

Sect Master 381

Chapter 381: Unwilling

Meng Zhang adopted this tactic, which was not very stimulating for those Second Rank beasts, as they were not eager to fight the human side to the death.

In this way, the Foundation Building cultivators on the human side would strike and disperse the beast formations, and then, together with the subsequent cultivators, slowly hunt down the scattered beasts.

Given the beasts' organizational abilities, their ability to suppress their nature and form such a disorderly army was already at its limit. It was impossible for them to be as well-trained and coordinated as the human army.

The human cultivators' sudden attack easily threw the beast army into chaos. Part of the beast army continued to retreat, while some were provoked by the human cultivators and stayed to fight. Another part of the beasts got caught in the confusion.

Especially the last group of beasts, they scattered around like headless flies, not only failing to stop the enemy but also causing significant casualties due to trampling each other.

Some of the more intelligent Second Rank beasts also noticed that something was amiss. They tried to chase down those human Foundation Building cultivators.

However, the beast side didn't have any advantage in the air. The enemy was agile and moved freely, making it impossible for the beasts to trap them.

The retreat continued for some time, and the beast army had already traveled dozens of miles with considerable casualties.

At this moment, the Second Rank beast in charge of command finally reacted and made a new decision.

The beast army ceased its retreat and stood its ground to face the attacks from the human side.

Meng Zhang and the other Foundation Building cultivators flew back to join the Refining Qi cultivators' team and then slowly approached the front of the beast army.

Though the beast army lacked formations and marching arrangements, the various beast clans, especially those with Second Rank beasts, naturally knew how to cooperate in battle. Their monster auras connected them, allowing them to unleash their innate monster techniques together, forming a series of natural formations.

Upon observing from afar, Meng Zhang knew that a fierce battle was about to begin.

The Foundation Building cultivators from Taiyi Sect, including Meng Zhang, Deep Earth Spirit General, Shocking Thunder Spirit General, Yang Xueyi, Hu Jing, Zheng Chao, Wen Qiansun, and their vassal, Shi Changqing, totaled eight individuals.

On the side of Qiaoshou Sect, there were only Aunt Jin, Jin Qigu, and Jin Qiao'er, three people.

The number of Foundation Building cultivators, eleven in total, exceeded that of the Second Rank beasts they were facing. However, not everyone was in perfect condition.

Shi Changqing hadn't completely expelled the poison from his inner core and had suffered significant depletion earlier, leaving him unable to exert even half of his strength. Besides, he was adept at alchemy but not particularly skilled in combat.

The other Foundation Building cultivators also had some who were heavily exhausted due to their role in maintaining the mountain protection great formation in the previous days, and they hadn't fully recovered. Some others still had injuries that hadn't completely healed.

Although they were not in their best condition, they had to go all out and engage in a decisive battle at this moment.

Meng Zhang gave the order, and all the Foundation Building cultivators, except Wen Qiansun, who went to organize the Refining Qi disciples' formation, flew forward toward the enemy. The Refining Qi cultivators followed, forming a defensive formation as they advanced.

After an intense bloodbath, the beast army suffered heavy casualties and was on the verge of collapse. Over three Second Rank beasts were killed, and many beast clans were defeated.

At this moment, a cloud of dust rose in the distance, seemingly heralding the arrival of a thousand-strong beast army charging towards them.

As the only Foundation Building late-stage cultivator in the field, Meng Zhang had been easily handling the battle. He was the first to notice the movement in the distance and flew up to the sky to use his Deception Breaking Eye technique to check.

Sure enough, within the swirling dust, a massive beast army was rushing rapidly toward them. It seemed like this was the same beast army that Zhui Dian (Chasing Lightning) had detected. Unexpectedly, they arrived so quickly.

The current battle was at a critical juncture, and in no more than half a day, the joint forces of the two sects could defeat the beast army before them and annihilate them in the pursuit of victory.

But the enemy's reinforcements arrived just at this crucial moment.

Given the speed of the enemy reinforcements, they would be here in at most half an hour and join the battle.

Time was running out, and though Meng Zhang was unwilling, he had to give up the easily attainable victory and prepare to retreat.

Meng Zhang transmitted the news of the incoming enemy reinforcements to all the Foundation Building cultivators on the field.

Everyone, like Meng Zhang, was unwilling to let go of the opportunity to defeat the enemy before them.

However, there was no choice. The recent battle with the enemy had nearly exhausted all of their strength. Not only was their true qi greatly depleted, but almost everyone also had injuries.

If another beast army joined the battle as fresh reinforcements, the human side would have no chance to withstand it.

Everyone present was level-headed and not driven by impulsive emotions. Even the most warlike Shocking Thunder Spirit General was a seasoned veteran who knew when to advance and when to retreat, understanding gains and losses.

Retreating during a battle was not an easy task.

They had to escape from the midst of the ongoing battle while maintaining their formation and blocking the enemy's pursuit...

Thankfully, firstly, the Foundation Building cultivators from both sects were highly mobile and could easily break away from their opponents.

Although the Refining Qi cultivators couldn't fly, they were well-trained and could cover for each other.

The Foundation Building cultivators launched a fierce assault against the beast army in front of them, unleashing countless spells that bewildered the enemy.

Then, the Refining Qi cultivators maintained their formation and slowly distanced themselves from the enemy, beginning their retreat.

Among the beast army, some of the more sensitive Second Rank beasts noticed the approach of their reinforcements.

They attempted to entangle the human cultivators, preventing them from retreating smoothly.

However, the Foundation Building cultivators showed their capabilities, firmly holding their ground and preventing the beasts from advancing.

Meanwhile, the retreating Refining Qi cultivators released numerous talismans and spells, tearing apart the pursuing First Rank beasts.

In this manner, the Refining Qi cultivators, under Wen Qiansun's command, maintained a steady formation while retreating, leaving no opportunities for the beasts to take advantage of.

Seeing the Refining Qi cultivators move further away, the Foundation Building cultivators one by one broke free from their opponents and began to retreat towards the rear.

After the intense battle just now, the current beast army had suffered heavy casualties and was exhausted.

Although the human cultivators were retreating, they remained vigilant. Especially the Foundation Building cultivators, who were holding the rear, possessed powerful means of attack.

As a result, the beast army tried to pursue for a while but failed to gain any advantage and instead suffered more casualties.

Now, the beast army had completely abandoned the idea of chasing and stayed where they were, waiting for the reinforcements to arrive.

The demon beast army dared not pursue recklessly, allowing the allied forces of the two sects to safely retreat back into the protective mountain great formation. The two demon beast armies also merged smoothly, forming a single force.

The old enemies had not been eliminated, and new enemies had arrived, with their strength multiplied. Everyone's expression turned grim.

Meng Zhang summoned the Foundation Building cultivators from both sects to discuss the situation. Flying Swan Sect was also being held back by the demon beast army. Not only had Flying Swan Sect committed all its forces, but the majority of the cultivation power from the entire Endless Sea of Sand had also been drawn to reinforce them.

Taiyi Sect and Qiaoshou Sect could no longer receive any external assistance, and they had to rely solely on their own strength to face the enemy before them.

Of course, if Flying Swan Sect managed to defeat the current demon beast army first, they might be able to send reinforcements. However, Meng Zhang wasn't someone who pinned all his hopes on others. Besides, whether Flying Swan Sect could defeat the demon beast army was still uncertain. To deal with the immediate threat, they had to rely on their own strength.

After the two demon beast armies merged, their combined strength far surpassed that of the allied forces of the two sects. The sects had no intention of engaging the demon beast army in open combat. Their only option was to defend within the protective mountain great formation and slowly wear down the enemy's strength.

Although the current demon beast army was formidable, it hadn't reached a level of despair for everyone. The protective mountain great formation had been fortified for hundreds of years and should be strong and stable enough to withstand the onslaught.

The Foundation Building cultivators had no better alternative and could only defend behind the protective mountain great formation. They hoped the demon beast army would continue their mindless attacks from outside the formation.

After a short wait, the two demon beast armies merged and advanced toward the protective mountain great formation. Without delay, they launched a fierce attack.

The actions of the demon beast army relieved everyone. If the demon beast army bypassed the formation and attacked the heartlands of the two sects, it would be a disaster. At that point, the allied forces might have to abandon the protective mountain great formation and engage the demon beast army in open battle, which would likely result in a crushing defeat. Alternatively, they would have to watch helplessly as the demon beast army ravaged their territories, killing their people and hoping they could evacuate in time.

Now that the demon beast army attacked the protective mountain great formation, it was the most favorable outcome and the worst choice for the demon beast army.

After a brutal battle, the demon beast army suffered significant casualties but still couldn't breach the protective mountain great formation. The cultivators behind the great formation took turns in battle, managing to repel the attack relatively easily.

If things continued like this, they might be able to significantly weaken the demon beast army before the protective mountain great formation collapsed, creating an opportunity for victory.

However, despite the smooth progress, Meng Zhang couldn't shake off his unease. According to common sense, a demon beast army of this scale should have a Third Rank demon beast commanding it to hold together various Second Rank demon beasts from different tribes. The absence of a Third Rank demon beast indicated that either they were fortunate, and the demon beast army lacked such a commander, or that the Third Rank demon beast was waiting for something.

Meng Zhang pondered but couldn't put his mind at ease. As the leader of the allied forces, he carried countless expectations and responsibilities, and he had to be prepared for the worst in any situation.

During a rest rotation, Meng Zhang attempted to use Grand Evolving Fortune to deduce whether there was a Third Rank demon beast commanding the demon beast army. As expected, his attempt failed. As a Foundation Building cultivator, he couldn't deduce the presence of a Third Rank demon beast, which could only be achieved by a Gold Core cultivator.

Though the deduction failed, Meng Zhang still gained some insight. He had a faint feeling that the enemy they faced might not be the entirety of their opposition. After thinking it over, he summoned Shocking ThunderSpirit General.

Among the Foundation Building cultivators, Shocking ThunderSpirit General had the fastest flying speed, extensive experience, and strong survival abilities. Meng Zhang entrusted him with a task.

He called two proficient Qi Refining disciples and handed them the Wind Driving Shuttle. He also summoned his spirit pet, Zhui Dian (Chasing Lightning). Meng Zhang instructed Shocking ThunderSpirit General to lead them in a careful search of the surrounding areas to check for any abnormalities.

To avoid causing panic and damaging morale, Meng Zhang only informed Shocking ThunderSpirit General about his concerns.

Upon receiving Meng Zhang's orders, Shocking ThunderSpirit General led the others and secretly left Taiyi Sect, searching the nearby areas to determine if there were any Third Rank demon beasts lurking.

The manpower within the protective mountain great formation was barely enough to cope, so having one fewer Shocking ThunderSpirit General didn't pose a significant risk.

Subsequently, the demon beast army launched multiple attacks on the protective mountain great formation but failed to breach it. The two sects suffered only a few disciples exhausted, and there were no other losses.

Time passed slowly, with the enemy attacking and the allied forces defending, followed by the enemy retreating and the allied forces resting in rotation. If they could keep this up, it wouldn't be too bad. Although everyone was tired, at least the danger wasn't overwhelming.

After five days, Shocking ThunderSpirit General returned to the protective mountain great formation using the Wind Driving Shuttle. He brought back some bad news that confirmed Meng Zhang's worst fears.

As it turned out, when Shocking ThunderSpirit General and the others left the protective mountain great formation to explore the outside, they split into three groups to search the surrounding areas. Eventually, the experienced Shocking ThunderSpirit General was the first to discover the target.

About a thousand miles away from their location, a massive Third Rank giant lizard was lurking, wandering around the area. Shocking ThunderSpirit General noticed it and immediately fled at the fastest speed possible.

The giant lizard seemed to be seriously injured and in poor condition, not excelling in flight. Thus, it couldn't stop Shocking ThunderSpirit General in time.

Despite escaping, Shocking ThunderSpirit General didn't run too far away. After making sure that the giant lizard didn't pursue him, he secretly returned to conduct a careful investigation.

The giant lizard was indeed a Third Rank demon beast, possessing formidable strength that couldn't be faked. However, it had a massive wound on its body, showing traces of being scorched by lightning, and it was still oozing pus and blood from the injury.

The giant lizard's aura fluctuated, indicating that it was in unstable condition and quite injured. After finishing the investigation, Shocking ThunderSpirit General returned covertly.

On his way back, he reunited with the Wind Driving Shuttle and Zhui Dian (Chasing Lightning) and promptly made his way back to the protective mountain great formation, bearing bad news.

Chapter 383: Choice

After listening to Shocking ThunderSpirit General's narration, Meng Zhang's face became heavy, immersed in deep contemplation. After all, a Third Rank demon beast was still a formidable existence, capable of contending with a Gold Core Daoist Master. Even with severe injuries and poor physical condition, it was not something their group of Foundation Building cultivators could handle. According to Shocking ThunderSpirit General's observation, the Third Rank giant lizard still retained at least half of its power and could easily sweep away all the Foundation Building cultivators.

The methods of Foundation Building cultivators would barely inflict any harm on a Third Rank demon beast. Now, it seemed that Meng Zhang had only one choice left. It was to immediately abandon the territories of both sects and lead their disciples to retreat swiftly. They would flee as much as they could under the inevitable pursuit of the demon beast army.

Otherwise, if they waited for the Third Rank demon beast to arrive, their mountain protection great formation here wouldn't stand a chance and would easily be broken.

Once the cultivators of the two sects fled, the numerous people living in their territories would be left at the mercy of fate. This seemed like the most rational and safest choice at the moment.

However, Meng Zhang was unwilling. Since becoming the Taiyi Sect Sect Master, he had worked hard for many years, going through countless trials and tribulations, to establish the current foundation and achieve their present status. Giving up everything like a defeated dog, leaving their homeland, was something he couldn't easily accept. Moreover, if they left this place, where could they find a place for Taiyi Sect to settle? Even if they sought refuge elsewhere, they needed someone willing to take them in.

After the demon beast army swept through Taiyi Sect and Qiaoshou Sect, it would most likely launch a surprise attack on Flying Swan Sect from the rear. By then, even Flying Swan Sect might not be able to withstand an attack from both the front and back.

Once Flying Swan Sect was defeated, the entire Endless Sea of Sand would likely fall into the hands of the demon beasts. Of course, Meng Zhang wasn't currently concerned with the fate of the whole Endless Sea of Sand; he didn't need to bear those potential consequences.

However, he couldn't ignore the immense unwillingness in his heart. He didn't want to abandon everything he had worked so hard for.

Unable to make the decision alone, Meng Zhang gathered several major Foundation Building cultivators during a break in the demon beast army's attack to discuss their options.

After hearing Meng Zhang's account, everyone had a grim expression and was shocked. They couldn't have imagined that behind the demon beast army they faced, there was another Third Rank demon beast waiting.

Facing a Third Rank demon beast, even one with severe injuries, was a battle they couldn't win, no matter how experienced they were. The higher the difference in Cultivation Base levels, the more challenging it was to challenge someone from a higher rank.

Everyone quickly calculated their odds and realized that escaping before the Third Rank demon beast arrived seemed like the only viable choice.

Not only Meng Zhang, but everyone else felt an immense sense of unwillingness. Qiaoshou Sect had labored for hundreds of years to build its foundation, and it wasn't something they could easily abandon. As for the Foundation Building cultivators of Taiyi Sect, they had witnessed their sect's growth firsthand, like watching their own children grow step by step. Making the decision to abandon their sect and flee was not an easy task.

For a while, everyone fell into silence.

Meng Zhang broke the silence and looked at Aunt Jin with great caution, asking, "Senior, does Qiaoshou Sect have any treasure that can contend with a Third Rank demon beast?" Qiaoshou Sect's background was mysterious, and even Fei Hongzi didn't dare to be careless with them. When they fought against Forest Spring Watch last time, Aunt Jin had revealed items that could resist pseudo-Third Rank beings.

Meng Zhang had some hope in Aunt Jin.

Without any hesitation, Aunt Jin replied, "Sect Master Meng, you overestimate this old woman. How could our mere Foundation Building sect possess a treasure to resist a Third Rank demon beast?"

Aunt Jin wore a bitter smile that didn't seem like a lie. Meng Zhang had asked Shocking ThunderSpirit General about the matter when they conversed, inquiring if he and Deep EarthSpirit General had any means to counter a Third Rank demon beast. Shocking ThunderSpirit General clearly told him that even if they risked their lives, they could at most fight against a Foundation Building late stage cultivator, but facing a Third Rank demon beast was beyond their capabilities.

Upon hearing the negative response from Aunt Jin, Meng Zhang's heart sank.

Seeing Meng Zhang's despondent expression, Jin Qiao'er hesitated for a moment before carefully speaking, "On my person, I have two Yin Thunder items left by a senior. The senior said that if a Gold Core senior bullied me, using their Cultivation Base to oppress me, I could use these Yin Thunder items to teach them a lesson."

Jin Qiao'er didn't reveal who the senior was, but to possess Yin Thunder items capable of harming a Gold Core Daoist Master, she was likely not from Qiaoshou Sect.

Meng Zhang's spirits lifted upon hearing Jin Qiao'er's words. However, both Aunt Jin and Jin Qigu glared at Jin Qiao'er with reproach, clearly blaming her for bringing out these two Yin Thunder items. As Jin Qiao'er spoke, she took out two black spheres the size of fists.

The experienced Shocking ThunderSpirit General glanced at them and said, "To refine these two Yin Thunder items, the cultivator must possess at least a Cultivation Base at the mid-stage of Gold Core. When detonated, they can indeed leave an ordinary Gold Core Daoist Master embarrassed or even lightly injured. However, using these two Yin Thunder items to defeat a Third Rank demon beast falls short by quite a bit."

Shocking ThunderSpirit General used to possess the power of Gold Core, so his judgment should be reliable. After waiting for a moment and seeing that no one else spoke up, Yang Xueyi slowly began to speak.

"I have a rune weapon left by a Gold Core senior from Purple Gold Sect. After many years of hard cultivation, I have barely grasped its mysteries."

"As long as we have six Foundation Building cultivators, we can barely activate this rune weapon. With its power, we should be able to contend with the Third Rank demon beast."

As Yang Xueyi spoke, he took out the bamboo scroll passed down in his Yang Family.

This treasure led to Yang Family's extermination, falling into the hands of Green Bamboo MountainSect Master Azure Bamboo, and was later recovered by Yang Xueyi.

Shocking ThunderSpirit General picked up the bamboo scroll and discussed it with Deep EarthSpirit General before saying, "If six Foundation Building late-stage cultivators simultaneously activate this rune weapon, they should be able to contend with the Third Rank demon beast."

Among the cultivators from both sects, Meng Zhang was the only one at Foundation Building late stage, and it was almost impossible to find six others at the same level.

"If we were to activate this rune weapon, we don't know how long we could sustain it, nor if we could drive away the Third Rank demon beast. There's at most a 20% chance of success," Shocking ThunderSpirit General continued, giving his judgment.

Once again, everyone fell into silence, as the decision between fighting and fleeing was not an easy one to make.

Chapter 384: Encircled and Killed

A giant lizard was slowly crawling on the ground thousands of miles away from the original mountain gate of the Golden Blade Sect. Unlike other Third Rank demonic beasts, it did not have a large number of fellow beasts serving it.

The giant lizard, known as Demon General, was also a dominant figure in the Demon Wind Gobi and had roamed the region for many years before joining forces with Lion Demon General. It commanded a vast and powerful group of lizard beasts.

After being seriously injured by the talisman of Fei Shi Daoist Master, the Demon General's wounds were severe and refused to heal for a long time. Even when Lion Demon General mobilized the demonic beasts of Demon Wind Gobi for a large-scale invasion of the Endless Sea of Sand, it had to temporarily avoid battle to allow its injuries to heal.

Just like how humans hunted demonic beasts and utilized their fur, flesh, and blood, the physical bodies of human cultivators had a significant effect on these creatures. It was said that consuming a large amount of human cultivator's flesh and blood could enhance the potential of demonic beasts, heal injuries, and improve their Cultivation Base.

Therefore, the enmity between demonic beasts and humans was not just about competing for living space but also viewing each other as precious resources and heavenly materials.

The Demon General, unable to recover from its injuries, thought about consuming human flesh and blood to heal itself. Most Third Rank demonic beasts had intelligence not inferior to ordinary humans, and the Demon General had some understanding of the current situation in the Endless Sea of Sand.

While Flying Swan Sect was being engaged on the frontlines, other areas of the Endless Sea of Sand were relatively empty. The Demon Wind Gobi shared borders with many regions, providing ample opportunity to bypass Flying Swan Sect and launch a direct invasion.

Thus, the Demon General selected the territory of Qiaoshou Sect as the breakthrough point. It planned to reach there, devour a large number of human cultivators, and heal its wounds.

Apart from ruling its own tribe, the Demon General also commanded other demonic beast tribes. It dispatched its own tribe to lead other tribes and launch a massive invasion on Qiaoshou Sect's territory.

The Demon General's tribe included more than five Second Rank giant lizards and countless First Rank ones. The Demon General was not interested in ordinary mortals; it sought Cultivator's flesh and blood.

Though separated by a thousand miles, the Demon General had been closely monitoring the situation ahead and occasionally issuing commands. It hid behind the massive demonic beast army, even splitting it into two forces to avoid revealing its full strength and scaring away human cultivators.

Every action taken by the demonic beast army after entering the area was geared towards one goal to attract and entangle as many human cultivators as possible. The Demon General hoped to exterminate all the cultivators, preventing future pursuits to find a source of flesh and blood.

Originally, the Demon General intended to wait longer, hoping to attract more human cultivators to the area. It didn't care how many demonic beasts would perish during this process. As long as its injuries were healed, it was willing to sacrifice its own tribe.

Yesterday, a human cultivator seemed to have discovered its presence and even recognized its rank. If it continued waiting in the rear, the human cultivators might have already started fleeing.

At this point, the Demon General no longer cared if its actions would alarm the human cultivators. After some contemplation, it began heading towards the original mountain gate of the Golden Blade Sect.

Once it arrived there, it could easily break through the Human Clan's protective formation, leading numerous demonic beasts to attack the enemy's gate directly. The Demon General quickened its pace, despite its massive size and the burden of severe injuries.

It was in no mood to fly and chose to sprint on the ground, rushing toward its destination.

Before it had covered a hundred miles, six Foundation Building cultivators descended from the high sky, lowering their flight altitude as they flew towards it. The Demon General glanced at them dismissively.

A mere few Foundation Building cultivators, even if their numbers increased slightly, were not worth its attention. The fact that food had come to its doorstep delighted the Demon General, and it decided to savor every last bit of these obedient morsels without any waste.

Yang Xueyi led the way, throwing a bamboo slip into the air. The slip transformed into six small bamboo forests, surrounding the Demon General.

Yang Xueyi, Meng Zhang, Shocking ThunderSpirit General, Deep EarthSpirit General, Aunt Jin, and Jin Qiao'er each entered one of the bamboo forests. With the power of the bamboo forests, the six Foundation Building cultivators' strength increased significantly, and they launched a joint attack on the Demon General.

The sky was filled with raging winds, blazing fires, and thunderous serpents as the intense battle unfolded. Yang Xueyi wielded a rune weapon that had been passed down from a Gold Core Daoist Master of the Purple Gold Sect, displaying its might and pressuring the Demon General tremendously.

The Demon General continuously rammed and thrashed inside the bamboo forests, resisting the onslaught from the group. It was a grueling battle, and each cultivator faced severe challenges.

Before the attack, Aunt Jin took out six Qiaoshou Sect's ancestral Ten Complete Great Nourishing Pills. After taking the pills, the six Foundation Building cultivators' injuries healed instantly, and their bodies recovered to perfect condition.

Though Aunt Jin had some doubts about Meng Zhang's decision to initiate the attack, once she stepped onto the battlefield, she put aside all her concerns and poured all her strength into the fight. The rune weapon, if in the hands of a Gold Core Daoist Master, could easily suppress Third Rank Lower Grade demonic beasts. But with only six Foundation Building cultivators, they could barely activate the rune weapon.

Even so, they inflicted enormous damage on the Demon General, overwhelming it.

The battle raged on for a day and a night, from dusk till dawn, and from dawn till dusk again. Finally, at the cost of heavy injuries, the Demon General managed to break three bamboo forests.

Deep EarthSpirit General, Shocking ThunderSpirit General, and Aunt Jin were seriously wounded. Seeing the Demon General about to break the bamboo forest where Jin Qiao'er was located, Aunt Jin forcefully suppressed her injuries, temporarily raising her Cultivation Base.

With her original mid-stage Foundation Building Cultivation Base, Aunt Jin forcefully raised it to late-stage Foundation Building and collided head-on with the Demon General.

Aunt Jin was torn apart, her body shattered.

Jin Qiao'er endured the pain and seized the opportunity, using two Yin Thunder to blind the Demon General's eyes.

In the end, Meng Zhang delivered the final blow. He unleashed the power of the Golden Crow Lantern, releasing the Solar True Flame, burning a hole through the Demon General's head, and taking its life.

Risking their lives, the group managed to encircle and successfully kill the Demon General.

Chapter 385: Monster Pill

When everyone discussed their strategy before the battle, they heard that the chances of winning against the Third Rank Monster Beast were very slim given the current situation. However, this judgment didn't discourage anyone. Among the people present, except for Aunt Jin, the other cultivators were relatively young and had a competitive spirit.

Both Shocking ThunderSpirit General and Deep EarthSpirit General were former Gold Core experts, and even though they had fallen from grace, they still carried some of their past arrogance. Facing a mere Third Rank Monster Beast, they looked down on it psychologically.

Especially the young cultivators from the Taiyi Sect, they were quite proud and absolutely unwilling to flee without a fight. Meng Zhang pondered for a long time before making the final decision.

"We can't act cowardly and run away before the enemy even arrives," he thought. "Taiyi Sect will face many challenges in the future, confronting even stronger foes. How can we expect to compete in the Cultivation World if we always cower and avoid trying?"

Meng Zhang decided they would first engage in a battle with the Third Rank Monster Beast. If they found it impossible to resist, then they would consider retreating. They needed to take a chance and give their all, so they wouldn't have any regrets.

Now that they had decided to confront the Third Rank Monster Beast, they needed to figure out how to exploit their strengths and the enemy's weaknesses to the fullest. After much discussion, they came up with a bold strategy.

They decided to leave a few Foundation Building cultivators behind at the mountain gate, leading the Refining Qi disciples to guard it. Six of the strongest Foundation Building cultivators would wield Yang Xueyi's rune weapon and actively confront the Third Rank Monster Beast in battle.

The Third Rank Monster Beast not only had formidable strength itself but also possessed strong commanding power over its underlings, the Monster Army. If it appeared among the Monster Army, even without directly attacking, the fighting power of the entire army would greatly increase, making them much harder to deal with.

Thus, they absolutely could not allow it to join forces with the Monster Army. Since it was currently still a thousand miles away, they needed to seize the opportunity to engage it while it was alone and push it back.

So, Meng Zhang and the five other Foundation Building cultivators stealthily left the mountain gate and daringly launched an attack, actively seeking out the Third Rank Monster Beast.

The outcome of the battle was unexpectedly good. They thought driving back the Third Rank Monster Beast would be a success, but they managed to kill it on the spot, completely removing this major threat.

However, Aunt Jin died in the battle, which was an unexpected tragedy. Jin Qiao'er, despite being a Foundation Building cultivator herself, almost collapsed upon witnessing the death of her closest elder. She carefully collected Aunt Jin's body and preserved it with great care.

After a short rest, Meng Zhang realized he needed to attend to the urgent matter of recalling everyone to the mountain gate. He had initially intended to leave Jin Qiao'er behind, but she showed her resolute side and insisted on continuing to fight, tears still in her eyes. Meng Zhang thought that perhaps intense combat might help dispel her sorrow.

He then decided to leave the severely injured Deep Earth Spirit General and Shocking Thunder Spirit General behind while the rest of them hurried back to reinforce the mountain gate.

Third Rank Monster Beasts were rare in the Endless Sea of Sand, except for the Demon Wind Gobi; they were seldom seen elsewhere. Every part of a Third Rank Monster Beast was valuable; its flesh and blood could be used to create precious spirit elixirs, its fur could be used for talismans, and most importantly, its Monster Core was extremely precious as the main ingredient for refining the Foundation Building Pill.

With a Third Rank Monster Beast's Monster Core as the main ingredient, the requirements for the other auxiliary ingredients were not too high. With Taiyi Sect's capabilities, they could gather all the necessary materials. Once Shi Changqing's injuries were healed, and he completely expelled the pill toxin, they could begin the alchemy process.

Qiaoshou Sect suffered the loss of Aunt Jin, and although Jin Qiao'er didn't mention claiming any spoils of war, they still made significant contributions. Meng Zhang was a fair person and planned to compensate Qiaoshou Sect after successfully refining the Foundation Building Pill.

As Meng Zhang was about to leave, he sensed some movements from his spirit pets in the spirit beast pouch he carried. Two spirit pets, Zhui Dian (Chasing Lightning) and Liu Li (Colored Glaze), jumped out of the pouch. They hesitated while looking at the gigantic corpse of the Demon General, still exuding a powerful aura.

Meng Zhang chuckled and scolded, "You two are usually so brave, but now you're acting like cowards? You have no courage to face a mere corpse?" The two clever spirit pets understood what Meng Zhang meant.

Upon hearing his words, they growled indignantly and fearlessly pounced on the Demon General's body to feast upon it. The flesh and blood of a Third Rank Monster Beast were rare delicacies for beings of their level.

With Deep Earth Spirit General and Shocking Thunder Spirit General guarding them, there was no need to worry about their safety. Before leaving, Meng Zhang used some effort to cut off the Demon General's long tongue. Then, he prepared to leave, taking Yang Xueyi and Jin Qiao'er with him, to rush back to the mountain gate.

When they arrived, the defensive formation was under immense pressure because they had lost a large portion of their fighting force. The cultivators maintaining the great formation were struggling greatly. In just this short period, many Refining Qi cultivators were completely exhausted and collapsed, unable to move.

If it weren't for the timely return of Meng Zhang and the others, some cultivators might have been drained dry by the great formation and died here.

Even though Meng Zhang and his companions were also exhausted and had lost a considerable amount of true qi, they were still Foundation Building cultivators. As they joined the defense, the other cultivators felt a significant relief, and some of those on the verge of collapse found a moment of respite.

However, there was an unexpected change in the battlefield dynamics. Shortly after the death of the Demon General, several Second Rank Giant Lizards in the Monster Army seemed to sense something and suddenly became extremely aggressive. The enraged lizards roared fiercely, driving their fellow monsters to fiercely attack the great formation.

Chapter 386: Let Loose the Channel

Due to the relationship with the Third Rank Demon General, who commands this army of demonic beasts, the Giant Lizard tribe under its control holds a special position within the ranks of the demonic army, possessing significant authority. When the Demon General is absent, these Second Rank Giant Lizards take charge and lead the demonic army in its place.

So, when all the Second Rank Giant Lizards went crazy and led their tribes in a desperate attack against the Guardian Mountain's great formation, the entire demonic army was forcibly driven to fiercely assault the Guardian Mountain's forces. Even other demonic tribes dared not openly defy the orders and obediently rushed in to fight with all their might.

The frenzied attacks from the demonic army exerted immense pressure on the Guardian Mountain's great formation, pushing it to its limits. Wen Qiansun, who was in charge of the great formation, communicated with Meng Zhang and informed him that the Guardian Mountain's great formation could only hold out for at most half an hour under such circumstances. Without the protection of the great formation, the cultivators from both sects would undoubtedly face certain defeat against the demonic army. Meng Zhang quickly inquired if Wen Qiansun had any countermeasures. Wen Qiansun promptly provided an answer: they could deliberately open a few passages in the great formation, through which the demonic army, out of habit, would mostly pour in and not focus their full attack on other areas of the great formation. Cultivators could then gather at the end of these

three passages and, with the support of the great formation's power, block the onslaught of the demonic beasts.

Upon hearing Wen Qiansun's strategy, Meng Zhang only took a moment to consider before deciding to proceed accordingly. After a tense arrangement, Wen Qiansun voluntarily opened the passages in the Guardian Mountain's great formation. There were three passages that cut through the great formation, providing direct access to its interior.

The keen demonic army immediately noticed this change, assuming that the human cultivators could no longer hold on. Consequently, the demonic army split into three groups and charged into the three passages. They poured in like a raging tide, packing the passages so tightly that they were nearly trampled on by their own comrades.

The passages extended from the foot of the mountain to its waist, not very long, just seven or eight miles. Given the speed of the demonic army, they quickly reached the end. At the end of each passage, cultivators from the three sects were already waiting in formation.

At Wen Qiansun's command, countless talismans filled the air, shooting toward the incoming demonic army. The Taiyi Sect was relatively wealthy in the Endless Sea of Sand, and when equipping its disciples, they spared no expense. Over time, the two sects had accumulated a considerable number of talismans and pills. Meng Zhang had even made several purchases from Great Wind City, bolstering their resources.

Especially after the battle with the Flying Swan Sect and the demonic army, the two sects had spared no effort in preparations, amassing various war supplies. Although the recent conflict with the Earthfire Sect had depleted a significant portion of their resources, they still had enough to handle one or two major battles.

Talisman attacks temporarily stalled the demonic army's advance, but the beasts seemed endless, making it challenging for the cultivators to see an end to the onslaught. Continuously releasing true qi, even in small amounts, took its toll, and the cultivators' true qi was almost depleted. Some cultivators, in desperation, consumed too many true qi-restoring pills in a short time, suffering from pill toxin and needing to be taken away for treatment.

While many demonic beasts had been killed, more continuously filled the ranks, trampling over the bodies of their fallen comrades to continue their charge. Despite the bolstering power of the great formation, the cultivators found it challenging to hold on.

Witnessing another wave of demonic beasts approaching, many cultivators were already exhausted, and it seemed they could no longer withstand the assault. Suddenly, a large group of puppets rushed out from behind the cultivators, actively confronting the oncoming demonic army.

Ever since Meng Zhang encountered Shang Family from Clever Machine Sect in Great Wind City, he had purchased a large number of puppets. With Gu Yue Huaidie's assurance, as long as Taiyi Sect could afford the spirit stones, First Rank and Second Rank puppets were freely available. After bringing the purchased puppets back to Taiyi Sect, they were warmly welcomed by the disciples.

These versatile puppets, in addition to their combat prowess, also enhanced the disciples' practical abilities during training. Realizing the unexpected effectiveness of these puppets, Taiyi Sect spared no expense in acquiring them when they had enough spirit stones. By now, they had over ten Second Rank puppets and several hundred First Rank puppets.

Although these puppets lacked flesh and blood and didn't experience fear or hesitation, they executed their pre-set commands mechanically, charging tirelessly at the enemy. In an open area, these puppets' slow reactions and rigid movements might be exposed as drawbacks. However, within the narrow passages, both sides found it challenging to maneuver freely. The puppets, sticking to their straightforward actions and a few moves, surprisingly proved to be very effective.

The puppets engaged in bloody battles with the demonic beasts, resulting in numerous casualties on both sides. However, even if the puppets were missing limbs or had their bodies severely damaged, as long as their cores remained intact, they would continue fighting the enemy. Even if they had to crawl or roll, they would still willingly confront the enemy.

Seeing the efficiency of the puppets, Meng Zhang found them quite expensive to operate, as it required a significant amount of spirit stones to drive them. Nonetheless, compared to losing Taiyi Sect's disciples, he believed it was well worth the cost even if it meant depleting their reserves of spirit stones.

After the initial frenzy, many demonic beasts began to grow more cautious, instinctively feeling fear. Especially when Meng Zhang, with the assistance of others, charged into the midst of the demonic army, activated the Golden Crow Lantern, and directly killed two Second Rank Giant Lizards.

Then, flying high in the air, Meng Zhang took out the tongue of the Third Rank Giant Lizard, waving it vigorously in front of the numerous demonic beasts. The fate of the Demon General Giant Lizard could be easily imagined from the severed tongue, which still exuded a strong aura, leaving no room for doubt.

Moreover, the tongue was still fresh, and the aura of the Demon General Giant Lizard remained potent, evidently proving its authenticity. A few remaining Second Rank demonic beasts, still possessing some reasoning, began to lead their tribes to retreat.

After suffering heavy losses among the Giant Lizard tribe, they were no longer capable of suppressing other demonic tribes. Without the commanding presence of the Third Rank Demon General, they naturally lost their authority over the other demonic tribes. As a result, several demonic tribes began to retreat, causing the demonic army as a whole to fall into disarray.

Taking advantage of the situation, Meng Zhang led the cultivators from both sects to launch a counterattack and quickly routed the remaining demonic beasts. Now, the entire demonic army could no longer hold its ground and started retreating like a receding tide.

Chapter 387: Following up a victory with hot pursuit

Seeing the retreating demon army, even though our side was already exhausted, under the leadership of Meng Zhang, all able cultivators rallied their remaining strength and launched a fierce pursuit, giving their all to chase down the enemy.

Chasing the enemy during their retreat allows us to achieve maximum results with minimal cost. Often, it is during pursuit that we can inflict the most significant damage on the enemy.

However, despite the demon army's retreat, their strength still remains, so we dare not pursue too far. We merely drive them away from the protective "Great Formation of the Mountain" and stop the pursuit for the time being.

Once back outside the protective formation, we tend to our wounds and recover, temporarily unable to launch large-scale attacks.

After the demon army moved away from the protective formation, internal conflicts soon erupted among the various demon tribes. These tribes had deep-seated contradictions that had been suppressed while they were under the dominance of the Third Rank demon beasts. Now, without the pressure from the Third Rank demon beasts, their longstanding conflicts burst forth.

Especially the Giant Lizard tribe, they had always relied on the influence of the Giant Lizard Demon General to oppress other tribes. The oppressed demon tribes had no choice but to endure silently.

Now, due to Meng Zhang's focused attacks, the Giant Lizard tribe suffered heavy losses and was unable to continue their dominance over other tribes, struggling even to protect themselves.

The tribes that held grudges against the Giant Lizard tribe were on the verge of confrontation.

Fortunately, the Second Rank demon beasts, though lacking the intelligence of human cultivators, still possessed some level of wisdom, not entirely irredeemable fools. The fact that the human cultivators remained a formidable threat made them suppress their impulses and refrain from internal strife.

With the death of the Third Rank demon beasts, the demon army lost its will to fight. Especially the smarter demon beasts realized that if humans could kill the Giant Lizard Demon General, then their strength must be greater than what they currently saw. Consequently, they hastily fled with their tribes, returning to the Demon Wind Gobi as if running for their lives.

Under the lead of these demon tribes, most of the demon army scattered away, leading to the disintegration of the once formidable force.

Most demon tribes returned to the Demon Wind Gobi, a few scattered and disappeared without a trace, and a tiny minority, including the Giant Lizard tribe, remained in the area, still unwilling to give up.

After a period of rest and recovery for the cultivators inside the protective formation, under Meng Zhang's leadership, they once again emerged from the formation and directly attacked the remaining demon tribes nearby.

These small groups of demon tribes were not particularly strong and couldn't even escape from the attacks of human cultivators, with almost all of them being killed on the spot.

With the mountain gate unblocked, this battle against the demon army can be considered a preliminary victory.

Both Taiyi Sect and Qiaoshou Sect suffered heavy losses in terms of resources. Aunt Jin, a mid-Foundation Building cultivator, died in battle, and many Refining Qi stage disciples were lost.

Such losses greatly saddened both sects, especially the loss of Aunt Jin, which dealt a heavy blow to Qiaoshou Sect.

However, despite the significant losses, the gains were also substantial. Not to mention the corpse of the Third Rank Giant Lizard, the area around the "Great Formation of the Mountain" was covered with layers of valuable demon beast corpses.

Demon beast corpses are precious cultivation resources, utilized in many aspects of cultivation and the hundred arts.

Previously, in the barren Endless Sea of Sand, there had never been such a large number of demon beast corpses at once.

By carefully cleaning the battlefield, both sects could recover some of their resource losses from these demon beast corpses.

Clearing such a large number of demon beast corpses was not an easy task, and there was also the matter of how to divide and process the demon beast corpses, which required knowledge and expertise to maximize their value as spoils of war.

Meng Zhang selected several Foundation Building cultivators who were in better condition to continue pursuing the fleeing demon tribes.

The rest of the cultivators, while cleaning the battlefield, focused on recovering and restoring their strength as quickly as possible.

Meng Zhang and the selected Foundation Building cultivators flew a considerable distance, catching sight of the retreating demon tribes.

Although numerous in number and formidable during their attack, as they retreated, they became a burden, slowing down their escape.

Meng Zhang and his group did not rush to engage the demon tribes head-on; instead, they slowly weakened them, peeling them away like an onion, layer by layer. When a demon tribe was weakened enough, they would swiftly move in and annihilate the entire tribe.

With their agile and strategic tactics, Meng Zhang and his team quickly achieved significant results.

Only when they had depleted nearly half of their true qi and were physically exhausted did they stop the attacks and return to recuperate.

Subsequently, cultivators from both sects were extremely busy.

They had to clean up the battlefield, harvest useful parts from the demon beast corpses, and chase down the fleeing demons while trying to preserve them whenever possible. Especially for those demon tribes with relatively intact numbers, they became Meng Zhang's primary targets.

He led disciples from both sects, working to weaken and scatter those demon tribes, minimizing their threat.

With the sheer number of demons and their scattered retreat, Meng Zhang didn't have time to deal with all of them. His main focus was on pursuing the major demon groups.

Many demons followed their original path, fleeing deep into the Demon Wind Gobi.

Meng Zhang and his team didn't dare to venture too deeply into the Demon Wind Gobi to avoid encountering other powerful demon beasts. If another Third Rank demon beast appeared, they would be unable to withstand it.

The Giant Lizard Demon General was already seriously injured, which gave Meng Zhang and the others an opportunity.

If the Giant Lizard Demon General were in peak condition, all their methods would be ineffective against it.

After driving the remaining demon forces deep into the Demon Wind Gobi, the cultivators of both sects focused on chasing down the scattered fleeing demons.

These demons were numerous and dispersed. Some of them were already outside Qiaoshou Sect's territory and had entered Taiyi Sect's territory.

It was foreseeable that these demons would cause great trouble to both sects' territories for a long time to come. Clearing them out would be the main task for the sects in the near future.

Deep Earth Spirit General and Shocking Thunder Spirit General dealt with the Giant Lizard Demon General's corpse and returned after slightly recovering from their injuries.

As for the little one, Zhui Dian (Chasing Lightning), it had consumed too much Third Rank demon beast blood and meat, falling into a deep slumber. The two Spirit Generals brought it back with them.

Meng Zhang carefully took care of the two little ones and then continued to be busy.

After paying a huge price and finally defeating the demon army, there were still many troublesome matters awaiting Meng Zhang.

Chapter 388: Truce

After defeating the demon army, the cultivators of Taiyi Sect and Qiaoshou Sect worked diligently for a whole month to clean up the battlefield and basically clear out the large groups of demons in both territories.

Despite their best efforts, there were still some small groups of demons roaming the sects' territories and even escaping to nearby areas. As for the isolated demons, their numbers were even greater. These demons posed a significant threat to the nearby oases, endangering both ordinary people and low-ranking cultivators.

Relying solely on the disciples of the two sects, it was not an easy task to completely cleanse such vast territories in a short period.

In Singing Sand City and Firewell Market, many loose cultivators stayed behind. Both sects offered rewards to encourage these loose cultivators to join the expedition teams to hunt down the fleeing demons. Killing demons not only yielded spoils of war but also allowed them to claim rewards from the sects. Why would they not take up this opportunity?

Consequently, groups of loose cultivators left the market and headed to the surrounding areas to hunt down various demons.

Originally, according to Zhao Liefeng's orders, Taiyi Sect and Qiaoshou Sect should have immediately rushed to the frontline to join the battle against the Flying Swan Sect and the demon

army. However, both sects suffered heavy losses, and their cultivators were exhausted. After such a long period of recuperation, they were still not fully restored.

Furthermore, after experiencing two bloody battles in succession, Meng Zhang and others also harbored the intention to avoid further conflict and were unwilling to engage in another life-and-death battle on the frontline for the Flying Swan Sect.

Thus, Meng Zhang used all sorts of methods to delay the time and didn't move towards the frontline for a long time. There was no need to fabricate any excuses; the reasons were readily available.

Many demon groups had not withdrawn and were still facing off against the cultivators of the two sects. A large number of demons had even invaded the territories of the two sects, causing significant damage. Both sects needed to spend a considerable amount of time and effort to eliminate these demons.

In short, Taiyi Sect and Qiaoshou Sect were both tied up by the demons, unable to spare any manpower or resources to support the frontline.

Just as Meng Zhang continued to find ways to delay and avoid engaging in battles with the demon army, the situation on the frontline where the Flying Swan Sect and the demon army clashed underwent a change.

In a sudden outbreak of bloody fighting, with the support of others, Fei Jiang Daoist Master paid a heavy price by being severely injured but managed to kill the Third Rank giant python.

Upon hearing news of the death of the Third Rank lizard Demon General before, Lion Demon General was now losing another Third Rank demon, and the thought of retreat began to arise in his mind.

The demon army had invaded the Endless Sea of Sand and had been battling the Flying Swan Sect for a long time without gaining much advantage, while sustaining heavy losses. It had significantly reduced their strength.

Lion Demon General was not without enemies in Demon Wind Gobi. If they suffered too much loss here, it might give the enemy an opportunity.

After another frustrated attack, Lion Demon General finally decided to retreat. The demon army withdrew swiftly like receding tides. With several Third Rank demons in command, their retreat did not appear chaotic at all, leaving no chance for the Flying Swan Sect cultivators to pursue them.

Seeing that the enemy had not revealed any weaknesses and considering the heavy losses and exhaustion on their side during this period, the high-ranking members of the Flying Swan Sect could only watch the demon army withdraw and were unable to launch a pursuit.

Nevertheless, no matter what, the retreat of the demon army brought temporary peace to the frontline, and the Flying Swan Sect could finally free up their hands.

After the demon army's retreat, Xianghe Daoist Master and Yunhe Daoist Master, despite Fei Yu Daoist Master's enthusiastic retention, accepted the remaining rewards and prepared to leave. Helping the Flying Swan Sect fight against the demon army was acceptable, but continuing to stay and assist in the battle against the Fire Cloud Sect was absolutely out of the question.

Within the Jiuqu League, despite their internal conflicts and even the desire to devour their enemies, they maintained a united front in front of outsiders and must not easily incite internal strife.

After Yunhe Daoist Master and Xianghe Daoist Master left, Fei Jiang Daoist Master had to enter seclusion for healing due to his serious injuries. Only Fei Yu Daoist Master remained, single-handedly holding the fort on the frontline.

Even though the demon army had retreated, Fei Yu Daoist Master dared not leave easily. If the demon army made a surprise return, he could at least resist for a while.

Near the entrance of the Flying Swan Sect, six Gold Core Daoist Masters had been engaged in a prolonged confrontation. Despite their long engagement, none could gain an advantage over the others, resulting in a stalemate.

These six individuals maintained contact, not fighting nor leaving, waiting for an opportunity to exploit each other's weaknesses.

After the demon army's retreat, the three Gold Core Daoist Masters from the Fire Cloud Sect knew that their chance had passed, so they quickly withdrew and left the area.

The two Gold Core Daoist Masters from the Qi Family had no intention of pursuing, while Fei Shi Daoist Master, with no backup, could only watch as the sworn enemies of his sect left so easily.

Thus, the conflict in the Endless Sea of Sand came to a temporary truce.

In a large desert not too far from the borders of Fire Cloud Sect and Flying Swan Sect, Jin Li Daoist Master, who had been wandering there all this time, finally breathed a sigh of relief upon receiving news of the ceasefire from the rear.

She took out a scroll and shook it vigorously. When she opened the scroll, it revealed a painting of the Ten Thousand Li Desert. In the vast expanse of yellow sand, one could see some small black dots moving around.

Jin Li Daoist Master spread the entire scroll in the air and performed a spell to activate it.

After a while, the Fire Cloud Sect disciples who had been trapped in the painting for many days suddenly felt their vision blur, and they found themselves in a different world, back outside.

During the inexplicable period of being trapped in the painting, the Fire Cloud Sect disciples had used all their strength and various methods but couldn't escape.

These disciples, coming from major sects, may not have had impressive cultivation bases, but they were insightful. They quickly realized that they had been trapped in a small independent world using extraordinary methods.

Having brought ample supplies for this expedition, the cultivators were quite resilient. Although they felt somewhat mentally fatigued after being trapped for so long, they hadn't suffered any other harm.

Upon escaping the painting, the Fire Cloud Sect disciples knew that they had encountered an unmatched expert. Therefore, they didn't dare linger and immediately fled back to Fire Cloud Sect.

Seeing the Fire Cloud Sect cultivators escape, Jin Li Daoist Master also breathed a sigh of relief.

If these cultivators had stayed or continued forward, she wouldn't have any good ways to stop them. Entrapping them in the Yellow Sand Ten Thousand Li Chart was already the limit. Trying to interfere further would only bring unnecessary trouble.

Chapter 389: After the War

Fire Cloud Sect cultivators voluntarily withdrew, which was the best outcome for Daoist Master Jin Li. He looked into the distance, sighed, and quickly left the area.

For now, the events that occurred here have not been transmitted to the Flying Swan Sect.

Upon receiving the news of the retreat of the monster army and the restoration of peace on the frontlines in his own territory, Meng Zhang, a cultivator of the Taiyi Sect, finally breathed a sigh of relief. Not only him but almost all cultivators from the Taiyi Sect were greatly relieved and overwhelmed with joy. Finally, they would no longer be conscripted by the Flying Swan Sect and forced to fight the monster army on the frontlines.

In this great war, both Taiyi Sect and Qiaoshou Sect suffered heavy losses, but they also gained substantial rewards. Besides the numerous monster corpses, they managed to seize the territory of Earthfire Sect, a significant gain. Though Flying Swan Sect managed to repel the monster army's invasion, they suffered heavy losses, and even their mountain gate was destroyed. Now, they were busy restoring their vitality and rebuilding the mountain gate, leaving them little time to attend to other matters.

The Earthfire Sect was too far away from the Flying Swan Sect, and they temporarily lacked the capability to manage it. Even the former Twin Success Valley and Green Bamboo Mountain had insufficient manpower from the Flying Swan Sect to oversee them. Currently, only a few Taiyi Sect disciples remained in those places, taking care of the spiritual fields and picking up debris from the ruins.

It seemed that Flying Swan Sect was starting to contract its forces, abandoning many peripheral strongholds and consolidating all its power within its core territory. The losses they suffered were too devastating, leaving Flying Swan Sect weakened and vulnerable.

At this time, Flying Swan Sect needed to concentrate its strength to face the challenges that lay ahead. Although the monster army had temporarily retreated, they still had their main forces intact and could return at any moment. Moreover, the inexplicable withdrawal of the Fire Cloud Sect cultivators raised uncertainty about their potential return.

Even the Northern Desert Qi Family, which had just helped Flying Swan Sect, was not to be trusted. Their true intentions were unclear, and they could pose a threat to the weakened Flying Swan Sect, making it difficult to confront external enemies or even suppress Northern Desert Qi Family.

The high-ranking members of Flying Swan Sect now desired peace to last as long as possible, allowing enough time for their new generation of cultivators to grow stronger. Meng Zhang from Taiyi Sect shared the same aspiration.

With the incorporation of Earthfire Sect's territory, Taiyi Sect gained additional oases and a larger population. Given enough time, some of these mortal inhabitants would awaken their spiritual roots and join Taiyi Sect, compensating for the recent losses.

The restoration of peace in the Endless Sea of Sand was a great boon for all cultivation forces in the region. Everyone urgently needed time to recuperate and recover their strength.

Seeing that the monster army showed no signs of returning, the higher-ups of Flying Swan Sect hesitated for a long time before finally disbursing the various cultivators conscripted for the war. These cultivators returned to their respective sects or families.

Upon returning to their own sect, the Land Walk Sect cultivators, who were neighbors with Earthfire Sect, found that their former territory had been taken over by others. During the war with the monster army, Land Walk Sect had suffered heavy losses, with over half of their main forces lost on the battlefield. Even those who returned safely to their sect were mostly injured.

With its current strength, Land Walk Sect did not dare to challenge Taiyi Sect. Although Taiyi Sect had employed some clever tactics, they still effectively annihilated Earthfire Sect. Faced with the powerful Taiyi Sect and their own significant losses, Land Walk Sect took the initiative to send envoys and made peace offerings. They even relinquished the disputed territory with Earthfire Sect and gave up some mining rights.

Taiyi Sect was not arrogant or overbearing and had shown interest in forming an alliance with Land Walk Sect against Earthfire Sect in the past. Now, although Earthfire Sect was no more, the two sects were willing to maintain friendly relations.

The situation in the Endless Sea of Sand had become increasingly unstable over the years, with frequent chaos and the demise of many sects with centuries of heritage, giving a sense of uncertainty. Having a good neighbor might not provide much immediate assistance, but it still held some value.

For the foreseeable future, the situation around Taiyi Sect remained relatively stable. Occasional small groups of monsters caused trouble, and there were occasional reports of monsters harming people, but nothing more serious.

Taiyi Sect made a concerted effort to exterminate the roaming monsters and significantly reduced their threat. Meng Zhang's foresight became evident at this time.

Within the Taiyi Sect's territory, the mortal oases had been equipped with various mechanical devices such as lightning crossbows and thunderous rifles, purchased from Clever Machine Sect's Shang Family. As long as the mortals were well-organized and controlled these mechanical devices, they posed a significant threat to low-level cultivators.

Several isolated low-level monsters were dispatched by these mechanical devices used by mortals, reducing their numbers. Taiyi Sect no longer needed their cultivators to personally deal with these threats, alleviating significant pressure.

In some remote oases, Taiyi Sect even deployed low-level puppets to ensure the safety of those areas. As long as the monsters were not in large groups, these few low-level monsters posed no threat to the oases.

Taiyi Sect entered a relatively peaceful period of development. Everyone in the sect was slowly repairing the damage caused by the war. The abundant harvest of various monster materials during the war had caused a plunge in their value. Monster materials held by major sects and forces had become less valuable.

Taiyi Sect organized surrounding cultivation forces, including Qiaoshou Sect and Land Walk Sect, and flew together in Second Rank flying vessels to Great Wind City. With the help of Gu Yue Youlan, Meng Zhang managed to sell these monster materials at a good price in the prosperous trading city of Great Wind City.

Great Wind City was capable of easily absorbing large amounts of monster materials. After selling the materials, they made significant purchases within Great Wind City before returning home.

Being able to connect with a powerful cultivation family like Gu Yue Family left the cultivators who traveled with Meng Zhang to Great Wind City amazed at his influential connections. Gu Yue Family's strength and reputation were renowned, even surpassing that of the Flying Swan Sect.

Furthermore, Gu Yue Family was one of the cultivation families in control of Great Wind City. The influence of Great Wind City was prominent within the Jiuqu League, overshadowing Fire Cloud Sect. These cultivators who journeyed to Great Wind City with Meng Zhang couldn't help but feel a sense of awe toward him, sensing the mystery behind his background.

Chapter 390: The Great Foundation Establishment

Meng Zhang traveled to Great Wind City this time, deliberately exposing the relationship between his Taiyi Sect and the Gu Yue Family, even if it meant exaggerating it. Of course, he had his own motives for doing so. Over the years, Meng Zhang had contemplated the development of Taiyi Sect on numerous occasions.

Considering Taiyi Sect's current strength, controlling such a vast territory was already quite challenging. There was currently no intention to expand further outward, nor was there enough power to encroach upon the territories of neighboring cultivation forces. Meng Zhang hoped to establish good relations with the surrounding cultivation forces, organizing an alliance where Taiyi Sect would play a leading role, and everyone would support one another. This alliance would come to each other's aid in crucial times and act together for significant endeavors.

Meng Zhang didn't expect this alliance to rival the Flying Swan Sect. He simply hoped it could be effective when facing invasions by demonic beasts or similar situations. For example, the alliance members would unite their strengths, follow unified commands, and act together. As for Taiyi Sect's current strength, it was more than enough to form such an alliance. However, Taiyi Sect's rise had been relatively short, and its influence was still not enough to gain the sincere respect of other factions.

By leveraging the reputation of the Gu Yue Family, the surrounding cultivation forces might regard Taiyi Sect more highly. It would make them believe that Taiyi Sect had a strong backing and powerful external support. However, creating an alliance outside the Flying Swan Sect's reach was currently impractical.

Meng Zhang had to consider whether the Flying Swan Sect would allow the existence of this alliance and how to handle relations with them if the alliance were established. These were all crucial matters that required careful handling.

Despite the Flying Swan Sect's current favorable attitude toward Taiyi Sect, it was mainly because they found Taiyi Sect useful in many ways, and Taiyi Sect did not pose a significant threat to them. If Taiyi Sect continued to grow and became a perceived threat to the Flying Swan Sect, the situation might change rapidly. In the Cultivation World, allegiances and enmities could shift quickly. Today's friends might become tomorrow's enemies; it was a common occurrence.

By revealing the relationship between Taiyi Sect and the Gu Yue Family, Meng Zhang also hoped that the Flying Swan Sect would think twice before confronting Taiyi Sect. Great Wind City was primarily focused on commerce and had no ambitions for territorial expansion or aggression against others. Nonetheless, its strength was formidable enough to crush many nearby cultivation forces. As a result, Taiyi Sect aimed to be on good terms with Great Wind City and its major cultivation families, avoiding unnecessary conflicts.

Meng Zhang returned from Great Wind City and, besides dealing with Taiyi Sect's affairs, devoted most of his time to cultivation. He had put a lot of effort into refining the two Heaven and Earth Spiritual Objects, Sunstone and Moonjade Liquid, he acquired from the Earthfire Sect's treasure trove.

The Foundation Building cultivators of Taiyi Sect had gone through a fierce battle with the Earthfire Sect and fought against the demonic beast army, leaving most of them severely injured and depleted of their energy. After the war, they spent a considerable amount of time recovering.

Finally, after more than two years in seclusion, Meng Zhang's senior disciple, Niu Dawei, successfully emerged from seclusion. Without relying on Foundation Building Pills, Niu Dawei's strong foundation and excellent aptitude allowed him to reach the Foundation Building stage. He became a Foundation Building cultivator with some achievements, qualifying him to participate in the battles of the Cultivation World.

Niu Dawei's successful Foundation Building not only added another Foundation Building expert to Taiyi Sect but also provided Meng Zhang with a reliable successor. Now, Meng Zhang could proudly declare that he finally had someone to carry on his legacy.

Despite being in his 60s, which was relatively young by Foundation Building cultivators' standards, Meng Zhang knew that unexpected events could happen in the treacherous Cultivation World. Among the current Foundation Building cultivators in Taiyi Sect, many were talented, but none satisfied Meng Zhang enough to be the ideal successor for the Sect Master position. Only his personal disciple, Niu Dawei, impressed him in every aspect, making him the most suitable candidate to inherit the position of Taiyi Sect's Sect Master. Of course, as long as Meng Zhang was still there, Niu Dawei would not ascend to that position. Nevertheless, Meng Zhang could start grooming him for the future.

Before Niu Dawei's Foundation Building, Meng Zhang hadn't let him get too involved in the Sect's affairs, even though he was the senior disciple. Now, with Niu Dawei's successful Foundation Building and extended lifespan, he had more time to spend on Sect matters.

Following the usual protocol, Meng Zhang promoted Niu Dawei to the rank of an elder in the Sect and started assigning him various tasks to assist him in managing the Sect's affairs. Despite his

simple and honest appearance, Niu Dawei's insights were profound, and he quickly became proficient in handling various matters within the Sect. Meng Zhang was pleased with his performance and gradually increased his responsibilities to help with more Sect affairs.

As for Meng Zhang's own cultivation, he now had more time to focus on refining his two spirit pets, Zhui Dian (Chasing Lightning) and Liu Li (Colored Glaze). After they had devoured a large number of Third Rank demonic beasts' flesh and blood during their last battle, they had entered a period of dormancy.

After more than a year, the two little creatures finally woke up. Upon awakening, they had advanced to the Second Rank, becoming formidable Second Rank spirit beasts capable of rivaling ordinary Foundation Building cultivators. Furthermore, they not only improved their existing talents but also gained new ones.

Zhui Dian's new talent allowed it to emit a special yellow light from its beak, immobilizing enemies and rendering them unable to move. Meng Zhang named this ability "Body Locking Divine Light." On the other hand, Liu Li, in addition to its improved illusionary talents, could now create a clone of itself. When it suffered severe damage, it could let the clone take the hit instead.

Regarding their newly acquired talents, both little creatures needed time to familiarize themselves with and exercise these abilities.

The substantial amount of materials harvested from the numerous demonic beasts' corpses wasn't entirely sold by Taiyi Sect. Most of it was stored in the Sect's treasure trove for internal use. Beast Controlling Hall Master Hu Jing used a considerable amount of the Sect's contributions to exchange for various materials to support his spirit pets.

Overall, Taiyi Sect had collected a vast array of materials from the abundant demonic beasts they had encountered, and they were taking their time to digest and utilize them.