

Sect Master 601

Chapter 601: Grand ceremony

The Saintess of the Yellow Lotus Sect showed great sincerity, while Meng Zhang harbored some caution, but it did not affect their cooperation.

They had a private discussion for a long time and reached some agreements. They made plans for future cooperation and how to jointly resist the True Monarch Mountain Peak.

On some critical issues, they both made a solemn pledge to prevent betrayal from each other. Although there might be ways to bypass such pledges in the Cultivation World, it would come at a certain cost. With the heart demon oath, neither of them could easily break their promises.

After the discussion, Meng Zhang didn't stay any longer and took the initiative to bid farewell and leave. As he reached the entrance, Gu Yue Huaidie stood silently by the courtyard's gate. They nodded to each other as a sign of acknowledgement before leaving the courtyard.

In the following days, nothing significant happened until the fifteenth day of the third month when the Azure Origin Sect held a grand ceremony in the center of Jiuqu City at the Senate headquarters of the Jiuqu League, to honor Jin Li, the True Monarch.

The ceremony was lively and attended by numerous guests. Prominent figures from the Jiuqu League were almost all present. Even those who had grudges with Jin Li, such as the True Monarchs from True Monarch Mountain Peak and True Monarch Profound Wind, attended the ceremony without reservation.

Besides them, countless Gold Core Daoist Masters and lords of various sects also participated. The daily affairs of the Azure Origin Sect were usually overseen by their Sect Master, Daoist Master Primordial One. This grand ceremony was no exception and was personally managed by him.

The Azure Origin Sect even sent three Primordial Spirit True Monarchs - True Monarch Azure Mist, True Monarch Azure Peak, and True Monarch Azure Gem - to show respect to Jin Li, which earned him great face.

Meng Zhang and the others from the Taiyi Sect stood together with cultivators from Great Wind City and attended the grand ceremony.

Shortly after the ceremony began, some keen-eyed cultivators noticed a significant issue. The other major force in the Jiuqu League, the Jade Sword Sect, had not sent anyone to attend the ceremony.

Not even low-ranking disciples from the Jade Sword Sect were present. Some perceptive cultivators started feeling that something was amiss.

Although the Jade Sword Sect and Azure Origin Sect occasionally had disagreements, they both understood the bottom line and had always kept their conflicts manageable. The high-level members of both sects knew the importance of maintaining unity in the Jiuqu League.

During this period, they had serious differences regarding whether to go to war with the Dali Dynasty. But what the Jade Sword Sect did now had completely disregarded the face of the Azure Origin Sect, almost tearing their relationship apart publicly.

As the ceremony continued, more and more cultivators noticed this problem. Many cultivators, who cared about the overall situation of the Jiuqu League, started feeling worried and uneasy.

While some ambitious individuals with hidden intentions found it strange, True Monarch Mountain Peak had long noticed the absence of Jade Sword Sect cultivators. When they saw their old rival, Jin Li, the True Monarch, looking somewhat gloomy, they couldn't help but reveal a smile without reservations.

The absence of Jade Sword Sect cultivators not only displeased the Azure Origin Sect cultivators but even Jin Li, the True Monarch, seemed a bit dissatisfied. The Sect Master of Azure Origin Sect, Daoist Master Primordial One, burst into hearty laughter.

"These Sword Cultivators, acting like little children, competing with us for no reason. What should I say about them?" Daoist Master Primordial One said.

"Sword Cultivators have this stubborn and unyielding temperament. When things don't go their way, they put on such a face," True Monarch Azure Mist added, wearing an expression of an exasperated adult dealing with a mischievous child.

With this interruption from the two Azure Origin Sect cultivators, the atmosphere immediately became more relaxed. The other cultivators who had been whispering to each other also wisely fell silent.

Unaffected by this aside, the higher-ups of the Azure Origin Sect proceeded with the ceremony as usual, meticulously following the Daoist traditions. Though they claimed to be adhering to their roots, in reality, they were overly concerned with formalities and rituals.

Meng Zhang didn't have a chance to interject during such occasions but quietly noted the uncertain relationship between Jade Sword Sect and Azure Origin Sect, making sure to be more vigilant.

Back when he was at the Jade Sword Sect's territory and later visited their Gold Core cultivators, despite his efforts to get acquainted and curry favor, he couldn't establish a real bond with them. However, in his impression, the Jade Sword Sect cultivators he had interacted with were not as aloof and arrogant as typical Sword Cultivators.

The Jade Sword Sect had unexpectedly made this move today, and he didn't know what they were up to.

Putting aside Meng Zhang's doubts, after going through a series of intricate procedures, the preliminary part of the grand ceremony was finally completed.

As a Daoist sect, the Azure Origin Sect paid great attention to the decorum of the Dao. Some might call it staying true to their roots, but in practice, they were overly preoccupied with formalities.

Next was the main event - True Monarch Jin Li, the newly-promoted Primordial Spirit True Monarch, showcasing their Divine Ability and conducting the Dharma meeting.

True Monarch Jin Li was not at all daunted by the situation and casually displayed their power as a Primordial Spirit True Monarch. During the Dharma meeting, although they talked in abstract and mysterious terms, their words were as eloquent as a Daoist sage, impressing everyone with their demeanor.

After True Monarch Jin Li's Dharma meeting, the grand ceremony entered its closing phase, and it was time for everyone to mingle freely.

True Monarch Azure Mist introduced Jin Li, the True Monarch, to the other Primordial Spirit True Monarchs within the Jiuqu League. Meng Zhang, along with the cultivators from Great Wind City, also made acquaintances with various other cultivators in the Jiuqu League.

The grand ceremony took half a day to conclude, and after that, until evening, numerous cultivators were inviting friends and socializing.

In the days following the ceremony, both True Monarch Jin Li and Meng Zhang were busy with social interactions. Many people, whether newly-promoted Primordial Spirit True Monarchs or formidable members of the Taiyi Sect, were interested in making connections.

However, the threshold to approach Primordial Spirit True Monarchs was very high, and not just anyone could casually approach them. As a result, Meng Zhang's place became bustling, with many visitors.

After the grand ceremony, it took over half a month for various cultivators to gradually leave Jiuqu City, and only then did Meng Zhang finally feel relieved.

During this period, he had been extremely busy, attending numerous social engagements day and night. Although he made acquaintances with many cultivators, they were merely familiar faces, and he couldn't engage in deeper conversations openly in such public settings.

After the grand ceremony, True Monarch Jin Li officially became a member of the Jiuqu League. As per tradition, all the Primordial Spirit True Monarchs within the alliance were titled Senators. True Monarch Jin Li, being a new addition, was no exception and became a Senator of the Jiuqu League.

The Jiuqu League had a dedicated Senate, the highest authority within the alliance, with supreme power and dominance over all major matters. The Sect Master of Azure Origin Sect, Daoist Master Primordial One, also served as the current leader of the Jiuqu League, appointed by the Senate.

Chapter 602: Refiner

Primordial Spirit True Monarch usually either roams around with elusive traces, wandering through the clouds, or stays in seclusion for extended periods, rarely venturing outside. In Jiuqu City, apart from the rotating Primordial Spirit True Monarch, it is rare to have more than a few Primordial Spirit True Monarchs gather when there are no major events happening.

Generally speaking, the Senate convenes only once every few decades. The Senators of the Jiuqu League rarely come together, so not every matter can be brought before the Senate for handling. Besides the leader dealing with the daily affairs of the alliance, there is also an Elder Council within the league to assist the leader in maintaining the overall operation of the Jiuqu League.

The Elder Council is an organization with some actual authority and was originally established to unite the core forces within the league. Suitable Gold Core sects and families within the Jiuqu

League can send a Gold Core Daoist Master to serve as a resident Elder in Jiuqu City after being recommended by at least one Senator. This Elder position belongs not to an individual but to a certain influence. Typically, possessing such a position requires having at least several Gold Core Daoist Masters.

Cultivation forces that rely on only 1-2 Gold Core Daoist Masters for showmanship generally do not possess these seats. The reason is simple: such cultivation forces have difficulty ensuring the continuity of Gold Core Daoist Masters' lineage. Once their Gold Core Daoist Master passes away, they may not be able to cultivate a new one in time, which would endanger the status of their Gold Core sect or family.

The minimum requirement for being an Elder in the Jiuqu League is to have a Gold Core Daoist Master's cultivation base. As for Primordial Spirit sects, they can naturally hold Elder Council seats. Some loose cultivators in the league at the Gold Core stage, if they gain the trust of the higher-ups or receive the support of a Senator, can also serve as individual Elders within the league. Although such Elders are not numerous, they play a role in balancing the various forces within the Elder Council.

Both Jin Li True Monarch's relationship and Taiyi Sect's strength qualify them to hold seats in the Elder Council. On this matter, no one poses difficulties for Taiyi Sect. After a series of complicated procedures, Taiyi Sect becomes a member of the Elder Council.

The Jiuqu League's leader, Daoist Master Primordial One, is also the Sect Master of Azure Origin Sect. He spends at least half of his time in Azure Origin Sect. The Elder Council, responsible for assisting him, handles many daily affairs within the league and holds considerable power. Of course, the power and influence of the Elders in the council are closely related to the strength of their sects, the Elders themselves, and the overall power of the sect.

The true dominators of the Elder Council are still the Gold Core Elders sent by the Primordial Spirit sects. Elders dispatched by ordinary Gold Core forces may not necessarily have significant decision-making power. However, this is still an opportunity to penetrate the upper echelons of the Jiuqu League, and Meng Zhang values it greatly.

After careful consideration, he temporarily appoints Yang Xueyi to the position of Elder in the Jiuqu League, stationed in Jiuqu City for an extended period. When he returns to the sect in the future, he will arrange for another Gold Core cultivator from the sect to take over the position.

With the increasing number of Taiyi Sect's Gold Core cultivators, sending one to reside permanently in Jiuqu City is not a burden. The Gold Core cultivator stationed here, as an Elder of the Jiuqu League, will represent Taiyi Sect's interests and work to secure advantages for the sect.

As for gathering information and making friends, it is all part of the job.

After the grand ceremony, Meng Zhang stayed in Jiuqu City for over a month, making various arrangements before preparing to leave. The establishment of a base in Jiuqu City and the development of commercial activities were entrusted to resident cultivators, with Yang Xueyi providing full assistance.

Following the ceremony, Jin Li True Monarch was invited by True Monarch Azure Mist to Azure Origin Sect as a guest, so she temporarily delayed her return. She instructed Jin Qiao'er to accompany Meng Zhang and the others back to the Endless Sea of Sand.

On their return journey, Taiyi Sect's flying vessel followed behind the two Cloud Boats from Great Wind City, embarking on their way home together. The journey was smooth and uneventful, and they eventually reached Great Wind City.

The Taiyi Sect members did not linger there and returned directly to Hundred Grass Slope. Upon their return, a massive surprise awaited Meng Zhang. Shocking Thunder Spirit General had previously taken the Thunder Pill refined by Jin Li True Monarch from Meng Zhang. After a period of seclusion, he completely absorbed and refined it, finally restoring his Cultivation Base to the Gold Core stage.

Now, Taiyi Sect had not only added an ordinary Gold Core cultivator but also regained a talented cultivator who was once renowned within the sect before becoming a Guardian Spirit General. After years of serving as a Guardian Spirit General, although his Cultivation Base hadn't made significant progress, his combat experience and other skills had significantly improved.

Shocking Thunder Spirit General excelled in the art of refining tools, especially his unique technique, the Thunderfire Hundred Refinements, which was distinct and highly effective. With the restoration of his Gold Core stage Cultivation Base, he had also regained his previous Third Rank tool refiner level, able to perform many refining techniques he couldn't use before.

As long as there were enough materials, Taiyi Sect would no longer lack in Third Rank magic tools in the future. Additionally, Shocking Thunder Spirit General possessed a considerable number of magic tool designs and could craft entirely new magic tools besides repairing damaged ones.

Meng Zhang's damaged Spiritsnake Spear had always been considered a hidden killer. It had demonstrated its remarkable efficacy in many battles. However, the damage to the magic tool was too severe, and even after Shocking Thunder Spirit General's repair, it still couldn't fully exert its power and couldn't be used frequently.

Now that Shocking Thunder Spirit General had restored his Third Rank tool refiner abilities, he naturally had the capability to further repair the Spiritsnake Spear. Furthermore, besides the Sun Moon Treasure Pearl he refined himself, Meng Zhang was not entirely satisfied with his other Third Rank magic tools. As he advanced into the Gold Core late stage, he felt these magic tools were not unleashing their full potential in combat.

Having someone as skilled as Shocking Thunder Spirit General as a Third Rank tool refiner, Meng Zhang decided to entrust him with the task of refining protective magic tools for the Sect Master. Taiyi Sect had many Gold Core cultivators, but their sources of magic tools varied, and not all of them were a perfect fit for their respective cultivation techniques.

Delicate Water Spirit General was proficient in the water refining method and could only refine certain special magic tools. Moreover, she was rather lazy and would not proactively refine tools unless someone with whom she had an excellent relationship requested it. In her free time, she preferred using water refining techniques to refine elixirs.

The mainstream method of refining magic tools in the Cultivation World was fire refining. Shocking Thunder Spirit General's Thunderfire Hundred Refinements technique was a variation and enhancement of fire refining. Although he was a bit arrogant, he wasn't as aloof as Delicate Water Spirit General and got along reasonably well with the other Gold Core cultivators in the sect.

It's easy to imagine that Shocking Thunder Spirit General would be quite busy in the future. The refining tasks entrusted to him by various Gold Core Daoist Masters from the sect would keep him quite occupied. With Taiyi Sect gaining the ability to refine Third Rank magic tools, not only could they reserve many spiritual materials for personal use, but they would also intensify efforts to gather more materials for Shocking Thunder Spirit General to use in his refining endeavors.

Chapter 603: Mother - Child Transmission Disc

After the joy of Shocking Thunder Spirit General's successful recovery of the Gold Core cultivation base did not last long, he was made anxious by a series of refining tasks arranged by Sect Master Meng Zhang.

Although Shocking Thunder Spirit General has always been proud and occasionally shows an air of seniority, he still unconditionally obeys the orders issued by Sect Master.

As Taiyi Sect continues to grow, the number of Gold Core cultivators in the sect increases. The origins of several Guardian Spirit Generals are not deliberately kept secret by Meng Zhang, and many high-ranking members of the sect have some knowledge of it. They show great respect to these senior members who have experienced Taiyi Sect's history.

Delicate WaterSpirit General is excessively arrogant, and there are not many people in the sect who can gain her favor.

Extreme Sword Spirit General prefers to be alone and his whereabouts are mysterious. Even Sect Master Meng Zhang sometimes cannot find him.

In comparison, Shocking ThunderSpirit General is not as amiable as Deep EarthSpirit General, but he is not particularly difficult to get along with. He has gradually gathered some like-minded fellow disciples around him.

In the past, when he was in a good mood, Shocking ThunderSpirit General used to refine or repair magic tools for his fellow disciples. Now, more refining tasks fall on his shoulders, but they don't cause too much trouble for him.

After handling the matters of Shocking ThunderSpirit General, Meng Zhang sent someone to invite Extreme Sword Spirit General.

This time, Meng Zhang was lucky; Extreme Sword Spirit General had returned from outside not long ago. Since the peace was restored around Taiyi Sect, Extreme Sword Spirit General had not spent many days within the sect. Most of his time was spent wandering outside.

When asked by Meng Zhang, he simply said he was traveling outside.

Although the four Guardian Spirit Generals all hold the title of elders, not everyone is assigned specific duties. Generals like Delicate WaterSpirit General and Extreme Sword Spirit General are not willing to take up positions within the sect. However, Taiyi Sect currently has sufficient manpower, and they are not essential. Meng Zhang respects their wishes and allows them to wander outside.

Moreover, due to the sect's benevolent merit system, if they want to obtain benefits from the sect, they must also contribute to the sect.

In fact, all four Guardian Spirit Generals have made significant contributions to Taiyi Sect and have accumulated considerable merit.

Extreme Sword Spirit General, for example, occasionally guides the sect's cultivators, including Gold Core cultivators, and earns a large amount of merit in return.

Upon hearing Sect Master Meng Zhang's summons, Extreme Sword Spirit General quickly appeared before him. Before Meng Zhang could speak, Extreme Sword Spirit General's face was full of unconcealable joy as he presented three worn-out plates like precious treasures.

The three plates consisted of one large and three small ones, with the large one being the size of a washbasin and the small one being the size of a rice bowl. From their appearance, it seemed that the three plates originated from the same source.

The plates were covered in rust and showed signs of damage, with several large and small gaps on their surfaces.

Seeing Meng Zhang's slightly puzzled expression, Extreme Sword Spirit General enthusiastically started to explain without waiting for him to ask.

Don't judge these three plates by their appearance, they may look shabby and unremarkable, but their origin is extraordinary. These three plates are a set, precisely the legendary Mother - Child Transmission Disc in the Cultivation World.

Speaking of the Mother - Child Transmission Disc, one must first mention long-distance Transmission Formations. Although Meng Zhang has never seen one, he has heard of them for a long time.

Short-distance teleportation is not uncommon in the Cultivation World, as there are many methods to achieve it. However, long-distance teleportation has always been a major challenge.

In the Middle-Earth Continent, where the cultivation civilization is highly advanced, many powerful sects possess long-distance Transmission Formations. As the name suggests, these formations can transport individuals across vast distances, achieving instantaneous movement even if the two locations are thousands of miles apart.

For example, Taiyi Sect's territory is vast, stretching from the Endless Sea of Sand to the Demon Wind Gobi, covering thousands of miles. To control such a vast territory, Taiyi Sect established numerous strongholds as the backbone and connected them using flying boats.

If the territory continues to expand, the cost of maintaining control will increase. Jiuqu League, for instance, faces difficulty in controlling the peripheral areas due to its vast territory.

The extent of a sect's effective control over territory depends on communication and transportation. Common communication methods in the Cultivation World, such as talismans and flying swords, have limitations in distance and speed. The same restrictions apply to commonly used means of transportation, such as flying boats and flying mounts.

Having a long-distance Transmission Formation can resolve all these issues. For a sect, possessing such a formation holds significant strategic importance, as it can expand the controllable territory many times over.

However, the sects in the Middle-Earth Continent that can refine long-distance Transmission Formations strictly control their usage and rarely allow them to be leaked to the outside world. Self-refining also presents numerous challenges that are difficult to overcome.

Firstly, the relevant knowledge required to refine long-distance Transmission Formations is strictly kept secret by those major cultivation sects, and it is not disclosed to outsiders.

Secondly, the process requires many precious materials. Among them, the most crucial and irreplaceable material is the "Boundary-Destroying Dust." This substance can only be obtained when a world is about to be destroyed, an exceedingly rare occurrence.

World destruction is an extremely rare event that even a Grand Dust World cultivator with immense power and lifespan may not encounter.

The alternative approach is to search for small worlds on the verge of destruction. In such cases, there is a high possibility of acquiring Boundary-Destroying Dust, such as those left behind by sects like the Purple Gold Sect.

Small worlds are incredibly valuable, and any sect possessing one treats it as a treasure, protecting it from destruction at all costs.

The collection of Boundary-Destroying Dust from such a world is challenging and requires the abilities of an extraordinary Primordial Spirit True Monarch. The scarcity of this material makes mass production of long-distance Transmission Formations nearly impossible.

Lastly, every use of the long-distance Transmission Formation consumes a large quantity of high-grade spirit stones and varying amounts of Void Nether Stones, depending on the distance of the transmission.

Void Nether Stone is a core material required to refine space-type magic tools. The common storage bags used by cultivators, for instance, are crafted from fragments of Void Nether Stone.

Void Nether Stone is also extremely precious, and there is no large-scale production of it near Jiuqu League.

Due to the scarcity of Void Nether Stone, space-type magic tools produced in Jiuqu League are expensive and of average quality.

Meng Zhang's Hundred Grass Pavilion, acquired from the Layered Mystery Sect, is a rare item in Jiuqu League, and few Primordial Spirit powers can produce similar items.

Because of these difficulties, long-distance Transmission Formations are rarely seen in Jiuqu League, Yuanzu Great Prairie, Crossing Severing Mountain Range, and even Dali Dynasty.

Occasionally, a few finished long-distance Transmission Formations have made their way from the Middle-Earth Continent, but they are regarded as treasures and kept secret by major powers.

The Mother - Child Transmission Disc presented by Extreme Sword Spirit General is a specially engraved array plate containing the long-distance Transmission Formation.

604: Patching

Of course, discs like the Mother-Child Transmission Disc have distinct differences in the effectiveness of the recorded transmission formations, depending on their level. Some lower-tier Mother-Child Transmission Discs can only transmit over short distances and are of limited value.

However, with Extreme Sword Spirit General's profound understanding, he couldn't hide his delight upon seeing this set of Mother-Child Transmission Discs, indicating that it is far from ordinary. And indeed, his following words confirmed Meng Zhang's conjecture.

Inside this set of Mother-Child Transmission Discs is a complete long-distance transmission formation capable of transmitting over a million miles. The only flaw is that the discs are severely damaged, affecting their practical functionality, making them difficult to use properly.

Of course, if this set of Mother-Child Transmission Discs were intact, it probably wouldn't have fallen into the hands of Extreme Sword Spirit General. He did not elaborate on how he acquired them, but his terrified expression suggested that it wasn't an easy task.

Meng Zhang himself lacks the ability to repair the Mother-Child Transmission Discs and lacks relevant knowledge about long-distance transmission formations. However, since Extreme Sword Spirit General presented them, he must have a way to restore them.

Extreme Sword Spirit General explained that while he is a pure Sword Cultivator and not well-versed in formations, during Taiyi Sect's heyday, they had the capability to craft powerful long-distance Transmission Formations. Being a carefully cultivated seed cultivator of the sect, he possessed the necessary knowledge.

Even though the current Taiyi Sect has lost the resources for crafting long-distance Transmission Formations after the Grand Crossing Mountain Range's reconstruction, they still inherited the relevant knowledge. The activation of long-distance Transmission Formations often requires the utilization of the Earth's veins' power.

Deep EarthSpirit General not only inherited this knowledge but also held a significant advantage in crafting and using long-distance Transmission Formations due to being a Geomancer.

Though the Mother-Child Transmission Discs are severely damaged, the main structure remains intact, and the core materials are undamaged. With the current formation masters like Wen Qiansun, Geomancer Deep EarthSpirit General, and Shocking ThunderSpirit General, along with Delicate WaterSpirit General, who can craft Third Rank magic tools, Taiyi Sect can easily repair the Mother-Child Transmission Discs at a price.

Once the repair is complete, the main disc will be placed at the Taiyi Sect's mountain gate, Hundred Grass Slope, while the sub-disc will be taken away from the sect. Even if they travel a million miles away, as long as the sub-disc is set up and its formation is activated, they can instantly teleport back to Hundred Grass Slope.

Similarly, if someone activates the main disc at the mountain gate, they can be sent to the location where the sub-disc is placed.

With this set of Mother-Child Transmission Discs, Taiyi Sect can span over a million miles, freely mobilize their forces, which will be of tremendous significance.

The Mother-Child Transmission Discs are so crucial that Meng Zhang hesitates to place the sub-disc in Taiyi Sect's current territory.

When Extreme Sword Spirit General presented the Mother-Child Transmission Discs, Meng Zhang had a rough idea in mind. After a conversation with Extreme Sword Spirit General, this idea became even clearer.

The best way to utilize the Mother-Child Transmission Discs is to establish branch bases. Taiyi Sect's influence around its vicinity is relatively fixed and challenging to expand further. However, beyond Taiyi Sect's borders, there must be suitable locations in the vast Cultivation World for Taiyi Sect's expansion.

By using the advantages of the Mother-Child Transmission Discs, Taiyi Sect can flexibly and effectively mobilize their forces without weakening the mountain gate's power.

Expanding Taiyi Sect's influence and acquiring more resources, as well as creating an escape route for the sect, can be achieved by establishing branch bases in distant locations. If the mountain gate faces any changes and Demon Wind Gobi cannot be defended, Taiyi Sect can promptly relocate.

However, to realize Meng Zhang's plans, the first step is to repair the Mother-Child Transmission Discs. Meng Zhang first presented the precious artifact, the Gold-Inlaid Jade, to Extreme Sword Spirit General. Ignoring his delighted expression, Meng Zhang instructed him to gather relevant cultivators.

When Wen Qiansun, Deep EarthSpirit General, and other cultivators arrived, Meng Zhang placed the Mother-Child Transmission Discs before them. After careful inspection, Deep EarthSpirit General confirmed that they could be repaired, but it would require substantial resources.

Regardless of the cost, even if it required the entire sect's efforts, the Mother-Child Transmission Discs must be repaired. Meng Zhang firmly entrusted this task to Deep EarthSpirit General, who would oversee the matter and coordinate everything, utilizing all available cultivators and resources in the sect.

Moreover, using long-distance Transmission Formations for transportation would also require the consumption of high-grade spiritual stones and Void Nether Stones. High-grade spiritual stones were relatively common, but Void Nether Stones were rare. Meng Zhang had already issued orders for the sect to concentrate its efforts on collecting a reserve of Void Nether Stones.

After briefing everyone, Meng Zhang allowed them to step back. His cultivation base was of the utmost importance, and Extreme Sword Spirit General went into seclusion immediately with the Gold-Inlaid Jade to refine it.

Deep Earth Spirit General began mobilizing resources and devoted all efforts to repairing the Mother-Child Transmission Discs. The entire sect was set in motion, with each person fulfilling their assigned tasks and immersed in their busy work.

Meng Zhang, however, ensured he had sufficient time for cultivation to prevent any delays in his own cultivation base. At this point, he needed to start considering how to break through the Primordial Spirit stage. He knew the preparations needed to be done in advance.

From the inheritances he gained in the Trial Ground, there was no content on breaking through the Primordial Spirit stage. His main cultivation technique, the "Sun-Moon Wheel Turning Sutra," only reached the Gold Core stage. Although he later acquired some inheritances from the Purple Gold Sect and Layered Mystery Sect, containing information on breaking through the Primordial Spirit stage, they were merely references.

After all, Meng Zhang's cultivation was based on Taiyi Sect's heritage, not those of the other sects. He sought advice from several Guardian Spirit Generals, the oldest and most experienced, but their assistance regarding breaking through the Primordial Spirit stage was limited.

None of the four Guardian Spirit Generals had experienced breaking through the Primordial Spirit stage themselves. Although they might have seen fragmentary records in the sect's scriptures, there was no complete inheritance.

Extreme Sword Spirit General, who had reached the Gold Core stage during Taiyi Sect's prime and was nurtured as a seed disciple, had some understanding of breaking through the Primordial Spirit stage. He specifically warned Meng Zhang that when he attempted to break through, he must use Taiyi Sect's heritage and absolutely not turn to other sects' techniques.

Meng Zhang took his advice seriously, but at the same time, it closed off the possibility of him exploring other cultivation methods. Currently, all of Taiyi Sect's inheritance techniques, including those obtained from the Trial Ground and the ones left by the four Guardian Spirit Generals, only

reached the Gold Core stage and did not contain information on breaking through to the Primordial Spirit stage.

Chapter 605: It is not smooth

The Taiyi Sect currently possesses some cultivation techniques that can lead one all the way to the Primordial Spirit stage. These techniques include the heritage of Purple Gold Sect, Layered Mystery Sect, and others, but they are not authentic Taiyi Sect inheritances; they were obtained from elsewhere.

The Extreme Sword Spirit General coincidentally obtained the Sword Cultivator technique in the past, which is highly refined and capable of being cultivated up to the Primordial Spirit stage. However, like the others, it is not part of the Taiyi Sect's heritage; it has a different origin.

In fact, within the Cultivation World, disciples of various sects may not necessarily consider their sect's heritage technique as their main cultivation practice due to reasons such as personal constitution or special opportunities. For many sects, these heritage techniques may not be regarded as extraordinary.

When Meng Zhang first entered the sect, he cultivated the Lesser Yang Qi Art, which is a common and widespread technique available in many places, not exclusive to Taiyi Sect. It was only after he entered the Trial Ground and obtained the more profound "Sun-Moon Wheel Turning Sutra" that he switched his cultivation focus.

During his exchange with the Extreme Sword Spirit General, the latter informed Meng Zhang that the "Sun-Moon Wheel Turning Sutra" is a genuine Taiyi Sect heritage technique and one of its core inheritances. Since Meng Zhang chose the "Sun-Moon Wheel Turning Sutra" as his primary cultivation technique, he must not easily give up on it or switch to other techniques.

Though the Extreme Sword Spirit General's words were not explicit, from the fragments of information he revealed, it is evident that the Taiyi Sect attached great importance to the direct lineage inheritance during its prime.

If Meng Zhang can cultivate the "Sun-Moon Wheel Turning Sutra" to the Primordial Spirit stage, it would bring immense benefits. Not only is the technique highly refined, but it also perfectly fits his constitution. It is unlikely that he could find a more suitable technique even if he searched the surroundings of the Jiuqu League.

However, after reaching the Gold Core stage in his cultivation, Meng Zhang faced a significant problem. The "Sun-Moon Wheel Turning Sutra" he obtained from the Trial Ground only covers the

part from the Refining Qi stage to the Gold Core stage. He has no clue on how to use this technique to break through to the Primordial Spirit stage.

Even the four Guardian Spirit Generals of the Taiyi Sect are powerless to help him with this issue. Meng Zhang has read numerous scriptures, including the core inheritances of other sects, such as the Layered Mystery Sect's "Fusang Sutra," which is an excellent technique that can be cultivated all the way to the Primordial Spirit stage. Although referencing these techniques has benefited Meng Zhang and granted him many insights, even with his talent, he lacks the ability to bridge the gap and fill in the missing parts of the "Sun-Moon Wheel Turning Sutra" on his own.

Seeing that this path is not viable, Meng Zhang, as a Diviner, chose an auspicious day and performed the Grand Evolving Fortune to conduct a calculation. The result was beyond his expectations, indicating that his opportunity has not yet arrived, and he needs to wait patiently. As for further information, it was beyond the scope of his calculation.

Unable to do much about it, Meng Zhang could only temporarily set this matter aside. Fortunately, the content of the "Sun-Moon Wheel Turning Sutra" for the Gold Core stage is still relatively complete, which does not hinder Meng Zhang's cultivation progress.

Meng Zhang needs a considerable amount of time to complete the Gold Core stage cultivation.

Leaving aside other matters, cultivators at the Gold Core stage require the absorption and refinement of the Nine Heavens Refined Essence. Without the help of senior sect members, it is quite a significant challenge to efficiently obtain the Nine Heavens Refined Essence.

During Meng Zhang's first journey to the Nine Heavens, he could shamelessly seek assistance from Jin Li True Monarch. However, it would not be feasible to accompany Jin Li True Monarch every time he goes to the Nine Heavens. Even if he were willing to do so, Jin Li True Monarch might not wish to burden himself with Meng Zhang.

In addition to cultivating his primary technique, Meng Zhang also needs to spend time gradually honing various Divine Abilities to enhance his combat power. Throughout his journey, Meng Zhang has experienced multiple perilous battles and never slackened in his efforts to improve his combat strength.

Upon his return to the Taiyi Sect from Jiuqu City, the entire sect began to get busy again.

Subsequently, Meng Zhang went to the Nine Heavens twice more in an attempt to obtain the Nine Heavens Refined Essence. His Spiritual Awareness, as a Diviner, helped him avoid many dangers, but there were still risks he couldn't completely avoid.

In two instances, he found himself besieged by a group of cloud beasts at the Gold Core stage, and it took considerable effort to break free. The most dangerous encounter involved a cloud beast at the Primordial Spirit stage that he stumbled upon along the way. Surprisingly, his Diviner's Spiritual Awareness failed to alert him in advance. Fortunately, he managed to retreat in time, and the pursuing cloud beast eventually gave up the chase.

This near-death experience taught Meng Zhang a crucial lesson – his Spiritual Awareness as a Diviner is not infallible, and it does not always warn him of impending dangers. There are exceptions, and many crises might not trigger his Spiritual Awareness.

While his Spiritual Awareness can provide some guidance during the search for the Nine Heavens Refined Essence, its role is limited, and it cannot guarantee a foolproof journey with abundant rewards every time. At most, it increases the likelihood of discovering the target compared to others.

Meng Zhang's two trips to the Nine Heavens yielded only a modest harvest, with insufficient Nine Heavens Refined Essence for his cultivation needs. He felt dissatisfied but lacked better solutions.

The Nine Heavens is fraught with dangers, and even with his current Cultivation Base, every step he takes there is like walking on thin ice, requiring utmost caution. Meng Zhang is not aware that his performance is already remarkable, as it is uncommon for many cultivators at the Gold Core stage to venture into the Nine Heavens without facing hardships or gaining minimal rewards. The fact that he can safely venture in and gain something is an achievement not easily attained even by experienced Gold Core cultivators.

The shortage of Nine Heavens Refined Essence has impeded Meng Zhang's cultivation progress. Relying solely on absorbing the natural spiritual energy is insufficient to complete the Gold Core stage cultivation.

In this situation, Meng Zhang decided to allocate more time to practice various Divine Abilities. While his cultivation progress wasn't smooth, the Extreme Sword Spirit General's cultivation progressed smoothly without any setbacks.

The spiritual treasure, Jin Zhongyu, brought back by Meng Zhang, was easily refined and absorbed by the Extreme Sword Spirit General, leading to an unsurprising recovery of his Gold Core stage Cultivation Base.

This development added another Gold Core stage combat power to the Taiyi Sect. Moreover, it wasn't a newly breakthrough cultivator at the Gold Core stage, but an experienced, battle-hardened veteran.

Chapter 606: Purchase

The Cultivation Base of Extreme Sword Spirit General had already recovered significantly, only one step away from restoring to the Gold Core stage of Cultivation Base. This time, after refining the spirit object "Golden Jade," it can be considered as making up for the final deficiency.

Having just restored to the Gold Core stage of Cultivation Base, Extreme Sword Spirit General should theoretically only be equivalent to an early-stage Gold Core cultivator. However, when faced with him, Meng Zhang noticed a restrained sharpness emanating from his body, hidden but not revealed, making his Spiritual Awareness feel a sense of great danger.

Meng Zhang vaguely felt that what he was facing was not a living cultivator but a sharp sword. Even though Meng Zhang himself was a cultivator at the late-stage of Gold Core, once he engaged with Extreme Sword Spirit General, there would be a possibility of losing his life.

In reality, the four Guardian Spirit Generals' current Cultivation Base realm was similar to that of an early-stage Gold Core cultivator. However, in terms of combat power, even a mid-stage Gold Core cultivator might not necessarily be their match.

Crossing realms to challenge opponents, a rare occurrence in the Cultivation World, came naturally to them. Guardian Spirit Generals were originally a war tool specially invented by the Taiyi Sect during its heyday. War tools were created for battle.

Though they were once outstanding disciples of the Taiyi Sect, after being refined into Guardian Spirit Generals, they fundamentally became something other than living beings.

During its prime, the Taiyi Sect possessed many dao soldiers, but regardless of that, Guardian Spirit Generals were among the best. For the majority of cultivators, having formidable combat strength was only a means of protecting their path. However, for Guardian Spirit Generals, fighting for the sect was the true purpose of their existence.

Of course, possessing such immense combat strength came with a cost. The upper limit of Guardian Spirit General's strength had been firmly fixed, making it practically impossible for them to break through to the Primordial Spirit stage of Cultivation Base. Even during the Gold Core stage, progress in Cultivation Base was extremely slow. Despite expending numerous resources and investing a great deal of time, their Cultivation Base progress remained limited.

The four Guardian Spirit Generals were all highly skilled at the late-stage of Gold Core before their deaths. However, after becoming Guardian Spirit Generals, their Cultivation Base fell to the early stage of Gold Core, and it became difficult for them to make further progress in their Cultivation Base.

Under such circumstances, they no longer devoted their primary time to cultivation but instead pursued other skills. Deep Earth Spirit General became a Geomancer, Shocking Thunder Spirit General became a tool refiner, and so on.

Their initial choices indeed benefited the present Taiyi Sect. In Meng Zhang's eyes, the combat power of the four Guardian Spirit Generals was replaceable, but their secondary professions and expertise in the myriad arts were of the utmost value to the entire sect.

Cultivating a third-rank secondary profession, such as a third-rank tool refiner or third-rank alchemist, was much more challenging than cultivating a Gold Core Daoist Master.

Even to this day, Taiyi Sect still lacked sufficient talent in secondary professions.

After Extreme Sword Spirit General restored to the Gold Core stage of Cultivation Base, he changed his previous behavior and spent most of his time inside the sect. On one hand, he guided the younger disciples' cultivation, and all Gold Core cultivators in the sect, including Sect Master Meng Zhang, sought his advice. On the other hand, he assisted Deep Earth Spirit General and others in repairing the Mother-Child Transmission Disc.

Though not a professional Formation Master, Extreme Sword Spirit General had a keen eye and relevant knowledge, which allowed him to be of great help.

The Mother-Child Transmission Disc, in essence, was a set of magic tools but a very special one.

Shocking Thunder Spirit General, a Third Rank tool refiner, spent a lot of time and basically completed the repair of the Spirit Snake Spear. After that, he temporarily put aside all his refining tasks to help Deep Earth Spirit General repair the Mother - Child Transmission Disc. Even the usually unruly Delicate Water Spirit General, at the request of Extreme Sword Spirit General,

displayed her unique water refining skills to assist in repairing the damaged parts of the Mother - Child Transmission Disc.

The core part of the Mother - Child Transmission Disc was mostly intact, and the precious material, "Boundary Breaking Dust," was not lost. When the entire Taiyi Sect mobilized to collect auxiliary materials, it was not too difficult. With everyone's full effort, the progress of the repairs became increasingly faster.

Meng Zhang could not directly help with this matter, so he could only provide logistical support as much as possible. The Spiritsnake Spear, a Third Rank top-grade spiritual weapon, had extremely powerful killing potential when in perfect condition. A cultivator at the Gold Corelate stage wielding the Spiritsnake Spear could almost sweep through opponents at the Gold Core stage.

Shocking ThunderSpirit General's craftsmanship was excellent, and he spared no effort in investing materials. The Spiritsnake Spear was nearly fully repaired, and even with some flaws, it did not hinder Meng Zhang from using it.

Meng Zhang put away the lethal weapon and carefully nurtured it with True Essence to ensure that it could fully unleash its killing power. With the intact Spiritsnake Spear in hand, Meng Zhang gained an impressive trump card.

The repair of the Mother - Child Transmission Disc went very smoothly, but the task of collecting Void Nether Stone was challenging. The Jiuqu League's vicinity did not have a significant production of Void Nether Stone. Any small amounts that were produced were quickly swept away by numerous factions. Previously, the Jiuqu League obtained most of its Void Nether Stone from external purchases. However, since the rise of the Dali Dynasty to the south of the Jiuqu League, their trade routes to the south were almost entirely severed.

In the past, the Three Sects Alliance and the Jiuqu League maintained close commercial exchanges through the Crossing Severing Mountain Range to the south. However, after the Dali Dynasty started attacking the Three Sects Alliance, this trade route was greatly affected and could hardly maintain normal operations. The Three Sects Alliance was facing a life-or-death crisis against the powerful Dali Dynasty and had no time to attend to commercial affairs.

The external business environment of the Jiuqu League deteriorated, leading to a decrease in the acquisition of Void Nether Stone, even though there were many places where it was needed. Suddenly, the prices of Void Nether Stone skyrocketed on the market, and they became scarce goods.

As a consequence, the prices of storage magic tools in the Jiuqu League market also soared. Although Meng Zhang ordered the sect to purchase a large quantity of Void Nether Stone regardless of the cost, the sect spent a significant amount of spiritual stones, but the harvest was meager. The small amount of scrap materials acquired through the purchases were practically useless.

The farther the long-distance teleportation Formation sent individuals, the greater the consumption of Void Nether Stone. Not only was there a quantity requirement for Void Nether Stone, but the quality also had strict demands.

Before, Meng Zhang had only issued orders to the sect without paying attention to the specific details. It was only after learning of the difficulty in collecting Void Nether Stone through the sect's reports that he paid attention to the market situation. Complete Void Nether Stones were not available for sale on the market, and even magic tools that required the use of Void Nether Stone for refinement had seen their prices skyrocket. Even the basic storage bags commonly used by low-level cultivators had doubled in price.

The higher the rank of the space-type magic tool, the more exorbitantly its price had risen. Without enough Void Nether Stone, even after completing the repair of the Mother - Child Transmission Disc, it would remain nothing more than an ornament and could not fulfill its crucial role.

Chapter 607: South

Currently, the commercial channels of the Taiyi Sect have penetrated deep into the Jiuqu League, covering most of its regions. Even within the headquarters of the Jiuqu League, Jiuqu City, under the efforts of the Elder Yang Xueyi, they have managed to open up a new situation.

However, despite these efforts, the Taiyi Sect has still struggled to gather the required Void Nether Stone. Meng Zhang sought help from the Gu Yue Family, and though they sincerely offered assistance, the supply of Void Nether Stone remained scarce. In fact, the Gu Yue Family itself requires a substantial amount of Void Nether Stone for regularly refining a batch of spatial magic tools. Giving even a small portion to the Taiyi Sect was considered a face-saving gesture for Meng Zhang.

As the repair progress of the Mother-Child Transmission Disc is rapidly advancing and almost complete, there is still a sense of urgency for Meng Zhang, as they haven't collected enough Void Nether Stone.

At this moment, an old and long-lost friend visits the Taiyi Sect's mountain gate, the Hundred Grass Slope, to pay a visit to Meng Zhang. This old friend is none other than Jue Ying Daoist Master, who has been a close friend of Meng Zhang for many years.

Despite being busy with various matters, their friendship has not faded over the years. Meng Zhang always feels indebted to both Luo Ye Daoist Master and Jue Ying Daoist Master, their two master-disciple friends. Jue Ying Daoist Master's visit is not just for catching up but also to help resolve Meng Zhang's troubles.

It turns out that Meng Zhang ordered the full collection of Void Nether Stone in the sect, which unavoidably involved using the Secret Hall's intelligence channels. The person in charge of the Secret Hall, An Moran, did his best but couldn't provide much help. Therefore, he took the initiative to contact Jue Ying Daoist Master from the Dark Alliance.

Back when Jue Ying Daoist Master was in the Taiyi Sect, he helped establish the Secret Hall and provided valuable training and experiences to An Moran. Their similar personalities and temperaments led to a master-friend relationship during their time together.

They exchanged contact information and occasionally kept in touch with each other.

This time, with no better solutions, An Moran had to seek help from Jue Ying Daoist Master. The influence of the Dark Alliance spread throughout the entire Grand Dust World, with branches everywhere. The black market not only serves as the external face of the Dark Alliance but also acts as a crucial channel for the alliance's interactions and trades with the outside world.

Various forces in the Cultivation World often find a need for the black market, as it offers many advantages. Meng Zhang, having grown up in the Endless Sea of Sand, could never be separated from the presence of the black market in that region of the Cultivation World.

Even now, with the Endless Sea of Sand changing rulers, the previous rulers, Flying Swan Sect, being replaced, the black market's existence has not been greatly affected. Business continues as usual, but now they need to communicate with the new rulers.

Taiyi Sect occupies a vast area in the Demon Wind Gobi and is engaged in large-scale development. Consequently, a black market has quickly emerged in their new territories.

Knowing the background of the black market, Meng Zhang tolerates its existence as long as the rules of the Taiyi Sect are adhered to. This approach reflects a pragmatic attitude of turning a blind eye to the black market's existence. Despite any past conflicts between Meng Zhang and the black market in the Endless Sea of Sand, the black market remains unaffected within the territories of Taiyi Sect in the Endless Sea of Sand.

Until later, the Taiyi Sect continued to grow and expand its influence. The upper echelons of the Dark Alliance made a decision to adjust their operations in the Endless Sea of Sand and Demon Wind Gobi regions. Regardless of whether it was in the Demon Wind Gobi or the Endless Sea of Sand, any black market organization existing within the territories of the Taiyi Sect and the Hanhai Alliance was separated and became an independent entity, with a certain degree of disconnection from the original black market organizations in the Endless Sea of Sand.

Due to the friendship between Meng Zhang and Luo Ye Daoist Master and Jue Ying Daoist Master, Meng Zhang was always well-informed about the black market. This move by the Dark Alliance effectively elevated the status of the Taiyi Sect to that of the former Flying Swan Sect. In the future, the interactions between the black market and Taiyi Sect would require a new approach.

After this change, any discord between Meng Zhang and the black market naturally disappeared and became insignificant. The newly integrated black market organizations within the Taiyi Sect's territories obediently adhered to the rules of Taiyi Sect, regularly paying protection fees, and actively operating in the underground markets of Taiyi Sect.

The relationship between Taiyi Sect and the black market became harmonious, and Luo Ye Daoist Master and Jue Ying Daoist Master could openly lean towards the Taiyi Sect. Previously, when they helped Meng Zhang, it was done through their personal connections. Now, they could fully leverage the power of the black market to assist the Taiyi Sect, albeit with a certain price to be paid by the sect.

Upon receiving An Moran's plea for help, Jue Ying Daoist Master mobilized her forces and used the channels of the black market to gather Void Nether Stone. Both Jue Ying Daoist Master and Meng Zhang were Gold Core Daoist Masters, and their young ages indicated promising futures. Their positions within the Dark Alliance gradually elevated, and ordinary members of the alliance were reluctant to provoke them without cause.

The Dark Alliance's influence was vast, and the black market was practically ubiquitous. It existed in various places, including the Crossing Severing Mountain Range to the south, within the Dali Dynasty, and even further south within the Middle-Earth Continent. There were even rumors within the Dark Alliance that the black market existed even in the territories of Holy Land Sects.

As the Jiuqu League lacked Void Nether Stone, they sought help from the south. After Jue Ying Daoist Master activated the Dark Alliance's forces, they quickly received a response. A black market branch in the south offered to sell a portion of the Void Nether Stone to the Taiyi Sect at a fair price, but the sect needed to do a favor in return.

Upon meeting Meng Zhang, Jue Ying Daoist Master didn't bother with pleasantries and quickly explained the situation. Before Meng Zhang could ask, she directly stated what the Taiyi Sect needed to do to obtain the batch of Void Nether Stone.

In the Yuantu Great Prairie, there used to be a flourishing situation with numerous cultivation forces and cultivators of various sizes. However, the extraterritorial Barbarian Clan launched a sudden and fierce attack, catching the local cultivation forces and the black market off guard. Many cultivation forces were wiped out under the onslaught of the Barbarian Clan, and the Barbarian Clan occupied a large portion of the Yuantu Great Prairie.

During the fall of many cultivation force's mountain gates, the black market branches in the Yuantu Great Prairie also suffered heavy losses and lost many crucial strongholds. One of these strongholds was the location of the black market's treasury. The attack happened too quickly, and the cultivators from the black market had no time to transfer the items from the treasury. Before the stronghold fell, they could only use secret techniques to hide the treasury, preventing it from being discovered by the Barbarian Clan's army.

Chapter 608: Terms of Exchange

In the world of Cultivation, the conflicts between various cultivation forces generally do not involve the black market. Especially the leaders of those major forces, to some extent, are aware of the background of the black market. Out of concerns for the powerful Dark Alliance, they consciously avoid bringing the battles to the black market. Over the years, this has almost become an unwritten rule within the Cultivation World.

For example, in the Endless Sea of Sand region, despite experiencing numerous major battles, the black market has not suffered significant losses. The people in the black market stay away from the battleground and remain unaffected.

However, the Barbarian Clan, being extraterritorial invaders, are unfamiliar with the forces of the black market and do not pay attention to these unwritten rules. In the eyes of the Barbarian Clan invaders, all cultivation forces are treated equally, and they must all be dealt a destructive blow.

One might think that with the considerable resources of the black market, losing some strongholds or a treasure repository should not be a big deal. But unfortunately, this particular treasure repository holds an item of special importance to certain individuals within the Dark Alliance leadership.

After the loss of that stronghold, the black market organized manpower to try and reclaim it, retrieving the treasure from the Barbarian Clan's grasp. However, the strength of the Barbarian

Clan's army was too overwhelming, and the cultivation forces in Yuan Tu Great Prairie were utterly defeated, unable to provide any assistance. Relying solely on the black market's strength led to a disastrous attempt, almost resulting in the complete annihilation of their forces.

Consequently, that stronghold became entirely under the control of the Barbarian Clan. Later on, though the Jiuqu League and Three Sects Alliance jointly managed to stall the Barbarian Clan's advance, temporarily stabilizing the situation in Yuan Tu Great Prairie, fully recovering the lost territory and reclaiming the lands occupied by the Barbarian Clan's army remained a distant prospect.

The Dark Alliance made numerous efforts to regain the treasured repository. However, the Dark Alliance, despite its vast influence, is divided into various factions, and internal struggles are fierce. Moreover, the Dark Alliance's strength is limited in a specific region. Even the combined forces of the Jiuqu League and the surrounding branches of the Three Sects Alliance can only engage in a protracted battle with the Barbarian Clan's army, unable to achieve a decisive victory.

Unable to prevail openly, the Dark Alliance's high-level strategists resorted to covert means. They didn't seek to defeat the Barbarian Clan outright but rather to secretly send people to infiltrate and stealthily retrieve the treasure. However, deploying a Primordial Spirit True Monarch would attract too much attention, and regular high-ranking members of the Dark Alliance would find it difficult to command a Primordial Spirit True Monarch for personal gain.

Therefore, the Dark Alliance dispatched several teams composed of Gold Core cultivators to secretly infiltrate Yuan Tu Great Prairie. However, each attempt ended in failure with heavy casualties. Despite hundreds of years passing, some high-level members of the Dark Alliance have not completely given up. Periodically, they organize teams to venture into Yuan Tu Great Prairie.

Despite their repeated failures, a sense of resilience and determination has grown among the Dark Alliance high command. They not only deployed the Dark Alliance's own Gold Core cultivators but also paid a hefty price to hire several Gold Core cultivators from the Jiuqu League.

While these repeated failures and casualties have tarnished the reputation of the Dark Alliance high command, it has become increasingly challenging for them to employ powerful Gold Core cultivators.

Jue Ying Daoist Master, after assisting Taiyi Sect in procuring the Void Nether Stone, has been discovered by a certain high-ranking member of the Dark Alliance. This individual saw an opportunity and offered a proposition. If Taiyi Sect dispatches a team of cultivators to infiltrate that stronghold and retrieve the treasure from the treasure repository, the individual will employ their power to provide Taiyi Sect with a substantial amount of Void Nether Stone.

Taiyi Sect, although a recent addition to the Jiuqu League, has risen in prominence only in recent years. However, Taiyi Sect has already proven its combat strength through multiple hard-fought battles. While it may not dare to compare itself with those Primordial Spirit sects, there are not many Gold Core sects that can surpass Taiyi Sect. If Taiyi Sect were to mobilize fully and dispatch a team of Gold Core cultivators, there would indeed be some chance of success.

Upon hearing Jue Ying Daoist Master's account, Meng Zhang fell into a momentary silence. The Void Nether Stone was undoubtedly essential, but asking Taiyi Sect cultivators to risk their lives in exchange seemed a bit excessive. Many Gold Core cultivators had failed before; could Taiyi Sect cultivators truly succeed? Even if they were to miraculously succeed, the cost would undoubtedly be substantial.

Observing Meng Zhang's silence, Jue Ying Daoist Master, who understood his old friend well, knew that he was likely unwilling to accept this exchange condition. Jue Ying Daoist Master hurriedly offered an explanation to avoid misunderstandings.

As it turns out, the treasure hidden within that repository was also of great use to Jue Ying Daoist Master and her disciples. Many years ago, Jue Ying Daoist Master's master, Luo Ye Daoist Master, had set her sights on that treasure repository. However, she knew that a head-on approach was not feasible and needed a different plan. She paid a high price to obtain a clever way to infiltrate the stronghold, open the treasure repository, and take away the treasure. But if Luo Ye Daoist Master were to actively explore and find the repository or open its secrets, it would undoubtedly raise suspicions. She didn't want to let the higher-ups in the alliance benefit without a price.

As a fellow member of the Dark Alliance, Luo Ye Daoist Master was all too familiar with certain high-ranking members who were entirely untrustworthy. Over the years, Luo Ye Daoist Master had been quietly patient, waiting for the right opportunity. And now, that opportunity had finally arrived.

The higher-ups in the alliance wanted Taiyi Sect's help to retrieve the treasure, which meant they would reveal how to find the repository and open it to Meng Zhang. Luo Ye Daoist Master's plan was to use her method to infiltrate the stronghold together. Then, Meng Zhang would open the repository and retrieve the treasure. As for how to handle the higher-ups in the alliance and how to ensure Taiyi Sect obtained the necessary Void Nether Stone, Luo Ye Daoist Master had already made plans.

Jue Ying Daoist Master's role in this meeting was to deliver Luo Ye Daoist Master's message. If Meng Zhang trusted them and was willing to participate in this plan, then they could proceed to the next step of the plan. However, if Meng Zhang felt the risk was too significant and was unwilling to participate, then the matter would have to be abandoned.

Jue Ying Daoist Master emphasized to Meng Zhang that Luo Ye Daoist Master had planned and prepared for this for a long time, and the plan was meticulous, with no loopholes. Taiyi Sect would not need to deploy too much overwhelming force, just two Gold Core cultivators working together would be sufficient to complete the plan. Luo Ye Daoist Master and Jue Ying Daoist Master themselves would accompany the operation, so Meng Zhang need not worry about the safety of Taiyi Sect cultivators. As long as everything went according to plan, there would be no casualties.

Having listened to Jue Ying Daoist Master's words, Meng Zhang once again fell into silence. He and Jue Ying Daoist Master had faced life and death together multiple times, battling side by side against the enemy, creating an unbreakable bond of trust. While he trusted Luo Ye Daoist Master's character and knew she wouldn't betray him, the matter at hand was of significant importance, and he needed to carefully consider it.

While he could trust Luo Ye Daoist Master, it didn't guarantee that her plan was without flaws. Infiltrating the extraterritorial Barbarian Clan's territory carried significant risks, and danger lurked at every moment. Meng Zhang couldn't help but take this matter seriously and weigh his options.

Chapter 609: Dongyuan City

Jue Ying Daoist Master saw Meng Zhang lost in thought and didn't disturb him, allowing him to carefully consider his options. Meng Zhang recalled the time he and Luo Ye Daoist Master became acquainted, and they both were known for being meticulous and thoughtful in their actions, especially Luo Ye Daoist Master. They always planned carefully and were not reckless in their decisions.

Though Meng Zhang didn't employ the Calculated technique, his Spiritual Awareness didn't sense any danger, indicating that this mission probably didn't pose a life-threatening risk. However, Spiritual Awareness wasn't foolproof, and there were ways to deceive it.

Meng Zhang could only weigh the circumstances repeatedly to make a judgment. In the end, he decided to trust his old friend, Luo Ye Daoist Master. Upon hearing Meng Zhang's agreement with Luo Ye Daoist Master's plan, Jue Ying Daoist Master finally felt relieved.

This opportunity was truly rare, and if they missed it, who knows when the next chance would come. The treasures hidden in that treasury were of great importance, and Luo Ye Daoist Master had been planning this for a long time. Now that Meng Zhang agreed to join, it was a happy ending for all.

Luo Ye Daoist Master hadn't even told his disciple, Jue Ying Daoist Master, the specific details of the plan. After Meng Zhang's agreement, he needed to meet with Luo Ye Daoist Master to receive further information.

Meng Zhang wasn't one to be indecisive. Since he had agreed, he wouldn't delay any further. He asked An Moran to take care of Jue Ying Daoist Master and went to handle the various affairs of the sect.

Normally, Niu Dawei, his eldest disciple, managed all aspects of Taiyi Sect in his absence, and he had been overseeing the daily affairs of the sect. However, recently, Niu Dawei had completed the Foundation Building stage of cultivation and voluntarily relinquished all responsibilities to focus on closed-door cultivation, aiming to break through to the Gold Core stage.

Meng Zhang was naturally very concerned about his direct disciple and had provided all the help he could to support Niu Dawei's breakthrough. Taiyi Sect was thriving now, with considerable resources available, including Third Rank spirit veins and abundant spiritual treasures and elixirs to aid in the Gold Core breakthrough.

Niu Dawei had a calm and steadfast character, with a resolute Dao heart. He had been steadily advancing on his cultivation path, with a remarkably stable foundation. Many within the sect were confident that Niu Dawei's closed-door cultivation would be successful.

For Meng Zhang, if his Sect Master's eldest disciple, Niu Dawei, successfully formed his Gold Core, it would hold significant meaning for Taiyi Sect. It meant that there would be a capable successor for the sect, and the next generation had already grown up.

The entire sect no longer solely relied on Meng Zhang, the old man, to manage everything. If it weren't for Luo Ye Daoist Master's matter this time, Meng Zhang wouldn't have wanted to leave the sect. He wanted to stay within the sect and wait for Niu Dawei to successfully emerge from seclusion.

Each hall in the sect had responsible individuals, all performing their duties diligently. Even without anyone giving orders, the entire sect could function normally.

Now, the most crucial task for Taiyi Sect is to repair the set of Mother-Child Transmission Discs, and most of the Gold Core cultivators in the sect are busy with this task. The only idle Gold Core Daoist Master, Hu Jing, has been entrusted with significant responsibilities by Meng Zhang. When the Sect Master is not present, Hu Jing is in charge of overseeing all affairs in the sect.

Of course, when facing important decisions, it's necessary to convene the elders for collective discussion. According to Jue Ying Daoist Master, Meng Zhang can take along another Gold Core cultivator for this mission. After some consideration, he chose to bring the Extreme Sword Spirit General.

As an ancient relic who has survived from the peak of Taiyi Sect's history until now, the Extreme Sword Spirit General has a wealth of experience and battle knowledge. Undoubtedly, he possesses some hidden trump cards. Concerning the task of repairing the Mother-Child Transmission Discs, the Extreme Sword Spirit General holds valuable knowledge and can provide helpful advice. However, he is not a Formation Master or a tool refiner, so he cannot directly participate.

Meng Zhang's decision to bring him along would not significantly affect the repair work. After arranging the affairs of the sect, Meng Zhang, accompanied by the Extreme Sword Spirit General and Jue Ying Daoist Master, left Hundred Grass Slope and flew in the direction of Great Wind City.

Luo Ye Daoist Master had been staying in Great Wind City, awaiting Jue Ying Daoist Master's reply. Now that Meng Zhang had come along with Jue Ying Daoist Master, there was no need for many words; it was evident that Meng Zhang had agreed to join the mission.

Time was pressing, so Luo Ye Daoist Master didn't waste time with formalities and expressions of gratitude. She immediately gathered everyone and set off, flying directly towards the east of Jiuqu League, in the direction of Yuantu Great Prairie.

During the journey, Luo Ye Daoist Master made some arrangements and instructions for Meng Zhang. The four Gold Core Daoist Masters traveled at full speed and arrived at their destination quickly.

Dongyuan City is a large city near Yuantu Great Prairie, and it is the largest city within a radius of thousands of miles. Originally a major commercial city, it served as a crucial transfer station for trade between Jiuqu League and Yuantu Great Prairie. It ranked almost on par with Great Wind City in terms of status and prosperity within Jiuqu League.

However, several hundred years ago, the extraterritorial Barbarian Clan launched a massive invasion of Yuantu Great Prairie, occupying most of the grasslands and advancing all the way to the doorstep of Jiuqu League. Jiuqu League had no choice but to concentrate its forces in Dongyuan City to resist the Barbarian Clan's invasion.

This once-thriving commercial city became a military stronghold and a strategically significant frontline fortress. The reinforcements sent by the Three Sects Alliance, along with the army of

cultivators from Jiuqu League, defeated the invading Barbarian Clan outside Dongyuan City. They pursued them and pushed the front lines thousands of miles towards Yuantu Great Prairie.

Over the years, Jiuqu League and the extraterritorial Barbarian Clan had clashed multiple times, engaging in several protracted battles. Generally, with the support of the Three Sects Alliance, Jiuqu League had the upper hand and steadily pushed the Barbarian Clan back into the depths of Yuantu Great Prairie.

Dongyuan City had transformed from a frontline to a rear area, slowly regaining its commercial city nature. With the valuable resources produced in Yuantu Great Prairie being transported to Jiuqu League, merchants could make substantial profits. Dongyuan City, as an essential transfer station, also needed to supply various goods to the front lines. The constant flow of cultivators and a vast amount of goods passing through here made Dongyuan City exceptionally prosperous and lively.

In such a place, the existence of a black market was inevitable. Luo Ye Daoist Master brought Meng Zhang and the others to Dongyuan City and directly entered the local black market. She left Jue Ying Daoist Master and the Extreme Sword Spirit General with the attendants of the black market and ventured deeper into the market with Meng Zhang, navigating its winding alleys towards the core location of the black market.

During their journey here, Luo Ye Daoist Master briefly introduced the situation to Meng Zhang. Dongyuan City was bustling with a large number of cultivators, and the black market business was thriving.

Chapter 610: Face-to-face talk

Luo Ye, the Daoist Master, is now taking Meng Zhang to meet someone who is not only the employer of this mission but also a senior elder of the Dark Alliance named Daoist Master Black Fox. Daoist Master Black Fox successfully formed the core hundreds of years ago and is the senior to Luo Ye in the Dark Alliance with extensive experience.

Considering Daoist Master Black Fox's age, the possibility of him breaking through to the Primordial Spirit stage is becoming smaller. Therefore, he focuses most of his energy on business operations and gaining power. On the other hand, Luo Ye, the Daoist Master, is ambitious in his path and doesn't want to get involved in mundane affairs. He and Daoist Master Black Fox are two very different cultivators.

Daoist Master Black Fox is in charge of important matters and wields significant power. He has spent many years building a vast network of connections, both within and outside the Dark Alliance. He enjoys high status and can easily mobilize many resources. Only someone like him can manipulate the different branches of the Dark Alliance for his own benefit.

It is not a simple task to transport large quantities of Void Nether Stones from the fiercely contested south to the black market. If it were that easy, Jiuqu League would have done it long ago, and there would be no need for the black market to handle such matters. To employ Taiyi Sect to work for him, Daoist Master Black Fox has made great efforts.

Luo Ye, the Daoist Master, leads Meng Zhang around the black market for a while until they arrive at a concealed room. "Senior, I have brought the person you wanted to meet," Luo Ye says while guiding Meng Zhang into the room.

Inside the room, there is a kind and smiling old man sitting at the top, accompanied by a middle-aged man speaking to him. "Luo Ye, is this the Sect Master Meng you mentioned? Indeed, he is a talented young man," the old man speaks kindly, appearing like a friendly grandfather with no hint of the aura a Gold Core Daoist Master would possess.

Luo Ye, as the intermediary, introduces the two parties to each other. It is evident that the old man is Daoist Master Black Fox, and the middle-aged man sitting below is the local host, presiding over the Dongyuan City black market.

Luo Ye had solemnly reminded Meng Zhang not to be deceived by Daoist Master Black Fox's friendly appearance. This guy is a true wolf in sheep's clothing, ruthless and cunning. Many people have suffered losses because they couldn't see through his true nature.

Meng Zhang has been serving as Sect Master for many years and has honed his social skills. He knows how to speak appropriately to different people and can handle various situations skillfully.

Both sides engage in warm and friendly conversation, acting like close relatives who have been separated for many years rather than strangers with no relationship. After exchanging pleasantries for a while, they finally get down to business.

As a Gold Core late-stage cultivator with many years of experience in the Cultivation World, Daoist Master Black Fox has a keen eye and can discern whether a cultivator is genuinely powerful or just putting up a facade. With a brief interaction and some probing, he can roughly figure it out.

He is very satisfied with Meng Zhang. This person, whether in terms of Cultivation Base or the aura he exudes, is not an ordinary individual. Taiyi Sect, as a force that recently joined the Jiuqu League, is considered a rising new power in recent years.

The Dark Alliance has always been known for its well-informed intelligence, and one of its main businesses is trading in information on the black market. As a high-ranking member of the Dark Alliance with real power, Daoist Master Black Fox naturally keeps a close eye on changes in the surrounding situation.

Taiyi Sect and Sect Master Meng Zhang have long caught his attention. As Taiyi Sect grows stronger and Meng Zhang's reputation rises, Daoist Master Black Fox habitually devotes more attention to them. When he learned that Luo Ye, the Daoist Master, was purchasing Void Nether Stone on behalf of Taiyi Sect, he keenly saw an opportunity.

Though he doesn't know why Taiyi Sect is willing to spend a great price to acquire Void Nether Stone, as long as Taiyi Sect has demands, they can be of use to him. For hundreds of years, he has been troubled by the loss of a certain treasure vault, causing him headaches and hindering his cultivation and progress. This matter has become a thorn in his side, and he won't rest until it is resolved.

He contacted Luo Ye, the Daoist Master, and proposed a condition. As long as Taiyi Sect organizes a team to go to Yuan Tu Great Prairie, open the treasure vault, and retrieve the treasures, he will spare no effort in collecting a batch of Void Nether Stone at a fair price to sell to Taiyi Sect.

Originally, he made this attempt as a routine, not holding high hopes for success, given his many previous failures. However, after personally meeting Meng Zhang, even though their acquaintance was not long, Daoist Master Black Fox sensed a unique aura about him. Somehow, this encounter boosted his confidence and changed his mindset.

In order to win over Meng Zhang and gain his acceptance, Daoist Master Black Fox offered even more benefits on top of the original conditions. Furthermore, he suggested sending experts to join Taiyi Sect's team and provide assistance to Meng Zhang.

Luo Ye, the Daoist Master, had a plan in mind, and naturally, he didn't want outsiders to join and disrupt their original plan. So Meng Zhang deliberately assumed an arrogant and disdainful attitude, accepting Daoist Master Black Fox's benefits in a matter-of-fact manner but unhesitatingly refusing the assistance Daoist Master Black Fox intended to send.

Meng Zhang's arrogant demeanor didn't anger Daoist Master Black Fox; instead, it gave him even more confidence. Only someone with real ability would dare to be so arrogant in front of him. Since Meng Zhang was prepared to accept the benefits from Daoist Master Black Fox, he would have to serve Daoist Master Black Fox in return.

Next, Daoist Master Black Fox slowly began to narrate to Meng Zhang. Hundreds of years ago, during an invasion by the extraterritorial Barbarian Clan, they occupied an important stronghold of the Dark Alliance in Yuan Tu Great Prairie, and Daoist Master Black Fox's master was the person in charge of that stronghold. Faced with the formidable forces of the Barbarian Clan, his master, realizing the odds were against them, immediately gave up the stronghold and started retreating.

Originally, he had planned to take the treasures from the vault with him, but at that time, he didn't have the confidence to successfully escape the chaos of the battle. He was worried that he might die in the midst of the turmoil, leading to the loss of the treasures.

In contrast, the vaults established by the Dark Alliance in various locations were created using special secret techniques. Once hidden, it was almost impossible for outsiders to trace them. Even if someone luckily discovered the existence of the vaults, without the specific method to open them, they would remain inaccessible. If forcibly opened through violence, the vaults would be destroyed, yielding no gain.

Thus, Daoist Master Black Fox's master used secret techniques to hide the vault. Then, he made a desperate escape, leaving the treasures behind in the vault. Since then, because they couldn't retrieve the treasures, Daoist Master Black Fox's lineage had paid a heavy price.

When Daoist Master Black Fox talked about this past event, it was evident that he was emotionally affected, especially when he mentioned his master's concern for the treasures until his final moments, passing away with regret. A glimmer of moisture even appeared in Daoist Master Black Fox's eyes.

Since the other party was putting on a show, Meng Zhang played along. He assured Daoist Master Black Fox that he would retrieve the treasures to comfort the departed spirit of his master.

After talking at length about the details, Meng Zhang left the place. Daoist Master Black Fox informed Meng Zhang that the Void Nether Stone needed to be transported from the south, and it would take some time before he could deliver it.

Originally, Daoist Master Black Fox only intended to charge the cost price for the Void Nether Stone, not making any extra profit. Meng Zhang wasn't worried about Daoist Master Black Fox defaulting on the deal, as the reputation of the black market was trustworthy, despite being a place not seen in a positive light.

Besides, Daoist Master Black Fox also promised Meng Zhang that apart from the one treasure he needed for himself, any other treasures inside the vault would be at his disposal. This benefit was

merely empty talk. If a rat enters a granary, does it need someone's permission to do whatever it wants?

This time, Meng Zhang agreed to infiltrate Yuan Tu Great Prairie for two reasons: to help Luo Ye, the Daoist Master, and to acquire the Void Nether Stone. Other benefits were just incidental and not the main objective.

After leaving the room, Luo Ye, the Daoist Master, greeted Meng Zhang proactively and brought him to the outskirts of the black market to meet with Jue Ying, the Daoist Master, and Extreme Sword Spirit General.

The four of them left the black market together and chatted for a while outside. Meng Zhang then bid farewell to Luo Ye, the Daoist Master, and the others in front of everyone's eyes and departed with Extreme Sword Spirit General.

After parting ways with Luo Ye, the Daoist Master, and the others, Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General wandered around Dongyuan City for a while, pretending to be tourists. Then, they left Dongyuan City and flew together towards Yuan Tu Great Prairie.

The frontline between Jiuqu League and the Barbarian Clan was still thousands of miles away. The journey just after leaving Dongyuan City was smooth and without any unexpected incidents.