

## Sect Master 411

### Chapter 411: Healing

After Meng Zhang and his group had some spare time, they began searching for the whereabouts of the group of sand monsters that guarded the nest.

During the migration of a large group of sand monsters, they would inevitably leave behind many traces. However, in the Deadly Sea of Sand, violent sandstorms often buried these traces quickly.

Fortunately, though Meng Zhang's Grand Evolving Fortune couldn't be used, other spells were not greatly affected. Especially Jue Ying, who was particularly skilled in tracking and tracing, had a strong ability in this regard.

With Jue Ying leading the way and Meng Zhang and Jin Qiao'er assisting, the three of them finally found some useful clues and started tracking along the trail.

Since entering the Deadly Sea of Sand, the fierce winds had never ceased. Almost every moment, countless sand and dust were swirling around from all directions.

Shortly after they started tracking, the sandstorm grew even more violent.

The sky had long lost any trace of light, and everything around them was pitch-black. Even the divine consciousness of late Foundation Building cultivators like them was greatly affected by the sandstorm, unable to extend too far.

Meng Zhang reluctantly identified a direction using his Deception Breaking Eye and led the two women to run in that direction.

Under these circumstances, they couldn't even fly close to the ground; they had to run on the surface.

They had no idea how far they had run before the surrounding storm gradually calmed down.

Although the sandstorm was still considerable, they could now accurately discern the direction.

It was at this moment that Meng Zhang and Jue Ying realized they had deviated from their original intended direction.

Jue Ying was about to reorient when two cultivators flew over from the front.

Their figures swayed in the air as if they were about to fall at any moment.

Flying not far ahead, the two cultivators finally lost their balance in the air and fell straight to the ground, landing heavily.

Fortunately, they had been flying low to the ground and the sand beneath them was soft, so they didn't suffer any serious injuries.

After landing, the two struggled on the ground for a while. Seeing this, Meng Zhang and the two women quickly went over to help.

Meng Zhang had already recognized their identities. They were the members of Wang Qiquan's loose group of cultivators, the brothers Qian Kaiyu and Qian Kaizhou.

When Meng Zhang and the two women arrived in front of the brothers, they were pale-faced and frothing at the mouth, rolling on the ground incessantly.

Meng Zhang waved his hand casually, and the two late Foundation Building stage cultivators were instantly immobilized, unable to resist.

Meng Zhang made a pulling motion with one hand, and the two brothers, who were now completely immobilized, were brought before him by an invisible force.

"Just a glance tells me they are suffering from a state of agitation," Meng Zhang said.

Most cultivators had some knowledge of medicine to varying degrees. Having gained many legacies from the Trial Ground, Meng Zhang had extensive knowledge and was well-versed in various fields.

In terms of medical skills, he had barely scratched the surface, but he could handle some not-so-serious situations.

Although the two brothers were now immobilized, their faces were still filled with madness and they glared angrily at Meng Zhang and the others.

While talking, Meng Zhang pointed out more than ten streams of true energy, gently striking the vital acupoints of the two brothers.

After a while, the two brothers showed signs of struggling at first, but then slowly regained their sanity.

Once their consciousness was restored, the two brothers understood their situation.

Meng Zhang's act of saving them wasn't due to some inexplicable kindness but rather his curiosity about their situation.

Given the strength of their loose group of cultivators, what had they encountered to end up in such a state?

Seeing the two brothers' sanity returning, Meng Zhang separated them and asked them separately, with Jue Ying helping with the questioning.

Meng Zhang inquired with the elder brother, Qian Kaiyu. Upon hearing Meng Zhang ask about their encounter, Qian Kaiyu first showed a fearful expression and then revealed a look of grief and indignation.

It turned out that after Wang Qiquan's group broke through the encirclement of the Ghost Path cultivators, they had been searching for the whereabouts of the Ling Marrow in the vicinity.

They wandered around, flying over many places.

Perhaps it was a stroke of luck, or perhaps Heaven favored the diligent, but they actually found a sand monster nest seed that was in the process of gestation not far away in an underground passage.

In that passage, there were countless guarding sand monsters.

After observing for a while, they rushed in for a fierce attack.

After a fierce battle, they wiped out the entire group of guarding sand monsters and destroyed the nest seed.

Near the nest seed underground, they found a piece of Ling Marrow.

This Ling Marrow was only the size of an infant's head and not quite enough for one person to use, let alone two people.

Wang Qiquan and Ning Bo had both completed their Foundation Building cultivation base a long time ago. Over the years, they had been working hard to achieve Gold Core.

The amount of Ling Marrow they obtained was barely sufficient for one person, which meant that only one of them could benefit from it.

The Deadly Sea of Sand was full of dangers, and they had encountered numerous crises along the way. Obtaining this Ling Marrow this time was already a stroke of luck. Whether they would have such luck next time was anyone's guess.

Thus, the unexpected, yet logical thing happened.

Wang Qiquan and Ning Bo both decided to secretly attack each other, each intending to seize the Ling Marrow for themselves.

Although Wang Qiquan was the leader of the group, his strength was only slightly stronger than Ning Bo's in terms of cultivation base. They were as close as blood brothers, and yet, without any hesitation, they sought to take each other's life.

Both were injured almost simultaneously and suppressed their injuries, beginning a life-and-death struggle.

The Qian Family brothers, who were watching from the side, were incredibly shocked and couldn't react in time. Even when they did react, they were at a loss and didn't know which side to help.

While the two brothers were struggling with their decisions, Wang Qiquan and Ning Bo, engaged in a life-and-death battle, didn't forget about them either.

With their personalities, they would naturally not leave any future troubles and let the two brothers reap the benefits.

Thus, Wang Qiquan and Ning Bo involuntarily involved the two brothers in the battle.

After an intense three-way melee, the Qian Family brothers slowly lost consciousness and had no idea what happened afterward.

It was only when they were rescued by Meng Zhang and the others that they finally regained their senses.

Throughout Qian Kaiyu's account, Meng Zhang had been using his innate Divine Ability, Mind Reading, to closely monitor his thoughts.

From both his outward reactions and inner thoughts, he had not lied; everything he said was true.

## Chapter 412: Ambush

On Jue Ying's side, she asked her younger brother Qian Kaizhou and obtained similar results to Meng Zhang's side.

However, to be cautious, they exchanged questions and repeated their inquiries to the two brothers, all of which yielded almost identical answers.

At this point, they could basically conclude that the two brothers were telling the truth.

The fate that had befallen the two brothers was likely the result of being affected by some kind of attack on their mental state during the battle.

If they hadn't fortuitously encountered Meng Zhang's group and received treatment, it would have been difficult for the brothers to leave the Deadly Sea of Sand alive.

After some treatment and examination, Meng Zhang roughly determined that the two brothers were no longer in any danger.

However, the restrictions on the two brothers' bodies were still intact, and they remained immobilized. It wasn't time to restore their freedom yet.

Meng Zhang and Jue Ying discussed the situation.

Meng Zhang had come to the Deadly Sea of Sand this time for the sake of Ling Marrow as well. Upon hearing about the Ling Marrow, they naturally couldn't easily let it go.

No matter who obtained the Ling Marrow, Meng Zhang would take action to seize it.

When it came to achieving his own form the core Grand Dao, Meng Zhang wouldn't care about his identity as a righteous cultivator at this moment.

When it came to forcibly seizing treasures or killing for treasure, he wouldn't hesitate at all.

They didn't know if Wang Qiquan and Ning Bo had already determined the victor at this point.

However, regardless of who ultimately won, they probably wouldn't linger here but leave the Deadly Sea of Sand as quickly as possible.

Time was of the essence, and Meng Zhang didn't delay any further. He led the two women and set off.

With a single wave of his hand, two invisible streams of true qi wrapped around the Qian Family brothers, pulling them along behind him.

Following the direction provided by the Qian Family brothers, Meng Zhang and his group flew straight to the location they mentioned.

Not flying too far, they saw the underground passages as described by the Qian Family brothers.

Dozens of giant tunnels crisscrossed the flat ground, extending far into the distance.

These enormous tunnels, hundreds of zhang deep, looked like ugly scars deeply imprinted on the earth.

Both inside and outside the tunnels were covered with piles of special ashes, likely the remains left by the destroyed sand monsters.

Meng Zhang carefully used his Deception Breaking Eye to examine the area and found traces of battles but no ongoing fight.

Could it be that the battle had already ended, and the victor had already left?

With this speculation in mind, Meng Zhang and the two women flew towards the location mentioned by the Qian Family brothers.

With the Qian Family brothers in tow, they entered one of the middle tunnels.

Arriving at the bottom of the tunnel, they found it filled with densely packed holes of various depths and various traces left by battles.

Ahead on the ground, lay two bodies that looked like Wang Qiquan and Ning Bo.

Could it be that they had already perished?

Although Meng Zhang found it hard to believe this result, there was a trace of relief in his heart.

If they really perished together, then he would save a lot of trouble. However, he didn't know where the Ling Marrow was now.

As Meng Zhang was thinking about the Ling Marrow, his gaze swept around, and a crystal-clear sphere the size of an infant's head fell into his eyes.

Meng Zhang's heart burst with joy, but then he suddenly felt something was amiss.

The sphere emitted an alluring light, captivating Meng Zhang and the others, making it impossible for them to look away.

The sphere seemed to exude a secretive power that silently attracted their minds.

Having the innate Divine Ability Mind Reading, Meng Zhang was highly sensitive to mental power. He keenly perceived that a strange power was silently invading his mind.

Meng Zhang himself had used Mind Reading many times to invade and read others' minds. Moreover, there were some contents related to mind confrontation in the legacies he obtained.

Reacting in time, Meng Zhang immediately resisted this invasion.

At this moment, Jin Qiao'er and Jue Ying's minds had already begun to waver.

Meng Zhang shouted loudly, "Be careful!"

His loud shout pulled the two women back from the verge of being entranced.

Jue Ying, who was extremely familiar with all kinds of tricks, immediately realized what was happening. A rare look of anger appeared on her face, followed by an uncontrollable killing intent.

Clearly, this attempt to control her mind had thoroughly infuriated her.

Jin Qiao'er also quickly reacted, equally enraged.

For cultivators, any attempt to control their minds was despicable and intolerable.

As the sphere on the ground radiated a brilliant light, a series of indistinct murmurs filled the ears of the three.

The three of them first felt their minds shaking, but they immediately put up effective defenses.

Meng Zhang's continuous loud shouts weakened the power of the murmurs.

A light glowed around Jue Ying's neck as she activated the protective magic tool, the Tranquil Spirit Jade Pendant.

Jin Qiao'er also had a defensive magic tool against attacks on her mind, which kept the murmurs at bay.

Just as the three were countering the enemy's attacks on their minds, the Qian Family brothers, whom Meng Zhang had previously restrained, struggled and seemed confused. They emitted beast-like roars and broke free from the restrictions and Meng Zhang's true qi that had bound them.

Once they regained their freedom, the two brothers rushed toward Meng Zhang's group like wild beasts.

Wang Qiquan and Ning Bo, who had previously lain on the ground, almost indistinguishable from dead bodies, leaped up and also charged fiercely.

Under a flanking attack and the hidden enemy's mental attack, Meng Zhang's group momentarily found themselves at a disadvantage.

However, they didn't panic but calmly dealt with the situation.

With sufficient vigilance, the enemy's mental attack, hidden in the shadows, couldn't exert much influence and at most distracted them slightly.

As for Wang Qiquan's group, despite appearing ferocious and fearless of death, their actual strength had greatly diminished compared to before, and they clearly lacked clear consciousness, acting like puppets controlled by others.

Under normal circumstances, Wang Qiquan's loose cultivator group would indeed pose a great threat to Meng Zhang's group. However, under the current circumstances, they seemed fierce but had their strength greatly reduced, far inferior to their normal state.

Meng Zhang took out the Golden Crow Lantern, released the Solar True Flame, and blocked the strongest attacks from Wang Qiquan and Ning Bo.

Jin Qiao'er and Jue Ying joined forces to deal with the Qian Family brothers.

When they had previously restrained the Qian Family brothers, Meng Zhang and Jue Ying had thoroughly checked them and found no abnormalities. However, the sudden changes now were beyond their expectations.

Aside from a momentary surprise, once they realized what was happening, Meng Zhang's group successfully withstood the enemy's attacks and began to gradually turn the tide.

The murmurs emitted by the sphere on the ground gave Meng Zhang a familiar feeling.

#### Chapter 413: Injuring the Enemy

Meng Zhang remembered this insidious technique that silently invaded the mind. Ye Feifan had once used it in Great Wind City when he tried to control Meng Zhang while he was extorting Foundation Building Pills from him. Meng Zhang had pretended to be affected, displaying brilliant acting skills, and successfully shook off Ye Feifan's attempt.

Now, the cultivator hiding in the shadows used a more concealed and powerful version of this technique. Meng Zhang felt that this method didn't seem like the work of a Ghost Path cultivator.

He had previously encountered Ye Feifan's bloodline parasitic technique from the Ghost Path, which led him to initially classify this new technique as such.

However, based on the current intense confrontation and the fate of Wang Qiquan's loose cultivator group, Meng Zhang had a rough guess in his mind. This method of manipulating people's minds and turning cultivators into living puppets was undoubtedly the work of a demonic cultivator.

Meng Zhang had heard of demonic cultivators before but had never encountered them personally. He had witnessed the tragic situation when Luo Ye was tainted by demonic energy.

Facing an ambush from a demonic cultivator now, Meng Zhang remained highly vigilant.

He secretly communicated with Jin Qiao'er and Jue Ying, warning them of the possible presence of a demonic cultivator in the vicinity. They needed to be cautious and not hold back when they forced the enemy out of hiding.

Jue Ying had already suspected the presence of a demonic cultivator since Luo Ye had suffered greatly from them. Jin Qiao'er, too, had heard about the terrifying nature of demonic cultivators from her master, and after Meng Zhang's reminder, became even more cautious.

The fierce battle continued with Wang Qiquan's group attacking from both sides, but they couldn't break through Meng Zhang's group's defenses, leading to a stalemate.

Although Meng Zhang appeared to be fiercely fighting the enemy, much of his attention was focused on the hidden demonic cultivator.

Unseen, the demonic cultivator's murmurs disturbed them, and Meng Zhang's group was unable to fully concentrate. They gradually found themselves at a disadvantage against Wang Qiquan's group.

Fortunately, Wang Qiquan's group had used up their trump cards, like the fake Third Rank talismans, when they broke free from the Ghost Path cultivators' encirclement earlier. Moreover, their consciousness was impaired, and they were unable to fully utilize their powerful cultivation bases, which prevented the situation from becoming too dire for Meng Zhang's group.

However, if they allowed the demonic cultivator to control the situation for too long, it could lead to dire consequences for them.

Amidst the chaos of the battle, two small shadows quietly flew out from Meng Zhang's spirit pet bag: Zhui Dian (Chasing Lightning) and Liu Li (Colored Glaze).

These two little creatures were naturally small in size and adept at hiding.

In the past, apart from Zhui Dian's slightly faster speed, which had some practical use, Liu Li mostly played the role of a cute mascot and had little impact in direct combat against Refining Qi stage cultivators like Meng Zhang.

However, after consuming the flesh and blood of the Third Rank beast and evolving, their battle prowess greatly increased, barely matching that of Foundation Building stage cultivators. Moreover, their innate talents were significantly enhanced.

As Meng Zhang and the others fought the enemy, the two little creatures secretly concealed themselves and began searching their surroundings.

The demonic cultivator was skilled in the art of hiding, even if a group of cultivators were to carefully search this place, it would be challenging to discover their whereabouts.

Luckily, these two little creatures had the intuition of spirit pets, especially Liu Li, who had a natural talent for illusion and hiding.

If the demonic cultivator had remained completely hidden, the two little creatures might have had a difficult time detecting them. But since the cultivator had to use demonic techniques to disturb Meng Zhang's group, they left traces.

In the end, Liu Li was the one who discovered something amiss. Relying on her innate ability, she detected the traces of the demonic cultivator's illusion technique.

There was a special connection between spirit pets and their owners. Upon receiving the message from Liu Li, Meng Zhang calmly informed Jin Qiao'er and Jue Ying.

The three of them moved in sync, gradually shifting the battlefield closer to where the demonic cultivator was hiding.

The cautious demonic cultivator quickly noticed that something was wrong, but before he could react, Meng Zhang had already taken action.

Jue Ying took out a fake Third Rank talisman and activated it. In the sky, a twisting and changing shadow appeared, forming over a dozen black tentacles that swiped toward Wang Qiquan's group.

Wang Qiquan's group was not in their right minds and didn't know how to evade properly. They directly faced the tentacles head-on, becoming entangled and temporarily unable to escape.

Taking advantage of this opportunity, Meng Zhang aimed at the hiding place of the demonic cultivator and activated another fake Third Rank talisman.

The ground trembled violently as an earth dragon emerged from the ground, pouncing directly at the hiding spot.

A loud collision occurred, and the space seemed to shatter like glass as a figure appeared.

After the fierce impact, the figure spat out blood and was thrown backward.

Demonic cultivators were natural enemies of the Cultivation World. They were scarce and faced difficulties surviving in the Cultivation World, especially Gold Core-level demonic cultivators, which were exceedingly rare.

Therefore, fake Third Rank talismans and similar items were relatively rare among demonic cultivators. These hidden demonic cultivators in the Deadly Sea of Sand had little interaction with the outside world and had difficulty obtaining various resources. Moreover, they lacked Gold Core-level demonic cultivators among them.

The current demonic cultivator naturally had no means of obtaining fake Third Rank talismans.

Once exposed, he lost his greatest trump card. He was merely a Foundation Building stage completion cultivator and was no match against the fake Third Rank talisman.

## Chapter 414: Healing

Based on Meng Zhang's analysis of their previous encounter, he deduced that this demonic cultivator most likely practiced the Heart Demon Path within the demonic arts. If caught off guard



and attacked secretly, even cultivator teams like Wang Qiquan's, with considerable strength, could be affected.

However, with sufficient precautions and an understanding of the cultivator's methods, this person would, at best, be slightly stronger than an ordinary Foundation Building completion cultivator, without the overwhelming advantage.

Following Meng Zhang's lead, Jin Qiao'er also activated a fake Third Rank talisman. She wasn't lacking in such items, considering she had a Gold Core Daoist Master as her master, as long as she was willing to use the materials.

Compared to her, Meng Zhang appeared a bit stingy, using the powerful fake Third Rank talisman sparingly.

Enduring the impact of two consecutive fake Third Rank talismans, the demonic cultivator was heavily injured. He let out a strange and sharp scream. Wang Qiquan's group, who had been trapped, immediately burst out all their strength and forcibly broke free from the entangled black tentacles, even if it meant self-harm.

They disregarded their injuries and recklessly charged towards Meng Zhang's group, akin to madmen, full of killing intent.

They were, after all, Foundation Building completion and late-stage cultivators. Once they began fighting desperately, Meng Zhang's group had to take them seriously, even if they were filled with hatred for the demonic cultivator.

They had to prioritize their own lives before anything else.

Taking advantage of the temporary distraction caused by the entangled tentacles, the demonic cultivator immediately employed an escape technique and fled at top speed.

Meng Zhang and the others couldn't afford to be distracted and could only watch him get away.

However, Meng Zhang did not remain idle; he secretly commanded Zhui Dian (Chasing Lightning) to quietly pursue the fleeing cultivator.

As the demonic cultivator fled, Meng Zhang's group could now fully deal with Wang Qiquan's team.

Liu Li (Colored Glaze) wasn't fast enough to keep up with Zhui Dian (Chasing Lightning) and stayed behind. She used her illusion skills to assist Meng Zhang's group against the enemies.

Wang Qiquan and Ning Bo were controlled by the demonic art, deeply entrenched in the demonic path, and had lost their senses, leaving only their instinct to kill.

After a bitter battle, Meng Zhang completely refined their bodies with the Solar True Flame.

As for Qian Kaiyu and Qian Kaizhou, they were also controlled but not as severely. Liu Li (Colored Glaze) used her illusions, causing them to briefly lose their focus, and then Meng Zhang's group captured them alive.

After the battle, Meng Zhang's group finally had time to observe their surroundings. The object that had fallen to the ground, resembling spiritual marrow, was as Meng Zhang expected a magic tool used to deceive people's hearts by the demonic cultivator.

After a thorough examination, Meng Zhang used the Solar True Flame to burn it to ashes.

There were traces of illusions in many places around them. With the demonic cultivator's escape, all the illusions gradually weakened and revealed themselves.

Meng Zhang's group searched the area but found nothing else.

Next, Meng Zhang had Jin Qiao'er and Jue Ying protect him while he carefully checked Qian Family's brothers' condition.

His main purpose was not to heal them but to explore the mysteries of the demonic art from them.

This time, being prepared and resolute, Meng Zhang directly inspected their Souls.

As he suspected, deep within their Souls, a restriction had been secretly placed. Every action of the brothers was unknowingly controlled.

During the first inspection of the brothers, Meng Zhang had overlooked this aspect unintentionally.

Even during the Refining Qi stage, Meng Zhang could perform Divine Soul Leaving the Body, allowing his Soul to enter the Taiyi Sect's Trial Ground. After reaching the Foundation Building stage, the power of his Soul grew stronger.

Therefore, when faced with the demonic art that confused the mind, he had a much stronger resistance.

Foundation Building completion cultivators could wander with their Souls, traveling a hundred miles away. Even if their physical bodies were destroyed, they had a chance to seize a new body and be reborn.

Meng Zhang's powerful Soul force slowly penetrated into the brothers' Souls.

After a difficult process, Meng Zhang finally used his formidable Soul force to forcibly remove the restrictions within their Souls.

During this process, he had a close encounter with the demonic art and engaged in a close combat between Souls.

Taking advantage of this opportunity, he read many memories from the brothers' Souls.

As it turned out, Wang Qiquan's loose cultivator group had encountered an ordinary sand monster tribe. However, while they were fighting the sand monsters, the demonic cultivator concealed himself and used the demonic art to manipulate and harm Wang Qiquan's group.

Loose cultivators, after all, lacked the experience that disciples of major sects possessed when facing demonic cultivators.

Their intense desire for spiritual marrow also led to flaws in their minds, which provided the demonic cultivator with an opportunity.

The demonic cultivator seemed to be a seasoned hunter, knowing exactly what these foreign cultivators desired the most.

From the moment he discovered Wang Qiquan's group, he deliberately led them into his trap.

A spiritual marrow disguised using demonic art, along with some covert manipulation, caused the two sworn brothers to turn against each other, resulting in a mutual slaughter.

When Wang Qiquan and Ning Bo were severely injured, the demonic cultivator took advantage of the opportunity to control them and turn them into puppets under his control.

As for the Qian Family brothers, their possession was still shallow, giving them some strength to escape.

The demonic cultivator didn't immediately pursue them, deciding instead to use them as bait to lure new prey.

Unaware that their Souls had been invaded by the demonic cultivator's power, the two brothers thought they had escaped danger.

Meng Zhang's group not only broke the demonic cultivator's trap but also captured the brothers alive.

After understanding the general situation and completely removing the restrictions within their Souls, Meng Zhang used his powerful Sun-Moon True Qi to cleanse their bodies thoroughly, ensuring there was no residual demonic energy and preventing any future issues.

After doing all this, Meng Zhang finally felt relieved.

As for the brothers, their Souls had suffered severe damage this time. After waking up, they would need a long time to recover from their injuries. Moreover, they would no longer have the opportunity to advance to the Gold Core stage in the future. Their cultivation base was likely to decline significantly, and even maintaining the Foundation Building mid-stage cultivation base would be uncertain.

After discussing with Jin Qiao'er and Jue Ying, they couldn't just leave the brothers here without any care.

After all, two experienced Foundation Building stage cultivators still had value.

In the end, Jue Ying, with her abundant experience, used a pill to put the brothers into a deep sleep, then took out a hand-sized cloth bag.

This was a human containment bag that could store living beings. She skillfully placed the brothers inside.

## Chapter 415: Tracking

As Meng Zhang used the Solar True Flame to burn Wang Qiquan and Ning Bo into ashes, the demonic cultivator who was fleeing felt like he had been severely struck. He spewed several mouthfuls of blood and nearly lost control of his flight.

Stabilizing his shaky body, he struggled to avoid falling to the ground. With a look of deep resentment, he glanced at the place where the battle had just taken place and then, without saying a word, continued his escape.

He fled for quite some time, finally arriving at his destination.

He burrowed into the ground and traveled underground for a while, entering an underground cave.

In that cave, Ye Feifan was unexpectedly present.

Sitting at the head was a blood-clothed old man, with Ye Feifan seated below.

The demonic cultivator, who had plotted against Meng Zhang and was referred to as Poison Heart Demon by Ye Feifan, paid no attention to Ye Feifan. Instead, he addressed the blood-clothed old man, "Blood Boss, how come this double-faced guy appeared here?"

As he spoke, he glanced disdainfully at Ye Feifan.

The blood-clothed old man said, "Alright, take care of yourself first. Brother Ye and I have been friends for many years; we should have a little get-together."

"Poison Heart Demon, Demon Bloodhand, and I have known each other for many years. When we met, you weren't even on the path yet," Ye Feifan said unreservedly.

Poison Heart Demon was about to erupt, but considering his injuries, he eventually kept quiet and found a corner to sit down in the cave.

Demon Bloodhand didn't pay any attention to Poison Heart Demon and continued to talk to Ye Feifan, "Brother Ye, that matter you mentioned earlier, I'm not avoiding it, but it's genuinely difficult to handle."

As it turned out, Ye Feifan had an extensive network of contacts and had no scruples in his actions. Not only did he have connections with the Ghost Path cultivators, but he had also secretly established ties with demonic cultivators.

Before his demise, he had joined forces with Demon Bloodhand, engaging in quite a few wicked deeds.

After regaining a new life through the Bloodline Parasitic Art, he caused quite a stir in Great Wind City. Later, to escape the pursuit of Huang Family cultivators, he had no choice but to seek refuge in the Deadly Sea of Sand, taking shelter with the Ghost Path cultivators he knew from before.

He had tried to persuade the Ghost Path cultivators to help him obtain spiritual marrow, but they were afraid of offending the sand monster's master and had to refuse him.

Helpless, he turned to the familiar Demon Bloodhand.

Demon Bloodhand had long admired Ye Feifan's ruthlessness and cruelty, which disregarded human nature, and had always wanted to bring him into the fold of demonic cultivators.

When Ye Feifan came knocking on his door, Demon Bloodhand was naturally delighted. The condition he proposed was for Ye Feifan to voluntarily join the demonic path, becoming a demonic cultivator, before he would help him obtain spiritual marrow.

Ye Feifan was discerning enough not to agree to becoming a demonic cultivator, just like he refused the Ghost Path cultivators. Becoming a demonic cultivator would make him a public enemy of the Cultivation World, an enemy of this world. Unless absolutely necessary, he wouldn't easily fall into the demonic path.

Before Poison Heart Demon entered the scene, the two were negotiating.

After Poison Heart Demon arrived, they exchanged some idle chatter before continuing their conversation.

Suddenly, Poison Heart Demon let out a muffled groan and spat out another mouthful of blood.

This was the moment when Meng Zhang broke the restrictions within the Souls of the Qian Family brothers.

Seeing Poison Heart Demon's condition, both Demon Bloodhand and Ye Feifan stopped talking.

Demon Bloodhand frowned, "What happened? Who caused you such a heavy loss?"

Upon hearing Demon Bloodhand's question, although Poison Heart Demon was reluctant to show weakness in front of Ye Feifan, he still honestly recounted everything that had happened earlier.

Originally, it was supposed to be a fruitful hunt, but it turned into a disaster when they encountered a man and two women. Not only did they lose all their prey, but Poison Heart Demon also suffered severe injuries, barely managing to escape.

Listening to Poison Heart Demon's account, Demon Bloodhand's face turned dark, and his eyes occasionally revealed a killing intent.

On the other hand, Ye Feifan wore a thoughtful expression but remained silent.

Demon Bloodhand chuckled in anger, "These foreign cultivators have some nerve. Not only did they refuse to obediently die, but they also dared to injure me. Once I'm free, I will extract their Souls and let them burn in demonic flames for a while."

Ye Feifan had other thoughts in his mind and was not interested in continuing to tangle with Demon Bloodhand.

After chatting with Demon Bloodhand for a while, he took the initiative to bid farewell and left.

After Ye Feifan departed, Poison Heart Demon asked in puzzlement, "Blood Boss, you are too indulgent with that guy. Why are you so courteous to him?"

Demon Bloodhand let out a sigh, "You don't understand. We demonic cultivators may seem fierce and powerful, but in reality, we lack capable people and can't achieve much."

"If this guy can voluntarily join the demonic path, it will undoubtedly bring new prospects for the demonic cultivators in the future."

Having said that, Demon Bloodhand fell silent, not saying much more.

Zhui Dian (Chasing Lightning), who had been tracking the demonic cultivator, followed him back after he entered the underground. Since he wasn't proficient in earth-escaping techniques and worried about revealing his traces, he didn't follow underground but waited silently in the sky.

When Ye Feifan bid farewell to Demon Bloodhand, he emerged from the underground, and Zhui Dian (Chasing Lightning) stealthily followed him.

Ye Feifan didn't notice that he was being followed and flew straight towards his destination.

After Meng Zhang and his group took care of the Qian Family brothers, they were preparing to leave.

Suddenly, Meng Zhang gazed thoughtfully in the distance.

Zhui Dian (Chasing Lightning) was tracking a demonic cultivator and flying in their direction.

Why did Zhui Dian (Chasing Lightning), who was following a demonic cultivator, end up trailing Ye Feifan? Wasn't he in cahoots with the Ghost Path cultivators? When did he get involved with demonic cultivators?

Ye Feifan flew over and immediately noticed Meng Zhang's preparedness with Jin Qiao'er and Jue Ying standing by. However, Meng Zhang didn't immediately take action, so he thought he should listen to what Ye Feifan had to say.

Jin Qiao'er and Jue Ying stared at Ye Feifan with hostility, but since Meng Zhang didn't move, they held back for now.

Seeing that Meng Zhang didn't attack right away, Ye Feifan inwardly rejoiced.

He got straight to the point and began explaining the purpose of his visit.

#### Chapter 416: Cooperation

Originally, Ye Feifan had already discovered the new location where the sand monsters migrated to earlier and found the existence of the Nest Seed. The Nest Seed was continuously absorbing the extremely pure spiritual energy from the Spirit Marrow and slowly growing and developing.

With his own strength, Ye Feifan was powerless to disperse the numerous guardian sand monsters around and seize the Spirit Marrow near the Nest Seed. His close associate, the Ghost Path cultivator, was unwilling to offend the sand monster's master and refused to help Ye Feifan deal with the sand monsters.

Helplessly watching the Spirit Marrow right there but out of reach, Ye Feifan felt extremely frustrated. He remembered dealing with Meng Zhang in Great Wind City. Though they had some difficulties during their previous encounter, the final outcome was satisfactory. Thus, this time, he came specifically to find Meng Zhang and his group, intending to join forces and confront the sand monsters together, then share the Spirit Marrow.

His luck was good, as he quickly discovered the traces of Meng Zhang and his companions after coming out for a few rounds. After listening to Ye Feifan's words, Meng Zhang looked at him with a somewhat foolish gaze. He would never plot with the tiger for its skin and wouldn't cooperate with Ye Feifan.

Without mentioning anything else, when they managed to disperse the guardians and seize the Spirit Marrow, the group of Ghost Path cultivators might suddenly emerge. Not only would Meng Zhang and his companions fail to keep the Spirit Marrow, but they might not even be able to preserve their own lives.

Hearing Meng Zhang's doubts, Ye Feifan cursed and swore, vehemently denying any intention to harm Meng Zhang and his group. He was willing to make a solemn pledge, vowing to keep the cooperation with Meng Zhang a secret from the Ghost Path cultivators and prevent them from interfering.

He even offered to make a ghost oath, stating that if Meng Zhang and his group were killed by Ghost Path cultivators within the Deadly Sea of Sand, he would suffer the same fate.

At first glance, Ye Feifan's commitment seemed sincere, as he was willing to risk his life to ensure Meng Zhang's safety from the Ghost Path cultivators. However, if Meng Zhang and his companions were killed by other sinister cultivators, he would have no responsibility.

Meng Zhang didn't rush to expose Ye Feifan's schemes and instead showed a contemplative look. Jue Ying wanted to remind Meng Zhang that the person in front of them couldn't be trusted, but after receiving Meng Zhang's eye signal, he remained silent. Jin Qiao'er had always had full trust in Meng Zhang and didn't interfere.

After much contemplation, Meng Zhang began to question Ye Feifan loudly. Surprisingly, Ye Feifan didn't get angry; instead, he felt pleased that Meng Zhang was swayed by his words. After a fierce debate, they finally reached an agreement.

Together, Meng Zhang's group and Ye Feifan headed to the location where Ye Feifan had discovered the Spirit Marrow. Working together, they dispersed the surrounding guardian sand monsters and obtained the Spirit Marrow. As for how to divide the spoils, that would be decided later.

Ye Feifan must keep the whole matter strictly confidential and not reveal it to the Ghost Path cultivators. If any Ghost Path cultivators appeared during the process, Ye Feifan had to immediately kill them without any delay.

Originally, Meng Zhang thought that if a Ghost Path cultivator appeared, Ye Feifan would take his own life. However, Ye Feifan strongly opposed this idea, arguing that if a Ghost Path cultivator happened to pass by, and he did nothing wrong, it would be too unfair for him to take his own life.

After some bargaining, they finally reached an agreement. While it appeared that Ye Feifan might be at a disadvantage, he was actually relieved. Meng Zhang had focused all his attention on the Ghost Path cultivators, leaving himself open to manipulation.

With the agreement made, Meng Zhang presented a Ghost Oath contract. After verifying its correctness, both parties made the vow, ensuring that neither would dare to renege.

Now that they had made the Ghost Oath, the formerly hostile parties were temporarily allies. Next, they began discussing how to deal with the guardian sand monsters.

Ye Feifan led Meng Zhang's group to secretly observe the location of the Nest Seed for a long time. He didn't lie about the information related to the Spirit Marrow and formulated a rough plan of action. Then, they temporarily separated to make their preparations.

Ye Feifan had indeed done a great favor by finding this place. If it weren't for the strength of the guardian sand monsters being too formidable for him to handle alone, he would have likely taken the Spirit Marrow long ago.

Ghost Path cultivators were unwilling to assist, and the sinister cultivators proposed unacceptable conditions. Faced with no other choice, he turned to seek help from Meng Zhang and his group. However, he had planned all along, thinking he could outwit Meng Zhang.

As for who was calculating whom and who would have the last laugh, the answer would soon be revealed.

After less than two days of separation, they gathered once again. The sand monsters had chosen a new stronghold after their migration, located over a thousand miles west of Emerald Lake. Without

Ye Feifan's guidance, it would have taken Meng Zhang's group much more time and effort to find this place.

Ye Feifan had indeed been a great help, saving Meng Zhang's group a lot of effort. The surface of the area showed no signs of anything unusual, but underneath the ground, there were countless crisscrossing passages. Countless sand monsters came and went through these tunnels, resembling an ant colony.

Among them were many powerful Second Rank sand monsters. If a Foundation Building cultivator entered alone, they would likely be surrounded and killed by numerous sand monsters.

Ye Feifan, relying on his knowledge of various mysterious techniques, had only dared to secretly investigate the place and didn't dare to easily alert the sand monsters inside.

There was no perfect method to deal with such a large number of sand monsters. They could only force their way in, confront the guardian sand monsters, seize the Spirit Marrow, and then make a hasty retreat.

Ye Feifan chose a direction and charged into the underground, while Meng Zhang's group chose another path and directly entered the underground passages. They would attack from two different directions, competing to see who was stronger and luckier to seize the Spirit Marrow first.

#### Chapter 417: Going well

The sand monsters within the Deadly Sea of Sand are different from those in the Endless Sea of Sand. In the Endless Sea of Sand, all sand monsters belong to various nests, each forming a relatively independent faction. They usually do not unite but rather grow and develop separately. However, during times of chaos caused by the sand monsters, when they harm human cultivators, these sand monsters from different nests would cooperate and fight together.

In contrast, in the Deadly Sea of Sand, there seems to be no discovered sand monster nests by outside cultivators. The sand monsters are divided into different groups roaming around without any known origin. Some of these groups have special missions, such as the one Meng Zhang and his group are currently facing, which specifically guards the growing nest seed.

These sand monsters dig numerous underground tunnels and passages, creating defensive structures similar to human cities, to prevent foreign invasions. Meng Zhang's group seemingly randomly chose an area to launch their attack, but in reality, it was after careful observation, as this spot was where the sand monster defense was relatively weak.

Though this direction had a considerable number of sand monsters, most were First Rank sand monsters, and there weren't many Second Rank ones. Each member of the trio used their skills to kill numerous sand monsters along the way, forcefully creating a path underground.

In another direction, Ye Feifan was also going all out, dispersing sand monsters ahead and charging forward. The Spirit Marrow continuously emitted strong spiritual energy fluctuations. The nest seed needed this spiritual energy to grow, making it difficult to conceal these disturbances, instead drawing more attention to it.



Even before entering the underground, when they were still outside, Meng Zhang and his group faintly sensed the intense spiritual energy fluctuations from the Spirit Marrow. As they got closer to their target, the sensation became clearer.

With such precise positioning, they didn't have to worry about missing their target. They rushed forward with all their strength in the direction of the spiritual energy fluctuations.

All the cultivators advancing underground were proficient in the Earth Escape Spell, so they didn't follow the paths dug out by the sand monsters. Instead, they directly moved towards the location of the Spirit Marrow in a nearly straight line.

Encountering groups of Second Rank sand monsters blocking their way, Jin Qiao'er and Deep Earth Spirit General each used a fake Third Rank talisman to forcefully disperse the obstructing sand monsters.

At this point, Meng Zhang felt a little embarrassed. As a Sect Master and a man, he seemed quite inadequate compared to the two women. Having a Gold Core master as a mentor was indeed beneficial; they would have an abundance of fake Third Rank talismans. He silently appreciated his luck, having fortuitously met Jin Qiao'er halfway when entering the Deadly Sea of Sand. Not only did he gain valuable information, but he also added a powerful combat force to his group.

After dispelling a group of sand monsters, Meng Zhang couldn't help but ask, "Miss Qiao'er, how much good stuff did your master give you?"

Jin Qiao'er replied, "Before, my master said I wasn't mature enough and was afraid I'd develop a bad habit of relying too much on external items, so she hadn't given me too many tools. I nagged her for a long time before she finally gave me two Yin Thunder orbs."

"But after our life and death battle with the Third Rank monster last time, my master scolded me severely, saying I didn't know the immensity of heaven and earth. However, she later gave me a lot of protective items."

Compared to a cultivator like Luo Ye Daoist Master, who had only recently advanced to Gold Core, Jin Qiao'er's master seemed much more generous. Gold Core cultivators could indeed refine fake Third Rank talismans, but the materials required were definitely not insignificant. Many cultivation sects might struggle to afford them.

As they chatted, the three of them had already reached the vicinity of their destination.

On the other side, Ye Feifan was still some distance away from this location. Despite his strong abilities and numerous hidden tricks, lacking a Gold Core Daoist Master as a mentor put him at a considerable disadvantage.

Appearing before Meng Zhang's group was a giant heart-shaped object, larger than an ordinary room, rhythmically pulsating as if a living being were breathing. With each tremor, a massive amount of spiritual energy was drawn into it.

Meng Zhang and Deep Earth Spirit General had previously infiltrated a sand monster nest and personally witnessed the core of a sand monster nest. The heart-shaped object they saw now was much smaller than a fully mature sand monster nest core, but its general form and aura were strikingly similar.

It was undoubtedly the nest seed of a sand monster. Judging from its appearance, it seemed that the seed was not far from maturity.

Not far away was a crystal-clear sphere about the size of an adult's head, constantly emitting incredibly pure spiritual energy. With Meng Zhang's keen eyesight, he immediately recognized it as the Spirit Marrow he had been tirelessly seeking.

Several Second Rank sand monsters were guarding it closely. As soon as Meng Zhang and his group rushed in, they immediately went crazy and attacked them.

From afar, more sand monsters were pouring in from all directions.

Understanding the urgency of the situation, Meng Zhang shouted loudly and went all out.

Jin Qiao'er once again used a fake Third Rank talisman to blast away the Second Rank sand monsters rushing towards them. Taking advantage of the opportunity, Meng Zhang reached the Spirit Marrow.

He took out a talisman to mask the spiritual energy fluctuations and then stored the Spirit Marrow in his storage bag.

Meanwhile, Jue Ying arrived in front of the sand monster nest seed and whipped it fiercely with her Wind Dance Whip, causing it to crack and break apart since it wasn't yet fully mature. She then picked several core parts and stored them in her storage bag.

After finishing their tasks, a massive number of sand monsters reinforced from all directions, crazily rushing toward them, enraged after the nest seed was destroyed and the Spirit Marrow was taken.

Having accomplished their objective, Meng Zhang's group didn't linger in the area. They rapidly forged ahead, escaping through a path they forcefully created among the sand monster interceptors.

After a bitter fight, they finally broke through the sand monster's blockade, escaped from underground, and reached the surface.

#### **Chapter 418: Mutually Made Plans**

When Meng Zhang, and his companions snatched the Spirit Essence and began to break through the ground, Ye Feifan had already sensed it. Their escape stirred up countless sand monsters, making it impossible to hide. Even the sand monsters that were originally pursuing Ye Feifan diverted their course to chase after Meng Zhang and the others.

Ye Feifan swiftly freed himself from the sand monster he was fighting and flew towards Meng Zhang's group. They had just emerged from the ground when a horde of sand monsters chased closely behind them. Urgently, they flew towards a distant location, with the sand monsters relentlessly pursuing them.

After a short while, Ye Feifan also emerged from the ground and witnessed the commotion from a distance, silently following them. Ironically, despite their cooperation in seizing the Spirit Essence, Ye Feifan had never known Meng Zhang's name or origin. Nevertheless, such details were inconsequential now as, in Ye Feifan's eyes, Meng Zhang was as good as a dead man.

According to their agreement, whoever obtained the Spirit Essence would proceed to divide it. Whether intentionally or not, both scheming individuals deliberately avoided discussing the specifics of the division.

"Ye Feifan, your tactics are too despicable. I won't allow you the opportunity to use the Spirit Essence to break through the Gold Core stage and cause trouble in the future," Meng Zhang said firmly.

While speaking, Meng Zhang took out some dust from the Spirit Essence that he had collected while underground and tossed it casually toward Ye Feifan as a symbolic gesture of sharing.

Ye Feifan's smile remained unchanged. He had already anticipated Meng Zhang's actions. These so-called righteous cultivators always put on a facade of righteousness but couldn't conceal their greedy hearts.

In Ye Feifan's plans, he never expected Meng Zhang and his group to honestly share the Spirit Essence with him.

"How about it? Do you want to snatch it from us? Remember, there are three of us, and you're just alone," Meng Zhang said disdainfully. Ye Feifan delighted in tormenting cultivators from prestigious families, enjoying their transition from arrogance to despair.

However, he knew that even with his strange and powerful secret techniques, defeating Meng Zhang's group on his own would be difficult, if not impossible. Ye Feifan never expected to achieve this feat alone.

He quickly shot a flying talisman into the sky. The talisman flew straight up and burst into a splendid display of colors, creating a colorful ribbon in the sky, marking their location.

Before taking action, Ye Feifan had already contacted familiar rogue cultivators and arranged for them to ambush nearby. These rogue cultivators were not willing to help Ye Feifan seize the Spirit Essence, but they were eager to hunt down foreign cultivators. If they encountered outsiders, they would not let them escape easily.

Upon receiving Ye Feifan's signal, these cultivators would rush to the scene as fast as possible. With Ye Feifan's strength, keeping Meng Zhang's group occupied was not a difficult task.

"I see you've set up some hidden helpers. No wonder you're so confident. Unfortunately, I have some allies as well," Meng Zhang said calmly.

Ye Feifan's face was filled with scorn. Among the Deadly Sea of Sand, the most troublesome cultivators to deal with were the rogue cultivators. Even Ghost Path cultivators would avoid them.

The foreign cultivators who came here were, at best, at the Foundation Building completion stage. No matter how many of them there were, they would all become lost souls in the Deadly Sea of Sand.

It was as if Meng Zhang hadn't seen Ye Feifan's reaction and remained relaxed. In fact, Meng Zhang's allies had already arrived earlier.

In the distance, the figure of Chasing Lightning was much larger than usual, catching everyone's attention as it flew rapidly toward them. Behind Chasing Lightning were a group of Ghost Path cultivators in hot pursuit.

Ye Feifan saw the Ghost Path cultivators, and his confident smile vanished instantly.

He clearly remembered that, in order to appease Meng Zhang, he had sworn an oath that if any Ghost Path cultivators appeared in front of him and Meng Zhang after seizing the Spirit Essence, he would have to do everything in his power to kill them.

Ye Feifan had never expected a group of Ghost Path cultivators to actually appear before him.

Now, Ye Feifan was inadvertently putting himself in a difficult position, violating the oath.

The consequences of breaking such an oath were terrifying, and Ye Feifan knew this all too well.

Yet, Ye Feifan was a decisive and cunning person, not one to hesitate. Upon seeing the Ghost Path cultivators, he made up his mind.

He left Meng Zhang and the others behind and took the initiative to fly towards the approaching Ghost Path cultivators.

While the Ghost Path cultivators found Ye Feifan's sudden approach strange, they were cautious as they had been hunted by cultivators from all sides in the Cultivation World. They didn't let their guard down, even in the face of someone they considered a friend like Ye Feifan.

Although they suffered a slight surprise at the beginning, they quickly responded, and a fierce battle broke out between them and Ye Feifan.

The infuriated Ghost Path cultivators didn't show any mercy, and Ye Feifan's confident expression disappeared as he was forced to defend himself.

Seizing this opportunity, Chasing Lightning quickly flew over to join Meng Zhang and the others.

They didn't linger any longer and flew towards the direction of the exit from the Deadly Sea of Sand.

Before the operation, Meng Zhang had dispatched his spirit pet, Chasing Lightning, to track down the Ghost Path cultivators. The whereabouts of Ghost Path cultivators were relatively easy to detect, and Chasing Lightning found them and provoked them into chasing after him.

Chasing Lightning led the group of Ghost Path cultivators in circles, drawing them away from Meng Zhang's group after Meng Zhang successfully escaped with the Spirit Essence.

#### Chapter 419: Preparing for the Core

Ye Feifan was absolutely unexpected because Zhui Dian (Chasing Lightning) secretly followed the Heart-Devouring Demon, making Meng Zhang realize his connection with the demonic cultivators and being on guard beforehand.

When Ye Feifan intended to use information asymmetry to scheme against Meng Zhang, Meng Zhang was already preparing to counter him. Equally unexpectedly, even though Meng Zhang and his two companions were engaged in battle and unable to split their focus, Meng Zhang had already dispatched his spirit pet, Zhui Dian (Chasing Lightning), to provoke the Ghost Path cultivators and lure them over.

Once the Ghost Path cultivators appeared in his sight, if they didn't want to violate the ghost oath, they had to give their all to kill him. This way, Meng Zhang's group not only easily evaded Ye Feifan's entanglement but also placed Ye Feifan in a dangerous situation.

Ye Feifan, who was always adept at calculations and taking risks, was cleverly outwitted this time, and he ended up hurting himself with his own schemes, being outsmarted by his opponent. As for whether Ye Feifan would successfully kill the group of Ghost Path cultivators, Meng Zhang didn't have the leisure to care about it anymore.

By the time the demonic cultivators collaborating with Ye Feifan arrived, many new variables might arise. Speaking of which, Meng Zhang's successful acquisition of the Spirit Core and his clever strategy against Ye Feifan owed a great deal to his spirit pet, Zhui Dian (Chasing Lightning). Initially, Meng Zhang had impulsively taken in this low-powered spirit pet, seemingly of little use. However, unexpectedly, Zhui Dian (Chasing Lightning) played a significant role at critical moments, providing immense help.

After leaving the place, Meng Zhang and his group flew directly towards the outskirts of the Deadly Sea of Sand. Their objectives were accomplished, and none of them had any intention of lingering there any longer. Meng Zhang had a chance to acquire the Spirit Core, and Jue Ying obtained the core part of the Sand Monster's nest seed, both achieving their goals. Jin Qiao'er also learned a lot through this experience.

However, the journey back from the Deadly Sea of Sand was not without its challenges. For some reason, they encountered numerous obstacles on their way. They hadn't encountered so many sand monsters when they came in, but now, it seemed as if they voluntarily charged into a group of sand monsters, facing countless interceptions.

They fought while walking and didn't dare linger in one place for too long, rushing with all their might towards the outside of the Deadly Sea of Sand. They faced heavy resistance and numerous difficulties throughout the journey. After multiple tough battles, the three of them were almost exhausted, feeling physically and mentally drained.

However, due to their fear of the Deadly Sea of Sand, they pushed forward despite their fatigue and finally made it to the edge of the Deadly Sea of Sand. Meng Zhang had to use one of the two pseudo Third Rank talismans he had purchased at a considerable cost. Jin Qiao'er and Jue Ying also had to use their life-saving treasures one by one.

Meng Zhang once again felt fortunate to have Jin Qiao'er, the little rich girl, with him. If he had entered the Deadly Sea of Sand alone without Jue Ying, he would have had a hard time obtaining the Spirit Core and might not have come out unscathed.

When they finally crossed the last stretch and completely left the Deadly Sea of Sand, the three of them breathed a sigh of relief. There was originally a large group of sand monsters relentlessly pursuing them from behind. However, at the border between the Deadly Sea of Sand and the Endless Sea of Sand, there seemed to be an invisible barrier that stopped all those sand monsters on the side of the Deadly Sea of Sand. Countless sand monsters rushed forward but abruptly stopped and scattered upon reaching the border. Witnessing this rare phenomenon, the three of them felt at ease.

This journey into the Deadly Sea of Sand was fortunate for all three of them. Three parts strength, seven parts luck, ensured they didn't return empty-handed. Although the time spent inside the Deadly Sea of Sand wasn't long, they felt as if they had experienced a long period.

The three of them weren't the type to procrastinate. After discussing their next moves, they each went their separate ways due to their individual concerns. Jin Qiao'er returned to Qiaoshou Sect alone. Being a pillar of Qiaoshou Sect now, she knew her prolonged absence would have caused much anxiety within the sect. Although Great Wind City was not far from Taiyi Sect, Meng Zhang had no intention of going back there. For safety reasons, and mainly to guard against the Flying Swan Sect, he wouldn't undergo Core Formation within Taiyi Sect. According to his plan before leaving Taiyi Sect, he wouldn't return until he successfully achieved Core Formation.

Meng Zhang and Jue Ying took some time to rest and then flew out of Qiaoshou Sect's territory stealthily. They concealed their tracks, moving covertly and maintaining utmost secrecy.

They spent some time crossing Flying Swan Sect's territory before leaving the Endless Sea of Sand and entering the territory of Great Wind City. After their return, Meng Zhang didn't immediately contact the Gu Yue Family due to carrying the precious Spirit Core.

Over the years, Jue Ying had established several connections in the Jiuqu League. On Meng Zhang's request, she began searching for a secluded and secure place for him to seclude himself. With the Spirit Core in his possession, Meng Zhang no longer needed to rely on Third Rank spirit veins.

Hence, he had more options for choosing a secluded location. Eventually, Jue Ying selected a hidden valley near Jade Sword Sect as Meng Zhang's place of seclusion.

This valley lay above a Second Rank spirit vein and was a property directly managed by Jade Sword Sect. Due to the abundant spiritual energy and its remote location, the place was peaceful and quiet.

Jade Sword Sect had established several independent estates in this area, rented out to various cultivators. Jade Sword Sect's reputation in the Jiuqu League was formidable, both within and outside the alliance, and no cultivator dared to provoke them easily. Sword cultivator sects like Jade Sword Sect were known for their strength, dominance, and fierce killing intent, which exerted considerable deterrence.

Therefore, the safety of Jade Sword Sect's properties was assured. Additionally, even if they found Meng Zhang attempting Core Formation within their estate, the Jade Sword Sect cultivators wouldn't interfere easily.

Meng Zhang settled in the estate after a long journey, spending a considerable amount of spirit stones to rent the most secluded one.

With Jade Sword Sect's reputation, he could rest assured that no one would disturb him as long as he stayed within the estate. For added security, Jue Ying stayed with him to protect him.

After settling down, Meng Zhang didn't rush to begin Core Formation. Instead, he took some time to rest and recover from the strain he had endured in the Deadly Sea of Sand, gradually restoring his strength.

He also started carefully reading and comprehending the experiences of previous cultivators during their Core Formation process, accumulating knowledge and experience.

## Chapter 420: Personal Enemies

In the vast desert, a man and a woman, two cultivators, rode separate Red Feathered Eagles, traveling under the scorching sun.

These two cultivators were An Xiaoran, the second disciple, and An Moran, the third disciple, both of whom belonged to Meng Zhang.

Meng Zhang had been away from Taiyi Sect on his wandering journey for nearly ten years. For a Foundation Building cultivator, ten years was not a long time. Before leaving, Meng Zhang had made arrangements within the sect. During these ten years, the daily affairs of Taiyi Sect were well-managed by Niu Dawei, the eldest disciple of the Sect Master, and everything was in excellent order, pleasing to everyone.

During this period, Taiyi Sect had thrived and grown stronger, producing several Foundation Building cultivators from among its members. Especially after Zhang Yingying, the Pill Hall Master, successfully advanced to Foundation Building by consuming the Lesser Foundation Building Pill, she smoothly ascended to become a Second Rank Alchemist. Now, besides supplying Shi Changqing's dependents, Taiyi Sect had the ability to refine Second Rank pills themselves.

Although they currently couldn't collect the materials to refine Foundation Building Pills, the materials for the Lesser Foundation Building Pill could still be obtained with some effort. Therefore, Taiyi Sect not only provided Lesser Foundation Building Pills to their disciples but also sold a small quantity to closely affiliated vassal families.

As for the defect of being unable to advance to the Gold Core stage after consuming the Lesser Foundation Building Pill, very few cultivators would care. In the vast Endless Sea of Sand, the chance to advance to the Gold Core stage was rare. For the majority of cultivators, reaching the Foundation Building stage was a lifetime dream.

Meng Zhang had long made the defect of the Lesser Foundation Building Pill known to all, but cultivators seeking its benefits still kept coming.

Within Taiyi Sect, according to the rules set by Meng Zhang, only cultivators with low-grade spiritual roots were allowed to exchange for the Lesser Foundation Building Pill. Middle-grade and above spiritual roots were strictly prohibited from using the Lesser Foundation Building Pill to advance to the Foundation Building stage.

This seemingly harsh rule was actually for the long-term development of the sect. Moreover, although Taiyi Sect had numerous disciples, the number of middle-grade spiritual root cultivators was few, so the impact was minimal.

This time, An Xiaoran and her younger brother, An Moran, were venturing out to explore a legacy left behind by a senior cultivator. The connection between An Family and these senior cultivators ran deep. Before the senior passed away during meditation, they had informed the An Family patriarch of the location of their legacy, which led to many outstanding cultivators from An Family generations attempting to obtain the inheritance.

The senior cultivator had high standards and did not want their heritage to fall into the hands of mediocre individuals. Thus, they set up numerous trials within the legacy. Only those who passed these trials would be deemed worthy of receiving the inheritance.

Previously, several cultivators from An Family had gone to this legacy, but their gains were limited. During the upheaval of An Family in the past, An Lei, the family head, sent away some promising An Family cultivators before things spiraled out of control. Before An Xiaoran and An Moran were sent away, An Lei personally disclosed the secret of this legacy to An Xiaoran.

Since then, An Xiaoran had kept this secret to herself and had never revealed it, not even to the sect, as it was a family secret.

Recently, An Xiaoran had completed the Refining Qi stage and began preparing to break through to the Foundation Building stage. With her talent, even without consuming the Foundation Building Pill, she had a great chance of successfully reaching the Foundation Building stage. However, to be fully prepared, she wanted to accumulate enough sect contribution points to exchange for the Foundation Building Pill.

Taiyi Sect had grown larger, and its rules had become stricter. Even as the Sect Master's direct disciple, An Xiaoran needed to contribute enough to the sect to exchange for the Foundation Building Pill.

However, the sect contribution points An Xiaoran had accumulated were far from sufficient, and her pride prevented her from accepting assistance from her senior brother, Niu Dawei.

In desperation, she remembered the legacy left by the senior cultivator.

If she could obtain substantial gains from the legacy, she might be able to exchange them for enough sect contribution points.

So, An Xiaoran asked her younger brother, An Moran, to join her in exploring the legacy.

The legacy was located west of the Endless Sea of Sand, within the territory of Flying Swan Sect.

The siblings rode their Red Feathered Eagles and traveled thousands of miles, expending a lot of effort before finally finding the legacy left by the senior cultivator.

After entering the legacy, they relied on their extraordinary talents and understanding, facing several trials and challenges, and eventually passed the tests left by the senior, obtaining the inheritance.

Through this experience, the siblings matured significantly, especially An Xiaoran, who approached the completion stage of her cultivation, drawing closer to the Foundation Building stage.

They spent a month inside the legacy and finally left with a full load of treasures. However, as they were just about to summon their Red Feathered Eagles to leave the area, a flying boat descended from the sky, landing before them.

A middle-aged cultivator with a refined appearance and gentle temperament emerged from the flying boat and hovered above them, looking down at the siblings.

"Zeng Jiexiong," An Xiaoran uttered the name with a hint of resentment in her tone.

"It's been quite some time, dear niece. In the blink of an eye, you've grown so big," Zeng Jiexiong said with a smile.



In the past, during the upheaval of An Family, Zeng Jiexiong took control of the family, forcing An Xiaoran and her brother to flee. Later, he even ordered bandits to chase after them. If it weren't for the timely appearance of Meng Zhang, the consequences would have been dire. An Xiaoran hadn't forgotten this grudge over the years. Her plan was to return to An Family once she had achieved sufficient cultivation and defeat Zeng Jiexiong, taking back everything from the family.

However, she had never expected that she and her brother would be intercepted by Zeng Jiexiong at this time and place. This location was a major secret of An Family, known only to the direct descendants of the family. Could it be that someone among the direct descendants had betrayed the family and joined forces with this man?

Zeng Jiexiong seemed to understand what An Xiaoran was thinking. He made a gesture toward the flying boat, and several cultivators whom An Xiaoran was familiar with jumped out from it. They looked at An Xiaoran and her brother with a slightly evasive gaze, unable to meet their eyes.

"Dear niece, the wise know when to seize the opportunity. These uncles of yours have been working faithfully for me. As long as you hand over what you obtained from that legacy, I promise you will not be treated unfairly."

"You can forget about it," An Xiaoran immediately refused without hesitation.

The senior cultivator who set up this legacy was highly skilled, making it difficult for outsiders to forcefully enter, and even An Family members couldn't obtain any gains from it unless they passed the trials. If powerful cultivators wanted to forcibly break into the legacy, everything inside would be destroyed, turning into ashes.