

## The Heavens 841

### Chapter 841: The Ancient Road of Trial by Fire is Opened!

“The next time we meet,” murmured Meng Hao, “it will be out in the starry sky.” The departure of Pill Demon, Chu Yuyan, and the others, was too sudden, and left him feeling empty.

He thought back to his hundreds of years of cultivation, and it seemed like there many people who had ended up departing, and were no longer in the lands of South Heaven.

Patriarch Reliance was gone. Xu Qing was gone. Pill Demon was gone. Chu Yuyan was gone....

Thankfully, Fatty, Chen Fan, and the others were still there. There were some people Meng Hao wasn't sure about; the 10th Wang Clan Patriarch for example, Han Bei from the former Black Sieve Sect, and of course Dong Hu, who had joined the Reliance Sect at the same time as him.

Meng Hao sighed. He did not leave the Southern Domain along with his father. Instead, he went to the Golden Frost Sect. He and Fatty drank together. Fatty sent his more than one hundred beloved concubines away, and he and Meng Hao sat on top of a mountain, drinking and talking about the past.

They talked about the State of Zhao, and about Yunjie County. They talked about the Reliance Sect, and everything that had happened there. Eventually, evening fell, and the stars slowly came out. It was impossible to tell how much exactly they had drunk.

“I'm going to join the disciple recruitment event held by the Three Great Daoist Societies of the Ninth Mountain and Sea!” declared Fatty, tossing aside his alcohol flagon and looking determinedly over at Meng Hao. “I don't want to be stuck in the lands of South Heaven for the rest of my life. I want to go out into the starry sky!”

Meng Hao looked back at Fatty. He himself had heard from Zhixiang about the Three Great Daoist Societies' disciple recruitment trial by fire. News about the matter had now spread throughout the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea, even here to Planet South Heaven.

Fatty gazed at Meng Hao with an expression of determination.

“You don’t need to say anything,” Fatty continued. “I know that you won’t stay in the lands of South Heaven for much longer either. Your path exists in the starry sky. Well, we’re brothers, so if you go, then I won’t stay behind! I’m going to give it a shot!”

Meng Hao didn’t respond at first. He simply lifted his wine flagon and took a drink, looked at Fatty, and smiled.

Then he said, “Considering those teeth of yours, you’ll definitely get some good fortune!”

Fatty laughed uproariously, then grabbed a flying sword and began to file at his teeth. The two of them laughed together, and then continued to chat until the sky turned bright. Meng Hao stayed with Fatty for a few days before leaving. The next stop on his journey through the Southern Domain was to visit Chen Fan.

Chen Fan sat as he always did, next to the mountain boulder. Meng Hao meditated silently next to him. Chen Fan no longer drank alcohol, but the stubble of a beard was still visible on his chin. An abstruse gleam could be seen deep in his eyes, but most of his time was spent gazing at the boulder, as if he were immersed in memories.

Meng Hao didn’t interrupt him, but rather sat next to him for an entire night.

When the sky grew bright and the time had come for Meng Hao to leave, Chen Fan suddenly said, “I’ve decided to go to the trial by fire held by the Three Great Daoist Societies.”

Meng Hao nodded and left.

His next stop was the Blood Demon Sect. He saw Wang Youcai, who, much like Fatty and Chen Fan, was interested in the trial by fire.

He also decided to participate, to take a chance for his future.

Meng Hao didn’t see Patriarch Blood Demon. Outside of Patriarch Blood Demon’s Immortal’s cave, Meng Hao could sense a dense aura of death. He stood there for a long time before finally clasping hands and bowing deeply.

“Senior, I will never forget your kindness in helping me to Sever the Devil and Seek the Dao!” He bowed again.

The aura of death was the same as ever as Meng Hao finally turned to leave. Off in the distance, he could see the valley where he and Xu Qing had spent their final days together, as well as the location where they had been married.

It was a mountain, on one side of which were the beautiful memories of Xu Qing, on the other side of which was carnage and battle. That was where he and Xu Qing had been married.

As he gazed at the location, Meng Hao suddenly felt very lonely. After staring for a long moment, he finally left.

Now, he wasn't sure where to go in these sprawling lands. All he could do was look up into the starry sky.

“Perhaps it's time for me to leave as well.”

Two months passed in the blink of an eye. Meng Hao went to the Milky Way Sea, to the Western Desert, to the Northern Reaches, and finally to the Eastern Lands. Eventually, the day came when the sky began to rumble, and the music of a great Dao spread out in all directions. Three enormous, multi-colored vortexes appeared in the sky.

The three vortexes' rotation caused a sound to echo out that could be heard by all cultivators in the lands of South Heaven. Be they in the Western Desert or the Southern Domain, in the Northern Reaches or the Eastern Lands, in that instant they could all see the three bizarre vortexes up above.

They looked like they were up in the sky, but actually, they existed in everyone's eyes.

Regardless of where the cultivators were located, as long as their cultivation bases met the requirements, and they had the desire to seek the Dao and find good fortune, then all they had to do was take a step forward and enter the vortex.

At the same time the vortexes appeared, an archaic voice echoed out from within them. Everything trembled, and no natural law could prevent the voice from echoing out as if from ancient times, striking fear into the hearts of all.

“The trial by fire was founded by the Three Great Daoist Societies, the Five Great Holy Lands, and the Three Churches and Six Sects!

“Anyone in the Ninth Mountain and Sea may participate, regardless of background, regardless of age, as long as the cultivation base requirement is met!

“The three vortexes are for the Nascent Soul stage, the Spirit Severing stage, and the Dao Seeking stage!

“First, walk upon the Ancient Road. The ten thousand people who reach the end the fastest will be able to participate in the honorable trial by fire!

“Of those ten thousand people, seven thousand will be from the Nascent Soul stage, two thousand from Spirit Severing, and one thousand from Dao Seeking! Cultivators of the Ninth Mountain and Sea.... let the trial by fire begin!”

Planet South Heaven trembled. Everyone knew that the enormous disciple recruitment trial by fire held by the Three Great Daoist Societies... was now underway!

Countless cultivators were prepared to participate. Their blood boiled at the possible good fortune in front of them. Without becoming Immortal, it was impossible to tread through the starry sky. Therefore, if they could seize this opportunity, they could have a meteoric rise, and be like a fish leaping from the sea into the heavens.

Simultaneously, similar vortexes appeared on Planet North Reed, Planet East Victory and Planet West Felicity, along with an identical voice with identical words. It was the same in the Ninth Sea and the Ninth Mountain. Throughout all locations in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, the voice echoed out, and three vortexes appeared.

The Ninth Mountain and Sea was completely abuzz, and countless cultivators were filled with determination, and hearts that wished to search for the Dao. They flew up toward the vortexes from innumerable locations.

More than ten thousand people flew up from the lands of South Heaven alone. Most were Nascent Soul cultivators, who flew into the Nascent Soul vortex to tread the Ancient Road of the Nascent Soul. There were a smaller group who flew into the Spirit Severing vortex.

The smallest group was that which walked... the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking.

If you looked at the Ninth Mountain and Sea as a whole, it was really impossible to tell how many people tread the Ancient Roads.

This was a grand event for the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea, so the Three Great Daoist Societies, the Five Great Holy Lands and the Three Churches and Six Sects all sent people to stand guard over the three Ancient Roads.

These three roads had a long history. They might be called Ancient Roads, but in truth, they comprised an ancient set of crumbled ruins within the Ninth Mountain and Sea. Within those ruins existed uncountable good fortune, and they had supposedly existed longer than the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

In truth, the three roads were only a small portion of the larger set of ruins that the Three Great Daoist Societies exercised control over. The fact that the roads were opening now aroused ambitions in countless hearts in the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

This was especially true because... these ruins were called the Ruins of Immortality, and in the past, people had discovered Immortality Illumination Vines there. That was what had changed the entire structure of true Immortality in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. Furthermore, the other eight great Mountains and Seas had similar ruins in them.

Most areas inside of the ruins were restricted areas. This was especially true in the depths of the ruins. If you entered those places, you would almost certainly die. Throughout countless years, only the most powerful of experts had ever dared to travel into the depths of the Ruins of Immortality, and virtually no one had ever emerged alive.

Rumor had it that Lord Li had traveled into the depths of the ruins, but as for what had happened there, no one knew. They only knew that the Dharma Clone he had left behind issued the Dharmic decree regarding returning life to the Heavens.

It was because of that Dharmic decree that, in following days, Lord Ji replaced the Heavens, which in turn drew the support of most of the powers within the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

There was another rumor that in the great Nine Mountains and Seas, regardless of which Mountain or Sea, anyone who could gain enlightenment regarding the ultimate secrets of the Ruins of Immortality, would become the Lord of all the Nine Mountains and Seas.

Although this was a generally acknowledged point, no one could actually accomplish it, not even Kṣitigarbha, the Lord of the Fourth Mountain and Sea.

Now that the trial by fire had begun, countless figures vanished into the three vortexes. Fatty, Chen Fan, Wang Youcai, and others all decided to take a chance to try to get some good fortune.

As for Meng Hao, he sat cross-legged underneath a towering tree in the Fang Clan of the Eastern Lands, looking up at the three enormous vortexes. After sitting there quietly for a moment looking at the flashing vortexes, a strange light gleamed in his eyes.

“You have the Immortal Ancient Dao Medallion, so if you want to join the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite, then you don’t have to participate in the trial by fire.” The voice came from Meng Hao’s father, Fang Xiufeng, who strolled up from behind him. He stood behind Meng Hao and continued, “Furthermore, there is always the danger of perishing in the trial by fire. Aren’t you scared of that?”

“Other than the chance to join one of the Three Great Daoist Societies, is there any other good fortune to be had?” asked Meng Hao.

“Of course there is!” replied his father. “If you get first place, then you can acquire a precious treasure. Considering the resources at the Three Great Daoist Societies’ disposal, even I would be excited at the prospect of getting a magical item from them.

“Furthermore, father can tell you another secret. In addition to the founders of the Three Great Daoist Societies, the founders of the Four Great Clans, the Five Holy Lands, and the three Churches and Six Sects... all previously walked the Ancient Roads of the Ruins of Immortality!

“It was there that they acquired the unimaginable good fortune that allowed them to found their various clans and sects.

“It was the same with the Fang Clan Ancestor. That was where he acquired the bloodline that has ensured that the Fang Clan stands tall in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. That, of course, is.... the Fang Clan’s Four Lives Awakening!”

“Dad, did you go there?” asked Meng Hao.

Fang Xiufeng didn’t respond at first. After a long moment, he shook his head.

“Originally, your mother and I planned to wait for you to grow up, then we planned to take a trip there.”

When he looked at his father, Meng Hao could sense that some amount of regret existed in his heart. He glanced back up at the three vortexes, and then a gleam of determination appeared in his eyes.

“Dad, I want to go.”

“If you want to go, then go. We cultivators should never be afraid of dying!” Fang Xiufeng looked at Meng Hao, and the love in his eyes was clear, as was the look of encouragement.

“At the end of the Ancient Road are the arena matches. Actually... I hope that you do participate in this event!

“Do you know why your father’s name is known throughout the Ninth Mountain and Sea, and is even known in other Mountains and Seas? That’s because even when I was in the Spirit Realm, I never shrank from a fight with anyone in the same stage as me. I fought and killed my way to the place I am now. I passed up all the members of my same generation, suppressed them, and seized destiny. That is how to become powerful!

“Never forget, the word cultivation 修行 is made of two characters, 修 which implies studying and practice, and 行 which implies action. It is not enough to just have 修, the studying and learning. You must also have 行, action.... You must always strive forward; that is the way to reach the pinnacle of power!”

Meng Hao coughed dryly, and a bashful smile appeared on his face.

“Dad, I can’t really identify with your path. I think... getting all of the Chosen in the Ninth Mountain and Sea to owe me money is the ideal way.”

Fang Xiufeng's jaw dropped as Meng Hao chuckled and then flew into the air. His body flashed as he flew toward the Dao Seeking vortex. He took a deep breath, and without any further hesitation, entered.

Chapter 842: Just a Misunderstanding....

The vortexes in the sky rotated, sending rumbling sounds echoing out in all directions. In virtually all regions of the Ninth Mountain and Sea, people were flying up into the vortexes. However, many of those people took steps to change their appearance upon entering.

They had various reasons for not wanting others to know who they truly were. After all, a grand event like this would draw the attention of the entire Ninth Mountain and Sea.

As soon as Meng Hao entered, he immediately sent some divine will out to the meat jelly. Moaning and groaning, the meat jelly helped Meng Hao to change his appearance to that of Fang Mu, from back in his days in the Violet Fate Sect.

Meng Hao was attending this event only for the trial by fire, and considering how he had flaunted his abilities in the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple on Planet South Heaven, and was now making his way alone off planet, he figured it would be much more convenient to rely on a second identity.

Furthermore, there would be no better opportunity to become famous under a second identity than this trial by fire hosted by the Three Great Daoist Societies.

"It's too bad my second true self is temporarily incapacitated because the true Immortal's soul was damaged by the Immortal Tribulation," he thought. "But, that's not such a bad thing." Meng Hao's eyes glittered brightly after making the transformation, and he looked out at the pitch blackness surrounding him. He could just barely make out a vortex spinning around him, with faint beams of light occasionally coming into view as they spun around him.

The sensation of being pulled along grew even stronger, and he felt increasing pressure weighing down on him.

After enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, a bright light became visible up ahead in the darkness. It grew brighter and brighter, and soon, completely enveloped Meng Hao.



When his vision grew clear once again, Meng Hao found himself looking out at a void, which was densely packed with countless platforms. Some were thirty meters wide, others, three hundred, and some three thousand.

The sizes varied, and in the center of each of the platforms was a stone stele, upon which could be seen a map. Beneath each stone stele was a candle holder. The candles were unlit, leaving the maps on the stone steles cloaked in darkness.

As for how many platforms there were, it was impossible for Meng Hao to count. His divine sense was under incredible pressure, making it impossible to send it out very far. As Meng Hao looked around, more and more people came into view. Much like Meng Hao, they stared out in shock at all the platforms.

All of them had peak Dao Seeking auras, and there were even a few who didn't quite measure up to the Chosen he had encountered before, but were very close.

They all wore different clothing, and bore different appearances. There were men and women, old and young. Some weren't even humanoid, but looked like beasts. From what Meng Hao could tell, there were several hundred in his immediate vicinity, with more and more people appearing off in the distance.

It was hard to tell who it was that flew out first, but soon, one of the three-thousand-meter platforms was occupied by a cultivator. After that, all of the cultivators who materialized in the void shot out toward the platforms at full speed. Each person who appeared occupied a single platform. Fighting broke out, but it was controlled. After all, there was no reason to unleash vicious fighting the moment they entered the Ancient Road trial by fire. It wasn't worth it.

Furthermore, any ownerless platform apparently created a bond to whoever set foot on it first, and the unlit candle would then begin to burn, illuminating the map on the stele.

As such, there wasn't very much fighting. As the saying goes, first come, first served, so anyone who was beaten to a particular platform would quickly leave in search of another.

Meng Hao's eyes glittered. The three-hundred-meter and three-thousand-meter platforms were relatively far away from him, and the closest one to him was a thirty-meter platforms, so he quickly made his way toward that one.

However, just when he was about to step foot onto it, someone else nearby apparently had the same idea as he did. It was a tall, hulking man with ripples spreading out from beneath his feet which, if you looked closely, resembled illusory seawater that contained three swimming fish. Overall, it made the hulking man seem incredibly impressive.

He and Meng Hao were both about to step onto the platform at exactly the same time, when the hulking man snorted coldly. Killing intent flickered in his eyes.

“Screw off!” he said.

With that, his right hand made a hurling motion toward Meng Hao. The fish began to swim through the water at incredible speed, and an intense power surged out, transforming into an illusory sea dragon which shot toward Meng Hao, mouth gaping open to consume him.

Meng Hao’s expression was as calm as ever, but he moved with explosive speed as he dodged past the sea dragon and then set foot onto the platform one breath of time before the hulking man.

In that instant, the candle on the platform burned to life, sending light spreading out in all directions. The hulking man’s face was very unsightly as he glared at Meng Hao, and he let out a cold snort as he shot toward another nearby platform.

Meng Hao’s expression was the same as ever, and he completely ignored the hulking man as he sat down cross-legged in front of the stone stele to examine the map. The map encompassed a huge area, but roughly ninety percent of it was covered in darkness, leaving only about ten percent clearly visible.

Within that small visible area, he could see numerous narrow roads spreading out, the origin of which was the location he was in now. The end location of all the roads was a place near the dark area on the map.

Out in the void, more and more candles were springing to life; apparently the number of platforms here was equal to the number of people who had arrived. Before long, all of the cultivators had occupied a platform.

Unfortunately, a handful of unlucky cultivators ended up dying in the fighting.

As for the hulking man from earlier, he had managed to secure a platform to the right of Meng Hao. He looked over at Meng Hao occasionally, his eyes glowing with killing intent. The spat between the two of them had obviously left him irritated.

Apparently, Meng Hao didn't notice the man, and focused intently on studying the map.

After enough time passed for an incense stick to burn, everything grew quiet. Finally, an archaic voice boomed out through the void.

"I am Ling Yunzi of the Nine Seas God World. As of now... the Dao gate has opened, and the Ancient Road stretches out. All of you must traverse the road... use it to corroborate your Dao, and to corroborate your destiny!

"The road is well-lit, but is filled with danger. Any who tread it must do so with utmost caution!

"As of this moment, if you turn back, you still have a chance to retreat. But once you step forward...when you look back, there won't even be the safety of a shoreline." His voice rang out over all the platforms, filling the entire area. All of the Dao Seeking competitors in the trial by fire could hear him.

When Meng Hao heard the Nine Seas God World mentioned, he looked up. It instantly made him think of Fan Dong'er, and he felt a bit apprehensive. He reminded himself that he had changed his appearance, but still didn't feel any less nervous. He quietly took out the black feather the parrot had acquired, and placed it an easily accessible location in the front of his robe.

"You may now enter the road. This is a trial by fire, and anyone with unsuitable latent talent will be eliminated first, leaving behind only the most suitable candidates.

"After that, you shall not simply walk as you wish along the road. At every stage along the way, you will be tested.

"Depending on your performance in the tests, I will arrange for you to proceed a certain number of steps. Everything you do here is visible to observers on the outside, so you need not fear that I will be unfair in my decisions.

"And now, let the first stage begin, the stage of combat!

“You may use any means fair or foul, even deadly means, to snuff out as many candles as you can in the time it takes an incense stick to burn! Anyone whose candle is snuffed out will lose the qualification to continue. Anyone who is killed will automatically be considered to have their candle extinguished!” As soon as they heard Ling Yunzi’s words, all the Ninth Mountain and Sea cultivators in the Dao Seeking trial by fire felt their hearts tremble, and their killing intent exploded up.

Everyone had assumed that all participants would be allowed to enter the Ancient Road, and that the fastest one thousand among them who reached the end would be able to proceed. They had never imagined that the trial by fire would actually begin in this way.

The point of the first stage was to prevent one’s candle from being extinguished, and at the same time, put out the candles of the others.

In the blink of an eye, people began sending out Dharma Clones to charge toward other platforms. Instantly, fierce fighting broke out; divine abilities and magical techniques caused everything to rumble and shake. The entire area was thrown into chaos, and roaring filled the ears of everyone present. It only took a moment before screams of death rang out.

Even as Meng Hao’s eyes began to glitter coldly, the hulking man off to his right who had been glancing at him murderously gave a vicious laugh and waved his right hand. Instantly, a Feng Shui compass flew out, which then transformed into a glittering spell formation that spread out to protect his candle. Then the man flew out toward Meng Hao.

“I’ve killed lots of peak Dao Seeking experts,” he said. “Since you dared to compete with me, then you’ll be the first person I kill in this trial by fire!” The illusory seawater swelled beneath his feet as he stepped onto Meng Hao’s platform. He quickly performed an incantation gesture, causing a sea dragon to roar toward Meng Hao.

Meng Hao was sitting cross-legged next to the candle, and when he looked up his face was calm. There wasn’t even a cold gleam visible in his eyes. He looked placidly over at the hulking man, then waved his hand through the air in a snatching motion. Shockingly, the Star Plucking Magic was unleashed.

The first thing that it grabbed was the sea dragon, which was completely incapable of fighting back, and although it struggled for a moment, Meng Hao simply pinched his fingers together, and it collapsed into pieces. The hulking man’s eyes widened; he was well aware that the sea dragon had

materialized with roughly eighty percent of his total power. Normally speaking, there were few peak Dao Seeking experts in the Ninth Sea who could possibly evade this sea dragon.

However, he had just watched as his opponent casually waved a hand and crushed it to pieces. In that instant, the hulking man's scalp went numb, and he was very nearly scared out of his mind.

"Not good!" he thought. "Don't tell me this is one of those inhuman freaks from one of the sects or clans? Impossible! I've seen all of those people from afar, but I've never laid eyes on this guy before!"

The man's face fell, and he immediately cried out with a loud voice: "Misunderstanding! Fellow Daoist, this was just a misunderstanding...."

As he spoke, he retreated at top speed. However, Meng Hao's Star Plucking Magic bore down on him and snatched up him. The hulking man's face filled with fear, but Meng Hao's was expressionless as he gently squeezed down.

Boom!

Before the hulking man could even let out a bloodcurdling scream, his body was crushed into pieces, and he was destroyed in spirit and body. When he died, his candle immediately snuffed out.

After making his deadly attack, Meng Hao pointed toward the Feng Shui compass that covered the hulking man's candle. It trembled, and was just about to fly back toward Meng Hao when a black beam flew toward it. The beam turned into a black-robed youth, who reached out to grab the Feng Shui compass.

However, almost as soon as his hand latched onto the item, Meng Hao's cold snort echoed out. When it entered the young man's ears, he began to tremble violently, and subconsciously looked over at Meng Hao. When their gazes locked, his mind filled with a roaring sound.

To him, Meng Hao's gaze felt like two sharp swords, stabbing into his eyes and threatening to slash his mind into pieces, stabbing into his brain and down into his soul.

The young man's face fell, and he coughed up a huge mouthful of blood. His face was pale, and he ceased all attempts to grab the Feng Shui compass.

“Fellow Daoist!!” he cried urgently in a raspy voice. “Pardon my offense!”

#### Chapter 843: Fight For Supremacy, the Entire Way!

Meng Hao didn’t immediately slaughter the young man. He calmly beckoned with his hand, causing the Feng Shui compass to fly over and settle onto his hand. Because the hulking man was dead, the item was currently masterless, so after Meng Hao sent some divine sense into it, it was branded to him.

“It’s definitely mysterious,” he said, “but unfortunately, not very powerful.” He waved his hand again, causing two ultra high-grade spirit stones to fly out from his dwindling collection. He pushed them onto the Feng Shui compass before their aura could spread out and be detected.

In the blink of an eye, the Feng Shui compass changed. Although it looked normal, it now exerted a spell formation which was far mightier than it had been before. It was worlds apart. Meng Hao quickly placed it down next to him, whereupon its glow spread out to cover the candle.

“Unless someone like Taiyang Zi or one of the other Chosen show up, this should hold out for the time it takes an incense stick to burn. Ordinary peak Dao Seeking cultivators won’t be able to break through it.” He rose to his feet and looked around. By now, half of the time was already gone, and he had only extinguished one candle. There were others off in the distance who had snuffed out seven or eight. Perhaps some people even further off had extinguished even more.

In the same moment that Meng Hao left his platform, people in the outside world, in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, were looking up at what had once been merely swirling vortexes, but now contained enormous viewing screens.

Those screens displayed everything that was happening on the Ancient Roads, although the images were very small. Of course, if one’s cultivation base was high enough, it was still possible to clearly see each and every individual despite how small they were on the screen.

Countless people in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were watching the screens. There were people from the Three Great Daoist Societies, the Four Great Clans, the Five Holy Lands, and the Three Churches and Six Sects, as well as various powerful rogue cultivators.

The various sects were paying especially close attention. They were not clans, and therefore had to recruit disciples from outside. Therefore, they would be paying close attention to the trial by fire.

Many would not wait until the end of the event was reached, but would select disciples to recruit throughout the process.

Of course, numerous conversations could be heard among the crowds throughout the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

“The Three Great Daoist Societies have created ten stages within the three Ancient Roads in the Ruins of Immortality. Each stage involves a different test, which will allow them to slowly filter out the competitors, and leave behind only the future Chosen.”

“It’s possible that some of the people who get eliminated might have great potential, but were just unluckily knocked out.”

“Look, the current leader on the Ancient Road of the Nascent Soul has already extinguished 39 candles. Although the Nascent Soul cultivators’ cultivation bases aren’t very high, they have an intense will to fight!”

“The highest number of extinguished candles on the Ancient Road of Spirit Severing is 27!”

“Who is that masked young man on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking...? He’s already extinguished 19 candles!”

“The Ancient Road of Dao Seeking is the most interesting after all. See that one guy? He’s probably a disciple of the Li Clan. He’s changed his appearance, but you can recognize who he is from the divine abilities he’s using. He’s already put out 15 candles.”

Even as the discussions were going on outside, Meng Hao flew out toward a thirty-meter platform on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking. As soon as he set foot on it, an enraged roar echoed out, and an old man with disheveled hair appeared. A will of madness radiated out as he charged toward Meng Hao.

“Die!” he cried, performing an incantation gesture that caused a fissure to appear, which then transformed into a broadsword!

“Void Severing!” he cried, causing some others in the area to look over in shock and then backpedal. Meng Hao turned, his expression calm as he gazed at the incoming Void Severing attack. He did not retreat, but instead utilized the Golden Roc Transformation. At the same time, he used

the powers of the black feather inside his robe so that the golden roc actually looked like a pitch-black vulture instead.

The vulture sped through the air toward the incoming Void Severing attack. When they slammed into each other, a huge boom echoed out, and the Void Severing blade collapsed, completely incapable of fazing Meng Hao in the slightest. When the old man saw this, his face filled with shock, and he fell back. However, before he could get very far, a blast of wind gusted against him as Meng Hao swooped down in vulture form. Claws slashed out, and a splattering sound could be heard as the man's head was crushed.

This was a trial by fire, a fight for good fortune. If you didn't kill your opponent, your opponent would kill you.

Meng Hao had experienced much gory brutality, so he was used to things like this. He wouldn't allow such a thing to affect him inwardly. When the old man died, his candle went out, and Meng Hao proceeded to the next platform. If nobody blocked his path, he would merely extinguish the candle; if people tried to kill him, he would return the favor and end their lives.

In a brief moment, Meng Hao swept across the entire area. No one could offer any resistance for longer than the space of a single breath, and ended either with a death, or an extinguished candle.

Meng Hao proceeded along as if he were walking across dried up weeds, his intense energy allowing him to rapidly rise up above the others.

Three candles. Four candles. Five candles....

Meng Hao attacked viciously and decisively. Currently, of the dozen or so people in his vicinity, there were four or five who were concealing their cultivation bases. When Meng Hao attacked them, their power exploded out; although none of them seemed to be on the level of Taiyang Zi and the other Chosen, they still possessed unique and exceptional divine abilities.

There was even one person who controlled powers which resembled those of Lu Bai, the Chosen from the Northern Reaches who used a Time divine ability. When this person attacked, he could seemingly lock down space and time in shocking fashion.

Any other peak Dao Seeking expert who went up against people like this, especially the one who could control space-time, would most certainly perish. However, Meng Hao possessed eighty



percent of the power of a true Immortal, and could even eradicate false Immortals. Each and every attack he made either killed someone, or snuffed out a candle. Booms rattled out constantly.

The only time he didn't instantly attack with lethal force was when he faced the old man who could control Time. After a bit of observation, he realized that this Dao of Time was the same type he had gone up against when he fought Lu Bai. At the time, it had definitely tantalized him, but was something that until now he still couldn't quite understand no matter how much he contemplated it.

When he attacked, he paid close attention to the results. Considering he had eighty percent of the power of a true Immortal, he was able to pick up some clues. As they fought, the old man grew more and more shocked, until finally he was virtually scared witless. From his view, he was fighting what appeared to be an ordinary youth, one that still somehow appeared to be analyzing and even imitating his Dao of Time. At a certain point he even seemed to be utilizing some of the same power, which left the old man completely shocked.

"Inhuman! This guy must definitely be one of those legendary Chosen!!" The old man's heart trembled, and it was without hesitation that he suddenly extinguished his own candle to ensure that he could continue to live.

Meng Hao's eyes glittered in response to the old man's decisiveness, and he made no further attacks. After the candle went out, he gave the old man a glance and simply teleported past him and continued onward.

Roughly a third of the amount of time it takes an incense stick to burn remained, and Meng Hao had already extinguished 19 candles!

Most of the platforms in the area were empty. As for the people whose candles were extinguished but who were not killed, one by one, they faded and were teleported away by the power of the Ancient Road, having lost any qualifications to continue with the trial by fire.

Many people were shocked by this; it didn't matter if you died or simply lost the qualifications, you were eliminated either way. This was a heavy blow to anyone who had placed high hopes in coming here and skating through some of the tests.

"So that Dao of Time is similar to the power of Time that I wield. There are similarities, but they're actually different!" Meng Hao's eyes were calm, but a thoughtful flicker could be seen in his pupils. The battle just now had not been short, and Meng Hao had actually benefited quite a bit.

As of now, he stood on one of the platforms, and his eyes swept about the area. Finally, his body flickered and he flew off in a different direction.

It was at this point that the archaic voice of the Nine Seas God World's Ling Yunzi suddenly echoed out again.

“Of that one incense stick's worth of time, there are now less than one hundred breaths of time left.... After those one hundred breaths of time, the first stage will be complete. Those of you who extinguish the most candles during that time, and also prevent your own candle from being extinguished, will receive a special reward!”

This announcement caused the entire Ancient Road of Dao Seeking to boil with excitement. Similar announcements were made on the Ancient Road of the Nascent Soul and the Ancient Road of Spirit Severing. The participating cultivators' killing intent immediately soared upward.

Meanwhile, in the outside world, vast crowds were paying close attention to the three screens visible in the giant vortexes. The Ancient Road of the Nascent Soul was a mass of chaos. On the Ancient Road of Spirit Severing, the fighting was more orderly.

The Ancient Road of Dao Seeking was unique. On the screen, what was clearly visible were over ten thousand locations in which a powerful expert had completely cleared out all of the candles nearby, making something like a vacuum for themselves.

Of those ten thousand or so areas, some were large and some were small. However, if you could rise above the field of competitors like an awl poking through a sack, it proved that you were a powerful expert. Soon, the experts began to fight among themselves.

“There's already someone who's extinguished seventy candles on the Dao Seeking road!”

“There's not much time left! This trial by fire is completely brutal! So many people have already been eliminated!”

The outside world was abuzz. Back on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking, many people were so agitated that their eyes were completely red. Some were attacking with deadly force, and some had already made significant achievements and were just stalling, waiting for time to run out. Meng Hao looked around, then barreled into a nearby area where eight people were all fighting each other at the same time. All of these people were powerful experts who had already cleared out the other nearby areas.

Shockingly, one of them was a fierce pangolin, a wild beast whose bright eyes revealed that it was no less intelligent than any human.

There was also a woman whose body appeared to be young, but whose face was covered with wrinkles. A pink, illusory image, which was clearly the early form of a Dharma Idol, could be seen behind her.

All of these seven or eight people fought with vicious attacks that sent booms rattling out in all directions. However, none of them seemed capable of overcoming the others, and in fact, some of them appeared to have joined forces.

As soon as Meng Hao neared, they looked over at him. None of them knew him, nor each other; they were all from different locations in the Ninth Mountain and Sea. They were here to fight for good fortune, so the instant they saw Meng Hao, the pangolin flashed through the air as it charged toward him. A few of the others also charged Meng Hao, their eyes flashing.

“No matter how much we fight, we can’t overcome each other! Instead of wasting time fighting each other, let’s go kill some other people! The good fortune will go to whoever is lucky enough to land the killing blow!”

“Yeah! This guy showed up here after us. His battle prowess is obviously ordinary, otherwise he would have already wiped everyone in his own region out!”

“He’s just unlucky! Kill him!”

The seven or eight people charged with killing intent in their eyes. Of course, despite their words, they were still on guard against each other. They might seem to have joined forces to attack someone else, but that didn’t mean they were any less likely to attack each other.

As the eight people closed in, Meng Hao’s expression was calm, and he stopped in place. There were now less than 61 breaths of time left before the conclusion of this stage; time was running out quickly.

In the blink of an eye, the eight people were upon him. The pangolin’s numerous scales lifted up as a divine ability rumbled out, seemingly powerful enough to break apart a mountain. The woman

also waved her hand, causing a pink aura to spread out behind her, which transformed into a pink skull.

The others also unleashed various divine abilities as each and every one leveled astonishing attacks.

Meng Hao looked on calmly, then clenched his right hand into a fist and punched out toward them through the void.

When the punch landed, an indescribable blast rose up, sweeping across the eight attackers. Their faces fell as Meng Hao made his move!

Chapter 844: First Place in the First Stage!

[/expand]

He transformed into a wind. A whirlwind!

The intense whirlwind swept out in all directions through the void, filled with crackling lightning. It was like a windstorm that swept across everything as it shot toward the incoming eight cultivators.

When the windstorm hit them, their divine abilities were shaken, and their expressions became that of shock. Their hearts trembled with astonishment. All of these people had slaughtered their way out of their own respective zones among the platforms, and were essentially the strongest people from those areas. In the outside world, they could be completely domineering in all the Spirit Realm, to the point where it was even difficult for them to outdo each other.

No one had ever been able to stand up to them, or outdo them in terms of power. And yet, Meng Hao's one punch left them feeling as if they had run into a windstorm.

This was a windstorm they couldn't fight back against nor resist. This windstorm... contained the might of Heaven and Earth, limitless destructive power that could rip them to pieces as easily as dried up twigs!

This was... a completely and thoroughly crushing power!

Intense rumbling rose up, and the whirlwind screamed, filled with never-ending bolts of lightning as it hurtled at top speed toward the eight cultivators. The eight cultivators' minds filled with roaring

sounds, and intense light. The incredible scene instantly drew the attention of other people on the larger battlefield.

In that moment, everyone outside in the Ninth Mountain and Sea who was watching the trial by fire stared fixedly at the three vortex screens.

On the Ancient Road of the Nascent Soul, massive carnage was visible. The Ancient Road of Spirit Severing was similar. Fatty could be seen there, soaked in blood, roaring as he pounced forward to latch his teeth onto the neck of an enemy. His eyes were bloodshot, and his teeth glittered brightly. He howled as his opponent's candle was extinguished.

Even Fatty didn't realize how ferocious, and even savage, he appeared. He had already drawn the attention of quite a few sects.

Then there were Chen Fan, Wang Youcai, Li Shiqi, and others who Meng Hao knew from the lands of South Heaven. They were all on the Ancient Road of the Nascent Soul. Some died, some were disqualified, others... fought until the very end!

Chen Fen held a sword in his hand. His expression was gloomy, seemingly without the slightest bit of life in it whatsoever. He seemed empty and dark, which affected his attacks, causing them to be filled with a similar gloominess. However, a black aura swirled around his sword, and anyone who encountered it would feel their emotions suddenly being affected. Therefore, Chen Fan was also distinguishing himself on the Ancient Road of the Nascent Soul, and drawing quite a bit of attention.

Fatty and Chen Fan had both been noticed, as had many others. This was merely the beginning of the event, and if they could continue to perform so stunningly, or even take first place on the Ancient Road of the Nascent Soul, then they would definitely have a chance at good fortune.

Of course, what drew the most attention was the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking. The fighting there had given rise to a foul wind and a bloody rain and, having come to its most critical juncture, was definitely the focal point for most of the audience.

It was easy to see the contrast with the chaos of the Ancient Roads of the Nascent Soul and Spirit Severing. The Ancient Road of Dao Seeking was filled with a shocking murderous aura. Of the previous ten thousand or more areas, each one was now controlled by a single powerful expert, all of whom were now fighting each other viciously as they attempted to extinguish each others' candles.

Victory or defeat was determined within the space of a few breaths in battles like that, and soon, massive changes to the situation on the battlefield could be seen.

“93 candles extinguished! Who is that? I’ve never seen anything like it!!”

“Look at that guy in the mask! He’s put out more than almost anyone else. He’s the first to extinguish more than 100!”

“Look, the Chosen from the Li Clan has extinguished more than 100 too!”

Everyone was in an uproar, and was crying out loudly.

“200! The person in first place has put out 200 candles!!”

“Things are happening too fast! The suspense is killing me! The guy with the mask, he’s... he’s... he’s actually exceeded 300!!”

“He’s the only one who’s exceeded 300. The next four people behind him have around 200 or more. Those five are definitely the most powerful people in this stage!”

“Time’s almost up!”

The sound of the uproar filled the air.

Back on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking, there were five people who had attracted the most attention from the other cultivators. The cultivators from the Three Sects and Six Churches, the Five Great Holy Lands, and the Three Great Daoist Societies watched the vortex screens, eyes filled with strange gleams. All five of those people shared something in common....

They stood completely alone in their respective areas, surrounded by emptiness!

Of those five people, the most prominent was the young man wearing the pitch-black mask. His black hair floated around him, and he wore a black robe. He looked almost like a shadow, and he exuded a cold, desolate and deadly aura.

His attacks were incisive, and he didn't even seem to use any divine abilities. The simple wave of a finger would cause the divine will of other peak Dao Seeking cultivators to be destroyed, and their Nascent Divinities would be shattered and perish.

There was another person among the five, a young woman. She wore a gauzy violet gown that made her look like the flower of the same name. Her face was obscured by some unknown technique, making it impossible to tell exactly what she looked like. She seemed charming and gentle, but attacked with complete ruthlessness. She was surrounded by countless violet flower petals, and upon each one could be seen a drop of blood. It was an astonishing sight.

The third among the group of five was a boy. He was skinny and virtually hairless, but possessed of remarkable speed. Furthermore, his body was covered with countless blue-colored decorative patterns that looked like sealing marks, which appeared to have formed naturally, as opposed to having been added later.

He exuded a wild and barbaric aura that he concealed as best he could; however as his blood flowed through his veins, the aura seeped out, and it made him seem like he wasn't a cultivator, but rather some savage beast from the wilderness.

The fourth person was a middle-aged man. His expression was cold and haughty, and he wore a white robe. He was surrounded by a cloud of brown mosquitos, each one of them the size of a fist. Their mouthparts were long and pointed, and buzzing could be heard as they circled around him. The sight was enough to cause anyone's scalp to go numb.

The mosquitos' bright red eyes and savage bloodthirsty appearance left everyone trembling from fear.

The fifth person was extremely peculiar. Sometimes he looked old, sometimes he looked middle-aged, and sometimes he looked like a teenager. It was as if his age were in constant flux. Every time he changed, his battle prowess would surge; he clearly cultivated some strange and bizarre Daoist magic.

These five people were currently the focus of most of the attention on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking. Each one of them had extinguished more than 200 candles, and the masked young man had put out more than 300.

Ranked behind them were many other Chosen who weren't the focus of as much attention. However, this was only the first stage, so it was really impossible to say how things would turn out in the end.

"There are less than thirty breaths of time left!!"

"These people are the mightiest amongst the mighty! With only thirty breaths of time left, it would be hard to change the outcome. The first stage is essentially over! The results are set!" Most people were thinking this way. Even the cultivators from the major sects felt the same way.

It seemed like time was about to expire, but just at this moment the whirlwind created by Meng Hao's fist swept over the eight people who were attacking him.

"Impossible!" cried the woman. Her eyes shone with disbelief, and she performed a double-handed incantation in an attempt to fight back. All of the power she could muster transformed into a mist that blocked the windstorm. However, the mist was instantly shattered, and the woman let out a bloodcurdling scream as she first began to vibrate and then was ripped to shreds by the windstorm, destroyed in spirit and body.

The windstorm spread out, accompanied by her shriek. Three more people went all out with their cultivation bases, and yet were incapable of standing up to the crushing power of the windstorm. Popping sounds rang out as they were exterminated.

The remaining four people were scared out of their minds, and wanted to flee, but couldn't. The windstorm surrounded them, and the shadow of death loomed up. Their original intent was to slaughter Meng Hao, but his deadly counterattack left them trembling, minds filled with terror.

They were about to plead for mercy, but the windstorm overwhelmed them. Two of them had no time to even speak, and were shattered into fragments. Their candles winked out.

"I refuse to accept this!" roared the beast cultivator, the pangolin. His fleshly body was the most powerful among them, but even he could only hold out for a single extra breath of time before his scales were ripped off and his flesh shredded by the windstorm. In an instant, he was nothing more than a skeleton.

All eight cultivators were dead!



In that moment, Meng Hao's count of extinguished candles broke past the 100 mark and began to climb toward 200!

The windstorm did not fade away. Meng Hao remained in the center position, his expression calm as he punched downward three more times. Then he took a deep breath and punched another three more times.

Rumbling filled the air as the windstorm experienced a threefold increase in size. Massive amounts of lightning crackled about, and the sound of thunder was deafening. The gigantic windstorm swept out in all directions, and reached a size of 3,000 meters in the following ten breaths of time.

By now, even the people on the outside world had noticed the enormous, lightning-filed windstorm on the vortex-screens.

“What’s that!?!?”

“I didn’t notice that before! Where did that huge windstorm come from?!”

“Heavens! That windstorm is still growing!!”

It wasn’t just the crowds who were now paying attention to the windstorm. Even Ling Yunzi from the Nine Seas God World was eying it. By now, there were only three breaths of time left before the first stage ended!

Three. Two! One!!

Boom! BOOM!! BOOOOMMM!!

In the same instant in which the stage concluded, Meng Hao’s windstorm spread out to a size of 30,000 meters! Simultaneously, it exploded, accompanied by numerous miserable shrieks, cries of alarm, and roars of defiance.

Furthermore, the number of candles listed next to Meng Hao’s name rose rapidly!

200!

300!

400!

500!!

All of the cultivators caught up in the enormous 30,000-meter windstorm were completely wiped out. In the blink of an eye, the entire area of the windstorm was swept completely clean. The only person remaining... was Meng Hao. He stood in the middle of the windstorm, his hair whipping about, his expression calm. However, even the outside audience could sense that deep within the calmness was a vicious ruthlessness.

In that instant, the entire Ancient Road of Dao Seeking went completely quiet. The audience outside stared at the vortex screens, eyes wide with disbelief at the sight of Meng Hao standing there, surrounded by complete emptiness.

He had come up from behind at the last minute to clinch first place in the first stage!

Chapter 845: Rising Star!

As of this moment, all eyes were on Meng Hao!

It wasn't just the people watching in the outside world. The remaining cultivators on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking couldn't help but look over at Meng Hao. Although everyone was separated by large distances, within the void of the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking he was the only one who had been able to clear out everyone within 30,000 meters. The sight was enough to shock everyone.

Even the person who had previously been in first place, the masked young man, had only been able to clear an area around 20,000 meters wide to call his own.

As of now, the high-level members of the Three Sects and Six Churches, the Five Great Holy Lands, and even the Four Great Clans, were all inwardly shaken. Their eyes glittered brightly, and many voices could be heard.

"Use any means necessary to send that man a message. Whatever his requirements are, get him to join the Burning Incense Stick Society!"

“Getting first in the rankings during the first stage doesn’t say too much. There are quite a few more stages to go, so there will certainly be others who rise to prominence. I’m afraid the person who came in second place won’t be shown much interest at the moment. However... the first place winner, even if he doesn’t do well in the following stages, showed such amazing strength in the first stage that we, the Church of the Emperor Immortal, must have him as a disciple! Send word down immediately!”

“His battle prowess is astonishing, and his temperament ruthless. A person like that is perfectly suitable to join us in the Church of the Blood Orchid!!”

Quite a few of the powers who made up the Three Churches and Six Sects were instantly attracted to Meng Hao because of his flashy display of power.

As for the Five Great Holy Lands, the Four Great Clans, and the Three Great Daoist Societies, although they were astonished, none made any such proclamations. However, they definitely looked at him differently than the others.

Also watching the Ancient Roads on the vortex screens were Meng Hao’s parents. They were in the Fang Clan in the vast Eastern Lands, looking up at the spectacle. Meng Hao might have changed appearances, but Fang Xiufeng and Meng Li could still recognize him instantly.

When they saw that he had taken first place in the first stage, both of them smiled. They were smiles filled with pride and anticipation. Of course, Meng Hao’s mother’s smile also contained a bit of concern. However, she knew that Meng Hao’s path... was his own to tread.

In the Kunlun Society, Grandmaster Pill Demon was watching the Dao Seeking vortex screen. Although nobody else might recognize Meng Hao, how could Pill Demon not be able to identify that person who had once been called Fang Mu?

Chu Yuyan stood next to Pill Demon, looking on silently. There were emotions in her heart which she would never be able or even willing to forget. After all this time, she had grown used to watching Meng Hao from a distance.

She was Pill Demon’s apprentice, but in the Kunlun Society, Pill Demon had been directly accepted as Daoist Kunlun’s apprentice, and had instantly become a blazing sun. Because of that, Chu Yuyan also had a unique position. It only took a short time for her to become acquainted with many of the

Chosen there. Furthermore, because of her incredible beauty, countless Kunlun Society disciples began to pursue her.

Her worldview was now completely different. There was no sky above her head now, but rather, stars. What she saw when she looked around were not towering mountains, but rather, a sea of heavenly bodies.

Despite all of that, though, the memories of everything that had happened on Planet South Heaven were etched deep into her soul.

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The first stage was over. Vast numbers of competitors had been eliminated from the Ancient Roads of the Nascent Soul, Spirit Severing, and Dao Seeking. Those who had made it through now waited for the second stage, exhausted and anxious.

Next, archaic voices spoke out in the three different Ancient Roads. The words spoken were different, but the meaning was the same, as the voice notified everyone that the first stage was over, and at the same time... announced how many steps each competitor would be able to take!

“Those who extinguished fifty candles or less in the first stage may go forward 3,000 paces! One hundred candles or less, 5,000 paces!

“Two hundred candles or less, 7,000 paces. Three hundred candles or less, 9,000 paces... Five hundred candles, 10,000 paces!” For the first time, Ling Yunzi of the Nine Seas God World appeared personally in the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking. He was thin, and wore a long green robe. He had white eyebrows, and a blue mark could be seen on his forehead that seemed to contain an entire ocean!

He stood there, his aura pulsing with monstrous power, as if he himself were made of a sea of stars!

Shockingly, the illusory image of a nine-headed sea dragon could be seen behind him. Although it was illusory, when Meng Hao looked at it, he felt as if he were looking at some celestial force.

Ling Yunzi could be considered one of the top most powerful experts in the whole Ninth Mountain and Sea!

His eyes swept the area, lingering for a moment on Meng Hao.

After he finished speaking, Ling Yunzi waved his sleeve, causing everyone in the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking to disappear as they moved forward beyond their own control, traveling an exact amount of steps in accord with the explanation that had just been provided.

Step by step, they advanced, encountering no candles or platforms along their way. They floated through the void until they reached a stretch of endless ruins. The crumbled remains of buildings could be seen, as well as ancient statues, dried up forests, rivers, and mountain ranges.

They were now in... the Ninth Mountain and Sea's Ruins of Immortality.

The void they had just been in was simply the entrance!

The only words that could be used to describe this area were: lifeless, archaic, ancient, mysterious, silent, and enormous!

Those were the six words that floated in the minds of all the competitors as they laid eyes on the Ruins of Immortality for the first time. The last word was actually the most prominent feeling that they experienced.

It was almost impossible to tell that this was a road of any sort. The one thing that stood out were the countless altars that stretched off in a line off into the distance. They seemed to be filled with an air of time, an ancientness. They were carved with complex magical symbols that were impossible for anyone to understand. The altars further off in the distance were covered even more thickly with magical symbols than the nearer ones, and gave off an air of incredible mystery.

If you had to call this place a road, then perhaps... the way the altars stretched out made the shape of that road visible.

It was impossible to tell how many altars there were; they extended out endlessly off into the distance.

Upon first glance, the altars didn't seem very big. However... they were actually incredibly enormous. In fact, the smallest of them were about thirty percent of the size of the entire void they had just been in.

Each and every one of the altars was simply gargantuan!

From this, it can be imagined how shocking the Ruins of Immortality were. From the feeling Meng Hao got, it was as if this place had not been constructed for use by cultivators, but rather, but some enormous race of giants.

But then, he suddenly changed his mind as he thought back to... what he had seen in the Immortal Ancient Daoist Rite Temple in the mountains in the Eastern Lands. In his vision, he had seen many things that seemed to indicate that many such things existed ancient times. Perhaps giants and cultivators were actually one and the same.

The group that stopped at 3,000 paces was relatively small. They all ended up on one of the altars, and there was no crowding whatsoever. The largest group was made up of those who could go 5,000 paces. Despite the large number of people, each person still had a large area to call their own on that particular altar.

Next were those who could move 7,000 paces. There were fewer in that group, and they quickly spread out across the altar, eyeing each other.

When it came to 9,000 paces, there was only the masked young man and the person who could change his age. Currently, he had changed from being an old man to being young. He and the masked youth shared one enormous altar.

As for Meng Hao, he was the last person to come to a stop, in the lead position. He was the only person to occupy an entire altar all by himself!

Similar scenes were playing out on the Ancient Roads of the Nascent Soul and Spirit Severing.

"The second stage, is the stage of killing!" said Ling Yunzi, his voice cold.

"The first stage was a test of your ability to engage in magical combat. Cultivators practice cultivation to be able to fight. We fight people, we fight the Heavens, we fight Earth. Only by fighting can we hew out a Heaven-defying destiny!

“This second stage of killing tests exactly how powerful you are in the Dao Seeking stage!

“This stage seems similar to the first stage, but is actually very different. In the first stage, you all fought different opponents. Some were weak and some were strong. There was no way to objectively determine exactly how powerful you are.

“In the second stage, you will all be fighting exactly the same enemy!

“To us cultivators, the Dao is of utmost importance. Our magics are prepared to protect our Daos. Without sufficient magic, how can we achieve our Dao? Therefore, all of you must unleash all the power you can in this second stage!

“In this stage, the time limit will again be set at one incense stick. This test is not regarding the number of fatalities you can inflict, but rather... how fast you can kill!

“Kill everything that you see. Anyone who cannot complete the task in the time it takes one incense stick to burn will be eliminated. In this second stage, your lives will be at risk. If you wish, you may turn and leave of your own volition right now!” Ling Yunzi’s eyes swept across the crowd, but no one chose to withdraw. His expression cold, he swished his sleeve, and immediately, the magical symbols on the altars began to shine brightly. Rumbling filled the air, and brilliant light swirled everywhere.

The light quickly spread out to cover the entirety of each altar, completely enveloping each and every person.

1,000 paces behind Meng Hao, the masked young man stood there, staring at Meng Hao as the light enveloped him. His eyes shone with a fierce gleam as he watched Meng Hao disappearing.

“You won the first stage, but the second stage will not belong to you!”

The old man with the age-changing ability was now a teenager, and his eyes shone with a similar light.

Behind them were all the other contenders who had earned top marks in the first stage. Each one was looking at Meng Hao’s disappearing figure, their eyes filled with stubborn gleams.

“Earlier, he obviously used some trick at the last minute. This time... he’ll be forced to show his true colors!”

At the same time, on the Ancient Roads of the Nascent Soul and Spirit Severing, everyone was also being covered up by the brilliant light. Soon no one was visible at all, and the only thing that could be seen within the glowing light was a list of names.

After each name was a number that indicated how many fatalities they had inflicted.

Back on Meng Hao’s altar, a cold voice suddenly rang out in his ear asking his name. Meng Hao’s face flickered slightly, and after muttering to himself for a moment, he responded with “Fang Mu.”

In the blink of an eye, the characters Fang Mu 方木 appeared in the altar’s light. Immediately, everyone in the Ninth Mountain and Sea could see it.

“His name is Fang Mu!!”

“Could it be possible that he’s connected to the Fang Clan? Although, there are tons of people surnamed Fang who aren’t connected to the Fang Clan.”

“Fang Mu. Fang Mu.... He got first place in the first stage, I wonder how he’ll perform in the second stage....”

“Don’t think too much of it. There’s no way somebody could take first place in the first stage and then again in the second stage. I suspect that he used some sort of forbidden Daoist Magic at the very last minute. Otherwise, he would never have come to the fore in the first stage. That’s why he suddenly jumped into the spotlight at the last minute.”

“Be that as it may, if he takes first place again, it would be totally Heaven-defying. The sects would be thrown into an uproar!”

Chapter 846: Fastest!

The three Ancient Roads were filled with splendorous light that covered everyone. The only thing visible were the lists of names, some of which were real and some assumed.



Soon, the only thing Meng Hao could see was bright light, and then everything around him changed, even the sky; the altar seemed to become a massive, glowing spell formation. It didn't last for very long, only the space of a few breaths of time, and then the light vanished.

Everything around him had changed. There was no sky up above, only stars. There was no ground beneath his feet, only a gigantic 3,000-meter long ancient beast!

It was an enormous python, completely pitch-black in color, its body covered with scars and wounds. It was even possible to see its bones in some places, and in other locations, you could see all the way through its entire body.

It appeared to be just on the verge of death, its life force fading, with barely enough energy left to even fly. Although it seemed to be just barely clinging to life, there was still a terrifying aura surrounding it, the power of which shocked even Meng Hao. Were it to explode out, even a true Immortal would likely be killed by the blast.

Meng Hao was standing on the head of the ancient python, and it appeared to be connected to him, as if he could control it.

After staring in shock for a moment, Meng Hao looked down to find that he was wearing a suit of armor. The armor seemed brand new, and it radiated a mild energy. Overall, he seemed to physically be in this place, but at the same time, his body also seemed to be illusory. Furthermore, up ahead of him was a planet!

It was much, much smaller than Planet South Heaven, and in fact, might not even have been large enough to actually call a planet. Perhaps it was nothing more than a large asteroid. It also seemed completely unstable, filled with chaos.

Almost as soon as Meng Hao laid eyes on the black planet, innumerable dots of light appeared that looked like eyes. All of the eyes opened and looked straight at Meng Hao.

An intense sense of crisis filled Meng Hao, and his mind trembled. Suddenly, whistling sounds could be heard, and, astonishingly, one thousand beams of light shot toward Meng Hao from the planet.

Figures could be seen within these beams of light, figures that weren't cultivators, but rather, puppets!

Meng Hao was not the only one to be seeing this. Each and every one of the cultivators on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking was in a unique world of their own. What they were seeing and experiencing was exactly the same as Meng Hao.

Meng Hao's eyes glittered coldly, and he didn't instantly spring into action. Instead, he took advantage of the time it would take for his opponents to reach him, to further study the ancient python. It appeared to be severely wounded, and on the verge of death, although it clearly had the power to make one final attack.

Such an attack would surely leave the beast completely dead in spirit and body. However, that final attack would surely be shocking, that much Meng Hao could tell.

He frowned and sent his divine sense out, then sighed. All of the puppets flying out from the planet had peak Dao Seeking auras, though not one of them was comparable to a false Immortal.

Just then, however, five auras suddenly exploded out from the planet, five auras that were all of the false Immortal stage. If that were all there were to it, it wouldn't be a big deal. But in that moment, yet another aura, even stronger than the others, exploded out.

The planet shook, and ripples spread out in all directions. The energy rose up, growing more and more powerful. It was very similar to the asteroid-like planet, completely filled with a will of chaos and madness.

Meng Hao's face sank, and his eyes widened....

It was a true Immortal!!

"One thousand puppets, five false Immortals, and one true Immortal...so this is the trial by fire?"

"According to what Ling Yunzi said, I'm supposed to kill all of these enemies within the time it takes an incense stick to burn. That's the only way to pass this stage. Ordinary attack methods would never be able to accomplish such a thing."

Meng Hao muttered to himself as the more than one thousand puppets whistled ever closer to him.

“There’s no way that this trial by fire will eliminate almost all the competitors in only the second stage....” Meng Hao’s eyes flickered as he looked down at the ancient python beneath his feet.

“This ancient beast is powerful.... The last attack it makes before dying will be powerful enough to kill all those thousand peak Dao Seeking puppets. Or, if I wait a bit, I could kill the five false Immortals with it. If I wait until the very end to use it, then I could kill the true Immortal.

“I only have one shot....

“That’s the choice we competitors are being given!” The light of understanding flashed in his eyes.

In the various other worlds in which the cultivators on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking all faced the same scenario, everyone was hesitating regarding how to stick out from the crowd. There were many Chosen hidden among the competitors, and they were all intelligent people. It only took them a moment to come to the exact same conclusion Meng Hao had about the crux of this stage.

The masked young man looked out with flickering eyes. Without hesitation, he shot out to fight the more than one thousand peak Dao Seeking puppets, intending to use the ancient python’s final attack to kill the true Immortal.

Such a decision was audacious, and required incredible self-confidence.

As for the old man with the age-changing transformation ability, his eyes flickered as he chose the same tactic.

There were, however, quite a few cultivators who chose to use the ancient beast’s powerful attack first, rumbling out and slaughtering the thousand peak Dao Seeking puppets. After the puppets had been completely wiped out, the cultivators would step forward themselves to fight against the five false immortals.

There were multiple cultivators who made each of the various choices. Shortly, the echoing sound of booms and the glow of magical abilities rocked Heaven and Earth within each of the various worlds.

However, the actual scenes playing out within these worlds was hidden to the observers out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea; the only thing they could see was the list of names and the numbers representing the kill count next to each name, which were quickly soaring.

As for the high-level Patriarchs from the Three Great Daoist Societies, Four Great Clans, Five Great Holy Lands, and the Three Churches and Six Sects, they were all sitting cross-legged in an enormous palace in the starry sky, staring at an enormous ancient mirror.

The mirror was split into three sections, within which could be seen clear images of everything that was happening on the three Ancient Roads.

“That masked young man chose the hardest path, but from that, you can see that his heart is as resolute as a boulder. He definitely has potential.”

“That cultivator with the age-transformations is most likely an apprentice of Patriarch Mirage. He might also be a rogue cultivator, but in any case, it’s quite rare to see cultivators of the Dao Seeking stage who practice time transformation magic.”

“There are many potential stars in this trial by fire....”

“From the three choices given them, we can learn about their personalities. Although, it doesn’t matter which choice they make, as long as they pass this stage, they can be considered Chosen!”

The old Patriarchs discussed the matter calmly, occasionally glancing at the Ancient Roads of the Nascent Soul and Spirit Severing to identify people they deemed worthy of notice.

Meng Hao, naturally, also received some attention. And yet, on the outside, there were currently no numbers displayed next to the name Fang Mu.

Meanwhile, the Patriarchs were continuing to discuss the matter...

“Hmm. That young cultivator with the mosquitos is the first one to make an unexpected move.”

“There’s also that kid in the yellow robe. He didn’t make any of the obvious choices either!”

All eyes in the palace were fixed on one of the scenes playing out on the mirror's surface. The young man with the mosquitos waved his hands, causing his mosquitos to fly toward the python, whereupon they stabbed their mouthparts into it and began to absorb its blood.

Another image depicted a young man who had performed unremarkably in the first stage. His body suddenly went blurry, and he fused down into the python. He quickly took control of it and set it to fighting, hoping to use it to kill both the puppets and the false Immortals.

Not too much time passed before other cultivators also began to use various unorthodox methods that did not conform with the three obvious choices. None of the members of the crowd in the palace seemed to find this unexpected, and in fact, had apparently predicted that such a thing would happen.

"This is excellent. There are far more people doing the unexpected than in the last trial by fire."

"From ancient times until now, there are always competitors in the Ancient Road's trial by fire who make breathtaking achievements in their later days. This group of cultivators is not bad at all!"

"How come that Fang Mu hasn't done anything yet?"

Amidst their chatting and laughing, some people had been paying attention to Meng Hao all along. Instantly, all eyes turned to the image portraying Meng Hao. He stood atop the head of the python, seemingly in a daze as the more than one thousand puppets bore down on him. They were now only about three hundred meters away.

"That Fang Mu most likely doesn't have any plan at all. It's not uncommon for cultivators to struggle when it comes to making decisions."

"That's too bad. I'd hoped to see if he could perform exceptionally well in the second stage too."

"For someone to take first place in two stages in a row isn't unheard of, but isn't very common either. Unfortunately, I'm afraid he's not the type that can do it."

As the puppets whistled toward him, Meng Hao's eyes glittered, and his lips turned up slightly into a cold smile.

“The three choices seem different, but in fact, they are the same. Perhaps by using some unexpected tactics, it would be possible to introduce some degree of variation in the results. However, even if you were able to wipe all of these things out, that would be overlooking something even more important!

“And that is... that planet!” His eyes shone with a strange light as he looked at the planet.

“In truth, this python has another function other than its one attack... and that is the power of flight!

“Before I proceed, though, I need to test out whether or not this body is real!” Eyes glittering, he suddenly reached his right hand out and then slapped it down hard onto his chest.

A boom rang out, his body trembled, and his eyes began to glow with a brilliant light. He’d felt like something was off as soon as he’d entered this place. Although everything seemed real, after experiencing the illusory world of the ancient Demon Immortal Sect, he had a much deeper understanding of such things.

In all the other worlds, everyone was already in the midst of furious fighting.

In Meng Hao’s world, the puppets were closing in. Meng Hao suddenly sat down cross-legged and then stretched his hands out to rest on the ancient python’s head.

The python’s eyes turned bright red, and it let out a roar. Then its body burst into flames as it used the last scraps of its life force to shoot forward at blinding speed.

The puppets scattered as the python swept through them. Even the five false immortals were incapable of blocking it. It moved with shocking speed as it carried Meng Hao directly toward the planet.

As soon as it reached the planet itself, the python collapsed into bits of ash that vanished. At the same time, the aura of a true Immortal exploded out from within the planet. A figure flew out, wreathed in golden light, moving with astonishing speed toward Meng Hao, who had just stepped foot onto the planet itself.

Its energy soared, and it looked like a windstorm as it bore down on Meng Hao.

However, even as it neared, a vicious expression appeared on Meng Hao's face, and he unleashed the Star Plucking Magic. A huge hand appeared that grabbed onto the golden figure, after which, Meng Hao closed his eyes. With ruthless decisiveness, he caused his cultivation base...

To detonate!

The power of the self-detonation was channeled directly into the golden figure through the Star Plucking hand. It didn't matter how incredibly powerful this figure was; its body was filled with roaring and, because its aura was chaotic to begin with, the power of the self-detonation compelled its inner aura to become even more turbulent, such that the figure was also forced...

To self-detonate!

A massive boom rattled out as both Meng Hao and the figure self-detonated together. The entire planet was then thrown into instability, causing it to shatter into countless pieces. A massive destructive power was unleashed as the fragments then transformed into a black hole which began to suck everything in!

The puppets and false Immortals had no time to fight back; they were instantly swallowed up by the black hole.

In the palace in the starry sky, the members of the crowd looked on in stupefaction.

Chapter 847: Talent. Cultivation. Age.

Crowds in locations all over the Ninth Mountain and Sea were watching the events on the vortex screens. However, regardless of location, the eyes of every spectator suddenly went wide with disbelief.

On the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking, Fang Mu's name had previously had no number next to it. In the blink of an eye, there was suddenly a number: 1,006!

The number appeared so quickly, so suddenly, that people didn't even have a chance to register it mentally before both the number, and Fang Mu's name, disappeared.

The light that covered the altar upon which Meng Hao stood slowly faded away, to reveal Meng Hao, sitting there cross-legged.

He was the first person...

To pass the stage!!

“That’s... that’s impossible!!”

“What just happened? I remember that just now, Fang Mu didn’t have any numbers next to his name at all. That means he hadn’t even killed a single enemy. Then I blinked my eyes, and he passed the stage?”

“A bunch of numbers appeared just now, and then they vanished, and Fang Mu passed the stage. Is it possible... is it possible that he used only one move to kill all of the enemies!?!?”

“Heavens! He got first place in the second stage too! Hardly any time has passed, not even a hundred breaths!!”

“He got first place in the first stage, and now first place in the second stage!!” Everyone out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea was completely shocked. Cries of astonishment rang out in all of the locations where people were watching, and the buzz of conversation immediately rose up.

In the vast Eastern Lands, Fang Xiufeng and Meng Li were gaping at the scene. Even they weren’t too sure exactly what Meng Hao had done.

Pill Demon and Chu Yuyan were also looking on with wide eyes, staring dumbly at Meng Hao on the screen.

The crowds out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea were in an uproar.

“That Fang Mu, he’s definitely the star of this whole trial by fire!”

“How powerful is he exactly? He actually... he actually killed all of the enemies with one move!”

“I want to see how exactly he did it. It must have been breathtaking!!”



Meanwhile, not too far away from Planet East Victory, an enormous turtle floated in the starry sky, carrying an entire continent on its back. He was staring in shock at the three vortex screens down below on East Victory.

“Dammit. It must be him! Even if he transformed into dust, the Patriarch would still recognize that little bastard!!

“But... what exactly did he do? He got first place in the blink of an eye!” This gargantuan turtle was of course none other than Patriarch Reliance.

At the same time, in another location in the starry sky, a figure could be seen sitting cross-legged on an asteroid, hair disheveled as he looked up at three vortex screens. His expression was taciturn, but a brilliant light glittered in his eyes.

“How could I have imagined that I wouldn’t die.... Meng Hao, Planet South Heaven was only the first half of my life. I have to thank you for helping me understand so much. In the remaining years, I will definitely find a way to pay you back.”

Even as everyone in the Ninth Mountain and Sea was shaken, back in the palace among the stars, silence reigned. The Patriarchs of the various sects and clans, even the representatives from the Three Great Daoist Societies, were all watching with wide eyes and slack jaws.

After a long moment, one of the old men chuckled wryly and said, “That’s cheating!!”

These people were the only ones who could clearly see what had actually happened.

“The fact that he came up with a way to seize victory like that might be considered cheating, but it’s amazing nonetheless!!”

“He didn’t hesitate to kill himself along with the enemy! Fervor like that is what clinched the victory!”

“Compared to this Fang Mu, all the others couldn’t even be considered to be using unorthodox tactics. His methods are truly astonishing. To self-detonate with such decisiveness, and furthermore,

to control it so ingeniously... we can be certain that Fang Mu was the first person to realize that the second stage was an illusory world!”

“Even still, he should be disqualified! Fraudulent methods like that are a complete disgrace!”

“Oh please, you want him disqualified so you can secretly go recruit him! That’s not cheating. The other competitors just didn’t think of that idea, or perhaps couldn’t pull it off. That’s just weakness on their part. This Fang Mu has definitely cleared this stage!”

As the discussions continued in the palace, one of the three Elders from the Three Great Daoist Societies who sat at the head of the group suddenly opened his eyes, filling the palace with endless light.

“Fang Mu. Stage cleared!” He spoke only four words, but they echoed out from the palace into the starry sky, and then, by means of a special technique, echoed throughout the Ancient Road, and then out into the rest of the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

Suddenly, a ranking list appeared in the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking, and in first place was the name Fang Mu. Every spot beneath it was blank.

The Ninth Mountain and Sea was abuzz, and many of the Patriarchs seated in the palace pulled out jade slips to transmit information to their sects, ordering them to attempt to recruit Fang Mu.

It was at this point that Meng Hao opened his eyes. At first, they seemed blank, but then quickly grew bright. His expression was calm as he sat there cross-legged and unmoving.

The second stage was a complete illusion, and the so-called risk to the lives of the competitors was false. However, because of the brutality of the first stage, the other competitors subconsciously assumed that the second stage would be exactly the same.

By now, roughly half of the prescribed time period had passed. Shockingly, a blue-robed young woman from the group who had proceeded 3,000 paces suddenly became visible from within the light that surrounded her. Her eyes brimmed with confidence as she looked over at the ranking list, and then suddenly went wide with shock.

“He was actually faster than me!” she thought. “I possess the Dao of souls, allowing me to take control of the puppets. And yet Fang Mu possesses some more powerful divine ability? Just what is it?!”

More people began to clear the second stage after the young woman. It didn’t take long for enough time to pass for an incense stick to burn. Roughly a third of the competitors didn’t manage to clear the stage. As for those who did, they used a variety of methods to succeed. When it came to the true Immortal, most of them chose to use the python to destroy it in a single blow.

No one used the same method as Meng Hao.

As people emerged from clearing the stage, they looked over at the ranking list, and were shocked.

“Fang Mu took first place in the first stage, and now he took first place in the second stage too!”

“Dammit!!” The masked young man was one of the last to emerge from the second stage. Behind his mask, his face was extremely unsightly. His previously high aspirations had been dealt a heavy blow. As for the old man with the age-transformation powers, he also looked ashen-faced, and was frowning.

Most of the cultivators who distinguished themselves in the first stage did not fare very well in the second stage.

Meanwhile, on the Ancient Roads of the Nascent Soul and Spirit Severing, the second stage had likewise concluded. Fatty, Chen Fan and Wang Youcai had all succeeded. Chen Fan put on the most astonishing performance, and although he didn’t take first place, he was in the top 100, which was quite an accomplishment!

As for Fatty and Wang Youcai, they ended up in the top 1,000.

Li Shiqi ranked toward the bottom, and had barely been able to pass.

It was only the second stage, but the previously large number of competitors had already been whittled down by roughly half.

Of course, Meng Hao's performance caused a huge stir in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, and the name Fang Mu was now planted thoroughly in everyone's minds. Many people were now looking forward to the third stage, to see if he could take first place yet again!

On the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking, Ling Yunzi of the Nine Seas God World stood there in illusory form, looking out at the crowds. This time, his gaze lingered on Meng Hao for a bit longer than it had last time.

Without another word, he then waved his hand, causing everyone to disappear. When they reappeared, they were further along down the Ancient Road. They still stood on altars, although everyone's positions were now changed. Some who were in the lead, were now sent further back, whereas some who had been far in the back, had now caught up.

Only Meng Hao was alone, far up ahead of everyone on his own altar. Behind him were all the other Dao Seeking cultivators, staring at his back, faces filled with the desire to do battle.

"The previous two stages tested your battle prowess," Ling Yunzi said coolly. "You will now pass through the third, fourth, and fifth stages simultaneously. They will test your latent talent, the depth of your cultivation base, and also... your true age!

"The higher your latent talent, the deeper your cultivation base, and the younger you are, the more outstanding your results will be!

"This is a composite test. Even if you did not perform well in the first two stages, if you do well in this third stage, you can still rise above the other competitors." With that, he waved his hand, causing everything to flash with bright colors, and a wind to pick up. Suddenly, three enormous stone steles rose up out of the altars in front of each competitor.

Each stone stele was inscribed with a single large character.

Talent! Cultivation! Age!

"Place your hand onto the stone stele, and allow its power to enter into you. Let the testing begin!"

The majority of the cultivators on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking stepped forward and placed their hands onto the 'talent' stone steles. In the blink of an eye, columns of light began to rise up from the stone steles, each one reaching a different height. Most reached a height of approximately

30 meters. However, there was one that suddenly shot up to 60 meters, drawing quite a bit of attention.

To any sect, the latent talent a cultivator possessed was actually more important than battle prowess.

Next, a 90-meter column of light appeared, then a 150-meter column, a 180-meter column, and even a 300-meter column!

That one belonged to the young woman who had emerged from the second stage right after Meng Hao. She looked at the column of light, her expression as calm as it usually was.

Behind her, more 300-meter columns appeared. Among the other cultivators who possessed 300-meter columns were the masked young man and the cultivator with the mosquitos. Those two, along with the young woman, were known to the audience by now. The others whose columns reached 300 meters were all people who hadn't attracted much attention in the previous two stages, but were now making a spectacular showing.

"A 300-meter column of light shows an incredible level of latent talent. I never imagined that there would be seven people with such latent talent in the Dao Seeking division of the trial by fire!"

"There are nine in the Spirit Severing division!"

"There are even more in the Nascent Soul division! A total of seventeen 300-meter columns!"

"I wonder how Fang Mu will perform...." While the crowds outside discussed the proceedings, the Patriarchs in the palace who represented the various sects and clans were looking on with glittering eyes. They eyed the various cultivators with exceptional latent talent, and of course, were looking at Meng Hao.

Meng Hao hesitated for a moment. He had never really paid much attention to his latent talent, but he lifted his hand up and then placed it onto the stone stele.

As soon as he touched it, a gentle power spread out into his body from the stone stele. It quickly flowed into his qi and blood passageways, eventually swirling out through his whole body. However, it was at this point that the illusory Immortal meridian created by the bronze lamp suddenly quivered. Then, it began to emit a gravitational force that... instantly sucked up the gentle power from the stone stele.

Meng Hao's eyes went wide.

Chapter 848: Senior, Bring Another!

On the Ancient Road of the Nascent Soul, glittering light rose up. Fatty stared blankly at the stone stele in front of him; the beam of light that rose up was only 90 meters tall, although there were still quite a few others that weren't as tall as his.

"Fudge!" he thought, his eyes blazing with fury. "Why the hell isn't my latent talent the best? That doesn't make sense! All those years ago the Golden Frost Sect told me that my latent talent was unequalled in the whole world!" He was especially depressed when he looked over and saw that Wang Youcai's column of light was 150 meters tall.

Then he looked over at Chen Fan, and Fatty's eyes went wide with disbelief. Chen Fan's beam of light... was actually among the 300-meter columns!

Li Shiqi's wasn't quite 300 meters tall, but was still tall enough at 250 meters.

On the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking, as the competitors placed their hands on the stone steles, radiant light shot up, filling the area with scintillating brightness. Only Meng Hao's stone stele was completely without any light whatsoever. He smiled wryly.

It was impossible for the stone stele to emit any light whatsoever, because the gentle power that was the source of the light never returned from Meng Hao's body into the stele. Instead, it had been swallowed up by the ethereal Immortal meridian inside of him.

Right now, the audiences in the outside world were all abuzz. Much importance was attached to the latent talent stage of the event. After all, latent talent was an important foundation for cultivators, and all sects paid close attention to it. As for the cultivators who displayed unusual amounts of latent talent, they were immediately taken note of.

There were quite a few people who looked over at Meng Hao. He had taken first place in the previous two stages, which put him directly in the limelight. Many people were waiting in anticipation to see if he would take first place in the third stage as well. Of course, there were also others who looked on with cold smiles, just waiting to ridicule him.

By now, all of the stone steles were lit up, be they on the Ancient Roads of the Nascent Soul or Spirit Severing, or the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking. Now, all attention was focused on Meng Hao....

This was especially the case because, after taking first in the first two stages, he was now ahead of everyone on the Ancient Road. There weren't even any other cultivators around him, which made his position even more conspicuous.

“What is Fang Mu up to?”

“Eee? There's no light coming from the stone stele at all! What's wrong? He can't possibly be completely devoid of latent talent. Even if it's poor, there would still be some light, right?”

“Maybe he didn't actually start the analysis yet. But hold on, his hand is clearly resting on the stele!”

Soon, everyone on the outside was looking over at the image of Meng Hao on the vortex screens, and were astonished.

The powerful experts from the various sects were also watching, as was everyone in the palace up the starry sky. Everyone from the Three Churches and Six Sects, the Five Great Holy Lands, the Four Great Clans, and even the Three Great Daoist Societies, was now looking at Meng Hao and his lightless stone stele.

“What crafty scheme is that little bastard pulling off?” thought Patriarch Reliance, his face twisted with fury. Although he had a complex relationship with Meng Hao, Meng Hao was the sole Inner Sect disciple from the Reliance sect. Therefore, the scene that was playing out right now left Patriarch Reliance feeling quite disgraced.

Back in the vast Eastern Lands, Fang Xiufeng and Meng Li were also staring in shock. They knew exactly what kind of latent talent Meng Hao had. Although he'd experienced the Seventh Year Tribulation, he was also the first person in the entire Fang Clan in years to actually experience a second and even a third lifetime.

Because of that, they knew that his bloodline ran especially strong. A cultivator's bloodline was one of the aspects of their latent talent, so they couldn't understand why the stone stele in front of Meng Hao did not shine with light.

Meng Hao cleared his throat and looked around at all the other people and their columns of light. Feeling all the eyes boring down into his back, he slowly lifted his hand up and then pressed it down again onto the stone stele.

The gentle power appeared once again, but just like the last time, the Immortal meridian swallowed it up. It was at this point that Meng Hao noticed that after absorbing the power, the Immortal meridian was a bit different.

He casually lifted his hand up again and then pushed it down, causing more of the gentle energy to spread out inside him. The spectators looked on in shock as Meng Hao continuously attempted to activate the light.

After trying seven or eight times, he realized that the Immortal meridian had absorbed too much of the gentle power, and now there wasn't any emanating out from the stone stele at all. However, the Immortal meridian inside of him had changed from its previous illusory state. About ten percent of it had solidified.

This development caused Meng Hao's heart to pound with wild joy and excitement. He knew that the moment the Immortal Meridian was complete, he would step into true Immortality.

Suppressing his excitement, he plastered an expression of surprise onto his face and then pushed his hand down onto the stele a few more times experimentally. He glanced around, then looked up, apparently frustrated, and called out into the void: "Senior Ling Yunzi, are you there!? This stone stele is broken! Can I have another?"

"Actually, sir, it would be best to bring out several, just in case there are any other broken ones. That will save you some frustration in the long run." He gazed up into the starry sky, an expression of eager anticipation on his face.

Everything was silent. The other cultivators on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking all looked on silently.

In the starry sky palace, the Patriarchs from the various sects were all frowning. However, they knew that the Ruins of Immortality were veiled in mystery. Even though the Three Great Daoist Societies held control of the three Ancient Roads, there were many things about them that they didn't understand.



After a long moment, the Patriarch of the Nine Seas God World said, “Fellow Daoist Ling Yunzi, give him another.”

The voice echoed out into the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking, and Ling Yunzi materialized out of the void. He looked down indifferently at Meng Hao, then waved his sleeve, causing the stone stele in front of him to vanish as if had been teleported away. Moments later, it was replaced by another stone stele.

Meng Hao’s eyes gleamed as he quickly reached his hand out and pushed it down onto the stone stele.

“SHINE!” he bellowed. The gentle power once again entered his body and began to flow about. At the same time, an imperceptible flicker appeared in Meng Hao’s eyes as he used both the meat jelly and the black feather to conceal anything that was happening inside of him.

The Immortal meridian quickly sucked in every last bit of the power, although it didn’t seem to have a very drastic effect on the meridian itself. Meng Hao blinked. Then, as Ling Yunzi looked on wide-eyed, he dramatically inspected the stone stele and tried to place his hand onto it several times. Soon, all the power from the stele was sucked away by the Immortal Meridian.

Ling Yunzi wasn’t the only person who was paying close attention to what was happening. The people in the starry sky palace were also observing closely, and their frowns deepened.

“There’s something wrong!”

“The stone stele isn’t defective. Even though everything seems normal, there’s actually something strange going on inside of his body.”

“He must cultivate some unique Daoist magic....”

As the discussions buzzed in the palace, an old man wearing a long crimson gown suddenly rose to his feet.

“There’s no need for any testing,” he said. “Ladies and Gentleman, Mount Sun would be happy to dispel any doubts for you. I will recruit him to join Mount Sun, and then all disputes will be resolved.” Laughing heartily, he began to walk forward, but then his path was suddenly obstructed.

“There’s no need for the Holy Land of Mount Sun to go to that trouble! The Burning Incense Stick Society is more than willing to take the risk of recruiting him.”

In the blink of an eye, the atmosphere in the palace was completely astir. As they verbally sparred over the matter, Meng Hao stood on his altar on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking. Sighing, he looked up at the grim-faced Ling Yunzi.

“Senior, this... this one’s broken too! Why don’t you give me a few more...?”

Ling Yunzi stared at him silently for a moment, then waved his hand. Rumbling echoed out as four stone steles with the character ‘talent’ inscribed on them suddenly appeared.

Meng Hao’s heart thumped, and he coughed lightly again and began the assessment.

“Hm, this one’s broken.

“Eee? This one’s broken too! Dammit!

“Heavens! Who would have thought that this one would also be broken!

“I... I can’t believe it! This one’s broken too!” Meng Hao looked up with a sheepish, pained expression, as if the Heavens were playing a cruel joke on him. Ling Yunzi looked back with an extremely unsightly expression.

Of course, inwardly, Meng Hao was extremely excited. Although the five stone steles from just now had not been incredibly effective, they had pushed his Immortal meridian from being ten percent solid to twenty percent.

Of course, all of the crowds looking on in the Ninth Mountain and Sea weren’t sure whether to laugh or cry. Although Meng Hao was no longer in first place, he was actually even more a center of attention than before, when he had placed first.

“Senior, why don’t you give me another ten,” Meng Hao said expectantly.

Ling Yunzi's eyelids twitched. With a cold harrumph, he waved his hand, then apathetically announced the first place winner of the third stage.

After that he said, "The next stage assesses cultivation base! Let the assessment begin!"

As his words rang out, the 'talent' stone steles vanished.

The first place winner of the third stage glared at Meng Hao in frustration, but could do nothing except wallow in anger.

"Senior!" Meng Hao cried out in distress. "Hey, senior! I'm not done with the assessment! This isn't fair!"

Ling Yunzi completely ignored Meng Hao, and in fact, vanished into thin air.

Nobody paid any attention to Meng Hao's complaints whatsoever. At the same time, everyone else on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking stepped forward toward the 'cultivation' stone steles. The Patriarchs in the starry sky palace up above looked on with glittering eyes. Although they had been bickering moments ago, it was all in accord with the various plans they had.

As for the crowds in the Ninth Sea, they had originally had high expectations for the third stage, but after what had happened with Fang Mu, the mood... was completely different.

"This is so unfair!" grumbled Meng Hao. He walked forward to the 'cultivation' stone stele, reached out his right hand, and was delighted to find that the gentle power, although somewhat different than the power from before, was actually slightly more powerful. As soon as it entered his body and began to circulate around, the Immortal meridian trembled and then thirstily spread out to absorb all of it.

"Dammit! How could this one be broken too?" exclaimed Meng Hao, seemingly furious. As all of the other stone steles around him shone with bright light, Meng Hao continued to attempt to get his to work, looking as though he refused to believe it wouldn't. After the seventh or eighth attempt, he had absorbed enough power from the stone stele to solidify his Immortal meridian to thirty percent.

His cultivation base, with its eighty percent of the power of a true Immortal, actually experienced some advancement.

Licking his lips, Meng Hao once again called out loudly. “This really isn’t fair! Senior Ling Yunzi, please, let me switch steles!”

Ling Yunzi materialized and, his expression dark, looked at Meng Hao and waved his arm. The ‘cultivation’ stone steles vanished, and then Ling Yunzi’s annoyed voice echoed out.

“Pipe down! Any more chatter from you and you’ll be disqualified! Next stage, the age assessment!”

Meng Hao blinked. Feeling slightly guilty, he proceeded toward the ‘age’ stone stele and pushed his hand down onto it.

Chapter 849: Creativity

On the Ancient Road of the Nascent Soul, everything was normal. The cultivators on the Ancient Road of Spirit Severing had made incredible progress. These three stages of talent, cultivation, and age assessments tested one’s foundation, and as such, were of great importance to the various sects and clans. There were already quite a few people from both the Ancient Road of the Nascent Soul and Spirit Severing whose names had been recorded by the sects. As long as they continued to perform well in the following stages, their future good fortune was essentially guaranteed.

Chen Fan was just such a person!

Unfortunately, Fatty and the others had not yet made it onto any of the lists.

In contrast, the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking was in complete chaos. It wasn’t that the proceedings themselves were chaotic, but rather, there was a feeling of unpredictability because nobody was paying attention to who would take first place in the assessments of talent, cultivation and age.

All sorts of conversations were playing out throughout the Ninth Mountain and Sea.

“Just what kind of latent talent does Fang Mu have? And what cultivation base? How old is he?!”

“I can’t believe the stone steles didn’t work! They even changed steles several times. There’s obviously something special about Fang Mu!”

“Oh right, who took first in the talent and cultivation assessments?”

“I wasn’t really paying attention. I’m just wondering whether the age-assessing stone stele will be effective on Fang Mu!”

Back on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking, Meng Hao was like an unwelcome guest whose style and actions took the wind out of everyone’s sails. He was now, once again, the focus of all attention.

Although he wasn’t in first place... the current first place competitor was being completely ignored.

More and more sects were becoming interested in Meng Hao, and in fact, his name had already been recorded by all of the Three Churches and Six Sects. Furthermore, it was in first place on all of those lists!

Meng Hao bashfully placed his hand on the ‘age’ stone stele, sucked in the energy, solidifying his Immortal meridian to forty percent.

He felt that it was quite a pity that Ling Yunzi was so stingy. Sighing wistfully to himself, he thought of yelling out another complaint about how unfair it all was, but managed to keep his mouth shut. He said nothing, but rather, stood there gauging the other competitors’ columns of light. No matter how high any of those columns were, everyone’s faces were extremely unsightly.

“The age-assessing stage is concluded!” announced Ling Yunzi with the flick of a sleeve. Everyone except for Meng Hao vanished and reappeared on altars further off in the distance.

Meng Hao had now gone from first place to dead last.

This development caused everyone who was competing in the trial by fire on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking to be very agitated. Virtually, all of them turned to glare back at Meng Hao, inwardly musing about how benevolent Ling Yunzi was. In their minds, someone like Meng Hao should obviously have been disqualified immediately.

“He obviously just doesn’t have enough latent talent, so he used some insidious technique to disable the stone steles. How shameless!”

“There must be something weird about his cultivation base that he doesn’t want anyone to know about. To use such methods to skirt the issue is really detestable. You know, he should be disqualified! Merely getting sent to last place is really showing him mercy!”

“Punish him to sate our anger!”

Everyone on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking was furious at Meng Hao, especially those who hadn’t made a name for themselves in the previous two stages. Those who had excelled in the assessments of talent, cultivation, and age were especially angry.

“This isn’t fair!” yelled Meng Hao.

“Not fair?” replied Ling Yunzi, glaring back at him. “You didn’t earn any marks in the last three stages, you wasted several stone steles, and even depleted some of the valuable resources of the Ruins of Immortality! You’re lucky to not be disqualified! I dare you to keep yapping!”

Anyone else who was in Meng Hao’s position that received such words and such a gaze from Ling Yunzi would instantly be filled with awe, fear, and concern over the consequences of their words. However, as far as Meng Hao was concerned, he hadn’t come here to join any sect.

“Oh great and powerful senior,” he said, “I know that I was in the wrong. Listen, how about this. Just give me three more stone steles to try out. If they don’t work, then junior will resign himself to his fate.”

Ling Yunzi gaped at Meng Hao, so angry that he almost felt like laughing. Were it not for Meng Hao’s previous performance having attracted the attention of all the spectators outside, he would definitely disqualify him immediately. Meng Hao was turning into a real headache. In the end, Ling Yunzi just pretended he didn’t hear him.

“The sixth, seventh, and eighth stages will assess your divine sense, willpower, and intuition!”

In response to Ling Yunzi’s words, Meng Hao blinked. Inwardly, he vowed that the next time he saw Fan Dong’er, he would definitely show her who was boss, and vent his anger toward Ling Yunzi on her.

“You will pass through these three stages simultaneously. Each of you will find yourself in your own world, filled with unique and strange phenomena, which you will use to create your own divine ability!

“Depending on the results of your creation, you will be presented with a certain number of....” At this point, Ling Yunzi faltered for a moment before speaking the final two words.

“... stone steles!”

When Meng Hao heard the words ‘stone steles,’ his heart began to thump, and his eyes shone brightly.

Ling Yunzi waved his hand, causing all of the altars began to tremble; massive amounts of fog began to accumulate, covering over everyone present. Then, the power of teleportation spread out, and everyone disappeared.

Outside in the Ninth Mountain and Sea, everyone settled their qi and calmed their minds, then focused on the scenes playing out on the vortex screens. It could be said that the first two stages tested fighting, and the third through fifth stages tested the foundation. In that case, the sixth, seventh and eighth stages tested creativity!

For cultivators, creativity required divine sense, willpower, and of course intuition.

Every time the Three Great Daoist Societies held a recruitment event, shocking and peerless individuals would create divine abilities in these three stages that would become incredibly famous.

Everyone was watching with keen anticipation.

In the starry sky palace, the Patriarchs were no longer squabbling, but instead, were watching with rapt attention. The Five Holy Lands, the Three Great Daoist Societies, all of them were closely examining the screens, and the cultivators on the Ancient Roads of the Nascent Soul, Spirit Severing and Dao Seeking.

The people who had ended up on the name lists of the various sects were the subject of special scrutiny. As long as they maintained good positions during these three stages, then there was no question about whether or not they would eventually be recruited.

As for the rest of the people who hadn't made it onto the name lists, if they performed spectacularly in these three stages, they would surely be noticed and their names would be added to the lists.

Up in the palace among the stars, everyone was sighing emotionally.

"Creating a divine ability is not a simple thing! It's very difficult.... I can't wait to see what stunning divine abilities we will see!"

"In any other place, it would probably be easier to find a phoenix feather or a qilin horn than to find someone in this group who could create a divine ability. However, the Ruins of Immortality are a special place, with a unique power. There are astonishing things here that would normally be very rare, or even nonexistent in the outside world, things that can inspire the competitors, and influence them inwardly."

"That's right, on the Ancient Roads, it will be much easier for them to create divine abilities. If they can't make one here, it shows that their future path will not stretch very far."

"Divine abilities must be created, a process that stems from the intuition of the creator. Willpower could be considered part of intuition, whereas divine will acts as a Dao Protector. In the final analysis, the same objects and the same source of inspiration will be viewed differently by different people, and can lead to different forms of enlightenment."

"From ancient times until now, the Daoist Societies have held this trial by fire on several occasions. The most powerful person to ever participate was Sir Fan from the Nine Seas God World. When he created his divine ability that year, he caused nineteen stone steles to appear, which is a record that stands to this day!"

"He created The Mortal Sea Becomes Immortal, which was eventually developed into a Daoist magic, one of the most powerful ever!"

Meanwhile, as the people in the starry sky palace were sighing in emotional reminiscence, all of the people being teleported opened their eyes as the scenery around them became clear.

A tremor ran through Meng Hao as he looked around at completely unfamiliar lands. Everything around him was a mass of black soil that stretched out as far as the eye could see.



It was blazingly hot, and nine suns could be seen high up in the sky, almost like nine mighty Immortals looking out across the lands.

This place was a wasteland!

Scattered structures were visible off in the distance, half sunken into the soil; those that remained above the surface were in a state of collapse. However, carvings of auspicious beasts could be seen on their surfaces, harkening back to their former glory.

A moaning wind blew through the land, brushing against the black soil, causing what sounded like a sad melody to spring up. It filled one with the desire to go searching for whoever might have listened to such a song in the past, but as it floated across the land, it seemed to be drifting through countless ages of time, and ancient memories.

Meng Hao stood there, completely alone in this vast stretch of land.

The only thing to accompany him was the murmuring wind, the black soil that stretched out in all directions, and the ruins that could be seen off in the distance.

Being in such a location caused Meng Hao's mood to sink, and his eyes flickered with a strange light.

"So, this place can influence the emotions," he thought, sending his divine sense spreading out. It swept the area, and in addition to everything he had already seen, he could now sense a faint pressure weighing down on him.

If he hadn't sent his divine sense out, he would have never detected it.... Furthermore, he was only aware of it within the range of his divine sense.

Meng Hao's expression slowly changed as he carefully examined his surroundings using divine sense. Now he could sense that there were actually different ranges of pressures, some strong, some weak, coming from all the various ruins lying about!

It was at this point that Ling Yunzi's voice echoed out to everyone on the Ancient Road of Dao Seeking. It almost sounded like it was coming from a different world that overlapped with this one.

“Sixth stage, divine sense.

“Seventh stage, willpower.

“Eighth stage, intuition.

“The world you are in contains 99 ruins, as well as a virtually intact Immortal pavilion. The pressure is different in each area, and you will find different forms of enlightenment in each location. The more powerful your divine sense is, the more Immortal ruins you will be able to sense, and the greater your enlightenment will be.

“After you find each Immortal ruin, your willpower will determine whether or not you can stand up to the pressure there.

“Your intuition will decide your final type of enlightenment, and how it becomes a divine ability!” Ling Yunzi’s archaic voice echoed about in the wasteland; it almost sounded like he was a figure from ancient times, that his voice was being affected by the agedness of the ruins and then transmitted through time into the ears of the competitors.

The wind whimpered, and the land looked as ancient as ever. Meng Hao’s eyes glittered as he sent his divine sense out and found that it was impossible to cover the entire world. He could only see seven sets of ruins.

The nearest was about three thousand meters away, and it appeared to be a dried up well, surrounded by a broken-down wall.

Meng Hao strolled over, and when he was about three hundred meters away from the well, he could sense pressure pushing down on him. It was powerful, like a windstorm.

The windstorm bore down on him, accompanied by a voice that, when compared to Ling Yunzi, truly did seem to come from ancient times.

“Whenever I see it, I think of you....

“To anyone who hears my voice in the future: Have you felt the same way as I do? Do you also have an object that makes you think of someone?”

## Chapter 850: Can the Leopard Change its Spots?

Meng Hao stopped in place and stared blankly at a vague illusion that suddenly appeared in front of him. He saw a middle-aged man wearing a long white robe, sitting cross-legged in front of the well.

The wall surrounding the well was suddenly intact, and a simple hut could be seen attached to it, the sides of which were covered in bottle-gourd vines.

The middle-aged man seemed to be gazing eternally at the well, as if he were locked in a single moment for all eternity.

It was a simple vision, almost ordinary, but Meng Hao felt himself trembling. The voice in his ear penetrated into his mind and echoed through his soul.

He thought of many things, many people, many objects.

He wasn't sure when, but at some point, he had walked up, sat cross-legged in front of the well and started staring at it. His mind filled with perplexity and struggle, as if the ancient voice from just now was allowing the dilapidated Ancient ruin here to interfere with his willpower and make him lose himself.

Inside, he was fighting against the pressure, and based on the intensity of his willpower, he was able to maintain a scrap of consciousness that prevented him from losing himself.

After two hours passed, the perplexity in Meng Hao's eyes slowly faded away, and was replaced with a bright light.

"What an incredible Dao Projection!" thought Meng Hao. Sweat pouring down his forehead, he took a deep breath and thought back to the daze he had just been in, and it frightened him. If there were any deadly forces in this area instead of just good fortune and chances for enlightenment, then Meng Hao would have been in great danger just now.

"Divine sense will allow me to find more of these Immortal ruins, and my willpower will enable me to fight back against the pressure. As for intuition, that is what I need to gain enlightenment. That... is what leads to creativity."

After a moment of silence, Meng Hao continued to sit there cross-legged, recalling everything he had just seen.

“There must be an object which, when I see it, will make me think of someone,” he murmured. He opened his bag of holding and swept it with his divine sense. Suddenly, he paused, and his eyes flickered awkwardly.

“Uh....” He hesitated for a moment, then pulled out a stack of paper from his bag of holding.

“Every time I look at this particular promissory note, I think of the resplendent Taiyang Zi....

“And this paper makes me think of Ji Xiaoxiao.

“This one makes me think of Song Luodan.

“And this one... Li Ling’er. This one is Sun Hai. It’s too bad I don’t have a promissory note from Fan Dong’er. Ji Yin didn’t write one either.” After looking over the promissory notes, he smiled wryly and realized that the enlightenment he had experienced didn’t seem to be the same as that of the middle-aged man in front of the well.

The man obviously missed an old friend or acquaintance, or perhaps a significant other. Meng Hao’s experience was quite different than that.

Sighing, Meng Hao put the promissory notes back in his bag of holding and rose to his feet. After looking at the ruins one last time, he flickered off into the distance.

“I don’t think the enlightenment of that place suits me,” he thought, shaking his head. “If it did, how come I would think of promissory notes in a place that was clearly designed to make one think of old friends?” He turned into a beam of light that shot off into the distance.

Of course, his divine sense was backed by eighty percent of the power of a true Immortal, so when he sent it out to search for another ruin, he quickly found one, and then flew in that direction.

What he found was a dried-up old river.

The only thing left behind was an empty riverbed, and pressure once again radiated out as Meng Hao neared. This time, there was no voice, only pressure, and this pressure was stronger than that which he had experienced at the well.

He sat down cross-legged in the riverbed and wrestled against the pressure for about an hour. When he returned to his normal state, he was panting, and more sweat poured down his forehead.

“If there are 99 sets of ruins like this, plus an intact Immortal pavilion, then that means that the more enlightenment I gain, the better my results will be when I create my divine ability.

“However... I’m only at the second ruin and it’s already so difficult. I wonder how many ruins some of the others have reached enlightenment in.” Meng Hao frowned and looked at the riverbed. Fighting back against the pressure with his willpower, he began to experience a vision.

He saw water flowing up into the sky, and boundless waves. This river seemed capable of shaking Heaven and Earth. As it flowed upward, it cut a huge rift through the sky.

“I bet if I can understand this river,” he murmured to himself, “I’ll be able to create a divine ability that has to do with flowing water. When I unleash it, a celestial river would appear all around me that would sweep over everything.” After thinking about it, he decided that such a divine ability would definitely be powerful. Therefore, he continued to sit there cross-legged, silently trying to reach enlightenment.

However, after six hours flowed by, he opened his eyes in frustration. After all that time, he wasn’t even able to organize his thoughts.

“When I look at the river, I know that it can lead to enlightenment about a divine ability, but I can’t stop thinking about the river beneath Mount Daqing, the bottle gourd I threw into it, and the slip of paper that was inside.” Scratching his head in puzzlement, he remembered how he had written down his great aspiration onto that note, and how he still hadn’t achieved that goal. He couldn’t help but sigh.

“It seems this place doesn’t suit me either,” he thought.

Standing, he sent his divine sense out to look for more ruins.

Meanwhile, everyone out in the Ninth Mountain and Sea was watching the various scenes playing out on the Ancient Roads of the Nascent Soul, Spirit Severing, and Dao Seeking. Of course, everything was quite blurry; not even the Patriarchs from the various sects up in the starry sky palace could clearly see what was happening.

After all, these Immortal ruins were filled with incredible power. It wouldn't be until the various participants created their final divine ability that everyone outside would be able to see what was happening.

However, the audience was able to see the three Ancient Roads, and knew that all of the participants were trying to gain enlightenment from the ruins.

Up in the starry sky palace, the various Patriarchs were discussing the scenes on the screen.

"It seems most of the competitors are still immersed in studying their first Immortal ruin. I wonder what type of enlightenment will be gained by the person who studies the most!?"

"Well whoever that is, they will definitely be able to create an incredibly powerful divine ability, that much is certain."

"That's right, Sir Fan from the Nine Seas God World gained enlightenment from 91 of the Immortal ruins. That was how he managed to create the stunning and peerless Mortal Sea Becomes Immortal! In the end, he got 19 stone steles!"

"Creating divine abilities has a lot to do with one's disposition. Grand and magnificent people create divine abilities that match their personality, whereas people with narrow thinking tend to make extreme divine abilities. Different personalities, different divine abilities."

It was at this point that the Patriarch from the Burning Incense Stick Society suddenly looked over at Meng Hao's screen. "Huh? Fang Mu has already gained enlightenment from two Immortal ruins!"

Shockingly, two bright dots could be seen on Meng Hao's screen.

Meanwhile, on the Ancient Road of the Nascent Soul, Fatty was sitting next to a woodpile, seemingly in a daze. The woodpile seemed ancient, as if it had existed for countless years, and was over three hundred meters tall, towering above the lands.

At the very top of the woodpile was a magic fungus!

It was an enormous magic fungus shaped like a millstone, completely violet in color, and emanating a fragrant aroma. Fatty swallowed, and then his eyes began to shine brightly.

“That thing is a treasure.... Just smell it and you can tell it’s some Heavenly material or Earthly treasure.” He immediately produced a flying sword from his bag of holding and sent it flying toward the magic fungus. The sword trembled as it neared, then was hit with a jolt that sent it flying back. The mushroom did not move one iota.

Fatty’s eyes shone with determination, and he produced some more magical items, then pushed out hard with his cultivation base. After an hour passed, he had not even succeeded in breaking the magic fungus’ skin.

“I don’t believe it!” he said, leaping to his feet. Gritting his teeth, he flew up to the magic fungus and then opened his mouth ferociously and bit it.

When he bit down, he couldn’t help but scream out in pain as he tumbled backward. Stars swam in his eyes, and his teeth felt as if they might shatter. Tears flowed down his cheeks, and his expression was much the same as that year back in the Violet Fate Sect when Meng Hao had concocted a special medicinal pill for him to eat.

“I won’t back down!” he roared, flying forward again and using all the power he could summon from his cultivation base and focusing it on his treasure-like teeth. Once again, he bit down viciously onto the magic fungus.

Pain washed over him, but Fatty endured it and surged with even more energy.

“There’s nothing that Grandpa Fatty can’t bite through!” he cried, his eyes shot with blood as he bit down even more viciously. It was fortunate that no one was here to witness what was happening, otherwise they would have been dumbstruck.

If someone were to paint this scene, it would depict Fatty, looking much like a wolfhound as he tore at the magic fungus with his teeth....

After biting it over and over again for an hour, Fatty let out a roar of rage and finally, was able to bite a tiny chunk out of the magic fungus.

His eyes were bright red as he chewed the magic fungus viciously and then swallowed it. He was just about to continue with his efforts when suddenly, a tremor ran through him, and he flopped over onto his back, unconscious.

After lying there unmoving for two hours, he finally opened his eyes, and they looked blank.

“What a dream!” he thought. “I saw myself creating a divine ability....” After a moment, his eyes began to shine with a bright light, and he resumed ripping at the magic fungus until he tore off another chunk, after which he passed out again.

The cycle repeated itself over and over again, so many times that even Fatty was unaware of how long it had been going on. Eventually, he had managed to eat about half of the magic fungus.

Also on the Ancient Road of the Nascent Soul was Chen Fan, who stood silently next to an enormous boulder. A brush could be seen in his hand, and his expression was blank, as if he were submerged in a reverie. Finally, he extended his hand and began to draw the image of a woman.

It was none other than his wife, Shan Ling.

“My spirit has darkened,” he murmured, “but I won’t forget love, not for the rest of my life.”

In another location was Wang Youcai, in front of whom was an enormous bronze mirror that looked completely and utterly ancient. He sat there cross-legged, staring at the image of himself in the mirror.

A vicious expression could be seen on his face, which was sometimes replaced by blankness, and then other times, an expression of enlightenment. He had already been sitting there for a long time.

His voice was hoarse as he said: “When I look at the world, when I look out at Heaven and Earth, I see the future, and I see the past.... However, I know that these eyes of mine can see more than that!” He almost appeared to be on the verge of going mad.



When Meng Hao, Dong Hu, and Wang Youcai had joined the Reliance Sect that year, Meng Hao could be described as quick-witted, Dong Hu as somber, and Wang Youcai as stubborn!