

## Sect Master 251

### Chapter 251: Victory

After Guang HongDaoist finished clearing the main storage area and stowed away valuable items, he left the place and headed towards the Hidden Scripture Pavilion. Upon arriving there, the Hidden Scripture Pavilion had already collapsed completely, and amidst the ruins, one could occasionally see the remains of a few corpses.

Guang HongDaoist called for Meng Zhang and Aunt Jin, and together they cleaned up the debris. Once the place was cleared, they found only some collapsed bookshelves, fragmented remains of bodies, and charred books. Carefully searching, they discovered a pile of intact books and a few jade slips.

Overall, Guang HongDaoist didn't gain much from the Hidden Scripture Pavilion. It seemed that during the sand monster attack, a group of Liu Family cultivators had defended the pavilion, but in the end, both the pavilion and its scriptures were destroyed, burned to ashes.

The main storage area and Hidden Scripture Pavilion were probably the most crucial locations for the Liu Family. Searching these two places should yield the most significant rewards. As for the alchemy, refining tools, and talisman-making aspects of the Liu Family, they were not outstanding. Places like the alchemy room and the tool room were unlikely to contain exceptional items.

Of course, considering the Liu Family's heritage of hundreds of years and numerous cultivators, there would undoubtedly be some precious items in other parts of the sect. However, the Liu Family's mountain gate covered a vast area, and it would take a considerable amount of time to search it thoroughly.

At this moment, Deep EarthSpirit General also flew over. Upon seeing Guang HongDaoist, he came directly to report. He had already cleared out all the sand monsters near the Liu Family mountain gate. However, there were still a few small sand monsters and First Rank sand monsters wandering around a little further from the mountain gate.

After pondering for a moment, Guang HongDaoist ordered Meng Zhang and the others to support the battle against the Refining Qi stage and the sand monster army. He stayed behind to guard the Liu Family mountain gate, preventing any sand monsters from escaping to that area.

Meng Zhang and the others understood Guang HongDaoist's intentions very well. The old guy simply wanted to take all the credit and didn't want them to be in the way, so he sent them off.

Naturally, Meng Zhang and the others obeyed the order and directly flew away from the Liu Family mountain gate, heading towards the battlefield.

After flying away from the Liu Family mountain gate, Deep EarthSpirit General gave Meng Zhang a smug look. It seemed that Deep EarthSpirit General had gained quite a lot this time.

Meng Zhang and the others flew at a rapid speed, deeply concerned about the situation of their fellow sect members' battle.

When they arrived over the battlefield, the coalition of several sects was still engaged in a fierce battle against the sand monsters. There were significant casualties among the sects, and the sand monster army had suffered heavy losses, but they still maintained a numerical advantage.

Without delay, the three of them dove down from the sky and joined the attack against the sand monster army.

Though the sand monster army was numerous, they consisted mostly of First Rank sand monsters and small sand monsters. Faced with Foundation Building stage cultivators, even if the sand monsters formed a formation, they could hardly contend.

Golden needles flew chaotically, flying swords danced in the air, and huge hammers swept across the battlefield. The three Foundation Building stage cultivators went all out, quickly clearing a large number of sand monsters, creating a gap in the sand monster army formation.

With reinforcements joining the battle, the morale of the disciples from various sects soared, and they fought back vigorously.

The three Foundation Building stage cultivators acted like three sharp arrows, deeply penetrating the sand monster army. The disciples from various sects followed closely behind, disrupting the originally organized formation of the sand monster army.

The sand monster army's greatest advantage lies in two aspects. Firstly, they possess numerous numbers, spreading across the mountains and plains. Secondly, their unique formations allow them to gather the power of all sand monsters and fully unleash their formidable combat strength.

Currently, their formation has been disrupted, and the sand monster army has become scattered and chaotic. Without the command and leadership of the Second Rank sand monsters, these creatures don't even know how to retreat and can only fight to the death in their current positions.

The battle has been lasting for a long time, with everyone pushing through exhaustion and persisting in the fight to completely eliminate the sand monster army. After the battle ends and all sand monsters have been annihilated, many disciples at the Refining Qi stage, completely disregarding their appearance, sit down on the ground, unwilling to move their bodies at all.

Meng Zhang and his companions have also suffered some excessive consumption and have to sit down on the ground to meditate and restore their true qi.

Xu Yishan has made numerous moves, which have led to uncontrollable injuries. Today, he has vomited countless mouthfuls of blood, his face frighteningly pale. Fortunately, he is a cultivator at the Foundation Building stage, so as long as he hasn't been killed on the spot, taking a few pills can stabilize his condition.

When night falls, the Foundation Building cultivators who went to chase down the Second Rank sand monsters finally return under the guidance of Guang Hui Daoist. None of these Foundation Building cultivators suffered any losses.

Meng Zhang and his friends inquired and found out that most of the Second Rank sand monsters had been killed during the pursuit, but two of them managed to escape. One of these Second Rank sand monsters was proficient in earth-escaping techniques and used the cover of the ground to flee. The other was skilled in wind-escaping techniques, making it incredibly fast and quickly disappeared after leaving the battlefield.

Despite these two escapees, which hindered the full success of this great battle, the outcome was still remarkable and could be considered a rare major victory.

Over at the Flying Swan Sect, although they had a Gold Core Daoist Master leading the battle, the sand monster side also had Third Rank sand monsters. These Third Rank sand monsters were fundamentally different from ordinary sand monsters, possessing more intelligence and beast-like instincts. Even with a numerical advantage on the human side with Gold Core Daoist Masters, it was challenging to completely exterminate them. Additionally, the leadership of the Third Rank sand monsters made the sand monster army even more difficult to deal with.

In this sand monster uprising, the Flying Swan Sect fought with the sand monster army for a long time, and a victory like today was truly a rare event.

After the major battle, each sect started their recovery and reorganization. The cultivator team from Forest Spring Watch directly settled at the mountain gate of Liu Family, while the teams from other sects camped nearby.

Lin Bailin had already thoroughly cleaned the area around Liu Family's mountain gate to ensure no sand monsters remained.

Although they achieved a great victory, the Refining Qi stage disciples from various sects suffered significant casualties. Only at Taiyi Sect, over ten disciples were killed, and the remaining ones were almost all injured. Meng Zhang knew that as long as Taiyi Sect wanted to establish a foothold in the Cultivation World, they couldn't avoid getting involved in various conflicts. In the future, more casualties and similar scenes would undoubtedly occur.

In fact, the casualties at Taiyi Sect were relatively light. Before the battle even began, Wen Qiansun commanded his disciples to set up the Qiankun Rotating Formation. Besides the dozens of formation flags, they also utilized the combined magic tool, the Nine Palace Windfire Banner, to bolster their strength. Unfortunately, there weren't enough cannon fodder to consume the enemy's attacks. The disciples of Taiyi Sect had to split into two teams, rotating to share the pressure and protect each other within the formation. Some weaker disciples couldn't withstand the immense pressure and were gradually worn down and killed within the formation.

The formation protected most of the disciples, and without this Base Formation technique, the casualties would have been even more substantial.

## Chapter 252: Subdue Rock

The flying boat landed on the ground, and the disciples of the Taiyi Sect set up camp near the Liu Family's mountain gate, with the flying boat as the center.

All the heavily injured disciples were properly taken care of, while those with minor injuries started to busy themselves after some casual treatment.

Meng Zhang and Deep EarthSpirit General entered one of the cabins of a flying boat. Deep EarthSpirit General took out Meng Zhang's storage ring, and he also had several storage bags obtained from the Liu Family.

The storage ring Meng Zhang confiscated from a disciple of the Yellow Lotus Sect was quite large, with a capacity more than ten times that of a regular storage bag.

Now, it was filled to the brim.

The appearance of the several storage bags held by Deep EarthSpirit General clearly differed from those of this side of the Endless Sea of Sand. However, they were small palm-sized pouches with a capacity far beyond that of ordinary storage bags.

These special storage bags were also filled with various gains.

As they carefully counted the loot, Deep EarthSpirit General narrated the process to Meng Zhang.

After parting ways with Meng Zhang, Deep EarthSpirit General went straight to the Liu Family's main treasury. Being aware of the limited time, he didn't stay there for long. He only selected precious spiritual materials and easily transportable items to take with him.

The focus of Deep EarthSpirit General's search was the Liu Family's Hidden Scripture Pavilion.

While Guang HongDaoist was busy clearing out the Liu Family's main treasury, Deep EarthSpirit General almost emptied the Hidden Scripture Pavilion, leaving behind only things of little value. In the end, he even had time to stage a scene, making it appear as though the Hidden Scripture Pavilion had been destroyed in battle.

By the time Guang HongDaoist finished cleaning the main treasury and rushed to clean the Hidden Scripture Pavilion, Deep EarthSpirit General had already left and continued his plunder within the Liu Family's mountain gate.

Meng Zhang couldn't help but speculate whether Deep EarthSpirit General had been a great thief in his younger days. His ability to plunder wealth was incredibly strong, almost sweeping away all the genuinely valuable items within the Liu Family's mountain gate.

Among the items taken by Deep EarthSpirit General this time were not only various spiritual materials and spirit stones but also numerous volumes of scriptures. These accumulated over hundreds of years in the Liu Family and contained not only the profoundness of their cultivation techniques but also precious knowledge.

Among the many spiritual materials, the most precious was a mysterious-grade spiritual material, the Mountain-Suppressing Stone. Once Deep EarthSpirit General completely refined and absorbed this earth-element spiritual material, his cultivation base could at least recover to the late stage of Foundation Building.

Of course, the Mountain-Suppressing Stone was extremely tough, making the refinement process difficult. Even for Deep EarthSpirit General, it would require a considerable amount of time and effort to slowly refine and absorb it.

In addition, Deep EarthSpirit General also collected two extremely cold Spirit Fires from the Liu Family's crafting rooms and alchemy rooms.

Although the extreme cold Spirit Fire was only a Yellow-level Spirit Fire, it had special effects when used to refine some cold attribute pills and magic tools. Even Foundation Building stage cultivators from the Liu Family used the power of the extreme cold Spirit Fire when refining cold poison and Yin Thunder.

It took Meng Zhang and Deep EarthSpirit General a whole night to initially sort out their gains. They stored everything in other storage bags and hid them all inside the flying boat.

After a night of rest, cultivators from various sects had mostly recovered their energy.

Guang HuiDaoist probably reached an agreement with Zhao Jiudou.

For the time being, the management of the Liu Family's mountain gate and territory was entrusted to the Forest Spring Watch.

To win Zhao Jiudou's favor, a significant portion of the wealth left in the Liu Family's mountain gate was distributed to him.

Even though Guang HongDaoist had already gone through a thorough search and collected many precious spiritual materials beforehand, Zhao Jiudou's income was still very generous. That's why he easily agreed to the terms this time.

Early the next day, Guang HuiDaoist began assigning tasks to the Foundation Building stage cultivators, continuing their search for the remaining portion of Liu Family's territory in an attempt to locate the sand monster's nest.

The efficiency of the Foundation Building stage cultivators in their search far surpassed that of the Refining Qi stage cultivators. With the concerted efforts of several Foundation Building stage cultivators, they completed the search of the remaining Liu Family territory in less than half a day. However, the sand monster's nest remained elusive, and they found nothing.

Prior to this, Guang HuiDaoist led a team to thoroughly search Green Bamboo Mountain's territory, but they also failed to discover the sand monster's nest. With both Liu Family and Green Bamboo Mountain territories yielding no results, the situation became more challenging.

Although the sand monster's nest was hidden deep underground, its depth was no more than 200 to 300 zhang (a unit of measurement). Furthermore, not all sand monsters were proficient in the Earth Escape Spell, so they needed to leave accessible entry and exit passages. Despite the thorough search by numerous cultivators, nothing was overlooked. The absence of the sand monster's nest in these two locations indicated that it was not located there.

Guang HuiDaoist called all the Foundation Building stage cultivators to gather within Liu Family's mountain gate for a discussion. After everyone assembled, without much ado, Guang HuiDaoist made a series of gestures in the air, conjuring a large map out of thin air.

The map displayed a clear representation of the surrounding area, including various terrains and the distribution of power. As Foundation Building stage cultivators, they were knowledgeable individuals. Although it was just an ordinary light and shadow illusion, when executed by Guang HuiDaoist, it carried no traces of artificiality, appearing entirely natural.

On the map, both Liu Family's territory and Green Bamboo Mountain's territory were confirmed to be devoid of the sand monster's nest and were marked out by Guang HuiDaoist. Adjacent to Liu Family's northern side was the territory of Forest Spring Watch. After a moment of hesitation, Guang HuiDaoist also marked it as unproductive.

To the south of Liu Family's territory lay Green Bamboo Mountain, which required no mentioning. To the west was the territory once belonging to Twin Success Valley, now occupied by Forest Spring Watch. In the east lay the territory of Flying Swan Sect, and to the northeast was the territory of Earthfire Sect.

Since the sand monster army had first appeared over Liu Family's territory, it was likely that their nest was nearby, even if not directly within Liu Family's territory.

After discussing with everyone, Guang HuiDaoist decided to send messages to the nearby Earthfire Sect and Flying Swan Sect, asking them to conduct their own searches near Liu Family's territory.

The area of particular focus for their search was the original territory of Twin Success Valley. Although Forest Spring Watch had taken over the territory long ago and had been actively managing it, the area was vast, and they lacked sufficient manpower to fully occupy all of it. The extensive desert region was beyond their reach.

If a sand monster nest was hidden underground in the parts of the territory still beyond Forest Spring Watch's control, it would be challenging to discover.

With the next step decided, there was no time to waste. Leaving only a few disciples from Forest Spring Watch to guard Liu Family's mountain gate, the teams from each sect immediately set out towards the original territory of Twin Success Valley.

Using flying boats, they quickly passed over Liu Family's territory and entered the original territory of Twin Success Valley. This time, as there was no need to divide their forces, the teams were stronger, and there was an ample number of Foundation Building stage cultivators.

Guang HuiDaoist decided to keep several disciples from Refining Qi stage at one location to be on standby while dividing all the Foundation Building stage cultivators into different groups to search the vast area separately.

### **Chapter 253: Design**

In Foundation Building cultivation, it's common for two cultivators to form a team for mutual support. Meng Zhang and Deep EarthSpirit General teamed up and flew towards the area responsible for the search.

The Twin Success Valley's territory was one of the largest among the neighboring forces, even surpassing the combined size of the Liu Family territory and Green Bamboo Mountain territory. Moreover, it boasted numerous oases and abundant resources.

Though it wasn't their first time patrolling the Twin Success Valley's territory, Meng Zhang still couldn't help but envy the fertile land below. How did Forest Spring Watch manage to take control of such a rich area? Apart from Guang ZhiDaoist Master, a Gold Core Daoist Master, Forest Spring Watch's overall strength was indeed hard to match.

Given the vast expanse of this area and the sand monster nests buried deep underground, even Foundation Building cultivators found searching extremely arduous and time-consuming. A whole day passed, and neither Meng Zhang nor Deep EarthSpirit General made any gains. The other Foundation Building cultivators searching in different areas didn't send any messages either. It seemed that no one had discovered a clue about the sand monster nest today.

Since the appearance of the Third-Rank sand monster during the sand monster turmoil, not only had all the sand monsters become more intelligent, but their nests seemed even better hidden.

As night fell, Meng Zhang and Deep EarthSpirit General, tired from the day's efforts, didn't return to the camp where several sects had gathered. Instead, they found a sand dune, landed on it, and meditated to recover their strength.

The sand monster nest was the lifeblood of the sand monsters, and there were undoubtedly guards nearby. Even Foundation Building cultivators couldn't afford to be careless and had to remain in good condition at all times to deal with unexpected situations.

As Meng Zhang sat on the ground, he thought that had he known the sand monster nest was so well hidden this time, he should have brought the Insect Controlling Jar from the sect. However, due to the sudden transfer of most of the cultivators from the sect and to avoid affecting the production of various minerals, they had left the Insect Controlling Jar behind, placing it under the care of a disciple from the Beast Controlling Hall. This disciple used sand insects to continue mining minerals.

Moreover, since so many Foundation Building cultivators were deployed this time, the difference in efficiency between searching underground with or without the Insect Controlling Jar wasn't significant. Thus, Guang Hong Daoist hadn't insisted on Meng Zhang bringing the magic tool.

If Meng Zhang had the magic tool with him now, it would have saved a lot of effort. Controlling the sand insects to burrow underground for searching would have increased the efficiency.

As midnight approached, Meng Zhang and Deep Earth Spirit General, having mostly recovered, didn't rush to resume their search but engaged in casual conversation instead.

With Deep Earth Spirit General's cultivation base gradually recovering, his memories seemed to be returning as well. Meng Zhang always wanted to learn more about the history of Taiyi Sect from him.

Regarding matters related to cultivation techniques and various cultivation arts, Deep Earth Spirit General was forthcoming and didn't hold back any information. However, whenever Meng Zhang inquired about the history of Taiyi Sect, he became evasive, vague, and reluctant to reveal much.

Knowing that direct inquiries wouldn't work, Meng Zhang seized every chance during their casual chats to try and indirectly approach the topic from different angles when Deep Earth Spirit General was off guard.

But Deep Earth Spirit General was highly vigilant, and whenever Meng Zhang touched on sensitive questions, he either changed the subject or pretended to be forgetful, claiming that his memories in that particular area hadn't fully returned.

Meng Zhang wasn't sure whether Deep Earth Spirit General was genuinely forgetful or just pretending, which left him somewhat dissatisfied.

While the two were conversing, Meng Zhang inadvertently looked up and saw a figure flashing across the sky. Even in the pitch-black night, when he activated the Deception Breaking Eye, he recognized that the person flying urgently was Zhao Jiudou.

Meng Zhang's heart stirred, and he quietly called out to Deep Earth Spirit General, and the two of them secretly followed behind.

They flew low to the ground, simultaneously employing concealed spells. From such a distance, unless Zhao Jiudou deliberately observed their direction, it would be difficult for him to discover Meng Zhang and the other person tracking him.

Speaking of Zhao Jiudou, who was flying in the air, Guang Hui Daoist had originally arranged for him to act together with Lin Bailin. However, Zhao Jiudou, relying on his earlier Foundation

Building and his status as a Flying Swan Sect disciple, acted as if he were senior to Lin Bailin and commanded him at will.

Lin Bailin had never looked highly upon Zhao Jiudou, and being provoked by him, he retorted with ridicule, bringing up embarrassing incidents involving Zhao Jiudou, especially the time when Meng Zhang had defeated him in public.

Zhao Jiudou, whose old grudges were triggered, almost couldn't resist taking action against Lin Bailin. However, considering that this operation was organized by the Forest Spring Watch, he managed to restrain himself.

Nonetheless, Zhao Jiudou didn't want to see Lin Bailin anymore, so he left him behind and flew away alone.

Fortune seemed to favor Zhao Jiudou, as not long after parting ways with Lin Bailin, he unintentionally discovered a Second Rank sand monster flying from afar.

This sand monster had no fixed form, and its entire body was composed of sand and dust, continuously twisting and changing into different shapes.

Zhao Jiudou recognized it at a glance; this was the same Second Rank sand monster that had escaped from everyone's grasp during the previous big battle, and it was proficient in Wind Escape techniques. The appearance of the sand monster here without any apparent reason triggered Zhao Jiudou's sensitive instincts, as he was currently searching for the sand monster's nest.

Just after being provoked by Lin Bailin, he was eager to achieve something on his own and didn't inform the others. Instead, he secretly followed the Second Rank sand monster, flying toward it.

With Zhao Jiudou tracking the sand monster, Meng Zhang and the other person followed him closely.

The Second Rank sand monster didn't fly too far before rapidly descending and crashing onto the desert's surface, then swiftly disappearing.

Zhao Jiudou flew to that spot and hesitated. If the Second Rank sand monster had disappeared there, then its nest should be nearby.

As a Flying Swan Sect disciple, he knew some information that ordinary cultivators didn't. There were great benefits within a sand monster's nest.

He wanted to monopolize these benefits, but he wasn't confident that he could break into the sand monster's nest alone.

Inside the sand monster's nest, there were likely more than one Second Rank sand monster guarding it. If he got trapped in a siege, Zhao Jiudou might not be able to preserve his life.

After careful consideration, Zhao Jiudou sent out a communication flying talisman. The talisman turned into a stream of light and disappeared into the sky.

Not long after, Lin Bailin hurriedly flew over from a distance.

Before landing, he anxiously asked, "You said you found clues about the sand monster's nest?"



Zhao Jiudou appeared somewhat unwilling to talk to Lin Bailin and casually said, "Just now, I seemed to have seen a sand monster lurking nearby. The sand monster's nest should be around here."

Zhao Jiudou intentionally made himself look guilty, his words evasive.

Lin Bailin glanced suspiciously at Zhao Jiudou. Could this guy be holding a grudge against him and thus made up an excuse to mock him, wanting him to waste his efforts for nothing?

Seeing that Lin Bailin didn't seem to believe him, Zhao Jiudou seemed to be provoked.

With an air of indignation, he said, "I've told you the information; believe it or not is up to you."

Without waiting for a response, Zhao Jiudou flew into the sky and swiftly departed.

## Chapter 254: Lair

Watching Zhao Jiudou fly away, Lin Bailin felt a bit hesitant. From Zhao Jiudou's appearance, the credibility of this information seemed low. Most likely, he held a grudge against Lin Bailin and used false news to mock and embarrass him, trying to make him look bad.

Lin Bailin wanted to ignore it, but the matter of the sand monster's lair was of great importance. Even if the information was unreliable, it couldn't be easily dismissed. The Cultivation World's general attitude towards such matters was to consider them true unless proven false, rather than the other way around.

If he were to inform others about it now, they would probably be wasting their time coming here. Falsely reporting military information might be a small matter, but it could cause unnecessary delays for everyone. Moreover, if he disturbed others' search for the sand monster's lair, it would be detrimental to the overall situation.

After giving it some thought, Lin Bailin decided to investigate the matter himself first. If he truly found the sand monster's lair, then he would inform others.

Taking action on his decision, Lin Bailin immediately used the Earth Escape Spell to burrow into the ground from his current location. Just as his body had vanished into the earth, Zhao Jiudou's body descended from the sky.

Zhao Jiudou hadn't actually flown far away; he merely pretended to leave but had been secretly observing the situation from the shadows. As soon as he saw Lin Bailin burrowing underground, he quickly returned to his original position.

A sinister expression appeared on Zhao Jiudou's face, and he stomped heavily on the ground, causing a powerful shockwave to travel directly towards the depths.

Meanwhile, Lin Bailin diligently searched the surroundings as he delved deeper into the underground. Before long, a violent tremor reached him from above.

Lin Bailin was puzzled. Who could be using the earthshaking technique on the surface, and why now?

After the tremors subsided, there were no new disturbances on the surface. Lin Bailin hesitated for a moment but decided to continue his thorough search of the area before returning to the surface.

As he ventured deeper, he soon discovered a clue to the sand monster's lair—a wide underground passage that revealed itself to his senses. Given its depth and construction, it was undoubtedly built by the sand monsters to access their lair.

Lin Bailin wasted no time and immediately activated the specially prepared messaging talisman. The talisman turned into a stream of light, piercing through the layers of soil and stones, flying toward the surface.

Knowing how formidable the sand monsters were, Lin Bailin was cautious and didn't want to venture further alone. He was even reluctant to linger in the area.

Lin Bailin was preparing to return to the surface and gather reinforcements before re-entering the lair. Suddenly, he sensed a strange and sudden attack in his divine consciousness.

His Earth Escape Spell was interrupted, and the thick rocks surrounding him fiercely pressed against his body. Struggling with all his might, he managed to break free and rushed into the nearby passage, finding temporary shelter.

But he was not safe yet. A Second Rank sand monster, proficient in earth-based spells, had ambushed him. It chased after him and joined in the siege.

Lin Bailin now understood the purpose behind Zhao Jiudou's earlier earthshaking technique. It was to alert the sand monsters hidden underground, allowing them to discover Lin Bailin and ambush him in time.

No need to mention the expletives he had for Zhao Jiudou. The man was truly despicable, attacking his own comrade over a mere verbal dispute.

Lin Bailin had no time to dwell on his anger towards Zhao Jiudou, as he was now surrounded by enemies, and the situation had become dire.

Caught in a perilous situation, Lin Bailin faced a double ambush by two Second Rank sand monsters. His first priority was to survive or escape from this danger before seeking revenge against Zhao Jiudou. On the ground, Zhao Jiudou remained vigilant, carefully monitoring the surroundings.

Seeing a communication flying talisman about to take flight from underground to the skies, Zhao Jiudou swiftly drew his sword. A flash of sword light shattered the talisman into pieces. Employing the Earth Escape Spell, Zhao Jiudou disappeared from the surface and concealed himself underground.

After Zhao Jiudou vanished, Meng Zhang and Deep Earth Spirit General arrived at the scene. They had been observing the entire incident from the shadows. They witnessed Zhao Jiudou's actions, which were all noted by them. To continue scheming against Zhao Jiudou from the shadows, Meng Zhang chose not to warn his old friend, Lin Bailin. Despite this, he silently wished for Lin Bailin's safety and hoped he could survive this ordeal.

As a young Foundation Building disciple of Forest Spring Watch, Lin Bailin had a promising future and garnered respect from the senior members of his sect. Surely, he possessed some life-saving means, even if he might not be a match for the sand monsters. Meng Zhang believed Lin Bailin should be able to avoid fatal danger.

Having seen through the true nature of Forest Spring Watch, Meng Zhang felt at ease. Staying hidden and following Zhao Jiudou promised greater benefits and aligned with their own interests.

Both Meng Zhang and Deep Earth Spirit General also used the Earth Escape Spell to go underground. With Deep Earth Spirit General's exceptional talent in using the spell, they were not worried about losing track of Zhao Jiudou, even if they were some distance apart.

Though the sand monster dens varied significantly, there were commonalities among them. Zhao Jiudou, being a disciple of the Flying Swan Sect, possessed knowledge that many other cultivators did not. He had a deep understanding of the sand monster dens.

Skillfully avoiding the areas where the sand monsters gathered and eluding their guards' attention, Zhao Jiudou made his way directly to the core of the sand monster den. Meanwhile, Lin Bailin found himself struggling to deal with the two Second Ranksand monsters. Entering the den further alerted the guarding sand monsters, and a large number of them rushed into the passage, attempting to overwhelm him completely.

Exhausted, Lin Bailin used all his trump cards and desperately tried to break free from the encirclement. He knew that staying here would mean certain death at the hands of the sand monsters. With a series of dark thunder explosions, he managed to create an opening amidst the sand monsters ahead.

Making a final desperate charge, Lin Bailin found the two Second Ranksand monsters persistently chasing after him, like festering sores he couldn't shake off. Additionally, another Second Ranksand monster with a large group of First Ranksand monsters was crazily heading their way.

To escape this dire situation, Lin Bailin took out a Thunderbolt Seed bestowed upon him by Guang Zhi Daoist Master, preparing to make his last stand. If he couldn't break through their ranks, he would be completely helpless.

## Chapter 255: Spirit Source Bead

Lin Bailin was trapped by sand monsters, facing a life-threatening crisis, while Zhao Jiudou had gradually approached the core of the sand monster's nest. At this point, Zhao Jiudou could no longer completely conceal his presence, and some sand monsters started to notice him.

Zhao Jiudou entered a vast underground space filled with numerous independent stone chambers interconnected by passages. This entire underground area was excavated by sand monsters and served as the core location of their nest.

Upon entering, Zhao Jiudou was immediately besieged by a group of First Rank sand monsters. As a Foundation Building stage cultivator, he had no reason to retreat. His flying sword danced up and down, reducing the charging sand monsters to dust.

Choosing a direction, Zhao Jiudou launched a swift assault. He charged forward without hesitation, without any pause. His reckless charge resembled that of a raging bull, swiftly crossing several passages and passing through multiple stone chambers until he reached a massive hall.

Before he could take a closer look, two Second Rank sand monsters, accompanied by a group of First Rank smaller sand monsters, rushed towards him. Having rushed all the way, Zhao Jiudou had to temporarily halt his steps to deal with the immediate threats.

Second Rank sand monsters were capable of posing a lethal threat to Foundation Building stage cultivators, so Zhao Jiudou couldn't afford to be careless. He displayed all his abilities and engaged in a fierce battle with the sand monsters.

As an intruder, Zhao Jiudou had drawn the attention of various sand monsters guarding the nest. They rushed forward one after another, seemingly intent on overwhelming him completely.

As Zhao Jiudou was held back near the entrance of the hall, Meng Zhang and Deep Earth Spirit General faced relatively little resistance and smoothly followed behind Zhao Jiudou, advancing into the core of the sand monster nest.

Even when they occasionally encountered a few stray First Rank sand monsters along the way, the two of them silently eliminated them.

When they were about to approach the large hall, they stopped and carefully observed the situation.

At the entrance of the hall, Zhao Jiudou was entangled in a fierce battle with sand monsters.

Meng Zhang activated his Deception Breaking Eye and continued to look inside.

Inside the hall, there was a giant object resembling a silkworm pupa. It was over a hundred zhang (a traditional Chinese unit of length, approximately 3.33 meters) in length and more than fifty zhang high, akin to a small mountain. This pupa was covered in various large and small openings.

Some of these openings sucked in large amounts of soil and dust, while others spewed out sand monsters. Most of the sand monsters were small, but occasionally, a few First Rank sand monsters emerged as well.

Once these sand monsters were born from the pupa, they staggered and stumbled, unsteadily making their way through the passages surrounding the hall, entering various adjacent stone chambers.

Upon seeing this, Meng Zhang finally understood. This pupa was the structure that gave birth to the sand monsters. He couldn't tell whether it was artificially refined or naturally formed. If it were naturally formed, Meng Zhang marveled at the incredible work of nature. If it was artificially refined, then he couldn't fathom who possessed such immense power to manipulate the heavens and earth in this way. Moreover, he couldn't comprehend the reason behind creating such a malevolent entity to harm human cultivators.

For the time being, Meng Zhang set aside these questions and continued to use his Deception Breaking Eye to observe the enormous pupa more closely. Finally, he saw the secret of the sand monster nest and understood why Zhao Jiudou was willing to frame Lin Bailin and sneak in secretly.

At the center of that enormous cocoon, there were special beads emitting spiritual energy, distributed in various locations.

Meng Zhang recognized the origin of these beads; they were extremely rare Spirit Source Beads.

The spiritual energy contained within these Spirit Source Beads was exceptionally pure and could be directly absorbed and utilized by Cultivators without the need for refinement. One Spirit Source Bead would be enough for a Foundation Building stage Cultivator like Meng Zhang to use for a decade or even longer without being exhausted.

Of course, no Foundation Building stage Cultivator would be extravagant enough to directly absorb the spiritual energy from the Spirit Source Bead. As the name suggests, the Spirit Source Beads serve as a source of spiritual power.

By using a special method to activate the Spirit Source Beads, one could form new spirit veins or enhance the grade of existing ones. This was the correct way to use Spirit Source Beads in the Cultivation World.

In the desolate Endless Sea of Sand, the Spirit Source Beads held special significance. With these beads, new spirit veins could be formed, leading to the creation of new oases, which provided the foundation for sects and clans to thrive.

Because of this, the Spirit Source Beads were considered invaluable. Whenever they appeared on the market, they were almost always sold at exorbitant prices.

Of course, for sects and clans, they would not easily sell such precious treasures unless absolutely necessary.

Meng Zhang recalled the time when he was still a Refining Qi stage cultivator and was once recruited by Twin Success Valley to participate in a mission to siege a sand monster's nest.

At that time, cultivators from Twin Success Valley, Forest Spring Watch, Liu Family, and Green Bamboo Mountain were entangled in a fierce dispute over a sand monster's nest, and they even turned against each other.

The reason for their strife was none other than the Spirit Source Beads found within the sand monster's nest.

In the past, Taiyi Sect was too weak and had no qualifications to participate in the competition for Spirit Source Beads.

Now that Meng Zhang and Deep Earth Spirit General had arrived, they wouldn't leave empty-handed.

However, they needed to carefully consider how to proceed with their actions.

This operation was organized by Forest Spring Watch. If Forest Spring Watch discovered the sand monster's nest, Taiyi Sect would probably not get a share of the Spirit Source Beads.

Zhao Jiudou, relying on his identity as a Flying Swan Sect disciple, wouldn't worry about Forest Spring Watch daring to snatch the beads if he managed to seize them first.

As Meng Zhang and Deep Earth Spirit General were observing, Zhao Jiudou found himself in a crisis.

Originally, dealing with two Second Rank sand monsters and a large group of First Rank sand monsters had already overwhelmed Zhao Jiudou, exhausting him.

Unexpectedly, after a while, two more Second Rank sand monsters emerged from that enormous cocoon.

These two freshly born Second Rank sand monsters had unstable auras. After hesitating for a while, they slowly approached Zhao Jiudou.

Zhao Jiudou knew that it was because he had intruded into the core area of the nest, and the nest sensed the danger, so it forcibly gave birth to these two Second Rank sand monsters to stop him.

Already at a disadvantage in the battle and now faced with two additional Second Rank sand monsters, even if they were newly born and their strength wasn't fully stable, Zhao Jiudou wouldn't be able to withstand them.

Regret filled Zhao Jiudou's heart. He had schemed against Lin Bailin to enter the nest alone for the sake of the Spirit Source Beads. However, he never expected the defensive power of the sand monster's nest to be so formidable. Even if he had diverted a significant portion of its forces, it still wasn't something he could handle. In self-mockery, Zhao Jiudou realized he had acted like a villain this time, all for naught.

## Chapter 256: Capturing

Just as Zhao Jiudou was beginning to have second thoughts and preparing to retreat, the Deep EarthSpirit General had already taken action. Utilizing marvelous earth escape techniques, the Deep EarthSpirit General stealthily moved through the ground, avoiding the sand monsters' attention, and arrived beneath the enormous cocoon.

At this moment, not only did Zhao Jiudou have several new wounds on his body, but he also felt his true qi greatly depleted, leaving him exhausted and weak all over. He knew that if he didn't leave now, he wouldn't have another chance. Gathering his remaining courage, Zhao Jiudou repelled the sand monsters that were entangling him and rushed towards the exit of the hall.

The group of sand monsters was not willing to let him go easily and immediately chased after him relentlessly.

Seemingly sensing the Deep EarthSpirit General's approach, the enormous cocoon began to tremble violently. The numerous sand monsters pursuing Zhao Jiudou also shuddered and then abandoned the chase. As if they had gone mad, they desperately rushed toward the massive pupa.

As Zhao Jiudou was retreating, relieved from the pressure due to the sand monsters' departure, he suddenly paused, realizing that someone else was invading the giant cocoon.

Upon this realization, Zhao Jiudou felt anger rising within him. It turned out to be a case of a mantis stalking the cicada while unaware of the oriole behind. He had put in so much effort, risking his life, only to serve as a pawn for someone else, unknowingly benefiting some unknown party.

Just as Zhao Jiudou was contemplating what to do, a silent attack descended from behind. Meng Zhang unleashed the venomous teeth of his flying sword and employed the Lifeless Killing Sword technique to launch a surprise attack.

After the intense battle, Zhao Jiudou was already in a precarious state. Caught off guard by the ambush of the deadly Lifeless Killing Sword, he was undoubtedly hit.

With Zhao Jiudou weakened from the blow, Meng Zhang immediately followed up with lethal moves, relentlessly targeting vital points. In a moment, Zhao Jiudou succumbed, carrying a deep sense of resentment in his heart.

While Meng Zhang might be capable of defeating Zhao Jiudou in a direct confrontation, it would not have been so easy to kill him.

After taking down Zhao Jiudou, Meng Zhang didn't bother to touch any of his belongings; instead, he released the Solar True Flame, burning the corpse and all the items on it to ashes, completely erasing any traces.

Disciples at the Foundation Building stage, like Zhao Jiudou, were not considered insignificant figures in sects with Gold Core cultivators like the Flying Swan Sect.

Meng Zhang knew that some Gold Core Daoist Masters possessed secret techniques to trace their disciples and even their belongings through the residual aura left behind. However, he was not currently strong enough to crack such techniques.

To be safe, caution was paramount. Flying Swan Sect, as a powerful entity, was not one that Taiyi Sect or Meng Zhang could dare provoke openly.

If Meng Zhang were to greedily take Zhao Jiudou's personal items, he might end up attracting the attention of a Gold Core Daoist Master.

As for why Meng Zhang didn't hesitate to kill disciples from the Yellow Lotus Sect and seize their spoils, that was because Flying Swan Sect and Yellow Lotus Sect held deep-seated grudges against each other in the Endless Sea of Sand.

Flying Swan Sect absolutely would not tolerate Yellow Lotus Sect's wanton behavior in the region.

Upon the exposure of Meng Zhang killing Yellow Lotus Sect disciples, he would only receive praise and support from Flying Swan Sect.

If Yellow Lotus Sect wanted to take revenge on Meng Zhang, they would have to get through the Flying Swan Sect first.

While Meng Zhang ambushed and killed Zhao Jiudou, the Deep EarthSpirit General had already taken the Spirit Source Pearl and started to flee for its life.

The time was too tight, and Deep EarthSpirit General had only one chance to reap the benefits. There was no time to carefully examine the gains, and he had no choice but to escape immediately.

Even as Deep EarthSpirit General faced the siege of so many sand monsters, his only fate was to flee in desperation. Some sand monsters chased after him relentlessly, while more of them stayed by the side of a huge cocoon, guarding it tightly.

After defeating Zhao Jiudou thoroughly, Meng Zhang still had some concerns. Deliberately attracting a group of sand monsters, he stirred up chaos around Zhao Jiudou's burial place.

With the intense aura of the sand monsters concealing the area, any traces that should have been here probably disappeared without a trace.

When Deep EarthSpirit General invaded the enormous cocoon, Lin Bailin was also at a critical moment. After using up all the thunder talismans in his hand, he managed to kill a large number of sand monsters, including a Second Rank sand monster. However, immediately after, even more sand monsters surged towards him.

Lin Bailin exhausted all his tricks but couldn't escape the encirclement of the sand monsters. His true qi was depleting rapidly, and his wounds were increasing. It seemed he couldn't hold on much longer and was hanging on the edge of life and death.

Suddenly, all the sand monsters paused for a moment, then crazily retreated and rushed back to the depths of their nest at the fastest speed. This was the time when Deep EarthSpirit General was invading the enormous cocoon. All the sand monsters outside sensed that the core of their nest was being invaded, so they desperately rushed back to defend it.

Deep EarthSpirit General's unintentional action inadvertently saved Lin Bailin's life. Despite his weakened state, Lin Bailin managed to struggle back to the surface.

Seeing that reinforcements hadn't arrived yet, he knew that the communication talismans he sent out were probably intercepted.

He sent out multiple communication talismans again, roughly explaining what had happened here and informed the people in Forest Spring Watch.

After dealing with Zhao Jiudou's remains, Meng Zhang left the sand monster's nest and returned to the surface. He emerged quite a distance away from where he had entered the underground.

After a while, Deep EarthSpirit General also shook off the sand monsters that were tracking him and hurried to join Meng Zhang.

Deep EarthSpirit General's luck was neither good nor bad; he managed to snatch two spiritual source pearls.

Not long after Meng Zhang and Deep EarthSpirit General reunited, they received a communication talisman from Forest Spring Watch, ordering them to gather there.

They hurried over and found the others at the place they had entered the sand monster's nest.

Forest Spring Watch's Guang HuiDaoist, upon receiving Lin Bailin's communication talisman, hurriedly led his people to this location. At the same time, he ordered several other cultivators to rush here as soon as possible.

When everyone had arrived, Guang HuiDaoist solemnly recounted Zhao Jiudou's actions.

Upon hearing the story, everyone was filled with righteous indignation and condemned Zhao Jiudou one after another.

Meng Zhang also joined in, cursing Zhao Jiudou with the others. To betray one's comrades for the sake of personal gain when facing the common enemy of humanity, the sand monsters, was a heinous crime.

However, despite their anger, it wasn't practical to take any direct action against Zhao Jiudou. After all, he was a disciple of Flying Swan Sect, and even the affiliated sects like Taiyi Sect and Forest Spring Watch's Sect Master Guang HuiDaoist couldn't simply dispose of him.

Zhao Jiudou had not come to join the others, and his whereabouts were unknown. Most likely, he had fled early, afraid of his plot against Lin Bailin being exposed.

Although Guang HuiDaoist couldn't order a pursuit of Zhao Jiudou, he wasn't about to let the matter go easily. He decided that after this battle, he would communicate with Flying Swan Sect and explain the whole situation, demanding an explanation from them.



## Chapter 257: Still

Although Zhao Jiudou was detestable, the sand monster's nest was right here, and they were facing a formidable enemy. There was no time to waste on him. Little did the people present know that Zhao Jiudou had been killed in a sneak attack by Meng Zhang long ago.

Over ten Foundation Building cultivators had gathered this time, possessing formidable strength. There was no need to discuss any battle plans; they didn't even have to call upon the Refining Qi cultivators. All they needed was to join forces and push forward together.

Thus, Daoist Guang Hui took the lead, leading the group directly towards the sand monster's nest below. The sand monster army had suffered significant losses during the previous disastrous battle, almost annihilating them. Even if the nest desperately tried to produce more sand monsters, it wouldn't be able to generate too many within such a short time.

The numerous Foundation Building cultivators pressed forward, easily crushing every sand monster that stood in their way. The nest resisted fiercely, attempting to obstruct the advancement of human cultivators. The sand monsters that roamed outside the nest also hurried back to join the battle in protecting their nest.

Unfortunately, the main force of Second Rank sand monsters was scant, and the number of First Rank sand monsters used as cannon fodder was severely inadequate. The smaller sand monsters, which were slightly more numerous, didn't even qualify as cannon fodder.

The battle's outcome was predictable – the human cultivators emerged victorious; it was only a matter of time. After an arduous fight that lasted through the night and well into the next morning, by noon on the second day, the human cultivators had reached the core of the sand monster's nest.

All the sand monsters inside the nest were annihilated, with barely any escapees. The colossal cocoon-like entity was blasted into pieces by the united efforts of the cultivators. As for the precious Spirit Source Beads inside, most of them had been consumed during the last-ditch effort to produce more sand monsters.

Even Forest Spring Watch cultivator, despite giving his all, failed to seize more than a few of these Spirit Source Beads. Of course, Forest Spring Watch would never share such spoils with their subordinate sects, and other sects didn't dare to harbor any illusions of getting their hands on them.

With the destruction of the sand monster's nest, the chaotic situation caused by the sand monsters near Forest Spring Watch was finally coming to an end. The vast majority of sand monsters had been wiped out, and with the nest destroyed, there would be no new sand monsters born.

Even if there were the occasional one or two roaming sand monsters outside, they posed no real threat.

After destroying the sand monster's nest, Daoist Guang Hui didn't become complacent; he continued to command the cultivator army to search the surrounding areas. While usually one area had only one sand monster nest, they still needed to search thoroughly and confirm to be completely at ease.

During the search, they found a few wandering sand monsters that had left their nests and took the opportunity to eliminate them. Sand monsters relied on their nests for existence, and when their nests were under attack, they would desperately rush back to defend them.

However, a small portion of sand monsters couldn't make it back to the nest in time due to various reasons such as being too far away, and by the time they returned, their nests had already been destroyed. These sand monsters became wanderers, losing their commands and merely wandering in the desert, following their instincts.

These wandering sand monsters posed a threat to lower-level cultivators passing through, so any capable cultivators they encountered would effortlessly clean them up.

After some time had passed, Forest Spring Watch finally commanded the various sects to complete the cleanup of the entire original Twin Success Valley territory.

Although the process was a bit convoluted, the outcome was favorable. Forest Spring Watch emerged victorious in the end.

After the war, it was time for rewards and recognition of merit. Forest Spring Watch, for the first time, called upon its vassal sects to join the battle, and various sects responded enthusiastically, giving their all.

Each sect paid a certain price in casualties, but the Golden Blade Sect's expedition suffered the most significant losses, with all members of the team led by Ruan Dadao perishing.

In response, Forest Spring Watch needed to show appreciation to its vassals, so Guang Hui Daoist announced the exemption of all vassal sects from supplying resources for three years.

As the new dominant power in the region, Forest Spring Watch needed to consolidate its position and win the support of its vassals. Therefore, its actions were milder compared to Twin Success Valley, with moderate annual demands for contributions. The sudden exemption of three years' worth of supplies came as an unexpected windfall for the vassal sects.

Nonetheless, compared to the losses suffered by the sects, especially the Golden Blade Sect, the exemption was not substantial. Dealing with internal affairs, Guang Hui Daoist, as the Sect Master of Forest Spring Watch, sent a message to Flying Swan Sect, accusing Zhao Jiudou of his actions.

Flying Swan Sect, currently engaged in a tough battle against the sand monster army, would likely not tolerate Zhao Jiudou's disruptive actions at this critical moment.

Surprisingly, Flying Swan Sect quickly sent a reply stating that Zhao Jiudou's soul lamp in their sect had been extinguished, indicating that he had already perished.

People were skeptical of Flying Swan Sect's explanation. Some believed that Zhao Jiudou might have had bad luck: despite framing Lin Bailin, he had fallen into the sand monster siege and met his demise. Human Cultivators who died at the hands of sand monsters generally left no complete corpses, as they were torn apart and devoured.

However, most people leaned toward the view that this was just an excuse made by Flying Swan Sect to protect Zhao Jiudou, allowing him to escape and hide somewhere.

Despite feeling indignant, Forest Spring Watch was no match for the powerful Flying Swan Sect, so they had to swallow their grievances and set the matter aside for now.

The other sects had no interest in getting involved, as the victim was not one of their own, so they preferred to watch from the sidelines quietly.

Meng Zhang specifically instructed Deep Earth Spirit General to keep the matter to himself and not to disclose it to others.

After completely suppressing the sand monster chaos, Forest Spring Watch led the various sects' teams and returned home.

Overall, Forest Spring Watch emerged as the clear winner this time. Seizing the opportunity to annihilate the sand monster army, they quietly took control of all the territories belonging to Liu Family.

Surprisingly, Flying Swan Sect seemed indifferent to the matter, perhaps because they felt they were not in the wrong regarding Zhao Jiudou.

Shortly after Meng Zhang returned to Taiyi Sect with his disciples, significant events unfolded in the nearby area.

Ruan Dadao, the Sect Master of Golden Blade Sect, had led all the elite members of the sect into battle, but the entire force was wiped out, and even Ruan Dadao himself couldn't escape his tragic fate.

The remaining disciples in the Golden Blade Sect were already a motley crew with mediocre aptitude and average cultivation bases. Upon receiving news of Ruan Dadao's death, internal strife broke out among them as they vied for control of the sect.

The situation escalated into a bloody internal war, with the Golden Blade Sect descending into complete chaos. Some even colluded with loose cultivators and set traps within the sect to eliminate all opposing factions.

## Chapter 258: Carving up

The internal chaos within the Golden Blade Sect escalated dramatically with the intervention of foreign cultivators. What was once a tranquil and peaceful mountain gate of the Golden Blade Sect turned into a bloody battlefield. Once blood was shed and lives were lost, the conflicts only grew fiercer and bloodier. Many of the remaining cultivators in the Golden Blade Sect fell victim to the internal strife.

Even the oasis under the control of the Golden Blade Sect was affected by the turmoil. Those cultivators who were defeated in the sect's internal struggles sought revenge on the mortal relatives of the victors. This cycle of revenge led to a rapid spread of violence into the mortal world. Mortals residing in the oasis became casualties of the battles between cultivators, and many more were intentionally slaughtered.

While cultivators fighting among themselves might have been tolerable, the heavy loss of mortal lives caught in the crossfire was considered excessive. The neighboring sects, Taiyi Sect and Qiaoshou Sect, both prestigious orthodox sects, could not turn a blind eye to the turmoil within the Golden Blade Sect.

Meng Zhang and Jin Qigu personally led teams of cultivators and entered the territory of the Golden Blade Sect to apprehend those cultivators responsible for killing mortals and subjected them to severe punishment. With two Foundation Building stage cultivators leading the charge, they easily took control of the Golden Blade Sect's mountain gate.

The culprits responsible for the bloodshed, who were once cultivators of the Golden Blade Sect, were brought to justice by the two sects. As for those loose cultivators who opportunistically joined the conflict, those who retreated in time managed to preserve their lives. However, those who persisted and tangled with the cultivators from Taiyi Sect and Qiaoshou Sect faced the prospect of being dealt with ruthlessly.

Both the mountain gate and the territory of the Golden Blade Sect were cleansed by Taiyi Sect and Qiaoshou Sect. However, the two sects had no intention of permanently occupying the Golden Blade Sect's mountain gate. Instead, they reported the situation to the Forest Spring Watch, requesting that the organization take over and continue the legacy of the Golden Blade Sect.

The mountain gate of the Golden Blade Sect was located above a Second Rank spirit vein, with a fertile oasis nearby. The Forest Spring Watch gladly accepted the request of Taiyi Sect and Qiaoshou Sect and sent people to take over the Golden Blade Sect's mountain gate.

Taiyi Sect and Qiaoshou Sect acted prudently and did not take the opportunity to plunder everything in the Golden Blade Sect. They each made copies of the scriptures and left the original texts undisturbed in the Hidden Scripture Pavilion. As for the items in the treasury, both sects only took what they needed, leaving most of it untouched.

After Forest Spring Watch took over the Golden Blade Sect's mountain gate, they were satisfied with the sensible actions of Taiyi Sect and Qiaoshou Sect's representatives. The original mountain gate of the Flying Eagle Sect also had a Second Rank spirit vein. After it was jointly destroyed by the Golden Blade Sect and Qiaoshou Sect, the two sects managed it together.

Now that the Golden Blade Sect faced trouble, the original mountain gate of the Flying Eagle Sect naturally fell entirely into the hands of Qiaoshou Sect. With this spoils of war, Qiaoshou Sect was entirely content and did not make further moves.

On the other hand, Taiyi Sect took advantage of the turmoil in the Golden Blade Sect and seized some mineral resources and oases near the border of the two sects.

Having obtained the largest share of the spoils, Forest Spring Watch silently approved the actions of Qiaoshou Sect and Taiyi Sect. Thus, the Golden Blade Sect, with its legacy of over three hundred years, quietly became history, and everything was completely divided among the sects.

After returning from their expedition against the sand monsters, Meng Zhang held an evaluation and rewarded the cultivators according to their merits. Every cultivator who participated in the expedition received generous rewards, enough to sustain them for a long time. Taiyi Sect, having participated in the division of the Golden Blade Sect, rewarded its disciples handsomely, and everyone received additional rewards.

It must be said that Qiaoshou Sect played a crucial role in the successful division of the Golden Blade Sect. The intelligence they had within the Golden Blade Sect had been stirring up trouble for a while, causing internal conflicts and discord, and it had not been in vain.

[Translation]

The Golden Blade Sect did not experience this chaos, and the Qiaoshou Sect and Taiyi Sect couldn't find an opportunity to intervene. After all, they were all righteous sects and also vassals of the Forest Spring Watch. It would not be right to invade each other's territories without reason. Righteous sects follow a principle of taking action with a justified cause.

The internal conflict within the Golden Blade Sect caused calamity for ordinary people, which gave Taiyi Sect and Qiaoshou Sect a pretext to interfere. After Taiyi Sect and Golden Blade Sect secretly formed an alliance, it was their first cooperation, and the result was very satisfactory for both sides. As for the spies from Qiaoshou Sect within the Golden Blade Sect, they all returned to Qiaoshou Sect after the chaos in the Golden Blade Sect was quelled.

With the restoration of order in the Golden Blade Sect, the region under the rule of the Forest Spring Watch entered another period of peace. Seizing this rare peaceful time, each sect focused on cultivating their inner strength and quietly developing their power.

Meng Zhang felt a sense of urgency in his heart. In recent years, the changes in the Endless Sea of Sand have been immense. Not to mention the past, just in Twin Success Valley and the nearby areas, so many major events have occurred in these years. Many cultivation forces that had lasted for centuries disappeared completely. Meng Zhang had a premonition that this was only the beginning, and the true great upheaval in the Endless Sea of Sand had yet to come. Before long, there would be even more intense changes happening within the Endless Sea of Sand.

Meng Zhang had a feeling of being caught in the tide of the times. To avoid being engulfed by the tide and to safeguard Taiyi Sect, the only way was to become stronger.

After returning from the expedition against the sand monsters, Yang Xueyi, who was already at the Refining Qi completion stage, was finally ready to enter seclusion and attempt to break through to the Foundation Building stage.

After experiencing the baptism of war and battles on the battlefield, the originally somewhat naive Yang Xueyi became more stable and mature. Although she spent a considerable amount of sect resources to exchange for the Foundation Building Pill from Meng Zhang, she clearly told him that she would try to rely on her own strength to break through to the Foundation Building stage. She would not take the Foundation Building Pill unless it was absolutely necessary.

In the Cultivation World, there is a saying that the fewer elixirs consumed during cultivation, the purer the true qi becomes. Especially for major breakthroughs like the Foundation Building stage, cultivators who do not use Foundation Building Pills might have a more solid foundation and stronger true qi. This theory seems to have some truth based on the countless experiences of senior cultivators.

Of course, some cultivators believe that ensuring a successful Foundation Building is the top priority. Even if there are some shortcomings after Foundation Building, they can be slowly compensated in the future.

In Meng Zhang's view, the Foundation Building stage is just the starting point of cultivation. No matter how one achieves success in Foundation Building, the cultivator who goes further in the future is the true winner.

Meng Zhang didn't refute Yang Xueyi's views. For cultivators aiming to reach the Foundation Building stage, having this kind of spirit is crucial. Regardless of whether Yang Xueyi uses the Foundation Building Pill or not, Meng Zhang won't interfere. Since he already gave her the Foundation Building Pill, it is her choice whether to use it or not.

While Yang Xueyi is in seclusion, someone else will have to take over the work in the Talisman Hall and the kitchen. Fortunately, Yang Xueyi's cultivation time won't be too long, and the Talisman Master and Spirit Chef she trained can manage things temporarily.

## Chapter 259: Grand Evolving Fortune

After Yang Xueyi's closed-door cultivation, Meng Zhang devoted most of his time and energy to his own cultivation. Besides his regular training, he spent a considerable amount of effort studying the book "Grand Evolving Fortune." Following the impulsive incident when he was almost assassinated by Liu Dajin, Meng Zhang seemed to have gained some insights upon revisiting "Grand Evolving Fortune."

With further in-depth study, he gradually began to make progress. Additionally, during the last expedition into the sand monster's lair, Meng Zhang obtained two intact spirit source beads. Such treasures could not be left idle in the storage; they needed to be used promptly.

Using a single intact spirit source bead, one could generate a new spirit vein from scratch, but it would be of the First Rank, Low Grade. Each time a First Rank spirit vein was upgraded, it only required one spirit source bead. Of course, depending on the quality of the spirit source bead and the techniques used, the time required would vary significantly.

The upgrade from a First Rank, High Grade spirit vein to a Second Rank, Low Grade spirit vein required two intact spirit source beads. For each upgrade of a Second Rank spirit vein, it required three spirit source beads.

Within the territory of Taiyi Sect, there was no shortage of First Rank spirit veins, and upgrading them to a higher grade held little significance. Currently, the main mountain gate of Taiyi Sect, Fuzhao Valley, possessed a Second Rank, Low Grade spirit vein. Meng Zhang did have the intention to improve its grade, but he lacked sufficient spirit source beads.

Finally, after some consideration, Meng Zhang decided to upgrade Taiyi Sect's original old mountain gate to a Second Rank, Low Grade spirit vein. There, an originally First Rank, High Grade spirit vein existed, and it would only require two spirit source beads to achieve his goal.

Furthermore, Meng Zhang didn't forget that the spiritual eye at the old mountain gate had a special nourishing effect. The precious pearl containing the remnants of the Guardian Spirit General and the spiritual weapon Spiritsnake Spear were still placed there to be nurtured. Even after the relocation of Taiyi Sect's main mountain gate, these two items remained undisturbed.

Generally, after upgrading the spirit vein's grade, the spiritual eye would exhibit some positive changes. Meng Zhang hoped that the nourishing effect of the spiritual eye would become stronger and help these two items recover sooner.

As for Deep Earth Spirit General's secondary occupation as a Geomancer, an important aspect was that it could assist in upgrading spirit veins. Carrying two spirit source beads with him, Deep Earth Spirit General infiltrated the underground spirit vein.

He had long since studied the terrain and was very familiar with the direction of the spirit vein. Originally, even with two spirit source beads, upgrading the spirit vein would take several years.

However, with the special techniques inherited from the Geomancer, Deep EarthSpirit General significantly enhanced the efficiency of the spirit vein absorbing the spirit source beads.

Spending just over half a year, the First Rank, High Grade spirit vein successfully upgraded to a Second Rank, Low Grade spirit vein.

Before Deep EarthSpirit General took action, Meng Zhang had spread rumors that the old mountain gate of Taiyi Sect had experienced a Flood Spirit phenomenon. After each Flood Spirit event, there would generally be new spirit veins born or existing ones upgraded. The earliest territory of Taiyi Sect, Sweetwater Oasis, obtained a complete First Rank spirit vein due to a past Flood Spirit occurrence. Although such events were rare, they occasionally happened in the Cultivation World.

At the moment the spirit vein at the old mountain gate of Taiyi Sect was upgraded, the ground trembled violently, and a powerful spiritual energy spread in all directions uncontrollably. Then, Deep EarthSpirit General employed his Geomancer skills to gradually converge the dispersed spiritual energy.

The grade of Taiyi Sect's old mountain gate's spirit vein was elevated due to encountering the Flood Spirit, and this news quickly spread in the vicinity. People who heard the news marveled at Taiyi Sect's good fortune but didn't think much more about it.

After another half year passed, the spirit vein finally stabilized completely.

Afterward, Taiyi Sect gained another Second Rank Inferior Spirit Vein. Initially, Meng Zhang purchased two sets of Second Rank Formations from Great Wind City. Fuzhao Valley utilized one, while the other set was kept as a backup. Once this Second Rank Spirit Vein stabilized, Meng Zhang enlisted the help of Wen Qiansun and the Deep Earth Spirit General to deploy this set of Second Rank Formations. With the protection of the Second Rank Formation, there was a sense of security in the area. Moreover, this Spirit Vein didn't disappoint Meng Zhang, as it significantly enhanced the nourishing effects of his Lingyan.

Whether it was the lingering souls within the precious beads or the spiritual weapon, Spiritsnake Spear, the recovery speed improved noticeably. Following this, in addition to arranging disciples to guard the area, Meng Zhang and the Deep Earth Spirit General, both Foundation Building cultivators, took turns overseeing the place.

Time flew by, and it had been four years since Taiyi Sect's last expedition to subdue the sand monsters. Meng Zhang's cultivation during the early Foundation Building stage had already been completed, and he could begin practicing in the mid Foundation Building stage whenever he chose.

Furthermore, after years of relentless effort, he finally gained some entry-level understanding of the Grand Evolving Fortune technique, which could be considered as having grasped the basics of divination. Meng Zhang could now successfully employ the Grand Evolving Fortune technique. Each day, he meditated for an hour using a special method to accumulate a unique "calculation tally," which was stored within his body. When he used the Grand Evolving Fortune to make calculations, he could expend these calculation tallies to obtain the desired results. The number of calculation tallies consumed varied depending on the complexity of the matter being divined.

For trivial matters, like predicting what meal the kitchen would prepare for him, only one or two calculation tallies were needed. However, for forecasting weather patterns, more than ten calculation tallies might be required. As for divining more crucial matters, such as the whereabouts

of a certain magic tool or a specific Foundation Building cultivator, the cost would be even higher, reaching dozens or even hundreds of calculation tallies.

Of course, if all the calculation tallies were exhausted and still insufficient, he could even consume his own lifespan. However, Meng Zhang was reluctant to do so, as depleting too much lifespan would also cause a substantial loss of spiritual energy. If he wasn't careful, it could shake the foundation of his cultivation and hinder his progress towards reaching the Gold Core realm or higher.

Moreover, Meng Zhang couldn't use the Grand Evolving Fortune technique to divine matters beyond his current Cultivation Base level. For instance, he could only divine the whereabouts of a Second Rank magic tool but not anything more advanced. Similarly, when divining a cultivator's whereabouts, he could only target those at the Foundation Building level and not Daoist Masters at the Gold Core level or higher.

If Meng Zhang insisted on forcibly divining beyond his limits, there was still a way, albeit at the cost of a considerable amount of his lifespan, which was limited to four Jiazi cycles for a Foundation Building cultivator. However, most Foundation Building cultivators found it challenging to live past two hundred years, which might seem long but was insufficient for their cultivation journey.

Slowly but surely, by consuming lifespan bit by bit here and there, the two hundred years would pass before they knew it. Considering the value of lifespan, Meng Zhang was cautious about casually depleting it. Not to mention, excessive loss of lifespan would also deplete a significant amount of vital energy, and in the worst-case scenario, it could jeopardize his path to the Gold Core realm, making it unattainable for a lifetime.

After gaining some entry-level understanding of the Grand Evolving Fortune technique, Meng Zhang began accumulating calculation tallies while continuing to study the knowledge of divination. Presently, Meng Zhang successfully mastered the art of divination and could barely be considered a Diviner.

## Chapter 260: Xueyi Foundation Building

Meng Zhang had always wanted to take on a part-time role as an assistant, but he lacked any talent in the hundred arts of cultivation. Skills such as alchemy, artifact refining, and talisman-making were all difficult for him to master. Unexpectedly, due to a twist of fate, he ended up becoming a rare Diviner in the Cultivation World.

The ranking of Diviners differed greatly from other professions in the Cultivation World. As long as one grasped the basics of the Celestial Art, regardless of their Cultivation Base, they could be considered a formal Diviner. Diviners could be divided into different strengths, and with a willingness to pay a price, even weaker Diviners could overcome stronger ones, using their own life or other means.

As for what the top-tier Diviner, the Grandmaster of the Celestial Art, was like and what abilities they possessed, Meng Zhang had no way of knowing. After becoming a Diviner, he didn't forget to study the various classics he obtained from the Liu Family and the Golden Blade Sect.



Especially, he was very interested in the Liu Family cultivators' method of achieving Foundation Building without having to consume Foundation Building Pills. However, after reading the Liu Family's classics, he discovered the limitations and drawbacks of this method, realizing it was not suitable for Taiyi Sect disciples to practice. Nonetheless, the underlying ideas had some valuable insights that could serve as a reference.

The Golden Blade Sect classics, on the other hand, were mostly of average quality. After reading them, Meng Zhang's gains were limited. It was to be expected since the Golden Blade Sect, despite its hundreds of years of inheritance, did not have much depth and accumulation in their classics. If it weren't for the presence of an expert like Ruan Dadao, the sect wouldn't be considered particularly strong.

With each passing day in the Taiyi Sect, Meng Zhang's life became more regular. He would rise early in the morning to absorb the essence of the rising sun, spend an hour reading the scriptures, and then handle sect affairs. At noon, he would absorb the intense sun's essence to refine his Solar True Qi. In the afternoon, he would study the Celestial Art and various cultivation classics. In the evening, he practiced spells and sword techniques. At night, he absorbed Lunar True Qi and refined it.

Before dawn, when the yin energy had not dissipated and the yang energy was just beginning to rise, he would merge the Lunar True Qi and Solar True Qi, refining them into Sun and Moon True Qi. This cycle repeated endlessly.

Unknowingly, Meng Zhang's Cultivation Base broke through the early stage of Foundation Building and entered the mid-stage. Excluding the now-defunct Twin Success Valley and Guang Zhi Daoist Master, the late-stage Foundation Building cultivator Liu Dajin was flawed and no longer mentioned. Apart from those, Meng Zhang's mid-stage Foundation Building Cultivation Base was already among the top in the nearby regions.

Challenging higher-level cultivators after entering the Foundation Building stage became much more difficult. Even elite disciples of major sects would find it challenging to defeat mid-stage Foundation Building cultivators from smaller sects.

Meng Zhang himself had extraordinary talent and received the inheritance of the Taiyi Sect during its peak. However, during the early stage of Foundation Building, he could barely protect himself against mid-stage Foundation Building cultivators in the vicinity. Challenging higher-level cultivators and winning against them was an impossible task. Unless they were cultivators who focused solely on skills like alchemy and artifact refining, with almost no combat abilities and rarely engaging in fights, there might be a chance for them to succeed in challenging higher-level cultivators.

When Meng Zhang broke through to the mid-stage of Foundation Building, it was a natural and smooth process, without making much noise or encountering any bottlenecks.

The cultivator with outstanding talent, combined with diligent efforts and the right cultivation methods, encountering such a situation is quite normal.

For those cultivators with poor talent, they would need to invest a significant amount of time and consume a vast amount of resources to make breakthroughs. The path of cultivation is filled with barriers, and every realm they advance requires risking their lives, as if engaging in a life-or-death battle.

Resources are limited, so sects and clans naturally favor and show preference to disciples with exceptional talent. While this may seem unfair to those with inferior talent, in a world where the strong prey on the weak like the Cultivation World, the concept of fairness becomes a mere joke.

If a large amount of resources were truly invested in disciples with poor talent and no particular strengths, that would be the greatest injustice. Such sects and clans would only grow weaker and eventually be eliminated by the natural selection of the Cultivation World.

As the transmigrator Meng Zhang, now a Sect Master of a sect, he naturally treats his disciples equally. However, just as his teachers in his past life favored diligent students, Meng Zhang also pays more attention to and values the outstanding disciples within his sect.

Even when Taiyi Sect was once a small and poor Refining Qi sect, Meng Zhang was willing to financially support disciples like Wen Qiansun and Tian Li.

When someone else has better talent and works harder than you, what do you have to compare with them?

Meng Zhang himself is a character with exceptional talent and dedicated cultivation, so naturally, he favors others with similar qualities.

Meng Zhang's entry into the mid-stage of Foundation Building has somewhat compensated for Taiyi Sect's shortcomings in terms of top combat power. At least when facing neighboring sects, they are not at a disadvantage in this aspect.

Deep EarthSpirit General had been slowly refining and absorbing the mountain-suppressing stone it obtained at Liu Family's mountain gate. Earth-elemental spirit objects are naturally stubborn and challenging to refine.

For Deep EarthSpirit General to completely absorb this mountain-suppressing stone, it would take about a decade.

However, once the absorption was complete, its Cultivation Base would at least be restored to the late stage of Foundation Building. Moreover, as it gradually refined the stone, its Cultivation Base would also gradually recover.

After over a year of seclusion, Yang Xueyi, who was attempting to break through to the Foundation Building stage, finally succeeded in coming out of seclusion.

Now, apart from Meng Zhang and Deep EarthSpirit General, Taiyi Sect finally had a third cultivator at the Foundation Building stage.

Deep EarthSpirit General was actually a senior member of Taiyi Sect, while Yang Xueyi was the first true new-generation cultivator cultivated by Meng Zhang after he became Sect Master.

Yang Xueyi truly lived up to her words by successfully reaching Foundation Building without relying on Foundation Building Pills. Given her spiritual root talent and determination, this outcome was not surprising.

The Foundation Building Pill that Yang Xueyi saved was originally intended to be returned to Meng Zhang, but he declined to accept it. Even though Yang Xueyi no longer needed the Foundation Building Pill, it could be given to a promising disciple in the future.

Since Yang Xueyi didn't use Foundation Building Pills to aid her cultivation, she didn't need to spend time expelling pill toxins. The process of consolidating her Cultivation Base became much simpler.

Originally, Meng Zhang planned to hold a Foundation Building dharma meeting to celebrate Yang Xueyi's success in Foundation Building and invite cultivators from nearby sects to attend. However, Yang Xueyi, who usually preferred a low-profile and quiet life, politely declined Meng Zhang's proposal.

Upon second thought, Meng Zhang realized that with the presence of Forest Spring Watch, adding one more Foundation Building cultivator to Taiyi Sect was not a big deal, and there was no need to make a grand spectacle with a Foundation Building dharma meeting.