

The Quest 401

Chapter 401: Legacy (1)

Sun Yi felt a pang of dread.

This junior cultivator was a first-grade Formation Master, and they, the Sun Family, could not afford to offend him.

Yet Sun Ze's gaze shifted, and he said,

"But Dad, we've already offended him..."

Sun Yi was taken aback.

Sun Ze continued, "Even if we let him go, he will hold a grudge against us..."

Sun Yi's heart gradually grew colder.

Indeed.

Their Sun Family had already offended this junior Formation Master.

At this point, hoping for peace was probably impossible...

But to really take action and close the matter permanently?

Sun Yi was not quite courageous enough to do that.

After all, he was not from humble origins; he lacked the ruthlessness.

Mo Hua sensed the struggle in the heart of the Family Head of the Sun Family and, with a slight move of his thoughts, released his Divine Sense to probe him.

This act of probing was brazen and undisguised.

Sun Yi, still tangled in his thoughts, suddenly sensed something, startled, and then his eyes widened dramatically.

This Divine Sense?!

He quickly turned towards Mo Hua, his voice trembling, "It's... it's you..."

Mo Hua did not reply, only silently watched him.

Sun Yi felt an icy chill in the pit of his stomach.

It was over.

They had encountered a little monster.

Could the Divine Sense of the Foundation Establishment Stage he had initially felt actually belong to the junior Formation Master before him?

At the Qi-refining Realm, yet with Foundation Establishment Divine Sense...

The Sun Family had offended not just a first-grade Formation Master, but also a Formation Master with exceptionally strong Divine Sense, with an unknown future potential...

Sun Yi's face turned ashen, and he stammered, "I... my Sun Family..."

Mo Hua said nonchalantly, "I can overlook it."

Sun Yi was shaken, "Is this true?"

"I am not lying to you."

Sun Yi gritted his teeth, "Alright!"

Discover hidden tales at

There are proper ways in the world.

And those who transcend the ordinary paths of Tao cultivation are either of extraordinary birth, gifted talent, or have a mindset and methods different from ordinary people.

Such cultivators could only be treated with respect and kept at a distance.

Otherwise, the Sun Family truly would face disaster.

Fortunately, this young gentleman said he would not take it to heart.

Whether he truly meant it or not, the Sun Family had to seize the chance to back down gracefully and send this deity away, to avoid escalating the situation further.

And Sun Yi also remembered something even more terrifying.

At the seventh level of Qi Refinement, with Foundation Establishment Divine Sense, and a first-grade Formation Master...

That such a person was merely a junior brother.

He had a senior sister, a senior brother, as well as a Master who was not ostentatious, and a seemingly insignificant, wooden-like coachman.

What could their identities be, what kind of cultivators were they, and how prominent could their backgrounds be?

Just thinking about it made Sun Yi's scalp tingle.

He dared not even think about it any longer.

Sun Yi immediately ordered loudly,

"Make way!"

Sun Ze, understanding his father's intent, whispered,

"Dad, are you planning to pretend to let them go and then take them by surprise when they're off guard..."

Sun Ze made a throat-slitting gesture.

Sun Yi immediately grabbed Sun Ze's neck to silence him.

At this moment, he truly wished he could strangle his own son.

Although Sun Ze had spoken softly, Mo Hua had heard him and gave Sun Ze a meaningful glance.

Sun Yi hastily apologized,

"My son is ignorant, speaks without thinking, and is unfit for great responsibilities. I ask for the Junior Master's understanding."

Ignorant, speaks without thinking, unfit for great responsibilities...

That meant the next Family Head of the Sun Family would have nothing to do with Sun Ze.

Mo Hua nodded his head.

Sun Yi breathed a sigh of relief, then bowed deeply and said respectfully,

"I respectfully see off the Junior Master, wishing the Junior Master a smooth journey!"

The other Sun Family cultivators looked at one another, completely unaware of what had just happened.

But they simply followed the Family Head's lead and likewise bowed respectfully, saying,

"We respectfully see off the Junior Master!"

The Sun Family cultivators made way and bowed.

The surrounding Spirit Farmers also felt a bit confused, but seeing the Sun Family treat Mo Hua with such respect, they too were relieved.

Ding Dachuan clasped his fist and said, "Junior Master, have a smooth journey!"

Mo Hua waved his hand and smiled, "Take care, everyone!"

"Junior Master, take care!"

"Have a smooth journey!"

"Good people are rewarded with good fortune!"

...

The other Spirit Farmers also said their farewells, sincerely sending their best wishes.

Likewise, under the respectful send-off of the Sun Family cultivators and the heartfelt farewells of the Spirit Farmers, Mo Hua left Thousand Families Town, setting off on the road towards distant lands.

It couldn't be considered startling or dangerous.

But with the matter resolved, Mo Hua also breathed a sigh of relief.

Sun Yi might have been a bit slow when it came to formations, but he knew how to act appropriately.

Being able to leave without a fight and with no casualties among the Spirit Farmers couldn't be better.

The Thick Earth Formation had already been painted by Mo Hua.

Provided that the land is nourished by the Thick Earth Formation to enrich the soil, Thousand Families Town would no longer suffer from famine in the future.

From now on, it was up to them.

Whether they could protect their Spirit Fields, safeguard the formations, resist the Sun Family, and ensure that their descendants had enough to eat...

These were things Mo Hua could no longer manage.

He was only a passing junior Formation Master and had done what he could.

Bai Zisheng felt a hint of regret.

"We didn't end up fighting... I wanted to test myself against someone at the Foundation Establishment stage."

He had been standing behind Mo Hua the whole time, waiting for the Sun Family to make a move, so that he could then step forward and put on a magnificent display of his brotherly prowess in front of his junior brother.

Unfortunately, the Sun Family did not give him that chance.

Bai Zixi didn't say much.

But Mo Hua saw that she seemed to have pulled out a golden sword and stood silently behind him.

Mo Hua felt a warmth in his heart, silently cherishing the kindness of his Junior Brother and Junior Sister.

When he had time, he would make something delicious for them to eat.

The Spirit Farmer from East Mountain Village had sent plenty of ingredients, not precious, but all specialties, not easily found in other places.

Mo Hua turned his head back to look at Thousand Families Town once more, suddenly feeling a touch of emotion:

"Old Ancestor of Sun Family was such a powerful person, yet it's a pity, the younger generations neither inherited his Formation skills nor his way of being a person."

Mr. Zhuang, who had been closing his eyes to rest, slowly opened his eyes, and softly sighed:

"The grace of the ancestors declines in the third generation, and is severed in the fifth."

Mo Hua asked in puzzlement, "Master, must it always be the third generation?"

"It's just a general rule, but most of the time, it is a declining process from generation to generation."

Bai Zisheng muttered softly:

"Our Bai Family has been passed down for so many generations..."

The Bai Family had been passed down for many generations, and it was still very prosperous, not having declined in the third generation, nor cut off in the fifth.

But he felt that his words were like challenging his master, so he didn't dare to speak loudly.

Mr. Zhuang responded with a gentle smile:

"The Bai Family has been passed down through many generations but didn't sever because your Bai Family's ancestors from one or two generations back, may not necessarily be dead..."

Bai Zixi was shocked to hear this, and both Mo Hua and Bai Zisheng's mouths fell open.

If the first and second generations haven't died, how many years have they lived?

Bai Zisheng exclaimed in disbelief,

"Tomb mounds have been built, the dead have been buried, spirit tablets have been erected, and offerings have been made, they can't possibly be still alive..."

Mr. Zhuang said, teasing, "What, you really wish for your Bai Family's ancestors to be dead?"

Bai Zisheng immediately covered his mouth.

This was not to be spoken casually.

It was alright to casually talk about other matters, but slandering the ancestors could get one a beating or confinement.

Still, he was very curious in his heart and secretly asked,

"They can't really still be alive, can they...?"

Mr. Zhuang just smiled enigmatically and did not answer.

Bai Zisheng was filled with doubts in his heart.

Bai Zixi thought for a moment and then asked Mr. Zhuang,

"Master, why is it that some small families, after more than ten generations, aren't considered prosperous but haven't declined either?"

Small families like Bai Family, with ancestors who weren't high in cultivation and didn't live long, must have passed away after so many generations, but they remained stable, so it shouldn't be considered "decline in the third and severance in the fifth."

Mr. Zhuang sighed and said:

"It's not about how many generations a family has been passed down, but about the ancestral teachings and the family's moral principles..."

"If the forebears are selfless, establishing meritorious deeds, and the descendants adhere to the ancestral teachings and maintain the family's discipline, then it will naturally last for a long time."

"The third and fifth generations are actually just like one generation."

"If the descendants forget the ancestral teachings and the family's discipline deteriorates, then relying only on the previous generation's leftover benefits to bully and indulge in pleasures, the grace will fade after three generations, and after five, it will be severed."

"Take the Sun Family, for instance; their Old Ancestor was a benefactor to Thousand Families Town."

"But his descendants took advantage of these benefits to bully others and indulge themselves."

"On the surface, the Sun Family still looks glorious, adorned in silks and feasting elegantly, but if they don't repent, the clan's downfall is only a matter of time."

Mr. Zhuang seemed to recall something, feeling somewhat emotional as he said:

"For a family, having little wealth or a shortage of cultivators in succession may not necessarily lead to a decline..."

"It's the degradation of family discipline that truly marks the beginning of its downfall."

Bai Zisheng and Bai Zixi, upon hearing this, became solemn and nodded in agreement.

Being from a noble family, they had seen many varying sizes of clans and had a deep understanding.

Mo Hua, originating from a Loose Cultivator background, though not fully comprehending, still nodded along.

...

The carriage traveled leisurely, gradually leaving Thousand Families Town as Mo Hua looked back at the Spirit Field.

The Spirit Field was fertile and brimming with life.

The Thick Earth Formation operated silently, gently nourishing the land.

But who knew how long the Formation could run and how long the Spirit Field could remain fertile.

Bai Zixi followed Mo Hua's gaze and frowned slightly, "The Sun Family won't just let things be, will they?"

Such a fertile Spirit Field was like juicy meat by a wolf's mouth.

Even if the Sun Family had a moment of conscience, it wouldn't last long.

Eventually, they would not be able to resist salivating over it.

The Sun Family would be wary of Mo Hua, a Grade One Formation Master, but they wouldn't fear these ordinary Spirit Farmers.

In the end, this Formation might still fall into the hands of the Sun Family.

However, Mo Hua looked at his Junior Sister with a smile and said,

"Don't worry."

Bai Zixi was a bit puzzled.

Mo Hua just smiled again without speaking.

...

At this moment in East Mountain Village, Ding Dachuan went to the Elder to recount what had happened.

The Elder relieved, exclaimed, "It's good that we could leave safely, we really owe it to that young gentleman."

Ding Dachuan nodded in agreement.

Then he turned his head and suddenly noticed Ding Miao drawing something on the ground, he couldn't help but be startled and asked,

"Miao'er, what are you drawing?"

"Formation!" Miao'er said in a tender voice.

Ding Dachuan was taken aback, "Where did you get a Formation?"

Miao'er took out a book from close to him, "This was given to me by my brother, he told me to draw according to it and to teach others after I finished."

The high spirit in the Elder's heart trembled, "Which brother?"

Miao'er pointed towards the Spirit Field, indicating the brother who had been Drawing Formations there.

"Can... I take a look at it?" asked the Elder, his voice trembling.

After pondering, Miao'er nodded.

The brother had said they could show it to their own, and the Elder was not an outsider.

The Elder took the Formation Book with trembling hands.

The Formation Book was compiled in simple and understandable terms; although he didn't understand Formations, he could still grasp the gist.

It was an Earth Series Formation Book, containing various Earth Series Formations used in the Spirit Field.

The Formations progressed from simple to complex.

From simple Patterns that didn't require much use of Divine Sense to the six-Pattern Cultivating Soil Formation, and finally a Grade One eleven-Pattern Thick Earth Ultimate Formation, everything was documented and detailed.

What level could learn what Formation, orderly and progressively deepening.

From enlightenment to mastery.

This was a complete book of Formation legacy, closely related to the Spirit Farmers.

With this Formation Book, even without relying on the Sun Family in the future, these Spirit Farmers might be able to draw their own Formations.

The Elder suddenly understood the meaning behind Mo Hua's words, "One can only rely on oneself."

For a moment, the Elder's emotions surged, his cloudy eyes filling with tears.

He was profoundly moved and filled with gratitude; despite his limited mobility, he solemnly turned towards the distant mountains and bowed deeply.

Around the distant mountains, mists twined.

Mo Hua's carriage, growing more distant with each passing moment, disappeared amongst the layers of mountains.

Chapter 402: Travel Holidays (1)

...

On the mountain road, Big White pulled the carriage at a steady pace toward the destination predetermined by Mr. Zhuang.

According to Mr. Zhuang, the place he intended to visit was a Sect with which he had old ties.

Mo Hua asked what Sect it was.

Mr. Zhuang played coy and did not say, only mentioning that they would know upon arrival.

Mo Hua did not ask any further.

Throughout the journey, Mr. Zhuang also instructed Mo Hua to pay close attention and use Divine Sense Calculation to search for traces of Formations.

Along the way, Mo Hua indeed sensed some Formation auras and, utilizing Divine Sense Calculation, deduced the Formation Patterns, presenting them to Mr. Zhuang for review.

Mr. Zhuang often nodded.

Occasionally, he would point out some errors and advised Mo Hua to be mindful.

Some of these mistakes were due to Mo Hua's lack of experience with Formations, incorrectly calculating the layout of the Formation Pivot;

Others were due to carelessness, missing a few Pattern lines;

And still, others were because the method of Calculation was incorrect, leading the trajectory of the Formation's Spiritual Power to deviate...

Mo Hua took note of these issues one by one, repeatedly pondering them to ensure they would not be repeated next time.

In this way, while traveling, sensing, calculating, and verifying,

Mo Hua's Divine Sense Calculation became increasingly proficient.

Regrettably, although some of the deduced Formations were new to Mo Hua, most were not rare as they only consisted of seven to nine Pattern lines.

There were no Second-Grade Formations.

Within a Second-Grade Prefecture Border, only First-grade Formation Methods were generally used.

Second-Grade Formations, which consume more Spirit Stones, were mostly unaffordable for Clans and Sects below Second Grade.

And Formation Masters capable of creating Second-Grade Formations mostly would not stay within the Second-Grade Prefecture Border.

Moreover, there was no sign of the Ultimate Formation that Mo Hua sought.

At first, Mo Hua thought he might have missed something.

But since Mr. Zhuang did not have them stop, it was likely there wasn't one.

It would be impossible for Mr. Zhuang to miss it.

Upon reflection, Mo Hua felt this made sense.

If Ultimate Formations were everywhere, they would be too common.

How could such common Formations be called "Ultimate"?

Besides, Mo Hua had already learned the Thick Earth Formation.

The Thick Earth Formation was an eleven-pattern Ultimate Formation.

Mo Hua's current Divine Sense was also at eleven patterns, just enough to use the Thick Earth Formation to refine it.

Whenever the carriage stopped for a break,

Mo Hua would jump off, release his Divine Sense to find some fresh tender grass, and gather it to feed Big White.

Then, while watching Big White eat, he would practice the Thick Earth Formation on the ground.

That was the only way to practice the Thick Earth Formation.

Using the Taoist Stele, Mo Hua contemplated the Earth Dao Meaning, causing the stele to overload, which had not yet recovered.

Mo Hua even thought it had broken.

Fortunately, after observing it for a few days, he noticed the stele just turned a bit grayer, its surface remained intangible, with no other abnormalities.

The aura of the Taoist Stele was gradually recovering, and it seemed it would be fine after some time.

This relieved Mo Hua.

But in the short term, he could not use the Taoist Stele to practice Formation Methods.

And the Thick Earth Formation could not be drawn on paper.

So Mo Hua could only wait for breaks to find a patch of land and squat down to draw Formations.

While practicing Formations to comprehend the Taoist Meaning, he also strengthened his Divine Sense.

Every time he drew a Thick Earth Formation on the ground, Mo Hua felt his Divine Sense merge more with the earth, deepening his understanding of the Earth Dao Meaning.

With such marvelous comprehension, the growth of Mo Hua's Divine Sense was not slow.

It was just that there was still some distance to a twelve-pattern Divine Sense.

...

That day everyone was sitting in the carriage.

Bai Zisheng and Bai Zixi were reviewing the Formation that Mr. Zhuang had taught them.

It was the Formation that even Mo Hua could not learn.

Mo Hua was somewhat curious, but he refrained from looking because of his curiosity.

Mr. Zhuang had his reasons for everything he did; it might involve some causes and effects that Mo Hua should not touch.

As for himself, Mo Hua looked at the Formation Books while practicing Divine Sense Calculation.

Mr. Zhuang was resting with his eyes closed.

A moment later, Mr. Zhuang suddenly opened his eyes and said,

"It's New Year's Eve."

All three disciples were startled.

Mo Hua counted the days, and indeed, it seemed today was New Year's Eve.

In the past, in Tongxian City, every festive season, the streets would hang red lanterns, the Market Town would display an array of goods, people bustled about, and every home wafted the scent of cooking...

But now, there was neither a village ahead nor a shop behind.

There was only a secluded mountain road, the cliffs on both sides, and the wild grass beside the road.

Thinking of Tongxian City, Mo Hua sighed softly to himself.

"I wonder how everyone in Tongxian City is faring."

"Are they festively celebrating the New Year again?"

"And my parents, are they healthy and safe?"

"I wonder if they missed me..."

Mo Hua pondered to himself, feeling homesick, with a hint of melancholy in his expression.

Mr. Zhuang, seeing Mo Hua's look, showed a trace of compassion and said,

"When you're away from home, everything is simple. But since it's a holiday, we should still celebrate it in a simple manner."

Mo Hua was somewhat surprised, "Are we going to celebrate too?"

"Mhm," Mr. Zhuang nodded gently.

"But... we don't have anything," Mo Hua murmured.

"Whatever you want, you can get from Old Kui," Mr. Zhuang said.

Mo Hua was stunned for a moment and turned to look at Old Kui.

Old Kui also nodded, "I have whatever you need."

Mo Hua's spirits immediately lifted.

Bai Zisheng and Bai Zixi were also excited.

The eyes of all three children sparkled brightly.

As if touched by the mood, the corners of Mr. Zhuang's mouth also curled into a smile.

...

So, with Mo Hua mainly leading the preparations,

He counted on his fingers, speaking to Old Kui:

"Grandpa Gui, I want lanterns, firecrackers, 'may there be surplus every year,' there must be fish, 'may every step take you higher,' there must be cakes..."

Mo Hua counted them one by one.

Old Kui nodded and said, "Wait here for a moment."

Then, right in front of Mo Hua, he disappeared.

Within half an hour, Old Kui reappeared as silently as he had left, throwing several storage bags onto the ground.

Mo Hua looked and found that sure enough, everything he had mentioned was there.

And many of them were new, seemingly just purchased from some festive Immortal City.

"Thank you, Grandpa Gui!"

Mo Hua said with a beaming smile.

Old Kui nodded and then handed over another storage bag.

Mo Hua was a bit startled but looked inside.

The bag was full of nuts like pine nuts, hazelnuts, and torrey nuts, most of which were raw.

"Fry some for me, I've finished all the ones from before," Old Kui whispered.

Old Kui, who was always busy driving the cart and had nothing to do, liked to snack on pine nuts.

So the pine nuts that Mo Hua had fried for him before were all gone.

Thinking that since it was New Year's, he might as well treat himself.

He had eaten plenty of pine nuts and wanted to try something new, so he bought a variety of them.

These Qi Refinement foods were new to him, and he didn't know what they were, but since they were sold together, he guessed they were probably similar and bought them all.

He just wondered if they would be crunchy when he cracked them.

Old Kui looked at Mo Hua with some anticipation.

Mo Hua smiled and nodded:

"Sure!"

So that afternoon, they stopped traveling.

The carriage was parked by the roadside.

Mo Hua tied bright red lanterns on the carriage, pasted several "Fu" characters, and even hung a big red flower around Big White's neck.

Big White wasn't very willing, but couldn't resist Mo Hua's insistence.

After all, "one who takes the gift cannot refuse the asker."

It had eaten so much grass fed by Mo Hua.

In addition, Mo Hua also prepared the firecrackers, set up the Fireworks Formation, and saved it for the evening display.

Next on the agenda was preparing the New Year's Eve dinner.

Mo Hua first fried the pine nuts and hazelnuts for Old Kui.

There were plain ones as well as ones flavored with various spices.

Old Kui took out a portion, arranged them on the table for everyone, and sneakily stuffed the rest into his sleeves.

Then it was time to cook the dishes.

Some of the ingredients were bought by Old Kui, and some were gifts from the Spirit Farmers of Thousand Families Town.

Bai Zisheng watched eagerly on the side, occasionally suggesting:

"Mo Hua, make this one, it's delicious."

"This one should be fried, not boiled."

"This one needs to be spicy to taste good, add more..."

Mr. Zhuang wasn't so particular, he could eat anything, but he still requested a "Steamed Bass" to prevent Bai Zisheng from ordering all spicy dishes.

Lastly, it was time to steam the pastries.

There were rice cakes, as well as various other pastries and sweets.

Bai Zixi helped Mo Hua knead the dough, and as she did, she began to shape small pieces of it.

Her fair little hands worked the pale dough, though it was unclear what she was making.

Mo Hua, curious, asked:

"Senior Sister, what are you shaping?"

Bai Zixi held an oddly shaped piece of dough in her palm and crisply said:

"A rabbit!"

Mo Hua was taken aback.

Bai Zixi frowned. "Does it not look like it?"

"It does..." Mo Hua lied through his teeth.

"It's just a bit... plump."

The little rabbit had turned into a little pig.

Bai Zixi looked again at the "little rabbit" in her hand, puzzled. "It's not fat..."

She thought it was quite cute.

Mo Hua was busy all afternoon and finally finished preparing the dishes.

The twilight faded, and the night began to deepen.

It was time for fireworks.

Before setting them off, Mo Hua was a bit worried, "Won't it frighten the Monster Beasts in the mountains?"

Old Kui glanced around and said lightly, "It won't."

Mo Hua was then reassured.

The Fireworks Formation was simple, as there was limited time, and Mo Hua hadn't made it too complex.

Moreover, this formation was drawn directly on the ground.

This was the first time besides the Thick Earth Formation that Mo Hua used the "earth" as a Formation media for his Formation Painting.

In the dark of the night, the fireworks were brilliant.

And then it was time to eat.

Everyone sat down to dine on the ground.

Soft grass, covered with silk cloth, was laid out with a spread of food.

With a variety of dishes and Mo Hua's improved culinary skills, the meal was delightful.

Mr. Zhuang enjoyed it the most, Bai Zisheng ate with the greatest glee, Bai Zixi ate with utmost elegance, and Old Kui was the most focused, persistently cracking pine nuts and hazelnuts.

Under the cool moonlight, amidst the tranquil mountains, there was a lively atmosphere of fireworks, noisy yet warm.

After a satisfying meal, Mo Hua no longer felt homesick.

He lay on the grass, counting the stars above.

For Mo Hua, it might not have been the most lively year, but it was the first time he spent New Year's with his master, senior brother, senior sister, and Grandpa Gui.

It was quite festive enough.

For Bai Zisheng and Bai Zixi, from a big clan, the festival used to be glamorous yet personally cold.

Full of worldly concerns and strict rules.

Now, the simplicity and bustle were more appealing.

Bai Zisheng also lay on the ground, chatting with Mo Hua off and on, occasionally tripping over his words.

Bai Zixi looked serene and graceful, yet she doubted in her heart, whether what she shaped earlier was really a rabbit?

Why did it turn into a little pig after being steamed?

Mr. Zhuang, surrounded by his three disciples, felt comfort in his heart, but there was a fleeting moment of melancholy.

This was probably the most lively New Year's he had celebrated in his few hundred years of solitary life.

Chapter 403: Unexpected Guest (1)

...

Thousand Families Town, East Mountain Village.

Not long after Mo Hua had left, a group of uninvited visitors arrived outside the village.

They stood on the mountain, gazing down at East Mountain Village, then took out a golden compass, as if searching for something.

The needle on the compass wavered uncertainly, pointing in no clear direction.

Frowning, they detected nothing and eventually left as quietly as they had come.

The cultivators came quickly and left just as fast, without disturbing the local cultivators.

The Spirit Farmers of East Mountain Village had no idea that outsiders had been spying on them.

They were still preoccupied with the Spirit Fields, concerned with the harvest and livelihood, and were thinking of ways to compete with the Sun Family.

Several days later, three more cultivators arrived.

An emaciated old man, a middle-aged cultivator with a scholarly appearance holding a paper fan, and a young man in white with a clear and bright look.

The emaciated elder flipped a Copper Coin into the air and caught it in his palm.

He looked at the divination result of the Copper Coin and whispered something to himself, sighing after a long while,

"It seems to be here, and yet the divination is not clear..."

The middle-aged cultivator said, "Pavilion Elder has divined that the person is within this state boundary; it should just be a matter of time before we find him."

The elder let out a sneer, "What are you thinking?"

The middle-aged cultivator was taken aback.

The elder sighed, "Great sound is silent, great form is shapeless."

"At his level, not to mention being in the same state, even if we were in the same Little Immortal City, if he concealed his movements, you would not detect him."

"What has no sound cannot be heard, what has no form cannot be seen, what has no Tao cannot be known."

"If he hides his vital energy, we stand no chance."

"Heavenly secret Calculation, is it something we cultivators can truly fathom?"

The middle-aged cultivator furrowed his brow,

"Don't we have the Three Talents Divination Copper Coins given by the Pavilion Elder?"

The elder weighed the Copper Coin in his hand and sighed,

"These Three Talents Divination Copper Coins are valuable, but it also matters who uses them and on whom they are used."

"My cultivation is not sufficient; I can use them to divine others, but using them to divine that person is just showing off in front of an expert..."

The middle-aged cultivator did not understand. "Wasn't it said that his Sea of Consciousness shattered, his Dantian destroyed, and his vital energy all but gone? Why is he still so difficult to deal with?"

The elder glanced at him, "Because he is a Formation Master, one whose natural talent is nearly monstrous, and whose understanding of Formations is close to attaining the Dao."

In the middle-aged cultivator's eyes emerged a deep wariness, followed by a sigh,

"Then why has he fallen to such a state?"

"You need not concern yourself with that, and you better not ask. Such matters are beyond our purview," the elder stated indifferently.

"We just need to do the task we've been given."

The middle-aged cultivator scoffed, "But if we go by what you say, if we can't divine his whereabouts, doesn't that mean we'll never find him?"

"Even lions nap."

"Moreover, we're not the only ones after him."

"If we just follow along and muddy the waters, it's fine not to find him, but we can't let anyone else find him."

Having said that, the elder turned back and instructed the young man in white,

"Young Master, I didn't want to take you out originally, but your father wanted you to gain some experience and you wanted to see the world, so I reluctantly agreed to bring you along."

"But unless absolutely necessary, do not take action."

"You must be cautious in your actions. Even though you carry a special Eternal Life Rune, do not let your guard down."

"Things here are overly complicated, involving too many powers. I might not be able to protect you..."

The elder spoke gravely, aiming to ensure the young master kept to himself, not trying to be clever or doing anything inappropriate.

Otherwise, he might not be able to cope.

Immediately after, he regretted his involvement.

Why did he have to deal with such a mess?

The young master was only twenty-three, already a Second Rank Formation Master in the initial stage of Foundation Establishment, his prospects limitless.

Instead of treasuring him like a jewel at home, why send him out to gain experience?

Cultivating the Tao is perilous; was it so easily gained through experience?

For Loose Cultivators who are poor, it's one thing not to travel, endure hardship, and later struggle for food.

You, however, a Noble Family Descendant, need not worry about food or cultivation; wouldn't it be better to stay safe and comfortable in your wealthy home?

Yet you insist on wading into these muddy waters.

And as for how deep these waters run, even he was unsure.

If anything significant were to happen, the special Eternal Life Rune might not even be enough to save his life.

Thinking of this, the elder wanted to smack himself.

It was all because of his big mouth.

After being plied with a few jars of fine wine by the young man's father, he got confused, and carelessly agreed to this task.

He regretted it as soon as he sobered up.

But by then it was too late...

The young man in white, still unaware of the complexities, simply said earnestly,

"Rest assured, I have taken your words to heart."

The elder, looking at the young man as naive as a blank sheet of paper, couldn't bear to say more and just sighed.

The young man's resolve shone through.

His reasons for coming were two-fold: he wanted to gain experience and see what the Tao Cultivation World beyond the Noble Clans was really like.

The other reason was to meet that renowned Mr. Zhuang.

In his family, he was recognized as a Formation Genius.

At a young age, he had already become a Second Rank Formation Master.

He once self-satisfyingly believed that Formations were nothing much; that even if there were Formation Masters stronger than him, they could not be much stronger.

High-grade Formation Masters were just older and had painted more Formations than he had.

In time, he was certain he would surpass them all.

That was until he inadvertently saw the Formation Patterns created by Mr. Zhuang in his early years and learned of Mr. Zhuang's deeds, that he realized his own insignificance and ignorance.

There are heavens beyond heavens, and people beyond people.

In this world, there exist profound Formations he had never studied, and brilliant Formation Masters he had never encountered.

The way of Formation is vast and profound.

What he had learned so far was but the tip of the iceberg.

Beneath the iceberg lay the true nature of Formations, as well as the Great Dao contained within.

With increased dedication to studying Formations, the young man in white had become a Second Rank Formation Master at such a young age.

...

He was the youngest Second-Rank Formation Master in the clan's eight hundred years.

He was somewhat grateful to Mr. Zhuang and also full of longing, and his curiosity was growing.

He wanted to know just what kind of bearing Mr. Zhuang had.

Was he, as the rumors said, supremely talented, peerless, proud, and arrogant, looking down upon all creation?

He also wondered if he could ever have a conversation with Mr. Zhuang...

The young man was thinking quietly to himself.

The gaunt old man cast the Copper Coins a few more times.

Still, he couldn't figure out anything.

He only vaguely knew that the person had been here.

Why he had come, what he had done, and when he had left, all were mysteries with no clues.

With no leads at this location, the three were ready to leave.

Suddenly, the young man in white exclaimed with a "huh".

The middle-aged cultivator asked:

"What's wrong?"

The young man in white pointed at a distant Spirit Field and said, "There is a Formation there."

The middle-aged cultivator frowned, "That's a Spirit Field, there are naturally Formations inside..."

The young man in white shook his head, "It's different."

The middle-aged cultivator was slightly taken aback and released his Divine Sense. After perceiving for a moment, his brow gradually furrowed.

Indeed, it was somewhat different...

Just a first-grade Spirit Field, why would it have such a rich vitality?

This didn't seem like a result that a first-grade Formation could achieve...

The gaunt old man also noticed the anomaly, but as he was not well-versed in Formations, he asked:

"What did you find?"

This young master's talent for Formations was extraordinary, and Mr. Zhuang was also a Formation Master. Perhaps he really had discovered something.

The young man in white frowned and shook his head:

"I only know that the Formation in this Spirit Field is out of the ordinary, but I can't see what's unusual about it. It will take some time to study it."

The middle-aged cultivator asked the old man, "Do we still have time?"

The old man said, "Whether we have time or not doesn't depend on us, but on his mood. If he wants to give us time, we have time; if not, then we don't."

After pondering for a while, the old man continued:

"Since you want to study it, go ahead and study it. Anyway, we're not in a rush these few days."

The young man in white showed a look of joy, "Thank you, senior."

In the following days, the three of them stayed in Thousand Families Town.

When he had nothing else to do, the young man in white also went to the Spirit Field. He wanted to know what kind of Formation was drawn there.

But after a few days, there was still no progress.

What was drawn in the field were clearly simple Formations like the Cultivating Soil Formation, yet the entire Spirit Field radiated distinct vitality.

The young man was baffled.

It wasn't until one day, when he climbed a mountain and looked far off, taking in the entire Spirit Field at a glance, that he suddenly had a revelation, an epiphany.

The entire Spirit Field turned out to be one large Formation!

The young man in white told the old man and the middle-aged cultivator about this discovery.

Both were equally astonished.

The gaunt old man nodded and said:

"Indeed, this kind of unimaginable Formation is indeed like his handiwork."

The middle-aged cultivator asked the young man, "Do you know what kind of Formation this is?"

The young man shook his head.

"Isn't it a first-grade Formation?" the middle-aged cultivator asked.

"It's first-grade."

The middle-aged cultivator was somewhat surprised, "You're a Second-Rank Formation Master, is there a first-grade Formation you don't know?"

The young man spoke awkwardly, "This should be a unique first-grade Ultimate Formation."

"Ultimate Formation?" The middle-aged cultivator didn't understand, "Even if it's Ultimate, isn't it still just first-grade?"

The young man in white shook his head, "It's different."

But he didn't elaborate.

Explaining such esoteric matters about Formations to cultivators who aren't Formation Masters is incomprehensible, no matter how you explain it.

"What do we do now?" the middle-aged cultivator asked once more.

The gaunt old man said, "This Formation can prove that the person indeed came here. We just need to keep searching."

Then he muttered to himself:

"Being pursued by so many, yet still having the leisure to draw a Formation? The actions of a true expert are indeed inscrutable..."

The middle-aged cultivator felt slightly disheartened, "Spent all this time searching, isn't it the same as not having searched at all? What does one Formation prove?"

The middle-aged cultivator brushed his sleeve and left.

The old man said to the young man in white:

"He's impatient, don't mind it. Finding an Ultimate Formation is a great discovery in itself, and this is very likely a Formation personally laid out by him, which is extraordinary..."

"Carefully copy down the Formation Patterns, make no mistakes, and then we can set off."

"Mhm." The young man in white nodded.

Afterward, he spent a day copying down all the Formation Patterns of the Spirit Field, then, out of curiosity, he attempted to study them himself.

But he found he couldn't master it in a short time...

"It seems this must be Mr. Zhuang's handiwork..."

The young man in white sighed and put the matter aside for now.

The next day, the three set out, leaving Thousand Families Town and continued their search in the direction pointed by the Compass and the Three Talents Divination.

The accuracy of the Three Talents Divination Copper Coin might not be reliable, but it was their only clue.

...

After the three had left, and some time had passed, a strange and oddly shaped person came walking up the mountain road to Thousand Families Town.

He wore a conical hat, covering his face.

There wasn't the slightest hint of breath around him.

As he walked, his footsteps were uneven, as if someone on stilts hadn't gotten used to the bamboo poles under their feet.

Passersby looked at him as if they saw nothing, as though he didn't exist at all.

The person followed the mountain path, passed through Thousand Families Town, passed East Mountain Village, and arrived in front of the Spirit Field. He took off his conical hat and stripped off his straw coat.

He revealed a Taoist's attire.

At the same time, a strange breath emanated from him.

Chapter 404: Taoist (1)

This eerie Taoist, standing motionless at the edge of the field like a scarecrow, did not move for a long time.

Several cultivators were approaching from afar, cursing something as they walked.

"These Spirit Farmers really have some nerve..."

"They're hard to deal with."

"If this continues, our Sun Family is not going to have an easy time..."

"What does the Family Head even have in mind?"

"He seems quite wary of those few cultivators from outside..."

...

The few cultivators from outside?

Upon hearing this, the Taoist turned his head stiffly and gave them a glance.

The cultivators of the Sun Family stopped in their tracks upon noticing him, seeing that the Taoist had a weak aura, shabbily dressed in peculiar attire, they questioned:

"Who are you?"

The Taoist did not respond but let out a dull sound from his throat.

It was like an aged drum leaking air, unable to produce a clear sound.

"Is he a mute?"

"Wearing a bamboo hat and a straw raincoat, could he be one of those Spirit Farmers from East Mountain Village?"

"That can't be right; he's also wearing a Taoist robe inside, looks like a Taoist..."

"Some outsider?"

The several Sun Family cultivators discussed among themselves.

Meanwhile, the Taoist continued to watch them in silence.

One of the taller, thinner cultivators with a quick temper cursed:

"You poverty-stricken Taoist, what the hell are you looking at? Keep staring and I'll gouge your eyes out..."

Before his words were finished, the Taoist suddenly pounced towards him.

The tall, thin cultivator was startled and, in a rush, threw a punch, but just one punch knocked the Taoist to the ground.

He steadied his heart and then sneered:

"And here I thought you had some skills, daring to lay hands on me with just that?"

Then he walked over and started beating and kicking the Taoist, cursing while he hit:

"What trash? Hit me?"

The Taoist struggled a few times but could not fight back.

The other Sun Family cultivators cheered from the side.

They would usually flaunt the power of the Sun Family to bully others, beating up anyone who crossed them like this.

It was both an outlet for their anger and a way to uphold the dignity of the Sun Family.

After the tall, thin cultivator finished beating him, he sneered coldly, "That'll teach you to watch where you're looking!"

Having said that, he kicked the Taoist and prepared to leave.

However, the Taoist stretched out his withered hand and grabbed his foot.

The tall, thin cultivator struggled to break free several times without success, growing furious, he drew his knife.

He chopped off the Taoist's hand with one strike.

But at the severed spot, only decayed flesh was present, with not a drop of blood.

The tall, thin cultivator felt a bit disgusted and a bit chilly, and decided to take a closer look at who this Taoist was, and why he was so strange.

He took a careful look at the Taoist's face.

At this glance, he was startled.

The Taoist's face was ordinary, but those eyes, pitch-black and hollow, like the eyes of a dead person.

Just one look made his head swim.

Suddenly, his Sea of Consciousness churned, he felt a headache and an urge to vomit.

At the same time, it was as if something invisible, sticky, and wet, climbed onto his head, then little by little, it burrowed into his divine chamber, drilling all the way into his Sea of Consciousness.

From inside the Sea of Consciousness, there came a sucking sound.

As if something was feeding...

The tall, thin cultivator felt an even stronger sensation of nausea and dizziness.

Nevertheless, this discomfort was momentary.

In the blink of an eye, he couldn't feel anything anymore.

With lingering pain, the tall, thin cultivator's gaze filled with confusion.

Gradually, his pupils deepened slightly, and his eyes no longer held any doubt.

And the Taoist on the ground slowly collapsed, no longer clinging, no longer struggling, lifeless.

The other Sun Family cultivators were taken aback at the sight:

"Sun Ji, did you kill someone?"

"If he's dead, he's dead; it's not like we haven't killed before."

The thin, tall cultivator named Sun Ji spoke indifferently, his voice carrying an almost imperceptible hoarseness.

"Then it's the usual drill."

"Alright."

The group went to the roadside to keep watch, guard against any other cultivators passing by or having seen anything.

Sun Ji dragged the Taoist's body to a nearby cliff and threw it over.

But before discarding the corpse, he tore off the Taoist's robe and kept it for himself.

The others exchanged glances.

"You want the robe of a dead man?"

"I'm used to wearing it."

The rest were taken aback and cursed:

"What nonsense are you talking?"

"Used to wearing it?"

"You're wearing a dead man's Taoist robe?"

"Put it on for us to see then?"

Without waiting for a response, Sun Ji actually put on the Taoist robe.

His tall, lanky figure clad in the dirty and old robe, with limbs sticking out awkwardly, looked utterly ill-fitting and somewhat sinister.

Like a field scarecrow cloaked in human clothes.

The other cultivators all showed signs of alarm.

One of the Sun Family cultivators couldn't help but say:

"You've actually got the guts to wear it? Damn, I really take my hat off to you."

Unperturbed, Sun Ji simply said:

"It's getting late, let's head back."

The others glanced at the sky, the sun was still high, it didn't seem late at all.

But, having killed someone, even though it was just a passing, nameless Taoist, it was still better to go back to the clan to lay low.

"Alright."

As the group headed back, Sun Ji suddenly said:

"It seems like we took a wrong turn."

"No, we didn't."

Sun Ji pointed in another direction, "That way is the way back home."

The others looked and had a moment of realization:

"Right."

"Must've drunk too much."

"Indeed, they had taken the wrong path."

Then they walked down another road.

They kept walking.

But the end of this road...

Was a steep cliff.

Below the cliff lay an abyss thousands of feet deep.

They continued as usual, talking and laughing on their way home, walking onto the cliff, then plummeting to their deaths, with not a single bone left intact.

Even as they fell, smiles remained on their faces.

In the face of death, they remained oblivious.

Only Sun Ji stopped at the edge of the cliff.

He looked indifferently at the abyss below, then turned his head to gaze at Thousand Families Town and the prominent estate within it, before walking towards it with measured steps.

Sun Ji wore an ill-fitting Taoist robe that showed both hand and foot.

His steps were natural at first but began to falter as he walked.

The cultivators on the road found him odd, but none dared to ask.

Sun Ji made his way to the estate of the Sun Family.

And then to Sun Yi's study.

Inside the study, Sun Yi was still pondering over the Thick Earth Formation, deeply troubled.

He soon became frustrated.

Still at a loss.

How does one learn a Formation of the first grade with eleven patterns?

How on earth did that kid manage to learn it?

Why, even though he had reached the Foundation Establishment Stage, could he not grasp it after pondering for so long?

Sun Yi was anxious.

If he couldn't learn this Formation, he would no longer be able to use it to threaten the Spirit Farmer.

Without the Spirit Farmer's support, the Sun Family would eventually run out of resources and decline.

"What if I pull man, and destroy the Spirit Field directly?"

A cold glint flickered in Sun Yi's eyes.

Destroying the Spirit Field would destroy the Thick Earth Formation.

Without the Thick Earth Formation, those Spirit Farmers who didn't know Formations would still have to rely on the Sun Family.

But the Formation belonged to the Old Ancestor of the Sun Family.

If he destroyed this Formation, it would also be akin to defying the teachings of his forebear.

It would be tantamount to forgetting his roots...

Sun Yi was indecisive and his thoughts were in turmoil.

Just then, someone knocked on the door.

Sun Yi was extremely irritated and ignored it.

But the person kept knocking.

Knock... Knock... Knock...

The sound was monotonous and numb.

In Thousand Families Town, in the Sun Family, who dared to knock on his door like this?

Pressing down his anger, Sun Yi said, "Get in here!"

The door slowly opened, and Sun Ji walked in wearing a dirty, old, and slightly too small Taoist robe.

Sun Yi was taken aback when he saw it and couldn't help but say,

"What the hell is that you're wearing?"

Sun Ji didn't speak.

Sun Yi frowned, sensing something was off, "What are you here for?"

Sun Ji still made no sound.

Sun Yi was about to say something more when he saw Sun Ji suddenly make a move, pulling out a waist knife and slashing at him.

But how could he, at the Qi-refining Realm, be a match for Sun Yi, who had reached the Foundation Establishment Stage?

Sun Yi caught the blade barehanded, channeling Spiritual Power, and with a twist, he warped the blade as if it were a sheet of iron, curling it up.

Then Sun Yi struck back with a palm, sending forth a surge of Spiritual Power that knocked Sun Ji away.

Sun Ji's chest was shattered by the force of the Foundation Establishment Spiritual Power, and he slumped to the ground, spitting blood.

Sun Yi snorted coldly, stepped forward, grabbed Sun Ji by the collar, lifting him up, and said coldly,

"You ingrate, who sent you to kill me?"

Sun Ji tried to say something, but instead coughed up a gush of blood from his throat.

"Who is it that gave you such a great offer to foolishly attempt to kill me?"

Sun Yi stared into Sun Ji's eyes and said coldly, "Speak!"

Sun Ji couldn't speak, but the color of his eyes deepened.

His pupils dilated, the whites shrank.

Little by little, his entire eyes turned pitch black and hollow.

Sun Yi felt a violent, nauseating pain in his Sea of Consciousness, furrowing his brow tightly before it slowly eased.

He tossed Sun Ji to the ground, oblivious, and then slowly returned to his seat.

"Sun Yi" sat in the chair with a vacant look in his eyes.

Amidst the flickering candlelight, he began recalling some memories.

And he seemed to be searching for something in those memories.

"Thick Earth Formation..."

"Ultimate Formation of the Earth Sect, first grade with eleven patterns, such a fine piece to end up here..."

"Mr. Zhuang..."

"My... dear junior brother..."

"Barely breathing, looks like the wound won't heal..."

"Ah, Old Kui is also here..."

"Took a disciple? That doesn't seem like you."

"Bai... Bai... my sister's child?"

"Still clinging to the past."

"What are you doing here?"

"To draw the Thick Earth Formation?"

"Meddling in affairs that are none of your business..."

"Is that all?"

"Sun Yi" muttered to himself as he pondered.

Suddenly, he paused, murmuring,

"No, this isn't right, I've forgotten something..."

"It's not that I've forgotten, it's that someone doesn't want me to know..."

"What did I forget?"

Sun Yi began scratching his head in torment, then suddenly remembered:

"There was another disciple? Another disciple?"

"How could there be another disciple?"

"Who is it?"

"Why can't I remember?"

Chapter 405: Eighth Level (1)

"Who is this person? What is his name?"

"I should remember..."

"But why can't I recall?"

"Why can't I recall?!"

"Sun Yi" muttered deliriously, tormented in thought.

He clasped his forehead with both hands, grasping his scalp and scratching fiercely, until blood flowed from his head and his face was torn, yet he remained puzzled and distressed.

A moment later, he slowly stopped.

In his eyes, a glint of cold decisiveness flashed.

With his finger dipped in his own blood, he shakily drew a Formation Pattern on his forehead.

The Formation Pattern was sinister and bright red, not a standard Formation, but a Demon Pattern from the Demon Sect.

Once the Demon Pattern was formed, it seemed to come alive, feeding on Sun Yi's Blood Qi and Divine Thought.

Sun Yi gritted his teeth as his Blood Qi slowly weakened, but his thoughts became increasingly clear.

The fog shrouding his memories also began to lift.

He finally remembered something.

"There was another... a little disciple..."

"A little disciple..."

"What was his name?"

"Sun Yi" wore an expression of pain as if enduring great torture, and finally piece by piece, he remembered:

"Mo..."

"Mo... Hua!"

Mo Hua!

"Sun Yi's" eyes first showed excitement, then confusion.

"Why?"

"Why was this name hidden so deep?"

"Who exactly is this child?"

In Sun Yi's memories, the image of a smiling face surfaced.

It was the smile of a little Cultivator, about ten years old.

Innocent and naive, yet also warm and endearing.

Simultaneously, his awareness of Mo Hua began to clarify.

"Qi Refinement, seventh level, a first-rank Formation Master, Foundation Establishment Divine Sense..."

"Sun Yi" trembled inside.

Foundation Establishment Divine Sense?

So that's how it was...

"With such terrifying talent, no wonder he needed to be hidden away..."

"Sun Yi" sneered, but as he laughed, his smile gradually faded.

"What was I just thinking about?"

"Who erased my memories?"

"Sun Yi" slightly angered, once again endured the intense pain in his Sea of Consciousness and sought the truth he had just forgotten amidst the fog.

He remembered the name Mo Hua once again.

And once again, he saw Mo Hua's smiling face.

His cognition of Mo Hua once again became clear.

"Qi Refinement, seventh level, Foundation Establishment Divine Sense..."

Before he could react, his memory stuttered, and he lost it again.

"Sun Yi's" gaze turned sharp.

To have hidden this child so deeply...

My fellow disciple, what exactly are you planning to do?

He tried to think again, to remember.

"Qi Refinement, seventh level, Foundation Establishment Divine Sense..."

But unexpectedly, at this point, his memory was wiped clean.

With every wipe, the memories dimmed; with each dim, more blurriness ensued.

After countless times, all that remained were the vague concepts of "Qi Refinement, seventh level, Foundation..."

"Qi Refinement, seventh level, not yet Foundation Establishment..."

"Sun Yi" nodded to himself.

Then it dawned on him; wasn't that stating the obvious?

Qi Refinement, seventh level, naturally hadn't reached Foundation Establishment yet.

But when he tried to ponder further, his thoughts grew hazy, unable to think of anything else.

"Is he just a filler disciple?"

Sun Yi muttered to himself.

He decided not to bother anymore, only remembering Mr. Zhuang, Old Kui, and the Bai siblings, and then nodded to himself.

Sun Yi took off his outer clothes and wiped away the blood on his face and body.

Then, he tore off the old and dirty Taoist Robe from the already-dead Sun Ji and put it on himself.

"Now it fits.")

Sun Ji was tall and thin, while Sun Yi had an average build and was slightly plump.

The Taoist Robe fit him just right.

"Sun Yi" pushed open the door again, the sky was dimming, and he walked out alone.

The disciples of the Sun Family were taken aback when they saw him.

For he was wearing an old Taoist Robe, which looked very peculiar.

Some disciples greeted Sun Yi respectfully, but he ignored them as if he had neither seen nor heard them, continuing to walk out with uneven steps.

Sun Yi left the Sun Family's gate.

Then he walked down the main road of Thousand Families Town, not looking back as he headed into the distance, disappearing at the end of the vast mountains.

This was the last time the disciples of the Sun Family saw their Family Head.

The Spirit Farmers of East Mountain Village also gossiped that the Family Head of the Sun Family, Sun Yi, wearing the robe of a dead man, limping away as if his soul had been hooked by something.

Most people speculated that Sun Yi had violated the ancestral teachings, and the Old Ancestor of the Sun Family had taken him to the underworld for punishment.

After that, Sun Yi never came back.

Nor was he seen again.

...

While "Sun Yi" was deducing Mo Hua's identity, Mr. Zhuang in the carriage also opened his eyes.

"Master, would you like some tea?" Mo Hua asked with a crisp voice.

Mr. Zhuang liked to nap, and after waking, he liked to drink some tea.

The preferences of the master were well remembered by Mo Hua.

Mr. Zhuang nodded slightly.

Mo Hua then poured him a cup of tea.

Mr. Zhuang seemed somewhat weary; after drinking the tea from Mo Hua, he felt a bit reinvigorated and then asked:

"Mo Hua, how does a person die?"

It wasn't just Mo Hua who was startled.

Even Bai Zisheng and Bai Zixi both looked puzzled.

They didn't know why Mr. Zhuang would suddenly ask such a question.

"Uh... If you're killed, you die?"

Mo Hua said quietly.

"You can die from hunger, from old age as well..." Bai Zisheng also said.

...

"What is the bottom line, then?"

Mo Hua recalled what Mr. Zhuang had said about a cultivator's Spiritual Power, Blood Qi, and Divine Sense and tried to express:

"A cultivator will die if the physical body exhausts, the Qi Sea shatters, or the Divine Sense perishes..."

"So, a cultivator's death ultimately relates to these three aspects?"

Mr. Zhuang nodded slightly.

"If someone wants to kill you, they will target one of these three, either wrecking your physical body, shattering your Qi Sea, or destroying your Divine Sense."

Mo Hua felt a chill in his heart, "Master, is someone trying to kill me?"

Mr. Zhuang shook his head, "It's better to be safe than sorry."

"Oh." Mo Hua nodded, pondered for a moment, then asked doubtfully:

"Master, I understand how one can kill through the physical body and Qi Sea, as ordinary Tao Cultivation Martial Arts and spells damage the physical body, corrode the meridians, and ruin the Qi Sea, but killing through Divine Sense... How does that work?"

"There are many methods," Mr. Zhuang said.

He looked at Mo Hua, then at Bai Zisheng and Bai Zixi, and patiently explained:

"One type is Divine Sense spells, which form spells with Divine Sense, harming the Divine Sense of others."

"Such spells are exceedingly rare; do not learn or use them casually, as prolonged use can also damage your own Divine Sense."

"Moreover, these spells are ancient secrets, with requirements for innate talent, and are generally beyond reach."

"The second type is Divine Sense parasitism, where one fragments their Divine Sense and inhabits the body of another cultivator."

"This is a technique of the Demon Path; you should neither learn nor use it."

"The third type is Divine Sense contamination, using ancient sinister Divine Thoughts, sealed since ancient times, to contaminate the Divine Sense of others, leading them to moral decay, derangement of Divine Sense, and even the collapse of the Sea of Consciousness, becoming something neither human nor ghost..."

"This amounts to killing by proxy. But by contaminating others, you also taint yourself."

"If others' Divine Sense is tainted, yours will not remain clean; you would just be unaware of it."

"Therefore, it's best not to use this method either."

"There are other ways to kill with Divine Sense, but they are mostly sinister and unorthodox, and I do not know them in detail."

After Mr. Zhuang finished speaking, he looked at the three disciples and cautioned:

"I tell you this so that you may be on your guard."

"The means to harm the physical body and Spiritual Power are mostly visible,"

"But the dangers of Divine Sense are often invisible."

"In this world, there exists many unseen and indescribable terrors, it's just that a cultivator's Divine Sense is too weak to perceive them."

"Hence, you must be extremely cautious with matters related to Divine Sense."

"Do not pry into people or things that should not be pried into."

"When encountering someone strange, do not speak to them, do not entangle with them, and especially do not look into their eyes..."

All three disciples looked serious and nodded.

After a moment of thought, Mo Hua softly said:

"Master, if someone's Divine Sense has parasitized you, is there a way to kill the intruding Divine Sense?"

Mo Hua thought back to the little demon in the Contemplation Map.

It jumped into Mo Hua's Sea of Consciousness, attempting to usurp his place and use Mo Hua's Sea of Consciousness as its breeding ground.

Although Mo Hua suppressed the little demon with the Taoist Stele after much trouble and eventually "consumed" it,

He was somewhat bewildered and ignorant of the ins and outs.

The Taoist Stele was useful, but he couldn't rely on it too much.

If the Taoist Stele were ever to malfunction, and he encountered another parasitic demon as before, it would be very dangerous.

Therefore, Mo Hua wanted to know if there were any other methods that could handle the parasitic Divine Thought without relying on the Taoist Stele.

Formation seemed possible, but Drawing Formation was relatively slow, and one could only stay inside the Formation without stepping out, which was quite passive.

Bai Zisheng and Bai Zixi both looked at Mo Hua with surprise and curiosity.

Their little junior brother really had... unusual thoughts.

Mr. Zhuang, however, was not surprised and simply nodded: "Yes."

Mo Hua's eyes lit up, "Then..."

...

...

"I can't teach you now."

Mo Hua sighed, a trace of disappointment in his voice, and then he looked forward with anticipation:

"Master, when can you teach me?"

Mr. Zhuang's gaze held profound meaning:

"Wait until your Divine Sense is a bit stronger, and I will teach you."

"Stronger?"

Mr. Zhuang nodded, "All measures to counter Divine Thought must be based on the strength of Divine Sense..."

"As long as the Divine Sense is strong enough, the perils within it naturally cease to be dangerous."

"With a powerful Divine Sense, a thousand evils cannot invade!"

Mr. Zhuang declared in a solemn voice.

With a powerful Divine Sense, a thousand evils cannot invade...

Mo Hua murmured to himself, and then nodded full of hope:

"Alright, Master!"

...

From then on, Mo Hua practiced drawing Formations with even more diligence.

Unable to use the Taoist Stele, he could only utilize every moment to practice the Thick Earth Formation.

Every time the carriage stopped, he would draw Formations on the ground.

This entire journey, rocks and soil bore the Formation Patterns he left behind.

He even brought some soil onto the carriage to practice his drawing.

Over and over, he practiced the level one eleventh pattern Thick Earth Formation.

Through this, Mo Hua continually honed his Divine Sense.

He subtly sensed a feeling of urgency.

Mr. Zhuang never spoke without reason.

The fact that he mentioned Divine Sense must mean he foresaw something.

Divine Sense killing...

That could mean someone might attempt to kill him using Divine Sense.

And so, he had to take precautions before it was too late.

With a powerful Divine Sense, a thousand evils cannot invade!

Every increase in strength of the Divine Sense made him that much safer...

Mo Hua practiced tirelessly, leading to a noticeable increase in his Divine Sense, but he was always just a little short of the twelfth pattern...

No matter how he practiced Formation drawing, it seemed to yield little effect.

Mo Hua felt somewhat helpless.

Early one morning, Mo Hua got up and started his routine cultivation to greet the dawn.

Suddenly, the Qi Sea inside him trembled slightly.

Mo Hua was taken aback, and then he was overjoyed.

He quickly took out a Spirit Stone, ceaselessly absorbed the Spiritual Energy, refined the Spiritual Power, circulated it through his meridians, and accumulated Spiritual Power in the Qi Sea.

After an unknown amount of time, the Spiritual Power solidified, and his aura grew stronger.

Mo Hua opened his eyes and could not help but smile brightly.

He had reached the eighth level of Qi Refinement!

And there was more.

After a breakthrough in realm, Divine Sense also grows.

Although compared to his Foundation Establishment level Divine Sense, his realm was only at Qi Refinement, and the increase in Divine Sense from the breakthrough was not substantial.

But these slight increases in Divine Sense bridged that small gap, pushing his Divine Sense over the threshold, successfully reaching the twelfth pattern!

The morning glow splashed across the mountains, casting its light upon Mo Hua.

At this moment, Mo Hua, at fourteen years old, was at the eighth level of Qi Refinement, with a Foundation Establishment level twelve pattern Divine Sense!

...

Chapter 406: 403

Mo Hua was already fourteen years old.

Cultivators have a long lifespan, even an ordinary Qi-refining cultivator could live for approximately one to two hundred years.

Being in one's teens was not considered old for a cultivator.

Bai Zisheng told Mo Hua that in some large noble clans, any cultivator under the age of eighteen was still considered a child.

Because members of noble clans generally had higher cultivation levels and longer lifespans, a decade or so was insignificant to them.

However, in Tongxian City or other lower-tier immortal cities, many loose cultivators might never progress beyond the Qi-refining realm in their entire lives.

Therefore, anyone over fifteen was regarded as a young lad.

If one did not have access to the right avenues in Tao cultivation and couldn't advance one's cultivation level, one had to learn a Tao cultivation skill to become self-reliant in the future.

That's what Da'hu and Dazhu had done.

Da'hu and his two companions learned monster hunting, while Dazhu learned artifact refining. The purpose was to ensure they had enough to eat.

Mo Hua had become a first-grade Formation Master, capable of supporting himself, but he still didn't look very old.

One reason was that he was inherently weak and grew slowly, making him shorter than his peers.

Another was that he had never practiced body refinement, which made him appear even thinner.

People like Da'hu and Dazhu were naturally big and tall and had practiced body refinement, so even though they were only three or four years older than Mo Hua, they were much taller than him.

Mo Hua couldn't help but sigh.

He too wished to be tall and strong.

Unfortunately, he spent every day drawing formations, exhausting his mind and energy. He did eat quite a bit, but he didn't grow much in height...

Now at fourteen, he was only a little taller than he had been at thirteen.

His junior brother Bai Zisheng was a head taller than him, and his junior sister Bai Zixi, with her tall stature, was also half a head taller than him.

Furthermore, with Mo Hua's delicate features and fair complexion, he resembled a porcelain doll, making him appear even younger.

"When will I grow taller?" Mo Hua pondered somewhat dejectedly.

He glanced at Bai Zisheng sitting to his left and then at Bai Zixi to his right, silently thinking to himself:

"I at least need to be taller than my junior sister..."

Bai Zixi gave him a puzzled look, "What are you thinking about?"

Mo Hua shook his head, "Nothing at all!"

...

Besides that, Mo Hua's cultivation realm had reached the eighth layer of Qi Refinement.

He was one step closer to Foundation Establishment.

The advancement in his cultivation realm had made his body a bit stronger.

But since he wasn't a body cultivator, this slight improvement was insignificant, like a mosquito's leg.

His spiritual power had also increased.

But his spiritual root was mediocre, and even though the cultivation technique he practiced was unique, its uniqueness lay in the use of divine sense rather than spiritual power.

So the spiritual power he cultivated was not abundant, just mediocre.

Just marginally inferior compared to the average cultivator.

However, compared to his junior brother and sister or the descendants of other familial clans and sects, he was probably far behind.

He remembered Mr. Zhuang saying that noble clans and sects relied on inheritance theories of spiritual roots, married generationally among each other, and thus birthed descendants with exceptional spiritual roots.

The disciples from the large clans and great sects often had superior spiritual roots.

In contrast, Mo Hua's mediocre spiritual root, which was on the lower end, truly wasn't impressive.

But if it wasn't impressive, so be it.

After all, he didn't rely on it to make a living.

Mo Hua was a Formation Master, who should establish himself with formations as his foundation.

Mr. Zhuang had also shown him a way, instructing him to "Prove the Dao with Divine Sense."

Moreover, as a cultivator's spiritual root was innate and unchangeable, there was no point in fretting over it.

After reaching the eighth layer of Qi Refinement, Mo Hua's spells had also strengthened.

Firstly, his Concealment Technique.

Now, cultivators in the initial stage of Foundation Establishment could hardly see through Mo Hua's Concealment Technique.

The effectiveness of the Water Prison Technique had increased as well.

It was cast faster, entrapped adversaries more accurately, and the duration of the constraint had been extended by a moment.

Although it was just a moment, in life-or-death struggles, this brief time could make the difference between survival and demise.

The power of the Fireball Technique had also intensified.

Mo Hua had specifically tested it a few times.

The color of the fireball had deepened slightly, and amidst the dark red was a hint of dazzling beauty, teeming with explosive spiritual power.

It was unassuming yet resplendent, with danger lurking within its brilliance.

Mo Hua couldn't help but wonder.

If he continued to cultivate the Fireball Technique to its pinnacle, what would the effect be, and how strong could the power become?

Mo Hua tried to imagine, but he couldn't conceive of it.

The effects of the spells beyond the Foundation Establishment Realm were beyond his comprehension.

When he had time, he would ask Old Kui.

Old Kui should know.

After all, his Fireball Technique was taught by Old Kui, as were the techniques for using spells.

Then came the matter of divine sense.

The divine sense with twelve patterns in Foundation Establishment was indeed much stronger than before.

His divine sense was more acute, his calculations faster, and his perception of the surrounding spiritual power more distinct.

Previously, drawing the Thick Earth Formation with eleven patterns was adept yet somewhat strenuous.

Now, when drawing the same formation, it felt much easier.

The fact that he now had a twelve-pattern divine sense...

Mo Hua thought for a moment and then went to find Mr. Zhuang:

"Master, could you teach me how to use the Slaying Divine Thought method?"

He remembered Mr. Zhuang saying before that once his divine sense grew stronger, he would teach him how to deal with parasitic divine sense.

How to oppose, or even destroy, divine sense or divine thoughts—or malicious intentions from others, when they invaded the Sea of Consciousness, whether they came from humans or non-humans.

Now that his divine sense had reached twelve patterns, it should be considered strong.

Mr. Zhuang calculated with his fingers and said:

"There's still plenty of time, no rush, wait until your divine sense grows stronger."

"It needs to be stronger..." Mo Hua muttered quietly.

"Haste makes waste," Mr. Zhuang spoke gently.

"Yes," Mo Hua nodded.

He continued to ask:

Chapter 407: Ultimate Formation

"Master, I've already reached twelve patterns, and I'm already tired of drawing the eleven-pattern Thick Earth Formation. Should I look for a twelve-pattern Ultimate Formation next?"

"Yes," Mr. Zhuang nodded slightly, "Your current Divine Sense is such that drawing ordinary Formations can no longer refine it in the slightest..."

Qi Refinement Eighth Level, Foundation Establishment Twelve Pattern Divine Sense.

This level of Divine Sense, like the Ultimate Formation, was seriously "off the charts"...

It was not something that could be improved by ordinary means.

Moreover, there were no Cultivation Techniques for cultivating Divine Sense in the Cultivation World.

Divine Sense was ethereal, intangible, and with each Cultivator distinct, the differences were substantial.

To enhance Divine Sense was extremely difficult to begin with.

The Contemplation Map was a trick, more like borrowing someone else's Divine Sense, and it was somewhat dangerous, so it was best not to use it.

Mo Hua nodded, then remembered another question:

"Master, for a higher-level Formation Master learning these lower-level Ultimate Formations, would it be a bit simpler?"

He had always been curious.

The requirement of Divine Sense for Ultimate Formations was high.

But this threshold was with respect to the same level of Cultivation.

If it were a higher-level Formation Master with strong enough Divine Sense, then learning some lower-level Ultimate Formations should be much easier.

But why, according to Mr. Zhuang, were there so few Masters who knew even a first-grade Ultimate Formation?

Mr. Zhuang said, "It would be somewhat easier, but not by much."

Mo Hua asked in confusion, "Why is that?"

A high-level Formation Master should have very strong Divine Sense...

"Divine Sense is the foundation of a Formation Master, the very essence," Mr. Zhuang slowly explained, "but having Divine Sense doesn't mean one can become a Formation Master, or that one can definitely learn Formations."

"Having Divine Sense only gives you the qualification to learn Formations. To master them, you need to study, to think, to practice, to understand."

"It requires perseverance, lots of time, energy, and focus."

"Not all Cultivators are willing to do this, and not all can manage to do it."

"Even if it's just a small matter, maintaining it is very difficult."

"Let alone something as abstruse and obscure as Formation principles; even many high-level Formation Masters struggle to persevere later on."

"Ultimate Formations are as such, with special Pattern techniques, hard to learn, hard to draw."

"Many Formation Masters have sufficient Divine Sense but might not be willing to practice, and naturally, they won't be able to learn."

Mr. Zhuang sighed faintly.

"This is the first point: even with Divine Sense, without practice, naturally you can't learn."

"It's like some people who, despite having the talent, are unwilling to make the effort and end up accomplishing nothing, squandering their potential."

Mr. Zhuang paused a moment, then continued:

"The second point is, even if you practice, you may still not learn it."

"The way of Formations is based on Divine Sense. Only with Divine Sense can you practice, and only when sufficiently proficient can you start to understand."

"Ordinary Formations, through diligent practice, you can learn the Formation Patterns, which don't require much understanding."

"But Ultimate Formations are different. Any Ultimate Formation, exceeding the Formation Method Classification, inevitably has its specialties and invariably contains unique Formation principles..."

Mr. Zhuang looked at Mo Hua, saying gently:

"You should have some experience with this."

Mo Hua nodded his head.

The two Ultimate Formations he learned, one was the Reversed Spirit Formation.

A first-grade ten-pattern, containing the power of Spirit Energy inversion, required Divine Sense Calculation to bring out its effects.

The other was the Thick Earth Formation.

A first-grade eleven-pattern, embodying the power of Spirit Energy generation, required an understanding of Earth Dao Meaning to truly master.

Both types of Ultimate Formations required more than just learning the Patterns.

They also necessitated a deeper recognition of Spirit Energy, a more profound use of Divine Sense, as well as a clearer understanding of Taoist Meaning.

If Mr. Zhuang had not provided guidance,

Or if one didn't have a Taoist Stele,

It was doubtful that one could learn and truly apply them.

Mr. Zhuang continued, "Thus, many high-level Formation Masters, despite having enough Divine Sense and sufficient practice, because they lack that bit of understanding, often can't find the way, fail to have that moment of sudden insight, and ultimately still can't learn Ultimate Formations."

"That bit of understanding is like the finishing touch."

"Without that bit of clarity, the whole Formation is just a shell, without any charm or spirit."

Mo Hua had a sudden realization, "Just like when I draw the Thick Earth Formation, if I can't perceive the Daoist Meaning, simply drawing it over and over again is futile."

Mr. Zhuang nodded, "Exactly."

Mo Hua was puzzled again, "But once they're at a high level, and are high-level Formation Masters, could they really fail to comprehend?"

"The two are related, but they're actually two separate matters," Mr. Zhuang explained. "Some Cultivators have profound Cultivation but have only mastered the use of powerful Spiritual Power, and their understanding of Spirit Energy and the Great Dao is actually very superficial."

"They can wield Spiritual Power to cast devastating Spells, dominating battles, but if you ask them to perceive the subtle changes in Spirit Energy to draw a first-grade Ultimate Formation, that would be difficult for them."

"Cultivators cultivate by absorbing Spiritual Energy and accumulating Spiritual Power, casting Taoist Skills, thereby wielding outward power."

"For general Cultivators, that is enough."

"But for Formation Masters, they not only have to control external power but also understand the underlying principles. Merely knowing how to manipulate Spiritual Power for combat is far from sufficient."

To control the power, to understand the principles...

Mo Hua seemed to grasp the concept and nodded earnestly.

Seeing that Mo Hua understood, Mr. Zhuang felt slightly relieved and then said:

"These are the issues on the level of understanding Formations. Since Ultimate Formations contain special Formation principles, even high-level Formation Masters might not necessarily learn low-level Ultimate Formations."

"Are there other reasons?" Mo Hua couldn't help but ask.

Mr. Zhuang nodded, "The other reasons are more complicated..."

Chapter 408: Ultimate Formation

Mr. Zhuang sighed softly:

"First is the issue of time."

"Mastering Ultimate Formations requires time, and a Formation Master's time is very precious."

"If you spend your time mastering low-grade Ultimate Formations, how will you learn high-grade Formations?"

"Formation Study is vast and profound, no Formation Master can be so adept that they have fully grasped the Formations of their current grade, and then go on to learn other things."

"If there is one, that Formation Master must be substandard."

"Because the more ignorant one is, the more they think they know everything. The more you know, the more you realize how little you actually know."

"The same goes for Formations."

"The deeper the understanding of a Formation Master, the more they know about the profundity of Formations and the infiniteness of the Great Dao."

"High-grade Formations are difficult, and naturally, high-grade Ultimate Formations are even more difficult, while low-grade Ultimate Formations are also not simple..."

"They don't have the time to cover both."

Mo Hua couldn't help but nod his head.

He then suddenly realized that he had a lot of time.

Because he practiced Formations on the Taoist Stele at night, which was equivalent to not needing to sleep.

This gave him twice the time compared to other Formation Masters.

And with Divine Sense on the Taoist Stele that could be rewound, his Divine Sense was always replenished.

By this calculation, he actually had several times more time to learn Formations than other Formation Masters.

Other Formation Masters had limited time and couldn't manage both.

Then, did he not need to choose, could he have them all?

Mo Hua blinked, feeling a tiny bit of guilty pleasure, and a little embarrassed.

As if he was cheating.

Seeing Mo Hua's eyes blinking, Mr. Zhuang knew he was having some crafty thoughts and couldn't help but smile faintly, but he did not probe further and continued:

"Besides that, low-grade Ultimate Formations are somewhat superfluous for high-grade Formation Masters."

"Because of the lower grade, the effects of the Formation are greatly diminished."

"It's time-consuming and labor-intensive to learn, and it's not very useful."

"And the most troublesome aspect is that some Ultimate Formations themselves are inherited in grades, following a continuous lineage."

Mr. Zhuang said solemnly.

"A continuous lineage?"

Mo Hua frowned, "If the grades are broken, can't they be learned?"

Mr. Zhuang nodded and slowly explained:

"Ordinary Formations don't fuss over these things."

"For example, if you don't know a First Grade Melting Fire Formation, it doesn't matter; you can start learning from Second Grade."

"These Formations are related, but they are also relatively independent of each other; there is no need to follow a fixed sequence."

"But Ultimate Formations are different."

"Many Ultimate Formations are linked grade by grade in a continuous chain."

"You must start from First Grade and then learn Second Grade, followed by Third Grade, progressing from the simpler to the more complex."

"And Ultimate Formations themselves are very rare, it's difficult to have a complete succession."

"It's very possible that the succession of a full set of Ultimate Formations is scattered across the state boundaries of the Nine State, in different forces in different places."

"First Grade in Li State, Second Grade in Kun State, Third Grade is missing, Fourth Grade in Qian State, and for the grades above Fifth, there are not even rumors..."

"Without the First Grade, you can't learn the Second Grade, and likewise, even if you have the Formation Diagrams for the subsequent Third and Fourth Grade Ultimate Formations, if the grades are broken, you fundamentally can't learn them..."

Mo Hua's mouth fell open.

No wonder they are called "Ultimate" Formations...

Difficult to learn by their very nature, they require progressive grades, linked in succession; one mishap could result in the discontinuation of the lineage...

Mr. Zhuang glanced at Mo Hua again and sighed:

"That's why during the Qi Refinement Realm, you should learn as many Ultimate Formations as you can, as many as possible, because most Ultimate Formations are based on the First Grade Ultimate Formations."

"Alright, Master!"

Mo Hua agreed and then expressed some concern, "But what about later on..."

Mr. Zhuang stroked his head gently and said calmly:

"Later on, you will have to learn how to find them yourself."

Mo Hua was taken aback, then somewhat understood.

Why Mr. Zhuang brought him out and let him find Formations on his own.

It was to guide him to become proficient in Divine Sense Calculation.

So that in the future, relying on his own abilities, he could also find the Ultimate Formations hidden in various places of the Nine State.

Mr. Zhuang sighed slightly, "For the reasons mentioned above, there are very few Formation Masters in this world who can truly master Ultimate Formations."

"But you are different; your Cultivation Technique is special, you must master Ultimate Formations, and you must be exceptionally proficient."

"The more Ultimate Formations you learn, the better; the harder they are, the better."

"The more you learn, the deeper your understanding of Formations, the stronger your Divine Sense becomes, and the further you'll be able to travel on your future path..."

Mr. Zhuang said to Mo Hua, his tone serious and his gaze full of expectations.

Mo Hua nodded solemnly, committing his master's words deeply to his heart.

Chapter 409: Minor Hidden Spirit Sect (1)

During the journey that followed, Mo Hua would occasionally stick his little head out the window to gaze at the scenery of heaven and earth.

He looked amidst the mountains, at the Immortal Cities, and within the ruins of broken temples, searching for any shadows of formations.

If there were any signs, he would release his Divine Sense to perceive them.

He then immersed himself in calculation.

If he deduced the trajectory of the spiritual power in the formation, he would halt the carriage and personally seek it out.

He would inquire local cultivators, visit local Formation Masters, or ascend to solitary mountain tops to gaze upon an ancient stele towering above...

In this way, with stops and starts, two months passed.

Mo Hua indeed found some special formations, even two ultimate formations.

But one was incomplete, and the other had only ten stripes, which were simple ones at that, containing rather elementary Taoist meanings.

Even without the aid of the Taoist Stele, Mo Hua learned it in a few days.

Afterward, there was no shadow of any ultimate formations to be found.

There were none with the First Rank Thirteen Stripes, not to mention formations with the First Rank Eleven or Twelve Stripes.

Mo Hua sighed.

The Taoist Stele in his Sea of Consciousness had "gone on strike" and not yet recovered, and every day he practiced the formations far fewer times.

He could only rely on drawing the Thick Earth Formation to enhance his understanding of formations and hone his Divine Sense.

But his Divine Sense was already at twelve stripes.

The eleven-striped Thick Earth Formation was too easy for him to draw; it no longer did much to hone his Divine Sense.

These days, his Divine Sense had grown exceedingly slowly.

He was far from reaching the thirteen-striped Divine Sense.

By contrast, his cultivation progress was much faster.

It was quite possible that by the time he reached the peak of the Qi Refining Ninth Level, his Divine Sense would still be stuck at twelve stripes, not reaching thirteen stripes, let alone the mid-phase of Foundation Establishment Divine Sense.

Establishing the Foundation with a twelve-striped Divine Sense...

Mo Hua sighed again, this was much worse than expected.

It seemed he needed to think of a solution...

After a brief contemplation, Mo Hua went to find Mr. Zhuang and asked,

"Master, are the twelve-striped formations really that scarce?"

Mr. Zhuang leisurely sipped his tea and said,

"Every ultimate formation is rare. Whether or not you encounter one depends partly on fate and partly on insight."

"Without the right fate, you won't come across one; without the insight, even if you do, you won't recognize it."

"Your encounter with the Thick Earth Formation shows you are deeply fated. It's not possible to find an ultimate formation in every place you visit."

"Seeking formations requires a long time and patience."

Mo Hua nodded, then with a furrowed brow, he sighed and said,

"But at this rate, by the time I establish my foundation, my Divine Sense will only be at twelve stripes..."

Mr. Zhuang tapped Mo Hua's forehead with a smile and said,

"Just speak directly, don't beat around the bush with your master."

Mo Hua chuckled, "I have heard of a twelve-striped formation before."

Mr. Zhuang nodded slightly, "Let's hear it."

"Master, do you remember Instructor Yan?" Mo Hua said.

Mr. Zhuang's eyes flickered, "The Spirit Pivot Formation Chart?"

Mo Hua was surprised, "Master, you knew about it?"

Mr. Zhuang, seeing Mo Hua's shocked expression, revealed a hint of amusement in his eyes:

"I have met Instructor Yan once. It was because of that formation that I saw him in a different light."

Mo Hua pondered and gradually understood.

Mr. Zhuang, profound and unfathomable, lived reclusively in the mountains, concealing his traces. Ordinary cultivators couldn't possibly meet him.

In Tongxian City, aside from himself, no one had seen Mr. Zhuang.

Even Mo Hua's parents, Mo Shan and Liu Ruhua, only knew Mr. Zhuang's name but had never met him, much less knew what he looked like.

But Instructor Yan was different.

Mo Hua always thought that Instructor Yan's mastery of formations was extraordinary.

But that was because he was once a disciple of Tongxian Gate, had received guidance in formations from Instructor Yan and felt grateful in his heart.

In truth, Instructor Yan was just a Qi Refining cultivator, not even a First Rank Formation Master.

Such mastery of formations was considered profound in a small Immortal City like Tongxian City.

But in Mr. Zhuang's eyes, it was probably negligible.

Based solely on formation expertise, it was unlikely that Instructor Yan could have become acquainted with Mr. Zhuang.

And it was even less likely that he recommended him as a named disciple to Mr. Zhuang.

Now, it seemed Mr. Zhuang knew about the ultimate formation causality that Instructor Yan carried, which was why he regarded him differently.

And it was due to this fortunate coincidence that Mo Hua became a disciple of Mr. Zhuang.

Unable to help himself, Mo Hua asked, "Master, is the Spiritual Pivot Formation really that powerful?"

Mr. Zhuang nodded,

"Every ultimate formation has its unique, extraordinary effects, inheriting some laws of spiritual power that are unusual and close to the Tao."

"The Reversed Spirit Formation is like that, the Thick Earth Formation is like that, the Spiritual Pivot Formation is equally so."

"The Reversed Spirit Formation signifies annihilation, the Thick Earth Formation signifies birth, whereas the focus of the Spiritual Pivot Formation lies in the word 'pivot'."

"Those who understand the Spiritual Pivot are the central hub of spiritual power, involving the essential structure of spiritual power..."

Mr. Zhuang wanted to say more but suddenly stopped.

Mo Hua, still eager to hear more, promptly asked,

"Master, why have you stopped speaking?"

Mr. Zhuang smiled, "The rest will be for you to comprehend on your own if you can obtain this Formation Diagram. If you can't obtain it, then speaking would be in vain."

Mo Hua grumbled inwardly, "Master is being secretive again..."

Having finished speaking, he was startled, and upon looking up, he indeed saw Mr. Zhuang looking at him with a smile that wasn't quite a smile.

Mo Hua gave an awkward laugh.

It was over, he had grumbled about his master, and again he had found out.

Mr. Zhuang shook his head with an indulgent look but said nothing.

Mo Hua then asked, "Master, does this Spiritual Pivot Formation Chart have a history? And what is the heritage of Instructor Yan's sect?"

Mr. Zhuang pondered for a moment before slowly saying,

"Instructor Yan's sect is called the Minor Hidden Spirit Sect."

"The origins of the Minor Hidden Spirit Sect lie with the Formation Sect that had declined a thousand years ago, the Great Hidden Spirit Sect."

"A thousand years ago, the Great Hidden Spirit Sect was destroyed, and the sect disciples scattered, their teachings disseminated across the land."

"They did not wish for the sect's name to be lost, yet dared not arrogate the title 'Great Hidden Spirit,' thus they changed one word, calling it the 'Minor Hidden Spirit Sect.'"

Mr. Zhuang looked at Mo Hua, then added,

"Apart from the 'Minor Hidden Spirit Sect,' other sects that appear dilapidated with 'Hidden Spirit' in their names, like Little Hidden Spirit Mountain, Hidden Spirit Gate, Hidden Spirit Valley, and so on, could all be associated with the 'Great Hidden Spirit Sect.'"

"If by chance you encounter them, it might be worthwhile to pay a visit, to form ties, and see if there are any lingering teachings."

Mo Hua nodded, committing the words 'Hidden Spirit' to memory.

Mr. Zhuang sighed softly before continuing,

"The initial reason I was willing to meet Instructor Yan was actually to have a look at the Hidden Spirit Sect's Spiritual Pivot Formation Chart."

"Unfortunately, the Minor Hidden Spirit Sect fell into ruin, and the Formation was stolen and lost."

"Although I did not see the Formation Chart, Instructor Yan is upright in nature, and in dissemination of teachings, he does not withhold secrets, very much in the spirit of the Formation Masters of the old Great Hidden Spirit Sect."

"I took a liking to him, and that is why I agreed to allow him to visit should he need to..."

After Mr. Zhuang finished speaking, he silently reflected while gazing at the clear-eyed Mo Hua:

"Who knew that upon his next visit, he would bring me a disciple with astonishing talent and cleverness..."

Mo Hua, unaware of Mr. Zhuang's thoughts, knitted his brows in thought before asking,

"Was there a specific incident that led to the downfall of the Minor Hidden Spirit Sect?"

Mr. Zhuang said, "Since you know of the Spiritual Pivot Formation Chart, you should have also heard about the destruction of the Minor Hidden Spirit Sect."

"Hmm," Mo Hua nodded, "It is said there was a traitor who killed his master and ancestors and stole the Formation Diagram."

Mo Hua felt somewhat angry.

Instructor Yan was kind, diligent in his duties, earnest in teaching, responsible, a good instructor.

His master, therefore, must have also been a good Formation Master and a good master who valued the transmission of formations.

That such people were killed by a disciple with the heart of a wolf and the lungs of a dog.

And that disciple even stole the formation chart that protected the sect, causing a decent sect to fall apart and disperse...

Mr. Zhuang lamented, "Human nature is greedy, forgetting righteousness at the sight of benefit. This world has many cultivators like that..."

"Don't assume that all cultivators are like those in Tongxian City, where the customs are simple and loose cultivators help one another."

"Among cultivators, there are good people, bad people, and those who vacillate between kindness and malice when faced with choices of interest."

"The path of Tao cultivation is unpredictable, human hearts treacherous and inscrutable."

"You must guard not only against wicked people, but also against good people who may turn wicked in the face of temptation..."

Mr. Zhuang patiently continued his earnest instruction.

Mo Hua nodded vigorously as he listened,

"Master, I understand. I will be good to those who are good to me; and I will not be good to those who are not good to me."

Hearing his somewhat childish words, Mr. Zhuang couldn't help but laugh, then asked,

"What if, those who are good to you are bad people, and those who are bad to you are good people?"

"As long as I don't do bad things, then those who are bad to me are naturally bad people, and those who are good to me are naturally good people."

Mo Hua declared with a clear voice.

Mr. Zhuang nodded with a smile,

"Indeed, that's the principle."

Mo Hua also smiled.

Mr. Zhuang then continued, "Since you've brought up this matter, do you have any leads on it?"

Mo Hua nodded, "Before departing, I went to find Manager Mo..."

"He too is from the Minor Hidden Spirit Sect, considered a junior brother to Instructor Yan."

"He told me, Instructor Yan has gone to the Minor Wilderness State Boundary, South Yue City, presumably to find that traitorous disciple of the sect."

"And in the hands of that traitor supposedly lies the Hidden Spirit Sect's secret transmission, a first-grade twelve-patterned, Spiritual Pivot Formation Chart!"

Chapter 410: Journey (1)

Minor Wilderness State Boundary, South Yue City, Instructor Yan, traitor, Spiritual Pivot Formation...

Mo Hua briefly organized his thoughts and then glanced again at Mr. Zhuang, asking softly,

"Master, is South Yue City on our way?"

He had been wanting to ask this before.

Instructor Yan had the kindness of enlightening him and providing him with opportunities.

To repay kindness with great generosity is only proper.

Mo Hua wanted to find Instructor Yan to see if there was anything he could help with.

He also had a bit of a selfish motive, wanting to see what a First-Grade Twelve Stripe Spiritual Pivot Formation was really like.

Whether he was capable of learning it, whether he could master it, and ultimately, whether he could use it to refine his Divine Sense to reach the realm of Thirteen Stripes.

But he didn't know where the sect Mr. Zhuang intended to visit was located, and whether it was on the way.

If it wasn't on the way, he couldn't just take the liberty to change Mr. Zhuang's plans.

Mr. Zhuang shook his head, "No, it's not on our way."

"I see..." Mo Hua felt a bit disappointed.

"But we can take a detour," Mr. Zhuang added.

Mo Hua was slightly stunned, "Won't that delay our journey?"

"Not at all," Mr. Zhuang said with a smile. "As long as you can learn the Formation, it won't be a waste of time."

Mo Hua felt warm inside.

After Mr. Zhuang had spoken, he sighed slightly,

"Moreover, I too want to see what is so special about the Spiritual Pivot Formation passed down by the Great Hidden Spirit Sect from those days."

"Hmm," Mo Hua nodded.

Now he was reassured, but at the same time, he felt a bit puzzled.

He always had the feeling that Mr. Zhuang's journey out into the world seemed to be for the purpose of teaching him Formation techniques...

Mo Hua furrowed his brow.

This doubt had plagued him for a while.

Along the way, Mr. Zhuang was unhurried, claiming to be heading to a certain sect, yet he didn't seem particularly urgent about it.

Instead, he spent the journey teaching him how to perform Calculation, how to derive, how to find Ultimate Formations, and how to comprehend them...

Moreover, even upon reaching the destinations, it was also for the purpose of having him learn Formations.

What about himself, then?

What exactly did his master wish to do?

Mo Hua stealthily sneaked a glance at Mr. Zhuang.

Mr. Zhuang's expression was serene and detached, inscrutably profound, revealing nothing.

"Who knows what Master is thinking about..." Mo Hua muttered to himself.

If his master had any wishes,

Maybe he could help fulfill them once his own cultivation was high enough.

It's just that he didn't know when that day would come...

After all, he was still but a small cultivator in the Qi-refining Realm.

Mo Hua let out a slight sigh.

At that moment, Mr. Zhuang was unaware of the little thoughts running through Mo Hua's mind. Instead, he spoke to Old Kui, who was driving the carriage,

"Take a detour, to South Yue City."

Old Kui pulled on the reins, and Big White neighed, its hooves striking the ground as it turned its head, taking another path that led to the road towards the Minor Wilderness State Boundary...

The Minor Wilderness State Boundary was also the Second-Grade Prefecture Border of Li State.

The Heavenly Dao Formation beneath restricted the highest level of cultivation one could use to Foundation Establishment.

Li State was ruled by the element of fire, and was filled with intense fire energy.

Tongxian City to the north had a slightly better climate, with mountains and rivers, lush vegetation—yet most of the year was quite hot, especially the spring and summer, which were particularly sweltering.

However, the Minor Wilderness State Boundary was located to the east of Li State, in a southern position, and the climate was even drier.

Along the way, there were grass and trees, but less in number, mostly in shades of brown and not growing densely.

Cultivators live off the mountains and the waters.

The few immortal cities en route mostly lived by Monster Hunting, and the next largest group was the Mining Cultivators.

The so-called Mining Cultivators were those who mined for a living.

Locally, they had other names, such as "Stone Mason," "Stone Worker," "Miner," and "Mine Laborer," among others.

Cultivators of different regions had different customs and expressions.

Among these Mining Cultivators, there were some who mined Spiritual Mines, but they were rare.

The Spiritual Mines of the Minor Wilderness State Boundary were either under the control of the Taoist Court or occupied by some large Clans and Sects.

Spiritual Mines were extremely important, usually mined by practitioners from one's own faction, rarely assigned to these external Loose Cultivators.

What these Mining Cultivators extracted were mines containing copper and iron.

Copper and iron from the Cultivation World were incredibly tough and required Body Refinement cultivators, expending great effort to excavate.

The mined copper and iron were used for Artifact Refining, construction, Alchemy, and other industries.

Even the Formation Pen used by Formation Masters and Spiritual Ink occasionally contained a bit of copper or iron powder.

The Minor Wilderness State Boundary wasn't rich in other resources, but it had plenty of mines.

Therefore, local Loose Cultivators lived by selling their labor, excavating mines for sustenance.

In the many trades of Tao Cultivation, though it was never explicitly stated, Mining Cultivators also belonged to the bottom "vile trades" and were taken up only by impoverished Loose Cultivators.

Mining was not simple; it had its own special techniques.

Mo Hua, on the road, only glanced at them from afar, so he did not have a clear understanding.

But in general, the Minor Wilderness State Boundary was indeed as desolate as its name implied.

Due to the desolation, there were more bandits on the road.

It wasn't long after setting out that the carriage would be stopped by some bandits.

These bandits didn't spout nonsense like "This mountain was opened by me, and this tree was planted by me, to pass from here leave some toll money."

The mountains were excavated by the Mining Cultivators, and the desolate mountains had no trees to plant.

Instead, they got straight to the point by saying things like,

"Hand over your Spirit Stones," "Leave behind the carriage and horses," "and you can keep your lives," and such.

In these situations, Mo Hua generally treated them differently.

That's because the composition of the bandits was also very complex.

Some were genuinely poor, their families couldn't make ends meet, their wives and children were on the brink of starvation, and they had no choice but to cover their faces, arm themselves with knives, and rob passersby.

Mo Hua thought that this wasn't right, but given that they were driven by necessity, he wouldn't blame them harshly.

And these people knew how to behave themselves.

Although they talked tough, most could be dismissed with just a few Spirit Stones.

Often just a moment ago, they would be shouting, "Hand over the Spirit Stones, and we'll spare your lives!" or similar harsh threats.

Once Mo Hua gave them a few Spirit Stones, they would become extremely polite.

Some, probably desperate to their limits and having not earned Spirit Stones in a long time, would even kneel and kowtow non-stop, repeating:

"Thank you, thank you, young brother!"

These Cultivators didn't ask for much, just a few Spirit Stones to buy some coarse grains and bran, enough to feed a family for half a month.

They weren't greedy; a few Spirit Stones relieved them of their burden, and they would leave.

Watching this, Mo Hua felt both amused and a bit sad.

Some Cultivators were just lazy and fond of pleasure, intending to rob homes to make a fortune.

After Mo Hua gave them a few Spirit Stones, they would still be unsatisfied.

That's when Mo Hua would stop being polite.

With a Fireball Technique for each, he would knock them all down, letting them lie on the ground for a good "reflection."

Such laziness always accompanied the neglect of cultivation.

Therefore, these kinds of bandits generally didn't have high cultivation.

Used to bullying the weak and fearing the strong, their martial arts and spells were both terribly lousy.

None of them were a match for Mo Hua.

Of course, there were also some "tough cookies."

These were considered local "habitual bandits," organized but not strong, having rules but not strict.

They simply had many people, each with a vicious and greedy nature.

They relied on their numbers and, seeing Mo Hua as a little Cultivator, would demand an exorbitant ransom.

After Mo Hua gave them Spirit Stones, they still thought it not enough.

They wanted Mo Hua and his companions to leave behind their horses and carriages.

The more outrageous thing was, they inadvertently caught sight of Bai Zixi and blurted out:

"The little girl stays!"

The other few bandits also looked on with drooling faces, "This little girl looks good, probably worth a lot of Spirit Stones if sold in the city."

"At least a few hundred..."

"Worthless scum, she's worth thousands!"

Mo Hua got angry.

How dare they target his little martial sister?

Bai Zisheng got even angrier.

He didn't waste words, directly drawing his long spear, his pale golden Spiritual Power stirring as he moved like a phantom, easily penetrating the thighs of the bandits before him, forcing them to kneel.

Then he sheathed his spear and started beating them with his fists.

From drawing his spear to throwing his punches, it all happened in the blink of an eye.

The bandits were in an uproar, which then turned into rage:

"What an arrogant brat!"

"Let's get him together!"

"Take them down!"

"Sell them to the slavers!"

...

The other bandits also rushed together.

Some circled Bai Zisheng, while others charged at Mo Hua.

Bai Zisheng remained calm, his Spiritual Power surging, his fist strikes formidable, fighting in all directions.

As a descendant of a noble clan, at the peak of the Qi Refining Ninth Level, with supreme Martial Arts and Spells, and often sparring with Mo Hua, he had little trouble dealing with these ragtag bandits.

Though there were many bandits, they fought each individually, without coordination or strategy, and gradually, they were defeated one by one.

Some came at Mo Hua as well.

Mo Hua, riding on Big White, flicked his fingers, and Fireball Techniques flew out one after another, knocking down all the bandits who approached.

There wasn't any bandit that a single Fireball Technique couldn't solve.

If it didn't work, then another was on its way!

Only one fish slipped through the net, managing to get within ten feet of Mo Hua in the gap between Fireball Techniques.

But before he could act, Big White kicked out and sent him flying.

The bandit was kicked like a sandbag, smashing into the mountain wall, and then falling to the ground with his bones shattered to pieces.

Big White nuzzled Mo Hua with its head as if to take credit.

Mo Hua embraced Big White's neck with a hand, smiling:

"Today we'll grab some extra grass to treat you!"

Big White gave a contented "whinny" in response.

In less than the time it takes to drink a cup of tea, the group of bandits had been utterly defeated, all lying on the ground moaning in pain.

A few who tried to run were fixed in place by Mo Hua's Water Prison Technique, then caught up with by Bai Zisheng, who impaled each one with his spear.

Bai Zisheng was still unsatisfied, "Dare to covet my sister?"

He then beat up several leaders of the bandits once more.

Mo Hua thought about it and decided he should exercise his muscles as well, so he drew out the Thousand Jun Stick and joined in on the beating.

Though they weren't beaten to death, they were nearly there.

After the beating, Bai Zisheng, seeing their pitiful state, wondered:

"Isn't this a bit too excessive?"

Mo Hua shook his head, "It's not excessive for such scum."

Bai Zisheng nodded, "True."

Mo Hua raised his pinky finger, concluding:

"Speaking on a smaller scale, this is called 'punishing evil and promoting good, acting courageously for justice'; speaking on a larger scale, this is contributing to the stability of the Minor Wilderness State Boundary..."

Bai Zisheng exclaimed in shock,

"Mo Hua, you sure can blather on. With your gift of gab, if you ever enter the Taoist Court, you're sure to do well."

He'd beaten a group of bandits out of personal grudge, yet could spin it so righteously.

Mo Hua wasn't pleased, "I'm being honest. I've always told the truth..."

"We're fellow Sect members, who are you trying to fool?"

...

Bai Zixi watched the two bickering with a gentle smile floating in her autumn-water-like eyes.