

Sect Master 401

Chapter 401: Decision

Jue Ying did not hide anything from Meng Zhang. She told him about all the dangers he would face in the Deadly Sea of Sand, and that the chances of him successfully obtaining the Spirit Marrow were very low.

Luo Ye had given Meng Zhang this option as a last resort. If Meng Zhang was unable to borrow the Third Rank spirit vein, or if he was unwilling to accept the harsh conditions, Luo Ye's path was his only choice.

According to Jue Ying, the Gu Yue Family of Great Wind City was not an ordinary Gold Core family. They had a deep background and a mysterious origin.

If Meng Zhang could get the help of the Gu Yue Family, his chances of forming a Gold Core would be much higher.

The Gu Yue Family was the envy of many cultivators. Joining the Gu Yue Family was not a bad thing. He could marry a rich and beautiful woman, form a Gold Core, and reach the pinnacle of his life.

In fact, for the sake of marrying into the Gu Yue Family, many cultivators would rather marry an old woman or grandmother than struggle for a few decades.

As a transmigrator with extraordinary talent, Meng Zhang had always been proud of himself.

After many years of tempering, Meng Zhang's pride had never faded.

Even though the Gu Yue Family offered very favorable conditions, Meng Zhang still did not want to agree easily.

Meng Zhang had a stubborn idea. He had to rely on his own strength to find a way to form a Gold Core.

He did not want to prove anything to others, he just wanted to follow his own heart.

Forming a Gold Core requires a cultivator to face their own inner demons and overcome them.

According to the experience of those who had successfully formed a core, the easier it is for a cultivator to pass through the heart demon barrier, the more open their thoughts are and the more smooth their heart is.

Whether it was for his own heart or for the sake of passing through the heart demon barrier when forming a core, he saw the Gu Yue Family as his last choice.

Even if it was dangerous, even if it was a matter of life and death, Meng Zhang had to try the Deadly Sea of Sand.

Meng Zhang told Jue Ying that he still wanted to go to the Deadly Sea of Sand to try.

Seeing that Meng Zhang was determined, Jue Ying seemed relieved.

She told Meng Zhang that the Deadly Sea of Sand was full of dangers, but it was not without hope.

The Fifth Rank great power was in a bad state, and he was being held back by the Primordial Spirit True Monarch. Every time he made a move, it cost him a lot. As long as he did not threaten his main body, he would not act easily. Even if he found someone stealing the Spirit Marrow, he would at most drive the sand monsters to chase them.

The Deadly Sea of Sand was almost the base of the sand monsters. A large number of sand monsters were roaming around inside. However, Third Rank sand monsters were only a minority.

As long as he was not targeted by a Third Rank sand monster, Meng Zhang's cultivation base was enough to make it difficult for ordinary sand monsters to entangle him.

As for those Ghost Path cultivators and Demonic Path cultivators, others might be afraid, but Meng Zhang was not worried.

As long as he had not entered the Gold Core realm, he would not be afraid of any ghost cultivators, demonic cultivators, or strange demons. Once he made up his mind, Meng Zhang put all his worries aside and focused on preparing to enter the Deadly Sea of Sand.

Jue Ying put her jade pendant and Meng Zhang's jade pendant together and gently activated them.

The two jade pendants each shot out a ray of light, and the two rays of light merged in the air to form a figure.

The figure was Luo Ye. Jue Ying looked ahead and said, "Meng Zhang, step forward."

Meng Zhang knew that this was the special ability of a Gold Core Daoist Master to transform their soul into thought. The figure of Luo Ye was created by a strand of Luo Ye's Divine Sense.

After Luo Ye became a Gold Core Daoist Master, she placed a strand of her Divine Sense in the jade pendant that Jue Ying was holding. The jade pendant that Meng Zhang was holding was probably the token that activated Luo Ye's Divine Sense.

Meng Zhang obediently stepped forward and came to the front of Luo Ye's figure.

Luo Ye's figure lightly touched Meng Zhang's forehead, and immediately, countless pieces of information swarmed in and entered Meng Zhang's mind.

Meng Zhang knew that Jue Ying would not harm him, so he did not resist and let the information enter his mind.

The information was too much and too messy, so Meng Zhang did not read it carefully, but just scanned it roughly.

This information should be the detailed process of Luo Ye's breakthrough from the Foundation Building Stage to the Gold Core Stage. From this content, Meng Zhang could gain a lot of valuable experience and lessons.

In addition, there were some secrets of breakthrough to the Gold Core Stage from previous cultivators. Meng Zhang did not know where Luo Ye got them from.

After a while, Meng Zhang had finished receiving the information.

The figure of Luo Ye transmitted the information and became a little dimmer.

Luo Ye's figure looked at Jue Ying and said, "Since you have brought Meng Zhang here, it means that he has decided to enter the Deadly Sea of Sand. You girl, you have wanted to enter there for a long time, and you will not miss this opportunity. I cannot persuade you, so you go with him."

Jue Ying also stepped forward and stood side by side with Meng Zhang in front of Luo Ye's figure. Luo Ye's figure faded away, and countless light spots fell from the sky and landed on Meng Zhang and Jue Ying.

Meng Zhang and Jue Ying felt that there were countless pieces of information in their minds.

This information included a lot of detailed information about the Deadly Sea of Sand. Inside, there were various natural traps and harsh environments. How to sneak in and how to avoid danger inside?

The information was too much to read in a short time.

Meng Zhang was a little strange. He had to venture into the Deadly Sea of Sand, which could be said to be forced by helplessness. But why did Jue Ying also have to take the risk and go there?

Jue Ying did not seem to have completed the Foundation Building Stage yet. Even if she had completed the Foundation Building Stage and wanted to break through to the Gold Core Stage, she should not be worried about the Third Rank spirit vein, right?

Seeing Meng Zhang's puzzled look, Jue Ying said, "I have other things to do when I enter the Deadly Sea of Sand. You can rest assured that I will not interfere with you."

"If you are really not at ease, we can go our separate ways and enter from different places."

Meng Zhang hurriedly shook his head. What a joke, he had nothing to worry about.

Jue Ying's cultivation base might not be as good as his, but she mastered a lot of strange secret techniques, and her survival ability was not necessarily weaker than his. In many cases, she might play a stronger role than him.

In addition, she was a disciple of a Gold Core Daoist Master and was born in a super power like the Dark Alliance. She definitely had more trump cards than him.

It would be a very beneficial thing for him and Jue Ying to travel together.

Chapter 402: Entry

Meng Zhang was alone in the Deadly Sea of Sand, but with Jue Ying's help, he had a better chance of success.

The two of them traveled together, and it was hard to say who benefited from whom. However, when they worked together, their fighting power doubled and their survival ability increased.

The jade pendant contained a strand of Luo Ye's Divine Sense. Once Luo Ye's Divine Sense in the jade pendant was exhausted, the jade pendant would lose its effect.

The two jade pendants looked the same, but they were made of different materials.

However, Meng Zhang still carefully put the jade pendant away.

The two of them did not rush to leave, and they stayed in the small courtyard to slowly absorb the information from Luo Ye's Divine Sense. Even though Meng Zhang was always confident in himself, he was still surprised to be able to obtain this information. It would be very helpful for him to break through to the Gold Core Realm in the future.

The small town where they were temporarily staying was just a mortal town. However, because it was located near the Jade Sword Sect, the spiritual energy was even stronger than many oases in the Endless Sea of Sand.

However, the two of them were both Foundation Building Realm cultivators, and the spiritual energy here could not meet their daily needs. They both carried a lot of spirit stones, which were enough to slowly consume.

The two of them stayed in the small town for more than ten days, and they had already sorted out all the information that Luo Ye had given them about the Deadly Sea of Sand.

Meng Zhang had not yet fully understood the experience of forming the core that Luo Ye had given him, but he could slowly understand it later. The most urgent matter was to get to the Deadly Sea of Sand as soon as possible and obtain the spiritual marrow.

After the two of them left the small town, they did not stay in the vicinity, but took a flying boat to return to Great Wind City.

There used to be regular flights between Great Wind City and Flying Swan Sect, and there were always Second Rank flying boats going back and forth between the two places. However, in recent years, a series of changes have led to a sharp reduction in flights between Flying Swan City and Great Wind City. There are only two flights a month.

Taiyi Sect, on the other hand, sends flying boats to Great Wind City to trade on an irregular basis, and there are no fixed flights.

The Second Rank flying boat that left Great Wind City for Flying Swan City this month had already flown away a few days ago. Meng Zhang and Jue Ying did not want to spend time waiting for a new flight, so they flew directly to the Flying Swan Sect territory.

The two of them were both Foundation Building Realm cultivators, and their flying speed was much faster than that of a First Rank flying boat.

Although Flying Swan Sect and Fire Cloud Sect have been in a state of confrontation for a long time, the border with Great Wind City is still relatively peaceful.

Neither sect wants to provoke Great Wind City at this time.

Because of the many wars in the Endless Sea of Sand in recent years, the output of mines has been greatly affected, and the various mineral resources that are transported to Great Wind City for sale have been greatly reduced.

Years of war have also almost emptied the treasury of Flying Swan Sect. The reduced purchasing power of Flying Swan Sect has caused Great Wind City to lose a lot of business.

The Endless Sea of Sand is a very important trade route for Great Wind City, and it contains a high profit.

Due to the tense situation in the Endless Sea of Sand, which has affected the business of Great Wind City, Great Wind City is dissatisfied.

If it were not for the intervention of the Primordial Spirit True Monarch behind the situation in the Endless Sea of Sand, Great Wind City would have wanted to forcibly suppress Fire Cloud Sect and Flying Swan Sect, so that the two sects could restore peace.

On the way, Jue Ying told Meng Zhang that the situation behind the Endless Sea of Sand was a secret for the vast majority of cultivators. However, the large cultivation forces in Jiuqu League should be aware of it. Meng Zhang and Jue Ying flew away from Great Wind City, and Meng Zhang sighed inwardly.

The cultivation forces in the Endless Sea of Sand were the most ignorant. Only Flying Swan Sect and Northern Desert Qi Family knew the truth.

The two of them quickly left Great Wind City's territory and entered Flying Swan Sect's territory.

The Demon Wind Gobi defense line tied up most of Flying Swan Sect's energy, and they could not take care of the border with Great Wind City.

Meng Zhang had seen Flying Swan Sect's patrol teams many times, but they were nowhere to be seen.

The defense was also very sparse after entering Flying Swan Sect's interior.

The two of them flew for half a day before finally seeing a Flying Swan Sect patrol team.

The two of them had the Divine Ability of Eye Technique, and they had long since discovered the Flying Swan Sect patrol team.

In this tense situation, the two of them did not want to cause any trouble, so they avoided the Flying Swan Sect patrol team and did not contact them.

Although it took a little time, the two of them eventually crossed Flying Swan Sect's territory and entered Taiyi Sect's territory.

Meng Zhang did not rush back to the sect after leaving the sect for a short time.

He and Jue Ying flew around in a big circle, heading southwest, and entered the former Golden Blade Sect territory through the former Twin Success Valley territory.

Originally, Golden Blade Sect was right next to Qiaoshou Sect, and after Golden Blade Sect declined, most of Golden Blade Sect's territory fell to Qiaoshou Sect. Qiaoshou Sect's southern and northern sides both have a large area that borders the Deadly Sea of Sand.

It is strange to say that the Deadly Sea of Sand is full of sand monster, but sand monster from the Deadly Sea of Sand rarely leave the Deadly Sea of Sand and enter the Endless Sea of Sand.

The sand monster that appeared in the sand monster disaster that broke out in the Endless Sea of Sand were all directly cultivated by the sand monster nests in the Deadly Sea of Sand.

After Meng Zhang knew that the sand monster disaster was related to the Fifth Rank great power in the Deadly Sea of Sand, he had more doubts in his heart.

However, limited by his own current strength, he could only temporarily suppress these doubts.

Patrol in Qiaoshou Sect territory became more stringent.

Especially facing the Demon Wind Gobi, because of the invasion of beasts, Qiaoshou Sect strengthened the patrol on this side. Taiyi Sect also sent a number of disciples to join the patrol team on that side. Even the Foundation Building cultivators of the two sects would take turns to sit down there.

Meng Zhang did not want to waste time at this time, nor did he want to talk to the cultivators of the two sects slowly.

He and Jue Ying, like in the Flying Swan Sect territory, actively avoided the patrol team and flew to the Deadly Sea of Sand.

The two of them crossed Qiaoshou Sect's territory and entered the Deadly Sea of Sand from the north.

Not far after entering the Deadly Sea of Sand, a sandstorm appeared in front of them, the spiritual energy fluctuated violently, and the energy spread everywhere.

The two of them looked at each other, and it was really a coincidence that they had just entered the Deadly Sea of Sand and met a group of sand monster fighting.

I wonder who is fighting with sand monster here?

With such a thought, Meng Zhang activated Deception Breaking Eye and looked ahead.

With just a glance, his face turned strange.

The person who was fighting with the sand monster in front of him was actually Qiaoshou Sect's Jin Qiao'er.

Chapter 403: Chance encounter

When Jin Qiao'er was still a little girl, Meng Zhang knew her. Jin Qiao'er was regarded as a precious treasure by the entire Qiaoshou Sect from a young age due to her exceptional talents and extraordinary aptitude. Especially Aunt Jin and Jin Qigu, they treated her as if she were their dearest heart and soul. They held her in their hands, afraid of dropping her, and kept her close to their hearts, fearing she might melt away.

However, the favor and love of everyone did not make Jin Qiao'er arrogant. She always retained a childlike innocence and had an excellent temperament.

Especially after witnessing Aunt Jin's death in front of her own eyes, she seemed to mature overnight, shedding all her immaturity and becoming a formidable individual who could stand on her own. Because of the close relationship between Taiyi Sect and Qiaoshou Sect, Meng Zhang had several encounters with Jin Qiao'er. Almost every time they met, Meng Zhang could sense Jin Qiao'er's progress.

Meng Zhang felt a bit puzzled about why Jin Qiao'er appeared in the Deadly Sea of Sand. Although Qiaoshou Sect had obtained the Foundation Building Pill as compensation, and another cultivator had successfully reached the Foundation Building stage in the past two years, they were still lacking manpower, especially Foundation Building stage cultivators.

Sect Master Jin Qigu of Qiaoshou Sect was always busy with countless matters, running around all day. Could Jin Qiao'er really be so free that she casually wandered around the Deadly Sea of Sand? If they hadn't encountered each other here, it would be fine, but now that they did, it didn't seem right to just leave without saying hello.

In the vast desert ahead, Jin Qiao'er was surrounded by two Second Rank sand monsters, leading over two hundred First Rank sand monsters, constantly attacking her. Although Jin Qiao'er was alone and facing many sand monsters, she was the one with the upper hand in the battle.

Jin Qiao'er stood on a cloud-shaped magic tool and controlled a shining golden ring. Wherever the golden ring passed, the two Second Rank sand monsters voluntarily retreated. The First Rank sand monsters that couldn't evade in time would collapse in large numbers when touched by the golden ring, turning into dust and dissipating.

Seeing Jin Qiao'er gaining the upper hand, Meng Zhang, flying over, didn't rush to intervene but shouted, "Miss Qiaoer, do you need my help?"

Meng Zhang and Jue Ying hadn't come close yet, but Jin Qiao'er had already noticed them. She sweetly smiled, "Big Brother Meng, there's no need for your help. Dealing with a few sand monsters is a piece of cake for me."

As if to prove her words, before the sentence even finished, Jin Qiao'er displayed her prowess. With just one finger, she split the golden ring into two, then two into three, suddenly turning it into three identical golden rings.

The golden rings kept changing positions in the air, constantly flying and maneuvering. The two Second Rank sand monsters couldn't avoid them and were each captured by one of the golden rings. The remaining golden ring rolled swiftly through the air and crashed into the First Rank sand monsters, shattering them wherever it passed.

After capturing the two Second Rank sand monsters, Jin Qiao'er struggled a bit to bring her hands together and recited a spell. The two golden rings immediately tightened, crushing the two Second Rank sand monsters into powder.

In just a short time since she finished talking with Meng Zhang, Jin Qiao'er had already wiped out this group of sand monsters with considerable strength.

After the battle, Jin Qiao'er proactively flew up to Meng Zhang.

In the time they hadn't seen each other, Jin Qiao'er's cultivation base had made great progress. She was now a mid-level Foundation Building cultivator.

Such rapid progress made even Meng Zhang, who had always considered himself a genius, feel a bit embarrassed.

Not only did Jin Qiao'er advance rapidly in her cultivation base, but her combat strength was also extremely formidable. The magic tool in her hand and the spells she cast were far from ordinary; it was evident that they had extraordinary origins. "It's been a while, Miss Qiaoer. Every time we meet, you give me a big surprise. Your progress is indeed astonishing."

"It's just like the younger generation surpassing the older generation. Old folks like us will sooner or later be caught up by young talents like you."

Upon hearing Meng Zhang's praise, Jin Qiao'er showed a slightly embarrassed expression. "Brother Meng, you flatter me. How could I possibly catch up to you? By the way, who is this young lady..."

"I almost forgot to introduce you," Meng Zhang interrupted. "This is Jue Ying, a talented cultivator from the Qiaoshou Sect. She's the rising star of the Endless Sea of Sand."

"Miss Qiaoer, this is Jue Ying, an old friend of mine for many years."

With Meng Zhang's introduction, Jue Ying and Jin Qiao'er formally met. After chatting for a while, Meng Zhang became curious and asked, "Miss Qiaoer, how did you end up here?"

"My master told me that when I have free time, I can come to the outskirts of the Deadly Sea of Sand to find some sand monsters to practice and gain combat experience. However, my master specifically instructed me not to venture deep inside."

Jin Qiao'er honestly revealed the reason for her appearance here.

"Miss Qiaoer, may I know who your master is, and where is she from?"

Meng Zhang had known for a long time that Jin Qiao'er had a mysterious master who seemed extraordinary. However, since Jin Qiao'er had never taken the initiative to mention it, Meng Zhang didn't pry. Now that they had brought up the topic, he couldn't help but ask.

"Originally, my master didn't want me to tell anyone. But since you asked, and you're not an outsider, there's no harm in telling you."

"In the past, Granny and Qigu used to call my master Daoist Master Jin. She told me her name is Jin Li."

Jin Qiao'er didn't hide anything from Meng Zhang.

"Daoist Master Jin." The name was indeed unfamiliar. But if she was addressed as Daoist Master, she must be a Gold Core stage cultivator. There definitely wouldn't be such a person within the Endless Sea of Sand, and Meng Zhang didn't have much knowledge about the Gold Core Daoist Masters in Jiuqu League either. He only knew a few of their names.

Meng Zhang glanced at Jue Ying. Jue Ying worked for the black market in Jiuqu League, so she should have access to more information.

However, Jue Ying shook her head slightly in response to Meng Zhang's gaze. It seemed that she also didn't know much about this Jin Li Daoist Master's background.

Jin Qiao'er briefly mentioned her master and then skipped the topic. Apparently, she didn't want to dwell on it too much.

To let her disciple fight against sand monsters in the Deadly Sea of Sand for combat training, Jin Qiao'er's master was truly a bold person.

"By the way, Brother Meng, how did you both end up here?" Jin Qiao'er curiously asked.

After hearing Jin Qiao'er's question, Meng Zhang and Jue Ying exchanged glances. It was a tricky question; they were allies, and withholding information might not be the best option. However, revealing everything also raised trust issues.

After pondering for a moment, Meng Zhang replied, "We're heading to the northern direction of the Deadly Sea of Sand." Meng Zhang provided a rough direction without lying, but Jin Qiao'er probably didn't know their specific destination.

To their surprise, Jin Qiao'er began to think and started counting slowly.

"What's in the northern direction of the Deadly Sea of Sand?"

"Over at the Extinction Grand Rift, even my master doesn't dare to go there casually, so you surely can't be heading there."

"Black Wind Grave is a place where Ghost Path cultivators raise and refine corpses; it's quite disgusting. You're probably not interested in that place."

"The Little Demon's Lair gathers many demonic cultivators. Are you going there to exterminate evil and uphold justice?"

"What else is there in the northern direction? Oh, right, there's Emerald Lake. You must be going there to search for Spirit Essence."

Jin Qiao'er astutely guessed the purpose of their journey, leaving both Meng Zhang and Jue Ying astonished. If not for knowing that Jin Qiao'er meant no harm, Meng Zhang would have suspected if she had been spying on them.

Seeing Meng Zhang's expression, Jin Qiao'er looked smug and quite pleased with herself.

"How did you guess our destination, Miss Qiao'er?" Meng Zhang curiously asked.

"When I used to cultivate with my master, she would tell me many stories, including information about the Deadly Sea of Sand."

"I'm quite familiar with the conditions and various locations inside the Deadly Sea of Sand."

"You're heading to a place where a despicable villain nurtures seed nests of sand monsters. It's heavily guarded and very dangerous."

"In fact, you're not the only ones. Many Foundation Building stage cultivators have gone there over the years, hoping to obtain Spirit Essence. But few have succeeded. Some returned empty-handed with good luck, barely keeping their lives, while others died there."

Meng Zhang and Jue Ying exchanged glances. They considered the matter to be highly confidential, yet it seemed that many people knew about it.

Seeing Meng Zhang's expression, Jin Qiao'er chuckled.

"Actually, several major forces within Jiuqu League know about obtaining Spirit Essence from the Deadly Sea of Sand."

"My master said that those hypocritical gentlemen in Jiuqu League dare not enter the Deadly Sea of Sand themselves, so they only send some Foundation Building stage juniors to try their luck and reap benefits."

Jin Qiao'er's tone indicated that she was indeed very familiar with various aspects of the Deadly Sea of Sand. Although they had information from Luo Ye Daoist Master, gaining more knowledge before venturing into such a perilous place wouldn't hurt.

Thus, Meng Zhang put on a serious expression and started seeking advice from Jin Qiao'er.

Jin Qiao'er didn't hesitate to provide guidance, but she had one condition: she wanted to travel with Meng Zhang and the others into the Deadly Sea of Sand.

During their previous conversation with Jin Qiao'er, Meng Zhang already knew that she had a Gold Core Daoist Master as her mentor. How could he risk taking her along? If something happened to her on the way, Meng Zhang feared he would face the wrath of a Gold Core Daoist Master.

However, Jin Qiao'er insisted on joining them, or else she wouldn't share more information.

She solemnly declared that Emerald Lake, their destination, wasn't considered deep within the Deadly Sea of Sand. Her journey there wouldn't violate her master's orders.

Jin Qiao'er specifically mentioned that Emerald Lake used to be the place for nurturing sand monster seed nests, but over the years, due to occasional disturbances by Foundation Building stage cultivators, the sand monster population had started to relocate.

Emerald Lake covered a vast area of thousands of miles, providing numerous places to hide sand monster nests. While Meng Zhang and Jue Ying could potentially find their targets with some extra time outside, doing so within the Deadly Sea of Sand was extremely challenging due to the adverse environment and mysterious forces. Even Foundation Building stage cultivators could easily get lost and perish there.

Jin Qiao'er had learned the approximate location of the sand monster tribe after their relocation from her master.

After sharing so much information, Jin Qiao'er was keen on accompanying them.

Spirit Essence was a Third Rank spiritual object, and even with the Grand Evolving Fortune, Meng Zhang found it difficult to track its whereabouts.

With Jin Qiao'er, who knew the situation, it would undoubtedly be much more convenient.

Seeing Meng Zhang visibly tempted, Jin Qiao'er seized the opportunity and assured him that she wouldn't slow them down. Moreover, she had protective items given to her by her master.

Recalling how Jin Qiao'er had used the Yin Thunder to heavily injure a Third Rank monster during their encounter, Meng Zhang realized that the protective items she possessed were no ordinary objects. Having a powerful master was indeed advantageous.

Finally, Meng Zhang agreed to Jin Qiao'er's request to travel together.

Jin Qiao'er was elated, just like a child getting the candy they wanted.

Now that they had agreed to let Jin Qiao'er join them, Meng Zhang didn't waste time and directly asked her about her knowledge of the situation within the Deadly Sea of Sand.

Jin Qiao'er was in high spirits and gave them a very detailed account.

After listening for a while, Meng Zhang and Jue Ying exchanged glances, feeling very fortunate.

Most of the information Luo Ye Daoist Master had given them was accurate. However, some details were outdated due to the ever-changing environment within the Deadly Sea of Sand.

In the Deadly Sea of Sand, even the tiniest deviation could have grave consequences.

Of course, Luo Ye Daoist Master had reminded them about this in the information, stating that it was for reference only, as the conditions constantly changed.

Meng Zhang and Jue Ying had initially overlooked this warning from Luo Ye Daoist Master, but meeting Jin Qiao'er halfway allowed them to correct some mistakes.

Seeing the immense value of Jin Qiao'er's knowledge, they no longer opposed her joining their team.

After discussing their route, the three of them left the area and headed deeper into the Deadly Sea of Sand.

Inside the Deadly Sea of Sand, the sun was rarely seen throughout the year. The sky was perpetually dim and gloomy, making it almost impossible to distinguish between day and night.

Ferocious sandstorms howled madly without cease. Visible tornadoes lifted sand dunes into the air, scattering countless grains of yellow sand in all directions.

As flying higher meant facing more turbulent winds, the three of them chose to fly at low altitudes to conserve energy in resisting the fierce gales.

Chapter 405: Abandoned

The Endless Sea of Sand was already desolate enough, but compared to the Deadly Sea of Sand, it still paled in comparison.

Inside the Deadly Sea of Sand, there was no trace of green, nor any sign of life.

As the three continued their journey, they had covered a considerable distance within the Deadly Sea of Sand, yet they had not seen any living beings.

The high mountains within the Deadly Sea of Sand had been mostly leveled by the fierce winds. Occasionally, they came across a few small hills, but they were heavily weathered and seemed close to disappearing completely.

The sand dunes were constantly shifting; after a strong wind, the original dunes would vanish, and new ones would form elsewhere.

In such an environment, there were hardly any distinctive landmarks to serve as reference points.

The three of them had to use their pathfinding spells frequently to ensure they stayed on course.

For some reason, using pathfinding spells in this place was exceptionally difficult and prone to failure, even for a cultivator like Meng Zhang, who had completed the Foundation Building stage.

They made their way with stumbling steps, and their speed was not particularly fast.

After flying a long distance, they took advantage of a lull in the wind and rested behind a wind-protected sand dune.

Without wasting any words, they took out spirit stones and began meditating to recover their true qi. Once they had enough rest, they left the spot and continued forward.

Although Jin Qiao'er had heard a lot about the Deadly Sea of Sand from her master, she realized that it was one thing to talk about it and another to experience it in person.

Meng Zhang and Jue Ying had obtained a wealth of information from Luo Ye Daoist Master, but entering the Deadly Sea of Sand showed that the situation was much worse than they had imagined.

At this point, Jue Ying demonstrated her remarkable ability to adapt and survive in such harsh environments. Whenever they faced challenges, she was the first to come up with solutions.

Both Meng Zhang and Jin Qiao'er admired Jue Ying and were glad to have her as a companion on this journey.

During their travels, they encountered several groups of roaming sand monsters. If the number and strength of the sand monsters were manageable, the three of them easily dealt with them. However, if they encountered a large group, they chose to avoid unnecessary battles to conserve their energy.

The Deadly Sea of Sand was teeming with sand monsters, and killing them all was an impossible task. To save their strength, they actively avoided many unnecessary fights.

Only when they couldn't avoid confrontation did they engage in a major battle.

After this pattern of traveling, fighting, and resting, the three of them spent almost half a month before arriving near their destination.

Emerald Lake, once a vast lake known for its emerald-green waters, had completely dried up since the formation of the Deadly Sea of Sand, leaving not a single drop of water in sight.

With the lake water gone, the dry lakebed and high riverbed were exposed.

This was one of the few more distinct features in the Deadly Sea of Sand, often used as a significant reference point by those who traveled through it. The name "Emerald Lake" had been preserved.

Many smaller lakes and tributaries once surrounded Emerald Lake, but they had long disappeared.

Upon arriving, Jin Qiao'er pointed northwest and said, "There are many caves there where sand monster seed nests are born."

"It is said that every birth of a sand monster seed consumes Spirit Essence. My master deeply pities these sand monsters, considering them as squandering natural treasures."

Hearing this, Meng Zhang couldn't help but ask, "Miss Qiaoer, if your master disapproves of these actions, why doesn't she intervene?"

Jin Qiao'er shook her head and replied, "Other Gold Core Daoist Masters dare not enter the Deadly Sea of Sand. Although my master frequents the area, she cannot act easily."

"My master didn't tell me the specific details; I only know that it involves an agreement among Primordial Spirit True Monarchs."

Upon hearing the involvement of Primordial Spirit True Monarchs, Meng Zhang decided not to inquire further. For him, Primordial Spirit True Monarchs were on a level too high for him to get involved in their matters.

"Because Foundation Building stage cultivators occasionally come to seize Spirit Essence, the sand monsters migrated westward in recent years."

"I'm not sure exactly where they settled, but I know the general direction."

Jin Qiao'er felt a little embarrassed. It was evident that she had exaggerated her intelligence a bit to join the journey.

Since they had all arrived at this point, Meng Zhang didn't say much more. Jue Ying directly stated their next course of action.

"I'll go to the original location and see if there are any traces left by the sand monster groups."

Jue Ying's plan made sense, and they followed her lead, searching northwest. To ensure efficient searching and prevent any oversight, the three separated and advanced simultaneously.

Within the Deadly Sea of Sand, Meng Zhang felt as if an intangible force enveloped the entire area.

This force weighed heavily on him, distracting his focus. His talented Divine Ability, the Deception Breaking Eye, was heavily affected here, making it challenging for him to see far ahead.

After flying a considerable distance, Meng Zhang made the first discovery.

Many large and small openings appeared on the ground ahead, leading directly into the depths.

Even more entrances had been buried by the continuously blowing sand.

Familiar with the habits of sand monsters, Meng Zhang could tell at a glance that these were abandoned sand monster nests.

When sand monsters abandoned their original nests and migrated, they would take away the most critical core of the nest and the Spirit Source Pearls. In abandoned sand monster nests, there would hardly be anything useful left.

However, Meng Zhang wasn't in a hurry because he had a lead.

Although he couldn't directly use the Grand Evolving Fortune to calculate the location of the Spirit Essence, he could use the Grand Evolving Fortune to calculate the whereabouts of the sand monster group that had once built their nest here, as long as there were no Third Rank sand monsters among them.

According to Jin Qiao'er, the nearby nests of sand monsters were all guards. Their duty was to protect the newly-born nest seeds.

Once new sand monster nests were born, they would find their way into the Endless Sea of Sand and slowly grow into a great threat to the Endless Sea of Sand Cultivation World.

Chapter 406: Unexpected Encounter

As long as Meng Zhang could use the Grand Evolving Fortune to calculate the whereabouts of the guarding sand monsters, finding the Spirit Essence should not be far away.

The only concern Meng Zhang had was whether his Divination Art would work smoothly within the Deadly Sea of Sand.

The mysterious force shrouding the entire Deadly Sea of Sand always made him uneasy. If he hadn't been a Diviner with a keen sense, he might not have detected the presence of this force at all.

Meng Zhang dove toward the ground, planning to regroup with Jin Qiao'er and Jue Ying to see what they had found.

As soon as he arrived on the ground, Meng Zhang faintly heard sounds of battle to his left.

He didn't dare to delay and flew over immediately.

Before he could get close to the battlefield, Meng Zhang witnessed a scene he could never have imagined.

Ye Feifan, who had a history of conflict with Meng Zhang in Great Wind City, had somehow appeared in the Deadly Sea of Sand.

At this moment, Ye Feifan no longer resembled the disheveled and pathetic appearance he had in Great Wind City. Instead, he appeared lively, arrogant, and domineering.

Ye Feifan didn't use any magic tools and relied solely on his bare hands to suppress both Jue Ying and Jin Qiao'er.

Jue Ying and Jin Qiao'er were both at the middle stage of Foundation Building, with Jue Ying even at the peak of the stage, ready to break through to the late stage at any time.

However, their combined efforts were helpless against Ye Feifan.

Jue Ying wielded a Wind Dance Whip, creating a plethora of whip shadows that stirred up fierce winds.

Jin Qiao'er used her Golden Rings to continuously attack Ye Feifan.

Yet, Ye Feifan strolled calmly through their intense attacks, and with the swift movements of his palms, he forced the two women to retreat repeatedly.

Meng Zhang couldn't fathom why Ye Feifan appeared at this place and engaged with the two women. Although he knew that both Jue Ying and Jin Qiao'er had hidden aces yet to be revealed, Meng Zhang didn't want to just watch from the sidelines any longer.

He brought out his Tangling Silk Soft Sword and turned into a streak of light, attacking Ye Feifan.

Meng Zhang's progress had been too rapid. The once handy Second Rank flying sword couldn't keep up with his current Cultivation Base.

While using the Dance of the Wind Willow Sword Technique as his regular attack method, Meng Zhang secretly had the Golden Crow Lantern ready to be activated at any time.

As soon as Meng Zhang made a move, Ye Feifan recognized him.

"It's you. Impressive, little guy. You actually managed to deceive even this old man when you were in Great Wind City."

"It seems you've long since figured out my bewitchment technique. You sure can act, and your performance is incredibly lifelike."

While Ye Feifan spoke, he continued to fight, bringing Meng Zhang into the midst of the battle.

"Kid, who are you really? I inquired all over Great Wind City but never found anyone like you. Could it be that you're not a cultivator from Great Wind City?"

"Are you hiding your origins because they are too shady?"

Ye Feifan fought with ease, trying to ascertain Meng Zhang's identity and background.

Joining the battle himself, Meng Zhang discovered the formidable aspects of Ye Feifan.

Meng Zhang, as a cultivator who had completed the Foundation Building stage, received the inheritance of Taiyi Sect during its heyday and experienced numerous battles against various cultivators.

Yet, now, even when teaming up with Jin Qiao'er and Jue Ying, they could barely hold their own against Ye Feifan and gain the upper hand.

Of course, the three of them were still holding back, not revealing their most powerful moves.

However, given Ye Feifan's shrewd nature, he surely had hidden aces up his sleeve.

Ever since the first time Meng Zhang saw through Ye Feifan's true nature, he had been wary of this old fox.

To use one's own descendant as a tool, employing the taboo Bloodline Parasitism Art in the Cultivation World—Meng Zhang had never encountered anything similar before.

The old ghost within Ye Feifan was on the verge of forming a core before his fall. Now it seemed that not only had he regained his Cultivation Base, but he had also made even greater progress.

Forming a core—that's right, Ye Feifan's Cultivation Base was now close to forming a core.

No matter how many contingencies he had left behind, he still needed a Third Rank spirit vein or similar spiritual objects.

In his situation, it would probably be challenging to borrow a Third Rank spirit vein from Jiuqu League.

Although the Ghost Path technique like Bloodline Parasitism was concealed, it might not escape the notice of Gold Core Daoist Masters.

As the master of Jiuqu League, they were, after all, a righteous sect that couldn't tolerate the use of evil methods like Bloodline Parasitism.

The information about the Spirit Essence's existence in the Deadly Sea of Sand was known to many major forces in Jiuqu League, and Ye Feifan should have learned about it through some means.

Unable to borrow a Third Rank spirit vein, he must have set his sights on the Spirit Essence.

With this, Ye Feifan became Meng Zhang's direct competitor.

As Meng Zhang guessed Ye Feifan's intentions, the old fox had likely guessed his as well.

"Little friend, you have already completed the Foundation Building stage. Instead of staying at home to cultivate and prepare to break through to the Gold Core stage, you risked everything and came to this godforsaken place, the Deadly Sea of Sand."

"I suppose your home doesn't even have a Third Rank spirit vein?"

"There are intricate relationships between the major cultivation families in Great Wind City, and marriage alliances are not uncommon. Even if your home doesn't have a Third Rank spirit vein, you could ask your old acquaintances with a thick skin, and there should be a solution."

"Now, I can be sure you are indeed not a scion of a major family in Great Wind City."

Ye Feifan's face appeared gentle, and his tone seemed like that of an old friend, very affectionate.

However, when he struck, there was no mercy, and he targeted Meng Zhang's vital points at every turn.

"Little friend, you are truly fortunate. Even in the Deadly Sea of Sand, you are accompanied by two charming beauties."

"Little friend, you alone can't handle two beauties. How about giving one to me, and I'll take good care of her for you?"

Ye Feifan's vulgar words seemed as though Jue Ying hadn't heard them at all, and she remained as calm as ever.

However, Jin Qiao'er, with a thinner skin, found it hard to bear. Her face flushed with embarrassment, she was ready to use some powerful methods to teach this shameless old man a lesson.

Meng Zhang intervened in time to stop her.

It was not that Meng Zhang didn't want to deal with the old man, but he had made a new discovery.

Not far away, cultivators were flying rapidly toward their location.

Meng Zhang wasn't sure whether the newcomers were friends or foes, so it would be best to keep some cards hidden.

Not just one group, but two groups of cultivators were approaching from different directions.

Seeing that others were getting close, Ye Feifan similarly noticed them.

He made a few moves to suppress Meng Zhang and the others, then withdrew to the side, remaining vigilant in secret.

Ye Feifan's response made Meng Zhang breathe a sigh of relief. It seemed that the newcomers were not his allies; otherwise, Ye Feifan wouldn't have acted this way.

Chapter 407: Provocation

Meng Zhang and the others didn't have to wait long before two groups of cultivators arrived almost simultaneously.

The larger group consisted of five cultivators, but their strengths varied. Aside from the young cultivator leading the group, who had a Cultivation Base at Foundation Building completion, the other four seemed to be followers a cultivator at Foundation Building late stage and three at Foundation Building middle stage.

The other group had four cultivators, with two at Foundation Building completion and two at Foundation Building late stage.

In the harsh environment of the Deadly Sea of Sand, one needed at least a Cultivation Base at Foundation Building middle stage to dare to enter. For a more comfortable experience, a team of cultivators with Foundation Building late stage abilities would be necessary.

The two groups of cultivators knew each other.

"Young Master Lu, why did you leave Great Wind City's comfort and bring your entourage to the Deadly Sea of Sand to eat sand?" one of the cultivators taunted.

"Wang Qiquan, as a young master, I don't need to explain my actions to a bunch of lackeys like you," Lu Chao retorted.

Both groups seemed ready to confront each other from the moment they spoke.

Jue Ying, having spent many years in the black market of Jiuqu League, was well-informed about many cultivators in the league. She secretly sent a message to Meng Zhang, revealing the backgrounds of the two groups.

The young cultivator was Lu Chao, an elite cultivator of the Lu Family in Great Wind City. The other four seemed to be his subordinates.

The other four cultivators belonged to a small but somewhat famous loose cultivator group within Jiuqu League.

The leader, Wang Qiquan, was at Foundation Building completion, while the other Foundation Building completion cultivator was Ning Bo. There were also two twin brothers, Qian Kaiyu and Qian Kaizhou.

Generally, most loose cultivators in the Cultivation World had low talent and couldn't join sects. Some were expelled from sects or became loose cultivators after their families were destroyed.

Additionally, some cultivators yearned for an unrestrained life and didn't want to be bound by sect rules, so they chose not to join any cultivation sects. Wang Qiquan and Ning Bo seemed to belong to the latter category.

The four of them had decent talent and cultivation bases. They got along well and achieved some success while wandering in the Cultivation World.

Listening to Jue Ying's explanation, Meng Zhang was amazed. A loosely organized group like this in Jiuqu League likely had a strength surpassing most cultivation factions in the Endless Sea of Sand.

Lu Family was the number one family in Great Wind City, ranking above the Gu Yue Family, and they held real power in the city.

Cultivators cultivated by such a family were definitely not ordinary.

After Lu Chao and Wang Qiquan exchanged some words, they both fell silent when facing unfamiliar cultivators. They were cautious of each other.

Being a loose cultivator himself, Wang Qiquan had more experience dealing with various cultivators. He looked at Meng Zhang's group and Ye Feifan, saying, "I don't know why you're starting a fight here in the Deadly Sea of Sand. We, Human Clan cultivators, should work together in this dangerous place."

After Jue Ying revealed the origins of the two groups, Meng Zhang began to scheme.

He shouted at Ye Feifan, "Ye Feifan, you snatched the treasure that assisted in forming the core from the Huang Family, angering their Patriarch. The Patriarch personally issued a high reward to capture you."

Hearing Meng Zhang's words, everyone's eyes lit up.

Lu Chao, being from Great Wind City, had naturally heard about the recent dispute between Ye Feifan and the Huang Family. Given his identity, he had no need to fawn over the Huang Family. However, when Meng Zhang mentioned the treasure that assisted in forming the core, it was impossible for him not to be tempted.

As for Wang Qiquan and the others, the reward from a Gold Core Patriarch and a treasure that assisted in forming the core both held irresistible allure.

No one doubted that Meng Zhang was lying; the dispute between Ye Feifan and the Huang Family had been widely circulated in Great Wind City. If it didn't involve some treasure, how could it have caused such a commotion?

Seeing everyone's eager gazes, Ye Feifan felt like he was being treated as prey. Yet, he remained composed and calm.

"Are you Ye Feifan?" Lu Chao asked sternly.

Ye Feifan glanced at Lu Chao with some disdain. He particularly disliked young masters from big families like Lu Chao.

Meng Zhang spoke again, "Gentlemen, the night is long, and dreams are many. We'd better capture Ye Feifan first and then discuss how to distribute the treasures."

Meng Zhang viewed Ye Feifan as a major threat, so it was necessary to instigate the other cultivators to act together and capture him.

"How I act is none of your business," Lu Chao retorted rudely to Meng Zhang before continuing to focus on Ye Feifan.

"Young man, hand over the treasure you got from the Huang Family. If I'm in a good mood, I might not turn you over to them."

In a sudden move, Ye Feifan's whole body turned into a green smoke and quickly floated away.

Before his body disappeared, he looked deeply at Meng Zhang.

Unexpectedly, just moments ago, Ye Feifan was standing there perfectly fine, but now he had vanished into green smoke.

Lu Chao was stunned at first, then burst into rage. He shouted in anger and flew in the direction where the green smoke had disappeared, followed closely by his four subordinates.

Wang Qiquan and the others naturally wouldn't let their prey escape and followed suit.

Meng Zhang and the two women exchanged glances. They all had the idea of taking advantage of the situation to get rid of Ye Feifan, so they also joined the chase.

Ye Feifan used his Smoke Escape technique, which excelled in concealment but wasn't particularly fast among various escape techniques.

Although he had taken the initiative and fled a considerable distance, the pursuers quickly caught up and kept him under close surveillance.

Lu Chao was the first to catch up, using his attacks to disrupt Ye Feifan's escape technique.

Ye Feifan had no choice but to reveal his true form and engage in a brief battle with Lu Chao.

With more pursuers behind him, he couldn't afford to waste too much time and continued fleeing. With so many cultivators at Foundation Building level present, and all of them possessing decent strengths, Ye Feifan's cultivation base and combat prowess didn't matter. As long as he wasn't a Gold Core Daoist Master, he was no match for them.

Ye Feifan fought while escaping, never staying in one place for too long.

Due to the varying levels of Cultivation Base among the pursuers, the chasing group stretched out quite a bit.

Lu Chao, Wang Qiquan, and Ning Bo chased in the front, firmly trapping Ye Feifan, making it difficult for him to escape.

Meng Zhang knew that a crafty character like Ye Feifan likely had several hidden tricks up his sleeve. He intentionally fell behind, letting others scout the way.

Meanwhile, the other cultivators simply couldn't keep up, so they gradually fell further behind.

However, with Lu Chao and others restricting Ye Feifan, he couldn't shake off the pursuers and escape completely.

Thus, everyone chased and escaped together, flying northward.

Chapter 408: Ambush

After chasing for a while, Meng Zhang was the first to notice that something was amiss. Having fought Ye Feifan before, he was well aware of the old man's capabilities. With his speed, even if he were trying to escape, it would be difficult for Meng Zhang himself to catch up, let alone Lu Chao and the others.

His current behavior seemed more like he was deliberately luring them to chase him.

Meng Zhang thought of the secret bloodline parasitic technique created by the Ghost Path cultivator and the rumors of his collusion with them. He turned to Jin Qiao'er at his side and asked, "Miss Qiao'er, how much do you know about the Ghost Path forces in the Deadly Sea of Sand?"

"My master mentioned that there are quite a few Ghost Path cultivators in the Deadly Sea of Sand, with the Black Wind Grave being the largest gathering place."

"However, there are no Gold Core Daoist Masters among these Ghost Path cultivators. The strongest of them are only at the False Core stage."

"If my master wasn't restrained, he would have exterminated these despicable guys long ago."

Hearing that there were no Gold Core Daoist Masters among the Ghost Path cultivators in the Deadly Sea of Sand, Meng Zhang felt somewhat relieved. However, cultivators at the False Core stage were not to be underestimated.

Meng Zhang had never fought against a cultivator at False Core stage before, so he wasn't sure how big the gap was between the False Core stage and Foundation Building completion.

While Meng Zhang was contemplating, the group followed Ye Feifan into a large sand dune.

Meng Zhang, who had been on guard, was the first to sense that something was wrong. He shouted, "Be careful, everyone!"

As he spoke, a sudden change occurred.

The Deadly Sea of Sand was already dim, with little light to be found. Suddenly, a pitch-black fog appeared out of thin air, shrouding the surroundings.

Even the weakest among them, at the Foundation Building middle stage, didn't react slowly. Their first reaction to the sudden change was to activate their protective magic tools to shield themselves.

Ye Feifan let out a sinister laugh, and his figure vanished from everyone's sight.

Almost at the same time, within the dense fog, ghostly figures flickered, and wailing cries echoed continuously.

"Playing tricks," Lu Chao sneered disdainfully as he quietly strengthened his defenses.

When the black mist appeared, Meng Zhang activated his Deception Breaking Eye to observe closely.

The black mist greatly hindered his Deception Breaking Eye, but he still managed to see some things.

Within the black mist were countless spirits, and numerous zombies were moving underground. Ghost Path cultivators were observing from various directions, ready to strike.

Before long, the ambushing Ghost Path cultivators launched their attacks.

At least ten Ghost Path cultivators employed their techniques, taking advantage of the cover provided by the black mist, and attacked from all sides.

Countless malevolent and eerie ghost spells shot towards the group.

Ye Feifan also joined the Ghost Path cultivators in attacking the group.

Meng Zhang's group also encountered three of the enemy's attacks.

One Ghost Path cultivator had no flesh and blood, just a gloomy white bone.

Another was a ghostly spirit with a soul-attracting bell, while the third was a zombie wielding a mourning staff.

All three of these Ghost Path cultivators had strengths at the Foundation Building late stage.

Their joint attacks formed a mysterious formation, making it quite challenging for Meng Zhang's group to deal with.

The black mist rolled and more Ghost Path cultivators entered the battlefield.

On the other side of the battlefield, a powerful aura rose, and one of Lu Chao's subordinates let out a miserable scream as a massive skull bit off half of his body.

Meng Zhang realized the strength of the hidden enemy.

"We can't stay here any longer. Let's leave quickly," Meng Zhang called out to the two women, preparing to break through.

With the assistance of the Ghost Path cultivators, Ye Feifan would be impossible to kill at this point.

Meng Zhang and the group had no deep grudges with these Ghost Path cultivators, and there was no need to continue entangling with them.

Meng Zhang took out the Golden Crow Lantern, and the scorching Solar True Flame burst out.

The Solar True Flame, being the bane of Ghost Path cultivators, was unstoppable if their Cultivation Base wasn't higher than Meng Zhang's.

The three Ghost Path cultivators attacking Meng Zhang's group let out strange cries and constantly retreated.

Wherever the Solar True Flame passed, all Ghost Path spells immediately dissipated.

After driving away the three Ghost Path cultivators, Meng Zhang's group didn't linger. They quickly flew in a chosen direction.

As for the other two groups of cultivators, they were strangers, so Meng Zhang could only apologize.

However, whether it was the loose cultivator team that had been wandering in the Cultivation World for years or Lu Chao, a Gold Core cultivator from a prestigious family, they should have hidden aces up their sleeves and wouldn't be so easily defeated here.

Meng Zhang held the Golden Crow Lantern, clearing a path in front with the blazing Solar True Flame, burning away the black mist.

The three of them smoothly broke through the encirclement and flew out.

At this moment, a giant skull emitted eerie cries as it chased from behind.

The flying speed of the giant skull was faster than that of Meng Zhang's group. Soon, it flew above them, and with its wide-open mouth, it generated an invisible suction force, pulling all three of them towards it.

Meng Zhang and the others did their best to break free from the suction force.

One Golden Crow after another flew out from the Golden Crow Lantern and rushed towards the giant skull.

Jin Qiao'er and Jue Ying also launched attacks at the giant skull.

Apart from Meng Zhang's Solar True Flame, the attacks from the two women were not very effective.

Meng Zhang knew that they couldn't be entangled by the enemy for too long. Otherwise, when the battle on the other side ended, and the Ghost Path cultivators there were freed up, they would be in big trouble.

False Core cultivators were indeed formidable. In a one-on-one fight, Meng Zhang wouldn't be a match. Even with the assistance of the two women, he could only barely hold his ground.

Of course, Meng Zhang didn't envy the False Core cultivator's strength. To achieve such power, they sacrificed their future advancement to the Gold Core stage.

Cultivators wouldn't become False Core cultivators willingly unless there was no other way. Among the Ghost Path cultivators, the price to become a False Core cultivator was even greater. Meng Zhang couldn't help but look down on them when he saw that the enemy had abandoned their human body and was reduced to just a giant skull.

Chapter 409: Backlash

No matter how strong you are now, it's only temporary. Meng Zhang thought to himself.

Although pushed to a disadvantage, Meng Zhang wasn't anxious.

Back in Great Wind City, he bought two fake Third Rank talismans from the black market.

Fake Third Rank talismans were of no use against Gold Core Daoist Masters, but they should work well against False Core cultivators.

Meng Zhang was about to take out the fake Third Rank talismans when Jin Qiao'er took action first.

She took out a palm-sized piece of beast skin and infused it with true qi, causing a gust of yellow sand to fill the sky.

The thick yellow sand wrapped around the giant skull, trapping it completely.

The giant skull struggled desperately but couldn't break free.

As a disciple of a Gold Core Daoist Master, Jin Qiao'er possessed many valuable items, including talismans like the fake Third Rank. She wasn't lacking in such things.

Taking advantage of the giant skull's entrapment, the three of them quickly accelerated and flew into the distance.

Ignoring the thunderous roars and continuous explosions from behind, they didn't turn back but focused on escaping. With the help of Jin Qiao'er's fake Third Rank talisman, the three of them managed to escape from the hands of the Ghost Path cultivators.

Once they were far away and felt safe, the three of them stopped to rest.

Traveling at full speed within the Deadly Sea of Sand was very draining. It was more inconvenient than being outside.

As they rested, they discussed their next move.

Having experienced a near-death encounter, the three of them had a firsthand experience of the danger in the Deadly Sea of Sand.

For Meng Zhang, obtaining the Ling Marrow was crucial for his own path, and he wouldn't stop because of some danger.

Jin Qiao'er felt a little scared at first, but then she became excited. She had come this far and couldn't just turn back.

"That old Ye Feifan is indeed in league with the Ghost Path cultivators," Meng Zhang cursed, and then he recounted his past encounters with Ye Feifan to the two women.

Jin Qiao'er and Jue Ying had also clashed with Ye Feifan before due to chance encounters. When they heard about Ye Feifan's use of the bloodline parasitic technique, Jin Qiao'er became furious, while Jue Ying was full of disdain.

"So, the body Ye Feifan is currently in should belong to someone from the Ye family."

"This cunning old guy is quite difficult to deal with, especially with the help of the Ghost Path cultivators," Jue Ying said.

"Our ultimate goal here is to seize the Ling Marrow. As long as we find it before Ye Feifan does, there's no need to confront these Ghost Path cultivators," Meng Zhang stated his plan.

"But these Ghost Path cultivators have already arrived here, and we don't know the exact location of the Ling Marrow," Jue Ying pointed out the difficulty they faced.

"My master once said that even Ghost Path cultivators cannot act wantonly in the Deadly Sea of Sand. Something like the large-scale battle we just witnessed is unlikely to happen again in a short time."

There were many inexplicable rules in the Deadly Sea of Sand that outsiders couldn't grasp.

Thanks to her master, Jin Qiao'er had some knowledge of these rules.

"We don't have a good way to deal with the Ghost Path cultivators, so we can only be more cautious. Once we spot a gathering of Ghost Path cultivators, we should avoid them as early as possible."

"As for finding the location of the Ling Marrow, I'll think of a way."

Meng Zhang didn't elaborate on his plan, and Jue Ying and Jin Qiao'er didn't press for more details.

Cultivators always had many secrets, and even with close relationships, it wasn't wise to dig too deep.

With Meng Zhang leading the two women, they returned along the original path and arrived near the abandoned sand monster nest.

The three of them burrowed underground and entered the enormous sand monster nest.

The sand monster nest was incredibly huge, like a massive underground city. The three of them found a concealed corner and began to meditate to recover their energy.

Meng Zhang made up an excuse and requested to be alone for a while.

He crossed his legs on the ground, concentrated his mind and qi, and prepared to use the Grand Evolving Fortune.

Calculation tallies floated around Meng Zhang's body, and he kept manipulating them with his hands while chanting incantations. He wanted to use the traces in the sand monster nest to calculate the whereabouts of those sand monsters.

But as he started the divination, Meng Zhang felt a terrifying presence, as if it was tracing him along some kind of clue.

His heart shook violently, and he had an intuition that if he continued the Grand Evolving Fortune, an unpredictable disaster would occur.

As a Diviner, Meng Zhang had great faith in his intuition. It wasn't baseless but rather a sudden inspiration.

Meng Zhang quickly stopped the divination, retracting all the calculations.

He groaned in pain and fell to the ground, coughing up blood nonstop.

It wasn't just the backlash from the spell that caused his injuries; there was also a mysterious force that he had inadvertently triggered through his divination.

If Meng Zhang hadn't reacted quickly and stopped the divination in time, the consequences might have been much worse.

It took a long time for Meng Zhang to recover. He began to take pills to heal his injuries slowly.

The Grand Evolving Fortune had not only failed to work but also inflicted great harm on him.

Without the ability to perform divination, finding the location of the Ling Marrow would be even more challenging.

However, instead of feeling discouraged, Meng Zhang's fighting spirit surged. He was the type to become more courageous when faced with setbacks and never easily gave up.

Shortly after Meng Zhang's failed attempt at using the Grand Evolving Fortune, in a corner of the Deadly Sea of Sand, a burst of malicious laughter rang out.

"Who's this ignorant Diviner daring to use the Grand Evolving Fortune in the Deadly Sea of Sand?"

"Didn't his sect's elders warn him about this? Is he too arrogant or just too skeptical?"

"The younger generation nowadays..."

Almost at the same time, Daoist Master Jin Li was patrolling in a certain area of the Deadly Sea of Sand when a voice suddenly sounded in her ear.

"Just now, a Diviner used the Grand Evolving Fortune in the Deadly Sea of Sand. It not only alarmed Qi Family's old ghost but also provoked that great power."

"The divination performed by this Diviner was quite interesting and gave this old man a feeling of familiarity."

"Pay close attention to the surroundings, especially near Black Wind Grave, and try to find that Diviner."

After receiving the order, Daoist Master Jin Li respectfully saluted the sky and replied, "Yes."

Then, she changed her direction and flew toward Black Wind Grave.

At this moment, Meng Zhang had no idea that his reckless use of the Grand Evolving Fortune in the Deadly Sea of Sand had alerted a formidable entity.

Due to his unexpected injury, Meng Zhang had to spend a lot of time healing.

Until he fully recovered, he didn't dare to wander around in the Deadly Sea of Sand.

Jin Qiao'er and Jue Ying stayed with Meng Zhang, waiting in the underground area for the time being.

At least on the surface, the underground of the Deadly Sea of Sand seemed safer than the surface itself.

Chapter 410: Searching

Due to the backlash from the Grand Evolving Fortune, Meng Zhang suffered severe injuries and had to hide underground to recover, spending nearly half a month in the process. It turned out to be a good decision as it helped them avoid many troubles on the surface.

On the day when Meng Zhang and his group encountered the ambush by the Ghost Path cultivators, they managed to escape in time, leading Jin Qiao'er and Jue Ying with them. The other two groups of cultivators weren't as lucky.

Led by Wang Qiquan, the loose group of cultivators showed remarkable teamwork, managing to repel a False Core strength Ghost Path cultivator. They even broke through the encirclement with the help of a fake Third Rank talisman.

Apart from some minor injuries, there were no other losses for them.

The group led by Lu Chao had the worst luck. As fellow cultivators from Great Wind City, Ye Feifan held a strong grudge against these big family descendants, so he focused most of his attention on Lu Chao and his team.

Facing the siege of numerous Ghost Path cultivators, Lu Chao tried his best but couldn't hold on. In the end, he had to abandon his companions and barely escaped.

The vengeful Ghost Path cultivators chased after him relentlessly, leaving him with no way to escape.

In desperation, Lu Chao actually entered the territory of the Little Demon's Lair.

The Little Demon's Lair was a place where a group of demonic cultivators hid, and even Ghost Path cultivators didn't dare to easily enter.

If ordinary cultivators could be compared to civilians, then Ghost Path cultivators were at best bandits, while demonic cultivators were like invading barbarians.

When Ghost Path cultivators encountered demonic cultivators, they generally kept their distance and avoided confrontation.

For Lu Chao, entering the Little Demon's Lair was like jumping from the tiger's den to the wolf's den.

After successfully ambushing the group and conducting a thorough search, the Ghost Path cultivators failed to find any trace of the escaped cultivators and had to temporarily give up.

However, their victory didn't last long. Just a few days later, Daoist Master Jin Li arrived at the Ghost Path cultivators' lair, Black Wind Grave.

Standing in the air, Jin Li Daoist Master looked down at the foul and messy land below, her face full of disgust.

With a wave of her hand, the ground rippled like water, continuously undulating and shaking. The violent earthquake made the earth seem as if it was about to split open. Many Ghost Path cultivators couldn't continue hiding underground and were forced to fly outside.

Due to certain agreements, she couldn't directly attack these Ghost Path cultivators, but giving them a scare and causing them some trouble wasn't a big problem.

"Daoist Master, please spare your Divine Ability," the giant skull that had once chased Meng Zhang spoke, now flying below Jin Li Daoist Master with a rather subdued and cautious demeanor.

"Daoist Master, we've been staying here quietly and haven't offended you. Why are you causing such a commotion here?" it pleaded.

"Why should I explain my actions to you? I felt a bit bored and decided to stir things up here. Is there a problem?" Jin Li Daoist Master looked down at them disdainfully.

The giant skull surprisingly looked somewhat pitiful and knew better than to continue talking. Having interacted with Jin Li Daoist Master before, it was well aware of her difficult nature.

The other Ghost Path cultivators present also kept silent, afraid of drawing Jin Li Daoist Master's attention.

Jin Li Daoist Master was satisfied with the attitude of these Ghost Path cultivators and didn't bother to deal with them any further.

"Have you hunted any outsider cultivators recently?" Jin Li Daoist Master had been tasked with finding a certain outsider Diviner. However, the Deadly Sea of Sand was vast, and without any other clues, finding a single outsider cultivator was like finding a needle in the ocean.

Even as a Gold Core Daoist Master with broad Divine Ability, she didn't have a good method for this task.

On the other hand, the group of Ghost Path cultivators hiding in the Deadly Sea of Sand were like bloodthirsty beasts. As soon as an outsider cultivator entered the Deadly Sea of Sand, they were like cats catching the scent of blood, eager to harvest their flesh, bones, and even their souls.

Thus, Jin Li Daoist Master sought out these Ghost Path cultivators, hoping to glean some information from them.

"We haven't, we haven't..." The giant skull shook repeatedly.

"Let Daoist Master know that we have been staying here quietly during this period, and we have absolutely not gone outside."

"Is that so?" Jin Li Daoist Master clearly didn't believe them.

However, these Ghost Path cultivators were seasoned veterans. They had already decided not to tell the truth, and Jin Li Daoist Master couldn't do much about it.

In truth, Jin Li Daoist Master had held back when she took action earlier. At most, she frightened them and had no intention of seriously hurting them.

Despite her intimidation, Jin Li Daoist Master failed to get the information she wanted and had no choice but to leave.

While Jin Li Daoist Master was displaying her power, Ye Feifan had been hiding among the group of Ghost Path cultivators, not daring to make any moves.

He couldn't help but envy the imposing aura of a Gold Core Daoist Master.

After Jin Li Daoist Master left, Ye Feifan flew in front of the giant skull and said, "Fellow Daoist, you've seen it yourself. A Gold Core Daoist Master possesses such power. As long as you assist me in obtaining the Ling Marrow, I will surely reward you handsomely once I achieve Gold Core in the future."

The giant skull looked at Ye Feifan skeptically but didn't say anything.

Although Ye Feifan had practiced the Ghost Path secret technique Bloodline Parasitism, he wasn't considered a complete Ghost Path cultivator by nature, so he naturally couldn't gain the full trust of these Ghost Path cultivators.

While the position of these Ghost Path cultivators in the Deadly Sea of Sand was somewhat awkward, they didn't want to attack the sand monsters proactively.

Ye Feifan understood their doubts and didn't rush; he let them think it over.

After Jin Li Daoist Master left Black Wind Grave, she continued flying northward and arrived near the Little Demon's Lair.

Although she knew that there were no Gold Core-level demonic cultivators inside, Jin Li Daoist Master's face still showed a hint of caution. After hesitating for a moment, she decided not to enter and detoured elsewhere.

Unaware that the person she was searching for was currently with her disciple Jin Qiao'er, Jin Li wandered through the Deadly Sea of Sand, searching for clues.

Not too long after Meng Zhang and his group found a peaceful time underground, it didn't last.

Several Second Rank sand monsters suddenly intruded into their hiding place, attacking them furiously.

The sand monsters in the Deadly Sea of Sand were divided into many different groups, and Meng Zhang and his group were looking for a specific group that guarded their nest. They had no interest in tangling with unrelated sand monsters.

The Deadly Sea of Sand was teeming with sand monsters, making it impossible to kill them all, and there were no spoils of war to gain from killing them. Meng Zhang and his group didn't want to waste their energy and engaged the attacking sand monsters only briefly before retreating.

Back on the surface, they had to spend some effort to shake off the pursuing sand monsters.