

Transmigrated into a Grandpa, Embracing the Laid-Back Life

Chapter 291: Only those who are alive are worthy to talk about Foundation Establishment

[1,261 words]

The morning light pierced through the smoke and dust that had accumulated over the pass, casting a bleak glow upon the ravaged city wall.

The Mystic Iron rock, after a night of fierce battle, had lost its usual cold, dark luster and was now covered in a layer of dark brown ice crystals.

That was the blood of demon beasts and cultivators mixed together, seeping into the cracks of the rock before freezing solid in the extreme cold of the Northern Border's dawn.

The air held no trace of freshness. Instead, it was thick with the smells of charred flesh, rust, and the lingering ashes of burnt talismans, a stench that tightened one's throat.

Several old soldiers from the logistics battalion, hunched over, were using iron shovels to clear the ground. The scraping of the shovel blades against the Mystic Iron rock produced a monotonous, grating sound, like fingernails scraping across bone.

Su Ming kept his head down, avoiding a puddle of not-yet-congealed entrails on the ground, and made his way toward the medical camp below the wall.

His hands were wrapped in thick bandages, covering the blisters from last night's spiritual energy backlash when he tried to cool down an overloaded formation plate.

Although he had applied the ointment Zhao Tiji gave him, the biting cold wind now made them throb with a fiery pain.

Lifting the heavy felt curtain of the medical camp, a strong smell of medicinal herbs assaulted his senses, mixed with the sound of suppressed groans.

Su Ming's gaze swept across the crowded stretchers before finally settling on a corner.

The sword cultivator who had saved him last night was lying on a simple wooden plank bed. His left shoulder was thickly bandaged with coarse cloth, a faint trace of crimson blood seeping through. His face was as pale as paper, his eyes tightly shut, with only the faint rise and fall of his chest proving he was still alive.

A medical cultivator was changing his dressing nearby. Seeing Su Ming approach, he merely glanced at the bandages on his hands and pointed to an empty spot. "Burns, go over there to get medicine. Don't block the way."

"I came to see him," Su Ming said softly.

The sword cultivator on the bed seemed to hear the movement. His eyelids fluttered a few times before slowly opening.

They were very ordinary eyes, filled with exhaustion and a hint of the numbness that follows a narrow escape. Once he recognized Su Ming, the corner of his mouth twitched as if trying to smile, but the movement tugged at his wound, turning it into a sharp intake of breath.

"Didn't die," the sword cultivator's voice was hoarse and rough.

"Thanks to you, I didn't," Su Ming sat down on a small stool by the bed. He didn't offer empty platitudes about "repaying a life-saving debt." Instead, he simply took out a bottle of Reviving Spring Pills from his robe and gently placed it nearby.

The sword cultivator was taken aback for a moment, then let out a scoffing laugh. The layer of distance in his eyes seemed to fade a little.

"Chen Chuan," he gave his name. "Wandering cultivator. No sect, no school."

"Su Ming. Outer disciple of the Cloud Hidden Sect."

"Knew you were from a sect. That leather armor of yours isn't cheap," Chen Chuan shifted his body with difficulty, trying to find a slightly more comfortable position. "That sword strike last night wasn't to save you. I was aiming for that Iron-Feathered Eagle. The claws and beak of that beast are worth fifty Military Merit points."

Su Ming nodded. "I know."

"I want a Foundation Establishment Pill," Chen Chuan said, looking up at the filthy canvas ceiling of the tent. His gaze suddenly turned sharp, like a rusty sword that still yearned to kill. "I've been stuck at Qi Refining perfection for ten years. If I don't come here to risk my life, I'll just be a handful of dirt in this lifetime. If I take the gamble, maybe I can live another two hundred years."

His tone was flat, as if discussing what to eat for dinner.

Su Ming looked at Chen Chuan.

The reason was cliché, yet rock-solid.

Here at Iron Wall Pass, there were no grand speeches about fighting for the glory of humanity. There were only gamblers like Chen Chuan, betting their lives for a chance to advance one more step.

"Your sword is broken," Su Ming suddenly said.

Chen Chuan's right hand, resting by his side, twitched violently—a swordsman's instinctive reaction.

"When my hands are better, bring it to me," Su Ming stood up, smoothing the slightly wrinkled hem of his robe. "I'll fix it for you. No spirit stones. Consider it payment for last night's sword strike."

Chen Chuan gave Su Ming a deep look. He didn't refuse, merely closed his eyes again. "Alright. Fix it if I'm alive."

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In the following days, Iron Wall Pass seemed to return to its usual monotony.

Aside from the nightly alarms and sporadic harassment, the large-scale beast tides did not occur again.

Su Ming's life fell into an extremely rigid routine.

During the day, he followed Zhao Tiji on inspection rounds of the formations. Like a tireless spinning top, he shuttled between various nodes.

He no longer just mechanically completed tasks. He began proactively taking on some of the more complex repair work.

His skill of "Water Method Bonding" grew increasingly proficient. Even under Lin Yu's guidance, he devised a little trick called a "Fluid Heat Dissipation Circuit"—using a few discarded Crimson Gold pipes to build a simple water circulation system around formation hubs prone to overload, significantly reducing the risk of catastrophic failure.

After Zhao Tiji saw this little invention, he directly promoted its use throughout the Third Squad's defensive sector. It saved quite a few of his brothers from shedding blood when dealing with high-intensity Spiritual Pressure impacts.

Because of this, Su Ming's reputation within the camp soared.

Even that Pockmarked Zhao, who had nearly come to blows over scrap materials before, now greeted Su Ming warmly with "Brother Su" and eagerly shoved good tobacco and liquor into his hands whenever he had any.

And at night, Su Ming would immerse himself in the world of the "Eight Gates Lost Trace Incomplete Formation."

With the insights gained from that night's battle, he had a brand new understanding of "chaos" and "loss of control."

Formations were no longer dead lines, but flowing energy.

If you can't block it, then guide it. If you can't sort it out, then split the flow.

Finally, on the twenty-fifth night since arriving at Iron Wall Pass.

Stone House Number Seven, Sector C.

Su Ming sat cross-legged. The cyan jade slip in his hand emitted a soft glow.

Within his Consciousness Sea, that once chaotic, tangled, and deadlocked incomplete formation now flowed like a tamed river. Though still swift, it followed a bizarre yet exquisite curve, forming a perfect closed loop.

"It's connected."

Su Ming slowly opened his eyes, a flicker of irrepressible joy within them.

He hadn't restored the formation to its original state. Instead, he utilized those few irreparable "deadlocks" to construct three small "pressure relief valves." When spiritual energy conflicts reached a critical point, these three valves would automatically open, ejecting the violent energy outward, thereby forming a new wave of offensive force.

It was akin to not trying to plug a breach in a collapsing dam, but instead digging three irrigation channels in front of the flooding waters.

"This is... turning waste into treasure."

Looking at the jade slip in his hand, a clear understanding arose in Su Ming's heart.

"Congratulations," Lin Yu's voice sounded at the appropriate moment. "This technique... has a bit of a 'Grandmaster's' flavor to it. If that old man Qing Quan saw it, his beard would probably stand on end."

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