

The Heavens 1411

Chapter 1411: The Vast Expanse Bell Heralds the Arrival of a Paragon!

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The young woman was so focused on rebuking the young man that she didn't notice what happened when she threw Meng Hao into the back of her flying shuttle. His eyelids twitched, although he didn't quite yet have the strength to open his eyes.

Furthermore, the young woman didn't notice that after Meng Hao landed in the back of the flying shuttle, various tiny vortexes opened up around him. Then, the mist which surrounded them formed into strands which began to seep into the flying shuttle!

The strands of mist circulated inside of the shuttle and then began to enter into Meng Hao. More and more of the mist vanished into him, like a river pouring into a dry channel.

Apparently, Meng Hao's injuries were so severe that he lacked the power to even absorb the mist of the Vast Expanse on his own. However, there was something about the flying shuttle that helped him to gradually begin building up the power he lacked to open his eyes.

Time passed, and for some reason the flying shuttle seemed to be going faster and faster. Eventually, the young woman, despite being so involved in berating the young man, finally noticed the increase in speed. At first, her jaw dropped, but then she began to laugh heartily.

"See, little brother? It's no wonder the great Vast Expanse School has such a reputation. The starry sky in their territory is obviously blessed with some sort of Essence that has increased our speed. I bet that Essence can even identify hostile forces. The more hostile you are toward them, the slower you'll move. The less hostile, the faster!" Having reached this conclusion, the young woman laughed again. Behind her, the young man stared in shock. In his estimation, that wasn't what was happening at all, and yet, he didn't dare to open his mouth. Instead, he nodded and pretended to be in awe of the young woman.

He knew that his sister wasn't the sharpest tool in the shed, but he also knew that deep down, she was a good person. Not only did she enjoy it when people looked at her fawningly, more importantly, when she was happy, she spent less time rebuking him.

Burying his reservations, the young man began to think about everything that had happened on their journey. They had encountered other flying shuttles along the way, and although his sister had never paid any attention to any of them, he had. Eventually, his attention was drawn to the collection of corpses and other objects in the back of the flying shuttle.

He looked at the corpse of Meng Hao, and suddenly realized that their flying shuttle had begun to move faster at almost the exactly same time that his sister picked up that very corpse.

However, considering the level of his cultivation base, he didn't notice anything out of the ordinary about it. No matter how he studied it, it didn't look like anything other than a corpse. A few days later, the young man stopped worrying about it so much, although he would still cast occasional cautious glances back at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao was already awake.

However, what had awoken was not his body, but his soul. After being pulled onto the flying shuttle, and absorbing some of the power of the Vast Expanse, he reached a state in which he felt almost as if he were observing everything around him in a dream state.

His soul hurt. He thought back to the Mountain and Sea Realm, to his father and mother, to his sister, to Xu Qing, and to so many other familiar faces.

He thought back to the butterfly, and how it had eventually landed on that green coffin.

He thought back to the parrot, and then the meat jelly, which was now devoid of any traces of life. All of that was in the past now. The only companion he still had to accompany him was the mastiff.

The mastiff wasn't dead. It had been asleep the entire time, hibernating. Even in its sleep, it still stood watch over him. It had paid a heavy price, and was even now only capable of sleeping.

“This enmity... must be avenged!!

“Mountain and Sea Realm... I will return to you!!

“Mom and dad, sister, Qing’er... wait for me....” Meng Hao’s soul stared out of the flying shuttle into the distance. He had no idea where the Mountain and Sea Butterfly was, not even in which direction it lay. He could only trust his feelings to guess where it might be.

The pain he felt was something which would not subside, and had already changed him. He was colder now, and more silent.

He could tell that the only reason he was alive right now was because the mastiff had protected him, and the meat jelly had sacrificed everything for him. Most importantly, though, was what he had done just before losing consciousness. He had... taken out the bronze lamp!

The mysteries surrounding that lamp were unfathomable. It had replaced all of his Soul Lamps; instead of having thirty-three, he had only one. However, after the lamp’s aura had melded with his Demonic qi, and the resulting pressure was even more terrifying than all of his other 33 Soul Lamps added together. “This bronze lamp... just who exactly did it belong to?”

During the process of studying the changes and transformations inside of him, Meng Hao eventually noticed the brother and sister duo on the flying shuttle. The older sister was thick-headed, and the younger brother was weak but shrewd. Meng Hao looked them over, then ignored them. The young man occasionally glanced back at him, but Meng Hao chose to remain still and silent.

However, were it not for this brother and sister, and the help of their flying shuttle, a random coincidence that allowed him to absorb the mist of the Vast Expanse, then it would have taken far, far longer for his soul to awaken.

That was something Meng Hao wouldn’t forget.

His injuries were so numerous that even after a thousand years of absorbing the bronze lamp, more time was required to restore his cultivation base.

For now, he could only bury his thoughts of spilling a sea of blood to gain vengeance. But he knew... that the day would come when he would get his revenge!

Months went by in which he maintained silence. Normally, the trip taken by the flying shuttle would have gone on longer, but now, it was rapidly coming to an end. Up ahead could be seen... an astonishingly large heavenly body!

It was not a land mass like the Immortal God Continent or the Devil Realm Continent. It was a planet!

This planet could definitely be listed among the astonishing heavenly bodies like the Immortal God Continent. However, if the lands on the planet were unwrapped and laid out flat, they would definitely dwarf that very land mass.

It was simply gargantuan, so large that it could only be taken in fully from a distance. In fact, it was so big that it almost seemed to be propping up the starry sky of the Vast Expanse.

If you compared the Mountain and Sea Realm to this planet, it would be like comparing an ant to an elephant!

Surrounding the planet was a dark yellow ring. Shockingly, if you studied that ring closely, you would find it was made up of countless asteroids, large and small. Simply looking at the planet was terrifying, and would leave one completely shaken.

Innumerable beams of light could be seen flying into and out from the planet, making it look even more dazzling.

“See that? That’s Planet Vast Expanse! Heavens! How could there be a planet so big? Compared to the land mass that we come from, it’s simply enormous. You could fit our home inside of it ten thousand times over! A hundred thousand. Maybe a million....” The young woman’s tone was quite grandiose when she began speaking, but in the end, she trailed off into silence as she stared at the huge planet in front of her.

The young man next to her was also staring with wide eyes.

Neither of them noticed that behind them, Meng Hao had just stirred. Although he still couldn’t open his eyes, his soul was also staring at Planet Vast Expanse, and within the eyes of his soul, a strange fire had begun to burn.

The young woman took a deep breath, and her eyes began to shine. “No wonder they say that it can vie for a place among the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm.... Wow, the Planet Vast Expanse!

“This is the home of the legendary... Vast Expanse School, which was created at the same time as the Vast Expanse itself, and has the only teleportation portal leading out!

“Little brother, I’ve decided. You definitely have to marry that Holy Daughter!” The young woman’s eyes shone with determination, and she flicked her sleeve, sending the flying shuttle closer and closer to Planet Vast Expanse.

However, as the flying shuttle got closer, a bright shield suddenly sprang up, sweeping out to cover the whole planet, and the starry sky which surrounded it. Every cultivator that it passed, regardless of the level of their cultivation base, was instantly locked in place in the starry sky, incapable of moving even an inch. Shocked expressions appeared as everyone wondered what was happening.

It was at this point that the sound of an ancient bell began to toll from somewhere on Planet Vast Expanse. The austere, sonorous sound swept out into the starry sky, pushing away the mist of the Vast Expanse and causing intense pressure to weigh down.

Dong!

Dong!

Dong!

As the sound of the bell rang out, cultivators of the Vast Expanse School on Planet Vast Expanse were all completely shaken. The tolling continued, it soon wasn’t just the ordinary cultivators who were surprised. The powerful experts who made up the inner strength of the Vast Expanse School also looked up.

When the bell tolled for the fourth time, numerous faces flickered in shock. By the sixth toll of the bell, there were 8-Essences Paragons who began to fly out toward the starry sky surrounding the planet.

However, even as they were flying out, the seventh tolling of the bell could be heard. Somewhere on Planet Vast Expanse, in a sprawling temple, an old man suddenly opened his eyes, and the aura of a 9-Essences Paragon erupted out from him. He instantly stepped out into the starry sky, followed by more powerful experts from Planet Vast Expanse. There were countless beams of light that flew out with incredible speed.

More than a million cultivators had been locked down in the starry sky outside of Planet Vast Expanse, and all of them were shocked and unable to move. And yet, the tolling continued.

Of the group of people frozen in place, most didn't understand what the tolling of the bell indicated, and therefore, took things mostly in stride. However, the people who did know the meaning of the bell couldn't stop their eyes from widening in shock and terror.

“That bell... it's the Vast Expanse Bell!!”

“When a Paragon who isn't a member of the Vast Expanse School arrives... the Vast Expanse Bell will toll!”

“Three tolls means a 7-Essences Paragon. Six tolls indicate 8-Essences. More than that means... a 9-Essences Paragon!!”

“The bell tolled seven times! That means... that a 9-Essences Paragon is here!!” The people outside of Planet Vast Expanse who understood the significance of the tolling bell were completely shocked. They began to look around, and soon, all eyes came to fall on the flying shuttle, which was the only object in the starry sky that hadn't been locked in place!

Upon that very flying shuttle, the young man's eyes were wide, and he was looking around in astonishment at all of the cultivators locked in place. His sister also looked around in shock, but then, began to laugh.

“Little brother, it's time to act tough. It seems the marriage agreement with the Yun Clan is still in effect. I haven't even brought out the jade slip yet, and the Vast Expanse School has already noticed and started ringing the bells to welcome us.” Although the young woman's eyes were open wide with delight, the young man's legs were trembling.

“Sister, I don't think that's what's...” Before the young man could finish speaking, they caught sight of the numerous beams of light shooting out from Planet Vast Expanse, and could sense the terrifying levels of their cultivation bases. The young woman only got more excited.

“Little brother, look, they're coming to receive us!” she said excitedly, taking a deep breath as the crowd of people drew nearer.

The young man behind her was flummoxed. He was weak, but very intelligent, and could tell that something strange was going on!

Chapter 1412: Reeling Them In!

Moments ago, when the shield sprang up around Planet Vast Expanse, the thick-headed young woman quickly gathered up all of the items and corpses, including Meng Hao, and put them into her bag of holding. She did it so quickly her younger brother had no time to intervene.

In her simplistic way of thinking, everything she had collected was worth keeping. And yet, she feared that people might look down on them for collecting so many miscellaneous items, which could eventually cause problems when it came to the marriage agreement.

Seeing the numerous incoming beams of light, the young woman got very excited. She quickly straightened her garments and put on a very haughty expression. Then she looked back at her nervous younger brother. Glaring, she said, "Look tough! Remember, you're the heir of the Yun Clan!"

There was no time to say anything else, as the beams of light flew at top speed and came to a stop in front of their flying shuttle.

In the lead was a man wearing a violet-gold robe. His hair was long and white, and he bore the semblance of a celestial being, with eyes that sparkled as if with lightning. He looked the brother and sister duo over, only glancing briefly at the young man before focusing his attention on the young woman. Then his eyes widened slightly.

Behind him were tens of thousands of other cultivators, all of them wearing very serious expressions, almost as if they had come to meet a powerful enemy.

The pressure weighing down from all of these powerful experts was incredible. Although they kept their power in check, the starry sky was still trembling, and everyone nearby could feel the weight of the pressure. The young man on the flying shuttle was shaking and could barely stand up straight. His blood was boiling, and he almost felt as if it were about to explode.

From the look of it, if these people let much more of their aura out, this young man's body, and those of many of the other cultivators in the area, would be shredded to pieces, killing them instantly.

His older sister had it a bit better off, but was still gritting her teeth and trembling in body and mind. However, she didn't seem to have lost any of her enthusiasm. Apparently... she couldn't see the fierce gleams in the eyes of these powerful experts from the Vast Expanse School.

Clasping hands and bowing deeply, she said, "I am Yun Shan of the Yun Clan. This is our clan's current heir, Yun Feng. Senior members of the Vast Expanse School, greetings!" Then, she quickly pulled out her Yun Clan identity medallion and held it high above her head.

Behind her, Yun Feng nervously clasped hands and bowed his head, cursing inwardly.

In response to Yun Shan's words, the eyes of the experts from the Vast Expanse School glittered. The old man in the leadership position frowned. He looked closer at this girl who called herself Yun Shan, gaze lingering on her bag of holding as he completely ignored the identity medallion.

After a long moment, he said, "Yun Clan..."

The entire time, his eyes were focused on her bag of holding, as if his gaze could actually pierce inside and see Meng Hao. After a moment, his eyes glittered, and he suddenly shook his head and laughed.

"Unlock Vast Expanse. Extend the Starpath. Summon the million disciples. Unveil the Vast Expanse Skyway. Welcome the honored guests!" Apparently, when this man spoke, his words were followed like law. The other powerful experts of the Vast Expanse School bowed their heads as rumbling sounds suddenly emanated out from Planet Vast Expanse. Shockingly, two giants appeared, who bore glittering starlight on their shoulders as they strode forth. In turn, that light began to form into a pathway.

At the same time, numerous beams of light appeared behind the giants. Astonishingly, a million cultivators appeared, all of whom wore the uniforms of Vast Expanse disciples. They fanned out to stand on either side of the path of stars, and as they did... a Skyway formed, lined by a million disciples.

All of the rogue cultivators out in the starry sky stared with wide eyes. There were some among them who weren't aware of the significance of the bell tolling seven times. But everyone knew what it meant when Planet Vast Expanse was unlocked in such a way, with starlight-bearing giants emerging, and a million disciples forming a road.

"That's the Vast Expanse School's most prestigious welcoming ceremony!"

“It’s been years since the Vast Expanse School did this. What powerful sect or clan did this brother and sister team come from?!”

“A million disciples forming a road.... The Vast Expanse School would only hold this ceremony for someone incredibly extraordinary!!” Everyone was completely shaken.

“Please, after you!” said the man in the violet-gold robe, flicking his sleeve and stepping aside. He smiled lightly as he spoke, but his eyes were glued on Yun Shan’s bag of holding. The other experts from the Vast Expanse School looked on with thoughtful expressions for a moment before they also stepped aside, leaving the entire path of starry light stretching out unhindered in front of the flying shuttle.

Yun Shan’s eyes were wide as saucers as she stared at the scene. It was something she couldn’t have imagined happening, not even in her dreams. And yet, it was playing out right here in front of her. Despite her usual thick-headed personality, even she couldn’t help but feel a bit suspicious.

“Was the Yun Clan really that incredible in the past?” she said to her brother. “I can’t believe a down-and-out clan like them... would actually cause the Vast Expanse School to hold a ceremony like this.

“Hmm. I guess the Yun Clan must have a lot of big secrets that I never found out about. Later on, I’ll have to spend a few spirit stones to run a more thorough investigation into them.” Of course, her train of thought led her to a strange conclusion, like it usually did. Looking very excited, she immediately stepped onto the path.

She walked along as arrogantly as ever, occasionally chattering to her younger brother.

“Come on, follow me. Keep your head up. Don’t forget, we’re from the Yun Clan, and you’re the heir!

“See how seriously they take us, little brother? The Vast Expanse School! Hahaha!” Although Yun Shan was nervous, her eyes sparkled brightly, and as she walked along, the disciples of the Vast Expanse School bowed respectfully. As for all of the rogue cultivators who had been locked in place earlier, they could do nothing but watch jealously as she entered Planet Vast Expanse.

Her brother walked along behind her, more nervous than ever. Something very strange seemed to be going on, especially when he realized that the Vast Expanse School hadn't even checked their Yun Clan identification medallions. The reason for that most likely had nothing at all to do with the conclusion his sister had reached.

However, there was nothing to be done about the situation now. The old man in the violet-gold robe followed not too far back, and behind him were the tens of thousands of other powerful experts of the Vast Expanse School.

Yun Feng's scalp tingled as he walked nervously behind his sister, following closely by the forces from Planet Vast Expanse. "This... this isn't a welcoming party," he thought, "this... is a security escort!"

As they proceeded through the starry sky, they eventually reached... Planet Vast Expanse itself!

Planet Vast Expanse was gargantuan, so big that you couldn't see from one end to the other. The location in which they arrived featured a boundless land filled with mountains, more than a million of them, with some peaks towering high above the mysterious fog and clouds which filled the area.

There were towering palaces which rose up from the peaks of the mountains, giving the entire place the feeling of a majestic, preeminent sect. Chain bridges connected the million mountain peaks, making it easy to see the borders of what was apparently the preeminent Vast Expanse School!

As soon as Yun Shan and Yun Feng entered the planet, they saw the million mountains, and their minds began to spin. Off to the side, the old man in the violet-gold robe smiled and began to explain.

"There are many cultivator clans on Planet Vast Expanse, but when it comes to sects... there is only the Vast Expanse School! In fact, all of those other clans exist only because of the Vast Expanse School.

"The Vast Expanse School is the very foundation of Planet Vast Expanse, and we have eight temple complexes, with the complex you are looking at now being the eighth.

"As for the lands of our sect, everything under the sky belongs to us!

“However, the true sect is inside of Planet Vast Expanse. Actually, the planet is hollow, and furthermore... is even larger on the inside than it is on the outside. That is the true core of the Vast Expanse School.”

The brother and sister duo couldn't help but gasp as the old man's voice echoed out. They saw the boundless mountains, they saw the numerous pagodas and palaces, they saw the countless cultivators flying to and fro. At first, they had assumed that what they were looking at was the entirety of the Vast Expanse School, but now they realized that it was only... a small portion.

This was only one among eight outer temple complexes.

“If the outer temple complexes are like this,” thought Yun Feng, “then I can only imagine how astonishing the inner core is beneath the surface of the ground....” He was left panting, and for the first time, a gleam of desire appeared in his eyes.

Even as the young man was shaken, his sister suddenly began to laugh.

“Not bad. Not bad at all,” she said. “The Vast Expanse School truly deserves its reputation as the ultimate Daoist society. The Yun Clan definitely falls short, although only by a bit.” Although her face was a bit ashen, she tried to look unimpressed. The sound of her brother's rapidly increasing heart rate was turning into a quite a headache, though.

The old man in the violet-gold robe laughed lightly. Then he spoke a single sentence, a sentence that contained such power that the air in the area suddenly locked everything in place, motionless.

“The ceremony has been completed, the sect has been assembled, and the formalities have been spoken. Fellow Daoist, the time has come for you to show your face!”

The old man's eyes glowed as they came to stare fixedly at Yun Shan's bag of holding.

At the same time, rumbling could be heard, and a powerful wind kicked up as numerous spell formations formed. The million disciples swirled through the air, lining up to form an even larger grand spell formation.

The tens of thousands of powerful experts flanking the man in the violet-gold robe all unleashed explosive energy which caused the sky to dim and everything to shake.

Down below, countless auras erupted out from the million mountains, making the entire place seem like the underworld!

The eruption of energy caused blood to spray out of Yun Feng's mouth as he teetered on the brink of unconsciousness. His sister stared in shock, and also coughed up blood, her face turning pale white and filling with confusion and shock.

She looked around at all the surrounding cultivators radiating powerful energy and realized that she had never seen so many powerful experts gathered together in one place.

"Seniors, you..." she said, forcing the words out of her mouth.

Of course, the old man in the violet-gold robe was being careful not to push things too far. After all, he could kill this brother and sister team with a single thought. After a moment, he frowned. Considering the level of his cultivation base and his age, he was adept at judging character, and at detecting when people were putting on an act. From the look of things, this brother and sister duo had no idea what was actually going on.

The old man's heart thumped; reaching out with his right hand, he made a grasping gesture, causing Yun Shan's bag of holding to fly out toward him. Instead of grabbing it, though, he simply waved his sleeve.

A bang rang out as the bag of holding burst open, causing countless random objects to spill out everywhere, including corpses....

The old man's eyes flickered. Ignoring the miscellaneous objects, his mind trembled as his eyes came to focus on one corpse in particular!

As soon as he saw it, his eyes began to shine with unprecedented brightness!

Chapter 1413: So, Are You Going To Sell This Corpse?

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In the moment that all the corpses spilled out, shocking ripples began to spread in all directions from that one corpse in particular. As a result, the faces of the one million Vast Expanse School

disciples turned deathly white, and blood sprayed out of their mouths. Shocked, they began to back up.

At the same time, their cultivation bases were thrown into complete chaos, something they had absolutely no control over.

The faces of the tens of thousands of powerful experts flickered, and their minds spun, as if they were suddenly facing a powerful foe. It was as if, all of a sudden, they were surrounded by mountains of corpses and seas of blood, from within which countless howls emanated out to completely inundate them.

It was a thoroughly shocking development which caused everything to vibrate and shake.

The indescribable energy coming from the corpse swept over everyone, becoming an intense pressure that caused even the one million mighty mountains down below to tremble. The lands quaked as dust and dirt first floated up into the air, and then were slammed back down again. The chain bridges which connected the mountain peaks were swaying back and forth, and countless disciples felt as if their minds were being struck by lightning.

The energy which had previously been emanating out from the million mountains was, as of this moment, being crushed down as if by a huge hand, completely disintegrated.

Everyone in the area gasped in shock. Only the brother and sister team didn't feel any pressure. However, they could see what was happening, and the thick-headed sister turned to look at that one particular corpse, the blood draining from her face in the process as she recalled how she had picked it up along the way.

"What... what kind of corpse did I pick up...?" she murmured inwardly. She saw the million disciples coughing up blood, she saw the lands trembling, she saw the mountain peaks shaking, she saw the astonishment of the tens of thousands of powerful experts, and she saw the blinding light shining from the eyes of the old man in the violet-gold robe.

One thing she didn't notice was that the mastiff which she had picked up along with the corpse was nowhere to be seen.

As all of this happened, countless gasps and cries of shock and alarm could be heard.

“That’s... that’s....”

“A Paragon corpse! That’s the corpse of a Paragon! Heavens! A 9-Essences Paragon corpse!!”

“No wonder the Vast Expanse Bell tolled. There aren’t many 9-Essences Paragons to begin with in the Vast Expanse, and yet somehow, these two people from the Yun Clan... happen to have the corpse of one in their bag of holding!”

“That corpse is a precious treasure!” In the midst of all the commotion, the old man in the violet-gold robe suddenly flicked his sleeve, causing numerous sealing marks to appear and float down onto Meng Hao’s corpse. As they settled onto him, everything in the area slowly returned to normal. However, everyone in the area was still in an uproar.

The old man eyed Meng Hao’s corpse, then looked over at the young woman who called herself Yun Shan.

“From whence cometh this corpse?” he asked.

“F-found... I found it....” she stammered.

Her words caused everyone to stare wide-eyed with shock, as if what she were saying was unimaginably outrageous. Soon, strange expressions appeared on the faces of the cultivators in the area. As for the old man, he felt as if a lightning bolt had just struck his mind. After staring in shock for a moment, he smiled wryly.

Although he had appeared to remain calm earlier, his heart had actually been surging with tsunamis of astonishment. There weren’t a large number of 9-Essences Paragons in the Vast Expanse. Each and every one was a consummately powerful expert, people... who ordinary folk would be lucky to simply catch a glimpse of. And that was when they were alive. After they died... it would be easier to find a phoenix feather or a qilin horn than to see such a corpse.

9-Essences experts had a longevity that was virtually unending. They would never just pass away into meditation. Either they would try to Transcend into the Daosource Realm, or they would fail in their attempt, and be destroyed in body and spirit. In the latter case, they wouldn’t leave a corpse behind.

Another possibility was that they might be killed in battle. However when 9-Essences Paragons fought, it would be unlikely that the defeated party would be behind as an intact body. Most of the time, the final result was a smashed and mangled corpse. Because of all of that, the intact corpse of a 9-Essences Paragon was something exceedingly rare.

The old man in the violet-gold robe spent a moment in thought. He recognized the sequence of cause and effect here. Obviously, this brother and sister team had found this corpse in their journeys. After arriving at Planet Vast Expanse, it attracted the attention of the spell formation, and caused the bell to ring. His previous assumption that someone was hiding in the young woman's bag of holding was simply a mistake.

Everything made sense now. Except for one thing. A dead person shouldn't have attracted the attention of the spell formation and caused the Vast Expanse Bell to ring.

"He still has a bit of life force left in him," he thought. "He must have been in a bitter fight, then somehow managed to flee at a critical moment. He was so severely injured that his soul nearly dispersed. He's likely in a state of recovery which will last for thousands of years." A flicker of greed appeared in the old man's eyes. Smiling, he reached out his hand to take the corpse; as for the brother and sister duo, he couldn't care less about them.

But then, he frowned as he noticed something on the corpse.

"Hmm, Karma Threads..." he thought. "Well that makes things a bit troublesome. His soul is mostly dispersed, but he still has some connections to this brother and sister, some bit of gratitude linking them together."

As the old man considered what to do, everyone else in the crowd looked on with strange gleams in their eyes. No one seemed to be paying attention to the brother and sister.

Yun Shan was trembling. As of this point, she was terrified, and filled with regret. She wished she had never picked up that corpse, and wished that she had never brought her little brother here to try to con their way into a wedding.

However, even as she trembled in fear, her younger brother sighed and clasped her hand. Normally, his grip was weak, but right now, it was firm.

She looked over in shock at her brother, who forced himself to ignore his fear as he nodded back at her.

A moment later, the old man in the violet-gold robe looked at them with glittering eyes. Smiling, he said, “So, are you going to sell this corpse? I want to buy it.”

Yun Shan gaped in shock at the man’s request. She was just about to reply when her brother took a step forward. Standing in front of her, he clasped hands and bowed to the old man.

“Senior, I am Yun Feng. I’ve come to the Vast Expanse School today to ask for the hand of the Vast Expanse Holy Daughter in marriage. This corpse isn’t for sale. It’s a betrothal gift!” Yun Shan was in complete and utter shock. The words spoken by her younger brother just now, and the way he carried himself, seemed completely out of character.

The old man looked at Yun Feng, eyes flickering with amusement at his words.

“Well, you’ve got guts. Fine. Join the Vast Expanse School, and I’ll send you directly to the Inner Sect.

“As for the marriage, I’ll give you a chance at that. If you can reach the Dao Realm within two thousand years, then I’ll arrange for you to marry the Vast Expanse Holy Daughter of the current generation at that time!”

Yun Feng hesitated, but his sister was clearly elated. Their entire purpose in coming to the Vast Expanse School was to profit in some way. If her younger brother could become a Vast Expanse School disciple, then that would be the hugest profit imaginable. She was just about to step in and accept, when her brother said, “What about my sister...?”

“Her cultivation base isn’t bad,” the old man replied immediately, “but her foundation is already solidified, making it impossible for her to cultivate the magic of the Vast Expanse School. However, Inner Sect disciples can recruit attendants. Just have your sister be one of your attendants.” As the old man finished speaking, he studied Meng Hao’s corpse, and saw that the Karma Threads connecting it to the brother and sister team had unraveled, indicating that the debt connecting them had been resolved. The old man swished his sleeve, collecting up Meng Hao’s corpse and carrying him off into the distance.

The rest of the cultivators also departed, the images of what they had just seen still playing out in their minds. Soon, a few disciples approached Yun Shan and Yun Feng to begin the formalities of accepting them into the Vast Expanse School. As they walked along, the young man looked around,

somewhat in a daze. On the other hand, his sister couldn't look any more happy; as far as she was concerned, they had struck a goldmine.

She glanced over at her younger brother, and her eyes gleamed with praise and anticipation. In her eyes, her brother had just grown up quite a bit, as was evidenced by the clever and decisive way he had just spoken up.

It was only Yun Feng himself who knew the truth. Moments ago, a voice had spoken in his ear and told him exactly what to say.

“That voice which told me what to do... could it have been... that corpse?!” A blank look could be seen in his eyes as he nervously followed the Vast Expanse School disciples off into the distance.

Meanwhile, on one of the million mountains that made up the eighth temple complex, the old man in the violet-gold robe strode along, unable to conceal the delight in his eyes. Soon, he was in a location deep within the million mountains, in front of a teleportation portal. Without the slightest hesitation, he stepped into the portal.

It rumbled and then shone with brilliant light, after which the man disappeared. When he reappeared, he was beneath the surface of Planet Vast Expanse, in the core of the Vast Expanse School.

The inside of Planet Vast Expanse had its own starry sky, complete with a sun and moon, as well as planets. Each one of those planets emanated the aura of a powerful expert, all of whom were apparently in secluded meditation.

Also located in the inner core of the planet was a sea of flames, buried within which was... half of a planet!!

That half-planet was mostly broken and shattered, and emanated a sensation of time and rot. Numerous pagodas and temples adorned its surface, and it emanated an ancient air.

The old man in the violet-gold robe immediately sped in the direction of the sea of flames, and the half-planet therein. As he neared, his voice echoed out, “Fellow Daoists, please have a look at what I've brought for you!”

Laughing, he waved his hand, sending Meng Hao's corpse floating out to hover above the buildings down below.

As soon as it appeared, the sealing marks which had been placed on him vanished, allowing shocking fluctuations to surge out and cover the entire half-planet. Countless people down below were astonished, and six streams of 9-Essences aura suddenly swirled out to surround Meng Hao, accompanied by six people.

"The corpse of a Paragon!! Old Fifth, where did you get your hands on this?!"

"It's not completely dead, there's still the remnant of a discarnate soul...."

"A Paragon corpse like this is something incredibly rare. Unfortunately, although the corpse is intact, its innards are withered into almost nothing!"

"It doesn't matter if its withered! With the resources at the disposal of our Vast Expanse School, we can restore this corpse to peak power in no time! With this corpse, we can carry out the plan to receive the Ninth Paragon earlier than expected!!"

The old man in the violet-gold robe laughed excitedly. It was at this point that a stream of divine sense that was terrifying even to these seven people suddenly exploded out from the half-planet. As it filled the area, the old man and the other six Paragons clasped hands and bowed, serious expressions on their faces.

"Greetings, Sect Leader!"

Chapter 1414: Refining a Paragon Corpse!

That terrifying divine sense was similar to the one from the archaic old man from the Devil Realm Continent. It was in the 9-Essences level, but was at its very peak!

That peak level qualified one to attempt a breakthrough to the Daosource Realm. Of course, powerful souls like that were very rare. For countless years, very few people had ever been able to reach the peak of 9-Essences. In fact, even in an enormous sect like the Vast Expanse School had only ever produced four.

However, those four had all reached a position only one step away from the Daosource!

Unfortunately, from ancient times until the current day, people who could take that final step were as rare as phoenix feathers or qilin horns. In all of the Vast Expanse, there had only ever been two or three... who had completed that step!

All of the others died.

Those who chose not to take that final step, and remained at the peak of 9-Essences, had virtually limitless longevity. Although it wasn't correct to say that they would exist for as long as all Heaven and Earth, they were close to such a level. They had shockingly profound levels of knowledge, and the longer they practiced cultivation, the more powerful they became. However, the Vast Expanse Tribulation came for them once every ten thousand years, and each time it came, it was more terrifying than the last time, until it managed to destroy them.

Because this was so, when it came to comparing those at the peak of 9-Essences, unless someone had a rare, unique Essence, then strength would be determined by who had practiced cultivation in that level for the longest time.

The powerful divine sense enveloped Meng Hao, boring inside of him, inspecting every inch of his being. The other seven Paragons remained off to the side, somber expressions on their faces.

After enough time passed for half an incense stick to burn, it slowly retracted, and then an ancient voice echoed out.

“This person received the legacy of a Daoist magic in a previous life, which artificially propelled him to the 9-Essences level. However, the result was significant damage that would be difficult to notice upon cursory examination. Even though he is still alive, it would be so difficult for him to make further progress that to do so would require something akin to defying Heaven.

“This person experienced profound sorrow and grief in life, and apparently went through a huge catastrophe. Most likely, he witnessed the destruction of his homeworld. Everyone else died, with him being the sole survivor. Even his narrow escape left him with only a discarnate soul.

“The level of rancor within him is profound, and his previous obsessions still linger. His mind was strong, and his fleshly body even stronger. He even commands some sort of Essence magic that exceeds my comprehension. Very interesting.

“All of those things are secondary, though. Most interesting of all is his aura. It is neither Immortal nor Devil, and it differs from the Vast Expanse. It contains fluctuations the likes of which... I have never seen before.

“Considering everything I have revealed, it is likely that the seven of you have already guessed who he is!” As the ancient voice echoed about, the seven Paragons, including the old man in the violet-gold robe, had thoughtful looks on their faces.

A moment later, one of their number, a middle-aged cultivator, suddenly spoke, his eyes glittering as he said, “One thousand years ago. The Mountain and Sea Realm. Meng Hao!”

In response to his words, the eyes of the other Paragons flickered. The old man in the violet-gold robe looked over at Meng Hao’s corpse. Then they began to discuss the matter.

“It’s most likely him. A thousand years ago, the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm Continent attacked the Mountain and Sea Realm, which was the evolved version of the Paragon Immortal Realm. It is said that the only thing which survived was a World-Butterfly, which entered the Green Coffin Vortex. A Dao was passed on to Meng Hao, pushing him into the 9-Essences level. But then he was seriously wounded, and even as he hovered on the brink of death, he was teleported away.”

“So, it’s him. Even to this day, the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm have people searching the Vast Expanse for him. If we....”

“It doesn’t matter. We just want his body, we’re not trying to help him awaken!”

The powerful divine sense once again spread out, and the ancient voice spoke, as cold as ice. “Leave him here. Just now, I felt some sort of reaction from the ancestral relic. Keeping it under control makes it difficult for me to divide my attention. Once it has stabilized, I’ll come back to wipe the discarnate soul out of the corpse. Then, we can refine the body using the resources of the Vast Expanse School. After all of its injuries have been healed, and the body is stabilized, then... the fleshly body vessel will be prepared, and we can summon the Ninth Paragon.

“As for the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm Continent, they will never be able to find the corpse in here. Besides, even if they knew about it, would they really be willing to start a war with our Vast Expanse School?” The ancient voice was filled with a domineering air, and even as it began to fade away, the other seven Paragons exchanged glances and then began to laugh. Then, they clasped hands and bowed before returning to their various locations of secluded meditation.

Since the Sect Leader himself said he would handle Meng Hao's corpse, they weren't worried at all about anything unexpected happening.

After they all left, Meng Hao's corpse remained there hanging there in midair, still and unmoving.

His soul was hidden within the wick of the bronze lamp that rested inside of him. The little bit he had allowed to emanate to the outside just now had been to attract the attention of the Paragons of the Vast Expanse School. He was making a gamble now, gambling that he wouldn't be discovered, that he could use this place to remain concealed from the forces which sought him, and simultaneously, restore his cultivation base.

He also needed to continue to practice cultivation, and seize an opportunity to step into the Daosource Realm as early as possible.

All of those goals were things he hoped to accomplish in the Vast Expanse School.

He would make use of the resources of the Vast Expanse School to heal his injuries, and perhaps even incite the Vast Expanse School into a war with the Immortal God Realm and the Devil Realm. Even if he couldn't pull off a war, he would still need a place with abundant resources to practice cultivation in the way he desired.

Actually, upon awakening, he had little concept of what the Vast Expanse School was. However, when he was on the flying shuttle, he had found that the closer he got, the more his bronze lamp would tremble and even emanate fluctuations that were complementary to Planet Vast Expanse. At that point, Meng Hao had made his decision.

The bronze lamp was mysterious and unfathomable. He wasn't sure exactly where it came from, but he could tell that it definitely had something to do with Planet Vast Expanse.

With his soul hidden in the wick of the lamp, the old man in the violet-gold robe had been unable to detect his presence. However, the powerful divine sense of the Vast Expanse School's Sect Leader left Meng Hao shaken with the threat it posed.

That divine sense was able to inspect every aspect of his body, and had even passed over the location of the bronze lamp several times. However, the lamp itself was something that even the

terrifying Sect Leader couldn't detect, which dispelled the lingering feelings of fear Meng Hao had because of the man.

A few days later, that same terrifying divine sense exploded out and enveloped Meng Hao. This time, it studied him for an entire hour, examining him in every aspect. It also completely wiped away the soul fragment that Meng Hao had left outside of the bronze lamp.

In effect, he was murdering Meng Hao; were it not for the bronze lamp, then any chance he had of fully awakening would have been forever erased.

After the hour passed, the divine sense slowly retracted. Meng Hao's corpse was then gripped by a powerful force which pulled it down toward a wide platform, atop which was an enormous cauldron!

It was a medicine cauldron, fully 3,000 meters tall, like a looming mountain. An everburning, seven-colored flame roared beneath it, and inside was a sea of medicine. The powerful force which gripped Meng Hao instantly threw him into the middle of the cauldron.

As that happened, the old man in the violet-gold robes flew over, along with the other six Paragons. They hovered to a stop above the cauldron, then waved their sleeves as they tossed numerous precious medicinal plants inside. In response, the medicinal brew inside began to bubble and boil.

"It has begun," said the ancient voice. "The soul is completely wiped away, leaving the body an empty husk. Heal the wounds and restore the body to a state of perfection, and then we can use it." The seven Paragons had very serious expressions on their faces as they sent out the power of their cultivation base, causing the pores all over Meng Hao's skin to open and begin to absorb the medicinal ingredient extracts.

Rumbling sounds echoed out. Inside the bronze lamp, Meng Hao's soul couldn't feel the burning sensation that existed outside of his body, but he could sense his wounds rapidly healing.

His spirits instantly lifted, and yet he maintained full vigilance.

Time passed. Nineteen days later, so much of the medicinal brew within the huge cauldron had drained away that the cauldron was almost empty. Meng Hao was like a black hole; despite the vast quantity of pure medicinal plants he had absorbed, his injuries were only healed by about thirty percent.

“Simply extraordinary! Not even all those medicinal plants could heal him?”

“It doesn’t matter. The resources of the Vast Expanse School are profound. Virtually limitless! However much he needs to absorb, that’s how much we’ll provide. It just goes to show the incredible potential in this corpse!” The Paragons laughed heartily. Not concerned at all about this development, they went to find more medicinal plants to throw into the cauldron.

Rumbling could be heard as the medicinal brew rose higher within the cauldron once again. Meng Hao was completely submerged. His fleshly body was growing stronger, and the dangerous instabilities caused by being prematurely awoken from the process of absorbing Shui Dongliu’s legacy were slowly being neutralized.

As he remained hidden within the bronze lamp, Meng Hao licked his lips. Although he wasn’t aware of it, a bashful expression had appeared on his face, and he seemed a bit embarrassed.

Another month passed....

“Still not recovered? Ah, it’s fine. Keep providing him materials to absorb!”

“I grew this Heavenrose Grass for 30,000 years. I’ll give it to him. All for the benefit of the Ninth Paragon!”

“Years ago I fought a desperate battle to gain this Cloud Dragon bone.... Ah, whatever. The arrival of the Ninth Paragon is critical for our Vast Expanse School!”

The seven Paragons didn’t seem very happy, but they gritted their teeth and began to produce all sorts of various precious materials from their collections, which they threw into the cauldron to continue the refinement process.

Meng Hao’s body was now almost completely recovered. The dangerous instabilities had been mostly neutralized. However, the bronze lamp which no one could see was like a ravenous black hole when it came to absorbing resources!

In fact, it had absorbed more than half of the various precious materials so far. That caused its flame to grow brighter and brighter, and gradually, Meng Hao could sense that the bronze lamp itself was awakening!

More and more materials were absorbed, until finally, the entire cauldron was rumbling, and the energy of Heaven and Earth in the area was also sucked in.

“The process is almost complete. The energy of Heaven and Earth is being absorbed. Things will be over soon.”

“We paid a high price, but the result is an incredibly powerful Paragon corpse. It will all be worth it when the Ninth Paragon arrives.”

The seven Paragons were laughing heartily, and looked very much at ease. In recent days, they had been constantly pouring cultivation base power into the cauldron. To finally see an end in sight to all the wastage caused them to sigh in relief.

Time passed. One month. Two months. Three months....

Chapter 1415: Vast Expanse Dao Body!

[/expand]

The starry sky which stretched out over the half planet trembled as boundless energy of Heaven and Earth surged into the enormous cauldron. All seven Patriarchs, including the one in the violet-gold robe, had extremely unsightly expressions on their faces. There was no need to even mention the wastage to their cultivation bases which had occurred over the past three months. Virtually all of the medicinal plants they possessed had already been thrown into the cauldron, and yet Meng Hao's corpse... still hadn't fully recovered.

“A pit! That's not a corpse inside that cauldron, it's a bottomless pit!” Their hearts ached, and yet the Sect Leader, wherever he was in the depths of the land, hadn't spoken a single word about the matter, so it would be bad form for them to stop. Enduring the pain, they continued.

Meng Hao, on the other hand, was more excited than ever. He was like a fish back in water, his injuries fully recovered, the instabilities negated.

And yet, he just couldn't bear to let so much energy of Heaven and Earth go to waste, not to mention all of the legendary medicinal plants, all of which were things that had been extinct in the

Mountain and Sea Realm. He was in a constant state of being remoulded; his fleshly body was growing stronger, and his cultivation base was rising.

The bronze lamp was burning brighter than ever as it absorbed the energy of Heaven and Earth, and the valuable, precious materials. As it grew stronger, it in turn helped Meng Hao to grow, causing incredible transformations within him as he grew more powerful.

As the process continued, Meng Hao's body became more and more suitable... to act as the vessel for the bronze lamp!

Before, his body had been most suited to the 33 Soul Lamps, but now, it was transforming in a way that would allow it to wield the power of that one bronze lamp!

That rebuilding process required that his qi passageways be broken down and then reconstructed. Light from the bronze lamp forged new qi passageways, which spread out to fill him. New blood vessels stretched out, and the pumping of his heart grew stronger. Every part of him was affected, until his body began to shine like a precious gem!

There was even a certain ancient feeling that appeared, as though Meng Hao's body had become a valuable, precious stone from ancient times. There was a chaotic, primeval Dao that seemed to fill him, to permeate every aspect of his flesh and blood, and to swirl around him.

His body seemed more ancient, its aura more primeval, and at the same time, he looked younger!

Even as Meng Hao was being transformed by the bronze lamp, something was happening in the lands below, where the half-planet existed. There could be seen a crimson sea.

It was not blood, but consisted of the condensed power of elemental fire. Within that crimson sea of fire was a huge turtle shell, upon which an old man sat cross-legged.

The turtle shell was like a sealing mark, which was apparently suppressing something that existed underneath the crimson sea of flames. The flames churned, and occasional beams of light would seep up from down below, as though whatever was being sealed underneath was attempting to break free.

The old man's face was pale white as he expended all possible effort to maintain the suppression of the seal. Because of the intensity of his work, he was unable to sense what was happening in the outside world.

He had no idea what had happened recently. The ancestral relic beneath the sea of flames had become active to a degree that far exceeded its activity in the past. In the past, it would occasionally become very animated every once in awhile, but such events would only last for a few days.

In contrast, this time it had remained active for several months!

Up above, Meng Hao continued the absorption process. The ancient air about him grew more prominent, and caused the starry sky above him to rumble with such intensity that the fluctuations spread out into the rest of Planet Vast Expanse!

The Heavens trembled, and clouds roiled. From a distance, it even looked as if a layer of distorted vortexes had appeared atop Planet Vast Expanse!

The brother-sister duo of Yun Shan and Yun Feng couldn't see these things, but if they could, Yun Feng would likely be reminded of what he had seen back on the flying shuttle!

The only difference was that the flying shuttle was small, whereas Planet Vast Expanse was... huge!

Over the course of the passing months, visiting cultivators on Planet Vast Expanse couldn't help but sense that something strange was happening. That was especially true of the last half month, during which the distorted vortexes appeared outside of the planet. Any who neared them would find their bodies being withered away rapidly. That terrifying fact ensured that few people dared to get close to them.

Even the mist of the Vast Expanse in the area seemed to have been affected, and began to flow ceaselessly. Eventually, the effect stretched out even farther. If it were possible to look down at the Vast Expanse from an extremely high vantage point, then Planet Vast Expanse would look every bit like a black hole.

That black hole was surrounded by a slowly spinning vortex which affected the entire area around it, and grew larger and larger as time went by!

Out in the Vast Expanse were countless bizarre entities who were now trembling. When they cast their gazes in the direction of Planet Vast Expanse, they could sense that something terrifying was slowly awakening there!

Time passed. Two months later, the seven 9-Essences Paragons were on the verge of losing their tempers. They had fully unleashed their cultivation bases, and had produced virtually all of the precious materials they possessed. They were now empty and drained, and yet Meng Hao's body in the cauldron was still withered, although it seemed to have improved slightly.

“Dammit, what is this thing? How can this corpse absorb such quantities of resources!”

“All of those resources were extremely precious and valuable. How is this even possible!?!?”

“By this point, there's no point in complaining. We need a big burst of energy to restore the corpse. Otherwise, everything else will have been a huge waste!” The seven Paragons gritted their teeth helplessly. As the saying goes, if you ride a tiger, it's hard to get off. They produced jade slips and sent various messages. Soon, numerous beams of light appeared from the main areas of the sect as cultivators brought more precious materials to feed into the huge cauldron.

“This is Dragonleaf Shoot.... We only have 350 grams of it in the entire sect!”

“Why did you even bring this Pinegod Cone here? It's... it's... alright, fine!” The seven Paragons felt their hearts twinge with pain; it had only taken a short six months or so for the precious materials they had spent countless years gathering for the sect, to disappear into the cauldron.

The cauldron thrummed, and inside, Meng Hao's body was actually reverting from its withered state. However, he was continuously suppressing those effects. In some ways, he was feeling a lot of pressure himself.

His fleshly body was getting stronger, and his cultivation base was rising. Gradually, everything began to stabilize. Within the precious materials were some things that could be categorized as Essences of all living things. When those items merged into Meng Hao's forehead, the Hex marks there gradually filled with more Essence power.

His body was being completely remoulded, completely transformed!

Surprised, Meng Hao let out a sigh. “I can’t keep this up much longer.... Those guys are crazy! They’re throwing so much stuff in that even the bronze lamp can’t absorb it quickly enough.”

More time passed, a half month. Outside of the cauldron, the seven Paragons’ hearts raged with flames of fury. The resources of the Vast Expanse School were drawn upon once more. By this point, the energy of Heaven and Earth in the starry sky was showing signs of being dried up. The seven Paragons couldn’t take it any longer.

“Dammit! I give up! I’m gonna drag that corpse out and cut it open to find out what’s going on!”

“This is no cultivator, and definitely not Meng Hao! I checked into Meng Hao earlier, and he’s a cultivator. What we have here is some all-consuming beast!”

“I quit!!” The seven Paragons couldn’t hold back their rage any longer, and shot toward the huge cauldron. Before they could get close, though, the cauldron itself began to emanate thunderous rumbling sounds. The energy of Heaven and Earth ceased moving toward it, and the medicinal brew suddenly went completely still.

Then, Meng Hao slowly rose up from within the shaking cauldron, to hover there in midair. He emanated shocking pressure that filled the entire planet, and spread out even further, causing the starry sky above Planet Vast Expanse to flash with strange colors.

It was at this point that the distortions which surrounded Planet Vast Expanse spread far and wide. Rumbling sounds could be heard as the mist in the boundless vortex was affected in numerous regions.

Countless living beings cried out and began to shake as looks of terror spread out on their faces. There were even certain ancient entities which not even the Vast Expanse School would dare to provoke, who were awoken from sleep, with looks of astonishment on their faces.

“Vast Expanse... Dao Body....”

Rumbling sounds filled the entire Vast Expanse, as it was filled by a gargantuan, indescribable vortex. Several shocking auras rose up from the Immortal God Continent, which looked off into the distance with somberness and shock.

The same thing happened on the Devil Realm Continent, in which several streams of divine sense looked off into the distance in disbelief.

Within the Green Coffin Vortex, the butterfly's wings fluttered as a bit of the mist of the Vast Expanse entered into the world of the butterfly, and could be sensed by many.

On the peak of the tallest mountain, tears streamed down Xu Qing's cheeks, and she smiled.

"I just sensed it.... You're out there...."

As the shocking events played out in the Vast Expanse, back above the half planet inside Planet Vast Expanse, Meng Hao floated there, the center of all attention among the surrounding disciples of the Vast Expanse School.

A fragrant aroma even spread out from him, and his body truly looked as if it had been moulded from precious gems. His facial features were the same, but in terms of his overall appearance, it was vastly different.

Anyone who looked at him would be shaken, as if they had just laid eyes on the most perfect treasure in existence!

As for the seven 9-Essences Paragons, they stepped forward, their eyes glowing with strange light as they examined Meng Hao.

Chapter 1416: Welcoming Light!

Meng Hao's current physical appearance was difficult to put into words. It was matchlessly scintillating, and as he hung there above the enormous cauldron, dazzling, jewel-like light spread out that seemed capable of outshining all other gems or treasures.

Shocking fluctuations spread out in all directions from him, which caused even more vortexes to appear outside in the Vast Expanse.

As of this moment, the old man in the violet-gold robe, as well as the other six Paragons, were gasping. They couldn't help but stare at what had sucked away the better part of a year, as well as countless precious materials from the sect and even their own cultivation base power. What had been moulded... was a Heaven-shaking, Earth-shattering fleshly body.

It was at this point that, deep in the lands down below, the old man on top of the turtle shell finally opened his eyes. The sea of flames had finally calmed down; whatever it was that had agitated the ancestral relic inside of the sea of flames had finally vanished.

The old man looked exhausted, but when he sent his divine sense out and saw Meng Hao, his jaw dropped, and his eyes began to shine.

“Vast Expanse... Dao Body!!” he murmured in disbelief.

He wasn't the only shocked one. The other seven Paragons were equally astonished as they sensed Meng Hao's treasure-like body, and as they studied the fluctuations emanating off of him, they quickly realized what it all signified.

“Vast Expanse Dao Body!!”

Gasps rang out, along with expressions revealing mixed emotions. There were even some within whose eyes appeared glints of greed.

Considering that 9-Essences Paragons were feeling greedy, it was easy to see how rare a Vast Expanse Dao Body was!

Of course, this Dao Body was actually not referring to a specific type of fleshly body, but was more a general classification!

Any fleshly body with the right qualifications and potential, after reaching a certain point, would incite changes in the Vast Expanse that the Vast Expanse itself had to suppress. At that time, it could be called a Vast Expanse Dao Body.

The seven Paragons' eyes were glittering, and all the lands around them were trembling. The old man on the turtle shell sent his divine sense out to form a clone, which, as soon as it appeared, caused the other seven Paragons to bury their feelings.

The divine sense clone wore a long white robe, and looked exactly like the old man back on the turtle shell. As he stood there studying Meng Hao, he raised his right hand and touched the corpse's forehead. At that point, boundless divine sense exploded out into Meng Hao.

This time, he spent even more time examining him than last time. An hour later, he lowered his hand. He had just used all of the divine sense power he could muster to thoroughly inspect Meng Hao inside and out, to confirm that there was no trace of a soul inside. Feeling a bit more relaxed, he turned to look at the other seven Paragons.

“You people don’t want to Transcend?!” he asked, a stern gleam in his eyes. His voice wasn’t loud, but it contained a shocking pressure that spread out in all directions, causing the other Paragons to sink further into silence.

“Even I can’t help but covet this Vast Expanse Dao Body. I might not be able to possess it, but I could turn it into a puppet that would be an extremely helpful asset, to say the least.

“But would that be worth forsaking Transcendence?!”

“Our Vast Expanse School is an offshoot of the Vast Expanse Society. And what is our purpose in this starry sky? !?! Have you forgotten?!”

“Within the necropolis of the first generation Patriarch of the Vast Expanse is the method for Transcendence. That is the mission of the Vast Expanse School!”

“After all of these years and years of searching, we’ve finally found hope. Now all we need is for the main sect on the outside to send Paragon Heaven-Eye down to us. Supposedly, he only recently stepped into the 9-Essences level, but he has a Dao eye. This Vast Expanse Dao Body was prepared expressly for him, and will play a vital function in the overall plan!”

“If we can find the secret of Transcendence inside the Patriarch’s necropolis, then all of us will have the same hope to Transcend. The Vast Expanse Society on the outside, the main sect, is not easy to get into, but if we Transcend, then we will be able to leave the Vast Expanse at any time. When that happens, we will definitely have extremely high positions within the Vast Expanse Society!”

“When you compare Transcendence to a piddling Vast Expanse Dao Body, I don’t even need to explain which is more important!” He swished his sleeve, causing Meng Hao’s body to fly out to the central region of the half planet, where... nine primitive-looking altars rose high into the sky.

Meng Hao’s corpse came to rest on the ninth of those altars, where it lay unmoving.

“Make preparations! Contact the Vast Expanse Society on the outside. In three days, we will prepare to receive the Ninth Paragon!” With that, the old man’s clone body vanished. Everything was very quiet, and the old man in the violet-gold robe took a deep breath.

“The Sect Leader is right. After all these years of preparations, and all of the waiting, when hope for Transcendence is finally right in front of us... a Vast Expanse Dao Body is not even worth thinking about!” Sighing, he clasped hands to the others and then walked away.

The others remained silent for a moment, but soon wry smiles appeared on their faces. Shaking their heads, they suppressed the greed they felt for the Vast Expanse Dao Body, and returned one by one to their secluded meditation, where they had three days to restore their cultivation bases back to their peak.

Those three days passed by in a flash. The starry sky outside of Planet Vast Expanse had returned to normal, the majestic vortexes had faded away, and the visiting cultivators returned to their normal affairs. However, the strange signs and portents which had occurred were firmly fixed into the minds of all. For those people, no amount of investigation or inquiry revealed any clues about what had happened.

After the third day, eight beams of light shot through the air of the half-planet toward the nine altars. In the lead was the Vast Expanse School’s Sect Leader. Usually, his time was occupied suppressing what was underneath the sea of flames, and he rarely came out. But now, he was here with his true self, which sat down cross-legged on the first altar.

The other seven Patriarchs, including the old man in the violet-gold robe, landed on the various platforms, then performed double-handed incantation gestures as they rotated their cultivation bases.

Simultaneously, innumerable Vast Expanse School disciples appeared in their location on the half-planet. As they sat down cross-legged, they appeared to be organized into an enormous spell formation. Furthermore, countless asteroids outside of the planet itself were also meticulously organized, causing flickering light to radiate out, and the starlight to fill with dense energy of Heaven and Earth.

Even more Vast Expanse School disciples were visible elsewhere on Planet Vast Expanse, sitting in meditation at the behest of the sect itself. Gradually, the auras of all of the disciples merged together into a whole.

On this day, all cultivators on Planet Vast Expanse who were not members of the Vast Expanse School were prohibited from flying in the air. Any violators would be executed immediately without question.

On this day, Planet Vast Expanse was locked down. No one was allowed to enter!

On this day, all of Planet Vast Expanse thrummed with energy, and rumbling sounds emanated out from it into the starry sky.

Furthermore, a beam of light shot out from the inner part of Planet Vast Expanse, from the turtle shell atop the sea of flames in the half-planet!

According to rumors, the Vast Expanse School had a teleportation portal which connected to outside of the Vast Expanse. In some ways that was true, and in some ways that was false. What was true was that there really was a spell formation. The false part was that... only a Transcendent cultivator could use that teleportation portal to leave!

However, to do that, a Transcendent cultivator wouldn't actually need the aid of such a spell formation.

The true purpose of the teleportation portal was to receive people from the outside, to lock down a position for such people, to transport souls!

This connection between the inside and the outside of the Vast Expanse enabled powerful experts from the outside to send a soul body inside. It was too difficult for a fleshly body to survive the process. It would be destroyed in order to keep the soul body whole and safe as it entered the Vast Expanse.

The cost to operate the teleportation portal was astronomical. Furthermore, both the Vast Expanse School on the inside and the Vast Expanse Society on the outside had to pay a huge price.

Because of the huge cost, it took eras and eras of preparation. In fact, throughout all the years of the Vast Expanse School's existence, it had only been used a few times.

Amidst rumbling sounds, brilliant light rocketed off of the turtle shell in the sea of flames. It pierced through the lands to appear outside of the half-planet, amongst the nine altars. The altars absorbed

the light, and then eight of the people atop the altars unleashed their cultivation bases, adding to the teleportation power.

Meng Hao lay on the ninth altar. From within the bronze lamp, his soul looked out coldly at what was happening. He knew that this would be the final test. If he could pass it safely, then from now on, he would be the Ninth Paragon of the Vast Expanse School.

Not only would he have a new identity, he would gain the protection of the Vast Expanse School. That was critical as far as he was concerned.

“I’ll exterminate this incoming soul, and when I open my eyes, I will be Meng Hao, and also... the Vast Expanse School’s Ninth Paragon.” He examined the bronze lamp that he was hiding in, and smiled. This mysterious and powerful lamp was the main reason why he was so confident in this gamble.

“I have no deep enmity toward you people. If you want to assign blame, then you should blame... yourselves for trying to possess my body!” His eyes flickered as he sank further into the bronze lamp and waited... for his enemy to arrive.

The ninth altar flickered with bright light that converged into a pillar which shot up off of the half-planet and into the inner starry sky. At the same time, the half-planet began to move in rotation, and the asteroids which filled the starry sky began to emanate dazzling light.

Countless voices could be heard chanting scriptures, which emanated off of the half-planet; at the same time, the pillar of light appeared above the lands of Planet Vast Expanse.

The sound of the chanting scriptures bolstered the light; the lands of Planet Vast Expanse were shaking, and the mountains were trembling. The sea of flames became still as the light shot out into the starry sky of the Vast Expanse, rising higher and higher until no one could see it.

At that point, everyone on Planet Vast Expanse began to tremble. Countless life forms bowed their heads, and looks of intense focus appeared in the eyes of the disciples of the Vast Expanse School. As for all the other cultivators, they were completely shaken.

Everyone was now waiting!

Meng Hao’s soul remained in the bronze lamp, eyes shining with a mysterious, incisive light!

“The critical moment has arrived. If I succeed, I can settle down in the Vast Expanse School, and will have a greater hope of getting my revenge. If I fail....

“I won’t fail! Even though the Sect Leader of the Vast Expanse School most likely still has suspicions about my soul, I... won’t fail!” Within Meng Hao’s eyes, a red, Demonic glow could be seen!

Chapter 1417: Who Cares If You Know!?

In the same moment that the pillar of light rose up off of the planet and out into the Vast Expanse, there were three areas on Planet Vast Expanse itself where heart-pounding fluctuations were emanating out.

The first location was a garden that looked like a celestial paradise. In one particular valley was a lake, next to which a young man sat cross-legged, wearing a long golden robe. He looked up, and as he did, his previously ordinary pupils suddenly distorted into oval shapes.

“Yet again someone descends. Is it really so easy for these kids of the younger generation to find the Patriarch’s necropolis?!

“If the method for Transcendence were so simple, then after all these countless years, wouldn’t there be more than just four or five people who have succeeded?”

The second location was far, far away from the first. It was an ice cave, filled with fluttering snow. A woman stood there silently, looking up into the Heavens, and the pillar of light. Her eyes seemed to contain reminiscence, as well as other mixed emotions. After a moment, it all transformed into a light sigh.

“I have no desire to search for the Patriarch’s necropolis, nor to Transcend. I only wish... to return home.”

Gradually, the woman disappeared behind the masses of snowflakes.

Coincidentally, the third location was almost the opposite of the second. It was a scorching desert, where a violet sandstorm raged. If one looked closely, it would be possible to make out the vague image of a person walking through that sandstorm.

When the pillar of light rose up, that person looked up, and then began to cackle shrilly.

“Ah, another. I wonder who it is this time?”

The lands of Planet Vast Expanse quaked as the pillar of light sent wild ripples out into the sky. It was hard to say whether or not it was because of Meng Hao’s Vast Expanse Dao Body, but many beings within the Vast Expanse were now paying close attention to what was happening.

It was at this point that a figure suddenly appeared within the pillar of light. It was a discarnate soul whose fleshly body was crumbling around it. Apparently, the soul was struggling to make its way down.

Apparently there were invisible barriers blocking its way, and as the soul descended, it began to disperse. However, in the very center of the soul was a violet eye, which emanated an air of madness, and continued to follow the pillar of light toward Planet Vast Expanse!

During the process, more of the soul dispersed, but at the same time, it increased its speed. Gradually, thunderous booms began to echo out from within the pillar of light.

Soon the soul was quite close to Planet Vast Expanse. However, at that point it seemed to run into some incredibly powerful obstacle, and the soul began to fully disperse. An unyielding roar echoed out, and then, eight figures appeared in the area surrounding the soul.

Closer inspection would reveal that those eight figures were none other than the Sect Leader and the other seven 9-Essences Paragons. They unleashed massive power to break the barrier down, causing the violet eye to gleam with excitement as they then escorted it down toward Planet Vast Expanse.

They moved with incredible speed, destroying any and all barriers which appeared. By the time the group actually reached Planet Vast Expanse, the soul had dispersed, leaving behind nothing but the eye.

The eye radiated madness, but also pain. It was covered with countless cracks and crevices, and was hovering on the verge of collapse. Apparently, the other eight Paragons could do nothing about that other than increase their speed and usher the eye toward the fleshly body they had prepared for it.

At the same time, the cultivators on Planet Vast Expanse saw what was happening, and their minds were filled with utter shock.

The sounds of scriptures being chanted by the cultivators of the Vast Expanse School seemed to contain a strange power which filled the area, which fused into the pillar of light and helped the eye to resist the collapse.

Rumbling echoed out as the violet eye reached Planet Vast Expanse, passed down through the lands into the inner planet, and then appeared in the air above the ninth altar, where Meng Hao lay stretched out.

By this point, the eye was almost completely covered with cracks, and seemed as if it might collapse at any moment. However, it was in that very moment that it slammed into Meng Hao's forehead and began to bore into him.

When the eye finally merged into Meng Hao, the Paragons on the other eight altars all reacted in the same way.

"Success!!" they cried, opening their eyes and laughing coldly.

The only one who didn't respond in that way was the Sect Leader, who snorted coldly as his eyes opened.

"Fellow Daoists," he said coolly, "activate the Soulseal Formation. Help the Ninth Paragon suppress the discarnate soul in that body!" He waved his hand and then pointed toward Meng Hao laying there on the ninth altar.

The other seven Paragons didn't seem surprised at all by the Sect Leader's command, almost as if they had been prepared for this. Chuckling coldly, they simultaneously unleashed cultivation base power, sending ripples out in all directions. With the Sect Leader taking the lead, they combined their power to form a sealing mark which descended onto Meng Hao.

Inside the bronze lamp, Meng Hao's soul had been preparing to attack the violet eye as soon as it entered. But then his face fell, and he looked around to find a barrier trapping his soul and preventing it from emerging.

It was at this point that the Sect Leader began to speak.

“Fellow Daoist, I don’t care who you are, but it’s safe to assume you’re Meng Hao from the Mountain and Sea Realm. Although I can’t tell where your discarnate soul is hiding, nor do I have any proof of its actual existence...

“I still believe that your arrival was far too coincidental!

“You just so happened to come in the exact moment when we needed a corpse?

“Perhaps it really was a coincidence. Perhaps it was even a coincidence that you consumed a vast amount of precious materials belonging to the Vast Expanse School. However, it strikes me that there’s too little of your soul left, and it put up too little of a struggle. This, of course, might just be a coincidence due to the severe injuries you sustained, which caused you to be so weak.

“It’s possible that you heard my discussions with my fellow sect members here, and that was why you never revealed any traces of your presence. Of course, there is another possibility, and that is that your soul truly has dispersed in all aspects.

“However, the presence of so many coincidences all at the same time is too suspicious. Perhaps I’m being a bit paranoid, but I believe that there is a high likelihood that your soul has not, in fact, dispersed!

“You have been waiting for this very moment to wipe out the Vast Expanse School’s Ninth Paragon, and take his place!

“Therefore, we came prepared. That ninth altar you are on also serves as a suppressor of souls, and is effective on any soul that does not cultivate the magic of the Vast Expanse School!

“Regardless of whether or not you are still there inside your body, and regardless of whether or not I’m paranoid, now that the seal has been activated, I can rest at ease.” As the old Sect Leader’s voice echoed out, the combined effort of the eight Paragons caused the power of the Soulseal Formation to crush down. That in turn allowed the violet eye to take root inside of Meng Hao, to spread tendril-like soul strands throughout his body.

At the same time, a violet mark could be seen on his forehead. It began to open up, taking control of everything, revealing... a violet eye!

Almost as soon as it appeared, a fierce gleam could be seen in the eye. Then, it closed, and even more soul strands went into Meng Hao, filling his qi passageways, his heart, his mind, his everything.

Inside the bronze lamp, Meng Hao's soul frowned. He watched coldly as all of this happened, and could feel the effects of the soul sealing carried out by the Sect Leader and the others.

"So, they were ready for me," he thought, eyes flickering. However, he didn't seem very surprised. After all, people who practiced cultivation all the way to the 9-Essences level were sure to be extraordinary in terms of wisdom and foresight.

"Well, in that case... I'll just have to go with my backup plan. If it turns out I can't erase this other soul, then I'll... consume it!"

Meng Hao's eyes glittered as the bronze lamp suddenly flared with light and then... a crack opened up on its surface. In the instant that the crack appeared, the soul strands of the Ninth Paragon tried to force their way in. Meanwhile, the faces of the Sect Leader and the other Paragons flickered.

Although they had had their suspicions, they hadn't dared to make a determination as to whether or not Meng Hao was truly still in his body. After all, the most rigorous inspections hadn't turned up the slightest evidence of that.

But now that the bronze lamp had opened up a bit, and the soul strands of the Ninth Paragon shot toward it, the eight Paragons could sense what was happening.

"So, he really is still around!" Cold, grim expressions appeared on their faces, and they sent their divine sense pouring toward Meng Hao's body to help the Ninth Paragon suppress Meng Hao's soul.

However, before their streams of divine sense could enter Meng Hao's body, the bronze lamp flashed, and a power of expulsion erupted out, blocking the eight streams of divine sense outside of the body!

Their faces fell. As for Meng Hao, he now had a bit of extra time. His soul unhesitatingly shot out toward the soul strands belonging to the Ninth Paragon. Instantly, the two intertwined, and began to try to consume each other.

At the same time, Meng Hao's Demonic qi erupted out, and his soul transformed. The multifariousness of the Demon caused his own soul to be indistinguishably mixed with the soul strands. That in turn caused his ability to consume them to increase dramatically!

The soul strands could sense the incredible danger, and tried to fight back. However, it was impossible to tell which were which!

The Sect Leader and the other eight Paragons had grim faces as they looked on. They could sense that the souls of Meng Hao and the Ninth Paragon were intermixed, but there was nothing they could do to intervene.

"How could this be happening!?!?"

"Dammit!!" Gleams of rage appeared in their eyes. The Sect Leader looked extremely grim, and yet, couldn't help but sigh with a bit of admiration.

"No wonder this Meng Hao was able to tangle with the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm.... He used his own body as bait for our Vast Expanse School. He set up a sinister scheme, and even anticipated that he would be discovered by us. I was simply too self-confident.

"This is a battle between souls, and one will end up consuming the other. We cannot interfere. Victory will be decided by which among their souls is the strongest."

Chapter 1418: Ninth Paragon!

The Sect Leader of the Vast Expanse School, along with the seven other Paragons, were all sitting cross-legged on the altars, looking very grim-faced.

Although they couldn't directly help the Ninth Paragon, the Soulseal Formation was still in place, exerting pressure onto Meng Hao's soul.

Because the formation only targeted cultivators who did not cultivate the magic of the Vast Expanse School, it was the most effective tool at their disposal. Unfortunately for them, when they tried to send their divine sense into Meng Hao, a powerful force rebuffed them. That only served to make Meng Hao seem more mystifying to them.

Of course, it was all because of the bronze lamp. Furthermore, it forced them to rely only on the general sensation they felt to understand what was happening. They couldn't directly observe. When you added in Meng Hao's multifarious Demonic qi, it meant that what they sensed was often wrong.

Plus there was the fact that they couldn't even tell exactly where Meng Hao's soul was hiding, which made it difficult for them to judge exactly how effective the Soulseal Formation was.

It was just as the Sect Leader had said: everything would come down to who was stronger: Meng Hao, or the Ninth Paragon.

One of them had shocking natural talent, and had relied on his own cultivation base to become a 9-Essences Paragon in the Vast Expanse Society. He even possessed a Dao eye, which could cause shocking transformations in Heaven and Earth. The other had been propelled to the 9-Essences level via legacy, and yet regardless of whether it was in terms of his status or his background, he had reached the pinnacle of his home Realm. He had experienced countless dangers, had watched his world be destroyed, and had battled with both the Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm Continent.

As for which one of these two souls was stronger... the Sect Leader and the other Paragons had no way to say for sure.

They could only wait.

Days passed one by one. Soon, half a month had gone by.

From the outside, there didn't seem to be anything special about Meng Hao. However, inside, a vicious battle was being fought with the soul of the Ninth Paragon. The bronze lamp ensured that the effects of the Soulseal Formation were blocked, allowing Meng Hao to fight with complete viciousness, a viciousness that the Ninth Paragon couldn't even come close to matching.

Even more important was that Meng Hao's soul was backed by his Demonic qi. Its maddening, multifarious nature was completely terrifying, and was a constant pressure on the Ninth Paragon.

"Dammit. Dammit!!" the Ninth Patriarch howled, although the sound was confined within the body. How could he ever have imagined that something like this would happen immediately upon his arrival?

All of his grand aspirations, his wild ambitions, his complex machinations, and even his dream of Transcendence, were now being utterly shaken. In fact, he was even able to sense that his consciousness was starting to fade.

Gradually, he had to admit that when it came to this battle of mutual consumption... he was not a match for Meng Hao!

He wallowed in his bitterness as time passed. Meng Hao's soul now controlled more than half of his body. In contrast, the Ninth Paragon was only growing weaker and weaker. Eventually, it reached the point where he was on the verge of being completely consumed.

"Give me a chance to live!" he wailed. "There is no enmity between us!!" Shaken, he refused to accept the idea of dying in this way.

In almost the same moment that his words echoed out, Meng Hao's soul paused for a moment, then swallowed what remained of the Ninth Paragon's soul, leaving behind only a tiny strand, like a flickering spark.

"You're right, there is no enmity between us," Meng Hao said coolly. "I won't kill you. I'll leave you with this tiny soul seed. One day in the future, I'll give you your freedom!" Even as his voice echoed out, memories and Daoist magics belonging to the Ninth Paragon exploded out within his soul.

The power of his soul increased with maddening rapidity. In the blink of an eye, it broke past its previous limit. After all, consuming the soul of a 9-Essences Paragon counted as incredible good fortune. Although it didn't quite match up to what had happened with Shui Dongliu, it came close!!

It was possible to imagine that, once Meng Hao regained complete control over himself, with his Vast Expanse Dao Body and increased soul power, then his battle prowess would exceed that of an ordinary 9-Essences Paragon. He wouldn't quite be at the peak, but he would definitely be in the mid 9-Essences level!

Meanwhile, the eight Paragons were still there on the altars, staring at Meng Hao with looks of vigilance and hesitation on their faces.

After half a month of observation, they could tell that there was no longer any chaos within Meng Hao. Clearly, one of the souls had consumed the other!

Furthermore, the soul which had emerged as the winner was now much more powerful!

“Which one of them was victorious?” said the old man in the violet-gold robe, his voice soft. The others were unwilling to offer any speculation.

“The Soulseal Formation isn’t doing anything now. The Ninth Paragon must have succeeded...”

“If he did, then the Soulseal Formation would automatically cease to have any effect. However, if Meng Hao succeeded, and absorbed the Ninth Paragon’s soul, then he would also become equipped with the characteristics of Vast Expanse techniques, and the result could possibly be the same.”

Even as everyone hesitated, the Sect Leader’s eyes glittered. “We’ll know the answer soon enough!”

Killing intent swirled in his eyes, and deep inside, he sighed. As soon as he had laid eyes on Meng Hao, he had come up with the idea of using his corpse instead of the other 8-Essences Paragon corpse they had prepared. After all, a 9-Essences corpse would ensure that the Ninth Paragon’s Dao eye would retain the majority of its power.

Then the Vast Expanse Dao Body had appeared, and he was even more convinced to go through with his plan. Even though there was something suspicious about the corpse, he was confident that they could handle the situation.

Actually, if it hadn’t been for the bronze lamp, the entire sequence of events would have been within his complete control.

Killing intent swirled amongst the other Paragons. If it turned out that the Ninth Paragon’s soul had been consumed in front of their very eyes, the sheer magnitude of such an affront would cause their desire to kill Meng Hao to grow even more intense.

The same thought was running through all of their minds. “I truly hope that the Ninth Paragon was victorious!”

As the eight Paragons looked on silently, Meng Hao continued on with the process of fully assimilating the soul. He saw the Ninth Paragon's life, his techniques, his Dao eye, and his memories. However, he saw nothing regarding the world beyond the Vast Expanse. It was almost as if all information regarding the outside had been sealed, and though Meng Hao could sense its existence, he had no way of unlocking and viewing it.

However, he was made aware of the Vast Expanse School's plans regarding the necropolis. Not a bit of that information was withheld.

Time passed. The consumption and absorption process took an entire month. Afterward, when Meng Hao had fully assimilated the Ninth Paragon's soul, he unleashed his own soul to completely fill his body.

As that happened, he was flooded with the sensation of being able to control his own body again. His heartbeat was no longer slow and monotonous, but thrummed with life and energy, and his qi and blood flowed more and more quickly. Furthermore, his aura ceased emanating out, but was contained inside of him.

However, this indicated that Meng Hao's battle prowess was completely different from before, and the pressure experienced by the other eight Paragons was now even more intense.

The Sect Leader and the other Paragons all kept their eyes fixed fully on Meng Hao. They knew that the answer to their question would soon be revealed.

One breath of time passed. Then another, and another....

Meng Hao's finger twitched, and his eyelids trembled. After ten breaths of time passed, he had gathered enough strength that... his eyes opened!

When that happened, the surrounding eight Paragons all unleashed their power. A shapeless tempest sprang up, transforming into a power of extermination that could be sent crushing down onto Meng Hao at a moment's notice.

However, Meng Hao's expression didn't even flicker. He opened his eyes and looked up at the starry sky, blankly at first, but then with more and more lucidity.

His mind filled with countless memories of the Mountain and Sea Realm, ending with the destruction of the Realm itself. He remembered the Mountain and Sea Butterfly fluttering toward the green coffin. He remembered the parrot wiping its mind.

Meng Hao saw all of that, and then buried it deep within him. What could be seen on his face now made him look very different from before. There was no smile, and no warmth. There was only... icy coldness.

His entire person was like a block of ice!

He seemed completely ambivalent toward the storm of killing intent around him as he slowly rose to a sitting position, looking around coldly at the other Paragons.

The Paragons had been paying very close attention to everything about Meng Hao. They noticed the blankness in his eyes, and then saw them turn lucid. They could tell that he was reminiscing about the past, and they could see how cold he had become.

However, none of those things told them much. If the awakened soul was Meng Hao, it would make sense for him to look blank, then lucid, then recall memories, then turn icy cold.

However, if it was the Ninth Paragon, it would have been the same. He would have looked blankly around at the new world, then grown lucid as he realized where he was. No doubt, he would recall memories of his time outside the Vast Expanse, as well as the fight between himself and Meng Hao. In the end, he would look around at these Paragons who had dragged him into an almost fatal ambush, and of course his expression would be icy!

“Who are you?!” asked the Sect Leader. In addition to the killing intent, other mixed emotions could be seen in his eyes. Even now that Meng Hao was awake... he wasn’t sure who he was.

Meng Hao turned, eyes icy as he stared at the Sect Leader. “Who do you think I am?”

Their gazes met, and the Sect Leader’s eyes began to glow as his divine sense surged into a mighty, crushing force.

“You’re Meng Hao!!” In response to his words, the other Paragons’ faces flickered, and their killing intent surged, becoming corporeal as it bore down destructively on Meng Hao.

Meng Hao's expression was the same as ever as he faced the combined killing intent of eight Paragons. Suddenly, a flash of light could be seen on his forehead, a violet streak that opened up to reveal an eye!

It was none other than the Ninth Paragon's Dao eye!

When the Dao eye opened, everything in the entire world went still. A consummate pressure radiated out, allowing him to stand up to the combined killing intent of all of his opponents.

In response, their faces flickered. Simultaneously, Meng Hao rose to his feet, and as he did, wild colors flashed in the sky and a huge wind kicked up.

It was as if a primordial and ancient will were awakening!

"I'm the Ninth Paragon!" he said, his voice booming like thunder.

The Sect Leader's eyes flickered as he examined the Dao eye. Inwardly, he sighed and buried his suspicions deep within his heart. Suddenly, he laughed.

"Ah, you truly are the Ninth Paragon of our Vast Expanse School!" The other Paragons looked on silently. Mixed emotions could be seen in their eyes as they looked at the Dao eye, but after a moment, they also began to laugh.

"Welcome, Ninth Paragon. Welcome to the Vast Expanse!"

Who you really are doesn't matter. As long as you have that Dao eye, and can wield its power... then you are the Ninth Paragon!

Chapter 1419: Putting Down Roots!

Whether or not he was really the Ninth Paragon didn't matter. The Sect Leader of the Vast Expanse School, as well as the other 9-Essences Paragons, had never actually met the Ninth Paragon, so naturally, there were no feelings of friendship between them.

The only reason they needed him was to help with their plan. Furthermore, the most important thing was the Dao eye, which would be of incredible usefulness to them.

That was why they had hoped that the incoming Ninth Paragon would be even stronger in terms of cultivation base.

Now, regardless of whether or not the person they were looking at was Meng Hao or the Ninth Paragon, he had the Dao eye. With that, nothing else really mattered.

If he was the Ninth Paragon, then things were well and good. If he wasn't, then he would have to act like him!

The Sect Leader knew that, and thus he sighed. The other 9-Essences Paragons also knew, and so reacted with mixed feelings.

Meng Hao was aware of that fact as well. That was why he hadn't been surprised at all by the killing intent he saw when he opened his eyes. And that was also why he had opened the Dao eye on his forehead.

When that Dao eye appeared, all danger faded away!

Believe me? Fine! Don't want to believe me...? You have no choice!

As he stood there on the ninth altar, looking at the Sect Leader and the other Paragons, he smiled. It was a warm smile, devoid of the coldness from earlier. Then he clasped hands and bowed to the others.

"Many thanks to you, Fellow Daoists. I will do my best to help with the Vast Expanse School's plan." His smile and his words spoke to his current attitude.

In response, the Sect Leader's eyes flickered, and he laughed again. "Come, come, you've just arrived, and therefore don't know much about our Vast Expanse School. Allow me to introduce everyone."

With that, the Sect Leader jovially introduced the other seven Paragons.

One of them was the old man in the violet-gold robe who had purchased Meng Hao's corpse. His name was Shangguan Hong, and as he smiled and clasped hands to Meng Hao, a profound gleam could be seen in his eyes.

Meng Hao smiled broadly in return, and seemed to have missed the look in the man's eyes. After all the formal greetings were done, the Sect Leader arranged for Meng Hao to be escorted to the temple on the half-planet which had been arranged ahead of time for the Ninth Paragon.

After Meng Hao left, the smiles on the faces of the Sect Leader and the other 9-Essences Paragons turned grim. They remained standing on the altars, silently watching Meng Hao disappear into the distance.

After a long moment passed, Shangguan Hong cleared his throat and said, "Well... that's it?"

Complex expressions could be seen on the faces of the others.

"There's no evidence. No way to prove whether or not he really is the Ninth Paragon...."

"Not necessarily. But what would be the point in it? Whether he is or isn't doesn't matter. If he's not, and prefers to maintain a cover, it doesn't hurt us. If we expose him as a fraud, though, it could harm our own interests."

"Hmph. I can't believe we wasted all those resources to end up like this. Maybe we should contact the Vast Expanse Society and have someone else sent down...."

"We spent far too many years accumulating all of those resources. It's not possible to rebuild the collection any time soon. Besides, if the Vast Expanse Society learned of this matter, who knows how they might deal with us."

After a bit of discussion, everyone quieted down and looked over at the Sect Leader.

He closed his eyes for a few moments, and when they opened, they were shining brightly.

"As long as he helps us carry out the plan, then it doesn't matter who he is, he counts as the Ninth Paragon. Going forward, keep this matter between us." Having finished speaking, he turned and headed back to the turtle shell above the sea of flames to continue his watch.

After he left, he left single sentence floating behind him. “Notify the sect, spread word, and prepare for the ceremony to officially welcome the Ninth Paragon.”

The other seven Paragons exchanged faint smiles. Strange gleams were buried deep in their eyes. Even after meeting Meng Hao and measuring him up, none of them felt any hatred toward him, or desire to kill him. In fact, they even admired him a bit.

“The ultimate figure of an entire Realm, someone who has tangled with both the Immortal God Realm and the Devil Realm. If he was able to make a comeback after dying... then he can’t be underestimated, nor should he be provoked.”

“How crafty and vicious. And also decisive. If he had made the slightest mistake, a huge battle would have erupted.”

“And yet he managed to hit the nail on the head with that Dao eye. In the end, he basically put himself in an unassailable position.”

“You all might think he is Meng Hao, but in my opinion, the Ninth Paragon would have done just the same.” Some of the Paragons sighed, and others smiled. After exchanging a few more words, they dispersed.

Everything slowly went back to normal in the starry sky of the half-planet.

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A Vast Expanse School disciple respectfully led Meng Hao to the palace which had been set aside for the Ninth Paragon.

The palace encompassed an area of 300,000 meters, taking up almost an entire plain on the north side of the half-planet. It even had special secluded meditation facilities just for the Ninth patriarch. At first glance, it looked like a vast city.

It was spectacular to behold, complete with mountains, rivers, numerous lakes, and countless buildings. It was like a celestial garden, and at the very center was a towering pagoda, beneath which was an austere temple.

The pagoda was so high it seemed to touch the clouds. From a distance, it was possible to see that there were nine cities like this on the half-planet, which of course corresponded to the nine Paragons of the Vast Expanse School.

Just outside of the city was a placard with calligraphy as flamboyant as dancing dragons and swirling phoenixes.

Ninth Paragon.

This was where Meng Hao was to live. The city was inhabited by 100,000 disciples who served as his guard force. Among their number were three Imperial Lords, seven Dao Sovereigns, dozens of Dao Lords, and over a hundred ordinary Dao Realm experts. The rest were either in the Ancient or Immortal realms.

That group in and of itself was enough to leave Meng Hao completely shaken, and gave him a hint as to the resources at the disposal of the Vast Expanse School.

In addition to the 100,000 guards were other members of their clans, as well as other ordinary disciples. All in all, the population of the city as a whole was well over a million.

At the moment, Meng Hao was seated cross-legged within the temple. Ten individuals stood there respectfully in front of him. These were none other than the three Imperial Lords and seven 6-Essences Dao Sovereigns.

There was something interesting about the Imperial Lords. Meng Hao wasn't sure how many Imperial Lords the Vast Expanse School had in total, nor how the considerations were made in their assignments. In any case, the Imperial Lords assigned as his guard were all women.

The three of them were all spectacularly beautiful. As cultivators who had reached the Dao Realm, that was no surprise. With the exception of people with odd perversions, all cultivators grew to be exceedingly good-looking by the time they had reached this level, regardless of how ugly they might have been previously. As for these three, they all seemed to be natural beauties, far beyond the ordinary.

If it were only the Imperial Lords who were women, it might not have been something unusual. However, all seven of the 6-Essences Dao Sovereigns were also women. Meng Hao couldn't help

but be a bit surprised at that. It wasn't until he searched through the memories of the Ninth Paragon that he found the answer.

Back in the Vast Expanse Society, outside of the Vast Expanse, the Ninth Paragon had been fond of cultivating magic that required male and female cultivators. The more female vessels he had to drain, and the higher their cultivation bases, the more exciting he found the process.

Obviously, the Paragons from the Vast Expanse School were aware of that, and had made special arrangements. However, as of now, all of those special arrangements were somewhat meaningless.

Meng Hao's expression was the same as ever as he sat there in the temple, twirling a jade slip through his fingers. Within that jade slip were 100,000 souls, which ensured that Meng Hao had no need to use his cultivation base to keep all of his guards under control. With a single thought, he could kill all 100,000 of them.

"This Vast Expanse School is quite interesting," he murmured to himself. He looked up at the ten women in front of him, and most especially the three Imperial Lords.

Of those three, one seemed cold and icy to an extraordinary degree. Based on what Meng Hao knew about cultivation, he guessed that her personality had been affected by the techniques she cultivated, which were surely based on ice and coldness.

Another of the women had a warm smile on her face, and looked at Meng Hao with awe and respect. Earlier, she had been the one to explain to Meng Hao all of his powers within the sect, and also how the sect was organized into its various factions.

The third of the Imperial Lords had a stony face and seemed very somber. However, deep within her eyes was a revulsion for Meng Hao. Clearly, she was not happy at all at being assigned this position by the sect.

As for the seven 6-Essences Dao Sovereigns, most of them looked nervous. To them, he was the Ninth Paragon, someone far, far above them, and someone whose words were to be taken as commands.

"Alright, keep going," Meng Hao said coolly, smiling at the warm Imperial Lord.

She nodded and continued her explanation. “In addition to the 100,000 guards and 1,000,000 ordinary disciples, your excellency has a considerable section of land to the far north, set aside for raising starbeasts.

“Also upon our holy planet are 10,000,000 spirit fields under your control, tended by over 100,000,000 spirit peasants. In addition to that is a vein of Earthflame, which is one of the three ultimate alchemic resources on Planet Vast Expanse. The medicinal pills and magical items it produces account for thirty percent of the total yield for the Vast Expanse School.” The Imperial Lord smiled at Meng Hao. When she spoke, her voice was like the the call of songbirds.

“You also possess a continent on the surface of Planet Vast Expanse, your majesty, which is known as the Vast Expanse Ninth Sect. That is where your Dao palace is located, and is also one of the temple complexes of the Vast Expanse School. There are hundreds of millions of disciples there, not to mention countless mortals.

“You are the ultimate authority within the Ninth Sect, and not even the other Paragons can interfere with your orders there. Even the exalted Sect Leader must request your permission before calling upon the resources there.

“In addition, of the 3,000,000 cities on the surface of Planet Vast Expanse, you exercise control over 300,000. You also control 131 businesses, including famous establishments like the Grand Banquet Pavilion, Celestial Benevolence Hall, and the 10,000 Treasures Mansion. In total, the branches of all the business you own number in the millions.

“Then there are your holdings off of Planet Vast Expanse. They include 97 cultivator clans and 64 land masses. Those are only the things which can be numbered. You have countless other interests which are too vast to calculate.”

“Among your direct subordinates are five 8-Essences Paragons and ten 7-Essences Paragons, stationed in various locations. As of now... they are all en route back here to pay their respects to you.”

After hearing the woman’s explanations, Meng Hao felt a bit out of sorts. He could never in his wildest imaginations have guessed that the Vast Expanse School’s Ninth Paragon... would be given so much wealth.

Chapter 1420: A Direction for Transcendence!

“And that is just ten percent of what is officially part of the Vast Expanse School as a whole.” The warm way she looked at Meng Hao never changed from beginning to end, not even when he ended up looking a bit dazed from her explanation.

As for the other Imperial Lords, the one was still cold-faced. As for the other, her disgusted gaze now seemed to contain a trace of scorn, although she apparently thought she was hiding it well.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered faintly. As of this point, he had a relatively overall idea of how powerful the Vast Expanse School was. At the very least, it was vastly larger and more powerful than the Mountain and Sea Realm.

“Considering that the three peak powers in the Vast Expanse are the Immortal God Continent, the Devil Realm Continent, and this Vast Expanse School,” he thought, “it leads me to believe that in my battle with the former two, they weren’t using all of their strength. Or perhaps there were some factions within them that chose to remain neutral.”

Meng Hao closed his eyes in thought for a moment, and when he opened them, he looked calmly at the ten women in front of him, then waved his hand dismissively. Finally, he closed his eyes again.

They all bowed their heads and left. After departing the temple, they all went their separate ways to their various residences.

Everything in Ninth Paragon City was quiet, as though pressure was weighing down on everyone. The 100,000 cultivators who were stationed in the city were all very nervous.

There was a sun and moon in the inner planet, and soon night fell. The sky was black, with a field of glittering stars. Silence reigned. In the temple, Meng Hao finally opened his eyes.

After a moment of silence, he slowly rose to his feet and walked forward. Then he vanished. When he reappeared, he was far above the palace, on the towering pagoda which looked out over Ninth Paragon City.

A wind blew, sending his hair flying about, and his robes rustling. There he stood, looking down at the scene below for some time before lifting his head to gaze off into the distance.

He felt like a stranger here, and everything seemed unfamiliar. The terrain was unfamiliar, the people were unfamiliar, and even the starry sky up above was unfamiliar.

Meng Hao felt very lonely. He had always thought of himself as being strong, but when he thought back to everything that had occurred with the Mountain and Sea Realm, all he saw was a sea of blood, and countless familiar faces, screaming as they died. Gradually, he began to tremble.

He had once believed that his Dao was that of freedom and independence, that it was like a journey upon which all difficulties and setbacks were merely sights to be seen along the way. After looking at those sights, he could move on; his road stretched out into the beyond.

But now, with the Mountain and Sea Realm destroyed, with so many people dead, with the parrot and meat jelly having sacrificed everything so that he could have a chance at another life, it was impossible to view all of those past events as mere sights to see while on a journey.

If they really were just scenery, he would rather stay to enjoy them, and not continue on the journey.

He stood there, heart aching as he thought about the meat jelly in armor form, which he had long since removed and put back into his bag of holding.

Quite some time passed before he managed to get his emotions under control.

“Wait for me.... I will definitely return!”

“When I do, I’ll take all of you away. We’ll leave the Green Coffin Vortex, and establish the Mountain and Sea Realm in the starry sky once again!”

“And I will definitely do everything I can to bring back those of you who have been lost!” A fierce glint appeared in his eyes, which he eventually buried, returning to a state of calm.

Even the redness of his eyes faded. Even close examination would not reveal the bizarre crimson glow in his pupils.

“My Soul Lamps were destroyed,” he murmured, “and now this bronze lamp has become my Prime Lamp.” The wave of a hand caused the bronze lamp to appear, radiating its aura of primordial ancientness.

“Because of all the precious materials provided by the Vast Expanse School, it was able to remould my fleshly body into a form suitable for it.” He looked thoughtfully at the bronze lamp.

“The lamp is burning, and I can sense that if I extinguish it, my cultivation base, and everything else about me... will experience explosive growth!

“From what I can tell, once that explosion occurs, based on the foundation I’ve built with my cultivation base, it will increase by double, triple, or maybe even... tenfold!” These were the conclusions he had reached after further study of the bronze lamp.

After another moment of silence, eight magical symbols appeared on his forehead. His cultivation base rumbled with power as a shocking energy erupted out. He reached his right hand out and placed it onto the lamp in an attempt to extinguish the flame.

The flame flickered, but no matter how much cultivation base power he threw at it, would not be extinguished.

“Still not quite there yet.... I need the Essences of all eight Hexing magics to be complete.” After looking thoughtfully at the dancing flame within the bronze lamp, he gradually retracted his cultivation base power.

“Of the Essences of the eight Hexes, I’ve only gained full enlightenment of the Dao of the Eighth. The other seven Hexes are incomplete. However, the overall process won’t be difficult. Once I finish absorbing Shui Dongliu’s legacy, and spend some time in secluded meditation, I can definitely complete all of the Hexes.

“But what is most important, and what will give me the power to extinguish this lamp, is the missing... Ninth Hex!

“Of the Nine Hexes of the League of Demon Sealers, I have already acquired the first eight. As for the Ninth Hex, I’ll need to create that one.” Meng Hao looked out into the night, his eyes glittering.

“From what I can tell, my future path is clear. I must complete the Essences of the eight Hexes. I must gain enlightenment of the Ninth Hex. I must then combine all the Hexes and use that power to extinguish the bronze lamp. Then I will use the power of the bronze lamp to break through the Paragon level and step into... the Daosource! Transcend!” Brilliant light shone within Meng Hao’s eyes, making him look like a blazing sun.

“If I Transcend, toppling the Immortal God and Devil Realms will be as easy as flipping over my hand!

“If I Transcend, resurrecting my dead friends from the Mountains and Seas will be no challenge!

“If I Transcend, I can reunite with the parrot and the meat jelly. Time can be reversed, and the Mountain and Sea Realm can be reverted from a state of destruction... to its former glory!

“Transcendence. Entering the Daosource. At that point I... will become Essence. I will be a supreme and paramount Dao of Heaven and Earth!” Meng Hao was panting, and his mind spun.

“Daosource. Daosource. From ancient times until now, only a few people have ever Transcended into the Daosource Realm!”

“The Immortal God Continent is powerful because countless years ago, one of their people Transcended. It’s the same with the Devil Realm.

“I, Meng Hao... can also do the same!

“The bronze lamp is my hope for Transcendence. It is like the key to open a great door! Acquiring the Essences of the full group of eight Hexing magics will not be difficult. The true difficulty lies in the Ninth Hex!

“I must gain enlightenment to create that Ninth Hex....” Meng Hao’s eyes shone brightly; he had already come to a vague conclusion regarding that Ninth Hex. “The Seal the Heavens Incantation will be my Ninth Hex!!”

He looked off into the distance as the darkness of night began to give way to the bright glow of day, illuminating his entire person.

The arrival of the Ninth Paragon was a huge matter for the Vast Expanse School. All of the millions upon millions of disciples in the sect were very excited. Of course, news about the matter rapidly spread throughout Planet Vast Expanse as well as the starry sky. In the following months, many of the powers in the region of the Vast Expanse School learned of the matter.

Endless streams of people came to offer congratulations, ensuring that the whole sect was abuzz with activity. Far more cultivators came and went than usual.

As the Ninth Paragon, Meng Hao actually remained undisturbed. He tasked the three female Imperial Lords with handling all matters. Even when other Paragons who were under his command came, he remained in secluded meditation.

That only served to make his subordinates more nervous. After all, Meng Hao was one of the nine most important people in the entire Vast Expanse School, and also had a terrifying cultivation base. At the same time, all of the outstanding individuals who made up the forces under his command were anxiously trying to determine what he liked and didn't like.

That was the only way for them to ensure that matters went smoothly in the days to come.

The grand ceremony was held several months later. It was a huge affair that involved all of Planet Vast Expanse, and included all the cultivator clans affiliated with the Vast Expanse School, as well as the other land masses in the area.

The ceremony itself lasted for a month, but Meng Hao only made one appearance in which people actually had the chance to lay eyes on him. Even though he only showed his face once, the coldness and pressure that radiated off of him was enough to give everyone a feeling of being stifled.

That was especially true of the Paragons under Meng Hao's command.

They waited for quite some time in Ninth Paragon City before Meng Hao received them individually. After their audience, each and every one had unsightly expressions on their faces, eyes filled with both hesitation but also a sliver of anticipation.

What Meng Hao had issued to them was his first order after becoming the Ninth Paragon!

“Use all available resources to expand our influence, beginning immediately. Within a thousand years, I want my forces to increase by several times at the minimum!”

The orders were quickly passed down. Whether or not people understood them or even approved, within the domain of the Ninth Paragon, his words were commands!

Whether or not people wanted to comply... they had to!

The forces of the Ninth Paragon immediately went wild with activity. They began to expand, to invade, to raid, and to multiply.

Meng Hao didn't care how they went about it. He only cared about the Mountain and Sea Realm, and his revenge. He didn't want to rest all his hopes on his Transcendence. Therefore, he would prepare... for the possibility that he wouldn't Transcend; if that happened, he still needed to possess the wherewithal to get his revenge.

He needed more people. He needed more power. He needed to prepare to make his future declaration of war.