

Sect Master 671

Chapter 671: Thoughts

Facing Meng Zhang's fierce and murderous appearance, with a hint of killing intent, Xu Mengying remained unmoved, as if she hadn't felt the slightest pressure at all.

"Sect Master Meng, we were getting along so well before. Why have you turned against me so quickly?"

"Sect Master Meng, you first helped me escape from the pursuit of evil people, and then saved my life from demons. We just joined forces to fight the enemy. Your repeated assistance shows that you are a person of high moral character and warm-heartedness. I can never forget your great kindness, Sect Master Meng."

Xu Mengying's seemingly sincere words of gratitude were like thorns and sarcasm in Meng Zhang's ears.

Apart from the first time when he helped her and received some benefits from Xu Mengying, the next two times he intervened were due to her troubles and were forced actions.

Xu Mengying's behavior of taking advantage and acting coy made even the extremely shrewd and guarded Extreme Sword Spirit General feel displeased, not to mention Meng Zhang.

However, Meng Zhang, who was truly furious, suddenly calmed down, no longer appearing angry.

If Xu Mengying could disregard his threats, then she must have some reliance.

Meng Zhang wanted to see what kind of reliance she had and what cards she could play to suppress him and the Extreme Sword Spirit General.

Meng Zhang remained silent, just gazing calmly at Xu Mengying.

Under Meng Zhang's intense scrutiny, Xu Mengying didn't seem embarrassed or uneasy. On the contrary, she talked incessantly.

After talking for a long time and seeing no response from Meng Zhang, Xu Mengying finally restrained herself.

She had been speaking for a while, but she wasn't sure if she was genuinely praising Meng Zhang or mocking him. Either way, Meng Zhang didn't pay attention to a word of it.

Seeing Xu Mengying stop speaking, Meng Zhang's voice turned sinister as he said, "Go on, continue speaking. I want to see how much nonsense you have to say. I am very patient, and I can listen to you all day."

"To someone on the brink of death, I am always generous," Xu Mengying said with a smile in response to Meng Zhang's veiled death threat.

"Sect Master Meng, if I die, no one will be able to provide you with Nine Heavens Refined Essence anymore."

"Although Nine Heavens Refined Essence is precious, I can still spend a little more time collecting it from above the Nine Heavens. But if this resentment remains unresolved in my heart, it might become my inner demon in the future."

Meng Zhang's expression remained unchanged as he spoke casually.

Xu Mengying knew that there was no way to resolve today's situation.

From the moment she landed on the ground, Meng Zhang had ignored her. The Sword Cultivator who accompanied him all the way had boldly released his Divine Sense, firmly locking onto her.

Although she knew that the cultivation level of this Sword Cultivator was inferior to hers, when facing him, Xu Mengying felt as if she were facing a hidden sword in its sheath. The power of the sword seemed to be concealed, as if it could unsheathe at any moment and strike directly at her vulnerabilities.

This concealed sharpness made Xu Mengying uncomfortable.

Her non-stop chatter earlier was not only a test of Meng Zhang but also an attempt to relieve the pressure.

Seeing Meng Zhang's seriousness, Xu Mengying knew that he was truly angry and wouldn't let her off so easily.

Xu Mengying's smile remained on her face as she said lightly, "Sect Master Meng, you're angry because you feel that you haven't received enough benefits and helped me for no reason."

"I am not an ungrateful person. I will surely show my heartfelt gratitude for Sect Master Meng's great kindness."

Meng Zhang, although angry, did not lose his rationality. His main purpose of exploding in anger was to extract enough benefits from Xu Mengying.

As long as there are sufficient benefits and interests, any bit of annoyance will be insignificant, and his thoughts will eventually become clear.

To truly kill Xu Mengying in a fit of rage would be a huge mistake. As a Cultivator, especially as a Sect Master, he cannot be easily swayed by his emotions. His actions must always be based on his own and his sect's interests.

Although Meng Zhang despised the prevailing culture in the Cultivation World, where only profit mattered and self-interest was prioritized, he would not go against it.

Xu Mengying, as the Saintess of the Yellow Lotus Sect, holds a sensitive status and possesses deep cultivation. She undoubtedly has hidden cards up her sleeve.

Not to mention whether Meng Zhang could kill her or not, even if he did, he would instantly become a public enemy of the Yellow Lotus Sect, violating the rules of the Jiuqu League.

If True Monarch Mountain Peak were to take action in response, not even Jin Li True Monarch might fully support him.

Despite the numerous Yellow Lotus Sect cultivators who were tracking Xu Mengying earlier, looking malicious, if Meng Zhang were to truly harm her, they might be the first ones to demand justice and not let Meng Zhang off easily.

Xu Mengying probably saw through this, which gave her the confidence to mock Meng Zhang without fear.

Of course, even though Meng Zhang couldn't kill her, he had ways to deal with her.

The simplest method would be to join forces with the Extreme Sword Spirit General to capture her and hand her over to Daoist Master Mountain Garden. At that time, Xu Mengying could be sold at a good price, and Taiyi Sect might even turn enemies into friends with the Yellow Lotus Sect.

Even if they couldn't capture Xu Mengying, as long as they could keep her entangled and delay her until Daoist Master Mountain Garden's people arrived, it would have a similar effect.

Being in a high position in the Yellow Lotus Sect, Xu Mengying was accustomed to the power struggles and intrigues within the sect. She was extremely clever and could see the situation more clearly than anyone else. Without Meng Zhang even speaking, she could anticipate that he had plenty of means to deal with her.

Xu Mengying had compelling reasons for taking this risky journey away from the Yellow Lotus Sect's Main Altar and secretly infiltrating the Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle. She was not only burdened with great responsibilities but also staking her own future, making any failure unacceptable.

With Meng Zhang's abilities, he had many ways to jeopardize her plans.

However, on the other hand, if Meng Zhang were to stand fully on her side, she would gain significant assistance. Especially in this expedition to the territory of the demons, where she had experienced perilous encounters being chased by demons, Xu Mengying increasingly felt that achieving her objectives solely by her own strength would be difficult.

After the previous probing and her prior understanding, Xu Mengying felt she had gained some understanding of Meng Zhang's character.

It might be challenging to bribe Meng Zhang directly, but bribing Taiyi Sect's Sect Master was not an impossible task.

As a prominent figure in the Yellow Lotus Sect, Xu Mengying had access to many resources. Even in the current difficult situation within the sect, with some effort, she could still offer benefits that would sway Taiyi Sect's Sect Master, Meng Zhang.

Chapter 672: Buy

"I, a humble woman, have a question and wish to seek guidance from Sect Master Meng." Xu Mengying put away the smile on her face and spoke solemnly.

Not knowing what trick this woman was up to, Meng Zhang hummed casually, patiently waiting for her to continue. Pressuring the other party to give in and gain benefits from them could not be rushed; it had to be done slowly.

Meng Zhang had already made up his mind that this time, he must make Xu Mengying bleed profusely.

"I wonder if Sect Master Meng has any insights into the current situation facing the Jiuqu League?" Xu Mengying asked humbly.

Not knowing why Xu Mengying brought up this topic, Meng Zhang chose not to respond and maintained his silence. No matter what Xu Mengying said today, even if she spoke eloquently, the matter at hand would not be easily resolved.

"With Sect Master Meng's foresight, of course, you can see that the Jiuqu League is currently facing internal and external troubles and is on the verge of a major change," Xu Mengying continued.

"Whether it's Dali Dynasty advancing further north after defeating the Three Sects Alliance or the ongoing aggression of extraterritorial Barbarian Clans on Yuan Tu Great Prairie, they are all deadly threats to the Jiuqu League."

"Unfortunately, at this critical moment, the Jiuqu League is plagued with internal conflicts and numerous contradictions..."

Xu Mengying went on to analyze the situation of the Jiuqu League in great detail, taking a considerable amount of time. In short, she implied that beneath the seemingly peaceful situation of the Jiuqu League, there were hidden dangers and crises. If not handled properly, the entire alliance could be at risk of collapse.

In truth, Meng Zhang agreed with Xu Mengying's words.

Though she had just tricked him earlier, Meng Zhang couldn't help but admit that this person had a far-reaching vision and could see many things that others couldn't. Many of her insights coincided with his own, and her thoughts were even more comprehensive than his. If they weren't in their current situation, Meng Zhang would have applauded and eagerly concurred with her several times.

However, Meng Zhang remained silent throughout.

This woman was too cunning; he couldn't let her divert the topic.

Seeing that Meng Zhang didn't respond, Xu Mengying remained unfazed and continued speaking for a long time. Then, she paused and asked another question.

"Sect Master Meng, what do you think of Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle?"

Before Meng Zhang could answer, she continued on her own.

She went on to praise Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle extensively. The cultivation environment there was excellent, and the resources were abundant. The overall level of cultivators was much higher than in the Jiuqu League.

Meng Zhang had only heard some hearsay about Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle before and had spent only a few days in Tiger Mountain City after arriving there before coming to this place. Based on his observations during this period, what Xu Mengying said seemed mostly true.

Indeed, Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle was much stronger in all aspects compared to the Jiuqu League.

After praising Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle, Xu Mengying paused for a while before suddenly asking, "Sect Master Meng, do you want to establish a foundation in Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle as a retreat for Taiyi Sect in the future?"

Meng Zhang rolled his eyes. Wasn't that obvious? Which cultivator in the Jiuqu League wouldn't want to establish a foundation in a place like Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle?

Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle has been developed for a long time, and the situation is relatively stable, with many interest relationships already solidified. While Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle

does not exclude foreign cultivators, establishing a foothold here for external forces is not easy. When Taiyi Sect was rebuilt in the past, it was even stronger than the current Taiyi Sect. Even standing on the fringes of Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle posed numerous difficulties, having to endure many hardships, dangers, and various challenges.

After its reconstruction, Taiyi Sect struggled for many years to integrate into Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle and faced rejection in many aspects. If it weren't for the local cultivation forces being weakened during the demonic calamity, Taiyi Sect might not have been easily annihilated.

Given Taiyi Sect's current strength, even if Meng Zhang was willing to abandon everything in the Jiuqu League and invest all the sect's power here, it would still be challenging to find enough foothold. Taiyi Sect, as a large and powerful sect, couldn't just settle anywhere in a remote corner.

To survive, the sect would need at least a Third Rank spirit vein, but in Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle, such resources were limited, and forcefully snatching a Third Rank spirit vein from an existing cultivation force would quickly turn the sect into a public enemy and draw hostility from numerous cultivators.

Hundreds of years ago, when Taiyi Sect was rebuilt, they used means to seize the local force's foundation and establish their own mountain gate as outsiders. This act became a significant reason why Taiyi Sect was never truly accepted by the local cultivation forces.

The Guardian Spirit Generals had previously recounted these events to Meng Zhang, hoping he could learn from them. With this cautionary tale, Meng Zhang knew well how difficult it was for outsiders to establish a foundation in Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle.

With Xu Mengying's identity in the Yellow Lotus Sect and access to numerous sources of information, she was well-versed in the situation in Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle. If she dared to tempt Meng Zhang with this matter, attempting to buy him over, it was not mere empty words. She must have a genuine way to offer him a foundation.

As it turned out, over a thousand years ago, the Yellow Lotus Sect was at its peak. Their Cult Master was farsighted and took precautions, spending a great deal of effort to establish a foothold in Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle. As a Primordial Spirit True Monarch, backed by a powerful sect that could achieve things even Gold Core sects couldn't, the Yellow Lotus Sect's Cult Master secretly manipulated events to make Yellow Lotus Sect forces blend in as a local cultivation force in Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle.

This move had two vital purposes. Firstly, it served as a potential retreat for the Yellow Lotus Sect in the future, a hidden backup plan within the Cultivation World. Many cultivation forces understood the wisdom of having hidden aces up their sleeves. Secondly, if the Yellow Lotus Sect were to grow stronger and expand significantly in the future, the force they arranged in Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle would serve as guides and vanguards.

This arrangement was the highest secret of the Yellow Lotus Sect. Except for those involved at the beginning, only a handful of people within the sect knew about it. The position of Yellow Lotus Sect's Saintess was special, forming a separate lineage, and she had also been involved in this matter.

Over time, this highest secret was passed down through the lineage of the Saintess to later generations.

Chapter 673: Maple Leaf Mountain City

The Cult Master of the Yellow Lotus Sect had a brilliant plan at that time, and he indeed put in great effort to implement it. However, to his surprise, the world is ever-changing, and no matter how well arranged and planned, everything undergoes a relentless baptism of time, eventually transforming beyond recognition.

In this world, it is impossible for everything to proceed according to one's desires.

After the Cult Master passed away during meditation, the Yellow Lotus Sect's glory did not last long before it fell into a crisis. The contemporary Cult Master of the Yellow Lotus Sect, Primordial Spirit True Monarch Xu Huanshan, mysteriously disappeared hundreds of years ago, leading to a series of upheavals within the sect, resulting in the Yellow Lotus Sect being effectively divided.

The force established in secret by the Yellow Lotus Sect in the Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle also started encountering problems. The Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle and the Jiuqu League were separated by vast mountains and waters, making it challenging for the Yellow Lotus Sect to even handle its internal issues, let alone worry about matters thousands of miles away.

As a result, the carefully laid-out spies gradually lost contact with the Yellow Lotus Sect's main headquarters and their control weakened. Most people in the world are unwilling to be subordinate to others, and no faction wants to be under the authority of another.

After years of development, this force deeply rooted in the Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle began to yearn for independence. They sought to break free from the Yellow Lotus Sect's control and have full autonomy.

The current state of the Yellow Lotus Sect undoubtedly gave this force the best opportunity. In fact, if the Yellow Lotus Sect does not intervene in time, it won't be long before they completely lose control over this force.

Xu Mengying did not hide any of these circumstances and shared everything with Meng Zhang.

Upon hearing this, Meng Zhang understood Xu Mengying's intentions to some extent and said with a sneer, "So, Lady Saint wants to use this force as compensation and offer it to Taiyi Sect?"

He found the idea of offering a force that was already on the brink of losing control as a favor to Taiyi Sect quite naive. Did Lady Saint really think she could fool him that easily?

Xu Mengying looked at Meng Zhang, who seemed displeased, and calmly began explaining to him. She wanted to add some fuel to the fire and thoroughly persuade Meng Zhang.

In the following conversation, Xu Mengying provided Meng Zhang with detailed information about this force.

This force is known as Maple Leaf Mountain City, named after the city built in the mountains, surrounded by forests of maple leaves. It is located on the eastern side of the Grand Crossing Mountain Range, near the Black Jade Forest.

It is a remote area, far from the core of the Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle. In the eyes of the major forces within the circle, it is considered a barren land. If not for this, Yellow Lotus Sect would have found it challenging to establish their foothold there.

Maple Leaf Mountain City sits atop a Third Rank spirit vein, enough to support several Gold Core Daoist Masters. The dominion of the mountain city is vast, possessing extensive territories.

Although there are not many ordinary people under their rule and very few vassal forces, the wide expanse of territory still holds a considerable amount of cultivation resources.

Having invested heavily in the past and undergoing centuries of development, Maple Leaf Mountain City has become a formidable Gold Core sect. Their status in the sects is not low, and their strength surpasses some and equals others.

Among the many Gold Core sects in the Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle, Maple Leaf Mountain City is relatively well-known. It's the kind of name that, once mentioned, everyone feels very familiar with, as if they have heard of its existence before.

After listening to Xu Mengying's introduction, Meng Zhang was indeed tempted. Maple Leaf Mountain City's foundation is quite impressive, not to mention serving as a retreat for Taiyi Sect. Even the old Taiyi Sect might not have had such favorable conditions.

If they could seize this foundation and establish it as a secret branch of Taiyi Sect within the Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle, it would be incredibly beneficial.

However, having witnessed Xu Mengying's cunning and tactics, Meng Zhang couldn't believe that she would hand over such a huge advantage without gaining anything in return. There must be many troublesome matters waiting for him.

Without a doubt, the Yellow Lotus Sect has already lost control of Maple Leaf Mountain City. Xu Mengying is clearly using him as a tool to reclaim this foundation.

Meng Zhang became cautious; who was calculating whom was hard to say.

Indeed, Xu Mengying proposed several conditions as prerequisites for Meng Zhang to obtain Maple Leaf Mountain City. Of course, she didn't state them outright; her tone remained gentle and even somewhat humble. She made it sound like she was repaying Meng Zhang for his past assistance, which led her to offer this foundation as a favor.

However, to obtain this foundation, Meng Zhang would need to do quite a lot.

Firstly, this foundation belongs to someone else, and Meng Zhang would have to take it by force. While Xu Mengying would provide assistance during the process, he still needed to exert considerable effort.

Secondly, Xu Mengying wanted Meng Zhang to help her resolve the issue of the Daoist Master Mountain Garden. Xu Mengying possessed a personal item that had been tampered with by a treacherous confidant. After careful inspection, she discovered that the method used was far from simple and was clearly the work of Primordial Spirit True Monarch.

Although Xu Mengying could temporarily shield her connection to the item, she couldn't do so indefinitely. Moreover, this item held special significance for her, so she couldn't simply discard it. Even if Xu Mengying temporarily eluded the pursuit of Daoist Master Mountain Garden, they would eventually catch up to her.

To escape from the hands of Daoist Master Mountain Garden once and for all, Xu Mengying asked Meng Zhang and the Extreme Sword Spirit General to find a way to delay them, buying her enough time until she completed her task and the item became irrelevant.

Apart from these two points, Xu Mengying presented many other conditions.

Although Meng Zhang felt anger at being manipulated by Xu Mengying, he could change his attitude quickly if there were enough benefits involved. Compared to the foundation of Maple Leaf Mountain City, a mere conflict of pride meant little.

Besides, Meng Zhang and True Monarch Mountain Peak had a deep-seated hatred between them. In the past, when True Monarch Mountain Peak ordered his subordinates to attack Taiyi Sect, the casualties were severe, and the losses immense.

Through his interactions with Xu Mengying, Meng Zhang realized that she was not simple and possessed various abilities. With her stance against True Monarch Mountain Peak, she could undoubtedly cause many troubles for them.

When weighed between the two, the blood feud and the conflict of pride, any reasonable person would make the correct choice.

As a cultivator, Meng Zhang could seek vengeance, focusing on his thoughts. However, as the Sect Master, he had to prioritize the sect's interests and always consider and strive for the greatest benefit for the sect.

Chapter 674: Delaying

Xu Mengying proposed so many conditions, and of course, Meng Zhang couldn't agree to all of them. Even if there was a willingness to cooperate between the two, bargaining was unavoidable.

The more they persisted at this moment, the more they would gain afterward.

Meng Zhang seemed passive, but he saw through Xu Mengying's bottom line. Moreover, with Extreme Sword Spirit General by his side, he was the dominant party and had an absolute advantage.

If he didn't know the price offered by Daoist Master Mountain Garden, he wouldn't have gone beyond Xu Mengying, and he could have just cooperated with Daoist Master Mountain Garden instead.

Xu Mengying had also clearly understood the current situation long ago. Many of the conditions she proposed were intended for negotiation.

After intense arguing for a long time, the two finally managed to resolve their differences reluctantly and reached a preliminary agreement. Except for the two conditions that Xu Mengying cared most about, Meng Zhang ignored all the other conditions.

For Meng Zhang, if he wanted to take over that piece of territory, he had to take matters into his own hands. There was no such thing as a free lunch in the world. The first condition was as good as non-existent.

As for helping Xu Mengying entangle Daoist Master Mountain Garden, that was not a difficult task at all. In fact, Meng Zhang even had plans to go further.

The agreement reached between the two parties was of great importance. Solely relying on verbal promises wouldn't be enough to reassure anyone.

Meng Zhang carried a written oath with a prepared ghost contract at all times. After Xu Mengying confirmed it, they both swore a ghost oath and pledged to cooperate.

During the swearing, Meng Zhang added one more condition for Xu Mengying. After the matters here were completed, she had to promptly provide the promised Nine Heavens Refined Essence to Meng Zhang.

Since it was something she had promised long ago, Xu Mengying didn't hesitate and agreed to it immediately.

With the ghost oath established, there was finally some assurance, and a basis of mutual trust was formed.

Although there were ways to evade the ghost oath, at least for a Gold Core Daoist Master, it was reliable enough.

Now, Xu Mengying and Meng Zhang were once again standing on the same front as temporary allies, turning enemies into friends in the blink of an eye.

The speed of transformation between enemies and friends in the Cultivation World was indeed surprising. Both Meng Zhang and Xu Mengying were used to this and didn't care at all.

They didn't mention the unpleasantness from earlier, as if those things had never happened.

Next, their goal was to seize the foundation of Maple Leaf Mountain City.

This was also a strong request from Meng Zhang.

Xu Mengying couldn't expect to use the benefits she promised in advance to manipulate Meng Zhang. He wouldn't agree to help Xu Mengying solve the trouble with Daoist Master Mountain Garden until he received the benefits.

He wanted to take control of Maple Leaf Mountain City first before dealing with other matters.

When Yellow Lotus Sect laid down this foundation, the predecessors in the sect probably considered the possibility of betrayal in the future. Out of necessary caution, they made some preparations in advance.

If Yellow Lotus Sect hadn't dispatched other forces, relying solely on these preparations might not have prevented Maple Leaf Mountain City from losing control.

But now, with Meng Zhang's involvement, the situation was entirely different.

Daoist Master Mountain Garden and others may have means to track Xu Mengying's whereabouts. However, as long as Xu Mengying keeps moving and doesn't stay in one place for too long, they would find it difficult to capture her.

Moreover, with Meng Zhang's assistance now, they would act even more cautiously.

Though Daoist Master Mountain Garden cursed at Meng Zhang to his face and seemed to look down on him, deep down, he would never underestimate Meng Zhang, his old rival from Taiyi Sect, with whom he had tangled for many years.

In the Endless Sea of Sand and the Demon Wind Gobi, Meng Zhang had already built a formidable reputation through numerous victories.

Xu Mengying and Meng Zhang were both decisive individuals, and once they made a decision, they quickly set their plans into motion.

They soon left the area and flew towards the direction of Maple Leaf Mountain City.

Maple Leaf Mountain City was quite a distance away from the region where the demonic calamity had erupted and was considered to be on the edge of the Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle.

Flying at high speed, the three of them quickly left the area dominated by the monsters.

Meng Zhang probably didn't realize that by agreeing to Xu Mengying's conditions and leaving this place ahead of time to seek control of Maple Leaf Mountain City, he had avoided a forthcoming major disturbance.

Shortly after they left, teams of cultivators from various major cultivation forces in the Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle arrived in the area to deal with the problem of demons infiltrating the market after demonizing some cultivators.

This team was of extremely high standard, consisting entirely of Gold Core Daoist Masters, led by two Primordial Spirit True Monarchs.

After arriving, they sealed off the surrounding area, searching for the whereabouts of the demonized cultivators and examining whether there were other demonized individuals.

Due to some delay in repairing their flying ship, Daoist Master Mountain Garden's group, unfortunately, didn't leave in time and ended up being stopped by the cultivators responsible for the blockade.

Initially, they relied on their large numbers and Daoist Master Mountain Garden's aggressive temperament, but when they saw the appearance of the Primordial Spirit True Monarchs, they immediately became extremely compliant.

They obediently reported their names and backgrounds, accepting the inspection with utmost cooperation.

Fortunately, Primordial Spirit sects like Yellow Lotus Sect had a certain level of reputation in the Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle, and some well-informed cultivators had heard about them.

What's more important was that during this time, the envoy sent by Jiuqu League had officially appeared in Tiger Mountain City and started to meet with cultivators from various major forces.

In terms of overall strength, Jiuqu League was far inferior to the Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle, but as an alliance composed of many cultivation forces, it could be considered as a collective entity. Compared to the fragmented Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle, Jiuqu League could muster much stronger forces. Thus, those from the Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle treated Jiuqu League's guests with respect and politeness.

Under these circumstances, after learning about Daoist Master Mountain Garden and others' background, the cultivators responsible for the blockade wouldn't intentionally make things difficult for them.

However, necessary inspections were still unavoidable, especially when it involved demons. There couldn't be the slightest oversight.

After a thorough inspection and completing complicated procedures, a considerable amount of time had passed.

If it weren't for the leading Primordial Spirit True Monarch considering them guests from Jiuqu League and being lenient, they might still be trapped in the blockade.

When they bid farewell to the cultivators responsible for the blockade, expressing their heartfelt gratitude, and left the area, much time had already elapsed.

During this delay, Xu Mengying and the others had long vanished without a trace.

Fortunately, they had the means left by True Monarch Mountain Peak. No matter where Xu Mengying fled or how far she went, as long as she didn't abandon that personal item, she would never escape the pursuit of Daoist Master Mountain Garden and his group.

Using the secret technique taught by True Monarch Mountain Peak, Daoist Master Mountain Garden quickly sensed the location of that item.

Following this sense, they set off again, heading in that direction.

Chapter 675: Bloodlines ban

Speaking of Meng Zhang, he, Xu Mengying, and Extreme Sword Spirit General rushed all the way and quickly arrived near Maple Leaf Mountain City. The area where the magic disaster broke out was originally the fringe of the Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle, which could be considered as the remnant veins of the Grand Crossing Mountain Range. The straight-line distance from Maple Leaf Mountain City was not too far.

The three Gold Core Daoist Masters rushed at full speed and didn't take too much time on the road. Maple Leaf Mountain City is located among the mountains, surrounded by steep terrain and difficult mountain roads. Strictly speaking, this mountainous area should not belong to the Grand Crossing Mountain Range. However, it has always been regarded as part of the remnant veins of the Grand Crossing Mountain Range.

In between the tallest mountains, Maple Leaf Mountain City was built. There are many cultivators and ordinary people living in the sloping land and surrounding valleys. A short distance to the east from this place is the edge of the Black Jade Forest.

Therefore, over the years, Maple Leaf Mountain City and the surrounding cultivation forces have always been plagued by attacks from the demon beasts of the Black Jade Forest. Fortunately, the edge of the Black Jade Forest is also considered remote to truly powerful demon beasts. Only some unlucky individuals who offend their own kind or those who escaped to this place seeking survival or were exiled here end up living here. These demon beasts have limited strength and numbers. With the cooperation of Maple Leaf Mountain City and the surrounding cultivation forces, they have been able to suppress the situation and repel these invading demon beasts time and again. They can even take advantage of their victories and venture into the Black Jade Forest.

Of course, due to the fearsome power of the strong demon beasts in the Black Jade Forest, they do not dare to venture deep into the forest, only lingering on the outskirts to gain some minor advantages and obtain cultivation resources.

Maple Leaf Mountain City has been rooted in this area for many years and is considered a local force by the surrounding cultivation forces. Even some of the cultivation forces in the vicinity cannot match the history of Maple Leaf Mountain City.

Xu Mengying is able to grasp the recent changes in Maple Leaf Mountain City and even sell the information to Meng Zhang because she naturally has her sources.

After the three arrived in the mountain area where Maple Leaf Mountain City is located, they landed on a deserted hill. After landing, Xu Mengying didn't waste any time and directly took out an incense stick, igniting it with real fire. Once the incense stick was burning, Xu Mengying held it in her hand and waited silently.

Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General remained silent, allowing Xu Mengying to act as she pleased. All three of them were very patient, and even in this silent waiting, they showed no signs of impatience.

After waiting for about an hour or so, a middle-aged woman flew over from a distance. It seemed she sensed the guidance of the incense stick and flew directly to this location, landing in front of everyone.

As soon as she landed, the middle-aged woman respectfully saluted Xu Mengying, "I, Xu Jiao, pay my respects to the Saintess."

It seemed as though Xu Jiao hadn't noticed Meng Zhang and the others; in her eyes, only Saintess Xu Mengying existed.

Although this middle-aged woman's appearance was ordinary, she was a genuine early-stage Gold Core cultivator. Seeing the fanatic expression on Xu Jiao's face, it was evident that she was Xu Mengying's loyal follower.

Unexpectedly, even when Xu Mengying fell from grace, she still had such devoted followers. This was one of her hidden cards and the heritage of the Yellow Lotus Sect, a Primordial Spirit sect that has been passed down for thousands of years.

Xu Mengying was affectionate towards Xu Jiao and did not treat her as a subordinate. She first briefly introduced Xu Jiao and Meng Zhang to each other, and then had Xu Jiao talk about the current situation of Maple Leaf Mountain City.

Maple Leaf Mountain City was established jointly by several major cultivation families in the area. Some of these families were originally local and were controlled by the Yellow Lotus Sect through various means, while others were directly affiliated with the Yellow Lotus Sect, disguising their identities after establishing the city.

Although Maple Leaf Mountain City is nominally considered a sect, most of the cultivators within the sect are members of the several cultivation families, with only a few outsiders. In reality, Maple Leaf Mountain City is more like a large alliance of cultivation families.

Among these families, the Jiang Family was originally a local cultivation family within the Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle. They were covertly subjugated by the Yellow Lotus Sect and became one of the earliest supporting forces in the establishment of Maple Leaf Mountain City.

Over the years, as the power of Maple Leaf Mountain City grew, it gradually lost contact with the Yellow Lotus Sect, and some of the high-level cultivators who knew about the sect's origins began to desire independence.

In fact, Maple Leaf Mountain City is a secret branch of the Yellow Lotus Sect, known only to the high-ranking members, and the Jiang Family, being in a prominent position, naturally knew about this secret.

The Jiang Family, being native to the Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle, naturally didn't want to be perpetual puppets of the Yellow Lotus Sect. During these years of seeking independence, the Jiang Family has played a leading role.

In truth, all the actions of the Jiang Family were just a disguise for self-preservation. The Jiang Family is, in fact, the ultimate pawn controlled by the Yellow Lotus Sect.

When Maple Leaf Mountain City was first established, the former Saintess of the Yellow Lotus Sect used a secret technique to leave a bloodline ban on the ancestors of the Jiang Family. This bloodline ban gradually spread among a significant portion of the Jiang Family's descendants, the true rulers and elites of the family.

This bloodline ban manifested outwardly as a unique bloodline inheritance exclusive to the Jiang Family. Due to this inheritance, a higher proportion of Jiang Family descendants awakened their spiritual roots, became stronger in the Refining Qi stage, and had an easier time advancing to the Foundation Building stage.

However, there are advantages and disadvantages to everything. Because of this bloodline inheritance, it became nearly impossible for the Jiang Family's cultivators to advance to the Gold Core stage.

Despite the imperfections, the means employed by the former Saintess of the Yellow Lotus Sect were almost perfect for handling the Jiang Family, given her limits as a mere Primordial Spirit True Monarch.

The purpose of this bloodline ban was not merely to strengthen the lower-level Jiang Family cultivators; it was to completely control the Jiang Family. By employing the secret techniques of the Saintess lineage, all Jiang Family cultivators with this bloodline could be manipulated, forced to live or die at the whim of others.

Even the former Saintess of the Yellow Lotus Sect could not lift this bloodline ban, let alone other Primordial Spirit True Monarchs. The Jiang Family is so revered that even a Primordial Spirit True Monarch would hardly be allowed to interact with them, let alone others.

As the lives of the family's elites were entirely under the control of others, the Jiang Family became the most loyal to the Yellow Lotus Sect.

In reality, the Jiang Family also gained many benefits from this bloodline ban. Though they lack Gold Core Daoist Masters, the Jiang Family occupies a significant middle-level position within Maple Leaf Mountain City, with a large number of Foundation Building stage cultivators and decent combat strength.

Over the years, the Jiang Family has secured many mid-level and key positions within Maple Leaf Mountain City. The Jiang Family cultivators have become the backbone of the sect and an essential support for the entire sect.

Chapter 676: Jiang Family

A pillar of the Gold Core sect is the Gold Core Daoist Master, but the true backbone of the sect, the ones who actually handle the affairs, are the cultivators at the Foundation Building stage.

Jiang Family has gained a special status within Maple Leaf Mountain City by continuously producing a large number of Foundation Building stage cultivators. They have earned the favor of several Gold Core Daoist Masters.

When Jiang Family realized the trend of Maple Leaf Mountain City seeking independence, they were unable to stop it. In order to protect themselves, they had no choice but to pretend to actively participate.

However, in secret, Jiang Family dispatched their most trusted members to secretly leave Maple Leaf Mountain City. After enduring countless hardships and crossing mountains and rivers, they finally arrived at Jiuqu League and made contact with the Yellow Lotus Sect.

Jiang Family was originally a pawn set by the Yellow Lotus Sect's Saintess lineage, belonging to the subordinates of the successive Saintesses. So, Xu Mengying, the current Saintess, received this news first and took up the responsibility without hesitation.

Faced with the encroachment of the True Monarch Mountain Peak, Xu Mengying herself is in danger and has no power to deal with Maple Leaf Mountain City, which is far away.

However, Xu Mengying is a visionary and knows that Maple Leaf Mountain City is a very important chess piece for the Yellow Lotus Sect, so it cannot be abandoned.

She sent her most trusted subordinate, Xu Jiao, to the Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle.

Although the Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle and Jiuqu League are far apart and have inconvenient transportation, there are occasional merchant caravans traveling between the two places. Top-tier commercial organizations like Four Seas Commercial Firm have Fourth Rank Cloud Boats that regularly travel between the two places. Similarly, organizations like the black market can also ensure communication between various regions.

Together with the Jiang Family member, Xu Jiao arrived at Maple Leaf Mountain City, disguised as a wandering loose cultivator, and roamed the vicinity.

With the secret cooperation of Jiang Family, Xu Jiao seized an opportunity and made contact with the Gold Core Daoist Master of Maple Leaf Mountain City.

Although Maple Leaf Mountain City is a sect composed of several cultivation families and is usually closed and conservative, they are very active in recruiting cultivators at the level of Gold Core Daoist Master.

After some reluctance, they invited Xu Jiao to join and become an honorary elder of Maple Leaf Mountain City.

Since then, Xu Jiao has settled down in Maple Leaf Mountain City, serving as Xu Mengying's hidden agent, waiting for the day to be activated.

Now, Xu Mengying has arrived nearby and summoned Xu Jiao.

Besides being happy to see her old master Xu Mengying again, Xu Jiao feels an indescribable excitement. Could it be that Xu Mengying has come here to set things right and take action against those traitors?

The reality does not disappoint Xu Jiao. Xu Mengying asks Xu Jiao to introduce the situation in Maple Leaf Mountain City and then discuss with Meng Zhang and others on how to proceed.

Currently, in Maple Leaf Mountain City, besides Xu Jiao, there are three Gold Core Daoist Masters. These three Gold Core Daoist Masters are from the dominant families of Maple Leaf Mountain City and are the ringleaders behind the betrayal of the city.

At the Foundation Building stage of cultivation, there are hundreds of Foundation Building stage cultivators in Maple Leaf Mountain City, with Jiang Family accounting for about 15%.

It seems that if they want to eradicate the original high-level members of Maple Leaf Mountain City and completely control the sect, they will need full cooperation from Jiang Family.

Jiang Family's loyalty has already been proven, so there's no need to keep it secret from them this time. In fact, they should leverage Jiang Family's strength.

With Xu Jiao's help, Jiang Family's patriarch, Jiang Xiaozhong, and two elders from the clan secretly met with Xu Mengying.

Upon meeting Xu Mengying, Jiang Xiaozhong and the two elders of Jiang Family were extremely excited and immediately paid their respects and salutations.

From their appearance, they were as enthusiastic as pet dogs when they see their master.

Meng Zhang couldn't help but secretly activate his Mind Reading Divine Ability and read the thoughts of the three people from Jiang Family.

It turned out that over time, the bloodline restriction on Jiang Family members would gradually weaken. This weakening refers to the diminishing benefits brought about by the bloodline restriction, but the control that the Saintess has over it will not weaken.

Over the years, Jiang Family members have fully enjoyed the benefits brought about by the bloodline restriction. Although the bloodline restriction has many restraints, it also has many uses.

This ensures that Jiang Family can continuously produce a large number of Foundation Building stage cultivators and maintain their status.

While it would be great if they could become Gold Core Daoist Masters or Primordial Spirit True Monarchs, in the Cultivation World, very few can reach such levels. Rather than reaching for the unreachable, it's better to focus on the present.

The real power wielded by Jiang Family lies in the Foundation Building stage cultivators within the family. After these individuals reach the Foundation Building stage, knowing that further advancement is difficult, they give up their efforts in cultivation and turn their focus to other aspects.

Some seek power and control within the sect, attempting to grasp more authority. Some indulge in a life of pleasure, taking numerous wives and concubines...

This situation has lasted for too long and has fundamentally changed the nature of Jiang Family's cultivators. They are content with their current lives and are not willing to make any changes.

However, to ensure such a comfortable life, there is one prerequisite: to ensure that Jiang Family's bloodline power does not weaken and the family can continue to produce enough Foundation Building stage cultivators.

In the past, every one or two hundred years, when the bloodline restriction on Jiang Family started to weaken, the Saintess of Yellow Lotus Sect would visit Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle and secretly strengthen the bloodline restriction through a certain spell.

Because it is an enhancement rather than an imposition, even if the recent generations of Yellow Lotus Sect Saintesses were only at the Gold Core stage, they could still manage it.

Therefore, the Saintess lineage of Yellow Lotus Sect has maintained a close relationship with Jiang Family.

After Xu Mengying took over as the Saintess of Yellow Lotus Sect, the task of strengthening Jiang Family's bloodline restriction naturally fell to her.

The last time Jiang Family received such a bloodline strengthening was more than a hundred years ago when the previous generation's Saintess was in power.

Soon, Jiang Family's bloodline power will begin to weaken again, and it will be time to receive the Saintess's help once more.

Xu Mengying's arrival at Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle and appearance in front of Jiang Family members can be considered a reassurance for them.

Xu Mengying had not mentioned any of this important information to Meng Zhang before. He had 1-2 guesses about what she might be thinking.

It seems that although Xu Mengying spoke nicely, she is still unwilling to hand over the foundation of Maple Leaf Mountain City to Meng Zhang. Though she reluctantly offers this foundation as a bribe, she has prepared some hidden means in secret.

With her methods, she should be able to ensure that Meng Zhang gains no advantage without violating the ghost oath.

Meng Zhang has sensed from their recent interactions that Xu Mengying is someone who values the interests of Yellow Lotus Sect and considers the bigger picture for the sect. Giving away the ancestral legacy for nothing, she definitely wouldn't accept it willingly and would leave some hidden means.

Chapter 677: Sneak attack

Looking at Xu Mengying's demeanor, she truly doesn't seem like a profligate child who cares nothing about her family's heritage. In order to preserve her ancestral legacy, she must have many means to deal with Meng Zhang. However, Meng Zhang also possesses his own trump cards. In the end, we will have to wait and see who will have the last laugh.

Meng Zhang remains calm on the surface, as if he hasn't noticed anything at all. On the other hand, Xu Mengying tries to soothe the three members of the Jiang Family with gentle words, but she quickly changes the topic. Apparently, she is afraid of revealing certain secrets to Meng Zhang during their conversation.

However, she doesn't know that Meng Zhang, relying on his innate Divine Ability - Mind Reading, has already gleaned everything he needs to know from the three members of the Jiang Family.

Xu Mengying gets straight to the point and directly asks Jiang Family's patriarch, Jiang Xiaozhong, how they can overturn the existing rule in Maple Leaf Mountain City and gain control of the situation as soon as possible.

Jiang Xiaozhong, being a local cultivator deeply familiar with the situation in Maple Leaf Mountain City, possesses knowledge beyond Xu Jiao's grasp. He starts explaining in detail to Xu Mengying, and the two Jiang Family elders beside him occasionally chip in with additional information.

With the involvement of the Jiang Family cultivator, their impact is indeed immense. In no time, they have formulated a concrete plan to quickly grasp the situation in Maple Leaf Mountain City.

Daoist Master Mountain Garden and others are still closely following behind, and Xu Mengying doesn't have much time to waste. Now that everyone has planned accordingly, it's time to take immediate action.

As a guest elder of Maple Leaf Mountain City, Xu Jiao holds a high status but has limited real power and finds it challenging to participate in the various confidential matters of the city. On the other hand, the Jiang Family cultivator, being a backbone force in Maple Leaf Mountain City for many years, has always been dependable and involved in numerous secretive events within the sect. Many of the managerial positions for mundane affairs in the sect are filled by Jiang Family disciples, and the Jiang Family patriarch easily manipulates things behind the scenes.

On the same night, a Foundation Building stage disciple from the Jiang Family, responsible for monitoring the direction of Black Jade Forest, urgently sent a talisman from a thousand miles away to report that the demon beasts in Black Jade Forest were showing unusual activities and seemed to be preparing for a large-scale attack on the surrounding areas.

The areas around Maple Leaf Mountain City were relatively peaceful, with occasional disputes among various cultivation forces, but most issues were peacefully resolved or decided through small-scale competitions. There had been very few large-scale wars between human cultivators.

However, the demon beasts in Black Jade Forest had become the biggest enemy of all nearby cultivation forces. Even though these demon beasts were considered inferior and eliminated within Black Jade Forest, they still caused considerable destruction to the surrounding regions. Each time they launched an invasion, the major cultivation forces in the vicinity had to exert significant efforts to drive them back.

Even with the strength of a Gold Core sect like Maple Leaf Mountain City, they couldn't completely solve this problem. Even the Primordial Spirit sects of the Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle wouldn't easily venture deep into Black Jade Forest, let alone these Gold Core sects.

Therefore, Maple Leaf Mountain City had to strengthen its monitoring of Black Jade Forest. At any sign of activity, they would respond promptly to minimize losses in all aspects.

Now, upon receiving the news of unusual activities among the demon beasts in Black Jade Forest, the high-level members of Maple Leaf Mountain City were immediately alarmed. Even though it was late at night, including the three Gold Core Daoist Masters, they gathered in the sect's main hall, where they usually discussed important matters.

The Sect Master of Maple Leaf Mountain City is a Foundation Building late-stage cultivator, while the three Gold Core Daoist Masters are the top elders and the true decision-makers of the sect.

Of course, in this sect primarily composed of family forces, the internal relationships are intricate and difficult to untangle. Even a Gold Core Daoist Master cannot unilaterally make decisions on many important matters; they need to discuss and consult with others.

The Jiang Family cultivator is responsible for various mundane affairs within the sect, such as cleaning and maintenance of the main hall on regular days.

More and more high-level cultivators arrive at the main hall, including Xu Jiao, a guest elder who came early. Maple Leaf Mountain City spent considerable effort to recruit guest elders like Xu Jiao to handle situations like the current one. Despite being guest elders, they often play the role of enforcers.

Apart from the high-level members, three attendants stand by the side, performing tasks such as serving tea and water. These servants are managed by the Jiang Family cultivator, and none of the sect's high-level members pay much attention to them.

After all the high-level members have gathered, Jiang Xiaozhong, the Jiang Family patriarch who should have reported the intelligence from his family, silently walks towards the outside of the main hall. A Gold Core cultivator notices this and is about to call Jiang Xiaozhong back, but suddenly an unexpected event occurs.

The seemingly inconspicuous three attendants launch a surprise attack, each targeting one of the three Gold Core Daoist Masters almost simultaneously.

These three Gold Core Daoist Masters of Maple Leaf Mountain City are only in the early stage of Gold Core cultivation, making them far inferior to Meng Zhang and his companions, who disguised themselves as attendants. Even in a fair and open fight, they wouldn't last a few moves.

If it weren't for the sake of a swift resolution to avoid causing chaos within the entire sect, Meng Zhang and the others wouldn't need to resort to sneak attacks.

Meng Zhang strikes first, the Spiritsnake Spear silently appearing in his hand and easily piercing the unguarded opponent. The opponent's protective spells seem as feeble as paper and offer no resistance.

With the deadly blow of the Spiritsnake Spear, this ordinary Gold Core cultivator naturally meets his demise.

Xu Mengying uses a secret technique to easily confuse her opponent's mind, leaving him powerless to resist and making him an easy target for her to kill.

Sword Cultivators are often the best assassins, and among the three, Extreme Sword Spirit General, with the lowest Cultivation Base, is the most skilled.

His invisible sword qi directly breaks through the opponent's defensive spells, killing him on the spot.

The other high-level members present are all Foundation Building stage cultivators. Witnessing the three pillars of the sect, the Gold Core Daoist Masters, being ambushed, they are filled with panic and haven't had the chance to react when Xu Jiao suddenly takes action.

As a Gold Core early-stage cultivator, Xu Jiao thought it would be an easy feat to ambush a group of Foundation Building cultivators. However, unexpectedly, there were more opponents, and each had some life-saving tricks up their sleeves. After launching her sneak attack, she failed to quickly take them all down, giving them time to respond.

Several Foundation Building cultivators shout loudly, seemingly trying to alert the outside cultivators and call for help from within the sect.

These few people are also confused by the sudden turn of events. The strongest cultivator of Maple Leaf Mountain City is within the main hall, yet even they have become targets of slaughter. For the lower-level cultivators in the sect, coming to this place means either dying in vain or facing no outcome other than death.

Chapter 678: Transmission

The reason these shouting cultivators are dying without closure is that they shouted their throats hoarse, yet not a single sound came out of the sect's main hall.

It turns out that Jiang Xiaozhong, the head of the Jiang Family, had arrived outside the main hall and immediately took out a set of prepared talismans and activated them, releasing their power.

This Second Rank talisman array had no other major use; its greatest function was to isolate the inside from the outside and block all movements and sounds within the sect's main hall.

Inside, whether it was the aftermath of the battle, various noises, or fluctuations in the cultivators' auras, everything was entirely isolated and could not be transmitted outside.

Meng Zhang was the first to kill his chosen opponent. Seeing that Xu Jiao hadn't dealt with his enemy yet, he casually waved the Spiritsnake Spear, causing all Foundation Building stage cultivators in the hall to perish.

In the blink of an eye, all cultivators from Maple Leaf Mountain City in the main hall had fallen, leaving only one survivor: Zhao Yude, the Sect Master of Maple Leaf Mountain City and a cultivator from a lesser family.

In Maple Leaf Mountain City, the true power over the sect rested with three Elders at the Gold Core stage. They belonged to different families and had their followers.

These three Gold Core families were also the most powerful ones in Maple Leaf Mountain City. Although they had three Gold Core Daoist Masters above them, the Sect Master's role was mainly to handle daily affairs, with limited authority in major matters. Nevertheless, whoever held the position of Sect Master would undoubtedly benefit their own family.

The three major families did not want to yield the Sect Master position to each other, and the second-tier families like the Jiang Family were unable to gain the trust of the three Gold Core families.

After a fierce struggle, everyone had to compromise and reach a solution that satisfied all parties, appointing Zhao Yude as the Sect Master.

Zhao Yude found himself in a very awkward position as Sect Master, essentially becoming a puppet controlled by the three major families.

When the plan was initially formulated, Jiang Xiaozhong had mentioned Zhao Yude. He was acknowledged as the Sect Master of Maple Leaf Mountain City but had limited real power. Moreover, his smooth and adaptable personality made him widely accepted.

A person with a smooth personality is unlikely to be rigid and is more likely to yield. In order to quickly control the situation in Maple Leaf Mountain City, Meng Zhang gave Zhao Yude a chance.

Zhao Yude indeed proved to be very astute and intelligent. Initially, he was still besieging Xu Jiao Daoist Master alongside other Foundation Building stage cultivators. However, after the three Gold Core Daoist Masters on his side perished, he immediately and cleverly gave up resistance and obediently hid in a corner of the main hall.

Later, when Meng Zhang killed all the Foundation Building stage cultivators in the hall, Zhao Yude indeed became the only survivor. When he saw that Meng Zhang showed mercy, he quickly fell to his knees and began pleading.

"Senior, spare my life, spare my life. I will be obedient..."

Seeing his reaction, Meng Zhang couldn't help but smile.

"You are indeed clever. It serves you right that you managed to keep your life."

Upon hearing Meng Zhang's words, Zhao Yude, who knew his life was spared, kowtowed heavily, showing immense gratitude.

Meng Zhang, who possessed the Divine Ability of Mind Reading, knew that Zhao Yude's actions were not pretense; he was genuinely terrified by the recent slaughter. Knowing fear was good, as it allowed him to be controlled by Meng Zhang.

With the cooperation of Sect Master Zhao Yude, it would become much easier to control Maple Leaf Mountain City. The higher-ups of Maple Leaf Mountain City, including the three Gold Core Daoist Masters, were all wiped out, clearing the obstacles to controlling the entire sect.

With Zhao Yude as the Sect Master and the full assistance of the Jiang Family, it seemed like seizing this foundation would be a piece of cake.

Of course, while it may sound easy, there were still many intricate and complicated tasks to be done. How to handle the remaining disciples of Maple Leaf Mountain City was a big issue.

Xu Mengying, Meng Zhang, and the Jiang Family's head, Jiang Xiaozhong, along with Zhao Yude, the puppet Sect Master, discussed their next steps in the main hall.

Meanwhile, the Extreme Sword Spirit General quietly left the sect's main hall.

Maple Leaf Mountain City also had a Third Rank mountain protection formation. On ordinary days, the authority over the formation was in the hands of the three Gold Core Daoist Masters. Additionally, Zhao Yude, as the Sect Master, had a slight degree of authority over it.

Any fortress was easier to breach from within.

The three Gold Core Daoist Masters were suddenly attacked and had no time to react, being instantly killed on the spot. Not to mention activating the mountain protection formation to defend against enemies.

If it weren't for the cooperation of the insider from the Jiang Family, breaking into the formation from the outside, even with Meng Zhang and the others' superior strength, would still be challenging.

If they couldn't achieve a quick and decisive victory and caused too much commotion, it might even alert other cultivation forces in the vicinity. If they attracted interference from others, seizing Maple Leaf Mountain City would become exceptionally difficult.

In this regard, the Jiang Family played a crucial role.

Therefore, Xu Mengying seized this point to gain merits for the Jiang Family and to strive for more benefits on their behalf.

Meng Zhang didn't answer; he had already seen through Xu Mengying's intentions.

Although she repeatedly said she was gifting this foundation to him, in reality, there were only himself and the Extreme Sword Spirit General from Taiyi Sect here.

As the Sect Master of a sect, Meng Zhang couldn't stay here for the long term and would eventually have to return to Taiyi Sect.

With only the Extreme Sword Spirit General remaining here, it was not possible for him to personally handle every matter. He needed the strength of the Jiang Family if he wanted to control the entire Maple Leaf Mountain City.

The Jiang Family was deeply rooted in Maple Leaf Mountain City and held significant power. With such favorable conditions, it would be effortless to truly control Maple Leaf Mountain City and completely sideline the Extreme Sword Spirit General.

As for Zhao Yude, the cowardly and opportunistic turncoat, he was utterly unreliable.

By then, Maple Leaf Mountain City would still be nominally under Taiyi Sect's foundation, but in reality, it would be controlled by the Yellow Lotus Sect.

Xu Mengying used Meng Zhang's power to eliminate the traitor and regain control over the slowly slipping Maple Leaf Mountain City. It was indeed a clever scheme.

Unfortunately, no matter how much Xu Mengying calculated, she couldn't foresee what kind of trump card Meng Zhang had.

Regardless of what Xu Mengying said, Meng Zhang remained silent, both as a form of protest and to buy time.

Just as Xu Mengying was considering whether to appease him, something happened that drastically changed her expression.

The Extreme Sword Spirit General led a group of Taiyi Sect cultivators and swaggered into the sect's main hall.

In addition to Wen Qiansun, Deep Earth Spirit General, Shocking Thunder Spirit General, and other Gold Core Daoist Masters, there was also a large group of Foundation Building stage cultivators.

The appearance of this batch of Taiyi Sect cultivators alone was enough to control the entire Maple Leaf Mountain City, with plenty to spare.

Once again, the Mother-Child Transmission Disc proved its worth.

Chapter 679: Clean

Just a moment ago, while everyone was discussing matters in the sect's main hall, the Extreme Sword Spirit General took the opportunity to leave alone and went to a secluded place outside Maple Leaf Mountain City.

The higher-ups of the sect were all wiped out, and there was no one presiding over the Third Rank mountain protection great formation. Moreover, the Jiang Family had provided Meng Zhang and the others with a talisman to enter and exit the great formation. At this moment, no one could stop the Extreme Sword Spirit General within Maple Leaf Mountain City.

He silently arranged a set of Mother - Child Transmission Discs nearby, then activated the power of the earth veins to activate the sub-disc and established contact with the main disc set up on Hundred Grass Slope, at the mountain gate of the Taiyi Sect.

In fact, this was the first time they used this set of Mother - Child Transmission Discs to teleport over such a long distance. The last time they teleported from Hundred Grass Slope to Red Rock

Valley, the distance was only thousands of miles. This time, they teleported from Hundred Grass Slope to Maple Leaf Mountain City, covering a distance of over 200,000-300,000 miles.

This treasure did not disappoint the Extreme Sword Spirit General and successfully connected to the other end at Hundred Grass Slope, although there was some significant loss of Void Nether Stone.

At Hundred Grass Slope, there were people guarding the Mother - Child Transmission Discs constantly. Upon receiving the signal sent by the Extreme Sword Spirit General, a Gold Core Daoist Master immediately teleported over.

After a brief communication, the Taiyi Sect quickly took action.

Currently, the Gold Core Daoist Masters of Taiyi Sect were mainly distributed in two places: the mountain gate, Hundred Grass Slope, and Red Rock Valley. Only a few Gold Core Daoist Masters were stationed elsewhere. These two places were both connected by the Mother - Child Transmission Discs, enabling instant teleportation.

Before leaving Taiyi Sect, Meng Zhang and the Extreme Sword Spirit General had specifically explained to the high-ranking members of the sect. So during this time, the Gold Core Daoist Masters of Taiyi Sect did not travel outside or wander around; they mostly stayed in these two locations.

Upon contacting Taiyi Sect, the entire sect immediately took action.

Since both locations were protected by Third Rank defense great formations, even if the Gold Core Daoist Masters temporarily left, it wouldn't have a significant impact. As for the Foundation Building cultivators, there were several hundred in Taiyi Sect, and they could be easily mobilized.

A few Gold Core Daoist Masters led a group of Foundation Building cultivators and were the first to teleport over. The next batch of reinforcements was still assembling nervously.

The Extreme Sword Spirit General, along with this group of reinforcements, arrived directly in the sect's main hall, appearing before Xu Mengying and the others.

Although they still didn't know how Meng Zhang managed to bring such an elite force here, when Xu Mengying saw the appearance of the Extreme Sword Spirit General's group, she knew her plans had failed.

She was a very astute person. Now that she knew the situation was beyond her control and her original plans were no longer feasible, she didn't linger and immediately abandoned the original plan, coming up with a new calculation.

Instead of trying to overpower Taiyi Sect and gain control of Maple Leaf Mountain City, she sought to negotiate with Meng Zhang for more benefits.

Xu Mengying indeed proved to be pragmatic and immediately made the most advantageous choice for her side. Although the reinforcements from Taiyi Sect had arrived, as outsiders, they needed Xu Mengying's strong cooperation to quickly gain control of the situation in Maple Leaf Mountain City. Especially since Taiyi Sect couldn't afford to be exposed and needed to maintain the façade of Maple Leaf Mountain City to establish a foothold in the region. Consequently, the two parties quickly reached a new agreement.

Next, the Sect Master of Maple Leaf Mountain City, Zhao Yude, and the cultivators from the Jiang Family collaborated fully with the Taiyi Sect cultivators to carry out a sweeping cleanup throughout the entire city. The process quickly began, leaving no one within the sect unaffected.

The Taiyi Sect cultivators, with Zhao Yude's assistance, gained partial control over the Third Rank mountain protection great formation. After some effort, three Gold Core Daoist Masters had been eliminated, and Wen Qiansun and Deep Earth Spirit General managed to decipher the great formation and obtain its complete authority. With the mountain protection great formation activated, Maple Leaf Mountain City was sealed off entirely, preventing anyone from entering or leaving and leaving no room for escape.

The three Gold Core Daoist Masters' families were the first targets of the cleansing. From top to bottom, regardless of age, gender, or cultivation base, the entire families were wiped out. In the past, Meng Zhang might have shown some reluctance, but after experiencing the trials and tribulations of the Cultivation World for many years, he had become hardened enough to make tough decisions when necessary. In Cultivation World, the extermination of families and clans was not uncommon. What happened in Maple Leaf Mountain City today was merely a very ordinary operation.

For Taiyi Sect to completely control Maple Leaf Mountain City and eliminate any potential threats, certain actions had to be taken. Just putting on the facade of a righteous sect would not secure their foundation. The upper echelons of Maple Leaf Mountain City were all wiped out, leaving mostly mediocre cultivators behind. In contrast, their enemies were an elite force led by Gold Core Daoist Masters, who already controlled the mountain protection great formation and had the geographical advantage.

However, Taiyi Sect cultivators weren't just mindlessly slaughtering. They also used the opportunity to absorb the power of those who surrendered. The Jiang Family was already under their control, and other smaller families that could be easily subdued, along with some discerned useful cultivators, were spared from the massacre.

Killing didn't take much time; it was the discernment of surrendering individuals and absorbing useful cultivators that required careful consideration. Taiyi Sect had accumulated rich experience in how to assimilate and integrate surrendering individuals. Soon enough, Taiyi Sect gained full control over Maple Leaf Mountain City and its territory.

Externally, Maple Leaf Mountain City's name remained unchanged, but internally it had become a branch of Taiyi Sect. A group of cultivators skilled in handling similar situations was sent by Taiyi Sect to organize and manage the city, maintaining the appearance of normalcy.

To the outside world, especially neighboring forces, rumors were deliberately spread, suggesting that internal conflicts and fierce clashes had occurred within Maple Leaf Mountain City's major families. In the end, the defeated ones were either cleansed or expelled, while the victorious faction took over, becoming the new rulers of Maple Leaf Mountain City. Such power struggles and internal turmoil were not uncommon in the Cultivation World.

Although the sudden events in Maple Leaf Mountain City seemed a bit surprising, they were not entirely unacceptable. As the surrounding cultivation forces digested and accepted the situation, with time passing, everyone would gradually forget about these events. In the end, except for those directly involved, few would care about these matters.

Chapter 680: Laying an ambush

Cleanse those big families and their loyal followers. Absorb those who surrender and control them in various ways. Take control of the vast resources in Maple Leaf Mountain City and manage the territory more efficiently...

The Foundation Building stage cultivators of Taiyi Sect have handled this complex series of tasks in an orderly manner. The current Taiyi Sect not only has numerous cultivators but also possesses talents in various fields, proficient in all kinds of affairs.

Meng Zhang handed over the task of controlling Maple Leaf Mountain City to a group of Foundation Building stage cultivators from his sect. As for the Gold Core Daoist Masters, they can be freed up for other purposes.

Taiyi Sect's power on the side of Maple Leaf Mountain City already holds overwhelming dominance. However, Meng Zhang has not violated his promise to kick Xu Mengying out of the

picture. Firstly, he made a solemn oath and does not want to break it easily. Secondly, Xu Mengying still holds some utility, and it's not the time to turn against her.

Now that Meng Zhang has gained benefits and obtained the foundation of Maple Leaf Mountain City, he should fulfill the other favor promised to Xu Mengying. She merely asked Meng Zhang to help detain the group from Daoist Master Mountain Garden. But now, Meng Zhang has more ambitious plans in mind.

Of course, whether this plan can be realized depends on Xu Mengying's cooperation. Meng Zhang tells Xu Mengying that he intends to use his power to ambush Daoist Master Mountain Garden and their group. The ambush is not meant to harm the enemies but to trap them. As long as they are firmly held, Xu Mengying will have the freedom to act and no longer be bothered by them.

The clever Xu Mengying knows that Meng Zhang's words may not be entirely true, but she indeed has important matters to attend to and cannot let Daoist Master Mountain Garden's group follow her indefinitely. After discussing, they formulate a rough plan.

In reality, due to the delay when Daoist Master Mountain Garden's group broke through the blockade, it allowed Meng Zhang's group to smoothly control Maple Leaf Mountain City and have enough time to design their plans.

This fortunate turn of events seems like heaven-sent assistance for Meng Zhang.

A few days later, Daoist Master Mountain Garden's group arrives flying on a Third Rank flying ship from the west. They used a secret technique to sense the whereabouts of Xu Mengying's personal item. Despite the distance and the delay, they still successfully found Xu Mengying's trail and followed her all the way.

Standing at the bow of the flying ship, Daoist Master Mountain Garden's face doesn't look good. After the last time the Third Rank flying ship was damaged by Meng Zhang, it underwent emergency repairs, and its outer appearance seemed restored. However, there were still many damages inside, hindering its speed from reaching its full potential.

Helping Xu Mengying wholeheartedly is indeed troublesome for Meng Zhang.

Up until now, Daoist Master Mountain Garden has unexpectedly not found a good solution to the problem. Unfortunately, Daoist Master Smiling Lotus, that guy, unexpectedly retreated at the critical moment and left the group on his own.

While passing through the blockade, Daoist Master Smiling Lotus claimed to cooperate with local cultivators in pursuing Demonize cultivators and volunteered to stay behind. Daoist Master Mountain Garden, of course, knows that Daoist Master Smiling Lotus just didn't want to personally take part in capturing Xu Mengying and was dissatisfied with him.

However, in front of the local cultivators of the Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle, Daoist Master Smiling Lotus took the initiative to offer help in capturing the Demonize cultivator. Daoist Master Mountain Garden had no choice but to accept. Not to mention the face of righteous sects, just the presence of a Primordial Spirit True Monarch nearby made Daoist Master Mountain Garden unwilling to get involved in unnecessary conflicts.

Besides, he also didn't want to expose the internal discord of the Yellow Lotus Sect in front of outsiders, so he had to let Daoist Master Smiling Lotus stay behind.

The team originally had eight Gold Core Daoist Masters, and missing one Daoist Master Smiling Lotus wouldn't affect the overall situation. However, his retreat at the critical moment left Daoist Master Mountain Garden dissatisfied.

He was already considering how, after returning, he would reveal Daoist Master Smiling Lotus's disloyalty in front of the True Monarch Mountain Peak and expose his treacherous intentions.

Daoist Master Mountain Garden's thoughts were complicated, but the flying ship's speed remained unchanged.

Based on the secret technique's sensing, Xu Mengying was not far ahead. As long as they passed through the mountain in front of them, they should discover her trail.

In a valley not far ahead of the flying ship, Xu Mengying and Meng Zhang stood together, playing with a jade pendant in their hands with complex thoughts.

This jade pendant was Xu Mengying's most cherished personal item, but it had been tampered with by someone she trusted.

If it weren't for the significance of this jade pendant, which was related to her future actions, she would have thrown it away to shake off Daoist Master Mountain Garden's pursuit. Instead, she now stood with Meng Zhang, waiting to ambush Daoist Master Mountain Garden's group.

Although she had a deep hatred for True Monarch Mountain Peak, Xu Mengying still didn't want to engage in a full-on conflict with her fellow disciples from the sect.

Under Meng Zhang's insistence, she acted as bait here to attract Daoist Master Mountain Garden's group, allowing Meng Zhang and his fellow disciples to trap them.

Xu Mengying and Meng Zhang had been waiting here for several days, but they didn't show any signs of impatience. They chatted casually from time to time.

Today, they finally saw their targets approaching.

The Third Rank flying ship carrying Daoist Master Mountain Garden's group hadn't flown over the valley yet, but several Gold Core Daoist Masters standing on the ship's deck had already spotted Xu Mengying and Meng Zhang in the valley.

Because they were worried about Xu Mengying escaping again and believed they had an absolute advantage, Daoist Master Mountain Garden didn't hesitate and directly ordered the ship to swoop down.

Seven Gold Core Daoist Masters stood outside the flying ship's deck, ready to attack at any moment.

The massive body of the Third Rank flying ship was like a small mountain, pressing down towards Meng Zhang and Xu Mengying below.

As soon as the flying ship appeared, Meng Zhang and Xu Mengying realized something was wrong. They quickly flew upwards, trying to escape. However, the flying ship charged directly at them, blocking their path of escape.

It was clear that they didn't want to engage in a head-on confrontation with the enemy. Instead, they rapidly descended, obviously planning to escape from the ground.

The flying ship accelerated its descent, almost catching up to them. The seven Gold Core Daoist Masters on the ship's deck were eager to make a move.

Suddenly, a loud noise echoed through the entire valley.

A golden giant net descended from the sky, directly targeting the descending Third Rank flying ship.

At the same time, a dense yellow light shield rose from the ground, also heading towards the flying ship.

Xu Mengying and Meng Zhang easily penetrated the yellow light shield, allowing it to hit the enemy's ship.

Unable to evade the sudden impact, the flying ship collided heavily with the light shield, producing a loud sound.

Due to the unexpected blow, the flying ship came to a momentary halt, and the descending golden giant net firmly enveloped it.