

Sect Master 491

Chapter 491: Sword Cultivator

Meng Zhang, as a Sect Master, had all kinds of people in his sect with different personalities and backgrounds.

It was impossible for everyone to be satisfied with him as the Sect Master, and he couldn't please everyone either.

Every time Meng Zhang met with Delicate WaterSpirit General, he could feel her condescending attitude from her unruly eyes. Although he felt a little uneasy, he still showed his broad-minded side and didn't argue with her. Without Meng Zhang asking, Deep EarthSpirit General stated his purpose.

It turned out that Delicate WaterSpirit General could refine some pills using the Ling Water Pregnancy Dan technique, and some of these pills could repair the soul of the sleeping Guardian Spirit General, which had a great effect.

Recently, she had been collecting various spiritual herbs to refine these pills. At this time, it became apparent that Taiyi Sect's reserves were shallow. The treasury lacked third-rank items such as third-rank spiritual objects, third-rank magic tools, and third-rank pills, which was almost equivalent to having none.

Due to the short creation time of the sect's spiritual herb garden, there was a lack of spiritual herbs with sufficient age. Whether it was collecting in the wild or purchasing from outside, the quantity was not sufficient, especially when it came to certain specific spiritual herbs, which made it even more difficult.

Delicate WaterSpirit General had spent a lot of effort but had not been able to collect all the necessary spiritual herbs.

This time, the Four Seas Building in Great Wind City was going to hold a grand auction, which included a special section for spiritual herbs, and the herbs that Delicate WaterSpirit General needed were among them. The three Guardian Spirit Generals were all elders in Taiyi Sect and had high status.

They each had their own responsibilities and were very accomplished in cultivation. They not only obtained many sect rewards but also had other means of earning a large amount of spirit stones.

However, truly valuable spiritual herbs were rare. Once they appeared at the auction, they would immediately attract everyone's attention and become the subject of fierce competition. With the financial resources of the three Guardian Spirit Generals, they were not confident that they could definitely obtain the spiritual herbs they wanted.

Delicate WaterSpirit General, who had always been reluctant to have much contact with Meng Zhang, had to ask for help from Deep EarthSpirit General and come to Meng Zhang for assistance. Taiyi Sect now had a large family business, and trade with Great Wind City was also hot.

Although there were many places where spirit stones were used, there was no problem in temporarily mobilizing a large amount of spirit stones. These Guardian Spirit Generals had a deep

bond with each other. After each Guardian Spirit General awakened, they would try their best to awaken their companions.

Especially now that Taiyi Sect was developing well, the three Guardian Spirit Generals had more time and energy to help their companions. These Guardian Spirit Generals were all powerful Gold Core level experts in the past.

Even if their strength had not fully recovered, they could still play a huge role. Every additional Guardian Spirit General would increase Taiyi Sect's strength.

Meng Zhang fully agreed with the idea of awakening the Guardian Spirit Generals and provided full support. Without any hesitation, Meng Zhang agreed to Deep EarthSpirit General's request and gave him a warrant to collect the required spirit stones from General Affairs Hall Master Meng Mingyuan.

Meng Zhang even declared that this amount of spirit stones would be recorded in the sect's accounts and did not need to be repaid by Deep EarthSpirit General and others. Even Delicate WaterSpirit General, who had always been dissatisfied with Meng Zhang, softened her expression a little when she heard Meng Zhang's words.

Meng Zhang was curious about these Guardian Spirit Generals. However, including Deep EarthSpirit General, they were not willing to talk much about the past. Unable to resist his curiosity, Meng Zhang asked how many remaining souls of the Guardian Spirit Generals were still asleep inside the pearl and what their origins and abilities were.

Deep EarthSpirit General clearly told Meng Zhang that there was only one remaining soul of a Guardian Spirit General still asleep inside the pearl. Including the three who had already awakened, this pearl could provide a total of four Guardian Spirit Generals for Taiyi Sect.

Taiyi Sect truly lived up to its reputation as a top sect that had once been glorious. Even though it had fallen to a low point, it still left something behind for future generations. Meng Zhang thought to himself.

When Meng Zhang asked about the origin and abilities of the Guardian Spirit General who had not yet awakened, Deep EarthSpirit General hesitated.

Delicate WaterSpirit General, who was always fearless and unruly, showed obvious fear on her face and a hint of dread flashed in her eyes. Before Deep EarthSpirit General could speak, Delicate WaterSpirit General cursed fiercely, "What does that mad swordsman have to say?"

Upon hearing Delicate WaterSpirit General's words, Deep EarthSpirit General immediately closed his mouth and no longer answered Meng Zhang's questions. "Mad swordsman," Meng Zhang paused for a moment.

Being called a mad swordsman indicated that the Guardian Spirit General was likely skilled in swordsmanship and might even be a rare Sword Cultivator. As far as Meng Zhang knew, Taiyi Sect was not a sect that focused on Sword Cultivation, nor did it have any renowned Sword Cultivation inheritance.

Meng Zhang wanted to ask further, but after looking at the expressions of Deep EarthSpirit General and Delicate WaterSpirit General, he knew it was useless and temporarily suppressed his curiosity.

Delicate WaterSpirit General's words and actions did not deceive Meng Zhang, who was adept at understanding people's hearts. On the surface, she cursed fiercely, as if she despised the Guardian Spirit General.

However, from her actions of running around and wholeheartedly trying to awaken the Guardian Spirit General, it was clear that her feelings towards that Guardian Spirit General were extraordinary. Meng Zhang couldn't be bothered with the private matters of these Guardian Spirit Generals. After asking Deep EarthSpirit General a few other questions, he let them leave.

Not long after Deep EarthSpirit General and Delicate WaterSpirit General left, the newly appointed Secret Hall Master, An Moran, came to pay respects to Meng Zhang. Although the time he had spent under Jue Ying's guidance was not long, An Moran's demeanor was noticeably different from before. Previously, he had a dull personality and was cold-hearted. Now, he had become very steady and exuded a somewhat sinister aura.

Thanks to Meng Zhang's full support and abundant resources, as well as the ability to mobilize the entire Taiyi Sect, the Secret Hall had established a preliminary framework and had begun to play a role in just over two years. The main members of the Secret Hall were selected from disciples of Taiyi Sect.

Their training time was short, and they were not yet capable of much. They still lacked the necessary experience to deal with external matters, especially when facing opponents like the Flying Swan Sect. However, within the Hanhai Alliance, they could be put to use due to the advantageous circumstances.

Recently, there had been a major upheaval within the three cultivation forces of the Hanhai Alliance. The previous high-ranking members had been completely cleared out, and new leaders had taken their place, with An Moran leading the Secret Hall. These three forces were officially affiliated with Taiyi Sect, but in reality, they had been colluding with the Flying Swan Sect all along, and could even be considered undercover agents for the Flying Swan Sect.

Although An Moran still appeared somewhat immature, and the Secret Hall was newly established, with Jue Ying's guidance, they managed to catch the tail of these three forces and investigate their details.

Although An Moran's methods were a bit rough and lacked finesse, they still had an effect. On one hand, it trained the disciples of the Secret Hall and gave them practical experience. On the other hand, it served as a warning to all members of the alliance, especially those who were wavering in their loyalty.

Chapter 492: Barrier

An Moran achieved impressive results with his first move, solving a significant problem. However, he remained expressionless, neither proud nor anxious, feeling that he had not accomplished anything extraordinary.

The Secret Hall operates covertly, handling sensitive issues that the Taiyi Sect cannot openly address, aside from intelligence gathering and internal and external monitoring. Despite the chilly relationship and mutual hostility between Taiyi Sect and Flying Swan Sect, they are not formally at odds and maintain a facade of friendship.

All members of the Hanhai Alliance, including Taiyi Sect, were originally vassals of the Flying Swan Sect or vassals of vassals. It is not unusual for many factions to maintain connections with the Flying Swan Sect.

Although Taiyi Sect is now a Gold Core sect, there is still a considerable gap in strength compared to the Flying Swan Sect. The surrounding cultivation forces had either been abandoned by the Flying Swan Sect in the past, in an attempt to win over Taiyi Sect, or were too far from the Flying Swan Sect and too close to Taiyi Sect. If they didn't lean towards Taiyi Sect, the Flying Swan Sect wouldn't pay them much attention.

These cultivation forces only sided with Taiyi Sect out of necessity, and their loyalty cannot be guaranteed. Consequently, Taiyi Sect needed to employ various means to completely subjugate these forces, bringing them all under its banner.

Regarding those forces that secretly support the Flying Swan Sect, Taiyi Sect couldn't directly intervene. They couldn't target them simply because of their affiliation with the Flying Swan Sect.

This is where the Secret Hall's covert actions come into play. Taiyi Sect now aims to become the true hegemon, and its conduct must align with that of the reputable orthodox sects. Therefore, they will handle illegitimate matters discreetly and from the shadows.

The recent success of the Secret Hall's small-scale operation demonstrated its value. Going forward, there are many tasks the Secret Hall must undertake. In addition to integrating Taiyi Sect's original intelligence system, they need to expand their influence outside.

Currently, the Secret Hall's power can barely monitor the Hanhai Alliance. To advance further, they need to recruit more people. They will not only select from within Taiyi Sect but also seek external talent.

Though Jue Ying cannot reveal Dark Alliance's unique training system, they did impart some commonly used methods and techniques to An Moran. As a result, An Moran is now preparing to secretly gather some suitable children and train them from a young age to become special operatives.

With Jue Ying's generous guidance, An Moran's progress was swift, and the development of the Secret Hall progressed smoothly.

As the Hall Master of the Secret Hall, An Moran only reports regularly to Meng Zhang and does not pay much attention to other elders in the sect.

Upon hearing An Moran's report, Meng Zhang displayed a pleased expression. He was exceptionally satisfied with An Moran. An Moran's mind was clear, always aware of what he was doing, what he needed to do, and he worked hard to achieve his goals.

Meng Zhang initially appointed An Moran as the first Hall Master of the Secret Hall because he was his direct disciple, and he trusted him implicitly. Now it is evident that An Moran was indeed the best choice for the position of Hall Master.

After listening to An Moran's report, Meng Zhang offered him some guidance and encouragement before allowing him to leave.

Due to the assistance of senior disciple Niu Dawei in handling daily affairs, Meng Zhang didn't have many matters that required his personal attention. After advancing to the Gold Core stage, the

path of cultivation became even more arduous. Even someone with qualifications and comprehension like Meng Zhang had to dedicate the majority of his time and energy to cultivation.

Focusing on his main cultivation technique, the "Sun-Moon Wheel Turning Sutra," Meng Zhang couldn't afford to relax for a moment. Learning various Divine Abilities and secret techniques also consumed a significant amount of time, especially the recently acquired Rainbow Escape Method, which demanded a substantial time investment.

Furthermore, Meng Zhang spent time reading scriptures and contemplating ancient texts. The cultivation of Tianji Arts, however, couldn't be forcefully rushed and carried a sense of letting things flow.

With the formal establishment of the Hanhai Alliance, its influence began to slowly ferment. The news spread to the Jiuqu League, and many forces became aware of the existence of the Hanhai Alliance. A Gold Core sect with only one Gold Core Daoist Master couldn't gain much recognition within the Jiuqu League. However, because Taiyi Sect took the lead in establishing the Hanhai Alliance, showing a confrontational stance against the Flying Swan Sect, some observant individuals took notice of the friction and estrangement between the two sects.

In the blink of an eye, almost eight years had passed since the founding of the Hanhai Alliance, and Qin Hongying had been serving as a guest of the Taiyi Sect for a decade. During these eight years, the development of the Hanhai Alliance had been remarkably smooth, and its reputation gradually became well-known.

Taiyi Sect occupied vast territories within the Demon Wind Gobi, with more abundant resources compared to the Endless Sea of Sand. Under Meng Zhang's instructions, the sect's higher-ups opened up some less valuable resources to the members of the Hanhai Alliance.

These resources, which were of little use to Taiyi Sect, surprisingly helped win the hearts of some cultivators. They were more willing to follow Taiyi Sect to gain greater benefits.

In her ten years as a guest of Taiyi Sect, apart from a brief appearance and a single intervention outside the Crow's Nest when she first arrived, Qin Hongying had not taken action again. Most of her time was spent meditating on Grand Lion Ridge. Periodically, she accompanied Meng Zhang to make appearances outside the Crow's Nest, intimidating the demonic beasts inside.

The demonic beasts led by the Dark Crow Demon General within the Crow's Nest showed no intention of charging out. At most, a few demonic beasts, mainly Dark Crows, patrolled the outskirts of the Crow's Nest.

Meng Zhang was too lazy to deal with these low-level demonic beasts himself and had Taiyi Sect disciples handle them to hone their skills.

Over time, it seemed that the Crow's Nest accepted this kind of battle hierarchy. Occasionally, small groups of demonic beasts, mostly First and Second Rank ones, would come out from the Crow's Nest.

Taiyi Sect sent Refining Qi and Foundation Building cultivators to engage in battles with these demonic beasts. For the survival of the fittest, these demonic beasts needed such fights to maintain their fierceness and animalistic nature.

For the Taiyi Sect disciples, this was a rare opportunity for real combat practice. In numerous skirmishes, there were casualties on both sides. Generally, the Taiyi Sect suffered very little loss but dealt significant damage to the demonic beasts.

Meng Zhang was very satisfied with the performance of the Taiyi Sect disciples in real combat training. However, his dissatisfaction with Qin Hongying gradually accumulated.

Qin Hongying contributed too little but gained too much in return. Most importantly, as a guest of Taiyi Sect, she always treated herself as an outsider, with no intention of forming any close bonds with the sect. While she wasn't hesitant to receive rewards, she consistently kept her distance from Taiyi Sect.

However, from Qin Hongying's perspective, she believed that she deserved everything she received.

Chapter 493: Extreme Sword

Taiyi Sect, such a small and insignificant sect, would never have gained any prominence if it weren't for the stroke of luck in having Meng Zhang, a Gold Core Daoist Master, among its ranks. Without her, the sect would have remained inconspicuous.

Her decision to become a guest elder of Taiyi Sect was solely influenced by her desire to establish a good relationship with Luo Ye, a Daoist Master from the Dark Alliance. She came all the way to the remote Demon Wind Gobi to assist Taiyi Sect in fending off the demons. Taiyi Sect owes her a great debt of gratitude.

Qin Family, a prominent cultivation clan within the Jiuqu League, is far superior to Taiyi Sect in many aspects. Not to mention the various resources possessed by the family, their Third Rank Spirit Vein alone surpasses anything Taiyi Sect has to offer in quality and quantity.

Qin Hongying had always held these thoughts in her mind, looking down on Taiyi Sect with a condescending attitude. Despite Meng Zhang being unable to read her mind, he could still sense her disdain through her words and actions. Over the years, Meng Zhang had developed a deep understanding of people's emotions and kept his discontent hidden beneath a composed facade.

For now, Taiyi Sect still relies on Qin Hongying's support, so Meng Zhang can only tolerate the situation for the time being.

Meanwhile, the Deep Earth Spirit General and Delicate Water Spirit General managed to obtain the necessary spirit medicine after spending a substantial amount of spirit stones from the sect. Delicate Water Spirit General spent nearly half a year refining the spirit pills that could restore soul power.

Though these pills couldn't compare to the Jade Soul Fluid that was once used to strengthen the souls of Twin Success Valley's Foundation Building late-stage cultivators in their attempt to break through to the Gold Core stage, they were cost-effective and easier to acquire.

Meng Zhang found the pills intriguing. While they were of no use to him at the moment, they could be invaluable for Taiyi Sect's disciples in the future, especially those attempting to advance to the Gold Core stage.

Delicate Water Spirit General readily agreed when Meng Zhang proposed the idea. She not only recorded the pill recipe and submitted it to Taiyi Sect's Hidden Scripture Pavilion but also promised to manufacture these pills for the sect as long as the supply of spirit medicine was secured.

Despite the occasional clashes with Meng Zhang, Delicate Water Spirit General knew when to prioritize the sect's interests. This was one aspect of her that Meng Zhang appreciated.

The precious pearl remained nestled within the spirit vein of Taiyi Sect's old mountain gate, where its soul was gradually nourished by a special power. However, the Guardian Spirit General who slept inside had suffered severe injuries, and even after years of nourishment, the soul had not fully recovered.

Delicate Water Spirit General personally infused the power of the pills into the pearl, allowing the dormant Guardian Spirit General to absorb it. Over a year passed, and the Guardian Spirit General's soul gradually awakened, but it was still far from complete recovery, let alone forming a new divine body.

Meng Zhang was curious about this Guardian Spirit General, whom even Delicate Water Spirit General feared and respected. He took the opportunity when Shocking Thunder Spirit General visited Grand Lion Ridge to inquire about it.

Shocking Thunder Spirit General was forthcoming, revealing the Guardian Spirit General's identity: Extreme Sword Spirit General, a rare Sword Cultivator, as Meng Zhang had suspected.

Compared to the other three Spirit Generals, Extreme Sword Spirit General was a true senior, born during Taiyi Sect's heyday. He displayed extraordinary talent in swordsmanship from a young age and aspired to become a Sword Cultivator. In addition to cultivating Taiyi Sect's less remarkable sword techniques, he had also acquired a more profound Sword Cultivator inheritance during his travels outside.

When Taiyi Sect was annihilated, Extreme Sword Spirit General happened to be away from the sect and narrowly escaped. His efforts were crucial in ensuring that some survivors of Taiyi Sect made it to Grand Crossing Mountain Range, where they later rebuilt the sect.

Extreme Sword Spirit General also willingly transformed into a Guardian Spirit General and continued to serve the sect. Unlike the other three, his origins were different, being from Taiyi Sect's prime era.

Shocking Thunder Spirit General mentioned that after Extreme Sword Spirit General fully recovered, Meng Zhang could inquire about the events of Taiyi Sect's prime era. As the only surviving elder from that time, Extreme Sword Spirit General held valuable knowledge about Taiyi Sect's history.

Especially the heyday of Taiyi Sect, Extreme Sword Spirit General experienced it firsthand, while Deep Earth Spirit General and the others only heard about it from others.

In addition to recounting Extreme Sword Spirit General's origins, Shocking Thunder Spirit General also praised his abilities endlessly. Legend has it that during Taiyi Sect's prime era, Extreme Sword Spirit General was considered the strongest below the Primordial Spirit stage. Even the true disciples who cultivated the core inheritance of the sect couldn't match his prowess with his three-foot green peak sword.

Sword Cultivators were renowned for their formidable combat abilities, and Extreme Sword Spirit General's exceptional strength surprised Meng Zhang. Despite being a Gold Core Daoist Master himself, he had never witnessed a true Sword Cultivator in action.

There were no true Sword Cultivators in the Endless Sea of Sand. Only a group of mediocre practitioners whose sword skills couldn't compare to Meng Zhang's. In the Jiuqu League, Jade Sword Sect was a pure Sword Cultivator sect.

During his early cultivation days, Meng Zhang formed his core within Jade Sword Sect's territory. Though he had some interactions with the sect's members, he never saw them engage in battle.

Extreme Sword Spirit General's talents were awe-inspiring, and Shocking Thunder Spirit General, a rather arrogant individual, spoke highly of him, which meant that Extreme Sword Spirit General was genuinely powerful.

As time was of the essence, Meng Zhang couldn't stay away from Demon Wind Gobi for too long. After briefly chatting with Extreme Sword Spirit General, he got straight to the point. Extreme Sword Spirit General's soul had awakened but hadn't formed a new divine body yet. He remained within the precious pearl.

Meng Zhang knew that forming the divine body required precious Heaven and Earth Spiritual Objects, and each Spirit General required different ones based on their attributes and cultivation techniques. Meng Zhang arrived at the spirit vein's eye, where Delicate Water Spirit General was guarding.

Extreme Sword Spirit General's soul remained inside the pearl, and although he could communicate with the outside world, his memory was incomplete due to the soul's partial recovery.

Approaching the pearl, Meng Zhang introduced himself to the sleeping soul of Extreme Sword Spirit General. Meng Zhang anticipated a rebellious and unruly temperament from a Sword Cultivator, but to his surprise, the voice that emerged from the pearl was gentle and respectful, carrying the demeanor of an elder.

Meng Zhang was taken aback. This was not the unruly Sword Cultivator or the "sword maniac" Delicate Water Spirit General had mentioned. Extreme Sword Spirit General's attitude and temperament were completely different from what he had expected.

Meng Zhang had little time and couldn't stay for long. After exchanging a few pleasantries, he delved into the main topic. Extreme Sword Spirit General tried his best to answer Meng Zhang's questions, but his memory was still incomplete, and he couldn't provide answers to everything.

However, Extreme Sword Spirit General disclosed many unheard-of things, making Meng Zhang realize that there was much he didn't know about Taiyi Sect's history.

Though he couldn't get answers to some critical questions, Meng Zhang gained valuable insights. Extreme Sword Spirit General offered a possible solution to Meng Zhang's inquiry about Taiyi Sect's inheritance. He revealed that though Taiyi Sect was destroyed during the demonic calamity, many legacies were still preserved in the mountain gate.

These legacies were of no interest to the demonic beasts, and if Meng Zhang managed to enter, he would undoubtedly find numerous treasures. However, it wouldn't be easy, as the area was completely sealed off by powerful cultivation sects due to the demonic calamity.

As a mere Gold Core Daoist Master, entering the mountain gate of Taiyi Sect in the current Grand Crossing Mountain Range would be risking his life. Nonetheless, Extreme Sword Spirit General's advice gave Meng Zhang some direction, even though he wasn't currently capable of entering the place.

With Taiyi Sect's continuous growth under his leadership, more and more Gold Core Daoist Masters would emerge in the sect. Meng Zhang thought that he could wait until he became stronger and had the support of fellow sect members before attempting to enter the mountain gate.

Extreme Sword Spirit General also revealed that even though he was a Sword Cultivator, his cultivation base focused solely on the path of the sword. Nevertheless, he had some knowledge about the superior inheritances of Taiyi Sect.

When his memories fully recovered, he could provide guidance to Meng Zhang's cultivation. Although some key questions remained unanswered, Meng Zhang had no choice but to accept the situation.

Extreme Sword Spirit General's advice and knowledge were invaluable, and Meng Zhang felt a deep sense of gratitude. Even if he couldn't get all the answers he sought, the encounter with Extreme Sword Spirit General had been a rewarding experience.

Chapter 494: The Divine Crafting Hall

After the conversation with Extreme Sword Spirit General, Meng Zhang didn't fully achieve his goal, but he gained a lot. At the end of the conversation, Meng Zhang asked Extreme Sword Spirit General what kind of Heaven and Earth Spiritual Objects he needed to help him reshape his divine body. Extreme Sword Spirit General told him that he required Heaven and Earth Spiritual Objects that were vibrant with life and rich in life force. Deep Earth Spirit General and others were already assisting him in collecting them.

Each Guardian Spirit General required different Heaven and Earth Spiritual Objects. For example, Deep Earth Spirit General used Fifth Earth Essence to reshape his divine body, while Shocking Thunder Spirit General utilized Heavenly Thunder Essence.

Although collecting regular Heaven and Earth Spiritual Objects with Taiyi Sect's current influence was not difficult, acquiring higher-grade ones would require much more effort. The better the quality of the Heaven and Earth Spiritual Objects, the greater the recovery aid they provided for the Guardian Spirit Generals.

Meng Zhang also didn't rely solely on the information from Extreme Sword Spirit General. He briefly introduced Taiyi Sect's current situation to the elder, and Extreme Sword Spirit General praised him, calling him exceptional and even stating that he was the key figure for Taiyi Sect's revival. Meng Zhang was pleased to receive such recognition from this esteemed elder.

Extreme Sword Spirit General hesitated when he learned about Taiyi Sect's need for Gold Core level cultivators. He asked for help in collecting some special items, not magical tools or pills, but objects with spiritual power that had been used by powerful Sword Cultivators. The items' power or grade didn't matter; what was crucial was that the previous owners must have been Sword Cultivators, and the stronger, the better.

Meng Zhang found this request strange and challenging. In Demon Wind Gobi, genuine Sword Cultivators were scarce. Apart from the Jade Sword Sect in Jiuqu League, there were only a few scattered Sword Cultivators. Finding items used by them wasn't an easy task.

However, Meng Zhang respected Extreme Sword Spirit General deeply and was determined to fulfill his request. He didn't wish to stay away from Demon Wind Gobi for long, as he was concerned about the situation there. After completing his conversation with the elder, he hurriedly left.

Once Meng Zhang left, Delicate Water Spirit General, who had remained silent during the conversation, glanced at the bead containing Extreme Sword Spirit General's Soul and sarcastically remarked, "From the way you acted just now, you don't seem like a straightforward Sword Cultivator but rather a cunning old fox."

"Didn't you say that you always seek direct solutions to problems and won't resort to tricks? Regardless of the difficulties, you would cut through with a single sword."

"By the way, since you respect this Sect Master so much, why didn't you tell him about that matter and instead kept it to yourself?"

After hearing Delicate Water Spirit General's words, Extreme Sword Spirit General fell silent for a while before saying, "Do you misunderstand Sword Cultivators, thinking that they are inflexible and incapable of adapting to changing circumstances? I understood the principle of 'yielding to overcome hardness' hundreds of years ago."

"That matter is too weighty, and it's not something that he, a Gold Core early-stage junior, can bear."

"I don't tell him for his own good."

After saying this, they both fell into silence.

Unaware of what transpired after his departure, Meng Zhang returned to Grand Lion Ridge, and nothing unusual happened. When he reached Taiyi Sect, life continued as usual. The entire sect mobilized under his command, using abundant resources to collect the items needed by Extreme Sword Spirit General.

With Jiuqu League's support, Taiyi Sect had established a stable trade route, gaining many connections. Collecting common Heaven and Earth Spiritual Objects wasn't difficult. However, obtaining higher-grade ones required more effort.

Extreme Sword Spirit General received the necessary Heaven and Earth Spiritual Objects and quickly regained his divine body and strength. Three years later, Meng Zhang met a transformed Extreme Sword Spirit General, now appearing as a refined middle-aged scholar, showing no signs of a Sword Cultivator's aura.

Upon sensing Extreme Sword Spirit General's cultivation base, he appeared to be at Foundation Building mid-stage. However, a closer inspection left Meng Zhang uncertain.

For a Foundation Building-stage cultivator to hide his true strength from Meng Zhang, a Gold Core Daoist Master, was no simple feat. Extreme Sword Spirit General was indeed extraordinary.

After awakening, Extreme Sword Spirit General was appointed as an elder in Taiyi Sect due to his seniority and contribution. In fact, apart from a few individuals, no one in Taiyi Sect knew the true origins of the four Guardian Spirit Generals; they were considered hidden aces cultivated by Taiyi Sect. After meeting with Meng Zhang, Extreme Sword Spirit General left Demon Wind Gobi and headed to Jiuqu League. Taiyi Sect had successfully fulfilled its goal by collecting the required Heaven and Earth Spiritual Objects.

However, collecting items used by Sword Cultivators proved more difficult. In the past, while Meng Zhang was at Jade Sword Sect, he had befriended a few cultivators from there. He sought their help first.

Meng Zhang dispatched envoys to Jade Sword Sect, visiting the cultivators he knew, hoping to purchase items used by Sword Cultivators. However, the cultivators were not very enthusiastic in their reception and couldn't assist him in obtaining such items.

Taiyi Sect faced several challenges, but one day, Jue Ying learned of the situation and sought Luo Ye Daoist Master's help. Dark Alliance had extensive influence in Cultivation World, and through some connections, Luo Ye Daoist Master helped Meng Zhang acquire two items once used by Sword Cultivators.

One was a broken Third Rank flying sword, once owned by a Sword Cultivator, now only a half-foot long fragment. The other item was a worn-out gray pouch called the Sword Pouch, a special treasure used by Sword Cultivators to nurture flying swords. The pouch's nurturing function was lost due to damage, making it affordable for Meng Zhang.

Meng Zhang carefully stored these items, unsure of their usefulness for Extreme Sword Spirit General. Apart from handling occasional tasks, his primary focus was on cultivation.

With Taiyi Sect's development in Demon Wind Gobi, the sect's income had significantly increased. Moreover, being part of the Grand Dust World and having connections with various sects through the Hanhai Alliance expedited resource acquisition.

Demon Wind Gobi offered a better living environment than Endless Sea of Sand, with numerous oases and lakes. Taiyi Sect cleared many of these oases of demonic beasts, and now they served as bases for various cultivation forces, including Taiyi Sect.

The sect had also started to move some mortals to these oases, and many cultivators had settled there as well. With the growth of mortal population, more cultivators were being produced, fulfilling Taiyi Sect's purpose.

Although Fire Cloud Sect and Flying Swan Sect had minor conflicts, news of Wu Mingwei, a new Gold Core Daoist Master from Flying Swan Sect, caused Fire Cloud Sect to become cautious. Wu Mingwei had risen after experiencing a major setback, and this news had implications for the entire Endless Sea of Sand region.

Meng Zhang felt the pressure of Flying Swan Sect's resurgence, knowing that it was not a favorable development for Taiyi Sect. He felt that Flying Swan Sect's growth was more concerning than Fire Cloud Sect's actions.

Within the current Endless Sea of Sand, there are three Gold Core forces.

After their disastrous defeat, the Northern Desert Qi Family is on the decline, and their influence remains confined to the Northern Desert, posing little threat to the Flying Swan Sect.

More importantly, the Northern Desert Qi Family is a branch of the Middle-Earth Continent's influential Qi Family. Even if the main Qi Family does not care about its exiled branch, True Monarch Qi Mingyuan has been supporting the Northern Desert Qi Family.

Though the Flying Swan Sect is dominant, they dare not ignore a Primordial Spirit True Monarch. Without a special reason, there is no need for the Flying Swan Sect to completely exterminate the Qi Family.

Taiyi Sect, as a rising Gold Core sect, has learned from the experiences of the Forest Spring Watch and Earthfire Sect. Previously, the Flying Swan Sect was weak and under external pressure, leading them to seek an alliance with Taiyi Sect.

Now, Taiyi Sect's value as an ally has decreased, especially with Meng Zhang establishing the Hanhai Alliance openly opposing the Flying Swan Sect. If the Flying Swan Sect wants to regain its prestige, they might consider targeting Taiyi Sect, given their resources.

Despite experiencing multiple setbacks, the Flying Swan Sect's overall strength remains far superior to Taiyi Sect, particularly in terms of high-end combat power, as they possess four Gold Core Daoist Masters. On the other hand, Taiyi Sect only has Meng Zhang himself to rely on since Qin Hongying is not up to par.

Meng Zhang couldn't believe how quickly the situation had changed since Wu Mingwei formed his core, resulting in a major shift in the balance of power.

This goes to show the influence of top Cultivators in the Cultivation World. The addition of a single Gold Core Daoist Master is enough to alter the power dynamics of an entire region.

Meng Zhang's rise to core formation after the painful setback was truly impressive. With Wu Mingwei's addition, the threat the Flying Swan Sect poses to Taiyi Sect has become imminent.

Gu Yue Huaidie and Luo YeDaoist Master had already left the Endless Sea of Sand, and before departing, they informed Meng Zhang that they would no longer get involved in the conflicts in the region.

If Taiyi Sect faces extreme danger, Luo YeDaoist Master might offer assistance, but Gu Yue Huaidie is not a reliable option. Firstly, she must consider her family's position, as the Gu Yue Family wouldn't easily become enemies with the Flying Swan Sect. Secondly, despite having fought together, her relationship with Meng Zhang is not strong enough for her to directly oppose the Flying Swan Sect.

The more Meng Zhang contemplated, the more he felt the great threat posed by the Flying Swan Sect.

With no other options, he decided to make a special visit to the Qiaoshou Sect to find Jin Qiao'er and request her help in contacting her master, Jin LiDaoist Master, to deliver a letter on his behalf.

If Jin LiDaoist Master, a powerful late-stage Gold Core expert, was willing to speak up, it might make the Flying Swan Sect think twice.

Meng Zhang did not stay long at the Qiaoshou Sect and returned to the Grand Lion Ridge. A few days later, Jin Qiao'er arrived with a message from Jin LiDaoist Master.

Jin LiDaoist Master made it clear that he would not interfere in the matters between the Flying Swan Sect and Taiyi Sect. They must resolve their own issues.

Jin LiDaoist Master's response disappointed Meng Zhang. If the Flying Swan Sect were to attack Taiyi Sect, how could Taiyi Sect resist without any support?

Seeing Meng Zhang's visible disappointment, Jin Qiao'er promised to approach Jin LiDaoist Master again to seek her help.

This made Meng Zhang feel a little embarrassed, as he had now incurred another favor.

Shortly after Jin Qiao'er left the Grand Lion Ridge, another unexpected guest secretly arrived.

This visitor surprised Meng Zhang greatly, prompting him to activate the Third Rank Hu Mountain Great Formation, the Metal Wind Violent Flame Formation, in preparation to meet the guest.

"Daoist Master Scarlet Flame, how dare you come here? Aren't you afraid that I'll keep you here? Without you, Fire Cloud Sect won't have it easy," Meng Zhang spoke cautiously.

As a mid-stage Gold Core cultivator, Daoist Master Scarlet Flame's cultivation base was higher than Meng Zhang's, but within the Third Rank Hu Mountain Great Formation, both were in a precarious situation.

Daoist Master Scarlet Flame seemed unconcerned and replied, "Daoist Master Meng, there's no need for empty words. Are you truly willing to have an irreconcilable enmity with my Fire Cloud Sect for the Flying Swan Sect?"

Meng Zhang paused, realizing that Taiyi Sect and Fire Cloud Sect had no prior grievances. The hostility between Taiyi Sect and Fire Cloud Sect was due to their association with the Flying Swan Sect.

"What benefits can Taiyi Sect gain by aligning itself with the Flying Swan Sect?" Daoist Master Scarlet Flame continued, "Before Taiyi Sect, the Forest Spring Watch and Earthfire Sect had Gold Core Daoist Masters, yet they still met unfortunate ends. You should be well aware of the Flying Swan Sect's ruthless methods."

Daoist Master Scarlet Flame's words made Meng Zhang hesitate. The Fire Cloud Sect had a long heritage and profound background, surpassing that of the Flying Swan Sect. Although they were currently at a disadvantage due to a rough start, their potential to reverse the situation couldn't be underestimated.

If Daoist Master Scarlet Flame was truthful, the Fire Cloud Sect now possessed the strength to confront the Flying Swan Sect directly.

Wu Mingwei's core formation demonstrated the Flying Swan Sect's power to Meng Zhang, teaching him not to underestimate these ancient Gold Core sects. The Flying Swan Sect had True Monarch Tian Zhu behind them, while the Fire Cloud Sect had True Monarch Profound Wind.

With Meng Zhang's current strength and vision, he wasn't qualified to judge the power comparison between True Monarchs. According to Jin LiDaoist Master's previous words, True Monarch Tian Zhu seemed to be significantly stronger than True Monarch Profound Wind.

However, True Monarch Profound Wind was an influential figure within the Jiuqu League. While the other Primordial Spirit True Monarchs of the Jiuqu League seemed to be avoiding any involvement in the conflict between True Monarch Tian Zhu and True Monarch Profound Wind, it was hard to say what would happen in reality.

If the critical moment arrived, and several Primordial Spirit True Monarchs of the Jiuqu League joined forces, even a renowned powerhouse like True Monarch Tian Zhu might not be able to withstand them.

Not to mention the vast power gap between the Jiuqu League and the Flying Swan Sect, making it even more apparent that Meng Zhang should not take these ancient Gold Core sects lightly.

Jiuqu League could easily crush the Flying Swan Sect with just a little finger. Seeing that Meng Zhang was moved by his words, Daoist Master Scarlet Flame did not push further but instead spoke calmly, "I've said all I need to say. Please think carefully about your next steps, Daoist Master Meng. No matter what decision you make, as long as Taiyi Sect does not actively oppose the Fire Cloud Sect, we will not treat Taiyi Sect as an enemy. One last reminder, True Monarch Tian Zhu behind the Flying Swan Sect did not originate from the righteous path of cultivators. In recent years, he has deviated further and become more unbearable. Under his influence, the Flying Swan Sect has fallen into the path of evil, and sooner or later, righteous cultivators will take issue with them."

"Don't rush your decision, Daoist Master Meng. Take your time to consider. Whenever you are ready, you can come find me. I will warmly welcome you," Daoist Master Scarlet Flame said before leaving.

Meng Zhang naturally did not use the power of the mountain protection formation to stop him but allowed him to depart freely. As he watched Daoist Master Scarlet Flame's figure receding, Meng Zhang fell into deep contemplation.

Daoist Master Scarlet Flame's unexpectedly mild attitude was not as fiery and arrogant as the rumors had suggested. Meng Zhang had personally witnessed the hot temper of the Earthfire Sect cultivators, who also focused on fire-based techniques like the Fire Cloud Sect cultivators. However, Daoist Master Scarlet Flame did not act aggressively; instead, he patiently reasoned with Meng Zhang. Everything he said was based on facts.

Facing the direct threat from the Flying Swan Sect, it seemed logical for Taiyi Sect to ally with the Fire Cloud Sect. If the Fire Cloud Sect's three Gold Core Daoist Masters had truly recovered, their strength might not be weaker than the Flying Swan Sect's. Transitioning to the Fire Cloud Sect would not burden Meng Zhang mentally. In the Cultivation World, shifting alliances were common.

Taiyi Sect could undoubtedly gain many benefits from aligning with the Fire Cloud Sect, but Meng Zhang, with his cautious nature, would need sufficient guarantees before fully committing. As for the words about righteousness and evil spoken by Daoist Master Scarlet Flame, Meng Zhang simply disregarded them as nonsense.

Many years ago, Taiyi Sect had already abandoned the Forest Spring Watch and joined the Flying Swan Sect. Changing allegiances once again was not a problem for Meng Zhang. However, for some reason, he felt uneasy about it. Seemingly straightforward decisions often hid unknown dangers.

After Daoist Master Scarlet Flame's departure, Meng Zhang secretly called several Taiyi Sect elders to discuss the matter together. Whether to align with the Fire Cloud Sect or maintain a hostile stance was a crucial choice.

The elders had differing opinions. Some believed that since the Flying Swan Sect was currently dominant, Taiyi Sect should follow the trend and ally with the Fire Cloud Sect to protect themselves. Others opposed this idea, arguing that the Flying Swan Sect had not shown any signs of attacking Taiyi Sect, and Taiyi Sect shouldn't scare themselves unnecessarily. The Flying Swan Sect might be stronger now, but they still needed Taiyi Sect's strength, especially considering the presence of the Northern Desert Qi Family and the pressure from the Fire Cloud Sect.

The elders debated vigorously. Yang Xueyi, Wen Qiansun, Hu Jing, Zheng Chao, and others were all younger than Meng Zhang but remained somewhat restrained in his presence.

Meng Zhang himself couldn't decide and sought the elders' advice. However, with their differing opinions, he was left without a clear direction.

As days passed, Meng Zhang became more and more frustrated with his inability to make a decision. Just when he felt the need to use his Grand Evolving Fortune to calculate and decide whether Taiyi Sect should join the Fire Cloud Sect, Jin Qiao'er arrived at the Grand Lion Ridge with some good news.

Jin Qiao'er had contacted her master, Jin Li Daoist Master, after leaving and brought back a message for Meng Zhang. Jin Li Daoist Master spent most of her time in the Deadly Sea of Sand, and it was not easy for even a Gold Core Daoist Master like Meng Zhang to meet her. However, as Jin Qiao'er was Jin Li Daoist Master's favored disciple, she could easily reach her and discuss important matters.

Jin Qiao'er wasted no time in meeting her master and asked for her help to resolve Meng Zhang's troubles. Jin Li Daoist Master's words were meant to put Meng Zhang's mind at ease. She explained that Flying Swan Sect's current strength recovery should not be Taiyi Sect's primary concern; instead, they should be wary of the Northern Desert Qi Family.

Until the Northern Desert Qi Family was dealt with, Taiyi Sect had no need to worry. Jin Qiao'er relayed Jin Li Daoist Master's words in detail, trying to clarify Meng Zhang's confusion.

However, half of the explanations came from Jin Li Daoist Master's original message, and the other half were the information Jin Qiao'er had received from her master on other occasions.

Chapter 496: Sound

Jin Li, a Daoist Master, had no distrust of her own disciples and naturally didn't hide any information from them intentionally. During their casual conversations, she inadvertently revealed many secrets.

As it turns out, Jin Li's connection with True Monarch Tian Zhu wasn't as close as imagined. Jin Li's master and True Monarch Tian Zhu were once sworn friends who roamed the Cultivation World together. Even during the years True Monarch Tian Zhu spent in the Endless Sea of Sand, they maintained contact.

Both Jin Li and her master had numerous enemies. Before her master passed away during meditation, they advised Jin Li to seek refuge with True Monarch Tian Zhu, hoping that their friend could protect their disciple with his status as a powerful Primordial Spirit True Monarch. Under such protection, their enemies wouldn't dare to pursue Jin Li to the Endless Sea of Sand seeking revenge. However, despite their friendship, Jin Li's master's passing meant that the connection between True Monarch Tian Zhu and Jin Li had its limitations. True Monarch Tian Zhu wouldn't simply protect Jin Li without anything in return.

To gain True Monarch Tian Zhu's protection, Jin Li needed to serve under him and work for him devotedly. Before Jin Li's arrival, Flying Swan Sect was already a useful chess piece in the hands of True Monarch Tian Zhu. Compared to Jin Li, who was a newcomer, True Monarch Tian Zhu clearly trusted Flying Swan Sect more.

Of course, Jin Li's Gold Core late-stage cultivation base was valuable to True Monarch Tian Zhu, and Flying Swan Sect treated her with great respect on the surface.

Due to certain agreements, Jin Li couldn't directly take action in the Endless Sea of Sand. In True Monarch Tian Zhu's plan, Flying Swan Sect was the master of the Endless Sea of Sand, with exclusive authority over its affairs. As long as Flying Swan Sect didn't violate True Monarch Tian Zhu's orders, Jin Li wouldn't interfere in their actions.

If Flying Swan Sect were to target Taiyi Sect, Jin Li's influence might not be enough to stop them. The only condition for Flying Swan Sect to respect Jin Li was her non-interference in the affairs of the Endless Sea of Sand.

This was the reason why Jin Li had refrained from getting involved in the matters between Taiyi Sect and Flying Swan Sect when she sent Jin Qiao'er to pass on the message.

Jin Li also had to consider True Monarch Tian Zhu's thoughts and avoid meddling in Flying Swan Sect's actions.

However, this time, Jin Qiao'er's persistent inquiry forced Jin Li to reveal some additional information.

A crucial struggle was underway between True Monarch Tian Zhu and a Fifth Rank great power. Qi Mingyuan, a later participant, had increasingly become a thorn in True Monarch Tian Zhu's side.

While Jin Li couldn't directly act against Qi Mingyuan, she informed Flying Swan Sect to seize the opportunity to cripple Northern Desert Qi Family, thereby disabling one of Qi Mingyuan's arms.

In the past centuries, Flying Swan Sect had numerous chances to completely eradicate Northern Desert Qi Family. But True Monarch Tian Zhu refrained from tearing their faces apart with Qi Mingyuan and instructed Flying Swan Sect to hold back. Thus, they only suppressed Northern Desert Qi Family in the barren land of the Northern Desert.

Now that Flying Swan Sect had recovered its strength, Northern Desert Qi Family was at its weakest point.

Flying Swan Sect had earned True Monarch Tian Zhu's trust and favor by faithfully executing his orders. Jin Li believed they wouldn't miss the current opportunity to strike at Northern Desert Qi Family to appease True Monarch Tian Zhu and eliminate their long-standing adversary.

Although Flying Swan Sect was powerful, they weren't strong enough to simultaneously defeat Taiyi Sect and Northern Desert Qi Family. So, before they could destroy the latter, Flying Swan Sect wouldn't recklessly confront Taiyi Sect.

After hearing Jin Qiao'er's explanation, Meng Zhang felt somewhat relieved. He realized that both he and Taiyi Sect were fortunate this time.

Thanks to True Monarch Tian Zhu's order for Flying Swan Sect to deal with Northern Desert Qi Family first, Taiyi Sect gained some breathing room.

With this respite, Taiyi Sect had room to maneuver.

Though Jin Li didn't take direct action this time, the information she provided was a great help.

Meng Zhang thanked Jin Qiao'er for her assistance and saw her off personally.

After Jin Qiao'er left, Meng Zhang carefully contemplated Taiyi Sect's next steps.

This precious breathing space couldn't be wasted. Once Flying Swan Sect eradicated Northern Desert Qi Family, they might turn their attention to Taiyi Sect.

If Taiyi Sect and Northern Desert Qi Family were both eliminated, Flying Swan Sect would dominate the Endless Sea of Sand and reclaim its position as the unrivaled ruler.

Thankfully, Jin Li's warning allowed Taiyi Sect to refrain from rushing to ally with Fire Cloud Sect.

If Taiyi Sect had openly sided with Fire Cloud Sect before Flying Swan Sect attacked Northern Desert Qi Family, Flying Swan Sect might have changed its plans and targeted Taiyi Sect first.

Even if Fire Cloud Sect could assist in time and withstand Flying Swan Sect, the losses to Taiyi Sect would be substantial.

With this understanding, Meng Zhang had more room to maneuver.

If Flying Swan Sect attacked Northern Desert Qi Family, Taiyi Sect couldn't simply watch them being annihilated. Taiyi Sect could secretly provide support to Northern Desert Qi Family and delay Flying Swan Sect's destruction of them, buying Taiyi Sect more time for development.

Though devising the initial plan was easy, implementing it was incredibly challenging.

Even with the support of Taiyi Sect, Northern Desert Qi Family might not be a match for Flying Swan Sect. And Taiyi Sect had to avoid exposing itself to prevent Flying Swan Sect's preemptive strikes.

These questions were not easily resolved and gave Meng Zhang a headache.

Fortunately, Flying Swan Sect hadn't attacked Northern Desert Qi Family yet, leaving Taiyi Sect with ample time.

Meng Zhang gathered the sect's elders again and informed them of the latest intelligence and situation.

These elders were not ordinary individuals, and after hearing Meng Zhang's words, they agreed with his assessment and plan.

To secretly aid Northern Desert Qi Family and increase the difficulty of Flying Swan Sect's attack, Taiyi Sect couldn't make overt moves, lest it draw Flying Swan Sect's attention prematurely.

As for the details of how to proceed, everyone chimed in with various workable strategies.

After numerous discussions, the entire Taiyi Sect mobilized discreetly.

Moreover, Taiyi Sect didn't want to directly oppose the black market or Flying Swan Sect. They only wished to hire some ruthless and daring cultivators who were willing to risk their lives for money through the black market.

If Flying Swan Sect attacked Northern Desert Qi Family, these cultivators could serve as reinforcements to support them.

Meng Zhang secretly transmitted the news of Flying Swan Sect's impending attack on Northern Desert Qi Family through certain channels, ensuring that Northern Desert Qi Family would be prepared to resist the assault.

Additionally, Meng Zhang discreetly informed Fire Cloud Sect about Flying Swan Sect's plans through some connections in Great Wind City. Given Fire Cloud Sect's style of operation, they wouldn't stand idly by while Flying Swan Sect achieved its objectives.

Daoist Master Scarlet Flame of Fire Cloud Sect mentioned that three injured Gold Core Daoist Masters had recovered and were secretly preparing to act when the time was right. If Fire Cloud Sect decided to support Northern Desert Qi Family, there was a good chance to verify Daoist Master Scarlet Flame's words.

Northern Desert Qi Family had received the information Meng Zhang transmitted but remained silent. It was uncertain whether they didn't believe the ambiguous source of the news or were merely concealing their preparations while maintaining normalcy.

As for Fire Cloud Sect, they also didn't take significant action after receiving the news. However, Taiyi Sect's intelligence capabilities were limited and focused on their territory. They couldn't fully keep track of Endless Sea of Sand, let alone Fire Cloud Sect's precise movements.

As time passed, Taiyi Sect began its war preparations, but Flying Swan Sect's attack on Northern Desert Qi Family still hadn't happened. Meng Zhang was puzzled about Flying Swan Sect's intentions, but he didn't doubt Jin Li's words.

While there was no external commotion, internal unrest brewed within the Endless Sea of Sand Daoist League. Taiyi Sect was comparatively new and lacked the prestige and strength of Flying Swan Sect.

After the news of Flying Swan Sect's Wu Mingwei successfully forming their core spread, the Endless Sea of Sand Daoist League was filled with anxiety, and many had other ideas.

Fortunately, Meng Zhang's intimidating presence, coupled with the lessons dealt to three other cultivation forces, maintained a superficial stability within the Endless Sea of Sand Daoist League. No sect dared to collude openly with Flying Swan Sect.

During this period, Taiyi Sect's Secret Hall, led by An Moran, became busier. They had to stay vigilant about Flying Swan Sect's movements while monitoring the internal situation of the Endless Sea of Sand Daoist League.

Though Secret Hall had expanded over the years, it had grown considerably, and even Hall Master An Moran was busy.

Amidst this hustle and bustle, Extreme Sword Spirit General, who had left on a journey to Jiuqu League, quietly returned to Taiyi Sect and arrived at Grand Lion Ridge.

Upon meeting with Meng Zhang, Sect Master Daoist Master, Meng Zhang could hardly believe his eyes. Extreme Sword Spirit General's cultivation base had recovered remarkably fast, already reaching the completion of Foundation Building stage.

After several years, Extreme Sword Spirit General had regained his strength in Meng Zhang's Divine Sense perception. However, he hadn't ascended to the Gold Core stage, which disappointed Meng Zhang but also relieved him. Even Taiyi Sect's Guardian Spirit General couldn't violate some of the fundamental rules of the Cultivation World.

During their discussion, Meng Zhang handed over the two items left by the Sword Cultivators they had collected previously – a broken Third Rank flying sword and a damaged scabbard. Extreme Sword Spirit General glanced briefly at the broken flying sword but showed a hint of delight at the damaged scabbard.

Gratefully accepting both items, Extreme Sword Spirit General thanked Meng Zhang.

After listening to Meng Zhang's account, Extreme Sword Spirit General pondered for a moment before saying, "I've always known how to fight on the battlefield, but I'm not skilled in strategies. I've awakened for a short time and don't know much about the Endless Sea of Sand. I don't have any great plans to offer Sect Master. My only advice is to avoid making hasty moves without fully understanding others' true intentions. Sometimes inaction is better than taking action, as acting rashly might lead to mistakes."

Meng Zhang was unexpectedly surprised by Extreme Sword Spirit General, known for his daring and combat prowess, giving such a conservative opinion. Perhaps Extreme Sword Spirit General was an anomaly among Sword Cultivators or even a pseudo-Sword Cultivator.

Before parting, Extreme Sword Spirit General delivered excellent news to Meng Zhang. With the two items provided by Meng Zhang and the gains from his recent journey, he could temporarily unleash the battle power of a Gold Core Daoist Master when needed. Although it wouldn't last long, a few strikes could prove crucial in dire situations.

Effectively, Taiyi Sect gained an additional half a Gold Core Daoist Master.

Extreme Sword Spirit General's surprises weren't the only ones. Others also brought good news to Meng Zhang during this period.

Deep Earth Spirit General and Wen Qiansun had jointly practiced a formation. By gathering enough Foundation Building stage cultivators, they could withstand a Gold Core Daoist Master's attacks for a short time.

As Yang Xueyi's cultivation base continued to improve, she became more adept at handling the rune weapon left by the Purple Gold Sect predecessor. With enough Foundation Building stage cultivators, they could activate the rune weapon and temporarily unleash combat power on par with an ordinary Gold Core Daoist Master.

Although Taiyi Sect hadn't produced any new Gold Core Daoist Masters, these methods could greatly compensate for their lack of high-end combat power.

With these ways to temporarily match Gold Core Daoist Masters' strength, Meng Zhang felt more confident in Taiyi Sect's abilities. They had many Foundation Building stage cultivators and ample resources. If a war with Flying Swan Sect were to happen, Taiyi Sect would have a certain degree of resistance.

They collected a large amount of war supplies and prepared to send them to Northern Desert Qi Family at any moment.

Secretly, Taiyi Sect's elders traveled to Great Wind City to contact the black market of Jiuqu League through Luo Ye, a Daoist Master. The black market on the Endless Sea of Sand side wouldn't accept contracts against Flying Swan Sect, but Jiuqu League's black market had fewer concerns.

Chapter 497: False Alarm 1

At first, Meng Zhang thought that after the significant rise in strength of the Flying Swan Sect, they might target Taiyi Sect. The information obtained from Jin Li Daoist Master indicated that the Flying Swan Sect considered the Northern Desert Qi Family as their primary target. Meng Zhang felt relieved and secretly mobilized the Taiyi Sect to be ready to support the Northern Desert Qi Family.

However, as time passed, several years had gone by, and the Flying Swan Sect still hadn't made any move against the Northern Desert Qi Family. This left Meng Zhang somewhat puzzled. Had he made the wrong judgment, or could Jin Li Daoist Master's information be incorrect too?

Regardless of his doubts, Meng Zhang refrained from making any hasty decisions. He took the advice of Extreme Sword Spirit General and decided to wait for the Flying Swan Sect to act before responding. Though Taiyi Sect had strengthened its combat capabilities and had some means to contend with Gold Core Daoist Masters, they were still at a significant disadvantage against the four Gold Core Daoist Masters of the Flying Swan Sect.

Apart from tapping the potential of the sect members, as the only Gold Core Daoist Master in the sect, Meng Zhang's best course of action was to focus on his cultivation and enhance his own combat strength. That night, Meng Zhang was diligently practicing his primary cultivation technique, the "Sun-Moon Wheel Turning Sutra." He absorbed the Yin Qi of the heavens and earth to refine the Lunar True Water while flying high in the sky. Similarly, during the scorching midday sun, he had already absorbed the intense Yang Qi to refine the Solar True Flame. The Solar True Flame and Lunar True Water he was refining now, in the Gold Core stage, were of a higher level compared to when he was in the Foundation Building stage. Moreover, they could be combined into a powerful Divine Ability called "Sun and Moon Divine Light."

After years of practice, Meng Zhang had gained some insight into the tremendous power of this Divine Ability. While he was cultivating, he suddenly felt something amiss and activated his "Deception Breaking Eye," looking into the distant night sky. A vast fleet of flying boats was approaching, clearly belonging to the Flying Swan Sect.

Meng Zhang was startled. Why was the Flying Swan Sect heading directly for Taiyi Sect? Weren't they supposed to deal with the Northern Desert Qi Family first?

With no time to think about the question further, he immediately descended to the Grand Lion Ridge's base and swiftly activated the Third Rank mountain-guarding great formation, called the

"Metal Wind Violent Flame Formation." The disciples on night patrol received his communication and began waking up the sect members within the base.

Under Meng Zhang's orders, the trained Taiyi Sect disciples quickly took their positions at various nodes of the great formation to assist him in controlling it. The entire Grand Lion Ridge base was fully awakened, and everyone was in a state of preparedness for battle. A thick light curtain rose above the base, with golden winds howling and flames blazing, as the power of the great formation began to be unleashed gradually.

With the support of the Third Rank mountain-guarding great formation, Meng Zhang felt somewhat reassured. However, knowing that the Flying Swan Sect had come with such a massive military force, Taiyi Sect couldn't actively confront them and could only rely on the great formation to defend itself.

This meant that Taiyi Sect would have to abandon many of its strongholds in the Demon Wind Gobi. If the Flying Swan Sect divided its forces and attacked, Taiyi Sect's mountain gates in the Endless Sea of Sand and its vast territory would also be impossible to defend.

With the way the Hanhai Alliance's members behaved, Taiyi Sect would crumble instantly in such a scenario. Meng Zhang regretted not making earlier preparations to leave a way out for Taiyi Sect. In the Cultivation World, many forces with lesser strength than Taiyi Sect would secretly leave some hidden cards for their survival in case of a calamity, preserving some seeds of their inheritance for the opportunity to rise again.

Although Taiyi Sect had a long history, it had long since fallen into decline. It was only after Meng Zhang became the Sect Master that there was some progress. However, by the standards of Gold Core cultivators, Meng Zhang was still too young, and his journey had been relatively smooth, with few obstacles to overcome. As a result, he hadn't considered the long-term implications and failed to leave behind an inheritance for the sect.

Now, as the Flying Swan Sect's mighty military force approached, Meng Zhang realized his oversight. At this critical moment, he had to plan for the worst.

Meng Zhang called three disciples, Niu Dawei, and the siblings from the An Family, and gave them low-voiced instructions. If the situation turned dire and the mountain-guarding great formation were to break, they were to escape immediately. Meng Zhang would do his best to buy them time.

Once they left the Grand Lion Ridge, they were not to linger in the Demon Wind Gobi and definitely not return to the Endless Sea of Sand. They had to rush to Great Wind City and seek refuge with Luo YeDaoist Master.

The disciples wanted to say something, but Meng Zhang stopped them. There was no time for hesitation; they had to act decisively.

Meng Zhang's strict orders left the three disciples with no choice but to accept silently, even if reluctantly.

Meng Zhang knew that if the Flying Swan Sect broke through the great formation, he would undoubtedly become their primary target, attracting the full force of the Flying Swan Sect's Gold Core Daoist Masters in pursuit. In such a situation, he decided it was better to delay the enemy and give the Taiyi Sect disciples a chance to escape. His three disciples had outstanding talents and

promising futures. If they could successfully flee, there would be hope for the revival of Taiyi Sect and the possibility of revenge for him.

Meng Zhang instructed his disciples and directed everyone to activate the mountain-guarding great formation with all their might. Amidst the crisis, a figure hurriedly flew over from the distance. It was Qin Hongying, accompanied by members of the Qin Family and her subordinates, ready to serve her commands.

The full activation of the Third Rank mountain-guarding great formation required a significant amount of Spirit Vein's Qi, which naturally affected Qin Hongying's usual cultivation. Moreover, the commotion at the Grand Lion Ridge base on this particular night had already alarmed Qin Hongying.

She sent one of her handmaidens to inquire about the situation. Normally, Meng Zhang might have been more courteous, but with the approaching enemy, he had no time for pleasantries, especially with a mere handmaiden.

"Tell your mistress that Grand Lion Ridge is about to be attacked by a formidable enemy. If she doesn't want to be caught in the battle, she should leave immediately."

As for Qin Hongying, Meng Zhang never had any expectations.

With her usual attitude, she wouldn't get involved in this mess and help Taiyi Sect against the enemy. The handmaiden faced the intimidating Gold Core Daoist Master and didn't dare to say anything, immediately turning around and flying away.

After a while, two flying boats took off from where Qin Hongying resided, flying into the sky.

"I apologize, Sect Master Meng. I want to make it clear that I won't interfere in Taiyi Sect's affairs and grievances."

The two flying boats hovered not too far away in the sky and didn't fly too far immediately. It seemed Qin Hongying also wanted to observe the situation and gather information about the battle.

Meng Zhang couldn't help but wonder if, in the event of Taiyi Sect's defeat and the loss of Grand Lion Ridge, Qin Hongying would seize the opportunity to exploit the situation and turn against Taiyi Sect. It wasn't that Meng Zhang was overly suspicious but rather an accurate assessment based on his understanding of Qin Hongying. She was a typical cultivator, motivated only by self-interest and disregarding right or wrong.

Qin Hongying's departure actually relieved Meng Zhang of a potential problem. The activation of the Third Rank mountain-guarding great formation, Metal Wind Violent Flame Formation, was completed in a short time. Taiyi Sect was ready and prepared to face the enemy.

Meng Zhang flew into the air, using his Deception Breaking Eye to observe the movements of the Flying Swan Sect's fleet. The Flying Swan Sect's flying boats approached rapidly, heading straight towards the location of Grand Lion Ridge.

Meng Zhang kept a close eye on their movements, ready to take action. The Flying Swan Sect's fleet, especially the two leading Third Rank warships, exuded a strong sense of hostility.

Just as the hostile fleet was about to reach Grand Lion Ridge, the two leading warships suddenly changed direction in midair and flew in another direction. The entire fleet followed the lead, forming a large circle, bypassing Grand Lion Ridge, and heading northwards.

Meng Zhang couldn't understand what game the Flying Swan Sect was playing. Why were they heading towards the Raven's Nest? Shouldn't they have dealt with Taiyi Sect first?

After bypassing Grand Lion Ridge, the Flying Swan Sect fleet accelerated and quickly disappeared into the night.

Meng Zhang remained vigilant, continuing to use his Deception Breaking Eye to carefully observe the enemy's flight path. The Third Rank mountain-guarding great formation below him was still active.

After a long time, the Flying Swan Sect's fleet flew farther and farther away until it vanished from Meng Zhang's sight. It seemed like they were heading in the direction of the Raven's Nest. But what was Flying Swan Sect's military doing there?

Meng Zhang was puzzled. He feared the Flying Swan Sect might be deceiving them, ready to launch a surprise attack at any moment. He ordered the Taiyi Sect disciples to be cautious and prepared to activate the mountain-guarding great formation at any time.

Hesitating for a moment, Meng Zhang was torn between fearing a trap and worrying about the Flying Swan Sect fleet's movements.

He looked down at the many Foundation Building disciples inside the great formation. Even if a Gold Core Daoist Master attacked, they wouldn't be able to break the mountain-guarding great formation in a short time. As for himself, he was confident that he wouldn't fall into the enemy's ambush.

Having made up his mind, Meng Zhang took immediate action. He followed the direction in which the Flying Swan Sect fleet had departed, flying after them. The speed of a Gold Core Daoist Master far surpassed that of the flying boats.

In no time, Meng Zhang caught up with the Flying Swan Sect's fleet from behind. He didn't dare to get too close but kept a safe distance, observing from afar.

The Flying Swan Sect fleet was indeed targeting the Raven's Nest. The army advanced without any pause, heading straight for the nest.

Nearby, there were patrols of demon beasts led by Dark Crows outside the Raven's Nest. Even though it was nighttime, the large-scale and conspicuous approach of the Flying Swan Sect quickly alerted the patrol demons.

As the patrolling demons sounded the alarm, the Raven's Nest quickly became active. Countless demon beasts were awakened from their slumber. Under the leadership of some prominent demon beasts, they entered a state of alert.

The Flying Swan Sect's fleet paid no attention to this. Three Gold Core Daoist Masters flew out of one of the flying boats and positioned themselves at the forefront of the entire army.

Meng Zhang had seen Fei Shi Daoist Master and Fei Jiang Daoist Master before, but the unfamiliar Gold Core Daoist Master should be the recently formed core, Wu Mingwei Daoist Master.

After the three Gold Core Daoist Masters flew out, they led two Third Rank warships to launch an attack on the outer perimeter of the Raven's Nest.

At the same time, the flying boats behind them slowed down and lowered their altitude. Flying Swan Sect cultivators leaped out and landed on the ground.

A large number of Flying Swan Sect cultivators formed formations on the ground, adopting an aggressive posture.

Meanwhile, in the front, the three Gold Core Daoist Masters and two Third Rank warships had begun attacking the outer defenses of the Raven's Nest.

Meng Zhang finally felt reassured by the Flying Swan Sect cultivators' actions. It turned out that their primary target was not Taiyi Sect but the Raven's Nest.

Meng Zhang and the entire Taiyi Sect had just been overreacting.

Meng Zhang couldn't understand why Dark Crow Demon General had provoked the Flying Swan Sect. It made them ignore Taiyi Sect, a significant threat, and disregard True Monarch Tian Zhu's order to attack the Northern Desert Qi Family.

Nevertheless, regardless of the reason, Flying Swan Sect attacking the Raven's Nest was excellent news for both Taiyi Sect and the Northern Desert Qi Family.

Meng Zhang recalled that he, Gu Yue Huaidie, and Luo Ye Daoist Master had previously explored the various defenses of the Raven's Nest. Although they, as three Gold Core Daoist Masters, hadn't fully exerted their power or mobilized the Taiyi Sect disciples to assist, they had experienced the exceptional nature of the Raven's Nest.

The Third Rank middle-grade demon beast, Dark Crow Demon General, alone was formidable. Moreover, the various formations left behind by White Lion Demon King were not something ordinary Gold Core Daoist Masters could easily break.

If Flying Swan Sect dared to take action against the Raven's Nest, they would soon be entangled in a difficult battle. It would be impossible for them to achieve victory in a short time.

Chapter 498: Source of Trouble Leads to the East

As a Fourth Rank Demonic Beast, the White Lion Demon King might not understand formations and such. However, at its level of existence, it had already grasped the principles of the Grand Dao and knew how to borrow the power of heaven and earth. The arrangements it left behind back in the day contained terrifying power. Once triggered, it would immediately unleash attacks akin to heaven collapsing and earth rending.

The Flying Swan Sect seemed intent on a swift and decisive battle, launching an all-out assault right from the beginning. Three Gold Core Daoist Masters and two Third Rank warships easily broke through the outer interception and entered the nest.

By this time, the Dark Crow Demon General and Poison Sand Demon General had also reacted. The two Demon Generals activated the arrangements left behind by the White Lion Demon King and engaged the invading enemies with all their strength.

On the ground, the disciples of the Flying Swan Sect advanced steadily after forming their formation. Countless demonic beasts swarmed in, and fierce life-and-death struggles ensued between them and the disciples.

Meng Zhang observed from the back, watching for quite some time. Finally, he was certain that the Flying Swan Sect was indeed not up to any tricks; they were genuinely fighting against the Dark Crow Demon General and its allies. For whatever reason, the Flying Swan Sect had chosen to attack the nest. Meng Zhang finally breathed a sigh of relief, as there was no need to worry about Taiyi Sect suffering a catastrophic fate.

Having assessed the situation on the battlefield, Meng Zhang knew that there would be no clear winner in a short period. He turned around and flew towards the Grand Lion Ridge.

Back at the Grand Lion Ridge, he dismissed most of the disciples, leaving only a few on guard duty with specific instructions to remain vigilant and not let their guard down. To alleviate the burden on the Third Rank spirit vein, most of the power of the Third Rank mountain protection great formation was also converged, maintaining a state of readiness to be activated at any time.

Meng Zhang gathered three disciples and some other Foundation Building cultivators stationed at the Grand Lion Ridge to inform them of the Flying Swan Sect's movements. Everyone breathed a sigh of relief upon learning that the Flying Swan Sect's army was attacking the nest. As long as it wasn't an attack on the Taiyi Sect, they were relieved.

As for the reason why the Flying Swan Sect chose this course of action, after some discussion, they couldn't arrive at a definitive answer.

After everyone dispersed, An Moran stayed behind alone. He directly apologized to Meng Zhang, acknowledging that as the head of the Secret Hall, he had not fulfilled his duties, allowing the Flying Swan Sect's army to advance directly to the Grand Lion Ridge. Thankfully, the Flying Swan Sect's target was not the Grand Lion Ridge; otherwise, the consequences would have been dire.

Meng Zhang knew this was not An Moran's fault. Considering that the Secret Hall was established not long ago and was still able to protect the internal affairs of the Hanhai Alliance, it was already commendable. With their current strength, it was practically impossible for the Secret Hall to penetrate deep into the territory of the Flying Swan Sect.

Meng Zhang did not blame An Moran but instead encouraged him before letting him leave.

After An Moran left, Meng Zhang's face turned gloomy. The Flying Swan Sect had intentionally projected this image to intimidate Taiyi Sect and deter them. Their actions had indeed achieved a considerable portion of their objectives.

From the earlier conversation with the others, Meng Zhang noticed that everyone seemed somewhat daunted by the Flying Swan Sect's prestige, and no one dared to suggest obstructing the Flying Swan Sect's attack on the nest. Even Meng Zhang himself was initially taken aback and relieved only after calming down. His resolve to confront the Flying Swan Sect also wavered slightly, but he quickly adjusted his mindset.

Regardless of why the Flying Swan Sect was attacking the nest, Meng Zhang couldn't just watch them succeed easily. However, dealing with the Dark Crow Demon General, a demonic beast, would not be easy for human cultivators. Even if he wanted to provide assistance, it was difficult to know where to start. Drawing from his experience attacking the nest in the past, Meng Zhang

believed that even with the Flying Swan Sect making a major effort, breaking through the nest's defenses would still require considerable time.

During this period, he needed to devise ways to obstruct and weaken the Flying Swan Sect's efforts.

Ironically, now that the Taiyi Sect had returned to normal and was not facing an external invasion, the old lady Qin Hongying, along with her followers, acted as though nothing had happened and settled back into her dwelling on the peak. Meng Zhang could only chuckle and not comment on the matter.

Following this, Meng Zhang deployed his spirit pet Zhui Dian (Chasing Lightning) and several other Foundation Building cultivators from the sect, coordinating them to monitor the battlefield nearby and keep a close eye on the Flying Swan Sect's every move.

Meng Zhang himself reduced his cultivation time and focused on the situation at the nest, closely watching the Flying Swan Sect's progress. As he had anticipated, the Flying Swan Sect's attack on the nest was indeed challenging.

Whether the Flying Swan Sect had underestimated the Dark Crow Demon General and the surrounding arrangements of the nest or the techniques left behind by the White Lion Demon King were truly formidable, after easily sweeping through the outer defenses of the nest, the sect encountered increasing resistance as they delved deeper.

Facing this predicament, the Flying Swan Sect's response also surprised Meng Zhang. Their lower-level cultivators, after forming battle formations, effortlessly repelled the obstructing demonic beast army without expending too much effort. Especially when they utilized the large-scale war formation "Four Directions Subduing Mountain Formation," surrounding four enormous stone tablets, a large number of Flying Swan Sect cultivators used the power of the formation to obliterate the blocking demonic beasts. They advanced steadily towards their goal.

Then, the Four Directions Subduing Mountain Formation collided with the arrangements left behind by the White Lion Demon King, resulting in a fierce confrontation.

The Flying Swan Sect cultivators charged forward like madmen, recklessly breaking through the various arrangements in their path. Witnessing this scene, Meng Zhang couldn't help but feel a chill. What had happened to the Flying Swan Sect? They were sacrificing their disciples as if they were mere pawns, rather than the cultivators of a powerful sect.

Meng Zhang, who had previously occupied a high position in the Flying Swan Sect, knew that he wouldn't be able to make such a decision. However, his curiosity about the Flying Swan Sect's intentions only intensified.

But his curiosity did not last long before it was quelled.

Meng Zhang, who was personally monitoring the situation outside the battlefield, received a transmission talisman from An Moran, the Third Disciple, with important information to report. An Moran was the Hall Master of the Secret Hall, responsible for Taiyi Sect's intelligence system. Meng Zhang didn't dare to neglect his report and immediately returned to the Grand Lion Ridge to meet with An Moran.

Upon seeing Meng Zhang, An Moran got straight to the point and reported important information. The Flying Swan Sect's full-scale attack on the nest was not just to disregard Taiyi Sect and the

Northern Desert Qi Family; it was to obtain a treasure left behind by the White Lion Demon King many years ago.

Several hundred years ago, during the time when the Purple Gold Sect was the ruler of the Endless Sea of Sand, the Layered Mystery Sect, a powerful cultivation sect in the Middle-Earth Continent, was wiped out by their enemies. One of the Layered Mystery Sect's Primordial Spirit True Monarchs, Li Zhong, managed to escape. To avoid pursuit from their enemies, Li Zhong fled far away from the Middle-Earth Continent and ended up in the Endless Sea of Sand.

During his travels in the north, Li Zhong met True Monarch Vermilion from the Purple Gold Sect, and they became good friends. Seeking refuge in the Endless Sea of Sand, Li Zhong planned to seek help from his friend True Monarch Vermilion to rebuild the Layered Mystery Sect, which had been annihilated.

True Monarch Vermilion warmly welcomed Li Zhong and was supportive of his plans to rebuild the Layered Mystery Sect. True Monarch Vermilion offered him a territory within the Endless Sea of Sand to use for his purposes. This kindness touched Li Zhong, and he relaxed his guard.

However, to his surprise, True Monarch Vermilion took advantage of his unguarded moment and launched a sudden attack on him, severely injuring Li Zhong but not finishing him off. Li Zhong managed to escape with serious injuries.

After escaping, Li Zhong had the misfortune to encounter the White Lion Demon King, and being a demonic beast, the outcome against a heavily injured human cultivator was predictable. The White Lion Demon King killed Li Zhong and took possession of the valuable treasure he carried—a legacy item of the Layered Mystery Sect. However, being a demonic beast, the White Lion Demon King couldn't inherit the treasure and could only keep it stored in its nest.

After hundreds of years, the Flying Swan Sect somehow learned of this news, which led to the events that occurred recently. The Flying Swan Sect claimed to be the ruler of the Endless Sea of Sand, but in reality, it was just a Gold Core sect. Without the support of True Monarch Tian Zhu, they might not have been able to dominate the Endless Sea of Sand.

The Flying Swan Sect had long sought the inheritance of the Purple Gold Sect to compensate for their own shortcomings and hoped to nurture a Primordial Spirit True Monarch. However, despite their efforts, they couldn't obtain the Purple Gold Sect's legacy.

Now, a more advanced inheritance from the Layered Mystery Sect appeared. Regardless of the cost, the Flying Swan Sect was determined to seize it.

Meng Zhang listened to An Moran's report and understood why the Flying Swan Sect launched a full-scale attack on the nest and why their behavior was so reckless. After contemplating for a while, Meng Zhang asked An Moran where he obtained this information. An Moran's answer was as expected; he received it from the Northern Desert Qi Family.

Meng Zhang then understood that the Northern Desert Qi Family had long known about the whereabouts of the Layered Mystery Sect's treasure. They had planned to target this treasure from the beginning, which was why they insisted on attacking the nest during the previous joint expedition with the Taiyi Sect and Flying Swan Sect.

Realizing that the Northern Desert Qi Family was playing both sides to distract the Flying Swan Sect and avoid their threat, Meng Zhang couldn't help but sneer at their scheming. The Flying Swan

Sect had fallen into their trap, and with a clear direction provided, the authenticity of the information should be confirmed.

Now that the Layered Mystery Sect's treasure was at stake, the Flying Swan Sect, after hundreds of years of pursuit, could no longer resist the temptation.

Chapter 499: Open intrigue

The Northern Desert Qi Family intentionally leaked information about the precious inheritance of the Layered Mystery Sect, which is a naked plot. The Flying Swan Sect, even knowing the Northern Desert Qi Family's scheme, would still do whatever it takes to seize it.

As for why the Flying Swan Sect didn't first wipe out the Northern Desert Qi Family and Taiyi Sect before exterminating the Yachao and taking the treasure, it's probably because they are afraid of inviting more trouble in the long run.

Facing the goal pursued by the sect for hundreds of years, the Flying Swan Sect cannot afford to fail this time and must acquire it at all costs. In comparison, Taiyi Sect and Northern Desert Qi Family are insignificant and have been disregarded by the Flying Swan Sect.

If they delay too long, it might attract other contenders, which would be a huge problem.

Meng Zhang also admires the Northern Desert Qi Family's determination. At a critical moment, they dared to throw out such a bait that the Flying Swan Sect couldn't refuse.

Of course, when the family faces extinction, the significance of any inheritance becomes unimportant. As long as it helps the family escape its doom, any price will be paid.

Now, the Northern Desert Qi Family has leaked this information to Taiyi Sect, which also harbors ill intentions. The enmity between Taiyi Sect and Flying Swan Sect cannot be concealed from the Northern Desert Qi Family.

If the Flying Swan Sect acquires the precious inheritance of the Layered Mystery Sect, their strength will significantly increase, and Taiyi Sect's situation will worsen.

Meng Zhang, as the Taiyi Sect Master, will definitely try to stop the Flying Swan Sect and might even compete for it.

The Northern Desert Qi Family's calculations are truly cunning. By releasing this information, they can sit back and watch the Flying Swan Sect and Taiyi Sect clash while they temporarily escape from the predicament.

The Northern Desert Qi Family isn't a good entity, and despite Meng Zhang's awareness of their schemes, he has no choice but to get involved.

However, even if he wants to obstruct the Flying Swan Sect, Meng Zhang must carefully consider his approach. It would be best to avoid direct conflict, ensuring that the Flying Swan Sect returns empty-handed.

After An Moran reported everything, seeing Meng Zhang lost in thought, he hesitated for a moment and disclosed another piece of information to him.

It turns out that when the True Monarch Li Zhong of the Layered Mystery Sect fled to the Endless Sea of Sand, he took on a named disciple by chance, who happened to be a member of the An Family.

Li Zhong, however, didn't consider it a significant matter and didn't inform the True Monarch Vermilion. Later, when Li Zhong was being hunted by the Purple Gold Sect, the named disciple didn't dare to reveal his true lineage.

At that time, Purple Gold Sect was the dominant power in the Endless Sea of Sand, and the Flying Swan Sect was just a subordinate sect of the Purple Gold Sect. The An Family was merely one of the numerous inconspicuous cultivation families in the Endless Sea of Sand.

Before dying during meditation, the named disciple of Li Zhong didn't dare to leave the inheritance directly in the An Family. Instead, he pretended to be a loose cultivator and left the legacy outside while setting up tests.

Only the An Family descendants who pass his tests can obtain the inheritance. When An Xiaoran and An Moran returned to the territory of the Flying Swan Sect the last time, it was to obtain this legacy.

The An Family ancestor who left the inheritance specifically emphasized that the future An Family members who get the inheritance must never reveal his true lineage.

In the Cultivation World, each cultivator has some hidden secrets. Even close relationships like father-son or master-disciple won't easily reveal them.

As for secrets, Meng Zhang has even more of them. He has never revealed his secret of being a transmigrator to anyone, not even the secret of how he entered the Taiyi Sect's Trial Ground.

Meng Zhang can understand the thoughts of the An Family siblings. Nevertheless, he playfully scolded An Moran a few times.

The An Family ancestor, who became the named disciple of the True Monarch Li Zhong, didn't receive much inheritance from the True Monarch Li Zhong. Due to various reasons, he remained a Foundation Building late stage cultivator his entire life, never breaking through to the Gold Core stage.

Of course, the guidance of a Primordial Spirit True Monarch, even if it's just a few words, is invaluable. Moreover, he was taught several techniques.

Regarding the precious inheritance of the Layered Mystery Sect, the An Family ancestor had heard the True Monarch Li Zhong mention it. He recorded the details in the information he left for future generations.

This inheritance treasure was called Myriad Layers Peak. When not activated, it appears as a palm-sized mountain toy.

To activate this treasure, one needs to use the Earth Vein's power and place it on a Third Rank spirit vein. Once activated, Myriad Layers Peak transforms into layers of real mountains, connecting and standing on the ground.

These mountains form a special great formation that can confound and trap enemies, making it nearly impossible to break through.

Hearing An Moran speak of this, Meng Zhang recalled something. Behind the Dark Crow Demon General's lair, Yachao, were a series of continuous mountains forming a long mountain range.

When he, Gu Yue Huaidie, and Luo Ye Daoist Master had attempted to attack Yachao together, he had felt those mountains were extraordinary.

He had even used the Deception Breaking Eye to observe them from a distance, but he couldn't see through them. At that time, he thought it was a formation left behind by the White Lion Demon King.

Fourth Rank demon beasts are known as Monster Kings, equal to human Primordial Spirit True Monarchs. With his mere Gold Core cultivation base, he naturally couldn't see through those formations.

Now, with An Moran's mention, Meng Zhang thought, could those continuous mountains be the transformed Myriad Layers Peak? White Lion Demon King, at least a Fourth Rank demon beast, even if it can't completely refine Myriad Layers Peak, it might be possible to activate it.

After sending An Moran away, Meng Zhang immediately flew towards Yachao and carefully observed the distant mountains. The more he looked, the more he felt that those mountains might indeed be the precious inheritance of the Layered Mystery Sect.

In his Deception Breaking Eye, those mountains emitted faint traces of treasure light. He wondered if the Northern Desert Qi Family and Flying Swan Sect were aware of the details of Myriad Layers Peak.

Meng Zhang glanced at the battle situation out of habit and noticed that in the short time he left, the situation had changed. Flying Swan Sect probably feared unexpected circumstances and didn't want to delay for too long. They were willing to let their disciples consume the various formations left by the White Lion Demon King, even at the cost of their lives.

In the eyes of the high-ranking members of Flying Swan Sect, when necessary, low-level disciples could be sacrificed. Don't think that low-level disciples with a lower Cultivation Base cannot play a significant role. In fact, once they form a formation and have the assistance of a formation's power, they can still have a significant impact, even defeating stronger opponents.

Flying Swan Sect's Four Directions Subduing Mountain Formation, a renowned large-scale war formation, truly lived up to its name. Many disciples, relying on the power of this formation, managed to wear down the enemy's strength and kill numerous demons.

Of course, the losses suffered by Flying Swan Sect were also significant. Two out of four stone pillars, which served as the formation's base, were destroyed in the battle, and low-level disciples suffered heavy casualties.

Meng Zhang couldn't help but admire the profound heritage of Flying Swan Sect. At critical moments, they could still bring out some hidden trump cards.

If Gu Yue Huaidie and Luo Ye Daoist Master were present, and they had so many powerful methods at their disposal, even if they had to sacrifice most of the Taiyi Sect disciples, they might have broken through Yachao long ago.

Even at the Gold Core Daoist Master level, in a major battle, one must go all out.

Unfortunately, the current Taiyi Sect was extremely lacking in Third Rank items.

Seeing that Yachao was on the verge of collapse, Poison Sand Demon General roared and attacked a Third Rank warship in the sky. It was hit and severely injured by the warship's explosion. Fei Jiang Daoist Master took the opportunity to kill Poison Sand Demon General on the spot.

Dark Crow Demon General was entangled by Fei Shi Daoist Master and couldn't spare any effort to assist.

Given Dark Crow Demon General's temperament, he should have fought desperately against the human cultivators. Somehow, he chose to endure a hit, abandon his lair, and fled towards the distant mountains.

Fei Shi Daoist Master shouted, and Fei Jiang Daoist Master and Wu Mingwei followed him, chasing Dark Crow Demon General into those mountains.

The changes in the battle were too fast, and Meng Zhang didn't have time to react.

Originally, according to Meng Zhang's original plan, Taiyi Sect was to avoid direct conflict with Flying Swan Sect and instead secretly assist Dark Crow Demon General in resisting them.

If there was no way to support Dark Crow Demon General, they could also secretly notify Fire Cloud Sect.

For many years, Fire Cloud Sect had been wanting to conquer the Endless Sea of Sand, and a significant part of their goal was to obtain the inheritance of the former Purple Gold Sect. If news about the precious inheritance of the Layered Mystery Sect in Yachao spread, Fire Cloud Sect would surely do everything to seize it. Even if they couldn't succeed, they would do their best to hinder Flying Swan Sect and prevent them from succeeding.

But looking at the current situation, Yachao had already been broken through. The three Gold Core Daoist Masters of Flying Swan Sect were chasing Dark Crow Demon General into the mountains.

It wouldn't be long before Dark Crow Demon General would be killed. The precious inheritance of the Layered Mystery Sect would then fall into the hands of Flying Swan Sect.

Meng Zhang absolutely wouldn't watch such a situation happen and would do everything to stop it.

Chapter 500: Agitation

Meng Zhang secretly made up his mind. Even if it meant completely breaking ties with the Flying Swan Sect, he must stop them at all costs and prevent them from fulfilling their desires.

The Flying Swan Sect was already much stronger than the Taiyi Sect and had been eyeing them with hostility. If the Flying Swan Sect were to obtain the inheritance left by the Layered Mystery Sect, it would be unacceptable.

At that time, there might be no place for the Taiyi Sect in the Endless Sea of Sand.

Contacting the Fire Cloud Sect now was no longer an option; Meng Zhang had to take matters into his own hands. Depending solely on his own strength would be a bit challenging, as he wouldn't have much influence against the three Gold Core Daoist Masters from the Flying Swan Sect.

After careful consideration, Meng Zhang unexpectedly came up with a twisted idea.

At this moment, the three Gold Core Daoist Masters of the Flying Swan Sect were chasing after the Dark Crow Demon General and penetrating deeper into the dense mountains.

A portion of the Flying Swan Sect cultivator's army remained in place, while another part dispersed, driving away the nearby demons to prevent them from approaching the area.

Meng Zhang called out to the Taiyi Sect disciples who were monitoring the situation of the Flying Swan Sect nearby, instructing them to immediately return to the Grand Lion Ridge.

He then unleashed the Rainbow Escape Method and rushed at full speed towards the Grand Lion Ridge. The Rainbow Escape Method lived up to its reputation as an exceptional escape technique known for its speed. Meng Zhang's figure transformed into a rainbow, swiftly streaking across the sky like lightning.

Grand Lion Ridge and the Crow's Nest were 4,000-5,000 li apart. It took him almost half a day to return to the Grand Lion Ridge.

Upon arriving at the Grand Lion Ridge, Meng Zhang didn't even have time to catch his breath; he immediately summoned his top disciple, Niu Dawei.

He instructed Niu Dawei to contact the Endless Sea of Sand immediately and gather all the elite disciples of the Taiyi Sect stationed there as quickly as possible. Then, they should join forces with the Taiyi Sect disciples stationed at the Grand Lion Ridge and head towards the vicinity of the Crow's Nest.

All disciples were to be prepared for battle and refrain from acting without orders. They would wait for his command to launch a fierce attack on the Flying Swan Sect's cultivator army.

At present, the Taiyi Sect had numerous flying vessels, and even though the Grand Lion Ridge and the Endless Sea of Sand were far apart, mobilizing disciples was still very convenient. It wouldn't take much time to assemble the main forces of the Taiyi Sect.

Of course, this was just a precautionary measure Meng Zhang had taken. He wouldn't order the Taiyi Sect disciples to attack unless absolutely necessary.

After giving instructions to Niu Dawei, Meng Zhang took a short rest before going to see Qin Hongying.

Ever since he had figured out Qin Hongying's temperament, Meng Zhang had barely had any direct contact with her, except for the regular times when he had to send her outside the Crow's Nest for patrol duty.

As the owner of the Grand Lion Ridge, Meng Zhang had noticed that Qin Hongying maintained a certain level of respect towards him on the surface.

After meeting Qin Hongying, Meng Zhang got straight to the point and recounted the Flying Swan Sect's attack on the Crow's Nest.

Meng Zhang told the truth without any concealment, but he did exaggerate a bit when it came to the precious inheritance of the Layered Mystery Sect.

The precious inheritance contained all the teachings of the Layered Mystery Sect and many valuable treasures collected by them, such as pills, magic tools, and Heaven and Earth Spiritual Objects.

Initially, Qin Hongying seemed indifferent as Meng Zhang started narrating, but she couldn't help but change her expression when he mentioned the precious inheritance of the Layered Mystery Sect. The Layered Mystery Sect was not an ordinary cultivation sect in the Middle-Earth Continent; it was a renowned and dominant Primordial Spirit sect. Its reputation spread far and wide, and even many well-informed cultivators in the Jiuqu League had heard of it.

Qin Hongying is not an uninformed person. On the contrary, she is mature in age, has deep experience, and possesses extensive knowledge. She has heard of the renowned Layered Mystery Sect and has some understanding of its teachings.

To her knowledge, the Layered Mystery Sect is highly skilled in alchemy and refining techniques, with unique elixirs that can greatly aid cultivators in breaking through bottlenecks. Qin Hongying accepted Meng Zhang's employment as a guest of the Taiyi Sect for thirty years because her lifespan was almost depleted, and she had no hope of advancement.

On the surface, she seemed to have accepted her fate, but deep down, there was an enduring sense of unwillingness. A cultivator like her would never be content to await the arrival of life's end passively.

Now, upon hearing about the precious inheritance of the Layered Mystery Sect from Meng Zhang, she saw it as a last chance given to her by fate. With her current Gold Core early-stage cultivation base, if she could gain something from the Layered Mystery Sect's precious inheritance, she might break through to the Gold Core mid-stage.

Entering the Gold Core mid-stage could add several decades or even over a hundred years to her lifespan. For Qin Hongying, who had limited time left, this unexpected opportunity was her last straw, and she wouldn't let it slip away.

After Meng Zhang finished speaking, without waiting for him to continue persuading, Qin Hongying voluntarily expressed her intention to seize the precious inheritance of the Layered Mystery Sect. She even worried that Meng Zhang might be afraid of the Flying Swan Sect's power and hesitate to act, so she promised numerous benefits to encourage him to join her in the raid.

Meng Zhang was surprised to see Qin Hongying so easily persuaded. She appeared extremely eager, lacking the calmness of a Gold Core Daoist Master. Nevertheless, this suited him fine, as it saved him from having to waste more words.

Qin Hongying offered many rewards, among them the immediate exemption of a large amount of resources that the Taiyi Sect still owed to the Qin Family. Meng Zhang graciously accepted the rewards that he could obtain immediately and quickly formed an alliance with her.

Facing a formidable enemy like the Flying Swan Sect, neither of them had the confidence to confront them individually. To have a chance of snatching victory from the Flying Swan Sect's hands, they needed to join forces.

After making the necessary preparations, Qin Hongying was ready to set out with Meng Zhang. He called upon the Extreme Sword Spirit General and asked him to accompany them on the journey.

Extreme Sword Spirit General was not one to boast without reason. He had claimed that his attacks possessed the power of a Gold Core Daoist Master.

Believing in his words, Meng Zhang treated the Extreme Sword Spirit General as a fraction of a Gold Core Daoist Master's strength to use in their favor.

Qin Hongying was puzzled by Meng Zhang's insistence on bringing along a mere Foundation Building cultivator. However, since they still needed Meng Zhang's help at this stage, she didn't concern herself with these insignificant details. Secretly, she disdained the state of the Taiyi Sect, as it was relying on a Foundation Building cultivator to face a Gold Core-level battle.

Once all the preparations were in order, the two set off. With the Rainbow Escape Method, Meng Zhang enveloped the Extreme Sword Spirit General in the escaping light, ensuring that their speed remained unaffected.

After a half-day journey, Qin Hongying and Meng Zhang arrived just outside the Crow's Nest. The Flying Swan Sect's cultivator army was currently regrouping near the breached Crow's Nest.

Not wanting to waste time on these cultivators, they bypassed them and approached the mountains from the side.

At this point, Qin Hongying and Meng Zhang had two choices: either they could directly rush into the mountains and join the fray or they could wait here silently and strike when the three Gold Core Daoist Masters of the Flying Swan Sect emerged from gaining the treasure.