

The Heavens 1491

Chapter 1491: Xu Liuyun

During the last snowfall of winter on the fourth continent, the curtain opened on the sixth life of Meng Hao's clone.

He was born into the prosperous Xu Clan, which owned lots of land and property in the region, and controlled numerous profitable businesses. Most of their income came from agricultural interests.

They lived in one of the large cities in the empire of the mortal world, which was situated next to a trade canal. They were fabulously wealthy.

A child born into a clan like that was destined to live a life free from adversity, and to always have everything he needed and wanted.

Thankfully, in this life, Meng Hao's clone was not a silkpants like he was in his fourth life. He grew up into an intelligent young man who was quite prominent even as a youth. Soon, he began to assist his father in managing the family companies.

As time passed, and he grew older, he came to be in charge of all of the family's business interests. He ran things well, but at the same time, began to develop a certain ferocity. It was a fierceness manifested, not toward his fellow clan members, but toward his business opponents.

He excelled at hostile takeovers, and soon all of the other businesses in the entire city had been swallowed up by his clan. Of course, an accomplishment like that couldn't be made without a bit of killing. Soon, the hands of the clone's sixth life came to be stained with blood.

Such methods were contrary to how his father preferred to do things, and in fact, went against the entire clan. However, he didn't take such matters very seriously. He did things how he wanted to, and by the age of thirty, the Xu Clan had come to be the richest in the area!

Eventually, he came to realize that he should support the scholars and intellectuals among his clan, so he founded a college. As time passed, his support of the scholar class allowed him to influence the imperial court.

Soon, his plotting extended his network to encompass even the warrior class in the empire.

He married, but felt no attachment to his wife. It had been done as a form of business alliance, with the hope of sending the clan's influence soaring to an even higher level.

And that was exactly what it did. By the time he was forty, the clan businesses were the most successful in all the lands. Over time, he expanded into many types of trade, and yet in the end, their foundation was always agriculture.

Under his leadership, the clan moved to the Imperial City, where they became the official Imperial merchants.

As the Imperial merchants, it was impossible for anyone to compete with them in terms of profits. Of course, in addition to the material benefits, there were other advantages to their new status.

By the age of forty-five, Xu Liuyun had reached the absolute pinnacle of his life. Numerous clan members had become officials within the current dynasty, and many of the scholars he had supported were now members of the government.

His entire clan had soared to incredible heights. Most people would likely be content to just enjoy the fruits of such labor. At first, he felt a bit confused about what to do next, but then, he realized that a storm was brewing.

That storm came in the form of a famine that had just taken grip on the land.

That winter, Xu Liuyun stood in a courtyard in the clan estates, looking at the snow falling out of the sky. Behind him were a few dozen members of the clan, standing there silently. Some of them were members of the Imperial court, some controlled powerful businesses within the Imperial City, and others were direct bloodline descendants of the clan who had been sent out to control other interests in other parts of the empire. There were even some powerful warriors present.

These were the people who controlled the power in the clan, and although it couldn't be said that their reach stretched throughout the entire empire, they weren't very far off from that.

Any one of them could be considered extremely prominent. And yet, as they looked at the man standing in front of them, their hearts were filled with reverence and awe. He was a man who, in the space of a few dozen years, had created an incredible storm of events.

Although he wasn't well-acclaimed in the Imperial court, and was even looked down upon by the emperor, the prime minister, and many others, the important members of the clan all knew... the terrifying power he wielded when it came to wealth and profit.

After a long moment passed, the sixth life of Meng Hao's clone, the man known to all as Xu Liuyun, finally spoke.

"This is an opportunity," he said. "Perhaps the Xu Clan can take the next step, and actually come to control the entire empire. Of course, there is also the possibility... that we will be wiped out." After another long moment, his eyes glittered with ferocity.

"Execute the operation!"

As soon as the words left his mouth, all of the Xu Clan's power, both within and without the Imperial City, was focused on one task. And that was... barricading off all of their farmlands from the public, in the middle of the famine!

It was a concept that, from the very beginning, seemed soaked in blood. Barricading farmlands in the middle of a famine carried the implication of driving up the price of grain goods to exorbitant levels, to the point where many people would be forced to sell their own properties to pay for food.

It would likely lead to many deaths because of starvation. Families and clans would be destroyed. However, among the ranks of the noble clans, the Xu Clan would have an incredible opportunity.

In order to carry out the plan, the Xu Clan used all of the wealth it had accumulated over the past decades. They plotted, created alliances, and killed enemies. In the end, several months after the famine ended... they controlled so much land that their power within the empire was almost without rival.

They had their own private army, and vast swaths of land, bought and paid for with blood.

By paying out numerous gifts, they managed to appease the noble class. The complicated scheming required caused more than a few gray hairs to appear on Xu Liuyun's head, and yet his mind never ceased to plan and plot.

The peace that followed lasted for fifteen years, during which time Xu Liuyun didn't make much of a stir. That made people less suspicious of him, and gave him a chance to quietly expand the interests of the clan.

One year, when he was sixty, he once again stood in a courtyard watching the snow fall. Behind him, hundreds of clan members stood quietly. Anyone who knew the identities and statuses of these people would be shocked; they were people who could shake the entire empire.

"This is an opportunity..." Xu Liuyun said, his voice hoarse. These were the same words he had spoken fifteen years ago. After a long moment, he nodded.

The nod of his head sparked a war of succession. Ten years passed by in a flash. The successor he had backed in the war became the emperor, and married a daughter of the Xu Clan. The young emperor even viewed Xu Liuyun as his foster father.

Virtually the entire Imperial court was loyal to him, even the prime minister. His word carried more weight with the army than an Imperial edict.

By this point, he had just as much power as he had had in his second life. Although it wasn't as obvious as it had been during that life, since he now operated in secret, his cold, calculating eyes could look down on the entire empire.

During this life, he had been heartless and unethical. He had no children, and yet, at the age of seventy, there was not a single person who dared speak to him without subconsciously bowing their heads.

Five more years passed, and his body began to decline. Eventually, he lapsed into a coma. Chaos was fermenting in the clan, and there were certain members who were itching to fight for control.

A year later, during the winter, he awoke from the coma. An old servant supported him with his arm as he stood in a courtyard, watching the snow fall. This was the third time in his life that he had been faced with an important decision.

"After I die, the clan will be thrown into unrest. After it passes... there may not be a Xu Clan in the empire any more." He knew that the reason for all of that was because he had no male heir.

“The only option is... to take control of the empire. Use the power of the empire to quell the clan turmoil. That way, any chaos will exist, not just in the Xu Clan, but in the empire as a whole. The result will still be favorable for in the end, though. As for the Xu Clan, it won't matter who gains control, at least the clan will continue on.”

Xu Liuyun, the sixth life of Meng Hao's clone, stood there silently. This time, he spent much more time deliberating than he had on the previous two occasions. A long, long time passed. Finally, he sighed, thinking about all of the blood that had been spilt to carry out his first plan, and acquire all of that land.

In the end, he chose not to attempt to overthrow the empire. Looking older than he ever had, he gazed at the falling snow, the final snowfall of winter, and closed his eyes. Gradually, his aura faded away.

The day after he died, the Xu Clan was thrown into chaos, and that chaos caused the entire empire to be shaken. Soon, the emperor intervened. Over the course of the following months, virtually the entire clan was slaughtered.

Eventually the emperor, who was now a middle-aged man, received a message that the final remaining members of the Xu Clan had returned to the city they had come from, by the canal. They were back in their original ancestral mansion. The glory they had built up over the past hundred years was like a flower in a mirror, or the moon reflected on the waters of a lake.

This was Meng Hao's sixth life.... His arrival rocketed the Xu Clan up to the pinnacle of grandeur, and upon his departure, he took that grandeur with him. It was as if time had flowed in reverse, returning the Xu Clan to its original state.

When his sixth life ended, the sixth sealing mark was complete. Meng Hao's clone entered reincarnation and began his seventh life.

During those hundred years, Yan'er traveled among the continents, visiting the mortal worlds, searching for the aura of her Master.

She was completely and utterly convinced that she would be able to find his reincarnation.

If she couldn't find him in one life, she would look for him the life after that, and the one after that... until she found him.

Meng Hao's true self was still sitting cross-legged on the flower out in the starry sky of the Vast Expanse, meditating as he waited for the flower to bloom.

The flower bud appeared to be just on the verge of opening up.

As for the Sect Leader and the other top experts of the Vast Expanse School, they were once again back in the necropolis, intent on opening the way to the ninth land mass. Although they weren't completely confident, they had to try. If they failed, they would try again, and again after that. They were focused and filled with anticipation as they began their journey.

At the same time, the Ninth Sect continued to expand, growing larger and larger. By this point, their forces were vast, and included numerous powerful experts. They subdued one Realm and world after another.

That was when Meng Hao's seventh life began on the third continent.

Chapter 1492: Mutt

The third continent on Planet Vast Expanse was unique among the other continents because it never had winter. All the seasons there were like spring. And yet, on this particular year, it snowed.

That snow didn't fall on the entirety of the continent, but specifically on one of the deserts there. Along with the snowfall, a child was born into the world.

This was the seventh life of Meng Hao's clone, and he was born into a very poor family who owned nothing more than a camel and a mutt dog. His father was a desert guide.

On the day the child was born, the dog froze to death, and therefore the father insisted on giving his son the name... Mutt.

Mutt was not born lucky. When he was three years old, his father was bitten by a viper while guiding a caravan through the desert. Although he made it back home, he died shortly thereafter.

His mother didn't seem to care much about her husband's death. After she buried him, she cared for Mutt for another five years. When he was eight years old, she ran off with a passing merchant.

On her way out the door, she told Mutt that his father had once been a bandit. Acting as a guide, he had led her family into the desert, where killed all of them except for her. Then forced her to marry him.

For her entire life after that, she had always looked forward to his death.

Mutt watched quietly as his mother made her way off into the distance. He lived alone after that. One day, an old man appeared who offered to take him to a place where there was food to eat. Mutt didn't hesitate; he immediately left with the old man.

He had been under the assumption that they would leave the desert, but contrary to his expectations, the old man simply took him to another location in the same desert. There, he was thrown into a hell on earth.

He was one of a whole group of children of the same age, all of whom received extensive daily training. They were being molded into... assassins!

In the years that followed, Mutt saw many people die. Some were killed by others, some he killed himself. Some died during the training process.

If you wanted to live, you had to be ruthless. If you wanted to live, you had to kill.

Mutt wanted to live, so he was ruthless, and he killed. He trusted no one, and as such, had no friends. The only thing which existed between him and those around him was hostility, and the ferocity of the fighting.

Every year, a new group of children would be brought in. Every year, a vast quantity of corpses would be buried.

Mutt grew numb to it all. At a certain point, the other children came to fear him. Even some of the adults looked at him in the same way.

"Maybe I'm ugly," he thought one day, running his fingers across his face. He was only sixteen, but his face was already crisscrossed with scars, making him look very sinister. In his second year in

this place, one of the older men had tried to force him into performing a revolting act, and when he refused, the man slashed up his face.

Two years later, Mutt cut that man's head off.

Mutt rubbed the side of his head, where his ear should be. He had lost his ear during a round of training in which only one person could come out alive in the end. His opponent had torn off his ear, but he had ripped his opponent's throat open.

Mutt's expression was cold as he looked at his throat in the mirror, which also had a vicious-looking scar on it.

In fact, his entire body was covered with scars, but he didn't care.

When he was seventeen, the old man who had brought him to this place took him away, along with two other boys and a girl. All three of them were people like Mutt, who had slaughtered countless opponents throughout the course of their training.

The four of them were taken to another training ground, where there were other youngsters their same age. The same monotonous existence ensued. Three years later, when Mutt was twenty, he participated in his final trial by fire. He beheaded a hundred opponents, causing everyone to look at him with fear. Even the old man who had taken him all those years ago had the same look in his eye.

Mutt didn't care. He just stood there quietly.

The following months were the happiest he had ever experienced. He was sent to learn etiquette, and was also treated by a doctor, who used strange medicinal plants to remove the scars from his body.

Although his ear couldn't be replaced, the miraculous medicines changed his appearance so much that he now looked like a handsome young man.

From then on, he was sent near and far throughout the continent on assassination missions. At the direction of the old man, he killed countless targets, including men and women, young and old.

He cut down people of all types, and never asked questions about them. He killed quickly and efficiently. However, he had a particular aversion to seeing victims who had a right ear. Every mission that he accomplished, he would slice off the right ear of the target.

Time passed. Ten years later, he had lost track of how many people he had killed. However, word had begun to spread; he now had a new name in addition to 'Mutt'.

He was called Ear-Slicer.

It was a macabre name.

He had always assumed his life would go on in the same way forever. But two years later, after he finished yet another mission, he was walking through a town and saw an old woman, a beggar. Her eyes had been dug out, her tongue cut off, her legs broken.

As Mutt stood in front of her, he smelled a noxious odor. He looked down and could see that her legs were putrefying, and had been broken so many times that the bones would never heal properly.

For many years, not a single emotion could be seen on his face, but now, his expression flickered. He looked at the woman somewhat blankly, and shivered.

This was the first time that, not only did he not return to the headquarters after the mission, he also killed someone other than his target.

He slaughtered many people in that town. Anyone who had threatened or harmed that old beggar woman ended up having their throats slit by Mutt, and their ears cut off.

There was one rich household in the town who was said to have once been a family of traveling merchants, and were thus particularly at fault. He exterminated the entire family. In the end, he took the old woman away with him.

The event caused a huge stir in the entire country. Numerous constables and inspectors closed in on the area, and the assassin's guild also sent people to try to silence him in death.

The following years were spent on the run, in exhaustion. He killed many people, and found himself in many dangerous situations.

Eventually, the old woman died. She wasn't killed; she simply succumbed to her previous injuries.

In all the years she was with Mutt leading up to her death, she never knew the identity of the person caring for her. After she died, he wrote a few words on her gravestone.

My mother.

- Mutt

He stood quietly in front of her grave for a long time. As he did, people began to appear nearby. They were familiar faces, each one being an assassin from the guild.

None of them spoke. After a long moment, their killing intent exploded out, and they began to converge on Mutt. He looked up, and began to fight like a wild dog.

One enemy after another fell. In the end, he was the only one left standing. To him, these opponents were simply too weak. Shaking his head, he cut off their ears and then left. He ended up traveling to a place where he assumed nobody would go looking for him, the desert. He was tired of killing people, and wanted to live alone in peace. Eventually, he took up the same line of work as his father, and began to guide people through the desert.

Years passed, an entire decade. One day he awoke to find his house surrounded. When he walked out the door, he found himself facing a group of assassins led by the same old man from years ago. He stood there looking at Mutt, legs trembling from the ravages of age.

After a long moment, the old man spoke out in a soft voice. "Kill him."

A spectacular slaughter ensued. Corpses fell left and right, and wounds opened up all over Mutt's body. He didn't care, though. After killing all of his opponents, he sighed and walked up to the old man. The old man looked on in bitter silence at the man who he himself had brought into the guild as a boy, seemingly waiting for him to say something.

Instead, a blade flashed.

Mutt frowned as he looked around at all the bodies. He left, going to the first training facility in the desert, then the second, and finally to the guild headquarters.

He had no idea how many people he killed. It was like back in the old days when you either killed or were killed.

After slaughtering everyone in the assassin's guild, he felt very tired. He returned to the desert, where he once again began to work as a guide. A year passed. Then another, and another. Eventually he lost track of time. One day he realized that he was an old man, and his body was very weak. There he was, was looking out at the desert, absent-mindedly feeling the right side of his head where his ear should be. Snowflakes began to flutter down from the sky, and at the same time, a beam of light appeared off in the distance. Within that beam of light was a woman.

The snow fell, and Mutt's eye slowly closed.

Thus ended his seventh life. As his soul flew out to once again enter reincarnation, the woman flew toward his body at breakneck speed.

She was beautiful, and when she finally reached Mutt's corpse, she could sense the power of reincarnation. Tears began to stream down her face.

"Master...." It was Yan'er. She had searched for years and years before coming to this place and sensing familiar fluctuations. However, she had been just a bit too late.

She knew that her Master was already in the cycle of reincarnation.

After a long moment of silence, she buried Mutt's corpse. Then she turned, her eyes flickering with determination as she began to follow the already fading aura of reincarnation.

She was convinced that... she was getting closer and closer to finding her Master.

That year, Meng Hao's clone completed the seventh sealing mark. Then, his eighth life began, on the second continent. With every reincarnation, the branches of the Immortal Root would shine even more dazzlingly than before. However, his memories came to be sealed even deeper. It was really as if he were experiencing a brand new life each time.

Chapter 1493: Wait Until I Grow Up....

Meng Hao's clone began his eighth life on the second continent.

Apparently, he really did have some special connection to snow. Each of his lives began in the snow, and this life was no exception. In the final snowfall of winter on the second continent, a baby was born into a mountain stronghold. His crying upon birth was loud and clear.

His father was a mountain bandit, the second in charge of the stronghold. As for the leader of the bandits... it was his mother.

The first time that seven-year-old Li Hao ever yelled at his parents, he cried: "I want to be a bandit too!"

In response, his mother spanked him for three days straight.

He had an older brother who was also an excellent bandit, and was quite renowned within the stronghold. His brother eventually won the approval of his parents, and was named the Young Lord of the stronghold.

As Li Hao grew up, his parents continuously presented him with servant girls to keep him company. Gradually, he came to understand what his mission in life was. He needed to provide grandchildren to his parents, to ensure that the offspring of the Li Clan would forever exist in Heaven and Earth.

It was a glorious mission, but also came with a lot of pressure. And yet... that was how his parents raised him. Every time he accomplished one of his missions, he could see how envious his older brother was.

His mission, and the looks given him by his brother, left Li Hao feeling very pleased. The harder he worked at it, the more his goal in life changed from that which he had stated at seven years of age.

"I don't want to be a bandit. I'm going to make sure that the offspring of the Li Clan fill the entire empire! In a hundred years, the Li Clan is going to be one of the biggest parts of empire!"

"In a hundred years, everyone in the Empire is going to feel like they're related!"

His declaration stunned his parents and left his older brother shaken. In fact, everyone in the entire stronghold was completely astonished.

Li Hao quite enjoyed the expressions on their faces, and came to view his mission as extremely important. From that day on, he began to work whole-heartedly. He began to do a lot of research, and closely studied certain popular, illustrated reading materials....

His own physical training, combined with the efforts of the servant girls, ensured that his skills only continued to become more refined. By the time he was twenty years old, he had already sired 59 children.

At that point, he stood at the peak of the mountain, looking up into the Heavens, tears of pride streaming down his face.

He felt like he was a roc, a roc who was being held back by being cooped up in the mountain stronghold. In order to accomplish the mission he had originally set out to accomplish, he chose to leave the stronghold and travel the lands.

His parents thought it was a crazy idea, and his brother... actually looked at him with fear. However, he didn't care about any of that. In his mind, his family just didn't understand his mission in life.

“You people just don't get it. One person... can change the world. Of course, the condition is that he has to be a man. A strapping, energetic man. And that man is none other than me... Li Hao!”

That night, he left the stronghold. Wrapped up in his ideals, he climbed down the mountain, and made his way out into the world. Experiencing the wide world really opened his eyes, and he felt as if his mission were more important than ever. In fact, he felt that every day that passed was a wasted opportunity.

He started in a village near the foot of the mountain. Thankfully, he was handsome, and had a very charming pair of eyes, allowing him to successfully accomplish his mission in the village.

How could he ever have imagined, though, that fully accomplishing his mission would be so difficult? Twenty years passed. He was now forty, and had encountered numerous difficulties. People had even tried to kill him. It was with great difficulty that he managed to sire 107 children.

Feeling just as energetic as ever, he decided to leave the village and go to... the next village.

“It's fine,” he told himself. “Villages are small, but my dreams are big.” In the second village, he used every method at his disposal, spending all of the wealth he had accumulated in the past twenty

years to get him through yet another twenty years. By that time, he had sired his 178th child in the second village.

He was moved to tears by that fact, and yet, despite being sixty years old, gritted his teeth and took all of his grown children, and even the grandchildren, in a campaign to even more distant lands.

The first destination... was the third village in this mountain range, almost ten kilometers away.

Li Hao was feeling more pleased with himself this time. He had been indoctrinating his children and grandchildren with his ideals. After all, he had long since come to the conclusion that he wouldn't be able to accomplish his mission on his own. However, with their help, he would surely be able to reach the glorious heights which he sought.

He and his sons and grandsons only spent three years in the third village before they occupied its entirety. It was then that Li Hao could laugh heartily and, instead of traveling out himself, send his sons and grandsons out into the rest of the country.

One after another, his sons and grandsons carried out his ideals, and his mission, out from the village into other locations. Ten years passed. Every year, another one of his descendants would grow up, and would be sent out.

After another ten years passed, Li Hao was more than eighty years old, and his descendants could be found in every business and vocation throughout the empire. As for exactly how many descendants he had, not even he knew. However, in his mind, tens of thousands was good enough.

He was happy with his life, and yet he continued to live for another fifteen years. When he was one hundred years old, the clan that Li Hao had founded had reached a shocking size. There were hundreds of thousands of members, and if they all joined together at the same time, they could count as a small country.

At the moment, they were spread throughout all of the lands, but that made it all the more terrifying.

Although he was a bit lonely in his old age, when the snow began to fall one winter, and his life came to an end, he was content and proud.

"I lived an extraordinary life, and I changed the future of an empire, of the world even. I alone... changed everything." Li Hao laughed three times, and then closed his eyes and passed away.

Meng Hao's true self was aware of all of this, and would most definitely have gone back to Planet Vast Expanse to stop it from happening, were he not stuck next to the flower.

He could never have imagined that after seven relatively normal lives, his clone's eighth life would have been spent doing something so absurd. Thankfully, the bodies left behind by his clones after reincarnation had no connection to Meng Hao himself.

Bodies did not reincarnate, only souls.

After the conclusion of the absurd eighth life, the memories were sealed, and the clone began his ninth life on the first continent. Meng Hao's true self was a bit worried about what would happen in this final life.

After a bit of contemplation, he decided not to interfere. He could sense that the clone's final life was just beginning to unfold. However, it was in that moment that his expression suddenly flickered, and he shot to his feet in surprise.

He had just sensed that the ninth life was completely different from the second through eighth lives. Those lives had been experienced by the soul passing through reincarnation. The bodies had not been Meng Hao's, only the souls.

However, as the ninth life began, Meng Hao could sense that this ninth life was exactly the same as the clone's first life. Unexpectedly... this life was somehow made from Meng Hao's own blood. Instead of saying that this was his clone's ninth life, it would be more appropriate to say that it was his actual clone!

The soul was his, and the blood was his. This was something completely different from before. Apparently, after his clone's body passed away into meditation on the Transcendence Path and his soul went through years upon years of reincarnation, his original body was somehow reconstituted in this ninth life. This was similar to how the infant Fang Mu that had floated down the river, formed from Meng Hao himself, was actually the same person as Meng Hao.

Meng Hao was both shocked and nervous because of this development.

However, that mere fact alone was not what left him most shaken. The biggest twist was that this clone's ninth life felt different from anything that had happened before. He could barely sense its

existence, as though the connection between the two of them was extremely faint. Meng Hao's true self couldn't see exactly what events were playing out in the clone's ninth life.

"The ninth life is the most important, the most critical. That must be the explanation for this strange development...." Having reached this understanding, he didn't feel much better. He was just about to head back toward the Vast Expanse School, when suddenly, the enormous flower began to bloom!

As it did, the aura of the final copper mirror shard began to spread out. Meng Hao's true self took a deep breath.

"I won't interfere with the clone. I'll let things play out as normal. Perhaps interfering would lead to negative consequences. Plus, if I don't get this copper mirror shard right now, then who knows how much longer I'll have to wait." With that, his eyes flickered with augury calculations. Without any further hesitation, he flickered into motion, heading into the enormous flower.

So far, he hadn't interfered at all in his clone's lives, and therefore, he would do the same for the final life; he would remain completely hands-off!

Meanwhile, in the first continent, in the capital city....

The capital city was large, and had a sizeable population, but was located in a relatively remote region. Snow fell and the wind blew as a husband and wife emerged from a temple after having prayed to be blessed with a child.

They had been married for many years, but had never conceived any children. Over the years, they had come to the temple on a few occasions to piously pray for offspring. They were starting to reach their later years, and were getting anxious about the matter. They had even consulted doctors about the situation, but no solution had been provided.

After leaving the temple, they headed back home, stewing in their anxiety. However, as they were walking along, they were surprised to hear the sound of a baby crying. Looking over, they saw an infant lying on the ground at the foot of a wall.

They quickly picked the baby up and looked around, but saw no one. Their hearts went out to the child, but after looking at him more closely, they realized the truth. Someone had abandoned the child in embarrassment because he had been born blind.

After a bit of thought, they decided to take the baby home with them. To them, this child was like a gift from the Heavens.

The boy would never see the light of day; he would live in a world of darkness. And yet, they chose to become his parents. They gave him the name Little Treasure, and began to raise him in an environment of warmth and love.

Little Treasure didn't realize that he was different from everyone else. He thought... that the world was simply black.

He thought that everyone was like him. He didn't even understand... what eyes were.

The Heavens had taken away his vision, had prevented him from seeing the world. However, he had been blessed with nimble hands, and a quiet, clever personality.

His parents loved him dearly from the very beginning. They held him when he walked, even until he was four or five years old.

His life was happy, and in fact, he thought that he must be the happiest person in the world.

When he felt the warmth of the sun on his face, he would ask, "Dad, mom! What's so warm?"

"That's sunlight from the sun."

"The sun?"

"It's a huge ball of fire up in the sky...."

"Can I touch it? How did you find out about it?"

".... Little Treasure, you... the Heavens have their eyes closed, so you can't see. Just wait... wait until you grow up, then you'll be able to see."

When he heard the birds singing, he would ask, “What’s that sound?”

“A bird.”

“Mom, what do birds look like?”

“They have wings, so they can fly in the sky....”

“Oh, okay. Once I grow up, I’ll be able to see them, right? When you were kids, you couldn’t see anything either, right mom, right dad? I get it.”

To hear such words from his little mouth caused stabs of pain to fill his parents’ hearts. They would hug him, and would cry silently.

The child was unaware of their pain. He was as happy as ever, blessed even. Furthermore, he held a keen anticipation for being able to eventually grow up.

One day he heard some neighbor kids making fun of him for being blind, although he didn’t know what the word meant.

That night, when his mom was rocking him to sleep, he asked, “Mom, what does it mean to be blind?”

Suddenly, he felt his mother shiver, and could sense that she had begun crying. He reached up and gently wiped the tears away.

“Don’t cry, mom...” he said softly. “I won’t ask that question ever again.” And for the rest of his life, he never did.

Chapter 1494: Little Treasure

Starting the next day, he was much quieter. When he felt something warm on his face, he wouldn’t ask what the sun was. When he heard something singing, he wouldn’t ask what birds were.

Eventually, he heard enough from other people to understand what it meant to be blind. He learned that the sky wasn’t black, it was blue. The world wasn’t black either. It was filled with many colors.

He also realized that he was different from the other children. They had all been able to see the world from the moment they were born, whereas he....

He thought about what his parents had told him, that he would be able to see the world after he grew up. That was a lie. And yet, he didn't want to believe that it was a lie, and continued to tell himself that after he grew up, he would be able to see.

The reason he couldn't see... was that he hadn't grown up yet.

He began to grow more reclusive. He didn't want to go out and play with the other children, mostly because they always bullied him. They made fun of him for not being able to see, joked about him being blind. But inside, he wanted to have friends, so he did his best to simply smile, and not cry. When he did play with the other children, and got shoved to the ground, tearing his clothes and scraping his skin until it bled, he just smiled.

People made jokes about him being blind, and those jokes only continued to become more and more cruel. He felt so bad that he wanted to weep, but he held it in. He didn't want to harm the friendships he had. He needed those friends.

One day, he got very excited when the other children, whom he could hear but not see, suddenly came looking for him. They said they wanted him to play a special game with them.

"It's called blind man's bluff. Little Treasure, you're blind, so you have to chase us, okay!?"

"Whoever you grab, that person will become blind. Oh right, we're going to go to a special place to play. Just wait until we say go, then you can start chasing us."

"Um... I don't want to play," Little Treasure said, trembling inwardly. He knew that being blind was a terrible thing, and didn't want to make other people become blind.

"Shut up! If you don't play with us right now, then we'll never play with you ever again!" Refusing to discuss the matter any further, the children dragged him out to play. He wasn't sure where exactly they were taking him, but eventually he heard birds singing. Eventually they shoved him into a kneeling position.

“Remember, don’t start chasing us until we say go.” They started laughing, the sound of which eventually began to fade off into the distance.

He knelt there on the ground, not moving, worried that he would break the rules and start moving too soon. If that happened, maybe they wouldn’t want to play with him again. So he waited... for a very, very long time.

Soon the singing of the birds faded away, and he started to get cold and scared.

"Can we start now?" he cried out. But no one answered.

"Can we start now?" He shivered. It was getting colder, and yet no one responded to his cries.

“Can we start now...?” He slowly rose to his feet, trembling. He thought he could hear the sound of people nearby, but no one answered his question.

He was scared. The world was pitch black, and the warmth that he normally felt because of his parents was gone. Now, the world was not only black, it was freezing cold.

“Can we start now...? I... I don’t want to play any more....” He was so frightened that tears began to roll down his cheeks.

“Where are you guys? I don’t want to play anymore.... I want to go home.

“Dad? Mom? Where are you...?” Weeping, he began to walk forward, flailing his arms in front of him, but grabbing ahold of nothing but air. After a few steps, he fell.

“Mother... where are you...? I’m scared....” He struggled back to his feet, weeping in fear. The feeling of being completely alone was stifling. His garments were torn. His head was bleeding. And he was only seven years old. Stretching his hands out in front of him, he began to walk forward slowly.

What he couldn’t see that he was currently in a forest, and that up ahead of him was a lone wolf. It was slowly approaching him, staring at him with cold, merciless eyes.

Just when the wolf was about to pounce on him, it suddenly shivered, then sagged in place. A moment later, it had transformed into nothing more than ash. A young woman appeared, wearing a long green garment.

She stared at the child, somewhat in a daze, watching as he groped his way along. She saw the tears on his face, and could hear him crying out in that heartbreaking voice. The young woman bit her lip, and began to cry.

“Master....” she murmured. This was Yan’er. She had been searching for her Master for hundreds of years, and on this day, she had managed to track the faint traces of the Dao of Reincarnation to this very place. At long last... she had found the reincarnation of her Master.

The weeping boy’s foot caught on something, and he began to fall forward, but Yan’er gently caught him in her arms.

Little Treasure shivered and reached out to feel who it was that had caught him. She felt warm, almost like his mother. There was something very familiar about her. She even smelled familiar.

“You....” he whispered.

After a moment, Yan’er knelt down in front of him, smiled, and asked, “Your name is Little Treasure, right?”

“Yes,” he replied, nodding. The woman’s voice was gentle, and suddenly, he wasn’t afraid any more.

It was at that point that voices could be heard off in the distance. Apparently, a large group of people were walking along and calling out sporadically.

“Little Treasure, where are you...?”

“Little Treasure... it’s me, mom. Where are you...?”

“Little Treasure....” It was his mother and father, along with other people. They sounded anxious, even fearful, as they called out to him.

“Dad.... Mom....” Little Treasure trembled.

Yan’er hesitated for a moment, then chose not to take the boy away. Instead, she reached out and tousled his hair.

“Your mom and dad found you,” she said softly. “I’ll... see you later.”

She took a step back to leave, but Little Treasure suddenly felt as if he were about to lose something important.

“Big Sis...” he blurted, “May I... may I touch your face?”

Yan’er’s eyes glowed with a kind warmth as she looked at the boy. This was her Master, who meant everything to her.

She knelt back down in front of the boy. His hands were smudged with dirt, but she didn’t care. He reached out and ran his fingers slowly and carefully across her face, and after a long moment, he smiled. Yan’er looked at him one more time. Then, smiling, she turned and left.

Moments later, Little Treasure called out to his parents, who rushed over, weeping, and scooped him up into their arms. After leaving the forest, he never asked about what had happened. However, in the following days, he refused to play with the other children. He preferred to be alone, where he would think back to the woman he had met in the forest.

Sometimes, he felt as if she hadn’t actually left, but was next to him, watching over him. Although she never revealed herself to him, he always had that feeling.

Time passed. Ten years went by, and Little Treasure had grown up. However, he still lived in a world of darkness, devoid of any light. It was as if the Heavens had forgotten all about him.

His parents had grown old, although he couldn’t see that. And yet, he could tell that their voices had become different. Because of his nimble hands, he began to learn the same carpentry skills as his parents.

Since he rarely had anything important to do, he took up sculpture as a hobby. Although he couldn't see, he could imagine, and as such, he carved sculptures that were incredibly vivid and full of life. They were like the dreams of a child.

He carved birds, and houses, and the people closest to him.

He didn't care that people called him blind. He didn't care that he couldn't see the world. In his heart, he had come to find his place in Heaven and Earth. His wooden sculptures. They were everything to him.

Although the sculptures didn't always resemble reality, they were what he saw in his heart. Furthermore, if he was able to feel something with his hands, then he would be able to reproduce it perfectly in sculpture form.

"Mother once said that the Heavens had closed their eyes. I want to sculpt Heavens with eyes wide open. Something that only I can feel." Little Treasure chuckled and shook his head.

Gradually, word of his sculptures spread in the city, and he was able to start a little business of his own. His parents, who continued to spoil him, were content.

Their son might have no eyesight, but he was an outstanding person. Eventually, it reached the point that he began to care for them in their old age. It was a touching thing, and they felt very content. Their hearts were filled with the love of a lifetime.

However, they still worried about Little Treasure. Although he had the skill to support himself in life, they still felt that he should marry.

Unfortunately, being blind, few families would be willing to marry their daughter to Little Treasure.

Three years passed. Eventually, someone acted as a matchmaker, and found a young woman from a small household somewhere in the city who agreed to marry Little Treasure. She was very pretty, and the fact that she had agreed to the marriage left Little Treasure's parents delighted. They gave their life savings as a betrothal gift, and escorted her back to their home.

That day was one of the happiest days in this old couple's life. They held the wedding ceremony, and hosted the wedding banquet. Red lanterns were hung. After the relatives and neighbors departed, Little Treasure's parents led him to the wedding chamber.

He was nervous. He had never even met this girl before. Everything had been arranged by his parents. However, he was a filial son, and would support his parents' decisions, even though marriage was something he didn't particularly care about.

Furthermore, he was curious as to why this young woman would agree to the marriage when he was blind.

When he entered the room, there she was sitting on the bed, wearing red wedding garments and a red veil. Although he couldn't see her, he could sense her presence.

Feeling his way across the wall, he approached the bed, reached out, and touched his wife.

She shivered, but didn't say anything.

He stood there quietly for a moment before gently lifting up her veil. "May I touch your face?"

The young woman seemed very nervous; she was gripping her garments tightly with both hands, and was breathing heavily. Her anxiety was no act; deep in her heart, she wasn't sure if she was doing the right thing. But this was what she had always wanted, regardless of whether it was in terms of past lives or the present....

She took a deep breath and then said, "Yes."

Little Treasure reached out and gently ran his fingers down her face, feeling her eyes, her nose, and her lips. Suddenly, a tremor ran through him.

Chapter 1495: World of Ice and Fire!

"It's you...?" Little Treasure said, his heart trembling. It was a face he could never forget. In the darkest, loneliest moment of his entire life, it was the source of the only warmth he had felt.

Eventually, Little Treasure's hands dropped away from her face. He smiled a warm, happy smile.

Years passed.

The ninth life of Meng Hao's clone went on quietly on the first continent. Meanwhile, Meng Hao's true self was in the enormous flower out in the starry sky of the Vast Expanse, in the middle of his search for the final copper mirror shard!

He was currently sitting cross-legged in a world frozen over with ice. "Once I get this final mirror shard, my collection will be complete, and I'll be able to... call out to the copper mirror and summon it back to me!"

Everywhere he looked he saw nothing but ice. There were plants, but they had apparently been frozen. They were beautiful, like ice sculptures.

"What a strange place..." he thought, his eyes flickering. He had been searching this area for the copper mirror shard ever since entering the flower. However, the coldness here was so intense that it would frighten even 9-Essences experts. It pressed against him at all moments, threatening to transform him into an ice sculpture, just like everything else.

After resting for a bit, he proceeded along through the world of ice. No matter how he searched, he couldn't find the copper mirror shard, and yet, he could sense that it was somewhere inside of this enormous flower.

As he proceeded along, he suddenly heard a powerful roar coming from somewhere off in the distance. The ice around him shuddered, and cracks appeared on its surface.

He frowned, turned to look behind him. Off in the distance, was what appeared to be an enormous mountain, fully 300,000 meters tall, its peak piercing the clouds above. The mountain was currently shaking, and was the source of the roaring he had just heard.

A closer look would reveal the truth: he wasn't looking at a mountain, but an enormous giant. The giant was currently trying to rise from a cross-legged position, but powerful Essence-sealing symbols surrounded it, preventing it from doing so.

Meng Hao snorted coldly. This 300,000-meter-tall giant was the first life form he had encountered after entering this place twenty years ago. As soon as it saw him, it had transformed from a mountain into a giant. Eyes flickering with killing intent, it had begun to fight him.

Communication with the thing had proved impossible. Meng Hao had tried to show it good will, but it had completely ignored him, and its killing intent had even increased. Angered, Meng Hao had begun to fight it.

The 300,000-meter-tall giant was no match for him, but also seemed to be incapable of dying. Throughout the twenty years, Meng Hao had fought and defeated it several times, and yet had never been able to obliterate it completely.

In the end, he didn't feel like fighting it anymore, and had sealed it in place so that he could search for the copper mirror in peace. Now, the giant was trying to break free from the seals.

Meng Hao looked away, ignoring the giant as he continued his search.

Years passed in which he continued to fly along. Eventually, he realized that it seemed to be getting less terrifyingly cold. At a certain point, he didn't even feel cold.

"Could it be that I'm entering another area?" he thought, picking up speed. A few months later, he hovered in the air looking off into the distance. Unexpectedly, he saw numerous cities within the icy landscape.

They were scattered about seemingly randomly, and there were many of them. Tens of thousands. Furthermore, these cities were filled with countless living beings.

They were huge. Compared to these cities, the cities that existed in the Mountain and Sea Realm and Planet Vast Expanse were like toys.

Meng Hao hovered there in thought. During the many years he had spent searching for the copper mirror shards, he had been to many, many worlds. He had seen all sorts of living creatures that were not cultivators. There were some that looked like wild beasts, and some that even had bodies made of mist.

At first he had been shocked at the sight of such beings. But after some time passed, it became nothing out of the ordinary. He was now fully aware that there were countless bizarre forms of life within the starry sky of the Vast Expanse.

Meng Hao looked at the cities up ahead. Even though they were quite a distance away, he was still able to clearly see the living beings within them.

They looked similar to cultivators, except they were enormous. Most were about thirty meters tall, like mountains trudging along. Even the babies among them were at least three meters tall.

Some of the oldest appeared to be over 300 meters tall sometimes as tall as 3,000. With his divine sense, Meng Hao was able to locate the most powerful among these entities. It was a giant at the early 9-Essences level, and it was at least 30,000 meters tall.

He wasn't located within one of the cities, but was sitting cross-legged in the form of a mountain.

However, based on the fluctuations of the giant's aura, it was possible to tell that it was bursting with life force. Surrounding the giant were other powerful experts in the form of mountains. None of the others were 30,000 meters tall, but there were a few hundred who were 15,000 meters tall.

These giants were the native species of this world, and Meng Hao could tell that they were of the same species as the 300,000-meter-tall ice mountain giant he had seen before.

Further off in the distance, Meng Hao was shocked to find that the realm of ice ended. Beyond, he could see green plains.

There were also countless cities visible upon the plains. All of them were connected together to form something like a wall, within which were living beings that resembled cultivators. They were all of a normal height, and yet had wings growing out of their backs.

The wings changed depending on the levels of their cultivation bases. The more powerful they got, the redder they became.

“What an interesting world. One part is freezing, another is warm.... Wait, no. This is the middle of the world, where it's warm, making it suitable for inhabitation by these giants and those avian people.

“If that's the case, then further off in the distance... it must be burning hot.” Meng Hao sped into motion, heading toward the green plains. His cultivation base was so far above the living beings he passed by that none of them even detected his presence.

He continued to fly along for years. Down below, the lands began to change from green to red. Burning lava flowed, casting a crimson tinge to the sky. Things started getting so hot that most living beings who attempted to enter the area would be transformed into ash.

It reached the point where even 9-Essences cultivators would be completely destroyed. Meng Hao was beginning to feel uncomfortable. Eventually, he saw something off in the distance that looked like a mountain. He also felt an aura no weaker than the one he had felt from the ice giant. That aura was now rushing toward Meng Hao as if it had just sensed him.

Everything rumbled violently as the mountain transformed into a volcano that erupted with blazing fire. As it did, a crimson Flamephoenix burst out from within. It looked at Meng Hao, its eyes flickering with killing intent and vigilance. Then, it shot toward Meng Hao, surrounded by a sea of flames.

As it neared, the Flamephoenix shrank down into the form of a woman. She was beautiful, with two crimson wings, and she stood upon a sea of elemental fire that shot through the air.

“You’re not welcome here, foreigner,” she said in a furious voice. “Get the hell out!” As her voice echoed out, the air around Meng Hao shattered, and the sea of flames roared toward him.

His eyes flickered, although he wasn’t surprised to find such a powerful entity here. The ice plains had the Icemountain Giant, and the land of flames had a Flamephoenix. The world was balanced.

“To be able to practice cultivation up to a level comparable to the peak of the 9-Essences, and even a bit beyond that, means these things are intelligent. Furthermore, they couldn’t possibly be prone to changeable emotions.

“In that case, the Flamephoenix and the Icemountain Giant immediately acting hostile must indicate... that they know about the copper mirror shard!” His eyes glittered as he fell back, waving his right hand to summon numerous mountains, which smashed into the sea of flames.

Rumbling sounds echoed out, and the world shook. The woman-form Flamephoenix’s face flickered. Killing intent swirled in her eyes, and she transformed back into a Flamephoenix, then charged toward Meng Hao in attack.

“I have a shape-changing magic too!” Meng Hao said. Snorting coldly, he changed into an azure roc, the color of which then continued to deepen until it was almost violet. A Demonic qi rose up, causing everything to tremble. The violet-colored roc shot toward the Flamephoenix, and the two collided in midair.

Heaven shook, the Earth trembled, and cracks spread out in all directions. Portions of the ground collapsed, and lava blasted up into the air. When two peak 9-Essences entities fought, it could have a huge influence on the surrounding world, and if it went on for too long, could destroy everything in the area.

The Flamephoenix let out a piercing cry, then fell back, changing back into the form of a woman. She coughed up a mouthful of blood, then glared up at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao's expression was the same as ever as he also transformed back into human shape, and then looked coolly at the Flamephoenix.

"With a cultivation base like that, your Excellency," the Flamephoenix said, "you can't possibly be some nameless nobody from the starry sky of the Vast Expanse. What is your purpose here!?" Despite clearly fearing Meng Hao, she didn't appear ready to give in at all.

"You're a lot more reasonable than that lump of ice," Meng Hao replied coolly. "I have no ill intentions here."

The Flamephoenix's eyes flickered. "Lump of ice? You saw Patriarch Icemountain?"

"Patriarch Icemountain? You mean that 300,000-meter-tall giant? Yes, I ran into him, and left him sealed where I found him."

The Flamephoenix's eyes narrowed as she tried to determine whether or not Meng Hao was telling the truth. She took a deep breath, looking at Meng Hao with even more fear than before.

After a moment, she asked, "Well then, why exactly have you come here, your Excellency?"

"For this!" Meng Hao said, waving his sleeve. A copper mirror shard appeared in front of him, emitting dazzling light amidst the light of the surrounding flames.

Chapter 1496: Decision by Battle

Meng Hao did nothing to conceal his purpose in coming. In fact, there was no need for him to do so. Considering the level of his cultivation base, acting wishy-washy could affect his mental state.

To powerful experts like Meng Hao, hiding one's cultivation base and then suddenly exploding out unexpectedly was boring and meaningless. They wouldn't do things like that unless absolutely necessary. In the long run, it could destabilize one's Dao heart. Relying on such paltry tactics could be an obstacle to striving for a great Dao.

After possessing a certain level of power, the best thing was to call upon such power openly.

No matter what plots or plans were afoot, the best thing was to be open and aboveboard, to crush everything in one's path.

The Flamephoenix found it hard to deal with Meng Hao's straightforward demeanor. She took a few steps back, panting, then said, "I've never seen anything like that thing. But since you're already here, Fellow Daoist, I can help you look for some clues. However, I have to warn you, the Ice-Fire Realm is very large. You need to prepare yourself to waste a lot of time."

Meng Hao looked at the Flamephoenix, then chuckled and shook his head. Looking very sincere, he said, "This object is very important to me. If it's truly impossible to find, then I'll leave. However, if I'm prevented from leaving the Ice-Fire Realm before it's sealed up again, then... I'll have no choice but to destroy it. This is a very important matter. I hope you can understand, Fellow Daoist."

Upon seeing the copper mirror shard moments ago, the Flamephoenix didn't have much of a reaction at all. Her face didn't even flicker. However, Meng Hao had experienced far too many things in life for her to be able to hide her shock from him.

Everything became especially obvious when she hinted about taking a long time.

He knew that this world wouldn't stay open forever. He had waited outside for hundreds of years before it had opened, and based on his calculations, he was quite sure that it would close again in about one sixty-year-cycle. If he didn't leave at that time, he would have to wait a very, very long time for another chance. It would only be when the flower bloomed again that he would be able to leave.

There would be too many opportunities for mishaps during that time, and Meng Hao wasn't willing to risk that.

Thus, the words he had spoken moment ago were no threat. They were merely a clear explanation of his intentions.

“Your lands can be destroyed, as can the ice plains,” he continued in a calm voice. “If that happens, then the temperature created by the two will vanish, and all the living beings that exist here will be destroyed.

“As for you and that Patriarch Icemountain, I might not be able to kill you two, but if I can seal one of you, then I can seal the other.

“If I can’t find what I’m looking for, I’m confident that, in my fury, I will seal you in a way that will ensure you can’t free yourselves for a very, very long time. So long that... when the flower blooms again, I’ll return and seal you again.

“A thousand years? Ten thousand years? I’ll keep you sealed away indefinitely. One day, my cultivation base will be powerful enough to kill you, and then I’ll do just that. However, before you die, I’ll Sousearch you, and get all the answers I’m looking for. In the end, I’ll get what I want.

“Of course, that will take a very, very long time. Many people will die. Too many. I really don’t want to do that, and so I’m hoping... that you won’t force my hand, Fellow Daoist.” With that, he clasped hands and bowed. Then he looked up, smiled, and said, “As for which decision you choose to make, it’s all up to you.”

Each sentence he spoke caused the Flamephoenix’s heart to pound. By the time he finished, her heart surged with waves of rage. And yet, she had no choice but to suppress them, as she knew that everything Meng Hao had just said was true.

He really would do just as he had said, and it was highly likely that things would happen just as he had described. Although things might not play out exactly as he intended, he would likely make up for any discrepancies in his plan, and ensure that the outcome was the same.

Everything came down to the cultivation base. Neither she nor Patriarch Icemountain, despite being beyond the peak of the 9-Essences level, were a match for this young man.

What was even more telling was that, despite the calmness of his gaze when he looked at her, she could tell that there was explosive violence hidden therein. His pupils were bright red, and when she looked into them, it was almost as if she could hear countless howling voices. There was a fury inside of him that left her mentally shaken. Even her cultivation base was thrown into chaos, and the sea of flames around her faltered.

Time ticked by, but Meng Hao didn't seem anxious. He simply waited for her reply, a smile on his face the entire time.

After the time it takes an incense stick to burn, the Flamephoenix sagged in place a bit, and let out a bitter sigh.

Then she looked up at Meng Hao and said, "The Ice-Fire Realm didn't always look like this. According to the legends, a long time ago, a precious treasure fell out of the starry sky and split open the lands.

"It was a mirror shard, one side of which emitted intense light and heat. That side created the world of fire. The other side of the shard emanated intense coldness, which was what created the lands of ice.

"The living beings here were also changed. They gradually transformed, until years later, the Icemountain Tribe appeared, as well as the Flamephoenix Tribe.

"If you take the shard away, then you will have no need to attack the Ice-Fire Realm to destroy it. It will happen automatically. All life will perish.

"You are not the first person to come here looking for the mirror shard. Throughout the years, it has not been uncommon for foreign entities to enter when the flower blooms, with the intent of snatching the shard."

Meng Hao frowned. He had already speculated that things would be this way. He had guessed as much as soon as he saw all of the ice sculptures, and also from the fact that the Icemountain Giant and the Flamephoenix had attacked him instantly.

After a moment of thought, he said, "Well, give me the mirror shard, and I'll separate your worlds and seal them to keep them safe. Then, I'll come back within a thousand years to strengthen the seals."

"You..." The Flamephoenix simply didn't believe that he was telling the truth.

"You'll just have to trust me," Meng Hao said, his eyes glittering coldly. He had long since run out of patience. He would make a promise, but if she refused to believe him, then there was nothing else he could do. The mirror shard was too important.

The Flamephoenix began to breathe deeply, and various expressions flashed across her face. Her eyes flickered with killing intent, and yet, she couldn't take the risk of refusing Meng Hao's offer, which would then lead to him destroying the world. On the other hand, agreeing with him also came with the risk of the world being destroyed anyway.

Deep in her heart, she still didn't want to give in to him.

After a long moment, she looked over coldly and said, "I can't make a decision like this on my own," she said. "Patriarch Icemountain must also agree."

Meng Hao chuckled. He waved his sleeve, and blast of wind shot out in all directions as he began to fly in the direction of the ice plains. The Flamephoenix gritted her teeth and flew along behind him.

This time, Meng Hao went much faster than last time. It only took a few months to cross the entire Ice-Fire Realm. The Flamephoenix was shocked, and her heart was pounding. Normally speaking, she wouldn't have been able to keep up, but she happened to have some magical items that gave her just enough speed to follow.

A few months later, deep within the ice plains, Meng Hao and the Flamephoenix heard a roar of fury. Patriarch Icemountain, the 300,000-meter mountain, was shaking as he struggled against the seals.

The Flamephoenix looked at him, then took a deep breath as the fear inside her heart mounted. Meng Hao smiled as he looked back and forth from the Icemountain Giant to the Flamephoenix.

"If the two of you don't agree," he said, "then it's going to take me a lot longer to get the shard.... Furthermore, after searching everywhere in vain, I'm getting the sensation that the mirror shard is underground...." He looked down at the lands below. The strange thing was that he had actually tried to blast the ground open earlier, and yet, despite the level of his cultivation base, he had been unable to do so.

After some thought, a flicker of determination appeared in his eyes, and he waved his finger toward Patriarch Icemountain.

Instantly, the seals unraveled, and a roar of rage echoed out as he rose to his feet. Without even a moment's pause, he launched himself toward Meng Hao, punching out with his fist.

The Flamephoenix seemed shocked, but then she gritted her teeth and similarly attacked Meng Hao.

Meng Hao smiled. His expression didn't change the all, but he did speak, his voice icy: "Looking to die?!"

As the words left his mouth, his cultivation base erupted with power that had been building up for several hundred years. Eight Essences were unleashed, along with the shocking power of his fleshly body. Combined with his Demonic qi, and the power in his blood, he could unleash incredible force.

It left the Icemountain Giant trembling, and the Flamephoenix shaking. As Meng Hao hovered there, an enormous head appeared behind him, radiating infinite darkness.

It had a vicious horn jutting out of its forehead, long black hair, and glowing red eyes that seemed to contain oceans of blood. The Demonic qi caused the world to distort, shaking everything violently.

If that were all there were to it, it might not be a big deal. But then Meng Hao extended his right hand, and seven copper mirror shards appeared. They then melted, transforming into black threads that spread out to cover his right hand, and then his torso, left arm, and legs. His entire body, with the exception of his head, was now covered with black armor!

As soon as the armor appeared, a savage and explosive aura erupted out, causing his power to rise.

RUUUUUUMMMMBLLLLLLE....

The incredible power surging out made it seem as if Meng Hao could unleash the power of the starry sky itself, as if he were the ultimate monarch, the most powerful being in the Vast Expanse.

Gradually, bits of Transcendent power began to radiate out from him. He looked down at the Icemountain Giant and the Flamephoenix, and then beckoned at them.

"Didn't you want to fight? Let's fight!"

Chapter 1497: Borrowing Power for the Search!

The Icemountain Giant's pupils constricted; as of this moment, he could sense how powerful Meng Hao's aura was, and knew that he was absolutely no match. However, he was still sure that Meng Hao wouldn't be able to kill him. He took a step forward, and struck out with his fist.

The Flamephoenix erupted with power, transforming back into her avian form. A sea of flames erupted around her as she shot toward Meng Hao. In the blink of an eye, intense booms echoed out as the three of them began to fight.

The ground quaked. The world shook. Meng Hao performed an incantation gesture with his right hand, and the pitch-black head behind him howled and shot toward the giant and the phoenix.

The Icemountain Giant's body vibrated, cracks spreading out across his surface before he completely exploded. However, in almost the same instant, he formed back together, and seemed no less willing to fight.

The Flamephoenix also fell back, her eyes shining brightly as countless flaming magical symbols appeared around her.

"Too weak," Meng Hao said coolly as he hovered there in midair. "Time to use your trump cards. If I win, you must tell me the location of the mirror shard. If you win, then I'll leave immediately."

"Very well," said the Icemountain Giant. "The outcome of this battle will determine everything."

The Icemountain Giant didn't seem surprised at all about what was happening. Meng Hao wasn't sure exactly how he and the Flamephoenix were communicating, but that didn't matter. The giant roared, beating at his chest with his fists. As a result, countless chunks of ice fell off of him, which then formed together into an enormous greataxe.

The Flamephoenix flickered as more flaming magical symbols appeared, and her body grew in size until it was 30,000 meters long. Intense, terrifying heat radiated out from her, causing the surrounding icy landscape to melt. And yet, only a moment later, it froze back up again.

Meng Hao's eyes flickered, and his mouth twisted into a cold smile as he stepped forward and unleashed a fist strike. It was none other than the Devil-Butchering Fist!

That fist strike contained the Life-Extermination Fist, the Self-Immolation Fist, and the God-Slaying Fist. All of those fist strikes became the Devil-Butchering Fist. The sky dimmed, as if this fist were replacing everything above and below as it rocketed toward the Flamephoenix.

The giant howled, hefting the greataxe and then slashing it down toward Meng Hao's fist. The giant simultaneously performed an incantation gesture with his left hand, causing intense coldness to spring out, creating an all-freezing windstorm that swept over Meng Hao.

The Flamephoenix let out a long cry, and the flames around her emitted Essence aura as they transformed into a crimson claw.

It was a bird-like claw, bright red, that shot directly toward Meng Hao.

In the blink of an eye, the giant and the Flamephoenix met Meng Hao's Devil-Butchering Fist. When they slammed into each other, the sky shattered, and the lands were destroyed. The entire world shook violently, and Meng Hao fell backward seven or eight paces. As he looked on, the giant's axe transformed into ash, and the giant himself shattered. A moment later, though, he formed back together, although he seemed a bit smaller than before.

As for the Flamephoenix, blood sprayed out of her mouth, and she was trembling visibly. Her injuries were serious, but only a moment later, the flames around her roared back to life.

The fear in their eyes as they looked at Meng Hao was clear. And yet, there was also an uncompromising gleam. Clearly, they would not agree to Meng Hao's demand, and just hand over their precious treasure. Not unless there was absolutely no other choice.

However, it was at this point that Meng Hao suddenly vanished. When he reappeared, he was right in front of the giant, whereupon he waved his finger.

Rumbling sounds echoed out as the giant fell back, icy coldness exploding off of him. Even as he prepared to fight back, Hexing magic Essence suddenly erupted out onto from Meng Hao's finger, after which he unleashed another punch.

The giant roared as cracking sounds emanated out. In the blink of an eye, he recovered, but he was still sent tumbling backward by 3,000 meters. Meng Hao instantly followed up, and at the same time, the Flamephoenix closed in.

Before the Flamephoenix could even get close, Meng Hao began to spin, his left foot sweeping through the air to create a powerful cyclone that slammed into the giant.

The giant howled, trembling as he fell back yet again. His body collapsed, but instantly recovered. At the same time, coldness exploded out of him as if to consume Meng Hao. Meng Hao snorted coldly, opening his fist up into a palm, wherein appeared a sealing mark.

He shoved his hand out in front of him, unleashing the Inside Outside Hex. A force of expulsion appeared, shoving the coldness away. Simultaneously, Meng Hao unleashed another fist strike.

The blow landed directly onto the giant's chest. Cracks spread out, and the giant exploded into fragments of ice. Meng Hao subsequently waved his sleeve, causing a wind to spring up and scatter the fragments.

Those fragments seemed capable of piercing through any barrier, and they quickly began to form back together. However, Meng Hao's eyes flashed with red light, and he performed an incantation gesture, then waved his finger, unleashing the Eighth Hex's Essence of space. His target was the Flamephoenix, who was closing in behind him.

The power of space erupted out, and the Flamephoenix's eyes widened. She let out a piercing shriek, and flames erupted off of her as she summoned a huge flame giant to take her place within the sealing power.

However, even as the Flamephoenix used a substitute to escape the Spatial Sealing, Meng Hao arrived and unleashed a fist strike. Flames burst out, but she quickly recovered, but Meng Hao then continued to unleash one fist strike after another.

He struck a total of thirteen blows. Each time, the Flamephoenix would collapse into flames, but then reform. After every blow, her face was a bit paler, and she was trembling even harder. When the final blow landed, she was sent flying backward 3,000 meters, blood spraying out of her mouth.

Just as Meng Hao was about to give chase, a furious roar echoed out.

"Foreigner, you've forced our hand. It's time for you to die!" It was the reformed giant, who spread his arms wide and howled, "Ice-Plains Flower!"

As he howled, intense coldness rose up from the ice plains around him. The coldness rushed toward the giant, and at the same time, the layers of ice in the area vanished, to reappear atop his body. It only took a moment for all of the cold and ice to form together into a huge flower on his right hand!

It was a flower made of ice, resplendent and beautiful, and as it grew larger, a terrifying aura emanated out from it. The entire world shuddered, and suddenly seemed to grow completely devoid of sound.

Next, the Flamephoenix, which Meng Hao had shoved 3,000 meters away, wiped the blood from her mouth and glared at him with a powerful murderous aura raging out. Eyes flickering with killing intent, the sea of flames around her roared even more powerfully than before, transforming into a pillar of fire that shot up into the sky.

The sky turned bright red, like a sea of fire, and at the same time, the Flamephoenix cried, "Crimson-Flame Flower!"

Almost immediately, the crimson sea of flames began to form together into a gigantic flower. The seemingly everlasting flame stretched from the sky to the land, filling half the world with matchlessly intense heat.

At the same time, the ice flower emanated intense coldness which froze everything it touched.

Meng Hao watched all of this happening with an expectant gleam in his eyes.

At the same time, the giant and the phoenix said, "Combined attack!"

The giant's body shattered, swirling up to merge into the ice flower, which radiated even more resplendent light than before.

The Flamephoenix likewise merged into the flame flower, ensuring that both of the flowers were the peak existences in this entire world.

The two flowers then shot toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao threw his head back and laughed uproariously.

“I’ve been waiting for this trump card of yours!” As soon as the words left his mouth, his energy skyrocketed. His hair rose up, and his black armor flashed as he performed an incantation gesture with his right hand. The Essence of the Eighth Hex appeared, then the Seventh, and the Sixth... all the way to the Essence of the First Hex. Then, they began to merge together.

“Eight Hexes, combine!” He threw his arms out in either direction, as the eight Hexing magic Essences transformed into threads, which then became a huge net.

The net spread out in all directions, and in the moment that it made contact with the ice and flame flowers, the world shattered. Heaven and Earth distorted as a huge shockwave blasted out in all directions. Within the blast, Meng Hao coughed up a mouthful of blood, and his body was shredded into a mass of bloody flesh.

And yet, his eyes shone brightly. This was the moment he had been waiting for!

“Copper Mirror Armor, Shake the Heavens!” The armor on his body suddenly flew off him, transforming back into seven shards. Then, they merged together, forming the almost-complete shape of a mirror!

This was the second true function of the copper mirror!

Almost as soon as that mirror appeared, the terrifying blast created by the ice and flame flowers, and the eight combined Hexes, was deflected by the mirror, changing it from an outward blast... into... a focused attack aimed at the ground!

Within the ice and flame flowers, the faces of the giant and the phoenix both fell. However, there was no time for them to do anything in response. Meng Hao’s cultivation base power exploded out like a sharp blade, joining the blast as it slammed into the ground.

In the blink of an eye, the terrifying peak power of all three of these powerful experts slammed into the layers of ice below.

BOOOOOOOOMMM!

The lands quaked in response. Meng Hao couldn't single-handedly break open the ground, but the combined power of all three of them caused the plains around them to collapse. An enormous crater opened up, to reveal... a sprawling necropolis!

Underneath this world of ice and fire, there was a necropolis that stretched out in all directions.

In the moment that the necropolis appeared, the aura of the eighth mirror shard erupted with unprecedented intensity. Meng Hao laughed heartily as he flew down toward the necropolis.

Chapter 1498: The Return Call!

Meng Hao moved as fast as lightning, shooting into the necropolis and following the tug toward the copper mirror shard.

The Icemountain Giant and the Flamephoenix were so shocked by the use of the mirror shards that they had no time to react. The ground was destroyed, and before they even had time to think about what that meant, they were flying down to try to stop Meng Hao.

“Don't let him get the precious treasure!” These were the two most powerful entities in this world, but they were still incredibly nervous as they unleashed all the speed they could muster to fly into the necropolis.

Unfortunately for them, they were just a bit slower than Meng Hao. He was like a cascading beam of light that shot through the passageways down below. Despite the numerous twists and turns, the copper mirror shard was like a burning signal fire in his mind.

He didn't pause for even a moment. In every location where a passage split off in two directions, he knew exactly which way to go, almost as if he had been here before.

Behind him, both the Icemountain Giant and the Flamephoenix shrank down in size as they followed in pursuit. Their hearts were filled with anxiety; the giant couldn't stop roaring in anger, and yet it did no good.

Time passed. The pursuit went on for months, and yet the giant and the phoenix were unable to catch up to Meng Hao. As for Meng Hao, he sped along through the passageways of the necropolis until eventually... he caught sight of the final copper mirror shard!

It was in a deep pit, half of which was liquid ice, the other half being lava. In the very middle of the two was the mirror shard, which had split the area like yin and yang.

The area was filled with a pulsing aura of both fire and ice, which was apparently what had created this strange place to begin with.

Meng Hao looked down, eyes gleaming with anticipation. Without any hesitation, he stretched his right hand out toward the pit and made a grasping motion.

Instantly, the entire pit shuddered, as though it were on the verge of exploding. The mirror shard itself began to shake, then gradually loosened from its position as if it were about to fly over to him.

It was at this point that a powerful roar echoed out from inside the liquid ice, as a sinuous dragon burst out. It was snake-like, and composed completely of frigid ice. Energy surging, it shot directly toward Meng Hao.

Simultaneously, a dragon of flames burst out from the lava, roaring as it charged toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao snorted coldly. Keeping his right hand in the same position as before, he performed an incantation gesture with his left hand and then waved it downwards. Demon Sealing Hexing magic erupted out in a powerful attack, enveloping the dragons of ice and fire, shoving them away.

They spun back and were about to attack again when Meng Hao's left hand flashed in a sealing gesture. Instantly, two streams of mist shot out, transforming into humanoid shapes, like clones. They immediately shot toward the dragons of ice and fire, grabbing them and shoving them backward physically. The two dragons were immediately pinned against the nearby rock walls.

At the same time, the two clones transformed into sealing marks which locked the dragons down. Now, no matter how they roared, they couldn't move at all.

Next, the copper mirror shard shook even harder, and then began to rise up into the air. It was at this point that the Ice Mountain Giant and the Flame Phoenix began to feel the world trembling around them. Their faces fell, and they pushed forward with increased speed. Within the space of a few breaths of time, they shot out of the tunnel.

“Stay your hand!” they roared. However, they were just a bit too late. As the copper mirror shard flew up into the air, the lava and the liquid ice exploded up. Meng Hao then reached out and grabbed the mirror shard.

His eyes shone with brilliant light, and he was even panting a bit. He had been searching for this shard for hundreds of years. At long last, his collection was complete.

The mirror shard itself seemed to be crying out with joy. In the blink of an eye, it melted, transforming into black threads that merged into Meng Hao’s armor. The armor now seemed more complete than ever, and the aura it emitted was shocking to the extreme.

Heaven and Earth trembled. The entire world shook. Without the copper mirror shard, the lava and ice within the pit began to mix together, and all the lands trembled. The ice mountains began to melt, and the flames began to die out. Destructive power spread out in all directions.

The Icemountain Giant trembled and let out a piercing cry. The Flamephoenix looked over, and seeing that he was about to attack, she gritted her teeth... and blocked the way to Meng Hao!

Rumbling filled the air as the Icemountain Giant roared in rage. “Flamephoenix, what are you doing!?”

“He already has the precious treasure,” she replied. “Do you really think we can get it back, even if we fight together?!” The Icemountain Giant roared, and the two of them began to argue. Then they ceased communicating verbally and began to confer via divine will.

Meng Hao stood nearby, watching. He didn’t interfere, but instead, focused on examining the summoning power of the copper mirror shards. As of this moment, he felt more strongly than ever that he could summon the copper mirror itself!

Not too much time passed before the Icemountain Giant let out another powerful roar. His expression was unyielding, and yet simultaneously, defeated. Finally, he had given in. The Flamephoenix turned to face Meng Hao. Taking a deep breath, she transformed into human form, then clasped hands and bowed deeply.

“Fellow Daoist, we were being rash earlier,” she said. “If it’s not too much trouble, we would like to request that we keep the previous agreement.”

Meng Hao looked at her coldly. As of this point, he could completely ignore this place and whatever happened to it. However, his action of taking the copper mirror shard had initiated the destruction of the entire world.

After a moment of thought, he performed a double-handed incantation gesture, causing his cultivation base power to erupt out and fill the area. Then, he unleashed Demon Sealing Hexing magic. Starting with the First Hex and going all the way to the Eighth, he drew upon his most powerful divine ability, the Eight Hexes combined.

However, this time he had eight mirror shards in the form of armor, making the divine ability even more powerful. Colors flashed, and the wind screamed. The faces of both the Icemountain Giant and the Flamephoenix flickered.

“Seal!” Meng Hao said, shoving his hands down toward the pit. That motion caused incredible sealing power to fall down onto the liquid ice and the lava.

Instantly, the two liquids ceased mixing together and gradually became still.

Cracking sounds emanated out, and at the same time, sweat dripped down Meng Hao’s forehead. His cultivation base power erupted again, and the power of the sealing mark of the combined Eight Hexes expanded, completely covering the liquid ice and the lava. Now, instead of destroying each other, they were locked in place. Although they weren’t completely separated like they had been before, they were no longer merging!

At the same time, the melting of the ice plains came to a halt. Although they were warmer than they had been before, they were still ice plains.

On the other side of the world in the lands of flame, fire once again flickered. Although it wasn’t as prevalent as it had been before, and the temperature had been reduced, the fire still existed. As for the two tribes which inhabited the world, although they were thrown into a bit of chaos, there was no deadly danger anymore.

“When I say I’ll do something, I do it,” Meng Hao said. “Right now, my cultivation base isn’t powerful enough to completely resolve the problem. However, with this seal in place, this world will be safe for the next ten thousand years.

“Once my cultivation base is strong enough, I’ll come back and remove the world from danger for all time.” He looked down once more at the deep pit, and then over at the Icemountain Giant and the Flamephoenix.

The Icemountain Giant glared, but the Flamephoenix smiled bitterly and then clasped hands and bowed.

Meng Hao likewise clasped hands and bowed deeply toward the two of them.

“This object is very important to me. Please... accept my apology for any offense I’ve caused. In the future, I’ll definitely repay you.” Although Meng Hao knew that neither of them believed him, he was being very sincere.

With that, he turned and left toward the exit of the necropolis.

Behind him, the Icemountain Giant and the Flamephoenix looked at each other with dour expressions. However, there was nothing they could do at this point. Sighing, they also left.

Now that he had the copper mirror shard, Meng Hao could fly even faster. After twenty days, he reached the exit passageway, and then flew out into the Heavens. Taking a deep breath, he looked back down at the lands below for a moment, then shot out at top speed into the void. A few months later, he emerged from the huge flower.

Now that he was back in the starry sky of the Vast Expanse, his eyes flickered, and his heart thumped with excitement. For the moment, he chose not to summon the copper mirror, but instead shot off into the distance.

He tried a few times to make a connection with his clone’s ninth life, but for some reason, could only vaguely sense him. He had absolutely no way to know what exactly his clone was doing or experiencing. It was almost as if he were covered by a dense fog. However, he could sense a familiar and terrifying aura brewing inside the clone.

“Something is really strange about this ninth reincarnation. Could it be because he’s forming the final sealing mark of the Ninth Hex?” That was the conclusion he came to. The Seal the Heavens Hex, the Ninth Hex, was incredibly powerful, and didn’t even seem congruous with the world. Perhaps its incredible nature was why this unexpected turn of events had occurred.

After a few more months, he had reached a barren and remote location within the starry sky of the Vast Expanse. There could be seen a land mass completely devoid of life, and filled with sprawling ruins.

Meng Hao had passed by this place a few hundred years before, and could sense that there was something strange about this place. Apparently, the energy of the Vast Expanse was weak here. As such, this was the location he had chosen to call out to the copper mirror.

He began to set up numerous spell formations in the area, most of them being restrictive spells. He had no idea what unexpected events might occur after he summoned the copper mirror, but based on all of his experiences, he was certain that something would happen, and that he needed to be ready!

He spent ten years making all of the preparations. In the end, the area looked like it had before, but the truth was that it was now as dangerous as a dragon's pool or a tiger's den. Finally, he sighed contentedly. Taking a deep breath, he sat down cross-legged in front of a dusty boulder. Eyes shining, he performed a double-handed incantation gesture, and the eight mirror shards flew out and began to circulate in the air around him. Apparently, they were forming a miraculous spell formation.

Eyes focused and filled with intense anticipation, he said, "Copper mirror, parrot... the time has come to reunite!"

"I call upon the power of these eight mirror shards to summon you, copper mirror! Whatever distant location you are in, return to me!" Waving his sleeve, he thought back to everything that had happened in the past, then once again performed a double-handed incantation gesture. He sent his divine will out, making contact with the eight mirror shards. That activated the miraculous spell formation. Rumbling sounds echoed out, and the eight shards formed together... into the face of a mirror, with one missing piece!

The mirror seemed to be absorbing Meng Hao's divine sense power. Then... it exploded as a brilliant column of light that illuminated everything in the area and caused the starry sky to tremble.

"Copper mirror... return to me!"

"Parrot... return to me!"

Chapter 1499: Familiar Fluctuations!

His voice seemed to thrum with bizarre power as it echoed out in all directions.

It was a power that came from Meng Hao's memories, from his longing. It filled the column of light as it shot off into the starry sky of the Vast Expanse.

“Copper mirror... return to me....

“Parrot... return to me....

“Lord Fifth... return to me!”

As the column of light formed by the eight mirror shards shot up from the desolate land mass, the Vast Expanse trembled, and the starry sky trembled.

In that same moment, countless powerful experts suddenly seemed to sense something. Their expressions flickered, and they looked in the direction of the beam of light.

In the locations where Meng Hao had discovered the other mirror shards, the powerful experts he had encountered gazed off into the distance, expressions flickering.

The giant lizard. The vicious head. The Icemountain Giant and the Flamephoenix. All of them could sense the auras of the precious treasures which had once been theirs.

At the same time, there were other entities within the starry sky of the Vast Expanse who were stirred into action.

Ripples spread out from the column of light, sweeping out through the Vast Expanse. At the same time, there was apparently a will which began to wake up, that then spoke out in an indistinct voice.

“Destroy that spell formation. Stop him....” Although the voice was difficult to make out, it could be heard by countless entities, and in response, their hearts trembled. Suddenly, a power of will seemed to fill them, taking control of their bodies. Almost immediately, they began to fly in Meng Hao's direction at top speed.

There was a fog, within which shrieking voices could be heard. Countless mysterious specters could be seen therein, which surged out into the starry sky, radiating murderous intentions.

On a crimson land mass, brutish roars echoed out as numerous 30,000-meter-long crimson dragons flew out into the Vast Expanse.

An enormous head floated amidst the dust that filled the starry sky. It had been dead for countless ages, but now its eyelids suddenly opened. There were no eyes, only empty holes, and yet suddenly glints of red could be seen inside. Moments later, a cloud of red dots flew out from within the eyes, forming something like a beam of light. Each one of those dots was a bright red bug, the lot of which flew off into the distance.

In another area, a huge coffin floated out in the void. It was broken down and dilapidated, with no corpse inside. Suddenly, a face materialized and floated above the coffin.

“That’s... the will of the Vast Expanse....” murmured a voice. The coffin vanished, and when it reappeared, it was far off in the distance, heading toward Meng Hao.

Ripples filled the starry sky of the Vast Expanse as countless entities appeared. Some were beasts, some were other types of life, but all of them were heading toward Meng Hao.

There were deathly, corpse-like spirits, minotaurs, creatures with tentacles for arms, stone golems, and extremely beautiful creatures that were only a third of the size of a normal human.

Virtually every type of existence possible could be seen....

The Immortal God Continent and the Devil Realm Continent were shaken, and countless cultivators flew out, eyes red as they charged into the Vast Expanse.

As of this moment, the entire starry sky of the Vast Expanse was trembling.

Back on Planet Vast Expanse, in the First Sect, Han Bei was sitting there cross-legged in meditation. Suddenly, her eyes opened, and they shone with a strange light. She flickered into motion, vanishing, then reappearing back out in the starry sky.

In addition to all of those things, there was something else that noticed the fluctuations. In a remote spot near the very edge of the starry sky of the Vast Expanse, there was a withered old tree, embedded into the trunk of which was a copper mirror.

The copper mirror suddenly began to vibrate and shine with bright light. Then, the image of a parrot became visible.

It seemed confused as it looked off into the distance, as if it were thinking about the past. After a long moment, a blank look filled its eyes.

“Someone... is summoning me....”

“This aura is very familiar, but I can’t remember who it is....”

“However, being called Lord Fifth... I like it. Seems familiar, very familiar....” After a long moment, the parrot faded away. Then, the copper mirror flew off of the tree, transforming into a current of light that shot toward the direction of the calling.

Meanwhile, Meng Hao still sat cross-legged on the land mass out in the starry sky. His divine sense was spread out in all directions, allowing him to feel how shaken the Vast Expanse was. Although he wasn’t able to see it clearly, he could sense the location of the copper mirror, and could feel... that it was currently rushing toward him at top speed.

“It’s coming. It’s definitely coming....” A tremor ran through him, and his eyes shone with excitement. He had been waiting for hundreds of years for this chance to reunite with the copper mirror.

“What a pity the meat jelly perished....” he thought, his heart filled with grief. However, he took a deep breath, confident that the day would come in which he would be able to resurrect the meat jelly.

“According to how fast it’s moving, it will need about seven days to get here!” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered. Even as he sensed the copper mirror, he could also feel an incredible ill will rising up against him within the starry sky of the Vast Expanse.

It was intense, something that could seemingly affect the very essence of life. Meng Hao could tell that as the ill will spread out, countless powerful experts began to head in his direction.

Furthermore, in addition to the ill will, there was something adding a blessing to his enemies, increasing their speed dramatically, almost to the point of a teleportation, enabling them to move far, far faster than the copper mirror.

“It seems all the work I put into setting up these defenses wasn’t a waste after all....” Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with killing intent as he thought back over the ten years he had spent setting up all of the spell formations. It had been difficult to suppress his anxiousness to summon the parrot, but now he realized that it was definitely worth it.

It was at this point that the first species of enemy appeared in the starry sky up above. The mysterious specters closed in at high speed, invisible to the naked eye, but detectable via divine sense. They seemed matchlessly vicious and evil, and as soon as they appeared, they charged toward Meng Hao, causing rumbling sounds to echo out.

He looked up them, eyes flashing with coldness. Before the specters could even get close to the land mass, they slammed into something like an invisible net. Flashes of light appeared, and the specters let out miserable shrieks.

Via divine sense, Meng Hao was able to see their bodies being sliced to shreds by the huge net, completely destroying them. And yet, before they could even fade away, more specters appeared off in the distance.

There were clouds of them, seemingly endless numbers that swarmed around the land mass. Were it necessary to count them, there would be more than a billion, creating an awe-inspiring scene as they charged in attack.

Booms rang out, and the land mass shook, but Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he performed a double-handed incantation gesture, causing the first of the nine shield layers he had built to shine with brilliant light, destroying the murderous specters.

The specters didn’t seem to fear death at all. They blasted bodily into the shield, causing it to shudder and teeter on the verge of being destroyed. Meng Hao’s eyes flickered with killing intent, and he snorted coldly. Then, his hands flashed in a double-handed incantation gesture, and he slapped them onto the ground.

“Detonate!”

Instantly, the first shield layer surged with blinding light, then exploded, sending a destructive blast out in all directions. It swept over the specters like a deadly tide, causing bloodcurdling screams to be heard as the specters were wiped out of existence.

There were some among them who were incredibly powerful, and yet, even they were incapable of evading destruction. By the time the blast dissipated, more than ninety-nine percent of the specters had been eradicated, leaving behind only those who were at the Paragon level.

Of those, there were seven, with two being at the 9-Essences level.

They were tattered and torn, their expressions those of confusion, and yet they continued to attack. Meng Hao snorted, right hand flashing with an incantation gesture that caused wisps of smoke to curl outside of the second shield layer. The smoke rapidly took the shape of a hand, which grabbed out toward the specters.

Booms could be heard as three of them were summarily crushed. The remaining specters fled, and just when the hand was about to pursue them, a mighty roar echoed out from the distance.

A beam of red light appeared, moving so fast it seemed like a teleportation. In the blink of an eye, it appeared directly in front of the huge hand; it was a gigantic, crimson dragon, bursting with the power of peak 9-Essences. As it slammed into the hand, the hand shattered, and then the dragon braced itself and charged onward in attack.

Even as it moved forward, more crimson dragons appeared off in the distance. One after another they could be seen, including three which were at the peak 9-Essences level. The rest were weaker, but the crimson dragons were powerful entities to begin with, and there were over a million of them. They filled the starry sky, instantly converging upon the second shield.

The lands shook violently as the previously invisible second shield began to distort under the powerful attack. A moment later, it was destroyed.

The resulting fragments blasted out like a shockwave. In response, Meng Hao sat there on the land mass below, eyes flickering with killing intent. These shields had been erected using a technique he had acquired within Shui Dongliu's legacy, and were very similar to the Mountain and Sea Grand Aegis.

Based on the current level of Meng Hao's cultivation base, it was far, far mightier than the shield which had protected the Mountain and Sea Realm. And yet, the crimson dragons were capable of shattering the second layer.

However, the price they paid to do so was heavy!

Chapter 1500: Holding the Line!

All of the crimson dragons beneath the Paragon level were shredded to pieces. Even as the reek of blood spread out in all directions, Meng Hao's hands flashed in a double-handed incantation gesture, and three enormous hands appeared outside of the third shield. Each one radiated the power of the peak 9-Essences level, and they shot directly after three crimson dragons.

Then the starry sky trembled as, unexpectedly, countless red dots appeared on the three enormous hands. A close look revealed that each one of those red dots was a bug of some sort. In the blink of an eye, they had completely covered the hands, accompanied by an odd droning sound. More and more bugs appeared, until everything seemed to be a huge swath of red.

Then, off in the distance, a sinister aura of death appeared. It rapidly spread out in all directions, and within it could be seen an endless collection of corpses. Each one of those corpses seem to have been possessed, and they formed a huge army that charged toward the land mass.

The red bugs and the army of the dead all unleashed a massive onslaught onto the third shield layer.

Shocking rumbling echoed out in all directions.

Meng Hao said nothing. Looking off into the distance, he spread both hands out and pushed them down onto the ground. Then he closed his eyes and ignored everything happening outside the shields. His entire mind poured into the copper mirror shards to intensify their call.

Time passed. Two days later, the copper mirror was still a beam of bright light shooting toward Meng Hao's location.

As for the land mass, it was shaking violently. The third shield layer had already collapsed, and now the fourth was teetering on the verge of destruction. Half of the red bugs were dead, and most of the army of the dead was gone.

However, a host of stone golems had appeared, and because of their roaring attacks, the fourth shield was almost destroyed. The stone golems attacked with utter madness.

In addition to them were minotaurs and strange, tentacle-armed entities. The tentacled entities did not have powerful fleshly bodies, but their magical techniques were incredibly shocking. Because of all of that, the fourth shield layer was finally destroyed. Even as the explosion rippled out, the stone golems' eyes gleamed with madness, and they suddenly self-detonated.

BOOOOOOOOMMM!

The self-detonation of the stone golems caused the shockwave of the fourth shield layer's destruction to blast into the fifth shield layer. Cracks spread out as the swarms of bizarre creatures continued to attack, and the fifth shield layer disintegrated.

Next came a rain of a billion or more arrows, which whizzed toward the sixth shield layer, bursting with shocking levels of power. In the blink of an eye, the sixth shield layer was destroyed.

That caused the seventh shield layer to appear, at which point Meng Hao opened his eyes. He looked out, his expression grim. Then he took a deep breath and performed a double-handed incantation gesture, causing a blurry face to appear on the surface of the seventh shield.

It looked almost like a specter as it flew up to meet the rain of arrows. Next came a host of tiny humanoid creatures no taller than an average person's knee.

More time passed. On the third day, the seventh shield layer was destroyed by the tiny creatures. In the three days that the armies of bizarre creatures had been attacking the shield layers, they had sustained severe casualties, losing even Paragon-level entities.

Creatures of all kinds and types could be seen. Of the numerous types of beings Meng Hao had encountered throughout his hundreds of years of traveling, only a small portion were represented here. These creatures had received the summons which had echoed out from the will of the Vast Expanse, and thus, it was with bloodshot eyes that they battered against the seventh shield layer.

On the fourth day, the seventh shield layer collapsed. On the fifth day, the eighth shield layer was destroyed.

On the sixth day, the ninth shield layer was shaking. Meng Hao opened his eyes again and looked out at the seemingly infinite armies of bizarre creatures. Their vast numbers were truly a shocking sight to behold.

They had numerous 9-Essences experts. Although they didn't represent even a fraction of the power that existed out in the starry sky, they were possessed by a madness that ensured they would not rest until Meng Hao was destroyed.

"One more day...." Meng Hao murmured. "The ninth shield layer will last for that much longer." Meng Hao could sense that the copper mirror was still some distance away. It would definitely appear within one day.

However, it was this point that Meng Hao opened his eyes, and his face fell. Off in the distance in the starry sky, an enormous planet had suddenly teleported into the area behind the land mass he was currently on. The planet immediately vibrated as it began to pick up speed.

Rumbling could be heard as the planet crushed numerous creatures in the army in its attack on the ninth shield layer.

Even the armies of bizarre creatures could hardly endure the ear-splitting rumbling which echoed out as the area where the ninth shield layer was hit immediately shattered. Then, the enormous planet began to move as, shockingly, it transformed into a giant. It stood there tall and mighty outside of the shield, grinning down at Meng Hao.

In the same moment that it grinned, a streak of light shot through the hole it had torn into the shield and headed directly toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao's face was very grim as he sat there cross-legged. He suddenly extended his right hand, then clenched it down violently. A boom rang out as he grabbed a tiny creature no taller than his own knee.

It was a woman, spectacularly beautiful, who exuded an enticing charm. However, her face was pale, and her expression one of disbelief. Apparently, she couldn't believe that the cloaking magic she cultivated could be seen through by Meng Hao.

Before she could beg for mercy, Meng Hao squeezed his hand down, and a popping sound rang out as her body exploded.

Things weren't over yet, though. Meng Hao rose to his feet, and his left hand unleashed a vicious fist strike. A crimson dragon suddenly appeared directly in the path of his fist. A look of confusion could be seen in its eyes as it seemingly allowed the fist strike to hit it, completely destroying its entire massive frame.

At the same time, Meng Hao tilted his head to the side to avoid a deadly attack from one of the specters. As the specter sailed past him, he suddenly opened his mouth and latched onto the specter.

Even as it let out a miserable shriek, Meng Hao inhaled deeply. The specter subsequently shrank down as it was sucked into Meng Hao to become part of his cultivation base.

All of this takes some time to describe, but happened in the briefest of moments after the planetary giant punched a hole into the shield and smiled.

Meng Hao's expression was as calm as ever as he strode forward thirty meters. As he did, the eight copper mirror shards, which remained in the spot he had been standing earlier, emitted a bright shield.

It consisted of a riot of colors which flowed across its surface, and was... the most powerful of Meng Hao's preparations, the tenth shield layer.

This shield protected, not the land mass, but the spell formation which was issuing the summoning call to the copper mirror.

Meng Hao stood outside of the shield, looking around, his eyes flickering with killing intent, a murderous aura swirling around him.

He said nothing, and yet his actions made his message clear.... No one would be getting past him to destroy that spell formation!

The entire battlefield went completely silent. However, that silence only lasted for a few breaths' worth of time. Then, howls and roars broke the silence as countless figures poured through the hole which had already been punched in the shield. As for the planetary giant, it began to batter the ninth shield in other locations.

Meng Hao took a first step forward, and the lands shook. Because the energy of the Vast Expanse was weak on his land mass, the shaking of the land itself influenced everything around it, slowing down the approach of the enemy.

Because of that, a few entities shot out in front of everyone else. They were none other than the Paragon-level experts. Although only one was at the 9-Essences level, with the rest being at the 8-Essences level, they were still powerful Paragons. As soon as they appeared in the open, Meng Hao shot forward, unleashing the Devil-Butchering Fist.

Life-Extermination. Self-Immolation. God-Slaying. Devil-Butchering.... They merged together into one fist, one punch, which shocked everything and shook the starry sky. Incredible power was unleashed on the handful of Paragons, and in their shock, blasted into them even as they were still preparing to defend themselves. They were crushed as easily as dry twigs.

Booms rang out as they exploded, destroyed in body and mind. By a fluke, only the 9-Essences expert survived, blood spurting out of various wounds. But then Meng Hao took a second step forward, appearing up in midair, where he punched out a second time. However, he didn't strike the Paragon, but someone else.

The air in front of him rippled as an old man appeared, a man with pitch-black skin and two horns sticking out of his head, who emanated the power of the peak 9-Essences level.

His expression was grave as he faced Meng Hao's single punch. Roaring, he unleashed a divine ability, summoning a black ox, beneath whose feet swirled flaming wind.

Meng Hao's single attack destroyed many of the bizarre creatures who were pouring in through the hole in the shield. Even the old man himself coughed up a mouthful of blood and tumbled backward, face filled with fear.

By this point, only half of the sixth day had passed. Meng Hao took a third step, although it was not to attack the old man with the pitch-black skin. He appeared outside of the ninth shield layer... in front of the planet-sized giant.

"You're strong, huh?" he said coldly. Even as the words left his mouth, the giant shivered, and his heart began to pound. He began to move backward.

Before he could get away, Meng Hao transformed into a black roc which shot forward like lightning, stabbing into the giant's forehead and then bursting out from the other side of his head!

