

The Heavens 351

Chapter 351: Peacock Screwing City

Dongluo City's three Nascent Soul Elders stood there fuming, gnashing their teeth. The hundreds of Cultivators outside of the fog still hadn't left, and were able to clearly see what was happening. Strange expressions covered their faces. Without any sort of consultation, they had all come to think the same thing: Meng Hao was someone to be intensely feared.

After a long moment, First Elder let out a long sigh and said, "Let all of our Clan members free and you can have the city, okay?!"

The dozens of Meng Haos all smiled. None of them spoke or moved; they simply looked at the three Nascent Soul Elders.

Not an ounce of respect for the Nascent Soul Cultivators could be seen in their gazes. Meng Hao didn't need to respect them. During his battle outside the Rebirth Cave, he had fought against more than ten Nascent Soul experts. There was nothing about them that he found awe-inspiring.

Even more importantly, Meng Hao was supremely confident that if he put on the blood-colored mask, although he would still not match up to them completely, he would definitely be able to fight back.

The First Elder said nothing for a while, but then let out a bitter laugh. He lifted his hand up and then smacked it down hard onto his chest. His body trembled as he spit up three consecutive mouthfuls of blood. With each mouthful, his aura grew weaker. By the end of the process, his Cultivation base was reduced by half.

Even though he was still of the Nascent Soul stage, his actual battle prowess was now at almost exactly the same level as the great circle of Core Formation. It would take him months to recover fully from such a state.

After a moment's silence, Second Elder sighed. He knew there was only one thing he could do; there were no other options available. He also delivered a palm strike to his own chest. After coughing up some blood, his face grew listless.

Third Elder glared venomously at Meng Hao for a moment, then took a deep breath. He also inflicted self-injuries. As he coughed up blood, his Cultivation base sank.

“Now do you trust us?” said First Elder coldly, wiping the blood from his mouth.

One of the dozens of Meng Haos gave a shy smile. Nodding, he tapped his bag of holding. Even as he did so, the First Elder’s eyes filled with a gleaming light; he suddenly opened his mouth and spit out a beam of light.

This was Nascent Soul Aura, similar to Core Qi. However, in terms of level, it was the Heavens and Core Qi was the Earth. This Nascent Soul Aura was red in color and was vastly more intense than any naturally occurring red glow in Heaven and Earth. It wasn’t very dense, but carried a brilliant luster. In an instant, it appeared in front of Meng Hao, then spread out to cover everything.

The glow disappeared in the blink of an eye. As it did, the Meng Hao who had been tapping his bag of holding, as well as all of the other Meng Haos in the area, were destroyed. However, what fell to the ground was not blood and flesh, but fog.

The sight caused the Nascent Soul Cultivators’ faces to grow even more unsightly. They had used every method at their disposal, but the prudence and deviousness of Patriarch Golden Light defeated them at every turn.

“Of course the one tapping the bag of holding wasn’t really me,” came a voice from the fog. The fog churned, and Meng Hao strode out. “Seniors, I know that my clones look transparent to your eyes. The fact that you mistook the clone for the real me is my fault, I guess. Oops.”

He waved his hand, causing hundreds of streams of medicinal elixir to fly out. They shot directly toward the bound Dongluo Clan members, fusing into their bodies through their foreheads.

“This poison is really harmless,” said Meng Hao with a smile. “It’s not fatal, nor will it affect the Cultivation base. Let’s just say it’s there as... insurance.” He stepped to the side, and a path opened up in the fog which led to the outside. The fog unwrapped from the hundreds of Dongluo Clan Cultivators, releasing them.

The three Nascent Soul Elders stood there with angry expressions on their faces, glaring at the single Meng Hao, unable to tell whether he was a clone or not.

After a long moment's silence, they started walking. When they passed him, Meng Hao continued to smile just as before. Suddenly, they stopped and turned their heads to look at him.

"Don't worry. The city is yours," said the First Elder, his tone sincere. "The Dongluo Clan doesn't want it anymore. The chaos of war grips the land, and the Dongluo Clan is now too weak to put up a fight. We will go into hiding. However, if any of our Clan members are harmed by your poison, then the three of us will exterminate you, even if we die in the process!" Having finished speaking, he flicked his sleeve and walked off.

Meng Hao continued to smile the entire time. He watched everyone leave, then suddenly lifted up his right hand. There in his palm was the Li Clan Patriarch. Almost at the exact same time that the Li Clan Patriarch appeared, a lightning bolt suddenly appeared in the blue sky above. It shot down, slamming onto the Li Clan Patriarch's soul.

"Curse you, you goddamned..." Before the old man could continue with his cursing, Meng Hao put him back into the blood-colored mask.

Meng Hao's movements just now had been as smooth as floating clouds and flowing water; he was quite proficient now.

The three Nascent Soul Elders looked back. When they saw the lightning fall, and then Meng Hao's actions, their faces sank and they sighed inwardly.

It was now obvious that the Meng Hao they had just walked past was the real one.

The entire Dongluo Clan left, hundreds of people. They departed what had once been their Dongluo City, leaving it completely and thoroughly empty.

No one knew where they left to. It was only known that several days later, they issued a proclamation in the Black Lands announcing their secession from the United Nine.

The news spread through the Black Lands like storm winds. Furthermore, the name of Patriarch Golden Light rose to complete prominence thanks to their battle.

The Dongluo Clan having been replaced, Dongluo City was renamed Peacock Screwing City. This rocked the Black Lands, after which many parties made various investigations and inquiries. In the end, it didn't matter; the Church of the Golden Light was now firmly established as a power.

Local Cultivators rushed to live in Peacock Screwing City. Soon, the Church of the Golden Light was over 1,500 men strong. By now, they were more powerful than the Dongluo Clan had been, with the exception of the three Nascent Soul Cultivators.

The city itself was fully repaired. The style was different from what Dongluo City's had been, though. The renovated Peacock Screwing City radiated the style of the parrot; it was now bright and colorful!

Meng Hao handed everything over to the parrot as he prepared to go into secluded meditation. All aspects, the city walls, the protective spell formation, all began to resemble the gaudy colors of the parrot.

In regard to the burrowing vines, Meng Hao planted some here, whereupon they became one aspect of the city's defense system.

Anyone who joined the Church of the Golden Light was allowed to live in the city. Of course, the Church of the Golden Light was not a Sect, so as more people arrived, the city was no longer truly a city, but rather, a temple!

Meng Hao channeled a spring from a local river, which he then transformed into a cistern. After adding some medicinal pills, it turned into another medicinal elixir cistern. This became the root of the entire Church.

The green leaf spell formation had been defiled by the parrot. After becoming the master of the city, the parrot didn't get rid of it, though, but rather, came up with some methods to repair and upgrade it. Now the spell formation could emit crushing pressure.

Also, it was now... multicolored.

The interior of the city was arranged as before, into three levels. There was only one residence on the third level. That was where Meng Hao currently sat cross-legged in meditation. In front of him was the small black jar which he had acquired from Big-head, the legacy item from the League of Hellfire from the Fourth Mountain.

He had been studying the item for several days. He very much wanted to be able to use it with the same seemingly miraculous speed that Big-head had. The idea was very intriguing.

He rubbed the surface of the jar and then suddenly, information regarding a divine ability popped into his mind. “Bloodburst Flash...?” he said lightly. “Use the power of flowing blood to achieve dramatic speed increase.”

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he lifted his hand to rub the roc scale on his forehead. No matter how he tried, he had been unable to employ its power a second time.

Several days later, just as Meng Hao had finished cultivating the art of the Bloodburst Flash, Big-head solemnly delivered a jade slip to him. He scanned it with Spiritual Sense, whereupon his eyes began to gleam.

Meng Hao had sent Big-head to make some inquiries throughout the Black Lands to find out where Frigid Snow Larvae existed. Such larvae were rare, but not mythical. Thankfully, it didn’t take long for Big-head to acquire the necessary information.

“Holy Snow City....” said Meng Hao with a soft sigh, gazing at the jade slip. A slight smile spread across his face.

There was only one place in all of the Black Lands where Frigid Snow Larvae could be found. It was none other than one of the cities of the United Nine, Holy Snow City!

The city belonged to the Frigid Snow Clan, a Clan that was much more powerful than the Dongluo Clan. Their Spirit Severing Patriarchs had ensured their continued existence for many years. In fact, in the past, they had even occupied the most prominent position within the United Nine, with three Spirit Severing Patriarchs!

Unfortunately, recent years had seen quite a decline in their power. They now only had one Spirit Severing Patriarch. According to rumor, this final Patriarch was reaching the end of his life, and rarely appeared. He was now the Dao Reserve of the Frigid Snow Clan.

Apparently, only direct blood descendants of the Clan could acquire a Frigid Snow Larva along with the method to raise it. Most importantly, the moment after coming to life, the Frigid Snow Larva would bond a master. That bond could never be altered. When the master died, the larva would also die.

Meng Hao put away the jade slip. The Frigid Snow Larva was related to his ability to transcend tribulation, and he definitely needed one. After some mental deliberation, he rose to his feet and left his residence. As he looked out at the riotously colorful city, he felt a bit dizzy.

The parrot soared excitedly through the air, followed by three listless Scarlet Peacocks. From below drifted up chanting regarding having faith in the Lord Fifth to gain eternal life.

As for the meat jelly, it was finally able to begin preaching to the thousands of members of the church. Currently, it was looking solemnly at a Foundation Establishment Cultivator, ignoring the trembling look of despair on his face as it enthusiastically described the beauty of a sunset from many years in the past.

Meng Hao watched on for a bit and then sighed. It looked to him like the Cultivators in the city were very different than they used to, thanks to the parrot and the meat jelly. After a moment's thought, he turned, transforming into a beam of light that shot off into the distance.

When the parrot saw him leaving, it suddenly got very excited.

“Taking off, eh? Hahaha! Lord Fifth will now enact a plan that has been a long time in the making. Come come, children. Lord Fifth will now teach you a second Celestial spell formation. This one is called the Immortal Execution Formation!” The parrot slapped its chest with its wing, its voice roaring out with excitement. “This formation can shake the Heavens and rock the Earth. Employing it isn't dangerous at all, and won't hurt you in the least bit. Lord Fifth was definitely not screwed over by my own spell formation nine times in the past! Therefore, you all have nothing to worry about!”

Chapter 352: Chaos in the Black Lands!

It was dusk in the Black Lands. Meng Hao whistled through the air at high speed, like a green shooting star that disappeared over the horizon.

This was his seventh day of travel after leaving the city. He had followed the course laid out on the map in the jade slip, flying without rest the entire time. It was uncommon to find long-range teleportation portals within the Black Lands. If you wanted to travel somewhere, you needed to make the journey with your own power.

Throughout the seven days, lightning would occasionally fall, to be accompanied by the miserable shrieks of the Li Clan Patriarch. Meng Hao wasn't harmed at all. At the moment, he was flying over

the smoking ruins of what had once been a town home to a small-scale power. Amidst the smouldering wreckage, Meng hao could make out quite a few corpses.

This was the fifth such scene Meng Hao had encountered during the past seven days. He looked down at it for a moment, and was about to fly past when suddenly he gave out a cold snort. His eyes glittered with coldness and he waved his right hand. A flying sword had just shot out toward him; now it came to a halt about thirty meters away.

A sinister cry suddenly rang out from within the ruins. "Attack!"

Eight beams of light appeared, shooting up toward Meng Hao. Among the eight people was one late Core Formation Cultivator. Two were of the mid Core Formation stage, and the rest were of the early Core Formation stage. Eight men squads like this were nothing to take lightly in any location. As they flew out, they emanated shocking power.

However, other than the late Core Formation Cultivator, all of the men had listless expressions in their eyes. Their Cultivation bases were powerful, but their movements were rigid, like those of puppets.

They bore down on Meng Hao, employing blazingly colorful magical items and techniques. Flying swords and magical bottles filled the air, seemingly moments away from slamming into Meng Hao. Meng Hao frowned, then utilized the Bloodburst Flash. Instantly, his body flickered, and he disappeared. When he reappeared, he was some distance away.

This was not minor teleportation. However, to move such a distance in such a short time was completely shocking.

Booms filled the air as the position he had just occupied exploded into a pillar of light, the result of the combined attack.

Meng Hao's expression grew dark. The attack just now had been filled with killing intent; however, he was certain that he had never met these people before.

"So, the chaos in the Black Lands has already reached this level," he thought with a frown. It was at this moment that the group of eight men realized that Meng Hao had disappeared. They turned around and caught sight of him. The late Core Formation Cultivator gave a cold snort, and a vicious look appeared in his eyes.

“Trifling early Core Formation Cultivator. It looks like you have some nice magical techniques. However, now that you’ve run into me, you have no choice but to be a good boy and become my puppet. The more puppets I have, the safer I’ll be.” The man lifted his right hand, and immediately, the seven other Cultivators charged toward Meng Hao, their faces wooden.

Meng Hao blinked several times in succession, focusing the power of his Cultivation base into his right eye. Instantly, his view of the world changed. Using the Celestial vision technique, Meng Hao was able to see vast quantities of gossamer threads attached to the bodies of the seven Cultivators. The threads stretched back into the fist of the late Core Formation Cultivator.

It seemed these people really were all puppets under his control.

As they sped toward him, Meng Hao lifted his hand. He sliced his fingertip, causing blood to flow out. His face grim, he pointed forward, and everything in his field of view turned the color of blood. A rumbling filled the air, along with a Blood Qi that transformed into an attack that shot out toward the incoming seven Cultivators.

The rumbling increased in intensity as the Blood Qi shook the air with power like that of a dragon. The seven Cultivators coughed up blood, and their bodies tottered backward. The face of the Late Core Formation Cultivator flickered. Meng Hao shot forward once again using the Bloodburst Flash. In the blink of an eye, he was directly in front of his opponent. Without hesitation or mercy, he lifted his blood-soaked finger and pressed down onto the man’s forehead.

Blood Qi poured into the Cultivator’s body, causing him to tremble. Veins bulged out on his skin, and lines of red appeared in his eyes. He twitched a few times, and then exploded.

Meng Hao flicked his sleeve, preventing any of the blood and gore from touching him. He had slaughtered the late Core Formation Cultivator smoothly and efficiently. After the death of the late Core Formation Cultivator, the other seven people began to tremble. Blood oozed from their eyes, nose and mouth as they slowly died.

Brow furrowed, Meng Hao collected their bags of holding. The entire battle had been a bit strange.

“It seems everyone in the Black Lands is living in fear. The weak wish to be strong, and will kill without compunction. Slaughtering opponents leads to increased strength.” He turned, disappearing off into the distance as he continued on toward Holy Snow City.

“I hope nothing too drastic has occurred to the Frigid Snow Clan of Holy Snow City. They are the only people who can raise Frigid Snow larvae, so if anything has changed, my plan will be ruined.” As of now, Meng Hao truly understood the level of chaos within the Black Lands. He continued forward at top speed.

Several days later, he was traveling through a chain of mountains when a boom suddenly echoed out. Meng Hao’s eyes glowed with killing intent as a dozen or so Cultivators closed in on him. He continued on, and heads flew. After enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, Meng Hao left, leaving only complete death in his wake.

The attack just now had stemmed from an incident a few days before when Meng Hao had consumed a medicinal pill to bolster his Cultivation base. The scene had been witnessed by a Cultivator, which led to an explosion of greed among other locals. Now, they were all dead.

Time passed by slowly. Half a month later, Meng Hao was still traveling along alone. He had faced quite a bit of dangerous situations along the way, but in the end, his grisly tactics left anyone who messed with him dead. Afterwards, he used a magical technique to cause their severed heads to float along behind him as he traveled. It was a road of death and severed heads.

In the end, the floating severed heads grew more and more numerous. There were dozens of them, most of them dried and withered, although some still dripped with blood.

This sight shocked the hearts of many local scoundrels, and enabled Meng Hao to travel a bit more safely. Fewer and fewer people were willing to provoke him.

Any Cultivator with brains who saw the macabre floating heads would immediately dispel any notions they had of messing with Meng Hao.

A few more days passed. More than a month had gone by since Meng Hao left the former Dongluo City. He had nearly crossed the entire Black Lands, and had personally witnessed the anarchy which reigned. There was no order. The forces of the Black Lands Palace and the armies of the United Nine engaged in countless battles which left the land swathed in the flames of war.

The pandemonium was like an even more explicit version of the law of the jungle. There was no need to conceal one’s actions, no need for misgivings. Only the strong survived. As for the weak, they were there to serve the strong.

Within a month's time, of the nine cities that made up the United Nine, only four remained. The Clans in the other cities were either exterminated, seized by the Black Lands Palace, or forced to flee into hiding. It was simply too difficult for the United Nine to stand up to the combined forces of the Western Desert and the Black Lands Palace.

It was only the day before that Meng Hao heard that Holy Snow City had been besieged, which caused his heart to sink.

"I'd hoped there would be no obstructions on my way there," he said, shaking his head. He shot forward as fast as possible. According to his estimation, his current rate of travel would get him to the vicinity of Holy Snow City in about two days.

Currently, he shot across the land underneath the evening sky. The ground below was no longer pitch black, but rather somewhat pale. It was not white soil, but rather, snow.

The air temperature was so low that Meng Hao could see his own breath.

The wind was bone-piercingly cold, and it had begun to snow.

It had been a very long time since he had seen snowfall. In fact, to his best recollection, the last time had been that snowy night in the State of Zhao when he'd shared the horse cart with the scholar and engaged in a lively discussion.

Snowflakes floated down from the sky, and Meng Hao's eyes glittered as he saw the snow piling up on the ground. Down below was a forest, although there were no leaves on any of the trees. Instead, their withered branches were piled up with accumulations of snow.

Meng Hao looked off into the distance, and suddenly his expression flickered. He dropped down to the ground and ceased flying. His green robe whipped in the wind as he walked through the forest.

Deeper within the forest were two Cultivators, blood spattered and pale-faced, standing protectively in front of a young woman in her late teens. She wore a white gown and was spectacularly beautiful. However, she seemed to be in a very miserable situation. Her face was also pale, and filled with a miserable expression. In her right hand she held a larva that appeared to be made of crystal. It was currently spinning silk, which transformed into a bright light that surrounded the group of three people. Unfortunately, the larva appeared to be somewhat listless, as if it were on the verge of death.

The group was currently surrounded by a pack of one hundred wolves, all of whom emanated black auras, and had bright red eyes. Behind the wolves was a Western Desert Cultivator, his body festooned with totem tattoos, who was staring greedily at the white-robed young woman.

The Cultivators protecting the young woman consisted of a man and a woman. The man gruffly cried out, “You despicable Western Desert Cultivator! Don’t you fear the power of our Frigid Snow Clan’s Spirit Severing Patriarch?!”

“There’s no need to discuss whether your Spirit Severing Patriarch is alive or not,” replied the Western Desert Cultivator in a hoarse voice. “If he’s alive, he’ll be paying attention to the battle of Holy Snow City. Right now... you’re just a regular old Frigid Snow Clan member. Your life or death won’t mean anything to him.”

The man waved his right arm, and the hundred black wolves pounced, slamming into the shield weaved by the larva. Booms rang out, and the Western Desert Cultivator’s eyes brimmed with avarice.

“Your Frigid Snow Clan switched out the character ‘blood’ in your name with the character ‘snow.’ But did you really think that would make the Western Desert forget about you?” The man laughed as he stared at the girl. [2]

In Chinese, the character for “snow” and “blood” are pronounced the same. Well, the character for blood actually has a few pronunciation variations, and one of them is exactly the same as snow

Chapter 353: Grand Dragoner!

The Western Desert Cultivator gave the young woman a vicious, greedy smile. “When neo-demons began to be raised in the Western Desert, the Frigid Blood Clan brought forth generation after generation of Grand Dragoner. When I was small, I heard all of the legends about your clan.

“Grand Dragoners wield power far greater than that of totems. They are the true pinnacle of the Western Desert. As for me... I’m a mere rank 3 Dragoner. But, if I can seize the legacy of the Frigid Blood Clan... then I’ll have a chance to become a Grand Dragoner! Hanxue Shan, what do you think of the neo-demons I’ve raised?” The Western Desert Cultivator laughed heartily as the black wolves in the area all lifted their heads up and howled. They seemed to bristle with ferocity. [1]

The glowing shield surrounding the white-robed young woman was showing signs of breaking apart. Her face was pale, and blood oozed from her mouth. There was despair in her eyes but also determination.

Turning to the two Cultivators protecting her, she said, “Don’t worry about me, leave while you can!”

The two Cultivators looked nervous. They were about to say something when the young woman glared, indicating that they shouldn’t speak.

It was at this moment that the bodies of the howling black wolves suddenly began to expand, and they charged forward. They slammed into the shield, which was now more than half destroyed. From the look of things, one more attack would thoroughly shatter it.

The wolves were on the verge of attacking again, and the Western Desert Cultivator’s eyes were glowing with a bright light. At this exact moment, the sound of footsteps crunching on snow suddenly echoed out from within the forest.

The sound was extremely distinct. Mortals did not live in this area, so the instant the sound of the footsteps could be heard, it caused the white-robed young woman and her companion Cultivators to look toward where the sound was coming from. The Western Desert Cultivator also looked over with a frown.

What they saw was a young man wearing a long robe, with black hair flowing down past his shoulders. His features were refined, and he had a cultured air. This, of course, was Meng Hao; he walked out slowly, looking every bit like a scholar.

From his bearing, he seemed as if he were simply enjoying a midnight stroll in his own backyard, out to see the beautiful layers of snow that had fallen on his flower garden. He strolled out, carrying a scroll in one hand, which only lent further to his scholarly aura.

The Western Desert Cultivator’s eyes narrowed, as if he disbelieved Meng Hao’s profound aura were real. He waved his right hand, and immediately eight black wolves leaped toward Meng Hao, howling, their crimson eyes glowing brightly.

The white-robed young woman seemed to be upset at the sight of it, but all of her energy was focused on controlling the Frigid Snow Larva, leaving her powerless to provide any assistance. She could only watch silently.

“Excellent fur,” said Meng Hao lightly, glancing at the wolves. “If the parrot were here, he would probably like them.” These wolves were not illusory creations of magic, but flesh and blood creatures.

However, there was something different about them, as if totemic power also existed inside them. This was the first time Meng Hao had seen beasts like this. There were more than a hundred of them, and each one emanated a power similar to that of the late Foundation Establishment stage.

Back in the Southern Domain, this pack of black wolves would constitute quite a powerful force.

“Interesting,” said Meng Hao as he walked forward. He patted his bag of holding to produce a red medicinal pill. He quickly crushed it into powder, which he then dispersed into the air with the flick of a sleeve.

A wind picked up, spreading the powder toward the eight wolves that were charging toward him. As soon as they made contact with the powder, they began to howl miserably. A moment later, they exploded into a haze of blood and gore. The blood and gore instantly turned black, and then completely dissolved.

The powder continued to spread out, and more black wolves screamed and began to rot away, their bodies then exploding. The explosion of the bodies sent black blood flying about, staining the white snow and filling the air with the stench of decay. Any other wolves who touched the blood would immediately begin to squeal. Their bodies would shake, and it only took the space of a few breaths before they, too, collapsed.

It was a chain reaction. As Meng Hao walked forward, more and more wolves began to scream and collapse into death. Black blood sprayed about, floating through the air, spreading out like a dark mist, which rose up into the air to form a cloud.

It took only moments for half of the over one hundred wolves to be killed. The rest retreated, trembling, their tails between their legs. As they looked at Meng Hao, their eyes filled with unprecedented terror.

The white-robed young woman watched all of this with wide eyes. The two Cultivators next to her also gaped. Even the Western Desert Cultivator stared in shock.

“This.... You....” he stammered, his body trembling, his eyes looked like they might pop out of his head. “So, you’re looking to die, huh?!?!” He then let out a howl filled with ultimate fury. The veins on his face bulged out, and his eyes filled with savagery and blood.

He lifted his right hand, within which appeared a black stone. He crushed it, then waved his arm. A black smoke swirled out, which then transformed into a vortex.

“Rank 2 Reptodragon neo-demons, emerge!” Suddenly, roaring sounds poured out from within the vortex, followed by a bright red reptilian creature approximately three meters long. It was followed by another. Soon there were ten, then thirty!

Thirty red reptilian creatures appeared, emanating shocking power. Their roars caused everything around to tremble.

A strange light shone in Meng Hao’s eyes. He had long since noticed that there was something different about this particular Western Desert Cultivator. He had two totem tattoos on his body, one of a black wolf, the other, a reptilian creature. The totems didn’t appear to be any different from the type seen on other Western Desert Cultivators. However, Meng Hao sensed that there was indeed something strange about them.

“Senior, he’s a Western Desert Dragoneer!” said the white-robed young woman anxiously. She could tell that Meng Hao was unfamiliar with creatures such as these, and continued: “Dragoneers might not have high Cultivation bases, but they command neo-demons. Kill him, and the neo-demons will disperse!”

“After I exterminate this guy, I’m going after you, slut!” cried the Western Desert Cultivator viciously. He waved his hand toward Meng Hao, and the thirty crimson reptiles charged toward Meng Hao in a frenzy, their gaping red mouths emanating an odor of death.

Meng Hao took one more look at the crimson reptiles, then shook his head. He raised his right hand and extended a finger toward the black cloud which still hovered in mid-air. Immediately, vast quantities of black raindrops began to fall down. The rain sprayed over the crimson reptiles, and they began to howl miserably. Their bodies trembled and began to decay. Over the space of a few breaths, all of the reptiles underneath the three hundred meter wide black cloud had transformed into skeletons.

Meng Hao stood in the midst of the black rain. Not a single raindrop fell onto his green robe or his long black hair. The sight of it was shocking, causing the Western Desert Cultivator to gasp. His eyes filled with a look of disbelief.

“You’re... you’re a Grand Dragoner!”

Chapter 354: Hanxue Shan

Being unfamiliar with the term, Meng Hao asked, “What’s a Grand Dragoner?” He walked up to the Western Desert Cultivator, who was currently trembling as he stared with reverence and fear at Meng Hao.

The person to respond to Meng Hao’s question was not the shivering Western Desert Cultivator, but rather the white-robed young woman, Hanxue Shan. “Grand Dragoner is the highest title achievable by Western Desert Dragoners, similar to Totem God. Both are titles which represent extreme levels of power. One breeds rare creatures that are even more powerful than Earthly neodemons. The other controls five or more totems. The battle prowess of the former is similar to that of the Spirit Severing stage, the latter, almost the same.”

The glowing shield surrounding the young woman had already dissipated, and she had put away the listless larva.

Meng Hao turned to look at her, whereupon she clasped hands and bowed.

“I am Hanxue Shan of the Frigid Snow Clan. I offer many thanks for your kindness in saving me, Senior.” The exhausted Cultivators next to her gave Meng Hao looks of gratitude. However, vigilance could still be seen in their eyes.

After all, the power he had manifested just now had frightened even the Western Desert Cultivator, let alone them.

With the wave of a sleeve, Meng Hao had killed countless wolves, transformed their blood into a mist which caused a rain to fall that desolated everything within a three hundred meter radius. Nothing alive was left in the entire area.

Such methods left them in complete shock. Furthermore, they couldn’t see Meng Hao’s Cultivation base; he emanated a mysterious force which left all of them incapable of showing him anything but respect.

“I’m not a Grand Dragoner,” said Meng Hao, shaking his head. “However, you do owe me some thanks.” He pointed a finger toward the ground and at the same time, pressed down on the forehead of the Western Desert Cultivator.

The man’s body instantly began to tremble, and his eyes filled with blankness, as if he had suddenly lost his thinking ability.

“His Cultivation base is only at the early Core Formation stage,” thought Meng Hao, “and yet he can control so many beasts. So this... is a Western Desert Dragoner?” Meng Hao now understood the situation, but he was still very curious regarding Dragoners, so he looked back at the white-robed young woman. “I didn’t save you for no reason,” he said.

The eyes of the two Cultivators standing at her side glittered with even more intense vigilance. This was especially so after they saw Meng Hao press down on the forehead of the Western Desert Cultivator. Whatever method he had used to make the man suddenly look so blank was clearly some frightening technique and caused them to become even more nervous.

“Please do not hesitate to state what you desire, Senior,” said Hanxue Shan, her voice light.

“I want a Frigid Snow Larva,” he replied immediately.

The two Cultivators standing next to her frowned. At the same time, they tried to conceal the irritation toward Meng Hao that appeared in their eyes.

Hanxue Shan hesitated for a moment.

“Senior, Frigid Snow Larvae bond with a master when they are very young. According to everything I’ve been told, the Frigid Snow Clan currently does not possess any such young larvae. Of course, I might not be privy to all the information. If you come back with me to Holy Snow City, I can check into the matter thoroughly, and do my best to repay your kindness.” She looked at Meng Hao with her exceedingly beautiful eyes. They didn’t seem to contain any duplicity. She was thankful to Meng Hao for saving her life, however, she also feared him. Everything she had witnessed just now left her with a feeling of profound dread.

Her words did not sound forced, but they were. She had the feeling that if she didn’t provide the correct response, this man’s kindness would very likely turn into enmity.

Furthermore, she couldn't be certain if his appearance here and now was coincidental, or if he had prepared for this situation all along. In any case, he had definitely saved her life. After returning to Holy Snow City, she would try to repay him.

Meng Hao thought for a moment as he looked at the young woman, his eyes filled with abstruseness. Then, he gave a slight smile and nodded.

The white-robed young woman gave an inward sigh of relief. With a forced smile, she backed up a few steps. The other two Cultivators continued to observe Meng Hao with even more vigilance as they left the woods.

The Western Desert Dragoon followed Meng Hao with a blank look on his face. He seemed to have lost control of himself, which, of course, filled Hanxue Shan and the others with even more shock.

Holy Snow City was in the northern part of the Black Lands. Although it was some distance from the Western Desert, it couldn't be considered extremely far. The land in the area was blanketed with ice and snow year round, making everything look white.

It was quite a distance from the location Meng Hao had recently occupied, the former Dongluo City. Despite the fact that both had been members of the United Nine, they actually had few dealings. After all, both Clans' position in the United Nine had been waning in recent years. Despite the recent decline in power of the Frigid Snow Clan, which had once been the leader of the alliance, they still maintained their pride and dignity.

Furthermore, there were still rumors of their Spirit Severing Patriarch, who continued to remain in secluded meditation. He hadn't appeared for several hundred years, but no one was completely sure whether he was alive or dead.

Even the possibility of him being alive ensured that Holy Snow City would not suffer any sort of disaster.

Therefore, although Holy Snow City did not possess the glory it once had, it still shone with splendor.

Right now, though, everyone in Holy Snow City was filled with a certain somberness. A pressure weighed down on them, as if dark clouds filled the sky and pushed down onto the land. The ice-

like, crystalline city walls were covered with Holy Snow City Cultivators, all of whom stared out vigilantly into the outside world.

The region outside of the city trembled. Currently, the sky was filled with countless pitch-black, winged Flood Dragons. They twisted about in the air, their crimson eyes glowing with viciousness. They emitted fierce howls that caused the hearts of the observing Cultivators to tremble.

At first glance, the winged Flood Dragons seemed innumerable, but actually, there were only fifty of them circling around Holy Snow City. Down on the ground could be seen seventy or eighty gigantic blue lions, each one twenty meters or so long. Wherever they walked, the ground beneath their feet turned into blue ice.

In addition to these beasts, there were approximately one thousand Cultivators, who stood behind the creatures, staring at Holy Snow City. They wore black clothing, and their faces were covered with masks. Most of them had Cultivation bases at the Foundation Establishment stage and wore white masks. Among the thousand Cultivators, only about thirty wore azure masks.

In the lead position was an old man with flowing white hair and a silver mask. Based on the aura of his Cultivation base, he was at the Nascent Soul stage.

Further off was a snow-covered mountain where several hundred tall men stood. Their faces were expressionless, and totem tattoos could be seen on their bodies, some more than others. Their auras were different from that of the other Cultivators, a bit more wild and bizarre.

These were Western Desert Cultivators.

Between the armies of Holy Snow City and the Black Lands Palace stretched a vast field filled with wind and snow, separating the two of them.

Even further back were tens of thousands of Black Lands Palace disciples, spread out to form a huge barrier around Holy Snow City, completely encircling it.

It seemed that a great battle was about to take place.

It was at this very moment that Meng Hao and the others appeared off in the distance and saw the scene spread out in front of them. Meng Hao's expression remained the same as ever, but the faces of Hanxue Shan and the two other Cultivators fell immediately.

They had been traveling for over a day, and during the entire time, Meng Hao had never asked her why she had left Holy Snow City. Nor had Hanxue Shan taken the initiative to provide any details.

However, based on some of the discussions he had heard between the other two Cultivators, he came to the realization that their party had set out with over thirty members. As of now, they were the only two guards left.

“It seems we won’t be able to get into the city,” said Meng Hao coolly. The forces of the Black Lands Palace were arrayed in such a fashion as to completely lock down Holy Snow City. At the moment, no military offensive had begun. Some people might not be able to tell, but considering that the strongest combatant present was of the Nascent Soul stage, it was clear that this was not intended to be a decisive battle, but rather an exploratory attack.

Hanxue Shan was about to say something when, suddenly, the sound of war bugles filled the air. The winged Flood Dragons shot toward Holy Snow City. The gigantic blue lions also sped forward, their bodies glowing with light such that they seemed like gigantic blue arrows.

As the bugles sounded out, the Black Lands Palace Cultivators flew up into the air in succession. Behind them, the ground shook as two giants appeared, each one roughly ninety meters tall. It wasn’t clear exactly where they had come from, but they strode forward accompanied by thunderous rumbling. Slung over the shoulder of each giant was a greatsword nearly three hundred meters long.

The swords seemed old, even ancient, but the power they emanated was astonishing.

If that was all there was to it, it would not be a big deal. But as the bugles sounded out, a black sea appeared. This black sea was comprised of several tens of thousands of black wolves which spread out across the land as they charged toward Holy Snow City.

The shield surrounding Holy Snow City sparkled as nearly a thousand Cultivators flew up from within the city. They employed a variety of magical techniques and magical items, the power of which shot through the shield to slice into the approaching beasts and Cultivators.

In addition, a massive beam of white, shining light shot up from within the city. Up above the city, five blinding, shining lights that looked like planets appeared, rotating about. With each rotation, they emanated a curving white light which swept out past the city walls.

Booming sounds shook Heaven and Earth, and everything trembled. Meng Hao had never witnessed a battle such as this between Cultivators.

As the battle began, Meng Hao also noticed a group of several dozen people fly out from within the city toward the glittering shield. The instant they passed through it, five flying planets appeared above them. They rotated, emanating an arcing white light which shot through the shrieking beasts in front of them, ripping them to pieces. Up above, the Flood Dragons dodged away, unable to get near them.

It wasn't one such squad that appeared. More than ten groups charged out from within the city to engage in the battle with the Black Lands Palace forces outside the city walls. Explosions filled the air, along with miserable shrieks, and the fighting continued.

It was not that Meng Hao had never witnessed a large scale combat between Cultivators. However, this type of battle was something he had never seen before. The sight of it caused his heart to start pounding. He was no newcomer to the Cultivation world, though, so he quickly calmed himself down.

What drew his attention most were the two massive giants that strode across the battlefield. Their movements were slow, but every step they took caused the ground to shake. The enormous swords they wielded emanated thoroughly shocking swords auras.

Suddenly, one of the squads of Cultivators from the city changed directions to head toward Meng Hao and his group. He might have taken it to be coincidence, but when he saw the look of happiness glittering in the eyes of Hanxue Shan, he knew that these people were coming to take her back to the city.

Chapter 355: Flying Rain-Dragon Up Above!

It seemed like the approaching Cultivators were actually preparing to attack. Meng Hao blinked. "Looks like even though I saved her, no one will believe I did." In the lead was a handsome young man who looked extremely nervous. His Cultivation base was at the late Core Formation stage.

Following him were a dozen or so other Cultivators, the weakest of whom was at the early Core Formation stage. Three were of the same level as the young man, the late Core Formation Stage.

At the front of their group were five rotating planets; the spell formation shone brightly and caused them to speed forward like the wind as they attacked.

Suddenly, Hanxue Shan shot forward. Her speed was incredible, causing Meng Hao's eyes to flicker. Clearly, she had been concealing the true limits of her speed before. As she flew forward, a cloud of ice and snow appeared beneath her feet, propelling her forward. The other two Cultivators also shot forward, utilizing magical techniques and treasures to increase their speed.

They were obviously worried that Meng Hao would attack them, or do something else to hold them back. Apparently, their use of these techniques and items were a waste; Meng Hao did nothing more than watch them go, a faint, enigmatic smile on his face. He didn't even take half a step forward; he just let them speed away.

This caused the two Cultivators to stare in shock. However, they had no time to think much about it; as vigilant as ever, they escorted Hanxue Shan as she flew down toward the battlefield, ready to defend her with their lives. As Hanxue Shan flew along, a silvery glow flew out from her person. Wherever the silver light went, the surrounding beasts would stop moving and begin to tremble. This made it possible for them to quickly charge quite a distance.

When Hanxue Shan and her guards were several hundred meters away from Meng Hao, he saw them meet up with the other young Cultivator and his group. Both seemed quite excited, but obviously knew that this was not the time for any sort of discussion. The Cultivators from the young man's group fanned out to protect Hanxue Shan, and they headed back toward the city.

It was at this point that Hanxue Shan finally breathed a sigh of relief. She glanced back at Meng Hao off in the distance, a cunning, complacent gleam in her eyes.

However, just as the group set out, Flood Dragons, Black Lands Cultivators, as well as a huge group of black wolves, charged toward them in attack. Off in the distance were some Western Desert Cultivators who also approached, eight of them. The battlefield was in chaos, but Meng Hao was clearly able to see all of these developments.

"Don't think I'll forget so easily about the fact that I saved your life," murmured Meng Hao. By this time, even he could see that this was not any sort of decisive battle. Both sides had various misgivings and were holding back.

The most powerful combatant on the field was the Nascent Soul Cultivator from the Black Lands Palace, who hadn't even made an attack. The person who had been sent to escort Hanxue Shan was of the late Core Formation stage. Holy Snow City hadn't even deployed Nascent Soul Cultivators at all.

“They’re holding back,” thought Meng Hao, scanning the battlefield. “Neither side wants to reveal their true strength. This battle is just a way to feel each other out. I don’t see much down there that could cause any problems for me.” He began to stride forward, followed by the confused Western Desert Cultivator.

Suddenly, a flash of light appeared within Holy Snow City, a figure who shot out past the city walls. It was an old woman with gray hair. The silver-masked Nascent Soul Cultivator from the Black Lands Palace strode forward to meet her, his eyes gleaming. Neither spoke; instead, they immediately attacked with divine abilities.

A boom echoed out, and the sky above the battlefield suddenly grew dim.

At the same time, the slaughtering on the battlefield grew more intense. More Cultivators poured out of Holy Snow City to join the fighting.

As for Hanxue Shan, she was getting more nervous. Despite being surrounded by guards from Holy Snow City, she was still quite some distance from the city itself. Furthermore, the surrounding wolves, lions, Flood Dragons and Cultivators from the Black Lands Palace and Western Desert, were making it difficult to move at all. Out of their group of a dozen or so Holy Snow City Cultivators, three had already died.

The magical Five Planets device rotated rapidly, but even the bright beams of white light that shot out from it were incapable of completely extricating them from the danger they were in. Even more importantly, one of the enormous giants was approaching, brandishing its gigantic sword. In addition, a group of more than a dozen Flood Dragons was currently charging toward the Five Planets, clearly intent on destroying them.

If the magical Five Planets device was destroyed, then they would be in even more danger.

A roaring sound filled the air as the dozen or so Flood Dragons began to howl. Their bodies glowed with flickering light as they shot toward the Five Planets device. Booming sounds filled the air as it began to break apart. Moments later, it completely collapsed.

When the Five Planets device broke apart, four more of the Cultivators surrounding Hanxue Shan died. When she heard their agonized, dying screams, her face went pale. She watched as one of the Cultivators chose to self-detonate before being killed. The powerful explosion spread out, slamming into their enemies, buying them a bit more time.

The young man of the late Core Formation stage anxiously grabbed Hanxue Shan, his eyes bloodshot as he dragged her onward toward the city. He seemed worried that the nearby beasts and Cultivators might also use self-detonation.

The complacency Hanxue Shan had previously shown toward Meng Hao was now completely gone, replaced instead by grief. She could only bite her lip as she followed the young man in front of her.

It was at this time that Meng Hao entered the battlefield. Before he had moved too far, nearby black wolves charged toward him, radiating frenzied savagery. Meng Hao's right hand shot out and grabbed one of them by the neck. Using his left hand, he forced a medicinal pill into its mouth, which caused it to begin to shake violently. Suddenly, the fur began to fall off of its body, which then began to swell. This entire process only took the space of a few breaths. As other wolves closed in, Meng Hao let go.

A boom filled the air as the hairless wolf let out a miserable shriek, and then exploded. There was no flesh and blood, but rather a black mist that spread out in all directions. As soon as the incoming wolves touched the mist, their bodies began to wither up, and they let out miserable shrieks as their bodies, too, transformed into mist. Very quickly, the area surrounding Meng Hao was filled with thick mist.

He proceeded forward, his expression as calm as usual. Of course, the scene which had just played out would cause any observer's eyes to fill with astonishment.

As he walked on, the mist roiled out, killing any of the beasts who touched it. It didn't take long before he was surrounded by mist for dozens of meters in each direction. By now, many people on the battlefield were looking over in his direction.

Hanxue Shan also saw what was happening. It was at this moment that a huge blue lion, over twenty meters long, pounced toward Meng Hao. Before it could get close, though, Meng Hao's right hand stretched out as fast as lightning, clamping onto the neck of the lion. Once again, he used his left hand to force a medicinal pill into its mouth.

Everyone watched on in astonishment as the gigantic lion's fur suddenly began to fall off. After that, it exploded, not into flesh and blood, but rather, a blue mist.

The blue mist spread out in the cold air, rapidly fusing with the black mist. The new mist expanded, and now, Meng Hao had no need to personally attack any of the blue lions. As soon as they touched the mist, their bloodcurdling howls would echo across the battlefield.

Gasps could be heard from the nearby Black Lands Palace Cultivators.

“Who is that?!”

“That’s... poison? That guy’s a poison expert!”

“That’s no ordinary poison. Look what it does to the Western Desert neo-demons! This poison... it...”

The Black Lands Palace Cultivators backed up, the faces beneath their masks filled with shock. Considering that even the Western Desert Cultivators’ Demonic beasts had no way to avoid Meng Hao’s poison, how could they?

Even more shocked than them were the Western Desert Cultivators, who all looked at Meng Hao with gazes of astonishment and terror.

Among the Western Desert forces were three people who were clearly not as tall as the others but were still sported totem tattoos. These were Western Desert Dragoners, men capable of controlling neo-demons.

All of the Flood Dragons, black wolves and lions in the area were under their control. However, they seemed more frightened than anyone else on the battlefield. Their breathing came in ragged pants as they stared at the mist surrounding Meng Hao; their hearts were filled with astonishment.

“Dragoner! He’s a Dragoner....”

“Only a Dragoner could understand neo-demons so well to be able to kill them like that....”

Meng Hao proceeded onward. Up above, fierce shrieks rang out as three Flood Dragons sped toward him. Meng Hao looked up, a strange light glowing in his eyes. There was no need to use poison in this situation. All he did was open his mouth in the direction of the Flood Dragons and suck in a deep breath.

As he did, the Flying Rain-Dragon Core that existed inside of his Golden Core suddenly trembled. Suddenly, the illusory image of a massive Flying Rain-Dragon appeared behind Meng Hao.

It was huge, several hundred meters in length, and it erupted with a domineering air of profound superiority. It was a sovereign of the sky! As Meng Hao breathed in, the Flying Rain-Dragon opened its mouth and charged toward the Flood Dragons. It seemed to be hungry, starving, as if it hadn't eaten for tens of thousands of years.

The three Flood Dragons let out miserable, desperate shrieks. Now that they faced up against a Flying Rain-Dragon, they trembled, and their expressions were those of dread. They wanted to flee, but it was too late.

The Flying Rain-Dragon swallowed them up, a scene which caused everyone on the battlefield to reel. The Western Desert Cultivators stared with wide eyes, panting, their faces covered with shock.

“He... he consumed those neo-demons!!”

“Grand Dragoneer! He's definitely a Grand Dragoneer!”

“That Flying Rain-Dragon phantom is his Heavenly neo-demon! It's definitely a Heavenly neo-demon! The Heavenly neo-demon of a Grand Dragoneer!!”

The Black Lands Palace Cultivators, the Holy Snow City Cultivators, everyone was staring at the scene, their minds reeling. The Flying Rain-Dragon behind Meng Hao lifted its head toward the sky in a soundless roar, then shot toward more Flood Dragons.

Chapter 356: How Unforeseen....

Flood Dragons are food for ancient Flying Rain-Dragons, who will chomp them down merrily!

Meng Hao's Flying Rain-Dragon phantom flew through the air, its massive illusory frame shaking everything.

Dozens of nearby Flood Dragons let out fierce shrieks that were filled with dread. Their bodies trembled, and they were about to flee in all directions when the illusory Flying Rain-Dragon let out another soundless roar. The wolves on the ground began to shake and then lie prone. The enormous blue lions also lowered their trembling heads and let out subservient grunts.

The Flood Dragons seemed to be filled with despair. However, they didn't dare to move. Meng Hao's Flying Rain-Dragon phantom swooped down and swallowed one of them up.

The battlefield was deathly quiet. Everyone gaped in shock at the scene which was playing out in the sky. The Flying Rain-Dragon swallowed one Flood Dragon after another.

Soon, each and every Flood Dragon had been swallowed up, after which, the Flying Rain-Dragon flew back to Meng Hao and then vanished.

Everything was as quiet as death.

Meng Hao cleared his throat, and then proceeded along toward Hanxue Shan. When he arrived in front of her, he saw her face covered with disbelief and dread, as was the face of the young man standing next to her.

"I saved your life," he said, looking a bit embarrassed. "You still haven't paid me back. Before you do, is it really appropriate to go running off?" He felt a little bit awkward saying words like this to a young woman.

Hanxue Shan quivered, her beautiful eyes brimming with terror. In her anxiety, she wasn't sure how to respond.

It was at this moment, however, that her eyes suddenly went wide. It wasn't just her. Everyone on the battlefield who had been paying attention to Meng Hao were now panting.

A roar echoed out behind Meng Hao as a ninety meter tall giant charged toward him, waving its enormous sword in the air.

This sword seemed capable of slashing a hole through the air itself. A piercing sound filled the air as it slashed down toward Meng Hao. It didn't emanate ripples, but instead seemed to be sucking in the surrounding air. The mist surrounding Meng Hao began to churn.

All of this takes some time to describe, but actually happened in only a moment. By the time Meng Hao finished speaking, the enormous sword was only about thirty meters away from his head!

The sword in its entirety was around three hundred meters long. The giant was ninety meters tall, and bursting with immense power. Although it didn't have a Cultivation base, it was clearly powerful enough to cause anyone to shake in fear.

The sword descended toward Meng Hao's head, causing the mist surrounding him to roil out in all directions. This made Meng Hao even more conspicuous on the battlefield.

However, even as the sword was almost upon him, Meng Hao, without even lifting his head up, reached his right hand out and physically grabbed the sword. A huge boom echoed out.

A massive energy shot from the sword into Meng Hao, causing his bones to creak, and massive cracks to appear around him in the ground. The enormous amount of energy even caused his feet to sink about eight inches down into the soil.

Meng Hao's expression never changed. He turned to look at the enormous giant.

"Time!" he said coolly, and ten Wooden Time Swords flew out from his bag of holding to form the Lotus Sword Formation. It rotated in the air, circling around the giant.

The giant howled and tried to wrench back its sword, but it was astonished to find that no matter how much power it used, the sword remained stuck in Meng Hao's grip. There was no way to take it back.

The giant's eyes glowed with a green light as it howled. It let go of the sword and then curled its hand into a fist which smashed down toward Meng Hao.

"Interesting," said Meng Hao with a laugh. "It would be a real pity to kill you." Tossing the greatsword to the side, he retrieved his Wooden Time Swords and then used the Bloodburst Flash to disappear right before the enormous fist slammed down. When he reappeared, he was on top of the giant's head. He pointed down with the finger of his left hand.

"Righteous Bestowal!"

Immediately, Meng Hao saw ghost images spring up everywhere on the battlefield. Visible only to him were strand after strand of Qi which rushed to pour into the head of the giant.

The giant howled, reaching toward Meng Hao with both of its hands. However, the Bloodburst Flash flickered, and he evaded completely. No matter how many times the giant tried to grab him, it couldn't, and he continued to use the art of Righteous Bestowal. This sight caused the eyes of all the onlookers to fill with shock.

“Receiving Righteous Bestowal is good fortune for you, if you keep resisting....” He pushed his hand down onto the top of the giant's head, his eyes shining with a strange glow. He could sense the resistance of the giant's will, but also, a desire for the Demonic Qi that he wielded. The twisting hesitation seemed to be causing it to hold back.

Meng Hao could also tell that this giant was not like a human, but more like a type of animal. It had an enormous physical body, but actually couldn't speak out with language. Its sentience was quite limited and it couldn't practice Cultivation.

However, when it attacked, its physical strength was as explosive as the great circle of the late Foundation Establishment stage. In some ways, such pure physical strength was actually much more frightening than Cultivation base power.

Therefore, Meng Hao had decided to test out his art of Righteous Bestowal. He wanted to see whether his speculations regarding its effects were correct.... As a Demon Sealer, he should be able to use Righteous Bestowal on any living creature in Heaven and Earth, give it his approval, and thusly, help it to become Demonic!

As the words came out of his mouth, the enormous giant began to shake. The glowing green light in its eyes was gone, as if suddenly, it could think. Its expression was no longer one of ferocity, but rather obedience. Now, it permitted the Demonic Qi to pour into its body.

The Black Lands Cultivators didn't understand exactly what was happening, but the scene was completely shocking nonetheless, although it didn't seem as incredible to them as what had happened moments ago with the Flying Rain-Dragon.

To the Western Desert Cultivators, though, what was happening caused their minds to reel uncontrollably.

This was especially true of the three Dragoners. Their faces filled with unprecedented looks of disbelief, as if their minds had been completely overthrown. Their brains reeled to the point that they were complete blanks.

“A Wild Giant actually yielded.... That’s impossible! Wild Giants never yield! Not even Grand Dragoners can do that. Even our Heavenly Wilds Tribe is only able to use them because of the special arrangement we have with the Wild Giant faction. Other than us, no one in the entire Western Desert can get a Wild Giant to yield!”

“It doesn’t have anything to do with Cultivation base. It’s like a rule of the Wild Giants. Their honor and their very blood won’t permit it. So... so, what’s going on...?”

The Western Desert Dragoners were shocked as they saw Meng Hao standing on the head of the giant. He wasn’t paying attention at all to the chaos that his presence had given birth to on the battlefield, nor the shock with which people were looking at him. He didn’t even notice how the mist he had created had risen up into the air and had transformed into a rain of poison.

Instead, he was looking down toward the pale-faced Hanxue Shan.

“I’ve saved you twice now,” he said with a smile. “You need to think of a way to repay me. Come up here, I’ll take you home.” The giant suddenly reached down toward the ground, placing its hand down flat in front of Hanxue Shan.

Everyone around her watched on as she stood gaping up at Meng Hao. Not even sure why she was doing it, she suddenly lifted her foot and stepped up onto the giant’s palm. It lifted her up and placed her on top of its head, where she stood next to Meng Hao. Then, the giant howled and began to stride forward toward Holy Snow City.

Up above in the sky, the two Nascent Soul Cultivators who had been locked in battle were now staring at the strange scene which was playing out below. Meng Hao also noticed their attention.

The giant charged forward, kicking up a fierce wind and causing the ground to quake. Soon, it neared Holy Snow City’s protective shield. The Cultivators inside had seen everything that had happened, and were now at a complete loss, not sure whether to open the shield or keep it closed.

It was at this moment that war bugles suddenly sounded out. The Black Lands Palace and Western Desert Cultivators began to pull back. That included all of the forces surrounding the city, the neodemons and wild beasts. After the time it takes an incense stick to burn, there were no enemy forces visible near Holy Snow City.

This initial probing battle had been intended to give both sides a taste of the other’s prowess. The fighting had been limited to below the Nascent Soul stage. However, Meng Hao’s appearance had

thrown everything into chaos. The morale of the Black Lands Palace troops had been damaged, so it was without hesitation that they retreated.

A great clamor of joy rose up within Holy Snow City when the Black Lands Palace retreated, although many people understood that the battle had just begun.

As for the old Nascent Soul woman, she flew down to hover in front of Meng Hao. As she looked at him, silence reigned around them. The shield still had not opened. All eyes were on Meng Hao.

“What do you want?” asked the old woman.

“A Frigid Snow Larva,” Meng Hao replied with a smile.

“What are you good at?” retorted the woman in an unhurried tone.

“I saved her,” said Meng Hao, pointing at Hanxue Shan.

The old woman shook her head. “That’s not enough.”

“I saved her twice!” said Meng Hao, his voice serious.

“Still not enough.” The old woman looked at Meng Hao calmly.

Meng Hao hesitated for a moment. “I think I might need to save her again a third time,” he said.

“Even if you married her, it still wouldn’t be enough,” said the old woman coolly. “It takes a year to raise a Frigid Snow Larva all the way to the larva stage. Right now, we only have two pupae left in the Clan!”

Meng Hao thought for a moment. “I’m good with poison,” he said.

The old woman gave him a deep look. “If you concoct poisons for the Frigid Snow Clan for a year, then I will see to it that you get a Frigid Snow Larva. However, if I find out that you have some

other motivations, then you'll never leave the city alive." With that, she gestured with her right hand, causing Hanxue Shan to fly over to her. Together, they flew back toward the shield.

Before passing through the shield, Hanxue Shan looked back at Meng Hao.

"Granny gave you her word!" she said. "If you have any evil designs, Heavenly lightning will exterminate your soul. You'd better watch out for yourself!"

Meng Hao smiled, and was about to say something when his face suddenly flickered. Without a moment's pause, his hand lifted up into the air, within which could be seen the Li Clan Patriarch's soul. A peal of thunder rang out, and a bolt of lightning shot down to slam into the soul embodiment. A miserable cry rang out, followed by vigorous cursing. Meng Hao quickly put the soul away.

He looked around to see everyone, even the old woman, staring at him in shock.

"Uh, that was weird," he said with a slight cough, looking embarrassed. "How unforeseen."

Chapter 357: Proud Sir Zhou

Holy Snow City was much larger than Dongluo City, and was divided into an inner city and an outer city. The inner city belonged to the Frigid Snow Clan, whereas the outer city was for other Cultivators.

The cold climate led to frequent snowstorms. Because of this, the white, snowy scenery was something that you never saw in the southern reaches.

In the eastern section of the outer city was a row of mansions, each of which contained a Spirit Spring. Although the spiritual energy they emitted was not vast, in the Black Lands, such residences could be considered luxurious.

Each residence was self-contained, and was protected with spells to ensure that no unwanted visitors would be able to enter. Even more importantly, the protective spells were actually linked to the primary defensive spell formation of the entire Holy Snow City, making them incredibly powerful.

The people who occupied these mansions were guests of utmost importance. Of course, this was also where Meng Hao's living quarters were arranged.

His mansion and its courtyard weren't huge, but neither were they small. The Wild Giant currently was sitting like a small mountain, snoring gently. It would occasionally wake up, whereupon it would grab some meat from the big pile off to the side, pop it into its mouth, and swallow it down. If it ever woke up and found no meat around, it would open its eyes wide and roar.

"Meat.... Meat...." it would then say.

Whenever that happened, Meng Hao would grudgingly run out and find some meat. It didn't take long for Meng Hao to start wondering which one of the two of them was the master....

In addition to the meat-loving Wild Giant, there was also a middle-aged man in the courtyard. A look of bitterness constantly covered his face, as if he had a bitter melon stuck in his mouth. After feeding the Wild Giant only two times, Meng Hao decided to pass on that holy task to this man.

He was none other than the Western Desert Dragoon that Meng Hao had captured. Meng Hao had unsealed him, but had then forced him to consume a poison pill, preventing him from doing anything other than sighing and accepting his fate.

One of Meng Hao's other requirements for the mansion had taken quite some time for Hanxue Shan to manage to comply with. Eventually, she had provided an assortment of lotus seeds, which Meng Hao catalyzed.

Now, the entire courtyard teemed with lotuses. Of course, ordinary lotuses could not grow here; these were snow lotuses.

Snow lotuses filled the courtyard with beauty. Oftentimes, Meng Hao would stare at the flowers for the entire day.

By observing their shape, he was able to sense their essence. By gaining enlightenment regarding the essence of the flower, he was able to improve his Lotus Sword Formation.

Such a life seemed strange to the Western Desert Dragoon. However... Meng Hao eventually asked his name, as well as other information. He helped Meng Hao to understand what neo-demons were. And then, the heart of this middle-aged man named Gu La grew cold, and filled with despair.

That was because Meng Hao enjoyed studying. He liked to study blood, bones, flesh and totems. Each time he studied any of these things, it was like a nightmare for Gu La.

Meng Hao currently sat cross-legged in front of a lotus. As he studied it, information about Western Desert Dragoners spun in his mind. “Dragoners are split into nine ranks, with rank 9 being referred to as Grand Dragoners. Neo-demons are also split into ranks, and they are simply bizarre creatures that lived within the Western Desert, which eventually came to be called neo-demons.

“After the ranks of 1-9 for neo-demons, is rank 10. Those are referred to as Earthly neo-demons. Rank 11 are Heavenly neo-demons, and rank 12 are... totems!” A strange light shone in Meng Hao’s eyes. Now that he had learned more about neo-demons, his understanding of the totems of the Western Desert was more complete. He was no longer completely ignorant.

According to the legends in the Western Desert, the totems of every tribe originated from rank 12 neo-demons, which could also be considered Heavenly neo-demons. Only neo-demons of such a high rank could become totems. After they did, then blood from their descendants could be used to draw totem tattoos. It was in this manner that totems were passed down from generation to generation.

A large tribe would have many totems. A small, weak tribe might only have one.

That was the origin of totems. You could say that all of the variety of different totems existed because way back somewhere in time, a rank 12 neo-demon had appeared.

“Just how powerful is a rank 12 neo-demon?” thought Meng Hao. There was no way for him to know, nor could Gu La explain clearly. He could only say that they were extremely powerful; as for the details, few people actually knew.

In the Western Desert, many Cultivators practiced totem cultivation. But the only people who could actually control neo-demons were Dragoners!

In addition to studying totems, Meng Hao also continued to accrue enlightenment regarding the magical symbols in the Celestial soil. He almost did it by second nature. If he wasn’t engaged in some other research, he would spend his free time outside, trying to gain more enlightenment.

Soon, he had been in Holy Snow City for several days. However, the Frigid Snow Clan had not once mentioned the matter of the Frigid Snow Larva. In fact, they had also not mentioned anything about the concocting services he was supposed to perform. As the days passed, no one came to visit him. He was alone inside the mansion, almost as if they had forgotten him.

He wasn't in a hurry. After his display of power in the battle several days ago, he was sure that the Frigid Snow Clan had plans to use him in some capacity. Someone would come to call on him eventually.

Furthermore, as the conflict escalated, especially when it reached the final stages, Meng Hao was sure that his poisons would only become more and more useful. He was the guest and they were the host, which would never change; however, as the guest became more powerful, the host would naturally be forced to yield some.

Therefore, Meng Hao enjoyed the flowers, studied totems, and gained enlightenment of Celestial soil.

Meanwhile, deep within the heart of the inner city of Holy Snow City, the old woman sat cross-legged with three others in the Frigid Snow Clan's main temple hall. In front of them burned an oil lamp, which danced about in the cold wind, casting flickering shadows about the temple hall.

Those four people were the four Grand Elders of the Frigid Snow Clan. All had Nascent Soul Cultivation bases, and wielded much power in their capacity as administrators of the city.

One of the four was a gray-haired old man with a moon-shaped mark on his forehead. The mark glittered as he spoke. "I still disagree with Third Elder's suggestion. Matters pertaining to Frigid Snow Larvae are very serious. Currently, there are only two that will be able to reach the larva stage. How could we possibly give one to an outsider!?"

These four had already been discussing the matter of Meng Hao for quite some time.

"I concur with Second Elder," said a middle-aged man coldly. He had a grim expression on his face. "First of all, we don't even know where that poison expert Cultivator is from. His Cultivation base is merely at the Core Formation stage, and yet he dares to boastfully demand a Frigid Snow Larva?! Most likely, he sees that Holy Snow City is teetering on the verge of collapse, so he figured he would come and try to extort things from us. In my opinion, we should just go kill him as a warning to others!"

“Look, we’ve been discussing this matter for a while now,” said the old woman. “Whatever this man’s objectives, for him to arrive at this particular time is obviously suspicious. However, in the battle a few days ago, he displayed powers that drew even my attention. Can we really shut the door in the face of such an ally? If we do, who else would dare come to our aid? Fourth Elder, you say that we don’t know where he’s from. But isn’t everyone in the Black Lands a Rogue Cultivator? How could he even prove where he came from?”

“Furthermore, I already gave my word. I won’t go back on it. If his poisons aren’t effective, then it won’t matter. But if they help to assure victory, then the Frigid Snow Larva will be his!” Her voice was calm but powerful.

The main temple hall was silent for a while. The only Elder who hadn’t spoken so far was First Elder. He had white hair and ancient features. He was short and stooped, almost like a midget. Finally, he opened his eyes.

Immediately, they shone with a bright glow, causing the main temple hall to instantly grow brighter. It even seemed to suppress the light emanating from the oil lamp.

The instant he began to speak, all three of the other Elders, even the old woman, bowed their heads.

“Very well,” he said. “You three have been debating the subject for quite a while now. Before we make any decisions, let’s wait until Sir Zhou can identify the poison in that blood!”

Time passed by. Four hours later, footsteps could suddenly be heard in the temple hall. The four Elders lifted their heads to see an old man approaching. He wore a long black robe, and his face was filled with an expression of pride. As he walked toward them, he was followed cautiously by two young women. Their eyes glowed with fervent respect, as if a single word from this man could cause them to do anything.

As the old man entered the temple hall, Second, Third and Fourth Elders all rose to their feet, smiles filling their faces.

“Sir Zhou,” they said in greeting.

“Greetings, Fellow Daoists,” said Sir Zhou in a cool tone. His expression was haughty, as it usually was. His features were not ancient; instead, his face shone with a healthy glow. Arrogance seemed to radiate off of him. Obviously, he was used to occupying a lofty position, or at least, was used to people flattering him.

Were Meng Hao present, he would be incredibly shocked. He would recognize this old man. It was none other than East Pill Division Furnace Lord Zhou Dekun, who had been captured and taken to the Black Lands!

Despite their rocky start, Meng Hao had eventually developed a good relationship with old man Zhou, and the two of them eventually became good friends. He had taken Meng Hao to visit quite a few Cultivator Clans, where they had been waited upon hand and foot like royalty. The look on the man's face right now was similar to how it had been back then.

His capture had worried Meng Hao, to the extent that after arriving in the Black Lands, he'd made some enquiries. However, no information had ever turned up. He had always assumed that Zhou Dekun was being tormented in some unknown location in the Black Lands....

However, it seemed that in all aspects, Zhou Dekun was even better off now than before. His aged appearance from before had been replaced by a ruddy glow. From the respectful, shy glances being given to him by the two young girls, it was clear that old man Zhou was like an old tree that had suddenly blossomed. Blossomed again and again....

"Sir Zhou, how goes the poison research?" said the First Elder with a smile. He remained seated cross-legged, but his expression was one of courtesy. He spoke to him as if he were an equal, despite the fact that Zhou Dekun was only of the late Foundation Establishment stage.

"Considering the level of my Dao of alchemy," responded Zhou Dekun proudly, "there are only two people under Heaven who can exceed me. One is my Master, whom you all know of, Grandmaster Pill Demon! The other is my Junior Brother Fang Mu. Other than these two, I dare anyone to claim to be above me!" He waved his hand, wherein appeared a jade bottle.

"This poisoned blood you gave me is definitely extraordinary. It took several days of thorough research before I was able to completely understand it. In any other location, this person could be considered a Chosen of Heaven. However, in my view, he's little more than a master alchemist. I could disintegrate his poison with a single breath! This man should know that the Dao of poison is not so simple of a subject. When it comes to the elite of the Dao of alchemy, there is only one person in the world whom I admire. That is none other than my Junior Brother Fang Mu. When his Bedevilment Pill appeared, the name of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron rose up. He could be considered the Patriarch of all poisons in existence!" He ended his speech with his jaw set proudly. Clearly, Zhou Dekun was implying that if his Junior Brother was so incredible, then his own power could only be imagined.

Serious and courteous expressions covered the faces of Elders, with the exception of the First Elder. Behind him, the two young girls gazed at him with looks of adoration.

“I am fascinated by the illustrious Dao of alchemy of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron,” said the old man with the moon-shaped seal on his forehead. “Unfortunately, I have never been fortunate enough to be able to travel to the Southern Domain to pay him my respects.” His expression was sincere; obviously he had heard of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, but not the events which had occurred at the Rebirth Cave.

Fourth Elder smiled and politely said, “As a distinguished apprentice of Grandmaster Pill Demon, and Elder Brother of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron, your Dao of alchemy can shake the Heavens and rock the Earth. I truly admire you, sir, truly! With you here, Grandmaster, Holy Snow City will never fall!”

Zhou Dekun laughed. Inwardly, he felt a bit emotional. Back in the Southern Domain, he could never have been so openly arrogant. But this was the backwater Black Lands, a place where continued existence was predicated by respect. Modesty was completely out of the question. Zhou Dekun had learned this lesson the hard way. So right now, he nodded proudly, indicating that the praise of him just now was absolutely correct.

In his heart, he sighed as he thought back to the despair he had felt after having been taken to the Black Lands. He thought of his bitterness at realizing he would never be able to return to his Sect. There had been no one to serve him, and no Cultivator Clans to give him gifts and take care of him. At that time, his life had seemed as gray as ash.

How could he ever have imagined that after the suffering would come happiness? He had managed to turn things around; he had been taken here because the people here viewed him almost like a treasure. After randomly concocting some medicinal pills, the locals had been shocked. He was provided with food and drink, and anything else he desired. He was even given two young female companions. His life was suddenly very comfortable, perhaps even more than back in the East Pill Division.

As he thought back on everything, Zhou Dekun sighed. He might never again be able to see his Sect, and yet, that wasn't such a horrible thing....

Thinking up to this point, he cleared his throat and then continued on with his lofty boasting.

“This crappy little poison is nothing,” he said. “Just wait until I concoct some of my own poison. I guarantee that those Western Desert Cultivators will have no choice other than to give in.” He spoke with an air of self-assured authority.

First Elder thought for a moment and then slowly said, “If Grandmaster Zhou is able to both dispel and concoct this same poison, then perhaps we should ask that other Cultivator to just leave.”

Second and Fourth Elders nodded their heads at this, and were just about to voice their agreement when the old woman spoke.

“I disagree. Sir Zhou is clearly a Grandmaster of the Dao of alchemy. However, it took several days of research for him to determine the nature of the poison. Besides, I’ve seen the results of that poison myself! If we make the other Cultivator leave, then we should really determine exactly how effective the poison is. Why not have a little competition between Sir Zhou and this other Cultivator? That way the man’s true self can be clearly seen.” She looked at First Elder.

First Elder hesitated for a moment, then made a gesture to Second and Fourth Elders indicating that they should hold their tongues. He gazed at Zhou Dekun. “Grandmaster Zhou, what do you think?”

Zhou Dekun laughed proudly. “That’s fine. I’m curious to lay eyes on this young mischief-maker and teach him a lesson. I’ll help him to understand that the Dao of alchemy of the Southern Domain is boundless, and that alchemists of the Southern Domain are unsurpassable.”

As he listened, First Elder nodded and smiled. He happened to very much admire this Grandmaster Zhou. He had sampled the man’s medicinal pills, and was confident that he was definitely number one in all of the Black Lands.

Laughing, he rose to his feet with clasped hands, as did the old woman and the other Elders. Amidst all the smiles, the old woman sighed lightly. She had done everything she could and had put up a good fight. At least she had done her best to pay back Meng Hao’s kindness in saving Hanxue Shan.

Naturally, people were sent to notify Meng Hao. The date for the “Dao of alchemy consultation” was set for three days later.

News of the matter spread through Holy Snow City like a whirlwind. Everyone heard about it, both Frigid Snow Clan members and outside Cultivators. Excitement grew. Everyone knew the name of Zhou Dekun. After all, during recent years in Holy Snow City, the reputation of Grandmaster Zhou was like the sun in the noon sky.

In fact, it was because of Grandmaster Zhou that so many Rogue Cultivators had been gathering in Holy Snow City. Regardless of the price they had to pay, they wanted to sample his medicinal pills.

Whether openly or in the heart, all of them took Zhou Dekun to be the number one alchemist in the Black Lands. Actually, many Cultivators who consumed his medicinal pills were so shocked that they claimed Zhou Dekun to be the ultimate Grandmaster even in the Southern Domain.

Therefore, Zhou Dekun's name only continued to grow more illustrious in Holy Snow City. Unfortunately, this place was so far from the former Dongluo City that Meng Hao had never received any information about it.

The news that Zhou Dekun planned to give a consultation regarding the Dao of alchemy caused quite a stir among the local Cultivators. All of them planned to personally go watch the event, not only to cheer on Grandmaster Zhou, but also to see how pill concocting worked.

This news was shocking enough. However, shortly thereafter word was issued from the temple in which Zhou Dekun resided. Based on recent battle achievements, he would choose ten individuals for whom he would personally concoct medicinal pills! This new bit of information immediately caused a huge sensation.

As the entire city simmered, Meng Hao sat cross-legged in his courtyard, surrounded by lotuses, looking at the invitation card in his hand. A strange expression covered his face, like a smile, and yet not. Standing across from him was Hanxue Shan, who was completely unable to discern his thoughts.

"Hey, what kind of expression is that?" she said, trying to suppress her nervousness. She wasn't sure why, but ever since the day Meng Hao had looked down at her from his position atop the giant's head, smiled, and spoken those words, after which she had walked up in a trance to join him, well... for some reason she kept thinking about him.

Actually, as soon as she had heard of the matter of Grandmaster Zhou, she had immediately run over to tell Meng Hao.

"Nothing," he said with a slight smile. "I just think this Zhou Dekun is kind of funny."

“You!” she cried, stamping her foot and glaring angrily at Meng Hao. “Zhou Dekun is at the pinnacle of the Dao of alchemy, the number one alchemist in the Black Lands! He’s even famous in the Southern Domain, the personal disciple of Grandmaster Pill Demon! He’s also the Elder Brother of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron. Do you know who Grandmaster Pill Demon is? Have you even heard of him!?”

“People such as them are like Chosen of Heaven, and you don’t even pay them any attention? All you can do is concoct poison! Aren’t you nervous?”

She was a pretty girl to begin with, but when she acted like this, it revealed another side of her beauty, as if she were vying with the surrounding lotuses. Meng Hao shook his head and smiled, a virtually imperceptible glitter in his eyes as he considered her words.

A perplexed look on his face, he asked, “I’ve heard of Grandmaster Pill Demon, ma’am, and I very much respect him. But who is this Grandmaster Pill Cauldron of whom you speak?”

“You don’t know who Grandmaster Pill Cauldron is?” she replied, her eyes wide and filled with disbelief. “I guess I shouldn’t be surprised. You’re just a Rogue Cultivator, so you don’t know much about the Southern Domain. I bet you don’t even know anyone who’s been to the Southern Domain! Your ignorance of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron is understandable.

“Well, let me tell you, Grandmaster Pill Cauldron is the number one Chosen in the Violet Fate Sect of the Southern Domain.” A look of adoration filled her eyes as she spoke. “His name is Fang Mu, and he’s Grandmaster Pill Demon’s Legacy Apprentice. His Dao of alchemy rocks everything under Heaven. He’s an amazing person who will be the stuff of legends in the future. He’s an expert in poisons, and has a unique understanding of the Dao of alchemy. There isn’t anyone in the United Nine of the Black Lands who doesn’t know about him. I have a dream that one day in the future, I’ll be able to go to the Southern Domain and pay him a visit. I’ll plead with him to concoct a medicinal pill for me.”

Meng Hao gave a dry cough. “You’re exaggerating,” he said without thinking. As soon as the words left his mouth, Hanxue Shan’s gaze turned dangerous.

“You don’t believe me? You’re not convinced?” She glared at him with wide eyes. After he had saved her twice, she suddenly found that she was less reserved in front of him, and more open. “You can disbelieve others, or remain unconvinced by their words. But, you are not allowed to disrespect Grandmaster Pill Cauldron! Fang Mu joined the Violet Fate Sect when he was seventeen years old. When he was just an apprentice alchemist, he utilized the Violet Fate Sect’s East Pill Division

techniques to cause a shocking scene! He displayed unprecedented talent, and caused everyone to be shocked.

“In fact, one of the East Pill Division Elders personally endorsed him to participate in the trial by fire to become a master alchemist. He was the first person to ever do so after having joined the Sect for less than a year! The way he became number one in the Sect was something exceedingly rare from ancient times until now!

“Thanks to his absolute superiority, he was promoted to master alchemist, after which he created a Bedevilment Pill, which sent the entire Southern Domain into an uproar. Later, he competed with Grandmaster Eternal Mountain and produced a Myriad Strength Pill, which was impossible to crush. That’s when he became a Furnace Lord!” By this point in her tirade, she really seemed to be upset. Her words came out in a rush.

“After that he took place in an alchemy duel in the Black Sieve Sect. His Dao was shocking. Later, he received enlightenment at the Ancient Dao Geysers. He cowed the Dao Child of the Black Lands Palace and slaughtered an azure-masked Core Formation Cultivator, causing his name to ring out under all the Heavens! Later, in the Violet Fate Sect trial by fire for Violet Furnace Lords, he took first place in unprecedented fashion, suppressing Chosen to become a Violet Furnace Lord and the Legacy Apprentice of the East Pill Division!

“He did all that in only a few years. Do you really think you’re better than someone like that? You really think you can measure up?”

Meng Hao stared at her in shock, his face a bit red. He felt somewhat embarrassed.

To be praised and commended in such a way was something he wasn’t used to. He almost couldn’t believe that Hanxue Shan knew so much about him.

“Could it be that she specifically investigated me?” he thought. He cleared his throat again, feeling a bit complacent. He couldn’t help but give a faint smile as he looked at Hanxue Shan. The look on her face said that she would fight to the death if he didn’t show respect to Grandmaster Pill Cauldron.

“If this Grandmaster Pill Cauldron knew he had a devotee like you here in the Black Lands, I think he would be very happy.” He laughed jokingly.

“Hmph! Don’t mock my love for Grandmaster Pill Cauldron. So what if I love him? He’s my dream beloved!”

Meng Hao laughed. Now he knew for sure that for some reason, the incident at the Rebirth Cave was not known among the Cultivators in the Black Lands. Perhaps the news hadn’t spread, or... perhaps the fact that he had left the Violet Fate Sect and fled for his life... had been suppressed!

Chapter 359: Zhou Dekun and Meng Hao

Seeing Meng Hao’s expression, Hanxue Shan was about to open her mouth and say something, but then had a sudden thought. A look of pity appeared in her eyes.

Sighing to herself, she thought, “His smile seems normal, but he’s obviously covering up his jealousy of Grandmaster Pill Cauldron. It’s so obvious!” Then she thought about how he had saved her twice, and how he wasn’t really very disagreeable in general. And of course there was the scene from the battlefield which kept playing out in her head.

Her heart suddenly softened.

She thought of Meng Hao’s words and bearing from moments ago, and then realized she had actually embarrassed him a bit, which was why he had reacted in the way he did. “There’s no need to feel frustrated,” she said comfortingly. “Grandmaster Pill Cauldron is a rare talent in the world. Ai, don’t let yourself feel discouraged.”

Meng Hao wasn’t sure whether to laugh or cry. There was no way he could tell this girl that the person sitting in front of her was the very one she adored to the extreme and wanted to marry, Grandmaster Pill Demon’s true Legacy Apprentice, possessor of the Everburning Flame, wielder of the Alchemy Dao Transmutation Incantation, and superstar of the Southern Domain, Grandmaster Pill Cauldron.

Hanxue Shan quickly changed the subject. She had suddenly thought of a problem. Frowning, she said, “What are you going to do? If you lose to Grandmaster Zhou, then there’s no way you’ll be able to get a Frigid Snow Larva. Even granny won’t be able to do anything about it. Besides, there are only two young larvae that can be raised, and it will take a year. Otherwise, I would help you to get one. Except, I don’t know how to raise them....” She was about to continue when she saw the look on Meng Hao’s face, as if something was unacceptable and he wasn’t sure whether to laugh or cry.

The look immediately annoyed her. Looking flustered, she stamped her foot. “Fine, forget it,” she said. “If you aren’t anxious then what’s the point of me being anxious for you?”

Her attitude was something Meng Hao had never encountered before. Neither Xu Qing nor Chu Yuyan had been so impulsive. He couldn’t help but size her up again.

“What are you looking at?” she said, glaring at him again, her young heart beginning to race. Without realizing it, she stood up a bit straighter and put on a menacing expression.

“I’m looking at you, beautiful,” replied Meng Hao with a laugh, winking.

“You...” Her face suddenly flushed red, and her heart seized with panic. She backed up a few steps, holding her tongue for a long moment before bursting out, “You were just coming on to me!”

Meng Hao scratched his head, his smile growing wider. He suddenly realized that messing with this girl was quite amusing. He cleared his throat and was about to say something else when, suddenly, Hanxue Shan once again spoke, her tone earnest: “Granny told me that according to Clan rules, anyone who comes on to a member of the Frigid Snow Clan will be turned into an ice statue! The only other option is to commit yourself to me!”

Meng Hao gaped in astonishment. This was the first time he had ever heard of such a ridiculous rule.

“You remember that!” said Hanxue Shan obsequiously. “You owe me a commitment!” Her eyes flickered with craftiness as she stared at Meng Hao. Covering her smile with her hand, she spun around and walked off. Her slender legs, lithe waist, and perky rear end only served to accentuate her youthfulness, and gave her a profound charm as she stalked off.

Meng Hao watched her leave, laughing to himself. He then looked back down at the invitation card in his hand, and Zhou Dekun’s name written on the top in flowing calligraphy. As he did, his smile grew even more brilliant.

“Very well. Three days from now I’ll go see this Grandmaster Zhou. We’ll see whether or not his Dao of alchemy has made any progress during his years in the Black Lands.” Smiling, he put away the invitation card, closed his eyes and sat cross-legged amidst the lotuses. He meditated on the shape of the lotus flowers and sought enlightenment regarding their essence.

The Wild Giant snored gently as it slept. Off to the side, poor Gu La was butchering some meat to feed it when it woke up.

A forlorn expression covered his face. He missed his life in the Western Desert, and yet, after hearing the conversation between Hanxue Shan and Meng Hao, he was suddenly filled with the desire to see this mysterious Grandmaster Pill Cauldron.

“If I have to be a slave,” he thought to himself, “it should be to a Chosen of the Dao of alchemy from the Southern Domain. That would be fitting for the likes of me, Gu La. Oh well. Such a pity....”

Time passed, and soon it was three days later. Hanxue Shan came twice to visit during the three days, but every time she caught sight of Meng Hao’s nonchalant attitude, she got mad. Her last visit came on the third day, the appointed day of the competition. Her face was dark as she stalked over, delivered a jade slip, and then left without another word.

The jade slip contained a pill formula, a simple one. Meng Hao could sense Zhou Dekun’s Dao of alchemy within the pill formula. Meng Hao wasn’t sure how Hanxue Shan had managed to get her hands on it, but obviously she wanted to give him a chance to study it so that he wouldn’t lose too badly.

“She really is a warmhearted girl,” he thought with a laugh. He studied the jade slip for a moment before transforming it into ash. Then he rose to his feet and flew up to stand on the head of the Wild Giant. “Alright, let’s go. Who knows, maybe I’ll end up giving some pointers to Zhou Dekun. It depends on how much his skill in the Dao of alchemy has regressed.” He shook his head as the Wild Giant suddenly opened its eyes. Looking a bit disconcerted, it rose to its feet. Its ninety-meter height made it look like a small mountain. It gave out a loud roar as it reached down, grabbed a big chunk of meat, and threw it into its mouth.

“Meat.... Meat....” it grumbled indistinctly. Then it strode forward, out of the courtyard.

Bells were sounding out within this region of Holy Snow City. As they heard the sound, nearby Cultivators suddenly remembered that today was the appointed day for Zhou Dekun to concoct medicinal pills. Immediately, excitement began to grow.

In recent days, Holy Snow City had produced large amounts of magical items and techniques, a variety of cultivation necessities, all for the purpose in bolstering the resistance against the Black Lands Palace invasion.

Such items were available based on achievements in battle. Because of their former status as one of the great Clans of the United Nine, the Frigid Snow Clan possessed deep reserves of such items.

Everyone knew that Zhou Dekun was going to concoct pills for ten people, based on their battle achievements. The news had caused quite a stir. Now that the bells were ringing out, large groups of Cultivators flocked toward Holy Snow Square, in the east of the city.

When Meng Hao appeared on the stomping Wild Giant, he was quite conspicuous. Even people some distance away could see the giant's huge frame.

Murmuring filled the air as the Wild Giant strode forward at top speed. It didn't need to fly, a single leap would propel it hundreds of meters forward.

Meng Hao sat cross-legged on top of the giant's head, the wind whistling past his ears. Snowflakes danced about in the cold air. He paid no attention to all the onlookers; he simply transmitted some silent instructions to the Wild Giant, his eyes closed.

Within the space of about ten breaths, he opened his eyes to find the Wild Giant leaping over a frozen river that ran through the city. Then, they arrived at Holy Snow Square.

The square had long since filled with hundreds of Cultivators, packed densely in rings. The sight of the Wild Giant caused them to immediately clear a path. Anyone who saw a ninety meter tall giant running toward them like a charging mountain would fall back without even thinking about it.

The center of the square was empty. Considering his status in Holy Snow City, Zhou Dekun would obviously not sit around waiting for anyone.

As soon as the Wild Giant entered the square, Meng Hao's body flashed as he flew forward. The surrounding hundreds of Cultivators' eyes were fixed on him as he soared over them, his expression placid. It was amidst complete silence that he stepped foot into the middle of the square.

It was almost noon; however, snow drifted down from the sky like it always did, landing onto the bodies of the spectators and resting on their hair. Meng Hao looked out at them calmly as he waited.

“So that’s the poison expert who will exchange poison concocting services for a Frigid Snow Larva from the Frigid Snow Clan.”

“If that guy was in some other city, he might be able to make a big impression. Unfortunately for him, this is Holy Snow City, and we have Grandmaster Zhou Dekun.”

“On the day of the battle, Grandmaster Zhou had reached a critical point in his pill concocting, and couldn’t participate. That’s why he didn’t have a chance to show off the power of his poison like that other guy.”

The onlookers discussed matters for a short time before four prismatic beams of light appeared. Four people appeared in the square, followed by dozens of Frigid Snow Clan members.

One was Hanxue Shan, who looked over concernedly at Meng Hao.

As for the four people, they were none other than the four Grand Elders of the Frigid Snow Clan. First Elder stood there, as short as a midget, but emanating power from his Cultivation base that seemed to suppress the surrounding Cultivators. They instantly stared at him with intense looks of veneration.

Second and Fourth Elders, as well as the old woman, Third Elder, were all Nascent Soul experts. Their appearance instantly caused everyone to cease speaking.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever. After the Elders arrived, about five breaths of time passed before Zhou Dekun appeared. He strode into the square, flanked by the beautiful young women, looking incredibly lofty.

All of the Cultivators in the audience looked at him with respectful expressions, smiled, and clasped hands in salute.

“Greetings, Grandmaster Zhou!”

“Many thanks for the medicinal elixir you provided, Grandmaster Zhou. I had somewhat of a breakthrough in my Cultivation base. Anything you need, I will provide as repayment!”

“Haha, it’s been a few days since we last met, Grandmaster Zhou. You are even more elegant and graceful than before.”

Words like these filled the air, causing Zhou Dekun to smile proudly. After entering the square, he greeted the four Grand Elders, and then looked superciliously over toward Meng Hao.

“What’s your name?” he said coolly, looking every bit a senior member of the Dao of alchemy.

“Fang Mu,” replied Meng Hao with a slight cough. Meng Hao looked at Zhou Dekun, and couldn’t help but sigh inwardly. He had been worried about the man for such a long time, but from the looks of it, he was definitely doing quite well.

Hearing the name Fang Mu caused Zhou Dekun to stare in shock.

Chapter 360: Zhou Dekun’s Treasured Pill

Zhou Dekun wasn’t the only one to stare in shock. Hanxue Shan also glared at Meng Hao angrily with wide eyes.

The surrounding Cultivators were struck speechless for a moment. Then, however, they burst out laughing.

“Fang Mu? Don’t tell me he’s talking about the famous Grandmaster Pill Cauldron from the Southern Domain?”

“Hilarious. This guy sure is insulting Grandmaster Zhou.”

“He really has some guts, and maybe some skills too. It’s too bad for him that he ran into Grandmaster Zhou. He’ll definitely be outdone.”

As the laughter continued to ring out, Grandmaster Zhou frowned and then gave Meng Hao a cold harrumph.

“Ignorant rascal,” said Zhou Dekun, flicking his sleeve. “It’s hard to believe you dare to even speak the name of Fang Mu. He’s my Junior brother, Grandmaster Pill Cauldron!” A proud look shone in his eyes; clearly he felt that his status as Grandmaster Pill Cauldron’s Elder Brother was a

very prestigious one. “Originally I merely planned to teach you a thing or two about the Dao of alchemy. However, considering your blathering, you rascal, I will now help you to understand that the grandeur of the Dao of alchemy is not something to be blithely chattered about.” With that, he lifted up his hand to reveal a small bottle.

“Contained in this bottle is blood infected with the poison you used the other day,” he continued, his voice arrogant. “I’ve long since analyzed it, and I have to say, it seems very potent, but is in fact quite simple.” With that, he tossed the bottle over to Meng Hao.

“The first lesson I will teach you is regarding the liquified poison in that bottle. You....” Before he could finish speaking, his eyes went wide.

All of the surrounding Cultivators instantly went quiet, too, as their gazes locked onto Meng Hao. Even the four Grand Elders were watching him closely.

That was because the instant Meng Hao caught the bottle, it shattered. A putrid, black liquid emerged, along with a mist, which floated above Meng Hao’s hand.

A moment later, a burning tongue of flame appeared in his palm, which instantly caused the black mist to dissipate. The liquid began to writhe, and after the space of about two breaths, had transformed into a medicinal pill! Everyone watching could clearly see the entire process!

The black medicinal pill suddenly began to emit strands of red Qi, after which, the pill turned violet in color. It was no longer putrid; instead, a fragrant aroma wafted up from it which lifted the spirits of anyone who smelled it.

“Liquid Congealment Concoction!” thought Zhou Dekun, his heart thumping. He was shocked, but quickly began to rationalize in his head. “It has to be some kind of trick. This guy is simply too young. Liquid Congealment Concoction is something that only Violet Furnace Lords can do.”

Meng Hao coughed lightly, looking a bit embarrassed. He really didn’t want to cause problems for Zhou Dekun. In fact, he was quite happy to be able to see him here. Liquid Congealment Concoction wasn’t anything particularly astonishing to see. It was more of a method of extending greetings to another alchemist. Unfortunately, because of the situation with the Ji Clan, and Meng Hao’s lack of certainty regarding all the circumstances involved, he didn’t want to openly be involved with Zhou Dekun.

“As an alchemist, I won’t denigrate your petty gimmick,” said Zhou Dekun, sounding very much like a Grandmaster. In his best reprimanding tone, he continued, “However, in the process of researching that poison liquid, I imbued it with no small amount of medicinal plants. I never imagined you would dare to treacherously use them to make a medicinal pill! We’ll ignore your Dao of alchemy for the moment. Such tricks are unacceptable!” The onlookers, including the four Grand Elders, suddenly weren’t as shocked as they had been moments before. After all, they had very much faith in Zhou Dekun, from their outsider’s view.

Zhou Dekun was actually somewhat alarmed inwardly. However, he knew that this was the Black Lands, and he was a Furnace Lord of the East Pill Division. Therefore, he was fully convinced that trickery had just been used just now to congeal the pill.

“Come,” he said, setting his jaw. “Concoct a pill for me. Use all the skill you have.” His tone was arrogant, but inwardly he had decided to use this opportunity to determine the true skill level of his opponent.

Meng Hao gave a slight smile. He glanced at Zhou Dekun, then shook his head and slapped his bag of holding to produce an ordinary pill furnace. Then, he produced some medicinal plants, which he tossed into the furnace. After a few moments, a green medicinal pill emerged. The fragrant medicinal aroma was thick. It was really just an ordinary medicinal pill, but it should have been enough to shock the audience.

However, upon the appearance of the medicinal pill, the observers didn’t look surprised at all. In fact, some of them even laughed mockingly. The Four Grand Elders frowned, and the old woman sighed and shook her head.

Hanxue Shan also shook her head, then looked at him as if he had lost and she were trying to comfort him.

Meng Hao gaped at all of this. Something didn’t seem right. The green medicinal pill seemed simple, but it emanated a strong medicinal aroma, and was actually an eighty percent medicinal strength pill for the Foundation Establishment stage.

“That’s your medicinal pill? Fine, I won’t go too hard on you. However, I will now be forced to convince you what a true medicinal pill is!” Zhou Dekun was actually heaving sighs of relief inwardly. Meng Hao’s Dao of alchemy had long since surpassed his by a vast margin. Furthermore, the medicinal pills Meng Hao created were not flamboyant. In fact, without holding the pill in hand, Zhou Dekun would have no way to tell its level. His expression was tranquil and composed as he smacked his bag of holding to produce a pill furnace.

This particular pill furnace was made from jade, and as soon as it appeared, it emanated spiritual energy. Meng Hao looked at it with surprise. Based on what he knew about pill furnaces, it only took a glance to tell that this one was beyond ordinary.

The surface of the jade pill furnace was carved with auspicious animals. These weren't ordinary depictions, they appeared to be totemic, and obviously served some special function.

Seeing Meng Hao's gaze caused a self-righteous look to appear on Zhou Dekun's face. This pill furnace had been gifted to him by the Frigid Snow Clan, and he was quite pleased with it. Despite the fact that his Dao of alchemy was only average, he was still confident in being able to achieve victory because of his consistency. With the addition of this pill furnace, his chances increased even more. As of now, his success rate would be at ninety percent.

The pill furnace appeared along with a glowing red stone. After placing the pill furnace in position, flames leaped up from the stone to emanate out. Next, Zhou Dekun produced some medicinal plants which he catalyzed to various degrees and then tossed into the pill furnace.

The pill furnace began to glow, and Zhou Dekun himself began to shine with a light that gave him a Celestial appearance. He looked lofty, even holy. Anyone who looked at him would instantly be convinced of his grandeur.

At this point, he definitely emanated the aura of a transcendent being.

"No wonder he's called Grandmaster Zhou. A single glance will tell you that he's Grandmaster material!"

"This is the second time I've seen Grandmaster Zhou concoct pills. Every single time, I'm shocked and filled with admiration."

The surrounding Cultivators discussed the sight, eyes filled with open veneration. The four Grand Elders looked on with slight smiles, nodding with respect toward Grandmaster Zhou.

A strange expression appeared on Meng Hao's face. No one else could tell, but it only took a glance for him to see that while the pill Zhou Dekun was concocting was exceptional, what was even more exceptional was the technique the man was using to make his body glow brightly.

“No wonder he’s done so well for himself here,” thought Meng Hao. “That technique is really useful. If I remember correctly, he wasn’t able to do that back in the Southern Domain. He must have picked up this technique here in the Black Lands.”

A buzz of conversation filled the air as Zhou Dekun, his eyes shining brightly, slapped the pill furnace. Blinding rays of light shot out, along with a white medicinal pill.

Immediately, a dense medicinal aroma filled the air, spreading out for dozens of meters in all directions. All who smelled it were immediately energized, and felt their Cultivation bases leaping with power.

People continued to gush with conversation.

“Now that is a medicinal pill! You don’t even have to consume it to feel your Cultivation base jumping! That pill is incredible!”

“It’s definitely extraordinary. In fact it’s even more potent than the last set of pills Grandmaster Zhou concocted. Hahaha. It seems Grandmaster Zhou’s Dao of alchemy is even better than before.”

Even the Grand Elders were smiling and nodding, with the exception of the old woman.

Meng Hao gaped openly at the complacent Zhou Dekun. After a long moment passed, he smiled wryly, finally understanding why the audience had looked at him with such cynicism. Zhou Dekun’s medical pills had always been exceptional. After all, he was a Furnace Lord. However, his final movement in slapping the furnace had seemed to be filled with complacency, but in fact caused the medicinal essence of the pill to begin to emanate out.

After the pill appeared, it was inherently weak; less than half of its original medicinal strength remained. The other half was emanating out into the air.

The dense medicinal aroma caused everyone to feel energized, and even experience tiny leaps in their Cultivation bases. To them, it indicated that this medicinal pill was high quality. However, that just went to show how little Black Lands Cultivators understood about the Dao of alchemy.

Suddenly, Meng Hao came to understand that when dealing with people who didn’t understand the Dao of alchemy, you had to be adaptable.

Furthermore, he also realized that he himself had unwittingly made progress in his own Dao of alchemy. His medicinal pills were no longer as showy, but rather, subdued. This was a realm that exceeded that of ordinary alchemists, let alone ordinary Cultivators.

He put away the green medicinal pill, looked at the glorious Zhou Dekun and, hearing the excited conversations of the surrounding Cultivators, began to chuckle.

It was at this moment that the voice of the Frigid Snow Clan's Second Elder rang out.

“Grandmaster Zhou, there's no need to provide further instruction to this self-proclaimed Fang Mu,” he said coolly. “Any agreements previously made with this callow Cultivator are now invalid.” He looked at Meng Hao. “Because of the kindness you showed in saving Hanxue Shan, we will not look further into your trickery just now.” Before the echo of his words could die out, the sound of piercing laughter suddenly filled the entire city.

“So this is your Frigid Snow Clan's alchemist? Wow, such an amazing Grandmaster. You've even outshone Pill Demon! Except, everyone's laughing at you.”

Three colorful beams of light suddenly appeared in the sky, sending out ripples as they flew down.

Three people appeared, and just as they seemed about to smash into Holy Snow City's protective spell formation shield, it suddenly opened. When the four Grand Elders of the Frigid Snow Clan saw who these three people were, their expressions immediately changed.