

Sect Master 131

Chapter 131: Purple Gold Sect

Meng Zhang had some impression of the name Purple Gold Sect. In the Sect Master's chronicles of Taiyi Sect passed down through generations, there were some accounts of the previous Sect Masters. Starting from over a thousand years ago, Purple Gold Sect was the sole overlord of the Endless Sea of Sand. All sects, including Flying Swan Sect, had to submit to Purple Gold Sect to establish themselves in the Endless Sea of Sand.

During its heyday, Purple Gold Sect had a Primordial Spirit Ancestor and several Gold Core Daoist Masters. Not only did they dominate the Endless Sea of Sand, but their influence extended southward, contending with the Jiuqu League.

Approximately seven hundred years ago, a great change occurred in the Endless Sea of Sand, leading to the demise of Purple Gold Sect's Primordial Spirit Ancestor. Subsequently, in a chaotic sand monster uprising that swept through the entire Endless Sea of Sand, Purple Gold Sect suffered heavy losses, with even many Gold Core Daoist Masters perishing.

After the tumultuous sand monster uprising, Flying Swan Sect joined forces with numerous sects to challenge Purple Gold Sect's dominance. The Qi Family, a large cultivation clan from outside the region, settled in the Northern Desert and joined the camp against Purple Gold Sect. The external Jiuqu League also intervened, openly or covertly opposing Purple Gold Sect.

After fierce bloodshed, Purple Gold Sect was exterminated, and both Flying Swan Sect and Qi Family rose to prominence. Flying Swan Sect, in particular, gained the most significant benefits. They not only claimed the largest portion of Purple Gold Sect's heritage but also became the new overlords of the Endless Sea of Sand. Qi Family's influence was suppressed and confined to the Northern Desert, while the external force, Jiuqu League, was expelled from the Endless Sea of Sand.

After many years of effort by Flying Swan Sect, the current power structure of the Endless Sea of Sand took shape. The preceding members of Taiyi Sect did not participate in this grand and turbulent history, as Taiyi Sect had not yet sought refuge in the Endless Sea of Sand at that time. The records left by the past Sect Masters were mostly based on rumors and hearsay, lacking certainty and detailed information.

After Meng Zhang and Jue Ying left the secluded little valley, they each released their mounts from the spirit beast bags and set off towards their destination. Meng Zhang quickly glanced at the map in his hand to confirm the direction to proceed.

The map was relatively detailed, marking the location of the former cultivator's cave of the Purple Gold Sect ancestor and the surrounding terrain. On the way, Meng Zhang had a question and proactively asked Jue Ying.

Usually, Meng Zhang kept his distance from unknown cultivator caves. However, Luo Ye had no reason to set him up, and the map she provided should be reliable. Upon hearing Meng Zhang's inquiry, Jue Ying, who was usually silent, provided a detailed explanation.

It turned out that Purple Gold Sect was eradicated after numerous battles. The process of its downfall was quite protracted, giving the sect's high-level members sufficient time to make preparations and secretly set up some contingencies.

Purple Gold Sect, once the overlord of the Endless Sea of Sand, had both visible and hidden bases scattered throughout the region, with numerous disciples. Although Flying Swan Sect spent a long time and countless efforts hunting down the remnants of Purple Gold Sect after their downfall, many disciples scattered across various places managed to evade their pursuit.

After failing to rebuild Purple Gold Sect and overturning Flying Swan Sect, several Purple Gold Sect disciples chose to go into hiding using various methods. They changed their identities and concealed themselves within the Endless Sea of Sand. The map Luo Ye obtained came from one of these Purple Gold Sect disciples.

This disciple's descendants had not awakened their spiritual roots, and he himself had no disciples to inherit his legacy. Before he died during meditation, he left this map detailing the location of his cave to his descendants, hoping that when one of them awakened their spiritual roots, they could follow the map to find the cave and receive his inheritance.

Over time, the map fell into the hands of outsiders and was obtained by Luo Ye by chance. Through information gathered from the black market, Luo Ye investigated the origin of the map and the events surrounding it. Cultivator caves like this one primarily served to pass on legacies to future generations and were generally safe, without deadly traps. That's why Luo Ye originally intended to send Jue Ying to explore it, but then Meng Zhang came to visit. Thus, Luo Ye offered the map to Meng Zhang as a gift and suggested that he and Jue Ying explore it together, agreeing to discuss how to distribute the gains later.

After listening to Jue Ying's explanation, Meng Zhang felt reassured. A cultivator cave with such a foundation was worth exploring.

Following the directions marked on the map, the two of them swiftly traversed until they reached a location over three thousand miles west of Firewell Market. It was a desolate desert with relatively flat terrain, with elevations not exceeding a hundred meters.

According to the map, the cave of the Purple Gold Sect cultivator was constructed underground. Meng Zhang couldn't help but comment that cultivators in the Endless Sea of Sand seemed to have a fondness for building their caves underground, as if they had turned into groundhogs.

Of course, Meng Zhang knew that this custom was related to the terrain of the Endless Sea of Sand. Most areas were vast, flat deserts with only a few hills. The few mountains were mainly occupied by major cultivation forces. In the vast, flat desert, there were almost no natural coverings. Without constructing caves underground, how could they ensure secrecy?

Several centuries had passed, not an insignificant period. Though not witnessing drastic changes, the surrounding terrain had undergone significant alterations. In the large desert, it was difficult to find suitable landmarks for reference, and the desert terrain often changed. A sandstorm could create countless sand dunes on the ground, and these dunes were unstable and frequently shifted positions.

Cultivators often relied on celestial bodies like the sun, moon, and stars for orientation, but many times, it wasn't precise enough. Meng Zhang and Jue Ying knew that the cultivator cave they sought was near this large desert, but the map couldn't help them pinpoint the exact location.

With no other option, Meng Zhang and Jue Ying had to search separately, both activating their Earth Escape Spell to begin their exploration underground. Searching without seeing the light of day was a very laborious and complicated task. For cultivators who hadn't mastered eye techniques, it was akin to blind people feeling an elephant; they relied solely on their senses to explore.

Chapter 132: Bitter Experience

The cultivator from the Purple Gold Sect, who left behind the cave dwelling, was merely at the Foundation Building stage. Relying solely on his own power, he couldn't construct the cave dwelling too deep into the underground.

With Meng Zhang's current proficiency in the Earth Escape Spell, he could easily penetrate a hundred or two hundred zhang into the ground.

Meng Zhang continued his descent into the underground. Initially, the first 20-30 zhang was relatively soft sandy soil, not suitable for constructing a cave dwelling. After reaching a depth of over thirty zhang, he encountered more solid layers of earth and stone.

Meng Zhang focused on searching the area below thirty zhang but above a hundred zhang in depth.

Subsequently, Meng Zhang became extremely busy. Whenever he felt that his true qi was overly depleted during the search, he returned to the surface, meditated to recover, and then continued to employ the Earth Escape Spell to dive underground.

After a lot of hard work underground, both Meng Zhang and Jue Ying, eventually, it was Meng Zhang who first discovered a clue. During one descent into the underground, he sensed a much denser spiritual energy than elsewhere, indicating the presence of a spirit vein nearby. When cultivators construct their cave dwellings, they usually try to build them above spirit veins.

Following the changes in the spiritual energy, Meng Zhang quickly determined the direction of the spirit vein. He followed it and soon found the hidden cultivator's cave dwelling.

Once Meng Zhang found the cultivator's cave dwelling, he didn't rush in alone. Instead, he planned to return to the surface to inform Jue Ying of their discovery.

Excited about their fruitful findings after so much hard work, Meng Zhang hurriedly called for Jue Ying, not paying too much attention to the situation on the surface. However, as he emerged from the ground, he was stunned to find more than a dozen cultivators preparing to disperse in all directions.

While Meng Zhang was taken aback, one of the cultivators on the other side, who was the first to notice Meng Zhang, was equally surprised. He couldn't understand why someone suddenly appeared from underground. Was this person lying in ambush?

After a momentary pause, the cultivator reacted instinctively. He shouted loudly and swung his whip-like magic tool fiercely towards Meng Zhang.

Meng Zhang's response was equally swift. While the man attacked, Meng Zhang's flying sword, "Soft Around The Finger," flew up like a stream of light and slashed the whip in half with a single strike.

With barely a sound, the sharp flying sword cut through the whip effortlessly. Continuing its momentum, it then aimed at the cultivator who wielded the whip.

The cultivator activated his defensive magic tool immediately, creating a transparent shield around him. When the flying sword struck, it only paused momentarily before piercing through the shield and continuing towards the cultivator.

At this point, the rest of the cultivators also reacted and began launching attacks on Meng Zhang without the need for commands, moving spontaneously.

Meng Zhang wielded his "Startling Soul Bell" in his left hand and the "Fire Seal" in his right hand, unleashing a full-powered assault into the crowd.

The cultivator who attacked first received support from his companions, but he couldn't evade the pursuit of the flying sword "Soft Around The Finger." A flash of blood later, and that cultivator lost his head.

Meng Zhang showed no mercy in his actions, not just because the enemy attacked first but because he recognized the leader among the opposing cultivators – Li Nu.

"Meng Zhang, why are you here?" A shocked voice rang out.

It turned out to be Li Nu, the former lackey of the Li family who later allied with the Zhao Family after the Li family was annihilated by sand monsters.

Meng Zhang knew a thing or two about Li Nu's background, given the latter's betrayal of the Li family in the past. He knew that Li Nu was not a benevolent person.

Not daring to be careless, Meng Zhang seized the opportunity and attacked with all his might, leaving Li Nu and his group no chance to catch their breath.

Despite the seemingly unfavorable odds, Meng Zhang showed no fear or intention to retreat. The "Startling Soul Bell" occasionally rang, causing several cultivators to freeze in their movements.

The flames emitted from the "Fire Seal" transformed into snakes of fire, rushing to engulf the enemies.

The flying sword, "Soft Around The Finger," was a terrifying weapon, and with Meng Zhang's mastery of the "Dancing Willow Sword Technique," he consecutively injured two more enemies.

Li Nu, with a ferocious expression, felt aggrieved at being suppressed by so many people despite their numerical advantage. The cunning Li Nu couldn't suppress the anger in his heart.

Li Nu's flying sword actively entangled Meng Zhang's "Soft Around The Finger." Though he had obviously not cultivated a decent sword technique, his abundant combat experience and cunning swordsmanship caused Meng Zhang significant trouble.

The most lethal flying sword, "Soft Around The Finger," was entangled, and multiple cultivators suddenly overwhelmed Meng Zhang.

However, even when facing a disadvantage, Meng Zhang's expression remained unchanged as he continued to attack.

Amidst the chaotic crowd, no one noticed that shadows under their feet were moving rapidly.

A cultivator took out several talismans, preparing to use them against Meng Zhang. Suddenly, a shadow shot out from his own shadow, and the next moment, he was drenched in blood.

The shadowy figure swiftly disappeared, blending back into the shadows.

Then, in the shadow of another person, the figure appeared again.

In a short span of time, taking advantage of the concealment of the shadows, this figure moved among the cultivators, swiftly killing four of them.

Remaining cultivators finally reacted and panicked, desperately dodging.

As they moved, their shadows moved with them.

The figure appeared and disappeared like a ghost, claiming the lives of the cultivators each time it appeared. Killing and vanishing in the shadows, leaving the enemies no time to react.

Chapter 133: Status

"Be cautious of the shadows beneath your feet." It was the experienced Li Nu who first noticed the signs of danger.

The group of cultivators panicked as they witnessed their companions being inexplicably attacked and killed. Upon hearing Li Nu's warning, they all focused their attention on the shadows beneath their feet.

With their guard up, the effectiveness of the ambush was greatly diminished.

As they concentrated on the shadows, they unintentionally loosened their guard around Meng Zhang. Taking advantage of the situation, Meng Zhang launched another fierce attack, even with Li Nu trying to restrain them, two cultivators still got injured.

In a shadow nearby, Jue Ying revealed her figure.

Jue Ying was a highly skilled assassin, proficient in stealth and assassination techniques. She was a formidable adversary.

Despite it being their first cooperation, she and Meng Zhang displayed remarkable synchronization, acting in perfect harmony.

Jue Ying held a thin dagger-like weapon, about half a foot long, pitch-black from hilt to tip. Though inconspicuous in appearance, its killing power was astonishing.

She casually tossed several talismans into the air, transforming them into massive stones that came crashing down on the crowd.

Taking advantage of the diversion, Jue Ying's figure vanished again.

This time, she didn't use the Shadow Shifting technique; her body didn't appear within the shadows. Instead, she employed Earth Travel, sinking into the ground. She traveled underground for a distance and then suddenly burst out from the earth, appearing behind two cultivators.

Two sprays of blood burst forth, and two more lives were claimed.

Jue Ying's abilities left her comrade Meng Zhang amazed. Her ingenious and skillful assassination techniques, along with the flexible application of various spells and skills, were truly impressive.

Based on Jue Ying's current performance, if confronted head-on, Meng Zhang might not be her match. However, facing her sneak attacks and assassinations from behind, even Meng Zhang would find it challenging to deal with.

Working together, Meng Zhang and Jue Ying became much stronger. Despite being only two people, they systematically slaughtered the enemy, overwhelming their numerically superior opponents.

Although Meng Zhang's Cultivation Base was slightly stronger than Jue Ying's, when it came to efficiency in killing, he fell far behind. Most of the corpses lying on the ground were the result of Jue Ying's actions.

After a fierce battle, all the enemies, except for Li Nu, were killed on the spot.

Li Nu, the cunning fellow, had prepared to escape when he saw the situation turning sour, and the enemies proving too formidable. However, now, it was Meng Zhang who intended to keep him here.

The flying sword, "Soft Around The Finger," continued to circle around Li Nu, preventing him from escaping.

This conflict had already resulted in multiple casualties, and both sides had incurred a blood feud. Meng Zhang was determined not to let Li Nu go under any circumstances.

Once this wily fellow successfully escaped, with his shamelessness and unscrupulous nature, he would become a formidable enemy to the Taiyi Sect.

"Sect Master Meng, there's no hatred between us that cannot be resolved. What happened earlier was a misunderstanding. As long as you let me go, I can swear on the spot to forget about today's events and never become your enemy again," pleaded Li Nu.

At this moment, Jue Ying also joined in to besiege Li Nu.

"Sect Master Meng, please spare me. I am willing to serve Taiyi Sect, work for you, and be at your beck and call," Li Nu desperately tried to manipulate Meng Zhang.

However, Meng Zhang remained unmoved, and he didn't slacken his efforts in the slightest. He and Jue Ying, one in the light, the other in the shadow, cooperated seamlessly, completely trapping Li Nu.

"Meng Zhang, you can't kill me. Do you know my identity?" Seeing that escape was futile and he was reaching his limits, Li Nu suddenly shouted in a stern voice.

It was useless to beg for mercy; he was trying to scare himself. Whatever his identity was, even if he were the deity himself, he wouldn't escape today. That's what Meng Zhang thought.

Li Nu felt a tingling pain in his left shoulder, where Jue Ying's dagger had struck him, and his whole body weakened. Then a searing pain followed, making him scream in agony, as Meng Zhang's flying sword, "Soft Around The Finger," severed his right arm.

"I am a disciple of Flying Swan Sect, Meng Zhang..." Li Nu roared.

Meng Zhang, who had initially been prepared to end his life with a single strike, did indeed stop. The flying sword, "Soft Around The Finger," grazed past Li Nu's body.

Relieved to have survived, Li Nu didn't stop his verbal threats.

"Meng Zhang, I am a disciple of Flying Swan Sect. If you kill me, Flying Swan Sect will never let you off the hook."

Approaching Li Nu, who was now powerless to resist, Meng Zhang struck his Dantian with a palm, causing him to spew blood and fall heavily to the ground. The excruciating pain in his abdomen rendered him unable to speak for a moment.

Jue Ying promptly applied pressure points on Li Nu's body, temporarily easing his pain and stopping the bleeding.

"Li Nu, are you truly a disciple of Flying Swan Sect?" Meng Zhang inquired.

"Yes, I am a disciple of Flying Swan Sect," Li Nu replied intermittently.

Meng Zhang didn't believe a word of this cunning fox's words. He had already destroyed Li Nu's Dantian with that palm, crippling his entire Cultivation Base.

Outwardly asking questions, Meng Zhang secretly activated his Mind Reading Divine Ability to probe Li Nu's thoughts. Normally, he wouldn't be able to read the mind of a Refining Qi ninth level cultivator, but Li Nu's Cultivation Base had been utterly ruined, and he was now heavily injured, causing his willpower to crumble.

Although it was challenging, Meng Zhang successfully read Li Nu's thoughts.

"Meng Zhang, as long as you spare me, I can introduce you to Flying Swan Sect..." Unaware that Meng Zhang could read his mind, Li Nu tried to deceive him.

Meng Zhang casually asked some questions to distract Li Nu's attention while covertly focusing all his efforts on using Mind Reading to access Li Nu's thoughts.

Once he had gathered enough information from Li Nu's mind, Meng Zhang didn't bother to continue the conversation and directly beheaded him with a single sword strike.

Looking at Li Nu's expression of disbelief and unavenged death, Meng Zhang sneered. At this point, even if you were the Sect Master of Flying Swan Sect's father, this is the only fate awaiting you.

As expected, Li Nu had been boasting; he did have a connection with Flying Swan Sect but was not an official disciple. He was merely an undercover scout.

Flying Swan Sect had many scouts like Li Nu, who had no apparent connection to the sect. They either acted as loose cultivators or belonged to some minor clans and sects. These scouts were secretly controlled by Flying Swan Sect and scattered throughout the Endless Sea of Sand to gather information for the sect, particularly to monitor Twin Success Valley.

Li Nu's identity was unknown even to his subordinates. Many years ago, he came here incognito and became affiliated with Twin Success Valley.

Appearing like a fence-sitter, he attached himself to the Li family like a clown. However, in secret, he collected various information on behalf of Flying Swan Sect, especially regarding Twin Success Valley's activities.

Initially, Li Nu was merely observing Twin Success Valley as part of his routine duties. However, in recent years, some unusual movements within Twin Success Valley had caught his attention.

Chapter 134: Cave Mansion

There was a somewhat elusive connection between Twin Success Valley and the Ghost Path cultivators. Twin Success Valley had started secretly collecting spiritual treasures required for Foundation Building cultivators to advance to the Gold Core stage. Li Nu reported this information to the Flying Swan Sect, which drew their attention. The Flying Swan Sect ordered Li Nu to intensify surveillance on Twin Success Valley. Additionally, the Flying Swan Sect began using various means to gather intelligence on Twin Success Valley.

In the eyes of the Flying Swan Sect, the so-called ten Foundation Building cultivators of Twin Success Valley were not worth mentioning. Not to mention the hundreds of Foundation Building cultivators they had, even any one of the three Gold Core Daoist Masters would be enough to slaughter Twin Success Valley.

However, if Twin Success Valley wanted to cultivate a Gold Core Daoist Master, the situation would be entirely different. The Flying Swan Sect controlled most of the Endless Sea of Sand, but they only had three Gold Core Daoist Masters. If Twin Success Valley had one Gold Core Daoist Master, the entire situation in the Endless Sea of Sand would change. Twin Success Valley would possess the ability to resist the Flying Swan Sect, and their rule over the region would be shaken.

Among the subordinate forces, no matter how close their relationship or loyalty to the Flying Swan Sect, having a Gold Core Daoist Master was an absolute prohibition. This was the bottom line of the Flying Swan Sect and the core of their rule.

Of course, cultivating a Gold Core Daoist Master was not an easy task. With Twin Success Valley's resources and strength, it was far from enough to cultivate a Gold Core Daoist Master. Even for the Flying Swan Sect, attempting to cultivate one using the full power of their sect might not necessarily succeed. The three Gold Core Daoist Masters the Flying Swan Sect currently had were the result of centuries of accumulation and were the sect's greatest reliance.

Because of this, the Flying Swan Sect had only increased its surveillance on Twin Success Valley in secret and had not taken any actual action. If Twin Success Valley failed to cultivate a Gold Core Daoist Master, they would remain a good subordinate to the Flying Swan Sect, and the Flying Swan Sect wouldn't need to tarnish its own righteous image by attacking them. However, the moment Twin Success Valley showed any signs of success, they would immediately face the fierce retaliation of the Flying Swan Sect.

Upon reading this information in Li Nu's mind, Meng Zhang felt a sense of unease. Why couldn't Twin Success Valley just be an obedient subordinate of the Flying Swan Sect? Why did they have to try to cultivate a Gold Core Daoist Master and attract the attention of the Flying Swan Sect?

As an affiliated sect of the Flying Swan Sect, Taiyi Sect would suffer a terrible fate if Twin Success Valley were annihilated by the Flying Swan Sect. Especially since Meng Zhang had secretly

supplied white hidden earth ore to Twin Success Valley, without the Flying Swan Sect's knowledge, in the past two years.

Meng Zhang couldn't help but feel extremely annoyed. How did Taiyi Sect end up on the same boat as Twin Success Valley? And now, they were considering jumping ship and seeking refuge with the Flying Swan Sect. But even if the Flying Swan Sect might not accept Taiyi Sect, once the news got out, Twin Success Valley would surely exterminate Taiyi Sect.

Twin Success Valley could still be a good subordinate to the Flying Swan Sect if they abandoned their goal of cultivating a Gold Core Daoist Master. However, Taiyi Sect didn't have the ability or opportunity to make such a turn. They were too weak and had little room for maneuvering. Meng Zhang could only temporarily put aside all his worries and take it one step at a time.

As for why Li Nu and the others were present in this situation, it was because Li Nu stumbled upon some intelligence by chance. In this area, there was a Cave Mansion left behind by a cultivator from the Purple Gold Sect. After the Flying Swan Sect destroyed the Purple Gold Sect, they actively sought out everything related to them, apart from relentlessly hunting down the remnants.

Li Nu had obtained information about the Cave Mansion of the Purple Gold Sect cultivator a while ago but didn't immediately report it to the Flying Swan Sect. Instead, he gathered a group of cultivators to investigate and see if there were any advantages they could gain.

Unfortunately for them, they ran into Meng Zhang and Jue Ying head-on.

After dealing with Li Nu and the others' bodies on the ground, Meng Zhang and Jue Ying started collecting the spoils of war, erasing all traces, and eliminating any future troubles.

Thankfully, Li Nu was only an external scout for the Flying Swan Sect and not an official disciple. Flying Swan Sect had plenty of external scouts like him, and a few missing scouts occasionally were not a big deal.

Meng Zhang and Jue Ying acted unnoticed and left no clues that could be traced back to them.

After dealing with the aftermath of the battle, Meng Zhang took Jue Ying with him and sneaked underground towards the Cave Mansion of the cultivator.

Together, they swiftly arrived in a spacious underground space.

Inside the Cave Mansion, there was a sitting corpse with its legs crossed. In front of the corpse was a letter.

Despite being in a spiritually rich Cave Mansion, this corpse had deteriorated over hundreds of years and was gradually decaying.

Meng Zhang and Jue Ying first paid their respects to the corpse. They knew it was important to show proper etiquette when inheriting someone else's legacy. Meng Zhang picked up the letter from the ground and began reading it carefully.

The letter provided a simple introduction to the cultivator's identity. He was an Inner-Sect Disciple of the Purple Gold Sect, who ended up here after the sect's downfall.

In the letter, this cultivator heavily criticized the Flying Swan Sect, describing them as unprecedented demons. He also implored whoever received his legacy not to seek refuge with the Flying Swan Sect and, if possible, to oppose them.

It seemed that this Purple Gold Sect cultivator held deep grievances against the Flying Swan Sect.

Taiyi Sect, being a small sect, didn't even have the qualification to seek refuge with the Flying Swan Sect. As an affiliate of Twin Success Valley, they were now secretly deceiving the Flying Swan Sect.

It appeared that Taiyi Sect fulfilled all the requests of this cultivator in the letter, and so Meng Zhang felt justified in accepting his legacy.

After reading the letter, Meng Zhang and Jue Ying proceeded to enter the left-side chamber of the Cave Mansion.

This room had been cultivated into a small spirit field, covering less than an acre.

Inside the spirit field, they found an abundance of profound ginseng, a common Spirit Plant whose value depended mainly on its age.

Profound ginseng that had grown for just a few years was the lowest-grade herb and worth next to nothing. However, once it reached several decades or even a hundred years of age, profound ginseng became quite valuable and was widely used in various spiritual medicines.

In this spirit field, the profound ginseng had been growing for hundreds of years. Even buried in the soil, the thick medicinal fragrance couldn't be concealed.

Chapter 135: Stalactite

"This trip was not in vain," Meng Zhang thought to himself. "Regardless of any other gains, just the value of this profound ginseng is immeasurable."

In the Endless Sea of Sand, there are not many legacies that have lasted for over five hundred years. The number of forces capable of cultivating hundreds of years old medicinal herbs is scarce.

In the Cultivation World, there are some forces proficient in the Spirit Plant technique, mastering the secret art of using spiritual energy to accelerate the maturity of medicinal herbs. This allows them to produce herbs of longer cultivation periods in a shorter time. However, herbs ripened using spiritual energy are far inferior in terms of medicinal properties compared to naturally grown ones.

The natural growth of the profound ginseng before Meng Zhang's eyes is something that cannot be bought in the Endless Sea of Sand, no matter how many spirit stones one is willing to spend.

Among the spoils collected from Li Nu and the others, besides storage bags, there were several special boxes known as Spirit Boxes. These boxes were unique spatial equipment used to temporarily store living items. Apart from storing beast eggs and young beasts, the most significant use of Spirit Boxes was for transplanting various Spirit Plants.

In remote places like Singing Sand City, it's rare to find Spirit Boxes for sale, but Li Nu, being an external scout for the Flying Swan Sect, was well-equipped with various tools.

Meng Zhang had some knowledge in Spirit Plant techniques, and the profound ginseng was not a high-level Spirit Plant, so transplanting it was not difficult. With Jue Ying's assistance, they spent some effort and managed to transfer all the profound ginseng, along with the attached soil, into the Spirit Box.

Meng Zhang and Jue Ying dealt with the profound ginseng and then entered a stone chamber on the right. This chamber was filled with abundant spiritual energy, clearly indicating the presence of a spirit vein's spiritual eye.

Before entering the cave, Meng Zhang had carefully examined it and determined it was a First Rank spirit vein. Although it was only a First Rank, it had already formed for many years, producing spiritual items.

In the center of the chamber, there was a small pool. Occasionally, a few drops of milky white liquid fell from the stone wall above, all of them landing in the pool.

The spiritual item produced by this spiritual eye was stalactite. Stalactite was a natural spiritual herb used not only in the refining of many elixirs but also for directly restoring expended mana when ingested.

Stalactite was the best recovery item. Ingesting stalactite to recover mana didn't leave any pill toxins behind, unlike ingesting elixirs.

Though the yield might not be high, after several centuries of accumulation, the pool contained a considerable amount of stalactite.

Having learned from the previous incident when he stole the Crimson Feather Liquid from the Zhao Family, Meng Zhang was now always prepared with special jade vessels to store large quantities of spiritual fluids.

Meng Zhang took out a pile of jade bottles, and with Jue Ying's help, they stored all the stalactite from the pool into the containers.

In a corner of this stone chamber, there was a pile of items. After dealing with the stalactite, Meng Zhang and Jue Ying began to sort through this pile.

The largest number of items in the pile were jade slips, numbering about thirty or more. Jade slips were information carriers used in the Cultivation World to record various important information. Many sects preferred using jade slips to record Cultivation techniques and other inheritance information because the cultivation techniques stored in jade slips were more accurate than those recorded in books.

Information recorded in books needed to be conveyed through writing, leaving room for personal interpretation and potential errors. On the other hand, the information stored in jade slips was directly infused into a person's mind, ensuring precision.

Unfortunately, both creating and accessing jade slips required at least a cultivator at the Foundation Building stage. Currently, Taiyi Sect did not have any Foundation Building cultivators.

Jue Ying proposed taking the jade slips back to her master first, to have them copied, and then returning the original to Meng Zhang.

The pile also contained various talismans and elixirs, including some Second Rank talismans and Second Rank elixirs.

Normally, such items would have lost their effectiveness due to the loss of spiritual energy over time. However, being stored in the abundant spiritual energy of the spiritual eye allowed them to remain intact.

Then, there were four Second Rank magic tools.

To utilize Second Rank magic tools to their full potential, a cultivator needed to reach the Foundation Building stage. Now that Meng Zhang had obtained these Second Rank magic tools, it would save him a lot of trouble after he reached Foundation Building.

Meng Zhang chose two of the magic tools, the Second Rank flying sword "Crimson Flame Sword" and the "Stonebreaker Hammer."

Jue Ying picked a whip named "Wind Dance Whip" and a jade pendant called "Calm Spirit Jade Pendant."

All four of these Second Rank magic tools were exceptional and not ordinary items.

Lastly, there were several empty storage bags among the items, but there were no spirit stones among their haul.

The deceased cultivator was at the Foundation Building stage, and his daily cultivation required the abundant and high-quality spiritual energy of a Second Rank spirit vein. To cultivate above a First Rank spirit vein, he would have needed to spend a large number of spirit stones to meet his cultivation needs.

It is estimated that the cultivator had already exhausted all of his spirit stones during his lifetime.

Purple Gold Sect truly deserved to be a dominant sect in the Endless Sea of Sand several hundred years ago. Even an ordinary Foundation Building disciple left behind such a rich inheritance. Meng Zhang couldn't help but marvel at it.

It was said that the bases of Purple Gold Sect were once spread throughout the entire Endless Sea of Sand. In the future, he might pay attention to any relevant news. Meng Zhang pondered in his heart.

All the gains, including those from Li Nu and the others, were evenly divided between Meng Zhang and Jue Ying. Both of them were generous and didn't quibble over their shares.

After processing all the loot, Meng Zhang and Jue Ying followed the instructions from the deceased cultivator's letter and cremated his body.

With a First Rank spirit vein and the precious stalactite produced by the spiritual eye, Meng Zhang thought it would be best to possess this place secretly, making it a hidden stronghold for Taiyi Sect.

As the saying goes, one should prepare three nests like a cunning rabbit. Considering the current situation of Taiyi Sect, it was time to start building some backup plans.

After confirming that Jue Ying had no interest in this place, Meng Zhang was determined to occupy it. Both the cultivator's cave and the spirit vein were buried underground, making them relatively concealed. Meng Zhang planned to discuss with Deep Earth Spirit General later to see if there was any way to make it even more hidden.

Upon returning to the surface, the two bid farewell and went their separate ways.

Back at Taiyi Sect, Meng Zhang quickly called Daoist Clear Spirit and Deep Earth Spirit General to help him transplant all the profound ginseng from the Spirit Box into the spirit field.

These precious profound ginseng would be personally cared for by Daoist Clear Spirit in the future.

Once everything was sorted out, Meng Zhang finally discussed the gains from the cultivator's cave with Deep Earth Spirit General. While Deep Earth Spirit General wasn't interested in most of the items, he showed a strong interest in the stalactite that Meng Zhang took out and even cheekily asked for some.

Chapter 136: Relations

As it turns out, Deep Earth Spirit General is currently at the stage of completing Refining Qi, and his Cultivation Base has reached the great completion stage. By paying a huge price, he can temporarily unleash the combat power of the Foundation Building stage. However, after the outbreak, Deep Earth Spirit General has to enter a deep slumber, which can last for about a year and a half. But, if there is enough Stone Milk available for him to consume, he won't need to fall into a deep slumber after the outbreak. At most, he will be weakened for a period of time.

Meng Zhang is generous and directly gave Deep Earth Spirit General a considerable amount of Stone Milk. With the increase in combat power of Deep Earth Spirit General, it is highly beneficial for Taiyi Sect. At critical moments, he, with the combat power of the Foundation Building stage, can be an important card for Taiyi Sect.

Moreover, the Second Rank magic tool, Stonebreaker Hammer, was also handed over to Deep Earth Spirit General by Meng Zhang. Meng Zhang asked if there was a way to hide that cavern from others, and after Deep Earth Spirit General got the information from Meng Zhang, he promised to handle the matter and take care of the concealment of the cavern and the spirit vein.

When at his peak, Deep Earth Spirit General had the ability to move mountains and overturn seas. Although his strength has not fully recovered yet, he can still change the geological structure around the cavern and spirit vein to better hide them, as long as he is willing to put in the effort.

After Deep Earth Spirit General left, Meng Zhang finished sorting out the gains from this time and resumed cultivation. He made a pact with Luo Ye to achieve Foundation Building within 15 years. Despite being confident, Meng Zhang remains vigilant and doesn't dare to relax.

Half a month later, Deep Earth Spirit General returned, having completed the tasks assigned by Meng Zhang. The cultivator's cavern and the spirit vein have been well-hidden.

A month later, Jue Ying came to visit Meng Zhang at Taiyi Sect and brought back the jade slip that Meng Zhang had given her last time. The contents of the jade slip were roughly copied down, which was considerate since Taiyi Sect currently lacks a Foundation Building cultivator to access the information within the jade slip. The contents were rich, including some Cultivation practices from Purple Gold Sect and various cultivation arts, which could greatly enhance Taiyi Sect's foundation.

Meng Zhang stored the books in the Hidden Scripture Pavilion and kept the jade slip separately. Jue Ying also established a channel for exchanging information between the two factions. Every half month or so, a merchant caravan would arrive at Singing Sand City. They would deliver the latest information to Zhang Zhanlin, who manages a grocery store there, and Zhang Zhanlin would then relay this information back to Taiyi Sect.

Jue Ying also gave Meng Zhang a palm-sized mirror, which can be used for urgent communication between the two parties. The usage of the mirror is simple; after refining it, one needs to infuse true qi to activate it.

Luo Ye has fulfilled her promise, and now she waits for Meng Zhang to reach the Foundation Building stage so she can help him dispel the demonic aura.

Jue Ying also expressed that if Taiyi Sect needs help in the future, as long as it is within her capability, she will try her best to assist.

Meng Zhang thought of the pile of scarlet copper ore in the sect. Currently, both he and Tian Li lack the time to refine these ores. The selling channels provided by Zhang Zhanlin and Shi Weiming mainly involve selling already refined scarlet copper.

Meng Zhang mentioned this matter to Jue Ying, and she pondered for a moment before suggesting a solution.

Two months later, a merchant caravan arrived at the foot of a small mountain near Taiyi Sect. The interior of the small mountain had been hollowed out and turned into a massive storage room, holding a large amount of scarlet copper ore.

This merchant caravan was from Earthfire Sect, and through Jue Ying's connections, Taiyi Sect got involved in this business. Being an alchemy-focused sect, Earthfire Sect had a huge demand for various alchemical materials, especially common materials like scarlet copper. They would buy as much scarlet copper as they could get.

Meng Zhang had considered selling the scarlet copper ore to Earthfire Sect before, but they lacked trust due to no previous dealings. He couldn't guarantee that Earthfire Sect would keep it a secret if they found out about Taiyi Sect's large reserves of scarlet copper. With Jue Ying's mediation, Taiyi Sect and Earthfire Sect reached this secret agreement.

The Earthfire Sect merchant caravan secretly took away the scarlet copper ore on a regular basis, and the two factions settled their transactions periodically. Earthfire Sect would pay using their own alchemically crafted magic tools or with spirit stones.

As the number of Taiyi Sect disciples increased, the demand for magic tools also rose. Establishing a good relationship with Earthfire Sect allowed Taiyi Sect to obtain a large quantity of high-quality and affordable magic tools.

For Earthfire Sect, not only did they acquire scarlet copper ore, but they also gained a channel for buying and selling magic tools. Despite the trade being somewhat troublesome, it was still acceptable.

Earthfire Sect was well-known for producing fearless and mad cultivators, and even Twin Success Valley didn't want to provoke them easily. Earthfire Sect's merchant caravans could freely come and go through many places in the Endless Sea of Sand.

Jue Ying's mediation had indeed greatly benefited Taiyi Sect. It made Meng Zhang realize that building good relationships with Jue Ying and her forces was a crucial matter. Although neither Luo Ye nor Jue Ying had explicitly revealed their identities, Meng Zhang speculated that they must have extraordinary backgrounds and powerful support, far from being just loose cultivators.

After several exchanges with Jue Ying, Meng Zhang learned that the black market wasn't run by a single force. Many influential powers in the Cultivation World were involved in its operations, including some so-called righteous sects.

Luo Ye had close ties with the black market and could tap into a significant portion of its power. At least until Meng Zhang helps Luo Ye remove the demonic aura from her body, they can be considered allies.

From an external perspective, the situation in Taiyi Sect seemed to be thriving. They had various industries operating both publicly and secretly, leading to a substantial increase in sect income. Meng Zhang had already repaid the spirit stones he borrowed from Shi Weiming long ago. They also had a secret trade with Twin Success Valley, which became an important channel for Taiyi Sect to obtain white hidden earth ore. Although Taiyi Sect hadn't become their mainstay, it meant they were no longer oppressed by cultivation forces like Zhao Family.

Furthermore, with Luo Ye's assistance, they gained access to sources of information and expanded new trading channels.

Despite such a favorable situation, Meng Zhang always carried hidden concerns in his heart.

Chapter 137: Zhao Family Annihilation

Meng Zhang's main concern was the news about Twin Success Valley preparing to cultivate Gold Core Daoist Masters. Ever since he obtained this information from Li Nu, he had kept it hidden in his heart. Besides telling Jue Ying, he hadn't informed anyone else in Taiyi Sect.

This matter was not something to be spread casually, as it could cause great trouble if Twin Success Valley were to find out. With Taiyi Sect's current strength, they couldn't influence Twin Success Valley, let alone the Flying Swan Sect. The only thing Meng Zhang could do was to focus on his cultivation, improve his realm, and enhance Taiyi Sect's power to prepare for the upcoming storm.

Time passed, and a year had already gone by since Meng Zhang made the agreement with Luo Ye. During this year, Jue Ying visited Taiyi Sect every three to four months to check on Meng Zhang's progress in cultivation, making sure he could achieve Foundation Building within the agreed time.

Meng Zhang didn't mind Jue Ying's visits. Amid the monotonous cultivation life, her presence brought a touch of brightness and variation. Whenever they met, they exchanged their cultivation experiences and discussed the events happening outside.

With the new sources of information, Taiyi Sect had a better understanding of the outside world. Meng Zhang's vision was no longer limited to the surroundings of Twin Success Valley.

On this day, Jue Ying came to Taiyi Sect once again. Hearing the familiar call of a crane outside while meditating in the sect's main hall, Meng Zhang hurriedly went to the courtyard to greet her.

As he watched Jue Ying riding a black immortal crane descending slowly in front of Taiyi Sect, Meng Zhang couldn't help but envy her. He wondered when the three Red Feathered Eagles, raised by the sect, would mature enough to be ridden.

The Endless Sea of Sand was a renowned desolate land in the Cultivation World, and the areas under Twin Success Valley's control were even more impoverished, with various resources scarce.

Rare items like flying mounts were seldom available for purchase, and even if they appeared, the prices were exorbitant and not practical.

Jue Ying had become a regular guest at Taiyi Sect after multiple visits. The disciples guarding the entrance immediately led her to meet Meng Zhang.

Having known each other for a long time, there was no need for much small talk. Meng Zhang led Jue Ying to a quiet room, and they went straight to the point.

Each time Jue Ying visited Taiyi Sect, she brought some fresh news. This time, the information she brought was closely related to Meng Zhang—the situation of the Zhao Family, which they hadn't heard from in a long time.

Over a year ago, most of the Refining Qi late-stage cultivators from the Zhao Family, along with their patriarch Zhao Yanbei, left the family and joined the Flying Swan Sect. Later, due to the actions of Twin Success Valley, Zhao Family was exterminated, and their mountain gate was taken over.

As for Zhao Yanbei and the others, Meng Zhang thought that with Twin Success Valley's methods, they shouldn't have left any potential threats behind. Moreover, back then, Meng Zhang didn't have the ability to obtain information from the territory of the Flying Swan Sect.

Now, Jue Ying's news about the Zhao Family immediately piqued Meng Zhang's interest.

It turned out that over a year ago, after Zhao Yanbei reached the Flying Swan Sect, he utilized the family's connections from the ancestors to contact an influential steward in the sect. Zhao Yanbei paid a significant amount of spirit items and a large number of spirit stones to exchange for a Foundation Building Pill. He also rented a cave mansion located above a Second Rank spirit vein near the Flying Swan Sect, preparing to return to Zhao Family after successfully achieving Foundation Building.

At that time, there was an elder within Zhao Family who raised doubts. Zhao Yanbei was already over fifty years old, and over a decade ago, he had failed while attempting to use the Twin Success Valley's Lesser Foundation Building Pill for Foundation Building.

Now, entrusting him with this precious Foundation Building Pill to build his foundation again, what if he failed once more? What would they do then? The Zhao Family would no longer have any chance to obtain another Foundation Building Pill.

The entire family's future and destiny were hinged on this Foundation Building Pill.

Considering the overall situation, they believed it would be better to let Zhao Jiudou, who was younger and had greater potential, consume the Foundation Building Pill to build his foundation.

This elder's suggestion infuriated Zhao Yanbei. This Foundation Building Pill was his last chance for Foundation Building, and he absolutely couldn't easily give it up when it concerned his own path.

Consequently, the Zhao Family became divided. Zhao Yanbei and the elders supporting him clashed with Zhao Jiudou's faction, and the conflict was intense.

When news of the Zhao Family's annihilation spread, their internal strife worsened amid their profound grief. Zhao Jiudou's side accused the family head, Zhao Yanbei, of acting recklessly,

leading to the destruction of the Zhao Family. On the other hand, Zhao Yanbei's supporters claimed that it was because of Zhao Yanbei's decisive actions that the Zhao Family obtained the Foundation Building Pill.

Time passed amid mutual accusations, and the members of the Zhao Family had nowhere to go and could only temporarily stay near the Flying Swan Sect.

Zhao Yanbei believed he had seen through Zhao Jiudou's plan—they were trying to delay time until he turned sixty years old, losing his last chance for Foundation Building.

In the end, the desire for Foundation Building and the importance of his own path outweighed the ties of blood. Zhao Yanbei colluded with outsiders, intending to completely eliminate Zhao Jiudou's faction.

Unexpectedly, this time, Zhao Yanbei invited a wolf into his home. The outsider he colluded with turned out to be a cultivator from the Ghost Path.

With Zhao Yanbei's protection, the Ghost Path cultivator managed to bypass the guards of the Flying Swan Sect and infiltrated the cave mansion where the Zhao Family lived.

This Ghost Path cultivator went on a killing spree, exterminating all the members of the Zhao Family, completely eradicating them.

After the incident, the patrolling cultivators of Flying Swan Sect quickly discovered what happened to the Zhao Family and found traces of the Ghost Path cultivator.

This was a major humiliation for the Flying Swan Sect, which considered itself the ruler of the entire Endless Sea of Sand, governing a large portion of it and having countless subordinate forces.

Now, there was a Ghost Path cultivator committing such a heinous act in the core area of the Flying Swan Sect, essentially slapping Flying Swan Sect in the face. The high-ranking members of the sect were furious, mobilizing numerous resources to hunt down this Ghost Path cultivator. The latest wanted orders had already been dispatched to Singing Sand City.

After listening to Jue Ying's account, Meng Zhang felt somewhat melancholic about the fate of the Zhao Family cultivators. Although Zhao Family and Taiyi Sect were enemies, their tragic end was undeniably pitiful.

The cruelty of the Ghost Path cultivator, who seeks revenge for even the slightest offense, made Meng Zhang vigilant. He must be cautious not to expose anything related to what he had done back in that mine cave.

Meng Zhang was also deeply worried about the relationship between Twin Success Valley and the Ghost Path cultivator.

With the guest still present, Meng Zhang temporarily put aside his concerns and warmly entertained Jue Ying. Coincidentally, the following day was the day when Deep Earth Spirit General would give a sermon.

Chapter 138: Lends a Hand to Assist

When Jue Ying previously visited the Taiyi Sect to pay her respects to Meng Zhang, she also had the chance to encounter the Deep Earth Spirit General giving a sermon.

Jue Ying had an extraordinary background and a mysterious and powerful mentor like Luo Ye, which placed her at the forefront of knowledge and experience. After listening to the Deep EarthSpirit General's teachings, she couldn't help but praise his profound insights.

Jue Ying remarked to Meng Zhang that it was unexpectedly remarkable to find such an expert in the Taiyi Sect. Despite being at the Refining Qi stage, the General's understanding of the Dao surpassed many Foundation Building cultivators.

Jue Ying didn't know the origin of the Deep EarthSpirit General, but she believed that the Taiyi Sect had a profound heritage. It was truly worthy of being a grand sect with a lineage from the Middle-Earth Continent, even though it had declined to its current state.

Meng Zhang naturally didn't delve into the specifics of the Deep EarthSpirit General's background and modestly responded to Jue Ying's admiration.

Several times, Jue Ying took the initiative to communicate with the Deep EarthSpirit General and benefited greatly from these exchanges.

Jue Ying rested at the Taiyi Sect for a night. The next morning, it was time for the Deep EarthSpirit General to give his regular sermon to the disciples.

Meng Zhang and Jue Ying arrived early and sat on meditation cushions in front of the main hall of the sect.

Though the number of Taiyi Sect disciples had been increasing, not everyone had the privilege to attend the teachings of the Deep EarthSpirit General. Those disciples whom Meng Zhang mistrusted, and others who might have been spies from other sects, were already sent away by him, assigned to various labor tasks, and seldom stepped foot inside the Taiyi Sect's mountain gate.

Before the arrival of the Deep EarthSpirit General, most of the available disciples gathered on the small square.

The belated Deep EarthSpirit General took his place on a high platform at the front without wasting any words and immediately launched into the main subject.

His teachings revolved around the methods and experiences commonly used by Refining Qi cultivators to break through bottlenecks and barriers.

Everyone present was enraptured, fully immersed in the teachings.

Even Meng Zhang, who had already advanced to the Refining Qi stage and had no bottlenecks before Foundation Building, gained considerable insights from this discourse.

The Deep EarthSpirit General spoke for more than an hour before concluding his sermon. Afterward, as the disciples took some time to digest and contemplate the teachings, the General casually selected a few disciples to answer their questions.

Once he gave detailed answers to their queries, Deep EarthSpirit General reluctantly ended the session, leaving the crowd yearning for more.

Even the highest Cultivation Base practitioners like Meng Zhang and Jue Ying did not immediately depart after the General left. They lingered, savoring the knowledge they had just gained.

After a while, Jue Ying said to Meng Zhang, "Taiyi Sect's disciples are truly fortunate to have such an expert as Deep Earth to answer their questions and teach them the Dao."

Meng Zhang nodded in agreement. The current Deep Earth Spirit General was formally the protector of the Taiyi Sect, but in reality, he had already taken on the role of head instructor and elder in charge of imparting cultivation techniques.

Having listened to the teachings of the Deep Earth Spirit General, Jue Ying was ready to leave the Taiyi Sect.

Coincidentally, Meng Zhang had some business in the Firewell Market, so he decided to travel with her, hitching a ride on her flying mount.

The black crane was exceptionally majestic and large, with wingspan exceeding thirty feet. Meng Zhang and Jue Ying easily hopped onto its broad back, sitting side by side with plenty of space to spare.

With both of them aboard, the black crane effortlessly unfolded its wings and soared into the sky, heading towards the Firewell Market.

The sharp and chilly wind at high altitude invigorated both cultivators, who were accustomed to hot and cold extremes.

Neither Jue Ying nor Meng Zhang were particularly talkative individuals. After a few brief exchanges, they fell into an awkward silence.

"Look, it seems there are demonic beasts besieging humans down there," Jue Ying exclaimed loudly.

As she spoke, the black crane came to a halt in mid-air.

Meng Zhang quickly looked down even though they were hundreds of feet above, their cultivator's vision allowing them to observe the events on the ground clearly.

A group of over a hundred poisonous sand lizards had surrounded a human team, fiercely attacking them. The human team appeared to be a merchant caravan, with about ten humped sand lizard beasts in tow, escorted by dozens of cultivators.

Poisonous sand lizards were notoriously formidable demonic beasts found in the Endless Sea of Sand. They possessed robust physical bodies and sharp claws, as well as innate talents for earth-based spells. When provoked, they would conjure stone armors and utilize sandstorms and earth spikes.

Moreover, as their name suggested, they could launch poison attacks, spitting venomous liquid mixed with sand, making it difficult for cultivators to fend off the toxic effects.

"It's strange to see so many poisonous sand lizards here," Meng Zhang mused aloud.

The surrounding area was a desolate and barren desert where even ordinary beasts were scarce, let alone demonic beasts.

As for a horde of demonic beasts attacking human cultivators, that was an unprecedented occurrence.

Regardless of the origin of these demonic beasts, since Meng Zhang had encountered them, he naturally had to intervene.

As a member of the Human Clan, it was the responsibility of every cultivator to help their kind against demonic beasts; it was a matter of race and righteousness.

Furthermore, among the human cultivators below, Meng Zhang recognized a familiar old man—Forest Mountain School's Sect Master, Xu Chengxian.

Though he didn't know why Xu Chengxian was here or why he was besieged by demonic beasts, it was Xu Chengxian's advice during their previous encounter that helped Meng Zhang greatly. Xu Chengxian's guidance led Meng Zhang to contact Shan Ying from Twin Success Valley and, with their support, suppress the aggressive Zhao Family.

Meng Zhang felt that he owed Xu Chengxian a favor, and now, in this situation, he saw the opportunity to repay it.

Chapter 139: Poisonous Sand Lizard

Meng Zhang was ready to lend a helping hand, and Jue Ying didn't mind engaging in a battle with the poisonous sand lizards below.

However, before intervening, they needed to be prepared. Rushing into battle might not change the situation and could even result in their own loss.

The poisonous sand lizards below were mostly First Rank beasts, with combat power equivalent to a Refining Qi stage Cultivator among humans.

This gathering of numerous poisonous sand lizards formed a tribe where they didn't attack each other. The reason for this was that there was a Second Rank lizard acting as the leader, commanding the First Rank lizards to launch attacks.

A Second Rank beast had combat power comparable to a Foundation Building stage Cultivator among humans.

If their enemy below were a Foundation Building stage Cultivator, Meng Zhang would probably lack the courage to intervene. However, Second Rank beasts lacked human intelligence and the diverse abilities of human Cultivators.

Facing an opponent with a low intellect, unable to control its own instincts, even if it had great physical strength, Meng Zhang dared to fight it.

Moreover, the human Cultivators below might be at a disadvantage, but they were not without means. Xu Chengxian, being experienced, surely had hidden aces up his sleeve.

The humped sand lizard beasts from the human caravan formed a circle, and all the human Cultivators arranged themselves along this circle to block the fierce attacks of the beasts.

These humped sand lizard beasts wasted their massive size. Not only were they more docile than old oxen, but they also had almost no combat power.

After observing for a while, Meng Zhang and Jue Ying found the right moment to join the battle.

Under Jue Ying's control, the Black Crane slowly descended. When it was about a hundred zhang above the ground, Jue Ying leaped lightly and floated down towards the battlefield.

Although a Refining Qi stage Cultivator couldn't fly in the air, with the Featherfall Art, they could barely glide with the aid of wind currents.

After Jue Ying landed, still far from the battlefield, she immediately used the Earth Escape Spell, burying her entire body underground.

With Jue Ying away from the Black Crane, the crane spread its wings and soared high, then dived down quickly toward the battlefield.

As the majestic creature flew into the sky, not only the human Cultivators but also many poisonous sand lizards raised their heads to look.

Meng Zhang leaped from the back of the Black Crane and glided with the wind, landing directly behind the poisonous sand lizards.

The ringing of a bell continuously sounded, and under the effect of the Startling Soul Bell, the poisonous sand lizards in front of Meng Zhang became confused and disoriented.

Meng Zhang activated the Fire Seal in his hand, and flames spewed out, transforming into fierce fire serpents that fiercely attacked the targets. After a while, burnt bodies lay on the ground.

The flying sword, Soft Around The Finger, flew out in a flash, slashing across the head of a poisonous sand lizard and leaving behind a huge wound. Copious amounts of blood gushed out, splattering the ground.

From the moment Meng Zhang leaped off the Black Crane to the scene of carnage and bloodshed, it took only a moment.

Meng Zhang's swift attack disrupted the formation of the beast group. The surrounded Cultivators also began to fight back, achieving considerable results.

"Little Sect Master Meng, thank you for your assistance. Such great kindness will undoubtedly be repaid generously," Xu Chengxian said, having already spotted Meng Zhang. His entrance was so impressive that it was impossible to ignore.

"You are too polite, Senior Xu. Our two sects are friendly, so lending a hand in times of need is only natural. There's no need to talk about repaying such mundane matters," Meng Zhang replied loudly.

As Meng Zhang spoke, his actions didn't pause. When dealing with the beasts, it was as easy as cutting melons and vegetables.

The thick stone armor and impenetrable scales on the surface of the poisonous sand lizards were nothing in front of the sharp flying sword, Soft Around The Finger. It cut through them like paper.

Among the poisonous sand lizards, there was one with a much larger size and thicker scales than the others. It noticed Meng Zhang.

This beast was the leader of the group, a Second Rank poisonous sand lizard.

"Little Sect Master Meng, be careful of that Second Rank," Xu Chengxian loudly reminded.

In fact, Meng Zhang had noticed the Second Rank's abnormal behavior even before Xu Chengxian.

A large area of poisonous sand appeared out of thin air above Meng Zhang's head and came rushing down like a torrent.

The poisonous sand emitted a blue light and an extremely nauseating stench.

Meng Zhang acted swiftly, moving like a nimble fish, and dodged the incoming sand in an instant.

The Second Rank poisonous sand lizard wasn't ready to give up and continuously launched its innate spells.

The ground suddenly rose high, and sharp spikes thrust toward Meng Zhang. Masses of poisonous sand were carried by the wind and surged toward him.

Meng Zhang was agile enough to jump into the midst of the other poisonous sand lizards while evading the attacks. In doing so, many of the First Rank lizards were accidentally injured by the Second Rank's attacks.

As Meng Zhang evaded the attacks, he didn't forget to eliminate any First Rank poisonous sand lizards that came his way.

The Second Rank poisonous sand lizard grew furious, and its enormous body charged toward Meng Zhang.

As it rushed forward, not hitting Meng Zhang, the surrounding group of poisonous sand lizards ended up in chaos.

While the Second Rank lizard chased Meng Zhang, a figure emerged from the shadows on the ground behind it. As soon as the figure appeared, it merged back into the shadows.

The Second Rank poisonous sand lizard suddenly paused after knocking one of its subordinates away.

From the shadow under its feet, a figure suddenly sprang out.

With a swift motion, Jue Ying's slender piercing sword stabbed the lizard's thigh dozens of times in a split second.

Given the massive size of the poisonous sand lizard, human long spears and broadswords were like toothpicks to it. Jue Ying's slender piercing sword was something it shouldn't have even cared about. Yet, after being struck, it suddenly experienced unprecedented intense pain, howling continuously as its body trembled violently.

Seeing that Jue Ying's sneak attack worked, Meng Zhang took advantage of the opportunity and controlled his flying sword to launch a fierce attack on the Second Rank poisonous sand lizard.

Capturing the leader was crucial. Once they took down the Second Rank poisonous sand lizard, the chaotic beast group would quickly fall into disarray.

Although these beasts lacked high intelligence, the many First Rank poisonous sand lizards instinctively launched attacks on Meng Zhang and Jue Ying.

As the poisonous sand lizards charged toward Jue Ying, her figure suddenly disappeared into the shadows.

A large area of blue poisonous sand completely enveloped Meng Zhang's body, but a blue light barrier appeared on the surface of his body, blocking all the attacks.

Chapter 140: Putting to Death a Second Rank

After being refined by Meng Zhang, the First Rank mirror called the Billowing Sea Mirror can automatically protect its master without deliberate control. The commotion caused by Meng Zhang and Jue Ying has prompted the surrounding cultivators, who were surrounded by poisonous sand lizards, to respond quickly.

Talismans scattered all over the sky, transforming into sharp spells that bombarded the poisonous sand lizards in all directions. Various magic tools flew out of the encirclement, causing chaos among the poisonous sand lizards.

Human cultivators are more adept at harnessing external objects' power compared to the demonic beasts. Whether it's talismans that can be activated with a small amount of true qi or magic tools with various functions, they can greatly amplify the strength of human cultivators. In contrast, demonic beasts, who rely solely on their innate talents, have limited abilities even if their physical bodies are strong and their claws sharp.

Before reaching the Third Rank, most demonic beasts can only use their innate talents, limiting their methods and power. On the other hand, human cultivators can tap into their potential, which temporarily suppressed the surrounding poisonous sand lizards with the help of Meng Zhang and Jue Ying.

Xu Chengxian and a middle-aged man leaped out of the crowd and pounced on the Second Rank poisonous sand lizard's location. As a Sect Master, Xu Chengxian, from the Forest Mountain School, has several hidden means at his disposal, enabling him to temporarily unleash the combat power of a Foundation Building cultivator.

Previously, the vast number of poisonous sand lizards made Xu Chengxian somewhat unable to focus. Additionally, the Second Rank poisonous sand lizard on the side kept a close eye on him, preventing him from exerting his full strength, fearing he might become the target of the powerful beast.

Now that Meng Zhang and Jue Ying joined the fight, not only did they kill numerous First Rank poisonous sand lizards, but they also drew the attention of the Second Rank poisonous sand lizard. If Xu Chengxian couldn't seize the opportunity at hand, he would appear inept.

He threw out a talisman that disappeared into a stream of light as it approached the ground near the Second Rank poisonous sand lizard. From the ground, a giant sand golem formed entirely from sand crawled out. Xu Chengxian had summoned the present sand golem using a Second Rank talisman.

Although Xu Chengxian only possessed a Refining Qi ninth layer Cultivation Base, preventing him from fully unleashing the talisman's power, the sand golem, not at its peak, was still challenging to deal with.

The sand golem raised its enormous arms and tightly wrapped itself around the body of the Second Rank poisonous sand lizard, rendering it almost immobile.

Seizing the opportunity, Meng Zhang commanded his flying sword to strike the Second Rank poisonous sand lizard fiercely. The sound of metal clashing continuously echoed as the creature's body suffered varying degrees of wounds.

Jue Ying's figure intermittently appeared within the massive shadow of the Second Rank poisonous sand lizard. Each time it appeared, it left behind black marks on the creature's body.

The middle-aged man who had jumped out with Xu Chengxian had a higher Cultivation Base than him. He displayed remarkably adept spellcasting skills, using various spells to block the approaching poisonous sand lizards.

The Second Rank poisonous sand lizard struggled fiercely after being entangled by the sand golem, causing numerous wounds to appear on the golem's body.

As a summoned creature, the sand golem would not cry out in pain or let its combat effectiveness be affected by injuries, no matter how many wounds it sustained. Although the sand golem's body was already damaged halfway, it still firmly held the Second Rank poisonous sand lizard, preventing it from breaking free.

Meng Zhang reached a position not far from the Second Rank poisonous sand lizard and unleashed the Solar True Flame to burn it. A golden flame drifted onto the creature's face, and its agonizing cries echoed through the air. The flame left a large charred area on the creature's face, even blinding one of its eyes.

With a certain level of intelligence, the Second Rank poisonous sand lizard was much smarter than an ordinary human child. It hated Meng Zhang to the core and took advantage of a moment when he was off guard to unleash its deadly tongue, which was as invincible as it was destructive.

Its unstoppable tongue shot towards Meng Zhang. Caught by surprise due to the close proximity, Meng Zhang was unable to dodge in time.

However, Jue Ying reacted the quickest and threw a small shield to block the tongue's path. The tongue easily shattered the shield without losing any speed.

A sea-blue light shield appeared in front of Meng Zhang, but it was also easily penetrated by the tongue.

In a critical moment, a small mirror flew out from Meng Zhang's body, actively confronting the elongated tongue.

With a crisp sound, the small mirror was shattered by the tongue, slightly slowing its speed.

Without hesitation, Meng Zhang rolled on the ground, narrowly avoiding the lethal tongue. If it had hit him, his life would have been in serious jeopardy.

After a while, the middle-aged man finally reached a place not far from there, protecting Xu Chengxian. He threw a green bead towards the head of the Second Rank poisonous sand lizard.

The green bead exploded in the air, transforming into a green light that directly pierced through the creature's head. This was the Yin Thunder, a substance that could only be refined by a cultivator at the Foundation Building stage. The Yin Thunders from famous sects like the Liu Family's Cold Poison Yin Thunder and the Earthfire Sect's Poison Fire Yin Thunder were renowned for their exceptional power. Though the Forest Spring Watch cultivator's Yin Thunder may not have had a prominent reputation, its power was formidable.

The Second Rank poisonous sand lizard's head was pierced by the Yin Thunder, and it quickly lost its life.

With the death of the Second Rank poisonous sand lizard, although there were still many First Rank ones remaining, they were now disoriented and leaderless, quickly falling into chaos. Without the Second Rank poisonous sand lizard's control, the beastly nature within them took over, causing them to act without reason, attacking some human cultivators while terrifyingly fleeing from others.

The human cultivators immediately launched a comprehensive counterattack. Including Meng Zhang, all the capable cultivators began to kill the remaining poisonous sand lizards before them. The fur, flesh, and claws of the demonic beasts were all valuable materials to the cultivators.

After a round of pursuit and killing, most of the poisonous sand lizards that attacked the merchant caravan were wiped out. After this intense battle, Meng Zhang felt a sense of satisfaction and relief.

Of course, Jue Ying was the true killer. Not only was he exceptionally skilled in killing humans, but he also proved to be very capable when dealing with demonic beasts.

After the battle ended, Meng Zhang finally had a chance to catch up with Xu Chengxian and exchange old stories. He approached Xu Chengxian with Jue Ying and briefly introduced him to the latter.