

Sect Master's Immortal Journey

Chapter 6: Trial Ground

As soon as Meng Zhang's soul entered the portal, he immediately felt a sensation of dizziness and lost his sense of direction. The surrounding space was rapidly changing and spinning continuously.

It felt like his soul was thrown into a washing machine's spin-dryer, spinning along with it without stopping. After an unknown amount of time, Meng Zhang's soul was on the verge of losing consciousness due to the violent spatial changes, but finally, the drastic transformations came to a halt.

Meng Zhang felt as if his soul was about to scatter, and even the glow on the surface of his soul became dimmer.

Fortunately, Meng Zhang had entered this realm with his soul; if it were his physical body, he would probably have vomited from such intense turmoil.

After the surrounding space stabilized, Meng Zhang discovered that he had arrived in a world unlike the mortal realm.

The sky in this world was gray and obscured by thick leaden clouds, exuding an overwhelming sense of oppression. There seemed to be no sun in this world, and consequently, there was no sunlight. The entire world was covered in a faint yellowish gloom, giving it an eerie and ominous atmosphere.

Surprisingly, Meng Zhang's soul had a peculiar feeling of affinity here. It was as if he had found his natural habitat, experiencing a sensation of inexplicable comfort and ease.

In the mortal realm, every time he performed Divine Soul Left the Body, he would experience a strong sense of oppression, as if the whole world was rejecting him. As a result, he was always cautious and never stayed outside for too long during that state.

The sensation from his soul made Meng Zhang realize that he had arrived in the Netherworld, a place where the soul ultimately belongs, contrasting with the mortal realm that repelled souls.

Looking around, Meng Zhang found himself floating in mid-air with emptiness all around. Beneath him was a vast ring-shaped mountain range, forming an unusually round and smooth circular shape.

In the center of the ring-shaped mountains was a massive basin, predominantly flat terrain mixed with some mountains, hills, lakes, and rivers.

Inside the basin, there seemed to be several cities crowded with countless troops and fluttering banners.

Outside the ring-shaped mountains, a thick black mist enveloped the area, obscuring the view of what lay within.

During his time in the mortal realm, Meng Zhang's soul had the ability of night vision. After arriving in the Netherworld, his five senses were greatly enhanced. However, he still couldn't see through the dark fog below.

Suddenly, an enormous force descended from somewhere, pressing heavily on Meng Zhang's soul. He had no resistance and was forcibly pushed towards the ground.

Meng Zhang's soul descended rapidly and soon penetrated the layer of black fog, entering it.

As his soul was inherently light, it landed with a mysterious buffer. The descent wasn't too fast, and the impact wasn't severe, causing no harm.

Meng Zhang's soul got up from the ground, swayed for a moment, and then surveyed the surroundings.

Below the black fog was a dark space.

Meng Zhang couldn't see far; he could only perceive a nearby flat ground. Looking a little further, everything was pitch black, as if the thick black ink had spread across the area.

With his soul's unique perception, he carefully observed his surroundings.

The ground was entirely covered in black sand, devoid of any signs of life. The surrounding silence was absolute, without even the slightest sound of wind.

Endless Sea of Sand, where Taiyi Sect was located, was known to be a desolate place in Grand Dust World. However, it wasn't entirely devoid of life.

Not to mention the scattered oases within the vast desert, even in the endless sea of yellow sand, one could occasionally discover some resilient creatures struggling to survive.

But here, apart from the dense death energy, there was no trace of life.

According to the records in the Sect Master's Chronicle, the Trial Ground was located in the Netherworld.

This place should be the legendary Trial Ground. The only question was what kind of trial he would be facing. After waiting in place for half a day without any changes in the surroundings, Meng Zhang decided to take action.

Since he came here to undergo a trial, standing around waiting was not going to get him anywhere.

With no sense of direction in this place, he randomly chose a direction and started to move forward.

After all, he couldn't distinguish north, south, east, or west in this space. As he advanced, more and more scenery came into his view.

As far as the eye could see, the surrounding scenery remained unchanged, with nothing new on the ground except for the black sand.

Meng Zhang's soul was not walking on the ground but floating in the air very close to it, drifting slowly forward. Since there was no wind around, he couldn't find any source of force to accelerate his floating speed.

After an unknown amount of time and distance, the place where Meng Zhang's soul had originally landed was now engulfed in darkness, completely invisible.

At that moment, a gust of wind suddenly blew from the left side of the darkness. Alert, Meng Zhang looked over and soon spotted a floating ghost emerging from the darkness.

The ghost retained a human form, emitting a dim cold light all over, like a humanoid cold lamp.

Upon noticing Meng Zhang, the ghost let out a sharp and piercing screech, then rushed towards him without hesitation. If Meng Zhang were in his physical form, ghosts like this one would be inconsequential, easily dealt with using a few spells.

However, in the state of the soul, Meng Zhang's magic powers were left in his physical body, rendering him unable to cast spells.

The ghost's attack was swift, taking only a few moments from discovery to reaching Meng Zhang's side.

Despite his lack of magic powers, Meng Zhang wasn't going to sit idly and wait for his demise.

Usually, cultivators in the Refining Qi stage of the Cultivation World would practice martial arts. On the one hand, it could strengthen their bodies and enhance their vitality. On the other hand, since their magic powers were limited during battles, they needed combat skills to gain an advantage.

Although his martial arts proficiency was diminished to less than 30% in his soul state, it should still be sufficient to deal with the ghost before him.

With a simple side step, Meng Zhang easily evaded the ghost's attack, then floated to its back and delivered a series of powerful punches.

Meng Zhang's soul, in the state of Divine Soul Left the Body, was fundamentally similar to a ghost like this one. This sudden encounter was a real ghost-on-ghost battle.

With each punch, a faint light spot detached from the ghost's body. In a moment, the ghost, who had endured countless strikes, shrunk by almost half.

While Meng Zhang was beating the ghost, the wind from the left side intensified.

Two more ghosts emerged from the darkness, and it seemed that there were even more ghosts behind them.

The ghosts didn't have any vital points, and even with Meng Zhang's superb martial arts skills, it was difficult to take them down with a single strike.

Seeing two more ghosts appearing and not wanting to be surrounded, Meng Zhang grabbed both sides of the ghost's body in front of him and exerted all his strength, tearing the ghost's body apart.

The ghost's body was ripped into two halves, and then, with a tremble of Meng Zhang's hands, the ghost's body completely disappeared.

As the ghost's body disappeared, Meng Zhang felt a refreshing energy flow into his own body. He, who was feeling a little weary, suddenly felt reinvigorated, and his expended energy quickly recovered.

Moreover, he sensed that his soul received an additional piece of information.

However, busy with the ongoing battle, he had no time to process this new information.

As more ghosts rushed out from the darkness, Meng Zhang shouted and took the initiative to confront them.

After several fierce battles, Meng Zhang was exhausted, but every time he killed a ghost, a refreshing energy entered his body, immediately restoring him to full strength. Similarly, his soul received more pieces of information.

Meng Zhang continued to eliminate eight ghosts in a row.

With high spirits, he was preparing to take the initiative and confront the ghosts within the darkness when a mysterious force suddenly repelled him from this space.

Once again, Meng Zhang experienced a dizzying sensation, and just like when he arrived, he was subjected to the torment until he finally returned to the sect's grand hall in the mortal realm.

His soul had never been out of his body for so long. As soon as he regained consciousness, he didn't hesitate and immediately rushed back to his physical body.

With Divine Soul Return to the Body, Meng Zhang's physical body also woke up.

The anomalies on the altar had all disappeared, and even the crude stone altar, when touched by the wind, turned into a myriad of stone dust, dissipating quickly.

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Chapter 7: Harvest

In the past, when Meng Zhang's Divine Soul Left the Body, he would merely take a stroll around Taiyi Sect and not dare to stay outside for too long, mainly out of concern for his soul's safety. After returning with Divine Soul Return to the Body, he would always feel mentally fatigued and devoid of energy.

This time was different from before. After his Divine Soul Return to the Body, Meng Zhang felt surprisingly energetic and refreshed.

Refining Qi stage cultivators also needed sleep. However, compared to ordinary people, they required shorter rest periods to meet their needs.

Of course, Refining Qi cultivators could go without sleep for several days and nights without significant consequences, aside from feeling a bit tired.

Meng Zhang hadn't rested well these past few days and had stayed up all night studying yesterday. Even tonight, he had stayed up late. According to common sense, he should be fatigued and drowsy by now. However, after returning from the Trial Ground, he felt full of vitality, without a hint of sleepiness.

Meng Zhang attributed this unusual state to the cooling energy that flowed into his soul when he killed the ghosts in the Trial Ground, restoring his soul's strength.

It seemed that this time, after his Divine Soul Left the Body, his soul not only didn't deplete but was replenished instead, thanks to this energy.

Additionally, while fighting the ghosts, Meng Zhang felt that some information entered his soul. At the time, preoccupied with the battle, he had no time to pay attention to this new information.

Now, back in a safe place, he slowly started organizing this information.

After a while, having sorted through this information, Meng Zhang's face couldn't conceal his surprise.

For killing eight ghosts, he obtained eight pieces of information.

One piece of information was related to artifact refinement, about how to engrave a specific common magic tool restriction.

Another piece of information concerned alchemy, describing how to process a certain medicinal material to fully activate its medicinal properties.

Yet another piece of information was related to formations, explaining how to trigger greater killing power using a special technique.

There was also information on the Fire Arrow Technique, revealing a specific method to reduce mana consumption and increase the spell's power. The eight pieces of information encompassed various practical tips and precious knowledge.

In Meng Zhang's previous life, knowledge equated to power. In this cultivation world, knowledge related to cultivation was not only highly valuable but could also be directly converted into power. Among the hundred arts of cultivation, knowledge about alchemy, artifact refinement, formations, and other means of creating wealth were particularly hard to come by.

Now, Meng Zhang only needed to kill ghosts in the Trial Ground to gain rare and invaluable knowledge.

Moreover, Meng Zhang also thought that the ghosts he had encountered were only the lowest-level Ghosts. When he glanced at the numerous higher-level Ghosts below while in the air, he couldn't help but wonder what kind of rewards killing those higher-level Ghosts would bring. This idea filled Meng Zhang's heart with excitement.

Taiyi Sect had experienced numerous trials and tribulations, and its heritage had nearly been lost.

Yet now, Meng Zhang had discovered hope for recovering that heritage.

It turned out that the Trial Ground hid information about Taiyi Sect's complete heritage from its heyday, and it was all true.

If it weren't for the restriction that allowed entry to the heritage site only once a night, Meng Zhang could hardly suppress his eagerness to enter again.

Meng Zhang glanced outside the grand hall and saw that the sun was about to rise.

Ever since he embarked on the cultivation path, the diligent Meng Zhang never missed the morning class.

These past few days, due to the incidents within the sect, he had missed two morning classes, leaving him with an empty feeling in his heart.

Today, Meng Zhang didn't want to miss the morning class any longer.

Meng Zhang left the grand hall and directly jumped onto its rooftop, the highest point of Taiyi Sect. Facing east, he crossed his legs and prepared to welcome the rising sun.

Meng Zhang's practice, the Lesser Yang Qi Art, required him to absorb the earliest rays of the rising sun each morning, condensing them within his dantian for refinement. This was the way to cultivate the unique Lesser Yang True Qi, which possessed the effects of tempering the body and nurturing the soul, as well as the power of Yang Fire. It was truly a rare and superior cultivation technique.

Unfortunately, most of Taiyi Sect's heritage related to the Lesser Yang Qi Art had been lost. Not only were parts of the Refining Qi stage techniques missing, but some critical parts had also been lost long ago.

Meng Zhang's extraordinary comprehension allowed him to overcome numerous difficulties and cultivate a pure Lesser Yang True Qi using the incomplete and fragmented scripture he possessed.

After completing his morning practice on the rooftop, Meng Zhang returned to the grand hall. He took out paper and a pen, carefully recording the knowledge he gained the previous night.

Since childhood, Meng Zhang had possessed a photographic memory. He could memorize any amount of information perfectly.

He wasn't worried about forgetting this information; rather, he intended to preserve it for the sect. He recorded the knowledge to store it in Taiyi Sect's Hidden Scripture Pavilion, enhancing the sect's heritage and reserves.

If he obtained more information from the Trial Ground in the future, he could categorize and bind them into books.

After finishing these tasks, Meng Zhang was about to go to Daoist Clear Spirit to see if there was any assistance needed in the spirit field. At that moment, he felt that the sect-protecting great formation was activated again.

Taking out the Sect Master's seal he always carried with him, Meng Zhang gestured in front of him, and a light screen appeared.

Daoist True Spirit's disciple, Li Jie, returned to Taiyi Sect using his identity token, passing through the sect's great formation. However, Daoist True Spirit himself was nowhere to be seen.

As Li Jie hurried into Taiyi Sect, he ran directly towards the grand hall.

"Sect Master, something bad happened..." Even before reaching the hall's entrance, Li Jie shouted loudly.

Meng Zhang put away the Sect Master's seal and looked at Li Jie, reproaching him in a low voice, "Why are you panicking? Cultivators must remain calm and composed, still as calm water. Look at you, what are you doing?"

Li Jie ignored Meng Zhang's reprimand and continued shouting, "Sect Master, something bad happened. Master is surrounded by sand monsters!"

Meng Zhang was shocked to hear this. How could Zhen Ling (True Spirit) senior encounter such bad luck, getting surrounded by sand monsters?

In the Endless Sea of Sand, sand monsters were the natural enemies of all intelligent life and the biggest menace in the desert.

No one knew where sand monsters originated from or when they first appeared. They were just there whenever there were humans in the Endless Sea of Sand.

Sand monsters fervently loathed all intelligent creatures, especially humans. Whenever they emerged, they would rampage through human settlements, attacking and killing all cultivators they encountered.

When a large number of sand monsters gathered, they would actively assault the sects and families in the desert, attacking their mountain gates.

Throughout the history of the Endless Sea of Sand, countless sects and families had been destroyed due to sand monster attacks, their mountain gates breached.

Taiyi Sect, in its second rebuilding, fell to the onslaught of sand monsters.

Upon hearing about the appearance of sand monsters, Meng Zhang's first concern was not for Zhen Ling (True Spirit) senior's situation but rather the safety of Taiyi Sect. If

sand monsters appeared nearby, Taiyi Sect would be in grave danger of being annihilated.

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Chapter 8: Turns around to run

"Don't worry, take your time, and tell me everything. Where exactly did your master get surrounded by sand monsters? How many sand monsters are there?" Meng Zhang's calm demeanor seemed to have infected Li Jie, who soon regained his composure and began answering Meng Zhang's questions.

"Sect Master, my master is about ten miles east of Taiyi Sect. He's surrounded by a large group of sand monsters."

"There are dozens of sand monsters in total, but most of them are small sand monsters. There are only a few mid-level sand monsters..."

"Sect Master, please hurry and save my master. He won't last long under the siege of the sand monsters..."

Li Jie pleaded desperately.

Listening to Li Jie's explanation, Meng Zhang finally breathed a sigh of relief. According to Li Jie, this was just a small group of sand monsters, not many and not too powerful.

If it were a large group of strong sand monsters, Meng Zhang would have to activate the sect-protecting great formation and seek assistance from Twin Success Valley.

Ordinary people, when fully armed and cooperating with each other, could deal with small sand monsters. Mid-level sand monsters, at most, had the strength of a Refining Qi stage cultivator.

Although Daoist True Spirit and himself were at odds and he was never a well-intentioned person, Daoist True Spirit was still his martial uncle. From the perspective of harmony within Taiyi Sect, Meng Zhang couldn't just ignore the situation.

Moreover, Meng Zhang believed that if he didn't help, Li Jie would definitely go to that kind-hearted old man, Daoist Clear Spirit, and wouldn't speak favorably about him at all.

Taiyi Sect's former Sect Master, his mentor, Daoist Profound Spirit, died in battle against sand monsters. Based on Li Jie's description, this batch of sand monsters wasn't particularly strong. He decided to pay a visit and consider it avenging his former Sect Master.

"Don't worry. You wait here, and I'll bring some magic tools and go with you."

Comforting Li Jie, Meng Zhang walked towards the back of the grand hall.

This had always been the residence of Taiyi Sect's Sect Master. After inheriting the position of Sect Master, Meng Zhang moved in here.

There were several spacious rooms behind the grand hall, with the largest one being the quiet room where the Sect Master meditated in seclusion.

Meng Zhang entered the quiet room and lightly tapped the wall beside the door in a specific pattern. The floor in the center of the quiet room cracked open, revealing a downward passage.

Following the passage, Meng Zhang walked down the stairs and entered an incredibly vast underground chamber.

The underground chamber was empty, except for a shimmering halo of light like water ripples flowing in the center of the floor, emitting a faint glow.

This was the core location of Taiyi Sect's First Rank top-grade spirit vein, the place where the spirit eye was located.

Although the First Rank spirit vein was of low grade and hadn't formed for a long time, the spirit eye hadn't given birth to any spiritual creatures yet.

However, the spirit eye was not only the most concentrated in spiritual energy but also rich in vitality, possessing special nourishing effects.

In the center of the ground in the middle of the underground chamber, there were three items placed quietly.

One was a gem the size of a human head, emitting a colorful light that was mesmerizing to behold.

During Taiyi Sect's heyday, there was a tradition of refining Guardian Spirit Generals. These Guardian Spirit Generals were special beings, not only possessing powerful strength but also possessing some abilities of true deities.

When the sect faced calamities, these Guardian Spirit Generals also joined the battle, fighting for the sect until the last moment.

During multiple great battles, almost all of the Guardian Spirit Generals were lost. However, a few of them managed to escape with their souls heavily injured and their divine bodies destroyed. The predecessors of Taiyi Sect preserved these remnants of their souls in the gem, hoping that future disciples would be able to revive these Guardian Spirit Generals who had once made great contributions to the sect.

Over the years, Taiyi Sect had been declining, struggling to maintain its heritage, and naturally had no ability to revive these Guardian Spirit Generals. The gem had the function of nurturing and moisturizing the soul. In the abundant spiritual energy of the spirit eye, the gem could slowly revive the remnants of the Guardian Spirit Generals.

Beside the gem lay a spear that was missing more than half of its length, with its spearhead almost split open. This was the spiritual weapon, Spiritsnake Spear, passed down by Taiyi Sect's predecessors. The complete Spiritsnake Spear could even make Gold Core Daoist Masters feel fearful due to its formidable power. However, this damaged Spiritsnake Spear had lost almost all its power and become very weak.

Of course, although the spiritual weapon was damaged, it couldn't be refined by a Refining Qi stage cultivator. Fortunately, the spiritual weapon's spirituality was still intact, so it could be used without refinement.

Ordinarily, the spiritual weapon, Spiritsnake Spear, needed to be kept in the spirit eye to nurture its remaining spirituality. Every time it was taken out and used, it would cause damage to the residual spirituality. It had to be nurtured in the spirit eye for a long time to barely recover.

The last item was a large black disc, a common spiritual measurement disc used in the Cultivation World to test spiritual root quality and physical attributes. General Foundation Building families could afford it. However, the measurement disc Taiyi Sect possessed was handed down by its ancestors and was much more accurate than the common ones in the market.

Although Taiyi Sect had fallen for many years, they still had some assets and could store such treasures. But the fact that these were the treasures stored in the sect indicated how impoverished Taiyi Sect had become.

After a brief hesitation, Meng Zhang picked up the damaged spiritual weapon, Spiritsnake Spear, and stored it in his portable storage bag. Then, he left the place.

Back in the sect's grand hall, Meng Zhang wasted no time in speaking and directly said to Li Jie, "Follow me."

Before leaving, Meng Zhang also greeted Tian Zhen, asking him to watch over the sect's gates.

Meng Zhang and Li Jie left Taiyi Sect and arrived outside the sect-protecting great formation. Meng Zhang took out two talismans imprinted with the Light Body Technique. In order to save true qi, the usually frugal Meng Zhang had to splurge a bit.

Meng Zhang used one talisman himself and imbued the other one on Li Jie, saying, "Lead the way."

After using the Light Body Technique talisman, the two of them became light as swallows. One in front of the other, they quickly headed eastward towards Taiyi Sect.

After running for several miles, Meng Zhang asked, "How much farther? Where exactly did your master get surrounded?"

"Not far ahead, we are almost there. My master is there, battling the sand monsters," Li Jie replied without looking back.

Meng Zhang felt something was wrong and upon careful consideration, he understood the problem. The area where Taiyi Sect was located was a desert plain with a radius of dozens of miles, with only a few slightly larger sand dunes.

When a large group of sand monsters moved, except for a few special breeds, they usually made a grand and unobstructed appearance, stirring up sandstorms. Even if a long time had passed, it was difficult to completely settle the sand. If Li Jie's master was fighting the sand monsters not far ahead, it should have caused a sandstorm with the naked eye, impossible to go unnoticed.

"This guy, Li Jie, is lying. His purpose is to lure me out and get me out of the protection of the Sect Protecting Formation," a thought emerged in Meng Zhang's mind.

With this thought in mind, Meng Zhang immediately stopped and had no intention of exploring the truth behind Li Jie's plot. He took out a talisman from his storage bag and patted himself with it. Then, without any hesitation, he turned around and flew back towards Taiyi Sect.

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Chapter 9: Pursuit

When An Lei, the head of the An Family, passed by Taiyi Sect, he admired Meng Zhang and once expressed the intention to recruit him. Although Meng Zhang politely declined An Lei's offer, the magnanimous An Lei did not get angry. Instead, before parting, he gave Meng Zhang a few gifts. One of these gifts was the talisman for the Divine Movement Art, a spell commonly used by Refining Qi stage cultivators for travel, which Meng Zhang, at the mid Refining Qi stage, could also cast. However, being a First Rank superior talisman crafted by a Foundation Building stage expert like An Lei, it possessed far greater power than Meng Zhang's own spell. Turning around and fleeing was not because Meng Zhang was cowardly but because it was currently the most correct choice. When the situation was uncertain, one could not recklessly charge forward to seek death. There were times to act cautiously, and those rash fellows died the quickest. Taiyi Sect was his home ground, with the Sect Protecting Formation to deal with unknown enemies.

After using the talisman for the Divine Movement Art, Meng Zhang's speed was as fast as a galloping horse. With a few leaps, he quickly distanced himself from Li Jie.

At this moment, Li Jie, who was leading the way, finally realized what had happened. He turned around and watched Meng Zhang's rapidly disappearing figure, feeling a bit at a loss.

After a few loud noises, several large pits appeared less than a hundred zhang (1 zhang = 3.3 meters) ahead. Four figures jumped out of the pits and flew towards this direction. Among them was Li Jie's master, Daoist True Spirit.

Arriving next to Li Jie, Zhen Ling (True Spirit) scolded him, "You're truly useless, unable to handle such a small matter."

Then, he turned to a middle-aged man beside him and said, "Boss Zhang, that kid escaped. What should we do?"

The middle-aged man had blown an unusually clear whistle when he jumped out of the pit earlier. Now, he disdainfully said, "Your Taiyi Sect is nothing more than a tiny sect, and your Sect Protecting Formation is nothing more than an empty shell. Even if we forcibly attack, it would only cost a little effort to break it."

The middle-aged man's appearance displeased a heavily scarred man beside him, who kept complaining, "I said it long ago, there's no need for so much trouble. The three of us brothers could have just charged at the garbage sect's gate and crushed that kid. It would have been a done deal."

"It's all because Zhen Ling (True Spirit) had to be clever and lure that kid out to kill him outside."

"Truly, it's like taking off one's pants to fart, utterly unnecessary."

"After being buried in the ground for so long, I'm really bored."

A younger, refined man beside them said, "Second Brother, don't worry, that kid won't get away. He may be slippery and fast, but in front of the three of us, he won't have a chance to escape back to his nest."

The three men accompanying Daoist True Spirit were the notorious bandits, Zhang Brothers, well-known in the nearby region. They never used their real names and addressed each other as Eldest Brother, Second Brother, and Third Brother. Outsiders referred to them by adding their surname before the rank.

These three loose cultivators were notorious for robbery, not only robbing other loose cultivators they encountered but even attacking some cultivation families and sects. Moreover, they also accepted hire and did various dirty work.

Zhen Ling (True Spirit) had crossed paths with Zhang Brothers a long time ago.

Ever since the envoy from Twin Success Valley brought Elder Profound Spirit's last words and supported Meng Zhang as the new Sect Master of Taiyi Sect, Zhen Ling (True Spirit) had made two plans. On one hand, it would be best if he could make Meng Zhang willingly give up the position of Sect Master. On the other hand, if Meng Zhang insisted on holding onto the position, Zhen Ling (True Spirit) would not be polite. He sent his disciple, Li Jie, to contact the notorious bandit Zhang Brothers through an intermediary and prepare to take Meng Zhang's life.

Although Zhen Ling (True Spirit) had a Refining Qi stage fifth level Cultivation Base, which was slightly higher than Meng Zhang's, he had witnessed Meng Zhang's strength in action and was not confident in defeating him. Thus, he resorted to spending many years' worth of spirit stones to hire assassins.

However, when Zhen Ling (True Spirit) met Zhang Brothers, he somewhat regretted it. Not because he suddenly had a moral conscience, but because he noticed that Zhang Brothers had significantly improved their Cultivation Bases during the many years they hadn't seen each other. Boss Zhang had reached Refining Qi stage seventh level, entering the Refining Qi late stage, while Zhang Second and Zhang Third both had Refining Qi stage sixth level Cultivation Bases. With Zhen Ling (True Spirit)'s Refining Qi stage fifth level Cultivation Base, he couldn't possibly suppress these three brothers.

Though Zhang Brothers had a decent reputation and no rumors of betraying their employers had spread, Zhen Ling (True Spirit) couldn't trust them completely. If these three brothers were allowed to enter Taiyi Sect and their greed was sparked, they might use the opportunity to plunder the sect.

Zhen Ling (True Spirit) had planned to use his disciple, Li Jie, to lure Meng Zhang out and kill him. Unfortunately, a flaw somewhere exposed his scheme, and Meng Zhang realized something was amiss. This kid acted decisively without any hesitation. When he sensed something was wrong, he immediately fled. Zhen Ling (True Spirit) thought with a hint of viciousness.

At this moment, three exceptionally spirited high-headed horses ran over from afar in response to Boss Zhang's whistle. In the blink of an eye, these three horses had covered the distant distance and arrived not far from Zhang Brothers.

These three horses were no ordinary mortal horses but First Rank superior magical beasts, Wind Chasing Horses. In terms of combat power, Wind Chasing Horses were even more formidable than many First Rank middle-grade magical beasts. Regarding running speed, Wind Chasing Horses were not inferior to ordinary Foundation Building stage experts.

Refining Qi stage cultivators did not have the ability to fly and, at most, could only display the Floating Art.

With these three Wind Chasing Horses, Zhang Brothers gained powerful maneuverability and could move with the wind.

Having committed crimes for many years, Zhang Brothers had remained at large, and these three Wind Chasing Horses had played a crucial role.

Seeing the Wind Chasing Horses approach, Zhang Brothers didn't waste time talking to Zhen Ling (True Spirit) and immediately mounted their horses, pursuing Meng Zhang in the direction he had fled.

Although they started later than Meng Zhang, the Wind Chasing Horses lived up to their name, quickly closing the distance between them and Meng Zhang, despite him using the talisman for the Divine Movement Art.

The Cultivation World's so-called "Mountain Gate" was just a habitual term for the sect's resident site and didn't mean that all sects had to be built on mountains. Similarly, the term "Cave Residence" didn't require actual caves; cultivators were not cave-dwelling people on mountaintops. Moreover, how could they dig caves on a plain? Were they going to be like mice digging holes?

Taiyi Sect's resident site was located on the desert plain, surrounded by an empty and boundless landscape.

The vast plain was an ideal place for the Wind Chasing Horses to display their abilities.

In the blink of an eye, the three Wind Chasing Horses caught up to Meng Zhang, making it impossible for him to shake them off.

If this trend continued, it would be impossible for Meng Zhang to escape into Taiyi Sect's resident site before being caught up to.

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Chapter 10: Yellow Sand Hidden Trace Formation

Taiyi Sect covered an area of only 30 acres, and its entire perimeter was surrounded by a yellow light, creating a tight and solid defense around the sect's residence. This yellow light originated from Taiyi Sect's Sect Protecting Formation, a First Rank superior formation called the Yellow Sand Hidden Trace Formation, which was quite common in the Endless Sea of Sand. Like all Sect Protecting Formations, the Yellow Sand Hidden Trace Formation served to gather and prevent the dispersal of spiritual energy. Additionally, it had defensive, trapping, and confusing functions that were quite effective. However, its offensive power against enemies was not very satisfactory.

When Taiyi Sect was rebuilt after being destroyed by sand monsters, there were only two Foundation Building stage experts left among the surviving disciples. Although they

could have struggled to seize a Second Rank spirit vein with determination, they eventually chose the current First Rank superior spirit vein to rebuild the mountain gate. One reason was to maintain a low profile and avoid making enemies with nearby cultivation forces. The other reason was that this particular First Rank spirit vein was unique, capable of nurturing spiritual essence, and contained a hint of magnetic force.

The ancestors who rebuilt Taiyi Sect had extracted the magnetic force from the spirit vein and infused it into the Sect Protecting Formation, giving the ordinary Yellow Sand Hidden Trace Formation several additional changes.

At this moment, even with the Divine Movement Art talisman accelerating him, Meng Zhang couldn't outrun the pursuit of the Wind Chasing Horses. He was now less than ten zhang away from the coverage of Taiyi Sect's Sect Protecting Formation.

Zhang Second, the man with scars all over his face, had already chased closely behind Meng Zhang on his Wind Chasing Horse. He raised the golden knife in his hand and fiercely slashed forward, sending a golden crescent-shaped knife energy shooting towards Meng Zhang's back. It seemed that he would strike Meng Zhang's back before he entered Taiyi Sect.

As if he had eyes on his back, Meng Zhang's body, which was originally flying forward, suddenly threw itself sideways, narrowly avoiding the knife energy.

However, this evasive maneuver slowed his progress. Taiyi Sect was within sight, but it felt like an unreachable distance.

Boss Zhang, riding on his horse, formed hand seals and shouted lightly. The ground behind Meng Zhang surged, and with a thunderous roar, the sand and soil formed a dirt dragon that pounced towards Meng Zhang.

Meng Zhang rolled on the ground to avoid the dirt dragon's attack. However, the dirt dragon didn't stop and continued pursuing him.

By now, Zhang Brothers had caught up and surrounded Meng Zhang.

Just before he reached them, Meng Zhang quietly took out Taiyi Sect's Sect Master seal. While rolling on the ground, he waved the seal and softly chanted a few incantations.

The Taiyi Sect's Sect Master seal was the control center of the sect-protecting great formation. As long as one entered the sensing range of the Sect Protecting Formation, they could control it. Moreover, the sensing range of the Sect Protecting Formation was much larger than Taiyi Sect's residence.

Suddenly, within the Taiyi Sect's Sect Protecting Formation, an invisible force emerged, accurately enveloping Meng Zhang, who was struggling on the ground.

Meng Zhang's body was firmly trapped and then swiftly pulled into Taiyi Sect's Sect Protecting Formation like a lightning. The yellow light that enveloped Taiyi Sect had no resistance to Meng Zhang's body, allowing him to pass through effortlessly. The sudden change caught Zhang Brothers off guard. Just as they were about to capture Meng Zhang, the unexpected occurred. Zhang Second, known for his quick temper, was furious. With a loud roar, he leaped from his horse and rushed towards Taiyi Sect's Sect Protecting Formation, easily passing through the yellow light.

Once inside the Formation, Zhang Second disappeared from his brothers' sight. Without hesitation, Zhang Brothers followed suit, leaving the Wind Chasing Horses outside the Formation and charging in. Having committed many robberies, they were already well-versed in dealing with the likes of the Yellow Sand Hidden Trace Formation, a common Sect Protecting Formation.

Inside the Sect Protecting Formation, Meng Zhang waved the Sect Master seal while activating various changes within the Formation. He also utilized its power to transmit messages to Tian Zhen and Daoist Clear Spirit.

"Zhen Ling (True Spirit) has betrayed the sect and colluded with outsiders to cause trouble."

"You must return immediately and defend against the external enemies."

Taiyi Sect, being a small sect, had survived in the treacherous environment of the Endless Sea of Sand for many years, mainly because its disciples were highly vigilant. Upon hearing Meng Zhang's words, even the kind-hearted Daoist Clear Spirit didn't hesitate and immediately took action with two disciples.

The four members of Taiyi Sect, following their usual drills, quickly headed to several control nodes of the Sect Protecting Formation, injecting their true qi to assist Meng Zhang in activating the Formation.

The Sect Protecting Formation immediately started undergoing various changes. Around Taiyi Sect, which had been relatively calm, strong winds began to blow, lifting up the yellow sand and shrouding everything in sight.

Zhang Second, who had entered the Formation first, was enveloped by the endless yellow sand upon his entry. The sand covered his body, making it difficult for him to even open his eyes. Unfazed, he swung his golden knife, sending out crescent-shaped knife energies to disperse the surrounding sand.

Having already obtained Taiyi Sect's information from Zhen Ling (True Spirit), Zhang Second knew that the Yellow Sand Hidden Trace Formation required numerous disciples to achieve its full power. However, considering Taiyi Sect's limited manpower, how much power could they exert from the formation?

Boss Zhang and Zhang Third, who had entered the Formation after Zhang Second, were temporarily cut off from communication due to the Formation's interference. Nevertheless, they remained calm and began attacking the Formation.

Zhang Third took out a command flag and waved it lightly, dispersing the surrounding sand, revealing an empty space.

Boss Zhang took out a palm-sized bell and gently shook it. Invisible soundwaves rushed out in all directions.

The bell was called the Soul Shocking Bell, a First Rank superior magic tool, and a rare one that directly attacked the soul. If not defended against properly, a Cultivator struck by its soundwaves would have their soul thrown into disarray, causing them to faint immediately.

Boss Zhang, who had defeated numerous enemies with this Soul Shocking Bell, made no gains this time. The sound of the bell was almost entirely blocked by the Sect Protecting Formation, not reaching Meng Zhang and the others.

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