

Sect Master 41

Chapter 41: Fang Yong returns

With the improvement of Daoist Clear Spirit's Spirit Plant Technique, the quantity and quality of spirit herbs planted in Taiyi Sect's spirit field increased. There were no major events in the sect, and Meng Zhang's main focus remained on his cultivation. Besides practicing the Lesser Yang Qi Art, he also emphasized practicing the spells obtained in the Trial Grounds. When Cultivation Base was similar, the number and strength of spells one possessed could become the deciding factor in a battle.

Meng Zhang spent a considerable amount of time studying and digesting the knowledge related to cultivation hundred arts obtained from the Trial Grounds. This knowledge allowed Taiyi Sect to develop professions such as Alchemist and tool refiner, at least in terms of theoretical knowledge. However, currently, no disciples in Taiyi Sect displayed talent in these fields. Most disciples still focused on Spirit Plant Technique, which was easy to learn but difficult to master. While it was easy to become a low-level spirit farmer, climbing to higher levels was not necessarily easier than becoming an Alchemist or tool refiner.

Meng Zhang considered choosing one cultivation hundred art as his secondary profession to develop further. He was determined to excel in that chosen field. However, he didn't show much interest or exceptional talent in any cultivation hundred art so far. Both Taiyi Sect and Meng Zhang's personal wealth couldn't afford to waste too many spirit stones on trial and error.

Meng Zhang was young, and he wasn't in a hurry. Cultivators weren't obliged to pursue cultivation hundred arts; they could also develop their secondary professions. Currently, Meng Zhang's life was fulfilling enough.

However, a piece of news arrived one day, completely ruining his mood. That morning, just after completing his morning practice, Tian Zhen and Daoist Clear Spirit came to him together.

It turned out that last night, Fang Yong, who had left with Fang Meng, returned to Sweetwater Oasis in a very sorry state. According to Fang Yong, Fang Meng had betrayed their fellow disciples, causing their deaths, and Fang Yong narrowly escaped the disaster.

Fang Yong, in a miserable state, now returned to Taiyi Sect, earnestly seeking Sect Master's forgiveness. However, he didn't dare to return directly to Taiyi Sect and instead stayed temporarily with relatives in Sweetwater Oasis.

The residents of Sweetwater Oasis were raised under the protection of Taiyi Sect and didn't have a good view of traitors like Fang Yong. Still, seeing him in such a pitiful state, begging for forgiveness, softened some hearts.

Several elderly Taiyi Sect disciples resting in Sweetwater Oasis were moved by Fang Yong's remorseful appearance. Some of them were also related to Fang Yong's mother's side, including a distant cousin of Daoist Clear Spirit. Daoist Clear Spirit, known for his kind-hearted nature, visited Sweetwater Oasis and, after meeting Fang Yong, asked for Meng Zhang's understanding.

Meng Zhang was inwardly annoyed. When Fang Yong had followed Fang Meng and left the sect, he should have pursued the traitor and dealt with him then. Now, Fang Yong wanted to return as if Taiyi Sect was nothing more than a place to come and go as one pleased.

However, he couldn't be too harsh since those elderly disciples had interceded, and he had to consider Daoist Clear Spirit's face as well. The intricacies of human relationships applied even to cultivators, and Meng Zhang couldn't escape this web of emotions.

After some contemplation, he decided not to harshly reject Daoist Clear Spirit's request. Instead, he chose to go to Sweetwater Oasis with Tian Zhen to meet Fang Yong before making a decision.

Once they arrived at Sweetwater Oasis, the disciple Li Baofu, who was stationed there, brought Fang Yong in front of Meng Zhang. Fang Yong was in his early twenties but looked like an old man. His face was weather-beaten, wrinkled, and lacked the vitality of a young person.

Fang Yong knelt on the ground as soon as he appeared, crawling to Meng Zhang's feet, sobbing and tearfully admitting his mistakes. He regretted listening to Fang Meng's deceitful words and betraying the sect.

Meng Zhang looked at Fang Yong coldly, waiting for him to finish crying before saying coldly, "If you're done crying, then honestly confess everything you did with Fang Meng after leaving Taiyi Sect."

"Let me make it clear beforehand, if you tell the truth, I'll still consider the past. If there's any falsehood in your words, don't blame me for being heartless."

Since becoming the Taiyi Sect's Sect Master, Meng Zhang had developed an air of dignity. Hearing his imposing voice, Fang Yong trembled before slowly starting to confess.

After leaving Taiyi Sect, Fang Meng led a small group of followers in the Cultivation World. This group included six people, with Fang Meng being at the Refining Qi Fourth Layer, while the others were beginners at the Refining Qi stage.

In Taiyi Sect, they could live a relatively difficult life under the sect's protection, but in the outside world, their group of inexperienced disciples quickly found it hard to survive.

Chapter 42: Thwarting

In the end, no one knows what Fang Meng was thinking. He unexpectedly led this small group to seek refuge with their old enemies and neighbors, the Zhao Family, under Taiyi Sect. The Zhao Family took them in and dispatched specialized personnel to thoroughly interrogate each individual, extracting all the information they knew about Taiyi Sect.

Unlike Taiyi Sect, which lacked manpower, the Zhao Family had plenty of their own family members. Compared to their trustworthy family members, these outsiders had little value. This group stayed with the Zhao Family for several months, enduring days of humiliation and regret. A few days ago, Zhao Family ordered Fang Meng to take this group and explore an abandoned mine. This mine was located more than a hundred miles east of Taiyi Sect, originally used to extract "white hidden earth," and belonged to Twin Success Valley. Over a decade ago, the mine was almost depleted, and during a calamity caused by sand monsters, the Cultivator guarding the mine and many miners perished, and the mine was destroyed.

After Twin Success Valley gathered nearby cultivation forces to eliminate the sand monsters, they were unwilling to invest the effort to repair this mine, which had lost its value. Besides, white

hidden earth was not a scarce mineral, as there were other active mines within Twin Success Valley's influence.

After being abandoned for more than a decade, somehow the Zhao Family became interested in this mine. They sent Fang Meng with his disciples to explore it, thinking it would be a simple task. However, upon entering the mine, they realized something was amiss. What was once a mine in the mortal world had turned almost into the Netherworld, with countless ghosts wandering and spirits dancing.

Soon after entering the mine, the group was surrounded by numerous ghosts. In a moment of danger, Fang Meng abandoned several disciples and fled for his life. Among the five disciples, apart from Fang Yong, the other four lost their lives. It's worth mentioning that Fang Meng was not only Fang Yong's senior brother but also his cousin. Despite this close relationship, he showed no mercy and abandoned his brothers.

Fang Yong, who managed to survive the ordeal, dared not stay in the same place or return to the Zhao Family. He returned to his hometown, Sweetwater Oasis, wanting to rejoin Taiyi Sect. As Fang Yong narrated this, Meng Zhang listened quietly without interrupting him. From the moment he saw Fang Yong, Meng Zhang had already activated his Mind Reading Divine Ability. Fang Yong's Refining Qi triple cultivation base was far inferior to Meng Zhang's, and all the secrets he concealed in his heart were revealed to Meng Zhang.

If Fang Yong had truly followed Meng Zhang's instructions and honestly confessed, perhaps Meng Zhang would have spared him. However, there were too many falsehoods in Fang Yong's account. The most significant omission was that Fang Yong was not the one who escaped the mine; he was saved by Zhao Family disciples who were observing from behind. After escaping the mine, Fang Meng immediately fled, showing a surprising level of cunning when it came to preserving his life.

The disciples who died among the group were saved by Zhao Family disciples, and Fang Yong, in particular, was subjected to a restriction talisman and coerced by Zhao Family before being sent back to Taiyi Sect. The Zhao Family's purpose was to make Fang Yong a spy in Taiyi Sect, passing on information about the sect.

If Meng Zhang didn't possess the Mind Reading ability, he might have been swayed by emotions and allowed Fang Yong to stay in Taiyi Sect. However, keeping Fang Yong alive in Taiyi Sect would create a significant hidden danger.

Thinking about this, Meng Zhang couldn't help but loathe Fang Yong for his unrepentant betrayal of the sect. No matter how dire the circumstances, betraying one's sect deserved severe punishment. Nevertheless, Meng Zhang restrained himself from acting impulsively.

Zhao Family must have some motives in returning Fang Yong to Taiyi Sect, and they probably deliberately revealed the information about the abandoned mine. They wanted to pique Meng Zhang's curiosity, luring him into exploring the mine.

Meng Zhang knew he should resist the temptation and avoid being manipulated by Zhao Family. However, his ego had grown significantly since he gained many benefits in the Trial Ground. Sitting idly by and doing nothing didn't suit his character.

Zhao Family had lost their Foundation Building stage cultivators and were now being supported only by a group of Refining Qi stage elders. Meng Zhang couldn't believe that Refining Qi stage

cultivators had any significant means to harm him. He decided to turn the tables and explore the mine, not falling for Zhao Family's scheme.

Chapter 43: Fire Seal

Although Meng Zhang had already decided to explore the mine, he wouldn't act recklessly and needed to carefully consider his plan beforehand. According to Fang Yong's information, the most significant danger inside the mine was an abundance of malevolent ghosts. During the Trial Ground, Meng Zhang, relying solely on his Soul, had slain numerous ghosts, including Yin soldiers. In the mortal world, with his physical body, he would have even more means to deal with ghosts. Notably, his cultivated Lesser Yang True Qi, being Very Yang and Very Hard, was particularly effective against various types of ghosts. Meng Zhang believed that the ghosts wandering in the mortal world were mostly lost souls or wandering spirits, and if there were yin soldiers, they would be rare. After all, the separation between yin and yang was governed by the laws of heaven and earth, and it was unlikely that a random mine would house several Ghost Kings. To be prepared was to be prepared for success. Before taking action, Meng Zhang needed to make some preparations. However, for him, going to explore the mine was neither mandatory nor urgent. Meng Zhang waited for half a month in the sect until another batch of herbs matured before riding his wind-chasing horse and leaving Taiyi Sect. As he rode the horse, Meng Zhang seemed to be napping but was actually secretly observing the surroundings. The wide plain extended endlessly, and besides the boundless yellow sand, there were no people to be found. Regarding the underground, with the wind-chasing horse's speed on the ground, perhaps only Foundation Building stage cultivators could catch up, which surpassed Refining Qi stage cultivators' earth-traveling speed. However, the sky was a different matter. With a casual sweep of his Deception Breaking Eye, Meng Zhang noticed something in the distant high sky. If it were a Cultivator with slightly weaker eyesight, they wouldn't be able to spot it. It was said that within the Zhao Family, they had a First Rank demon beast called the "Crimson Feather Eagle." While not very powerful in combat, as a flying demon beast, it had an extremely fast flying speed and remarkable vision, able to see a small bird on the ground from a thousand zhang above. The Zhao Family had a special beast-taming method to control the Crimson Feather Eagle easily. It was an excellent messenger and scout, adept at spying and investigating enemies.

Discovering the aerial observer, Meng Zhang temporarily had no way to deal with it. With his current abilities, it was difficult to harm such a high target. However, he was not in a rush. Since the Zhao Family dispatched the Crimson Feather Eagle to monitor him, it meant that his judgment about the Zhao Family was correct. Thinking about beast-taming methods, Meng Zhang had obtained quite a few inheritances during the Trial Ground, but besides his mount, the wind-chasing horse, he hadn't found a suitable demon beast. If he had the chance, he should try to raise some young demon beasts to cultivate them. After half a day, Meng Zhang arrived at Singing Sand City and smoothly entered the city. The black dot in the sky behind him had stopped its advancement and remained hovering in the high sky. Singing Sand City was occupied by several Foundation Building stage cultivators long-term. If an outsider demon beast like the Crimson Feather Eagle approached Singing Sand City, it would easily alert them. Foundation Building stage cultivators were much stronger than Refining Qi stage cultivators and had various means to deal with flying demon beasts like the Crimson Feather Eagle. Moreover, as a subordinate force of Twin Success Valley, Zhao Family wouldn't dare to cause trouble in Twin Success Valley's controlled Singing Sand City.

Once inside Singing Sand City, Meng Zhang confirmed that he had shaken off the Crimson Feather Eagle's surveillance. Originally, according to his plan, he should directly go shopping, but he realized that the Zhao Family had been entrenched here for many years, and their foundation was much stronger than Taiyi Sect. There might be informants in Singing Sand City, and if he went shopping directly, Zhao Family would probably find out about his purchases. Considering this, Meng Zhang first found an inn to stay and secretly contacted Shi Weiming. After trading the herbs he brought with him to Shi Weiming, he gave him a shopping list, asking for help with the purchases. This small favor was easy for Shi Weiming, who had collaborated with Meng Zhang several times before. Shi Weiming called a few subordinates and had them go to several shops in Singing Sand City to buy the items on the list.

Meng Zhang didn't wait here and went directly back to the inn. In the evening, he engaged in his usual pastime every time he visited Singing Sand City—strolling through the ghost market and browsing the stalls. After going around the ghost market, Meng Zhang had gained nothing. It seemed that there hadn't been many new items since he had been away for a while. Meng Zhang started to consider that when he had free time, he should visit other markets to see if there were any new interesting items. After finishing the stroll through the ghost market, according to the pre-arranged agreement, Meng Zhang secretly met with Shi Weiming. Shi Weiming didn't disappoint him; he not only bought all the items Meng Zhang needed but also surprised him with extra items. There were ten Earth Escape Spell talismans, some talismans for dispelling evil spirits, and a Fire Seal. The Fire Seal was a First Rank superior magic tool, entirely made of warm jade in a fiery red hue. When infused with True Qi, the Fire Seal could release flame-type spells, and the power of the flame varied depending on the type of True Qi infused. Meng Zhang was extremely satisfied with this magic tool, surpassing his expectations. During his several visits to Singing Sand City, he had never come across a magic tool so well-suited for him. Originally, he had only asked Shi Weiming to buy any random fire attribute magic tool, but Shi Weiming brought him this excellent piece. Even if it was more expensive, it was worth it. After accepting the items and handing over the spirit stones to Shi Weiming, the two bid farewell amidst Meng Zhang's repeated thanks.

Coincidentally, on his way back to the inn, Meng Zhang encountered someone he knew, a caravan leader named Lao Bulu with whom he had had dealings before. After their initial meeting, they had run into each other twice in Singing Sand City. This wasn't strange since the main task of Lao Bulu's caravan was to travel to the white hidden earth mine, transporting supplies and bringing back white hidden earth. He would occasionally stop in Singing Sand City, a place he had to pass through. After the two met, Lao Bulu told Meng Zhang that the sand monsters encountered by their caravan during the last trip came from a newly emerged sand monster nest nearby. Twin Success Valley sent out a large group to find the nest, and it took several Foundation Building stage cultivators to completely destroy it. After the nest was destroyed, the sand monsters roaming around were quickly cleared out by Twin Success Valley. The nearby commercial routes also became safe again.

Chapter 44: Purchase

Upon meeting, Meng Zhang and Lao Bulu exchanged no pleasantries, and the latter dragged Meng Zhang to a restaurant, insisting on treating him to a few drinks. Meng Zhang didn't refuse and went along with it. The restaurant was run by Forest Spring Watch and offered not only top-quality

spiritual food but also renowned spiritual wine called "bloody wine." As the name suggested, it had a color resembling blood and was named accordingly. It emitted a peculiar, bloody fragrance. Bloody wine's primary ingredient was the blood of special demon beasts, which was then brewed using Forest Spring Watch's secret method. Besides being rich in spiritual energy, bloody wine had the miraculous effect of nourishing one's qi and blood and nurturing the physical body. Due to its limited production, there were very few casks available in the restaurant, and it was only offered in limited quantities.

Arriving late, Lao Bulu and Meng Zhang missed the chance to purchase it. However, the restaurant owner reserved half a pot of bloody wine for Meng Zhang, thanks to Lao Bulu's influence. Despite not being fond of alcohol, Meng Zhang couldn't resist drinking a few cups when faced with the enticing aroma. After a few cups, he could clearly feel a series of scorching warm flows circulating within him, making his qi and blood more active. While feeling tipsy, Lao Bulu introduced a business opportunity to Meng Zhang. Mining the white hidden earth required a large number of ordinary people of working age as miners. It had been a crucial task for Lao Bulu's caravan to purchase these ordinary workers to replenish the workforce. The living conditions and population were better in the areas directly controlled by the Flying Swan Sect. If one put in more effort, it was possible to hire many ordinary people to work as miners. Of course, to reduce costs, caravans like Lao Bulu's actively collected displaced ordinary people. The young miners would be sent to the mine to work, while their families would stay behind to allow the miners to work in peace. However, the elderly, weak, sick, and disabled without any connections were considered almost valueless.

Lao Bulu had accumulated a considerable number of such ordinary people and had been willing to sell them. As for the restrictions on selling ordinary people in the Cultivation World, he had ways to deal with it. Now, Lao Bulu wanted to inquire if Meng Zhang was interested in purchasing this batch of ordinary people. When they first interacted, Lao Bulu had helped Meng Zhang transport ordinary servants, so Lao Bulu thought Meng Zhang might be interested. Although most of the ordinary people in this batch were elderly, weak, sick, or disabled, there were quite a few children who would be valuable to Meng Zhang since child slaves were in demand in the Cultivation World. Including the children in this batch among the elderly, weak, sick, and disabled made the latter more valuable. Meng Zhang wanted to purchase more ordinary people not only to increase their numbers but also to break the current social structure of Sweetwater Oasis. The small number of people in Sweetwater Oasis all had personal relationships with each other, which had annoyed Meng Zhang, especially after the recent incident with Fang Yong.

Introducing more outsiders would be the beginning of breaking these personal relationships. After a brief discussion, Meng Zhang and Lao Bulu finalized the deal. As for the price, Lao Bulu didn't take advantage of Meng Zhang. Following that, Meng Zhang waited for a day in Singing Sand City before setting off with Lao Bulu's caravan. This time, Meng Zhang purchased over five hundred ordinary people, including fewer than thirty children under the age of eighteen. Lao Bulu specially took care of Meng Zhang in this regard, as ordinary people under the age of eighteen were the most valuable in the Cultivation World. The chances of awakening spiritual roots were higher for ordinary people under eighteen, and the younger they were when they awakened, the better. After the age of eighteen, it was challenging for them to awaken spiritual roots. Although there were a few exceptions who awakened spiritual roots after eighteen, their prospects were limited due to their late awakening.

Meng Zhang used his own spirit stones for this transaction, as it was his idea to change Sweetwater Oasis's population structure. In addition to purchasing the ordinary people, he also bought a large amount of food and daily necessities, which significantly depleted his own spirit stones. After leaving Singing Sand City, Meng Zhang spent some time talking and bonding with Lao Bulu. Soon after Meng Zhang left Singing Sand City, a black dot appeared in the high sky, following from a distance. After walking for a while, Lao Bulu looked puzzled and glanced at the sky. These merchants traveling all over the place were not simple; they had some means up their sleeves. Meng Zhang thought to himself.

"Brother, there's no need to worry; it's a trick from a neighboring faction near my sect." "They're just monitoring us and won't have other intentions." Meng Zhang honestly confessed.

"Don't worry about it, Brother; if you need anything, just say the word," Lao Bulu said generously.

Although their relationship seemed to be growing closer, and they called each other "brother," Meng Zhang didn't take Lao Bulu's polite words to heart. Merchants like Lao Bulu wouldn't rashly get involved in disputes between two forces. Of course, Twin Success Valley's affiliated forces wouldn't dare to provoke him either.

"It's just a small matter; I'll handle it myself. If I need Brother's help in the future, I'll ask," Meng Zhang replied politely.

After this little incident, they didn't discuss the topic further. The journey was smooth and uneventful. When they arrived near Sweetwater Oasis, after completing the transaction, Lao Bulu bid farewell and left. Meng Zhang called the people of Sweetwater Oasis and had them transport the purchased ordinary people and goods back. After dealing with everything, Meng Zhang finally returned to Taiyi Sect. When there were no outsiders around, Tian Zhen privately reminded Meng Zhang that Sweetwater Oasis had limited space and might not be able to accommodate more people. Meng Zhang was well aware of this, but expanding the oasis or creating new ones wasn't an easy task. It seemed that the purchase of ordinary people would have to be postponed. Tian Zhen didn't tell Meng Zhang that the new arrivals and the original residents of the oasis were not getting along well and had caused numerous disputes. Tian Zhen had handled these matters with the Taiyi Sect disciples of Sweetwater Oasis, so as not to distract Meng Zhang.

Chapter 45: Sand storm

After returning to Taiyi Sect and realizing that he was being monitored outside, he didn't rush to go out. First, he refined the Fire Seal he had purchased in Singing Sand City, and then he patiently waited for the right opportunity within the sect. After more than half a month, Meng Zhang's awaited chance finally arrived.

Starting from the previous night, a fierce wind and a vast sandstorm swept through the area surrounding Taiyi Sect, covering hundreds of miles in all directions. Endless Sea of Sand, especially the region where Taiyi Sect was situated, was considered remote even within the vast desert plains. The surroundings were an endless expanse of desert, without even slightly elevated mountains, only sand dunes, let alone any forests or vegetation. Whenever strong winds blew, it stirred up the sand into a whirlwind, causing visibility to drop to zero, and the world seemed filled with sand. Such sandstorms occurred occasionally throughout the year and had become a prominent characteristic of Endless Sea of Sand.

Meng Zhang stood on a small square in front of the sect's main hall, gazing at the bleak scene outside. The entire sky was dark, filled with boundless yellow sand, with no gaps in sight. The roaring winds were chilling, and the sandstorm churned like turbulent waves in the sky. At this moment, Tian Zhen also arrived by Meng Zhang's side.

"Is the protection formation around Sweetwater Oasis okay?" "The spiritual energy stored in the formation's nodes is abundant, and we have enough spirit stones to maintain its operation," Tian Zhen replied.

Although Sweetwater Oasis didn't have a complete spirit vein, it had several spiritual energy nodes. By relying on these nodes, they established a protective formation called the Endless Sea of Sand's First Order Wind-Breaking Formation. The formation's defensive power was not strong, and its function was primarily to defend against sandstorms. During normal times, to save spiritual energy, the formation would remain closed, and the spiritual energy within the nodes would be carefully stored. Even the Taiyi Sect disciples in Sweetwater Oasis wouldn't actively absorb the spiritual energy from the nodes, at most taking in some of the scant spiritual energy diffused within the oasis. However, when sandstorm weather occurred, someone would activate the formation to defend against the sandstorm's attack. If the supply of spiritual energy from the nodes was insufficient, Sweetwater Oasis also stored some spirit stones that could be used to power the formation during critical moments.

In fact, in any oasis formed within Endless Sea of Sand, there were generally spiritual energy nodes at the very least. In some larger oases, there might even be complete spirit veins inside. Meng Zhang was confident in Tian Zhen's ability to handle things, so he returned to his quiet room. After the sandstorm persisted for half a day, Meng Zhang secretly left Taiyi Sect without notifying anyone. As a precaution, he used an Earth Escape talisman at the sect's entrance to leave underground. The distance he could travel underground with the Earth Escape talisman was generally not more than ten miles. However, because the ground around him was all soft, loose sand, lacking compacted soil and rocks, this time Meng Zhang traveled a much farther distance underground than usual. In sandstorm weather, the fierce winds made it difficult to stand and could even blow people away. The sand-filled air made it difficult to see one's own fingers. In such weather, not only ordinary people but even ordinary Refining Qi stage cultivators would be cautious and would rarely venture outside. Meng Zhang didn't believe that Zhao Family's Scarlet Feathered Falcon could monitor the area around Taiyi Sect in such weather. Even if it were still there, its vision wouldn't be able to penetrate the sandstorm. While taking advantage of the cover provided by the sandstorm, Meng Zhang approached the abandoned white hidden earth mine.

With the help of the Deception Breaking Eye, Meng Zhang wasn't worried about getting lost in the sandstorm. With the talismans, his speed was significantly faster. He was very familiar with the terrain around Taiyi Sect's periphery. The sandstorm covered an extremely large area, and within a radius of hundreds of miles, the sandstorm's influence was immense. According to Meng Zhang's past experience, such sandstorms could last for several days, or even up to ten days. However, Meng Zhang still tried his best to expedite and explore the abandoned mine before the sandstorm ended. As he distanced himself from Taiyi Sect's area, the sandstorm showed no signs of abating, but the terrain on the ground began to change gradually. The ground started to become more solid, and some barren lands appeared, along with occasional wind-weathered small hills. Soon, Meng Zhang saw traces of green on the ground, and he would occasionally come across low shrubs and cacti-like plants.

Taking advantage of the sandstorm's cover, Meng Zhang was already very close to the abandoned mine. The mine was backed by a hill hundreds of meters high, and its entrance went deep underground. The mine was said to have been dug very deep. The mine's exit was surrounded by several hills, concealing the entrance. Instead of directly entering through the mine's exit, Meng Zhang circled around and approached the abandoned mine from behind. Throughout this process, Meng Zhang occasionally used the Deception Breaking Eye to observe his surroundings, ensuring that nobody had discovered him. In such sandstorm weather, the observers were unlikely to persist, and even if they did, their vision wouldn't penetrate the sandstorm.

The sandstorm, although a disastrous weather phenomenon in Endless Sea of Sand, had become Meng Zhang's best cover. He reached the backside of the hill where the mine's entrance was located. After one last observation with the Deception Breaking Eye, Meng Zhang used the Earth Escape Spell talisman. His body disappeared into the ground, and he began traveling underground. Since the ground was entirely made up of tightly compacted rocks, the distance he could travel underground with the Earth Escape talisman was far from ten miles, and his speed was quite slow. Finally, Meng Zhang passed through the hill underground and entered the mine.

When the Earth Escape Spell ended, Meng Zhang's body reappeared on the surface. As soon as he exposed himself, he sensed a familiar aura he hadn't felt in a long time.

Chapter 46: Mine tunnel

The long-lost familiar aura that Meng Zhang sensed was Yin Qi. The Yin Qi inside the mine was extremely dense, although it couldn't compare to the Trial Ground. However, to ordinary cultivators, it was enough to consider this place as a Netherworld.

As soon as Meng Zhang emerged from underground, several ghosts that happened to be nearby were attracted by the rich Yin Qi and rushed towards him. A cold and eerie atmosphere enveloped him, but a surge of Yang He's aura emanated from Meng Zhang's body. His Lesser Yang True Qi resembled the rising sun, emitting a scorching light. The ghosts that approached were instantly vaporized before they could get close.

This ruckus alerted more ghosts, and they swarmed towards Meng Zhang like moths to a flame. Without panicking, Meng Zhang lightly shook the Soul-Shocking Bell in his left hand. This First Rank superior magic tool was a loot he acquired from Boss Zhang. Its attack targeted the target's soul directly, causing Soul shaking and confusion, rendering the targets motionless.

The mine was now infested with ghosts, and the Ghosts that roamed the area seemed to come in endless waves. With the help of the Soul-Shocking Bell, Meng Zhang effortlessly cleared out the hovering ghosts in the air, causing them to fall to the ground in a daze, just like Luo Ye had described.

Brandishing his right hand, Meng Zhang used the Fire Seal. Fiery flames spewed out from it, turning the surrounding ghosts into ashes. This First Rank superior Fire Seal served two purposes - it amplified the power of fire-based spells for Refining Qi stage cultivators, and it could release nine fire serpents to automatically attack enemies. Meng Zhang's Lesser Yang True Fire, which already possessed the power to vanquish evil spirits, became even stronger after being enhanced by the Fire Seal, making it the bane of the ghosts. Although the number of ghosts around Meng Zhang was not insignificant, they were almost defenseless against his two magic tools. However, he still remained

vigilant as he was only on the upper level of the mine, and there were many more layers underground. He took a rough direction and proceeded forward.

The mine's original tunnels had collapsed or caved in. However, Meng Zhang didn't need to worry about being buried alive with Earth Escape talismans on him. Whenever he encountered a sealed-off area, he would take out a Bursting talisman and blow it up to create a passage.

As he went deeper into the mine, the Yin Qi grew denser, and stronger ghosts appeared - not just ordinary ghosts, but also vengeful spirits, and zombies, which possessed physical bodies and had strong resistance against the Soul-Shocking Bell and Lesser Yang True Fire. Dealing with these zombies proved to be quite challenging for Meng Zhang, but eventually, he managed to burn them to ashes with his Lesser Yang True Fire, albeit taking a bit longer.

In addition to the visible ghosts, the invisible Yin Qi was almost everywhere. For ordinary cultivators, prolonged exposure to such Yin Qi would cause severe damage to their bodies. However, Meng Zhang had dealt with Yin Qi many times before and was not worried about this issue. His Lesser Yang True Qi circulated within his body, keeping him warm and protected from the Yin Qi.

This place was not the Trial Ground, and there were no rewards or benefits for eliminating ghosts. While it cost some true qi, Meng Zhang was more concerned about using up Bursting talismans, which were not cheap. With dozens of Bursting talismans in his possession, he couldn't afford to be too profligate. He didn't know how long this situation, where he could only go forward and not retreat, would last.

Before entering the mine, Meng Zhang had observed the surrounding area using the Deception Breaking Eye. Based on the knowledge he gained from the Trial Ground, he had some expertise in divination and geomancy. The location of the mine was surrounded by several hills, forming a naturally Yin area. The underground was a gathering place of Yin Qi and fiendish Qi, a natural breeding ground for ghosts. It was not surprising that so many ghosts appeared here, given the vast number of people who had died in this mine.

However, after entering the mine, Meng Zhang noticed that the environment here was not entirely naturally formed but had traces of artificial arrangement. Thanks to the vast knowledge he gained from the Trial Ground, despite his young age and lack of experience outside, his insights and experience surpassed many seasoned cultivators in the Cultivation World.

The situation inside the mine was undoubtedly the work of Ghost Path cultivators. While Ghost Path cultivators were not as universally reviled as demonic cultivators, they were still detested in the Cultivation World. People naturally had a hostile attitude toward those who manipulated ghosts, and Ghost Path cultivators were more likely to fall into demonic cultivation compared to other cultivators. It was safe to say that at least seven or eight out of ten Ghost Path cultivators would eventually succumb to demonic cultivation and become fully-fledged demonic cultivators.

In the Flying Swan Sect's territory, Ghost Path cultivators were not welcome. If any dared to appear openly, they would be collectively expelled or hunted down by various forces in the area.

Upon discovering the mine cave's connection with the Ghost Path cultivators, Meng Zhang became somewhat hesitant. Surviving under the hostility of the entire Cultivation World was a testament to the formidable abilities of Ghost Path cultivators. Their strength was evident, and their methods were ruthless, seeking revenge for even the slightest offense. Meng Zhang was reluctant to easily provoke such a powerful enemy.

Throughout his time in the mine cave, Meng Zhang faced numerous Ghosts who were anything but weak. His smooth progress was not solely due to his own strength but also because of the magic tools and cultivation techniques he possessed, which allowed him to counter the Ghosts effectively. Other cultivators, without targeted means, even those with a Cultivation Base at the Refining Qi Late stage, would find it challenging to break through the heavy interceptions of the Ghosts and reach Meng Zhang's position.

This mine cave was clearly the work of Ghost Path cultivators. Did the Zhao Family cultivators know about it? If they did, what were their intentions? Why didn't they report the presence of Ghost Path cultivators to Twin Success Valley? Why did they use Fang Yong to relay the information to him? Meng Zhang pondered as he continued forward.

Meanwhile, not far from the mine cave, beneath a concealed hill, there was a hidden cave where several young cultivators were complaining incessantly.

"I hate this weather. The sandstorm is so fierce that even the Crimson Feather Eagles can't stay in the air. It seems we won't be able to monitor the surroundings."

The one speaking was Zhao Yang, an elite among the younger generation of the Zhao Family. At just over twenty years old, he already possessed a Cultivation Base at the Refining Qi Sixth stage. His excellent aptitude made him highly valued by the elders of the family.

Having grown up with abundant cultivation resources, Zhao Yang spent most of his time cultivating within the family and rarely went outside. This mission was relatively simple and not too dangerous, which was why the elders allowed him to take part in it. It was considered a form of training and would help him break through the bottleneck from the mid Refining Qi stage to the late stage.

"With such a huge sandstorm, even the Crimson Feather Eagles can't move. That brat with a palm-sized sect master and only a mid Refining Qi Cultivation Base, dare he venture out in this weather?"

"He's not afraid of getting lost in the sandstorm and buried alive under the sand?"

A cacophony of discussions ensued among the young cultivators.

"Enough with the chitchat. This mission is crucial, so we should be cautious. When the storm calms down a bit, let the Crimson Feather Eagles try to fly," a middle-aged man with a cold expression interrupted their discussion. This man was Zhao Chen, the youngest elder of the Zhao Family. In his forties, he had a Cultivation Base at the Refining Qi Late stage. With his talent and cultivation base, if he could obtain a Foundation Building Pill, he might have a chance to build a foundation in this lifetime.

For the task of monitoring Meng Zhang, the Zhao Family had spared no expense and mobilized significant manpower. They deployed four Crimson Feather Eagles, divided into two teams—221 Team and Taiyi Sect Team—to monitor the surroundings of Taiyi Sect and the mine cave respectively. Since each location had two Crimson Feather Eagles taking turns to observe, Meng

Zhang would have no chance to escape the scrutiny of the Zhao Family people once he left Taiyi Sect and arrived here.

Although the Crimson Feather Eagles were demon beasts cultivated by the Zhao Family for many years, most of them were small-sized creatures, smaller than ordinary eagles. They could only be used as messengers or for simple reconnaissance tasks. Among the many Crimson Feather Eagles, only a small number had mutated into large Crimson Feather Eagles that could carry cultivators.

The large Crimson Feather Eagles were the most important mobile force of the Zhao Family, and their total number was less than ten. This time, almost half of them were mobilized to monitor Meng Zhang, indicating the high level of importance the Zhao Family attached to this matter.

Meanwhile, after some contemplation, Meng Zhang began to grasp the situation.

The Zhao Family must have discovered traces of Ghost cultivators in the mine cave. However, due to certain advantages within the cave, the Zhao Family chose to conceal the presence of Ghost cultivators, seeking to monopolize those advantages. Moreover, the Ghost cultivators who set up their formations inside the cave were likely not present within it. Otherwise, the Zhao Family wouldn't dare to seize it.

By triggering his curiosity through Fang Yong, the Zhao Family enticed Meng Zhang to come here, either to scout the way for them in preparation for further investigation or to serve as a scapegoat.

Having understood this, Meng Zhang continued forward. Since the mine cave contained benefits coveted by the Zhao Family, he couldn't simply let it go. Even if he had to take a risk, he would claim the rewards.

Despite the thousands of people who died in the mine cave, Meng Zhang had not encountered any bodies as he advanced. In this yin qi environment, corpses were not easily decomposed, and the number of bodies that turned into zombies was surprisingly low.

During his journey, Meng Zhang eliminated many zombies, some of which were probably fellow cultivators with storage bags hanging from their waists. After killing the zombies, Meng Zhang naturally claimed their storage bags as spoils of war.

Furthermore, with his Deception Breaking Eye, Meng Zhang noticed several buried storage bags in some corners, all of which he emptied and collected their contents.

Aside from a substantial number of lower-grade spirit stones, there were various odds and ends. Meng Zhang put all the items into his own storage bag and casually discarded the one with Twin Success Valley's emblem.

The harvest was quite good, with 500-600 lower-grade spirit stones and various miscellaneous items. Meng Zhang had not only replenished what he had spent to enter the mine cave but also made some extra gains.

Before setting out, Meng Zhang had brought several storage bags, and now they came in handy.

Instead of continuing along the original path of the mine cave, Meng Zhang used his divination technique to advance through the areas where the yin qi was the strongest. Surprisingly, this direction was smoother than the winding mine path and saved him time.

Though he still had to deal with numerous Ghosts blocking his way, Meng Zhang managed to make steady progress, albeit expending considerable effort.

After eliminating another group of Ghosts and making a big detour, Meng Zhang finally arrived at his destination. It was a massive stone chamber excavated underground, incredibly spacious, capable of accommodating hundreds of people like a hall.

This stone chamber was situated at the gathering point of yin qi and the source of fiend qi leaking from the underground.

Chapter 48: Jade Soul Fluid

The stone walls surrounding the stone chamber were covered with densely packed runes, and in the corners, there were rows of formation flags. Various materials for setting up formations were scattered everywhere.

An invisible force constrained most of the yin qi and fiend qi in the stone chamber, only allowing a small portion to leak and disperse to the outside. At this point, the stone chamber could no longer be considered part of the mortal world; to a large extent, it resembled a projection of the Netherworld in the mortal realm.

While outside in the passages, Meng Zhang faced numerous Ghosts besieging him, the area around the stone chamber remained surprisingly clean, devoid of even a trace of Ghosts. The reason was simple: a special force within the chamber prevented the Ghosts from approaching.

Meng Zhang didn't rashly approach the chamber but carefully observed it from a distance using his Deception Breaking Eye. After studying it for a while, he finally discerned some clues.

Inside the stone chamber, there was a formation arranged, and its power leaked out, affecting the surrounding mine tunnels. Meng Zhang's eyesight was sharp, and he possessed enough knowledge of formations. With some effort, he finally identified the formation before him – the Yin Yang Reversal Formation.

The Yin Yang Reversal Formation was a typical formation used by Ghost Path cultivators and rarely encountered by ordinary cultivators. Besides its core, its other components could take various forms, and the materials used for the formation and the techniques employed would determine its rank.

The current great formation before him was at least a Second Rank Formation, a clear sign that the person who set it up had put a lot of effort into it.

Before entering the mine cave, Meng Zhang had used his Deception Breaking Eye to observe the changes in the terrain around and employed Feng Shui techniques to roughly measure the direction of the Earth Veins. The master who arranged this Yin Yang Reversal Formation made full use of the geographical advantages. The fiend qi from underground and the grudges of the thousands of victims in the mine cave were all materials used for this formation. Of course, setting up such a formation also required other precious materials.

Meng Zhang's Deception Breaking Eye couldn't completely see through a Second Rank Formation, but with his extensive knowledge of formations and the observations he made along the way, he could make a fairly accurate guess about the formation.

Over a decade ago, the mine cave was breached by sand monsters, resulting in numerous casualties. Moreover, the location of the mine cave happened to be where fiend qi gathered. Judging from the leaking yin qi, this formation must have been set up at least ten years ago.

Not long after that calamity, an expert in formations among the Ghost Path cultivators seized the favorable conditions and set up this formation here.

The Yin Yang Reversal Formation had many functions – it could be used for defense, offense, nurturing Ghosts, and providing a place for Ghost Path cultivators to cultivate certain techniques and spells.

However, the purpose of this Yin Yang Reversal great formation was none of the above; instead, it was used to cultivate a certain kind of yin attribute treasure.

As for the numerous Ghost zombies that Meng Zhang encountered along the way, they were caused by the massive amount of leaking yin qi from the Yin Yang Reversal Formation within the mine cave.

Creating those Ghost zombies was not the intention of the formation's arranger; it was an accidental consequence of the yin qi leakage.

In an ideal state, the Yin Yang Reversal Formation could forcibly reverse a certain area of the mortal world into the Netherworld. However, the current Second Rank Formation fell short of achieving this, but it was more than sufficient to create an environment similar to the Netherworld to cultivate a yin attribute treasure.

Upon realizing that the treasure in the formation was Jade Soul Fluid, Meng Zhang felt greatly tempted. Such a Second Rank Formation had been used to cultivate the treasure for many years, and Meng Zhang wanted to get his hands on it.

He also understood that a Second Rank Yin Yang Reversal Formation required regular maintenance to keep it operating normally. However, judging from the formation's current state, it had been left unattended for at least several months.

As a result, more and more yin qi was leaking from the formation, which was a tremendous waste.

Meng Zhang didn't need to break the formation, nor was there a need for that. If he only wanted to take away the Jade Soul Fluid, he pondered for a long time and finally came up with a clever approach. The Yin Yang Reversal Formation aimed to reverse yin and yang and had two formation eyes, one yin and one yang. To enter the formation, one had to simultaneously use the powers of yin and yang to stabilize the two formation eyes.

Although Meng Zhang was just one person and seemed unable to stabilize both formation eyes simultaneously, he came up with a brilliant idea: Divine Soul Left the Body, using both his Soul and physical body at the same time.

Soul belonged to yin, while the physical body belonged to yang. It happened to meet the requirements – two forces, one yin and one yang, could be activated simultaneously.

Chapter 49: Takes the treasure

Meng Zhang planned to use his physical body and Soul to stabilize the two formation eyes separately. However, there was a major problem with this plan. The moment he used Divine Soul Left the Body, his physical body essentially became a lifeless shell with no autonomous movement capability.

Fortunately, Meng Zhang had experienced Divine Soul Left the Body multiple times before and was very familiar with this situation. Even though the physical body lost its autonomous movement, it was still a living body with vitality, and it would react reflexively to external stimuli.

With a concrete plan in mind, Meng Zhang activated his Deception Breaking Eye and cautiously moved within the Formation, searching for the two formation eyes. Thankfully, while the Yin Yang Reversal Formation was a Second Rank Formation, most of its power had been used to nurture the Jade Soul Fluid, leaving its defensive capabilities limited. Furthermore, due to the lack of maintenance for a long time, the Formation had developed some flaws.

After spending some time, Meng Zhang managed to find his targets, and the two formation eyes were not far apart, with a distance of less than ten zhang between them. There was no obstruction in between, allowing the yin and yang forces to exchange easily. Meng Zhang arrived at the corresponding position of each formation eye, sat cross-legged, held the defensive magic tool, Billowing Sea Mirror, which he had salvaged, in his right hand, and took out the First Rank Formation Breaking Talisman he obtained after killing Boss Zhang in his left hand.

He started circulating the true qi within his body. True qi flowed like a river, circulating through his acupoints. According to his estimation, even if he didn't actively control the flow of true qi at this moment, it would continue to run according to inertia.

With the timing calculated, Meng Zhang immediately concentrated his mind and used Divine Soul Left the Body. In this yin qi-rich environment, his Soul should have felt quite comfortable. However, his instinct told him that there was a force within the Formation that could completely erase his Soul.

Meng Zhang didn't dare to be careless. As soon as his Soul moved, he quickly came to the position of the other formation eye. Once there, he used the soul technique he learned from the Trial Ground to condense a soul armor for defense and then used another soul technique to increase the speed of his Soul.

As soon as Meng Zhang finished enhancing the soul techniques, a significant change occurred with his physical body. Although he lost control, the true qi within his body continued to run according to inertia and skillfully reached his hands.

The First Rank Formation Breaking Talisman in Meng Zhang's left hand was hit by true qi and immediately self-ignited, turning into a stream of light shooting upwards. The First Rank Formation Breaking Talisman couldn't break a Second Rank Formation, but it was enough to stimulate a reaction from the Formation.

The Yin Yang Reversal Formation immediately responded. In each of the two formation eyes, a powerful force emerged, ready to drive the Formation to react.

Feeling the external stimulus, Meng Zhang's physical body instinctively moved, holding the Billowing Sea Mirror, which he had already refined, in his right hand. The external force caused the

Billowing Sea Mirror to emit a soft light, creating a watery light screen that firmly protected Meng Zhang's entire body.

Once activated, the Billowing Sea Mirror could autonomously provide defensive power without the need for the owner's continuous control.

The light screen clashed with the forces from the formation eyes, causing intense tremors and ripples.

In a short period, the light screen would not be easily broken, and the forces within the formation eyes temporarily held each other in check.

While the Formation Breaking Talisman was activated, Meng Zhang used the soul technique to condense a spear that he ruthlessly thrust into the ground.

A mysterious force also emerged in the formation eye where his Soul was, attempting to connect the two formation eyes and drive the entire Formation.

However, due to Meng Zhang's Soul movement, the forces about to be set into motion were temporarily stopped. As a result, the entire Formation experienced a momentary pause, causing the defensive power to disappear.

Without delay, Meng Zhang's Soul immediately rushed towards the central pool in the stone chamber. Strange black gas was flowing all around the chamber.

Meng Zhang's Soul inevitably came into contact with these gases leaking from the underground fiend qi. They had a strong eroding effect on his Soul. The souls of ordinary Ghosts would be instantly annihilated when brushed by these gases.

Cracks immediately appeared on the surface of the soul armor surrounding Meng Zhang's Soul, as if it would break open at any moment.

The speed of the Soul was very fast, much faster than that of the physical body. In the blink of an eye, Meng Zhang's Soul arrived above the pool.

Although Meng Zhang's Soul was strong, it hadn't reached the level where it could manipulate objects. Even if his Soul used all its strength, it could only roll up a few pieces of paper.

Fortunately, Jade Soul Fluid, as a treasure, was originally light as a feather, even lighter. The Jade Soul Fluid in the pool amounted to less than ten drops.

Meng Zhang's Soul dived into the pool, using all its strength to scoop up all the Jade Soul Fluid.

Even though it was only a few drops of Jade Soul Fluid, Meng Zhang's Soul felt as if it was carrying a mountain. The pressure was immense.

Enduring the tremendous pressure, Meng Zhang's Soul moved at full speed. The soul armor on Meng Zhang's Soul was completely worn out, dissolving into blue smoke. Even on his Soul, there were several wounds. If his Soul wasn't exceptionally tough, it would have been severely injured long ago.

Just before his Soul was heavily damaged by the fiend qi, Meng Zhang's Soul successfully returned to its original place.

Once the Soul returned, Meng Zhang took out a jade bottle and stored all the Jade Soul Fluid inside it. Meanwhile, he kept running at his fastest speed towards the outside of the Formation.

In fact, there were still many precious treasures within this Formation. It used the fiend qi from underground as the yin attribute power while providing yang attribute power through a large piece of Red Sun Warm Jade.

Meng Zhang cultivated the Lesser Yang Qi Art. If he obtained a yang attribute treasure like the Red Sun Warm Jade, it would bring him countless benefits.

Additionally, to cultivate the Jade Soul Fluid within the Yin Yang Reversal Formation, besides the power provided by the Formation, it required numerous precious materials.

These materials were laid out in the stone chamber, ready for anyone to pick up. However, Meng Zhang kept a clear head and focused only on the Jade Soul Fluid. He didn't actively pick up anything else.

As events unfolded, Meng Zhang's foresight proved to be correct, allowing him to escape disaster. Just as he left the stone chamber, the stagnant Yin Yang Reversal Formation resumed its operation. It seemed to have experienced some sort of backlash, running almost at full capacity. The underground fiend qi condensed and swept through the Formation, showing no mercy to any living beings.

If Meng Zhang were still inside the Formation at this time, he would hardly have any resistance against the raging fiend qi. Sacrifices and gains, knowing what to give up is crucial; without knowing what to let go of, he wouldn't have obtained the Jade Soul Fluid and might even lose his life.

Chapter 50: Eliminates the trace

After experiencing the tremendous changes within the Formation, Meng Zhang was still trembling with fear. He had come dangerously close to being trapped inside the Formation, but thankfully, his quickness had saved him from that fate. Although Meng Zhang had successfully obtained the treasures this time, his Soul had suffered some injuries. However, he couldn't focus on that at the moment and planned to deal with it later when he returned.

Rather than hurrying to leave, Meng Zhang wanted to erase any traces of his presence here. The fact that such a Formation was set up, providing precious materials to refine the Jade Soul Fluid, indicated that the owner of the Formation not only possessed great power but also immense wealth.

Furthermore, Twin Success Valley originally owned this mining cave, which was later abandoned and utilized by the Ghost Path cultivators. Meng Zhang didn't know the role Twin Success Valley played in this and whether they had any connection with the Ghost Path cultivators. However, he didn't have the time or interest to investigate it now.

In general, identifying a person for ordinary individuals and regular cultivators relied on their appearance, physical characteristics, voice, and so on. These features were part of the physical body and not hard to change. However, powerful cultivators had other means of identification.

A more advanced method was to identify each person's unique true qi characteristics. Just like how there were no two identical leaves in the world, even if individuals cultivated the same technique in

the same environment, their true qi would possess unique differences due to their individual constitutions. When true qi was activated, it emitted a distinct aura that made identification easier.

An even more advanced method was to identify a person's Soul. Each person's Soul was unique, and the Soul's aura was nearly impossible to change.

Meng Zhang watched the Yin Yang Reversal Formation that was currently running, the rampant underground fiend qi swirling within the Formation, and it was engulfing all the auras within, including the one left behind when he used Divine Soul Left the Body. When he entered the Formation, no one saw him. Now, he only needed to deal with the true qi auras leaked while he was killing Ghosts on his way here.

Meng Zhang slowly walked back along the path he came from. Whenever he passed places where he had taken action, he would take out a pile of talismans and randomly shoot them around. Techniques like Golden Sword Art, Earth Dragon Art, Fireball Art, and more bombarded the surroundings of the mining cave.

Fortunately, Meng Zhang had prepared well in advance and purchased enough talismans from Shi Weiming in Singing Sand City. The various spells stirred the surrounding spiritual energy, completely concealing Meng Zhang's true qi aura.

Moreover, these powerful techniques wreaked havoc, causing parts of the mine to collapse. The places where Meng Zhang had passed were all covered by collapsed earth and rocks.

By coincidence, when Meng Zhang reached a corner in one of the mining tunnels, he first used an explosion talisman on a stone wall, creating a big hole. Then, he followed up with an Earth Dragon Art that caused the ground to collapse, revealing a hidden chamber below.

Planning to leave, Meng Zhang stopped and observed the situation, then jumped down into the secret chamber. Several dried corpses surrounded a stone table in the chamber, forming a circle.

On the table were three storage bags. After confirming that they were safe and without traps, Meng Zhang carefully examined them. To his surprise, they were ten-fold storage bags, a relatively rare type.

While a ten-fold storage bag held ten times the capacity of a regular one, its high price made it less cost-effective, so it was seldom used by cultivators in the Refining Qi stage.

These three storage bags were filled with various items, with the majority being White Hidden Earth Crystals. White Hidden Earth Crystals were rare companion minerals that highly condensed the essence of White Hidden Earth ore. They were encased in a hard shell, which required careful polishing to obtain the crystal inside. These White Hidden Earth Crystals varied in size, with the larger ones being bigger than an adult's fist, and the smaller ones being as small as a finger.

Unlike White Hidden Earth, which was abundant, White Hidden Earth Crystals were a more precious spiritual material. Flying Swan Sect, in particular, had always paid high prices for these crystals without any limit.

Meng Zhang couldn't understand how this abandoned White Hidden Earth mine had yielded so many White Hidden Earth Crystals. If Twin Success Valley had known this, they wouldn't have abandoned the mine. If news of this got out, Flying Swan Sect might have intervened without regard for face.

This time, when Meng Zhang entered the mine, he brought eight regular storage bags, and they were all filled with numerous gains. After ensuring that these three ten-fold storage bags had no markings or hidden imprints, Meng Zhang took them all with him. Following the same route, Meng Zhang returned to the hill at the mine's entrance. By now, the talismans he brought, aside from the Earth Tunneling Talisman, were mostly consumed.

Meng Zhang activated the Earth Tunneling Talisman to leave the mine from the back of the hill.

At this time, the sandstorm was still raging fiercely, and it had not dissipated yet. With the sandstorm blowing heavily, even the Red Feathered Eagles of the Zhao Family couldn't clearly observe the situation below.

The Zhao Family cultivators had to risk being discovered as they secretly approached Taiyi Sect to observe it more closely.

Luckily, everyone in Taiyi Sect was occupied with their own affairs, and no one noticed the hidden spies.

After nearly ten days, the sandstorm finally dissipated completely, and the Zhao Family cultivators resumed their monitoring activities, but this time without any disturbances.

At this point, Meng Zhang, who had been in seclusion all this time, had completely repaired his Soul's injuries.

Once his Soul was fully healed, he went to the underground chamber where the spirit vein's Spirit Eye was located beneath the Sect Master's quiet room.

It had been a while since he was here, and the chamber looked the same as before. The Spirit Eye inside also showed no changes. The Spiritsnake Spear, which he had used last time, was recovering its spirituality from the nourishing power of the Spirit Eye.

The human-sized gem still emitted a colorful light, and within it slept the Guardian Spirit General of Taiyi Sect from many years ago.

The remnants of these Guardian Spirit Generals, who were heavily injured, rested in the gem's inner space, gradually recovering with the help of the spirit vein's nourishing power. If not for external assistance, the recovery process would be unimaginably lengthy.

Meng Zhang risked everything to seize the Jade Soul Fluid not for himself but to help these sleeping Guardian Spirit Generals.