

Immortality 1281

Chapter 1281: What Are You Talking About?

In the small grove.

Cheng Mo, clad in triple-layer heavy armor and wielding twin axes, stood sternly, exuding an intimidating aura.

Mo Hua entered the grove and respectfully said, "Big Brother, I've brought the man to you."

Cheng Mo froze for a moment, then quickly caught on when Mo Hua gave him a subtle signal. He nodded grandly and replied with imposing confidence:

"Alright!"

Song Jian, upon seeing Cheng Mo's commanding demeanor, thought to himself that it confirmed his speculations.

So this kid leading the way was merely a "little follower."

This commanding giant was indeed the true lead "Big Brother" among Taixu Sect's disciples this year.

Song Jian promptly ignored Mo Hua and focused all his attention on Cheng Mo, staring him down intently.

Cheng Mo let out a cold chuckle, showing not a trace of fear.

This was exactly what Mo Hua had instructed him beforehand—to exude an air of unshaken arrogance.

Their confrontation began.

Mo Hua pointed at the grove and announced solemnly:

"The duel will take place right here. No techniques are off-limits, only victory or defeat matters. This isn't a fight to the death. If someone admits defeat or cannot get up within ten breaths after falling, they lose."

"Whoever loses must honor their promise..."

Mo Hua glanced at Song Jian and said, "If Taixu Sect loses, we'll return your Sever Gold Sword. But if you lose, you cannot cause further trouble to Taixu disciples here in Refining Demon Mountain."

Mo Hua confirmed again, "No issues, right?"

Song Jian responded, "I keep my word."

Cheng Mo echoed, "It's a deal."

Both sides nodded, reaching an agreement.

Only Xun Ziyou, observing from afar, remained puzzled and bewildered, thinking to himself:

"What's with these kids? Playing games out of the blue... What's the point?"

A duel?

What's the use of that?

Don't they have better things to do...

Xun Ziyou didn't get it.

Ever since Elder Master Xun had spoken seriously to him, clarifying that one strand of Mo Hua's hair equaled the exchange value of one of his arms,

He had now become Mo Hua's dedicated "bodyguard" in Refining Demon Mountain.

He didn't care about Taixu Sect, but as long as Mo Hua was in Refining Demon Mountain, he had to keep an eye on him.

If anything happened to Mo Hua, the patriarch wouldn't spare him.

As for Mo Hua stealing Song Jian's Sever Gold Sword, Xun Ziyou did know about it, as he had witnessed it himself.

But what happened after Mo Hua took the sword, he wasn't sure.

What perplexed him even more was why this child, Mo Hua, had gone and stolen someone else's Spirit Sword and now concocted this bizarre duel...

Xun Ziyou furrowed his brow slightly.

What was this kid planning?

He couldn't quite figure it out.

Still, as long as Mo Hua didn't get hurt, he wouldn't bother with the rest.

Moreover, it wasn't the frail Mo Hua who would fight, but rather Cheng Mo and Song Jian—two disciples who didn't matter to him. As long as they didn't cause any fatalities, he'd let it be.

Meanwhile, the duel was on the verge of eruption.

In no time, Cheng Mo and Song Jian had engaged in fierce combat.

Clad in armor, Cheng Mo radiated vigorous Blood Qi, wielding his massive axes with a ferocity akin to roaring winds, his spiritual power surging.

Song Jian maneuvered agilely using the Escape Gold Body Skill, darting around while manipulating the Sever Gold Sword, unleashing brilliant golden Sword Qi, clashing against Cheng Mo.

His original top-grade Sever Gold Sword had been snatched by Mo Hua.

And now, the Spirit Sword he temporarily wielded, though also top-grade and similar in design, was still inferior to his previous sword.

But as his cultivation wasn't weak and he had mastered the orthodox Sever Gold Sword Jue, combined with the top-grade Sever Gold Sword, he managed not to lose ground in a one-on-one match against Cheng Mo when unimpeded by Mo Hua's schemes.

However, Mo Hua's intention was not for them to truly duel and determine a winner.

After fighting dozens of rounds, Cheng Mo, following Mo Hua's instructions, began to feign weakness, assuming a defensive posture without counterattacking.

Song Jian noticed Cheng Mo's spiritual power begin to dwindle, his strength falter, and didn't suspect anything. He merely thought his swordsmanship was overpowering Cheng Mo, leaving him unable to cope. Growing increasingly arrogant, he sneered:

"Taixu Sect disciples this year? What a joke!"

With that, his attacks became even more ferocious.

The Sever Gold Sword Jue was pushed to its limit, harnessing the Spirit Sword's power to unleash dazzling golden sword light that relentlessly slashed at Cheng Mo.

He sought to overcome Cheng Mo in one vigorous burst, reclaim his Sever Gold Sword,

And thoroughly humiliate this group of Taixu disciples, washing away his disgrace.

Cheng Mo's armor began to show sword marks.

As Mo Hua anticipated, despite the triple-layer armor made of Gold-breaking material, soft silk, and refined iron, its defensive capabilities were insufficient against the sharp Sever Gold Sword Qi.

Taking a few more hits from the Sword Qi, the armor was now starting to crack.

Cheng Mo could only retreat and evade, relying on his robust physique and abundant Blood Qi to endure the sword energy, resulting in a rather bedraggled appearance.

Nonetheless, he maintained an expression of scorn and, in his coarse voice, shouted the lines Mo Hua had taught him at full volume:

"Just this level of Sever Gold Sword Qi?!"

"The Sever Gold Sect's Sect Sword Technique isn't much!"

"Cutting me feels like a tickle—can't even call this a scrape!"

"Come on! Put some strength into it, pretty boy! Didn't you eat today, or what?"

Song Jian, enraged, swung his Spirit Sword with unrelenting force, bombarding Cheng Mo with Sword Qi like an inescapable net, wishing to hack Cheng Mo into pieces.

He truly despised being called "pretty boy."

Thus, Cheng Mo ended up looking even more wretched.

Xun Ziyou, watching from the sidelines, shook his head repeatedly.

What was this nonsense? Stubbornly taking hits for no reason?

Why were Taixu Sect disciples engaging in such brainless acts...

Xun Ziyou sighed, feeling somewhat disheartened.

Since the division among the Three Sects, which continued to this day, Taixu Sect's legacy had gradually declined, even the Sect-protecting Forbidden Technique, "Taixu Divine Thought Transforming Sword True Jue," had been rendered a banned technique that could no longer be passed on...

The sect's current state was far from its former glory.

In contrast, Tai'a Sect had claimed first place among the Eight Great Gates at the last Dao Conference.

Chapter 1282: What Are You Talking About (2)

The Rushing Void Sect has been steadily improving.

Only the Taixu Gate keeps falling further behind with every step.

Now, the disciples cannot master any decent sword techniques and are instead suppressed by the Broken Gold Sect, those second-rate goods, with Sword Qi.

Truly, it's like a dragon stranded in shallow waters, a tiger humbled in flat plains.

If this were in the past, even if you gave them ten times the courage, they wouldn't dare provoke the Taixu Gate.

Xun Ziyou was mildly angry.

With the Tai Xu Sword Intent infused in his body, his Divine Sense was as sharp as a blade; if he truly harbored murderous intent, mere lowly evil demons—just a glance would be enough to sever their lives!

But alas...

Divine Thought into Sword is no longer cultivated; no one dares to cultivate it, and no one can cultivate it anymore...

The sect no longer teaches it.

This Ultimate Technique is destined to be eternally buried in the Sword Tomb, just like those countless broken iron and ruined blades scattered across the mountains, forever lost to the unending river of Tao Cultivation.

Thinking of this, Xun Ziyou's expression became melancholic, and his heart carried a trace of desolation.

He fell into this deep melancholy for a long time before suddenly realizing that something seemed amiss.

He snapped out of his daze and glanced around, only to discover that Mo Hua had gone missing.

Xun Ziyou sighed in defeat.

Taking care of this "bear child" is truly exhausting; he couldn't relax for even an instant.

Just one lapse in attention, and the child vanished to who knows where...

Xun Ziyou expanded his Divine Sense and scanned his surroundings, finally spotting Mo Hua slyly hiding behind a large tree while everyone else was distracted.

Over there, Cheng Mo and Song Jian were locked in heated combat.

Meanwhile, Mo Hua was crouched behind the tree, sneaking around doing who-knows-what.

Xun Ziyou frowned slightly.

"This little brat... What kind of mischief is he up to now..."

He used his Third Grade Spiritual Artifact to conceal his form, then suppressed his aura, tiptoeing behind Mo Hua.

He didn't get too close though, keeping several meters of distance, craning his neck to secretly observe what Mo Hua was doing.

Mo Hua sat on the ground intently focused, a mysterious, obscure, and slightly eerie aura emanating from him.

From time to time, he would look up at something.

The direction he gazed toward was precisely where Cheng Mo and Song Jian were battling.
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After glancing there, he'd lower his head and diligently sketch something on the paper before him.

Xun Ziyou had a puzzled expression on his face.

"What could he be drawing?"

Illustrations?

Sketching the details of Cheng Mo and Situ Jian's duel?

This Mo Hua, though occasionally childish in his actions, surely wouldn't bother with something so trivial...

Xun Ziyou moved closer to take another look.

The paper was covered in intricate patterns; judging by their appearance... they resembled Formation Patterns.

"Formation Patterns, huh..."

"I figured he wouldn't be that petty."

Xun Ziyou took a closer look, finally realizing these Formation Patterns held a certain uniqueness—they had no curved strokes, only sharp, chisel-like straight lines, exuding a piercing sharpness.

Xun Ziyou's expression froze.

This was... a Sword Array?

He scrutinized further.

Only then did he discover that golden light faintly emanated from the sword patterns, interlinking and slicing across each other, resembling the fractured surfaces of Goldstone—looking all too familiar.

Broken Gold... Sword Array?

Xun Ziyou's pupils contracted sharply, and then his scalp tingled as an overwhelming shock left him speechless.

This... This damned thing is...

The Broken Gold Sect's treasured and absolutely forbidden sword-forging secret—the Broken Gold Sword Array?!

Xun Ziyou gasped sharply as his breath hitched.

This is utterly outrageous!

This is turning the world upside down!

This secret knowledge, even within the Broken Gold Sect's Inner Gate among its most direct lineage disciples, is seldom passed down. And even when it is, it's always bound by a "Death Oath."

Yet Mo Hua, sneaking off to some hidden corner, managed to draw it out?

Xun Ziyou's heart trembled intensely; he wanted to verify if it was indeed true but suddenly saw Mo Hua flinch and turn around.

A pair of clear and profound eyes stared in his direction.

Even Xun Ziyou, a Late Golden Core cultivator and an Inner Sect Elder of the Taixu Gate, felt his heart pound in fear at Mo Hua's sudden motion.

It felt like being caught red-handed while snooping.

Fortunately, his cultivation foundation was strong, his Third Grade Spiritual Artifact formidable, and his Twenty-Eight Patterns Divine Sense deep; he managed to avoid being detected by Mo Hua.

Mo Hua's bright, clear eyes swept past his presence, then cautiously scanned the area before furrowing his brow and muttering to himself:

"That's strange..."

"Was someone spying on me just now?"

He could unmistakably sense a surge of intense emotional fluctuation.

It seemed as though someone was in great "shock."

Mo Hua expanded his Divine Sense to examine his surroundings, but the forest remained as tranquil as ever, empty and undisturbed.

Was it a high-ranked cultivator spying?

Lower-ranked and peer-level cultivators lacked Divine Sense capable of surpassing his own, and thus couldn't evade his detection.

Anyone capable of eluding him must have cultivation realms vastly superior to his own.

But a truly high-ranking cultivator wouldn't stoop so low as to spy on a little cultivator like him, right?

Moreover, he hadn't detected any discernible malice.

A mistake?

Mo Hua frowned but eventually chose to ignore it.

Priorities first.

He continued to derive insights from the Broken Gold Sword Qi, stripping away its external form, unraveling its sword logic, reconstructing the authentic Broken Gold Sword Array.

One stroke at a time, he recorded it onto the Formation Paper in front of him.

Xun Ziyou's eyes trembled with astonishment, but he didn't dare let his emotions show too strongly; he carefully, silently retreated until he was far away from Mo Hua, then exhaled long and deeply.

Xun Ziyou glanced again at Mo Hua's dedicated silhouette in the distance, his gaze solemn, his eyes still carrying indescribable lingering fear.

To derive a Sword Array from Sword Qi?

How is this even possible?

Just what kind of little monster is this child?

This couldn't possibly have been taught by the ancestor, could it...

Xun Ziyou's heart churned uncontrollably.

After nearly an hour, Mo Hua finally felt he was almost done.

Chapter 1283: What are you talking about (3)

His Gold-Cutting Sword Formation remained incomplete, still lacking a good deal, but his Divine Sense had already been depleted.

Moreover, Cheng Mo was nearly at his limit.

Even though he practiced Body Cultivation and had exceptional physical talent, it was impossible to endure such beatings endlessly.

For today, it was best to take a step back.

Mo Hua walked to the edge of the forest and scattered some foul-smelling flesh. Sure enough, within moments, a monster beast resembling a hyena, standing as tall as a man, with its mouth foaming a rancid stench, appeared.

The monster beast let out a roar toward the group, its eyes flashing with savage intent.

Cheng Mo felt a surge of alertness and immediately knew it was time to retreat.

The armor on his body was nearly in tatters, his flesh bore multiple wounds, and if the fight continued, he might truly have reached his breaking point.

Cheng Mo swung his axe, knocking back Song Jian, who wielded the Gold-Cutting Sword, then deliberately said with exasperation:

"This beast is causing trouble; let's battle another day."

Song Jian was unwilling to let the matter rest. He sensed that he was only a step away from defeating Cheng Mo. Then, he would be able to trample over Cheng Mo, mock the incompetence of the Taixu Sect, and wash away the humiliation he had suffered before.

But right at the critical moment, Cheng Mo decided to stop fighting, muttering something about battling another day.

Battle another day my ass!

How could Song Jian accept this? He immediately shouted in anger:

"Coward! If you have the guts, don't run! Let's determine a winner here and now!"

Cheng Mo sneered coldly, saying, "Idiot! The monster beast is here—if you don't run, are you planning to die?"

Without waiting for a reply, he quickly turned and bolted.

Song Jian, fuming with rage, chased after him while cursing:

"You bastard! Coward! If you run, it counts as your loss!"

Cheng Mo, thick-skinned as ever, retorted while fleeing:

"You're full of shit! According to the rules, I haven't surrendered nor fallen motionless to the ground. That doesn't count as a loss. And as for your Sever Gold Sect's vaunted swordsmanship, it's nothing impressive. To me, it's barely tolerable—I can't even be bothered to dodge it..."

His words were bold, but with his patched-up broken armor and body covered in injuries, they lacked much credibility.

Song Jian cursed repeatedly, calling him "shameless."

With the hyena-like beast closing in rapidly, Cheng Mo remarked, "This time it's just bad luck. If it weren't for this meddlesome beast, I guarantee in another twenty rounds, I'd beat you to your knees, calling me 'Grandpa.'"

"If you've got the guts, let's fight again next time."

Song Jian's gaze turned dark and cold. Realizing he had no other recourse, he gritted his teeth and said:

"Fine! Next time, I'll slice you into ribbons!"

Cheng Mo laughed coldly. "Such bragging."

Then, with a quick turn, he darted off to the left.

Covered in wounds and reeking of blood, the hyena-like beast didn't hesitate and instantly gave chase.

Left with no alternatives, Song Jian returned to regroup with the disciples of the Song family within the Sever Gold Sect.

"Young Master, how did it go?" The disciples of the Song family, noticing that Song Jian's Spiritual Power was greatly depleted, asked in concern.

Song Jian's face darkened. "A mere Taixu Sect disciple—not worth mentioning."

"This time they got lucky. Next time, I'll definitely cut them down with my sword!"

The disciples chimed in flattering remarks:

"Young Master is heroic and unparalleled!"

Song Jian took a deep breath, his fury clearly not yet spent.

Meanwhile, on the other side, Mo Hua had set up a formation to lay a trap. Together with several others, they joined forces to dispatch the pursuing hyena-like beast.

Cheng Mo slumped onto the ground, waving his hand weakly. "Junior Brother, I'm done for—it's no use continuing; I can't take any more beatings."

Even if his body was wrought of iron, he couldn't withstand such a relentless onslaught of Gold-Cutting Sword Qi.

To last two hours was already commendable.

Mo Hua transferred two hundred merit points to him, then patted his shoulder. "Hang in there; next time I'll get you upgraded armor—it should make a big difference."

The Gold-Cutting Sword Formation wasn't fully calculated yet.

Mo Hua estimated that another two rounds of Cheng Mo being pummeled and they should have enough data.

Mo Hua remarked, "The next armor will be much tougher."

Cheng Mo sighed, "Fine."

Mo Hua instructed the team to skin the hyena-like beast and collect materials to exchange for merit points.

Half of the points were allocated to Cheng Mo as compensation for "taking the beatings."

That made Cheng Mo feel much better.

Upon returning to the sect, Mo Hua wasted no time heading to the Disciple's Residence. He opened the Formation Paper and delved into the study of the Gold-Cutting Sword Formation.

The formation emitted golden brilliance, its lines sharp and decisive.

However, it was an incomplete sword formation and ranked merely as a second-grade one.

Mo Hua carefully noted its Formation Patterns, attempting several times to recreate them—all unsuccessful without exception.

The sword formation's patterns on paper had appearance but lacked essence; they couldn't truly emulate a proper sword formation.

Mo Hua furrowed his brows.

This sword formation bore some resemblance to an Ultimate Formation. Formation Patterns were merely superficial constructs—understanding the essence of the Ultimate Formation and comprehending its specialized Law were necessary to truly master it.

Reversed Spirit Formation, Thick Earth Formation, Spiritual Pivot Formation, and Five Elements Source Formation—all operated in similar fashion.

Could the sword formation also belong to the category of Ultimate Formations?

Mo Hua mulled over the thought, but it seemed unlikely.

Ultimate Formations were notoriously challenging to learn, and Formation Masters capable of mastering them were extremely rare.

If this sword formation truly matched an Ultimate Formation, then the sword Dao heritage of these aristocratic families would be doomed to extinction sooner or later.

Moreover, the mass production of Spirit Swords would be an impossibility.

Producing Ultimate Formations on a large scale was almost an insurmountable task.

Thus, sword formations could not be compared to Ultimate Formations. The difficulty of the sword formation wouldn't be that high.

Mo Hua's brows slightly furrowed once more.

Or perhaps, sword formations had their own unique kind of difficulty?

Based on his understanding of formations and cultivation practices, Mo Hua theorized that the difficulty of a sword formation might act as a threshold to be crossed.

If one managed to cross it, learning the sword formation wouldn't be hard.

If the threshold couldn't be crossed, one might never learn it in their lifetime.

This threshold was likely controlled by aristocratic families to monopolize sword formation knowledge and prevent its widespread dissemination.

What, then, could this "threshold" be?

Mo Hua's Divine Sense raced.

Putting himself in the shoes of the aristocrats in control of sword formation heritage, if he were tasked with setting up a barrier to entry for sword formations, where would he start?

Mo Hua pondered for a moment, then his eyes lit up.

"Sword Techniques..."

The true core of family heritages was their systematic, interlocking structure.

The tighter the system, the stronger the heritage.

Likewise, the tighter the system, the lower the probability of heritage theft.

Given its association with swords, it's highly likely that the transmission of sword formations and sword techniques are part of the same system.

One must learn the Gold-Cutting Sword Technique first before studying the Gold-Cutting Sword Formation.

In this way, even if the sword technique were leaked, without the corresponding sword formation, it would be impossible to forge Spirit Swords, and the power of the Gold-Cutting Sword Skill would be severely diminished.

Conversely, if the sword formation were leaked, without mastery of the Gold-Cutting Sword Technique, one couldn't channel Gold-Cutting Sword Qi, and learning the confidential Gold-Cutting Sword Formation would similarly remain impossible.

By binding the Sword Technique and Sword Formation together, inheriting only one would not mean inheriting the complete knowledge.

To steal the entire transmission of the Sever Gold Sect's sword heritage would prove immensely difficult.

Unless...

Their luck was unbelievably extraordinary...

Thinking this, Mo Hua's heart trembled slightly.

He quietly retrieved a jade slip containing the "Sever Gold Sword Control Jue" from his Storage Ring and glanced again at the Gold-Cutting Sword Formation he'd halfway calculated, momentarily stunned.

Could it be that he was close to completing the set?

The heritage of Sever Gold Sect, especially their Sword Dao transmission, seemed to be mostly in his possession already.

Gold-Cutting Sword Qi, methods of sword forging, Sword Control Techniques, and the core sword formation...

The direct disciples of the Song family within the Sever Gold Sect likely hadn't learned as much as this Taixu Sect disciple had...

Mo Hua even felt a bit embarrassed.

Still, opportunities must not be squandered.

Since it had landed in his lap, he might as well learn.

Mo Hua began to use the Sword Technique to comprehend the Sword Formation.

He had only learned the Sever Gold Sword Control Jue superficially, and his Gold-Cutting Sword Qi remained very rudimentary.

But for crossing the threshold, it didn't matter.

Even with mediocre results, once over the barrier, it was sufficient.

Mo Hua's target was the Gold-Cutting Sword Formation; mastering Gold-Cutting Sword Qi wasn't necessary to an expert level—it could be passable.

Mo Hua held his breath and focused, channeling Gold-Cutting Sword Qi.

A frail, rudimentary Gold-Cutting Sword Qi slowly seeped into the formation.

The formation emitted sharp brilliance, akin to cutting gold and jade—a sign of its activation.

Mo Hua's eyes brightened as he continued funneling Gold-Cutting Sword Qi into the Gold-Cutting Sword Formation to activate it, allowing Sword Qi circulation, thus gaining insight into the essence of the formation's operation...

Or more precisely, the "Sword Dao" inherent within the formation.

...

Meanwhile, in the Elder's Residence.

Xun Ziyong knelt before Elder Master Xun and said something he himself could hardly believe:

"Mo Hua... has learned the Gold-Cutting Sword Formation..."

The writing Elder Master Xun froze, lifting his head slowly, his gaze dazed and astonished as he asked:

"How did he learn it?"

Xun Ziyou replied, "He set a trap, tricked the Song family's direct lineage disciple from Sever Gold Sect into fighting one-on-one with a disciple from our Taixu Sect."

"That Song family direct descendent used Gold-Cutting Sword Qi."

"Mo Hua watched from the side..."

Xun Ziyou sighed, "And somehow, while watching... he pieced together the Gold-Cutting Sword Formation..."

Elder Master Xun's expression turned wooden.

Pieced it together just by watching...

Listen to the words coming out of your own mouth...

Chapter 1284: Sword Control

Just by looking, he learned it...

Elder Master Xun fell silent, the brush in his hand came to a halt.

Xun Ziyou, his gaze lowered, secretly lifted his eyes and glanced at Elder Master Xun before summoning the courage to ask:

"Patriarch, this couldn't have been... taught by you as well, right?"

Elder Master Xun's pale eyebrows arched slightly as he glanced at Xun Ziyou and said indifferently:

"What's the matter? Not acceptable? Are you questioning me, this old Patriarch?"

Xun Ziyou's sudden burst of courage instantly vanished, and he awkwardly replied, "Wouldn't dare."

Then, he muttered under his breath:

"Still, Patriarch, you might be showing a bit too much favoritism... Sect disciples aren't taught, Xun family descendants aren't taught, yet all of it is given to Mo Hua, that kid..."

"And it's all the good stuff..."

"Formation Drawing on the Ground, Sword Qi deduction..."

"Why don't you just teach him the Divine Thought into Sword True Jue as well?"

Elder Master Xun immediately rebuked:

"Spouting nonsense?!"

"That technique isn't something that can be taught! Are you trying to ruin him?"

"With every strike of the sword, Divine Thought diminishes a fraction — this is the path to self-destructing one's Divine Sense!"

"I've already sealed my own Divine Thought and haven't used that sword technique for centuries. And you want that kid to learn it? You want his Divine Sense to be eroded, to sever his own foundation?"

Xun Ziyou shrank back when faced with Elder Master Xun's anger, not daring to utter another word.

Elder Master Xun furrowed his brows, pondered briefly, and then instructed:

"You, along with the elders in the sect... privately emphasize to them again: no one, under any circumstances, is to mention even a single word about the Divine Thought into Sword True Jue in front of Mo Hua."

"Not a single word!"

Elder Master Xun's gaze hardened slightly as he sighed softly.

That child was too clever, his Divine Sense strong, his curiosity deep. If he ever truly heard of such a sword technique existing within the Taixu Gate, he would surely rack his brain trying to learn it...

Xun Ziyou helplessly cupped his hands and said, "Understood."

Elder Master Xun silently looked at him, "The consequences of Divine Thought into Sword—you should be well aware, shouldn't you?"

Xun Ziyou paused, then his expression turned desolate.

He had spoken impulsively, but deep down he knew the truth.

Memories flooded his mind:

The late Patriarch Dugu in the back mountain.

The Sword Tomb filled with countless broken blades across the hills.

Brother Dugu Xuan, once the hope of many and unparalleled in Sword Dao, whose Lifebound Spirit Sword had shattered, leaving him to vanish without a trace...

And now, the declining Taixu Gate.

Xun Ziyou restrained his expression and solemnly cupped his hands again, "Understood."

Elder Master Xun nodded slightly.

"As for the Sever Gold Sect over there..." Xun Ziyou asked again, "Will there be any trouble?"

Elder Master Xun thought briefly and replied, "Cover it up. Don't let anyone else find out about this. Mo Hua, that kid, is clever—he definitely won't say anything. As long as you don't say anything either, the Sever Gold Sect won't know a thing."

"Deducting Sword Qi..."

Elder Master Xun paused briefly before murmuring, "Goes against the basics of Tao cultivation... something ordinary Cultivators simply cannot learn."

"As long as no one spreads this news, even if the Sever Gold Sect over there rack their brains, they'll never be able to figure out what's going on."

Xun Ziyou's heart trembled slightly.

Simply not something regular Cultivators can learn...

This meant that Mo Hua's innate talent might indeed be extraordinary.

No wonder... why the Patriarch values Mo Hua that much.

Xun Ziyou then asked, "But what if the Sever Gold Sect sees the sword formation and suspects our Taixu Gate?"

Elder Master Xun firmly replied, "Then we categorically assert that this isn't the Sever Gold Sect's sword formation!"

Xun Ziyou froze.

Elder Master Xun's face remained calm as he continued, "How could the Sever Gold Sect prove that this sword formation originated from them? Would they dare to take out their own sword formations for a comparison?"

Xun Ziyou hesitated, "But, it is of the Golden Series..."

Elder Master Xun raised an eyebrow, "A Gold-Series Sword Formation automatically belongs to the Sever Gold Sect? Does the Sever Gold Sect have such arrogance?"

"What of the Melting Gold Sword Formation, Gold-Breaking Sword Formation, and Gengjin Sword Formation, which are passed down across various major Golden Sword sects throughout the Nine State? Are those all theirs too?"

Xun Ziyou pondered for a moment, "That does seem reasonable..."

Catch a thief with stolen goods.

Without catching them red-handed and possessing the stolen items, where would Sever Gold Sect find justification to slander the disciples of Taixu Gate?

Besides, there's always the Patriarch to rely on.

Even taking a step back: strictly speaking, this sword formation wasn't something Mo Hua "stole." It was something he managed to "see" with his own capabilities.

They could wield swords in front of him, but how could they prohibit him from "looking"?

Just by looking, he could learn a sect's entire heritage. How could this possibly be blamed on Mo Hua?

Xun Ziyou slowly nodded, an unbidden sense of admiration in his heart: the Patriarch was truly the Patriarch.

Whether in cultivation or in... audacity.

"Patriarch, I understand." Xun Ziyou said.

Elder Master Xun waved his hand.

Xun Ziyou rose and respectfully took his leave.

After Xun Ziyou left, Elder Master Xun sat alone, his frown deepening.

"Deducting Sword Qi..."

"How exactly is it being deduced?"

"Could it be..."

A tremor ran through Elder Master Xun's heart as an utterly profound technique resurged in his thoughts—a pinnacle method that unveiled heavenly secrets and calculated boundless principles:

Heavenly Secret Calculation!

"That brat named Zhuang... Exactly what has he been teaching his little disciple?"

"But this doesn't make sense..." Elder Master Xun frowned, "Given he hasn't taught the Immortal Sky Formation Flow, why would he teach Heavenly Secret Calculation?"

"This isn't something anyone at the Foundation Establishment Realm could possibly learn!"

Elder Master Xun's gaze turned slightly grave.

The Taixu Mountain remained silent, and the Elder's Residence stayed tranquil.

Elder Master Xun continued writing something on paper. Once finished, he stowed the paper away, then took out his own compass. His gaze darkened, and he muttered lowly:

"The secrets hidden within this child might be deeper than I've imagined..."

"It'd be best to add another 'lock' to the karma surrounding this child..."

...

Mo Hua was still diligently studying the Gold-Cutting Sword Formation.

A sword formation was a critical component of swordsmanship transmission, the core of sword weaponry, and the key to Sword Dao.

Mo Hua wanted to learn Taixu Gate's Divine Thought into Sword.

Back in the small fishing village, he had used karmic tracing to learn the basics of the "Transforming Sword Skill."

Chapter 1285: Sword Control (2)

But this Transforming Sword Skill is merely superficial.

Moreover, because he's a swordsmanship "rookie," his "Transforming Sword Skill" lacks a foundational essence in sword techniques, making what he learned quite crude.

It's just a mimicry, creating a "sword shape" with Divine Thought.

Even so, this Transforming Sword Skill already exhibits considerable power.

However, this power relies on his own formidable and evolved Divine Sense, rather than on refined techniques of Divine Thought.

Mo Hua wished to go further, to learn more profound Divine Thought into sword techniques.

But he currently has no leads at all.

It is inconvenient for him to ask Elder Master Xun about it.

If he asks about formations, Elder Master Xun is overjoyed, but if it's sword techniques, Elder Master Xun is bound to be quite unhappy.

He would certainly think Mo Hua was "not focusing on his proper studies" and too restless in his thoughts.

From the other elders, whether acquaintances or strangers, no matter how Mo Hua cautiously probed, he couldn't glean any information.

Apart from that Sword Cultivator senior from the small fishing village, Mo Hua, to this day, hasn't seen any other Taixu Sect members mastering Divine Thought into sword techniques.

This Divine Thought Sword Technique seems to have disappeared from Taixu Sect.

That's quite bewildering.

Mo Hua sighed.

Since there are no leads, he can only figure it out himself.

Divine Thought into sword requires swordsmanship fundamentals as its basis.

Mo Hua's Sword Dao foundation is appallingly weak.

So, he plans to enhance his understanding and cognition of Sword Dao.

Whether it's Sword Qi or Sword Weapons, he can research and delve into them.

To see if he can gain insights obliquely, comprehending the true essence of "Divine Thought into Sword."

The current Sever Gold Sword Formation, with both swords and formations, is a good opportunity.

However, this Sword Formation is an exclusive legacy of the Sever Gold Sect.

It's absolutely necessary to learn it secretly; the Sever Gold Sect must not find out.

At the very least, they must not realize he possesses their Sever Gold Sword Formation.

In the following days, Mo Hua immersed himself in the study of Sword Formation patterns, layouts, applications, and principles whenever he had time.

The Sword Formation is incomplete, so he can't learn it in its entirety, but his understanding of the principles behind Sever Gold Sword Qi is growing increasingly profound.

Based on Sever Gold Sword Qi principles, Mo Hua improved the Gold-breaking Armor.

This armor incorporates fire demon bones that block Sword Qi and adds formations to counteract Sword Qi.

Mo Hua completed the blueprint and handed it to Master Gu.

Though it was just one set, Master Gu didn't slack off and personally worked overtime to craft this set of "Gold-breaking Armor."

For differentiation, Mo Hua named this set of armor "Sever Gold Armor."

This armor, as the name implies, primarily defends against gold-series Sword Qi, with the explicit purpose of countering the Sever Gold Sect.

Nonetheless, this Sever Gold Armor is only a prototype, requiring further refinement, and the Sever Gold Sword Formation hasn't been fully deduced yet.

"Still need that pretty boy..."

Mo Hua muttered silently in his heart.

Soon, it was the day of rest—a scheduled dueling day.

Inside Refining Demon Mountain.

Cheng Mo donned Mo Hua's newly refined "Sever Gold Armor" and started taunting Song Jian again.

Although he had earlier sustained injuries, over the past week, he had fully recovered.

With skin thick and tough, Cheng Mo, being someone who quickly forgets pain after his wounds heal, immediately provoked, "Pretty boy, last time you were just lucky enough to escape a beating, but today I'll make you kneel and call me grandpa!"

Song Jian's face turned dark, "You're courting death!"

The two quickly engaged in combat once more.

This time, Song Jian struck harder, with fiercer Sword Qi.

Cheng Mo, despite his bragging exterior, earlier bore a hint of apprehension, yet as they began exchanging blows, he suddenly felt much less pressure.

Song Jian's Sword Qi, while gleaming with golden light and looking razor-sharp, when striking against him noticeably lost much of its power, and the pain dulled significantly.

This armor not only defended against gold-series Spiritual Power but also dramatically reduced the potency of Sword Qi.

Cheng Mo found this unbelievable.

The spiritual artifacts tailor-made by his Junior Brother were increasingly outrageous, capable of countering even sword techniques from a Twelve Sects sect-protecting faction...

Cheng Mo was a bit astonished.

With this armor on, not only could he withstand more hits from Song Jian, but he could also earn more merit points!

Cheng Mo's spirits lifted, and shouting loudly, he re-engaged in combat with Song Jian.

The scene locked into a tense stalemate.

Mo Hua observed from the side, employing Heavenly secret Calculation to deduce the Sword Qi of Song Jian's Spirit Sword while advancing his study of the Sever Gold Sect's Sever Gold Sword Formation.

At the same time, he gauged the effectiveness of Sever Gold Armor using the potency of Song Jian's Sword Qi.

Song Jian had, without knowing, become Mo Hua's "lab rat."

And yet, he remained completely oblivious.

The duel stretched on for nearly an hour and a half, before Mo Hua reused an old trick, luring monster beasts with the scent of blood to disrupt the fight and force it to an end.

Cheng Mo hurled curses and threats as he left, but soon slipped away.

Song Jian, shaking with rage, was utterly powerless to retaliate.

Following Mo Hua's clandestine meddling, Cheng Mo and Song Jian dueled several more times.

Song Jian grew increasingly fiery, ignoring everything around him, obsessed solely with fighting Cheng Mo.

Every time he met Cheng Mo, he drew his sword to kill, his eyes turning red with fury, wishing he could shred Cheng Mo to pieces.

Cheng Mo, however, didn't care.

His mission was to "get beaten."

During their first duel, his armor had failed, leaving him quite injured.

But in each subsequent duel, Mo Hua's refinements made the armor stronger, countering both gold-series Spiritual Power and Sword Qi, rendering Cheng Mo increasingly fearless.

Additionally, his Junior Brother even paid him "wages."

An hour's work earned him a hefty hundred merit points, which was quite generous.

After numerous duels, Mo Hua studied Sever Gold Sword Qi and finally deduced the complete Sever Gold Sword Formation.

This was an extremely rare sect-protecting Sword Formation.

Mo Hua eagerly began studying the Sever Gold Sword Formation.

He sought to understand its deeper principles and the fundamental essence of Sword Dao.

This would greatly aid him in comprehending "Sword Dao."

Several more days passed, and after dozens of simulations of Sever Gold Sword Qi and interpretations of Sever Gold Sword Formation, Mo Hua gradually mastered the Sever Gold Sword Formation.

Chapter 1286: Sword Control (3)

But at the same time, he suddenly discovered an astonishing truth:

The essence of the Sword Array lies in using the Formation to achieve a transformation in the form of Spiritual Power, thereby enhancing the Power of Killing.

In other words, the essence of Sword Qi itself is a "Shape Transformation" of Spiritual Power.

The Sword Array is merely the method to transform Spiritual Power into Sword Qi.

"A transformation at the level of Spiritual Power..."

Mo Hua was startled, his thoughts raced, drawing connections, and he instantly recalled two other forms of spiritual transformation:

The reversal of the Reversed Spirit Formation and the fusion of the Mini Meteorite Skill.

Formation Collapse, Spell Fusion, Swordsmanship Transformation...

The forms of these three differ, but their essence lies in the internal structure of Spiritual Power, derived from the Dao Laws and giving rise to various transformations.

And the so-called "Swordsmanship" is essentially also a method of "Shape Transformation" of Spiritual Power.

This technique doesn't involve profound internal changes to Spiritual Power, but rather alters its external form, sharpening it until it becomes as cutting as a sword, thereby enhancing the Power of Killing.

Spiritual Power as substance, Sword as form.

Mo Hua suddenly saw the light.

Soon after, a bold idea sprang to life:

If Spiritual Power could be transformed into Sword Qi through the Sword Array...

Doesn't that mean, even without a foundational Swordsmanship, and without cultivating Sword Qi, he could still generate powerful, lethal Sword Qi through the Sword Array?

Play to strengths; avoid weaknesses.

Leverage the strengths of Formations and avoid the weaknesses of Swordsmanship?

Mo Hua's heart skipped a beat.

Wouldn't that mean he could tread the path of a "Sword Cultivator," even without any foundation in Sword Dao?

Not by cultivating Sword Qi within himself, but by relying heavily on the Sword Array.

Of course, Mo Hua didn't care.

Whether it's Sword Qi or Sword Array, a Sword Cultivator who can defeat enemies is a good Sword Cultivator.

But... how to kill?

Mo Hua leaned on the desk in the Disciple's Residence, silently contemplating.

First, he needed to forge swords.

This was beyond question.

Without forging Spirit Swords, there would be no medium to carry the "Sword Array." Without a Sword, the Array wouldn't exist, and "Sword Cultivation" wouldn't amount to anything, let alone Sword Dao and the Power of Killing.

The exact methods for sword forging could be discussed later.

The issue was, after forging Spirit Swords and inscribing Sword Arrays, then what?

How would he wield the swords for killing?

Mo Hua frowned.

Fighting at close range by slashing with the swords? Definitely not feasible.

He lacked the physical strength for that.

Using Sword Qi for long-range attacks?

Mo Hua shook his head.

That wasn't viable either...

His insufficient Spiritual Power would result in weak Sword Qi, incomparable to other Sword Cultivators.

Additionally, both methods of attack are typical for regular Sword Cultivators and have little to do with the Sword Array; they wouldn't utilize his advantages.

On top of that, his own Swordsmanship was rudimentary. Mimicking a Sword Cultivator wielding swords would merely turn his efforts into an imitation, detracting from rather than enhancing his combat prowess.

Mo Hua sighed deeply.

As expected, everything sounds simple in theory but is hard in practice.

The principles of Tao Cultivation are one thing; practical application is quite another.

"I wonder if there's a way to play to strengths and avoid weaknesses, cover for my insufficient Spiritual Power and lack of Swordsmanship, and maximize the potency of the 'Sword Array'..."

Mo Hua mentally sifted through all the combat methods of Sword Cultivators he was aware of, and then, startled, he recalled two words:

Sword Control.

For a moment, his memories blurred.

Long ago, beneath the large old locust tree at the Forgetful Residence.

The excited voice of his Junior Brother echoed in his ears again:

"After Foundation Establishment, you can use Divine Sense to control objects..."

"It's no big deal to control tables and chairs, but you can control swords!"

"Think about it—using Divine Sense Sword Control! From far away, just a thought, and the sword would swoosh and fly off, killing enemies a thousand miles away! Isn't that incredible..."

...

For a fleeting moment, Mo Hua felt a "like it was from another lifetime" sensation.

Those words seemed like a distant past, yet also like it had just been yesterday.

Junior Brother...

Mo Hua sighed lightly and then began to calm his mind, seriously pondering over "Sword Control."

After Foundation Establishment, one could use Divine Sense for Object Manipulation, meaning Sword Control would naturally be possible as well.

But up to now, he hadn't seen true "Sword Control."

The Sever Gold Sword Control Jue of the Sever Gold Sect, though containing the words "Sword Control," primarily focused on "Sword Qi" rather than Sword Control.

Utilizing Spirit Swords for accumulation to unleash a more powerful Broken Gold Sword Qi.

That was quite different from Junior Brother's description and his own understanding of "Divine Sense Sword Control, killing enemies from miles away."

Uncertain whether the Sever Gold Sect's Sword Control technique was inherently designed this way...

Or whether it simply was an early stage of Sword Control, falling short of true "Sword Control."

"Sword Control..."

Mo Hua contemplated for a while, his eyes flashing.

Use Divine Sense for Sword Control, use the sword as Formation media, make the Formation the core, simulate Sword Qi through the Formation, and thereby execute lethal attacks...

Following this line of thinking, Mo Hua was shocked to realize that "Divine Sense Sword Control" might indeed play to strengths and avoid weaknesses, resolving all the flaws in his Sword Dao combat methods.

His Spiritual Power was insufficient? Then use Spirit Stones instead of Spiritual Power.

His Sword Qi was weak? Then rely on Sword Arrays to derive powerful "Sword Qi" through spiritual transformation.

His physical body was frail? Then simply ensure no one could get close to him.

Divine Sense Sword Control, killing enemies thousands of miles away, leveraging the potent Divine Sense to control swords, sniping down foes from extreme distances...

Mo Hua's expression brightened, his eyes shimmering.

This scene—just imagining it made his blood course with excitement.

But as Mo Hua pondered slightly, he suddenly realized that if he employed this method of "Sword Control," the Spirit Swords would only serve as "disposable items."

Once launched, regardless of whether they hit the enemy, they wouldn't return.

The cost was indeed rather high.

But without sacrifice, there's no gain.

The expense of a few Spirit Swords pales in comparison to powerful killing techniques.

If this long-distance sniping "Sword Control" could truly be mastered, whether in range, force, concealment, or safety, it would undoubtedly surpass the sword techniques of ordinary Sword Cultivators.

Squandering a few Spirit Swords would be worth it.

Mo Hua nodded slightly, then got down to business, utilizing his insights on cracking the Gold-Cutting Sword Formation to forge a proper "Gold-Cutting Armor."

He had already planned for his Junior Disciples to don the Gold-Cutting Armor and confront the Sever Gold Sect to wrest control of the Refining Demon Mountain territory.

With the Gold-Cutting Armor, the Sever Gold Sect would stand no chance.

After defeating the Sever Gold Sect disciples and seizing the territory, they would begin efficiently hunting Monster Beasts and harvesting materials.

Previously, Monster Hunting was for Merit Points and Monster Blood.

Now Mo Hua had another goal:

Forge swords!

According to his intentions, he would craft special Spirit Swords containing "Sword Arrays," thereby further experimenting with true "Sword Control" for long-distance killing strikes!

If one day, he achieved mastery in Sword Control...

Then wherever his Divine Sense reached and his Sword Array extended, life and death would lie solely within his thoughts!

Chapter 1287: Conspiracy

Of course, all of this is still just a hypothesis for now.

Mo Hua understood in his heart that this was likely a form of "corner-cutting" and "taking shortcuts," a non-traditional style of "Sword Control" that only suited himself.

Learning it in practice would still require significant effort.

How should one forge a sword?

Should the inherent shape of the Spirit Sword be altered, and if so, how?

What is the principle behind orthodox Sword Control? How does it differ from his own method? What are the relative advantages and disadvantages?

Then there's the matter of Sword Arrays.

Generally, the "Sword Array" within Spirit Swords serves to "enhance" the transformation of spiritual power, making it sharp as a blade and thereby amplifying the Sword Qi of the Sword Cultivator.

If he were to use it, he would have to redesign the form of the Sword Array based on Sword Dao principles.

Because he wasn't a Sword Cultivator, his natural Sword Qi was negligible and wouldn't be effective even if amplified.

Thus, he decided to abandon the "amplification" style of the Sword Array and transform its use of spiritual power into a "burst" type of Sword Array.

The essence of the Sword Array remained the same, but its purpose differed.

The function of a traditional Spirit Sword's Sword Array was to "convert and amplify Sword Qi," whereas what he wanted to achieve was "convert and burst Sword Qi."

The challenges to overcome in this endeavor, even thinking about them, seemed numerous and daunting.

Mo Hua could only tackle them step by step.

For now, he still needed to resolve the matter with the Sever Gold Sect.

Once he mastered the complete Gold-Cutting Sword Formation, Mo Hua began choosing mutually reactive Formation Patterns based on array principles, continuously combining, testing, and thereby further enhancing the Gold-Cutting Armor.

He had been working on this earlier.

Additionally, during Cheng Mo and Song Jian's duel, he gradually tested the functionality of the "Gold-Cutting Armor."

In a short time, thanks to his continuous refinement and effort, Mo Hua perfected the true "Gold-Cutting Armor."

Master Gu over there began mass-producing it formally.

Mo Hua then personally led a squad, wearing "Gold-Cutting Armor" to "clear maps" in Refining Demon Mountain.

Even the core disciples of Sever Gold Sect's direct lineage, who practiced the orthodox Sever Gold Sword Control Jue and condensed their Sword Qi, found that their powers drastically weakened in

the face of Mo Hua's specially tailored Gold-Cutting Armor, based on fundamental Sword Array principles.

In actual combat, Sever Gold Sect disciples were defeated one after another.

Some disciples, unwilling to accept this, repeatedly regrouped and returned, but since their Sword Qi was suppressed, they became like hyenas without teeth or claws. Each time, they were beaten into a rout.

Eventually, Sever Gold Sect realized the problem lay with the armor.

They had been aware of this earlier but relied on their high regard for Sever Gold Sect's Sword technique and did not take the armor seriously.

The Sever Gold Sword technique, capable of cutting gold and jade with unparalleled potency, was believed to be unbeatable against any armor.

This was the common belief of Sever Gold Sect disciples.

But after suffering several setbacks, they were forced to admit that their Sever Gold Sword was thoroughly countered by Taixu Sect's armor.

Afterward, when they caused trouble again, it wasn't to win, but to steal the Taixu Sect disciples' armor.

Mo Hua also discerned Sever Gold Sect's intent.

Thinking it over, he instructed his fellow disciples in Refining Demon Mountain:

"In a fight, we can lose, but the armor mustn't be lost. If the other side tries to snatch it, it's better to destroy it than to let them have it."

Additionally, for safety's sake.

Mo Hua also implemented purchasing restrictions through Master Gu:

"It must be Taixu Sect disciples holding the Taixu Token, along with my signature, to buy 'Gold-Cutting Armor.'

Within the Gold-Cutting Armor, Mo Hua also made certain modifications.

Seeking advice from Master Gu and referencing some secrecy methods within Spirit Sword internal Sword Arrays, he added self-destructive Formation Patterns to the armor's internal array.

Once forcibly dismantled, the internal array would destroy itself.

This ensured that even if anyone realized the profound mystery inside the armor, they wouldn't be able to deduce its workings without access to the Formation Patterns.

From then on, Sever Gold Sect began stealing the armor, repeatedly launching ambushes.

In direct confrontations, they never once gained an upper hand.

Still, they persisted.

There's truth in the phrase: the thief has a thousand days to strike, but none can defend against the thief for a thousand days.

Through repeated battles and some underhanded schemes, Sever Gold Sect eventually managed to seize several armors.

...

Inside an elegant and luxurious cave mansion belonging to Sever Gold Sect.

Jin Yicai sat in the foremost seat. To his right was a tall, imposing cultivator dressed in a robe, a face hardened with a hint of malice, seated like a mountain.

The two were on equal footing.

Standing below them, with a respectful expression, was Jin Gui.

Jin Gui retrieved an armor from his Storage Bag, slightly hunched, and presented it.

"I coordinated with several fellow disciples at the late Foundation Establishment stage to conceal their aura and blend into the crowd. After considerable effort, we finally managed to seize these three sets of armor..."

"The first set of armor was destroyed by Taixu Sect's people."

"When they saw that the armor was about to be taken, they acted decisively. Even at the cost of injuring themselves, they made sure to destroy the armor."

"This must have been a directive given to them in secret..."

"The second and third sets, however, are complete. Though slightly damaged, it's not too bad. However..."

Jin Gui paused briefly, "When I had a few of the sect's Artifact Refiners disassemble the armor and reconstruct its array, one of the sets directly self-destructed. Its internal structure and sealed Formation Patterns were utterly obliterated."

"The self-destructive Formation Patterns within the armor are just like those used in Spirit Swords. Evidently, the cultivators forging the armor had ulterior motives, wanting to prevent us from uncovering its secrets..."

"I quickly ordered them to stop, thereby saving the last set."

"With this final piece, I did not dare to proceed recklessly. Utilizing the young lord's connections, I sought out a Feather Transformation Realm Artifact Refiner Elder from the Jin family."

"The Elder, upon hearing about armor equipped with self-destructive Formation Patterns, expressed keen interest and decided to personally intervene."

Chapter 1288: Conspiracy (2)

"The Elder truly lives up to his reputation; with just a slight move, he dismantled this armor..."

"After dismantling it, however, the Elder's expression grew somewhat grim."

"He said this armor was crafted by an 'expert', its design exceedingly peculiar, meticulously custom-made. Especially the formation embedded within—it is extraordinarily unique..."

"This formation is a type of hybrid formation, bearing effects such as gold-breaking, physical defense, and sword-countering. It appears chaotic but is ingeniously designed, lacking a complete system yet highly practical—carrying a hint of the subtle elegance of defeating form with formlessness..."

"What's most curious is that the formation within perfectly counters the 'shape transformation' of the Broken Gold Sword Qi from the Sever Gold Sword Control Jue. It's as if..."

Jin Gui paused.

Jin Yicai frowned, "As if what?"

Jin Gui sneaked a glance at him but ultimately held his tongue.

Jin Yicai grew displeased, "Speak directly! Stop dithering."

Jin Gui then said, "The Elder claimed it seems... to have been crafted by some expert Formation Master well-versed in the Sever Gold Sword Array..."

"Only then could one craft such armor—to counter attack with defense, counter sword with armor, use Spiritual Power transformation to suppress sword Qi transformation—and create a suit that counters our Sever Gold Sect's sword techniques with such precision..."

Jin Yicai's expression turned dark.

The tall disciple of the Sever Gold Sect nearby also had a frosty gaze.

"The Elder's implication is..." Jin Yicai stated coldly, "That there's a traitor within our Sever Gold Sect?"

Jin Gui bowed lightly, "The Elder didn't say explicitly. It's also possible that our Sever Gold Sect's sword array was leaked..."

Jin Yicai snorted, "The sword array is the Sect's secret, sealed tightly. Everyone who learns it signs a 'Death Oath.' How could it be leaked to outsiders?"

"Unless..."

Jin Yicai's gaze grew increasingly dangerous.

Jin Gui, perplexed, whispered, "Young Master, what do you mean..."

Jin Yicai smirked coldly, glancing around faintly, "Since there are no outsiders in this cave, I'll speak openly..."

"In the Sever Gold Sect, the Jin family wields the greatest influence. But naturally, not everyone bears the Jin name."

"Surely, there are some who harbor ulterior motives."

"These people eye the Jin family like tigers stalking prey."

"They may not necessarily leak our sword formation to outsiders, but who can guarantee they wouldn't act themselves—breaking our own Sever Gold Sect's sword Qi for personal gain..."

Jin Gui, enlightened, "Young Master means..."

He hesitated briefly, whispering softly, "The Song..."

Jin Yicai's eyebrows twitched.

Jin Gui froze momentarily, finding it hard to believe, "No matter how contentious the Song family may be with our Jin family, they are ultimately members of the Sever Gold Sect. Could they truly collude with external forces, secretly work with the Taixu Sect, and craft formations to counter our own sword Qi?"

"Could the Song family be attempting to leverage the Taixu Sect to topple the Jin family and usurp power?"

Jin Yicai's eyes showed deep contemplation, "This matter remains unclear and cannot be concluded, but it's not entirely impossible."

Jin Gui slowly nodded, though confusion lingered in his heart:

"For someone to be skilled enough to understand our Sever Gold Sect's sword array, independently craft formations to counter Sever Gold Sword Qi—their expertise must surely belong to a Song family Elder or someone at an elder-level, correct?"

"Would such an individual stoop so low as to craft mere second-grade formations or forge second-grade Spiritual Artifacts?"

"What do you know?" the tall Sever Gold Sect cultivator said coldly and indifferently:

"Formations are not about superficial grades alone."

"The true essence lies beyond the grades, deep and unfathomable..."

"The Great Dao evolves; returning to simplicity. Those truly proficient in formations simplify the complex and make the difficult look easy. Even a low-grade formation can display ingenuity beyond the reach of ordinary Formation Masters..."

"Moreover, those from the Taixu Sect are just Foundation Middle Stage disciples who joined recently—what else would they use besides second-grade formations?"

The Sever Gold Sect cultivator's stance was lofty and arrogant as he spoke to Jin Gui, unhurriedly and without reservations.

Jin Gui bowed respectfully, not daring to challenge him:

"Senior Brother speaks wisely!"

Jin Yicai frowned and questioned the tall cultivator:

"Cousin, with your expertise in formations, can you discern who is helping the Taixu Sect draw formations, forge armor, and counter our Sever Gold Sect's sword Qi?"

The tall cultivator picked up the dismantled armor from the table, studied it intently, his gaze heavy, his expression also growing serious:

"The formation patterns—like silver hooks and iron strokes—demonstrate exceptional skill, suggestive of at least a century's experience..."

"The formation pivot—complex yet orderly—indicates profound understanding of formation principles."

"In our Sever Gold Sect, we have high-level Formation Masters. But for such unrestrained design, capable of improvising diverse formation patterns seamlessly—individuals with such insight and creativity are very rare."

"For someone of such achievements to willingly craft trivial second-grade formations and meddle in affairs between Outer Disciples—this is indeed puzzling..."

Jin Yicai pondered briefly, then suddenly felt a chill in his heart, his expression shifting slightly, "Could it be... a leak?"

The tall Sever Gold Sect cultivator's face also darkened upon hearing this.

Jin Yicai's tone grew grim as he said:

"It could be the Song family—or perhaps one of our other Sever Gold Sect Elders. They might have secretly caught wind of some intel and thus colluded with the Taixu Sect, intending to use the hands

of Taixu's disciples to sabotage our plan at Refining Demon Mountain—thereby seizing the opportunity to topple the Jin family..."

"Cousin," Jin Yicai's face paled slightly, "This matter must not be exposed, or I'll be doomed..."

The tall cultivator's gaze deepened as he responded, "Don't worry. No matter how colossal the mistake you may make, our uncle and aunt will handle the aftermath for you."

"No, no, you don't understand," Jin Yicai's expression was grim, his eyes full of grievance, "My father despises me."

"Originally, he served as the Vice Sect Leader, enduring for seventy years. In less than ten years, he would've been promoted to Sect Leader."

"But because of the prior incident, his promotion was thwarted."

"The Jin family pulled many strings to suppress that issue, but such actions came at a cost—my father's advancement has been indefinitely postponed."

Chapter 1289: Conspiracy (3)

"The higher-ups of the Sever Gold Sect, various families, including the Jin family's elders—under all kinds of restraint, this matter cannot proceed for now..."

"My father blames everything on me, thinking it's my fault he can't become Sect Leader."

Jin Yicai's expression contorted slightly. "Does he even reflect on it? If he truly had the capability, these seventy years ago, he would have already ascended by now."

"Who knows what he's been doing all these years? And now, at the last critical step, he blames me for ruining his big opportunity?"

"Tell me, is this even my fault?"

Jin Yicai's gaze turned venomous. "If it hadn't been for that despicable Gu Changhuai meddling in my business, catching me red-handed, listing my crimes, and reporting them to the Taoist Court,

would I have fallen to this state? Forced to endure my father's scolding, shamed utterly, and confined to this cave residence?"

"It's downright laughable..." Jin Yicai sneered coldly. "My father and the others, they always preach about the worthlessness of common lives, saying human lives are mere grass, that it's unnecessary to consider some people as equal to us. Treating them as cattle horses would suffice. And we, as the offspring of the Jin family, are naturally born superior, far removed from ordinary people, different in destiny."

"But what happened? I believed those words. I treated human lives like grass. I indeed stood above others. Yet all I did was direct some lackeys to eliminate a few insignificant beings, refine a few batches of pills—not even dirtying my own hands."

"My father, my grandfather—suddenly they righteously rebuke me, claiming my mindset is skewed, not following the Righteous Dao..."

Jin Yicai sneered incessantly. "Absolutely absurd!"

The tall cultivator's pupils slightly contracted. He spoke with indifference, "Do not defame your family's elders in the presence of outsiders."

Saying so, he glanced at Jin Gui.

Jin Gui immediately hung his head low, pretending not to have heard anything.

He knew, despite sharing the surname "Jin," he was not truly considered part of the Jin family in their eyes. He was merely slightly better than grass and cattle horses.

Jin Yicai also realized he had misspoken, but his expression remained frosty, unwilling to appear contrite.

Nevertheless, toward his steady yet ruthless "cousin," whom he had grown up with, his heart remained a mixture of closeness and reverence.

"Brother, what should we do now?" Jin Yicai's face was exceptionally grim. "I've already suffered my father's cold shoulder. If I provoke greater calamity this time, my father would undoubtedly beat me to death!"

The tall cultivator saw Jin Yicai's apprehensive demeanor, with tinges of fear. His gaze slightly tightened as he slowly nodded and said:

"Then do not act hastily. Lie low for now and act covertly."

"The matter with Taixu Gate—we'll settle it later."

"Good!" Jin Yicai gritted his teeth. "And Gu Changhuai and the Gu family too!"

Jin Yicai's gaze turned ominous. "On the day I was captured, aside from Gu Changhuai and the Gu family's minions, there was also some little brat from Taixu Gate who used that vile and disgusting Water Prison Technique!"

"Had it not been for his Water Prison Technique, I might have managed to escape that day."

"Being confined to this cave, I haven't had the chance to send someone to investigate his origins. I don't even know which family he belongs to."

"The next time I encounter him, I will tear that Water Prison Technique bastard into pieces to sate my fury!"

"No, tearing him apart would be too merciful..."

Jin Yicai's eyes turned frigid. "I'll sacrifice him alive, feed him to the Demon Refining Diagram, and let him suffer the torment of being devoured by a thousand demons, consumed by evil thoughts, dying in indescribable agony, his soul obliterated, beyond reincarnation!"

Jin Yicai's handsome face began to gradually distort.

The tall cultivator shook his head slightly.

His cousin harbored far too strong a desire for revenge.

Such a volatile temperament, revealing joy and anger so openly—how could one remain composed when facing significant events?

Was Tao Cultivation supposed to be this easily achieved?

If it hadn't been for his fortunate birth, a father of high rank and status, a mother ridiculously indulgent and protective, he likely would have died countless times by now.

Still, he remains useful for now—and highly so...

Clad in a Sever Gold Taoist Robe, the tall and imposing cultivator silently glanced at Jin Yicai beside him, his gaze deep.

...

"Sever Gold Sect backed down?"

Inside Taixu Gate, Mo Hua looked rather astonished.

Cheng Mo nodded. "Indeed, they've turned into a bunch of turtles hiding in their shells, not showing their faces at all."

Having said this, Cheng Mo grabbed a massive roasted pork knuckle and started gnawing on it.

It was midday, and a group of disciples was gathered in the dining hall, eating spiritual meals in lively camaraderie.

Mo Hua furrowed his brows slightly.

Something seemed off...

This didn't seem at all like the Sever Gold Sect's usual style.

He had thought Sever Gold Sect was petty, vindictive, and relentless, bound to feud endlessly with them.

Even if they couldn't win, they would surely persist with annoying provocations.

Yet unexpectedly, they had backed down so decisively.

"Let's monitor them for a while, keeping wary of tricks," Mo Hua advised.

"Understood!" Cheng Mo nodded.

Over the following period, Refining Demon Mountain remained calm and uneventful. Not a single Sever Gold Sect disciple appeared to provoke them.

Mo Hua finally confirmed that Sever Gold Sect had seemingly given up on competing with Taixu Gate within the mountain.

Of course, there remained one exception.

That exception was Song Jian.

One day, while Mo Hua was entering the mountain, Song Jian and seven or eight others ambushed him.

Yet Mo Hua felt no fear.

Because now, in the Outer Mountain of Refining Demon Mountain, one whistle from him could summon seventeen or eighteen Taixu Gate disciples.

What's more, seven or eight Foundation Building Middle Phase cultivators were powerless to block him.

Song Jian pointed at Mo Hua, furious:

"I know it now—you're Mo Hua!"

"You're the one who stole my Sever Gold Sword!"

"Cheng Mo, that big oaf, isn't the leader here—you're the one!"

"You're their 'Junior Brother'!"

Mo Hua looked slightly surprised. This fool... wasn't as dim-witted as he imagined?

"And so?" Mo Hua asked.

Song Jian bristled with rage. "Return my Sever Gold Sword, or you're dead for sure!"

Mo Hua pondered briefly and asked:

"If I return your sword, will you stop bothering me?"

Song Jian initially wanted to snarl, "Of course not."

The grudge between them ran deep.

But since the Spirit Sword was still in Mo Hua's possession, and considering "one must bow beneath the eaves," Song Jian suppressed his fury and said, "If you return my Sever Gold Sword, all prior grudges will be forgiven."

"Alright!"

Mo Hua agreed readily.

He hadn't originally planned to return it.

But reconsidering, he realized he had extrapolated the Gold-Cutting Sword Formation from Song Jian's Sword Qi and tested the effectiveness of the Gold-Cutting Armor using him.

Song Jian had inadvertently provided immense help to him.

Though the man himself likely remained unaware.

Having received such help, he figured a gesture of reciprocity wouldn't hurt.

Mo Hua tossed over a twisted, blackened blade, its edges warped and the body shattered—"scrap metal."

"There, returned," Mo Hua said.

Song Jian took the scrap metal, his face boiling with anger. "I want my Sever Gold Sword—what is this rubbish?!"

Mo Hua sighed and revealed the harsh truth:

"This IS your Sever Gold Sword..."

Song Jian lowered his gaze and noticed the familiar sword patterns etched on its remains. That sense of connection he felt while holding it—so distinct—hit him like thunder.

"This IS your Sever Gold Sword..."

The words echoed repeatedly in his ears.

Song Jian stood there, dazed, his face pale as stone weathered by countless storms.

When he finally regained his senses, he began to rage.

"I'll kill you!!"

Song Jian grasped the sword and scanned the vicinity, but by then, no sign of Mo Hua remained.

Mo Hua had already fled to some obscure corner.

With fury surging through him, and his whole body trembling, Song Jian roared toward the heavens:

"Damn you, Mo Hua! This life and the next, I swear to never reconcile with you!!"

"...No coexistence under the same sky!!!"

The roar reverberated across Refining Demon Mountain.

Walking leisurely along the trails, Mo Hua heard it but paid no heed.

Though Song Jian's cultivation wasn't weak and his swordsmanship decent, compared to someone who had gutted the Fire Buddha, it was just laughable.

Should he truly wish to exploit Song Jian, countless methods came to mind.

Besides, as a Sever Gold Sect disciple, Song Jian's conflicts with Taixu Gate were trifling; he hardly met the threshold of truly unforgivable evil.

If, someday, Song Jian indeed tread the path of unforgivable sin and foolishly stood against him, Mo Hua would certainly retaliate without mercy.

But that was something for the future.

For now, Mo Hua had more pressing matters to attend to.

At present, a substantial chunk of the Outer Mountain area of Refining Demon Mountain had come under Taixu Gate's control.

As luck had it, Mo Hua happened to be on the mountain and intended to practice the "Divine Sense Sword Control" technique.

He wanted to test his Sword Control's power, speed, and reach—then refine flying swords tailored to the skill.

On this day of Rest Week, Mo Hua woke early, gathered several broken swords obtained from Master Gu, and headed straight to Refining Demon Mountain.

Chapter 1290: Sword Control Genius

In the Refining Demon Mountain, the morning sun bathed the peaks, and the grass and trees were lush and verdant.

Although the mountain forest was filled with dangerous Monster Beasts, Mo Hua seemed as carefree as if on a spring outing. His expression was relaxed, his steps were brisk, and he even hummed a little tune.

Upon reaching the foot of a slope, Mo Hua stopped, took out fruit wine, pastries, and dried meat from his Storage Bag, and began to leisurely enjoy his food while admiring the morning landscape.

After a while, a figure appeared in the distance.

Mo Hua immediately stood up, his face lighting up with joy, and waved enthusiastically while shouting:

"Situ, over here!"

A tall and handsome young man carrying the Li Fire Sword on his back looked over and, with a smile, returned the greeting before walking toward Mo Hua.

The newcomer was none other than Situ Jian.

Coincidentally, he was the "sparring partner" Mo Hua had sought for practicing Sword Control.

Both of them hailed from Li State, making them unofficial "fellow villagers."

Back when Mo Hua lived in Li State, he had connections with the Situ Family and was acquainted with Situ Fang, Situ Xiu, Situ Jin Elder, and other cultivators from the clan.

However, since the Situ Family was quite large, those individuals were likely from a branch family and were probably not familiar with Situ Jian.

Mo Hua decided not to bring it up.

In the mountain, under the morning sun, the two enjoyed fine wine and delicacies together.

Once they had their fill, they officially began training with their swords.

Before starting, Situ Jian couldn't help but ask curiously:

"Junior Brother, you're not a Sword Cultivator, so why the sudden interest in Sword Control?"

Mo Hua's face took on a serious expression as he made up an excuse off the cuff:

"The Sever Gold Sect is inherently stingy and their methods underhanded. Although they've quieted down for now, it's hard to say they won't come back stronger in the future. So, it's best to be prepared and study Sword Controlling Methods properly."

"Not only them—here in the Qianxue State Boundary, there are so many Sword Cultivators. It's crucial to learn more to avoid falling into their traps someday..."

"Know thy enemy, and you'll never lose a battle."

"Oh." Situ Jian slowly nodded and praised, "Junior Brother, you really think far ahead."

"Far ahead?"

"Yes." Situ Jian replied, "True 'Sword Control' can only be learned in the Foundation Establishment Late Stage, and its sword moves are only attainable in the Golden Core Realm."

Mo Hua stared blankly, "That far ahead?"

Situ Jian silently looked at Mo Hua, thinking to himself, turns out Junior Brother doesn't know a thing...

Situ Jian sighed and found a large rock to sit on, then began explaining to Mo Hua from scratch:

"For any Sword Cultivator, training always starts with Sword Qi. Using Spiritual Power to transform it into a sword is the foundation to entering Sword Dao."

"However, when Sword Cultivators first begin, the Sword Qi formed by their Spiritual Power is weak, so they must rely on Spirit Swords to amplify their Sword Qi and enhance their killing power."

"The earlier the stage, the shallower the cultivation, the weaker the Sword Qi, and the more reliant Sword Cultivators are on their swords."

"When reaching later stages, when cultivation deepens, Sword Qi strengthens, it's possible to wield no sword in hand yet embody the sword itself, reducing the dependency on sword weapons."

"Of course, Sword Cultivators with swords are still exceptionally formidable."

"This is because the union of Sword Qi and sword weapons in 'Sword Control' creates a cumulative effect with astounding killing power."

"How strong can it get?" Mo Hua asked with keen curiosity.

Situ Jian shook his head, "I don't know..."

Mo Hua: "..."

Situ Jian awkwardly added, "Anyway, very strong... but I haven't mastered the true 'Li Fire Sword Flight Art' yet, so I can't say how strong."

"So, that means the Sever Gold Sect senior we encountered before, using the Sever Gold Sword Control Jue, wasn't really performing 'true Sword Control,' right?"

"Which Sever Gold Sect senior?"

"The one who got stripped, tied to a tree, and had turtles drawn all over him."

"Oh." Situ Jian recalled the incident and nodded, "Right."

Situ Jian explained to Mo Hua, "He did cultivate the Sword Controlling Technique, but his cultivation and Sword Dao comprehension weren't high enough to display real Sword Control. So his Sword Control was still stuck at the elementary Sword Qi level."

"True Sword Control..."

Situ Jian's expression became serious, his eyes filled with yearning:

"It all starts with cultivating Sword Qi to an immensely powerful level."

"Then fusing Sword Qi with the sword itself."

"And finally, using Divine Sense to control the Spirit Sword melded with Sword Qi, lock onto the enemy, and kill them from a distance with the Flying Sword."

"Only when Sword Qi, sword weapons, and Divine Sense unite can one truly reach higher levels and gradually cultivate 'Sword Intent'..."

"Sword Intent?!"

Mo Hua's expression drastically changed in shock.

Situ Jian was startled and softly asked, "Junior Brother, is something wrong?"

Mo Hua realized his reaction had been over the top, quickly composed himself, and patted Situ Jian's shoulder while saying:

"No, you're absolutely right!"

"Carry on..."

Situ Jian hesitated for a moment and then shook his head, saying, "That's it..."

Mo Hua was taken aback, "That's it?"

Situ Jian nodded, "What comes after Sword Intent is too advanced. Since my cultivation is still shallow, I can't comprehend it..."

Much less Sword Intent—he hadn't even properly learned 'Sword Control.'

"Alright then." Mo Hua sighed.

Although not learning more about the deeper mysteries of 'Sword Intent' was a bit disappointing, at least he had grasped one critical point:

Divine Sense Sword Control, Sword Qi, sword weapons, and Divine Sense melding into one are the key to nurturing 'Sword Intent.'

Sword Control is the consummate method of combining Sword Qi and sword weapons.

At the same time, it also marks the beginning of cultivating 'Sword Intent.'

Such advanced concepts went beyond the standard sect curriculum; even the Taoist Skills taught by sect instructors wouldn't cover this.

Sword Controlling Methods...

If they could only be learned in the Foundation Establishment Late Stage and perfected in the Golden Core Realm...

Then at the earliest, it'd be next year during the Foundation Establishment Late Stage courses, or perhaps even after entering the Inner Gate, that this knowledge would be imparted.

Indeed, there's wisdom in "having three people and learning from one teacher." It's always worthwhile to seek advice from fellow sect members whenever possible.

Mo Hua nodded inwardly in approval.

"Then Divine Sense Sword Control—how exactly does one control the sword?"

"Is it similar to Divine Sense Manipulation of objects?"

"Do you just use Divine Sense to control the Spirit Sword and stab forward from a distance?"