

The Heavens 21

Chapter 21: Meng Hao, You're Shameless!

The black mountain was not bare, but rather covered with a lush forest of trees that stretched up toward the heavens. The reason this place was called a black mountain was because all the trees were completely black, and it seemed to be filled with swirling Demonic energy.

It was completely different from any of the other mountains as far as the eye could see.

Upon entering the mountain, Meng Hao heard a deep roar, and two Demonic beasts of the third level of Qi Condensation charged toward him. They had the bodies of wolves with long snake-like tails and were covered with thin fur. They glared at him hatefully.

As soon as they approached, Meng Hao stopped, then lifted up the copper mirror and shined it upon them. Instantly, one of the Demonic beast's right eye shot out a geyser of blood. It let out a miserable shriek, frightening its companion. Meng Hao's eyes flashed. This time, the mirror had exploded the Demonic beast's eye, not its buttocks. A similar thing had occurred when he fought Zhao Wugang. He didn't have any more time to think about it. Even as they moved to evade him, he hurtled past them.

As for the two fifth-level Cultivators, they raced in pursuit, infuriated. Their flying swords shot out, instantly slaying the two Demonic beasts. They didn't even stop to collect the Demonic Cores. Their bodies seemed to become rainbows as they raced in pursuit of Meng Hao.

"This is a Demonic mountain. I've heard that a Demon King lives on the peak. Meng Hao, fleeing to this place is just a way of seeking your own death."

"There's no need to flee. Come back and we can discuss things, maybe make a trade." The two Cultivators called after him as they pursued, their voices seemingly sincere, but their hearts filled with murderous intentions.

Meng Hao neither looked back nor responded to their calls, instead speeding along in the direction of the peak of the mountain. Before long, he ran into a group of seven or eight Demonic beasts. Most of them seemed to be at the third level of Qi Condensation. After cowing them with the copper mirror, he made his escape. Of course, the two fifth-level Cultivators had no such ability, so they had to massacre their way through. Then, covered with blood—demonic blood, of course, not

their own—they continued in pursuit. They were starting to grow exhausted. During the battle, they had used up even more medicinal pills. But as the saying goes, if you ride a tiger, it's hard to get off. Gritting their teeth, they continued their pursuit.

“They’re still after me...” Meng Hao, his face grim, had already reached the farthest point he had ever travelled on the black mountain. If he went any further, it would be difficult to avoid Demonic beasts of the fifth level of Qi Condensation. A hard look appeared on his face, and with clenched jaw, he proceeded onward toward the mountaintop.

After time passed enough for half an incense stick to burn, a low roar suddenly sounded out, seeming to cover half of the mountain. Like a dark wind, a multi-colored giant wolf came toward him, howling. The wolf had legs six meters long, and bright red eyes which shone with killing intent. Suppressive fifth-level Qi Condensation spirit roiled away from it.

If it had been alone, it would not have counted for much. But behind it followed a group of five smaller multi-colored wolves with Cultivation bases at the peak of the fourth level, as well as another fifth level wolf. Their fierce howling filled the air.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered, and without hesitation, he lifted the copper mirror and shone it toward the wolves. A miserable shriek poured out from the mouth of one of the wolves and blood poured out from its chest as if it had been stabbed. The other wolves looked on in shock, retreating unconsciously.

Moments later, unsure of what exactly was happening, and full of guesses, he gritted his teeth and proceeded forward. Two flying swords appeared beneath his feet, carrying him forward over thirty meters in an instant. Further behind appeared the two fifth-level Cultivators. When they saw the pack of Demonic wolves, their expressions dropped. Even though they pursued Meng Hao together, they still had to guard against each other. This area was still in the jurisdiction of the Reliance Sect, but once outside the gates of the sect, it would not be a rules violation for one of them to kill the other.

Amidst pursuit, it would have been no big deal, but now they were facing a crisis. The two fifth-level Demonic wolves looked at them threateningly. That, not to mention the rest of the smaller Demonic wolves, caused the two to quickly come up with a plan. Immediately, they split, one running off to the left and the other to the right.

They moved quickly, but the Demonic wolves moved even faster. They were sentient Demonic beasts, and already felt an astonishing fear of the copper mirror, as well as, Meng Hao. Amidst their

furious roars, however, he had made his escape, whereupon two Qi Condensation fifth-level Cultivators invaded their territory.

The Cultivators had no time to consider their fury. They ran, pursued by the howling Demonic wolves. In moments they had fled far away.

Meng Hao let out a sigh. Look up toward the mountaintop, and then back toward the fleeing Cultivators, his eyes flashed.

“Those Demonic beasts will cause them a bit of trouble, and will keep them off my tail for a while. But the fourth two-hour period is almost here. The pill beacon will shine again, and then they’ll be able to find me.” Meng Hao looked again toward the mountain top. He clenched his jaw and ran forward.

Shortly after that, a beacon of light burst out of his bag of holding, shooting up into the sky. Even someone a great distance away would be able to see it clearly.

Every two hours, the beacon would appear, as it had already a few times today. This was the fourth time.

Meng Hao proceeded carefully, trying to avoid as many Demonic beasts as possible. Most of the ones he saw were of the fifth level of Qi cultivation, so of course he feared them. It seemed they preferred to move about in groups, not alone, so even though the copper mirror provided some protection, he did his best to move around them. As such, his speed was reduced, and he could not run.

Time slowly passed, nearly an hour. Suddenly, a massive, furious roar sounded out throughout the whole mountain. At the same time, Meng Hao burst out from the thick forest, a worried expression on his face. Chasing him were seven or eight psychic Demonic apes. They were furious, and extremely fast, pursuing Meng Hao with unbridled fury.

Three of them were of the fifth level of Qi Condensation, and this made Meng Hao groan inwardly. He had been very careful so far, and hadn’t imagined that even as he carefully made his way around the troupe of Demonic apes, the mirror would of its own volition suddenly attack them, exploding one of the apes whose fur was so long it dragged on the ground. This of course raised the fury of the rest of the Demonic apes.

“Even if it is a Demonic ape with super long fur, it doesn’t mean you have to act like this,” said Meng Hao bitterly, looking at the copper mirror in his hands. He realized that he still didn’t fully understand all the mysteries of the mirror. Now, though, he didn’t have time to think about it. He ran down the mountain away from the Demonic apes. Looking back, he saw that the apes were closing in on him, so he waved the copper mirror, and another miserable shriek rang out. At that exact moment, Meng Hao saw that ahead of him, which was about the half-way point down or up the mountain, glittered the aura of flying swords.

His eyes shone and he raced forward. In an instant he was almost upon a group of four Cultivators of the fourth level of Qi Condensation. One of them was Shangguan Song. They were in close combat with several Demonic bears. Blood filled the air, and it appeared that they had the upper hand, as the corpses of two Demonic bears lay at their feet.

“Meng Hao!” They caught sight of him almost as soon as he caught sight of them, and their eyes filled with murderous intent, especially Shangguan Song’s.

They appeared to be exhausted. Their journey in the black mountain had been wrought with battle. Originally, they had been ten strong, but most of them had already given up. The four remaining had exercised control over their Cultivation bases with gritted teeth and followed after the pill beacon until they found themselves in this brave fight against the Demonic bears.

When they caught sight of Meng Hao, their eyes grew red, and they subconsciously wanted to switch the target of their flying swords’ attacks.

“Dear Brothers, I received your orders to attract the attention of this troupe of Demonic apes. Quick, make your move!” As Meng Hao approached, he ignored the flying swords and shouted his words loudly so that the pursuing psychic apes would be sure to hear.

Even as the words were out of his mouth, shockingly furious roars reverberated from behind him as the seven or eight psychic apes burst out from the trees, their red eyes glowing.

“Meng Hao, you’re shameless!!!”

“Dammit, you’re too despicable!”

The four men’s faces fell, and they tried to fall back, cursing Meng Hao. But the fight with the Demonic bears wouldn’t permit it. Meng Hao, who was still worried about the whole situation, had already passed them, and the red-eyed Demonic apes charged forward furiously.

Meng Hao looked back at the four of them, killing intent appearing in his eyes. He slapped his bag of holding, and some flying swords shot out with a low hum.

“BOOM!”

The explosion thundered out, as the flying swords exploded. Meng Hao instantly sent two Flame Serpents to follow them, and several nearby trees exploded into bits. Borrowing some of the momentum from the explosion, Meng Hao swallowed a mouthful of blood and shot away. Behind him, the four Cultivators were impeded by the explosions. As for the Demonic apes, they had lost sight of Meng Hao. But the Cultivators were right there in front of them, so they attacked instantly.

Miserable screams rang out, and Meng Hao continued onward without a backward glance.

“This place isn’t too bad... it’s just a bit dangerous.” Meng Hao ran along, until he was sure the Demonic apes weren’t following him, then stopped, panting. He looked around.

“It’s not easy to keep hold of a Dry Spirit Pill,” he murmured. He looked down at his bag of holding and let out a sigh, feeling somewhat distressed.

“I’ve already wasted thirty-one flying swords, and each one of those is basically a Spirit Stone. I’ve also consumed several medicinal pills, each of which is also equivalent to a Spirit Stone. And it isn’t even the fifth two-hour period yet...” Meng Hao laughed bitterly, feeling twisted at heart.

“In the end, if I can consume the Dry Spirit Pill and make a breakthrough in my Cultivation base, then it will all be worth it!” Veins of blood had appeared in his eyes. He was like a gambler who intended to win at any cost, and had gone all in.

“If those four fourth-level disciples don’t get killed, they’ll definitely be exhausted, and I doubt they’ll be willing to continue their pursuit. Now, all I have left to worry about are the two fifth-level Cultivators.” His expression grew somber. His opponents had higher Cultivation bases than him, and there were two of them. It would be difficult to stand up to them, and as far as he was concerned, it wasn’t worth it to kill them. The cost in Spirit Stones would be too great.

He rested for a bit, looking up at the mountaintop. Then he gritted his teeth and began to run. The fifth two-hour period arrived quickly, and almost as soon as the pill beacon shot up into the sky

from his bag of holding, he heard the sinister voices of his two opponents coming from either side of him.

“Meng Hao, you can’t escape!”

“Hand over the Dry Spirit Pill to me. I can let you die with your corpse intact. Otherwise I’ll leave you here for the beasts, and nothing will remain of you.”

Even as their voices echoed off into the distance, the two Cultivators’ bodies flashed like rainbows as they charged towards Meng Hao. Determination filled Meng Hao’s eyes and he fled onward. It appeared that up ahead was the resting place of some Demonic beasts.

Chapter 22: A Sword Resting in Demonic Python Skin

Not much time had passed. It seemed as if the entire black mountain were seething. The roars of Demonic beasts shook the air, rising and falling one after another. Even more frequent were the miserable shrieks which sounded out. The ten or more Cultivators who had dared not further their pursuit into the mountain looked pale. Fear filled their hearts, and now they were even less willing to enter the mountain than before.

“What happened? How come it seems like all the Demonic beasts in the whole mountain are in a rage?”

“What’s going on? Elder Brothers Yin Tianlong [1. Yin Tianlong’s name in Chinese is 尹天隆 (yǐn tiān lóng) - Yin is a common family name. Tian means "Heaven" or "sky." Long means "prosperous," "swelling," or "the sound of drums"] and Zhou Kai [2. Zhou Kai’s name in Chinese is 周凯 (zhōu kǎi) - Zhou is a common family name. Kai means "victorious" or "triumphant"] are both of the fifth level of Qi Condensation, but even they would have a hard time raising the wrath of the entire mountain. Could they have use some unique and special technique?”

The small crowd at the foot of the mountain made their guesses, listening to the deafening roars.

As far as Yin Tianlong and Zhou Kai, they had already been tormented to near madness by Meng Hao’s tricks. They watched helplessly as Meng Hao moved about up ahead in the distance, along with vast amounts of Demonic beasts. Based on the hatred in their eyes, if looks could kill, Meng Hao would have been dead several times over.

Yet, within the hatred was helpless exhaustion that only Yin and Zhou could truly understand. Every time they had begun to chase Meng Hao again, he had constantly used some sort of Demonic magic to provoke all types of Demonic beasts. With the mere flick of a sleeve, he would cause some part of a Demonic creature's body to explode. The stench of blood filled the air, slowly driving the creatures crazy.

Seeing so many Demonic creatures made their scalps go numb, as the creatures didn't just pursue Meng Hao. Once the creatures caught sight of the two of them, they would begin chasing after them. Then, some distance away, Meng Hao would slip away like a loach.

"Dammit! I curse you to die in the belly of the beasts!!!" roared Zhou Kai. Next to him, Yin Tianlong sighed, looking even more exhausted.

Time slowly passed, and the beginning of another of the two-hour periods approached. In the darkness of night, the pill beacon was dazzling. As it revealed Meng Hao's position, Zhou and Yin gnashed their teeth and pursued. As usual, Meng Hao used his Demonic magic to provoke more Demonic beasts, then led them to Zhou and Yin, whereupon he would watch them disappear amidst the pack of furious creatures.

"How can he have not been devoured by a Demonic creature already!?" Zhou and Yin were exhausted to the bones, whereas Meng Hao skipped and jumped about, filled with energy. Seeing this, hatred filled them to the marrow, and their gums itched with hatred. But there was nothing they could do.

In truth, Meng Hao was also exhausted. Every time the pill shone, he was forced to immediately arouse the attention of some Demonic beasts. Of course, the copper mirror allowed him to stop the fastest creatures screaming in their tracks, thus giving him time to escape. Were it not for that, he would have long since dropped to the ground in fatigue.

Suddenly, he realized that he had reached the top of the mountain. The ground was covered with fissures and crevices, some of them so large that a person could easily fit inside. Panting, Meng Hao sat down behind a boulder to rest, looking down at the copper mirror in his hands. It was burning hot, as if everything that had happened today had made it incredibly excited. With a bitter smile, Meng Hao looked around and noticed a massive fissure up ahead, out of which seeped a thick black mist.

Just then, a roar suddenly erupted from the giant fissure, the same roar that earlier had quelled all the fierce beasts on the mountain. The roar seemed capable of shaking the whole world. It

resounded like a thunderclap. In an instant, the entire area was clear of all Demonic beasts, as if the entire mountain now contained only this roar.

The roar seemed to vibrate even Meng Hao's mind, dispersing all the spiritual energy within his body. His facial expression changed. This roar was familiar. In his previous visits to the regions near the black mountain, he had heard it. It was a sound which curdled both blood and Qi, leaving one's mind filled with unease.

As the roar sounded out, Meng Hao forced his eyes to remain open and watch as the black mist poured out of the fissure. As the mist dispersed, Meng Hao was able to see a huge black python, over six meters thick, with a heinous and fierce countenance. About half its length had suddenly moved out of the fissure.

It looked to be in pain, and its fierce roar shook heaven and earth. Meng Hao spat out a mouthful of blood. He leaped out from behind the boulder and flew down the mountain, not daring to remain behind. But then he stopped, his curiosity having gotten the better of him. When he went back to take a second look, he noticed something interesting.

The python's body, half of which was visible sticking out of the fissure, seemed to be peeling. It looked as if it had two sets of skin. It coiled up on itself, rubbing the outer skin to shed it away.

"It's shedding?" Upon recognizing what was happening, Meng Hao sucked in a breath. He knew that pythons were weakest during the time in which they shed their skin. It took a while for it to happen, especially if the python were demonic in nature. With a body as large as this one, it would probably take even longer, perhaps several years.

"No wonder you can hear it roaring all the time. It must have been in the process of shedding for years." His gaze shifted, and he noticed something else in addition to the python.

Upon closer inspection, he gaped in amazement. It was a flying sword. It appeared to be exceedingly primitive, with no special characteristics at all. But, it had been stabbed deeply into the python's body. It appeared to have been there for quite a long time, many years perhaps.

The area around where the sword had stabbed into the body was dry and withered, which attested to the power of the sword.

"This demonic python has a Cultivation base of at least the seventh level of Qi Condensation, perhaps the eighth. Maybe even the ninth..." His mouth grew dry. He could only imagine how tough

the python's skin was, which only further attested to how amazing the primitive-looking flying sword was.

“A flying sword which can stab a demonic creature like this must be a true treasure.” Meng Hao palpitated with eagerness, then let out a dejected sigh. With a Cultivation base at the fourth level of Qi Condensation, acquiring the sword was little more than a dream for him. Even if he were at the fifth level, it would be equally impossible.

Shaking his head, he headed down the mountain, eyes glittering. There was still something important to accomplish. The copper mirror in his sleeve continued to boil, and soon, he had a handful of Demonic beasts following him, howling.

A few hours passed and dawn broke. The last of the twelve two-hour periods would soon end. Zhou and Yin had already given up all hope. They stared up at Meng Hao, who sat cross-legged further up the mountain.

If the two of them made the slightest move, he would rile up a group of beasts, and not only would they not succeed in their goal, they would most likely be injured. Couple that with their exhaustion, and the only thing they could do was gasp for breath and stare venomously at Meng Hao.

“Dammit. Meng Hao, how could you escape me!?” Zhou Kai panted for breath then let out a helpless howl. Meng Hao really was a loach that could come and go like a shadow within the jungle.

“Don't you have your own skills?” said Yin Tianlong, who wasn't very far away. Able to neither kill nor pursue, he was half mad, and his words seemed to contain no logic. “Can you just, not flee? There's no need to use such wicked demonic magic to send beasts after us. Why don't we have a fair fight?”

“My Cultivation base isn't as high as yours, how could I fight you?” said Meng Hao, also panting. “If you want to keep chasing me, I don't really have any other choice.” He swallowed another medicinal pill.

Never before in their lives had Zhou and Yin ever met anyone as seemingly unreasonable as Meng Hao. They both felt regret at heart. If they had known it would turn out like this, they would never have chased after him to steal the pill.

Time slipped by, and the hour approached for the sealing spell on the pill to dissipate. Yin Tianlong let out a long sigh. With a bitter laugh, he shook his head. There was nothing left he could do. He couldn't pursue or attack, lest he be forced to face Demonic beasts. His medicinal pills were exhausted, and he had lost two flying swords. How could he even attempt to steal the pill...? Of course, that was not to mention his opponent's tactics. His dazzling, wicked ideas seemed to have no end. Even the slightest bit of inattentiveness would lead to injury.

With a humiliated sigh, he gave one last look at Meng Hao, then turned and headed down the mountain, finally tormented into surrender.

As he left, Zhou Kai felt wracked with indecision. Dawn approached, as did the ending of the twelfth two-hour period, and with it, the unsealing of the medicinal pill in Meng Hao's bag of holding. Zhou Kai stamped his foot hatefully, then, without a word, turned and left. He was convinced that Meng Hao was just too hard to deal with. In fact, there was fear in his heart; if he didn't leave this place now, perhaps he never would.

Meng Hao watched the two of them leave and head down the mountain. He let out a very long sigh, and felt exhaustion fill his body like floodwaters. He bit his tongue and woke up a bit, then hurried off into the distance. He didn't leave the black mountain, but rather made his way to the mountaintop. There was the Demonic python there, but generally speaking it was relatively safe. After all, the python needed time to complete its transformation, and its roars kept away other Demonic beasts.

Meng Hao found a fissure in the rocks and sat down cross-legged. He glanced down at his bag of holding, suddenly feeling apprehensive.

"I wasted so many medicinal pills, each one worth Spirit Stones. Let me calculate... including thirty-seven flying swords and more than forty Demonic Cores, that comes to... one hundred ninety-eight Spirit Stones. One hundred ninety-eight." His body trembled, and he felt quite upset.

"Thankfully, the twenty-four hours is now up," he said, trying to comfort himself, "and the Dry Spirit Pill is mine." Pushing aside his disappointment, he forced his mind to be clear, then, looking around to make sure it was safe, he pulled out the copper mirror and began to make copies of the Dry Spirit Pill.

Mid-day arrived, and Meng Hao looked down at the pills in his hands. Ten Dry Spirit Pills. He forced out a smile, but disappointment was still visible in his face. It took a lot of Spirit Stones to copy a Dry Spirit Pill, many more than were required for a Demonic Core. Now he understood the exchange rates required by the copper mirror.

He clenched his jaw, then popped one of the pills into his mouth.

“Fifth level of Qi Condensation! I have to reach the fifth level!” His eyes grew bloodshot, filled with resilient determination. He sat in meditation and began to rotate his Cultivation base. Booming sounds resounded through his body as boundless spiritual energy erupted out of the Dry Spirit Pill, causing the spiritual forces in Meng Hao’s body to turn into a spinning vortex which suddenly spread outward in all directions.

Time went by slowly, and days passed. When Meng Hao, his eyes closed, broke through the fifth level of Qi Condensation, the black mountain was filled with the roars of the python. Its transformation, like Meng Hao’s, seemed also to have reached a critical juncture.

Chapter 23: An Ancient Beast!

As Meng Hao sat in secluded meditation in the small mountain fissure, rumors about what had happened regarding the Dry Spirit Pill began to ripple out. This was especially true when Zhou and Yin returned. Many people saw them, but of course none dared to ask about who had ended up with the Dry Spirit Pill.

Because Meng Hao didn’t appear, rumors began to spread that he had died.

At that exact same moment, Wang Tengfei stood with hands clasped in his Immortal’s Cave on the East Mountain. The mountain breeze caused his hair to waft about and his long robe to rustle. He seemed exceedingly perfect in every way, especially his face, which was so beautiful and flawless that it could send women mad.

As a matter of fact, a mere nod of his head could drive crazy not just the young female Cultivators of the Reliance Sect, but of the Cultivation World of the entire State of Zhao.

His gentle eyes, amiable disposition, beautiful features, superb latent talent, refined Cultivation base, astonishing family background... all of it seemed to prove that Wang Tengfei deserved to be Chosen, which in turn caused people to respect him even more. He was blessed by heaven.

He stood there, an enchanting smile on his face, his eyes seemingly filled with stars as he stared off into the distance. His gaze seemed to almost bore directly through the mountain ranges to fall directly onto the black mountain filled with Demonic beasts.

He stared for a long time, his eyes flickering with an indiscernible excitement.

“The time has come,” he said, his smile light but his heart afire. “I spent three years digging through the ancient records, then another year searching high and low throughout the State of Zhao. After that, I waited for two more years here in the Reliance Sect. Finally, today has arrived. Before the Winged Rain-Dragon died, it flew to this place.

“I never imagined that the two most important things to me would relate to the Reliance Sect. Is my destiny really to be realized here? After the current matter is ended, I will enter the Inner Sect and being my plans regarding my Foundation Establishment.” His smile grew even more enchanting.

“Elder Brother Wang, we are prepared,” said a man who stood behind Wang Tengfei. His Cultivation base was at the fifth level of Qi Condensation. He spoke with utmost respect. “Even the members of the other Sects are assembled according to your requirements. We shall certainly succeed. Unfortunately, Shangguan Song hasn’t returned, and we don’t know where he is. It’s not certain whether or not he was able to invite Master Uncle Shangguan.”

“Very well,” said Wang Tengfei with a smile. “We’ve been preparing for this matter for a long time. According to my deductions, the Demonic python is almost at the end of its two-year shedding period. The moment it completes the process, it is at its weakest.” His eyes grew brighter. Not only had he spent years in preparation, he had been required to pay the price of four valuable treasures, as well as tens of thousands of Spirit Stones, to prepare the spell. Even for him, it was a price which could only be paid once. As of now, he had nothing left.

“Don’t worry, Elder Brother Wang. We will definitely succeed. Allow Junior Brother to congratulate you in advance on acquiring the Core.”

“Of course we will succeed. I, Wang Tengfei, have never failed.” He laughed, and his expression grew even more resplendent. If the ancient records were correct, he would return with a valuable treasure that would accompany him for the rest of his life, and also an ancient legacy which would allow him to control heaven and earth. As for the Demonic Core, it could have been considered a treasure when it was in its prime. But after all these years, it would have faded, and would not be as effective. However, it could still help him break through from the sixth level of Qi Condensation to the seventh.

“Tomorrow at dawn, we shall go to the black mountain,” said Wang Tengfei mildly. With a smile, he rubbed his right arm. Hidden underneath the sleeve was a red mark. He rubbed it, and his eyes once again flashed with excitement.

It was a mark left by a Blood Drop which had fallen onto him from the Heavens when he was six years old. After that day, he was surrounded by a dream in which he flew through the air and became a sovereign of the sky.

With the Blood Drop had come knowledge of a legacy, as well as a special sense, which, when coupled with the information from the records of two-hundred years ago, had enabled him to find a thread of a clue which had led him here.

“No one in the entire world except for me could do this. And that is because I am connected to the legacy, and have the Blood Drop, which is unique in the world.” He gazed off toward the black mountain, his smile even more entrancing, filled with anticipation.

“If this was still the era of Patriarch Reliance, then he would definitely take control of the dragon. But he’s been missing for four hundred years. That is good fortune for me. According to the ancient records, as well as my own investigations, I know that when the dragon came here two hundred years ago, its aura had been suppressed by the treasure. Few people realized that. Even though this is Reliance Sect territory, the area has powerful restrictive spells. Not only was there no aura emanating out, even if there were, no one would have been able to sense it. And even if someone entered the area, their vision would have been blocked by the magic, and they would have been unable to see it.

“As for the Demonic python, it has spent most of its time in slumber. It was only because of the shedding process that it began to roar and howl. Only when the Demonic python sheds its skin fully will the restrictions dissipate, and it will be safe to enter. Thanks to my Blood Drop legacy, I was able to deduce these matters. No one else understands even the half of it.

“A valuable treasure, a complete legacy, all there, waiting for Wang Tengfei!” His smile growing wider, he flicked his sleeve and walked back into the Immortal’s Cave. Moonlight circled around him, unwilling to part from him. The mystical scene caused the other Cultivator’s expression to be filled with even more veneration.

The next day at dawn, atop the black mountain, in that virtually invisible fissure, Meng Hao’s entire body had grown crimson red. Sweat poured off him, and massive amounts of black filth oozed continuously out of his pores.

He had been in mediation for several days, but now his eyes opened. Outside, the roars of the Demonic python grew more intense. It seemed it had reached a critical juncture of its own.

Meng Hao was not distracted, though. He focused and rotated his Cultivation base. He pushed over and over again, but the fourth-level bottle neck was still there. His eyes red, he swallowed ten Dry Spirit Pills, whereupon his head began to buzz, and his body trembled violently. A loud ripping sound could be heard, and it seemed as if his body were floating like a piece of paper in the wind.

Inside his body, his Qi and blood vessels sparkled like crystal, nearly transparent, like an otherworldly omen. The spiritual energy in his body whirled, forming a magnificent lake. It wasn't a big lake, but it was a lake nonetheless.

The lake, the Core lake, existed in Meng Hao's dantian region, quite heavy.

Meng Hao knew that he could control the power and enable it to erupt with the power of the fifth level of Qi Condensation. To a Cultivator who had reached Foundation Establishment, it was weak and insubstantial, but as far as Qi Condensation went, the fifth level was a watershed, the second watershed being the seventh level, followed by the ninth.

His head buzzed for quite some time. Eventually, Meng Hao slowly opened his eyes, and they glittered like they had before. A burst of popping sounds rang out. He seemed to have grown a bit taller, and though his skin was still dark, a new air emanated from him.

"The fifth level of Qi Condensation." Meng Hao took a deep breath, then smiled. He had reached the fifth level of Qi Condensation. Now he could practice the Wind Walking technique. That, combined with flying swords, would give him much greater speed both in movement and attack. It was completely beyond the fourth level.

"Dry Spirit Pills really are beyond ordinary," said Meng Hao, looking down at the two Dry Spirit Pills in front of him. "But, they still have their limitations. Perhaps after consuming a lot of them, they will become less effective, just like the pills in the past. I wonder if I will be able to use them to get to the sixth level of Qi Condensation." As he contemplated this, his expression suddenly changed. The roars of the Demonic python now carried a tone of misery. Booming sounds rang out. Meng Hao leaned forward, and he looked outside of the fissure.

As he looked, his pupils constricted and his hands clenched into fists.

Not far away on the mountaintop, was a white-robed youth, extraordinarily beautiful, as if his perfect body was a blessing from heaven. A golden flying sword rotated around him, and the wind blew furiously around as he battled with the Demonic python.

It was none other than... Wang Tengfei.

He smiled calmly, and his kind, amiable eyes made him seem like the sun. He seemed to glow, as if he could eliminate all the shadows around him.

When he attacked, he seemed perfect, as if the Heavens approved his each and every movement.

Around him were at least nine others, one of whom was Shangguan Xiu. He flicked his sleeves as he took the lead in battling the Demonic python. As for the others, all of them had Qi Condensation levels of the seventh level or higher. All were strangers whom Meng Hao had never seen before. They surrounded the Demonic python, preparing to kill it. Booming sounds rang out, and the python let out astonishing roars.

Meng Hao stared at Wang Tengfei, not moving a muscle. But deep in his eyes was a dark look that slowly grew, replacing any mildness until it filled his eyes.

After a short bit of time, the Demonic python's roars grew more and more miserable, and wounds covered its body. Blood splattered everywhere. This truly was its weakest state. The surrounding Cultivators attacked even fiercerly. Wang Tengfei smiled, as perfect as ever, his eyes filled with an indiscernible excitement.

He had waited for this day for a long time.

Suddenly, from the peaks of nine surrounding mountains, shining silvery light coiled up and linked together to form a spell. The spell ever so slowly filled the air, then broke into countless silver threads which then turned into a silver fog that shot down toward the ground. It seemed that they were preparing to seal the Demonic python.

But, just then, the python looked up toward the Heavens and let out a roar which resounded out over the black mountain, shaking everything. Suddenly, on top of the python's head appeared the ghostly image of a beast.

The creature was bright red, with enormous wings and a hideous-looking head. Its sharp claws glittered, and it had a long tail. The instant the phantom appeared, the swirling winds in the sky seemed to change colors, and astonished expressions appeared on the faces of everyone present. Only Wang Tengfei's eyes appeared more excited. Fortunately, the ghostly image appeared for only a moment, then disappeared.

When the ghostly image disappeared, the Demonic python shot out of the deep fissure, its body sleek and smooth. It let out a frightening roar and spit reddish mist out of its mouth, an attack which then shot out in all directions. The Cultivators couldn't avoid it, not even Wang Tengfei, and they could only watch helplessly as it enveloped them, then shot out into the distance. Because of the attack, when the silver fog fell from the sky, it didn't just fall down upon the Demonic python, but Wang Tengfei and the others as well.

As the silver fog descended upon them, Meng Hao's heart began to thump wildly. Before, he had seen a sword sticking out from the Demonic python's body. But as of now, the sword was nowhere to be seen. Without the slightest hesitation, he leaped up and, moving faster than he ever had in his life, jumped onto a flying sword and shot toward the top of the mountain and the large fissure.

"Go! Go! Go!" Meng Hao said under his breath. Without any regard for safety, he charged into the fissure-like cave, ignoring the strange odor which filled the air. As he moved deeper into the cave, he saw a massive snakeskin, stuck into which was the small, primitive-looking sword.

Without even a pause, he grabbed the sword, his heart thumping, face flushed with excitement. Just as he was about to leave, his eyes widened. Despite his extreme level of excitement, he was still able to gasp in shock. The thing really was a python skin, but it was also something else, something shockingly frightening that Meng Hao had never before seen in his life.

It was ... the corpse of a creature. A massive, shriveled corpse, several hundreds of meters long. The black mountain seemed to be hollow inside, and the creature's corpse filled more than half of it.

Also visible were two gigantic, mostly disintegrated wings. Despite being dead, the creature's massive, hideous head was incredibly frightening. This creature looked the same as the ghostly image which had just appeared, and now it was clear that the so-called Demonic python was actually the creature's tail.

"A tail that becomes a demon!" said Meng Hao, stupefied. "What Demonic beast is this?! If it's a Demonic beast... it must have a Demonic Core!" He clenched his jaw. Based on his experience collecting Demonic Cores, it wouldn't be located in the creature's belly. Most Demonic Cores were located in the head. He dashed toward the horrific-looking head, and with a swipe of the primitive-looking sword, split it open. Sure enough, inside was a shriveled Demonic Core. He grabbed it, and was about to leave, when suddenly his heart began thumping even harder. From his current position, he could see that beneath the head of the creature's corpse was a skeleton.

Who knew how many years the skeleton had lay crushed under the head. Next to the skeleton was a golden-colored bag of holding.

Blood boiling, Meng Hao suddenly had the feeling that his destiny was thick in this place. He had acquired the sword, the Demonic Core and now a golden bag of holding. He snatched it up, then shot out of the cave like the wind, and then down the mountain, filled with incredible excitement.

“I’ve struck it rich! This time, I’ve really freaking struck it rich!”

Meng Hao had only been inside the cave for the space of about ten breaths, and in ten more, he was gone from the mountain. The moment his shadow disappeared, a shape began to descend from the silver fog that hung in the sky. It was a person wearing a white robe; Wang Tengfei. With a flick of his sleeve, he floated down slowly. He looked around for a moment, then sped toward the cave.

Chapter 24: Who was it?!

Wang Tengfei looked so excited that if anyone could have seen him, they would have been shocked. No one had ever seen such an expression appear on his face.

To other people, Wang Tengfei was a Chosen, with a mild expression, amiable smile, and beautiful appearance, perfect in every way.

But at the moment, he could not help but show his excitement. He had prepared for this moment for years, had spent so many resources, all to get to this point, a point he had looked forward to for years. He would finally have a treasure he could carry with him for his entire life. His heart nearly burst with frenzied excitement.

One of the main reasons he had joined the Reliance Sect to begin with was to acquire this treasure.

Moving as fast as he could, he entered the cave. When he caught sight of the massive, frightening corpse, he let out a loud laugh and his eyes glowed. He dashed toward the creature’s tail, the part that had turned into the Demonic python. He searched about for a while, whereupon a look of confusion appeared on his face. His eyes widened. After looking across the entire corpse, he stood there looking dumbstruck.

“What’s going on...? It can’t be. The treasure can only be acquired after the python sheds its skin. The only safe time to enter is right now. How could it not be here? It’s impossible!” A heinous look filled his eyes, and his head spun. He searched the corpse again, seeking out the place where he

remembered the sword should have been sticking out. When he found it, it was clear that the sword had already been taken. Wang Tengfei's body began to shake, and an unbelievable fury appeared in his eyes. He let out a howl that shook the entire black mountain.

That was when he noticed that the corpse's head had been split open and the Demonic Core removed. When he saw the skeleton, his mood sank even deeper, and he barely even looked at it.

His whole person appeared savage with fury. He dashed outside and pulled up his sleeve, hoping to get some reaction from the Blood Drop on his arm. But there was no reaction whatsoever. In fact, it was as if the Blood Drop had been wiped away!

He searched the black mountain high and low but found nothing.

In the end, he returned dumbly to the cave and looked at the creature's corpse. He let out another shrill shriek.

"I spent three years searching the ancient texts. Three years, with no time for Cultivation! I spent hundreds of thousands of Spirit Stones before I found the clue from two hundred years ago that led me to the Flying Rain-Dragon!" His body trembled, and his face contorted. Any beauty at all in him was gone, replaced by madness.

"I spent a year searching throughout the State of Zhao, in the mountains and the wilds. I went everywhere, all the districts. The reactions of the Blood Drop finally led me here!" His eyes red, he clenched his fists angrily. Anyone who saw him like this would surely be shocked in the extreme.

"For the treasure, I deigned to begin my spiritual studies in this damned Reliance Sect. Dammit, Dammit! I've had to endure for nearly three years already!!!" His heart ached, as if it had been stabbed with an invisible sword that smashed his arrogance to pieces. Up until now, he really had never believed that he could possibly fail.

"To prepare the spell to suppress the dragon, I spent all my remaining Spirit Stones!! I used some precious influence from my Clan to suppress information about the ancient Flying Rain-Dragon from getting out. I even refused the aid of my Clan-members because I wanted the treasure and the Legacy to be the true starting point of my training!

"Who was it? Who took my treasure!?" His body trembled violently, his head buzzed, and his blood roiled. He had spent so much, and someone else had benefited. He spit out a mouthful of blood onto his white robe, staining it red.

It was like a man in the mortal world who paid the bride-price, bought a luxuriously decorated mansion, found the most beautiful bride, then arranged an amazing wedding feast to which he invited countless friends and family. Then, in front of everyone's eyes, filled with anticipation, he entered the nuptial chamber and saw his beautiful, blushing bride in her red wedding gauzes, then threw himself upon her...

Only to suddenly find he had become a different person. Everything that belonged to him was suddenly being enjoyed by some other bloke. Even his face had been taken away!

“Who took my ancient Cultivation sword!?” Wang Tengfei again shouted mournfully, then spit out another mouthful of blood. He staggered backward a few paces, his face pale, his eyes burning with madness. He couldn't accept it, not at all. Never before had he failed, ever. This, coupled with his arrogance, caused his heart to be filled with a powerful, humiliated fury.

“Who stole the treasure I planned to use to rebuke the Cultivation world!?” As he thought about the price he had paid to reach this point, he coughed up another mouthful of blood. His robe was now almost completely red as he staggered backward.

“You didn't just take the treasure, you took the Demonic Core. Without that, I can't break through to the seventh level! Who are you?! Who are you who took away my fortune! That was my treasure, that was my Demonic Core!!” His face twisted with madness as he continued his search, but to no avail.

His miserable roars reached Meng Hao's ears as he fled for his life. His eyes glittered excitedly, and he ran even faster.

“I'm rich. Really, really rich.” His heart raced and his mouth felt dry, and his speed increased until it far exceeded his previous speed limitation. Only a short time passed before he reached the Immortal's Cave on the South Mountain.

He had guessed that the treasures he'd taken were very important to Wang Tengfei. Since he had virtually stolen them, he could not very well announce their existence publicly. He wanted to hide himself away as well, but if he did so, it would only attract more attention to himself. Instead, he should place himself in the open and attach himself to a position of reason, be bold and assured, with justice on his side.

He licked his lips, and his eyes fairly shone. Even though Fatty still had the jade slip that opened the Immortal's Cave, Meng Hao still had another jade slip given to him by Elder Sister Xu, which he knew could open the door. If there were only one key, how could she have opened the door when he sat counting his Spirit Stones that one time?

When he entered the Immortal's Cave, he didn't see Fatty. At first, he was worried. But then he realized that even though Fatty looked naive, he was actually quite clever, and wouldn't let himself be taken advantage of. Not thinking about it any further, he sat down cross-legged, took a deep breath and pulled out the golden bag of holding. He grew even happier at the sight of it, and when he opened it, he started to murmur softly to himself.

"It's so big. It seems it can hold... what?" Before he even finished his sentence, his body grew stiff, and he sucked in another breath. When he looked in the bag of holding, his mind went blank, then began to buzz.

"Holy crap! Holy crap! I really am rich!!" His hands trembled as they gripped the bag of holding. It took a few moments for him to get his thoughts in order again. He pulled out a Spirit Stone with a shaky hand.

The Spirit Stones in the bag were not quite the same as his other Spirit Stones. About as big as a finger, the Spiritual energy which swirled about in them was not dense, and they also contained a strange swirling mist inside. And the sheer amount... inside the bag of holding were over two thousand Spirit Stones!

He had never seen such a vast amount of wealth in his entire life. He could not even breathe for a moment. His body trembled, and he stared blankly. Other than the Spirit Stones, the only things in the bag were some articles of clothing and a few other miscellaneous items.

Sweat began to drip down Meng Hao's forehead. It wasn't hot inside the Immortal's Cave, but his body felt as if it were burning. After a bit of time went by, he began to laugh, a hearty laughter filled with joy.

"These Spirit Stones are strange. They're big, but their spiritual energy is just average. But the quantity, hahaha..." After some time passed, he got himself under control. Licking his lips, he pulled out another of the objects he had acquired, the withered Demonic Core. He looked at it, his eyes gleaming intensely. He took a deep breath.

"That gigantic Demonic beast must have been dead for many years. Eventually, its tail transformed into a Demonic python. It must have been incredibly powerful when it was alive. And its Demonic

Core...” Meng Hao’s breathing grew ragged as he looked at the hard, dried out Core. He brought out the copper mirror, intending to make some duplicates.

Almost as soon as he pulled it out, and before he could even place the Demonic Core on its surface, the mirror suddenly began to burn so hotly that it almost injured Meng Hao’s hand. An invisible force burst out from the mirror, charging toward the Demonic Core.

A bang sounded out as the Core in Meng Hao’s hand was struck by the invisible attack. In an instant, another invisible force shot out from the copper mirror and struck out at the Demonic Core. It was as if the Demonic Core had suddenly turned into a long-furred Demonic creature, and the copper mirror had gone mad with the desire to destroy it.

Meng Hao was dumbstruck. He instantly grabbed the mirror, and, enduring the pain, shoved it back into his bag of holding. The Demonic Core dropped to the ground with a thump, a multitude of small cracks now visible on its withered surface.

“Dammit. This is a Demonic Core, not a furred Demonic beast.” Meng Hao painfully hurried to pick up the Core.

It was a good thing the withered Demonic Core had a tough outer crust. The copper mirror’s violent attack had damaged its surface, and now, a small gleaming pellet was visible, from which wafted the aroma of dense spiritual energy. It instantly filled the Immortal’s Cave and caused his eyes to glitter. Considering the violent reaction of the copper mirror, he didn’t dare to attempt to duplicate it. He hesitated for a moment, then stored it away.

After taking another deep breath, he pulled out the third of his acquisitions, the small, primitive-looking sword. Holding it in front of him, he smiled.

“This sword is incredibly sharp. It could stab into the Demonic python, and was even able to split that giant demon’s head open. It’s definitely something special.” He looked at the small sword in his hand. It was made not of gold or iron, but wood. On its surface were some faint lines of gold that seemed to have some sort of magical properties. Even though it seemed primitive, even just thinking about the wooden flying sword and its incredible sharpness made Meng Hao incredibly excited.

Chapter 25: Sovereign of the Sky

“This treasure must have a special history.” Meng Hao swung the wooden sword, then stabbed it into the ground. It went in easily. Smiling, Meng Hao pulled it out, even happier than before.

Suddenly, he lifted his head, looking surprised. He sensed that the spiritual energy in the Immortal's Cave was suddenly thinner than before. Actually, it seemed to have completely disappeared.

Even though there wasn't originally a huge amount of spiritual energy, for all of it to disappear should not be possible. Spiritual energy was the Qi of heaven and earth, which pulsed through various mountains like great arteries. The Reliance Sect was just such a place. It should be impossible for the spiritual energy to suddenly dry up for no reason.

Curious, Meng Hao stabilized his aura and concentrated, casting his senses about. Suddenly, he looked back at the wooden sword, disbelief covering his face. He had just discovered that all the spiritual energy in the room had been absorbed by the wooden sword.

"The sword... it can absorb spiritual energy?" Meng Hao was shocked. After a moment, he slapped his bag of holding and produced a Spirit Stone. After placing it next to the sword, he watched as the Spirit Stone slowly grew dark over the space of about ten breaths .

He picked the Spirit Stone back up, feeling a bit sad at the loss of a Spirit Stone, but excited at the same time.

"This sword... it truly is a great treasure." He gazed at the sword with a look of determination, then slowly drew it across one of his fingers. With ease, it sliced open a cut. Meng Hao focused on his Cultivation base. Sure enough, he felt the spiritual energy in his body being sucked out continuously through the cut.

He covered his finger, excitement clear in his eyes. Within moments, the wound had healed, and Meng Hao gazed at the sword, laughing foolishly.

"If I used this sword when battling a magic-user, all I would need to do is cut them, and their spiritual energy would be drained away and I could trample over them. Too bad I only have one. If I had two, or ten, or a hundred, then I could drain my opponent's spiritual energy even faster. How astonishing would that be...?" An image appeared in his mind of himself wielding a hundred wooden swords, all stabbing into Wang Tengfei's body.

His journey into the black mountain, and spending all those Spirit Stones, had definitely been worth it.

With that thought, he suddenly took a deep breath and pulled out the copper mirror.

“I wonder how many Spirit Stones...” He hesitated for a moment, but couldn’t stop thinking about how amazing the sword was. He placed it down onto the mirror. As soon as it touched the surface, the mirror flashed, and the sword was sucked inside. Meng Hao had never seen this happen before, and it caused him quite a shock. He tried to grab the mirror to stop it, but was too slow. The wooden sword was gone.

“What’s going on? Dammit, mirror, I went through a lot of painful hardships to get that sword, you, you, you... okay, calm down, calm down.” Panting a bit, he forced himself to grow calm. After considering for some time, he took out a Spirit Stone and placed it onto the mirror. It disappeared.

“Hmm. Has it already started the duplication process?” Meng Hao’s heart thumped, and with an anxious expression, he put in another Spirit Stone. One, two, three... A disheartened expression appeared on his face. The mirror was like a bottomless hole. Before much time had passed, Meng Hao had already put two hundred Spirit Stones into it.

“Dammit, dammit...” He wanted to stop, but refused to get to this point and have nothing to show for it. Also, he knew that if he gave up now, it would essentially mean giving up the mirror’s duplication ability.

He could only endure his frustration and put more Spirit Stones in. Three hundred, four hundred, all the way to one thousand. His face grew pale. His hand shook as he held out another Spirit Stone.

“When will this end, mirror? Are you stealing all the Spirit Stones I just got?” He gritted his teeth. He’d already dropped in one thousand Spirit Stones. He couldn’t give up now. With eyes as bloodshot as a gambling addict, he threw in more Spirit Stones. Finally, when he threw in the two thousandth stone, the mirror began to shine with bright, multicolored light, indicating that the duplication had begun. By this point, Meng Hao was a bit numb. He stared mutely at the multicolored light, which slowly dissipated over a few seconds.

When the light was gone, there were two identical wooden swords on the mirror.

When he saw them, some of the color returned to his face. He picked them up, feeling a mix of emotions from sadness to anger to pain. All he could do was comfort himself.

“It’s okay, no problem,” he muttered to himself through clenched teeth. “What are a couple thousand Spirit Stones worth anyway? Just a trifle. You can’t get something new without giving up

something old. It's worth it to have two of these wooden swords." He spoke the word "trifle" with a bit of bitterness. He quickly put the copper mirror away and looked again at the two wooden swords. He sat there for a while thinking about their power. Slowly, he began to calm down.

Determination once again filled his eyes. After a while, he put the two treasured wooden swords away. As for the second sword, it was worth two thousand Spirit Stones as far as Meng Hao was concerned.

With a bitter laugh, he sat there cross-legged in meditation, waiting for the spiritual energy in the Immortal's Cave to return. Suddenly, his eyes opened, and he retrieved the Demonic Core from his bag of holding.

"Even though I just broke through to the fifth level of Qi Condensation, who knows how much progress my Cultivation base will make if I take this pill..."

With a determined look, he swallowed the Demonic Core and closed his eyes. His body began to vibrate. The Demonic Core dissolved into an incredibly dense flood of spiritual energy which instantly inundated Meng Hao.

The density of this spiritual energy was beyond any medicinal pill Meng Hao had ever consumed. In fact, there was no way to even compare it to anything. The Core exploded with a white brightness, sweeping over Meng Hao's body. Blood sprayed out of his mouth and his body shook. But he held on, and the Core lake grew larger and larger. Moments later, Meng Hao experienced a feeling of boundlessness.

With each pulsing expansion, he felt a severe pain and his body shook even harder. His face grew pale, and he gritted his teeth as hard as he could.

Then, the Core lake began to churn and roil, and an astonishing level of spiritual power began to form. Despite the pain, Meng Hao could sense his Cultivation base expanding from the initial stage of the fifth level to the middle stage. Time passed, although he wasn't sure how much. Accompanied by the thundering of the Core lake, his Cultivation base climbed even higher to the peak of the fifth level.

Then, his head buzzed, and his Cultivation base suddenly broke through the fifth level and entered... the sixth level of Qi Condensation!

And not just the initial stage of the sixth level, it continued to climb to the middle stage of the sixth level. Then it slowly began to stop. The clothes on Meng Hao's body had been reduced to ash. Only the bags of holding remained at his side. Black filth completely covered him, but if you looked closely, you would see that his skin sparkled translucently, as if rays of morning sun emanated from it.

His hair was longer, reaching down to his shoulders, and he was a bit taller. His body no longer seemed frail and weak, but rather tall and slender.

His features were still somewhat swarthy, but his countenance shone with a strength too difficult to describe. It was otherworldly.

His Core lake seethed and churned, filling his entire body. Deep in its recesses, the Demonic Core settled down. For some reason, it didn't dissolve, but rather sat there, unmoving.

If it only just sat there, it would not be anything to think about. But when his Cultivation base reached the sixth level, his head buzzed, and within the buzzing, he felt the indistinct pull of some sort of Legacy. It seemed to be emanating from the Demonic Core, settling onto his mind like a branding iron.

It must be some sort of blood legacy from the Flying Rain-Dragon, left for its weak, young offspring. As it had approached death, it fused the Legacy into its Demonic Core. The Demonic python must have intended to consume it after shedding its skin. And of course, Wang Tengfei, possessing a Blood connection to the Legacy, had lusted for the same thing. Sadly... Meng Hao got it first.

Meng Hao suddenly found himself dreaming. He was flying in the middle of the sky, rebuking the highest heavens, rocking the earth, surrounded by churning winds and clouds. He was the Lord of the heavens, and when the other flying beasts looked at him, they trembled as if they had lost the qualification to fly, and would let him slaughter them.

He was the a sovereign of the sky, Chosen, worshiped by all creatures. It seemed as if it were an ancient age, very long ago.

That feeling of flying in the heavens left Meng Hao feeling almost crazy, almost in love with the feeling. He flew for a long time, and the entire time, a multitude of fierce beasts retreated from him in fear, and countless people on the ground prostrated themselves in worship.

With the wind and earth beneath him, only the heavens could match up to him, but he was their equal.

Then, he reached a lake, and he lowered his head to look at himself. He was a dragon, several tens of thousands of meters long, with two, massive wings, each one also several tens of thousands of meters long. He possessed an indescribable power which could shape the world.

His head was fierce and savage, and he had an incredibly long tail. All of it merged together to form a boundless nobility which created an electric buzz in Meng Hao's mind. His mind seemed to rip open, and a voice rang out.

"I am the Flying Rain-Dragon of ancient times!" It filled his mind, filled the world, and left everything trembling. All the living creatures roared. Flying Rain-Dragons had long since vanished from the earth, but some of its descendants still existed. Although they might be weak, the Legacy still existed.

At that exact moment, on the East Mountain of the Reliance Sect, in his Immortal's Cave, Wang Tengfei's face grew dark. The fury in his heart nearly made him go mad. He had tasted failure, and was having a hard time accepting it. No matter how many times he tried to use the Blood Drop to sense the Legacy or his opponent, nothing happened. He didn't know what was happening.

"Did you find it?" said Wang Tengfei, suppressing the fury in his heart as he lifted his head to look at the young man standing in front of him. It was the other young man who had accompanied him that day in addition to Shangguan Song.

Chapter 26: Bewilderment

"Elder Brother Wang, I secretly checked around and asked quite a few disciples throughout the Sect. I don't think I left anything out." This young man was also famous in the Reliance Sect, but in front of Wang Tengfei, he was completely respectful. He had never seen Wang Tengfei like this, and was a bit hesitant. He had begun speaking with a respectful bow. "I even looked around in the Servants' Quarters and followed up on Zhou Kai, Han Zong and some others. At that time, there were thirty-seven people who weren't present in the Sect. Of those thirty-seven people, I eliminated twenty-nine as suspects. Among the rest, there are six of whom there is no evidence to suggest they were at the black mountain. Only two were definitely there. Meng Hao and Han Zong."

Wang Tengfei looked more and more angry. He raises his hard eyes, which caused the young man's heart to grow cold. He nervously lowered his head.

“Han Zong was also at the black mountain... Meng Hao?” Wang Tengfei frowned. Meng Hao’s name sounded familiar to him.

“Meng Hao is... the person who injured Elder Brother Lu,” the young man said hastily.

Wang Tengfei’s face grew darker, and his heart burned. He had planned for so many years and expended so many resources. For so long, he had taken the whole matter to be concluded before it began. It was his great victory, something he could take back to his clan to refine them. But then, it was snatched away from him. When he thought of the sword, his face twisted in pain. That was his tool to rebuke heaven and earth. And when he thought of the Legacy of the Flying Rain-Dragon, his heart wept.

Before today, he had been fully self-confident, completely assured of his success. Everything belonged to him, that was just his good fortune. Only he was qualified to have such good fortune. Yet he then met an unexpected defeat, a blow he had never imagined he would receive. He found it extremely difficult to accept, as if the heart-rending turn of events had not actually happened.

Breathing deeply, Wang Tengfei opened his mouth to speak, but then suddenly began to tremble as a burning pain arose on his right arm. He lifted up the sleeve and stared at his arm, watching as the Blood Drop slowly disappeared. There was nothing he could do but watch it go away, and after it had left, his beautiful features twisted with fury and defeat. The Legacy was gone. He coughed up some blood.

He knew that at this moment, the person who had snatched away his treasure was now fully connected to the Legacy. He would never again be able to use the Blood Drop to sense anything, because the Legacy had already chosen the other person.

When the young man in front of him saw this happen, he grew frightened. He was about to take a step forward when Wang Tengfei suddenly lifted his head up and shouted, “Beat it!”

His booming voice reverberated, and the young man’s face went white. He had never seen such a succession of different expressions on Wang Tengfei’s face. His body cold, he left.

Within the Immortal’s Cave, Wang Tengfei’s eyes grew red and his mind seethed as he thought of Han Zong and Meng Hao. He could not help but think about the day he had looked down on the Outer Sect ants in the square.

He frowned, his face growing more somber. He thought about how the Blood Drop wasn't able to sense the legacy, and how it had been wiped out by his opponent. Regardless of if it were Han Zong or Meng Hao, neither of them should have been able to do it.

“Just who are you?!” His eyes shot with blood, he slapped his bag of holding and a flash of silver light appeared and coalesced into a silver, octagonal spell device, which floated in front of him.

He stared at it for some time, then determination filled his eyes. This was one of the spell devices he had prepared for one of the mountains surrounding the black mountain. After being used, it needed to regenerate for several hours, whereupon it could be reused.

He had already decided that he would activate the spell device, and even if it injured him, he would cast his senses inside to see who was present that day in the black mountain region.

Looking at the silver spell device in front of him, Wang Tengfei bit his tongue and spit out a bit of blood. As the blood splashed onto the spell device, his fingers flickered in an incantation pattern, and suddenly his head hummed and his awareness flickered. Amidst the indistinct feeling, he was suddenly able to sense several auras emanating out in waves.

“One, two... nine people that I invited to help me, these are their auras...” Wang Tengfei's face grew pale; the spell device in front of him began to quiver, and cracks appeared on its surface. But he didn't give up, and instead continued to cast his senses into it.

A vague outline began to appear in his mind, filled with several dots of light. Ten of the lights were familiar to him, and another one of them belonged to Meng Hao.

In addition to those, there was another light. Wang Tengfei concentrated for a moment, then was certain it was Han Zong. Unfortunately, the spell device could only keep a record of who was in the region of the seven or eight mountains surrounding the black mountain, not their specific location.

Wang Tengfei frowned, and then suddenly noticed that the outline in his head contained... another light!

It was faint, and if he had not looked closely he would have missed it. Without pushing the spell device to the breaking point, to the limits of its power, he wouldn't have been able to sense it.

“This is...” His heart trembled, and he concentrated, but even as he did so, his body shook and he coughed up blood. The spell device shattered. Pieces of it shot out, hitting both him and the walls of the Immortal’s cave.

His face white, he coughed up more blood, looking incredibly afraid. When sensing that last light, his mind had begun to tremble, as if whoever it belonged to could crush him to death with a single thought.

The spell device could only give him an approximate feeling regarding aura level, not the target’s Cultivation base. But for the aura level to cause such a reaction left him frightened beyond belief.

“Who was that?!” said Wang Tengfei, shaking. His fear left him certain that this fearsome person was definitely the one who could so easily rip away his Blood Spot sense.

His heart cold, he lifted his head and breathed deeply. After some time passed, he had recovered his senses. But the memory of that faint light pressed down on him with the weight of a mountain.

“How did this person know about the black mountain affair...? Could it be that they have been following me in my search...? Who was it...?”

Time passed, and eventually the dream ended. Meng Hao opened his eyes, unsure how many days had passed, nor of how his Cultivation base had changed. He felt as if he had been dreaming for a very long time.

When the dream concluded, Meng Hao felt as if he had more memories than before, memories that were vague and ancient, and couldn’t be recalled. But that thirst to fly in the sky still flickered powerfully in his mind.

He felt certain that if one day he could really fly through the sky, then the memories in his head would become clear.

After some time passed, Meng Hao took a breath, his vision slowly returning to normal. As his senses returned, he felt his Cultivation base, then stopped, dumbfounded.

“The sixth level of Qi Condensation?” His eyes glittered fiercely, and after thoroughly examining his Cultivation base, he nearly went mad with joy. He sensed the majestic Core lake, and the Demonic Core floating within, and an amazing feeling began to overcome him.

“I actually reached... the sixth level of Qi Condensation!” He shook as he stood up, then laughed heartily. His laughter echoed throughout the Immortal’s cave.

Excitedly, he sat back down cross-legged, closing his eyes and casting his senses about. It seemed as if he could feel everything around him in complete detail. In fact, he suddenly heard Fatty’s voice outside.

“Meng Hao, you were cursed with ill luck. You took the pill, but I didn’t want that to hurt you. Please don’t come haunt me...

“Poor old Master Fatty, I’m actually more cursed than you. Did you know that our business is gone? It was stolen away.” Fatty squatted outside the Immortal’s cave in front of a small fire, his face pained as he burned yellow paper money.

“Meng Hao, when you become a spirit, you have to come back and help me. Look at how much paper I’m burning for you.” Tears streamed down his face as he continued to burn the paper money, weeping and wailing.

“You come from a poor family, but don’t worry; I, Master Fatty, am here to take care of you. I’ll come burn paper for you every day so that in the next life you’ll be able to buy a house and get a wife. You’ll finally achieve your goal of being rich.

“Oh, Meng Hao, how could you leave like this...” Fatty’s wails grew even louder, as if he were completely heartbroken.

Upon hearing this, a strange expression appeared on Meng Hao’s face. He opened his eyes. This was the first time anyone had ever burned yellow paper for him, and he wasn’t sure whether to laugh or cry. He stood and pushed the main door open with a long creak, then walked out.

As soon as he stepped out, Fatty’s loud wails suddenly ceased, and he looked up in astonishment. He straightened, his eyes filled with fear. Then he recognized Meng Hao, and he leaped up, gaping.

Meng Hao looked at Fatty with a strange expression, then gave a light cough and walked over to the nearby stream and began to clean himself off. He had never been so dirty in his entire life. After cleaning off, he put on a fresh green robe, then used a flying sword to trim his hair. Now he felt, and looked, like his old self. He turned and smiled at Fatty.

Chapter 27: The Wind Stirs Again

Fatty stared at Meng Hao, tears streaming down his face. He rushed forward, bawling.

“You’re not dead. Meng Hao, you’re not dead!” cried Fatty as he hugged Meng Hao. “I was so scared these past few days. Everyone said that you had died, and I was so sad. You’re my only friend. What would I do if you died?”

“I thought of fleeing the Sect. I even lost interest in filing my teeth. But if I left, how could I get revenge for you? So I didn’t leave. I swear that I will find a way to help you get vengeance...”

Fatty looked with warm sincerity at Meng Hao, and after speaking for a bit, his tears began to dry up. The two of them sat next to the stream and Meng Hao told him about all the things that had happened in the black mountain, leaving out, of course, the matters regarding the Flying Rain-Dragon and Wang Tengfei. Fatty listened anxiously, and when he heard that Meng Hao had reached the sixth level of Qi Condensation, he gasped, stupefied.

“The sixth level of Qi Condensation...” Fatty looked extremely excited. “Holy crap, you’ve, you’ve... you’ve reached the sixth level of Qi Condensation! The year Elder Sister Xu brought us here, she was at the seventh level. Meng Hao, you really are an Immortal! Can you fly?”

“Fly...” Meng Hao closed his eyes, visualizing the descriptions of the Wind Walking technique from the Qi Condensation manual. It would naturally be easier to perform the technique at the sixth level than at the fifth, but after trying several times, the best he could do was float in the air for a moment before dropping down. Muttering, he continued to try for a while, then took a medicinal pill. Finally, he was able to suspend himself about five inches in the air. Fatty looked on with wide eyes.

Meng Hao suddenly opened his eyes, and they shone brightly. He stood up, then made several laps around the area, moving like the wind. Fatty watched on, breathing heavily.

After moving around like this a few times, Meng Hao began to grow more accustomed to the technique. He slapped his bag of holding and with a flash, a flying sword appeared. It moved down to his feet, and then he shot into the air. Fatty looked shocked, as if he couldn’t believe what he was seeing.

“You’re flying...” he murmured.

Meng Hao felt incredibly excited. The wind blew against his face as he used the Wind Walking technique to fly with the sword. After about thirty breaths, he began to feel unstable, then started to lose his balance. As his happened, Meng Hao’s mind suddenly shook, and a mnemonic appeared in his head.

The mnemonic didn’t consist of words, and was fantastically mysterious. It appeared in his mind like an instinct, and as it did, the spiritual energy in his body suddenly began to circulate. He waved his right hand unconsciously, almost like the flapping of a wing. Suddenly, a Wind Blade appeared in front of him!

When the Wind Blade appeared, the flying sword underneath his feet quivered. The Wind Blade shot forward into the jungle, and three lines of trees were instantly sliced in half. A rumbling sound reverberated throughout the vegetation, and Meng Hao tumbled onto the ground.

Fatty was thoroughly astonished, and it took him a while to recover his senses. His face flushed, he looked at Meng Hao with reverence in his eyes.

“You really did it! If I stick with you, who would dare to bully me? And who would dare to mess with our business!” Thinking about this, Fatty suddenly laughed out loud.

Meng Hao closed his eyes and thought excitedly about the Wind Blade. He was intelligent, and realised that it most likely had something to do with the strange dream and the Demonic Core. The mnemonic which had appeared in his head was also connected to the Demonic Core. Suddenly, the shadow of the Winged Rain-Dragon appeared in the Core lake. Meng Hao wanted to give voice to the feelings he felt regarding the Dragon and being a sovereign of the sky, but try as he might, he could not.

“Oh right,” said Fatty, suddenly recalling something. “Special promotion training is beginning in a few days. I heard that there’s a month-long period in which you can sign up. You should join! You’ll definitely be accepted. Then you could be the Reliance Sect’s third Inner Sect disciple! You’ll be super famous!”

“Special promotion training?” Meng Hao looked surprised. He had heard about it before, but back then, his Cultivation base had been too low, so he hadn’t even considered it. But things were different now. In the entire Reliance Sect, there were only three people at the sixth level of Qi

Condensation, including himself. The others were Wang Tengfei and Han Zong. Han Zong had been stuck at the fifth level of Qi Condensation for a long time, but had recently broken through to the sixth.

“I heard that they’re only going to accept one disciple, and everyone is saying that the training was set up specifically for Wang Tengfei. But now you’re at the sixth level, you might be able to succeed.” Fatty really wanted Meng Hao to agree. If he became an Inner Sect disciple, he would easily be able to become a big shot in the Reliance Sect.

Meng Hao hesitated, unsure of what he really wanted to do. He was excited about the prospect, knowing that being an Inner Sect disciple would be different than being in the Outer Sect. After becoming a member of the Inner Sect, no one would be quick to offend him, not even Sect elders. Furthermore, there would be more opportunities for Spirit Stones and medicinal pills. But this was an important matter, and Meng Hao’s Cultivation base had developed quite rapidly. He needed to consider what others might think, or conjecture. If he attracted too much attention, his losses might outweigh his gains.

He had been a member of the Reliance Sect for almost two years now, and had developed a deep understanding of the phrase “the law of the jungle.” He also knew not to advertise his wealth. And yet, he hadn’t decided not to participate either. Maybe he would go. Although, after everything that had happened in the black mountain, his treasures and medicinal pills were almost completely used up. He would need to restock.

He could not help but think wistfully about the two thousand Spirit Stones.

Twenty days flashed by, and the registration period for the special promotion training was almost over. Not many had signed up. According to Sect Rules, upon registering, one could not leave the main square, but was required to sit in meditation beneath the dragon-carved pillars. No one was allowed to disturb the registrants, either.

Actually, the so-called training was in fact a contest of battle magic. It was said that years ago, the participants went out into the wilds to search for treasures, but with the Reliance Sect in decline, the only way to select who to promote to the Inner Sect was to see who would be victorious with their battle magic.

During that twenty day period, Meng Hao took a trip to the High-Level Public zone, but it was completely empty. Considering the Reliance Sect’s decline, Meng Hao could understand why. Once again, he opened up shop outside the Low-Level Public zone.

His return caused quite a big stir, and no one dared to interfere with the business. In fact, during the twenty days, business boomed and he earned quite a few Spirit Stones. Almost every day he was able to duplicated magical items and medicinal pills, which he slowly built up into a new stockpile.

Even though all the magical items and flying swords in his bag of holding were ordinary in nature, he already had nearly a hundred. Thinking back to his fight with Lu Hong, and the events in the black mountain, he now clearly understood the best methods to engage in magical combat. After pondering about this for a while, his eyes glittered. He had just come up with an idea to increase the effectiveness of all his flying swords.

Other than managing the business, most of the remainder of Meng Hao's time was spent researching this method of increasing the power of his flying swords. He performed various tests and eventually came up with a few new techniques, ways to control more swords at the same time. One of the things he did was change the appearance of various swords to disguise them. Some he purposely scratched and marked up, some he broke the tips off of, and some he painted various colors.

The rest of his time was spent attempting to connect his thoughts to those of a sovereign of the sky, the Flying Rain-Dragon. Even though he never succeeded, he found that his Wind Walking technique improved significantly, bringing him gradually closer to the sky.

Time whizzed by and now only two days remained of the registration period for the special promotion training. Meng Hao currently sat at his stall by the Low-Level Public Zone, watching Fatty inside, hawking wares with deep fervor. Suddenly, he turned his head and looked off into the distance. Far down the mountain, he caught sight of someone walked toward him. Every step carried him forward several meters, so he arrived at the plateau very quickly. He appeared to be twenty-seven or twenty-eight years old and looked proud and lofty. In front of him, a long strip of yellow paper floated in the air, upon which was written various magical figures. Wisps of black smoke emanated from its surface, curling up and around the young man.

"A talismanan..." Meng Hao's eyes flickered as he examined it. He had read about this type of yellow paper in the Qi Condensation manual. It was a powerful magical item which could be used a limited number of times.

The approaching young man was none other than the second most powerful person in the Outer Sect, Han Zong, who was at the sixth level of Qi Condensation. As soon as he appeared, it caused quite a commotion on the plateau as everyone greeting him with cupped fists.

"Meng Hao," he said coldly, ignoring everyone else and staring at Meng Hao. "Master Uncle Shangguan has a matter he wishes to discuss with you. Please come with me to see him."

Meng Hao frowned. Master Uncle Shangguan was no stranger. Whether it was his presence during Individual Pill Distribution or his participation with Wang Tengfei in fighting the Demonic Python, it was clear that he was no ordinary individual.

“What could he want with me?” thought Meng Hao, slowly standing up. “Did he sense something about me?” He knew that the man was one of the Sect’s elder generation. Since he was of the Outer Sect, he could not refuse to comply. If he did, then it would look suspicious.

Muttering, Meng Hao looked at cold-faced Han Zong. He had assumed that if the truth about events that day were revealed, Wang Tengfei would be the first one to come looking for him. Could this summons have something to do with that affair?

Meng Hao’s face was calm, but his head spun and he laughed coldly to himself. With a seemingly casual glance at Fatty, he walked forward.

Moving along with Han Zong, they soon reached the West Mountain. At its peak, the spiritual energy was especially thick. Meng Hao caught sight of an exquisite residence, inside of which a group of young boys were planting Spirit Grass.

Soon they came to a stop in front of a three-story building. Han Zong looked at Meng Hao, and then the voice of Shangguan Xiu boomed out from inside.

“Come in, Meng Hao. Han Zong, you head to the South Mountain.” A jade slip suddenly flew out into Han Zong’s hand. He looked at Meng Hao with a cold laugh, then turned and left.

Meng Hao’s heart began to thump. This didn’t seem right. Shangguan Xiu gave Han Zong a jade slip and sent him to the South Mountain...

Chapter 28: Shangguan Xiu

Time did not permit Meng Hao to spend time thinking. The door to the building swung open silently. Inside was pitch black and emanated a sinister air.

“You still haven’t entered,” said Shangguan Xiu, his voice cold. Meng Hao hesitated, then, eyes flickering dimly, realised that he couldn’t retreat. After thinking about it for a moment, his nervousness grew. He stepped forward into the building.

Inside, rays of light gradually appeared which, though dim, revealed the surroundings. Shangguan Xiu sat there in his golden robe, expressionless, eyes cold as he watched Meng Hao enter.

Almost as soon as he stepped a foot inside, Shangguan Xiu's eyes suddenly flickered, and he raised his right hand. A needle shot out, stabbed Meng Hao's finger, then flew back in an instant. All his bags of holding flew away from him too, completely beyond his control, to land in front of Shangguan Xiu.

Some blood remained on the flying needle, which Shangguan Xiu licked.

"There's no trace of precious materials..." Shangguan Xiu frowned. His gaze swept over Meng Hao as if he could see all the secrets he kept. The Demonic Core within Meng Hao stirred, and he did his best to conceal this from Shangguan Xiu.

Meng Hao's face fell, revealing a terrified expression. He opened his mouth but didn't seem to know what to say.

With another frown, Shangguan Xiu opened one of Meng Hao's bags of holding. He rummaged around a bit, not even glancing at the large quantity of flying swords. It seemed as if he didn't even notice the copper mirror. After finding nothing unusual, his frown deepened.

"Master Uncle Shangguan, what... what are you looking for?" His face was covered with terror, but inside he laughed coldly. He had long since made preparations for such an event. The wooden sword, along with most of his Spirit Stones and medicinal pills, were in Fatty's safe keeping, hidden away.

"Let me ask you," said Shangguan Xiu, his gaze falling like lightning upon Meng Hao, "How did your Cultivation base progress so rapidly?"

"Elder Sister Xu and Grand Elder Ouyang have been watching out for me," he replied, beginning to tremble. "They gave me some medicinal pills..." He pretended to force himself to try to be calm, but inside he wasn't worried. It didn't seem he had been asked here because of what had happened with Wang Tengfei, but rather because of his rapid progress in Cultivation.

Shangguan Xiu frowned again. He obviously knew that Grand Elder Ouyang had taken a liking to Meng Hao, otherwise he would not have been so mild in his inquiries.

Just then, Han Zong's voice drifted in from outside.

"Reporting back to Master Uncle Shangguan. Meng Hao's Immortal's Cave is empty."

"You may leave," replied Shangguan Xiu. He sat in contemplation for a moment as Han Zong departed. He stared wordlessly at Meng Hao.

Time gradually passed, and soon it was evening. Meng Hao's countenance grew more and more nervous and filled with fear. Finally, he spoke, trembling: "Master Uncle..."

"Very well, you may go," said Shangguan Xiu with a wave of his hand. He looked irritated.

Meng Hao stood, saluted with cupped fists, and left, feeling relieved. After reaching the bottom of the mountain, his speed increased as he raced toward the South Mountain.

As Meng Hao left, Shangguan Xiu's expression changed. He lifted up the silver needle and examined it carefully, licking more blood off of it. His eyes glittered.

"Something's not right. This blood has large amounts low-level Demonic Core aura. I didn't notice it before because I was concentrating on Grand Elder Ouyang's potential influence. But now that the blood has dried, it's clear. He must have consumed hundreds of Demonic Cores. Where could he possibly get his hands on so many? This Meng Hao must be keeping some secret." Killing intent filled Shangguan Xiu's eyes, and his body leaped into the air in pursuit of Meng Hao.

Meng Hao sped along at high speed, feeling relieved, but also jumpy. He arrived outside the South Mountain Immortal's Cave, and as he approached, he saw Fatty stick his head out of the trees in the distance. Catching sight of Meng Hao, he ran over.

"I was scared to death," said Fatty, letting out a relieved sigh. "Meng Hao, you were gone the whole afternoon..." He took out the bag of holding Meng Hao had given him. "Thankfully no one noticed that I kept this hidden away."

With a dignified expression, Meng Hao nodded and accepted the bag of holding. And yet, as soon as he laid hands on it, a whistling scream could be heard some distance away. A beam of prismatic

light seemed to be approaching, within which could be seen an old man wearing a golden robe. It was none other than Shangguan Xiu.

He was flying! Only Cultivators who had reached Foundation Establishment could fly. With the assistance of magical items, one could glide for a bit, like Elder Sister Xu, but this was not true flight.

Seeing this, Meng Hao's heart shook. He watched his opponent flying down from the top of the mountain. He moved with a speed similar to Meng Hao's when he borrowed momentum from flying swords.

Shangguan Xiu immediately caught sight of Fatty handing the bag of holding over to Meng Hao, and his eyes flashed. Without a word, he shot toward Meng Hao, certain that he would be able to grab him. Today, he would learn Meng Hao's secret. Perhaps this secret would be of great assistance to himself.

Meng Hao's expression changed, and his emotions spun. But the situation was urgent, and he didn't have time to think. He put away the bag of holding and grabbed Fatty. Then he leaped up, and a flying sword circulated around him to land underneath his feet. He shot off into the distance.

It happened so fast that Shangguan Xiu's pupils constricted. He let out a cold snort and flew off in pursuit.

Fatty was so scared that his face was white. But he didn't move, afraid that he might distract Meng Hao. He trusted that Meng Hao would not abandon him.

Actually, this was very true. Meng Hao was not that type of person. He knew that if he dropped Fatty, he might be able to move a bit faster. But he also knew that Shangguan Xiu would then vent his wrath on Fatty.

"Dammit. To this guy, Outer Sect disciples are like ants, only Inner Sect disciples are true Cultivators of the Reliance Sect."

Gnashing his teeth, he looked back at Shangguan Xiu, who was getting closer and closer. At the same time, Meng Hao was dropping closer and closer to the ground. He wouldn't be able to keep going much longer. He pushed forward as fast as possible, sweat breaking out on his forehead, his mind racing. He saw the Outer Sect up ahead, and suddenly he had a flash of inspiration. He knew what to do.

His eyes shining, he leaped down to the ground, dashing into the Outer Sect. Then, regardless of the effect on his Cultivation base, he gritted his teeth and once again leaped onto a flying sword. A whistling scream reverberated out, causing nearby Outer Sect disciples to crane their necks, dumbstruck.

Shangguan Xiu's face grew dark. With a flick of a sleeve, he darted straight toward Meng Hao. The distance between the two grew closer and closer. When it reached roughly thirty meters, Shangguan Xiu's face suddenly changed as he realized where Meng Hao was heading. By then, it was too late to stop him.

Meng Hao approached the Outer Sect square, with its dragon-carved columns. On the tall platform, Grand Elder Ouyang sat in meditation. Beneath him in the square, Wang Tengfei also sat cross-legged, meditating.

This was the registration location for the special promotion training!

"I want to sign up!" cried Meng Hao as soon as he entered the square.

"Me too!" shouted Fatty, the blood draining from his face.

Shangguan Xiu stopped in his tracks, just outside the square. Murder filled his eyes, but it quickly disappeared, replaced with a genial smile. Grand Elder Ouyang had opened his eyes. He looked at Meng Hao, surprised by his Cultivation base. He gave Meng Hao a look of praise.

Wang Tengfei also opened his eyes, seemingly completely uninterested in Meng Hao.

"Now that you have signed up," said Grand Elder Ouyang coolly, "you must remain confined to this area. Training begins in two days." His gaze swept over Shangguan Xiu, whose heart subsequently sank. Making his smile look even more amiable, he looked at Meng Hao, false praise in his eyes.

Meng Hao looked back at him, and when their gazes met Shangguan Xiu's fury boiled. He could do nothing about it, though, so after a long moment he laughed and walked off.

Not much time passed before Han Zong strode up. He entered the square, glaring at Meng Hao. With a sneering laugh, he declared that he was registering.

As he walked past Meng Hao, he whispered, "You offended Shangguan Xiu. I dare you to stay here! The Inner Sect training is where you will reap death."

Meng Hao's eyes flashed as he stared coldly at Han Zong's retreating back.

After that, the deadline for registration approached. Before Meng Hao had arrived, only Wang Tengfei had signed up. Then Han Zong arrived. Now, four more people entered the square.

They were no strangers to Meng Hao. Yin Tianlong and Zhou Kai were present. The other two each appeared to over thirty years of age. One of them was tall and stalwart, the other skinny and frail, with hideous scars on his face. Both emanated desolate auras of death. These were the other two members of the Sect who were of the fifth level of Qi condensation.

The four of them entered the square, casting dark looks toward Meng Hao and Fatty. The aggressive killing intent in their eyes was impossible to conceal.

Fatty started to get nervous, and Meng Hao narrowed his eyes. Now he knew the power of Shangguan Xiu's influence.

Time passed slowly, and soon two days had passed. Now, only one hour remained until the registration period was over. The square was already surrounded by numerous Outer Sect disciples. They hadn't come to sign up, but to watch the Inner Sect special promotion training, to maybe learn something, and to watch Wang Tengfei in all his glory.

Of course, there were eight people in the square, including Fatty, with his low Cultivation base.

Even as the sound of discussions buzzed, the time limit was reached. The sound of bells filled the entire Reliance Sect. They rang in succession, nine times, after which Grand Elder Ouyang opened his eyes and looked out at the eight people before him. He flicked his wide sleeve, and the large platform glowed with many colors then expanded outward until it encompassed a diameter of roughly three hundred meters.

He waved his right hand again, and eight jade slips flew out, toward each of the eight people. When the slips descended in front of each of them, they could see that numbers were inscribed onto their surfaces, from one to eight.

“Forfeiting before a battle is prohibited,” said Grand Elder Ouyang coolly. “In the competition for promotion to the Inner Sect, life and death are predestined. If, after stepping onto the platform, you feel you cannot win, you may admit defeat. First match, numbers one and eight.” Wang Tengfei opened his eyes, and raised up his jade slip, upon which was written ‘one.’ He stood and floated up to stand on the platform. The wind gently lifted his long hair. Clad in his snow-white robe, he looked perfect, beautiful, gentle and refined. He smiled. This caused all the surrounding Cultivators to let out a cheer. What none of them could see, however, was that beneath Wang Tengfei’s smile was concealed the bitter pain of loss and defeat.

At that moment, Shangguan Xiu appeared in the crowd, glaring menacingly at Meng Hao.

Chapter 29: Inner Sect Training

Yin Tianlong’s face fell as he looked at the character ‘eight’ on the jade slip in front of him. Hands behind his back, he used his Wind Walking technique to float up onto the platform.

The moment his feet touched down, Wang Tengfei lifted his right foot, and suddenly the entire platform began to vibrate with a loud hum, as if some sort of blast was accumulating from all corners. Wang Tengfei didn’t move, but the massive invisible force shot toward Yin Tianlong.

When he saw this, Yin Tianlong’s face changed. Wang Tengfei had not even moved, yet the massive pressure bearing down on Yin Tianlong was already making it difficult for him to circulate his spiritual energy.

“I admit defeat...” he said immediately and without hesitation. Apparently, he didn’t want to hear any comments about his decision. Saluting deeply with cupped hands, he leaped off the platform and left the square.

Grand Elder Ouyang remained expressionless. Slowly, he spoke again: “Wang Tengfei is victorious. Second match: numbers two and seven.”

As soon as the words were out of his mouth, Fatty looked at the character ‘two’ written on his jade slip and began to tremble. At the same time, the scar-faced Cultivator of the fifth level of Qi Condensation glared coldly at him, then stepped onto the platform.

“Just walk up and then admit defeat,” Meng Hao said to him in a low voice, pushing him forward. Fatty’s ball-like body flew up onto the platform.

As soon as he landed, he immediately said: “Admit defeat...” He dared not speak three words, only two, and yet the scar-faced Cultivator’s eyes flickered with murderous intent. Before Fatty could finish speaking, he lifted up his hand. A flying sword shot screaming toward Fatty at incredible speed. By the time Fatty said ‘admit,’ it was two meters from his throat.

By the time it was obvious what was happening, it was too late. Meng Hao’s face changed and he shot to his feet. At the same time, Grand Elder Ouyang flicked an object out with his fingers. Right before the flying sword penetrated Fatty’s throat, a ringing sound could be heard and the sword flew away. Fatty was left with a small nick on his neck.

Fatty took a step back, his face pale. Then he jumped down and returned to Meng Hao, so scared that his legs were like rubber. He had never before experienced the closeness of death in such a way.

Meng Hao looked at the line of blood on Fatty’s neck, and a murderous look appeared in his eyes. His opponent had attacked with extreme ruthlessness and an obvious desire to kill. Were Meng Hao his opponent that would have been fine, but Fatty’s Cultivation base was too low. To attack him in such a way was going too far.

Looking around, Meng Hao caught sight of Shangguan Xiu standing in the distance, his grim face filled with murder. Flames of fury burst out in Meng Hao’s heart. He had never done anything to offend Master Uncle Shangguan; Master Uncle Shangguan was the aggressor, the one who attacked with deadly force.

In all his years in the Reliance Sect, Meng Hao had never revealed an intense desire to kill. But now, his eyes shone with clear killing intent.

What had just happened was so obviously fishy that even the surrounding Cultivators could tell. One after another, they began to look at Meng Hao. Discussions broke out.

“Next match, numbers three and six,” said Grand Elder Ouyang with a frown.

Han Zong stood, the number three jade slip in his hand. As he walked past Meng Hao, he whispered, “You offended Master Uncle Shangguan. You won’t be the only one to die today. Your friend will die too.” You could say that other than a Grand Elder, Shangguan Xiu was the most powerful and influential member of the Sect.

Because of the decline of the Reliance Sect, its numbers were few. The chaos of the Sect rules, and mutual slaughter among the Outer Sect disciples, all of this, was because the Reliance Sect was at the end of an era, and just wasn't like it used to be.

There were fewer medicinal pills, so how could they be distributed fairly... There were not many Spirit Condensation Pills, so of course they became objects of deadly struggle between the disciples who wished to consume them.

So, let there be chaos. Every man for himself. Whether it be members of the first level of Qi Condensation or the fifth, let chaos rule, and death. There was no fairness here; life and death were determined by destiny. There were no sermons, no one giving instruction on how to practice cultivation. There was only the Qi Condensation manual. Whether you were a worm or a dragon, you could only rely on your luck. If you succeeded, you lived. If you failed, you died. If you were tough, you survived. If you were weak, you didn't.

Whoever could kill their way to the end of the path would become an Inner Sect disciple, and then be a true member of the Reliance Sect and Elder Ouyang's true student.

In the past, Sect Leader He Luohua had been focused on making the Sect more powerful. But weighed down by the pressures of reality, he had completely exhausted himself, and had long since hidden away in seclusion. Grand Elder Ouyang had a soft personality, and as far as his Cultivation went, he was in his later years of longevity, with not much time left. Therefore, he didn't have much energy to spend time on the Sect.

Among the Inner Sect disciples, Elder Sister Xu was usually in secluded meditation. With her cold personality, she didn't pay much attention to Sect affairs. Elder Brother Chen was primarily focused on the Dao, and didn't participate in Sect matters. Circumstances as such, only Shangguan Xiu remained.

His Cultivation base was at the ninth level of Qi Condensation, and he was over ninety years of age. He had served the Sect well, and could not help but become the Master Uncle to the disciples of the Sect. But the Sect was in decline. Were this some other Sect, considering he was still in the Qi Condensation stage, he would never be called Master Uncle.

Meng Hao watched Han Zong as he flashed up onto the platform. His opponent was Zhou Kai, and it seemed this would be no life and death battle. Zhou Kai immediately admitted defeat, and the match was over.

The last match of the first round had arrived. Meng Hao stood and flew up onto the platform. His opponent was the tall, strong man who had a Qi Condensation of the fifth level. His aura radiated murder, and from the look of him, he had experienced many bloody battles.

He looked at Meng Hao and growled, running straight toward him, his body expanding. He raised his hand, and instantly, a shining battle-ax appeared. This was clearly no ordinary object.

His face dark, Meng Hao slapped his bag of holding. A swift, sharp flying sword appeared and shot forward. But by the time it was about two meters away from the big man, a soft shield appeared, blocking the flying sword.

“You’re gonna die today!” said the big man with a hideous grin. Before coming to the training, Shangguan Xiu had given him a magical item. Even if Meng Hao’s Cultivation base was a bit higher than his, he didn’t have anything to worry about.

“Boom,” said Meng Hao coolly, his facial expression the same as ever. The flying sword exploded with a bang, sending the big man flying backwards. The shield in front of him flickered, preventing him from being injured.

Laughing, he charged again. But Meng Hao was faster. He dashed forward, slapping his bag of holding. Two flying swords appeared, shot forward and then exploded. The blast reverberated, and the shield bent. The big man’s face changed, and before he could even react, four more flying sword shot forth. A massive explosion rang out, and the shield was ripped to pieces. The attack stabbed through, directly into the big man’s chest. He let out a miserable cry and spat out a mouthful of blood.

Before his body could hit the ground, another flying sword shot forth from Meng Hao, glittering as it stabbed into the man’s throat. He fell twitching to the ground in a pool of blood, dead.

Since entering the Sect, Meng Hao had not killed very many people. But this time he had slain the man with vicious ruthlessness. He floated down from the platform, giving Han Zong a cold glance.

“Next, you die,” he said, sitting down cross-legged and closing his eyes.

Han Zong’s pupils constricted and his killing intent grew stronger.

A buzz of discussion rose from the surrounding Cultivators as they recovered from watching the scene. They had been shaken by its bloodiness.

“Meng Hao is victorious. The first match of round two is Wang Tengfei and Xu Ge.” Grand Elder Ouyang’s voice was cool, as if he hadn’t even noticed the reek of blood in the air.

Xu Ge was the Cultivator who had tried to kill Fatty moments ago. As soon as he stepped foot on the platform, he admitted defeat. Giving Wang Tengfei a respectful salute, he turned and left the square as quickly as possible.

At this point, everyone could see that be it Han Zong or the four Cultivators of the fifth level, their goal was not to be promoted, but rather to kill Meng Hao.

“Match two, Meng Hao and Han Zong.” Grand Elder Ouyang looked intently at Meng Hao, and as soon as he finished speaking, silence prevailed. Everyone stared at Meng Hao and Han Zong.

Meng Hao looked as somber as ever as he stepped onto the platform. Han Zong arrived at almost exactly the same time. No introductory remarks were necessary. They both attacked at the same time.

A thunderous sound rang out as three flying swords appeared, circling around Meng Hao. A shield appeared, revolving around Han Zong, and in front of him appeared a glowing, five-colored banner. It instantly swept toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao said nothing. As the five-colored banner approached, he didn’t retreat. He lifted his left hand, and instantly, a fifteen-meter long Flame Serpent appeared. It roared and flew forward. The Flame Serpent didn’t appear to be just a snake, but more like a python. Blistering heat radiated out from it as it flew.

At the same time, Meng Hao’s right hand slapped his bag of holding; six flying swords appeared and shot forward.

Han Zong laughed coldly, his eyes shining with murderous intent. He took a step forward, then slapped his left hand onto the ground. When he stood, a deep rumble could be heard, and the entire platform began to shake. In front of him suddenly appeared a Stone Golem, approximately three meters tall. With a roar, the Stone Golem charged forward at incredible speed. When it slammed into the Flame Serpent, a massive explosion thundered across the platform.

Amidst the roar, the five-colored banner shot forward, approaching Meng Hao's flying swords. Han Zong's eyes glittered brightly.

"Five Radiances Art!"

As soon as the words were out of Han Zong's mouth, the five-colored banner suddenly shook, and then began to shine brightly in all directions. A two-colored stream of mist shot out from it, transforming into two Spirit creatures, who charged toward Meng Hao with shrill screams. The second of the two Mist Spirits was only partly visible; obviously because of his Cultivation base level, Han Zong was limited in his ability to use this art.

As soon as the two-colored Mist Spirits appeared, the surrounding Cultivators cried out in astonishment.

"That's Master Uncle Shangguan's consummate Five Radiances Art! They say it's one of the most powerful arts for Sect members who haven't Perfected their Foundations. Brother Han Zong can only summon two of the colors!"

"So Han Zong can use this art! Yeah, it must be because of that banner. Could it be a magic item provided by Master Uncle Shangguan?"

Emitting shrill, ear-piercing cries, the two-colored Mist Spirits shot toward Meng Hao with irresistible force. The moment his six flying swords touched them, the swords shattered into pieces.

Chapter 30: Kill Han Zong, Battle Wang Tengfei!

Standing in the square beneath the platform, Shangguan Xiu's lips twisted with a grim smile. He didn't care at all whether Meng Hao lived or died. He only wanted the treasures within in Meng Hao's bag of holding.

After Meng Hao had registered for the Inner Sect promotion training, he had gone to find Zhou and Yin to inquire after the events which had occurred in the black mountain. He knew that Meng Hao had provoked masses of Demonic beasts with some supposed Demonic magic.

Shangguan Xiu was convinced that it was no Demonic magic, but rather a magical treasure.

Meng Hao's eyes narrowed. He watched the two-colored Mist Spirits approaching. He raised his left hand and waved it in front of him. An invisible Wind Blade appeared and shot toward the Mist Spirits at high speed.

At the same time, Meng Hao quickly swallowed a handful of Demonic Cores, then slapped his bag of holding and flicked his sleeve. A stream of sword auras flew from the bag. In the blink of an eye, twenty had appeared, filling the air. It was quite shocking. The swords also shot toward the two-colored Mist Spirits.

Many of the flying swords appeared to be in bad condition or of different colors.

Upon seeing this, the surrounding Cultivators gasped with astonishment, but before they could even begin to discuss the matter amongst themselves, the Wind Blade reached the Mist Spirits, and a bang rang out. The Mist Spirits vibrated. Then, the flying swords hit, and two miserable shrieks could be heard. The two-colored Mist Spirits were extraordinary, but there were just too many swords.

The Mist Spirits were torn to pieces, and the swords continued on to slash into the five-colored banner. A massive explosion occurred and the banner disintegrated, along with about half of the swords. Han Zong watched on, stupefied. Meng Hao slapped his bag of holding, swallowing another Demonic Core and produced ten more flying swords, which shot forward.

Han Zong had never imagined Meng Hao would have so many flying swords. He retreated backwards, waving his right hand. A shining, two-layered shield appeared around him. But he was still concerned. The hairs on his body stood on end, and his skin felt numb. He knew that life and death hung in the balance here. His right hand moved again, and a jade pendant appeared in front of him, adding another layer of shielding around him. With three shields in place, he felt a bit better.

Then, the sword rain descended. Sword auras flashed ceaselessly. They slammed over and over into the first shield layer, and it shattered almost immediately. Shortly after that, the second shield layer broke into pieces, unable to withstand the sword rain.

"How can he have so many flying swords!?" Han Zong's pupils constricted, and he looked terrified. He retreated further.

In the blink of an eye, the third shield fell apart, and the jade pendant split into pieces, unable to hold up against the multitude of swords. And then the sword rain descended upon Han Zong, and he screamed. Sword after sword stabbed into him. They lifted his corpse up into the air, then slammed it back down onto the platform. He twitched a few times, then rattled out his final breath. He had so

many swords sticking into him that he looked like a hedgehog. Everyone watching gasped, their faces filled with astonishment.

“How... how.. how can there be so many flying swords!?”

“So many flying swords, no wonder he owns a shop. A few days ago I saw him sell at least ten! He hasn’t just been selling medicinal pills, recently. He’s also been selling magical items.”

“Meng Hao must have had some sort of windfall. His Cultivation base has grown incredibly fast. Maybe he obtained a bunch of treasures in some sort of adventure.” The buzz of discussion filled the air, and as it did, Shangguan Xiu frowned, his face dark.

Meng Hao stood on the platform, face pale. He still had some spiritual energy left. His attacks, especially the last one involved twenty flying swords, had quickly drained him. He was only at the sixth level of Qi Condensation, after all. Fortunately, he had been consuming Demonic Cores throughout the battle to replenish himself. This made his attacks even more effective. Meng Hao had invented this fighting method himself, and was quite familiar with it, having practiced it often.

He waved his right hand, and the swords lifted up from Han Zong’s body and returned to him, dripping blood along the way. They circled around his body before returning to his bag of holding.

He descended from the platform and sat down cross-legged next to Fatty. He popped a Demonic Core into his mouth and felt it dissolve. He didn’t care if people saw him consuming so many. As far as they were concerned, after the affair at the black mountain, he should have been able to acquire quite a few Demonic Cores.

Furthermore, he had another battle to be concerned about. The humiliation he had endured under Wang Tengfei’s four finger attacks would be repaid today in full measure. He had been waiting for this day a long time!

Grand Elder Ouyang looked at Meng Hao, his eyes filled with obvious approval. His admiration of Meng Hao had continued to grow from the day he entered the Sect. In his eyes, Meng Hao was growing up. His face radiated contentment.

Grand Elder Ouyang didn’t care what stroke of good fortune Meng Hao had. As a Cultivator, good fortune was a blessing dictated by fate. He especially liked people who were blessed with good fortune. His smile filled with kindness, but inside, he felt regret and nervousness.

“Regardless of who lives or dies in the battles of the Inner Sect training, Wang Tengfei’s latent talent is something rarely seen in the span of a hundred years. His Cultivation base is extraordinary at this young age. If he manages to perfect his foundation, he will be a talent rarely seen even during the Sect’s glory days. Meng Hao just isn’t a match for him....” He sighed.

Standing there in the crowd, Shangguan Xiu’s face grew even grimmer. He narrowed his eyes.

He had never imagined that Meng Hao would be able to defeat Han Zong, especially since he’d bestowed a powerful treasure to him. The power of the Mist Spirits summoned by the five-colored banner should have been able to destroy Meng Hao with no problem.

And yet Meng Hao’s dozens of flying swords had ripped it to shreds. Even Shangguan Xiu had been shocked to see so many flying swords. Even though they were low-level swords, they were still sharp. Even scrap iron in such large numbers could shock and amaze.

At this moment, far away on the East Mountain, stood a middle-aged man of approximately forty years of age. He wore a black robe and had the look of a scholar. As he watched the battle unfold in the Outer Sect square, his eyes filled with strange light and came to focus on Meng Hao.

“This kid... He wasn’t worth noticing before. His latent talent is nothing extraordinary, but he seems to possess incredible good fortune.” This man was none other than the amazingly powerful Sect Leader He Luohua, who had already reached Core Formation.

“If he wasn’t up against Wang Tengfei, this kid might be able to join the Inner Sect. But it’s Wang Tengfei... it will be difficult.” He Luohua watched Meng Hao with kind eyes. As a Core Formation Cultivator, and the Sect Leader of the Reliance Sect, he didn’t pay much attention to the twists of fate and fortune that occurred amongst disciples who still practiced Qi Condensation. Things would play out naturally.

If a disciple was lucky, then he would be happy. But with Wang Tengfei present, He Luohua didn’t give much stock to Meng Hao’s chances to gain victory.

“It’s too bad there are only three pieces of Vorpall Jade... Wang Tengfei’s spot was decided upon long ago, otherwise...” He Luohua shook his head, trying to decide whether or not to intervene if it seemed Meng Hao would die. He sighed.

Time slipped by. Grand Elder Ouyang watched on in approval as Meng Hao's spiritual energy slowly restored. He was clearly showing partiality to Meng Hao, but none of the onlookers dared say anything.

As for Wang Tengfei, he didn't pay attention to anyone. Even though Meng Hao's rapid advancement in Cultivation base was astounding, Wang Tengfei didn't think about it too much because of Grand Elder Ouyang's intervention that time. Deep in Wang Tengfei's heart, he didn't think or even consider it possible that Meng Hao could be the person who took his treasures. He was convinced that it was the other dim light he had seen.

Thinking of this, Wang Tengfei's heart throbbed with pain, and he nearly wept tears of blood. As of now, the Legacy had nothing to do with him. He could not sense even a sliver of it. He was an outsider as far as it was concerned. Even if the person who now possessed it stood in front of him, he would have no idea.

"The Legacy is no longer mine, but the treasure..." Wang Tengfei's hands clenched into fists. He had only been able to catch a glimpse of the sword from a distance. Other than that, he had only been able to read about it in the ancient records. He didn't even know what it could do. He only knew that the ancient records stated clearly that the sword was one of a kind, and that its spiritual power could overwhelm everything in heaven and earth.

He had planned to thoroughly study it after acquiring it, but now... all of that was just wishful thinking.

Wang Tengfei closed his eyes and took a deep breath. Sitting there cross-legged, he appeared as mild and gentle as ever, as if he didn't have a care in the world.

"I am Wang Tengfei. Even though the Legacy and the treasure were stolen away, the Reliance Inner Sect belongs to me. It is the second of my main goals. Even without the treasure or Legacy, I will join the detestable Inner Sect of the Reliance Sect. That will be my fortune!

"One defeat is nothing! I am Wang Tengfei!" On the outside he was peaceful and calm, so he forced himself to be equally calm on the inside, to emerge from the depths of defeat.

He was arrogant because he was Wang Tengfei, a perfect, blessed god, Chosen.

He was indifferent because he knew that the Inner Sect training had been opened especially for him, and was merely a show, carried out simply to comply with Sect Rules. From the moment he had

entered the Reliance Sect, he was different. To the members of the Outer Sect, he had long since already become a member of the Inner Sect.

He was calm because he didn't care a bit about the Reliance Sect. A small Sect like this meant nothing to him. Even a single member of his Clan could lay waste to the entire Sect. Were it not for his insistence to come to this backwater State of Zhao, he would never be here. Not considering his status. He should be shaking heaven and earth back home in his powerful Clan.

So he was arrogant, indifferent and calm. He let the time pass, allowing this person whose name he could not even remember to recover his Cultivation base.

Enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, and then Meng Hao suddenly opened his eyes. They glittered with the desire for battle. He had killed a man of the fifth level of Qi Condensation. He had killed Han Zong. Never before had he killed so many people in one day. But his heart filled with anticipation. He would place Wang Tengfei underfoot and repay in full the humiliation he had endured that day.

Without a word, Meng Hao slowly stood up.