

Sect Master 71

Chapter 71: Search

Xiao Haisheng floated silently in the air, his face dark as he gazed down at the Cultivators below, creating an atmosphere of palpable pressure, inducing silence all around.

"Our Elder, Xiao Shenqiang, died under mysterious circumstances, and I must investigate the truth to give the deceased an explanation," he declared solemnly. "I'm in a terrible mood right now, so you better be honest."

Xiao Haisheng's gaze swept across the faces of Old Man Bamboo Stick, Liu Dachuan, and Guang HongDaoist, who were all powerful Foundation Building cultivators. Naturally, they were the prime suspects for the murder.

Shan Ying stood behind Xiao Haisheng, his face cold. He worried that Xiao Haisheng might blame himself for Xiao Shenqiang's death, and he was also angered by the loss of a fellow sect member.

Xiao Shenqiang was a kinsman of Xiao Haisheng and had always been his trusted confidant. Given Xiao Haisheng's protective nature, this matter was unlikely to be easily resolved.

Two Foundation Building cultivators from Twin Success Valley had come with Xiao Haisheng and were leading a team of disciples to search the sand monster's lair meticulously.

Within Twin Success Valley, there was a special positioning technique. Xiao Shenqiang's body was quickly found and brought before Xiao Haisheng.

Although Xiao Shenqiang's body had turned into an ice sculpture and was broken into several pieces, the marks on the body were still evident.

"Poisonous Cold Yin Thunder, Liu Dachuan, do you have anything to say?" Xiao Haisheng glared at Liu Dachuan, his face filled with killing intent.

Cold sweat broke out on Liu Dachuan's forehead. "Xiao Haisheng, don't wrong an innocent person. Poisonous Cold Yin Thunder may be a unique technique of my Liu Family, but it's not uncommon to find it in the market. Who knows who ended up with it?"

"That's right, Sect Master Xiao. Liu brother isn't lying. Poisonous Cold Yin Thunder is occasionally sold in the market. Who knows who acquired it in the end?" Guang HongDaoist chimed in, not wanting to directly confront Xiao Haisheng but trying to be fair to Liu Dachuan.

"Just relying on Poisonous Cold Yin Thunder as evidence to accuse Liu brother of murder may not convince everyone," Old Man Bamboo Stick added in an indifferent tone.

Xiao Haisheng knew that the three Foundation Building cultivators in front of him weren't easy to deal with. Even if he managed to suppress them for now, he couldn't dispose of them arbitrarily.

"Hand over your storage bags," Xiao Haisheng said with a fierce look, showing a strong intention to take action at any moment.

Whether out of the fear of losing face or not wanting to anger Xiao Haisheng further, the three of them swallowed their pride and let Xiao Haisheng inspect their storage bags.

Knowing Xiao Shenqiang well, Xiao Haisheng had a general idea of what items Xiao Shenqiang carried.

He carefully examined the storage bags of the three individuals but found nothing incriminating.

Either these three were indeed innocent, and the real culprit behind Xiao Haisheng's murder was someone else, or they were smart enough not to covet the items on Xiao Shenqiang's body.

Suppressing his anger, Xiao Haisheng returned the storage bags to them. Old Man Bamboo Stick received his bag with a disdainful snort.

Xiao Haisheng then shifted his gaze downwards.

The crowd below consisted of Refining Qi cultivators who had entered the sand monster's lair together with the three Foundation Building cultivators. In the previous chaos, they had suffered considerable losses. Following Xiao Haisheng's strict orders, they were now arranged according to their sects, standing quietly below.

At Xiao Haisheng's command, two Foundation Building elders who had come with him and a group of Twin Success Valley Refining Qi disciples began the search.

They meticulously inspected everyone's storage bags and even conducted rough body searches. Their scrutiny was so thorough that not even a needle could escape their inspection.

The first to be searched were the disciples of Liu Family. Coincidentally, they found a folding fan on one of the Liu Family disciples.

This folding fan was just an ordinary First Rank magic tool with nothing special about it. However, Twin Success Valley disciples who were familiar with Xiao Shenqiang knew that it was the same folding fan he often carried and played with, revealing his refined taste. A Twin Success Valley enforcement disciple held the folding fan and questioned sternly, "Where did this come from? Tell me, did you kill Elder Xiao Shenqiang?"

Being unjustly accused of such a serious crime, the young disciple panicked and stammered, "I-I-I found it in the sand monster's lair."

As he spoke, he looked for help toward Liu Dachuan, who was standing above from the Liu Family.

"Found it? It's so easy to pick up a First Rank magic tool? Why didn't I have such good luck?" the Twin Success Valley enforcement disciple mocked.

Under the watchful gazes of everyone, Liu Dachuan would never abandon his own disciple.

"It's normal to find a magic tool in the chaotic sand monster's lair," Liu Dachuan said, firmly supporting his disciple.

Xiao Haisheng had already decided that the Liu Family disciples were the prime suspects and paid no attention to Liu Dachuan's defense. Instead, he shouted in a stern voice, "Continue the search."

The results of the subsequent searches, however, surprised everyone present and left Xiao Haisheng in a difficult position.

They found no suspicious items on the Liu Family disciples. But on a disciple from Green Bamboo Mountain, they discovered a Second Rank magic tool that Xiao Shenqiang often used.

Questioned, this disciple's response was the same as the Liu Family disciple's—he found it in the sand monster's lair.

The search continued, and even the Twin Success Valley disciples who had followed Xiao Shenqiang into the sand monster's lair were not exempted.

The search results were beyond anyone's expectations and put Xiao Haisheng in a difficult position.

On the disciples from various sects and families, they found belongings that belonged to Xiao Shenqiang. Even the jade pendant that Xiao Shenqiang had always kept hidden and only a few people knew about was found on a Twin Success Valley disciple.

Finally, in the panicked eyes of Zhao Family's Elder Zhao Renlong, the Lesser Foundation Building Pill inside his storage bag was also discovered.

Xiao Haisheng was thoroughly enraged. Even the previously respectful Zhao Family dared to play tricks behind his back.

Among the many vassal forces of Twin Success Valley, Xiao Haisheng believed he had treated Zhao Family well. Ten years ago, he had even sold a Lesser Foundation Building Pill to Zhao Family at a low price.

It was essential to know that Twin Success Valley's production of Lesser Foundation Building Pills was limited. Even many disciples within the sect struggled for years without obtaining one. Each Lesser Foundation Building Pill produced by Twin Success Valley was wrapped in a special shell with a hidden mark on it.

The Lesser Foundation Building Pill found on Zhao Renlong was precisely the one Xiao Shenqiang had prepared for his own son.

With a swift motion, Xiao Haisheng pulled Zhao Renlong's body to his side.

"You heartless and ungrateful scum! You don't know how to be grateful and are taking advantage of the situation," Xiao Haisheng exclaimed furiously. "Zhao Sect Elder, you claim to have found this pill, but spare me the lies!"

In a panic, Zhao Renlong turned his pleading gaze towards Zhao Family's patriarch, Zhao Yanbei, who had already kneeled down with the rest of his family members while Xiao Haisheng was venting his anger.

Chapter 72: Penalty

Zhao Yanbei had served as the head of the Zhao Family for many years, leading them in confrontations against other families without Foundation Building cultivators. He relied not only on his Cultivation Base, which had reached the Refining Qi completion level, but also on his ability to judge the situation and steer accordingly.

Knowing that Sect Master Xiao Haisheng of Twin Success Valley had murderous intentions, he didn't dare plead for Zhao Renlong. It was better for Zhao Renlong to suffer than for the entire Zhao Family to bear the wrath.

Xiao Haisheng didn't have many concerns about dealing with subordinate forces. He didn't bother to continue questioning Zhao Renlong and instead directly began extracting his soul.

The malicious act of soul extraction was employed by many Foundation Building cultivators, but it was generally not abused. This was because the subjects of soul extraction, if they survived, could end up with anything from mental confusion to becoming a mindless fool, and at worst, losing their lives.

With raging fury, Xiao Haisheng pressed his palm against Zhao Renlong's head, activating the soul-extraction technique. Scenes appeared in Xiao Haisheng's mind, including many of the Zhao Family's secrets.

Xiao Haisheng had no interest in the trivial matters of the Zhao Family and was mainly interested in how Zhao Renlong came into possession of the Lesser Foundation Building Pill.

Zhao Renlong did not lie; he did find the Lesser Foundation Building Pill. He had no knowledge of its origin and had never met Xiao Shenqiang.

After the soul extraction was completed, Zhao Renlong, already weakened due to age, couldn't withstand the process and perished on the spot.

Xiao Haisheng casually tossed Zhao Renlong's corpse to the ground, deep in thought.

The members of the Zhao Family, witnessing the tragic end of their elder, felt a deep sorrow that stifled any dissent or even daring to look at their elder with disapproval.

This was the sorrow of the weak and their fate.

As a series of events settled, Xiao Haisheng became calmer and realized that something was not right.

If Xiao Shenqiang's death had nothing to do with the three Foundation Building cultivators across from them, then who was the murderer? What purpose did they have in killing Xiao Shenqiang?

Being a force's leader, Xiao Haisheng had seen many intrigues and deceptions in the Cultivation World, and a bold idea formed in his mind.

Could it be that someone wanted to provoke conflicts between Twin Success Valley, Green Bamboo Mountain, Liu Family, and Forest Spring Watch? Using Liu Family's cold poison and Yin Thunder to kill people seemed like an attempt to frame Liu Family. Scattering Xiao Shenqiang's belongings, making them be found by cultivators from various forces, was meant to cause internal chaos in Twin Success Valley and create hostility between them and other forces.

Lost in his conspiracy theories, Xiao Haisheng began to think about some of Twin Success Valley's opposing forces.

Meng Zhang's use of the cold poison Yin Thunder was his only method to harm Foundation Building cultivators, and he had only acted out of self-defense to confuse the situation. He had never expected that it would lead Xiao Haisheng to imagine a bunch of conspiracies against Twin Success Valley.

Xiao Haisheng found it challenging to decide how to handle the situation. He had just confidently accused Liu Family, and now he had to backtrack and say that Liu Family had nothing to do with Xiao Shenqiang's death. Xiao Shenqiang was a senior elder of Twin Success Valley, and his death needed an explanation.

While Xiao Haisheng was suspicious and hesitant, a cyan-colored flying ship appeared in the distant sky and rapidly approached them.

The flying ship soon arrived not far ahead, and two figures flew out and stood in front of Xiao Haisheng.

Seeing their arrival, Liu Dachuan and Old Man Bamboo Stick were delighted, while the cultivators from Twin Success Valley immediately assumed defensive postures.

"Liu Dajiang, Zhujian, you two arrived quite quickly," Xiao Haisheng sneered.

"Receiving a distress call from our fellow clansmen, Dajiang didn't dare delay. If Dachuan offended Sect Master Xiao, I hope Sect Master Xiao can be magnanimous and not hold it against Dachuan," Liu Dajiang said politely.

Liu Dajiang possessed a mid-Foundation Building Cultivation Base and was not only a formidable expert in Liu Family but also its grand elder. His status and influence within Liu Family surpassed Liu Dachuan's.

Zhujian was a middle-aged man with a cold expression. Though he was much younger than Old Man Bamboo Stick, his Cultivation Base far exceeded the latter's.

As one of the top experts of Green Bamboo Mountain, Zhujian had only a mid-Foundation Building Cultivation Base but was fearless when facing Xiao Haisheng, a late-stage Foundation Building expert.

Zhujian nodded at Xiao Haisheng as a form of greeting, leaving the talking to Liu Dajiang, who was more eloquent.

At least for now, facing the powerful Xiao Haisheng, Green Bamboo Mountain, Liu Family, and Forest Spring Watch stood on the same side.

Xiao Haisheng knew that when the three forces found him, they must have secretly signaled for reinforcements to come.

Now that the reinforcements had arrived, continuing the confrontation would likely lead to more forces joining the fray. Having been accustomed to being dominant, Xiao Haisheng was reluctant to back down easily as it would make others look down on him and believe that he couldn't handle the pressure from the three forces.

Thus, both sides were deadlocked again.

Xiao Haisheng took a strong stance, stating that all the Refining Qi cultivators who found Xiao Shenqiang's belongings must undergo soul extraction and questioning.

The three Foundation Building cultivators from the opposing forces naturally refused to subject their subordinates to such torment. They strongly opposed Xiao Haisheng and argued vehemently.

After a long back-and-forth, with neither side willing to yield, it was Forest Spring Watch's Daoist Guang Hong who was the first to verbally relent. He expressed his willingness to help Twin Success Valley investigate the murderer. Then, Liu Family and Green Bamboo Mountain had no choice but to make verbal promises to assist in the matter and to punish the Refining Qi cultivators who found Xiao Shenqiang's belongings when they returned.

Seeing the three Foundation Building cultivators and their disciples leave, Xiao Haisheng's anger was still unresolved. He knew that continuing the entanglement was pointless. Shan Ying was called over and given some orders before leading his disciples to depart.

Shan Ying arrived in front of the remaining people and announced a series of punitive decisions. Anyone who found Xiao Shenqiang's belongings and failed to report it immediately was severely punished. As for the Zhao Family, although Zhao Renlong had died, all their cultivators present were punished, sentenced to three years of hard labor at Singing Sand Mountain.

Knowing that Twin Success Valley was venting their anger on them, the Zhao Family had no thoughts or capability to resist.

The cultivators from other subordinate forces were quickly dismissed.

Meng Zhang secretly rejoiced, grateful that he had managed to escape this disaster.

Fortunately, he wasn't greedy and voluntarily gave up the items from Xiao Shenqiang's storage bag while confusing the situation. Involving cultivators from Liu Family and

other forces had made Xiao Haisheng wary, and he reluctantly let the matter go.

Chapter 73: Bottom of the Well

Meng Zhang had no idea that Xiao Shenqiang possessed the spirit tool, and even his fellow disciples in Twin Success Valley were unaware of it.

Of course, even if the cultivators from Twin Success Valley knew about it, Xiao Haisheng, a late-stage Foundation Building expert, wouldn't have the ability to meticulously examine everyone's Soul and find the hidden spirit tool, as Xiao Shenqiang had refined it with his Soul and concealed it with soul techniques.

Meng Zhang and Tian Zhen were preparing to leave when they were stopped by a disciple from Twin Success Valley. This disciple was there to announce a reward for Meng Zhang. Since he was the first to find the sand monster nest, Taiyi Sect wouldn't have to pay tribute to Twin Success Valley for the next three years. The tribute referred to here was just the regular offering. If Taiyi Sect gained new sources of wealth during these three years, such as mining resources, they would still have to pay the appropriate share.

Unexpectedly, despite all the events that had occurred, Twin Success Valley did not renege on Meng Zhang's reward. One could understand that Twin Success Valley, being a prominent sect in the region, wouldn't risk damaging its reputation over a trivial amount of spirit stones.

With the reward obtained, Meng Zhang's trip was not in vain. Moreover, it was also fortunate that Zhao Family cultivators were in trouble. Originally, Zhao Yanbei brought the elite members of the Zhao Family to flatter Twin Success Valley, but he never expected that because of Meng Zhang's unintentional actions, they would incur Twin Success Valley's wrath. Now, Zhao Family's leader and elite members couldn't escape, and the remaining cultivators from Zhao Family probably wouldn't dare to continue causing trouble for Taiyi Sect. Thus, Taiyi Sect had temporarily lost a formidable enemy and could enjoy three years without external pressures.

"After this battle, Fang Yong performed poorly, but it's a pity he lost his life," Tian Zhen sighed while on the way back.

Meng Zhang didn't tell Tian Zhen that Fang Yong was an undercover agent from the Zhao Family. He merely said that Fang Yong had bad luck and died among the sand monsters. There was no need to tarnish his reputation after his death. More importantly, Taiyi Sect now had another traitor, which was detrimental to the Sect's reputation, and Meng Zhang, as the Sect Master, didn't find it honorable.

Instead of going straight back to Taiyi Sect, Meng Zhang and Tian Zhen first made a trip to Sweetwater Oasis. Fang Yong had relatives there, and many of Taiyi Sect's disciples had close connections in the area. It was only reasonable and respectful to inform Fang Yong's family of his passing.

Initially, handling such matters fell under Tian Zhen's responsibility as the General Affairs Elder, but since it was on the way, Meng Zhang didn't mind making the trip.

Upon arriving at Sweetwater Oasis, after Tian Zhen comforted Fang Yong's family, an old disciple from Taiyi Sect stationed there, Li Baofu, secretly approached Meng Zhang.

He led Meng Zhang to a secluded corner and looked around to make sure no one was eavesdropping before speaking mysteriously, "Sect Master, we might have found a treasure in Sweetwater Oasis."

"A treasure? What kind of treasure?" Meng Zhang became interested.

Li Baofu then began to narrate in detail.

As it turned out, Sweetwater Oasis was named after three sweetwater wells located at its center. The water from these three wells was clear and refreshing, with a special taste. The wells had always been carefully protected, and only a small amount of water was extracted daily for the privileged few in Sweetwater Oasis to enjoy.

Several senior disciples of Taiyi Sect, including Li Baofu, were among those privileged individuals.

About ten days ago, they discovered a faint spiritual aura in the water drawn from the wells. When they consumed this water, it had a much better effect compared to absorbing the scattered spiritual energy within the oasis.

They concluded that some Heaven and Earth Spiritual Object must have appeared in the wells, infusing the water with spiritual energy.

However, due to their limited cultivation bases and advanced age, they were unable to explore the bottom of the wells themselves. Nevertheless, they remained loyal to the sect and immediately reported the discovery.

After responding to Twin Success Valley's call for action against the sand monsters, only one Refining Qi middle-stage expert, Qingling Dao, remained in Taiyi Sect. He needed to stay in the sect to prevent any mishaps and couldn't leave easily.

As a result, the matter had been delayed until now, when Meng Zhang and Tian Zhen returned.

Listening to Li Baofu's account, Meng Zhang decided to investigate personally and didn't wait for Tian Zhen. He went straight to the three sweetwater wells.

Since discovering the possible Heaven and Earth Spiritual Object, several senior disciples of Taiyi Sect at Sweetwater Oasis had taken turns guarding the wells to prevent anyone else from approaching.

Meng Zhang greeted the seniors and then proceeded to draw water from each well.

Each bucket of water contained a faint trace of spiritual energy, which was nothing significant for Meng Zhang but a valuable supplement for these senior disciples who lacked spiritual energy.

Sweetwater Oasis had been under Taiyi Sect's rule for many years, and there had been no reports of demonic beasts or similar occurrences. Moreover, the spiritual energy within the wells, while faint, was pure and devoid of any miscellaneous energies.

Meng Zhang speculated that the bottom of the wells shouldn't pose any danger.

To be cautious, Meng Zhang activated the Deception Breaking Eye and carefully examined the bottom of the wells from above. The water was clear, and there were no living creatures in sight.

Meng Zhang chose one of the wells and jumped in.

The well's opening was spacious enough to accommodate his body comfortably. As a Refining Qi Sixth Layer cultivator, Meng Zhang could hold his breath for a long time.

He submerged himself in the water and dived downward. In no time, he felt his feet touch the firm and smooth rock surface at the bottom of the well.

Meng Zhang then activated an Earth Escape Spell, and his body penetrated the rock at the bottom.

After traveling a certain distance within the rock, Meng Zhang sensed a surge of resistance, making it difficult to advance further. Thick spiritual energy emanated from the depths, severely hindering the Earth Escape Spell.

Based on Meng Zhang's experience, he quickly realized what must have happened here.

Chapter 74: Flood Spirit

The situation in this sweet water well seems to be a Flood Spirit.

The so-called Flood Spirit refers to a phenomenon where a large amount of spiritual energy emerges from the underground due to changes and movements in the earth's veins and movements below the ground. Generally, after the appearance of a Flood Spirit in an area, new spiritual nodes will emerge. If there are enough spiritual nodes, it may even form a completely new spirit vein.

The vast amount of spiritual energy surging from the underground prevented Meng Zhang from diving deeper. He could only stay at his current position and use the Deception Breaking Eye to roughly observe the situation below.

The dense spiritual energy emanating from the underground made it difficult for the Deception Breaking Eye to see clearly.

After some time had passed and when the power of the Earth Escape Talisman was about to run out, Meng Zhang returned to the bottom of the well and then surfaced again. Facing the expectant gazes of the crowd, Meng Zhang said, "Allow me to take another look and confirm everything."

Meng Zhang jumped into another sweet water well, dived into the bottom, activated the Earth Escape Talisman, and once again entered the underground. After observing for a while, he obtained the same results.

When Meng Zhang returned to the surface this time, Tian Zhen had finished handling his affairs and arrived at the scene as well. Meng Zhang gathered everyone present and said in a low voice, "Don't make a commotion, let alone leak this information outside. The bottom of the well should be a Flood Spirit."

Upon hearing this, everyone's faces were not disappointed, but instead filled with excitement. The significance of a Flood Spirit was clear to all.

The emergence of several new spiritual nodes, or even a new spirit vein, was a tremendous stroke of good fortune. Even with thousands of high-grade spirit stones, it would be difficult to purchase a low-level spirit vein.

The reason these senior disciples had left Taiyi Sect early and returned to Sweetwater Oasis was that, apart from their advanced age and the hopelessness of their path, they also wanted to relieve the pressure on Taiyi Sect's main spirit vein.

In Sweetwater Oasis, they had been struggling due to the lack of spiritual energy. It was even challenging to maintain their previous cultivation bases.

Now, with the appearance of the Sweetwater Oasis Flood Spirit, an ample supply of spiritual energy would nourish their bodies. Not only could they maintain their cultivation bases, but their lifespans would also be extended.

Seeing the joyous crowd, Meng Zhang was equally delighted.

Taiyi Sect had gone through numerous hardships, especially after the passing of the previous Sect Master, Daoist Profound Spirit. The sect's fortunes had plummeted. However, since Meng Zhang took over as the Sect Master, Taiyi Sect had started to recover, and good things kept happening.

In his heart, Meng Zhang couldn't help but wonder, "Could it be that I, as a transmigrator, am the legendary protagonist of this world, the son of destiny?"

"May I ask, Sect Master, after this Flood Spirit, how many new spiritual nodes will appear in Sweetwater Oasis? Will a new spirit vein emerge?"

Everyone began asking a series of questions.

"I can give a rough estimate after I explore the last sweet water well," Meng Zhang replied, then jumped into the third sweet water well.

As soon as he reached the bottom, Meng Zhang felt something new. In this well, there was an extremely rich and pure earth attribute spiritual energy, fiercely rejecting other types of spiritual energy.

In a spirit vein, although most of the spiritual energy was of a certain attribute, there would still be small amounts of other attributes mixed in. In the area recently affected by the Flood Spirit, the attributes of the spiritual energy should be more mixed.

The presence of such pure and abundant earth attribute spiritual energy indicated the likelihood of a earth attribute Heaven and Earth Spiritual Object being present here.

Thinking of this, Meng Zhang's heart surged with excitement. He activated the Earth Escape Talisman and began to move deeper underground.

However, the earth attribute spiritual energy ahead was so dense that even with the power of the Earth Escape Talisman, Meng Zhang found it difficult to make progress. It was as if his body was trapped in a thick glue, making it nearly impossible to move.

Meng Zhang almost exhausted all the Earth Escape Talismans he had on him, slowly maneuvering to the side of the glowing mass. With all the strength he had left, he managed to bring the mass into his hands.

Taking a moment to recover his true qi, Meng Zhang carefully examined the glowing mass. "This is Fifth Earth Essence," he quickly identified the object with his knowledge. The Fifth Earth Essence was a Heaven and Earth Spiritual Object of the earth attribute, usually formed deep underground. However, this time, it appeared near the surface, probably due to changes and movements in the earth's veins. In terms of grade, it was considered a yellow-level Heaven and Earth Spiritual Object. Despite being relatively low-level, if it were to appear outside, it would still attract fierce competition from Foundation Building cultivators.

In the Endless Sea of Sand, where cultivation resources were scarce, even objects without grades were not common.

To store various Heaven and Earth Spiritual Objects, special tools or techniques were required.

Fortunately, Meng Zhang had acquired knowledge of these matters from the inheritance he obtained in the Trial Ground.

Since he hadn't prepared special tools in advance, he temporarily used true qi to seal the Fifth Earth Essence and then put it into his storage bag.

After dealing with this, Meng Zhang remembered his original purpose for diving into the well. He activated the Deception Breaking Eye to explore the underground and observe the surrounding environment.

After observing three different wells, Meng Zhang gained a rough understanding of the scale of this Flood Spirit.

Once everything was settled, Meng Zhang returned to the surface. However, he kept the information about the Fifth Earth Essence to himself, not out of selfishness or distrust, but to protect everyone and Taiyi Sect. If news of the Fifth Earth Essence leaked out, it could attract the covetous gaze of Foundation Building cultivators, which Taiyi Sect, with its current strength, would find difficult to contend with.

Meng Zhang kept his acquisition of the Fifth Earth Essence a secret, not just for everyone's safety but also to safeguard Taiyi Sect.

"Sect Master, how large is the scale of this Flood Spirit?"

"Sect Master, will Sweetwater Oasis really have a new spirit vein?"

Everyone asked with excitement, and no one could maintain their calm when their own interests were at stake.

Chapter 75: Reentry

"The current Flood Spirit has not yet ended. So far, Sweetwater Oasis will have at least five or six more spiritual energy nodes."

"When the Flood Spirit ends, there will be even more spiritual energy nodes appearing in the oasis."

"After these newly appeared spiritual energy nodes connect with the existing ones, they will form a new spirit vein."

Based on his observations, Meng Zhang made his judgment.

"It will take about three to five years for the new spirit vein to form within the oasis."

Meng Zhang's words delighted everyone present. The appearance of a spirit vein on Sweetwater Oasis meant a significant improvement in the entire oasis's environment. Not only would the spiritual energy become more abundant, but the oasis itself would also expand greatly. In the future, Sweetwater Oasis would be able to accommodate more cultivators and mortals, which was equivalent to gaining an additional sect entrance for the Taiyi Sect.

As instructed by Meng Zhang, the news about the Sweetwater Oasis Flood Spirit should be kept as confidential as possible. First, to prevent anyone coveting this new spirit vein. Second, to prevent enemies from secretly sabotaging and hindering the formation of the new spirit vein.

After giving the instructions, Meng Zhang hurriedly returned to Taiyi Sect with Tian Zhen.

Upon returning to Taiyi Sect, Meng Zhang placed the Fifth Earth Essence he had obtained into the underground spirit eye in the Sect Master's quiet room. Then, without much conversation with Daoist Clear Spirit, he left Taiyi Sect alone. Riding on the wind chasing horse, Meng Zhang's destination this time was Singing Sand City.

Upon reaching Singing Sand City, Meng Zhang went to the Flying Swan Building and purchased a First Rank Formation called "Earth Wood Illusion Array." This Base Formation had relatively weak power, but it had the ability to seal spiritual energy and gather spiritual energy. Moreover, it could use the power of earth and wood to generate illusions, concealing various situations within the area covered by the Formation.

After purchasing the formation, Meng Zhang did not stay in Singing Sand City but immediately returned to Sweetwater Oasis. Although Meng Zhang had acquired a lot of knowledge about formations in the Trial Ground, this was his first time actually setting up a Formation. Fortunately, the Earth Wood Illusion Array was a low-level Formation, making its deployment relatively simple. Additionally, the shop owner also provided a formation manual when Meng Zhang made the purchase, which contained detailed information about the Formation, including specific deployment methods.

After reading the manual and studying the actual Formation, Meng Zhang roamed around Sweetwater Oasis to determine the specific positions before starting to set up the formation disk and place the formation flags. The most crucial aspects of this Formation were the formation disk and formation flags. As long as the positions were correct, there would be no other issues.

Meng Zhang's first attempt at activating the formation failed, but after adjusting the positions, the formation successfully activated. Once the Earth Wood Illusion Array was activated, its power enveloped almost the entire Sweetwater Oasis. Meng Zhang entrusted the control of the central

formation disk to Li Baofu, who would be responsible for managing the entire Formation on a daily basis. Similarly, the First Rank Formation required a significant amount of spiritual energy. Until the spirit vein in Sweetwater Oasis fully formed, relying solely on a few spiritual energy nodes wouldn't suffice to meet the consumption.

With no other choice, Meng Zhang took out many low-grade spirit stones from Taiyi Sect's treasury and placed them in the Formation in advance. Luckily, because of the great merits Meng Zhang earned when being summoned by Twin Success Valley, Taiyi Sect was exempted from supplying offerings for three years. Otherwise, continuously consuming low-grade spirit stones to supply the Formation for 35 years would have been a considerable burden for Taiyi Sect.

The Earth Wood Illusion Array not only concealed the situation within Sweetwater Oasis and blocked outsiders' prying eyes but also gathered spiritual energy, which could accelerate the formation of the new spirit vein. By sealing the spiritual energy, it prevented any waste due to energy leakage.

After dealing with matters in Sweetwater Oasis, Meng Zhang returned to Taiyi Sect. During this trip, Meng Zhang encountered some dangers, especially when facing the Foundation Building stage cultivator Xiao Shenqiang. If it weren't for the effectiveness of the Cold Poison Yin Thunder, Meng Zhang might not have escaped unscathed. With lingering fear, he rested in Taiyi Sect for a few days to completely calm his mind.

At night, Meng Zhang's Divine Soul left his body and took out the spirit tool "Concealment Gauze Cloth," which had been hidden using Soul techniques. After refining the Concealment Gauze Cloth with his Soul, Meng Zhang's Soul could freely use this spirit tool. Once familiar with the use and understanding of its functions, Meng Zhang prepared to enter the Trial Ground again. He had already traversed almost the entire Trial Ground, except for that mysterious gorge, which he still had no confidence in entering.

Fortunately, with the Concealment Gauze Cloth, Meng Zhang did not need to force his way in directly. One night, after completing the ritual, Meng Zhang's Soul entered the Trial Ground again. This time, Meng Zhang did not waste time and directly put on the Concealment Gauze Cloth, stealthily approaching the mysterious gorge from outside. Based on last night's experience, Meng Zhang successfully bypassed the guarding yin soldiers at the gorge's entrance and entered the gorge. Whether it was the yin soldiers guarding the entrance or the archers lurking around the surrounding hills, none of them detected Meng Zhang's presence. Even the patrolling yin soldiers, as long as Meng Zhang did not run into them, remained oblivious to his existence. As a floating Soul, there was naturally no trace of footprints to be left behind. With the Soul completely concealed, Meng Zhang quietly delved deeper into the gorge.

Chapter 76: Precious Pearl

After entering the canyon, the guardians here are no longer Yin soldiers, but squads of ghost beasts. These ghost beasts have peculiar and varying shapes, some small like human children, while others are like small hills, causing the ground to shake with their movements.

Their eyes are sharp, their hearing keen, and their sense of smell highly developed. As Meng Zhang advanced along the path, a ghost beast that resembled a wild dog suddenly rushed over and sniffed around intently. "This is bad," Meng Zhang inwardly exclaimed. He had only tested the

Concealment Gauze Cloth for its invisibility function and didn't know if it could conceal his Soul's scent.

Though this ghost beast couldn't see him, if it could sniff him out, it would be terribly unjust. After sniffing around for a while, the beast made some random calls and then ran away. Meng Zhang breathed a sigh of relief, unsure if the creature's sense of smell was unreliable or if the Concealment Gauze Cloth had covered his Soul's scent.

Meng Zhang became even more cautious as he continued. The passage in the canyon was deep and lengthy, sometimes broad enough to accommodate a large group of people passing at once, and sometimes narrow like a winding path that required people to walk sideways.

The tall mountains on both sides of the canyon were shrouded in a mysterious force, preventing Meng Zhang from flying too high. Each time he passed through the narrow paths, he carefully drifted through the middle, trying to avoid colliding with the mountain walls on both sides.

In the mortal realm, Souls could penetrate through earth and stone with relative ease. However, in the Netherworld's Trial Ground, almost all the rules of nature had undergone certain changes. Even an ethereal Soul would make a disturbance if it collided with the surrounding mountain walls.

The twists and turns of the deep canyon seemed endless, and Meng Zhang was getting a bit tired of it. However, he had no choice; this was the only passage to enter the canyon's interior. The surrounding mountains and cliffs were restricted, and Souls couldn't pass through. The only consolation was that his ability to float as a Soul was still effective, allowing him to avoid many obstacles that were impassable from the ground.

Finally, after passing through the last bend, a vast and flat small plain appeared before Meng Zhang's eyes. This plain was actually a flat valley within the mountains, surrounded by towering peaks.

In the middle of this small plain stood a massive building. Numerous large stone pillars stood, halls without roofs, collapsed palaces, tilted pillars, and beams lying on the ground... The entire foundation was in ruins, with no intact building left, only countless debris.

When this building was intact, it must have been a grand palace. Even from the remnants, one could imagine its former magnificence. Now, numerous ghost beasts freely roamed among the palace ruins, frolicking and playing.

Outside the palace on the plain, even more ghost beasts roamed around. Meng Zhang was a bit disheartened; in the area outside the canyon, he had attempted to kill some ghost beasts. These ghost beasts were different from ordinary ghosts; killing them yielded no knowledge or the power to strengthen his Soul. In short, killing these ghost beasts was a complete waste of effort with no rewards.

This flat and open small plain hardly seemed to hide any treasures. Unless...

Meng Zhang, knowing that thieves wouldn't leave empty-handed, had taken such great risks to enter the canyon's interior. Naturally, he was determined to extract all the gains and not let his efforts go to waste.

Now, the only potential treasure might be hidden in the ruins of the palace. Clad in the Concealment Gauze Cloth, Meng Zhang continued forward, crossing the small plain, avoiding the roaming ghost beasts, and finally drifting into the palace ruins.

After searching for a while in the ruins, Meng Zhang spotted a suspicious target. A massive, unprecedented ghost beast buried half of its body underground, leaving only its head on the ground. This ghost beast was snoring loudly, and none of the other ghost beasts dared to come near.

Floating above this ghost beast's head was a black bead, quietly suspended in the air without moving. With just a glance, Meng Zhang's gaze was fixated on it for quite some time before he could finally tear his eyes away.

His Divine Soul had left his body and was temporarily without a physical form, thus losing the ability of the Deception Breaking Eye. However, a primal instinct arose within him, making him desire the black bead intensely, wishing to take it immediately. But when he glanced below at the enormous ghost beast, he couldn't help but shudder.

Just a few glances generated such a tremendous pressure, causing a terrifying deterrent force. The strength of this ghost beast was unimaginable, and it was certainly not something he could contend with.

Meng Zhang's yearning for the bead made him unable to give it up; he had only one way to retrieve it: through cunning. He hoped this ghost beast would remain in deep slumber, undisturbed.

Meng Zhang carefully evaded the roaming ghost beasts in the ruins, approaching his target with utmost caution. Once he entered the area near the beast, his movements had to slow down. It was no wonder no other ghost beast dared to approach; this beast had a strange force field around its body, somewhat resembling the Law Domain possessed by legendary Gold Core Daoist Masters.

As soon as one entered this area, immense pressure would manifest, forcefully oppressing any Ghost within. Despite the pressure, Meng Zhang continued onward.

After slowly moving for a while, Meng Zhang finally arrived above the beast's head. The snoring of the ghost beast showed no change; the deafening sound actually reassured Meng Zhang.

"Keep sleeping, continue to sleep soundly, the more deeply, the better, never wake up," Meng Zhang silently urged.

Meng Zhang's Soul had already drifted beside the black bead, almost within his grasp. After a moment's hesitation, he made a resolute decision. His Soul reached out, firmly grabbing the bead.

As Meng Zhang grabbed the bead, the snores of the sleeping ghost beast suddenly ceased.

Chapter 77: Sun-Moon Wheel Turning Sutra

As the thunderous snoring suddenly disappeared, the surroundings fell into a deathly silence, where one could almost hear a pin drop.

Meng Zhang, realizing the perilous situation, didn't hesitate. He immediately activated the spirit tool "Concealment Gauze Cloth" and swiftly distanced himself from the ghost beast.

The massive ghost beast must have been in a deep slumber because even when it was suddenly disturbed, it couldn't wake up immediately and took a moment to react.

This moment was precisely Meng Zhang's chance of survival.

Before the ghost beast fully awakened, Meng Zhang had already begun his escape. By the time the beast regained its consciousness, Meng Zhang was about to leave the mysterious force field surrounding its body.

As soon as he left that area of mysterious force, Meng Zhang's speed surged to its limit. Ripples akin to water waves appeared in the air, spreading rapidly towards the distance.

Sprinting at full speed and fully utilizing the acceleration function of the Concealment Gauze Cloth, Meng Zhang unavoidably broke its invisibility feature.

However, he didn't have time to worry about being visible or not. His only goal was to escape as fast as possible, for he knew that mere invisibility wouldn't be enough to evade such a terrifying creature.

Indeed, Meng Zhang made the right decision.

As the ghost beast woke up, probably realizing that the precious bead on its head was missing, it immediately let out a deafening roar.

Whether it was the ghost beasts frolicking in the ruins of the palace or those roaming outside on the small plain, upon hearing the earth-shattering roar, they all trembled in fear, collapsing to the ground, shivering with terror.

This roar even caused Meng Zhang's Soul to tremble momentarily, nearly making him fall to the ground.

Exerting all his willpower, Meng Zhang managed to steady himself and continued floating away. Oddly enough, that roar inadvertently helped Meng Zhang. With all the ghost beasts scared and lying on the ground, there were no obstacles in his path, and he no longer needed to detour.

After the roar subsided, Meng Zhang's speed slowed slightly but he kept moving forward at a high speed.

Angered by the roar, the ghost beast struggled to rise from the underground.

The entire small plain seemed to experience a massive earthquake, and the ground trembled violently.

As the beast's body emerged from the ground, the few remaining structures in the ruins of the palace were almost completely overturned.

Seemingly not the brightest creature, the ghost beast let out another earth-shaking roar.

Meng Zhang thought it would be the same as the previous one, but he quickly realized he was wrong.

Accompanying this earth-shaking roar was a shockwave spreading in all directions. A powerful shockwave approached rapidly and soon caught up to Meng Zhang.

The force of the shockwave cracked the Concealment Gauze Cloth in several deep fissures. Meng Zhang's Soul also shook, blurring his perception slightly.

Aware that his chance of survival was diminishing, Meng Zhang didn't slow down. Instead, enduring the discomfort, he used the force of the shockwave to accelerate further.

Within a short time from the moment the monster fully woke up, Meng Zhang had not only escaped far from the ruins of the palace but had reached the edge of the small plain, about to enter the passage leading to the gorge.

This time, the ghost beast seemed to have learned a bit and no longer roared randomly or unleashed indiscriminate attacks.

After gathering strength for a moment, the beast opened its enormous mouth like a small mountain and fiercely sucked in Meng Zhang's direction.

A powerful suction force came from behind Meng Zhang, anchoring his body in place and dragging him backward.

Meng Zhang's body jerked, and his figure seemed to lose all resistance, being sucked in by the ghost beast.

At the same time, another figure separated from the one just sucked in and floated rapidly forward. At this critical moment, Meng Zhang abandoned the spirit tool "Concealment Gauze Cloth" and performed a golden cicada shedding its shell technique, letting the assimilated spirit tool take his place and be sucked in by the ghost beast.

Seizing this opportunity, Meng Zhang's Soul broke free from the powerful suction.

The "Concealment Gauze Cloth" was drawn to the beast's mouth, and by the time it realized something was wrong, Meng Zhang had already escaped into the entrance passage of the gorge.

Even the widest section of the gorge's entrance passage couldn't accommodate the massive ghost beast.

Meng Zhang continued moving forward within the passage, and he could still hear the reluctant roar of the ghost beast from behind.

Meng Zhang knew he was temporarily safe.

After traveling a distance within the passage, several ghost beasts approached him.

Without the Concealment Gauze Cloth, Meng Zhang lost his ability to remain unseen and couldn't avoid these beasts.

He stopped and prepared to engage in a battle with them.

But an unstoppable force came, forcibly carrying Meng Zhang's Soul out of the Trial Ground.

This time, Meng Zhang's time in the Trial Ground had come to an end.

Back outside, after his Divine Soul returned to his physical body, Meng Zhang held the precious bead in his hand and examined it carefully.

He couldn't fathom how the bead was crafted; it was weightless and seemingly ethereal, something that even his Soul could pick up. With a slight squeeze, the bead shattered like a bubble.

A refreshing aura flowed into his body, flooding his mind with a vast amount of information.

After the bead disappeared, a pitch-black book appeared in his hand.

Meng Zhang sat cross-legged on the ground, absorbing and digesting the refreshing aura.

It took a long time, but he finally finished absorbing it and started sorting through the vast amount of information in his mind.

The content of this information was exceedingly rich, containing many aspects of cultivation.

After a simple organization, Meng Zhang obtained the greatest reward from this adventure.

Hidden within the information was a cultivation technique called the "Sun-Moon Wheel Turning Sutra," a rare Yin-Yang attribute technique.

When Taiyi Sect's old Sect Master, Daoist Profound Spirit, divined Meng Zhang's spiritual root, he found it to be of the highest quality. Meng Zhang's constitution was best suited for cultivating Yin-Yang attributes.

Yin-Yang attributes were rather rare, and obtaining a suitable cultivation technique was extremely challenging. In this region known as the Endless Sea of Sand, there were scarcely any renowned Yin-Yang techniques.

Even the fallen Taiyi Sect lacked the resources to gather a substantial collection of them.

In the end, they only possessed a partially incomplete Yang attribute technique, the "Lesser Yang Qi Art," which barely suited Meng Zhang's body constitution. However, with his exceptional talent and understanding, Meng Zhang progressed rapidly in his cultivation using the incomplete technique.

Since the Taiyi Sect's relocation and reconstruction in this place, Meng Zhang became the most outstanding disciple in the sect's history, possessing the highest talent and fastest progress in cultivation.

Given his aptitude, if he were to cultivate a technique that matched his body's Yin-Yang attributes like the "Sun-Moon Wheel Turning Sutra," his future would be limitless.

Chapter 78: Article 0 calculates

"The Sun-Moon Wheel Turning Sutra" is not only a superior cultivation method compared to the "Lesser Yang Qi Art" but also highly compatible with Meng Zhang's physical attributes. Practicing a superior cultivation method not only allows for a solid foundation but also enhances one's combat abilities.

In the information transmitted by the precious bead, there was a particularly solemn reminder. Meng Zhang's current Soul strength had already reached the limit of a Refining Qi stage cultivator, approaching that of a Foundation Building stage cultivator. In terms of divine soul power alone, many cultivators who were at the Refining Qi completion stage or preparing for Foundation Building were far inferior to him.

Meng Zhang's Soul strength could no longer continue to grow, so he urgently needed to strengthen his physical body to maintain the balance between Soul and body. Additionally, he could no longer enter the Trial Ground.

This was a significant loss for Meng Zhang. During his multiple entries into the Trial Ground, not only did his Soul become stronger, but he also gained valuable knowledge. From various cultivation arts to profound techniques, and introductions to various spiritual objects, these experiences transformed Meng Zhang from an ignorant rookie into a seasoned cultivator with extensive knowledge, greatly enhancing the Taiyi Sect's heritage.

Based on his experiences in the Trial Ground, there seemed to be hidden secrets behind it. However, with Meng Zhang's current abilities, he was temporarily unable to investigate further.

After dealing with the information from the precious bead, Meng Zhang turned his attention to the black book in his hand. This book was a rare treasure known as the "Soul Register."

A rare treasure was completely different from a typical magic tool; it possessed unique functions. The purpose of the Soul Register was to absorb a trace of a cultivator's Soul if the cultivator willingly wrote their name on it, concealing the Soul within the register. In the future, as long as the owner of the Soul Register activated it, regardless of the distance, it could take the life of the cultivator whose name was inscribed.

This Soul Register was a powerful treasure, and Meng Zhang carefully kept it safe.

In the following days, Meng Zhang began to study the "Sun-Moon Wheel Turning Sutra" carefully. Once he thoroughly understood it, he would switch to practicing this cultivation method.

One day, after Meng Zhang finished his daily routine exercises, Tian Zhen came to him. Another person had awakened their spiritual roots within the Sweetwater Oasis, and Tian Zhen had just brought the person back.

With a shortage of manpower in Taiyi Sect, a new disciple would be added, and Meng Zhang couldn't hide his joy.

However, Tian Zhen's expression was somewhat strange, so Meng Zhang asked, "Is there anything unusual about this person who awakened their spiritual roots?"

"There's nothing particularly unusual, it's just that this person is a bit older," Tian Zhen replied.

As it turned out, this person who awakened their spiritual roots was not a youth but a middle-aged person who was nearly 35 years old. Generally speaking, most cultivators in the Cultivation World awaken their spiritual roots before the age of 18. After the age of 18, it becomes challenging to awaken them, and even if they do, their future prospects are quite limited.

Coincidentally, the person who awakened their spiritual roots was not a native of Sweetwater Oasis but the mortal servant Meng Zhang bought from Singing Sand City last time. This person's name was Wen Qiansun, and he used to be an accountant in a wealthy mortal family.

Due to the destruction of the oasis by sand monsters, Wen Qiansun, who was fortunate enough to survive, first became a refugee and then was sold as a servant.

After listening to Tian Zhen's account, Meng Zhang became a little curious. When Wen Qiansun was brought before him, Meng Zhang observed him intentionally. As long as one hadn't started cultivation, even if they awakened their spiritual roots, they were still mortals. Normally, facing a cultivator who could dominate their fate, most ordinary mortals would feel nervous to some extent. However, this Wen Qiansun seemed a bit anxious on the surface, but his eyes were constantly darting around, showing him to be a shrewd individual.

Initially, Meng Zhang was just mildly interested in Wen Qiansun, but after using the spiritual root measuring disk and measuring his spiritual roots, Meng Zhang felt a great sense of regret. This middle-aged man, Wen Qiansun, who seemed destined to have limited prospects, unexpectedly had a middle-grade spiritual root, and it was at the upper end of the middle-grade category.

With such a spiritual root quality, if he had awakened before the age of 18, there would have been no bottleneck in his cultivation up to the Refining Qi stage; it would have been a smooth journey. With the help of a Foundation Building Pill, or even a Lesser Foundation Building Pill, it would have been relatively easy to achieve Foundation Building. Unless he encountered extremely bad luck, the chances of failure would have been minimal. Even if he didn't use a Foundation Building Pill, relying solely on his own Foundation Building, the chances of success would still have been high.

Meng Zhang felt immense regret and frustration. According to Taiyi Sect's records, in the past century, apart from Meng Zhang himself, who had an exceptional high-grade spiritual root, the rest of the disciples were mostly low-grade spiritual roots, and among the low-grade spiritual roots, most were of the worst quality.

Occasionally, there were a few with mid-low-grade spiritual roots, and they were considered the future pillars of the sect and required special attention and cultivation. For instance, Tian Zhen's distant nephew, Tian Li, who entered the sect, had a low-high-grade spiritual root quality, and Tian Zhen cherished him as a treasure.

Now, Wen Qiansun had a mid-high-grade spiritual root quality. Under normal circumstances, both Meng Zhang and Tian Zhen would have been overjoyed. But why did he awaken his spiritual roots so late, and why now? Even if he had awakened a few years earlier, it would have been much better.

At the age of nearly 35, he had already missed the best age for cultivation. His vitality would start to decline, and his body would slowly deteriorate. There were so many unfavorable conditions that could offset the advantages of his spiritual roots.

The best age for Foundation Building for a cultivator is before 60 years old. After 60, the body's condition starts to deteriorate, and the success rate of Foundation Building decreases rapidly.

Wen Qiansun would face enormous challenges to cultivate to the Refining Qi stage within the next twenty years and then hone his Cultivation Base for Foundation Building preparation.

Meng Zhang couldn't help feeling deeply regretful and frustrated. It was a great thing for Taiyi Sect to have a new disciple with a mid-low-grade spiritual root, given the severe shortage of manpower. However, Wen Qiansun's excellent spiritual root quality and his advanced age were contradictory.

It was like having an enticing and delicious dish placed before you, but it happened to be poisoned.

After wrestling with these thoughts for a while, Meng Zhang finally calmed himself down. At this point, being conflicted was pointless.

"Gain and loss are both part of life." Whatever happens, Wen Qiansun's future would depend on his own efforts. With himself as the Sect Master, the future of Taiyi Sect would not rely solely on him.

Having understood this, Meng Zhang no longer dwelled on the matter.

Chapter 79: Spirit General Deep Earth

Wen Qiansun had a lively mind. Seeing the changing expressions of Meng Zhang and Tian Zhen, he thought that he might have done something wrong, and he looked over with some concern.

Among the disciples of the sect, Meng Zhang would not easily use his Divine Ability, Mind Reading. As long as they didn't violate the rules, Meng Zhang, as the Sect Master, would treat them with enough respect and care, just like a patriarch.

Without using Mind Reading, Meng Zhang could still guess Wen Qiansun's thoughts.

"You don't have to worry. Elder Tian and I just feel regretful for you and have no other thoughts."

After comforting Wen Qiansun, Meng Zhang instructed Tian Zhen to accept Wen Qiansun into the sect as usual. As for other thoughts, they would set them aside for now.

Tian Zhen almost always followed Meng Zhang's instructions and immediately arranged for Wen Qiansun accordingly.

After handling the matter of accepting Wen Qiansun into the sect, Meng Zhang returned to his quiet room and continued to comprehend the "Sun-Moon Wheel Turning Sutra." It took him more than ten days to fully comprehend it.

Superior cultivation techniques demanded high requirements from cultivators' talents and comprehension.

That night, while Meng Zhang was meditating, he suddenly felt a slight vibration from underground, as if there was some movement in the basement.

The basement was the most critical place in Taiyi Sect. It housed not only the spirit veins' spiritual eyes but also several precious treasures nourished there.

Meng Zhang couldn't afford to be careless, so he quickly opened the entrance and went into the basement.

Inside, the spiritual energy was turbulent, as if a spiritual storm had just occurred.

The basement was originally the place with the densest spiritual energy in Taiyi Sect. If it didn't absorb a significant portion of the spirit veins' spiritual energy, Taiyi Sect could have reclaimed several acres of spirit fields.

But now, the originally rich spiritual energy in the basement had become extremely thin.

A tall figure stood in the center of the basement, quietly looking at something, deep in thought.

There was suddenly an unfamiliar person in the basement, and Meng Zhang should have been cautious. However, he inexplicably felt no hostility toward this stranger.

"Are you the current Sect Master of Taiyi Sect?"

The man had a strong, towering physique with bulging muscles all over. He had big ears and thick eyebrows, giving people a reliable and stable feeling.

Meng Zhang nodded instinctively. "I am indeed the current Sect Master of Taiyi Sect."

"I am Deep Earth. I have seen the Sect Master." The man named Deep Earth respectfully saluted Meng Zhang.

"You are...?"

"Yes, I am the Guardian Spirit General of Taiyi Sect. I just woke up from a long slumber."

"After so many years, unexpectedly, the once mighty Taiyi Sect has fallen to its current state."

Deep Earth sighed with emotion.

It turned out that he was the Guardian Spirit General who had been sleeping in the treasure bead. It seemed that using the Jade Soul Fluid and taking such risks was not in vain. According to the records in the Sect Master's chronicle, the Guardian Spirit General, forged when Taiyi Sect was at its peak, was the most loyal guardian of the sect.

Since the person before him was not an outsider, Meng Zhang relaxed and began to talk with Deep Earth.

"Sensing the aura of the Jade Soul Fluid, we were still discussing who should absorb those few drops of Jade Soul Fluid. Unexpectedly, the Sect Master brought Fifth Earth Essence as well. Although it's a bit less, it's enough for me to rebuild my physical body. So, I will be the first one to absorb the Jade Soul Fluid, and they will continue to sleep."

It was only then that Meng Zhang noticed the missing Fifth Earth Essence that had been stored in the basement.

Meng Zhang felt no regret; a temporarily unused heavenly material was worth exchanging for a powerful Guardian Spirit General. As he conversed further with Deep Earth, he started to feel a bit disappointed.

In its heyday, the Deep Earth Spirit General indeed had the combat power of the Gold Core stage. But during the ancient war, his divine body was destroyed, his soul was heavily damaged, and he had to enter a long slumber.

Taiyi Sect had been trying to awaken these Guardian Spirit Generals again. Although they had never succeeded, they had helped repair their souls to some extent.

After Taiyi Sect fell and migrated to this place, the remaining souls of these Guardian Spirit Generals were nurtured within the treasure bead through the spiritual eyes, gradually gaining some consciousness.

When Meng Zhang dripped the Jade Soul Fluid into the bead, the Guardian Spirit Generals temporarily regained a simple consciousness.

Later, when he placed the Fifth Earth Essence in the basement, Deep Earth Spirit General woke up.

But now, the awakened Deep Earth Spirit General's strength had greatly declined, barely possessing the combat power of the Refining Qi completion stage.

If they had a Guardian Spirit General at the Gold Core stage, Taiyi Sect could dominate the surrounding area, and at the very least, they wouldn't have to be a vassal of Twin Success Valley. Even the regional hegemon, Flying Swan Sect, would have to show enough respect to Taiyi Sect.

However, with only a Deep Earth Spirit General at the Refining Qi completion stage, Taiyi Sect would still quietly develop and behave modestly. After all, Meng Zhang himself, with the highest cultivation base in the sect, was only at the Refining Qi 6th layer, still some distance away from reaching the Refining Qi late stage. Having an additional Refining Qi completion stage Deep Earth Spirit General would undoubtedly significantly increase Taiyi Sect's strength and provide them with a powerful ace.

Meng Zhang had always been curious about Taiyi Sect's situation in the past, especially the reasons for its calamity. He thought that Deep Earth Spirit General might satisfy his curiosity since he had personally experienced the ancient war.

Unfortunately, Deep Earth Spirit General's answer disappointed Meng Zhang greatly. His Soul was still far from fully recovering, so he couldn't remember everything from the past. He had no recollection of what had happened during those times.

If Meng Zhang wanted Deep Earth Spirit General to recover his strength and memory quickly, he needed to provide more treasures like Jade Soul Fluid and Fifth Earth Essence.

This request put Meng Zhang in a difficult position. Those treasures had come to him through fortuitous circumstances, and acquiring more of them would not be easy.

Fortunately, Deep Earth Spirit General didn't require special offerings on ordinary days. He could absorb the spiritual energy of heaven and earth like an ordinary cultivator.

Moreover, Deep Earth Spirit General sensed the weak magnetic force hidden in the spirit vein and hoped to absorb it himself.

Other than being stored in the Sect Protecting Formation, the Yellow Sand Hidden Trace Formation, this weak magnetic force had no other use on ordinary days.

Compared to the Sect Protecting Formation, Deep Earth Spirit General was undoubtedly more important. Without hesitation, Meng Zhang agreed to his request.

Chapter 80: Spirit Vein Formation

After the complete stabilization of Deep Earth Spirit General's divine body, Meng Zhang summoned all the disciples for a meeting in the sect's main hall. Besides addressing sect affairs, Meng Zhang introduced Deep Earth to everyone. Concealing Deep Earth Spirit General's true identity, he only stated that he was the new guardian appointed by Taiyi Sect. From then on, the guardian Deep Earth became an integral part of Taiyi Sect, with the same status and treatment as the elders.

As for Deep Earth's specific duties, he would be dispatched wherever his services were needed. According to Deep Earth Spirit General, even a Gold Core Daoist Master would find it challenging to discern the true nature of his Guardian Spirit General without a special Divine Ability. In the eyes of most cultivators, he was just an ordinary cultivator.

Having served as the Taiyi Sect Master for some time, Meng Zhang had gradually established his authority within the sect. Since he didn't disclose Deep Earth Spirit General's origins, nobody pressed for further information. The members of the sect considered Deep Earth as a Refining Qi completion stage cultivator.

Regardless, the addition of a Refining Qi completion cultivator to the sect was cause for celebration. During the meeting, Tian Zhen, who was in charge of the sect's mundane affairs, reported the recent changes in Sweetwater Oasis and the consumption of lower-grade spirit stones required to maintain the formation.

After the meeting dispersed, Deep Earth Spirit General approached Meng Zhang privately. It turned out that Deep Earth Spirit General not only naturally excelled in various earth-based spells but also possessed the skills of a Geomancer. Even though his cultivation base hadn't fully recovered, most of these abilities remained intact.

A Geomancer was a profession proficient in various arts such as feng shui, formations, and divination within the cultivation world. They could utilize the power of the earth to alter the land and were considered a high-level comprehensive occupation, difficult to cultivate, yet indispensable.

Geomancers could locate and survey mines, estimate reserves, and use feng shui and divination to find spirit veins and sense earth energies. Advanced Geomancers could even manipulate and cultivate new spirit veins, making them a rare sight in the cultivation world, usually available only to major powers. Even Flying Swan Sect had only a few low-ranking Geomancers, and these individuals were highly treasured.

Learning that Deep Earth possessed the abilities of a Geomancer, Meng Zhang was pleasantly surprised. Geomancy seemed to hold greater value than Deep Earth's Refining Qi completion cultivation base. Deep Earth voluntarily offered to go to Sweetwater Oasis and help nurture the forming spirit vein.

Deep Earth Spirit General understood that to fully recover his cultivation base, he needed to accumulate slowly and not devote all his time to cultivation. He only needed a certain amount of time each day to absorb spiritual energy and magnetic power. The rest of his time could be utilized freely.

Agreeing to Deep Earth's proposal, Meng Zhang allowed him to spend at least half of his time at Sweetwater Oasis, carefully nurturing the spirit vein. In the meantime, Meng Zhang focused on his cultivation of the "Sun-Moon Wheel Turning Sutra."

To practice the "Sun-Moon Wheel Turning Sutra," one first needed to separately cultivate Solar True Qi and Lunar True Qi, two opposing types of true qi. Having a foundation in Lesser Yang True Qi cultivation, Meng Zhang smoothly progressed in cultivating Solar True Qi.

Lesser Yang True Qi cultivation involved absorbing the newborn yang energy between heaven and earth during sunrise and incorporating it into one's true qi. In contrast, cultivating Solar True Qi required absorbing the most intense and scorching yang energy at noon, refining one's true qi through this extreme heat. Unlike the gentle and tame morning sun's energy, the scorching yang energy was difficult to control and could cause significant harm to the body.

Despite the discomfort, Meng Zhang endured the pain and, in a short time, adapted to the power of the scorching yang energy. In the evenings, he absorbed the bone-chilling Lunar True Qi that descended from the sky. The first strand of Lunar True Qi entering his body felt like being trapped in an ice cave, causing his limbs to grow cold and nearly freezing him.

However, by swiftly utilizing his Solar True Qi, Meng Zhang managed to warm his body and dispel the icy aura. After being tamed, the Lunar True Qi refined Meng Zhang's true qi, converting part of it into Lunar True Qi. Over time, his true qi gradually underwent this transformation.

Solar True Qi and Lunar True Qi both had opposing and complementary aspects. Meng Zhang skillfully controlled these two extreme forces, allowing them to coexist harmoniously within his

body. It took him a whole year to complete the conversion of all his Lesser Yang True Qi into Solar True Qi and Lunar True Qi.

From this point on, Meng Zhang truly delved into the practice of the "Sun-Moon Wheel Turning Sutra." Meanwhile, under the careful attention of Spirit General Deep Earth, the spirit vein in Sweetwater Oasis fully formed.

Originally, Meng Zhang estimated that it would take at least three to five years for the spirit vein to form. However, with Deep Earth Spirit General's help, this process was significantly shortened, showcasing the value of a Geomancer.

After its formation, the spirit vein still needed extended nurturing before it could completely stabilize. Deep Earth Spirit General, being capable, took charge of all tasks related to the nascent spirit vein. This newly formed spirit vein was of First Rank middle grade.

Once the spirit vein was formed, not only did the oasis's spiritual energy become abundant, but the oasis's territory also expanded significantly. After a short time, when the spirit vein stabilized, Deep Earth Spirit General rearranged the First Rank Formation earth-wood great formation, making it depend on the spirit vein and no longer consuming lower-grade spirit stones.

Finally, Taiyi Sect was free from the burden of consuming vast quantities of spirit stones. The spiritual energy of the spirit vein was now confined to a certain area, exclusively available for Taiyi Sect's disciples to absorb. Any surplus spiritual energy accumulated in specific regions.

When the spiritual energy reached the required concentration, Deep Earth Spirit General approached Meng Zhang and proposed to open a spirit field within the oasis. While it was a beneficial endeavor, it required significant resources, imposing a heavy burden on Taiyi Sect. After thinking for a while, Meng Zhang recalled that Deep Earth Spirit General was proficient in the art of Earth Escapement. This sparked an idea, and secretly, he left Taiyi Sect, bringing Deep Earth along to the area where the scarlet copper mine was located.