

## Sect Master 221

### Chapter 221: Spirit Liquor

Walking along the streets of Firewell Market, Meng Zhang observed the bustling scene, well aware that this unusual prosperity was a result of the ongoing war between the Flying Swan Sect and the sand monsters. As a crucial supplier of war materials, this place had become the most prosperous area in the entire Endless Sea of Sand, second only to the main city of Flying Swan Sect, Flying Swan City.

Over a year ago, Zhao Jiudou summoned cultivators from various subordinate sects of the Forest Spring Watch to annihilate the last refuge of the Twin Success Valley. Then, about three months ago, the Forest Spring Watch's sole Gold Core Daoist Master, Guang ZhiDaoist Master, joined the ranks of the Flying Swan Sect's camp, thanks to the endorsement of the Fei TianDaoist Master, as they engaged in the war against the sand monsters.

This sand monster turmoil truly gave the Flying Swan Sect a headache, especially with the Third Rank sand monsters, which possessed combat power no weaker than a Gold Core Daoist Master and displayed high intelligence. The First Rank and Second Rank sand monsters were stubborn war tools that only knew how to fight to the death. However, the Third Rank sand monsters knew how to strategize, engaging in guerrilla warfare against human cultivators.

Moreover, with the Third Rank sand monsters as their leaders, the First and Second Rank sand monsters became even more formidable opponents. Their armies ravaged the territory of the Flying Swan Sect, inflicting massive losses.

Although Guang ZhiDaoist Master had joined the war, there were no immediate results to show. Forest Spring Watch, however, finally felt secure since they didn't have to worry about the sudden invasion of Flying Swan Sect.

Within the dominion of the Forest Spring Watch, including nearby sects like Taiyi Sect, everything had become peaceful and calm, allowing everyone to focus their energy on managing their sects. Especially during the fierce battles between Flying Swan Sect and the sand monsters, they could profit significantly by supplying war materials.

Meng Zhang's visit to Firewell Market this time had two purposes. Firstly, over a year ago, during the pursuit of Twin Success Valley remnants, his frequently used flying sword, the Red Flame Sword, suffered damage. Despite the capabilities of Taiyi Sect's workshop, they were unable to repair the Second Rank magic tool, so he had to send it to Earthfire Sect and entrust their tool refiner with the repair.

The second purpose was to promote spirit liquor.

After returning from Great Wind City, not long after, Yang Xueyi found two recipes for brewing spirit liquor in Taiyi Sect's Hidden Scripture Pavilion.

Every year, Taiyi Sect produces spirit grains, which yield a surplus of spirit rice in addition to meeting the dietary needs of its disciples. Yang Xueyi studied the recipes and used a considerable amount of spirit rice and other materials to brew a type of spirit liquor.

Upon trying it, the disciples in the sect praised it loudly. This spirit liquor not only replenished true qi but also nourished their qi and blood.

Using another recipe, Yang Xueyi utilized spirit fruits as the main ingredient and added various spirit medicines to brew another type of spirit liquor. This one also replenished true qi and had the added benefit of strengthening muscles and bones.

Both types of highly acclaimed spirit liquors were quickly sold out in Singing Sand City, where the main traders were Refining Qi stage cultivators, and they primarily dealt with First Rank items.

Meng Zhang usually bought Second Rank magic tools and talismans from Firewell Market since Singing Sand City, despite its appearance of being bustling, had limited spending power, and there weren't many spirit stones in circulation there.

Thanks to the success of the two types of spirit liquor, Yang Xueyi was encouraged and spent a lot of time brewing a large quantity of spirit liquor, gradually increasing its production.

In fact, Forest Spring Watch had long had a tradition of brewing and selling spirit liquor, and their high-quality spirit liquor was famous and highly popular. However, the spirit liquor Yang Xueyi produced was of lower grade, aimed at high volume to maintain sufficient profits.

Meng Zhang was proactive, concerned that Singing Sand City's market might saturate sooner or later. Hence, he came to Firewell Market to seek new buyers.

Having visited Firewell Market multiple times before, Meng Zhang quickly got in touch with the familiar Shang Family. Currently, the Flying Swan Sect was engaged in a brutal war with the sand monsters, and various cultivators on the bloody frontlines suffering from the torment of war had a strong demand for spirit liquor.

With Taiyi Sect producing a large quantity of spirit liquor at just the right time, it was a perfect opportunity.

After finalizing the arrangements for selling the spirit liquor, Meng Zhang went to meet his acquaintance from Earthfire Sect, Shangguan Wen, who was in charge of external affairs and had interacted with Meng Zhang many times before.

Taiyi Sect had become a long-term supplier of minerals for Earthfire Sect, which led to more interactions with them. As a result, Meng Zhang and Shangguan Wen developed a decent relationship.

Currently, the demand for various magic tools on the frontlines was at its peak, and Earthfire Sect had not only depleted all of its stock but also kept their tool refiners working day and night to barely meet the demand.

If it weren't for his rapport with Shangguan Wen and Taiyi Sect's loyalty as a longstanding customer, the repair of the Red Flame Sword might have been delayed indefinitely.

When Meng Zhang received the repaired Red Flame Sword from Shangguan Wen, he didn't look very satisfied. Although Earthfire Sect's tool refiner had warned beforehand that the sword, damaged by celestial thunder's aura, would inevitably have reduced quality even after repairs, Meng Zhang couldn't find joy in seeing the outcome after waiting for a year.

The Red Flame Sword was originally a Second Rank lower-grade flying sword, and now with its quality further decreased, it was barely maintaining its Second Rank status.

Observing Meng Zhang's unconcealed expression, Shangguan Wen said, "It seems that Sect Master Meng is not very satisfied with this flying sword. But there's nothing more we could do; our tool refiner has done their best."

"I don't blame the tool refiner, I know he did his best. But most of my abilities rely on my flying sword. With the Red Flame Sword in this state, I'm indeed lacking a handy flying sword," Meng Zhang half-seriously remarked.

After pondering for a moment, Shangguan Wen said, "How about this? A senior of our sect obtained a complete Second Rank beast's corpse several years ago by chance. He extracted the spine of the beast's corpse to craft a Second Rank flying sword. After years of hard work, the flying sword will be ready in about two months."

"Originally, this flying sword was intended for the year-end auction. But since Sect Master Meng urgently needs a flying sword, I'll take the liberty to arrange a private transaction and offer you this flying sword."

"This flying sword is made from exceptional materials, and the senior who crafted it exerted their full effort. Its quality is extraordinary, so in terms of price..."

"You needn't worry, my friend. As long as the item is good, the price is not an issue," Meng Zhang confidently said.

Taiyi Sect had managed its affairs well in the past two years and had the good fortune of prosperous times, resulting in a decent annual income. As the Sect Master, Meng Zhang not only had a handsome salary and share of the profits but also enjoyed substantial external income.

So, a mere Second Rank flying sword was something Meng Zhang could certainly afford.

## Chapter 222: Reckless Decision

After finalizing the details of the transaction with Shangguan Wen and paying a deposit, Meng Zhang bid farewell and left. He strolled through the Firewell Market without buying anything. His next stop was Great Wind City, where he was exposed to various goods, broadening his horizons. As a result, he became less interested in ordinary items.

The Earthfire Sect, one of the top refining sects in the Endless Sea of Sand, was highly skilled in the art of crafting magic tools. The only limitation was their inability to produce Third Rank or higher magic tools due to the lack of a Gold Core Daoist Master. They were renowned for their exceptional First Rank magic tools and even some outstanding Second Rank ones. Unfortunately, the Endless Sea of Sand was impoverished and couldn't provide enough refining materials.

The Earthfire Sect only sold a limited number of their refined magic tools, keeping most of them for themselves or providing them to powerful factions and friendly sects. They also had to give a portion to the Flying Swan Sect as offerings. The few high-quality magic tools that did leave the sect were usually auctioned to earn substantial spirit stones.

As for the magic tools sold in shops, they were mostly of average quality, and their prices were exorbitant. Fine flying swords, being the most common magic tool in the Cultivation World, were in high demand among cultivators. The Earthfire Sect had no trouble selling their top-notch flying swords.

If it weren't for Shangguan Wen's intention to befriend Meng Zhang, he might not have agreed to a private transaction. After his stroll, Meng Zhang returned home.

Back at the Taiyi Sect, knowing he was about to obtain a new Second Rank flying sword, he decided to deal with the deteriorating Crimson Blaze Sword. He had advanced the Blood Refining Martyr Art he practiced during the Foundation Building stage, now becoming a Second Rank spell. To perform the blood refinement with this Second Rank spell, he needed a Second Rank magic tool in good condition, unlike the First Rank stage, where any tool would do. Throughout the entire Endless Sea of Sand in the Cultivation World, Second Rank magic tools are far from abundant. Many Foundation Building stage cultivators with limited financial resources don't have suitable Second Rank magic tools and have to make do with ordinary ones.

Even though Meng Zhang currently has enough wealth, he isn't willing to spend a fortune on a Second Rank magic tool that will be consumed as a one-time use item. Now that the Crimson Blaze Sword is useless, he decides to utilize the Blood Refining Martyr Art to refine it.

It takes Meng Zhang more than half a month to complete the blood refinement process. He estimates that after the Crimson Blaze Sword is sacrificed and detonated, it would be equivalent to a full-force attack of an average mid-level Foundation Building cultivator.

Meng Zhang waits in his sect for nearly two months until the agreed-upon time arrives, and then he takes the Crimson Feather Eagle and rushes to the Firewell Market.

Shangguan Wen, as the elder responsible for external affairs in the Earthfire Sect, spends most of his time at the Earthfire Sect's outpost in the Firewell Market. When Meng Zhang meets him, Shangguan Wen's face looks embarrassed, almost avoiding direct eye contact with Meng Zhang.

Seeing this, Meng Zhang already knows that there's a problem with the agreed-upon transaction. He understands that this matter cannot be easily dismissed, so Shangguan Wen has no choice but to be honest about it.

"Sect Master Meng, I'm truly sorry. The flying sword you reserved has been bought by someone else."

"As for the deposit you paid, our sect will surely refund it with interest."

Shangguan Wen speaks with a tone of guilt and deep apologies.

"I wanted the flying sword; I don't need this deposit," Meng Zhang says with frustration. Although the Earthfire Sect holds significant power and ranks high among the vassal sects of the Flying Swan Sect, this time, Meng Zhang is in the right and doesn't plan to let this go easily.

"Brother Shangguan, I trusted the Earthfire Sect's reputation when I paid the deposit and made the deal."

"You casually break your word and violate the agreement; it's simply unacceptable."

"Sect Master Meng, it's all my fault. If you want to scold or blame someone, blame me. I accept it all. It's all my fault for not thinking carefully before taking action, leading to this mistake."

Shangguan Wen keeps apologizing and speaks kind words. Despite being just a Refining Qi stage cultivator, his status in the Earthfire Sect is special, and he wields considerable authority. Even some Foundation Building stage elders cannot influence him with their words. Meng Zhang has no

choice but to deal with him calmly. It wouldn't be right to scold or physically harm someone just because they broke their promise. If Meng Zhang were to do that, he would risk offending the Earthfire Sect. Last time, the Earthfire Sect unilaterally terminated the mineral trade with Taiyi Sect due to a ban from the Flying Swan Sect, causing a lot of inconvenience. And now, within such a short period, they've stood Meng Zhang up again. The blood-refined Crimson Blaze Sword is now unusable, causing him significant trouble. Unfortunately, in the Cultivation World, strength reigns supreme, and while the Earthfire Sect is powerful, Taiyi Sect is too weak. Reluctantly, Meng Zhang has to swallow his pride.

However, that doesn't mean he'll just let this slide. He needs to get to the bottom of things and find out who the mysterious person is that made the Earthfire Sect break the deal.

"Shangguan Elder, I'd like to know who this powerful individual is that could make the Earthfire Sect sabotage our agreed-upon deal?"

Shangguan Wen hesitates, unsure if he should tell Meng Zhang.

"Shangguan Elder, I admit that I've learned a lesson from this incident, but the Earthfire Sect cannot leave me in the dark about it."

Meng Zhang's tone is now filled with suppressed anger.

After some contemplation, Shangguan Wen realizes that he can't risk offending Meng Zhang, considering that Taiyi Sect is currently supplying a significant amount of minerals to the Earthfire Sect. So, he reluctantly gives a somewhat evasive response.

"The day before yesterday, when the flying sword was successfully completed, Zhao Jiudou from the Flying Swan Sect War Hall happened to visit our sect. He took a liking to the flying sword and insisted on buying it."

"I didn't want to sell it to him initially, but Zhao Jiudou is a disciple of Zhao Liefeng, an elder of the Flying Swan Sect War Hall. It wouldn't be wise to offend him, especially during wartime. If I refused the deal, and the Flying Swan Sect War Hall requisitioned the flying sword in the name of war, we couldn't refuse."

Shangguan Wen tells the whole story without concealing anything, but he places all the blame on Zhao Jiudou from the Flying Swan Sect, portraying the Earthfire Sect as an innocent victim. Meng Zhang wonders whether Zhao Jiudou intercepted the deal intentionally or if it was just coincidental. Regardless, he notes it down in his mind.

Zhao Jiudou is not a decent person, and neither are the people from the Earthfire Sect. After listening to Shangguan Wen's explanation, Meng Zhang decides not to waste any more words, withdraws the deposit, and leaves directly.

## Chapter 223: Life-saving

Meng Zhang was feeling increasingly frustrated. He wandered aimlessly on the streets of Firewell Market, pondering how to stand up to Earthfire Sect and Zhao Jiudou.

In the Cultivation World, those who were modest and forgiving were not well-regarded. People in this world believed in retaliating for the smallest offense, and those seeking revenge were feared and left unprovoked.

Although Meng Zhang wasn't overly magnanimous, he wasn't one to seek revenge for every slight either. However, as the Sect Master of Taiyi Sect, he couldn't afford to let others trample on him without any response. Such behavior might lead others to underestimate both him and Taiyi Sect.

Currently, Earthfire Sect was an important trading partner for Taiyi Sect. Taiyi Sect produced a vast amount of valuable minerals that not just any sect could handle. Until they found new potential customers, Taiyi Sect couldn't afford to break ties with Earthfire Sect.

Nevertheless, they could now start preparing for alternatives. While continuing to supply Earthfire Sect, they could simultaneously explore new customers. Even if they earned a bit less, it was essential to diversify their clientele to avoid becoming overly dependent on a single sect like Earthfire Sect.

As for Zhao Jiudou, Meng Zhang couldn't do much about him at the moment. Zhao Jiudou himself wasn't a major concern, but his identity as a disciple of Flying Swan Sect posed some trouble.

While strolling through the streets, Meng Zhang unexpectedly spotted someone familiar. It was Ruan Dadao, the former Sect Master of Golden Blade Sect, who was accompanied by a few disciples, leaving a shop.

Ruan Dadao seemed to have some extraordinary luck lately, as he had recently advanced to the mid-stage of Foundation Building, regaining his confidence. Previously, due to Golden Blade Sect's failure under Ruan Yuan's leadership in reaching Foundation Building, Ruan Dadao had become relatively low-key. Now, he was acting somewhat arrogant again.

In this area, most cultivators were at the early stage of Foundation Building, making those at the mid-stage quite exceptional. Even in Forest Spring Watch, aside from the exceptional Guang ZhiDaoist Master, no one had reached beyond mid-stage Foundation Building.

Meng Zhang didn't bother with Ruan Dadao, as they had never been on good terms. He pretended not to notice him and walked away.

Firewell Market had a prohibition on flying within its borders. Cultivators and their flying mounts were not allowed to take off directly from the market area. They had to move a certain distance away from the market before they could take flight.

Utilizing the Divine Movement Art, Meng Zhang quickly left Firewell Market. Since reaching Foundation Building, he either flew in the sky or rode the Crimson Feather Eagle soaring through the heavens. For a long time, Meng Zhang hadn't felt the earth under his feet as he ran. Today, for some reason, he was in the mood. He activated the Divine Movement Art and sprinted in a random direction, feeling much better as the rushing wind hit his face.

After a while, he decided it was time to stop and release the Crimson Feather Eagle to fly back to Taiyi Sect. However, something caught his attention, and he abruptly halted his actions. About two hundred zhang ahead, there seemed to be an ordinary sand dune, seemingly empty beneath it. But by chance, Meng Zhang noticed a faint ripple in the space there.

Out of habit, he activated the Deception Breaking Eye to get a clearer view. What had seemed empty a moment ago now revealed over ten formation flags planted around a group of people, enclosing them in a small circle with Jin Qiao'er protected inside by Qiaoshou Sect's Sect Master, Jin Qigu. Two Foundation Building cultivators were fiercely attacking the protective circle.

At a short distance away, another Foundation Building cultivator manipulated the formation flags to create a boundary that trapped the nearby area, preventing Jin Qigu's group from breaking out and also concealing any activity from within.

Jin Qigu had not reached Foundation Building for as long as Meng Zhang, and her cultivation level among Foundation Building cultivators was relatively weak. Despite forming a defensive formation with several Refining Qi stage female disciples, she was struggling to hold against the two stronger Foundation Building cultivators' assaults. Several Qiaoshou Sect disciples' bodies lay on the ground, having already fallen in the fight.

Jin Qiao'er, the protected one, seemed immobilized, apparently facing some problem, and her face was filled with self-blame. She wanted to do something but couldn't move.

Meng Zhang didn't expect that a casual use of the Deception Breaking Eye would lead him to such a situation. However, he hesitated only for a moment before deciding to intervene and help these people in need. Taiyi Sect and Qiaoshou Sect had joined forces against enemies a few times, fostering some camaraderie. As both were vassals of Forest Spring Watch, they should be mutually supportive. However, Taiyi Sect was the weakest among the factions, and Meng Zhang had the least seniority, often being excluded from important matters. To change this situation, Taiyi Sect needed to make allies.

Meng Zhang had previously tried to befriend Forest Mountain School and had some interactions with two Foundation Building cultivators from there. However, Forest Mountain School was a loyal subordinate of Forest Spring Watch, always prioritizing their interests, and Taiyi Sect couldn't become a reliable ally to them.

On the other hand, thanks to Meng Zhang's efforts over the years, relations with Qiaoshou Sect had improved, and they had significant interactions. Now, when Qiaoshou Sect's cultivators were in danger, Meng Zhang had a favorable impression of Jin Qiao'er. He couldn't pretend not to see them and walk away.

Though determined to help, Meng Zhang maintained a casual facade, as if he hadn't noticed the boundary ahead. He turned around and ran in the opposite direction, making sure that the opposing side couldn't see his back.

Once he had run a considerable distance away, ensuring that they couldn't detect him, Meng Zhang activated the Earth Escape Spell, burrowing underground to return to the vicinity of the boundary.

Meng Zhang paused and used the Deception Breaking Eye to observe the battlefield from below. He then fully activated the Earth Escape Spell, rapidly moving through the ground until he emerged on the surface.

With the previously blood-refined flying sword, Crimson Flame, in hand, he threw it towards the Foundation Building cultivator who was controlling the formation flags and manipulating the boundary.

The cultivator noticed Meng Zhang's presence when he appeared nearby but assumed that Meng Zhang hadn't noticed the situation and left. He returned his focus to the battle.

Caught off guard by the sudden attack, the cultivator couldn't react in time. Just as Crimson Flame was about to reach him, he managed to launch a defensive spell. However, the sword exploded violently before his protective barrier could fully form. The shield was easily torn apart, and he activated a defensive magic tool on his body to protect himself.

## Chapter 224: Strikes to Kill

Using the Blood Refining Martyr Art, the power of the blazing Crimson Flame Sword's explosion is no less than the full force strike of an ordinary Mid Foundation Building cultivator. The cultivator who set up the barrier was merely at the Initial Foundation Building stage of cultivation and seemed not very skilled in this kind of battle, lacking obvious adaptability.

After the Crimson Flame Sword exploded, all his defensive measures were shattered, and he ended up spewing blood uncontrollably, his body sent flying away. As a Foundation Building stage cultivator, he should have some means to preserve his life, as long as he didn't die on the spot.

The other two Foundation Building stage cultivators who were besieging Jin Qigu and the others also noticed the situation here. Reacting swiftly, one continued to attack Jin Qigu's group, while the other turned around and rushed over as if his life depended on it, attempting to rescue his comrade.

Meanwhile, the injured companion struggled and prepared to retrieve life-saving items from his storage bag. As soon as Meng Zhang threw the Crimson Flame Sword, he charged forward, and his flying sword's venomous fang followed suit, shooting like lightning toward the target.

The heavily injured cultivator, unable to dodge due to being blown away, was directly pierced by the flying sword's venomous fang. The venomous fang stirred within his body, turning his insides into a mess. At this point, even the most tenacious person could only meet their demise.

The reinforcing cultivator witnessing this scene forcefully halted his charge and vigilantly observed Meng Zhang. Jin Qigu, who was under attack, also noticed the situation. She had thought they were ambushed and had little chance of survival, but with Meng Zhang's help, there was finally hope for their survival.

"Sect Master Meng, be careful, these two are demons from the Yellow Lotus Sect," Jin Qigu timely warned Meng Zhang.

The Yellow Lotus Sect cultivators were known for their strange ways and terrible reputation, often considered unorthodox sects. Jin Qigu's label of "demons" wasn't unjustified.

Upon hearing Jin Qigu's shout, Meng Zhang's eyes flickered, and he shouted back, "Bold demons! How dare you intrude into the territory of my Flying Swan Sect! Do you think my Flying Swan Sect has no one?"

Meng Zhang didn't expect the enemy to be scared off just by mentioning Flying Swan Sect; it was merely to make them a little more cautious, which was still advantageous.

After the shout, without waiting for the enemy's response, Meng Zhang invoked his flying sword's venomous fang and thrust it toward the enemies.



Having only one flying sword, Meng Zhang couldn't employ a dual sword technique nor unleash the Strange and Upright Sword Art. Not wanting to easily reveal the Lifeless Killing Sword, he employed the Wind Dance Willow Sword Technique.

Each sword technique required a suitable flying sword to exhibit its greatest power. When Meng Zhang was still a Refining Qi stage cultivator, he used the First Rank flying sword "Soft Around The Finger," which was actually most suitable for executing the Wind Dance Willow Sword Technique.

However, after the Foundation Building stage, the power of the First Rank flying sword was obviously insufficient, so he bestowed the flying sword upon Yang Xueyi. The flying sword's venomous fang in his hand, used to execute the Wind Dance Willow Sword Technique, could only be considered passable and did not offer any special enhancements.

Facing Meng Zhang, the cultivator also wielded a flying sword and engaged in a fierce battle. With one opponent less, the pressure on Jin Qigu's side significantly decreased. She, along with several disciples from her sect, could barely hold off the enemy.

Meng Zhang and his opponent exchanged several moves, and he felt that his opponent's sword technique was exceptional, displaying extraordinary swordsmanship, rich experience, and lethal killing moves. Meng Zhang, who took pride in his swordsmanship, not only failed to gain the upper hand but also began to fall behind gradually.

A good flying sword was crucial for the full display of swordsmanship's power. Meng Zhang's swordsmanship was not weaker than his opponent's, but due to the inferior flying sword, he began losing his advantage.

Meng Zhang remained calm; it was evident that Jin Qigu's side could hold on for a long time. Even though he temporarily fell behind, for the opponent to defeat him, it would take at least half a day or more.

Furthermore, swordsmanship was not the only skill in Meng Zhang's arsenal. Accustomed to keeping some tricks up his sleeve, he had yet to reveal his true trump card.

Meng Zhang controlled his flying sword's venomous fang, engaging in a fierce battle with the opponent's flying sword. His body leaped and dodged, moving left and right, evading the opponent's attacks. Rarely encountering a swordsmanship master, Meng Zhang became interested and wanted to have a good contest with the opponent, honing his own swordsmanship and gaining more combat experience.

The swordsmanship master seemed to enjoy the battle as well and did not use any other means, solely employing his swordsmanship to match Meng Zhang skillfully. Although Meng Zhang was slightly falling behind, he was not without counterattacks. With his proficiency in using the Wind Dance Willow Sword Technique, known for using softness to overcome hardness, this was the time to display its power.

The two battlefields, not far apart, became increasingly intense. The location wasn't far from Firewell Market, which was usually bustling with various cultivators passing by.

That deceased Yellow Lotus Sect cultivator had created a barrier to conceal all the activities here. But now that the cultivator who set up the barrier had died, and the barrier was destroyed during the Crimson Flame Sword's explosion, everything was exposed.

After fighting for a long time, the situation on Meng Zhang's side became more unfavorable. The opponent's flying sword had completely suppressed Meng Zhang's flying sword's venomous fang, leaving him with little ability to fight back.

Meng Zhang secretly took out the Golden Crow Lantern, looking for an opportunity to make a sneak attack. When the opponent believed they were on the verge of victory, Meng Zhang would seize the chance to give him an unforgettable lesson.

At this moment, a flying boat from afar passed by this area, heading towards Firewell Market. The flying boat was flying at a relatively low altitude, allowing those on board to see the battlefield clearly below.

Jin Qigu had no idea about Meng Zhang's plan and thought that both she and Meng Zhang were about to reach their limit. She shouted loudly toward the flying boat passing overhead, "The demons from the Yellow Lotus Sect have invaded the Endless Sea of Sand. Hurry and invite the experts from the Flying Swan Sect to exterminate these demons!"

Originally hesitating whether to approach the battlefield, the flying boat immediately lowered its altitude upon hearing Jin Qigu's call and flew towards the battlefield.

The two Yellow Lotus Sect cultivators looked at each other, knowing that the opportunity had passed, and the mission was now impossible to accomplish. If they continued to linger here, truly attracting the Flying Swan Sect cultivators, it would bring a lot of trouble.

Without further hesitation, the two, who already had the upper hand, easily forced their opponents to retreat, successfully leaving the battlefield and fleeing into the distance. Watching the two figures grow smaller in the distance, Jin Qigu had no strength to pursue, and Meng Zhang knew that even if he went alone, it would be futile to catch up.

As the flying boat approached, Meng Zhang quickly searched the body of the cultivator he had killed. Apart from having three storage bags on him, this guy had also hidden a storage ring close to his body. If it weren't for Meng Zhang's Deception Breaking Eye, he would have almost missed it.

After confirming that nothing was left behind, Meng Zhang let go of the enemy's body. At this moment, several cultivators jumped down from the flying boat, approaching Meng Zhang and the others.

## Chapter 225: Knowing

Several cultivators in the Refining Qi stage, though not lacking in courage, dared to actively rush towards the battlefield of a Foundation Building stage cultivator.

As soon as they landed, they started shouting and yelling.

"Where are the cultivators from the Yellow Lotus Sect?"

"Did the cultivators from the Yellow Lotus Sect run away?"

"Which way did the cultivators from the Yellow Lotus Sect escape to?"

Meng Zhang glanced at the flying boat above, confirming that there were no Foundation Building stage cultivators inside. He couldn't fathom where these youngsters got their confidence to act this

way. Were they truly unaware of the power of Foundation Building stage cultivators, or was it ignorance that emboldened them?

Nevertheless, they were here to help, so Meng Zhang didn't show any displeasure. Jin Qigu was even more courteous, warmly greeting the others. After exchanging names and introductions, they began to understand each other better.

It turned out that these young people belonged to an outer caravan of the Flying Swan Sect. The status of this caravan was roughly equivalent to what Meng Zhang had known before as Lao Bulu's group.

The flying boat they were on was transporting goods to the Firewell Market.

The leading young man was named Wu Dongzhi, an outer disciple of the Flying Swan Sect. He was very talkative and quickly became familiar with Meng Zhang and the others through casual conversation.

Wu Dongzhi showed no fear in the face of two Foundation Building stage cultivators. He spoke confidently and fluently.

As it turned out, due to a conflict hundreds of years ago, the Flying Swan Sect had been wary of two forces: the Fire Cloud Sect and the Yellow Lotus Sect. These two forces had been keeping a close eye on the Endless Sea of Sand, always watching for any movements by the Flying Swan Sect.

The cultivators from these two forces often concealed their identities and sneaked into the Endless Sea of Sand. The Flying Swan Sect couldn't prevent such incidents and could only let them be.

However, the Flying Swan Sect had a bottom line: if these infiltrating cultivators from the two forces behaved low-key, were honest, and didn't cause trouble, the Flying Swan Sect wouldn't bother them.

But if they stirred up trouble in the Endless Sea of Sand, especially like the recent confrontation where they killed cultivators from the Endless Sea of Sand, then the Flying Swan Sect would have to intervene.

This matter concerned the dignity of the Flying Swan Sect, and they would never let it go lightly. Although the two Yellow Lotus Sect cultivators had escaped for now, the Flying Swan Sect would undoubtedly send powerful experts to chase them down and wouldn't let them escape easily.

These young people either came from the Flying Swan Sect or had close connections with the sect. Upon hearing that cultivators from their arch-enemy, the Yellow Lotus Sect, had appeared, they disregarded their own safety and came to investigate.

Judging from the confident expressions on these young people's faces, they probably possessed some means of self-preservation handed down by their elders, which was why they weren't afraid of Foundation Building stage cultivators.

These youngsters truly didn't know the immensity of heaven and earth, relying on some small tricks to venture deep into the tiger's den.

Cultivators from a major sect like the Yellow Lotus Sect were not comparable to small sects or loose cultivators. If it weren't for their concerns and the presence of Meng Zhang, a renowned Foundation Building stage cultivator, these young people would probably have suffered a great loss.

While Jin Qigu appeared enthusiastic, she didn't disclose the full extent of the enmity between them and the Yellow Lotus Sect, only mentioning that they were being chased by the Yellow Lotus Sect cultivators due to some minor conflicts.

Thanks to the continuous propaganda by the Flying Swan Sect against their disciples, the Yellow Lotus Sect, as a hostile sect, had been demonized in the eyes of Flying Swan Sect disciples. To them, the Yellow Lotus Sect was nothing short of an evil, despicable existence, comparable to cultivators from the demonic path.

The actions of the Yellow Lotus Sect's cultivators, doing things that harmed both the heavens and the principles of righteousness, were not surprising. Chasing after a group of weaker female cultivators was indeed in line with the typical behavior of Yellow Lotus Sect cultivators.

After talking for a while, the few young people who were still on a delivery mission took their leave. Before departing, they promised to inform the Flying Swan Sect about what had happened here so that the sect could deal with the matter of the Yellow Lotus Sect's cultivators.

However, Wu Dongzhi also admitted that the Flying Swan Sect was currently busy battling sand monsters, and manpower was scarce, so it might not be able to dispatch experts to chase down the Yellow Lotus Sect's cultivators in a timely manner.

Jin Qigu and the others had already provoked enmity with the Yellow Lotus Sect's cultivators, so they had to be extra cautious from now on.

Once these young people left on the flying boat, Jin Qigu and Meng Zhang began to have a deeper conversation.

Jin Qigu didn't hide much from Meng Zhang, her savior. Ever since the incident in Great Wind City, where the Yellow Lotus Sect's cultivators took an interest in Jin Qiao'er, Jin Qigu had been extremely careful.

However, after returning to the Endless Sea of Sand for so long, the Yellow Lotus Sect's cultivators hadn't shown up, so Jin Qigu became complacent, thinking that the sect was still concerned about the reputation of the Flying Swan Sect and wouldn't dare to cause trouble there.

During the last pursuit of the remnants of Twin Success Valley, Aunt Jin was seriously injured and still hadn't fully recovered. She had been recuperating within Qiaoshou Sect.

A few days ago, Jin Qigu planned to go to the Firewell Market for some business. Since their return from Great Wind City, Jin Qiao'er had been confined to Qiaoshou Sect, forbidden to go outside due to concerns about the Yellow Lotus Sect's cultivators.

With so much time having passed and no sign of the Yellow Lotus Sect's cultivators, everyone had relaxed their vigilance.

Finally unable to stay put any longer, the usually lively Jin Qiao'er couldn't bear it and clamored to go out with Jin Qigu. Jin Qigu, who doted on Jin Qiao'er, couldn't resist her and agreed to take her along.

The journey to the Firewell Market went smoothly. After Jin Qigu finished her business, she spent two days playing with Jin Qiao'er in the Firewell Market before starting their journey back today.

Little did they expect that not far from leaving the Firewell Market on their First Rank flying boat, they fell into an ambush.

Three Foundation Building stage cultivators from the Yellow Lotus Sect, having received news from an unknown source, had laid an ambush here long ago.

When the flying boat of Qiaoshou Sect passed by, it was easily shot down. After landing, everyone from Qiaoshou Sect was trapped within a formation.

Jin Qiao'er accidentally triggered the enemy's restriction and couldn't move. If it weren't for the desperate efforts of Jin Qigu and the others, she would have been taken away.

With the people from Qiaoshou Sect trapped inside the formation, if Meng Zhang hadn't intervened to rescue them, the consequences would have been unimaginable.

After listening to Jin Qigu's account, Meng Zhang was deeply impressed by the Yellow Lotus Sect's cultivators' concealed patience and their ability to hit precisely.

Together, Meng Zhang and Jin Qigu spent some effort before finally removing the restriction from Jin Qiao'er.

Once Jin Qiao'er regained her freedom and was able to move, she threw herself onto the bodies of several fellow disciples, crying bitterly and wailing.

Jin Qiao'er felt extremely guilty, believing that her impulsiveness had led to the death of her fellow disciples. If the Yellow Lotus Sect's cultivators hadn't taken an interest in her, and if she hadn't insisted on going out, this tragedy wouldn't have happened.

As Jin Qiao'er began to cry, several female disciples from Qiaoshou Sect also burst into tears.

Although Jin Qigu appeared calm on the surface, deep down, she was also filled with immense grief.

## Chapter 226: Unexpected Benefit

Among the deceased female disciples, there were several personal disciples cultivated by Jin Qigu for many years, as well as one junior sister whom Jin Qigu held in high regard.

After achieving Foundation Building, Jin Qigu intended to follow the Qiaoshou Sect's tradition of passing on the position of Sect Master to a junior sister at the Refining Qi stage, allowing her to handle the sect's daily affairs. However, the junior sister whom Jin Qigu had high hopes for had been secluded in cultivation for a certain technique until just a few days ago when she finally came out of seclusion.

Jin Qigu brought this junior sister to Firewell Market to entrust her with some matters and introduce her to some important Qiaoshou Sect's clients. Upon their return, Jin Qigu planned to pass on the position of Sect Master to her.

Unexpectedly, due to an ambush by the demonic cultivators from the Yellow Lotus Sect, the junior sister who was supposed to take over as the Sect Master sacrificed herself by using a self-destructive secret technique to buy time and protect Jin Qiao'er.

Losing the intended Sect Master, Jin Qigu now had to search for a new candidate slowly. Though Meng Zhang was unaware of the full extent of Qiaoshou Sect's losses, he stayed with them for a while, witnessing their grief and tears.

Jin Qigu didn't let her disciples immerse themselves in sorrow for too long. She and a few female disciples tidied up the bodies of their fallen fellow disciples and took the initiative to bid farewell to Meng Zhang.

Considering that two Foundation Building stage cultivators from the Yellow Lotus Sect were still at large, Meng Zhang, being the kind person that he was, decided to escort them all the way back to the Qiaoshou Sect, ensuring their safety.

They traveled together until they returned to Qiaoshou Sect, finally feeling completely relieved. The Qiaoshou Sect's mountain gate was guarded by a Second Rank great formation, and Aunt Jin at the mid-Foundation Building stage was in charge. The two early Foundation Building stage cultivators from the Yellow Lotus Sect wouldn't dare to cause trouble there.

Meng Zhang politely declined Qiaoshou Sect's invitation to stay, bid them farewell, and directly returned to Taiyi Sect.

Back at Taiyi Sect, Meng Zhang finally had the opportunity to carefully inspect the spoils of this battle.

The seemingly inconspicuous early Foundation Building stage cultivator, after his death, brought a great surprise to Meng Zhang. The three storage bags he carried were all Tenfold Aspect storage bags, each filled to the brim.

The storage ring he kept close to his body had a spatial volume exceeding ten times that of a Tenfold Aspect storage bag.

Not to mention the various items inside, just this high-capacity storage magic tool alone was something Meng Zhang had wanted to possess for many years.

The items he sorted out were stacked like a mountain. Among the commonly found spirit stones, pills, talismans, and First Rank magic tools, there were three particularly interesting things.

Firstly, there were a hundred wooden kites. These were produced by the Clever Machine Sect, a sect in the Jiuqu League specializing in creating all sorts of mechanical puppets. By infusing them with spiritual energy, these wooden kites made entirely of spirit wood could fly in the sky. With their broad backs, they could carry 2-3 people at once without any problem. While not of much significance to Foundation Building stage cultivators, having one as a Refining Qi stage cultivator would be incredibly convenient and even lifesaving during critical moments.

These practical mechanical puppets were highly sought after within the Jiuqu League's domain. However, in the usually isolated Endless Sea of Sand, it was rare to come across them.

Secondly, there were three bottles of Elemental Restoration Pills. These Second Rank pills could repair the injuries of Foundation Building stage cultivators and compensate for any damage to their foundations. While Meng Zhang seldom used pills to assist his cultivation during the Refining Qi

stage due to his excellent spiritual root, his demand for the spiritual energy of heaven and earth significantly increased during Foundation Building. Solely relying on self-absorption would only suffice, but to increase his cultivation speed, he could now begin using some pills.

Of course, given Meng Zhang's aptitude, he wouldn't be interested in ordinary Second Rank pills. The truly practical ones were beyond his reach.

In Singing Sand City, let alone Firewell Market, there aren't many publicly available Second Rank pills. In Meng Zhang's eyes, the cost-effectiveness of these Second Rank pills is not high.

As for the Shi Family, the pills traded to Taiyi Sect are limited to First Rank pills for use by Refining Qi stage cultivators. The only Second Rank pill Meng Zhang obtained from the Shi Family, the Foundation Building Pill, was not only provided with the main materials by him but was ultimately obtained through the help of Luo Ye, a late Foundation Building stage cultivator.

The three bottles of Elemental Restoration Pills that Meng Zhang currently possesses are all high-quality and rarely seen among Second Rank pills in the Endless Sea of Sand. Before this, Meng Zhang had never come across them in the market.

When Meng Zhang last helped Luo Ye dispel demonic energy, he suffered severe injuries to his elemental energy and damaged his foundation. If he were to rely solely on self-cultivation, it would take at least 20-30 years to make a full recovery. With these three bottles of Elemental Restoration Pills, this time could be significantly shortened.

The third interesting item is a seemingly tattered old book. Its appearance is unremarkable, but its contents are extraordinary.

On the cover of the old book are four handwritten characters: "Grand Evolving Fortune."

This book, "Grand Evolving Fortune," records the most mysterious and profound knowledge in the Cultivation World—the path of heavenly numerology.

According to legend, there is a group of cultivators in the Cultivation World who are adept at heavenly numerology, known as Diviners. Diviners' status is even above that of tool refiners, alchemists, and formation masters. Only the top sects can have Diviners.

Diviners, skilled in heavenly numerology, can deduce everything in the world with a simple finger calculation, including past and future events. An omniscient Diviner can turn misfortune into good fortune and evade various calamities on their path of cultivation.

Meng Zhang holds a skeptical attitude about whether the legendary Diviners are truly omnipotent. However, he is genuinely interested in the knowledge of heavenly numerology.

If Meng Zhang does possess the aptitude to study the heavenly numerology and become a Diviner, his status in the Cultivation World would be extraordinary. Diviners are highly sought after by sects that have Gold Core Daoist Masters and Primordial Spirit True Monarchs.

The esteemed seniors and experts in the Cultivation World greatly value Diviners and would go to great lengths to befriend them and even win their favor.

However, Meng Zhang also acknowledges reality. If the heavenly numerology were so easy to learn, the Cultivation World would be overflowing with Diviners long ago. In truth, Diviners are extremely rare and scarce in the Cultivation World.

At least in the Endless Sea of Sand and the surrounding areas of the Jiuqu League, there has been no mention of any existing Diviners. The study of heavenly numerology requires an exceptionally high level of cultivation.

Many cultivators have already become Gold Core Daoist Masters but remain completely ignorant about heavenly numerology. Such individuals who lack an understanding of heavenly principles and fate are not uncommon in the Cultivation World.

As a Foundation Building stage cultivator, Meng Zhang is merely attempting to study "Grand Evolving Fortune" to see if he has any innate talent for learning the heavenly numerology.

Despite being full of confidence in his aptitude and comprehension and occasionally feeling a sense of superiority as a transmigrator, Meng Zhang dares not claim that he will definitely succeed in mastering this knowledge.

## Chapter 227: Tangling Silk Soft Sword

Of course, at present, Meng Zhang wasn't busy studying "Grand Evolving Fortune." To study the Tianji Art, adequate preparation was necessary. Apart from abstaining from certain activities and performing rituals, at the very least, he needed to meditate and focus his mind and energy.

Meng Zhang carefully put away the "Grand Evolving Fortune" and three bottles of Supple Element Pills. He wore the storage ring on his finger. As for the pile of spiritual stones and other items, he put some into the storage ring and the rest into the sect's treasury, converting them into contribution points for himself.

Meng Zhang had a considerable amount of contribution points, but he rarely exchanged items from the sect's treasury. The primary reason was that the accumulation in the treasury was not abundant, and he didn't want to deplete it, which could affect the sect's functioning.

Even the one hundred wooden kites were placed in the treasury for the disciples to exchange using their contribution points. The more abundant the items in the treasury, the stronger the disciples' desire to exchange, encouraging them to take on more tasks and contribute to the sect. After dealing with the spoils of war, Meng Zhang finally had time to handle the internal affairs of the sect. He called upon the external affairs Hall Master Li Xuan and instructed him to visit Firewell Market more often, gradually making contact with some merchants and seeking new buyers for the sect's minerals.

At the same time, Meng Zhang also asked him to mobilize the sect's forces to investigate the situation of Zhao Jiudou, that guy from Twin Success Valley. Information related to Flying Swan Sect disciples wouldn't be easily revealed in the black market, but fortunately, Taiyi Sect had made significant progress in various aspects over the years and established its own channels for intelligence.

Next, Meng Zhang focused on his cultivation. Since he hadn't obtained the new flying sword, and the Crimson Flame Sword had already been destroyed, he needed to master some new techniques to counter his deficiencies in swordsmanship.

On one hand, he intensified his efforts to refine the Golden Crow Lantern, and on the other, he practiced some secret techniques that only Foundation Building cultivators could master.



A few months passed, and Li Xuan's contacts with merchants went smoothly. The Endless Sea of Sand wasn't only home to Earthfire Sect as the top refining sect; there were other sects with their own tool refiners, and many loose cultivators were skilled in the art of refining. With Flying Swan Sect engaged in a bitter battle with the sand monsters on the frontline, the demand for various magic tools was immense, and the tool refiners had equally substantial requirements for different minerals.

Li Xuan established contact with several merchant firms with some connections to Flying Swan Sect and began selling various minerals to them.

As for Zhao Jiudou, during this period, he had been relentlessly hunting down the remnants of Twin Success Valley. After the futile effort last time, Zhao Jiudou's interest in pursuing the remnants remained undiminished, primarily because the prominent Elder Dan Yihu of Twin Success Valley had yet to be captured, affecting Zhao Jiudou's mission evaluation.

However, no matter how much effort Zhao Jiudou exerted and the various methods he employed, he couldn't find Dan Yihu's whereabouts. The Foundation Building cultivator had no ties and was hiding with determination. In the vast Endless Sea of Sand, there were numerous places for him to conceal himself.

Frustrated by the inability to locate Dan Yihu, Zhao Jiudou angrily searched for people related to Twin Success Valley. His hope was to force Dan Yihu to appear and, at the same time, to gain some rewards that could improve his mission evaluation.

Twin Success Valley had been the dominant force in this area for many years, and there were numerous cultivators and mortals associated with the sect. Zhao Jiudou's indiscriminate and reckless actions, expanding his attacks without distinction, had caused a sense of fear and unease among everyone. Taking advantage of his identity as a Flying Swan Sect disciple and wielding the sharp sword of hunting down Twin Success Valley remnants, Zhao Jiudou had committed numerous atrocities during this time.

It was said that Forest Spring Watch, the new owner of this region, was somewhat dissatisfied with Zhao Jiudou's actions. The more reckless Zhao Jiudou became, the happier Meng Zhang was. His behavior had made him many enemies, and he was bound to run into trouble sooner or later.

On a particular day, Jin Qigu, the Sect Master of Qiaoshou Sect, visited Taiyi Sect to personally thank Sect Master Meng Zhang for his assistance in saving her and Jin Qiao'er. Jin Qigu's gratitude was not mere words but a sincere expression of appreciation, and she presented a valuable gift as a token of thanks.

It was a Second Rank middle-grade flying sword called the Tangling Silk Soft Sword, which had once been used by a Foundation Building cultivator from Qiaoshou Sect. Qiaoshou Sect specialized in the art of flying needles, and most female cultivators practiced this technique. However, this particular senior from Qiaoshou Sect was an exception, as they excelled in swordsmanship and had acquired the precious Tangling Silk Soft Sword.

After the senior passed away during meditation, no other Foundation Building cultivator in Qiaoshou Sect was proficient in flying swords. Thus, the sword had been kept idle in their sect's treasure trove. Jin Qigu presented this exquisite flying sword to Meng Zhang as a gesture of gratitude.

Surprisingly, Qiaoshou Sect was well-informed and knew that the flying sword Meng Zhang had previously ordered had been sold to someone else by Earthfire Sect, leaving him without a suitable flying sword. This showed the sincerity of Qiaoshou Sect's gratitude.

Of course, Meng Zhang was unaware of the significance Jin Qiao'er held in Qiaoshou Sect. Though he had saved Jin Qigu, saving Jin Qiao'er had earned him immense gratitude from the high-ranking members of Qiaoshou Sect. This led them to prepare a nearly tailor-made gift for him.

Meng Zhang initially felt unworthy and tried to refuse the gift multiple times, but Jin Qigu was insistent on him accepting it. Eventually, he reluctantly accepted the Tangling Silk Soft Sword.

The Tangling Silk Soft Sword was both flexible and sturdy, possessing a harmonious blend of softness and strength, making it perfect for performing the "Willow Dance in the Wind" sword technique. However, being a sword usually used by female cultivators, its exquisite and delicate appearance made it seem a bit effeminate for a male cultivator to wield. Nevertheless, considering its perfect compatibility with his sword technique and the absence of any other suitable flying swords, Meng Zhang had no choice but to use it for the time being.

After receiving the gift, Jin Qigu and Meng Zhang discussed various matters between their sects and reached a verbal agreement on certain aspects. This incident brought Taiyi Sect and Qiaoshou Sect closer together, though they were not yet allies, they were no longer enemies. At least for a long time to come, they would not be hostile towards each other. Jin Qigu also promised that Qiaoshou Sect would notify Taiyi Sect of any events they were involved in to prevent Taiyi Sect from being isolated.

After seeing off Jin Qigu, another piece of news brought anger to Meng Zhang. Zhao Jiudou had somehow obtained information that the current Pill Hall Master of Taiyi Sect, Zhang Yingying, was once an alchemist disciple of Twin Success Valley and had served the sect for many years.

## Chapter 228: Causing trouble

Zhao Jiudou, who was being hunted down across the world by remnants of Twin Success Valley, felt like he had stumbled upon a priceless treasure when he discovered Zhang Yingying in Taiyi Sect. Since Zhang Yingying joined Taiyi Sect, she had remained there without venturing outside.

To capture Zhang Yingying, Zhao Jiudou had to first deal with Taiyi Sect. In fact, Zhao Jiudou's original goal was not solely Zhang Yingying. When he was still with the Zhao Family, he had a significant conflict with Taiyi Sect, and the grievances between the two factions ran deep. After Zhao Jiudou successfully reached Foundation Building stage and returned to Flying Swan Sect as a disciple, Taiyi Sect's reputation grew from an insignificant Refining Qi sect to a notable Foundation Building sect.

Though Zhao Jiudou outwardly displayed no reaction, he held a deep resentment toward Taiyi Sect's Sect Master, Meng Zhang, whom he had always looked down upon during his time at Zhao Family.

Now that it was confirmed that Taiyi Sect was sheltering remnants of Twin Success Valley, Zhao Jiudou naturally wanted to openly confront Taiyi Sect. He arrived in Singing Sand City and sent a message through someone, demanding that Taiyi Sect hand over Twin Success Valley remnants, particularly Zhang Yingying, and that Sect Master Meng Zhang should apologize in person.

Upon hearing this news, Meng Zhang's first reaction was, "This damned mad dog." Even if Zhang Yingying now held the position of Taiyi Sect's Pill Hall Master, her significance to Taiyi Sect was immense, and Meng Zhang would not hand her over even if she were just an ordinary disciple.

If Zhao Jiudou hadn't disguised himself as a Flying Swan Sect disciple, Meng Zhang would have immediately ordered the Deep Earth Spirit General to kill him. Unfortunately, Taiyi Sect could not openly oppose Flying Swan Sect, so directly confronting Zhao Jiudou as a Flying Swan Sect disciple was not the best strategy.

To deal with Zhao Jiudou, they needed to neutralize the advantage of his Flying Swan Sect identity. After contemplating for a while, Meng Zhang left Taiyi Sect and hurried to the Forest Mountain School.

As a frequent visitor, Meng Zhang was familiar with the way and directly met with Forest Mountain School's Elder, Xu Yishan. Meng Zhang presented generous gifts and had a long private discussion with Xu Yishan, promising various benefits before finally departing from the Forest Mountain School.

Not long after Meng Zhang left, Xu Yishan contacted Guang HongDaoist from the Forest Spring Watch. A few days later, Guang HongDaoist arrived in Singing Sand City while inspecting a tavern operated by the Forest Spring Watch. Suddenly, a group of cultivators, of unknown origin, surrounded Guang HongDaoist, each kneeling and pleading innocence.

They claimed no association with Twin Success Valley and were falsely accused of being remnants of the sect, persecuted by someone who falsely claimed to be from Flying Swan Sect.

The cultivators tearfully and earnestly accused Zhao Jiudou of his atrocities. Enraged, Guang HongDaoist scolded the group harshly and drove them away.

When the news of Guang HongDaoist's encounter with the group spread, Gu Tanghai, responsible for Singing Sand City's daily affairs, rushed over anxiously. Relieved to find Guang HongDaoist unharmed, Gu Tanghai inquired about the situation.

Then, Guang HongDaoist unexpectedly shifted the topic to the so-called Twin Success Valley remnants. He stated that the remnants had long been eradicated, and the only one still at large was Dan Yihu. In the future, anyone claiming to capture Twin Success Valley remnants would only be troublemakers disrupting the stability and unity of the Cultivation World. All sects need not pay any attention to such individuals.

The remarks made by Guang HongDaoist quickly spread, and with the deliberate dissemination by certain individuals, it became widely known. Originally prepared to cause trouble for Taiyi Sect, they had to temporarily back down. Forest Spring Watch's rule over the surrounding areas had been recognized by Flying Swan Sect. Instead of viewing Forest Spring Watch as a subordinate, Flying Swan Sect treated them as equals. Moreover, Forest Spring Watch's Guang ZhiDaoist Master was currently assisting Flying Swan Sect in exterminating sand monsters at the frontline, making Flying Swan Sect reliant on Forest Spring Watch's support. As Zhao Jiudou was a disciple of Flying Swan Sect, he couldn't afford to offend Forest Spring Watch.

Zhao Jiudou ceased pursuing Zhang Yingying and investigating the so-called Twin Success Valley remnants. He finally quieted down for a while. However, after less than three months, he openly declared in Singing Sand City that Fuzhao Valley originally belonged to Zhao Family's ancestral

grounds but was usurped by "thieves" from Taiyi Sect. He now identified himself not as a disciple of Flying Swan Sect but as a member of Zhao Family, intending to reclaim his family's ancestral grounds.

During these three months, Meng Zhang had been inside Fuzhao Valley. He consumed the healing pills obtained last time and used secret techniques acquired from the Trial Ground to gradually remove the poison within his body. After taking about one and a half bottles of the healing pills, Meng Zhang fully recovered the lost vitality and repaired the damage to his foundation. He stopped taking the remaining pills and started stabilizing his Cultivation Base.

When Meng Zhang heard Zhao Jiudou's proclamation, he simply ignored it. Once someone had gained an advantage, who would willingly relinquish it? The Fuzhao Valley taken by Taiyi Sect from Twin Success Valley had nothing to do with Zhao Family.

Zhao Jiudou caused a commotion for over half a month, but no one paid any attention to him. They thought he would naturally calm down once he had enough, but unexpectedly, he sought out Guang HongDaoist and somehow persuaded him. Guang HongDaoist sent word to Taiyi Sect that there was a dispute over the ownership of Fuzhao Valley and requested Taiyi Sect and Zhao Jiudou to negotiate and resolve the matter peacefully. If negotiations failed, they would settle it through a public contest, as was customary in the Cultivation World.

Upon receiving Guang HongDaoist's message, Meng Zhang inwardly cursed him as an old fox. Guang HongDaoist seemed to be benefiting from both sides. Previously, Meng Zhang had bought his cooperation through Xu Yishan to restrain Zhao Jiudou. Now, Meng Zhang didn't know what Zhao Jiudou had offered Guang HongDaoist, causing him to side with Zhao Jiudou or perhaps trying to maintain a balance. Having suppressed Zhao Jiudou last time, Guang HongDaoist was now giving Flying Swan Sect face, fulfilling Zhao Jiudou's wishes.

Since Guang HongDaoist had already spoken, Meng Zhang naturally had to give him some face. Fortunately, Guang HongDaoist didn't completely side with Zhao Jiudou but proposed a contest to determine the ownership of Fuzhao Valley through victory or defeat. Although this was unfair to Taiyi Sect, having to put their own possessions at stake, Meng Zhang felt confident in defeating Zhao Jiudou and didn't pay too much attention to this matter.

Meng Zhang informed Zhao Jiudou through messengers about the agreed time and location for the contest. Guang HongDaoist, being accepted by both sides, became the witness for this competition. After the news spread, several nearby sects sent their cultivators to observe the contest, and even loose cultivators who loved watching the excitement eagerly waited for the event.

## Chapter 229: Old Opponent Fencing

One month later, outside the southern gate of Singing Sand City.

Stretching endlessly before the southern gate was a vast desert, spacious and perfect for a martial contest. On the side near the gate, a tall and majestic platform had long been erected.

Five Foundation Building stage cultivators — Guang HongDaoist, Gu Tanghai, Ruan Dadao, Jin Qigu, and Lin Shenpo — were seated high on the platform, serving as witnesses for this contest.

On the opposite side of the platform, in mid-air, Meng Zhang and Zhao Jiudou flew, their gazes locked in a standoff.

Guang HongDaoist spoke a lot of nonsense, emphasizing that this contest was meant for friendly sparring, and both sides should refrain from going too far and causing harm to each other's relationship.

After he finished blabbering, Guang HongDaoist loudly announced, "Let the contest begin."

On the ground, many cultivators had gathered, eagerly anticipating the battle between the two Foundation Building stage cultivators.

Having grown impatient with Guang HongDaoist's lengthy speech, some bold loose cultivators were ready to stir up some trouble.

As soon as the contest started, Zhao Jiudou struck a stylish pose and released an extraordinary flying sword made from the bones of a beast.

This bone-bladed sword was refined by the Earthfire Sect's tool refiner, using the spine of a Second Rank demonic beast known as the Iron-Eating Beast.

The Iron-Eating Beast had a habit of devouring various metal ores and metallic substances.

The metals it ingested were gradually accumulated and concentrated in its bones after being digested by its body. Through the tempering of demonic energy, these bones became as hard as diamond and unbreakable.

The spine of the Iron-Eating Beast was almost completely covered by various metals. After years of tempering by demonic energy, it had become an exceptional weapon.

Taking advantage of the local resources, the Earthfire Sect's tool refiner invested a great deal of time and effort to craft this excellent flying sword from the spine of the beast.

Although it was a flying sword made from beast bones, its durability far surpassed those made from various metals.

Zhao Jiudou was undoubtedly aware that he obtained this flying sword by intercepting it from Meng Zhang.

The bone-bladed sword hovered in front of him, as if deliberately showing off and mocking Meng Zhang. Meng Zhang didn't mind. No matter how good a flying sword was, it needed to fall into the hands of the right person to unleash its full power.

Zhao Jiudou controlled the bone-bladed sword and launched an attack towards Meng Zhang.

Zhao Jiudou already possessed formidable talent in swordsmanship. In the past, as a member of the Zhao Family, limited by their conditions, he hadn't undergone systematic training in sword techniques. However, he had gained considerable fame by relying on a few improvised sword moves.

Later, through a fortuitous encounter, he joined the Flying Swan Sect and received systematic cultivation from a large sect. Not only did he successfully reach the Foundation Building stage, but he also made significant progress in all aspects of cultivation.

Now, he displayed a set of unknown sword techniques, which seemed quite impressive and powerful.

Sitting on the high platform, observing the battle, Lin Shenpo from Forest Mountain School was himself a master enamored with swordsmanship. Seeing Zhao Jiudou perform a decent set of sword techniques, his eyes brightened, and he attentively studied it.

Meng Zhang casually waved his hand, and a white, silky ribbon descended from the sky, intercepting the flying sword coming at him.

In the past few months, Meng Zhang had completely refined the Tangling Silk Soft Sword given to him by the Qiaoshou Sect. This flying sword could be both soft and strong, perfectly suited for displaying the "Willow Dance in the Breeze Sword Technique."

The silky ribbon swayed unpredictably between softness and hardness, twisting left and right. When it stretched straight, it resembled a sharp sword, exuding an aura capable of severing all things in the world. When it bent, it became like weightless willow catkins, easily dispelling the great force imposed upon it.

Meng Zhang and Zhao Jiudou each displayed their extraordinary skills, engaging in an intense duel.

Lin Shenpo, sitting on the high platform, watched Meng Zhang and Zhao Jiudou fiercely contesting, feeling a sense of admiration. Several years ago, both Zhao Jiudou and Meng Zhang were only Refining Qi stage cultivators. He had witnessed them spar with swords during their Foundation Building dharma meeting.

How much time had passed since then? They had not only successfully reached the Foundation Building stage but had also become skilled practitioners among Foundation Building cultivators. Lin Shenpo, who used to look down on them as juniors, now had to view them as equals.

As Meng Zhang and Zhao Jiudou battled, they were unaware of Lin Shenpo's emotional reflections as he watched from the sidelines.

Although both of them had considerable talent in swordsmanship, they were not pure Sword Cultivators and did not possess the ability to defeat myriad techniques with a single sword strike like Sword Cultivators.

The two Second Rank flying swords clashed in mid-air, while their bodies moved at high speeds.

Zhao Jiudou threw a massive fireball, which Meng Zhang evaded before retaliating with a sharp water arrow.

This exchange continued with both sides continuously unleashing various spells and attacks upon each other.

The cultivators watching from below cheered, feeling that their trip had not been in vain, as this epic battle was sure to be a topic of boasting for a long time to come.

Meng Zhang and Zhao Jiudou still had some energy left to spare during their battle, and they were well aware of the reactions from the spectators.

As a disciple of the Flying Swan Sect, Zhao Jiudou naturally carried the pride of being a disciple of a prominent sect. It infuriated him to be treated like a sideshow by the onlookers while he fought with all his might against his enemy.

With a deliberate decrease in flying altitude, Zhao Jiudou flew closer to the observing cultivators. After evading one of Meng Zhang's spells, he clapped his hands together, summoning a gigantic earth dragon that swept towards Meng Zhang.

Meng Zhang dodged the attack, but the powerful earth dragon maintained its force and continued to sweep toward the cultivators below.

Those cultivators who had come to watch the spectacle now found themselves in an unexpected and dangerous situation. A Foundation Building stage cultivator's full-powered attack was not something that ordinary Refining Qi stage cultivators could withstand.

The Refining Qi stage cultivators on the ground scrambled to hide and evade the attack.

Guang HongDaoist, seated on the high platform, frowned, looking displeased. Zhao Jiudou's actions lacked the demeanor expected of a disciple from a prestigious sect, and his casual harm to others damaged Guang HongDaoist's reputation as the host.

Before Guang HongDaoist could act, Lin Shenpo was already one step ahead.

A flying sword shot out like lightning, directly slicing the earth dragon into harmless sand and soil.

The sword, having completed its task, circled around under Lin Shenpo's control, as if warning the two combatants not to act recklessly.

Guang HongDaoist couldn't help but call out, "Gentlemen, please exercise restraint and avoid injuring the innocent."

Meng Zhang couldn't help but inwardly curse Zhao Jiudou for the trouble he caused, which had nothing to do with himself. However, it seemed that Zhao Jiudou could still cause trouble while engaged in battle with him. It appeared that the pressure he had put on Zhao Jiudou was still far from enough.

After hearing the warning, Zhao Jiudou became more composed and focused all his thoughts on the battle with Meng Zhang.

## Chapter 230: Defeated in Public

Once Meng Zhang went all out, Zhao Jiudou clearly felt the immense pressure. The "Tangling Silk Soft Sword Technique" was originally a top-secret sword technique of the Taiyi Sect. Even during the heyday of the Taiyi Sect, it was considered a superior sword technique.

Meng Zhang, with his exceptional talent, had immersed himself in swordsmanship for many years and had long perfected this sword technique to an extraordinary level. Especially after reaching the Foundation Building stage, he gradually discovered the true power of this sword technique.

Countless white shadows danced in the air as the white silk covered the sky, forcing Zhao Jiudou's "Bone Blade Sword" to retreat repeatedly. The "Tangling Silk Soft Sword" took advantage of the situation and pursued, unleashing a myriad of sword shadows that almost completely enveloped Zhao Jiudou's body.

Zhao Jiudou used his "Bone Blade Sword" to defend from left to right while swiftly moving his body, dodging and barely withstanding Meng Zhang's attacks. Zhao Jiudou was secretly astonished, as he didn't expect Meng Zhang to be so formidable. Back when Zhao Jiudou was at the Refining

Qi stage, he had clashed with Meng Zhang twice, but neither side emerged victorious. Due to various reasons, they had to settle with a draw.

Zhao Jiudou was full of confidence after joining the Flying Swan Sect, thinking that his strength had greatly improved and that he could openly defeat Meng Zhang, his old rival, to regain his lost pride. Unexpectedly, while he was making progress, his opponent was progressing even faster.

Of course, even though Zhao Jiudou was temporarily at a disadvantage, he still had hidden aces up his sleeve, believing that he could turn the tables.

In mid-air, Zhao Jiudou flew at high speed, evading the attacks of flying swords while searching for an opportunity to strike. When he and Meng Zhang passed by each other, a flying sword suddenly flew out from behind him and slashed toward Meng Zhang's back.

Meng Zhang's divine consciousness extended further than Zhao Jiudou's, capturing everything that happened behind him. Being a master of the "Dual Sword Style" himself, Meng Zhang didn't fear Zhao Jiudou's amateurish dual sword techniques. Not just any two flying swords could be considered the "Dual Sword Style"; they needed a special sword technique to coordinate seamlessly without interfering with each other.

Meng Zhang feigned a bit of panic, pointing with one hand, and the "Tangling Silk Soft Sword," which had been entangled with the "Bone Blade Sword," detached from the entanglement and flew towards the flying sword attacking his back.

Seeing this, Zhao Jiudou thought that Meng Zhang panicked when the flying sword approached, leading to an incorrect choice. Seizing the opportunity, Zhao Jiudou used his "Bone Blade Sword" to attack Meng Zhang.

Without the obstruction of the "Tangling Silk Soft Sword," the "Bone Blade Sword" flew almost unhindered toward Meng Zhang. Just as the "Bone Blade Sword" was about to strike him, Meng Zhang took out the "Golden Crow Lantern" that he had prepared long ago and activated the Solar True Qi within his body to the fullest extent.

A faint shadow of a three-legged golden crow appeared on the "Golden Crow Lantern," and a tremendously scorching flame surged directly toward the oncoming "Bone Blade Sword."

Meng Zhang didn't use the "Venomous Teeth of the Flying Sword" because he wanted to conserve enough power to activate this immensely powerful magic tool. Although he could only unleash a small portion of the "Golden Crow Lantern's" might, the reinforced Solar True Flame was incredibly potent.

The Solar True Flame engulfed the "Bone Blade Sword" upon contact, causing Zhao Jiudou to feel as though he had been struck by a heavy blow, unable to help but spew out a mouthful of blood. The true qi imprint he had left on the "Bone Blade Sword" was completely destroyed by the Solar True Flame.

On the other side, taking advantage of Zhao Jiudou's injury, the "Tangling Silk Soft Sword" twisted like a rope, completely entangling the flying sword Zhao Jiudou had released.

Seeing Zhao Jiudou injured and spitting blood, everyone knew that the outcome had been decided. Although Guang HongDaoist disapproved of Zhao Jiudou, he couldn't allow a disciple of the Flying



Swan Sect to be killed or severely injured right under his nose."Stop!" Guang HongDaoist interfered in the battle.

Although Meng Zhang couldn't kill Zhao Jiudou on the spot, he wanted to give him a profound lesson to prevent him from causing trouble in the future.

Meng Zhang continued to activate the "Golden Crow Lantern," causing the Solar True Flame on the "Bone Blade Sword" to burn even more fiercely. As Zhao Jiudou's aura was linked to the "Bone Blade Sword," he couldn't avoid being affected by the severe damage it received.

Zhao Jiudou was preparing to find a way to force Meng Zhang back and regain control of the "Bone Blade Sword." However, on the other side, Meng Zhang's "Tangling Silk Soft Sword" had already knocked down the other flying sword Zhao Jiudou released and was flying towards him.

Seeing that their words of dissuasion were ineffective, Guang HongDaoist and Lin Shenpo flew into the battlefield together.

Guang HongDaoist grabbed Zhao Jiudou and sternly shouted, "The outcome is clear. How long do you want to linger on?"

Lin Shenpo released a flying sword to block the "Tangling Silk Soft Sword."

Meng Zhang put away the "Tangling Silk Soft Sword" but continued to unleash the Solar True Flame, burning the "Bone Blade Sword." Sensing Guang HongDaoist's disapproving gaze, Meng Zhang withdrew the Solar True Flame. He kicked the "Bone Blade Sword" towards Zhao Jiudou, simultaneously sending a silent burst of Lunar True Water from his foot, attaching it to the "Bone Blade Sword."

As water and fire clashed, the "Bone Blade Sword" was seriously damaged. Repairing it completely would undoubtedly take time and effort.

Guang HongDaoist made a gesture, and a stream of qi supported the "Bone Blade Sword," placing it in Zhao Jiudou's hand.

In truth, Zhao Jiudou's injuries were not severe, but Guang HongDaoist was concerned for his safety and stopped him from continuing the fight.

With a bit of self-awareness, Zhao Jiudou knew that he had indeed lost today's battle. He received the "Bone Blade Sword," put away the other flying sword, and without saying a word, he flew away in front of everyone, feeling utterly humiliated.

Guang HongDaoist looked at Zhao Jiudou's departing figure and shouted loudly, "The outcome of today's battle is decided. From now on, both sides must not continue to engage in conflict. The ownership of Fuzhao Valley shall not be questioned by anyone again."

In the final moment, Guang HongDaoist managed to remain fair and didn't favor Zhao Jiudou.

Meng Zhang's victory over the Flying Swan Sect disciple Zhao Jiudou undoubtedly boosted his reputation. From now on, it seemed that no one would dare to underestimate him.

Jin Qigu flew to Meng Zhang's side and congratulated him.

Everyone gathered together and started chatting. They were all dissatisfied with Zhao Jiudou's behavior.

Meng Zhang, being young and having not been in the Foundation Building stage for long, displayed such outstanding combat strength, garnering admiration from everyone.

In his usual modest manner, Meng Zhang actively changed the topic to divert attention away from himself.

After a while of chatting, Meng Zhang took the initiative to bring up the "Lesser Foundation Building Pill." Almost everyone became interested in this topic and turned their gazes to Gu Tanghai.

It had been a while since they obtained the pill formula, and they were curious about their progress in researching and refining the pill. Had they successfully produced the pill yet?