

The Heavens 151

Chapter 151: I'll Do It Myself

The dark red vines seemed to have been infected by Meng Hao's fury. They whipped about wildly, creating a buzzing noise. Dust rose from the ground like a fog, obscuring Meng Hao's figure.

His black scholar's robe now looked a bit faded. Long hair whipped around him, and killing intent, fueled by his intense anger, rose to the heavens. This killing aura was poles apart from Meng Hao's usual disposition.

Veins of blood filled his eyes. He saw Xu Qing's helplessness, her bitterness, her pale beauty, and then the simple smile that broke out on her face. That smile became Meng Hao's everything.

Meng Hao loved her. It was the youthful love that comes from looking at a pretty girl. A simple love. After the dissolution of the Reliance Sect, they had been separated by an entire world. Now that they could see each other again, the years that had passed didn't seem very long after all, almost like a dream.

Seven or eight years ago, you were a cold, a young girl who stood beneath the moon and accepted the Cosmetic Cultivation Pill. Now, seven or eight years later, here you are, your face pale, but smiling.

Seven or eight years ago I was a scholar standing on Mount Daqing who threw a gourd bottle down the mountain. You will never know the promise I placed in that gourd bottle.

Seven or eight years later, here I stand, my killing intent billowing to the Heavens. The road behind me doesn't stretch very far, but it is filled with the bones of Cultivators.

Seven or eight years....

For mortals, many things can change in seven or eight years. For Cultivators, seven or eight years is not a long time; but then again, Cultivators all begin life as mortals. Meng Hao was no longer the scholar he had been seven or eight years ago, but the memories from that time still remained. He would never forget those years.

He gazed at Xu Qing and smiled. His smile contained warmth, and the happiness of seeing someone again for the first time in a long while. It lasted until he looked upon the trembling man surnamed Zhao who stood there pale-faced, his robe hanging loose on his body.

Zhao Shanhe felt as if Meng Hao's eyes were two sharp swords stabbing into his own eyes. The gaze entered his head, causing his mind to tremble. It pierced his blood and flesh, grinding against his bones and stabbing into his Qi passageways. It stabbed all the way to his Dao Pillar.

His Dao Pillar was filled with cracks; he obviously had a Fractured Foundation. The Dao Pillar shook violently, as if Meng Hao's gaze would cause it to crumble to pieces. Zhao Shanhe was frightened out of his mind.

"Fellow... Fellow Daoist, senior, I'm Zhao Shanhe, a Conclave disciple of the Black Sieve Sect. Fellow Daoist..." His tongue quivered as he spoke. He might be a rich kid, but he wasn't stupid. The pink shield from just now was a treasure that could only be broken by the late Foundation Establishment stage. And yet Meng Hao, who seemed to be at the early Foundation Establishment stage, had crushed it.

He also saw Meng Hao's frigid killing aura. It was powerfully intense, something that he had never actually seen before in his entire life.

"You're surnamed Zhao?" Meng Hao said coolly, beginning to a step forward. "I just killed another guy surnamed Zhao. His name was Zhao Binwu." Meng Hao had acquired Zhao Binwu's name from the identification medallion in his bag of holding.

As he took his first step, it felt to Zhao Shanhe as if Meng Hao was stepping directly onto his heart. His heart pounded, filling with a difficult to describe pain, deep inside.

It was then that Meng Hao's words from just now registered in Zhao Shanhe's mind. A thunder-like roaring filled him, and his body shivered. He unconsciously took a step backward. Meng Hao's gaze swept over him, filled with an incredible pressure. Zhao Shanhe's mind reeled again, and his trembling body lost the ability to move. Facing Meng Hao, his Cultivation base seemed completely incapable of producing even the smallest amount of power.

This was crushing pressure!

Meng Hao released the full power of his Perfect Dao Pillar, creating a pressure that could crush down upon any Foundation Establishment Dao Pillar!

This was an innate ability of a Perfect Foundation. Because the Perfect Foundation struggles with the Heavens over spiritual energy, it has the ability to emit crushing pressure on all other Foundation Establishment Cultivation bases!

Amidst his trembling, Zhao Shanhe's expression flickered. Meng Hao took a second step, and as the step descended, Zhao Shanhe's face grew deathly pale. Blood oozed out of his mouth, and an intense dread crept into his eyes.

"Fellow Daoist... if... if you want to talk..." His entire body shook, but even as he tried to speak, Meng Hao took a third step. He stomped down; Zhao Shanhe's spirit shook and he coughed up a mouthful of blood. The Dao Pillar within him was unable to withstand the pressure exuded by Meng Hao. A large fissure sliced all the way through it!

More fissures grew, spreading out to fill the entire Dao Pillar. The blood drained completely from Zhao Shanhe's face, and his eyes filled with anguish. Trembling, he was just about to use all the power he could muster to fight back, when Meng Hao, face blank, took his fourth step, which was filled with powerful killing intent.

The instant the fourth step descended, the roaring within Zhao Shanhe rose to the Heavens. His heart suddenly stopped beating for a moment. All of his organs seemed to slow as the cracks spread throughout his Dao Pillar until suddenly... it disintegrated!!

The Dao Pillar disintegrated!

When that happened, Zhao Shanhe let out a bloodcurdling shriek that was unlike anything that had emerged from his mouth before. He coughed up seven or eight mouthfuls of blood, and then began to wither and shrink. Cold sweat poured out of him, and his face was ashen. His body could suddenly move again, but all that he was able to do was retreat backward.

Before he could move backward very far, Meng Hao took a fifth step, and now he was standing in front of Zhao Shanhe. His knee flew up, not toward Zhao Shanhe's neck, but directly between his legs!

Pop pop!

The intense pain caused Zhao Shanhe to double over, screaming. Even as he screamed, Meng Hao's right hand shot up and clamped onto his neck. The scream now existed only within Zhao Shanhe's throat, with no way to emerge out.

He could only whimper as his face began to turn a dark purple color. Unable to speak, unable to scream, the pain seemed to grow ten times worse.

His eyes bulged, filled with insanity, and his body twitched. He suddenly wanted to fight back.

But... he couldn't resist. He was powerless to even struggle, unable to even utter threats. His body shook, filled with pain. He was like a mortal, his Dao Pillar destroyed, his Cultivation base in ruins.

"Stop!" cried a trembling voice. It was Xue Yuncui, who was still next to Xu Qing. Her body shook and her face was pale. But she still held the sword at Xu Qing's neck, seemingly ready to stab it in at any moment.

To her, Meng Hao appeared to be some sort of devilish fiend, cruel and ruthless. It caused the blood to drain from her face, and she didn't dare to even look him in the eye. Regret welled up from within her heart, but it was too late. She could only beg for him to let her go.

"You're Meng Hao, right? I've heard Xu Qing talk about you and the Reliance Sect.... This is all just a misunderstanding. I just want to leave...." Her voice trembled as she looked toward Meng Hao. Even though she held a sword, she was actually the frightened one.

"I used to be a scholar," he said coolly. He continued to hold Zhao Shanhe up by the neck, but turned to look at Xue Yuncui. His voice was soft as he continued, "Once I read an ancient text that was said to be from the Great Tang in the Eastern Lands. It described thousands of bizarre execution methods. There was one that, after I read about it, caused me to have nightmares for days." Eyes filled with loathing, he reached up with his left hand and grabbed one of Zhao Shanhe's fingers. One by one, he crushed the bones of the fingers of both hands. Then his arms. Then his shoulders. Then the rest of his body.

Zhao Shanhe wanted to pass out from the intense pain, but couldn't, not with Meng Hao there. Time passed for as long as it takes an incense stick to burn. Finally, Meng Hao twisted his right hand. A popping sound rang out as Zhao Shanhe's neck was snapped.

The entire time, he was unable to utter a single cry. Such was his death....

Meng Hao dropped Zhao Shanhe's body and then looked at Xue Yuncui. "How do you want to die? I'll let you decide."

Her face was completely pale, like a corpse's. Her body trembled, as did the sword she held in her hand. She looked at Meng Hao, and dread welled up within her. This was like the worst nightmare she had ever experienced.

"You... Don't you force me!!" she cried. Even as the words left her mouth, the ground beneath her feet exploded up. A dark red vine snaked out, wrapping around her body and sending the sword spinning into the air. Meng Hao flicked a sleeve to knock it twenty-five or so meters away. The vines circulated around Xue Yuncui, their mouths wide and seemingly dripping with saliva, just waiting for Meng Hao's command, whereupon they would consume her.

"Don't kill her..." said Xu Qing quietly, struggling to her feet. She looked at Meng Hao. "I want to do it myself. I've been wanting to cut her tongue out for years." Gritting her teeth, she retrieved Xue Yuncui's sword. The vines lowered Xue Yuncui toward her.

"Junior Sister Xu... I..." She faced Xu Qing, trembling, an imploring look on her face.

Xu Qing, her face cold, lifted the sword and stabbed it slowly into her mouth. Xue Yuncui's screams echoed out.

Xu Qing leaned forward and whispered into her ear: "You can't fight back, so just close your eyes and enjoy it. I've always wanted to tell you, you are the slut!" She twisted the sword in her hand. After the space of about ten breaths, Xue Yuncui stopped struggling. Xu Qing stabbed the sword in even deeper.

Chapter 152: Words Under the Moon With An Old Companion

Xu Qing looked at Xue Yuncui as she stabbed the sword all the way through her head. Then she stepped back, pale faced. Xue Yuncui slipped into death, and Xu Qing stood there silently.

Meng Hao looked at her and then walked up next to her. Together, they sat down. The vines dragged Xue Yuncui's body down into the ground and began to devour it.

The moon hung high in the sky, and everything was quiet. No one had noticed the ripples of battle magic; after all, this Blessed Land was a very large place.

“First time?” asked Meng Hao. Their shadows overlapped in the moonlight.

She was quiet for a while before nodding.

“The first time I killed someone, my heart was troubled for quite a while,” he said softly. As he looked at her, images from the Reliance Sect floated into his mind.

A breeze passed by, cleaning away the stench of blood. Xu Qing’s hair curled up, brushing against Meng Hao’s face. It was hard to tell whether it wrapped around his face, or his heart.

“Was it after the Sect disbanded?” asked Xu Qing, turning her head to look at him. Her face was pale, but to Meng Hao, it was beautiful.

He remembered the night years ago when he had escorted her back to the East Mountain. As he’d watched her walking away from him, he’d thought to himself that he wouldn’t mind marrying her.

It was a memory from years ago, such a long time ago. It was hard to determine whether or not it was simply the idling of youth.

“Actually, it was inside the Sect,” said Meng Hao with a smile. He felt relaxed. This Blessed Land was a dangerous place, but for some reason he felt at ease, as if he were back in the Reliance Sect, on top of the East Mountain, standing beneath the moon.

“Oh?” said Xu Qing, looking shocked. She stared at Meng Hao, temporarily forgetting to cover her face with coldness.

To Meng Hao, her blank look was filled with beauty. It was very different from the Elder Sister Xu from his memories. Coldness was unapproachable; but her numb look now made her seem very dear.

Meng Hao laughed.

“I suddenly have the feeling I never understood the real you, Elder Sister,” he said with a smile, looking at her. He was no longer the scholar he once had been. He had experienced many things,

and had grown through the years. In terms of both experience and wisdom, he had matured a lot. He was now able to tell that the coldness exhibited by Xu Qing was intentional.

He looked over her, catching sight of the milky white skin beneath the rips in her clothing. This was not the first time he'd seen a woman in such a position, but for some reason, when he'd looked at Chu Yuyan, he could remain calm. Seeing Xu Qing now, though, a different look filled his eyes.

Xu Qing's gaze met Meng Hao's for a moment, and then she looked away, her heart pounding. A flush appeared on her face, and she gripped her garment tightly in her fists. She was clearly nervous.

Meng Hao coughed lightly, and then slapped his bag of the Cosmos, producing a set of clothes which he began to place around her shoulders.

She said nothing, allowing him to cover her up. She lifted her beautiful face to look at the moon. As the moonlight shone onto her, Meng Hao looked at her hair and her lovely features. They were so delicate it seemed as if the wind might cause them to break.

"You killed someone in the Sect? Who?" Xu Qing tried to pretend she didn't notice Meng Hao looking at her, but her flush had deepened.

"An Outer Sect disciple surnamed Zhao," said Meng Hao, recalling Elder Brother Zhao's horrific death by the copper mirror. "He wanted to take the Immortal's Cave you gave me."

"You've really got guts," she said, turning her head and shifting her gaze from the moon to Meng Hao. "You actually killed someone inside the Sect." Her words were spoken in earnest, and with the earnestness came her usual coldness. However, Meng Hao could see the uncomplicated simplicity beneath the coldness.

"Well... actually I didn't just kill one person," he said with a light cough.

"Oh?" Elder Sister Xu stared mutely again for a long moment. It was as if she were meeting him for the first time. She looked him over carefully, thinking for a while. "So you got used to it?" She hastily added: "What I mean is, after killing so much, did you stop feeling uneasy at heart?"

“Let’s talk about something else,” said Meng Hao. He could tell that she was very curious about the matter. But for a man and a woman to sit under the moon talking about killing people didn’t quite seem appropriate.

“Oh,” she said, nodding, looking at him. Her coldness concealed her true personality, but at the moment, she suddenly didn’t know what to say.

“I want to show you something.” Meng Hao tapped his bag of the Cosmos, and the Cosmetic Cultivation Pill appeared in his hand. With a smile, he handed it out to Elder Sister Xu.

When she saw the pill, she stared in shock. Her eyes were fixed on the pill as she slowly raised her hand and took it from him. Then she closed her eyes.

It was impossible to tell what she was thinking inside. After a moment, she opened her eyes and looked at Meng Hao for a long, long time.

This was the third time Meng Hao had given her a Cosmetic Cultivation Pill.

She put it away quietly, then softly said, “A few years ago I heard that the State of Zhao... disappeared.”

Meng Hao sighed. Then, he proceeded to explain to her about Patriarch Reliance. She sat there underneath the moon, listening intently. When he told her that Patriarch Reliance was actually a gargantuan, vicious turtle, her mouth dropped open and a look of disbelief covered her face. To Meng Hao, she was truly beautiful. He suddenly stopped talking.

This in turn caused Xu Qing to look into his eyes. When their eyes met, she suddenly turned and stared off into the distance, her heart racing. She was experiencing a strange feeling, and a strange nervousness. She felt an emotion she wasn’t familiar with. In all honesty, she didn’t mind; actually she liked it a bit.

“I’ve seen Elder Brother Chen a few times...” she suddenly said, not sure what to talk about. “This place is an ancient Blessed Land... Oh, right, how can your Cultivation base possibly be at the Foundation Establishment stage...?”

Meng Hao looked at her, a warm smile growing on his face.

“What was the situation with Zhao Shanhe?” he asked lightly.

“He was a Conclave disciple of the Black Sieve Sect,” she replied, a look of disgust appearing in her eyes. “His Clan has deep roots in the Sect. He was shameless and disgusting. Over the past few years, he used Foundation Establishment Pills as bait to force himself on numerous female disciples....”

“Foundation Establishment Pills....” He looked at her for a moment. He could tell that she had completed the circle of nine Qi Condensation levels. With a Foundation Establishment Pill, she could definitely go into secluded meditation and reach Foundation Establishment.

“That type of pill is very valuable,” she said, a dismal look on her face. “It’s even hard for Inner Sect disciples to get one. You can only acquire one with the support of someone of the senior generation, or if you perform some special service for the Sect. Or possibly if you have amazing latent talent.

“After Patriarch Zhen brought me to the Black Sieve Sect, she completely ignored me. However, my personality was similar to a Core Formation Cultivator of the senior generation, so she took me in as a disciple. She promised to give me a Foundation Establishment Pill, but she left for the sect a few years ago and has never returned. According to the rumors, she’s dead....”

Meng Hao slapped his bag of the Cosmos. Instantly, three Foundation Establishment Pills appeared in his hand. He held them out to her.

“I have some Foundation Establishment Pills,” he said.

Xu Qing stared wordlessly at the three pills. She was shocked, never having imagined that Meng Hao would have a Foundation Establishment Pill, let alone three. These three pills would cause a riot if they appeared within the Black Sieve Sect.

“Those...” Xu Qing breathed even harder when she saw the symbol etched into the side of the pills. Her eyes widened. “Those were concocted by Grandmaster Pill Demon.”

“I only have three. But if it’s not enough, then I can get some more for you when we get out of here.” He smiled, placing the pills into Xu Qing’s hand. To anyone else, these pills would be incredibly valuable.

“It’s enough, really. One... maybe two is probably enough.” She was about to say more when Meng Hao closed her hand over the pills.

“I don’t need them. You take them. If you need, I can stand guard for you when you use them.”

“Unless you’ve been at the ninth level of Qi Condensation for dozens of years, are completely prepared, and have refined your body to the extreme, then you would need several months at the least. This place isn’t appropriate. I’ll wait till I get back to the Sect and find an appropriate place to break through.” She gave him a deep look. “You can’t stay here for too long, Meng Hao. You need to be careful. The Black Sieve Sect has known about the existence of this place for a long time, but hasn’t been able to enter. Recently, though, they came across an ancient map.

“With the map, they were able to open the entrance. Originally, this was an ancient Blessed Land, but over the years it has changed, and is now a land of death.”

Meng Hao’s eyes glistened as he listened to her explanation.

“Supposedly, it has something to do with an ancient, violent Spirit. I’m not really sure what it is, and there are lots of rumours in the Sect about it. Although, I can tell you that the reason they’ve gathered so many rogue Foundation Establishment Cultivators is not to acquire treasures, but to create a Hundred Spirits Tower!

“It’s not a big secret to the Inner Sect disciples, and even some in the Outer Sect know about it, but they don’t care about rogue Cultivators. Actually, there are even a few amongst the rogue Cultivators who know about it.

“The Hundred Spirits Tower is actually quite simple to describe. Basically, by using a variety of magical Cultivation techniques, one hundred Dao Pillars are refined together to create the Hundred Spirits Tower.

“The purpose of creating the tower is top secret. I don’t think even the Inner Sect disciples know about it. Amongst the Conclave disciples, only two or three even know a little bit.” This was everything Xu Qing knew regarding the activities in the Blessed Land.

Suddenly, a massive roaring could be heard from somewhere off in the distance.

The instant the sound echoed out, the ground in the Blessed Land suddenly began to quake violently. At the same time, a mysterious gravitational force came into being. Meng Hao's eyes flickered. He felt the Dao Pillars within him trembling, as if something were trying to pull them out of him.

Chapter 153: Barring the Way

Meng Hao's expression changed in a flash. His Cultivation base rotated, and intense power from his Perfect Dao Pillars expanded out to resist the gravitational force.

Xu Qing didn't react whatsoever at first. But when she saw the expression on Meng Hao's face, she suddenly started to look anxious and worried.

The roaring sound echoed across the land, affecting not just Meng Hao, but all of the rogue Foundation Establishment Cultivators within the Blessed Land. Each and every one of them, regardless of what they were doing at the moment, immediately sat down cross-legged to meditate.

However, in rapid succession, the bodies of multiple rogue Cultivators exploded, sending flesh and blood showering in all directions. Only their Dao Pillars were left intact. They flew through the air, dragged toward the location of the gravitational force.

The Dao Pillars flew toward what turned out to be a mountain range. Some powerful force had worn down a section of the mountains, so that it was sunken in. In the sunken area was a black tower.

From the looks of it, it wasn't completely finished being constructed. There were currently three levels. From all directions, multiple Dao Pillars flew toward it and began to form the fourth layer!

When the fourth layer was completed, the gravitational power grew weaker and then disappeared. Over thirty rogue Cultivators had died just now in the Blessed Land.

This shocking event instantly struck fear into the hearts of all the other rogue Cultivators. However, they were stuck inside. No matter where or how they searched, they would not be able to find any exits.

The area where the gravitational force originated from was surrounded by nearly one thousand Black Sieve Sect disciples, sitting cross-legged, chanting bizarre scriptural texts. The Black Sieve Sect disciples who had entered the Blessed Land in random places were all rushing toward this area.

Meng Hao opened his eyes, and they gleamed with a mysterious light. He glanced toward the area where the roar and the gravitational force had come from. His Dao Pillars were now stable. They were Perfect Dao Pillars, so even though the gravitational force was not small, it was far from being dangerous to him.

Seeing Meng Hao's pale face, Xu Qing quickly said, "That is the gathering place for the Black Sieve Sect disciples. All disciples were informed before entering to go to that place as quickly as possible. When we get there, we have to chant some scripture, although I don't know why.

"I know of an exit. Including last time, I've been here twice now. I can take you there and you can leave this place. You can't stay here."

Meng Hao didn't say anything. He stood, looking off toward where the gravitational force had originated. After a long moment, he shook his head.

"The gravitational force doesn't affect me very much. And I have a way to leave here. As for you, though..." He looked back at her. "If that gravitational force hadn't appeared, it would be fine. But now, the rogue Cultivators will know something strange is going on. They'll be looking for Black Sieve Sect disciples to explain what's going on. Who knows what methods they will use to force out the information. Furthermore, if you know about that exit, then others will too. The people from the Black Sieve Sect wouldn't be so careless." He looked at Xu Qing, who had existed in his memories for so long as Elder Sister.

"We haven't seen each other for such a long time, I'd hoped we could spend some more time alone together," he said quietly. "But now is not the time. I'll escort you to the Black Sieve Sect rendezvous point. You will be much safer there."

"You really have a way to get out of here?" Xu Qing asked, her tone serious.

"Really," replied Meng Hao just as seriously.

Xu Qing looked quietly at him for a moment, and it seemed as if she wanted to say something. Before she could, Meng Hao stepped forward and wrapped his arm around her supple waist, then flew up into the sky.

Gale force winds blew about, but they were blocked by Meng Hao's Cultivation base. All Xu Qing could feel was Meng Hao holding her. Her face reddened again.

Her black hair drifted next to his face, filled with a delicate, unforgettable fragrance. Xu Qing didn't say anything as they sped along. In the past, she had been his Elder Sister. But he no longer exhibited any of the weakness he had as her Junior Brother. He was a Foundation Establishment Cultivator. The way he had slaughtered Zhao Shanhe was evidence of the incredible changes he had experienced throughout the years.

As Meng Hao breathed in her delicate fragrance, she also could smell him. It made her feel safe, like she was home.

She suddenly thought back to Mount Daqing, and the young scholar Meng Hao. She had carried him away to the Reliance Sect in much the same fashion as he was holding her now, pressed up against him.

A smile appeared in her eyes as she thought of this. She looked up at Meng Hao's profile and time seemed to slow down.

She didn't understand what she was feeling, but she knew that right now, everything was peaceful. Suddenly she had the feeling that Meng Hao really was like her younger brother.

"You grew up," she said suddenly. She wasn't quite sure why she said it, but she did.

Hearing this, Meng Hao suddenly stopped flying for a moment and smiled wryly. Her face was covered with a cold look of seeming indifference, but it was obviously an act.

"I think you're a few years older than me...." he said, clearing his throat.

"Five years older!" she said seriously. "I'm your Elder Sister!"

"That's no big deal." Seeing her wide-eyed look, he laughed and added, "Okay, okay, I never said you're not my Elder Sister."

Time passed, enough for an incense stick to burn. Suddenly, eight beams of light appeared in front of them. Before the two of them could pass, the people caught sight of them.

“Qi Condensation.... That woman is a Black Sieve Sect disciple!”

“Yeah, she must be. She’s just what we’ve been looking for!” All of them were Cultivators of the early Foundation Establishment stage. Their eyes glittered viciously as their gazes shifted from Xu Qing to Meng Hao.

A blue-robed, middle-aged man amongst them looked coldly at Meng Hao and said, “Fellow Daoist, there’s no need to tell us what this woman told you. We want her, now!” It seemed that if Meng Hao didn’t comply, the man would attack.

Every person in their midst had hostile looks in their eyes. The gravitational power that had appeared had scared them witless, so they had decided to search for lone Black Sieve Sect disciples to extract information from.

Now that they had found one, they wouldn’t give her up easily.

Xu Qing started to pant with nervousness, unconsciously tightening her grip on Meng Hao’s robes. To her, these eight Foundation Establishment Cultivators had incredibly high Cultivation bases. Considering hers, she wouldn’t be able to resist even one of them.

“Screw off!” said Meng Hao coolly. He didn’t stop flying for even a second but continued to shoot directly toward them. Xu Qing was getting even more nervous. She had seen him dispatch Zhao Shanhe, but at the moment, they were facing eight people. She couldn’t help but be worried.

When he heard Meng Hao’s words, the blue-robed man laughed. Killing intent sprang up in his eyes. Meng Hao’s Cultivation base was at the early Foundation Establishment stage, just like he himself, and he had seven others backing him up. Considering Meng Hao was a single person, there shouldn’t even be a need to begin fighting. And yet, Meng Hao had unexpectedly dared to rave wildly.

Cold smiles broke out on the faces of the seven other Cultivators. In their minds, Meng Hao was simply talking big.

However, even as the blue-robed man lifted his hand to begin an incantation gesture and the seven others began to take out various magical items, Meng Hao opened his mouth. The lightning mist exploded out, and before any of the eight of them could react, it had enveloped them. The earth

below showered up as a dozen dark red vines shot upward. They screamed up savagely, directly into the midst of the lightning mist.

Miserable, ear-piercing screams echoed out from within. They sounded like the cries emitted just before death. Meng Hao's expression was the same as ever as, holding Xu Qing in his arms, he continued on flying. The lightning mist wrapped up the bags of holding and delivered them to Meng Hao, who tucked them away. The vines burrowed back into the ground. As for the eight Cultivators, they were nowhere to be seen.

The quick and efficient dispatching of the eight Cultivators didn't phase Meng Hao at all. But Xu Qing sucked in a breath. Meng Hao had grown up to an astonishing degree.

He continued to fly along at high speed. They were getting closer to the origin of the gravitational force. Along the way, they ran into single Cultivators, or occasionally groups of three to five. In total, they ran into ten early Foundation Establishment stage Cultivators. None of them was able to obstruct Meng Hao's progress in the least bit.

Soon, they were very close to the Black Sieve Sect rendezvous point. Behind Meng Hao appeared two beams of light which emanated the power of the mid Foundation Establishment stage. If that were the extent of it, it wouldn't be a big deal. But at the same time, ahead of Meng Hao appeared another beam. Inside was an old man. This was the same old man with whom Meng Hao had entered the Black Sieve Sect. He was of the late Foundation Establishment stage.

He stopped several hundred meters in front of Meng Hao. The man's cold gaze fell upon Xu Qing.

"Fellow Daoist, I have been waiting here for quite some time waiting to see a Black Sieve Sect disciple. Hand the woman over to me."

The two mid Foundation Establishment Cultivators came to a stop behind Meng Hao and Xu Qing, who were now completely surrounded.

The two mid Foundation Establishment Cultivators were middle-aged. Their eyes were dour, and they radiated a cold aura along with significant killing intent. They were clearly vicious and cruel.

"What do you want to know?" said Meng Hao coolly. "I can tell you." Xu Qing's face was wan as she rested in his embrace. Without him there, she would definitely have been captured and interrogated by rogue Cultivators. Along the way, she had seen several Black Sieve Sect disciples who had been captured and questioned using various methods.

But rogue Cultivators were rogue Cultivators. They wouldn't easily give up information when asked. After all, that information could be life-saving to them; by telling others, it could reduce their own chances and deliver both parties to death.

"I'm not used to listening to what others have to say," said the old man calmly. "I only trust the results of my own handiwork." The power of the late Foundation Establishment Cultivation base emanated out, sending massive pressure down onto Meng Hao.

Chapter 154: To Each His Own Path

Meng Hao didn't respond. He looked down at Xu Qing and gave her a little smile. He retreated backward with her, causing the late Foundation Establishment old man to snort and then fly forward toward Meng Hao like a nightingale.

His speed was incredible, and he displayed the full power of his late Foundation Establishment Cultivation base, causing eight ripples to spread out in the air. He obviously had eight Dao Pillars within his body.

By this point, Meng Hao had already reached the two mid Foundation Establishment stage middle-aged Cultivators. They laughed, and one of them flashed incantation gestures. A hundred Ice Blades magically appeared and began to spin, forming a giant whirlwind. The whirlwind shot toward Meng Hao, each blade within filled with the power of the early Foundation Establishment stage.

The other man slapped his bag of holding to produce five black, buzzing, head-sized wasps with long, red stingers.

"You overestimate yourself!" said the man who had created the Ice Blades. The Ice Blade whirlwind screamed toward Meng Hao. Holding Xu Qing with his right arm, he waved his left hand. Instantly, an enormous Flame Dragon appeared, along with a Wind Blade. Shockingly, the Flame Dragon was not pure red, but streaked with gold! Because of the Sublime Spirit Scripture, the dragon had become a Golden Dragon.

The Wind Blade fused with the dragon, causing it to expand to three hundred meters in length. Furthermore, two bulges appeared on the left and right side of the Flame Dragon. As soon as the Wind Blade touched the dragon, they exploded out into two enormous wings. It unfurled the wings; this was a Flying Rain-Dragon.

Meng Hao had been enlightened regarding this technique when the roc had awakened the Flying Rain-Dragon Legacy within him.

The next thing to appear with the Dragon was a Flame Sea. This Flame Sea was birthed from the power of the Perfect Dao Pillar. Mid Foundation Establishment Cultivators simply had no way to resist it.

Boom!

The Ice Blade whirlwind broke apart in an instant, transforming into a mist which was consumed by the Flame Sea. The flaming Flying Rain-Dragon roared. The two mid Foundation Establishment stage Cultivators retreated, looks of shock on their face. In the blink of an eye, the Flying Rain-Dragon shot forward and consumed one of them in a single bite.

A miserable scream echoed out as his body was transformed into ash.

All of this happened in the time it takes a spark to rise off of a piece of flint. Neither the old man of the late Foundation Establishment stage nor the man with the five wasps had time to react before it was over.

Face expressionless, Meng Hao turned and strode directly toward the five ferocious buzzing wasps.

They shot toward him, but as they neared, their bodies suddenly began to tremble violently. It seemed as if they had sensed something frightening and didn't dare to get any closer. They retreated instantly, something their master had never experienced before.

Even as shock covered his face, laughing-crying demon faces appeared in Meng Hao's eyes. One was clear, the other was blurry, and they instantly caused Meng Hao to emit a bizarre aura. The five wasps emitted sharp cries, and their bodies trembled even harder, as if they might lose their ability to fly. Suddenly, they turned and savagely attacked each other.

As this bizarre scene played out, Meng Hao strode through the midst of the wasps, raising his left hand and slicing his own finger, covering it with blood. Suddenly, the entire area was covered with a bloody aura. When it disappeared, Meng Hao was standing directly in front of the middle-aged man. He lifted up his index finger and pushed between the man's eyebrows.

The man's body shook, and his eyes bulged. His body rapidly began to wither, and by the time Meng Hao removed his finger, his entire body had transformed into blood, which drained down onto the ground.

Meng Hao turned and looked at the shocked late Foundation Establishment old man. Only the space of a few breaths had passed since Meng Hao took action, and yet he had already completely exterminated two powerful mid Foundation Establishment Cultivators.

His methods were vicious, his techniques bizarre. A coldness suddenly appeared in the old man's body, growing rapidly.

Now he understood why Xie Jie of the Black Sieve Sect had been watching Meng Hao that day on the Feng Shui compass, and had even tried to bait him into doing something that would reveal his abilities. Clearly, Xie Jie had heard something about Meng Hao.

"Want to keep going?" Meng Hao asked calmly. His index finger still glowed with a bloody light, casting a bloody light over his body.

The old man didn't respond. Considering the level of his Cultivation base, he too could have easily killed the two mid Foundation Establishment stage Cultivators. But he couldn't have done it in such a leisurely fashion. He felt fear in his heart, especially when he saw Meng Hao's complete lack thereof. Clasp hands in salute, he moved backward several paces, giving way for Meng Hao to pass.

"I am Xu Youdao. As for the matter today, I offer my apologies. I believe we will be meeting again soon." He said the last in a very meaningful tone.

Meng Hao thought for a moment, then nodded. The blood glow was beginning to fade as he shot off into the distance. In his arms, Xu Qing was completely shocked by the battle power of his Cultivation base.

She hesitated for a moment and then blurted, "What... what level is your Cultivation base, really?"

"I'm at the peak of early Foundation Establishment," he said with a little smile. He now appeared to be a completely different person than the one who had just been fighting. He really had changed because of all his experiences through the years. However, this change was in the way he dealt with enemies. His disposition toward his friends was as scholarly as ever, and hadn't changed in the least bit.

Actually, his ruthless killing had a lot to do with the poison within him. Someone infected with the three-colored Resurrection Lily would become increasingly cruel and ferocious until the day they transformed into an actual Resurrection Lily.

“How can you kill people of the mid Foundation Establishment stage...?” asked Xu Qing, her brow furrowed.

“Oh, there are many reasons,” he said simply. “I may be at the early Foundation Establishment stage, but I can hold my own against the late Foundation Establishment stage.”

Not much time passed before they reached a mountain. From the mountain peak, Meng Hao could see the large man-made area and the big black tower that was being erected.

He could just make out the nearly one thousand Black Sieve Sect disciples sitting cross-legged around the tall tower, along with the faint sound of scriptures being chanted. He couldn't make out the details of the scriptures, however.

“I can't get any closer,” he said. His gaze shifted from the scene below, to Xu Qing. “There shouldn't be any rogue Foundation Establishment Cultivators in this area, you should be able to proceed on your own without being in danger. Take this, it's an invisibility item. You'll be able to use it after you reach Foundation Establishment.” He handed her the invisibility talisman.

She accepted it. She still had Meng Hao's robes draped over her. They were a bit large, but she still was beautiful. She looked at Meng Hao and was about to open her mouth as if to say something. Instead, she leaned forward and embraced him lightly. Her head pressed against his chest, and she could hear his heart beating.

This was not an embrace of passion, but the embrace of a sister to a brother, of family.

The sky was growing light, and the darkness was fading away. Meng Hao looked down at Xu Qing's beautiful hair. It seemed as if her hair knew he was looking at it; or perhaps it was the wind. It floated up gently to caress his face.

A long time passed, and then Xu Qing stepped back and looked him deep in the eyes.

“You need to be careful,” she said. “Get out of this place as soon as you can.” Then she turned, stepped onto a flying sword and shot down the mountain. She glided up and down a few times, eventually entering a small forest at the bottom of the mountain. When she emerged from the other side of the forest, Meng Hao’s clothes were gone and she was dressed in a fresh Black Sieve Sect robe.

Meng Hao stood there the whole time, watching her disappear into the distance. A sense of departure filled him, and for a moment, he felt like he was back in the Reliance Sect when it was being disbanded.

Now, though, he was no longer a Qi Condensation Cultivator. He was of Foundation Establishment, with a Perfect Foundation. He was no longer a child, but a young man. Wisdom birthed from maturity helped him to understand that it didn’t matter whether you are a man or woman; every person has the right to make their own choices.

His path could only be tread by he himself. Perhaps his path would cross the paths of others, and that was well and good. But for the moment, he needed to walk alone. Unless... he could be powerful enough to forge his own road. Change everything. The alternative was to live a life full of sighing.

He watched Xu Qing until she reached the Black Sieve Sect rendezvous point. Determination filled his eyes. He lifted his head, looking into the sky. There, the rising sun and the moon were almost on top of each other.

Meng Hao’s eyes began to glow.

“Since I’m here, I might as well go check things out. If the Classic of Time is real, then using the copper mirror and Spring and Autumn trees, I can forge that so-called treasure of Time! And then there’s my Thunderclap leaf. Lu Tao is in this place too, I might be able to get some more information.” He turned and shot up into the air, using the position of the sun and moon to guide his path.

He proceeded on for a while. Suddenly, a booming sound filled the air, and the gravitational force appeared again. This time, Meng Hao saw with his own eyes an early Foundation Establishment Cultivator who couldn’t fight against it. His body exploded, and an intangible Dao Pillar flew out from the remains.

“The gravitational force is getting stronger. I’m worried that eventually, I won’t be able to resist it.” He frowned, suppressing the trembling of his Dao Pillars and flying forward as quickly as possible.

Soon, the sun and the moon would not be overlapping any more. But now that Meng Hao knew which direction to go, he realized that he was getting closer and closer to his destination.

Chapter 155: The Last Person

Time passed slowly, about four hours. The gravitational power appeared again once, during which time Meng Hao continued to fly past mountain after mountain.

This place was very strange. The sun blazed brightly up above in the sky. If you looked closely, however, you could also see the vague shape of a moon within it. It seemed that within another two hours, they would split apart.

After about another hour's travel, a vast plain appeared up ahead.

The plain was filled with tall grass, half the height of a person. It swayed in the wind, making the plain look almost like a sea. The only sound present was the whispering of the wind. Within the plain was one area devoid of grass. Three people sat there cross-legged.

Two were women and one was a man. The man was middle-aged and dressed in a gray robe. His face was expressionless, and his eyes were closed in meditation. An icy air drifted off of his body. He was of the late Foundation Establishment stage. He was one of the three late Foundation Establishment Cultivators that traveled to this place on the violet Feng Shui compass.

Of the two women, one was middle-aged and a bit overweight. Her features were ordinary, almost like those of a farm-girl. She was another from that group of three powerful late Foundation Establishment Cultivators.

An impatient expression filled her face as she looked at the last woman. This woman wore a veil which covered half of her face and obscured her features in a mysterious blur.

“Fellow Daoist, did you invite me here so that I can sit around waiting? I somehow don't believe that our destination is really as dangerous as a dragon's lair or a tiger's den. Are Fellow Daoist Sima and myself really not enough?” She laughed coldly. The cold, middle-aged man opened his eyes from meditation. They glowed as he looked at the woman in the veil.

“Fellow Daoist Li, please wait just a bit longer,” said the veiled woman, her voice light. “I have invited five people in total. If they do not arrive, then we might as well not proceed. With just the three of us, our chances of success will be small.”

The Li woman snorted and seemed to be about to say more. In the end she didn't.

“Be patient for just a bit longer,” said the veiled woman. “The sun and moon will cease to overlap in about two hours. If they haven't arrived by then, then we might have no other choice than to make an attempt ourselves.”

An hour passed, at which point a beam of colorful light appeared. Within it was a streak of violet. Whoever was approaching wore a violet robe.

This person approached at top speed, arriving in the space of a few breaths. It was a young man with handsome features and a slight smile on his face. From his violet gown, it was obvious that he was no ordinary person. After landing, his eyes swept over the three others. He smiled at them and then cupped hands in greeting.

“I'm late,” said Xie Jie “Please forgive me, Fellow Daoists. Sorry to keep you waiting, Junior Sister Han.” This was none other than Conclave disciple Xie Jie of the Black Sieve Sect. He looked at the veiled woman with a smirk as he revealed her identity.

His appearance caused the Li woman to frown slightly. She stood and returned his salute. The cold man, however, did little more than give him a slight nod.

The veiled woman frowned as the two others looked at her.

She laughed lightly, removing her veil. Her face was incredibly beautiful and delicate, her skin as lustrous as jade. Everything seemed to grow brighter because of her beauty.

“Han Bei

Chapter 156: Fear of Meng Hao

Meng Hao's expression was tranquil. No one moved to interfere with the woman. The man in the gray robed sat meditating with his eyes closed. Xu Youdao was aware of Meng Hao's extraordinariness, so naturally he did nothing.

As for Han Bei, she had speculations regarding Meng Hao's incredible power, but wasn't certain. She just knew a bit of secret information, which had fueled her conjectures. For her, this situation would be a good chance to observe Meng Hao's battle prowess.

She still wished to offer some words of caution, but would the Li woman really listen? The woman's Cultivation base was at the late Foundation Establishment stage, but in terms of thinking ability, she was one of the weakest present. The only way she had reached late Foundation Establishment was good fortune accumulated by her ancestors that had been passed down to her.

Regarding Xie Jie, he had intentionally manipulated the whole thing, so obviously did nothing to stop it from happening. He watched Meng Hao from off to the side, a smile on his lips. He was very curious as to why the Elders of the Sect had instructed him to keep an eye on Meng Hao. After arriving at the Blessed Land, he hadn't paid too close attention, but having run into Meng Hao again, he wanted to feel him out.

Everyone had their own plans and schemes. Meng Hao glanced them over, and although he wasn't able to fully grasp their various motivations, he had a pretty good idea. He watched the Li woman approaching, her pink whip whistling through the air. His face was expressionless, and he didn't take even a single step backward. In fact, in the midst of her approach, he took three steps forward.

As he did, he lifted his right hand and struck out.

As his palm struck out a fierce wind sprang up, causing the surrounding grass to whip about in a frenzy. Without pausing, Meng Hao struck out a second time, then a third, a fourth and a fifth time!

These five strikes were the Nineteen Clear Sky strikes that Meng Hao had acquired from the violet-robed young man, by means of the rattan vines. The manual was incomplete, but the first five strikes were whole.

Each of these five strikes were filled with the complete power of Meng Hao's Perfect Dao pillars. After striking out five times, an enormous magical palm the size of a person appeared in front of him. Wind whipped about in all directions as the palm shot forward.

When the five Clear Sky strikes appeared, Han Bei and Xie Jie's expressions changed. They instantly recognized the enormous palm. This was a magical technique from the Black Sieve Sect; there was no way for outsiders to know it. Yet, here was Meng Hao, using it right in front of their eyes. There was no denying it, and this caused their hearts to tremble.

The Li woman was of the late Foundation Establishment stage, but she only had seven Dao Pillars. Furthermore, they were not even Cracked, but Fractured. Disdain covered her face as her illusory whip slammed into Meng Hao's enormous palm. She knew in her heart what was going to happen. The palm would collapse into pieces as her whip sliced through it like a hot knife through butter. After it disintegrated, her whip would fall upon her opponent's body, severing tendons and crushing bones.

Boom!

An explosion reverberated out. There was a collapse. But it wasn't Meng Hao's palm. As soon as the middle-aged woman's magical whip made contact with the giant palm, it shook, and then broke apart into pieces. The Li woman's face fell when she saw this unexpected turn of events. A look of disbelief covered her face.

How could she possibly have imagined that this would happen? She had used a magical whip powered by late Foundation Establishment. Her opponent's palm exceeded her wildest imagination; dread seeped into her eyes.

Meng Hao's giant palm instantly destroyed the whip. It shot forward with shocking power, accompanied by gale force winds. The Li woman no longer scorned Meng Hao; instead, as the area began to shake, a sense of imminent danger rose up inside her. She retreated immediately, raising her right hand, into which a small shield appeared. She bit down on her tongue and then spit up some blood from her Cultivation base. When it landed on the little shield, it began to spin, expanding outward and meeting Meng Hao's giant palm.

Another explosion rippled out. The shield shook, and was tossed backward several meters, just barely able to resist the palm. Meng Hao continued to stride forward. His Spiritual Sense, which far outmatched any late Foundation Establishment Cultivator, exploded out, crushing down onto the Li woman.

She screamed under the pressure. It felt like a sharp sword was stabbing through her brain, as if her own Spiritual Sense were about to shatter. She coughed up blood and staggered backward. By this time, Meng Hao had reached the small shield. He waved his hand, causing the massive illusory palm to wrap around the shield and drag it back to him. Using his Spiritual Sense, he erased the

branding mark on the shield and then put it into his bag of holding. He looked at the woman surnamed Li.

The woman was in shock, her Spiritual Sense suppressed, her treasure un-branded and taken by Meng Hao. She retreated backward at top speed, coughing up blood, her face pale, her head buzzing. After she had moved backward a dozen or so meters, she finally came to a stop. She looked up at Meng Hao, astonished.

“You....” Her scalp was numb. It was clear that Meng Hao’s Cultivation base must not be at the early Foundation Establishment stage. She had never seen an early Foundation Establishment Cultivator display such incredible battle power. Nor had she ever experienced such terrifying Spiritual Sense.

Not even a Flawless Foundation could be like this, as far as she was concerned.

“This art contains a total of nineteen strikes,” Meng Hao said coolly, his expression the same as always. He didn’t even mention anything about the treasure he’d snatched from her.

Hearing his words, the Li woman sucked in a breath, and her face went a few shades more pale. Her body began to tremble. The attack just now had rattled her Dao Pillars, caused her to cough up blood, and had forced her to utilize a treasured item. If more than five strikes had been used, she wasn’t sure if her treasure could have resisted it. In that case, her Dao Pillars would surely have been damaged.

“Fellow Daoist, your Cultivation base is unfathomable,” she said in a strained voice. “I was crude and rash, please don’t take offense. Please keep my Cloud Peak shield as a token of my apology.” She clasped hands and bowed deeply to Meng Hao, her eyes filled with dread.

It wasn’t just her. Xu Youdao’s gaze was fixed on Meng Hao. He was now completely reassured that he had made the right decision not to attack Meng Hao earlier. Meng Hao could not be an early Foundation Establishment Cultivator. If he really was... then that was exponentially more frightening.

The gray-robed man’s eyes flickered open and came to rest on Meng Hao. He nodded.

Han Bei looked at Meng Hao thoughtfully, a light smile appearing on her face.

“Fellow Daoist Meng, you’re not late. The hour has arrived. Our chances of acquiring the Classic of Time has now increased thirty percent.”

Xie Jie laughed and said nothing. He didn’t bring up the Nineteen Clear Sky strikes. Fear of Meng Hao now existed in his heart, and he now knew that Meng Hao was not a person to be provoked lightly. After all, he had only seen Meng Hao’s colossal Spiritual Sense, and had no inkling what magical techniques or items he might have.

Whenever he dealt with people he didn’t understand, he would be careful not to provoke them. Only after coming to understand them completely would he strike like lightning.

“Forget about the Classic of Time for a moment,” said Meng Hao calmly. He looked at Han Bei, his expression the same as ever. “I came to this Blessed Land at the request of Fellow Daoist Han. However, your Sect controls this place. I’m very curious. If I help you to acquire the Classic of Time, will my Dao Pillars be ripped out afterward?”

Han Bei and Xie Jie’s eyes flashed. Before they could respond, Xu Youdao laughed grimly and said, “Fellow Daoist Meng doesn’t beat around the bush. I’m also very curious about this matter. Would the two Fellow Daoists care to provide an explanation to dispel our doubts?”

“I, too, would like to know the answer to this question,” said the gray-robed man. His eyes flashed with a cold light as he looked at Han Bei and Xie Jie.

It seemed the Li woman was also concerned with her safety. She said nothing, but moved back a few paces, effectively closing a circle around Han Bei and Xie Jie.

Han Bei smiled. “Fellow Daoists, I must request that you do not press us regarding Sect matters. I really can’t speak about it. Even if I did, you most likely wouldn’t believe me. In any case, it’s a Sect secret. Even though I’m a Conclave disciple, I don’t know a lot about it. However, as for the place we’re going to, I will of course take responsibility for your safety.” She waved her hand and four jade slips flew out toward Meng Hao and the others.

Han Bei continued, “Within this jade slip is a detailed explanation of how to exit this place. Use the method described therein, and you can leave without a hitch. There are several exits to this ancient Blessed Land. If you don’t believe me, read the jade slip and then check to see where the exits are. Then you’ll understand why I selected this location as our rendezvous point.” She smiled, looking as earnest as always.

Meng Hao's Spiritual Sense swept over the jade slip, and he looked around the area he stood. According to the jade slip, there were three exits. One of them... was the area they were standing on top of.

Meng Hao's hands flashed the incantation method recorded within the jade slip and he immediately felt a teleportation power rising up from beneath his feet. However, now was not the time to test it out, so he did not continue to bind the incantation.

"Here are four Spirit Seal insects," said Han Bei. "If you wish to conduct further inspection, you can. Send some Spiritual Sense into them and then send them out of the exit. Then you can be assured that my words are not false." She waved her right hand. Four white, thumb-sized insects flew out toward Meng Hao and the others.

Xu Youdao grabbed one. After examining it for a moment, he nodded. Branding it with Spiritual Sense, he used the technique described in the jade slip to send the insect down into the earth. It disappeared.

The Li woman did the same. The gray-robed Cultivator completely ignored Han Bei's insects, instead slapping his bag of holding to produce a scorpion.

"Of course I believe you, Fellow Daoist Han," said Meng Hao. He glanced at the insects and then selected one. He continued with his incantation, sending the insect through the exit using the method from the jade slip. However, in addition to the bug, he sent one of the rattan vines that were hidden deep in the earth. From the insect, he caught the indistinct impression of another location. It was definitely somewhere else, somewhere far, far away.

However, at the same time, he suddenly caught a sense of intense danger from the vine. Meng Hao's eyes narrowed.

Almost immediately the vine died. As it did, it transmitted a final image to Meng Hao. It appeared clearly in his mind, an enormous bronze cauldron. It was incredibly imposing, appearing to be tens of thousands of meters tall.

Chapter 157: A Cauldron with a Square Exterior!

The image disappeared. Meng Hao's expression was as normal, revealing nothing. He looked at Xu Youdao and the others. Their expressions had not changed. It seemed all of them, including Xu Youdao and the gray-robed Cultivator, approved of what Han Bei had said.

“Could it be that they didn’t notice the bronze cauldron?” thought Meng Hao. After being branded by his blood, the vines had begun to emit a faint Demonic aura.

Han Bei smiled. “Fellow Daoists, now that you can rest your hearts at ease, please accompany me to the location of the Classic of Time. No matter what happens today, if we acquire the Classic, then everyone will get a copy.” She bowed toward the group, and then shot into the air and flew out across the plain.

Xie Jie was the second to fly up, followed by Xu Youdao and the Li woman. Meng Hao and the gray-robed Cultivator were the last of the six to turn into beams of colorful light that shot through the sky.

No one spoke as they traveled. Everyone was lost in their own thoughts. Meng Hao’s face was expressionless, but his thoughts were filled with the image of the huge bronze cauldron. At the moment, he was about seventy to eighty percent certain that the area he had seen was no exit, but rather Han Bei’s handiwork.

He wasn’t sure if Han Bei could dupe the others, but he had his good luck charm, and thus felt reassured in his current position. The location of the Classic of Time was surely bizarre and astonishing; if it weren’t, Han Bei wouldn’t have spent so much time and resources to go there.

“I wonder how Han Bei learned of this Classic of Time...” he thought to himself, looking up ahead at Han Bei’s lithe figure as she shot through the air.

Suddenly, Xu Youdao spoke up, giving voice to what Meng Hao had just been considering. “Fellow Daoist Han, you still haven’t explained how you learned of the Classic of time, nor how you acquired the first volume.”

Han Bei looked back with a smile.

“If Fellow Daoist Xu is anxious for an answer, then I will give it as soon as we arrive.” It was at this time that they reached the edge of the vast plain. Suddenly, the roaring sound once again appeared. It was very far away, but it still caused everyone except for Han Bei and Xie Jie to feel shaken.

Those of the late Foundation Establishment stage rotated their Cultivation bases until the roaring and gravitational force died down. Then everything went back to normal, except that their faces were a bit paler.

An apologetic look appeared on Han Bei's face, but she said nothing. She raised her hand and pushed her hand down toward the ground. A strong wind suddenly sprang into being, sweeping across the land. Han Bei took a deep breath and then smacked her bag of holding. A jade bottle appeared in her hand.

It was blue-green in color, and as soon as it appeared, her expression became somewhat somber. She tossed it out, and everyone watched as it descended downward.

When it landed onto the ground, cracks appeared on its surface that spread out rapidly. A blue liquid appeared within the cracks which emanated a faintly bitter aura. As the aura spread out, the eyes of the gray-robed Cultivator narrowed.

“That's... Blue Heaven Elixir!”

Even as his words rang out, the blue bottle split into pieces. The blue liquid within expanded out to form a mist that enveloped the surrounding three hundred meter area. Suddenly, all of the grass disappeared, as if it had been a mere illusion. The earth surrounding them was pitch black, as if it were suffering from some sort of curse, some ancient spell which had existed for millennia.

“Fellow Daoist Sima, you are certainly experienced and knowledgeable. You are correct, this is Blue Heaven Elixir. To acquire even one drop required countless hardships. It's capable of piercing a variety of illusions.” She smiled at the gray-robed man, then glanced at Meng Hao and the others.

“Fellow Daoists, I know that you have many questions. We are currently standing above an ancient portal which leads to a sealed zone within the Blessed Land. In actuality, the Black Sieve Sect learned about this Blessed Land hundreds of years ago. However, the person who actually discovered it was not a disciple of the Black Sieve Sect, but an ancestor of my Clan.

“Because of the Blessed Land, the Black Sieve Sect made my ancestor join the Sect, which is how the Han bloodline came to exist there. In fact, the map used to enter this place was created after years of research on the part of one of my Clan uncles. He used a mysterious magical technique to refine and congeal his own blood into the map. Because....” She was silent for the space of a few breaths, then continued, “Because this Blessed Land was once ruled by a lord who was also a patriarch of the Han Clan. However, he eventually became one with the Dao, and dissipated. Despite that, a connection to this place will occasionally appear within his descendants.

“I’m not sure what the Black Sieve Sect is plotting. But before he transformed into the map, my Clan uncle told me that because of his bloodline connection to this place, he knew that a secret technique of the Han Clan existed within. The three volume Time magic. This magic can produce a Time-Ruining treasure. Wielding the treasure can enable you to suck away the lifespans of others. That is why it requires a Spring and Autumn tree or similar item as its base.

“Even in ancient times,” she said, her voice gentle and clear, “this Time-Ruining treasure was astonishing and rarely seen. Nowadays, it could be considered lost. If it still exists, then it’s only in this place! Regarding the first volume of the Classic of Time, well... that is an item that has been passed down through generations in my Clan.

“I shall combine the three volumes and refine the Time-Ruining treasure. It is my personal affair, and I don’t want other Han Clan members to know about it. I also wish to avoid the prying eyes of the Black Sieve Sect. That is why I invited you all here today. As for Elder Brother Xie, he is here because of a previous agreement between the two of us.”

Everyone obviously had their own opinion about how much of what she had just said was true and how much was false. The methods she had used on the outside to gather their group together gave some clues. Meng Hao’s eyes flashed over the group, and inside, he laughed.

“It seems like everybody is thinking something different. But other than me, it looks like nobody is even listening to Han Bei’s explanation. And she knows it. There does seem to be something wrong with what she said just now.

“However... the Classic of Time is most likely real. Right now, I don’t really have very many powerful magical items other than the wooden swords. I do have the Spring and Autumn tree which is easy to duplicate with the copper mirror. If I can learn the technique from the Classic of Time, then my problem will be solved.

“I still need to be cautious, though. If anything goes wrong, I’ll use the good luck charm to leave this place immediately.” Even as he made his mind up, Han Bei flashed an incantation gesture to open the ancient portal beneath them.

An ancient and archaic roar sounded out from within, as if some sleeping beast was awakening. Suddenly, a glittering light appeared. It did not spread out far; it only enveloped the surrounding three hundred meters.

When the light appeared, Han Bei looked up to the sky as if she were calculating something. Then, her body flashed and she shot down into the portal. With a slight smile, Xie Jie entered as well, followed by Xu Youdao and the others.

Meng Hao swept the area with Spiritual Sense to confirm that it was nothing more than a teleportation portal. After seeing everyone else enter and begin to turn blurry, he followed. The glowing light flickered and then faded. Everyone disappeared.

When they re-appeared, the sky above was the same sky as in the Blessed Land. However, the earth was covered with cracks. Far off in the distance, an object was visible. When Meng Hao's eyes fell upon it, they shone brightly for a moment and then returned to normal.

Up ahead was an enormous bronze cauldron!

The cauldron was several tens of thousands of meters tall, rising up so tall that it seemed to be supporting the sky. It looked both ancient and primitive, as if it had existed for countless years. A boundless might radiated out from the cauldron, causing everyone to feel an intense fear, even Han Bei.

A variety of thoughts ran through the minds of everyone present.

“Cauldrons are the utensils of nations. They can only be forged by people with incredible destiny. It turns out... such a fear-inspiring cauldron exists in this place!”

“What a true treasure! Who could possibly be so bold as to forge such a heavenly cauldron?!”

“It's archaic design seems to be matchless. It must have been here for countless tens of thousands of years. Could it have been forged by some ancient almighty being...?”

They all panted as they gazed upon the cauldron. Even the cold man in the gray robe gasped when he saw it. A strange light flickered in his eyes.

Xie Jie's eyes narrowed, and it took some time before he regained his composure.

Meng Hao instantly recognized it; this was the same cauldron he had seen in the transmission from the vine before it had died in the so-called exit. As he looked around, he could tell that... everything around looked exactly the same as what he had seen in the supposed exit.

He laughed coldly in his heart, but his expression didn't change at all. He furtively retrieved the good luck charm and checked to make sure that it was still working. Inwardly, he was incapable of holding back some admiration for Patriarch Reliance. He wasn't sure how treasured of an item this good luck charm was, but he did know that it still worked in this place.

Feeling a bit reassured, he looked back up at the massive cauldron. He couldn't help but feel awed. Even though this wasn't the first time he'd seen it, to stand in front of it like this made him feel like an insect.

"The cauldron is cracked..." said Xu Youdao with a sigh.

Everyone could see that the massive, awe-inspiring bronze cauldron had a huge crack running down through it. The crack seemed as if it wished to split the cauldron in two, yet wasn't quite able to.

Everyone else guessed in their hearts that the crack must have been caused by some other shocking magical item. But when Meng Hao saw it, he got a different feeling. The crack was not something that was caused by a magical item. He looked up into the sky and thought back to how it had felt to be struck by Tribulation Lightning. That was the same type of feeling he got when he looked at the crack; it must have been caused by Tribulation Lightning!

"Anyone who could take possession of this massive cauldron and use it as a magical item would definitely be able to shake the Cultivation World." Xie Jie's words were soft, but filled with passion.

Chapter 158: Coexist with Ji?!

Han Bei took a deep breath, and a look of excitement flashed across her face. She lifted her right hand, and an ancient, crescent-shaped piece of jade flew out. It was a deep green color, almost black, and had a completely extraordinary appearance. It was not an object that a person would normally hold in their hand, but rather something that seemed as if it should be buried deep in an ancient tomb, never to see the light of day. Its color seemed to be the result of absorbing far too much sinister death aura.

The crescent jade flew out and then shockingly emitted a bright glow which covered everything around. The glow rippled as it shot forward toward the crack on the surface of the massive cauldron, and then entered it.

“This is where the final two volumes of the Classic of Time are!” said Han Bei. She flew forward, followed by Xie Jie, the Li woman, Xu Youdao and the man in the gray robe.

Meng Hao proceeded along as well. Six beams of flashing light shot ahead, growing closer and closer to the enormous cauldron. As they grew near, they felt an enormous pressure spreading out from the cauldron, which continued to grow stronger and stronger.

Soon, they were nearing the gigantic crack, which looked like an enormous canyon on the surface of the cauldron. They came to a stop in front of the crack. A mist floated around within, thin, but all-encompassing. Inside was nothing but blackness.

Upon nearing the crack, Xie Jie slapped his bag of holding. A green light appeared that solidified into a furry green beast. Its body flashed as it shot directly toward the crack. The instant it touched the mist, however, it let out a miserable cry, and its body was torn to pieces.

Caution filled the hearts of the onlookers.

“Only someone with incredible Spiritual Sense can lift the mist and mend this crack,” said Han Bei. “Then we can enter.” She looked up at the sky again as if she were calculating something. Then she turned and looked at Meng Hao.

It wasn’t just her. Xu Youdao’s gaze fell onto him as well. Meng Hao’s battle with the Li woman, and the intense power of his Spiritual Sense, had left a deep impression on the man.

“Fellow Daoist Han, you must be joking,” said Meng Hao, somewhat impolitely. “This cauldron must have been cast innumerable years ago. It’s aura is beyond ordinary. I don’t think I can even touch that crack.”

“Fellow Daoist Meng, you misunderstand,” she said hastily. “Of course I’m aware that this cauldron is not something people with Cultivation bases like ours can touch. I have a family heirloom treasure that can eradicate the crack. However, it must be guided by Spiritual Sense. Doing so will cause the crack to be healed.” As she spoke, she slapped her bag of holding to produce a small fan the size of a palm. It only had three feathers, each of which was covered with magical symbols.

“Only one person can use the treasure, and your Spiritual Sense is the most powerful among our group. I truly hope to gain your assistance. Once we enter, there will be other areas where you will

not be required to do anything. This item is a fan. When its spirit is pushed with Spiritual Sense, it will release a power that far supersedes our Cultivation bases. It is a treasure that the Han Clan specifically forged just for this location.”

Meng Hao looked calmly at the fan for a moment, and then lifted his hand. The fan flew toward him. He examined it for a moment but didn't touch it at first.

Eventually, he gave a slight nod.

Seeing him agree, Han Bei let out a sigh of relief. She then moved off to the side, away from Meng Hao, in order to prevent any sort of misunderstanding.

His face was blank as he released his Spiritual Sense. As it emanated out, Han Bei and the others concentrated, sensing the immense power and comparing it to their own. All of them grew even more cautious.

Meng Hao sent his Spiritual Sense into the fan to examine it. Sure enough, it was branded, linking it to Han Bei. Meng Hao lifted his head up to look at the crack in the enormous cauldron.

A moment later he lifted his hand and thrust it forward. The fan suddenly erupted into flame. The three feathers began to wriggle in a bizarre fashion. A whirlwind sprung into being around Meng Hao.

As his hand moved forward, the whirlwind shot toward the mist. A boom echoed out as it slammed into it. The mist immediately began to roil and seethe. At first it seemed as if the two would cancel each other out. However, the whirlwind wasn't strong enough, and began to fade away.

“The crack can be erased, but it's somewhat draining.” Meng Hao watched the mist within the crack restoring itself, as if it were being reborn. He thought for a moment, and then lifted his right hand and released even more Spiritual Sense. This time, he used more than before, causing the flames on the fan to rise up even more awe-inspiringly. Now, the flames were filled with two colors!

The onlookers' pupils constricted as they felt the power of Meng Hao's Spiritual Sense, which seemed to be over double their own. This shocked them to the core, especially Han Bei, whose eyes filled with fear as she watched him.

It seemed as if the fan were sucking in Meng Hao's Spiritual Sense as fast as possible. He proceeded with caution; if any signs appeared to indicate that he was losing control, he would instantly sever its connection to his Spiritual Sense.

The whirlwind appeared again, even more powerful than last time. Within an instant, Meng Hao's figure was almost impossible to see within its screaming winds. The onlookers could just barely make out the image of him waving his hand forward.

As he did, the fan's first feather instantly transformed into burning ash and the second feather began to fall apart. The wind grew stronger, roaring with power. It slammed into the mist, and as it did, the third feather of the fan disappeared into flaming ashes.

The entire fan now fell apart, causing Han Bei's heart to melt a bit. Then her gaze hardened; success or failure would occur at this juncture.

Boom!

A massive explosion ripped out as the enormous whirlwind collided with the mist. They ate at each other, and suddenly a gap appeared within the mist.

At the same time, a sinister coldness erupted out from within the cauldron, shooting out through the mist and blasting across the group of Cultivators.

It was as if a door had just opened which had been closed for ages. An aura that had been sealed up for countless years burst out, flowing across Meng Hao and the others. If that was all, it would not be a big deal. However, within the coldness of Time existed memories that swept across the six people. Suddenly, images appeared in front of them from countless ages ago.

Within the vision could be seen an enormous, shocking bronze cauldron. It floated above the earth, underneath a red sky. Astonishing bolts of lightning descended onto its surface, slashing it constantly, as if they desired to crush it into nothing.

However, the cauldron would not give in, and it rose up amidst the roar of the lightning. Up above in the red sky, a vortex appeared, beyond which could barely be made out the image of another world. The cauldron wished to defy the Heavens and pass through the vortex into the vague world beyond.

Below on the ground were hundreds of thousands of figures. They prostrated themselves on the ground, chanting scriptures at the same time. The sounds of their voices merged together and echoed out. When the sound reached his ears, it made Meng Hao think of the the Black Sieve Sect disciples sitting cross-legged, chanting scriptures. It sounded... similar, even though he couldn't make out the details of what they were chanting.

Suddenly a voice boomed out from within the cauldron. "It was thy wish for your expanse to replace the starry sky, to cover my eyes with the dome of Heaven. The World Tree would not submit, and destroyed itself in the starry sky. My master may be sleeping, but can he still exist under the same sky as Ji?!" Lighting fell down constantly from the Heavens, seeking to obliterate the cauldron. Suddenly, the vision passed from the eyes of everyone except for Meng Hao. They exchanged shaken looks with each other.

Meng Hao was a bit closer to the cauldron, however, and was the first to meet the blast of Time wind. His vision continued on a bit longer.

He saw the massive bronze cauldron continuing to rise up. The lightning falling from the red sky began to merge together. It was impossible to tell how many lightning bolts congregated to form a gigantic spear. It looked like a tooth surrounded by fields of lightning that shot down toward the cauldron.

A boom echoed out and the giant bronze cauldron trembled. A massive crack split down through it. It rose no more, and instead fell down. It slammed into the ground, and then another voice sounded out. It seemed to sigh.

"You are unwilling to let me take this cauldron from this place. Then... I will lay in rest here forever, waiting for the day on which you fall."

It was at this point that the vision faded from Meng Hao's eyes. He took a deep breath and then lifted his head to look at the cauldron. As of now, the mist and the crack caused by it, were disappearing.

An anxious expression appeared on Han Bei's face. Not hesitating in the slightest, she shot forward, flying toward the crack. Without a word, the rest of the group followed, their eyes flickering.

Meng Hao flew along with them as they headed at top speed toward the crack. As soon as he entered the cauldron, Meng Hao felt the copper mirror in his bag of the Cosmos growing hot.

Now was not the time to examine it, though. Meng Hao entered the cauldron to find himself in a world of lightning and thunder.

The inside of the cauldron was a space of several tens of thousands of meters in size. It was completely filled with crashing lightning, almost like a river. The light created by so much lightning was as blinding as sunlight.

However, there was no time for the group to gaze at the world within the cauldron. From within their midst, a blood-curdling scream rose up.

The Li woman was the last to enter. The instant she did, a bolt of lightning descended with incredible speed. It slammed into her. She screamed as her body was transformed into flying ash. Even her bag of holding was incinerated into nothingness.

Chapter 159: Square Without, Round Within; a Trend of the Heavens

It happened so quickly that Xu Youdao's face flickered. Next to him, the eyes of the gray-robed Cultivator narrowed and he slapped his bag of holding to produce a wooden slip.

It emitted a bluish light that seemed to indicate it could repel lightning. The bluish light circled around the gray-robed Cultivator and he took several steps away, as if he didn't want to stand close to any of the others.

Xie Jie's face also flickered. About the same time that the bluish light flickered up around the gray-robed Cultivator, a wooden statue appeared in Xie Jie's hand. The statue had three heads and six arms. As it appeared, it transformed into a soft, glowing light that circulated around Xie Jie.

Han Bei reacted even faster, sooner in fact, than even Xie Jie or the gray-robed man. A three-colored lotus throne appeared in front of her; obviously this was also some sort of lightning-repelling treasure.

Only Xu Youdao and Meng Hao seemed to be without such objects. Xu Youdao let out a cold harumph as he unwrapped a blue treasure shaped like a medicinal pill. The pill emitted a bluish-green shield which surrounded his body.

Seeing all of this, Meng Hao laughed grimly. The other three had obviously colluded; otherwise, why would they possibly have all come equipped with lightning-repelling treasures? Only he and the Li woman had come unprepared.

“Nice move, Fellow Daoist Han,” said Meng Hao coolly, his eyes sweeping across the four of them.

“I never anticipated there would be so much lightning,” said Han Bei lightly, “so I’m not sure what you’re talking about. Fellow Daoist Meng, if you don’t have a lightning-repelling item, then you’re welcome to use this Anti-Lightning Leaf. It’s only moderately effective, but it’s better than nothing.” A translucent leaf appeared in her hand, and she looked at Meng Hao. Actually, she had been eyeing him this entire time, especially the moment when he’d entered the cauldron. When that happened, her eyes had flickered.

Xie Jie and the other two men were all looking at Meng Hao, although it was impossible to tell what they were thinking. Their eyes seemed to be filled with an unanswered question.

Lightning crackled about above them, and booms of thunder filled the air. It was powerful and astonishing. Each bolt of lightning seemed to be incredibly fierce, strong enough to strike down even the late Foundation Establishment stage.

Suddenly, a bolt of lightning slammed down in the midst of them. An explosion rattled out as the lightning dissipated into countless arcs of electricity.

“I have no lightning-repelling item, but I do have a lightning-attracting technique,” said Meng Hao calmly. The lightning mist appeared around him, which then congealed into the lightning flag.

Electricity swirled around it, which included strands that contained the Heavenly Tribulation Meng Hao had collected. It was clearly an extraordinary item. The nearby lightning seemed to twist, as if it were being pulled down.

If all the lightning in the area were really called forth, then it wouldn’t matter if the others had lightning-repelling magic. They would all be transformed into dust just as quickly as the Li woman.

Almost as soon as the lightning flag appeared and the lightning around them began to ripple, Meng Hao sucked the flag back into his mouth. The converging lightning dispersed. However, it was now obvious that if the flag remained in the area for any amount of time, then it would call the lightning down, and they would all die.

Xie Jie’s expression flickered, the gray-robed man’s eyes narrowed, and Xu Youdao gasped and took a few steps back. Fear of Meng Hao filled their eyes.

The sensation of danger filled their heads, and their hearts began to pound. Unsightly expressions instantly filled their faces.

Xie Jie's voice was also grim as he said, "Fellow Daoist, you're really being a bit too excessive." His heart was filled with vigilance as he spoke, his attention focused solely on Meng Hao.

Xu Youdao had already been affected by Meng Hao's ferocity twice. Now, he stared at him with a complicated look, saying nothing. Yet again, he sighed inwardly. In his eyes, Meng Hao was no weaker than some Core Formation eccentrics.

He didn't need a lightning-repelling item. With a lightning-attracting item, he had suddenly turned the tables and put everyone else at a disadvantage.

"Fellow Daoist, what is the meaning of this?" said the gray-robed man, staring at Meng Hao.

"Oh nothing," said Meng Hao. "I just want to remind you, Fellow Daoists, that Meng Hao can call down lightning at any time." He spoke calmly and slowly as he stood there. He seemed ready to pull out his lightning treasure if even one bolt of lightning headed his way.

Han Bei said nothing for the space of a few breaths before a genial smile appeared on her face.

"I was joking with you just now, Fellow Daoist Meng. Of course I have a way for you repel the lightning." She waved her hand, and a leaf fell off of the lotus throne. She was just about to hand it to him, when he laughed and approached her.

Her face fell; her heart was filled with fear of his methods, and when she saw him nearing her, she involuntarily took a step backward.

But he had already arrived at her side. "There's no need to go to the trouble, Fellow Daoist Han," he said coolly. Lightning crackled above them. "Let's just use your lotus throne together. Wouldn't that be easier? Or are you unwilling to do so?"

A twisted look appeared on her face, but before she could say anything, the gray-robed Cultivator nodded.

“That would be the best,” he said.

“I agree,” said Xu Youdao, breathing a sigh of relief inwardly.

Xie Jie’s eyes sparkled, and he did nothing to indicate he disagreed.

Han Bei hesitated a moment, then gave Meng Hao a bitter smile.

“If that’s your requirement, Fellow Daoist Meng, then how could I disagree?” She gritted her teeth as she opened the lotus throne shield and allowed Meng Hao to enter.

Now that Meng Hao stood next to Han Bei within the shield, the other three men felt somewhat more at ease. Meng Hao’s threat moments ago had been beyond anything they could have anticipated. Even thinking back to it caused the hair on their necks to stand on end. Meng Hao was truly vicious.

Han Bei looked deeply at Meng Hao for a moment with a forced smile. Then she gave him a slight bow and began to move forward. Meng Hao went along, his face calm. Xie Jie and the others followed.

Five people gradually proceeded through the torrents of lightning. Roaring filled the air. Lightning fell, crashing into the ground and sending sparks rippling out in all directions.

Clearly, the lightning-repelling items were extraordinary; the party appeared to be completely safe. Meng Hao’s eyes swept over them, and inside he laughed coldly. These magical items were clearly not things that Foundation Establishment Cultivators should have in their possession. Each of these Cultivators must have the backing someone extremely powerful, who provided the impetus for them to enter this place.

“Xie Jie only has the Black Sieve Sect,” he thought. “As for the gray-robed man and Xu Youdao, they’re obviously not ordinary rogue Cultivators. They must have some powerful connections.” As the group proceeded on, the lightning grew more intense and frightening. The roaring never seemed to end. Meng Hao had seen Tribulation Lightning before, but the lightning here seemed even more formidable.

“This is not a place for Foundation Establishment Cultivators. Just one bolt could completely eradicate any of us. Yet, none of these people seem even slightly concerned. Obviously they knew ahead of time what they would be facing.

“I was targeted by Tribulation Lightning because of my Perfect Dao Pillar, which is not permitted to exist. As for this cauldron... the spirit of the Heavens must be furious, filled with intense desire to obliterate it, even more so than me.” Meng Hao looked up ahead. This amount of lightning was unpleasant to the eyes, and made it impossible to examine the surroundings. The only option was to continue forward.

No one spoke as they traveled onward. About an hour passed, and they were much further in. Even though they were still surrounded by lightning, the intensity had lessened, and now they were able to see a bit more clearly. What they saw ahead of them caused them all to begin to breathe heavily.

Xu Youdao gasped. “That’s...” His face was covered with shock.

Xie Jie’s eyes glittered, and he panted. Next to him, the gray-robed Cultivator’s eyes shone as he stared dead ahead.

Han Bei’s eyes also grew brighter.

Far up ahead, in the center of the giant cauldron, were nine enormous statues. Each statue depicted a middle-aged man. The clothing they wore was not like like the clothing of modern times; it was much simpler. And yet, they were clearly long robes.

Amongst the nine people depicted, three had crowns on their heads. Two had long hair, which draped over their shoulders. One was even completely bald. They exuded an imposing power that was difficult to describe. It seemed as if each statue represented some powerful Dao that demonstrated a path of heaven and earth.

Anyone who caught sight of these statues would be stunned, and filled with a sensation of ancient glory. The statues were not standing upright; rather all of them were were kneeling down on one knee, with both arms stretched upward, heads bowed.

Objects could be seen within their upstretched hands!

There was some sort of wheel-shaped treasure, something that was clearly an extraordinary sword, as well as a glowing jade bottle. Each statue had a different treasure. The flickering glow created by the treasures created multiple glowing afterimages. Meng Hao and the others couldn't help but gasp.

In the hands up one of the statues could be seen two ancient scrolls! The features of this statue strongly resembled Han Bei!

On the back of the statue was a gigantic crack, which had obviously been rent by lightning from Heaven. It was impossible to say how many years has passed since that had happened.

If this was all there was to it, it wouldn't be a bit deal. But there was more. Meng Hao was shocked, and everyone else was panting. In the center of the nine incredible statues was the object to which they were all bowing... a bronze, circular cauldron!

A voice sounded out in Meng Hao's mind: "Square without, circular within; a trend of the Heavens!"

Chapter 160: No Meng in the Nine Families

The outside was an enormous square cauldron, whereas inside there was a Heavenly circular cauldron. This circular cauldron was truly a Heavenly trend!

Meng Hao's mind buzzed as he saw this. Having experienced the world of the enormous cauldron, he felt as if it contained something cosmic.

"Nine kneeling figures, nine pinnacles of the Heavens," muttered the gray-robed man, beginning to tremble. "These kneeling figures are not people, they obviously are referring to the will of the Heavens!"

"No, no. How could the cauldron be reversed? It shouldn't be like this. The heavens are circular and the earth is square. That's a generally acknowledged truth from ancient times. It's a law that was established tens and tens of thousands of year ago, a principle of heaven and earth.

"The cauldron should be circular on the outside and square on the inside. That would be correct. In that case, it would be as they say, the Heavens on the outside, above, the earth on the inside, beneath...." The man's body trembled even harder as he continued to mumble to himself. It seemed

as if he just couldn't comprehend the world of this cauldron which was square on the outside and circular on the inside.

Xu Youdao stared blankly at the circular cauldron, his eyes radiating astonishment. It was impossible to tell what he was thinking.

Xie Jie's eyes narrowed. Despite his shock, he immediately produced a jade slip, within which he inscribed all of this.

Han Bei seemed to be in shock as well. She looked at the massive fissure on the back of the statue, and then a brilliant glow appeared in her eyes that was obviously veneration for her ancestors.

"I understand," said the gray-robed man, his voice quavering. "The heavens are circular, the earth is square. A circular cauldron on the outside becomes the Heavens, the square cauldron on the inside becomes the earth. That would be in accord with the will of the Heavens, but this... This embodies evil! This represents the earth covering the Heavens. This is the same as burying the Heavens!!

"This way, the circular cauldron is the Heavens, the square cauldron is the earth. This place.... is a tomb!!" Sharp astonishment filled his voice as he spoke. He slowly took three steps backward. He coughed up a mouthful of blood. His face was pale and his eyes shone brightly with astonishment. His hands flickered as if he were calculating something, and his voice began to grow louder.

"These nine worshippers are definitely pinnacles of the Heavens! They've just been embodied into these statues, which obviously represent the legendary Nine Mystical Stars. The Nine Mystical Stars are worshipping the cauldron. The Heavenly trend is solidified here. A bronze square cauldron, within which is buried the heart of the Heavens!

"How daring! How grand! A tomb in which the Heavens are buried inside the earth!! Just whose tomb is this? Willing to face death to steal good fortune from the Heavens! This is a coffin, and the Blessed Land outside is the tomb!

"Put it all together, and this place is no Blessed Land. It's a Cursed Land! It's a tomb of defiance against the Heavens!"

His words entered the ears of the others, and turned cold. Xie Jie's and Xu Youdao's expressions changed. Meng Hao took in a deep breath to settle his shaking nerves. The gray-robed man's words resonated inside of him, creating a sense of familiarity. Perhaps this place... really was a tomb.

He thought back to the vision he had experienced outside of the cauldron, and of the man's voice he had heard when the lightning struck it.

“You are unwilling to let me take this cauldron from here. Then... I will lay in rest here forever, waiting for the day on which you fall.”

Meng Hao took a deep breath and thought back to the other archaic voice he had heard from within the cauldron.

“It was thy wish for your expanse to replace the starry sky, to cover my eyes with the dome of Heaven. The World Tree would not submit, and destroyed itself in the starry sky. My master may be sleeping, but can he still exist under the same sky as Ji?!?!”

The voice seemed to echo in Meng Hao's mind. His heart beat rapidly, and he thought back to the legend of the Spring and Autumn tree which was currently inside the Blood Immortal mask. That flag had the character Ji written on it!

He also thought back to the requirement of the Blood Immortal to refine the bloodline of Ji!

“Fellow Daoists,” said Han Bei, “there's no need to be alarmed.” Her clear, bell-like voice echoed out. Although it couldn't outmatch the sound of the thunder, everyone could hear her clearly. “I don't know whether or not this place is a tomb, but as you all can see, the person holding those ancient scrolls is my ancestor. The statue has been cracked open by Heavenly Thunder. That was how the first volume of the Classic of Time came out of this place, and was eventually acquired by later generations.” She turned to look at Meng Hao and the others. “In fact, of all the treasures here, only these scriptures can be taken away. All the other statues are perfect and unharmed.

“I've attended quite a few secret meetings; the fact that you all saw my message shows that you are destined to be here. You all have your own reasons for coming here, and are surely backed by powerful forces. Naturally, I am aware of that, and really don't care who you represent.” She continued in a soft voice, “I only hope that for the sake of the Nine Mystical Stars, you will all keep your promises. Right now, we can only look, but when we draw near to the statues, I have a way to acquire the two scriptures. Then we can make copies for everyone.

“Actually, my only real purpose in coming here is to pay my respects in front of the statue of my ancestor.” Her voice seemed to contain some strange power that made everyone calmer. The gray-

robed man's complexion slowly returned to normal. Now that Meng Hao thought about it, he began to wonder if the man had purposefully said such crazy things.

He was also a bit skeptical of Han Bei's words "for the sake of the Nine Mystical Stars."

"It's not far now," continued Han Bei. "However, next I must ask for help from Fellow Daoists Xu and Sima. There will be more lightning after this point, and the going will be more difficult. Originally, we should never have had the chance we do. But the year that the first volume of the classic flew out, it carved out a path. Inside the path, we will be much safer. More importantly, the power of the lightning will not be as strong.

"Furthermore, it will have intermittent periods of weakness. Those times will be short, only about one hour. However, it should be plenty of time to get through safely. I picked the starting time of our mission to coincide with the lightning's weak period!" Her gaze swept across them, and then she looked up, as if she were waiting for something.

After about ten breaths, the lightning in the area began to grow dimmer. It was still dense, but the pressure that bore down on them from it was significantly less. It was definitely not as fearsome as before.

"The lightning will be weak for one hour. Fellow Daoist Xu, Fellow Daoist Sima, hurry!" Her eyes shined as she lifted her right hand. A dark piece of ancient jade flew out and floated above them, seeming to point in a certain direction.

Muttering to himself, Xu Youdao flew forward. The gray-robed Cultivator seemed to have completely returned to normal. He accompanied Xu Youdao. The power of late Foundation Establishment roiled out from them. One of them was clearly emanating Wood-type Qi. But then the gray-robed Cultivator began to emit a Dust-type Qi, which completely eclipsed the Wood-type Qi. As they walked forward, a yellowish brown glow rippled out.

Both of them produced magical items, and Han Bei took in a deep breath. She waved her hand, and her ancient Time jade emitted a brilliant glow. Everyone proceeded cautiously.

Because of the temporary reduction in lightning, they were able to fly forward relatively quickly.

However, the closer they got to the statues, the more dense the lightning grew. Rumbling booms filled the sky. Lightning crashed down, some of it slamming into the ground very close to the group of five. Their hearts trembled as they proceeded.

Xu Youdao and the gray-robed Cultivator proceeded together with seeming difficulty. Soon, cracks appeared on their treasured items. Without hesitation, they pulled out even more lightning-repelling items. Meng Hao's expression was the same as ever, and he said nothing. He made no indication whatsoever that he would offer assistance. He had already accomplished his task, and from here on out, they would not likely be asking him to do anything.

This place was dangerous, but all of the others had chosen to come here and were well-equipped.

Within Meng Hao's hand was the good luck charm. That was the trick he had up his sleeve.

Time passed slowly, and gradually the group grew closer and closer to the statues. The faces of Xu Youdao and the gray-robed Cultivator grew ashen. They were reaching their limit. As the statues got closer and closer, the lightning grew more and more dense. They had already gone through multiple magical items, and were coughing up blood. They couldn't proceed.

Suddenly, a lightning bolt began to descend, heading directly toward their group. Seeing this, the faces of Xu Youdao and the others flickered. The ancient Time jade that Han Bei wielded suddenly emitted a bright shield. When the lightning bolt slammed into the shield, a massive explosion rippled out. Han Bei coughed up a mouthful of blood, as did all of the others. The glow of electricity surrounded them, and their faces drained of blood. This was especially true of Xu Youdao and the gray-robed man, whose bodies trembled.

The lightning dissipated into curving sparks of electricity, and everyone heaved sighs of relief. They looked about, their faces filled with even more caution than before.

"Fellow Daoist Han," said Xu Youdao, turning to stare at Han Bei. "Didn't you say that the lightning would become weaker? Why was that bolt now so powerful?!"

Meng Hao wiped the blood from his mouth, but his eyes were shining. The fragments of lightning within his body were being sucked in by the lightning flag. It seemed to be changing again.

Actually, though he looked injured, after coughing up the blood, he was fine. However, he continued to force his face to look pale.

Wiping the blood from her mouth, Han Bei coldly replied, "You all chose to come here. There is no way you were unaware that this place is not suitable for Foundation Establishment Cultivators.

Were it not for my understanding of this place, were it not for this ancient Time jade, were it not for some other things that we all know about, then we wouldn't be walking through this place. We would not even have been able to enter the cauldron.

“As far as the lightning, it is weakened at the moment. However, there still exists the possibility that bolts will fall that have not been weakened.” She turned to Xie Jie. “Elder Brother Xie, having come this far, we've now reached the point where you must act. This location also holds what the Black Sieve Sect seeks, which they plan to fish out with the Hundred Spirits Tower. They seem to be ignoring our activities in here, but undoubtedly they are keeping guard outside.

“We both know that they don't dare to enter this place. Other than descendants of the Nine Great Families, anyone who enters here will die. The Nine Great Families have experienced decline in the Southern Domain, to the extent that they can't measure up to the current generation of Clans, and are mostly comprised of mortals. Ones who can practice Cultivation are usually herded up by various Sects. We have the appearance of elegance, but in fact we are little more than livestock. You and I are simply curious tools to the Black Sieve Sect.”

Xie Jie was quiet for a moment, and then smiled. “Actually, what makes me the most curious is that the Nine Great Families do not include Meng. Furthermore, not one of these nine statues resembles Fellow Daoist Meng at all. So, how was he able to enter this place?” He gave Meng Hao a deeply meaningful look.