

A Demoness 191

Chapter 191: Nothing But Ants Under the Primordial Heavenly Blade

Ye Ji fell into the endless abyss. Jiang Hao watched her fall.

He didn't manage to get her storage treasure. The fog hadn't dissipated, but the old, white-haired man appeared by his side.

"Did you push your senior sister down?" He sounded surprised.

Jiang Hao turned to look at the old, white-haired man and briefly considered whether to push him down as well. He brushed off the idea. It wasn't the right time.

He still needed the two men to break the formations. If brute force didn't work, he would have to give up on the Misfortune Pearl. He felt a little regretful thinking about it.

"I was just protecting myself," he said softly.

"I didn't expect that you could beat a Golden Core Realm cultivator. Although she was seriously injured, I doubt she would have fallen at your hands," said the old, white-haired man in confusion.

The mist finally dispersed. This mist could hinder perception and vision. So, it might have been a special treasure that must have helped Jiang Hao.

The old, white-haired man hadn't been able to see what was going on between Jiang Hao and Ye Ji. He had thought Jiang Hao was in danger and had approached to help.

He never expected to find Jiang Hao unharmed while facing someone in the Golden Core Realm.

“You really think I might not have any hidden cards up my sleeve?” asked Jiang Hao as he looked at the old, white-haired man.

“I do have that feeling now... I won’t underestimate you. But you better be careful. For now, we can only let you go up and get that... thing. However, before you do, tell us what Yan Hua told you,” said the old, white-haired man.

“You’ll have to pray for more luck,” said Jiang Hao.

The old, white-haired man returned to the other side and continued to break the formations. This time, he was more cautious.

“Be cautious of Jiang Hao. He definitely hides some secrets,” he whispered to his companion.

The old man with a goatee smiled. “You’re at the early stage of the Primordial

Spirit Realm, while he is only at the late stage of the Foundation Establishment Realm. Even if he has secrets, is it worth being cautious about? If you’re worried, just cripple him. No need to be so worried.”

“Not yet,” whispered the old, white-haired man. “When he makes a move, don’t give him time to react. One powerful strike is enough to injure him and avoid complications.”

The old man with a goatee was astonished. Was it really necessary to be so cautious? Wasn’t it better to attack when Jiang Hao was relaxed? Why did they have to reduce themselves to being so calculative and cautious against someone in the late stage of the Foundation Establishment Realm?

However, he didn’t argue. He just nodded. “Whatever... I don’t mind.”

They were going to make a move one way or another. So, it didn’t matter when they did it.

Jiang Hao continued to break the formations using brute force. He wondered if he had to break them completely before going up.

He observed his surroundings and noticed that the formations were connected like a chain. The latter parts were easier to break once the earlier parts were broken through. The formations were stronger when they were attached to the others.

Upon careful observation, he found that the formations were preventing the power of the Misfortune Pearl from overflowing.

Will bad luck affect everyone once the formations are broken?' wondered Jiang Hao. 'I wonder if the Hong Meng Heart Sutra will be enough to resist it...'

Being plagued by misfortune was terrible. Jiang Hao decided to leave immediately if he sensed something. He didn't care if the two men noticed anything.

After a long time, Jiang Hao felt that the longer he stayed, the greater the influence of the red light would be.

Fortunately, he had the protection of the Hong Meng Heart Sutra. Otherwise, he would have been affected a lot by the Misfortune Pearl.

As for the two from the Heavenly Saint Sect, they had already been affected, but they were still unaware.

If they were outside, they might notice something, but breaking the formation was like inhaling poison with every breath. It was hard to detect, but they were already being poisoned.

Jiang Hao remained silent and thought about the most opportune moment to launch an attack.

'If they are on guard against me, would they try to attack me? If so, when would be the best time?' thought Jiang Hao. 'Should I attack when all the formations are broken? No... By then everyone would know about the imminent danger.'

A thought crossed his mind. He activated the Hong Meng Sutra.

He raised the Primordial Heavenly Blade and appeared behind the old, white-haired man. Jiang Hao slashed at him.

He used the Moon-Slaying technique.

Although it was unlikely that a Primordial Spirit Realm expert would make any sudden attacks, Jiang Hao didn't want to take a chance.

It was better to initiate the attack than wait to be ambushed.

Meanwhile, the old, white-haired man was stunned by Jiang Hao's sudden attack. The immense power emanating from Jiang Hao was definitely stronger than his.

'Is he a Primordial Spirit Realm expert?' wondered the old, white-haired man. It was no wonder Jiang Hao had seemed too calm.

The old, white-haired man immediately used his magic treasure, the Vajra Staff, to counter Jiang Hao's sudden strike.

Clang!

The Primordial Heavenly Blade clashed against the Vajra Staff. The staff couldn't take the impact and shattered.

The blade descended on the old, white-haired man.

The old, white-haired man roared as a powerful force erupted from his body.

However, Jiang Hao's sharp blade slashed through everything and left a deep cut on the old man's body.

With a loud bang, the old, white-haired man was sent flying.

At this moment, the old man with a goatee finally reacted and intervened just when Jiang Hao was going to make his final move.

Glancing at the old man, Jiang Hao kicked. Purple energy gathered at his foot and shot out.

Bang!

The kick landed heavily on the old man's chest, causing him to retreat several steps.

Without hesitation, Jiang Hao executed the Light and Dust technique and caught up with the old, white-haired man.

"You want to kill me? You think it's that easy?"

The old, white-haired man steadied himself and roared. A surge of power enveloped his body and madness gleamed in his eyes.

He burned away his life force and used everything to avoid being killed by Jiang

Hao.

Boom!

The old, white-haired man's power erupted with ferocity. The power condensed into a monster that charged at Jiang Hao.

"Die!"

Jiang Hao activated the Reappearance of Hidden Spirit ability. He lifted his blade and a mighty power surged forth.

He used the second form of the Heavenly Blade: Mountain Suppression.

The pressure of a hundred thousand forces materialized, and the invisible blade pressed down and collided with the ferocious beast.

Boom!

The blade shattered everything and reduced the beast to pieces of meat.

Rumble!

The giant beast crumbled and disintegrated. Finally, the figure of the old, white-haired man reappeared. He was suppressed by the Mountain Suppression.

Crash!

Jiang Hao slashed again. The old, white-haired man's life force shattered. His body disintegrated.

Without hesitation, Jiang Hao moved in again as she prepared to slash one more time.

However, the old man with a goatee rushed toward him. Jiang Hao had no choice but to use the remaining power of the Moon-Slaying in his left wrist to force him back.

Only then did he approach the old, white-haired man and struck him with his blade.

The blade pierced through his body.

‘You...’

The old, white-haired man gazed at Jiang Hao, unwilling to accept his impending death. Then, he was sent flying into the abyss.

Jiang Hao glanced at the abyss and retreated to the stone platform. He then turned to the old man with a goatee who was trembling in rage.

“Surprised?”

Chapter 192: Angered to Death

The old man with a goatee stood on the stone platform as he clutched at his injured arm. He stared at Jiang Hao icily.

He was shocked. The young man in front of him had easily destroyed all his defenses. His strength was far beyond someone at the early stage of the Primordial Spirit Realm, but he realized that Jiang Hao was actually still at the early stage.

Jiang Hao had managed to injure him with just a casual strike. They were supposed to be at the same level. The old, white-haired man had burned all his life force, yet he wasn’t even a match for Jiang Hao.

“Aren’t you Jiang Hao?” he asked in confusion.

“I am,” said Jiang Hao calmly.

“According to our investigation, Jiang Hao is twenty-three years old. Are you telling me you are of that age?”

It was impossible for someone so young to have reached the Primordial Spirit Realm.

Jiang Hao ignored the question. "Tell me why you are here."

The people from the Heavenly Saint Sect were troublesome, and gaining some understanding of their intentions would be helpful for the future.

"We came to find you." the old man with a goatee sneered. "Did Yan Hua tell you about the secret of the mines?"

"No." Jiang Hao shook his head. "How many spies does the Heavenly Saint Sect have in the Heavenly Note Sect?"

"I know of three," the old man with a goatee said. "What did Yan Hua tell you?"

"I told you. She didn't tell me anything. She just thought I was interesting and wanted to kill me," said Jiang Hao. "What's the deal with the Heavenly Saint Sect's Saintess?"

"Yan Hua wanted to kill you?" The old man with a goatee was momentarily stunned. "So... did you kill Yan Hua? Did you deceive everyone in the Heavenly Saint Sect?"

"The Saintess candidate is chosen by several elders. It's a special status. Even the elders don't know the real identity of the Saintesses."

The old man with a goatee sneered. "Why should I tell you?"

"Do you want to continue breaking the formations?" Jiang Hao remained indifferent.

"Breaking the formation?" The old man with a goatee laughed. "So... you left us alive so that we would help you break the formations? You are really a mantis trying to catch the cicadas, aren't you? We thought we were using you, but we underestimated you."

Jiang Hao calmly looked at the old man. He didn't say anything. The old man wasn't wrong.

As for the information regarding the Heavenly Saint Sect's Saintess candidates, Jiang Hao was surprised. So, the Saintesses didn't know each other at all. This meant that Ming Yi and Miao Tinglian might not have known each other despite being from the same sect.

"You killed my brother and want me to help you with the formations?" said the man with a goatee. "Are you kidding me?"

He threw a round-shaped treasure at Jiang Hao.

Jiang Hao was surprised. Were the people of the Heavenly Saint Sect really loyal to each other?

The power of the treasure was potent, but Jiang Hao swung his saber and cleaved it in half. By that time, the man with the goatee had already jumped into the abyss.

He grinned maniacally. "You should know how dangerous the abyss is, right? Are you bold enough to follow me? I might survive. If I do, I'll come after you for revenge!"

At this point, the old man with a goatee had already fallen.

Jiang Hao couldn't confirm whether he was dead or not. He put away his sword and raised his left hand with his palm facing upward.

"Universe in A Palm," he uttered.

The ability was activated. Purple energy swirled from his hand and wrapped around the old man with a goatee.

"What is this?!" The old man with a goatee wanted to resist, but he was unable to fight the power.

He was completely covered by the purple spiritual energy. Jiang Hao retracted the purple energy, and the old man appeared in his palm.

The old man with a goatee inside the purple sphere looked at Jiang Hao in astonishment.

“Surprised?” Jiang Hao asked.

The old man frantically attacked the walls of the purple sphere. It seemed like he wanted to escape. However, his strength was insufficient to break through.

Jiang Hao didn’t delay. He used the first form of the Heavenly Blade. His fingers became the blade.

Jiang Hao slashed toward the man on his palm. The old man was severely wounded. When he was on the verge of death, Jiang Hao cast him out.

The old man fell to the ground. He was human-sized now.

“It’s a pity that you won’t last long enough to fall into the abyss,” said Jiang

Hao.

“You...” The old man with a goatee was so angry that he couldn’t even speak.

“Try not to make me an enemy in your next life,” said Jiang Hao.

He used his saber and ended the man’s life. He struck him twice more to make sure he was really dead.

He fished for the dead man’s storage treasure and threw the corpse into the abyss.

Jiang Hao then shifted his gaze to the Misfortune Pearl.

“It seems I have to break the formation myself. I wonder how much time it will take,” he muttered.

The great battle outside should be over in a few days. The place was likely to be discovered by then. It would be better to leave as soon as possible.

Jiang Hao looked at the storage treasure. What he cared about the most were spirit stones.

He was surprised to find that the storage treasure had around twelve thousand spirit stones. ‘So many...’

The ones in the Primordial Spirit Realm were wealthier than the Golden Core Realm cultivators.

However, Jiang Hao only had a thousand spirit stones on himself, and that was mostly because he had looted that from the others he had subdued or killed.

His only advantage was that he didn’t need to spend spirit stones on his cultivation.

“It seems that one’s wealth or poverty cannot be completely measured by their cultivation level.’

He didn’t regret that he hadn’t been able to obtain the other man’s storage treasure. At least, he hadn’t ended up dead..

Chapter 193: Jiang Hao is Dead?!

Jiang Hao looked at the other items in the storage treasure. He didn’t find anything valuable. It seemed that all the good things had been used.

“Is it because they felt hopeless about advancing, or did they just happen to use them all up?”

Jiang Hao didn't know for sure. He did find a book on cultivation technique called the Heavenly Saint Life Technique.

"Is this the cultivation technique of the Heavenly Saint Sect?"

Jiang Hao took a brief look and confirmed that it was indeed the cultivation technique of the Heavenly Saint Sect.

It contained information on both the cultivation technique and spiritual technique.

"The Heavenly Saint Spiritual technique? I wonder how it compares to the Great Thousand Spiritual technique in terms of power..."

"According to the description, some aspects focus on external forms. Overall, it's not much different from the Hundred Revolutions of the Heavenly Note technique. But with the addition of a spiritual technique, this should be stronger."

Jiang Hao put away the items. He couldn't cultivate this technique because he was already cultivating something else.

However, it might fetch a good price if he sold it.

After putting away the items, Jiang Hao planned to break the formations with brute force.

He raised his saber and attacked the formations while his ability was still active.

Around noon the next day, Jiang Hao heaved a sigh of relief. The formations were finally broken. It was much more difficult than he had expected.

If the two Primordial Spirit Realm cultivators had been present, the formations could have been broken last night.

There was still one last defense before he could reach the Misfortune Pearl. Once it was broken, the power of misfortune would overflow. He had no idea how it would affect him.

After a moment of silence, Jiang Hao allowed the purple energy to envelop his entire body before he struck the last blow.

Crack!

The Primordial Heavenly Blade shattered the defense like glass.

In the next instant, the Misfortune Pearl emitted a bright red light. The aura swept through the surroundings like waves.

However, in front of the Primordial heavenly Blade, the power of misfortune didn't hold

Jiang Hao used the power of the purple spiritual energy to suppress the bursting power of misfortune.

The Misfortune Pearl was suppressed by the purple energy. At that time, Jiang Hao used the Universe in a Palm ability to seal the Misfortune Pearl in a sphere in his palm. Jiang Hao used all his power to seal the pearl in front of him.

Fortunately, the Misfortune Pearl had no owner, so it didn't resist Jiang Hao's might.

The purple spiritual energy enveloped and sealed the entire Misfortune Pearl. It suspended a little above his palm without touching his skin.

Jiang Hao didn't dare to touch it. He didn't undo the seal he had placed. After confirming that he was safe, he observed his surroundings.

The Misfortune Pearl was sealed, and the power of misfortune was no longer overflowing.

‘It seems the sealing technique is quite effective.’

Jiang Hao looked at the Misfortune Pearl, which now looked like a purple bead. The crimson inside was only visible if one inspected it very closely.

Jiang Hao activated the Daily Appraisal on the pearl.

[Heavenly Fate Misfortune Pearl: Magical treasure of providence. Currently sealed by the Universe in a Palm ability. It will automatically break free from the seal after fifteen days. If not suppressed, it will gradually release the aura of misfortune, causing devastation all around. In its sealed state, the Heavenly Fate Misfortune Pearl can suppress curses.]

‘Fifteen days?’

Jiang Hao fell silent. He sat down and began to refine his cultivation. He wasn’t in a hurry to leave, and he still needed to confirm something.

During the night, he had already recovered his strength fully, but he kept his eyes closed and focused on refining his cultivation.

The next morning, he opened his eyes and activated the Reappearance of Hidden Spirit. He once again used the Universe in a Palm ability to cover the Heavenly Fate Misfortune Pearl with purple energy. He sealed it once more.

Jiang Hao then appraised it once again. He wanted to know if the sealing effects could be stacked one after the other.

If that was possible, he would take the pearl with him. If not, he would just give up and leave it here. Fifteen days wasn’t long. No one knew what kind of devastation the pearl might cause after that.

[Heavenly Fate Misfortune Pearl: Magical treasure of providence. Currently sealed by the Universe in a Palm ability. It will automatically break free from the seal after twenty-nine days. If not suppressed, it

will gradually release the aura of misfortune, causing devastation all around. In its sealed state, the Heavenly Fate Misfortune Pearl can suppress curses.]

‘It seems that the sealing can be stacked... but I don’t know how many times it can be done.’

Jiang Hao didn’t stay back this time. It was time to leave. Since the sealing effect could be stacked, there was no need to worry.

He could just gather his strength and seal it every day. If he ever needed to use it, he could just break the seal. However, the pearl was too terrifying to use. He hoped he never had to use it.

Jiang Hao was curious why a person would make such a treasure. Its function was to exterminate everything living.

‘In a sealed state, it can suppress curses, so it’s still useful...’

Jiang Hao left the ruin after that. He was in a hurry to get out.

After a while, he finally saw the exit. He heaved a sigh of relief as he stepped out. That heavy feeling disappeared.

The feeling of heaviness in the ruin was because of the Misfortune Pearl.

‘I need to make sure if the Heavenly Fate Misfortune Pearl would be the same outside. If it is more active outside, then the seal might break faster...’

Jiang Hao headed toward the defense line. He glanced in the direction of the core of Devil’s Den. The radiant light was still there, but it had weakened significantly.

It seemed whatever he had done had worked. Now, he only needed to do some final clean-up after heading back. At most, it would delay him for another month or two.

At the defense line, Zheng Shijiu sat by the tree. He had suffered many injuries. Fortunately, they could rest a bit.

After several days of effort, the defense line was back to normal. They were taking a break to recover their strength. After that, they needed to clean up the remaining demons. At least, there would be more reinforcements coming soon.

"It seems like the matter will be over within a month or two." Zheng Shijiu sighed.

"So many days have passed. If Senior Sister Ye Ji and the group were successful, shouldn't they be back by now?" said Yue You.

"Perhaps they will be back in a few more days." Xin Yuyue had suffered severe injuries too. She stayed with Zheng Shijiu and Yue You because it felt a lot safer to be with them.

"If they return... Junior Brother Jiang will be among them, right?" asked Yue You.

Zheng Shijiu and Xin Yuyue fell silent. They nodded slowly.

"How can you be sure?" Yue You didn't understand how they had so much faith in Jiang Hao.

"It's just a gut feeling," Zheng Shijiu said.

They waited for three days. They saw someone returning, but it wasn't Jiang Hao. They were the other two Foundation Establishment Realm cultivators.

They were both heavily injured and had barely managed to escape. They briefly explained how they had stayed back to hold off the demons while Ye Ji and the others fought.

After listening for a while, Zheng Shijiu asked about Jiang Hao's situation.

However, they told him that Jiang Hao had died very early on their journey.

As a late Foundation Establishment Realm cultivator, he was the weakest and the first to fall behind.

‘Dead?’

Zheng Shijiu found it hard to believe.

Yue You sighed. Jiang Hao was a good person, and they had worked together several times before. It was disappointing to hear that he might be dead..

Chapter 194: Aren ‘t You Dead?

Zheng Shijiu didn’t believe it. Senior Sister Ye Ji hadn’t even returned yet, so nothing was certain.

Two more days passed, and still, no one returned.

Ye Ji, Jiang Hao, and Lan Feng were nowhere to be seen. That was strange. It was unclear if they were delayed by something or if something unexpected had happened on the way.

The two people who had returned from the journey felt that they were superior to others because they had gone on a dangerous journey and returned safe and sound. They even mocked some of the other disciples for not being as brave as them. They even occasionally criticized Jiang Hao for being reckless, which had cost him his life.

Zheng Shijiu still felt it was unlikely for Jiang Hao to have died that easily.

The two disciples didn’t dare reveal more information. They were worried about the return of their companions, but they still wanted to be seen as brave.

Three more days passed, and there was still no news. No one returned.

The crisis had been long resolved. The group that went to the core to solve the problem should have arrived by this time.

Jin Long gathered everyone. "Those who have recovered, come with me to clear out the demons in the forest. Ye Ji and the others haven't returned. They might be trapped. We'll try to find them and assist them in any way we can."

Nobody refused. They didn't dare refuse a senior.

Those who were severely injured didn't need to follow. Xin Yuyue and Yue You had recovered a bit from their injuries, so they decided to follow the group. Clearing out the demons had its benefits. Besides, they could do with more spirit stones.

Zheng Shijiu was also planning to follow the rescue group to the forest.

Two days later, they encountered many demons on their way. They fought with all their might.

Fortunately, the demons were fighting on instinct alone, so it wasn't difficult to get rid of them.

Zheng Shijiu swung his paper fan and released fierce attacks. He took his time this time. He retreated a little to lure the demon to an empty area. Soon, he was fighting near Xin Yuyue and Yue You. They glanced at each other.

Everyone felt a bit awkward.

Zheng Shijiu smiled. "You two have worked hard," he said. "These demons are formidable."

"True, Senior Brother Zheng," said Xin Yuyue. "This time, the fights with these demons turned out to be truly unforgettable."

Yue You only nodded.

After that, they went into different areas. Zheng Shijiu was relieved. 'Why did they have to retreat to the same area?'

Zheng Shijiu saw Jiang Hao. He was fighting near the edge while trying to evade another demon's attack.

Xin Yuyue and Yue You also noticed him. How was he here? He was supposed to be dead!

Jiang Hao felt helpless. After intentionally delaying for a few days, he finally managed to make it back, only to find that they had already started clearing out the demons. He joined in anyway.

This time, he had no intention of killing the demons with one strike. He only wanted to hide between them. So, he dragged out the fight.

It seemed others were doing the same. A demonic sect was a demonic sect, after all. They lacked cooperation and a sense of unity.

To avoid notice, he had changed his location. He was just evading the demons to pass the time when he noticed Zheng Shijiu and the others.

Jiang Hao killed the remaining demons and greeted them. It had been so long since he had been gone. He asked them about the current situation at the defense line.

Yue You and Xin Yuyue were surprised to see that it was really Jiang Hao! But why was he here?

How was he here with their group? They didn't recall him joining their group. They hadn't even seen him when they started this rescue mission.

"When did you return, Junior Brother Jiang?" Zheng Shijiu asked.

“Just a while ago. I saw that many of you were fighting the demons, so I joined in,” said Jiang Hao.

The three people were speechless. His explanation made sense, but it still felt strange.

When the two disciples in the Foundation Establishment Realm returned, everyone cheered for them. It was quite a scene. However, nobody even saw Jiang Hao return.

Zheng Shijiu hesitated briefly, then explained the situation of the past few days. He also mentioned the two disciples in the Foundation Establishment Realm who had returned recently.

“They said I was dead?” Jiang Hao was confused. When he thought about it, it made sense. He had disappeared early on, so they might have assumed he was dead.

“I can see why they might have thought that. I hid from the demons. I was lucky that I was able to recover from my injuries. When I finally felt strong enough to move, I was hesitant to find Senior Sister Ye Ji and the others. Instead, I decided to return to the defense line.”

Zheng Shijiu nodded. He didn’t know if Ye Ji and the others had gotten along with Jiang Hao. It was unclear whether Jiang Hao was telling the truth. From what the two disciples said, Ye Ji and her group might not have had it easy.

If they had targeted Jiang Hao, it was highly likely that they wouldn’t be coming back.

“So... we only have to clean up the remaining demons?” asked Jiang Hao. “Senior Sister Ye Ji and the others must have been successful then.”

Zheng Shijiu and Xin Yuyue felt that something was strange.

Yue You didn’t say anything. She still remembered what Zheng Shijiu and Xin

Yuyue had said. She felt that something was not right. Jiang Hao was still in the late stage of the Foundation Establishment Realm. ‘How did he escape and hide from the demons?’

After that, the group didn't talk much. They focused on exterminating the remaining demons. This time, they cooperated and killed the demons quickly.

They advanced forward, with Jin Long leading the way.

They followed the path that Ye Ji and her group might have taken.

Half a month passed on the journey. They came across two corpses of disciples in the Foundation Establishment Realm.

The group felt regret but didn't slow their pace. Another month passed, and they focused on clearing out the demons. They found another corpse.

Thirteen people had gone into the forest. Among them, they found three corpses, while three had returned alive. Seven people were unaccounted for.

After another month of scouting, they found one more corpse. Six people remained.

Of course, most people didn't know that Jiang Hao was still alive. They thought Jiang Hao had died early.

After another half a month, they discovered a relic and a severely injured corpse of Lan Feng.

A Golden Core Realm cultivator was dead! When the two Foundation Establishment Realm cultivators returned, they were fearless and optimistic. However, seeing Lan Feng's mutilated corpse made them afraid.

Perhaps there was a powerful enemy lurking in the shadows...

When they found the relic, many people wanted to explore it further. Jin Long was also tempted.

They thought that this was the place where Ye Ji and the others would be

found. Maybe there weren't any dangers inside anymore.

"Junior Brother Jiang, do you want to go in to take a look?" asked Zheng Shijiu.

After two months, their injuries had healed. Yue You carried her huge sword on her back once again.

"No." Jiang Hao shook his head. "These places usually tend to be dangerous."

He really didn't want to go inside. The oppressive force that he had encountered before made him uneasy. The pear was already in his storage treasure anyway. There was nothing in the ruin.

He had sealed the Misfortune Pearl every day. The time limit for the seal had reached two years.

However, for the past two months, there had been nothing amiss with the pearl. Perhaps the worst had passed.

The cleanup of the demons along the way was almost done by now..

Chapter 195: Stirring Up Trouble Again

The group waited outside the ruin for a long time.

In the end, Jin Long led some people and entered the ruin, while a Foundation Establishment Realm cultivator was left outside to supervise the one who remained outside.

However, there were many Foundation Establishment Realm cultivators, so not all people accepted the one in charge.

Jiang Hao didn't care about it.

The Demon's Lair that the small demon had tried to lead him to was still far away. It was on the other side. So, there was no need to worry.

If they did come across the lair, Jiang Hao would be in trouble. He couldn't reveal his cultivation in front of everyone while fighting.

He had confirmed one thing in these many days. He had destroyed the stone that controlled the demons.

"Senior Brother Zheng, have you heard of this place?" Xin Yuyue asked.

"I have never heard of it." Zheng Shijiu shook his head. "I have read many records about the Demon's Lair, but none of them mentioned any strange ruins. However, many places record that the Demon's Lair has many treasures, and anything could happen there."

Everyone knew that there were opportunities in the Demon's Lair. Almost everything could be found there. Spirit herbs, special treasures, etc.

Jiang Hao had also encountered some spirit herbs in the past few days. Although they weren't of top quality, they would be worth a thousand spirit herbs after maturity.

However, it would take a long time for the herbs to mature. They died easily after being transplanted somewhere else. In the end, he gave up.

The only regret was that he couldn't find many bubbles. He only found a few bubbles along the way.

Everything had returned to square one. He had to rely on his luck to accumulate cultivation and lifeblood, like before.

"I wonder what's inside." Yue You looked at the ruin with great curiosity.

"It's probably dangerous," Jiang Hao said.

He looked to the side. "Somebody's coming."

Many people already knew that he was very perceptive, so he didn't hide it. Sure enough, a group of people approached them.

Jiang Hao recognized Ning Xuan. She was from the Cliff of Broken Hearts, too. She was in the early stage of the Primordial Spirit Realm.

The fact that they had appeared here meant that the two cases had a connection. The people in Jiang Hao's group were nervous to see them.

Ning Xuan announced her name. "Who's in charge here? Come forward and explain what's happening here."

The disciple in the Foundation Establishment Realm, who was left in charge, stepped forward fearfully.

"Now it's getting lively," said Zheng Shijiu. "But we should be safe now."

"Did you go in?" Ning Xuan frowned, then instructed several Golden Core Realm experts to examine the ruin.

"If anyone comes out with something red in their hands, kill them on the spot."

Zheng Shijiu and the others were shocked to hear this. They had no idea why the senior would give such an order.

Jiang Hao frowned. Ning Xuan knew about the pearl. He was puzzled. If she knew about the pearl, why wasn't it destroyed before everyone gathered here?

'Could it be that the ruin suddenly surfaced here out of nowhere? Maybe it wasn't here before...'

Jiang Hao wondered if that was the case. As for the ruins appearing suddenly, it must have been the work of demons.

The ruin might have been suppressed when the seniors suppressed the core before. If that were true, there might be other ruins in the Demon's Lair!

The Golden Core Realm seniors evacuated the surroundings.

Many people noticed that Ning Xuan was being too cautious when it came to the entrance of the ruin. She treated it like a dangerous enemy.

"What could make Senior Sister Ning Xuan so nervous? She's in the Primordial Spirit Realm," said Zheng Shijiu in confusion.

Jiang Hao shook his head. He knew what was making her nervous, but she didn't dare say it out loud. If he was discovered carrying the pearl with him, he didn't know what she would do to him.

Everyone stared at the entrance of the ruin as night fell. The sound of footsteps could be heard on the stairs inside.

Everyone was nervous.

Ning Xuan's eyes flickered. Her razor-sharp gaze was focused on the entrance of the ruin.

"Whoever is inside, stop right now. Don't take a step forward! One of you can walk slowly to the entrance. Don't make any sudden moves, or you'll be killed."

“Are you insane? It’s me, Jin Long! ” shouted Jin Long. He neither stopped nor slowed his pace of walking.

“I said stop!” Ning Xuan’s voice was icy.

Boom!

In an instant, the aura of the Primordial Spirit Realm swept in all directions. Bang!

The powerful force injured those inside. Frightened cries and pained screams rang out.

“Crawl out of there one by one. Slowly... Anyone who doesn’t cooperate will be considered a traitor and will be killed on the spot,” said Ning Xuan.

Jin Long was stunned. He obeyed and crawled up to the entrance. He froze when he saw the Primordial Spirit Realm seniors at the entrance.

“What did you find inside? Did you see anything?” Ning Xuan asked.

“We only saw a floating stone platform and a path, as well as several corpses. We didn’t find anything else,” Jin Long said.

“Did you see any red light?” Ning Xuan asked.

“No.” Jin Long quickly shook his head.

“Did you search every place thoroughly?” Ning Xuan asked.

“We searched everything we saw. We don’t know if there were any hidden places,” said Jin Long truthfully. He had searched every nook and cranny. He hadn’t found any treasures. He didn’t even see Ye Ji anywhere.

“Take out everything in your storage treasure and show me. Leave nothing behind,” said Ning Xuan.

Jin Long was unwilling to do it, but he didn’t refuse. He was afraid that he might really be killed.

Soon, everyone was inspected. No red light or treasures were anywhere to be found.

Ning Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

It would have been convenient to kill them instead. However, they needed to make sure they had the treasure. Otherwise, killing disciples for no reason would get them into trouble with the sect.

Ning Xuan had no idea what was inside either. She simply followed the orders she was given. It was a relief that nothing was found. If there had been something, none of them would have survived.

According to the map they had received, this area should have been a meadow, not a ruin. The order she received was to investigate the place. She was told to wait for further instructions if the place happened to be guarded.

No one was allowed to enter. If they tried to disobey, they would be thoroughly investigated. The orders had mentioned that if they saw red energy or light, it would cause devastation and no one would survive.

When Ning Xuan reached the place and saw a crowd, she realized that nothing good would come out of it. Fortunately, there had been no issues so far.

“Seize them and wait for the Law Enforcement Hall to conduct an investigation,” said Ning Xuan.

She couldn’t make any decisions for now, so she had no choice but to wait.

Jiang Hao sighed inwardly. The situation was unexpected. Fortunately, no one had intended to go further in to investigate.

He wondered if the people from the Law Enforcement Hall would go crazy and search everyone's storage treasures.

Jiang Hao thought they might not really do that because they hadn't checked his storage treasure last time when they had come to take him into custody. Only the person in charge had searched him later.

However, if the higher-ups of the sect knew about the Heavenly Fate Misfortune Pearl, who knew what they would do?

If the pearl appeared anywhere near the sect, the whole sect might be doomed. Jiang Hao remained calm and waited patiently for the arrival of the people from the Law Enforcement Hall..

Chapter 196: The Arrival of the Law Enforcement Hall

Jiang Hao and the others rested a little further away from the ruin while being guarded by the Golden Core Realm cultivators. The seniors seemed wary of them.

'Senior Brother Jin Long is very wealthy. He had about ten thousand spirit stones! Now that I think about it, Senior Sister Ye Jits storage treasure might have a considerable number of spirit stones. What a pity!' thought Jiang Hao.

"The people from the Law Enforcement Hall have arrived. It seems that the situation here is very serious," said Zheng Shijiu as he looked around. "It seems like we're being treated as suspects for some reason."

"Hmm..." Jiang Hao nodded.

They were indeed treated as suspects. Logically, they hadn't done anything to warrant this. As long as they didn't do anything to go against the sect, they should be fine.

Jiang Hao still had the Heavenly Fate Misfortune Pearl with him. If they searched him, they would find it very easily.

Two days later, Jiang Hao and the others received news that over ninety percent of the demons in the Devil's Den had been eliminated. The defense could be lifted, and they could return to report.

As long as the demons didn't head toward the outskirts, there was no need to worry. The core beam of light remained stable.

The Heavenly Note Sect had achieved a complete victory with minimal losses.

Two more days passed, and Jiang Hao saw the ruin move.

"The ruin is descending," Zheng Shijiu said.

Yue You and Xin Yuyue were also astonished.

Jin Long and the others, who had entered the ruin, turned pale in fear. If they hadn't made it out in time, they would have been buried with the ruin.

It wasn't just Jin Long. Jiang Hao also felt a chill run down his spine.

If he had stayed in longer, he would have been buried. The only way would have been to use the Thousand Miles Teleportation Talisman to escape. If that failed, he would've had to rely on Hong Yuye.

The ruins gradually sank into the ground before everyone's eyes. There were no more ruins or any other structures in the vicinity. There was only vast grassland.

They were all shocked to see it. Jiang Hao stared at the new grassland. He wasn't able to sense anything. If he couldn't sense it, it must be harder for others.

He looked in the direction of the core of the Devil's Den and wondered what made this place so mysterious.

According to Hong Yuye, there was some kind of inheritance there that made everything feel magical and surreal.

What kind of inheritance could cause such a phenomenon?

Jiang Hao shook his head and brushed his thoughts aside. No matter how much he thought about it, he couldn't figure anything out.

Taking a deep breath, Jiang Hao sat on the ground and closed his eyes to rest.

The next day, there was a commotion. The people from the Law Enforcement Hall had arrived.

"Senior Sister Ning Xuan, you've worked hard. You can hand these people over to us now," said a familiar voice.

'Liu Xingchen?' Jiang Hao tried to see if it was really him.

It was indeed Liu Xingchen standing beside Ning Xuan.

From Jiang Hao's perspective, there wasn't much change in Liu Xingchen's aura. It meant that the two who took over his body hadn't made any moves. soon, LIU xmgcnen Degan to Investigate Jin Long ana tne others. Insteaa or physically searching them, he used a treasure.

It was a mirror that covered Jin Long and the others. It searched their souls and traced their previous actions.

'The Heavenly Essence Soul Modeling Mirror...' Jiang Hao stared at the mirror, somewhat surprised.

He had heard Liu Xingchen mention this treasure before, but he didn't think it was something an ordinary cultivator could use. Technically, Liu Xingchen shouldn't have the qualifications to use it.

Jiang Hao used the Daily Appraisal ability on the mirror.

[Pseudo-Heavenly Essence Soul Modeling Mirror: A treasure created by imitating the Heavenly Essence Soul Modeling Mirror. It is infused with a trace of the aura of the Heavenly Essence Soul Modeling Mirror. It can trace simple cause and effect and is frequently used by the Law Enforcement Hall of the Heavenly Note Sect for investigations.]

Jiang Hao breathed a sigh of relief. It wasn't the actual Heavenly Essence Soul Modeling Mirror. Normal investigation methods wouldn't be able to expose him. The fact that the Law Enforcement Hall hadn't found any evidence after several attempts could prove that.

So far, the only thing that could threaten him was the real Heavenly Essence Soul Modeling Mirror.

"No problem with these people," declared Liu Xingchen.

Jin Long and the others heaved a sigh of relief, as did Ning Xuan.

"But..."

The people gathered there were nervous once more.

"But this is not enough. We need to understand more about what happened.

so...'

Liu Xingchen stared at Jin Long. "Junior Brother Jin and the others who went in need to come with us for further investigation. As for others, we will do a simple investigation to make sure everything is okay."

The other members of the Law Enforcement Hall took out a bowl of water. Many water droplets there surged with spiritual energy.

“Everyone, please reach out and cup a bit of water in your palm.”

Jiang Hao and the others did as they were instructed.

He realized that this was a method to test if any of them had been tainted by misfortune. He didn’t need to worry.

However, the person next to him wasn’t as lucky. The water in his hand glowed with a dark light.

This frightened everyone, including the members of the Law Enforcement Hall and Ning Xuan.

Jiang Hao could only sigh at the other person’s misfortune. They might just be unlucky, or they might actually possess a treasure tainted with misfortune.

“Don’t worry. It’s just a trace of black light. It’s probably just a coincidence that they have something similar. Let’s take them back for further investigation,” Liu Xingchen said calmly.

After that, nothing eventful happened.

After the members of the Law Enforcement Hall left, Jiang Hao and the others received orders from the sect. The mission was over, and they could return to the sect.

Everyone breathed a sigh of relief. Their journey was finally at an end after three whole months!

However, people were curious about where Ye Ji and the others had disappeared. They hadn’t found any more corpses. Could she have disappeared in the ruin?

A few days later, Jiang Hao and the others left the Devil’s Den.

“Well, let’s part ways here. I hope we can meet again on the next mission,” Zheng Shijiu said with sincerity at the entrance of the Devil’s Den.

Xin Yuyue echoed his sentiments.

Jiang Hao nodded.

These people didn’t really pose a threat to him. They were as cautious as he was.

Yue You nodded too. She had cooperated with them throughout, but she had her doubts.

Yue You returned to the Flowing Waterfall. This particular mission had been very dangerous. Fortunately, someone had destroyed the source that controlled the demons. Zheng Shijiu and Xin Yuyue thought that it was Jiang

Hao.

However, the rest of the people believed that it was Ye Ji who had done that before she disappeared.

“Junior Sister Yue, you’re back!” said a woman in a blue dress.

“Senior Sister Cheng, it is very nice to meet you here.”

Cheng Ran who was about to ascend to the Primordial Spirit Realm, was a True Disciple of the Flowing Waterfall.

“I heard that all of you returned safely,” said Cheng Ran. “I also heard that it was all thanks to the Cliff of Broken Hearts.

“The Cliff of Broken Hearts?” Yue You suddenly thought of Jiang Hao.

She felt puzzled. Did her senior sister also think that Jiang Hao had saved them all?

She brushed her thoughts aside. She was probably thinking way too hard about this.

“Yes. There was a source that was controlling the demons. Senior Sister Ning Xuan of the Cliff of Broken Hearts made the final contribution and destroyed the source,” said Cheng Ran. “But... I also heard that Ning Xuan received the credit, but the work was done by someone else. A mysterious person destroyed the source before they reached there..”

Chapter 197: Unable To Defend Himself

“There was someone else?!” Yue You was somewhat surprised. “Was it Ye Ji?”

“Ye Ji? She’s only in the early stage of the Gold Core Realm. She’s not capable of solving this matter,” said Cheng Ran. “The demon guards at the source were all in the middle stage of the Golden Core Realm. Some were even at the early stage of the Primordial Spirit Realm. How can someone in the early stage of the Golden Core Realm?”

“If it wasn’t Ye Ji or Senior Sister Ning Xuan, then who did it?”

Cheng Ran frowned. “It’s hard to say. Someone entered the house and killed the demons there. Ning Xuan and the others only found the source after a day.”

Cheng Ran shrugged. “It’s just a rumor. It’s hard to say what’s true and what’s false. There were guards at the Primordial Spirit Realm too. Besides Ning Xuan, no one else was strong enough to solve the problem unless some other seniors lent a hand. But I haven’t heard of anyone trying to claim credit for it. In any case, it’s hard to say for sure since none of us personally witnessed the situation. It’s also possible that someone might have a grudge against Ning Xuan and intentionally spread the rumors. The Hall of Merit didn’t say anything, so it seems the information might be genuine. But who would want to let go of fame or benefits after doing the work?”

Cheng Ran laughed.

‘Someone who didn’t want to claim any credit...’ Yue You thought about it.

However, when she thought about how some of the demon guards had been at the Primordial Soul Realm, she shook her head. There was no way Jiang Hao could have fought the demons in that cultivation realm.

Yue You felt that Zheng Shijiu and Xin Yuyue had influenced her thinking. However, their remarks remained in the back of her mind.

After leaving the Devil’s Den, Jiang Hao didn’t rush to go back. Instead, he went to the Law Enforcement Hall to report the end of the mission.

He received a hundred spirit stones and a robe. It was an ordinary and inexpensive robe. It was probably priced at 289 spirit stones in the market.

‘I received quite a lot this time,’ thought Jiang Hao. ‘If I was at the Golden Core

Realm, I would have received at least a thousand spirit stones.’

Jiang Hao remembered that Mu Qi had received over three thousand spirit stones on his last mission. However, he was in the late stage of the Golden Core Realm at that time.

Jiang Hao put away the spirit stones. He wanted to buy a Golden Core Collar for the spirit beast. Changing the collar every time was more expensive.

“Three thousand?!”

Jiang Hao was slightly surprised. It costs so much to buy a Golden Core Collar! If he spent that much on a collar, he would be left with only eight thousand spirit stones.

In a few months, the Immortal Peach Tree would grow and bear fruit again. He would need another ten thousand spirit stones then.

He thought of Ye Ji. He should have grabbed her storage treasure before she fell.

He bought the collar for 2850 spirit stones.

After that, he bought some talisman-making materials. He planned to make talismans to earn some more spirit stones. He needed to accumulate another ten thousand spirit stones by the end of the year, just in case.

If the Immortal Peach Tree required more than ten thousand spirit stones, he might just give up on it. He would just prioritize the spirit beast because it would give him a golden bubble.

‘I wonder what I’ll get this time.’

Jiang Hao made his way toward the Cliff of Broken Hearts. Halfway there, he heard a commotion. It sounded like several people were arguing.

He decided to ignore them until he heard a familiar voice.

“No, it wasn’t me! I didn’t steal your things!”

Jiang Hao approached them to take a look. Several outer sect disciples were ganging up on a young boy and beating him.

The young boy was Lin Zhi. Senior Brother Zheng had mentioned him in the Devil’s Den.

“Still lying? You dare steal our things just because you are friends with two extraordinarily talented people? You got some nerve!”

The one who was shouting was an adult man in the third stage of the Lifeblood Refinement Realm. He kicked Lin Zhi in the head.

“You have to compensate us with spirit stones this time. At least five spirit stones. No less than that.”

“I didn’t steal anything,” Lin Zhi said as he covered his head with his hands.

“You still dare to deny it?”

The others punched and kicked him.

“Just because you know two people who are exceptionally talented, you look down on us? They haven’t even advanced in their cultivation! Besides, why would they even care about you? Who would want to associate with someone like you who hasn’t been able to improve even after a year? They would feel insulted to even be associated with you! You aren’t worthy!”

“Why are you talking to him? He stole our things! Make him pay us back first,” said another person.

They searched Lin Zhi. They found six spirit stones in his storage treasure.

“You’re quite rich,” the man at the third stage of the Lifeblood Refinement Realm said with a smirk.

He found a small bag in Lin Zhi’s pocket. The words on the bag read, “Safe and Sound.”

“What is this?” asked the man.

“That’s mine! Please... it’s only a protective talisman my mother got for me,” said Lin Zhi as he tried to get it back.

“This garbage is a protective talisman?” The man flung the bag into the forest.

“No! Please...” Lin Zhi pleaded.

As the man threw the bag, it changed direction midway and flew right into Jiang Hao’s hand.

Jiang Hao had been observing the commotion for a while but didn’t intervene. He looked at the outer sect disciples. Their attire was different from Jiang Hao’s. It signified the difference in status.

The others looked terrified when they saw him.

“Greetings, S-senior.”

“Leave. Now,” said Jiang Hao.

The group of people fled the scene quickly.

Jiang Hao sighed inwardly. ‘Six spirit stones...’

That was probably Lin Zhi’s entire savings from the past year. Outer sect disciples only received one spirit stone per month. Six spirit stones were a considerable amount.

Jiang Hao had been the same as Lin Zhi, except he hadn’t saved his spirit stones. He had spent them all to improve his cultivation.

Only when his cultivation improved would he be safe from being harassed by others.

Jiang Hao always kept his head down and focused on his cultivation. The worst he suffered was getting beaten up by others because they couldn’t snatch away his spirit stones because he had none.

However, he had lived with Qi Yang for a while, and no one dared to beat him up after that.

Lin Zhi's situation was more complicated. He was an easy target.

Jiang Hao looked at Lin Zhi. He noticed that something was strange.

He had six spirit stones, which meant he might have already advanced to the first stage of the Lifeblood Refinement Realm for at least six months. Why was it that his strength was lower than that of someone in the first stage? There was something strange about his body.

"How long have you been at the first stage of the Lifeblood Refinement Realm?" Jiang Hao walked over to Lin Zhi and handed him the protective talisman.

"Eight... eight months," Lin Zhi said.

'Eight months?'

Jiang Hao felt that something was strange. He had brought Lin Zhi back because he found him peculiar. He hadn't had a chance to assess him properly because he hadn't met him often.

He activated his Daily Appraisal ability and applied it on Lin Zhi..

Chapter 198: Finding Someone To Lean On

The grass swayed gently in the wind.

Lin Zhi struggled to get up. He was trembling. Everything hurt when he tried to move. Bruises were evident in the corner of his mouth. He looked disheveled and ragged.

He lowered his head, not daring to look up. He was afraid of attracting attention.

At this moment, only Jiang Hao was looking at him. He got feedback from the ability.

[Lin Zhi: At the first stage of the Lifeblood Refinement Realm. Outer disciple of the Heavenly Note Sect. During his childhood, he had a chance encounter with the ancient master, Gu Ming, who was nearing the end of his life. As a small act of kindness, Gu Ming let go of the resentment he held towards his imminent demise. Whether it was gratitude or some fated connection, he bestowed the precious Star Bright Moon Pearl of the Bright Moon Sect, which merged with Lin Zhi's soul. His cultivation progress has been slow as the Star Bright Moon Pearl absorbs spiritual energy. When enough spiritual energy is accumulated, it will be fed back to Lin Zhi which will help him ascend to the Foundation Establishment Realm in a single stride. It is suitable for him to practice the Star, Sun, and Moon techniques.]

'So... that's what it is,' thought Jiang Hao.

Jiang Hao was truly intertwined with the Bright Moon Sect. First, Chu Chuan, and now, Lin Zhi. Both were somehow related to that sect.

'What would others do if they discovered this secret?' Jiang Hao thought. Lin Zhi would definitely be killed for the treasure inside his soul.

Jiang Hao had no interest in that treasure. Even if he did, he couldn't kill the young boy. He had recruited him here, after all. He couldn't kill a child in cold blood.

"Are you okay?" asked Jiang Hao.

Lin Zhi lowered his head. "I... I didn't steal anything."

"I know," said Jiang Hao gently. "The people who were beating you up know that too. They were just making an excuse to attack you and take your spirit stones. It isn't as common in the sect, but things like these have always happened."

Lin Zhi clenched his fist. He then let it go. He seemed resigned to his fate.

Jiang Hao noticed it. "You have two friends who have exceptional talent. The first thing you need to understand and accept is the gap between you and them. You need to know where they stand and where you stand. After that, you need to decide how you want to act."

Lin Zhi looked at Jiang Hao in confusion.

"Whether you like it or not, this place is the demonic sect. Most disciples here are just waiting for their time to strike you down. What you need to do is not save the spirit stones, but use them to become stronger as soon as possible. Your path will be much more difficult than others."

Bearing the treasure also meant bearing huge consequences. If Lin Zhi advanced too fast, it would attract other people's attention. The physical and mental strain was very draining. If he succeeded, he would rise to the top and face new problems. If he failed, he would remain at the bottom, getting beaten up.

"Do you have any difficulties in your cultivation?" asked Jiang Hao as they walked back.

"I'm accumulating spiritual energy, but I'm having some trouble with the cultivation technique," said Lin Zhi truthfully. He knew Jiang Hao would advise him if he had a problem.

"The Hundred Revolutions of the Heavenly Note technique is related to sound. When you cultivate, you will feel your meridians vibrate slightly. Listen to that and follow it. It will help you cultivate faster."

Jiang Hao explained and advised Lin Zhi a lot on the way back. He didn't tell the boy about the Star Bright Moon Pearl in his soul. He couldn't understand why the ancient master, Gu Ming, had taken an interest in Lin Zhi.

'Average talent, average temperament, average perseverance... he is average in all aspects. How was such a person worthy of such a treasure? It would only harm him in the long run..

Jiang Hao watched as Lin Zhi returned to his residence. He concealed himself and stood at a distance.

Regardless of how ordinary Lin Zhi seemed, he was still the owner of the treasure. The future was uncertain, but his current situation was dire.

The other disciples might target him and make his life hell. He would eventually feel the pressure of lagging behind his two best friends.

Jiang Hao hesitated for a moment. He then walked to the window to look inside. But what he saw surprised him.

In the corner of the room, Lin Zhi sat cross-legged on the ground and wiped his tears away. The tears flowed down his face nonstop.

Only then did Jiang Hao realize that Lin Zhi was just ten years old. He was just a child. He was beaten and robbed, with no one to look after him.

Jiang Hao sighed sadly as he watched Lin Zhi try to stop himself from sobbing aloud and fiercely wipe away his tears.

After a long while, Lin Zhi dried his tears. He then took out a small box from the drawer on the side table and put the protective talisman inside it.

He gently touched it. His eyes welled up with tears. However, before the tears could fall, he closed the box and took it outside the room.

At the back of the house, he dug a hole and dropped the box in it. He buried the box.

From now on, nothing would scare him. He had nothing to lose.

Jiang Hao remained silent. 'I misjudged him a bit.'

He smiled softly and left. Lin Zhi was stronger than he had given him credit for.

It wasn't much, but it was a beginning.

Jiang Hao was now aware of Lin Zhi's situation and had a cultivation technique that was a perfect match. But he wouldn't intervene, at least not for a while.

He needed to observe Lin Zhi a bit more.

On the way back, Jiang Hao saw someone attacking another disciple. Bang!

A young girl punched a boy. He fell onto a pile of dirt. Blood stained the surroundings.

"It seems like you beat him to death," said the spirit beast. "Pity I can't eat humans."

"Junior Sister Xiao Li, why did you suddenly attack him so fiercely?" Cheng Chou asked.

"He provoked me. He said he has reached the same realm as me," Xiao Li said.

"The same realm?" Cheng Chou sighed. Hadn't Chu Chuan learned anything by now?

Chu Chuan had passed out.

Jiang Hao looked at the heavily injured Chu Chuan. He had reached the second stage of the Lifeblood Refinement Realm.

'Second stage in just a year... he advanced so quickly,' thought Jiang Hao. The gap was even more apparent when compared to Lin Zhi.

Lin Zhi had started cultivating sooner than Chu Chuan.

However, compared to Lin Zhi, Chu Chuan was lucky.

Jiang Hao walked over to them.

"It's almost lunchtime. Let's go catch a tender and wealthy child to eat," said the spirit beast shamelessly. "I won't eat anything else today. We'll eat... carrots! Nothing is better than carrots!"

Xiao Lu and Cheng Chou were puzzled by the sudden shift in the spirit beast's attitude.

"Right, Master?" said the beast as it turned around.

Curiously, Xiao Li turned to look and found that Jiang Hao was walking over to them.

She snapped her head back to look at the unconscious Chu Chuan on the ground. He then gripped the spirit beast tightly and held it in front of her as though she was shielding herself..

Chapter 199: The Demoness Visits Again

Jiang Hao was curious to know how the spirit beast always detected his presence, even when he concealed himself.

"Senior Brother Jiang, great to see you back!" said Cheng Chou as he checked on

Chu Chuan.

Jiang Hao nodded at him. "Did you give the things I left with you to Chu Chuan?" he asked the spirit beast.

"I did, " said the spirit beast as it munched on a carrot.

“What about the spirit herbs and my flowers in the courtyard?” asked Jiang Hao.

“Rest assured, Master. All the beings know how great of a demon I am. Even the vegetation doesn’t defy—”

“Just speak normal, human language,” said Jiang Hao with a sigh.

“Everything is fine,” the spirit beast said.

Jiang Hao nodded and observed the beast. It had already reached the late stage of the Foundation Establishment Realm. Its progress was truly remarkable.

“Master, take a look at this.” The beast showed Jiang Hao its collar. “It’s cracked again. When will you buy me a new one?”

Jiang Hao looked at it indifferently and tossed the collar that he had bought just a while ago. “How about this?”

The spirit beast’s eyes lit up in delight. It leaped onto Xiao Li’s head. It broke the old collar and slipped on the new one. “Master, do I look like a great demon now?”

“I don’t raise demons,” Jiang Hao said.

“But I can be anything you want. If I become a great demon, I can...”

Jiang Hao ignored the beast and turned to Xiao Li.

She grabbed the beast and held it in front of her like a shield. “J-Junior Brother Chu wanted me to give it my all.”

“What’s your cultivation level?” Jiang Hao asked.

“Second stage of the Lifeblood Refinement Realm,” said Xiao Li.

“Are you still causing trouble in the cafeteria?” asked Jiang Hao.

“No. I haven’t caused any trouble at all!” Xiao Li put the beast down on the ground.

Jiang Hao nodded. “Focus on improving your cultivation in these few days. I’ll ask Cheng Chou to take you back for another visit to your house.”

Xiao Li jumped up excitedly, lifted the beast, and spun in a circle. Then she froze and looked at Jiang Hao awkwardly.

“Thank you,” she said. “Senior Brother Jiang, can I have something like that

She pointed to the collar on the spirit beast’s neck.

Jiang Hao looked at her in surprise. “No.” Why would a dragon ask for a pet collar?

Xiao Li lowered her head in disappointment.

Jiang Hao sighed. “I’ll get you something else next time.”

Xiao Li was delighted. The spirit beast was happy for her too.

Jiang Hao couldn’t help but sigh. He felt that he cared too much for them. If he had ignored them from the beginning, perhaps it wouldn’t have been this troublesome.

Now, he just hoped to release the beast and guide the dragon to freedom as soon as he could.

Jiang Hao asked Cheng Chou about the recent situation in the sect.

According to Cheng Chou, the demand for spirit herbs had increased over the past three months. There had been some issues in other Spirit Herb Gardens, but the problems weren't serious.

They were a bit tired because of the low manpower, but they hadn't hired anyone without Jiang Hao's permission. Fortunately, the demand wasn't too high, and they could handle the pressure.

"And the other inner sect disciples working there agreed with it?" asked Jiang

Hao.

The increased demand for spirit herbs was likely due to the Devil's Den and the Heavenly Saint Sect.

"At that time, Senior Brother Han Ming was in charge of the Spirit Herb Garden. I told him we couldn't hire anyone until you were back. He didn't say anything. He even helped handle the pressure from the increased orders. He achieved some minor credit for his contributions and gave me some pills."

Jiang Hao chuckled. Han Ming was truly a strange person. He had lost to Jiang Hao, so he didn't make any moves. If he had no one above him, Jiang Hao wondered what Han Ming would do.

Perhaps he would continue challenging others.

"Will you be free in these few days?" he asked.

"Yes." Cheng Chou nodded.

Jiang Hao asked Cheng Chou to take Xiao Li back to her home for a visit.

Xiao Li wanted to head to the cafeteria for her meal and asked Jiang Hao if he wanted to come along. Jiang Hao politely refused. He had something to do at his own house. The spirit beast followed Jiang Hao.

Jiang Hao stood at the gate of his courtyard. He saw two blue bubbles floating near the Heavenly Fragrance Dao Flower.

[Cultivation +1]

[Lifeblood +1]

There was nothing urgent to do in the sect for now. He could finally have some quiet time. He decided to focus on improving his strength and cultivation.

He looked at his interface as he walked to the Immortal Peach Tree.

[Name: Jiang Hao]

[Age: 23]

[Cultivation: Early Stage of the Primordial Spirit Realm]

[Cultivation Method: Heavenly Sound Hundred Revolutions, Hong Meng Heart

Sutra]

[Divine Ability: Nine Revolutions Death Substitution (unique), Daily Appraisal,

Clear and Pure Heart, Reappearance of Hidden Spirit, Divine Might]

[Lifeblood: 10/100 (can be cultivated)]

[Cultivation: 9/100 (cannot be cultivated)] [Divine Abilities: 1/3 (cannot be obtained)]

[Golden Legend: 1/2 (cannot be obtained)]

In the past three months, there had been almost no progress in his lifeblood or cultivation. However, he was back now. He could make progress!

If he worked diligently to accumulate lifeblood and cultivation, he could advance in over a year. Taking a year to advance wasn't a big deal in the cultivation world.

'My cultivation realm is currently on par with Liu Xingchen. I wonder if he will advance first or if I will.'

If it were someone else, Jiang Hao was certain he would be the first. But Liu Xingchen was something else. He was not only a genius, but his physical condition was also extraordinary.

Who else could devour the souls of great beings like a dragon and a sorcerer?

The spirit beast walked near the Heavenly Fragrance Dao Flower. It was about to touch the flower when it fell to the ground, unconscious.

Jiang Hao heard some movement behind him. Before he could turn to look, a white figure descended in front of him.

It was the spirit beast. It was bruised and swollen. Someone had tied it to the tree branch in a split second.

Jiang Hao was stunned. This could mean only one thing. Hong Yuye was here.

Sure enough, a faint fragrance filled the air. It was a familiar fragrance.

“How is your enchantment practice going?”

The voice was crisp and pleasant, like the singing of birds in the forest. It was refreshing to hear. However, the voice mocked him.

Jiang Hao turned to see a woman in a red gown standing in the courtyard. Her skin was pale, and she was surrounded by a radiant aura. She smirked at him.

Her beauty was unparalleled.

Jiang Hao came back to his senses. “Greetings, Senior.”

He hadn’t read any more books on charms after she caught him reading it last time.

Hong Yuye smiled softly and sat on the wooden chair. “I remember that you still have some Azure Red tea left.

“I do,” said Jiang Hao and prepared to make some tea.

The fragrance of the tea leaves wafted up as he soaked them in hot water. Hor

Yuye waited patiently.

Jiang Hao finished brewing the tea and poured her a cup.

“What did you find in the Devil’s Den?”

“Senior, why would you ask something like that?” said Jiang Hao as he poured tea for himself. “I didn’t find anything.”

Hong Yuye lifted the cup to her lips and took a sip. "Hm... Tell me, is your beast like you, or are you more like the beast?"

Jiang Hao remained silent..

Chapter 200: I Hope You Will Be As Confident When I Visit The Next Time

Jiang Hao had indeed brought something from the Devil's Den. It was the Heavenly Fate Misfortune Pearl.

However, he didn't want anyone to find out.

He suspected that Hong Yuye was trying to trick him into admitting the truth, so he denied everything. He hardly thought Hong Yuye would search him physically. It would be inappropriate.

Jiang Hao remembered that Hong Yuye had claimed the Heavenly Fragrance Dao Flower so brazenly. She had even claimed the Immortal Peach Tree for herself.

Even a powerful person could turn aggressive when they need something. The possibility of Hong Yuye searching his storage treasure was low but not zero.

With his thoughts spinning, Jiang Hao decided not to tell her anything. Perhaps he could get away with it if he played dumb.

Hong Yuye drank her tea calmly. "Would you come to my place for some tea?"

"I'm afraid I can't, Senior." Jiang Hao lowered his head.

"Show it to me," said Hong Yuye.

"I really don't have it."

He poured more tea for the woman in front of him.

"How dare you lie to me when the red light is emanating from you so clearly?" said Hong Yuye.

This sudden remark caught Jiang Hao off guard.

Before he could respond, Hong Yuye said, "Any treasure, even if sealed, can leave traces. These traces will dissipate after a certain period of time, but the longer the interaction, the more obvious the traces. The most noticeable treasures in this regard are those related to providence and karma."

Hong Yuye stared at Jiang Hao. "Do you think I'm blind?"

"What if I just happened to come into contact with something like that but don't really have it on me?" Jiang Hao asked.

"So, you do accept that it's a possibility," said Hong Yuye with a smile.

Jiang Hao felt that he had fallen into her trap once again. He hesitated and decided to bring out the pearl.

The Heavenly Fate Misfortune Pearl was gently placed on the table. It was shrouded in purple spiritual energy.

Hong Yuye reached out, picked it up, and examined it for a moment. "I thought you were a good cultivator but lacked courage. It seems you can be reckless when you need to."

Jiang Hao didn't say anything. The pearl might come in handy someday, but using it would incur bad karma.

Jiang Hao decided not to use it unless absolutely necessary.

“Why did you take it? What was your intention?” Hong Yuye raised an eyebrow and looked at Jiang Hao. “Did you plan to use it against me?”

“No, Senior. You misunderstood,” said Jiang Hao. He did think of that for a little while, but not anymore.

Hong Yuye smiled. “Alright.”

Jiang Hao lowered his head and remained silent. It was better to talk less with her.

Hong Yuye placed the pearl back on the table and sipped her tea. “Do you know what this is?”

Jiang Hao shook his head. “Please enlighten me, Senior.”

Hong Yuye glanced at Jiang Hao. “You’re such a cautious person. If you hadn’t known what this pearl was for, would you have risked taking it out of the Devil’s Den?”

Jiang Hao smiled awkwardly. “Senior, you are wise.”

“I think this is the Heavenly Fate Misfortune Pearl,” he said.

“You should know that once the seal is broken, it will not only affect you but also the whole sect. It will be disastrous. It will kill a lot of people. Those who manage to escape will be plagued by misfortune. It will keep spreading until all living beings become part of it,” said Hong Yuye.

“If you intend to destroy the Heavenly Note Sect and escape, remember my flower and the Immortal Peach Tree with you... or you will suffer the consequences,” said Hong Yuye.

Jiang Hao shook his head. "I don't intend to do anything like that, Senior hadn't entertained any thoughts of using the pearl to destroy the Heav Note Sect.

First, the situation wasn't critical. Secondly, using the Misfortune Pearl accumulate too much bad karma.

"There's something I should remind you of..." Hong Yuye looked at the table. "Although the Heavenly Fate Misfortune Pearl brings bad luck people still covet it. If it had appeared here, some people might already be talking about it."

She didn't say anything further, but Jiang Hao understood. Regardless, he couldn't have left the pearl there, nor could he give it to someone else. However, he was only in the early stage of the Primordial Spirit Realm wasn't strong enough to protect the pearl.

Did obtaining treasure always come with such troubles?

"Senior, is it possible for someone to find the exact location of the Heavenly Fate Misfortune Pearl?" asked Jiang Hao.

Hong Yuye thought about it for a while. "In theory, no. The traces can be found when one imbues one's aura into an object. Since imbuing an aura: the Misfortune Pearl means instant death, I don't think anyone could find it."

"In that case, are you interested in this pearl, Senior?" asked Jiang Hao.

"Why would I carry such an unlucky thing with me?" said Hong Yuye.

Jiang Hao realized that Hong Yuye only wanted divine treasures. The Heavenly Fragrance Dao Flower and the Immortal Peach Tree were both divine items. In contrast, the Heavenly Fate Misfortune Pearl was not only associated with misfortune but also stained with the blood of countless living beings. Therefore, she was uninterested in owning such an item.

Jiang Hao decided not to say anything more. It was better to keep the pearl with himself for now. At least it had the power to suppress curses. There might be an opportunity where he could use it.

“What about the progress on the Stone Tablets?” Hong Yuye asked.

“No progress at all,” said Jiang Hao. “But we are going in the right direction. I have infiltrated the inner circle. I might discover more.”

The truth was that he only glanced at the stone tablets occasionally. Gui was still chasing after the python. Xing and Liu often chatted about random things. However, they did mention that the Great Thousand God Sect was becoming more active. They had also talked about how the Bright Moon Sect had recruited another exceptionally talented disciple. Aside from that, Jiang Hao didn’t see anything else. As for the mastermind behind the stone tablets, there wasn’t anything to be found.

“You are full of lies.” Hong Yuye walked to the Immortal Peach Tree and waved her hand lightly. The spirit beast fell into the river and drifted away. “In a few more months, this tree will bear fruit. I remember you saying that the fruits would be sour.”

Hong Yuye looked at Jiang Hao. “If it turns out to be sweet, you will bear the consequences.”

“Please rest assured, Senior. It will be sour,” Jiang Hao said confidently.

“Are you that confident about it?” Hong Yuye was surprised as she looked at Jiang Hao’s determined face.

Her presence became ethereal, and she started to vanish.

“I hope you will be as confident when I visit the next time.” Her voice mocked him..