

The Heavens 191

Chapter 191: Defeat after Defeat!

The Wang Clan Nascent Soul Cultivator turned his head and stared at Eccentric Song. Meng Hao continued to stride toward the retreating Wang Tengfei. He lifted his hand and grabbed Wang Tengfei's index finger.

"So, this is the finger I decimated that time," he said coolly. Wang Tengfei's eyes flashed with hatred, as well as pleasant surprise.

He had developed this poison finger at great cost. He could have re-grown a normal finger, but had instead mastered perseverance and endured the pain necessary to grow a poison finger.

In his estimation, it was a metamorphosis. He had reached this conclusion in a flash of enlightenment; he would take his defeat and transform it into brilliant glory.

The pain had caused him no small amount of torment, but he had suffered through it and created a poison finger which was like a personal precious treasure.

Wang Tengfei knew that all people will endure setbacks in their lives. However, to transform a setback into a treasure can make life truly glorious.

Maybe he was right, but sometimes, fate can be cruel. Today... he ran into Meng Hao.

There were some things that Meng Hao didn't do intentionally. Like it or not, though, the three-colored Resurrection Lily not only made him immune to all other poisons, it also made his body hyper-toxic.

When Wang Tengfei saw Meng Hao grab his poison finger, he began to laugh. The laugh contained both hatred and carefree cheer. He could just imagine how Meng Hao, in mere moments, would begin to wither up and then transform into a pool of blood.

However, even as his laughter began to ring out, it screeched to a sudden stop. A look of absolute disbelief appeared on his face. His finger disappeared within Meng Hao's hand, and then after the

space of a few breaths, a popping sound could be heard. A black mist appeared that seemed to be sentient, it trembled, as if it didn't dare to near Meng Hao.

Meng Hao loosened his grip. Wang Tengfei's entire body shook, and blood sprayed from his mouth. He staggered backward, gazing numbly at the space his index finger had once occupied. He suddenly thought back to the scene from seven or eight years ago, when he had been defeated. He had always thought that he was Chosen, and his opponent was a mere insect. His defeat before had been an accident, and now he had reached Foundation Establishment. His opponent was far beneath him.

But today....

"You're right, you and I aren't archenemies," said Meng Hao indifferently. He had a bit of that same old bashfulness in his expression as he looked at pale-faced Wang Tengfei. "That term is too meaningful. It doesn't suit our relationship." He made no attempt to kill Wang Tengfei. It's not that killing him wasn't worth it, but rather, to kill him in this situation would cause too many complications.

The most important point in the whole thing was that Meng Hao always seemed to end up with the things that belonged to Wang Tengfei. It left him with a strange feeling that suddenly made him even less willing to kill him.

Everything surrounding them was quiet. The invisible woman was gazing tenderly toward Meng Hao. A smile appeared on her face, and when she saw Meng Hao dissolve the poison finger, it transformed into a look of love.

Seeing Meng Hao's shy smile, the woman laughed and shook her head. The loving look grew even stronger.

"This kid has always been a player...." the woman said quietly. "He just can't help but make girls like him." She glanced at Han Bei and then Li Shiqi, as if she were sizing them up as potential daughters-in-law.

"The Han Clan bloodline... not up to standard. She won't do. As for this other one... she seems interesting. She's powerful enough, at least."

Smiling shyly, Meng Hao returned to his place beside Chen Fan. Fatty ran over, giving Meng Hao a wink.

His face pale, Wang Tengfei wordlessly returned to his spot next to Wang Xifan. He laughed bitterly, seemingly having lost any will to fight. Wang Xifan said nothing. He looked over at Meng Hao, his eyes radiating killing intent.

Meng Hao looked up, his eyes locking onto Wang Xifan. When their gazes met, Meng Hao thought back to that year when he sat on top of the East Mountain in the Reliance Sect. Today, however, he was not someone who Wang Xifan could kill with a single glance.

“I wonder if I’ll be able to fight against the Core Formation stage after I form my ninth Perfect Dao Pillar!?” He had been wondering this for some while. After seeing the incredible power of his Perfect Dao Pillars, it caused him to feel even more anticipation for the Perfect Core. In addition, he truly wanted to know if he could battle against the Core Formation stage while he was still in Foundation Establishment!

He wasn’t sure. But as of this day, Wang Xifan was someone who Meng Hao decided must be killed.

Seeing the coldness in Meng Hao’s eyes, Wang Xifan’s killing intent grew more intense. He had the feeling that if he didn’t kill Meng Hao soon, he might lose his chance to do so.

“This Meng Hao is progressing too rapidly....” Wang Xifan had to admit he had overlooked Meng Hao.

It was at this time that the sound of bells rang out, filling the capital city. Suddenly, multicolored beams of light filled the sky. The entire Song Clan passed from night into morning.

In the outside world, it was now night. As the change occurred, the spiritual energy within the Song Clan suddenly grew thicker. However, other than the members of the Song Clan, no one was able to absorb it through breathing exercises. Except for... Meng Hao. His eyes glittered. He actually didn’t need to do anything to absorb the spiritual energy; it naturally drifted into his body strand by strand, slowly replenishing his four Perfect Dao Pillars. In addition to restoring his nearly empty four Dao Pillars, it was causing the outline of his fifth Dao Pillar to appear.

Of course, it wouldn’t be possible to completely solidify the fifth Dao Pillar. That couldn’t happen in a short amount of time. Perhaps if he stayed in the Song Clan for a long period of time, it would.

The bells rang out, and the moon and sun alternated their positions. As day and night mixed together, a colorful glow appeared in the air. Suddenly, three figures emerged from the glowing light.

As this happened, numerous members of the Song Clan looked up at the multicolored glow with looks of veneration. This in turn caused the Cultivators from the other Sects and Clans to look up as well.

The three figures gradually grew distinct. They seemed to be solidifying out of nothing. One was an old man who wore white robes. His smiling face did not reveal the slightest bit of panic because of the events which had just occurred in the Song Clan.

Next to the old man were two middle-aged men. They were handsome, and had profound Cultivation bases.

The old man said, "I am so grateful that all of you could join the Song Clan in our search for a son-in-law! Please, let's begin!" He laughed heartily, and then waved his right hand. The entire square trembled, and countless banquet tables appeared out of thin air. Simultaneously, time seemed to swirl about them, and suddenly they were no longer in the square or even the Song Clan, but floating somewhere up in the sky.

They were surrounded by clouds, and everything looked celestial in nature. Maidservants appeared, their features indistinct, but their figures graceful. They danced and flew about as they reverently placed alcohol and Spirit Fruits onto the tables.

The sound of wind, flowing waters, and birdcalls filled the air. It all seemed extremely graceful and elegant. Neither Meng Hao nor any of the other Foundation Establishment Cultivators had ever seen anything like this before. Some people looked around, others stared at the maidservants.

The Nascent Soul Cultivators who led the various Sects and Clans broke out in smiles and words of admiration. "Elder Song Tian's Cultivation base is profound. This cosmic time shifting truly is of the highest degree of perfection."

The old man was none other than Patriarch Song Tian of the Song Clan. According to the rumors, he had long since reached the Spirit Severing stage. However, it was really impossible for anyone to tell for sure, or even ascertain any clues.

Song Tian laughed and then sat down cross-legged, followed by the two middle-aged men who accompanied him.

The Wang Clan Nascent Soul Cultivator flicked his sleeve. Grim faced, he sat down next to Song Tian, glaring at Eccentric Song. Obviously, he was still brooding at the fact that he had been obstructed by Eccentric Song earlier.

Meng Hao sat at one of the banquet tables next to Fatty. Now that Meng Hao was here, Fatty refused to sit with the Golden Frost Sect, instead demanding to sit next to Meng Hao. He chatted energetically about his experiences in the Golden Frost Sect. He seemed exactly the same as he had been back in the Reliance Sect. Occasionally he would pull out a Spirit Stone and crunch it to pieces between his teeth.

Suddenly, Fatty pulled out what was clearly an extraordinary flying sword. It glittered brightly as he began to use it to grind his teeth.

“One of my friends in the Sect gave me this sword to protect myself,” he said. “But when I grind my teeth with it, it doesn’t feel very good. If you want it, it’s yours.” He handed the sword toward Meng Hao.

It just so happened to be covered with Fatty’s saliva....

Meng Hao hesitated. Next to Fatty, Zhou Daya’s eyes went wide. “Little Patriarch,” he said, “that sword is a magical Legacy weapon of the Nineteenth Bloodline....”

“So annoying! A magical weapon is a magical weapon. Ah, never mind. I guess I can’t give this one to you. But I have some other things.” He pulled out another large magical weapon, whose bright glow instantly attracted quite a bit of attention.

“Do you like this one?” said Fatty, looking pleased. His expression caused Meng Hao to smile.

Chen Fan sighed, looking enviously at Fatty. He knew how important Fatty was to the Golden Frost Sect. He could only shake his head.

Han Bei drifted over in her men’s clothing. She smiled lightly at Fatty.

“Fellow Daoist Li, would you mind scooting aside? I’d really like to sit here.”

Fatty stared at Han Bei and then looked at Meng Hao. Lowering his voice, he said, “Meng Hao, this chick has pretty good skin. Between her and Chu Yuyan, who do you think is better?”

Meng Hao lifted his glass to his lips and took a sip of alcohol, then cleared his throat.

Fatty laughed loudly, then moved over to make room for Han Bei. She sat down, clearly not offended at all by Fatty. She looked at Meng Hao, blinked, and then laughed.

She slid a bit closer to him, and then gently whispered into his ear, “Brother Meng, how exactly are you going to thank me for the matter regarding Xu Qing?”

Chapter 192: Games with Han Bei

“Fellow Daoist Han, what exactly do you mean?” replied Meng Hao, his expression the same as ever. Despite his calm exterior, his heart trembled. He turned to look at Han Bei, and their eyes met. She was clearly watching him closely, feeling him out.

If Meng Hao’s expression changed even the slightest bit, Han Bei would have noticed. That, of course, was why she had moved so close to him.

Han Bei was a schemer, which Meng Hao had come to understand very clearly in the Black Sieve Sect’s Blessed Land. In fact, he hadn’t encountered anyone among his peers who could come close to her in terms of plotting.

“Brother Meng,” she said with a charming smile, “there’s no need to ask questions you already know the answer to. Junior Sister Xu was a member of the Reliance Sect in the State of Zhao, and so were you.” Coupled with her men’s clothing, her sweet tone made her even more alluring.

“Oh?” replied Meng Hao, looking at her with a vague smile.

His expression caused her to start momentarily. Then she frowned, and she suddenly began to feel nervous at heart.

“Brother Meng, it was for your sake that I helped out Junior Sister Xu on multiple occasions. Were it not for my interference, she would have fallen under a lot of suspicion. Thankfully, I have a lot of influence in the Sect, so she wasn’t implicated when you took Ultimate Vexation.” She smiled. “So, how do you plan to repay me?”

Her smile was beautiful, but her eyes flickered with craftiness. Despite her charming appearance, Meng Hao knew the profound depth of her scheming nature, which was impossible to tell from her expression. He would never forget how she had repeatedly called out to her “Xie, dear” that day, only to then exterminate him in an instant. The scene played out in Meng Hao’s mind.

She leaned a bit closer to Meng Hao. From the perspective of anyone looking at them, it would definitely seem they were on quite intimate terms.

“Fellow Daoist Han,” he said coolly, “aren’t you worried about being seen so close to me? What if the Black Sieve Sect starts to suspect something? I imagine that they’re looking for me right now. After today, they’ll definitely send people after me.” His words seemed casual, but he was in fact attempting to feel her out.

“Brother Meng, you can just directly ask me what you want to know. There’s no need to try to feel me out.” She chuckled, looking at him. She breathed out slowly, and her breath brushed across him, carrying with it the aroma of orchids. Meng Hao frowned and edged away from her a bit.

Seeing him move away, Han Bei smiled thoughtfully. She moved closer to him yet again. A delicate fragrance wafted off of her.

Meng Hao frowned, and edged away even further. Han Bei let out a soft laugh that carried a bit of derision with it.

“The Black Sieve Sect is indeed looking for you. Don’t worry, though. The other Sects don’t have any idea. The search for you is being done in secret. You do need to be careful though....” She smiled and, finally seeming to think she was a bit too close, to Meng Hao, moved a bit further away. Suddenly, Meng Hao’s hand snaked out and wrapped around her supple waist. He pulled her close to him.

“How exactly did you want me to thank you?” he said. “You tell me.” He was so close to her that she could feel him breathing. They looked into each other’s eyes, and though their expressions both seemed warm, they were clearly locked in a combat of scheming.

Han Bei suddenly looked a bit flustered. She had never anticipated that Meng Hao would do something like this. She recovered her composure quickly, however, and then her eyes shined with an unruly beauty.

“It’s simple,” she said gently. “Give me the jade page you took from within the square cauldron. I want the entire thing. That’s all.” Her body suddenly twisted imperceptibly, and she pulled away from Meng Hao and stood up.

“Brother Meng, think about it carefully,” she said with a smile.

Meng Hao looked back at her with a vague smile. He didn’t say anything, but after a moment lifted his hand to his bag of holding to produce a jade slip. He tossed it toward her.

She frowned. This was just an ordinary jade slip, not the jade page that she wanted. However, she also knew that Meng Hao was deeply skilled in scheming, and wasn’t someone she could easily trifle with. She accepted the jade slip, scanning it with Spiritual Sense. A strange expression flickered across her face before it returned to normal. She gave Meng Hao a deep look, and then a wide smile once again appeared on her face. She nodded, then turned and headed back toward where the Black Sieve Sect was seated.

Meng Hao lifted his glass and took a sip of alcohol. The only thing on the jade slip was an image of her killing Xie Jie, which Meng Hao had secretly recorded that day.

Actually, even if Han Bei hadn’t come looking for him, he would have thought of a way to get in touch with her. He had prepared the jade slip as a way to get information, and also as a bit of insurance.

Fatty watched Han Bei leave, then started peppering Meng Hao with questions. Chen Fan looked at Meng Hao admiringly. He suddenly realized that considering his Junior Brothers skills, there was no need to attempt to arrange a marriage for him.

Some time passed. After a while, the sound of bells rang out, and the multicolored glow appeared once again. From within its midst emerged two people, one a man, the other a woman. The man was handsome, tall and slender, with eyes like lightning. He wore a white robe and had long black hair that gave him a sort of demonic beauty. He smiled toward everyone and raised clasped hands in greeting.

“It’s the Song Clan Dao Child, Song Yunshu!!”

“Song Yunshu has an extraordinary Cultivation base. As the Dao Child of the Song Clan, he is the number one figure amongst their Foundation Establishment experts....”

“The girl next to him is Song Jia. She’s the girl the Song Clan is finding a husband for.”

Meng Hao looked up, his gaze sweeping across the man and woman as they walked out from the multi-colored glow. Song Jia was petite and delicate. She had long hair and clear, fair skin. She exuded a gentle femininity, and had beautiful, bright eyes. Her eyes shone, not with the scheming of Han Bei, the admonishment of Li Shiqi, or the coldness of Xu Qing. Her eyes shone with gentleness.

Anyone who looked at Song Jia would be able to sense her purity and gentleness. She seemed like the type of girl who would never lose her temper.

She looked out at the crowd. The instant Meng Hao looked in her direction, their gazes locked for a moment.

Song Tian, who sat in the very front, laughed and called out, “The hour has arrived! From generation to generation, the Song Clan has practiced Cultivation without excessive formalities. We prefer simplicity. Heroes and talented individuals of the various Sects and Clans, welcome to the Song Clan. With the exception of those here to observe, all of you are here for the same reason. I won’t waste time with further explanations.” Even as his voice echoed out, he waved his right hand, and the clouds up ahead began to churn. In the blink of an eye, a massive vortex appeared, beyond which a strange world could be seen.

Within this world was a vast sea, in the middle of which was an enormous tree that rose up into the sky. The colossal tree was taller than even a mountain.

Thick vines wrapped around its trunk, snaking up with it toward the heavens.

The trunk was enormously large. At its top, limbs stretched out to form a shape almost like a mushroom. Vines hung down, some of them even reaching down into the sea. A wild wind whipped across the waters, giving rise to seething waves.

Up above in the sky, black clouds billowed, and lightning crashed. The sound of thunder echoed out.

The banquet of Cultivators was actually located in the clouds above this world.

With a laugh, Song Tian said, “At the top of this tree is the Cubic Pearl. Whoever is the first to acquire the pearl, will be the newest son-in-law of this generation of the Song Clan!” He looked out across the crowd, and then at Song Jia. His eyes glowed with the love of an elder for a junior. Then, his gaze fell upon Meng Hao. Just as quickly, he looked away.

Eccentric Song hadn’t spoken during this entire time. It was impossible to tell what he was thinking.

Han Bei didn’t move, but the Black Sieve Sect disciples who surrounded her seemed itching to go. They had come to the Song Clan for the sole purpose of winning a place as a son-in-law of the Song Clan. Success would mean instant benefit, not for the Sect, but for themselves.

It was hard to say who was first. Multiple figures leaped up and flew toward the cloud vortex and the sea below.

Li Daoyi didn’t make a move. As a Dao Child, he had come only to observe. He obviously couldn’t marry into the Song Clan. The rest of the Li Clansmen around him, though, were different. One by one, they flew toward the vortex.

Wang Tengfei sat there thoughtfully, hesitating. Wang Xifan held out a hand to bar his way. However, he had long since made his decision. He strode forward and then transformed into a colorful beam that shot toward the vortex.

His participation was different from that of the others. Looks of astonishment appeared on the faces of the Violet Fate Sect disciples, especially their Nascent Soul Cultivator. His eyes flickered. Next to him, the Wang Clan Nascent Soul Cultivator frowned.

Fatty gave a dry cough and looked at Meng Hao. Then, he flew up into the air. His Cultivation base wasn’t at the Foundation Establishment stage yet, but he had a host of magical items. The rest of the Golden Frost Sect Cultivators flew up with him. Together, they charged toward the vortex.

As for Chen Fan and the others from the Solitary Sword Sect, they flew up one after another. So did the disciples of the Blood Demon Sect, including Wang Youcai. Li Shiqi sat there, her expression cool.

Meng Hao looked through the cloud vortex at the sprawling sea and the massive tree. His eyes narrowed, and he sat there thoughtfully for a moment. Then he stood, strode forward, and shot toward the vortex.

The invisible woman was still there. She watched Meng Hao disappearing into vortex. The tender love in her eyes grew stronger. Finally, she sighed.

“You must walk your path alone. Perhaps one day, you will find your way to us, and then you’ll understand everything.... If you can’t make it, then mother will wait for you to be reincarnated in the yellow springs of the underworld.” Her voice was soft as she looked at Meng Hao. She closed her eyes, turned, and then disappeared. It was as if she had never been there to begin with.

Monstrous waves rolled across the surface of the sea, propelled by the screaming wind. It threatened to blow away all of the approaching Cultivators, making it incredibly difficult to even reach the gigantic tree.

Compared to the tree, they were like crickets or ants, tiny to the extreme.

Meng Hao looked down at the waters and his eyes narrowed. Beneath the massive waves, dark shadows could be seen swimming to and fro. A sense of danger welled up within him.

“The Song Clan’s search for a son-in-law is a trial by fire,” said the Song Clan Patriarch. “We don’t want a bloody spectacle. If anyone feels the danger has become too extreme, you can forfeit with a single word and be instantly teleported out.” His words echoed out across the sea. At the sound of his words the wind suddenly lessened, as if it didn’t dare to interfere.

Chapter 193: The Flower Blooms at Dawn!

Above the sea and the enormous tree, was the endlessly roiling cloud vortex. Above the cloud vortex was the banquet set by the Song Clan in search of a son-in-law.

Currently the Song Clan Patriarch’s voice was ringing out across the sea, and the invisible woman had vanished. Deep within the recesses of the Song Clan mountains was where their Dao Reserves were located.

The corpse, composed of half a body, emitted a mysterious glow from its eyes. Hesitation flickered within the glow.

“Just... just who was she? She seems to have the spirit of an Immortal, but yet is not qualified to be one.... She was looking toward that young man Meng Hao with deep love and affection. However, the object of her gaze was not Meng Hao, but... that Resurrection Lily inside of him!

“She said that he would come before them, and would understand everything. Why did those simple words cause my hair to stand on end....” The old man’s eyes emanated an archaic light, and he sank into thoughtfulness. “She said that if he failed, she would wait for him to be reincarnated in the yellow springs of the underworld. How very logical. It seems she’s accustomed to such things.... This is not something a Cultivator can do. There is no reincarnation in Cultivation. For a Cultivator to attempt to reincarnate is useless. Otherwise, why would the Rebirth Cave have appeared?

“Rebirth is possible, which means the ability to live another life. However, there is no such thing as reincarnation. In terms of reincarnation, this is only possible for... the legendary Resurrection Lily! The Resurrection Lily merges with a person as a form of reincarnation. This is why it’s called a Resurrection Lily! Once the flower merges with a person, the person disappears, but the flower remains. However, things are never so absolute in this world. If the Resurrection Lily were to be tamed and consumed, Seven Colored Immortal Ascension is possible!”

This Song Clan Patriarch who had just recently revealed himself to the rest of the Song Clan suddenly flew up into the air. His eyes glittered as the indistinct image of the lower half of his body appeared. His hair whipped around his head as he kneeled atop the pillar.

“Immortal, your origin is full of mystery. The Song Clan has watched over the Southern Domain for generation after generation. Immortal, I beg you to clear up my confusion!” He bit down on his tongue and spit up some blood from his heart. The blood flew out and instantly disappeared. However, the Sun-Moon treasure in the sky above the Song Clan suddenly flickered, and a glow appeared that no outsider would be able to notice. It shot down through the mountains until it was directly in front of the old man.

It transformed into a partially transparent figure. It was impossible to tell whether it was male or female. It was blurry as if it were both there, and not there....

When the old corpse caught sight of the figure, an expression of veneration appeared on his face. He knew that this was the Spirit of the Clan treasure. This Spirit... was also an ancient Patriarch of the Song Clan. According to legend, after achieving Immortality, he had left behind a fragment of his Spirit here.

The figure lifted its hand and gently tapped the top of the old man’s head.

The man's body trembled, and suddenly his eyes shone with disbelief. He looked up and watched as the illusory figure slowly disappeared. It was as if it had never been there.

The old corpse took a deep breath. "The flower blooms at dawn, and achieves Immortality on the day of vicissitude. The mother of the Resurrection Lily... the Dawn Immortal.... This Meng Hao is too dangerous...." He was silent in thought for a moment. However, he gave no orders, nor did he do anything to reverse the words he had been forced to transmit earlier by the woman.

Meanwhile, in the roaring ocean beneath the cloud vortex, the wind screamed. The Cultivators who had entered this place numbered in the dozens. They circled the region of the enormous tree.

Whoever could break through the massive winds and actually reach the tree itself, would snatch the first place position in the race.

To be able to earn a place within the Song Clan would earn the right to practice Cultivation within the profound Clan regions. Almost all of the Cultivators present thirsted for such an opportunity. That was why they were here, and that was what they were fighting for.

Meng Hao, on the other hand, was not here for any supposed chance to marry into the Song Clan. Although this place was incredibly suitable for Cultivation, he wasn't the type to be inclined to depend on others. Unless he had an important purpose, he preferred to be like the sea and the sky, free to roam as he wished, alone.

For a man to roam under the heavens, enjoy the scenery, observe the beauty of the earth and the animals... that was what life meant to Meng Hao. His eyes glittered as he looked up at the massive tree in the distance. At its vast top existed a pearl.

The others didn't value the pearl itself, but rather, what it represented. Only Meng Hao cared about the former! Were it not for the pearl, Meng Hao wouldn't even be here.

"I hope that pearl can dispel my poison. If it can, I won't have to go through all the trouble of infiltrating the Violet Fate Sect."

Meng Hao's eyes flickered, and his heart trembled as he shot forward. He narrowed his eyes and stopped flying for a moment.

“So, I can absorb spiritual energy in this place too. Furthermore, it’s even more dense here than outside. What big secret does the Song Clan have? How come the spiritual energy here is like that in the Blood Immortal Legacy zone? Why can I absorb it?” His eyes filled with thought, he once again shot forward at high speed. At the same time, he rotated his Cultivation base. His four Perfect Dao Pillars hummed, and his body became like a black hole. Immediately, the spiritual energy in the area began to rush toward him.

Meng Hao didn’t suck it in with unbridled speed, but cautiously, gradually.

Off in the distance, Wang Tengfei’s face was grim, his heart filled with bitterness and even a bit of insanity. Ever since he was young, he had been Chosen. Because of the blood of the Flying Rain Dragon which had fallen from the heavens, his path had been set as he grew up. It seemed he always had the same type of good fortune.

However... thanks to his brother Wang Lihai, he hadn’t been able to become a Dao Child of the Wang Clan. All the focus gradually drifted further and further away from him. In fact, for his entire childhood, he had lived within the shadow of his brother.

He wanted to resist, to fight back. He wanted to exceed his brother. He wanted to prove that he was worthy to be Dao Child of the Wang Clan. Because of that, he had left the Clan and gone to the State of Zhao in search of the Flawless Foundation.

He knew that if he stayed in the Wang Clan, it would be difficult to rise to prominence.

Filled with idealism and aspiration, he went to the State of Zhao to find the Flawless Foundation and the legacy of the Flying Rain-Dragon. His plan was to return from the State of Zhao and then challenge his brother to battle.

However, everything had been ruined by Meng Hao. He had been defeated. Utterly and thoroughly. But he refused to give up. Thanks to Wang Xifan’s encouragement, and the support of Chu Yuyan, he had emerged from the shadows with his poison finger.

In fact, it was only with the help of Chu Yuyan that he had achieved the Cracked Foundation that he had. When he had witnessed his brother die in the Blood Immortal Legacy tournament, it had suddenly felt as if the future were wide open. His extreme misfortune would finally give birth to a meteoric rise.

At that time, he believed that Wang Tengfei’s life would finally be restored.

Except... subsequent events caught him completely unawares. To his astonishment, he found that Wang Lihai was not dead. The Wang Lihai that died in the Blood Immortal Legacy tournament was in fact a Dao Clone created by a Wang Clan patriarch.

Subsequently, the rumours of Chu Yuyan and the strange man spread like wildfire. It was something he simply could not tolerate. Yet even more unbelievable was how when he asked Chu Yuyan about it, she wouldn't respond.

It would be bad enough if that were all that he suffered. He could grit his teeth and endure. However, it was here in the Song Clan that he discovered the man who had been seen with Chu Yuyan was actually Meng Hao!

That had driven him crazy. He had gone all out in order to kill Meng Hao. However, that battle became the straw that broke the camel's back. That straw, that crushing defeat at the hands of Meng Hao, caused Wang Tengfei to laugh bitterly. His thinking, his temperament, his everything, all twisted and changed in that moment.

It pushed him toward the edge of insanity.

"I can do without the Wang Clan," he thought, his eyes filled with veins of blood, "and I can also cut off Chu Yuyan. I, Wang Tengfei, will tread my own path. I will take everything away from Meng Hao. I will snatch it all back!!" His body trembled with crazed fervor as he shot through the wind toward the tree.

Fatty plugged his nose against the wind as he floated in mid-air. Seven or eight Golden Frost Sect disciples formed a protective ring around him.

"The Sect Lord prohibited me from marrying into the Song Clan. But, I figured I would give it a shot anyway," he said. He popped a Spirit Stone into his mouth and crunched it to pieces.

The surrounding Golden Frost Sect disciples could only smile bitterly.

"Little Patriarch, you really shouldn't be doing this. Senior, what if you go berserk and then somehow become a son-in-law of the Song Clan? When we returned to the Sect, our punishment would be horrific...."

“That’s right, Little Patriarch, think things over again... Think things over again...”

Fatty stared at them with wide-eyed, his expression one of disbelief. “But I’m already here,” he said.

“Little Patriarch,” said Zhou Daya hurriedly, “don’t you know about all those Junior Sisters back in the Sect who have eyes for you? Plus, you have several official beloved assigned to you by the Sect Leader. They’re all waiting for you....” He understood Fatty the most, and as soon as the words were out of his mouth, Fatty took a deep breath.

“Alright, forget it. Let’s just go along to watch the fun.”

At the same time as the Golden Frost Sect disciples were trying to dissuade Fatty from participating, off in the distance, Wang Youcai floated in mid-air looking thoughtful. A strange aura circulated around his body. He appeared to be around seventeen or eighteen years old, but also emanated an extremely anti-social air. He gazed toward the enormous tree, lost in thought.

He looked at Fatty, and then Meng Hao. Whenever Meng Hao looked back at him, however, he would avert his eyes.

Whatever had happened between him and Dong Hu, it seemed would remain a secret that only the two of them could understand.

The mournful, screaming wind whipped the sea into madness. The dark shadows which swam back and forth in its depths made this whole place seem incredibly awe-inspiring. Amidst the howling wind, everyone surged forward. The wind blasted against their faces as they shot toward the enormous tree.

Chapter 194: Will of the World Tree

It was impossible to fly very high in this place, because the wind speed increased with altitude. Meng Hao saw one Black Sieve Sect disciple who tried to fly up directly toward the top of the tree. Before he got too high, he screamed, and his body disappeared into a haze of blood and flesh.

The wind continued to pick up. It seemed as if it were filled with sharp blades, as well as a hard-to-describe pressure that made the three thousand meter area around the tree seem like a wall.

When Meng Hao entered the area, he felt the intense pressure pushing against him. The closer he got to the tree, the thicker the spiritual energy got. Of course, he could absorb it, and the closer he got, the more quickly he did so. His eyes shone brightly.

“Moving forward must be very difficult for everyone else, but for me, this place is like a holy land of Cultivation!” He looked up at the enormous tree in front of him, which stretched thousands of meters up into the sky. “Just exactly... what kind of tree is this?” He could sense that the spiritual energy in the place was not the spiritual energy of Heaven and Earth, but rather, produced by the gigantic tree.

As all the Cultivators struggled their way toward the tree, up above the clouds in the sky, the members of the five Sects and three Clans watched on through the cloud vortex, eyes glittering.

They could see everything quite clearly.

Song Tian smiled. “Of all the heroes and Chosen of the various Sects and Clans that have come today, I wonder who will be the first to reach the tree?” The Nascent Soul eccentrics from the Sects and Clans all smiled.

“I’m afraid it’s difficult to say. I never imagined that that Song Clan’s search for a son-in-law would involve this treasured painting....”

“This tree must have been summoned by a will shard from the ancient World Tree. It was clearly painted by the ancient Daoist Grandmaster Shui Dongliu when he gained enlightenment at the legendary location in which the World Tree destroyed itself. It is said that with sufficient enlightenment, the tree itself can be summoned. This is truly a precious treasure capable of summoning that which is ancient.”

Han Bei sat off to the side, observing the Nascent Soul Cultivators and their discussion. She looked for a moment at Meng Hao in the cloud vortex. Her face was calm, giving not even the slightest clue as to what she was thinking.

Li Shiqi stared at the tree created by the will shard of the World Tree, lost in thought.

The Nascent Soul Cultivator from the Black Sieve Sect was a middle-aged man. “The World Tree’s will shard is capable of releasing the legendary ancient Heaven-replacing spiritual energy,” he said. “Unfortunately, it is useless to Cultivators, and will only be an obstacle to them. However, with a suitable Cultivation base, and sufficient enlightenment, the World Tree could be placed in that

world. What a truly precious treasure! Eventually, it could be possible for this treasure to help these disciples make a breakthrough in their Cultivation base.” As he gazed at the cloud vortex, his gaze lingered on Meng Hao.

He had noticed Meng Hao some time ago, of course, but had maintained his silence and done nothing.

“This tree is indeed a will shard of the World Tree. The painting is entitled Ancient Will of the World Tree. It was gifted to me by the Eighth Sea Lord of the Milky Way Sea when I was one thousand years old. I brought it out today for the purpose of helping these members of the younger generation gain enlightenment of ancient times, as well as to benefit all of you. This painting will not belong to me much longer.” Song Tian laughed, shaking his head. “I intend to give this painting as a gift to whoever is the next son-in-law of this generation of the Song Clan.”

This caused the other Nascent Soul Cultivators to stare wordlessly at the cloud vortex, their eyes shining brightly.

Suddenly, Eccentric Song, who sat several places down, laughed and said, “Patriarch, would it be appropriate for me to have a little wager with these Fellow Daoists in regards to who will reach the tree first?”

Elder Fan from the Solitary Sword Sect laughed heartily. He took a swig of alcohol and jeeringly said, “All of us will naturally bet on our own Sect’s disciples. Elder Song, who will you bet on?”

“I bet on HIM!” said Eccentric Song, lifting his arm and pointing toward the cloud vortex at...

Meng Hao!

All of the Nascent Soul Cultivators followed the line created by Eccentric Song’s fingers to look at Meng Hao. The eyes of the Nascent Soul Cultivator from the Black Sieve Sect sparkled.

The Wang Clan Nascent Soul Cultivator frowned.

Elder Fan from the Solitary Sword Sect laughed and gave Eccentric Song a meaningful look.

“Excellent, what are the stakes?” said the Nascent Soul Cultivator from the Blood Demon Sect, a withered old woman with a full head of silver hair. Her voice was raspy, like bones rubbing together. She smiled hypocritically.

“I put up this Soul Fruit!” he said. He flicked his sleeve and pressed his fingers down onto his forehead. After the space of a few breaths, the illusory image of a small, cross-legged figure emerged.

In the blink of an eye, the small figure coalesced into an object that looked like a Spirit Fruit. It emitted a delicate fragrance.

This was none other than a Soul Fruit, something that Nascent Soul Cultivators could congeal into being from their Nascent Soul, and could compare to precious materials. Heaven and earth could produce Spirit Fruits, but to Nascent Soul Cultivators, their bodies were their own Heaven and Earth, and could naturally produce such fruits.

Soul Fruits are like good fortune from Heaven and Earth, and are the most precious treasures of Nascent Soul Cultivators.

Soul Fruits from others have replenishing powers, and to Nascent Soul Cultivators, are the most optimal source of healing and restoration.

Hearing Eccentric Song’s words caused thoughtful expressions to appear on the faces of the other Nascent Soul Cultivators. Not much time passed before all of them coalesced Soul Fruits of their own. Soon, eight of them hovered together in mid-air.

Eight Soul Fruits. To any Nascent Soul Cultivator, such stakes would be incredibly tempting. All of the Cultivators pretended not to be moved, but inwardly, they shook with excitement. They gazed through the cloud vortex at the various disciples.

Song Tian smiled and did nothing to prevent the proceedings. Of the two men sitting next to him, one was meditating with eyes closed, the other was closely watching the Cultivators in the cloud vortex, his face grim.

The Song Clan Dao Child, Song Yunshu sat calmly near Patriarch Song Tian. He said nothing, just smiled. Within his eyes flickered an intense light.

Eccentric Song seemed enlivened. His eyes shone as he gazed at Meng Hao in the cloud vortex.

“Alright, boy,” he thought, “I want to see the same skills you used that day in the State of Zhao. If you win, I’ll gift you with one of these Soul Fruits as a reward.” Because of what had happened in the State of Zhao, as well as various rumors he had heard in the Song Clan, Eccentric Song keenly anticipated Meng Hao’s performance.

As the people above placed their bets, the dozens of Cultivators down by the enormous tree continued to forge ahead. Because of the pressure pushing against them, they couldn’t move very quickly. But they continued forward nonetheless.

At the moment, the fastest of the group was Wang Tengfei. His eyes were red, and he moved forward recklessly. To him this was his only chance. If he joined the Song Clan, then he could start everything anew, and begin a new rise to prominence.

“Chu Yuyan, you slut. And you, Meng Hao! Just wait for me!” He ground his teeth as he pushed forward a few dozen meters.

After Wang Tengfei was Wang Youcai, who approached quietly. Behind him was a group of Cultivators including Chen Fan, who had taken the lead among them.

Fatty, with his entourage of protectors, moved along neither quickly nor slowly.

Meng Hao was obviously a bit behind. However, his expression was calm as he proceeded forward. Every so often, he would pause and cautiously suck in a bit of the thick spiritual energy around him.

Soon, an hour had passed. Wang Tengfei was only about thirty meters from the tree. Wang Youcai was roughly sixty meters away. Everyone else was about three hundred meters or closer. Up above in the clouds, Eccentric Song was getting nervous. Around him, the other Nascent Soul Cultivators began to smile.

Three hundred meters away, Meng Hao took a deep breath. He had been carefully absorbing spiritual energy the entire way. The effect was the same as consuming a handful of Sieve Earth Pills. Despite his caution, he was able to absorb more and more spiritual energy. Meng Hao’s eyes suddenly glittered.

“This is a rare opportunity,” he thought. “I might as well absorb all of it!” Determination filling his eyes he began to move forward. In that instant, a tremor ran through his body as he ceased to repress his four Perfect Dao Pillars. They began to rotate, and a buzzing sound echoed out within him. A massive vortex appeared around him.

The vortex instantly caused the surrounding spiritual energy to shoot toward him.

The water beneath him was whipped into a fury, and Meng Hao’s very body seemed to distort and grow blurry. Mysterious spiritual energy screamed into him, and his speed suddenly increased dramatically.

It wasn’t that he was aiming to increase his speed. However, as he moved forward, the spiritual energy grew more and more abundant. In the blink of an eye, he was not three hundred meters away from the tree, but two hundred fifty, then two hundred....

Meng Hao’s Cultivation base was gradually increasing. The outline of his fifth Dao Pillar was now completely visible and rapidly congealing.

Meng Hao started to get excited. He took a deep breath and moved forward even faster. Considering he had decided to recklessly absorb the spiritual energy, there was no reason not to absorb all of it.

This was Meng Hao’s personality. Even when he was a scholar, he had been like this. It was simply how he lived. Normally, he didn’t like to cause a scene. But sometimes causing a scene was unavoidable. When it happened, he would go all out.

His fifth Dao Pillar coalesced and his Cultivation base continued to climb. His eyes began to glow brightly, and his aura grew more and more powerful!

In the space of a few breaths, he had rocketed forward until he was only ninety meters from the tree. His sudden blazing speed was too incredible, as was his absorption of the spiritual energy. The surrounding Cultivators noticed immediately.

They saw the fear-inspiring vortex which surrounded him, and could sense him absorbing the thick spiritual energy which had been blocking them. It shot toward him at incredible speed, sending ripples throughout the entire world.

“What’s he doing....?”

“He’s... he’s absorbing the spiritual energy? That’s impossible!”

“How... how can he be doing that?”

The surrounding Cultivators looked at him with shock.

It wasn’t just them. Up in the clouds, all of the onlookers were watching the scene, their hearts filled with astonishment.

“He’s swallowing up the ancient spiritual energy!”

“What is he? What kind of Cultivation technique does he use to be able to do that!”

The eyes of the Nascent Soul Cultivators glittered like lightning as they watched Meng Hao. They were shocked to the core, never having imagined that they would see something like this.

Interestingly, even though they were Nascent Soul Cultivators who should easily be able to see a person’s Cultivation base, Meng Hao’s Dao Pillars were currently obscured from their vision.

It was as if some bizarre force were interfering, making it impossible for them to pick up even the slightest clue. The middle-aged man from the Black Sieve Sect watched thoughtfully, his eyes narrowed. He had noticed this strange obscuration of Meng Hao’s Dao Pillars even before he entered the cloud vortex.

As the alarmed Nascent Soul Cultivators watched Meng Hao’s advancement, the Song Clan Patriarch Song Tian looked at him, his eyes glowing brightly. In fact, his eyes hadn’t left Meng Hao from the beginning.

He stared wordlessly at Meng Hao in the cloud vortex, eyes flickering with surprise.

Eccentric Song laughed loudly. He also found the scene to be unbelievable, but on the other hand was incredibly happy. As his laughter rang out, Han Bei sucked in a deep breath, thinking about how Meng Hao had been able to enter the square cauldron even though the name Meng did not exist in the Nine Great Families.

Li Shiqi's phoenix-like eyes flashed as she watched Meng Hao thoughtfully.

Down by the enormous tree, the spiritual energy roiled, causing the wild wind to grow in intensity. The wind buffeted Wang Tengfei, causing him to spin backward from thirty meters to about one hundred and twenty-five meters!

The others were blown back as well. With this reversal, Meng Hao was now the closest person to the tree, being only ninety meters away.

Wang Tengfei raised his head up and howled. He couldn't accept such a situation. He pushed forward with all his strength. However, at that same time, Meng Hao took a deep breath and also pushed forward. He moved forward about thirty meters, and then another thirty!

In two short bursts, he was now only thirty meters away from the tree. Compared to the tree, he was like a cricket. The vortex around him swirled, causing the boundless spiritual energy in the area to suck toward him. The full shape of his fifth Dao Pillar was now visible. If he continued at this rate, he would most likely be able to complete it.

When he formed his fifth Perfect Dao Pillar, Meng Hao would definitely be... the most powerful person in the Foundation Establishment stage.

Whether it be Chosen or Dao Children, the entire Foundation Establishment stage would be like dry weeds that could be crushed beneath his feet!

Chapter 195: Suppressing Everyone

The chance Meng Hao had now was sudden and unexpected. Thanks to this lucky break, his Cultivation base was climbing upward at incredible speed. Furthermore, the closer he got to the tree, the thicker the spiritual energy became.

He took a deep breath, completely ignoring the strange looks everyone was giving him. He was completely focused on the enormous tree and the bizarre spiritual energy it emitted that only he could absorb.

It had been a long time since he had been able to enjoy the refreshing feeling of absorbing spiritual energy. His eyes glistened brightly as his body flashed onward.

The spiritual energy beneath the tree roiled madly. His body was like a whirling black hole, sucking all the spiritual energy in, without exception.

His Cultivation base continued to climb, and the image of his fifth Dao Pillar grew clearer. Soon it would no longer be illusory.

Ten percent, twenty percent, thirty percent....

Meng Hao grew more and more excited as he absorbed the increasingly thick spiritual energy. He leaped forward, heading directly toward the base of the enormous tree.

Next to the towering tree, Meng Hao was little more than an insect, tiny and weak. It was essentially impossible to even compare. They were as different as a firefly and the shining moon.

Meng Hao was the first to step into the tree itself. The other Cultivators closed in. Within the space of about ten breaths, Wang Tengfei and Wang Youcai also stepped onto it.

They, of course, could not absorb the spiritual energy of this place, and therefore had no way to replenish themselves. There is no need to even mention how difficult it was for them to proceed forward. On the other hand, Meng Hao was like a fish in water. In an instant, he was already three hundred meters away from them.

After observing this, the eyes of the spectators shone with a strange glow. This was especially true of the Song Clan Patriarch. His eyes glittered brightly as he watched the cloud vortex, and Meng Hao.

“So he can absorb the spiritual energy there....” he thought. “But that place is merely a painting of the World Tree. It couldn’t even be considered a projected image. However, it does contain some of the World Tree’s will, as well as dense spiritual energy, although not much....” His eyes glittered, although they contained some amount of hesitation.

Eccentric Song too felt shocked, but was also about to go wild with joy. A wide smile emerged on his face. He looked at the shifting expressions of the other Nascent Soul Cultivators and smiled even wider. He flicked his sleeve to collect the Soul Fruits together.

“Fellow Daoists, I shall collect my winnings. Do you wish to make another wager? I bet this kid will become the next son-in-law of the Song Clan. What do you say? Wager, or no wager?”

The other Nascent Soul Cultivators ignored him, refusing to be provoked, and instead focused on what was happening in the cloud vortex. They gazed thoughtfully as Meng Hao ascended the gigantic tree.

Eccentric Song continued to prod a few more times, but seeing that the others refused to speak, he simply put away the Soul Fruits and laughed. The ill feelings toward Meng Hao from years ago were now completely gone.

“This Meng Hao kid isn’t bad,” said Eccentric Song, eyeing the cloud vortex. “Ai, if I had known he was like this, I would have bet on him against Wu Dingqiu all those years ago.”

Within the cloud vortex, Wang Tengfei’s eyes were red. He was on the tree now, proceeding up. The spiritual energy in the area pushed against him, and he had no way to absorb it whatsoever. The wind whipped about, but he forged on without regard to caution. He knew that if he were knocked off the tree, then he would have to start over from the very bottom.

Making progress was incredibly difficult, but every time he looked up and saw Meng Hao speeding along, it would cause him to ignore the screaming wind and intense pressure. Insanity and intense jealousy filled his heart, and he would proceed onward through the thick pressure.

“How could I possibly lose to him!?!?” he raged inwardly. “I am a Wang Clan Chosen! He stole my legacy and my beloved! Today, I shall wrest away his good fortune. Why are you always so unfair to Wang Tengfei, Heavens?! I refuse! I will not give in!!” Setting his teeth, he shot upward. The wild wind buffeted him, but he held doggedly onto the tree. It felt as if his arms were about to rip off.

To his astonishment, Wang Tengfei suddenly realized that the unabsorbable spiritual energy of this place, which exhibited such strong pressure, was actually lessening around Meng Hao. The closer he got to Meng Hao, the easier it was to progress.

Behind him, Wang Youcai, Qian Shuihen, Lu Song as well as Fatty and the others, had all reached the tree, and were relentlessly pursuing.

All of them noticed Meng Hao’s significant increase in speed.

Meng Hao had already sensed that although the spiritual energy in this place seemed thick and abundant, actually, the entire place was divided into different areas. The spiritual energy of the area he was currently in was almost sucked dry. Because of that, Wang Tengfei and the others were able to move more quickly.

However, although the spiritual energy below him was decreasing, he continued moving upward. Soon, he encountered more dense spiritual energy, which he began to absorb immediately. His fifth Dao Pillar was already about forty percent complete.

“The spiritual energy here is organized in layers,” he thought, his eyes shining brilliantly. “Each layer can be completely absorbed into my body. Although it looks incredibly dense, there’s actually not very much of it. However, if I absorb all of it, I should be able to complete my fifth Dao Pillar.” He continued onward, and the spiritual energy continued to pour into him. Whenever it began to grow thin, he would continue on upward to a new layer.

Behind him, Wang Tengfei and the others were continuing to increase their speed. The spiritual energy having dried up, the resisting pressure was gone. The only thing they had to deal with was the raging wind. Their progress now was much easier, so the gap between Meng Hao and them was slowly lessening.

The enormous tree was many dozens of meters in diameter, and from a distance, didn’t seem very far away from the cloud layer above, where the Nascent Soul Cultivators watched the proceedings. Seeing what was happening caused them to sit there quietly in contemplation. The Wang Clan Cultivator let out a cold harrumph. “Eccentric Song, let’s make another bet. This time, the stakes are two Soul Fruits!”

Eccentric Song hesitated for a moment, his brow furrowed.

The Black Sieve Sect Nascent Soul Cultivator coughed lightly. “I’m in,” he said.

The Nascent Soul Cultivator from the Li Clan chimed in. “So, another bet,” he said coolly. “Eccentric Song, why don’t we all join in? Two Soul Fruits per person. Winner takes all.” His words made Eccentric Song even more hesitant.

After a long moment passed, he gritted his teeth. He actually had incredible faith in Meng Hao’s ability to perform, so he flicked his sleeve.

“We’re on!” he said.

Subsequently, all of the Nascent Soul eccentrics produced Soul Fruits. Seeing so many in one place caused all of the Cultivators to palpitate with eagerness. The stakes of this wager were significantly greater than the previous bet.

At the same time as all the eccentrics made their bets, Meng Hao shot up at top speed. He had passed through three layers of the enormous tree, and had now progressed roughly thirty percent up. By now, Wang Tengfei and the others were a mere thirty meters behind him. It seemed they might soon pass him.

Meng Hao’s face was calm. The good fortune of this place lay in the spiritual energy; as far as he was concerned, it didn’t matter who was in first place. Suddenly, Wang Tengfei roared. Employing some unknown magical technique, his body began to glow, and he shot up with incredible, explosive speed. In the space of a few breaths, he had progressed more than thirty meters. This caused him to pass Meng Hao by nearly ten meters.

However, before he even had a chance to rejoice, an enormous force caused his body to tremble. The pressure caused him to cough up blood as it enveloped his body. Just then, Meng Hao passed him, sucking the spiritual energy of the area into his body. The pressure began to subside. If it hadn’t, Wang Tengfei felt as if he might have been crushed down into the tree by a giant, invisible hand.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever as he proceeded onward, ignoring Wang Tengfei. He passed the area that was covered with the blood Wang Tengfei had coughed up, continuing to absorb the spiritual energy. After absorbing all of it, he moved onto the next layer.

Clearly, anyone who wanted to try to pass Meng Hao could do so by merely charging forward.

However, seeing what happened to Wang Tengfei shook the hearts of all the Cultivators below. They stared at Meng Hao with strange expressions. As for Fatty, he took a deep breath, and looked completely disbelieving.

As of this moment, none of the pursuing Cultivators dared to pass Meng Hao....

Meng Hao continued on slowly, which gave them no other option than to do the same. Looking embarrassed and helpless, they followed Meng Hao. Clearly, many of them had various plans in

mind. They would wait until the very top of the tree, whereupon various techniques would explode out as they attempted to pass him!

Chapter 196: Followed by All Eyes

Meng Hao was aware of all of this, of course. His expression was the same as ever and he ignored everyone else. He paused at each layer to absorb as much spiritual energy as possible, and then continued to climb upward.

Several meters behind him were all the other Cultivators. They eyed Meng Hao helplessly, waiting for him to move onward before doing so themselves.

Each and every pair of eyes inside this world was watching Meng Hao. He was the focus of all attention.

The Song Clan's competition in search of a son-in-law had turned into Meng Hao's stepping stone. Regardless of whether Meng Hao was the winner or not, he had already left a deep impression on Song Jia. That, coupled with the events which had happened before the banquet began, caused her to ignore everyone else and focus solely on Meng Hao.

Perhaps it was fate; after today, the five Clans and three Sects would know that Meng Hao was also Chosen!

Perhaps it was fate; after today, stories of scholar Meng Hao of the State of Zhao would spread throughout the entire Southern Domain. There was now one more amongst the ranks of the Chosen!

Also fated was that previously unknown Meng Hao would be the complete center of attention. More and more Cultivators would hear of him and especially... the matter of him and Chu Yuyan. Rumors would spread like wildfire throughout the entirety of the Southern Domain.

Meng Hao would become the object of jealousy of countless male Cultivators. Of course he would also attract the notice of many female Cultivators. He was now the subject of a huge scandal involving one of the four most beautiful women in the Southern Domain. Everyone was paying attention to him now.

At the same time, anyone who hadn't heard about Meng Hao's dealings with the Violet Fate Sect back in the State of Zhao, would surely know about it now. Meng Hao's name would only become more and more well known.

In actuality, if people knew about the feud between the Black Sieve Sect and Meng Hao, or how he had taken the Blood Immortal Legacy, then he would instantly become the most famous Cultivator in all of the Southern Domain. After all, he could now sweep across Chosen and push down Dao Children.

Today was only the first sign of what was to come, though. This was Meng Hao cutting into the Southern Domain!

Time passed. Meng Hao, his expression the same as always, continued onward slowly. Behind him, many of the Cultivators were growing impatient. A young man from the Violet Fate Sect looked at Meng Hao slowly absorbing spiritual energy, and frowned. Unable to accept the situation any longer, he shot forward.

He slapped his bag of holding, and immediately, eight talismans appeared to circle around him. A bright glow appeared, some sort of protective spell. With a triumphant cry, he charged onward, passing Meng Hao and entering the next layer beyond.

The Violet Fate Sect Nascent Soul Cultivator coolly mentioned, “This is a Chosen of the Violet Fate Sect, Liu Gao. His Cultivation base is beyond ordinary. His eight talismans treasure can reduce any force of pressure by eighty percent.” Even as the words left his mouth, his face suddenly grew unsightly.

As soon as Liu Gao passed Meng Hao and entered the next area, his body began to shake. His face tightened, and blood sprayed from his mouth. His body trembled as if it were under attack. Everyone watched as he howled and tried to endure. Meng Hao cleared his throat. He stopped in his tracks for a moment, looking up and waiting.

After the space of a few breaths, the Violet Fate Sect disciple coughed up more blood. One by one, his eight talismans disintegrated. With a miserable scream, he fell down into the sea below. He emerged moments later, pale faced, and began to climb again. It didn’t take him long to rejoin the group of people below Meng Hao, where he stared upward with fear and respect.

Everyone looked thoughtfully at Meng Hao, who once again cleared his throat and moved upward, absorbing spiritual energy along the way.

No one dared to attempt to pass him. They could only follow helplessly. Time passed as Meng Hao proceeded through the layers. By now, his fifth Dao Pillar was about seventy percent complete.

The further he progressed, the more spiritual energy he needed. Before long, Meng Hao was roughly three thousand meters from the apex of the enormous tree.

Wang Tengfei's eyes flashed, and though Wang Youcai said nothing, his eyes shined brightly. A look of anticipation covered Fatty's face. He had no thoughts of trying to pass Meng Hao, but was very much looking forward to seeing what happened when Meng Hao reached the top.

It wasn't just the Cultivators whose eyes glittered; up in the cloud layer, the eccentrics from the five Sects and three Clans, as well as all the Song Clan members, were all focused on Meng Hao. Although his participation in the Song Clan search for a son-in-law had been unexpected, a critical moment was approaching. Everyone watched on with keen anticipation.

With a smile, Song Tian said, "At the top of the tree, there is a final test. Of the heroes of the various Sects and Clans, it's hard to say which one... will be able to pass the final test."

One of the Nascent Soul Cultivators laughed and said, "I had heard that part of the tradition of your Song Clan search for a son-in-law involves a difficult test. I'm very curious as to the nature of this test. Elder Song, would you mind explaining a bit about it?"

"That's right," said the Golden Frost Sect's Nascent Soul Cultivator. "I've also heard such things. Elder Song, would you mind telling us some about it? We're all very curious."

Everyone seemed very interested in hearing about the final test.

Song Clan Patriarch Song Tian laughed loudly. Then, he looked at the middle-aged man who sat at his right hand. "Muqiu, we are searching for a husband for your daughter. Why don't you explain the final test?"

The middle-aged man was handsome and dashing. Hearing the words of the Patriarch, he clasped his hands respectfully and then looked at the group of people, eyes flashing like lightning. Then he glanced at Song Jia, and a warm, loving expression filled his face.

His voice cool, Song Muqiu said, "The final test in our search for a son-in-law is a bit different than the tests in previous generations. This is a test of a Cultivator's Dao Heart!"

The Nascent Soul Cultivators frowned.

Elder Fan from the Solitary Sword Sect frowned and took a drink of alcohol. “Matters of Dao Hearts aren’t even clear to us, let alone these Foundation Establishment pups.”

“That is why this test is special,” replied Song Muqiu. “Elder Fan is correct, Dao Hearts are mysterious and unfathomable. Actually, the Song Clan believes that one of the most important aspects of the Dao Heart is determined by personality and behavior. The combination of the two, as well as a person’s stubbornness... that is the Dao Heart. Therefore, although today’s test is not conclusive, it will give us some inkling of what will be. Actually, as it relates to Dao Hearts, this test is actually a choice!” Having said this much, Song Muqiu closed his mouth and declined to comment further.

Everyone else sank into deep thought. As for Song Jia, she continued to watch Meng Hao within the cloud vortex, very curious as to what choice he would make during the final test....

Song Yunshu’s eyes flickered as he calmly watched the cloud vortex. He was Dao Child of the Song Clan, and yet, as he watched Meng Hao, an uneasy feeling welled up in his heart. He was used to concealing his emotions, though. His exterior was calm. But he was extremely curious to see what choice Meng Hao would make.

“As Dao Child of the Song Clan, I was able to take the test myself ahead of time. My choice....” Song Yunshu was lost in thought. He had only succeeded on his second try. Succeeding in such a fashion had earned him the praise of Patriarch Song Tian.

With a smile, Patriarch Song Tian said, “Muqiu makes it sound very complicated. The final test is a choice, and also a test of observation. I should make clear that the Dao Child of our Song Clan succeeded on his second attempt.” He glanced at Song Yuncai with a look of praise.

This caused everyone to grow even more curious. They all looked back down, waiting for Meng Hao to break through. They also peered at the group of Cultivators behind him, all of whom were waiting for their chance to spring forward.

Meng Hao began to move faster and faster. His fifth Dao Pillar was now eighty percent complete, and he now needed even more spiritual energy than before. Remembering the horrific scene that had accompanied the completion of his last Dao Pillar, Meng Hao wanted to be certain there was enough spiritual energy in this place before he reached the point of no return.

Otherwise, when the critical juncture arrived, then he would have no choice but to consume the other Cultivators. That was a path that Meng Hao refused to tread.

Cautiously, but quickly, he absorbed the spiritual energy. He proceeded, leaving behind some of the spiritual energy and moving on to the next layer. He was rapidly approaching the top of the tree. Because he had left behind some spiritual energy, the Cultivators behind him suddenly encountered the resisting pressure, and had no choice but to slow down.

They trudged on desperately. However, there was now more and more distance between them and Meng Hao. Wang Tengfei's eyes were completely red. He pursued madly.

Meng Hao was now only fifteen hundred meters from the top of the tree.

One thousand meters. Five hundred meters. Two hundred fifty meters.... One hundred fifty. Fifty.... Meng Hao leaped up, surpassing the final gap to stand on top of the tree.

At this moment, all eyes were upon him!

Chapter 197: Sublime Spirit Scripture!

At this moment, the Song Clan Patriarch and Eccentric Song both stared at Meng Hao. In fact, without exception, all of the Song Clan members in the cloud layer were looking at him.

The attention of the Nascent Soul Cultivators of the five Sects and three Clans were all fixed on him as well.

To garner such attention showed how famous Meng Hao now was in the Southern Domain.

Members of the Song Clan such as Song Yunshu, as well as Han Bei, Li Shiqi, Li Daoyi... everyone's attention was focused solely on Meng Hao.

The Chosen from the various Sects and Clans, regardless of their frustration or helplessness, regardless of what thoughts were running through their heads, were looking up at Meng Hao. Wang Tengfei, Fatty, Wang Youcai, Qian Shuihen, Lu Song....

Atop the tree, at the pinnacle of this world, Meng Hao stood alone, the focus of all the heavens.

As soon as he stepped foot on the top of the tree, he felt the boundless spiritual energy in the area sucking toward him. It was definitely enough to complete his fifth Dao Pillar. Far below the top of the tree, the massive sea seemed smaller; now it looked like a mirror.

Beyond the edges of the mirror, was nothingness.... This world was not limitless. In fact, in the midst of the nothingness could be seen what appeared to be handwriting, floating there faintly.

The ancient will of the World Tree; respect its strength, remember its intentions. Painted in the spot where the World Tree destroyed itself.

It was signed with three characters. Shui Dongliu.

“Shui Dongliu... could it be that this entire world is... a painting?” Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as he stared at the words. Then he took a deep breath and allowed the spiritual energy to flow into him. The instant his fifth Dao Pillar reached ninety-percent completion, a person suddenly appeared up ahead of him!

It was an old man who had the demeanor of a transcendent being. He wore a long, gray robe, and it was impossible to tell exactly how old he was. He was clearly ancient, although was impossible to tell how many countless ages he had lived.

Meng Hao could sense no ripples emanating from the man’s Cultivation base. It seemed as if he were a mortal, not a Cultivator. And yet, considering how ancient he was, how could he possibly be mortal?

The old man looked at Meng Hao, his face calm and filled with unspeakable dignity. It seemed as if even the Heavens would flee from before him.

The old man spoke, his voice cool, “The Heavens are not the Heavens, the Earth is not the Earth. The stars are eternal, and the Dao will always be!” His words floated out gently, much the same as his hair floated gently around his body. “This place does not belong to the Heavens, nor to the Earth. This painting of the World Tree contains endlessly flowing memories. Drink of them, and the great Dao in front of you will lead you to the utmost heights. Select a path upon which to approach me.” Suddenly, nine snaking paths appeared among the twisted leaves of the tree’s crown. They all led toward the old man, who stood only a few hundred meters up ahead.

Each path led to the same destination: the old man.

The old man lifted his hand. There between his fingers was a thumb-sized pearl. “Select a path upon which to approach me, and then take the pearl. Choose wrong, and you must start over.”

The pearl was white, and seemed to contain an entire world within its depths. Looking at it, Meng Hao noticed that it was not round. For some reason, it seemed to be the shape of a cube. It was very bizarre.

Suddenly, Meng Hao could sense the three-colored Resurrection Lily inside of him being suppressed slightly.

“Nine paths. And I have to pick one....” he frowned. By this time, Wang Tengfei and the others were approaching. However, they weren’t able to step onto the treetop. It seemed that there was some invisible force that prevented more than one person from being atop the tree.

Meng Hao thought for a while as he looked over the nine paths. He had no clue how to select a path. He looked at the man up ahead, and then his eyes gleamed. The man was holding the pearl with three fingers! After thinking for another moment, Meng Hao took a deep breath and then walked forward onto the third path.

The instant his foot stepped down on the path, the world seemed to turn upside down. A roaring filled his ears, and everything grew blurry for a moment. When everything became clear, he found that he was now at the very bottom of the tree!

He was only a few hundred meters from the surface of the sea, falling downward. His mind reeled, and he forced himself to a stop. Looking up, he saw Wang Tengfei climbing up onto the top of the tree.

“I chose wrong, so I have to start over....” He frowned. Selecting a path seemed to involve little more than random guessing. How could one pick, other than going through the paths one by one?

Meng Hao muttered to himself for a moment. Then, his eyes flashed as he saw Wang Tengfei falling down from the top of the tree like a shooting star. He, too, had failed, and had to start from the beginning, at the sea beneath the tree.

Meng Hao leaped into action, heading up toward the top of the tree at top speed. In the time it takes for half an incense stick to burn, he was less than three thousand meters away from the top. During that time, he witnessed over ten Cultivators falling down toward the ocean.

Meanwhile, up in the cloud layer, the Nascent Soul Cultivators watched on with furrowed brows. Having seen everything that happened, they broke into discussions.

“Nine paths. How can one know which path to choose...? It must involve careful observation. The answer doesn’t lie in blind luck, but with that old man!”

“He is not emanating any Cultivation base ripples, and yet emanates a profound air. Perhaps the answer to the riddle is hidden in the words he spoke...”

“No wonder this test requires careful observation. There doesn’t seem to be any clear solution. For the Song Clan Dao Child to have passed the test in two tries really is worthy of admiration.”

Han Bei looked at the scene playing out on the tree. Her eyes shined with interest. After thinking for a moment, she said. “The fourth path from the left!”

Li Daoyi’s eyes flashed. Having heard that the Song Clan Dao Child passed the test in two tries, he felt a sense of competition rising within him. He slowly said, “The fourth path from the right. That path doesn’t look special. But the leaves there are somewhat thicker. Furthermore, the old man seemed to pause slightly after every fourth word he spoke!”

Li Shiqi’s eyes also flickered, but she said nothing. She was lost in thought as she stared at the nine paths.

Song Yunshu’s expression was placid, but in his heart, he sighed. He had succeeded in two tries, but in fact, it had all been a matter of luck. He actually had no idea how he had succeeded.

Patriarch Song Tian laughed but said nothing. Hearing the discussions, he shook his head and fixed his attention to the top of the tree. Meng Hao was nearing it again.

Meng Hao moved quickly, and the three thousand meters whizzed by. The only people left at the top of the tree were Fatty and others from the Golden Frost Sect. Seeing Meng Hao approach, Fatty immediately made way for him.

Meng Hao nodded. Another person up above failed, after which Meng Hao's body flashed and appeared for a second time on the treetop. By this time, his fifth Dao Pillar was more than ninety percent complete. There wasn't much spiritual energy left, but Meng Hao was certain it was enough to complete the Dao Pillar.

He took a deep breath as he stood there atop the tree. He gazed at the old man, then recalled his words again as he looked over the paths again. Then, he stepped forward onto the fourth path!

He had made exactly the same choice as Han Bei!

However, the moment he stepped onto it, everything turned upside down, and he was again shooting down toward the sea beneath the tree.

"I'm really starting to dislike this place!" he thought, his eyes filling with both frustration and determination.

All of the Chosen from the various Sects and Clans who had failed once were now making their second attempts. And yet, one after another, they failed, falling downward just like Meng Hao.

Meng Hao went up to try a third time.

By this time, everyone was watching with strange expressions. They were all lost in thought, trying to figure out what they had overlooked. Which path was correct?

More discussions broke out among the Nascent Soul Cultivators.

"This place is very mysterious. These kids have all had two chances each, and between the lot of them, have tried every one of the nine paths."

"Clearly, the correct path changes. The route is not fixed. It seems that luck does have quite a bit of a role."

Han Bei frowned, continuing to look on. She was now starting to form another opinion on which path was the correct one.

“There’s no need to get anxious, friends,” said Patriarch Song Tian. He laughed. “To find the correct path, each person must observe matters carefully. It will all depend on their Dao Heart.”

Atop the massive tree beneath the cloud vortex, Meng Hao shot back upward. He was currently about nine thousand meters from the top of the tree when suddenly his Dao Pillar reached the point where it was only a sliver away from being completed. The same phenomenon that had appeared in the Xiao Clan, once again began to occur.

His body immediately began to wither. Thankfully, there was plenty of spiritual energy in this place. The unbridled gravitational power of the Dao Pillar began to absorb all of the spiritual energy, no matter how far away it was. Each and every bit of it rushed toward Meng Hao.

His face was ruddy as he felt his Cultivation base climbing upward. He shot upward, and was soon only three thousand meters from the top. His mind began to reel.

A booming sound could be heard, and Meng Hao’s face flickered as suddenly, a golden light began to collect inside of him. His Cultivation base started rotating, causing the light to shine outward. It seemed as if it wished to eclipse the World Tree!

Amidst the golden glow, streams of magical symbols appeared. They were indistinct, but the instant they appeared, they caused the entire world to be filled with a golden color.

Up above, looks of disbelief appeared on the faces of the Nascent Soul Cultivators. One by one, they stood up. “That’s....”

“The Sublime Spirit Scripture!” said one of the other Nascent Soul Cultivators breathlessly.

Chapter 198: The Number One Person in Foundation Establishment!

The Nascent Soul Cultivators couldn’t keep their cool. One by one, they began to speak, their eyes shining with unprecedented brightness.

“That’s... that’s definitely the power of one of the three great classic scriptures. That golden glow... it’s a sign of the Sublime Spirit Scripture!!”

“That kid cultivates with the Sublime Spirit Scripture. That scripture has supposedly been lost for years. There are only fragments left. How did this kid get the whole scripture!?!?”

“From the looks of it, he acquired the Qi Condensation Manual of the Sublime Spirit Scripture. Supposedly, it appeared a few hundred years ago in the State of Zhao, and was used by a man named Patriarch Reliance. His Cultivation base was unfathomable....”

Their eyes were on Meng Hao, but what they were really paying attention to was the Sublime Spirit Scripture!!

Each and every one of them could crush Meng Hao between their fingers like he was nothing; he wouldn't be able to fight back in the least. Whichever one of them got their hands on Meng Hao, would actually be acquiring the Sublime Spirit Scripture.

Such a text would be indescribably useful to any Sect. Whoever acquired it would be in the position to sweep across the Southern Domain with impunity.

That Sect would become incomparable, and would without fail become the overlord of the Southern Domain!

How could these Nascent Soul Cultivators not be excited? Even if Meng Hao succeeded in becoming a son-in-law of the Song Clan, they would still no doubt crazily pursue him regardless of anything!

In any case, Meng Hao currently was not a member of the Song Clan, and was only one participant among many.

It wasn't appropriate to make a move at the moment, but once Meng Hao emerged, all of the Sects and Clans in the Southern Domain would want to grab him. In such an event, his life wouldn't be important. To get the Sublime Spirit Scripture, there wasn't a single Nascent Soul Cultivator who would hesitate to use Soulsearch on Meng Hao to drag out the Sublime Spirit Scripture.

The result of such a Soulsearch would kill him!

As soon as the Sublime Spirit Scripture appeared, Meng Hao instantly became the prey of all of these super Sects of the Southern Domain!

It was obvious what everyone was thinking. The Nascent Soul Cultivators' eyes glittered. This was the Song Clan, but sooner or later, someone would make a move. They all glanced over at the Song Clan Patriarch.

Meng Hao had openly revealed his secret of possessing the Sublime Spirit Scripture. It would without fail arouse the lust of any Sect or Clan. However, in terms of positioning, the Song Clan currently had the clear advantage.

As the Nascent Soul Cultivators looked over at the Song Clan Patriarch, they discreetly retrieved transmission jade slips and crushed them between their fingers. This instantly sent notifications back to their various Sects and Clans.

Eccentric Song watched the scene in shock. The rest of the Song Clan members all seem to be in shock. Patriarch Song Tian suddenly stood up. His eyes shone mysteriously, and he was breathing heavily. However, he then recalled what had happened within the Clan earlier, along with the warning transmitted by the Dao Reserve Patriarch, and his eyes filled with determination.

"This Meng Hao..." he said, "must not be provoked! Whoever causes problems for him is seeking death!" He flicked his sleeve. "Ladies and gentlemen, you are in the Song Clan!" His words echoed out like thunder, causing the faces of the Nascent Soul Cultivators to tighten. Blood seeped out of the corners of their mouths. Their eyes glistened with fear as they stared at the Song Clan Patriarch.

"Regardless of what objectives you might have, this is the Song Clan's search for a son-in-law," he said, his eyes shining. "Whoever succeeds will become a son-in-law of the Song Clan. Once everyone emerges, there will be time for your greed. However, if Meng Hao becomes the son-in-law of the Song Clan, then it must be viewed as the will of the Heavens."

"Elder Song, we will naturally comply with your words," said the Nascent Soul Cultivator from the Black Sieve Sect, smiling.

The rest of the Nascent Soul Cultivators all agreed slowly, pretending not to pay any attention to Meng Hao. However, in their hearts, they were preparing for the arrival of fellow Sect members.

Patriarch Song Tian was of course well aware of that. He sighed inwardly and said nothing more, continuing to gaze at the golden world within the cloud vortex.

Magical symbols appeared in the golden glow that spread out from Meng Hao. This was none other than the Sublime Spirit Scripture.

Observers would be able to make out the details of the magical symbols, but would be unable to commit them to memory. The only thing they would be able to remember would be a blur.

In the Southern Domain, there are three classic scriptures. Only one of them emits a golden glow... the Sublime Spirit Scripture!

There were no records of the origin of the scripture, or of who created it. There were many legends, though. One stated that it had been created by an eminently powerful Cultivator of the Dao Seeking stage who had walked the path of the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

However, such a matter seemed too monumental. As such, many people refused to believe such a legend.

Regardless, each of the seven manuals of the Sublime Spirit Scripture could be considered precious treasures. In fact, the reason that the Violet Fate Sect became one of the great Sects was because it had acquired a fragment of the Foundation Establishment manual of the Sublime Spirit Scripture.

Just a fragment of one of the manuals could give birth to a great Sect; this alone demonstrates the boundlessness of the Sublime Spirit Scripture!

Practicing the Cultivation of the Sublime Spirit Scripture would eventually cause the body to reach the point where it would emit magical scriptures. This is a special state, and a special sign!

Such a state could only be reached after nine Dao Pillars had been formed. Then it would become visible. However, because Meng Hao had a Perfect Foundation, he was in a unique position with his Five Dao Pillars. That was why the sign made itself visible now.

Of course, this turn of events exceeded Meng Hao's powers of anticipation and caught him completely unawares. His heart instantly filled with vigilance, and he immediately pulled out the good luck charm and prepared it for activation.

As the scripture floated out from his body and the golden glow filled the entire world, the Chosen from the various Sects looked up at him in astonishment and shock.

Fatty gasped and began to mutter to himself. “That’s Meng Hao for you. He was awesome in the Reliance Sect. Then he came to the Southern Domain and seduced Chu Yuyan. Now he’s showing off even more power....”

Wang Youcai stared wordlessly at the golden light. Inside, similar waves of admiration filled his heart.

As for Wang Tengfei, he felt as if he had been struck by lightning. His body shook. A sense of unwillingness wanted to rise up within him, and yet he was forced to admit that Meng Hao... was no longer someone he could afford to look down upon.

In fact, fear began to well up in Wang Tengfei’s heart; not even ten years had passed since they last met. After another ten years, how much further would Meng Hao have surpassed him? Wang Tengfei didn’t even dare to think about what would occur if one day, he himself was still in the Foundation Establishment stage, but Meng Hao reached Core Formation. If they met again at that time, what would happen...?

The stir caused by what was happening now far exceeded the recent spectacle created by Meng Hao when he had climbed the tree.

He panted as intense booming sounds filled his body. They far exceeded the roaring he had experienced when he created his fourth Dao Pillar in the Xiao Clan, so much so that Meng Hao’s heart shook and his flesh leaped.

He felt his fifth Dao Pillar being completed. After the space of a few breaths passed, his head suddenly resounded with an enormous roar. Finally, his fifth Dao Pillar appeared in full!!

His fifth Perfect Dao Pillar!

With this fifth Dao Pillar, his Cultivation base rocketed to new heights. Blinding golden light shined out from him, and the magical symbols of the Sublime Spirit Scripture revolved around him in circles. They seemed as if they were prostrating themselves toward Meng Hao.

Every breath he took caused the symbols to flutter. Every blink of his eye caused the golden light to shine even more blindingly. His Cultivation base rose higher and his battle prowess soared. Meng Hao was transforming in an unprecedented fashion!!

Suddenly, Tribulation clouds appeared in the mountains of the Song Clan, and they lingered for some time before dissipating.

Meng Hao's long hair floated about him, and his body filled with an indescribable might. As the roaring continued to echo out, his heart began to thump. He took a deep breath as he allowed all the feelings to wash over him. The explosive growth of his Cultivation base caused his battle might to far exceed his previous pinnacle.

Meng Hao was now convinced that at the moment, he could easily sweep across the entire Foundation Establishment stage. Regardless of Chosen or Dao Children, all of them were beneath him. He had a Perfect Foundation and five Dao Pillars; he was invincible within the Foundation Establishment stage!!

In front of him, all Foundations except for Flawless Foundations, could be crushed by his Perfect Foundation.

At the same time, however, a profound sense of danger welled up within him. He knew that everyone outside was watching him. The scripture symbols which were floating around him were obviously from the Sublime Spirit Scripture.

Despite the feeling of danger, determination filled Meng Hao's eyes. Fingering the good luck symbol, he leaped forward. This place was already devoid of spiritual energy, so he shot forward toward the treetop, surrounded by the golden glow.

"So far no one has come down after me. There's definitely not much time left...." Meng Hao was nervous, but also wasn't willing to leave quite yet. His goal, the Cubic Pearl, was still there for the taking. Then he could escape with the good luck charm.

"If the charm could get me out of the ancient Blessed Land, then this place will naturally be no problem either!" The good luck charm needed time to prepare, so at the same time as he poured power from his Cultivation base into it, he shot upward. Utilizing the strength of his five Perfect Dao Pillars, he shot past the final three thousand meters to arrive at the empty treetop.

The gray-robed old man stood there. The nine paths in front of him had been affected by the golden glow, and now appeared to be paths of gold.

This was Meng Hao's third time standing here. His eyes glowed brightly. The time had come to make his final choice. The choice he made... was one that only Meng Hao could make!!

Chapter 199: The Tenth Path!

Currently, all of the Nascent Soul eccentrics up in the clouds watched on with shining eyes. If they weren't in the Song Clan, they would have long since taken action. They were frightened, but had already made preparations. In their opinion, Meng Hao was like a turtle in a jar. He couldn't escape even if he sprouted wings.

The only thing they needed to worry about was the Song Clan. The importance of the Qi Condensation Manual of the Sublime Spirit Scripture was hard to describe. Actually, many of them couldn't understand how it was possible that their various Sects had permitted the scripture to remain in the Reliance Sect, and had chosen not to go take it....

Their eyes flickered as they watched on. They were simply waiting for Meng Hao to come out, and for backup from their Sects to arrive.

However... the Nascent Soul Eccentric from the Black Sieve Sect's eyes flickered with something else, undetectable to the others. The jade slip which he had crushed contained details different from that of the others. Not only had he passed on the information about the Sublime Spirit Scripture, but also news that he had tracked down Meng Hao.

Orders had already been issued by the Patriarchs of the Black Sieve Sect to search for the person who had snatched away Ultimate Vexation. The news hadn't been broadcast on the outside, of course, and their search could only be conducted secretly. Therefore, the appearance of the Sublime Spirit Scripture was not a good development for the Black Sieve Sect.

"All of the Sects are now paying attention to him," thought the Black Sieve Sect Nascent Soul Cultivator, his eyes flickering. "I need to grab him first, before all his secrets are revealed!" A cold smile appeared on his face. "Ancient Blessed Lands cannot contain this guy. He has a good luck charm from the ancient Good Luck Sect. He can go anywhere in the world." He was the only one among the Nascent Soul Cultivators who knew that this phantom fragment of the World Tree was incapable of keeping Meng Hao trapped within it. He wasn't worried, though. Once the Black Sieve Sect learned that Meng Hao had the good luck charm, they had instituted a slew of contingency plans.

Down beneath the cloud vortex, in the glowing, golden world, Meng Hao took a deep breath. He stared at the old man, who stood only a few hundred meters away on the treetop.

They were separated by nine paths, all of which glowed with golden light. Three of the paths actually seemed to glow a bit brighter than the others.

“How do I pick...?” Meng Hao stood there thoughtfully for a brief moment. Then, a cold light gleamed within his eyes. He had made two choices before and had failed both times. This was his third chance. If he failed again, he knew that he would never get a fourth chance.

In actuality, Meng Hao had already guessed which path was the correct one to take. It was the same path he had walked before. If a person truly wishes to practice Cultivation, they must have persistence, and not easily change their mind. This was the key to treading the nine paths in front of him.

“But that choice... is not a choice born of my will....” Meng Hao’s eyes shone with coldness. He moved forward, and as he did, all of the Nascent Soul Cultivators above watched on. Even though the entire world was filled with the blinding golden light, their vision could pierce through it to observe the proceedings.

The instant Meng Hao shot forward, his five Perfect Dao Pillars exploded with power invincible to the rest of the Foundation Establishment stage. The golden glow grew thicker, and his speed increased.

However... he did not pick any of the nine leafy paths. Instead, he flew up into the air and... shot directly toward the gray-robed old man. All of this takes some time to describe, but actually happened in the blink of an eye. Meng Hao completely bypassed the nine paths to appear directly in front of the old man. He lifted his hand, and his Cultivation base rippled out. Instantly, a six hundred meter long Flame Dragon appeared and then slammed down onto the old man.

Meng Hao lowered his hand, causing the Cubic Pearl to fly out of the old man’s hand and into his own. The old man didn’t do anything whatsoever to stop him. As the Flame Dragon engulfed him and the pearl was snatched away, a mysterious light appeared in his eyes, and a slight smile touched the corners of his mouth.

The old man’s archaic voice filled the air. “You obviously realized which path was the correct one to take. Why make this choice?” As the voice echoed out, the golden glow that filled the world was suddenly suppressed. Now, all of the Chosen from the various Sects and Clans could clearly see what was happening on top of the tree.

The sight filled them with shock. Expressions of disbelief covered their faces as they saw the gray-robed old man being engulfed in flames. Meng Hao floated in mid-air. It was impossible for them to

miss the fact that he had not picked any of the paths on the treetop, but had instead chosen to kill the old man.

“He dared to attack?!”

“This... this... this Meng Hao chose not to walk one of the paths. He chose to attack?! How could this be?”

“That old man is completely unfathomable.... You can tell from a single glance that he’s beyond ordinary. This place is just too bizarre. I can’t believe Meng Hao dared to attack! Dammit... how come I didn’t think of that!?!?”

Even as the Chosen beneath the treetop expressed their shock, the Nascent Soul eccentrics up above instantly shot to their feet, their eyes fixed upon Meng Hao.

This was especially true of Patriarch Song Tian. He gasped, and a glow of disbelief radiated from his eyes. A serious expression filled his face.

It wasn’t just him. Eccentric Song, Han Bei, Li Shiqi, Li Daoyi, as well as Song Clan Dao Child Song Yunshu all stared with completely disbelief.

Panting, Song Yunshu stared fixedly at Meng Hao. He had participated in this test and had succeeded on the second try after picking the same path as the first time. However, he had never imagined that you could actually raise a hand against the gray-robed old man.

“How could he do such a thing?” said Song Yunshu said hoarsely. “That’s the Spirit of the tree....”

It was at this moment that everyone heard the old man’s question echoing out from within the flames. It was the exact same question that was running through the heads of all the observers.

Why had he chosen such a path?

“Conforming to convention is emptiness,” replied Meng Hao. “Yielding to and complying with the Heavens is well and good. Unending persistence is fine, too. However, I cannot choose either of those.” Having said this, he shot up into the air!

He would not comply with rules of this place, but would instead create his own path. He was like the Perfect Foundation, not permitted by Heaven and Earth, and the target of extermination by Tribulation Lightning. However, he would continue onward. That was how he differentiated himself from others; his path was not one of inflexible adherence to the rules. As such, why would he follow the rules of this place? Why would he pick the correct path out of the nine?

He had chosen to break through and take the pearl by force, by slaughtering! He knew that he could succeed by persisting in treading the path from before. However, this so-called persistence was actually just a method of following the rules; it was not true persistence!

The old man's laughter rang out from within the flames. His ancient smile was filled with happiness, as well as anticipation. He gave Meng Hao a deep look, allowing the flames to consume him. Soon, his body was gone.

As the old man disappeared and Meng Hao shot up into the air, the Chosen down below in the tree looked up mutely. They stared at Meng Hao in shock, their hearts in turmoil, incapable of calming down. Meng Hao's choice had been simple, but not many people were capable of simplicity such as this.

They lived lives of compliance, lives in which rules must be followed. Perhaps the subconscious desire existed within them to break out of the rules, but they would never be able to imagine how to do so.

Meng Hao, however, was different!

Wang Tengfei's face was pale white, and Wang Youcai was speechless. Fatty's face slowly filled with even deeper admiration. Meng Hao's words just now had left a permanent impression on all of their hearts.

When they heard his words, the Nascent Soul Cultivators in the clouds above all gasped. As they looked at Meng Hao, the same thought filled each and every one of them.

"If this kid lives, he will definitely achieve a high position within the Southern Domain!"

Such a personality, such mentality, such tactics... all of it led the Nascent Soul Cultivators to the same conclusion. Meng Hao might have the Sublime Spirit Scripture, but as of now, they didn't want to capture him and use Soulsearch to retrieve it. That would lead to his death.

If they could get Meng Hao to join their Sect, they could help him grow into a truly powerful expert of the Sect!

Li Daoyi's eyes glowed with a powerful light; an intense desire to do battle fermented within him. Li Shiqi's eyes also glowed brightly; looking at Meng Hao down beneath the cloud vortex, she also suddenly desired to have a rematch.

Han Bei looked at Meng Hao thoughtfully. Deep within her eyes flickered a sense of admiration and praise. She couldn't help but think that if she had been in Meng Hao's place, she would have picked to follow the original path. She would never have had the resolve of Meng Hao. In retrospect, it seemed like an easy decision, but in reality, it was something almost no one would ever think of doing.

Song Yunshu sat in thought. Next to him, Song Jia gazed at Meng Hao. Everything that was happening was being burned deeply into her mind.

"Conforming to convention is emptiness," said Patriarch Song Tian. "Well said!" His voice echoed out as he stood up.

The surrounding Nascent Soul Cultivator's hearts began to thump; the situation was not unfolding well for them.

"This kid has managed to take the Cubic Pearl. Whoever he is, whoever he has offended in the past, this daughter of the Song Clan is now his! Who here dares to touch him!?" Hearing his words caused everyone to sit there thoughtfully. And yet, none of them seemed to notice the meaning within Patriarch Song Tian's words. What he had said was strange; he never mentioned anything about marrying into the family. His words seemed to have a deeper meaning.

At this exact moment, the bright glow of multiple spells filled the air outside of the Sun and Moon mountains of the Song Clan. Powerful Qi suddenly appeared, as figure after figure emerged.

The five Sects and two Clans had arrived to investigate!

Chapter 200: Killing Amidst the Night Rain!

At the same moment that the five Sects and two Clans appeared outside of the Sun and Moon mountains of the Song Clan, Meng Hao was inside the world of the cloud vortex, shooting upward. All eyes were upon him as he pressed down on the good luck charm in his hand, pouring power from his Cultivation base into it.

He had begun to prepare the good luck charm much earlier, so the instant he poured spiritual energy into it, an enormous black hole appeared just in front of him in the sky. All of the Chosen and Nascent Soul eccentrics saw this happen.

The swirling vortex seemed to transform into a gaping mouth that instantly swallowed up Meng Hao. From below, the Chosen of the various Sects watched on in open-mouthed shock. The Nascent Soul Cultivators could only watch as he disappeared right in front of them. How could they ever have predicted that this would happen?

Seeing Meng Hao disappear, the Nascent Soul Cultivators were incapable of maintaining their calm. At almost the exact same time, they shot to their feet and flew toward the cloud vortex. Patriarch Song Tian sighed inwardly. He'd had no choice but to speak the words he had just now. However, even if this was Song Clan territory, it would be difficult to stand up against all the five Sects and two Clans. For Meng Hao to make an escape on his own was actually for the best.

At the moment, Song Tian couldn't really prevent the Nascent Soul Cultivators from attempting to pursue Meng Hao. However, moments later, unsightly expressions appeared on their faces. They could clearly see that Meng Hao had used some sort of powerful magic to teleport away.

"It turns out a trifling Foundation Establishment Cultivator like him has a precious teleportation treasure. What other mysteries is this Meng Hao hiding?!"

"The Sublime Spirit Scripture, a precious teleportation treasure. The Violet Fate Sect will definitely get our hands on him!"

The Nascent Soul Cultivators returned, and the representatives of the five Sects and two Clans approached. Meng Hao's good luck charm teleported him away. Meanwhile...

In the Black Sieve Sect, in the number one mountain which was situated in the very center of the Hundred Thousand Mountains, smoke curled into the air above a massive incense burner. At the moment, dozens of Cultivators began to shoot up and disappear into the smoke.

Down below, Patriarch Violet Sieve and the beautiful, middle-aged woman stood there grimly. They watched as the Cultivators above began to vanish.

Patriarch Violet Sieve frowned and said, “He’s using that good luck charm, which makes him difficult to track. If we dispatched Core Formation disciples, or magical items that can employ the power of Core Formation, then it would interfere with the Tri-Black Incense Burner, making it difficult to accurately pinpoint the teleportation ripples. The slightest mistake, and we could be hundreds of kilometers off. Furthermore, the Tri-Black Incense Burner can only be used once per month.”

“It doesn’t matter,” replied the beautiful woman coolly. “We may not be able to use Core Formation disciples, but Zhou Jie is among the Foundation Establishment disciples we sent. Considering his Cultivation base, as well as his status as Dao Child, he’ll be able to distract Meng Hao. He only needs to keep him in place for a bit. The others can prepare the spell, and then we can be there in an instant. At that time, Meng Hao wouldn’t be able to escape even if he was given wings.”

“Don’t forget, we don’t know how many times he can use the good luck charm. If it was complete, then he would be able to use it seven times in total.” He watched thoughtfully as the last of the disciples vanished into the smoke above the Tri-Black Incense Burner.

“Don’t worry,” replied the beautiful woman, smiling. “Meng Hao is only at the mid Foundation Establishment stage. Based on the information in the ancient records, I did some calculation. Based on his Cultivation base, it should take him the time it takes two incense sticks to burn to be able to activate the good luck charm. As long as Zhou Jie and the others can hold him off for that amount of time, and prepare the spell, then Meng Hao is doomed. He’s nothing but a trifling Foundation Establishment Cultivator. Don’t worry, Elder Brother Violet Sieve. After that much time passes, we will be there in front of Meng Hao.”

As they continued their discussion, somewhere in an unnamed part of the Southern Domain, in the midst of a mountain range filled with hundreds of mountains, dark clouds filled the sky and lightning crashed down. A roaring filled the sky, causing the wild beasts in these desolate mountains to tremble, seemingly awed by the Heavens.

Great, bean-sized drops of rain poured down from the sky in a torrent. It was currently sunset, but the sun was completely covered by the clouds, making everything completely dark and hazy.

A lightning bolt slashed through the sky, and then suddenly ripples expanded out into the air, splitting the sheets of rain. A massive, swirling black hole appeared, and out staggered Meng Hao, his face pale. He immediately looked around.

The black hole disappeared, and rain fell onto Meng Hao. He didn't even seem to notice it as he examined his surroundings. Finally, he let out a sigh of relief.

A cracking sound emanated from his hand. He looked down and could see that another large fissure had appeared on the surface of the good luck charm. It seemed he would only be able to use it a few more times before it shattered.

"This is a life-saving treasure," he thought. "I can't just use it lightly..." He hesitated for a moment, and then took a deep breath. His body suddenly vibrated. The rainwater shot away from him, and his clothes were no longer soaked.

"At the moment, I imagine all the Sects and Clans are looking for me." He frowned. The golden glow of the Sublime Spirit Scripture had not been something he'd anticipated. Of course, he'd had no other choice than to flee.

"Thankfully, I got the Cubic Pearl. I wonder if it will be able to dispel the poison of the three-colored Resurrection Lily..." His eyes began to glow, and he decided to go search for a quiet place in the mountains to carve out an Immortal's cave and test out whether or not the poison could be dispelled. He had just taken a step when suddenly his expression flickered.

The place where the black hole had appeared moments ago had already returned to normal. And yet suddenly, he could see that another hole was opening up. It was pitch black inside and emanated a rippling power that caused the rain in the area to fly away.

Killing intent flickered within Meng Hao's eyes. He could choose to flee. After all, the sudden appearance of this vortex could not be a coincidence. It must be someone pursuing him by tracking the ripples of his teleportation.

But he did not choose to flee. Rather, a cold light, threatening and determined, appeared in his eyes. He could flee for ten or so breaths worth of time, but instead, he decided that he might as well stay and attack.

As the thought coalesced into his mind, he began to stride forward. He waved his hand, and an enormous Wind Blade and Flame Dragon appeared, which shot toward the black hole and then slammed into it.

As the roaring Flame Dragon slammed into the black hole, a booming sound filled the air. The black hole began to fall apart. As it did, the shadows of dozens of Cultivators appeared. They began to coalesce, as if they were about to emerge.

Without hesitating, Meng Hao lifted his hand and bit down hard on one of his fingers. The Blood Finger technique instantly descended onto the weakened black hole.

Boom!

The massive booming sound drowned out the sound of crashing thunder. The black hole shook and then exploded into pieces. There were no blood-curdling screams. However, of the dozens of Cultivators who had been about to emerge, only half made it out alive!

The other half were wiped out with the destruction of the black hole!

Bloodless killing. It was only possible because of Meng Hao's decisiveness. Had he hesitated or fled, daring not to make a move, then he would now be facing not a dozen or so enemies, but double the current amount.

The dozen or so people who had appeared immediately erupted with the power of late Foundation Establishment. One in their midst was a man with long, dark hair. He was tall, slender and handsome, with thin lips and a strange glow in his eyes. His Cultivation base was at the great circle of Foundation Establishment, the Pseudo Core stage!

"Black Sieve Sect!" Meng Hao's eyes narrowed. He instantly recognized the garments of these Cultivators. His killing intent climbed higher. Now that he knew it was the Black Sieve Sect, everything made sense. He didn't say another word. From this moment forth he would attack with decisiveness, and not the slightest bit of hesitation.

He stepped forward, his five Perfect Dao Pillars rotating. They didn't leak the slightest bit of power. The raindrops around him vibrated as he approached the nearest Black Sieve Sect Cultivator.

The man gave a cold snort. He lifted his hand, and the illusory image of a large hand appeared, which shot toward Meng Hao. Without so much as a word, the other surrounding Cultivators also made beelines for Meng Hao.

Only the Pseudo Core stage Cultivator didn't make a move. Off in the distance, he slapped his bag of holding to produce an incense burner about the size of a hand. He rubbed it, which caused it to ignite.

Smoke rose up into the air, congealing into concentric rings of magical symbols. It looked very much like a teleportation portal.

At the same time that the portal appeared, Meng Hao was closing in on the Black Sieve Sect Cultivator who had summoned the illusory hand. The Cultivator smiled ferociously. As far as he was concerned, this whole mission was really making a mountain out of a mole-hill. Being in the late Foundation Establishment stage, he could easily deal with a mid Foundation Establishment stage Cultivator. Wiping him out would be simple.

"I, Xie, shall get the credit for this one!" he said, laughing. He shot forward, and as he did so, a multitude of glowing spikes suddenly emerged from his shoulders. He clearly planned to slam them directly into Meng Hao.

Meng Hao's expression was the same as ever. He lifted his hand and pressed his finger into the approaching illusory hand. A boom sounded out, and the hand immediately disintegrated into countless shards. The Black Sieve Sect Cultivator named Xie stared in shock as Meng Hao closed in on him.

Meng Hao didn't even look at the man. The power of his Cultivation base, which he had been concealing up to now, suddenly exploded out.

Boom!

Pressure billowed out from Meng Hao, and suddenly he was directly in front of the Cultivator. His hand shot out and clasped around the man's neck. Eyes cold, he squeezed.

A cracking sound could be heard, and the Cultivator's eyes bulged in death!

This was killing amidst the night rain!