

TRANSMIGRATED INTO A GRANDPA, EMBRACING THE LAID-BACK LIFE

Chapter 321: Side Hustles

The process of setting up the formation was tedious and precise.

Su Ming did not make a grand spectacle like a traditional Formation Master setting up an altar and performing rituals. Instead, he was like a meticulous tailor, threading a needle and weaving a thread through every corner of the defense zone.

The cultivators in the Bing-6 Defense Zone initially just watched curiously, but soon, their attention was drawn to another matter.

During a rest break, Su Ming sat on a large rock to recover his spiritual energy.

Beside him lay a newly treated heavy black iron shield. It was Zhang Meng's spare shield, and Su Ming had casually added the "Flexible Water Force-Dispersing Formation" to it.

"It's done already?" Zhang Meng hefted the shield, trying a few practice swings.

Whoosh— Whoosh—

The heavy shield left afterimages in the air. Zhang Meng's eyes instantly widened.

"Holy crap! This feel... how is it so smooth?"

He looked at Su Ming with an incredulous expression. "It feels like a current of water is supporting the shield's movement, not a single bit of force is wasted!"

This shout drew all the resting cultivators nearby.

"Captain, let me try!"

"Is it really that amazing?"

Several brawny body cultivators took turns trying it. After testing it, the look in their eyes when they turned to Su Ming instantly became blazing hot.

It was the look of a hungry wolf spotting a fat piece of meat.

"Master Su! Hook me up with one too!"

"Brother Su, my mountain-splitting axe vibrates my hands too much, can you adjust it too?"

"And my leg guards! They're too heavy when running!"

In an instant, Su Ming was surrounded, watertight.

In his Consciousness Sea, Lin Yu chuckled. "See? This is the brand effect. Now, start your performance."

Su Ming stood up, a trace of a troubled expression appearing on his face. "Brothers, I sincerely apologize. Today's main purpose is to set up the formation. I have limited materials on hand, and carving this kind of force-dispersing formation consumes an extreme amount of divine sense..."

"We'll provide the materials!"

"Military Merit is no problem! Just get it done!"

How could they possibly let this opportunity slip by? On the battlefield, having equipment that was just a bit more ergonomic increased one's chances of survival by a fraction.

Su Ming "hesitated" for a moment before reluctantly nodding. "Since everyone trusts me so much, I'll make an exception this once. However, time is tight. I can only process five items today. As for the price... depending on the magical

implement's grade and the extent of damage, it ranges from thirty to one hundred points."

"I'll pay fifty! Do mine first!"

"I'll pay eighty! Master Su, look at mine!"

The scene nearly descended into chaos. In the end, it was Zhang Meng, with a dark expression, who stepped in to restore order and selected five "lucky ones."

Su Ming didn't waste words and got to work on the spot.

His water spiritual energy transformed into the most precise engraving knife, tracing out patterns like ripples on the rough surfaces of the magical implements. He didn't alter the original structure of the implements. Instead, he embedded miniature "fluid buffer circuits" at key stress points and spiritual energy conduction points.

Half an hour later, five magical implements, looking as good as new, were handed back to their owners.

"Incredible! Swinging this axe feels awesome!"

"These boots... it feels like wind springs forth underfoot when running!"

Those five cultivators settled their Military Merit on the spot, each beaming with joy as if they had gotten an incredible bargain.

Su Ming looked at the three hundred and twenty additional Military Merit points on his identity token, silently calculating in his heart.

"One thousand one hundred points from the main job, plus three hundred twenty points from the side hustle. This trip's potential earnings: one thousand four hundred twenty points."

This rate of earning money was much faster than hunting demon beasts, and it was safer.

The path of monetizing his skills suddenly seemed wide open.

...

As dusk fell and darkness enveloped the land, the "Spiderweb" in the Bing-6 Defense Zone was finally fully deployed.

As Su Ming executed the final spiritual hand seal, twenty-four nodes simultaneously lit up with faint, dim light before vanishing into the ground. An intangible fluctuation instantly covered the entire defense zone, like an invisible net shrouding the place tightly.

"Senior Han, please test the formation." Su Ming made an inviting gesture.

Formation Master Han took a deep breath and personally controlled a mechanical puppet rat, skimming the ground as it attempted to infiltrate the defense zone.

However, the moment the puppet rat stepped past the outer perimeter, the formation plate at the center of the defense zone emitted a crisp chime. Immediately after, the soil beneath the puppet rat's feet seemed to turn into viscous quicksand, its originally swift speed instantly halved.

"Excellent!" Formation Master Han slapped his thigh forcefully, his eyes filled with admiration. "Early warning is sensitive, the slowing effect is obvious, and the spiritual energy fluctuation is minimal, making it extremely difficult to detect. Fellow Daoist Su's 'Spiderweb' is truly brilliant!"

Although Zhang Meng didn't understand the principles of formations, seeing that puppet rat spinning around like it was drunk told him the money was well spent.

"Hahahaha! Good! Brother Su is indeed an honest man!" Zhang Meng laughed heartily and patted Su Ming's shoulder (this time much lighter). "This one thousand one, I spent it willingly and happily!"

A humble smile remained on Su Ming's face, but his heart maintained absolute calm.

"As long as Captain Zhang is satisfied."

After bidding farewell to the enthusiastic Zhang Meng and the greatly changed-in-attitude Formation Master Han, Su Ming walked alone on the road back to the Bing-7 camp.

The night wind was still biting cold, but Su Ming's footsteps were unusually light.

...

By the time he returned to Stone Hut Number Seven in Bing-7, the night was deep, and the wind and snow had scraped away the last trace of lingering warmth from the world.

Su Ming latched the door bolt behind him, his fingertips flicking out strands of spiritual energy to activate the hut's defensive restrictions layer by layer. Only when the dim blue light curtain of the "Minor Heavenly Cycle Water Rhythm

Formation" completely isolated the howling sounds from outside did he finally let out a long breath, a puff of turbid air tinged with white frost.

Inside the hut, only a flickering oil lamp the size of a bean remained, its flame gently swaying in the quiet.

Su Ming walked to the stone table and carefully took out from his robe the jade bottle sealed with a spirit-sealing talisman. His movements were gentle, as if holding fragile glass.

Inside was the Void Stone Powder he had spent an entire night, using the meticulous "water grinding effort," to slowly "wash" out bit by bit from the raw ore he had picked up at the Ghost Market.

Four Qian in total.

In the cultivation world, this amount might only be enough to refine the lowest-grade storage pouch. But in Su Ming's eyes, this was his Master's life, and also his biggest trump card at Iron Wall Pass.

"Master, now?" Su Ming asked in his heart.

"Now." Lin Yu's voice held less of its usual laziness and more gravity. "Right now, it's the third quarter of the Zi hour, the time of transition between Yin and Yang. The spiritual energy fluctuations in the camp are at their most chaotic, perfect for masking the Void's disturbances. Plus, with these few layers of turtle shell you've set up, it should be foolproof."

Su Ming nodded, not rushing to act.

He first took out the dark golden formation plate he had already carved long ago from his storage pouch.

This formation plate was still the one Li Kai had given him. After Su Ming's repeated repairs and fine-tuning, although the patterns on it were varied and complex, they exuded a sense of time-worn smoothness.

Next, he arranged three layers of "Breath-Concealing Talismans" and two layers of "Spiritual Energy Disruption Formations" around the formation plate.

Only after completing all this did he carefully peel off the seal on the jade bottle.

"Keep your hand steady, don't shake," Lin Yu reminded. "Every single grain of this powder is money. Once spilled, it's like poured-out water, impossible to retrieve."

"This disciple understands."

Is Chapter 322: the end?

Is Chapter 322 the end?

Su Ming took a deep breath, circulated the Like Water Art, and condensed an extremely gentle ball of water spiritual energy at his fingertips. He probed into the bottle's opening, wrapping around and extracting a wisp of silver-gray powder.

Shasha, shasha.

The powder scattered like fine snow, accurately falling into the most crucial node grooves at the very center of the formation plate.

As the Void Stone Powder filled the grooves, the originally dull and lusterless patterns on the formation plate, like a dried-up riverbed suddenly nourished by rainwater, began to glow with an extremely faint grayish light.

"Rise!"

Su Ming shouted softly, his hands forming a seal. The spiritual energy within his body, like a trickling stream, slowly poured into the formation plate along the spiritual energy guiding channels.

Hmm—

An extremely faint, almost imperceptible tremor sounded within the stone hut.

The sensation was very strange, as if the originally flat space had been pressed by an invisible finger, creating a slight depression invisible to the naked eye.

At the center of the formation plate, that small pinch of Void Stone Powder instantly burned out, transforming into a wisp of silver smoke that drilled into that "depression."

Crack.

A hair-thin black crack quietly split open three inches above the formation plate.

There was no earth-shattering spiritual energy vortex, nor any radiant, spectacular phenomenon.

The crack was like a sleepy eye, barely opening a slit, exuding an aura of lifelessness and icy coldness.

Immediately after, a wisp of dull gray mist slowly seeped out from the crack.

It really was just a single wisp.

And its color was turbid, completely lacking luster, looking like the ash left over from burning firewood, carrying a musty smell.

Su Ming was stunned.

"This..." he hesitated, "Master, is this the 'Source Substance' we worked so hard to attract? Why does it look different from what we attracted back at the sect?"

Last time at the back mountains of the Cloud Hidden Sect, although it was also gray mist, at least the quantity was substantial and satisfying, and occasionally silver threads or even golden grains could be seen.

But this thing before his eyes...

"Don't complain, it's good enough to have something to eat."

Lin Yu's voice sounded somewhat helpless. The Xuantian ring glowed faintly, emitting a suction force that swallowed that wisp of gray mist in one gulp.

"Pah, tastes like dirt."

As soon as he swallowed it, Lin Yu started his outburst, "It's like soaking a moldy steamed bun that's been sitting for three years in muddy water, dry and astringent. Just barely enough to fill the stomach."

As the gray mist was absorbed, the glow on the Xuantian ring brightened for just a moment before returning to calm.

That tiny spatial crack also closed accordingly. The light on the formation plate completely extinguished, leaving only a pile of white lime devoid of any spiritual energy.

"This is it? It's over?" Su Ming looked at that small pile of waste residue, feeling a pang of heartache.

One qian of Void Stone Powder, exchanged for just this one mouthful of "moldy steamed bun"?

"Let's analyze it."

Although Lin Yu's voice still carried a tone of disdain, it was noticeably more vigorous than before, "This place is Iron Wall Pass. The underground spiritual veins have been drained day and night by that 'Big Dipper Seven Stars Demon Locking Grand Formation,' already dried up like an old woman's foot-binding cloth. With the earth veins powerless, the connection to the Void is naturally weak."

"What about stellar energy?" Su Ming looked up at the roof, "Although we're inside, the moonlight tonight is decent..."

"Forget it." Lin Yu cut him off, "Don't you see what's above your head? The sky above Iron Wall Pass is perpetually shrouded in blood-tainted energy and the spiritual light of the mountain-protecting formation, meant to guard against demonic bird raids. This shell blocks stellar energy and moonlight essence completely. Without stellar energy to pull it, our 'Minor Void Spirit Attraction Formation' is just a broken radio without an antenna, only able to pick up the most basic static."

"Which is this most basic 'Gray Mist Source Substance.'"

Su Ming fell silent.

Indeed, this was a battlefield, not a blessed pocket dimension. All resources had been squeezed dry by the war machine. Where would there be any extra spiritual essence left for them to scavenge?

"Still, even a mosquito's leg is meat."

Lin Yu seemed to be consoling himself, or perhaps encouraging Su Ming, "Although this gray mist is of low quality and small quantity, its advantage lies in its purity. After absorbing it, I feel the stability of my Soul Body has increased by about ten percent."

"Ten percent?" Su Ming's eyes lit up.

"That's right. Translated into your understanding, it means the time I can now maintain the 'observation micro state' each day has extended from the original two hours to three hours." Lin Yu paused, "Moreover, that feeling of emptiness inside the Soul Body, as if it could dissipate with the wind at any moment, has finally disappeared. It's like... putting a new beam into a house about to collapse."

Su Ming felt somewhat relieved.

As long as his Master was still here, as long as that cheat-like "observation micro" vision remained, this one qian of Void Stone Powder was well spent.

"As for that higher-level 'Silver Radiance Source Substance,' or even 'Golden Grains'..." Lin Yu sighed, "That kind of luxurious meal requires the right timing and favorable conditions. In this godforsaken Iron Wall Pass, unless you can find a spiritual vein node not covered by the grand formation, or wait for this mountain-protecting formation to develop a hole... Of course, let's not hope for the latter. If the formation breaks, we'll be the ones filling the breach with our lives."

"Master is right."

Su Ming put away the formation plate and used a brush to sweep the waste residue into a special waste bag, "Basic Source Substance is enough for Master to recover slowly. High-level Source Substance requires the right timing and conditions; it can't be forced. For now, improving our own strength is the priority."

"The Void Stone supply line is now barely closed."

Su Ming calculated, "Although the output is low, as long as I keep earning Military Merit, keep buying ore, this 'Gray Mist' can keep coming. As long as Master doesn't starve, our snowball can keep rolling."

"Speaking of rolling snowballs..."

Su Ming glanced at the pile of damaged magical implements in the corner that hadn't been processed yet, a slight curve forming at the corner of his mouth, "Tomorrow, it's time to visit the neighbors."

...

The next day, the wind and snow had somewhat subsided.

The reputation of the Bing-7 Defense Zone had, as if grown wings, spread throughout the entire Bing Battalion overnight.

This wasn't just because of Zhao Tiji's big mouth that couldn't keep a secret, but also because of solid, tangible achievements.

The neighboring Bing-6 Defense Zone had encountered a small-scale "Shadow Rat" sneak attack last night. Those palm-sized, burrowing-specialist first-tier demon beasts were usually the most annoying. Though they couldn't kill anyone, they specialized in biting formation foundations, endlessly irritating.

But last night, that hot-tempered Zhang Meng actually didn't curse.

Reportedly, it was because of that newly laid "Spiderweb" formation. The moment those rats poked their heads out, it was like they were stuck to glue.

Their movements slowed down as if they had dementia, and the lads from Bing-6 beat them all to death with shovels like playing whack-a-mole.

Zero losses in that battle.

Once this news got out, the entire Bing Battalion was in an uproar.

Early in the morning, the area outside Su Ming's Stone Hut Number Seven was as lively as a vegetable market. "Brother Su! Brother Su, are you home? I'm Wang Dachui from Bing-8!"