

Sect Master 661

Chapter 661: Getting rid

Meng Zhang faced four opponents without fear. These four opponents were just a group of individuals at the early and mid stages of the Gold Core realm, and their Cultivation Base was far inferior to his.

One reason he didn't take more aggressive actions was because they were near Cloud Boat, and above Cloud Boat were the high-ranking members of the envoy, especially three Primordial Spirit True Monarchs. Meng Zhang didn't want to disturb them and cause unnecessary trouble.

Another reason was that Meng Zhang had no intention of killing or harming them. He only wanted to fulfill his agreement with Xu Mengying.

Therefore, Meng Zhang let go of several opportunities to kill them but instead, kept them entangled, preventing them from escaping. Extreme Sword Spirit General, with evident injuries, flew to the side, occasionally groaning in pain.

Xu Mengying was also a Gold Core cultivator, and with this chance, she should have escaped without a trace long ago.

Meng Zhang calculated the time and was considering how to end this farce gracefully.

"Meng Zhang, what are you doing?" A furious shout came from above, and Daoist Master Smiling Lotus and Daoist Master Mountain Garden finally arrived.

Seeing that both groups tasked with monitoring Xu Mengying were trapped by Meng Zhang, Daoist Master Smiling Lotus and Daoist Master Mountain Garden were furious. If it weren't for others being present, they might have already taken action.

"Stop immediately! Why are you fighting here? You are ruining the face of Jiuqu League!" Zhu Liangyu's voice accompanied a reprimand as he appeared.

As a trusted disciple of True Monarch Profound Wind, he accompanied his master on this trip. Unexpectedly, they encountered such a situation right after arriving at Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle.

Zhu Liangyu had a history of enmity with Jin Li True Monarch due to his master's position, but after joining Jiuqu League under the invitation of True Monarch Azure Mist from Azure Origin Sect, the animosity between True Monarch Profound Wind and Jin Li True Monarch had been resolved. Zhu Liangyu had no reason to continue being hostile to Jin Li True Monarch.

While he wouldn't consider them friends, they were no longer enemies. Zhu Liangyu had even fought alongside Yellow Lotus Sect cultivators before.

Seeing Meng Zhang and Yellow Lotus Sect cultivators fighting, Zhu Liangyu, who knew the grudges between them, really didn't want to get involved in this mess.

However, he couldn't just ignore it because he held an important position in this envoy. He couldn't let Jiuqu League cultivators fight openly in Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle when Primordial Spirit True Monarchs were watching.

Meng Zhang knew that the outcome of today's events would likely fall on Zhu Liangyu's shoulders.

He stopped, took a few steps back, and flew to a place not far from Zhu Liangyu.

"Senior Zhu, you came at the right time. Can you arbitrate for us?" Meng Zhang said.

"Yellow Lotus Sect's people are simply too much. Not only did they insult my Taiyi Sect, but they also took the initiative to attack and seriously injured one of our elders," Meng Zhang accused loudly, along with the four Yellow Lotus Sect cultivators who had fought him, shaking with anger.

The ever-lurking Extreme Sword Spirit General even joined in, moaning as if seriously wounded.

Zhu Liangyu and Jin Li True Monarch were peers, and they had had some conflicts in the past. Now, Meng Zhang was shamelessly addressing him as a senior, trying to portray himself as the victim.

Zhu Liangyu couldn't care less about the details of their grievances or get involved in their fight.

"I don't care about your grudges or reasons. You better behave yourselves. The three Primordial Spirit True Monarchs are watching, and you don't want to go too far," Zhu Liangyu threatened sternly.

"You've truly tarnished the reputation of Jiuqu League and affected this diplomatic mission. If the Primordial Spirit True Monarchs decide to punish you, no one will be able to protect you."

After hearing Zhu Liangyu's harsh warning, everyone felt a chill. Especially Meng Zhang, who had been actively causing trouble, felt a bit uneasy.

The little scheme he and Extreme Sword Spirit General had cooked up might deceive others, but it would never escape the keen eyes of the Primordial Spirit True Monarchs with their vast Divine Abilities. The Primordial Spirit True Monarch sitting on Cloud Boat was just a stone's throw away, and they likely saw everything that happened here.

Of course, despite being disgruntled, Meng Zhang didn't want to continue the entanglement. He mumbled under his breath, "We are the victims here. These Yellow Lotus Sect guys are just bullies..."

Meng Zhang was preparing to leave with Extreme Sword Spirit General when Daoist Master Smiling Lotus flew to his face, looking at him with an unpleasant expression.

No wonder Daoist Master Smiling Lotus was annoyed. True Monarch Mountain Peak had issued strict orders this time, selecting a strong team specifically for this mission.

Though the team was not large, it was powerful. The team included eight Gold Core Daoist Masters, including Daoist Master Smiling Lotus, as well as more than ten Foundation Building cultivators with special talents in tracking and tracing.

Although Daoist Master Smiling Lotus had some reservations deep down, he didn't want to fail the mission due to his mishandling.

When Cloud Boat arrived at Tiger Mountain City, he and Daoist Master Mountain Garden were about to meet up with the group tracking Xu Mengying. However, they ran into Zhu Liangyu, an old acquaintance, on the way and had to stop and exchange pleasantries.

Even though Zhu Liangyu was at the Gold Core late stage, he was a trusted disciple of True Monarch Profound Wind. Daoist Master Smiling Lotus couldn't afford to offend him.

But just by delaying for a moment, trouble occurred here.

Being provoked by Meng Zhang's actions, the team that was supposed to track Xu Mengying had likely allowed her to escape without a trace.

"Sect Master Meng, you better think carefully. Do you really want to get involved in this matter?" Daoist Master Smiling Lotus said with a malicious tone.

"What matter? I didn't get involved in anything! It's Yellow Lotus Sect who was too arrogant and started the fight," Meng Zhang shouted loudly.

"Is this how you behave? At least show some dignity as a sect master. Don't make me lose respect for you," Daoist Master Smiling Lotus said in a chillingly soft tone.

Meng Zhang shut his mouth. At this point, given his current status, it was indeed not appropriate for him to act this way. Even if he didn't care, he had to consider the image of Taiyi Sect.

Meng Zhang regretted a bit. Due to his greed and Xu Mengying's persuasion, he impulsively got involved. It seemed like he had entangled himself in some big trouble.

Daoist Master Smiling Lotus didn't say much more, but Daoist Master Mountain Garden was unwilling to let Meng Zhang go so easily.

As a member of True Monarch Mountain Peak, his Cultivation Base was not weak. He had enough confidence to look down on cultivators like Meng Zhang.

"Kid, don't act so arrogantly. Beware of inviting disaster upon yourself and causing trouble for Taiyi Sect," Daoist Master Mountain Garden shouted with a powerful aura, further fueling Meng Zhang's anger.

However, Meng Zhang didn't say much and instead, gestured a goodbye to Zhu Liangyu and left with Extreme Sword Spirit General.

Chapter 662: Tiger Mountain City

Watching the figures of Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General as they departed, Daoist Master Mountain Garden snorted heavily. Meng Zhang had concerns about the Primordial Spirit True Monarch aboard the Cloud Boat, and he didn't dare to act recklessly. Otherwise, he would have

already ordered an attack. With so many Gold Core cultivators from the Yellow Lotus Sect present, they could certainly make Meng Zhang and his group suffer a big loss. Daoist Master Mountain Garden had never feared Taiyi Sect, their old enemy, and he harbored deep malice towards them.

Everyone present was not a fool and could see that Meng Zhang deliberately provoked this conflict. It seemed that there was some sort of collusion between Meng Zhang and Xu Mengying. As the Saintess of the Yellow Lotus Sect, Xu Mengying's situation was related to the overall unity of True Monarch Mountain Peak and the entire Yellow Lotus Sect. Meng Zhang was ignorant, actually daring to get involved in such matters. True Monarch Mountain Peak would definitely not spare him, even if he had the protection of Jin Li True Monarch. He might escape with his life, but his fate would be grim.

Zhu Liangyu, as an outsider, was unwilling to get involved in the grudges of other sects and create unnecessary troubles. Seeing Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General fly away, he considered the matter resolved. He bid farewell to Daoist Master Smiling Lotus and others before taking his leave.

As Zhu Liangyu flew back to the Cloud Boat, True Monarch Profound Wind and True Monarch Azure Gem were sitting in a room chatting. Although they never left the boat, they were well aware of all the big and small events around them. Whether it was Yellow Lotus Sect's Hong Siming and others tracking Xu Mengying, or Meng Zhang deliberately causing conflicts to help Xu Mengying escape, they saw everything.

"Those people from the Yellow Lotus Sect are really..." True Monarch Azure Gem's sentence was left unfinished, but his tone already conveyed his sentiment.

True Monarch Profound Wind understood that True Monarch Mountain Peak's action to integrate the Yellow Lotus Sect was not something that the Azure Origin Sect, a giant within the Jiuqu League, would necessarily like to see. Though they wouldn't directly hinder it due to their identity, they would be pleased to see the Yellow Lotus Sect cultivators facing difficulties.

True Monarch Profound Wind and True Monarch Mountain Peak used to be allies, and their relationship was still close. But there was no doubt about whom they would choose between True Monarch Mountain Peak and the Azure Origin Sect. Moreover, True Monarch Mountain Peak had not acted without reason. To persuade him to rebel against True Monarch Tian Zhu, both True Monarch Profound Wind and the Qi Family brothers had paid a great price.

True Monarch Profound Wind felt that he owed True Monarch Mountain Peak nothing, and he didn't want to upset True Monarch Azure Gem over the matters of the Yellow Lotus Sect. He just smiled and remained silent, showing his disinterest in the recent events.

After Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General left the Cloud Boat, they flew directly towards Tiger Mountain City. Though Meng Zhang held the status of an official member of the diplomatic mission, no one interfered with his actions. In the mission, there were quite a few individuals like him, who prioritized personal interests over official duties.

Tiger Mountain City was a flourishing and renowned city in the nearby area. As it stood at a critical transportation point, it naturally welcomed visitors from all directions, and its inspections of outsiders were not too strict. The news of two Cloud Boats from the Jiuqu League arriving at Tiger Mountain City had spread far and wide. Therefore, the appearance of two Jiuqu League cultivators in the city was inconspicuous.

Before them, many cultivators from the Jiuqu League had already entered Tiger Mountain City. When Extreme Sword Spirit General served as the Guardian Spirit General for Taiyi Sect near the Grand Crossing Mountain Range, he traveled through many surrounding areas and collected various pieces of information. However, much had changed over the centuries since Taiyi Sect's reconstruction, and Extreme Sword Spirit General had been in deep sleep for a long time. He was unfamiliar with the current situation.

This was Extreme Sword Spirit General's first visit to such a distant place since waking up, but fortunately, Tiger Mountain City had been established long before. The city's basic situation had not undergone significant changes, and most of the high-ranking individuals and major forces in the city remained the same.

Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General followed their original plan and settled into Tiger Mountain City first. After hundreds of years had passed, they needed to understand the current situation at Taiyi Sect's former mountain gate before taking further action. If they charged blindly into an area filled with demons without knowing the situation, they would be courting death.

They found an inn in Tiger Mountain City and rested there. Then, Extreme Sword Spirit General planned to use his previous connections to gather various information. Although hundreds of years had passed, the world had not undergone drastic changes. Extreme Sword Spirit General spent considerable effort finding channels through which he could exchange spirit stones for information.

However, the information he obtained was only superficial and unreliable hearsay. It seemed that Taiyi Sect's former mountain gate had become a territory infested with demons, and even ordinary cultivators, no matter how daring, wouldn't dare to approach it. Therefore, they couldn't gather any useful information through conventional channels.

On the Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle, there was also a presence of the Dark Alliance. In large commercial cities like Tiger Mountain City, black markets were indispensable. Although the Dark Alliance branches on Jiuqu League's side and the Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle side were independent, they shared a common origin. As long as there were no grudges between them, they would still help each other.

While Meng Zhang was in the Jiuqu League, he visited Daoist Master Black Fox and obtained a letter from him. Daoist Master Black Fox was a senior member of the Dark Alliance with extensive connections and friends all over. Now that Extreme Sword Spirit General's actions were not going smoothly, he had no choice but to seek help using that letter.

Meng Zhang easily found the location of the black market in Tiger Mountain City. Once inside, he directly handed the letter from Daoist Master Black Fox to an administrator. Daoist Master Black Fox's face indeed had some influence, and not long after handing over the letter, a Gold Core cultivator came to meet him.

This Gold Core cultivator called himself Ku Zhu. He seemed to be a high-ranking steward of the local black market. Ku Zhu appeared frail and lifeless, as if he were at death's door.

Of course, Meng Zhang didn't actually take him for a dying man. Thanks to his Deception Breaking Eye, he could sense a hidden vitality within Ku Zhu's seemingly lifeless body. With his insight, he deduced that the man was cultivating a unique technique, which explained his appearance.

Chapter 663: Going

Perhaps because of the connection with Daoist Master Black Fox, Ku Zhu showed some politeness to Meng Zhang. After considering Meng Zhang's request for a moment, he readily agreed. He arranged for a servant to attend to the guests while he went to gather intelligence for Meng Zhang.

The efficiency of the black market was indeed impressive. In no time, Ku Zhu returned with a jade slip in hand. Seeing the surprise in Meng Zhang's eyes, Ku Zhu casually explained. It turned out that a few days before Meng Zhang's arrival, someone had already come to request intelligence about the area near Taiyi Sect's mountain gate, which was occupied by demons. Moreover, this person was an important client, so the black market naturally had to provide high-level intelligence suited to their status. Meng Zhang's timing was quite fortunate. Ku Zhu handed over a copy of that intelligence directly to Meng Zhang.

Upon hearing this, Meng Zhang couldn't hide his astonishment. Was there someone else who, like him, was willing to take risks and venture into the area near Taiyi Sect's mountain gate? He inquired further with Ku Zhu, wanting to know more about the person and the related information.

Unexpectedly, Ku Zhu found himself in an awkward position, as his earlier careless remark invited Meng Zhang's probing questions. However, despite being introduced by Daoist Master Black Fox, Ku Zhu couldn't compromise the black market's rules and easily reveal their customers' information. This basic principle had to be upheld by everyone in the black market. Otherwise, who would trust dealing with them in the future? Ku Zhu brushed off Meng Zhang's inquiries and abruptly changed the topic. If Meng Zhang insisted on probing further, Ku Zhu would simply smile and remain silent.

Dealing with people from the black market wasn't Meng Zhang's first time, and he knew that it was due to Daoist Master Black Fox's influence being insufficient, or perhaps the letter provided by Daoist Master Black Fox could only have such an effect. Meng Zhang couldn't do anything about it; he had to let the matter go and stop pressing for more information.

He accepted the jade slip handed to him by Ku Zhu, sincerely thanked him, and then, following the rules, paid a sufficient amount of spirit stones as the price for purchasing the intelligence. The letter from Daoist Master Black Fox had granted Meng Zhang the status of an important client and introduced him to the black market on this side of the Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle, giving him the right to engage in higher-level transactions. Without this letter, no matter how many spirit stones he offered, his customer status here would not be enough to access many services.

Meng Zhang quickly skimmed through the information in the jade slip and found that it was extremely detailed, containing everything he wanted to know. Ku Zhu was still by his side, and Meng Zhang didn't want to appear too rude. He put away the jade slip, intending to read it more carefully later.

Ku Zhu chatted with Meng Zhang for a while and then took the initiative to serve tea and see him off. After leaving the black market, Meng Zhang returned directly to the inn where he was staying. When Extreme Sword Spirit General returned, Meng Zhang informed him about the information he had gathered regarding the area near Taiyi Sect's mountain gate. Extreme Sword Spirit General pondered for a moment and told Meng Zhang that the person who was seeking information might not necessarily be targeting them. Over hundreds of years, many sects and families near the Grand Crossing Mountain Range had been destroyed during the demonic calamity. These sects and families' mountain gates likely contained valuable cultivation resources, and in the Cultivation World, there were many daredevil cultivators who were not afraid of death. Over the years, quite a few cultivators risked their lives to infiltrate those areas in search of these resources.

Actually, over these years, many cultivators have disappeared in those areas, and most of them met unfortunate fates. Perhaps this person's planned expedition coincides with their destination. Of course, that would be the best-case scenario. The worst-case scenario is that this person has ulterior motives and is indeed coming for them. Since Ku Zhu is unwilling to reveal the person's identity, Extreme Sword Spirit General cannot make an accurate judgment on which situation it is.

Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General discussed it but couldn't come up with a better solution. They decided to adapt to the situation as it unfolds. They certainly wouldn't give up on this planned mission just because of a little doubt.

Next, they carefully read the jade slip they purchased from the black market together. The content was very detailed, providing thorough descriptions of the Taiyi Sect's mountain gate and the surrounding areas. Over the years, many cultivators entered the areas affected by the demonic calamity with the idea of exploring the heritage. Various pieces of information about these areas had spread through different channels. Some cultivators ventured deep into the dangerous territories, but realizing the dangers were too great, they recorded the information and sold it directly. Others saw the business opportunity and began specializing in trading intelligence.

The black market considered intelligence trading an essential business, so they seized this opportunity. By collecting and comparing various pieces of information, the black market even dispatched scouts for exploration. This is how Meng Zhang obtained this comprehensive and relatively accurate intelligence.

The black market doesn't easily sell such valuable intelligence to outsiders. They edit and divide it into various parts with different levels of detail, selling them to customers at different prices based on their status. Thanks to Daoist Master Black Fox's influence, Meng Zhang purchased high-level intelligence, which was considered top-notch.

With this intelligence, Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General could save a lot of effort and avoid many dangers, making their approach to the target relatively safe. They carefully analyzed the intelligence and deliberated for a long time. Then, they started preparing for their journey, including procuring useful items.

Before departing for the Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle, both of them knew that their main adversaries would be various demons. Therefore, Meng Zhang mobilized the entire sect's resources to purchase a large number of items for dealing with evil and demons.

Their purchases in Tiger Mountain City were just a supplement. They didn't stay in Tiger Mountain City for long, as they were eager to reach their destination. After making all necessary preparations, they set off.

The rebuilt Taiyi Sect's mountain gate was located on the northeastern edge of the Grand Crossing Mountain Range, thousands of miles away from Tiger Mountain City. As powerful Gold Core Daoist Masters, they had nothing to worry about concerning their safety throughout the journey.

However, they needed to conserve their energy and remain in the best condition as they were about to face significant challenges.

They chose not to expend their energy on flying, so instead of flying themselves, they planned to rent a flying boat in Tiger Mountain City to travel northeast towards the Grand Crossing Mountain Range. In the Cultivation World, especially on the Jiuqu League's side with average refining skills, ordinary low-grade flying boats could be carried around easily, but faster high-grade flying boats were difficult to manage. Since low-grade flying boats were too slow and not up to their standards, Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General did not carry any high-grade flying boats this time.

They didn't want to waste too much time on the journey, so they spent a considerable amount of spirit stones to rent a Third Rank flying boat renowned for its speed and set off directly.

Their journey was uneventful, and the flying boat smoothly arrived at its destination, stopping outside a large market.

Chapter 664: Jiachen Market

This grand market is named after the Ten Heavenly Stems and Twelve Earthly Branches and is called Jiachen Market. In the past, after the outbreak of the demonic calamity, it wreaked havoc over a large area. To prevent the further spread of the calamity and to prepare for its suppression, some major forces of the Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle took joint actions and implemented various measures.

One of these measures was to establish a solid defense line outside the outbreak area, known as the extraterritorial barrier, to prevent the monsters from passing through and to keep the calamity outside the line. On this defense line, many fortresses were built as supporting points. During counterattacks, these fortresses also served as resting camps and departure points for the Cultivator army.

Most of these fortresses were built atop spirit veins and named after the Ten Heavenly Stems and Twelve Earthly Branches.

After a series of bitter battles, the living space of the monsters was greatly reduced. As of now, compared to the time of rampant calamity, the area inhabited by the monsters has significantly shrunk. Though, due to various reasons, the major forces were unable to completely eliminate all the monsters, they managed to confine them within a certain area and maintained strict surveillance.

If these monsters were to show large-scale anomalies again, the major forces would mobilize once more to suppress them. This approach received criticism from many Cultivators. They questioned

why the forces didn't eradicate all the monsters completely and instead tolerated their existence, which could lead to future troubles.

Regardless of the discussions and criticisms, the major forces remained steadfast in their ways and were not easily swayed to change their practices. Fortunately, over the years, the trapped monsters didn't pose significant threats.

Apart from those Cultivators who willingly ventured into the monster-infested areas seeking treasure, not many others were harmed by the monsters. Those who were reckless and greedy did not deserve sympathy.

As time went on, the surrounding Cultivators became accustomed to this situation and accepted the fact that monsters still existed. The increasing number of Cultivators entering the monster-infested areas for treasure-hunting, in turn, stimulated local trade and commerce.

Before entering the market, Cultivators needed various supplies, and upon returning, they required rest and healing. The various items they brought back needed to be sold, and Cultivators who earned large amounts of spiritual stones needed to spend them. This obvious business opportunity was not overlooked by shrewd individuals.

Although the former war fortresses had already transformed into bustling markets with people coming and going, some wartime customs were still retained. Regardless of where the flying ships came from, they couldn't directly fly into the market; they had to land outside the market area.

Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General didn't mind taking a few extra steps. After landing, they walked straight to the nearby Jiachen Market. There was a sky-restricting formation set up inside the market, and if a Cultivator flew directly in, they would trigger the formation's attack.

Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General seemingly strolled casually but were actually moving quickly. After a few steps, they arrived just outside Jiachen Market. The market gates were tightly closed, and the protective great formation had been activated. Groups of Cultivators were already in position, ready to use the great formation to counter any threats.

Before even approaching the market, the two had noticed something unusual here. They came over voluntarily to inquire about what was going on. According to the information provided by the black market, the surrounding area had been relatively peaceful for many years, and markets like Jiachen had transformed from fortresses into bustling trade centers.

These markets usually have their gates wide open, welcoming visitors from all directions. It's quite rare to see the gates tightly closed as if facing a great enemy. Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General were halted by the stationed cultivators inside before they even reached the gate. If they continued forward, they would be struck by the market's formation.

Upon hearing the warning, both of them maintained their composure and voluntarily ceased their advance. Their purpose in coming was to gather information, not to confront the cultivators within the market.

Observing their cooperative attitude, the cultivators inside the market eased their guard slightly. Meng Zhang, as the Sect Master, naturally couldn't easily speak up, leaving the task of gathering information to Extreme Sword Spirit General.

Although Extreme Sword Spirit General was known as a cold and aloof Sword Cultivator in the Cultivation World, his personality was quite accommodating, allowing him to communicate peacefully with others. When needed, he could even display acting skills and assume various roles.

At this moment, Extreme Sword Spirit General acted as a Cultivator driven by insatiable greed, preparing to explore the monster-infested area for relics.

The adventurers who ventured into those areas for treasure-hunting were mainly at the Foundation Building stage, with occasional Gold Core Daoist Masters mixed in. Foundation Building cultivators entering such areas were gambling with their lives, as a single misstep could lead to death at any moment.

Gold Core Daoist Masters had a better chance of survival inside those areas. Although the risks were still significant, their ability to protect themselves was much stronger.

However, Gold Core Daoist Masters held a higher status in the Cultivation World compared to Foundation Building cultivators. Even if they were down on their luck, they wouldn't casually risk their lives.

Generally, Gold Core Daoist Masters would only venture inside if they had reliable information and were confident in obtaining substantial gains, despite the risk of being surrounded by monsters.

Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General didn't intentionally hide their cultivation base. Any cultivator with a bit of discernment could sense the aura belonging to Gold Core Daoist Masters that

they exuded. Gold Core Daoist Masters held a certain level of status wherever they went, and very few people would dare to treat them disrespectfully.

Extreme Sword Spirit General showed no airs of a Gold Core Daoist Master and amicably shouted to the stationed cultivators inside, explaining their purpose and casually inquiring about the situation in Jiachen Market.

A proficient member of the stationed cultivators was in charge of dealing with external cultivators, and he seemed experienced in answering Extreme Sword Spirit General's questions. He didn't care about the truthfulness of Extreme Sword Spirit General's words, nor did he inquire about his identity. He simply informed Extreme Sword Spirit General that Jiachen Market was under full martial law, and no one was allowed to enter.

The reason behind this action was not a secret. About ten days ago, a Cultivator who had gone into the mountains to search for treasure returned to another market. After entering the market, this person suddenly became demonized and spread demonic taint among the creatures within the market, causing many cultivators to be affected.

Fortunately, the stationed cultivators in the market hadn't lost their vigilance due to the long period of peace. They promptly noticed something was amiss and, together with other cultivators in the market, fought against the demonized cultivator to quickly suppress the incident.

Chapter 665: Departure

After the Cultivator Demonization, the combat power was drastically different from before.

The weak became strong, and the strong became even stronger.

Moreover, within the market, there were more than just one Cultivator who had been Demonized. Even the most ordinary beings, once Demonized, gained a certain level of combat power.

If it weren't for the protective Great Formation within the market, the defending cultivators might not necessarily prevail over their opponents.

After a fierce battle, the entire market was ravaged, turning into a complete ruin.

Most Demonized Cultivators were killed on the spot, and the Demonized beings were mostly eradicated.

However, there were still some who slipped through the cracks.

It's important to note that due to the devastating Demon Catastrophe in the past, many fortresses in the vicinity had specific arrangements.

The market's protective Formation itself possessed strong anti-demon abilities. Its ability to detect demonic creatures surpassed many Gold Core Daoist Masters.

Any Cultivator disguised by demonic creatures or Demonized Cultivator approaching the market's periphery would trigger a prompt reaction from the Formation, guiding and assisting the defending cultivators in their extermination.

In fact, over the years, there had been many cunning demonic creatures attempting to infiltrate the market and create chaos. However, without exception, they were exposed by the Formation and eventually eliminated by the defending cultivators.

The real concern arising from this incident was not just the immediate damage and losses caused. The fact that Demonized Cultivators and demonic creatures had found ways to evade the Formation's scrutiny was a significant problem.

Shortly after the incident, messages reached all the markets.

Because these markets were originally transformed fortresses, they easily established tight defenses.

All markets were on high alert, forbidding any cultivators from entering.

Everything that happened here had already been reported through various channels to the major forces that controlled the fate of the Great Transverse Cultivation Circle.

While waiting for representatives from these major forces to arrive and handle the situation, the markets remained sealed to prevent any opportunities for demonic creatures.

In addition, a group of powerful Gold Core cultivators formed a team to patrol the surrounding areas.

On one hand, they hunted down any remaining Demonized Cultivators, and on the other hand, they stood ready to support the various markets.

After hearing the briefing from the defending cultivators, Extreme Sword Spirit General and Meng Zhang exchanged glances.

They never expected to be so unlucky to encounter such an incident shortly after arriving.

According to their original plan, they intended to enter nearby markets, such as the Jia Chen market, gather the latest information, and see if they could find Cultivators familiar with the situation for further inquiry.

After all, the information obtained from the black market couldn't be completely trusted. It was best to confirm things on the ground.

Their cautiousness was justified, given the horrific scenes of the Demon Catastrophe from years ago. When it came to dealing with demonic creatures, there was no such thing as being too careful.

Now, with this unexpected event, all their plans were in jeopardy.

With no other options, Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General had no choice but to venture directly into the dangerous area.

Seeing that entering the nearby market was impossible, the two did not insist.

Extreme Sword Spirit General took out a large pile of spirit stones and placed them on the ground, intending to purchase a map of the Demon-infested Area.

The defending cultivator hesitated for a moment, but ultimately the fear of offending the Gold Core Daoist Master prevailed.

He said they didn't need any spirit stones, and he would give them a map. He asked them to wait for a moment and went inside.

After a while, he reappeared and, using the power of the protective Formation, handed them a map.

With a casual gesture, Extreme Sword Spirit General took the map in hand, thanked the cultivator, and left with Meng Zhang.

Given the evident wariness from the other party, it was clear that they were not welcome. It was better to leave early to avoid causing any trouble.

Once out of the sight of the defending cultivator, they flew into the sky and distanced themselves from the area.

Flying to a secluded place, the two landed on the ground and began to examine the map.

All the information on the map was stored in a small jade slip.

It detailed the specific conditions of the surrounding areas, along with many detailed notes.

Obviously, this map was not an ordinary item; it was a rather advanced piece of equipment.

Comparing it with the information obtained from the black market, the overall situation was quite consistent. There were minor differences in a few details, likely due to recent changes rather than intentional concealment by the black market.

Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General briefly discussed their plan and then set off directly towards their destination.

Both of them wanted to take action quickly, resolve the matter in the shortest time possible.

Meng Zhang had a hidden worry in his heart.

The recent incident with the Demonized Cultivators could likely attract the Primordial Spirit True Monarch of the Great Transverse Cultivation Circle.

If the Primordial Spirit True Monarch arrived, it could introduce new variables to their situation.

The worst-case scenario would be the major forces deciding to completely cleanse the nearby area due to the Demonized Cultivator incident. In that case, Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General would have to leave promptly to avoid being affected.

After flying a considerable distance, they entered a buffer zone.

This area had been severely affected by demonic creatures during the Demon Catastrophe.

A large area was devoid of any vegetation, and all living beings had been annihilated.

Meng Zhang's home, the Endless Sea of Sand, was already considered a remote and sparsely populated place. The Deadly Sea of Sand next to it was even known as a forbidden zone for living beings.

However, compared to the current area, those two places could be described as teeming with life.

After the Demon Catastrophe spread to this region, all living beings were Demonized.

Cultivators who had eradicated the Demon Catastrophe used various methods to completely eliminate all Demonized beings.

The remaining demonic creatures had been compressed into a fixed area. Although there were occasional appearances of demonic creatures in this buffer zone, large-scale occurrences were rare.

This area resembled a circular band, tightly enveloping the region occupied by demonic creatures.

According to the information obtained from the black market, in the years when demonic creatures were first restricted, there were even Primordial Spirit True Monarchs leading groups of cultivators, at least Gold Core Daoist Masters, on regular patrols around the area.

As soon as any demonic creature dared to leave the core area and attempt to venture out, it immediately attracted the merciless slaughter of the cultivators.

Despite the common belief that demonic creatures lacked intelligence, after being ruthlessly killed by cultivators, they learned to guard the core area and rarely ventured outside.

Eventually, the killings and patrols slowly came to an end.

Nowadays, unless a major event occurred, the Primordial Spirit True Monarch was not inclined to fly nearby.

Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General's current target, the Taiyi Sect's mountain gate, lay within the core area ahead.

Chapter 666: Entering

Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General flew forward for several hundred miles, smoothly crossing the buffer zone and entering the core area infested by monsters.

This core area is not small, with a diameter of three to four thousand miles, and monsters frequently appear.

Upon reaching this point, they truly entered a dangerous territory.

Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General hadn't ventured even ten miles when numerous monsters appeared ahead.

They were flying at a moderate altitude, only about a hundred yards or so.

Apart from occasional demonized birds colliding with them, there were also monsters leaping from the ground, charging towards them.

Without Meng Zhang needing to take action, Extreme Sword Spirit General casually released a few sword qi, annihilating all these low-level monsters.

Low-level monsters lack intelligence, driven purely by instinct. Once they sense living beings, they recklessly rush forward, ignoring their own lives. They won't cease until they tear apart and devour the living.

Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General hadn't flown much farther, and they had already eliminated many low-level monsters.

The core area infested by monsters was filled with a strange vitality.

Various creatures existed here, but there were no normal beings.

All living beings had been completely demonized, turning into monsters of varying levels.

Among monsters, peaceful scenes were rare; they were almost constantly fighting and engaging in bloody battles.

This was also a means of growth for monsters. Low-level monsters grow into high-level ones mainly by fighting and devouring each other.

As they gradually delved deeper into this area, witnessing various scenes and combining the information obtained from the black market, Meng Zhang began to have some doubts.

Monsters don't spontaneously generate. The Grand Dust World is not a demonic realm; monsters are not easily born here.

Apart from summoned monsters from the demonic realm, the demonization of local beings is a major source of monsters.

All living beings in this area had long been demonized. While high-level monsters could be considered evolved from low-level ones, the origin of these low-level monsters remained a mystery.

Demonization is not immortal; monsters also have their own lifespan.

If the low-level monsters born during the Demon Catastrophe centuries ago haven't evolved into high-level monsters, it would be difficult for them to survive until now.

Yet, monsters continued to be born in this area, indicating that they were being replenished somehow.

Thinking about the peculiar attitude of the major forces in the Great Transverse Cultivation Circle towards the monsters in this area, Meng Zhang pondered.

He hoped that the major forces in the Great Transverse Cultivation Circle would be vigilant enough not to play with fire and get themselves burned.

Meng Zhang was just a passerby, insignificant and with limited strength. He had no power to intervene in the significant events occurring in the Great Transverse Cultivation Circle.

In fact, Meng Zhang couldn't casually disclose his speculations on this side of the Great Transverse Cultivation Circle; otherwise, he would be inviting trouble.

Shaking his head, Meng Zhang set aside these thoughts and redirected his attention to the task at hand.

This area was originally part of the Great Transverse Mountain Range, or rather, an extension of its branches stemming from the time of the Demon Catastrophe, which had caused tremendous destruction to the surrounding environment and resulted in bizarre changes to the terrain.

After flying forward for a distance, Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General voluntarily landed on the ground.

Flying in the air was too conspicuous, making it easy to attract monster attacks.

The low-level monsters encountered earlier were nothing compared to what might appear deeper inside, where higher-level monsters could pose a more significant threat.

Their goal was to enter the Taiyi Sect's mountain gate, not to engage in demon-slaying. They aimed to avoid unnecessary battles as much as possible.

After landing, Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General activated a Divine Ability to conceal their presence. Taking advantage of the complex terrain, they continued to advance cautiously.

Both of them proceeded with great care, attempting to avoid direct encounters with monsters. If they couldn't avoid a confrontation, they would go all out to swiftly eliminate the threat before alerting nearby monsters.

Even the more powerful Refining Qi cultivators with proper preparation could likely handle the low-level monsters on the periphery in combat.

As Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General delved deeper, the encountered monsters exhibited combat capabilities equivalent to Foundation Building cultivators at the very least.

According to the common cultivation world grading system, these monsters were at least Second Rank.

While ants may not pose a threat individually, a sufficient number of Second Rank monsters could be fatal to a Gold Core Daoist Master.

The Great Transverse Cultivation Circle boasted numerous powerful factions, and even Primordial Spirit sects did not dare to act recklessly.

The rebuilt Taiyi Sect was only a Gold Core sect and, being newcomers, naturally faced exclusion and potential suppression from local powers.

Although the rebuilt Taiyi Sect might be more formidable than the current Taiyi Sect, its influence, direct territories, and the number of vassals were far inferior to today's Taiyi Sect.

Even the surroundings of Taiyi Sect's mountain gate couldn't be thoroughly cleared; they could only control an area within a few hundred miles.

Near the Taiyi Sect's mountain gate, other factions had established their own gates. Some forces openly hostile to Taiyi Sect might set up strongholds even if their gates weren't nearby, forming a siege posture and gradually squeezing Taiyi Sect's living space.

Meng Zhang had heard about these events from a few Guardian Spirit Generals before.

The rebuilt Taiyi Sect had indeed faced many challenges, subject to various restrictions, and had to be cautious in many matters.

At the time, with Taiyi Sect's strength, they could have easily swept the surrounding area, eliminated hostile sects, and uprooted the strongholds of opposing forces.

However, the Taiyi Sect's leadership chose a different path, opting for restraint.

Taiyi Sect endured, navigating through conflicts with opposing forces and striving to expand its living space.

Reflecting on these past events, Meng Zhang couldn't help but sigh. The rebuilt Taiyi Sect had a tough journey, facing limitations and having to carefully consider its every move.

The Sect Master of Taiyi Sect at that time must have lived a more difficult life than Meng Zhang himself.

Meng Zhang could understand the decisions made by the Taiyi Sect's leadership at that time.

Taiyi Sect was originally a group of survivors who had fled from the Middle-Earth Continent and had rebuilt themselves in the Great Transverse Mountain Range.

Even if not all the sect's leaders were overly cautious, it was unavoidable in a place where every sound and movement could be a potential threat.

If they had used force against local powers at that time, it might have stirred public resentment, making them enemies of major cultivation forces in the vicinity and possibly leading to a joint siege.

The leaders of Taiyi Sect at that time were striving for survival in a difficult situation, managing to pass down the sect's traditions despite the odds. It was truly admirable.

Thinking of these Taiyi Sect predecessors and the fact that he was about to enter the rebuilt Taiyi Sect's mountain gate, Meng Zhang couldn't help but feel a bit nervous.

Along the way, they encountered various difficulties, and Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General narrowly avoided being surrounded by large numbers of monsters several times.

Chapter 667: Alarming

Throughout the journey, Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General were careful enough not to disturb the large groups of demons. Occasionally, when they did encounter some, they made swift and silent kills without causing any commotion.

Until now, the two of them had encountered no resistance and faced no danger. The rebuilt Taiyi Sect's main gate was less than a hundred miles ahead. Despite significant changes in the surrounding terrain and environment over the years, Extreme Sword Spirit General still knew the way very well and was leading the way.

With Extreme Sword Spirit General's familiarity with the surroundings and access to the latest intelligence and maps, they managed to avoid many troubles along the way. They had passed several Third Rank demon lairs, and without precaution, it would be easy to startle these alert creatures.

Dealing with Third Rank demons wasn't a one-hit kill affair, and any prolonged combat would attract swarms of demons to surround them. These creatures often engaged in bloody battles among themselves but immediately turned their focus to any intruders, attacking relentlessly.

As they approached Taiyi Sect, Meng Zhang's keen eyes could already make out the mountain peaks where the rebuilt sect resided. The new Taiyi Sect had expanded, forming a long mountain range that contained the main gate. Some especially tall and majestic peaks were clearly modified artificially and represented the former major peaks of Taiyi Sect.

Extreme Sword Spirit General had previously told Meng Zhang that to access the secret vault left behind by Taiyi Sect, they needed to enter the main peak. However, the mountain gate of Taiyi Sect had now become a nest of demons.

The intelligence obtained from the black market specifically pointed out that various powerful demons, including Third Rank ones, now occupied the mountain gate. These Third Rank demons were a headache even for Gold Core Daoist Masters.

These Third Rank demons had begun to develop intelligence and, while remaining ferocious by nature, they knew how to suppress their instincts and collaborate with their kind during hunts. Many of them served as leaders, commanding numerous lower-level demons.

Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General had successfully approached Taiyi Sect's main gate. The journey had been smooth sailing, and if not for experiencing it firsthand, Meng Zhang would have found it hard to believe.

However, the real challenge lay before them now. Demons roamed the surrounding mountains, some forming organized patrol teams that tirelessly circled the area along designated routes. It seemed like these demons never rested from their patrols.

This posed a dilemma for Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General. No matter how skilled they were, they couldn't infiltrate Taiyi Sect's main gate without alerting the demons. The intelligence from the black market had not specified the type of demons occupying the gate, only stating that they were numerous and powerful.

What appeared before Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General were merely Second Rank demons, possessing the battle strength of Foundation Building cultivators at best. However, the fact that they could command and organize these demons so efficiently meant that the higher-ranking demons behind them were definitely not ordinary.

Of course, within this area, the most powerful demons that appear are Third Rank demons, equivalent to human Gold Core stage cultivators.

During the outbreak of the demonic catastrophe, Fourth Rank demons were born, but they were eventually slain by the joint efforts of major forces.

Fourth Rank demons are not easy to come into existence; they require specific conditions. The major forces in the Grand Crossing Cultivation Circle have always kept close surveillance on this area. It is nearly impossible for Fourth Rank demons to be born unnoticed.

Otherwise, even if Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General were brave enough, they wouldn't dare to approach this place recklessly. They exchanged a helpless glance and realized that sneaking in secretly was no longer an option, leaving them with only one choice—to force their way in.

With their abilities, cutting a path through the demons wouldn't be too difficult. As long as they found what they were looking for before the demons could react, they could quickly retreat and still have a chance of survival.

However, they did not act immediately. It was their first time in this place, so they decided to observe the situation firsthand. They would not engage with the demons head-on unless absolutely necessary.

Though they knew the chance of success was slim, Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General attempted to infiltrate further using an Earth Escape Spell. However, they quickly retreated from underground when they encountered numerous strange purple and black roots intertwining beneath the surface. These seemingly sentient roots could easily be disturbed by any slight movement nearby.

If Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General had not been quick to react, they would have likely exposed their presence by now. The demons had arranged such a tight defense underground, which was unexpected.

The two didn't make a sound and refrained from extending their Divine Sense too far. Demons were highly sensitive to Cultivators' Divine Sense, and any scanning would alert them. Furthermore, the soil on the ground in the surrounding area had a strange purplish-red color, indicating contamination by demonic energy over the years. Black mist floated everywhere on the ground and in the sky, which acted as a strong shield against various probing Divine Abilities.

Staying in these areas for an extended period would lead ordinary Cultivators to unconsciously be influenced by the demonic energy, eventually leading to Demonization. Therefore, those Cultivators seeking treasures in this area would take various protective measures before entering, ensuring they leave quickly without prolonged stays. After leaving, they would ask high-level experts to help them expel the demonic energy.

With Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General's Cultivation Base and adequate preparations, staying in this area for a while posed no major risks.

The two did not continue their actions but instead carefully observed, seeking any possible vulnerabilities. Suddenly, from a distance on top of a mountain peak, bursts of extremely furious roars resounded.

Clearly, these were the voices of high-level demons. Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General could sense the anger contained in the roars.

Accompanying the roars, a figure resembling a wisp of blue smoke shot out like lightning from the mountaintop and quickly fled towards the outside. Although the surrounding demonic mist interfered with Meng Zhang's Deception Breaking Eye, he still recognized the identity of that figure at a glance.

Following the roar of the demon, all the surrounding demons were alarmed. The area around the mountain peak erupted into chaos as countless demons soared into the air and rushed towards the fleeing figure.

A giant skeletal head and a massive silhouette composed of black mist were relentlessly chasing after that figure.

Chapter 668: Chance Encounter

"Damn guy," the Extreme Sword Spirit General couldn't help but curse loudly.

Meng Zhang, who had been watching the spectacle, now felt the urge to join in the swearing.

The figure descended from the peak of the mountain and unexpectedly flew towards the position of Meng Zhang and the Extreme Sword Spirit General.

It was unclear whether this person did it intentionally or purely by chance. This kind of action was clearly stirring up trouble.

The figure floated down quickly, seemingly covering a considerable distance, but in just a few moments, it successfully crossed and arrived not far from Meng Zhang and the Extreme Sword Spirit General.

Most of the monsters crazily rushing toward this figure had not realized it yet.

However, the two Third Rank monsters were closely following, showing no signs of relaxation.

The figure floated over Meng Zhang and the Extreme Sword Spirit General, emitting a laughter like silver bells.

"Sect Master Meng, there's no hiding, come out."

"Damn it," Meng Zhang knew in his heart that this person intentionally flew in his direction.

This figure was none other than Xu Mengying, the Holy Maiden of the Yellow Lotus Sect, whom Meng Zhang had helped not long ago but hadn't had the chance to collect the debt.

Not only did they accidentally meet, but this woman also deliberately involved him.

"Sect Master Meng, help a little, and the lady will repay you in the future."

"We are all Human Clan Cultivators; Sect Master Meng wouldn't ignore someone in peril, right?"

"If the lady dies here, Sect Master Meng won't have anyone providing Nine Heavens Refined Essence."

Xu Mengying spoke rapidly, firing off a string of words like a machine gun.

As she spoke, the two Third Rank monsters had caught up from behind.

The huge black skull opened its mouth, and black blades shot out, covering Meng Zhang, Extreme Sword Spirit General, and even Xu Mengying below.

At this moment, even if unwilling, Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General had to take action.

Sharp sword energy shot forward, piercing the two large arms into pieces.

However, the mist surged, and all the wounds quickly disappeared, the arms returning to their original state.

A massive column of fire descended, forcing the giant skull to retreat repeatedly.

The Solar True Flame, possessing the effect of purging evil and breaking demons, was most effective in such situations.

Meng Zhang didn't use any other means, just urging the Solar True Flame to counter the enemy.

In just a short delay, a vast number of monsters swarmed in.

The ground shook violently as thick vines burst from the earth, wildly twisting in the air and striking towards the three.

Two more Third Rank monsters flew in from a distance, quickly joining the battle.

"Quickly, we can't entangle with these monsters."

Without needing the Extreme Sword Spirit General's reminder, Meng Zhang had already realized.

Golden crows made of flames descended from the sky, turning the tide as they burned the once arrogant and unruly monsters into ashes.

Although it seemed like they gained a significant advantage, Meng Zhang showed no sign of joy.

Forced into the battle in the first place, whether it was victory or defeat, Meng Zhang wouldn't benefit.

If they didn't evacuate quickly, Meng Zhang and the Extreme Sword Spirit General might end up in a precarious situation.

More and more monsters poured in, creating a situation akin to poking a hornet's nest.

Xu Mengying was even more eager to escape than Meng Zhang and the others, unwilling to continue tangling with the monsters here.

Xu Mengying's cultivation base was formidable, displaying a combat strength not inferior to a mid-stage Gold Core cultivator. As for her true cultivation base, even Meng Zhang found it difficult to fathom.

Despite a bit of dislike, as a comrade, even if only a temporary one, Xu Mengying proved to be exceptionally competent. She actively cooperated with Meng Zhang in battle, filling in the gaps and seamlessly complementing their actions. Sometimes, just as Meng Zhang had a thought, Xu Mengying would promptly cooperate, making Meng Zhang's moves more fluid.

The trio chose a direction and made a concerted effort to break through, fighting with all their might. Under their joint efforts, they carved out a bloody path, almost unstoppable and leaving the enemy defenseless.

After breaking through, they flew rapidly ahead. The pursuing monsters roared, but their distance only increased.

Only the Third Rank monsters barely managed to keep up with the trio's figures, while the lower-ranked monsters had long been left far behind.

As the three accelerated, even the Third Rank monsters were gradually shaken off.

If the area wasn't infested with monsters and didn't have a large population, Meng Zhang would have liked to turn back, take advantage of the situation, and slay one or two monsters to vent his frustrations.

Fortunately, he remained clear-headed, understanding the need for caution in such a place.

His prudence prevented another potential trouble.

Due to the trio's full-speed escape, they didn't bother concealing their tracks. Along the way, the commotion attracted many monsters in the vicinity.

Once these monsters detected signs of living beings, they swarmed like sharks smelling blood, rushing from all directions.

Luckily, the trio acted swiftly, not entangling themselves with these monsters.

Meng Zhang led the way, breaking through the encirclement of monsters.

When they reached a relatively secluded area, the three quickly descended to the ground and used their divine abilities to hide their presence, erasing all traces.

After ensuring there were no loopholes, the three chose a place with fewer monsters and silently rushed forward.

They dared not fly high but hugged the ground and flew low.

In this way, the trio avoided the monsters, expending considerable effort to shake off the pursuit and escape from the core area infested by monsters to the outer buffer zone.

Upon reaching a safe place, the trio dispelled the invisibility spell, revealing their figures.

Meng Zhang's face was grim, glaring fiercely at Xu Mengying.

This woman had gone too far this time, daring to harm others and dragging him and the Extreme Sword Spirit General into the siege of monsters.

Such behavior was no different from a naked betrayal.

If Meng Zhang and the Extreme Sword Spirit General weren't strong and clever enough, replacing them with someone weaker, they would have long been overwhelmed by the monster horde. It would either be a struggle for survival or succumbing to demonization.

For such actions, Meng Zhang would absolutely not tolerate it. He wouldn't easily let her off just because she was a beautiful woman.

If Xu Mengying didn't provide an explanation and sufficient compensation, Meng Zhang wouldn't mind taking drastic measures, including killing and ruthless actions.

Chapter 669: Coincidence

Extreme Sword Spirit General had followed Meng Zhang for many years and understood his character very well. Seeing Meng Zhang's posture, he took a few steps and blocked Xu Mengying's path.

"My Lady Saint, shouldn't you give us an explanation for what happened today?" Meng Zhang spoke insolently, with a hint of playful smile on his face.

Xu Mengying didn't reply immediately. Instead, she removed the veil that had been covering her face for years, revealing her true appearance.

A breathtakingly beautiful face, capable of captivating all living beings, appeared before Meng Zhang.

Xu Mengying smiled enchantingly, and her gentle voice echoed in Meng Zhang's ears.

"Sect Master Meng, why bother nitpicking over trivial matters? You are such a prominent figure; how can you be so preoccupied with such things?"

This was the first time in the many years Meng Zhang had known Xu Mengying that he had seen her true face.

Meng Zhang was taken aback for a moment, wondering if she was trying to seduce him.

Did she think that a beautiful appearance would entice him?

Meng Zhang, a cultivator at his level of cultivation base, except for a few anomalies, could resist the allure of appearances. In his eyes, even the most beautiful face was nothing more than fleeting clouds. A good appearance was no more valuable than a pile of spirit stones.

Meng Zhang looked at Xu Mengying with an appreciative and pure gaze, paying no attention to the compliments she gave him but instead getting straight to the point.

"Miss Xu, spare me the pleasantries. I only need one thing from you: how will you settle the accounts from earlier?"

In the Cultivation World, there was a custom of addressing female cultivators as "Immortal" regardless of their actual cultivation level. Although this was a form of respect, Meng Zhang didn't quite like it.

Calling a female pig "Immortal" or a Refining Qi stage cultivator "Immortal" seemed too cheap. They were even less worthy than the prostitutes in brothels.

Meng Zhang believed that only Gold Core Daoist Masters who were above average in appearance could be truly addressed as "Immortal."

Xu Mengying initially met these criteria, but now he needed to pressure her, so he didn't want to be overly polite.

Xu Mengying seemed unbothered by Meng Zhang's pressing attitude and maintained a smile on her face.

"Sect Master Meng, we are all part of the same group; there's no need to be so formal. As a sect master and a righteous person, it's your duty to help fellow cultivators and eliminate demons. Why should others have to demand explanations from you?"

Meng Zhang didn't want to engage in a verbal duel with a mere woman and had no desire to waste any more words. His expression grew increasingly gloomy, ready to take action at any moment.

He harbored no thoughts of cherishing and admiring beauty; he only wanted to satisfy his desire for revenge.

Similarly, Extreme Sword Spirit General began secretly circulating their power, ready to cooperate with Meng Zhang.

Capturing Xu Mengying wouldn't be an easy task, given her displayed combat prowess. Besides, she was the Holy Lady of the Yellow Lotus Sect, and she undoubtedly had some hidden aces up her sleeve.

Just as Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General were on edge, preparing to make a move, a sharp gust of wind sound came from a distance.

A flying boat appeared in the sky and quickly flew towards this location.

In an instant, the flying boat arrived above the three individuals. Daoist Master Mountain Garden and Daoist Master Smiling Lotus appeared at the bow of the flying boat.

Seeing Meng Zhang and the Yellow Lotus Sect's Holy Lady together, and recalling Meng Zhang's recent intentional disturbance to create an opportunity for Xu Mengying, Daoist Master Mountain Garden suddenly realized and felt he understood the situation.

"Meng Zhang, you indeed have a connection with that woman. This time, you've been caught red-handed, and you have nothing to say. Even if this matter reaches your master, Jin Li True Monarch, you won't escape," Daoist Master Mountain Garden spoke harshly.

Daoist Master Smiling Lotus's words were not as harsh, but they were equally blunt.

"Meng Zhang, you interfered in our sect's internal affairs and meddled in matters you shouldn't have. You have violated a major taboo in the Cultivation World and have offended the Nine-Bends Fascination Alliance rules."

Facing the accusations from the two Daoist Masters, Meng Zhang's face turned livid. He didn't want to explain, and he knew explanations wouldn't help at this point. The situation had already gone beyond what mere words could solve.

Daoist Master Mountain Garden's words infuriated him deeply, and he even harbored a killing intent.

After all, he had been a sect master for so many years and had decent cultivation skills to restrain his temper. He coldly gazed at Xu Mengying.

Yue Yuan Zhenre obviously followed this woman's lead, and now he was in a difficult situation, implicated by her.

Daoist Master Mountain Garden wanted to order an attack and capture the three of them directly.

However, Daoist Master Smiling Lotus hesitated. On the one hand, Xu Mengying held a high position as the Yellow Lotus Sect's Holy Lady, so he was reluctant to make a move against her. On the other hand, Meng Zhang was involved in this matter, and an immediate attack might trigger another large-scale war with the Taiyi Sect.

Yellow Lotus Sect's East River Branch now occupied a vast territory in the Endless Sea of Sand, adjacent to the Taiyi Sect. If they went to war, the East River Branch would undoubtedly be the frontline and would be used as cannon fodder.

While Daoist Master Smiling Lotus hesitated, the Gold Core Daoist Masters on the flying boat revealed themselves.

Shortly after arriving at Tiger Mountain City, they had rented a Third Rank flying boat. Given Yellow Lotus Sect's vast resources, they didn't care about the expenses.

Although Xu Mengying managed to temporarily shake off the pursuing Yellow Lotus cultists with Meng Zhang's help, Yue Yuan Zhenre had received guidance from True Monarch Mountain Peak before departure. Xu Mengying's subordinates had long placed some means on her.

This flying boat carried this group of people and followed Xu Mengying's trail from Tiger Mountain City until they caught up with her here.

As for running into her and Meng Zhang together, it could only be seen as destiny, leading them to capture them.

Upon Daoist Master Mountain Garden's order, he and the other Gold Core Daoist Masters made their move.

With the enemy vastly outnumbering them, both Meng Zhang and Xu Mengying knew they couldn't foolishly fight head-on at this point.

Just a moment ago, Meng Zhang and Extreme Sword Spirit General had been looking at Xu Mengying as enemies, and now they were joining forces against a common enemy.

Although they hadn't communicated beforehand, the three of them coordinated seamlessly, like the best comrades and companions.

A radiant light filled the air as Meng Zhang used his Divine Ability "Sun and Moon Divine Light" to temporarily shield their opponents' perception.

Extreme Sword Spirit General released a barrage of sword energy, enveloping all the enemies, forcing them to divide their attention.

With a gentle wave of Xu Mengying's hand, an inexplicable force emerged, causing the hostile group to feel dizzy and disoriented.

Taking advantage of the momentary suppression of their opponents, Meng Zhang and the others flew into the sky and headed towards the distance.

Before leaving, Meng Zhang casually threw a thunderball towards the flying boat in the air.

It was a thunderball he had crafted using a secret technique when he was not a Gold Core True Monarch. He had begged quite a few from her back then, and after many years of use, he still had a few left.

Chapter 670: Plaintive

In the past, Jin Li, the Daoist Master, was powerful and proficient in lightning techniques. The thunderball she crafted with great effort could threaten cultivators at the Gold Core stage.

When Meng Zhang's thunderball was thrown, Xu Mengying, who coincidentally acted in sync with him, also threw a talisman towards the flying boat.

Xu Mengying's talisman reached its target later, landing outside the flying boat and being blocked by its protective formation.

Flashes of light emerged as the power of the talisman and the protective formation canceled each other out.

Meng Zhang's thunderball, unhindered, landed on the surface of the flying boat.

With a loud bang, the thunderball exploded in the abdomen of the flying boat. Not only did it create a large hole in the abdomen, but the explosion also caused significant damage inside.

There was no prior indication, yet the two of them unconsciously executed an almost perfect cooperation.

Even while attacking, their escape speed did not diminish at all.

Meng Zhang and Xu Mengying rushed towards the distance as if their lives depended on it.

Their speed was not slow, and even Extreme Sword Spirit General, who had the lowest cultivation base, managed to keep up with them by using the Sword Escape Technique.

Meng Zhang led the way with the Rainbow Escape Method, while Xu Mengying followed closely behind using the Wind Escape Technique.

Though Extreme Sword Spirit General lagged behind, the distance was not too far, and he closely followed the two in their escape.

Many years ago, due to the relationship with the Clever Machine Sect and its various Mechanical Creations, Meng Zhang developed a keen interest in flying boats, puppets, and other Mechanical Creations.

Not only did Meng Zhang purchase a large number of Mechanical Creations from the Clever Machine Sect, but he also established a Divine Workshop in the sect to repair and replicate various Mechanical Creations.

Meng Zhang was quite knowledgeable about different types of flying boats, especially the propulsion chambers that provided power to them.

His sneak attack with the thunderball happened to damage the flying boat's propulsion facilities, causing its speed to significantly decrease, losing the ability to fly at high speeds.

Without the flying boat for transportation, the eight Gold Core Daoist Masters from the Daoist Master Mountain Garden, with varying strengths, would definitely be spread out during the pursuit, potentially leading to further problems.

If such a situation arose, it would be ideal for them to hunt down the enemies without being picked off one by one and seize the opportunity to strike back.

Although Daoist Master Mountain Garden was somewhat arrogant, he wasn't foolishly conceited. He had a clear understanding of the relative strengths between enemies and allies.

While the damage to the flying boat might require compensation later, the more pressing concern was the impact on the team's mobility, which would limit their actions and create trouble.

Daoist Master Mountain Garden did not command everyone to continue the pursuit.

Xu Mengying might escape for a while, but she couldn't escape forever; sooner or later, she would be caught.

Daoist Master Mountain Garden glanced displeasingly at Daoist Master Smiling Lotus. If it weren't for the latter's hesitation and failure to act promptly, Xu Mengying would never have escaped so easily.

The people from East River Branch could not be relied upon, even though they seemed to have submitted on the surface. In secret, they were still making moves, never truly accepting their allegiance.

Daoist Master Mountain Garden didn't spare Daoist Master Smiling Lotus's face and reprimanded him gently but firmly.

Now, everyone was working for True Monarch Mountain Peak, and there could be no slightest negligence.

With True Monarch Mountain Peak on the verge of unifying the Yellow Lotus Sect and becoming the master of the entire sect, it's crucial for Daoist Master Smiling Lotus not to side with the wrong team at this critical moment.

Daoist Master Smiling Lotus surpasses Daoist Master Mountain Garden in both seniority and cultivation base. If it weren't for the special favor of True Monarch Mountain Peak, could Daoist Master Mountain Garden have attained his current cultivation base and status? Daoist Master Smiling Lotus never really regarded Daoist Master Mountain Garden, who achieved his position through connections, and now, he felt humiliated in front of him, which made him secretly furious.

However, he also knew that now was not the time to argue with Daoist Master Mountain Garden. When one is under someone's roof, they must bow their head. Since East River Branch is under the control of True Monarch Mountain Peak, they must not openly defy its orders or offend its trusted followers.

Daoist Master Smiling Lotus maintained a composed expression and suppressed his anger.

Seeing Daoist Master Smiling Lotus's reaction, Daoist Master Mountain Garden thought that his reprimand had silenced him. The thought of suppressing the senior member of the sect made Daoist Master Mountain Garden feel pleased and triumphant, feeling that he had gained some prestige.

Meanwhile, Yue Yuan wasted a lot of time on empty words before finally starting to plan the next course of action, preparing to continue tracking Xu Mengying.

On the other hand, Meng Zhang and the others had swiftly flown far away, leaving the Yellow Lotus cultists far behind, with no traces of them visible.

After flying for a considerable distance, almost leaving the buffer zone, the three finally stopped and landed on the ground.

Upon landing, Xu Mengying let out a soft sigh filled with sorrow and indistinct loss, a sigh that could move the hearts of listeners and bring tears to their eyes.

However, Meng Zhang remained unmoved and continued to stare at Xu Mengying.

Their recent cooperation in battle and escape did not erase the previous grudges.

Even the previous fight and escape were all due to Xu Mengying's actions.

It was no wonder that women were considered a calamity. The more beautiful they were, the deeper the calamity.

"Unexpectedly, even she betrayed me," Meng Zhang muttered to himself, expressing a sense of disappointment and wounded pride.

Having barely escaped from their pursuers, Xu Mengying immediately realized that someone must have tampered with her belongings.

While escaping, even during high-speed flight, she had carefully checked her entire body and all the items she carried with her.

With some initial speculation, Xu Mengying quickly narrowed down the suspects and identified the true culprits.

Only a few individuals, her trusted followers who had been with her for many years, could have quietly and discreetly tampered with her belongings. Yet, these very people betrayed her.

The betrayal of her closest confidants left Xu Mengying feeling heartbroken and made her realize the dire situation she was in.

If it weren't for the fact that the situation seemed hopeless, these trusted followers would never have dared to betray her.

Regardless of her status as the Yellow Lotus Sect saint or her own strength as a young and powerful Gold Core Daoist Master, she should have had a strong deterrent effect on the people in the sect,

making them hesitant to betray her. Yet, they still betrayed her and even placed a tracking device on her belongings, making it impossible for her to escape completely.

Meng Zhang had no idea that in just a short time, Xu Mengying's mind was filled with various thoughts, her heart full of worries and regrets, recalling many things.

In Meng Zhang's eyes, Xu Mengying was merely putting on an act.

He had no time to watch her perform, nor did he wish to continue playing along with her.

Her pitiful and charming appearance might bewitch countless innocent young men, but it had no effect on Meng Zhang. No matter how pitiable or attractive she might be, he wouldn't show the slightest bit of mercy.