

Sect Master's Immortal Journey

Chapter 3: Reading

At the beginning, as Meng Zhang started reading this "Sect Master's Chronicle," he felt like he couldn't stop. This booklet originated from a thousand years ago and contained a vast amount of Taiyi Sect's past and history.

Originally, Taiyi Sect was a large sect located in the Middle-Earth Continent, with a long-standing heritage and formidable strength. The sect had several Primordial Spirit Elders, making it a prominent force in the Middle-Earth Continent.

However, more than a thousand years ago, for unknown reasons, Taiyi Sect was annihilated by a mysterious power. Those disciples who were not present at the sect at the time fled to the north after the incident.

Over a thousand years ago, some fortunate survivors established a new Taiyi Sect on the outskirts of the Middle-Earth Continent. Although the reestablished Taiyi Sect had lost much of its heritage and strength, it managed to take root in the region relatively smoothly. While they no longer produced Primordial Spirit Elders, they continued to have Gold Core Daoist Masters. Thus, Taiyi Sect's legacy continued.

Around seven hundred years ago, a calamitous demonic disaster swept through the region. Taiyi Sect was caught in the turmoil, and its mountain gate was besieged, leading to another catastrophe. The disciples who managed to escape the mountain gate did not dare to stay in the area and fled northward, eventually taking refuge in the Endless Sea of Sand.

Three hundred years ago, the refugees of Taiyi Sect in the Endless Sea of Sand established Taiyi Sect once again after a series of struggles with the local forces. Although they managed to gain a foothold, the sect's heritage was almost depleted, and they were no longer able to cultivate Gold Core stage cultivators. The sect relied on a few Foundation Building stage cultivators to hold their ground.

Unable to maintain its independence, Taiyi Sect had no choice but to seek refuge under the Gold Core sect, Flying Swan Sect, becoming a vassal of Flying Swan Sect to barely survive in the Endless Sea of Sand. Taiyi Sect continued to pass down its legacy for nearly two hundred years.

About a hundred years ago, Taiyi Sect encountered a large group of sand monsters besieging their mountain gate, causing it to fall once again. The surviving disciples continued to flee northward until they arrived at the present location of Taiyi Sect's current residence.

Thus, Taiyi Sect was rebuilt again, but this time, its revival was feeble, barely maintaining a faint legacy. At this point, Taiyi Sect had even lost its status as a vassal of Flying Swan Sect.

In order to survive, Taiyi Sect had to lower its status and become a vassal of Twin Success Valley. The records within the sect about Taiyi Sect's previous history were not detailed, merely passing over the relevant information. The sect members knew that Taiyi Sect had once been glorious, but the specific details were scarce. Even the former Meng Zhang knew at most that Taiyi Sect had once had Foundation Building stage cultivators, had been a vassal of Flying Swan Sect, and held a comparable status with Twin Success Valley. As for more information, it remained unknown.

Now, after reading this "Sect Master's Chronicle," Meng Zhang finally learned about the glorious history that Taiyi Sect had once possessed.

"Who knows what unlucky star Taiyi Sect offended to encounter such misfortune, falling from the prosperous Middle-Earth Continent to the desolate Endless Sea of Sand."

"And their disciples are becoming weaker with each generation. At this rate, who knows how many more generations Taiyi Sect can continue its legacy?"

At this moment, Meng Zhang seemed to have forgotten his identity as the Taiyi Sect Sect Master and couldn't help but make some comments.

The contents recorded in the "Sect Master's Chronicle" were extensive, many of which were unheard-of anecdotes that greatly intrigued him. Since Taiyi Sect's escape from the Middle-Earth Continent, its struggles for survival and confrontations with various powerful enemies were all meticulously recorded. Along this journey, numerous past heroes who were dedicated to the sect emerged, creating countless epic legends.

As he read on, Meng Zhang couldn't help but feel that Taiyi Sect's inheritance had not been easy.

Unconsciously, Meng Zhang continued reading until dawn. Despite not having slept all night, he didn't feel tired. After daybreak, he still didn't put down the booklet.

Not long after daybreak, Daoist True Spirit, accompanied by his disciple Li Jie, left Taiyi Sect to go on a trip. A month ago, Daoist Profound Spirit had personally taught Meng Zhang how to control the sect-protecting great formation of Taiyi Sect.

More than a month ago, when Daoist Profound Spirit was summoned by Twin Success Valley, he ignored Fang Meng's opposition and transferred full control of the sect-protecting great formation to Meng Zhang. Being in control of the sect-protecting great formation, Meng Zhang was well-informed about all activities within it. Nobody's movements in the sect could escape his eyes.

Yesterday, when Fang Meng led his followers to leave Taiyi Sect, Meng Zhang had been observing the situation all along. Reluctant to engage in conflict with Fang Meng as fellow sect members, Meng Zhang had tacitly permitted their departure. Otherwise, with the activation of the sect-protecting great formation, he could easily subdue them without much effort.

"At this time, why did Zhen Ling (True Spirit) Daoist leave Taiyi Sect, and what are his intentions?" Meng Zhang felt puzzled.

Unlike the simple-minded Fang Meng, Zhen Ling (True Spirit) Daoist, who had never sought the position of Taiyi Sect Sect Master, was like a venomous snake. His heart was cruel, and he was capable of anything.

Having observed him coldly in the sect for many years, Meng Zhang had a clear understanding of Daoist True Spirit's character and couldn't trust him.

After pondering for a while without any conclusion, Meng Zhang had no choice but to temporarily set this matter aside. As long as he firmly controlled the sect-protecting great formation, Zhen Ling (True Spirit) Daoist would not succeed in any plot, Meng Zhang reassured himself.

With Taiyi Sect's meager population and few matters to handle, Meng Zhang had plenty of free time to leisurely read the "Sect Master's Chronicle" in his hands.

Meng Zhang didn't strictly follow chronological order but read according to his interests, skipping through and searching for useful information.

The experiences and insights of the previous Taiyi Sect Sect Masters were fascinating. Some even recorded their cultivation experiences in the chronicle, which was of great help to Meng Zhang.

What made Meng Zhang regretful was that the legendary extraordinary skills and divine abilities that Taiyi Sect possessed during its prosperous days were not recorded in the chronicle. It was reasonable since if these contents were recorded, those things would not have been lost for so long.

Currently, there were few preserved classics in Taiyi Sect, and even fewer useful cultivation techniques. The likes of Changchun Gong, Huangsha Jue, Tongming Gong, and similar techniques that most people cultivated were generic and widely circulated in the cultivation world.

The only secret transmission technique left in Taiyi Sect was the Lesser Yang Qi Art, which only Meng Zhang, with his exceptional aptitude and comprehension, had the ability to cultivate. However, due to its incomplete transmission, practicing the Lesser Yang Qi Art was extremely difficult. Within Taiyi Sect, only Meng Zhang, with outstanding talent and understanding, had the capability to practice it.

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Chapter 4: Record

Throughout the entire day, Meng Zhang spent most of his time reading the "Sect Master's Chronicle." This magic tool, passed down among the Taiyi Sect's generations of Sect Masters, brought him great surprises. Meng Zhang's eyes were opened wide, and his anticipation for the contents recorded in the chronicle grew.

By the time night fell and after spending the whole day, he came across an interesting entry in the book. It was recorded by a former Sect Master of Taiyi Sect, Xuan Qingzi. According to his account, in Taiyi Sect's prime, they possessed numerous Trial Grounds used to temper the disciples.

Outstanding disciples who entered these Trial Grounds would face various tests. If they passed, they would gain significant benefits, including access to certain sect legacies that greatly enhanced their strength.

After Taiyi Sect's annihilation, these Trial Grounds were either destroyed or occupied by other sects. However, some of these Trial Grounds were located in other dimensions, and during the sect's destruction, they might have escaped the catastrophe.

After Taiyi Sect was rebuilt, the higher-ups of the sect had invested considerable effort to re-enter these Trial Grounds and reclaim their lost legacies. After numerous attempts, the post-rebuilt Taiyi Sect successfully communicated with one of the Trial Grounds.

This Trial Ground was located in the Netherworld, and the physical body of a living person could not enter it. Only when the Divine Soul Left the Body and entered as a Soul could one access it. Furthermore, the targets of this Trial Ground were Refining Qi stage disciples of the sect, so only cultivators at the Refining Qi stage could enter.

Ordinary cultivators generally had to reach the Refining Qi stage before their Soul could barely leave their body. Moreover, the Soul could not stay out of the body for too long or go too far from it. If an ordinary cultivator wished for their Soul to stay outside the body for an extended period and travel far, they would need to possess a Cultivation Base at the Foundation Building stage.

However, such limitations were nothing to the flourishing Taiyi Sect, which once boasted numerous Primordial Spirit elders and a multitude of talents. There were always some peerless geniuses who possessed the Soul strength equivalent to that of the Foundation Building stage even while at the Refining Qi stage. Furthermore, Taiyi Sect at that time had many special means to enhance the Soul strength of ordinary Refining Qi stage disciples.

As a result, this Trial Ground in the Netherworld frequently welcomed Refining Qi stage disciples with powerful Souls during its prime.

However, after the reconstruction of Taiyi Sect, there were no more exceptional disciples, and all means of enhancing Souls were lost. Consequently, despite their painstaking efforts to communicate with this Trial Ground, they couldn't enter it or make it function. All the efforts of the sect members turned out to be in vain.

When Sect Master Xuan Qingzi recorded this event, he expressed his regret and frustration, lamenting that the post-rebuilt Taiyi Sect was simply unlucky and encountered obstacles at every turn.

Afterward, Taiyi Sect's mountain gate was once again breached, and the sect was left in chaos and displaced. This particular record was then submerged in history, and the subsequent generations of Sect Masters showed no interest in it.

When Meng Zhang read this entry, he didn't breeze through it as the previous Sect Masters did. Instead, he carefully read it repeatedly. Perhaps due to his status as a transmigrator, Meng Zhang's Soul was naturally stronger than that of an ordinary person.

In this aspect, his exceptional talent was evident even before he began his cultivation. He possessed a photographic memory and remarkable comprehension. Shortly after formally starting his cultivation, with just a Cultivation Base at the Refining Qi initial stage, he could easily achieve Divine Soul Left the Body. As his Cultivation Base advanced to the Refining Qi stage middle phase, he could even leave his body for extended periods and wander freely as a Divine Soul.

Being a transmigrator was his most significant secret, one he hadn't even revealed to his mentor, Daoist Profound Spirit.

Over a month ago, when the former Sect Master, Daoist Profound Spirit, was summoned by Twin Success Valley, Meng Zhang took advantage of the opportunity to indulge in his Soul's wanderings. In the dead of night, he would willingly let his Divine Soul leave his body and explore the sect's surroundings. A few times, he even dared to venture far from the sect's residence, wandering around the area.

With this special ability, Meng Zhang's interest was immediately piqued when he read about the Trial Ground. This Trial Ground seemed tailor-made for him. Although his Cultivation Base was not high, being only a Refining Qi mid-stage cultivator, he was confident in his Soul's strength and believed that he could enter the Trial Ground without any problems.

As for the authenticity of the records in the book, Meng Zhang had no doubts. This "Sect Master's Chronicle" was specially used by the Taiyi Sect's successive Sect Masters to record events and was exclusively reserved for Taiyi Sect's Sect Master. The previous Sect Master, Xuan Qingzi, would not lie in there. Meng Zhang was genuinely looking forward to the Trial Ground left behind by Taiyi Sect's prime.

However, the current Taiyi Sect was a far cry from its prime, not to mention the difference compared to the rebuilt Taiyi Sect from before. The sect's heritage was almost completely lost, and apart from Meng Zhang's "Sect Master's Chronicle," they probably couldn't find anything in the sect that connected them to the past Taiyi Sect.

Taiyi Sect had always lived a compact life, relying solely on the production of the 19-acre spirit field. They had to surrender almost one-third of the output as offerings to Twin Success Valley, with the rest exchanged for various resources to sustain the sect's operation.

To subsidize the sect, the former Sect Master, Daoist Profound Spirit, often led the disciples to hunt and kill demonic beasts or take on jobs to earn spirit stones. Everyone in the sect, including Meng Zhang, the prominently cultivated seed disciple, struggled due to the lack of sufficient cultivation resources.

Of course, the so-called geniuses consumed the same resources but achieved faster cultivation progress. Meng Zhang was such a genius. Despite having the shortest cultivation time, he had the fastest progress among his peers.

If he could obtain the heritage of Taiyi Sect's prime, it would undoubtedly benefit both him personally and the entire Taiyi Sect immensely. Long ago, Meng Zhang had promised Daoist Profound Spirit that he would revive Taiyi Sect and restore its former glory.

Now, it seemed that an opportunity to fulfill this promise had presented itself before him. Meng Zhang quickly made up his mind and decided to enter this Trial Ground as soon as possible, even if it meant taking risks.

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Chapter 5: Sacrificial offering

Meng Zhang was a doer; when he had an idea, he acted on it immediately. He stopped reading, carefully stowed away the "Sect Master's Chronicle," and walked out of the main hall. Taiyi Sect was a small sect occupying less than thirty acres of land. Several small courtyards contained lush green spirit fields.

The sect lacked grand and majestic buildings, with only a few rows of ordinary houses. Even the grandest hall of the sect, the main hall, had no embellishments and appeared inconspicuous. Meng Zhang left the main hall and entered one of the adjacent houses. This was the Taiyi Sect's treasury, where all the sect's wealth was stored. Tian Zhen, Meng Zhang's staunch supporter, resided here and was responsible for guarding the treasury.

When Tian Zhen saw Meng Zhang enter, he immediately stood up and respectfully greeted him, "Sect Master..."

"You don't need to mind me; I'm just getting something," Meng Zhang waved his hand and walked to the back wall of the house. He reached out and fumbled around on the wall, twisting it a few times. With a series of rumbling sounds, a hidden door appeared on the original wall, revealing a secret chamber behind. Meng Zhang was familiar with the place and walked straight in.

He had been here more than once and had even counted the resources inside multiple times. Although it was called the sect's treasury, the amount of wealth inside was pitifully small. The walls of the secret chamber were covered in layers of runes, preventing the dissipation of spiritual energy from the items stored within and ensuring a constant temperature and humidity. It also protected against pests and decay.

Shelves lined the walls, but most of them were empty, with only a few holding various items. There were stacks of commonly used talismans, dozens of bottles of elixirs, and a large pile of low-grade materials such as cinnabar, blank talisman paper, incense, demonic beast blood, thread incense, and medicinal oil, all neatly categorized on different shelves.

On the floor, there were several large jars, one filled with more than two hundred jin of spirit grain, another containing dried spirit dates...

In the middle of the secret chamber, there was a large chest holding less than a thousand pieces of low-grade spirit stones. These were all the belongings of Taiyi Sect, accumulated over the past century or so. Despite the fact that the entire sect's treasury lacked even one decent magic tool, the successive Sect Masters of Taiyi Sect had put their utmost effort into managing the sect under such adverse conditions, allowing for the accumulation of these resources.

Meng Zhang didn't need many items, nor were they particularly precious. After searching through a few shelves, he gathered what he needed. With a brief greeting to Tian Zhen, he hurriedly left the treasury.

In the courtyard outside the main hall, Meng Zhang found a grinding stone the size of a millstone and returned to the main hall. Placing the stone in the middle of the hall, he took out his flying sword and used it to flatten the surface of the stone, creating a smooth plane.

Then, he infused true qi into his fingertips and, following the records in the "Sect Master's Chronicle," started drawing on the stone. Thin cracks the width of a finger appeared on the surface of the stone, forming complex runes layer by layer.

Meng Zhang had an excellent memory, and it didn't take him long to finish drawing the runes on the stone, perfectly matching the records in the "Sect Master's Chronicle." He took out a bottle containing mercury that had been refined with spiritual energy and poured it onto the stone. Using true qi, he remotely controlled the mercury to flow along the inscribed runes, quickly filling all the gaps.

Next, he took out some cinnabar and applied it all over the surface of the stone. With that, a simplified altar was set up. A small bottle of demonic beast blood and ten low-grade spirit stones were carefully placed on the stone as sacrificial offerings. Meng Zhang was relieved that the required offerings were not extensive and didn't require a large expenditure.

Finally, he took out three long incense sticks and lit them in front of the altar. With everything in place, Meng Zhang stood solemnly before the altar, concentrating his mind and calming his breath. According to the records in the "Sect Master's Chronicle," during the Taiyi Sect's heyday, they had made a covenant with a Ghost Deity from the Netherworld, and this deity was responsible for guarding the Trial Ground. Taiyi Sect disciples needed to set up altars, prepare offerings, and communicate with the Ghost Deity, then use the deity's power to send their own souls into the Trial Ground. There was no need for ceremonial rituals like bathing, changing clothes, or fasting. The most crucial aspect was sincerity and showing no disrespect towards the Ghost Deity.

Standing before the altar for a while, feeling that he had finally calmed his mind, Meng Zhang deeply bowed three times, then lowered his head and cupped his hands in a respectful manner. His face showed a sincere and solemn expression as he said, "I, Taiyi Sect Sect Master Meng Zhang, sincerely pray and humbly request the Honored Deity to reveal thyself."

After saying this, Meng Zhang maintained his posture, not moving a muscle. The hall fell silent, not even a breeze was stirring. Only the three incense sticks burning on the ground remained quietly flickering in the still air. These three long incense sticks could burn for over an hour in the windless environment.

As time passed, Meng Zhang's expression remained unchanged, his movements unwavering, and even his breathing didn't show the slightest disorder. When the three incense sticks were almost completely burnt out, the hall finally underwent a change.

A gust of eerie wind seemed to materialize out of thin air, howling fiercely in the hall, making Meng Zhang feel somewhat unsteady on his feet. Above the altar, a dense black cloud appeared, within which a faintly discernible portal emerged.

Suddenly, the portal emitted a suction force, directly drawing the offerings on the altar into it. Meng Zhang knew that this was the critical moment. Without hesitation, he quickly sat cross-legged, entered a meditative state, and communicated with his soul.

Soon, Meng Zhang entered a strange state that felt like a half-dream and half-awake condition. In this semi-conscious state, he sensed his own soul within his body. It appeared as a softly glowing human-shaped mass of light, with a hazy and faintly familiar face that bore some resemblance to Meng Zhang.

"This is me," Meng Zhang had a moment of realization.

Then, his consciousness merged with the glowing mass of light, and they became indistinguishable from each other. Meng Zhang controlled his soul, exerted force, and leaped as if escaping from a cage.

His soul leaped out from the top of his physical body and surveyed the surroundings for a moment before resolutely dashing towards the portal above the altar, like a fearless charge forward.

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