

Sect Master 281

Chapter 281: Heavy Ritual

At first glance, Meng Zhang was indeed drawn by Fei Hongzi's words, shifting his attention to the Fire Cloud Sect and the Yellow Lotus Sect East River Branch. However, deep inside, Meng Zhang was extremely curious about the secret Fei Hongzi deliberately concealed. He struggled to suppress his curiosity and refrained from using Mind Reading to read Fei Hongzi's thoughts. What could this secret be, and why hasn't any information about it leaked?

Among the most well-informed powers that Meng Zhang had encountered was the black market. However, it seemed that they were either unaware of this secret as well, intentionally keeping it concealed, or Meng Zhang lacked the necessary clearance. Regardless, none of the intelligence he obtained from the black market had any relevant information about this matter. For now, Meng Zhang could only take note of this and figure out a way to inquire about it later.

Fei Hongzi sighed, "Many people criticize our sect for acting tyrannically and being unfavorable. But they have no idea how much our sect has sacrificed for the Endless Sea of Sand Cultivation World."

"As the Daoist Master of our sect, Fei Shi, with a mid-stage Gold Core cultivation base, stands peerless among his peers. Yet, in order to protect the humans of the Endless Sea of Sand, he has to remain stationed in the Demon Wind Gobi for an extended period, preventing hordes of demonic beasts from wreaking havoc on the world."

Meng Zhang heard the title "Fei Shi Daoist Master" for the first time and guessed that it must be one of the hidden Gold Core Daoist Masters of the Flying Swan Sect. Among the known three Gold Core Daoist Masters of the Flying Swan Sect and the two from the Northern Desert Qi Family, all of them only had early-stage Gold Core cultivation bases. If Fei Shi Daoist Master truly possessed a mid-stage Gold Core cultivation base, he would be more than capable of dealing with the Northern Desert Qi Family.

According to Fei Hongzi, Fei Shi Daoist Master had to remain in the Demon Wind Gobi and couldn't spare any efforts elsewhere. Fei Hongzi shouldn't be lying about this matter. It seemed that the Flying Swan Sect indeed had some powerful cards hidden up their sleeves, enough to completely turn the tide of the situation.

Meng Zhang couldn't help but develop some respect for the Flying Swan Sect. No wonder the demonic beasts in the Demon Wind Gobi behaved so obediently and didn't dare to run rampant, not even the Third Rank ones. It turned out to be thanks to Fei Shi Daoist Master's efforts.

However, despite the respect, Meng Zhang wouldn't blindly pledge allegiance to the Flying Swan Sect just because they had done something beneficial for the people.

"If our sect really ignored everything else and brought out Fei Shi Daoist Master, those opposing forces would have been eradicated long ago, and we wouldn't have so many future troubles."

"But our sect must consider the overall situation and protect all of the Endless Sea of Sand's Human Clan from the cruelty of the demonic beasts, even if it means letting a bunch of clowns run amok for a while."

Fei Hongzi said with a pained expression.

"Of course, those clowns won't be running amok for much longer. Once our sect is free to act, we will naturally deal with them."

As he spoke, a proud and disdainful look appeared on Fei Hongzi's face.

"Indeed, the Flying Swan Sect deserves to be the leader of our righteous path. With profound heritage and formidable strength, yet willing to endure humiliation and carry heavy burdens for the sake of the Human Clan. It is truly respectable and admirable," praised Meng Zhang loudly.

Meng Zhang knew well how to play along with such a situation; he didn't need anyone to teach him that.

"Taiyi Sect is also a member of our righteous sects. I wonder if Sect Master Meng is willing to do something significant for the Human Clan of the Endless Sea of Sand?" Fei Hongzi asked solemnly.

Meng Zhang couldn't help but exclaim inwardly, "The meat for acting is here." He said with fervor, "No need to say more, the Flying Swan Sect is the leader of the righteous path in the Endless Sea of Sand. My Taiyi Sect is willing to align itself with them and contribute to their grand cause." Meng Zhang spoke with a touch of magnanimity.

Fei Hongzi didn't nitpick Meng Zhang's words but changed the subject to another matter. "I heard from Lao Jian that Sect Master Meng wants to request Foundation Building Pills?"

"That's right. The number of disciples at the Refining Qilate stage in Taiyi Sect is increasing, and as a Sect Master, I have to plan ahead for their future. For the sake of their cultivation path, I had to summon up the courage to come and ask for them," Meng Zhang replied, leaning toward the Flying Swan Sect. Besides the fact that the Flying Swan Sect was a long-standing dominant force with formidable strength, he genuinely sought to obtain Foundation Building Pills.

"Do you know, Sect Master Meng, how many Refining Qicompletion cultivators there are in the Endless Sea of Sand who, due to the lack of Foundation Building Pills, either risk their lives to break through to the Foundation Building stage and fall into demonic cultivation, or give up on their cultivation altogether and make no progress?" Fei Hongzi sighed, "Not to mention others, just within my Flying Swan Sect, there have been countless Refining Qicompletion cultivators waiting in line for 10 to 20 years without fulfilling their wishes. It's not that the sect is stingy, but the number of Foundation Building Pills produced each time is limited and not enough for distribution. We must balance the relationships within the sect and consider the legacies of various vassal families. Even I, as the Sect Master, find it extremely difficult to request a single Foundation Building Pill."

Meng Zhang's enthusiasm dampened as he heard this, but Fei Hongzi continued, "However, since Sect Master Meng has made the request, I won't let you leave empty-handed. Our sect's Gold Core Daoist Master has also issued an order to gift a furnace of Foundation Building Pills to Sect Master Meng."

Meng Zhang's eyes lit up, feeling a surge of joy in his heart.

"Unfortunately, due to the recent chaos caused by the sand monsters, all the stock of Foundation Building Pills was used up in rewarding merits after the battle. Now, there isn't a single Foundation Building Pill left within the sect. The materials for producing Foundation Building Pills are mostly obtained from the Mirage Secret Realm, but it will be a long time before the realm opens again. We have dispatched people to the Jiuqu League realm to purchase various spirit medicines for refining

Foundation Building Pills. Rest assured, Sect Master Meng, once the materials are gathered, our alchemists will immediately start refining. By then, we will prioritize fulfilling Sect Master Meng's request," Fei Hongzi promised earnestly.

Despite the promising words, Meng Zhang couldn't help but curse inwardly. Fei Hongzi's words had left him uncertain and uneasy. It seemed like he was being strung along, with no Foundation Building Pill actually offered.

Fei Hongzi may not have the ability to read minds, but his vast experience in handling affairs allowed him to sense Meng Zhang's discontent to some extent.

"While we may not have Foundation Building Pills to offer you temporarily, our sincerity is still ample," Fei Hongzi continued, pulling out a list and handing it to Meng Zhang.

As Meng Zhang glanced at the list nonchalantly, his gaze soon became fixated. The list contained the names of numerous heavenly materials, and many rare Heaven and Earth Spiritual Objects were also listed. There were also Second Rank magic tools, pills, and talismans of various kinds, enough to dazzle Meng Zhang's eyes.

Fei Hongzi noticed Meng Zhang's expression and said with a hint of pride, "Everything listed here comes from our sect's vast treasury. It's accumulated over hundreds of years, and I'm sure it won't disappoint Sect Master Meng. If there's anything you like, don't hesitate to speak up. I dare not promise too much, but with my status, I can certainly arrange to gift 1 or 2 items as a token of welcome to Sect Master Meng."

Meng Zhang reluctantly tore his greedy gaze away from the list but still hesitated to speak.

Chapter 282: Request

When showing respect to others, there is usually a request to be made. Flying Swan Sect must have a significant demand to offer such generous gifts, and undoubtedly, Meng Zhang needs to pay a considerable price in return.

Indeed, Meng Zhang covets the items listed on that list, as many of them are rare spiritual treasures he has long yearned for. However, there's no such thing as a free lunch, and he fears that Flying Swan Sect might ask for a price he cannot bear.

Meng Zhang hesitated, remaining silent for quite some time. His purpose in coming to Flying Swan Sect was merely to establish a connection and secure a retreat route for Taiyi Sect. He didn't want to tie himself to Flying Swan Sect's chariot so early on.

"Sect Master Meng, are you unsatisfied with the items on the list? If that's the case, I can go and request the Gold Core Daoist Masters in the sect to offer items from their personal collections," Fei Hongzi said in a magnanimous manner.

"Senior, please state your request directly. If it is within my capabilities, I will undoubtedly accept it without hesitation. If it is beyond my abilities, then I apologize for my incompetence," replied Meng Zhang with a bitter smile, abandoning any thoughts of trying to deceive Fei Hongzi.

As for the idea of reaping benefits first and then turning his back on the deal, Meng Zhang had long dispelled such thoughts. If he were to truly anger Flying Swan Sect, they might not be able to harm Forest Spring Watch directly, but they had plenty of ways to deal with Taiyi Sect.

Fei Hongzi spent so many words, waiting for Meng Zhang to say these words. No longer beating around the bush, Fei Hongzi straightforwardly stated his demand.

"My request is simple: Taiyi Sect must proactively attack Forest Spring Watch and strive to completely exterminate them."

As soon as Fei Hongzi finished speaking, Meng Zhang began shaking his head continuously. This was absurd! Taiyi Sect, a mere Foundation Building sect, attacking Forest Spring Watch, a Gold Core sect, and trying to completely wipe them out? Fei Hongzi was asking too much; this was an impossible task.

"Sect Master Meng, please don't rush to refuse. Our sect won't let Taiyi Sect go to its demise without a plan. We propose this request because we firmly believe that Sect Master Meng can accomplish it," Fei Hongzi comforted in a gentle tone.

"Senior, please don't jest. This is simply impossible, and I implore you not to speak of it again. I realize my mistake and won't dare to disturb you any further," pleaded Meng Zhang repeatedly.

"It seems that Sect Master Meng doesn't trust me. Well, I understand that empty words alone are not convincing. I can make a Ghost Oath to guarantee that I will fulfill everything I have said," said Fei Hongzi.

Upon hearing Fei Hongzi mention the Ghost Oath, Meng Zhang fell silent, gazing at Fei Hongzi with a mix of surprise and uncertainty. In the Cultivation World, there were various ways to make oaths to ensure trust and agreements between cultivators.

Ordinary cultivators could make a Blood Contract, using their blood essence to guarantee the fulfillment of promises. If the oath was broken, the cultivator's own blood essence would backfire on them. Blood Contracts were common but had weaker binding power, and many high-level cultivators could circumvent them with secret techniques.

Another method was the Heart Demon Oath, where a cultivator swore upon their own Heart Demon. If they broke the oath, they would be plagued by their Heart Demon, hindering their cultivation progress and making it easy to fall into madness during training.

Of course, breaking a Heart Demon Oath wouldn't immediately lead to punishment, and there was usually enough buffer time. Especially for cultivators who had already severed their path of cultivation, the cost of breaking such an oath was not too high.

Therefore, the power of Heart Demon's oath is not strong enough, and its restraint is insufficient. On the other hand, the Ghost Oath is witnessed by the Netherworld Ghost Deity. Cultivators swear their oath under the witness of the Netherworld Ghost Deity, and if they violate it, the Ghost Deity will drag them into the Netherworld, resulting in their demise. Even a Gold Core Daoist Master cannot resist the power of the Netherworld Ghost Deity. Taking the Ghost Oath is equivalent to pledging one's life and the restraint it imposes is formidable.

As for the legendary Heavenly Dao Oath, it can only be sworn in the presence of the Heavenly Dao by a Primordial Spirit True Monarch. Ordinary people need not even think about it.

Fei Hongzi's willingness to take the Ghost Oath shows his sincerity, and he is genuinely not trying to deceive Meng Zhang, who already seems interested.

Seeing Meng Zhang's intrigue, Fei Hongzi continues, "Sect Master Meng, our sect has a comprehensive plan to deal with Forest Spring Watch. However, due to the need for secrecy, we will not easily divulge it until you agree to join."

"Sect Master Meng, rest assured, I bear no ill intentions. Letting Taiyi Sect attack Forest Spring Watch is something we are fully confident about, and we can ensure the smooth progress of the matter," Fei Hongzi says earnestly.

Despite Fei Hongzi's sincerity, Meng Zhang is still not willing to take sides so quickly and is especially reluctant to engage in battles with Forest Spring Watch.

"I do not doubt Senior's intentions, but this matter is of great importance, and I cannot make a decision on my own. I need to return and discuss it with the elders of my sect," Meng Zhang says, trying to find a way to leave the troublesome situation.

Fei Hongzi seems to have not seen through Meng Zhang's intentions and responds in an agreeable tone, "Indeed, such important matters require careful consideration and listening to the opinions of the elders. I won't force you, Sect Master Meng. Take your time to discuss it, and when you have a decision, you can inform me."

"As for this list, feel free to keep it. If you find anything you like, just let us know, and someone will deliver it to you," Fei Hongzi says generously.

"Alright then, there are still many matters in our sect to attend to. It was a fruitful meeting with Sect Master Meng today. Let's conclude our discussion here, and I'll take my leave first."

"Sect Master Meng, you can stay here as our guest or explore Flying Swan City. All expenses in Flying Swan City will be on our sect's account. Of course, if you decide to return, no one will stop you," Fei Hongzi's attitude is surprisingly accommodating, almost too good to be believed.

Despite Fei Hongzi's seemingly benevolent demeanor, Meng Zhang cannot help but suspect that there might be hidden schemes or plots. However, after Fei Hongzi bids farewell and Lao Jian accompanies Meng Zhang without interference, none of the expected conspiracies occur. Fei Hongzi proves to be as accommodating as he seemed, which surprises Meng Zhang.

Flying Swan Sect has ruled the Endless Sea of Sand for many years, and their success has not come from being softhearted. As the Sect Master of Flying Swan Sect, Fei Hongzi is undoubtedly not a benevolent person. Meng Zhang is convinced that Fei Hongzi must have some ulterior motive waiting for him, but he cannot discern it at the moment. Meng Zhang regrets his impulsive decision to come to Flying Swan Sect. He had only intended to make contact and understand Flying Swan Sect's stance to keep a retreat for Taiyi Sect. Unexpectedly, he encountered Flying Swan Sect's Sect Master Fei Hongzi and became entangled in an unforeseen situation.

Chapter 283: Awakening

Meng Zhang no longer wanted to stay here and had no interest in strolling around Flying Swan City. His heart was set on returning to Taiyi Sect as soon as possible to discuss with his fellow disciples, hoping to figure out what kind of medicine Fei Hongzi was selling in his gourd.

Meng Zhang expressed his desire to leave quickly to Lao Jian, who not only did not stop him but also offered to accompany him part of the way. Although Meng Zhang declined Lao Jian's kind offer to avoid drawing attention, he eventually agreed.

To avoid drawing attention, Lao Jian prepared an unmarked flying boat himself. The next morning, Meng Zhang, along with An Xiaoran and others, boarded the flying boat. Under Lao Jian's control, the boat departed from the estate, heading away from Flying Swan Sect.

Once the flying boat had flown a short distance, three young kids came outside the cabin and started playing around. An Xiaoran intended to scold them to keep quiet and not disturb Meng Zhang, but he was stopped by Meng Zhang, who said that it was natural for children to play and as long as they weren't too disruptive, there was no need to interfere.

Observing An Xiaoran's composed demeanor, Meng Zhang suddenly asked, "Xiaoran, I've always remembered Senior An's favor. Why didn't you ask me to help you kill Zeng Jiexiong and regain control of An Family?"

Meng Zhang's question was merely rhetorical, as he knew it was not feasible to act on it. Even ignoring the fact that Zeng Jiexiong's brother was a disciple of Flying Swan Sect, Meng Zhang couldn't easily harm members of the sect's affiliated families.

He asked the question to gauge An Xiaoran's response. An Xiaoran possessed exceptional talent, but he wanted to know if his character matched his abilities. After all, An Xiaoran had shown maturity and quick-wittedness by taking care of his younger brother after their family faced a major crisis and seizing the opportunity to seek help from Meng Zhang.

Without much hesitation, An Xiaoran responded directly, "The debts and grudges of An Family, I want to settle them with my own hands. I will personally take back everything we've lost."

"Very ambitious, very ambitious indeed," praised Meng Zhang.

Suddenly, there was a cry of alarm from inside the cabin. An Moran was still there, and An Xiaoran quickly rushed in like a rabbit. Meng Zhang followed a bit slower, as he sensed an unusual gathering of spiritual energy. After entering the cabin, he found it had turned quite cold. An Moran was lying on the ground, surrounded by several cyclones formed by condensed spiritual energy spinning around his body.

The young couple accompanying them felt a little afraid and dared not approach too closely; they watched from a distance. An Xiaoran was about to rush over to help, but Meng Zhang held him back.

"No need to panic; it's just the awakening of his spiritual roots." "What does it feel like to awaken one's spiritual roots? An Xiaoran had experienced it firsthand. She was just concerned and lost her composure for a moment. But when Meng Zhang pointed it out, she immediately realized her mistake.

At this moment, witnessing An Moran's spiritual root awakening, An Xiaoran was overjoyed, almost moved to tears of happiness.

Hearing the commotion inside the cabin, Lao Jian stopped the flying boat in mid-air and rushed over as well.

Seeing the scene of An Moran's spiritual root awakening, Lao Jian remained silent for a moment before saying, "Congratulations, Sect Master Meng, you are really lucky. Taiyi Sect has gained another outstanding talent."

Although Lao Jian hadn't measured An Moran's spiritual roots, with his discerning eyes and insight as a disciple of a major sect, he knew that An Moran's spiritual roots were extraordinary, and his constitution was probably a rare ice attribute.

Originally, the An Family was a subordinate family of the Flying Swan Sect. A talent like An Moran would most likely have joined the Flying Swan Sect and become their disciple. Now, they were witnessing this exceptional talent being embraced by Taiyi Sect.

Lao Jian cursed inwardly, as he had heard about the An Family's recent troubles caused by Zeng Jiantang. However, since Zeng Jiantang's status in the sect was not lower than his own, he had no reason to interfere in the An Family's affairs. Furthermore, Flying Swan Sect still relied on Taiyi Sect's support, so Lao Jian couldn't compete with Meng Zhang for disciples.

Though reluctant, Lao Jian gracefully congratulated Meng Zhang.

Of course, Meng Zhang wouldn't tell Lao Jian that neither An Xiaoran nor An Moran were Taiyi Sect disciples yet. He had thought that finding An Xiaoran was already a stroke of good luck, but unexpectedly, An Moran's talent was equally outstanding—a two-for-one deal.

Drawing from her ample experience, An Xiaoran approached An Moran after he stabilized and taught him how to regulate his breathing, adjust his body, and control the anomalies caused by his awakened spiritual root.

Seeing An Xiaoran's competent guidance, Meng Zhang left the cabin, allowing the siblings to spend time alone together. He also asked the ordinary members of the An Family not to disturb them for the time being.

Observing this, Lao Jian returned to the bottom of the cabin and continued piloting the flying boat.

The flying boat's speed was rapid, and as dusk approached, they arrived at the outskirts of the Flying Swan Sect. Beyond that lay the territory of the Earthfire Sect.

Meng Zhang flew into the air and released another First Rank flying boat he had with him. Both An Xiaoran and An Moran, along with the ordinary members of the An Family, were carefully transferred onto this flying boat.

After bidding farewell to Lao Jian, Meng Zhang piloted the boat and quietly departed during the night.

The journey through Earthfire Sect's territory was uneventful and smooth. Meng Zhang safely returned to Taiyi Sect.

Once back at the Fuzhao Valley, the main gate of Taiyi Sect, Meng Zhang personally arranged accommodations for the members of the An Family. He also assigned a few reliable disciples to take care of them.

Although An Xiaoran and An Moran were not yet official Taiyi Sect disciples, their eventual induction into the sect was only a matter of time given their prolonged stay. Meng Zhang instructed

that the treatment of the An Family siblings should be on par with Inner-Sect Disciples of Taiyi Sect.

The Hidden Scripture Pavilion was opened to them, with a guaranteed supply of spirit stones, elixirs, and other resources. The other disciples in the sect naturally respected and attended to them well, considering how highly Sect Master Meng valued them.

The ordinary members of the An Family would also be properly arranged for. If they awakened their spiritual roots in the future, every effort would be made to have them join Taiyi Sect. If not, they could still reside in Fuzhao Valley and live together with the ordinary relatives of Taiyi Sect disciples.

Once everyone from the An Family was settled, Meng Zhang finally had time to deal with other matters within the sect. Having returned not long after leaving Taiyi Sect, there were no major events, and everything was running smoothly as usual.

Chapter 284: Aunt Jin Visits

Within Taiyi Sect, what Meng Zhang cared about the most was the matter concerning Wen Qiansun's Foundation Building. He had strong feelings for this disciple he had been watching closely, and he was deeply concerned. Although Wen Qiansun was considerably older than him, Meng Zhang had personally witnessed Wen Qiansun's progress from the beginning of his cultivation journey to the current stage.

However, since Wen Qiansun's breakthrough in his last seclusion, he had yet to come out, leaving Meng Zhang uncertain about the outcome of his cultivation. At this time, Meng Zhang couldn't disturb him and could only shift his attention elsewhere.

Meng Zhang gathered Elder Yang Xueyi and other high-ranking members of the sect to discuss the matter proposed by Fei Hongzi. Everyone found Fei Hongzi's request unbelievable and outright unreasonable. Pill Hall Master Zhang Yingying was particularly outspoken, claiming that Flying Swan Sect wanted to use Taiyi Sect as cannon fodder, sending them to their deaths. Whether Taiyi Sect succeeded or failed in attacking Forest Spring Watch, it would only weaken the strength of the latter, benefiting only Flying Swan Sect.

Of course, Meng Zhang felt that Zhang Yingying's viewpoint was too extreme. He believed that if Fei Hongzi dared to make such a request, there must be a reason behind it. Nevertheless, since almost everyone in the sect opposed following Fei Hongzi's proposal, Meng Zhang didn't say much either.

Deep Earth Spirit General seemed to want to say something, but in the end, he remained silent.

Regarding how to handle this matter, surprisingly, everyone's opinion was unanimous—to stall Flying Swan Sect. They didn't want to outright reject the request to avoid thoroughly offending Flying Swan Sect, but they couldn't truly follow Fei Hongzi's plan either. It was a vague response, stating that the sect's opinions were divided, and they needed to consider and discuss it slowly. As for when they would reach a conclusion, it was unknown.

Meng Zhang also knew that this method couldn't be effective forever. Flying Swan Sect couldn't wait indefinitely. But until they found a better solution, they could only adopt this temporary approach, like covering their ears while stealing the bell.

After everyone dispersed, Meng Zhang calmed his mind and made preparations. He wanted to use the Grand Evolving Fortune technique to calculate the hidden secrets behind Fei Hongzi's request. However, as expected, before he could even start, a powerful force from the unknown interrupted him. It warned Meng Zhang that the level of calculation was too high, surpassing his current limits. If he forcefully continued, it would consume a significant amount of his lifespan. So, Meng Zhang quickly stopped the calculation, not daring to push further.

While he could afford to sacrifice three to five years of his lifespan for such a calculation, the feedback suggested that the cost would be far greater.

Puzzled by the strange idea of consuming his lifespan in such a way, Meng Zhang temporarily put the matter aside and returned to his regular life. Most of his time was dedicated to cultivation, and he occasionally spared some time to deal with sect affairs.

Three months passed, and it seemed that Fei Hongzi had forgotten about the matter. No one from Flying Swan Sect came looking for Meng Zhang. The situation in the Endless Sea of Sand remained calm. Forest Spring Watch showed no changes, Earthfire Sect continued to be obedient, and Flying Swan Sect seemed to ignore the existence of both these sects. Northern Desert's Qi Family continued to confront Flying Swan Sect.

Outside the Endless Sea of Sand, sects like Fire Cloud Sect remained unchanged, showing no signs of activity.

Meng Zhang was satisfied with the current situation. Peace was preferable—no wars, no casualties. He genuinely hoped that the Endless Sea of Sand would remain this peaceful, allowing Taiyi Sect more time to develop and enabling him to gradually enhance his Cultivation Base.

During this period, a significant event occurred in the Taiyi Sect. After observing and experiencing the internal environment of the sect for some time, An Xiaoran and An Moran decided to join the Taiyi Sect and become its disciples.

Of course, this result was not achieved without effort from Meng Zhang. Some eloquent disciples in the sect also lent their support to influence the decision.

After An Xiaoran and An Moran made their decision to join, Meng Zhang personally measured their spiritual roots and physical attributes. As expected, both siblings had outstanding spiritual aptitude.

An Xiaoran possessed above-average spiritual root quality and had attributes of fire and wood. Remarkably, even without knowing her own spiritual root attributes, she intuitively chose the appropriate cultivation path of "Ranmu Gong" (lit. "Burning Wood Technique") suited for her own constitution. Such intuition was truly terrifying.

An Moran had medium-grade spiritual root quality, and unsurprisingly, his attribute was ice. Meng Zhang selected the cultivation technique "Ice Soul True Technique" specifically for him.

Furthermore, the Liu Family was renowned for their ice attribute cultivation techniques. Although An Moran did not have Liu Family bloodline, making it difficult for him to directly cultivate their

techniques, Meng Zhang still managed to find relevant cultivation scriptures from the Liu Family and gave them to An Moran as reference.

Both siblings displayed exceptional spiritual aptitude and good character. Considering their young age, they were truly rare talents with boundless potential. It was certain that the Refining Qi stage was only the beginning of their cultivation journey, and Foundation Building would definitely not be their endpoint.

After a grand initiation ceremony, the An siblings officially became members of the An Family. Meng Zhang accepted them as his disciples and directly granted them the status of Inner-Sect Disciples.

As Taiyi Sect continued to grow and prosper, the distinctions and promotions within the sect became increasingly challenging. At present, apart from some exceptions due to historical reasons, newly promoted Inner-Sect Disciples were either disciples who reached the Refining Qi stage or exceptionally outstanding individuals with a strong skill in the mid-stage of Refining Qi.

The fact that An Xiaoran and An Moran became Inner-Sect Disciples upon joining was unprecedented. Nevertheless, Meng Zhang held great authority and prestige within the Taiyi Sect. He played a pivotal role in the sect's current achievements, and his decisions were unquestionably followed by all.

With the addition of the An siblings and the senior disciple Niu Dawei, Meng Zhang now had three disciples. He dedicated a considerable amount of time to personally guide their cultivation.

Meng Zhang was delighted to have excellent disciples, and the Taiyi Sect gained two exceptional talents. His mood was joyous and pleasant.

Unfortunately, Meng Zhang's good mood did not last long, as it was soon disrupted by an unexpected visitor. Within half a month after the An siblings' initiation, Aunt Jin of the Qiaoshou Sect personally paid a visit to Meng Zhang.

Meng Zhang warmly received this ally, and after a brief exchange of pleasantries, Aunt Jin mentioned that she had an urgent matter to discuss privately with him.

Leading her into a quiet room, before they even had a chance to sit down, Aunt Jin uttered a sentence that left Meng Zhang astonished and horrified.

"Sect Master Meng, how have you considered Fei Hongzi's proposal?"

Chapter 285: Standing in Line

"You, you, you..." Meng Zhang pointed at Aunt Jin but couldn't find the right words to say.

Meng Zhang finally understood that Qiaoshou Sect and Flying Swan Sect were working together. Reflecting on his previous meeting with Aunt Jin, where she seemed to be fully aware of the situation in the Endless Sea of Sand and reassured him that there wouldn't be any chaos for the time being, he now realized that the information might have come from Flying Swan Sect.

Being a Gold Core sect, any connection with Flying Swan Sect meant that even with his Grand Evolving Fortune, Meng Zhang couldn't deduce Qiaoshou Sect's secrets.

After a while, Meng Zhang calmed down. The alliance between Taiyi Sect and Qiaoshou Sect hadn't been long-lasting, and it was natural for them to keep certain secrets hidden. Just as Taiyi Sect wouldn't reveal its confidential information to Qiaoshou Sect, it was reasonable for the latter to have their own undisclosed matters.

Though he understood, Meng Zhang couldn't help feeling a sense of discontent from being kept in the dark. He wore a cold expression and expressed his displeasure, "Senior Jin, you've caused great distress by hiding this from me. Who knew that your sect had become so close to Flying Swan Sect? Yet, you didn't even give me a hint, which is somewhat unkind."

Aunt Jin smiled bitterly, understanding Meng Zhang's feelings. "Sect Master Meng, please don't be angry. It was not my intention to hide this from you. The connection between Qiaoshou Sect and Flying Swan Sect isn't recent. To be precise, we have had ties for over five hundred years."

Five hundred years ago, Meng Zhang was taken aback. That was indeed a long time ago. Wait a minute, five hundred years ago was precisely when Twin Success Valley became a vassal of Flying Swan Sect and began expanding its influence in the surrounding areas, right?

Meng Zhang believed he had figured out Qiaoshou Sect's background. "Flying Swan Sect is truly farsighted. They set up Qiaoshou Sect as a pawn over five hundred years ago, constantly monitoring Twin Success Valley, right?"

Aunt Jin listened to Meng Zhang and couldn't help but laugh wryly. "Sect Master Meng, you misunderstood us. Qiaoshou Sect isn't a pawn of Flying Swan Sect, nor do we have any task to monitor Twin Success Valley."

"Sect Master Meng, think about it. Twin Success Valley is just a Foundation Building sect. Would Flying Swan Sect really care so much and plan so far ahead, setting up such a profound layout over 500 years in advance?"

Seeing Aunt Jin's expression, it didn't seem like she was lying. Puzzled, Meng Zhang asked, "Then, Senior Jin, what is the relationship between Qiaoshou Sect and Flying Swan Sect?"

Aunt Jin looked troubled and said, "Sect Master Meng, please don't put me in a difficult position. The relationship between Qiaoshou Sect and Flying Swan Sect is complicated and not easy to explain. Some details are better kept secret, as they can do more harm than good if revealed. Although Qiaoshou Sect has had ties with Flying Swan Sect for a long time, we are neither their vassals nor their pawns."

"We have our own principles and won't blindly follow Flying Swan Sect. Flying Swan Sect alone can't command Qiaoshou Sect."

Meng Zhang carefully looked at Aunt Jin, trying to figure out if she was being truthful. In his impression, the Qiaoshou Sect, despite its 500-year history, wasn't a powerful faction. In the past, it was merely one of Twin Success Valley's many dependents. Now, it had become a vassal of the Forest Spring Watch, just like Taiyi Sect.

Aunt Jin seemed to be quite confident in her speech, but she didn't appear deceitful or overbearing. It seemed that there were many secrets behind the Qiaoshou Sect that Meng Zhang was unaware of.

"Senior Jin, since the Qiaoshou Sect is not a pawn of the Flying Swan Sect, what did you mean by your earlier question?" Meng Zhang asked directly, setting aside all his confusion for the moment.

"Sect Master Meng, my intention is simple. Does Taiyi Sect intend to accept Fei Hongzi's proposal?" Aunt Jin replied firmly.

"Sect Master Meng, let me tell you the truth. You cannot keep postponing this matter; you must provide a clear answer. Dilly-dallying is not an option, and trying to please both sides will lead to destruction. Now is the time to take a stand," Aunt Jin's tone carried a distinct sense of threat.

"Don't push people too far. Even if we take a stand, Taiyi Sect can also stand with the Forest Spring Watch," Meng Zhang retorted defiantly.

"Hahaha..." Aunt Jin burst into laughter.

"Sect Master Meng, you really don't know anything, do you?"

"Erasing the Forest Spring Watch is not just the Flying Swan Sect's idea. There are many influential figures involved in this plot. Even the Flying Swan Sect itself is just a pawn in the game."

"Sect Master Meng, based on our long-standing relationship, I advise you not to act impulsively."

Observing Aunt Jin's proud demeanor, Meng Zhang wanted to believe that she was lying or exaggerating. However, his intuition told him that Aunt Jin was telling the truth.

Her revelations left Meng Zhang quite taken aback. Seeing that he was visibly affected, Aunt Jin continued persuading him.

"Sect Master Meng, I can swear that everything I said is true. You have experienced the chaos caused by the sand monsters firsthand. But do you know that sand monsters are not naturally occurring beings? They were artificially created."

Having fought the sand monsters numerous times and even infiltrated their lair, Meng Zhang had always wondered about their origins. However, lacking any leads, he had set the question aside. Now, hearing Aunt Jin's words, he couldn't help but ask, "Then who exactly possesses such great power to create these formidable enemies of mankind? And what is the purpose of this entity's existence?"

Aunt Jin's expression betrayed a trace of fear she couldn't conceal.

"I'm not entirely sure about all the details. All I know is that the creator of the sand monsters is a 'great power' from the depths of the Deadly Sea of Sand. As for their motives, it's beyond my knowledge."

"What I can tell you is that Guang ZhiDaoist Master of the Forest Spring Watch is connected to this 'great power.' The recent chaos caused by the sand monsters was probably orchestrated by Guang ZhiDaoist Master in the shadows."

"The sand monsters have been a scourge of the Endless Sea of Sand for many years, making them enemies of humanity. Guang ZhiDaoist Master, driven by his own selfish desires, has been covertly fueling this menace and using the sand monsters to harm innocent lives."

"The actions of Guang ZhiDaoist Master are no different from those of demons. I suspect that he has fallen into the path of evil and become a malevolent being."

As Aunt Jin spoke, her righteous indignation was evident. The amount of information in Aunt Jin's words overwhelmed Meng Zhang, and he needed some time to process it all before responding to her.

Chapter 286: Agreement

"Of course, this great power responsible for creating the sand monster calamity is currently trapped by esteemed seniors of the righteous path. He cannot escape or directly interfere with the Endless Sea of Sand. Helplessly, he can only create sand monsters and use Guang ZhiDaoist Master and others as lackeys to stir up trouble and cause disasters in the Endless Sea of Sand."

"Sect Master Meng, as a member of the righteous path, why don't you join us in eradicating evil and upholding justice, eliminating the evildoers of Forest Spring Watch?" Aunt Jin spoke with a righteous tone.

Meng Zhang remained silent. He didn't pay much heed to the empty talk about upholding justice and eradicating evil. What concerned him was Aunt Jin's demeanor, which made it seem like they really had the confidence to destroy Forest Spring Watch.

The most critical aspect of choosing a side wasn't about right or wrong; it was about standing with the side that would emerge victorious.

Aunt Jin had revealed so many secrets to him, essentially showing her cards. At this point, it was challenging to continue delaying.

"Sect Master Meng, I can tell you clearly that we have planned everything thoroughly and can launch our move at any time. With Taiyi Sect on our side, it's the icing on the cake. Without Taiyi Sect, it'll only be slightly troublesome and require a bit more effort. But ultimately, we will succeed."

"Sect Master Meng, you have no other choice now. If you refuse Fei Hongzi's proposal again, he will actively spread rumors about you and him secretly colluding. Once the news spreads, do you think Forest Spring Watch will tolerate you? Will it tolerate Taiyi Sect?"

Aunt Jin had no choice but to resort to threats at this point.

"Rumors end with wise men. Fei Hongzi thinks he can use rumors to drive a wedge between Taiyi Sect and Forest Spring Watch, but it's absolutely impossible," Meng Zhang asserted firmly.

"Is that so, Sect Master Meng? You can certainly try," Aunt Jin sneered.

"Sect Master Meng, don't think that I'm forcing you. In fact, I'm helping you. Carefully weigh the pros and cons and consider it thoroughly."

Meng Zhang fell into contemplation; he wasn't particularly quick-witted. Aunt Jin's words had stirred some confusion in his mind.

Seeing Aunt Jin's resolute appearance, it seemed that Forest Spring Watch was indeed in deep trouble this time. If that were the case, Taiyi Sect truly needed to pick a side soon.

Suppressing his impatience, Meng Zhang calmly said, "Senior Jin, this matter is of great significance, and I alone can't make the decision. How about this, give me a few days to discuss with the sect's elders."

"Sect Master Meng, I hope you're not deliberately stalling for time. Ten days from now, I'll come again to hear your answer."

"By the way, I told you those things just now, and it's best not to spread them casually. Otherwise, the consequences will be unimaginable."

After saying this, Aunt Jin didn't say much more and left the place.

Last time, when Meng Zhang convened the high-ranking members of the sect for discussion, they couldn't reach a conclusion. Considering that Aunt Jin had revealed so many secrets this time, he didn't plan on consulting too many people.

After Aunt Jin left, Meng Zhang spent a day calming his emotions and adjusting his state of mind. Then, in an empty chamber, he once again employed the Grand Evolving Fortune.

With incantations uttered from his mouth and hands continuously forming gestures, the calculation tallies floating in front of him began to deplete one by one.

By now, he had accumulated nearly two hundred calculation tallies.

When the calculation tallies were nearly exhausted, he finally obtained the result he desired.

He did not attempt to deduce the content Aunt Jin had told him about, as the matter involved the Gold Core sect, Flying Swan Sect, and even a more powerful great power than the Flying Swan Sect. Even if he staked his life, there was no guarantee that he could deduce the results he desired.

Therefore, Meng Zhang's current deduction was focused on whether Aunt Jin had deceived him during their conversation or led him astray with verbal traps. The issue at hand concerned only the discussion between Meng Zhang and Aunt Jin, both being mid-level cultivators in the Foundation Building stage. After expending sufficient calculation tally, this deduction finally succeeded.

The answer Meng Zhang obtained was negative—Aunt Jin indeed did not deceive or mislead him. As for the calculation results for the Grand Evolving Fortune, Meng Zhang had more confidence in them due to previous successful precedents.

However, this deduction by Meng Zhang still had its flaws. He had only deduced that Aunt Jin hadn't deceived him, but if Aunt Jin herself was being deceived by someone else without her knowledge, then Meng Zhang's deduction would lose its significance.

Meng Zhang had considered this possibility as well. Yet, he couldn't overlook Aunt Jin's cunning and scheming nature. The fact that the Qiaoshou Sect managed to hide its connection with the Flying Swan Sect for over five hundred years without leaking any information indicated that she was not easy to deceive.

If he chose to believe Aunt Jin, it meant that the Flying Swan Sect had already secretly woven a large net to capture Forest Spring Watch at any moment. Considering Flying Swan Sect's profound background, it was far superior to sects like Forest Spring Watch and Earthfire Sect. If Aunt Jin was so confident about the success of the plan, then Meng Zhang naturally sided with her as the potential victor.

With these thoughts, Meng Zhang made a preliminary decision in his mind. To be sure about his choice, he invited Deep Earth Spirit General to a private chamber and disclosed everything Aunt Jin had told him, seeking his advice.

After listening to Meng Zhang's account, Deep EarthSpirit General remained silent for a long time before saying, "Sect Master, I agree with Fei Hongzi's proposal to join the encirclement of Forest Spring Watch."

As an elder, Deep EarthSpirit General rarely expressed opinions on Taiyi Sect's internal affairs and had never interfered with Meng Zhang's decisions. Although he always acted clueless in front of Meng Zhang, never revealing how much of his memory had been restored or anything about his past and Taiyi Sect's history, he still possessed more experience and insight than Meng Zhang due to his seniority.

Meng Zhang respected and trusted his opinions greatly.

"In addition, didn't Fei Hongzi give you that list of treasures? Some of the items recorded on it are highly beneficial to Taiyi Sect. You can use this opportunity to request them from Fei Hongzi."

Meng Zhang had shown the list of treasures given by the Flying Swan Sect to the high-ranking members of the sect. Though everyone coveted the items, they didn't dare to demand them from Fei Hongzi due to the issue of faction alignment. However, if Taiyi Sect were to truly side with the Flying Swan Sect, they could consider seeking some benefits from them.

Having finally made his decision, Meng Zhang felt a great burden lift from his shoulders, and he became noticeably more relaxed.

Ten days later, Aunt Jin arrived as promised, once again visiting Taiyi Sect to meet with the Sect Master, Meng Zhang. Meng Zhang readily agreed to Fei Hongzi's proposal, willing to join the operation to exterminate Forest Spring Watch. Of course, he also took the opportunity to present various conditions of his own.

Chapter 287: Article 0 Lays the Foundation Building Plan

Regarding the numerous conditions put forward by Meng Zhang, Aunt Jin did not have the authority to give her approval. She told Meng Zhang that she could only relay his requests. As for whether Fei Hongzi would agree, she was uncertain.

Over the following days, Aunt Jin shuttled back and forth between the Taiyi Sect and the Flying Swan Sect, delivering messages on behalf of Meng Zhang and Fei Hongzi. There were several instances when the two parties had significant differences in their conditions, leading to heated disputes. On such occasions, Meng Zhang left the Taiyi Sect and secretly went to the Flying Swan Sect to negotiate with Fei Hongzi.

During the negotiation process, Meng Zhang discovered that Aunt Jin was indeed not a subordinate of the Flying Swan Sect, as she had claimed. Fei Hongzi treated Aunt Jin with great respect. It seemed that the Flying Swan Sect and the Qiaoshou Sect had no subordination relationship; rather, they were more like cooperating entities. If one were to make an analogy, it was like two independent branches under the same organization.

After a series of arduous bargaining, Meng Zhang finally reached an agreement with Fei Hongzi. Fei Hongzi took out a pre-prepared oath document, and after Meng Zhang confirmed its contents, a simple ceremony was held. The three of them swore on the oath document, agreeing to various terms.

The Flying Swan Sect would not directly participate in the attack on the Forest Spring Watch, but they would provide covert assistance. Their task was to find a way to deal with the Gold Core Daoist Master, Guang Zhi Daoist Master, from the Forest Spring Watch.

On the other hand, the Taiyi Sect and the Qiaoshou Sect would join forces to launch an all-out attack on the Forest Spring Watch and completely annihilate it.

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The three individuals vowed to uphold the agreement and never break their oaths. After the oath was complete, the oath document self-ignited without the need for fire, and a ghostly figure emerged from the green smoke, disappearing into the air. This oath document was acquired by the Flying Swan Sect from an external source and was crafted by an expert well-versed in the arts of contracts and the Ghost Deity path. With the witness of the Ghost Deity, the reliability of the oath was guaranteed.

If anyone among the three were to break the oath, the responsible witnessing Ghost Deity would directly drag them into the Netherworld.

With the formation of the alliance, Meng Zhang, now an ally, took the opportunity to shamelessly request the treasures promised by Fei Hongzi.

Initially, Fei Hongzi had listed these treasures to intimidate Meng Zhang, believing that randomly offering one or two items from the list would be enough to appease him. However, Meng Zhang's demands were far-reaching and seemed insatiable, making him appear greedy and shameless. If it weren't for the fact that they still needed Meng Zhang for the upcoming actions, Fei Hongzi would have wanted to throw him out.

Meng Zhang used both soft and hard tactics, engaging in several rounds of bargaining before finally obtaining the treasures he desired.

One of the treasures was two drops of Jade Soul Fluid. Meng Zhang had obtained this treasure at the risk of his life from a ghost cultivator's cave in the past. The methods for refining Jade Soul Fluid were generally held by ghost cultivators. It appeared that the Flying Swan Sect's treasury contained such treasures, indicating that their relationship with ghost cultivators might not be entirely innocent. However, it was also possible that the Jade Soul Fluid had been purchased by the Flying Swan Sect from an external source without any direct involvement with ghost cultivators.

Jade Soul Fluid was a precious item that could help a Foundation Building stage cultivator complete their Soul and prepare for the breakthrough to the Gold Core stage. Such invaluable treasures are absolutely unobtainable in the Endless Sea of Sand.

In the past, in their pursuit of Jade Soul Fluid, Twin Success Valley even colluded with Ghost Path cultivators.

Meng Zhang had to invest considerable effort and haggle for quite some time to obtain two drops from Fei Hongzi. As for acquiring more, Fei Hongzi adamantly refused, leaving Meng Zhang unaware that these two drops of Jade Soul Fluid were originally brought to Flying Swan Sect by the Zhao Family in exchange for a Foundation Building Pill. Due to their slightly flawed quality, Fei Hongzi was willing to give them to Meng Zhang. If they had been flawless, he would have kept them for cultivating the disciples of his sect.

The second treasure Meng Zhang sought was a cluster of Heavenly Thunder Essence.

Fei TianDaoist Master, the most senior Gold Core Daoist Master of Flying Swan Sect, risked his life to collect this cluster when he ventured deep into the thunderclouds during a gathering of thunderstorms. Originally, he intended to use the essence as the main material for crafting a Third Rank magic tool. However, finding matching materials proved difficult, and he couldn't find a suitable Third Rank tool refiner either, so Fei TianDaoist Master had to abandon the plan. Consequently, the cluster of Heavenly Thunder Essence was left stored in Flying Swan Sect's treasury.

Due to its violent and uncontrollable nature, no cultivator from Flying Swan Sect could utilize this essence. Over the years, it remained neglected and unused in the treasury. Although precious, Fei Hongzi, who valued practicality, was willing to part with it. After some hesitation, he agreed to Meng Zhang's request.

The third treasure Meng Zhang sought from Flying Swan Sect was a heap of fiend qi stones formed by condensed fiend qi.

While fiend qi from the underground is harmful to cultivators and can even damage their souls, certain cultivation techniques in the Cultivation World require the use of underground fiend qi. In some places, the concentration of underground fiend qi is so high that over time, it condenses into fiend qi stones.

Flying Swan Sect acquired this heap of fiend qi stones from an underground mine several years ago. However, the sect lacked cultivation methods and spells that could make use of the yin-yang attribute fiend qi. Consequently, the heap was left untouched in the treasury, with the intention of eventually selling it to Jiuqu League.

After some hesitation, Fei Hongzi decided to give the heap of fiend qi stones to Meng Zhang upon his request.

With the three treasures in hand, Meng Zhang returned to Taiyi Sect.

Jade Soul Fluid and Heavenly Thunder Essence were obtained through Meng Zhang's help in negotiating with Deep EarthSpirit General.

Deep EarthSpirit General intended to use these treasures to awaken the remnants of other Guardian Spirit Generals sleeping within a precious pearl.

Meng Zhang remembered clearly that awakening Deep EarthSpirit General itself required several drops of Jade Soul Fluid and a lump of Fifth Earth Essence.

Now, with only two drops of Jade Soul Fluid, it was uncertain if it would be enough.

Before leaving, Deep EarthSpirit General made it clear to Meng Zhang that the process of awakening the Guardian Spirit General remnants was not a task accomplished overnight. He requested Meng Zhang to delay taking any action until he returned.

Although the action plan was already in place, it would still take some time to prepare before executing it. If Meng Zhang intentionally delayed, it could buy even more time.

Less than a month after returning from Flying Swan Sect, Meng Zhang received some good news. Wen Qiansun, who was in seclusion and attempting to break through to the Foundation Building

stage, had finally succeeded and become a Foundation Building cultivator. Taiyi Sect had gained another powerful asset.

Chapter 288: Action

Wen Qiansun's successful Foundation Building this time was really unexpected for many people in the sect. He started practicing late, and even with good aptitude, by the time he completed Refining Qi, he had already spent too much time and was almost at the limit age for cultivators to reach Foundation Building. Without enough time to refine true qi and sufficient precipitation, he took a gamble and made a bold and vigorous effort, which led to his success.

In addition to luck, Wen Qiansun's success was due to his own efforts and perseverance, despite being underestimated by others. In fact, Wen Qiansun had already passed his 60th birthday during the period of seclusion, and according to the common knowledge of the Cultivation World, it is almost impossible for cultivators to succeed in Foundation Building after the age of 60. However, Wen Qiansun broke this common knowledge with his determination and courage, creating a great miracle.

Of course, the Cultivation World, with its extraordinary power, is a world where miracles happen. After Wen Qiansun's successful Foundation Building, he did not rush to leave seclusion. He only notified the sect of his breakthrough and continued to practice. Yang Xueyi lent him the Foundation Building Pill, which played a decisive role in his success. Now, Wen Qiansun needs to spend time slowly expelling the pill toxin and consolidating his Cultivation Base.

This time, Wen Qiansun's practice is different from when he was striving for Foundation Building. He can communicate with the outside world instead of being in closed-door seclusion. Meng Zhang made a copy of the list that Fei Hongzi gave him and gave it to Wen Qiansun. He asked Wen Qiansun to choose two magic tools that he could use, as a congratulatory gift from himself.

Wen Qiansun has just achieved Foundation Building and has not had time to practice various secret techniques or master many methods of Foundation Building period cultivators. Therefore, he can only rely on magic tools to enhance his combat power. Wen Qiansun's successful Foundation Building at this critical moment is truly a blessing for Taiyi Sect. With one more Foundation Building period combat power, there is one more chance of victory.

After returning from Flying Swan Sect, Meng Zhang did not idle but began to practice a small Divine Ability called Twin Forms Towards Heaven Sword. Only Gold Core cultivators can practice true Divine Abilities. Before that, what cultivators practiced were called small Divine Abilities or False Divine Abilities. Twin Forms Towards Heaven Sword is a highly lethal small Divine Ability that Meng Zhang obtained from the Trial Ground inheritance.

The complete version of Twin Forms Towards Heaven Sword can be used as a Great Divine Ability to compete among Gold Core Daoist Masters. What Meng Zhang is practicing now is a prequel version of the castrated version. Even the castrated version of Twin Forms Towards Heaven Sword requires specific conditions to begin practicing. Mid-Foundation Building Cultivation Base is a basic requirement, and sufficient pure Yin-Yang fiend qi is also needed. There are higher requirements for the practitioner's aptitude and comprehension.

Meng Zhang happens to meet all these seemingly harsh conditions now.

After starting his cultivation, Meng Zhang slowly absorbed the Yin-Yang fiend qi from the fiend qi stones into his body, and then mixed it with his internal true qi using a special method. Every drop of fiend qi entering his body would stimulate intense pain in his meridians, as if someone were scraping his flesh and bones with a knife. Meng Zhang could endure the physical pain.

He was extremely careful, not allowing the pain to distract him in the slightest. Underground fiend qi inherently contained impurities, and if not handled properly, it would pollute his true qi. This would not only cause a decline in his Cultivation Base but also require a significant amount of time to purify the true qi.

Meng Zhang encountered some difficulties but managed to overcome many obstacles during his practice of Twin Forms Towards Heaven Sword. The only problem now was that Meng Zhang was worried that the pile of fiend qi stones he obtained from Flying Swan Sect would not be enough.

The operation conducted by Flying Swan Sect against Forest Spring Watch was aimed at certain victory, leaving no room for failure. They mobilized a large force and made thorough preparations to ensure no loopholes. Meng Zhang intentionally delayed the process, often complaining and creating various obstacles.

According to the agreement between the two sides, Flying Swan Sect secretly provided Taiyi Sect with a lot of resources. However, Meng Zhang always claimed that it was not enough and continuously requested more resources from Flying Swan Sect. Symbols and magic tools for battle, as well as healing pills, were secretly sent from Flying Swan Sect to Taiyi Sect.

Taiyi Sect took the lead in confronting Forest Spring Watch head-on, and it was certain that disciples of Taiyi Sect would shed blood. Meng Zhang did not hold back in his demands from Flying Swan Sect. Of course, Meng Zhang was not greedy without limits or boundaries. If he truly angered Flying Swan Sect, both sides would part ways, and Taiyi Sect would be the one to suffer.

Meng Zhang cautiously tested Fei Hongzi's bottom line and gradually requested resources, trying his best not to completely provoke him. Of course, Taiyi Sect was genuinely preparing for war.

More disciples were temporarily conscripted into the War Hall, where Meng Zhang personally guided them through various special training exercises. The intensity of training in spell casting and combat techniques increased.

More disciples were gathered together to practice war formations. They had to learn to cooperate with each other and become familiar with fighting together against enemies. However, Taiyi Sect maintained an appearance of calm and tranquility externally while making intense preparations for war internally.

While Taiyi Sect was preparing for war, Qiaoshou Sect and Flying Swan Sect were not idle either. Even the Shi Family, who had been pursued by Flying Swan Sect for many years, joined the alliance. As remnants of the Purple Gold Sect, the Shi Family had a deep-seated hatred for Flying Swan Sect. However, it was unknown what price Flying Swan Sect paid, as it convinced the Shi Family to abandon their hatred and fight for Flying Swan Sect.

When Meng Zhang heard this news, he couldn't help but sigh inwardly. In the Cultivation World, the power of hatred is still no match for the power of self-interest. As long as Flying Swan Sect is willing to offer a price, any deep-seated grudges can be set aside.

Green Bamboo Mountain, which already had a close relationship with Flying Swan Sect and could be considered a subordinate, was ready to act at any time according to Flying Swan Sect's orders. In this operation, although Flying Swan Sect did not directly attack Forest Spring Watch, Taiyi Sect, Qiaoshou Sect, Shi Family, and Green Bamboo Mountain joined forces. With a calculated plan, Forest Spring Watch would undoubtedly suffer. On the side of Forest Spring Watch, they only had staunch supporters from Forest Mountain School. However, without proper preparation, they might not have time to react. Even in a head-on battle, the combined strength of the four forces already surpassed that of Forest Spring Watch.

Despite Meng Zhang's intention to delay, the operation began according to the original plan.

Chapter 289

As Taiyi Sect and several other sects were busy preparing for war, Flying Swan Sect made the first move. Fei Tian Daoist Master, the oldest Gold Core Daoist Master of Flying Swan Sect, personally sent someone to invite Guang Zhi Daoist Master of Forest Spring Watch and Daoist Master Roaring Blaze of Earthfire Sect to discuss important matters. To show sincerity, Fei Tian Daoist Master went alone and arranged to meet on the territory of the Northern Desert Qi Family.

Fei Tian Daoist Master was highly respected within Flying Swan Sect and was considered the backbone of the sect. He was known for his unwavering words and actions. During the previous sand monster incident, Fei Tian Daoist Master took the initiative to negotiate with Guang Zhi Daoist Master and invited him to assist in the battle. To gain Guang Zhi Daoist Master's trust, Fei Tian Daoist Master made a heart demon oath in front of Qi Nanfei Daoist Master of Qi Family, promising not to harm Guang Zhi Daoist Master.

During the sand monster incident, Fei Tian Daoist Master kept his promise. He not only provided a Third Rank spirit vein for Guang Zhi Daoist Master's cultivation but also treated him as well as the Gold Core Daoist Masters within Flying Swan Sect. After the incident, Fei Tian Daoist Master not only did not trouble Guang Zhi Daoist Master but also fulfilled his promise of reward.

However, some people within Flying Swan Sect were dissatisfied with Fei Tian Daoist Master's actions. They criticized him for being old and cowardly, not eliminating threats like Guang Zhi Daoist Master and instead openly supporting them. If Fei Tian Daoist Master's prestige and seniority were not so high, some might have openly questioned him.

In reality, more and more disciples within Flying Swan Sect began to criticize him. Despite this, Fei Tian Daoist Master's sincerity this time was difficult for Guang Zhi Daoist Master and Daoist Master Roaring Blaze to refuse. Although the relationship between Forest Spring Watch, Earthfire Sect, and Flying Swan Sect was delicate, both sides were trying to maintain the appearance of peace.

Especially for Forest Spring Watch and Earthfire Sect, who were much weaker than Flying Swan Sect, the longer they could delay breaking ties, the better. Therefore, Guang Zhi Daoist Master and Daoist Master Roaring Blaze had to give Fei Tian Daoist Master face and arrived at the agreed-upon location on time.

Fei Tian Daoist Master had not set up an ambush here and had a genuine matter to discuss. When they met, Guang Zhi Daoist Master and Daoist Master Roaring Blaze finally breathed a sigh of

relief. Only Fei Tian Daoist Master was present from Flying Swan Sect, and two Gold Core Daoist Masters from Qi Family were secretly observing from afar. Fei Tian Daoist Master's attitude was very kind, treating Guang Zhi Daoist Master and Daoist Master Roaring Blaze as juniors. He told them that after the sand monster incident was settled, the demon beasts in Demon Wind Gobi began to act up again. Especially the Third Rank demon beasts deep in Demon Wind Gobi, they seemed to be restless.

Endless Sea of Sand suffered heavy losses during the sand monster incident. If the demon beasts caused trouble again, all sects needed to work together to fight against them. Guang Zhi Daoist Master and Daoist Master Roaring Blaze naturally agreed and said a lot of good things. They said that as Human Clan cultivators, they must work together against external enemies. They absolutely could not let the demon beasts rampage and harm the people. Fei Tian Daoist Master took the opportunity to propose that the three of them go to Demon Wind Gobi together to investigate the movements of the demon beasts, so that each sect could prepare accordingly. Seeing that Guang Zhi Daoist Master and Daoist Master Roaring Blaze were clearly hesitant, Fei Tian Daoist Master took out a ghost oath contract that he had prepared in advance. He was willing to make a ghost oath that he would not harm the two of them and would do his best to protect their safety.

Caught by Fei Tian Daoist Master's words and sincerity, Guang Zhi Daoist Master and Daoist Master Roaring Blaze could not refuse. Moreover, they were indeed curious about the movements of the demon beasts in Demon Wind Gobi. However, they still had many doubts in their hearts. Helpless, they put forward a series of conditions. Fei Tian Daoist Master did not make too much trouble and agreed to this series of conditions.

Finally, through this oath contract, the three of them made a ghost oath to ensure that these conditions could be implemented. After making the ghost oath, Fei Tian Daoist Master immediately became the most trusted ally of the two.

After explaining to their respective sects, Guang Zhi Daoist Master and Daoist Master Roaring Blaze accompanied Fei Tian Daoist Master to Demon Wind Gobi to investigate the movements of the demon beasts. This matter was not kept secret and soon spread throughout Endless Sea of Sand.

Almost all cultivators thought that through this cooperation, the relationship between the three sects had become closer. As long as the three sects did not become hostile, Endless Sea of Sand would maintain peace for a long time to come.

Only a few people like Meng Zhang knew that Flying Swan Sect had started to take action. The next step would be the beginning of a series of battles. Before the war started, Meng Zhang made a secret visit to Flying Swan Sect and met with Fei Hongzi, Gu Tanghai, Aunt Jin, and Azure Bamboo for the last time. They discussed all the details of their actions to ensure that everything went smoothly.

Seeing Gu Tanghai, Meng Zhang couldn't help but feel a little sigh. This person really put down the hatred of his family for hundreds of years and joined the enemy's camp. Meng Zhang wondered what price Fei Hongzi had paid to convince Gu Tanghai to join Flying Swan Sect.

When facing Azure Bamboo, Meng Zhang felt a little uneasy. After all, the two sides had shed a lot of blood in the previous battles. Azure Bamboo always had a cold face and ignored Meng Zhang, Gu Tanghai, and others. But when facing Fei Hongzi, Azure Bamboo immediately changed to a flattering expression, like a wagging dog.

Fei Hongzi didn't care about the grudges between Azure Bamboo and the other three. As long as they could work together to deal with Forest Spring Watch, it was enough. Meng Zhang was thinking about how to get rid of Azure Bamboo when they went to war with Forest Spring Watch. He wondered if he should collude with Aunt Jin and others to take the opportunity to eliminate Azure Bamboo.

After the discussion, when everyone had left, Meng Zhang stopped Fei Hongzi. He told Fei Hongzi that Wen Qiansun of Taiyi Sect had just reached Foundation Building and was ready to obey Flying Swan Sect's orders to join the battle against Forest Spring Watch. However, Wen Qiansun's cultivation base was shallow, and he would not be able to help much on the battlefield. Instead, he would be in danger.

Seeing Wen Qiansun's loyalty to Flying Swan Sect, Meng Zhang asked Fei Hongzi if he could lend Wen Qiansun 2-3 magic tools to protect himself and avoid unnecessary risks.

Chapter 290: Development

Wen Qiansun's life and death may be insignificant, but it would be detrimental if it were to interfere with the important matters of the Flying Swan Sect. As Meng Zhang spoke, he handed the list to Fei Hongzi, highlighting the magic tools that Wen Qiansun had chosen. Fei Hongzi couldn't help but be amused by Meng Zhang's shameless demeanor.

The list provided by Meng Zhang consisted of items that were all at least Second Rank. Many of these treasures were so valuable that no amount of spiritual stones could afford them. Prior to this, the Flying Swan Sect had already provided a large amount of resources to support the Taiyi Sect. Although these war supplies were only First Rank, the sheer quantity made it impossible for the Taiyi Sect to purchase them even if they abstained from eating and drinking for several years. Furthermore, even if the Taiyi Sect could produce enough spiritual stones, they lacked a reliable channel for bulk purchases.

Putting aside the few spiritual objects that Fei Hongzi initially gave to Meng Zhang, Fei Hongzi was starting to get irritated by Meng Zhang treating the Flying Swan Sect as his personal warehouse and making demands. Meng Zhang immediately sensed the change in Fei Hongzi's mood and began showering him with flattery and compliments.

In summary, Meng Zhang claimed that his request for these items was not for personal gain but to enhance the combat capabilities of the Taiyi Sect, enabling them to better fulfill the tasks assigned by the Flying Swan Sect.

In the end, Fei Hongzi was left with no choice but to tolerate Meng Zhang's shameless persistence and reluctantly handed over three magic tools to him. Fei Hongzi, who had been wearing a cold expression all along, couldn't remember how many times he had said, "This is an exception, and it won't happen again."

Since the operation had already begun, it was impossible to stop it now. This was the most valuable moment for the Flying Swan Sect in relation to the Taiyi Sect. If the Taiyi Sect were to leave, the carefully planned operation of the Flying Swan Sect might end in failure.

Of course, both parties had already made a solemn vow, and the Taiyi Sect would not go back on their word or board the Forest Spring Watch.

However, Fei Hongzi was concerned that the Taiyi Sect might not contribute their full effort, which could affect the upcoming major battle. This operation was of great importance and could not tolerate the slightest mistake.

In order to stabilize the Taiyi Sect and ensure their wholehearted participation in the battle, Fei Hongzi had no choice but to reluctantly agree to some unreasonable demands, even if it made him unhappy.

Meng Zhang, who had achieved his goal, naturally didn't hesitate to offer some flattering words without asking for anything in return. After rambling on for a while, he finally left.

Upon returning to the Taiyi Sect, Meng Zhang immediately handed the three magic tools to Wen Qiansun, urging him to quickly refine them so as not to miss the imminent battle.

The first magic tool was a jade formation plate. When setting up various formations, the jade formation plate could greatly enhance their power. Especially when deploying formations on the battlefield, using the jade formation plate could expedite the process.

The second item was a palm-sized shield called the Purple Gold Shield. Once activated, the Purple Gold Shield could transform into a large shield, protecting Wen Qiansun from head to toe.

The third item was a small three-inch-long dagger called the Armor-Piercing Blade. Despite its small and seemingly toy-like appearance, once refined by a cultivator, the Armor-Piercing Blade possessed an incredibly sharp and decisive power. Many Second Rank defensive magic tools and spells would be unable to withstand its strikes. These three magic tools are versatile, providing both offensive and defensive capabilities, and are also beneficial for Wen Qiansun to utilize his formation talents. It is evident that Wen Qiansun chose these three magic tools with great care. They are all high-quality items and not the mediocre goods that can be found on the market. If it weren't for the advantage of being associated with the Flying Swan Sect, they would be impossible to obtain even with money.

Wen Qiansun's process of consolidating his cultivation base by expelling pill toxins went smoothly. After completing this, he began refining the three magic tools.

On the other hand, Deep Earth Spirit General, carrying the Jade Soul Fluid and the clump of Heavenly Thunder Essence, had not come out of the Taiyi Sect's old mountain gate since entering the spiritual eye. This was due to his prior instructions, and Meng Zhang couldn't disturb him.

Deep Earth Spirit General's original purpose was to awaken other Guardian Spirit Generals and increase the Taiyi Sect's combat power. However, if he continued to stay inside for too long, he might miss the upcoming major battle. If it weren't for Wen Qiansun's successful Foundation Building, the Taiyi Sect would not only have failed to increase their combat power but also lost a Foundation Building cultivator.

Meng Zhang secretly hoped that Deep Earth Spirit General would act smoothly and come out early. Even if he couldn't awaken new Guardian Spirit Generals, as long as he could participate in the battle, it would be enough.

Outside, the Flying Swan Sect's plan was proceeding as planned. Shortly after the three Daoist Masters entered the Demon Wind Gobi, Land Walk Sect and Earthfire Sect had a major dispute over a piece of underground mineral deposit.

Like Earthfire Sect, Land Walk Sect was nominally a vassal of the Flying Swan Sect but had a high degree of independence and was more like a feudal lord. Land Walk Sect disciples were proficient in earth-based spells, especially the Earth Escape Technique. In the Endless Sea of Sand, Land Walk Sect was known for their ability to dig and tunnel.

They fully utilized their own techniques and often went underground to explore mineral deposits, occasionally reaping significant rewards. Later on, many sects and families would hire Land Walk Sect to explore mineral deposits on their land. Especially for some cultivation forces with few personnel, they would often entrust Land Walk Sect to mine their own mineral deposits and wait for the dividends.

Land Walk Sect had mined a large amount of mineral deposits and was one of the largest mineral suppliers in the Endless Sea of Sand. As time passed, Land Walk Sect became increasingly dissatisfied with merely providing mineral materials and began to vigorously cultivate tool refiners within the sect, hoping to become a refining sect like Earthfire Sect.

As a result, there was a conflict of interest between Land Walk Sect and Earthfire Sect. The cause of this dispute was simple: disciples from both sects discovered a scarlet copper mine near the boundary between the two sects.

Neither side was willing to back down, and both claimed that the scarlet copper mine belonged to their respective sects. From the initial dispute, it quickly escalated into a heated argument. Earthfire Sect disciples were already hot-tempered and easily provoked. In a fit of anger, they were the first to take action.

Once they started fighting, the intensity of the dispute was out of control. After a melee, both sides suffered casualties. Land Walk Sect believed that Earthfire Sect disciples had started the fight and that they were in the right. Therefore, Land Walk Sect demanded that Earthfire Sect cede the scarlet copper mine and hand over the injured disciples.

Before Daoist Master Roaring Blazeform the core, Earthfire Sect was a thorn in everyone's side that no one dared to provoke. Earthfire Sect had always been the one bullying others, and no one had ever dared to challenge them. Since Daoist Master Roaring Blazeform the core, Earthfire Sect had become a Gold Core sect. Although due to Daoist Master Roaring Blaze's orders, Earthfire Sect disciples deliberately kept a low profile and suppressed their temper, they still had great pride in their hearts.

Now that Land Walk Sect had made such a demand, Earthfire Sect naturally would not agree. Who do you think you are, Land Walk Sect? Do you really think you're the Flying Swan Sect? Trying to bully Earthfire Sect is simply overestimating yourselves.