

# The Heavens 18

## Chapter 18: Fatty of the Outer Sect

Time flashed by. Meng Hao didn't even take half a step outside of the Immortal's Cave. He didn't want to go out and didn't want to see anyone. He could never forget how Wang Tengfei had turned the whole world against him. He sat cross-legged, staring at the fingernails, encrusted with dried blood. His previous numbed expression changed into wrath, then somberness. Finally one day, the main door of the Immortal's cave creaked open, and moonlight poured in.

Elder Sister Xu stood there in the doorway, wreathed in moonlight which obscured her features.

Meng Hao didn't say anything, and neither did she. Time passed. Finally, she said, "I ended my secluded meditation just yesterday."

Meng Hao stood, saluting her with clasped hands.

"Wang Tengfei has an important background," she continued mildly. "He's not from the State of Zhao, and his Cultivation base is at the sixth level of Qi Condensation. The Sect Elders have already selected him to be promoted to the Inner Sect. You... you must not provoke him."

"Junior Brother understands," said Meng Hao with a smile. His expression appeared to have returned to its usual state, as if he had abandoned any brooding about what had happened. Although, deep in his eyes existed something which had never before appeared in his sixteen years of life.

It was a cold light he kept buried so deeply that only he could sense it. Others were clueless.

"However," said Elder Sister Xu, "if he causes any more trouble for you, all you have to do is smash this slip, and I will sense it, even if I'm meditating in seclusion." A moment passed, and then she waved her hand. A purple-colored jade slip appeared next to him.

"Of the four people I brought to the mountain that day, you are the first to be promoted to the Outer Sect. Your companion who you worked with in the North Servant's Quarter is being promoted today. Tomorrow at dawn, he will arrive in the Outer Sect to register." With that, she turned to leave.

“Many thanks, Elder Sister. I have a question I wish to ask,” he said. “I was hoping Elder Sister could explain. My Cultivation base is at the fourth level of Qi Condensation. Considering my latent talent, how long do you think it will take to reach the seventh level?”

“To reach the fourth level of Qi Condensation in less than a year seems to indicate that you have had quite a bit of good fortune in your Cultivation. You don’t need to explain the details, and I won’t ask. Without such fortune, it might take ten years at the fastest. At a slower rate, it could take half of a sixty-year cycle. The fourth, sixth and eighth levels are all bottlenecks, especially the sixth. Without a bit of good fortune, it’s difficult to break through to the seventh level.”

“It’s like that for everyone?”

“For everyone.” Then she was gone. Meng Hao sat down cross-legged, a sharp look shining in his eye.

An hour later, he stood up and left the Immortal’s Cave for the first time in days. The seasons were changing again, and it seemed autumn would arrive within a few days. The leaves were beginning to change color and wind drifted across the mountains and valleys.

Beneath the bright moon, Meng Hao made his way along a small path into the wild mountains. Everything was quiet, and the only thing that could be heard was the gentle rustle of falling leaves as Meng Hao made his way toward the North Mountain.

He wanted to go see Fatty. In the entire Sect, he was his only friend.

The Northern Servant’s Quarter was quiet this late at night. As he approached, he heard the sounds of snoring filling the air, a special kind of snore that he had grown accustomed to in his four months as a servant.

The horse-faced young man who presided over the Northern Servants’ Quarter sat cross-legged on the large boulder. He suddenly opened his eyes and look at Meng Hao, surprised for a moment. Then he rose to his feet and saluted Meng Hao with clasped hands.

“Greetings, Elder Brother Meng.” Rumors about Meng Hao had abounded recently, and of course the horse-faced young man had heard them.

“No need for the formality, Elder Brother,” said Meng Hao. “I’m here to see an old friend.” Taking a look at the young man’s Cultivation base, Meng Hao could see that it was the third level of Qi Condensation. It appeared as if it had been stuck there for several years.

Elder Brother Horse-Face nodded. After Meng Hao stepped foot into the Servants’ Quarter, he sat back down cross-legged, a strange expression on his face. With a silent sigh, he closed his eyes again.

Meng Hao walked into the courtyard and found the East Seventh House. As he approached, the sounds of Fatty’s snores filled the air. As soon as he entered, a strange expression filled his face, and the antsy feeling that had filled his heart recently began to dissipate.

Fatty lay there on his back, snoring away. The other bed in the room had been pushed away from the wall, forming a small gap.

There in the gap, sound asleep, was the big man who called himself Grandpa Tiger. Even though he was asleep, his face seemed contorted in fear, as if he had encountered something terrifying in his dreams.

His wooden bed was covered with a multitude of bite marks. In some places, it was chewed all the way through, so much so that it seemed it might fall apart. The wooden table was long gone, and Meng Hao imagined that it must have been completely eaten up. Even the walls had bite marks on them. In sharp contrast, Fatty’s bed remained bite-less.

The big man in the corner shivered, then let out a miserable cry. He was obviously in the throes of a nightmare. Given his emaciated appearance, and the dark circles under his eyes, it seemed he hadn’t been sleeping well lately. Meng Hao could only imagine the wretched circumstances that had tormented him into this state.

It seemed his cry had awakened Fatty, who sat up looking annoyed, then saw Meng Hao. He suddenly grew excited.

“Wild chicken! Did you bring any wild chicken?”

Meng Hao looked at him, unable to hold back his smile.

He was as round as ever, apparently having not lost even a bit of weight. In fact, he looked a bit fatter. His teeth had also grown longer, by about half. When he talked, they glittered brightly.

“I heard you reached the first level of Qi Condensation,” he said with a smile, “so I came to see you. I was in such a hurry that I didn’t have time to grab a chicken.” He sat down on the bed next to Fatty, examining his teeth.

Fatty, proud of his Cultivation base, began to talk. Meng Hao didn’t say much, instead listening to Fatty’s garrulous chatter. Soon, the moon began to fall and the sun began to rise. The wounds in Meng Hao’s heart also began to dissipate, leaving behind only scars. The fingernails in the Immortal’s Cave and the cold look in his eyes fused together within Meng Hao to create a more mature look.

At dawn, Meng Hao left with Fatty. Grandpa Tiger watched them go, tears streaming down his face. His tears moved Fatty, and before they could leave the courtyard, he ran back, gave him a hug, and then said something. Whatever he said caused the big man’s face to grow pale and his body to tremble.

“What did you say to him?” asked Meng Hao, when they were just about to reach the Outer Sect.

“He’s a good person. After you left the Servants’ Quarter, he became my friend. He was so upset at me leaving, I just couldn’t take it.” A pained expression appeared on his face. “I told him that I would definitely come back often to visit. He looks tough,” continued Fatty emotionally. “But he’s actually a bit of a coward. He always has nightmares when he sleeps. Poor guy.”

Meng Hao didn’t say anything, nor did he ask anything else about the man. As the two of them walked through the Outer Sect, people looked at Meng Hao, their expressions strange, as if measuring him up.

“Eh? Seems you really roiled things up in the Outer Sect, Meng Hao,” said Fatty excitedly. “Everyone’s looking at you.” In his mind, he figured that few people would be willing to bully him since he had Meng Hao at his back.

Meng Hao smiled but didn’t explain. When they were almost to the Treasure Pavilion, Meng Hao stopped walking. He watched Fatty approach the building.

In the amount of time it took for half an incense stick to burn, Fatty returned excitedly. In his hand he carried a short sword, covered with a layer of fish-like scales. It wasn't the least bit sharp, but instead rough.

"See the treasure I got, Meng Hao? It's truly a great treasure." He waved the sword in the air, and Meng Hao was just about to ask what it could possibly be used for when Fatty opened his mouth and started filing at his teeth with it. A scraping sound could be heard, and Meng Hao wasn't sure whether he should laugh or cry.

"It's great!" said Fatty, sounding more and more excited. "My teeth keep getting longer, and I'm constantly looking for things to file them down. But whatever I find always breaks within a few days. I can use this treasure to file them down forever!"

Meng Hao showed Fatty around the Outer Sect. He even offered to let him stay with him in the Immortal's Cave, but Fatty refused. He had been living with a roommate for too long, and had been looking forward to having his own place in the Outer Sect. No matter what Meng Hao said, he refused. When they arrived at his house, he looked completely content.

Meng Hao didn't push him. When the night was deep, he returned to the Immortal's Cave and sat down cross-legged.

Time flew, and soon three months had passed. Two months before, Meng Hao had re-opened his stall by the Low-Level Public Zone. Perhaps because of what had happened with Wang Tengfei, no one caused any problems for him, and soon, his business picked up again.

Soon, he added magic items to his offerings, and business grew even more. But now, there was more than one person in the company. At his side was a fat teenager who constantly filed his teeth with a flying sword. He had a good sense for business, and constantly hawked wares in the Public Zone. Soon, he was the main force in the business. With the cooperation of Meng Hao, who could not enter himself, they made quite a tidy profit.

One day, when winter had fallen and snowflakes filled the air, Meng Hao sat cross-legged at the edge of the plateau, meditating. Suddenly, Fatty let out a yelp and grabbed a person, dragging him toward Meng Hao.

"Meng Hao, Meng Hao, look who it is!"