

The Heavens 861

Chapter 861: First Place!

“What a Chosen!” By this time, all of the Patriarchs in the starry sky palace had risen to their feet with expressions of deep emotion on their faces. They were looking at the vortex screens, where the giant and the beasts were all bowing in worship to Meng Hao.

All of the sects wanted to recruit Meng Hao as a disciple, but the Nine Seas God World of the Three Great Daoist Societies had already made a move, leaving them with no opportunity.

It wasn't just the other Three Great Daoist Societies who were in such a position, but also the Five Great Holy Lands.

“This Fang Mu is one of the most incredible Chosen to appear in countless years!”

“Congratulations to the Nine Seas God World. Fang Mu will definitely demonstrate extraordinary talent and skill in the God World!” In response to such words from the various Patriarchs, the old man from the Nine Seas God World laughed heartily. His expression was one of extreme contentment.

By now, it was clear that Fang Mu was definitely in first place in this trial by fire!

Of course, the crowds outside in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were in commotion. When it came to the final two stages of the heart and the Dao, Meng Hao was the first person to ever clear the entire stage. Not even Sir Fan had been able to do so.

Meng Hao had earned everyone's complete and utter attention!

“He definitely deserves to be in first place!”

“His name will soon shake the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea. He's going to be number one among all Chosen! Once he joins the Nine Sea God World, if he continues on this path of growth, he'll definitely become a Divine Son! If he and Fan Dong'er get together, then they'll definitely become a legend!”

“You guys didn’t notice, but in the final twenty thousand deaths, Fang Mu was actually happy! Compared to the pain everyone else was in, that’s probably even more frightening!”

As the echo of discussion spread throughout the Ninth Mountain and Sea, Patriarch Reliance was out in the starry sky, looked quite pleased. Then, he suddenly shuddered.

“Dammit! I’ve been thinking about this wrong! What the hell does that little bastard’s life or death have to do with me? His being the center of attention has nothing to do with the Patriarch! We’re enemies! Dammit! Dammit! I’ve been looking at it all wrong!!”

Also somewhere in the starry sky was the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch, his hair disheveled, his eyes narrowed as he looked off into the distance.

“Strong... much stronger than I remember,” he murmured. Deep within his eyes flickered the glow of Wang Tengfei’s spirit. “Meng Hao, I truly can’t wait until the moment when we meet again!” With that, he turned and disappeared into the distance.

In the Kunlun Society, Pill Demon and Chu Yuyan looked on with trembling hearts. Having personally witnessed everything that had gone on in the trial by fire, were they not already aware that Fang Mu was Meng Hao, they would never have possibly drawn a connection between the two.

Fang Mu... really was the complete focus of attention.

“Planet South Heaven is too small,” Chu Yuyan murmured, a twinge of obsession visible in her eyes. “You were being held back there. Your world... is out among the stars.”

Back on Planet South Heaven, in the Fang Clan in the vast Eastern Lands, Meng Hao’s parents looked at the vortex screens with smiles on their faces. Of course, buried within those smiles were emotional sighs.

“Hao’er really is going to leave us,” murmured his mother, her voice soft.

After a moment of silence, his father gently said, “Planet South Heaven is too small for him, and was limiting his growth. He was bound to leave South Heaven sooner or later. After this trial by fire is over, I won’t try to get him to stay too long.”

“But he’s just a child,” she replied bitterly.

“He’s grown up. If you don’t let him fly, how can he ever come to know the boundless universe?”

Meanwhile, on Planet West Felicity, Zhao Yifan was polishing his sword, and the desire to fight flashed within his eyes. Then he looked away from the vortex screen up in the sky.

“I must not underestimate all of the other members of my generation out there. I never imagined someone else like Meng Hao of Planet South Heaven existed. But now, this Fang Mu appears in the trial by fire!” The desire to fight burned hot in his eyes.

“I truly hope that you participate in the arena matches!” said Zhao Yifan, taking a deep breath and then closing his eyes. He would of course take part in the arena matches, and would actually lead the disciples of the Sublime Sword Flow Grotto into the fighting.

Only one cultivator from the Nascent Soul, Spirit Severing, and Dao Seeking stages would come out victorious in the arena matches. Then, they would be recruited as a disciple by one of the Three Great Daoist Societies, and become a Conclave disciple at that.

Of course, that didn’t mean that participation was restricted. On the contrary, if disciples from the Three Great Daoist Societies participated and took first place, then they would also be able to join the Conclave.

As far as other sects went, they did not participate for the chance to join a Daoist Society, but rather, for the incredible prizes offered up in the arena matches.

In the Nine Seas God World, Fan Dong’er sat cross-legged with her eyes closed. Her complexion was ashen, and there seemed to be a trace of Karma in it. For some reason, she kept thinking about Meng Hao, whom she hated with a passion that had permeated even her bones.

Behind her, as always, was the female corpse. When her master saw the corpse, he did not attempt to help her get rid of it. Instead, he told her that it was good fortune for her.

However, Fan Dong’er did not wish to have good fortune like this.

“How come just looking at this Fang Mu pisses me off!?” thought Fan Dong’er as she looked up at the vortex screen, her graceful brow furrowed. She was another of the Chosen who would participate in the arena matches.

In the Li Clan on Planet North Reed, Li Ling’er’s expression was indifferent as she sat cross-legged in the clan’s Daoist rite centers. Seated in front of her was a large group of Li Clan members, all of whom were listening to her give a speech about cultivation. To these clan members, Li Ling’er was like a celestial goddess, selfless, incorruptible, and aloof.

Occasionally, the vortex screens up above would draw the attention of the Li Clan members, and even Li Ling’er would occasionally look over.

When the clan members asked her if she would participate in the arena matches...

“Yes, I will!” she responded coolly.

Taiyang Zi, as well as Sun Hai of the Church of the Emperor Immortal, were both required by their sects to participate in the fighting. Virtually all of the sects and clans sent their Chosen to join the arena matches.

Some of them were people Meng Hao knew, but many were Chosen who hadn’t ever been to Planet South Heaven.

In the outside world, everyone was preparing for the arena matches. As for Meng Hao, the world around him shattered into pieces. When he reappeared, he was back in the lead position on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking.

Behind him were all the other competitors in the trial by fire. They looked at Meng Hao with awe in their eyes, even the masked young man and the cultivator with the mosquitos.

Meng Hao had used his own strength to crush the other participants in virtually every way.

Ling Yunzi materialized up in midair. He hovered there, looking at the crowd for a moment before speaking.

“The ten stages of testing have concluded,” he said coolly. “Being responsible for the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking, I will now select one thousand people to continue.” With that, he waved his hand, causing several thousand Dao Seeking cultivators to instantly vanish, teleported back to their places of origin.

One thousand people remained.

“All of you have passed the testing phase. Next, you may decide whether or not to participate in the arena matches.

“In the arena matches, anyone who makes it to the top 100 will receive a prize of 1,000 Immortal jades. Perhaps some of you are unfamiliar with Immortal jades. They are objects that can be used in cultivation after you reach the Immortal Realm. They are a rare thing in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. 1,000 Immortal jades is similar in value to 10,000,000 spirit stones.”

Originally, Meng Hao hadn’t been very interested in participating in the arena matches. However, when he heard this, his eyes went wide and began to shine with a bright light.

“10,000,000 spirit stones...” he thought, panting. “The Three Great Daoist Societies are way too rich! You get 10,000,000 spirit stones just for getting in the top 100?!?!” Meng Hao was now feeling a bit excited.

“If you get into the top 16, the prize is 5,000 Immortal jades,” Ling Yunzi continued. As his voice echoed out, Meng Hao got even more excited. All of the remaining participants were now panting eagerly.

“If you reach the top 8, the prize is 10,000 Immortal jades!”

Meng Hao’s mind filled with roaring, and he was mentally adding up how much 10,000 plus 5,000 plus 1,000 Immortal jades was in spirit stones. After finishing the calculation, his eyes began to shine with fierce light.

“The prize for reaching the top 4 is an Immortality Illumination Vine!” continued Ling Yunzi, which instantly caused many among the thousand remaining participants to cry out loud in disbelief. Meng Hao didn’t seem to care too much, but the eyes of the others around him instantly went completely bloodshot.

To most people, Immortal jades were just material wealth, and although they could be used in cultivation, that wouldn't help until the Immortal Realm. However, an Immortality Illumination Vine could completely change one's fate in life, and could make true Immortal Ascension possible!

This was especially important because of the fact that a true Immortal had recently appeared on Planet South Heaven. In the following thousand years, Immortality Illumination Vines could be considered precious treasures to everyone, except perhaps Meng Hao.

They could change fate and determine the future!

There were different prizes offered on the other two Ancient Roads. However, regardless of the stage they were in, when the cultivators found out what rewards that were being offered, it sent their blood boiling. They weren't the only ones. When the crowds in the Ninth Mountain and Sea heard of the prizes available on the three Ancient Roads, their eyes went bloodshot, and they began to breathe heavily. Were it not for the fact that they didn't possess the requisite qualifications, they too would be there to participate in the fighting.

This was especially true when they heard that one of the prizes on the Ancient Path of Dao Seeking was an Immortality Illumination Vine.

"I can't believe the prize is... an Immortality Illumination Vine!!"

"Dammit! If I had known that, I would have participated! In the next thousand years, anyone who has an Immortality Illumination Vine has a high likelihood of becoming a true Immortal!!"

"True Immortality! Although using an Immortality Illumination Vine doesn't measure up to seizing destiny, it doesn't matter how you become a true Immortal among the stars, you're still a true Immortal!!"

Ling Yunzi looked out with satisfaction at all the looks of shock. However, when he looked at Meng Hao, he could tell that although he was cheering like everyone else, it seemed a bit perfunctory. After a moment of thought, Ling Yunzi spoke out again.

"Fang Mu, although you are a Conclave disciple of the Nine Seas God World, if you don't perform enough meritorious service in the future, you won't be awarded with an Immortality Illumination Vine. You must seize this opportunity to acquire one."

Meng Hao quickly nodded his head, and then suddenly asked, “How many spirit stones is an Immortality Illumination Vine worth?”

Ling Yunzi’s jaw dropped.

“They’re priceless,” he responded. “If you put one up for auction, it’s very likely that it would sell for millions of Immortal jades.”

When Meng Hao heard that, his mind spun, and he began to tremble. Immediately, his eyes went completely bloodshot, and his expression turned completely vicious.

Seeing Meng Hao like this caused Ling Yunzi to clear his throat. He was gradually starting to understand Meng Hao’s personality a bit more.

“Whoever takes first place will receive a prize of....” Ling Yunzi paused dramatically.

“A drop of blood passed down by the Three Great Paragons!”

The response to his words was complete silence. However, there were some people who began to tremble, and expressions of intense disbelief covered their faces, looks that exceeded the ones that had appeared when they were told about the Immortality Illumination Vines. The outside world was quiet too, but only for a moment, after which a great tumult broke out.

“A drop of blood from the Three Great Paragons! Heavens! That would contain the Dao of the Three Great Paragons!!”

“The Three Great Paragons!? According to legend, they were powerful experts from ancient times. They... they actually left behind a drop of blood!?!?”

“Is this for real?!?!?”

Even the Patriarchs in the starry sky palace could hardly believe it. They shot to their feet, panting, expressions of shock written on their faces.

Only Meng Hao didn't seem to have much of a reaction. However, Ling Yunzi's next words, which were clearly directed at him, caused Meng Hao's heart to skip a beat.

"Fang Mu, if you put this drop of Paragon's blood up for auction, it would be easier to find a phoenix feather or a qilin horn than to find someone in the Ninth Mountain who could afford it."

Chapter 862: Provocation!

Meng Hao took several more deep breaths, but he was unable to calm himself. Even he had to admit that deep down, his main weakness was... his love of money.

But that wasn't his fault! He had been poor since he was little, and even though lots of people owed him money, those debts hadn't been repaid. Things really weren't easy for him!

When he was young, he had been so poor that he developed a fear of lacking money. After he grew up, he entered the world of cultivation, and still had never really been rich. There was that short period of time in the Milky Way Sea, and his unexpected windfall. However, when he thought about it, the only reason he had been able to save up the money he had now was because he hadn't used the copper mirror in a long time. When he thought about how voraciously the copper mirror consumed wealth, it made Meng Hao feel completely impoverished.

1,000 Immortal jades made him excited. 10,000 sent his blood boiling. The value of the Immortality Illumination Vine made his eyes go bloodshot. Now, there was the drop of Paragon blood, which caused Meng Hao's eyes to go green.

When Ling Yunzi saw that green glow, he stared in shock for a moment. He had never before seen a light like that shining in someone's eyes. This was the first time.

However, it only took a moment for more heavy breathing to be heard. Many of the other participants were much like Meng Hao, and didn't originally understand the value of a drop of Paragon's blood. When they heard Ling Yunzi's second sentence, their minds filled with roaring.

They weren't the only ones. The Patriarchs in the starry sky temple were also panting; to them, a drop of Paragon's blood was like a precious treasure.

They were well aware that an item like that was something that only the Three Great Daoist Societies could possess. They would most certainly not have very many either. It was a precious

treasure, the likes of which was not common in this age. And yet, unthinkable, the Three Great Daoist Societies were offering it up as a prize in this trial by fire.

The Patriarchs from the Three Great Daoist Societies smiled slightly, but did not speak. Obviously, there was some profound meaning behind offering the Paragon's blood as a prize. Actually, it didn't really matter who it was specifically that acquired it. The point was to let everyone know that they had Paragon's blood!

The crowds in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were seething with excitement. Even the Chosen out in the various sects who were preparing to participate in the fighting began to pant. The disciples from the Three Great Daoist Societies were much the same. Although they were members of the Daoist Societies, it would normally be impossible to acquire the things that were being offered as prizes unless they performed some incredible service to the sect.

But now... all they had to do was win first place, and it would be theirs!

Zhao Yifan rose to his feet, bursting with the desire to fight. "Paragon's blood.... It's impossible to say which Paragon, but if I fuse it into my Dao of swords, it will definitely make my Dao even more incisive!"

Fan Dong'er's eyes went wide, and she began to pant.

"With that blood, perhaps I can finally free myself from this corpse!"

Li Ling'er, Taiyang Zi and Sun Hai, as well as the other Chosen, all had similar reactions. There were even some Chosen who had elected not to participate in the fighting, such as Song Luodan and some others, who immediately regretted their decision.

"The arena matches will take place inside the Ruins of Immortality," continued Ling Yunzi. "However, the location will not be here on the three Ancient Roads, but rather, on an ancient Dao Tree located further within!"

"All of you will be given three days of rest, after which, I will personally take you to the ancient Dao Tree!"

"During those three days, if any of you wish to leave, you may do so freely." With that, Ling Yunzi turned to leave.

“Patriarch, please wait a moment!” Meng Hao hurriedly cried out.

Ling Yunzi stopped in place, then turned back to look at Meng Hao. His eyes were filled with approval, and a smile could be seen on his face.

“What’s the matter?”

A bashful smile could be seen on Meng Hao’s face as he somewhat embarrassedly said, “Patriarch, er... earlier you mentioned that I could ask for anything I want, and you would give it to me. Well... I think that a drop of Paragon’s blood would do nicely.”

When Ling Yunzi heard this, his eyes went as wide as saucers. He was just about to rebuke Meng Hao, when he noticed Meng Hao’s expression. Then he thought about how stirring all of Meng Hao’s actions had been, and his anger cooled.

“That is not something I can personally decide,” he said, shaking his head. “How about this: once you get to the sect, we will continue this discussion.” With that, he left.

“I knew all along they wouldn’t keep their promise,” Meng Hao thought. “I should have plucked off the pointer needle on the Feng Shui compass too.”

Time passed. None of the thousand participants on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking chose to leave. They all sat down in meditation, taking every moment of opportunity to practice cultivation, hoping to put themselves in top fighting condition.

Most of them felt quite drained from the previous ten stages of the trial by fire. They had expended much, were mentally exhausted, and their cultivation bases were running low. This was especially the case after the final two stages, and their near collapse into complete despair.

The torment they had experienced was severely draining mentally. However, the remaining 1,000 people were naturally outstanding individuals, so they took advantage of every moment to restore their energy.

Meng Hao had his Eternal stratum, so he was the only person who didn’t need to spend any time recovering.

“So, there are three more days until the arena matches,” he thought. “Why do I have the feeling that I’ve really lost out on a lot during my time here? I wasn’t able to take the floor slabs and decorative tiles from the Warrior Pavilion, not to mention the shelving. There wasn’t any time....”

“The Three Great Daoist Societies took the Feng Shui compass as well.” He turned to look over at the trial by fire contestants on the other altars, then suddenly felt a flash of inspiration. He stood up and flew to the edge of the altar, and as he neared, sensed an intense pressure. A faint rumbling sound could also be heard.

The rumbling immediately attracted the attention of the other thousand participants. They looked over with wide eyes to see what Meng Hao was doing, and instantly, their faces began to flicker. Even the people in the outside world noticed and were shocked.

“What’s he doing?”

“He needs to calm down! Why is he trying to move off of the altar?”

In the palace in the starry sky, the Patriarchs of the various clans looked on with shock. Ling Yunzi suddenly appeared as well, and he looked on in astonishment.

Meng Hao had once again succeeded in drawing all attention onto himself. As he moved out into the gap between his altar and the one behind it, the pressure grew even more intense. Finally, massive rumbling filled the air, and great beads of sweat broke out on Meng Hao’s forehead. He began to tremble, and yet, his eyes shone with a brilliant light.

When the spectators in the Ninth Mountain and Sea saw this, they immediately picked up on what they thought were the hidden details, and began to heave sighs of praise.

“He’s practicing cultivation!”

“He definitely deserves to have taken first place in the trial by fire! Even during the three days of rest before the arena matches, he actually refuses to waste time, and is working hard at cultivation!”

Soon, everyone came to the conclusion that the only possible explanation for Meng Hao’s actions was that he was practicing cultivation.

The Patriarchs in the starry sky palace began to nod in approval.

“Excellent. Using the pressure weighing down on the Ancient Roads to practice cultivation. Considering the level of pressure, cultivating there for three days is like spending thirty days in the outside world. If you spent longer, you would get even more used to the pressure, and once you were released, would be able to unleash explosive might. Such a thing would give you much greater momentum going into the arena battles.”

“No wonder he was able to take first place in the trial by fire. His awareness of cultivation is deeper than most people could comprehend.”

As the Patriarchs nodded and discussed the matter, the three elders from the Three Great Daoist Societies were all smiling.

Meanwhile, the Chosen from the various sects on the outside were practicing cultivation in preparation for the arena matches. They cared little about most of the people they would be facing up against. However, there were some that had left them with deep impressions. Meng Hao, of course, was the one from whom they felt the most pressure.

When the Chosen saw Meng Hao practicing cultivation out in the pressure of the Ancient Roads, their expressions became serious.

“In a situation like that, to be able to think up such a method to practice cultivation...This Fang Mu really is extraordinary,” said Zhao Yifan.

“This Fang Mu will be a formidable adversary.” Fan Dong’er frowned.

Li Ling’er, Taiyang Zi, and Sun Hai all had solemn expressions on their faces.

Back on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking, Ling Yunzi hovered in the void, slowly nodding his head, the look of praise on his face growing even deeper.

Slowly, the participants on the other altars began to react. Quite a few began to imitate Meng Hao, and stepped off the altars and into the pressure. However, none of them could last for very long before being forced to return to their altars.

That only served to increase their awe of Meng Hao.

Four hours passed by, after which Meng Hao finally managed to close in on the nearest altar. On that altar, Li Yan's pupil's constricted. Although he had long put himself on guard inwardly, his expression didn't change, and he looked over at Meng Hao coldly.

He had also attempted to move out into the pressure outside the altar, but had only been able to last for an hour before being forced to return. As for Meng Hao, he had persisted for four hours; that was something that left Li Yan completely shocked.

At first, he assumed Meng Hao would only rest for a bit and then go back, but in complete contrast to his expectations, Meng hao actually approached him.

"Fellow Daoist Fang, come no closer!" he said, his eyes glittering coldly. His hair was already standing on end, and he couldn't be any more vigilant. He waved his hand, causing a shield to immediately appear, bursting with energy.

The scene instantly attracted quite a bit of attention. The people in the crowds in the outside world all began to look over.

"Fellow Daoist," Meng Hao responded with a smile, "don't get the wrong idea. I have no ill intentions. I'm just here to sell some medicinal pills. Look, right here, I happen to have a wonderful Spirit Reviving Pill." With that, he adroitly produced a medicinal pill from his bag of holding.

"One pill will completely enliven you, and will increase your energy by a hundredfold. How about this: for 100,000 spirit stones, I'm willing to part with this medical pill and give it to you!" He looked over at Li Yan.

Li Yan was staring with wide eyes, as were all of the other competitors in the trial by fire. Up in midair, Ling Yunzi was in complete shock.

The crowds in the outside world looked on agape, and all of the Chosen were staring fixedly. Even the Patriarchs in the starry sky palace were gaping.

“He... he expended all that effort, fought back against that enormous pressure, just to... just to sell some medicinal pills?!?!”

“And he wants 100,000 spirit stones for a Spirit Reviving Pill? That’s... that’s way too expensive!”

Ling Yunzi wasn’t sure whether to laugh or cry. At first he wanted to get angry, but then he thought about how sensitive Meng Hao was regarding spirit stones, as well as the stirring matter of the Feng Shui compass, and he sighed.

“This kid is definitely a rogue cultivator. He’s no doubt experienced many hardships in his practice of cultivation. Therefore, he has a strong attachment to spirit stones.”

Li Yan looked hesitantly at Meng Hao. He actually did want to buy the medicinal pill. The problem wasn’t about the amount of spirit stones, but that he didn’t dare to actually buy it. At this moment, he wasn’t sure if he could trust that what Fang Mu was saying was true or not.

After a long moment, Li Yan carefully replied, “Fellow... Fellow Daoist Fang, I actually have my own medicinal pills.”

“Oh, I see,” said Meng Hao, looking disappointed. He then turned to look at the participants on the other altars.

Most of them looked back silently. However, there happened to be a middle-aged man who stood six altars away from where Meng Hao currently was. He looked on with an arrogant expression.

“I can’t believe someone who cares so much about money could take first place,” he called out. “I’ve really been blind. If you can personally deliver those medicinal pills to me, then however many you want to sell, I, Zhao, will buy.

“However, I’ll only wait for half a day. If you can’t make it here in that amount of time, then you’ll just have to scram.”

Meng Hao looked up at the middle-aged man. Then, a bashful smile appeared.

Chapter 863: Pill Delivery Service!

Meng Hao stood there on the second altar, looking at the man standing on the eighth altar. There were a total of five altars standing between them!

This man was one of the thousand participants on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking, and back home, he was a Chosen. That was why he was able to stick out so well on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking.

Originally, he had believed himself capable of struggling his way into the top ten, but the brutality of the trial by fire had resulted in him sustaining some severe blows to his self-confidence. However, during the three trials of talent, cultivation, and age, he had taken second place in the trial of talent. He had been very excited about that, but then Meng Hao had thrown everything into chaos, the result being that few people had taken note of him.

Jealousy of Meng Hao had taken deep root within him then and there. Then, Meng Hao's spectacular performance in the other stages had caused that jealousy to transform into bone-deep hatred.

Of course, he was not a witless person. If he was going to attempt to humiliate Meng Hao in full view of everyone, he would definitely have to ensure his own safety. That was why he had put a half-day time limit on his offer.

He did not believe that Meng Hao could possibly make it to him in half a day. After all, Meng Hao had spent roughly four hours to get to the second altar. Half a day contained twelve hours, so therefore, the man was confident that Meng Hao would not be able to reach him.

"If the time passes and he still comes, he won't be able to do anything at all to me. There are rules, after all! If he tries to attack me, the Three Great Daoist Societies will intervene. That he's a disciple of the Nine Seas God World... makes no difference!

"Rewards come only with risk. If I humiliate Fang Mu, people will definitely notice me. This is my opportunity to get my name out there to the sects. This is my chance to get noticed!" The man's eyes flickered, and his mouth turned up into a cold smile.

A bit of a bashful smile tugged at Meng Hao's lips. He nodded at Li Yan, then turned and headed toward the edge of the altar. When he stepped out into the void, the pressure of the outside once again weighed down on him. Meng Hao was like a rowboat in an angry sea, his robes whipping about. However, he proceeded forward with firm steadfastness, moving ahead one bit at a time.

When he started out toward the next altar, it instantly caused all of the competitors in the trial by fire to look over. Their eyes glittered as various thoughts ran through their heads.

“Even if Fang Mu does something more spectacular than he already has, I don’t think he can get to that man in half a day.”

“That’s not very smart. He should just have put up with the man’s words and waited to handle the matter after the arena matches.”

“That guy really is malicious. He’s smart though. He actually went out of his way to provoke Fang Mu. If he ends up humiliating him, he’ll really earn a name for himself.”

The remaining competitors in the trial by fire were intelligent people, and they quickly understood what was going on.

Up in midair, Ling Yunzi looked on with a cool expression. Considering the level of his cultivation base, he wouldn’t pay too much attention to the competitors jockeying for positions. However, he couldn’t help but feel quite a bit of admiration for Meng Hao, and began to watch, wondering if Meng Hao would be able to reach his destination in less than half a day.

The cultivators out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea looked on with interest, and quite a few of them realized what the middle-aged man was thinking. There were, of course, varying opinions about the matter.

“This Fang Mu is a bit impulsive.”

“He shouldn’t have tried to sell those medicinal pills. He’s just giving his opponents an opportunity and invitation to humiliate him.”

The Patriarchs up in the starry sky palace settled their qi and calmed their minds. The conflicts between the trial by fire competitors weren’t something they would pay close attention to. However, considering everything that Meng Hao had accomplished, many of them were waiting to see how he would resolve this issue.

“This is actually a test in and of itself,” said the Patriarch from the Church of the Emperor Immortal. “The previous stages all tested internal weaknesses. A person’s response to provocation can reveal a lot about their instincts.” Many others nodded in response.

Time passed by. Two hours later, Meng Hao was moving along at a quick pace. He was now between the second and third altars, and the pressure weighing down on him from the surrounding void sent his hair whipping about. However, his expression was calm, and he continued without pause.

The other competitors were all silently shaking their heads. They knew that the half-day timetable was something Meng Hao couldn't meet.

The middle-aged man's facial expression was one of complete complacency. When he'd opened his mouth earlier, it had actually been with some nervousness, but now he was completely calm and even laughing.

"Fang Mu, you only have half a day! If you can't make it here by then, you can just get the hell back to your own altar. After half a day passes, even if you offer your medicinal pills to me for free, I won't take them."

The arrogance in his tone was extremely apparent.

Meng Hao looked up at the man far off in the distance, and smiled. He proceeded forward, taking about an hour to get to the third altar.

This time he finished the trip an hour faster than the last time, which was of course shocking to many onlookers. However, of the twelve hour time limit, there were now only nine hours left. The middle-aged man looked even more relaxed, and laughingly called out.

"Fang Mu, you have five altars to go, but only nine hours left! You'd best take advantage of your time. I'm curious to see how many altars you can get under your belt before the nine hours is up!"

Meng Hao smiled bashfully, then stepped out into the void once again. The pressure surrounded him, and his energy surged. Boundless light radiated off of him, and he continued onward without pause. Although he was moving slower, and the pressure was increasing, he managed to reach the fourth altar in only two hours.

That gave rise to quite a bit of astonishment among the onlookers. The middle-aged man's face flickered a bit, but he called out just as arrogantly as before.

“So what? There are still four altars between us, and you only have seven hours! Do you really think you can make it here?”

“I don’t need that much time,” said Meng Hao, his first time speaking to the middle-aged man. Even as he spoke, lightning crackled out around him and he stepped out into the void. Rumbling echoed out because of his incredible speed, almost as if from friction. This time, he used only one hour to set foot onto the fifth altar.

“What!?” Many of the trial by fire competitors jumped to their feet, their expressions that of astonishment. The spectators out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were also looking on wide-eyed.

To cross the gap between two of the altars in only one hour required astonishing speed. That was especially true considering that his first attempt had taken a full four hours.

“Was he intentionally holding back the first time around? Or is he just getting used to the pressure!”

“Is this Fang Mu really going to pull off some kind of miracle?!”

The outside world was in an uproar, and the middle-aged man’s face had fallen. He was panting as he stared at Meng Hao, fully cognizant of the fact that there were only three altars between them.

In terms of the time limit, there were six hours left!

“Impossible!” thought the man. His face was ashen, and his eyes wide as he looked over at Meng Hao charging toward him. There was a shy smile on Meng Hao’s face, and it seemed almost apologetic.

Next, Meng Hao strode out to cross the void. This time, his speed was such that he only needed the time it takes an incense stick to burn before landing with a bang on the sixth altar. He was now very close to the middle-aged man on the eighth altar.

Without even a pause, he proceeded from the sixth altar out into the void toward the seventh altar. This time, he didn’t even need the time it takes an incense stick to burn before he was standing at the edge of the seventh altar, looking at the middle-aged man not too far off in the distance.

The man’s scalp was numb as he rose to his feet, an expression of astonishment on his face.

“Impossible!!” he said, trembling, and edging backward slowly. He now felt incredible regret, and if he had a chance to do things over, he would definitely never have chosen to provoke Fang Mu.

All of the surrounding competitors were also astonished, especially the cultivators on the seventh altar where Meng Hao currently stood. They quickly rose to their feet and made a path for Meng Hao to walk through, clasping hands and bowing deeply at the same time.

Meng Hao’s might left them all stunned. The cultivators watching from outside in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were equally shocked, especially the Chosen. They stared at Meng Hao on the vortex screens, and by now, had placed him in a very high position mentally.

In the starry sky palace, the Patriarchs had strange looks in their eyes.

Ling Yunzi hovered in midair, smiling slightly and looking at Meng Hao with admiration. His cultivation base was profound, and he had long since seen through the various clues. This was not a case of Meng Hao concealing his cultivation base, but rather, him becoming accustomed to the pressure in the place.

“For him to be able to create Paragon magic, to have the image of the Pāramitā Bridge in his heart, and considering the profundity of his cultivation base, very few types of pressure under Heaven would be able to stop him.”

Now many among the crowds of trial by fire competitors were looking over mockingly at the middle-aged man. His face was ashen, and he was trembling. Earlier, he had been surrounded by no small amount of fellow competitors, but now, they had all edged away from him.

“It’s never a good idea to provoke people, and yet this guy chose to provoke Fang Mu.”

The middle-aged man trembled, and his heart was pounding. Roaring filled his mind, and he had no time to think of any more ideas as Meng Hao flew out and crossed the last void in the space of twenty breaths of time.

Meng Hao looked like an Immortal Divinity as he flew through the void to appear directly in front of the middle-aged man. All of the other competitors immediately clasped hands and bowed, then backed away.

The man trembled and stared fixedly at Meng Hao. After taking a deep breath, he then let out a cold snort.

“Fellow Daoist Fang, clearly you have a profound cultivation base to be able to come here personally. Fine, I, Zhao, will buy your medicinal pill.” With that, he produced a bag of holding which he tossed over.

“There are 100,000 spirit stones in there. Take them and leave.”

Meng Hao smiled as he caught the bag of holding. Then his expression turned a bit bashful.

“Oh, this won’t do,” he said. “I have a lot of Spirit Refreshing Pills, you know.” With that he patted his old bag of holding to produce... a pill bottle.

He waved the pill bottle in front of the middle-aged man’s face. Inside were dozens of medicinal pills.

The middle-aged man’s eyes went wide, and he began to inch backward.

“You never said how many you had! You....”

“Huh?!” In one moment, Meng Hao had a sincere smile on his face, but the next, it darkened.

“I came here from all the way over there to deliver medicinal pills to you! And now you’re not going to buy them!?” He stepped forward until he was directly in front of the man, and then his hand lashed out.

The man tried to fight back, but how could he possibly be a match for Meng Hao? A boom could be heard, and blood sprayed out of the man’s mouth. Meng Hao grabbed his hair and shoved him down onto the ground.

Chapter 864: The Real Ruins of Immortality!

“Trying to make a fool of me?” growled Meng Hao, killing intent flickering in his eyes. He lifted his right foot up and kicked down viciously onto the man. Cracking sounds could be heard, and blood sprayed from the man’s mouth. Bones were smashed, and the man opened his mouth to say

something, but in that moment, a vicious expression appeared on Meng Hao's face and he punched downward.

A boom echoed out. Meng Hao had attacked viciously, immediately prompting a miserable shriek from the middle-aged man. He was now broken and bleeding, miserable to the extreme.

“Misunderstanding! Fellow Daoist Fang, this was just a misunderstanding!”

“Misunderstanding my ass!” Meng Hao leapt up into the air and then trampled down onto the man's face. A bloodcurdling scream rang out. The man was now soaked in blood, cradling his head in his arms as Meng Hao thrashed him.

“Wanna buy my stuff? Buy it! Don't wanna buy it? You're gonna buy it anyway!” Meng Hao grabbed the man by the hair, lifted his head up, and then slammed it back down into the ground.

Before the man could even scream, Meng Hao lifted his right leg up and kicked down hard. A crack could be heard as the man's leg was shattered!

This scene of explosive violence, and the rapid change in Meng Hao's facial expression, caused all of the surrounding onlookers to stare in complete, jaw-dropping shock.

The audiences outside in the Ninth Mountain and Sea gasped, and stared blankly at what was happening on the vortex screens. Meng Hao's savagery left them totally astonished.

“This guy is definitely someone you can't provoke!”

“What a brutal personality! He's definitely someone to avoid pissing off!”

“I can't believe that a cultivator with a scholarly aura like that could have such a violent temper!!”

The Chosen from the various sects were also taken aback, some more than others. For example, Sun Hai looked on with wide eyes, panting. He watched blankly as Fang Mu grabbed the middle-aged man's hair, and then Sun Hai began to tremble. He suddenly called to mind something that had happened to him that he would never be able to forget for the rest of his life, a completely humiliating and embarrassing memory.

“This seems... somewhat similar.... But that’s not him, is it...?” Sun Hai hesitated for a moment. After recalling that certain person, a tremor ran through him. The whole incident was a nightmare. After returning to the Church of the Emperor Immortal, he had often been jolted out of meditation by the shocking memories. Furthermore, he had shaved his hair, and was now completely bald.

In the starry sky palace, the Patriarchs looked on with wide eyes, staring in shock as Meng Hao violently beat the middle-aged man. At first, they were completely shocked, but then they began to chuckle.

“This Fang Mu’s personality is kind of amusing.”

“He exacts revenge for the slightest offense, and isn’t willing to suffer any losses whatsoever. Well, truth be told, the other man was the one who started the whole thing.”

On the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking, Ling Yunzi chuckled and shook his head, pretending as if he hadn’t seen what was happening.

The middle-aged man was dripping with blood, and was both screaming miserably and also trying to fight back. However, the more he struggled, the more ruthlessly Meng Hao beat him. More cracking sounds echoed out as another bone was broken.

Of the surrounding trial by fire competitors, one after another gasped, and all of them were looking at Meng Hao with intense terror in their eyes. They were so afraid of Meng Hao that their scalps were numb.

“This guy seemed perfectly normal! How could he be so brutal!?”

“Must not provoke him! Absolutely must not provoke him!”

Meng Hao’s eyes flashed with killing intent, and he jabbed two fingers of his right hand toward the middle-aged man’s eyes.

The man let out a miserable shriek and then urgently cried out, “Buy! I’ll buy!”

The words floated into Meng Hao's ears like a melody of nature. His right hand stopped in place, and the brutal, vicious expression on his face vanished, to be replaced by a bashful smile and a somewhat embarrassed expression.

He cleared his throat and then said, "Well, look at you! Why didn't you speak up earlier?"

He quickly squatted down and, as the trembling middle-aged man looked at him with terror in his eyes, slowly helped him to his feet.

"You don't need to help me up, really...." The simple action of being helped to his feet caused the man to be even more frightened than before, and he began trembling violently. Before he could even finish speaking, though, Meng Hao glared at him, and he didn't dare to say another word.

"This pill bottle is full of Spirit Reviving Pills," said Meng Hao. "Delivery fee included, one pill costs 200,000 spirit stones. There are a total of 15 pills, so that's a total of 3,000,000 spirit stones." He placed the pill bottle into the man's hand and then looked at him expectantly, eyes gleaming.

The man was on the verge of bursting into tears. The single thought that occupied him now was just to get Meng Hao to leave as quickly as possible, lest he find himself in an even more deadly situation.

"Okay, I'll buy them...." The middle-aged man immediately produced a vast quantity of spirit stones.

Meng Hao's eyes gleamed as he caught sight of the huge amount of the spirit stones that were still left in the man's bag of holding. He obviously had quite a few left over even after buying the pills. Meng Hao cursed the fact that he only had one bottle of Spirit Reviving Pills in his bag of holding.

"Look, you're a customer, so I'm responsible for your safety," Meng Hao said solemnly. "Tell me who it was that beat you up, okay? Or, well, never mind. That's not important. The important thing is that you're hurt, and you're going to be participating in the arena matches that begin in two days. But you don't need to worry, Fellow Daoist. I have more medicinal pills!

"These are top-notch injury-treating pills, for only 200,000 per pill. Don't worry, I'm honest and fair with all customers." Meng Hao immediately pulled out seven or eight pill bottles, which he then handed to the middle-aged man.

The man stared in shock. He really and truly wanted to weep now. For a moment, he considered not buying them, but when he looked at Meng Hao and his bashful smile, he began to shiver uncontrollably. Gritting his teeth, he purchased each and every one of the pills.

Meng Hao took a deep breath, then began to stare at the man's bag of holding, his eyes shining brightly. Clearing his throat, he said, "Fellow Daoist, considering the level of your injuries, I don't think those medicinal pills are enough. It seems even your Nascent Divinity was injured."

"What?" The middle-aged man's scalp was going numb. His Nascent Divinity had not, in fact, been injured, but when he saw the look in Meng Hao's eyes, he knew that it very easily could be.

The man scowled miserably, and his heart was filled with intense regret. He was already starting to run out of spirit stones; these were his life savings, including special rewards given to him by his sect.

"Fellow Daoist Fang, let me go, alright?" he pleaded. "It really was my mistake...." Of course, deep inside, his hatred burned, and he wanted to tear Meng Hao into pieces.

Meng Hao smiled, but his eyes were completely cold as he said, "You know, the first person I ever killed was also surnamed Zhao."

The man trembled, and he felt like a cold breeze was filling his entire body. Gritting his teeth, he pulled out some more spirit stones and bought Meng Hao's new medicinal pills. By now, his bag of holding was completely empty.

Meng Hao nodded in satisfaction, then patted the man on the shoulder.

"If you have any other needs, don't hesitate to call me over."

The middle-aged man trembled and nodded.

Meng Hao turned and stepped back out into the void. This time, his trip all the way back to his original position on the first altar only took about an hour. The entire way, the other trial by fire competitors clasped hands and bowed, making way for him, their eyes filled with fear.

Back on the first altar, Meng Hao sat down cross-legged and began to take inventory of everything he had acquired. Looking at the accumulation of spirit stones inside, he finally felt as if his trip here hadn't been a waste.

"It's too bad that Warrior Pavilion was so stingy, though," he thought. "All I did was take a few magical items, right? I didn't take the floor tiles or the shelving. I didn't even touch the decorative tiles!"

"Back in the Bridge of Immortal Treading, I dug up all the floor tiles!" When he thought about how stingy the Warrior Pavilion was, his hatred grew. There was nothing he hated more than stingy people.

"Well, in any case, a lot of small gains can add up to a windfall. As long as I keep going in life, then one of these days, I'm going to be the richest person in the all the Nine Mountains and Seas!" Thinking about his grand aspirations, he took a deep breath. For some reason he felt as if he was now one step closer to fulfilling his dreams.

"When I find Xu Qing, the two of us will always have more than enough money to spend." He sighed emotionally.

Time passed by, and soon the three day rest period had ended. The trial by fire competitors opened their eyes, and bright gleams could be seen. With Meng Hao there, most had no thoughts of trying to take first place; they just hoped to make it into the top 8!

Ling Yunzi materialized out of the void and glanced over the crowds.

"The arena matches will be held in the ancient Dao Tree of the Ruins of Immortality. All of you must keep one point firmly in mind. The location of the Dao Tree cannot be considered the depths of the Ruins of Immortality, but it is still a place of extreme danger. Virtually anything could happen outside of the tree while you participate in the fighting. Remember... you must not, under any circumstances, leave the ancient Dao Tree.

"Only by staying on the tree itself can you guarantee your safety. If you leave the tree... it is impossible to say whether you will survive or not!" Ling Yunzi gazed sternly at the competitors, then waved his hand. Immediately, a red glow sprung up everywhere, and the void trembled. Ripples spread out as everything present, including Meng Hao, flew up into the air. Ling Yunzi suddenly seemed to grow incredibly large, whereupon he swished his sleeve, causing everyone to fly inside of it.

This scene caused Meng Hao's heart to tremble!

“What an extraordinary divine ability!” he thought, panting. After all the trial by fire competitors were pulled into Ling Yunzi's sleeve, they could clearly see the outside world whizzing by, and knew that Ling Yunzi was now moving forward at incredible speed.

The audiences in the outside world watched as similar scenes played out on the Ancient roads of the Nascent Soul and Spirit Severing. The two old men in those locations also flew up, and soon joined Ling Yunzi as they flew off into the distance.

The path they traveled was covered with mist, and occasionally, wails and howls could be heard echoing about, as well as terrifying roars. Gradually, an enormous head became visible, floating there in the mists. Blood oozed out of its eyes, ears, nose, and mouth, and an enormous centipede could be seen burrowing in and out of its eyes.

When the crowds on the outside saw these things, they gasped and stared at the vortex screens in shock.

“Ruins of Immortality! These are the real Ruins of Immortality!!”

“That giant's head is at least ten thousand meters tall!!”

Inside of Ling Yunzi's sleeve, Meng Hao could see everything that was happening outside. He also saw the giant's head, and he couldn't help but feel shocked as they passed it by.

More time passed. The mists grew thicker, and the wailing undulated endlessly. Eventually, a huge vine appeared up ahead, swinging back and forth. Shockingly, there were countless corpses bound up on the vine, corpses that were ancient and shriveled, and yet who possessed magical items and treasures that were related to bags of holding.

Considering that the items still existed after all these years, it showed that... this vine was incredibly mighty, and would tolerate no incursions.

Several days passed, during which time Meng Hao saw countless bizarre things. He saw an enormous ball of fur the size of a planet. He saw a gigantic bleeding eye. He saw an army of cultivators in tattered clothes, walking slowly through the void with blank looks on their faces.

Each of those cultivators was so powerful that Meng Hao found it difficult to breathe.

Most shocking of all, though, was when Meng Hao saw... a ship, floating slowly through the mists. Meng Hao was not unfamiliar with this ship, and when he saw it, his mind trembled. This was the same ship he had seen in the Milky Way Sea, and just like before, an old man sat at the prow!!

Chapter 865: Sixth Demon Sealing Hex!

[/expand]

Seven days went by. Ling Yunzi and the other two old men gradually began to decrease their speed, and looks of concentration appeared on their faces. Although they had made this trip on numerous occasions, every time they did, it was with the utmost caution. These were the Ruins of Immortality, not some other random location. Although not every single step was filled with danger, there were still many shocking things that could fill even them with senses of deadly crisis.

One misstep, and they might end up being buried in this place. Furthermore, this was a trial by fire, so if there were any accidents, they wouldn't be the only ones who died; all of the people stored inside their massive sleeves would go along with them.

If that happened, it would be a huge blow to the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea.

Ling Yunzi and the others stopped in place for a moment to perform some incantations of augury. Then they exchanged glances, and one of them commented, "Are the lives of the Chosen from the great sects really that much more valuable than all the other lives?"

Ling Yunzi shook his head and declined to answer. Whereas the three of them were personally escorting all of the trial by fire competitors, the Chosen from the great sects would simply wait for them to arrive at the ancient Dao Tree. There, a teleportation portal would be set up, and they could go to the place directly.

The teleportation portal would only be able to remain active for the space of about ten breaths of time, and could only handle a volume of about one hundred people. Even that would require a huge expenditure of resources.

That price would be split between the various sects, all to ensure that their Chosen would reach their destination without any complications.

“There are still ten hours left before the entrance appears,” said the old man who carried the Spirit Severing competitors. “Why don’t we rest for a bit?” With that, he sat down cross-legged.

The one who had complained before was the old man carrying the Nascent Soul cultivators. He gave a cold harrumph and looked off into the distance.

“Let’s bring the competitors out and let them take a look around,” said Ling Yunzi. “This ten hour period should be relatively safe.” He swished his sleeve, and the one thousand Dao Seeking cultivators, including Meng Hao, immediately appeared. Many of them gasped as they were finally able to personally see the surroundings. Their minds were clearly shaken, but none of them spoke a single word.

Moments later, the Spirit Severing and Nascent Soul experts appeared in vast groups. They looked around at their surroundings and sharp inhalations of breath could be heard everywhere.

“Do nothing rash, and do not stray too far,” Ling Yunzi said, his voice echoing about. “We are now in the real Ruins of Immortality, and there are many dangers lurking about. Considering the level of your cultivation bases, you would never normally be able to come to a place like this. Since you’re here with us now, take a moment to experience what it feels like. You can consider this one of your rewards.”

Meng Hao took a deep breath as he looked around. They were surrounded by mists, some thin, some thick. Many areas radiated intense pressure. Clearly, there were different areas, some of which were possible for people of greater power to enter, other areas not so much.

The area they occupied contained the weakest pressure of all. Furthermore, the three old men were pushing back, reducing the power by at least half. Even with much of the power being deflected by the three old men, it was still difficult for many of the competitors to hold up.

The majority of the Nascent Soul and Spirit Severing cultivators were meditating cross-legged. The remainder that were not forced to focus fully on fighting back against the pressure, were examining their surroundings. Among the Dao Seeking cultivators, about half were meditating, with the remaining several hundred moving about in the area.

Meng Hao walked ahead until he was about three hundred meters out. There, he stopped. He suddenly had the feeling that the pressure would increase explosively if he proceeded any further. He stood there silently for a moment before smacking his bag of holding to produce a flying sword. He gradually extended it out, and when it went past the three hundred meter mark, cracking sounds could be heard. Fissures spread out across the sword, and after a few breaths of time, it disintegrated into ash.

“Five breaths of time,” he thought, his eyes glittering. The flying sword he had used just now was a Spirit Severing treasure, and yet here, it could only last for five breaths of time.

Shaking his head, Meng Hao began to back away from the three hundred meter mark, when suddenly, a voice echoed into his mind.

“Come... come...”

He stopped in his tracks, and his eyes began to shine with a brilliant light. As he looked out into the Ruins of Immortality, the voice continued to echo in his mind. He turned to look at the people behind him, but apparently, not even Ling Yunzi and the other two could hear what he was hearing. It seemed that only he could detect the voice.

At the same time that the voice echoed out, the ancient Demon Sealing Jade in his bag of holding suddenly began to emanate flickering light.

The Demon Sealing Jade had remained dormant for a very long time, but now it was glowing once again. However, unlike the previous occasions, it did not speak.

The voice from moments before continued to speak.

“League of Demon Sealers... come here... come to me....” As the voice spoke, the mist in front of Meng Hao seemed to weaken and change, as... a path appeared.

Meng Hao’s mind trembled as he looked at the path. He did not walk forward, but rather, began to edge backward. He knew that the level of his cultivation base placed him at the peak of his peers. However, when you considered the Mountain and Sea Realm as a whole, he was merely in the Spirit Realm, which made him very weak.

This path might lead to good fortune, but considering the level of his cultivation base, that good fortune could very well lead to his death.

In the moment that he stepped backward, the voice continued on with even more urgency.

“The League of Demon Sealers.... I am a member too. Come to me, I shall give you good fortune.... I shall give you destiny to step upon the Heavens, to achieve a meteoric rise! You can directly become Immortal!”

The more the voice tried to persuade him, the more Meng Hao backed up. When he had backed up about thirty meters, the mist in front of him suddenly began to churn, as if some incredible power were approaching, heading directly toward Meng Hao.

His face fell, and he began to speed backward. By this time, Ling Yunzi and the others had sensed that something was happening. Faces flickering, the three of them immediately sprung into action, pulling all of the trial by fire competitors back into their sleeves, and at the same time, striding forward to stand next to Meng Hao. By this point, the swirling mists had spread to reveal a figure.

It was a cultivator whose body was in a state of decomposition. His head was half destroyed, and his clothes were tattered. An archaic, rotting aura emanated out from him, and he was surrounded by swirling mists. In his hand, he held a tattered banner, and he stood there, staring listlessly at Ling Yunzi and the others with his one remaining eye.

Ling Yunzi and the other old men stared at the man as if he were a deadly enemy. Their energy surged, and the light of magical techniques began to swirl around them.

“Senior, you have already perished,” said Ling Yunzi. “Ashes to ashes, dust to dust. We of the junior generation are still alive, and are just passing through here. We disturbed your rest, please forgive us. Senior, kindly return from whence you came!”

The half-headed figure slowly raised his right hand and pointed a decomposing finger directly at Meng Hao.

“I... want... him....”

Ling Yunzi’s face fell, as did those of the other two old men.

Breathing heavily, Meng Hao backed up until he was behind the three old men. As he stared at the figure, his heart trembled. It was at this point that he noticed that the half-headed man... had a sword stabbed into his waist.

The sword was pitch black and emanated a freezing aura. However, Meng Hao could also tell that the sword possessed Demon Sealing power. It only took a moment for him to realize that it was the power of a Demon Sealing Hex!

It was at this moment that the ancient Demon Sealing Jade in his bag of holding finally spoke into his mind with its archaic voice.

“Sixth Demon Sealing Hex!”

Ling Yunzi placed his right hand onto his bag of holding. “Senior,” he said, “Please don’t push us too far!”

The half-headed man suddenly looked over at him, and flames leapt up within his single remaining eye. He suddenly lurched forward, the mists surrounding him seething, as if they contained countless vengeful souls, screaming miserably. He waved the banner, and rumbling sounds could be heard as mist poured toward the three old men.

Ling Yunzi’s face flickered and he let out a roar, unhesitatingly slapping his bag of holding to produce a talisman.

It was an ancient talisman that emanated a boundlessly archaic aura. It seemed to have existed through countless years of time. All it depicted was a simple, smiling face. However, as soon as it appeared, the half-headed man stopped in place, and even the incoming mists stopped, seemingly stuck permanently in place, not daring to get any closer.

Ling Yunzi took a deep breath, performed an incantation gesture, and then pointed out. The talisman immediately floated up into midair. At the same time, Ling Yunzi grabbed Meng Hao and then shot backward at top speed. The other two old men also retreated, leaving the talisman floating there in the air.

“I can’t believe we ran into a revenant here. That talisman should hold it in place for twenty hours.” Ling Yunzi frowned and looked over at Meng Hao. “How did you draw its attention?”

Meng Hao smiled wryly, unsure of exactly what to say.

“It probably has nothing to do with him,” said the man carrying the Spirit Severing cultivators, who happened to be from the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite. “The revenants here usually just look for people they think will be suitable to help them to return to life. We’ve run into them before, haven’t we?”

Meng Hao hesitated for a moment, then asked, “Seniors, what is... a revenant?”

“Some ancient cultivators left strands of resentful will behind when they died. Those strands of will exist outside of the natural law of the Mountain and Sea Realm, and continuously attempt to return to life. Those are revenants.”

Meng Hao nodded and looked back at the half-headed man. He had a mind to go and try to retrieve the sword, but he knew that it was impossible to do so. Inwardly, he sighed with regret.

Soon, ten hours had passed, and the surrounding mists were churning. Meng Hao was back in Ling Yunzi’s sleeve, and yet, was still able to see the world outside. Shockingly, off in the distance... was an indescribably large corpse.

It was so huge that Meng Hao could do nothing less than gasp. It seemed larger than a planet, seemingly without end. A cultivator who stood in front of it would be smaller than an ant.

The corpse appeared to be almost like an enormous continent, hanging there in the void.

As Ling Yunzi and the other two old men flew forward, they each produced a magical symbol that caused their bodies to emanate a gray light. They shot toward the huge body, and in the blink of an eye, touched down onto it and then sped forward.

Meng Hao looked on gaping as Ling Yunzi and the other two continued onward for an entire month at an indescribable speed. Despite that, they still had not crossed the entirety of the corpse. Eventually, a tree appeared up ahead.

It was a gargantuan, shocking, ancient tree.

Apparently, the tree was growing directly up from within the corpse, as if it were feeding off of its lood and flesh.

The trunk of the tree stretched high up into the air, until, at a certain point, two huge branches split off in opposite directions, making it look like an enormous fork.

The tree was covered with innumerable leaves, each one of which was fully three hundred meters wide. The leaves did not bend downward, but spread out evenly like platforms.

“We’re here!” said Ling Yunzi. He and the other two came to a stop, then waved their hands, causing all of the competitors to fly out from within their sleeves and land on the tree leaves.

Chapter 866: I Am a God!

The crowds in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were watching on the vortex screens, and could see everything that Ling Yunzi and the others encountered.

That included the decomposing, half-headed man, as well as all the other things lurking in the mists.

Many gasps could be heard from the cultivators in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. For most of them, this was their first time ever seeing the Ruins of Immortality. In previous trials by fire, outsiders were not permitted to see these things, but this time was different. Not only were the prizes astonishing, but for the first time, everyone was able to catch a glimpse of the Ruins of Immortality.

Although it was only a tiny portion, it was still enough to capture the attention of innumerable cultivators.

When they saw the gigantic corpse, cries of shock echoed out in all directions. Then the ancient Dao Tree appeared, and even greater shouts of astonishment could be heard.

“It’s actually... growing on the top of the giant’s corpse!”

“That’s the ancient Dao Tree? What exactly is it? Why is it called a Dao Tree?!”

“That corpse... Heavens! I never imagined that things that huge existed! How is this possible?! If that thing wasn’t dead... who could possibly fight it? It’s... actually a real corpse!”

The faces of the Patriarchs up in the starry sky palace were calm; all of them were familiar with the Ruins of Immortality.

However, they were all wondering what motive the Three Great Daoist Societies had to allow all the crowds on the outside to see.

A huge corpse. An ancient tree.

“The tree leaves are the arenas,” said Ling Yunzi. “The leaves on the left side will be the Nascent Soul battleground. The leaves on the right are for Spirit Severing. As for the central main trunk... that is where the Dao Seeking fights will take place!” As his words echoed out, Meng Hao stood there on one of the leaves on the main trunk, at the bottom level.

All of the other Dao Seeking cultivators were also located on bottom-level leaves. When they looked up, they could see that the branches sticking out from it were arranged in layers, the highest of which was ten levels away.

The higher the level, the fewer the leaves. In fact, at the apex, there was only one golden leaf, which was completely eye catching.

As for the battlegrounds on the left and right, they were also arranged in levels, although instead of climbing straight up, they moved out to the side. Similarly, though, as they reached their ends, the leaves grew sparser, until at the very end of each, was a golden leaf!

Three golden leaves. Those were the limits of the ancient Dao Tree, and the locations where the final matches would be fought.

Even as Ling Yunzi provided his explanation, he and the other two old men performed incantation gestures and produced magical materials which they used to begin to set up teleportation portals on the giant’s corpse beneath the tree.

After the teleportation portals took shape, the three old men performed incantation gestures and pointed out, causing boundless light to shine up. Out in the sects of the Ninth Mountain and Sea, as soon as the light from the teleportation portals rose up, Zhao Yifan, Taiyang Zi, Fan Dong’er, and other Chosen all stepped forward onto the teleportation portals at their locations. Light flashed, and they vanished.

When they reappeared, they were standing atop the giant's corpse in the Ruins of Immortality.

It only took the space of about ten breaths of time for roughly a hundred people from all the sects to arrive. Then, cracking sounds could be heard as the teleportation portals shattered and faded away.

As Fan Dong'er and the others spread out, they looked around with trembling minds. This was apparently their first time coming to this place as well.

From the leaf he stood upon, Meng Hao could see Fan Dong'er, Taiyang Zi, even Sun Hai and others. His eyes flickered and a smile appeared on his face.

Ling Yunzi waved his sleeve, causing the nearly one hundred Chosen to fly out toward tree leaves according to the level of their cultivation base.

Soon, Fan Dong'er and the others were standing on leaves on the lowest level of the tree. As for Fan Dong'er, she wore a white robe, and behind her swirled a globe of white mist. It was very thick, making it impossible to see exactly what was inside.

The leaf she stood upon wasn't very far away from Meng Hao, and he couldn't help but glance over at her. His eye was especially caught by the white mist behind her.

Fan Dong'er noticed him looking at her, and frowned. However, she knew the two of them would soon be fellow disciples of the same sect, so she suppressed her anger and merely glared at him.

Meng Hao quickly looked away, focusing his attention on Zhao Yifan, then Li Ling'er. When he looked at Li Ling'er, he subconsciously... checked out her rear end.

He could still remember how he had spanked her two times, leaving her buttocks uneven.

Li Ling'er glanced at him coolly, then ignored him completely. Feeling somewhat pleased, Meng Hao then looked around until he noticed one particular young man who happened to be looking at him.

When their gazes met, the young man trembled. He was... naturally, Sun Hai.

Sun Hai didn't recognize Meng Hao, but for some reason, when Meng Hao looked at him, it caused him to gasp and be filled with a cold, unsettling feeling.

At first, Meng Hao didn't recognize who the bald-headed youth was. But after a moment, his jaw almost dropped.

"What happened to all his hair?" he thought. "I seem to remember leaving quite a bit behind." It wasn't just Meng Hao who was sizing up these Chosen. Many of the other competitors in the trial by fire were examining them closely.

Not much more time passed before Ling Yunzi's voice was heard once again.

"The arena matches of the Nascent Soul, Spirit Severing, and Dao Seeking, will be completely separate from each other, and shall progress separately. The ancient Dao Tree leaves upon which you stand contain a teleportation function. Not only will it teleport two people onto one leaf to fight, but it will also teleport the winner to the next level!

"The matches will proceed in this fashion all the way until the final battle.

"In the arena matches, life and death are determined by fate. Defeat will result in elimination from the competition. If you utter the words 'I concede,' then you will also be removed from the competition.

"Bear in mind that we are in the Ruins of Immortality, and danger lurks everywhere! Even if some strange things appear on the outside, things which attempt to distract you, or lure you out, you must under no circumstances leave the tree leaves.

"On the tree leaves, you are safe. If you leave them, though... it is impossible to say whether you will make it back alive.

"And now, let the arena matches begin!"

Almost in the same instant that the words left Ling Yunzi's mouth, Meng Hao suddenly cried out loudly.

“Patriarch, wait a moment!”

His voice echoed out, attracting quite a bit of attention from those around him. Ling Yunzi frowned and looked over at Meng Hao. At first he was tempted to ignore him, but after thinking about the expression on Meng Hao’s face when he held the Feng Shui compass aloft, his heart softened.

“Yes, what is it?”

“Patriarch, I wanted to know, the enormous corpse down there, is it a cultivator?” Actually, Meng Hao wasn’t the only person who wanted to know the answer to that question. All of the competitors were wondering the same thing. As for the newly arrived Chosen, they remained silent; they had already asked about the subject when they were in the outside world.

Ling Yunzi remained silent for a moment. He didn’t actually have the sole authority to answer such a question. He looked over at the other two men, and all of them exchanged glances. Then, they produced jade slips which they used to communicate with their sect headquarters, inquiring as to whether they were permitted to respond.

After a moment, Ling Yunzi put his jade slip away and looked back up at Meng Hao.

“This is a God of the Pāramitā!”

After uttering those words, Ling Yunzi didn’t wait for anyone’s reaction. He immediately called out again, “Let the arena matches begin!”

Meng Hao’s mind trembled, and he couldn’t keep himself from taking in a deep breath in response to the answer he had just received. A God....

Actually, all of the trial by fire participants were mentally shaken. However, even as this happened, the world in front of them distorted, and they began to grow blurry. In the blink of an eye, everyone grew clear again, and they were on the next level of leaves.

However instead of being alone on the leaves, each person was now facing an opponent.

Meng Hao found himself looking at a young man who had originally been bursting with power. However, as soon as things grew clear and he saw that he was facing Meng Hao, his face fell.

He was not one of the Chosen from the outside sects, but rather one of the competitors from the trial by fire. Furthermore... he had been on the same altar as the middle-aged man upon whom Meng Hao had vented his anger earlier. He had personally witnessed the entire incident.

Although he felt torn inwardly, his eyes quickly filled with a fierce light. He let out a powerful roar and employed the full power of his cultivation base as he turned into a prismatic beam of light that shot toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao's face was calm as the young man closed in. He raised his right hand and punched out into the air, then spun and began to walk toward the edge of the arena.

Almost in the same moment that he turned, a huge boom could be heard, and blood sprayed from the young man's mouth. Although he had been approaching like a shooting star, in that instant, his light went dim, and he was forced back more than thirty meters, where he coughed up another mouthful of blood. His expression was now dismal, and his face ashen.

He was well aware that Meng Hao had been holding back. The blow just now had been directed at the air in front of him, and had it actually landed on his body, he would not have gotten off as easily as being forced back a bit and only slightly injured.

He took a deep breath, then looked sadly at Meng Hao, clasped hands, and bowed deeply.

"I concede," he said, sounding a bit bitter.

As soon as the words left his mouth, he faded away, returning to the first level of leaves, which indicated that he had been eliminated. As for Meng Hao, he sat down cross-legged at the edge of the arena and looked around at the other matches that were taking place.

He was feeling quite pleased with himself, but as for the cultivators from the Ninth Mountain and Sea watching the arena matches, they were completely shaken by Meng Hao's power.

"One punch... into the air! And he actually injured a peak Dao Seeking cultivator!"

"This Fang Mu hasn't even used any magical techniques! He's just relying on the strength of his fleshly body!"

“No wonder he could stand up to the pressure outside those altars! Such fleshly body strength is extremely rare!”

The first round of the arena matches was a simple thing for Zhao Yifan, as well as the other Chosen. None of them needed more than ten breaths of time to secure victory.

Meng Hao looked around at the other arena locations and identified about ten other people besides the Chosen who were worth paying attention to. Among those, one was the masked young man Li Yan. Another was the cultivator with the mosquitos, and a third was a young boy who was also one of the trial by fire competitors. Although he never spoke, he had made it into the group of one thousand Dao Seeking competitors, and had his own unique capabilities.

In the first round, he attacked viciously, the result being that his opponent was instantly reduced to a bloody pulp.

The fourth person was a garrulous old man who constantly shivered and muttered to himself. His first opponent was a Chosen from the Seven Seas Sect. Strangely, as soon as he appeared in front of the mumbling old man, the Chosen suddenly seemed to go crazy and tried to charge outside of the leaf arena. Were it not for Ling Yunzi immediately intervening to save him, he would have been in great danger.

Of those four people, the one who caused Meng Hao the greatest consternation was not the garrulous old man or Li Yan, but rather, that unprepossessing young boy!

“He has at least thirty percent of the power of a true Immortal!” thought Meng Hao, looking at him closely. Almost in the exact instant that Meng Hao looked at him, the boy turned his head to return the gaze. Their eyes locked over all the various arenas between them, and the boy’s mouth twisted into a vicious smile.

Chapter 867: One Punch!

Other than those four, there were six Chosen who Meng Hao hadn’t seen on Planet South Heaven when all the outside Chosen came. Four were men and two were women. One of the women wore a white mask and a long red robe. When she attacked, a Blood Orchid bloomed around her, indicating that she came from the Church of the Blood Orchid.

The other woman wore garments of five colors, and was not very pretty. She attacked with shocking five elements magic, and even though Meng Hao had previously cultivated a five elements Nascent

Soul, he had the feeling that this woman's skill with the five elements exceeded his own. She was from the Five Colors Sect.

The other four cultivators were all young men. One of them did not personally attack his opponent, but rather, caused a coffin to appear, from within which emerged a corpse. The corpse easily slaughtered the young man's opponent. He was from one of the Five Great Holy Lands, the Paleo-Immortal Mausoleum.

The second young man was bony, with eyes that burned like fire. Like the other young man, he did not personally attack, but instead, simply stared at his opponent, who then burst into flames and then transformed into nothing but ash.

The third young man was handsome and, shockingly, had a third eye on his forehead. It was clearly a Dharma Eye, and it remained closed the entire time. The young man wore a slight smile, and he seemed almost completely harmless, as if he lacked any ability to attack whatsoever. Furthermore, his opponent didn't attack either! The two of them transmitted a few words to each other, and then the opponent knelt down on one knee, looking at the young man with a pious expression, and conceded.

This young man was from the Burning Incense Stick Society.

The last person was a hulking man from the Kunlun Society. He was stalwart, with a powerful fleshly body. He started his match standing there like a mountain. When his opponent attacked, he waved a finger, causing a huge mountain to descend, smashing into his opponent and instantly defeating him. However, he did not kill his opponent.

When Meng Hao saw that, his eyes suddenly shone with the desire to do battle.

As the intense fighting of the first round of arena matches played out, the audiences outside in the Ninth Mountain and Sea closely watched the screens in the three vortexes. Each of those screens was divided into multiple smaller screens which depicted each of the battlegrounds.

In the palace in the starry sky, the various Patriarchs were closely observing to the goings on, and were paying especially close attention to the Chosen from their own sects. They were also watching the cultivators from the other sects. Although most of the Chosen were not particularly powerful, they were the future blazing suns of the various sects.

As long as they did not unexpectedly perish and could mature and grow stronger, they would eventually allow their sects to gain more power and influence.

“This generation has come across the fate of becoming a true immortal; in the Nine Mountains and Seas, every 10,000 years, the true immortality destiny descends, and an entire generation of Chosen always comes out of the woodwork.”

“I wonder which three will last until the end to take first place in their stage!?”

Everyone was watching the fighting, hearts filled with anticipation.

Back in the battleground, Meng Hao’s expression was calm as he sat there cross-legged on the leaf. He looked around at the other arenas, and could see many people looking back at him.

After looking around for a while, Meng Hao had the mind to take a look at the Nascent Soul battles, but unfortunately, it was currently impossible to see the fighting taking place in the other two areas. Finally, he closed his eyes and waited for time to pass.

On the Nascent Soul battleground, Chen Fan’s expression was as gloomy as ever. His attacks appeared to be normal, but his opponent seemed to have been infected by his mood, and as such, was only able to fight with half of the power of his cultivation base.

On the Spirit Severing battleground, the fighting was equally intense.

The first round of arena matches for the Dao Seeking stage was the first to end, after a total of four hours. Half of the competitors were eliminated, and the other half stood on their leaves on the second level, eyes flickering. The leaves beneath their feet began to shine with light that spread out to cover everyone and teleport them to the third layer of leaves.

When he reappeared amidst the flickering light, Meng Hao was facing an old man whose face was covered with dark blotches. Immediately, a murderous aura sprang up, along with shocking energy. The man held a cane in his hand, and as he walked forward, he suddenly realized he was facing Meng Hao, and his pupils constricted.

“Fang Mu!” he thought, and his heart began to pound with unease. He had never imagined that he would end up facing the mighty Fang Mu in the second round. “His fleshly body is incredibly powerful, and his divine sense is incredible. He has a profound cultivation base and attacks without

mercy.... Dammit, why did I have to end up facing him? Although, I might not necessarily be unable to earn a victory. I excel in terms of speed!”

Eyes flickering, the old man turned into a blur as, all of a sudden, nine clones appeared.

The nine clones closed in on Meng Hao, each one coming from a different direction.

Meng Hao stood there, looking around coldly at the incoming figures. His expression was calm as he raised his right hand and once again released one punch. As soon as the punch landed on the ground, he turned and, just as he had in the last battle, began to walk to the edge of the arena.

Behind him, massive booms rang out. His one punch caused a huge vortex to appear, which emanated a shocking gravitational force and intense rumbling. Ten figures immediately began to be sucked in toward the vortex. Nine of them collapsed into pieces, and the old man’s true self coughed up blood. His expression was one of astonishment as he quickly called out that he conceded.

As soon as the words left his mouth, he faded away to reappear back on the first level of leaves. He had been completely defeated.

By that point, Meng Hao had reached the edge of the arena, where he sat down cross-legged and closed his eyes.

Many people in the outside world were paying attention to Meng Hao, and what they saw shocked them.

“One punch again!! It was exactly the same as the first round, except that the old man’s cultivation base was clearly much higher than the guy from the previous fight!”

“This Fang Mu’s fleshly body is so powerful that he can create a vacuum! Maybe his speed truly isn’t that great, but he’s so strong that he doesn’t even need speed! Who could possibly fight back against that one punch!”

“He’s definitely going to get into the top 16. I can’t wait to see him fight against some of those Chosen!!”

The outside world was in an uproar. It didn't take long for the second round of arena matches to end, and the third to begin. Meng Hao appeared on the next level of leaves, where he looked at the glittering lights in front of him and watched his opponent emerge.

This person was no Chosen. Instead, it was the young man with the mosquitos. When he laid eyes on Meng Hao, instead of looking nervous like the previous two opponents, his eyes gleamed with the desire to do battle.

"Fang Mu," he said. "It's my pleasure to be able to fight with you. Finally, I'll be able to see exactly how powerful you are!"

Meng Hao's expression was the same as ever; completely emotionless. What he had been paying attention to this whole time was not the young man himself, but rather his mosquitos.

Before the young man even finished speaking, he waved his hand, causing a shocking cloud of fierce mosquitos to appear. The largest were a meter long, and many were the size of a fist. They spread out in a great cloud as they shot toward Meng Hao.

A buzzing sound could be heard as they closed in. Meng Hao's eyes flickered as he clenched his fist and then punched out.

Just like the previous matches, it was only one punch. Rumbling filled the air and ripples spread out in all directions. At the same time, Meng Hao turned and walked toward the edge of the arena.

Behind him, the shocking ripples slammed into the mosquitoes, causing them to collapse into pieces. The young man's body began to vibrate uncontrollably as he shot backward. Blood sprayed from his mouth, and his expression was one of shock. He hadn't even been able to attack, and yet his cultivation base was suppressed, and he almost felt as if his vital organs were being tossed about.

At the critical moment, even the young man's voice quavered as he cried out, "Concede... I concede!!"

He looked over at Meng Hao with an unprecedented expression of fear. He had been aware that Meng Hao was powerful, but had never imagined that he was THIS powerful!

As the scene played out in front of the eyes of the audience in the outside world, it sent them into tumult. In the first round, one punch. In the second round, also one punch. In the third round, facing up against a powerful opponent, and... also one punch!

“Just... just how powerful is he!?!?”

“He definitely deserves to take first place! With power and confidence like that, he’s basically invincible!”

“I’m guessing that only the Chosen from the great sects can actually fight him!!”

“I wonder who will force him into using two punches!?”

Up in the starry sky palace, the various Patriarchs were nodding in approval. None of them had any reason to deny that among his generation, Meng Hao truly was incredibly powerful!

“He must be using a vibration magic. This Fang Mu isn’t very old, but he’s actually mastered the magic of vibration!”

“That’s a fleshly body technique that can only be learned when the fleshly body has reached a certain level of power. It can be considered very strong within the Spirit Realm. In fact, even in the Immortal Realm, there are only a handful of people who have mastered it!”

Meng Hao’s performance was flashy and eye-catching, making him the center of attention of everyone watching the arena matches. When it came to the Chosen who were participating in the arena matches, they were also paying close attention to Meng Hao. Although their matches ended quickly, none of them were able to finish them with the ease that Meng Hao did.

“Hmph, he’s just gotten lucky. How could he have run into so many weak opponents?! If he had faced off against formidable adversaries like we did, there’s no way he would’ve gotten off so easy!”

“The further along we get, the more powerful the opponents will be. Let’s see exactly how many rounds he can last!”

Discussions like these could be heard as the third round of matches concluded, and the fourth round began. By now, most of the cultivators had been eliminated, and only about a hundred remained.

Each and every one... was incredibly powerful!

Meng Hao stood on the fifth level of leaves as another opponent appeared amidst glittering lights. It was a hulking man who wore a long robe. Ripples spread out as he materialized. This was not the powerful expert from the Kunlun Society, but was a Chosen nonetheless.

He came from the Seven Seas Sect.

In each of the previous rounds, he had torn his opponent to shreds. All of them had died. When walked out into the arena, a cruel smile could be seen on his face, and his eyes shone with a vicious gleam.

“Fang Mu...” he said. “We meet at last. You made quite a show in the past few rounds, but that was only because the people you were up against were weaklings!

“This time, I’ll help you to understand how wide the gap is between a rogue cultivator like you and us Chosen. That gap... will leave you in despair!” The man laughed uproariously, and put on the appearance of being crude and rash. In truth, he was actually being very cautious, and was careful not to let any of his scheming thoughts show on the surface. As he spoke, he began to charge forward, and illusory seawater appeared around him. Seven seas appeared, causing rumbling sounds to fill the air. Simultaneously, a huge sea dragon materialized and roared toward Meng Hao.

As of this moment, many people among the audiences outside in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were watching Meng Hao in the arena. When they saw the Chosen from the Seven Seas Sect attacking Meng Hao, many of them sighed.

“Fang Mu will definitely be incapable of pulling off something amazing with a single punch like before.”

“Hmph. Going up against weaklings makes it easy to seem powerful. But now that he’s fighting a Chosen, he’ll have a tough time remaining calm. Even if he wins, this battle is definitely going to be like a fierce struggle between a tiger and a dragon.”

“I’ve heard that the Seven Seas Sect’s Yun Tianhe has a bizarre energy. After combining that energy with the cultivation base, it create a power that enables him to fight a false Immortal without being at a disadvantage.”

The discussions in the outside world could not be heard in the arenas. At the same time, the hulking man from the Seven Seas Sect let out a powerful roar as he closed in on Meng Hao. Meng Hao’s expression was as calm as ever as, just the same as before, he punched one time!

Chapter 868: Junior Blood Immortal!

“Looking to die!?” said the hulking man with a malicious grin. He was clearly not pleased with Meng Hao’s plan to end the fight with one punch. Sneering inwardly, he redoubled the power he was putting into his attack, and also unleashed a forbidden technique of his sect, which further increased its power by thirty percent.

He didn’t just want to win, he wanted to kill his opponent, and he seemed very excited at the prospect of ending the life of the first place competitor who was also a future Conclave disciple of the Nine Seas God World.

Killing someone in an arena match was nothing anyone could complain about, so there was little danger of repercussions. His sect would reward him, and even more importantly, protect him.

What he saw was a chance to make great advancement with little effort, right there in front of him.

“DIE!” he roared, his eyes bursting with a murderous look as he caused the Seven Seas Dragon to suddenly grow another vicious head, which also snapped toward Meng Hao.

It was at this point that Meng Hao’s fist connected with the dragon.

It was only one punch, but that punch slammed into the dragon with an enormous boom. A violent tremor ran through it, and then its first head cracked and exploded. The second head also exploded, and then, bit by bit, its body.

The seven seas rumbled briefly and then collapsed, vanishing in the blink of an eye, as if they had never been there to begin with. At this point, Meng Hao’s fist slammed into the hulking man’s chest.

The big man's eyes went wide as he looked at Meng Hao, and his face twisted. Meng Hao's expression was calm as he pulled his hand back and walked off to the edge of the arena.

In the instant he turned, blood sprayed from the hulking man's mouth. Fissures spread out from the point of impact on his chest, and in the blink of an eye, they had covered his entire body. A look of disbelief could be seen on his face, and he opened his mouth to say something. Before any words could come out, though, he exploded.

As the haze of blood and gore blasted out, Meng Hao reached the edge of the arena and sat down cross-legged. The entire time, only one, placid expression could be seen on his face. He reached up to wipe a drop of blood off of his cheek, then closed his eyes.

Gasps could be heard from the audiences outside in the Ninth Mountain and Sea as they watched Meng Hao in terrified shock.

“That was still... just one punch!!”

“Heavens! Just exactly how powerful is this Fang Mu!? That Chosen from the Seven Seas Sect could match up to a false Immortal, and yet he collapsed from a single punch! Fang Mu hasn't even punched two times yet.”

“Four matches, and he only punched one time each! Fang Mu is way too powerful!!”

“He's already in the top 100, with only four punches!!”

Even the eyes of the Patriarchs in the starry sky palace went wide.

Meng Hao was the focus of the attention of all the Chosen from the various sects, and was now viewed by most of them as a major adversary. Even Zhao Yifan was wondering whether or not he could beat the Seven Seas Sect's Chosen with only one punch. Of course, if he used a sword, he was confident he could.

Rumbling booms continued to echo out as the fourth round of arena matches proceeded. There was another battle that was particularly eye-catching. In fact, after Meng Hao's match ended, most eyes among the audiences in the Ninth Mountain and Sea turned to watch it.

That battle was the match being fought by a disciple from the Holy Land of Mount Sun, the illustrious Taiyang Zi!

His body was surrounded by boundless light, making him look almost like a sun. His opponent was a boy, the same competitor Meng Hao had noticed earlier, and had been paying special attention to.

From what Meng Hao could tell, he possessed at least thirty percent of the power of a true Immortal.

When the battle started, most of the spectators were confident that Taiyang Zi would come out victorious. And yet, contrary to all speculations, he actually lost!

Furthermore, it was an incredible defeat. If he hadn't uttered the words 'I concede,' then he would almost certainly have died. The boy's magic caused a bloody glow to emanate out, and it seemed incredibly bloodthirsty. The sight of it caused quite a stir among the crowds, and many of the cultivators participating in the arena matches were shocked.

"Junior Blood Immortal! That was one of the names that came up in the trial by fire!"

"He actually defeated Taiyang Zi!"

"He's making his rise to the top!!"

While the outside audiences were discussing the matter, Meng Hao looked over at the boy to find him looking back with killing intent flickering in his eyes.

Two hours later, the fourth round of matches ended. There were now only a bit over sixty people left in the competition. The next round... would determine the top 32!

From more than a thousand people, 32 would move on! One could imagine that even if there were a weak person among that number who had happened to overcome more powerful people by chance, then that luck could be considered an aspect of their power.

"The top 32 are about to be determined!"

“Even some of the top Chosen from the great sects were defeated in the previous fights. I wonder who will make it to the top 32!”

While the outside audiences buzzed, Ling Yunzi stood below the ancient Dao Tree and glanced over the more than sixty competitors who remained.

“In the Dao Seeking arena matches,” he announced, “the most powerful people will form the top 32. Unfortunately, you have three too many people to make all the matches even. Therefore, some of you will be fighting more than one battle to make it into the top 32. As for who those people are, only the Heavens know. It will all be up to the Dao Tree’s teleportation.

“You will have four hours to rest, after which the battles to determine the top 32 will begin!”

During those four hours, Meng Hao sat there cross-legged, meditating. He could sense that there were many people watching him, but he didn’t open his eyes. Considering the level of his cultivation base, he was clearly at the pinnacle of the competitors in the arena matches. Were it not for the Immortal jades and the precious treasures, he would never have participated.

However, now that he was here, there were a few people who had attracted his interest. Unfortunately, he had yet to face them as opponents.

Four hours later, glittering light covered the leaves of the Dao Tree, teleporting Meng Hao and all the remaining contestants up to the next level of leaves. From within the glittering light in front of Meng Hao, a young woman stepped out.

She wore a blood-colored robe, and a white mask. This was the Chosen from the Church of the Blood Orchid, and as soon as she caught sight of Meng Hao, she stopped in her tracks. However, it took only a moment for her to emanate a powerful will to fight.

The intensity of that will caused Meng Hao’s eyes to shine with a fierce glow.

“Fellow Daoist Fang,” she said, her words echoing out coldly from behind her mask, “please give me some fighting tips!” Even as she spoke, she performed an incantation gesture with her right hand, causing a Blood Orchid to appear in front of her. As the flower swayed back and forth, it began to grow rapidly. Rumbling sounds could be heard as, in the blink of an eye, it grew to a size of thirty meters.

It had a thick trunk, blood-colored petals, and looked both extremely imposing and visually stunning. At the same time, the flower twitched, causing branches to shoot toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao stepped forward, clenched his fist, and sent out a single punch.

As of this moment, everyone in the outside world was watching as the punch caused a huge vortex to appear. Rumbling sounds spread out, causing the air to vibrate, and everything else to shake violently.

The incoming Blood Orchid branches twisted and then completely collapsed. However, in that moment, the Blood Orchid's petals spread wide as it bloomed. A drop of blood emerged that flew back to land on the forehead of the young woman's mask. Radiating an intense aura, the young woman then flickered as she shot toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao stood in place, neither retreating nor advancing. However, at the same time, he punched a second time.

This second punch caused the air to ripple, and a massive force to explode out and sweep across the young woman. Her body trembled, and she was about to unleash a divine ability when an intense pressure crushed down onto her cultivation base. In the blink of an eye, she completely lost any ability to rotate her cultivation base, which left her not only completely surprised, but also incapable of avoiding the punch that slammed into her.

A boom could be heard. Beneath the mask, blood spurted from the young woman's mouth, and she staggered backward a full thirty meters, after which she looked up at Meng Hao, panting.

"You're no match for me," Meng Hao said coolly.

The young woman was silent for a moment, after which she chuckled bitterly and nodded.

"I concede," she said, and then vanished. When she reappeared, she was back on the first layer of leaves.

Meng Hao had won once again, but before the audiences outside could comment, light began to glitter on the tree leaf again, and... another person emerged!

It was a boy, none other than the same boy who had just defeated Taiyang Zi. Junior Blood Immortal!

His appearance on the scene instantly sent the audience into tumult.

“Fang Mu is one of the people who has to fight twice!!”

“There were three extra people in the competition, so some people have to fight more than once to get into the top 32. I never thought that Fang Mu would be one of them!”

“This is going to be one intense battle! Fang Mu versus Junior Blood Immortal! I wonder who will be strongest!?!?”

Junior Blood Immortal emerged slowly, and when he saw Meng Hao, his mouth twisted into a vicious grin. Killing intent flickered in his eyes.

“So, we meet at last!” he said in a raspy voice, licking his lips. A shocking red glow could be seen in his eyes as he stared at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao looked the boy over. He knew that he attacked with bizarre ferocity, and had reduced all of his opponents to pools of putrid blood, with the exception of Taiyang Zi.

Contrary to what one might expect, the boy had not made much of an impression during the ten stages of the trial by fire. He had achieved just enough to make it into the top 1,000. Clearly, he had been holding back in virtually all aspects.

Meng Hao’s expression was calm, and he said nothing. He merely looked indifferently at the boy.

When their gazes met, roaring sounds filled both of their minds as their divine senses made contact with each other. The boy’s eyes filled with surprise. He knew his opponent was powerful, and yet, still remained fully confident in himself. Taking advantage of the rumbling caused by the divine sense, he charged toward Meng Hao, raising his right hand to perform an incantation gesture. Bloody light flickered up, and in the blink of an eye, a blood-colored bottle gourd appeared, rotating as it sped through the air toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao's expression was the same as ever as he took a step forward. In that instant, the entire arena match field began to quake, and a wind began to swirl around Meng Hao.

"This divine ability of mine will cause all of the blood in your body to boil and turn into a putrid sludge!" The Junior Blood Immortal's voice was now shrill as he called out. In the blink of an eye, the blood-colored bottle gourd began to exert an incredible gravitational force, as if it wanted to suck Meng Hao inside of it.

Meng Hao snorted coldly. He did not level any punches; this Junior Blood Immortal had a bizarre cultivation base, and Meng Hao would not take him lightly. The wind swirling around him quickly transformed into a violent tempest that shot forward. At the same time, his body transformed into a black vulture, which flapped its wings, charging through the gravitational force to appear directly in front of the boy, where it slashed out with claws vicious enough to shatter stone and metal.

Chapter 869: Top 32!

The boy's expression flickered, and blue veins popped out on his forehead as he howled at the incoming vulture. Sound waves rippled out that seemed to wish to shatter the air. The boy's expression was vicious as he raised both hands up, causing a sea of blood to appear and surge out toward Meng Hao.

Booms rang out as the two of them fought back and forth in midair. At one point, the boy let out a shrill cry, causing the sea of blood to turn into a blood-colored vortex that tried to suck Meng Hao in.

Meng Hao waved his hand, causing numerous mountains to appear, which then linked together to form a mountain range. However, thanks to the black feather, that mountain range actually looked like a huge river, which then surged in counterattack against the blood-colored vortex. The vortex was crushed as easily as dried twigs, shattering into pieces as vulture-form Meng Hao once again slashed through the air, his claws extended toward the boy's torso.

Boom!

Blood sprayed from the boy's mouth as a huge hole was ripped into his chest. He immediately shot backward in retreat, biting the tip of his tongue and spitting out some blood, which twisted in the air to become ten blood drops. Each drop immediately began to expand, turning into ten seas of blood that spread out to cover everything.

“Ten Seas, Blood Slaughter!” roared the boy. Meng Hao’s face was calm, and he didn’t retreat. Instead, he advanced, an aura of invincibility exploding out of him. As he faced the ten seas of blood, he clenched his hand into a fist and punched out into the air. Then, he punched again.

Two mere punches did not seem capable of fighting back against the ten roaring seas of blood. However, the boy’s face flickered as he realized that something didn’t seem quite right about the two blows, although he wasn’t sure what.

In the blink of an eye, and before he had any time to react, Meng Hao attacked a total of nine times. He didn’t even seem to be paying attention to the seas of blood that surrounded him, but instead, was punching directly forward.

Nine punches, each one more shocking than the one before.

This was... a Daoist magic! Nine Heavens Destruction!

As soon as the ninth punch exploded out, the boy’s face fell. His pupils constricted as he retreated at top speed. At the same time, a massive boom echoed out, so powerful that cultivators in the surrounding arena matches heard it and were shocked.

A gigantic vortex surged out as a result of the nine punches. The blood seas were completely incapable of doing anything except be sucked up by the vortex. As for Meng Hao, he stood next to the vortex, his expression cold as he watched the boy fleeing. Then he raised his hand and stretched it out in a grasping motion.

Star Plucking Magic!

BOOM!

Blood sprayed from the boy’s mouth. An expression of astonishment covered his face as he was dragged back toward Meng Hao, his body completely beyond his own control. In the blink of an eye, he was directly in front of Meng Hao, and was close enough that he could even see the cold look in Meng Hao’s eyes.

“You’re looking to die!” howled the boy, his eyes bright red. Suddenly, his skin turned crimson, and black mist began to float up from the top of his head. Shockingly, an enormous image began to form above him.

It was a gigantic leech, covered with scales, that emanated an intense pressure. As soon as the cultivators of the Ninth Mountain and Sea saw it, their faces flickered with shock.

“Blood Leech Grand Magic!!”

“That’s a forbidden magic! That boy’s actually using a forbidden magic!”

In the starry sky palace, the various Patriarchs were looking on with strange gleams in their eyes.

“That boy has remained undercover this entire time. Considering he cultivates a vicious magic like that, it’s little wonder he could defeat Taiyang Zi!”

“However, Saint Blood Leech was exterminated years ago by the Three Great Daoist Societies. Even if some of his Divine Clones survived, they wouldn’t be able to do this alone! It seems this boy must have gotten his hands on one of them. Although it’s only the first form of the Blood Leech Grand Magic, Fang Mu is still in grave danger.”

“According to legend, the only thing that can restrain this magic is the Dao of the Blood Demon. Either that, or an incredibly powerful cultivation base.”

Back in the arena, a vicious expression could be seen on the boy’s face. This was his trump card, which he had intended to save for someone in the top 4. However, he was now forced into a corner, and had no other choice. His desire to kill Meng Hao now grew even stronger.

“Killing you won’t be a waste of my grand magic,” said the boy with a hideous grin. “Considering your reputation, slaying you will make me famous!” The enormous illusory Blood Leech opened its mouth, revealing countless sharp teeth as it pounced toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao frowned slightly. This leech left him feeling as if his blood were unstable, and that it would burst out from inside of him at any moment. He snorted coldly, and rumbling filled the air as his Dharma Idol appeared behind him.

Because of the transformative powers of the black feather, the Dharma Idol now looked exactly like Fang Mu. It was three hundred meters tall, and emanated boundless magical light. As soon as it appeared, it stepped forward and punched toward the enormous leech.

A boom could be heard, and the boy's face fell. Blood spurted out all over his body as he tumbled backward. The enormous illusory leech trembled, seemingly on the verge of collapsing to pieces.

"I refuse to back down! Fang Mu, DIE!!" The boy howled as countless rips and tears appeared all over his body. At the same time, the image of the leech shattered, transforming into innumerable fragments that shot toward the boy and fused into him. In the next moment, the boy suddenly exploded.

In that moment of explosion, the boy's flesh and blood transformed into numerous blood-colored leeches, a vast cloud of nearly a thousand. Buzzing could be heard as they shot toward Meng Hao. In addition to the leeches, a bloody mist spread out in all directions, making it impossible for onlookers to see what was happening clearly.

This new development caused great shock among the onlookers in the outside world. Even the Patriarchs in the starry sky palace were surprised.

"The second form!"

"I can't believe this boy has cultivated the Blood Leech Grand Magic all the way to the second form!"

Not even the Patriarchs in the starry sky palace could see what was happening inside the red mist. Were this some other location, nothing could block their divine sense. However, these were the Ruins of Immortality, so they could only watch with their eyes, not with their divine sense.

Even Ling Yunzi and the other two old men couldn't do anything but watch. Their faces flickered as they considered the danger Meng Hao was in.

The outside world was in tumult.

"Don't tell me Fang Mu is going to perish!"

What the people on the outside couldn't see was that Meng Hao was standing in the middle of the bloody mist, his body glowing with red light as he stared coldly at the more than one thousand incoming Blood Leeches. The leeches were now trembling in terror.

The boy's quivering divine sense emanated out from the leeches.

“Blood... Blood Demon Grand Magic? Spare me, Fellow Daoist Fang, spare me....”

Meng Hao ignored him. After sweeping his own divine sense across the leeches, he exercised a bit of will, and booms could be heard as one leech after another began to explode. All of them transformed into nothing more than drifting ash.

As the bloody mist faded away, Meng Hao walked calmly over to the edge of the arena and sat down cross-legged.

The outside world was in an uproar.

“That boy's grand magic was actually defeated!”

“There were clearly more than a thousand leeches just a moment ago. Then that red mist covered everything over, and we couldn't see anything. How exactly did Fang Mu secure victory!?”

“Junior Blood Immortal defeated Taiyang Zi, and then Fang Mu defeated Junior Blood Immortal! Fang Mu... is invincible!!”

The outside crowds were astonished, and the Patriarchs inside the palace were frowning. They were all looking at Meng Hao with thoughtful expressions.

They had been unable to see what had happened inside the red mist, but they knew that the second form of the Blood Leech Grand Magic was incredibly difficult to deal with. The fact that it had been defeated so quickly was quite puzzling to them.

As everyone pondered these matters, the old man from the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite spoke up.

“Perhaps the boy's version of the second form wasn't stable, and he accidentally self-destructed,” he said slowly, his voice echoing about.

This was the only answer that made sense. After all, the second form of the Blood Leech Grand Magic was very difficult to cultivate successfully.

Back in the arena, Meng Hao sat there calmly. His battle with the boy just now had caused quite a bit of shock amongst the other competitors, especially the Chosen. The boy had just defeated Taiyang Zi, so the fact that Meng Hao had ended up killing him caused even more attention to be sent his way.

The Chosen had been quite shocked just to see the Blood Leech Grand Magic; what had played out after that left them filled with a sense of mystery.

Zhao Yifan's eyes flickered, and his desire to fight grew stronger as he looked over at Meng Hao. He said nothing, but the look flickering in his eyes grew even more intense.

Fan Dong'er frowned. On the one hand, she felt some mysterious and unexplainable loathing toward Meng Hao, but on the other hand, she had to admit that he was definitely on her level.

Li Ling'er and Sun Hai also looked over at him. Compared to Li Ling'er, Sun Hai's feelings were far more intense; to him, looking at Meng Hao kept causing him to think about his nightmarish experience on Planet South Heaven.

The other matches proceeded along. Now that Meng Hao's battle was over, there was another intense match that drew quite a bit of attention. That was the masked young man, Li Yan, who was fighting the emaciated youth from the Bones of the Flamedevil.

The youth attacked with a monstrous sea of flames, and fire burned within his eyes. As for Li Yan, the fighting had reached the point where he had finally removed his mask, revealing a scar-covered face, and eyes that brimmed with the desire to do battle. They fought with shocking attacks until Li Yan finally ran out of power. However, the Chosen from the Bones of the Flamedevil was also seriously injured.

Because of Li Yan's defeat, Meng Hao now had a much better idea of exactly how powerful he was.

The crowds in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were sighing.

“What a pity. It seems Li Yan isn’t strong enough to make it into the top 32. However, this was a battle against Chen Hao from the Bones of the Flamedevil, and he’s incredible. Even though Li Yan lost, he still managed to seriously injure Chen Hao.”

“You can only chalk it up to bad luck. At least he can feel proud in defeat!”

“I wonder how many competitors from the trial by fire will be left in the end. Will the first place spot for the stages of the Nascent Soul, Spirit Severing, and Dao Seeking belong to them, or to the Chosen?!”

In the palace among the stars, the Patriarchs were watching the various battles thoughtfully, but their expressions revealed nothing about what they were thinking.

In contrast, bets were already being placed in the outside world regarding who would make it into the top 8.

Soon, this round of matches was over. The extra three people were eliminated, along with half of the other participants, leaving 32 competitors behind!

These 32 were incredibly powerful cultivators!

Chapter 870: The Fiends Descend!

“Spend the next day in rest and recovery,” said Ling Yunzi. “After that, the top 16 will be selected!” Meng Hao and the others among the top 32 were now getting ever closer to the top of the main trunk of the ancient Dao Tree. Currently, they began to rest and prepare for the battles to get into the top 16.

By now, the battles to select the top 32 had already begun for the Nascent Soul and Spirit Severing stages. From Meng Hao’s position up above, he could finally see Chen Fan down in the Nascent Soul arena matches.

Although Chen Fan was currently fighting against a Nascent Soul cultivator like himself, the level of difficulty to get into the top 32 was extreme.

Nevertheless, he was still enduring. His sword strikes had gained an additional sharpness which, combined with his gloomy demeanor, caused shock to fill the heart of his opponent.

Chen Fan had long since drawn the notice of quite a few sects. His sword contained a Domain, even though he himself was only in the Nascent Soul stage. Someone like that was certain to make stunning accomplishments in the future.

One of the Three Churches and Six Sects, the Solitary Sword Pavilion, which was somewhat related to the Solitary Sword Sect, was especially interested in Chen Fan. They were actually the first to take note of him.

The day passed by quickly, and in the end, Chen Fan made it into the top 32.

As for Meng Hao, he began to fight for his spot in the top 16!

As the battle began, glittering light spread out, and they moved closer to the top of the tree. Meng Hao's opponent was another Chosen!

It was the young woman from the Five Colors Sect, who wore robes that were a mixture of five colors. Meng Hao had been paying attention to her in previous battles, and knew that she had astonishing skill in five elements magic.

This young woman was much more cautious than Meng Hao; once she saw who her opponent was, her heart began to thump. Of the handful of people she truly feared in the arena matches, Meng Hao was one of them.

After she and Meng Hao clasped hands to each other, the young woman took the initiative, performing a double-handed incantation, immediately unleashing metal, wood, water, fire and earth, all five elements. They materialized into a massive sea, a huge battleship, a blazing sun, and an enormous clay golem that wielded a golden greatsword, all of which shot toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao's eyes gleamed with the light of anticipation. Body flickering, he waved his hand, causing a Violet Sea to descend, which was his water totem. Then the Golden Crow appeared, his metal totem. After that were his wood, fire, and earth totems. Shockingly, five elements fought against five elements.

The clash caused wild colors to flash about, and rumbling to fill the air. The audiences in the outside world were looking on with rapt attention.

In the arena, Meng Hao and the young woman fought back and forth in midair. Metal, wood, water, fire, and earth, the five elements, were unleashed amidst rumbling booms. In a short time, they had exchanged several dozen attacks, but throughout it all Meng Hao never went all out. Rather, he merely relied on the five elements as the avenue of attack while facing off against the woman.

He was using this fight to strengthen his five elements magic. Considering that the young woman was even more skilled than Meng Hao in the use of the five elements, this match gave those watching it the feeling that it was two disciples from the Five Colors Sect who were fighting.

In fact, the disciples from that very sect were somewhat confused, and watched in shock as the battle unfolded.

“Fang Mu actually excels in five elements magic as well!!”

“This is unbelievable! Although many people can use five elements magic to some degree, no one can compare to the Five Colors Sect. And yet, Fang Mu is actually evenly matched with Han Mei!”

There were sixteen arenas with thirty-two people fighting in them; no one had secured victory as of yet. It was at this point that a black wind rose up within the Ruins of Immortality. Not even the enormous corpse beneath the ancient Dao Tree could do anything to prevent its arrival. It swept out, appearing directly above the huge tree. Inside of the black wind, a pair of white eyes could be seen, which stared down at the crowds of people fighting down below.

The instant the black wind appeared, the faces of Ling Yunzi and the other two old men flickered. It wasn't just them; the crowds out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were also shocked.

Most nervous of all were the Patriarchs in the starry sky palace. They all rose to their feet, even the old men from the Three Great Daoist Societies, their eyes widening in response to the sudden appearance of the black wind.

“The ancient Dao Tree was personally planted by the Paragons, and contains a bit of the Paragons' will,” said the Patriarch from the Nine Seas God World. “They will be safe as long as they stay on the tree.”

By now, all of the fighters on the Dao Tree had seen the Black Wind, and their faces flickered. Ling Yunzi and the other two old men took deep breaths, and then Ling Yunzi's voice rang out.

“You must not leave the leaves of the tree! As long as you remain on the leaves you will be in no danger!”

Almost in the same instant that Ling Yunzi’s words could be heard, a scream rang out from off in the distance, a sound so piercing it seemed capable of shredding iron or rock. It echoed about, and to the people on the tree it merely gave them a twinge of pain in their ears, inflicting not even a minor hindrance to them. However, Ling Yunzi and the other two old men coughed up blood and, faces falling, quickly retreated as close as possible to the tree.

In that same moment, an enormous eyeball began to descend from up above. It was thoroughly bloodshot, and as it neared, the veins of blood within the eye began to extend themselves and whip around. Suddenly, a shrill voice echoed out.

“Who! Who plucked out my right eye!?!?”

“My right eye! Get back here, come back....”

As the sound echoed about, the crowds on the Dao Tree coughed up blood. Thankfully, a bright glow spread out from the Dao Tree, ensuring that there were no deaths, only injuries.

The black wind and the eye merely milled about outside the Dao Tree, apparently in dread of it. However, after a moment, the black wind seemed to lose patience. A shrill shriek could be heard as an enormous, decomposing roc flew out from inside. It was shockingly large, and as it flew out, its sharp talons slashed out toward the Dao Tree.

Before it could get very close, brilliant light spread out from the Dao Tree, causing the roc to let out a miserable shriek and fall back. However, it did not leave. Instead, it continued to loiter outside of the Dao Tree, its eyes radiating an intense aura of death and savagery.

Considering that was all that happened, Meng Hao, although shocked, didn’t pay very close attention to the matter. However, just when he was about to resume fighting with the young woman, another figure approached from off in the distance.

It was a man with half a head, his body surrounded by swirling black mist. He held a banner in his hand, and a sword had been plunged into his side. The grievous wound that had taken off half of his head did not appear to have been inflicted while alive, but rather as if some creature had bitten it off after he was already dead. Instead, the fatal blow that killed him was apparently delivered by the sword that was still stuck into his side.

He approached slowly, his one remaining eye sweeping over the crowds until it finally came to rest on Meng Hao. Then, he began to head directly toward him.

When Ling Yunzi and the others saw the man, their faces fell. Meng Hao's eyes flickered.

It was at this moment that the young woman from the Five Colors Sect suddenly performed an incantation gesture and attacked. Her five elements magic caused five-colored light to blaze up, transforming into a five-colored sealing mark that rotated rapidly as it shot through the air toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao frowned. He was no longer interested in fighting, so he punched out with his right hand, simultaneously causing his Dharma Idol to appear. Intense energy surged out, and a boom could be heard as the five-colored sealing mark shattered. The young woman's face fell, and blood spurted from her mouth.

It was in this moment that the half-headed man waved his right hand, causing the banner in his hand to unfurl. A black mist appeared, which transformed into a huge vortex. At the same time, he pointed toward Meng Hao.

“Come... come... come....” His voice was archaic, as if it had originated in ancient times. As the voice echoed out, an enormous gravitational force exploded out and enveloped the tree leaf Meng Hao was on. Meng Hao's face flickered, and he immediately dropped to the surface of the leaf. However, the face of the young woman from the Five Colors Sect fell as she was involuntarily swept up into the air. In the blink of an eye, she appeared to be on the verge of... flying completely away from the leaf.

Everyone looked on as it happened, but none of them were able to do anything to come to her aid. Ling Yunzi and the others stared with wide eyes, but could do nothing to help.

The crowds watching in the Ninth Mountain and Sea observed the scene with wide eyes, and many gasps could be heard.

In the starry sky palace, the Matriarch from the Five Colors Sect watched with an expression of unprecedented anxiety. The young woman participating in the arena matches was not a Chosen of the sect, but one of her direct bloodline descendants.

“Save me!” the girl cried in shrill alarm. She was now flying through the air toward the edge of the leaf, and was just about to be sucked outside. She could see the terrifying roc inside the black wind nearby, opening its decomposing mouth. She could also see the eyeball, with the countless veins stretching out from it.

Meng Hao’s eyes glittered, and he suddenly extended his hand toward the girl and made a grabbing motion. The Star Plucking Magic was unleashed as he grabbed onto her and began to pull her back. However, the suction force was too strong, and all Meng Hao could do was slow her down a bit.

“Hurry up and concede!” he growled.

The young woman suddenly seemed to come to her senses, and urgently cried out, “I concede!!”

As soon as the two words left her mouth, and just as she was about to be sucked outside, glittering light surrounded her and she vanished. When she reappeared, she was back down on the first layer of leaves, badly shaken and her face ashen. She looked up toward Meng Hao with an expression of deep gratitude.

Meng Hao heaved a sigh of relief, then sat down cross-legged, looking out coldly at the half-headed man outside of the Dao Tree.

Everyone else who had been watching also sighed in relief. Ling Yunzi looked over at Meng Hao with even more admiration than before. Even he hadn’t thought of using the words ‘I concede’ to get out of danger.

Everyone out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea was completely surprised by everything that had happened. They were especially shocked by how quickly Meng Hao had reacted. To them, it was evidence of incredible quick thinking and resourcefulness.

“That’s right! All she had to do was concede, and then she was teleported out. It took a moment, but that was definitely the simplest method. How come I didn’t think of that!?”

“This Fang Mu is extremely quick-witted to come up with a plan like that in such a situation!”

Up in the palace in the sky, the Matriarch from the Five Colors Sect took a deep breath and then glanced at Meng Hao on the vortex screen. Her expression was one of gratitude; she was not the

type of person who liked to owe favors to others, so this was a kindness she would be sure to repay in the future.

“The arena matches will now continue,” said Ling Yunzi from his position beneath the Dao Tree.

“All of you must remember to never step foot outside of the arena. If any situation arises similar to what has just occurred, it would be much better to concede than to die.” Ling Yunzi sighed.

Although he was aware of why the Three Great Daoist Societies had chosen this place to hold the arena matches, the dangers of the area made it such that those in the Spirit Realm really should not be here.