

The Heavens 321

Chapter 321: Cover Over Li With the Heavens!

Outside of the Immortal's cave, the parrot was currently soaring about in the sky, calling out with its shrill voice.

“Listen to me, all of you. Lord Fifth is a Celestial bird, an ancient Celestial bird. I know of the Heavens, and I know of the underworld, because there is nothing that Lord Fifth doesn't know. If I'm in a good mood, then I'll pass on to you a Celestial magic. Celestial magic! Do you know what that means? Now repeat after me, as loud as you can: Have faith in the Lord Fifth, gain eternal life! When the Lord Fifth appears, who dares to cause strife!” As it finished speaking, it landed onto Huang Daxian's head, its expression lofty and proud, as if it were innately above all the masses.

“You're nothing but a flashy bird!” said the meat jelly solemnly. It was currently perched atop the head of a Cultivator of the great circle of Foundation Establishment. “You call yourself Celestial, but you're really just a bird. And what do you mean by the number five Lord? What is number five anyway? At the most you're a First Lord!” The Cultivator beneath it gave a wry smile, his face pale.

“How many lives have I been trying to teach you this!?” said the parrot, glaring with contempt at the meat jelly. “You still can't count past three? You're not even qualified to talk to Lord Fifth!”

“Oh yeah? How high can you count?” asked the meat jelly, sounding both furious and humiliated.

“I can count to nine!” replied the parrot haughtily, glaring with wide eyes. Immediately, the meat jelly stared in shock as it tried to comprehend how vastly high of a number nine must be. It wanted to say something back to the parrot, but seeing its haughty appearance, the meat jelly realized that nine must be an incredibly high number. It suddenly started to feel a bit low in the self-esteem department.

All of the surrounding Cultivators had strange expressions on their faces, but none of them dared to hold back from repeating the words that so recently caused their blood to freeze upon hearing them. After all, they knew how fearsome the meat jelly and the parrot could be.

The meat jelly was completely indestructible. Two months before, yet another greedy nearby group had come, but the meat jelly had transformed into an enormous bubble and surrounded them. No

matter what the dozen or so Cultivators inside had done they had been incapable of even leaving a mark.

Eventually, they had had no choice but to just look out helplessly. Eventually, the meat jelly had let them go, giving a provoking look to the parrot at the same time.

Later, another group of Cultivators arrived, and then, the local Cultivators caught a glimpse of what could be called true insanity, and true misery.

One of those Cultivators ended up cursing the parrot, whereupon the seemingly innocuous multicolored bird had... delved into any hole it saw, at top speed. In the blink of an eye, blood-curdling screams filled the air as the invading Cultivators had half their bodies filled with bloody holes as the parrot shot through them.

As for some of the unlucky ones, the parrot ended up shooting in and out of their eyes. Miserable screams rang out that people still couldn't forget.

The man who had cursed the parrot, well, the parrot threatened the meat jelly, forcing it to transform the man into a luxuriantly furred ape.

Then... came a nightmare which continued to plague everyone who witnessed it.

With a howling roar, the parrot shot like lightning toward the hairy ape. Specifically, toward its rear end....

The shrill screams which came out of the mouth of that Cultivator, as well as the sinister and wicked excitement of the parrot, immediately caused everything else to be blanketed with thick silence....

After these two battles, the group's power in the area was established, and no one dared to trifle with them.

The haughtiness of the parrot became well known, as was its love of cursing people, its pettiness, and its unwillingness to forget a grudge.

As for Huang Daxian, every time he saw the meat jelly or the parrot, he would flatter and fawn over them. Eventually, others learned from him. Soon, the entire region became the territory of the parrot and the meat jelly.

From then on, it was on a daily basis that the Cultivators would shout, "Have faith in the Lord Fifth, gain eternal life! When the Lord Fifth appears, who dares to cause strife!"

Their numbers grew, as did the range of their sphere of influence. As such, more and more of the Celestial soil was collected.

Meng Hao retracted his Spiritual Sense and examined his bag of holding. Actually, having so many people here was a bit of a headache. If any more people joined them, then even if Meng Hao had more medicinal pills, it still wouldn't be enough.

After thinking about the situation for a while, Meng Hao stood and left the Immortal's cave. As soon as he appeared, the meat jelly flew over. The parrot seemed a bit unwilling, but also approached and began to circle around Meng Hao. The vines popped up from the ground and swayed back and forth, seemingly happy to see him. Some of the Cultivators who had previously witnessed Meng Hao's power also bowed to him in greeting.

The entire area was soon in relative chaos. Most of the people here had never seen Meng Hao, but had heard of him, and now craned their necks to catch a glimpse.

Meng Hao looked at the crowd with a frown and then walked over to the cistern located near the Immortal's cave. Suddenly, he had an inspiration; he slapped his bag of holding, sending three medicinal pills flying out.

Before anyone could see clearly what exactly the pills were, Meng Hao had sent them directly into the cistern. Next, he performed a quick incantation gesture with his right hand, and then pointed at the cistern. The water began to seethe as if it were boiling, and an intense heat could be felt, as if an invisible fire were burning.

After a moment, a thick spiritual energy wafted out from the cistern, enveloping the entire area. The faces of all the Cultivators immediately changed, filling with shock and excitement.

Based on the thickness of the spiritual energy, it seemed like drinking a mouthful of the cistern water would be like drinking medicinal elixir.

“Everyone may drink once from this medicinal cistern!” said Meng Hao, giving a look toward Huang Daxian and the Cultivator of the great circle of Foundation Establishment. When his gaze passed over them, their hearts trembled; the Dao Pillars of the Foundation Establishment Cultivator trembled, as if they could sense the intensity and fearsomeness of Meng Hao.

Everyone slowly lowered their heads, and then Meng Hao turned, taking the Celestial soil that had been collected recently, and returning to the Immortal’s cave to study it and gain further enlightenment.

Another month passed. By this time, Meng Hao was able to study the soil for a sustained time equal to the burning of half an incense stick. During that time, he could observe the tiny figures formed from golden magical symbols, and their paintings.

Based on Meng Hao’s judgement, he had actually only collected one part out of hundreds. In order to gain enlightenment, he would need to collect a lot more of the Celestial soil.

Recently, Meng Hao had also suppressed the growth of his Core. The reason was that once his Core Qi appeared, it would signify that his Core was completely solidified; the only following step would be to achieve the Perfect Gold Core.

As far as the essence of his Core Qi, according to Meng Hao’s understanding, it would be better to develop it after he acquired the Perfect Gold Core. He was confident that at that time, his battle prowess would experience instantaneous and incredible advancement.

On this particular day, after Meng Hao concluded his research, he rested for a moment, then once again tried out the art of Righteous Bestowal. His recent days had been spent on cultivating these two divine abilities. Of course, whenever he used the art of Righteous Bestowal, he would not go anywhere near the field of rubble.

The more he used it, the deeper his understanding became. He already had a basic mastery, and could fuse his will with Demonic Qi to create an Incarnation.

He placed his hand onto the ground, and ghost images sprang up everywhere. It took only a moment to merge his Spiritual Sense into the local Demonic Qi, and then send it out in all directions. At the moment, it could cover everything within a full three hundred kilometer radius. That was equivalent to the Spiritual Sense of the late Core Formation stage.

To reach past five hundred kilometers was possible only for Nascent Soul eccentrics.

As the amalgamation of Meng Hao's Spiritual Sense and the Demonic Qi spread out, it was as if he had an invisible body outside the Immortal's cave. This invisible body could go anywhere within the three hundred kilometer radius, directed by his will.

He saw the Cultivators outside the Immortal's cave. They were already seventy or eighty in number, all of various levels of cultivation. There was only one assignment they were tasked with; every day they had to leave the camp and then return with some of the violet-green Celestial soil. They could use any means necessary to do so. The greater amount one returned with, the more they would be allowed to drink from the medicinal cistern.

Meng Hao took a glance at it all, then ignored it, submerging himself in this strange state, traversing the local area, experiencing what it felt like to utilize the Demonic Qi.

Before he even realized it, an hour had passed. According to Meng Hao's experience, the Incarnation he had formed using the art of Righteous Bestowal would only last for a little more than an hour. He was just about to disperse the effects of the art, when his Incarnation suddenly turned its head and looked off into the distance, eyes narrowed. He experienced no alarm, only calmness.

There, off in the distance, was the field of rubble. Shockingly, he could see a fog of black Qi emanating out, coalescing into the image of an enormous old man.

The old man was huge, as large as a giant, and he was looking at Meng Hao.

His lower half was formed from black mist, above which, he was dressed in a black robe. His white hair fluttered around him, and his eyes were like lightning. His expression was filled with ancient profundity, and a rift split the middle of his forehead. From within the rift emerged a host of tiny black snakes which wriggled and squirmed and emitted hissing noises.

"Greetings, senior," said Meng Hao, clasping his hands and bowing.

The old man looked at Meng Hao for a moment. "I've been watching you," he said. Then he continued, his voice containing no politeness: "Why do you have a Ji Clan Karma thread attached to you? Answer me!"

"That has nothing to do with you, sir," replied Meng Hao with a cool frown.

“Oh?” said the old man with a piercing gaze. His aura suddenly flared out, and his entire body seemed to surge with Heavenly might. The black mist seethed, and the host of black snakes protruding from his forehead glared at Meng Hao. Their forked tongues flicked in and out as they emitted savage screams.

At the same time, over a hundred enormous black pythons appeared in front of the old man, seemingly reflections of the small snakes on his forehead. After they appeared, they spread out in all directions. The sight of it was incredibly shocking.

Of course, no one but Meng Hao could see this, and his expression was as calm as ever.

“You came here once before,” said the old man, continuing to look at Meng Hao. “You saw the seal which suppresses me. That’s why you’re so confident, isn’t it?” His voice echoed out like thunder, causing even the sky to seem to grow dark.

“Correct,” replied Meng Hao casually.

The man stared at him for a while, then suddenly let out a hearty laugh. “Nice response. You have a Ji Clan Karma thread attached to you, which means you will have trouble evading their Karma in this life. Cultivators who have achieved enlightenment regarding the Essence of the Ninth Mountain and Sea become prey for the Ji Clan.

“You’re young, so for you to be able to sense the Essence of the Ninth Mountain and Sea means you must be on the path of some great legacy. However, such a path... will lead you into conflict with the Ji Clan. It seems to me you won’t get very far on your journey.” With another laugh, he turned and the black fog began to disappear.

Hearing the old man’s words caused Meng Hao to feel a bit confused. Seeing the man was about to disappear, he suddenly blurted, “What is the Essence of the Ninth Mountain and Sea? What does the Ji Clan want with it?”

“There are nine Mountains in the vastness. Each Mountain has four planets, as well as a sun and a moon which revolve around the Mountains and Seas. One Mountain, one Sea, one Essence. Acquire the Essence of a Mountain and Sea, become the Lord of the Mountain and Sea... The Lord of the Ninth Mountain and Sea was surnamed Li (李), but he perished in a great calamity. The Mountain then had no Lord; therefore, all of the Immortals vied for the position!

“Lord Li had two subordinate Celestial warriors. The most powerful of the two changed his surname. He used the Heavens to cover over Li and called himself Ji. From then on, Ancestor Ji occupied the Heavenly Palace. He hunted and killed ancient names, changed the positions of the Heavenly bodies, and sealed the hosts of Immortals....”

“Tribulation for Mountain and Sea! A great war among the Stars. Immortals perished. There was boundless weeping. All living things raised their heads, but instead of glimpsing the stars, they saw the Heavens of Ji!” The old man’s powerful voice seemed to be filled with both laughter and insanity as he slowly disappeared.

Meng Hao floated in mid-air staring blankly. His mind spun, echoing with the old man’s words, and his bitter laughter, which seemed part song and part lunacy.

Chapter 322: Ji Clan Bag of Holding

After quite some time passed, Meng Hao’s figure gradually disappeared, transforming into a pulsing aura which disappeared into nothing.

Back in the Immortal’s cave, he slowly opened his eyes. They were filled with an expression of blankness, as well as a somewhat embarrassing feeling of fear.

His breathing was a bit heavy. Everything the old man had said, every word, every sentence, continued to echo in Meng Hao’s mind like thunder.

Various memories began to flicker through his mind, and his eyes began to glow.

“The boundless Ninth Mountain.... Choumen Tai is from the Seventh Mountain’s Planet Tiger Cage, and participated in what he called the great war of the Ninth Mountain.... That must be the great war among the Stars that the old man talked about!”

“Also, I remember that the Eighth Generation Demon Sealer said that he came across the legacy of the Seventh Generation Demon Sealer in the Sixth Mountain, which was how he joined the League of Demon Sealers. He said he refined half of the Sea of the Sixth Mountain to form his Demon Sealing Jade!”

Various clues that used to be scattered about in his mind were now being drawn together by the old man’s words. Now, he was getting a much clearer image of everything.

“The vastness beyond this world includes Nine Mountains and Seas of indescribable size. Each Mountain has its own respective sun and moon.... Each Mountain even has four planets! According to what Choumen Tai said, I’m on one of the four planets of the Ninth Mountain, Planet South Heaven!” In this instant, the world that Meng Hao used to know was torn to pieces. Everything was vastly larger than he had ever imagined. Currently, his mind was filled with knowledge of the Heavens that... only Immortals understood.

“The Ji Clan is powerful not just here on Planet South Heaven, but the other three planets as well. This is because Ancestor Ji seized the Essence of the Ninth Mountain and Sea and became the most powerful of all, eventually changing the Heavens of the Ninth Mountain! Ancestor Ji (季) covered the name Li (李) with the Heavens (天)! How audacious of him!” Meng Hao took a deep breath; he suddenly felt a great pressure upon him. Could he ever have truly imagined how powerful the Ji Clan was? It was unimaginably terrifying.

Furthermore, what he was up against was merely a minor branch of the Ji Clan here on Planet South Heaven.

“Karma thread...” he thought. “That must be the invisible thread that attached to me after I killed Ji Hongdong. With that thread stuck to me, I won’t be able to flee anywhere in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. Hmm... I wonder what position the Fang Clan occupies?” He frowned, having no way to answer the question.

“The Essence of the Ninth Mountain and Sea.... Could that be the Demonic Qi I’m able to sense using the art of Righteous Bestowal? Is the Essence of the Ninth Mountain a Demon?” Meng Hao frowned. Considering his Cultivation base and experience, these were things that he had difficulty comprehending.

“Choumen Tai is from the Seventh Mountain. The Eighth Demon Sealer was from the Sixth Mountain. The Seventh Demon Sealer’s legacy was in the Sixth Mountain.... I’m the Ninth Demon Sealer from... the Reliance Sect.” Meng Hao’s mind was in complete disorder. It was as if some vast, mysterious scroll was slowly spreading out in front of him. The more he wished to see, the more of the scroll he needed to spread out.

“And then there’s that woman from the Solitary Sword Sect, Shan Ling. The Demon Sealing Jade said that she was a stone from the Ninth Mountain who fell to here and became a spirit....” Meng Hao rubbed the bridge of his nose. He felt like his entire mind was in a shambles.

“What kind of people were the previous eight generations of Demon Sealers? By cultivating their magic, I can sense the Essence of the Ninth Mountain and Sea. How powerful were they, exactly?”

And why didn't Ancestor Ji approve of the League of Demon Sealers...." He frowned again. He liked thinking, but no matter how he thought about everything he knew, he couldn't put all the pieces together. He was just missing too much information.

Using a tiny bit of information to try to understand a huge picture will of course lead to frustration.

"Demon Sealers, Demon Sealers.... If the Qi Essence of the Ninth Mountain and Sea is Demonic Qi, then wouldn't the League of Demon Sealers be in a position above the Ninth Mountain and Sea? If that is the case, then I...." His heart began to pound at the enormity of the question. However, he quickly decided to dispel the notion.

"Impossible. If that were true, then how could the previous eight generations of Demon Sealers have perished? And why would I, the Ninth Generation Demon Sealer, be in such dire straits? My only Dao Protector is an old turtle who has long since fled." Meng Hao laughed bitterly. No matter how he tried to get rid of the idea, it seemed impossible; and yet, it had taken root in his mind.

"The Eighth Demon Sealer had to experience Dao Tribulation in the Nine Mountains and Seas.... He didn't say Ninth Mountain, he said Nine Mountains. He meant all of the Nine Mountains and Seas...." Meng Hao thought for a while, and then decided to stop analyzing everything. He let out a soft sigh. He knew that speculating would do him no good; he was nothing more than a Core Formation Cultivator.

"Who knows, I might never leave Planet South Heaven. The only way to do so is to reach Immortal Ascension ." He shook his head to clear his mind.

Immortal Ascension was just a vague concept to him; what was of more immediate concern was the path of the Perfect Gold Core.

In the following months of practice with the art of Righteous Bestowal, Meng Hao never again sensed the old man in the rubble field. However, he consistently had the feeling that he was being watched.

Through the months, the number of outside Cultivators who joined the force surrounding his Immortal's cave surpassed one hundred. It was now the most powerful force in the entire region.

More than one hundred people surrounded the small mountain. The medicinal cistern was the second of the holy locations, the first being Meng Hao's Immortal's cave.

Every day, they were all required to recite the words regarding faith in the Lord Fifth bringing eternal life. Because of the sheer force of numbers, when they shouted their rallying cry, it sounded like thunder.

The increase in numbers did benefit Meng Hao. Whenever he needed something, a large group of Cultivators would appear at a single word to handle whatever matter it was. The parrot and the meat jelly seemed extremely interested in commanding all of the Cultivators. Therefore, Meng Hao didn't need to pay them much attention, and instead left them to their devices.

On one particular day, Meng Hao sat cross-legged meditating, when suddenly his eyes snapped open. He could sense that the magical symbol on Ji Hongdong's bag of holding had finally completely dissipated.

"I wonder what will be inside the bag of holding of a member of the Ji Clan.... It's hard to say, considering that Ji Hongdong was just a member of the junior generation." Now that he understood more of the fearsome power of the Ji Clan, his anticipation was even greater. He took out the bag of holding and scanned it with Spiritual Sense.

His face immediately changed, and he gasped.

"He was definitely worthy of being a Ji Clansman...." he murmured. "I made out big this time!" He had long anticipated that the contents of the bag of holding would by no means disappoint. However, regardless of the vast power and resources of the Clan, Ji Hongdong was a tiny member of the junior generation. As such, Meng Hao had assumed he wouldn't be disappointed, but also didn't expect too much.

However, it seemed he had underestimated the resources of a member of the Ji Clan Quasi-Array....

"Ultra high-grade quality Spirit Stones...." A glow shone over Meng Hao's right hand as a Spirit Stone appeared. The interior of the Spirit Stone was turbid, not translucent. It looked ordinary, and was something most people had never even seen. However, Meng Hao was familiar with it.

This was the exact same type of ultra high-grade Spirit Stone he had used to duplicate the wooden sword all those years ago!

Such Spirit Stones were incredibly useful. Meng Hao had long since run out of them. When he thought back to how he had squandered them that time, his heart hurt. In fact, considering that he felt that particular wooden sword to be only moderately powerful, it really felt like a waste.

He really regretted his ignorance at that time. Having practiced cultivation down to now, he truly understood the value of ultra high-grade Spirit Stones. In all of the Southern Domain, high-grade Spirit Stones could be found, but the ultra high-grade variety were exceedingly rare.

As he looked at the Spirit Stone in his hand, power suddenly surged from his Cultivation base. The Spirit Stone began to glow with a resplendent light. At the same time, an immense amount of spiritual energy emanated out, filling the entire Immortal's cave.

It permeated the cave, spilling outside as well. The more than hundred Cultivators outside all opened their eyes wide with shock as they sensed the spiritual energy.

“Fifty ultra high-grade Spirit Stones!” thought Meng Hao. He suppressed his excitement; to him, such a collection of Spirit Stones would be incredibly useful. They could serve as the nucleus of certain magical treasures or spell formations.

Furthermore, he could also try to duplicate the Primordial Heavenly Replenishing Pill, which he needed to help recover his longevity. Then, he would be able to use the Blood Immortal mask again, and wield its shocking power.

He began to put the Spirit Stone back. “Alright, so there’s Spirit Stones. What else is... oh!?” Suddenly, his body began to tremble, and he rose to his feet, a look of disbelief on his face.

“This... this....” He began to pant, astonishment written on his face. Just now, something had happened which he hadn’t sensed in a long time... spiritual energy had flowed into his body!

This place was neither the Blood Immortal Legacy zone, nor the Song Clan. But suddenly, he was able to absorb the spiritual energy in the area. It poured directly into his body, seeping in through his pores, filling him.

The sensation of being able to once again absorb the spiritual energy of Heaven and Earth caused Meng Hao to close his eyes. Ever since he had formed the Perfect Foundation, he had been unable to absorb spiritual energy in any place other than the Blood Immortal Legacy zone and the Song Clan.

A moment later, he opened his eyes, and they glowed with an intense light. He had already absorbed all of the spiritual energy in the entire area, including that outside the Immortal's cave.

This in itself completely changed his impression of this bag of holding. His mind was spinning even more intensely than it had when he heard the words of the old man in the field of rubble.

“Ultra high-grade Spirit Stones....” He once again looked at the Spirit Stone he held in his hand. He rotated his Cultivation base, and felt boundless spiritual energy surging into him. This proved his assumption; it was not an illusion.

“It must have something to do with my Cultivation base. In any case, it seems that once I form the Perfect Gold Core, I can still use ultra high-grade Spirit Stones to absorb spiritual energy. I couldn't do that during Foundation Establishment. With these Spirit Stones, I won't have to only rely on medicinal pills and the Violet Pupil Transformation to heal myself.” He looked back down at the fifty ultra high-grade Spirit Stones in the bag of holding. As of this moment, they were even more valuable to Meng Hao than they had been before.

Chapter 323: Goddess Duo Lan[1]

Meng Hao took a deep breath. The glow in his hand lasted for a long time before he finally put away the ultra high-grade Spirit Stone. After that, a silver-colored magical symbol appeared above his palm. It began to emit a silver glow, as well as a faint aura that floated up into the air and transformed into more magical symbols. It gave Meng Hao a feeling very similar to that given off by the Celestial soil.

The magical symbols emanated powerful ripples which immediately caused Meng Hao to feel a sense of danger; he examined everything closely before sending the symbol away.

“Exactly as I anticipated. To kill a son of the Ji Clan, one must not get involved in a prolonged battle. Exterminate like lightning, giving him no chance to use any magical items.... If I hadn't been so decisive in my use of the blood-colored mask, then I'm afraid...” Fear filled him as he thought back to the fight; had he hesitated in the slightest, there might have been a much different outcome.

The Ji Clan was truly fearsome; Meng Hao just couldn't believe that they wouldn't have some powerful tricks up their sleeves. The main reason he had achieved victory was because he had attacked like a clap of thunder, giving his opponent little time to react.

Looking at the silver magical symbol, Meng Hao could tell that it required preparation time to use.

“At its very weakest, this thing is more powerful than my Cultivation base; I’m just not sure exactly how to use it.” After thinking for a moment, his hand flickered again; this time, a translucent pill bottle appeared.

Clearly visible inside was a medicinal pill the size of a longan fruit [1]. The pill was branded with the image of a hand. Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he opened the pill bottle; after sniffing the aroma of the pill, he was visibly moved.

“This is not an ordinary medicinal pill! This is... a one hundred percent consummate pill!” He took a deep breath as he closely examined the pill. A long moment later, a look of amazement filled his eyes.

“Soul Procurement Pill! One of the three great ancient medicinal pills! A consummate Soul Procurement Pill!” Breathing deeply, he examined it once again to confirm he was correct. He was. There was no mistake. His expression filled with wonder.

Of the three great ancient medicinal pills, Meng Hao already possessed a Primordial Heavenly Replenishing Pill. Therefore, he would be able to compensate for longevity he had squandered. Also, his Master had given him three Outlander Pills, which he could use to suppress the Resurrection Lily, as well as add to his longevity.

“The Nascent Soul of a Nascent Soul Cultivator is based on the five elements, and is divided into five colors. A Four Color Nascent Soul is actually considered the ultimate. With a Flawless Foundation and a Violet Core, along with a One Color Soul Procurement Pill, then it’s possible to add one more element!

“If I had four elements, then this pill could increase it to five. But, if I already had five elements, then... would it be able to become a Six Color Nascent Soul? Too bad it doesn’t matter how many times you consume this pill, it will only be effective once.” He held the One Color Soul Procurement Pill and stared at it, his eyes glittering. Finally, he carefully put it away.

He had the strong feeling that this pill would be extremely important to him in the future!

Next, he looked down at the bag of holding as he pulled out a fishing rod.

It was long and slender, and completely emerald in color. He hefted it in his hand, not quite sure exactly what function it served. It was glittering and translucent, and also appeared to be very sharp; the hook at its end shone with a cold light.

“This thing....” After a moment’s pause, he flicked the rod; immediately an illusory pool of water appeared in front of him. The fish hook flew down into the pool of water, and as it did, a tremor ran through Meng Hao’s body. He heard the sound of infants wailing, the gasping breath of old people just before death, the laughter of able-bodied men, the stubborn oaths uttered by teenagers. He heard the voices of all living things.

The sounds entered his mind and heart, shaking them. He felt as if he would be torn apart. He immediately loosened his hand; the fishing pole fell to the ground, and everything else vanished.

It had only taken that brief moment for Meng Hao’s entire body to be covered with sweat. His breath came in ragged gasps.

“What is this thing?” he thought, looking down at the fishing pole. It didn’t look like anything particularly extraordinary at first, but now, it seemed vastly mysterious.

This was especially so when he thought about how terrifying the Ji Clan was; clearly, this fishing pole must surely be some type of important item.

Some time passed, after which Meng Hao put the fishing pole away. He looked back at the bag of holding. Other than a collection of ordinary Spirit Stones, there seemed to be only one other noteworthy item.

It was a box.

The box was square, seemingly crafted from jade, and yet not. It was pitch black, and on the right corner was a mark, a character.

Fang (方).

The box seemed ancient, permeated with an archaic aura. Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he slowly opened it. Inside was a single glove. It was as soft as the wing of a cicada as he picked it up.

He used Spiritual Sense to examine it carefully for a moment before placing it on his right hand. The instant he put it on, he sensed an incredible power exploding out from within it, flowing into his right hand.

He took a deep breath and looked at his hand. There was no glove visible; however, when he made a fist, cracking sounds could be heard, as if the air itself was being pulled toward it. Everything in the Immortal's cave trembled, then flew into the air toward Meng Hao's closing fist. Even the air seemed to be reduced, by at least half, sucked into the fist.

"What power....?" Suddenly, an image in his mind appeared of the young woman of the Fang Clan, and her terrifying fist.

"Fang.... This item must be related to the Fang Clan. If it is, though, why is it in the bag of holding of a member of the Ji Clan? Furthermore, why wouldn't he use it?" After much pondering of the matter, he remained puzzled. All of the other items, the ultra-high-grade Spirit Stones, the fishing pole, even the silver-colored magical symbol, were things that required time to use. Ji Hongdong had no time to use any of them.

And yet he didn't wear the glove, which was clearly extraordinary. Had he put it on, it would not have been so easy to kill him.

"I still have his blood," thought Meng Hao. "When I'm able to create a Blood Spirit, then its consciousness will be linked to me, and I will be able to see his memories. Perhaps then I can find out the answer." He took some time to feel the power of his right hand, then slowly opened it. He looked once again at the bag of holding. Inside were some miscellaneous items. As for the ordinary Spirit Stones, there were about twenty or thirty thousand, not enough to duplicate any of the medicinal pills he needed to copy.

Eyes glittering, he put the bag of holding away.

With these objects, he now had even more ability to rise to power outside of the Southern Domain. He could truly roam free now.

"Except, I can't at the moment," he thought, shaking his head. He retrieved Ji Hongdong's bell, then spit out a mouthful of Qi from his Core and melded the two together. He then studied it for a while, trying to figure out how to use it. Like the other objects, it seemed that learning how to use it would require a bit of research.

“There’s no hurry. My wounds are healed, and the time to emerge is almost here. First, though, I need to duplicate the Primordial Heavenly Replenishing Pill!” At first he was a bit hesitant; he knew that the One Color Soul Procurement Pill could only be used once. Unfortunately, there was no way to test whether the Primordial Heavenly Replenishing Pill had a similar restriction.

If it did, then duplicating it would be a waste. However, if he didn’t duplicate it, but could use it more than once, it would be a huge loss.

He had a decisive disposition. Therefore, eyes glittering, he pulled out the copper mirror and the Primordial Heavenly Replenishing Pill. He took a deep breath, and then began to duplicate it with an ultra high-grade Spirit Stone.

The three great ancient medicinal pills were rare in the modern world, and he wasn’t sure at first if duplicating it would even work. It pained him a bit to have to spend five of the ultra high-grade Spirit Stones to duplicate one pill.

He immediately put the duplicate into his mouth.

Time passed by. Several days later, his hair slowly began to change. It was no longer white, but black; his face began to show signs of color, and soon shone with life. His entire person glowed, and in fact, his Cultivation base had even grown. It wouldn’t be long before he would be able to break into the mid Core Formation stage.

Meng Hao held back though. His primary goal was the Perfect Gold Core; he could not turn back once Core Qi appeared and he entered the mid Core Formation stage.

A few more days passed before he opened his eyes. They glowed with a bright and piercing light. His longevity was completely restored. He cast his Spiritual Sense outside, where it was currently early morning. Beneath the dawn sun, the parrot was flying in circles in the sky, continuously calling out orders to the more than one hundred people below.

“Lord Fifth is going to teach you a Celestial spell formation. This Celestial spell formation uses people as its base! I guarantee that if you master the formation, then you will be invincible! Now, cry out the words with me!”

“Have faith in the Lord Fifth, gain eternal life! When the Lord Fifth appears, who dares to cause strife!” The roaring of the more than one hundred Cultivators was like thunder...

The meat jelly sat off to the side, face filled with disdain. However, it couldn't conceal the envy and jealousy it felt inside.

Meng Hao had watched similar scenes on multiple occasions recently. He had merely smiled wryly and ignored it. He was just about to retract his Spiritual Sense, when suddenly he frowned. He pushed two fingers down against the ground and invoked the art of Righteous Bestowal. The Qi in the area poured into him, focusing in his eyes. Combining his vision with his Spiritual Sense, his swept the region with his gaze. There, several hundred kilometers away, was a procession of Cultivators, flying in this direction.

In the lead was a man and a woman. The man wore a gold mask, and Meng Hao recognized his aura. It was Black Lands Dao Child Luo Chong!

The woman next to him wore a fine gauze veil; her beautiful features were just barely visible behind the hazy fabric. She seemed to embody all of the beauty in Heaven and Earth.

She had long, slender legs, and a full chest. This, coupled with the somewhat provocative gown she wore, made her emanate a fatal attractiveness.

The garment hugged her slender waist, accenting her curvaceous rear end. On her forehead was a totemic tattoo of a butterfly, which made her appearance even more arousing.

Her arms seemed as if they were carved from jade, and were also decorated with glittering totem tattoos. Behind these two people were four more. Two were masked Black Lands Cultivators of the mid Core Formation stage.

The other two were large-framed; at a glance, it was obvious that these were powerful Western Desert experts. The four of them were obviously the followers of Luo Chong and the woman.

“This is one of the most infertile regions within the Black Lands,” said Luo Chong. “The only people who live here are lowbred Rogue Cultivators, not decent enough even for you to look at. Goddess Duo Lan, why exactly does your visit from the Western Desert bring you here?” Luo Chong's face was hidden behind his mask, but a warm smile could be heard as he spoke. His eyes sparkled with intense adoration as he looked at the woman.

She gave him a graceful smile that looked like a blooming lily. She was without a doubt a natural born beauty. Her smile caused Luo Chong to breathe a bit more heavily. She was just about to respond to him, when suddenly, her phoenix-like eyes flickered. The butterfly totem on her forehead flickered as if it were about to fly out.

“Who are you?!”

Chapter 324: The Cutting Edge of the Black Lands

Meng Hao sat cross-legged in his Immortal’s cave, the fingers of his right hand pushed against the ground, eyes closed. His Spiritual Sense was currently merged with the mountain’s Demonic Qi. Not only was the range of his Spiritual Sense now greater, but the sensation that he could form an Incarnation was even stronger than ever.

Luo Chong of the Black Lands and the woman from the Western Desert were directly in front of Meng Hao’s field of vision. The world in front of him was a rippling blur, both the air, the land, as if it were some other location.

Luo Chong and the four others were also rippling, blurry figures. As for the beautiful woman, however, as soon as her butterfly fluttered into action, she immediately became crystal clear.

Meng Hao looked at her, and in that same instant, she looked back at him.

To the woman, however, Meng Hao did not appear as the image of a person, but rather, a blurry mountain!

The mountain was not very high, but emanated a majestic and vigorous will; it rose up above the earth, exerting a pressure that made the woman’s face flicker.

“Demon....” Her eyes flashed and her pupils constricted. “Sir, I am Duo Lan from the Western Desert. I have no intention of offending you, Demon Lord....” Her voice was soft and filled with fear.

Meng Hao didn’t respond. He looked at her closely for a moment, especially the totem on her forehead.

After a moment the image of the mountain faded away from the woman's vision, disappearing without a trace.

Her entire body shook, and her eyes shined with a bright glow. She began to breathe heavily, which made her chest rise and fall. This in turn caught the attention of Luo Chong.

"Goddess Duo Lan," he said, sounding surprised, "what happened?" He could see that her face was somewhat pale. It wasn't just him that noticed; the four people behind them had also seen it.

"Nothing," she replied with a smile, quickly recovering her composure. However, a look of fear still lingered in her eyes.

At the same time, back in the Immortal's cave in the short mountain, Meng Hao opened his eyes. They glittered brightly as he lifted up his hand to look at his two fingers.

"This is the first time I've entered this state and then seen... the power of totems. It seems as if they have something to do with Demons!" A thoughtful look appeared in his eyes. In the past, he had done a bit of research regarding totem variations, but had never been able to determine anything definitive. However, the woman just now had been using totemic power, and had been able to sense him. Furthermore, he sensed Demonic Qi coming from her totem tattoo.

"Interesting," he thought, closing his eyes again.

Not much time passed before Luo Chong, Duo Lan and the four others neared Meng Hao's group of Cultivators.

Their approach caused the Cultivators in the area to look up toward them. As soon as they saw the golden mask worn by Luo Chong, and the two green-robed Cultivators behind him, as well as the Western Desert Cultivators, their faces immediately filled with awe and veneration.

In the Black Lands there were two great powers, sort of like empires. One was the Black Lands Palace, the other was the United Nine.

The United Nine was a group of allied cities controlled by different Cultivator Clans. Of the two, however, the Black Lands Palace was the most frightening. Its Cultivators wore masks, the colors of which indicated the level of their Cultivation base.

Azure masks represented Core Formation. Silver masks represented Nascent Soul. Gold masks represented Dao Children.

The Black Lands Palace ruled by force in the Black Lands. It was referred to as the number one power, and was known to have the support of the Western Desert. Because of that, even the Sects of the Southern Domain feared the Black Lands Palace.

A Dao Child from the Black Lands Palace was like a Chosen of the Heavens. One word from him could determine life or death for these Cultivators. He was the Heavens, they were nothing but bugs.

The parrot tilted its head up, looking with contempt at the group flying through the sky. Next to it, the meat jelly had a solemn look on its face. “These people are immoral,” it muttered. “They are just too wicked....”

Up in mid-air, Luo Chong’s gaze swept over the group, and he suddenly let out a cold snort.

The sound of it fell upon the group of Cultivators. It felt like the fury of an emperor, causing all of them to silently lower their heads and kowtow.

Seeing this caused a pleased expression to fill Luo Chong’s eyes. He looked over at the incredibly beautiful Duo Lan.

“Goddess Duo Lan, what exactly are you looking for?” he said with a smile. “We have a bunch of backwater Cultivators here. I can make them go looking for whatever it is you need.” Based on his words, he obviously really did view the Cultivators down below as nothing more than insects.

Duo Lan’s pretty brow furrowed slightly, and she hesitated. She thought about the place she wished to locate, and it was true: having people familiar with the area would be of help. Just when she was about to nod in agreement, her eyes suddenly narrowed. She had just seen that in the middle of the location occupied by the Cultivators, was a small mountain.

At first glance, the mountain seemed strange to her. At second glance, she felt a peculiar sensation that made her think back to the Demon she had just seen....

Luo Chong happened to see her looking over at the mountain. He glanced at it passingly before his gaze came to fall on the medicinal cistern. As soon as he saw it, his eyes narrowed, and he shot forward through the groups of people to land directly next to it.

He scooped up some water and sampled it, after which his eyes shined brightly.

“This is a natural medicinal elixir cistern! The quality is amazing, the highest quality!” He laughed heartily, ignoring the incensed expressions of the surrounding Cultivators. He waved his right hand, within which appeared a jade bottle that he prepared to fill with the medicinal cistern.

“If I procure some of the medicinal stones from this area,” he thought, “I can take this cistern back with me and put in the Palace!” It seemed that escorting this beautiful woman was going to pay off for him after all.

In the blink of an eye, the bottle shot out into the air. The cistern water began to gurgle, and then shoot toward the bottle. The more than one hundred Cultivators in the area were growing more and more furious. It was hard to say who was first, but they all stood up in quick succession, their eyes shining with hatred. Black Lands Cultivators are inherently a cruel and savage lot, and to see someone so brazenly steal their cultivation resources caused their veneration to turn into frenzy.

However, in the exact instant in which all of the Cultivators stood up en masse, one of the mid Core Formation Cultivators floating up in mid-air gave off a cold snort. The sound transformed into something like rolling thunder which swept across the ground, causing the faces of the other Cultivators to instantly go pale. Some of them even coughed up blood.

“You people sure are brazen!” said Luo Chong with a cold laugh. “I’m a Dao Child, and I’ve taken a liking to this medicinal cistern. That’s good luck for the cistern, as well as you. If I didn’t need you to help Goddess Duo Lan, then based on your actions just now, I would have a mind to exterminate the lot of you!”

As soon as the words left his mouth, a calm voice echoed out from within the small mountain. “They may be brazen, but your temper takes the cake.”

The suddenness of the voice caused Luo Chong to immediately turn, a look of concentration in his eyes. The two Black Lands azure-masked Cultivators from up above shot down to appear on either side of him, their eyes flashing. They had already scanned the mountain with Spiritual Sense, but hadn’t detected anyone within. This unexpected voice immediately filled them with fear.

As Meng Hao's voice echoed out, he reached down and touched the ground with one finger. The ground shook, and vast quantities of Demonic Qi tendrils rose up from the ground. They emanated out from the mountain and began to congeal at its peak.

No one could see this Qi, not even Luo Chong and his companions. The only thing they could sense was a crushing feeling of danger. The two Western Desert Cultivators, on the other hand, as well as Duo Lan, could clearly see it. Their faces flickered as the huge amount of Qi began to take the shape of a phantom figure.

The phantom figure seemed to be draped with a black robe. His features were indistinguishable, but as he stood there, he seemed to be fused with the mountain, as if he were the mountain, and the mountain was him.

Duo Lan was experiencing the exact same feeling she had from moments ago.

She looked around and realized that the more than one hundred local Cultivators all had looks of respect on their faces. They were not kowtowing to the short mountain, but, the sight in front of her reminded her of what you might see in a Tribe of the Western Desert.

Such Tribe members were constantly prostrating themselves to the most powerful totems in the tribe. That was how they acquired totemic power.... What she was seeing here was the early stages of such an arrangement.

Suddenly, the black phantom atop the short mountain flickered, gathering together the Demonic Qi in the area and shooting toward Luo Chong and the other two people with him. Though they couldn't see it, they could feel the danger, and retreated in shock.

However, the speed of their retreat could not compare to the quickness of the black phantom. Just when they were about to collide, Duo Lan's face twisted. She could not allow the Dao Child of the Black Lands Palace to die right in front of her. That would most certainly affect her prestige. She lifted her right hand and then waved a finger; the butterfly on her forehead flew out, speeding directly toward Luo Chong and the others.

At the same time, the two Western Desert Cultivators let out gruff roars. A giant bear totem coalesced, snarling as it charged forward. After that was a giant elephant, which also barrelled ahead.

In the blink of an eye, the phantom Meng Hao had created with the art of Righteous Bestowal was now racing to attack six individuals at the same time.

An explosion rippled out; Meng Hao's Demonic Qi phantom shook and then dissolved. Blood sprayed from Luo Chong's mouth. The faces of the two azure-masked Cultivators went pale. One of them grabbed Luo Chong and shot backward. The two Western Desert Cultivators howled as they retreated backward several paces. As for Duo Lan, her face flushed red briefly before returning to normal.

"Your Excellency, Demon Lord, we're here today..." She actually felt a bit relieved, and was about offer words of mediation when suddenly a cold snort echoed out from within the short mountain.

"My Incarnation is a bit weak," said Meng Hao lightly. The black Qi around him covered his body, which suddenly flashed, speeding out of the Immortal's cave like a black smoke.

In the blink of an eye, he was in front of the bear totem Western Desert Cultivator. He raised his right hand, the one covered in the diaphanous glove, and formed a fist, which then descended down toward his opponent.

Chapter 325: Tribulation Transcending Miraculous Life Form!

Boom!

As the fist descended upon the bear totem Western Desert Cultivator, his face flickered. The first thing that happened was that the giant bear shook violently and then shattered into countless pieces. As the boom echoed out, the man's body caved in. Blood sprayed from his mouth in seven or eight spurts as he was hurled violently backward several hundred meters. Eventually he ground to a halt, coughed up another mouthful of blood, and then sagged visibly, his body covered in blood.

His complexion suddenly seemed to grow older. Before he had even stopped moving, he'd changed from being a middle-aged man, to an ancient one. His hair was gray, his skin covered with wrinkles, and his eyes listless.

Most terrifying of all, the three totem tattoos on his body faded and then disappeared.

Shockingly, a tiny, shrieking phantom version of the enormous bear from just now, floated above Meng Hao's right hand.

Meng Hao wasn't finished. In the space of a single breath, he took a step forward and lashed out with three more fist strikes.

The first fist slammed into the elephant totem Western Desert Cultivator. Blood showered from his mouth as he tumbled backward about fifty meters. He groaned, and it sounded like his body might be about to explode. He rapidly grew older; his life force dissipated, and his totems faded. Now a bear and an elephant circled around Meng Hao's hand.

His second punch slammed into the chest of one of the azure-masked Cultivators. Crunching sounds could be heard, and the man screamed. His mask shattered as blood shot from his mouth. He also was flung backward fifty meters or so; his body aged rapidly, and it seemed as if his Cultivation base might collapse.

The third punch landed onto the other azure masked Cultivator. His Cultivation base was a bit weaker than the other; he had just stepped into the early Core Formation stage and as such, his Core was not completely stable. Meng Hao's fist strike sent him tumbling back about thirty-five meters; his scalp went numb as he felt a terrifying power surging through his body, destroying everything. His Core shattered, and then his entire body exploded into a haze of blood and gore.

All of this happened in the blink of an eye. Then, Meng Hao was in front of Luo Chong. His diaphanously gloved hand shot out, latching onto Luo Chong's neck, lifting him up into the air.

Behind his gold mask, Luo Chong's eyes shone with intense fear and astonishment. His body trembled and he panted raggedly. However, he didn't dare to struggle. He could sense the intense killing intent emanating out from his faceless attacker. The denseness of the killing intent caused his mind to reel.

Seeing Meng Hao's billowing killing intent, Duo Lan's face paled and she cried, "Great Demon Lord, please listen to me! We harbor no ill intentions. What happened just now was a misunderstanding. Great Demon Lord, I beg you to forgive our hot-headedness. We did not know this was your territory. Great Demon Lord please stay your hand.... We are willing to provide compensation for our actions just now."

"Great Demon Lord," gushed Luo Chong, "this... this is all just a misunderstanding. Really, just a misunderstanding...." He felt like he already had one foot in the grave, the same feeling he'd had when facing Fang Mu from the Southern Domain, about whom he still frequently had nightmares.

That was the first time he'd felt like this. Now was the second.

Except, the feeling this time was even more intense than the first time. All of his arrogance from moments ago had completely disintegrated.

“Misunderstanding?” said Meng Hao, his voice hoarse, like two rocks rubbing against each other. His left hand reached into his robe to pull out a medicinal pill. He shoved it into Luo Chong’s mouth, and then sent an identical pill shooting over toward Duo Lan.

“Consume that pill,” he said coolly, “and then we can consider this matter a misunderstanding.” Luo Chong’s eyes flickered with even more intense fear. He wasn’t sure what medicinal pill he had just consumed, but he could imagine what it might be. There was nothing he could do about it now; he would have to wait until he got back to the Black Lands Palace, where the effects could surely be dispelled.

Duo Lan’s face flickered as she hesitated. She didn’t care too much whether Luo Chong lived or died. However, if she didn’t consume the pill, then the result of the offense given just now would not be good.

Gritting her beautiful teeth, Duo Lan lifted up the medicinal pill and then swallowed it down. She looked at Meng Hao.

He loosened his hand, then flicked his sleeve and turned to walk back toward the mountain. Purposely putting an imperious expression onto his face, he said, “Get the hell out of here. If you ever again enter the area three hundred kilometers in any direction, the poison will kill you! No alchemist under Heaven can neutralize my demonic pills.” With that, he disappeared into the Immortal’s Cave.

Luo Chong, Duo Lan and the others hesitated only for a moment before disappearing off into the distance.

When they were about a hundred kilometers away, they finally stopped and looked back in the direction of Meng Hao’s Immortal’s cave.

“Dammit.... Once I get back to the Black Lands Palace, I’ll dispatch some people to wipe that place out!” said Luo Chong, a dangerous look on his face.

“I’ll take care of it,” said one of the old azure-masked Cultivators through clenched jaw. “Let’s see what superhuman abilities that guy really has. I’ll...” Before he could finish speaking however, a single word suddenly rang out from nowhere.

“Bestow!”

One word. The instant it echoed out, the azure-masked Cultivator began to tremble. Luo Chong and the others watched in astonishment as a pulsating black aura emerged from his ears, eyes, nose and mouth. Soon a massive black aura was spreading out from him. As for Duo Lan, she could see that above the old man’s head was a phantom figure; it was none other than Meng Hao’s Righteous Bestowal Demonic Incarnation.

The blurry Demonic Incarnation burrowed into the man’s body through the top of his head. The azure-masked Cultivator began to scream, and his right arm suddenly began to quiver. Luo Chong watched on in astonishment as the man’s right arm suddenly struck out toward his own forehead.

A boom could be heard as the man’s head exploded, killing him instantly.

“Take care of yourselves,” said Meng Hao coolly before disappearing.

Everything was as silent as death.

Luo Chong’s body shook uncontrollably, and he immediately abandoned any thoughts about what he had just been talking about. The only thing he could think of was that he would never come with three hundred kilometers of this place ever again.

Duo Lan was panting and her eyes were wide. She had seen some so-called Demon Lords in the Western Desert, but none of them were as bizarrely frightening as this one.

“What if it was turned into a totem...?” thought Duo Lan. Her heart beat even faster.

Maintaining their silence, the remaining four Cultivators shot off into the distance.

Outside the Immortal’s cave, the retreat of Luo Chong and the others caused the eyes of the more than one hundred Cultivators to fill with fanaticism. Cultivators worshipped the powerful, and the power displayed by Meng Hao just now left their minds reeling and hearts trembling.

“Did you see that?” squawked the parrot, immediately flying up into the air. Its eyes slowly passed over the amassed Cultivators. “That was none other than Lord Fifth’s Celestial magic! If you diligently practice your cultivation according to my methods, then it won’t be long before you are just as powerful!”

Back in the Immortal’s cave, Meng Hao’s looked down at his right hand, and his eyes filled with a mysterious glow.

“This right hand, coupled with the power of my Cultivation base and the Demonic Qi, can exterminate the mid Core Formation stage. However, when it comes to late Core Formation, my only option is to use the Blood Immortal mask.

“Either way, considering I’m at the peak of the early Core Formation stage, there aren’t many other Core Formation Cultivators who are a match for me. Once I succeed with the Perfect Gold Core and enter mid Core Formation, a Cultivator in the same stage who could deal with me would be a rarity indeed!” His eyes gleamed with self-confidence.

As far as he was concerned, the difference between the power he had wielded in Foundation Establishment, and his power now, was vast.

“Getting the last medicinal plant ingredient won’t be hard. But the Heavenly Tribulation which will come after I form the Perfect Gold Core... that will be a problem.” Meng Hao frowned. That was what he had the most misgivings about. The Heavenly Tribulation from back in Foundation Establishment had been terrifying. If the Blood Immortal Legacy hadn’t fought against it for him, Meng Hao would never have been able to form the Perfect Foundation.

Muttering to himself, his eyes glittered as he sent his Spiritual Sense out with a message. A few moments later, flapping sounds could be heard as the colorful parrot flew in from outside, looking a bit impatient.

“What’s going on?!” it said, eyeing Meng Hao. “Don’t you know that Lord Fifth is in the middle of training those Cultivators out there? Don’t you know how precious Lord Fifth’s time is?”

“How do I transcend Heavenly Tribulation?” asked Meng Hao, not beating around the bush.

“Heavenly Tribulation?” The Parrot stared in shock, and then flew a few circles around Meng Hao, seemingly sizing him up from various angles. Finally, it made a clucking noise and shook its head. It sighed. “Nobody can transcend it. You’re dead. It seems that I, Lord Fifth, ancient Celestial bird, should consider getting a new master.”

It was about to leave, when Meng Hao, his expression the same as ever, calmly said, “So, you don’t even know how to transcend tribulation. And you still call yourself an ancient Celestial Bird.” His face was clearly filled with a sneer.

When the parrot saw the sneer, its feathers immediately stood on end, and it glared at Meng Hao.

“I don’t know?” it said, panting. “You dare to tell me I don’t know? I... I can’t be fooled so easily!” Instead of continuing any further, it put on a supercilious expression and began to preen its feathers.

“So, you really are just a flashy old bird!” said Meng Hao casually, his sneer growing even more obvious. He even went so far as to close his eyes, as if he didn’t deign to continue the conversation.

The parrot was instantly furious. Pecking furiously at its feathers as it preened, it roared, “Who said I don’t know?! I know a method that can suppress and delay Heavenly Tribulation. There’s no Celestial magic like that which I don’t know!”

“So, you really don’t know,” replied Meng Hao lightly.

“Heavenly Tribulation is nothing but farts!” roared the parrot. “Back in the day, I could transcend tribulation with a single breath! Even now, I know at least ten thousand ways... no, I mean, a million different ways to do it! I’ll tell you one of them. All you have to do is find a miraculous life form, the type whose roots and leaves are connected the same way a mother and a son are connected. The roots cannot be destroyed, and the leaves never die. The leaves never die, and the roots cannot be destroyed! You hold onto the roots, and use the leaves to defend against the Heavenly Tribulation. That is how you can transcend tribulation!

“Too bad for you miraculous life forms like that aren’t common. Even things similar to it aren’t common. They’re all extinct. You would have to have an incredible amount of luck and fortune to happen across one. Just from looking at you, I’d say it’s not gonna happen. You’re not that kind of person. Most likely, you’re dead.”

Hearing the parrot’s words actually caused Meng Hao’s eyes to flicker. After analyzing the parrot’s words, they seemed to make quite a bit of sense. Furthermore, his mind was currently reeling. This

was because he had thought of a miraculous life form from the Black Lands that was very similar to what the parrot had described!

Chapter 326: I Haven't Tried That Out Before!

“The roots cannot be destroyed, the leaves never die. The leaves never die, the roots cannot be destroyed....” Meng Hao’s eyes filled with thought as he put the pieces together. A miraculous life form that inherently displayed the type of relationship between a mother and a son. Rare in the world, almost never seen.

What appeared in Meng Hao’s mind now were words he had heard years ago.

“The larva cannot be destroyed, and the thread cannot be broken. The thread cannot be broken, nor can the larva be destroyed!” These words were describing a creature that, when fed Sieve Net Thunder Mulberry Leaves, would transform from Frigid Snow into the miraculous bug called the Eyeless Larva.

“Besides that larva, there’s another way, but their growth isn’t complete....” Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he thought of his Blood Clones.

Because the nucleus of each Blood Clone was the skin of the meat jelly, as long as he himself didn’t die, they couldn’t be destroyed. Even if they were, they could easily be recreated. It might be a bit of an exaggeration to say that they were eternally indestructible, but the fact remained that it would be very difficult to truly kill them.

However, the Cultivation bases of the Blood Clones were too far removed from his own. They might be difficult to destroy, but when it came time to face the Heavenly Tribulation, Meng Hao knew that the Blood Clones would be defeated.

“Unless I refined nine generations of blood, then added myself in, thus forcing another generation on top of the nine. Then it would be a Blood Spirit. I could not be destroyed, and the spirit would never disperse!”

As Meng Hao sat lost in thought, the haughty parrot once again looked at Meng Hao with disdain. “Don’t even think about it,” it said suddenly. “Only people with incredible luck and amazing fortune can ever have a chance to get a miraculous life form like that. As an example, I, Lord Fifth, once had a miraculous lotus root. Only someone like me could ever get something of the sort.”

Meng Hao ignored the parrot and continued to think. A new thought suddenly flickered in his mind. The parrot's words had opened up the floodgates of his mind regarding transcending tribulation. After all, he was not in the Blood Immortal Legacy zone; this time, he would be facing the test alone.

He had been thinking about the matter for a very, very long time. The parrot's words just now had lit a virtual fire in his mind; all kinds of thoughts and questions exploded inside of him.

“Regarding miraculous life forms,” he thought, “there's something else I could do. I could borrow Demonic Qi from Heaven and Earth to create an illusory Incarnation. After all, the Incarnation can carry my will with it to kill people. I wonder if I could use it to defend against Heavenly Tribulation.... It's too bad the Incarnation is so weak. However, it's an area that could be explored.” His eyes lit up as he realized that he actually already had three types of miraculous life forms.

“Plus, I have the meat jelly!” he thought. His eyes contained an imperceptible glitter. Using the meat jelly when transcending tribulation would be his last resort. He had long since taken note of its ability to consume lightning.

“Forget it. Just forget it,” said the parrot, looking askance at Meng Hao. It sighed, its face filled with an expression that exuded omniscience. “That method just now was definitely too difficult. In all the Heavens, I think only Lord Fifth could pull off something like that. For other people, well, it could only happen in their dreams.

“Lord Fifth is an erudite, ancient Celestial Bird. Omniscient. Okay, I'll tell you of another method. This one isn't very hard. Actually, it's pretty simple. However, such a method is also only available to people with extraordinary luck and fortune.

“It's not very complicated. You just need to have a Soul of Lightning next to you. If you do, it will be much easier to transcend the tribulation. However, you'll have to train the Soul of Lightning yourself. Basically, you start out with the soul of a Cultivator with a very profound Cultivation base. Then, you slowly use lightning to transform its soul embodiment. Over time, you gradually increase the amount of lightning. Assuming the soul isn't destroyed, then you eventually force it to transform into a Soul of Lightning that you can use.” The parrot yawned and then flew out of the Immortal's cave in a flash of light. Outside, it once again began to instruct the Cultivators about its self-proclaimed Celestial magic.

Meng Hao sat cross-legged in the Immortal's cave, thinking about what the parrot had said about the Soul of Lightning. A strange expression appeared on his face, and after a while, he slapped his bag of holding. The blood-colored mask appeared in his hand. He sent his Spiritual Sense inside to

find the Li Clan Patriarch, who had been forgotten by the meat jelly after the appearance of the parrot.

The Li Clan Patriarch was no longer listless like before. However, as soon as he caught sight of Meng Hao, his entire body began to tremble. Clearly, his fear of the meat jelly had reached the ultimate level.

Meng Hao circled around the Li Clan Patriarch, examining his soul embodiment. After a while, his eyes began to shine.

The glow in his eyes struck terror into the heart of the Li Clan Patriarch.

“What... what are you planning?!” he asked cautiously. He had a bad feeling, as if something miserable were about to happen to his soul embodiment. After his time spent being tormented by the meat jelly, without even the option of seeking death, he was no longer as proud and haughty as he used to be.

Meng Hao didn't say anything. After examining the Li Clan Patriarch for a moment, he did something with his Spiritual Sense, and a lightning bolt appeared within the blood-colored mask. It crackled down toward the Li Clan Patriarch, slamming directly onto his soul embodiment.

“Dammit! What the hell are you doing?!?!” He trembled, and his soul embodiment flickered as if it were about to dissipate.

Meng Hao nodded, then used his Spiritual Sense again to summon another lightning bolt, and then another. Rumbling booms sounded out as they fell down onto the Li Clan Patriarch, who emitted constant miserable shrieks.

This process went on for about two hours, until the Li Clan Patriarch's soul embodiment was growing dim.

“You psycho!” cried the Li Clan Patriarch, gnashing his teeth. “You're a damned lunatic! And that meat jelly is nothing but a nightmare! One of these days I'll get my revenge!” He continued to curse, but inside actually felt quite pathetic, and was heaving constant sighs.

In the Immortal's cave, Meng Hao opened his eyes.

“The Li Clan Patriarch has an extraordinary Cultivation base. He meets all the requirements to become a Soul of Lightning. From now on, I’ll need to use all methods at my disposal to get him accustomed to lightning. I also need an Eyeless Larva. Before that, though, I should head out and collect the last medicinal plant ingredient I need for the Perfect Gold Core.” Having made up his mind, Meng Hao sent his Spiritual Sense out to find Huang Daxian.

He was currently looking on complacently as the parrot flew around above a group of people who were all running around in various patterns. Huang Daxian’s body trembled as Meng Hao’s voice suddenly echoed out in his head. Then, his mind was branded with an image of the plant Meng Hao needed.

Half a month later, Meng Hao was looking down at a jade slip, inside of which was information regarding the medicinal plant he needed, a clue uncovered during the investigation carried out by his group of over a hundred Cultivators. Meng Hao stood and left the Immortal’s cave.

“Dongluo City, member of the United Nine Cities.” Inside the jade slip was also a map of the Black Lands, marked with the location of Dongluo City, which wasn’t very far away. [1]

By now, Meng Hao was familiar with the power structure of the Black Lands, thanks to his more than one hundred followers. Other than the Black Lands Palace and the United Nine, the Black Lands were inhabited completely by Rogue Cultivators. In some cases, groups banded together to form small-scale powers. Some were strong, some were weak, but regardless, they existed in a state of disunity.

As far as the United Nine, it was made up of nine of the Black Lands’ most powerful Cultivator Clans, and the cities that had grown up around them. They had banded together and formed an alliance to stand up against the power of the Black Lands Palace.

The ingredient Meng Hao needed was a Spirit Orchid Leaf, a medicinal plant that wasn’t particularly rare. That having been said, it wasn’t something that the small-scale powers would have. It would only be available in one of the nine major cities.

According to the information he’d received, Dongluo City would be holding an auction soon. Medicinal pills would be up for sale, as well as medicinal plants. As for the Spirit Orchid Leaf, it could actually be consumed directly to treat injuries, so of course people would be willing to purchase it.

Meng Hao flicked his sleeve as he left the region of his Immortal's cave for the first time in more than a year. Transforming into a beam of prismatic light, he shot like lightning off into the distance.

Thanks to the Primordial Heavenly Replenishing Pill, his hair was now black once again and his eyes were filled with abstruseness. He wore a green gown, and his features were handsome and refined. On his forehead was mark that looked both like a scale and a feather, and yet was neither. Overall, he appeared completely extraordinary.

As he flew away from the Immortal's cave, the meat jelly and the parrot followed him.

As they flew along, the parrot continuously chided the meat jelly, who squabbled back endlessly. It went on for a few days, with the two of them occasionally getting into blows. Finally, the parrot used its trump card. It went on with a series of "Do you want to know?" questions, which resulted in the meat jelly transforming into a small bell which the parrot fastened around its leg.

The parrot finally came to rest on Meng Hao's shoulder, perched there with an arrogant look on its face that said that it was a one-of-a-kind ancient Celestial bird, esteemed in Heaven and Earth, unique in all creation.

The ground beneath them was pitch black, with occasional black-colored plants growing up from the soil. It all looked very sinister. The entire time, Meng Hao didn't stop once; following the information on the map, he flew straight toward Dongluo City.

On one particular evening several days later, a green city appeared up ahead. It wasn't grand and majestic, but rather, square in shape, and apparently constructed from vegetation.

The city walls were created from interwoven plants. The greenness created by the plants made the city stick out conspicuously from the black soil.

In the middle of the city, trees grew up. All of the trees had massive amounts of branches growing out from them, which were also interwoven to form layers. The city as a whole seemed to be formed of two levels, one on the ground, the other in the sky.

There was a third level, which was formed by a single, enormous tree, the interior of the city. From a distance, the city looked very bizarre. Meng Hao's eyes began to shine.

As they approached, they saw the city gate, which was formed by eight giant interlocking trees. Cultivators walked in and out of the gate, and inside the city itself were quite a few Cultivators.

Perched atop the massive tree in the center of the city was what appeared to be an enormous phoenix, several dozens of meters in length. It had bright, scarlet feathers, and was incredibly beautiful.

A closer look revealed that it wasn't actually a phoenix, but a peacock.

It would occasionally look around at the city with an arrogant expression. It didn't emit the power of a Cultivation base, but from a distance it still emanated a powerful, threatening aura that Meng Hao could sense. It caused his pupils to constrict.

The look in the peacock's eyes seemed to say that no one was worthy of its gaze. It looked around arrogantly, seemingly despising all that it saw.

Suddenly, Meng Hao heard the parrot whisper: "You dare to act like that in front of Lord Fifth, bitch!?"

Meng Hao had read some information about this scarlet peacock in the jade slip. It was a holy animal of the Dongluo Clan. For some reason unknown to outsiders, it would occasionally take to flight and circle around the city; everyone who saw the spectacle would praise its beauty.

Just as they were about to enter the city, Meng Hao heard the parrot next to him, panting heavily.

"Eee? Now that I'm closer I can see that flirty look in its eyes... Hm, a red bird, I've never tried that out before...." Before Meng Hao could react or even think about what it meant, the parrot was gone. Meng Hao watched as ripples spread out in the air, and a multicolored streak shot up through the air toward the peacock.

Chapter 327: Angry Dongluo Ling! [1]

Everything was happening too quickly. Meng Hao gaped in astonishment. Before he could react, he saw the multicolored streak flying through the air at high speed. It looked like a shooting star as it headed toward the beautiful, proud Scarlet Peacock.

Within the colorful light was none other than the parrot, shooting forward like a spear, head upraised. Its sharp, curved beak emitted a cold glow, as it clenched its body tight into something that looked like a spearhead.

Meng Hao wasn't sure if he was mistaken or not, but it very much seemed like its eyes were shining with excitement, as well as determination and lasciviousness....

It moved with incredible speed. In one breath it was quite a distance from the peacock. In the next breath, it was upon it.

All of the feathers on the body of the Scarlet Peacock stood on end as it turned its beautiful head, emanating the powerful might of a phoenix, seeming to warn everyone from encroaching upon its space. Meng Hao's eyes went wide, and his mind began to spin. He suddenly had a very bad feeling about what was happening. He watched the multicolored streak of light that was the parrot as it charged directly toward the peacock's rear end....

Aaiiiee!

An intense, miserable screech echoed out from the once graceful and beautiful peacock. The sound was wretched, as an indescribable pain washed over it.

All its feathers stood on end, and its expression was twisted and distorted. It was no longer elegant, and its beauty had now been transformed into suffering. It trembled violently as its scream filled Dongluo City, which of course attracted the attention of large numbers of Cultivators. All of them lifted their heads up in astonishment.

What they saw was the peacock, always so graceful and haughty, now trembling violently and screaming miserably. It was flying haphazardly through the air, beating its wings, as if it was trying to shake something off of its body.

Its efforts were of no avail. As it screamed, its eyes turned red, and a billowing Flame Sea appeared around it. Within the fire, the peacock continued to scream intensely. Its feathers bristled to the point where it looked like it might explode from insanity.

All of the Cultivators in the city were staring with gaping mouths, unsure of what exactly was happening to it. However, they could all sense that the peacock was currently experiencing indescribable pain.

It was at this time that members of Dongluo City's Cultivator Clan emerged, looking worried as they flew up toward the peacock. One among their number was a young woman wearing a long, emerald green garment. Her features were beautiful and enchanting, but her phoenix-like eyes were filled with worry and confusion as she approached the peacock.

"Scarlet Peacock, what's wrong...?" she said. Her voice was pleasant, like the song of a lark.

As soon as the Cultivators down in the city saw her, they began to discuss the matter in hushed tones.

"That's Goddess Dongluo Ling of the Dongluo Clan..."

"That's none other than one of the three most beautiful female Cultivators in the Black Lands, Dongluo Ling!"

By this time, Meng Hao had ducked his head down and hurried into the city, his scalp slowly growing numb. He blended into the crowd, his face ashen, looking up at the flames in the sky. The miserable shrieks of the peacock continued to ring out.

"Damned parrot!" thought Meng Hao, grinding his teeth. There was nothing he could do about it, though. He should have considered the parrot's indulgences. Back when it was stuck in the copper mirror, Meng Hao had to take the initiative to provoke something like this. But now that it was free, it couldn't hold itself back after seeing a pretty, feathered peacock.

"I can't let people find out that I brought it here..." he thought with a frown. Up above, the peacock let out another shriek. Now, everyone could see a multicolored beam of light whizzing through the air near the peacock's rear end. Before anyone could see clearly what was inside of it, it built up some momentum and then shot back toward the peacock.

The peacock tried to dodge out of the way, but was unable to. When people saw this, they could only watch on in dumbstruck silence.

Based on what they had just seen, they now understood why the elegant Scarlet Peacock was emitting such blood-curdling screams.

A buzz of conversation immediately rose up as everyone expressed their disbelief and astonishment.

“This is....”

“What is that thing? What it’s doing is... indescribable....”

“That multicolored light is entering.... My god! Is there really a magical item that does something like this? What is it? It’s simply too vicious, too malicious, too penetrating....”

Meng Hao stood in the crowd, his jaw clenched. He felt as if his face were burning, and he was very worried about everyone finding out that the multicolored light had been brought into the city by him.

The Dongluo Clan Cultivators floated in mid-air, trying to figure out how to help the peacock. Dongluo Ling’s face was filled with anxiety. However, the sight of the multicolored light caused them to stare in shock.

The Scarlet Peacock’s wails were pitiful, its eyes filled with humiliation and pain. Suddenly, it began to fall to the ground, body trembling. The Dongluo Clan Cultivators rushed forward in a frenzy. As they neared, the multicolored light disappeared, leaving behind only an exhausted panting sound.

The Dongluo Clan Cultivators’ faces were extremely unsightly. Dongluo Ling’s was virtually bursting with flames. Moments later, the entire city was sealed down tightly. More Dongluo Clan Cultivators appeared, bursting with bestial killing intent and rage as they began to search for the multicolored light.

One could imagine what savage methods they would employ to punish the mysterious multicolored light if they ever found it....

As for the Scarlet Peacock, it was currently being given emergency treatment....

Meng Hao’s face was just as unsightly as he dispersed along with the crowd. He wasn’t sure where the parrot had gone to. If it suddenly appeared on his shoulder, then he would have to leave the city immediately.

He suddenly realized that the meat jelly was actually very well behaved....

As night fell upon Dongluo City, word of what had just happened spread through the various Cultivators. Late that night, the wrath of the entire Dongluo Clan was burning.

In the Dongluo Clan's manor house, Dongluo Ling stood there with tears in her eyes as she comforted the trembling, sleeping Scarlet Peacock. Every time it trembled, her eyes would flash with killing intent.

"I'm going to find that multicolored light," she said, gnashing her teeth, "and when I do, I'll hack it into pieces!"

Meanwhile, Meng Hao sat cross-legged in his room in a local inn, his face dark. Finally, he opened his eyes from meditation and let out a soft sigh as the parrot appeared.

It looked the same as ever, multicolored, with the meat jelly bell still attached to its foot. Its expression was one of arrogance, and its eyes flickered with contentment and complacency.

"Heyyy, Lord Fifth is back," it said, strutting back and forth on the table, lifting its head up to stare at Meng Hao.

"Did you have fun?" asked Meng Hao coolly, his facing expressionless.

"Lots of fun!!" replied the parrot. It took a deep breath, and the haughtiness in its face disappeared, to be replaced by a look of reminiscence.

"I've tried out many different purely colored birds such as that," it said with a sigh. "One year I even tried out their ancestor, the phoenix. However, scarlet is the only color I haven't tried. Not bad. Really not bad."

"Do you know how much difficulty it's going to cause if they found out it was you?" said Meng Hao.

"What are you scared of?" it said, its face filled with conceited grandeur. "Have faith in the Lord Fifth, gain eternal life. When Lord Fifth appears, who dares to cause strife? If they dare to mess with me, I'll screw 'em to death! I'll deal with them like I dealt with that bird. I'm not talking about

you, of course. Birds have their tenacity, and so do people. Tenacity, that's the key. Look, I have a duty to help you out. Join me in your loudest voice...."

A solemn-looking face suddenly appeared on the bell on the parrot's foot. "You're immoral! Simply too wicked! My life's mission is definitely to convert you, you sinister bird!"

The parrot looked down at the meat jelly with a look of disdain. "Shut up, b*tch! Did I ever not take you with me to do these kinds of things? Do you remember the Space Ape from that year? Did I take you with me, or not? How about the Flame Phoenix? Did I take you with me, or not? What about that big hairy fish in the Star Sea, or that tiger in the Eighth Mountain? What about the great Golden Dragon? Did you forget about that?"

The meat jelly hesitated for a moment, then gritted its teeth and said, "Uhh... You forced me!"

Meng Hao sat off to the side, watching on silently. Originally he had planned to say a few things about what had happened today, but hearing the parrot list off its "achievements," he suddenly realized he didn't have anything to say. He sighed, shaking his head and ignoring the two, instead closing his eyes and continuing to meditate.

As the night went on, the Dongluo Clan used all its power, all their precious treasures, all their Divine Sense, to search every corner of the city. It was all to no avail. As the search continued, three days slowly passed.

During the three days, Meng Hao went out twice. Each time, the parrot would perch pompously on his shoulder to accompany him. On a few occasions, they encountered members of the Dongluo Clan. However, the uncomely parrot didn't seem to attract any suspicions.

"Don't worry," said the parrot. "I've done things like this before on many occasions, and I've never gotten caught. The only things left behind are legends of Lord Fifth. However, no one ever knows my true appearance."

Meng Hao didn't respond.

On the two occasions he went out, Meng Hao made inquiries about the auction which was to take place in ten days, and was able to confirm that ten Spirit Orchid Leaves would be up for sale.

He also made some inquiries about the price. This particular plant would appear in the auction every few years, and the price was always a bit over ten thousand spirit stones.

Meng Hao personally didn't have many Spirit Stones, but Ji Hongdong's bag of holding had ultra high-grade Spirit Stones, as well as a collection of regular Spirit Stones to the number of about twenty thousand. It wasn't much when it came to duplicating medicinal pills, but it should be enough to purchase the Spirit Orchid Leaf and still have some left over.

On evening of the fourth day, Meng Hao sat cross-legged in his room. Suddenly, his eyes opened, and he let out a sigh. As he had anticipated, trouble had come looking for him. He looked up at the door.

It didn't take long before it exploded, shattered to pieces that showered into the room.

Chapter 328: Establishing Strength!

The instant the door shattered into pieces, a whooshing sound could be heard, and the parrot disappeared without a trace. Meng Hao wasn't sure where it had gone to hide, but obviously it had seen the look on his face and knew the trouble it had stirred up. However, instead of cleaning up its own mess, it left it to Meng Hao. Meng Hao's mood sank even deeper.

His eyes flickered with coldness. He knew that the law of the jungle was a strict one and was revered as a way of life in the Black Lands. Weakness and retreat gave an opponent even more power and reason to crush you.

In the Black Lands, there was no reasoning, there was only strength.

The strong could plunder cities and enslave Clans. In the Black Lands, you could do anything you wanted and no one would do anything against you unless it was to their benefit. If you didn't encroach on someone's territory, they wouldn't pay attention to you at all even if you slaughtered countless other Cultivators.

For example, the nine Clans that made up the United Nine had changed countless times throughout the years. One would rise, another would fall, down to this very day.

After the door was destroyed, two people charged into the room, accompanied by a cold, glittering light. As they descended upon him, Meng Hao let out a cold snort. It didn't matter that he was

actually in the wrong. He sat there cross-legged, his killing intent flashing. He lifted his right hand up as fast as lightning, and a single finger attack shot out.

A miserable scream immediately filled the air, and a corpse toppled backward out the door. At the same time, his four remaining fingers curled into a claw which latched onto the neck of a black-robed Cultivator.

No matter how he struggled, the man couldn't move an inch. Meng Hao immediately sent spiritual power into the man's Cultivation base, sealing it down tightly.

When attacking, one cannot hesitate, nor show weakness. That is a fundamental rule in the Black Lands.

Meng Hao's expression was calm as he looked over at the door. Standing outside were eight Cultivators wearing black robes. Their expressions were serious, but they didn't dare to enter the room. Instead, they stood there looking vigilantly at Meng Hao.

"Dongluo Ling," said Meng Hao coolly, "is this the way the Dongluo Clan receives its guests? You'd better provide an explanation, or I'll turn your skull into a cooking pot."

The people outside remained silent as a woman stepped out from behind them. She wore a long, emerald green robe, and was quite beautiful. Her skin was so delicate it seemed a breeze could break it. This was none other than Dongluo Ling. Her brow was furrowed as she glared into Meng Hao's room.

"Since you know who I am, then you'd better let my man go immediately. Then we can discuss some matters." Her voice was pleasant, but filled with iciness. Her Cultivation base was beyond ordinary; it appeared to be at the early Core Formation stage.

Meng Hao grinned. He might have the appearance of a scholar, but looking at him now, he possessed a certain fierceness. He suddenly clenched his right hand. Loud cracking sounds could be heard; the man's body twitched as his neck was crushed into pieces. After he was thoroughly dead, Meng Hao stood up and turned into a blur as he rushed toward the door.

Dongluo Ling laughed mockingly. She stood her ground, not moving at all. As she glanced down at the body of the dead man, the eight men around her suddenly moved forward to obstruct Meng Hao's way. Two of them were white-haired old men. Their gazes were like lightning, their stature tall; shockingly, they even had totem tattoos on their arms. However, they didn't look like Western

Desert Cultivators. They had extraordinary Cultivation bases at the mid Core Formation stage. Their bodies flashed as they moved forward to defend Dongluo Ling.

They were fast, but Meng Hao was even faster. In the blink of an eye, he was out the door. He flicked his sleeve, and a gale force wind suddenly exploded out. It screamed out in all directions, causing the bodies of the eight Cultivators to shake as they spit up blood. They all retreated, looks of astonishment on their faces.

This caused Dongluo Ling's face to change and her pupils to constrict before she could even think about it. The faces of two old men in front of her fell.

Meng Hao was as calm as ever as he neared Dongluo Ling. The eyes of the two old men flickered as they also advanced, hands flickering in incantation gestures. Their Cultivation bases roared with power as their magical techniques appeared.

"No Core Qi," said Meng Hao, his expression intentionally lofty. "Insects." Even as he spoke, his right hand lifted up and then descended downward in a fist.

Boom.

An expression of shock filled the face of one of the men. The magical technique he had been incanting immediately collapsed to pieces. He felt an incredible power slam into him, and blood sprayed from his mouth as he staggered backward several paces.

As for the other old man, his eyes narrowed and he let out a howl as he attacked. Meng Hao's left hand snaked out, and he tapped the man's forehead lightly. Suddenly, Demonic Qi rose up, visible only to Meng Hao. It poured into the man, causing his veins to bulge and his eyes to fill with confusion.

All of this happened in a single instant, and then, Meng Hao was standing directly in front of the shocked Dongluo Ling.

Dongluo Ling knew that she had acted rashly, and that her opponent was far more powerful than her. The only thing she could do now was angrily say, "Do you really dare to offend me in my own Clan's city? You're dead for sure!"

Meng Hao looked her over coldly. Then he lifted up his right hand and was about to grab her, when suddenly he frowned and paused in mid-motion. Then, he pointed his hand down toward the ground. The entire inn began to shake as invisible Qi rushed up from all directions to circle around Meng Hao. It formed into a barrier to protect against a black spear which was currently shooting toward him from off in the distance.

The spear was as thick as the hand of a child, and was covered with complex, swirling patterns. It whistled through the air, slamming into the Demonic Qi vortex surrounding Meng Hao. A boom echoed out, and the spear shook, then collapsed into pieces. The pieces transformed into green-colored Core Qi, which then dissipated in all directions. The spearhead, however, did not disappear; it was still stabbing through the vortex. Just as it seemed it would pierce all the way through, Meng Hao reached up and tapped the top of the spearhead.

As soon as he touched it, the spearhead trembled and then exploded into fragments of Core Qi.

Dongluo Ling took advantage of this opportunity to back up about twenty meters. It seemed she was about to flee. Meng Hao coolly said, "Get back here."

The words were simple, but the instant she heard them, Dongluo Ling's face went pale white. She had suddenly discovered that her entire body was incapable of moving.

The old man who Meng Hao had just tapped on the forehead looked confused, as if his spirit had fled. Seemingly not even under his own control, he bound Dongluo Ling, grabbed her, and then flew back toward Meng Hao.

It was at this moment that Meng Hao lifted his head and looked off into the distance. It was currently dusk, and there were no Cultivators visible anywhere. Even the inn seemed to be empty. However, far off in the distance, a middle-aged man stood on a rooftop. His body was skinny and withered, almost like a skeleton. However, he emitted a dignified aura as he looked toward Meng Hao.

Their gazes met, and their Spiritual Sense shot out, emanating with massive pressure. Invisible ripples exploded out. Meng Hao didn't move, but the face of the middle-aged man flickered, and he retreated several paces, coughing up blood.

"So," said Meng Hao, his voice cool, "mid Core Formation Core Qi turns out to be slightly more powerful than insects."

“Your excellency, who are you?” asked the stooped, middle-aged man. “Why do you wish to make the Dongluo Clan your enemy?” His expression was serious, and it seemed he couldn’t see Meng Hao’s Cultivation base.

“Sir, that is exactly the same question I wanted to ask you,” said Meng Hao calmly. “I have no grievance with the Dongluo Clan. So why did you send everyone in the area away, and then surround me and try to kill me!?”

Dongluo Ling ground her teeth and glared at Meng Hao, her eyes radiating hatred. “From the day the Scarlet Peacock was injured until today, thirteen people have entered the city. I’ve personally looked into the other twelve. You are the last one, and also the most suspicious!” When she thought about how the Scarlet Peacock couldn’t even fly now, and would always tremble and shake as it slept, her hatred toward Meng Hao seeped into her bones.

Meng Hao’s face sank. His voice cold, he said, “What ultimate absurdity! You’re just trying to stir up trouble!” He didn’t even make an attempt to explain anything; his simple response made him seem even more awe-inspiring.

The middle-aged man hesitated for a moment. Finally, he clasped hands and bowed toward Meng Hao, a bitter smile on his face. “This is all just a misunderstanding,” he said with a sigh. “My little sister went off on her own to investigate things. Fellow Daoist, I truly hope you can forgive us. That Scarlet Peacock is my little sister’s most beloved pet, and what happened has really aroused our ire. Therefore, we accidentally offended you. Sir, I am Dongluo Han. I implore you to give me a bit of face. What do you say?” [1]

Meng Hao looked hesitant. He waved his right hand, and the old man who had bound up Dongluo Ling no longer looked confused; he regained his senses, then immediately began to tremble. He looked at Meng Hao as if he were a ghost.

Dongluo Ling’s body flashed, transforming into a beam of light as she flew over to stand next to the middle-aged man. She glared viciously at Meng Hao.

“Many thanks, Fellow Daoist,” said the man. “Allow me to give you a Dongluo City command medallion. With this medallion, your time in the city will be much more convenient.” Dongluo Han pulled out a black command medallion which he tossed toward Meng Hao. Meng Hao grabbed it and looked it over. In his time spent in the city recently, he’d learned that in Dongluo City there were five different types of command medallions. Scarlet was the highest, black was secondary, then yellow, blue and white. Each medallion came with various privileges within the city.

For example, in order to participate in the upcoming auction, one needed, at the least, a yellow command medallion.

After Meng Hao took the command medallion, Dongluo Han once again clasped hands and bowed, then grabbed the obstinate Dongluo Ling and left, along with the other Cultivators. As she left, Dongluo Ling's features were filled with fury.

"Third Bro, why did you compromise with that guy?" she asked. "We surveilled him for several days. Of the thirteen suspects, he was definitely the most suspicious. Some people even saw him with a multicolored parrot."

Before Dongluo Han could respond, a dignified voice suddenly could be heard from off to the side.

"I told him to." Along with the voice, a man appeared. He looked to be middle-aged, but there was also some sort of ancientness to him. As soon as he appeared, Dongluo Han and Dongluo Ling lowered their heads and saluted.

"Greetings Clan Chief."

"The Black Lands are falling into great chaos. The United Nine face imminent danger. At the moment, the last thing we need is to provoke powerful enemies. That guy appears to be in the mid Core Formation stage, but his attack just now was matchlessly ruthless. He dispatched another mid Core Formation Cultivator with no difficulty. He seems like a Rogue Cultivator, but at the same time, not. Under normal circumstances, it wouldn't matter, but for now, we need to exercise caution."

Chapter 329: Lord Fifth Flies Into a Rage

"The Black Lands in great chaos?" said Dongluo Han, gaping at the Clan Chief.

Dongluo Ling also gaped for a moment. For as long as she could remember, the law of the jungle in the Black Lands made it appear on the surface as if there were no rules. However, because of the Black Lands Palace and the United Nine, there was a bit of stability. Superficially, the Black Lands seemed chaotic, but the powers beneath the surface made things much less chaotic than they seemed.

The Dongluo Clan Chief was quiet for a moment before looking up at the stars in the sky and saying, “Four days ago in Saturn City, Elder Tumou was killed by Patriarch Death Spirit from the Western Lands....”

His words caused Dongluo Han’s face to flicker. The surrounding Cultivators all looked shocked and doubtful.

Breathing heavily, Dongluo Han said, “Elder Tumou was an almighty Spirit Severing Cultivator... He....” The nine Clans that made up the United Nine were all very different. Furthermore, various Clans had come and gone throughout the years. However, the main reason the United Nine was able to stand up to the Black Lands Palace was because of their four great mountains.

These four mountains housed four Spirit Severing Patriarchs. The Clans of these four were naturally the leaders in the alliance. With the presence of the four Patriarchs, they had been able to oppose the Black Lands Palace down to this day.

The Dongluo Clan Chief slowly continued, “After Elder Tumou perished, the Black Lands Palace immediately invaded his Saturn Clan. In a single day, all the Clan members were slaughtered, and their city was taken over by the Black Lands Palace.”

Dongluo Han gasped. “The Black Lands Palace.... The Western Desert....” After a moment’s thought, his heart and mind trembled. This news caused him to completely forget about the matter of the Scarlet Peacock.

“This matter must be kept a secret....” said Dongluo Ling, looking at the other surrounding Cultivators.

The Clan Chief shook his head. “It won’t take long before news of the incident spreads throughout all the Black Lands, even if the United Nine tries to cover it up, the news will spread.” He looked tired and very anxious.

Dongluo Ling was about to say something else, when suddenly, a miserable shriek could be heard coming from the top level of the city, where the Scarlet Peacock was. The cry was one of ultimate misery, as if it were experiencing indescribable pain.

Dongluo Ling’s face immediately flashed. Next to her, Dongluo Han gaped in shock. All of the Cultivators immediately looked upward.

As for Meng Hao, he was sitting cross-legged inside of his room. After the Dongluo Clan members left, the staff of the inn returned, giving Meng Hao a wide, respectful berth. The owner of the inn waited on him nervously, allowing him to change rooms and even giving him some Spirit Stones before making an excuse to leave.

“At first I thought I was going to have to fight my way out and come back in disguise,” thought Meng Hao, looking down at the black command medallion. “Who would have thought that the Dongluo Clan would back down?” A puzzled look appeared on his face. “Has something happened I don’t know about?”

It was at this point that he heard the miserable shrieks coming from outside. He immediately stood, opened a window, and looked out, a strange expression on his face.

Another scream rose up into the air. This time, it was obvious that it was a different Scarlet Peacock than the one from before. Even as looks of shock filled the faces of everyone in the city, a third shriek echoed out.

At the same time, three figures, blazing like fire, shot out from the second level of the city. It was three more Scarlet Peacocks. The largest was nearly a hundred meters long, the smallest only about thirty. They were letting out shrill shrieks; anyone who heard them could almost feel their pain.

A boom rattled out, and for some inexplicable reason, a massive force seemed to rip through one of the huge trees that made up the second level of the city. It shot in and out several times, until it had cut out a character.

5!

A bang rang out as a tall, strapping man appeared in mid-air, surrounded by a multicolored glow. His features were indistinct, but he gave on an eminently conceited air as he floated there in mid-air looking down on the ground.

The three peacocks trembled. Beneath them, the massive character 5 that had been cut into the tree, was extremely clear.

“You all listen carefully to what Lord Fifth has to say. When I was born, I was the most revered in Heaven and Earth. If I want people to wear clothes, they wear clothes. If I want animals to have fur or feathers, then they grow it immediately!”

The echoing voice immediately evoked the wrath of the Dongluo Clan. Furious shouts could be heard from within the Dongluo Clan. A ruddy-faced old man suddenly charged out, emanating the power of the Nascent Soul stage. He shot toward the parrot, who was currently utilizing the meat jelly’s transforming ability.

“You dare to defame the residence of the Dongluo Clan!? Get back here!”

“You old fart!” screeched the man-form parrot. “Lord Fifth is gonna screw you to death!” His body flickered as he shot toward the old man. He radiated a savage potency, as if he were a member of an elite death squad the most powerful and esteemed person in all the Heavens.

This powerful vigor radiated thickly off of him, as if there were no orifice in the world that he couldn’t conquer!

The parrot, in the form of a virulent, muscular man, suddenly appeared next to the old Nascent Soul Cultivator. The speed of his movement left the man shocked, and before he could do anything, they slammed into each other.

As the boom rattled out, the Nascent Soul Cultivator’s face twisted. Cold sweat burst out from his forehead as he realized that his opponent had been shooting straight toward the area roughly a handsbreadth below his navel. If he hadn’t moved quickly enough....

Before he could continue along with this train of thought, he suddenly felt a cold air on his back.

The man-form parrot was off to the side, raising his head up and giving out a piercing howl.

“You’re far too wicked!” said a voice. “Doing this kind of thing is very immoral! Very, very immoral. You shouldn’t....”

“Shut the hell up, b*tch! Lord Fifth is gonna screw this guy to death!” The man-parrot’s eyes grew green as he glared at the Nascent Soul Cultivator, let out a wild shout, and then charged forward.

The old man's scalp went numb as he saw the strange man approaching him. This was the first time he had ever felt such fear in his heart. However, it was at this exact moment that a cold snort suddenly sounded out from within the Dongluo Clan. Two prismatic beams of light flew out, emanating the power of Nascent Soul Cultivation bases. One of these men was even of the late Nascent Soul stage.

A boom echoed out, and the man-parrot tumbled backward. His eyes grew even more green, and its body began to tremble with rage.

"I'm gonna screw you to death! All of you...."

"No need to get so excited," said the meat jelly. "Don't be so impulsive...."

"Asura Fire!" cried the man-parrot as it floated there in the air. Suddenly, black flames leapt into being.

"Sky Walker Slaying!" it cried again. The flames roared up into the sky. In the middle of all the black flames was the man-parrot, its body trembling. Suddenly, a black band of cloth appeared in its hand, which it wrapped around the top of its head, covering one eye. It was really a bizarre sight. Suddenly, it shot down toward the Nascent Soul Cultivators.

It moved with incredible speed. As it did, a black mist emanated out from its body, as well as fire. It gradually transformed into an enormous one-eyed raven, hundreds of meters long. It emanated a shocking power as it charged in a frenzy toward the three Nascent Soul Cultivators.

Everyone who saw this was astonished. Even Meng Hao's eyes were wide.

The three Nascent Soul Cultivators were pale faced. They all began to perform incantations. Above them, the intensely shocking flames descended down. The faces of the Nascent Soul Cultivators fell, and they retreated. A massive boom shook everything as a huge crater appeared in the ground.

This crater was located in the very center of the city, causing the plants which composed the floor to begin to sway and sag. The entire second level of the city was virtually destroyed. The ground quaked, and all of the Cultivators currently in the city flew up into the air, faces pale with astonishment.

There was nothing alive within the crater, and the enormous black raven had disappeared without a trace.

The only thing left behind was a wildly arrogant voice which broke the silence.

“Have faith in the Lord Fifth, gain eternal life. When the Lord Fifth appears, who dares to cause strife!”

This was the only sound that echoed out into the quiet. Dongluo Ling’s eyes were filled with fear, and off to the side, Dongluo Han was panting. The Dongluo Clan Chief had a serious expression on his face as he shot off toward the crater. His solemn voice called out, “Remember this: never, ever provoke that Cultivator. A person like him has a lot of helpers. We’ve reached a moment of truth. Make friends, not enemies!”

The ground eventually ceased quaking. Meng Hao stood at the window, his expression strange. Everything that had happened just now made him suddenly think that the parrot was actually kind of funny.

A multicolored light suddenly flashed in the room. The parrot appeared, looking exhausted. It flopped down onto the table and looked at Meng Hao out of the corner of its eye. It was huffing and puffing, but its expression was as haughty and proud as ever.

“Bitches. If Lord Fifth hadn’t just recently awoken from slumber, then he would be much more powerful. I could have screwed the entire city! Then they would know how badass Lord Fifth is! As for you, kid, feel free to express your thanks by offering me some worship. Come, come. Say it with me: Have faith....”

Meng Hao turned, ignoring the parrot and instead looking once again out the window, his eyes shining with vigilance. He had long since pulled out the good luck charm to see if he could use it.

“It’s too bad I haven’t been able to harness the power of the roc. If I had, then even a Nascent Soul Cultivator wouldn’t be able to keep up with me.” He continued to look out in the direction of the Dongluo Clan.

As time passed, however, it seemed that the commotion had died down. No one came to cause trouble, and the Dongluo Clan didn’t seem to be furious. Everything was smoothing over.

This, however, made Meng Hao even more nervous, although what he was worried about wasn't the Dongluo Clan, but whatever momentous event had led to the current circumstances.

If something major hadn't happened, the Dongluo Clan definitely wouldn't be acting like this.

Three days later, Meng Hao finally understood everything. One of the cities of the United Nine had been taken over after its Spirit Severing Patriarch perished. The Western Desert was controlling the Black Lands Palace; it seemed their goal was to devour all of the Black Lands.

This news swept over the Black Lands like storm winds over the following days. Soon, everyone knew about it....

When the day of the auction arrived, Meng Hao left his room. A cold wind blew outside, and the sky above was filled with dark clouds. It seemed a thunderstorm was approaching.

"The Black Lands are heading towards an upheaval," said Meng Hao to himself. He looked around to see Cultivators all around him hurrying in the direction of the auction.

The parrot was perched on Meng Hao's shoulder, looking around proudly as if it knew that one day it would take care of this place once and for all.

Chapter 330: I'll Marry Anyone But You!

The crater in the middle of Dongluo City had long since been filled in with vast amounts of vegetation. The damaged second level was also restored to its normal condition. However, the "5" on the big tree could not be covered up, no matter what the Dongluo Clan did.

The auction was being held not very far away from that very tree. As Meng Hao approached the auction, he couldn't help but see it. The parrot, perched on his shoulder, looked up at it out of the corner of his eye. With an egotistical expression, he lifted his head up as if everything were beneath him.

The auction facility wasn't very large, a far cry from the Violet Fate Sect auction, in which tens of thousands of Cultivators could participate. There were only a few hundred people seated around the auction floor, conversing in whispers. In the middle of it all was a raised platform.

Only Cultivators with the appropriate command medallions from the Dongluo Clan could enter. As soon as Meng Hao produced his black command medallion, he was immediately treated with favor, and escorted to a comfortable seat.

If the auction floor had been set up with private booths, Meng Hao would have been entitled to one because of the black command medallion.

He sat down, his expression the same as ever, then closed his eyes and settled his mind. There weren't very many people seated near him, nor were there many people in the auction in general. This wasn't a very common sight in Dongluo City.

Because of the latest news circulating around the Black Lands, people were nervous. Many Cultivators had already fled the cities. At the moment, the cities of the United Nine were no longer as safe as the outside world was.

After all, the Black Lands Palace was targeting, not Black Lands Cultivators in general, but the Clans of the United Nine.

Under such circumstances, Meng Hao knew that any people who had chosen to come attend this auction were people with utmost self-confidence. Considering war had already broken out, an auction like this most likely wouldn't be held again for some time. In fact, this would probably be the last auction in Dongluo City until the war ended.

"I have to attend...." said Meng Hao to himself. After enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, the auction would begin. More people began to filter in, and as they did, a man and a woman approached Meng Hao.

As they neared, Meng Hao opened his eyes and saw Dongluo Han and the beautiful Dongluo Ling. Dongluo Han had a broad smile on his face, whereas Dongluo Ling looked irritated, like she didn't want to be there.

"Fancy meeting you here, Fellow Daoist," said Dongluo Han with a grin, approaching Meng Hao and sitting down next to him. "When last we parted, I was unable to enquire as to your respected name. Would it be possible to find out?"

Dongluo Ling hesitated for a moment and then sat down on the other side of Meng Hao.

“My humble surname is Meng,” said Meng Hao coolly. “I’m a simple Rogue Cultivator.” He smiled at Dongluo Han. He could sense that the man hadn’t come to cause him trouble, but must have some other request, and had chosen this moment before the auction to bring it up.

His presence here was not unexpected; Meng Hao had actually predicted that something like this would happen.

“Brother Meng, there’s no need to be so modest,” replied Dongluo Han with a polite smile. “Considering how strong you are, I don’t think any other Rogue Cultivators could measure up to you.” His glance flitted over the parrot, and an imperceptible flicker of fear flashed through his eyes.

As for Dongluo Ling, she sat on the other side of Meng Hao. During the entire time, she had been glaring fiercely at the parrot. If looks could kill, then she would have slain the parrot many times over by now.

Meng Hao chuckled but didn’t say anything. Since Dongluo Han hadn’t brought up whatever request he planned to discuss, Meng Hao would just have to remain in the dark. However, he turned the good luck charm over and over in his palm, just as he had been doing for the past several days, never returning it to his bag of holding.

It was at this point that the parrot looked impatiently at Dongluo Ling and said, “What the hell? Are you crazy? What do you keep staring at Lord Fifth for? Are you looking for a screw?”

Dongluo Ling’s eyes went wide, and the veins on her face bulged out. Her beautiful features went purple, and she lunged to her feet, filled with explosive power. She was so angry that her entire body trembled.

During her entire life, she had never met anyone who she wanted to chop into pieces as much as this parrot. As such, her disgust toward Meng Hao had also reached an incredible level.

Dongluo Han gaped for a moment, then laughed bitterly and was about to say something when the parrot rolled its eyes. “Lord Fifth hates featherless, furless necks,” it said in its high-pitched voice. “Lord Fifth also hates waists with no fur or feathers. Nice chest and rear end, but again, no fur, no feathers. Even if you offered yourself free of charge, Lord Fifth wouldn’t accept.” The expression on its face said that no matter what she said, it would never like her.

Meng Hao felt a massive headache coming on. He cleared his throat.

The parrot's words just now made Dongluo Ling feel as if her mind were about to explode. Flames of fire raged in her eyes, and she seemed on the verge of losing control. She was about to spring into action when Dongluo Han's face suddenly darkened.

“Fifth Sis, SIT DOWN!”

Dongluo Ling's head shot up to look at him. Gritting her teeth, she thought about the safety of her Clan, and of Dongluo Han's solemn expression. Bottling up her frustration and fury, she could do nothing but sit back down. However, she made a firm decision that in the future, no matter who tried to get her to come see this detestable parrot, she would absolutely refuse.

“We've incurred Brother Meng's ridicule,” said Dongluo Han. “Please don't take offense at my younger sister's impulsiveness. Actually, I brought her with me today to offer an apology for the matter from the other day.”

“You're too courteous, Fellow Daoist Dongluo. That was just a misunderstanding, there's no need to bring it up.” Meng Hao smiled, but inwardly, he was on guard. He had anticipated that the Clan would seek him out eventually. Because of the power he had displayed, and the parrot's performance, most likely, he met the qualifications to be recruited by the Clan.

However, based on what Dongluo Han had said just now, Meng Hao could tell that he had something even bigger planned.

“My younger sister lacks discipline, and unfortunately, the Clan is facing upheaval. Brother Meng, you are handsome and talented. You and I hit it off well right from the start. In fact, I don't even take you to be an outsider. Brother Meng, I wonder if you would....”

Meng Hao's eyes suddenly flashed, and he was about to say something when Dongluo Ling once again shot to her feet.

“What are you talking about, Third Bro? You said you brought me here to make an apology! I get what you're trying to say, and I completely disagree! I don't care if it's your idea or the Clan's idea, I will never comply. If you try to force me, then I'll kill myself! I will never become anyone's beloved, especially this shameless, vulgar, despicable hoodlum!” She turned to glare coldly at Meng Hao, making no attempt to conceal her hatred, disgust and contempt. “You might as well quit your dreaming. I've taken an oath to never become someone's beloved, but even if I hadn't, there are countless heroes in the United Nine, and you don't measure up to even a single one of them!”

With that, she gave Meng Hao a final contemptuous look, then turned her supple waist and stalked off. Her slender, lithe figure would cause any man who saw it to feel tremors in his heart.

Meng Hao frowned. After hearing Dongluo Han's suggestion, he had been about to refuse. However, hearing Dongluo Ling's reaction caused him to smile and hold his tongue. He looked back at Dongluo Han.

Dongluo Han sighed inwardly. The idea hadn't come from the Clan. It was something he had spontaneously come up with himself. He had the feeling that this Cultivator named Meng possessed some unfathomable secret. As such, the idea of convincing him to join the Clan had wormed its way into his head.

Seeing Dongluo Ling's fierce reaction, however, caused Dongluo Han to shake his head with a bitter laugh. He gave Meng Hao an apologetic look, and didn't bring the matter up again. Instead, he sat silently in thought for a moment and said, "I assume you guessed my purpose in coming, Brother Meng. The Black Lands are falling into chaos. The Alliance of United Nine Cities isn't equal to the Black Lands Palace, but our power is not too far off. Fellow Daoist, join the United Nine, and your every wish will be but a command away."

Meng Hao didn't immediately refuse. He sat thinking for a short while, before slowly responding, "I can't make a decision immediately, sir."

"No matter," replied Dongluo Han. Actually, if Meng Hao had agreed immediately, it would have aroused his suspicions. An initial refusal was actually the most appropriate response. "The United Nine will be recruiting Black Lands Cultivators throughout the coming days. I want you to know that the United Nine will naturally treat recruits with utmost sincerity. Even though war has broken out between the Black Lands Palace and the United Nine, you should be able to see that the United Nine will not easily be exterminated. Brother Meng, I will await your decision. You can use that command medallion to notify the Dongluo Clan. In addition you can use the medallion to borrow some Spirit Stones for use in the auction today, a gift from me."

It was at this time that bells echoed out from the platform in the center of the auction floor. A glowing light emanated out, and a figure appeared on the platform. The auction was officially beginning.

Dongluo Han clasped hands and smiled, then made his way out of the auction area to look for other Cultivators to recruit. The entire Dongluo Clan had been mobilized in an effort to get more Rogue Cultivators to bolster the alliance.

There weren't a lot of people present, but the auction atmosphere was still lively. However, Meng Hao quickly noticed that there were three particular groups of people with whom others would not compete, regardless of what item was up for auction. At the most, they would watch on with dark expressions, but would hold their tongues.

These three groups were located carefully in opposite locations of the auction floor, and would not compete with each other.

Meng Hao glanced them over, then paid them no further attention. Regardless of where you went, there would be groups of various levels of influence and power. Groups like this would invariably flex their muscles at an important auction such as this.

Perhaps under normal circumstances they would be a bit more cautious. However, considering this was Dongluo City, and also considering the general chaos in the Black Lands, groups such as this were now far more valuable than before.

What Meng Hao needed, though, was the Spirit Orchid Leaf, of which ten would be available in the auction. Considering the turmoil on the horizon for the Black Lands, medicinal plants that could heal injuries would be increasingly valuable.

Despite that, Meng Hao still was able to acquire one. When he did, seven or eight Cultivators eyed him greedily.

His expression was the same as ever as he waited for the auction house to deliver the Spirit Orchid Leaf to him, whereupon he prepared to leave.

“Next up for auction is a flag. This flag is a treasure suitable for the Core Formation stage, and is called the Black Days Banner. When unfurled, it unleashes incredible power, and places inky blackness beneath your feet. It can be used both offensively and defensively, and most strange of all, can be fused with your Core Qi!

“This treasure was acquired from within some ancient ruins. Furthermore, we guarantee that in all the Black Lands, there is only this one.” As auctioneer introduced the item, a woman walked out from behind him bearing a copper tray. Atop the tray was a piece of cloth the size of a fist.

Meng Hao was just about to leave when he heard all of this. Suddenly, the parrot's eyes went wide, and it stared at the flag, its eyes filled with disbelief.

After a moment the parrot didn't speak, but rather transmitted its shrill, disbelieving voice into Meng Hao's head. "Get it! You have to get it! This is incredible luck for you!"