

Sect Master 181

Chapter 181: Fights (Last Part)

Foundation Building cultivators fought relentlessly in the sky, while Refining Qi disciples engaged in life-and-death battles on the ground. Wen Qiansun led the disciples of the Taiyi Sect, who formed the Qiankun Rotation Formation, to confront the cultivators of Green Bamboo Mountain head-on.

Flags waved, figures changed, and circular light rings emerged from the formation, protecting all the disciples of Taiyi Sect within. Zhang Hantao, the head of the Zhang family, felt uneasy when he saw Taiyi Sect confronting Green Bamboo Mountain head-on. If it weren't for the fact that he couldn't escape the formation, he might have fled the battle already. But now, seeing the unknown defensive formation that seemed quite formidable, he finally breathed a sigh of relief.

Under Wen Qiansun's command, the disciples of Taiyi Sect split into two groups. Yang Xueyi led one group to form the outer circle, continuously revolving around the inner circle, while Zhang Hantao led another group to form the inner circle, revolving in the opposite direction. As the two circles rotated in different directions, the Qiankun Rotation Formation began to operate at full power. The true qi of all the disciples within the formation was drawn out and poured into the formation.

The rotating circles, like grinding stones, fiercely collided with the cultivators of Green Bamboo Mountain. The two town suppressing steles humped on the backs of sand lizard beasts started to flicker intensely, clearly under great pressure.

The disciples of Green Bamboo Mountain, protected by the light shield, also felt the power emanating from the Taiyi Sect's formation due to the intense fluctuations of the shield. The current batch of participating disciples from Green Bamboo Mountain was just a remnant of their elite force, and their strength was significantly inferior to the original elite members.

If it weren't for this makeshift version of the Four Directions Subduing Mountain Formation, Green Bamboo Mountain would probably have no chance of overpowering Liu Family and the other forces. Taiyi Sect's Qiankun Rotation Formation was a formidable killing move inherited from its prime. Even if it displayed only a fraction of its power, it would be enough to neutralize the makeshift formation of Green Bamboo Mountain.

Zhang Hantao, with his group of disciples, remained in the inner circle and continued moving. Initially, he thought the disciples in the outer circle were the main force in the battle, protecting them from harm. However, once the Qiankun Rotation Formation started to operate, he felt increasing pressure on his body, and his true qi was uncontrollably dissipating outward.

After just a short time in battle, Zhang Hantao's true qi was severely depleted, and he was on the verge of collapse. His disciples were weaker than him, and some of them were already coughing up blood and falling to the ground.

Realizing the dire situation, he tried to escape the formation, but he found that he couldn't control his body anymore. His body seemed to move on its own, running in circles, and he couldn't stop the outflow of his true qi.

Once the Qiankun Rotation Formation was activated at full power, everyone within the formation was bound by its effects and could only passively follow its movements. Wen Qiansun, who was

controlling the formation, had complete control over its every change and the destiny of everyone within it. The "rotation" in the Qiankun Rotation Formation wasn't just a fancy name; it referred to the rotation of the pressure between the two groups of disciples.

Under Wen Qiansun's command, the pressure that should have been evenly distributed between the two groups was shifted entirely onto Zhang Hantao and his disciples. The outer circle, led by Yang Xueyi, directly confronted the disciples of Green Bamboo Mountain, exchanging powerful attacks.

Yang Xueyi and Green Bamboo Mountain held deep enmity and hatred, which fueled Yang Xueyi to unleash all her potential, fighting with everything she had. Apart from Yang Xueyi, the other disciples of Taiyi Sect had limited strength. Similarly, the disciples of Green Bamboo Mountain were not much stronger.

After a fierce battle, many disciples of Green Bamboo Mountain fell to the ground, with their lives hanging by a thread. However, Yang Xueyi and her group were mostly unharmed, just a bit exhausted.

On the other hand, Zhang Hantao and his group of disciples were in dire straits. Their true qi had been entirely drained and poured into the formation, and the pressure originally intended for Yang Xueyi's group was now overwhelming them. One by one, they fell to the ground, succumbing to their injuries.

Before his death, Zhang Hantao finally realized the cunning calculations of Meng Zhang. He exclaimed bitterly, "How ruthless." And then he collapsed and died. His ambition had clouded his judgment; he failed to see Meng Zhang's true intentions and understand the Base Formation technique, leading to this tragic outcome, which was of his own making.

As the inner circle suffered heavy casualties, the Qiankun Rotation Formation eventually broke apart without any external attack. Fortunately, the cultivators from Green Bamboo Mountain could not hold on any longer and took the initiative to retreat.

Meanwhile, the cultivators from the other three sects clashed with Liu Family's disciples from the flank. After a brutal battle, both sides suffered heavy losses. In the short term, it was challenging to determine the victor, but seeing Green Bamboo Mountain's disciples falter, Liu Family's disciples chose to withdraw.

Both Liu Family and Green Bamboo Mountain disciples retreated slowly, and the heavily damaged joint force had no strength left to pursue them. They could only watch as the two sects gradually entered the protection formation of Singing Sand City. In the sky, the Foundation Building cultivators who had been battling against each other stopped simultaneously, returning to their respective formations. The fact that the disciples of Taiyi Sect could confront Green Bamboo Mountain's Four Directions Subduing Mountain Formation head-on and even triumph over it was unimaginable and terrifying.

The Foundation Building cultivators from the other three sects gazed at Meng Zhang with mixed feelings, filled with caution. Only after meeting up with the Refining Qi disciples did a few of the Foundation Building cultivators breathe a sigh of relief.

Taiyi Sect was not without losses either. The ground was littered with the bodies of their disciples, numbering at least several dozen. Taiyi Sect already had the smallest number of disciples, and now they suffered losses of more than half, making them the most heavily affected among the four sects.

Meng Zhang's face darkened as he glared with rage. How could he, as the Sect Master, not feel sad and angry at the loss of so many of his disciples? In his heart, however, he secretly admired Wen Qiansun, who had perfectly executed his intentions, eliminating the malignant tumors within the sect and purifying the ranks.

Meng Zhang looked at the Foundation Building cultivators from the other three sects, suppressing his anger, and said, "Gentlemen, my Taiyi Sect has fulfilled its promise and blocked Green Bamboo Mountain. Don't forget what you promised me."

"Rest assured, Young Sect Master Meng, we will keep our word and not go back on our promises."

"We are not people who break their word. Whatever benefits we promised will be fully granted to Taiyi Sect."

Chapter 182: Night assault

In today's battle, the coalition of four sects had a slight upper hand, but they also suffered considerable losses themselves.

Let's set aside the Taiyi Sect for now; the other three sects, along with the Liu Family, were left in a state of mutual destruction, with heavy casualties on both sides. After the intense battle, the four sects began the grim tasks of collecting bodies, treating the wounded, and regrouping their forces. As the night descended, they finally managed to settle down somewhat by establishing temporary camps for rest.

Five cultivators at the Foundation Building stage chose not to stay within the camp but followed Xu Yishan from the Forest Mountain School to a nearby sand dune, quietly waiting. On the other hand, the Liu Family and Green Bamboo Mountain retreated into Singing Sand City and started their own recovery process.

Although the coalition forces temporarily retreated today, they suffered fewer casualties than their opponents. What's more crucial is that they have the protection of Singing Sand City's defensive Formation, which means even if the immediate situation is unfavorable, they won't suffer a crushing defeat. They can fall back into the market area and rely on the protective Formation for defense, making it practically impossible for the enemy to break through and attack them. As night fell, the Elder from the Azure Bamboo Sect, who received a message from their sect, arrived at Singing Sand City. Initially, he was sent on orders to monitor the movements of the Forest Spring Watch. While the Forest Spring Watch remained motionless, Singing Sand City suffered an unexpected defeat.

With the Elder's arrival, they now had an extra person at the Foundation Building stage. One should not underestimate the significance of this difference; this individual might be the one to decide the outcome of the battle.

Both sides started to conserve their energy and prepare for the battle tomorrow. With the two sects still in good shape and the reinforcement from the Azure Bamboo Sect's Elder, everyone believed that tomorrow's battle would undoubtedly turn the tide and lead to a complete victory.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the coalition forces, the five Foundation Building stage cultivators stood on the sand dune, enduring the cold wind, waiting silently until midnight.

Finally, a figure descended from the dark sky and appeared before them. Surprisingly, it was the long-absent Gu Tanghai, a member of the Meng Zhang.

Gu Tanghai's gaze casually swept over Meng Zhang, showing no signs of anomaly. "Do you have the item?" Xu Yishan asked anxiously.

"Thankfully, I've succeeded," replied Gu Tanghai, taking out a seemingly unremarkable disc slightly larger than a palm. This seemingly insignificant disc was, in fact, the central control hub for the protective Formation of Singing Sand City.

When the cultivators from Twin Success Valley withdrew, they took this Formation disc with them. Later, Green Bamboo Mountain had no choice but to call upon a Formation Master to create a makeshift substitute.

Now, with the genuine Formation disc in their possession, they could deactivate the Formation's control from the Twin Success Valley and even reverse it to directly attack the cultivators from Liu Family and Green Bamboo Mountain.

During a secret meeting at the Forest Mountain School, Xu Yishan had suggested seeking Gu Tanghai's help and proposed certain conditions in return. If they defeated their opponents and reclaimed Singing Sand City, the benefits would be equally divided between the four sects and Gu Tanghai. He would also be responsible for the daily management of Singing Sand City.

Originally, none of the four sects were comfortable letting others control Singing Sand City. However, now they have handed over control to Gu Tanghai, a loose cultivator. As long as their interests are not compromised, everyone can accept it.

Xu Yishan didn't lie; Gu Tanghai indeed appeared in time and brought the decisive key to victory.

Gu Tanghai didn't explain how he obtained the Formation disc, and nobody pressed for further details.

As dawn approached and time was running out, Gu Tanghai couldn't afford to exchange pleasantries with everyone. He led them into action immediately.

The main focus of this operation was stealth, so apart from the six Foundation Building stage cultivators, only a few elite members from each sect were brought along. Meng Zhang even took only one prominent disciple, Yang Xueyi, to accompany him.

Under the cover of darkness, they stealthily approached Singing Sand City. With the central control hub for the Formation in their possession, they effortlessly bypassed the defensive Formation and headed towards the heart of Singing Sand City.

Inside Singing Sand City, most cultivators, from those at the Foundation Building stage to the lower-level Refining Qi cultivators, were meditating and restoring their energy for tomorrow's battle. Only a few cultivators were responsible for guarding the market. With the protective Formation in place, they were not worried about potential attacks.

The infiltrating group managed to avoid the few guards and patrolling cultivators and reached the central location of Singing Sand City.

Here stood a tall tower that was a critical position for controlling Singing Sand City's defensive Formation. Green Bamboo Mountain and Liu Family hadn't occupied Singing Sand City long

enough to fully understand its key areas. They had underestimated the protective Formation initially established by Twin Success Valley, thinking that the makeshift Formation disc created by a few Formation Masters could replace the original one.

Twin Success Valley had dominated this region for years, and Singing Sand City, as its most important outpost outside the sect, held secrets that ordinary Formation Masters couldn't grasp in a short time. Somehow, Gu Tanghai had obtained the information and immediately pinpointed the Formation's crucial points.

Silently, they subdued the guards and entered the tower. Gu Tanghai inserted the Formation disc into a restriction on the ground. After some busy activity, the control of Singing Sand City's protective Formation fell into Gu Tanghai's hands.

Gu Tanghai allocated some of the control to the others present, and together, they launched a deadly surprise attack on the cultivators from both Green Bamboo Mountain and Liu Family.

Unexpectedly, the Formation that was meant to protect them became the instrument of their demise. Singing Sand City quickly descended into chaos as the powerful Formation unleashed its attacks on the two sects' cultivators.

With the bolstering power of the Formation, the cultivators from the four sects' side gained tremendous strength, and they fought valiantly, driving their enemies back.

The battle between the Foundation Building stage cultivators erupted in Singing Sand City and continued through the night until daybreak. Although the number of people on the side of the four sects was small, they had the advantage of controlling the Formation, which led to significant gains.

Most of Liu Family and Green Bamboo Mountain's Refining Qi stage cultivators died within Singing Sand City, with only a fortunate few managing to escape. Liu Family's Elder, Liu Dajiang, and Liu Dahai were killed in the battle, while Liu Dahai's timely escape saved him.

Bamboo spear Elder died, and Azure Bamboo was heavily injured but rescued by someone named "Bamboo Sword."

This battle truly showed Meng Zhang the terrifying power of a fully activated Second Rank Formation.

Chapter 183: After the war

In an unprepared situation, the cultivators found themselves trapped within the Formation without any means of breaking it, feeling helpless and frustrated. Meng Zhang also became aware of the lesson learned from this enemy at the cost of lives. Without the protection of Singing Sand City's defensive Formation, the joint forces of the four sects could defeat the enemy at best, but they would never achieve such a fruitful outcome.

Gu Tanghai brought the central formation plate for the protective Formation, and his contribution was indeed remarkable. Despite the decisive victory, several Foundation Building stage cultivators who participated in the battle were severely injured. Xu Yishan of the Forest Mountain School was especially close to losing his life when Liu Family's Elder Liu Dajiang almost struck a fatal blow. Although he narrowly escaped death, he lost a significant portion of his vitality, leaving him with numerous injuries that made even moving his body difficult.

After receiving the signal, the joint forces of the four sects gradually entered Singing Sand City and took control step by step. With their sect disciples arriving, the cultivators at the Foundation Building stage, who were initially distrustful of each other, finally let their guard down.

Last night's battle turned Singing Sand City into almost complete ruins, with only a few buildings remaining intact. This once bustling commercial hub had now been completely devastated. The Foundation Building stage cultivators were busy tending to their injuries, leaving the task of cleaning up the market to their subordinates.

After a day of rest, they began to recover, and even Xu Yishan, who suffered the most severe injuries, could barely move. Liu Family and Green Bamboo Mountain were almost wiped out this time, suffering severe damage to their foundations. If the joint forces of the four sects regrouped and pressed their advantage, they could easily reclaim the territory of Twin Success Valley and even occupy most of Liu Family and Green Bamboo Mountain's territories.

However, the current situation was unclear, and the joint forces lacked the courage to pursue the enemy easily unless pushed to a corner. If not for the desperate circumstances that forced them to join forces, the four sects might not have united against the enemy. Both Liu Family and Green Bamboo Mountain were the vanguards of the Flying Swan Sect. Their defeat might trigger an unknown reaction from the Flying Swan Sect, which could easily annihilate the seemingly strong joint forces with a mere finger movement.

In the beginning, it took tremendous effort from Xu Yishan, the old fox, to persuade everyone to rise up and resist. After the injuries of several Foundation Building stage cultivators stabilized, they gathered together in the only intact building in the market to discuss the next steps for the four sects.

As soon as everyone assembled, Xu Yishan took the initiative to speak, advocating for seizing the advantage and pursuing the enemy. Even if they couldn't break into Liu Family and Green Bamboo Mountain's main gates, they should grab all their territories.

Xu Yishan emphasized that Forest Spring Watch would be their most loyal support. Ever since Guang ZhiDaoist Master took control, not even the Flying Swan Sect dared to provoke Forest Spring Watch easily. Northern Desert Qi Family's Gold Core Daoist Master, Qi Nanfei, personally approached Guang ZhiDaoist Master to bring them into the fold. If Guang ZhiDaoist Master joined the Northern Desert Qi Family, the Flying Swan Sect would lose its numerical advantage in Gold Core Daoist Masters, and its dominant position in the Endless Sea of Sand would be shaken.

Therefore, the Flying Swan Sect wouldn't dare to act against Forest Spring Watch. With Forest Spring Watch's support, it was the perfect opportunity for them all to expand.

However, Xu Yishan's passionate speech failed to sway the others. They were not fools to blindly sacrifice themselves for Forest Spring Watch based on empty words.

Aunt Jin and Ruan Dadao outright rejected Xu Yishan's proposal during the discussion, as they could not reach a unified consensus within the four sects regarding the pursuit of the enemy. Meng Zhang, on the other hand, noticed the alliance between Golden Blade Sect and Qiaoshou Sect and decided to move closer to Forest Mountain School to avoid isolation. He actively supported Xu Yishan's proposal and tried to align with him frequently.

With the inability to reach a unanimous decision on pursuing the enemy among the four sects, the matter was ultimately abandoned. The focus of the discussion among the crowd shifted to how to divide the spoils. The Liu Family and Green Bamboo Mountain considered Singing Sand City as their forward base and transported a large amount of supplies, storing them here. These supplies, including the storage bags on the bodies of two cultivators, became spoils for the four sects. There was a heated argument among the people, almost leading to a fight several times. Finally, with the persuasion of Gu Tanghai, they reached an agreement on the distribution.

Last time, Luo Ye caused a commotion when he went to the Shi Family's gate with Meng Zhang. Gu Tanghai did not know that Luo Ye had already left the Endless Sea of Sand. When he saw Meng Zhang, he thought of Luo Ye behind him. During the argument, Gu Tanghai stood on Meng Zhang's side several times. In the end, Meng Zhang gained a small advantage in the distribution of spoils. Besides receiving many supplies, he also received a Fifth Earth Essence as compensation. After all, Taiyi Sect suffered heavy casualties and paid a lot of lives to stop Green Bamboo Mountain. The lives of Taiyi Sect cultivators were valuable, and compensation was necessary.

Actually, the biggest spoils of this battle were Singing Sand City itself. However, due to the blockade of Flying Swan Sect for several years, the commercial function of Singing Sand City as a market was almost completely scrapped. The market was severely damaged in last night's battle, and it was not an easy task to rebuild it. According to the prior agreement, Singing Sand City was handed over to Gu Tanghai for management. The other four sects all had shares. They would divide the profits when the market recovered in the future. As for when the market would recover, only time would tell. Next to Singing Sand City was Singing Sand Mountain, which produced a precious spiritual material called Xunfeng Stone. Mining Xunfeng Stone was very difficult and a very laborious job. When Singing Sand Mountain belonged to Twin Success Valley, Twin Success Valley sent cultivators who made mistakes to mine here. The Zhao Family cultivators, including Zhao Yanbei, were sent here to serve several years of hard labor and suffer a lot because they offended Twin Success Valley.

Gu Tanghai was also responsible for managing Singing Sand Mountain. After mining Xunfeng Stone, the several sects would divide it according to the proportion. After distributing the spoils, Qiaoshou Sect and Golden Blade Sect did not stay long and left Singing Sand City quickly, each returning to their own sect. Meng Zhang stayed for a few more days and got to know Forest Mountain School better. Gu Tanghai also contacted Meng Zhang and said that the previous incident was a misunderstanding, and they did not intend to swallow Meng Zhang's Foundation Building Pill. Gu Tanghai lowered his head and hoped that they could continue to trade in the future. Before Taiyi Sect cultivated enough alchemists, they really needed Shi Family as a partner. As the lord of a sect, Meng Zhang needed to maintain enough rationality and prioritize interests rather than personal likes and dislikes. Meng Zhang said that the cooperation was pleasant and should continue. However, in his heart, he was wary of the Shi Family and decided to cultivate Taiyi Sect's alchemists as soon as possible.

After handling various trivial matters, Meng Zhang returned to Taiyi Sect and faced many things waiting for him. Integrating the newly acquired territory and helping new disciples integrate into Taiyi Sect were all quite complicated tasks.

As Zhang Yingying signed her name on the soul register in front of Meng Zhang, he smiled with satisfaction. The biggest unstable factor in Taiyi Sect had been consumed in the recent war. Upon returning to Taiyi Sect, Meng Zhang began to clean up the internal affairs of the sect. The Taiyi Sect's direct lineages were naturally loyal, and the newly joined members quickly became obedient in the face of Meng Zhang's overwhelming power.

The Liu Family and Green Bamboo Mountain were cultivation forces on the same level as the former Twin Success Valley. Originally, the four major sects were just vassals of the Twin Success Valley, but in this war, they won a complete victory and almost wiped out their opponents. The prestige of the four major sects was greatly enhanced, and their reputation spread far and wide. The new members who had just joined Taiyi Sect were at least outwardly loyal and willing to work hard for the sect. They also had a certain degree of fear towards Meng Zhang, the Sect Master.

Meng Zhang increasingly felt that Mind Reading, this Divine Ability, was a powerful tool for discerning people's thoughts. With the help of Mind Reading, Meng Zhang had figured out everyone's thoughts. All the new members, at least outwardly, pledged their allegiance to Taiyi Sect and were willing to share the joys and sorrows with the sect. They considered themselves members of Taiyi Sect and worked hard for it.

To be on the safe side, Meng Zhang used all his efforts to make several key figures willingly sign their names on the soul register. Zhang Yingying was a woman in her thirties with a somewhat beautiful appearance. She usually looked honest and straightforward, but sometimes had her own ideas. She was a very savvy woman who absolutely did not dare to defy the strong. She had some feelings for the Zhang family, but she couldn't be said to be very loyal to Zhang Hantao, the head of the family. After the Twin Success Valley was destroyed, she took the initiative to escape from the remaining cultivators of the Twin Success Valley and did not hang herself on a tree. This showed a little bit of her intelligence.

Meng Zhang brought back the news of Zhang Hantao's death and only said a few words to her. She immediately accepted her fate and signed her name on the soul register. As a First Rank Alchemist, Zhang Yingying could only refine pills for Refining Qi period cultivators to take. But for Taiyi Sect now, this was already very rare.

After solving the loyalty issue of the disciples in the sect, Meng Zhang carried out a sweeping integration of the internal affairs of the sect. With the expansion of Taiyi Sect's territory and the increase in its members, the sect needed to take the right path and could no longer be run like a ragtag group. Several halls were established within Taiyi Sect, and some disciples were promoted. First, the General Affairs Hall was established, responsible for handling all kinds of internal affairs of the sect, with Hall Master Tian Zhen serving as the General Affairs Elder. Then the Spirit Plant Hall was established, responsible for managing all the spirit fields within the sect, with Spirit Plant Elder Daoist Clear Spirit serving as the Hall Master. The Foreign Affairs Hall was also established, responsible for Taiyi Sect's external exchanges and handling external relations.

Over the years, Li Xuan had handled all the affairs of the white hidden earth mine in an orderly manner, saving Meng Zhang countless efforts. His actions also proved his loyalty to Taiyi Sect. Li Xuan was appointed as the Hall Master of the Foreign Affairs Hall. The position of Hall Master was higher than that of an Inner-Sect Disciple and was below that of an Elder.

The Refiner Hall was established, with Tian Li serving as the Hall Master, specializing in the affairs related to refining tools within the sect. The Alchemy Hall was established, with Zhang Yingying

serving as the Hall Master, responsible for cultivating Alchemists and refining pills. The Talisman Creation Hall was established, with Yang Xueyi serving as the Hall Master, responsible for cultivating Talisman Masters and making various talismans.

Meng Zhang had once been interested in making talismans, but later found that his talent in this area was mediocre, so he gave up. As a Foundation Building period cultivator who was not a professional Talisman Master, if he made Second Rank talismans, not only was the success rate very low, but the power of the spells on the talismans was generally only one or two percent of what he could normally cast. Such talismans were basically useless for Foundation Building period cultivators in battle, but some Refining Qi period cultivators could use them as a last resort.

Meng Zhang also established a Dining Hall, responsible for making all kinds of spiritual food for the disciples in the sect to enjoy. For now, Yang Xueyi could only serve as the temporary Hall Master of the Dining Hall. The sect also established a Formations Hall, specializing in all matters related to formations within the sect, such as setting up formations and breaking enemy formations. Wen Qiansun, the only Formation Master in the sect, naturally became the Hall Master of the Formations Hall.

The Beast Controlling Hall was led by Hu Jing and was responsible for breeding and taming various kinds of monsters. The War Hall was specifically for external battles, and Zheng Chao, a brave and skilled disciple, became the Hall Master of the War Hall. The Law Enforcement Hall was responsible for maintaining the sect's rules and enforcing the sect's internal law and order. Since there were no suitable candidates, Meng Zhang, the Sect Master, had to serve as the Hall Master. The Merit Hall managed the Hidden Scripture Pavilion, sorted out the sect's martial arts and scriptures, and taught various skills to the disciples. The Hall Master of the Merit Hall was also held by the Protector Deep Earth Spirit General.

After receiving the Fifth Earth Essence given by Meng Zhang, Deep Earth Spirit General spent most of his time in seclusion to refine it. Many of the Merit Hall's tasks had to be handled by Meng Zhang. After straightening out the internal organizational structure, Meng Zhang moved Taiyi Sect's mountain gate to Fuzhao Valley, the original mountain gate of the Zhao Family. This was the only Second Rank spirit vein currently controlled by Taiyi Sect and had many advantages over the sect's original mountain gate.

After the relocation of Taiyi Sect's mountain gate, there was a large-scale construction project within the sect. The most regrettable thing was that the Second Rank Formation of the Zhao Family was destroyed and had no repair value due to severe damage. It was completely dismantled by the Twin Success Valley cultivators. Firstly, it was not really needed, and secondly, the resources within the Twin Success Valley began to become scarce due to the cultivation of Gold Core cultivators. In some less critical areas, they had to save resources. Therefore, Twin Success Valley had never set up a Second Rank Formation here.

Currently, Taiyi Sect lacked finished products such as formations, talismans, and magic tools, despite having an abundance of spiritual stones and materials. Due to the Flying Swan Sect's blockade of the commercial routes, the Singing Sand City and the western region, including the Forest Spring Watch area to the north, had a very depressed economy. Materials could not be transported out, spiritual stones could not be spent, and various finished products could not be brought in. As time went by, Luo Ye's departure made the relationship between the black market and Meng Zhang less close than before.

Meng Zhang spent a certain amount of spiritual stones every month to obtain some intelligence from the black market. Other than that, the black market no longer provided any other help. The order to blockade the area where Taiyi Sect was located was issued by the Flying Swan Sect, and the black market could not disobey the Flying Swan Sect's orders just for the sake of a little relationship with Meng Zhang. Unless Meng Zhang could bring greater benefits. Helplessly, Meng Zhang could only dig out the potential within the sect and hope that the tool refiners, Talisman Masters, and others within Taiyi Sect could grow up quickly.

Chapter 185

Meng Zhang walked out of the Four Seas Building disappointed once again, as his attempt to purchase the Second Rank Formation had failed.

Despite three years passing, the Flying Swan Sect's blockade of the western region of Singing Sand City and the Forest Spring Watch remained unchanged.

The internal debate within the Flying Swan Sect on how to handle the Forest Spring Watch has yet to reach a clear resolution.

While the Flying Swan Sect has not directly attacked the Forest Spring Watch, they have imposed a comprehensive blockade on them. The Taiyi Sect and three other sects have also been viewed as allies of the Forest Spring Watch and have been subjected to strict blockades.

The Second Rank Formation is now considered a strategic weapon, and all Shang Family stores that sell it within the Flying Swan Sect's territory must keep detailed customer information for future reference. Customers with unknown identities are not even entertained.

While Meng Zhang can easily break through the Flying Swan Sect's blockade, shopping in Firewell Market is very troublesome. Even big merchant families like the Four Seas Building dare not violate the Flying Swan Sect's orders and sell Second Rank Formations to Meng Zhang, despite knowing his identity as the Taiyi Sect Master.

Meng Zhang turned to the Earthfire Sect, but they refused to purchase Taiyi Sect's scarlet copper mine or sell magic tools to them. The steward who had a relationship with Meng Zhang in the Earthfire Sect bluntly stated that the Flying Swan Sect's influence was vast and almost everywhere, unlike Twin Success Valley, which was easier to deceive. Now that Twin Success Valley is gone, Taiyi Sect can openly mine and sell scarlet copper, but they have no sellers.

As for the black market, Meng Zhang cannot rely on it either. All shops in Firewell Market have been warned by the Flying Swan Sect not to trade with the Forest Spring Watch or any related forces. Otherwise, the Flying Swan Sect will punish them severely.

All major transactions in the current Firewell Market require the identification of the trading parties. Meng Zhang can only conduct small transactions in secret, which is not very helpful to the Taiyi Sect. Moreover, some important items are simply unavailable.

Even a decent Second Rank magic tool is hard to come by, let alone the Second Rank Formation.

After entering the Foundation Building period, Meng Zhang no longer needs First Rank magic tools. He only has the Second Rank flying swords, the Red Flame Sword, and the Poison Fang Sword. He is not a Sword Cultivator who can break through all obstacles with just a sword.

The Deep Earth Spirit General, who obtained the Fifth Earth Essence three years ago, has also regained his initial strength in the Foundation Building period after refining it. Apart from the Stonebreaker Hammer that Meng Zhang gave him, he has no other Second Rank magic tools. The power of magic tools is crucial in combat.

Meng Zhang has been to Firewell Market several times but has not been able to buy a satisfactory Second Rank magic tool. He can only buy overpriced and impractical goods while hiding his identity. The high-quality magic tools are not sold to people with unknown identities, let alone the Taiyi Sect Master.

Meng Zhang left Firewell Market disappointed, secretly admiring the authority of the Flying Swan Sect. Regardless of whether they are in the underworld or the white world, all Shang Family members obediently follow the Flying Swan Sect's ban and dare not violate it in the slightest.

After leaving Firewell Market, Meng Zhang rode on an exceptionally fast Red Feather Eagle and headed towards Singing Sand City. While cultivators in the Foundation Building period have the ability to fly with the wind, having a means of transportation is still preferable for long-distance travel, as it can save a lot of energy. After more than an hour, Meng Zhang saw Singing Sand City in his line of sight.

Gu Tanghai is indeed a remarkable figure. However, in just three years, Singing Sand City has been rebuilt to some extent. After taking over Singing Sand City, Gu Tanghai began to demonstrate his abilities. In the Cultivation World, it is generally believed that Gu Tanghai is a loose cultivator.

Countless loose cultivators regard him as an idol and trust him deeply. In terms of the black market, they know the origin of the Shi Family and the close relationship between Gu Tanghai and the Shi Family. However, the black market is not obligated to proactively inform the Flying Swan Sect of this information. Therefore, for many years, the Shi Family and Gu Tanghai have not appeared in the Flying Swan Sect's line of sight.

As for now, Gu Tanghai has established a relationship with the Forest Spring Watch. Even if the Flying Swan Sect knows his background, they will not easily take action against him until they have resolved the issue with the Forest Spring Watch. Gu Tanghai uses his identity as a loose cultivator to publicly declare that he wants to build Singing Sand City into a paradise for loose cultivators.

Loose cultivators in the Cultivation World can take refuge in Singing Sand City and settle down here. When Twin Success Valley was still around, there was an Alchemist guild in the surrounding area. The Alchemist guild was controlled by several sects led by Twin Success Valley. Small sects and small families could not cultivate Alchemists.

Even those with alchemy talent had to join sects like Twin Success Valley to receive training. Through the Alchemist guild, Twin Success Valley and other sects monopolized the supply of elixirs in the surrounding area, and the prices of elixirs were extremely high.

After Gu Tanghai took control of Singing Sand City, he used the Shi Family's alchemy abilities to provide a large number of cheap elixirs, attracting a large number of loose cultivators to settle here. For many cultivators, especially loose cultivators, having elixirs and spirit grains can satisfy most of their needs.

The Red Feather Eagle lowered its flying altitude and arrived over Singing Sand City. Meng Zhang has been here several times, and the guards are already familiar with his identity. The protective Formation opened a portal and allowed Meng Zhang to enter.

It must be said that Gu Tanghai is very capable of managing things. However, in just three years, Singing Sand City has already undergone a transformation. The damaged market has been mostly repaired, and many new buildings have sprung up.

There are some shops in the market, and occasionally, people can be seen on the once desolate streets. Unfortunately, despite Gu Tanghai's and the Shi Family's capable management, they have reached their limit in the face of the poor environment. When Singing Sand City was first established, it was managed by powerful forces like Twin Success Valley.

Not only did the Liu Family, Forest Spring Watch, and others invest heavily in it, even the Flying Swan Sect and Four Seas Building were also stationed there. The market was backed by many cultivation forces to the west, and it was connected to other territories under the Flying Swan Sect's rule. After many years of development, it became prosperous.

However, now, there are only four sects, including Taiyi Sect, to the west of Singing Sand City, and the east is completely blocked by the Flying Swan Sect, with the commercial route completely cut off. Even with the Forest Spring Watch and a group of poor loose cultivators, they cannot support a slightly larger business district.

Meng Zhang put the Red Feather Eagle into his spirit beast bag and walked for a while on the street before arriving outside a shop. According to the agreement, including Taiyi Sect, the four sects can have multiple shops in Singing Sand City.

Unfortunately, this is of no use. Taiyi Sect has only opened a grocery store in the market, which looks like it is about to close down. It is empty all day long, and business is scarce. There is nothing that can be done. The environment is such that even those who manage things well cannot do much.

Chapter 186: Trade Route

Meng Zhang was about to enter his own shop when he heard a greeting from behind, "Sect Master Meng." He turned around and saw Gu Tanghai rushing towards him.

"Sect Master Meng, may I have a word with you? I have an important matter to discuss," Gu Tanghai said urgently.

Over the years, Taiyi Sect and Shi Family had maintained a good relationship on the surface, engaging in a significant amount of trade. Perhaps due to concerns about Luo Ye, who had appeared with Meng Zhang in the past, Gu Tanghai had always been friendly towards Taiyi Sect.

Meng Zhang nodded and followed Gu Tanghai, leaving the area.

Gu Tanghai led Meng Zhang a long way until they arrived at a small building in the center of Singing Sand City. This was the administrative building of Singing Sand City, where Gu Tanghai often handled various internal and external affairs of the market.

Gu Tanghai led Meng Zhang into a hall, asked him to sit down, and served tea and snacks. Knowing Meng Zhang's character, he didn't beat around the bush and went straight to the point.

"Sect Master Meng, the main reason I asked you to come here is because the blockade by the Flying Swan Sect has caused a lot of inconvenience for everyone. The market has been stagnant and desolate."

"Therefore, after discussing with several other Sect Masters, we have decided to open up new trade routes and seek new business opportunities."

Meng Zhang had heard many rumors about this matter before, including from Gu Tanghai. He wholeheartedly agreed with it.

In recent years, Meng Zhang had increasingly felt the disadvantages of the lack of trade routes. Taiyi Sect's supply of spirit grain was barely sufficient, and during good harvests, they could sell a portion of it externally. However, there was a shortage of medicinal pills. Shi Family provided most of them, and their own sect's Pill Hall could only provide a small portion.

Some disciples in the sect practiced certain special techniques that required specific spiritual materials. Meng Zhang had to secretly go to Firewell Market to purchase small quantities, often not enough for their needs.

As for other magic tools, talismans, and so on, they were even more scarce. Even the sect-protecting great formation at the mountain gate had not been established yet.

They could barely sustain themselves during peacetime, but once a war broke out, there would be a severe shortage of various resources.

Currently, Taiyi Sect had some mineral deposits. In addition to the original scarlet copper and white hidden earth mines, they had also acquired the mysterious iron and thousand dust sand mines.

However, due to a lack of manpower and a lack of market outlets, these mines had to be temporarily idle or minimally exploited. Without being able to transport the resources and earn spirit stones, they couldn't acquire the necessary spiritual materials.

This was not a healthy state for the sect's development.

Of course, opening up trade routes externally might sound simple, but it was actually very difficult to accomplish.

The areas where several sects were located were surrounded by the influence of the Flying Swan Sect to the east and south. It was impossible to find any opportunities within the Flying Swan Sect's sphere of influence.

To the north and west was the forbidden area of the Deadly Sea of Sand. It was possible to enter the ruling area of the Qi Family in the Northern Desert through an uninhabited area in the northeast.

However, the Qi Family in the Northern Desert was always conservative and highly exclusive. Moreover, the Northern Desert itself was very barren and had little production.

The Qi Family had been suppressed by the Flying Swan Sect in the Northern Desert for many years and had not made much progress. Even though the Qi Family had two Gold Core Daoist Masters, they also lacked resources for cultivation. To be honest, anyone who has some understanding of the Northern Desert region would find it very strange. The fact that the Northern Desert Qi Family has been able to withstand the Flying Swan Sect for so many years, relying on such a poor and remote area, is quite surprising.

In the southwest direction, there is a small area that borders the Demon Wind Gobi. Through the Demon Wind Gobi, one can directly enter the territory of the Jiuqu League.

The Jiuqu League is a cultivation alliance centered around the Jiuqu River. Compared to the Endless Sea of Sand, it is incredibly prosperous. It has numerous sects, a constant stream of experts, a developed cultivation civilization, abundant resources, and a thriving economy.

The Jiuqu League's strength is countless times greater than that of the Flying Swan Sect, and they even have a Primordial Spirit True Monarch within their ranks.

When the invasion of the Endless Sea of Sand occurred, it was only the actions of two small sects on the outskirts. Yet, it posed a significant challenge for the Flying Swan Sect to deal with.

If it weren't for the fact that the high-ranking members of the Jiuqu League looked down upon the barren land of the Endless Sea of Sand and focused their attention on the more prosperous south, the Flying Swan Sect would have lost its opportunity to rule over the Endless Sea of Sand long ago.

For sects like Taiyi Sect to open up trade routes, the Northern Desert Qi Family is their only choice.

The first option is relatively easier, but the Qi Family itself is not wealthy, so even if they establish a trade route, the gains would be limited.

The second option requires passing through the Demon Wind Gobi.

The Demon Wind Gobi is the only place within the Endless Sea of Sand where a large number of demonic beasts gather. There are numerous powerful demonic beasts there, and even deep within the Demon Wind Gobi, there are Gold Core-level monsters.

Over the years, even the Flying Swan Sect, which rules over the Endless Sea of Sand, has been reluctant to venture deep into the Demon Wind Gobi.

Although reaching the Jiuqu League only requires passing through the outskirts of the Demon Wind Gobi without going deep inside, it can still be quite troublesome if one is unlucky enough to be entangled by the horde of demonic beasts.

As for the Gold Core-level monsters, they are unlikely to leave the depths of the Demon Wind Gobi, so there is no need to worry too much about them.

Several Sect Masters have debated these two different options many times in the past.

Due to his limited knowledge and experience, Meng Zhang has no understanding or preference for the Jiuqu League and has not participated in the debates.

Now that Gu Tanghai has brought up the issue of opening up trade routes again, it should mean that a decision has been made.

Before Meng Zhang could speak, Gu Tanghai continued on his own.

"After much discussion, we have finally decided to go together to the Jiuqu League. Even if the journey is more dangerous, the rewards will be greater." "If Sect Master Meng is interested, it's best to start preparing early."

"Of course, there's no need to rush. Even if everything goes smoothly, we won't set off for several years."

Taiyi Sect also greatly needs external trade. Since a decision has been made, Meng Zhang naturally agrees to join the endeavor.

Meng Zhang readily agrees and will depart with everyone in a few years.

During these years, Taiyi Sect will make many preparations, gather various goods for trading, and compile a list of items to be purchased.

In just a few sentences, both sides have reached an agreement on this matter without any doubts.

Gu Tanghai lifted his teacup, took a sip, paused for a moment, and then continued speaking.

"The second matter is that Elder Dan Yihu from Twin Success Valley has asked me to act as an intermediary and contact the various Sect Masters to undertake a major task together."

As Gu Tanghai spoke, he took out a lantern from his storage bag.

The lantern had an ancient appearance, seemingly made of bronze. Its surface was covered in rust and tarnished with copper stains.

"Golden Crow Lantern," Meng Zhang stared at the lantern for a long time before becoming somewhat excited.

Chapter 187: Golden Crow Lantern

Meng Zhang had heard about the famous magic tool called the Golden Crow Lantern since he was young. During the time when Taiyi Sect was still a vassal of the Flying Swan Sect, a powerful Foundation Building expert from Taiyi Sect wielded this Second Rank superior magic tool and achieved remarkable victories, earning it a great reputation. However, when the sand monsters attacked Taiyi Sect's mountain gate, the sect suffered heavy losses, and its elite disciples were decimated, pushing the sect to the brink of destruction.

Three Foundation Building cultivators managed to escape from the sect and decided to flee far away to a desolate and remote region, escorting the remaining disciples of Taiyi Sect towards the northern wilderness until they reached the territory ruled by Twin Success Valley. The last three Foundation Building cultivators of Taiyi Sect were seriously injured and close to the end of their lifespans, unable to persist for much longer. At that time, Taiyi Sect had no successors and was facing a crisis of decline.

Without any Foundation Building cultivators, it was highly unlikely that they could keep possession of this renowned magic tool, and it might even attract calamity upon the sect. Thus, the Foundation Building cultivators of Taiyi Sect decided to offer this magic tool as a gift to Twin Success Valley in exchange for becoming their vassal and receiving their protection. Since then, Taiyi Sect existed as a vassal of Twin Success Valley for over a hundred years until Meng Zhang took over as the Sect Master and Twin Success Valley was eventually destroyed, leading to Taiyi Sect gaining its independence.

During Meng Zhang's growth, some elder members of the sect often mentioned the legendary Golden Crow Lantern. Seeing the magic tool that Taiyi Sect had lost, he couldn't help but feel excited. Just when they were lacking magic tools, to regain possession of this famous magic tool was truly fortunate.

Not one to keep Meng Zhang in suspense, Gu Tanghai directly revealed the truth. "Elder Dan Yihu hopes that the Sect Masters will join forces again to attack the original territory of Twin Success Valley and reclaim the Date Spice Oasis. As for this magic tool left by the Taiyi Sect ancestors, it is a gift for Sect Master Meng."

Upon hearing Gu Tanghai's words, Meng Zhang immediately calmed down and looked at him meaningfully. He remembered how Gu Tanghai had presented the core formation disc of Twin Success Valley's defensive formation when they conquered Singing Sand City. Now, Gu Tanghai was acting as a mediator for Twin Success Valley's remnants, indicating that he had a connection with them. Furthermore, Gu Tanghai was also linked with the Forest Mountain School, which was under the influence of Forest Spring Watch. Twin Success Valley's remnants held great hatred towards their annihilators, the Flying Swan Sect, and their second-highest enmity was towards the opportunistic Forest Spring Watch, which took advantage of their downfall.

Gu Tanghai seemed to have good relations with both Twin Success Valley's remnants and Forest Spring Watch. He played both sides and was indeed a formidable character.

While Meng Zhang had been wary of Gu Tanghai, he didn't immediately accept the proposal and used delaying tactics. He mentioned the urgency of going to war again just three years after the previous conflict and said he needed time to consider the matter. Regarding the gift, he humbly claimed he felt undeserving of such a generous offering.

Seeing through Meng Zhang's thoughts, Gu Tanghai advised him, "Let me be straightforward, Meng Zhang. The other factions have already agreed to the conditions set by Elder Dan Yihu. Now, it's only your answer they are waiting for. I'm not good at hiding my thoughts; if there's anything I have to say, I'll say it directly. Golden Blade Sect and Qiaoshou Sect have already received a Lesser Foundation Building Pill each. You can rest assured to accept this magic tool, Sect Master Meng. As for Forest Mountain School, they are acting on the orders of Forest Spring Watch, trying to test the attitude and bottom line of Flying Swan Sect. Rest assured, this time's campaign is absolutely safe and just a formality. Flying Swan Sect won't easily interfere."

After hearing that the other factions had agreed, and considering that Forest Spring Watch had an edge in judging the situation due to their backing from Forest Spring Watch, Meng Zhang's doubts began to fade. If Flying Swan Sect had intended to interfere, they would have done so three years ago when Liu Family and Green Bamboo Mountain were defeated. Since Flying Swan Sect had remained inactive for three years, it seemed they were wary of Guang Zhi Daoist Master and reluctant to act easily.

The original territory of Twin Success Valley was richer than all the vassal territories combined, and both Golden Blade Sect and Qiaoshou Sect coveted it. Meng Zhang couldn't help but feel envious as well. Setting aside his concerns about Flying Swan Sect, Meng Zhang eventually agreed to the proposal.

After arranging a date for the campaign with Gu Tanghai, Meng Zhang left with the Golden Crow Lantern. Back at Taiyi Sect, he summoned the Deep Earth Spirit General, who had already restored his Foundation Building strength. Together, they studied the magic tool and confirmed that there were no issues. Feeling good about regaining the magic tool lost by his sect's ancestors, Meng Zhang, who was in need of a magic tool, began to refine the Golden Crow Lantern.

A few days later, two old friends, Lin Bailin from Forest Spring Watch and Xu Chengxian, the Sect Master of Forest Mountain School, secretly visited Taiyi Sect. Several years had passed, and Meng Zhang had become a high and mighty Foundation Building cultivator, while Lin Bailin and Xu Chengxian were still in the Refining Qi stage.

Xu Chengxian appeared somewhat reserved and eager to please, lacking the demeanor of a senior, while Lin Bailin remained composed and treated Meng Zhang as he always had. Meng Zhang preferred Lin Bailin's attitude. Additionally, Meng Zhang observed that Xu Chengxian was already advanced in years and lacked the sharpness required to achieve Foundation Building in this lifetime. On the other hand, Lin Bailin had a solid foundation and cultivation base, and his true qi was quite refined. It wouldn't be long before he attempted to break through to the Foundation Building stage.

After some pleasantries, Xu Chengxian revealed the purpose of their visit. They wanted to purchase the white hidden earth mined by Taiyi Sect, preferably with white hidden earth crystals. Since Guang ZhiDaoist Master had used the Heavenly Rainfall to form the core, the use of white hidden earth had become widely known throughout the Endless Sea of Sand. The secret that Flying Swan Sect had guarded for many years was now almost common knowledge.

Chapter 188: Prepares to go to battle

Nobody knew who or which faction was spreading the message in secret. But now, most of the cultivators in the Endless Sea of Sand knew that White Hidden Earth could be used to construct the Guiding Tower and trigger the Heavenly Rainfall that occurred every three hundred years.

Cultivators who relied on the Heavenly Rainfall to form their core needed to regularly refine large quantities of White Hidden Earth crystals to neutralize the powerful Tenth Water aura within them. Although it could be used without these crystals, it was less effective.

Fei TianDaoist Master of the Flying Swan Sect had utilized the Heavenly Rainfall for core formation over three hundred years ago, so the sect had been purchasing White Hidden Earth crystals without limitations since then. This demand was for the benefit of Gold CoreDaoist Masters, and it required the entire might of the Flying Swan Sect.

When Xu Chengxian made the request, Meng Zhang knew that it was to supply Guang ZhiDaoist Master. Though Guang ZhiDaoist Master appeared elusive, he still maintained a secret method of communication with Forest Spring Watch.

The origin of the White Hidden Earth used to construct the Guiding Tower by Forest Spring Watch was unknown. Was the supply now facing problems? Since Forest Spring Watch had come to them, Meng Zhang couldn't refuse such an important customer.

Ever since the commercial route was cut off, their White Hidden Earth mine had been operating at half capacity. But now, upon Xu Chengxian's request, Meng Zhang assured him they would immediately resume full-scale mining. He even offered to provide some emergency stock of White Hidden Earth and a few White Hidden Earth crystals if they were urgently needed.

Meng Zhang's frank attitude was welcomed by Xu Chengxian and Lin Bailin. Forest Spring Watch had already become a Gold Core sect, and if Taiyi Sect could establish a connection with them, it would undoubtedly benefit their future development.

As for the price, Meng Zhang did not take advantage of the urgent need and offered a friendly price. Unfortunately, Forest Spring Watch couldn't provide too many spirit stones at the moment. This was not unexpected for Meng Zhang, as Guang ZhiDaoist Master, after core formation, needed a lot of spirit stones to set up spirit gathering formations for daily cultivation without a Third Rank spirit vein.

Forest Spring Watch, despite being a Foundation Building sect with profound background and vast resources, still faced challenges supporting a Gold CoreDaoist Master, especially with their income channels blocked by the Flying Swan Sect.

Meng Zhang couldn't help but speculate on the intent behind the Flying Swan Sect's complete blockade. Were they planning to slowly erode Forest Spring Watch's accumulation, depriving Guang ZhiDaoist Master of sufficient support, and preventing his cultivation base from stabilizing?

Leaving those thoughts aside, Meng Zhang discussed the matter further with Xu Chengxian. Since Forest Spring Watch couldn't produce enough spirit stones, they agreed to trade through barter.

The special spring water from Forest Spring Watch could be used in the Refiner Hall, and the spiritual clams they raised were precious materials. Additionally, if Forest Spring Watch encountered difficulties, Meng Zhang was willing to offer credit or delayed payment.

Meng Zhang didn't expect to make much money from the White Hidden Earth mine. The most important thing was to strengthen their relationship with Forest Spring Watch.

After settling the details of the trade, Meng Zhang bid farewell to Xu Chengxian and Lin Bailin, two important guests.

He then spent some time at Taiyi Sect until the agreed-upon day of the expedition with Gutang Hai quietly arrived.

At present, Taiyi Sect had less than a hundred disciples, and they couldn't afford to lose too many expendable troops. Meng Zhang selected more than twenty disciples and used a Second Rank flying ship and two First Rank flying ships to set off for Singing Sand City.

The main purpose of using the Second Rank flying ship was to seize the spoils of war quickly. Taiyi Sect's strength and number of disciples were limited, making it impossible for them to occupy territory far from their sect for an extended period.

Meng Zhang's goal in this battle was straightforward: to snatch resources and leave immediately. By the time Taiyi Sect's forces reached Singing Sand City, the other sects had already arrived one after another.

The Foundation Building stage representatives gathered again to discuss the upcoming joint efforts against the Golden Blade Sect and Qiaoshou Sect.

During this gathering, Aunt Jin's attitude toward Meng Zhang had improved significantly. To prepare for the alliance against the other two sects, Meng Zhang had deliberately approached Forest Mountain School and also built a good relationship with Aunt Jin.

Recently, Meng Zhang had placed a large order with Qiaoshou Sect for hundreds of standard Dao robes to provide their disciples with a unified attire. Before that, Taiyi Sect's disciples had looked like an unruly bunch due to a lack of uniformity.

Qiaoshou Sect, like Taiyi Sect, had faced difficult times because of the blockade by the Flying Swan Sect. The business of customizing Dao robes had been dormant for a long time, so Aunt Jin was pleased to have such a large customer in Meng Zhang.

In fact, Meng Zhang had found several areas of mutual benefit between the two sects. Qiaoshou Sect primarily grew spiritual mulberry trees in most of their spirit fields, using the leaves to feed spiritual silkworms. The silkworms produced spiritual silk, which was the main product of Qiaoshou Sect.

Due to the switch from agriculture to sericulture, Qiaoshou Sect had to purchase a large amount of spirit grain every year to feed their disciples. On the other hand, Taiyi Sect had surplus spirit grain every year due to their good harvests.

Meng Zhang had decided to slowly win over Qiaoshou Sect and drive a wedge between them and the Golden Blade Sect alliance. However, he knew it wouldn't be an easy task, and he was only trying it out.

Feeling overwhelmed at times by the intricate maneuvering and political struggles, Meng Zhang wished he had a clever strategist by his side. Although Li Xuan, the Elder responsible for external affairs, was good at networking and diplomacy, he lacked a few key elements to be a tactical mastermind.

After some simple preparations for the upcoming battle, a group of flying ships departed Singing Sand City for the location that was once Twin Success Valley.

Chapter 189: Pitiful scene

The flying boats of the four sects were clearly divided into four groups, flying towards the front. Shi Weida, alone, boarded the flying boat of the Taiyi Sect. He seemed somewhat familiar and took the initiative to strike up a conversation with Meng Zhang.

Compared to his cousin Shi Weiming, Shi Weida possessed higher innate talent in cultivation. As a result, he had been kept hidden by the family, practicing within its confines. Unlike his cousin Shi Weiming, who had already left early to serve the family, it was the first time Shi Weida participated in a major battle after reaching Foundation Building stage.

Meng Zhang was curious about Shi Family's background and engaged in a friendly chat with Shi Weida. However, whenever the topic shifted to the family's internal affairs, Shi Weida tactfully avoided discussing it. Despite several attempts, Meng Zhang couldn't extract any useful information, so he stopped pursuing the matter and rested with his eyes closed. The flying boat swiftly advanced, leaving Singing Sand City behind and entering the territory of Twin Success Valley. A small oasis came into view, but it was in a pitiful state, with black ruins scattered all around. The mortal inhabitants who used to reside in the oasis had long disappeared.

Over the years, various forces had shown concern for the situation here. From time to time, they sent scouts to gather information. Three years ago, after Liu Family and Green Bamboo Mountain suffered a devastating defeat, they couldn't maintain order in the occupied areas due to heavy losses and depleted strength.

Countless external cultivators who received the news took advantage of the situation and plundered the land of Twin Success Valley without restraint. These lawless cultivators were even more terrifying than locusts, leaving nothing behind in their wake.

Not only were all the cultivation resources looted, but the mortals also suffered greatly. The able-bodied men were taken as laborers, some were sold to mines, and even children found buyers among various cultivation forces. As for the useless elderly, weak, sick, and disabled, they were directly dealt with on-site.

Faced with cultivators, even the weakest Refining Qi stage cultivators had no resistance against them. Scenes of bloodshed and brutality played out repeatedly, and the mortals in Twin Success Valley were almost completely eradicated.

Normally, such a large-scale catastrophe that caused significant harm to mortals would have attracted the intervention of righteous sects. However, the Flying Swan Sect, as the leader of the righteous sects, turned a blind eye and even allowed it to happen. Therefore, other forces might have had their concerns, but they chose to remain silent and avoid getting involved.

As the joint forces of the four sects moved forward, they encountered several oases, all showing similar tragic scenes. The places ravaged by the marauding loose cultivators were left barren, and there was no hope of finding any gains there.

The flying boats continued without stopping until they finally reached a relatively intact oasis, guarded by Liu Family cultivators. Without the need for several Foundation Building stage cultivators to act, the Refining Qi stage cultivators from various sects swarmed and easily captured the oasis, eliminating all enemies.

In order to train their disciples, the several Foundation Building stage cultivators stayed in the flying boats without making a move.

On this journey, besides capturing three oases, they also encountered some loose cultivators led by team leaders who were engaged in pillaging. Even the cold-hearted cultivators were somewhat moved by the tragic scenes they witnessed, especially the young and fiery Meng Zhang, who despised these heartless villains.

Such inhumane and wanton killing was hard to tolerate. These evildoers truly deserved their grim fate. Meng Zhang immediately drew his flying sword and took action.

A group of Refining Qi stage cultivators couldn't put up any resistance against a Foundation Building stage expert who attacked in anger. In a matter of moments, all the criminals were beheaded.

Ruan Dadao couldn't help but disdainfully remark, "Youth lacks composure. Even as Foundation Building stage cultivators, they show off against Refining Qi stage cultivators. It's truly disappointing."

His words were heard clearly by everyone on the other flying boats. However, this time, no one chimed in, not even their ally Aunt Jin, who only managed a dry laugh. Lin Shenpo even frowned, clearly showing some displeasure.

After the little incident on the way, the flying boats continued without delay and finally arrived at their destination, Date Spice Oasis.

Date Spice Oasis was situated atop a Second Rank spirit vein and was once the most important stronghold in Twin Success Valley after the main gate. However, its significance started to diminish when Twin Success Valley focused on developing Singing Sand City. Nevertheless, it remained an important location with numerous Twin Success Valley cultivators stationed there, and a large number of mortals inhabited the area. Many families of Twin Success Valley cultivators resided in Date Spice Oasis.

The name "Date Spice Oasis" originated from the many date palm trees planted in the oasis. Some of these trees were Spirit Plants that produced an abundance of spiritual fruit dates. Especially, the Second Rank Spirit Plants, of which there were only 10-20, produced dates that were cherished delicacies for Foundation Building stage cultivators.

When Twin Success Valley was still intact, it used to offer some of these dates as tributes to the Flying Swan Sect. The entire oasis would be filled with a strong aroma of dates when they ripened.

However, after Twin Success Valley was destroyed by the Flying Swan Sect, the joint forces of Green Bamboo Mountain and Liu Family attacked Date Spice Oasis first. Many Twin Success Valley cultivators fled, but a small group of them, with stubbornness, attempted to resist the alliance by relying on a Second Rank Formation.

No matter how formidable the Formation, it still required cultivators with corresponding strength to operate. A small group of Refining Qi stage cultivators had no hope of unleashing the full power of a Second Rank Formation.

After expending significant effort, the alliance finally broke the Formation and took control of the oasis. All the Twin Success Valley cultivators died in battle, and countless mortals in the oasis suffered as well.

Fortunately, both Green Bamboo Mountain and Liu Family were considered righteous sects and had their limits when it came to their actions. Furthermore, they treated the oasis as their spoils and did not want to cause excessive damage.

Date Spice Oasis remained mostly intact, with many mortals still living there, but the ownership had shifted to Liu Family and Green Bamboo Mountain.

Chapter 190: To War

Since their defeat three years ago, the Liu Family and Green Bamboo Mountain have been licking their wounds. Recently, the Green Bamboo Mountain's bamboo sword, after recovering from his injuries, took the initiative to sit in Date Spice Oasis to deter the increasingly rampant loose cultivators.

The news of the four sects' joint attack was not deliberately kept secret, and before the flying boats set off, the news reached the bamboo sword's ears.

According to the elder, Elder Zhuye, who is stationed here, they should evacuate in a timely manner, taking all personnel and goods with them. Anything that cannot be taken away should be destroyed immediately, and no advantages should be given to the enemy.

As the top master of Green Bamboo Mountain for many years, the bamboo sword has always had a high self-esteem.

He has not been able to accept their previous defeat until now. In his view, it was completely unjust to lose without fighting. If the enemy had not controlled the protection formation of Singing Sand City through their sinister plots and tricks, they might not have lost.

Now that the enemy is attacking again, the bamboo sword is not willing to retreat easily. If they don't fight openly and honestly, his mind will not be at ease, and his thoughts will not be clear.

Liu Fengbo, a Foundation Building period cultivator stationed here by the Liu Family, is a young cultivator of the Liu Family who has only recently reached the Foundation Building period. He agrees with the bamboo sword's opinion that it is too humiliating to escape without fighting. He is also eager to establish military exploits. If they escape like this now, when the enemy continues to attack and reaches the various mountain gates, where can they still run?

Elder Zhuye, who is alone and unable to persuade the two of them, can only agree to fight the enemy. However, not to mention the gap in Refining Qi period cultivators. Their side only has three Foundation Building period cultivators, while the enemy has five. If the numbers are not equal, they cannot win.

Fortunately, Liu Fengbo has a solution and managed to persuade two Foundation Building period loose cultivators to join them. One is Daoist Whitesand, the leader of the White Sand Pirates. The White Sand Pirates are a group of notorious river bandits who have long been active in the Flying Swan Sect's jurisdiction and have been repeatedly wanted by the Flying Swan Sect's affiliated forces. These bandits are elusive and come and go like the wind, committing crimes everywhere, and have not been caught for many years.

Of course, the most crucial factor is that these bandits know what's what and know which people to provoke and which not to.

After Twin Success Valley's demise, they immediately came from afar to plunder and wreak havoc here, leaving behind a lot of blood debts.

The other Foundation Building period loose cultivator that Liu Fengbo managed to persuade is called "Three Spears" Gu, and no one knows his real name.

"Three Spears" Gu has been a lone bandit for many years, doing evil deeds. He came here to take advantage of the opportunity after seeing Twin Success Valley's demise.

Although the Liu Family and Green Bamboo Mountain have suffered setbacks, they are still able to offer a lot of benefits and bribe these two guys.

The bamboo sword is arrogant and looks down on these bandits, but he is not stupid and knows that this is a temporary expedient. After all, the Liu Family and Green Bamboo Mountain suffered too heavy losses last time and cannot dispatch more Foundation Building period cultivators.

The bamboo sword holds his nose and tolerates his disdain for the two bandits, temporarily joining forces with them to fight the enemy.

The Second Rank Formation of Date Spice Oasis has been completely broken and has no repair value. After their defeat three years ago, the two families did not have a plan to hold out. If it were not for the bamboo sword's insistence on fighting, the cultivators of the two families would have retreated long ago.

Therefore, there is only one First Rank Formation here, which is just for show.

The First Rank Formation is basically useless against Foundation Building cultivators. After discussing their options, the five members of the Green Bamboo Mountain decide to leave Date Spice Oasis and meet the joint attack of the four sects head-on.

Ultimately, in this kind of battle, the outcome between Foundation Building cultivators is the key to determining the final victory. The small number of Refining Qi cultivators cannot influence the situation.

The four sects' flying boat fleet sees the five Foundation Building cultivators flying ahead as soon as they approach Date Spice Oasis. Without delay, the five Foundation Building cultivators leave their flying boat and actively engage the enemy.

The flying boat fleet temporarily stops advancing, waiting for the outcome of the battle between the Foundation Building cultivators. It is a fair fight, as each side has five cultivators. Everyone selects their opponent and begins fighting.

In one of the battles, Meng Zhang faces off against "Three Spears" Gu, a notorious bandit. Meng Zhang, a skilled swordsman, uses his dual sword technique to great effect against "Three Spears" Gu's set of three short guns.

Despite his vast experience in battle, "Three Spears" Gu cannot match Meng Zhang's swordsmanship and is forced to defend himself without being able to fight back.

Meng Zhang is a cultivator with a strong foundation in his practice, having studied secret sword techniques passed down from his sect. He begins to gain the upper hand against "Three Spears" Gu, who has relied on his loose cultivation methods.

After fighting for a long time, Meng Zhang gradually gains the advantage, but there is still a long way to go before he can win. To try to gain the upper hand, Meng Zhang takes out the Golden Crow Lantern, a notorious magic tool.

After refining it with Solar True Qi for many years, he is able to use it to some extent. Meng Zhang holds up the lantern, and a blazing line of fire shoots out, aimed directly at "Three Spears" Gu. Recognizing the magic tool, "Three Spears" Gu exclaims in shock.

He remembers when the Taiyi Sect used the Golden Crow Lantern over a hundred years ago and the terror it caused. Despite the danger, "Three Spears" Gu still fights on.