

The Heavens 101

Chapter 101: Eighth Generation Demon Sealer

“If I don’t investigate just because it’s a little dangerous, then what will happen in the future when I face dangerous situations? I’d probably be even more willing to hold back. That’s not the proper attitude with which to face the law of the jungle in the Cultivation world. This Demon Sealing Jade is from Patriarch Reliance. It’s obviously an artifact from the Demon Sealing Sect. Furthermore... I myself am a disciple of the Demon Sealing Sect. I must figure out what’s going on!” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he thought back to the Demonic technique used by Shangguan Xiu, and the Demonic magic of Patriarch Reliance. Stubbornness filled his heart as he entered the cave.

“That having been said, I still need to be extremely cautious. If there are any signs of enemies that I can’t contend with, then I’ll leave immediately, with no regrets.” Meng Hao’s eyes shined with determination. Lightning-filled mist arced around him, his two wooden swords hovered around, and the feathers spun in a protective spiral. A look of utmost caution covered his face and spiritual energy emanated out from him. He would instantly be able to sense even the slightest sign of trouble.

As a Foundation Establishment Cultivator, his body was stronger; he could fly and had Spiritual Sense. All of these made it easier to protect himself and ensure that he lived a long life. They also gave him the opportunity to face dangerous situations with confidence.

At the moment, if Meng Hao were of the Qi Condensation stage, even if he had the courage to enter this place, he simply couldn’t.

It was pitch black, and Meng Hao felt the threatening pressure of the intense coldness which continuously roiled out from up ahead.

Within the cold, there was also the faint Blood Qi, which became thicker and thicker the further Meng Hao proceeded. A look of caution on his face, he continued onward. Three hundred meters in, he stopped momentarily and used a wooden sword to cut a hole into the earth wall. Then, he slapped his bag of holding to produce a talisman, which he placed inside the hole.

This talisman was the one he’d acquired from Wang Tengfei that day long ago.

He moved onward until he was about six hundred meters into the cave. There, he stopped and produced ten flying swords from within his bag of holding, which he stabbed into the walls. As he proceeded further into the cave, he continued to stop every few hundred meters and make such preparations. If anything unexpected happened, then he would have some backup life-saving options during his retreat.

By the time Meng Hao was about twelve hundred meters into the cave, the mist surrounding him had begun to seethe and roil. A faint moaning sound could be heard. A look of concentration appeared on Meng Hao's face, and he stopped momentarily. He looked around carefully for a long moment before proceeded further into the cave, following the red rope with flickering eyes.

Soon he was fifteen hundred meters. Suddenly, a piercing shriek emanated from within the recesses of the cave, along with an ear-splitting roar. The mist surrounding him flickered with massive quantities of electricity, which formed together to form a Lightning Globe. With a boom, it shot out and slammed into an indistinct figure up ahead. The figure flickered and disappeared.

Meng Hao gasped. His Lightning Flag was very powerful, even more so now that he was at the Foundation Establishment stage. The fact that it hadn't exterminated the indistinct form proved how powerful the figure was. Meng Hao stopped for a moment, hesitating. He looked up ahead in the cave, rubbing the Demon Sealing Jade. Gritting his teeth, he moved forward.

He continued on another six hundred meters, bringing him a full two thousand or more meters into the cave. The intense cold caused his body to quiver. The Blood Qi buffeted against him, filling his nostrils with every breath he took. Dark, crimson patches had begun to appear on his skin, and his eyes glowed red.

"I'm two thousand or more meters in, only about three hundred meters from the end..." His eyes had shined with more redness. At the moment, his unwillingness to let a matter drop had flared up. He moved forward, the full power of his Foundation Establishment Cultivation base in play. His Dao Pillar thrummed, sending boundless spiritual energy coursing throughout his body. He moved faster, speeding down the tunnel.

In the space of a few breaths, he caught sight of what appeared to be the end of the cave, as well as the sword he had sent in.

As things became clear, he realized that the cave was not twenty-five hundred meters deep as he had thought. Twenty-five hundred meters in was a round platform, in the middle of which was a hole, two meters wide!

The rope, which appeared to be soaked through with blood, disappeared into the deep hole, which seemed to drop down into eternity.

Meng Hao's sword was embedded into the side of the platform, which was why he had assumed the cave was twenty-five hundred meters deep. He was surprised to see this. But then, his eyes suddenly narrowed; the Demon Sealing Jade was now emitting a massive amount of blinding light. It was then that he noticed a corpse, sitting cross-legged next to the platform!

In the corpse's hand was an ancient-looking jade slip. This slip also emitted a brilliant glow, as if it were somehow connected to the jade slip he held in his own hand.

Before Meng Hao had the chance to process all of this, a shrill scream filled the air. A blurred figure raced toward him. The mist defended him, but Meng Hao could clearly see a six-fingered hand pressing against it, reaching toward him. It stopped about two meters from him, where a massive conglomeration of lightning resisted it.

A ghastly coldness emanated from the hand, which appeared to belong, not to an adult, but a child!

Boom!

Meng Hao was shoved backward. Eyes flashing, he waved his hand, and the two wooden swords shot toward the indistinct figure. However, despite the swords' incredible speed, the figure was faster. It dodged and then shot backward to crouch next to the round platform. Underneath the glow of the ancient jade, Meng Hao could not see it clearly.

It had an emaciated body, like that of a feral animal. But upon closer examination, it looked more like a seven- or eight-year-old child. Its eyes were completely red, and as it stared at Meng Hao, it opened its mouth to reveal black teeth. It screamed.

Meng Hao's expression was the same as ever, although coldness gleamed in his eyes. Sword auras began to glow around the two wooden swords as they circled Meng Hao. Suddenly, Meng Hao's eyes narrowed. From within the hole in the flat platform, ten dim streams of light emerged as ten figures appeared which looked exactly the same as the child. They radiated viciousness as they stared at Meng Hao.

If this was the extent of it, it wouldn't have been a big deal. But, behind the ten phantoms, revealed by the glow of the ancient jade, Meng Hao saw a white-haired man floating up out of the hole in the platform.

His face was devoid of blood, and he wore a white robe. His white hair floated about him. His eyes were closed, and a vicious scar stretched from his forehead down to his chin. The flesh around the wound stretched back to reveal bone. The ten phantoms surrounded him. The whole scene caused a profound sense of danger to well up in Meng Hao.

His scalp grew numb, and he began to inch backward. Before he could even take three steps, a shrill screaming filled the air. The ten phantoms launched themselves from the platform, shooting directly toward Meng Hao.

It was at this moment that the Demon Sealing Jade flew into the air of its own volition. A bright glow spread out from it. At the same time, the ancient jade in the hands of the corpse next to the platform also flew up into the air.

An ancient and profound voice filled the air. "Ancient Dao; Tenacious Desire to Seal the Heavens; Benefaction for All in the Mountains; Dao Tribulation Must Come to the Nine Mountains and Seas; My Fate is the Aeon!" It boomed throughout the ancient cave, causing the ten phantoms to emit blood-curdling screams. Meng Hao watched as they instantly transformed into black smoke.

The white-haired man suddenly opened his eyes.

Within his eye sockets.... were no eyes, only bloody holes. It looked as if the eyes had been dug out years ago!

As his eyes opened, the two ancient pieces of jade emitted beams of light which interlocked to form a restrictive spell filled with magical symbols. It settled down over the area, causing the white-robed man to begin to tremble, unable to move further.

He slowly lifted his right hand, pushing against the restrictive spell. He himself made no sound whatsoever, but his action caused the entire cave to begin to shake.

All of this happened too quickly. Meng Hao breathed raggedly as he looked at the two ancient pieces of jade. He lifted his hand, and instantly, the two pieces of jade flew toward him to land on his palm.

The second piece of ancient jade was inscribed with a magical character. Meng Hao had seen this character before in his studies in the Magic Pavilion in the Reliance Sect. It was the character for 'eight!'

As soon as it touched his hand, a profound voice filled his mind. It sounded ancient, as if it were being projected from a time long, long ago. It echoed out in his mind.

"The League of Demon Sealers has existed as long as the Dao. I am the Eighth Generation Demon Sealer Daoist Master. I am determined to walk the path of Dao Tribulation of the Nine Mountains and Seas. In all likelihood, I will perish, so I leave my sentience along with my clone here to resolve the ill-fated relationship between Da Nu and myself....

"Sealed three million meters down, pressed down by the weight of this section of the Milky Way Sea, buried. Grief and sorrow are part of the Dao of Heaven and Earth. However, I am a Demon Sealer Daoist Master, and I must not allow distractions into my heart... so I leave my clone here to accompany her and resolve her Demonic resentment.

"If you are of the League of Demon Sealers, place a drop of your blood onto the jade in confirmation. If you are not of the League of Demon Sealers, then remove yourself from this place. If the jade leaves without tasting blood, you will be cursed for three generations; your descendants will never see the moon and you shall perish."

The voice disappeared, and the glow from the ancient jade slowly faded. Meng Hao muttered to himself, his eyes gleaming. He wasn't sure whether or not to place a drop of blood onto the ancient jade. But if he didn't, then he didn't dare to take the jade away. He didn't fully believe the warning uttered by the ancient voice. And yet, he couldn't ignore it.

Chapter 102: Eighth Demon Sealing Hex!

Murmuring to himself, Meng Hao frowned. He looked over toward the black hole. At the moment, there was not just one white-robed man floating there, but about seven, all in different positions. Their bloody gazes were fixed upon him.

Although he couldn't see their eyeballs, Meng Hao's entire body grew cold. This place was incredibly bizarre, and he was filled with the desire to leave as soon as possible.

But then he looked down at the ancient jade pieces in his hand, and resolve filled his eyes. He bit the tip of his tongue, allowing a drop of blood to fall onto the second ancient jade.

As soon as the blood drop splashed onto it, it began to vibrate. A gaseous substance appeared in front of Meng Hao, which solidified into a gray-colored Qi. It shot toward him, entering his body in the spot between his eyebrows. A roaring sound filled his mind, and then an archaic voice sounded out again within his head. This time it was more clear, as if the speaker were standing next to his ear.

“I was not always the Eighth Generation Demon Sealer Daoist Master. It was outside of the Sixth Mountain that I gained enlightenment from the will left behind by the Seventh Generation Demon Sealer Daoist Master upon his death. I willingly cut away my past and reversed my Dao, inheriting the past generation’s Dao. I roamed creation, and eventually, refined half of the sea outside the Sixth Mountain in order to forge the Demon Sealing Jade that is required of each generation.

“With the help of the Demon Sealing Jade, I mastered the Seventh Demon Sealing Hex. Since ancient times, each new generation of the League of Demon Sealers must create a new Hex; therefore, I created the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex. Throughout my life, I sought out the other scattered Hexes, but sadly by the time I reached the Dao Tribulation of the Nine Mountains and Seas, I had only found three. What a pity.

“Successor, if you are lucky, able to absorb the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex, and then create the Ninth Demon Sealing Hex. Then the League of Demon Sealers will be in accord with the law of the Dao.

“The League of Demon Sealers seeks out the great Demons of Heaven and Earth, drawing out the aura of all the living things under vault of heaven. Seizing Demonic lives, refining Demonic blood, using it and then... the concepts of Demonic Sealing, Demonic Construction, and Demonic Transformation....

“I don’t know which generation of Demon Sealing you are, perhaps the Ninth. If so, you’re lucky, but at the same time, unlucky. Nine is ultimate number, a peak of deterioration. The path you tread... is filled with many variables.

“This clone only possesses the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex. I now pass it on to you. This Hex uses Demonic Qi as its foundation, and can... seal bodies, seal spirits, seal Immortals, seal divinities, seal the luck from the Heavens, seal all living things in the world!” The voice echoed out in Meng Hao’s head, more and more clearly until it became a thunderous roar that branded itself onto his mind. The brand was an ancient character, the character for Sealing!

Eventually the echoing roar faded away. Meng Hao didn’t know it, but ten days had passed in the outside world while he had been immersed in the branding process. Another full moon had arrived.

In the valley outside, the moonlight pierced into the mists, causing them to churn and seethe like seawaters. The toad geezer once again arrived on the scene. This time, there was an additional Cultivator of the ninth level of Qi Condensation. He had obviously just broken through to the ninth level. Nonetheless, this filled the group with complete confidence.

“Now that brother Sun has made a breakthrough in his Cultivation base, we will definitely pull out fifteen hundred meters!”

“Right. We’ve waited for this day for too long. If we can pull out fifteen hundred meters, then our ancestral spirit will awaken. Our Cultivation bases will raise to another level. If the luck exists, we might even reach Foundation Establishment!”

“It’s hard to determine the probability of Foundation Establishment luck. However, according to the ancient records passed down from our ancestors, pulling out fifteen hundred meters will definitely bring some type of luck with it.” They exchanged gleaming glances, then immediately went to work under the thick moonlight. Of course, Meng Hao couldn’t be further from their minds; as far as they were concerned he had long since passed away.

They spat out globules of blood, and formed the black blade. The mists began to spin into a whirlpool, and then the red rope appeared. The toad geezer grabbed ahold of it and let out a howl as he pulled.

A thunderous boom echoed out and the rope began to move. The movement reached down through the valley into the cave, all the way to the spot where Meng Hao stood, then further down into the magically sealed hole.

As soon as the rope began to move, expressions of panic appeared on the faces of the eight or so white-haired men. Suddenly, nearly a dozen of the phantoms which looked like seven- or eight-year-old children appeared. Their shrill screams echoed throughout the deepness of the cave.

One of the strange properties of this rope was that when it was pulled, it began to emit massive amounts of intense coldness, as well as a rotten smell. The glittering restrictive spell trembled, as if it might collapse at any moment.

Time passed. The seven men outside heaved on the rope, gradually pulling out fifteen meters. The roaring grew more intense, and even more coldness poured out. The rotten smell grew many times thicker and stronger.

Soon... a panting sound could be heard in the cave. It sounded as if some living thing were in the midst of some sort of struggle. A figure appeared, screaming shrilly. It launched itself at the shining restrictive spell.

The spell shook, and cracks appeared on its edges.

It was at this moment that Meng Hao's eyes became fully clear. He shook himself and took in a deep breath. A gleam appeared in his eyes as he became aware of what was happening in the ancient cave. He saw the rope moving, as well as the rapidly collapsing restrictive spell.

There was no time to think. He clasped his hands and bowed toward the corpse. Then, carrying his mist with him, shot back toward the cave entrance. Before he could move even thirty meters, the shining restrictive spell shattered. Ten emaciated phantoms shot out, followed by the eight white-haired old men. All of them aimed directly for Meng Hao, screaming as they approached.

Behind them, thin streams of blackness floated up out of the deep hole. They looked like hair. The panting sound from within the hole became clearer.

Something inside was struggling fiercely, as if it desired nothing more than to burst out of the hole.

Meng Hao's face was pale but his eyes shined brightly. His Dao Pillar began to rotate, sending the power of Foundation Establishment coursing throughout his body. He dashed forward several dozens of meters. Unfortunately, the emaciated, child-like phantoms behind him were even faster. Over and over again, they crashed into Meng Hao's lightning mist.

Booms echoed out as the lightning mist rapidly began to deteriorate. The child-like phantoms didn't seem to feel any pain. Every time they were knocked away by lightning bolts, they immediately charged back again. Everywhere Meng Hao looked, spirits charged toward him.

Sword auras shined out brightly as the wooden swords circled around him. Feathers spun, causing a wind to blow out. Meng Hao moved onward as quickly as possible.

That was when the eight white-haired men drew close. At the same time, several of the child-like spirit phantoms appeared in front of him, blocking his path. Meng Hao felt a profound sense of danger. Without hesitation, he slapped his bag of holding. A hundred flying swords appeared, forming into a sword rain which charged forth.

“Boom!”

As soon as Meng Hao uttered the word, the flying swords detonated, turning into a cloud of shrapnel that swept the phantoms off of their feet. Meng Hao raced past them toward the entrance of the cave, which was now about fifteen hundred meters away.

The shrieking behind him grew more intense. More and more black tendrils billowed about. They were nearly three hundred meters behind him.

Meng Hao didn't have time to look closely. He knew that if he slowed even a little bit, he would most likely lose his life. Even the slightest delay in reaction on his part, and he would be finished.

“With great risk comes great reward. Getting the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex makes all of this worth it. Too bad I haven't gained complete enlightenment regarding the Hex, otherwise I could use it right now.” He took a deep breath and pushed forward at top speed. The cave entrance was now almost twelve hundred meters away.

It was then that the white-robed men behind Meng Hao raised their arms and waved their fingers toward him.

The finger attacks made Meng Hao's entire body turn cold. Without hesitation, he flickered his hand in an incantation and waved backwards. The feathers surrounding him shot back, then suddenly detonated. Another hundred swords appeared from within his bag of holding. They also shot back and then exploded.

A massive boom filled the cave tunnel, resounding outwards and diminishing the power of the white-robed men's finger attacks. However, despite this, they still bore down on Meng Hao.

His face was pale as the mist around him shook; a gap opened up. His body instantly became freezing cold, and he coughed up a mouthful of blood. The blood instantly froze into solid chunks. It felt as if the power of his Cultivation base dropped by half. He was in great danger. However, amidst the danger, Meng Hao suddenly grabbed the red rope. He pulled it, borrowing from its power to shoot forward.

Meanwhile, out in the valley, the seven men gasped for breath. Gritting their teeth, they continued to heave on the red rope, pulling continuously. Behind them were over a dozen poison beasts, mouths clenched onto the rope as they pulled with incredible might.

“Dammit, how come it suddenly became so heavy!?”

“What’s happening? We just pulled out three hundred meters, it shouldn’t be like this!” The seven men were shocked, and anxious expressions appeared on their faces. Suddenly, the rope pulled back on them, jerking them dozens of meters forward. Then the tugging force disappeared. But moments later, even as they gritted their teeth and pulled on the rope again, it was tugged backwards with great strength.

As they cried out to each other in confusion, Meng Hao was inside the cave, pulling on the rope to launch himself forward. He coughed up more blood. Without hesitation, he consumed some medicinal pills, not wasting any time as he used all his power to flee.

His expression was grim. The lightning mist around him was growing thinner and thinner. If his reaction time had been any slower in dealing with the finger attacks from the white-robed men, Meng Hao’s body would have been frozen to death.

Chapter 103: Treasures

“What is that thing!?” panted Meng Hao, his heart grim. With no time to even wipe the blood from his mouth, he popped a Foundation Establishment Pill into his mouth. Because of the level of his Cultivation base, the pill would not cause his body to be paralyzed. Its power instantly flushed out the coldness.

No one but Meng Hao could be so wasteful.

His body seems to transform into a flash of light as he pulled on the rope, borrowing its power to shoot even closer to the cave mouth. As of now, he was only six hundred meters away. At his heels, roughly nine meters away from him, were the black tendrils of hair and the other phantoms. Further back, twenty-five hundred meters into the cave, at the end of the floating black mass of tendrils appeared a human head!

The red rope penetrated the head between the eyebrows and then continued to stretch down into the darkness.

It was a woman's head. The beauty of her features was difficult to describe, as if she didn't belong in the mortal world. Her open eyes were filled with confusion and frustration, as if before her death, there were too many things that she didn't understand, and too few answers.

To Meng Hao, six hundred meters was not very far. Given his current Cultivation base, he should be able to cross the distance in the space of a couple of breaths. But, the coldness in the cave was affecting his speed, and the relentless attacking pursuit behind him forced him to concentrate.

The hair tendrils continued to spread out, and it seemed as if it would reach Meng Hao's feet at any moment. Meng Hao took a deep breath, then lifted his hand toward the rocky wall.

As he pushed against it, the power of his Cultivation base exploded out to activate some of the backup magical items he had placed there. Ten flying swords suddenly flew out, shooting toward the tendrils and then exploding. A boom echoed out, shaking the cave. Meng Hao shot forward, pulling fiercely on the red rope.

Outside in the valley, the seven Cultivators' faces were pale white. Three of them spat up blood and staggered backward. The remaining four gritted their teeth and held on. Behind them, the poison beasts seemed to be losing power.

"Maybe this time there will be an incredible treasure. That's why it's so heavy!"

"Right. When we pulled out that Spirit Sealing rock, it was incredibly heavy...."

"Haha! We'll pull out a similar treasure this time. Don't be stingy with your medicinal pills. We have to pull out this treasure!" The three injured Cultivators gritted their teeth, panting. They pulled out medicinal pills and consumed them. With looks of excitement and anticipation, they once again stepped forward and pulled on the rope.

Down in the cave, Meng Hao borrowed momentum from the rope to fly another three hundred meters. The black tendrils were now a bit further away from him.

His eyes gleaming, his hand shot out toward the cave wall, to where he had hidden the talisman. It began to emit a golden light, which swirled about and then coalesced into blurry figure which was impossible to see clearly. It turned and, emanating a shocking power, charged toward the black hair and the other pursuing spirits.

As the explosion billowed out, Meng Hao leaped forward. The pursuing spirits shrieked madly, charging once again toward him. A cold look appeared in his eyes, and he said a single word.

“Boom!”

The talisman would now serve an additional function. Another explosion ripped through the ancient cave. Borrowing the momentum of the explosion, Meng Hao surged forward. He was now only thirty meters from the cave mouth. He took hold of the red rope and pulled hard. In an instant, he shot forward thirty meters, flying out of the cave!

As he shot out of the cave, ten phantoms charged forward. However, they stopped immediately when they reached the cave mouth, shrieking, as if they dared not step outside. Their shrieks echoed out, but did not leave the valley; there seemed to be some sort of restrictive spell in place. As such, the seven struggling men outside didn't hear it.

Meng Hao held onto the red rope, allowing it to pull him upward. He turned and looked back down at the cave. As he did, he heard the voice of a woman, filled with frustration and doubt. It also carried with it a billowing sense of grief which shook Meng Hao.

“The Dao.... What is the Dao?!”

The voice grew shrill as it spoke, causing Meng Hao's heart to seize with pain. He drew further and further away from the valley floor, passing through layer after layer of mist, until he neared its border.

“Pull! Haha! Let's see what treasure comes up!”

“Maybe it's another Spirit Sealing stone. Whatever it is, we definitely will not have wasted our effort this time!”

The seven men pulled excitedly, their eyes burning with passion. And then Meng Hao emerged. Their mouths dropped open and they stared at what they had painstakingly pulled up. The red roped dropped from their hands.

They gaped, dumbstruck, their minds spinning out of control. This was something they couldn't possibly have predicted, and it left their brains blank. They had expected a treasure, but instead had ended up with Meng Hao. They couldn't believe their eyes.

“This.... This....”

“Dammit, what’s going on?! How can this be?!”

“That’s... that’s the outsider from before. He’s not dead after all. But, how could it be him that we pulled up?”

Their minds reeled, especially the toad geezer, who had no reaction other than to gape. As for the Cultivator who had lost the Spirit Snake, when he recognized Meng Hao, his eyes filled with rage.

“It’s that damned outsider....” he said angrily, taking a step toward Meng Hao. He couldn’t believe that he had spat up so much blood in his efforts to pull Meng Hao out of the mist. His rage billowed up.

As he walked forward, Meng Hao looked at him calmly. As he did, the man’s body suddenly began to shake and his organs felt as if they would stop working. His Cultivation base seemed as if it had lost its ability to function. The blood drained from his face, and astonishment filled his eyes. A massive pressure bore down on him, causing him to shake so violently that he thought he might fall into pieces. Meng Hao continued to look at him.

This was the crushing power caused by the vast difference in their Cultivation bases. The man knew that by merely lifting his hand, Meng Hao could explode him into a million pieces. An intense, indescribable dread welled up within him. Shaking, he coughed up blood, so scared that he didn’t even dare to take a step backward.

The six other men had already begun to feel sick to their stomach, but seeing this, seeing Meng Hao standing there like an imposing mountain, their hearts shook. They knew that this mountain could exterminate them all in an instant.

“He’s hovering in the air!!” It was at this moment that the toad geezer’s face changed. Looking at Meng Hao’s feet, he realized that this flight was not the same method used as when he and his fellows flew on their poison beasts. This was... true flight!

“A Foundation Establishment expert!” The words pounded into their hearts, causing all of the men’s expressions to change. Their faces were filled with shocked disbelief. They remembered that two years ago, he was only a ninth-level Qi Condensation Cultivator. They even had assumed him dead.

But here he was again, this time in a position vastly superior to theirs. As a Foundation Establishment expert, he could end their life at any time. Their were faces pale as they all cupped their hands and bowed deeply to him.

“The junior generation offers greetings to the elder generation...” said the seven men, their fists clasped in front of them. Dread filled their hearts as they thought about what would happen if Meng Hao suddenly turned hostile. This was especially true of the man who had lost his Spirit Snake; anxiety filled him. His body trembling, he dropped to the ground to kowtow to the expressionless Meng Hao.

Even as he dropped to his knees, Meng Hao lifted his hand and waved it forward. A flying sword appeared; it was an ordinary sword, but it contained the power of Meng Hao’s Foundation Establishment Cultivation base. It shot forward, disintegrating as it did so. The shrapnel shot down toward the Spirit Snake Cultivator.

A blood-curdling shriek rang out. He was of the ninth level of Qi Condensation, but blood showered out of his body, and he was killed instantly. His body toppled down into the mists.

The other six men stood there trembling, not daring to even flee. They kowtowed to Meng Hao, not showing any reaction whatsoever to the attack just now. Actually, the man’s death had come as no surprise. From the time that Meng Hao had first appeared until this day, he had been most venomous in expressing his hatred for him.

If Meng Hao did not eliminate him, the other six men would have found it strange. That, in turn, could have given birth to other problems.

Although Meng Hao had not been a part of the Cultivation World for a very long time, he had experienced many things in the past six years. He was not the soft-hearted scholar he once had been. When killing became necessary, he did it without hesitation.

Enmity had been created two years ago when the man had attacked him, and then had his Spirit Snake killed. The man was of the ninth level of Qi Condensation, so it was impossible to tell whether or not he would reach Foundation Establishment. Killing him now would prevent any future troubles.

From the incident with Ding Xin, Meng Hao had learned that even when attacking enemies weaker than yourself, you must be quick and thorough in the kill.

From the incident with Wang Tengfei, he had learned that even an opponent with a lower Cultivation base could harbor resentment, and pursue vengeance ruthlessly.

In these six years, Meng Hao had matured, both in his personality and in his methods of dealing with matters.

Chapter 104: A Great Wind Arises, The Roc Spreads its Wings

As he looked down at the six men who trembled in fear like cicadas during winter, Meng Hao for the first time experienced the strength and respect shown to powerful experts in the Cultivation world. It would be more accurate to say respect and fear. Two years ago, these men had been willing to attack him even though he was of the ninth level of Qi Condensation. But now, each and every one of them was shaking in his boots.

“I want you to tell me everything you know about this place,” said Meng Hao coolly. “If you hide anything from me....” He let his words trail off as his gaze swept over them. They trembled as they saw the remnants of the red glow emanating from his eye.

The glow was filled with a Demonic air, and when they saw it, their pupils shrank reflexively. The sight seemed to have been branded onto their spirits. Their expressions changed; they looked terrified to the extreme and would clearly not hide anything from Meng Hao. They told him everything, even taking out the village’s ancient records and giving them to Meng Hao. They showed him maps, ancestral poison recipes... everything.

Several days later, Meng Hao left the valley region, respectfully sent off by the six Cultivators. His bearing was calm and his face expressionless as he sat cross-legged on an enormous green leaf, which transformed into a multicolored beam and shot toward the Southern Domain.

After he left, the six Cultivators relaxed a bit. As for the man who had died, they had long since chosen to forget that. They did not have the slightest shred of a desire to seek vengeance. They simply gazed off in the direction Meng Hao had taken and hoped he would never return.

A few more days passed. It was late at night in the deep valley; there, in a region impossible to see, was the mouth of an ancient cave. Everything was calm.

Within the cave was a red rope, as well as several spirits who looked like seven- or eight-year-old children, squatting there, about twenty-five hundred meters into the cave. Occasionally they would let out a howl or two.

The rope went down into a hole that seemed endless. It stretched down into the earth, deeper and deeper. Soon, a woman's head could be seen, pierced by the rope. Her face was pure white, her eyes open, gazing frustratedly at the darkness.

Past the head, the hole continued to stretch down, along with the red rope.

Thirty thousand meters, three hundred thousand meters, one million five hundred thousand meters.... There, it began to smell like the sea. In fact, at this point, seawater could be seen. The rope sank into the seawater, continuing on, seemingly without end.

If someone could see that far down, three million meters, they would be gazing upon... a pitch black sea. The rope stretched on into the sea depths to this area; it was impossible to tell exactly how far the sea and the rope stretched. Up ahead was a stone formation that appeared to be thousands and thousands of meters in diameter.

Massive stone boulders had been erected, ring after ring, layer after layer. In the very center of the stone formation was a wooden coffin, onto the surface of which was attached the red rope.

The distance between this location and the mountain valley is difficult to describe. The rope is simply too long, and not completely straight, either. If someone pulled on it with incredible force, perhaps about one thousand five hundred meters, then maybe you could measure it at approximately three million meters.

It seemed the coffin had been in this location for a very, very long time. At this moment, a scraping sound could be heard. Along with the scraping, the lid of the coffin... slowly began to open. It moved upwards about three inches!

A blackness seeped out of the coffin, spreading out into the seawater....

The name of this sea was... the Milky Way.

This sea existed between two great sub-continents of the world. As the blackness spread out into the sea, a school of a hundred fish, each about the size of a palm, swam quickly through the water. The blackness enveloped them.

Time passed, and the blackness slowly shrank down, then disappeared. The school of a hundred fish had been reduced to bones.... Except for one remaining fish. Swishing its tail, it swam out from within the bones. Its body was pitch black, and growing out of its body were two tentacles. The tentacles swiftly grew longer and longer, until they were nearly three hundred meters in length. As it swam upwards through the water, the tentacles writhed, making the fish look terrifying.

It moved upward rapidly, as fast as lightning. As it raced upwards, the Milky Way Sea around it began to churn and roar. Suddenly, it broke through the surface, soaring up into the night sky.

The instant it left the sea, a tremor ran through its body. In the blink of an eye, its body expanded, and its appearance changed. Soon it was thirty meters long, three hundred, three thousand, thirty thousand!

Within the space of a few breaths, it had grown to nearly three hundred thousand meters in length. It was now no longer a fish, but a bird. It appeared to be an enormous roc!

An aura of death roiled off of the roc's body. It seemed ancient, as if it had just awoken from a deep slumber. Its life force was not strong, and its eyes were dim. It seemed as if its life might flicker out at any moment.

“Rebirth....” The resonant voice sprang out from the roc's mouth as it flapped its wings and began flying in the direction of the Southern Domain.

Despite its enormous speed, if it wanted to leave the Milky Way Sea and reach the Southern domain, it would need to fly for more than half a year.

Meanwhile, Meng Hao sped along through the sky, sitting cross-legged on the enormous green leaf. Black clouds roiled above him, and lightning crashed down all around him, along with pouring rain.

However, the rain didn't touch Meng Hao. The leaf emitted a glowing shield which blocked the rainwater. Meng Hao shot through the stormy night, occasionally illuminated by the flashes of lightning.

He lowered his head to look at the jade slip he held in his hand, a look of deep thoughtfulness in his eyes.

“According to the legends, that cave in the valley leads to the Milky Way Sea... The villagers have been watching over that area since ancient times, and every full moon, they pull on that rope. Every time they do, they get rewards of some sort. The whole thing seems a little fishy.” He turned his head, and his eyes glittered as he looked out through the thunderstorm toward the location of the mountain valley. Bits and pieces of some larger story seemed to be coming together. He put the jade slip back into a bag of holding, within which were a large assortment of bottles and jars. They contained various formulas refined by old man toad and the others, as well as a collection of poison pills created by their Clan.

They had given these gifts in tribute to Meng Hao, as well as a handful of jade slips.

Most of the poisons would be deadly to someone of the Qi Condensation stage, but would have less of an effect on someone at Foundation Establishment. However, there were a few that were special. For example, one was called Delight Pill. It would turn into a mist that, when inhaled, would cause the victim to have sexual hallucinations.

He glanced over the various poison pills, and then retrieved another jade slip. This jade slip contained maps of the area. He noticed one area which would take about half a year to travel to, that contained a teleportation portal.

The teleportation portal was controlled by a Clan of Cultivators, and was the only one in the area. Using it would allow him to teleport to the Southern Domain, which would cut a huge amount of time off of his journey there. After teleporting into the Southern Domain, he would be only about a half month’s travel from the border of the State of Eastern Emergence, one of the Nine States of the Southern Domain.

“The Nine States of the Southern Domain form the center of the Southern Domain. Nine flourishing mortal nations, each one of them much larger than the State of Zhao. With such a huge amount of mortals, the resources available are even greater and thus, the rise of the illustrious Sects and Clans of the Southern Domain.

“Five great Clans and three great Sects. Each exists in its respective nation. As for the ninth nation, its proximity to the Western Desert caused it to become a flourishing trading hub. Eventually, it came to be called the Black Lands.” Meng Hao put the jade slip away. There wasn’t much information. However, it corroborated what he’d learned back in the Reliance Sect. As of now, he could visualize a rough outline of the Southern Domain, although it wasn’t very detailed.

“Once I get to the Southern Domain, I’ll have to acquire a better map, then I’ll understand things better.” He looked up at the rain and lightning, his eyes glowing brightly.

“I have a lot of acquaintances in the Southern Domain; Elder Sister Xu, Elder Brother Chen, Fatty and... Wang Tengfei!” A smile appeared on his face, a smile filled with stubbornness.

“It’s been many years. Meng Hao is coming!”

Several months later, in an endless strip of barren mountains, atop a tall mountain peak, a thunderous boom rang out. It was a beautiful mountain, dotted with various stockade villages. The mountain peak was connected to surrounding mountains by long iron chains, which seemed to form a huge spell formation.

In the sky above, two people were locked in magical combat. Below, crowds of people looked up in awe.

One of the combatants was a burly man who appeared to be over thirty years of age. Bare-chested, a golden-colored centipede was wrapped around his right hand. His left hand flickered in an incantation, and a gigantic sail appeared. It rippled in the wind, emitting a piercing shrieking sound. The other person was Meng Hao.

He was not using the Lightning Flag, nor had the wooden swords appeared. A simple flying sword circled around him which he used to attack. At the same time, he flashed an incantation gesture, and a howling Flame Python flew forth, over sixty meters in length. Next, multiple spinning Wind Blades appeared, amazing the onlookers.

A massive boom echoed out, and the two of them each shot backward. The burly man laughed and clasped his hands in respect toward Meng Hao.

“Brother Meng, your Cultivation base is extraordinary. I, Shan, truly admire you.”

Meng Hao lifted his hand. The flying sword returned to circle around him. He smiled, and returned the salute.

“Brother Shan is being modest. You only attacked with eighty percent of your power, but I had to use all of my power to defend. I am the one to be doing the admiring.” The words seemed casual, but when he heard them, the burly man’s heart shook.

Two days ago, Meng Hao had arrived here and had asked about being able to use their teleportation portal. This place was unlike the mountain valley Meng Hao had just come from. The chiefs of the stockade villages in the area were all Foundation Establishment Cultivators. They welcomed Meng Hao enthusiastically, treating him to a feast and exchanging tips about Cultivation with him. In order to prove the extent of his power, he had agreed to a sparring match with one of the Foundation Establishment Cultivators.

“Brother Meng is the one being modest. You attacked casually, and not with your full strength. I’m really curious how much of your power you used?” The man’s eyes shined; the sparring match had been his idea. But as it had proceeded, he had grown more and more apprehensive. Both of them were at the Foundation Establishment stage, but it seemed as if his opponent were only using about half of his power. Furthermore, Meng Hao had been able to tell how much power he was using.

“When might I be able to use your teleportation portal?” said Meng Hao, sidestepping the question. He smiled, although the smile didn’t touch his eyes. He had actually not even used a third of his full strength.

“Oh, that’s simple. You can use it today.” The burly man nodded, muttering to himself.

Soon after, the spell formation within the mountains activated, and Meng Hao’s body disappeared. As the glow faded, the burly man surnamed Shan frowned.

Next to him were two men of the ninth level of Qi condensation. As Meng Hao disappeared, one of them said, “Chief, that guy...”

“I’m not sure where he came from,” said the burly man, his voice deep. “His magic is strange, as is his Foundation Establishment Cultivation base. I felt him out with some attacks and could tell that he’s an experienced fighter. He came here alone, but seemed completely at ease. He must have some unique and special techniques. Yeah, it’s not worth it to provoke him.”

When he had attempted to feel out Meng Hao, he had failed. Meng Hao kept his power sealed up tight. This caused the man’s fear and suspicion to grow stronger. The teleportation portal couldn’t be used by just anyone; if your power is not sufficient, it could take your life, which happened occasionally. Therefore, he let Meng Hao use the portal, to ensure that no calamity befell his village.

Chapter 105: Poison Blossoms in the Right Eye

There is a wide plain on the border of the State of Eastern Emergence, in the center of the Southern Domain. There, the glow of a teleportation spell appeared, then faded. Outside of the teleportation portal, seven or eight Cultivators of the Qi Condensation stage sat cross-legged. They stood up as Meng Hao appeared, saluting him with clasped hands.

These Cultivators were posted here to defend the teleportation portal and to receive visitors to the village. When Meng Hao appeared and they sensed the deepness of his Cultivation base, their respect for him grew even greater.

Meng Hao walked out of the teleportation portal. His eyes swept over the Cultivators, then flickered up to the sky above the wide plain. Everything looked unfamiliar. He glanced back at the portal spell, marveling at the range of its teleportation.

Ignoring the surrounding Cultivators, Meng Hao shot up into the sky. He did not use a flying sword or the enormous green leaf or the treasured fan, but rather his Cultivation base. His body transformed into a prismatic beam of light as he disappeared into the distance.

The seven or eight Cultivators watched as he left, their veneration for him growing.

“I wonder if I’ll ever be able to become a powerful Foundation Establishment expert....”

“Stop dreaming. Even if you did reach Foundation Establishment, at the very best you would have a Fractured Foundation. People like us can only imagine what it would be like. Only people groomed by the great Sects have a chance to get a Foundation Establishment Pill. And even amongst the great Sects, the numbers who do are few. Most people go their whole lives without even touching one.”

“Even with a Foundation Establishment Pill, people with latent talent like ours would only have a tiny chance of succeeding. Ah, the Foundation Establishment stage... that is true power!” The Cultivators sighed. Being assigned to guard duty in this location, they rarely had a chance to see Foundation Establishment Cultivators. Seeing Meng Hao had filled their hearts with admiration and envy.

Days passed, and the entire time, Meng Hao did not use any flight-bestowing treasures, even though it forced him to waste a bit of spiritual power. He was as cautious as ever; this was the center of the Southern Domain, and he knew he had to be especially careful.

He had offended too many people from here; the Violet Fate Sect, obviously, as well as Eccentric Song and Wang Tengfei. Time passed, and soon he neared the State of Eastern Emergence. The closer he got, the more cautious he grew.

During the past months, he had attempted to use the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex almost every day. However, no matter what he did, he wasn't able to gain the enlightenment he needed. Everything seemed a blur.

Ten days after leaving the teleportation portal, Meng Hao was flying along, when suddenly his expression changed. His body trembled, and he fell out of the sky, his face pale. He hit the ground running, making a beeline for a nearby forest. He waved his hand toward a tree up ahead that was large enough for three people to encircle with their arms. The tree cracked open, sending splinters of wood out into the air. Meng Hao leaped into the fissure, immediately sitting down cross-legged. His face was turning a deep purple color, and his body was trembling. He spat out the Lightning Flag, which immediately transformed into a protective lightning mist.

He coughed up a mouthful of blood as he attempted to take control of the poison that was flaring up within him.

This time, the flareup lasted for three days. The entire time, Meng Hao sat there, his jaw clenched tight. The pain of the poison within his body felt like insects ripping his insides apart. His eyes were blood red and savage, and would have shocked anyone who could see it. Suddenly, in the pupil of his right eye appeared a demonic face that seemed to be laughing and crying at the same time. Somehow, it also had the appearance of a blossoming flower.

Meng Hao was aware of this. More than ever, he desired to dispel the poison.

On evening of the third day, a vicious wolf wandered into the area and caught the scent of blood. It eyed the cavity in the tree where Meng Hao sat, and then shot forward. Just as it was about to reach the tree, a hand shot out from within, latching onto the wolf's neck. It squeezed.

A cracking sound could be heard. The wolf didn't even have a chance to cry out before it died. It twitched for a moment and then went still. His face pale, Meng Hao emerged from the tree. His eyes glittered, shining with an intense killing aura. Every time the poison flared up, he had a stronger desire to kill. The flickering, laughing-crying demonic face in his eye seemed to be having a strange effect on all of the Qi in his body.

Meng Hao looked down at the dead wolf he held. He flicked his hand, and the body was consumed with flames. Ash drifted out from Meng Hao's hand. The fire flickered on his face. He looked much less a scholar now, and much more a vicious Cultivator.

“In the past two years, the poison has flared up nine times. But this time was different. Why did a demonic face appear within my right eye...?” He reached up and felt his right eye. The demonic face slowly faded away. Meng Hao experimentally circulated his Cultivation base. When he did, the demonic face appeared again. His body transformed into a shining beam of light as he continued on toward the State of Eastern Emergence.

It was a large nation, about ten times larger than the State of Zhao, filled with Cultivators and Sects. The largest of the Sects was the Violet Fate Sect, which acted as the leader of the other Sects.

You could definitely say that the State of Eastern Emergence was the base of operations for the Violet Fate Sect.

Meng Hao knew this, but had no other options. Going around the nation would involve traveling a huge distance. He wanted to get the State of Blue Clouds, where the Black Sieve Sect was, a location actually closer to where the State of Zhao had been, but which was on the other side of the State of Eastern Emergence.

Fortunately, the State of Eastern Emergence was huge, so if he was careful, it shouldn't be difficult to hide. It wasn't like the State of Zhao, which was small enough to make searching for people easy. Furthermore, he was no longer of the Qi Condensation stage. Now that he was of the Foundation Establishment stage, he could protect himself much more easily. His decision made, he entered the State of Eastern Emergence.

“If I keep going on in this direction, there is a city of Cultivators.” Meng Hao flew through the air, passing through the border. He wore a long, black robe and a wide bamboo hat. His eyes flickered about as he surveyed the lands of the State of Eastern Emergence. There were few mountains, mostly wide plains. There were cities of mortals scattered about everywhere, connected by trade routes that were filled with horse carts.

The hustle and bustle was far greater than that in the State of Zhao. As he flew through they air, other Foundation Establishment Cultivators flew past him, going in different directions. That was something which would be a rare sight in the State of Zhao.

There were also many Qi Condensation Cultivators. You could say that the spiritual energy throughout the State of Eastern Emergence was greater than that of some of the famous mountains

within the State of Zhao. In fact, there were some places where the spiritual energy was so dense that it made Meng Hao apprehensive.

Several days later, Meng Hao finally saw a majestic city rising up in front of him on the horizon!

It would take a mortal many hours to travel fifty kilometers, but Meng Hao arrived at the city gate in less time than it takes an incense stick to burn.

It was currently dusk, and as the sun set over the city, it looked like a gigantic coiling dragon, its head lifted up to look at the heavens.

As he approached the city, he felt a pressure pushing him down from the sky. He landed on the ground and proceeded forward on foot, lifting his head up to gaze at the city. Even though he had seen cities before, this sight moved him. There were other Cultivators around him, some alone, some in groups of four or five.

Above, the sky was completely clear. There was a restrictive spell in place overhead that prevented flight, and the only thing that could be seen was its colorful glow. It made everything seem celestial in nature.

The gate was guarded by Cultivators of the eighth level of Qi Condensation. There were also guards on top of the city walls, and Meng Hao could see that they were of the ninth level of Qi Condensation, on the threshold of reaching Foundation Establishment.

“This is a great city of Cultivators of the Southern Domain...” As he contemplated, Meng Hao began to more fully understand the power the Violet Fate Sect wielded in this great nation.

Meng Hao looked ahead and noticed that as people entered the city gates, they paid a tax of Spirit Stones. Just as he was about to do the same, a whistling scream could be heard approaching in the air.

The sound was very sudden, causing all the Cultivators in the area to lift their heads. Off in the distance, a beam of light shot toward the city.

It was violet-colored, and roughly thirty meters wide. It approached like a screaming, shooting star. In its midst was a middle-aged man wearing a splendid garment. His face was expressionless, and

he flew toward the city center as if the restrictive spell emanating from within meant nothing to him.

The pressure exuded by his body sent looks of shock to appear on the faces of the Cultivators on the ground. A wind kicked up, turning into a whirlwind, which swept across the land.

“A Core Formation eccentric. Only people like that can ignore the city’s restrictive spell and fly.”

“Keep your voice down. That’s Reverend Bi Hong of the Violet Fate Sect. They say that years ago, someone from the Cloud Resemblance Sect was disrespectful to him, so he slaughtered the entire Sect. He’s cruel and ruthless.”

The buzz of conversation slowly died out. Meng Hao looked off into the distance, his expression calm, but his heart pounding. Lowering his head, he entered the city.

The largest city of Cultivators he’d ever been in before was Milky Way City in the State of Zhao. Entering this great city in the State of Eastern Emergence, he felt as if his world-view had suddenly expanded. Items used in Cultivation were available everywhere, and tall buildings rose up as far as the eye could see. Qi Condensation and Foundation Establishment Cultivators bustled about, and Meng Hao even caught sight of two Core Formation Cultivators like the Reverend Bi Hong from moments ago.

Meng Hao was the only person wearing a wide bamboo hat, which actually caused many people to turn and look at him. He hesitated a moment before ducking into a random shop. When he came out, the hat was gone. His expression was calm as he walked past several more shops, and then began to walk through some snaking alleys. Suddenly, his body shot backward thirty meters, and his hand shot out like lightning. It came to rest on the neck of a boy of about fifteen or sixteen years of age. Meng Hao lifted him up and pressed him against the wall.

The boy’s Cultivation base was not very high, it was at about the sixth level of Qi Condensation. His body was bony, but his eyes seemed to be filled with wit and cunning. His face twisted as Meng Hao lifted him up. The boy knew that by exerting just a bit of spiritual power, Meng Hao could turn him into ash.

“Why are you following me? I’ll give you one sentence to explain yourself.” Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he held the trembling youth. The young man looked at his black robe and loose, long hair, and it seemed as if death itself were hovering in front of him.

Chapter 106: The Day the Resurrection Lily Blooms in Seven Colors

“Senior, I can help you find the things you need in the city,” blurted the young man hurriedly. He was nervous, and fear shone in his eyes. He believed what Meng Hao had just said. He knew he would only have one chance to explain himself clearly, otherwise, he would be exterminated. It wouldn’t matter that they were within the city limits.

Meng Hao gave the young man a look. He didn’t say anything, but the young man was clever, and picked up on Meng Hao’s intention. He continued speaking.

“I’m Qiu Lin of the junior generation,” he said, the words pouring out, his heart pounding. “I was born here in Eastern Greatness City, so I know the place well. I noticed you when you entered the city; I can tell that it’s your first time here. You need someone who knows their way around to help you find what you’re looking for. I’d like to offer my services.

“Senior, for only fifty Spirit Stones, you can save yourself a lot of time. I can help you find what you need much faster.” He looked nervously at Meng Hao. He wasn’t lying; everything he’d said was the truth.

He had done this type of thing before, but this was the first time he had encountered someone like Meng Hao, who exuded such a deadly air.

Meng Hao looked over him coldly and then slowly loosened his grip. He frowned; the more the poison flared up, the stronger his killing intent seemed to grow. It seemed to be slowly affecting his personality.

Qiu Lin took in a deep breath and then said, “What is it you seek to buy, sir?”

“Poison pills,” replied Meng Hao coolly.

“Poison pills?” Qiu Lin stared in surprise. He thought for a long moment, and then his eyes glittered and he went on to provide a vivid description of this aspect of the city.

“Senior, there are not many shops in the city that specifically sell poison pills. But, poison pills are still medicinal pills, and there are lots of shops in the city that sell medicinal pills. There are two shops that could be considered the best. One of them, called the Ten Thousand Pills Pavilion, has the most variety of pills. It’s very famous, and when they have auctions, even Foundation Establishment Cultivators will attend.

“There’s another shop that’s a bit smaller, but they conduct trade with the Western Desert, so they have a lot of imported items. They say the apothecary there used to work with Grandmaster Pill Demon of the Violet Fate Sect. He was some kind of boy genius when it came to medicines.

“Which place would you like to go to, sir?”

Meng Hao thought for a moment, then said, “The Ten Thousand Pills Pavilion.” Qiu Lin nodded and led the way off. Having his help really did save Meng Hao quite a bit of time. They walked quickly through the city, and within about an hour, arrived at a seven-story pavilion. A huge stone stele had been erected next to it, upon which were written the characters ‘Ten Thousand Pills Pavilion.’

“I can’t really go inside,” said Qiu Lin. “I’ll wait out here for you, sir.” Looking around, Meng Hao noticed that there were quite a few disciples of the fifth or sixth level of Qi Condensation milling about.

With a slight nod of his head, he entered the seven-story building. As for Meng Hao, he had cast a bit of Spiritual Sense onto him, to ensure that he didn’t try anything funny.

Now that he was of the Foundation Establishment stage, he was becoming much more familiar with the usages of Spiritual Sense.

In the Ten Thousand Pills Pavilion, Qi Condensation Cultivators were restricted to the first floor. The second and third floors were for Foundation Establishment; Core Formation was the requirement to enter the fourth floor. Meng Hao walked around a bit, frowning as he glanced over the various medicinal pills.

Enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, and he left. Qiu Lin immediately stepped forward.

“Let’s go to the second place you mentioned,” said Meng Hao, continuing to frown. Qiu Lin was clever, so he didn’t ask any questions. He immediately led Meng Hao away. It was nearing evening when they finally arrived in a relatively remote part of the city, to a shop that seemed to have been there since ancient times.

“This place is small, and it has three rules,” Qiu Lin told Meng Hao. “The first rule is that you can’t enter unless you put up a deposit of fifty thousand Spirit Stones. The deposit is non-refundable, whether or not you buy anything.

“The second rule is that only one person at a time may enter. Everyone else must wait outside. Furthermore, only twenty people are allowed in each day. Once twenty people have entered, others must wait until the following day.

“The third rule is that once inside, random questions are not allowed. Every question asked must be accompanied with a payment of Spirit Stones.”

Meng Hao stared in surprise for a moment, before understanding showed in his eyes. He walked forward. He hated to lose Spirit Stones, but if it led to being able to dispel the poison, then it would be worth it.

The door of the shop was closed. On it hung a plaque with the number 18 written on it.

Meng Hao settled his Qi and calmed his mind, then stood there quietly. Qiu Lin stood next to him. Finally, when the sun was about to drop over the horizon, the door creaked open and a middle-aged man walked out. A frown was on his face, and he didn’t even look at Meng Hao and Qiu Lin. He walked out, turned, and then clasped hands and bowed to the old man who had shown him out.

When he saw the middle-aged man, Meng Hao’s eyes narrowed and he lowered his head. He had seen this man before. It was none other than Reverend Bi Hong, whom he had seen flying through the sky earlier in the day.

The old man who stood in the shop door was of the late Foundation Establishment stage. For a Core Formation eccentric to salute him in such a manner was very unusual.

Reverend Bi Hong turned and then transformed into a colorful beam of light that shot off into the air. A screaming whistle echoed out, after which the old man in the shop looked at Meng Hao.

Without hesitation, Meng Hao produced a bag of holding, inside of which were fifty thousand spirit stones. He respectfully handed it over.

The old man accepted it with a slight nod, then turned and entered the shop. Meng Hao followed him, glancing back as the door closed behind him. The number on the plaque changed from 18 to 19.

The shop wasn't very large. There were no shelves. Instead, there were seven pill furnaces of various sizes, two long tables, and an oil lamp. The light was relatively dim, although to Cultivators, this didn't matter; they could see everything clearly.

"How can I help you?" said the old man coolly, sitting cross-legged behind one of the long tables.

Meng Hao said nothing, instead slapping his bag of holding to produce a jade vial. He pushed it across the table toward the old man.

The old man picked it up and opened it, then gazed at it closely. He lowered his head and sniffed it, then tipped it over. Blood flowed out onto the surface of the table.

The jade vial contained a sizeable amount of blood, which Meng Hao had extracted from his body.

"Interesting," said the old man, his voice low. He stared at the blood on the table. He lifted his hand, and a long, silver needle appeared. He dragged it through the blood, and immediately, the needle began to glow. Then, in the blink of an eye, it began to melt with rot. In an instant, it had turned into bits of ash, which floated out in the air.

The old man's eyes glistened. He smacked the table with his left hand, causing the blood to fly up into the air, where it congealed into a globule. He then smacked his bag of holding, and a withered seed appeared. He flicked his finger, and the seed merged into the globule of blood.

The blood instantly began to contract, and soon was gone. The seed was no longer withered, but rather, plump and nearly bursting. As it floated in the air, it slowly began to sprout.

Meng Hao watched with rapt attention as all of this happened, growing more and more nervous. He had spent a lot of Spirit Stones, all to attempt to dispel the poison.

The seed sprouted, forming into a long branch, upon which a single leaf grew. The leaf eventually grew into a flower. As soon as the flower appeared, the old man's face went pale. Meng Hao's eyes narrowed.

The petals of the flower were three different colors: yellow, blue and red, interlocking with each other. The flower itself had the appearance of a demonic face that was laughing and crying at the same time. The demonic-face-flower floated there in the air, seemingly alive. It was extremely bizarre.

“A three-colored Resurrection Lily...” said the old man in a hoarse voice [1. The name Resurrection Lily is based on a real plant, although I doubt its appearance in real life is anything like how it’s supposed to look in ISSTH]. He stared at the flower, his eyes shining.

“When this poison flares up three times, it forms a complete cycle. After three cycles, the flower will bloom. After it blooms, a demonic face that seems to be both laughing and crying will appear in your right eye. It will come and go depending on your usage of your Cultivation base. If you circulate your Cultivation base for a long time, it will grow more clear. At this stage, the poison will not injure you, and in fact will protect you from all manner of other poisons. However, your desire to kill will grow stronger.

“After three more cycles, the flower will bloom again, and when the poison flares up, another demonic face will appear in your left eye. At this point, your desire to kill will be even stronger. You will become incredibly bloodthirsty. At this point, not only will you be immune to a vast array of poisons, you will begin to emanate a poisoned miasma. Your flesh will become incredibly tough, and you will be more resilient than the average Cultivator.

“However, you will find that your body is also becoming more and more stiff. Your agility will be reduced, and your life force will slowly become dim. You will often be surrounded by a death aura.

“After this, the flower will bloom a third time,” said the man, his voice filled with profundity.

“Your... your mind will be lost, your life will be gone. Your body will transform into a three-colored Resurrection Lily. The person who planted the seed in you will come to pick the flower. Sometime after the transformation, you will turn into a four-colored Resurrection Lily.

“Mortal, Qi Condensation, Foundation Establishment, Core Formation, Nascent Soul, Spirit Severing, Dao Seeking. Seven stages, seven colors, one for each stage. Eventually, the Resurrection Lily will bloom in seven colors, the flower descends, Immortal Ascension, one thousand years.

“In ancient times, Cultivators used this flower in order to achieve Immortal Ascension.” The old man gazed at Meng Hao.

Hearing the man's word caused him to shiver, not from cold, but from fear. He frowned as he thought about everything the man had said regarding the poison.

“Fellow Daoist, please, don't joke with me. I have ordinary latent talent, and no special treasures that people are pursuing. It wouldn't be worth it for an enemy to plot against me with such a rare flower.”

The old man looked at him with a smile, but said nothing.

Meng Hao was silent for a moment, then produced another bag of holding which he placed down in front of the old man. The man nodded.

“Young friend, what you said is both correct and incorrect,” said the old man slowly. “This three-colored Resurrect Flower is not complete; it's defective. It won't bloom past three colors. Otherwise, no one in the world would be able to dispel it for you.

“How can I dispel it?” When the man didn't respond, Meng Hao threw over another bag of holding.

Meanwhile outside the shop, the stars and moon had appeared in the evening sky and lanterns were being lit throughout the city. A woman appeared in the distance, dressed in a long, sleeveless white garment.

She was incredibly beautiful. Graceful and slender, her appearance underneath the moonlight was like that of a celestial being. She looked cool, calm and very refined. Her appearance was beyond ordinary in every aspect. As the lamplight filled the city, she walked up to the shop. When she saw the number 19 on the plaque on the door, a slight smile appeared on her face that caused Qiu Lin's heart to race.

Meng Hao himself had seen this woman before, in the Reliance Sect. She had accompanied Wang Tengfei when he left the sect. This was ... Wang Tengfei's fiancé.

Chu Yuyan.

Chapter 107: Spring and Autumn tree

“There are three methods to deal with this poison,” said the old man, collecting the bag of holding. “The third method is to simply alleviate the pain caused by the poison. There are three types of Spirit Fruit that you can eat which will have this effect.

“A second method can be used to suppress the effects of the poison and also reduce the frequency of the flareups. For this, you need a Spring and Autumn tree. One tree can suppress the poison for one year. By the way, this type of tree is actually capable of doing more than just suppressing a vast variety of poisons. It’s very rare, but not impossible to acquire. The only down side is that using it will cause the poisoning will deepen. Also that the rebound effect is severe; if the time comes when you cannot suppress the poison any more, it will erupt violently, and you will be unable to dispel it.

“As for completely eliminating the poison, and this is the first method, it’s actually quite simple. Find someone of the senior generation who is in the Spirit Severing stage. They can easily eliminate the poison for you using the power of the Spirit Severing stage.

“Very well, seeing how readily you spend such quantities of Spirit Stones, I might as well tell you of a fourth method. If you somehow have the good fortune to acquire a Poison Dispelling Pill personally concocted by Grandmaster Pill Demon, then you could use it to completely eliminate the poison.

“However,” said the old man calmly, “Grandmaster Pill Demon holds a lofty position in the Violet Fate Sect. It would be very difficult.”

Meng Hao thought for a moment, then without another word, pulled out another bag of holding. He cared a lot about Spirit Stones, but they were simple material possessions which could not compare to the value of his own life.

The old man accepted the bag of holding, eyes glittering, and a smile appeared on his face.

“I know what question you’re going to ask.”

“Where can I buy it!” asked Meng Hao coldly, his expression grim.

“There’s no way for outsiders to know about this, yet. But considering my status, I’m special, so I happen to have heard the news. In a month, a trading caravan from the Western Desert will arrive here. When they do, the Hundred Treasures Pavilion will host an auction. One of the items they will be selling is Spring and Autumn tree.

“Hundred Treasures Pavilion?” Meng Hao’s eyes flashed as he thought back to the Hundred Treasures Pavilion in Eastern Refinement City in the State of Zhao.

Meng Hao stood, and with a last glance at the old man, turned and walked to the door. When he opened it, the first thing he saw was a refined, beautiful woman. Their eyes met for a brief moment.

“Middle Foundation Establishment stage!” thought Meng Hao. His face showed nothing as he walked forward. The woman in white’s expression was normal. As Meng Hao left, she walked into the shop. As she did, her brow furrowed slightly, and she looked back at Qiu Lin and Meng Hao as they walked off.

“He seems familiar, but I can’t remember where I’ve seen him before.” Chu Yuyan didn’t pay much more attention to it. The year she had seen Meng Hao on the top of the East Mountain of the Reliance Sect, he had only been at the sixth level of Qi Condensation. Even though he had snatched away Wang Tengfei’s chance at joining the Inner Sect, Chu Yuyan hadn’t paid much attention to him at all. Six years had passed since then, and she had long since forgotten about him.

She had forgotten Meng Hao, but he hadn’t forgotten her!

Meng Hao couldn’t possibly forget the middle-aged Dao Protector who had stood there that night. Neither could he forget the woman who had seemed to be on such intimate terms with Wang Tengfei.

“That was definitely her....” Meng Hao walked faster, his expression cold, but his thoughts racing. Based on her reaction, she hadn’t recognized him. In any case, he had changed a lot recently, especially in terms of his Cultivation base. It would be difficult for anyone to connect the current Meng Hao with the old one.

“I was a nobody back then. She seemed so close with Wang Tengfei; she must be the disciple of a great Sect. I wouldn’t have made any sort of impression on her. But her Cultivation base is in the middle of the Foundation Establishment stage. I wonder... I wonder what Wang Tengfei’s Cultivation base is like nowadays?” He thought back to everything that had happened that year, and barely perceptible cold smile appeared on his face.

Qiu Lin walked beside him, looking thoughtful. He looked back, and then suddenly stopped walking.

“Now I know! That was Chu Yuyan!” he said.

“Chu Yuyan?” asked Meng Hao, his expression flickering as he looked back at Qiu Lin. “You mean the woman back there?”

“Yeah,” said Qiu Lin excitedly. “She’s a Chosen from the Violet Fate Sect, and also one of the Four Great Beauties of the Southern Domain. That was definitely her!”

“Oh?” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered.

“According to the rumors,” gushed Qiu Lin, “when she was born, a celestial lotus bloomed. Her latent talent is incredible, and her beauty is extraordinary. She was taken in by Grandmaster Pill Demon as a personal apprentice! Her beloved, Wang Tengfei, is a Chosen from the great Wang Clan. The year they got engaged, the entire Southern Domain was talking about it.” He might be well-informed about the affairs within the Southern Domain, but as he spoke, he didn’t notice the look which appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes.

They continued on, and Qiu Lin proceeded to talk about various matters related to Chu Yuyan. At Meng Hao’s request, he led him to an inn in a far corner of the city. Meng Hao asked him a few questions regarding the auction and then paid the Spirit Stones he owed. By the time Qiu Lin left, it was late at night.

Meng Hao sat cross-legged in his room in the inn, his eyes twinkling. His mind was filled with the various things Qiu Lin had told him about Chu Yuyan. Enough time passed for two incense sticks to burn. He frowned.

“I wonder if there is some way to use Chu Yuyan to get Grandmaster Pill Demon to make me a Poison-Dispelling Pill...” When he thought about Grandmaster Pill Demon, he couldn’t help but think about Ding Xin’s Foundation Establishment Pill.

“Ding Xin was also an apprentice of Grandmaster Pill Demon...” Meng Hao laughed bitterly. He had killed the man’s apprentice, and also offended the Violet Fate Sect. Dispelling the poison in that way would be very difficult.

After a while, he began to meditate. Meng Hao had found that after reaching Foundation Establishment, he needed larger amounts of spiritual energy, much more so than he’d needed in the Qi Condensation stage. In order to reach the middle of the Foundation Establishment stage, he would need to form four Dao Pillars.

“Right now I only have one Dao Pillar. Because of the crack on the Dao Pillar, I have a Flawless Foundation. Plus, I established my Foundation after reaching the thirteenth level of Qi Condensation. Furthermore, my Cultivation is based on the Sublime Spirit Scripture, making my Dao Pillar gold colored. My enlightenment is deeper, and I have much more Spiritual Sense. I don’t think that many people in the early stage of Foundation Establishment would be my match.

“I’ve never fought someone of the middle stage of Foundation Establishment, so I’m not sure, but I think I could hold my own.” His eyes shone as he thought of his match with the burly man surnamed Shan. At that time, he had come to have a much better understanding of the power of his Flawless Foundation. When the time came to form his second Dao Pillar, he would be prepared.

“I need some medicinal pills suitable for the early Foundation Establishment stage,” he said, taking a deep breath. He closed his eyes and spit out the Lightning Flag. A field of lightning mist sprang up, within which arcs of electricity sparkled. If anyone tried to make a move against him, they would immediately shoot out to protect him.

Within the mist, Meng Hao once again attempted to use the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex, and once again failed. However, with each of his failed attempts, he seemed to grow closer to enlightenment.

The night passed uneventfully. As dawn broke the next morning, Meng Hao opened his eyes. He left the inn to explore this city of Cultivators in the State of Eastern Emergence. He wanted to find some medicinal pills suitable for Foundation Establishment, and hopefully learn something about the Spring and Autumn tree.

Half a month passed, during which time he explored almost all of the shops in the city. This place was filled with an incredible variety of medicinal pills and magical items. However, the prices were very high. After considering his options for a long time, Meng Hao purchased a common medicinal pill which was useful during the Foundation Establishment stage.

This pill was called Massed Establishment Pill, and was suitable for the early Foundation Establishment stage.

“There are quite a bit of pills that are suitable for the Foundation Establishment stage, but it seems that their efficacy is just ordinary. The really high-quality medicinal pills are exclusively available from various Sects. It’s hard for outsiders to get their hands on them. The only chance to even see them would be during an auction.”

Another half month passed. Meng Hao had grown much more familiar with the city. At the moment, he sat in the restaurant of his inn, next to a window, looking down at the throngs of people below. In his hand was a cup of alcohol, which he sipped as he thought.

“I’ve consumed far too many medicinal pills over the years. I’ve pushed my Cultivation base with a quantity of pills far exceeding the average person.” He frowned. It’s not that the city didn’t have pills suitable for the Foundation Establishment stage, or that the prices were too high. It was a problem of the five medallions.

In the city there were five types of medallions available that determined who could have the chance to buy certain products. Without one of the medallions, even if you had the money to buy certain items, you couldn’t. That was the rule in the city, and also the way that the Violet Fate Sect could control the distribution of medicinal pills within the nation.

“Five types of medallions. The only way to acquire one is to do some sort of meritorious service. So annoying!” Meng Hao lifted up the cup of alcohol and took another drink. His frown deepened.

“Thankfully I don’t need a medallion to participate in the auction. As long as I have enough Spirit Stones to pay the entrance fee, I can get in.” Meng Hao’s gaze swept the street below. As he muttered to himself, time passed. Soon, the inn’s restaurant began to fill with Cultivators, who chatted and exchanged information.

Qiu Lin had selected a relatively well-known inn for Meng Hao. Here, they only served drinks. In fact, they only served one kind of drink, which was called Savor the Spirit.

The flavor of this alcohol was quite unique; it didn’t burn going down. It was very strong, but was infused with spiritual energy. It wasn’t a lot of spiritual energy, but it was enough to make the alcohol quite expensive.

“I heard that the trade caravan from the Western Desert arrived today. They brought way more people with them than they did in past years. I bet there’s going to be a lot of treasures up for grabs at the Hundred Treasures Pavilion auction.”

“There aren’t as many resources in the Western Desert as there are in the Southern Domain, but they have a lot of very unique material that we really need here. When they show up every few years, they usually bring representatives from around a hundred different merchant groups and a variety of Sects from different nations. The techniques of their Cultivators are very strange. I hope we have a chance to learn something from them.”

“I don’t think so. They’ve obviously brought more people than usual. There has to be a reason for that. I’d say there’s an eighty to ninety percent chance it has something to do with the corpse of that Immortal.” The sound of voices filled the restaurant, and most of them were discussing the auction which was to take place in half a month, and how it related to the arrival of the Western Desert trade caravan.

Meng Hao was getting ready to make his departure. The trade caravan didn’t interest him. However, when he heard mention of the corpse of an Immortal, his eyes flashed, and he sat back down and poured himself another cup of alcohol. He took a drink and continued to listen.

“The Immortal’s corpse... heh heh, it’s been a bloodbath over there recently. Three years ago, the five great Sects and the three great Clans tried to force their way into the area, but were met with failure after failure. They had no choice but to back off.”

“The Immortal’s corpse must have fallen out from the heavens that year because it wanted to enter the Rebirth Cave, one of the Southern Domain’s three Danger Zones. And yet for some reason, it landed about three thousand meters away from it. Actually, it didn’t just provoke a reaction from the five great Sects and three great Clans. The strange things that exist within the Rebirth Cave also have been emerging occasionally.”

“Everyone wants a piece of the Immortal’s body. Even just a bit of it would increase anyone’s hope of achieving Immortal Ascension!” As Meng Hao listened to the buzz of conversation in the restaurant, a strange look appeared in his eyes. He thought back to the time in the State of Zhao when the land had continued to shake over and over again. He had gotten the feeling that something from the Heavens had fallen down to smash into the earth.

“You know what I heard? When the Immortal’s corpse fell down, some people saw it with their own eyes. They said its pupils were gray, and that inside, seven stars glittered!” When Meng Hao heard this, he was just lifting his cup up to take another drink. Suddenly, a tremor ran through his body, and his hand began to tremble, spilling alcohol out all over.

Chapter 108: The Secret Struggle Begins

The restaurant was filled with all sorts of people, so no one noticed Meng Hao’s strange behavior. He slowly put down his cup of alcohol. His expression was as calm as ever, but his heart had suddenly begun pounding, and a roaring sound filled his head.

He silently turned his head to look at the person who had mentioned the seven stars in the eyes of the corpse of the Immortal. Then he lowered his head and took another drink.

“You know what, it’s weird. That Immortal is dead, but it’s body still exudes a powerful pressure which caused all kinds of strange phenomena. The great Sects and Clans could only approach to a distance of three hundred meters.”

“I heard that recently the great Clans and Sects made some special preparations and were able to approach closer than three hundred meters.” The discussions continued until midday, whereupon people began to disperse. The person who had mentioned the seven stars stood up. Chatting and laughing with his companion, he made to leave.

It was at this moment that Meng Hao lightly tapped the table. The tap emitted a roaring boom, which sent a tremor through the bodies of the nearby Cultivators. Their expressions changed as they all turned to look at Meng Hao.

His Cultivation base suddenly emitted the massive pressure of Foundation Establishment, enveloping the restaurant. Then it dissipated. However, in that brief moment, the bodies of the eighth and ninth level Qi Condensation Cultivators trembled. Their faces grew pale, and their hearts flip-flopped as they tried to remember whether or not they had said something to offend this Foundation Establishment expert.

“Elder generation....” One by one, they saluted, their hearts were filled with veneration. They knew that fighting was prohibited within the city limits, so this person wouldn’t attack someone lightly. But to them, the mighty pressure exuded by a Foundation Establishment Cultivator was incredibly powerful, and caused dread to well up inside of them.

“You,” said Meng Hao, pointing at one of the people. “Come here.” It was a young man who looked to be about twenty-seven or twenty-eight years old. He was at the eighth level of Qi Condensation. When Meng Hao pointed at him, his body began to shake and the blood drained from his face.

“Elder generation....” Fear filled his eyes, and confusion his heart. He had never seen Meng Hao before and had no idea how he had attracted his attention. The other Cultivators surrounding him quickly slipped away from the restaurant, letting out sighs of relief in their hearts.

Face expressionless, Meng Hao took another drink. The young man hesitated, not daring to refuse to approach. Reverently and cautiously, he took a few steps forward.

Meng Hao lifted his head and looked at him. “You just said that the corpse of that Immortal had gray eyes, within which were seven stars. Is what you said true?”

“Senior, allow me to explain,” said the young man quickly, not daring to leave anything out. “I didn’t see the matter with my own eyes, I only heard about it. However, I have a good friend who really did observe the whole thing personally.”

“And where exactly is this good friend of yours?” said Meng Hao, his voice low.

“I haven’t seen him for half a year,” he replied quickly, worried Meng Hao would think he was making things up if he took too long to respond. “He’s a Water Bamboo Sect disciple named Xu Yan.”

Meng Hao frowned and nodded, waving his hand dismissively. The young man bowed respectfully, and then left as fast as possible, heaving a sigh of relief. He decided that he would never again return to this place again.

Meng Hao sat there thinking. There weren’t many people left in the restaurant, and all of them were of the Qi Condensation stage. Having seen what just occurred, they all paid their bill and left, one by one. Soon the restaurant was empty.

“Gray pupils with seven stars. Could the corpse of that Immortal and the animated corpse I saw in the whirlpool above the Tower of Tang in the State of Zhao... be one and the same?!” Meng Hao sat there, contemplating the corpse he’d seen and the sense of calamity he’d felt. The more he thought about, the more it seemed that some complicated matters were unfolding behind the scenes.

“If I want to confirm it, I’ll have to see the corpse with my own eyes....” After a while, he returned to his room. The matter of the Immortal’s corpse was now a heavy weight on his heart. He had the sinking sensation that the reason the corpse had fallen to the earth... was he himself.

Meng Hao spent the next half-month trying to gather more information about the corpse of the Immortal. As he did, he slowly came to have a much better understanding of the all the momentous events which had occurred in the past two or three years because of it.

“The year the corpse fell, it immediately aroused the attention of the five great Sects and three great clans of the Southern Domain. One after another, they attempted to reach the corpse, but could never get closer than three thousand meters. Plus, they encountered problems with the strangeness from within the Rebirth Cave.

“They made further attempts, even using various Sect treasures, and were eventually able to get as close as three hundred meters.... The most momentous thing that happened was half a year ago. The Solitary Sword Sect used their Dao Reserve to break past the three hundred meter mark. They were able to get two drops of blood from the corpse!

“One of the drops was purchased by the Violet Fate Sect for an exorbitant price. The other was taken back to the Solitary Sword Sect to be used to gain enlightenment regarding the meaning of Immortality.” Meng Hao sat cross-legged in his room, recording all of the information onto a jade slip. He had come across all this information at the cost of some Spirit Stones.

“There were even some Cultivators from the Great Tang in the Eastern Lands who came to investigate.... People from the Western Desert have also arrived. The corpse came to be called an Immortal’s corpse, and has sent shockwaves throughout the entire Cultivation world.” Meng Hao was quiet for a moment. He put the jade slip away and then left the inn, his eyes glittering.

In the past month, and everyone in this city of Cultivators was talking about the upcoming auction. Meng Hao had already gone to the Hundred Treasures Pavilion to pay his deposit and get his auction medallion.

At the moment, he strode down the street. After passing through a few alleys, his robe became black. He put on his wide bamboo hat and covered his face with a mask. Lately, more and more people dressed in a similar fashion. With the auction just around the corner, there were many people who didn’t want their personal affairs to be made known, and thus went about in disguise.

Soon, Meng Hao reached the area where the auction was to be held. It was a large, circular public square. Numerous restrictive spells could be seen, causing glowing magical symbols to fill the air.

Numerous Cultivators patrolled about on guard duty, ten of whom were at Foundation Establishment stage. Four Cultivators floated cross-legged in the air above the auction stage, their bodies glowing. The pressure they exuded around the area was that of the Core Formation stage.

This was just the guard force that was visible. To organize an auction of this scale would require the support of Nascent Soul Cultivators. A Nascent Soul Cultivator could strike fear into the heart of an entire city. But even in the five great Sects and three great Clans of the Southern Domain, Nascent Soul Cultivators were rare.

Any Nascent Soul Cultivator would be referred to as Patriarch, and would usually spend time in secluded meditation. Usually, Core Formation Cultivators would be the ones to leave the Sect to handle matters.

Most of the people attending the auction were from the State of Eastern Emergence. Also present were Cultivators from surrounding nations, who had traveled here for the sole purpose of participating in the auction. Everyone who entered the auction square had an auction plaque. By the time Meng Hao arrived, there were already several hundred people present. More continued to stream in.

Meng Hao had paid for a seat at the very far edge. He sat down cross-legged in his position, looking coldly at the stage and the square. Above the main square were three levels of private booths, arranged, not for Cultivators with high Cultivation bases, but for Cultivators with high positions.

Looking around at the Cultivators around him, he saw a group who were clearly much taller than everyone else. They wore less clothing, and in fact, many parts of their bodies were encircled with iron hoops. Their skin was dark, and most of them had blue eyes.

Each and every one of them were big and tall, their hair wild. From their strange clothing and iron hoops, it was obvious that they weren't from the Southern Domain. These were Cultivators from the Western Desert.

Time passed, two hours. Soon, when the auction square was filled with nearly a thousand people, the sound of a bell rang out. The bustle and noise died down, and everything grew quiet.

At the same time, a blinding, multi-colored glow appeared in the middle of the auction stage. It expanded out to cover the entire auction square.

As the glow expanded out, a man appeared on the stage, seemingly from nowhere. He was old, and wore a long, expansive robe. His hair was white, and he had an ancient look. He gazed about with gleaming eyes, causing quite a commotion amongst the surrounding Cultivators.

“It's Sir Qiao from the Hundred Treasures Pavilion!”

“So, Sir Qiao is going to personally preside over the auction. He's in the middle of the Core Formation stage. He's not from the Southern Domain. He came here several years ago from the coastal islands in the Milky Way Sea.”

Discussions rippled out, after which the old man on the stage coughed lightly. Then he spoke, his voice filling the entire auction square.

“There shall be one hundred items auctioned today,” he said coolly. “They include medicinal pills, magical items, legacies, precious materials, goods from the Western Desert, treasures of the Southern Domain, and valuables from the Milky Way Sea. I don’t need to waste time stating the rules of the auction. Lot 1 is a thousand-year-old conch shell from the Milky Way Sea!” A woman appeared behind him, seemingly out of nowhere. She was lithe and beautiful, and had an air of extreme confidence. She carried a jade tray, upon which was a black conch shell, about the size of a hand.

The conch shell was covered with numerous lines, which ran and interlocked randomly across its surface. It glimmered as if it contained secrets of the Heavens and the Dao. As soon as it appeared, a mysterious, celestial sound filled the air in the auction square.

“This treasure is a thousand years old, and emits a celestial sound,” said Sir Qiao. The auction square went quiet. “The veins that run through the shell are magical in nature. By imbuing them with Spiritual Sense for three days, you can add half of a sixty-year-cycle to your longevity. There is no reserve price for this item.” As soon as he finished talking, the auction square erupted with conversations.

A treasure that could increase longevity could cause quite a sensation, and even fighting. Even many of the people in the private booths were shocked. It seemed this day’s auction would be quite an affair.

Even though he was far away from the auction stage, Meng Hao’s attention was focused on the composed young woman. An expression of shock covered his face as he realized he recognized her. This was the woman who had flirted with him in the Hundred Treasures Pavilion in Eastern Refinement City. Her name was Qiao Ling.

“How could she be here?” he thought. “The State of Zhao disappeared a long time ago.... Maybe she left before all the momentous events. After all, there’s a Hundred Treasures Pavilion in this city too.”

At the moment, Chu Yuyan stood in one of the private booths in the first level, looking down at the auction square. Next to her stood a middle-aged man, a respectful look on his face.

“Fellow Daoist Chu, the Spring and Autumn tree that you need is here. Unfortunately, the rules of our Pavilion cannot be broken. If you need it, you must acquire it through auction. It is lot 39 on the auction list.”

A thousand-year-old conch shell from the Milky Way Sea, capable of increasing the longevity of a Cultivator. Longevity is priceless. Long life is important to anyone; it is a thirst which springs from the soul itself.

This is especially true for Cultivators, even more so for those who are reaching the end of their years. To add half of a sixty-year-cycle to their life, they would pay almost any price.

The fact that this was the first item up for auction led to quite a buzz. People immediately began calling out bids, both from the ring of private booths up above, and from the throng of nearly a thousand down below. The prices being called out for the thousand-year-old conch shell grew higher and higher, until it reached a level that left Meng Hao somewhat apprehensive.

In the end, someone in the second level of private booths purchased it. Even though no one in the crowd below had been able to purchase it, their spirits were lifted by the purchase. When the second, third and fourth items appeared, the atmosphere grew even more exciting, and the prices called out even higher.

This was the first time Meng Hao had attended an auction like this, and also his first time seeing the unbridled excitement of Cultivators. His mind slowly grew clear, and he looked coldly around as the Cultivators called out price after higher price for the items they wished to purchase.

“Lot 8 is an item that many Fellow Daoists have traveled here specifically to purchase...” said Sir Qiao coolly. He flourished his right hand, and behind him, Qiao Ling appeared with yet another item on a jade tray.

It was a fragment of black bone. Its edges were jagged, and it appeared to be a piece of a skull. There were complicated magical symbols carved into it and it emanated an ancient, ghastly aura, which was sealed by a small shield produced by the jade tray.

Even still, some of the aura drifted out, filling the auction square with what seemed to be the stench of rotten flesh, accumulated over many years. Everyone present felt an ancient aura, filled with a wild, indescribable grief.

“One of the three Danger Zones in the Southern Domain is the Ancient Temple of Doom! The Doom Clan arose in ancient times, and did not meet with the approval of the Heavens. The Heavenly Dao cursed them, and thus, they died. But their spirits were not willing to pass away, so they defied the Heavens to create their temple!

“It’s hard to say how many years have passed since that time. The temple has become a Danger Zone, filled with incredible peril. Even Nascent Soul Cultivators will have a hard time making it out alive. However, inside the temple is an ancient Legacy, ancient Spirit medicines, and ancient treasures. A few years ago, one of the Solitary Sword Clan’s elders made it out alive, raving about the Long Life Pill he’d seen!

“I am pleased to represent the Hundred Treasures Pavilion in auctioning this item, which comes directly from the Ancient Temple of Doom. It has the power to ward against evil.” When he finished speaking, everything was quiet. However, it didn’t take long for people to begin bidding.

“Three-hundred thousand Spirit stones!”

“Five-hundred thousand Spirit stones. That item can ward against evil. If I go into the Ancient Temple of Doom, I’m dead for sure. But, I’m reaching the end of my longevity. With that item, maybe I can enter the Temple!”

“Six-hundred thousand Spirit Stones! I’m determined to get this item!”

As he listened to the price going up, Meng Hao’s eyes flickered. He had read about the three Danger Zones of the Southern Domain. But he only knew some general information, nothing specific. Now he knew a little bit more of the Ancient Temple of Doom, thanks to Sir Qiao.

“The three Danger Zones; the Rebirth Cave, the Ancient Temple of Doom, and the Primordial Dao Lakes....” Meng Hao watched on as the bids on the item from the Ancient Temple of Doom slowly increased. After a while, he closed his eyes. He wasn’t interested at all in this particular item.

Time passed by as item after item was auctioned off. Finally, Sir Qiao’s voice rang out.

“Lot 38 is a bottle of Refined Establishment Pills, six in total. Personally concocted by Grandmaster Pill Demon, these pills are suitable for Cultivators of the Foundation Establishment stage. The reserve price is thirty thousand. The bidding shall be in increments of at least ten thousand.” Meng Hao’s eye snapped open.

Some of the previous auction items had included medicinal pills. However, the prices had been too high, or not appropriate for his level. The treasures had been similar. But this Refined Establishment Pill was the least expensive item to appear so far.

“Forty thousand Spirit Stones.” Qi Condensation Cultivators made up the largest percent of participants, and after that was the Foundation Establishment stage. The number of people who made bids previous hadn’t been very large, but for this item, many people began to call out prices.

“Fifty thousand Spirit Stones!”

“I’ll bid eighty thousand Spirit Stones. I need those Refined Establishment Pills. Please, Fellow Daoists, for the sake of the Cloud Peak Sect, allow me to take them.”

“One hundred thousand!” said Meng Hao, his eyes flashing. He also needed these medicinal pills. The instant he opened his mouth, the Cultivator who had just spoken turned around. His eyes flicked back and forth; there were too many people present, so it was impossible for him to determine who had spoken.

“One hundred ten thousand!” he said coldly.

“One hundred fifty thousand!” Meng Hao didn’t care a bit about the other Cultivator trying to figure out who he was. As soon as he spoke, the man’s gaze fell upon him.

This Cultivator from the Cloud Peak Sect was also at the early Foundation Establishment stage. He stared murderously at Meng Hao, clenching his teeth. “Two hundred thousand!” he said. No one else was willing to bid further. The pill was extraordinary, but two hundred thousand Spirit Stones was more than most of them could afford.

Meng Hao frowned. He needed this type of pill, but in actuality, only needed one. Also, he had no way to know how high the price for the Spring and Autumn tree would reach. Compared to that, the pill wasn’t very important. Therefore, he decided to give up.

“Lot 39 is a Spring and Autumn tree. This type of wood is not very common. It can suppress ten thousand types of poison, and can be refined into the primary ingredient required to make a variety of magical items. This is the first time I’ve personally auctioned off this item. As such, I would like to share some classified information with all of you Fellow Daoists.

“Spring and Autumn tree is created when normal wood is struck by Spring and Autumn Lightning. It cannot be produced by people, and only appears in accordance with the luck of the Heavens. Many of you probably know this already. This tree has no root, so if you place it into the earth, it

will not grow. However, according to legend, this tree has a parent tree in the yellow springs of the underworld, the World Tree!” His words caused an uproar in the auction square. Hearing the word World Tree even caused the Cultivators in the private booths to look down in shock.

“Sir Qiao,” rang out a voice from one of the private books, “is this World Tree you mention the one from the legends, which leads to beyond the Heavens?”

“Correct,” said Sir Qiao, his expression calm. “Its shape is like that of an ox, its bark is easily peeled off, and when this happens, the ribbon-like strand looks like a yellow snake. Its leaves are like a net. Its fruit is like that of a golden rain tree and its trunk is like an elm tree. Its name is the World Tree.

“According to the ancient legends, an almighty expert once replaced the Heavens. He even covered over the starry sky with his own expanse. His expanse covered the world, with the starry sky being beyond that. However, the World Tree did not agree to live under that Heaven. Instead, it destroyed itself in the starry sky. However, its will remained within the earth. During the seasons of Spring and Autumn, Heavenly lightning will fall to destroy it; to protect itself, it creates the Spring and Autumn tree.

“Dark green leaves, a purple trunk. Black flowers and yellow fruit. There is no sound beneath its canopy, nor are shadows cast. Of course, these are just rumours that I’ve heard, I’m not sure if they are true or false. The opening bid for the Spring and Autumn tree will begin at one hundred thousand Spirit Stones.” Sir Qiao’s words made many who hadn’t previously been interested in the Spring and Autumn tree to suddenly be very interested.

Meng Hao frowned. Before, he was confident in being able to control the price of the tree, but now, with so many people interested in it, he would surely have to pay a much higher price.

He looked up at Sir Qiao standing there on the auction stage. His face was expressionless, but Meng Hao could clearly sense how shrewd and ruthless he was.

Also frowning was Chu Yuyan, up in the top level of private booths. Her delicate brow furrowed, and she sighed inwardly. She realized she had been a bit rash. The Hundred Treasures Pavilion had intentionally done this after she made her inquiries. Presumably, they also knew why she needed this particular tree.

In the auction square, multiple people began calling out bids.

“One-hundred fifty thousand!”

“Two-hundred thousand!”

“Two-hundred thirty thousand!”

As for Meng Hao, he sat there watching as the price went up; he held his hand.

“Two-hundred sixty thousand! That’s as far as I can go. It might be able to suppress poisons, but it’s a consumable item. I don’t need it because of some so-called World Tree. I need it to dispel poison.” The polite words were spoken by a soft-spoken Cultivator wearing a long black robe. He saluted the surrounding Cultivators with clasped hands.

It was at this point that Chu Yuyan spoke up. “Three-hundred thousand!” Her clear voice rang out, causing many people to look up, although they weren’t entirely sure who had spoken.

“Three-hundred twenty thousand!” said the other Cultivator, his heart thumping. He clenched his teeth and looked up at the ring of private booths. All the people up there were famous figures from throughout the State of Eastern Emergence, and were not to be offended easily. But, he couldn’t give up.

“Three-hundred fifty thousand!” said Chu Yuyan coolly. Some people down below were now able to tell where the voice was coming from, and they looked at the top level of private booths. However, most of the Cultivators still hadn’t determined where the voice was coming from.

The black-robed Cultivator’s face twitched. Finally, he let out a bitter laugh. Three-hundred twenty thousand Spirit Stones was his limit, and it included quite a bit borrowed from other people. Although, that was of secondary importance. What gave him greater reason to abandon the competition was the identity of the other party. Although he hadn’t been able to identify the exact location of the person who was bidding against him, considering it had come from the top level of private booths, he knew that it must be someone he couldn’t afford to provoke.

He sat down bitterly, not making another bid.

Everyone knew that whoever this mysterious woman was, she needed the Spring and Autumn tree. Nobody was willing to offend someone from within the ring of private booths.

Chu Yuyan let out a light sigh. She was spending three-hundred fifty thousand, which was far more than its actual value. But to her, it was worth it.

However, at this exact moment, a voice suddenly broke the silence down below.

“Three-hundred sixty thousand.”

When the voice rang out, everyone in the auction square gaped in shock, looking around to try to see who had just spoken. Because the Cultivators in his immediate vicinity were looking at him in amazement, it didn't take long before everyone in the square was looking at him.

He sat there, his head lowered, his face covered, his eyes calm.

“Four-hundred thousand!” said Chu Yuyan, frowning. She never imagined that someone else would put forth another bid, but she had no choice other than to raise the price.

“Four-hundred ten thousand,” said Meng Hao coolly. His voice was deeper than normal, but he still spoke calmly.

Chapter 110: Chu Yuyan's Killing Intent

"I can't believe he's going to try to outbid someone from the second level! Who is this guy? He's wearing a big hat and you can't see his face."

"That guy's got real nerve to jack up the price so high for a Spring and Autumn tree."

"Who is the Cultivator in that top level booth...? This is interesting." Discussions sprang up in the auction square. Only Sir Qiao, up on the stage, appeared the same as ever. He glanced at Meng Hao, then looked up toward the top level booth.

Behind him, a look of interest appeared on Qiao Ling's face. She looked at Meng Hao closely, but because of his wide hat, and the cloth covering his face, she didn't recognize him.

"Five-hundred thousand!" said Chu Yuyan, her brow furrowed. This was an incredible bid even for her. She stepped forward, lifting up the booth's curtain. Suddenly, she became the center of attention of everyone down in the auction square.

They all recognized her.

"That's..."

"Chu Yuyan! It's Chu Yuyan from the Violet Fate Sect!"

"So, it's her..." The entire square broke out into conversations. In the State of Eastern Emergence, Chu Yuyan was highly respected. She was a Cultivator of the Violet Fate Sect, was Grandmaster Pill Demon's personal apprentice, and her father was the Sect leader. This, coupled with her unsurpassed beauty, instantly caused everyone to stare at her.

"Well, so much for the suspense. If Chu Yuyan hadn't shown her face, very well. But now that she has, no one would be willing to try to outbid her for something as ordinary as a Spring and Autumn tree."

"It seems Chu Yuyan has her heart set on that Spring and Autumn tree. She even revealed her identity! Don't tell me those rumors from a few years back were true?"

"I think they were. Otherwise, she wouldn't need a Spring and Autumn tree."

The Cultivators' conversations buzzed, and even Chu Yuyan assumed that the bidding for the Spring and Autumn tree was over. Then, Meng Hao's cold voice rang out.

"Six-hundred thousand!" Meng Hao no longer increased the bid in ten-thousands. He immediately surpassed Chu Yuyan's bid by one-hundred thousand. This caused quite the uproar; even Sir Qiao stared down at Meng Hao.

Chu Yuyan frowned at Meng Hao, but could only see the top of his hat.

"Six-hundred fifty-thousand!"

"Seven-hundred thousand," said Meng Hao calmly. He was determined to acquire the Spring and Autumn tree, and would not give up.

"Fellow Daoist, you must certainly know who I am," said Chu Yuyan, her voice light as she stared at Meng Hao. "This item isn't worth so many Spirit Stones. I need it to help suppress poison for someone I'm sure you know. Please back down; if you do, I'll consider myself to be in your debt."

This caused further discussions on the auction floor.

"So, the rumors are true. She's buying it for Wang Tengfei of the Wang Clan!"

"According to the people from the Golden Frost Sect, Wang Tengfei, one of the Chosen from the Wang Clan, used to be a member of a Sect in some backwater nation. He was searching after some amazing Legacy. But he was trounced during a tussle over a spot in the Inner Sect, and a local Cultivator smashed his finger!"

"That's most likely true. That guy Li Fugui who the Golden Frost Sect cares so much about has a beef with Wang Tengfei. He talks about it to everyone. And as for Wang Tengfei, he treats even himself poorly. He formed a new finger for himself, but it was poisonous. A lot of people know about it. Obviously, Chu Yuyan wants the Spring and Autumn tree to help Wang Tengfei suppress the poison of his finger!"

When Meng Hao heard this, a barely perceptible flicker appeared in his eyes. Now he knew why Chu Yuyan was so anxious to get the Spring and Autumn tree. And from what the other Cultivators were saying, it sounded like Fatty Li Fugui was doing quite well for himself in the Golden Frost Sect.

"Fellow Daoist Chu, I also very much need this item," said Meng Hao coolly.

Chu Yuyan's eyes flashed coldly. She gritted her teeth and stared at Meng Hao. "Seven-hundred fifty-thousand!" she said.

"Nine hundred thousand." Meng Hao still had quite a bit of Spirit Stones in his bag of holding. He had made up his mind to win the Spring and Autumn tree, so immediately called out an exorbitant price.

Hearing such a high number, the surrounding Cultivators gasped and looked greedily at Meng Hao. But then they realized that anyone who dared to snatch an item out from in front of Chu Yuyan from the Violet Fate Sect, must surely have powerful backing.

"You!" Chu Yuyan gnashed her teeth so hard they seemed on the verge of shattering. She was a Chosen of the Violet Fate Sect. However, the spirit stones she carried belonged not to herself, but the Sect. It would be hard to explain why she had spent so much to help Wang Tengfei, regardless of her position within the Sect. Nine-hundred thousand was a number that left her feeling somewhat powerless. She said nothing, simply staring down at Meng Hao, her eyes shining with murder.

A long moment passed, and she didn't make a higher bid. The Spring and Autumn tree went to Meng Hao. Someone from the Hundred Treasures Pavilion approached him to accept his money and give him the item. He accepted it, then left the auction square as quickly as possible.

He didn't care what other items were being auctioned off. He had no intention of staying behind. In Cultivator auctions, anyone can leave at any time.

He hurried out, moving as fast as possible through several alleys. He tossed off his hat and cloth mask, and then changed his robe. He now looked completely different than he had in the auction square.

Moving at top speed, he headed straight out of the city gate. Three hundred meters out, he shot into the sky, turning into a beam of light that shot off into the distance. After he had been flying for the time it takes an incense stick to burn, a whistling scream could be heard behind him. It was a spotless white crane, chasing after him at a speed that exceeded his own.

Meng Hao frowned and looked back.

Standing atop the crane was a woman in white clothes. It was none other than Chu Yuyan, her face expressionless, but her eyes ice cold. She stared icily at Meng Hao's retreating form. The crane cried out, turning into a prismatic beam of light as it approached. A white glow emerged from its mouth, which transformed into a gigantic net which shot forward to envelop Meng Hao.

Chu Yuyan held a jade slip in her hand. There were black spots on the surface of the jade slip, which emanated an archaic aura. She used it to summon a phantasmic white-haired old man, who came into being above the jade slip. The phantom lifted his hand and waved his finger toward Meng Hao. A phantasmic finger shot out to follow Meng Hao, which was the special function of this particular jade.

"Hand over the Spring and Autumn tree, and I won't cause you any trouble. Otherwise, I will use this searching jade to track you down. The ancient jade is locked onto you. Even if you flee to the ends of the earth, I'll be able to find you." Chu Yuyan slapped her bag of holding again, and a Violet Qi emerged, forming into a violet-colored lotus-seed pod, the size of a fist. She tossed it forward, whereupon it shook, shooting out a dozen lotus seeds. As they flew forward, the violet lotus seeds transformed into armor-clad phantom women, who shot toward Meng Hao brandishing battle spears.

As they approached, pressure from Chu Yuyan's Foundation Establishment Cultivation base bore down on Meng Hao. In addition, the armor-clad women who sped toward Meng Hao seemed to be emitting the power of the early Foundation Establishment stage. Above, the clouds spiralled violently.

Meng Hao's eyes flashed. In the past six or seven years, he had gained a lot of experience using battle magic. Not waiting for the massive white net to descend, he opened his mouth and spit. Amidst a burst of lightning, the Lightning Flag emerged, transforming into a mist that shot out from Meng Hao, arcs of electricity dancing back and forth within it. It shot, not toward the descending net, but instead the approaching phantoms, wrapping them up.

An explosion sounded out in all directions. The phantom women shattered into pieces. Chu Yuyan frowned, lifting her delicate hands up in an incantation gesture. Just as she was about to cast some type of magic, Meng Hao's hand flashed. He used the mist emanated by the Lightning Flag to block his hand from Chu Yuyan's field of view. Then he smacked his bag of holding to produce the copper mirror, which he shined toward Chu Yuyan's crane.

Instantly, the crane's eye went wide with disbelief. A booming sound rang out as the crane's wing exploded into a mist of blood and flesh. Next, its rear end quivered and then exploded!

Blood and gore rained down, and a blood-curdling shriek came out of the once elegant crane's beak. Having lost its ability to fly, it tumbled down to the ground, pain wracking its body. Chu Yuyan gaped in astonishment. Seeing the crane's wing and butt explode bloodily had left her momentarily terrified.

As the crane screamed and fell to the ground, the huge white net began to break apart. Meng Hao shot backward in retreat, taking in a deep breath and causing the Lightning Mist to return into his bag of holding. Then, he drew a great, black bow out. He pulled back on the bow and shot nine arrows toward an astonished Chu Yuyan. Backed by the power of his Cultivation base, the arrows screamed as they flew through the air.

Boom after boom filled the air. Meng Hao frowned, continuing to shoot backwards at top speed. A violet-colored shield now circulated around Chu Yuyan. When the arrows slammed into it, they disintegrated. However, the shield was also forced backward, and then was broken into pieces. Chu Yuyan's clothing was ripped open because of the arrows, revealing some of her skin. She was beautiful enough to begin with; seeing her like this would cause most men to palpitate with eagerness. A sharp glow emitted from her eyes as she stared at the black bow in Meng

"That bow was bestowed by the Sect upon Junior Brother Ding Xin. Why do you have it? After Ding Xin went to the State of Zhao, his life slip shattered. The State of Zhao..." An astute gleam filled her eyes. As she spoke, her eyes widened. She'd thought Meng Hao looked familiar, but now she was able to connect the dots. She finally recognized him; this was the Meng Hao that Wang Tengfei was always muttering about. "You're... you're Meng Hao! Didn't the State of Zhao disappear? You..."

"Clever girl," said Meng Hao, then took to flight.

Now that she knew who he was, her killing intent grew thicker. She sped in pursuit, her heart filled with shock as she thought of how only a few years ago, Meng Hao had been at the fifth or sixth level of Qi Condensation. Now, he was at the Foundation Establishment stage; based on the vibrations of his Cultivation base, it was clearly not Fractured. She was eighty to ninety percent sure that it must be Cracked!

The events of a few years ago in the State of Zhao had caused substantial waves of shock to ripple through the Southern Domain. Chu Yuyan was amazed that Meng Hao would appear here. Obviously, he must have escaped from the State of Zhao before it disappeared.

Meanwhile, at a location far from the central region of the Southern Domain, an enormous Roc appeared. It emanated a powerful death aura as it flew in from the Milky Way Sea. It moved at incredible speed, whipping up fierce winds as it passed. Lightning filled the sky around it. Anyone who didn't immediately get out of its way would be whipped up into the whirlwind it created and tossed to who knew where.

As it passed, mountains split and crumbled underneath the Roc's screaming cry. From a distance, many Cultivators saw the Roc and its death aura, and their hearts quivered as they thought of the treasures that must exist on its body. Some tried to chase it, but they were too slow. In the space of time it takes for an incense stick to burn, they were left behind.

This solitary Roc was on the verge of death. And yet, just as ever, it flew through the sky, a sovereign of the sky!