

The Heavens 631

Chapter 631: False Immortals and True Immortals

“Whose entire life, bitch?” said Meng Hao, his killing intent boiling. The Sword Qi descended, slashing down toward the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch, who was currently enveloped by the power of the Agarwood.

Rumbling climbed up into the sky as the Sword Qi neared. However, it was then that a black wind suddenly sprung up around the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch. The wind rapidly condensed into a shocking black dragon.

The black dragon opened its mouth and a roaring wind emerged that fought back against the power of the Agarwood. The cage appeared to be instantly diffused; at the same time, drops of rain appeared out of nowhere. More and more appeared, transforming into a rain that filled the entire sky and then shot toward the Sword Qi.

A massive boom could be heard that shook everything. Blood poured out of Meng Hao’s mouth, and he fell back. Without looking back to see what had happened, he retrieved the teleportation jade slip that he had acquired from Patriarch Reliance that year, and squeezed it between his fingers.

The jade slip had been on the verge of shattering years ago. Strangely, though, after not having used it for so long, it had slowly repaired itself, and was now much more solid.

Glittering light spread out. Because of the current level of Meng Hao’s Cultivation base, the time needed to activate the teleportation power was much less. It only took the space of seven or eight breaths to succeed, and then he began to teleport away.

After Meng Hao disappeared, the roaring and booming in the area faded away. The Wang Clan Patriarch slowly moved forward, his body gradually becoming more blurry, and occasionally glittering with light. A huge gash could be seen stretching from his head all the way down through the rest of his body, splitting him entirely in half. He seemed to be forcing the two halves to remain together.

He didn’t seem to recognize any sort of pain as he watched Meng Hao disappearing. His eyes glittered with a mysterious light, and he smiled. Because his body had been split in two, however, the smile looked exceedingly savage and horrible.

“I underestimated you, child. It turns out you have a real precious treasure....

“However, you can’t evade me.” Even as he smiled that horrific smile, the Wang Clan Patriarch’s body grew completely blurry. Gradually, it turned into a wisp of aura, which then dissipated into the surroundings.

At the same time, in the mountains of the Wang Clan in the Southern Domain, the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch’s true self lay in a coffin in the tomb underneath the 10th mountain. His eyes opened.

A strange light glowed within as he looked up at the cliffs stretching up above him. He began to chuckle hoarsely.

“If it weren’t for the fact that I used my true self’s power to interfere with the Ji Clan and hide that child’s Perfect foundation, they definitely would have noticed him. At some point throughout the years, they would surely have tracked him down and stolen him away. If I had been there as my true self just now, I would have succeeded.

“However, the Perfect Dao foundation has matured, and is ripe for the plucking. Even though I still can’t venture out with my true self, a clone will still do the trick. That Sword Qi was obviously gifted by an outsider. How many times can he use it? Perhaps he’s already reached the point where he can’t.” The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch shook his head and smiled. A ghost image suddenly appeared over him. In the blink of an eye, an illusory body rose up to float in mid-air. As it grew clearer and clearer, it started to resemble the Wang Clan Patriarch in all respects.

The clone’s hand flickered in an incantation, and after a moment, he frowned.

“Near the Milky Way Sea....

“The Milky Way Sea is a restricted area for the Dao Seeking stage....” The 10th Wang Clan Patriarch’s Clone hesitated for a moment. Then his expression returned to normal. His eyes flashed as he slowly began to grow blurry.

On the edge of the Western Desert, between the Violet Sea and the Milky Way Sea, was a border region that stretched farther than the eye could see. That border region was actually nothing more than a wall-like mass of soil. On one side, the water was violet, the other side, the water was blue, making the difference between the Violet Sea and the Milky Way Sea clearcut!

In a particular area in that border region, a huge black vortex suddenly appeared in mid-air. Meng Hao staggered out from the middle of the vortex, blood spraying from his mouth.

The blood was pitch-black, and filled with rot. Meng Hao's face was pale, and his entire body was covered by a thin membrane, which was nothing other than the meat jelly, helping him to prevent his body from completely exploding.

However, Meng Hao could still sense his body slowly decaying. The feeling of imminent death grew stronger and stronger.

"10th... Wang... Clan... PATRIARCH!!" Monstrous killing intent boiled in Meng Hao's eyes. He gritted his teeth as more blood oozed out of his mouth. This was virtually the worst injury he had ever sustained in all his years as a Cultivator.

"That bastard was just a step away from being a false Immortal," squawked the parrot angrily, flapping its wings. "How could he be so shameless! Bitch! He actually attacked you, Meng Hao! Dammit! Lord Fifth was viciously sealed that year, otherwise, it wouldn't matter that the bastard didn't have fur or feathers, I would have popped him anyway!"

"What's a false Immortal?" asked Meng Hao. His hand was pushed up against his chest as intense pain wracked his entire body. Gradually, a violet light appeared in his eyes as he drew upon his longevity to heal himself.

"False Immortals are low-lives who can never experience the luck to reach Immortal Ascension!" raged the parrot. "They don't have their own Dao, and yet, they refuse to die. In their unyieldingness, they conform themselves to the Dao of another, and use that to become Immortal. That's a false Immortal!"

"Some people would rather die than become a false Immortal who belongs to someone else. Others, in order to avoid death, will pay any price. The latter are basically betrayers of the Dao!"

"In the Ninth Mountain and Sea, the greatest of the false Immortals are the Ji Clan. The Ji Clan changed the Heavens, and their Immortals are all false Immortals, and also the strongest of all the false Immortals!"

“Next are all the various Clans and Sects. After gaining enlightenment of the Daos of their ancestors, they trod the path of the false Immortal!” This time, the parrot didn’t hold any information back.

Meng Hao silently considered all of this. He had come to find that the Violet Pupil Transformation was becoming less and less effective in healing himself, and didn’t heal as quickly as before. Although it still worked, it was far, far too slow. His heart sank.

“Some people with high aspirations, those who truly strive after the Dao, who live in the morning and die in the evening, would rather acquire their own personal Dao. Such people can face death willingly.

“When people like that succeed, they are true Immortals!

“However, after the Ji Clan changed the Heavens, true Immortals are seldom seen. Perhaps every thousand years, one might appear on any given planet. Only on the four great planets can the Dao be confirmed and Immortal Ascension achieved. Once someone reaches Immortal Ascension on a planet, then in the next thousand years, a second person may not. Therefore, to say that in ten thousand years in the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea, a few dozen true Immortals appear, would be an overstatement.

“When you add in true Immortal Tribulation, the number of true Immortals who can survive in the four great planets won’t exceed ten!” By this point in its speech, the parrot sounded grieved and indignant.

“True Immortal Tribulation?” asked Meng Hao. He sent his Divine Sense into the blood-colored mask. When he saw that the mastiff was there recovering, he breathed a sigh of relief.

“Those who wish to search for their own Dao and become true Immortals must face it. Succeed, and it is inconsequential. Fail, and they perish to become a natural law of Heaven and Earth.

“Success mean ascension to being a true Immortal. Afterwards, when any Immortal Tribulation falls, that person will rise to prominence. Other than another true Immortal, no one else could possibly be a match.” It was hard to tell what exactly the parrot was thinking, but all of a sudden, its tone was gloomy.

Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as he looked at the parrot and then asked another question. “That 10th Wang Clan Patriarch said something about a Perfect Dao foundation. What did he mean?”

“You cultivate the Sublime Spirit Scripture. Although I don’t understand too much about it, I do know that it’s one of the three classic scriptures. If you cultivate it to completion, you will be a Sublime Spirit Doyen!

“However, the Perfect stratum lies only beneath Spirit Severing. That is, Qi Condensation, Foundation Establishment, Core Formation, and Nascent Soul, four stages. As for how to cultivate it after that, nobody knows except for past generations of Sublime Spirit Doyens.

“As for the Perfect Dao foundation, that is something that only those who cultivate the Sublime Spirit Scripture are qualified to have. Furthermore, anyone with such qualifications will have a much, much greater chance of reaching true Immortal Ascension.

“As far as false Immortals are concerned, if they can acquire your Dao foundation, then it means they would have another chance to make a choice! With enough experience and preparation, they might be able to change their path from that of false Immortal to the realm of the true Immortal!

“Most importantly, possessing a Perfect Dao foundation means that if you fail in true Immortal Ascension, then you won’t perish! You can shed your Dao foundation and escape death that one time!”

After hearing this explanation, Meng Hao now understood everything that the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch had said.

He also understood why the Ji Clan had virtually never come looking for him. Most likely, many threats that he didn’t even know about had been resolved in secret by the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch.

He was like a Dao Protector. Except, his purpose in protecting Meng Hao was to steal his Dao foundation!

“What happens if my Dao foundation gets taken away?” asked Meng Hao slowly, a profound gleam swirling deep in his eyes.

The parrot thought for a moment, then replied in a low voice, “If a tower has no foundation, what happens?”

“It collapses,” replied Meng Hao coolly. “It’s unstable and is destroyed.”

“The same would happen to you. If someone steals your Dao foundation, then you’ll die.”

“Meng Hao, get out of here!” cried the parrot anxiously. “That bastard definitely got away. From what he said, he set you up as a Dao seed long ago. Flee! Flee until you’ve grown up a bit more!

“As for your aura, the meat jelly can conceal it. If the Wang Patriarch finds you any time soon, it won’t be a good thing!”

Meng Hao stood there silently, indescribable emotions stirring him into a somewhat vicious mood. Gradually, his lips twisted into a cold smile.

He knew that compared to the Wang Clan Patriarch, he was nothing more than a bug. However, his heart still thumped with viciousness. Now that this matter had been raised, it would not fade away. Instead, it had turned into something like a seed.

It was like a seed that was buried deep in the recesses of his heart.

“I came to understand the law of the jungle a long time ago,” Meng Hao muttered to himself. “One day, I will achieve my Dao, and the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch will die. If the Wang Clan gets in my way, then when I have my own great Dao...

“I will ensure that the Southern Domain has no more Wang Clan, ever!” Filled with determination, the viciousness in his heart once again surged.

He took a deep breath and looked around. Then, he looked off in the direction of the Milky Way Sea, his eyes glittering. He began to fly at top speed, healing himself at the same time.

Eventually, he reached the invisible wall that completely separated the Violet Sea and the Milky Way Sea. He slammed into it, and then pierced directly through it. A fishy, sea aroma filled the air. This... was the Milky Way Sea!

A boundless sea surged in all directions. Off in the distance, the sun was setting. In the glow of twilight, all that could be seen were beautiful waves and a deep orange glow.

“I need to be cautious in all matters, prepared for all contingencies....” He lifted up his hand, within which was the teleportation jade slip. It was definitely on the verge of shattering now. After a moment’s hesitation, his eyes filled with determination and he pressed down. Based on his understanding from previous usage of the item, he could tell that the teleportation distance was determined by how much Cultivation base power was sent into it.

He pushed down hard and, a moment later, a black vortex appeared around him. He was sucked in, and then disappeared.

After he vanished, enough time passed for an incense stick to burn. Suddenly distortions appeared in the air in the position he had just left from. A moment later, the image of the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch emerged. He looked around and then frowned.

“Very crafty, child,” he said coolly. “Your aura disappears from here. However, I’ve already determined that you are in the Milky Way Sea.

“You can’t evade me. Your Perfect Dao foundation belongs to me. You may enjoy hiding yourself, but I will find you.” With that, his body flickered, and he vanished.

Chapter 632: The Milky Way Sea

The Milky Way Sea was located in the middle of the lands of South Heaven, splitting everything into two continents, one comprised of the Eastern Lands and the Northern Reaches, the other of the Southern Domain and the Western Desert.

The area taken up by the Milky Way Sea is huge, far greater than either of the two continents. If you compared it in size with the Southern Domain, the Milky Way Sea would be approximately five times as large.

Therefore, it was divided up into four sections called Rings. The part outside of the Four Rings was called the Outer Sea.

The boundless sea was constantly plagued with hurricanes that swept about, causing huge waves to spring up. Still, there were many islands to be found, some large, some small, which meant that there were Cultivators too.

Of course, sea beasts swam to and fro within the sea waters. Their flesh and blood were often prized by Cultivators, especially the sea beasts that were similar to Cultivators, and were called Sea Demons. Their Demon hearts were highly valuable. Even one Demon heart could emit spiritual energy similar to a mid-grade Spirit Stone.

For these and a variety of other reasons, the Milky Way Sea had been a destination for Cultivators for many years. People settled down, multiplied, expanded, and soon power structures emerged.

There were both strong and weak powers in the Milky Way Sea, and they were distributed amongst the various islands that dotted the surface of the waters. Most of the powers existed in the Fourth Ring. Only some very powerful Sects or Clans qualified to reside in the Third Ring.

Of course, there were many legends that passed from ear to ear in the Milky Way Sea. Many seemed unlikely, but at the same time, many people believed them to be true. It seemed that when anything changed in the Milky Way Sea, there were always people who would attribute it to something strange.

It was a vast sea that would never be peaceful and calm, but would always be brushed over by hurricanes. This... was the Milky Way Sea.

In the Outer Sea region of the Milky Way Sea, a ship approximately three hundred meters long was moving along at high speed.

At the prow of the ship, a middle-aged man was casually recounting some Milky Way Sea legends to some youngsters who were gathered around him.

“According to the legend, there is an ancient ship which can be seen in the Milky Way Sea. Anyone who sees that ship will receive great blessings.... They say that an old man sits cross-legged at its prow.

“He wears a dilapidated suit of armor, and his eyes are closed. He never moves....”

The youngsters looked very excited. Apparently, this was a story they could hear a hundred times, but never get tired of.

Water sprayed up from the surface of the sea, and high up above the ship, a silk flag snapped in the salty breeze. Embroidered on the flag was the character “Zhang 张,” along with the representation

of a flying sword. That indicated that this ship belonged to the Zhang Clan, a Cultivator Clan of the Milky Way Sea.

There were approximately fifty people on the ship, most of whom were fit and strong, but mortal. There were only a handful of Cultivators, all of whom sat cross-legged in meditation. The only one who didn't was the middle-aged man at the prow of the ship, who was in the late Foundation Establishment stage. He was the one telling stories to the younger generation Clan members.

"Our Zhang Clan's Patriarch saw that ship a few hundred years ago," he continued in a low voice, taking advantage of the situation to subtly influence the younger generation of the clan. "He received a blessing just as the legends say; he had a Cultivation base breakthrough, and became a Core Formation expert.

"It was for that reason that he was able to occupy an island in the Outer Sea, and establish our Zhang Clan as a local power. All of you need to remember this!"

Among the group of youngsters was a strapping young boy who instantly spoke up. "We know that story, Uncle Hai Xin!" he said. His tone pleading, he said, "Tell us about Saint's Island!"

As soon as the words left his mouth, some of the other children began to beg for the same thing.

The middle-aged man laughed silently, not quite sure of what to say. He was about to begin speaking, when suddenly he sensed something. He turned his head to look at the ship's quarterdeck, and saw a beautiful young woman emerging

She wore a nautical silk jacket and skirt, and was naturally beautiful, radiant, and enchanting. A slight smile could be seen on her face as she stepped out of the quarterdeck. However, despite the smile, it was impossible to cover up the anxiety and unease in her eyes.

Holding her hand was a child of six or seven years old, a boy. He had plump cheeks, and looked quite adorable. As for the young woman, her Cultivation base was at the great circle of Foundation Establishment.

"Greetings, Clan Leader!" said the middle-aged man respectfully. He clasped hands and bowed deeply.

The other youngsters around him also bowed to her.

“We’re all fellow Clan members, there’s no need for such politeness,” said the young woman, laughing. “Nan’er wanted to see the sun setting over the ocean, so I brought him out to have a look.”

The boy next to the young woman looked at the middle-aged man with wide eyes and piped: “Uncle Hai Xin, did I just hear someone mention Saint’s Island?”

The middle-aged man laughed, and a dotting gleam appeared in his eyes. To him, all the hope of the Clan rested on the future of this boy.

“Ah, Saint’s Island,” said the man, smiling. “It’s the number one island in the Fourth Ring, and its Footloose Sect is the number one Sect in the whole Fourth Ring!”

“Saint’s Island is very large, almost like a continent! It’s far, far larger than our island. There is even a nation of mortals that exists there, called the State of Xiao.

“Because the Footloose Sect has a Spirit Severing Cultivator, it can strike awe into the hearts of all the other forces in the Fourth Ring. It has many Cultivators; Qi Condensation and Foundation Establishment Cultivators are everywhere. There are even dozens of Core Formation Cultivators! And when it comes to Nascent Soul experts... they have seven!

“In the entire Fourth Ring, there isn’t a single Sect or Clan who could possibly fight back against their power. The Footloose Sect is fully deserving to be regarded as the overlord of the Fourth Ring.

“You all know the reason we’re going there. Therefore, when we arrive, all of you need to be very respectful. Young Master Nan’er has the best latent talent of anyone born in recent years.

“The Footloose Sect is accepting disciples, which means that our Clan has an incredible opportunity!” As of this point, the man’s eyes shone with anticipation.

“If Young Master Nan’er can join the Footloose Sect, then with his latent talent, he’ll definitely be able to reach Foundation Establishment. There would even be the possibility that in the future, he could reach Core Formation! Then, he could be just as heroic as our Clan Patriarch, all those years ago!

“When that happens, our Zhang Clan will once again be able to rise to prominence in the Outer Sea!” The middle-aged man’s voice was filled with passion. The youngsters around him looked over with admiration and envy at the boy standing next to the young woman.

The young woman tousled his hair, and was about to say something when, suddenly, her expression flickered. In the same moment that she looked up, so did the middle-aged man.

From the middle of the ship, a man and a woman suddenly flew up into the air. Both of them looked to be about fifty years old, and had Cultivation bases in the late Foundation Establishment stage. They stood on flying swords, expressions of shock on their face as they looked up into the air.

Everything was quiet, and everyone on the boat looked on, stunned.

What they saw was a huge rift soundlessly open in mid-air. It rapidly turned into a pitch-black vortex, which rotated rapidly as it turned into a black hole.

A man staggered out, blood spraying from his mouth.

He had long gray hair, and wore a white, blood-stained robe. His aura was unstable, and his face was pale white. Of course, it was Meng Hao.

The parrot perched on his shoulder, and its disdainful gaze swept around the area.

As soon as Meng Hao appeared, his internal injuries once again exploded out, which was something he hadn’t anticipated. The second teleportation had actually ripped open the old wounds, causing the injuries to become even worse.

He hovered in mid-air, looking down at the people on the ship and the various expressions on their faces. It didn’t matter that he was currently injured, as soon as his gaze swept across them, their hearts began to tremble and pound. They felt as if they were being stared at by an ancient, wild beast.

“My injuries are too severe,” he thought, looking away. “I need to quickly find somewhere to begin healing.” Ignoring the people on the ship below, he took a deep breath, and was just about to force his Cultivation base to rotate so that he could move off into the distance.

On the ship, everyone stood around as mute as cicadas in winter. Except for the young woman.

“Senior, there’s no need to leave!” As soon as the words left her mouth, she felt regret. When Meng Hao looked back at her, she trembled, but then forced herself to clasp hands and bow deeply.

“Senior,” she went on, trembling, “you’re seriously injured. If you’re searching for a place to rest and heal, our ship has first-class cabins as well as some medicinal pills. If you’d like, you can always treat yourself here.” She clenched her teeth, and her heart pounded with nervousness.

When they heard her words, the faces of the surrounding Foundation Establishment Cultivators, including the middle-aged man, all fell. They couldn’t understand why the Clan Leader would do something like this. They wanted to do something to stop it, but didn’t dare to open their mouths.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he paused in mid-air to look at the young woman.

When he looked in her eyes, the young woman felt as if all Heaven and Earth were roaring, and she began to tremble even harder.

“What place are you going to?” he said, retracting his gaze.

“Our humble Clan is going to Saint’s Island in the Fourth Ring, so that my son can join the Footloose Sect.” The young woman didn’t dare to hide anything, and also spoke very respectfully. As of this point, the other three Foundation Establishment Cultivators had guessed what her purpose was. Although they continued to tremble inwardly, they also felt a bit of anticipation.

Meng Hao didn’t know where exactly this Saint’s Island was, nor did he understand the power structures and various regions of the Milky Way Sea. After a moment of thought, he nodded and then floated down onto the ship. The young woman respectfully guided him to a private cabin protected by a spell formation.

Meng Hao nodded, then sat down cross-legged. As he closed his eyes, the young woman respectfully made her exit.

As soon as she left, the parrot disapprovingly said, “Why did you pick this place? Don’t tell me you’ve taken a liking to that young lady? She doesn’t have much fur. I actually checked her out a few times earlier....”

“It doesn’t matter where I hide in the Milky Way Sea, it’s all the same,” replied Meng Hao coolly. “Even if I’m at the bottom of the sea, once the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch detects my aura, he’ll be able to find me. Since that’s the case, I might as well hide here. Who knows, I might even gain some unexpected benefits.” With that, he began to rotate his Cultivation base. Violet light gleamed underneath his eyelids as he began to treat his injuries.

Time passed by. On the morning of the second day, the young woman brought some local Milky Way Sea food products. She also gave him a jade slip that had information about Saint’s Island, as well as a sea map of the surrounding areas.

The map was the most valuable thing to Meng Hao. Although it seemed simple, it had actually been produced by information gathered by successive generations of the Zhang Clan.

The young woman wasn’t sure of Meng Hao’s origins, but just to be safe, she gave him the map as a show of good faith.

Meng Hao took the jade slip, looked it over, and then smiled. The young woman instantly felt a bit more at ease. She reached up to pull a strand of hair back over her ear. Her features were naturally beautiful, but the mixture of anxiety and relief caused her to look even more entrancing. Suppressing her own excitement, she respectfully left.

Meng Hao watched her leave. Based on his experiences, the reason she had asked him to stay was because she had experienced grave danger in the past. Thus, she had taken the risk to call out to him.

He then focused his attention on the jade slip. “So the Milky Way Sea is divided into four Rings.... The area outside the Fourth Ring is called the Outer Sea.

“Saint’s Island. State of Xiao. Footloose Sect.” After a bit of time, he put the jade slip away and then continued to treat his injuries.

Time passed by slowly....

Chapter 633: Honored Guest

In the blink of an eye, seven days passed.

Meng Hao spent the entire time with eyes closed in meditation, treating his injuries. During the seven days, the injuries gradually healed by about thirty percent. Unfortunately, his fleshly body still couldn't hold together without the help of the meat jelly. It still needed time to grow stable. However, the wounds were gradually fusing shut.

Every day, he would eat three meals of fruit, personally delivered by the young woman. She was always very respectful.

She even offered up some Spirit Stones. Whatever Meng Hao requested was provided in full, and all his questions about the Milky Way Sea were answered in detail.

In addition to healing himself, Meng Hao was able to gain quite an understanding about the area.

During the seven days, the surface of the Milky Way Sea was calm and quiet. The Zhang ship from the Outer Sea bravely proceeded onward as it had from the beginning. Of course, now that Meng Hao was on board, everyone was a bit more nervous than before. However, nothing untoward occurred.

As time passed and Meng Hao continued to stay in secluded meditation, the young woman gradually felt more at ease. Her previous cheerful and playful attitude returned. Occasionally, her laughter rang out, filled with a bit of childish naivety.

The other three Foundation Establishment Cultivators on the boat were as nervous as ever. They understood what the Clan Leader was thinking, but in their opinion, what she was doing was like asking a tiger for its own skin, expecting a bad person to act against his own interest. In their opinion, young people like her didn't understand the ruthlessness of the Cultivation world. On the other hand, the three of them, having practiced cultivation up to the level of Foundation Establishment, and having maintained the position of the Clan on their island in the Outer Sea, had experienced many situations of deadly crisis.

They well knew that in the Cultivation world, the law of the jungle prevailed, and danger was the norm. One bad thing could lead to complete destruction, and could even affect an entire Clan.

Meng Hao had randomly appeared out of a bizarre black hole. Although he was weak and severely injured, the look he had given them seven days ago had caused them to feel as if they were frozen dead in the middle of winter.

They had the intense sensation that if Meng Hao wanted to kill them, then it wouldn't matter if he was even more severely injured, they would all be destroyed.

Currently, all of three of them stood at the stern of the ship, frowning and giving voice to the same concerns.

“This matter with the Clan Leader... it's not wise!”

“That man was severely injured, and arrived via teleportation. From the look of things, he must be the subject of pursuit. If his pursuers catch up with him, it could bring about the destruction of all of us!”

“Ai! I know what the Clan Leader is thinking. This journey to Saint's Island is our last shot. If we succeed, we can strike some fear into the Liu Clan so that they don't dare to act recklessly.”

“We can only hope that Nan'er will fight to excel. Hopefully he can stick out in the Footloose Sect's competition for new disciples.”

The three of them exchanged glances and then sighed lightly.

The Patriarch of the Zhang Clan had founded their island in the Outer Sea. However, after he passed away in meditation, they had been forced to tread as carefully as if walking on thin ice. Another Core Formation Cultivator hadn't appeared in the Clan, which meant that the island they occupied soon came to be eyed greedily by surrounding neighbors.

Were it not for the spell formation left in place by the Patriarch before he passed away, as well as the magical items and social connections he had made, then they would have long since lost their island and become an auxiliary Clan.

They had managed to hold on for a while, until finally a crisis loomed. The Liu Clan, who occupied a nearby island, had long since begun to glare at them like a tiger eyeing its prey. Slaughter had been on the verge of breaking out.

During that moment of critical danger, the Zhang Clan Leader, which was none other than the beautiful young woman, had made a difficult decision. She took all of her people and left the island in secret to deliver her son to the Footloose Sect.

If he became a disciple of the Footloose Sect, then his identity would be enough to intimidate anyone in the Outer Sea. It would protect the Zhang Clan for at least around a hundred years.

The three Foundation Establishment Cultivators continued to discuss matters.

“This whole thing is going to be very difficult.... There’s no need to even mention that after arriving at Saint’s Island, it’s impossible to know if Nan’er will be able to distinguish himself amongst the crowd and enter the Footloose Sect. Regardless of anything, our path is going to be one of extreme danger.”

“That’s right. Rumors will have spread, and the news leaked. The Liu Clan won’t be willing to accept this.... We can only hope that they react too slowly. Hopefully we left early enough to seize a superior position and evade their pursuit.”

“In addition to the Liu Clan, there are also the numerous sea beasts that roam between the Outer Sea and the Fourth Ring, not to mention the cruel rogue Cultivators. How could our path possibly be one of peace and security?”

“However, this really is our only chance....” The three once more sighed and then lapsed into silence. They understood what the Clan Leader was trying to do, and since she had already made her decision, there was no need to spend time worrying.

Who knew? Perhaps... inviting the wounded expert to stay with them might have some extraordinary outcome.

At the same time that the three of them were having their discussion, the Zhang Clan Leader, the young woman, stood at the prow of the boat, clasping her son’s hand. She looked off into the sky up above, unable to conceal her expression of anxiety and unease.

“Our voyage will continue for three more days before we reach the Fourth Ring,” she murmured. “After leaving the Outer Sea behind, then we really will have evaded the Liu Clan....” Although the Liu Clan was not weak, that was only when speaking in terms of the Outer Sea. In the Fourth Ring, they could be considered bugs. In the analysis of the young woman, once they entered the Fourth Ring, the Liu Clan would most likely give up any pursuit and not dare to follow.

After all, she and her Clan were at the end of their rope, whereas the Liu Clan wouldn't dare to rashly put themselves in danger.

She looked down at her son and patted his head. "Nan'er, you need to remember, the Footloose Sect pays a lot of attention to seniority. After we arrive, you must not make any breaches of etiquette."

The boy didn't seem to understand what she meant, but he nodded his head obediently. Her eyes filled with a doting expression, and she was just about to lean over to pick him up when her expression flickered and she suddenly looked behind her.

At the same time, the three Foundation Establishment Cultivators in the stern also looked back.

What they saw was a pitch-black ship speeding toward them at top speed. The flag flying on the ship was clearly emblazoned with a huge character.

Liu 刘!

This was a ship from the Outer Seas Liu Clan. They had been in full pursuit for days, and had finally caught up. On the prow of the ship stood four people, three of whom wore extremely respectful expressions. The other was clearly different than them.

He was an old man with an aloof expression. His eyes flashed like lightning, and he held his hands clasped behind his back. His voluminous robe flapped in the wind, and his long, white hair made him look completely extraordinary.

His Cultivation base emanated the ripples of the early Core Formation stage. It was for this reason that the Liu Clan ship had been able to pursue at top speed for so many days.

As soon as the young woman caught sight of the old man, the blood drained from her face. She began to pant, and her hands clasped down tightly onto her son.

The other three Foundation Establishment Cultivators of the Zhang Clan also felt their hearts beginning to pound. Their faces paled, and their eyes filled with despair.

"Liu Clan... Patriarch!"

As the Liu Clan ship neared, the appearances of the old man and the other three who accompanied him grew clearer. Behind them appeared seven or eight Qi Condensation Clan members, all of whom wore expressions of disdain.

Standing next to the Liu Clan Patriarch was a middle-aged man. He smiled and said, “Zhang Wenfang, what’s your hurry? Now that you’ve abandoned your Zhang Clan island, where exactly do you think you’re going?”

Zhang Wenfang walked to the stern of the ship, took a deep breath and then said, “Junior offers greetings, senior Liu. Senior, we’ve abandoned our island, and would simply like to get as far away as possible. Our two Clans were friends in the past. Don’t tell me you won’t even give us a chance to survive?” The other Zhang Clan Cultivators gathered around her, their faces filled with extreme grief and indignation.

The young woman’s words were directed, not toward the man who had spoken, but toward the Liu Clan Patriarch. Despite matters having reached their current state, she still addressed him respectfully.

The Liu Clan Patriarch said nothing; he merely looked on with a proud expression. The Clan member standing next to him was the one to respond, his tone of voice filled with ridicule. “What a joke! Do you really take us to be three-year-old children? Do you really think we don’t know of your plan, Zhang Wenfang? You’re obviously journeying to the Footloose Clan!”

“Junior can abandon everything, even deliver our island to you, senior. I can also swear that we have no intention to encroach on what is not ours. I just beg of you to be a bit lenient....” Zhang Wenfang’s face was pale, but before she could finish speaking, the Liu Clan Patriarch frowned.

“Pipe down!” he said coolly, his voice echoing about like thunder in all directions. The seawater roiled, and the minds of the Zhang Wenfang and the other Clan members filled with a droning sound.

One sentence, two words. All of the Qi Condensation Clan members coughed up blood. Only Zhang Wenfang and the other Foundation Establishment Cultivators got by with only pale faces. Their expressions were filled with increasing hopelessness.

“Where do you come up with so much nonsense?” said the Liu Clan Patriarch, his voice cool. “Kill them all! Old people, children, don’t leave a single one alive!” With that, he waved his sleeve, and the surrounding Liu Clan members flew up into the air, vicious expressions on their faces.

Zhang Wenfang clenched her teeth and looked back at the ship’s quarterdeck. “Senior Liu!” she suddenly cried. “If you have a quarrel with the Zhang Clan, you can kill us, but do you really dare to trifle with our honored guest?!”

“Still making things up?” said the Liu Clan Patriarch with a cold snort. “You expect me to believe that the Zhang Clan has a Nascent Soul guest aboard? Or is it a Spirit Severing expert? Wouldn’t that be a bit more threatening?” He had already swept the ship with Spiritual Sense, and had detected only the Zhang Clan Cultivators and mortals on the ship, no one else.

By this point, the Liu Clan Cultivators were closing in. A glowing shield sprang up from the Zhang Clan ship, blocking their progress. However, it couldn’t do anything to stop the Liu Clan Patriarch. With a single palm strike, he caused a deafening boom to ring out. The ship sank down by more than half into the water, and the shield shattered into fragments.

The Liu Clan Cultivators proceeded onward with vicious grins. As soon as they reached the boat, Zhang Wenfang and the other three Foundation Establishment Cultivators unleashed magical items and flashed incantations to summon magical techniques. Booms instantly rang out.

The massacre had begun.

“The Patriarch has issued the orders! Eliminate them completely, root and branch. They can only blame their own name of Zhang.”

Some of the Liu Clan Qi Condensation Cultivators, with hideous grins on their faces, headed toward the pale-faced and terrified youngsters. Zhang Wenfang’s eyes turned red, and the Clan members next to her were on the verge of going crazy and risking everything.

The Liu Clan Patriarch hovered in mid-air, staring superciliously out of the corner of his eyes. To him, all of these people were clearly insects.

However, it was at this moment, a calm voice suddenly echoed out from within the Zhang Clan’s ship.

“Pipe down!”

It was only two words, but as the sound expanded out, it instantly suppressed all other sounds. It was louder than thunder, and gave rise to three echoes. It was also filled with intense pressure that weighed down on everything.

At the same time, within his cabin, Meng Hao’s eyes opened. His gaze seemed to pass through the ship, making everything outside visible.

Chapter 634: Who’s Feeling Jumpy?

The instant his voice rang out, it gave rise to the first echo. Ripples appeared that headed toward the Liu Clan Qi Condensation disciples who were about to attack the youngsters. They began to tremble, then blood sprayed from their mouths as they were sent tumbling backward. Then, their bodies simply exploded in mid air, countless pieces flying about in all directions. At the same time, all the other Liu Clan Qi Condensation disciples suffered the same fate. They first watched on with blank expressions, then were shattered into chunks of blood and gore.

When the second echo rang out, the Liu Clan’s three Foundation Establishment Cultivators’ faces went pale white. They felt as if an enormous, invisible hand were bombarding them. They tumbled backward through mid-air, screaming miserably. In the blink of an eye, countless tears and rips could be seen in their bodies, and then, a moment later, they exploded into pieces.

The third echo caused the Liu Clan Patriarch, who was floating up above, to shake. His face instantly filled with an expression of disbelief and horror. Blood sprayed from his mouth as he retreated backward. He couldn’t prevent his body from beginning to rip apart.

“This... this....” His mind roared with a terror he had never known, and then he suddenly thought back to how Zhang Wenfang had mentioned an honored guest.

“Senior, spare me....” he screamed, his terror having reached the pinnacle. However, even as the words left his mouth, he suddenly burst into pieces, causing blood and flesh to rain down in all directions.

In that instant, everything went deathly silent....

Everyone who remained on the Liu Clan ship were all mortals, who were now watching on with pale faces, their bodies shaking.

As for the Zhang Clan members, including Zhang Wenfang, they all stared in shock, and were also shaking. That was especially true of the three Foundation Establishment Cultivators, whose faces were completely pale. They had no way to even imagine what kind of Cultivation base could destroy all their enemies with a single statement.

And that included an early Core Formation Cultivator, someone whose Cultivation base was the same as their own previous Patriarch!

“Nascent Soul eccentric!” That was what was now floating in the minds of the three.

Zhang Wenfang’s body trembled. She also had never imagined that the person she invited to stay on their ship would be so fearsome. Originally, she had taken him to be a Core Formation expert, but what she had just seen left her astonished to the extreme.

Had she known that Meng Hao possessed such a Cultivation base, she might not have had the courage to speak up and urge him to stay behind. However, she was the Clan Leader. Therefore, her first reaction was to instantly turn toward the ship’s quarterdeck, then drop to her knees and kowtow.

“Thank you, senior... for your action just now....” Her voice quavered as she spoke. At the same time, the other members of the Clan, their minds trembling, began to drop to their knees to kowtow.

“Come on, let’s keep going,” replied Meng Hao from within his cabin. Zhang Wenfang ignored the Liu Clan ship, and, her anxiety deepening, respectfully complied, having the mortal members of the Zhang Clan send their own ship forward.

Moments later, the Zhang Clan ship was moving on just as before. As for everyone on board, absolute silence reigned amongst them.

They remained in that state for three days, until finally the ship entered the Fourth Ring, and then everything finally changed.

However, everyone still acted extremely cautiously. Whenever any of them happened to pass Meng Hao’s cabin, they would stop outside to bow before proceeding on their way.

Half a month later, the ship was speeding along through the Fourth Ring, and they drew ever nearer to Saint's Island. Although they weren't sure why, they hadn't encountered even a single sea beast or rogue Cultivator. Perhaps it was luck. That was not even to mention the pirate Cultivators who would cause anyone who discussed them to grow pale in the face.

Meng Hao had treated his injuries to the point where he was now sixty percent recovered. The meat jelly had finally sloughed off of him; his fleshly body was now recovered to complete stability. As long as he didn't get involved with a magical battle of the Spirit Severing level, he would be fine.

"This injury was inflicted by the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch, who has a Dao Seeking Cultivation base. That's why the Violet Pupil Transformation has been so ineffective." His eyes finally opened. After taking a moment to examine his Cultivation base, a smile appeared on his face for the first time in many days.

His Cultivation base, which had originally been compressed to 8 parts, now only consisted of 7 parts. The deadly pressure he had experienced in the magical battle with the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch had fused it together.

"My path to Spirit Severing is already opened. Soon... if I encounter anything that wishes to dominate me, I will have to be stronger than it and anything!" He rose to his feet and pushed open the door of his private cabin. For the first time in a month, he finally stepped foot outside.

The parrot had long since left for who knew where. Its personality was such that it couldn't remain quietly in one place for days on end. Once the meat jelly removed itself from Meng Hao, the two of them flew off to have fun somewhere.

It was midday, and the sun shone brightly. When Meng Hao stepped out onto the deck, the warm sun fell onto his back, and it felt good. There were a few youngsters of the Zhang Clan playing nearby. One of them was the boy named Nan'er, and he was also the first to notice that Meng Hao had emerged. At first, his little face filled with hesitation. But then he remembered what his mother had said to him about being courteous. Ignoring his fear, he clasped hands and bowed to Meng Hao.

"Nan'er offers greetings, senior uncle."

His words caused the other youngsters to notice Meng Hao. Instantly, their young faces went ghastly pale and filled with fear. The scene from half a month ago had been like something from a nightmare. All of them quickly began to bow.

Seeing the children caused a smile to break out on Meng Hao's face. He liked children. Even back in Yunjie County when he was a scholar, he had been especially fond of kids.

After so many years had passed, after traveling the path of Cultivation and acquiring a longevity that far exceeded any mortal, there were many wonderful things about being mortal that seemed increasingly far away.

Seeing these children caused his eyes to grow soft and gentle. Glancing them over, he could see that their latent talent was all completely ordinary, except for the one called Nan'er. His was slightly above the others.

Meng Hao smiled and asked, "What are you guys playing?"

"We're playing... hide-and-seek," replied Nan'er a bit nervously. The other youngsters around him were even more nervous as they nodded their heads.

"He can hide really good...." said one of the other children bravely. He was a boy of about eleven or twelve years of age.

"Yeah, that's right! Every time he hides, nobody can ever find him!" said another child. Soon, all of the kids starting talking, one after another, saying this and that. Meng Hao's warm smile widened as he listened. Gradually, the nervousness they all felt began to dissipate.

"It's not that I'm good at hiding," said Nan'er, his voice strong and clear. "You guys are just stupid and can't find me!" He glared around at the others.

When Meng Hao heard this, he laughed and looked at Nan'er.

"Where exactly do you hide?" he asked with a smile. Some of the other children cocked their ears, obviously quite curious.

Nan'er's face went a little red as he looked at the other youngsters. He seemed to be considering whether or not say anything. After all, if he told everyone his hiding place, then where would he be able to hide in the future? Finally, he took a few steps forward, and Meng Hao scooped him up in his arms. Nan'er rested on his shoulder and then carefully whispered into his ear.

“Senior uncle, I always hide under my mother’s bed. I just go where nobody else can go, it’s simple, right?”

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. It really was a simple truth. If you were playing hide-and-seek, you should hide where no one else can go. In that case, of course they would be incapable of finding you.

Now that he thought about it, he and the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch were essentially playing a game of hide-and-seek.

It was in this moment that Zhang Wenfang suddenly emerged from the quarterdeck. When she saw Meng Hao with the children, and especially the way that he was holding Nan’er, she immediately started panting, and grew incredibly nervous.

“Nan’er....” she said. She tried her best to remain outwardly calm, but her voice still quavered a bit.

When Meng Hao saw her looking over at them, he put the boy down and tousled his hair.

“Sly little fox,” he said with a smile. Nan’er blushed and then ran to hide behind his mother.

“Junior offers greetings, senior,” said Zhang Wenfang, breathing a sigh of relief as she bowed.

Meng Hao nodded, and was just about to say something when suddenly, his expression flickered. He looked off into the distance. There, within the range of his Divine Sense, an island had appeared. It was incredibly large, and just glancing at it, almost seemed like a continent.

Mountain ranges could be seen, as well as many areas swirling with mist that blocked his Divine Sense. He only examined the place for a moment before retracting his Divine Sense. According to the map in the jade slip he had been given, Meng Hao knew that their voyage was almost at an end.

“Senior, we have only half a day left. When evening falls, we will reach Saint’s Island. Many thanks for your assistance,” she continued, her voice sincere. “Our entire Clan will remember you from generation to generation, senior!” She gave Meng Hao a curtsying bow. She really was extremely appreciative; however, the awe and reverence she felt occupied the most of her heart.

By now, many of the others on the ship had gathered. They watched Meng Hao with heads bowed; they were so nervous that they didn't even dare to look up.

Meng Hao glanced over at Nan'er and then casually said, "He's going to join the Footloose Sect?"

"That's right," replied Zhang Wenfang quickly. "My son has the best latent talent in the Clan. The Footloose Sect is recruiting disciples right now, so if he can distinguish himself, he will put himself in a superior position, both for himself, and our entire Clan.

"The Footloose Sect is the most powerful Sect in the entire Fourth Ring. You could consider it the overlord, a force that nobody dares to provoke. They pay very close attention to seniority, and the Sect rules are very strict. In fact, they say that there is virtually no fighting between members."

"The State of Xiao," thought Meng Hao. "The State of Xiao." He said nothing, instead opting to stare off into the distance.

Seeing him remain silent, the rest of the people around didn't dare to speak. Time passed slowly, and Saint's Island grew nearer and nearer. The sky was starting to grow dark. In the murkiness of evening, the island resembled some enormous creature lying there on the sea. From a distance, it looked very grand and magnificent.

At the same time that Meng Hao neared the island, an old man wearing a Daoist robe sat in a luxurious palace deep in the mountains.

He bore the semblance of a transcendent being, and was dignified in appearance as he sat on his white jade throne. Next to him was an incense burner, beside which stood a beautiful girl. The girl yawned as she lazily fanned the burning incense, causing the tendrils of incense smoke to spread out.

Originally, the palace was completely silent, but suddenly, the meditating old man opened his eyes. He trembled, and a perplexed look could be seen in his eyes.

"Strange," he said, his eyelids twitching involuntarily. "Why do I feel so jumpy all of a sudden?"

Chapter 635: Destined To Meet Again

“Rainy, what do you think is going on?” murmured the old man toward the girl as she languidly fanned the incense. “Why does the Patriarch suddenly have this feeling that something huge is going to happen?” The old man was obviously ill at ease, and in no mood for meditation.

“Maybe you did too many bad things?” replied the girl, glancing over at him.

“No, not me! The Patriarch has spent these years cultivating life and spirituality. It’s been a long time since I even stepped outside.” The old man found that his eyelids were twitching even more rapidly, and for some reason, the unease he felt in his heart was growing more intense. He stepped down from his throne and began to pace back and forth inside the palace.

The uneasy feeling kept growing stronger, leading him to believe that something akin to a disaster was just around the corner.

If the other members of the Footloose Sect saw his current appearance, they would be truly shocked, as if the Heavens had fallen. They would all drop to their knees to kowtow immediately. That was because this old man was none other than the Patriarch of the Footloose Sect.

In the entire Footloose Sect, his position was the highest, and absolutely without compare. In fact, he was the founding Patriarch of the entire Sect.

The Footloose Sect paid special attention to seniority; it was actually a Sect rule that he had established. People with different levels of seniority were required to show proper respect to those above them, which made a clear distinction between everyone.

As for him, he was Patriarch Footloose, a position without compare. In all of Saint’s Island, he was the most supreme existence. A mere word from him could determine the existence or destruction of the entire island.

“Something fishy is going on! Something is definitely about to happen!

“I’m feeling more and more nervous, more and more jumpy!” The old man’s face flickered, and the girl suddenly looked a bit suspicious.

“Something big is definitely about to happen,” he said. “The Patriarch’s premonitions cannot be wrong!” With that he suddenly stopped in place and looked up. A glow appeared in his eyes that seemed capable of splitting Heaven and Earth.

At the same time, an indescribably majestic Divine Sense suddenly spread out from him. It swept out in all directions, the mountaintop palace being the point of origin.

In the blink of an eye, the Divine Sense had covered the entire island. Every inch of dirt, every scrap of rock, every district, every person, every life.

Whether it be flying creatures in the sky, or the plants or animals on the ground, everything on the island was scanned and examined carefully by the Divine Sense.

“Nothing out of the ordinary?” said the old man. Now he looked even more baffled. He scanned back and forth several times, but couldn’t detect anything that should make him anxious. Then, without even thinking about it, he caused the divine sense to expand out a bit further, to cover the sea area surrounding the island.

It was at this point that a tremor suddenly ran through the old man’s body. His eyes went wide, and he looked off in a certain direction, a look of disbelief on his face.

In that direction, he could see a ship with his Divine Sense, a ship currently on its way toward the island.

In the prow of the ship was a man with gray hair, a pale face, and a long white robe. As soon as the old man saw him, his heart was thrown into chaos.

Beads of cold sweat began to pour down his forehead, and he started panting in unprecedented fashion. He almost didn’t seem capable of believing what he was seeing. He rubbed his eyes vigorously a few times, just to make sure he wasn’t mistaken. Then, he let out a mournful wail.

“Dammit, dammit, dammit....”

Eyes filled with disbelief and blankness, he stared at the white-robed man. Although he looked different than before, the old man instantly recognized who he was.

“Meng Hao!!!” The old man gnashed his teeth, and a vicious expression appeared on his face. His entire body began to shake, as if he were infinitely furious.

“I hid here from you, and you, you, you... you actually tracked me down, you bastard!?!?”

“You actually came from the Southern Domain looking for me?”

“You, you, you....”

“Won’t you ever give up?! The League of Demon Sealers is a bunch of bastards! Yeah, that’s right. All bastards! Stinking bastards!!”

This old man... was none other than Patriarch Reliance!

The so-called Saint’s Island was in fact the former State of Zhao. However, it had been transformed into something completely new by Patriarch Reliance, to the point where even the residents of the State of Zhao would never recognize it.

As for the State of Xiao, it was the new name for the old State of Zhao....

Regarding the Footloose Sect... it was nothing less than the old Reliance Sect. The Cultivators who made up the Sect were all previous members of the old Sects that had existed in the State of Zhao. After having fled the Southern Domain, the old turtle Patriarch Reliance had forced them into a corner, and they had joined the new Footloose Sect.

Hundreds of years had passed, so by now, they were all fully integrated into the Footloose Sect, and followed Patriarch Reliance’s orders without question. As for Patriarch Reliance, in his efforts to hide himself from Meng Hao, he had changed his name to Patriarch Footloose.

In his mind, he had been conned all those years ago, and had been given no choice but to become the Dao Protector of the Ninth Generation Demon Sealer. With the Demon Seal in place, he couldn’t fight back, and definitely couldn’t harm Meng Hao.

However, even though he couldn’t fight, what he could do, was hide. In his mind, hiding within the vast Milky Way Sea meant that he would most likely never meet Meng Hao again in his life. In that way, he could live a happy, footloose life. That was how he had come up with the new name Patriarch Footloose.

However, after seeing Meng Hao, everything changed in the blink of an eye.

“AAAARRGGGHHHHHHHH!” roared Patriarch Reliance. “The Patriarch’s life is filled with suffering! I hide out here, and... dammit, I hide out here and the bastard can still find me!?” All the lands trembled slightly, and the seawater surrounding the island began to churn. It almost seemed as if there were some enormous creature under the water, flailing about.

“How could I possibly end up running into that Heaven-damned little bastard again?! That year in my Immortal’s cave, he took away all of my treasures, all of my savings! He took my good luck charm, my Thunderclap Leaf, my Outlander Tree, my divine spirit plants, my Spirit Stone mountain!!” Patriarch Reliance was obviously stingy to the extreme; he still clearly remembered everything that Meng Hao had taken from him hundreds of years ago.

In response to Patriarch Reliance’s angry ravings, the beautiful girl next to the incense burner suddenly looked up. A look of reminiscence appeared in her lovely eyes.

She thought back to all those years ago, to the vow made by the young man on the shore, who wanted to help the North Sea turn into a real sea.

“Meng Hao....” said the girl, covering her smile with a hand. She started to laugh, and then, without even looking at Patriarch Reliance, flew into the air. The instant she emerged from the palace, she saw an old boatman leaning up against the wall, looking at her with a doting expression.

“Boat Spirit! Meng Hao is back!” This girl was none other than Guyiding Tri-rain!

A look of concentration appeared in the old boatman’s eyes, and then he laughed. The girl shouted out in excitement, and then the two of them began to make their way off into the distance.

Patriarch Reliance suddenly looked up and then roared: “You two aren’t going anywhere!”

Suddenly, the entire mountain that the palace was located on completely vanished.

At least, that is what someone looking from the outside would see. From the perspective of the mountain, everything on the outside disappeared.

“Fudge! Do I need to flee again?!”

“Dammit! I lived here footloose and carefree for hundreds of years. Hundreds of years!

“No. I need to get away before he finds me. I can’t allow him to figure out that I’m here.” Gnashing his teeth, Patriarch Reliance flicked his sleeve. He was just about to send his Divine Sense back into his true self and then flee before Meng Hao stepped foot on the island, when suddenly, his eyes turned up thoughtfully.

“Wait a second. From the look of things, the little bastard doesn’t know I’m here!” Patriarch Reliance’s eyes suddenly grew bright. As for Guyiding Tri-rain, she didn’t look very happy as she returned into the palace with the Boat Spirit.

“If he doesn’t know that I’m here, then that must mean that he’s not here to look for me, right? He just happens to be passing by!!

“If that’s the case, then what do I need to flee for? I don’t! I don’t need to flee! He doesn’t know I’m here, so all I need to do is make sure he leaves without a hitch. As long as he doesn’t detect me, then he won’t have any reason to suspect anything!

“Hahaha! It turns out the Patriarch is the cleverest as usual. This way, I can continue to live here footloose and fancy free without any further complications!” The more he continued to talk, the brighter Patriarch Reliance’s eyes glowed. As he paced back and forth within the palace, Guyiding Tri-rain watched on, her face growing increasingly unsightly.

“Didn’t you make a promise to the Patriarchs from his Sect?” she asked, unable to hold back. “Why back out? Being his Dao Protector doesn’t mean nothing good will come to you. Why do you have to constantly hide?”

“Silly little girl!” said Patriarch Reliance, glaring at her. “You don’t know a damn thing!

“Hmm. You know, it was just recently that I remembered something. I feel like a long, long time ago, I met another little bastard who had the same name as this bastard!

“That other bastard went way overboard. It was back when I was little, and he bullied and humiliated me to the extreme!!

“I almost forgot about it. It wasn’t until recently that it suddenly came to mind!” Patriarch Reliance’s eyes went wide with both humiliation and curiosity. He really had no idea why it was only recently that he had suddenly recalled the matter.

In fact, the clearness of the memory also contained haziness.

“Have you ever wondered why the Patriarch carries an entire continent on his back? You think I want to? It’s a humiliation!!” It wasn’t clear what Patriarch Reliance was thinking about exactly, but his face was filled with fury.

“He must just be here to handle some matter or another. After he takes care of his business, he’ll be gone. Once the little bastard is out of here, then everything will be fine!” Patriarch Reliance took a deep breath, and his eyes flashed like lightning. Having made his decision to get Meng Hao to leave as quickly as possible, he would now spare nothing to accomplish his goal.

Meanwhile, evening was approaching and the sky was growing dim. The seawater gurgled as the Zhang Clan ship neared Saint’s Island. Meng Hao stood at the prow, looking at the sandy beach up ahead, and the densely packed docks. Scattered Cultivators flew about above the island, and people bustled about busily on the beach.

For some reason, Meng Hao felt as if he weren’t in the Milky Way Sea, but rather, back in the Southern Domain.

In the following moment, Meng Hao noticed that the entire island seemed to tremble. His eyes narrowed. At the same time, the surrounding water surged with waves, causing the ship to rock up and down. Everyone on the ship cried out in alarm.

Meng Hao was astonished at the sudden appearance of the waves, however, in the space of just a few breaths, they calmed down. His brow furrowed, and he stood there thoughtfully for a moment before sending his Divine Sense out. Although he didn’t detect anything out of the ordinary, he remained vigilant inwardly.

Not much time passed before they entered the docks. After the ship was secured, they disembarked, and finally managed to step foot onto Saint’s Island.

Meng Hao didn’t know it, but as soon as he stepped foot onto land, Patriarch Reliance’s heart trembled.

Chapter 636: As Long As You Leave, Anything Is OK!

The docks were constructed into the beach, and seemed quite simple. However, the atmosphere was incredible. For one thing, there were countless uniformed disciples directing the boats here and there.

These disciples weren't very old, and most of them had a Cultivation base at the Qi Condensation stage. Occasionally, a Foundation Establishment disciple would stroll past on patrol.

They didn't wear haughty expressions, however, it was clear that deep in their bones, they held themselves high above the masses. The feeling wasn't very intense, but it was there. Despite that, they treated all the guests very courteously.

On the far side of the docks, horse carriages were lined up in rows. The horses that pulled these carts looked very bizarre. They didn't have four legs, but rather, six. Also, they had horns coming out of their heads. They looked like horses, but were also covered with tentacle-like feelers.

This was a unique wild beast in the Milky Way Sea that happened to be easy to tame. They were called Heavenly Horses.

Far off in the distance, three towering pagodas could be seen. Burning lights flickered inside, which would make them visible even from far off in the sea.

As Meng Hao looked at the three pagodas, he noticed that sitting within each of them was a cross-legged Cultivator. All were middle-aged; one had a Cultivation base at the mid Core Formation stage, the others at the early Core Formation stage.

Obviously, they were here to keep guard over the area and prevent any disorder from erupting.

The entire dock and beach could be considered a point of entry and exit of Saint's Island. Everything proceeded in quite an orderly fashion, despite the relatively large number of people present. Therefore, even though evening was falling, a clamor of noise and voices filled the air.

Even as they docked, Meng Hao saw at least ten more ships arrive, to be directed by the locals into various locations in the harbor.

No one actually approached the docked ships to receive any of the outsiders. This was Saint's Island, and the Footloose Sect was the greatest Sect in the entire area. Despite the stellar reputation of the enormous organization, they wouldn't send disciples to personally receive tiny Clans from the Outer Sea.

Of course, that included the Zhang Clan. During the time period in which the Footloose Sect was recruiting new disciples, many, many Clans from the Outer Sea would come. In fact, right now there were literally hundreds of boats moored to the docks. And this was only one side of the island. If you counted the docks on the other sides of the islands, the number of boats would exceed a thousand.

In addition to the people coming to join the Footloose Sect, there were others who had arrived to do business. Saint's Island was a huge place, and the Cultivator cities there were exceedingly famous.

In fact, there were some types of Cultivation resources that could be only be acquired in full on Saint's Island.

Right now, the sky was getting dark, and the ocean breeze blew across their faces, bringing with it the pungent smell of saltwater and sea life. Meng Hao breathed in deeply as he stood there on the deck, looking at the shadows that were distant mountains of Saint's Island.

The Zhang Clan members, under the leadership of Zhang Wenfang, were preparing to disembark. The group of youngsters looked around with both nervousness and curiosity. Deep in their eyes could also be seen anticipation.

Nan'er clasped his mother's hand tightly as he looked around. He looked a little bit scared.

As the Zhang Clan Foundation Establishment Cultivators engaged in the proper formalities with the Footloose Sect disciples in charge of the docks, Zhang Wenfang turned to Meng Hao and gave him a curtseying bow. Her voice low, she respectfully said, "Senior, this is Saint's Island. Anyone below the Core Formation stage is prohibited from flying here, so we will need to travel by horse carriage...."

Meng Hao nodded but didn't say anything. It didn't take long for the Zhang Clan members to finish up with the Footloose Sect disciples, who then led the group toward three horse carriages.

This was the first time for the children, including Nan'er, to see Heavenly Horses. They looked at them wide-eyed, desiring to near them, but also afraid. This was also Meng Hao's first time seeing such beasts, and he couldn't help but stare a bit.

It was at this point that some Cultivators walked off of the deck of a newly arrived boat off in the distance. They wore resplendent clothing, and were led by man of roughly thirty years of age. His appearance was beyond ordinary, and he had a Cultivation base at the great circle of Foundation Establishment. He was followed by a group of four or five Foundation Establishment Cultivators, who in turn led seven or eight children along with them. The whole group casually looked over Meng Hao and the others as they neared.

The thirty-year-old man in the lead position suddenly made an "eee?" sound. He stopped in place and looked at Zhang Wenfang. She saw him as well, and her face flickered.

"Wenfang!" the man said slowly, obviously recognizing her.

She pursed her lips, a complicated expression on her face as she curtsied to him with clasped hands.

"Brother."

Upon hearing her words, the rest of the Zhang Clan members' faces also flickered. As for the Cultivators behind the thirty-year-old man, they all seemed to be thinking the same thing as they looked over.

The thirty-year-old man stood there silently, his gaze as sharp as a blade. When he saw Nan'er standing there holding Zhang Wenfang's hand, he frowned.

Zhang Wenfang bit her lip, then finally lowered her head and said to her son, "Nan'er, this is your uncle."

"Hello, uncle," said Nan'er in his clear, crisp voice. A bit of fear could be seen on his face.

The thirty-year-old man snorted coldly.

“Wenfang,” he said coolly and in a very impolite tone, “Father and Mother are still furious about what happened all those years ago. If you have a heart, you’ll come home and let them talk to you. Don’t continue to lose face and make a fool of yourself among these outsiders!”

“As for this child.... Don’t have him call me uncle. Did you really bring him here to try to get him into the Footloose Sect? You’ve overrated yourself from when you were young, and now you’re getting your own son to do the same. You’re just going to disappoint people.” The people behind him began to chuckle, especially the group of children, within whose eyes scorn could be seen.

Nan’er was shaking, and looked even more scared. Zhang Wenfang suddenly looked over to glare at her brother. Breathing heavily, she said, “I already cut off all ties with you people that year.”

“Xu Wenfang!” growled the man, his eyes growing wide.

“Xu Wende, I am Clan Leader Zhang Wenfang of the Zhang Clan,” she retorted coolly. “You aren’t even qualified to speak with me.” With that, she tugged her son’s arm to get into a horse carriage.

The other members of the Zhang Clan glared with hostility at the members of the Xu Clan, then began to enter the horse carriages. As for Meng Hao, his expression was the same the entire time, and he did not speak a word. In fact, he had long since taken a seat up front on the bench seat of one of the horse carriages.

No one dared to try to convince him to sit anywhere else. They all lowered their heads wordlessly as the horse carriages began to slowly make their way off.

“Slut!” said Xu Wende coldly, his voice loud enough for all the Zhang Clan members in the horse carriages to hear. “I offer to give you some face, and you reject it? Our Clan suffered shame because of you, and now you dare to bring that bastard son here to join the Footloose Sect!?”

“Since you insist on bringing your little Zhang Clan bastard here to lose face, then I look forward to seeing just how far he can get through the competition!”

The Zhang Clan Cultivators clenched their fists, and Zhang Wenfang sat there in the horse carriage, her face pale and her arms wrapped around Nan’er. It was impossible to tell what she was thinking, but tears were streaming down her face.

“Don’t cry, mother,” said Nan’er, wiping the tears off of his mother’s face. “I’ll definitely get into the Footloose Sect!” he guaranteed, his voice soft.

Meng Hao sat on the bench seat of the horse carriage. As the Heavenly Horses sped along the well-maintained road, he looked up at the canopy of stars overhead. He also heard what Nan’er said inside the horse carriage.

“What a good kid,” he whispered, shaking his head. Based on his experiences, it was simple for him to understand the situation with the Zhang Clan. Obviously, there was an unapproved marriage, after which the husband died. The Clan then began to deteriorate, leaving the wife responsible for her husband’s role of leading the Clan.

The Heavenly Horses sped along through the night. At dawn the following morning, a city appeared up again. Even from a distance it appeared majestic and magnificent. Despite the early hour, the city was still like a seething cauldron of activity. People walked hither and thither, and a buzz of excitement filled the air.

Up in the air, colorful beams of light could occasionally be seen flying about. Those would be Core Formation Cultivators.

Meng Hao looked everything over, and suddenly got the feeling that there was something out of the ordinary with this Footloose Sect. He wasn’t sure what it was, but there was something about Saint’s Island that felt very familiar to him.

Upon close examination, he was sure he hadn’t seen any of these places before, but he still had an intense sensation of familiarity. However, after much thought, he wasn’t able to determinate what the source of that familiarity was. They entered the city through the east gate, and then eventually reached a tavern. Zhang Wenfang respectfully escorted Meng Hao to a luxury room, and then was about to go to arrange rooms for everyone else.

She wasn’t sure what Meng Hao was thinking, and wasn’t certain that he would continue to escort them. Before leaving, she hesitated for a moment, then lowered her head and asked, “Senior, there are still ten more days until the Footloose Sect begins the formalities of recruiting new disciples....”

Meng Hao nodded, but didn’t respond. Zhang Wenfang respectfully left.

It was currently early morning. Meng Hao opened his window and looked out at the people walking around on the street below. There were quite a few mortals mixed in with the Cultivators. The rays of the rising sun shone down to illuminate everything.

He took a deep breath, then sat down cross-legged and closed his eyes, surrounded by the sounds of the bustling city.

“Why does this place seem so familiar?” he thought once more.

Despite the fact that Meng Hao’s current Cultivation base allowed him to fight First Severing Cultivators, he still couldn’t detect the stream of Divine Sense that cautiously swirled beneath his feet.

The owner of the stream of Divine Sense was of course Patriarch Reliance, who sat in his palace, more jumpy than ever.

“Fudge! The little bastard is here. And it turns out he’s escorting some people who want to join the Footloose Sect!!” Patriarch Reliance was incredibly depressed. If he had known this was the situation, he would have simply canceled the Footloose Sect’s call for new disciples.

That way, he could have completely prevented Meng Hao from even coming.

“I can’t let this stand. With him here, the Patriarch can’t sleep well. I need to get him out of here as soon as possible.... Dammit, there’s still ten days before the recruiting begins? No, that won’t work. We’ll start tomorrow.... FUDGE! Let’s start now!!” with that he raised a hand, causing a jade slip to appear. Instantly, flames appeared on its surface and it flew into the air.

It transformed into a shocking beam of light which then sped directly toward the Footloose Sect.

The Footloose Sect was located in the east region of Saint’s Island, in a boundless stretch of wild mountains. There, nine great valleys could be seen, spread out in concentric rings. Although they looked majestic, there was also something strange about them. Inside of the nine valleys were countless richly ornamented palace buildings. Everything was luxurious and lavish.

The jade slip immediately entered the ninth valley, and a huge temple that lay therein. It came to stop in front of an old man who sat there cross-legged, somberly providing admonition to the group of people sitting in front of him.

As soon as he saw the jade slip, a tremor ran through the old man's body. He quickly pinched the jade slip, then prostrated himself on the ground and lifted it high above his head. Instantly, the voice of Patriarch Reliance could be heard.

“Disciple recruitment begins immediately!”

It was only four words, but as they echoed out through the Footloose Sect, and the other deep valleys, colorful beams of light immediately shot out to gather in the main temple of the ninth valley.

These people were the Sect Leaders of the various auxiliary Sects from the other valleys. Their Cultivation bases were extraordinary, and some of them were Cultivators with whom Meng Hao had butted heads in the past.

Moments later, bells could be heard tolling throughout the Footloose Sect. Footloose Sect disciples flew out by the hundreds to head off in all directions. It was time to notify the visiting Clans that the disciple recruitment was beginning!

Chapter 637: The Zhang Clan is Here?!

Meng Hao was flabbergasted. And it wasn't just him. The group from the Zhang Clan were also shocked. In fact, everyone who had come to Saint's Island with the hope of joining the Footloose Clan were completely astonished.

The day for disciple recruitment was clearly ten days away, but then suddenly, the date was moved up. Many people began to feel nervous and alarmed, as if something incredible was about to happen.

An enormous event like disciple recruitment was no child's game. As such, even if the date were moved up, it shouldn't have been changed to earlier than the next day. There definitely should never have been a situation in which... it began that very day.

After all, it was already noontime....

Most importantly, there were many people who were still out at sea, hurrying on their way.

There were many speculations and inquiries, of course. Even the Footloose Sect disciples were complaining. They had no idea what major event was underway; all they could do was carry out matters according to the orders from the Sect.

Therefore, the Footloose Sect dispatched large numbers of disciples to begin to gather together all the prospective new disciples and bring them to the main gate of the Footloose Sect.

Before the Zhang Clan left the tavern, Zhang Wenfang hesitated, then invited Meng Hao to proceed along ahead with her. Meng Hao muttered inwardly for a moment, but then he saw the anticipation on Nan'er's face, and he couldn't refuse. He joined the Zhang Clan as they went to be teleported to the Footloose Sect.

When they arrived near the main gate, a hubbub of voices could be heard. Already, more than a thousand people could be seen, although only about three hundred were actually there to join the Footloose Sect. The rest were just along as escorts.

Among the crowd was the Xu Clan, who, when they caught sight of the Zhang Clan, gave cold, contemptuous laughs.

The Zhang Clan had arrived somewhat late, and so were forced to wait at the end of the very long line. In the Footloose Clan's disciple recruitment, there were three trials by fire, each one of which could only have three participants.

Of course, in addition to the members of the various Clans present, there were also quite a few Footloose Sect disciples, there to maintain order. They acted very courteously, but it was also impossible for them to hide the pride they felt in their bones.

In the crowds, everyone was talking about the goings on.

"Three trials by fire. The first tests willpower, the second tests latent talent, and the third tests powers of insight. In every stage, you can earn first, second, third, or fourth rate marks.... anyone who gets three first place marks is worthy of the title Chosen."

"Yeah, that's right. In all the years, I don't think anyone ever got three first place marks. At the most, there may have been some people who got two."

“Furthermore, the Footloose Sect is very strict in its requirements for recruiting disciples. You have to get at least full third rate marks to get into the Sect. Even one fourth rate mark means that you’re out.”

Back at the end of the very long line, Meng Hao yawned as he listened to the conversations around him. According to his calculations, it would take at least two or three days for the Zhang Clan to get to the front of the line.

Nan’er was extremely nervous. Zhang Wenfang stood next to him, offering quiet words of encouragement. Meng Hao looked around, and even sent out his Divine Sense to sweep over the Footloose Sect.

“This Sect is a bit odd,” he murmured to himself, his gaze flickering. “It’s made up of nine valleys.”

At the same time, Patriarch Reliance sat in his palace, wearing a worried face.

“This is taking too long.... The little bastard is escorting someone to join the Sect, but, hey, couldn’t you go to the front of the line, huh?! Why did you run to the back!?! What do you think you’re doing?!” Patriarch Reliance clenched his teeth, then sent his Divine Sense out to cover over the whole Footloose Sect. Eventually, it came to rest on a disciple near Meng Hao and the others.

The disciple was currently looking coldly out at the crowds, inwardly confused about why the Sect suddenly moved up the date for recruiting disciples. Even in the midst of his contemplation, his body suddenly trembled, and then his eyes began to grow brightly.

As of this moment, he was no longer himself. Instead, he had become a clone of Patriarch Reliance. He began to walk forward, eyeing Meng Hao and shivering a bit. Then he turned toward the Zhang Wenfang and Nan’er.

“Are you the Zhang Clan from the Outer Sea?” asked the Patriarch Reliance-controlled Footloose Sect disciple. His voice was cheerful as he stepped forward to examine Zhang Wenfang and the other members of the Zhang Clan.

Zhang Wenfang was taken aback, as were the other Clan members around her. In fact, the members of other Clans that were lined up ahead of them couldn’t help but turn around to look.

“Yes, we’re the Zhang Clan,” replied Zhang Wenfang as quickly as she could.

“Wonderful, wonderful. The descendant of an old friend is here!”

The Footloose Sect disciple sighed emotionally. “Years ago, I used to be very close to your husband, and even owed him a favor. To be able to see all of you here today is nothing less than fate. Come, let me escort up to the front.” With that, he quickly grabbed Nan’er and began to walk forward.

Zhang Wenfang stared in shock, wracking her brain to try to remember what past incident the man must be referring to. The other Clan members were also astonished. Even after thinking for some time, they truly couldn’t recall their previous Clan Leader having a close relationship with any Footloose Sect disciples.

“This....” Zhang Wenfang hesitated for a moment, but seeing that the disciple had already begun to pull her son away, she quickly followed. The other members of the Zhang Clan also went along. Meng Hao watched everything happening, and then joined them.

The group made their way from the very back of the line toward the front, which instantly attracted the attention of everyone who was waiting. That was especially true of the Xu Clan, who watched on in astonishment as everything happened.

Immediately, people began to call out questions.

“Fellow Daoist of the Footloose Clan, dare I ask why they get to go from the back of the line to the front?”

“Yeah! They were in the back! They can’t just randomly cut in line! How come they can so brazenly go all the way to the front!?”

Now even more people were paying attention. As soon as they saw what was happening, they were shocked, and couldn’t understand why the Footloose Sect, which normally paid such close attention to rules and regulations, would allow something like this to happen.

Meanwhile, there were other Footloose Sect disciples who saw what was happening. One of them happened to be a Core Formation Cultivator who was in charge of maintaining order in the area. When he saw what was happening, he frowned.

“Zhao Han!” he shouted, a dignified expression on his face. That was the name of the Footloose Sect disciple who Patriarch Reliance was controlling with his Divine Sense. “What are you doing? It doesn’t matter if you’re longtime friends with these Zhang people, you...” Before the Core Formation Cultivator could finish speaking, Patriarch Reliance up in the palace gave a cold snort, and sent out more Divine Sense.

A virtually imperceptible tremor ran through the Core Formation Cultivator, and then his eyes glittered brightly.

“Wait, these guests are the Zhang Clan from the Outer Sea?” His expression one of excitement, he immediately stepped forward to glance over the group from the Zhang Clan.

This scene caused all the surrounding Footloose Sect disciples as well as the visiting Clan members to exchange astonished looks.

“The Heavens finally take notice, and allow me to see you members of the Zhang Clan!” said the Core Formation Cultivator, looking very excited. “The descendant of an old friend is here....”

“Years ago, I was close friends with your Zhang Clan, and even benefited from a great kindness on the part of the Clan. Come come, I’ll take you to the first place in line!” With that, he took gaping Nan’er from Zhao Han without any further explanation, and headed off toward the front of the line.

Zhang Wenfang stared in astonishment once more. She felt as if her mind was spinning. She looked back at her other fellow Clan members, but they had looks as blank as hers. No matter how they wracked their memories, they couldn’t think of any time in which their Patriarch had any close friends at all.

The rest of the Clans who were here to join the Footloose Sect all watched on in astonishment, especially the Xu Clan. Their eyes were widest of all, and filled with disbelief.

It was in this manner that, under the leadership of the Core Formation Cultivator, the Zhang Clan continued on from the back of the line directly toward the front. The entire time, the Cultivators of the Zhang Clan almost couldn’t believe what was happening.

However, their expressions of confusion quickly turned into excitement.

Right now, more than half of the Outer Sea Cultivator Clans had come. There were even some Clans from the Fourth Ring. As of this moment, everyone now took note of the Zhang Clan, and many people began to discuss the matter in hushed tones. Many people glanced over at them with admiration and envy.

The Xu Clan members all had faces pale and filled with disbelief.

“This... this is impossible!!”

By the time Nan'er arrived in the very first place in line, Meng Hao's shock at the sudden change of events caused him to feel that something fishy was going on.

Meanwhile, back in the Saint's Island palace, Patriarch Reliance looked quite proud of himself.

“Humph. The Patriarch prevails again! The only thing to do is to get the little bastard out of here as quickly as possible. I don't care what price I have to pay!

“Wait. No. I need to speed things up. The best thing would be to settle things within ten breaths of time. I need to make sure he has no reason at all to stay here. That way he'll screw off as quickly as possible!” Again, Patriarch Reliance sent Divine Sense out to cover the Footloose Sect.

In the blink of an eye, the Divine Sense split into dozens of streams that all settled into different individuals.

And then.....

Suddenly, an old man flew out from within the Footloose Sect. He obviously had a Core Formation Cultivation base, and as soon as he appeared, he laid eyes on Zhan Wenfang. “The Zhang Clan is here?! The Zhang Clan from the Outer Sea?”

The Clan members in the line immediately gaped.

“That's Honor Guard Han!”

“Honor Guard Han is one of the most powerful experts in the Footloose Sect. He has an incredibly high position!”

“Don’t tell me... that he also owes a favor to the Zhang Clan?”

The old man quickly approached. “So, it really is the Zhang Clan. Excellent, excellent! The descendant of an old friend is here! I will definitely take advantage of this day to pay back the favor I owe to the Zhang Clan!”

However, before he could even get close, before the crowds in line could digest what was happening, while the Zhang Clan members were all still in a daze, roaring shouts could be heard from within the Sect.

“The Zhang Clan is here?!”

“So, it really is the Zhang Clan! They actually made it to the Footloose Sect!”

“The benefactor is here! I, Tu Dahai, must go to pay my respects!”

Shockingly, ten figures appeared from within the Footloose Sect. Each and every one was of the late Core Formation stage, and they actually comprised more than half of all the Core Formation Cultivators in the Clan.

As they flew out, a buzz could be heard from within the crowds in line. All of the Cultivators from the Outer Sea Clans were trembling in astonishment. The Fourth Ring Cultivators were even more dumbstruck as their gazes followed those of the ten Core Formation Cultivators to fall onto the Zhang Clan.

Zhang Wenfang stood there dully, as did the other Zhang Clan Cultivators.

They were even starting to get a bit frightened. They had never heard anything about their deceased Patriarch having so many friends....

Meng Hao’s eyes were wide as he watched on. What was happening really was far too strange....

Chapter 638: Twists and Turns Enrage the Patriarch

“Heavens, it’s actually true! Those ten or more Footloose Sect Honor Guards are all figures who could shake the entire area with the stomp of a foot. And they all... actually owe a favor to the Zhang Clan!”

“The old Zhang Clan Patriarch was only at the early Core Formation stage. How could he get these people from the Footloose Sect to owe him a favor?”

The crowd was abuzz, and the Zhang Clan were standing there wide-eyed.

“Was the Patriarch... really so illustrious back in the day?” thought Zhang Wenfang. She looked a bit dazed. She had never heard such a matter spoken of back in the Clan. In her memory, before the Patriarch died, although he’d had a few friends, few were the sincere type. Besides, he had been dead for so long that any friendly sentiments had long since faded away.

Were that not the case, the Clan wouldn’t have been forced into the dead end they had been, with no choice but to give up their island and come to this place.

However, what was happening right now was very real, causing Zhang Wenfang to grow even more confused.

Intermittent gasps could be heard coming from the crowds in line, and their faces were filled with disbelief and astonishment. All eyes in the area were completely fixed on the members of the Zhang Clan.

Although most of them dared not allow their envy and jealousy to show on their faces, such feelings filled their hearts.

That was especially true of the Xu Clan, whose faces were pale white, and whose hearts had seized with terror. How could they ever have imagined that the people they had just looked down upon and even shamed, the down and out Zhang Clan, could have such a glorious past?

“No wonder little sis cut ties with the Clan to marry into the Zhang Clan,” thought the man from the Xu Clan. “I didn’t understand back then, but now...” Having gained this new understanding, he suddenly felt a bit different.

As for the other Outer Sea Clans who had conflicts with the Zhang Clan, they were now scared witless and panting heavily. Not only were their hearts filled with fear regarding what might happen later, they were also inundated with intense animosity.

“I can’t believe the Zhang Clan has such incredible connections.... Why didn’t they say something earlier? Nobody in the Outer Sea would have dared to pick on them.”

Zhang Wenfang subconsciously glanced at some of her fellow Clan Members. What they all saw was mutual shock regarding what was happening.

“Could it be because of me?” thought Meng Hao. He couldn’t help but think this, and as he did, his eyes glittered. He looked at the Honor Guards from the Footloose Sect, and although it was impossible to tell what they were thinking, his eyes narrowed.

“Descendants of our benefactor, please accept our salute!” With that the Footloose Sect Honor Guards excitedly clasped hands and began to bow. There were even a few of the elderly members who had tears streaming down their faces. The joy they felt seemed beyond description.

The Zhang Clan members were overwhelmed by the unexpected show of favor, and even tried to shrink back. Zhang Wenfang had no idea what she should say. However, her heart filled with joy that she simply couldn’t suppress. It was like the saying “when the bitterness ends, the sweetness begins.” Tears began to roll down her face.

From the day she had married into the Clan until now, she had never experienced anything like this. The proud and elated feeling and the looks on the faces of her Clan caused the excitement in her heart to be equal to that of the Footloose Sect members in front of her.

The ten Honor Guards all began to speak one after another.

“Does this child wish to join the Footloose Sect?”

“What need is there to wait in line? We’ve been waiting for the descendant of a benefactor to come join the Sect! We can accept you immediately! Inner Sect disciple!”

“That’s right! He’s an Inner Sect disciple!”

They reached their decision very quickly.

The scene caused all the other Outer Sea Clans who were waiting in line to be filled with envy. Any Clan would wish their child to be treated in such a way. Who wouldn't want to be invited into the Clan, as opposed to have to pay respects to enter?

Meanwhile, in the palace of Saint's Island, Patriarch Reliance's face was covered with a complacent grin. He stood up and began to stroll back and forth, giving Guyiding Tri'rain no choice but to watch on helplessly.

"The Patriarch is the smartest yet again," he said. "Hahaha! Now the little bastard has no reason whatsoever to stay behind. Get out of here immediately, kid! Screw off with no delay!" As Patriarch Reliance thought about how proud he was of himself, he began to laugh heartily.

However, in the midst of his laughing, his face suddenly fell, and he sent his Divine Sense out one more time.

Even as the Honor Guard members were excitedly discussing their decision to accept Nan'er as an Inner Sect disciple, a cold voice like that of a thunderclap suddenly filled the Footloose Sect. The voice immediately caused everyone's hearts to tremble.

"What's the commotion!?" The cold voice which echoed out from the mountains belonged to that of an old man. "Accepting new disciples is a great matter within the Sect, and yet you people are here causing a racket! What a travesty!"

As soon as the grim-faced old man appeared, the ripples of a Nascent Soul Cultivation base emanated out. Everyone immediately began incredibly nervous.

"That's... that's Lord of the Third Valley!"

"The Great Valley Lord came personally! Don't tell me he's also friends with the Zhang Clan?" The crowds in the line, as well as the other Footloose Sect disciples who were not affected by Patriarch Reliance's Divine Sense, were all making the same guesses inwardly.

"Even if you all are old friends with this Clan," the old man said coolly, "the Sect still has its rules, and those rules won't change." His expression was not one of anger, but power. His words instantly shook everyone present.

“In the Footloose Sect,” he continued, “there is nothing more important than rules. Anyone who wishes to join the Sect must do so according to the rules.” His ice-cold gaze fell onto the members of the Zhang Clan. “All of you, go back to your original position in line. After enough time passes, you will naturally reach this position.”

Immediately, the Cultivators from the other Clans in line felt roused. They had felt that what was happening was unfair, but didn't dare to give voice to such thoughts. Now that they saw a Valley Lord of the Footloose Sect administering justice, they felt that the rumors about the Sect were true; they really did strictly adhere to Sect rules.

Zhang Wenfang's face was pale white. She immediately bowed her head and voiced compliance. The feeling caused by joy being reversed into the opposite filled her with complete shame. However, she feared causing problems for the Footloose Sect Honor Guards who were friends of the Clan, so she immediately acquiesced, grabbing Nan'er, who was trembling with fear, and began to make her way back to the end of the line with her other fellow Clan members.

The Xu Clan immediately went wild with joy when they saw this. They said nothing, but the looks of ridicule and disdain in their eyes were impossible to cover up.

“As for the lot of you,” continued the old man, his eyes cold, “you're Honor Guard members of the Footloose Sect. Your actions just now were completely beyond the bounds of propriety! You will all be punished by being confined to your quarters for three months!” His words rang out, filled with an incredible feeling of might and dominance.

However, as soon as the old man spoke the words, he suddenly heard a furious voice echoing in his own ear: “I'll punish your ass!”

The raging voice was like thunder, although no outsider could hear it, only the old man. As soon as the powerful sound echoed about in his head, his face fell.

Naturally, he knew exactly who it was who was speaking to him.

“All of this was by the order of the Patriarch!” raged Patriarch Reliance, sounding flustered. “Fudge! You completely ruined my big plan! I'll skin you alive!” He seemed truly enraged.

Just when the goal he had worked so hard to reach was about to be accomplished, a bit of interference ruined everything. Of course, Patriarch Reliance was scared. He was scared that Meng Hao would figure out that something was going on. He was so furious that he wanted to slap this old man to death immediately.

When he sensed the Patriarch's rage and killing intent, the Lord of the Third Valley instantly began to shake. Suddenly, he looked up at the Zhang Clan retreating toward the end of the line, and his mind became very clear.

"Wait!" he cried, immediately hurrying forward.

"Are you people from the Zhang Clan?" he then asked, his voice filled with excitement. Teardrops could be seen forming in the corners of his eyes. His voice caused the other Outer Sea Clan members in line to instantly gape in shock. They simply couldn't wrap their minds about what was happening....

They weren't the only astonished ones. The surrounding Footloose Sect disciples all had blank expressions on their faces. The events of the day were simply... too strange for them to understand.

As for the Zhang Clan members, they stopped in their tracks, then turned to look at the old man who was scurrying over.

Zhang Wenfang looked at him and hesitated for a moment before quietly responding, "Senior... We... we are the Zhang Clan from the Outer Sea."

"So it is the Zhang Clan after all!!" said the old man. He stamped his foot, causing the nearby mountain peaks to rumble, and the ground to quake.

"This is all my mistake," he said. "Earlier I was inside, and when I sensed that something big was going on, I came out. However, I didn't recognize you! Aiya! I have only myself to blame!" With that the old man laughed emotionally. From his expression, he seemed to be thinking about past times.

"I'll never forget how your Zhang Clan Patriarch showed me such kindness that year. He even saved my life six times! If it weren't for him, I would not be alive today. The descendant of an old friend is here. Ah, the descendant of an old friend is here." He sighed again as his words echoed about. Everyone was instantly stunned.

That was most true of the Xu Clan, who watched on with wide eyes, breathing heavily, their minds trembling. They truly could never have imagined that the Zhang Clan would have such deep relationships, to the extent that one of the nine Valley Lords of the Footloose Sect owed them a great favor.

“Now that his descendant has come to the Footloose Sect, even if we have to bend the rules a bit, I will assume all the responsibility,” said the old man resolutely. “I will not allow a descendant of the Zhang Clan to suffer any shame here!” His gaze swept about, and all of the Outer Sea Clan members had no choice other than to bow their heads. Inwardly, they were completely shaken.

Meng Hao’s eyes narrowed, and a slight smile had appeared on his face. Although he could sense no familiar aura, considering his past experiences, how could he not see through the bizarreness of the goings on?

“Interesting,” he thought. “As far as I can recall, there’s only one old bastard who likes to handle things in such an unreliable fashion.”

Zhang Wenfang was currently trembling. The joy and surprise that had come her way was almost too much to handle. Currently, her blankness and confusion were almost at the pinnacle. She was just about to say something when suddenly, the Third Valley Lord took a few steps forward and then picked Nan’er up into his arms.

“They look alike!” he said. “They really look completely alike! A single glance at this child and I can’t help but think of the Zhang Clan Patriarch.

“Child, are you willing to accept me as your Master?”

At the moment, most nervous of all was Patriarch Reliance, who panted in his palace as he watched the scene down below. He was dying to hear Nan’er voicing his acceptance.

“Hurry up and agree, child!” he murmured. “Come on, hurry up! I beg you, just agree.... The Patriarch promises you, if you agree, then from now on, I will watch over you in the Reliance Sect, er, no, I mean the Footloose Sect!” However, he didn’t dare to do anything too obvious, lest Meng Hao sense something amiss.

Nan'er was extremely nervous, and even scared. His face was pale, and without even thinking about it, he turned to look back at his mother, and then for some reason, Meng Hao.

Had he not looked at Meng Hao, then Meng Hao wouldn't have inserted himself into the matter. However, considering how helpless the child looked in his inability to make a decision, Meng Hao couldn't help but smile and then casually say, "No need to rush into things. Considering the child's latent talent, I think he should have a bit better standing in the Sect."

When Patriarch Reliance heard this, blood sprayed out of his mouth like a geyser. He lifted his head back and let out a howl of indignation.

Chapter 639: The Superiority of the Patriarch's Intellect

"You little bastard! What do you want? What are you doing!?" Patriarch Reliance clenched his hand into a fist and then slammed it into the ground. A boom filled the palace, causing the entire mountain to shake. In fact, waves rolled out across the sea surrounding the island.

"You're messing with me, aren't you, you little bastard!" fumed Patriarch Reliance. "I'm acting with good will and good intentions! I helped you pull everything off smoothly, and then you refuse!?!?" His voice rolled back and forth within the palace, but did not echo outside. He was now agitated to the extreme, and on the verge of flying into a rage.

"Are you really trying to push the Patriarch into going insane! FUDGE! The Patriarch refuses to play your little game. I'll just take the Footloose Sect and leave. The Patriarch can't afford to provoke you, so he'll just avoid you completely!" Patriarch Reliance was just about to follow through with his words, when suddenly he seemed to think of something.

"Wait. No!" A look of suspicion suddenly appeared on his face.

"That little bastard is crafty to the extreme. At the moment, he still doesn't know that I'm here. If I appear, then the cat will be out of the bag. If he finds out I've been hiding in the Milky Way Sea...." Suddenly, Patriarch Reliance's eyes flashed.

"Hmmpphh. The Patriarch is intelligent, divine and mighty. How can I possibly be fooled?" Patriarch Reliance's voice dripped with disdain. "Clearly the little bastard is feeling out the situation. Therefore, I will not reveal myself, no matter what happens. I'll just hold on.... So what if he takes a Master? That doesn't count for crap! He won't accept one Nascent Soul Master? How about a group then!? I can't believe that he'll refuse!" Once again, his Divine Sense spread out through the entirety of the Footloose Sect.

Meanwhile, outside the main gate of the Footloose Sect, Meng Hao's words echoed out, causing Zhang Wenfang to gape in surprise. Nan'er looked at Meng Hao wide-eyed for a moment, then immediately spoke in his crisp, clear voice.

"I don't accept...."

The Third Valley Lord's heart immediately quivered, and he glared at Meng Hao hatefully. He was just about to say something when, all of a sudden, eight streams of Divine Sense shot toward them.

Eight figures became visible in mid-air. Although their faces were not clear, the ripples of a Nascent Soul Cultivation base were quite clear. The entire Footloose Sect trembled, and the sky flashed with a riot of colors. The wind and clouds were thrown into upheaval, and brilliant rays of light shone out in all directions.

It instantly caused countless disciples to approach the area; as for the Footloose Sect disciples who were already at the main gate, their faces flickered and they all began to drop to their knees to kowtow.

The Outer Sea Clan members in line began to pant. They watched the scene in shock, their minds trembling.

"The nine great Valley Lords are all here!"

"What exactly is going on? Don't tell me... don't tell me all of them are friends with the Zhang Clan?"

The Zhang Clan members stood there trembling, filled with blankness and also fear because of everything that was happening.

A deathly silence then filled the air. Meng Hao looked up, eyes glittering. Although all of these people were Nascent Soul Cultivators, there were odd ripples emanating from their bodies. With Meng Hao's Cultivation base, he could sense them, but couldn't see clearly exactly what they were.

Of course, considering they were Lords within the Sect, they would certainly possess some secrets to elevate their level of dignity, which Meng Hao understood.

“This child has destiny connecting him to the Footloose Sect!” said an archaic voice from within one of the eight streams of Divine Sense up in mid-air. The voice echoed out throughout the entire Footloose Sect.

“After discussion, we nine great Valley Lords all accept this child as an apprentice! He will join the Footloose Sect as a Conclave disciple!”

The voice reverberated out into the ears of everyone present. The other Clan members from the Outer Sea watched on, panting with unprecedented anxiety. Far too many unexpected turns of events had occurred, to the point that they would be unable to forget this day for the rest of their lives.

The disciples of the Footloose Sect were completely shocked, and they all began to look over at the young child held in the arms of the Third Valley Lord.

It must be stated that within the Footloose Sect, there were only three Conclave disciples! As of this moment, there were four!

Complete silence followed, after which an explosion of sound could be heard. That sound was caused by the voices of the crowds in line as they expressed their disbelief and utter shock.

The matter that had just occurred would soon spread out through the entire Outer Sea, as well as the Fourth Ring. Throughout all the years, such an event had never occurred in the Footloose Sect. The Nine Valley Lords had all accepted a single person as an apprentice! That person would quickly become completely famous.

As for the Zhang Clan, they would experience a meteoric rise because of the events of the day. Whether it be in the Outer Sea or the Fourth Ring, because of their relationship with the Footloose Sect, no one would ever dare to provoke them. It wouldn't take very long for word of this matter to spread everywhere.

The Zhang Clan was destined to rise to fame.

Zhang Wenfang panted at this unexpected blessing. It was simply too amazing, causing her entire person to tremble, and tears to pour down her face. The Zhang Clan members around her were also excited to the extreme.

Meng Hao smiled. When he noticed Nan'er looking back at him again, he nodded.

Nan'er mustered his courage, and then clearly spoke out. "Nan'er accepts the senior grandpas as Masters!"

His voice wasn't very loud, but as soon as it rang out, everyone, be they Footloose Sect disciples or Outer Sea Clan members, knew that as of this instant, this boy was... completely different from them!

With the nine great Valley Lords as his Masters, he would be the number one person in the entire Footloose Sect. In fact, as long as his latent talent wasn't extremely poor, he would surely reach Core Formation!

From now on, the Zhang Clan would be like a blazing sun in the sky. Everyone who had ever looked down upon them would be forced to bow their heads in compliance. Anyone who had disputes with them in the past would only be able to writhe in fear and send gifts of apology in great numbers.

Anyone who had blood enmity with them would be forced to immediately flee the Outer Sea. Otherwise, they would never be able to find shelter anywhere.

The Zhang Clan was like the carp who leaped over the dragon gate and received the highest reward. That was the final assessment of everyone present.

Tears streamed down Zhang Wenfang's face. The joy in her heart caused the most brilliant smile she had ever smiled to appear on her face. "Husband, is your spirit watching all of this from the underworld...?"

The other Zhang Clan members watched on with wild joy, as if they could see the countless possibilities that had now opened up for their future. They thought back to the past, and then considered the future, and seemed to have acquired new enlightenment. Their new understanding would keep them going as they reached out to a higher realm.

Most excited of all, however, was no member of the crowd, and no member of the Zhang Clan. Instead, it was Patriarch Reliance, up in his palace. He was so excited that his body trembled as he paced back and forth. He looked over at Guyiding Tri'rain with a scornful expression.

He, of course, didn't care about what was happening with the Zhang Clan. Intense anticipation appeared in his eyes as he looked off at the Footloose Sect and Meng Hao. He hoped fervently that all of this was enough to cause Meng Hao to leave Saint's Island.

"You have no reason to stay behind, you little bastard, so why don't you go? Hahaha! Screw off at top speed! Do not under any circumstances allow me to see you again!" Patriarch Reliance thought about what it would be like if Meng Hao left with absolutely no suspicions. Then he would be able to openly live a footloose and fancy free life. When he thought about that, it filled him with excitement, almost as if he had gotten some sort of revenge. The more he thought about Meng Hao leaving, the more anticipation he felt.

Currently, the entire Footloose Sect was in an uproar. Meng Hao was laughing, and his eyes glittered. Then, his expression returned to normal as he looked over at Zhang Wenfang and the others.

From the look in his eye, it seemed that he was still worried about the Zhang Clan members, apparently concerned about their safety in the future.

Although others might not be able to read his expression, Patriarch Reliance was completely focused on Meng Hao, and immediately sensed it. Without hesitation, he sent his Divine Sense into the nine Valley Lords.

Almost as if they knew what Meng Hao was thinking, the nine Valley Lords instantly began to speak.

"The members of the Zhang Clan are close friends with the Footloose Sect. You will stay on Saint's Island in your own area, which will belong to you in perpetuity."

Instantly, waves of intense envy and jealousy filled the hearts of the various Clan members from the Outer Sea. After all, one of the reasons they hoped to join the Footloose Sect was to not just for the opportunity for a single member of the Clan, but for the entire Clan to have the chance to move to Saint's Island.

It was an honor, and a very high position. After moving to Saint's Island, the Clan would never again need to worry about its continued existence in the future. The Footloose Sect would be their biggest protector.

Now, everyone watched on as the previously down and out Zhang Clan received such incredibly good fortune. Various complex thoughts filled the hearts of everyone present. Everyone immediately made the decision that they would spare no effort or cost to become friends with the Zhang Clan.

As for the Xu Clan, their hearts began to pound with fear and intense terror. They worried that retaliation would come from the Zhang Clan, which would turn into a great catastrophe that they couldn't withstand.

This particular phase of a disciple becoming apprentice to a Master was now concluded. The crowds of Clans waited to continue with the process of trying to join the Sect, while the Zhang Clan, to everyone's envy, was led away respectfully by Footloose Sect disciples. As for Meng Hao, Patriarch Reliance watched with eager anticipation as he finally parted ways with the Zhang Clan.

Nan'er gave Meng Hao a deep look. He waved, his face filled with unwillingness to part.

Meng Hao reached out to tousle the boy's hair. Then he muttered for a moment and slapped his bag of holding to produce a bottle of medicinal pills, along with a few magical items, all of which he gave to the boy.

"Focus on practicing cultivation," said Meng Hao. "You never know, we might meet again someday in the future." With that, he patted Nan'er's shoulder and then turned to walk off into the distance.

Zhang Wenfang watched Meng Hao walking off, and then looked at the gifts he had given Nan'er. Her eyes filled with deep gratitude, she dropped to her knees and respectfully kowtowed to him.

Perhaps through all eternity, they would never know the real reason why Nan'er had been accepted as an apprentice.

Meng Hao made his way off.

Under Patriarch Reliance's anticipatory gaze, he left the Footloose Sect mountains. As soon as this happened, Patriarch Reliance smiled, and was so excited that he almost let out a huge roar.

He couldn't help but feeling happy at how superior he considered his intellect to be. Right now, it seemed like everything he looked at filled him with happiness. His eyes squinted with joy as he watched Meng Hao making his way further and further away.

However, in the midst of all his smiling, he suddenly gaped.

That was because even as Meng Hao turned into a beam of prismatic light that shot throughout the air, he suddenly stopped and looked down. There below him, not far away from the Footloose Sect, was one of the largest Cultivator cities on Saint's Island!

“Uhh? Come on, get going!” said Patriarch Reliance, staring. “What are you waiting for, huh?”

Meng Hao hovered in mid-air, rubbing his chin. Although it was impossible to tell whether or not he was doing it on purpose... he began to mutter to himself.

“Before I leave, I really need to purchase some items. It probably won't be easy to find a Cultivator city like this one out on the Milky Way Sea.

“Furthermore, these Footloose Sect Cultivators are good people. The prices here probably will be pretty low, and definitely not too high. If they were too high, then I might be forced to stay on Saint's Island for even longer.” Clearing his throat, he flew toward the city.

Patriarch Reliance watched on blankly as Meng Hao descended upon the city. He wanted to cry, but had no tears, and was on the verge of going mad. He began to pant and walk in circles in the palace, gnashing his teeth.

“I've already mostly succeeded. If I have to keep on, then so be it! I'll deal with it! No Spirit Stones! Fudge! I'll give you some!

“As long as you leave, I'll do anything!”

Chapter 640: I'll Leave After I Finish Shopping

Meng Hao was in a good mood....

It was a warm, sunny day, and evening was approaching. The color of the sky and the scenery around him all looked incredibly beautiful. The more he looked at it, the better he felt.

His body flickered as he shot through mid-air toward the city. Almost in the same moment in which he was about to arrive, seven or eight streams of Divine Sense suddenly neared him. Almost as immediately, they dispersed in amazement.

Meng Hao had only revealed an early Nascent Soul stage Cultivation base. Even still, that caused quite a bit of shock amongst the people in the city. No one dared to block his way, and they allowed him to enter the city.

The Cultivator city was crowded and bustling with activity. All types of shops could be seen, and although most of the Cultivators were in the Qi Condensation stage, there were some Foundation Establishment and even the occasional Core Formation.

When it came to Nascent Soul Cultivators, Meng Hao saw a few. Clearly, they were not members of the Footloose Sect but rather, Cultivators come from the Fourth Ring to do business.

As soon as he entered the city and began to stroll about, he saw shops on both sides of the street filled with luxurious products; customers were constantly walking in and out. As for the streets themselves, they were paved with green limestone, making the whole place seem even richer.

As he walked, Meng Hao noticed a mid Core Formation stage Cultivator up ahead. He wore a light green robe, and looked quite mighty, even threatening despite his lack of angry expression.

He was walking up ahead of Meng Hao, and was just about to enter a shop off to the side, when suddenly a growl could be heard off in the distance, and a bright beam of light shot toward him at top speed.

“Zhou Jian, you traitor! So it turns out you hid here after daring to steal my Spirit Stones!? Well I, Sun, swear that you will be slain this very day!” A middle-aged Cultivator could be seen approaching. His Cultivation base was at the Core Formation stage, and his power seemed boundless. He performed an incantation gesture with his right hand, causing two flying swords to emerge with sharp glows. They instantly shot toward the Cultivator with the light green robe.

The man’s face fell, and he had no time to evade. Instantly, fighting broke out between the two of them. Attacks exploded out, forcing quite a few nearby onlookers to dodge out of the way.

They fought openly, surrounded by explosions that rose up into the sky. Magical items and divine abilities were unleashed, and both men coughed up blood and then fell back. Almost in the same

instant that they fell back, the Footloose Sect disciples in charge of maintaining order rushed toward the scene. A cold snort filled the entire area.

“Magical fighting is prohibited in Saint’s Distance City! The two of you screw off immediately!”

The echoing voice caused the face of the Cultivator named Sun to flicker. As he looked up, the Cultivator named Zhou took advantage of the pause to retreat further. It was hard to tell whether or not it was intentional, but his movement brought him right next to Meng Hao’s side. Before any observer could see what happened, the man slipped a bag of holding to Meng Hao.

“Please watch over this for me, Fellow Daoist,” he said. “I’ll be back within three days at the least. If I haven’t come to get it within three days, then everything inside belongs to you.” With that, he flew up into the air. The Cultivator named Sun let out a roar and then began to chase him. The two of them quickly vanished.

Meng Hao stood there blinking. The fight had started far too quickly, and ended even faster. Meng Hao looked down at the bag of holding, wiped away the brand mark without hesitation, and then scanned it with Divine Sense. Instantly, a strange expression appeared on his face.

There was nothing inside other than Spirit Stones.....

Furthermore, there were more than 30,000 of them.

Meng Hao cleared his throat, then calmly put the bag of holding away, his expression the same as ever. There really was nobody he knew so unreliable as to be able to pull off something like this which was so full of sloppy mistakes.

Upon first stepping foot onto Saint’s Island, Meng Hao hadn’t thought too much about why the place seemed so familiar. But then he realized that it looked so different from that familiar place in his memory that it seemed obvious someone had altered it, even moving mountains and rivers to make it different.

And then... everything went completely smoothly, especially all the matters to do with the Footloose Sect. Meng Hao couldn’t help but start getting a bit suspicious. Considering everything, it was only natural that he realize what was happening.

“It’s a good thing that when I went to the Bridge of Immortal Treading that year I got a bird’s eye view of the Milky Way Sea, and realized that the old bugger was hiding there,” he thought. “If it weren’t for that, I might have had my suspicions, but I couldn’t have been sure.

“The old bastard really is good at hiding. Even my Demon Sealing senses couldn’t pick up on his aura.” Meng Hao coughed lightly, then, without batting an eyelid, continued onward.

Meanwhile, back in the palace, Patriarch Reliance was nervously staring at Meng Hao. He watched him put away the bag of holding and then let out a sigh. Then, he started to complain regretfully.

“Oh, my Spirit Stones. Those are the Patriarch’s 30,000 Spirit Stones... gone, just like that. Everything here on Saint’s Island belongs to me, only to be gone, just like that...”

“Dammit, you little bastard! Nothing good ever happens when I run into you!” Patriarch Reliance gnashed his teeth, but there was nothing else he could do. He could only silently pray that Meng Hao would leave as quickly as possible.

As for Meng Hao, he patted his collection of free Spirit Stones, and then glanced around. Soon he caught sight of a shop that specialized in magical items. His eyes narrowed as he strode toward it.

Even on the outside, the shop looked extremely luxurious. Upon entering, he could see that it had three floors, and that the glow of magical items was shocking. The products available started from the Qi Condensation stage and even went up all the way into the Nascent Soul stage. There were special and incredible items available for all stages.

Currently, there were about seven or eight Cultivators in the shop, looking through various treasures, followed by salespeople with radiant smiles. In the middle of the shop was an incense burner, from which wisps of smoke radiated out, filling the entire first floor with an elegant aura. As soon as someone entered, it was possible to calm the mind and simply enjoy the high-end atmosphere of the shop.

As soon as Meng Hao stepped foot inside, an old man wearing a long gown approached smilingly. He clasped hands and bowed deeply to Meng Hao.

“Fellow Daoist, welcome to one of the top ten shops in all of Saint’s Distance City. We guarantee quality, and are honest with all customers. You can set your mind at ease when you do business here.

“What exactly are you looking for?” The old man’s smiling words seemed somehow familiar to Meng Hao. After thinking about it for a moment, he realized that they were almost exactly the same words he had used in his own shop back in the Reliance Sect.

The old man had a passable Cultivation base of the early Foundation Establishment stage. His latent talent was ordinary, and he was not on the verge of any sort of breakthrough, which was why he maintained such a position in this shop. He quickly measured up Meng Hao. Although he couldn’t clearly see Meng Hao’s Cultivation base, based on the way he carried himself, the old man could see that he was full of money.

“You’re funded by the Footloose Sect?” asked Meng Hao, sounding a bit surprised.

The old man looked both proud and embarrassed as he laughed and nodded.

“Fellow Daoist,” he said, “is this really your first time to Saint’s Island? There are three Cultivator cities here, and many of the shops in those cities are the property of the Footloose Sect.

“Take a look here.” The old man pointed to a wooden plaque next to the door, upon the surface of which was clearly carved a design that looked like a turtle....

“That mark,” continued the old man, “indicates that this place is property of the Footloose Sect.”

Even as the old man made his explanation, Patriarch Reliance’s heart began to pound, and he started wailing in anguish.

“I’m finished, FINISHED!” he cried. “How could the Patriarch in all his intelligence forget about THAT!? Dammit! That design.... Please, DO NOT let it attract the attention of that little bastard!”

In his anxiety, Patriarch Reliance quickly sent his Divine Sense into the old man that Meng Hao was talking to. An imperceptible tremor ran through the old man, and his expression changed. As of this moment, he was no longer himself, but rather, an incarnation of Patriarch Reliance.

“Fellow Daoist, look over there!” he said quickly, stepping in front of Meng Hao to block his line of sight. “All of the treasures in this shop are very extraordinary, really!”

Inwardly, Meng Hao gave a cold laugh, but outwardly, he looked in the direction in which the old man was pointing. There was a flying saber, completely silver and radiating icy coldness. The price listed next to it was 1,500 Spirit Stones.

It was a magical item useful to the early Foundation Establishment stage. Meng Hao looked it over and then frowned.

“Too expensive!” he said, his voice serious.

The old man laughed on the outside, but inside, he was cursing Meng Hao’s stinginess. “The Patriarch just gave you 30,000 Spirit Stones, and now you’re saying it’s too expensive?!”

“Fellow Daoist, today is your lucky day! It just so happens to be our crazy, once-a-decade sale! All products in the entire shop are half off! You can have this item for only 750 Spirit Stones!”

Meng Hao didn’t look satisfied. “This thing is worth 30 Spirit Stones at the most. Forget it. I think I’ll go to some of the other shops in the city. Then I’ll probably go to some of the other Cultivator Cities as well.” With that, he turned to leave.

However, as soon as the words left his mouth, a tremor ran through Patriarch Reliance. When he heard that Meng Hao planned to stroll around the city, he began to grieve inwardly. Gritting his teeth, he decided to throw all caution to the wind.

“Fine. 30 Spirit Stones! It’s yours!”

Meng Hao spun back around and grabbed the little saber, his face awash with joy. Then he waved his finger at the hundreds of other magical items on display on the first floor of the store.

“I want all of them,” he said.

Patriarch Reliance stared in shock. However, in his desire to get Meng Hao away as quickly as possible, he could only grit his teeth and endure the drops of blood that were being squeezed out of his heart.

It was in this manner that, under the shocked gazes of the other customers, Meng Hao purchased everything on the first floor of the shop. Then, even as Patriarch Reliance was starting to get excited, Meng Hao didn't leave, but rather made his way toward the second floor.

“Everyone says that the people from the Footloose Sect are good people. Although I've seen many things, I have to say that this is the most honest shop I have ever been into. Alright, I'm going to take a look at the second and third floors. Assuming I like what I see, I'll take it all. 30,000 Spirit Stones should be enough for everything, right?” He swished his sleeve magnanimously.

Patriarch Reliance, in the form of the old man, almost coughed up an entire mouthful of blood. His eyes were bloodshot, and he was just about to howl out in rage, when Meng Hao continued to speak in a soft voice.

“I'll leave after I finish shopping.”

The sentence caused Patriarch Reliance to gasp. He continued to remind himself that he just had to hang on a little bit longer. As he comforted himself in this way, he gave a smile that looked worse than a wailing grimace, and then escorted Meng Hao through the second and third floors. He moved as quickly as possible, and soon, Meng Hao had gathered up all of the magical items.

In the final calculation, there were several thousand items. Even at the price of only 30 spirit stones per item, he still needed over 100,000 Spirit Stones.

Patriarch Reliance felt as if his heart were being slashed by daggers. His face was pale as he stared helplessly at Meng Hao, seemingly on the verge of crying.

When it came time to settle the bill, Meng Hao rubbed his bag of holding, and a thoughtful look appeared in his eyes.

“I don't think I have enough Spirit Stones,” he said a bit bashfully. When Patriarch Reliance heard this, he gaped in shock.