

Sect Master 231

Chapter 231: Difficulties

In the world of Cultivation, only a minority of geniuses can successfully reach the Foundation Building stage without relying on Foundation Building Pills. For the vast majority of cultivators attempting to break through to the Foundation Building stage, external assistance in the form of pills is essential.

The ability to cultivate new Foundation Building stage cultivators is crucial for the inheritance of various sects.

Only the Flying Swan Sect possesses the technique to refine Foundation Building Pills. As for the matter of Shi Changqing from the Shi Family successfully refining a furnace of Foundation Building Pills, neither Meng Zhang nor the Shi Family intentionally leaked any information about it.

Seeing the expectant gazes of the crowd, Gu Tanghai smiled bitterly. He exchanged a glance with Daoist Guang Hong and straightforwardly said, "Everyone, after our Alchemist conducted extensive research on the pill formula, we found that it is indeed quite challenging to refine Lesser Foundation Building Pills."

"Forest Spring Watch faces the same problem; we simply cannot produce Lesser Foundation Building Pills," Guang Hong Daoist added.

Gu Tanghai and Daoist Guang Hong explained the entire situation to the others in a few words.

It turned out that after acquiring the pill formula for Lesser Foundation Building Pills, both the Shi Family and Forest Spring Watch immediately began their research. Although refining Lesser Foundation Building Pills is less difficult than refining Foundation Building Pills, they still belong to the category of Second Rank pills, which are relatively challenging to produce within the Second Rank pill range.

If the difficulty was only in the refinement process, it wouldn't have been much of a problem. After all, Shi Changqing from the Shi Family had successfully refined Foundation Building Pills before. While the materials for Lesser Foundation Building Pills were precious, they still paled in comparison to the requirements for Foundation Building Pills.

However, the main issue lies in the fact that the production of Lesser Foundation Building Pills requires two specific materials that only the now-destroyed Twin Success Valley could provide. With the demise of Twin Success Valley, its heritage was lost, and the methods for producing these two materials naturally disappeared as well.

Without these two crucial materials, it is impossible to refine Lesser Foundation Building Pills.

Upon hearing Gu Tanghai and Guang Hong Daoist's words, everyone felt greatly disappointed. Previously, as subordinate sects of Twin Success Valley, they could pay a sufficient price to occasionally obtain Lesser Foundation Building Pills from them. But now that Twin Success Valley has been destroyed, and Lesser Foundation Building Pills cannot be refined, how can they ensure the future cultivation of Foundation Building stage cultivators in their sects?

Do they have to deal with the Flying Swan Sect and find a way to obtain Foundation Building Pills from them?

As the crowd turned to him for help, Guang Hong Daoist also felt somewhat embarrassed. Most of Forest Spring Watch's Foundation Building cultivators relied on the assistance of Spirit Pearls obtained from Spirit Clams that had lived for hundreds of years. Although these pearls served as supplements, their effects were not as remarkable as Lesser Foundation Building Pills, and their production was extremely low, barely sufficient for Forest Spring Watch's own use.

As for obtaining Foundation Building Pills from the Flying Swan Sect, that was not even something worth considering. Although Flying Swan Sect appeared to have reconciled with Forest Spring Watch on the surface, it was only temporary. Flying Swan Sect's vigilance towards Forest Spring Watch would not disappear.

Flying Swan Sect would undoubtedly find a way to hinder the growth and expansion of Forest Spring Watch. Without Foundation Building Pills, the number of Foundation Building cultivators in Forest Spring Watch and its subordinate sects would not increase rapidly.

Therefore, Flying Swan Sect would not easily allow Forest Spring Watch to obtain Foundation Building Pills. In the past, Twin Success Valley, despite its dominance, still allowed its subordinate sects to exchange for Lesser Foundation Building Pills. Now that Forest Spring Watch has replaced Twin Success Valley's position, if this problem remains unsolved, these subordinate sects will likely become disloyal and distant.

Upon seeing Daoist Guang Hong's dilemma, Meng Zhang suddenly spoke up, "One person's wisdom may be limited, but collective wisdom is extensive. Brother Gu, why not publicly disclose the formula for Lesser Foundation Building Pill and let everyone research it together to see if we can find a solution."

Meng Zhang's suggestion immediately garnered agreement from the crowd.

"Indeed, Sect Master Meng makes sense. If Brother Gu can't solve the problem, maybe someone else can."

"Pooling our ideas together, we might come up with a solution."

Driven by their desire for Lesser Foundation Building Pills, everyone hoped to solve the problem and successfully refine the pills together. Even if they couldn't solve the issue, having access to the pill formula itself would still be valuable.

It should be noted that even in Singing Sand City, let alone the Firewell Market, Second Rank pill formulas were rarely available for sale. Unique formulas like Lesser Foundation Building Pill were incredibly scarce in the entire Endless Sea of Sand.

Gu Tanghai hesitated, and Daoist Guang Hong became intrigued. Meng Zhang continued, "We won't just take the pill formula for free. Let's all contribute and compensate Brother Gu and Forest Spring Watch adequately."

Everyone wholeheartedly agreed with Meng Zhang's proposal.

As a result, they began to discuss the appropriate amount of spiritual stones for compensation and how the various sects should share the burden.

Witnessing the enthusiastic response from everyone, Daoist Guang Hong made up his mind.

Qiaoshou Sect, Golden Blade Sect, Taiyi Sect, and Forest Mountain School each contributed five thousand low-grade spiritual stones in exchange for the Lesser Foundation Building Pill formula.

As for how Gu Tanghai and Daoist Guang Hong would split the twenty thousand spiritual stones, that was their concern.

A complete pill formula should contain detailed instructions on various materials, their processing methods, and the precise steps involved in the refining process, including the timing and techniques.

Strictly speaking, the formula obtained by Daoist Guang Hong was not complete. One of the materials required for refining Lesser Foundation Building Pills was the essence of the Six God Flowers, extracted using a secret method from Twin Success Valley.

Although the Six God Flowers were expensive spirit flowers, they were not too difficult to obtain. Both Shi Changqing and the Alchemist from Forest Spring Watch had used different methods to extract the essence of the Six God Flowers but failed to meet the requirements of the pill formula, resulting in a waste of materials.

Moreover, another material called the Three-Leafed Dan Ginseng seemed to be only plantable in the former Twin Success Valley. After Twin Success Valley's destruction, the cultivation method for this material was lost.

Without these two critical materials, it was impossible to refine Lesser Foundation Building Pills.

After obtaining the Lesser Foundation Building Pill formula, everyone planned to bring it back to their respective sects for thorough research by their Alchemists. However, even Shi Family and Forest Spring Watch were unable to find a solution, and their efforts were destined to be in vain.

In contrast, Meng Zhang carefully examined the formula for Lesser Foundation Building Pill and recalled the ancient scriptures brought back by Deep Earth Spirit General from Twin Success Valley.

With his exceptional memory, Meng Zhang almost had a photographic memory, immediately recalling the contents he had seen before.

The secret method for extracting the essence of the Six God Flowers and the cultivation technique for the Three-Leafed Dan Ginseng were all recorded in those ancient scriptures.

Having grasped the origins of the missing materials, Meng Zhang realized that if he cooperated with Shi Family, they could refine Lesser Foundation Building Pills successfully.

However, Meng Zhang had suffered a significant loss at the hands of Shi Family before. He wouldn't make the same mistake twice. The last time Shi Family swallowed his Foundation Building Pill, it took the intervention of Luo Ye, a late-stage Foundation Building cultivator, to retrieve it.

Luo Ye had long since left the Endless Sea of Sand, and without this strong support, Meng Zhang couldn't force Gu Tanghai to do anything.

He decided to keep this secret and wait until Taiyi Sect trained its own Alchemist. Only then would he have their Alchemist refine the Lesser Foundation Building Pills. Even if it took decades, he was willing to wait.

After returning to the sect, Meng Zhang would keep some of Twin Success Valley's ancient scriptures separate, ensuring that ordinary disciples wouldn't have access to them.

Chapter 232: Explanation

After much discussion, the crowd bid their farewells and went back to their respective homes.

Before Meng Zhang left, he was asked by Gu Tanghai to stay behind for a discussion. After everyone else had departed, Gu Tanghai took Meng Zhang back to Singing Sand City. They arrived at a tavern and found a secluded private room. Once seated, a waiter came and served them food and wine.

Gu Tanghai enthusiastically persuaded Meng Zhang to drink and eat, playing the role of a hospitable host. When three rounds of drinks and five flavors of dishes had passed, and the atmosphere seemed appropriate, Gu Tanghai cautiously inquired about the whereabouts of the two Foundation Building Pills that Meng Zhang had requested from the Shi Family and Luo Ye's current location.

Meng Zhang had already thought about Gu Tanghai's question. He didn't hesitate and gave a direct answer. He explained that he had given one of the Foundation Building Pills to Luo Ye's disciple, as Luo Ye had helped him greatly, and he couldn't let Luo Ye's efforts go unrewarded.

When Meng Zhang mentioned this, he looked meaningfully at Gu Tanghai, causing the latter's face to appear somewhat uneasy. Gu Tanghai was the one who had pressured the Shi Family to aid Luo Ye. As for Luo Ye himself, after completing Foundation Building, he went on a journey to seek opportunities to reach the Core Formation realm.

As for the other Foundation Building Pill, Meng Zhang gave it to Deep Earth. It was impossible for Deep Earth, the Spirit General, to remain hidden forever. Having a Foundation Building cultivator in a sect like Taiyi Sect was a significant event, and there needed to be an explanation for Deep Earth's origin.

According to Meng Zhang, Deep Earth came from a distant land and was originally a Refining Qi completion stage loose cultivator. This person had a formidable Cultivation Base and remarkable knowledge. To recruit Deep Earth into Taiyi Sect, Meng Zhang had offered him the Foundation Building Pill. As long as Deep Earth was willing to make a solemn pledge, vowing loyalty to Taiyi Sect, he could receive the Foundation Building Pill to assist in his Foundation Building.

Sure enough, after taking the Foundation Building Pill, Deep Earth successfully achieved Foundation Building, adding one more Foundation Building expert to Taiyi Sect.

Meng Zhang's explanation seemed flawless. Furthermore, Deep Earth's situation could be easily verified. Taiyi Sect had a clear understanding of the backgrounds of its disciples, and aside from Deep Earth, there were no other Foundation Building cultivators.

Originally, Gu Tanghai had been thinking about obtaining the Foundation Building Pills from Meng Zhang. After all, Meng Zhang wouldn't need them anymore after achieving Foundation Building. He was willing to pay a certain price to acquire the pills. However, with Meng Zhang's revelation that both Foundation Building Pills were no longer in his possession, Gu Tanghai abandoned the idea.

Gu Tanghai also instructed Meng Zhang not to disclose that the Foundation Building Pill used by Deep Earth came from the Shi Family. Instead, they should claim that Meng Zhang had acquired it during his last visit to Great Wind City and gave it to Deep Earth upon his return.

Meng Zhang readily agreed to Gu Tanghai's request and continued to drink with him. At a certain point, Gu Tanghai mentioned Zhang Yingying, an Alchemist from Meng Zhang's family who was originally cultivated in Twin Success Valley. He suggested that Meng Zhang should inquire with her about any knowledge she might have regarding the Lesser Foundation Building Pill.

Meng Zhang smiled and replied, "Brother Gu, you're overthinking it. Zhang Yingying isn't a direct disciple of Twin Success Valley but merely an alchemy tool. Moreover, her alchemy technique is average, so it's unlikely she has access to information about the Lesser Foundation Building Pill."

Gu Tanghai acknowledged the reasonability of Meng Zhang's explanation. Information about the Lesser Foundation Building Pill was highly classified within Twin Success Valley. Zhang Yingying, a mere First Rank Alchemist and an outsider, wouldn't likely have access to such information.

Seeing Gu Tanghai deep in thought, Meng Zhang suggested an idea, "Brother Gu, if you want to obtain the alchemy recipe for the Lesser Foundation Building Pill and clues about the two materials, you might consider seeking help from Flying Swan Sect."

Meng Zhang didn't speak without reason. When Flying Swan Sect attacked Twin Success Valley, exterminating everyone in the sect, they still occupy Twin Success Valley's mountain gate. If anyone were most likely to possess the complete heritage of Twin Success Valley and the alchemy recipe for the Lesser Foundation Building Pill, it would be Flying Swan Sect.

Hearing Meng Zhang's words, Gu Tanghai bitterly smiled a few times. Shi Family was the remnants of Purple Gold Sect and had been hunted by Flying Swan Sect for hundreds of years. Not to mention asking Flying Swan Sect for the complete alchemy recipe of the Lesser Foundation Building Pill, just appearing before them required immense courage.

With the main topic nearing its conclusion, the two chatted idly for a while, exchanged toasts, and then bid farewell to each other.

After returning to Taiyi Sect, Meng Zhang entered the Hidden Scripture Pavilion, where he extracted the relevant parts about the two materials and the alchemy recipe for the Lesser Foundation Building Pill from the Twin Success Valley's records and put them together.

This portion of information was kept separately by Meng Zhang. Only when the sect had a Second Rank Alchemist would they be allowed to borrow it.

The Lesser Foundation Building Pill required a special spirit herb called the Three-Leafed Dan Ginseng. The cultivation method involved nurturing ordinary dan ginseng for decades and, once it reached a certain level of maturity, using a secret method from Twin Success Valley to transplant it onto a three-leafed flower.

As it was not urgent to cultivate the Three-Leafed Dan Ginseng, Meng Zhang secretly instructed Daoist Clear Spirit to begin secretly cultivating both the dan ginseng and the three-leafed flowers with reliable disciples.

After dealing with the matters concerning the Lesser Foundation Building Pill, Meng Zhang went to the Pill Hall within the sect.

Due to the frequent alchemy practices, the Pill Hall occupied an independent courtyard in a relatively remote location within the sect. Inside the Pill Hall were several alchemy rooms containing alchemy furnaces of different grades for the use of the sect's alchemists. There were also several independent rooms for storing various medicinal materials.

Seeing Meng Zhang arrive at the Pill Hall, the Hall Master Zhang Yingying hurriedly greeted him. She had heard about Zhao Jiudou's pursuit of the Twin Success Valley remnants and that Taiyi Sect was targeted. She thought she might not escape this time. However, unexpectedly, Meng Zhang, just a small Sect Master of a minor sect, dared to confront the disciples of Flying Swan Sect and didn't hand her over. This made Zhang Yingying deeply grateful but also very worried.

Zhang Yingying had been extremely anxious when Meng Zhang went to accept Zhao Jiudou's challenge, but now that she saw him return safely, a huge burden lifted from her heart.

Meng Zhang smiled and said, "You don't need to worry anymore. Zhao Jiudou suffered a defeat this time, so he shouldn't dare to keep bothering us."

With Meng Zhang's reassurance, Zhang Yingying's worries finally completely disappeared, and she was deeply moved by his actions. At this moment, her sense of belonging and loyalty to Taiyi Sect had never been stronger.

The recognition and loyalty of disciples towards their sect were built up little by little.

After comforting Zhang Yingying, Meng Zhang inquired about the cultivation situation of the alchemists in the sect. Zhang Yingying felt embarrassed to say that the cultivation of alchemists in the sect was still lacking. Though Pill Hall had recruited several disciples with considerable talents and carefully nurtured them for a long time, most of them were still alchemy apprentices and could only assist in handling various medicinal materials. Only one qualified alchemist had been trained, but the success rate of pill formation was not high. Often, Zhang Yingying had to help them when they were doing alchemy.

Chapter 233: Inspecting the Sect (1)

Meng Zhang did not blame Zhang Yingying. Instead, he comforted her with a few words.

The cultivation of an Alchemist is not something that can be rushed. Besides the sect's strong emphasis on nurturing talents, it also depends on the disciple's aptitude. Among the several nearby sects, the Shi Family is a remnant of the Purple Gold Sect with a long history. Hundreds of years ago, they were already a somewhat famous family of alchemists.

In recent years, they produced an alchemy genius named Shi Changqing, which led to their current achievements.

As for other sects like Qiaoshou Sect, Golden Blade Sect, and Forest Mountain School, they may have a few First Rank Alchemists who can refine a small number of First Rank pills for cultivators in the Refining Qi stage.

Among them, it seems that Forest Spring Watch has a Foundation Building stage Second Rank Alchemist, but their reputation is not prominent, and their skills are only average.

Since Zhang Yingying was recruited into the sect, she has refined many pills for the sect. She worked hard without credit and did her best in nurturing Alchemists. Although Meng Zhang usually appears to be less involved in the specific affairs of the sect, he pays close attention to all the situations within the sect. He is very satisfied with Zhang Yingying's performance.

Nurturing Alchemists is a long-term plan that cannot be rushed, nor can it be achieved hastily. Meng Zhang encouraged Zhang Yingying sincerely before leaving the Pill Hall.

After leaving the Pill Hall, Meng Zhang strolled around several other places within the sect.

The Tool Hall, located in a remote corner of the sect due to its frequent use of fire for refining tools, was under the leadership of Tian Li. It had developed quite well. Apart from a few more apprentices responsible for handling various mineral materials, there were also two additional tool refiners. Including Tian Li himself, there were three First Rank tool refiners who were fully capable of independently refining First Rank magic tools.

Many of the First Rank magic tools in the hands of the disciples were crafted by these three.

Apart from the inheritance that Meng Zhang obtained from the Trial Ground, the scriptures left by the Purple Gold Sect cultivators in their caves, the scriptures brought back from Twin Success Valley by the Deep Earth Spirit General, and the contents related to refining tools, all greatly benefited the tool refiners in the sect.

Currently, the sect did not have a source of geothermal fire, so the tool refiners used spirit wood for fire, which consumed a considerable amount of it. Fortunately, they could purchase a large number of high-quality spirit woods from the Forest Mountain School, so they were not currently lacking in supply.

Meng Zhang roughly assessed the situation in the Tool Hall, encouraged them, and then left.

Meng Zhang's next stop was the Talisman Hall.

Hall Master Yang Xueyi had the highest cultivation base among the Hall Masters and had already reached the completion of the Refining Qi realm. After polishing her true qi for a while longer, she could attempt Foundation Building.

The Foundation Building Pill that Meng Zhang had been carefully storing would come in handy at that time.

Regarding the sect's only Foundation Building Pill, Meng Zhang didn't plan to give it to Yang Xueyi for free. Instead, he intended to exchange it for the sect's good deeds.

As the Hall Master of the Talisman Hall, Yang Xueyi not only refined a large number of talismans for the disciples to use but also trained two qualified Talisman Masters and several Talisman Master apprentices.

In addition, Yang Xueyi also managed the kitchen, regularly preparing various spirit foods for the disciples.

She also trained several kitchen apprentices to handle various ingredients for her.

Yang Xueyi's refined spirit wine is of excellent quality and affordable, making it highly popular outside. The substantial sales of this spirit wine have brought significant profits to the sect.

Yang Xueyi has made enormous contributions to the Taiyi Sect, accumulating a large amount of merit, which she exchanges for Foundation Building Pills with ease. Meng Zhang always feels that it was an immensely correct decision to risk accepting her into the sect, considering the contributions she has made.

The Beast Controlling Hall is managed by a female disciple named Hu Jing. She possesses exceptional talent in both Cultivation Base and beast taming, particularly excelling in controlling the magical tool "Beast Taming Cauldron."

The cultivation of the Red Feathered Eagles within the sect has been going very smoothly. There are already five or six of them that can be ridden, while more than twenty others, although too small for riding, serve as messengers and scouts for the sect.

Upon taking over Fuzhao Valley, Meng Zhang received a batch of spirit birds from the disciples of Twin Success Valley. Mainly comprised of various types of immortal cranes, about six or seven of them are now suitable for riding.

Having these flying mounts significantly enhances the mobility of Taiyi Sect's disciples, allowing them to control such a vast and desolate territory in the Endless Sea of Sand. Unlike the densely populated Middle-Earth Continent, the Endless Sea of Sand is sparsely inhabited due to its harsh environment, with vast areas of hundreds of miles devoid of human presence.

As Taiyi Sect's territory is quite extensive but scattered with only a few oases and remote mining sites, having the ability to move quickly is crucial. It is impractical to rely on Foundation Building cultivators for every minor task; thus, the numerous Refining Qi cultivators play a vital role in maintaining the sect's rule. Providing Refining Qi cultivators with flying mounts becomes a meaningful endeavor.

Apart from the Beast Controlling Hall's aerial mounts, there are also many low-level demon beasts like mountain patrol dogs that, once tamed, are still useful. However, the development of the Beast Controlling Hall is somewhat limited due to the scarcity of high-quality and well-bred demon beasts.

Meng Zhang is pleasantly surprised to discover that the wind chasing horses he used to ride frequently during his Refining Qi period have successfully bred and produced many excellent offspring. These new wind chasing horses have grown up and now provide excellent mounts for the sect's disciples. Additionally, the large-horned cattle bred within the sect have become the main force for cultivating spirit fields.

Unexpectedly, Hu Jing, a female disciple, has managed the Beast Controlling Hall so well, achieving remarkable results among the various halls of the sect. Meng Zhang sincerely praises Hu Jing for her accomplishments.

The War Hall occupies a significant area and serves as a place for members to practice their spells. Besides the fixed group of disciples with decent combat abilities, all other disciples of the sect take turns to undergo training in the War Hall to enhance their practical combat skills.

Zheng Chao's Cultivation Base has already reached the ninth level of Refining Qi. In terms of combat power, except for Yang Xueyi, no other Refining Qi stage disciple in the sect is his match. Meng Zhang not only presents Zheng Chao with the magic tool "Soul-Stirring Bell" he used back in

the day but also gifts him the Second Rank puppet he obtained from the Li family's secret library, along with several Second Rank talismans.

As the Hall Master of the War Hall, Zheng Chao is a key player in the sect's combat operations and must have some life-saving tricks up his sleeve.

Chapter 234: Inspecting the Sect (2)

When Meng Zhang arrived at War Hall, Zheng Chao was instructing several disciples. Meng Zhang became interested and not only gave some guidance but also personally tested and assessed these disciples. Although these disciples' actions were still a bit inexperienced, they showed considerable proficiency and had a systematic approach.

After encouraging Zheng Chao, Meng Zhang left the place and went to Formations Hall. Inside Formations Hall, it was deserted, with only Wen Qiansun, the Hall Master, and two Formation Master apprentices.

Formation is considered a highly challenging skill among the myriad arts of cultivation. Without exceptional comprehension and extraordinary intelligence, one can hardly grasp the essence of formations. Despite having numerous disciples in Taiyi Sect, they could barely cultivate two Formation Master apprentices.

When not engaged in cultivation, Wen Qiansun studied various formation scriptures. Any matters related to formations within the sect were handled by him. If even he couldn't handle them, it would require the intervention of Deep Earth Spirit General.

Formations Hall didn't offer much to see, so after encouraging Wen Qiansun, Meng Zhang left the place.

The duties of Outer Affairs Hall mainly took place outside the sect, and as the Hall Master, Li Xuan spent most of his time on the go. Meng Zhang had no specific reason to visit him there.

General Affairs Hall was managed by Meng Zhang's senior brother, Tian Zhen, who was also the General Affairs Elder of the sect. For many years, Tian Zhen had been handling the day-to-day affairs of the sect in an orderly manner, and Meng Zhang had great trust in him.

Currently, the arrangement of tasks for sect disciples, the issuance of missions, the distribution of rewards, and other similar matters all fell under the responsibility of General Affairs Hall. Additionally, this hall was in charge of handling various unclassified tasks within the sect.

Meng Zhang also entrusted the management of the sect's treasury to Tian Zhen. Recognizing his own limited aptitude in cultivation, Tian Zhen focused most of his time on sect affairs, as he believed that his future in cultivation was somewhat limited, bordering on giving up on it altogether.

Meng Zhang had advised Tian Zhen several times and even wanted to delegate some of his tasks to others, but Tian Zhen firmly refused. His determination to personally take charge was not about grasping power but rather a lack of confidence in others. He insisted on contributing to the sect himself.

Everyone had their own aspirations, but despite Meng Zhang's earnest persuasions, he had no choice but to let it go. Tian Zhen genuinely enjoyed the busy workload and was unwilling to give it up.

General Affairs Hall was the busiest place in Taiyi Sect. Disciples came and went, collecting and submitting tasks, creating a continuous flow of activity.

Meng Zhang glanced at it as he passed by but refrained from disturbing the work inside.

Deep EarthSpirit General, the guardian and also the Hall Master of Merit Hall, often presided in Hidden Scripture Pavilion, answering disciples' questions and guiding their cultivation.

Originally a powerful cultivator at the Gold Core level, Deep EarthSpirit General encountered a great calamity and was left with only a remnant of his soul, escaping death by a hair's breadth. Currently, his Cultivation Base had only recovered to the early stages of Foundation Building. To further advance, he had to rely not so much on his personal cultivation achievements but more on external resources.

As a result, Deep EarthSpirit General didn't have much time for personal cultivation, dedicating more time to sect affairs.

Since reaching the Foundation Building stage, Deep EarthSpirit General's attitude towards Meng Zhang had changed from before. He now showed greater approval and recognition, evident in the way he treated him differently from before.

Meng Zhang strolled around the Hidden Scripture Pavilion and then voluntarily left without disturbing the Deep Earth Spirit General and their companions.

Although the Law Enforcement Hall was established at the sect's entrance, Meng Zhang had been unable to find a suitable candidate for the position of Hall Master. Consequently, he took on the role himself.

The Law Enforcement Hall was situated not far from the main hall of the sect, while Meng Zhang's Sect Master's quarters were located behind it. During his spare time from cultivation, Meng Zhang would spend some time at the Law Enforcement Hall, handling accumulated affairs.

He carefully selected several disciples known for their rigor and fair judgment to work in the Law Enforcement Hall. These disciples were responsible for maintaining the sect's rules and recording any violations, after which Meng Zhang would impose appropriate punishments depending on the severity of the situation.

Rather than going to the Law Enforcement Hall, Meng Zhang considered that with an increase in the number of disciples, the hall should expand accordingly, ideally with a suitable Hall Master appointed.

Meng Zhang eventually arrived at the sect's spirit field.

Fuzhao Valley had been diligently managed by the Zhao Family for many years and later further improved by Twin Success Valley. The hundreds of acres of spirit fields were in good order.

While the entry requirements for the Spirit Plant Technique were low, achieving proficiency required countless efforts and dedication. For disciples with poor aptitude or lacking other talents, studying the Spirit Plant Technique seemed to be the most reliable option.

The sect had numerous spirit farmers, but only a few were qualified, and even fewer were outstanding. Over the years, the most exceptional spirit farmers in the sect were Daoist Clear Spirit and his few disciples, as well as Wang Shitou and his son, who had joined Taiyi Sect in earlier years.

Daoist Clear Spirit, as the elder in charge of spirit field affairs, not only managed all the spirit fields in Fuzhao Valley but also those in other spirit veins across Taiyi Sect's territory. Even with the assistance of the Wang father and son, Daoist Clear Spirit was constantly busy and overwhelmed.

However, he bore no discontent and instead relished the busy work within the spirit fields.

Upon Meng Zhang's arrival in the spirit field, Daoist Clear Spirit was occupied with his duties. After Daoist Clear Spirit had finished, Meng Zhang respectfully paid his respects to this esteemed elder of the sect. They exchanged a few words before Meng Zhang took his leave to avoid interrupting Daoist Clear Spirit's work.

Meng Zhang contemplated and decided to establish an organization within the sect known as the Cultivation Field Hall, responsible for all affairs related to the spirit fields. Any new spirit fields or maintenance tasks would be entrusted to the Cultivation Field Hall. During peak times at the spirit fields, disciples from the sect could be called upon to assist. Additionally, some mounts, including flying ones, would be specifically allocated to the Cultivation Field Hall to facilitate their movements between various spirit fields.

Having served the sect for many years and earned trust, Wang Shitou was a suitable candidate to become the Hall Master of the Cultivation Field Hall.

Meng Zhang hoped that this move would alleviate Daoist Clear Spirit's burden. Despite having several sources of minerals, the output of the spirit fields remained Taiyi Sect's most crucial source of income. More importantly, an ample supply of spirit rice was essential for the cultivation of sect disciples.

Meng Zhang, as a Foundation Building cultivator, no longer required ordinary spirit rice and merely indulged in it occasionally for the taste. However, the majority of disciples in the sect still relied on it.

Given the significance of the spirit fields, Meng Zhang paid particular attention to them.

After inspecting various places within the sect, Meng Zhang mounted the Red Feathered Eagle and began to survey Taiyi Sect's territory. Throughout the oases within the territory, some old disciples who had left the sect were helping to guard them, and overall, there were no major issues.

Due to Meng Zhang's repeated efforts to bring in new people from outside and the annexation of other oases, the population under Taiyi Sect's rule had increased significantly, leading to a thorough change in the population structure.

Chapter 235: Spread of War

In addition, Meng Zhang also made a special inspection of the sect's several mineral deposits.

Now that Twin Success Valley, the great mountain, no longer loomed overhead, and Forest Spring Watch was relatively lenient with its vassals, and Taiyi Sect had gained enough strength. The few mineral deposits in the sect's territory were not particularly precious.

Therefore, Taiyi Sect could now openly exploit these mineral resources without having to do so covertly. With the control of sandworm mining using the "Imperial Worm Jar," Taiyi Sect had indeed saved a significant amount of manpower.

Of course, minerals like the "White Hidden Earth" still required a large workforce for extraction.

Currently, due to the rampant sand monsters, conflicts near the territory of the Flying Swan Sect persisted. Many oases were breached, and countless commoners were displaced. Despite the Flying Swan Sect's efforts to provide relief, many commoners ended up seeking refuge in Forest Spring Watch, either voluntarily or involuntarily.

Surprisingly, several sects were unanimously inclined to introduce more commoners. Meng Zhang invested considerable effort in bargaining with these sects before bringing in a large number of commoners.

Ordinary commoners were allowed to settle in An Family within the oases, leading a stable life. However, those who harbored dissent or acted unruly were all sent to work in various mineral deposits.

Taiyi Sect was a righteous sect, and Meng Zhang had his principles. Taiyi Sect would not mistreat these commoner miners and would ensure they received at least adequate treatment.

Meng Zhang carefully observed the various mineral deposits. Each deposit had dedicated disciples guarding it. Surrounding the deposits, disciples rode Wind Chasing Horses with patrol dogs, conducting meticulous inspections.

In the sky, tamed Crimson Feathered Eagles patrolled back and forth. If anything was amiss, they would immediately notify the guarding disciples. Matters that the guarding disciples couldn't handle were relayed to the sect, and someone from the sect would deal with it.

The defense of the mineral deposits was quite stringent. At least for those loose cultivators in the Foundation Establishment stage, it was highly unlikely for them to come and pillage, only to escape with their loot.

After patrolling the sect's territory, Meng Zhang returned to the sect.

From then on, Meng Zhang primarily focused on his cultivation. Apart from occasionally dealing with sect matters, he also conducted periodic inspections within and outside the sect.

With the increase in population within the territory, the number of disciples awakening their spiritual roots and joining the sect also grew. Once these disciples matured, Taiyi Sect would undergo another wave of significant development.

Since Meng Zhang had taken the "Elemental Nourishing Pill" to consolidate his foundation, his progress in cultivation had been advancing at an astonishing pace. His aptitude was outstanding, and his comprehension ability was extremely high. Even after entering the Foundation Building stage, he still held a significant advantage in cultivation.

Meng Zhang estimated that in a few years, after completing the initial stage of Foundation Building, he could attempt to break through to the mid-stage of Foundation Building.

Whenever he had spare time, Meng Zhang also dedicated time to studying the book "Grand Evolving Fortune." Unfortunately, even with Meng Zhang's comprehension ability, it felt like he was reading an incomprehensible scripture, yielding almost no gain.

Although tempted to give up, Meng Zhang couldn't bear the thought of it. Even the inheritances he obtained from the Trial Ground did not include the "Art of Heaven's Secrets," indicating its rarity and preciousness. Finally obtaining a book on this art seemed like a certain kind of opportunity for Meng Zhang, one that he shouldn't easily let go of.

Afterward, Meng Zhang occasionally revisited the "Grand Evolving Fortune" in the hope of gaining some insights.

Although he had no success in learning the "Art of Heaven's Secrets," Meng Zhang didn't slack off in his studies of the Daoist scriptures. Every day, he spent a significant amount of time reciting and pondering over the scriptures.

Meng Zhang knew that the process of comprehending the Dao Classic was not something that could be rushed. He mentally prepared himself for several decades without expecting immediate results.

In the surrounding area of Forest Spring Watch, there were no major incidents, and the external environment of Taiyi Sect remained stable while the sect experienced steady internal development.

As time passed, two more years went by. Both Meng Zhang and Taiyi Sect had experienced two years of tranquility.

On the other hand, the war between Flying Swan Sect and the sand monsters was still ongoing. Although Flying Swan Sect had gained a slight advantage, they had not achieved absolute superiority. The losses for Flying Swan Sect and its affiliated forces were heavy, while Forest Spring Watch and its affiliated forces continued to develop steadily.

Within Flying Swan Sect, some cultivators were dissatisfied with this situation and proposed conscripting Forest Spring Watch and its affiliates to participate in the extermination of the sand monsters. However, since Flying Swan Sect had adopted an attitude of equality towards Forest Spring Watch, it seemed unwise to forcefully conscript them, especially considering the significant contributions made by Guang Zhi Daoist Master in the war against the sand monsters.

For a short while, Flying Swan Sect couldn't make up its mind about conscripting Forest Spring Watch and its affiliated forces.

After some time had passed, chaos suddenly erupted near Forest Spring Watch due to the sand monsters. However, the idea of conscripting Forest Spring Watch was no longer mentioned within Flying Swan Sect.

The initial outbreak of the sand monster chaos occurred in the territory of the Liu Family. A large group of sand monsters, including some Second Rank sand monsters, easily swept through the Liu Family's territory, wiping out their few affiliated forces and strongholds.

Having suffered heavy losses in wars with Taiyi Sect and other sects in previous years, Liu Family's strength had significantly declined, and they were unable to completely eradicate the sand monsters on their territory. They could only close their mountain gate and wait for reinforcements. The Liu

Family's territory was adjacent to Forest Spring Watch. The sand monsters didn't attack the mountain gate of Liu Family but instead started to roam toward Forest Spring Watch's territory.

Fortunately, Forest Spring Watch reacted swiftly and dispatched high-level cultivators to barely repel the group of sand monsters.

If the sand monsters were not entirely eradicated, they would continue to roam and destroy all human settlements they encountered. As Forest Spring Watch had become the dominant force in the area, the responsibility to eliminate the sand monsters fell on them.

Forest Spring Watch mobilized all cultivators and issued conscription orders to its affiliated forces. Since Forest Spring Watch didn't have many affiliated forces, the few cultivation families within its territory were essentially integrated into Forest Spring Watch itself.

Therefore, the main targets of Forest Spring Watch's conscription were the forces that later joined them.

As it was the first conscription of Taiyi Sect and other sects, Forest Spring Watch issued a very strict order. Major sects were prohibited from concealing their strength and were required to go all out with their elite forces.

Thus, Taiyi Sect and other sects were forced to mobilize entirely.

At this time, Yang Xueyi had already completed Refining Qi cultivation and could have attempted to break through to the Foundation Building stage. However, due to Taiyi Sect's conscription, she voluntarily requested to join the battle.

Meng Zhang had originally planned to find an excuse to keep Yang Xueyi at the sect, but since she insisted on participating, he couldn't persuade her otherwise and had to agree.

Knowing that the campaign against the sand monsters would be extremely difficult, and in compliance with Forest Spring Watch's strict orders, Taiyi Sect held nothing back. All their Foundation Building stage cultivators, including Zheng Chao, Yang Xueyi, Wen Qiansun, and Hu Jing, joined the expedition without exception.

Chapter 236: Various Faction Building up

On this day, it was the designated day for the gathering of various sects by the Forest Spring Watch.

Above Date Spice Oasis, flags were fluttering, and the great army had assembled. A solemn and murderous aura pervaded the entire scene. Each sect had sent out their elite disciples, holding nothing back. Forest Spring Watch made it clear that they intended to establish their dominance, and no sect would be foolish enough to willingly court trouble.

At this critical moment, defying Forest Spring Watch could easily lead to the annihilation of a sect. Over a dozen flying ships of various sizes hovered silently in the sky. Dozens of flying mounts fluttered their wings, guarding beside the ships.

Meng Zhang stood at the forefront of one of the flying ships, with the elite disciples of his sect standing behind him. The flag of Taiyi Sect above the ship fluttered in the wind, and Meng Zhang's expression was solemn. In this Cultivation World large-scale battle, the sect's flag not only inspired the morale of the disciples but also guided them in their actions.

Meng Zhang's senior disciple, Niu Dawei, was also with him this time, allowing him to broaden his horizons and gain more experience. Niu Dawei was appointed as the flag bearer, responsible for guarding the flag of Taiyi Sect. With his initial-stage Refining Qi cultivation base, this position was the safest for him.

Beside Taiyi Sect's ship, Ruan Dadao of Golden Blade Sect, Xu Yishan of Forest Mountain School, Lin Shenpo, and others led their elite disciples, ready to take action at any moment.

The flying ship of Qiaoshou Sect was positioned behind Taiyi Sect's ship, with Aunt Jin and Jin Qigu standing at the bow. Even Jin Qiao'er joined the expedition this time. Over the past two years, Flying Swan Sect had also dispatched people to search for the infiltrated demonic cultivators from Yellow Lotus Sect. However, due to the urgency of the frontline battles and limited manpower, they had not found the whereabouts of the demonic cultivators from Yellow Lotus Sect. Therefore, Qiaoshou Sect remained vigilant and on guard against them at all times.

Jin Qiao'er decided to join the expedition this time for two reasons. Firstly, she wanted to test and train herself, and after the ambush incident by Yellow Lotus Sect's demonic cultivators last time, Jin Qiao'er had noticeably matured. Secondly, with Aunt Jin and other Foundation Building experts going out, Jin Qiao'er felt safer accompanying them rather than staying behind in the sect.

Ahead of Taiyi Sect's ship was a flying ship belonging to the Shi Family. Both Foundation Building experts, Gu Tanghai and Shi Weida, naturally joined the expedition. Even Shi Changqing, the Alchemist who rarely appeared in public, was forcibly enlisted to accompany them.

After the various sects had gathered, a fleet of flying ships, guarded by over twenty flying mounts, took off from Date Spice Oasis and arrived in front of each sect. This fleet carried all the elites of the Forest Spring Watch.

Before Master Guang ZhiDaoist, Forest Spring Watch had been low-profile, seldom revealing their true strength. Now, they displayed their fangs and revealed their full power.

Sect Master Guang HuiDaoist of Forest Spring Watch, along with his three disciples, Guang HongDaoist, Guang QuanDaoist, and Guang DeDaoist, flew into the sky above everyone. Guang HuiDaoist possessed a mid-stage Foundation Building cultivation base, and his strength was not weak. However, he was a reserved person and rarely appeared in public. On the other hand, Guang HongDaoist, as the elder in charge of external affairs for Forest Spring Watch, often represented the sect in various matters, commanding affiliated sects. He had a more renowned reputation among outsiders and was better known.

In reality, Guang HuiDaoist had been in charge of Forest Spring Watch for many years and had quietly made various preparations to support Master Guang ZhiDaoist in reaching the core. His strategies and courage were extraordinary and not to be underestimated.

Twin Success Valley, whose strength far exceeds that of Forest Spring Watch, has become a sacrifice and stepping stone, while Forest Spring Watch, taking advantage of the situation, has risen to prominence, with Guang HuiDaoist playing a crucial role in this success.

Guang QuanDaoist and Guang DeDaoist, like Guang HongDaoist, both have a Cultivation Base in the early stage of Foundation Building. They are also elders of Forest Spring Watch with formidable Cultivation Bases.

Meng Zhang's old friend, Lin Bailin, successfully achieved Foundation Building not long ago. He is currently leading a group of cultivators in the ranks of Forest Spring Watch.

The number of cultivators from the several vassal families affiliated with Forest Spring Watch is not large, but their connections with Forest Spring Watch run deep. As a result, their cultivators do not form separate teams but follow along with Forest Spring Watch's forces.

Although the combined forces of Forest Spring Watch and the vassal sects are already assembled, they are waiting for someone before departing.

After a long time, impatience grows among the people. Finally, a figure flies in from the distant horizon and lands not far from the others.

This person is none other than Zhao Jiudou from the Flying Swan Sect, who has been absent for a long time. Since being publicly defeated by Meng Zhang the last time, he felt ashamed and had no face to stay nearby.

This time, Forest Spring Watch is about to launch an operation in Liu Family's territory, and since Liu Family is a vassal of the Flying Swan Sect, they naturally need to send cultivators to coordinate between the two sides.

Zhao Jiudou hails from the Zhao Family and is very familiar with Forest Spring Watch and the surrounding forces. He has had several dealings with Forest Spring Watch in the past, which is why the sect has assigned him this task.

Despite arriving late, Zhao Jiudou shows no sign of embarrassment. He flies to the vicinity of Guang HuiDaoist and calls out loudly.

"Guang HuiSect Master, all of Liu Family's cultivators are guarding the mountain gate and cannot leave."

"Liu Family's patriarch, Liu Dahai, asked me to relay the message that the members of Forest Spring Watch are free to act as they wish, as Liu Family cannot join the battle."

Many cultivators, not just those from Forest Spring Watch but also those from the vassal sects, find Zhao Jiudou's behavior quite unpleasant.

Guang HuiDaoist, however, remains composed and ignores Zhao Jiudou's impoliteness.

It is understandable that Liu Family refuses to send cultivators to the battle and focuses on guarding their mountain gate. After their heavy losses in the previous battle at Singing Sand City and the subsequent killing of the young Foundation Building cultivator Liu Fengbo by Meng Zhang, Liu Family is currently at its weakest and simply cannot afford to participate in the upcoming fight.

Moreover, the several sects accompanying Forest Spring Watch on this expedition have deep-seated grudges with Liu Family.

Although, logically, these sects would not dare to risk enraging the Flying Swan Sect by attacking Liu Family opportunistically, there is always the chance that they might lose their heads in the heat of battle and attempt to exterminate Liu Family completely. Therefore, Liu Family must remain cautious.

After listening to the message brought by Zhao Jiudou on behalf of Liu Dahai, Forest Spring Watch and the affiliated sects can legitimately enter Liu Family's territory to exterminate the roaming sand monsters.

Guang HuiDaoist glances at the cultivators below. "There is no need for further words from me. Remember, sand monsters are the enemies of humankind, and they cannot coexist with us."

"Exterminating sand monsters is the righteous cause of the Human Clan. If anyone dares to disobey orders or shrink from the battle, I will have no choice but to execute them to uphold military discipline."

After saying this, Guang HuiDaoist, accompanied by several elders in the Foundation Building stage, flies back onto the flying boat of Forest Spring Watch.

This flying boat takes the lead and flies forward, with the rest of the Forest Spring Watch's flying boats following closely behind, along with the flying boats of the vassal sects.

Zhao Jiudou directly flies into the flying boat of the Golden Blade Sect, where he is warmly received by Ruan Dadao.

Chapter 237: Vanishes without the Trace

Under the protection of nearly a hundred flying mounts, a fleet of over thirty airships majestically entered the territory of the Liu Family.

During the usual sand monster calamities, these creatures were rigid and straightforward. Once they detected human cultivators, they would relentlessly pursue them, fighting to the death and never retreating, nor taking the initiative to change their tactics. Only when their nests were under threat would they hurry back to defend them.

However, when Third Rank sand monsters appeared in the Endless Sea of Sand at the same time, all the sand monsters exhibited slightly more intelligence. They would retreat when the attack was unfavorable and evade their enemies when chased. Furthermore, they developed more means of hiding their nests.

The chaos caused by Third Rank sand monsters in the Flying Swan Sect resulted in the nearby sand monsters around Forest Spring Watch also becoming somewhat smarter.

The sand monster horde swept through the Liu Family's territory but did not fully assault the well-prepared Liu Family mountain gate. Instead, they probed a few times before turning to invade Forest Spring Watch's domain.

Upon entering Forest Spring Watch's territory, they were met with a fierce counterattack by the cultivators of Forest Spring Watch. Surprisingly, the sand monster horde promptly retreated and scattered in different directions.

The main force of Forest Spring Watch's cultivators aimed to penetrate deep into Liu Family's territory, eradicating the sand monsters entirely and destroying their nests. Of course, Forest Spring Watch's decision to make such a bold advance was made after careful consideration. Among the sand monsters they faced, there were no Third Rank sand monsters.

After Third Rank sand monsters appeared in the Endless Sea of Sand, all the sand monster hordes demonstrated increased intelligence, acting on instincts to seek advantages and avoid harm. However, this didn't mean the sand monsters truly possessed wisdom. Even a Third Rank sand monster couldn't employ schemes and tricks like humans, such as luring enemies in or pretending to be weak.

If the sand monster horde Forest Spring Watch encountered did indeed have Third Rank sand monsters, these creatures would have directly razed Liu Family's mountain gate, swiftly cleared the surrounding areas, and exterminated all human cultivation forces, including Forest Spring Watch. They would never retreat or scatter in different directions.

After years of enduring the rampage of sand monsters in the Endless Sea of Sand, the Cultivators of the region were familiar with various habits of these creatures.

Therefore, Forest Spring Watch and its allied sects dared to enter Liu Family's territory aggressively and pursue the scattered sand monster horde.

Not long after the Forest Spring Watch's forces entered Liu Family's territory, a cultivator hurriedly flew over from a distance.

This cultivator was Guang RuiDaoist, another mid-Foundation Building cultivator from Forest Spring Watch.

During the previous invasion of sand monsters into Forest Spring Watch's territory, he led the forces that repelled the attack.

After the battle, he sent his men to report to Forest Spring Watch's Sect Master, Guang HuiDaoist, and personally followed the retreating sand monster horde to track their movements.

Guang RuiDaoist got straight to the point without any pleasantries as he reported, "While I was tracking the sand monster horde, I encountered an ambush from four Second Rank sand monsters at the junction of Green Bamboo Mountain's territory and Liu Family's territory. Worried about being surrounded, I had no choice but to retreat first."

"After a while, when I returned to that location, the sand monster horde had disappeared without a trace."

Losing track of the sand monster horde was an unavoidable situation for Guang RuiDaoist. Second Rank sand monsters were much more formidable than Second Rank demonic beasts. Four Second Rank sand monsters were enough to threaten the life of a mid-Foundation Building cultivator like Guang RuiDaoist. The sand monster disappeared at the border between the Liu Family's territory and the Green Bamboo Mountain's territory. Could it have escaped into the Green Bamboo Mountain's territory?

The top priority in dealing with the sand monster is to destroy its nest. However, the nest is deeply buried underground, and Guang HuiDaoist currently has no clue about its location. It's essential to locate the sand monster's nest. With no other choice, he leads a large army to first eliminate the sand monster population, weaken their strength, and then slowly search for their nest.

Guang RuiDaoist has lost track of the sand monster's whereabouts, and there's no effective method to quickly find the nest.

After some thought, Guang HuiDaoist decides to have Guang HongDaoist bring Zhao Jiudou to him.

A moment later, Guang HongDaoist arrives with Zhao Jiudou before Guang HuiDaoist.

Due to the urgency of the situation, Guang HuiDaoist gets straight to the point. "Brother Zhao, I need to trouble you with something."

"The sand monster disappeared at the border between the Liu Family's territory and the Green Bamboo Mountain's territory. It's highly likely that they have moved into the Green Bamboo Mountain's territory."

"Please go and inform the Green Bamboo Mountain about the situation. We will enter their territory later to search for the sand monster population."

Guang HuiDaoist must be cautious because there is a deep-seated animosity between Green Bamboo Mountain and Forest Spring Watch, and Green Bamboo Mountain is affiliated with the Flying Swan Sect. They can't directly intrude on their territory and need Zhao Jiudou, a disciple of the Flying Swan Sect, to communicate beforehand to avoid misunderstandings and conflicts.

Upon hearing Guang HuiDaoist's request, Zhao Jiudou wastes no time and immediately leaves on a flying vessel towards Green Bamboo Mountain.

Instead of directly leading the large army into the Green Bamboo Mountain's territory, Guang HuiDaoist takes a detour within the Liu Family's territory.

This approach allows Zhao Jiudou enough time to inform the Green Bamboo Mountain.

It also guards against the possibility that the sand monster population might still be lingering in the Liu Family's territory.

Following Guang HuiDaoist's orders, the army spreads out, covering a considerable area in the sky.

For two days, they search within the Liu Family's territory but find no trace of the sand monster population.

Finally, the entire army arrives near the entrance of Liu Family's mountain.

The Liu Family's mountain stands tall and majestic, the highest peak for thousands of miles around. Its height far exceeds that of Green Bamboo Mountain and Forest Spring Watch.

The lower half of the mountain exhibits a mix of yellow and green, but as one looks higher up, it turns completely white, covered in snow.

The sight of the snow-covered half of the mountain sends shivers down one's spine even from a distance.

Most of the Liu Family members reside on this mountain. However, due to the recent sand monster attacks, the mountain gate is sealed shut, with protective formations enveloping the area in an almost intangible glow.

At the foot of the mountain was a sizeable oasis, housing numerous commoners.

But during the sand monster invasion, the Liu Family only evacuated the close relatives of their cultivators and some other relatives. Distant relatives and regular commoners were left behind and abandoned.

After the sand monster horde passed, the oasis was reduced to ruins, with most of its inhabitants slaughtered.

Thanks to the formidable defense, the sand monster tried to attack the Liu Family mountain gate a few times but finding no weaknesses, they eventually retreated.

Seeing the approaching Forest Spring Watch army, the Liu Family didn't show any intention of opening the gate to welcome them. Instead, they fortified the gate's defenses, with one protective formation activating after another, clearly on high alert.

Chapter 238: Dividing Forces

In the face of Liu Family's vigilant and defensive attitude, everyone in the vicinity was dissatisfied. Meng Zhang, in particular, sneered, "A bunch of cowards who fear the sand monsters like tigers and can't even protect their own people. They treat reinforcements as if they were thieves."

Meng Zhang's voice, infused with true qi, carried far, and even the cultivators on the nearby flying boats could hear it. Everyone nodded in agreement, and some hot-headed cultivators couldn't help but burst into curses.

Daoist Guang Hui furrowed his brow; he also disapproved of Liu Family's actions but didn't want to escalate the conflict at this moment. He gathered the representatives of several sects together and announced his plan.

According to Daoist Guang Hui's plan, the cultivator army would split into two groups and act independently. The cultivator teams from Forest Spring Watch and Shi Family would head to the Green Bamboo Mountain territory to trace the whereabouts of the sand monster group. Meanwhile, Taiyi Sect, Qiaoshou Sect, Golden Blade Sect, and Forest Mountain School would stay in Liu Family's territory to search for the sand monster nests.

The sand monster group first appeared in Liu Family's territory, and according to their habits, their nests were most likely nearby. However, Liu Family's territory covered hundreds of miles, and considering the surrounding areas, the area was even larger. Moreover, the sand monster nests were buried deep underground, making it a time-consuming task to find them.

Daoist Guang Hong from Forest Spring Watch would stay behind to coordinate and oversee the actions of the four sects' cultivators. He quickly gathered the main personnel from the four sects and, with a casual stroke, delineated a rough search area for each sect.

Using Liu Family's main gate as the center, the surrounding areas were evenly divided into four sections, with each sect responsible for searching their designated area. Daoist Guang Hong remained in the middle to provide support.

If any sect discovered the location of a sand monster nest, the other three sects would immediately rush to provide assistance, aiming to destroy the nest as quickly as possible.

After the announcement, the cultivators from the four sects immediately sprang into action.

Meng Zhang led the cultivators from Taiyi Sect and began a careful search within their assigned area. They lowered their flying boats and many elite disciples jumped off, using their abilities to carefully search underground.

Meng Zhang and Deep EarthSpirit General, both Foundation Building cultivators, had better methods for underground exploration. Especially Deep EarthSpirit General, he had a unique affinity with the earth and could naturally sense various conditions underground. His searching efficiency alone surpassed the combined efforts of Meng Zhang and the other Refining Qi cultivators.

Searching for the sand monster nests underground was destined to be a time-consuming task. As time passed slowly, the search proceeded methodically.

Daoist Guang Hong always used secret methods to maintain contact with Forest Spring Watch's disciples. The joint forces of Forest Spring Watch and Shi Family, after entering the Green Bamboo Mountain territory, also faced difficulties in searching for the sand monster group.

After Zhao Jiudou informed Green Bamboo Mountain, just like Liu Family, they closed their gates and activated the mountain protection great formation, not allowing any cultivators to leave the gate even half a step. The cultivators from Forest Spring Watch and Shi Family were left to roam freely within the Green Bamboo Mountain territory, tirelessly searching for the whereabouts of the sand monsters. From sunrise to sunset, from sunset to sunrise, two days had passed, and both sides' teams had gained nothing.

In a concealed cave within the Liu Family's rear mountain, an old man with white hair and wrinkled face sat cross-legged on a jade bed, quietly listening to the report of a kneeling cultivator below.

This old man was named Liu Dajin, an elder of the Liu Family, and also the father of Liu Fengbo, who had died at the hands of Meng Zhang. In the Liu Family, cultivators of the bloodline, after completing Refining Qi cultivation, could enter the family's secret ice cave. There, they could utilize the family's secret techniques to absorb the accumulated cold qi within the ice cave and attempt to break through to the Foundation Building stage.

Although this method of advancing to the Foundation Building stage did not require auxiliary pills like Foundation Building Pills, it carried high risks. If the attempt failed, the consequences could range from the body becoming stiff and immobile, turning into a living corpse, to losing one's life, with the soul returning to the afterlife. Even if one successfully achieved Foundation Building, there were still many potential problems.

Foundation Building cultivators needed to regularly expel the accumulated cold qi from their bodies, requiring a significant amount of time and energy. The higher their cultivation base, the faster the cold qi accumulated, and the more time and energy were spent in purging it.

Early-stage Foundation Building cultivators had to spend nearly half their lifespan in seclusion to expel the cold qi. Mid-stage Foundation Building cultivators required more than two-thirds of their lifespan. As for late-stage Foundation Building cultivators, they had to sit on specially crafted warm jade beds throughout the year to suppress the excess cold qi with the bed's power. Whenever they left for some time, they couldn't delay outside for too long. They needed to hurry back to the Liu Family promptly to utilize the warm jade bed's power to control the cold qi. Otherwise, they might end up freezing to death.

Due to these drawbacks of their own Foundation Building cultivators, Liu Family appeared weak externally and was constantly suppressed by Twin Success Valley. Currently, besides Liu Dajin, who was a late-stage Foundation Building cultivator, there was only the early-stage Foundation Building family head, Liu Dahai, left in the Liu Family. The substantial losses of Refining Qi cultivators had not been promptly replenished.

At this moment, Liu Family was at its most vulnerable state. Several sects' coalition forces entered the Liu Family's territory, and although the Liu Family kept their mountain gates tightly shut, they still secretly dispatched cultivators to monitor the movements of these sects. The sects had noticed the Liu Family's actions but couldn't be bothered to confront them directly.

The cultivator kneeling in front of Liu Dajin was initially his disciple, who was sent out to monitor the movements of those sects. The sects' objective was to search for the nest of sand monsters and not specifically target the Liu Family. So, they behaved openly without deliberately concealing their actions.

Having received the report from his disciple after he had reported to Family Head Liu Dahai, he hurried to the rear mountain to inform Liu Dajin. "Master, it's said that Taiyi Sect's Meng Zhang frequently separates from the main group and searches alone in a specific area."

"Yes, Master. Meng Zhang, as the Sect Master, often acts separately from other sect members and disciples," the disciple confirmed.

Listening to the report, Liu Dajin nodded with satisfaction and dismissed the disciple, instructing him not to leak this information. Once the disciple left, Liu Dajin's expression changed. His face was filled with pain and unwillingness.

"Fengbo, you died so unjustly. You achieved Foundation Building at such a young age, and you were the hope of the next generation of Liu Family, but you died at the hands of that scoundrel."

"I cannot rest peacefully until this debt is repaid."

Chapter 239: Hatred

Liu Dajin muttered to himself, his face twisted with anger, almost on the verge of shouting. "The hatred of killing one's own child, an irreconcilable enmity. I swear not to be human until this vengeance is avenged."

Liu Dajin held the highest cultivation base within the Liu Family, but he had always been selfish, disregarding the greater good and acting recklessly. As a result, the higher-ups in the family were rather disapproving of him. Despite possessing a Cultivation Base at the late stage of Foundation Building, he was still just an ordinary elder. The key positions, such as the family head and the grand elder, were far beyond his reach.

In a cultivation family like the Liu Family, which had a legacy spanning hundreds of years, there were established rules that couldn't be ignored merely by virtue of a high Cultivation Base. Unless one could form a Gold Core, they would always be bound by the family rules.

As the oldest cultivator in the Liu Family, Liu Dajin didn't have many years left to live. His ambitious and promising son was killed by Meng Zhang's hands, and consumed by hatred, he vowed to exact revenge at any cost.

Meng Zhang had never set foot in the Liu Family's territory before. Liu Dajin, who had to suppress the chill within him, couldn't leave the Liu Family's gate for long periods. But now, Meng Zhang had taken the initiative to enter their territory to deal with the sand monsters. For Liu Dajin, it was an opportune moment for him to personally avenge his son.

As the sky gradually darkened, Liu Dajin used the cover of night to stealthily leave the Liu Family's gate and head in the direction of Meng Zhang.

According to the rules of the Flying Swan Sect, during the operation to subdue the sand monsters, all Human Clan cultivators should put aside their past grievances and focus all their efforts on dealing with the sand monsters. Anyone who dared to cause internal strife during this time would be severely punished by the Flying Swan Sect.

Liu Dajin knew that his actions wouldn't receive support from the family head, Liu Dahai, and if his actions were exposed, not only would he face severe punishment from the Flying Swan Sect, but the entire Liu Family would also be implicated. But blinded by hatred, he no longer cared about these consequences. Personal gains and losses, as well as the interests of the family, were all cast aside as he was single-mindedly determined to kill Meng Zhang.

While Liu Dajin set out to find Meng Zhang, aboard the flying boat of the Golden Blade Sect, another conflict was unfolding.

In the cabin of the Second Rank flying boat of the Golden Blade Sect, all disciples were currently ordered out by Ruan Dadao. Inside, only Ruan Dadao and two strangers remained, engaged in an unyielding argument.

These two unfamiliar cultivators were the ones who had ambushed Jin Qigu and Jin Qiao'er from the Yellow Lotus Sect.

Both of them were distant cousins, named Hong Wei and Hong Feng. Like Zhang Ke, who had died at the hands of Meng Zhang, they were Foundation Building stage cultivators from the Yellow Lotus Sect's East River Branch.

Several years ago, members of the Qiaoshou Sect and other sects had gone to Great Wind City for trade. Jin Qiao'er, who was touring Great Wind City, caught the eye of an important figure from the Yellow Lotus Sect, who intended to take her away. However, the plan was thwarted by patrolling cultivators from Great Wind City, and the Qiaoshou Sect and others managed to escape and return to the Endless Sea of Sand.

Of course, afterward, that important figure easily learned the identities and backgrounds of Jin Qiao'er and the others. The Endless Sea of Sand belonged to the Flying Swan Sect, and there had been a deep-seated enmity between Flying Swan Sect and Yellow Lotus Sect's East River Branch for hundreds of years. Even that important figure didn't dare to act rashly within Flying Swan Sect's territory.

Later, when the Endless Sea of Sand erupted with the sand monster turmoil, most of the manpower from Flying Swan Sect got involved in dealing with it. It was then that the important figure sent Hong Feng and the other two to the Endless Sea of Sand, intending to capture Jin Qiao'er.

Hong Feng and his two companions had a hard time coming to the Endless Sea of Sand, and they were not willing to simply complete their mission. They pooled their resources, borrowed from various sources, and finally gathered a large amount of spirit stones to purchase a substantial amount of goods, intending to trade them in the Endless Sea of Sand. The Flying Swan Sect was engaged in a fierce battle with sand monsters, and they had a great demand for various war-related supplies.

Carefully selecting items that could not directly enhance the combat power of Flying Swan Sect cultivators but were urgently needed by them, like a hundred wooden kites, was an excellent example. Hong Feng, Hong Wei, and Zhang Ke purchased the goods and stored them in Zhang Ke's magic tool for transportation.

Through an intermediary, they contacted Ruan Dadao of the Golden Blade Sect and, at a price, obtained his support in intelligence gathering. While they were preparing to go to the Firewell Market to sell their goods, they coincidentally received a message from Ruan Dadao that Jin Qiao'er would appear there.

Abandoning their plans to prioritize their mission, they successfully ambushed Jin Qiao'er's flying vessel. However, just when they were about to succeed, Taiyi Sect's Sect Master, Meng Zhang, suddenly intervened. Meng Zhang not only disrupted their mission but also killed Zhang Ke, took away the goods and his personal belongings.

Hong Feng and Hong Wei held a deep grudge against the meddlesome Meng Zhang. After the incident was exposed, Flying Swan Sect dispatched cultivators to search for the whereabouts of the Yellow Lotus Sect members. For the past two years, Hong Feng and Hong Wei had been constantly evading pursuit by Flying Swan Sect cultivators, and their escape would not have been possible if Flying Swan Sect hadn't been preoccupied with the sand monsters.

Amidst the chaos of the sand monster outbreak, Forest Spring Watch summoned vassal sects to join the battle. Hong Feng and Hong Wei took this opportunity to come to Ruan Dadao and requested his help in diverting the attention of Aunt Jin and Jin Qigu, so they could capture Jin Qiao'er. However, Ruan Dadao firmly refused their request. Unwilling to give up, Hong Feng and Hong Wei persisted in their pleas, which made Ruan Dadao both angry and regretful of his past decisions. While Qiaoshou Sect and Golden Blade Sect had been allies for many years, Qiaoshou Sect had been thriving, with Aunt Jin and Jin Qigu successfully reaching the Foundation Building stage. In contrast, Ruan Yuan, whom Ruan Dadao had high hopes for, failed to achieve Foundation Building.

Moreover, Qiaoshou Sect produced a talented disciple like Jin Qiao'er, further overshadowing Golden Blade Sect. As a long-time ally of Qiaoshou Sect, Ruan Dadao knew many hidden facts that Qiaoshou Sect deliberately concealed and understood how exceptional Jin Qiao'er was. He truly envied her potential.

If Jin Qiao'er grew to her full potential, Golden Blade Sect would no longer maintain an equal position in front of Qiaoshou Sect. In the worst-case scenario, Golden Blade Sect might end up being a mere follower and lackey of Qiaoshou Sect. As a proud individual, Ruan Dadao couldn't accept being suppressed by a group of female cultivators.

Thus, when the Yellow Lotus Sect cultivators approached him through an intermediary, offering him benefits in exchange for information about Jin Qiao'er, he readily agreed. He never anticipated that the three Yellow Lotus Sect Foundation Building cultivators would all fail in their attempts. Afterwards, Ruan Dadao lived in constant fear, worried that Flying Swan Sect cultivators might track him down and implicate him for collaborating with Yellow Lotus Sect.

Now, two Yellow Lotus Sect members approached him once again, seeking his assistance. If Ruan Dadao were to betray his allies during the sand monster siege, once his actions were exposed, not only he but even Golden Blade Sect could face the danger of annihilation. Despite Hong Feng and Hong Wei's persuasions, Ruan Dadao refused to budge, resolutely declining to help.

Chapter 240: Sneak attack

Hong Feng and Hong Wei, seeing that they couldn't persuade Ruan Dadao to help, left with disappointment. Before leaving, they threatened Ruan Dadao. If he didn't change his mind, the news of his collusion with the Yellow Lotus Sect might be exposed. The possible reactions of the Flying Swan Sect and Forest Spring Watch were unknown in that case.

They gave Ruan Dadao a day to think it over, and they would come back tomorrow night. If Ruan Dadao's answer didn't satisfy them, he would have to bear the consequences himself.

As the two Yellow Lotus Sect cultivators departed under the cover of darkness, Ruan Dadao regretted deeply. He couldn't believe he had rashly associated himself with the Yellow Lotus Sect cultivators. He had no intention of turning against the Qiaoshou Sect, but he simply wanted to eliminate Jin Qiao'er without anyone noticing. Even if Jin Qiao'er left the Qiaoshou Sect and the Endless Sea of Sand, he could accept it.

However, after the failed attempt by the Yellow Lotus Sect cultivators, they persisted and continued to pester him. Ruan Dadao still had some sense left in him, realizing that he couldn't assist them in ambushing their allies while they were besieging the sand monsters. Such an act was absolutely unacceptable.

Ruan Dadao pondered hard, desperately searching for a solution to get out of his current predicament.

Meanwhile, in another part of the night, Liu Dajin had been searching and finally located Meng Zhang, who was alone. As a Foundation Building stage cultivator, Meng Zhang chose to operate independently, as it allowed him to be more efficient.

As a member of the Human Clan Cultivators, Meng Zhang naturally harbored a deep hatred for sand monsters. He was willing to contribute his part in eradicating them, not just completing the task assigned by the Forest Spring Watch.

To swiftly find the nest of the sand monsters, Meng Zhang had put in significant effort. Now, under the cover of darkness, while the Refining Qi stage cultivators from Taiyi Sect rested, Meng Zhang continued his search in a designated area he had marked out.

Liu Dajin, upon discovering Meng Zhang, became composed. As a Foundation Building stage cultivator, Meng Zhang could escape if not dealt with swiftly. Even if Liu Dajin couldn't guarantee a one-strike kill, he aimed to inflict severe damage to prevent Meng Zhang from fleeing.

Knowing that a direct confrontation would provide an opportunity for Meng Zhang to escape, Liu Dajin decided not to take that risk. Instead, he employed all his skills and stealthily closed in on Meng Zhang, looking for a chance to strike.

Just as Meng Zhang had finished searching one area and was preparing to take a break, a sense of impending disaster suddenly overwhelmed him. He felt an inexplicable sense of horror, as if he might perish at any moment.

Being vigilant, Meng Zhang didn't consider this feeling a mere illusion. As a Foundation Building stage cultivator, he had long mastered control over his emotions. He knew this sudden sensation must be a warning sign that he had to take seriously and respond to promptly.

In a fleeting moment, numerous thoughts raced through Meng Zhang's mind, but he wasted no time. He knew he had to leave the area immediately. Acting on his instincts, Meng Zhang quickly moved, forcefully launching himself into the air, ascending towards the sky.

However, before he could rise too high, an icy cold aura descended from above, enveloping him in an arctic chill, as if he had suddenly been plunged into an icy wasteland.

Meng Zhang, who had faced Liu Family cultivators in several previous encounters, immediately recognized the chilling true qi, a secret technique unique to the Liu Family.

From the strength of the attack, the opponent is not only at the early stage of Foundation Building in their Cultivation Base, but possibly even beyond the mid-stage of Foundation Building.

At this moment, Meng Zhang couldn't afford to ponder why the Liu Family suddenly had such a powerful expert and why they would dare to ambush him at this critical moment.

Meng Zhang's most urgent task right now was to escape from the enemy's carefully planned assault. Fortunately, he had already lifted off the ground, giving him enough space to dodge and maneuver.

His body, which had been flying upward, suddenly accelerated, increasing its speed several times over. However, instead of continuing to fly high, he darted forward. The spot where Meng Zhang had been standing silently turned into a huge pit.

Although the enemy's attack only grazed him, it almost froze all the blood in Meng Zhang's body, leaving half of his body numb from the cold.

Ignoring the discomfort in his body, Meng Zhang forcefully condensed true qi and tried to escape from this perilous situation as quickly as possible.

Normally, when facing such an ambush, Meng Zhang should have fled in the direction of the Taiyi Sect disciples to quickly rendezvous with them and seek support. However, his instinct led him to choose a different direction to escape.

The sudden warning in his heart had helped him avoid a calamity just now. Trusting his intuition, Meng Zhang flew in the opposite direction of the Taiyi Sect disciples.

Meng Zhang's body was almost skimming the ground, leaping forward like a rabbit. The sneak attack from Liu Dajin, which should have been a sure hit, was unexpectedly avoided by Meng Zhang's sudden movements.

Liu Dajin couldn't understand why his meticulously planned attack, which seemed impossible to dodge, had failed. It was as if Meng Zhang had known his actions in advance and evaded in time. Seeing Meng Zhang attempting to escape, Liu Dajin didn't have time to contemplate the issue. He swiftly lunged forward, sticking close to Meng Zhang like a malignant sore, making the surroundings feel even colder.

Meng Zhang pushed his true qi to the limit, solely focused on fleeing ahead. He had no chance to retaliate. He knew that even the slightest pause in his movements would result in a storm of attacks, leaving him defenseless and killed on the spot.

Meng Zhang couldn't spare a moment for counterattacks, spellcasting, or retrieving items from his storage bag. He could only focus on escaping with all his might, without any unnecessary movements.

Despite his efforts, Meng Zhang was aware that he wouldn't be able to escape for much longer. In about ten breaths, the enemy would catch up to him and kill him.

Meng Zhang followed his intuition in his escape, and it led him straight towards the direction where the Golden Blade Sect was located.

Coincidentally, Hong Feng and Hong Wei, who had just parted ways with Ruan Dadao, happened to run into the pursued Meng Zhang. Upon recognizing each other, they discovered their respective identities.

Seeing Meng Zhang being chased, Hong Wei and Hong Feng felt delighted and contemplated whether they should take advantage of the situation and interfere.

However, Meng Zhang reacted swiftly and desperately shouted, "Big Brother Zhang, Fifth Brother Wang, Liu Family cultivators are colluding with sand monsters! You must be careful!"

Upon hearing Meng Zhang's shout, Hong Feng and Hong Wei were momentarily stunned. Who were Big Brother Zhang and Fifth Brother Wang? Was Meng Zhang referring to them as his brothers? But they weren't addressed by those titles. Besides, could human cultivators from the Endless Sea of Sand collude with sand monsters?