

Sect Master 611

Chapter 611: Convergence

After flying a considerable distance, Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General exchanged smiles. They both made discoveries and understood each other's intentions.

Daoist Master Black Fox spoke pleasantly on the surface, but in reality, he didn't trust Meng Zhang at all. He appeared generous and enthusiastic but was actually petty and scheming. Since leaving the black market, Meng Zhang and his companions noticed they had acquired an unexpected tail.

Surprisingly, the individual secretly trailing them displayed remarkable skills. Despite following them for a long distance, their presence remained undetected. Even a Gold Core stage cultivator might not have been able to discover them.

Meng Zhang was well aware that Dark Alliance cultivators, especially those in specialized roles like spies and assassins, might not have a strong Cultivation Base, but they possessed exceptional abilities in concealing their tracks and executing covert assassinations.

Luo Ye, as a Daoist Master, had average talents in this area and was not particularly skilled in these techniques. However, Jue Ying, the other Daoist Master, was completely different. She was a natural-born assassin with astounding talents, a willingness to put in effort, and remarkable proficiency in various related skills. Meng Zhang had witnessed her skills firsthand when she helped establish the Secret Hall in Taiyi Sect and taught An Moran.

Now, once again, he witnessed the capabilities of a Dark Alliance cultivator in this aspect. Unfortunately, this cultivator trailing them had picked the wrong target.

Meng Zhang, being a Diviner, had an astonishing Spiritual Awareness that was nearly impossible to deceive. As for Extreme Sword Spirit General, having survived from the prime days of Taiyi Sect until now, his true abilities and hidden cards were a mystery even to Meng Zhang, the Sect Master.

A mere Gold Core stage cultivator had no chance of stealthily trailing them without being detected. Meng Zhang didn't want to expose the pursuer at this moment; it wasn't the time to start a conflict. He soared into the sky with incredible speed, and Extreme Sword Spirit General followed closely without lagging behind.

Enduring the fierce gusts of wind, Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General continued ascending until they reached the area under the Nine Heavens before stopping their ascent. Only cultivators of Gold Corelate stage and above could gradually adapt to the special rules of the Nine Heavens.

For cultivators whose Cultivation Base fell short, forcefully entering the Nine Heavens would result in death. However, ascending to such heights was enough to shake off their pursuer, and there was no need to venture into the Nine Heavens.

The atmosphere in the high altitudes of Grand Dust World was harsh, and the raging gusts of wind hardly ever ceased. Unless one was a Primordial Spirit True Monarch, survival in such an environment required the continuous operation of True Essence and protective spells. Consequently, any trailing pursuers would either give up or reveal themselves.

Glancing back at the empty space behind them, Meng Zhang realized that the pursuer had wisely abandoned the chase.

Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General decided not to continue ascending but instead set their sights on the direction of Yuantu Great Prairie, flying through the high altitude like this was not an easy task for an extended period.

They flew a certain distance and then voluntarily lowered their altitude to a few hundred zhang (a zhang is an ancient Chinese unit of length equivalent to about 3.3 meters) above the ground. After all, their purpose of flying high had been achieved, and they had successfully shaken off their pursuers without wasting unnecessary energy.

The border between Yuantu Great Prairie and Jiuqu League was extremely long, meandering for tens of thousands of li (Chinese unit of distance, roughly 500 meters per li). Neither the Barbarian Clan nor the Jiuqu League could fortify and defend every inch of the border. The Jiuqu League adopted a strategy of focused defense, establishing defenses in certain key areas, especially where Third Rank spirit veins were present, relying on major cities like Dongyuan City for protection. These defense lines were divided into numerous sections, each entrusted to different sects and factions for defense.

If the Barbarian Clan launched an attack on a certain section of the defense line, nearby Jiuqu League cultivators would actively reinforce that area. The Barbarian Clan was skilled in offense but lacked proficiency in defense. Even when they were relatively weaker or at a disadvantage, they would still take the initiative to attack. Only the Jade Sword Sect, facing the direction of the Barbarian Clan, would often take the initiative to launch preemptive strikes.

In fact, the defense line held by the Jade Sword Sect was not only the most stable but also slowly and firmly advancing deeper into Yuantu Great Prairie. In the past, to provide a retreat route for Taiyi Sect, Meng Zhang had purchased a piece of land that Jade Sword Sect had captured in the direction of Yuantu Great Prairie.

Apart from that, even the first sect of the Jiuqu League, Azure Origin Sect, rarely launched attacks. When facing the Barbarian Clan's army, defense and counterattacks were their most commonly used strategies.

Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General's destination this time was a defensive stronghold situated on Yuantu Great Prairie, located between the Barbarian Clan's army and the Jiuqu League. It was a small mountain on the grassland, with a Second Rank spirit vein embedded within it. The mountaintop had been flattened, and several structures were built on it. From the foot of the mountain to the summit, a Second Rank protective formation covered the entire area.

Based on the different grades of spirit veins, the Jiuqu League had established several strongholds of various sizes on Yuantu Great Prairie. During peaceful times, these strongholds collected resources from the surrounding areas and exploited the spirit veins beneath them. During times of war, these forward strongholds provided early warnings for the rear. Some of the larger strongholds could also serve as support points for the entire defense line, delaying or even blocking the enemy's advances.

Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General didn't enter the stronghold directly but rather landed a few dozen li away to the west of the stronghold, waiting silently. Both of them were Gold Core cultivators and had great patience, so they waited in silence for more than two days.

On the third night, Luo Ye Daoist Master and Jue Ying Daoist Master flew in from the west. Even before getting close, both sides noticed each other. The four individuals gathered together, finally reuniting.

After bidding farewell to Meng Zhang and the others in Dongyuan City, Luo Ye Daoist Master and Jue Ying Daoist Master had stayed in the city for more than a day to avoid arousing suspicions from Daoist Master Black Fox. Only after they were certain that there were no pursuers behind them did they change their flight direction and fly here to meet Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General.

Jue Ying Daoist Master was an exceptionally skilled scout and assassin within the Dark Alliance. Nobody dared to track her secretly in front of her; it was all in vain. She could guarantee that their tracks were not exposed.

Before this, Luo Ye Daoist Master had only told Meng Zhang part of the plan. Now, upon their arrival, she disclosed the remaining details of the plan without omitting anything. According to the plan, they wouldn't foolishly venture into the deep Yuantu Great Prairie with their true identities. Nor would they directly infiltrate and personally experience the Barbarian Clan's vigilance capabilities. They would conceal their identities and movements, infiltrating deep into Yuantu Great Prairie in a very special way, and then act opportunistically.

Before this, Luo Ye Daoist Master had already used her connections to arrange for skilled individuals to be responsible for supporting and covering them.

Chapter 612: The different kind in demonic cultivation

Luo Ye Daoist Master landed with the crowd on the ground, arriving next to a nearby swamp. The four of them waited in this place and occasionally exchanged a few words. After waiting for a long time, it was probably midnight when a figure descended from the sky and landed in front of the group.

This was a middle-aged man with a cold and stern face, tall and thin in stature. In fact, he hadn't even landed yet when Meng Zhang and the others noticed him approaching. However, seeing Luo Ye Daoist Master's calm expression, they knew that he was someone she had arranged to meet, so they didn't react differently.

The middle-aged man hadn't even stabilized his footing when Luo Ye Daoist Master took the initiative to greet him warmly, saying, "Senior Brother."

The middle-aged man didn't respond with words, just nodded, then took out four sets of green hooded cloaks and casually threw them to Luo Ye Daoist Master. "When it's dawn, you'll mix into the ranks outside the stronghold."

Before anyone could react, the middle-aged man soared into the sky and disappeared in an instant. Throughout the encounter, the man didn't waste any words and didn't even spare a glance at others.

Watching the figure vanish, Luo Ye Daoist Master sighed and distributed the four hoods to everyone. Meng Zhang cleared his throat and walked up to Luo Ye Daoist Master.

"Senior, I shouldn't have spoken up, but do you know about the background of this Senior Brother of yours?"

"Sect Master Meng, are you asking if I know that my Senior Brother practices Demonic Cultivation?" Luo YeDaoist Master said matter-of-factly.

Luo YeDaoist Master's frankness left Meng Zhang unsure of how to respond. Demonic Cultivators don't have any distinguishing marks on their faces; on the contrary, they are skilled at concealing their identities and whereabouts. Otherwise, as enemies of the Cultivation World, they would have been exterminated by righteous cultivators long ago. How could they still roam freely, harming the world?

Meng Zhang, being a Diviner, possessed an exceptionally keen Spiritual Awareness. Especially after the last time he killed Demonic Cultivator Ye Feifan and received a blessing from heaven, he became highly sensitive to Demonic Cultivators. He could almost smell the foul odor emanating from them from a distance.

The methods Demonic Cultivators used to hide their identities couldn't escape his notice. In his eyes, the vast majority of Demonic Cultivators, regardless of their Cultivation Base, were virtually transparent.

As soon as the middle-aged man had landed and appeared before him, Meng Zhang had already discerned his identity. If it weren't for considering Luo YeDaoist Master's reputation, he would have acted earlier.

Even cultivators from prestigious sects secretly collaborating with Demonic Cultivators wasn't uncommon, let alone someone like Luo YeDaoist Master, who came from the Dark Alliance. It wasn't surprising for her to have connections with Demonic Cultivation.

Meng Zhang trusted Luo YeDaoist Master but not Demonic Cultivation. Hence, he asked delicately.

Luo YeDaoist Master sighed deeply. "Truly unexpected, you were able to see through Senior Brother's identity at a glance. Even an ordinary Primordial Spirit True Monarch might not be able to figure him out. I don't know if it's your Taiyi Sect's inheritance that's remarkable or if you're just too perceptive."

"Many outsiders have misunderstandings about our Dark Alliance, and that's not entirely unfounded. Our Dark Alliance's image and methods sometimes raise suspicion. However, please remember one thing: although at times members of our Dark Alliance may have some dealings with Demonic Cultivation, fundamentally, we are sworn enemies who cannot coexist."

As Luo YeDaoist Master spoke, her tone was serious and earnest.

After hearing Luo YeDaoist Master's words, Meng Zhang didn't react immediately, but Extreme Sword Spirit General on the side sneered disdainfully.

"Your Dark Alliance's relationship with Demonic Cultivation is not merely limited to collusion, right? As far as I know, many Demonic Cultivators originate from your Dark Alliance."

Extreme Sword Spirit General's words made Meng Zhang's face show a trace of surprise. Colluding with Demonic Cultivation was one thing, but becoming a Demonic Cultivator oneself was an entirely different matter.

The Demonic Cultivation lineage comes from beyond the heavens, and Demonic Cultivators are seeds sown by extraterritorial great demons in various worlds. They excavate the world's foundations, poison and corrode the world, preparing it for the arrival of the great demons, ultimately demonizing the entire world. Demonic Cultivators are not only enemies of the Cultivation World but enemies of this world as well.

No matter who they were before, once they step into the demonic path and become a Demonic Cultivator, they gradually lose themselves and become puppets of the demonic path.

While the Dark Alliance might have done many wrong things and had numerous shady dealings, they still depended on the Cultivation World. The members of the Dark Alliance lived in this world, and even the most insane cultivators would not want to see the entire world being demonized.

If the Dark Alliance were to completely become a force of Demonic Cultivation, no matter how powerful they were, they would have no place in the Cultivation World.

"This Senior from Taiyi Sect is indeed knowledgeable, knowing even many of our sect's secrets."

Extreme Sword Spirit General and other Guardian Spirit Generals' backgrounds were already known to many high-ranking members of Taiyi Sect, but nobody would intentionally spread that information.

Meng Zhang had a very close master-disciple relationship with Luo YeDaoist Master and could almost be called life-and-death friends. However, Meng Zhang was still clear about the separation between public and private matters and wouldn't easily disclose the sect's secrets.

Luo YeDaoist Master didn't know Extreme Sword Spirit General's background; she only knew that he was a Senior from Taiyi Sect, which was why she was surprised. Old-timers like Extreme Sword Spirit General had rich experiences and knowledge, and nobody knew how many secrets of the Cultivation World he was privy to. However, since he knew about Demonic Cultivators from their sect, he should also know that they were different from regular Demonic Cultivators; they were a kind of anomaly among them.

"They do this to completely eradicate Demonic Cultivation and defeat the demonic path; that's why they willingly embrace it and become part of it," Luo YeDaoist Master said, and her tone contained a hint of melancholy.

Extreme Sword Spirit General fell silent for a moment before saying with a hint of irritation, "Once you step onto the demonic path, you can never turn back. Initially, they might retain some self-control, but as they delve deeper into it, they will eventually lose themselves."

"You say they are anomalies among Demonic Cultivators, but one day, they will become indistinguishable from the rest of them."

"Attempting to defeat Demonic Cultivation and resist the demonic path through this method is simply wishful thinking."

For once, the usually reserved and reticent Extreme Sword Spirit General spoke so much. Having spent a long time with Extreme Sword Spirit General, Meng Zhang had some understanding of him, but he couldn't fathom why today's events seemed to be troubling him.

Extreme Sword Spirit General's words also touched Luo YeDaoist Master. She sighed softly and said, "Perhaps the Senior is right, and this approach is indeed wishful thinking. But people have their own aspirations. Since someone has chosen this path, there must be some reason, some significance."

Extreme Sword Spirit General didn't continue speaking, whether he was convinced by Luo YeDaoist Master's words or simply didn't feel like saying more.

For a while, the atmosphere in the scene turned somewhat peculiar and fell into silence.

Chapter 613: Infiltration

Sensing the tense atmosphere, Meng Zhang coughed heavily.

"Well, some of the things you're discussing are beyond my understanding. Could you explain them to me?"

Meng Zhang's intention wasn't just to ease the tension but also to clarify his own doubts.

Since the Extreme Sword Spirit General showed no intention of speaking, Luo Ye Daoist Master took the initiative to explain. These matters, though top secrets of the Dark Alliance, were known to the Extreme Sword Spirit General, thus making secrecy unnecessary.

How the Extreme Sword Spirit General came to know these secrets was not pursued by Luo Ye Daoist Master, nor could it be.

It's widely known that the Demonic Path inheritance in the Grand Dust World originated from beyond the heavens. The great demons from beyond used various means to spread the Demonic Path to this world, nurturing Demonic Cultivation.

All cultivators who practiced the Demonic Path would ultimately become devoted to it, serving the great demons with unwavering loyalty.

The power of Demonic Cultivation was undeniable. With mysterious techniques and diverse methods, their combat abilities far exceeded cultivators of the same level.

Apart from the chosen disciples from major cultivation sects, ordinary cultivators often couldn't match a Demonic Cultivator of the same level.

Demonic Cultivation brought numerous disasters to the world. Each Demon Catastrophe caused chaos in the Cultivation World, leading to widespread suffering.

Demonic Cultivation had become a cancer to this world, a source of endless calamity. Thus, effectively restraining Demonic Cultivation was a consensus among many cultivators.

The top sects in the Cultivation World each had their own methods to subdue demons. However, these were closely-guarded secrets, inaccessible to the average cultivator.

Out of desperation, some cultivators began to study the Demonic Path techniques, leading to the concept of "using the demonic to control the demonic."

This idea gave rise to a special kind of Demonic Cultivation. They practiced the Demonic Path but not to serve it. Instead, their goal was to eradicate Demonic Cultivators and eliminate the Demonic Path.

For various reasons, the number of such Demonic Cultivators began to grow.

The Dark Alliance, being a congregation of the darker aspects of the Cultivation World, had many cultivators who had encountered Demonic Cultivation. Some of them turned to the Demonic Path, becoming this special kind of Demonic Cultivator, an anomaly within their ranks.

These cultivators had noble ideals, willing to sacrifice themselves, which was admirable. However, their ends were often not pleasant.

If these cultivators weren't slain by righteous cultivators, and somehow managed to grow, they would eventually fall completely into the Demonic Path, losing themselves and becoming true members of it.

According to Luo Ye Daoist Master, due to certain reasons, many in the Dark Alliance studied Demonic Path techniques, aiming to overcome its pitfalls and avoid tragedy.

The Dark Alliance would promptly eliminate any of its members who completely fell to the demonic, losing themselves.

The masters in the Dark Alliance had made significant progress in their study of Demonic Path techniques over the years. The modified Demonic Path techniques they practiced were much safer, not as prone to leading practitioners astray.

As Luo Ye Daoist Master reached this part of the explanation, the listening Extreme Sword Spirit General scoffed disdainfully, clearly unimpressed.

Luo Ye Daoist Master didn't get angry but patiently explained further. Many in the Dark Alliance practiced the Demonic Path out of necessity.

Her senior brother, Daoist Master Withered Branches, had once battled Demonic Cultivators alongside Luo Ye Daoist Master before reaching the Gold Core stage.

Daoist Master Withered Branches, protecting Luo Ye Daoist Master, suffered grave injuries from a Demonic Cultivator and was entangled with demonic energy.

Luo Ye Daoist Master, too, was wounded by Demonic Cultivation and tormented by the demonic energy.

Faced with similar situations, the two made different choices.

Daoist Master Luo Ye exiled himself to the Endless Sea of Sand, where he ceaselessly battled against demonic energy, enduring its relentless assault. Meanwhile, Daoist Master Withered Branches, having switched to the Demonic Path after renouncing his former ways, actively absorbed and refined the demonic energy within him, evolving into a unique practitioner of Demonic Cultivation.

Later, Luo Ye encountered Meng Zhang and, with Meng Zhang's assistance, who was practicing the "Sun-Moon Wheel Turning Sutra," not only expelled the demonic energy but also preserved his foundational strength unharmed. Though Luo Ye was reborn and made significant breakthroughs in his cultivation base, he still couldn't match the cultivation speed of Daoist Master Withered Branches.

Years passed, and Luo Ye achieved only a mid-stage Gold Core cultivation base, while Withered Branches reached the late stage of Gold Core. Such cultivators who actively practiced Demonic Path techniques were the Dark Alliance's top secret. Luo Ye wouldn't have known this if not for his connection with Withered Branches.

Moreover, to sever ties—at least superficially—these Demonic Path practitioners had no further contact with the Dark Alliance. They had long departed from the Alliance, severing all relations.

By seeking Withered Branches' help through old connections, Luo Ye actually breached the rules of the Dark Alliance. However, given the significance of a certain treasure, he felt compelled to do so. Fortunately, Withered Branches, remembering their past camaraderie, agreed to offer limited assistance.

Luo Ye explained all this to reassure Meng Zhang, who had bravely accepted Daoist Master Black Fox's risky proposal, mainly to assist her. Hearing Luo Ye's detailed account, Meng Zhang no longer harbored any doubts. Even the disdainful Extreme Sword Spirit General didn't object to or refute Luo Ye's explanation or the plan.

The four waited until dawn was about to break, then left for a base nearby. Withered Branches provided four cloaks, practical low-level magic tools that concealed their appearances, masked their auras, and helped in identifying each other.

Upon reaching the foot of a hill, they found a Second Rank flying ship, specially designed for cargo, much larger than typical ships of its class, with ample internal space. Many cultivators, dressed similarly, had already gathered there. Most were moving cargo, while some boarded the ship empty-handed.

Despite the crowd, there was hardly any conversation, mostly just gestures. They seemed indifferent to strangers, focused solely on their tasks. Meng Zhang's group, cloaked, went unchallenged and unquestioned.

Luo Ye, seemingly familiar with the place, silently led them onto the ship. In the surrounding darkness, similarly dressed cultivators occasionally emerged, joining the crowd. Like Meng Zhang's group, many boarded the ship empty-handed, their cargo—if any—concealed in their storage magic tools.

In the Jiuqu League, due to a shortage of Void Nether Stones, storage capacity was limited. For transporting large quantities of goods, they relied on large-scale Demonic Beasts or, as in this case, flying ships.

Chapter 614: Smuggling

The same type of Second Rank flying boat, there are differences in quality. The Second Rank flying boat that Meng Zhang and the others are currently on can be considered a top-notch one among Second Rank flying boats. In terms of cargo capacity, it is even stronger than some Third Rank flying boats.

This Second Rank flying boat is massive, docked at the foot of a small mountain, and its highest point almost reaches halfway up the mountainside. Luo Ye Daoist Master had previously told Meng Zhang and the others that this is a smuggling flying boat specifically operating between the territory of the extraterritorial Barbarian Clan and the Jiuqu League.

The Yuantu Great Prairie is vast and abundant in various resources. Especially, there are many unique spiritual materials that are indispensable to the Jiuqu League. Although the Barbarian Clan is ferocious and ruthless, they are also intelligent beings. As long as a creature possesses intelligence, communication is possible.

The products from the Jiuqu League, including pills, spiritual rice, and spiritual fruits, are all in demand by the Barbarian Clan. As a result, a group of smugglers emerged, secretly shuttling between the two major forces, engaging in various forms of smuggling.

After the cultivation forces that originally occupied the Yuantu Great Prairie were defeated by the Barbarian Clan, many remnants were left stranded in the peripheral areas of the prairie. The Jiuqu League, while confronting the Barbarian Clan, did not forget their strength. Even the smallest force can be valuable, especially when these forces also hold deep enmity with the Barbarian Clan.

There are many small outposts like the one nearby, located on the defensive line of the Jiuqu League against the Barbarian Clan. With the Jiuqu League's manpower, it is challenging to manage them all. Therefore, the high-level members of the Jiuqu League entrusted these outposts to the remnants of the defeated forces for operation.

On one hand, this provided them with a foothold so that they wouldn't wander around and cause trouble for the Jiuqu League's Cultivation World. On the other hand, it allowed the Jiuqu League to utilize their strength and reinforce the defenses along the frontlines.

Over the years, these remnants seemed to have forgotten their deep-seated hatred towards the Barbarian Clan and started doing business with them. The smuggling flying boat docked near the outpost, and to say that the cultivators inside the outpost were unaware of the boat's true nature would be self-deception.

Luo YeDaoist Master thoroughly investigated all the details before taking action. She told Meng Zhang that the cultivation family stationed at this outpost had its ancestors exterminated by the extraterritorial Barbarian Clan, and only a few remnants managed to escape here.

Feuds and grudges cannot sustain a family; neither can they allow it to thrive and grow. Only a continuous flow of cultivation resources can be the foundation for a family's existence. In the face of substantial profits, what does the blood feud matter?

In fact, not only these remnants, but even within the Jiuqu League itself, many forces are involved in smuggling with the Barbarian Clan. Many individuals are not content with the profits from transporting resources; they even send talismans, magic tools, and Mechanical Creations to the Barbarian Clan's controlled areas.

Such actions are tantamount to supporting the enemy. It is similar to how Meng Zhang's past life as an arms dealer sold weapons to enemy countries during wartime. The smuggling business between the Barbarian Clan and the Jiuqu League is highly profitable and involves a wide range of people. It has formed a stable chain of interests that even the high-ranking members of the Jiuqu League

cannot easily touch. The more prominent the force, the more they pursue profits, and the deeper they get entangled in these dealings.

The black market naturally wouldn't miss out on such a big business opportunity. They also got involved in the smuggling trade. However, Luo Ye Daoist Master didn't want her colleagues in the black market to know her whereabouts, so she preferred seeking help from her fellow disciple who had fallen into the demonic path rather than using the black market channels.

More and more passengers boarded the flying boat, and the upper decks were almost filled to capacity. Such a cargo-carrying flying boat would undoubtedly have poor conditions inside and would not be suitable for transporting a large number of living people.

On the highest deck of the flying boat were several connected halls specially designed to accommodate cultivators. Over a hundred cultivators were squeezed into these halls, which were far from spacious. Cultivators require a certain amount of personal space due to their unique nature, and being in such a crowded place made many of them uneasy.

Some experienced individuals, clearly veterans who had taken such flying boats numerous times, casually found a corner and sat down without caring about appearances. Meng Zhang and his group found a secluded corner and walked over together.

Meng Zhang stood at the outermost edge of the corner, intentionally releasing a bit of his aura. The cultivators on the flying boat were mostly at the Foundation Building stage, with some older Refining Qi stage cultivators. The aura he emitted easily intimidated the nearby cultivators, making them unconsciously move away, leaving a considerable space for Meng Zhang and his companions.

Meng Zhang knew that most cultivators traveling between the two factions were not kind-hearted individuals, and many were ruthless and greedy. Showing a bit of strength could reduce unnecessary trouble.

Aside from the upper deck, the lower decks of the flying boat were used to carry cargo. Camel teams arrived from all directions, delivering numerous goods. Specially designated cultivators were responsible for unloading the cargo.

Sealed boxes with various talismans were carried down to the lower decks and quickly filled up all available space. The camel teams that had unloaded all the goods departed under the cover of the night.

The cargo hold was nearly full, and it was almost time to depart. The cultivator in charge of the flying boat ordered its takeoff, regardless of whether everyone had arrived or not.

After the flying boat took off into the night sky and shortly encountered the first light of dawn, it flew higher and higher, entering the depths of the clouds. Taking advantage of the cloud cover, it headed towards the Barbarian Clan's controlled territory.

The cargo-laden flying boat was heavy, so its flight speed wasn't fast, but it surprisingly remained stable.

Meng Zhang and his group remained silent in the corner, meditating to conserve their energy. Meng Zhang casually surveyed his surroundings. All the cultivators on the flying boat were draped in identical cloaks, concealing their true identities. Many cautious cultivators had an additional layer of disguise hidden beneath their cloaks.

Using Deception Breaking Eye, Meng Zhang effortlessly saw through the cloak's concealment. Even the most skilled cultivators at the Foundation Building stage couldn't deceive Meng Zhang's keen eyes. He carefully observed the true faces of most of the cultivators on the ship and memorized them.

Among this group, there were a few individuals whose identities Meng Zhang couldn't easily discern. After a bit of effort, he roughly identified one of them as Luo Ye, Daoist Master's senior, Daoist Master Withered Branches. The others were all Gold Core stage cultivators.

The journey of the flying boat proceeded smoothly without encountering any obstacles. The patrols of the Jiuqu League and the Barbarian Clan near the boundary between them seemed to have silently disappeared.

Chapter 615: Barbarian Clan

In order to achieve this, it's not as simple as having information within both sides' patrol teams and knowing the patrol routes. Meng Zhang couldn't help but maliciously speculate that high-ranking members of both patrol teams must be involved in smuggling. Otherwise, the flight path of the flying boat wouldn't be so perfect, precisely avoiding all the patrol teams.

It's important to note that the Jiuqu League guards both inside and outside the defensive lines very tightly. The teams that patrol regularly and irregularly hardly leave any loopholes.

The flying boat doesn't travel in a straight line; instead, it winds and turns, making several large circles and deliberately avoiding many areas. Luo YeDaoist Master had thoroughly investigated these smuggling routes beforehand.

Those areas they circumvented are the regions patrolled by the Jade Sword Sect cultivators. The members of the Jade Sword Sect are fanatic about their duty and difficult to bribe. They never give face to anyone, even if it's a merchant group claiming to be from the Azure Origin Sect; they would dare to stop and inspect them.

Jade Sword Sect holds a deep hatred for smuggling, and they punish anyone they catch severely. All smuggling merchant groups, no matter how powerful their background, will steer far away from the Jade Sword Sect's Sword Cultivators.

When Meng Zhang heard Luo YeDaoist Master speak admiringly of the Jade Sword Sect's Sword Cultivators, he still had some doubts in his mind. Were these Sword Cultivators truly so upright and incorruptible?

The cargo flying boat wasn't particularly fast, and due to taking many detours, it flew in the high sky for a whole day before reaching its destination.

As dusk approached, accompanied by a gentle evening breeze, the waist-high green grass swayed irregularly. The night on the vast grassland held a unique charm.

At this moment, no cultivator had the leisure to enjoy the beauty slowly. The flying boat had long passed through the Jiuqu League's defense line, and they were now in the extraterritorial Barbarian Clan's controlled territory.

The enormous flying boat descended slowly and landed next to the most conspicuous hillock in the vicinity. As soon as the flying boat touched the ground, the cultivators who had been on board the entire day stretched their bodies and began to move.

Some more impatient ones were already prepared to leap off the flying boat.

Just then, a burly figure suddenly appeared in the sky. He held a long flagpole, which was more than three zhang (ten meters) in length, almost surpassing his own height. At the top of the flagpole, there hung a large red flag, fluttering gently in the night breeze.

With a wave of the flag, a squad of elite Barbarian Clan soldiers appeared on the otherwise empty grassland. They rode war wolves and silently surrounded the flying boat, forming a tight blockade.

The sudden appearance of the Barbarian Clan soldiers caught the cultivators on the flying boat off guard. Moreover, the imposing manner of the Barbarian Clan soldiers and the special air of killing caused many cultivators to startle, feeling somewhat uneasy.

However, Meng Zhang and his three companions remained unfazed, leisurely surveying the surrounding Barbarian Clan soldiers.

Meng Zhang had long heard about the extraterritorial Barbarian Clan. Especially after Taiyi Sect joined the Jiuqu League, he specifically gathered intelligence about this matter. After all, being a member of the Jiuqu League meant that at any time, they might be sent to the Yuantu Great Prairie to fight against the Barbarian Clan's army.

The extraterritorial Barbarian Clan is a race where every member is a soldier, with an innate inclination for invasion and formidable combat strength.

Ordinary barbarian foot soldiers can match Refining Qi stage cultivators; barbarian captains are on par with Foundation Building stage cultivators, and barbarian generals have strength comparable to Gold Core stage cultivators. As for the Barbarian King, they can overpower Primordial Spirit True Monarchs.

As a combative race, the Barbarian Clan is highly organized and disciplined, adept at coordinated combat. Especially with their unique characteristics, the Barbarian Clan army is much more suited for the battlefield than a cultivator army.

A regular cultivator team facing off against the Barbarian Clan army would be at a disadvantage. Only those specialized in combat, such as dao soldiers trained by major sects, can confront the Barbarian Clan army head-on.

However, within the Jiuqu League, how many sects can actually train dao soldiers? Even if these sects exhaust all their efforts, how many dao soldiers can they produce?

If not for powerful sects like the Azure Origin Sect and Sword Cultivators from the Jade Sword Sect within the Jiuqu League, the league might not be able to suppress the Barbarian Clan army.

The Barbarian Clan member in the sky appears burly, but their movements are delicate and adept at concealing their presence. Before revealing himself, apart from Meng Zhang and a few others on the flying boat, nobody else noticed his existence.

The large flag in his hand is an army formation magic tool, complemented by Barbarian Clan secret techniques, allowing the barbarian soldiers to approach silently.

Cultivators involved in smuggling between the two major forces are generally not virtuous individuals; most of them are unruly rogues.

However, the display of power from the Barbarian Clan just now was enough to intimidate everyone and make them cautious.

Although the Barbarian Clan is fierce, they also understand the significance of smuggling merchant groups. After asserting their dominance, a Barbarian Clan leader naturally came forward to warmly receive the cultivators.

Some cultivators on the flying boat left with the Barbarian Clan soldiers, while others, with the assistance of the Barbarian Clan soldiers, began to move the cargo.

This is the location where the smuggling merchant group has come to a stop. If they rely solely on the merchant group's assistance, it will be difficult to continue further.

Daoist Master Withered Branches did not mingle with these cultivators. With his two companions, he headed towards the lower cabin.

Luo YeDaoist Master gestured in secret, and Meng Zhang and his group followed closely behind him.

Several other cultivators on the flying boat, dressed similarly to them, also followed suit.

The cultivators on the flying boat, including the guards, clearly feared Daoist Master Withered Branches greatly. Wherever he went, all the cultivators scattered, and no one dared to block his path.

Daoist Master Withered Branches remained silent and quickly arrived outside a cabin below.

With a wave of his hand, including Luo Ye Daoist Master and the four of them, the group of cultivators behind him entered the cabin.

Inside the cabin were heaps of large boxes taller than a person.

Without needing any orders from Daoist Master Withered Branches, everyone started to carry the boxes.

Those with greater strength carried four or five boxes at a time, while those with less strength carried two or three boxes each. Following Daoist Master Withered Branches, who had his hands free, they left the cabin and arrived at the upper deck of the flying boat.

Daoist Master Withered Branches flew into the air and nodded to a barbarian general. Then, with a wave of his hand, everyone followed, flying into the sky and trailing behind him, heading deep into the Yuantu Great Prairie.

Meng Zhang held four large boxes in his hands and felt the weight was significant. The four of them used secret techniques to suppress their aura and cultivation base, only displaying the strength of Foundation Building stage cultivators, similar to the other cultivators carrying boxes.

Meng Zhang was curious about what was inside the boxes that required a group of Foundation Building stage cultivators to laboriously carry. The outer layer of the boxes was covered with a layer of forbidden spirit soil, which could isolate all spiritual fluctuations inside. On the outside of the box's outer wall, there were inscriptions and restrictions of various kinds, preventing any attempts at peeking inside and isolating the contents from the outside world.

Chapter 616: Treasure House

The treasure house of the black market is located near Lake-Blue City in the depths of Yuantu Great Prairie. Before the extraterritorial invasion by the Barbarian Clan, Lake-Blue City was a prosperous metropolis known throughout Yuantu Great Prairie. It was a hub where cultivation resources gathered from the deep regions of Yuantu Great Prairie were assembled and then transported to Jiuqu League and even Crossing Severing Mountain Range. Additionally, various goods from the outside world destined for Yuantu Great Prairie also had to pass through this major city. In the Cultivation World, the more developed and prosperous a place is in terms of commerce and trade, the more likely it is to have a black market.

The Dark Alliance initially established the black market in Lake-Blue City, making it one of the largest institutions in Yuantu Great Prairie. Daoist Master Withered Branches led the group of

people transporting goods and flew straight ahead. Meng Zhang had several moments when he wanted to use his abilities to find out what was inside the boxes. However, after careful consideration, he suppressed his curiosity. Both Daoist Master Withered Branches and his two companions were not to be underestimated. Meng Zhang might be considered a strong Gold Core Daoist Master, but in the face of Demonic Cultivation, he couldn't afford to be careless. If he were to use his Divine Ability, a group of powerful Demonic Cultivators might be alerted, and once his identity was exposed, he had no idea what consequences he would face.

Daoist Master Withered Branches was willing to help Luo Ye Daoist Master due to their previous relationship, but other Demonic Cultivators might not be as accommodating. Besides, loyalty and bonds in this world were unreliable. To avoid unnecessary complications, Meng Zhang decided not to meddle.

The journey was not fast due to the heavy cargo they were carrying. The entire team flew at a moderate speed through the air. On the ground, squads of Barbarian Clan soldiers rode battle wolves, patrolling the vast grasslands. In the sky, Barbarian Clan squads rode flying eagles, constantly patrolling the area. Occasionally, one or two formidable Barbarian Generals could be seen flying by.

The defense in the Barbarian Clan-controlled areas was quite strict. Although the Barbarian Clan excelled in offense and often used attacks instead of defense, it didn't mean they left their controlled areas defenseless.

After several days of flying, Daoist Master Withered Branches and his team finally reached their destination. Lake-Blue City originally sat atop a Third Rank spirit vein. After the Barbarian Clan occupied the area, they destroyed the original city and established a camp as an important stronghold. In the countless realms of the heavens, regardless of race or Cultivation Base, the vast majority of living beings yearned for the spiritual energy of heaven and earth and pursued spirit veins on the land.

Within Lake-Blue City, there even existed a Barbarian King, a powerhouse capable of surpassing a Primordial Spirit True Monarch. If he were alarmed, Meng Zhang's team would have no place to bury themselves.

Fortunately, the treasure house of the black market was not located within Lake-Blue City, so Meng Zhang and his companions didn't need to enter the city. With a Primordial Spirit True Monarch's divine sense covering a vast range, the Barbarian King, being of the same level, naturally possessed a similar level of Divine Ability. It was challenging for them to hide anything from him, but due to the abundance of information, the Barbarian King wouldn't pay attention to every little thing; he would only focus on the anomalies.

There was a close connection between Demonic Cultivation and the Barbarian Clan. The transport team led by Daoist Master Withered Branches had obviously been here many times before. They were familiar with most of the Barbarian Clan patrol teams they encountered along the way, so they were left undisturbed, free to come and go.

Arriving near Lake-Blue City, the situation remained the same. From ordinary barbarian soldiers to powerful barbarian generals, no one interfered with them. Seeking help from Daoist Master Withered Branches was a wise move by Luo Ye Daoist Master, which saved them from many troubles.

Around Lake-Blue City, the area was divided into different regions, each belonging to different tribes. Camps stood around Lake-Blue City, with each camp surrounded by various totem poles of different sizes. For the Barbarian Clan, these totem poles served as both magic tools and objects of worship. After years of worship by the Barbarian Clan, many totem poles were filled with a strong aura of incense. These totem poles served as the best warning mechanism, even surpassing the formations and talismans of Cultivators. If any strangers approached the camp, it would easily trigger these totem poles and raise the alarm.

Before, Daoist Master Black Fox organized several teams to come to Lake-Blue City to seek treasures. These teams, all consisting of Gold Core Daoist Masters, not only possessed strong combat capabilities but were also skilled in concealing their tracks and infiltrating secretly. However, these teams either triggered the totem poles and alerted the Barbarian Clan's forces to surround them or were exposed by the Barbarian King himself. This led to them being attacked by the Barbarian King.

Thanks to Daoist Master Withered Branches' help, Luo Ye Daoist Master's team managed to approach the area smoothly. The delivery point was outside a nearby camp. Daoist Master Withered Branches led his team to land on the ground, and soon, Barbarian Clan soldiers came to greet them, taking over the goods and carrying them into the nearby camp.

There is a Barbarian Clan member with a face covered in oil paint and a much stronger build than a bear, coming to receive Daoist Master Withered Branches. The voice of Daoist Master Withered Branches sounded in Luo Ye Daoist Master's ears, "I can only take you this far, the rest is up to you. The Barbarian King guarding Lake-Blue City will receive us later, and I will try to distract his attention. The opportunity is only once; you must seize it."

Except for Luo Ye Daoist Master, no one else heard this voice. Daoist Master Withered Branches and his two companions chatted with the barbarian general, leaving the area and flying toward Lake-Blue City.

The other cultivators left behind were not qualified to enter Lake-Blue City. They separated into small groups and rested in the surroundings, patiently waiting for Daoist Master Withered Branches' return. The Barbarian Clan soldiers were too lazy to pay attention to them and left on their own.

After flying with such heavy cargo for several days, each of them felt physically weak and extremely tired. The area seemed safe, and the cultivators started to meditate.

When confirming that nobody noticed them, Luo Ye Daoist Master led everyone in using the Earth Escape Spell to dive into the ground and move stealthily to the side. Although the Earth Escape Spell was discreet, it wasn't foolproof. The monitoring range of the totem poles extended from the sky to the ground and even deep underground, making it challenging to find a loophole. However, their current location was outside the range of the totem poles' alertness. This was a deliberate adjustment made by the Barbarian Clan after they discovered the arrival of the transport team to prevent these cultivators from accidentally triggering the alarm.

Meng Zhang identified the direction and led everyone to covertly move towards the destination. The four Gold Core Daoist Masters were not only skilled in stealth techniques but also had considerable proficiency in the Earth Escape Spell. They traversed the underground silently, without making any noise.

Using his Deception Breaking Eye, Meng Zhang carefully observed the alert range of the totem poles ahead and cautiously avoided them. Even the tightest defense has vulnerabilities, especially in this area, which was considered the inner part of the Barbarian Clan-controlled zone. Enemies had difficulty entering here unnoticed, so the surrounding Barbarian Clan members were not particularly vigilant. The true focus of the Barbarian Clan's surveillance was still outside this area.

Meng Zhang led everyone in secretly traveling underground for half a day, finally arriving at their destination, close to the location of the treasure house. The underground here extended 600 zhang (Chinese unit of length, about 3.33 meters per zhang), and a small underground dark river flowed through it, creating a large cavity in the earth.

When cultivators reached the Gold Core stage, they would generally cultivate some elemental escape techniques, not necessarily to attain profound mastery but to be able to use them smoothly in case of emergencies. With their Gold Core Daoist Master's Cultivation Base, even if they used the most basic elemental escape technique, it would still yield satisfactory results.

Meng Zhang and the four others entered the underground river from the ground and then used water escape techniques or water repelling spells, diving to the bottom of the dark river. However, the treasure they sought was not in this space. When constructing the treasure house, the head of the

black market in charge at the time spared no expense to invite an expert proficient in spatial spells. They opened an independent space hidden within a spatial interstice. The treasure house was built within this separate space, shielded from detection with no traces left in the surrounding area. Even if a Primordial Spirit True Monarch came here without knowing the target's location and searched aimlessly, they could easily miss the treasure house.

A few hundred years had passed, and this treasure house had remained quietly hidden here, waiting for future generations to unlock its secrets.

Meng Zhang took out a palm-sized jade token. It was given to him by Daoist Master Black Fox and could open the treasure house. This jade token was actually a magic tool made using special methods, connecting it to the space where the treasure was hidden.

Meng Zhang infused True Essence into the jade token and then recited the incantation taught by Daoist Master Black Fox. After a while, a slight tremor came from the riverbed of the underground dark river, causing the water to ripple. Although they were 600 zhang deep underground, too much movement could still alarm the Barbarian Clan above. Fortunately, the tremor didn't last long and slowly subsided after a short moment.

The riverbed of the dark river revealed what seemed like a water curtain forming a large entrance.

Chapter 617: Going well

This newly appeared portal is the entrance to the treasure repository. However, the appearance of the portal does not mean that the road ahead will be smooth. If it is not opened according to the predetermined method but forcefully intruded upon, it will not only trigger the backlash of protective restrictions but may also lead to the complete collapse of the entire space.

Meng Zhang stood alone before the portal, holding a jade token in his hand, reciting an incantation loudly. After a moment, the portal trembled violently, and ripples of light spread across the water curtain, revealing a large gap.

Meng Zhang quietly instructed the other three people to follow closely behind him. Then, he waved the jade token in his hand, emitting a faint light that enveloped everyone. Under Meng Zhang's lead, they all leaped into the gap ahead.

After a dizzying and disorienting feeling, Meng Zhang and the others arrived in a massive stone chamber. This chamber was like a grand hall, tall and wide, with rows of shelves lining the surrounding walls. The shelves were filled with boxes of various sizes and numerous jade slips.

On the floor of the stone chamber, large boxes were piled up. Meng Zhang casually kicked open one of the boxes, and it was filled with low-grade spirit stones. He then opened another box, revealing refined Xuanjin (a precious metal).

Meng Zhang glanced around; there were at least hundreds of boxes in the chamber. If they were all filled with spirit stones and rare materials, it would be an astronomical number. However, these boxes contained low-end items, primarily valued for their quantity. The truly precious treasures were on the surrounding shelves.

Meng Zhang walked to a shelf not far from the east wall of the chamber and randomly took out several boxes, gently opening them. Inside were Second Rank Heaven and Earth Spiritual Objects, a high-quality magic tool, and Second Rank elixirs...

He also randomly picked up three jade slips and read their contents. One jade slip contained records of transactions in this black market, which had become worthless after several centuries. The other two jade slips contained a cultivation technique from a small family and a very obscure medicinal recipe.

Knowing that they were here to explore the treasure repository, both Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General brought many large-capacity storage magic tools. However, even with these tools, it would not be enough to move the entire treasure repository.

There were many valuable items in the repository, but due to the hasty escape of the previous owner, the place was somewhat chaotic and disorganized. Meng Zhang and the others needed to spend considerable time organizing and selecting the most valuable items to take with them.

But before that, Meng Zhang needed to find the items Daoist Master Black Fox had requested. According to the description provided by Daoist Master Black Fox, Meng Zhang went to the east wall of the chamber.

He activated his True Essence and gently moved aside an incredibly heavy row of shelves. He then extended his right index finger, infused it with True Essence, and drew several mysterious runes on the wall. He took out the jade token and placed it in the center of the runes, sticking it tightly to the wall.

After a moment, the wall cracked open, revealing another row of shelves behind it. At the top of these shelves was a jet-black pearl the size of a baby's head. This was the treasure Daoist Master Black Fox had been longing for and reminiscing about for hundreds of years.

Daoist Master Black Fox hadn't disclosed the details of the item to Meng Zhang but had described its appearance. He had also told Meng Zhang that if he could safely bring back this pearl, he could claim all the other treasures in the repository for himself. At the same time, Luo YeDaoist Master had gone to great lengths and taken risks to come here for this pearl.

Apart from this pearl, there were six other boxes on the shelf. Though they hadn't been opened yet, the fact that they were placed together with the pearl in such a hidden place indicated their considerable value.

Meng Zhang stepped back and gestured for Luo YeDaoist Master to approach. Luo YeDaoist Master smiled, not needing many words to express her gratitude. She walked up and collected the pearl.

As for the other boxes accompanying the pearl, Luo YeDaoist Master didn't even spare them a glance. Meng Zhang didn't hesitate either and opened each of the six boxes, temporarily storing their contents. He knew he could take his time to sort them outside.

Luo YeDaoist Master finally achieved her goal and let out a sigh of relief. After so much planning and effort, it hadn't been in vain.

Just then, Extreme Sword Spirit General furrowed his brow and said to Meng Zhang, "Sect Master, do you sense it?"

Upon hearing this, Meng Zhang didn't dare to be careless and immediately began to carefully sense his surroundings but found nothing amiss. Luo YeDaoist Master and Jue YingDaoist Master also started to sense their surroundings but didn't detect anything unusual. Having witnessed Extreme Sword Spirit General's ability to detect information, they knew he wouldn't speak without reason.

Jue YingDaoist Master couldn't help but glance at Extreme Sword Spirit General, suspecting that he might be overly cautious and suspicious. However, at this moment, Meng Zhang's keen Spiritual Awareness finally alerted him. Following the guidance of his Spiritual Awareness, he used his Deception Breaking Eye to carefully examine the outside of the stone chamber and then used his Divine Sense to thoroughly investigate, finally understanding what had happened.

"This isolated space is slowly collapsing," Meng Zhang revealed his discovery. With Meng Zhang's reminder, Luo YeDaoist Master and Jue YingDaoist Master carefully investigated and also discovered the situation.

When Luo YeDaoist Master and Jue YingDaoist Master used their Divine Abilities to investigate, Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General didn't idle either; they quickly began collecting various items inside the stone chamber.

"After this isolated space was opened, the ongoing space storms are gradually eroding it. It requires regular maintenance to remain stable."

"This place hasn't been visited for hundreds of years; maintenance was out of the question," Luo YeDaoist Master combined her understanding of the place and made her judgment.

Seeing Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General eager to collect items, she asked in confusion, "Even if this space is going to collapse, it won't happen overnight. Hundreds of years have passed, it can't possibly collapse exactly at this moment. We shouldn't be so unlucky, right?"

"True, from my perspective, this isolated space can support itself for another ten or eight years," Jue YingDaoist Master added.

"This space won't collapse immediately. However, during the process of collapse, it will continuously release intense space fluctuations," Meng Zhang said with a bitter smile, expressing his concerns.

He hadn't finished speaking, but everyone understood his meaning. This isolated space had been sealed. All space fluctuations were confined here and hadn't spread outside. But once Meng Zhang opened this long-sealed space, the previously confined space fluctuations could no longer be restrained; they would uncontrollably spread outward.

Due to the unique space fluctuations sensed by Extreme Sword Spirit General, he reminded Meng Zhang, who then realized the situation.

Even Gold Core cultivators present could detect these special space fluctuations. Nearby in Lake-Blue City was a Barbarian King with Divine Abilities vast enough to suppress a Primordial Spirit True Monarch. Sooner or later, he would sense the space fluctuations here and come to investigate.

With Meng Zhang's reminder, Luo YeDaoist Master and Jue YingDaoist Master also understood the situation. They stopped wasting time on words and immediately joined the efforts to collect items.

Although Luo YeDaoist Master had achieved her goal by obtaining the pearl, how could she leave empty-handed when she had an opportunity to obtain vast cultivation resources? Practically every cultivator wouldn't mind being too rich or having too many cultivation resources.

In reality, Luo YeDaoist Master and Jue YingDaoist Master, despite belonging to a powerful force like the Dark Alliance, had also experienced times when they lacked cultivation resources.

Even if all four of them filled every storage magic tool they had on their person, it still wouldn't be enough to completely empty such a large treasure repository. Furthermore, some special treasures couldn't be directly placed into storage magic tools.

For instance, Meng Zhang had just discovered several sealed boxes on a shelf. When he opened them, they were all Void Nether Stones, each the size of an adult's fist.

Void Nether Stones were spiritual objects with extremely strong spatial properties and couldn't be placed directly into ordinary storage magic tools. Otherwise, the spatial power occasionally released by them would damage the storage space of the magic tool.

Similarly, one storage magic tool couldn't be directly placed inside another storage magic tool. Space magic tools couldn't be stacked directly and required special handling.

The most common method was to find an exceptionally stable space magic tool, like the Hundred Grass Pavilion placed in Taiyi Sect's mountain gate at Hundred Grass Slope. Other space magic tools could be placed inside it because the independent space within the Hundred Grass Pavilion was large and stable enough to withstand any spatial influence.

The Hundred Grass Pavilion was a valuable inheritance of Layered Mystery Sect and hard to come by. Meng Zhang was incredibly fortunate to possess it. Obtaining another one would not be a simple task.

In fact, the isolated space they were currently in was barely qualified for this purpose. However, transplanting such a large isolated space onto a magic tool was something even most Third Rank tool refiners couldn't achieve.

As Meng Zhang rapidly sifted through and collected various items, he couldn't help but sigh inwardly that doing business in the black market was indeed a path to wealth.

This treasure repository contained far more cultivation resources than an average Gold Core sect. Meng Zhang estimated that even the Taiyi Sect's current main treasury might not be as affluent.

Of course, the reason for this was also that Taiyi Sect had risen relatively recently and hadn't had enough time to accumulate substantial resources.

Chapter 618: Escaping

Taiyi Sect hasn't been able to accumulate vast resources, and there is an important reason for this, which is Meng Zhang's attitude problem. Meng Zhang is not a miser, nor does he have the attributes of a hoarder. The current Taiyi Sect is rapidly developing, but it has not yet reached the time to plan for the future and enhance the accumulation of the sect. Instead of letting various cultivation resources rot away in the storage, it's better to provide them to the disciples to cultivate more outstanding individuals. If it weren't for considering the future of the sect, Meng Zhang would have wanted to distribute all the cultivation resources to the disciples to help them digest quickly. Especially resources like spiritual stones, they need to be invested to generate more wealth and earn more spiritual stones.

Since Taiyi Sect joined the Jiuqu League, the trading environment has been improving. Under Meng Zhang's guidance, the entire sect has invested a significant amount of resources to build a commercial network. The vast market of the Jiuqu League, as long as they penetrate it and establish a foothold, even if there are no immediate returns and continuous losses, there will come a day when they can reap massive profits.

Meng Zhang and the other three people didn't utter a word, but they hastened to collect various resources from the treasure vault. With so many things, the storage magic tools they carried could only take a small portion of them. Therefore, they had to choose carefully and take the most valuable items with them.

After a while, the storage magic tools of the four were nearly full. Suddenly, Meng Zhang felt something and said, "It's about time; if we don't leave now, we won't be able to get out." As Meng Zhang had enough authority, the other three trusted his judgment. If he said it was time to leave, they naturally couldn't stay here any longer. They didn't bother with the scattered cultivation resources on the ground and left directly.

Meng Zhang took out a jade token, recited an incantation, and escorted everyone outside of space. As they looked at the slowly closing spatial portal, Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General exchanged glances and almost simultaneously took action.

Meng Zhang first threw the jade token, followed the connection between the space and the token, and activated the Deception Breaking Eye to accurately locate the weakest point in the independent

space. The Spiritsnake Spear shot out like lightning, repeatedly damaging the foundation of the space. Extreme Sword Spirit General's index and middle fingers merged in his right hand, and he shot out more than ten extremely sharp sword qi, easily piercing through the spatial barrier, riddling the independent space with holes.

Finally, Meng Zhang gently tossed two thunderballs from Jin Li True Monarch into the closing spatial portal. After two muffled sounds, the foundation of the independent space was completely destroyed. The space that could have held for ten to thirty years collapsed rapidly, disappearing in the blink of an eye.

Meng Zhang didn't care about that independent space anymore; he led everyone along the underground river downstream. Along the way, he summoned ten Yellow Earth Strongmen. These Second Rank Yellow Earth Strongmen not only had the combat power of the Foundation Building stage but were also proficient in earth-based spells. They were carefully selected from the dao soldiers trained by Soldier Nest before Meng Zhang left Taiyi Sect.

Although peace had been restored around Taiyi Sect, many disciples in the sect had experienced the benefits of using Yellow Earth Strongmen during the war. Even after the war, many disciples still clamored to exchange for Yellow Earth Strongmen, despite the increased threshold set by the sect. Meng Zhang made arrangements so that not all Yellow Earth Strongmen could be exchanged; Soldier Nest had to accumulate a batch of Yellow Earth Strongmen for future use.

Meng Zhang released ten Second Rank Earth Escape Spell talismans to empower the Yellow Earth Strongmen. These talismans, combined with the natural proficiency of Yellow Earth Strongmen in earth-based spells, made them feel like fish in water while moving through the earth.

Following Meng Zhang's instructions, the Yellow Earth Strongmen dispersed in various directions, moving through the earth. As Meng Zhang led the group, they flew low over the ground, avoiding the paths the Yellow Earth Strongmen were taking.

When they reached the surface, the Yellow Earth Strongmen, who had been traveling in different directions, triggered the totem poles' alarms, alerting the nearby Barbarian Clan camp. The Barbarian Clan displayed their high military quality, as the internal turmoil did not lead to widespread chaos. Well-trained groups of Barbarian Clan soldiers began searching systematically along different routes.

Meng Zhang summoned ten more Second Rank Yellow Earth Strongmen. This time, he emptied all the remaining inventory of the sect. He took out three Third Rank talismans, specifically the Dust Escape talismans crafted by Yang Xueyi, a Third Rank Talisman Master in Taiyi Sect.

Although Taiyi Sect had Yang Xueyi as a Third Rank Talisman Master, ensuring the supply of Third Rank talismans, they were still precious and not to be used lightly. The materials needed to craft Third Rank talismans were valuable, not to mention the time and effort required from Yang Xueyi. As a Gold Core Daoist Master and an elder of Taiyi Sect, she couldn't spend too much time making talismans.

With the help of everyone, Meng Zhang quickly activated the three Dust Escape talismans. Three groups of rapidly rotating sand and dust appeared in the air, carrying several Yellow Earth Strongmen each and sweeping towards the distance.

The Second Rank Yellow Earth Strongmen that were not caught in the sand and dust escaped in different directions. Meng Zhang led everyone to fly low along the ground, moving away from Lake-Blue City. Along the way, whenever they encountered Barbarian Clan troops, they didn't engage in lengthy battles but swiftly dealt with them to create a path and escape.

All four of them were experts among Gold Core cultivators. Meng Zhang was at the Gold Core late stage, Extreme Sword Spirit General was a formidable Sword Cultivator, Luo Ye Daoist Master had various techniques, and Jue Ying Daoist Master constantly displayed his killing moves. Their team's combat strength was incredibly strong, and even the long-established Gold Core sects in the Jiuqu League might not be able to assemble such a formidable group.

As they were escaping, a terrifying aura rose from Lake-Blue City. Lake-Blue City was a prosperous place on Yuan Tu Great Prairie, ruled by the intelligent Barbarian King, Sha Le Hai. Not long ago, he was receiving three Demonic Cultivators in the city. In the vast multiverse, Demonic Cultivation was infamous and despised by all. Even the aggressive and warlike Barbarian Clan, who invaded and conquered, also detested Demonic Cultivation. However, this Barbarian Clan army had entered the Grand Dust World and found itself surrounded and besieged on all sides, facing a dire situation. In such circumstances, any force that could provide assistance was highly valuable.

Demonic Cultivation is a common enemy in various worlds, except for the Demon Domain, where everyone regards them as villains and calls for their downfall. In a situation similar to the Barbarian Clan, some Demonic Cultivators actively seek communication and cooperation with the Barbarian Clan, offering assistance. Even someone as rational and composed as Barbarian King Sha Le Hai can suppress his hatred for Demonic Cultivation and temporarily collaborate with them.

Of course, Demonic Cultivators are not benevolent. The help they provide comes at a cost that the Barbarian Clan must pay. Over the centuries, after several transactions, the two sides established a relatively stable channel of communication.

The Demonic Cultivation that came to Lake-Blue City was a familiar acquaintance of Barbarian King Sha Le Hai. Although the opponent was only a Gold Core Demonic Cultivator, Sha Le Hai still treated him with great importance and personally received him, a gesture of the highest level of respect.

After their meeting, the Demonic Cultivator proposed to learn and witness the Divine Ability secret techniques of the Barbarian Clan. When it comes to combat, no Barbarian Clan would refuse. To save face, Sha Le Hai decided to suppress a large part of his Cultivation Base and only fight with one hand against the Demonic Cultivator, despite the difference in their realms.

The Demonic Cultivator's methods were indeed peculiar. Despite the difference in their Cultivation Base realms, Sha Le Hai was still somewhat impressed by the Demonic Cultivator's Divine Ability.

During the battle, Meng Zhang and his group were escaping, and when Sha Le Hai sensed the spatial fluctuations, Meng Zhang and the others had already begun their escape. This caused some chaos in Lake-Blue City's vicinity, especially as the spatial fluctuations from afar grew increasingly intense.

Sha Le Hai was not someone who valued his pride more than anything else. In his eyes, substance was more important than face. He released a powerful aura, attempting to deter the hidden enemies.

While his subordinates dealt with the chaos, Sha Le Hai made a decision. He chose to stay and stabilize the collapsing independent space, rather than going after the intruders outside. The wealth within the treasury could be of use to the Barbarian Clan, which often suffered from shortages despite the rich resources of the Yuan Tu Great Prairie. If the space completely collapsed, the resources inside would be buried in the turbulent flow, making it difficult even for the Barbarian King to retrieve them.

Meanwhile, on the ground, Meng Zhang took out various prepared items, and Luo Ye Daoist Master and Jue Ying Daoist Master also used their hidden cards to help them escape. The Four of them managed to flee Lake-Blue City and avoided the Barbarian Clan's pursuit only after taking a long and winding route.

At this point, Meng Zhang was supposed to bring the bead back to Daoist Master Black Fox as per their agreement. However, Meng Zhang had already obtained many high-quality Void Nether Stones from the treasury, and Luo Ye Daoist Master had taken the bead. So, Meng Zhang decided to disregard Daoist Master Black Fox's orders and directly return to Taiyi Sect.

Luo Ye Daoist Master intervened, preventing Meng Zhang from acting rashly and insisting that he should follow the original plan and still meet with Daoist Master Black Fox.

Chapter 619: Soul Bead

Luo Ye Daoist Master warned Meng Zhang that Daoist Master Black Fox is not to be trifled with. This individual has operated within the Dark Alliance for many years, not only possessing considerable power but also having an extensive network and strong abilities. If Meng Zhang were to offend him, it might be difficult for the Dark Alliance to openly confront Meng Zhang, but Black Fox could use his influence to create countless ways to hinder Meng Zhang's progress in the Jiuqu League.

Especially since this treasure is of great significance to Daoist Master Black Fox, he will never give up on it. He would go to any lengths to strike at the Taiyi Sect and force Meng Zhang to comply. Even though Taiyi Sect has the support of Jin Li True Monarch behind them, they would still be defenseless against various hidden threats.

Jin Li True Monarch is not a babysitter for the Taiyi Sect, and it's impossible for them to attend to every detail of the sect's affairs. If things go wrong, all the years of hard work Taiyi Sect invested in the Jiuqu League would be completely destroyed.

Meng Zhang takes Luo Ye Daoist Master's warning seriously, knowing that she wouldn't speak without reason. However, Meng Zhang wonders if there is a win-win solution since Luo Ye Daoist Master is also after the Soul Bead this time.

Luo Ye Daoist Master indeed doesn't disappoint Meng Zhang. She tells Meng Zhang that she will handle the Soul Bead first before handing it over to Meng Zhang to deliver to Daoist Master Black Fox. Meng Zhang is quite curious about the importance of this bead.

In Cultivation World, the Dark Alliance is a complex organization with cultivators of various backgrounds. The most trusted within the Dark Alliance are the cultivators groomed by the alliance itself. Next are those cultivators affiliated with other sects who are under the Dark Alliance's wing, and Luo Ye Daoist Master belongs to this category. Additionally, there are cultivators recruited through various means, including those from other sects, clans, and loose cultivators. Some of them outright betray their own sects and families to join the Dark Alliance, while others maintain a cooperative relationship to some extent.

As the number of cultivators is vast and their origins are complex, the Dark Alliance must find ways to ensure their loyalty, especially for those in key positions. If any of them were to betray the Dark Alliance, it would result in significant losses.

To guarantee loyalty, the Dark Alliance has many methods at its disposal. The Soul Bead that Meng Zhang and Luo Ye Daoist Master acquired is one highly effective means. Similar to the soul lamps used by many sects and families, the Soul Bead can collect a trace of Soul aura from its members and store it within.

By using this trace of Soul aura, the possessor of the Soul Bead can control the life and death of these members. Even if some members betray the Dark Alliance, they cannot escape the grasp of the alliance. Moreover, if a powerful individual skilled in curse-type spells is involved, they can use this trace of Soul aura to silently kill someone from a distance.

This particular Soul Bead, stored in the treasure vault for hundreds of years, has collected the Soul auras of numerous Dark Alliance members. Some of these members have already perished, but those who survived until now are at least Gold Core-stage cultivators.

Having this Soul Bead in hand means having complete control over their lives and at the very least, a powerful means of constraint against them. It's astonishing that such an inconspicuous bead can influence Gold Core Daoist Masters and even Primordial Spirit True Monarchs. No wonder Daoist Master Black Fox has been obsessed with this Soul Bead for hundreds of years and spared no effort to retrieve it.

Luo Ye Daoist Master told Meng Zhang that she will seek a high-level expert to extract some of the Soul auras from the Soul Bead. After that, Meng Zhang will return the Soul Bead to Daoist Master Black Fox. This way, Luo Ye Daoist Master will achieve her goal, and Meng Zhang will be able to report to Daoist Master Black Fox.

Once Luo Ye Daoist Master gave clear instructions, she asked Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General to wait for her for a few days. Meng Zhang naturally agreed and found a secluded place within the controlled area of the Jiuqu League to hide with Extreme Sword Spirit General.

Luo Ye Daoist Master left temporarily with Jue Ying Daoist Master. During this free time, Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General began to sort out their spoils from the treasure vault. They only took items of high value, ignoring middle-grade spirit stones and opting to collect top-grade ones instead.

They mainly selected Third Rank items, with a few Second Rank items that served special purposes. For example, the Jade Soul Fluid could help Foundation Building stage cultivators to complete their souls. The Qi Tempering Pill could refine the true qi of Foundation Building stage cultivators, saving them time and assisting in their preparations before forming the core.

Third Rank pills, in particular, were highly valuable. Meng Zhang gained many Third Rank pills and pill formulas. Though Taiyi Sect currently lacked Third Rank Alchemists and couldn't refine Third Rank pills, Meng Zhang believed that it was only a matter of time before they cultivated some.

These Third Rank pills were highly beneficial for Gold Core stage cultivators within the sect. The Gold Lotus Pill, in particular, was an extraordinary Third Rank pill. Its role was simple – to enhance the chances of success in forming the Gold Core for Foundation Building stage cultivators. Depending on the cultivator's circumstances, it could increase the success rate from half-formed to 10%.

Though the probability might seem low, in the Cultivation World, any pill or spiritual item that could enhance the success rate of forming the core was invaluable and couldn't be measured in spirit stones. Even Foundation Building Pills were considered special strategic resources and not easily circulated in the market like the Endless Sea of Sand in the past.

Taiyi Sect now had more than one Second Rank Alchemist and had solved its medicinal material problem with the Hundred Grass Pavilion's attached medicinal garden, ensuring a stable supply of Foundation Building Pills. However, pills that could assist in forming the core were not something Taiyi Sect could produce themselves, and it was challenging to obtain them from the outside.

In this venture, Meng Zhang not only acquired six Gold Lotus Pills but, more importantly, obtained the complete pill formula for them. Without a doubt, the pill was rare and challenging to refine, but with the formula, Meng Zhang could gradually collect the necessary ingredients.

They also found many Third Rank talismans. Even with Yang Xueyi, Taiyi Sect's Third Rank Talisman Master, Third Rank talismans were always in demand and never too many.

Additionally, there were over ten Third Rank magic tools, each holding immense significance. Meng Zhang didn't have time to inspect them thoroughly. He needed to return to the sect and check them with the Third Rank tool refiner to understand their true abilities.

In the Cultivation World, besides commonly used magic tools, there were many specially crafted magic tools that required specific methods of refinement to unleash their full potential. The higher the rank of the magic tool, the more evident this became. The cultivator's main cultivation technique and refining method would also influence the magic tool's usage.

Chapter 620: Harvest

In addition to obtaining many Void Nether Stones on the shelves of the treasure trove, Meng Zhang also found three huge Void Nether Stones in the place where the Soul Beads are stored.

Inside the secret chamber where the Soul Beads are kept, apart from the Soul Beads themselves, there are six other boxes. One of these boxes contains these three Void Nether Stones. Each of these Void Nether Stones is about the size of a baby's head and of extremely high quality.

In the Jiuqu League, when refining storage bags and other storage magic tools, they often use only some leftover pieces of Void Nether Stones. Even the lowest-level storage bags in the Cultivation World only require the addition of some fragmented Void Nether Stones during their refinement.

If all these three Void Nether Stones are used to refine storage magic tools, the vastness of the storage space can be easily imagined. From now on, Meng Zhang will no longer worry about the lack of storage space on his person.

If he encounters a similar situation in the future, he might even be able to empty the entire treasure trove. Of course, if the treasure trove is completely emptied, the Barbarian King's restraint would be lifted, and whether they can safely escape would be another matter altogether.

The second box contains a large piece of Sun Gold Crystal, an excellent material used to refine fire attribute magic tools. Among Third Rank spiritual materials, Sun Gold Crystal is considered top-grade. Even when refining some Fourth Rank magic tools, it can be fully utilized as an important auxiliary material.

The third box holds twelve Gold Nuts. Thanks to a secret sealing technique, even after hundreds of years, the Gold Nuts still look as if they were just picked, with almost no loss of medicinal properties. Each Gold Nut is slightly larger than an adult's thumb, with a golden color throughout, as if it were made of pure gold.

The primary function of Gold Nuts is to strengthen the physical body of a Gold Core stage cultivator. If they can be refined into corresponding elixirs, their medicinal properties can be fully unleashed. Meng Zhang's cultivation technique also includes body refinement practices. By consuming these Gold Nuts, he can save a lot of cultivation time and achieve better results in body strengthening.

The fourth box contains a scroll. This scroll is called "Dark Thorn Secret Canon," a unique manual used by the Dark Alliance to train assassins and spies. It contains a wealth of information, including various secret techniques, specially crafted elixirs, and more.

Following the instructions in this secret canon would allow one to train powerful assassins and outstanding spies, just like the Dark Alliance does.

However, Meng Zhang finds this "Dark Thorn Secret Canon" a bit troublesome. Before forming his core, Jue Ying Daoist Master helped Taiyi Sect establish the Secret Hall to train assassins and spies. She dared not reveal the unique inheritance of the Dark Alliance and only passed on some generic knowledge.

Now that Meng Zhang possesses the exclusive secret canon of the Dark Alliance, if the information were to leak out, the Dark Alliance would undoubtedly not sit idly by. Daoist Master Black Fox probably knows about the existence of this secret canon. Nevertheless, he actively hired Meng Zhang to explore the treasure trove, and now that the secret canon has fallen into Meng Zhang's hands, he bears a great responsibility.

Considering the cunning nature of this old fox, he should not willingly invite trouble but rather pretend not to know about this matter. Now that the secret canon is in Meng Zhang's possession, he will not easily give it away. His idea was to return to the Taiyi Sect and, together with the higher-ups of the sect, carefully study the Secret Canon and absorb its essence. When using it within the Taiyi Sect, they would try to make some changes, so it wouldn't look exactly like the original version in the Dark Alliance.

As for cultivating assassins and spies, they had to proceed secretly and avoid any exposure. The fifth box contained a puppet doll. Initially, Meng Zhang didn't understand the purpose of this doll, but Extreme Sword Spirit General, with his rich experience, quickly recognized it as a Death-Substituting Dummy.

As the name suggests, the Death-Substituting Dummy was a special treasure that could help the owner take someone else's place in death. It was a life-saving gadget, so Meng Zhang carefully put it away.

After refining the Death-Substituting Dummy in the future, it could be used to take injuries on behalf of its owner, effectively granting them an extra life.

Inside the sixth box was a Fourth Rank Talisman, a talisman that only a Fourth Rank Talisman Master could refine. To become a Fourth Rank Talisman Master, one must have at least a Cultivation Base at the Primordial Spirit stage.

Even within the Taiyi Sect and the surrounding forces, there probably wouldn't be such a powerful talisman. Seeing this Fourth Rank Talisman, Meng Zhang felt puzzled. He wondered why Daoist

Master Black Fox's master didn't take it with him. Even if he couldn't fully unleash its power, it could still greatly enhance his combat strength.

However, Meng Zhang didn't know that all the items in that secret room, including the Soul Bead, were not personal belongings but treasures of the Dark Alliance organization. Daoist Master Black Fox's master was merely a custodian, and without orders from higher-ups, he didn't have the authority to use those items.

Organizations like the Dark Alliance had numerous rules and strict discipline. Even the high-ranking members wouldn't dare to easily violate the rules. Meng Zhang, as a leader of a powerful faction himself, couldn't comprehend the extent of the system's restrictions on an individual.

Daoist Master Black Fox and his master could bend the rules within limits and exploit loopholes, but they would never dare to openly violate the organization's rules. Especially Daoist Master Black Fox's master, who was always cautious and strictly followed the Dark Alliance rules without any deviations.

Even though Meng Zhang knew the value of the items in these six boxes and how they could help him break through, he decided to act as if these items didn't exist until he received clear orders.

Due to a twist of fate, these treasures fell into Meng Zhang's hands centuries later, seemingly by chance. Truly, fortune favors the prepared mind, and unexpected gains can lead to great wealth. Taiyi Sect had been operating for many years, and despite the hard work of countless individuals, it was likely challenging to collect such cultivation resources.

Meng Zhang couldn't help but feel a bit worried that such a massive gain might cloud his judgment. He feared that he might become fixated on shortcuts and stop managing the sect honestly.

Fortunately, Extreme Sword Spirit General was experienced and shrewd, with the ability to judge and identify treasures, surpassing Meng Zhang. With his guidance and Meng Zhang's own knowledge, even though they had limited time, they managed to take away the most valuable parts of the treasure trove.

As they were busy counting their gains, they didn't notice the passing time. It took more than ten days before Luo Ye Daoist Master returned alone to their location.