

Sect Master 261

Chapter 261: Elders

Although Meng Zhang was not very old, he could proudly say that the younger generation of cultivators in Taiyi Sect had promising talents, especially Yang Xueyi, a Foundation Building cultivator, and Deep Earth Spirit General.

After some careful consideration, Meng Zhang made an announcement to the entire sect and appointed Yang Xueyi and Deep Earth Spirit General as elders within the sect. Aside from managing their respective affairs, the elders also had a say in other matters concerning the sect. Especially when it came to significant decisions, the Sect Master needed to seek the opinions of the elders.

Meng Zhang didn't intend to rule the sect single-handedly, as he was not a dictatorial personality. He knew his own limitations, that his intelligence and experiences were average, and his insights were not extraordinary. While he handled day-to-day affairs well, when faced with major issues, it was better to listen to the opinions of others within the sect.

Collective wisdom was crucial to prevent mistakes and make the right decisions. Currently, besides Yang Xueyi and Deep Earth Spirit General, there was another elder in Taiyi Sect named Tian Zhen, who was at the Refining Qi stage.

These two Refining Qi stage elders were Senators of Taiyi Sect, having made significant contributions to the sect, and their status was beyond doubt. Meng Zhang didn't want to dwell on historical issues, but from now on, he wanted to set a rule that any newcomer aspiring to become an elder in Taiyi Sect must have at least reached the Foundation Building stage in their Cultivation Base.

As the number of Refining Qi stage cultivators increased within the sect, the matter of disciples' Foundation Building became a pressing concern. Not all Refining Qi completion cultivators possessed the talent of Meng Zhang and Yang Xueyi, who could achieve Foundation Building without relying on Foundation Building Pills. In fact, even with Yang Xueyi's talent, successfully achieving Foundation Building without taking Foundation Building Pills was somewhat lucky.

Shi Changqing of the Shi Family had previously succeeded in refining a batch of Foundation Building Pills but was unable to continue due to the lack of materials. To continue collecting materials for refining Foundation Building Pills on the market, even if he was willing to pay a significant price, it would not be accomplished overnight.

As for the Lesser Foundation Building Pill of Twin Success Valley, Shi Changqing couldn't refine it yet because the formula was not complete. Of course, Shi Changqing was deeply researching to find alternative materials or continuously attempting to deduce the handling methods of those two crucial materials.

Such work was ongoing, and both Shi Changqing and Forest Spring Watch were making continuous efforts. Various alchemy techniques in the Cultivation World were gradually born and perfected through these slow and arduous processes. Of course, aside from dedicating a great deal of effort and time, luck was often needed to achieve good results.

Among the talented alchemists in Taiyi Sect, Zhang Yingying was only a First Rank Alchemist, and even with a complete formula, she couldn't refine a Second Rank pill like the Lesser Foundation Building Pill.

Meng Zhang decided to keep the complete formula of the Lesser Foundation Building Pill a secret. He abandoned the idea of seeking help from other alchemists in distant places, as he didn't have trustworthy Second Rank Alchemists among his contacts. If news about the complete formula leaked, both the Shi Family and Forest Spring Watch would come knocking at his door. While the Shi Family might be manageable, he couldn't easily refuse Forest Spring Watch.

Meng Zhang's principle was simple—he would rather keep the complete formula hidden than benefit others. As for collaboration, there was no mutual trust to support such an endeavor.

The matter of the Foundation Building Pill is not urgent for now. Yang Xueyi has become a Foundation Building cultivator, and of course, she needs to possess the strength befitting a cultivator of that stage. Besides cultivating some Foundation Building spells and Divine Abilities, she also requires Second Rank magic tools.

However, suitable Second Rank magic tools are not available in the nearby area; they have to go to the Firewell Market to find them.

Once Yang Xueyi's cultivation base stabilizes, she holds a dharma meeting within the sect to share her insights and experiences with the disciples. She is open and doesn't hold back, imparting many useful cultivation tips to them.

After a few more days, Meng Zhang accompanies Yang Xueyi on a journey to Firewell Market. Though it is far away, they ride on the Crimson Feather Eagles, and after spending a day's effort, they reach their destination.

Inside the Firewell Market, they visit all the shops, even the black market, but they can't find the suitable Second Rank magic tool Yang Xueyi desires. Despite her recent attainment of Foundation Building, Yang Xueyi has high standards and doesn't find any of the seemingly useless items appealing.

Unable to find the desired magic tool in the shops, Meng Zhang has no choice but to seek help from Shangguan Wen, the external affairs disciple of the Earthfire Sect.

With Meng Zhang and Yang Xueyi meeting Shangguan Wen, he greets them politely, congratulates Yang Xueyi on her recent Foundation Building, and compliments her exceptional talent and the teaching abilities of Taiyi Sect, but he doesn't get to the point.

Meng Zhang patiently engages with him for a while before stating his purpose. He wishes to purchase 1-2 top-quality Second Rank flying swords, expecting compensation for the Earthfire Sect's previous failure to deliver the promised Second Rank flying sword, which was intercepted by Zhao Jiudou.

However, Shangguan Wen begins making various excuses and evasions. He claims that their top Second Rank tool refiners are busy fulfilling orders from the Flying Swan Sect or that all their Second Rank magic tools have already been sold.

In essence, Shangguan Wen is unwilling to help and doesn't give Meng Zhang any face. He suggests that Meng Zhang should look at the various shops in the Firewell Market.

Feeling disappointed and nostalgic for the prosperous Great Wind City, where even Third Rank magic tools were readily available, Meng Zhang realizes that he can't spend money even when he has it in this barren Endless Sea of Sand.

Since Shangguan Wen has made his stance clear, Meng Zhang doesn't bother to continue pestering him. He casually responds and takes Yang Xueyi away from there.

Before they leave, Shangguan Wen mentions with a hint of seriousness that Earthfire Sect and Taiyi Sect have a long-standing relationship of trust and mutual reliance in their mineral trades. He warns Meng Zhang that dealing with dubious merchants could lead to losses and deception. He recalls instances where people in the previous Firewell Market were cheated when engaging with merchants of unknown origins and ended up losing everything.

Chapter 262: Preliminary Test Calculated

Since the incident where Zhao Jiudou intercepted the harvest last time, Meng Zhang ordered the external affairs Hall Master Li Xuan of the sect to search for other Shang Families outside and sell various mineral products of the Taiyi Sect. Meng Zhang's intention was twofold: first, to express dissatisfaction with the Earthfire Sect and give them a warning, and second, to diversify and reduce the reliance on the Earthfire Sect by not putting all their eggs in one basket.

Li Xuan's work was quite effective, and after many years of effort, they managed to find alternative buyers for at least half of Taiyi Sect's mineral products.

Meng Zhang's intentions were clear: he was willing to suffer some losses in terms of price and sell fewer spirit stones if it meant preventing the Earthfire Sect from controlling Taiyi Sect's shipping channels. Judging from Shangguan Wen's reaction, Taiyi Sect's approach was successful.

Regardless of whether Shangguan Wen's previous words were complaints or warnings, Meng Zhang was not afraid of him. Although the Earthfire Sect held great power in the Firewell Market and was nominally the master, the market's success was built on a relatively fair business environment, which was the result of the joint efforts of various Shang Families. If the Earthfire Sect wanted to bully others and engage in unfair trade practices, not only would the other Shang Families oppose them, but even the Flying Swan Sect would not tolerate it.

In essence, the Earthfire Sect was too arrogant and looked down on Taiyi Sect. Otherwise, when Meng Zhang actively sought help, if Shangguan Wen had even a little sincerity, he could have saved face and improved the relationship with Taiyi Sect.

After leaving Shangguan Wen's place, the clever Yang Xueyi also noticed that the Earthfire Sect's attitude was not right. Understanding the situation, she said to Meng Zhang, "Sect Master, since Earthfire Sect is unwilling to help, let's just go back. It's not urgent to buy the Second Rank magic tool. I'll spend more time practicing some spells, and it won't affect our combat strength."

Yang Xueyi's sensible words actually aroused Meng Zhang's competitive spirit. He replied, "You don't need to say more about this matter. Since I promised you to help you get a suitable Second Rank magic tool, I won't go back on my word."

Meng Zhang believed in keeping promises just as he wouldn't eat pork with hair after leaving Zhang the Butcher's place. Even though they couldn't buy a suitable Second Rank magic tool from the Earthfire Sect, Meng Zhang had other ways to handle the situation.

Instead of rushing back, Meng Zhang and Yang Xueyi stayed in the market and found an inn to rest. They chose a secluded small courtyard to stay in.

After returning to his room, Meng Zhang calmed his mind and adjusted his breathing, clearing his thoughts. He then focused and initiated the Grand Evolving Fortune technique.

Countless calculation tallies flew out from Meng Zhang's body, gathering into a circle in front of him. These calculation tallies appeared vague and ethereal, impossible to touch by an outsider's hand.

Meng Zhang held both hands up in front of him and kept moving his ten fingers, chanting indistinct words. The previously calm surroundings seemed to stir on their own, disrupting the airflow in the room.

Soon, the room was filled with an ancient and mysterious atmosphere. Invisible gusts of wind flowed through the room.

In his consciousness, Meng Zhang repeatedly calculated his target, and one calculation tally after another disappeared. Since he started learning the Grand Evolving Fortune technique, he had been accumulating calculation tallies, rarely taking a break, and adding one tally almost every day.

Until now, Meng Zhang has accumulated over four hundred calculation tallies. It's just a mere Second Rank magic tool he's trying to deduce, so these calculation tallies should be enough.

The rate at which the calculation tallies are disappearing is very fast; in a short while, about half of them vanished. Meng Zhang's expression is not good because the consumption of the calculation tallies is too rapid.

He worries that if the calculation tallies are depleted before yielding results, he might end up exhausting his life. Thankfully, the worst-case scenario he fears has not occurred.

After consuming over three hundred calculation tallies, Meng Zhang finally obtains the Calculated result. A rough piece of information appears in his mind: In ten days, two thousand miles east of the Firewell Market, the thing he desires will appear.

The information is not precise and lacks specific details, but Meng Zhang is already satisfied. This is the result of using the art of celestial calculation; at his current level, obtaining definite information regarding Second Rank items is impossible.

In fact, even if he had received vague, enigmatic information, he would have been very pleased. Meng Zhang is not yet aware of the seemingly inconspicuous "Grand Evolving Fortune" and its significance and miraculous effects in the world of Diviners.

With the specific time and a rough location, Meng Zhang considers this Calculated session a success. Early the next day, he summons Yang Xueyi to accompany him in traveling to the Calculated location.

Though the result indicated it would take ten days, arriving early and making preparations is not a bad idea.

Yang Xueyi, who always obeys the Sect Master, doesn't question much and follows Meng Zhang directly.

In less than a day, the two of them reach the destination. The result of the Calculated session only provided a broad area: two thousand miles east of the Firewell Market, which is an immensely vast region.

Meng Zhang doesn't rush to land but, instead, leads Yang Xueyi to ride a Red Feathered Falcon, thoroughly surveying the surroundings.

The terrain below is an endless desert with nothing remarkable. During this process, Meng Zhang frequently activates his Deception Breaking Eye to carefully observe the surroundings but doesn't find anything abnormal.

It seems that the time hasn't come yet, and the thing he desires hasn't appeared.

After a day of traveling, Meng Zhang and Yang Xueyi find a sand dune to land on, clear a space, and begin to meditate and recover.

The next day, Meng Zhang takes Yang Xueyi again, mounts the Red Feathered Falcon, and takes to the sky, circling the area.

This routine continues, flying high during the day and resting in a designated place at night.

On the third day, Yang Xueyi finally couldn't help but ask, "Sect Master, are we searching for something? We've been circling around in the sky like this, exploring the entire area, but still haven't found our target."

Meng Zhang smiles mysteriously. "Don't ask too much for now. The time hasn't come, that's all. When the time comes, you'll understand everything."

Meng Zhang hasn't revealed the Calculated result to Yang Xueyi, nor has he informed him that he has become a Diviner. It's not that he doesn't trust Yang Xueyi, but rather because it's the customary style of Diviners.

Chapter 263: Dropping from the Clouds

The role of a Diviner itself is a mystical profession. For most Cultivators, Diviners exist only in legends. Even those who have encountered Cultivators trained in the ways of Divination often find them enigmatic, appearing and disappearing like elusive dragons.

Since Meng Zhang became a Diviner, he naturally had to embody some of the characteristic traits of a Diviner. Throughout the years in the Cultivation World, Diviners had always adhered to this style, indicating that there must be some reason behind it, and it was not just a facade.

Yang Xueyi, the Sect Master of Taiyi Sect, had great trust in Meng Zhang. So, when Meng Zhang said that the timing wasn't right and they needed to wait patiently, she refrained from further idle talk and followed his instructions.

In Meng Zhang's heart, however, there was a hint of uncertainty because it was his first time utilizing the technique of Heavenly Calculation. He wasn't entirely sure about the accuracy of the results it produced. In times of peace, if he couldn't find a satisfactory magic tool at Firewell

Market, he could have gone to the directly controlled territory of the Flying Swan Sect, which was even more prosperous and thriving in terms of trade.

But now, the sand monster turmoil was in full swing, and fierce battles were taking place in the territory of the Flying Swan Sect. For a Cultivator like Meng Zhang, at the Foundation Building stage, going there would entail significant risks.

Traveling such a long distance to such a perilous place just to acquire a magic tool didn't seem like a worthwhile endeavor. Therefore, Meng Zhang attempted to use the Grand Evolving Fortune technique. Unfortunately, the results of the Heavenly Calculation were never entirely clear.

Over the next few days, Meng Zhang and Yang Xueyi thoroughly searched the surrounding area. Meng Zhang even employed the Deception Breaking Eye technique to see through the ground. Although the depth of his vision was limited, he didn't find anything suspicious.

Doubts started to emerge in Meng Zhang's mind. Could it be that he had cultivated a fake technique of Heavenly Calculation? Could the Calculated results of Grand Evolving Fortune be unreliable?

With these doubts, Meng Zhang endured these difficult days. Finally, the tenth day arrived, the day when Grand Evolving Fortune's Calculated results were due.

Early in the morning, Meng Zhang, accompanied by Yang Xueyi, rode a Crimson Feathered Falcon and soared into the sky, leisurely observing the surroundings. The entire morning passed, but they found nothing unusual. Meng Zhang began to feel a bit disheartened.

During the midday, the two of them rested briefly. In the afternoon, they continued to roam around, but still, they found nothing. As night approached, the day was drawing to a close.

Meng Zhang felt a bit deflated. Grand Evolving Fortune had actually made a mistake; there was no trace of a Second Rank magic tool in this place. Yang Xueyi looked at Meng Zhang with some puzzlement, wondering why the Sect Master seemed a little low-spirited today.

Descending to the ground with Yang Xueyi, Meng Zhang decided not to wander around aimlessly anymore. He felt like a fool, doubting the effectiveness of his cultivation in the Heavenly Calculation technique.

Just as Meng Zhang began to question his technique, a sudden change occurred. In the sky, three figures appeared, with one in the front frantically fleeing and the other two closely pursuing. Meng Zhang immediately noticed the situation in the sky, and his heart wavered. Could this be the opportunity foreseen by Grand Evolving Fortune?

As they could fly in the sky, all three were Foundation Building stage cultivators. Typically, cultivators at the Foundation Building stage possessed Second Rank magic tools. Could it be that this time, I am here to kill and seize treasures, taking their magic tools?

At this moment, the cultivator fleeing in front noticeably slowed down. The pursuing cultivator behind caught up and intercepted him.

"You dog thief from the Flying Swan Sect, let's fight together!" A mournful roar resounded in the sky.

The trapped cultivator took out a ball of flames from his body. Then, he sprayed a mouthful of blood onto the flames, drenching them completely.

The ball of flames suddenly burst open, enveloping both pursuers.

One of the pursuers had almost no resistance and was immediately ignited. His entire body was like a burning torch, blazing fiercely.

The other pursuer activated a protective shield as the flames exploded, shattering the shield.

Taking advantage of this momentary delay, the second pursuer's body turned into a stream of light, disappearing into the sky.

After delivering his final attack, the chased cultivator lost all strength and fell straight down from the sky.

Meng Zhang and Yang Xueyi exchanged glances and immediately flew into the sky, heading towards the location where the battle had taken place.

The cultivator who had been ignited hadn't even landed on the ground yet, and his entire body had been burnt to ashes, which scattered with the wind.

The pursued cultivator's body fell directly to the ground from the sky. Even though the ground was soft sand, falling from such a height caused his body to be shattered into a bloody mess.

Meng Zhang and Yang Xueyi landed at the spot where the cultivator had fallen.

Although the cultivator was dead, the three storage bags he carried remained intact.

Meng Zhang's discerning eye could see through the mess of flesh and blood and extract three perfectly preserved storage rings from it.

Meng Zhang used his true qi to levitate the storage bags and rings in the air. He conjured a stream of clear water, carefully washing away the bloodstains on them.

After thoroughly cleaning them, Meng Zhang and Yang Xueyi began to sort out the items inside.

The three storage bags were all Ten-Fold Storage Bags, filled with various items such as spiritual stones, pills, and talismans. Additionally, there were several jade slips and a total of four Second-Rank magic tools.

Seeing these four Second-Rank magic tools, Yang Xueyi looked at Meng Zhang with a puzzled expression.

Could it be that this was what the Sect Master meant by understanding everything at the right time? But how did the Sect Master know that someone would fall from the sky at this exact moment?

For a moment, Meng Zhang's image in Yang Xueyi's mind became unusually tall and mysterious.

Among the pile of items, Meng Zhang searched and found a black token.

In the center of the token, there was an emblem of a fiery red cloud, resembling a burning flame.

Meng Zhang had been to the Jiuqu League territory and knew about the distribution of cultivation forces around Great Wind City.

At a glance, he recognized this as the identity token of a disciple from the Fire Cloud Sect, a major cultivation sect near Great Wind City.

Considering that this person was chased and killed by disciples of the Flying Swan Sect, he should indeed be a member of the Fire Cloud Sect.

Hundreds of years ago, during the chaotic times in the Endless Sea of Sand, Fire Cloud Sect had invaded on a large scale, but they were eventually driven out by the Flying Swan Sect.

Since then, Fire Cloud Sect had harbored ill intentions, coveting the Endless Sea of Sand.

For hundreds of years, conflicts and small-scale battles occurred frequently along the borders between Fire Cloud Sect and Flying Swan Sect.

The intrusion of a Fire Cloud Sect disciple into the Endless Sea of Sand, followed by being hunted down by a Flying Swan Sect disciple, seemed to be nothing out of the ordinary.

Chapter 264: Fire Cloud Sect

Among the four Second Rank magic tools, one of them was a shimmering golden brush, precisely a Second Rank talisman brush, which could be used for drawing Second Rank talismans. It seemed as if it was tailor-made for Yang Xueyi, the expert in talisman making.

The second item was a collar emitting five colors of golden, black, white, cyan, and red lights. This was a Five Elements Collar, capable of enhancing the power of the user's Five Elements spells and reducing the spell's consumption. Yang Xueyi possessed a middle-grade spiritual root, aligned perfectly with the Five Elements attribute, and practiced Five Elements cultivation techniques. Though she often employed the Wind Dance Swordplay with her flying sword, her true expertise lay in various spells, especially those related to the Five Elements. However, as a Refining Qi stage cultivator, she faced various limitations while casting spells. The spells were hard to cast instantly, their power was limited, and she could only use a limited number of spells.

Now that she had entered the Foundation Building stage, those limitations naturally vanished, and it was the perfect time for Yang Xueyi to showcase her spellcasting prowess. That's why she confidently told Meng Zhang that even without suitable Second Rank magic tools, her combat strength wouldn't be weak due to her extensive spell practice.

The Five Elements Collar was especially suitable for Yang Xueyi's abilities. Next, there was a piece of emerald-green silk, as if woven from a cluster of clouds, known as the magic tool Biyun Cloth. The Biyun Cloth was both offensive and defensive. When released, it could attack and trap enemies, and when retracted, it could protect the user. Such a beautiful magic tool was especially well-suited for female cultivators.

Lastly, there was a small black pennant exuding a chilling aura. It belonged to the Yin Wind Pennant, which had a tendency toward Yin and cold attributes. Upon careful sensing, it seemed to carry the aura of a Ghost Path cultivator. As a female cultivator, Yang Xueyi naturally disliked such a ghostly magic tool. However, Meng Zhang, with his Lunar True Qi, could easily control it. The first four magic tools were assigned to Yang Xueyi, while the Yin Wind Pennant became Meng Zhang's possession.

After tidying up the storage bag, Meng Zhang began inspecting the items inside the three storage rings. Each of these rings had a vast capacity, nearly ten times larger than an ordinary storage bag. Within them were various mineral materials, most of which could be used in refining different

magic tools. Despite the Endless Sea of Sand being desolate, it was not entirely devoid of resources. The region had its own distinctive minerals.

The mineral materials stored within the rings had undergone meticulous refinement. For instance, the Xuanjin Ore had been diligently processed to become highly pure Xuanjin...

Upon clearing out two particular materials, Meng Zhang's expression immediately turned unpleasant. One of these materials was a rare and precious underground Flame Crystal. These crystals were deeply buried beneath the ground, especially at the bottom of volcanoes, making them challenging to discover. The Earthfire Sect, which had risen to prominence by its unique cultivation techniques, possessed secret methods for mining these Flame Crystals from underground.

For Flying Swan Sect, unless they wanted their Gold Core Daoist Masters to act as miners, the only option to obtain Flame Crystals was through Earthfire Sect. The majority of Flame Crystals mined by Earthfire Sect were offered as tributes to the Flying Swan Sect.

Flame Crystals were extremely scarce on the market in the Endless Sea of Sand, and their prices were exorbitant. It was highly unlikely that this Fire Cloud Sect disciple had acquired such a large quantity of Flame Crystals from the market or Flying Swan Sect. The only remaining possibility was that they were linked to Earthfire Sect.

As one of the major cultivation sects in the Endless Sea of Sand and a vassal sect of Flying Swan Sect, Earthfire Sect's collusion with the sworn enemy Fire Cloud Sect was undoubtedly a sensational piece of news. "If the matter of the Earthfire Crystals could still be excused by the Earthfire Sect, Meng Zhang's discovery of another material inside the storage ring nailed down the accusation of Earthfire Sect colluding with the Fire Cloud Sect.

This material is called Crimson Flame Oil.

Crimson Flame Oil is not a naturally occurring substance but rather something refined by the Second Rank tool refiner of the Earthfire Sect through special means.

The formula and refining methods of Crimson Flame Oil have always been kept strictly confidential and never leaked to the outside.

When refining metal attribute magic tools, especially those leaning towards fire-based magic tools, adding Crimson Flame Oil not only significantly increases the success rate of the refining process but also enhances the power of the magic tool.

For the Earthfire Sect, refining Crimson Flame Oil is an extremely arduous task, requiring the Second Rank tool refiners to invest a considerable amount of time and energy.

Even in an alchemy sect like the Earthfire Sect, Second Rank tool refiners are not numerous, and they are usually very busy.

The Earthfire Sect never sells Crimson Flame Oil on the market; it is never seen in the market.

The Flying Swan Sect has made numerous efforts and applied significant pressure for the Earthfire Sect to submit three bottles of Crimson Flame Oil each year. According to the Earthfire Sect, this accounts for over half of their annual output.

However, the Flying Swan Sect depletes the three bottles of Crimson Flame Oil they receive every year very quickly; it is simply not enough.

But within Meng Zhang's storage ring, he discovered dozens of bottles of Crimson Flame Oil.

Apart from the Earthfire Sect, there should be no other sect in the world capable of providing so much Crimson Flame Oil.

What exactly is the relationship between the Earthfire Sect and the Fire Cloud Sect? Is it merely a simple trade relationship, or is there a deeper collusion?

Regardless of the nature of their relationship, it is undoubtedly being concealed from the Flying Swan Sect, and they will not tolerate it. Once the Flying Swan Sect discovers it, the Earthfire Sect will undoubtedly face great difficulties.

Meng Zhang has now discovered this secret, giving him leverage to control the Earthfire Sect. As for how to use this leverage to maximize his own and Taiyi Sect's benefits, he will need to think carefully.

Meng Zhang and Yang Xueyi put the sorted items back and stored away the storage magic tools.

After careful inspection, neither the three storage bags nor the three storage rings had any obvious markings or hidden magical imprints.

Meng Zhang casually released a flame, turning the body of the Fire Cloud Sect cultivator into ashes.

As for the body of the Flying Swan Sect disciple, along with all the items on him, they had already turned to ashes and scattered with the wind.

Having just done all this, Meng Zhang suddenly felt a strong sense of unease in his heart, as if there was a mysterious power warning him.

He had experienced this feeling before when he was ambushed by Liu Dajin. Back then, he suspected that it was a unique ability among cultivators, a special warning.

The last time, Meng Zhang trusted this feeling and narrowly escaped with his life from the Foundation Building late stage Liu Dajin.

Now, with the experience, Meng Zhang had to follow this feeling in his heart.

He didn't even dare to fly into the sky and hastily said to Yang Xueyi, "Follow me quickly."

Before Yang Xueyi could respond, Meng Zhang immediately cast the Earth Escape Spell and disappeared into the ground.

Without any hesitation, Yang Xueyi also cast the Earth Escape Spell and followed Meng Zhang into the ground."

Chapter 265: Earth Escape

Meng Zhang exerted all his efforts to cast the Earth Escape Spell, continuously delving deep into the underground. Yang Xueyi followed closely behind him without uttering a word.

After a while, Yang Xueyi began to feel the strain. Her talent for spells was high, and her proficiency with the Earth Escape Spell was commendable. However, being at the early stage of Foundation Building with limited Cultivation Base, it was her first time delving so deeply underground.

Meng Zhang, still silent, noticed Yang Xueyi's situation as they continued descending.

After some time, Yang Xueyi reached a certain limit, barely able to hold on. It was then that Meng Zhang ceased their descent into the depths and changed course, moving horizontally underground toward another direction, making a direct escape into the distance.

Meng Zhang seemed to be fleeing for his life, and his speed was astonishing. Yang Xueyi gave it her all to barely keep up with him.

Shortly after Meng Zhang and Yang Xueyi delved into the underground, three cultivators flew from the distant sky and landed directly at the spot where Meng Zhang had just destroyed the evidence of the corpse.

The three cultivators emanated powerful auras. Aside from one in the mid-stage of Foundation Building, the other two were at the late stage of Foundation Building.

One of the cultivators at the late stage of Foundation Building held a round bead and carefully examined it before saying, "Senior Brother, the aura of Fifth Junior Brother and Seventh Junior Brother vanished here."

"The last time Seventh Junior Brother contacted us, he was being tracked by cultivators from the Flying Swan Sect. His aura disappeared here, and Seventh Junior Brother, I'm afraid..." The eldest among them spoke with a darkened expression and a cold tone.

"With Seventh Junior Brother encountering trouble here, how can we explain this to our Master?" The youngest one among them voiced some discontent. "This was supposed to be a very simple mission, but Seventh Junior Brother insisted on acting alone..."

"Enough! Don't mention such things again," the one who spoke first interrupted him. "If such words reach our Master's ears, he will think that we are shirking responsibilities and blaming each other."

The eldest cultivator took out a mirror, which flew into the air, emitting a dazzling light. The light swept in all directions, scanning back and forth before finally sweeping across the ground, penetrating deep into the underground.

After a while, finding nothing, the eldest cultivator couldn't help but say resentfully, "We found nothing here. Let's leave as soon as possible. If we're caught up by those thieves from the Flying Swan Sect, it'll be another trouble."

The three cultivators stopped saying more and flew away into the distance.

Not long after the three left, two Flying Swan Sect-marked flying boats arrived at the scene. Several cultivators descended from the boats, conducted an intensive search, even employing secret techniques, but found no traces of any cultivators.

Unaware of what had transpired after they left the underground, Meng Zhang and Yang Xueyi didn't know what happened there.

If Meng Zhang hadn't impulsively issued a warning, they would likely have run into cultivators from the Fire Cloud Sect.

If they hadn't followed their instincts and fled from deep underground, they might not have evaded the magic tool search of the Fire Cloud Sect cultivators.

In such a situation, a peaceful encounter with the Fire Cloud Sect cultivators was out of the question. Once they engaged, given the significant difference in their strengths, it was indeed uncertain whether Meng Zhang and Yang Xueyi could escape unharmed.

Following their hearts' intuition, Meng Zhang led Yang Xueyi to travel a long distance underground before finally emerging back to the surface.

As soon as they appeared on the surface, the two of them flew towards Firewell Market in the distance.

After returning to Firewell Market, Meng Zhang experienced a series of events following his use of the Celestial Insight Technique, which led to a sudden realization in his heart. He found lodging in an inn and secluded himself in a quiet room to meditate.

At this moment, Meng Zhang's state was exceptional. He had an unprecedented clarity of mind, with his consciousness lucid and vibrant. After meditating for a considerable time, he finally concluded this profound insight.

The occurrences of the past ten days provided him with new understanding, and he made significant progress in the Celestial Insight Technique. Now, Meng Zhang could proudly proclaim himself as a qualified Diviner.

Previously, he had never delved deeply into matters related to the Calculated and Cultivation World using the Celestial Insight Technique. He merely experimented with some trivial matters and had not truly comprehended the essence of the technique. However, through this trial or refinement, his understanding became deeper, and he no longer harbored any doubts about the Grand Evolving Fortune he cultivated.

As a qualified Diviner, Meng Zhang now possessed two abilities. The first was the spontaneous insight, which most Diviners had, but the level of proficiency varied. With this ability, he could sense significant events that were about to occur in his life, especially those that posed a threat to his existence. For Meng Zhang, this spontaneous insight served as a valuable warning ability that had already proven its worth in saving his life.

However, the spontaneous insight was not infallible. If other Diviners disrupted the celestial mechanisms, it could deceive Meng Zhang's senses. Moreover, individuals of higher status, such as Primordial Spirit True Monarchs, could also make it difficult for Meng Zhang to sense their actions.

Despite its flaws, the spontaneous insight remained the most critical ability for Meng Zhang. The second ability he possessed was the skill to use calculation tallies for divination. The number of calculation tallies required depended on the complexity of the matter being predicted. Similarly, if other Diviners disrupted the process, it would significantly increase the consumption of calculation tallies.

The Celestial Insight Technique couldn't be overused, especially not abused. It had to be employed judiciously as reckless usage could invite calamities.

Prosperity and misfortune coexist, and misfortune can lead to fortune. How to convert misfortune into fortune was a question every Diviner had to face.

In Meng Zhang's case, he had used the Celestial Insight Technique rashly to calculate matters concerning the magic tool. It was clearly not careful enough, and he narrowly avoided colliding with a cultivator from Fire Cloud Sect, which could be seen as a warning from fate.

However, since becoming a Diviner, this was the first time he used the Grand Evolving Fortune to calculate matters related to the Cultivation World. Somehow, he achieved a perfect result, possibly influenced by some unknown force in the universe. Meng Zhang couldn't help but wonder if this was a divine gift, a beginner's luck granted by the heavens.

Before Meng Zhang's transmigration, there were many legends about first experiences, and they were generally associated with good luck. For instance, a beginner in gambling would often defeat seasoned experts, and someone's first intimate encounter would be celebrated with special favors and blessings.

Likewise, it seemed that Meng Zhang's first use of the Celestial Insight Technique had brought him a tremendous fortune, akin to receiving a grand red envelope of luck.

Chapter 266: Roaring Flame

While Meng Zhang was meditating, Yang Xueyi was busy refining the magic tool she had just acquired.

In this region known as the Endless Sea of Sand, which was ruled by the Flying Swan Sect, even if they obtained a magic tool from a disciple of the Fire Cloud Sect, there was no need to worry about being sought after by the rightful owner. As a matter of fact, both the Yellow Lotus Sect's East River Branch and the Fire Cloud Sect had been sending disciples into the Endless Sea of Sand for hundreds of years to gather information, but they mostly dispatched disciples at the Foundation Building stage who had to conceal their identities and act covertly.

The Gold Core Daoist Masters of the two sects had never been heard of venturing into the Endless Sea of Sand. A few years ago, when the incident of Yellow Lotus Sect disciples infiltrating the Endless Sea of Sand and ambushing the Qiaoshou Sect was exposed, even though Qiaoshou Sect was a vassal of the Forest Spring Watch, as rulers of the Endless Sea of Sand, the Flying Swan Sect demonstrated the magnanimity of a major cultivation sect by sending experts to search for the whereabouts of the Yellow Lotus Sect disciples.

Moreover, the higher-ups of the Flying Swan Sect, feeling their authority offended, did not hesitate to divert manpower from the battlefield to strengthen the patrols in the Endless Sea of Sand, preventing outsiders from causing trouble here. Usually, as long as those outsiders didn't provoke any incidents, the Flying Swan Sect disciples would often turn a blind eye to them. However, after this incident, disciples from sects like the Fire Cloud Sect and Yellow Lotus Sect would be expelled or even pursued and killed if they encountered Flying Swan Sect patrols.

Therefore, once the identities of disciples from either sect were exposed, they had to find a way to quickly escape from the Endless Sea of Sand. The Fire Cloud Sect disciple that Meng Zhang and the others encountered had the misfortune of running into a patrol of the Flying Swan Sect, which led to a series of events.

After dealing with the matter concerning the Heavenly Secret Technique, Meng Zhang began to contemplate. The evidence they obtained from the Fire Cloud Sect disciple could fully prove the collusion between the Earthfire Sect and the Fire Cloud Sect.

Of course, Meng Zhang would not act recklessly and harm others without benefiting himself. His current consideration was how to profit from this situation. The cultivators of Earthfire Sect were known for their fiery temper, explosiveness, and fearless behavior.

The reason behind this reputation was said to be related to the cultivation techniques they practiced. Most of the direct disciples of Earthfire Sect cultivated a secret fire attribute technique. During the Refining Qi stage, they absorbed the raging fire spiritual energy, especially the fire spiritual energy from the underground, and converted it into their true qi.

The turbulent spiritual energy easily caused cultivators to go berserk and lose control. Their special cultivation technique also affected their temperament and character. When they reached the completion of the Refining Qi stage, Earthfire Sect disciples would risk their lives and venture deep underground to find suitable earthfires.

Unlike other sects' Foundation Building disciples who needed assistance from Foundation Building Pills and the like, Earthfire Sect disciples only needed to merge the earthfire using their secret technique to successfully advance to the Foundation Building stage. However, this process was extremely dangerous, as the slightest mistake would turn their entire bodies to ashes.

As one of the major cultivation sects on par with the former Twin Success Valley, Earthfire Sect had a large number of disciples. However, almost every year, Refining Qi completion disciples would die during the Foundation Building process. Even so, there was a continuous stream of disciples attempting Foundation Building after completing the Refining Qi stage.

Cultivators at the Foundation Building stage, cultivated through this method, not only possessed formidable combat power but also exhibited a ferocity that disregarded life and death. While the number of Foundation Building cultivators in Earthfire Sect might not match that of Twin Success Valley, their battle strength was no weaker and even more ferocious when it came to fighting. Initially, Twin Success Valley acted in an overbearing manner as the regional overlord and dared not easily provoke Earthfire Sect. Given the character and style of the Earthfire Sect cultivators, Meng Zhang truly didn't dare to rashly threaten them. If he were to anger those lunatics, they would act recklessly, leading to disastrous consequences. In the end, it would be Meng Zhang who suffered the losses.

After much contemplation, Meng Zhang realized it was best to deal with rational individuals. Shangguan Wen, the external affairs executive of Earthfire Sect, might only be at the Refining Qi cultivation level, but his status within the sect was not low. Moreover, he didn't behave like a typical Earthfire Sect disciple. Shangguan Wen was astute and tactful, making him a suitable person for normal communication.

Although Meng Zhang had some unpleasant encounters with Shangguan Wen recently, he decided to visit him to test the waters. After making the decision, he left Yang Xueyi at the inn and went to pay Shangguan Wen a visit.

However, upon arrival, the Earthfire Sect disciple in charge of receiving guests claimed that Shangguan Wen was not there. He had left a few days ago for some business. Initially, Meng Zhang thought that Shangguan Wen was being standoffish and didn't want to see him. But after using Mind

Reading to read the thoughts of the disciple, he realized the disciple was not lying. Shangguan Wen had indeed left Firewell Market a few days ago, and there was no information about when he would return.

Meng Zhang then discovered that although Shangguan Wen had a habit of saying one thing but meaning another and looking down on others, he was still a powerful figure among Earthfire Sect cultivators. Now that Shangguan Wen was not in Firewell Market, Meng Zhang couldn't find another suitable high-ranking Earthfire Sect member to communicate with in the short term.

Threatening Earthfire Sect with the evidence he possessed and attempting to extort benefits had to be done cautiously and patiently. Since Shangguan Wen was absent, there were no other suitable candidates. Meng Zhang didn't want to wait around, so he took Yang Xueyi and returned to Taiyi Sect.

The trip was not in vain. Besides achieving his goal, he also gained some extra benefits. However, using the Grand Evolving Fortune required time for replenishment. Meng Zhang gained a substantial amount of contributions to the sect by appropriating most of the items from the Fire Cloud Sect disciple he encountered.

As for Yang Xueyi, she had to refine the newly acquired magic tools and gradually adjust to them. Once she reached the Foundation Building stage, she could further improve her talisman-making skills and strive to become a Second Rank Talisman Master. Only then would the Second Rank talisman brush be of use.

Within a month of returning to Taiyi Sect, Meng Zhang received two significant pieces of news. The first was that after years of bitter fighting and heavy losses, Flying Swan Sect had finally slain a Third Rank sand monster, eradicated the sand monster army, destroyed their nest, and completely quelled the sand monster upheaval. This large-scale and devastating sand monster uprising was a rare event in the history of the Endless Sea of Sand. Its impact on Flying Swan Sect and the entire region was profound. The second major news had an even greater and surprising influence on Meng Zhang and the surrounding situation. It was about the Earthfire Sect's Elder, who successfully formed their core over ten days ago. Henceforth, he was to be addressed as Daoist Master Roaring Blaze.

Chapter 267: Chaotic Situation

Elder Lie Yan has transformed into Daoist Master Roaring Blaze, but this change is not just a mere title shift; it signifies an impending upheaval in the entire Endless Sea of Sand.

Initially, Twin Success Valley, a large sect, was suppressed by the Flying Swan Sect because they wanted to cultivate their own Gold Core Daoist Master. Later, they were annihilated by the Flying Swan Sect when they attempted to seize the Heavenly Rainfall.

Similarly, Guang Zhi Daoist Master of Forest Spring Watch grasped the opportunity during that chaotic period to form his own core.

Flying Swan Sect repeatedly pressured and plotted against Guang Zhi Daoist Master, but he, being decisive and intelligent, managed to escape their schemes with the help of Qi Family's Gold Core Daoist Master.

Then, coincidentally, the chaos of the sand monster erupted, and the Flying Swan Sect had no choice but to compromise and recognize Guang ZhiDaoist Master's position.

Flying Swan Sect made peace with Qi Family and hired Guang ZhiDaoist Master to participate in the conflict, eventually pacifying the sand monster upheaval.

Unexpectedly, the Elder Lie Yan of Earthfire Sect took advantage of the Flying Swan Sect's distractions and successfully formed his core at this opportune moment.

Elder Lie Yan of Earthfire Sect was already renowned, known as a late-stage Foundation Building cultivator with significant fame in the Endless Sea of Sand. However, nobody expected that he would one day become a Gold Core Daoist Master.

In reality, some senior members of the Flying Swan Sect had seen him before and evaluated his potential, doubting his prospects on the path of cultivation.

Although Earthfire Sect had considerable influence, it was ultimately a Foundation Building sect. Due to the flaws in their cultivation techniques and limited resources, reaching the late stage of Foundation Building was already their limit. His potential was nearly exhausted, leaving little room for further advancement.

In fact, throughout Earthfire Sect's history, there were many geniuses even more astonishing than Elder Lie Yan. However, due to the flaws in their techniques, they were unable to form their cores and remained trapped in the Foundation Building stage for their entire lives.

Elder Lie Yan's successful core formation seemed to prove that the Gold Core Daoist Masters of Flying Swan Sect had indeed misjudged him.

Having served as the Taiyi Sect Master for many years, Meng Zhang possessed detailed information about the surrounding cultivation forces.

He had some understanding of Earthfire Sect, a trading partner for many years.

Meng Zhang could not have anticipated that Elder Lie Yan would suddenly become Daoist Master Roaring Blaze at this particular time.

Considering the collusion between Earthfire Sect and Fire Cloud Sect, Meng Zhang couldn't help but suspect that Daoist Master Roaring Blaze's successful core formation was due to assistance from Fire Cloud Sect.

Fire Cloud Sect, an ancient Gold Core sect, had a heritage even longer than that of the Flying Swan Sect. Such a major sect might possess secret legacies capable of helping others form their cores.

If Daoist Master Roaring Blaze indeed relied on Fire Cloud Sect to succeed in forming his core, then the relationship between the two sects was not as simple as it seemed. The intricacies of the situation felt overwhelming.

As for the plan to use evidence to threaten Earthfire Sect, Meng Zhang had long abandoned it as futile. Earthfire Sect was now a Gold Core sect; any attempt to intimidate them would be courting disaster.

Even if news of their collusion with Fire Cloud Sect were leaked, Earthfire Sect had nothing to worry about. Flying Swan Sect couldn't even handle Guang ZhiDaoist Master, let alone Daoist Master Roaring Blaze.

With the core formation of Daoist Master Roaring Blaze, the situation in the Endless Sea of Sand had truly become complex.

In recent years, a series of events indicated that the once dominant Flying Swan Sect was gradually losing control over the Endless Sea of Sand's situation.

Shortly after quelling the chaos caused by the sand monsters, Guang ZhiDaoist Master of Forest Spring Watch departed from the territory of Flying Swan Sect and returned to Forest Spring Watch.

During his journey back, it is said that Guang ZhiDaoist Master passed by Earthfire Sect.

Daoist Master Roaring Blaze personally received Guang ZhiDaoist Master, and they engaged in deep discussions and enjoyed each other's company.

Moreover, with the resolution of the sand monster incident, the alliance between Qi Family and Flying Swan Sect naturally dissolved.

Before long, the two factions resumed their confrontational state.

If Forest Spring Watch, Earthfire Sect, and Qi Family could unite, Flying Swan Sect would be at a disadvantage, particularly on the level of Gold Core Daoist Masters, as they would only have three compared to the combined strength of the other three factions.

During the sand monster incident, not only did Flying Swan Sect suffer heavy losses as a vassal, but many of its subordinate forces were completely annihilated. Even Flying Swan Sect itself paid a heavy price in casualties.

Meng Zhang closely monitored the situation in the Endless Sea of Sand after the chaos, continuously gathering intelligence from various sources.

The current situation in the Endless Sea of Sand was one of four opposing poles.

If the three factions, Forest Spring Watch, Earthfire Sect, and Qi Family, joined forces, there was a real possibility of bringing down Flying Swan Sect.

Taiyi Sect, as one of the Foundation Building sects in the Endless Sea of Sand, was destined to be swept up in the coming storm. If the four factions engaged in a large-scale conflict, Taiyi Sect would undoubtedly be involved.

At that time, Meng Zhang and Taiyi Sect would face a dilemma of how to proceed.

Whenever he thought about this issue, Meng Zhang felt a headache.

If the response was mishandled and the faction aligned with incorrectly, it could indeed lead to the catastrophe of annihilation.

Meng Zhang acknowledged his lack of wisdom and convened the high-ranking members of Taiyi Sect for multiple discussions, but they couldn't come up with a good solution.

As a vassal of Forest Spring Watch, Taiyi Sect should have been on the same side as them. However, Meng Zhang had no loyalty or trust towards Forest Spring Watch and was unwilling to place the fate of Taiyi Sect in their hands.

Since the internal discussions yielded no conclusive results, Meng Zhang decided to seek the advice of external experts.

Forest Mountain School was a staunch supporter of Forest Spring Watch, so it wasn't a viable option. Gu Tanghai of Shi Family was a cunning old fox, and he couldn't be trusted either.

Qiaoshou Sect, as Taiyi Sect's ally, had maintained a good relationship over the years. Aunt Jin was also a seasoned and crafty individual.

Meng Zhang thought it might be a good idea to visit her and hear her opinion.

With this in mind, Meng Zhang left Taiyi Sect and headed to Qiaoshou Sect.

Upon arriving at Qiaoshou Sect, he was led to the sect's main hall and easily met Aunt Jin and Jin Qigu.

Jin Qiao'er was still the same as before, always accompanying the two of them. Despite reaching the Refining Qi Late stage, she remained as lively and innocent as a child.

As soon as she saw Meng Zhang, she clamored to play with Zhui Dian (Chasing Lightning) and Liu Li (Colored Glaze).

Meng Zhang put the two little ones into the spirit beast bag when he went out and carried them with him.

After years of evolution and ample resource supply, the two little ones had made significant progress. They both had at least the combat power of the Refining Qi Middle stage and had become smarter and more human-like, making remarkable progress in their respective areas of expertise.

Zhui Dian (Chasing Lightning) was even faster now, as not even an ordinary Foundation Building cultivator could catch up to him.

Liu Li (Colored Glaze) had awakened talents in illusion techniques and could release some simple illusions. Mischievous by nature, she often used these illusions to play tricks on the new disciples of Taiyi Sect.

Meng Zhang released the two little ones from the spirit beast bag.

When they saw Jin Qiao'er, although it had been many years, they still remembered this little girl who used to give them red fruits to eat.

Jin Qiao'er cheered and immediately became close friends with the two little ones.

They all played and had fun together, leaving the main hall and leaving only Meng Zhang, Aunt Jin, and Jin Qigu behind.

Chapter 268: Consulting

Watching the cheerful figure of Jin Qiao'er, Aunt Jin and Jin Qigu wore expressions full of doting affection. As for Jin Qiao'er, this lively and adorable young girl, Meng Zhang also had a great fondness for her. He truly hoped that this little girl could maintain her innocent heart forever.

As allies, the Taiyi Sect and the Qiaoshou Sect had interacted frequently over the years, leading to a certain level of understanding between them. Many events within the Qiaoshou Sect had slowly reached Meng Zhang's ears. He had heard about Jin Qiao'er's excellent talent and how her cultivation base progressed by leaps and bounds, especially after the incident where she was

ambushed by the demonic beings of the Yellow Lotus Sect. Jin Qiao'er had been working diligently on her cultivation ever since.

It seemed that Aunt Jin and Jin Qigu's affection for Jin Qiao'er was not merely simple doting but a wholehearted effort to nurture her as the future of the Qiaoshou Sect. Furthermore, by casually using the Deception Breaking Eye just now, Meng Zhang couldn't help but notice that the cultivation technique Jin Qiao'er practiced was vastly different from the ones Aunt Jin and Jin Qigu cultivated. It was evidently a highly profound technique.

However, the specifics of this technique remained elusive to Meng Zhang for the time being.

After Jin Qiao'er left, Meng Zhang refocused his attention. Regardless of whatever secrets Jin Qiao'er might be harboring, they were currently irrelevant to him. One's time and energy were limited, and it was impossible to decipher every mystery encountered.

Meng Zhang respectfully bowed to Aunt Jin. "This junior has come this time to seek guidance from the senior on an important matter."

Being courteous was not a fault, and if one intended to ask for assistance, it was only proper to adopt a humble attitude. Moreover, considering Aunt Jin's seniority and age, Meng Zhang believed this level of etiquette was warranted.

"Sect Master Meng, there's no need to be so formal. Our two sects have a close relationship, and there's nothing you can't ask for my help with. If there's anything you need assistance with, as long as this old woman can be of help, I won't refuse," replied Aunt Jin with a smile.

Meng Zhang didn't immediately state his own question but began with casual conversation. "Senior, you must be aware of the changes happening in the Endless Sea of Sand over these years, especially recent events."

Seeing Aunt Jin nod, Meng Zhang continued, "Taiyi Sect is like a lone boat in a vast ocean, facing the imminent storm. There's always the danger of capsizing."

"I am still young and lack knowledge. I truly do not know how to safely navigate through this storm," he admitted.

"Senior, with your vast experience and exceptional wisdom, you must already have strategies to deal with it. I dare to implore you to share some insights. The entire Taiyi Sect will be forever grateful."

Hearing Meng Zhang's words, Aunt Jin and Jin Qigu exchanged glances before speaking, "Sect Master Meng, there's no need for you to worry too much right now. Endless Sea of Sand is indeed on the verge of major changes, but it might not necessarily be a crisis for the Taiyi Sect."

"You don't need to be anxious at this moment. At least in the short term, Endless Sea of Sand won't be in chaos, and the four forces won't erupt into a major war." Aunt Jin's tone was very decisive, not like casual speculation. Upon hearing it, Meng Zhang was intrigued; there must be a source of information from Aunt Jin that he didn't know about. To arrive at such a conclusion, the source of this information must be formidable indeed. Even the vast black market, known for its vast connections in Divine Ability, could not possess such accurate intelligence when it came to Gold Core sect matters.

Aunt Jin had no reason to deceive Meng Zhang; she spoke with confidence, indicating she had her own solid basis. Despite Meng Zhang's attempts to inquire further, Aunt Jin remained silent, not revealing anything about her source of information. Even when using his Mind Reading Divine Ability, Meng Zhang couldn't glean any of Aunt Jin's thoughts. He discreetly attempted to use the ability on Jin Qigu, whose cultivation base was inferior to his, but still found nothing. It seemed both of them had secret techniques to shield their thoughts completely.

Until now, Meng Zhang had held a subtle disdain for Qiaoshou Sect, a sect led by female practitioners. However, he now realized that this sect was far from simple; it concealed numerous secrets. Meng Zhang discovered that even as allies, he knew very little about Qiaoshou Sect's true nature.

Fortunately, it seemed that Qiaoshou Sect harbored no hostility towards Taiyi Sect. The two sects had close cooperation in various aspects. Trying to extract more information, Meng Zhang lingered on, trying to coax and cajole Aunt Jin and Jin Qigu, but their lips remained tightly sealed, refusing to reveal any more. Despite his efforts, Meng Zhang eventually gave up and took his leave.

Recalling the scene, he departed from Qiaoshou Sect with his two young companions, leaving behind Jin Qiao'er's reluctant gaze.

As Meng Zhang gradually disappeared from view, Jin Qigu expressed some concern, asking, "Senior Aunt, isn't it a bit too early to reveal our secrets now?" "We've been in contact with Taiyi Sect for a long time, but we don't know much about them, let alone trust them," sighed Aunt Jin. "The Endless Sea of Sand is undergoing a major change, and we need to gather allies. At least for now, we can't find a more reliable ally than Taiyi Sect. As for whether Taiyi Sect is trustworthy, we can observe and test them slowly in the future. If we don't do something now, I'm afraid it'll be too late."

Unaware of Aunt Jin and Jin Qigu's conversation, Meng Zhang returned to Taiyi Sect and took some time to adjust. After calming his mind, he began to utilize the Grand Evolving Fortune technique.

His first calculation concerned whether Aunt Jin and the others harbored ill intentions or had deceived him. After spending nearly a hundred calculation tallies, Meng Zhang finally obtained the result: Aunt Jin and the others had no ill intentions and had not deceived him. This reassured him, and he could temporarily stop worrying about Taiyi Sect getting involved in the conflict among Gold Core sects.

Looking at the remaining dozens of calculation tallies, Meng Zhang attempted to deduce Aunt Jin's sources of information. However, he immediately stopped when he realized the immense difficulty and wide-ranging implications of the matter. The current number of calculation tallies was far from enough.

Meng Zhang estimated that he would need thousands of calculation tallies to attempt to deduce the information. Whether he could achieve satisfactory results remained uncertain. As for trying to predict the actions of the Calculated Flying Swan Sect and the other three forces, as Aunt Jin had mentioned, maintaining peace, Meng Zhang didn't even consider attempting it. His proficiency in divination was still insufficient to deal with matters related to Gold Core Daoist Masters. Forcing such calculations could lead to a severe decrease in his lifespan.

Chapter 269: Tranquil

At this moment, Meng Zhang felt a profound sense of powerlessness. Facing the Gold Core sects, whether it was the Taiyi Sect or himself, there wasn't much they could do but wait silently for the situation to unfold.

However, it didn't mean that Meng Zhang had done nothing. On one hand, he actively sought external information, gathering the latest developments to be well-prepared for any changes. Additionally, he remained dedicated to his cultivation. No matter how the situation evolved, having a stronger Cultivation Base would give him more adaptability.

As time passed slowly, the situation in the Endless Sea of Sand remained calm, contrary to everyone's expectations of impending turmoil.

After Guang Zhi Daoist Master returned to the Forest Spring Watch, he didn't stay long before embarking on another journey.

Similarly, after the Earthfire Sect's Grand Elder, Daoist Master Roaring Blaze, formed the core, he didn't linger in the sect and disappeared without a trace.

The Flying Swan Sect didn't take any action against the Earthfire Sect, and everything seemed to carry on as usual, as if Daoist Master Roaring Blaze hadn't even formed the core.

The Earthfire Sect was exceedingly calm as well, not stirring up any trouble or attempting to challenge the dignity of the Flying Swan Sect just because they now had an additional Gold Core Daoist Master.

Even the previously hot-tempered cultivators in the Earthfire Sect had become more restrained in recent times.

While the Qi Family and Flying Swan Sect were in a standoff, there had been no major conflicts.

Once the disciples sent by the Flying Swan Sect dealt with the external forces that secretly infiltrated the Endless Sea of Sand, they returned to their sect.

Meng Zhang was still uneasy about the seemingly peaceful but underlying turbulent situation in the Endless Sea of Sand. Especially the unnaturally tranquil atmosphere surrounding the Earthfire Sect raised his concerns.

Meng Zhang visited the Qiaoshou Sect twice more, each time warmly received by Aunt Jin and the others. However, whenever he tried to inquire about the hidden details, they immediately changed the subject, reassuring him that the Endless Sea of Sand would remain stable for the time being, and he should just wait patiently.

How could Meng Zhang possibly remain calm in a situation where he was aware that significant changes were on the horizon, yet he was left in the dark? It made him feel restless.

Nonetheless, he noticed that the Qiaoshou Sect didn't harbor any ill intentions towards the Taiyi Sect or himself. Whatever they were hiding from him, he couldn't find out.

Since he couldn't obtain more information from the Qiaoshou Sect, Meng Zhang tried other avenues.

While he managed to gather some general intelligence from Taiyi Sect's information channels, he found himself powerless when it came to the higher-level decisions of the Gold Core sects.

Meng Zhang then discreetly went to Firewell Market and contacted the person in charge of the black market there. However, Luo Ye had already left the Endless Sea of Sand, and her influence was diminishing. Despite any instructions she might have left before departing, the black market didn't give Meng Zhang much attention, considering him merely an important regular customer.

From the black market, Meng Zhang didn't acquire any useful intelligence. It's unclear whether the black market lacked such information or simply refused to share it with him.

Since this path led to a dead-end, Meng Zhang had to explore other alternatives.

Despite external difficulties, the internal development of the Taiyi Sect proceeded smoothly. The various businesses of Taiyi Sect flourished, accumulating more spiritual stones and gaining access to abundant cultivation resources. The territory of Taiyi Sect expanded, and the number of mortal disciples increased. Almost every year, some mortals awakened their spiritual roots and joined the Taiyi Sect.

With more disciples, naturally, some outstanding individuals emerged. In recent years, two disciples had caught Meng Zhang's attention.

One of them was named Fang Tong, who had recently broken through to the Refining Qilate stage. The Fang family had been influential in Sweetwater Oasis and had followed the Taiyi Sect for many years, providing numerous cultivators. Of course, there had also been traitors like Fang Yong among them. Fang Tong and Fang Yong, these two senior clan members, are entirely different. Fang Tong is a talented and hardworking individual loyal to the sect. His aptitude is outstanding, and he diligently cultivates. Most importantly, he is just and rigorous in his actions.

Meng Zhang initially assigned Fang Tong to the Law Enforcement Hall as an ordinary disciple. After observing him for several years, Meng Zhang found that Fang Tong was impartial and strictly followed the law, never showing favoritism. His work left Meng Zhang very satisfied. When Fang Tong reached the Refining Qilate stage, Meng Zhang appointed him as the Hall Master of the Law Enforcement Hall, responsible for upholding the sect's regulations. This relieved Meng Zhang from personally holding the position of Hall Master and lightened his burden.

Another disciple is a young woman named Yang Qiaoniang, hailing from the Yang Family and Yang Xueyi's junior sister, only slightly younger than Yang Xueyi. Yang Qiaoniang's spiritual root awakened relatively late, close to the age of 18, which is the limit for awakening. Although she received special care from Yang Xueyi, her cultivation base remained average due to her mediocre aptitude. However, she displayed exceptional talent in culinary arts.

After several years of hard work and learning the essence of Yang Xueyi's culinary skills, Yang Qiaoniang became a competent spirit chef. Through Yang Xueyi's careful cultivation, she excelled in the culinary arts. Following Yang Xueyi's Foundation Building, she recommended Yang Qiaoniang to Meng Zhang to take over as the head of the kitchen. Meng Zhang readily agreed, lightening Yang Xueyi's burden and allowing her more time for her own pursuits.

As outstanding disciples continued to emerge within the sect, Wen Qiansun also approached Meng Zhang. He had recently completed the Refining Qicompletion stage and now intended to temporarily relinquish the position of Formations Hall Master to focus on breaking through to the Foundation Building stage. Despite being younger than Meng Zhang, Wen Qiansun's age was significantly higher. He awakened his spiritual roots late and entered the sect quite late, which made his path challenging despite his exceptional aptitude.

Wen Qiansun was now fifty-nine years old, and if he didn't attempt to break through to the Foundation Building stage now, he might never get another chance. However, attempting Foundation Building at his current age posed significant risks. Even a slight mistake could lead to demonic cultivation. Wen Qiansun was not content with remaining a Refining Qi cultivator forever; he had higher expectations for his own path.

Meng Zhang still remembered that when he was about nineteen years old, Wen Qiansun was already about thirty-five years old and had just awakened his spiritual roots, joining the Taiyi Sect. Initially, including himself, everyone within the sect didn't hold high expectations for Wen Qiansun. However, when Wen Qiansun displayed his talent in formations, Meng Zhang decided to focus on his training.

In Meng Zhang's heart, even if Wen Qiansun was only a Refining Qi stage disciple, his talent in formations was worth the Taiyi Sect's significant investment. Now, as Wen Qiansun prepared to risk it all and attempt the Foundation Building stage, Meng Zhang provided his support. Even before Meng Zhang could make a request, Yang Xueyi handed over her Foundation Building Pill to Wen Qiansun upon learning of his intentions.

Of course, Yang Xueyi made it clear that the Foundation Building Pill wasn't a free gift; she loaned it to Wen Qiansun temporarily. After Wen Qiansun successfully reached Foundation Building, he would have to find a way to return one Foundation Building Pill to her.

Chapter 270: Travel

Without saying much, Wen Qiansun silently accepted the Foundation Building Pill, cherishing Yang Xueyi's good intentions in his heart. Meng Zhang had wanted to encourage him with a few words, but he thought better of it. With Wen Qiansun's determination, there was no need for empty words.

Meng Zhang and Yang Xueyi separately shared their experiences and lessons in breaking through the Foundation Building stage with Wen Qiansun. Meng Zhang emphasized that each Cultivator's circumstances were different, and one should not rigidly apply the experiences of others. Those experiences could serve as references at most, but when it came to critical moments, one needed to make decisions based on their own actual situation and judge accordingly. In fact, after Meng Zhang and Yang Xueyi both achieved Foundation Building, they recorded a considerable amount of content regarding breaking through the Foundation Building stage and placed it in the Hidden Scripture Pavilion. As long as disciples in the sect spent some merit points, they could borrow and read it.

Since Wen Qiansun was preparing to break through Foundation Building, he had naturally read this content before. However, hearing it again directly from Meng Zhang and Yang Xueyi gave him new insights.

Having said all that needed to be said, after bidding farewell to Meng Zhang and the others, Wen Qiansun began his seclusion to break through.

Meng Zhang couldn't help but worry about Wen Qiansun's breakthrough this time. Although his aptitude was similar to Yang Xueyi's, he was much older. Moreover, before this attempt, he didn't have enough time to refine his true qi due to his age. Nevertheless, Wen Qiansun was resolute, and since he had already started his seclusion, Meng Zhang had to temporarily set aside his concerns.

Everything in Taiyi Sect remained as usual, and the situation in the Endless Sea of Sand still maintained an eerie silence.

Meng Zhang felt that he couldn't just passively wait for the situation to change. He decided to go out and experience the current state of the Endless Sea of Sand personally, hoping to gain new information.

After Yang Xueyi's successful Foundation Building, the overall strength of the sect's higher-ups was abundant. With the increasing number of Taiyi Sect disciples and their cultivation bases slowly growing, the shortage of manpower within the sect began to ease.

Although the internal structure of the sect was relatively simple, it was still well-organized. The various Hall Masters were capable of managing their respective responsibilities. Even if Meng Zhang was absent for an extended period, the sect would still operate smoothly.

Meng Zhang informed the higher-ups of his intention to go on a journey and arranged all the necessary matters before quietly leaving Taiyi Sect.

First, he visited Singing Sand City, intending to make contact with the Shi Family cultivators, especially Gu Tanghai.

Singing Sand City had become even more prosperous over the years. Its location was excellent, which was why it had been targeted for development by Twin Success Valley.

After Flying Swan Sect lifted the blockade on Forest Spring Watch, Singing Sand City began to develop normally. Especially in the past few years, the turmoil caused by the sand monsters in the vicinity of Flying Swan Sect's territory affected a wide area. Many cultivators sought refuge and migrated to Firewell Market and Singing Sand City.

In addition to a large number of loose cultivators, there were also many disciples and family members from various sects and clans who had been relocated in advance.

Thanks to this war, Singing Sand City's development skyrocketed, gaining immense benefits from the war's spoils. Although the war had ended, there were still many cultivators lingering here, unable to leave yet.

Walking through the streets of Singing Sand City, Meng Zhang couldn't help but admire Gu Tanghai's management capabilities. As Singing Sand City's commercial activities recovered, Taiyi Sect began to recoup its investments there and gained significant profits from its market share.

Meng Zhang glanced at Singing Sand Mountain in the distance. Apart from Singing Sand City, the main source of income was the wind attribute spiritual material called Xunfeng Stone produced within Singing Sand Mountain. Regrettably, since Taiyi Sect, Shi Family, and others had become vassals of Flying Swan Sect, the majority of the Xunfeng Stone's production went to Forest Spring Watch.

After the downfall of the Golden Blade Sect, its share of Singing Sand City and Xunfeng Stone silently fell into the hands of the Forest Spring Watch. Of course, Meng Zhang's slight regret was merely a case of human greed.

Compared to the era of Twin Success Valley's rule, Forest Spring Watch had become much more lenient. During Twin Success Valley's reign, all Xunfeng Stones belonged to them exclusively.

Apart from contributing a portion to the Flying Swan Sect as an offering, other sects and families had no chance of getting involved.

Singing Sand City's benefits were only shared with a few powers like the Forest Spring Watch and Liu Family, apart from the Flying Swan Sect. The subordinate sects could only dream of any benefits.

Being treated as equals by the Flying Swan Sect, the Forest Spring Watch didn't need to offer them any offerings or benefits. This allowed Forest Spring Watch to gain some advantages that it could use to win over its subordinate powers.

From this perspective, Taiyi Sect, as a subordinate of the Forest Spring Watch, did indeed benefit. Unfortunately, Forest Spring Watch's foundation was too shallow, and its fate relied solely on Guang ZhiDaoist Master.

Facing the deep-rooted and powerful Flying Swan Sect, even if they allied with other powers, the outcome of any conflict was uncertain. Meng Zhang knew that choosing the wrong side at a critical moment would lead to a disastrous end.

Therefore, he had always been reluctant to fully align with Forest Spring Watch's cause. After strolling around Singing Sand City, he arrived at the Hengyuan Building established by Taiyi Sect.

Although Hengyuan Building was not as renowned as Flying Swan Building and Four Seas Building, it had made a name for itself in Singing Sand City and gained several loyal customers.

Meng Zhang didn't go inside but observed from outside before leaving to visit Gu Tanghai. Unfortunately, he arrived at an unfortunate time, as Gu Tanghai was currently away from Singing Sand City.

Shi Weida, who was in charge of the affairs here, seemed clueless and unaware of many things. After chatting briefly with him, Meng Zhang took his leave.

For this trip, Meng Zhang brought not only his Red Feathered Eagle for riding but also a First Rank flying boat, just in case. Of course, he mostly used the Red Feathered Eagle for travel when alone.

Meng Zhang mounted the Red Feathered Eagle and left Singing Sand City. Twin Success Valley and Liu Family's territories, which now belonged to Forest Spring Watch, didn't interest him.

He circled around and headed straight for the Firewell Market. If the war's spoils were worth one point for Singing Sand City, then Firewell Market gained benefits worth at least ten points.

Singing Sand City, which primarily catered to Refining Qi cultivators, was relatively lower in level. You wouldn't even find a single Foundation Building cultivator during a stroll in Singing Sand City, but in Firewell Market, it was a common sight.

Meng Zhang didn't rush into Firewell Market; instead, he rode the Red Feathered Eagle and observed the surroundings. Earthfire Sect's main gate wasn't far from Firewell Market.

Due to Earthfire Sect's intimidating reputation, cultivators usually avoided approaching it without reason, so as not to provoke a group of lunatics.

Meng Zhang didn't get close but used his Deception Breaking Eye from a distance to observe. However, he found no useful information. This wasn't surprising since it wouldn't be so easy to uncover the situation at Earthfire Sect.

