

Immortality 1271

Chapter 1271: Search the Mountain

"Injure their muscles and bones... Give them a good beating then?" Cheng Mo asked.

Mo Hua nodded.

Cheng Mo looked delighted, but then frowned, "But the disciples of the Sever Gold Sect are so despicable, always hiding and sneaking about. They're hard to track..."

"No problem," Mo Hua replied, "You gather some men. During this month's rest break, I'll accompany you all into the mountain."

When fellow sect members have been bullied, being their 'Junior Brother,' one has to stand up for them!

"Alright!" Cheng Mo nodded.

A few days later, when the rest break arrived, Cheng Mo followed Mo Hua's instructions and gathered twenty people.

This group of twenty was composed of the disciples closest to Cheng Mo—those he often called upon, played with, and even carried out tasks, earned rewards, and shared merit points with in the past.

The twenty disciples assembled before Mo Hua, greeted him, and said:

"Junior Brother!"

Mo Hua nodded, his expression slightly serious, "This time, we're heading to Refining Demon Mountain. We won't do anything else—just deal with Sever Gold Sect!"

All the disciples' faces brightened with excitement.

These past days in Refining Demon Mountain, they'd been repeatedly disturbed by Sever Gold Sect, not only suffering injuries but also enduring humiliation. A great deal of time had been wasted, barely earning any merit points. They had built up a lot of frustration.

But Sever Gold Sect was shameless—if they couldn't win, they'd flee, and after running, they'd still come back to harass again. Truly unbearable.

Mo Hua spread a map across the table.

"The plan is simple."

"We'll form twenty-man groups, equip gold-breaking armor, carry gold-breaking spiritual tools, and sweep through the mountain with the map!"

"Any Sever Gold Sect disciples with bad intentions—once spotted, beat them up, strip their Taoist robes, draw a turtle on them, and hang them on the trees."

"I want to see just how shameless they can be..."

After giving instructions, the group set out.

Including Mo Hua and Cheng Mo, they comprised twenty-five people and, to avoid drawing attention, split into smaller batches as they entered Refining Demon Mountain, finally regrouping at a hillside within the mountain.

After meeting up, they officially began "mapping."

The disciples of Sever Gold Sect were indeed cunning, hiding well.

On the surface, the dense mountains and forests seemed devoid of suspicious traces.

Mo Hua walked ahead, using his Divine Sense with the quality change of Seventeen Patterns, supplemented by calculations, to scan the surrounding mountains, rivers, and forests.

In the illusion-like whiteness, the mountain stones, vegetation, monster birds, snakes, and insects shed their outer appearances, revealing their forms through spiritual energy or demonic power.

For a fleeting moment, there was a sense of peering into the "true essence" of all things.

And under his Divine Sense, those Sever Gold Sect disciples using concealment spiritual tools, hidden behind mountain rocks, camouflaged among the vegetation, or masked by grass and trees—they were all laid bare.

Mo Hua sensed for a moment, then pointed with his finger.

"Over there in the bushes, there's five crouching."

"Up in the trees, seven are sitting."

"Behind the big rock, five are hiding."

"In the water, too..."

"And some are using the Earth Evasion Technique, burrowing underground..."

...

As Mo Hua walked, he called out targets.

The members of Sever Gold Sect were truly gifted in their devious tactics, employing various methods.

However, in front of Mo Hua, their "deviousness" was laughable.

Like this, the disciples secretly hiding in the mountain with malicious intentions from Sever Gold Sect were identified by Mo Hua one after another.

Cheng Mo led his team to charge forward, and chaos ensued—swords clashed, spiritual energy surged, and shouts erupted:

"Who?!"

"Taixu Gate's little brats!"

"Damn it, how'd they find us?"

"I'll hold them off—run!"

"Alright..."

"You bastard, you said you'd hold them off, but you're running yourself?!"

"Idiot!"

"Suppress them with spells!"

"Their armor is strange, my Golden Blade Technique can't cut through..."

"Useless!"

...

With superior numbers and gold-breaking armor, the battle was practically one-sided.

Amid the clamor, the Sever Gold Sect disciples were subdued one by one.

Mo Hua kept his promise—stripping their Taoist robes, drawing turtles on them, hanging them on the trees, making them endure humiliation.

This was the price of arrogance.

After handling one batch, Mo Hua waved his hand.

"Continue..."

Thus, twenty-plus people moved forward again.

Mo Hua continued to scout and identify targets, while Cheng Mo's group would strike, apprehending Sever Gold Sect disciples and hanging them on the trees.

With Mo Hua leading the way, the group followed their planned route, combing the mountain and apprehending every Sever Gold Sect disciple they encountered.

It wasn't until nightfall that the group left Refining Demon Mountain.

Mo Hua pondered for a moment and decided to lead everyone to hunt some monster beasts, stripping materials and selling them at the mountain gate for merit points to distribute among the group.

Monster beasts were few, and people were many, so each person received just over a hundred merit points—a perfect amount to cover the gate fee and avoid losing any points.

One may not profit, but they must never lose!

This was Mo Hua's principle.

After venting their frustrations, everyone happily returned to the sect to drink.

...

Later that night, within Sever Gold Sect.

A disciple reported the events at Refining Demon Mountain to a tall, thin senior brother from Sever Gold Sect.

This senior brother bore injuries, including a mark on his shoulder from being struck by an ax.

His movements were sluggish, seemingly afflicted by severe poisoning that hadn't completely cleared.

Focused, he was flipping through a Monster Hunting Atlas.

"Brother Jin, bad news..."

The disciple stammered in a panic.

The Sever Gold Sect senior brother frowned with annoyance, "What's the matter?"

"We..." The disciple took a deep breath and murmured, "We've been ambushed by Taixu Gate..."

The Sever Gold Sect senior brother frowned deeper, "And then?"

"They took advantage of their superior numbers, acted despicably, and used some unknown methods to locate every one of our disciples hiding in the mountain..."

The junior disciple emphasized again, "They outnumbered us, were despicable, and we couldn't match them. We were beaten badly, and then..."

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The disciple paused for a moment.

The Sever Gold Sect senior brother frowned, "And then?"

The disciple sneaked a glance at the Sever Gold Sect senior brother and whispered, "Then, it was just like with you..."

The Sever Gold Sect senior brother froze slightly, "What do you mean, just like me?"

"Stripped of their clothes, painted with turtles, and hung on a tree..."

These words, like sharp swords, pierced straight through his mental defenses.

The Sever Gold Sect senior brother's blood surged instantly. He slammed the table in front of him, shattering it into pieces, and then began trembling with rage.

What a monstrous humiliation!

This was the most humiliating experience he had ever suffered in his entire life!

What made it even harder to accept was that the ones who subjected him to this humiliation were just a group of Foundation Establishment Middle Stage disciples—far inferior in seniority and cultivation compared to him.

Each time he thought about this, he clenched his teeth, his anger blazing within him.

The disciple, seeing this, shivered on the side in fear.

After a long while, the senior brother of the Sever Gold Sect, who had suffered the breaking of his sword techniques, the stripping of his Taoist Robe, the hanging on a tree branch, and the drawing of turtles, finally suppressed the fury in his heart. With a frosty expression, he asked:

"On the Taixu Sect's side, who was leading them?"

The disciple said, "I don't know for sure, but the one charging at the forefront was a tall Taixu Sect disciple wielding a giant axe."

"A giant axe!"

Just as expected!

A cold light flashed in the eyes of the Sever Gold Sect senior brother.

"Brother Jin, what should we do next..." The disciple cautiously asked.

The Sever Gold Sect senior brother contemplated briefly, then sneered:

"If they want to fight, we'll fight them!"

The disciple's expression lit up with joy, "Brother Jin, you're going to make a move?"

The Sever Gold Sect senior brother's face darkened.

Me? Make a move?

It was because he made a move last time that he ended up in such an embarrassing situation.

The Sever Gold Sect senior brother, narrow-minded by nature, let his gaze grow cold. He looked at the disciple, though no one could guess what he was pondering.

After a moment, he spoke:

"Not yet. For now, neither I nor the other senior brothers from the Sever Gold Sect can take action."

"Previously, it was because those little pests snatched away monster beasts belonging to the Sever Gold Sect that I confronted them."

"But now, this is a conflict among disciples of the same generation. If we senior brothers step in again, it would inevitably be seen as bullying the weak."

"Even if there is justification, word would still spread, and we would inevitably be criticized."

"The Sever Gold Sect has always conducted itself righteously, fearing no slander, but neither can we hand others such an excuse."

"So, this matter must still be handled by your generation of junior disciples. It's your fight to fight."

"But..." The disciple hesitated nervously, "We're probably no match for the Taixu Sect..."

The Sever Gold Sect senior brother's expression turned cold, "You are a disciple of the Sever Gold Sect. How can you lack the will to fight, boosting the morale of others while diminishing your own?"

The Sever Gold Sect senior brother let out a cold laugh, "Even though the Sever Gold Sect is ranked only within the Twelve Streams, that was merely due to prior evaluations unfairly underestimating us."

"As of today, the Sever Gold Sect has grown far stronger and is no longer as we once were."

"As for the Taixu Sect, they have declined with every generation, reduced to being the weakest among the Eight Great Gates, their reputation nothing but a hollow name."

"What Brother Jin says is absolutely true!"

The disciple responded hurriedly, though his expression showed lingering hesitation, "But, Brother Jin, you don't know. Every member of the Taixu Sect has a Gold-breaking armor..."

"And we of the Sever Gold Sect, with most of our disciples having Metal Spirit Roots and cultivating gold-series skills..."

"When our spells strike their Gold-breaking armor, their power is greatly diminished."

"Body cultivators fare slightly better, but still have no clear advantage..."

"In direct confrontations, we disciples of the Sever Gold Sect do not fear the Taixu Sect, but they are too cunning. Coupled with the advantage of their spiritual tools and armor, we are afraid of being at a disadvantage..."

The Sever Gold Sect senior brother frowned.

He was aware of these facts, and they had long seemed strange to him.

Under normal circumstances, such single-element armors should be difficult to mass-produce. Even if mass-produced, they would almost certainly result in financial losses.

One or two pieces would be fine.

But for each person to have one, of the same design, inscribed with Gold-breaking Formation—it was highly unusual.

This suggested that someone, or some force, was deliberately targeting the Sever Gold Sect, sparing no expense and paying an enormous price to develop these customized spiritual tools specifically designed to counteract Golden Spiritual Power...

The Sever Gold Sect senior brother's expression grew more and more serious. After a moment, he spoke:

"I will personally handle this matter. Gather the disciples and teach the Taixu Sect a lesson tomorrow."

"Yes, Brother Jin."

The disciple took the order and left.

After thinking for a moment, the Sever Gold Sect senior brother stood up and left the Disciple's Residence. Walking along the magnificently decorated golden steps, he headed to another location within the Sever Gold Sect—a secluded and luxuriously adorned cave dwelling.

A beautiful female disciple opened the door and led him inside, guiding him all the way to the main hall.

In the hall sat an elegantly dressed young man with handsome features.

The young man was savoring tea.

The beautiful female disciple moved closer and whispered something in his ear. The young man nodded, then teasingly stroked her chin, saying something ambiguous.

The female disciple left, blushing shyly.

The Sever Gold Sect senior brother kept his gaze steady and dared not look around, but his peripheral vision couldn't help but linger on the alluring figure of the female disciple as she departed. A trace of envy welled up in his heart.

This wasn't an elder's cave dwelling but a disciple's residence.

A single-occupancy cave dwelling, with female attendants.

These things were against the rules.

Not just in the Sever Gold Sect, but in more than half of the sects across the Qianxue State Boundary, this was contrary to sect regulations.

But rules were always made for the common folk.

Some people were destined to stand above the rest, enjoying wealth and privileges that ordinary cultivators could never touch in their lifetimes.

The Sever Gold Sect senior brother shifted his gaze to the elegantly dressed young man at the center of the room.

Jin Yicai.

One of the most direct descendants of the Jin family from the Sever Gold Sect.

On his father's side, a lineage that had been entrenched in the upper echelon of the Sever Gold Sect for generations; on his mother's side, ties to the Central Dao Court Seven Pavilions, with considerable influence even within the Taoist State.

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This exquisitely designed cave abode was specifically requested by his mother from the Sect, made exclusively for her only treasured son.

In her words, Jin Yicai was born noble, with an extraordinary bloodline. How could he possibly live in the same Disciple's Residence as those ordinary disciples?

The beautiful female disciple from earlier was not a servant.

Rather, she was a genuine female disciple from a distinguished family within the Sever Gold Sect, possessing a top-grade Spiritual Root.

In the eyes of others, she was a "Heavenly Pride" who excelled in both talent and beauty, someone unattainable.

But in this cave abode, she was nothing more than a plaything to warm his bed.

Jin Yicai, blessed with a prestigious background and exceptional Spiritual Root, even had a private cave abode within the Sect.

Countless young ladies from middling distinguished families within the Sever Gold Sect harbored dreams of marrying into the Jin family, basking in its glory.

He didn't need to do anything. Simply leaving the door to his cave abode slightly ajar at night...

Was enough for various stunning women to squeeze inside, climbing onto his bed to offer themselves willingly.

Even if they were discarded afterward, these women accepted it with pleasure.

Even the guiding female disciples were changed every few days.

These practices clearly violated the Sect rules.

And yet, the upper ranks of the Sever Gold Sect were aware but deliberately turned a blind eye.

A senior brother of the Sever Gold Sect felt a twinge of jealousy and resentment in his heart.

Before he'd been promoted by Jin Yicai or had even stepped foot through the door of his cave abode, he had no knowledge of these matters at all.

Only after witnessing them firsthand did he realize the supposedly pure and noble "Fairies" so revered in the Sect could stoop so low.

Those grandiose Sect rules, for some people, were nothing but a joke.

Fame and wealth could rot the human heart to such a degree.

The senior brother of the Sever Gold Sect felt both sour and hateful in his heart.

What he hated was not the greed of human desires or the corruption of fame.

What he hated was that none of this had anything to do with him.

But now, things were different. He had already aligned himself with Mr. Jin.

As long as he followed Mr. Jin, step by step, even if his background wasn't great, he would eventually rise above others and step onto a grand path of success.

He could already faintly smell the fragrance of fame and glory.

That fragrance was so alluring, much like the powdery scent from the previously graceful female disciple, captivating his soul.

At this moment, a faintly arrogant voice came from within the room.

"Jin Gui, what's the matter?"

The senior brother addressed as "Jin Gui" quickly gathered his thoughts and respectfully replied:

"The Taixu Gate is still causing trouble."

Dressed in luxurious golden-threaded robes, Jin Yicai, with a lazy expression, furrowed his brows upon hearing this.

Jin Gui continued: "They're equipped with 'Gold-breaking' Spiritual Artifacts. The ordinary disciples probably aren't their match."

Jin Yicai sneered, "Gold-breaking Spiritual Artifacts? Foolish tricks..."

He nodded slightly, "Convey my message: have the direct lineage disciples of the Jin family who have trained in the Sever Gold Sword Jue to a satisfactory level and whose Sever Gold Swords have been forged to confront the Taixu Gate."

After speaking, Jin Yicai let out a cold snort. "Do they really think my Sever Gold Sect is a rabble?"

Jin Gui responded, "Understood."

Jin Yicai paused for a moment in thought, lifting his gaze slightly. "What's the situation with the Monster Beasts?"

Jin Gui bowed his head slightly as he reported, "Following your instructions, we've captured seventeen types according to the catalog. The remaining types are scarce and still being sought..."

Jin Yicai's expression turned displeased.

Noticing this, Jin Gui's heart sank. He immediately said:

"Refining Demon Mountain is vast, with steep terrain and dense forests. Monster Beasts are numerous yet difficult to find, and recently the disciples of the Taixu Gate have been causing interference, hampering our operations..."

"Once we've dealt with the Taixu Gate disciples, within half a month, all the types will surely be captured!"

Only then did Jin Yicai nod. "Don't disappoint me."

Jin Gui resolutely declared, "Young Master, rest assured!"

The room then fell silent.

Jin Yicai calmly sipped tea.

Jin Gui stood there respectfully, not daring to utter a word.

The room, opulent and extravagant, was filled with the lingering smoke from an incense burner.

An air of wealth and ease permeated the space.

Jin Yicai took a sip of tea, yet an inexplicable irritation stirred within him.

If not for that incident, he wouldn't have been placed under house arrest by his father, forbidden from stepping out of this cave abode. Even his mother's pleas had no effect.

Because of this, even highly important tasks had to be entrusted to others.

He had even been harshly scolded by his father over the matter.

In his entire life, he had never been subjected to such reproach.

In his anger, Jin Yicai let out a "crack," crushing the teacup in his hand into fragments.

Jin Gui was startled.

Soon, the beautiful female disciple from earlier gracefully walked in upon hearing the sound. She wiped the spilled tea for Jin Yicai, replaced the cup, poured a fresh one, and then retreated with a seductive glance and a graceful sway.

Jin Gui lowered his head, but couldn't help sneaking a few glances through the corner of his eye.

These women were the finest in the Sect, completely out of his reach.

Jin Yicai noticed the minutiae of Jin Gui's expression.

Jin Yicai let out a faint smirk and said indifferently:

"Have you memorized everything I told you?"

Jin Gui hurriedly replied, "I've memorized it."

"Good." Jin Yicai stirred the floating tea leaves with the lid of the teacup. "This matter is of utmost importance and must not fail. If you can handle it well..."

Jin Yicai took a small sip of tea:

"I'll take you onboard."

Jin Gui trembled all over, his face lighting up with joy. Regardless of rank, he immediately knelt and kowtowed:

"Thank you, Young Master!"

"Thank you for your guidance, Young Master!"

"Jin Gui will henceforth go through fire and water, following you unwaveringly!"

Jin Gui swore loyalty with trembling excitement.

Jin Yicai nodded approvingly, glancing down at Jin Gui kneeling on the ground, but in his heart, he couldn't help but think:

"He looks exactly like a dog..."

...

The next day, Mo Hua led his team back into Refining Demon Mountain to continue scouring the area.

However, this time he noticed something was off.

The disciples of the Sever Gold Sect had suddenly grown stronger.

Although they wore the same golden Taoist Robes, their gazes were more arrogant, their Spiritual Roots more superior, their cultivation deeper, their Sword Qi sharper, and even their golden Spirit Swords were noticeably different.

Additionally, they were using advanced sword techniques.

When the two sides clashed, the pressure on the Taixu Gate side abruptly increased.

Mo Hua had no choice but to personally step in.

Fortunately, despite the strength of the Sever Gold Sect disciples, they were all at the middle stage of Foundation Establishment. Given Mo Hua's current cultivation level, his powerful Divine Sense, near-instant Fireball Technique, and various cunning and disruptive control spells were sufficient for him to shine in this kind of large-scale battle among cultivators.

Not to mention, he also had Formations.

Thus, while the battle was arduous, Mo Hua and his comrades still emerged victorious, though many of them sustained injuries.

The Sever Gold Sect suffered a loss, but the damage wasn't too severe.

At least the number of disciples hung on trees and painted with turtle drawings had significantly decreased.

Both sides ceased their fighting, exchanged harsh words, and then retreated to their respective Sects.

Back at the Sect, the disciples of the Taixu Gate tended to their injuries.

Mo Hua examined everyone's wounds and became aware of a problem:

The Gold-breaking Armor seemed to have lost its effectiveness...

The Gold-breaking Armor, inscribed with the Kejin Formation, was specifically designed to counter gold-series spells, with exceptionally high resistance to Golden Spiritual Power.

But the newly arrived Sever Gold Sect disciples appeared to be core disciples of the Sever Gold Sect.

The Taoist Skills they practiced were the true and complete Sever Gold Sword Control Jue.

The Sword Qi they unleashed, while technically gold-series Sword Qi, was, in essence, "Sword Qi."

Gold-breaking Armor solely countered gold-series spells, but its defense against Sword Qi was negligible.

As a result, this confrontation left more Taixu Gate disciples injured.

But... how could one defend against Sword Qi?

Sword Qi itself, how did it differ fundamentally from ordinary Spiritual Power? And why was its power significantly greater than that of standard spells?

There were still eight days until the next resting period.

Mo Hua decided to investigate these questions during this time.

Otherwise, in future confrontations, even more fellow disciples might be hurt, and engaging in this feud with the Sever Gold Sect would ultimately prove disastrous.

Mo Hua specifically sought out Elder Yi, who taught Taoist Skills, for guidance.

Afterward, he also consulted several sword cultivators, including Situ Jian, to gain clarity.

He began to understand.

The power of sword cultivation was most directly manifested through "Sword Qi."

And the potency of Sword Qi partly relied on the "Sword Weapon."

Sword Weapon...

Mo Hua recalled the luxurious golden Spirit Swords hanging at the waists of the Sever Gold Sect disciples, and a spark of inspiration lit up in his eyes.

"The Spirit Swords of the Sever Gold Sect..."

Chapter 1274: Snatching the Sword

Small-scale cultivator clashes emphasize scheming, strategy, and varied tactics, resulting in numerous changes.

Large-scale cultivator battles, where forces swarm together in chaotic charges, instead demand straightforward transitions between offense and defense.

In such battles, having an advantage in either offense or defense can greatly improve the odds of victory.

Such is the case with the conflict against the Sever Gold Sect.

If one can rely on Gold-breaking Armor to defend against gold-series skills, then in situations of equal cultivation level, once the charge begins, they would gain the upper hand.

But this only applies when facing ordinary disciples of the Sever Gold Sect.

Ordinary Sever Gold disciples cultivate gold-series techniques, gold spiritual power spells, and martial arts.

Even if they practice sword techniques, they usually cultivate ordinary gold-series sword arts or the entry-level Sever Gold Sword Control Jue.

Gold-breaking Armor can suppress these.

But core disciples are different.

The core disciples of the Sever Gold Sect are often gifted sword cultivators who practice the most orthodox Sever Gold Sword Control Jue and wield top-grade gold-series spirit swords.

The power of their sword techniques partly stems from gold spiritual power, but their true core force comes from pure Broken Gold Sword Qi.

This sword qi, amplified by the top-grade golden swords, is even more formidable.

It far surpasses the crude Broken Gold Sword Qi Mo Hua himself cultivated.

And it is much stronger than the sword technique of Boss Jiang, who Mo Hua encountered at first—a man who stole Sever Gold Sect secrets, defected, and turned to trafficking cultivators.

Boss Jiang's sword technique was stolen.

His original inheritance was not orthodox, so its power naturally could not compare to these core direct-lineage disciples.

"The Sever Gold Sword Control Jue..."

Mo Hua silently muttered to himself.

He now realized he might have underestimated this sword technique.

As one of the Twelve Streams, the Sever Gold Sect's sect-protecting sword technique has a long lineage, far more significant than he had thought.

Using Gold-breaking Armor to counter ordinary gold-series skills might work.

But using it to counter the Sever Gold Sword Control Jue was perhaps naïve.

Just consider—the disciples of the Sever Gold Sect, with their arrogance, would have long been beaten down if their techniques were so easily countered.

There was no way the Sever Gold Sect could have held its position within the Twelve Streams of Qianxue for so long.

However, being difficult to counter does not necessarily mean there is no countermeasure.

Everything should be attempted; success is uncertain.

But if one does not attempt, failure is guaranteed.

Mo Hua decided to study this thoroughly...

In the dining hall of the Disciple's Residence, Mo Hua propped his chin in thought before asking Situ Jian beside him:

"Situ, is a sword vital to sword cultivators?"

Situ Jian paused, nodded, and said, "Of course."

A sword cultivator without a sword—is that still a sword cultivator...

"How important is it specifically?" Mo Hua asked again.

Situ Jian pondered for a moment before saying, "Swordsmanship is considered a special Taoist skill; it emphasizes the unity of man and sword."

"The primary level of man-sword unity refers to the integration of a cultivator's spiritual power with their spirit sword, thereby unleashing more potent sword qi."

"Without a spirit sword, the sword qi a cultivator releases is essentially no different in power from ordinary spells, but with the augmentation of a spirit sword, the power of swordsmanship leaps to a higher tier."

"A sword cultivator with a sword and one without a sword are essentially two completely different types of cultivators—the difference is night and day."

"In the cultivation world, there's a common saying: 'A sword cultivator with a sword is a dragon; without a sword, they are no better than a dog.' Although it may sound exaggerated, it shows how crucial a sword weapon is to a sword cultivator."

"Body cultivators rely on their physical bodies, spiritual cultivators depend on their Qi Sea, while the entirety of a sword cultivator's cultivation is heavily reliant on their sword weapons."

"A quality sword weapon can empower a sword cultivator immensely, even allowing them to 'defy fate and rewrite destiny.'"

"Thus, all sword cultivators regard their spirit swords as treasures and dream endlessly of possessing a supreme divine sword."

As Situ Jian spoke, a sense of longing welled up in his heart.

"Oh..."

Mo Hua nodded faintly.

Though Situ Jian explained things well, Mo Hua couldn't deeply relate.

This was the principle of orthodox sword cultivation, something that didn't seem to concern him.

Mo Hua was self-aware; his foundation was far too weak, and without familial support, he not only lagged hundreds of steps behind others on the path of orthodox sword cultivation, but his journey was also destined to be short-lived...

"What is the higher form of 'man-sword unity' like?" Mo Hua asked.

Situ Jian shook his head, "That involves profound sword intent, which I haven't reached yet, so I don't really understand."

"Alright then," Mo Hua nodded.

His situation was entirely the opposite.

In terms of uniting sword qi and sword weapon, compared to other sword cultivators, Mo Hua was essentially clueless.

However, he did have significant familiarity with sword intent.

After all, he had already learned the 'Transforming Sword Skill' of Divine Thought into Sword.

That said, his rudimentary 'Transforming Sword Skill' likely did not create anything that could be considered authentic sword intent.

"Then why does a sword weapon amplify the power of sword qi?" Mo Hua asked once more.

So far, the only methods he'd seen that could enhance spiritual power were the Five Elements Source Formation and the Five Elements Origin Armor engraved with it.

Apart from that, no spiritual artifact he encountered had the effect of 'boosting spiritual power.'

The Five Elements Source Formation, being both the sect-protecting ultimate technique of the Five Elements Sect and an extremely difficult formation to learn and pass down, stood in a class of its own.

Currently, the Five Elements Origin Armor remained unique to him.

But swords were different—though the art of sword forging was rare and closely guarded by major sects, families, and sects, its accessibility far outpaced that of the Five Elements Source Formation.

After some consideration, Mo Hua added:

"Is it because of the sword array?"

"Yes," Situ Jian replied. "A spirit sword can amplify sword qi precisely because, during its forging, a sword array is sealed within, merging sword and formation into one."

"Thus, when spiritual power is injected into the spirit sword, circulating through the sword array, the sword qi unleashed becomes much sharper."

Chapter 1275: The Sword Robbery (2)

Mo Hua asked again: "Have you ever seen a Sword Array?"

"No." Situ Jian shook his head. "The inheritance of Sword Arrays is the core secret of the clan. Even the Direct Lineage Formation Masters within the clan can't learn it easily."

"The requirements are that strict?"

"Extremely strict," Situ Jian said solemnly. "I can't speak for other families, but take the Situ Family as an example: the inheritance of the Li Fire Sword Array is extraordinarily stringent..."

"It's not taught to those outside the clan, not taught to those married into the clan, not taught to those married away, not taught to non-direct lineage members, and even among the Direct Lineage, anyone wishing to learn the Sword Array must sign a 'Death Oath' and swear that while a person may die, the method cannot be passed on. Only then would they qualify to learn the Sword Array."

Mo Hua was taken aback at these words.

Previously, he'd only heard Master Gu mention that Sword Arrays were the core inheritance of Sword Dao families, extremely precious.

But he hadn't imagined that they'd be precious to this extent...

Yet the more this was the case, the more curious he felt.

What do Sword Arrays actually look like...

He had to find a way to obtain one and study it.

Mo Hua's thoughts shifted, and he couldn't help but cast a glance at Situ Jian's Li Fire Sword hidden within its sheath.

Situ Jian's heart skipped a beat, and he instinctively guarded the Li Fire Sword in his hand.

The two locked gazes for a moment, before Mo Hua quietly asked:

"Can I take a look?"

Situ Jian looked conflicted. "Junior Brother... you won't dismantle it, right..."

Mo Hua immediately nodded. "I won't, I won't! I'll just look at it..."

Seeing that Situ Jian was still reluctant, Mo Hua added:

"Just here, just a quick look."

Only then did Situ Jian reluctantly hand over the Li Fire Sword he carried everywhere, treating it like his lifeblood, to Mo Hua.

Mo Hua carefully accepted it, feeling its weight and a slight warmth upon touch.

The sword blade was forged from a material unknown to him; crystalline like jade, sharp like iron, with faint flows of fiery red.

Squinting his eyes, Mo Hua examined the hilt of the Li Fire Sword, looking for any gaps to determine if it could be dismantled.

Situ Jian tensed up immediately.

Thankfully, Mo Hua had no intention of actually dismantling it.

After thoroughly examining it, he found no point of entry for dismantling, and respectfully returned the Li Fire Sword to Situ Jian, saying, "Thanks."

Situ Jian breathed a sigh of relief, taking back the Li Fire Sword and immediately securing it.

Whenever the Li Fire Sword was in Mo Hua's hands, he couldn't help but feel on edge.

Meanwhile, Mo Hua was lost in thought.

The Li Fire Sword was a treasure of the Situ family—it wouldn't be easy to make a move on it, and if he actually damaged it, he'd feel far too guilty.

After pondering for a moment, Mo Hua said to Situ Jian:

"Next rest day, we'll head to Refining Demon Mountain and snatch a few Spirit Swords from the Sever Gold Sect..."

The power of Sword Qi partly comes from the Sword Array.

Dismantling a Sever Gold Sword would allow research into the Sword Array and how to improve Gold-breaking Armor for defense against genuine Broken Gold Sword Qi.

Situ Jian shook his head. "Even if you snatch them, it likely won't work. Spirit Swords typically have an internal self-destruct Formation; if forcibly dismantled, the Sword Array will self-destruct..."

Mo Hua paused, contemplating the matter, and eventually agreed.

Considering how precious the Sword Array was, having some form of sealed self-destruct mechanism made sense.

But that said, they'd still have to snatch them.

Only by obtaining the swords could they find out whether or not dismantling them was truly possible.

"No problem, we'll grab them first and see." Mo Hua said.

Situ Jian wanted to persuade him further but suddenly caught himself, immediately realizing that if Junior Brother Mo didn't go snatch Sever Gold Swords, with his curiosity for formations and relentless pursuit of answers, sooner or later he'd probably set his sights on the Li Fire Sword...

Situ Jian clenched his heart and quickly nodded:

"Yes, exactly! We must grab some swords! Without dismantling a few, how can we know if they'll self-destruct."

"Junior Brother, I'll help you snatch them!"

If the Sever Gold Sect's Sever Gold Swords were dismantled, it didn't matter—as long as his own Li Fire Sword stayed intact.

Mo Hua felt deeply moved.

Situ Jian in his heart was now elevated to a "Great Good Person."

...

A few days later, the rest day arrived.

Mo Hua gathered Cheng Mo, Situ Jian, and a few others—a total of five—and set off once again for Refining Demon Mountain.

He didn't bring the other disciples.

Mo Hua had considered it; without optimizing the Gold-breaking Armor to address Broken Gold Sword Qi, the odds of his Junior Brothers and Junior Sisters getting injured would increase greatly, which wasn't worth it.

Also, given they were "snatching" things this time, they needed to keep things light, move quickly, and avoid excessive numbers.

Upon entering Refining Demon Mountain, Mo Hua, familiar with the route, quickly spotted a small group of Sever Gold Sect disciples.

There were eight of them, led by a "pretty-faced" young lord-like figure.

Mo Hua swept his gaze across them, briefly sensing with his Divine Sense, and had a general assessment of their strength.

Their cultivations were all uniformly at the Foundation Building Middle Stage.

Three Body Cultivators, two Spiritual Cultivators, and the remaining three were Sword Cultivators.

The Body and Spiritual Cultivators didn't have swords—not worth snatching.

The focus would be on those three Sword Cultivators.

Each of them had golden Spirit Swords equipped, with the prettiest "pretty face" leading the group boasting the highest-quality Spirit Sword, glittering with golden light.

The more Mo Hua looked, the more he liked it.

He decided then and there: from now on, this sword already "belongs" to Mo.

The Sever Gold Sect disciples, completely unaware of the impending danger, continued chatting idly while scouring the mountain:

"The Taixu Gate cowards haven't shown up..."

"Scared off, probably."

"Guess they've recognized the power of our Sever Gold Sect. Serves them right."

One of them sneered, "Daring to oppose Sever Gold Sect—they must have a death wish."

Another expressed caution: "But the Taixu Gate lot is sly. If they're not showing up, they're likely scheming something. Best to stay alert..."

The "pretty-faced" leader dismissed the concern, saying, "It doesn't matter. This entire mountain is now filled with our Sever Gold Sect disciples. What could they even dare to do..."

Chapter 1276: Snatch the Sword (3)

Before he could finish his sentence, he suddenly saw a towering and burly disciple rush out from nowhere. With a double-axe downward chop, he struck down a smug, overly relaxed disciple from the Sever Gold Sect who hadn't been on guard.

The pretty boy froze for a moment, then his expression changed drastically.

"Enemy attack!"

But before they had time to react, Yang Qianjun charged out, his spear thrusting like a dragon. He stabbed another Sever Gold Sect disciple in the back, toppling him.

Then, Situ Jian's Li Fire Sword arrived in an instant.

The blazing Li Fire, accompanied by sharp Sword Qi, caught another Sever Gold Sect disciple off-guard and pierced his thigh.

That disciple let out a wail and fell to his knees.

Situ Jian, landing a strike, didn't pause but immediately channeled all his spiritual power, ready to target the next disciple.

This time, his attacks were particularly vicious, and he thought to himself:

I must help Junior Brother seize the Sever Gold Sword!

That way, Junior Brother won't eye my Li Fire Sword anymore.

The core disciple from the Sever Gold Sect, the so-called pretty boy, flew into a rage when he saw what was happening. He was about to use Sword Control to fight back, but just as he drew his sword halfway, he felt a sharp pain at the back of his head, and dizziness overwhelmed him.

"A sneak attack with a blunt weapon?!"

The pretty boy was momentarily stunned but quickly reacted, taking out a Golden Body Talisman to activate.

Yet just as he brought out the talisman, a fireball whizzed toward him and exploded on his arm.

The searing pain caused his hand to tremble, and the Golden Body Talisman dropped to the ground. When he aimed to bend down and retrieve it, it was too late.

Hao Xuan had already kicked the talisman away.

On the other side, the ordinary Sever Gold Sect disciples were no match for Cheng Mo and company—experienced, coordinated, and even somewhat groomed under Mo Hua's influence.

Taken wholly off guard, they were ambushed and subdued in no more than ten rounds. Four disciples were captured, while the remaining three stood trembling, not daring to advance.

Cheng Mo's group shifted their attention to the pretty boy.

The pretty boy, sensing the situation had turned dire, immediately displayed the Escape Gold Body Skill to flee.

His movement technique was remarkable; in a flash of golden light, he had already leaped several feet away.

Fleeing, he still managed to hurl curses back at them. "Despicable scum, you just wait! Soon I'll..."

Before he could finish, a flash of blue light appeared—a chain materialized out of nowhere and bound him securely.

The pretty boy was shocked and terrified.

"What kind of spell is this?"

He tried to struggle, but Cheng Mo had already strode up to him, raising his twin axes and pressing them against the pretty boy's neck.

The pretty boy seethed inwardly and roared:

"You worthless bastards! You..."

Cheng Mo gave him a swift kick. The pretty boy yelped and clutched his stomach, swallowing the rest of his curses.

Mo Hua, unceremoniously and with lightning speed, snatched the Sever Gold Sword from the pretty boy's waist, tucked it into his own robes, and decisively ordered:

"Retreat!"

He had already sensed that other Sever Gold Sect disciples, alerted by the commotion, were rushing toward their location—and there seemed to be quite a few of them.

Now was the time to retreat, without further entanglement.

Cheng Mo and the others nodded in agreement.

Moments later, the five of them swiftly made their escape.

The pretty boy stood stupefied for a moment. When he looked down, he found that at some point, his Sever Gold Sword was no longer on his waist.

"My sword!"

Fury surged in his chest.

As he looked up again, the surroundings were devoid of people. The group had already vanished.

"You bastards! I won't let you get away with this!"

He gritted his teeth, cursing.

Moments later, a crowd of Sever Gold Sect disciples surrounded him, expressing concern.

"Brother Song, are you alright?"

The pretty boy's face was white with anger.

This bunch of useless fools—did he look alright?

His abdomen still burned in pain, but that was the least of his concerns; what mattered now was the Sever Gold Sword.

This was a Spirit Sword he had nurtured for many years and planned to use as the embryo for his Lifebound Spirit Sword.

"My sword was taken!"

When they heard this, the crowd's expressions grew solemn.

"Go!" the pretty boy barked angrily. "Find those bastards and bring my sword back!"

"Yes!"

The Sever Gold Sect disciples all nodded in agreement.

The Sever Gold Sect was split into two major families: the Jin family and the Song family.

The pretty boy, whose surname was Song, was part of the Sever Gold Sect's most core lineage, second only to the Jin family.

His orders were not something regular disciples would dare to neglect.

Soon, the Sever Gold Sect disciples gathered together and began searching the mountain.

They thought that with so many disciples, capturing a few Taixu Gate disciples would be an easy task.

But they soon realized how wrong they were.

Mo Hua and his group seemed to have vanished into the mountain, leaving no trace whatsoever.

These Sever Gold Sect disciples were all at the Foundation Building Middle Stage, with Divine Sense capabilities at most reaching fourteen patterns.

With their level of Divine Sense, there was no way they could detect Mo Hua, whose Divine Sense had reached seventeen patterns and undergone a quality change.

Not to mention that this was Refining Demon Mountain.

Mo Hua now had a thorough understanding of the Outer Mountain of Refining Demon Mountain. Walking through it was as familiar as strolling through his own backyard.

Finding him in the mountains was akin to looking for a needle in a haystack.

As a result, even after Mo Hua had returned to Taixu Gate, clutching the Sever Gold Spirit Sword, the Sever Gold Sect disciples were still frantically searching the mountain like headless flies.

But as night fell, Monster Beasts in the mountains began to stir, and they dared not linger any longer. They had no choice but to retreat back to their sect.

The pretty boy who had his Sever Gold Spirit Sword stolen returned to the Sever Gold Sect with a dark face, only to run into a tall, lanky, late-stage Foundation Establishment senior brother outside the Disciple's Residence.

This individual was none other than Jin Gui.

Jin Gui greeted him with a smile and bowed courteously, saying:

"Junior Brother Song Jian."

The pretty boy, also known as Song Jian, frowned at the greeting but replied perfunctorily, "Brother Jin."

There was an inherent indifference in his tone.

The two major families of the Sever Gold Sect, the Jin family and the Song family, were never truly on good terms.

Within the sect, from the Sect Leader, Vice Sect Leader, all the way to the elders and instructors, the two families constantly fought for power, building considerable animosity over time.

However, as they were in the same sect, they refrained from tearing each other apart openly.

"How did the mountain patrol go?" Jin Gui asked with a smile that didn't reach his eyes.

Song Jian's face looked ugly, but he replied honestly:

"The Taixu Gate acted despicably. Most of their disciples stayed hidden, while a small number ambushed us shamelessly and stole my Sever Gold Sword..."

The sword was stolen?

Jin Gui smirked inwardly but fake-sighed outwardly:

"To a sword cultivator, a Spirit Sword is as important as their life. Junior Brother Song, how could you lose your Spirit Sword..."

Song Jian easily caught the sarcastic tone and felt a flicker of rage. He retorted:

"Brother Jin is right. Even if it means losing face, the sword must not be lost."

Jin Gui's face turned dark instantly.

This was clearly a jab at the notorious incident where he had been stripped and hung on a tree, with turtles painted all over him.

The two exchanged subtle jabs, each trying to humiliate the other.

Jin Gui then chuckled and said: "Shall I arrange for some Jin family disciples to help you retrieve your sword tomorrow?"

"No need," Song Jian replied coldly. "What the Song family loses, the Song family will retrieve. If the Song family can't do it, the Jin family surely won't either..."

The two locked eyes, their gazes filled with hostility.

Finally, Jin Gui forced a smile and said, "Junior Brother Song, take care of yourself."

Song Jian replied similarly: "Brother Jin, good luck."

As they brushed past each other, their expressions turned frosty. Both snorted inwardly:

Who does the Sever Gold Sect truly belong to—the Jin family or the Song family? The answer remains unclear...

After parting ways, both returned to their residences, recalling the day's events with fury. Gradually, their hatred shifted toward another thought entirely.

Jin Gui's eyes glowed red as he smashed his desk:

"That little punk who painted turtles on me—I'll tear him limb from limb one day!"

Meanwhile, Song Jian crushed a teacup in his hand, his face twisting in anger:

"That brat who stole my Sever Gold Spirit Sword—I'll make him pay a hundredfold one day!"

...

And at that very moment, Mo Hua—the one who had painted turtles on Jin Gui and stolen Song Jian's Spirit Sword—was sitting in his residence like nothing ever happened, intently studying the radiant Sever Gold Sword in his hands.

This was an exceptionally valuable Spirit Sword.

He was pondering whether it might be possible to dismantle the Sever Gold Sword.

If it could be dismantled, would he be able to extract the Sword Array within it?

If he could acquire the Sword Array, wouldn't that mean...

He could finally forge a real Spirit Sword of his own?

Mo Hua's eyes shone with excitement, filled with eager anticipation.

Chapter 1277: Sword Array

Two hours later, Mo Hua stared at the battered and charred Sever Gold Sword before him, its blade curled inward, and fell into deep thought.

This exquisite top-grade Sever Gold Sword had been thoroughly destroyed in his hands in less than two hours.

Mo Hua arrived at a conclusion:

The sword array within the Spirit Sword indeed has a self-destruction mechanism.

At least the Spirit Sword before him had self-destructed.

Even though he had been exceedingly cautious, employing all the artifact refining knowledge at his disposal, it had been futile.

The Sever Gold Sword chose death over submission and utterly destroyed itself.

The sword array within also burned itself to ashes.

Mo Hua didn't even get a chance to glimpse what type of array system the sword array used or how many formation patterns it had...

Mo Hua let out a deep sigh, his heart aching.

Such a fine Spirit Sword, gone just like that.

What a waste...

Mo Hua mourned for the top-grade Spirit Sword for a moment, then began pondering when he could toss this "broken sword" to Master Gu to see if it could be melted down and repurposed in the forge.

For now, however, he needed to focus on the matter of the "sword array."

"The sword array self-destructs, and even after seizing the Spirit Sword, one cannot obtain the sword array by dismantling it."

"So if I wish to acquire the sword array, where should I start?"

Mo Hua found himself in a bind.

He began brainstorming solutions to the problem.

Capture some Sever Gold Sect disciples and subject them to harsh interrogation?

His improved Formation Punishment Board hadn't been used in ages since he couldn't go out to apprehend Sin Cultivators anymore. Perhaps it was time to let Sever Gold Sect disciples kneel on it for a change?

Mo Hua mulled this over for a moment but then shook his head.

That wouldn't work...

Too brutal.

The iron board was meant for Sin Cultivators, Evil Cultivators, and Demon Cultivators.

Ordinary disciples of the Sever Gold Sect, despite their petty rivalry with Taixu Gate and their detestable ways, were not deserving of such punishment.

There must be limits between good and evil.

Punishment tools should also be used judiciously; otherwise, he might develop a cruel and violent disposition and eventually turn into a bloodthirsty Demon Head.

Such behavior would go against the teachings of his parents, master, Elder Master Xun, and the various elders of Taixu Gate.

Moreover, even with torture, it would likely be futile.

Secrets of this caliber weren't something common disciples would have knowledge of.

This sword array, capable of amplifying Sword Qi, was so secretive that, while not comparable to the Five Elements Source Formation, it was certainly no ordinary trick.

The difficulty must be incredibly high.

The Sever Gold Sect disciples didn't seem particularly clever, nor did many of them possess strong Divine Sense abilities. It was highly unlikely they could master such a complex sword array.

If they didn't know it in the first place, interrogation would be pointless.

In that case...

Find out where the Sever Gold Sect's sword-refining shop is located, sneak in, and steal the sword array's secrets?

Or perhaps try to acquire a Sect Token from the Sever Gold Sect and see if he could tamper with it?

Mo Hua considered these options, only to dismiss them himself.

The Sever Gold Sect's sword-refining shop was bound to be extremely well-guarded. How could he, a mere little cultivator at the middle stage of Foundation Establishment, possibly sneak in...

At least for now, it was utterly impossible.

The Sever Gold Sect's Sect Token, even if obtained, would be useless.

He had no understanding of highly advanced formations like the Yuan Magnetic Formation, let alone how to tamper with them.

These two methods were unusable for now.

"Neither will work..."

Lying on his bed, Mo Hua racked his brain, turning over every trick he could think of until suddenly, a spark of inspiration lit up in his mind:

"Calculation!"

Divine Sense Calculation could deduce formation patterns from the spirit traces left by arrays.

If a Sword Cultivator activated Sword Qi through the sword array within a Spirit Sword,

Wouldn't that mean...

He could reverse-calculate the secret sword array stored within the Sword Weapon by tracing the marks left by Sword Qi?

Mo Hua gasped.

Wouldn't this mean he was defying the heavens?

From then on, anyone who showcased swordsmanship before him would have their Sword Weapon heritage thoroughly exposed!

Mo Hua himself could hardly believe it.

But whether it would work required experimentation to find out...

The next day, Mo Hua sought out Situ Jian.

"Situ, I need a favor from you."

Situ Jian looked puzzled, then asked, "Is it about the Sever Gold Sword?"

"No," Mo Hua replied. "That sword is already ruined."

Situ Jian froze for a moment, then his entire demeanor collapsed.

"Ruined?!"

"It's only been one night, and a top-grade Spirit Sword has been completely destroyed?" Situ Jian was stunned.

Inwardly, Mo Hua muttered to himself:

To be precise, it was destroyed in just two hours...

"It's just a minor issue; don't worry about it."

Situ Jian looked pained.

How could it be a minor issue? That was a top-grade Spirit Sword...

He suddenly felt a twinge of sympathy for that Sever Gold Sect pretty boy.

A well-maintained Sever Gold Sword, undoubtedly nurtured painstakingly over time, had ended up ruined in just one night at the hands of Junior Brother.

Situ Jian instinctively clenched his grip tighter around his own Li Fire Sword.

The Sever Gold Sword was gone, fine.

But his own Li Fire Sword—no matter what—absolutely couldn't fall into Junior Brother's hands!

As he was contemplating whether he should keep a low profile in the future, avoid flaunting his identity as a Sword Cultivator, and stash his Li Fire Sword safely in his Storage Bag, Mo Hua continued:

"Your Li Fire Sword—lend it to me for a bit."

Situ Jian shivered all over.

Mo Hua quickly reassured him: "Don't worry, I won't dismantle your Li Fire Sword. I just need you to use it to release Sword Qi for me to observe."

Situ Jian let out a breath of relief but couldn't help double-checking, "Really?"

"Yes!" Mo Hua replied with certainty.

Only then did Situ Jian relax.

After class, Mo Hua pulled Situ Jian along to the Dao Room.

With many disciples on Taixu Mountain, it wasn't convenient to practice swordsmanship openly.

The Dao Room was the only place sealed, quiet, and free from disturbances.

Chapter 1278: Sword Array (2)

"Just keep channeling Li Fire Sword Qi and strike that Taoist Puppet," Mo Hua said to Situ Jian.

"That simple?" Situ Jian asked.

"Yes," Mo Hua nodded. "It's that simple."

Situ Jian didn't ask further about what exactly Mo Hua wanted to do, because past experiences had proven that his Junior Brother always had deeper intentions behind his actions.

If it involved formations, even if Mo Hua explained, Situ Jian probably wouldn't understand.

"Alright!" Situ Jian agreed decisively.

After that, in front of Mo Hua, he summoned the Li Fire Sword and activated the Li Fire Sword Qi, slashing at the Taoist Puppet one strike after another.

Mo Hua sat cross-legged nearby, his eyes dark and filled with focus. Lines of Heavenly secret Patterns surfaced in his gaze as he used the Tricky Calculation to enhance the Heavenly secret Calculation, beginning his deductions of Situ Jian's Li Fire Sword Qi.

Li Fire Sword Qi was a fire-elemental Sword Qi, engulfed in blazing flames, radiating scarlet light.

At first glance, it merely appeared as a scorching form of Sword Qi.

Mo Hua then activated his Divine Sense, and double images appeared in his eyes. He continuously attempted to use the Heavenly secret Calculation to deduce the deeper energies within.

The intense scrutiny from Mo Hua made Situ Jian feel a chill in his heart as he slashed again and again with his sword.

Although he didn't know what Mo Hua was attempting, he felt like his Sword Qi was being gradually laid bare...

Situ Jian was alarmed.

How... How is this possible?

Mo Hua isn't even a Sword Cultivator. How could he understand Sword Qi just by observing it casually?

"It must be an illusion..."

Situ Jian felt uneasy, but since he had already agreed to help Mo Hua, he didn't want to back out halfway. With a tinge of reluctance, he pressed on, striking the puppet one sword strike after another.

He didn't know how long he kept at it, and just as the unease in his heart peaked, Mo Hua suddenly spoke:

"Alright."

Situ Jian stopped and turned around to find Mo Hua's expression was notably disappointed.

He hadn't deduced it...

Mo Hua let out a sigh.

After a brief silence, Situ Jian couldn't help but ask:

"Junior Brother, what are you trying to do...?"

Mo Hua replied, "I'm researching Sword Qi to better deal with the Sever Gold Sect."

Situ Jian let out a slight sigh of relief, though inwardly he still didn't understand why Mo Hua needed to study his Li Fire Sword Qi to deal with Sever Gold Sect.

Besides, can anything really be discerned just by looking like this?

Situ Jian's expression was filled with doubt.

Mo Hua, however, fell into silent contemplation.

Using Sword Qi to deduce the sword array hidden within the Spirit Sword—this idea was feasible.

He could indeed calculate a bit, but it was extremely difficult, revealing only vague traces of the Sword Array.

His Calculation Method was still lacking in refinement.

Even with the amplification from the Tricky Calculation, he was unable to fully decipher the concealed Sword Array.

However, Mo Hua was not discouraged.

Such things were akin to Drawing Formations—with practice comes skill.

If it couldn't be calculated in one attempt, then two attempts, three attempts... until the solution was reached.

From that point on, whenever time permitted, Mo Hua would have Situ Jian practice his sword in front of him. This allowed him to practice his deductions and refine his calculations of the Sword Array.

Still, constantly troubling Situ Jian made Mo Hua feel a bit guilty, so he decided to transfer some Merit Points to him.

Situ Jian, in turn, felt mortified about accepting it.

"Junior Brother, how could I accept this?"

Mo Hua said, "Even brothers must settle accounts clearly. You helping me is an act of grace, but I can't let you suffer for it!"

Situ Jian tried to refuse again.

Mo Hua then sternly said, "Take what I've given you. I don't lack a few Merit Points!"

He had been accumulating Merit Points for a long time and was now a Merit-rich powerhouse.

In terms of origin, he was a Loose Cultivator, while his peers were noble family's sons.

But if one were to measure Merit Points, he was the true "noble" among them, far wealthier than most of his peers.

Situ Jian accepted the points with gratitude in his heart.

The sect's Merit Points were indeed something he couldn't decline.

After receiving the Merit Points, Situ Jian became even more dedicated and focused when showcasing his Li Fire Sword Qi for Mo Hua.

He couldn't let Junior Brother's Merit Points go to waste.

As for the sensation of having his Sword Qi laid bare...

Situ Jian thought about it repeatedly and still felt it must have been just an illusion.

He was simply using the Li Fire Sword Technique, channeling Li Fire Sword Qi through the Li Fire Spirit Sword. How could it possibly be "deciphered" by someone?

If merely unleashing Sword Qi could expose it, wouldn't all Sword Cultivators under the heavens abandon the sword?

That was obviously impossible.

A Sword Cultivator who didn't draw their sword—how could they still be called a Sword Cultivator?

Situ Jian gradually put his concerns to rest.

Besides, his kind-hearted Junior Brother had even given him extra Merit Points.

Situ Jian resolved not to judge Mo Hua's intentions unfairly with narrow-minded suspicion.

With Situ Jian's cooperation, Mo Hua's proficiency in calculating Sword Qi steadily improved...

Though, Situ Jian wasn't always available.

Occasionally, when Situ Jian was busy, Mo Hua would hire other Sword Cultivator disciples to demonstrate Sword Qi for him.

However, these disciples' levels in Sword Dao were not particularly high—Situ Jian was still the best.

Thus, Mo Hua practiced over and over, deducing repeatedly, gradually expanding the depth of his calculations and strengthening his comprehension of Sword Qi.

In his eyes, the Sword Qi began to lose its original sword-like form, dissolving into something much deeper...

Finally, after seven days and countless painstaking, tedious, and iterative calculations, Mo Hua suddenly experienced a flash of enlightenment.

His Divine Thought became crystal clear, and his mental landscape instantly expanded.

Within his Divine Sense's vision, the crimson Li Fire Sword Qi, flowing like molten lava, began to break apart, disintegrating inch by inch, revealing the sharp and distinct sword marks hidden deep within its essence.

These marks were the Sword Array within the Spirit Sword!

Mo Hua's heart was filled with joy. He immediately began to write, his pen strokes flowing effortlessly like water, rapidly recording these sword marks.

The sword marks resembled Formation Patterns, yet they had no curves—only sharp, straight lines, brimming with piercing Sword Intent, as though they were carved out by blades or swords.

Chapter 1279: Sword Array (3)

This is...

The Situ Family's Sword Dao Heritage: Li Fire Sword Array!

A heritage directly passed down from Situ Sword Ancestor's Li Fire Sword Technique, at least the most critical inheritance among Second Grade Li Fire Sword Techniques.

And now, this secret sword array has been calculated by Mo Hua and fully restored...

Mo Hua raised his head and glanced at Situ Jian in the distance, who was completely unaware and still focused on using Sword Qi to strike at wooden puppets. After pondering briefly, Mo Hua erased the sword array he had just recorded.

At the same time, he also forced himself to forget the Li Fire Sword Array within his mind.

This sword array must not be retained.

Sword arrays are the secrets of sword Dao families.

If this Li Fire Sword Array is leaked, disaster will inevitably befall the Situ Family.

Although Situ Jian is innocent and unaware, cannot be blamed, ultimately the sword array leaked because of him, and he cannot absolve himself of responsibility.

If that happens, he'll be caught in a difficult situation.

Since Situ calls him Junior Brother and trusts him, he absolutely cannot betray him.

Mo Hua nodded slightly.

The Li Fire Sword Array on the diagram was erased, and the Li Fire Sword Array in his mind was forcibly forgotten.

Mo Hua felt somewhat at ease and then said, "Situ, it's done."

Situ Jian stopped his hands and said, a bit bewildered:

"Is it finished?"

"Yes." Mo Hua nodded and smiled: "I'll treat you to something delicious!"

Situ Jian politely declined a few times but eventually joined Mo Hua for a banquet at the disciples' dining hall.

Though he wasn't greedy for such culinary pleasures, when Junior Brother treated, he certainly wouldn't refuse.

And thus, Mo Hua invited Situ Jian to enjoy a hearty spiritual meal in the second-floor dining hall of the Disciple's Residence.

Yu Er naturally joined in, along with Yang Qianjun, Hao Xuan, Xie Ling, and Cheng Mo, who took the opportunity to eat as well.

During the meal, the hosts and guests were delighted.

However, Mo Hua paid special attention to Cheng Mo, even going so far as to order a plate of pork knuckles and place it before Cheng Mo, saying, "Cheng Mo, eat more."

Cheng Mo was a bit stunned by the favor but also somewhat confused, asking, "Junior Brother, weren't you treating Situ Jian? Why are you constantly asking me to eat more..."

Mo Hua replied, "Because next, it's your turn to help."

Cheng Mo glanced at the glistening, spicy pork knuckles in front of him, patted his chest, and promised:

"Junior Brother, rest assured, whatever it is, I'll take care of it for you."

Mo Hua nodded and said, "Then eat more, you'll need to be full before getting beaten up."

Cheng Mo, midway through chomping a pork knuckle, froze in shock.

"Beaten... up?"

"Yes," Mo Hua nodded, "beaten up."

...

Two days later, during the break period, at Refining Demon Mountain, Mo Hua adorned Cheng Mo with three layers of armor: one layer of Kejin Armor, one layer of Soft Silk Armor, and one layer of Refined Iron Armor.

"Later, I'll call someone from the Sever Gold Sect to duel with you. Be arrogant, don't aim to win, just stall them. The longer you hold out, the better."

Cheng Mo looked bitterly displeased.

Hao Xuan was utterly puzzled, asking, "Junior Brother, what are you trying to do?"

Mo Hua teased with a grin, "You'll find out soon enough."

Hao Xuan nodded, half comprehending, half confused.

Mo Hua patted Cheng Mo's shoulder again, saying, "You'll have to endure, take some hits. These three layers of armor are specially crafted—they can't completely block Sword Qi but can reduce Golden Spiritual Power and Strength. You're sturdy and strong, you should be able to hold out for a while."

Cheng Mo looked at Mo Hua with a face full of grievance.

Mo Hua took on a serious expression and said, "This matter is of utmost importance. It concerns the territory dispute between our Taixu Gate and Sever Gold Sect disciples and the future profits of Monster Hunting. Such a critical responsibility can only be entrusted to you!"

Cheng Mo seemed skeptical, "Really..."

"I'm your Junior Brother, how could I fool you?" asked Mo Hua.

Cheng Mo's expression became somewhat complicated.

Mo Hua decided to incentivize him further: "If you go take those hits, I'll reward you with Merit Points—100 Merit Points for every hour you endure!"

Cheng Mo was momentarily stunned, "Really?"

Mo Hua nodded and said, "Immediate payment."

Cheng Mo suddenly became bashful, "That's too generous, Junior Brother, you don't have to spend so much..."

"If you don't want to do it, I'll find someone else."

"Wait!" Cheng Mo exclaimed, "Other disciples can't endure as well as I can; this kind of demanding task is obviously best suited for me."

Then he reconfirmed, "One hour equals 100 Merit Points, right..."

"That's correct," replied Mo Hua. "If you drag it out for five hours, that's 1,000 Merit Points!"

1,000 Merit Points!

Cheng Mo's eyes glowed red with excitement.

Even Situ Jian and the others standing nearby envied him, but they weren't as robust as Cheng Mo in Blood Qi, nor could they endure the hits, so they couldn't earn these Merit Points.

Cheng Mo eagerly vowed:

"Junior Brother, don't worry, even if you asked me to climb a mountain of swords or plunge into boiling seas, as long as it's your command, I, Cheng Mo, wouldn't so much as flinch!"

"Alright," Mo Hua sighed with mild exasperation. "Enough bragging, prepare ahead of time. Take some pills to replenish Blood Qi, I'll go find someone to beat you."

Cheng Mo foolishly grinned and replied, "Alright!"

Mo Hua left the group, concealing his figure as he wandered Refining Demon Mountain, searching for his chosen target.

It wasn't long before he discovered the Sever Gold Sect pretty boy.

The Sever Gold Sect disciple "Song Jian" was wearing a grim expression, leading ten other Sever Gold Sect disciples as they scoured the mountain.

Mo Hua revealed himself and called out, "Pretty boy!"

Song Jian visibly froze for a moment before noticing Mo Hua standing alone, ten paces away. He looked at him incredulously.

This brat dared to show up right in front of him alone?!

Song Jian's pale face turned crimson with anger.

This was clearly not taking him seriously!

This was outrageous!

Song Jian waved his hand and coldly commanded, "Grab him, and beat him to death!"

The other Sever Gold Sect disciples immediately rushed at Mo Hua.

Mo Hua called out, "Don't you want your sword?"

"Stop!" Song Jian instantly shouted.

The Sever Gold Sect disciples abruptly halted, frozen in their tracks.

Chapter 1280: Sword Array (4)

Song Jian's eyelids twitched violently as he glared at Mo Hua. "Where is my Sever Gold Sword?"

It had already become nothing more than worthless scrap metal...

But saying something like that out loud was clearly inappropriate. Mo Hua simply replied vaguely, "Let's have a match. If you win, I'll return the 'sword' to you."

Song Jian's gaze sharpened as he snorted coldly. "Why should I compete with you?"

"Don't want to compete? Fine," Mo Hua said indifferently. "Then I'll just find an Artifact Refining Master, disassemble your Sever Gold Sword into junk, and toss it into a furnace to melt it down..."

"You wouldn't dare!" Song Jian's eyes were nearly spitting fire.

Mo Hua looked utterly unbothered.

Dare or not... he'd already done it, now it was just a matter of finishing the last step...

Song Jian took a deep breath to suppress the rage boiling within him.

When under someone else's roof, one has no choice but to bow their head.

The sword was in Mo Hua's hands, leaving him no choice but to compromise.

"Fine," Song Jian said. "I'll compete with you."

"Not you against me," Mo Hua shook his head, "it's you against my 'big brother'."

Mo Hua slightly raised Cheng Mo's status with this declaration.

Song Jian frowned. "Your big brother?"

Mo Hua nodded. "Yes, the big guy who swung an axe at you the other day."

Song Jian instantly recalled the lead axeman from that day, and the two axes that had been held dangerously close to his neck. The anger in his eyes grew even fiercer.

"Fine. Old grudges and new ones—let's settle them all at once."

However...

Song Jian's gaze darkened slightly as he looked at Mo Hua. "Why are you so insistent on fighting me?"

Mo Hua sighed, his tone somewhat troubled.

"We entered Refining Demon Mountain simply to hunt Monster Beasts, earn some merit points, and avoid getting embroiled with your Sever Gold Sect. It benefits no one."

"Since that's the case, why not settle it with a duel?"

"If you win, we'll return your sword."

"If you lose, Sever Gold Sect will let this go and stop giving us trouble."

Song Jian frowned, secretly thinking Mo Hua was being childish.

The matter of Refining Demon Mountain involved sect interests and the livelihoods of countless disciples. How could a mere duel settle such a significant dispute?

Moreover, as a disciple of the Sever Gold Sect—even one of the direct lineage—he had no authority to make such decisions.

However, the immediate priority was to regain the Sever Gold Sword.

Currently, he was at the Foundation Building Middle Stage.

Once his realm reached Foundation Establishment Late Stage, he would need to begin nurturing his "own Magical Treasure." This Spirit Sword, the embryo of a Magical Treasure, was crucial to him and could not be lost under any circumstances.

As for his agreement to the duel, promises made in words mean nothing; they can't be taken seriously. For now, he would placate this little brat, agree to the duel, and focus on retrieving his Sever Gold Sword.

Song Jian feigned agreement and said, "Fine, it's a deal!"

But what Song Jian didn't know was that Mo Hua had been spouting nonsense all along.

Returning the Sever Gold Sword? Sure, he didn't mind—after all, it was already scrap metal and of no use to him.

But as for giving up the crucial territory of Refining Demon Mountain, a place where they could hunt Monster Beasts, extract Monster Blood, harvest materials, and earn merit points... how could he possibly agree to that?

No one would agree to such terms, and Mo Hua himself certainly wouldn't.

Mo Hua nodded and said, "Follow me."

With that, he turned and walked away.

Song Jian hesitated slightly.

Most of the Sever Gold Sect disciples present were from the Song family. Seeing this, they hurriedly spoke up. "Young master, beware of trickery."

"That little brat must have malicious intent."

"It might be better to reconsider and plan carefully..."

Song Jian wavered, but Mo Hua kept walking forward without looking back. He was about to disappear into the distance.

If Mo Hua truly walked away, Song Jian feared he might never see his Sever Gold Sword again in this lifetime.

After hesitating for a long time, Song Jian finally grit his teeth and ordered, "Wait here."

He then immediately utilized the Escape Gold Body Skill, transforming into a streak of golden light, and chased after Mo Hua, following closely behind him as they entered a small forest...