

Sect Master 421

Chapter 421: Interruption

Ever since Zeng Jiexiong learned about the location of this senior's cave dwelling within the population of An Family, he attempted several times to invade it and obtain the inheritance inside. However, with his qualifications and comprehension, despite numerous attempts, he couldn't pass the tests left by the senior.

He worried that his actions might attract the covetousness of others, so he didn't dare seek help openly. Instead, he tried various methods to crack the restrictions within the cave and bypass those challenging tests. At the same time, he secretly monitored the area to see if any wandering members of An Family came to visit the cave.

Over a month ago, when An Xiaoran and An Moran arrived at the cave, they were discovered by the secret observers, who then relayed the information back. When the siblings obtained the inheritance from the cave and came out, Zeng Jiexiong, who had been waiting outside for a long time, directly intercepted them.

An Xiaoran's refusal caused a change in Zeng Jiexiong's expression. "My dear niece, don't refuse the toast only to drink a forfeit. My patience has its limits, and I won't be so polite forever."

As he spoke, a strong pressure emanating from a Foundation Building stage cultivator bore down heavily on the siblings. An Xiaoran and An Moran silently resisted the formidable pressure, gritting their teeth and saying nothing.

Among the Refining Qi stage cultivators in Taiyi Sect, the siblings were considered top-notch, and they were equipped with life-preserving talismans bestowed by the sect's elders. However, the chasm between the Refining Qi stage and the Foundation Building stage was not easily bridged. Even if the siblings risked their lives, it would be challenging to challenge someone at a higher cultivation level.

Seeing that An Xiaoran and An Moran could withstand the pressure without backing down, Zeng Jiexiong's expression grew darker. He had decided to take drastic measures, cripple the siblings' cultivation bases, and interrogate them later.

"We are disciples of Taiyi Sect. You dare to attack us without reason. Our Master won't let you go easily," An Xiaoran said fiercely.

"Hmph, Taiyi Sect, such arrogance. This place belongs to Flying Swan Sect's territory. You Taiyi Sect members have no place to be so presumptuous," Zeng Jiexiong disdainfully retorted.

Taiyi Sect might have flourished in recent years, producing many outstanding individuals and gaining widespread fame. Comparatively, An Family, controlled solely by Zeng Jiexiong, was indeed no match for Taiyi Sect. However, one mustn't forget that An Family was a vassal of Flying Swan Sect. Moreover, Zeng Jiexiong's younger brother, Zeng Jiantang, held the position of an Inner-Sect Disciple in Flying Swan Sect, granting him a respectable status within the sect.

No matter how powerful Taiyi Sect was, would they dare to antagonize Flying Swan Sect? Even if Zeng Jiexiong offended Taiyi Sect, as long as he had the protection of Flying Swan Sect, Taiyi Sect could only stare helplessly from the sidelines.

Zeng Jiexiong was just about to make his move when a profound and powerful aura descended from the sky. Zeng Jiexiong felt an immense pressure upon him, making it difficult to maintain his stance. On the other hand, An Xiaoran and An Moran, struggling on the ground, felt the pressure suddenly ease.

A cultivator descended from above, and upon seeing this figure, An Xiaoran joyfully exclaimed, "Elder Deep Earth!"

Zeng Jiexiong, however, saw the newcomer as a formidable adversary. In recent years, the two Foundation Building late-stage elders of Taiyi Sect, Deep Earth and Shocking Thunder, had gained significant notoriety by accomplishing many great deeds.

Deep Earth's appearance quickly took control of the situation. He reprimanded An Xiaoran before giving Zeng Jiexiong a glance. "You, girl, always stubbornly taking everything upon yourself and unwilling to trouble others. I only received your senior brother's message and traced your whereabouts in time."

"Have you ever considered what the consequences would have been if I had arrived just one step later?"

After scolding An Xiaoran, Deep Earth turned his attention back to Zeng Jiexiong. "Based on your contemptuous remarks about Taiyi Sect, I shouldn't let you go. However, you're fortunate as I happen to be in a good mood."

"Now get lost before I change my mind."

With Deep Earth's Foundation Building late-stage Cultivation Base, he could easily kill Zeng Jiexiong on the spot. Knowing he was no match, Zeng Jiexiong quickly led the An Family members onto a flying vessel and left, not daring to utter another harsh word.

"We should leave as well. There's an important event waiting for us back at the sect," said Elder Deep Earth.

"What important event is happening in the sect?" An Xiaoran asked.

"You'll find out when we return," Deep Earth replied playfully, withholding the information.

As Deep Earth, An Xiaoran, and An Moran returned to Taiyi Sect together, Zeng Jiexiong, who had been forced to retreat, felt resentful. The object of his desire, which he had coveted for so long, appeared before him but slipped away just like that.

Taiyi Sect, Deep Earth, they really held too much sway. A mere Foundation Building sect, yet they dared to be so arrogant just because they had gained some power. They simply didn't know their own limitations.

After leaving, Zeng Jiexiong dismissed his subordinates and flew towards Flying Swan Sect. Since the destruction of Flying Swan Sect's mountain gate by the Gold Core Daoist Master of Fire Cloud Sect, Flying Swan Sect had been making efforts to rebuild the gate. However, they faced pressure on two fronts and couldn't spare the manpower needed for significant reconstruction. Moreover, the continuous wars in recent years had drained the sect's resources, leaving them with insufficient strength to rebuild the mountain gate on a grand scale.

Thus, they merely cleaned up the original site and built some simple structures in its place. Many of the sect's internal organizations had been relocated to the nearby Flying Swan City.

Recently, it happened to be Zeng Jiexiong's younger brother, Zeng Jiantang's turn to be stationed in Flying Swan City. Despite being Zeng Jiexiong's own blood brother, it took quite some effort for him to see his sibling.

Zeng Jiexiong had numerous grievances against this proud and talented brother of his. Though Zeng Jiantang held a respectable position within Flying Swan Sect, he rarely directly assisted Zeng Jiexiong. Many times, when Zeng Jiexiong sought his help, he was refused under the pretext of sect rules.

Zeng Jiexiong had once wanted Zeng Jiantang's help in breaking the restrictions within the cave and obtaining the inheritance left by the anonymous cultivator. However, the arrogant Zeng Jiantang, being born into a Gold Core sect like Flying Swan Sect with its rich inheritance, looked down upon the unknown cave left by an unknown cultivator from An Family. Why bother wasting time for something left behind by a vassal family like An Family?

This time, Zeng Jiexiong had made up his mind. No matter what, he would persuade his brother, whether through coaxing or pressure, to use the power of Flying Swan Sect to oppress Taiyi Sect and reclaim justice for himself. How could Taiyi Sect's cultivators dare to oppress the master of a Flying Swan Sect vassal family within the territory of Flying Swan Sect? This was simply inconceivable!

"If you ignore the present strength of Taiyi Sect, you'll only get yourself into unnecessary trouble," Zeng Jiantang interrupted before Zeng Jiexiong finished stating his demands.

"Nowadays, Taiyi Sect is not the same as before. We can't easily provoke them."

Chapter 422: Achievement Gold Core

Meng Zhang looked at the Taiyi Sect's mountain gate beneath his feet, his heart filled with an indomitable spirit, a feeling of overlooking the world.

It wasn't easy. The process of forming the core was an unprecedented challenge for Meng Zhang, who was full of confidence and well-prepared, facing various life-and-death tests.

Just thinking about the process of breaking through to the Gold Core stage made Meng Zhang feel a bit afraid.

In the valley belonging to the Jade Sword Sect, after Meng Zhang's closed-door cultivation, he diligently pondered the knowledge about forming the core, fully absorbing the experience and lessons of his predecessors, and spent a long time adjusting his state of mind.

When everything was in order and all was ready, he began his formal breakthrough to the Gold Core stage.

As a Foundation Building cultivator, his Soul, physical body, and true qi all had to be flawless, and he advanced with an unwavering Dao heart, determined to break through to the Gold Core stage without hesitation.

With his high-grade spiritual root aptitude and exceptional comprehension, Meng Zhang had never encountered significant difficulties in his past cultivations.

Whether it was cultivating incomplete techniques or lacking sufficient resources, he was able to overcome them gradually with his own strength.

After gaining the full inheritance of the Taiyi Sect at its peak, leading the rise of the sect, and obtaining ample resources, his cultivation base progressed rapidly, making his journey smooth.

For him, the so-called thresholds and bottlenecks on the path of cultivation were practically non-existent.

Without taking Foundation Building Pills, he succeeded in Foundation Building relatively easily.

In his post-Foundation Building cultivation, progress was also smooth, with few obstacles encountered.

In addition to cultivation, he also had time to practice the Grand Evolving Fortune, a divination technique, becoming a Diviner.

His cultivation base advanced rapidly, yet he never neglected his combat abilities. Techniques like the small Divine Ability "Twin Forms Towards Heaven Sword" and various secret techniques allowed him to demonstrate great prowess on the battlefield.

Since embarking on the cultivation path, Meng Zhang, who had never encountered significant difficulties, faced an immense challenge at the crucial moment of forming the Gold Core.

Forming the core was different from Foundation Building. When a cultivator in the Refining Qi stage attempted to break through to Foundation Building, even if they failed, they wouldn't face significant danger. At most, their cultivation base would suffer, and they might sustain serious injuries. It was rare to hear about Refining Qi cultivators losing their lives while attempting to break through to Foundation Building.

However, during the process of forming the core, cultivators faced many dangers. In the worst-case scenario, they might even be in mortal peril.

The various difficulties during the process of forming the core were one thing, but the most significant obstacle was the Heart Demon Tribulation, which almost trapped Meng Zhang.

Originally, Meng Zhang believed his will was firm enough. His Dao heart was resolute, and his mind was clear, impervious to external distractions.

However, after entering the Heart Demon Tribulation, he faced illusions that made it difficult to distinguish reality from falsehood, affecting his mind.

If a cultivator was ensnared by their inner Heart Demon and couldn't break free, the consequences were unimaginable.

The so-called Heart Demon referred to the flaws and vulnerabilities in a person's spiritual and mental state, including hatred, greed, delusions, attachments, and resentments, among others.

Everyone had their inner Heart Demon, but the vast majority of people couldn't perceive it or subconsciously ignored it.

When a cultivator formed the core, these flaws and vulnerabilities would be amplified a thousandfold. The formerly intangible and formless Heart Demon would become tangible within the cultivator.

During this process, if a cultivator lost control of their inner self and let the Heart Demon run rampant, they could lose all consciousness and become a mindless walking corpse. In severe cases, their soul would leave their body, leading to their demise.

Within the Heart Demon Tribulation, Meng Zhang encountered countless illusions, including all the experiences of his past lives, attempting to immerse him completely in them.

Numerous extreme emotions, pain, hatred, anger, euphoria, joy... all flooded his mind.

Meng Zhang used all his willpower to maintain his clarity of mind, preventing himself from completely succumbing to these illusions.

He was like a small boat in an endless sea of suffering, persisting amidst raging storms.

This small boat that went with the flow was always on the brink of destruction, at any moment facing annihilation.

But Meng Zhang, relying on his unwavering Dao heart, firmly anchored the boat.

In the most adverse circumstances, he kept his reason intact, refusing to be completely consumed.

With the utmost determination, he held onto his consciousness, gradually freeing himself from the illusions, allowing clarity to return to his mind.

After successfully passing through the Heart Demon Tribulation, Meng Zhang's mind underwent an unprecedented tempering, as if he had been reborn.

Having prepared spiritual marrow in advance, he didn't need a Third Rank spirit vein.

He quickly absorbed the vast spiritual energy within the spiritual marrow, merging it with his Essence, Qi, and Spirit, successfully forming the Gold Core.

Meng Zhang's Gold Core was round and flawless, brimming with vitality.

With such a high-quality Gold Core, he would have even better opportunities for future advancements.

During Meng Zhang's core formation, it also triggered intense celestial phenomena.

The clouds billowed and the sky changed color, with dazzling golden and rosy lights filling the sky.

The surrounding courtyards were already quite far apart, and the one Meng Zhang rented was particularly secluded.

However, such a strong celestial phenomenon still alarmed the neighboring cultivators and the Jade Sword Sect members present here.

These cultivators were at most in the Foundation Building stage and didn't dare to act rashly in the face of the core formation phenomenon. Even those curious ones who wanted to approach and observe were driven away by Jue Ying.

At this moment, the Jade Sword Sect members here displayed the demeanor of cultivators from a prestigious sect.

Since they had spent a considerable number of spirit stones to rent this courtyard, as long as they didn't cause damage or negative impact, whatever they did inside was their own business.

Jade Sword Sect cultivators not only had no reason to interfere with the tenant but should also ensure that the tenant wasn't disturbed by outsiders.

With the attitude of the Jade Sword Sect cultivators, Meng Zhang, at the crucial moment, was finally undisturbed and successfully formed the core.

From this moment on, Meng Zhang became a Gold Core Daoist Master, and others should address him as Daoist Master Meng.

That adult-head-sized spiritual marrow was unexpectedly consumed by two-thirds.

Since Meng Zhang didn't have a Third Rank spirit vein to use, he would need to gradually absorb the spiritual energy within the spiritual marrow in the future to consolidate his cultivation base in the Gold Core stage. After successfully forming the core, Meng Zhang proactively ended his seclusion. He first thanked the Jade Sword Sect cultivators for their magnanimity and then expressed his apologies to the neighboring cultivators.

Of course, the neighboring cultivators were in awe and warmly greeted Meng Zhang.

For a group of Foundation Building cultivators, it was rare to have a chance to interact with a Gold Core Daoist Master in their lifetime.

Now, witnessing a cultivator successfully forming the core, who didn't seem unfriendly, they naturally wanted to get acquainted and at least be familiar with a Gold Core Daoist Master.

As a result, this freshly-fledged Gold Core Daoist Master, Meng Zhang, received the first batch of cultivators who came to congratulate him at his door.

Chapter 423: Return

Meng Zhang, a new Gold Core Daoist Master, warmly welcomed the Foundation Building cultivators. It was rare to encounter such an approachable Gold Core Daoist Master, and everyone was excited. During the interaction with these Foundation Building cultivators, Meng Zhang also gained something valuable. Some of them expressed their willingness to join him.

Rather than hastily accepting or outright refusing, Meng Zhang tactfully shifted the topic. After receiving the Foundation Building cultivators, Meng Zhang sought out the Jade Sword Sect cultivator responsible for this area and requested a visit. Although he hadn't received any help from the Jade Sword Sect, since he had quietly formed the core on someone else's territory, it was proper to pay a visit and have a friendly chat.

The request was relayed back to the Jade Sword Sect, a Primordial Spirit sect that didn't typically pay much attention to a newly promoted Gold Core cultivator. Moreover, being a Sword Cultivator sect, they were known for their pride and seclusion, so rejecting someone from afar wouldn't be surprising.

However, to Meng Zhang's surprise, the Jade Sword Sect not only agreed to his visit but also sent a Gold Core elder to receive him. They met not at the Jade Sword Sect's main gate but at an estate not far from there.

During their conversation, though mostly polite, the Jade Sword Sect's Gold Core elder offered some advice to Meng Zhang. Grateful for the guidance, Meng Zhang expressed his admiration and longing for the Jade Sword Sect.

The elder didn't respond to Meng Zhang's words and didn't say much further. After a casual chat, Meng Zhang took his leave. With plenty of spiritual essence remaining, he didn't urgently need a Third Rank spirit vein.

Back in the courtyard where he had formed his core, Meng Zhang consolidated his Cultivation Base while observing the loose cultivators who expressed their desire to join him. Additionally, the Qian Family brothers whom Meng Zhang had saved and brought back to recover were now in decent shape. Though their prospects were dim, and they could only reach the mid-stage of Foundation Building in their Cultivation Base, they no longer had the heart to wander aimlessly.

Grateful for Meng Zhang's life-saving grace, the Qian Family brothers expressed their wish to serve and follow him. With Meng Zhang becoming a Gold Core Daoist Master, his Divine Abilities, Mind Reading, and Deception Breaking Eye had made significant progress. Satisfied that the brothers were sincerely joining him without any hidden intentions, Meng Zhang welcomed them into his ranks.

After entering the Gold Core stage, Meng Zhang needed to cultivate new secret techniques unique to Gold Core Daoist Masters. Only then could he truly possess the combat power of a Gold Core cultivator befitting his new status. He stayed in this place for a few more years, during which four more Foundation Building cultivators joined him.

Once his Cultivation Base was completely stable, Meng Zhang led his newly acquired Foundation Building subordinates and set out to return to Taiyi Sect. After forming his core, Jue Ying had left on her own accord, but before departing, she made it clear that she might seek Meng Zhang's help in the future and hoped he wouldn't refuse.

Meng Zhang was not the kind of person to forget old friends just because his Cultivation Base had grown stronger. He made a promise that if Jue Ying needed his help, she should inform him, and he would be there to assist her.

Leaving the territory of the Jade Sword Sect, Meng Zhang and his group made their way to Great Wind City. After settling his subordinates, he paid a visit to Gu Yue Huaidie. However, she happened to be away, and it was Gu Yue Youlan who received Meng Zhang. She was quite surprised that Meng Zhang had managed to form his Gold Core without using the Gu Yue Family's Third Rank spirit vein.

When Meng Zhang shared the story of how he had endured countless hardships to obtain the spirit essence from the Deadly Sea of Sand, Gu Yue Youlan couldn't help but be deeply impressed. As a highly regarded young member of the Gu Yue Family, she had heard many stories about the Deadly Sea of Sand. Meng Zhang's experiences were truly extraordinary.

Now that Meng Zhang had advanced to the Gold Core stage, their statuses were different, and Gu Yue Youlan showed him even more respect, treating him with utmost deference. Of course, Meng Zhang didn't display any arrogance as a Gold Core Daoist Master in front of his old friend. Moreover, the Gu Yue Family, being a cultivation family, was never short of Gold Core Daoist Masters.

Under Gu Yue Youlan's recommendation, Meng Zhang visited a Gold Core elder who oversaw external affairs in the Gu Yue Family. The two had a pleasant conversation and reached many agreements for cooperation.

With Meng Zhang becoming a Gold Core Daoist Master, Taiyi Sect naturally rose in prominence and became a Gold Core sect. Now, Taiyi Sect had gained the qualification to interact on an equal footing with the Gu Yue Family.

After visiting the Gu Yue Family, Meng Zhang returned to Taiyi Sect with his subordinates. This time, he didn't conceal his presence but openly returned to the sect. Nearly ten years had passed since he left the sect as a Foundation Building cultivator, and now he had returned as a Gold Core Daoist Master.

Meng Zhang's return brought excitement to the entire Taiyi Sect. The sect was abuzz, and all affiliated families and nearby cultivation forces were stirred up. After Guang ZhiDaoist Master from Forest Spring Watch and Daoist Master Roaring Blaze from Earthfire Sect, Meng Zhang was the third Gold Core Daoist Master not affiliated with Flying Swan Sect.

After the initial shock, many people started to anticipate how Flying Swan Sect would react to this newly promoted Gold Core Daoist Master, Meng Zhang. They wondered what attitude the sect would take and how they would treat him.

Some individuals who held ill intentions towards Taiyi Sect secretly hoped for Meng Zhang's misfortune. Ever since the official war between Fire Cloud Sect and Flying Swan Sect, the fate of Guang ZhiDaoist Master and Daoist Master Roaring Blaze had spread throughout the Endless Sea of Sand.

According to Fire Cloud Sect, Flying Swan Sect used the pretext of defending against monster invasions to secretly harm the two Daoist Masters. The purpose was to eliminate all Gold Core Daoist Masters in the Endless Sea of Sand who didn't belong to Flying Swan Sect, ensuring their dominance.

Flying Swan Sect, on the other hand, had a different version of events. They claimed that Guang ZhiDaoist Master and Daoist Master Roaring Blaze had conspired with Fire Cloud Sect during the monster invasion to create chaos in the Endless Sea of Sand.

Thus, Flying Swan Sect took decisive action and killed Guang ZhiDaoist Master and Daoist Master Roaring Blaze. As for which version was the truth, only the two sides themselves knew for sure.

At least on the surface, all the cultivation forces in the Endless Sea of Sand staunchly believed Flying Swan Sect's account, remaining loyal to them and refusing to believe the malicious rumors spread by Fire Cloud Sect.

Regardless of the reasons, the fact that the two Gold Core Daoist Masters not belonging to Flying Swan Sect had died at the sect's hands was indisputable.

Everyone still remembered how Flying Swan Sect had dealt with the cultivation forces attempting to cultivate Gold Core Daoist Masters in the Endless Sea of Sand.

Chapter 424: It is different now from those days.

With the precedents set by the Guang Zhi Daoist Master and Daoist Master Roaring Blaze, many people are not optimistic about the fate of Meng Zhang, this newly emerged Gold Core Daoist Master.

However, Meng Zhang is not worried about this matter at all. After forming his Gold Core, he openly returned to Taiyi Sect and has been presiding over matters within the sect.

He has long foreseen the situation he would face. The Flying Swan Sect is no longer the dominant power it used to be in the Endless Sea of Sand, as it was when the core was formed by Guang Zhi Daoist Master and Daoist Master Roaring Blaze. Back then, the Endless Sea of Sand had not suffered massive invasions from external enemies, and the Flying Swan Sect had the strength to deal with internal issues.

But now, the situation is drastically different.

Both the Fire Cloud Sect and the Demon Wind Gobi have put immense pressure on the Flying Swan Sect. The sect is barely holding on. If a new Gold Core Daoist Master were to oppose the Flying Swan Sect at this time, it might become the straw that breaks the camel's back.

The Flying Swan Sect is already stretched thin with two-front battles, and even if they were willing, they are simply not strong enough to confront Meng Zhang, this new Gold Core Daoist Master.

In reality, the Flying Swan Sect is facing its most critical moment in history. Whether it is the recovery of the Gold Core Daoist Master from the Fire Cloud Sect or another large-scale invasion by the demon beasts from Demon Wind Gobi, either event could completely crush the Flying Swan Sect.

Meng Zhang is well aware of the predicament the Flying Swan Sect is in. During his time in Jiuqu League, he learned a lot of information he couldn't access before. Seeing the bigger picture, he has a deeper understanding of the situation in the Endless Sea of Sand.

Meng Zhang is certain that the Flying Swan Sect, in this current state, won't make things difficult for him; on the contrary, they might even try to please and secure his alliance.

Even if Meng Zhang's judgment is wrong, the Flying Swan Sect wouldn't have the power to deal with him. So, Meng Zhang confidently revealed himself as a Gold Core Daoist Master, making sure this news spreads far and wide.

Moreover, Meng Zhang is planning to hold a grand celebration to commemorate his attainment of the Gold Core, proclaiming his existence to the entire Endless Sea of Sand. With the development of Taiyi Sect to this day, they no longer need to bow to others to survive. They have the strength to establish their dominance in the Endless Sea of Sand and become a ruling force.

This celebration is not just Meng Zhang's Gold Core celebration; it's also a celebration of Taiyi Sect's rise.

Shortly after Meng Zhang returned to Taiyi Sect, he made this decision.

Taiyi Sect now has a considerable number of Foundation Building stage cultivators. Apart from the original ones, there have been several new ones over the years, and Meng Zhang also brought back a group of Foundation Building cultivators.

The number of over a dozen Foundation Building cultivators now surpasses the Twin Success Valley, which boasted ten Foundation Building cultivators, second only to the Flying Swan Sect.

With so many Foundation Building cultivators, they are no longer as precious as before. In the past, they were mainly elders within the Taiyi Sect. However, going forward, the criteria for becoming an elder in the sect will be raised. Even the existing elders must have at least a mid-stage Foundation Building cultivation base and make significant contributions to the sect while accumulating a certain amount of good deeds.

As for the group of Foundation Building cultivators Meng Zhang brought back, they are currently serving Taiyi Sect as guest disciples.

Ever since Meng Zhang decided to hold his Gold Core ceremony, the entire Taiyi Sect has been bustling with activity. Organizing arrangements, setting up the venue, sending out invitations, and welcoming guests—all these complex and meticulous tasks fall upon the disciples of the sect.

Meng Zhang didn't involve himself in these matters; he entrusted everything to Niu Dawei. During Meng Zhang's absence, Niu Dawei had been acting as the representative Sect Master and, along with the other elders, had managed the sect efficiently, leading it to flourish.

Upon Meng Zhang's return, he was pleased to see the situation. Everyone, including Niu Dawei, had indeed lived up to his expectations.

Taiyi Sect's vast territory was now firmly under control, and its influence silently extended in all directions. The Endless Sea of Sand was vast and even the ruling Flying Swan Sect couldn't claim dominance over every place.

As a rising power, Taiyi Sect knew that if it didn't want to directly challenge the Flying Swan Sect, it needed to explore and acquire resources from previously overlooked areas.

Deep Earth Spirit General had completely refined the Heaven and Earth Spiritual Object, the Mountain Suppressing Stone, while Shocking Thunder Spirit General had fully refined the essence of Heavenly Thunder. Both Guardian Spirit Generals had restored their cultivation bases to the late Foundation Building stage.

During Meng Zhang's absence, apart from assisting Niu Dawei with sect affairs, they had spent most of their time and energy on external exploration. Over the years, they had traveled throughout the Endless Sea of Sand, investigating many previously unexplored areas.

Their goal was not only to find new cultivation resources for the sect but also to obtain valuable spiritual objects that could awaken other dormant Guardian Spirit Generals.

To seize a spiritual medicine that could repair souls, Deep Earth Spirit General and Shocking Thunder Spirit General even ventured into Demon Wind Gobi, engaging in a fierce battle with the demonic beast tribes.

They killed many Second Rank demonic beasts, successfully obtained the spiritual medicine, and managed to escape from the hands of Third Rank demonic beasts. This battle earned them great renown and made them known as formidable figures in the Endless Sea of Sand.

It was thanks to their presence that during Meng Zhang's absence, no small fry dared to provoke Taiyi Sect.

However, with Meng Zhang's return and the glory he radiated, the achievements of the two Guardian Spirit Generals were completely overshadowed.

Shortly after Meng Zhang returned to the sect, Deep Earth Spirit General brought An Xiaoran and An Moran back with him. After years of separation, there were naturally many things to talk about. Even though none of them were particularly verbose, they chatted for quite a while.

An Xiaoran shared all the gains she obtained from the senior cultivator's cave with Meng Zhang. The most important of these gains was a superior technique called the "Fusang Sutra," which perfectly matched her wood-fire attribute constitution. Meng Zhang was full of praise for this technique, as it surpassed even his own "Sun-Moon Rotation Method" in suitability for a wood-fire constitution.

With Meng Zhang's guidance, An Xiaoran dissipated her true qi from her previous cultivation of the "Burning Wood Art" and began cultivating the newly acquired "Fusang Sutra."

As for the grievances between An Xiaoran's siblings and Zeng Jiexiong, Meng Zhang didn't care at all. With his current status and level of cultivation, he had no spare energy to pay attention to some Foundation Building stage juniors.

Zeng Jiexiong and Zeng Jiantang, unless they had gone mad, would never dare to continue plotting against the An Family siblings. The personal disciples of a Gold Core Daoist Master held such prestigious positions; they were not to be trifled with.

When An Xiaoran and her siblings achieved significant progress in their Cultivation Base in the future, they would naturally resolve these past grievances.

Chapter 425: Gold Core Celebration

On the fifth day of the twelfth lunar month, if it were in a place close to the Middle-Earth Continent, by this time, it would probably have been bitterly cold with glistening white snow. However, in the Endless Sea of Sand, where the climate hardly changes throughout the year, the scorching sun still hangs high, making it intolerably hot.

Today is the day of the celebration of Meng Zhang's Gold Core achievement. Near the entrance of Taiyi Sect, from the foot to the summit of the mountain, colorful decorations, lanterns, and flags have been put up in advance.

Despite the recent busy and arduous times, with numerous complicated tasks, everyone in Taiyi Sect is exceptionally joyful and satisfied. Especially today, a day of great happiness, the entire Taiyi Sect is filled with exuberance and excitement.

With Meng Zhang as the Gold Core Daoist Master, Taiyi Sect is about to soar to new heights, benefiting all its members immensely. All the cultivators of the sect who could make it have gathered together.

Even many old disciples who had long left the sect have attended, including Tian Zhen, who returned to retire in his hometown. At this moment, tears fill his eyes as he is overwhelmed with joy.

In his old age, with his hair turned white, he finally gets to witness the rise of Taiyi Sect. Meng Zhang, whom he had high hopes for since his youth, has indeed lived up to his expectations by successfully reviving the once declining Taiyi Sect.

Though Taiyi Sect is still far from its glorious peak, it has already surpassed the time when it was on the verge of collapse and forced to take refuge in the Endless Sea of Sand. Tian Zhen feels deeply gratified and contented with Taiyi Sect's current state.

As for the disciples present at the scene, they can hardly conceal their excitement. With a Gold Core Daoist Master in the sect, they can strive for greater benefits for the sect. The elevation of the sect's status is keenly felt by each and every one of them.

A stronger sect can provide more cultivation resources for its disciples, giving them more confidence when facing the outside world.

Alongside Taiyi Sect's disciples are guests from the affiliated forces. These small clans that rely on Taiyi Sect have also grown stronger and can now enjoy a greater sense of security.

The guests from Qiaoshou Sect, this ally, sit closely with the Taiyi Sect disciples. As Taiyi Sect becomes more potent, their alliance strengthens even further.

On the other side, there are envoys from nearby cultivation forces like Land Walk Sect. When they see the esteemed Meng Zhang, the atmosphere becomes respectful and humble.

At the outskirts of the square, the disciples of Taiyi Sect, acting as hosts, are loudly announcing the names of the guests.

Suddenly, countless ribbons descend from the sky, and a hearty voice resounds from above.

"Flying Swan Sect's Fei Jiang, specially here to congratulate Daoist Master Meng on achieving the Gold Core."

With this voice, a burly, majestic-looking old man descends slowly from the sky.

On this joyous occasion, the mountain-guarding formation at Taiyi Sect's entrance has been completely deactivated. With Meng Zhang, the Gold Core Daoist Master, in attendance, there is hardly any need for the formation's protection.

Seeing Daoist Master Fei Jiang descend, Meng Zhang stands up from his seat.

"As a junior, Meng Zhang, I pay my respects to Daoist Master Fei Jiang," Meng Zhang respectfully bows.

Regardless of their future relationship with Flying Swan Sect, as the host, Meng Zhang will not lack in basic courtesy. Fei Jiang, an advanced Gold Core cultivator with many years of experience, is senior in both age and generation to Meng Zhang. Showing respect to him is also a form of reverence for the elderly. Seeing Meng Zhang stand up and bow, the various guests sitting below also rose and showed humble gestures. "Daoist Master Meng, there's no need to be so formal. You are one of us now," said Fei Jiang, the Gold Core Daoist Master, in a friendly and gentle manner. Meng Zhang had already expected this amicable attitude from Fei Jiang. After all, Fei Jiang had been in seclusion for a long time since suffering severe injuries during a battle with a horde of demonic beasts. If it weren't for Meng Zhang's Gold Core celebration, he probably wouldn't have come out of seclusion yet.

Although Meng Zhang had recently advanced to the Gold Core stage, his discerning eyes could sense that Fei Jiang's aura was somewhat unstable, indicating that his injuries hadn't fully healed. Meng Zhang speculated that Flying Swan Sect had sent Fei Jiang, the wounded Gold Core Daoist Master, to show goodwill and assure him that they didn't harbor any ill intentions towards Taiyi Sect.

Fei Jiang landed directly in front of Meng Zhang and engaged in a warm conversation. In many Gold Core sects, the position of Sect Master was usually held by a cultivator in the Foundation Building stage. However, Meng Zhang, as a Diviner, had chosen to retain the position of Taiyi Sect's Sect Master. It wasn't due to a lust for power or unwillingness to give up the role, but rather his intuition as a Diviner told him that continuing to be Taiyi Sect's Sect Master would benefit both himself and the entire sect. As the Sect Master, he represented not only himself but the entire Taiyi Sect.

After the initial show of respect towards Fei Jiang, Meng Zhang maintained a confident and composed demeanor throughout their conversation. Seeing the two Gold Core Daoist Masters engaging in friendly discussion, many cultivators below couldn't help but breathe a sigh of relief. It seemed that Flying Swan Sect's attitude towards Meng Zhang was favorable, and as long as they didn't resort to hostilities, the other cultivation forces in the Endless Sea of Sand would avoid getting involved in any potential conflict between Taiyi Sect and Flying Swan Sect. Of course, there were a few individuals who secretly felt disappointed, hoping for some chaos to arise. However, Fei Jiang's visit was indeed sincere. To express their regard for Meng Zhang, Flying Swan Sect had dispatched a Gold Core Daoist Master, specifically one who was injured and wouldn't engage in a serious fight. Fei Jiang not only conveyed goodwill through words but also showed genuine intent. He learned that Meng Zhang needed a Third Rank spirit vein for cultivation and warmly invited him to visit Flying Swan Sect. To prevent any misunderstandings, Fei Jiang took great pains to emphasize his sincerity.

Meng Zhang politely declined Fei Jiang's invitation. He didn't want to get involved with Flying Swan Sect at this time, as it could lead to unforeseen complications. Moreover, he had learned from the experiences with Guang Zhi and Roaring Blaze Daoist Masters that even though Flying Swan Sect might not pose a threat to him, he needed to remain cautious.

Chapter 426: Honored Guests

Perhaps worried that Meng Zhang would misunderstand, Fei Jiang Daoist Master did not insist on his offer after Meng Zhang declined it. In order to show the goodwill of the Flying Swan Sect, Fei Jiang Daoist Master offered many benefits. For example, the territory of Twin Success Valley and Green Bamboo Mountain, which the Flying Swan Sect had long been unable to manage, were now handed over to the Taiyi Sect. Additionally, Fei Jiang Daoist Master hinted that the Taiyi Sect should handle the other cultivation forces around them, such as the Land Walk Sect.

Of course, the Taiyi Sect could not go too far and had to maintain the face of the Flying Swan Sect. Although they had no intention of annexing these sects, with Fei Jiang Daoist Master's hint, Meng Zhang could now begin his next plan.

In just a few words between the two Gold Core Daoist Masters, the ownership of a large area of land and the fate of many cultivation forces were decided. Of course, Fei Jiang Daoist Master did

not offer these benefits without any requests. He vaguely hinted that he hoped Meng Zhang would join the Flying Swan Sect's camp, either to fight against the Fire Cloud Sect or to help resist the invasion of the Demon Wind Gobi monsters.

Fei Jiang Daoist Master was not willing to sell out his benefits for nothing, and Meng Zhang kept praising him with kind words, but when it came to when he would participate in the battle, there was no definite answer. Fei Jiang Daoist Master was straightforward and had a hot temper. He was already displeased with Meng Zhang's hesitation, despite his efforts to show goodwill.

At this moment, Niu Dawei, Meng Zhang's senior disciple from the Taiyi Sect, shouted loudly, "Luo Ye Daoist Master is here to visit." Most of the people present had never heard of Luo Ye Daoist Master, but since she was called a Daoist Master, her status was self-evident.

Luo Ye Daoist Master's timely arrival helped Meng Zhang out of his predicament. After apologizing to Fei Jiang Daoist Master, Meng Zhang took the initiative to greet Luo Ye Daoist Master. "I have seen Luo Ye Senior. I will never forget the guidance you gave me."

Luo Ye Daoist Master not only pointed Meng Zhang in the right direction, but also taught him the "Form the Core" experience, which was of great help to him. "Don't be so polite. Your achievements today are also due to your own opportunities. It was because you helped me first that we were able to establish a good relationship."

After exchanging a few words, Meng Zhang introduced Luo Ye Daoist Master to Fei Jiang Daoist Master. Fei Jiang Daoist Master looked at Meng Zhang with some suspicion, not knowing when he had met Luo Ye Daoist Master. He was also unclear about Luo Ye Daoist Master's background. However, in his eyes, every Gold Core Daoist Master was a person who could not be ignored.

Luo Ye Daoist Master nodded slightly at Fei Jiang Daoist Master and sat down not far from him. If Meng Zhang had an unknown Gold Core Daoist Master as a strong ally, the Flying Swan Sect's attitude towards him would have to be readjusted. Fei Jiang Daoist Master secretly muttered to himself, originally thinking that Meng Zhang was just a lucky guy who barely succeeded in forming the core. He was alone and had not yet entered the circle of Gold Core Daoist Masters. Unexpectedly, he was not simple at all.

What surprised Fei Jiang Daoist Master even more was that just when he thought that Luo Ye Daoist Master was Meng Zhang's trump card, Niu Dawei shouted again, "Gu Yue Family Heart Butterfly Daoist Master has arrived."

Upon hearing the name Gu Yue Huaidie, Fei Jiang Daoist Master couldn't help but change his expression. The Flying Swan Sect was very familiar with their old neighbor and biggest business partner, Great Wind City. Fei Jiang Daoist Master was well aware of the status of the Gu Yue Family in Great Wind City and the position of Gu Yue Huaidie within the Gu Yue Family.

Previously, rumors had circulated among the surrounding cultivation forces of the Taiyi Sect that Meng Zhang had a close relationship and frequent dealings with the Gu Yue Family. When these rumors reached the ears of the high-ranking members of the Flying Swan Sect, they scoffed at them. The Gu Yue Family's status was far beyond what Meng Zhang, a mere individual, could aspire to. At most, there might have been some business dealings between the Taiyi Sect and the Gu Yue Family. Meng Zhang, however, shamelessly claimed to have a special relationship with the Gu Yue Family.

In reality, it was nothing more than taking advantage of the ignorance of the country bumpkin to boost his own reputation. But now, with the important figure of the Gu Yue Family, Gu Yue Huaidie Daoist Master, attending Meng Zhang's Gold Core celebration, it indicated that Meng Zhang was not a dispensable existence in the eyes of the Gu Yue Family.

After apologizing, Meng Zhang left the side of Luo Ye Daoist Master and Fei Jiang Daoist Master to warmly welcome the esteemed guest, Gu Yue Huaidie. Gu Yue Huaidie was not alone but accompanied by her disciple, Gu Yue Youlan. Meng Zhang greeted both Gu Yue Huaidie and Gu Yue Youlan with respect. The two parties had interacted multiple times before and had a good relationship. Without much formality, Meng Zhang led them to the side of Fei Jiang Daoist Master and Luo Ye Daoist Master.

Seeing the familiar interaction between Meng Zhang and Gu Yue Huaidie Daoist Master, Fei Jiang Daoist Master felt a sinking feeling. His concern was no longer Meng Zhang, but the Gu Yue Family. If Meng Zhang truly joined forces with the Gu Yue Family and they, through the Taiyi Sect, wanted to interfere in the affairs of the Endless Sea of Sand, it would spell trouble for the Flying Swan Sect.

There were differences in strength among the Gold Core sects. Although the Flying Swan Sect was the dominant force in the Endless Sea of Sand, it was due to special circumstances. In terms of actual power, the Flying Swan Sect was not outstanding among the Gold Core sects. Their ability to dominate the Endless Sea of Sand in the past and drive out the forces of the Fire Cloud Sect and the Yellow Lotus Sect East River Branch relied not solely on their own strength.

Leaving aside past events, even now, the strength of the Fire Cloud Sect surpassed that of the Flying Swan Sect. Despite having the advantage and the assistance of the Northern Desert Qi Family, the Flying Swan Sect was already struggling to resist the invasion of the Fire Cloud Sect. The strength of the Gu Yue Family was not inferior to that of the Fire Cloud Sect. If the Gu Yue Family, as a fresh force, also wanted to meddle in the affairs of the Endless Sea of Sand, the Flying Swan Sect would likely have no choice but to surrender.

Although his mind was filled with countless thoughts and uncertainties about Gu Yue Huaidie's intentions, Fei Jiang Daoist Master remained polite on the surface, even with a hint of flattery, warmly greeting Gu Yue Huaidie. Gu Yue Huaidie, too, did not display the arrogance of a cultivator from a major family and exchanged a few polite words with Fei Jiang Daoist Master before engaging in conversation with Luo Ye Daoist Master.

While others were unaware of Luo Ye Daoist Master's background, Gu Yue Huaidie had some understanding of Luo Ye Daoist Master and the Dark Alliance behind her.

Chapter 427: Luo Ye Daoist Master

Gu Yue Huaidie was a remarkable figure who could tell what Fei Jiang Daoist Master was worried about at a glance. She said, "I came here this time as a private individual to congratulate Meng Xiaoyou, and it has nothing to do with the Gu Yue Family." Gu Yue Huaidie's words did not ease Fei Jiang Daoist Master's mind. He could not easily believe the other party. Even if what the other party said was true, personal relationships were often more solid than those between sects.

Seeing Fei Jiang Daoist Master's respectful appearance and the few traces of vigilance hidden in secret, Gu Yue Huaidie smiled and said no more. When sending the invitation to Gu Yue Family, Meng Zhang did not expect that Gu Yue Huaidie would give him such face and personally come to congratulate him. After so many years of dealing with Gu Yue Family, Meng Zhang had a certain understanding of them. Gu Yue Huaidie's cultivation base in the middle stage of Gold Core was not particularly outstanding in Gu Yue Family, but she had a high status in the family.

According to some Gu Yue Family juniors, Gu Yue Huaidie was probably the strategist of Gu Yue Family, and her words carried weight, even able to decide the family's strategic direction. Such a person would not take care of him just because of some past relationship with Taiyi Sect's predecessors. She must have had another purpose in coming this time. That's what Meng Zhang thought in his heart. Of course, on the surface, he was flattered and treated Gu Yue Huaidie warmly. After Gu Yue Huaidie arrived, the guests who were supposed to come also arrived.

Next, there were some complicated formalities. Fortunately, cultivators valued efficiency and did not spend too much time on useless procedures. After the formalities were over, it was time for Meng Zhang to give a sermon. As a Gold Core Daoist Master, Meng Zhang's temperament was different from when he was a Foundation Building period cultivator. Among the content he spoke, there were many practical experiences and insights into cultivation.

After the sermon, almost everyone in the audience was listening intently and gained a lot. When Meng Zhang finished his sermon, everyone was reluctant to leave. After the sermon, Meng Zhang left the scene. Below, the Foundation Building period elders of Taiyi Sect were responsible for receiving guests from all sides, while Meng Zhang personally received the three Gold Core Daoist Masters and took them to a quiet room.

Taiyi Sect was only a Foundation Building sect before, and there was not even a Third Rank spirit vein in the mountain gate. The buildings were just makeshift and looked very shabby. However, the three Gold Core Daoist Masters did not care about these things. They came here for their own purposes.

When everyone sat together, it was not easy to speak frankly. There were many private dealings that were not suitable to be put on the table and made known to everyone. The four of them chatted about useless things and were reluctant to get to the point. Fei Jiang Daoist Master saw Luo Ye Daoist Master and Gu Yue Huaidie here, and he didn't want to force Meng Zhang too much, but in the end, he couldn't help saying, "Daoist Master Meng, I hope you can contribute to the overall situation of the Endless Sea of Sand. No matter if it is the Fire Cloud Sect or the demon beasts of the Demon Wind Gobi, the consequences will be unimaginable if they invade the Endless Sea of Sand on a large scale."

"Under the ruins, there are no survivors. Facing these foreign invaders, Taiyi Sect cannot expect to be the only one to survive." "I won't say much else, I just hope that Daoist Master Meng will consider the overall situation and the future more." After speaking, Fei Jiang Daoist Master left without paying attention to Meng Zhang's retention.

Looking at Fei Jiang Daoist Master's departing figure, Gu Yue Huaidie smiled and shook her head. "I've heard that this Fei Jiang Daoist Master of the Flying Swan Sect has a hot temper and a straightforward personality. Today, I see that it is true." "The Flying Swan Sect is also out of people. They actually sent him to persuade Sect Master Meng." With Gu Yue Huaidie's identity and cultivation base, she was fully qualified to comment on the Flying Swan Sect and Fei Jiang Daoist

Master. After speaking, Gu Yue Huaidie glanced at Luo Ye Daoist Master and said, "It's rare to come to the Endless Sea of Sand. I'll go outside for a walk first." After speaking, she left directly, leaving Meng Zhang and Luo Ye Daoist Master behind. "She's smart enough not to stay here and pester us," Luo Ye Daoist Master muttered.

With Luo Ye Daoist Master's personality, she couldn't stand Gu Yue Huaidie's arrogant attitude. Seeing that there were only the two of them and Meng Zhang, Luo Ye Daoist Master waved her hand and set up a ban to prevent eavesdropping from inside and outside.

"Sect Master Meng, how much do you know about the situation in the Demon Wind Gobi?" Jue Ying Daoist Master didn't waste any time and went straight to the point.

The Demon Wind Gobi is usually occupied by demon beasts. Meng Zhang only knew about the situation inside through hearsay. He had passed by the edge of the Demon Wind Gobi before, and although Deep Earth Spirit General and Shocking Thunder Spirit General had rushed into the Demon Wind Gobi to seize spiritual medicine, they had not gone too deep into it. Meng Zhang did not know much about the situation inside the Demon Wind Gobi.

Meng Zhang revealed all his knowledge of the Demon Wind Gobi to Jue Ying Daoist Master. Luo Ye Daoist Master shook her head after listening. "Sect Master Meng, you are already a Gold Core Daoist Master. You can't be so ignorant of your neighbors." Then, Luo Ye Daoist Master detailed to Meng Zhang the information she had obtained from the black market, explaining the various situations inside the Demon Wind Gobi clearly and plainly.

Meng Zhang had known that the black market had strong intelligence capabilities. After learning from Jue Ying that the black market belonged to a powerful organization called the Dark Alliance, Meng Zhang's evaluation of the black market was even higher. However, he never expected that the black market would have such a deep understanding of the Demon Wind Gobi.

It should be noted that the Demon Wind Gobi is a place where demon beasts dominate, and there is no place for human clan cultivators. Meng Zhang was truly surprised by Luo Ye Daoist Master's words. Such a hidden organization as the Dark Alliance actually had such great power.

To put it nicely, this is called inclusiveness and tolerance. To put it bluntly, it is called accommodating both good and evil. After Meng Zhang digested this information, Luo Ye Daoist Master threw out more shocking news.

"That Golden Tiger Demon General is not a wild demon beast. In those days, it was a spirit pet of a senior of the Purple Gold Sect."

"After the Purple Gold Sect was destroyed and many high-ranking seniors died in battle, the Golden Tiger demon beast wandered into the Demon Wind Gobi and became a great demon there."

Chapter 428: Respective Request

"Since the demise of the Purple Gold Sect years ago and the rise of the Flying Swan Sect as the ruler of the Endless Sea of Sand, Golden Tiger has been seeking revenge for the Purple Gold Sect," said Luo Ye Daoist Master as she calmly recounted these unknown secrets to Meng Zhang.

"He has opposed the Flying Swan Sect multiple times, and in the end, he was relentlessly pursued by the Flying Swan Sect's Gold Core Daoist Master, forcing him to flee into the Demon Wind Gobi," she continued.

"Among Third Rank demonic beasts, Golden Tiger is undoubtedly formidable. However, even with his strength, he is powerless against a Gold Core sect like the Flying Swan Sect."

"After a series of twists and turns, Golden Tiger eventually joined the Dark Alliance, serving them for many years," Luo YeDaoist Master explained gradually.

"Golden Tiger's ultimate goal in joining the Dark Alliance was to harness its power to seek revenge and take on the Flying Swan Sect."

"Unfortunately, Dark Alliance rarely initiates conflicts with the various regional rulers in the Cultivation World. Moreover, the Flying Swan Sect has significant connections, making Dark Alliance reluctant to engage in any disputes with them."

"After spending many years in the Dark Alliance and finally understanding their stance, Golden Tiger left the alliance and returned to the Demon Wind Gobi."

"When he left the Dark Alliance, he stole a crucial treasure."

"As you know, the situation in the Endless Sea of Sand is incredibly complex, involving Fifth Rank great powers and even the intervention of Primordial Spirit True Monarchs. Despite the Dark Alliance's formidable influence, they are unwilling to get involved easily."

"For this reason, the Dark Alliance has never sent anyone into the Demon Wind Gobi to retrieve that treasure."

"Recently, I have an important matter that requires the use of that treasure. However, I couldn't find any help within the Dark Alliance. So, I had no choice but to come and seek help from Sect Master Meng."

"I hope to join forces with Sect Master Meng and retrieve that treasure from Golden Tiger."

Listening to Luo YeDaoist Master's words, Meng Zhang's face showed a troubled expression. Given their relationship, Meng Zhang didn't hide his concerns and directly expressed his worries.

"Golden Tiger is hiding in the Demon Wind Gobi, which is the stronghold of demonic beasts, with almost endless numbers of them, including Third Rank ones."

"With our current strength, it won't be easy to come out unscathed once we venture deep inside. Retrieving the treasure from Golden Tiger's hands will be even more challenging."

Meng Zhang was not unwilling to help; he just didn't want to participate in a mission destined to fail and needlessly put his life at risk.

"Sect Master Meng, rest assured, I won't be reckless and venture into the Demon Wind Gobi alone."

"After spending so many years in the Dark Alliance, they know Golden Tiger well."

"I have a plan to lure him out of the Demon Wind Gobi."

"But, I can't ensure I'll be able to keep him away alone, which is why I need Sect Master Meng's assistance."

Luo YeDaoist Master's words relieved Meng Zhang's worries.

Demonic beasts have always been the archenemies of the Human Clan. As long as they stay away from the Demon Wind Gobi, Meng Zhang won't show any mercy towards these creatures.

In the following discussion, Luo YeDaoist Master revealed more details about her plan and everything related to Golden Tiger. She didn't divulge all the plan's intricacies but gave Meng Zhang a heads-up to prepare him for what's to come.

To deal with formidable foes like Golden Tiger, Luo YeDaoist Master also needed to make extensive preparations. Moreover, the timing was not yet ripe, so she had to wait patiently. However, Meng Zhang didn't disappoint Luo YeDaoist Master. Knowing that the plan was feasible, he immediately and without hesitation agreed to lend his assistance.

After discussing the main purpose of her visit, Luo YeDaoist Master engaged in further conversation. Despite being a Gold Core Daoist Master, Meng Zhang lacked guidance from senior members of his sect and was unfamiliar with the circle of Gold Core Daoist Masters. Taking advantage of this opportunity, Luo YeDaoist Master spent much effort explaining everything a Gold Core Daoist Master should know to Meng Zhang. This included information about neighboring Gold Core Daoist Masters, how to connect with others of their kind to expand one's network, and how to acquire the resources necessary for Gold Core cultivation.

Luo YeDaoist Master's generous sharing filled in the biggest gap in Meng Zhang's knowledge. The precious information about the black market that Luo YeDaoist Master had collected over the years was something even many prominent powers wouldn't know, and no matter how many spirit stones Meng Zhang spent, he wouldn't be able to gather such intelligence.

Once again, Luo YeDaoist Master's help left Meng Zhang indebted to her for a significant favor. After concluding their discussion and making arrangements, Luo YeDaoist Master bid her farewell and left.

Not long after Luo YeDaoist Master's departure, Gu Yue Huaidie, who had been wandering outside for a while, came before Meng Zhang. Although Meng Zhang was Gu Yue Huaidie's junior in terms of seniority, he was already a Gold Core Daoist Master, and Gu Yue Huaidie regarded him as a peer.

Without wasting any time on pleasantries, Gu Yue Huaidie went straight to the point. She wanted to obtain a treasure from the Mirage Secret Realm and hoped that Meng Zhang would lend her a hand.

Meng Zhang was familiar with the Mirage Secret Realm, even though he had never personally ventured inside. He had heard about its conditions long ago.

The Mirage Secret Realm was located at the heart of the Mirage Desert. When the Purple Gold Sect ruled the Endless Sea of Sand, a Primordial Spirit True Monarch from their sect put in great effort to establish this secret realm. During the Purple Gold Sect's existence, it served as a trial ground for their Refining Qi stage disciples.

After the fall of the Purple Gold Sect and the rise of the Flying Swan Sect, which lacked a Primordial Spirit True Monarch, they couldn't develop new secret realms or fully control the Mirage Secret Realm due to their limited capabilities. Despite their efforts, the Flying Swan Sect could only access a small part of it.

Approximately every hundred years, when the Mirage Secret Realm opened, the Flying Swan Sect sent outstanding Refining Qi stage disciples into the realm to harvest various spiritual herbs and scatter new seeds of spiritual herbs.

Because of the perilous conditions and numerous demonic beasts inside the Mirage Secret Realm, the Flying Swan Sect offered various attractive incentives to entice talented Refining Qi stage disciples from all around to enter. These disciples would resist the demonic beasts, harvest the spiritual herbs, and in return, gain considerable benefits.

Over the years, the Flying Swan Sect greatly benefited from the Mirage Secret Realm, obtaining countless spiritual herbs. Many of the primary and auxiliary ingredients for their Foundation Building Pills came from the Mirage Secret Realm.

Gu Yue Huaidie's plan to enter the Mirage Secret Realm would be firmly opposed by the Flying Swan Sect. If anything went wrong in the realm, it could severely shake the foundation of the sect. Moreover, as far as Meng Zhang knew, no Gold Core Daoist Master from the Flying Swan Sect had ever come close to the Mirage Desert where the Mirage Secret Realm was located. There must be some hidden taboo associated with it.

Of course, as the master of the Gu Yue Family, Gu Yue Huaidie couldn't be unaware of these circumstances. By openly telling Meng Zhang about her intention to obtain treasure from the Mirage Secret Realm and seeking his assistance, she probably already had a plan to overcome these obstacles.

Chapter 429: In Every Way Cooperation

Meng Zhang looked at Gu Yue Huaidie, knowing that she must have a plan to solve these problems. However, Gu Yue Huaidie didn't directly address the main topic but instead asked a seemingly unrelated question.

"Sect Master Meng seems to have a good relationship with Luo Ye Daoist Master. It appears she has some important matters to discuss with you," Gu Yue Huaidie inquired.

Meng Zhang smiled but didn't respond. He wasn't one to gossip and wouldn't casually reveal the arrangement he had with Luo Ye Daoist Master to anyone. Gu Yue Huaidie didn't mind Meng Zhang's silence and changed the subject to ask, "Now that Sect Master Meng has become a Gold Core Daoist Master, have you thought about your future plans?"

"My future plans?"

"Yes, since you achieved the Gold Core stage by absorbing the essence of the spirit marrow without utilizing a Third Rank spirit vein, it's undoubtedly a great accomplishment. However, the spirit marrow in your possession should be almost depleted by now."

"A Gold Core Daoist Master, without access to a Third Rank spirit vein, must use high-grade spirit stones for their daily cultivation needs. Over time, the consumption of high-grade spirit stones becomes immense. Even with Taiyi Sect's vast resources, it would likely be quite challenging."

Indeed, the spirit marrow in Meng Zhang's possession was much larger than Gu Yue Huaidie imagined. Even after using some of it to form his core, there was enough remaining to sustain Meng Zhang for the next 10-20 years. However, she made a valid point; the spirit marrow would

eventually be depleted, and a Gold Core Daoist Master needed an enormous amount of spiritual energy daily. Without access to a Third Rank spirit vein, Meng Zhang had to consume a significant number of high-grade spirit stones to maintain his cultivation base. In the Endless Sea of Sand, low-grade spirit stones were the primary currency, and middle-grade spirit stones were quite rare. Taiyi Sect occasionally required middle-grade spirit stones, such as for powering Second Rank puppets, and would have to pay a considerable price to obtain them.

As for high-grade spirit stones, they were exceedingly rare in the Endless Sea of Sand. The region neither produced nor traded high-grade spirit stones among the Shang Family clans. Even in the Jiuqu League, where high-grade spirit stones were mined, they were extremely scarce.

If Meng Zhang needed to use high-grade spirit stones, he would have to pay a hefty price to exchange them in Great Wind City, and there was no guarantee of obtaining the desired quantity.

Although Taiyi Sect currently held vast territories and seemingly had a good income, supporting a Gold Core Daoist Master like Meng Zhang was still a daunting task.

In the long run, Meng Zhang would need to possess a Third Rank spirit vein to permanently solve this problem. However, all the Third Rank spirit veins in the Endless Sea of Sand were already claimed. If he wanted to borrow one from someone else, it would undoubtedly come at a steep cost.

Gu Yue Huaidie gazed solemnly at Meng Zhang. "Sect Master Meng, for a Gold Core Daoist Master, a Third Rank spirit vein is indispensable. Without it, there will be many inconveniences."

Meng Zhang smiled helplessly. He understood this point well, but where could he get a Third Rank spirit vein? Should he snatch one from the Flying Swan Sect or Northern Desert Qi Family, or should he willingly become subservient and seek help from them?

Gu Yue Huaidie seemed to grasp Meng Zhang's helplessness, and with a smile, she said, "Sect Master Meng, have you forgotten about the Demon Wind Gobi?"

Indeed, the Demon Wind Gobi was teeming with Third Rank demonic beasts, and there must be Third Rank spirit veins among them. However, the number and strength of demonic beasts in the Demon Wind Gobi were overwhelming, and Meng Zhang had no ability to venture into that treacherous territory.

"Sect Master Meng, Flying Swan Sect has long been troubled by the Demon Wind Gobi, but they have been unable to resolve this issue," Gu Yue Huaidie explained. "If you and I cooperate with Flying Swan Sect, we should be able to breach the Demon Wind Gobi, killing a large number of the demonic beasts inside and allowing you to claim a Third Rank spirit vein."

"In doing so, Flying Swan Sect would solve the major problem of the Demon Wind Gobi, and you would gain access to a Third Rank spirit vein in a win-win situation," Meng Zhang added, knowing that Gu Yue Huaidie would also gain forgiveness from Flying Swan Sect. Gu Yue Huaidie had done Flying Swan Sect a great favor, helping them out of a difficult situation where they were caught between two enemies. As a condition for helping Flying Swan Sect, she wished to take action against the Mirage Secret Realm, and Flying Swan Sect was likely to agree.

However, Gu Yue Huaidie was meticulous in her approach. Instead of forcibly suppressing Flying Swan Sect using Gu Yue Family's influence and directly attacking the Mirage Secret Realm, she took a more gentle route, which allowed her to handle things without completely breaking ties with Flying Swan Sect.

Now, there was only one remaining question: Did Gu Yue Huaidie have the ability to break through the Primordial Spirit True Monarch's methods left behind by the Purple Gold Sect and forcibly enter the Mirage Secret Realm?

Thinking about Gu Yue Family's formidable power and mysterious background, it was highly likely that Gu Yue Huaidie had a certain degree of confidence if she dared to target the Mirage Secret Realm.

"I wonder who from Gu Yue Family will be dispatched this time to break into the Mirage Secret Realm?" Meng Zhang couldn't help but ask.

"You know that the situation behind the Endless Sea of Sand is complex, involving several Primordial Spirit True Monarchs," Gu Yue Huaidie replied. "If I, Gu Yue Huaidie, make some small moves here, it won't cause much trouble. But if our entire family of cultivators launches a massive attack, it may bring some undesirable consequences. Therefore, I need your assistance, Sect Master Meng."

Meng Zhang understood why Gu Yue Huaidie had taken a gentler approach in dealing with Flying Swan Sect. Gu Yue Family wouldn't risk getting involved in the complicated affairs of the Endless Sea of Sand, which was understandable.

But the question remained: Could he and Gu Yue Huaidie really break the Primordial Spirit True Monarch's methods left behind by the Purple Gold Sect?

Meng Zhang voiced his doubt, which also happened to be the area where Gu Yue Huaidie had the least confidence.

"While I do have a way to crack the methods left behind by the previous Purple Gold Sect seniors, I still need a few reliable helpers," Gu Yue Huaidie explained. "I will try to persuade Flying Swan Sect, and they might send a Gold Core Daoist Master. With you, we will be a little short on manpower."

"We cannot involve our family members, and while I have some connections, almost all the surrounding Gold Core Daoist Masters in the Endless Sea of Sand are aware of the situation here. No one would be willing to act without any reason."

Gu Yue Huaidie paused, deep in thought. "Do you think it's appropriate for Luo YeDaoist Master to join us?"

"Of course, if we want Luo YeDaoist Master's assistance, we need to do her a small favor first," Meng Zhang said, testing the waters. Although Luo YeDaoist Master had her plan to deal with Golden Tiger, Meng Zhang thought it would be best to have an extra layer of insurance. Golden Tiger was an experienced Third Rank demonic beast with profound Cultivation Base and formidable strength. He and Luo YeDaoist Master had only recently formed their cores, making them relatively junior among Gold Core Daoist Masters. Even with their combined efforts, it might not be enough to deal with Golden Tiger. If Gu Yue Huaidie could provide her help, it would greatly increase their chances of success.

Therefore, without consulting Luo YeDaoist Master beforehand, Meng Zhang was already considering involving Gu Yue Huaidie in their plans.

Chapter 430: Trivial

Meng Zhang didn't beat around the bush; he directly shared his and Luo YeDaoist Master's plan with Gu Yue Huaidie. It was a rough outline of their intentions. Assisting in dealing with a mere Third Rank demonic beast wasn't a significant matter for Gu Yue Huaidie. After all, for Human Clan Cultivators, hunting down demonic beasts was a righteous act, carrying the weight of a just cause. With some consideration, Gu Yue Huaidie agreed to Meng Zhang's request.

Once Gu Yue Huaidie agreed to help, Meng Zhang gained greater confidence and could assist Luo YeDaoist Master in resolving the Golden Tiger issue. The collaboration among different forces, helping one another to solve problems, brought mutual benefits. However, at this point, it remained a preliminary plan for Meng Zhang and Gu Yue Huaidie. To turn this plan into an executable strategy, much work lay ahead.

Subsequently, both Meng Zhang and Gu Yue Huaidie sprang into action. Meng Zhang needed to contact Luo YeDaoist Master and inform her of the change in plans, with Gu Yue Huaidie joining as a helper. On the other hand, Gu Yue Huaidie had the more challenging task of persuading the Flying Swan Sect to accept her plan.

After Gu Yue Huaidie departed, Meng Zhang visited the Jiuqu League again and got in touch with Luo YeDaoist Master. Upon meeting, Luo YeDaoist Master didn't express any dissatisfaction with Meng Zhang's initiative. In fact, she had also considered that relying solely on herself and Meng Zhang might not be enough to handle the Golden Tiger. However, due to the complex situation in the Endless Sea of Sand, she found it difficult to obtain more assistance from the Dark Alliance. She was still contemplating how to temporarily enhance her combat strength. Now, with the good news of Gu Yue Huaidie's involvement, a major problem was resolved.

Having Gu Yue Huaidie as a strong reinforcement, Luo YeDaoist Master quickly left the Jiuqu League and accompanied Meng Zhang to the Endless Sea of Sand. Back at the Taiyi Sect, while awaiting news from Gu Yue Huaidie, Meng Zhang, as the Sect Master, had to take charge of many important matters within the sect. Niu Dawei, who had temporarily acted as the Sect Master, was relieved of this burden and now focused on handling the daily affairs of the sect.

As a Gold Core Daoist Master, Meng Zhang's previous plans began to be implemented one by one. He wholeheartedly embraced the benefits offered by Fei JiangDaoist Master of the Flying Swan Sect. Taiyi Sect cultivators marched openly into the former Twin Success Valley, where they gathered with their fellow sect members who had secretly taken advantage of the situation. Together, they started large-scale construction.

Even the territory of Green Bamboo Mountain, including its mountain gate, was incorporated into Taiyi Sect. This meant that Taiyi Sect now directly bordered the Flying Swan Sect's immediate territory. The surrounding cultivation forces were quick to notice the recent changes in the situation. The Flying Swan Sect's concessions and efforts to win them over prompted them to make their choices.

These cultivation forces, seemingly affiliated with the Flying Swan Sect, sent representatives to Taiyi Sect, expressing their willingness to pledge allegiance to Taiyi Sect in secret. Taiyi Sect readily accepted their allegiance, even though it might be merely symbolic at this point. However, Meng Zhang believed that as the situation developed, with subtle influence over time, Taiyi Sect could gradually and thoroughly absorb these cultivation forces into their system.

There were numerous cultivation forces of varying sizes in the vicinity, and Taiyi Sect had no intention of annihilating them all or forcibly integrating them. As a righteous sect and a dominant power, Taiyi Sect needed to maintain its image. In their destitute days, they could be ruthless and resort to any means, but now as a Gold Core sect and a regional hegemon, they had to handle matters with some finesse.

This is similar to how Meng Zhang's past vibrant socialites would wash off their past and take on the identity of a virtuous countryman after reaching a certain level of success in their careers.

The entire Cultivation World was still dominated by so-called righteous sects. For Taiyi Sect to further develop, it had to learn from the demeanor of the righteous sects, integrate into their ranks, and become one of them. Taiyi Sect established an alliance in the surrounding area, incorporating all nearby cultivation forces into it. Naturally, Taiyi Sect became the leader of this alliance, able to command all its members.

Due to some concerns about the Flying Swan Sect, Taiyi Sect did not overly publicize this alliance. The organization structure of the alliance was also quite loose at the moment, mainly serving as a means of resource exchange and consolidation.

With a Gold Core Daoist Master in control, Taiyi Sect started to take bolder actions in other aspects as well. It purchased numerous flying boats from Great Wind City, establishing an aerial network spanning the entire alliance. In addition to the regular flights to Flying Swan City, Taiyi Sect also opened a direct route to Great Wind City. Regular flights from Taiyi Sect to Great Wind City transported various resources from the Endless Sea of Sand, while bringing back resources lacking in the Endless Sea of Sand. This increased the frequency of interactions between people from both regions.

Taiyi Sect now had a considerable number of Foundation Building cultivators, allowing them to safeguard the safety of these remote flying boats. Previously, as rulers of the Endless Sea of Sand, the Flying Swan Sect monopolized most of the trade with Great Wind City. Almost all resources produced in the Endless Sea of Sand were transported to Great Wind City through the Flying Swan Sect. Similarly, the goods purchased from Great Wind City were mostly sold in Flying Swan City.

When Forest Spring Watch and its affiliated forces were blocked by the Flying Swan Sect, they had to go directly to Great Wind City for trade. After the downfall of Forest Spring Watch, Taiyi Sect gained the privilege of direct trade with Great Wind City under the tacit approval of the Flying Swan Sect, but the scale was small, and the number of transactions was limited.

Now, Taiyi Sect's extensive trade with Great Wind City completely shattered Flying Swan Sect's monopoly and severely damaged their interests. Apart from seeking profits, Meng Zhang's actions also served as a test for the Flying Swan Sect, to see how much they would tolerate Taiyi Sect and their Gold Core Daoist Master. The result proved Meng Zhang's conjecture right: the Flying Swan Sect did not react at all and allowed Taiyi Sect to act freely.

Facing immense pressure from both the Fire Cloud Sect and Taiyi Sect, the Flying Swan Sect was already exhausted and incapable of diverting attention to these matters. With the sect's survival at stake, even significant interests had to be set aside for the time being.

Therefore, Meng Zhang released the remaining cultivators from the imprisoned Earthfire Sect. He generously allocated a First Rank spirit vein to them, providing a place for them to settle down and

continue the legacy of the Earthfire Sect. This way, Meng Zhang completely fulfilled the oath he made to his inner demon years ago.