

The Heavens 751

Chapter 751: Returning to the Blessed Land

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Karmic Hexing had been bestowed upon him by Patriarch Blood Demon when he reached the fourth level of the Blood Demon Grand Magic. It was a hexing magic that belonged solely to the Demon Sealers, and was something that only Demon sealers could learn and utilize.

Meng Hao had long since achieved internal enlightenment regarding the magic. However, after testing it out, he found that he was unable to successfully cast it consistently. Now that he saw the pitch-black imp fleeing, coldness filled his eyes and he immediately unleashed the magic.

When he raised his hand and then chopped it down, the entire world seemed to grind to a halt. He was now able to see innumerable silk-like threads attached to everyone. They were wrapped and twined together as they spread out into the air to connect to everything else in the world.

This was not the first time Meng Hao had seen something like this. The Karmic Severing of the Ji Clan invoked a similar sight.

However, Meng Hao was a Demon Sealer, so he would not sever Karma, he would hex it!

Karmic Severing was, of course a severing, whereas Karmic Hexing was a type of sealing!

Severing someone's Karma with Karmic Severing would result in their complete and utter death. It didn't matter if the victim had numerous clones; any memories that existed of the victim in anyone's mind would be blotted out. By erasing the image of the person in everyone's mind, even if that person still lived on somewhere, they would be dead.

Such a fearsome Daoist magic was a fundamental magic of the Ji Clan, and in fact, could be considered the most powerful art in the Ninth Mountain. The reason being, of course, that the Heavens of the Ninth Mountain... was none other than Ji Tian.

As for Meng Hao, his Karmic Hexing was, simply stated, using Karma as a hex.

It could use your own Karma to seal you!

The more Karma you possessed, the more powerful the sealing. It didn't matter if you were a human, Immortal, or some other powerful being; as long as you had Karma, you could be sealed.

At first glance, it did not seem to be as domineering as the Ji Clan's art. In reality, though... severing something was as simple as wielding a sharp blade. To seal someone with Karma, however, required controlling Karma itself, and therefore, a deep understanding of it.

The Ji Clan's Karmic Annihilation had been cultivated to the ultimate degree, but definitely could not be used to control Karma. The Ji Clan cultivated a blade with which to sever Karma, whereas the Demon Sealers controlled it. With a single word, they could break the Karmic connection itself.

The two arts were on completely different level.

The power of Karmic Hexing was enough to shake the Heavens. It was like the Eighth Demon Sealing Hex, one of the eight great Demon Sealing hexes. Only such a peerless Daoist Magic was worthy to be among those created by the successive generations of Demon Sealers.

Furthermore, it was only by creating such an individualized hex that someone could truly be considered... a Demon Sealer!

"I wonder what my own personal hex, the Ninth Demon Sealing Hex... will be like...?" Meng Hao murmured to himself. His eyes were now blank as he looked up into the sky at the pitch-black imp.

He saw the innumerable Karma Threads attached to the thing, and then he saw them suddenly twisting and distorting as they entangled the pitch-black imp.

"NO!!" screamed the imp. "The seventh hex! It's the seventh hex.... The seventh generation Demon Sealer has already perished, his Hexing magic was lost! How could someone in this world be using it!?!?"

"Impossible! I can't accept this! There's only one sixty-year cycle left...." The pitch-black imp struggled, but the only result was that it became more entangled. Within the space of a few short breaths, it was completely wrapped up; escape was virtually impossible.

Of course, everyone who was watching saw something very different than what Meng Hao saw. They could not see the Karma Threads; they only saw Meng Hao point, and in response, the pitch-black imp suddenly stopped in midair. It seemed to be struggling, as if its body weren't under its own control any more. Then it began to move backward.

Toward Meng Hao!

After only a moment, it was back in front of Meng Hao and then on the palm of his hand. Everyone gaped as Meng Hao casually put the imp in his bag of holding.

Gasps could be heard from all directions. The Blood Demon Sect disciples took it much more in stride; after all, they were used to Meng Hao's enigmatic unpredictability. However, the hundreds of thousands of rogue cultivators were flabbergasted.

“Was that... a sealing?”

“But I didn't sense any ripples or signs of sealing magic! It was like... like that pitch-black imp flew over of its own accord!”

“This Blood Prince of the Blood Demon Sect, Meng Hao... he's beyond comprehension!”

The Black Sieve Sect was now completely destroyed.

The only thing that remained was a crater. The mountains were crumbled, and the once glorious sect now existed only in minds of those who remembered it. All that was left of this shattered and barren land was the unceasing rotation of the heavens above.

A great sect that had existed for ten thousand years, was now nothing more than wreckage and ruins.

Gone. Completely gone.

The surrounding rogue cultivators looked down silently at what used to be the Black Sieve Sect, and gradually, began to sigh to themselves.

Meng Hao hovered in midair, looking down at the ruins of the Black Sieve Sect, and thought back to the first time he had come here. He also thought about when he came here as Fang Mu, and then the third time he came, for Xu Qing.

After a long moment, he shook his head. He was just about to leave when he stopped in place. He looked back down at the ruins and then a strange light began to shine in his eyes.

“It seems I forgot about something...” he murmured. His eyes glittered as he thought back to the first time he had come to the Black Sieve Sect, and the ancient Blessed Land.

It was there that he encountered the vexatious meat jelly.

It was also where he saw that ancient cauldron!

It was an enormous cauldron that was square on the outside and circular on the inside. It was cracked, and contained infinite lightning inside, as well as several enormous statues which bore the surnames of various ancestors from ancient times.

In the very center of the statues was an inner cauldron that was round on the outside and square on the inside. Inside of that cauldron... was the precious treasure of an incredibly ancient, almighty being.

Meng Hao's eyes flickered, and he decided not to leave. Instead, he disappeared in a flash toward the enormous fissure in the ground. He had just recalled that the withered corpse had been sitting cross-legged in front of a door.

His second true self took the lead into the fissure. They sped downward and quickly landed on the lotus-shaped platform, directly in front of the doorway, which exuded an ancient and primordial aura.

Meng Hao hesitated for a moment as he looked at the door. Heart trembling, he sent his second true self ahead to enter.

After a moment, Meng Hao's eyes flickered, and his divine sense that existed in his second true self allowed him to see everything that his second true self was seeing. Without hesitating, he stepped into the door.

RUMBLE!

Everything twisted, distorted, and turned blurry. When things became clear again, Meng Hao appeared in that same world that he had come to before, the ancient Blessed Land!

Because of his familiarity with the place, he was able to see that things were quite different than they had been before. Everything was still and quiet. There were no trees or grass, and everything was black.

There were still mountains visible, but they had black iron chains wrapped around them. The entire world almost seemed to be an enormous spell formation.

“That pitch-black imp was guarding this door,” he thought, “so it must have some connection to all this blackness.” He flew up into the air and, based on what he remembered of the place, headed in the direction of the enormous cauldron.

As he sped over the land, he was shocked to see that roughly seventy percent of the entire place was pitch black. The other thirty percent was gradually changing. Based on the speed with which it was occurring, it would probably take about one sixty-year-cycle or less for the entire place to turn black.

As he studied the land below, an expression of reminiscence appeared as he recalled reuniting with Xu Qing for the first time in this place.

After a while, he sighed.

Enough time passed for an incense stick to burn before he arrived in a location that had not been covered over by the blackness. The same teleportation portal as before was still operational.

Considering Meng Hao’s current cultivation base and experience, he only had to look at it for a moment before determining how to operate it. He produced a spirit stone, which he placed on the surface. Immediately, the glow of teleportation rose up, and Meng Hao faded away.

When he reappeared, he was near the location of the enormous cauldron. He could hear the shocking rumble of thunder, and off in the distance, he could see...

An enormous, bronze cauldron!

As he looked at the cauldron, he recalled the visions he had experienced, of an almighty being who had refused to capitulate when the Ji Ancestor assumed control of the Ninth Mountain, and had used the cauldron to try to bolt from under the Ji Heavens.

His decision was the same as that of the legendary World Tree. However, in the end, the World Tree destroyed itself within the starry sky. As for that almighty being, after the cauldron was broken open, he was apparently eradicated in form and spirit. The only thing that remained behind was this shocking cauldron.

Perhaps to Lord Ji, the cauldron and its Heaven-murdering will were useless. Perhaps there was another reason why he didn't take it for himself. In any case, to other people, the cauldron would definitely be considered a precious treasure.

Meng Hao took a deep breath and headed forward. As he neared the enormous bronze cauldron, the sound of lightning grew louder and more frequent. Blue lightning bolts fell relentlessly, transforming the entire area into a sea of lightning.

Shockingly, some of the lightning bolts were even black.

About 3,000 meters away from the cauldron, Meng Hao stopped. "When I came here with Han Bei and the others, we waited until the lightning was at its weakest before daring to go in. But now....

"Now... I'm quite different than I was back then." Eyes glittering, Meng Hao strode forward into the lightning. Countless bolts of lightning fell, and at the same time, an ancient, domineering voice resounded out from within the cauldron.

"Halt!"

In conjunction with the voice, the lightning fell with increased intensity. It transformed into something almost like a sheet that covered everything in all directions.

“I have some fuzzy recollections of you,” the voice continued, echoing amidst the thunder with might like that of the Heavens. “You shouldn’t be here. Leave immediately. If you take even a single step forward, a tribulation of fire and lightning will descend and you will most certainly die.”

Meng Hao stopped in place and then called out, “Senior, you must be the spirit of this treasured cauldron!”

The ancient voice did not speak again, and the lightning and thunder grew more intense. However, a path through the lightning appeared behind Meng Hao. Apparently Meng Hao was being given a message.... The only path for him was the one that left this place.

He took a deep breath and then said, “Senior, I’ve come here today for one purpose. I wish to take this cauldron away from here. Senior, could you please explain how to do so?”

After a long moment, the ancient voice could be heard once again. This time, its tone was colder than before, and even filled with a touch of disdain. “All you have to do is approach the cauldron and brand it with your divine sense. Then you can take it away.”

Hearing this, Meng Hao immediately picked up on the unstated implication. “You’re not the cauldron’s spirit?”

“Of course I’m not!”

Chapter 752: Dao Seeking Fleshly Body!

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The first time he came here, he would never have dared to even open his mouth, let alone directly ask the question he just had. Back then, his cultivation base was simply too low, and it was only by lucky coincidence that he was even able to come here in the first place.

Now, though, he was a Second Severing cultivator with a second true self that was at the peak of Dao Seeking.

In the current age in which Immortals were incredibly rare in the lands of South Heaven, the peak of Dao Seeking fully deserved to be called the pinnacle level of power. Meng Hao really was on the same pedestal as the most powerful experts of South Heaven.

And that was not speaking of the Southern Domain, but Planet South Heaven as a whole.

Meng Hao looked calmly at the endless sheets of lightning between him and the bronze cauldron, then stepped forward. As soon as he entered the lightning, he was surrounded by shocking rumbling sounds. Endless amounts of lightning shot toward him.

Smacking sounds echoed out as the lightning bolts slammed onto him. They were like writhing white snakes that, from a distance, looks almost like a tempest that surrounded Meng Hao.

He proceeded forward slowly, but every step was taken firmly and stably. Soon, he had advanced by ten measures, each measure being roughly three meters!

The rumbling grew more shocking and intense, and the lightning bolts more numerous. The pressure was intense, and even Meng Hao couldn't help but frown after passing twenty measures. He felt his body spasming, and knew that he could proceed forward. However, based on his calculations, after three hundred measures, he would be able to proceed no further.

The ancient voice once again rang out, filled with coldness: "You are currently a thousand measures away from the cauldron. Based on your level of strength, the most you can reach... is three hundred measures. The sensible thing would be to give up now. If you do something completely moronic, then you will either end up dead or seriously wounded."

"Actually," said Meng Hao coolly, "if I really wish to traverse this path of lightning, well... it's not that difficult of a thing." He waved his sleeve, and the air behind him rippled. In the blink of an eye, his second true self stepped forward to stand next to Meng Hao. Lightning fell around them, but the second true self wasn't harmed in the least bit. In fact, neither its hair nor even the edges of its garments were even stirred.

"Hhhh?" Within the huge cauldron, the ancient voice seemed momentarily struck speechless. "The soul of an Immortal!" it then exclaimed. In conjunction with the words, the lightning in the area grew even more shocking. Suddenly, the lightning merged together to form a man, who hovered in midair.

He was an old man with indistinguishable features. Only his outline was visible, but based on his appearance he seemed to be the lord of the lightning here. He emanated a shocking pressure, and seemed to be able to wield shocking power.

“No, not the soul of an Immortal,” murmured the old man. “It’s a clone... and yet, also not a clone. This is a fleshly body created with some secret art, raised to a pinnacle of power, after which... the soul of a true Immortal was inserted into it!” When Meng Hao heard the old man’s musings, his eyes went wide. Clearly, the old man could pick up on various clues to piece together the truth.

“False Immortals are common, but true Immortals are very rare! With this Immortal clone, you definitely qualify to take the cauldron. However... the cauldron itself has no soul. Whoever touches it for the first time will find part of their soul extracted to become the essence of the cauldron spirit. Are you sure that you want your Immortal clone... to touch the cauldron?” The old man gazed steadily at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao frowned slightly, and muttered to himself for a bit. According to what the old man said, if his second true self touched the cauldron, then part of his soul would be split away. That meant the cauldron would not belong to Meng Hao, but to the true Immortal’s soul.

Furthermore, that meant that although he would most likely be able to use the cauldron, it wouldn’t be his.

“This old guy is pretty mysterious,” thought Meng Hao. “Regardless of what he says... I can’t trust him completely.” After some more thought, he looked down at his right arm, and the lightning dancing back and forth across it. Occasionally, lightning would be absorbed into his arm, which gave rise to a tickling sensation. From the look of it, his right arm was actually strong enough to absorb the lightning.

Meng Hao’s eyes suddenly began to glitter.

“My Nine Heavens Treasured Body Seal needs to absorb vast quantities of magical items.... Could it be that I can actually absorb the lightning from this place?” Heart pounding, he took a deep breath and closed his eyes for a moment. When they opened, his Nine Heavens Treasured Body Seal was fully rotating.

As soon as he employed the art, the lightning around him acted as if it had suddenly found a drain to pour down, as if his body was a black hole. In the blink of an eye, all of the lightning... began to fall directly onto Meng Hao.

Apparently, Meng Hao was able to consume it all!

He trembled as pain stabbed through him. The Nine Heavens Treasured Body Seal really was absorbing the lightning, which flowed through his body, merging into it. Enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, and he trembled the entire time.

Then, his eyes began to glow with an intense light.

“I’m a bit stronger,” he thought. “About as much as I would be by absorbing a few dozen Spirit Severing treasures.” He took a deep breath as he realized that this place would be extremely dangerous to anyone except to someone who cultivated the Nine Heavens Treasured Body Seal. To him, this place was a location of incredible good fortune.

Meng Hao immediately sent his second true self back to its original position, then looked up at the old man formed from lightning.

“Senior, I think I will make an attempt alone,” he said. With that, he stepped forward into the rumbling. Lightning fell, and Meng Hao’s body trembled. The Nine Heavens Treasured Body Seal spun into action once again, and the lightning was absorbed.

The pain he felt as the lightning danced through his flesh and blood made him shiver. However, his eyes shone with persistence. Enduring the pain, he continued onward, one measure at a time until he reached 100!

100 measures was 300 meters!

There was now more lightning, falling in vast sheets. Meng Hao was completely submerged in it, and from a distance he was barely even visible.

Within the lightning, the power of the Nine Heavens Treasured Body Seal flowed through him. His fleshly body writhed as the lightning danced. It bored into him over and over again, and as it did, he could clearly sense his fleshly body becoming stronger and more powerful.

Before, his fleshly body was already at the absolute pinnacle of Spirit Severing. All he needed was to push it forward a single step and it would be in Dao Seeking.

“I must take advantage of this opportunity!” he thought, his eyes flickering as he continued onward.

Up in the sky, the old man made of lightning watched on with an expression that only continued to grow more serious. A brilliant glow began to flicker in his eyes; clearly he had noticed that there was less lightning in the area.

Although it was only a small reduction, it was something that he had never experienced in all the countless years he had been here.

“So, he can absorb lightning?” he thought, shocked. “And not even normal lightning, at that. Tribulation Lightning! He can absorb it and use it to strengthen his fleshly body!

“What technique does he cultivate to be able to do something like that? Don’t tell me... it’s one of those legendary Heaven-defying fleshly body Daoist magics?!” By this point, Meng Hao had already traveled to the 900 meter mark.

Lightning crashed down onto him the entire time, and he was surrounded by the booming of lightning. It was as if countless silver spikes were being stabbed into him nonstop.

Even using the expression “ten thousand arrows piercing the heart” would not be an exaggeration.

The pain was so intense that Meng Hao’s vision began to grow dark. Despite being completely surrounded by bright, resplendent lightning, all he could see was darkness. He quickly bit the tip of his tongue, causing himself to regain a bit of clarity. Spitting out the blood, he proceeded forward.

RUMBLE!

1,500 meters!

Meng Hao raised his head up and roared. His right arm had now fully broken through from Spirit Severing to Dao Seeking. As for the rest of his body, it was now pushing the very borders of the limits of Spirit Severing.

The lightning in the area had previously spread out for three thousand meters. But Meng Hao had absorbed a lot of it, and now it only stretched for 2,500 meters.

The reduction only went faster after his right arm reached Dao Seeking. The 2,500 meters quickly shrank down to only 2,000 meters.

Excited, Meng Hao gritted his teeth and pushed forward.

He soon reached the 1,800 meter mark.

2,000 meters!

An incredible rumbling could be heard as his left arm broke through to the fleshly body of Dao Seeking.

2,500 meters!

Both legs radiated the aura of natural law, as if they were now connected in some bizarre way to Heaven and Earth. Both of them were now in Dao Seeking!

2,750 meters!

Meng Hao was panting as the lightning around him suddenly shrank down to only 1,000 meters.

It was at this point that the black lightning bolts smashed down toward him with incredible destructive power. He looked up, his eyes bright red, and allowed the black lightning to slam into him.

As soon as the black lightning bolts merged into him, cracking sounds could be heard. Tears instantly spread out across his skin; it almost appeared that he would be incapable of withstanding the lightning, and would fall to pieces.

Next, though, his Eternal stratum kicked in, and the wounds healed. Intense pain surged through him, the likes of which he had never felt before. He couldn't hold back from letting out an anguished howl.

Even as he did, rumbling filled his body; it was not the sound of him collapsing into pieces, but rather, the shocking rumbling of an incredibly powerful Dao Seeking fleshly body.

His limbs and torso all broke through from Spirit Severing into Dao Seeking. Only his head remained as a weak spot, and the most difficult area to strengthen. Meng Hao took a deep breath and then pushed onward. 2,800 meters. 2,850 meters.... 2,900 meters!

His head felt as if it were being crushed down upon by the Heavens. Countless lightning bolts danced across him, and the Nine Heavens Treasured Body Seal rotated rapidly....

2,950 meters.... 2,999 meters.... Finally... 3,000 meters!!

The bronze cauldron was directly in front of Meng Hao. He stood there trembling, surrounded by a mere 300 meter area of lightning. Surrounded by the boundless lightning, he coughed up a mouthful of blood and then slowly began to lift his hand. Gritting his teeth, he slapped his palm down onto the surface of the bronze cauldron!

The huge cauldron began to thrum, and the three hundred meter area of lightning instantly condensed down onto Meng Hao.

BOOM!

“From now on, you belong to me!” said Meng Hao, his voice quavering out from within the lightning.

Chapter 753: Destination - Solitary Sword Sect!

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RUMBLE!

The lightning in the three hundred meter area rushed toward Meng Hao, thoroughly enveloping him. The Lightning Elder up in mid-air watched Meng Hao's actions with sparkling eyes. By this point, he was thoroughly shaken.

It was then that, all of a sudden, the enormous bronze cauldron began to shudder. Within the lightning, Meng Hao seemed on the verge of being torn to pieces. His skin was ripped and torn, and was clearly on the verge of exploding.

It was at that point, when he was almost about to explode, that natural law descended and swirled around his head. Now, every inch of Meng Hao's person... was completely in Dao Seeking!

This was a Dao Seeking fleshly body!

This Dao Seeking was not as obvious as a Dao Seeking cultivation base. The influence it had on natural law was not very intense. However, from this moment on, Meng Hao's body was truly like a Dao Seeking treasure.

At this point, he could close his eyes and allow any Spirit Severing cultivator to attack him at will, and it wouldn't harm his body in the least bit.

In fact, in all the lands of South Heaven you would be as likely to find a phoenix feather or a qilin horn as you would to find someone with a fleshly body comparable to Meng Hao's. Not even in the Ji Clan could someone like that be found.

This was an extremely powerful fleshly body!

Meng Hao lifted his head back and roared. In a short moment, all of the lightning in the area was sucked into his body. It disappeared without leaving behind even the tiniest trace. Meng Hao flew up into the air, and although no lightning could be seen on him, if you looked deep into his eyes, you would be able to sense amorphous lightning deep within.

As he hovered there in midair, he cast his senses throughout his body, and could feel how terrifyingly powerful it was. He could even sense some of the natural law of Heaven and Earth. Because this was an ancient Blessed Land, the natural law in this place was different from that of South Heaven. Therefore his aura was now a bit more primordial and chaotic than before.

It seemed ancient, filled with the passage of years, and the air he let off was one of boundless time.

He took a deep breath and then looked back down at the enormous bronze cauldron, and his eyes flashed. Moments ago, when he had placed his hand onto the cauldron, he had felt a bit of his soul detaching and entering the cauldron.

As he looked at it now, he could sense some vague, mysterious connection to it.

"Rise!" he said, raising his hand aloft.

RUMBLE!

The enormous bronze cauldron trembled. Creaking sounds could be heard, and fissures spread across the surrounding terrain, as it slowly rose up into the air, causing vast amounts of dust to spread out in all directions like a cloud.

As the cauldron rose into the air, its primordial, ancient aura became more and more similar to Meng Hao's.

The sight of it caused the old man hovering in midair to gasp. He looked deeply at Meng Hao, then glanced down at the second true self standing not far away.

"I am not the spirit of the cauldron," he said lightly. "However, I am its guardian. The truly valuable thing about this treasure is the inner cauldron, which is mysterious in origin. As for the outer cauldron, my master forged it. Now, it belongs to you. Since you have acquired it... it means you are tied to it by destiny. Time will tell whether or not you can use the cauldron to achieve the same glory that my master did.

"Now that you have obtained the cauldron, my mission is accomplished..." His eyes began to grow dim, and his body started to fade away.

His voice cool, he continued, "I should have perished long ago. That year, I was the lone survivor of the Tribulation Lightning, and my soul did not disperse. Now that my mission is complete, I can experience rebirth....

"I will travel to the underworld of the Fourth Mountain and be reincarnated, be born once again as a human. Years from now, perhaps you and I will meet again on the road to Immortality..." He continued to fade away until he was nothing more than dots of light, which began to fly up into the sky, then disappeared.

Meng Hao looked in the direction the old man had departed to. He wasn't sure who he was, but he couldn't help but think of the tall man he had seen in the vision all those years ago.

For a moment, the two of them had seemed quite similar.

After a moment of thought, Meng Hao looked back at the enormous cauldron.

“Shrink!” he commanded.

The huge cauldron thrummed, and then began to shrink. When it was the size of a hand, it floated down to rest on Meng Hao’s palm. As soon as it touched him, lightning surged out from Meng Hao, and he was immersed in electricity.

Within the lightning, Meng Hao’s body trembled, and he was able to sense some of the remarkable abilities of the bronze cauldron. It seemed as if this knowledge had suddenly popped into his mind automatically as soon as he touched the cauldron.

“Form Displacement Transposition” He gaped for a moment, then suddenly pushed down on the cauldron and looked over at his second true self.

In that instant, everything suddenly went blurry for a moment. When he could see clearly again, he was shocked to discover that he... was still holding the cauldron, but was now down on the ground where his second true self had just been standing. As for his second true self, he was hovering in midair where Meng Hao had just been.

“Incredible!” he thought, his eyes going wide. Panting, he looked down at the Lightning Cauldron, and his eyes shone with a strange light. He could immediately tell that this cauldron would be extremely useful in magical combat.

In fact, its usefulness wouldn’t be limited to battle. He could use it in many circumstances. It truly was Heaven-defying.

“It has other abilities too,” he thought. “It can unleash lightning, and is also incredibly heavy, capable of carrying out true crushing!”

“Furthermore, it was created in ancient times. The sturdiness of the materials used make it is such that other magical items can’t even compare!” His eyes flickered as he suddenly thought of the statues inside the Lightning Cauldron, as well as the inner cauldron.

“This is truly a precious treasure!” he thought, breathing heavily. He put the Lightning Cauldron into his bag of holding, then flew up into the air. Together with his second true self, he shot off into the distance.

Moments later, he teleported out of the ancient Blessed Land and found himself once again on the lotus-shaped platform deep in the recesses of the former Black Sieve Sect. The door was no longer operational, and broke into tiny pieces, which then vanished.

Meng Hao glanced back at the disappearing door, then shot up out from within the earth. The Blood Demon Sect disciples were waiting outside, and when they caught sight of Meng Hao, they clasped hands and bowed.

“Blood Prince, we welcome you back with deep respect!”

The two Ironblood Patriarchs could sense that there was something different about Meng Hao, although they weren't sure exactly what it was. As for the Golden Frost Sect Patriarch and the 3rd Li Clan Patriarch, they were now Blood Clone puppets, and had no way to tell.

When it came to the hundreds of thousands of rogue cultivators, not a single one could pick up on even the slightest clue. All they could tell was that Meng Hao... somehow seemed stronger, and more ancient.

“The Black Sieve Sect is destroyed,” declared Meng Hao, looking around at the crowds of people. “Next... is the Solitary Sword Sect!”

“The Solitary Sword Sect!” The forces of the Blood Demon Sect flickered with killing intent, and their desire to slaughter burned like wildfire. The hundreds of thousands of rogue cultivators were also getting excited.

“He's actually going to completely wipe out the four powers who allied against him!!”

“If the Blood Demon Sect does that, then they really will unite the Southern Domain!”

Even as the hundreds of thousands of rogue cultivators expressed their shock, a glow like that of lightning appeared beneath Meng Hao's feet, and he shot off into the distance, followed by countless beams of light that were the Blood Demon Sect disciples.

Several days later, the sky outside the Solitary Sword Sect began to rumble. The clouds collapsed as a mighty gale-force wind swept through the area. A storm seemed to be gathering above the Solitary Sword Sect.

The sect was completely sealed up. Disciples inside were not permitted to leave, and the entire sect was poised as if to face a mortal enemy. Everything was sealed to protect against reprisals from the Blood Demon Sect.

The mood in the Solitary Sword Sect was gloomy and distressed. Everyone was nervous. There were only a few tens of thousands of disciples left, and all of them were on edge. The sect's Dao Seeking Patriarch was dead, and the strongest people in the entire sect were their three Spirit Severing Cultivators, including Sir Jian.

When they saw the beams of light flying through the air that were the Blood Demon Sect, they knew that they could do nothing to fight back. They could only hope that their grand spell formation, designed to protect the sect, would be able to stand up to the revenge-bent Blood Demon Sect.

The air outside the sect rippled as tens of thousands of beams of light approached. Meng Hao was in the vanguard position, and the murderous air around him was thick. His eyes flashed with killing intent as he glanced over the Solitary Sword Sect.

In this part of the Southern Domain, the mountains stuck straight up like swords. In the middle of the sect was a shocking mountain surrounded by thin mist. Looking through the mist at the sect, it appeared to be completely bleak and desolate.

Although the mist appeared to be thin, it was actually the first spell formation of the Solitary Sword Sect's grand spell formation.

The Blood Demon Sect disciples behind Meng Hao joined their voices together into a raging sound that boomed like waves through the Solitary Sword Sect.

“SURRENDER, OR DIE!”

There was no response. However, the thin mist that surrounded the Solitary Sword Sect began to spin, transforming into numerous swirling dragons. The dragons rapidly merged together, shockingly forming... an enormous Sword Dragon!

The dragon was lizard-like, and gigantic enough to cover the entire sect. Its back was covered with innumerable great swords that stuck up like needles. It was green, and shocking to the extreme. As soon as it appeared, it raised its head up and roared at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao's eyes flickered with coldness. He slapped his bag of holding with his right hand, and the Lightning Cauldron flew out. It thrummed, expanding rapidly until it was the size of a mountain. Endless bolts of lightning shot out from it, causing the entire sky to become a world of lightning.

A shocking pressure weighed down, and the sight of the cauldron caused Sir Jian and the other two Spirit Severing Patriarchs to become extremely nervous. As for the other disciples, they were shocked to the core.

However, there was one man off in a far corner of the Sect who did not seem nervous at all. He looked almost like an old man, but was in fact middle-aged. He had a stubbly beard, and looked lonely. Although he was a Solitary Sword Sect disciple, he wore no sword at his side.

The only thing he had was a flagon of alcohol from which he drank. He stared at what first seemed like an ordinary boulder that rested a bit further up the mountain from him. However, upon closer inspection... a person was visible inside the boulder. That same person existed for all eternity in his heart.

"Junior Brother," the man said. "Kill them.... Kill everyone in the Solitary Sword Sect. Avenge my master, and pay for my crimes." With a bitter smile, he took another long swig of alcohol.

As the shocking Lightning Cauldron expanded in size, more and more lightning appeared, causing everything to tremble.

The Blood Demon Sect disciples, as well as the hundreds of thousands of rogue cultivators that came to observe, were all flabbergasted. They looked on in awe as the Lightning Cauldron sped toward the Solitary Sword Sect's Sword Dragon.

RUMBLE!

"Stand firm!" roared Sir Jian.

"All disciples, pour full energy into the spell formation!" cried another of the three Solitary Sword Sect Patriarchs.

Tens of thousands of disciples gritted their teeth and poured all of their energy into the spell formation. Instantly, the Sword Dragon looked even more corporeal than before.

Everyone watched as the Lightning Cauldron descended toward the Sword Dragon, which roared and then charged up to meet the Lightning Cauldron in mid-air.

Shocking booming sounds rang out.

Gasps rang out in all directions when the Sword Dragon slammed into the Lightning Cauldron, only to begin to shatter into pieces! It was incapable of standing up to the Lightning Cauldron in even the slightest capacity, and its entire body collapsed into fragments in only the blink of an eye....

It was destroyed as easily as crushing dry weeds!

Chapter 754: The Tale of Chen Fan

The Lightning Cauldron crushed the Sword Dragon amidst incredible rumbling sounds, then struck the Solitary Sword Sect's spell formation head on.

Ripples spread out through the air, and from the perspective of cultivators on the outside, the Solitary Sword Sect distorted and looked as though it might be ripped apart at any moment. Inside the sect, the three Patriarchs trembled and coughed up blood.

As for the tens of thousands of Solitary Sword Sect disciples, they also trembled, and their faces were pale as they spit up mouthfuls of blood.

“Second Spell Formation!!” cried Sir Jian, his voice echoing throughout the sect. Immediately, tens of thousands of disciples produced medicinal pills to consume.

They knew deep in their hearts that this battle would determine whether the Solitary Sword Sect survived or was destroyed. If their spell formation could hold, then they would be able to continue on sealed in their mountain. If it could not hold... then that meant the Solitary Sword Sect would be wiped away from the Southern Domain.

Of course, there was also the possibility of surrender.

As the forces of the Solitary Sword Sect unleashed the full scope of their power, countless sword beams appeared from within the ground, the mountains, and the buildings; from every corner of the sect.

There were more than 100,000 of them, and they flew out to circulate around the entire sect, like a tempest. As the tempest raged, the swords began to merge together, forming the shocking image... of a gigantic greatsword!

It was more than 30,000 meters long, and the entire Solitary Sword Sect fit inside of it. It was essentially a sword-shaped shield.

Meng Hao's expression was the same as ever as he gestured out into the air. The Lightning Cauldron shrank down and returned to him. When it touched down onto his palm, he was instantly surrounded by lightning.

"Break that formation!" he said coolly. The Golden Frost Sect Patriarch and the 3rd Li Clan Patriarch immediately charged ahead. As they neared the sword shield, they waved their hands, causing peak Dao Seeking cultivation base power to explode out. Booms echoed as tens of thousands of Blood Demon Sect disciples also sent out attacks. Divine abilities and magical techniques descended like rainfall, slamming into the Solitary Sword Sect's grand spell formation.

Meng Hao sent his thoughts out to control his second true self, who suddenly appeared along with the Wooden Time Sword, and then immediately shot into the fray.

The combined power of tens of thousands of cultivators, which included three peak Dao Seeking cultivation bases, slammed into the spell formation. Instantly, the Solitary Sword Sect's greatsword shuddered, and then began to crack.

Meng Hao hovered in midair, watching the scene coldly.

Booms filled the air for an entire hour, after which the Solitary Sword Sect's greatsword could not hold out any longer. Many of the swords which made up the sword formation began to collapse. Once the spell formation was no longer complete, its demise could only hasten.

In the end, a huge explosion occurred, in which the spell formation was breached. The flying swords were shattered, sending shrapnel flying about. The Solitary Sword Sect's grand spell

formation now had a huge gap torn into it, visible through which was the true Solitary Sword Sect. Tens of thousands of pale-faced disciples could be seen, as well as the three despairing Spirit Severing Patriarchs.

Boom!

Meng Hao's second true self entered the gap. Eyes flashing, he stretched his hands out to the left and right, causing cracking sounds to echo about. The gap was torn even larger, until the spell formation was completely destroyed.

At the same time, the Blood Demon Sect disciples charged in like a cloud of blood, ready to slaughter the entire Solitary Sword Sect.

In their despair, the Solitary Sword Sect disciples could not even muster the will to resist. It was impossible to say who did it first, but they all began to drop to their knees and kowtow.

“Surrender! I want to surrender!”

“We surrender!”

Of the three ashen-faced Spirit Severing experts, two laughed bitterly and were just about to voice their own surrender, when suddenly, Sir Jian's eyes flickered. He quickly performed a minor teleportation, reappearing some distance off next to the middle-aged man with no sword and a flagon of alcohol.

As soon as he reappeared, his hand snaked out and latched onto the top of the man's head. Sir Jian's eyes filled with insanity and savagery.

“MENG HAO!!” he screamed. “This is your Elder Brother from the Reliance Sect, Chen Fan. I know he's your close friend, so if you dare to make a single move, I'll kill him, even if it means I die too!”

This development caused the Blood Demon Sect disciples to stop in their tracks and look coldly over at Sir Jian. Even the Solitary Sword Sect disciples gaped in shock. None of them looked happy in the least bit and, in fact, their faces went as pale as death.

This was especially true of the two other Spirit Severing Patriarchs, who were completely caught off guard. They knew that they were no match for the Blood Demon Sect. Their failed attempt to fight back moments ago was clear evidence of that.

Surrender was their only option!

And yet, Sir Jian suddenly pulled this trick, dragging the entire Solitary Sword Sect along with him in provoking the jinx Meng Hao. The two Patriarchs' faces instantly fell.

“Sir Jian, you must not do this!!”

“Sir Jian, you...”

Sir Jian's expression grew even more vicious. He glared down at Chen Fan's head for a moment, then back toward the Blood Demon Sect forces, and Meng Hao.

“Meng Hao, give me the Solitary Sword Sect's Immortal Puppet! All I want is the Immortal Puppet. Once I have it in hand, I won't harm a hair on Chen Fan's head!”

When Meng Hao first laid eyes on Chen Fan again back at the Ancient Dao Lakes, he could tell that he was in a bad situation. He had wanted to help, but could tell that Chen Fan was already dead inside. He had actually come to the Solitary Sword Sect this day for two purposes. One was vengeance for the Blood Demon Sect. The other was his concern for Chen Fan.

“Are you insane?” replied Meng Hao, his face grim.

“So what if I'm insane!?” Sir Jian roared back, his eyes bloodshot. “I just want the Immortal Puppet. Hand it over, and I'll let him go!”

Chen Fan's face was pale as he looked over at Meng Hao. He said nothing, but he was smiling. It was the same smile he had worn when he had reunited with Meng Hao all those years ago in the Southern Domain.

“Junior Brother, you've grown up....” That was what he had said all those years ago. Now, he wore the same smile, and Meng Hao could almost sense the same high-spirited Senior Brother he remembered from the Reliance Sect, the same Chen Fan who was so focused on pursuing the Dao.

Seemingly in a flash, hundreds of years had passed, and Chen Fan had changed. The one thing that remained were the emotions forged between them back in the Reliance Sect.

“Meng Hao,” said Sir Jian, his eyes filled with maliciousness, “you might be high and mighty now, but your Elder Brother’s life has been filled with bitterness!” When he saw the grim look on Meng Hao’s face, he relaxed a bit. At first, he was worried Meng Hao wouldn’t care about whether Chen Fan lived or died. Hoping to foster further pity on the part of Meng Hao, he coldly continued.

“This Chen Fan was once a Chosen in the Solitary Sword Sect, and was even one of the Seven Swords. Unfortunately... he should never have fallen in love with Shan Ling!

“Shan Ling was the incarnation of a mountain boulder, and other than the legacy precious treasure, she was the most important treasured item in the Solitary Sword Sect!

“She was not permitted to foster emotions or desires of the flesh! Were she to do so, she would no longer be a spirit, and would separate from the boulder. That would affect the fate of the entire Solitary Sword Sect! After all... according to legend, that stone came from the Ninth Mountain!”

As Sir Jian spoke, Meng Hao recalled the first time he had come to the Solitary Sword Sect, and the beautiful woman he had seen floating down the mountain.

“Chen Fan violated sect rules. He fled with the boulder, altering fate and absconding with Shan Ling. In the end, the Solitary Sword Sect captured them.... Then, because of Chen Fan, his master...”

“Enough!” roared Chen Fan. His eyes snapped open, and they were shot with blood.

Meng Hao’s heart trembled. He had known Chen Fan for years, and this was the first time he had seen him so emotional. There was pain in his eyes, even madness, the type that made Meng Hao recall his own state when he caught sight of Xu Qing’s discarnate soul back in the Black Sieve Sect.

“Enough?” said Sir Jian. “How is it enough? When it came time for the fury of the sect to fall upon you, your master took your place. His cultivation base was crippled, and he was reduced to a mortal, which was how he died.

“As for you, if Shan Ling hadn’t threatened to destroy herself and the boulder.... Well, in the end, she made an arrangement with the sect to spend the rest of eternity as a boulder, never to awaken, all to save your measly little life!”

“ENOUGH! No more....” Chen Fan was trembling, and tears poured down his cheeks. Although his expression was one of intense pain, he smiled bitterly. His eyes seemed to grow more and more dispirited.

He would never, ever be able to forget how his master stood in front of him, bowed his head to the sect, and said, “He is my apprentice. I will accept responsibility for his mistake.”

He had watched wide-eyed as his master’s cultivation base was crippled. The man who had once been a powerful Nascent Soul expert, became an old man, a mortal. Until the day he died, his master did not complain a single time. On the contrary, he was as warm and gentle as ever. Unfortunately, that only caused Chen Fan’s pain to increase, a feeling that was enough to drive him to insanity.

His master’s son hated Chen Fan with a passion, which was yet another thing that made him wish he could simply die.

Chen Fan was filled with hatred. He hated that he was powerless to change any of the things that had happened, and he hated the Solitary Sword Sect for being too callous.

He wanted to die.

And yet... he couldn’t stop thinking about her.

The only thing left to do was drink. In his drunken dreams, he could return to the wonderful times of the past.

He had let his master down. He had let Shan Ling down. He had let anyone who had anything to do with him down.

Meng Hao stood there, taciturn. Now that he understood what had happened to Chen Fan, he realized how someone who had once been so high-spirited and full of mettle, could sink into such a depression.

“Enough...” murmured Chen Fan bitterly, bowing his head.. “I beg of you, please... enough.... Please...”

Sir Jian laughed coldly. “Were it not for Shan Ling’s actions, do you really think you could have committed such a heinous crime and gotten away with nothing more than a shattered Nascent Soul? Do you think the only price to pay would have been the inability to break through to the next stage of cultivation?”

“Your existence is nothing but a tool the sect can use to influence Shan Ling. Unfortunately... the war with the Blood Demon Sect changed things too unexpectedly.” Sir Jian then looked at Meng Hao. “Only the Patriarch knew how to control the boulder. Otherwise, you would never have been able to break through our spell formation so easily.” Seeing that Meng Hao seemed to be more and more focused on his words, Sir Jian began to believe that his control of the situation was growing. He looked back at Chen Fan.

“You singlehandedly drove your Master to his death and ruined your beloved. And yet you still say ‘enough?’”

“SHUT THE HELL UP!” roared Meng Hao. His voice echoed like thunder, and his eyes flashed with killing intent. His words caused Sir Jian’s pupils to constrict, and his heart to seize. He immediately began to squeeze down with his right hand.

However, it was at this exact moment that the Lightning Cauldron in Meng Hao’s hand flashed.

Form Displacement Transposition!

What changed positions was not Sir Jian, but rather, Chen Fan!

Chapter 755: I Pray That You Find Happiness

When the Lightning Cauldron in Meng Hao’s hand began to sparkle with brilliant lights, and then emit a rumbling sound, Sir Jian’s face fell, and a bad feeling welled up in his heart. Without the slightest hesitation, he squeezed down with his hand, planning to stab his fingers into Chen Fan’s head, injuring him as a threat to Meng Hao.

However, the instant his fingers began to move, an incredibly shocking power shot back into his hand. It was as if what he was squeezing was not flesh and blood, but a red-hot iron. The backlash of power made it feel as if needles were stabbing into his palm. Sir Jian was completely shocked.

At the same time, he was astonished to find that, instead of staring at Meng Hao as he had been this whole time, he was now looking at Chen Fan.

Heart pounding, he slowly looked down to see his hand resting on Meng Hao's head!

His eyes went wide, and his scalp numb. He immediately shot back, spooked out of his mind.

“What divine ability is that!?!?!?” Sir Jian was completely astonished, and also terrified. He bit down on the tip of his tongue and spit out some blood which he used to flee even faster than before.

“Trying to run away?” said Meng Hao, his eyes flickering with killing intent. He pointed out with his left index finger, and his second true self immediately unleashed the Wooden Time Sword. Even if Sir Jian could move faster, it still wouldn't be enough to escape the Wooden Time Sword.

It was upon him in the blink of an eye, causing everything around it to twist and distort. To his shock, Sir Jian began to wither rapidly. He let out a miserable scream, upon which the Wooden Time Sword stabbed directly through his head.

Slaughtered with a solitary sword!

Tidy and efficient, not the least bit sloppy. Sir Jian's body was withered, his Nascent Divinity killed. As he fell, it almost seemed as if ten thousand years passed; he quickly turned into nothing more than dust floating in the wind.

There was nothing left to indicate that he had ever been. He was completely and utterly... dead.

The two other Spirit Severing experts of the Solitary Sword Sect, along with the tens of thousands of other disciples, were shocked into complete silence. Their faces were pale white, and barely a moment had passed before one of the Spirit Severing experts gave a start and then dropped to his knees to kowtow.

“Blood Prince, we wish to surrender to the Blood Demon Sect!”

The other disciples immediately dropped to their knees, their hearts pounding and voices trembling as they cried, "Greetings, Blood Prince!"

Despite the fear in their voices, there were tens of thousands of them, and the sound of their cry formed a sound wave that rolled out in all directions.

Meng Hao didn't respond. Instead, he looked back at Chen Fan. Chen Fan's face was downcast, filled with an expression that betrayed his lack of interest in life. To him, life was a pain from which he wished to extricate himself.

Meng Hao's heart twinged with pain as he thought back to the Eldest Brother that existed in his memories. That person didn't look like this. That person wholeheartedly sought after the Dao and had lofty ambitions. Although at times he could be a bit stuffy and uptight, he was a hero who never hesitated for even a moment to stand in front of Meng Hao and protect him from any danger.

That Chen Fan viewed Meng Hao as a Junior Brother, someone he needed to care for after their sect vanished. He was an Elder Brother who even worried about Meng Hao finding a wife.

"Elder Brother...." said Meng Hao, his voice soft.

Chen Fan was silent for a moment before slowly looking up at Meng Hao. After a moment, he forced a smile onto his face.

"Junior Brother, you've grown up.... I can finally stop worrying.... Do you have some time right now? If you do, let's drink a bit."

Meng Hao immediately nodded, waving a hand to dismiss the Solitary Sword Sect disciples and the Blood Demon Sect disciples. All of them left the sect and waited outside, cross-legged.

The entire Solitary Sword Sect was quiet. Meng Hao and Chen Fan sat down on the mountain peak, beneath the strange boulder. Chen Fan produced a flagon of alcohol, which he handed over to Meng Hao.

A complex look could be seen in Meng Hao's eyes, but he wasn't sure how to even begin to give advice, so he simply accepted the flagon and took a long drink.

The alcohol was strong and burned like fire as it slid down his throat.

Chen Fan looked at the boulder and softly said, “She’s your sister-in-law.”

Meng Hao sat there quietly.

As Chen Fan continued, tears began to stream down his face.

“We promised each other that since the path to Immortality was filled with so many obstacles and unforeseen twists and turns, it would be better spend our lives with each other.

“She’s sleeping now, and might not wake up in this lifetime. But then again, maybe she will.... I’ll stay here to accompany her. That was our agreement.

“I let down my master. I was unworthy of him....” Chen Fan looked like an old man. More and more tears poured down his face.

He rarely wept, not even when he and Shan Ling were captured and brought back to the sect. When Shan Ling made the decision to rest in sleep, there were tears in his heart, but they wouldn’t come out. The first time he truly cried was when his master accepted the punishment for him.

The second time he cried was when his master died.

The third time was here, in front of Meng Hao.

“Elder Brother....” began Meng Hao, but he wasn’t sure what he should say, so he stopped talking. After a moment, a determined look appeared in his eyes. He suddenly raised his right hand, and a drop of blood slowly formed on the tip of his finger.

When the drop of blood appeared, his face went a bit pale. A scintillating, blood-colored glow appeared, and Chen Fan’s eyes went wide. After a moment, his eyes flashed in realization, and he shot to his feet.

His expression stern, he cried, “Junior Brother! What do you think you’re doing!? Stop this instant!”

“Elder Brother, I can’t do very much to help you. The only thing I can do is help you to restore your cultivation base. That way, your longevity will be increased, and you can... you can have more time to stay with your beloved.” With that, he gestured with his finger. His lifeblood instantly shot forward and merged into Chen Fan’s forehead.

Chen Fan trembled. Years ago, his Nascent Soul had been damaged, cracked; at this moment, however, time seemed to run in reverse. His Nascent Soul absorbed the blood, and the cracks sealed up.

The blood didn’t just contain some of Meng Hao’s life force, it also contained some of the power of his Eternal stratum. It was that power that enabled Chen Fan’s cultivation base to be restored.

Of course, Meng Hao only had a few such drops of lifeblood. If he parted with too many, that which was Eternal within him would be no more.

But Chen Fan was his Elder Brother. The friendship that had formed between the two of them, and everything that had happened since then, made it so that Meng Hao didn’t even hesitate. If he didn’t give his lifeblood to Chen Fan, that would mean... that he wasn’t Meng Hao.

Chen Fan started trembling, and after a moment passed, coughed up a huge mouthful of blood as his Nascent Soul instantly reappeared like new. Now that he had a Nascent Soul again, his cultivation base surged, and his salt-and-pepper hair turned black.

His aged features once again became young and heroic, and he no longer looked like an old man. He was middle-aged and bursting with energy.

Now he looked more like the Chen Fan that Meng Hao remembered.

Chen Fan gaped at Meng Hao. “Junior Brother, you...”

“There’s no need to talk about it,” said Meng Hao softly. “You’re my Elder Brother...”

Chen Fan held his tongue, and after a long moment passed, slowly nodded. He picked up the flagon of alcohol, looked at the boulder, and began to drink.

The sky gradually grew dark, and eventually the moon rose. When the dawn sun peeked its head over the horizon, Meng Hao took the initiative to start a conversation. He and Chen Fan began to chat about the Reliance Sect, and all the things that had happened after that in the Southern Domain. They talked about all the wonderful things from the past.

When the sun was high in the sky, Meng Hao rose to his feet.

“Elder Brother, I need to go now.... If you ever grow weary of being here, you can always find me in the Blood Demon Sect.”

Chen Fan didn't respond at first. He looked at the boulder, and the woman who rested inside with her eyes closed.

“You've grown up,” he said softly, “and your Elder Brother has gotten old.... Don't worry about me. You follow your path.... and I'll follow mine. I'll stay here with her until the day I close my eyes for good.

“When that day comes, Junior Brother... can you please bury me here? That way I can watch the sun rise and set with her forever. If there is another life after this one... I'll find this place again. Life after life... I'll wait, until the day she wakes up.” He turned to look deep into Meng Hao's eyes.

“Junior Brother... take care of yourself. Your Elder Brother isn't good at much, so all I can do... is pray that you find happiness. I hope that your path... leads you to greatness!”

Meng Hao stared at Chen Fan, and his face was filled with a variety of complex emotions. He also had an indescribable feeling in his heart that led him to believe he would never forget that person from the Reliance Sect who was so focused on pursuing the Dao. He would never forget the person standing in front of him to protect him. He would also never be able to forget... the Elder Brother from now, who stood there softly murmuring his story.

“Elder Brother... take care of yourself,” Meng Hao said quietly. He clasped hands and bowed deeply, then turned and left, sighing inwardly.

Chen Fan sat down cross-legged and watched Meng Hao leave.

“Ling’er, he’s my Junior Brother. In my heart, he’s family.... I don’t have much family, just him and Junior Sister Xu. Only those two.

“If you still have some awareness of the outside world, then let’s pray together that they find happiness....”

Meng Hao flew out of the Solitary Sword Sect. As soon as he appeared, the Solitary Sword Sect disciples and the Blood Demon Sect cultivators rose to their feet, their expressions that of deep respect.

Meng Hao looked over the Solitary Sword Sect and then said, “Produce strands from your souls and swear blood oaths. After that, you may remain here and become an auxiliary branch of the Blood Demon Sect. Everything will remain as it did before, although your jade slips, ancient records, and legacy items will all be handed over to the Blood Demon Sect.

“Henceforth, there is no Solitary Sword Sect in the Southern Domain, only an auxiliary branch of the Blood Demon Sect.

“The man who sits beneath the boulder on the mountain top is my Elder Brother Chen Fan. No one is allowed to step even half a pace onto that mountain. No one may disobey him in the slightest.”

The Solitary Sword Sect disciples voiced their agreement. From the moment they had agreed to surrender, they were prepared for something like this to happen. Their soul strands and blood oaths were organized by the Blood Demon Sect, then transformed into a soul slip, which was given to Meng Hao. Next, the magical items and ancient records in their treasure house were removed, as well as their legacy items.

Finally, some Blood Demon Sect disciples were stationed in the sect permanently. After that...

Meng Hao flicked his sleeve, and the Blood Demon Sect took to the skies.

Their next target was... the Golden Frost Sect!

As for his second true self, he had already vanished, sent to a different location by Meng Hao.

Chapter 756: Crazy Fatty!

In the Golden Frost Sect, it didn't matter that the whole sect had been sealed. The disciples were still faced with difficult decisions.

Should they continue to defend their position, or should they leave the Southern Domain...?

Should they surrender to the Blood Demon Sect, or die in battle...?

The destruction of the Black Sieve Sect was nothing astonishing. However, the Solitary Sword Sect's surrender had been witnessed by hundreds of thousands of Southern Domain cultivators. Word had long since spread, and even the sealed-off Golden Frost Sect had gotten the news.

It didn't take very long at all for the Golden Frost Sect to grow incredibly alarmed. Of course, the least alarmed of all was Li Fugui. However, despite his lack of alarm, he was still quite nervous. Recent days found him sighing with distress, and at a distinct loss.

The Golden Frost Sect had treated him well, very well, from the very beginning. He had been given many beautiful beloved companions, which left him exhausted, but happy.... On the other hand, Meng Hao had been his brother ever since their days in the Reliance Sect.

They had joined the sect together as Outer Sect disciples. They had caught wild chickens to eat, and had even run the general store together. Meng Hao had looked out for him, and that was something he would never forget.

The two of them were truly brothers.

Now, though, he was in an awkward predicament, and was actually somewhat confused about what to do. His brother was on the way to destroy the Golden Frost Sect, and he wasn't sure how to handle the situation.

A few days after the surrender of the Solitary Sword Sect, the Golden Frost Sect's only Spirit Severing expert, along with Li Fugui's master, personally came to him to discuss the matter.

"Sue for peace?" said Fatty, gaping in shock at the Spirit Severing Patriarch, who looked quite exhausted.

“You’re on good terms with Meng Hao. He’s the type of person who... despite being cruel and merciless, capable of carrying out horrendous massacres, and with an unfathomably high cultivation base, is still... someone who cares about past friendships.

“We can verify that from the news about the Solitary Sword Sect. Based on what happened with Chen Fan, it’s possible to tell a little bit about what Meng Hao is thinking.

“Li Fugui, think about it. How has the sect treated you ever since you joined? We’re now facing imminent catastrophe. Hopefully, you can step forward bravely and use your friendship with Meng Hao to help us weather this storm!

“The Golden Frost Sect is willing to surrender. Our only request is that we don’t become an auxiliary branch, but rather, allies!

“We will do everything in our power to comply with the Blood Demon Sect, but we want to preserve our core Daoist teachings and doctrines, so that our sect will not be wiped away from the Southern Domain. Perhaps years from now, we can once again rise to prominence. We must fight for that chance.”

The Golden Frost Sect’s only Spirit Severing Patriarch clasped hands and bowed deeply to Li Fugui. Li Fugui’s master stood off to the side, looking at him.

Li Fugui was quiet for a moment before nodding seriously.

Another day of nervousness passed for the Golden Frost Sect. Finally, the clouds seethed outside of the sect’s grand spell formation, and tens of thousands of beams of light appeared. They were like a towering sea of blood, bright red as they shot toward the Golden Frost Sect.

These were the Blood Demon Sect disciples. They had destroyed the Black Sieve Sect and forced the Solitary Sword Sect into compliance. Now, they turned toward the Golden Frost Sect, their hearts filled with the desire to kill.

Behind them were the rogue cultivators, even more than before. Hundreds of thousands were following the Blood Demon Sect through the Southern Domain to bear witness.

Outside of the Golden Frost Sect was an area where the air did not ripple with the distortions of a defensive spell formation, nor was there any enshrouding fog. Instead, an illusion barrier protected it, revealing only the image of a barren mountain.

As soon as the Blood Demon Sect disciples appeared on the scene, and before they could even react, a beam of light could be seen, and Fatty's round figure was there on the mountain.

"Don't attack, don't attack, it's me!" he called out at the top of his lungs. Seeing the tens of thousands of Blood Demon Sect disciples, and the hundreds of thousands of rogue cultivators behind them, left Fatty completely frightened.

Meng Hao looked at Fatty, and then glanced over at the Golden Frost Sect. It only took him a moment to figure out what the Golden Frost Sect was planning. Inwardly, he had already been experiencing some doubts regarding how to handle them.

Fatty was here, and Meng Hao knew that no matter what he did to the Golden Frost Sect, it would affect Fatty negatively.

Seeing Fatty suddenly appear, Meng Hao waved his sleeve, causing the air around him to distort. He vanished, then reappeared in front of Fatty. They were then surrounded by a blurriness that prevented anyone from seeing clearly what was happening.

A faint smile appeared on Meng Hao's face. He looked over Fatty's rotund figure, then laughed out loud. Fatty heaved an inward sigh of relief, and the two of them embraced.

Unfortunately, it didn't take long for Meng Hao's smile to turn wry.

"Your belly... is too huge," he said. Fatty was so fat that it made it hard to hug him.

"Yeah, I got fat again," said Fatty, smiling and rubbing his head. "Recently I've been thinking of trying to lose some weight." He looked past Meng Hao toward the tens of thousands of murderous-looking Blood Demon Sect disciples.

"So, um.... Eldest Brother Meng Hao, what do you say we get down to business?" Fatty looked extremely nervous.

“Oh?” replied Meng Hao, blinking and looking back at Fatty with an enigmatic smile.

Fatty sighed and then just directly explained. “The sect’s Spirit Severing Patriarch sent me here to sue for peace. How about... we don’t fight!? The sect will surrender as long as they can preserve their core Daoist teachings and doctrines....”

As the two of them chatted, the disciples of the Golden Frost Sect looked on nervously from within their sect, wondering what the result would be.

“I wonder if Elder Brother Li will succeed or not...?”

“Meng Hao really values friendship. He shouldn’t have a hard time convincing him.”

“You can’t say for sure. Meng Hao is the Blood Prince of the Blood Demon Sect. He’s killed countless people, and is completely cruel and ferocious. There’s no way he’ll agree to our demands so easily.” Even as they discussed the matter, Meng Hao was listening to Fatty make his demands. An even wider smile broke out on Meng Hao’s face.

“Fatty, you’re working so hard to represent the sect and sue for peace, but what has the sect offered you in return?”

Fatty gaped for a moment, then suddenly slapped his thigh. A look of fury appeared on his face.

“Fudge! You’re right! Those bastards didn’t offer me anything!! Alright, Meng Hao, don’t agree to anything yet. I’m gonna go back to the sect and tell them that the negotiations didn’t go well. After they offer Young Master Fatty something good, then I’ll come back.”

Meng Hao chuckled and shook his head. Then he flicked his sleeve, causing the blurriness around them to fade away. As it cleared, everyone in the outside world could see the two of them.

Meng Hao’s face darkened, and Fatty’s eyes gleamed. Realizing that it was time to put on the show, he flew into a rage and then roared, “Meng Hao, how could you be like this!?!?”

Burning with rage, he turned and headed back to the Golden Frost Sect.

The faces of the Golden Frost Sect cultivators fell, and their hearts began to thump.

Fatty angrily returned to the sect, and was immediately surrounded by anxious-looking disciples.

“I’m done with that fool! Done!” cried Fatty. “Meng Hao doesn’t care at all about friendship! I’m through trying to reconcile with him!” Hearing Fatty’s ranting caused the Golden Frost Sect cultivators to grow even more alarmed.

The only Spirit Severing Patriarch immediately strode forward and asked, “He didn’t agree?”

“As soon as I brought up the matter of suing for peace, he asked me what authority I had to negotiate for the sect! On what authority?!?! I’m a Golden Frost Sect disciple, dammit! What an insult!” As he spoke, Fatty’s eyes shifted back and forth craftily.

The surrounding Golden Frost Sect disciples had been suppressing themselves for too long now. They had placed all their hope on Fatty, and now that he had failed, they couldn’t suppress themselves any longer.

“Well if he’s going to be like that, then let’s fight!”

“Yeah! It would be better to die in battle than be insulted like this! Even Elder Brother Li couldn’t do anything about it. Let’s fight!”

“FIGHT!!”

Their desire to go to battle soared, and soon, the entire sect was filled with a murderous aura. People even began to rotate the sect’s spell formations into battle readiness.

Fatty was stupefied. He thought he had made things pretty obvious, and was shocked that no one had picked up on his hidden meaning.

The Spirit Severing Patriarch stood there silently, looking at Meng Hao floating in midair off in the distance. He sighed inwardly. He had no desire to go to war; the Golden Frost Sect didn’t even come close to matching up with the Blood Demon Sect. But now... what other options did they have?

Normally speaking, he would have picked up on the hidden message in Li Fugui's words just now. However, he was so anxious and alarmed that he simply didn't notice.

"If we're going to fight, then we should make the first move!" said the Spirit Severing Patriarch, gritting his teeth. "Fight now, and worry about everything else later!"

Fatty's eyes went wide, and his heart started to pound. Realizing that things were getting out of control, he quickly stepped forward.

"Actually..." he said. "I think there's still some hope..."

"Elder Brother Li, there's no need for further discussion. We're going to fight!"

"Yeah! Junior Brother Li, we've been pushed into a corner. The only option now is to fight!"

"We'll show them who the Golden Frost Sect is! We might be down and out now, but we still have the power to fight!"

Fatty was now extremely nervous. "Hey everybody, you need to listen to me! I think..."

"Li Fugui, there's no need!" said the Spirit Severing cultivator, his eyes cold. "I made an error in judgement. It seems we'll have to fight first before we can have a shot at turning this around. Disciples, heed my command..." He flicked his sleeve and was about to issue orders when, all of a sudden, Fatty lifted his head up and roared.

"Patriarch, give me one more chance! I, Li Fugui, will put my life on the line to secure peace for the sect!" He was so nervous that his throat was hoarse.

Immediately, everyone turned to look at him in shock, even the Spirit Severing Patriarch.

Li Fugui slapped his chest so hard that it stung, and tears welled up in his eyes.

“You’re an amazing kid,” said the Spirit Severing expert, clearly moved. “You... you really don’t need to put yourself in such danger. We will fight them, and show them the true power of the Golden Frost Sect! That’s our only hope!” With that, he prepared to give combat orders.

Fatty was trembling, and veins bulged out on his forehead. Once again, he let out a mighty roar.

“Don’t worry, Patriarch. I’m a disciple of the Golden Frost Sect. Even if I die the most cruel death, I will help the sect to pass through this crisis! This time I’ll just tell that Meng Hao that I’m a disciple of the Golden Frost Sect, and its future Golden Prince. If he doesn’t agree to our terms, I’ll kill myself right in front of him!” With that, he flew up into the air, his face calm and unflinching.

A tremor ran through the Spirit Severing Patriarch, and the other disciples were completely moved to see Fatty’s tear-soaked face and calmness in the face of death.

“Regardless of whether or not you succeed,” said the Spirit Severing Patriarch, “you are now the Golden Prince of the Golden Frost Sect!!” By this point, he felt that something fishy was going on, but considering the crisis they were in, he couldn’t focus too much on that.

Fatty immediately started to get excited. In his opinion, it was the time to push things a bit further, so he took a deep breath and then ripped off the top of his robe, revealing his rolls of fat. His expression serious and filled with the determination to die for his sect, he cried out, “Patriarch, please bestow me with a titular tattoo!

“Please carve the characters ‘Golden Prince of the Golden Frost Sect’ onto my back!”

The Spirit Severing Patriarch stared in shock, and his face twitched.

Chapter 757: Calamity for the Li Clan!

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As soon as the words left Fatty’s mouth, all of the Golden Frost Sect disciples stared in shock. The Spirit Severing Patriarch’s face twitched, and then he took a deep breath and, with effort, spoke as if he were very moved.

“What an amazing kid. Amazing!! The sect will never forget you! You are our hero!

“Very well, I’ll bestow the tattoo unto you!” With that, the Spirit Severing Patriarch waved his right hand toward Fatty, causing the characters ‘Golden Prince of the Golden Frost Sect’ to appear on his back.

The characters were carved... quite deeply, causing intense pain that made Fatty clench his teeth, and even squeeze out some tears. However, he didn’t make a sound. Once the characters were inscribed, he took a deep breath, and then swept his fellow disciples with a meaningful gaze.

“I’m going now,” he said, “and perhaps I won’t return. Even if I die, I will still belong to the Golden Frost Sect, whether in flesh and body, or in spirit and soul!

“Fellow disciples! My beautiful, beloved companions! I’m leaving now!” With that, he flew out of the sect.

As he shot through the air, quite a few disciples had unsightly looks on their faces, and one even began to give voice to suspicions.

“I’m not sure, but wasn’t Junior Brother Li acting a bit weird just now?” he asked.

In response to his question, there were a few disciples who frowned and were about to respond, when the Spirit Severing expert snorted coldly.

“Li Fugui is willing to risk his life for the sect, and even requested that I give him that tattoo.... ” After mentioning the tattoo, the Spirit Severing Patriarch paused momentarily, struggling with himself internally. Although he hadn’t picked up on any of the clues at first, he had lived for many years. In the end, how could he not have seen through Fatty’s incongruous behavior?

It only took a moment of thought for him to thoroughly understand that Fatty was milking the glory for all it was worth. Although the Spirit Severing Patriarch didn’t really approve, considering the current situation, he couldn’t very well say anything.

Not only was he forced to hold his tongue, he also had to help cover for Fatty’s earlier conspicuousness and make the story seem more convincing. As he realized this, he couldn’t help but sigh inwardly.

“Anyone who has any suspicions can go take his place if they want!” he continued.

When he thought back to how he had bestowed the tattoo, the Spirit Severing Patriarch couldn't help but think that the whole thing seemed so fake.... "Why couldn't Li Fugui put on a more convincing performance?" he thought. "Damn it all, what the hell is a titular tattoo anyway...y-y-you...!"

However, considering the relationship Fatty had with Meng Hao, he couldn't risk offending him. Therefore, he began to consider coming up with some good, justifiable reasons as to why he had bestowed the tattoo, reasons that everyone would believe.

Even as the Patriarch was wrestling with such thoughts, Fatty was flying out of the sect, his face as calm and unflinching as ever. Inside, however, he was grinning ear to ear.

"Hahaha!" he laughed inwardly. "Grandpa Fatty outsmarts them again! Especially that titular tattoo thing! It completely sets the matter in stone. In the future, if anyone dares to deny that I'm the Golden Prince, all I have to do is take my shirt off!" Feeling quite pleased with himself, he flew toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao waited, hovering in mid-air. When he saw the shining white ball of flesh flying through the air toward him, he gaped. Staring quizzically at Fatty as he arrived, he waved his hand, causing the area around them to blur. Then he noticed the characters tattooed on Fatty's back.

"Well? What do you think?!" said Fatty, his expression one of wild joy.

Meng Hao stared for a moment, then let out a long sigh.

"What's wrong?" asked Fatty, not looking very pleased. He subconsciously produced a flying sword and started to file at his teeth.

"How can you have such low ambitions?" said Meng Hao with a wry smile. "Why didn't you have them write 'Sect Leader of the Golden Frost Sect?'"

Fatty suddenly stopped filing his teeth, and his eyes went wide. He let out a roar, and his eyes went bloodshot.

“Dammit! DAMMIT! How come I didn’t think of that?! This won’t do. Meng Hao, don’t agree to the terms yet. Hold on a moment, I’m going back to the sect!” He turned, and was just about to speed back to the sect when Meng Hao reached out and grabbed his arm.

Meng Hao looked speechlessly at him. Then he thought back to how bumbling Fatty had been back in the Reliance Sect, and he suddenly understood everything.

“Golden Prince is fine,” he said quickly. “Look at me, I’m a Sect Prince, too.” Worried that Fatty would continue to mess things up, he quickly projected his voice to fill the entire Golden Frost Sect.

“Golden Frost Sect, considering that Li Fugui has become your Golden Prince, I will exempt you from the death penalty for your act of besieging the Blood Demon Sect. From now on, you are a part of the Blood Demon Sect!

“I shall permit you to retain your core Daoist teachings and doctrines, but you must immediately provide soul strands and blood oaths!”

In response to his words, the Golden Frost Sect’s spell formations opened up to reveal the sect. The Spirit Severing Patriarch, as well as tens of thousands of disciples, all flew out and bowed to Meng Hao.

“We will obey the decrees of the Blood Demon Sect!”

The Golden Frost Sect surrendered, and its members gave soul strands and blood oaths. Fatty became the sect’s Golden Prince, and although some people didn’t approve, no one dared to say anything. After all, the threat posed by Meng Hao was far too great.

In any case, their discontent was not severe. Had Meng Hao personally forced them to raise Fatty to Golden Prince, the situation might have been different. In any case, resolving the issue of the Golden Frost Sect in this way was not the most ideal method for Meng Hao, but he could accept it.

Unfortunately, he felt a bit guilty for the Blood Demon Sect disciples. They had come to exact revenge, but in the end, hadn’t been able to kill anyone. Their fury and resentment could only fester in their hearts, with nowhere to vent it.

Killing intent flickered in Meng Hao’s eyes.

“Next, the Li Clan!” he shouted.

He had never had any good impressions of the Li Clan, especially towards Li Daoyi, whom he had met many years before. If one didn't consider their tangential relationship, then the only other person from the Li clan that Meng Hao had anything to do with would be the Li Patriarch inside the blood mask, who had been turned into a Soul of Lightning.

Meng Hao turned to the Blood Demon Sect cultivators behind him, to the disciples who had suppressed their killing intent for too long, and said, “There will be no surrender for the Li Clan!”

With that, he flicked his sleeve and flew up into the air. The tens of thousands of Blood Demon Sect cultivators turned into beams of light as they followed him, consumed by their desire for carnage. In the battle for the Blood Demon Sect, they had narrowly escaped with their lives, and the majority of their comrades had died. The resulting desire for revenge now burned hot and deep.

This was an enmity that could only be washed away with blood!

The Black Sieve Sect had essentially been empty. The Solitary Sword Sect surrendered. The Golden Frost Sect had Li Fugui. They could understand Meng Hao's decisions, but their desire to kill had been held back for too long, and needed a release.

The place it would be released was none other than the Li Clan!

There was no peace and quiet in the Li Clan; everything was abuzz with activity. There were tens of thousands of clan members left alive, and the sole remaining early Dao Seeking Patriarch had been awakened from sleep to take charge. They were attempting to teleport the entire clan out of the Southern Domain.

Originally, they had assumed that sealing the clan off from the outside world would be sufficient to prevent reprisals from the Blood Demon sect. However, the Solitary Sword Sect's spell formations had crumbled, which destroyed their hopes. As of that moment, they suddenly realized that... the Li Clan could by no means remain in the Southern Domain.

They considered surrender, but once the Golden Frost Sect did that very thing, the Li Clan's Dao Seeking Patriarch realized that a great catastrophe was heading their way.

“The Blood Demon Sect mobilized to exact revenge,” said the Patriarch. “There was no slaughter carried out at the Black Sieve Sect, Solitary Sword Sect, or Golden Frost Sect.... That means that the Li Clan is in grave danger!” It was without hesitation that preparations began to teleport the clan out of the Southern Domain.

Unfortunately, at almost the same moment that their teleportation portal began to rotate, a massive rumbling filled the air, and an enormous parasol formed of magical symbols appeared above the clan.

The parasol shone with boundless radiance as it immediately exploded, causing formless ripples to emanate outward. The ripples enveloped the Li Clan, not to destroy it, but to seal it.

Having been sealed, the Li Clan’s teleportation portals immediately ceased functioning.

The seal was formed by the power of a peak Dao Seeking divine will, and in just a twinkling, spread out for hundreds of kilometers in every direction.

This area was like a world unto itself, cut off from everything else.

Unless the Li Clan had another peak Dao Seeking expert, then even with the aid of some special magical items it would be extremely difficult for them to break the seal without expending a great deal of time. Furthermore, Meng Hao’s second true self now floated cross-legged in midair above the sect, eyes closed in meditation, completely ignoring the Li Clan down below.

He had been dispatched to the Li Clan directly from the Solitary Sword Sect, sent here by Meng Hao specifically to prevent the Li Clan from attempting an escape upon learning of what had happened.

Although the second true self sat there with eyes closed, his body emanated the pressure of peak Dao Seeking. All of the Li Clan members within the area of the seal were trembling in terror. It was a dread that came from the depths of the heart, and it quickly infected the entire clan.

“Meng Hao!” said the early Dao Seeking Li Clan Patriarch, who happened to be their 9th Patriarch. He flew out from the Clan estate, flicking his sleeve to cause a scroll painting to appear.

The scroll painting depicted a woman whose eyes were closed in meditation. At first glance, she seemed indescribably beautiful and striking, but upon closer inspection her features were somewhat

indistinct. As soon as she appeared, shocking ripples spread out in all directions. The 9th Li Clan Patriarch performed an incantation gesture, causing the ripples to surge through the air in an attack on Meng Hao's second true self.

Booms echoed out, and the air distorted. Meng Hao's second true self slowly opened his eyes to reveal somber coldness. He looked down at the 9th Li Clan Patriarch, gave a cold snort, and pointed downwards.

The gesture instantly caused the city below to begin to quake. Signs of withering appeared within all of the cultivators; it almost seemed as if the natural law of the world inside the sealing area had changed.

The face of the 9th Li Clan Patriarch fell, and he cried out inwardly. Then he bit his tongue and spit out a mouthful of blood, which was then absorbed by the scroll painting.

"Ancestor, save me!!" he cried miserably.

As his voice rang out, the scroll burst into flames, and the woman inside opened her eyes!

When she spoke, her voice was raspy and yet strangely magnetic. "The Li Clan is not originally from Planet South Heaven, but rather, Planet North Reed. If you insist on slaughtering these people, Fellow Daoist, the Li Clan will not rest until you are dead.

"I won't hold you accountable for your lack of knowledge about the origins of the Li Clan. Simply sever your arms as punishment. Furthermore, dig out both of your eyes.... That is the punishment for anyone not of the Li Clan who lays eyes on me.

"Now, as to whether or not you try to wipe these Li Clan members out, the choice is up to you."

Chapter 758

The eyes of Meng Hao's second true self gleamed with killing intent. Although the soul of the second true self was not Meng Hao's, thanks to the hidden power within the fleshly body, as well as Meng Hao's divine will, he could control him as if it were his own body.

"Screw off!" said the second true self, his voice cold.

The words did not come with a thunderous roar, nor were there any boundless ripples. There was only monstrous coldness that spread out in all directions, causing everything for hundreds of kilometers to freeze over.

Within the flaming painting, the woman's eyes widened.

"You really don't know what's good for you!" she exclaimed through gritted teeth. She lifted her right hand, causing a tempest of flame to appear, which immediately shot out in all directions to attempt to fight against the region set up by the second true self.

The second true self snorted and then closed his eyes, completely ignoring the rumbling that filled the air. He had completely sealed down everything, making it impossible for the Li Clan to flee.

Time passed, and the Li Clan only continued to grow more panicked. No matter what techniques they attempted to use, they were incapable of teleporting away, nor could they break through the seal created by the second true self. Even the face of the woman on the screen was beginning to look unsightly. After all... she was only a strand of divine will, and even if she were stronger than she was now, she was still nothing more than a scroll painting, with a cultivation base at the mid Dao Seeking level, falling short of the peak.

After all, the Li Clan of South Heaven was merely one of many offshoot branches of the main Li Clan on Planet North Reed. If it weren't for the fact that they had some unique ties to the main clan, they would already have died out. As for their previous heights of glory and their present state of decline, in terms of the complex inner workings of the Li Clan as a whole, it actually didn't amount to much.

Three days later, rumbling continued to fill the air just as it had the entire time. The woman in the scroll painting was more than half burned away, having gone all out with the power available to her as a divine will clone to bolster the Li Clan's frantic efforts to break through the seal. As a result, cracks were finally becoming visible in it.

It was at this point that suddenly, tens of thousands of beams of light appeared off in the distance. They shot through the air like a red cloud, radiating killing intent.

It was the Blood Demon Sect's tens of thousand of disciples who had all been holding themselves back for so long. In the lead was Meng Hao, flanked on the left and right by his Dharma Protectors.

As he neared, the eyes of the woman in the scroll painting glittered; she could tell at a mere glance that this was the true self of the clone.

Her eyes flickered with killing intent, and she was just about to say something, when coldness burst out of Meng Hao's eyes. Without so much as a word, he waved the index finger of his right hand, and the Golden Frost Sect Patriarch and the 3rd Li Clan Patriarch shot toward the Li Clan, eyes shining with a glow like blood.

At the same time, the tens of thousands of Blood Demon Sect disciples exploded with a blood-colored glow as they finally unleashed the rage that had been pent up this entire time.

“Kill them!!”

“Spare no one! Kill them all!”

The tens of thousands of Blood Demon Sect Disciples recalled the bitter images from the battle outside their own sect, and their eyes turned red. Bloodthirsty and mad with rage, they charged the Li Clan. In response, the tens of thousands of Li Clan members began to fight back in desperation, looks of hopelessness on their faces.

This was a battle where no quarter would be given; its sole objective was to wipe out an entire clan.

Off in the distance, the hundreds of thousands of rogue cultivators were shaken by what they saw.

“The killing has started....”

“The Blood Demon Sect's revenge is now truly being carried out!”

“The Li Clan... will be no more in the Southern Domain.”

“The Li Clan is going to be wiped out, and the Wang Clan was mysteriously destroyed in a single night. The only clan left in the Southern Domain will be the Song Clan!”

“Of the five great sects, the Black Sieve Sect was eradicated and the Solitary Sword Sect surrendered and lost their core Daoist teachings and doctrines. It was only because of Li Fugui that

the Golden Frost Sect maintained theirs, but they will not be able to return to their former glory for many years. That just leaves the Violet Fate Sect....”

The slaughter intensified as the shocked rogue cultivators looked on. The left and right Dharma Protectors had lost their conscious wills, and attacked with shocking power. The woman in the scroll painting was defeated in exchange after exchange, and the 9th Li Clan Patriarch’s face was ashen. Blood sprayed from his mouth as his fleshly body was destroyed by the 3rd Li Clan Patriarch. His Nascent Divinity flew out at top speed.

“3rd Patriarch!!” he shrieked miserably.

Unfortunately for him, the 3rd Li Clan Patriarch was not aware of what was happening, and his only reaction was to attack again.

The Li Clan members fought back miserably, but were incapable of standing up to the elite cultivators of the Blood Demon Sect.

Thousands were killed just in the initial salvo.

The battlefield was soon soaked with blood, with slaughter being carried about constantly. Meng Hao didn’t attack, nor did his second true self. They merely observed the battle.

By now, Meng Hao was starting to grow weary of the bloodshed. In all the years since he had begun to practice cultivation, he had never killed so many people.... Even during the migration in the Western Desert, he had not seen such endless slaughter.

He felt a great weariness in his heart, and his expression was somewhat blank.

His ears were filled with the din of slaughter, bloodcurdling screaming, curses uttered moments before death, and battle cries. Despite the sheer volume of these sounds, all of it seemed to transform into a drone that came from very, very far away.

He suddenly realized that he reeked of blood. He could even sense that his heart was changing color... and was almost black.

It was the result of the accumulation of murderous desires and too much killing. When his heart became completely black, Meng Hao knew that would probably mean... that he had reached the point where the excessive killing didn't bother him any more.

But was all of this what he really wanted?

He suddenly missed his days back in the Demon Immortal Sect, back during the Western Desert migration, back in the Southern Domain as an alchemist, and even his naive life in the Reliance Sect.

But now, he was surrounded by killing, and he was exhausted because of it. When he closed his eyes, he could sense the countless vengeful spirits of the people he had killed, swirling around inside of him. They engulfed him, transforming into an intense, resentful miasma that was like a curse. A never ending curse.

Meng Hao stood there, taciturn and silent.

He really was... very tired.

"Perhaps this is why I have been unable to push the Blood Demon Grand Magic past the fourth level," he thought with a sigh.

"After all, I am still not the Devil that Patriarch Blood Demon wishes me to be.... I simply can't be that cruel and merciless. I just can't kill and kill without being shaken inwardly."

After reaching the fourth level of the Blood Demon Grand Magic, he had tried on multiple occasions to achieve enlightenment regarding the fifth level, but all to no avail. It was as if he had reached the end the road.

He looked out at the bloody carnage and the twisted expressions of those that were caught up in the slaughter, and the weariness and exhaustion within him surged even higher. Finally he had his answer.

"Perhaps, deep in my heart, I'm simply not truly willing to allow myself to become completely blackhearted. I don't want my happiness to come from the ghosts of those who I have killed. I don't want my path to be filled with slaughter. In that case... I guess I'll never reach the fifth level of the Blood Demon Grand Magic in this lifetime.

“The fifth level requires even more killing. It requires innumerable souls.... It requires more and more vengeful spirits to gather around me to successfully cultivate the magic.

“Only if I concede and become a Devil can I fully embrace the Blood Demon Grand Magic. At all times, regardless of the circumstances, I must embrace the colors of red and black.

“That is the only way. And it is a way... that I cannot accept.” He stood outside the Li Clan looking at rivers of blood, mountains of corpses, and ruins. Booms filled the air as cultivators from both sides fought back and forth ferociously, almost as if they had lost any semblance of reason.

It was at this point that Meng Hao suddenly came to a realization....

The battle didn't last very long. With the left and right Dharma Protectors in action, it barely took two hours before the Li Clan's fate was sealed.

The woman in the scroll painting could not be killed. She was a strand of divine sense that would return to her true self on Planet North Reed upon the painting's vanishment. As she began to fade away, her cold voice echoed out.

“You chose the path of extermination! From now on, if you step foot outside of Planet South Heaven, the Li Clan will hunt you down wherever you go in the Ninth Mountain, for as long as it takes!”

Meng Hao's eyes flickered with coldness. His second true self waved its right hand toward the woman in the scroll painting and the fading of her figure was suddenly arrested, and the flames which burned around her died down a bit.

The woman gaped in shock, during which time Meng Hao pointed out his right index finger.

Demon Sealing, Eighth Hex!

Demon Sealing, Seventh Hex!

The combination of these two great hexing magics being unleashed at the same time caused the woman to tremble violently. She was formed from divine will, but all of a sudden, she found herself severed from the divine will of her true self.

“What are you doing!?!?” she cried in shock, her face falling.

Next, Karma enmeshed her, and strands composed of the five elements sealed her inside. Meng Hao lifted his hand, and the woman’s body gradually began to shrink. In the blink of an eye, she became a glowing white sphere which floated down to land on his palm. He immediately crushed it.

A boom echoed out as Karma was shattered. The woman let out a bloodcurdling scream as she was completely destroyed along with her Karma.

Now, she was completely incapable of returning to Planet North Reed and her true self.

“Court death, and you just might succeed,” said Meng Hao coolly. He opened his hand, and countless glowing particles rose up into the air. Meng Hao could now sense another vengeful spirit circulating around him.

No one could see the venomous stares; Meng Hao was the only one who could sense them.

Meanwhile, on one of the four great planets that circulated the Ninth Mountain, Planet North Reed, there was a continent that covered half of the entire planet. The entire continent belonged to one clan, and that was the Li Clan!

According to some legends, this Li Clan was founded by the descendants of Lord Li of the Ninth Mountain and Sea. As to whether or not that was true, it was impossible for any gossipers to determine. Although, if it were true, why hadn’t Lord Ji exterminated this Li Clan?

In the vast lands of the Li Clan was a towering altar, the design of which was very unique; it was shaped like an enormous trident. At the very tip of the trident, a woman sat cross-legged in meditation. She had very long hair that hung down her body, and she was exceptionally beautiful, almost celestial.

Suddenly, her eyes snapped open to reveal a sharp, but confused light.

“The divine sense clone I left behind for my younger brother’s clan on South Heaven just died...”

Chapter 759: The Northern Reaches Mobilizes

[/expand]

The Li Clan was destroyed.

Not a single clan member was left behind. All were killed. It was nothing Meng Hao could do to stop. Nearly seventy percent of the disciples of the Blood Demon Sect had died. Although there was a certain coldness between disciples of the sect, this was war, and when fellow disciples passed away, the survivors would pay any price to exact vengeance.

Vengeance became an obsession!

The Solitary Sword Sect was the first to surrender, so the Blood Demon Sect disciples could choose to endure.

Because the Blood Prince’s dear friend was a member of the Golden Frost Sect, they were able to hold on to survival.

But when it came to the Li Clan, they could endure no more. Perhaps the Blood Demon Sect disciples did not hate the Li Clan any more than the others, but they needed to kill. They needed their revenge. They needed an outlet for their obsession.

The Li Clan was awash with rivers of blood. What had once been glorious, was now in ruins. In the years to come, the clan would eventually turn into nothing more than barren dirt.

Of course, many mortals live in the Li Clan’s headquarters. However, the Blood Demon Sect had not sunk to the level in which they would massacre mortals, so they were left alive.

Finally, the Blood Demon Sect disciples left. They returned to the Blood Demon Sect, and at long last, the slaughtering was over in the Southern Domain. Peace and quiet returned. However, all of the Southern Domain’s cultivators were well aware... that from now on, the Blood Demon Sect was not just the number one sect in the Southern Domain, it was... the ruler!

There was no power that could resist them. The Blood Demon Sect now had... four peak Dao Seeking cultivators!

Patriarch Blood Demon, Patriarch Golden Frost, the 3rd Li Clan Patriarch, and the fourth member, Meng Hao's clone!

With four peak Dao Seeking experts, the Blood Demon Sect had the power to sweep unhindered across the Southern Domain. They were even comparable to some of the true super sects of the Eastern Lands.

Furthermore, the level of power they had displayed recently was just the tip of the iceberg.

After the destruction of the Li Clan, the Southern Domain was once again stable and quiet. Unfortunately, the overall number of cultivators in the land as a whole had been significantly reduced. There were even some areas that were noticeably empty.

Meng Hao didn't immediately go back to the Blood Demon Sect. First, he went to the Violet Fate Sect, which of course sent the entire sect into a stir. When he arrived outside the main gate, he looked up silently at the enormous statue of Reverend Violet East.

The Violet Fate Sect was silent for a short while, and then the East Pill Division and the Violet Qi Division appeared in solemn, ceremonial form. Meng Hao saw many familiar faces, and he sighed.

His desire had not been to reunite with the Violet Fate Sect in such a way. This type of meeting... made him feel like a stranger.

The elderly Violet Fate Sect Sect Leader strode forward, an old man who was very familiar to Meng Hao. He looked very nervous as he clasped hands and said, "Blood Prince, your gracious presence is a bright light shining down upon our humble sect. Please, come in!"

The Violet Qi Division and the East Pill Division made similar welcoming declarations. Among their number was the sect Elder from years ago who had identified Meng Hao's incredible latent talent. He saw Violet Furnace Lords Lin Hailong and An Zaihai, as well as the man he had become entangled with all the way back in the State of Zhao, Wu Dingqiu.

All of them approached Meng Hao and clasped hands in respect.

Hanxue Shan made an appearance, but not Chu Yuyan.

The respect shown to him by the Violet Fate Sect made Meng Hao sigh in his heart. He couldn't help but speak up and ask them not to treat him in such a way, but unfortunately, he could not change the murderous air which swirled around him. The events that had occurred in the Black Sieve Sect, the Solitary Sword Sect, the Golden Frost Sect, and the Li Clan had struck fear into the entire Southern Domain. It all turned into something like a palpable pressure which radiated out from Meng Hao.

He could tell that Wu Dingqiu was nervous, and could sense the fear in the hearts of An Zaihai and the other Violet Furnace Lords. Even Hanxue Shan seemed reluctant to approach him.

There were other familiar faces, and it was the same with all of them. Apparently, his murderous aura was too strong, like a stabbing needle that prevented people from getting near him.... Meng Hao stood there, silent, his heart twinging painfully.

“After someone gets too powerful,” he thought, “must he grow apart from the people he used to know...?” Meng Hao suddenly felt very lonely. It was the kind of isolated feeling that came when you were with your friends, then suddenly realized that you felt as if you were all alone in the vast world.

Meng Hao thought of Chen Fan and Fatty. For some reason, he even thought of Grand Elder Ouyang from the Reliance Sect, and Sect Leader He Luohua. Throughout the hundreds of years, Meng Hao had never run into them.

Feeling both like a friend and a stranger, Meng Hao entered the Violet Fate Sect.

Normally, the peak Dao Seeking Patriarch of the Violet Fate Sect would never appear in public, but now that Meng Hao had arrived, he emerged from secluded meditation.

He was a middle-aged man with an ancient, transcendent air. He was skinny, and had no brilliant glow in his eyes, but his peak Dao Seeking aura was not weak. He peered out from within the temple, watching Meng Hao approaching with Violet Fate cultivators crowding around him.

“Fellow Daoist Meng, please have a seat.” With a slight smile, the man waved his hand, causing a long table to suddenly appear in the center of the temple's main hall. Alcohol and spirit fruits could be seen on the table, and off to the side were floating figures playing beautiful music.

The rest of the Violet Fate Sect members stopped outside of the temple hall. They clasped hands and bowed deeply, then slowly left. Soon, only Meng Hao and the middle-aged man remained.

“Patriarch, there’s really no need for all of this,” said Meng Hao.

“You’re a guest, Fellow Daoist,” the man said with a smile. “Even though you used to be a disciple of the Violet Fate Sect, now that you’ve come in this fashion, how could I not entertain you? Please, have a seat.”

Meng Hao stepped forward and then sat down at the table. With a smile, the middle-aged man sat down across from him.

“I am Sun Tao, and to be honest, I’m not a Patriarch. I am simply an apprentice alchemist, so there’s no need for you to address me as Patriarch. Actually, to be most correct... I should actually call you Young Lord.” The man laughed and then poured Meng Hao a cup of alcohol.

Meng Hao stared at him in shock.

“In the past, I was apprentice alchemist to Reverend Violet East.” Sun Tao looked at Meng Hao for a moment, and then smiled. “In fact, I still am.”

At this point, Meng Hao’s eyes glittered.

“It is neither necessary nor proper for you to ask the question that is on your mind,” continued Sun Tao. “I know exactly why you have come here. Unfortunately, your master is in secluded meditation, and cannot come out....”

Meng Hao’s heart trembled. The reason he had come to the Violet Fate Sect was because he wanted to see his master. They had been separated for many years, but he had never forgotten the three kowtows.

“Your master sent me here to explain something to you,” Sun Tao went on. “When practicing cultivation... one must cultivate the heart!

“As long as the heart is there, it doesn’t matter if it is red or black. Your will is the most important factor. Your will is like a blade, and that blade... can still be used in your Third Severing. There is no need to be swept up with confusion.

“Life is a series of decisions. Whether you make the correct decisions or not doesn’t matter. The important thing is to keep going forward. Years later, when you look back, perhaps you’ll find that the incorrect decisions you made... weren’t really incorrect. Similarly, the correct decisions... might not necessarily have been correct.

“Why struggle with frustration? Why proceed with confusion? In all things... resolution only comes from continuing to move forward.

“Following this line of reasoning, if there is no such thing as ‘incorrect,’ then how can the ‘correct’ exist? Similarly, if there is no ‘correct,’ then how can the ‘incorrect’ exist?”

“Another matter,” said Sun Tao, gazing at Meng Hao. “The Dao of alchemy is a great Dao. Your master wished me to remind you to never abandon it. Although it might not be of much use to you in your cultivation here in the lands of South Heaven, your future path... will take you far away from here.

“At that time, the Dao of alchemy... will be of incredible assistance. It will ensure that regardless of whatever hardships you face, your alchemic flame will never be extinguished.”

Meng Hao sat there silently. After a long moment, he lifted his glass and took a long drink of alcohol. Then he stood, clasped hands, and bowed deeply to Sun Tao.

“Many thanks for the enlightenment, senior,” he said. “Please pass word to my master that I will never forget his teachings!”

Sun Tao remained seated, but gave a slight nod in response. Meng Hao took a deep breath and then turned to leave the temple hall.

At the same time, in an Immortal’s cave in the number one mountain peak of the East Pill Division, a white-haired old man sat cross-legged in meditation. The air around him twisted and distorted as if due to a great Dao.

His eyes opened a crack as he looked out at Meng Hao leaving the main temple, and an expression of contentment could be seen on his face.

As soon Meng Hao emerged from the temple hall, the Violet Fate Sect Leader, Elders, and others hurried forward. At the same time, Meng Hao suddenly stopped in place and turned his head to look toward the mountains of the East Pill Division.

After a long, long moment, he looked back at the Sect Leader. "I'd like to visit my old Immortal's cave," he said. The Sect Leader immediately nodded, and the group escorted him to the East Pill Division.

Almost as soon as he entered the East Pill Division, a strange expression appeared on Meng Hao's face.

He had just caught sight of... an iron spear!

After all these years, the spear was still here in the Violet Fate Sect.... It was stabbed into the ground, surrounded by an ornate barricade. The spear had now become a landmark in the Violet Fate Sect.

Seated cross-legged by the spear were two old men. Despite their age, Meng Hao still recognized them. They were none other than.... Lu Song and Qian Shuihen.

As of now, they were both Core Formation cultivators and Honor Guards of the Violet Fate Sect. The moment Meng Hao laid eyes on them, they rose to their feet, expressions of deep respect on their faces. They immediately clasped hands and bowed deeply to Meng Hao.

"Greetings, Senior Meng."

The Violet Fate Sect Leader laughed heartily. "Hahaha! Blood Prince, do you still remember this spear? It was originally brought back to the sect by Wu Dingqiu. This area is now a famous place in the sect."

"Senior Meng, you can rest your heart at ease," said Lu Song excitedly.

"Yes, senior, we will definitely care well for the spear!" agreed Qian Shuihen.

Lu Song and Qian Shuihen had long since forgotten their resentment from years ago. Now, they viewed Meng Hao with almost feverish adoration. In fact, everything that had happened between them and Meng Hao years ago was a source of pride for both of them.

Meng Hao cleared his throat and then rubbed his bag of holding. Only he knew that inside was a gold spear that he still hadn't found a chance to con someone with....

Off to the side, Wu Dingqiu shuddered. Grumbling inwardly, he was just about to edge backward when Meng Hao suddenly looked over at him.

A tremor ran through Wu Dingqiu, and he immediately plastered a smile onto his face. However, his heart was pounding, and he could not stop cursing Eccentric Song for instigating the spear incident.

Even as Meng Hao was in the Violet Fate Sect, reminiscing about old times, a desolate and frightening scene was playing out on the border of the Northern Reaches, near the Milky Way Sea.

Nearly a million cultivators were standing at combat readiness near the shore. They were divided into more than ten battalions according to the various sects and tribes they were from.

There were also numerous 300-meter-tall beasts, shackled so tightly with iron chains that they couldn't free themselves no matter how fiercely they struggled.

Up in the sky were countless vicious flying beasts that emitted piercing cries as they circled about. Their wings cast enormous shadows down below as they nearly blotted out the entire sky.

Further off in the distance were dozens of roaring giants as tall as mountains that wielded bone cudgels.

Even further off in the distance were dark clouds that circulated about, apparently concealing countless savage and evil spirits.

This was the army of the Northern Reaches which had gathered next to the Milky Way Sea. Apparently... they were waiting for something!

Most shocking of all were the eleven unbridled and lofty auras which roared high into the sky. These auras... were all peak Dao Seeking auras!

Chapter 760: Your Mother Was Here

[/expand]

Storm clouds were gathering.

Up above the Violet Fate Sect, dark clouds formed in thick layers. Flashes of lightning could be seen, accompanied by the rumble of thunder.

The rain would soon begin to pour down.

When it came to weather like this, with rain or snow, most sects would do nothing to shield the sect from the elements. Instead, they would allow the rain and snow to fall onto the sect itself. They believed that rain and snow were part of the Dao of living things, and that by experiencing such weather, the spiritual energy in the sect would thrive.

By preventing the rain and snow from entering the sect, the sect might have the appearance of an Immortal paradise but, in fact, it would lose some of its connection with nature.

Meng Hao glanced one more time at the iron spear, then cleared his throat and spoke a few polite words. Then he headed further into the East Pill Division, toward the small mountain that had once been his home. Throughout all the years that had passed, no one had ever been allowed to occupy the mountain. It was as if the mountain had been reserved for him for all eternity.

From this detail, he could tell that, as far as his master Pill Demon was concerned, Meng Hao... would always be a disciple of the Violet Fate Sect.

When Meng Hao entered his old Immortal's cave, the Violet Fate Sect Leader, Elders, and others could all see the reminiscence in Meng Hao's eyes, and they discreetly took their leave. Meng Hao was left alone in his old residence.

Before long, the thunder overhead grew louder and the rain pattered onto the ground as it began to fall in earnest. A fine mist was kicked up, but it didn't rise too far before it was seemingly beaten back down by the oncoming rain. Small rivulets of water could soon be seen.

Everything grew hazy as the sheets of rain descended. The entire scene was one of charm and peacefulness.

Meng Hao stood at the door of his Immortal's cave, looking out at the rain, thinking about his days as an alchemist.

Time passed. The sky grew dark, and the rain continued to fall harder and harder. Meng Hao stood there for a long time, expecting... a certain someone to appear. However, by the time the glow of dawn appeared in the sky, she hadn't.

Meng Hao smiled and shook his head silently.

As the sun rose, the rain ceased. The sky was clear, and the moisture left behind by the rain made the air thrum with exuberant life force. Meng Hao walked out of his Immortal's cave and prepared to leave the Violet Fate Sect.

On his way out, he visited Bai Yunlai and gave him a hefty sum of spirit stones and medicinal pills.

He also went to see Hanxue Shan and some of his other old acquaintances. He gave gifts to all of them, even... Chu Yuyan.

After a moment of silent consideration, he left her a jade slip with a strand of his divine sense, which would protect her in a moment of deadly crisis. He gave the jade slip to Hanxue Shan and asked her to pass it along to Chu Yuyan. With that, he flew up into midair, then transformed into a beam of colorful light that shot off into the distance.

In the moment that he left, Chu Yuyan sat in her Immortal's cave in the East Pill Division, gnawing on her lip as she looked up into the sky.

"You made your choice, and I have my pride!" she murmured softly. Eventually, Hanxue Shan came. She hesitated for a moment before offering the jade slip to Chu Yuyan.

Chu Yuyan was silent for a moment. At first, she didn't want to accept the gift, but in the end, she couldn't control herself. She lifted her hand up and took the jade slip.

Hanxue Shan gave a slight sigh and then left.

Chu Yuyan trembled as she held the jade slip in her hand. It was hard to say when, but at some point, tears began to roll down her cheeks.

Meng Hao left the Violet Fate Sect and flew through the boundless sky over the familiar lands of the Southern Domain toward the Song Clan!

The Song Clan was in the south, in a special area that did not suppress the cultivation base of cultivators, but made it impossible for them to absorb the spiritual energy of Heaven and Earth.

Years ago, Meng Hao had no way to understand why the Song Clan was like that. However, considering the current level of his cultivation base, he now knew that it was a feature created by a peak Dao Seeking expert.

Dao Seeking cultivators could form their own personal natural laws, which grew more and more powerful as they approached the peak of Dao Seeking. Eventually, such natural law could create special regions, just like the Song Clan.

When Meng Hao entered the territory of the Song Clan, the entire clan was thrown into a commotion. The Song Clan Patriarch, who had been in secluded meditation under the surface of the clan, immediately opened his eyes and went out to meet Meng Hao.

The clan would not allow the slightest bit of disrespect to be shown to Meng Hao. In fact, there was not a single cultivator in the entire Southern Domain who would treat Meng Hao disrespectfully now.

Perhaps Meng Hao himself was not incredibly strong, but his second true self was a peak Dao Seeking cultivator, and Meng Hao was the Blood Prince of the Blood Demon Sect.

The entire Song Clan arranged a grand banquet to honor Meng Hao, the scale of which was completely unprecedented. As he sat there, Meng Hao looked around at the Song Clan and mused that this was his second time visiting this place.

The first time was for the Song Clan's search for a son-in-law. That was when he had acquired good fortune and met... Shui Dongliu.

The Song Clan Patriarch sat next to Meng Hao and couldn't help but sigh emotionally.

Even more emotional than the Patriarch, however, was Eccentric Song.... He was still a Nascent Soul cultivator, and he sat in a position not too far away from Meng Hao, his head bowed, fearful that Meng Hao would look his way.

Despite his bowed head, Meng Hao still noticed him.

“Fellow Daoist Song,” he said coolly, “How are all those wild beasts that you collect?” After all, Meng Hao had never viewed himself as the type of person to hold a grudge....

Eccentric Song shivered, and thought back to what he had witnessed Meng Hao do back at the Ancient Dao Lakes. After it was all over, Eccentric Song had assumed everything was water under the bridge, but now that Meng Hao was actually in the Song Clan, he was more nervous than ever.

As soon as Meng Hao asked his question, Eccentric Song lurched to his feet and clasped his hands toward Meng Hao, bowing repeatedly. His face was covered with a flattering smile that was even more unbearable to look at than if he had begun to cry.

“Senior, I am honored by your concern. However... I don’t collect wild beasts any more....”

“Oh....” replied Meng Hao. As he gazed at Eccentric Song, he noticed the pleading look in the man’s eyes.

Meng Hao smiled slightly and then looked away.

Eccentric Song heaved a sigh of relief and quickly sat down, whereupon he picked up his glass and took a long drink of alcohol. Although his fear had been allayed, moments ago he had been frightened to death. He had long since heard stories of Meng Hao’s shocking, murderous air. Meng Hao could kill without blinking an eye. He had exterminated Dao Seeking experts, and slaughtering Spirit Severing cultivators was as easy to him as killing dogs. As for Nascent Soul cultivators... he could blot them out of existence by simply breathing.

Meng Hao’s presence, and the fact that he was sitting next to the Song Clan Patriarch, left Eccentric Song completely terrified. Ever since Meng Hao returned to the Southern Domain, Eccentric Song had begun to regret his past actions. Then the Blood Demon Sect rose to prominence, and his fear grew.

“I absolutely, positively, without a shadow of a doubt should NOT have provoked that jinx all those years ago.... Who would have ever guessed that the brat would eventually become so terrifying.... Aiiiiii, nobody could have predicted it.” Sighing, Eccentric Song thought back to the events in the State of Zhao, and how Meng Hao had slaughtered a path all the way to the top of the mountain

with the iron spear. Eccentric Song almost seemed to be in a trance as he remembered all the spirit stones and medicinal pills that were taken away.

“Although,” he thought, “how many people in the Southern Domain can say that they caused that jinx, Meng Hao, to flee from them? I guess this just goes to show how great I am.” Now that he thought about it, Eccentric Song felt a bit pleased with himself. “Besides, it was that old bastard Wu Dingqiu who instigated the whole incident!”

There was another person at the banquet who sighed emotionally, and that was Song Jia’s mother. As for Song Jia, she sat next to her mother, her expression indifferent. Her mother was the one with the excited expression.

“According to what that woman said all those years ago,” she thought, “Jia’er can become Meng Hao’s maidservant... Not bad, actually! How do I bring it up to him, though?” She frowned and then looked over at the Song Clan Patriarch, only to find that he was looking at her.

She immediately understood what he was thinking, and abandoned her previous plan.

The banquet lasted for a few hours. Meng Hao’s primary objective in coming to the Song Clan was to reassure and pacify them. After all, the Blood Demon Sect was now the greatest power in the unified Southern Domain. The Song Clan had maintained neutrality, so it was necessary for the Blood Demon Sect’s Blood Prince to personally visit them.

There was no need for formal agreements. Meng Hao’s visit was enough to explain the stance of the Blood Demon Sect. Similarly, for the Song Clan Patriarch to personally entertain him showed the Song Clan’s attitude.

As evening fell, Meng Hao politely refused the Song Clan’s urgings that he stay behind for longer. When he rose to leave, his gaze fell upon Song Jia, and he hesitated for a moment before producing a jade slip.

The jade slip contained a strand of divine sense similar to the one he had given to Chu Yuyan. Meng Hao knew that he was beholden to Song Jia. His youthful hot-headedness had influenced her search for a husband, and was the reason she had never married. Meng Hao had always felt like he owed an apology for the matter.

Considering that he had personally gifted her with the jade slip, and also helped her in the ancient Demon Immortal Sect, he finally felt as if there was some resolution to the matter.

Song Jia accepted the jade slip and bowed her head in thanks, her expression as calm as ever.

Off to the side, the Song Clan Patriarch smiled as he looked on, and his eyes glittered. Finally, he laughed heartily and then escorted Meng Hao out of the Song Clan ancestral mansion.

“Patriarch, there’s no need to see me out,” said Meng Hao. “If I have some free time in the future, I’ll come back to visit.” He clasped hands, then made to leave.

“Meng Hao, my young friend,” said the Patriarch with a laugh, “there’s no need for such formality. Actually, we’re already like family, right? My little granddaughter Song Jia has long since become your maidservant, so there’s no need for you to treat the Song Clan as if we’re strangers.”

“Maidservant?” said Meng Hao, stopping in his tracks. He looked back at the Patriarch with a strange expression.

“Oh? You didn’t know, young friend?” The Song Clan Patriarch could tell the truth from Meng Hao’s expression, but he feigned astonishment nonetheless. “Back during the Song Clan search for a son-in-law, your mother came personally to ask us to make my little granddaughter your maidservant.”

Meng Hao’s heart began to pound with great waves of shock. However, after practicing cultivation for so many years, he was not the novice he had been years ago, and his expression remained the same as ever. However, a profound gleam appeared deep in his eyes as he looked back at Patriarch Song.

“Patriarch, there’s no need to beat around the bush,” said Meng Hao.

Considering Meng Hao’s countenance, Patriarch Song’s expression became solemn.

“Well, I’m not entirely sure if it was your mother, young friend. After the incident occurred, I realized that there are two possibilities. Either it really was your mother, or... it was the mother of the Resurrection Lily!

“I have no way to determine for certain, but what I can tell you for sure is that she is an Immortal. As to whether she is a false Immortal or true Immortal I don’t know... However, she definitely came from the Eastern Lands!” Patriarch Song slapped his bag of holding to produce a jade slip, which he handed to Meng Hao.

“This is her likeness, which I inscribed onto this jade slip from my memory.”

Meng Hao silently accepted the jade slip. He almost didn't dare to look at it. Taking a deep breath, he sent his divine sense inside, whereupon he saw the image of a woman. Instantly, towering waves of shock filled him.

Even if his composure were even stronger, it would still be shattered nonetheless. He suddenly felt as if a hundred thousand thunderclaps were exploding in his ears. His body trembled, and his eyes shone with intense attachment and obsession.

He had long since stopped trying to track down information about his parents. He had long since assumed that his childhood dream of traveling to the Eastern Lands was something of the past.

But now, he had an intense impulse to immediately go to the Eastern Lands to ask... WHY?!

That was because the woman in the jade slip....

Looked exactly like the image of his mother that existed in his memories!!