

SOVEREIGN OF THE THREE REALMS

BOOK 07

Plow Days

EPUB CREATION BY LISA HAYES

Sovereign of the Three Realms

(三界独尊)

by

Plow Days

(犁天)

Synopsis

Jiang Chen, son of the Heavenly Emperor, unexpectedly reincarnated into the body of a despised young noble, thus embarking on the path of the underdog trouncing all comers.

No one has the right to call himself a genius in front of Jiang Chen, as no one has a better understanding of the heavens than the son of the Heavenly Emperor.

Genius?

He who adheres to me shall ascend, those who oppose me can find solace in hell!

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The Second Selection: Finale

Chapter 342: Advancing Into The Earth Spirit Quadrant

Master Fang was indeed an open and upright gentleman. The two talked for a long time, but he never asked where Jiang Chen was from nor wanted to recruit Jiang Chen on behalf of his sect.

This kind of demeanor made Jiang Chen admire him from the bottom of his heart.

The two chatted late into the night before Master Fang rose to take his leave, still feeling that he hadn't fully expressed all that he wanted to.

He hadn't thought either that he would be able to chat so harmoniously with a young man from the ordinary world.

What he'd thought had been the oddest was that the knowledge and bearing of this young man, and his insights into many matters, had surprised him multiple times as well. The level and breadth in which he approached a question made even him, a senior executive in the sect, feel a bit inadequate.

Just what kind of freak genius was he? Was he really a secular disciple?

Master Fang laughed wryly in his heart, but his confidence in Jiang Chen was further affirmed. The rise of this kind of young man, even if he'd been born in the ordinary world, was inevitable.

“Alright, here is good. You will be reporting to the earth quadrant tomorrow. I will say only this, the keeper of the earth quadrant is Master Shuiyue of the Purple Sun Sect.”

An explosive went off in Jiang Chen’s mind. As the saying goes, a careless word may reveal much to an attentive listener.

Master Fang’s kind reminder was definitely without any other connotations. Master Fang had no idea of his true identity, and even if he did, he wouldn’t necessarily know of Jiang Chen’s past grudges with Master Shuiyue.

Master Fang’s key point of emphasis here was actually the Purple Sun Sect.

When it traveled to Jiang Chen’s ears, however, it became Master Shuiyue.

Master Fang clapped Jiang Chen’s shoulder, “Rest well. Report to the earth quadrant in your most well-rested state. I believe that with your potential, the earth quadrant won’t be able to keep you down either.”

……

A list of names made it to keeper Shuiyue.

There were only ten names on the list—those who had emerged from the mystic quadrant. Master Shuiyue gave it a cursory glance and immediately frowned.

"There are actually two secular disciples?"

Master Shuiyue was a beneficiary of the ordinary world as her most prized disciple had emerged from the Eastern Kingdom.

However, even though this was the case, she still couldn't fully cast off her prejudices against the secular disciples, particularly as all sorts of rumors had traveled to her ears from the mystic quadrant during this time.

Although Guo Ren wasn't of her faction, it was still reprehensible that a vaunted sect disciple had ended up in such ignoble straits!

Master Shuiyue had privately cursed that Guo Ren was trash for throwing away the sect's face when she heard of this, but she truly didn't have a good impression of this secular disciple either.

"I'd like to see if this freak genius of the boulder's heart truly has three heads and six arms?" Master Shuiyue threw the list away to the side.

She raised her hand and sent out a few commands, turning them into a cloud of light and having it vanish into the air.

Four disciples arrived in front of Master Shuiyue before too long.

“We greet our honored master.” The four disciples were all Master Shuiyue’s prized favorites.

“No need to stand on ceremony.” Master Shuiyue’s noble features held traces of stern dignity. “You four number amongst my ten major disciples, yet not a single one of you have made it into the sky quadrant in the first three months. This truly is disappointing.”

The four of them were the very depiction of shame and felt quite fearful.

“It’s a good thing that three other major disciples of my Shuiyue faction are retaining face for me in the sky quadrant. Now, I’m setting a target for you. No matter what, one of you must make it into the sky quadrant within the next three months. Do you have confidence in doing so?”

Master Shuiyue asked faintly.

These were all Master Shuiyue’s personal disciples. Apart from the three disciples in the sky quadrant, they were the strongest level of existences beneath Master Shuiyue.

“Your disciples will do all in our power to do so!” The four disciples bowed.

“Hai Tian, you rank third amongst my ten personal disciples,

second only to first senior brother Ceng Shi and second senior brother Chu Xinghan. Of course, Long Juxue has an innate constitution and I will not mention her in the same breath as all of you. Apart from the three of them, you're the strongest amongst the disciples left. I hope you can focus your concentration in these three months and don't disappoint me. Strive to make it into the sky quadrant in the next three-month period."

A young man with no eyebrows standing on the left hand side nodded firmly. "Honored master, your disciple will try his best to obtain a placement in the top ten for the sky quadrant, even if my bones are all shattered in the process."

"The three of you can't be remiss either. The competition within the earth quadrant is exceedingly high and our Shuiyue faction counts as an important party within the Purple Sun Sect. If you four don't deploy your talents well, as strong and dominating Long Juxue and Ceng She might be in the sky quadrant, others will still say that the Shuiyue faction only has a few geniuses and the others are all quite mediocre. Are you willing for others to poke at you like this?"

"Your disciples are unwilling!" The four answered in unison.

"Right. Ten have arisen from the mystic quadrant this time. No attention needs to be paid to the others, but you must pay some attention to a secular freak amongst them."

Hai Tian asked out of curiosity, "Honored master, what kind of incredible person has come from the mystic quadrant, and from the ordinary world at that?"

“Don’t you underestimate your enemy. Although I’ve never met this secular freak, he’s made quite a name for himself in the mystic quadrant. He’s defeated all in that quadrant, and first seed Guo Ren of our sect was frightened into forming internal demons. He grew so angry that he spat out blood and is completely wasted.”

“What? Something like this happened?!” The four disciples all had a look of surprise on their faces.

They’d been consumed by the nervous atmosphere of the competition in these three months. The earth quadrant disciples were all highly capable and strong, with minuscule differences between each other. Therefore, the battles were abnormally fierce. They didn’t have time to spare on matters in the outside world.

They were all shocked when they heard Master Shuiyue mention this.

“Mm. You must pay attention when you meet this person.” Master Shuiyue warned them again.

The four of them feigned a servile manner but were privately dismissive. They all felt that Guo Ren was true trash; he’d fallen without even fighting and had been frightened into forming internal demons. How embarrassing!

As four of the ten personal disciples beneath Master Shuiyue, they were on a completely different level than Guo Ren.

Although they nodded their assent, they were still very unaccepting of this.

“You are dismissed.” Master Shuiyue waved her hands and dismissed the four disciples, but waves of irritation rose in her heart.

She, too, knew where the irritation came from. It’d started ever since she’d seen this list of names.

This irritation was due to the secular genius.

Master Shuiyue herself didn’t know either why she would be this sensitive to that secular genius. However, this kind of irritation came from the intuition of an expert, and it made her feel slightly uneasy inside.

Master Shuiyue suddenly recalled something and a stunning thought raced through her mind.

“It can’t be that much of a coincidence that this secular genius might be Juxue’s rival from the ordinary world?” This notion suddenly dashed through her mind.

It became uncontrollable after it’d taken root.

“What is there to worry about even if it is him?” Master Shuiyue

comforted himself. “As extraordinary as he is, all is nothing in front of an innate constitution. None of the ordinary geniuses can measure up to an innate constitution. Juxue has already set foot into the fourth spirit realm after two years under my care, and the trials of the first three months have surely helped her cultivation progress another step forward to at least the fifth level spirit realm. That is a level of existence that no one can ignore in the sky quadrant. With her talents, there’s a seventy to eighty percent chance that she can assail the sky spirit realm in these three years. When she breaks through, she will be a bird flying where it should in the skies, and a fish jumping where it would in the seas. The seat of champion of the great selection is destined to be hers!”

Master Shuiyue’s irritated feelings slowly calmed down when she thought of Long Juxue. This unparalleled disciple had given her boundless confidence, allowing her to daydream about the future of the Shuiyue faction.

Perhaps, there might come a day in which the disciple that she had so sagely taken in would become the second origin realm expert after forefather Sunchaser.

Master Shuiyue was full of excitement when she thought of that. At that time, her Shuiyue faction will surely leap up as well and become an unsurpassed existence within the sect!

……

A new day finally arrived as the top ten of the mystic quadrant was led to the earth quadrant by an examiner.

Impressive and magnificent buildings greeted their eyes when they set foot into the boundaries of the earth quadrant. The atmosphere was quite imposing. All sorts of towering trees that reached to the sky or rare fruits and flowers could be seen along the way.

The environment of the mystic quadrant was immediately shown as inferior in this regard.

“The earth quadrant is indeed superior to the mystic quadrant. The spirit power concentration here is at least twice that of the mystic quadrant. It looks like the sky, earth, mystic, and yellow quadrants are divided appropriately by level.” Jiang Chen’s senses perceptively captured the differences between the two areas along the way.

“We’re here.” The examiner brought them to the entrance of the earth quadrant and seemed to be afraid of Master Shuiyue. He didn’t want to go in and only said, “You can make your way inside.”

An enormous public square greeted them after the entrance. There were some lifelike sculptures scattered around the public square, giving one a thick sense of great history.

A group of candidates had gathered there much earlier. There was also a group of people wearing the outfits of examiners standing in front of the candidates. There was a woman in their center with a noble set of features, looking roughly thirty or so

years old.

This lady was wearing plain clothes and was still attractive despite her age as she had a tantalizing air to her. However, her frosty countenance made her rather unapproachable.

Jiang Chen didn't need to think at all to know that this person was the keeper of the earth quadrant, Master Shuiyue.

She was also Long Juxue's teacher in the Purple Sun Sect, her backer.

Master Shuiyue's gaze shot over like lightning, a powerful bearing encompassed within it even from such a far away distance. This single gaze made the ten newcomers shiver all over, apart from Jiang Chen.

"What a cold woman." The thought struck Jiang Chen as he became on guard. This woman was putting them down as soon as they'd met. It seemed like she was absolutely not someone easy to get along with.

According to the experiences of Jiang Chen's past life, these kinds of girls who liked to play dress up were all hypocrites. They yearned for adoration, but had to pretend to be cold as ice.

"You there, get over here. Are you expecting me to go and fetch you?" Master Shuiyue's voice was cold, and the temperature around her seemed to decrease by seven to eight degrees when she

opened her mouth, making the listeners shiver.

Jiang Chen paid attention to the reaction of the others. He was neither humble nor pushy as he walked over.

There were far fewer candidates in the earth quadrant than the spirit quadrant. There only five hundred in number.

Chapter 343: Five Kinds Of Rings

Fewer numbers of people didn't mean that competition wasn't as fierce.

Jiang Chen didn't want to make a name for himself having just arrived, so he stood in the back of the crowd. He also knew that according to the conventions, the newly promoted candidates would be fourth level candidates in the earth quadrant. There were no other scenarios that could happen.

Indeed, someone quickly sent over their earth quadrant candidate tokens before too long.

Jiang Chen had been champion of the mystic quadrant, so his token was number 491. The others ranged from 492 to 500.

The numbering was easy to understand, but "fourth level" was carved on the back, proving Jiang Chen's speculation right.

"Fourth level indeed... even though I've won a hundred matches in a row, I'm still fourth level." Jiang Chen tucked the token into his waist with a wry smile.

Master Fang of the mystic quadrant had at least explained to them why they were fourth level.

Here, it was obvious that Master Shuiyue couldn't be bothered to even introduce the area.

Jiang Chen didn't mind. He stood in the crowd with his eyes and head lowered, not wanting to give anyone any evidence against himself. He observed the earth quadrant candidates silently.

"The earth quadrant is greatly different from the mystic quadrant alright. There was at least a noticeable lack of mockery and dismissive glances when we walked in. It looks like the maturity and shrewdness of the people who could make it here are all far superior to the trash in the mystic quadrant."

This was his first discovery after arriving here.

Master Shuiyue's voice sounded again. "You are all candidates of the earth quadrant, and thus different from the mystic quadrant. Your goals should be to move onto the sky quadrant. Therefore, your hundred challenges will be different in this cycle. This time, the rings in which your matches take place will not be without any external interference. Your rings will be divided into the following: ring of gravity, ring of fire, ring of ice, ring of thorns, and ring of soul devouring."

Jiang Chen memorized the five different names.

Master Shuiyue continued, "This means that in this cycle, you will not be fighting in the ordinary rings. You will be faced with a random selection of these types of rings."

"What? No ordinary ring?" Wails rose up from the earth quadrant candidates.

“No way! These five kinds of rings sound terrifying. So not only will we have to fight against our opponents, but we’ll have to resist the ring’s effect as well!”

“I know right? These names make my skin creep. Goosebumps are crawling all over my arms!”

All the candidates of the earth quadrant were quite dejected.

Their hundred challenges had taken place in the regular rings three months ago.

But Master Shuiyue had suddenly announced that the rings were intrinsically changing. This was simply too abrupt! The candidates present all found this a bit difficult to accept.

“Silence!”

Master Shuiyue’s tone was solemn as she called out coldly. Several currents of cold air blew upon the candidates’ faces, as if wanting to freeze the very air.

The loudly grousing candidates all became ashen faced and as silent as the winter cicadas.

“This woman has a temper and really likes to throw her weight around!” Since Jiang Chen knew that she was Long Juxue’s

master, he naturally wouldn't have the slightest bit of respect for her.

However, the circumstances now were that she was the keeper of the earth quadrant. This made Jiang Chen have to tread gingerly.

He'd learned from Master Fang just how much power a keeper had.

If the keeper wanted to cheat, the other examiners would find it difficult to even question them. If the keeper wanted to suppress someone, they'd be able to pull it off so flawlessly that no one would be able to point out any misdoings.

"My reputation in the sky quadrant has likely already traveled to her ears. With her personality, she's likely going to pay special attention to me. Heh heh, it looks like I won't have an easy time of it during the three months in the earth quadrant." Jiang Chen could only look for the silver lining.

There were five hundred of them, therefore the concentration of matches would surely be less than those of the mystic quadrant's.

However, the duration of these matches would certainly be longer.

Indeed, Master Shuiyue continued, "The rules of the challenges are the same as the previous three months. Everyone must complete a hundred challenges, and the time allotted for fighting is

one hour. If you do not defeat your opponent within the allotted time, the development of the battle will be used to determine who wins and who losses. Those of you who still have questions may ask them now."

A candidate from the mystic quadrant immediately raised his hand, "Master, will the order of the matches still be randomly selected?"

"I've already gone over the nonsense of how the rules are the same as before! Apart from the rings and the match duration, everything remains the same!" Master Shuiyue hectored loudly.

Jiang Chen kept a low profile. He couldn't be bothered to ask. He would gain nothing from speaking up now apart from inviting hatred and suppression.

The rules were such, and he'd long since familiarized himself with them when taking part in the hundred challenges in the mystic quadrant. Since only the rings and the time limit had changed, then everything was the same as prior.

"The old rules apply. Everyone return to your residences to prepare. The challenges begin officially tomorrow at the chen hour (TN: 7am – 9am)." Master Shuiyue waved her jade-like arms. "Dismissed."

Jiang Chen dragged his feet as he trailed in the back of the crowd en route for the residences.

They all had their numbers now anyways, and their numbers corresponded to their residences. He wasn't worried about being unable to find his residence. He had to say, the earth quadrant was the earth quadrant alright. Even the fourth level candidates enjoyed a residence to themselves.

Of course, there were only five hundred people here, so there were more than enough residences to go around. There was naturally no need for a huge crowd of people to squeeze into one yard.

Jiang Chen rather liked the feeling of having a bit of territory to himself.

When he entered the yard, Jiang Chen took a look around and familiarized himself with the surroundings according to his old habits. Caution is the parent of safety, and it was absolutely the right thing to do to get a lay of the land when entering a new environment.

"Mm, as domineering as Master Shuiyue is, she wouldn't dare publicly do anything to the residences." Jiang Chen didn't discover anything out of the ordinary after scouting around for a bit.

He then entered the house. The house was actually designed quite like a secret room, fully protecting the privacy of the inhabitants.

The layout of the residence was such that it cleverly surrounded and protected the house in its center.

Jiang Chen sighed with amazement. “I wonder who designed this legacy realm of the ancient times to design it so cleverly! Can it be that this Eternal Spirit Mountain was also a place of trials and training in ancient times?”

Jiang Chen was filled with curiosity towards this realm all of a sudden.

He took a spin around the house and sat down cross legged once he was thoroughly familiar with it. He shifted his attention to thoughts pertaining to the earth quadrant tests.

Five kinds of rings. Jiang Chen mused over all of them in his mind.

“The ring of gravity isn’t difficult to understand. It’s undoubtedly a ring that is heavily restricted by amplified gravity. The usage of strength and energy under the pull of gravity will be an enormous test for the candidates.”

Jiang Chen went over the basic theories of gravity in his mind. In actuality, this kind of ring was a type of force field.

To cultivators, gravity wasn’t something that they were completely unable to shake off.

Of course, this was only relative. How much they could shake off depended on how strong the gravity was.

If the gravity was ridiculously strong, then even the cultivators who could fly through the sky or earth would find themselves unable to escape even with wings!

If the gravity was at normal levels, then cultivators who could grasp the rhythm of the force field and who were adept at breaking through the restraining force of the force field wouldn't be much affected at all.

Ever since Jiang Chen had refined the magnetic golden mountain, he'd had a certain mastery over magnetic power. This force field actually had some similarities with that magnetic power.

The magnetic power was also a restraining force field. Of course, it could also attack, devour, and destroy in addition. It was much stronger than a simple gravity force field.

"The ring of fire must be as its name, a battlefield of high temperatures. To provide a tangible example, it must be like fighting in a cauldron while being cooked at high temperatures. That domineering temperature and the hunger of the fierce flames is an enormous test to cultivators."

"The ring of ice is similar to the ring of fire, but their attributes are the exact opposite. One is a fiery cauldron, the other is an icy cavern. To cultivators, they're merely different environments and different trials. These two rings are no different to the ordinary ones for me."

This wasn't blind confidence from Jiang Chen. Ever since refining the Flaming Heart of Ice, Jiang Chen had the most adept control over the attributes of fire and water.

He'd face such environments with the Lotus multiple times but had always emerged unscathed.

Even if he didn't use the Lotus, he had the Redscaled Firelizard's armor. That was enough to ensure that he wouldn't be burnt by flames or frozen by ice.

The Firelizard's scales would automatically absorb the power of the flames and would automatically emanate the imbued fire spirit power when faced with icy conditions.

This was one of the biggest reasons why Jiang Chen had put his whole heart into enmeshing the Firelizard's scales into the skysilk soft armor.

The events of those days had been to prepare for situations like these.

"The ring of thorns sounds like a ring filled with thorns and thistles. However, I shouldn't only decipher the surface meaning of these words. In my view, the five rings are echoing the five elements. The ring of gravity is attributed to earth, as are the rings of fire and ice to fire and water. Will the ring of thorns be to the metal or wood attribute? If wood, then is the ring of soul devouring mapping to the metal attribute?"

Jiang Chen couldn’t come to a conclusion immediately with the last two rings.

“Forget it, I’ll think about it when I’m actually in that environment in the future. These five rings hearken to the five elements, so the remaining two rings must be attributed to the metal or wood elements. I just need to keep this in mind and make my preparations.”

Jiang Chen was even more reassured after thoroughly researching the five rings.

He sat down cross-legged and began to meditate.

Chapter 344: Second Level Of The Nine Transformations Of Demons And Gods

Time was money in the world of martial dao. Advancing along its path was like rowing a boat upstream, whereupon not advancing meant that one was going backwards.

Even if Jiang Chen had the extraordinary advantage of having retained the memories of his past life, he didn't dare rest on his laurels at all.

He'd trained diligently everyday during the three months in the mystic quadrant, and his efforts had been rewarded. Three months of hard practice had enabled him to grasp the first level of the Nine Transformations.

The exterior of Jiang Chen's body now was as if a layer of armor. Although it wasn't up to the level of the Firelizard's scales, the level of defense it provided meant that those with a similar level of strength to him would find it difficult to harm him.

With this level of protection and the protection from the Firelizard skysilk armor, it meant he had dual layers of insurance. If the current Jiang Chen called himself number two in defense amongst his peers now, then absolutely no one else had the right to call themselves number one!

"The second level of the Nine Transformations of Demons and Gods is one of refining the flesh and blood. The trials of this level will surely be tenfold more arduous than those of the first level.

Humans are made of flesh and blood, and the refinement of these two will surely be accompanied by agony on the level of purgatory flames."

Jiang Chen had long since been mentally prepared that the path of body refining wouldn't be an easy one to travel.

He'd have to undergo these trials if he wanted to create an indestructible body on par with that of the demons and gods. If a piece of jade isn't cut and polished, it cannot be made into anything. The art of body refining was the same as cutting jade, the material being something that had to be thoroughly tempered.

He deployed the metal essence force from the magnetic power and pierced his skin with it to let it sink into his flesh and blood. The pores on Jiang Chen's body immediately opened as beads of sweat the size of beans speckled on his forehead.

This feeling was as if countless steel needles had all suddenly stabbed into his flesh and blood. That kind of heart-wrenching pain made even a person of strong determination like Jiang Chen almost cry out in pain.

"Hold it in! If I want to become a man above all, then I need to be able to endure agony that others cannot. Although I have the memories of my past life, the potential of this body isn't high. If I don't put forth hard effort and steel myself over and over again to form solid foundations, the gap between me and the other disciples with renowned talents will become ever apparent as my level rises."

Jiang Chen was trying so hard and was willing to endure so much because he'd always had a sense of looming danger.

He knew he had his advantages, but this advantage of memories from another lifetime wouldn't be able to ameliorate the insufficiencies of this body in an instant.

Even though Jiang Chen had defied the heavens to change his own fate several times, and was likely at the apex of existence in the sixteen kingdom alliance. However, the world was vast, and he would never be satisfied with a small piece of land at the size of the sixteen kingdom alliance.

Therefore, Jiang Chen didn't dare let up for even a second in the reforging of his body and internal structure.

"Just as an innate constitution could've appeared in Long Juxue in this mere sixteen kingdom alliance, then there must be many more stronger geniuses in this world. My vision will absolutely not be confined by this alliance. The four great sects are just a stepping stone for my rise. If I set my standards at the level of the four great sects, then I would truly be abandoning all hope for myself."

Jiang Chen would use this harsh reality to spur himself onwards whenever he thought about giving up.

"The potential of my body is likely that of an ant once I leave the sixteen kingdoms and enter the Myriad Domain, not to mention the Upper Eighth Realm. I may very well fall down in some place

one day if I don't continuously improve."

With last time's experience, Jiang Chen's demands on himself had become more strict.

"Come, let the reforging from this metal essence power become even fiercer!" A hint of a crazy smile appeared on Jiang Chen's mouth as the metal essence power redoubled, once again surging into his body.

"Hiss..." Jiang Chen sucked in a cold breath.

Twice the metal essence power surged into his body all of a sudden, and Jiang Chen spasmed uncontrollably. Enormous pain spread throughout every nerve in his body.

It was said that there were eighteen levels of hell. The pain he was currently going through was absolutely placing him within it.

Jiang Chen shook his head and sent sweat flying, trying his best to keep his mind clear. Boundless pain could numb one's nerves and make one's reactions become slower.

Jiang Chen repeated his actions again and again.

He spent the first night since arriving in the earth quadrant in the midst of self-mutilating training. When day broke, Jiang Chen opened his eyes and sensed the changes brought about from his training.

“One reaps no more than what he has sown. If it wasn’t for this pain, how would I be able to forge the indestructible golden body then? Think of a phoenix being reborn from the flames. People only see its beauty from rebirth, but who knows the pain and agony it suffers through when it’s bathed in flames?”

Jiang Chen got up and walked to the yard outside, lightly breathing in the morning air and feeling the abundant spirit power ripples in the earth quadrant.

“The earth quadrant is already thus, the sky quadrant is likely even more wondrous. It’s a pity that brother Xiao Fei isn’t here. It will be quite lonely over these three months without a bosom friend I can truly talk to.” Jiang Chen sighed lightly, but didn’t lose himself in the sorrow of Xiao Fei leaving.

He took a look at the hour and realized it was about time.

Jiang Chen had truly become a loner this time around as he traveled to the area of the Hundred Challenges Arena.

This Arena was originally an ordinary facility, but many mechanisms and formations had been built into it at its bottom when it was designed.

Adjusting the formations would cause changes to occur in the Arena.

Jiang Chen looked down and saw that the formations were all sparkling with intriguing light. It was apparent that the formation had activated already.

He wasn't unfamiliar with formations, but the combination of formations and an arena was a small innovation that Jiang Chen hadn't come in much contact with in his previous life.

He became a bit lost in thought as he stared at the formations.

"Master Shuiyue arrives!"

The somewhat lackadaisical candidates immediately snapped to attention and stood up. It looked like Master Shuiyue had established quite a bit of authority in the previous three months. The candidates all looked frightened out of their wits. Jiang Chen couldn't help but wonder, just how badly had these guys been tortured by that woman?

They lost all composure the very moment they heard her name.

Master Shuiyue's stern eyes swept across all five hundred candidates. When her gaze passed by Jiang Chen's mask, her look seemed to pause purposefully with a severe indication of prejudice. Master Shuiyue's shrewd eyes seemed to want to peer into his internal heart through his eyes.

Jiang Chen smiled faintly, want to read my mind through my eyes? Dream on!

He'd practiced the Boulder's Heart and possessed extremely high mental defenses. Even the evil mental eye hadn't been able to turn him into a golden-colored sculpture on the magnetic golden mountain, so what of a mere Master Shuiyue?

It wasn't that Jiang Chen didn't think much of her. In terms of cultivation, this woman was obviously near the peak of the spirit realm, and likely only a step behind Ye Chonglou.

She was someone with whom Jiang Chen could absolutely not fight at the moment.

However, in terms of strength of heart, Jiang Chen didn't feel that this old woman was stronger than him at all.

He lifted an eyelid with ease and looked openly upon Master Shuiyue. There were a few hints of judgement in his eyes as well.

Master Shuiyue grew uncommonly enraged when Jiang Chen met her eyes. This was because she could feel a flippant flicker in his eyes, as if a lecherous pervert toying with a gentlewoman.

"This country animal is indeed rude to dare look so blatantly upon me and size me up!" Master Shuiyue was heavily incensed. The other had needed only to flick a single glance at her to give her the feeling of being completely exposed to him.

In ordinary times, which sect disciple dared look so openly upon

her? Almost all of them evaded her eyes and didn't dare meet her gaze.

Master Shuiyue greatly enjoyed this feeling of being feared.

This was precisely the reason why she'd had the feeling of being molested when someone else had looked her in the eyes. Jiang Chen actually hadn't meant that at all.

Of course, as angry as she was, she couldn't very well openly pin a crime on someone just for looking her in the eyes.

After taking a look around, Master Shuiyue raised her right arm. "Do you see that? Formations have been activated in all of the rings. These rings are no longer ordinary rings. Each of you will spend twenty matches each in the five different types of rings."

Five rings and twenty matches each happened to make precisely one hundred matches total.

"Alright, I now announce that the second Hundred Challenges Trial officially begins."

The second cycle officially began with her announcement.

Jiang Chen really was unused to someone murmuring beside him. However, there were advantages to being in the earth quadrant. Those who were looking to cause trouble for him had also decreased as well.

However, they'd only decreased, but hadn't disappeared entirely.

Although Jiang Chen hadn't purposefully observed things, he could still feel a few looks from the darkness roving over his body.

He'd long since grown used to such furtive glances, so didn't pay much attention to them.

"I wonder when will I appear on the first day of the earth quadrant matches?"

There were only five hundred in the earth quadrant, so even if selection was done at random, the proceedings should move at a brisk pace.

After all, the names of those who were selected and failed wouldn't go back into list of names.

Therefore, selecting one name meant that there was one fewer name in the pool.

Jiang Chen did indeed welcome an auspicious beginning on the first day.

His number was selected not long after the matches had begun.

His opponent was also quickly selected afterwards—they were a

fourth level candidate.

A fourth level in the earth quadrant was the equivalent of a mid to upper air genius.

The ring they would battle on was also selected. It was a ring of ice.

The ring of ice was a good environment for Jiang Chen. He could feel the icy air as soon as he set foot on the determined ring. The formation beneath the stage rippled as it sent forth currents of icy power, shrouding the surroundings of the ring with layers of frost.

“Mm, this power of ice isn’t that bad. The defenses of the Firelizard’s armor are enough to withstand it.” Jiang Chen was reassured after he took a small reading. The Firelizard armor would be enough to defend against this level of icy power.

He wouldn’t need to spend any of his inner energy to defend against the cold.

This was absolutely a huge advantage for two candidates fighting. Jiang Chen stood ramrod straight within the ring. He had a dapper air, giving one a feeling of lofty loneliness.

“Damn, this is really cold! This damn ring is freezing me to death! How are we supposed to fight?” A complaint traveled over from the other end.

Jiang Chen's opponent was a chubby little fatty who refined pills. This person was a Myriad Spirit Sect disciple. Judging from his imitation of a meat ball, he was afraid of the cold.

"Brother, I've heard of you. I've heard that you were invincible with one move from the 'Obscure Seal of Life and Death' in the mystic quadrant!" The little fatty actually slyly made his greetings to Jiang Chen.

Chapter 345: A Comical First Win In The Earth Quadrant

This little fatty had on a merry expression as he made faces at Jiang Chen, keeping his voice very low, “Brother, let’s speak candidly. I’m the one being challenged, so it doesn’t affect my score if I lose. Therefore, I don’t want to win this fight at all. How about we put on an act? Don’t be too serious, and I won’t be too fake. Let’s play fight for a while, then I’ll voluntarily head off the stage. I seriously hate this ring of ice. I don’t want to waste my inner energy here and really go head to head with you.”

The little fatty’s tiny eyes kept rolling around as he spoke with a tone of a businessman wanting to engage in a deal.

Jiang Chen had met all sorts of opponents, but it was a rare sight to meet someone who openly wanted to cheat.

“C’mon brother, let me know your true thoughts.” The fatty asked hastily when he saw that Jiang Chen wasn’t responding.

Jiang Chen nodded faintly, “Then it depends on whether you really want to put on an act, or you’re acting about not wanting to fight for real.”

The little fatty grinned from ear to ear. “You’ll know soon.”

He then roared loudly and started charging towards Jiang Chen with his ball-like body. The entire ring began to shake with loud

sounds when this enormous meat ball started rolling.

He did appear to be creating a huge uproar, but the little fatty seemed quite sincere in not wanting to use his internal energy in this match. He was purposefully leaving some flaws open as he rolled.

It wasn't that the little fatty had a low level of cultivation, but rather was doing this on purpose to indicate that he truly didn't intend on winning.

Since the fatty was playing the game so conscientiously, Jiang Chen could only act accordingly.

When the fatty saw that Jiang Chen was diligently acting with him, he also privately complimented Jiang Chen; he was a good brother alright! The two of them panted and huffed on the ring, radiating dominating auras and going ahead at full speed.

Someone who wasn't involved in the match really wouldn't be able to tell that they weren't fighting for real. Their yells were ferocious, but hadn't the barest hint of internal energy expenditure.

The fatty's shoulder suddenly dropped after fifteen minutes as he let out an agonized cry. His rotund body dropped straight off the elevated ring as if he'd been struck by lightning.

Jiang Chen really wanted to laugh when he saw this exaggerated

act.

The comical fatty didn't forget to throw Jiang Chen a look of "heh, my sly plan worked!" as he fell off the stage.

Thus, Jiang Chen secured his first win in such a comical manner.

"The candidates of the earth quadrant are different to the mystic quadrant alright. If this fatty candidate had truly fought me, he likely would've been able to exchange a few moves with me. Even though his cultivation level is only at the fourth level spirit realm, in terms of actual battle strength or aura, he's different from the mystic realm candidates."

Jiang Chen had actually paid quite a bit of attention and noticed that the sect disciples of the mystic quadrant were mostly of the third and fourth level spirit realm. The earth quadrant were mostly fourth level spirit realm, with a few fifth level—but those were much fewer.

However, despite also being of the fourth level spirit realm, no matter what the measure, the fourth level candidates of the earth quadrant was far superior to those of the mystic quadrant.

"I'm also of the fourth level spirit realm, but my actual fighting ability is absolutely something that no ordinary fourth level cultivator can measure up to. The candidates in the earth quadrant are basically all second tier geniuses, some even preliminary first tier geniuses. All of them must have areas in which they excel in and are quite different from the mediocrity in the mystic quadrant.

I was able to sweep the mystic quadrant, but thanks to various restraining factors here, I probably won't be able to do what I did in the mystic quadrant."

Jiang Chen had formed the bones of a plan in his heart after thinking of Master Fang's reminders.

"The keeper of this quadrant is that Shuiyue woman. She will set her sights on me if too much light is shone on my talents, and may even suppress me. In addition, the rings here aren't the ordinary ones. I'll have to use some of my trump cards if I try to win furiously like that. That would be most inappropriate."

The five rings were of the five great elements of metal, wood, water, fire, and earth. If Jiang Chen swept all his matches again, then some of his hidden aces would definitely be revealed.

After all, most cultivators weren't able to cultivate in all five elements. Being able to do so was the unique advantage of one with an innate constitution.

Those who weren't born with a constitution and could still cultivate in all five elements were those with astounding fortuitous occurrences and had rewritten their destinies.

Take Jiang Chen for instance, he was able to do so because of the changes wrought by the Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill, and the reflections of his numerous fortuitous occurrences.

If he could sweep all the rings, what would that mean then? That would mean that he could adapt to all of the rings and had extraordinary potential in all five elements.

“Forget it, although it’s nice to sweep all my matches, there’s no need to continue playing like this. Since these five rings aren’t like ordinary matches, it wouldn’t be realistic to have results like I had in the mystic quadrant. The matches of the earth quadrant aren’t just of those between candidates, but also a battle with the ring itself as well. The ring will drain the candidate just as equally as one’s opponents. Therefore, it’s rather unrealistic to go at it the way I did in the mystic quadrant.”

Jiang Chen decided to use a more conservative rhythm to proceed after running through various considerations.

In any case, he had plenty of time to complete a hundred challenges over the next three months He’d won so crazily in the mystic quadrant because he’d been provoked by others and had been dismissed by the entire quadrant, provoking his anger as a result.

But now that he’d gotten here and was facing a main examiner, Master Shuiyue, who was eying him up like a tiger looking at prey, Jiang Chen felt that this woman could make trouble for him at any time, so it was better to keep a lower profile...

Of course, a low profile was one thing, but there was no reason to immediately give up his turn after obtaining one victory.

Jiang Chen decisively chose to continue when the examiner queried him.

He seemed rather unlucky this time as he selected a first level candidate, and one that was ranked quite ahead at that, number 23 out of 500 candidates in the earth quadrant.

“The Purple Sun Sect again.” Jiang Chen also felt odd when he looked at the name in his hand. Was he fated to be rivals with the Purple Sun Sect?

However, he didn’t really mind. Whether it was the Purple Sun Sect or the other sects, he had but a single thought when he set foot into the ring, and that was to defeat his opponent.

The ring he selected this time was a ring of fire.

“Purple Sun Sect, the ring of fire…” A thought flashed through Jiang Chen’s mind as he looked at the examiner overseeing the selection. What a coincidence, I don’t suppose any cheating is happening?

“Humph. Whether he’s cheating or that it’s a coincidence, the Purple Sun Sect disciples are unlucky to bump into me.” Jiang Chen laughed coldly in his heart and walked towards the ring with large steps.

He could play ball with the other three sects like the little fatty from the Myriad Spirit Sect. If everyone was quite polite and

friendly, then all could be discussed. However, there was no room for discussion with the Purple Sun Sect.

When Jiang Chen set foot into the ring, his opponent was already standing there with crossed arms.

He was dressed in a fiery robe and seemed to embody the aura of a fiercely burning ball of flame as he stood on his side. His entire demeanor seemed to have seamlessly melded into this ring of fire.

This person's thin face appeared quite sinister, as the violent light in his eyes made one feel that he wasn't a kind sort.

"Secular kid, I've heard of you."

The person spoke coldly as frightening flames shot out from his eyes, seeming to want to shoot into Jiang Chen's eyes. The two balls of flames churned continuously in his eyes, as creepy as ghostly fire.

"Parlor tricks!"

Jiang Chen snorted lightly and shot out a soft hum like lightning, forming an invisible air current and piercing towards this person's hotly burning eyes.

"Hmm?" The person's expression changed as his eyes hastily shut, evading this strong air current blow.

“Don’t embarrass yourself in bringing out this level of glamour.” Jiang Chen smiled faintly. This kind of glamour was a way of attacking an opponent’s consciousness. To put it bluntly, the art of glamour was a way of attacking the heart.

Although Jiang Chen wasn’t afraid, he had to admit that if this had been used on a mentally weak practitioner, the twin balls of fire would’ve likely obliterated their consciousness, turning them into a puppet before the battle had even begun!

However, for Jiang Chen’s level of mental strength, this was just a small trick.

As strong as the Golden Eye of Evil had been on the magnetic golden mountain, Jiang Chen had still evaded it. In contrast, this glamour hadn’t even a tenth of the Eye’s strength. Jiang Chen’s slight snort had been enough to shatter it to pieces.

That person had also been startled that his art had been defused. He’d also lost some face thanks to Jiang Chen’s mockery.

However, he was quite shrewd as he opened his eyes again and stared at Jiang Chen, saying coldly, “Kid, that was just a warm up. Don’t get cocky too early.”

“I’ve heard that you were quite arrogant in the mystic spirit quadrant, particularly against my Purple Sun Sect. You said that you would destroy each Purple Sun Sect disciple that you met. Is this the case?”

The rumors had exaggerated things a bit, but Jiang Chen had indeed done so. All the Purple Sun Sect disciples who'd met him in the ring had ended up with horrific downfalls.

Jiang Chen was patently disinterested in idle prattle, arching an eyebrow, "Are all Purple Sun Sect disciples as long winded as you?"

The person laughed coldly, "Don't try to provoke me. There's no use in that! I'm not Guo Ren or the trash in the mystic quadrant. Remember this, I am Ouyang Jian. Cheng Zhen and Cheng Lan are my younger cousins, and my juniors in the same faction. Today, I'll return to you tenfold what you'd done to them!"

Jiang Chen couldn't help but jeer, "Should I take a nap first? Wake me up when you're done running your mouth!"

Ouyang Jian wasn't actually one who liked to talk, he was actually crafting an atmosphere.

He was similar to many Purple Sun Sect disciples, born with extraordinary affinity for the fire attribute. He enjoyed a tremendous advantage in the ring of fire.

Add to that the glamour that he practiced, he was adept at creating an atmosphere than melded his influence into the surroundings with every word and gesture, forming a controlling force that made his opponent unwittingly follow his rhythm.

However, Jiang Chen paid him no heed at all.

If Jiang Chen had bickered with him and had his emotions aroused, then he would've unwittingly fallen into Ouyang Jian's rhythm.

But, such tricks were quite pointless in Jiang Chen's eyes.

Ouyang Jian's painstakingly crafted atmosphere may be useful on others, but it was a completely futile exercise to Jiang Chen.

On the other hand, Ouyang Jian was naturally inclined to the fire element, and so this ring wasn't a restraint for him at all, but fertile ground that would double the effectiveness of his strength and arts.

However, how would he know that this ring of fire was a similar walk in the park for Jiang Chen.

His so-called advantage was meaningless in front of Jiang Chen!

Chapter 346: Raging Tide Of Flames? Too Weak!

The two had already exchanged multiple blows amidst their words.

Ouyang Jian maintained a rock-solid look on the surface, but he was still stunned beyond belief in his heart. Just now he'd attempted to create a certain atmosphere and pull his opponent into his tempo.

But judging from the other's noncommittal attitude, his efforts had been in vain.

"This country animal does indeed have a few tricks up his sleeve. No wonder Guo Ren had been frightened into forming an internal demon." Ouyang Jian slightly improved his opinion of Jiang Chen. "However, meeting me on this ring of fire means that he can only lament his bad luck!"

Ouyang Jian suddenly glared with both eyes as he shook his arms once. The ring turned into an ocean of flames as countless waves of fire set the surroundings ablaze like a hungering beast from ancient times.

"Kid, you're my prey in this ring of fire, hahaha..." Ouyang Jian made a grasping motion with his right hand and a long broadsword shimmered in and out of existence on his arm, similar to a python entangling itself on his arm.

“That is the Fire Python Sword!” The Purple Sun Sect disciples cried out in surprise beneath the ring.

“Tsk tsk, Ouyang Jian has finally successfully refined the Fire Python Sword. He’s just like a fish in water now and will surely claim the limelight in the earth quadrant!”

“When it comes down to it, this secular kid was truly unlucky to come into the hands of Ouyang Jian, and force him to use the Fire Python Sword in the ring of fire.”

“Indeed, refining the Fire Python Sword means that his strength will double at the very least. Add to that the advantages the ring of fire confers, I’m afraid that even the top-ranked in the earth quadrant will find it difficult to triumph over Ouyang Jian under such circumstances.”

This wasn’t exaggeration. Every cultivator had different talents.

This ring of fire was an advantage for Ouyang Jian, but torture for cultivators with ordinary potential in the fire attribute.

“Haha, that kid is about to be done for. This is the Raging Tide of Flames that Ouyang Jian has created using the ring of fire. He’s been surrounded by it, and will be cooked to death even if Ouyang Jian doesn’t make another move.”

“This is what happens to those who go against my Purple Sun

Sect, die!”

“Damn straight! Kill anyone who besmirches the dignity of my sect!”

“Freaking hell, I’d thought I couldn’t bear the sight of Ouyang Jian before, but this kid doesn’t look that much of an asshole anymore!”

The Purple Sun Sect disciples beneath the stage were all fervent and enthused. They naturally felt great boost to their face when another one of their sect was flaunting his prowess in the ring.

Jiang Chen held his ground, as if meditating. The fiercely burning flames seemed but an illusion in his eyes. No trace of panic or dismay could be found neither on his being or face.

Ouyang Jian’s eyes widened slightly as he sent out a red-hot splendor, calling out, “Kid, you only have the right to be my opponent if you can hold out for fifteen minutes in the face of my Raging Tide of Flames!”

Ouyang Jian formed a hand seal as the Fire Python Sword continued to dance in his hand, directing the seething current around him to gather from all-around and continuously advance on Jiang Chen, encircling him.

The Purple Sun Sect disciples stirred below the elevated ring. They knew that the highlight of the show had arrived!

Once the raging flames surrounded an opponent, then the only thing left from the hellfire would be destruction, unparalleled torture torture and death!

Ouyang Jian's expression twisted, all was within his grasp!

The strong flames surged towards Jiang Chen from all directions of the stage. The balls of fire seemed to have their own life of their own as they closed in on their prey like vicious beasts.

Yet Jiang Chen remained as firm as a mountain. The expression on his face didn't flicker and his lashes didn't even bat.

"This kid is putting on airs and pretending to be calm. Does he intend to hop out of the circle in the instant that the spirit fires surround him? Huh! Who can jump out once they've been surrounded by my Raging Tide of Flames? The flames are as roaring waves, each interlinking with the next. No matter where he jumps to, he'll be unable to evade the onslaught!"

A victorious smile had almost appeared on Ouyang Jian's face.

"Die, kid!" Ouyang Jian's Fire Python Sword increased its speed, as did the raging flames in the surroundings, churning towards Jiang Chen.

"Are you taking out this level of spirit fire to publicly humiliate yourself?"

Jiang Chen, who'd remained as firm as a mountain up to now, suddenly lifted his eyelids. A radiant light shot forth from them as he lifted his hands slightly, turning his palms outwards and motioned as if he was slamming a door in someone's face.

Something strange happened in this moment.

The fiercely encroaching flames suddenly halted in their path, crashing into an invisible wall as they seemed to suddenly halted on their own.

The enclosement of the raging flames stopped about three meters away from Jiang Chen. Balls of fire had encircled him beyond that distance, but could advance no further.

Looking at the flames, it looked as if there was a force within this three meter radius that made them quake in fear. In fact, the balls of fire actually seemed to slowly be dying down.

"What?"

"What's going on?"

"What's Ouyang Jian doing? Toying with his prey?"

"Finish the battle quickly, don't put on a show."

“Heh heh, I think he wants to slowly torture his prey to death. Don’t you think that it’s really boring to kill your opponent in one second?”

Although the disciples beneath the ring felt it was a bit odd, they all still felt that this was Ouyang Jian deliberately making things look mystifying and toying with his prey.

However, up on the elevated ring, Ouyang Jian suddenly goggled in shock across the ring.

Indeed, he too had discovered that the Raging Tide of Flames was slowly weakening, as if it had met a terrifying power. These flames infused with spirit power actually advanced no further but began to slow down instead.

Although these flames weren’t alive, they did indeed have some sentience, and a primal sort of fear caused these spirit flames unwilling to proceed.

It was as if surging forward another step would cast them into a boundless abyss and have them completely devoured.

Jiang Chen softly produced a long whistle. “Ouyang Jian, is this your so-called Raging Tide of Flames? Too damn weak! Even an old granny would find your flames too weak. Now, break!”

Jiang Chen flourished his sleeves as an enormous power engulfed the surroundings, shaking the very air as it devoured the raging

flames around him.

Those overweeningly dominant flames were all extinguished like mere candles!

This scene petrified all the Purple Sun Sect disciples jeering beneath the ring. They had been running their mouths a second before, clamoring about their prowess, as if their enemy was a turtle caught in a jar, dead without a doubt.

But in the next moment, that Raging Tide of Flames they were so proud of and constantly boasting about were extinguished like pitiful candles with a wave of a sleeve.

Was… was this a battle?

This had been too easy? What kind of aura had Ouyang Jian's Raging Tide of Flames possessed? Yet they'd all been suppressed neatly with a wave of one's sleeve?

This kind of power was as if an enormous elephant stepping on a little bunny.

There was saying comparing something "as easy as blowing away a speck of dust". And this was truly all the other had exerted in extinguishing the flames.

The most depressing thing was, Ouyang Jian was most proud of his Raging Tide of Flames and they'd been reduced to being

absolutely worthless, that even an old granny would find them insufficient… this was truly a thorough slap to the face!

Ouyang Jian was thrown into disarray.

This scene was beyond his understanding. He'd thought of all sorts of possibilities and had simulated all sorts of situations that might arise.

His opponent using some sort of treasure to withstand the flames for instance, and then stubbornly resisting before his defenses were slowly whittled down and his opponent finally falling in defeat.

Or his opponent having no way to defend themselves and being swallowed whole by the tide and burnt to a crisp.

Or another scenario in which this fellow's speed was surprisingly fast and attempted to jump out of the flames' encirclement, but still had no place to escape before eventually dying an ignoble death beneath the Raging Tide of Flames.

In conclusion, he'd simulated all sorts of possible outcomes, but had never envisioned this one. He'd never even considered the possibility of failure in the ring of fire.

It was because of this that once this scene appeared, Ouyang Jian was completely thrown for a loop. His brain couldn't even react for the moment. He only had one thought, "How is this possible, how

is this possible?!”

Reality was harsh.

The Raging Tide of Flames was put out like a light flickering in the breeze. Ouyang Jian’s dao heart contracted uncontrollably as a trace of fear flashed through the depths of his eyes.

He’d been absolutely confident before in the ring of fire.

But now, an uncontrollable feeling of fear rose to the fore.

His opponent was too bizarre.

When the most adept and well versed method of a supremely confident person was easily broken by another, that was a fatal blow to their confidence.

“What did you say just now? You said that I only had the right to be your opponent if I could endure 15 minutes of your Raging Tide of Flames?”

Jiang Chen laughed unhurriedly and said softly, “I also want to tell you now that with your little bit of ability, you truly don’t have the right to be my opponent.”

These words stabbed into Ouyang Jian’s dao heart like the most terrifying blade in the world.

Ouyang Jian's body twitched as a violent grimace dawned on his face. He roared furiously, "Kid, you must've used some treasure to cheat! What are you being cocky about? The Raging Tide of Flames was just the appetizer. You can boast only if you live through Sixteen Blows of my Raging Python of Flames!"

He'd transformed into a ball of red light as he spoke, the Fire Python Sword in his hand sweeping through the void and transforming into sword aura that filled the air. Its speed was surprisingly fast as it madly slashed down at Jiang Chen.

The Sixteen Blows of the Raging Python of Flames was a berserk sword technique. It could be said that it was a strong sword technique tailored for Ouyang Jian.

It speed was astoundingly fast and the sword aura madly violent. When accompanied with fire techniques, its power was shocking when deployed and the wielder could often prevail, even from a weak position, and deploy boundless fighting strength.

"The fire veils fill the skies as the sword dances like a mad python. So fast, so strong!"

"It looks like Ouyang Jian has been thoroughly enraged!"

"Yeah, he's brought out his speciality. Add to that the Fire Python Sword, a spirit weapon refined six times over, this kid looks like he's dead without a doubt because he pissed off Ouyang Jian!"

“That makes sense. This fellow just broke through Ouyang Jian’s Raging Tide of Flames. He must’ve had some treasure that helped him cheat, and it wasn’t his true strength at all. Let’s see how he cheats beneath the Sixteen Blows and the berserk sword aura!”

Ultimately, the Purple Sun Sect disciples were still unwilling to accept what had happened. They didn’t feel that this ordinary brat had truly suppressed the Raging Tide of Flames based on his own abilities.

Chapter 347: A Stab That Turns The Complex, Simple

Ouyang Jian's cultivation level was also at fourth level spirit realm.

But in terms of martial dao realm and vision, his fourth level spirit realm was completely different from Jiang Chen's.

The speed of his Sixteen Blows of the Raging Python of Flames was indeed astounding, and the momentum of his sword quite overwhelming.

But for Jiang Chen, what he feared the least was the kind of physical attack that emphasized speed and momentum.

Speed?

To an ordinary cultivator of the fourth level, this strike was indeed fast. But to Jiang Chen, this speed was only ordinary.

Ferocious?

The momentum of a wild python was a bit ferocious to an ordinary cultivator, but to Jiang Chen, this kind of momentum was no different from randomly barging about.

At the heart of it all, this level of this technique was nothing

compared to Jiang Chen's level of knowledge.

Jiang Chen didn't even want to bring out his nameless saber. Instead, he took out a feather from the Fire Raven King's tail.

Light suddenly exploded in his eyes as the tail feather suddenly shot out, as if an agreement had been reached.

Ding.

A crisp collision rang out.

Jiang Chen had used this tail feather to stab directly at the other's Fire Python Sword, despite the tens of thousands of sword shadows.

This seemingly careless stab had seemed simple, but it'd actually broken though all of the other's complex sword movements with one move, making straight for the heart of the attack.

Even Master Shuiyue, who'd been wearing a distant expression up until now, frowned slightly at this move.

One's true level of skill was revealed when one made a move.

In Master Shuiyue's eyes, whether it'd been Ouyang Jian or the secular genius, they'd all been showing off and deploying overly flowery moves in previous battles, with no fatal blows that spoke

to the heart of martial dao.

However, Jiang Chen's ordinary stab had caught Master Shuiyue's attentions.

This stab that had reduced the complex to the simple had absolutely grasped the true meaning of martial dao. There were no theatrics, and no flashy poses that looked cool.

There was only this one stab that had completely destroyed all the illusions arising from the Raging Python of Flames, and had directly pierced the core of Ouyang Jian's stroke.

This stab was composed of absolute essence!

Countless sparks flew from the Flaming Python Sword as it connected with the feather. Ouyang Jian felt a surge of pressure pushing rapidly down on him.

He couldn't help but back up multiple steps in succession before finally managing to find his footing.

When he looked again at the Flaming Python Sword, he noticed with horror that a chip had appeared on its edge where the weapons had just clashed. The spirit weapon that he was so proud of, one that had been refined six times over, had seen such a horrifying wound form on it!

"This sounds like it was the trump card you were relying the

most on? That's all it amounted to." Jiang Chen chuckled. "I've already taken the blow from your so-called Raging Python of Flames. Now, you take one of mine!"

Jiang Chen raised his arm as he spoke as a strange rhythm, a marvelous tempo, suddenly made the surroundings move to a bizarre beat.

Suddenly—

Jiang Chen's body dashed forward as a bolt of lightning flashed through the air.

Ouyang Jian had discovered that the other's strange weapon had already stabbed to his face.

"Ah!" Ouyang Jian hurriedly raised his sword and barely managed to defend himself.

Ding, ding, ding...

Crisp sounds of collision rang out ten times in a row.

Ouyang Jian's Flaming Python Sword broke apart at every inch and fell to the ground piece by piece.

"Just about time now, hmm?" Jiang Chen whistled cleanly as he sent his arm forward, stabbing the Fire Raven King's tail feather

directly between Ouyang Jian's eyebrows.

Ouyang Jian had no place to retreat to; all avenues of retreat had been blocked off. The only thing he could do was shut his eyes and wait for death.

Suddenly, a piece of snow white silk suddenly shot out connected with the tail feather in Jiang Chen's hands with a flash of brilliant light.

Jiang Chen felt his arm go numb and his blood churn. The tail feather in his hand was knocked askew and didn't connect with Ouyang Jian.

"That's enough!" A cold, dignified, and dispassionate voice resounded.

Ouyang Jian had snatched his life from the jaws of death, and cold sweat had broken out all over his body. When he heard the voice, he knew that it was Master Shuiyue who'd made a move to save him.

Jiang Chen knew that an expert had interfered when his strike failed. He snorted lightly and quickly adjusted his stance, looking at Master Shuiyue and asking frostily, "What does the master mean by this?"

Master Shuiyue responded noncommittal, "You've won. Why show no mercy?"

“I only ask, are the examiners allowed to interfere?” Jiang Chen asked faintly.

Jiang Chen seemed calm, but he was seething with rage inside. Why show no mercy since I’d won? How fake are these words? Would this old woman say this if Ouyang Jian had won?

However, Jiang Chen knew that the Purple Sun Sect had always been a domineering sort. It was pointless to reason with them.

This sect subscribed to the belief that strength was king. They only acknowledged power and strength. Therefore, Jiang Chen hadn’t the slightest desire to reason with them.

To do so for someone who didn’t accept logic at all was to preach to deaf ears, like playing a lute to a cow.

There was only one way to handle people like her, and that was to use a strength even more powerful than hers to beat, trample, and crush her until she submitted.

Although Jiang Chen was completely enraged, he also knew that there was no benefit to be gained in erupting in open hostilities with this old woman now. Therefore, even though his anger soared to the high heavens, he still didn’t curse loudly in open hostility.

Master Shuiyue said calmly, “As long as it doesn’t interfere with

the win or loss, an examiner naturally has the authority to handle some unexpected incidents. Whyever not?”

She had spoken so shamelessly, so what else could Jiang Chen say?

He thought viciously, this old woman is much stronger than me at the moment; there’s temporarily no need to cast aside all considerations of face.

He snorted coldly and moved to the side, looking at Ouyang Jian with mockery, “Relying on the seniors of your sect to protect you, this is all you’ll ever amount to in this life.”

Ouyang Jian had nothing to say to this, and was beside himself with shame.

Jiang Chen naturally couldn’t continue his challenges after bumping into something like this. He smiled coldly and flicked a glance at Master Shuiyue. He then glided down from the ring with a flip of his body, akin to a soaring eagle.

Master Shuiyue was enraged at heart as well. As an elder in the Purple Sun Sect, her position was high and authority immense. Now that she was the keeper of the earth quadrant, no one dared naysay her when she spoke.

All of the earth quadrant candidates acted like a mouse seeing a cat whenever they saw her.

However, this secular disciple had not only dared talk back to her, but that look in his eyes and that tone was completing dismissing her, a sect heavyweight!

Whether it was from the perspective of her power and influence, or from the perspective of her own looks and demeanor, Master Shuiyue was completely unable to accept being dismissed like this.

Jiang Chen alighted from the elevated ring and sat down cross legged in a patch of open ground with an indifferent expression.

He was the only secular disciple in the earth quadrant and as a result, stood out quite a bit.

Although he was a bit lonely without companions, he didn't mind it that much.

However, with the momentum he'd displayed in destroying Ouyang Jian just now, no one dared overlook his existence in the earth quadrant now.

Although Jiang Chen was resting with his eyes closed, he could still feel the looks of judgment being levied upon him from all sides. He knew that his show of strength in that battle just now had likely aroused much interest.

This wasn't a bad thing, but wasn't a good thing either.

Jiang Chen didn't pay it much heed. His strength would've been revealed sooner or later as the challenges went on. As long as his trump cards were enough, he feared nothing.

Thus, he had voluntarily given up further challenges. In this way, his score for the day was set at two successive victories.

"Brother, not a bad showing."

Laughter came from behind Jiang Chen. A young man with all sorts of strange shapes drawn over his face walked up, greeting Jiang Chen with a kind tone.

Jiang Chen knew this person. He seemed to remember that the newcomer was from the Myriad Spirit Sect and was called Liu Wencai.

This person had been the seventh seed in the mystic quadrant and had once invited Jiang Chen to have a drink with him, but Jiang Chen had declined at that time.

Jiang Chen had a decent impression of this person. As the seventh seed, he hadn't been afraid when faced with first seed Guo Ren.

This bit of backbone had made Jiang Chen think higher of him.

This fellow had ended up ranking at number eight in the mystic quadrant Hundred Challenges, entering the earth quadrant with

Jiang Chen. However, his identity was more ordinary in the earth quadrant.

He'd had a few hangers-on no matter where he had gone in the mystic quadrant. Now that he was in the earth quadrant, he was devoid of anyone by his side.

The earth quadrant was filled with preliminary first tier geniuses. They naturally wouldn't be Liu Wencai's followers.

Jiang Chen lightly raised his eyelid and asked faintly, "You want to invite me to have a drink again?"

Liu Wencai chuckled, "Things are regulated too strictly around here, I wouldn't dare ask you for a drink. Everyone knows that Master Shuiyue isn't someone to be trifled with. I don't want to run afoul of her."

Jiang Chen declined to comment and nodded carelessly.

"You were too cool just now when you trampled Ouyang Jian." An excited light flashed through Liu Wencai's eyes. "I underestimated you before. It looks like you're still a fish in water in the earth quadrant."

He seemed to then think of his own fate as he sighed lightly, "Not like me, I'm probably just going for a walk here. It's likely that I'm going back to the mystic quadrant after this cycle."

There was a large assembly of talents in the earth quadrant, with experts as common as the clouds. Liu Wencai had also discovered over these two days that even a seeded candidate like him ran into walls wherever he went in this quadrant. His own peers were indifferent to him.

This kind of feeling of defeat made him feel a great psychological drop from his expectations. He had a feeling of having nowhere to vent his feelings!

It was precisely this feeling of a setback and subsequent loneliness that made him feel close to Jiang Chen when he saw the latter displaying his prowess.

He didn't have his own circle in the earth quadrant. His peers in the Myriad Spirit Sect hadn't accepted him either because their friendships were ordinary. So when he saw Jiang Chen, someone he was somewhat familiar with, crush Ouyang Jian, he also felt a shared sense of glory.

This was because he felt that everyone had risen from the spirit quadrant, so he genuinely felt happy for and proud of Jiang Chen.

In addition, the loneliness in his heart made him want to find someone that he could pour out his sorrows to, someone who he could chat to or even form a clique with.

Except, with his understanding of Jiang Chen before, this secular genius wasn't the sort who would get along with anyone, so he'd gathered quite a bit of courage to approach Jiang Chen.

This mentality was completely different to how he was in the mystic quadrant. He'd been a seeded opponent in the mystic quadrant, full of confidence.

He'd received no end of a cold treatment wherever he went after arriving here for two days. This made some small cracks appear in his confidence.

Chapter 348: Receiving Pointers From Jiang Chen

Jiang Chen raised his head with surprise. In his memories, Liu Wencai had a very dashing and confident personality. Why did he have a bit of a self pitying tone today?

When he saw Jiang Chen look at him, Liu Wencai smiled ruefully, “Brother Boulder, I finally understand why you secular disciples are always filled with a sort of anger, and why you guys are always filled to the brim with such enormous motivation. Being ostracized and dismissed by everyone is truly a great motivator.”

There was a bit of anger present in his tone.

It was obviously that his various circumstances since entering the earth quadrant had slightly changed his mentality.

Jiang Chen nodded with a faint smile. “Brother Wencai is a sect disciple, why do you voice words filled with such anger?”

Liu Wencai sighed, “Brother Boulder, I’m not a true sect disciple when it comes down to it. My identity as a sect disciple is quite hollow. I was born in an ordinary hunter’s family and great changes happened in my family when I was still in my swaddling clothes. One of the executives of the Myriad Spirit Sect happened to save me. It can be said that he was my savior, and my only family elder in the sect. However, good people don’t live long lives, and he unfortunately died in the midst of action during a sect

mission. From that point on, I was also called an unlucky orphan star and I was left forlorn with no protector. If it wasn't for the fact that I work particularly hard to live in the cracks of the sect, I probably wouldn't have even been able to stay in the sect, much less participate in the selection."

Liu Wencai had been feeling sad and gloomy. He never had a friend that he could truly talk to.

He himself found things a bit odd at this moment, why was he pouring his heart out to a secular disciple? He scratched his head after speaking and said with some embarrassment, "Brother Boulder, I've rather polluted your ears after blathering on for so long. It's odd, I'm not the sort of person who likes to chatter on and on, but I somehow feel an intimate sense of friendship whenever I see you. Will you think I'm kissing up to you when I say these words, or that I'm putting on airs? Heh heh."

Liu Wencai laughed a bit self deprecatingly. He really didn't want to kiss up to anyone. He'd come looking for Jiang Chen this time truly because he felt a natural sense of friendship.

He also felt quite gleeful when he saw Jiang Chen trample on the sect disciples. Although Liu Wencai was a sect disciple, he had the thoughts of a secular disciple in his bones.

He had a tough time of things because he wasn't a lineal disciple in the sect. Every step he'd taken had been quite difficult.

If it hadn't been for his own good showing and obtaining the

chance to participate in the great selection due to his undying efforts, he would've been buried in the bottom ranks of the sect sooner or later, forever unable to change his circumstances.

Jiang Chen's gaze was remote as he pointed at the empty space beside him, "Sit."

He hadn't been predisposed against Liu Wencai to begin with. Now that he'd heard his words and observed his person, he was a fellow of true feelings.

Jiang Chen also felt naturally inclined to strike up a friendship with people like him.

He picked up a branch and drew some circles on the ground. He drew another bigger circle outside of the circles.

"These four circles are like the four great sects, and the larger circle is like the sixteen kingdom alliance. No matter whether if we're in the larger circle or the smaller ones, all we can see is one limited circle. If we jump out of the little and big circle, you'll discover just how vast the outside world is. It's unlimited and boundless. For us, the sects are just a stepping stone on our path to pursuing the boundless grand dao. There's no need to allow these things to disturb our dao heart."

A look of contemplation appeared in Liu Wencai's eyes as he lost himself in thought, staring at the small and big circles, seeming to muse over Jiang Chen's words.

Jiang Chen drew a slash with his branch and broke out of the circles.

“For us, we must press forward with indomitable will and break through these thousands of obstacles to obtain the grand dao. If we cannot break free of these restrictions and fetters, then all will vanish in the blink of an eye without a trace like the floating clouds.”

Jiang Chen smiled and he brushed the branch over the ground, erasing all the circles and lines in an instant.

Whether it was the sixteen kingdom alliance or the four great sects, they were all just a small bit of land in the end. If there was anything great that would happen, they would disappear in a flash like the drawings on the ground.

It wasn’t that Jiang Chen talking recklessly, it was that he’d recognized how frail the sixteen kingdom alliance was when he’d chatted with Ye Chonglou last time.

The sixteen kingdom alliance was teetering on the edge of elimination in the Myriad Domain, and it was highly likely to be exiled as a desolate wildland. This proved that the sixteen kingdom alliance was in a precarious position indeed.

Liu Wencai thought deeply and he suddenly seemed to understand something. He cast a look of gratitude at Jiang Chen, “Thank you, Brother Boulder, for your golden counsel. Your words just now were like a sledgehammer to my head. Indeed, what need

do we have to talk about birth and background? If one is a true genius, all the powers beneath the heavens will be unable to stop his rise. If one is mediocre, then all the powers beneath the heavens will be unable to raise him up."

Jiang Chen laughed heartily and he nodded slightly without saying anything.

Liu Wencai was happy to see Jiang Chen accept his understanding. He no longer felt that ill at ease feeling that he had before he sat beside Jiang Chen.

He absentmindedly felt that this secular genius was a bright lamp, providing guidance when he'd lost his way and leading him out of the wrong path in an instant.

"Brother Boulder must be a genius. he was born in the ordinary world and he dominated multiple sect geniuses. He is sure to transform into a dragon when he encounters the winds and clouds in the future. It's divine fortune that I am able to speak with such a character. I have leveraged Brother Boulder's strength to lead me out of woods. I should associate with Brother Boulder more in the future and befriend him, respect him as an elder brother, and continue to improve myself."

Liu Wencai was greatly agitated. He felt that being with Jiang Chen and only exchanging a few words with him had resulted in great gains.

Brother Boulder's level and the height of his existence was far

beyond the level of the ordinary world, and it'd even surpassed the world of knowledge of the sect disciples.

Liu Wencai's thoughts moved quickly as his thinking was quite nimble. Otherwise, how could he, a hunter's son, have found his footing in a sect with numerous geniuses?

He had reaffirmed his own judgement at this moment in thinking that Brother Boulder was an unparalleled genius. His potential, talents, and realm were higher than even those of the preeminent geniuses in the sects.

This kind of person was destined to soar to the heavens sooner or later!

"Number 498, Liu Wencai of the Myriad Spirit Sect, come up for your challenge!"

Liu Wencai's name was selected at this moment.

Liu Wencai had recovered his previous ease and calm at this point. He bowed slightly to Jiang Chen, "Many thanks to Brother Boulder's pointers to lead me away from the morass of my heart. Whether I win or lose in these Hundred Challenges, I will bring my full strength to bear!"

He strode forward with vigorous steps and ran for the elevated ring.

A cultivator who'd just resolved something that'd been troubling him, would release an astounding amount of power.

Liu Wencai selected a fourth level disciple of the Flowing Wind Sect as soon as he entered the ring and he beat his opponent into the ground in thirty moves.

This move surprised his peers from the Myriad Spirit Sect, not to mention greatly astounding the examiners.

Liu Wencai's peers had ostracized him before because he wasn't a lineal disciple. His level hadn't been enough to enter their circle. But looking at things now, this character who had no grandparents to dote on him or any uncles to love him in the sect was harboring a great strength!

Even Liu Wencai himself hadn't thought that he would win, and win so crazily!

He'd entered the earth quadrant as the eighth ranked candidate in the mystic quadrant. In the eyes of the outside world, this was his limit. He was sure to be amongst the bottom in the earth quadrant and he was a hot candidate for demotion.

In actuality, Liu Wencai had been subjected to jeers and mockery everywhere he'd gone over the last two days. No one had been willing to accept him because they all felt that there was no need to welcome a character destined to be eliminated.

His confidence had taken a certain level of beating as a result.

Jiang Chen's words prior to this battle had rang in his heart like the morning bell. Helping him think through his obstacle in a moment and dissipating all the shackles in his heart.

Achieving his first victory in the earth quadrant didn't get to Liu Wencai's head. He calmly decided to give up his next chance, leaving the ring with the score of his first victory.

He knew that he wasn't a genius to win several times in a row. He temporarily didn't have the ability to triumph over several strong enemies in a row.

Liu Wencai was beside himself with joy after returning to Jiang Chen's side.

"Congratulations." Jiang Chen said.

"So explosive battle strength can be deployed after the shackles of the heart are lifted. It looks like a cultivator's opponents aren't just others, but himself as well." Liu Wencai sighed.

Jiang Chen was also truly happy for his sudden comprehension.

It was rare to find a sect disciple as genuine as him.

Everyone seemed to have kept back some of their strength on the

first day of the matches. No one seemed to want to exert themselves to the utmost all at once.

Therefore, the most anyone did in the entire day was three successive victories.

The mystic quadrant phenomenon of commonly seeing five or six wins in a row, or even 25 straight wins, like Jiang Chen's mad tide, was never seen again.

Jiang Chen was selected later on as well, by a Flowing Wind Sect disciple in the ring of gravity. He departed from his style in the mystic quadrant and he purposefully concealed his strength, waiting until time was almost up to win in a manner that made him appear like he'd barely pulled it off.

However, he'd done it so flawlessly that anyone watching would've felt that he'd been unable to deploy his talents in the ring of gravity, and that the gravity had limited his performance.

In this regard, some of the first level candidates of the earth quadrant were at ease.

"Perhaps this secular genius really does possess the fire attribute like Ouyang Jian. That's why he lost so badly."

"True gold isn't afraid of the trials of fire. This secular disciple is just from the mundane world alright. His true form is revealed upon meeting a true test. It looks like he can deploy only a third of

his strength in the area of gravity. Heh, we have no need to fear battle strength like his."

Jiang Chen's trampling of Ouyang Jian earlier had made all the first seed candidates in the earth quadrant view Jiang Chen as a major enemy.

They all breathed a sigh of relief when they saw Jiang Chen's 'bedraggled performance' in the ring. If he was only amazing in the ring of fire, then this genius wasn't a well rounded one.

Who would be afraid of him when not in the ring of fire?

Chapter 349: Master Shuiyue's Resentment

The first day of the Hundred Challenges had ended. There were at least ten who had achieved successive wins, but the best out of them had only obtained three in a row. Most were like Jiang Chen, having reached two wins in a row.

Jiang Chen had voluntarily stopped, which left his scores slightly unimpressive at the moment, but also placed him solidly in the top ten.

He'd adjusted his strategy and even purposefully reined in his strength in the afternoon match, leaving many red herrings in the ring of gravity.

But even so, he'd been unable to shake off Master Shuiyue's attentions.

Master Shuiyue usually had nothing to do with secular disciples, but she'd formed some prejudices against the mystic quadrant champion after hearing of Guo Ren's matter.

This fellow's enmity towards the Purple Sun Sect had been apparent in the ring of fire today. Although Ouyang Jian wasn't one of her disciples, she didn't want to see a Purple Sun Sect disciple being killed by someone else in the ring, so she'd interfered despite her identity as the keeper of this quadrant.

Master Shuiyue's personality had always been domineering, and she was renowned amongst the four sects as someone without the

slightest hint of womanly virtues.

Her name was that of someone who'd cast off all earthly shackles, but her temper was more fiery than any ordinary person's. Her arrogance had been further reinforced now that she'd accepted a genius disciple with an innate constitution.

Jiang Chen had been born of the ordinary world and had dared publicly question her authority in the ring. Although his tone hadn't been to the point of being openly hostile, it was already an enormous transgression in Master Shuiyue's eyes.

She called up the images of today's matches after returning to the examiners' area.

Master Shuiyue felt that there was something amiss in the match between Jiang Chen and Ouyang Jian. She'd be watching on the sidelines, but hadn't been part of the action and thus had no idea what'd actually happened in the ring.

However, even after watching the playback in the pricey recording gems, Master Shuiyue still came up empty handed.

"Ouyang Jian isn't a mediocre talent. His ranking as first level and number 23 of all candidates in the earth quadrant are well deserved, thanks to his talents and cultivation. What does he rely on? He leverages his talents of fire and that Raging Tide of Flames, and Sixteen Blows of the Raging Python of Flames. However, his two trump cards seemed to have been useless against this secular swine?"

Master Shuiyue studied the images. She wanted to know, just what had happened?

Why had the Raging Tide of Flames ceased to continue when they'd reached three meters from the secular candidate? Why had all the angry flames suddenly disappeared when the fellow flourished his sleeve?

It wasn't that Master Shuiyue was unable to do the same.

She had a natural affinity for water and she could enclose a thousand li in ice with one move. She could easily destroy Ouyang Jian's Raging Flame of Tides.

But, what level was she at? She was a boss in the sky spirit realm, and only a step away from the peak of the sky spirit realm and one of the nine heavyweights of the Purple Sun Sect.

It was easy for her strength to destroy Ouyang Jian.

But could a secular candidate be mentioned in the same breath as her?

Master Shuiyue looked at the images a few more times, and a look of deep contemplation appeared on her still lovely face. "This secular swine is arrogant and intractable, and possesses great enmity towards my Purple Sun Sect. If we cannot subdue him, we absolutely cannot allow the other sects to have him. Otherwise,

he'll become a great scourge for our sect in the future."

Master Shuiyue was a decisive person. Many ways to resolve the situation had already appeared in her mind when she examined the problem.

However, she still decided to first obtain forefather Sunchaser's thoughts.

According to the rules, the four forefathers weren't allowed within the four quadrants. Therefore, Sunchaser and the others weren't located in the Eternal Spirit Mountain.

Elsewhere, Sunchaser suddenly snatched out with his hand. A message glyph landed in his palm.

It sparkled like a firefly for a moment as Master Shuiyue's features appeared in his hand.

"Forefather, a secular genius has appeared in the earth quadrant. He's the champion of the first selection. This person has bad relations with our Purple Sun Sect, please advise on our course of action."

This glyph was quite marvelous. It disappeared when Sunchaser closed his hand.

"That freak genius with the boulder's heart again?" Sunchaser murmured to himself. "Although the other three old freaks say

that the disappearance of the magnetic golden mountain has absolutely nothing to do with him, why does my intuition keep telling me that the mountain's disappearance has much to do with him?"

"I was anxious that day and asked him a few questions. It looks like although he submitted on the surface, he still held a grudge. Otherwise, why else would he still act with such enmity against my Purple Sun Sect disciples?"

To be honest, Sunchaser had held some expectations for the champion of the first selection.

After all, his results had indeed been stunning. Even if the best amongst the four sects had participated, they might not have gotten the same results either.

However, admiration was one thing, it didn't mean that Sunchaser would unconditionally cater to a mere secular disciple.

"Contending with my sect? Interesting." A vicious streak flashed through Sunchaser's face. "A secular disciple lacks shrewdness in the end and can't hide their thoughts. How easy would it be to emerge from the masses in this selection? Progress will be difficult after offending my Purple Sun Sect. Mm. Let's roughen him up a bit. If he really is a worthy talent, I naturally have my methods to lure him into my Purple Sun Sect. If he's just an overweeningly arrogant character and makes it out of the earth quadrant, there will naturally be countless geniuses who will kill him in the sky quadrant."

When Sunchaser's thoughts traveled here, he made some gestures with his fingers and sent out a message floating through the air in the direction of the earth spirit quadrant.

A spot of light landed in Master Shuiyue's hands.

"Allow him free rein for now, there's no need to suppress him. Recruit him if he can be tamed. If not, there are countless geniuses in the sky quadrant who will take care of him. You are an examiner, there's not need to overly interfere."

There was a tone of warning in Sunchaser's message. It was obvious that he knew of Shuiyue's temperament and knew that she often acted on emotions and easily destroyed plans. If she incited public anger and was censured by the other three sects, she would lose a great deal of face if she was unceremoniously switched out.

Light danced in Master Shuiyue's eyes when she received forefather Sunchaser's decree. She finally sighed a deep sigh.

"The forefather's decree cannot be ignored. Can it be that I must watch this kid strut around in front of me over the next three months?"

Master Shuiyue didn't dare go against forefather Sunchaser's decree, but in the depths of her heart, she still didn't wish to accept a secular disciple preening in front of her.

Even though Jiang Chen's behavior was far from arrogant, the prejudiced Master Shuiyue still found him swollen with arrogance and was irritated by the very sight of him.

"When did such an abnormal factor arise in the secular disciples' sixteen kingdoms? This child gives me an instinctive feeling of rejection and disgust. With my level of cultivation, I wouldn't randomly form these thoughts. Can it be that his identity truly is suspicious?"

The thought that made Master Shuiyue the most uneasy flashed through her mind again.

"Jiang Chen was the one with the greatest reputation amongst the sixteen kingdom secular disciples before the great selection. Can he truly be Jiang Chen?"

Master Shuiyue had always had this speculation that hadn't been able to be verified.

"If it really is Jiang Chen, then I am confident I can convince the forefather to change his strategy. However, this evidence will be difficult to obtain. The forefather obviously still has hopes to tame this child. But if it really Jiang Chen, he's destined to be at odds with our sect. Mm, if I can find evidence that he is Jiang Chen, I will surely be able to make the forefather retract his thoughts..."

A hint of a cold smile eked out from the corners of Master Shuiyue's lips. "Jiang Chen! Freak genius of the boulder's heart! You better not be the same person. If you are, the four areas of the

selection are destined to become your resting place.”

Master Shuiyue recalled the news that Chu Xinghan had brought back to the sect that day.

The second ranked disciple beneath her, Chu Xinghan, had brought back Long Juxue from the Second Passing in the Eastern Kingdom, and had also brought back the news that a mysterious man had saved Jiang Chen.

The mysterious man had also said clearly that if the Purple Sun Sect sent more people after Jiang Chen, he would personally demand an explanation from the sect. He’d also said that Jiang Chen and Long Juxue should settle their grievances themselves.

This problem had always been disturbing Master Shuiyue. This was also the reason why she hadn’t sent her disciples to pursue and kill Jiang Chen.

It wasn’t that she’d been scared by that threat, but that she felt that with Long Juxue’s talents, it’d be as easy as killing a dog to get rid of Jiang Chen when she grew into her own.

Therefore, she’d thought that there was nothing bad about letting Long Juxue handle the matter herself.

“Even Chu Xinghan had felt that this mysterious man was fathomless. His cultivation level is surely not less than mine. Jiang Chen then went to the Skylaurel Kingdom and stirred up quite a

ruckus there. In this regard, the person who threatened Chu Xinghan might've been Ye Chonglou, spirit king protector of the Skylaurel Kingdom!"

Some traces of fear appeared on Master Shuiyue's face when she thought of Ye Chonglou's name.

As arrogant as she was, Master Shuiyue knew that there was still a gap between her strength and Ye Chonglou's.

She'd just set foot into the ninth level spirit realm and touched the peak of the sky spirit realm. There were still many who could defeat her at this level.

However, although Ye Chonglou was also the peak of the sky spirit realm, he was the publicly acclaimed "spirit king".

Ordinarily speaking, there were none within the same realm who could defeat those awarded with this title, or even come close to their level of cultivation.

Therefore, although a spirit king was the peak of the sky spirit realm and hadn't set foot into the origin realm, he was someone that no ordinary peak of the sky spirit realm could measure up to. A spirit king was an invincible existence and one that could vaguely feel the doorframe to the origin realm. One was only a half step away from the next realm.

As cocky as Master Shuiyue was, she too felt a headache when

thinking of Ye Chonglou and wasn't willing to offend him.

"In my opinion, the person who threatened Chu Xinghan was likely Ye Chonglou. If he was the one, he does actually have the right to say such words. Humph. The great selection is an event being held by all four sects. What can he do? Blades are without eyes, and blows without mercy in the selection. No one can find fault if a secular disciple loses his life. Even if he wants to start something after the selection, can he be more domineering than forefather Sunchaser?"

As strong as a spirit king was, that was still within the radius of the spirit realm.

In the eyes of the four origin realm forefathers, a spirit king was just a spirit realm cultivator, in the end a completely different level from them.

Master Shuiyue's mind was full of random thoughts. She intuitively felt that the freak genius of the boulder's heart was possibly Jiang Chen.

But she had no way of convincing the forefather without tangible evidence.

Chapter 350: A Targeted Scheme

Master Shuiyue's heart was full of contradictions now. She suspected the freak genius of the boulder's heart was Jiang Chen, but also didn't want to accept this.

This was because she felt that an ant akin to Jiang Chen was unworthy of such strong potential.

The Eastern Kingdom had given birth to one Long Juxue. How could it have given birth to another incredible genius?

That was an insult to her vision.

If the freak genius of the boulder's heart was indeed Jiang Chen, why had she only selected Long Juxue and not detected the existence of Jiang Chen in the Eastern Kingdom?

This was a blot upon her record for her.

Therefore, she was quite conflicted right now. It was very difficult for her to accept the truth that Jiang Chen was the freak genius of the boulder's heart and had such high potential.

However, she also desperately needed an excuse now to suppress this freak genius who'd offended her so.

"According to the intelligence brought back by Chu Xinghan,

Jiang Chen used his talents in training beasts to coordinate the million strong Swordbird Army and defeated the Long family at the Second Crossing. Taming beasts is but an unorthodox back door solution. What does this say about someone who is enthusiastic about an unorthodox way? This means his martial dao potential is absolutely not that strong. In addition, according to the various intelligence reports from the Skylaurel Kingdom, Jiang Chen's never displayed any astounding battle strength. He'd either depended on Ye Chonglou's protection each time or the mob bullying from the Swordbird Army. What else does he have apart from this?"

It was an odd thing. For an expert at Master Shuiyue's level, there was actually no need to be that bothered by a young cultivator.

However, when she'd seen the other three sects fight over him in the legacy territory, her heart had felt as uncomfortable as if she'd eaten a fly.

Her thoughts had been, even if an ordinary brat is a bit talented, was it necessary to fight over him publicly like this?

Everyone knew that this fellow was rivals with Long Juxue. To openly fight over him like this was an obvious slap to her face.

And now that she suspected Jiang Chen was the freak genius of the boulder's heart, not only was she infuriated, she was also a tad bit worried.

If this was the case, then the momentum behind this secular brat's rise was simply too scary.

His scores in the first selection had been heaven-defying.

Just by the feats displayed on that assessment, they had revealed a level of improvement that was almost on par with Long Juxue, if not already on the same level as her.

However, Long Juxue had had the attentions of ten thousands focused onto her alone these past years, and had claimed the advantage of sect resources.

Jiang Chen had been following and crawling around in the ordinary world all this time, and the level of resources he'd had was on another level entirely.

In this kind of contrasting situation, for two who had started off at similar levels, if Jiang Chen had been able to keep up the same rate of improvement as Long Juxue, then this kid was truly worthy of note. It could even be said that he was truly a latent threat for Long Juxue!

She once again summoned her four disciples for a lecture.

"Honored master, your disciples greet you." The four disciples approached to make their greetings.

Master Shuiyue said faintly, "Did any of you watch the battle

between that secular genius and Ouyang Jian today?”

Of the four disciples, two of them hadn’t been in a match at that time and had seen it with their own eyes, whereas the other two had been undertaking their challenges in other rings and hadn’t seen it.

“Take a look again.” Master Shuiyue conjured forth the images again.

The four disciples focused their attentions on the reenactment of the match. Master Shuiyue played it for them again when it was over, watching it three times in a row.

“Hai Tian, you are currently my strongest disciple in the earth quadrant. What do you think of this candidate? I had all of you keep an eye on him previously, but although you fearfully agreed with your words, you were dismissive in your hearts. I only ask you one question now. How would you fight him if you met in the ring?”

The four disciples were all privately astonished and had nothing to say.

Hai Tian thought silently for a moment and sighed, “That secular genius must have had quite a fortuitous encounter in the area of fire. Perhaps it’s a treasure that defends him, or he may have other methods. Your disciple may be able to use the ‘Thousand Li Locked in Ice’ passed down from the honored master to contain the flames and weaken him this way. My chance of victory would be about

fifty-fifty.”

Hai Tian was the strongest of the four. If he was only at fifty-fifty probability, then the others would be even less.

“Honored master, there were many accidents in his match with Ouyang Jian. When he was next challenged in the ring of gravity, his performance was much more ordinary. With our cultivation levels, we should have more than fifty percent chance of winning as long as we don’t meet him in the ring of fire. If we meet him in the ring of ice, he will be dead without a doubt and have no hope of winning at all!” Another disciple who was younger and had exceedingly long earlobes spoke confidently.

Hai Tian also nodded, “Honored master, if we meet him in the ring of ice, I believe that I and the other three junior brothers will have exceedingly high chances of winning.”

Master Shuiyue was silent for a moment and then shook her head lightly. “Don’t underestimate him. He once displayed talents for fire and water in the first selection. If he is thus accomplished in the ring of fire, can you guarantee that he doesn’t have some fallbacks in the ring of ice?”

“Honored master, in my eyes, he seems to have used some sort of fire attribute treasure to cheat in his match with Ouyang Jian. It wasn’t that he had a high cultivation level. He has a great treasure against fire, but certainly he won’t have one for water? If so, this kid truly defies the heavens.”

“Junior brother Yan is right.” Hai Tian smiled. “Honored master, if he really did have such fortuitous occurrences, that makes him superior to even us sect disciples. I don’t think this is likely.”

Master Shuiyue also found this a bit unbelievable, but up until now, this secular genius’ performance had been absolutely incredible.

“You cannot view this person with normal eyes.” Master Shuiyue’s tone was very grave.

“Don’t worry honored master. Senior brother Hai Tian ranks within the top five of the first level candidates and is absolutely on a different level from Ouyang Jian. That kid will be a cricket after the end of autumn, unable to bounce around for long if he runs into senior brother Hai Tian!”

Hai Tian smiled demurely and said reassuringly, “Honored master, if your disciple meets this fellow, I will certainly teach this arrogant fellow a lesson. That a mere secular disciple has dared challenge the honored master is truly evil!”

“Indeed, when us brothers bump into him, we will absolutely vent our honored master’s ill feelings.”

Master Shuiyue also spread out her hands, “The forefather has sent word not to suppress him. However, I am speculating that this fellow is the rival of your junior sister Long Juxue from the ordinary world. If he really is that swine Jiang Chen, then he is fated to be unable to coexist with my Purple Sun Sect. If we

temporarily don't suppress him according to the forefather's will, it will be even more difficult to move against him when he comes into his own."

"Then the honored master's intentions are...?" Hai Tian asked probingly.

"Hai Tian, He Yan." Master Shuiyue said, "You rank third and fourth, respectively, amongst all the ten greatest disciples beneath me. It is said that a country nurtures its soldiers for a thousand days, all for one day's battle. Now, I want to send you two to test this fellow. Do you dare try?"

"Your disciples are willing to shoulder the honored master's burdens." The two disciples she had called upon replied.

The other two also said voluntarily, "We are also willing to shoulder the honored master's burdens."

Master Shuiyue waved a hand dismissively, "This matter is of great importance. Let your third and fourth senior brothers go for greater assurance in completing this task. Since this is the case, I'll arrange things tomorrow. Number four, I'll arrange for you to select this freak genius first. Which ring do you think you will have the most confidence in?"

"Honored master, your disciple is willing to meet him in the ring of ice." The Shuiyue faction had particular affinity for water.

Master Shuiyue then looked at Hai Tian. “What about you, number three?”

Hai Tian thought for a moment, “Since honored master will be sending junior brother He to meet him in the ring of ice, then there is no meaning for your disciple to choose the ring of ice again.”

Master Shuiyue nodded, quite satisfied with Hai Tian’s comprehension.

“Number three, it seems like you understand my meaning. Since that secular brat has no particular disadvantages in the area of water, he will certainly be worse off fighting number four in the ring of ice. If he also has a heaven-defying performance in the area of water, then there’s no meaning in you picking the ring of ice again.”

Master Shuiyue’s considerations were quite all-encompassing.

“Perhaps junior brother He will handle that kid without even needing me to put in an appearance.” Hai Tian laughed heartily and said, “If your disciple does need to fight, then I choose the ring of spirit devouring.”

The ring of spirit devouring was the ring that mapped to the metal attribute.

There were all sorts of external powers in this ring that would

sap a candidate's reserves of spirit power, making them run through their energy more quickly.

Of the five rings, this was the ring that candidates wanted to face the least.

As for Hai Tian, he'd had some special occurrences that allowed him special methods that others wouldn't have for the metal attribute.

Therefore, his advantage in the ring of spirit devouring should be no less than his advantage in the ring of ice.

Master Shuiyue nodded, "Number three, number four, remember, this is only a battle to feel out his identity. Don't kill him for now, or I won't be able to explain myself to the forefather. If you have the ability to, use a more clandestine method to break open his mask so that his true features are revealed. That would be a true accomplishment."

This was Master Shuiyue's true goal. What she wanted to do the most was to uncover the true identity of this freak genius.

According to the rules, secular candidates couldn't reveal their identities until the final battle, lest it give rise to improper recruitment actions from the four sects.

But if one's mask was accidentally broken in a match, that was another story entirely.

Hai Tian had high levels of comprehension and knew that his honored master wanted to know this freak genius' identity, and that she particularly wanted to confirm if he was their junior sister Long Juxue's rival, Jiang Chen.

She would be able to form a strategy only after this question was answered.

Hai Tian immediately understood the greater meaning behind this match, and a confident look made its way onto his face. "Honored master, your disciple will go back and think of a plan. I'm not idly boasting, but I truly have seventy to eighty percent confidence if we are to compete in the ring of spirit devouring."

"Don't worry about the ring. As the keeper, I still have this little bit of authority."

Although examiners couldn't cheat, if she went about her business privately and with no witnesses, who would be the wiser? The keeper's authority wasn't something that the other examiners could measure up to. This kind of cheat would be easy to accomplish!

"Alright, go back and make your preparations. Meet tomorrow's matches at your best condition possible. Particularly Hai Tian, remember that I will put everything in place for you."

Master Shuiyue waved her plain hand and indicated their dismissal.

Chapter 351: Sparring Beneath The Moon

Jiang Chen was as cautious as ever upon returning to his residence. He probed the surroundings and finally entered his room when he was sure that there was nothing out of the ordinary.

After his lesson in the mystic quadrant, he absolutely wouldn't let anything similar happen a second time.

Three months of training in the mystic quadrant was the equivalent of a year or two in the outside world. Three more months in the earth quadrant was at least six months worth in the mystic quadrant.

"The first level candidates within the earth quadrant are all of the fifth level spirit realm. My current cultivation level is still at the fourth level, and although I need to fear no one in the earth quadrant with this level, it's not quite enough to face the genius disciples in the sky quadrant. It looks like I need to make good use of these three months in the earth quadrant. I need to strive harder to continue my progress and break through to the fifth level."

Jiang Chen also knew that the chance to train in the Eternal Spirit Mountain was rare.

His cultivation level had advanced rapidly, but those within the sky spirit quadrant weren't there for a vacation either. Since they were in an environment that was even more superior, perhaps their improvement was similarly quite rapid.

Therefore, he had to try his best to maintain his momentum and ensure that he didn't fall behind that much.

"Although the treasures that I have give me the ability to challenge those with higher cultivation levels, when I reach the sky quadrant, everyone there will be the proud sons and daughters of the heavens, and will certainly have treasures bestowed upon them by their sect elders. Although their treasures will surely be inferior to the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice and the magnetic golden mountain, I've only grasped a surface level control of these two items right now. I can't even deploy one-one hundredth of their capabilities. I may not have the advantage when I'm faced with the premier sect geniuses and treasures."

His previous victories hadn't gone to his head, nor did he become blindly confident.

The Lotus and the magnetic golden mountain were indeed treasures that perhaps even the origin realm old monsters may not be able to comprehend, but he was able to use too little of them at present.

It made his heart itch when he thought about this. Take the magnetic golden mountain for example, it was indeed a treasure mountain with countless numbers of divine arts inside waiting to be claimed.

"Ai, to own a treasure mountain but only be capable of using a tiny bit of it, such as the magnetic power to restrain my enemies or

some essence of metal to refine my body, is akin to a starving man looking upon a salted fish while only allowed to eat white rice."

When he thought of the treasures tucked away in the mountain, Jiang Chen felt an urgent desire to cultivate.

He wanted to release the magnetic storms, summon the golden monsters, attain the Evil Golden Eye, or even summon the Lord of the Golden Seal!

What would be even more impressive was hauling out the entire mountain and using it in the most primitive way to crush his enemies. That kind of thrilling feeling was something that could not be described in words.

Jiang Chen had actually tried to do so before, but such domineering methods were something that he was wholly unable to try at the moment.

The Evil Golden Eye would be comparatively easier because Jiang Chen had trained his eyes already with the God's Eye. He estimated that he'd be able to attempt training with this treasure after entering the sky spirit realm.

The Evil Golden Eye wasn't just an art of the eye. The wielder also needed enormous strength of heart and heaven-defying control of the power of metal essence.

The Evil Golden Eye actually made use of the arts of the eye to

freeze one's soul, unwittingly using metal essence to petrify one into a golden statue.

This art looked sinister beyond belief, but its basic principle was just that simple.

When this art reached its peak, all of the steps would be completed in one go and the art deployed with a mere thought.

This was why it even made one feel that the Eye was evil.

After all, turning someone into a golden sculpture with one glance was indeed a bit terrifying.

But when its profound principles were stripped away, there wasn't much of a secret at its core.

As for the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice, Jiang Chen had actually continued to develop it step by step. His cultivation level had continued to grow with the expansion of his spirit ocean, and his grasp of the Lotus grew more and more adept.

It had been six lotuses before, but he could now control twelve at once, and his methods were more and more covert.

In his match with Ouyang Jian, he'd actually made use of the Lotus.

However, the Lotus had remained beneath the ring and hadn't revealed itself at all. The outside world had seen no traces of it.

Ouyang Jian's imposing Raging Tide of Flames had been halted by the Lotus of Fire and Ice.

They had been swallowed by the Lotus in the end as well.

Jiang Chen flourishing his sleeve had been just a smokescreen to bedazzle the audience's eyes.

"The earth quadrant is indeed different from the mystic quadrant. The five rings all have their unique areas, and they're an enormous trial to the candidates as well. In this way, the difficulty of the matches will be raised by quite a bit. It's apparent to see from the fact that the highest rate of successive wins earlier today was just three."

Jiang Chen also felt that competition was fierce in the earth quadrant when he thought back to the battle conditions of today.

The sound of someone knocking on his door traveled in from outside the courtyard.

Jiang Chen used the Ear of the Zephyr to notice that the visitor was Liu Wencai.

He noticed that it was indeed the young man from the Myriad Spirit Sect when he opened the door. Liu Wencai smiled

ingratiatingly, “Brother Boulder, have I disturbed you?”

“Come on in.” Jiang Chen was naturally happy that a friend had come visiting.

Jiang Chen had no friends he could particularly chat with ever since Xiao Fei had left. When he’d gotten to know Liu Wencai earlier today, he’d felt that although this person was full of high spirits and was an extrovert, he was also a rare sect disciple who was truly genuine.

“I hadn’t dared to disturb you, but as I meditated in my residence and thought of what Brother Boulder had taught me earlier today, I became more and more engrossed as I thought about it and felt that my gains were great. Therefore, I couldn’t help but want to come by and thank you.” Liu Wencai offered a scroll with a smile, “Brother Boulder, I don’t have much to thank you with. These are a few of my thoughts and reflections with regards to taming spirit creatures. I don’t know if it’ll be of any help, but I wanted to give them to Brother Boulder to express my gratitude. Please accept it if you think enough of it, or give it to someone else some day if you don’t.”

It could be seen that he was the type to return a favor with a favor, and wasn’t the sort to gain advantage through unfair means.

Jiang Chen knew that he was speaking with complete sincerity when he looked at the other’s genuine, serious expression.

Jiang Chen didn’t turn him down and accepted with a smile,

“The reflections of a Myriad Spirit Sect genius will surely be quite useful. Perhaps I’ll really have use for it in the future?”

Jiang Chen wasn’t the sort to not show his friends face. Even when he knew that he would never have use for something of this level.

Anything he took out from his past memories would be enough for the entire Myriad Spirit Sect to spend ten or a hundred years digesting.

However, this was a friend’s sentiments. Even if it was a blade of grass or a tile, it was still a token of friendship.

With this friendship, it was enough to prove that this person wasn’t someone who would be ungrateful, doing things such as burning a bridge after crossing it.

“Right, there’s something that I want to remind you of as well. You defeated Ouyang Jian with great fanfare today. I listened to the sect disciples’ conversations, and Master Shuiyue seems to be quite infuriated. The entire Purple Sun Sect seems to be banding together to suppress you. You need to be mentally prepared.” Liu Wencai warned.

“The Purple Sun Sect has always been one to bully the good. I’d find it odd if they didn’t do so. However, aren’t you afraid of being targeted by the Purple Sun Sect as well in coming to find me?”

Liu Wencai smiled ruefully, “They can’t even be bothered to look at a small character like me seriously. Haven’t you seen that the peers in my own sect pay no attention to me, much less than the Purple Sun Sect?”

“There are no small characters beneath the heavens, only cowards who think little of themselves. Who will value you if you belittle yourself?”

Liu Wencai started laughing heartily when he heard these words, “Indeed, indeed. We’re small characters in other’s eyes, but we must possess the lofty aspirations of an indomitable spirit ourselves!”

“Indeed, as long as we have lofty aspirations, hope yet remains.” Jiang Chen nodded. “Brother, the night is young. Why don’t the two of us spar for a bit?”

Jiang Chen began to admire Liu Wencai more and more. He was of the mind to help him, but couldn’t very well put up a front of “I’m going to be your teacher”.

Therefore, his proposal of a spar was to pick out some of Liu Wencai’s technical flaws through practical battle, and point out some of the holes that the latter would easily reveal.

Although Jiang Chen’s level of training was only at the fourth level spirit realm, his knowledge of martial dao was quite high!

Jiang Chen had watched Liu Wencai's match in the ring earlier in the day. That his enemy hadn't been strong was one reason for his victory, and the natural momentum after his sudden insight had been another.

Factors related to fighting technique had actually been less prevalent in that match.

Jiang Chen had managed to pick out many flaws when he'd watched that match.

"Attack me with all you've got." Jiang Chen said to Liu Wencai in the yard.

Liu Wencai had seen Jiang Chen's abilities and knew that he wasn't being cocky. He was also privately happy. He knew that it was a rare opportunity for experts to be able to spar.

Perhaps, Brother Boulder wanted to give him pointers!

He roared lowly, "Be careful, Brother Boulder!"

Wham!

Liu Wencai gave a tiger's roar as his two fists formed illusions, triggering the winds and clouds and making for Jiang Chen's chest.

“The rhythm between your left and right fists isn’t harmonious enough. Your two fists should be able to attack and defend, but with your scattered rhythm, you’ll be unable to either attack or defend when you meet a true expert.”

Jiang Chen reached out a palm as he spoke and cut across Liu Wencai’s left fist, following through to point at his throat.

Just like Jiang Chen had said, he was neither able to defend nor attack.

Liu Wencai’s face reddened. He’d been thinking just now that, you can identify flaws when I’ve only just started my move? He’d even thought that Jiang Chen had spoken too early.

However, he fully accepted things in the next moment.

Jiang Chen wasn’t just running off at his mouth. He’d magnified the other’s problems with just a careless palm.

“Again.”

Jiang Chen backed up a step with a frosty tone. His entire demeanor had changed when they’d started sparring.

The two young men started fighting against each other beneath the night sky.

They actually forgot all sense of self in the midst of sparring. They only came to themselves when the sun rose and the roosters started crowing.

When they glanced at the sky again, it was already pre-dawn.

“Haha, brilliant, fantastic! Brother Boulder, you’re truly my good senior brother and even my good teacher. I’ve gained much in participating in this selection, simply because I could make your acquaintance.”

Liu Wencai had gained quite a great deal after a night of sparring.

“Brother Boulder, there’s still roughly four hours left. I’m going to go back and meditate so I can digest the gains of this night.” Liu Wencai was both excited and agitated.

He subtly felt that this night’s sparring would improve his techniques to perfection and greatly enhance his fighting strength!

Chapter 352: A Shameless String Of Fights

For Jiang Chen, sparring with Liu Wencai hadn't resulted in gains as large as the latter's, but it hadn't been a total waste for him either.

Practical experience was always useful.

Liu Wencai's technique and strength were actually not bad. He possessed exceedingly high potential. When Jiang Chen had faced off against him, he discovered that perhaps because Liu Wencai was the son of a hunter, he'd used the blood of various beasts to refine his meridians since he was young. This had resulted in the phenomenon of dragons and tigers in his blood, muscles, and meridians.

This phenomenon could be an innate factor, or it could something that was cultivated after one was born as well.

"Liu Wencai may be someone who can be shaped. It's a pity that his humble background made his sect overlook him, and he came even further down in the world when he lost his backer. His potential likely remains untapped, and it could be beyond people's imagination."

Jiang Chen discovered that Liu Wencai was beyond the ordinary after a night of sparring.

Jiang Chen adjusted his breathing and he rested after returning to his room. Post battle was the best time to nurture one's spirit.

Cultivating, refining, and reforging spirit power would see the best results during this time.

Jiang Chen finally opened his eyes when the time to assemble was almost upon him, and a hint of a smile eked out from the corners of his lips.

He had indeed had some gains after a night of sparring.

He left his residence and arrived at the Hundred Challenges Arena.

It was the second day of the matches, and it was apparent that every candidate was full of enthusiasm, and the spirit of not wanting to lose was written all over their faces.

The candidates of the earth quadrant were indeed more ambitious and hardworking.

These candidates wavered between second tier and preliminary first tier in their sects. They'd be able to join the ranks of the first tier with a little bit of fortune.

Making it to the first tier would make them core disciples, able to receive the sect's true legacy.

It could be seen that they were all striving to their utmost for this goal.

Jiang Chen solemnly respected all those with dreams.

However, there were exceptions as well, such as the Purple Sun Sect's disciples. Jiang Chen had felt their unfriendly looks since early in the morning.

It was obvious that they'd gathered last night to discuss how to exact revenge on him and put the ball back in their court.

Although these disciples may not have the strongest relationship with Ouyang Jian, the latter's crushing defeat was an affront to the sect's face.

The Purple Sun Sect disciples naturally wouldn't remain unmoved when their sect had lost face.

"A bunch of trash that only knows how to form groups. None of them can withstand even a blow when they're separated." Jiang Chen couldn't be bothered with these disciples.

He found a relatively empty spot and he sat down cross legged, silently waiting for the new day's worth of challenges.

Liu Wencai came over before long as well, but he wasn't alone this time. There was someone else with him, and this person rather surprised Jiang Chen.

This was because he knew who the person with Liu Wencai was.

The new person was the Myriad Spirit Sect fatty that Jiang Chen had selected for his first win. This amusing fellow had a spike shaped face atop his rotund body. His face was round at the bottom and it tapered off at the top. Accompanied with two thin legs, his body proportions were quite odd.

To put it in other words, he was thin at the ends and thick in the middle.

His eyebrows also had quite a bit of character. They were imbued with a comical feeling. His thin eyes would form a line when he smiled, but a sharp sense of shrewdness suffused his eyes.

He looked open and honest, but he was actually full of schemes.

That was Jiang Chen's first impression of the little fatty. But after yesterday's battle, Jiang Chen thought more warmly of this fellow.

This was the first guy that he'd met who'd dared bring a passive attitude into battle.

One had to know that if someone being challenged was unenthused in their match, they may very well face punishment.

"Brother Boulder, this is... " Liu Wencai had just opened his mouth and was about to make introductions, when the little fatty

stretched out a meaty hand and stopped Liu Wencai.

The fatty chuckled, “Junior brother Wencai, you don’t need to make introductions. I, Fatty Lu, have long desired to meet Brother Boulder.”

This little fatty was a disciple of the Myriad Spirit Sect, named Lu Yali. However, because he was shaped like a fat pear, people often mocked him by calling him as Lu Pear.

Yali sounds the same as the Chinese characters for “pear”

“Brother Boulder, my name is Lu Yali, but people call me Lu Pear. Pleased to make your acquaintance and please keep an eye out for me in the future.” The little fatty was one who warmed up to others by himself and he didn’t feel standoffish.

“Hello.” Jiang Chen shook hands with the little fatty.

Liu Wencai was a bit awkward off on the side. He hadn’t thought that Fatty Lu would come find him today, and he hadn’t thought that Fatty Lu would want to meet Jiang Chen no matter what.

Although the two were of the same sect, and they interacted a bit normally, there wasn’t much of a friendship between them.

In addition, apart from a few hangers-on in the mystic quadrant, he had no close friends in the earth quadrant at all, so he was rather on his guard when Fatty Lu suddenly appeared.

However, according to his understanding of Fatty Lu, this fellow had always played the none-too-glamorous role of a clown in the sect because of his body shape.

He was often jeered at, teased, and even beaten or cursed at.

However, Fatty Lu had always been quite optimistic. He was always smiling, and this kind of survival technique allowed him to carve a small space for himself amongst the younger generation of the Myriad Spirit Sect.

However, because of his personality, a few of the true geniuses looked properly at him at all. Therefore, Fatty Lu didn't have any truly good friends that he could talk to in the sect.

This was why Liu Wencai hadn't rejected him out of hand when Lu Fatty came to find Liu Wencai.

It was said that one should not reach out a hand to slap a smiling face.

Looking at Fatty Lu, he also wanted to find people to form a group with. Based on Jiang Chen's cold eyed observation, Fatty Lu was also one of those in a more awkward situation in the Myriad Spirit Sect.

Otherwise, none of the more normal disciples would come to form a group with him now.

He wasn’t repulsed by the idea, and the matches began as the three chatted and laughed.

None of them made it into the list of challengers in the first batch.

However, Jiang Chen’s name appeared in the list of those being challenged shortly thereafter.

“Brother Boulder, may you succeed at the very start.” Liu Wencai said.

Fatty Lu chuckled, “It doesn’t matter! The wins and losses when you’re challenged don’t count in the final score after all.”

This was Fatty Lu’s rules of survival. It was fine if he discarded some of his face in order to better his chances of survival.

Most candidates being challenged would try their hardest for considerations of face.

Cultivators didn’t like to lose. So even they were the ones being challenged and this match didn’t count for anything, most candidates were unwilling to lose and become the backdrop for someone else’s victory.

This was why competition was very fierce. Candidates such as Fatty Lu with no principles were very rare.

Jiang Chen's opponent was a fourth level disciple from the Precious Tree Sect in the ring of ice.

He had intentions to hold back his strength. So when faced with this opponent, he pretended to be trying quite hard, but he used none of his trump cards.

Thus, they fought until the end of the time limit, whereupon Jiang Chen just barely managed to use the advantage of the ring to prevent his opponent from winning.

Even if someone who was being challenged won, they'd have to leave the ring.

When Jiang Chen walked down from the ring, he was met with Fatty Lu's shifty-eyed, bizarre smile. "Brother Boulder, you look like a good man with strong features, but who would've thought that your acting skills are even better than I, Fatty Lu's?"

Jiang Chen knew that this little fatty was shrewd and he didn't chat much with him. He sat down cross legged with a smile.

He hadn't sat down for long before his name was chosen again.

"This is odd. You've only just sat down and you've been selected again. Is someone playing with you?" Liu Wencai felt that it was unfair as conspiracy theories filled his mind.

His opponent had changed to the first level candidate of the Flowing Wind Sect, and he was in the ring of ice again.

The first level candidate of the Flowing Wind Sect was two levels higher than Ouyang Jian had been. This was an easy opponent to face off against.

Since he had been chosen, Jiang Chen naturally wouldn't evade the battle.

He entered the ring and started fighting. With his personality, he wouldn't choose to lose even if he was the one being challenged.

He absolutely didn't accept Fatty Lu's method of survival in this.

Of course, even if it was a first level disciple, he couldn't force Jiang Chen to use all his strength.

Jiang Chen acted even more mightily this time, finally turning the match into a hard fought battle in which he almost lost.

Another match in which he'd barely won, one could almost say it was a pyrrhic victory.

Jiang Chen walked down from the ring with 'exhaustion' on his face.

The smile on Fatty Lu's face became even more pronounced. It

was funny, even Liu Wencai thought that Jiang Chen had expended too much energy in two successive matches, leading to his tiredness.

However, Fatty Lu's bizarre smile also fully explained that he knew that Jiang Chen was still acting.

The show that the two had put on yesterday had enabled Fatty Lu to gain a deep understanding of Jiang Chen's acting skills. Therefore, only he knew that Jiang Chen was absolutely putting on an act.

"Senior brother fatty, don't disturb Brother Boulder." Liu Wencai said. "He's fought two times in a row and he has expended great effort. He must rest and recover. Otherwise, if it's his turn to be the challenger, he'll be in a weak position then!"

Fatty Lu chuckled. "Alright, alright."

As smart as he was, he knew that it was enough to merely know some things and not thoroughly reveal them. It was enough to have a tacit understanding. Putting things out in the open meant that they might become ruined by their own cleverness.

This time, an even more bizarre thing happened.

Jiang Chen hadn't even warmed his seat before his name was chosen again. He was still the one being challenged.

This time, even Fatty Lu felt that there was something afoot here, to say nothing else of Liu Wencai. Fatty Lu said musingly, “The winds are a bit strange today. Can it be such a coincidence that one is selected to be challenged three times in a row?”

There were also questions in Jiang Chen’s heart.

However, the thing to avoid when a cultivator was fighting a match was wild speculation. Since he’d been chosen, whether it was real or a cheat, what did he fear?

His opponent this time was He Yan of the Purple Sun Sect.

“He Yan? He ranks as number four amongst Master Shuiyue’s ten main disciples. He’s a seeded candidate in the top twenty in the earth quadrant!” Although Fatty Lu’s strength wasn’t particularly strong, his gossip abilities were very practiced. He knew all sorts of random news, intelligence, and information with great familiarity like the back of his hand.

“Humph! Tiring out someone through several rounds of successive fights. How shameful!” Liu Wencai wasn’t suspicious now, but he felt that Master Shuiyue had done this on purpose.

She’d first arranged for two strong opponents to wear away at Jiang Chen, and then she sent her own disciples in the end. Master Shuiyue was absolutely manipulating the selection!

Liu Wencai was greatly angered and he felt that a great injustice

had been done to Jiang Chen.

Chapter 353: What's The Point Of Keeping Trash?

The most ludicrous thing was that it was still the ring of ice this time.

As calm as Jiang Chen was, he too knew that someone was doing this all on purpose. Thinking back to the mystic quadrant, even someone as righteous as Master Fang had manipulated the matches, purposefully benching Jiang Chen.

Of course, he had done so to protect Jiang Chen.

However, with today's situation, Jiang Chen would never believe that there wasn't a human factor at play here.

Except, the manipulation this time wasn't to protect him, but precisely the opposite. It was to suppress him.

He'd been challenged three times in a row and had barely had any time to rest. For all three times, the ring of ice had been selected.

What did this mean?

This meant that this was absolutely being arranged purposefully by someone. The two strong opponents beforehand had just been an introduction to exhaust him.

He Yan was the true main act.

Jiang Chen smiled coldly in his heart, and threw a sarcastic, meaningful flick towards Master Shuiyue. His lips curved slightly upwards, drawing out a mocking arc.

For a vaunted sect heavyweight and keeper of the earth quadrant to resort to such shameless tactics, this really made Jiang Chen look down on her.

“This old woman laid out a good plot alright. She first used two other people to exhaust me, and then sends her own prized disciple to challenge me. Wearing me down so that I can finally be defeated, how amazingly shameless.”

Jiang Chen quickly saw through Master Shuiyue’s scheme.

Actually, it wouldn’t even be called a scheme, but just blatant manipulation.

However, people could only guess in the absence of evidence and couldn’t actually accuse Master Shuiyue of anything.

When he saw Master Shuiyue’s noble and righteous expression, Jiang Chen only felt that this woman was unspeakably fake and disgusting.

“Trying to play me with these methods?” The pride in Jiang Chen’s bones started stirring as well. “The more you want to drag me down, the more I won’t let you succeed. You want to use your prized disciple to destroy me and help him along his path? I damn well won’t let you see your carefully laid plan play out!”

Jiang Chen had indeed purposefully kept his strength in check in the last two battles because he’d been the one challenged. He hadn’t used any ultimate moves at all.

The so-called drain on his energies was negligible. It had been feigned to confuse the enemy.

The fruits of his feint were apparent. He Yan deeply believed what he saw, and a bizarre hint of a smile was on his face. He looked like he was evaluating prey as he swept his eyes impertinently up and down at Jiang Chen.

The situation was like that of a fierce beast with his prey underfoot, debating on where to begin devouring it.

“Who comes? Report your name. I, He Yan, don’t kill nameless opponents.” He Yan laughed coldly and put on an air.

He knew more clearly than anyone who this opponent was. All of this had been prearranged.

However, he’d said this to raise his own morale and beat down on his opponent. These were the common tactics that sect disciples

used.

To Jiang Chen, this was simply too trite.

He couldn't even be bothered to look at He Yan as he said in an aloof tone, "Stop strutting around and get to it. Let me see if a so-called prized disciple is worthy of me truly putting forth some effort."

He Yan had finally managed to create an atmosphere in which he ruled supreme, but Jiang Chen had wrecked it completely when he dumped this basin of cold water over him.

"Country bumpkins are ill mannered indeed." He Yan controlled his anger with effort and cursed, "Kid, since you've come to the ring of ice, then let me customize an ice coffin for you!"

"You were taught by a female master alright. You're loquacious, blathering, and noisy!" Jiang Chen frowned.

This basin of cold water was even worse than the previous one, and it completely doused He Yan's second round of ambition.

He Yan realized dejectedly that since this savage kid was thoroughly uncivilized, it was impossible to use a sense of propriety, justice, honesty and honor to provoke him.

It looked like he could only use brute force to beat the other into submission.

A crease formed across his brow as He Yan spread out his arms, lightly waving the five fingers of each hand in time with a soft tempo.

Frost-white beams of starry sparkles began to emanate from his hands.

“Star Harvester, form!”

He Yan suddenly brought his two palms forward as his body charged forward like lightning. Beams of splendor formed a mass of icy frost and seemed to freeze the very air of the surroundings.

Jiang Chen only looked ahead of him, and saw translucent crystals form in every inch of the air like ice crystals.

He Yan’s “Star Harvester” had traveled to Jiang Chen’s chest in the next moment.

Once the Star Harvester connected, even the lightest touch would be enough to freeze one’s blood, and turn one into an icicle.

He Yan was full of confidence about this move. His years of practice with it were absolutely not empty bluster.

Jiang Chen remained firmly where he was standing as countless numbers of ice crystals formed in all directions, traveling to his

feet in a second and freezing him up to his knees.

“Haha, kid, you’re dead meat!”

He Yan exulted in mad delight when he saw that his ice crystals had trapped the other’s feet.

He hadn’t thought that the secular genius would be so confident to not even move when facing his attack. Was he being stubborn? Or had he been exhausted too much in the previous two battles?

“You can’t hate me for this, you can only blame yourself for being idiotic!” He Yan didn’t have the slightest trace of mercy in his heart. The more pitiful his enemy was, the more excited he would be.

He leered as he pressed down his palm on Jiang Chen’s chest.

Bam!

A vicious palm was imprinted directly onto his chest as it sounded lowly.

In the next instant, the powerful power of ice concentrated in the “Star Harvester” started spreading from the palm and ice crystals formed along its path.

Jiang Chen seemed to be frozen solid.

This scene completely stunned everyone watching beneath the ring. Was this a fight? This was a one-sided slaughter!

They hadn't seen the secular candidate move at all from beginning to end. Had the secular disciple been exhausted of all of his spirit power in the first two battles and had been frozen as soon as he'd set foot in the ring of ice?

"Brother Boulder!" Liu Wencai's chest was about to explode from anger when he saw this. He was certain that Jiang Chen had expended too much energy in the first two battles, causing him to be be hit and frozen by the other's move.

Fatty Lu also displayed a trace of surprise. He too was a bit hesitant in this moment. He'd thought all along that Jiang Chen was acting, that he was pretending to be tired.

But if this was the case, why had He Yan so easily hit him in this moment?

"Haha, this country bumpkin isn't all powerful now, is he? The ring of ice is indeed his hell. Senior brother He, show your magnanimous mercy and make him an ice coffin!"

"It's such an easy way out for him to be beaten to death like this! This kid shouldn't die so easily like this after offending our Purple Sun Sect!"

“He dares offend Master Shuiyue, who’s courting for death if not him?”

A hubbub of discussion arose beneath the ring.

Mater Shuiyue hadn’t seemed to think that the match would go so successfully. She almost suspected in this moment that all of the strong performances the secular genius had put on were actually just a hoax.

Otherwise, how would he have fallen so easily? Or was it that he’d been truly emptied out in the previous two battles and had run out of tricks in the ring of ice?

“He Yan didn’t disappoint me alright. Although the forefather may admonish such a result, that’s nothing to be bothered about. There is life and death in the rings. Everything is normal.” A large stone hovering over Master Shuiyue’s heart could finally be set down as this time.

However, a beam of light shot out of her eyes just as she finished these thoughts, and a foreboding feeling assaulted her.

“He Yan, be careful!” Master Shuiyue blurted out.

He Yan was quite proud of himself and just about to admire his artwork when he suddenly realized that he couldn’t move his hand!

The palm that he'd placed on his opponent's chest seemed to be stuck in place by an enormous power.

When he took a closer look, his own palm had actually been frozen as well along with his opponent's chest.

"What's going on?!" He Yan was scared witless by this. How could a cultivator who was adept at using ice techniques, freeze his own hand?

What a joke!

He jerked with all his strength, but couldn't budge at all. He was truly panicking now, and was looking at the candidate in front of him with disbelief.

The pride he had previously had utterly vanished by now to be replaced by a coldness akin to falling into a cavern of ice.

The other's stern face that'd seemed to be carved in stone suddenly revealed a trace of a mocking smile. "Star Harvester? Instead of harvesting the stars, it seems like you've trapped your own hand. I say, your hand wouldn't be useful even if you went to harvest vegetables at a garden, much less than the stars. Trash indeed!"

A red light suddenly flashed around Jiang Chen's body as all the ice crystals seemed to be melted in an instant, transforming into clouds of white mist and rising into the air.

“Since it’s trash, why bother keeping this hand?” Jiang Chen smiled cruelly as his body moved, his right hand on the other’s wrist.

He shouted as a powerful force surged forward, ripping off He Yan’s arm with a crack like he was harvesting lotus roots.

“Ah!!” He Yan cried out ghastly and almost fainted from the pain. His entire arm had been ripped off, flesh and bone. The magnitude of that pain was imaginable.

“Trash!”

Jiang Chen lifted a leg and connected solidly with He Yan’s chest like he was kicking a rubber ball. The latter drew a beautiful arc through the air as he flew off the ring.

Jiang Chen rubbed his hands over the arm in his hand and turned it to dust.

This gesture made Jiang Chen seem incredibly imposing and magnificent, shaking the observers beneath the ring so that they couldn’t help but tremble, true fear filling their eyes.

Jiang Chen’s actions had been exceedingly quick, not leaving any time for anyone to react. Even if Master Shuiyue had wanted to react, she would’ve been too late.

When she came to her senses, her prized disciple was already flying off the ring, his condition unknown. She dashed out and rushed for He Yan.

Killing intent abruptly exploded in Master Shuiyue's eyes. The temperature around the ring descended rapidly, and even the skies seemed to turn dark.

Chapter 354: Stunning The Earth Quadrant

Jiang Chen's two moves had been quite ruthless. The force from his grab crippled He Yan's hand, and the force from his kick thoroughly wasted He Yan's spirit ocean.

There wasn't the slightest trace of mercy.

He'd no need to show any mercy either. In that moment previously, He Yan had shown none, and had absolutely wanted to fight Jiang Chen to the death.

Even those observing the match had thought that He Yan had killed Jiang Chen.

Therefore, when faced with someone who wanted to kill him, how could Jiang Chen show any mercy?

Master Shuiyue took a glance, and the killing intent in her phoenix eyes exploded out with no boundary. She let out a long whistle as a fierce aura broiled upwards.

"Dumb animal, you dare cripple my disciple?!"

This imposing aura didn't frighten Jiang Chen.

He remained as distant as the clouds and winds, a remote expression appearing on his face as he flicked a glance towards

Master Shuiyue like he was looking at an idiot.

"Him wanting to kill me was natural and right, but me crippling him violated one of heaven's laws? Is this the four great sects' selection or your Purple Sun Sect selection? Go back to your sect if you want your word to be law or if you want to be tyrannical. No one will interfere with you there. What are you strutting around here for?"

Jiang Chen laughed coldly, wholly unafraid of Master Shuiyue's, whose posture was like she wanted to eat someone.

Since they'd erupted in open hostility, there was no need to put on a veneer of politeness.

You're the keeper alright.

But if you keep suppressing me this shamelessly, then I'll be damned if I keep playing with you. If it comes down to it, we'll just have a huge fight and then have nothing to do with each other.

Jiang Chen knew that the four great sects were a mutually restraining force, and they would never let this old woman act as she would.

She had gone out for wool, but came home shorn instead. A flash of regret and apology appeared in Master Shuiyue's heart as she looked down at the crippled and now useless He Yan.

In the end, it'd been her arbitrary willfulness that had harmed her disciple.

He Yan probably wouldn't have ended up in such tragic straits if she hadn't obstinately wanted to target the secular genius.

What was most laughable was that she'd been so self satisfied with her previous plans, but had ultimately been hoodwinked by the secular genius.

The exhaustion that he'd displayed in the previous two battles had been to purposefully show a weak side to his enemies and baffle his opponents.

How pitiful that, even her, a sect heavyweight, had naively believed this.

Master Shuiyue was utterly infuriated at this moment. She'd truly picked up a stone to smash down upon her own foot.

"Good, good, good! I, Shuiyue, have dominated the sixteen kingdoms for over a hundred years. You're the first person who dares waste my disciple in front of me."

If an examiner could make a move, Master Shuiyue would've, at this moment, given absolutely no thought to anything else to kill Jiang Chen.

However, she could only hold her nose and keep it in for now.

The hate in her chest, though, roiled up to the heavens.

Jiang Chen shrugged, ignoring Master Shuiyue's killer look as he pushed off of both feet and floated back down to the ground.

"You won't die if you don't come asking for it. I hope that there are more of these idiots who come seeking death."

Jiang Chen showed the image of his back to Master Shuiyue and said faintly.

"Master Shuiyue, let me advise you about something. You will bring down consequences on yourself if your actions are unjust. You don't need to send your disciples to their death even if you're that prejudiced against me."

He didn't need to worry about being challenged after getting off the ring this time. A candidate could only be challenged at most three times a day.

He had already been challenged three times in a row and had reached his limit.

Jiang Chen ignored the shocked gazes around him and returned to his original spot, sitting down with a grand flourish and paying no heed to the reactions of the outside world.

The other candidates were utterly flabbergasted this time.

Everyone knew that this secular genius was incredible beyond comprehension, but to be so extraordinary was beyond their imagination.

He'd dared to lecture Master Shuiyue!

To the candidates of the earth quadrant, this was high treason and courting death!

Who didn't know that Master Shuiyue's personality was domineering? Once she formed a grudge against you, your future in the plot of land that was the earth quadrant would become dismal indeed.

However, the secular genius had dared to do so, and didn't mince his words at all. He'd dared to say that Master Shuiyue would see the consequences of her own actions!

This tone was sarcastically pointing out that Master Shuiyue was manipulating the trial and purposefully suppressing him, sending her disciples into the ring to suppress him!

However, when the candidates thought carefully, they felt that there was some logic in Jiang Chen's words.

He did indeed have a reason to lose his temper. He'd been challenged three times in a row, and the challenge times had been so close to each other that they had been almost without pause.

He'd fought one match and had yet to even catch his breath when he was selected again. This had happened three times in a row, and if one were to claim that this was a coincidence, it would truly be a hard sell.

"Could it be that Master Shuiyue is really manipulating the matches to purposefully suppress the secular genius?"

"I hadn't thought that the Purple Sun Sect would be so biased against the secular genius. There are indeed traces of manipulation in these matches. Otherwise, how could he have been selected three times in a row and been sent to the ring of ice all three times? This was obviously a match set up for He Yan. What a pity that human scheming is no match for the plans of heaven. Who would've thought that the secular genius would put on such a fantastic display in the ring of ice?"

Jiang Chen had captured the limelight previously by trampling Ouyang Jian. Everyone had thought that he'd perhaps had some fortuitous circumstances in the realm of fire, or had some treasure protecting him.

Add to that Jiang Chen's labored performance in the ring of ice, no one had any thoughts that he'd be able to pull off such a comeback in the ring of ice.

It was now apparent that the secular genius was a shrewd person!

Even the normally crafty Master Shuiyue had been taken in by

the illusion crafted by this kid, losing a prized disciple for nothing!

Who would've thought that a fellow who had appeared so exhausted previously would suddenly be infused with the vigor of tigers and dragons, easily destroying He Yan?

Who would've thought that He Yan's strong power of ice would become as weak as the remnants of tofu in front of this secular genius?

Everything had looked so accidental, but was also the irrefutable truth.

As they watched Master Shuiyue's darkened face, the candidate hearts started thumping wildly as they silently prayed that this woman wouldn't vent her ill temper on anyone else.

At the same time, candidates who'd always been put out by the Purple Sun Sect also felt delighted. They'd felt noticeably that during this time, Master Shuiyue was biased towards the Purple Sun Sect.

However, this kind of prejudice could only be felt, and evidence was hard to obtain.

They've only ever been able to be silently outraged about this, but unable to voice their thoughts. Now that they saw someone finally take a stand and attack Master Shuiyue without hesitation, they all felt quite vindicated.

The scales of their hearts unconsciously tilted towards Jiang Chen, the secular candidate.

“This secular genius is indeed frightening. It looks like even the Purple Sun Sect won’t find it that easy to suppress him. His battle today is likely going to spread throughout the four sects. If the forefathers are disturbed, Master Shuiyue will likely be in for a further lecture.”

Indeed, this candidate had such a heaven defying potential in both fire and water. He would be of the first tier existences even in the four great sects.

Sure, he had incredible good luck.Yeah, his potential was uncommonly good. None of this changed one fact, and that was the fact that he was indeed quite extraordinary.

Even people as strong as Ouyang Jian and He Yan had been easily defeated in the rings they were best at.

Yes, an absolutely crushing defeat.

Whether it was Ouyang Jian or He Yan, the grand moves that they had deployed didn’t even actually threatened their opponent.

On the contrary, Jiang Chen had dispelled them easily and had counterattacked with one blow.

He’d also done so quite easily, so it wasn’t an exaggeration at all to say that he’d completely crushed them.

Even the strongest, first level geniuses of the earth quadrant had to admire such a genius, and would even be envious of him.

“This freak genius of the boulder’s heart and from the ordinary world is so domineering to begin with. If he’d been a lineal descendent of the sect, he’d likely rank in the top ten of the sky quadrant by now?”

“We’ll have to see what Master Shuiyue is going to do about this now. However, judging from the looks of things, it’ll be hard for her to keep him within the earth quadrant. Unless she ignores the rules and does so herself, it’ll be almost impossible for her to contain him in the earth quadrant!”

“I wonder how he’ll perform in the ring of gravity, the ring of thorns, and the ring of spirit devouring? If his performance is domineering in those three great rings as well, then there will be no doubt about as to who will be the champion of the earth quadrant.”

The first level candidates were all feeling a complex mix of emotions.

Some of them admired Jiang Chen and lauded his courage. After all, he truly was the first one who dared to call out Master Shuiyue in the earth quadrant.

Of course, there were also those who were jealous of him. What right did a secular disciple have to be thus domineering? How were the sect disciples supposed to survive this way?

Of course, there were also calmer candidates who analyzed this complicated situation, and had to admit in the end that an unforeseen factor had appeared in the fight for the top ten of the earth quadrant.

The one most excited now was Liu Wencai. Although he wasn't applauding like Dan Fei had earlier, his look of excitement was hard to conceal.

"Damn strong! How do you define a momentum that presses forward bravely? This is the aura that a genius cultivator should have! I've always thought that Brother Boulder was strong, but it seems like I've still underestimated him."

Liu Wencai was incredibly excited, and he felt proud of his eye for assessment. He also felt glory and satisfaction for being able to interact with such a person.

Little fatty Lu was also delighted as he looked at Jiang Chen's haughty appearance with squinting eyes. He, too, was completely overcome by all of this.

When some people considered themselves above all else, that didn't come off as a noble bearing, it rather reeked of cocky strutting around and narcissism.

But Jiang Chen's expression of pride now was a true mighty bearing. He returned strongly from the ring, ignoring the hundreds of complicated looks being shot at him, and paid no attention to the outside world's reaction.

Accept it if you will, reject it if not. All are as if the clouds to me.

This was the true demeanor of one on high — there is no one else apart from me.

"Mm, not only is Brother Boulder's strength above all, his talents are extraordinary. What's more rare is that his will is as a boulder's heart, unwavering and indestructible. It would be hard for such a genius not to rise." Fatty Lu came to his own conclusion and further reaffirmed his desire to kiss up to Jiang Chen.

"I, Fatty Lu, have always been dismissed by others in the sect and have bumbled through my days like a clown. No one's ever respected me. Brother Boulder was a chance acquaintance, but not only did he play along with me, he didn't disdain the fact that my features are ugly. To be able to become friends with such a person must be a great fortune that I've earned in my past life. I must hold onto his leg tightly and steel my heart to stand on his side. Perhaps, this might be a large stroke of fortune in the future."

Fatty Lu's rules of survival may have been inferior and humble, but he also had his own logic to them as well.

Chapter 355: Master Shuiyue Incites Public Anger

“Honored master, your disciple requests to do battle.” Third disciple Hai Tian sent a message to Master Shuiyue.

Shuiyue herself was hesitating a bit now.

If He Yan had still lost after a hard pitched battle with that secular genius, Master Shuiyue would have arranged for Hai Tian to take the field without hesitation.

However, she truly did hesitate after she saw that secular genius easily defeat He Yan in a second.

He Yan’s cultivation was less than Hai Tian’s, but there wasn’t much of a gap. One was ranked number three, the other number four, there was only a thin line between them.

Even though Hai Tian would have his unique advantage in the ring of spirit devouring, Master Shuiyue wasn’t confident now that the secular genius wouldn’t continue to be this insane in the ring of spirit devouring, given his perverse performance in the rings of fire and ice.

One could no longer use the look of a normal person in which to judge this secular genius!

“Honored master, your disciple was as intimate as brothers with junior brother He. Please allow me to take the field and exact revenge for him.” Hai Tian once more made his request when he saw his master hesitate.

His relations with He Yan were alright, they definitely weren’t at the point of being as intimate as brothers.

However, when Hai Tian looked at his master, he knew that his master had been infuriated to the utmost. This was the moment in which she most needed someone to share her burdens and help her vent some ill temper.

If he could help his master vent some ill temper now, then his position in his master’s heart would certainly draw close to behind first senior brother Ceng She’s and second senior brother Chu Xinghan’s.

He would never measure up to Long Juxue, but at least he could enjoy similar treatment as his two senior brothers.

Hai Tian wanted to take the risk to win his master’s affections.

Not to mention, Hai Tian was confident that his strength was higher than He Yan’s. He may not be able to win out over the secular genius in the ring of ice, but he was confident that he’d be able to pull out some techniques in the ring of spirit devouring.

Master Shuiyue didn’t want anything to happen to anymore of

her disciples at this time, “Hai Tian, this dumb animal is quite bizarre. I think only someone in the sky quadrant will be able to suppress him.”

Hai Tian said hurriedly, “Honored master, your disciple absolutely has seventy to eighty percent confidence in the ring of spirit devouring. Please let your disciple try. This ruffian is so arrogant, our Shuiyue faction will have to completely bow our heads if we don’t reduce some of his influence.”

Hai Tian knew his honored master’s personality, and knew that the thing she cared the most about was the Shuiyue faction being suppressed.

Master Shuiyue’s heart did indeed waver when these words were sent to her. She also understood her own disciples, and knew that Hai Tian was a water attribute genius, but his potential in the metal realm was absolutely stunning. Add to this his own fortuitous occurrences, the ring of spirit devouring was indeed a stage suitable for Hai Tian.

“This dumb swine is so arrogant, am I supposed to bow my head to him just like this and concede defeat?” When Shuiyue thought about a future in which her faction was suppressed by a secular disciple, she couldn’t even breath smoothly.

“How about if I send Hai Tian for a try? Hai Tian’s personality is even more calm and more shrewd than He Yan’s. Him taking the field would be a better choice. Otherwise, I wouldn’t have arranged him to go second. I was worried he wouldn’t take fight. Since his will to fight is so strong, why not let him try? He’s

certain to suppress that secular swine in the ring of spirit devouring!”

Master Shuiyue’s desire to win still overcome all else when her thoughts traveled here. She instructed Hai Tian, “Alright, wait a moment. I’ll arrange it immediately. The number of times he can be challenged today have already been reached, I must arrange it so that he’ll challenge you.”

Hai Tian was gladdened to hear his master’s tone soften.

“Hai Tian, you must be careful in this match. Don’t be in a rush to attack, test the waters first. Remember, your own safety is paramount. If you are able to suppress this arrogant ruffian, credit for this achievement will go to you!”

With the previous example of He Yan, Master Shuiyue patiently gave a few reminders. She didn’t want her two best disciples in the earth quadrant to be crippled.

She had particularly high hopes for Hai Tian. Of the four top disciples in the earth quadrant. Hai Tian’s ranking was the highest, and he had the greatest hopes of making it into the sky quadrant.

She’d only felt guilt and badly that He Yan had been crippled, but if something happened to Hai Tian, then she really would have suffered a grave and heartbreaking loss.

“Next challenger, number 491, report to the ring of spirit devouring.”

Number 491 was Jiang Chen’s number in earth quadrant.

Jiang Chen had been sitting down cross legged when he heard his number. He opened his eyes, a look of slight surprise shooting out of his eyes.

He’d thought that he enjoy a period of quiet after being challenged three times in a row.

He hadn’t thought that his number would be selected again as soon as he’d sat down. This time, it was him taking the ring to challenge others.

He flicked a meaningful glance at Master Shuiyue. Jiang Chen’s mind was clear. He knew that this old woman hadn’t given up hope and still wanted to do something.

However, he wouldn’t retract into his shell like a turtle either. He snorted in cold laughter and walked towards the ring. I’d like to see what that old woman will get up to this time!

Jiang Chen didn’t wait for the examiner to speak and smiled frostily, “Let me guess who my opponent is this time?”

He purposefully looked down towards Master Shuiyue’s disciples.

“It should be you this time?” Jiang Chen’s gaze locked onto Hai Tian’s figure. He was familiar with those beneath Master Shuiyue.

He knew that she had four major disciples in the earth quadrant.

He Yan was number two, and Hai Tian was number one.

Since he’d personally crippled He Yan, then whatever that old woman Shuiyue wanted to do would depend on her sending out Hai Tian.

With how shameless this woman was, she would give no thought to the rules as soon as she lost her rationality and would continue to cheat.

It was too easy for a keeper to manipulate the matches.

Master Shuiyue’s heart sank when she heard Jiang Chen’s words. She hadn’t thought that the secular genius would be so sharp as to see straight through her schemes.

Jiang Chen knew that he’d guessed rightly when he saw Master Shuiyue’s expression change.

He laughed heartily, “You’d rather cheat in order to send someone to their death? What kind of masochistic mentality is this? Don’t tell me you’re getting cold feet now?”

It looked like he was speaking to Hai Tian with these words, but he was actually speaking to Master Shuiyue.

She was now caught between a rock and a hard place. If she pulled out Hai Tian's number now now, then all would be too ironic, and it would be directly telling everyone that yes, I did indeed manipulate these matches.

But if she didn't pull out his number, that meant she was bowing her head to Jiang Chen and that she'd been frightened by his words.

A war was waged in her head, did she send Hai Tian or not?

Master Shuiyue had never thought that she would be so out played by a secular brat to the point where there was no easy way out. She watched him standing in the ring, chatting and laughing easily, a proud smile at the corners of his lips and mockery suffusing his dismissive eyes.

Master Shuiyue was immediately incensed by his expression.

"Hai Tian, you go!"

Master Shuiyue was also greatly decisive. If she admitted defeat now and didn't let Hai Tian take the stage, this matter would become a blot on her record for forever and even form into her internal demon.

Therefore, even if others said she was manipulating the matches, even if she would be removed from her position as keeper, she would never take this lying down!

Hai Tian was likewise feeling the fires of rage and had a bone deep hatred of Jiang Chen.

He respected his master tremendously, almost as if she were an immortal in the heavens. When he saw that she was backed into a corner by this secular disciple, he was gritting his teeth with hatred and itched to take the field himself, to torture the other to death by slicing the meat off his bones in strips and burning his bones to ashes!

“Number 491 challenges candidate number four, Hai Tian in the ring of spirit devouring.”

A great hubbub exploded from the entire Arena when this was announced.

This… this was naked manipulated!

Even the neutral candidates could no longer abide this. If it hadn’t been for them fearing Master Shuiyue’s despotic power, they would’ve wanted to erupt in protest.

Even if they didn’t voice their protests, the booing arising from all corners was enough to explain what was wrong here.

Did any law or justice exist at all, given how your Purple Sun Sect was behaving? What was this? Public suppression!

They might not have felt much about suppressing a secular disciple, but was there any impartiality left in manipulating the matches thus? Who could promise that her actions would be limited only towards this secular disciple?

Who could guarantee that she would never use the same methods to suppress the geniuses of the other sects?

This was absolutely an ill wind and a vulgar practice!

If a keeper occasionally got up to some shenanigans and wasn't too blatant about it, everyone else would just pretend it hadn't happened and let it pass on by.

But this had been too obvious and completely unconcealed. If even this was allowed, then there was absolutely no impartiality in the trials in the earth quadrant at all!

Therefore, apart from the Purple Sun Sect disciples, almost everyone below in the rings were siding with the secular disciple this time.

It wasn't that they thought that well of Jiang Chen, but that they were thoroughly disappointed and enraged by Master Shuiyue's actions.

Manipulating the matches and continued oppression, who would dare rise to the top in the earth quadrant after this? She'll suppress whoever's in the limelight? Was her Purple Sun Sect going to claim all the top spots in the end?

The candidates were all made of flesh and blood. They liked to enjoy privilege, but still craved fair competition on the same level.

It would be false to say that Master Shuiyue didn't have the slightest bit of pressure when she heard all the booing.

However, it was like she was riding a tiger now and finding it hard to dismount.

Her face darkened as she whistled lowly, sending out a strong aura and immediately silencing all the booing.

"What are you agitating about? There is fair competition in these matches, what are you making a fuss about?"

Although she knew she was cheating, Master Shuiyue still maintained a sense of awe-inspiring righteousness. She didn't have the slightest awareness that she was cheating.

A divine halo had replaced it, as well as the bearing of a holy mother who was not to be questioned.

Jiang Chen couldn't help but curse lowly when he saw this, "You lead the life of a whore and expect a monument to your chastity, how fake!"

However, the more Master Shuiyue was thus, the more Jiang Chen was enraged. He'd thought that she'd rein herself in a bit after He Yan being crippled.

He hadn't thought that she hadn't given up hope. It looked like this old woman was more stubborn and domineering than he'd thought!

"Hahahaha..." Jiang Chen laughed instead of growing angry. His face suddenly darkened, "A fair competition huh! This is a type of fairness that I've never experienced before in my life."

He put away his sarcastic expression after speaking and looked towards Hai Tian. "When the heavens want one to die, they will cause them to go mad first. I hope you put forth some effort into the fight and don't become a sacrifice due to someone else's insanity!"

He was naturally insinuating Master Shuiyue with his words.

Hai Tian laughed coldly. His heart grew calmer the more critical things became. He knew that all would depend on the match to come if he were to suppress the voices beneath the ring!

History was written by the victors!

Chapter 356: Kill!

Fight!

There was only one thought in Jiang Chen's heart now.

Whatever the crap about Hai Tian, Shuiyue, all of that was about as important as the floating clouds.

If they dared force him down to step on his head, then he had to fight! He'd use absolute power to reduce them all to dust and personally forge a peaceful scene that was bathed in glorious sunlight.

Jiang Chen seemed to be cut off from the rest of the world as he stood in the ring of spirit devouring. He could see the outside world, but all methods of communication had seemed to be severed.

"I see, it turns out that the ring of spirit devouring maps to the metal element." This was his first time in this ring.

The ring of spirit devouring encompassed an enormous formation of metal essence within it, filling the air with a grave killing intent. Jiang Chen could feel wisps of that intent slip by in front of him as he stood in the ring. It was as if yellow sands had filled the skies, an enormously oppressive feeling settling down on him.

The power of metal essence was dangerously sharp, its lethality compounded by its immense piercing, and sometimes even devouring, abilities.

Of the five elements, the element of metal had the keenest edge, and its piercing power amongst the strongest.

The so-called spirit devouring aspect was simply the enormous killing power created from the metal essence formation. The devouring strength would erode every candidate's spirit ocean and drain their energy.

This ring was an arduous test for the candidates, because it was quite sinister.

If you stood there without moving, although the air currents would be violent, their destructive ability was limited.

But once you starting moving, and the faster you moved, the more piercing these air currents would become. If your speed exceeded the flow of air currents, they might even directly punch through your body.

Therefore, maintaining constancy in the face of changing situations was the best strategy in the ring of spirit devouring.

Hai Tian was indeed much more calm than He Yan. His entire being was as sharp as a blade as he slowly melded into the ring. He looked like a golden colored statue, giving one a dispassionate,

haughty feeling.

Jiang Chen smiled coldly. Hai Tian was indeed on a different level than He Yan. At least, he hadn't started brashly attacking as soon as he'd set foot into the ring and revealed his trump cards.

"Secular kid, make your move. I'll let you make three moves first." Hai Tian spoke softly.

Every cultivator liked to create their own air in a battle, and Hai Tian was actually also creating an atmosphere that was advantageous to him.

He was very familiar with the ring of spirit devouring, and knew that remaining as unmoving as a mountain was the best choice.

Staying still was better than making a move.

When one moved, the backlash of the power in the ring would increase exponentially. The faster one moved, the greater the backlash.

Therefore, Hai Tian wanted to make his opponent make the first move and wear him down.

Out of consideration for the experience of those who had tasted defeat at Jiang Chen's hands, Hai Tian had decided to follow his master's reminders and establish a careful defense, observing Jiang Chen first.

Therefore, his so-called letting Jiang Chen take three shots first was actually mere trickery.

Jiang Chen only smiled faintly and had a strange look on his face, “Are you sure?”

“I’m sure.” Hai Tian laughed heartily, “It’s only right and just that a sect genius allows a secular cultivator some free moves.”

Jiang Chen nodded, “Since this is the case, I might give offense.”

Jiang Chen lifted his arms and sent two beams of golden light shooting forward. One was as if a great eagle soaring over the land, the other a fierce tiger pouncing towards its food.

The sudden flashes of the two beams of light seemed be akin to the explosions of the stars, giving one a fleeting illusion of intangibility.

“What?”

Hai Tian’s thoughts spun rapidly and he felt that this was quite bad. He’d thought that the other would physically attack, use weapons, or even send his fists flying his way.

He hadn’t thought that his opponent would only lift an arm and send two concealed weapons flashing towards him like two beams

of starlight.

It would've been one thing if it was an ordinary concealed weapon, which would've been absolutely nothing to Hai Tian.

But this concealed weapon had a very bizarre trail to it, and one was veering to the left, while the other to the right. There were two vastly different mysteries behind them. One of them yin, the other yang, with the two marvelously complementing each other.

Throwing daggers!

Hai Tian's pupils contracted rapidly as he took a look. He hastily set up something in front of him that opened like a clam shell.

Bam!

This shell-like object produced a yellow light, and an enormous rebound force immediately deflected the two "Moonshatter Flying Daggers".

The two throwing daggers fell to the ground, sending sparks flying out.

"Mm? What is that?" Jiang Chen was a bit surprised. He was quite confident about the attacking abilities of his throwing daggers.

He’d deployed the Moonshatter Flying Daggers with his first move, and had even imbued it with the mysteries of the Divine Aeons Fist.

He’d once used this move to fight against a fourth level spirit realm Silvermoon Monsterape when he was at the first level.

With his cultivation level of fourth level now, the strength he could bring to bear was absolutely stunning. Even a fifth level spirit realm cultivator may not have been able to evade his move.

However, although Hai Tian was currently disheveled, he’d defused the throwing daggers move!

Jiang Chen was well aware that it wasn’t because Hai Tian possessed incredible strength or speed.

The reason why he’d been able to deflect the throwing daggers was because of that clamshell-shaped object in his hands.

Hai Tian shook his hands and the two halves of the shell immediately changed into two curved, blade-like leaves, revealing a frightening gleam.

“Two more moves left.” Hai Tian laughed coldly. “Don’t tell me that you’re out of tricks apart from concealed weapons and ambushes.”

Master Shuiyue was slightly reassured when she saw this down

below in the ring. Hai Tian was Hai Tian alright. He was much more dependable than He Yan.

When she saw that Hai Tian had steadied the situation and had taken at least one of his opponent's hits, confidence began to grow in her heart.

In her eyes, this freak genius was just well versed in devious schemes and sudden ambushes. Using throwing daggers in a sudden attack at a time like this was the most obvious example.

Now that his throwing daggers hadn't succeeded, what could he do to Hai Tian in close quarters?

Especially in the ring of spirit devouring. The treasure in Hai Tian's hands was almost wholly unaffected by the ring of spirit devouring, and could even borrow the strength of metal to enhance his own fighting abilities.

"Hai Tian didn't disappoint me alright." Master Shuiyue's expression was finally lightening a bit now, after the successive blows she'd suffered.

The failure of the "Moonshatter Flying Daggers" had slightly surprised Jiang Chen, but only for a moment.

His mind immediately calmed down.

"No wonder he wanted this ring. There's a treasure protecting

him. This treasure likely naturally counters the power of metal and can deflect any metallic attacks."

The mysteries of the "Moonshatter Flying Daggers" were indeed invincible, but in the end, they were made out of metal.

When Jiang Chen understood things, a cold smile leaked out of the corners of his mouth. Do you think I can't do anything to you if I can't use any weapons?

He made a grasping motion with both hands and flicked out two tail feathers of the Fire Raven King.

He shook his arms once and made seals with his fingers.

"Go!" Jiang Chen repeated the same move and once again deployed the mysteries of the "Moonshatter Flying Daggers". However, this time, he wasn't using a metallic weapon.

You could deflect a metallic weapon, but why don't you try it again with the Raven King's tail feathers?

In terms of quality, the Raven King's tail feathers were vastly superior to the throwing daggers.

When Hai Tian saw that Jiang Chen was repeating the same move, he couldn't help but laugh. This secular cultivator is a poor sort alright. Does he have any other tricks up his sleeve?

The treasure in his hands that were now in the form of two curved blades seemed to be connected at the hilt now, as it formed a whirling blade.

It turned in the direction of the oncoming attack, sending out spirals of strong spirit power ripples towards those two beams of light.

Any metallic weapon would find it impossible to draw close to his reversed edge blade!

The reversed edge blade was like its name, reversing all metallic attacks.

This was what Hai Tian was most proud of, and his unique advantage in the ring of spirit devouring. This was also why he had strongly asked to take the field.

Why did he have so much confidence after seeing his peer being completely crushed? This reversed edge blade was the greatest source of his confidence.

This blade could negate all power of metal, meaning that this ring of spirit devouring posed no restrictions on him.

The reversed edge blade could even absorb the power of metal and transmute it for his own use.

So when he saw Jiang Chen use the same attack again, Hai Tian was truly dismissive.

“Oh go the hell back!”

The reversed edge blade shone splendidly in all directions, enclosing the two beams of light speeding towards Hai Tian.

However, Hai Tian’s heart suddenly skipped a beat. He’d discovered that the two beams of light hadn’t been deflected by his blade, and that their speed had actually increased, and was shooting towards his vital parts in a strange arc.

“What’s going on??” Hai Tian was truly shocked.

His opponent had used the same attack. It’d been easily deflected last time, why had something gone awry this time?

Mockery appeared on Jiang Chen’s face as his arms continue to move. He brought out seven more Fire Raven King tail feathers and sent them all shooting towards Hai Tian like a streak of nine stars.

Even if they were in the ring of spirit devouring, Jiang Chen had many methods that he could use against Hai Tian.

However, he’d simply chosen the least tiring and most secretive manner to avoid displaying his trump cards.

The nine tail fathers were nine beams of light, completely sealing off all avenues of retreat for Hai Tian!

Pfft, pfft, pfft, pfft!

Enormous strength easily pierced through Hai Tian’s armor.

The nine tail feathers drove into the two sides of his collarbones, ribs, hands, and feet.

The last one shot straight through his forehead and nailed Hai Tian onto the wall next to the ring.

His body was suspended as blood streamed down from his wounds.

The reversed edge blade in his hand clattered to the ground. Hai Tian’s eyes were wider than a cow’s, his surprise so profound he hadn’t even had time to close them.

A look of disbelief still lingered in his eyes, intermixed with fear, despair…

Even Master Shuiyue hadn’t anticipated such an enormous reversal. When she came to herself, Hai Tian was already completely nailed to the wall.

A casual smile crossed Jiang Chen's face as he retracted his hand seals, recalling the nine tail feathers.

Bam!

After losing the force supporting his body, Hai Tian's corpse slid down dejectedly, his last breath having long since fled his body.

"Another one." Jiang Chen laughed slightly and was even more decisive this time. He couldn't even be bothered arguing with Master Shuiyue, and flew down from the ring whilst everyone was still flabbergasted.

Suddenly, thunderous applause sounded from the entire Arena.

The applause was like a tide, ringing out from all corners as if this had been a premeditated action.

Apart from the Purple Sun Sect, most of the other sects were applauding for Jiang Chen!

This ironic scene almost made Master Shuiyue fall down from her seat.

Chapter 357: The Situation Greatly Changes

The applause was like the tidewaters, wave upon wave, not ceasing for the longest time.

Jiang Chen hadn't thought that such a scene would happen either. When he walked down from ring, he saw Liu Wencai and Fatty Lu furiously applauding, their faces beet red with emotion, almost as if they wanted to clap until their hands fell off.

"Damn straight Brother Boulder!"

"We're so proud of you Brother Boulder!"

The corners of Liu Wencai's eyes were red, it was obvious that he was so emotional that he wanted to cry. Fatty Lu also wiped surreptitiously away at the corners of his eyes with his sleeve.

"Brother Boulder, look! A just cause enjoys abundant support while an unjust cause finds little support. The Purple Sun Sect manipulated the matches and has aroused public anger. Such perverse acts will not gain public acceptance in the end! Hai Tian brought down destruction on himself!" Liu Wencai was almost yelling in his high charged state, and the blood vessels on his neck pulsed like worms traveling through mud.

Indeed, what Liu Wencai had said was what most candidates were thinking.

Even though these candidates were all sect geniuses and may not necessarily wish to see a secular disciple hogging too much of the limelight or see someone else rise in front of them, they were still rational in the end.

Once the initial envy of realizing that this secular disciple's potential and strength was much higher than the others wore off, they would slowly accept it.

And when the Purple Sun Sect started manipulating the matches, things became completely different then.

If even the challenges could be manipulated at will, then what was the point in the other three sects competing? How would they even compete then?

It could be said their slight bit of repulsion towards secular cultivators was born out of the desire to win from a competitive spirit. But their hatred towards violating the rules and disgusting acts such as openly manipulating the matches, was a sentiment from the depths of their hearts and a matter of principle.

If even principles could be changed, then there was no point to the matches at all.

It was because of this hatred towards the Purple Sun Sect that the scales of their hearts all tilted towards Jiang Chen.

When they saw Jiang Chen destroy Hai Tian in an incredible

way, they felt greatly vindicated and applauded mightily as a result.

This was a display of power to the Purple Sun Sect, and a protest released from the depths of their hearts.

If it'd been before, under Master Shuiyue's despotic power, they might not have done so. But now, she'd lost two disciples in a row and was shocked senseless at the moment.

This secular cultivator had surprised Master Shuiyue again and again. He'd pulled her down from her pedestal in one go, making her appear no longer irrefutable and invincible in candidates' hearts.

Once her authority was questioned, collapse would be fast.

It could be said that Jiang Chen had chipped away at Master Shuiyue's authority, bit by bit.

She'd fully calmed down by now.

She placed a finger beneath Hai Tian's nose and discovered that he'd long since lost all signs of life.

"Ah...." Master Shuiyue suddenly threw her head back and screamed lowly. Layers of frost shimmered into existence on her face, as beams of white mist spread at high speed around the surroundings with incredible speed.

“Swine, you injured two of my disciples in a row. One’s dead and the other’s crippled. Good, good, good!!”

Master Shuiyue gritted her teeth as her raging fury began to expand along with her aura, roiling towards Jiang Chen through the air.

“Master Shuiyue, what are you doing?”

The other examiners were immensely alarmed. They discovered that Master Shuiyue had the first signs of going berserk. Please, you’re the keeper of this quadrant. Are you going to raise a hand against a candidate?

The other examiners weren’t pushovers either. When they saw Master Shuiyue thus, they all jumped out to stop her.

“You want to stop me?” A layer of frost covered Master Shuiyue’s face.

“Master keeper, although you’re the one in control, we won’t sit idly by when you want to publicly flaunt the rules.” The other examiners all spoke up.

Are you kidding me? It was shameless enough for you to manipulate the matches, and now you want to raise your hand against a candidate? If we let you succeed, won’t the matches of the earth quadrant become a colossal joke then?!

“Get out of my way!” Master Shuiyue roared lowly as she pushed her aura forward again.

“Master Keeper, turn back from the wrong path, awaken back to your senses!”

“Manipulating the matches and ignoring the rules, and now you even want to publicly injure a candidate. You have no respect for the law! We should report this to our own forefathers.”

“Right, we must protest this. If this continues, the earth quadrant will become a joke.”

Master Shuiyue laughed in cold succession. “Censure? Do you think that I would be afraid of your criticisms? So what? Do you think I care about the identity as a keeper of the earth quadrant?”

“Get out of my way, or don’t blame me for showing no mercy!” Master Shuiyue’s rage was out of control. It looked like she was completely going berserk.

The other examiners looked at each other with determined expressions.

The candidates on all four sides all surged over at this time, forming a crowd.

“If you want to do as you wish, then go ahead and kill all of us as well!!”

“”Right, this earth quadrant isn’t a place in which you reign supreme. Do you think you’ll be able to stopper all our mouths by killing someone?!”

“Everyone rise up and denounce her!”

“Right, this dominating woman has always been biased towards the Purple Sun Sect. Is this kind of person worthy of being a main keeper? I’ve put up with her long enough!”

Joint anger was written all over their faces. Their expressions were full of rage and explosive emotions.

Jiang Chen hadn’t thought either that matters would escalate to this extent. He sighed in his heart, ah, this old woman has angered the heavens and people on the earth.

And I thought I was unpopular enough as a secular cultivator.

Compared to her, I’m practically an angel!

Jiang Chen was actually rather happy to see the situation develop thus. He wasn’t the sort to delight in the miseries of others, but he was bizarrely excited to see Master Shuiyue being publicly condemned by the crowd.

He knew that this woman was domineering and was publicly defying the rules. This was indeed a matter that would easily give rise to public fury.

When things had developed thus, his role as the person in question was no longer important.

The situation now was one of everyone publicly condemning the keeper.

“Brother Boulder, do you see this? This is the cry of the public. This woman is too tyrannical and finally incited public fury in the end.”

“Indeed, choosing her to be the keeper was a real mistake alright.”

Fatty Lu and Liu Wencai were all standing to the side, pointing their fingers at what was going on. They were happy to see such a scene as well. Those who watched a good show were never afraid of the show becoming bigger.

Their mindsets were even more so when it came to the Purple Sun Sect. Of the four great sects, the Purple Sun Sect had always been domineering and self-styled themselves as the head of the four sects.

This situation hadn’t been formed overnight either.

A crowd would be enough to push down a wall!

Even those who were watching the show now couldn't help but give it a few shoves as well. After all, they'd all had enough of Master Shuiyue.

She obviously hadn't thought that the situation would suddenly take a turn for the worse. She'd always had a high opinion of herself and thought that she was a goddess in the hearts of the candidates.

She hadn't thought that she'd become a public enemy all of a sudden!

The hubbub of yells with a cries of "old woman" mixed into them made her completely flabbergasted.

Me? An old woman?

To someone as exceedingly narcissistic and full of themselves as Master Shuiyue, someone with utmost confidence in her appearance, for others to address her by this title was worse than killing her!

Honestly speaking, although Master Shuiyue had been famous for around a hundred years, and she was over two hundred, she had maintained appearance well. She only looked like she was in her thirties right now. And for a cultivator at her level, her body

processes were quite efficient and strong, making it seem like there was no difference between her body and that of a young person's.

Therefore, although Master Shuiyue seemed quite like a frosty beauty and presented herself with a noble, luxurious front, she actually yearned for the attention of the young folk and even craved to be loved by them.

She even made it so that most of her disciples were males.

However, others usually never knew of her thoughts.

Thus, when she heard others criticize her as an "old woman", she was so angry that she was almost shaking. She emitted a long whistle as her beautiful face twisted. She screamed like a harlot yelling on the streets, "Are all of you trying to rebel?"

This voice rolled outwards like thunder as a formless aura surged and crashed outwards, shaking the candidates around her so that no one could maintain a steady footing and their bodies grew cold.

When Master Shuiyue truly lost her temper, it was still a very frightening thing with her level of cultivation.

However, of the hundreds present, there were still three to four hundred other sect disciples, excluding the Purple Sun Sect disciples. Were any of them pushovers?

When they saw Master Shuiyue trying to maintain control with

brute force, they were filled with righteous indignation and started yelling.

"Trying to bully us with force?"

"She's just one person and is trying to suppress all of us?"

"Everyone complain about her! We'll refuse to participate if she's not removed!"

"Right, let's censure her! Sue her! We're all going on strike if she continues to be the keeper! Just choose the winners from her Purple Sun Sect in the future then!"

"Right, we can't take this anymore! I said that something was amiss last week already. Out of the ten promotion slots, five of them were taken by the Purple Sun Sect. Do you believe that there was no cheating involved in any of this?"

"Right, as an examiner, she cheated to benefit herself and to settle private grudges! She even abused her power for private matters!"

"Haha, too bad she picked up rocks to smash her own foot. She lost two disciples in a row."

Public furor was hard to quell once aroused. The other examiners had quickly contacted the heavyweights of their sect.

“What? The earth quadrant has greatly changed, and the candidates all want to censure Master Shuiyue?” The head of the Purple Sun Sect, Zixu Zhenren, was completely stunned when he heard this.

“Forefather, can this be false?” Zixu Zhenren asked hesitantly.

Sunchaser’s face was darkened as he too rather regretted his decision at the moment. He could’ve sent someone else to oversee the earth quadrant exams.

The spots for keeper had been equally divided up amongst the four sects, with the earth quadrant being given to the Purple Sun Sect.

Forefather Sunchaser had wanted to reward Master Shuiyue for finding Long Juxue and let her further build up a name for herself and increase her visibility.

But, to think that this Shuiyue had allowed things to develop to this point?

The candidates had formed into groups to publicly condemn her, just how badly had she bungled things?”

“Zixu, come and take a look at the earth quadrant with me. I trust that the other old monsters won’t let go of this opportunity to criticize our sect!”

Sunchaser’s tone was a bit dejected.

Chapter 358: Master Shuiyue Is Relieved Of Her Duties

The forefathers and heavyweights of the other three sects all received the news at the same time.

When they understood the circumstances of this matter, the heavyweights all itched to take action. This was a perfect opportunity to take the Purple Sun Sect down a peg!

The Purple Sun Sect had been quite domineering during this selection and they had self styled themselves as the leader of the four great sects. This had already been enough to greatly irritate the other three sects.

This time, Master Shuiyue had apparently even manipulated the matches. With the forefathers' understanding of Master Shuiyue, that was completely possible.

Therefore, they all ran for the earth quadrant at first light.

The situation would be hard to salvage once public anger was aroused.

The four forefathers had personally made an appearance, investigating the situation and considering the testimony from the other examiners as well as the candidates.

Apart from Sunchaser, the other three forefathers all agreed that Master Shuiyue had manipulated the matches.

“Four matches in a row without pause. Which one of you can give me a reason that proves this wasn’t manipulation?” Forefather Ninelion of the Myriad Spirit Sect was the first to cry out.

Forefather Icemist of the Flowing Wind Sect also shook her head. “The traces of manipulation are too obvious. Daoist Sunchaser, your Purple Sun Sect truly was out of line in this matter.”

“Daoist Sunchaser, give us the best way to proceed.” Forefather Thousandleaf said faintly.

Sunchaser had a look of dejection on his face. He too was sorely disappointed in Master Shuiyue at the moment. Everyone was seeking to topple this wall now. If she wasn’t swapped out, the three old monsters wouldn’t be able to pacify the crowds either.

Judging from the candidates’ posturing, it was very likely that they would boycott the matches if Master Shuiyue wasn’t removed!

Sunchaser snorted. Although he was domineering, he was completely in the wrong here. What else could he do?

“You three sects have long since coveted this position anyways. What do you say we can do? Will you three be able to amiably

select a replacement if my sect vacates the position?”

“And why can’t we?” Ninelion smiled. “I recommend that the other three sects nominate a person each to jointly manage the earth quadrant.”

“That makes sense, I agree.” Icemist nodded.

Thousandleaf chuckled. “I have no opinions otherwise.”

As long as Master Shuiyue was removed and the Purple Sun Sect vacated this position, there was no big deal if the three sects held joint control over this position.

Sunchaser was dejected beyond belief, but he could only accept things silently. He snorted lightly and he flicked his glance to Jiang Chen. “Young man, it seems like your shadow can be found in any matter that happens.”

Jiang Chen only smiled faintly when faced with the dignity of forefather Sunchaser. “The tree desires stillness, but the wind will not cease. Forefather, can you truly place the blame for what those of your sect did onto my head?”

“Hahaha, well said.” Forefather Ninelion walked over, laughing heartily. “Little fellow, I’ve heard of your recent exploits. I only want to say, damn good showing! A true genius should be like you, refusing to be cowed or to submit, unshaken by all outside powers and walking your own path.”

“Old monster Ninelion, watch the timing of your words!” Sunchaser said coldly.

“Heh heh, I speak when I want to. Can you control me? Control your own sect first and stop giving reasons for others to laugh at you.” Ninelion chuckled meaningfully and he looked jeeringly at Master Shuiyue.

Master Shuiyue was almost too ashamed to show her face. Her gaze shot viciously at Jiang Chen, hating the architect of her current circumstances.

“This secular swine has broken two of my disciples in a row, and he has now damaged my standing and reputation, making me lose face in front of the forefathers!”

Master Shuiyue had never been of a kind sort, and her hatred for Jiang Chen now was something that wouldn’t be washed clean by the waters of three rivers and five streams.

“Young man, the suggestion I gave you last time is still in effect. A martial dao genius must choose his path well. Placing one foot right leads one down a golden avenue. Placing one foot wrong may be the first down into a bottomless abyss.”

Sunchaser laughed coldly and brandished his sleeves, “We leave!”

A group of Purple Sun Sect executives followed behind him.

Master Shuiyue stared at Jiang Chen like a viper for the longest time before bringing up the rear.

Jiang Chen knew that he'd fully offended this woman.

"Young man, ignore that old crazy Sunchaser. Their Purple Sun Sect has long been used to acting as they would. Now that they've lost face this time, they had to find some words to scare you with." Ninelion chuckled. "Remember one thing, whether it's secular cultivators or sect disciples, we are all cultivators of the sixteen kingdom alliance at the end of the day. There are no sectarian biases in the selection, just the greater picture of the sixteen kingdom alliance."

"Old monster Ninelion, I rarely agree with your words, but I have to this time." Thousandleaf laughed and also walked over. "Young man, you didn't do anything wrong in this matter. As long as your path is correct, don't veer from it due to any threats. You'll understand when you reach our level how important one's way is."

"Do well. We see the hope of the secular cultivators in you." Icemist also encouraged him.

It was apparent to see from how the three forefathers were reassuring him together how much hope they had for the secular champion.

Even though his identity had yet to be revealed, even until now, his illustrious battle results were enough to awe everyone.

Judging from these circumstances, it was a foregone conclusion that he would enter the earth quadrant.

Although the three forefathers hadn't openly recruited him, their ardent gazes were thoroughly betraying their thoughts.

"Many thanks to the three forefathers' pointers. I will absolutely try my best to stay true to my way."

The challenges were still taking place, and since Master Shuiyue had been censured, the three forefathers couldn't stay too long and affect the exams.

They chose three new keepers and issued careful reminders, emphasizing that the replacements needed to be impartial and they could not allow personal feelings to be mixed in with the matches.

Master Shuiyue had been unable to set aside her personal feelings and she had seen her standing and reputation destroyed instead.

The matches of the earth quadrant resumed normal operations.

Jiang Chen had killed Hai Tian in his match. He could still continue his challenges according to the rules.

His rhythm had been destroyed and Jiang Chen didn't want to continue his challenges. He chose to give up his opportunity.

He then left the arena and returned to his residence.

A lot of things had happened today, and he needed some time to organize his thoughts.

Since he'd been challenged three times already, there was no way he would be challenged again today. Therefore, his departure from the arena wasn't against the rules.

Jiang Chen sat down in meditation when he returned to his room, slowly calming his emotions.

Although the events of today looked like an accident, they had actually been inevitable. Jiang Chen knew that his conflict with the Shuiyue faction would be heightened sooner or later.

After the happenings earlier, they would likely be heightened sooner now.

"That woman is truly crazy and she can't keep her emotions in check. She thought that she'd tire me out with four matches in a row. Hmph, what a lovely plan huh! It was a good thing that I had multiple aces and I had barely used any energy in the previous three matches in the ring of ice. However, it had been indeed a bit more tiring in the ring of spirit devouring."

With Jiang Chen's level of cultivation knowledge, no one on a similar level to him could measure up to him.

Hai Tian actually counted as someone who'd caused some trouble for him.

"There are almost none who can truly threaten me in the earth quadrant. It looks like I need to set my sights ahead of time to the sky quadrant."

When it came to this quadrant, the only thing that was a challenge to Jiang Chen wasn't his opponents, but the five rings.

"When it comes to do it, Hai Tian was fancying himself clever. He had the protection of that treasure and he wasn't afraid of the backlash of that ring. If he'd attacked me with all his strength, I would've been burdened by it. Although my defense would've been able to barely hold out against the backlash, my movements would've absolutely been affected. It would've been a close thing had I faced off against Hai Tian. I may not have been able to win then, if I didn't bring out the Lotus. That fellow had most likely studied my style in the previous matches and so, he wanted to be on the defense first, allowing me to attack and exhaust my spirit power. He would then counterattack when my reserves were drained."

To be honest, Jiang Chen had been quite lucky in this match.

It had been his opponent being too unfamiliar with the situation and using the wrong tactic.

If Jiang Chen hadn't had the tail feathers of the Raven King, he most likely would've had to use his final trump card of the

Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice.

Otherwise, he really wouldn't have been confident that he'd win.

"It looks like I have the first selection to thank. If it hadn't been for those marvelous occurrence in the Valley of Destruction, I would've been forced to reveal the Lotus if I'd wanted to win today."

He didn't want to expose the Lotus that early.

That was his final trump card that he was saving until the end. He didn't want to use it at all before facing his final opponent.

Jiang Chen's days passed much easier without Master Shuiyue's oppression. However, he also adjusted his strategy and stopped his challenges everyday after attaining two victories in a row.

With these five rings in the earth quadrant, it wasn't that easy to be a madman sweeping the stages in successive victories.

Jiang Chen didn't want to do this at this point either.

What he felt gratified by was that Liu Wencai's battle strength had indeed increased greatly after a few practice sparring matches between the two. His win rate wasn't low either.

Liu Wencai was incredibly grateful. When he'd arrived at the

earth quadrant, he knew that his level and number of 498 meant that his level was second from the bottom.

No matter how he looked at things, he was a hot contender for being demoted. It was very likely that he would be sent back to the mystic quadrant after three months.

He wasn't willing to accept this and he wanted to change his fate.

And now, while his scores weren't enough for his ranking to be far ahead, he had far outstripped the awkwardness of being in the bottom ten.

"Brother Boulder, perhaps I'll never be able to catch up to you, but I'll keep working hard according to how you've taught me. Even if I can't catch up to you, I still must work hard and follow you, ensuring that I can see your back at all times, so that I am not completely left behind in the dust."

Liu Wencai made the following oath in his heart.

Little fatty Lu had also seemed to be affected by Liu Wencai. He put away his usual joking and lackadaisical manner and he practiced more diligently than usual.

It rather seemed like he wanted to compete with Liu Wencai!

Jiang Chen naturally saw the changes in the two and he was happy for them from the bottom of his heart. He also felt slightly

proud of them.

To be able to affect others with his own actions and accelerate his friends' development; he was quite happy to see this.

Chapter 359: Fated Rivals

Somewhere in the temporary quarters of the Purple Sun Sect.

All the Purple Sun Sect heavyweights had gathered in one area.

Master Shuiyue was slightly embarrassed to be facing her brethren and began to reflect. “Forefather, fellow daoists, Shuiyue was incompetent and dragged everyone down so that all lost face with me.”

Zixu Zhenren was the head of the sect and naturally had to project himself as thus at this time. He comforted her, “Junior sister Shuiyue, everyone knows that, although your temper is fiery, you act for the best of the sect at all times. Many factors were at play in this matter, and it wasn’t all your fault. It was the other three sects that have always been jealous of us, so they wouldn’t have passed up on this opportunity at all.”

“Right, junior sister need not admonish yourself. This was just a mere secular cultivator with no knowledge of the vastness of the world. There will naturally be sect geniuses who will vent your ill will for you when he reaches the sky quadrant.”

“There is reason in these words. Although this candidate has great potential, there is still a large gap between him and the premier geniuses of our Purple Sun Sect.”

Everyone started comforting Master Shuiyue.

It wasn’t that they had close relationships with Master Shuiyue, but that everyone knew she had taken in an incredible disciple.

This disciple was going to be a pillar of the sect sooner or later. Even forefather Sunchaser had said that Long Juxue was theoretically the disciple with the greatest hope of ascending to the origin realm.

There was no reason for this other than her innate constitution. That fact alone made her superior to all the other sect geniuses.

Master Shuiyue felt a bit better receiving all of their words of comfort. However, she still hadn’t dared to look at forefather Sunchaser ever since coming back.

She had indeed committed a grave mistake this time, particularly when the forefather had already sent her a message telling her to not make a move lightly.

She hadn’t respected his wishes and had fancied herself clever in playing with fire, resulting in her picking up rocks to smash her own feet in the end. Not only had she lost face, but she’d paid the price of two personal disciples as well.

“Forefather, Shuiyue is incompetent. Please proclaim your punishment.” Shuiyue was afraid of nothing beneath the heavens and on the earth, but forefather Sunchaser was the only exception.

Even the most powerful senior executive in the Purple Sun Sect didn't dare act wildly in front of forefather Sunchaser, including Master Shuiyue.

"Hmph. Shuiyue, it was an achievement in taking in Long Juxue, and it was a black mark in your books when you defied my orders this time. Merits offset demerits. This matter is over."

Forefather Sunchaser snorted coldly and gave Shuiyue a way out.

Master Shuiyue felt quite anguished. She knew that the forefather's words meant that her merits in scouting Long Juxue had been completely wiped out. She would no longer enjoy any more special privileges within the sect.

This was no small blow to her.

However, since the forefather had spoken, she dared not haggle. After all, he hadn't pursued her guilt in defying his orders. This was already an act of mercy.

"Forefather, there is still one thing I must report." Master Shuiyue thought for a moment and still gathered her courage to speak up.

"What?"

"I suspect that the secular freak genius is very likely Long Juxue's rival in the mundane world—Jiang Chen!"

Everyone was stunned when she gave voice to her speculation.

“What did you say?” Zixu Zhenren also couldn’t sit still. “Jiang Chen? You mean the kid who was being feted by the other three sects before the selection?”

This thought had once flashed through Zixu Zhenren’s mind as well, but he hadn’t thought more deeply on it. He couldn’t help but ask now that Master Shuiyue had brought it up, “Do you have evidence of this?”

“I don’t have concrete evidence, but this candidate has been at odds with our sect ever since he’s entered the second selection. Why is this? In addition, I have the slightest feeling of unease about this candidate. All of you know that for a cultivator at my level, I wouldn’t have unexplainable emotional hunches. Therefore, I’m worried that this intuition will become reality.”

The intuition of martial dao!

A cultivator’s intuition wouldn’t appear for no reason; there are no waves without the wind. Something was usually bound to happen once it appeared.

This time, even forefather Sunchaser sank into deep musing.

He was a venerated origin realm practitioner and had a deep understanding of the intuition of martial dao. When random

thoughts such as these appeared, they were often very accurate.

The stronger one was, the more accurate these thoughts were.

“Can it be that the secular genius really is Jiang Chen?” Sunchaser had never made much of Jiang Chen. At his level, any so-called genius was just a minor character to him.

Those who didn’t have the potential to enter the origin realm would be unable to make it into his line of sight.

He did look favorably on several geniuses in the Purple Sun Sect, and the one most likely to enter the origin realm happened to be Long Juxue.

As long as all proceeded smoothly, an azure phoenix constitution would have at least a seventy to eighty percent chance of ascending to the origin realm.

Therefore, Long Juxue was without a doubt the most popular character amongst the younger generation. She had the privilege of being first priority when it came to enjoying the sect’s resources.

Sunchaser, in turn, saw in this secular cultivator a certain potential, namely the potential of becoming a venerated origin realm cultivator.

This was why he’d told Master Shuiyue not to suppress this

candidate.

But if this genius really was Long Juxue's rival, then he couldn't be allowed to live.

"Can it be that a mere Eastern Kingdom has birthed two geniuses all at once?" Sunchaser murmured softly to himself.

"Forefather, what do you mean?" Those assembled were surprised.

Sunchaser sighed, "I hadn't thought much of this before Shuiyue had brought it up. But since she's had this hunch, this is a sign from the heart and basically has no room for error with it. This candidate may truly be Jiang Chen, Long Juxue's death rival. It looks like heaven's ways are fair. Long Juxue is such a genius that she is destined to have such a rival. I have investigated her background and discovered that Jiang Chen truly is her fated rival."

"Forefather, do you think so too?" Master Shuiyue was greatly stunned when she heard forefather Sunchaser speak so. She'd always hoped that her intuition was wrong.

This was because the shock that the secular genius had brought to her was simply too great.

It was great to the point where she wasn't completely confident that Long Juxue would be able to suppress him.

“Let’s wait and see.” Sunchaser spread out his hands. “If this candidate is truly Jiang Chen, he is destined to be unable to coexist with Long Juxue. He will certainly become her internal demon if he doesn’t die.”

“On the other hand, if he truly is Jiang Chen, he would actually be the best tool to temper Long Juxue with. If Long Juxue can overcome him, then she will surely rise to the skies like a phoenix soaring the nine heavens.”

“Forefather, do you mean to allow this candidate to enter the sky quadrant and compete with Long Juxue?” Master Shuiyue asked hoarsely with surprise.

“What?” Sunchaser smiled coldly. “You can’t bear for this to happen out of a desire to protect your disciple?”

“This kid is crafty and tricky, whereas Long Juxue’s personality has yet to form and she lacks a certain amount of tempering. I’m worried…”

“Don’t worry unnecessarily like the man fretting about the sky falling in.” Sunchaser said remotely. “In order to become one above all, one must be able to make it past everything. If a fated rival is enough to stop her, then all is futile no matter how high her potential is.”

The other heavyweights of the sect all nodded in agreement.

Geniuses not only needed to have potential, but also needed various conditions that would allow them to grow into their own. The design of the initial selection encompassed all of this.

If Long Juxue was unable to make it past this obstacle or was unable to defeat all of her opponents, then what right did she have to stand at the pinnacle of the sect and enjoy treatment that no one else had?

“Shuiyue, your personality is fiery, but this isn’t a shortcoming. Even your fierce protection of those close to you isn’t a shortcoming, but you must remember that although a master’s protection is necessary in the development of a cultivator, too much interference is actually a type of confinement. If you do everything for her, what true tempering can she undergo? If her personality isn’t forged, how will we trust her with important situations?”

Sunchaser’s tone became stern. “Therefore, if this candidate is indeed Jiang Chen, this is actually a good thing. He will become Long Juxue’s most ideal test. To have a fated rival during the rise of genius is a stroke of luck and not disaster, do you understand?”

Master Shuiyue was grave as she suddenly understood something.

She really did feel quite a bit of regret in this moment. If she’d understood this earlier, she wouldn’t have lost so much face this time. Not only had she wrecked her own reputation, she’d paid the

price of two personal disciples as well.

"Alright, that will be all. Shuiyue, treat this matter as a type of trial for yourself as well. Temper your personality well."

Sunchaser waved his hand and was about to leave.

"Forefather, please wait. There is still one more thing regarding Jiang Chen." Master Shuiyue suddenly remembered something.

"What else is there?"

"That day in the Eastern Kingdom, Jiang Chen was one step away from being killed by my disciple Chu Xinghan when a mysterious person appeared out of nowhere and saved him. He gave Chu Xinghan the message that Long Juxue and Jiang Chen's matter should be settled by only the two of them. If the Purple Sun Sect or any others interfere, then the mysterious person will personally come to the Purple Sun Sect for an explanation. It now seems that this person may be the person secretly mentoring Jiang Chen."

"Mysterious person? Smoke and mirrors." Sunchaser laughed coldly in succession. "Apart from us four old fellows in the sixteen kingdoms, who else has the right to be mysterious?"

"Think no more on this matter. Whoever they are, our sect fears nothing in the sixteen kingdoms. He's not worthy of threatening the Purple Sun Sect!" Sunchaser delivered this in a domineering tone.

“Mm, I actually suspect that the mysterious person could be the spirit king protector of the Skylaurel Kingdom, Ye Chonglou.” Master Shuiyue still voiced the suspicions in her heart.

“Ye Chonglou?” Sunchaser’s tone grew even more contemptuous. “Spirit king protector of the kingdom? Since he’s a spirit king, then there’s nothing to worry about. He can come talk to me as equals when he enters the origin realm. However, will he be able to do so with his endowments? Heh heh, impossible!”

Although Sunchaser wasn’t familiar with Ye Chonglou, he still knew of him. He knew that this man was only a step away from the origin realm but had always been unable to break through.

This was a bottleneck. If he hadn’t been able to bridge it in a hundred years, it meant he didn’t have the ability to take the final step.

This was the difference between the origin realm and the spirit realm. It was just one line, but that line encompassed a thousand mountains and ten thousand moats.

Since forefather Sunchaser had set the tone, there was nothing much for anyone else to say. Everyone left to go about their own business, leaving Master Shuiyue still a bit worried.

Chapter 360: The Thundercloud Tree, Refining The Golden Body

The Hundred Challenges of the earth quadrant had basically become an exercise in carrying out Jiang Chen's official duties. He won one or two matches a day and he never sought to carry on.

Even so, no one had been able to defeat him up until now. No one had even come close.

They all had to admit that, in the end, this secular genius belonged to the sky quadrant, and not the earth quadrant.

Jiang Chen didn't waste the three months time that he had as he trained diligently every day. His goal was to use this time well and sprint forward, making it into the fifth level spirit realm as early as possible.

Although there were fifth level spirit realm candidates in the earth quadrant, there weren't that many.

But when he moved onto the sky quadrant, the lowest ranked amongst them would be at the fifth level spirit realm. There would be plenty of sixth level spirit realm as well.

It was even rumored that there would be geniuses of the sky spirit realm in the sky quadrant as well.

Jiang Chen felt that although he had many trump cards, he didn't have the slightest confidence in facing a genius in the sky spirit realm.

Because of this, he pushed himself even harder. He knew that when he arrived at the sky quadrant, he would no longer have such a clear advantage as he'd had in the earth and mystic quadrants.

The sky quadrant was filled with the elites painstakingly selected by the sects.

"It looks like I need to work harder to win out over all the younger generation of the sects." Jiang Chen simulated things carefully and he felt that in order to conquer the sky quadrant, his current level of cultivation was truly insufficient.

He was training the 'Nine Transformations of Demons and Gods' to the second level. As time went on, Jiang Chen used the power of metal essence to refine his flesh and blood every day.

He suddenly remembered something one day.

"Ah right, how could I have forgotten the Thundercloud Tree?" Jiang Chen suddenly remembered the Thundercloud Tree and Thundercloud Cicada on the ninth level of the magnetic golden mountain.

Setting aside the Thundercloud Cicada for now, there were many wondrous effects from the Thundercloud Tree. One of them was to

refine the golden body!

Jiang Chen had gained so much during the first selection that he'd forgotten about the Thundercloud Tree.

He slapped his thigh and sighed, "I'm wasting a heavenly treasure here by ignoring the Thundercloud Tree! If I were to refine the Tree, I'd be able to use my own body and use it to refine an invincible body. Add to that the effects from the Nine Transformation of Demons and Gods — that'll be double insurance for my success then!"

Jiang Chen felt boundless inspiration at that moment.

He acted upon his thoughts and he sent a beam of consciousness to communicate with the Thundercloud Cicada. He knew that if it didn't agree to this, he wouldn't be able to obtain part of the tree.

The tree resided on the ninth floor of the magnetic golden mountain, and although he'd conquered the mountain now, it was a bit unrealistic to summon the entire mountain with his current level of cultivation.

Besides, if he were to do so here, it would also be an astounding event.

Therefore, he had to obtain the cicada's consent in order to barely summon one ten-thousandth of the mountain's original form.

It was almost impossible for him to summon the entire mountain before he reached the origin realm.

But he could summon a mere fraction of the mountain so that the courtyard could comfortably hold its shape.

Of course, the prelude to that was that the Thundercloud Cicada had to be willing to help.

“Human big brother, you’re the master of the magnetic golden mountain now and I’m the one who told you about this. Not only do you not thank me, you want me to give you the Thundercloud Tree as well!” The cicada sounded a bit aggrieved after it heard Jiang Chen’s request.

Jiang Chen smiled with a thick face, “I don’t want much, just a small section. It absolutely won’t affect your space of survival on the tree.”

“Really just a small section? Then, human big brother, can you promise that you won’t want any in the future?”

“Well… the Thundercloud Tree grows fast as well. When it grows into a towering tree in the future or even a forest of Thundercloud Trees, it’ll be impossible for me to not want any during that time then.”

The cicada cocked its head to the side and thought for a moment.

“Ten years, I’ll give it to you this once, but you can’t ask for more during the next ten years.”

Ten years wasn’t a long time to a cultivator.

“Alright, ten years it is. But, you can’t be too miserly, I need to be able to use it after all! I say, little cicada, you know that I have a lot of enemies right now and I need the tree to strengthen myself. If my strength can’t keep up and I’m destroyed by someone else, then they might take the magnetic golden mountain away. You’ll become someone else’s possession at that time. Surely, you know that humans are quite greedy. Your bloodline is so superior, someone’s definitely going to swallow you for your bloodline. Do you believe me?”

The cicada began to tremble in its fright as it said nervously, “Human big brother, you won’t devour me for my bloodlines, will you?”

Jiang Chen grinned, “I promise not to hurt you.”

The cicada grew depressed. “That means you still might ask for a lot of things from me.”

Jiang Chen didn’t deny it. The bloodline of a Thundercloud Cicada were very noble. If he refined it and obtained its heritage, then he’d be able to train an art that faked death, the ‘Cicada’s Disappearance’.

This art was absolutely worth half a life to a cultivator.

“Little cicada, I won’t lie to you. I would dearly like to master your heritage — the Cicada’s Disappearance. However, I won’t harm your body, but I might come to borrow some of your bloodline in the future.”

The cicada sighed softly. “Alright, compared to other humans, big brother is a good man already. When my bloodline slowly evolve to perfection, I’ll consider lending you a drop of blood then. Don’t look down on a single drop of blood from me, that would be enough for you to obtain my heritage and memories.”

Jiang Chen was overjoyed, “Let’s not talk about the future yet, I’ll await your Thundercloud Tree.”

The bloodline of the cicada was still a far off matter for him. What he needed now was the Thundercloud Tree.

The cicada quickly returned with a chunk of wood as long as Jiang Chen’s arm. He was quite satisfied and he smiled, “Little cicada, I thought you’d be miserly and just give me the amount as big as a fist. I hadn’t thought that you’d be so generous.”

“You’d start scheming if I wasn’t generous.” The cicada pouted. “Human big brother, don’t contact me if there’s nothing else. It’s very tiring to communicate like this through the mountain.”

The Thundercloud Cicada flapped its wings after saying this and

vanished.

Jiang Chen made several hand seals and the magnetic golden mountain slowly dissolved into formless golden light, slowly shrinking and finally vanishing into Jiang Chen's palm without a trace.

He was like a fish in water after receiving this piece of the tree.

He sat down to collect his thoughts and he immediately began cultivating. It wouldn't be that easy to refine this piece of Thundercloud Tree.

It wasn't a simple matter of assimilating the wood into his flesh and blood. Rather, it had to be melded into every bit of his flesh and blood.

Flesh and blood, tendons, meridians, spirit ocean...

There were many uses for this wood. Apart from helping him refine an invincible body, it could also call down thunder to refine a body of thunder, enabling the cultivator to master all sorts of thunder related arts.

In addition, the wood could also defend against a hundred poisons. One could say that it was impervious to the invasion of all poisons.

"If I refined this wood, I likely wouldn't have unwittingly fallen

victim to that trap last time. The Thundercloud Tree actively filters out some poisons."

Jiang Chen still felt that he reacted too slowly.

If he'd thought of refining this wood earlier, then that matter wouldn't have happened either.

Refining the Thundercloud Tree wasn't something that would be achieved overnight. This was because the wood itself was quite hard and it had to be crushed into a powder first before it could be refined.

With the density of the wood, turning it into powder wasn't something that could be accomplished overnight either.

This was the matter that Jiang Chen focused on over the next three days after completing his challenges.

He finally completed the task after five days, but the process of refining and absorbing the powder would take at least ten days.

Half a month passed like this.

As he felt all parts of his body slowly absorb the essence of the tree, he had a particular feeling of accomplishment.

"The Thundercloud Tree is a treasure alright. No effort needs to

be extended in order to absorb regular spirit medicines, but it's such an arduous task to absorb the essence of this tree. It's a good thing that perseverance is rewarded. Now that I've absorbed the tree's essence, I'll have more confidence in refining the golden body of demons and gods."

Jiang Chen was also quite excited.

As he sensed the changes in his body that were brought about by the Thundercloud Tree, he too felt quite a sense of accomplishment.

The memories of his past life had still brought him many benefits.

Looking at the changes to his body and the trump cards he now held, how many sect disciples could also boast of the same, much less the secular cultivators?

If it hadn't been for the memories of his past life, most of these would've been destined to have no relationship with Jiang Chen.

He wouldn't have an understanding of the ancient beast language without the memories of his previous life, and he wouldn't have been able to tame the Goldbiter Rat King. He would've naturally missed out on the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice.

He also wouldn't have recognized the Thundercloud Tree without the memories and he naturally wouldn't have obtained it.

He likewise wouldn't have been able to answer the Lord of Golden Seal, and he would've been pounded to death on the tenth level, to say nothing of refining the magnetic golden mountain instead.

Without the Lotus, he surely would've fallen into the disaster that was the Fire Ravens setting fire to a hundred li. He never would've obtained the cores and bodily treasures of the Fire Raven tribe and Redscaled Firelizard.

At the heart of it all, none of that could've been accomplished by an ordinary cultivator. The memories of his past life were what all of it was based on.

As time went on, the days passed one by one. His body also became stronger after absorbing the Thundercloud Tree.

When the end of the three months were nigh, he'd also just about thoroughly completed refining his flesh and blood at the second level of the 'Nine Transformations of Demons and Gods'.

In this regard, his golden body of demons and gods had reached a small milestone.

The critical thing was that after absorbing the Thundercloud Tree, his physical body had gained an additional layer of defense, and he'd had an additional layer of protection when coming face to face with thunder attribute geniuses in the future.

Jiang Chen moved closer and closer to the sky quadrant as time passed.

He couldn't wait to take his measure of the so-called premier geniuses in the sky quadrant.

At the end of the three months, he'd become the champion of the earth quadrant with a flawless record with no doubts at all.

.....

A young girl with a cool bearing received a message glyph, somewhere in the sky quadrant. She read it briefly as her brows lifted slightly, revealing a trace of stern intent. "Jiang Chen? Secular genius? Coming to the sky quadrant? What gives that dumb animal the right to make it all the way to the sky quadrant?"

This girl was the genius subjected to the most attention amongst the younger generation in the Purple Sun Sect — Long Juxue!

Chapter 361: The Three Geniuses Of The Shuiyue Faction

The sky quadrant was without a doubt the most mysterious sector amongst the four quadrants.

There were but a hundred candidates here. and none here were just to fill the quota. Not a single candidate was under fifth level spirit realm.

Even Long Juxue, who'd only entered the sect two years ago, was fifth level of the spirit realm after half a year of cultivation, and showing signs of breaking into the sixth level.

The azure phoenix constitution made her momentum as domineering as though she were splitting bamboo. No matter what she learned or practiced, it all came to her with less effort than any other genius.

This strong innate constitution caused others to both envy and admire her, and there was nothing else that they could do.

An innate constitution was something that occurred once in a thousand years in a place like the sixteen kingdoms.

Even the four forefathers didn't boast of this characteristic.

Long Juxue had gained much in this half year. Not only had her

cultivation increased, but so had her confidence greatly spiked as well.

She was no longer the timid and cautious Long Juxue who'd just entered the sect. She no longer needed to purposefully fawn on a senior brother or match her words to someone's expression.

It was now other people's turn to watch hers, be mindful and purposefully kiss up to her.

Long Juxue quite liked this feeling. She enjoyed lording over others, watching them fret and intentionally restrain themselves to appease her.

She'd enjoyed the feeling of the various noble sons idolizing her in the Eastern Kingdom.

When she'd first entered the sect, she'd been a bit self conscious because she'd spent a long time in the mundane world. She hadn't dared act as she usually would, and she'd deliberately sucked up to several senior brothers just so she wouldn't be suppressed.

But now, the potential of her innate constitution was on full display and her position within the sect was rising sharply as a result.

She had once again regained the feeling of the stars dancing attendance on the moon, just like she'd enjoyed in the mundane kingdoms.

Being fawned on, respected, and feared—these feelings that made one feel like a deity thoroughly restored Long Juxue's confidence.

If one had to say that there were any cracks left in her heart, that would be that enormous embarrassment in the mundane kingdom!

She didn't have much feelings for her family, but the matter with her brother and father was something engraved on her heart.

Therefore, she was always extremely irritated when she thought of Jiang Chen.

She almost couldn't wait to exact her revenge on him, burning his very bones into ashes and then going back to slaughter the rest of his clan in the Eastern Kingdom.

The message glyph had come from her honored master Shuiyue.

Shuiyue had conveyed everything that had happened in the earth quadrant, including her suspicions regarding the identity of the secular genius, and had even exaggerated them a bit as well.

At the same time, she also reminded Long Juxue to not underestimate this candidate no matter what. Long Juxue also had to suppress this candidate in the sky quadrant no matter what, or it would give rise to endless troubles afterwards.

“Is this secular swine really Jiang Chen?” Long Juxue learned of his rise through the message glyph, but she was suspicious whether the secular candidate really was Jiang Chen. Could the honored master be mistaken?

Is Jiang Chen really that strong?

Long Juxue’s impression of Jiang Chen had halted on their battle at the Second Crossing. This fellow had been lucky enough to grasp some methods to tame spirit fowl, which was why my Long family came off worse in the conflict. Does he truly have the potential described here?

Formulaic thinking was like this sometimes.

Long Juxue’s impression of Jiang Chen was too poor, and it had halted at where he’d been in the Eastern Kingdom.

Therefore, she felt that the secular genius likely wasn’t Jiang Chen.

But since her honored master had said so, and she’d even described it so convincingly, even saying that Jiang Chen was possibly the Skylaurel Kingdom Ye Chonglou’s secretly mentored disciple.

Ye Chonglou was the Skylaurel Kingdom’s spirit king protector. When the matter involved him as well, Long Juxue had to place some stock into what was being said no matter how skeptical she

was.

However, she also dismissed it right afterwards. “Hmph, whether he’s Jiang Chen or not, he’s caused my honored master to fall into such dire straits. As her disciple, I will not sit idly by after this. Especially after my honored master has issued warnings to me, indicating she wants me to make a move.”

“It’d be even better if he was Jiang Chen, I can take care of old and new grudges in one fell swoop. If he dares come to the sky quadrant, I’ll make him regret arriving in this world!”

Long Juxue was one who nursed a grudge. When she recalled the ignoble treatment she’d had at Jiang Chen’s hands, her dignity couldn’t absorb the hit and she couldn’t help but feel the urge to go on a rampage.

In another residence in the sky quadrant, a man with exceedingly frosty features sat cross legged, an eerie light dancing in his eyes.

He was slightly lost in thought regarding a message glyph in his hands.

“The honored master was censured in the earth quadrant? She lost her position as the keeper? The source of all these sins is a secular cultivator??”

The fires of rage surged within the young man’s heart. This person was the eldest disciple beneath Master Shuiyue, within the

top five of the Purple Sun Sect's most preeminent disciples.

His name was Ceng Shi.

A head full of long hair was flung wildly back on his shoulders. It was grey on one side and black on the other, parted down the middle and clearly delineated. It looked rather peculiar.

"Sigh..." Ceng Shi was rather depressed upon reading all the messages within the message glyph. "The honored master wishes for me to mentor junior sister Long Juxue well, and listen to her when needed. It looks like my title of the first senior brother is far beneath junior sister Long Juxue in our honored master's heart."

Ceng Shi did indeed feel a bit of a dilemma. On one hand, he revered his honored master as one would a deity. He never dared slack on matters for his master.

It could be said that before Long Juxue had appeared, he had been the benchmark for all the disciples and his master's pride and joy.

Because of the cultivation level and position that his honored master had brought him, in Ceng Shi's heart, his respect for his master had exceeded even that of his birth mother's.

When he learned that someone had plotted against his honored master in the earth quadrant, his first thought was to vent a breath of ill will for his honored master.

However, the words in the second half of the message rather depressed him. He knew that Long Juxue had an innate constitution, but he'd been the first senior brother for so long that he'd grown used to being the boss of all the junior brother and sisters.

Now that he was to suddenly heed to someone else and not be the boss anymore, it would take hims some time getting used to.

"Forget it, since these are the honored master's commands, I cannot disobey them. However, I must strive even harder in the sky quadrant and obtain a good ranking in the final competition. I need to fight my way into the final sixteen!"

Ceng Shi also knew that there would be enormous competition for the final sixteen. Only four would be selected from each sect!

Although he ranked in the top five in the Purple Sun Sect, now that Long Juxue had appeared, he'd undoubtedly gained another strong opponent.

Due to many reasons, Ceng Shi's attitude towards Long Juxue was quite complicated.

"Forget it, let's take a walk to junior sister Long Juxue first." Although Ceng Shi was slightly jealous of Long Juxue, he couldn't defy his master's orders.

The second-ranked disciple beneath Master Shuiyue, Chu Xinghan, had also received a message glyph. His eyebrow raised, “Jiang Chen? The secular young man at the Second Crossing that day?”

Contrary to Ceng Shi, Chu Xinghan was one who had strong opinions. He had the most amount of predetermined views, and was the most capable of the bunch.

If one were to say that Ceng Shi had a sort of oedipus complex towards Master Shuiyue, then in contrast Chu Xinghan only viewed her as someone who’d pointed him down the way of his martial dao.

Honestly speaking, he also knew that his place in his honored master’s heart didn’t measure up to senior brother Ceng Shi, and was even far beneath junior sister Long Juxue.

However, he was broad-minded and and didn’t feel the slightest bit unhappy or that there was something unusual about it.

“If that secular genius really is Jiang Chen, then he truly is junior sister Long Juxue’s fated rival.” Chu Xinghan also quietly left his residence thinking of this as he made his way to Long Juxue’s residence.

Ceng Shi and Chu Xinghan arrived at almost the same time at Long Juxue’s residence.

“Senior brothers, you’ve arrived.” Long Juxue nodded when she saw the two. “Have a seat in the courtyard.”

Chu Xinghan’s deep eyes looked at Long Juxue as he sighed in his heart, “This little junior sister has grown into her own in the end. She’s no longer the small girl who only knew how to play little schemes at the Second Crossing. However, her personality is without morals. I truly cannot tell if it’s a good thing or not to be pupils of the same master as her.”

Chu Xinghan’s personality was quite calm, and he had his own unique sense of judgment for various matters and people.

From Long Juxue’s actions, he could tell that this woman wasn’t the sort to value relationships and loyalty. He’d been the one who’d saved her in the ordinary world that day, but she’d only sought to flatter senior brother Ceng Shi after entering the sect, and he’d never seen her thank him, Chu Xinghan.

And now, she wasn’t even as respectful towards senior brother Ceng Shi anymore. The atmosphere of a talk between equals had replaced it, and even a sense of superiority creeped in.

To put things bluntly, her wings had filled out and she didn’t need to kiss up to anyone.

“Senior brothers, I trust you’ve also received the honored master’s message glyph explaining the particulars of the situation. This secular freak has caused our honored master to lose all face in front of her peers. As disciples, it will not do if we cannot take on

some of our master's burdens for her."

Logically speaking, Ceng Shi was the senior brother here and he should've been the first to speak.

However, Long Juxue was obviously already viewing herself as the representative of the Shuiyue faction. She'd spoken with the bearing of a leader without waiting for Ceng Shi to speak.

Chu Xinghan had a distant expression on his face. He didn't respond, and didn't look at Ceng Shi.

Ceng Shi had thought that Long Juxue would make some small talk first and let him, the eldest senior brother, speak first. He hadn't thought that Long Juxue would straight-out view herself as the senior sister.

A bit of displeasure flashed through his brows, but he didn't express it.

"This candidate dared offend our honored master, he's bringing destruction down on himself with his words! Junior sister, I've heard that he's a fated rival in your life. If you find yourself in any difficult straits, Xinghan and I will absolutely not sit idly by." Ceng Shi bit off his words angrily.

"Fated rival?" Long Juxue felt as disgusted as if she'd eaten a fly when she heard these two words. "That title is too much. He's just a mere ant and unworthy of being a rival. If it really is him, I'll

make him regret being born in this world!”

Ceng Shi smiled faintly, “Your silly senior brother made a mistake. Xinghan, you once exchanged blows with this candidate. What do you make of him?”

Chu Xinghan could make out the subtle clashes between Ceng Shi and Long Juxue in their words. He didn’t want to get involved. He answered faintly, “He had yet to grow into his own then and thus isn’t worth discussing. If someone hadn’t interfered, I would’ve long since brought him back to the sect for the honored master’s judgement.”

Chapter 362: Two Portions Of Beast Blood

In terms of strength, Chu Xinghan was currently below Ceng Shi. In terms of potential, Chu Xinghan could not match up to Long Juxue.

But in terms of shrewdness and strength of heart, neither of the two measured up to Chu Xinghan. He saw things more clearly than even Master Shuiyue.

Senior brother Ceng Shi and junior sister Long Juxue was destined to be unable to coexist together.

His honored master had never handled this problem well.

However, Chu Xinghan was a smart person. He naturally wouldn't give Master Shuiyue any pointers for he knew her well, and offering her any suggestions would be asking for trouble.

His honored master might even think that he was purposely running his mouth out of jealousy of those two people.

Therefore, the wisest decision was to avoid being involved, refrain from speaking too much and stay out of this matter entirely.

Jiang Chen? Chu Xinghan wasn't interested. He was different from Ceng Shi. Although he respected Master Shuiyue, he didn't respect her to the point of being willing to die for her.

Since Long Juxue and Ceng Shi were that enthusiastic, there was no reason for him to become involved. At any rate, he wasn't as strong as either of them, so they could go have their fun.

Chu Xinghan was well aware that Long Juxue was not a peer that he could become friends with. She certainly wasn't the least bit grateful towards him for saving her in the Eastern Kingdom.

Who knew, she might even resent him. After all, he had the chance to kill Jiang Chen back then but had not taken it, opting to bring Jiang Chen back to the sect for his master's judgement instead.

Chu Xinghan had rather admired Jiang Chen then, and hadn't wanted to kill a genius for no reason other than Long Juxue.

But now it looked like his actions then had likely already caused Long Juxue's to hold a private grudge against him, particularly since she'd been quite bedraggled in that match, even making a fool of herself.

He was one of the three who had seen her in those laughable circumstances. There had also been Yu Jie and Xu Zhen. And now, both of them were dead.

A proud person like Long Juxue would definitely be unwilling for others to remember her embarrassment. Therefore, it was likely that not only was she not grateful that Chu Xinghan had saved her life, but she actually bore him a death wish.

People’s hearts were hard to predict.

Chu Xinghan’s observation of Long Juxue was that she was the sort to employ all sorts of methods in order to reach her goal.

Whoever who was at odds with her was her stumbling block.

Therefore, he knew full well that his wisest decision was to not become embroiled in all this.

His master’s favour was important but Master Shiuyue’s care of Chu Xinghan had not reached the point that he must sacrifice his own life in response.

There was a scale in Chu Xinghan’s heart, and he knew what position he occupied in his master’s heart.

Ceng Shi chuckled upon hearing Chu Xinghan’s words. “This means that someone is supporting Jiang Chen. However, no matter who this supporter is, everything is but a fleeting cloud in the face of our junior sister’s innate constitution. Junior sister, the third cycle is about to be begin. I’m going to head back now. Let’s stay in touch if anything happens.”

Long Juxue’s forehead creased slightly. She’d invited the two here to listen to any plans they had or to invite them to offer plans of their own.

Chu Xinghan stood up and smiled, “Since the eldest senior brother has said thus, then I will be taking my leave as well. Junior sister, you shouldn’t think too much about this. Even if that Jiang Chen has three heads and six arms, he’s destined to be a mere stepping stone in the path of your rise!”

Words of goodwill were free, so it didn’t cost him anything to voice them.

Long Juxue was dejected, but maintained a noncommittal expression as she watched her two senior brothers walk out of her yard and vanish into the distance.

“Hmph, it looks like both of them are unwilling to submit to me. Ceng Shi, I know you don’t accept me because you feel that I’ve stolen your status as the eldest senior brother. If you possess enough self awareness, you will submit to me. If not, don’t blame me for not valuing us our relationship as fellow disciples if you force me to action!”

Long Juxue had never been a kind person. Although Ceng Shi hadn’t had the slightest bit of malevolent intention just now, she could hear his obvious intentions in the way he spoke.

What bloody fated rival or talk of a backer.

This all had obvious connotations to it.

……

It was Jiang Chen's last day in the earth quadrant.

The scores of the earth quadrant had been announced a lot earlier. Jiang Chen was the champion without any doubt.

However, neither Liu Wencai nor Fatty Lu had made it into the top ten and received the right to move up to the sky quadrant.

Liu Wencai however, was quite satisfied. Before he arrived in the earth quadrant, he had been worried about the prospect of demotion, feeling quite sure that he'd be sent back to the spirit quadrant.

However, thanks to his friendship with Jiang Chen, his strength had suddenly increased over these three months. His scores had placed him in the top 100 out of the five hundred earth quadrant candidates.

Fatty Lu had also improved a hundred places over the last cycle. He'd improved from three hundred to a ranking in the two hundreds.

Their rates of improvement had all been exceedingly swift.

"Ai, human connections are fleeting. Brother Boulder, I truly don't wish to be parted from you just like this." A trace of sadness marked Liu Wencai's eyes, before he laughed a little self-deprecatingly. "However, Brother Boulder's future will be bright

after going to the sky quadrant. I should be happy for you."

"Come, I raise this toast to Brother Boulder! May your momentum remain just as strong in the sky quadrant. May you obtain the qualification to fight for the final sixteen after making it into the list of sixty-four!"

The second selection would ultimately select sixty-four candidates to take part in a final match and compete for a spot in the final sixteen.

The final sixteen would then become the personal disciples of the four forefathers and learn from the four venerated origin realm cultivators.

This was undoubtedly a dream-like goal for the cultivators of the sixteen kingdoms.

"I too raise a toast to Brother Boulder." Fatty Lu's emotions were also slightly uncertain today as well. Normally, he was different from Liu Wencai who was usually in high spirits and wore his heart on a sleeve. Fatty Lu fancied himself as the calm type.

However, today his calm facade seemed to have been infected by the melancholy of parting. He'd been a bit depressed all day.

Indeed, he'd been in the earth quadrant for so long, but not that many people showed him any respect. The two in front of him counted as his rare friends in the earth quadrant.

Particularly Jiang Chen, Fatty Lu felt greatly indebted towards him.

Jiang Chen's every word and gesture had deeply impacted the fatty's very being, tempering his confidence.

Moreover, this secular genius was different from other sect geniuses. His eyes were not at the top of his head, and he did not form connections based on the other's potential, background, or looks.

He used a true heart of sincerity to make friends.

A true heart for a true heart. Only friends like these would be true bosom friends.

Although Fatty Lu had his street-smartness and his craftiness, that was just a way of survival that he had developed out of resignation. It did not mean that he was really a heartless fellow.

A heart was made of flesh. Jiang Chen truly had brought no small amount of change to Fatty Lu and Lu Wencai during this time.

He'd changed their strength, their mental state and their destinies.

Jiang Chen also felt similarly as he looked at the two.

Although he had lived two lifetimes, his heart of devotion had never changed. He had never been the sort to abstain from human feelings.

He had always been especially generous towards friends.

“You two count as friends I’ve made in the earth quadrant. You value me and treat me as a big brother. Since I’m a big brother, I should act like one. I’m going to the sky quadrant tomorrow, but I should give you guys something.”

Gifts?

Liu Wencai and Fatty Lu started. They hadn’t thought about this at all.

In their eyes, to be able to spend time with Brother Boulder everyday, listen to his teachings and spar with him was the greatest gift of all.

He still wanted to give them gifts?

When it came to gifts, they were sect disciples after all and theoretically had more resources than secular cultivators. If one were to give presents, they were the ones who should be doling them out.

Jiang Chen made a grasping motion with his right hand and took out two flasks the size of fists.

“These two flasks of beast blood may be of some use to you. Both of you are from the Myriad Spirit Sect and usually rely on beast blood to cultivate, right? Particularly you, Wencai, I feel that your foundational potential is quite extraordinary and seems yet untapped. There should be bigger secrets in your body, but I’m not quite sure at the moment. Take these two flasks and refine them. Remember, you must refine them yourselves and can’t gift them to anyone else. Don’t ask what beast they came from or what rank it was. Just remember that this blood is exceedingly precious. If you lose it, you’ll regret it for the rest of your life.”

This blood had been collected from the body of the Redscaled Firelizard. While Jiang Chen had given the flesh and blood to the Goldbiter Rats, he’d also collected quite a bit for himself.

He’d collected dozens of little flasks like these. However, for something as enormous as the Firelizard, the amount in those flasks was less than even one-one thousandth of its blood.

The Firelizard was a saint rank creature that was on par with a human origin realm cultivator.

It was likely hard for even forefather Ninelion of the Myriad Spirit sect to obtain blood from a beast of this level, not to mention the two of them.

Of course, just these two little flasks were insufficient to

thoroughly remake someone.

But even a little bit of this heaven-defying blood was enough to change one's potential. That in itself was astonishing enough.

The slightest hint of a bloodline from a saint rank creature was enough for a cultivator to use for the rest of his life.

When the two saw Jiang Chen warn them like this, they did not dare tarry. The moment they took the flasks and grasped it in their hand, they could immediately feel a strong sense of spirit power, as if it wanted to burrow straight into their bodies.

"What a strong life force!" Fatty Lu could not help but exclaim.

Jiang Chen smiled faintly and thought, how could the blood of a saint rank beast not be strong?

It was then that the two understood this was not ordinary blood, and carefully stowed the flasks away like they were putting away a treasure.

"Remember, don't speak of this matter to anyone, or it might bring destruction upon you."

"Yes, I won't even speak of it in my dreams." Fatty Lu hastened to express.

Liu Wencai nodded lightly, but his attitude had already explained all.

“Wencai, this is the reflections of beast taming that you gave me last time. I took a read and thought it was quite good. I’ve mastered it all now so I’m returning it to you. I’ve also made some additions that may be of use to you. You can peruse them when you’re bored.”

Jiang Chen handed a scroll back over to Liu Wencai.

Chapter 363: Liu Wencai Undergoes A Complete Change

The three of them began to pour wine for each other and started chatting about all topics beneath the heavens. Finally, Fatty Lu asked to be excused when it was past midnight.

He could sense the beast blood and the immense aura emanating through the flask. This made his heart itch, and he couldn't wait to go back earlier and refine it.

Jiang Chen smiled and sent Fatty Lu on his way.

Liu Wencai felt a bit awkward and smiled, "He's always like this, so don't think much of it Brother Boulder. He still has his principles when the situation calls for it and is worthy of a deeper friendship."

Jiang Chen laughed heartily, "This is precisely what's cute about him. Why would I blame him? Come, let's keep drinking."

The two returned to the yard and continued drinking.

When Fatty Lu had been present just now, Jiang Chen had not said anything lest he was someone who easily spilled the beans about his internal thoughts. Now that there was only Liu Wencai left, Jiang Chen said, "Wencai, this beast blood may be ten times more effective for you than it is for fatty. I've sparred with you for a few months and have sensed that there is still untapped power

inside you. There is still potential that hasn't been unlocked. You should refine this as soon as you go back; you'll see unexpected gains from it. You may even be able to make it into the sky quadrant after three months."

"What?" The light of surprise dawned in Liu Wencai's eyes. It was already a legend that he'd made it into the top 100 from a ranking at the bottom of the earth quadrant.

Make it into the sky quadrant?

To be honest, Liu Wencai had never even thought about this. If Jiang Chen had remained within the earth quadrant and they could've sparred every day, then he might've had a bit of confidence in that claim.

But now that Brother Boulder was leaving, Liu Wencai was convinced that his rate of improvement would absolutely not be that swift in the future.

"Remember, don't doubt your potential and don't suspect this flask of beast blood. Right, let me gift you something else that might be able to become a very useful weapon for you."

Jiang Chen took out another item that was as thick as a child's arm. It was ivory in color and gave one a very noble feeling.

"This is a bone of the same beast the blood originates from. If you can request a strong weapons refiner to meld all sorts of divine

patterns and formations into it, its battle strength will certainly be stunning. Even in its natural form right now, six or seven times refined spirit weapons are no match for it."

A spirit weapon was just a spirit weapon in the end.

This bone had been taken from the body of the Redscaled Firelizard. Thus, the durability of a saint rank spirit creature was easy to imagine.

Liu Wencai studiously listened to everything Jiang Chen said. He accepted the spirit bone and toyed with it for a bit, sensing the enormous power within and its natural resonance with him. The strong spirit ripples it emitted created a formidable aura.

"This bone is something else alright." Liu Wencai's eyes lit up with brilliant light. "Brother Boulder, I've discovered that I owe you more and more. If I were a girl, I would've promised myself to you already to repay you for all you've done."

Jiang Chen rolled his eyes, "Oh stop it!"

Liu Wencai chuckled, "Don't be mad, don't be mad. Come, let's drink."

The two of them drank to their heart's content, with Liu Wencai finally taking his leave when the night was about to draw to a close. Jiang Chen walked him out as well and clapped his shoulder, "Remember, study the scroll when you go back."

Liu Wencai found it odd that Jiang Chen was mentioning the scroll again. He nodded subconsciously, “Brother Boulder, I will see you again if fate permits.”

“I hope to see you in the sky quadrant in three months.” Jiang Chen said faintly.

Sky quadrant? A strong sense of confidence took root in Liu Wencai’s heart for the first time.

He bade Jiang Chen farewell and returned to his residence. Liu Wencai was in no hurry to refine the flask of blood and unfurled the scroll first.

“Mm? What’s this?”

Liu Wencai immediately discovered that the contents of this scroll wasn’t what he’d given Jiang Chen.

The scroll was the same, but the contents weren’t what they were before.

“This…” Liu Wencai’s eyes lit up. “These are reflections in the area of spirit beast taming. And! This has to do with refining beast blood, and…”

Liu Wencai was quite shocked when he took a closer look. He

discovered that every sentence was exceedingly profound.

Even the most precious tomes of the Myriad Spirit Sect had content inferior to that inside this one scroll.

“Amazing, truly amazing!”

The more Liu Wencai read, the more he was astonished and wreathed in smiles. He discovered that he’d picked up a treasure! Even if forefather Ninelion had been the one to pick up the scroll and read it, he would likely still be speechlessly astonished.

“Just what kind of perverse existence is Brother Boulder to give me such a precious scroll? Is... is he the reincarnation of an omnipotent god?”

Liu Wencai’s hand was almost shaking in shock and excitement. He put the scroll away carefully in his storage ring.

“I’ll need at least a few decades to digest all the knowledge in this scroll. I need to treasure it well and not let it leak out at all. Otherwise, countless numbers of geniuses within the sect will set their sights on me, and perhaps even the heavyweights of the sect will try to pry it from my hands.”

Liu Wencai knew the value of the item in his hands. If it was claimed by the sect, it would absolutely become the treasure of the sect.

“Brother Boulder isn’t an ordinary person at all. I’m but a passing acquaintance of his and we’ve struck up a friendship, but he’s gifted me with such a treasure. I, Liu Wencai, must do well and not let him down!”

“Brother Boulder, three months! I will make it to the sky quadrant in three months and reconvene with you!” Liu Wencai had a sudden explosion of confidence.

He knew better than anyone that he’d met a man who’d changed his life.

He was also more aware than anyone else that, although Brother Boulder came from the ordinary world, he was destined to soar to the skies. Even the candidates in the sky quadrant might not be able to curb his rise!

Liu Wencai suddenly thought of his initial invitation to Jiang Chen in the mystic quadrant, and that Guo Ren from the Purple Sun Sect had also invited Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen had mocked Guo Ren then that he was a frog at the bottom of a well, seeing only the sixteen kingdom alliance in his eyes and knowing only the four great sects.

It now looked like Brother Boulder had vast aspirations that had long since exceeded the boundaries of the sixteen kingdoms. He was considering problems from a higher vantage point.

“It looks like the four great sects are just Brother Boulder’s springboard. How laughable that Master Shuiyue was such a pathetic little character. With Brother Boulder’s stunning talent, is this something an old woman like her could hold back? I can already predict that in the moment Brother Boulder reveals his true colors, all of the geniuses of the four sects will look dim in comparison!”

“Mm, I must hurry up. Right, Brother Boulder reminded us several times that this blood isn’t ordinary. I trust that it’s no common item either.”

Liu Wencai could use the scroll to deduce that there was much to this flask of beast blood, and that bone than met the eye.

He felt that he’d changed from a poor little kid to a millionaire in the span of a second. He felt quite fulfilled and very excited.

When his thoughts traveled here, Liu Wencai took out the blood and began to refine it.

In the instant that the blood entered his body, however, Liu Wencai seemed to feel something collapse with a roar inside of him, and his entire body started howling like the waters bursting through a dam.

Crack crack crack.

Crisp sounds rang out from all over Liu Wencai’s bones.

And then—

Every single one of his bones, every single drop of blood, every inch of flesh and blood seemed to be smashed into pieces, reassembled, smashed again, and reassembled again.

“What… what’s going on?”

There seemed to have been a vault of energy inside Liu Wencai, and this vault was explosively opened all of a sudden in this moment.

All of his clothes exploded into tatters and fell to the ground. His taut and study muscles were all exposed to the outside air.

At this moment, numerous strange glyphs appeared over his skin. They were as thin as tadpoles, giving off an exceedingly mysterious feeling.

“Ah!!”

Liu Wencai emitted a dull roar reminiscent of a beast. His eyes appeared quite violent due to their bloodshot appearance.

“What… what kind of beast’s blood is this?” The thought flashed through Liu Wencai’s mind.

Refining beasts' blood was an ordinary occurrence for cultivation in the Myriad Spirit Sect. But he'd never bumped into such a happening.

Bam!

Bam!

Bam!

The endless collisions finally slowed down. Liu Wencai laid prone on the ground, utterly exhausted and listless.

"Mm? Wait, the purity of my blood seems to have changed. There's also a difference in my spirit ocean. How is this possible? How could my spirit ocean have become so clean all of a sudden? Where are all the impurities? The impurities within my blood are gone as well!"

This discovery made Liu Wencai spring up to a sitting position.

"How... how is this possible? A flask of beast blood could cast off my old self and completely change me? No, this wasn't a rebirth. It just cleaned the impurities in my body. Right, I felt an enormous power awaken in my body just now. Can it be that the power in my body helped me turn into what is essentially a completely new person?"

"I remember Brother Boulder saying that some potential seemed

to be hidden in my body. Can it be that this blood tapped into my latent potential?" Liu Wencai's mind was a chaotic mess right now. He only knew that his potential wouldn't lose out to those preeminent geniuses in his sect from now on.

Looking at the purity of his spirit ocean, it was practically ethereal!

Liu Wencai was awash in delight though he wasn't able to explain this sudden change either. However, this was without a doubt a wondrous phenomenon. He knew that his potential had suddenly increased three to five times.

The nature of the wildness exuding from his body was also several times more potent than previously. The Myriad Spirit Sect always pursued the untamed beauty. This was needed to tame spirit creatures. In the Myriad Spirit Sect, wildness was an allure and a charisma, the symbol of strength and potential.

The wild nature within Liu Wencai had been perfectly released. There was an explosive presence to him now, a symbol of an extremely strong life force!

Chapter 364: The Rules Of The Sky Quadrant

“Brother Boulder?” Liu Wencai walked excitedly over to Jiang Chen’s residence in anticipation of clearing up his questions, but soon realized that not a single soul was present.

“Left?” Liu Wencai looked dumbly around at the empty yard. He knew that Brother Boulder had likely gone to report to the sky quadrant.

“Thank you, Brother Boulder.”

Even though the person had left, Liu Wencai still bowed deeply and respectfully outside Jiang Chen’s residence.

“I’ll make it to the sky quadrant after three months and continue our brothership!”

An unforeseen surge of confidence rose in Liu Wencai’s heart at that moment.

……

The sky quadrant was exactly as Jiang Chen had thought, a place full of spirit power.

The earth quadrant couldn’t hold a candle to the sky quadrant.

“Welcome to the sky quadrant.” An examiner greeted them enthusiastically.

There were four keepers in the sky quadrant, one from each of the four great sects.

“According to the rules, your rankings will be the last ten in the quadrant. All of your scores will start from zero in this quadrant.”

Everything was starting from zero?

Jiang Chen started. Did this need to be announced? It was a new cycle, of course everything was starting from scratch.

“Heh heh, judging from your expressions, you must feel it odd that I’m saying this. Don’t think it’s strange; this is the sky quadrant, and thus different from all the others. The scores for each cycle are cumulative here, and every candidate that ascends to the sky quadrant starts off with zero.”

“Master examiner, I spent my first cycle in the sky quadrant and had obtained a score before. I fell to the earth quadrant but performed well and came back again. Can I not regain the score I had before?”

There were many candidates like this one.

They'd been the bottom ten in the first cycle and had been demoted to the earth quadrant. Due to superior performance in the earth quadrant in the second cycle, they'd been promoted again.

Now that they were back, they naturally wanted to regain their old scores.

The examiner smiled faintly, "My apologies, your scores are zeroed when you leave the sky quadrant. When you come back, you will start off as a newcomer and start from scratch."

The candidates' faces immediately changed. "This... this isn't fair! Then they who've been here for the past two cycles will have much higher scores! We're starting from scratch, then doesn't that mean we're only going through the motions for the selection?! How can we compete with them?!"

"Going through the motions?" The examiner laughed coldly. "If you have no confidence in yourself, then what meaning is there in you participating in the selection? This selection is meant for geniuses, and a true genius would be able to fight against disadvantageous conditions. What need do we have for mediocrity? If you truly have talent and potential, why would you have been demoted from the sky quadrant to the earth quadrant? Did we purposefully send you away?"

The candidates were speechless.

Jiang Chen had remained silent off on the side. Although the rules seemed a bit ridiculous, he wasn't of a mind to bring

contempt upon himself and protest something.

The rules had been set by others. To question their rules was to invite ridicule and scorn.

“Alright, old rules it is. Every single person who arrives must first understand the rules of the quadrant. The sky quadrant is completely different from the other quadrants. The tests that you need to undertake here aren’t just limited to matches in the rings.”

“Come and pick up your participant tokens as well as a set of the rules. Go carefully study them!”

It was apparent that even those candidates who had returned to the sky quadrant were treated like newcomers upon their return, with redefined participant numbers.

There were a hundred in total in the sky quadrant, so the newcomers naturally started at number 91.

Jiang Chen had been the champion, so his number was 991.

He received his token and a copy of the rules.

“Alright, just as usual, there won’t be any exams on the first day. The third cycle will officially begin tomorrow.”

“Remember, the sky quadrant only welcomes true geniuses, not

trash who only knows how to complain and not work hard. Read the rules well. Even though you're latecomers, you may not necessarily lose. Alright, dismissed!"

Jiang Chen didn't linger after he finished listening to the examiner. He headed directly for his residence.

The sky quadrant was at least five times larger than the earth quadrant. Each candidate had their own residence and yard. All was extremely quiet and no one had any fear of being disturbed.

Jiang Chen arrived at residence 91 and looked at the quiet residence, murmuring to himself. "This will be my hideout for the next three months."

He pushed open the door and as per his habits, began a thorough inspection. After making three or four circles around and encountering no accidents, he finally sat down leisurely on a chair in the yard and began to read the rules of the cycle.

The sky quadrant was indeed much different than all the others.

It seemed to deliberately want to protect the various geniuses, foregoing the endless rounds of battles between candidates.

This quadrant seemed to focus more on the candidates' cultivation.

One's scores was dependent on the acquisition of points in the

sky quadrant, and there were two major ways to gain points.

There was a foundational way to win points and an advanced way.

The foundational way was the same for everyone. It was divided into four areas, and each area had five exams for a total of 20 exams.

Each exam was worth five points, for a total of 100.

An appropriate number of points would be awarded based on the number of foundational exams completed. Points would not be deducted if exams were left unfinished.

There were a lot of ways to win points in the advanced method.

Challenging other candidates, for example.

In order to challenge other candidates here, you needed to bet 20 points. If you won, you would regain your 20, and the opponent's 20. Accordingly, the same if your opponent triumphs, your loss would forfeit your 20 point bet to the opponent.

The rules stated that every candidate could issue one challenge a day, with their opponents selected at random.

The option to accumulate points through battle was something

that those who excelled in battling loved. If they selected someone who was roughly on par with themselves, then they could even designate their own bets.

What did that entail? That meant under the condition of mutual agreement, they could increase the number of points being bet.

The rules set the original bet at 20 points, but if both sides agreed, one could increase that up to 50, 100, or even all the points a candidate currently had.

But of course, both sides had to agree to this.

Moreover, this aspect was strictly regulated. If it was discovered that someone was purposefully taking it easy, cheating, or giving his points to someone of his sect, then both parties' points would be reduced to zero.

Therefore, although bet designation had occurred in the first two cycles, the bets hadn't been particularly large. No one had dared to bet all their points at once either.

After all, the qualification to be in the sky quadrant was one that was hard to come by. No one wanted to lose all their points because of a gambler's mentality.

Everyone wanted to make it onto the list of 64 and then the final 16 in the sky quadrant.

No one would purposefully lose their points for someone of the same sect.

In the world of cultivation, sacrificing oneself to elevate another of the same sect was something that happened, but just not in this manner.

Apart from challenging others, there were still many ways to earn points.

Conducting various missions, for example.

There were five mission levels.

A first level mission would result in 10 points if completed.

A second level mission would result in 20 points if completed.

A third level mission would result in 40 points if completed.

A fourth level mission would result in 100 points if completed.

Finally, a fifth level mission would result in 200 points if completed.

Regardless of what level mission it was, a candidate had to have sufficient points in abeyance. This was because if the mission

wasn’t completed, the value of the mission was deducted from the candidate’s points.

If you wanted to apply for a fifth level mission, you would have to have two hundred points in reserve. If you had less than two hundred points, then you didn’t have the right to apply for the mission.

According to the rules, there was only one chance a day to apply for a mission. If one failed, one was barred from applying for a mission within the next five days, and had to wait until the sixth to apply again.

Apart from these regular missions, some special ones were occasionally released as well. The points available from these special ones were exceeding high.

However, there was only one such mission a month.

Whenever this special mission appeared, it would stir all the geniuses into a frenzy.

This was because the number of points available was extremely high, and points wouldn’t be docked if candidates failed. However, what made these missions special was that there was a degree of danger to them.

This mostly summed up the rules. Overall speaking, there were many ways to obtain points apart from the 100 points from the

foundation missions each month.

Jiang Chen read the rules over several times and formulated a general plan of attack. It looked like there was a possibility for large gaps between candidate points.

And it wasn't like there weren't necessarily no chances for newcomers.

This was because apart from the foundation missions, all other chances to earn points had to be prefaced with a candidate betting their own. Some could make it big, some could suffer losses.

After all, there would be successes and failures a-plenty with the missions.

If a candidate was a bit more aggressive and failed a few more times than others, it was easy for him to end up with nothing as his points dropped.

If newcomers maintained a steady pace, there weren't necessarily no chances to find their footing.

"The sky quadrant exams are truly complicated. I don't have a single point right now, so it looks like I need to start from the foundation points. There are 20 missions in total, so I have to get all 100 points from them. When I gain these 100, then I'll take on some more missions and slowly accumulate my points. I have no capital now as I have no points, so I can't be too aggressive.

Otherwise, if I lose even my foundation points, I'll have no chance to make a comeback."

Jiang Chen was well aware that as a newcomer, he had nothing to play with. If he lost even his foundation points, then he'd be demoted.

There were only 100 foundation points to be had in the three month cycle. There would be no more if he lost them all.

Therefore, he had to be conservative in earning his points in the beginning, without the luxury to take risks.

If he advanced brashly and failed several times in a row, he'd only be able to stay on the sidelines and watch others have fun as he awaited demotion at the end of the three months.

Chapter 365: Meeting Long Juxue Again

By the time Jiang Chen had thoroughly digested the rules, he'd also formed a basic plan of attack.

"I must seek to obtain all of the hundred foundation points. I can also appropriately issue some challenges. The most steady way of going about things is to apply for the regular missions. A first level mission results in ten points, and they can be run everyday. As for the special missions, although they award a lot of points and have no risk of losing points, they only come around at most once a month. They're something I can only hope to run into."

"I've only just started; I must seek to do things steadily, and not blunder about with brute force."

Jiang Chen set down a plan for himself. He was starting from scratch with no foundation, so taking things slowly but surely was the way forward.

"Having completed two cycles already, the candidates in the sky quadrant must've amassed quite a few points already. My starting point is already far behind these fellows. It's good thing that only half a year has passed out of the three years. I still have two and a half years to catch up. Of course, the caveat being that I'm not eliminated in that time. If I lack sufficient points and rank in the bottom ten after three months, then I'll be sent back to the earth quadrant with dust on my face."

Jiang Chen would never let this happen.

“I wonder how many points those premier candidates have received now?” Jiang Chen had yet to participate in the trials of the sky quadrant, and so couldn’t come up with an accurate estimate.

“Although I temporarily can’t calculate it, those at the top will likely have more than 1,000 points.”

After all, six months, 180 days. Even if one completed one mission a day, that would result in 1,800 points.

That didn’t even include the 200 foundation points each month.

Of course, it wasn’t like points would only increase. Once a candidate failed a mission, their points would be docked and they would be forbidden from applying for missions for the next five days. This would also affect their points as well.

Jiang Chen could see that the rules of the sky quadrant were focused on cultivating the candidates, allowing them to fully develop in these three years.

Therefore, there were less clashes between the candidates when compared to the other quadrants. This was to avoid the premier geniuses exchanging blows too early and thus leading to the early loss of genius talent.

When premier geniuses crossed hands, the interchange may very

well be fatal.

Therefore, there were a lot fewer trials that involved combat.

Of course, this wasn't to say that there were none at all. Successfully challenging other candidates would result in 20 points. This was a popular way to earn points for those confident in their fighting ability.

There was also the need for the occasional match in order to confirm how the candidates were developing.

These kinds of challenges usually wouldn't be to the death, but they were just as ferocious as those in the other quadrants.

Jiang Chen knew that this was the intention of the four sects.

After all, in the end they would select the strongest 64 for the final selection. Then, the candidates would have ample opportunity to display their techniques and determine who was truly the most superior.

The final rounds three years later was the true stage for the geniuses to display their talents. The three years in the interim were a period of time for them to cultivate, improve, and ascend higher.

All sorts of superior conditions were available in the sky quadrant.

In addition, all of the sect geniuses were gathered here. Everyone was existing within a nervous, competitive bubble. They were each other's best motivation. After all, it was hard for one not to improve when they felt the stress of competition.

Rates of improvement were fast with opponents and motivation.

After familiarizing himself with the rules, Jiang Chen's first plan of attack was to gain all one hundred foundation points.

These foundation points would form the capital he needed to expand into other areas.

In addition, he was a newbie at the moment, and could only play around in the newcomer area. Even when he earned 100 points, he wouldn't be able to apply immediately for the fifth level missions.

"Forget it. I should walk around and take a look at things since I've just arrived in the sky quadrant. I should observe the competition." Jiang Chen hadn't bothered to scout out his competition in the earth and mystic quadrants.

Thanks to his advantages in those quadrants, he was able to obtain an overwhelming victory without having to understand his opponents.

However, the sky quadrant was different. He was dealing with the elites amongst the elites here!

Here, none of his opponents could be underestimated. The most critical thing was that these opponents had already completed two cycles, and their knowledge of the environment and rules would be infinitely stronger than any newcomer.

The sky quadrant was also similar to other quadrants, with a lot of off limit areas.

If a candidate barged into the taboo areas, they would be attacked by all sorts of restrictions and formations.

Apart from the residences, the main square was the only other place which candidates could access. The foundation missions, mission announcement areas, and the rings for matches could all be found here.

As for the residences, apart from the walkways, other candidates' residences were all private property. Jiang Chen wouldn't be able to enter without the owner's permission.

He walked around for a bit but noticed that no one was doing the same.

"It looks like I was too naive. Time is money. No one would spend valuable time walking around outside when they could be cultivating."

Jiang Chen shook his head at himself. Thinking carefully about

things, he had no friends in the sky quadrant at all. If he had to speak of any old acquaintances, then it was likely just down to the usual suspects.

There was Long Juxue, Chu Xinghan, and Luo Huang from the Purple Sun Sect, who'd attacked Eastern Gouyu and Tian Shao on the outskirts of the Skylaurel Kingdom that day. Of course, there were also Iron Dazhi and Zhou Yi of the Precious Tree Sect.

They were all his rivals.

When Jiang Chen's thoughts wandered their way, he couldn't help but smile ruefully. He had yet to start up in the sky quadrant, but already had five strong enemies.

He became bored after walking around for a while and returned to his residence.

When he felt that all the other candidates were cultivating behind closed doors, he also felt a sense of pressure on him.

"I may be the only fourth level spirit realm in the sky quadrant?" Jiang Chen laughed self deprecatingly as a sense of urgency grew in his heart.

Jiang Chen had broken through to the fourth level during the initial selection. He'd spent half a year in the mystic and earth quadrants, and had worked quite hard during this time as well, but his focus had been on training the "Nine Transformations of

Demons and Gods". That had occupied a lot of his time.

However, his spirit ocean had continuously absorbed spirit power and he'd spent much time everyday solidifying his cultivation. He'd also had the practical experience from the matches in the two quadrants and his daily spars with Liu Wencai.

Real knowledge came from actual battle experience, and Jiang Chen's level of cultivation had been rising steadily as well.

Although he had yet to break through to the fifth level spirit realm, only a thin veil separated him from that step. He would be able to break through at any time.

"With such a superior environment in the sky quadrant, perhaps I can try to breakthrough. Perhaps I'll receive some inspiration one day during these three months and enter the fifth level."

More accurately speaking, the fifth level was the middle of the earth spirit realm.

To go from fourth level to fifth level actually required a period of accumulation.

However, even though there was but a line between the two levels, the difference was still great.

There were very few fifth level spirit realm candidates in the earth quadrant, the majority were fourth level.

But in the sky quadrant, apart from himself, Jiang Chen could find no other fourth level spirit realm.

“Breaking through to the fifth level spirit realm will happen when conditions are ripe. I lack that final step right now, that juncture for breakthrough. Perhaps it’s a moment of enlightenment, or perhaps a match. Or perhaps that inspiration will come when I turn around carelessly one day.”

Jiang Chen’s comprehension of cultivation was quite profound. He knew that this kind of opportunity was something only hoped for and couldn’t be counted on. There was no need to forcefully make it happen. The more he tried, the further away his goal might travel.

The more he kept a calm mindset, the stronger his strength of heart was, the more likely he’d be able to break through when the time arrived.

This was how Jiang Chen spent his first day and night in a new environment. The next day, he presented himself at the main square before the time to assemble had arrived.

The square wasn’t particularly crowded even after a hundred candidates had gathered here. They even appeared rather few in this enormous quadrant.

Even though their numbers were few, Jiang Chen had been able to sense the fervent atmosphere in the sky quadrant as soon as he’d

set foot inside. The enormous competitive spirit burned white-hot in the square.

Jiang Chen particularly stood out with his mask and unique uniform.

Every candidate knew who he was when they saw his outfit.

The dual champion of the mystic and earth quadrants. He'd swept the matches with several Purple Sun Sect geniuses with his power alone, and had pulled Master Shuiyue off her pedestal in the end as well.

A genius that had bewitched the earth quadrant was nothing in the eyes of the sky quadrant candidates.

However, a genius that even an examiner had needed to cheat in order to suppress, was rather shocking.

Master Shuiyue was exceedingly proud, but she'd even gone to the lengths of employing despicable methods. What did this mean? This meant that Master Shuiyue was wary of this candidate.

Jiang Chen could feel all sorts of complicated gazes sweep all over him.

However, he ignored all of these looks.

Suddenly, he felt a cold gaze pierce at him from the left.

He suddenly had the feeling of having a dangerous animal fix its sights on him.

“Long Juxue?” Jiang Chen’s heart pounded for a second. Although he didn’t turn his head to look, that gaze was familiar and something he’d never forget.

Long Juxue had left with this sort of gaze that day at the Second Crossing.

“No, why would this woman stare at me with such hatred? Logically speaking, as a secular cultivator, I wouldn’t attract her interest even though I’ve made it into the sky quadrant. Why is it that she looks at me alone with such hatred? Can it be... she already knows my true identity?”

Jiang Chen looked back with neither a humbling nor an arrogant gaze when his thoughts reached here!

Chapter 366: Obtaining Points

They'd already finished an invisible exchange of blows in the instant their eyes met.

The face-off between rivals!

Their hearts were full of understanding in this moment.

Long Juxue was convinced that this secular candidate was Jiang Chen.

Likewise, Jiang Chen was certain that Long Juxue had already identified him.

Long Juxue's killing intent surged, whereas Jiang Chen remained coolly composed.

The clash between rivals was over in a flash, but a victor wasn't clear. Tidal waves of emotions grew in their hearts.

Long Juxue was surprised, "Just what kind of lucky occurrences did this dumb animal run into? My eyes had encompassed the formless aura of the azure phoenix, but it wasn't enough to shake his dao heart at all. This dumb animal has such strong strength of heart?"

Jiang Chen was also reflecting, "This scorpion hearted woman

seems to be quite treasured in the Purple Sun Sect. It's only been a three short years, but she's already at the peak of the earth spirit realm. This rate of improvement is faster than mine!"

Although Jiang Chen was surprised, he knew this was to be expected. The only advantage he had against Long Juxue was the experiences of his past life.

Long Juxue's advantages were likewise obvious. An innate constitution gave her an enormous head start. Such a constitution would be considered a decent talent no matter what plane she was in.

Her second advantage was resources. Judging from her posture, she was likely the most valued out of the younger generation in the entirety of the Purple Sun Sect. All sorts of resources and items would be earmarked for her. It was likely that all the entire senior executives would come together and tailor a cultivation plan for her.

With such treatment, it would be difficult for Long Juxue's strength to not suddenly improve in leaps and bounds.

"I wouldn't have known had I not taken a look. I'd thought that this woman's cultivation would be at a similar level to mine. Who would've thought that the Purple Sun Sect would be willing to go to such depths and spend so many resources on her? This was absolutely an advantage born of a pile of resources. Her six months in the sky quadrant are also an advantage that I cannot measure up to either. It looks like I need to hasten my footsteps to catch up to her."

Jiang Chen felt an even stronger sense of urgency now that he'd bumped into Long Juxue again and seen her true level of cultivation.

He cleared his mind and stood within the crowd, listening to the examiner's speech.

"The foundation exams are divided into four areas. They are: martial dao, strength of heart, pills, and a combination of them all. Each area has five subjects, and each subject is worth five points. Passing one subject earns you five points, failing doesn't lose you any."

"Alright, the exams begin now."

The main focus of the selection was placed in the sky quadrant. Therefore, there were more examiners than candidates.

There were one hundred candidates in this quadrant, but three to four hundred examiners dancing attendance on them.

Along with the more particular nature of the sky quadrant exams, there was no need for candidates to take turns. Everyone could undergo the foundation exams at the same time.

"It looks like the candidates of the sky quadrant are truly valued. Each candidate can undergo the exams as soon as they arrive and don't need to waste time in pointless waiting."

Jiang Chen felt kindly disposed towards the exams of the sky quadrant.

Martial dao, strength of heart, pills, and a combination of them all.

Jiang Chen gained a thorough understanding of the cultivation direction of the four sects after looking at the exams.

They were absolutely raising strong seeds for the origin realm, and it seemed, with a strong sense of urgency.

Strength of heart—ordinary cultivation wouldn't emphasize this.

However, if one's goals were set on the origin realm, then strength of heart was particularly important.

There wasn't much apparent use for it in the spirit realm because it was both difficult to train, and lacked training methods. Thus, most cultivators weren't willing to spend an inordinate amount of time on training their strength of heart. They would rather spent it forging their spirit ocean or honing their techniques.

A venerated origin realm cultivator must have a strong strength of heart, a mastery of martial dao, and holistic development in all directions.

Otherwise, a misstep in any of these areas could become a limitation.

There was an all-inclusive range of topics within the four subject areas, including refining weapons, the way of glyphs, taming beasts, formations, mechanisms...

Martial dao seemed simple, but the knowledge held within was as deep as the fathomless sea, without border or boundary.

However, this kind of setting was absolutely good news to Jiang Chen.

His cultivation level in the sky quadrant ranked amongst the last, but in terms of knowledge, there was truly no one who was his superior in this quadrant.

It wasn't his fault that his cultivation level was low, his start was simply far behind. All of these sect geniuses had been born with golden spoons in their mouths and had received all kinds of training from their sects since birth.

A difference in cultivation level could be narrowed through hard work in the future. Now that he'd reached the sky quadrant, Jiang Chen was as if a dragon returning to the seas and soaring through the heavens.

Jiang Chen decided to participate in the foundation exams first. He wanted to understand first just how difficult the exams in the

area of martial dao were.

They were indeed difficult.

However, even though they were challenging, they were aimed at fifth level spirit realm cultivators. With Jiang Chen's cultivation, it wasn't too hard for him to complete these exams.

He quickly completed two of them. They were actually quite similar to the ones in the first selection. One of them was against a golem, and the other against a fifth level spirit rank beast.

That didn't pose too much of a problem for Jiang Chen.

The third and fourth exams had to do with martial dao theory. It was even harder to stump Jiang Chen in this regard.

However, he didn't display an extraordinary performance, but strode steadily forward and completed them one by one.

This made the examiners of the sky quadrant quickly revise their opinion of him.

This secular candidate was indeed uncommon, no wonder he'd been able to pull Master Shuiyue down.

The last exam was of even greater difficulty, as it involved an examiner personally testing him.

Of course, the examiner would only exert the strength of the sixth level spirit realm.

The candidate would pass if he held out for fifteen minutes.

Sixth level spirit realm was already a very decent level of existence in the sky quadrant. There were a hundred within the quadrant, and only a fifth of those had reached this level.

Therefore, many candidates were unable to pass this exam when they attempted it.

The examiner smiled faintly in the ring, “Are you ready?”

Jiang Chen stood coolly in the ring and nodded, “Please grant your instruction.”

When the examiner saw that Jiang Chen’s demeanor was steady without the slightest bit of fear, his opinion of this young man immediately soared.

“Watch yourself!”

The examiner didn’t deploy any fancy moves, simply unleashing a punch as he strode forward. However, this punch embodied within the martial dao logic of distilling the complex down to the simple.

This punch seemed simple, but was much more frightening than the flourishes or fancy footwork of other techniques.

Jiang Chen felt this punch instantly seal off the area, giving him the feeling “I’d be unable to shake off this punch no matter where I went.”

“Flowers bloom and fade, spring is ever reborn!”

Jiang Chen didn’t dodge as he punched out with both fists, deploying the mysteries of the Divine Aeons Fist to the maximum.

The blow that encompassed the mysteries of the yin and the yang formed a boxing intent like taiji, giving rise to its own world and moving against the current as it met the boxing aura coming from the other side.

Bam!

The two auras crashed into each other, making the dust fly through the sky as spirit aura rippled outward.

“Again!”

The impact awoke Jiang Chen’s battle intent, and boundless martial dao inspiration sprang out, akin to a carp leaping over a river crossing.

There were nine cycles of blooming and wilting in the “Divine Aeons Fist”. With the fusion of the “Obscure Seal of Life and Death” into the boxing technique as well, Jiang Chen had an unexpected level of combat ability.

Even though he was faced with the sixth level spirit realm in a test, Jiang Chen was utterly fearless, completely engrossed in his mindset of seeking the martial dao.

Bam, bam, bam!

Fists relentlessly crashed into each other. Jiang Chen was two levels lower, but his spirit power surged and raged, putting him on the same level as the peak of the fifth level spirit realm.

He wasn’t that far off from the sixth level either. Along with his astonishing level of competency in his boxing technique, even the sixth level spirit realm examiner felt thoroughly suppressed.

The mysteries of the Divine Aeons Fist varied greatly, and the rhythm of heaven and earth were encompassed in those changes. The cycle of the four seasons, night chasing day as day chased night, flower blooming and wilting, seas changing into mulberry fields and fields changing to seas again...

The examiner felt that although the “Obscure Seal of Life and Death” seemed quite familiar, he seemed to have greatly underestimated its power when he met it with his fist.

The “Obscure Seal of Life and Death” had obviously been greatly improved after being combined with the “Divine Aeons Fist”.

The examiner’s cultivation level was indeed higher than Jiang Chen’s, but his comprehension of martial dao and technique was far below Jiang Chen.

As fifteen minutes passed, the examiner couldn’t see how he’d win at all. He didn’t even dare say that he had the upper hand in the ring.

According to the rules, if the examiner wasn’t defeated in fifteen minutes, then the candidate was deemed as having passed.

The examiner was rather gracious, “Well done young man. Your boxing technique looks simple, but its concepts are deep and profound. What is particularly rare is that your comprehension of the technique has exceeded the level of great perfection and reached the legendary realm. The Obscure Seal of Life and Death is no longer at its previous level in your hands. I feel quite gratified in being able to pass such a genius as you.”

Jiang Chen also smiled faintly, “I only won through your graciousness.”

“Hahaha, that I didn’t. Good luck young man. Although it’s your first time in the sky quadrant, I feel quite certain that you’ll be able to stay.”

The examiner truly had a gracious bearing as he left the ring with a hearty laugh.

This kind of demeanor also put Jiang Chen in a good mood. Whether it was Master Fang in the mystic quadrant or this examiner, they were all cultivators with thoughtful poise.

It looks like the four sects weren't filled with the narrow minded. There were also benevolent elders as well as those with uncommon bearing.

Thus passed the five exams of the martial dao area.

By this time, half the day had passed. Jiang Chen was rather satisfied with this efficiency. He'd at least obtained 25 points already.

He walked down from the ring and headed over to the examination area to report in, discovering he was indeed not the first to complete the foundation exams.

About a dozen others had already completed their exams and left with 25 points.

But Jiang Chen's appearance still caused an uproar in the examination area.

A secular cultivator had completed five foundation exams so quickly?

Jiang Chen checked in, added his points to his token, and ignored all the looks as he walked over to the next examination area.

Chapter 367: The Betting Madman

When Jiang Chen arrived at the area for testing strength of heart, he noticed that not many participants had arrived yet.

The examination area was a tower.

There were nine levels to the towers, and the way of testing for all five exams in the area was to climb from the first floor to the fifth, finding a jade pendant with the same number as your own token.

Completing this task in the allotted time would win you 25 points. Those who didn't make it would have their points calculated with where they ended up at.

If a candidate lost their way, they would gain no points. Making it past the first floor would award you five points.

This exam of the heart was a bit similar to the Path of Rebirth that Jiang Chen had experienced in the first selection.

However, the architecture of this tower was different to the Path of Rebirth. More accurately speaking, the tower used space formations to craft all sorts of situations in which dimensions randomly intersected with each other, making it hard for those within to find the real path.

This kind of method that folded space was one that touched on

the various divine arts of space.

Jiang Chen went up to the bottom of the tower. As he looked up at the nine level tower, there wasn't a ripple of emotion in his heart. The Path of Rebirth hadn't stumped him, and this tower wouldn't do so either.

"Humph. Kid, you scared? Scram back to the ordinary world if you are and don't block the way!"

An ear piercing voice came from behind just as Jiang Chen was focusing his attentions on studying this tower.

A young man with red hair in a short sleeve shirt that displayed his chest was standing there. His shoulders were broad and his back was thickly muscled, giving one the feeling of a tiger's back and bear's waist.

The most interesting part of this fellow wasn't his mane of red hair flowing in the wind, it was his large feet. It was like they were the feet of enormous beasts, a full size larger than most normal folk's. He also wasn't wearing any shoes. Him going barefoot gave one an exceedingly wild feeling.

A slight furrow creased Jiang Chen's brow. This fellow is quite impudent. I'm just standing here, what business is it of yours?

He froze where he was standing, like a thickly forested mountain, purposefully unmoving.

“Oh? You want to start something?” The red haired youth chuckled and put out a hand the size of a large fan, grabbing at Jiang Chen. “Move!”

Jiang Chen made a shooing motion forward with his hands and he sent a surge of strength forward.

Both of them grunted softly as their bodies wavered.

“Hmm?” The red haired youth seemed to have sparked his interest as he chuckled oddly. “I underestimated you, secular kid. Interesting.”

He once again reached a hand out to Jiang Chen.

He’d increased his strength this time and was using seventy to eighty percent of his total strength, projecting a posture of ‘I’m not stopping until I shove you out of the way.’

Jiang Chen snorted coldly and he made a circle with his arms. The moon was in his left hand and the sun in his right as he drew an enormous taiji vortex with a light movement of his arms.

The red haired youth once again ended up clutching empty air.

He was even more bedraggled this time as his body pitched forward after he stumbled slightly.

The fellow was completely stunned now. His eyes widened like two brass bells as he stared at Jiang Chen. “Good going kid, I take back what I said before. You have what it takes to travel through the Divine Maze Tower. Interesting, how interesting! I hear everyday how there’s a freak genius of the boulder’s heart from the secular world. Everyday and every month — calluses are growing in my ears! It looks like although the rumors have been exaggerated, they’re not without reason. Good. very good. You deserve your reputation alright.”

The red hair youth rubbed his hands together and grinned. “Your boxing technique and footwork is not bad. It looks like it won’t be easy for me to beat you out right. Time is of the essence now and I’m going to head into the Divine Maze Tower. I hope we can have a good fight next time we meet and see if it’s your boxing technique that’s superior or my fists that are harder.”

The fellow gestured as he talked, spittle flying everywhere as he gave one a feeling of powerful domination. He seemed like a person, rough around the edges, who liked to battle.

Jiang Chen had thought at first that this person was purposefully provoking him. It looked like now that he’d misunderstood. This person’s personality was likely just this forthright and direct.

He smiled faintly, stepping to the side, “Go on in.”

To someone who bore him no enmity, Jiang Chen wasn’t so bored as to keep butting heads with them. He stepped to the side to

let the fellow in.

"Are you not going in?" The red haired youth started in surprise.

"I will be."

"Heh heh. So you are, huh?" The red haired youth's eyes gleamed as he suddenly thought of something exciting.

"Is there something amiss?" Jiang Chen couldn't help but ask when he saw the other smile bizarrely.

"Haha, nothing, nothing at all. Look, we're going in at the same time. Do you want to make a bet that whoever makes it to the fifth floor and locates their own jade pendant first is the winner? How about that?" The red haired youth spoke with an animated expression.

"So what if I win? So what if I lose?" Jiang Chen had to laugh. It looked like he'd run into a gambler.

"Let's place a forfeit on it. How about we bet spirit stones?"

"Spirit stones?" Jiang Chen smiled ruefully. "I don't have any."

He really didn't have any. In the ordinary world, spirit stones weren't a medium of exchange. Although Jiang Chen had quite a few rare and precious items, he really didn't have any spirit stones.

The red haired youth smacked his own forehead. “That’s right, you’re a secular cultivator and it’s normal that you wouldn’t have any spirit stones. Actually, us sect disciples don’t have many either. Then what do you say we bet on?”

“Must we?” Jiang Chen smiled.

“Ai, look at how boring these trials are. It’s all the same stuff. How boring do you think our lives would be if we don’t find something fun to do?”

Jiang Chen was speechless at seeing how much this fellow liked to gamble. However, he wasn’t the slightest bit interested.

“Sorry, I don’t have anything valuable to bet with you.” Jiang Chen demurely declined.

“Do you really have nothing of any value?” The red haired youth was depressed.

“No.” Jiang Chen shook his head. He had many nice things, but he’d obtained them with great effort and he didn’t want to take them out as a forfeit.

“Depressing, how depressing!” The red haired youth waved his fan-like hands and he lost quite a bit of interest. However, his eyebrow quirked again as he seemed to think of something fantastic and he slapped his thigh. “How about this? I’ll bet a spirit

stone with you, and it's yours if you win. If you lose, you become my lackey. How about that?"

"Be your lackey?" Jiang Chen smiled wryly. "Not interested."

"Man, you're really boring. Do you think that anyone can be a lackey of the great Tang Hong? Are you afraid that I'm exploiting you? Why don't you ask around and see when have I, Tang Hong, ever taken advantage of someone? Humph! If it wasn't for the fact that you seemed a bit interesting, I wouldn't have wanted to waste this time with you at all."

So the red haired youth's name was Tang Hong.

Jiang Chen could see that this fellow didn't bear any malicious intent, but he liked to gamble too much.

He smiled. "I don't want your spirit stone. To be fair, why don't you be my lackey if you lose?"

"I... be your lackey?"

Tang Hong blanked as he widened his eyes, looking at Jiang Chen like he was looking at a freak and then suddenly laughing heartily. "Kid, you want me to be your lackey?"

This did sound odd to Tang Hong. He was a top three genius of the Precious Tree Sect, and he was also ranked in the top 10 in the sky quadrant.

Even the most premier geniuses didn't dare say that they'd make him a hanger-on.

Everyone knew that he had a nickname called Death-Defyer Tang Hong. Once this fellow's ire was up, he was known for being hard to shake off.

This was because he had a most death defying spirit. Therefore, all cultivators on similar levels were unwilling to interact too much with Tang Hong. They were all afraid of him suddenly doing something crazy.

This was also why he'd never had many friends.

His stubborn personality was suffused with a mad drive that most ordinary folk couldn't handle.

Jiang Chen ignored his reaction and laughed softly. "If you want me to be your lackey, then to be fair, you naturally have to be my lackey if you lose. What? Afraid to make the bet? Forget it if you're afraid. I'll take my leave now."

Jiang Chen could see that he was an unbridled and wild person.

Tang Hong blanked and then, he smacked his forehead. "That's true, a bet has to be fair. An unfair bet is cheating. What the hell's the point of cheating? Alright, I'll make the bet with you. Kid, don't go back on your word now."

“As long as you don’t.” Jiang Chen chuckled as he walked into the tower.

Tang Hong wasn’t one to easily give up as he called it, “Kid, you want to get a head start on me? Think again!”

It looked like this fellow didn’t just have an ordinary love of gambling. An even brighter light was shining out of his eyes now that they’d set the bet and he was incredibly excited.

“Kid, don’t blame me for not reminding you. Every level in this Divine Maze Tower will continuously change according to the shifts in formation. Although I’ve traveled through it twice, it wasn’t easy both times. There’s also no logic to the space formation either, it all depends on your mental strength. There are many who failed in this area.”

Tang Hong seemed to feel that it wouldn’t be much to win over a rookie as he purposefully spoke a few reminders.

Jiang Chen chuckled and purposefully provoked him, “Why don’t you take care of yourself, hmm? Don’t lose your way in the end now.”

Tang Hong bawled out, “Kid, you dare look down on me!? How dare you!”

Jiang Chen flashed forward as he vanished from Tang Hong’s

sight with a whoosh.

Tang Hong chuckled oddly. “Silly kid, do you think you’ll reach it first level just by moving faster? Speed isn’t the key to this Divine Maze Tower, but strong strength of heart is.”

Tang Hong seemed to be quite confident in his strength of heart. He crossed his arms and he took a look around, revealing a trace of a confident smile as he dashed forward in a blur of red light.

He traveled through one level in a short amount of time and arrived at the second. He cast his eyes around, but he saw no sign of Jiang Chen.

He couldn’t help but grin. “Heh heh, that silly kid must still be wandering around randomly downstairs. Rookies! Ignoring my advice after coming to the Divine Maze Tower. He really didn’t recognize my good intentions.”

Tang Hong was quite confident in the exam of the Divine Maze Tower as he had his own thoughts about them.

Although there was no pattern to the space formation, his strength of heart was exceedingly strong as he could always find the slightest clues, and ignore the realistic illusions.

He continuously identified various traps and dead ends.

Tang Hong quickly found the passageway to the third level.

“Heh heh, that kid dares make a bet with me in the Divine Maze Realm. He’s too young in the end… too naive!” Tang Hong grinned widely and proudly.

Chapter 368: Admitting Defeat, Calling You Boss

“Fourth level now. I’ll reach the fifth level soon. Haven’t even seen a hair of that kid, he probably hasn’t even made it to the second level yet?”

Tang Hong was even prouder when seeing his victory at hand. He loved to gamble. When he made a bet, he wasn’t looking to gain anything, but purely reveled in the delight brought by gambling.

He loved the feeling of winning, and loved the other’s dejection after losing. That was his greatest joy.

There wasn’t any malice in this, it was just his guilty pleasure.

Of course, this was also brought up because Tang Hong had a good impression of Jiang Chen.

He’d heard of the freak genius of the boulder’s heart in the sky quadrant. And honestly, he’d been a bit skeptical. Was the freak genius really as incredible as rumors made him out to be?

However, he grew quite interested once he heard that the freak genius had pulled even Master Shuiyue down in the earth quadrant.

Someone as haughty and ill-tempered as Master Shuiyue was

disagreeable to Tang Hong's eyes. In the sky quadrant, her disciple Long Juxue threw her weight around as if she was really something, placing herself up on a pedestal and projecting the image of a saint with no one worthy of entering her eyes. To someone as unreserved as Tang Hong, this was really someone who irked him greatly.

So when he heard that Master Shuiyue had been taken down in the earth quadrant, Tang Hong rather admired those actions.

He'd so happened to bump into Jiang Chen today at the Divine Maze Tower, and was of a mind to test this renowned secular genius.

After a bit of probing, he'd discovered that the rumors were indeed true, he hadn't been able to touch the other two moves in a row. This strength won Tang Hong's respect.

Tang Hong's personality was like thus, direct and forthright. If he admired someone, he would express that admiration in his own way.

Betting, for instance, was a method in which he expressed this admiration.

However, Jiang Chen didn't understand Tang Hong and had no idea what that action had meant.

Tang Hong spent some time on the fourth level. But even once he

found the proper passageway, there was still no one behind him.

"Mm, although I spent quite some time on the fourth level, the time I've spent has yet to reach even a third of the allotted time. There's not that many in the sky quadrant who can match my speed, right?"

He was indeed confident in this regard. Although he had yet to enter the ranks of the most elite on the path of martial dao for various reasons, he was confident that his abilities in the strength of heart were enough to place him in the top five, or perhaps even the top three.

He arrived on the fifth level.

"Hoo, finally here. I should hurry up and find my jade pendant so that that kid accepts his defeat. But that kid's such a rookie, he's probably still going in circles on the second or third floor? Hahaha!" Tang Hong couldn't help but cackle when his thoughts traveled here.

"What are you laughing about?" A voice suddenly traveled to Tang Hong's ears.

"None of your freaking business!" Tang Hong responded irately back, but suddenly froze. Why did this voice sound familiar?

"Ah?" Tang Hong looked in the direction of the voice and jumped up. "You!"

Jiang Chen was standing not too far away from him. He smiled faintly at Tang Hong and swung the jade pendant in his hand. “Sorry about that, I was just a bit faster than you.”

“You… how is that possible? How did you get up here?” Tang Hong was petrified as he was stunned senseless, completely unable to believe his eyes.

“I got up here the same way you got up here. Who told you to only be thinking of how to win along the way and thus waste time?” Jiang Chen laughed leisurely. “I’ll go down first, you take your time in finding your jade pendant.”

“…” Tang Hong had a dumbfounded expression. His mouth hung open so widely, several large mantous could almost fit inside.

Having obtained the 25 points in the trial of heart, Jiang Chen now had a total of 50 points on his hands.

“Mm. All things are difficult before they become easy. The beginning was smooth, and at least I’m not penniless with the current 50 points.” Jiang Chen smiled and was about to head towards the next examination area.

“Wait.”

Tang Hong had also exited the Divine Maze Tower at this time. “Don’t go yet, wait for me to get my points.”

Jiang Chen halted his footsteps when he saw that Tang Hong looked quite serious. Judging from the look of this fellow, he'd probably go on a rampage if Jiang Chen didn't wait for him.

He was the winner anyways, he wasn't afraid of the other not owning up.

Tang Hong walked over with a depressed look after getting his points. "What are you smirking about? I am willing to admit my defeat. I'll call you boss if it comes down to that. But I'm going to win next time! You'll have to call me boss then!"

"Alright, I'll wait for you to win." Jiang Chen smiled dashingly.

"The next area is the five pill exams. Do you dare make a bet?" Tang Hong chuckled. "Let me introduce myself, I'm a Precious Tree Sect disciple, pills are my forte. If you don't have the guts to make a bet with me, you can tell me now."

Jiang Chen smiled. "Then let's not bet."

Tang Hong smiled proudly. "Mm. You've got some brains after all. I would want to win fair and square. Humph humph, who would dare compete with us Precious Tree Sect disciples regarding pills in the sixteen kingdoms?"

Tang Hong's words were suffused with strong confidence.

“Mm, it’s not a matter of having brains, but that you’d lose even more badly if we bet on the dao of pills. You wouldn’t be able to make a comeback in this lifetime at all.”

“What?!” Tang Hong yelled. “Kid, don’t be so cocky! Do you know who you’re talking to? You still dare boast about your pill abilities in front of a Precious Tree Sect disciple?”

Jiang Chen smiled faintly, “What now, is this how you admit defeat?”

Tang Hong chuckled and scratched his head. “Boss. Alright, you’re my boss now. But I still have to say, don’t boast about the dao of pills in front of me.”

“I’m really not boasting.”

“Then what do you mean?” Tang Hong’s expression grew a bit stiff. He felt rather put out that his opponent wasn’t even looking at him properly. Him, a Precious Tree Sect genius!

“I just don’t want you to lose that badly.” Jiang Chen shrugged and smiled.

“Me, losing?!” Tang Hong leapt up. “I was careless just now and accidentally lost to you. If you dare bet with me on the dao of pills, I’ll be able to beat you even with my eyes closed.”

One could see that Tang Hong was quite confident in the dao of

pills.

“Haha, it’s a good thing to be confident.” Jiang Chen didn’t continue the conversation as he turned to leave after a few casual words.

“What are you laughing about? Do you think I’m blustering?” Tang Hong was even more surprised. He really couldn’t handle being taken lightly in the area of pills.

“Mm. You are indeed blustering.”

With Jiang Chen’s potential in pills, everyone in the sixteen kingdoms was blustering when they said they could beat him. Although he hadn’t been able to cultivate in his prior life, his skills had reached a heavenly existence with the dao of pills. He truly did have the confidence to voice such words in a tiny little place of this mundane world.

“Then let’s make another bet.” Tang Hong’s self respect had been completely provoked.

“You’ve already lost one bet, what else can you bet?” Jiang Chen chuckled.

“Let’s go another round. If I lose, I’ll be your lackey for the rest of my life. I’ll never go back on my words or make trouble for you. Do you dare?”

“Rest of your life?” Jiang Chen laughed. “Isn’t that too much?”

Tang Hong pounded his chest. “Those who know me know that I never change my mind. If you can truly beat me in the dao of pills, I’ll even call you grandfather without a frown, much less boss.”

“Let’s forgo calling me grandfather, I don’t want my life to be shortened. You’re the one who said boss for a lifetime, are you sure you won’t regret this?” Jiang Chen felt that this fellow was quite cute in his stubbornness and had his interest peaked as well.

“Regret? I, Tang Hong, have never known regret in this life!” Tang Hong yelled loudly. “I won’t take advantage of you either. If you lose this bet, we’ll call it even and continue to bet next time.”

“I won’t lose.” Jiang Chen smiled faintly.

Tang Hong had made many bets in his life, and had seen many who boasted of self-confidence.

But he’d never been as serious as he was today. His desire to win was fully awakened when he saw Jiang Chen calm and confident.

“Alright, you think that you won’t lose, I also feel that I definitely won’t lose. Let’s see just who’s going to lose!”

Tang Hong was already making large strides for the pill examination area as he spoke.

For such an interesting opponent to appear all of a sudden, the dry and humdrum examinations become a bit more exciting.

Jiang Chen treated this as entertainment and walked towards the examination area.

He might not have been so certain of victory in other areas.

But he dared say so in the area of pills, and there was no room for accidents at all.

The pill exams were varied and creative.

The five exams were completely different. The first one was to identify spirit medicines. They had to sort through and organize 81 medicines with the fastest speed possible, no mistakes allowed.

“Begin!”

When the examiner learned of their bet, he too seemed to approve of it and aided them, giving them the same testing content.

These spirit medicines were as ordinary as eating and drinking to Jiang Chen. Particularly the lower level medicines, they were even easier to identify.

He hardly even needed to use his eyes as he could organize them appropriately with a slight sniff. Some didn't even need to be sniffed as he could sort them through touch alone.

He raised his hands after a few breaths of time and said, "Done."

Tang Hong was startled. He'd only completed about half! However, he was a Precious Tree Sect disciple after all and had enormous concentration. He wasn't affected, and quickly finished as well.

"Candidate number 91 completes the first test first." The examiner was a fair person and announced Jiang Chen had taken the first victory.

Tang Hong was a bit skeptical as he walked over to take a look at Jiang Chen's sorting. It was all neat and orderly. His expression changed from skepticism to bafflement. Tang Hong flicked a few glances at Jiang Chen, as if looking at a freak.

However, he still talked tough.

"Humph. Crude methods. Your hands were just faster. Whoever wins the three out of five exams first is the true victor."

Jiang Chen smiled. "This should indeed be the case."

The examiner seemed to enjoy watching the clashes between youngsters, particularly when one was a secular genius and the

other a Precious Tree Sect genius.

This kind of clash would absolutely give rise to many fireworks, making things exceedingly fascinating.

Chapter 369: Lackey for Life

“The second exam, matching spirit medicines. As we all know, there are medicines that naturally counteract or complement each other. A qualified pill refiner must have sophisticated knowledge in the area of matching. Otherwise, if he doesn’t even know how to match spirit medicines, or doesn’t even understand whether medicines are a good fit for each other, then it will be impossible for him to become a strong pill refiner.”

The examiner smiled. “There are 32 kinds of spirit medicines in the second exam. Please match them accordingly. Remember, they won’t necessarily be matched in pairs. This exam tests your knowledge of medicine effects and the understanding of how they might complement each other or not.”

This were all basic knowledge that a pill refiner would know. It wasn’t unfamiliar to either Jiang Chen or Tang Hong.

Tang Hong had a look of eagerness on his face. After his loss in the first exam, his battle spirit had been fired up and he was filled with even more competitive spirit.

This was a person who battled even more fiercely in adverse conditions.

Jiang Chen was noncommittal, maintaining his unrushed and unhurried attitude. There was nothing for him to grow anxious about in the field of spirit medicines.

There was also no one who could give him pressure.

“Begin.”

Tang Hong started almost as soon as the examiner finished speaking.

Jiang Chen smiled and he walked to the pile of spirit medicines for a close, individual look after he’d performed some chest stretches.

He looked them over three times. His fingers then suddenly flew like he was a most adept magician performing a wondrous piece of magic.

He matched all 32 medicines in the span of two breaths.

In pairs or triples, he made 13 matches total.

“Finished again?” The examiner was surprised to see Jiang Chen raise his hand. Jiang Chen’s previous speed in identifying spirit medicines had already greatly stunned him.

The difficulty level was without a doubt, even greater this time. It wasn’t just a matter of identification, but also applying one’s knowledge.

Even the examiner felt that he’d be hard pressed to match Jiang

Chen's speed.

Jiang Chen nodded and walked out. The examiner was a bit skeptical, but his expression shifted slightly when he drew close.

The matching had been done completely correctly, without the slightest error.

Tang Hong on the other side, scratched his head and pulled on his ears for quite a while before finishing. When he walked out however, he found that Jiang Chen had led the way by quite a margin again.

"One victory left." Jiang Chen extended a finger and grinned slyly.

Dejection was written all over Tang Hong's face. He was already performing above his usual level! He thought that he'd be able to win for sure this time. But alas, reality is cruel.

"Hot damn, did you dream about this exam, kid?" In Tang Hong's understanding, he couldn't imagine a secular disciple displaying such perverse abilities. Just how familiar would he have to be with the spirit medicines to have such speed?

He couldn't think of any other reasons anymore.

Jiang Chen chuckled. "Even if I dreamed of it, I would still win."

Tang Hong snorted. “Don’t be too proud just yet. It’s not over!”

Only two exams had been conducted. There were three more left, and so Tang Hong felt that he still had hope to turn back a disadvantageous situation.

As long as he won the remaining three, it would still be a walk in the park in the end.

“The third exam, identification of pill recipes. There are ten recipes here. Some are correct and, some are erroneous. Leave the correct ones alone and point out the errors in the ones that are wrong.”

“Remember, your identification rate must reach six recipes to count as having passed. Your bet is one thing, don’t just pursue speediness and impact your efficiency.”

The examiner gave them a kind reminder.

Identifying recipes was delicate work. If a candidate strived for speed above all else, it would be very easy to make a mistake. They would be put down as having failed as soon as their identification rate dipped below sixty percent, and lose all five points.

Jiang Chen smiled. The thought of failing had never crossed his mind.

The four foundation missions of martial dao, strength of heart, pills, and the combination.

He was most confident in the area of pills.

Even though he was equally confident in the other areas, if he dared say he was number two for the dao of pills however, no one would dare say that they're number one!

All ten recipes were placed in front of him.

He looked over each of them one by one. None of them were particularly complicated recipes.

There were eight that had errors. Some had only a few mistakes and others had riddled with them.

Jiang Chen checked off the two correct pill recipes and he began writing on the other eight.

He didn't perform above his usual level. In fact, he used the simplest language possible to point out the mistakes.

He'd finished the exam in about fifteen minutes.

Beside him, Tang Hong was obviously not finished. There were two recipes in particular that he was unsure about. He considered them for quite some time and he barely managed to squeeze out an

answer at the end.

When Jiang Chen handed in his recipes, surprise flashed through the examiner's eyes. He pursued the submission with a furrowed brow and he became more shocked the more he read.

He thought that the secular genius had been too cocky and was sure of himself in handing in his answers so early. He was bound to not have any good answers.

But when the examiner took a careful look, this questionnaire was completely perfect with full marks.

The examiner looked meaningfully at Jiang Chen, shocked to the core. He also threw a sympathetic look at Tang Hong at the same time, feeling an inexplicable surge of pity for him.

When Tang Hong gleefully handed in his answers, he noticed that the examiner giving him a pitying look, whereas Jiang Chen was standing off on the side and smiling faintly.

"He... was faster than me again?"

The examiner smiled wordlessly and nodded.

"No worries, what if his identification rate wasn't 60%? It's still his loss if he didn't pass." Tang Hong felt that Jiang Chen must've been pursuing speed in handing in his exam so early, and forgoing correctness. Haste made for waste.

The examiner continued with the pitying look, “His identification rate was 100% without a single error. Let me take a look at yours.”

An explosion went off in Tang Hong’s mind as he was thrown in disarray.

He’d lost, again? How could he have failed utterly in all three exams?

“H-how is this possible?” Poor Tang Hong’s mind was finding it difficult to operate at the moment. He felt that he’d been utterly defeated.

“However strong you may be, there’s always someone stronger. Tang Hong, do you fully concede this time?” The examiner also laughed.

Tang Hong’s large fan hands kept scratching at his red hair. Dejection was written across his face as he looked at Jiang Chen and he couldn’t help but mutter, “What a weirdo.”

After being depressed for a moment however, Tang Hong smiled. “I, Tang Hong, have never conceded to anyone. But today, I truly do. You’re the first to make me concede in the area of spirit medicines. Alright! I call you boss willingly and wholeheartedly. I, Tang Hong, am willing to accept my defeat. I will be your lackey and follower life from now on!”

“However, the bet hasn’t ended yet! Although I’ve lost, I’m going to do so gloriously. I’m going to fight to lose 2:3, and not by 0:5.”

There were still two exams left out of the possible five. Although Tang Hong had already lost, if he could win the last two, his scores would look not that bad at least.

The fourth and fifth exam had to do with practical application, which was refining pills.

Tang Hong had even less of an advantage in this area, but Jiang Chen had discovered that although Tang Hong liked to gamble, his attitude upon losing wasn’t poor and so he wasn’t a bad sort.

Jiang Chen purposely stayed his hand and lost one of the two pill refining exams. He did so very deftly and naturally, leaving not a trace of evidence.

With the final score of 1:4, although Tang Hong had lost, he hadn’t lost everything.

The examiner seemed to have guessed something, but he didn’t say anything. He awarded 25 points to both geniuses.

“Today’s bet was a sight to see. I wish such amazing performances could be seen everyday in the pill examination area.” The examiner spoke with some emotion.

If he hadn't been the one in charge of these exams, he almost wanted to suspect if someone had leaked the contents of the exams to the secular genius.

However, he'd been the one to random select all the exam topics. It wasn't that easy to leak them and thus, no matters of cheating possible.

"Boss, where are you going? Wait for me! Hey!" Tang Hong started chasing after Jiang Chen when he saw the latter was leaving.

Someone walked in just as they'd reached the door. This person started when he heard Tang Hong call him boss, then started laughing oddly. "Tang Hong, have you finally submitted to me and are calling me boss?"

Tang Hong blinked. Who the hell is this shameless person?

When he took a good look at the person in front of him, Tang Hong started cursing loudly, "Get the hell outta my face! Keep dreaming your idiotic dreams! I call you Boss?! Who the hell do you think you are?"

Jiang Chen also paused when he saw the newcomer, but he actually knew this person. It was Iron Dazhi, heir to the Iron family in the Precious Tree Sect.

This fellow had wanted to cause some trouble for Jiang Chen in

the Skylaurel Kingdom and he had been thoroughly ripped off instead. This fellow was a walking moneybag in Jiang Chen's eyes.

Therefore, when he thought of those happy memories of swindling the Iron family when he saw Iron Dazhi, he actually didn't look at Iron Dazhi with an irritated gaze. Who would dislike someone bearing gifts?

Jiang Chen dearly wished that such opportunities would come a few more times. The Iron family was simply too rich, they were almost swimming in their wealth.

However, he didn't forget his current identity. He was the freak genius of the boulder's heart, not Jiang Chen.

Iron Dazhi obviously didn't think much of secular cultivators as he swept a careless glance over Jiang Chen, halting on Tang Hon's face.

Iron Dazhi sniggered, "Did you call me boss just now? Apart from us of the same sect here, who else is worthy of being your boss?"

Iron Dazhi was a few years older than Tang Hong, and both were sect geniuses.

However, Tang Hong's potential was actually a bit better than Iron Dazhi's. But, Iron Dazhi had been born to a good station in life and he had reincarnated well.

After he'd had his butt handed to him by Jiang Chen last time, his grandfather Iron Long had shut him into closed door cultivation after he returned and Iron Dazhi had gained quite a bit.

After exiting from closed door cultivation, he'd gone from fifth level spirit realm to sixth level with a shake of his body, the peak of the earth spirit realm.

Therefore, he had quite a bit of confidence in front of Tang Hong.

Although he was a direct descendant of the Iron family in the Precious Tree Sect, he didn't have many quality confidantes or followers.

Guys like Zhou Yi were his best lackeys.

However, compared to Tang Hong, Zhou Yi paled far in comparison. Therefore, Iron Dazhi had indeed wanted to pull Tang Hong into his camp and have this follower advise him.

Chapter 370: Always Ready For A Beating Huh?

Although Tang Hong now recognized Jiang Chen as his boss, the irritation in his heart had yet to be placated after losing a competition. He naturally wouldn't do so in front of his boss.

Iron Dazhi, however, had suddenly barged in out of nowhere. Judging from his foolish demeanor, he wanted to make Tang Hong his underling!

This made Tang Hong feel deeply offended. This Iron Dazhi was a good-for-nothing who depended on the protection of his family's elders. He was complete trash in Tang Hong's eyes!

This kid dared throw his weight around in front of Tang Hong?

He kept cracking his knuckles audibly.

"Iron Dazhi, you're always freaking ready for a beating, huh? Don't think I'm too wuss to hit you just because you have a powerful grandfather."

Iron Dazhi blinked. He'd come storming out of his closed-door cultivation with quite a strong momentum. He'd always felt himself somewhat weaker than Tang Hong before.

But this time's training had seen him break through sixth level

spirit realm and receive the Iron family legacy. When compared to Tang Hong now, he would only be stronger than him and not weaker.

This brat dares talk back to me like this?

Iron Dazhi's face darkened immediately. "Tang Hong, do you understand the notion of precedence? What kind of position do you have, what kind of position do I have? In terms of background and cultivation, in what way am I unfit to be your boss?"

Tang Hong sneered and advanced closer, "Why the feck would I care what your background or cultivation are? Why don't you keep strutting around? Do you believe that I'll slap the shit out of you with one blow?"

Tang Hong had lost his bet and was ticked that he had no place to vent his ill will on. Iron Dazhi hadn't recognized the situation he was in and charged straight in. What an idiot.

One had to say, Tang Hong's stocky body and his head full of red hair scattered like straw gave others a very fierce feeling.

Add to that his extraordinarily large feet—he was indeed rather frightening when he started walking.

Iron Dazhi also regretted his bit of mouthing off when he saw Tang Hong start to go on a rampage. This wasn't the way to bring him into his camp!

Everyone knew that Death-Defyer Tang Hong would put in an appearance when he was provoked enough.

Seeing that Tang Hong was about to lose his composure at any time, Iron Dazhi hastily said, “Forget it. I’m participating in the exams today and won’t bother myself with arguing with you today. The other sects are all united in this great selection, so what do you think you’ll gain in arguing with me?”

Jiang Chen couldn’t help but laugh inwardly at Iron Dazhi when hearing this.

This guy chickened out in the critical moment! No matter what his reason had been, he was absolutely finding a way out of the situation and didn’t dare conflict with Tang Hong.

Tang Hong snorted, “Bullshit! Unity is just a surface act. I also warn you that you better not be hoity-toity in front of me in the future.”

Iron Dazhi was livid. “Alright, alright! Tang Hong, you’re cocky now. But one day, I’ll make you dance in attendance to me!”

Tang Hong laughed in cold succession and flicked his middle finger at Iron Dazhi, leaving with a flourish.

His emblematic big feet pounded on the floor, creating a large ruckus.

Jiang Chen chuckled and flicked a glance at Iron Dazhi, preparing to walk out as well. The results were quickly apparent when two geniuses faced off.

Iron Dazhi was born of a good family and had many resources, but he was still a good-for-nothing in terms of personality and schemes who couldn't be saved.

Tang Hong on the other hand had an obviously resolute dao heart, and a spirit that never accepted defeat.

"Secular ant, what are you laughing about?" Iron Dazhi had been depressed already and flew into a rage when he saw that mask wearing secular ant also laughing. You pathetic ant, a character the same as a dog, dare laugh in front of me as well?

Jiang Chen had long since grown immune to names such as secular ant and ordinary kid. He laughed coldly and imitated Tang Hong in raising his middle finger.

"What business of yours is it that I laugh?"

Jiang Chen also left with a flourish after these words, ignoring the black lines running down Iron Dazhi's face.

He was about to respond when someone suddenly walked out of the pill refining room. She said with a furrowed brow, "This is the pill examination area, who causes an uproar here? Do you

understand the rules?”

The examiner also walked up with a smile when he saw this person. Another heaven-defying genius had emerged. “Long Juxue, you’ve completed the exams?”

This lovely figure was indeed Long Juxue. She’d completed the pill exams and was exiting from this direction when she heard the noise.

Nodding, Long Juxue frowned and raked a faint glance over Iron Dazhi. “You’re a Precious Tree Sect disciple, do you not know that quiet is needed for refining pills? Have your elders not taught you even this bit of knowledge?”

Iron Dazhi had been depressed to begin with, and this was heightened with Long Juxue’s lecture. “This… this is my fault as well?”

Of course he knew her background. An innate constitution, and the undertones that she would become first in the Purple Sun Sect. As proud as Iron Dazhi was, he too knew that this woman was not one to provoke.

Otherwise, with his personality, how would he stand for being lectured by a woman?

Long Juxue averted her face with disdain. Apparently, a character like Iron Dazhi was unworthy of her sight.

The examiner hastened to smooth things over when he saw that the scene had taken an awkward turn. “Alright, the noise just now wasn’t only Iron Dazhi’s fault. The matter arose because Tang Hong of the Precious Tree Sect bet against the secular genius. What do you think the results were?”

“What?” Long Juxue and Iron Dazhi were in unexpected accordance this time as they asked the same question at the same time.

It was obvious that the two weren’t really on the same wavelength. They’d blurted out this question because Iron Dazhi was paying attention to Tang Hong and Long Juxue had picked up the ear-piercing words of the secular genius.

“Tang Hong was very confident in betting with the secular genius. Whoever lost would be the other’s lackey for life. In the end, the self-assured Tang Hong lost three exams in a row, and he lost them in a manner with no hope of winning at all. Tsk tsk. The secular genius is truly amazing. Tang Hong’s gift for spirit medicine is at least top three in the Precious Tree Sect. To think that he would lose so utterly.”

The examiner was patently the sort that liked to disseminate all sorts of gossip. His face grew animated as he spoke of thus, completely forgetting that the secular genius harbored an enormous grudge with Master Shuiyue from the earth quadrant.

Master Shuiyue’s prized disciple was standing right in front of

him.

“That secular genius beat Tang Hong?” Iron Dazhi was immensely taken aback. “When did Tang Hong become such trash? This completely throws away the face of my Precious Tree Sect!”

Quite of bit of edge had been taken off from Iron Dazhi’s spirit just now, so he couldn’t help but complain now. It was as if this kind of complaining would help him regain his confidence and the face that he’d lost earlier.

Long Juxue’s face was frosted over as she laughed coldly, saying disdainfully. “Is an unorthodox little dao worth showing off about? Crude and pathetic indeed.”

She floated away with a wave of her snow-white sleeves afterwards.

The examiner suddenly recalled something. His expression changed as he laughed ruefully. “Look at me running my mouth, I forgot about the grudge between the secular genius and Master Shuiyue.”

Having been quite upset just now, Iron Dazhi didn’t have any good feelings towards the secular genius or towards Tang Hong. He said irritably, “I request to take the exams.”

…….

Jiang Chen had completed three major areas and fifteen exams in one day. He now had 75 points in hand.

Examination time was drawing to a close. Jiang Chen didn't continue towards the comprehensive subject area, but he doubled back and prepared to return to his residence.

There were three months to a cycle anyways. There was plenty of time.

"Boss, why aren't we going to the comprehensive subject area? If we go now, we still have time to loot some points."

"Loot?" Jiang Chen was astounded.

Tang Hong ruffled his messy red hair and chuckled, "There's no difficulty to the foundation exams. To us, it's just grinding out points, so everyone jokingly calls it looting points. Truthfully speaking, it's a given that those who rank in the top 20 always obtain these 100 points every month."

"A given?" Jiang Chen was surprised. "Top 20?"

Tang Hong nodded very affirmatively. "A given. I've never heard of anyone slipping up thus far. In addition, the twenty exams of the four subject areas are usually completed within a day to a day and a half. If anyone takes more than two days to complete this, then even if they obtain all 100 points, they won't think they've

succeeded because they've delayed obtaining points in the advanced stage."

There were one hundred guaranteed points in the foundation stage.

The advanced stage was where the true division between candidates in the sky quadrant was demarcated.

"How many points do you have now?" Jiang Chen asked out of curiosity.

Tang Hong answered loudly, "I have 1,500 points. I'm a far ways off from those perverts."

"What's the highest?" Jiang Chen had always wanted to know this answer, but he hadn't found the appropriate person to ask. Who would've thought that he'd gain a follower today, and one for life!

"There's not much difference between the highest candidates, they're definitely over 2,000. I wonder if they've reached 2,500 yet." Tang Hong shook his head and sighed. "These fellows enjoy the most resources in the sect. I, Tang Hong, am top three in the sect, but compared to them, my position in the sect is quite awkward. It's one as if my grandmother doesn't like me, and my uncle doesn't love me."

The Precious Tree Sect had always been one of overt struggles

and covert plots between the Xie family and Iron family.

Tang Hong was a genius with an outsider's surname and didn't have a particularly strong backing in the sect. Therefore, he truly didn't have much of an advantage in terms of sect resources.

In addition, his personality was wild and unrestrained. He hadn't fallen under the Xie or Iron family banner.

It was because he hadn't joined either camp that his resources were much fewer compared to the geniuses of those families.

Even so, he didn't lose heart this way but tried even harder, training and learning even more furiously.

Due to this, the bone-deep drive to win and his unrestrained personality had forged his spirit of never giving up, a strength of heart that wouldn't falter even if Mt. Tai collapsed in front of him, making him stronger than any Precious Tree Sect disciple.

Jiang Chen was gravely awed when he heard these numbers.

Who would've thought that the highest numbers would be over two thousand. It looks like he would have to stride forth with great footsteps to make up for his late arrival.

Chapter 371: Jiang Chen's Plan To Grind Out Points

Jiang Chen had previously guessed that their points were certainly over a thousand. But it looked like he'd still underestimated their speed in grinding out points.

When he saw Jiang Chen remain silent after hearing those words, Tang Hong—someone who had never known how to comfort someone, actually said, "Don't worry boss. With your potential in strength of heart and pills, you'll earn lots of points quickly."

Jiang Chen, however, wasn't worried about this. He was planning on the best way to earn these points.

"Tang Hong, normally speaking, what's the fastest way to earn points in the advanced stage?"

"If your strength is strong and battle abilities astounding, then challenge others. You gain 20 points for every victory and lose 20 for every loss. Those ranked in the top for battle strength challenge others everyday, so they gain points very quickly."

Tang Hong had obviously come up short in this area before and muttered angrily. "To hell with them. Those brutes just have more resources, treasures, and that little bit of superior cultivation. They make use of this to trample others and crazily grind points. How shameless."

They would naturally use this advantage since they held it, Jiang Chen wasn't that surprised.

He asked, "How difficult are the regular missions?"

Tang Hong thought for a moment and responded, "A first level mission is as difficult as our hardest foundation exams. But that's not always the case, it depends on luck."

"Second level missions double in difficulty and so forth as the mission level increases."

"That difficult?" Jiang Chen was surprised. A constantly doubling difficulty level—this wasn't normal!

Tang Hong nodded. "It's very difficult indeed. If it wasn't, that perverse lot would have probably gotten up to three, four thousand points long ago, perhaps even more."

"Are the regular missions divided into various subjects like the foundation exams?" Jiang Chen asked.

"Of course, the exams are meant to uncover geniuses. As long as you're exceptionally strong in a certain area, you can keep taking missions in this area. Of course, there are still some restrictions to prevent cheating when grinding out points." Tang Hong had been here for two cycles and was thus very familiar with all details of the rules.

“What restrictions?” Jiang Chen had already snapped to attention inwardly when he heard that the missions were divided into subjects.

“For instance, let’s say you’re talented in the area of pills. You can apply for a pill related mission. But you can increase the mission difficulty by a single level each day. For instance, let’s say you applied for a level one mission today, then you can only apply for a level two mission tomorrow, and a level three the day after. When you reach the peak of the level five, you must return to level one and can’t continue tackling level five missions. In addition, if you continuously apply for missions in this area, you’ll be barred from applying in this area again for ten days should you fail.”

“Ten days? Isn’t it a five-day ban if you don’t complete the mission?”

“That’s under normal circumstances. If you continuously apply for missions in the same area, then you’ll be banned for 10 days. And that’s a ban on all missions. If you want to earn points during that time, you can only challenge other candidates.”

“I see.” Jiang Chen smiled wryly, having finally understood those rules.

Tang Hong chuckled, “However, if you fail when challenging other candidates, you’re also barred from issuing challenges for the next five days.”

Jiang Chen was aware of these rules.

They also made sense, preventing cheating when grinding out points.

If it wasn't for these rules, those point fiends would likely leave others behind in the dust.

Jiang Chen made a careful estimation. If these people completed a level two mission every day and obtained all the foundation points, they would have at least four thousand points.

The restriction of five to ten days leveled the playing field to a certain degree.

"Boss, are you thinking of grinding out points in the pill area?" Tang Hong suddenly thought of something.

"What do you think?" Jiang Chen smiled leisurely.

Tang Hong grinned widely. "Alright, I fully agree!"

Jiang Chen did indeed have this thought. He'd just arrived and was far behind the others. If he did things slowly and steadily, who knew when he'd catch up?

Therefore, he had to use the craziest speed possible to earn points. Even if he didn't reach those at the top, it'd be great if he

could slowly catch up.

He'd have to at least ensure that he wouldn't be eliminated in the first three months. If his score was in the bottom ten in the end, he'd have to return to the earth quadrant. This was the last thing he wanted to happen.

"But boss, you must be careful. I once had the same ambition in the pill area and tried that before as well. I challenged level two after completing level one and level three after level two, but ended up failing the third level. Damn depressing. It was a good thing I was banned for only five days."

Tang Hong couldn't help but voice a warning when he recalled his own tragic circumstances.

"Isn't it supposed to be ten days?"

Tang Hong chuckled. "That's only if you tackle five missions in a row in the same area. I only did that three times and hadn't reached the point of being banned for a whole ten days, or I really would've been in for it!"

The two of them chatted a bit longer. One had to say, Tang Hong and Jiang Chen got along quite well, they actually felt like they'd known each other for a long time after chatting for a while.

Tang Hong's personality was unreserved, and he'd never bowed his head to others. He was a loner within his sect as well. It wasn't

that he didn't know how to socialize, but that he couldn't abide by the lifestyle within the sect. The two great families holding up the sect only knew how to play politics everyday. This wasn't the sect life that Tang Hong wanted.

"Boss, let's go to the comprehensive area tomorrow."

When they left, Tang Hong waved his fan-like hands in farewell as he left for his own residence.

When Jiang Chen looked upon this fiercely-built man, traces of a smile appeared on his face. "This fellow is big, but his thoughts are as innocent as a child's. Very refreshing and direct. That such a person could make it to this level in a sect speaks volumes of his potential and personality."

In the world of martial dao, being innocent and direct isn't necessarily a bad thing. Not being embroiled in politics meant that one could focus even more on cultivation.

That was because people like this had simple thought patterns, held fast to reason and were indomitable and resolute. These types of people could often display enormous potential.

Of course, the disadvantages of being unable to play the game were also apparent. Unless his potential was strong enough to crush all other geniuses, he would be ostracized and marginalized amongst peers, unable to receive the focus of attention and resources.

The sects also had their considerations. As opposed to raising an unbridled and uncontrollable genius, it'd be better to raise someone on the same level that was malleable and had a sweet mouth.

When he returned to his residence, Jiang Chen went through the exam contents again in his mind.

"It looks like I can't fail any of the foundation exams at all. Tang Hong is right. To the geniuses with enormous potential, the 100 points from the foundation exams are almost a gift. No wonder they say they're looting points. They're not looting points, but rather time instead."

Even if the foundation exams were of ordinary difficulty, he'd have to complete them as fast as possible to avoid impacting his time to gain more points.

According to what Tang Hong had said, the missions in the advanced stage were quite difficult.

The difficulty of a level one mission was the same as the most difficult foundation exam. When he thought back on things, Jiang Chen recalled that his last exam in the martial dao area had been a face off against an examiner.

And one at the sixth level spirit realm at that.

If the advanced stage missions were that difficult, then the

martial dao subject area was not the way to proceed for gaining points.

It wasn't that he was afraid of challenge, but that he needed to be shrewd in his current stage and gain points as fast as possible, making his score rise rapidly.

It he went to attempt some martial dao missions, the level one mission would be on the sixth level spirit realm, much less level two and three.

Although Jiang Chen wasn't afraid, it was obviously not worth the time.

To spend so much effort and undertake the risk, he might as well go to the pill area to easily grind out points.

He only had one chance a day to attempt an advanced stage mission.

Naturally, he should spend it in the area that he was most confident in, and the one that would take the least bit of effort.

Right now, he had the most confidence in the area of pills.

"Mm. Let's not overthink it. Let's take care of the five exams in the comprehensive area tomorrow and obtain all 100 foundation points."

Considering the difficulty of the previous exams, he should be able to obtain the last 25 points with no problem at all.

Having formed a plan, Jiang Chen thought no further and sat down cross legged, continuing to cultivate.

Having cultivated in the Eternal Spirit Mountain for half a year, there were signs of Jiang Chen's spirit ocean finally breaking through in the sky quadrant.

He could feel that he'd reached the critical point in the fourth level spirit realm. He only needed a catalyst to break through.

Therefore, Jiang Chen was trying quite hard now to successfully enter the fifth level spirit realm in one go.

"I may be the only fourth level spirit realm in the entire sky quadrant right now. The others are mostly fifth level, with a small few at the sixth level. There are likely some in the sky spirit realm, but I just haven't seen them yet."

The candidates of the sky quadrant were different from the others. They didn't congregate near the arena everyday, and appeared in different areas as well, so it was normal not to run into each other.

Most importantly, the top geniuses of the sky quadrant all valued themselves greatly and felt that their identities were too grand to

show themselves that often.

They seemed to either enjoy playing mysterious, or were worried that revealing themselves in the public too often would allow others to see through their trump cards.

In conclusion, the ones at the apex in the sky quadrant were all as elusive as ghosts.

Jiang Chen trained madly, spending the entire night tempering his spirit ocean, feeling the moment of breakthrough was edging closer and closer. He only needed one last push.

“Mm, it looks like some special development is needed to bring this about. I needn’t rush, it will come together when the time is right.”

When the next day arrived, Jiang Chen wasn’t depressed. Rather, he was filled with fighting spirit.

Tang Hong came to find him not long after he’d opened his eyes, inviting him to go to the comprehensive area together.

This huge man with a wild and rugged appearance seemed to have truly taken Jiang Chen as his boss.

And so, the two traveled together to the foundation testing site.

Chapter 372: Easily Completing The Level Two Mission

The exams of the comprehensive area were an assorted collection, but they all had to do with martial dao.

It was as Tang Hong had said; this exam was basically a free ride, nor was it that difficult.

The exams that Jiang Chen selected weren't too challenging, having to do with formations and refining weapons. He was well-versed in this exams of area and obtained the 25 points.

Tang Hong had likewise not met with any problems.

The two of them met in the lobby, and Tang Hong grinned. "Let's go to the pills area?"

"Sure, why not?" Jiang Chen laughed heartily.

Tang Hong had more confidence in the area of strength of heart and pills. But comparatively speaking, he had the most confidence in the area of pills.

Those who'd come to the area of pills were mostly Precious Tree Sect disciples.

They didn't run into that disappointing fellow Iron Dazhi this

time, however.

“I’m requesting a level one mission.” Tang Hong said.

“I’m requesting a level two mission.” Jiang Chen felt that a level one mission wouldn’t have any difficulty to it and decided to go straight for level two.

The examiner wasn’t the one from yesterday, so he was a bit surprised to see someone directly set their sights on the second level.

Ordinarily speaking, most candidates were quite cautious when applying for advanced stage missions. They usually started off at level one and slowly added on.

There were those who challenged level two right away, but only those who were at the peak level of existence in their sects had enough gall to do that.

Those fellows would also have great confidence in level two missions.

However, the rules dictated nothing of a candidate’s limits in selecting the difficulty of their first mission. So, although the examiner was a bit taken aback, he nodded his head after checking Jiang Chen’s token and noting that he did indeed have the qualification to request a level two mission. He handed over a mission token to Jiang Chen.

“Examination room 32, level two mission. Come back to reclaim your participant token after you’re finished.”

Jiang Chen accepted his mission token and waved his hands at Tang Hong. “Good luck, brother.”

Tang Hong’s eyes were greatly widened as he murmured, “What a hardcore guy, going for a level two mission from the get-go. He’s my boss alright!”

Tang Hong flung the mission token in his hands upwards and walked towards his examination room as well.

Jiang Chen arrived at the room number 32 and handed over his token to the examiner.

“Go on in, the mission’s inside. You can read the mission content yourself. Completing it in the allotted time means you pass. If not, you fail.”

Jiang Chen nodded and walked inside.

The level two mission was a bit uncommon.

There was a partial pill recipe inside, with many of the ingredients already listed but several key ones missing. Candidates had to make use of the other ingredients to extrapolate which ones

were missing.

This mission wasn't simple.

This was different from refining pills. That was done from complete pill recipes.

This was to investigate and fill in the gaps, completing the partial recipe. One had to say, the difficulty of this mission was quite high. If one hadn't spent a significant amount of effort researching recipes, it would be very difficult for them to complete it.

But for Jiang Chen, he only needed to somewhat think through this level of recipe to easily come up with the right answer.

Although he didn't know this recipe and had never seen it before, the theories of pill recipes were broadly applicable. Mastering one meant mastering a hundred. For low-level recipes, they were merely an extension of the fundamental principles.

Jiang Chen understood the general gist after a momentary glance.

This recipe was missing three ingredients. There wasn't only one correct answer, as any one of them could be replaced by identical derivatives.

Jiang Chen restored the recipe in detail and appended it with some explanations.

It wasn't that he enjoyed elaborating on his answers, but he was simply afraid the examiners would be far too mediocre to even understand the theory behind his answers if he didn't explain himself. It would be quite depressing if he was judged as having only completed half of his mission because of their incomprehension.

He'd spent only fifteen minutes in the entire process.

When he verified that there were no errors, Jiang Chen walked out of the room. The examiner started to his feet, "You cannot walk around while the mission is underway. Go back inside."

Jiang Chen smiled ruefully, "Can I not walk around even after having completed the mission?"

"Eh? Completed?" The examiner blinked. How was this possible? Four hours were allocated for a level two mission.

How long had passed? He'd already completed it?

This fellow had probably given up directly after he saw how difficult the mission was? The examiner walked in with a belly full of suspicion.

However, he was quickly stunned by Jiang Chen's examination scroll.

The answer on the scroll was quite complete, the annotated explanations thorough and detailed. It offered complete understanding in one glance and imparted new inspiration.

Those who could be an examiner in the pill area naturally had deep backgrounds in pills. When he saw how the recipe had been completed, he could tell that it was clear from one cursory glance.

“You... you really compiled this?” The examiner realized that he’d asked a dumb question, regretting it immediately after he said it. Openly questioning a candidate wasn’t something that an examiner should do.

“Is there anyone else here?” Jiang Chen’s brow knit together.

The examiner hastened to explain, “I have no other purpose. I was just too surprised. Your speed in finishing it is simply too fast and the amount of time you spent so short.”

Jiang Chen could see that the examiner didn’t have any malicious intent and nodded wordlessly.

The examiner looked meaningfully at Jiang Chen, but the questions in his heart remained unanswered. He drew a mark on the mission token to indicate that it had been completed.

“Take the token and go back to the front to retrieve your candidate token. There are 20 points awarded for a level two mission. Congratulations.”

The examiner was quite gracious as he smiled faintly at Jiang Chen, offering his congratulations.

Jiang Chen nodded, took the mission token, and left.

The examiner watched Jiang Chen's back and reached out a hand to slap himself lightly. "Me and my fat mouth. I better have not offended him. But this fellow is truly odd. Completing a level two mission in fifteen minutes is unheard of. Can it be that he's seen the recipe before? Is that why he could complete the mission so easily and so effortlessly?"

This explanation seemed to be the most reasonable.

The first examiner smiled a small, knowing smile when he saw Jiang Chen return. Returning so quickly? It looks like the mission was a wash. Young men are really hotheaded eh! He's gotten a big head after coming here from the mundane world. But this is a good thing. With this time's lesson, he'll understand that a level two mission isn't that easy to do.

It wasn't that this examiner was delighting in the misfortunes of others, but he felt that the young man didn't have his feet on the ground.

However, if he'd been here yesterday and seen Jiang Chen and Tang Hong's competition, he likely wouldn't be thinking this way.

“I’ve completed the mission and have come to return the mission token.” Why would Jiang Chen care about what this examiner was thinking? He walked up and handed the mission token over.

“Completed?”

The examiner had wanted to take Jiang Chen and take this cocky young man down a peg, when he suddenly heard that Jiang Chen had completed the mission.

“Mm, please look it over.” Jiang Chen nodded. He’d long since grown used to all sorts of disdain and suspicion from his path in the mundane world to the sky quadrant. He didn’t care that another one had been added to these ranks.

The examiner had all sorts of questions in his mind as he accepted the mission token. His heart pounded after glancing at it. It really was complete!

A mission token was only complete if an examiner personally carved his marks into it.

No one was able to forge these marks.

“Not bad, not bad. Twenty points for a level two mission. They’ve already been added, take a look.” Although the examiner was shocked, he still calmed down in the end.

Jiang Chen smiled and accepted his token, leaving after nodding

at the examiner.

Time was precious. Jiang Chen couldn't afford to waste any at the moment.

He had to make use of every minute in the sky quadrant and not squander any.

Compared to the sect disciples, his start had simply been too late. He really would be left behind if he didn't try his best.

Another day passed.

Jiang Chen once again came to the pill area. The examiner was a new face. There were many examiners in this area, and it was normal that someone different was on duty every day.

Jiang Chen handed over his token and said, "I'd like to apply for a level three mission."

"Level three?" The examiner had just gotten to work early in the morning, and his hand trembled slightly at these words. He looked at Jiang Chen with a sideways glance, "Are you sure?"

Jiang Chen nodded very certainly, "I'm sure."

The examiner still hadn't regained his senses. He looked at Jiang Chen up and down before taking his candidate token. The

examiner smiled superciliously, “You’re that secular genius? I’ve heard that you made quite a fuss in the earth quadrant.”

“Does this have anything to do with the sky quadrant exams?” Jiang Chen caught a whiff of something else going on. This examiner was different from the previous ones. There was the faintest traces of belligerence in his words, and he seemed to bear Jiang Chen no small amount of malice.

The previous examiners had been surprised – and had even lost their composure – but they did not bear any ill will. It had been a pure emotional reaction on their front.

But this one held traces of mockery and even suppression in his timbre.

“That there is not, but it’s not necessarily a good thing for a young man to be too cocky. Do you know what a level three mission entails?”

Jiang Chen’s eyebrow arched. Are you quite done already?

He didn’t want to waste time and spittle on blathering with this guy.

Jiang Chen said irritably, “Follow the rules if there’s something inappropriate about me requesting a level three mission. If not, please also follow the rules. My time is precious and I don’t want to waste it in verbal sparring.”

The examiner blinked. This fellow is damn cocky. I'm an examiner, and even those sect geniuses are humble and docile in front of me. Who dares show their temper?

However, the rules were the rules. He didn't dare actually break them. He well remembered the example made of Master Shuiyue.

This examiner was affiliated to the Purple Sun Sect and had said so much because he disliked Jiang Chen, wanting to annoy him a bit.

However, it was obvious he'd failed and had incurred chagrin for himself instead. When he saw candidates continue to walk into the area, he didn't dare vent his spleen lest he become subject to a protest.

Chapter 373: Divine Class Potential

Repressing a belly full of rage, the examiner gave a level three mission token to Jiang Chen, laughing coldly, “Room 68, go there yourself.”

Jiang Chen’s expression was remote as he took possession of the mission token, heading for room 68. He could naturally make out from the examiner’s malicious attitude that he was likely from the Purple Sun Sect.

With Master Shuiyue as a previous example however, the examiner would only be making trouble for himself if he tried to do anything in the exams.

Others had requested the level three mission in the pill area before, but an instance would only occur once every few days.

When all of the candidates in the great hall heard that the secular genius had requested this mission, they cast sideways glances at each other and put their heads together, thinking that this was incredible.

“This secular genius is simply too cocky! He went for a level three mission? Is he really treating this subject as his own backyard, for him to play around in however he’d like?”

“Level three mission? He’s going to run out in a second with dust on his face.”

“Definitely. How many geniuses have failed on a level three mission? An ordinary kid dares take the challenge? He’s being overconfident like teaching his grandma to suck eggs!”

“Not necessarily, I’ve heard that he completed a level two mission yesterday. He even beat Tang Hong from the Precious Tree Sect previously on the pill foundation exam.”

“What? That foolish muscle guy Tang Hong?” Someone asked in surprise.

A huge roar sounded from outside the hall when that question was asked. “Which bastard is running his mouth about me behind my back?!”

An enthusiastic and vigorous form charged in, grabbing the fellow who’d spoke and threw him out before he’d even had time to react.

“Screw you man. You take me for a sick cat if I don’t show you that I’m still a tiger! Try talking about me behind my back next time, see if I don’t break your bones!!”

Tang Hong had been a bit late because he was still training. When he made it here, he happened to hear someone talking bad about him, that he was a foolish muscle guy.

People talking about others behind their backs was what Tang

Hong hated most in this world.

"You, c'mere. What were you talking about just now?" Tang Hong pointed at another candidate who'd taken part in the discussions.

The candidate's face was ashen as he looked at Tang Hong in fine fettle. He knew that this primitive brute was about to go on a rampage. Fear pricked his heart, but he didn't conceal anything and gave a full accounting of everything.

"Challenging a level three mission?" Tang Hong's eyes lit up when he heard this. He slapped his thigh and complimented. "My boss alright! Such charisma!"

Tang Hong laughed heartily and ignored the gossiping candidates. Although these fellows were all part of the sky quadrant, their strength was in the lower echelons. They naturally didn't dare offend Tang Hong, someone who would rank in the top ten. They all rubbed their noses and shrank to the side.

"I request a level two mission." Tang Hong seemed to have been affected by Jiang Chen as he also walked up with a heroic, expansive air and slapped his token down onto the table.

The Purple Sun Sect examiner was the type to hate one thing on account of another. He turned his attentions to Tang Hong, but didn't dare cause trouble for him.

He could inwardly curse that both of them would fail so that they would face the penalty of being barred for five days.

“Foolish brute, wallowing in degeneration to take a country bumpkin as a boss. This brat is throwing away all of the Precious Tree Sect’s face.” The examiner grumbled privately.

……

Jiang Chen entered the exam room and started his new challenge.

A level three mission was indeed much harder than a level two mission. However, to Jiang Chen, there was no problem that was insurmountable for him when it came to pills.

The mission requested that candidates select the useful ingredients from a pile of a thousand and put them together to form a base that could be used to refine pills.

The request was that candidates be able to put together ten recipes.

Quite a few ingredients were needed to refine a single type of pill. It could range anywhere from four to more than ten ingredients.

One main ingredient was definitely needed, the amount of the rest of the complementing ingredients could be many or few.

However, it was quite a tall task to put together ten pill recipes from the mess of a thousand ingredients here.

Four hours were given for such a task.

For an ordinary cultivator, a thousand ingredients were enough of a headache. It would take at least an hour to organize them all and finely identify them.

It was even harder when one needed to put them into recipe combinations.

To Jiang Chen however, these pills were all novice level creations. There was nothing difficult about them at all.

He quickly sorted them all and picked out which ones could be useful in refinement, which could be the main ingredient.

He quickly picked thirty or forty ingredients suitable for being the main ingredient in a recipe.

Recipes having to do with these ingredients then rose in his mind. He looked over all of them, and then looked at the other ingredients.

If all complementing ingredients were present, then he could put them together as one recipe.

He proceeded neatly in this manner.

One had to say, this level three mission was indeed complex, but that was only for outsiders. To well-versed experts, the most complicated things were easy, if they attacked the problem with the right methods.

It was said that problems were difficult for those who didn't know how to tackle them, but those who did wouldn't find them hard at all.

There were 23 recipe combinations in front of Jiang Chen after an hour. He confirmed them again and again, ensuring that there was nothing wrong with all of these small and large recipes.

Jiang Chen made identifying marks on each of these combinations. He also summarized what pills could be refined, the pills' name, and the general theory behind each pill.

Exactly two hours had passed after he'd completed all this.

When he finally confirmed that all was in order, Jiang Chen walked out and said to the examiner outside the room. "I'm done, will you check please?

The examiner was also surprised at Jiang Chen's speed, but didn't say anything. He walked into the room and was greeted by the sight of 23 combinations. Detailed, complete, visible at a

glance.

“These... these are all your combinations? So many?” The examiner was shocked as he stared dumbly at the combinations. There were 23 of them! Far in excess of the 10 required by the mission.

The examiner was thrown into a disarray after counting up the number. It was as if someone had suddenly targeted his acupoint and had petrified him.

“Indeed. According to my calculations, this should be the limit. The rest of the ingredients won’t be able to form another recipe.”

Of this, Jiang Chen was quite certain of.

The examiner took quite a while to respond as his voice was full of emotion. He tsk’ed in amazement. “Genius, genius... we’ve also simulated this mission before and 23 recipes are indeed the greatest number of combinations that can be made. But did you know how long we took to simulate this?”

“How long?” Jiang Chen was taken aback. He hadn’t thought that the examiner would talk about this with him.

“Eight of us participated, and we spent 32 hours, working day and night, to come to this conclusion and be certain that we hadn’t overlooked anything. Indeed, 23 combinations is the limit.”

The examiner sighed again. “Genius, such genius. I have to say, this is divine class potential! I have truly learnt something today. It’s not difficult for us to complete ten combinations in a short amount of time, but for you to have identified all combinations in such a short amount of time, this is indeed heaven defying potential.”

This examiner was completely different from the Purple Sun Sect examiner at the entrance of the area. His tones and words were full of admiration.

It was indeed as he’d said. It was an easy thing for the examiners to complete this mission in a short amount of time, given their potential.

But to use half the allotted time to identify all 23 combinations, what was this if not a freak genius?

This was almost outside the scope of his imagination.

“Young man, you’re the youngster gifted with the most pill talent that I’ve seen thus far. Don’t be unworthy of your talents!”

The examiner’s tone was grave and earnest. His heart of treasuring talent was quite evident.

Jiang Chen smiled, “Then, have I passed?”

The examiner couldn’t help but laugh, “If I don’t pass you, then

us old men would likely never pass as well. Not only do you pass, but you pass with flying colors for your miraculous completion. If it wasn't for the rules dictating that a level three mission could only be awarded 40 points, I would give you 80 or 160 points if it were up to me! I think that your answer scroll is absolutely perfect."

The examiner was profuse with his praise as he marked the token with his unique sign. "Go and obtain your points. Youngster, I'm certain that there will come a day that you're the most venerated pill master in the sixteen kingdoms!"

This was definitely the highest praise.

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. He felt that it was touching that someone was encouraging him so kindly.

"Young man, with your strength, you can absolutely challenge a level four mission. There only been three instances of a candidate challenging a level four mission up until now. Only one has succeeded. I hope you can be the second." The examiner encouraged.

"There's not much meaning in being second. If I'm going to do it, I'm going to be the first. Has anyone ever requested a level five mission?"

No one thus far had requested a requested a level five mission yet. To be frank, only a sparse few had requested a level four mission up to this point. It'd only be requested three times in the

last sixty, seventy days.

And, only one instance had resulted in success. The successful case had been lucky, the mission hadn't been that difficult then.

Ever since someone had successfully passed a level four mission, no one had dared challenge it afterwards. It was too difficult. For any of the candidates to succeed, they would have insane heaven-defying good luck.

However, it was already something to be proud of having completed a level three mission. At least, up until now, there had been only 10 successful instances of passing a level three pill mission in the last sixty days.

Jiang Chen returned with a triumphant smile. When the Purple Sun Sect examiner took Jiang Chen's token, his very face turned green.

He'd been taunting and jeering Jiang Chen before, and now, Jiang Chen had slapped him back in the most thorough way possible.

When Jiang Chen took back his candidate token, the points on it had changed to 160 points.

100 foundation points, 20 from a level two mission, 40 from a level three. He now had 160 points!

Chapter 374: Unprecedented, Level Five Mission

Jiang Chen was rather satisfied by this point accumulation rate.

However, what he didn't know was that his title as a freak genius had made the rounds among all the pill area examiners overnight.

All the examiners had heard of his phenomenal accomplishments by now.

He'd beaten the proud and unbridled Tang Hong in a bet, and the latter was now wholeheartedly become the freak genius' follower.

He'd crashed through a level two mission as if splitting bamboo, completing it in fifteen minutes when allotted two hours, and completed it in stunning fashion, with no flaws to be found at all.

He'd then displayed divine potential in the third mission; Eight examiners had used 32 hours to finish simulating a mission, but he'd used only two hours to thoroughly do so by himself.

What was this if not divine-class potential?

When Jiang Chen appeared again the next day, he was greeted by the complicated gaze from an examiner. There were hints of appraisal in the examiner's eyes, as well as subtle traces of anticipation.

“What level mission? Four?” When Jiang Chen handed over his candidate token, the examiner responded warmly and enthusiastically, without even waiting for him to speak.

Jiang Chen had indeed intended to request a level four mission, but found it rather strange when the examiner asked him like this. The examiners swapped out every day, and their constantly changing reactions threw Jiang Chen for a loop.

The difficulty of the fourth level mission had indeed increased by quite a bit once again.

Jiang Chen returned to the main entrance four hours later and handed over his mission token.

Level four mission, success!

His successful challenge of a level four mission spread throughout the entire sky quadrant in the blink of an eye.

A secular cultivator had accomplished such stunning feats in the sky quadrant, becoming the second to complete a level four mission since the beginning of the exams!

If it were the original person who’d completed a level four mission, people may not have put much thought into it.

But this feat had been achieved by a secular cultivator! This drew quite a bit of suspicion and disbelief in these results.

“What? Level four pill mission?” Long Juxue also thought it incredible when she received this news. “How could that dumb animal’s potential in spirit medicine have increased so much, so quickly?”

Her thoughts traveled back to the Hidden Dragon Trials of the Eastern Kingdom.

She remembered how the Pill King Garden had once attempted to usurp the Hall of Healing’s position and held an exhibition, trying to slap the latter’s face.

Yet, ultimately the Hall of Healing had hit back soundly in return, introducing a few pills that completely destroyed the Pill King Garden and causing it to disband.

This matter had stunned the capital back then, and naturally Long Juxue had been aware of it as well. However, no one knew what brought that about.

“Could it be that the pills the Hall of Healing had marketed at that time had come from Jiang Chen?” Long Juxue suddenly felt enlightenment dawn on her.

“Why did the Third Hallmaster Qiao Baishi of the Hall of Healing harden his resolve to associate with Jiang Chen, even though he

was the successor to the Hall? Was it really because of Jiang Chen's potential in pills?"

The more Long Juxue thought about this, the more likely she thought it to be.

"That dumb beast has hidden himself rather well. I hadn't imagined that his potential in the area of pills is so high. Could it be that his mysterious backer truly is spirit king protector Ye Chonglou of the Skylaurel Kingdom?"

Although Ye Chonglou wasn't someone of the Precious Tree Sect, he had a myriad of connections with the sect. If he had truly started raising Jiang Chen since young and focused on pills, then everything laid out before her would have a reasonable explanation!

Whenever Long Juxue heard Jiang Chen's name now, it felt like a thousand, nay, ten thousand vipers gnawing on her heart. It was incredibly unsettling.

Her deep, burning hatred made her itch to immediately destroy Jiang Chen and scatter his ashes to the four winds after burning him to the ground.

"Hmph. Talent in the dao of pills is still an unconventional side path in the end. Even if he can deploy this potential to the utmost, it'll never be able to measure up to my advantage of an innate constitution."

Long Juxue had great confidence in her azure phoenix constitution. The overbearing atmosphere now present in her bearing was something that had been accumulated over time.

"Jiang Chen, I'll let you strut around for now. You best not let me select you in the challenges. When that day comes, it will be your last on this earth. Go and have your little fun for a few days!"

Chilling killing intent suffused Long Juxue's hate filled eyes, akin to the passage of autumn to the arrival of bitter winter as the surrounding temperature plummeted.

"Haha, boss, big happenings, big happenings! You're now a celebrity in the sky quadrant!" Tang Hong grinned and laughed loudly.

"Is being a celebrity a good thing? Someone's just trying to set me up as the public enemy. There's nothing good about it. Haven't you seen that those preeminent sect disciples are all the very epitome of a low profile?"

Tang Hong chuckled, "They are they and you are you. Those fellows like to flaunt a mysterious air and pretend that they're all that. You're my boss and so you should be a bit more arrogant. You've got the skills and talent and so you should put those sons of b*tches in their place! They need to stop acting like idiots with eyes on the top of their heads that don't look properly at anyone!"

It was evident that Tang Hong was quite disdainful towards those premier experts. This was the core reason why he'd been unable to

become part of the most select social circles.

"Forget it, I have no desire to compete with anyone right now. My most important mission currently is to grind out points. Everything is as fleeting as the winds if I don't raise my score."

There was no point in erupting in full hostility before the moment to battle arrived.

"Boss, are you really going to challenge the level five mission tomorrow?" Tang Hong rubbed his hands and changed the subject.

"Yep." Jiang Chen answered shortly and simply nodded his head.

"Heh heh, then things will be even more fun tomorrow. No one's requested a level five mission in the pill area thus far. Boss, you're heaven-defying! No matter whether or not you succeed, this step will absolutely own all your opponents."

Tang Hong kept rubbing his hands in excitement and his eyes gleamed when he thought about the scenario at hand.

If it'd been anyone else requesting a level five mission, Tang Hong's first thought would've been—an idiot seeking death.

His second thought would've been—the hell does it have to do with me?

But Jiang Chen was different. Jiang Chen was his boss.

Tang Hong had an almost blind faith in Jiang Chen at this point. One had to know that despite with Tang Hong's potential, he'd never challenged a level four mission.

But boss was going to challenge a level five mission and set a new record in the sky quadrant!

Tang Hong wasn't the only one making these speculations. The entire sky quadrant was discussing whether or not the secular genius would really challenge a level five mission.

A level five mission!

This was a mission that that even the most preeminent geniuses didn't dare attempt, despite reward of 160 points upon completion being quite alluring.

However, the same thing applied both ways. If he failed, he would be docked 160 points.

Prior to attempting the level four mission, he'd already had 160 points. Now that he'd completed it and been rewarded with 80 points, he had 240 points.

This score was past the minimum requirement for requesting a level five mission.

After a few days of hard work, Jiang Chen's score had passed the minimum requirement of 160 points.

Tang Hong scratched his ears and head and sat for a bit, then remained there for a bit more. He appeared quite fidgety and brash. He sometimes had a lively expression on his face, and at times mumbled to himself.

It looked like this perverse genius of the Precious Tree Sect had long since grown used to life as Jiang Chen's follower, and would be so worked up about his boss' affairs that he wouldn't be able to sleep.

This night was quite long for Tang Hong.

He arrived early next day to find Jiang Chen and watch over him.

Jiang Chen found it funny when he saw Tang Hong's intensely anxious attitude. Challenging a level five mission was a simple matter for Jiang Chen.

But to Tang Hong, this was an incredible, earth-shaking and heaven-shattering matter.

In fact, it was a monumental event for the entire sky quadrant.

"Boss, take a few deep breaths in and don't be too nervous.

Remember, this is a level five mission. It's no joke!"

Tang Hong chuckled.

"The hell am I nervous about? What's there to be nervous about?" Jiang Chen hadn't been nervous at all. Thanks to Tang Hong fooling around, it actually looked like Jiang Chen was putting on a front.

"You're really not nervous? Boss is boss alright. This is a transaction of 160 points! You gain 160 points if you win, but if you lose, you'll be back in poverty when your points are docked."

Having lower than 100 points in the sky quadrant was absolute poverty.

But in Jiang Chen's heart, he'd never even considered failure. The level four mission had still been completed with ease last time.

Then using the difficulty of the level four mission as a barometer, even if the level five was double of that, it would still be no challenge to Jiang Chen.

"If I take home 160 points, then my total score will be 400 points." Jiang Chen's heart was full of longing.

400 points was indeed nothing in the eyes of the higher level candidates. But to Jiang Chen, this was an exceedingly good starting point.

He had to keep grinding out points in the pill area until his points were greater than a thousand. He could even look forward to two thousand points.

Although the other geniuses were also grinding out points in their strong areas, no one was a bigger cheat than Jiang Chen in the sky quadrant.

The others could gain points because of their superior strength and their unique advantages in the sects.

But Jiang Chen's gains were based on using the memories and experiences of his past life. This was something that no one else would have apart from him.

He could use a single move to take everything.

It was evident that the exams of the sky quadrant were used to uncover geniuses in any areas.

The two of them had arrived at the pill examination area as they chatted.

Rumors were flying thickly in the outside world that he was about to challenge the level five mission. There were many gathered to witness the show and take in the means of this challenge.

Therefore, there were at least double the number of disciples here than normally present.

When they saw Jiang Chen appear in the lobby, things became quite lively. The star of the show was here! This was good news for those waiting to watch the show.

Chapter 375: Stunning The Sky Quadrant

“Are you sure that you’d like to request a level five mission?” The examiner asked again.

“Yes.” Jiang Chen nodded his head lightly.

“Haven’t all of you been waiting here to see my boss challenge the level five mission?” Tang Hong cried out on the side.

“Room number 12. Young man, you’re the first to challenge a level five mission. I wish you good luck!” The examiner gave the mission token to Jiang Chen.

Tang Hong waved his big hands, shouting, “Good luck boss! Take down the level five mission, and you’ll be the genius ranked first amongst the sky quadrant then!”

The words ‘first ranked genius’ were quite ear piercing to the candidates waiting around to see a good show.

It wasn’t as if just anyone had the right to be the first ranked genius.

Even of the preeminent geniuses now, neither of them dared self style themselves as number one. This was because no one wanted to become a public enemy at this time.

This title was actually a burden. Whoever dared to call themselves as such thus would become the target of everyone's attacks.

Of those who could make it into the sky quadrant, who was willing to let someone else take home the title of first genius?

Even those who had no hope of making it to the top felt out of sorts when they heard Tang Hong's words? Was a secular cultivator worthy of the title of first genius? Aren't you worried that the wind will hurt your fat tongue after all that boasting!

However, Tang Hong wasn't thinking that much at all. He didn't have the intention of raking Jiang Chen over the coals at all. He'd been defeated by Jiang Chen several times in the areas that he was most confident in—strength of heart and pills.

That he'd lost so thoroughly meant that Tang Hong truly and wholeheartedly accepted Jiang Chen as his boss.

Tang Hong was a straightforward guy. He would say whatever was on his mind. He never cared about concealing his thoughts. He didn't care at all that what he was saying was irritating to others.

He only knew that he truly wished that Jiang Chen would succeed in challenging a level five mission.

He thoroughly submitted with good grace to a boss who'd beaten him like this. Completely, and utterly!

The difficulty of a level five mission was indeed great.

It involved the refining of pills, and the requirements it made on the final product were quite high.

Of course, to someone who'd refined the Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill, this was bit difficult to Jiang Chen, but not too much.

The kind of quality he was being asked to produce was far below the aforementioned pill.

The time allotted was 24 hours, and the required level of quality was to produce an upper rank pill.

The pills were divided into lower, mid, upper, supreme, and even earth and heaven rank.

Of course, it was impossible for the last two to appear in the sixteen kingdoms. There were no pill masters of the requisite ability level, nor were there pill cauldrons and ingredients of sufficient quality.

To refine an earth or heaven rank pill meant that every detail had to be perfect. If even one was insufficient, then it'd be impossible to refine a pill of those ranks.

Jiang Chen observed the pill cauldron when he'd laid out all the

ingredients in the right order. Its quality was acceptable for refining a pill of the requisite quality.

As the cauldron heated up, Jiang Chen started to go through each step in a calm, unhurried fashion.

Continued fortuitous circumstances had made it so that Jiang Chen had a fine control over fire. This was the experience that the Lotus of Fire and Ice had brought him. It had absorbed the entire vein of heavenly fire power in the initial selection, so the fire that he could control now was exceedingly strong.

The potential of one's fire talents was quite important to a pill master.

The strongest pill masters were adepts at controlling fire and had to be geniuses of fire. If one didn't possess enormous fire attribute potential, then they could forget about becoming a decent pill master.

Of course, the best potential for someone refining pills was still someone who had great holistic potential, such as Long Juxue's innate constitution.

To innately possess talents in all five attributes meant that no matter what this person did or learnt, they'd be able to do so faster than anyone else.

The dao of pills was thus as well. At the end of the day, it was still

regarding one's grasp over the five elements. One's grasp of fire was just an impetus in the end.

Pills were a finished product.

Spirit ingredients were formed naturally and yet to be manipulated. There were those born completely in nature and those raised by humans. Their uses were more single minded.

Pills made use of various spirit ingredients and melded them together to give rise to a bigger effect. This was the profound mystery of the dao of pills.

Therefore, when it came down to the bottom of things, the dao of pills was of the same origin of martial dao.

To understand one was to understand a hundred.

Of course, to someone who was naturally proud as Long Juxue and thoroughly immersed in martial dao, she disdained being a pill master.

Although pill masters were respected, they were only thus and not revered in the end if they didn't have strong martial dao to back themselves up.

Long Juxue liked the feeling of being one on high and being respected and feared by thousands.

She loved the feeling of the masses at her feet and grasping all in her hands.

Of course, this wasn't limited to just Long Juxue. Most bent on martial dao pursued the peak of martial dao, just for the experience of having superiority over all.

This wasn't something that an ordinary pill master could attain.

Even though Jiang Chen had been renowned throughout the realms in his past life for his grasp of the dao of pills, that didn't mean he'd possessed the prestige of being able to awe all those throughout the realms.

This was because he hadn't possessed absolute power.

Jiang Chen looked silently at the cauldron and focused his concentration. Once he entered the state of refining pills, Jiang Chen's heart was as calm as still water. He quickly found the mentality that he had possessed in his past life.

Time passed with the tick of every second and minute.

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Those who had completed their daily mission all converged on the lobby. It was obvious that someone had spread the word that

someone had requested a level five mission.

Apart from those geniuses who were cognizant of their status, almost a majority of the hundred candidates in the sky quadrant had arrived. There were forty to fifty people in the lobby.

All of them were whispering to each other and discussing about the secular genius.

Tang Hong had taken advantage of this time to solidly complete a mission. He exited quickly and was now quite agitated.

This was the first time that a level five mission had appeared.

Although Tang Hong was very confident in the new boss that he'd accepted, his heart was still on tenterhooks before Jiang Chen came out.

If he succeeded, that would set off an explosion that would shock even the most preeminent geniuses.

Therefore, Tang Hong had high anticipations for such a scene to appear.

"Boss, you've got to hold out. I, old Tang, finally have someone that I admire. I hope you return triumphantly and smack all the faces of those so-called top geniuses!"

Tang Hong was both anxious and full of anticipation. Because he would occasionally come off worse for the wear from those preeminent geniuses, so he ardently wished that someone even more perverse would appear and thoroughly trample those so-called top geniuses.

It wasn't that he was jealous of them, but that he couldn't abide by their style.

Those who were waiting to watch the show were all among the lower tier in the sky quadrant. Tang Hong took a look and realized that none of the top 20 were here.

"Heh heh, these fellows have their eyes on top of their heads, but they're definitely all dying of curiosity and still won't come personally. However, it doesn't matter that they're not here. They'll be the first to receive the news when boss finishes. Hahaha, I wonder if they'll become uneasy then?"

More people arrived the longer that time went on.

Even Iron Dazhi of the Precious Tree Sect couldn't resist temptation and ran over for a look as well.

Iron Dazhi's expression changed when he saw Tang Hong. When Tang Hong glared at him though, Iron Dazhi knew enough to not come up and greet the former. Resentment filled his heart instead.

"This idiot Tang Hong. He could've latched onto the leg of a

direct descendent of the Iron family but decided to call a secular kid as his boss instead. This kid's brain really isn't normal."

Another person walked in after Iron Dazhi walked in. He was tall and wore plain hemp clothes. his eyes were like the stars as a deep look filled them. His bearing seemed a bit desolate, giving one the feeling of an ascetic monk.

This person was Chu Xinghan, Master Shuiyue's second disciple.

He'd heard of what was going on here after he'd completed his mission. He'd been a bit surprised, and had come over for a look.

Honestly speaking, although Jiang Chen and Master Shuiyue were dead set against each other in the earth quadrant, Chu Xinghan had always been one to follow his intuition and not be controlled by emotions.

Logically speaking, he was of Master Shuiyue's faction and as such, he should be hating Jiang Chen. But he really didn't hate this person in the depths of his heart.

When he'd seen Jiang Chen at the Second Crossing, he'd felt warmly disposed towards this young man. This was why he hadn't killed Jiang Chen even in the face of great pressure, and had decided to bring him back to the sect.

In contrast, he just didn't feel much towards Long Juxue, this so-called genius with an innate constitution. He even had a rather bad

impression of her.

When he thought of the causes, Chu Xinghan also knew that his honored master was likely suppressing Jiang Chen because she suspected he was Jiang Chen.

The source of all these grudges was Long Juxue.

Since the honored master was erupting in open hostilities with Jiang Chen because of Long Juxue, Chu Xinghan's first thought was that he wouldn't become involved at all. He didn't want to become embroiled in pointless conflict for Long Juxue's sake again.

He'd become involved that time when he saved her life, but she hadn't been grateful at all. The calm Chu Xinghan then learnt that this woman was not worth wasting his efforts on at all.

With the previous examples of third junior brother Hai Tian and fourth junior brother He Yan, Chu Xinghan knew this more clearly than anything else.

In the depths of his heart, Chu Xinghan actually admired Jiang Chen quite a bit and even felt respect for this secular genius. To be able to make it to this step wasn't a product of sheer luck only.

Chu Xinghan even had the faintest premonition that even Long Juxue wouldn't be able to win with confidence over this fellow.

When his thoughts traveled here, Chu Xinghan's gaze couldn't help but look to the front.

Chapter 376: Catching Up At Top Speed

“He’s out!” Some sharp-eyed fellow called out.

All gazes shifted over to that direction in unison.

Only ten hours had passed, he was out already?

Tang Hong’s enormous feet stomped over, pushing aside the people in his way. He took a look and saw that the person who’d come out was indeed Jiang Chen.

“Boss!” Tang Hong’s eyes widened as his heart sank. It wasn’t a good sign that he’d come out this early.

What did ending a level five mission early mean?

Jiang Chen also blinked when he saw the sixty or so people gathered in the lobby. He looked at Tang Hong and then pointed at those in the lobby. “What’s going on here?”

Tang Hong chuckled, “They’re all here to watch the show since they heard you requested a level five mission.”

“Well, boss? Didja crush it?” Tang Hong was a quite agitated as his large hands were clenched into fists, light shining out of his eyes.

Jiang Chen nodded, “The level five mission is rather a bit interesting.”

“Eh? Whaddya mean interesting? Did you succeed or not?” Tang Hong scratched his head full of straw-like hair and asked forthrightly.

When the others saw that Jiang Chen had nodded and then said the mission was a bit interesting, they too didn’t know if he’d succeeded or not. They all looked at Jiang Chen with gazes full of complex emotions.

Some were anticipatory, some were waiting to watch a joke. There were also those who were disdainful. Jiang Chen caught glimpse of a microcosm of human emotion from those assembled in that moment.

“Mm, I succeeded.” Jiang Chen’s expression was remote as he nodded.

“Fantastic, hahaha!” Tang Hong threw his head back and laughed. “Level five mission, haha! Do you see that? This is a true genius, a real genius!”

Jiang Chen walked forward as the crowd of onlookers all parted in twain in front of him. A mix of emotions played across their faces as they looked at Jiang Chen.

“Master examiner, this is the mission token, please inspect it.”

Jiang Chen did not become full of himself just because he'd completed a level five mission.

He also ignored the reactions of those around him. Whether they were envious or jealous, he, Jiang Chen, walked only his own path.

The examiner's hand spasmed slightly as he accepted the mission token, murmuring, "I hadn't thought... hadn't thought that the first to succeed in a level five mission in the sky quadrant would be a secular candidate. Our four great sects should truly reflect. How many gems have we missed in the ordinary world over the years?"

The examiner sighed and took Jiang Chen's mission token, awarding 160 points to him after checking it.

In this way, there were 400 points on Jiang Chen's candidate token.

This score was just enough to ensure that he wouldn't be eliminated from the sky quadrant.

"Brother, let's get to know each other. I'm Iron Dazhi of the Precious Tree Sect. I hadn't thought that a genius like you would exist in the ordinary world. This really is an eye opener for me. I've come because I'd like to personally witness a secular genius' glory. Would you be interested in gathering at my residence? In terms of the dao of pills, if my Precious Tree Sect dares call ourselves second amongst the four great sects, then there will be no one who dares say that they're first."

Iron Dazhi was the first to come over and greet Jiang Chen enthusiastically.

Jiang Chen stared blankly. He hadn't thought that Iron Dazhi would have this side to him. He still remembered when he'd bumped into Iron Dazhi with Tang Hong that day. They hadn't seemed to get along.

The fellow had seemed to forget the matters of that day already and was greeting him warmly.

Tang Hong also blinked. He walked up and shoved Iron Dazhi aside, "Bugger off and don't block the way here."

Iron Dazhi was incensed but managed to restrain himself, and said coldly, "Tang Hong, you and I are of the same sect. I wouldn't be kicking up a fuss if I were you. I'm recruiting a genius for the sect now, so what are you messing around for?"

Tang Hong wasn't kindly disposed towards Iron Dazhi. "What the hell are you? Do you think you represent the sect? You only represent the Iron family at most. Do you understand?"

Iron Dazhi snorted coldly, "I can't be bothered arguing with idiots like you."

He proceeded to smile apologetically at Jiang Chen, "Brother, Tang Hong is a fool. Don't take him seriously. I have some superior wine in my residence and it makes me feel anguished that I have

no one to share it with. Good wine and geniuses are a match made in heaven, no? Are you interested in having a drink?”

Jiang Chen’s brow furrowed when he saw Iron Dazhi kick up a fuss in front of him. “Not interested. Move.”

He didn’t pause after saying these words and walked past Iron Dazhi as if he was air, heading for the door.

Tang Hong chuckled oddly, “Iron Dazhi, don’t think you’re actually a genius just because you have a good ancestor. You’re really unworthy.”

With this bout of self-humiliation that he’d brought down on himself, a streak of killing intent flashed through Iron Dazhi’s eyes.

The others also started laughing uproariously. Their look at Iron Dazhi was full of mockery and sarcasm. It was obvious that they were delighting in the fact that Iron Dazhi was being shamed.

It wasn’t that they were enemies with Iron Dazhi. They were competing with each other, so it was natural for them to feel delighted at seeing someone else unlucky and making a fool of themselves. They were only one step away from kicking Iron Dazhi when he was down.

Chu Xinghan stood at the door, and the two flicked a seemingly noncommittal glance at each other when Jiang Chen passed

through the door.

"It's him alright!" Chu Xinghan already had a preconceived notion in his mind. When he saw that meaningful look, the familiarity coming from his previous interaction with Jiang Chen surged to the fore again.

Standing at the door, Chu Xinghan sighed to himself as he watched Jiang Chen vanish into the distance. "Am I destined to be enemies with such a character?"

Chu Xinghan shook his head and warned himself again. "No, I cannot become involved in this morass of a conflict. He is the fated rival of Long Juxue, and that's between the two of them. I, Chu Xinghan, am loyal to martial dao. I've already saved Long Juxue once due to my gratitude to the honored master. I have no need to become involved again. There is a power on him that makes my heart palpitate. I have a premonition that he won't be that easily suppressed."

Chu Xinghan warned himself repeatedly with a calm heart.

After the clash between gazes just now, he was even more certain of his notions. The secular genius wasn't someone who'd be that easily oppressed.

Although Long Juxue had talent that surpassed all, if she were to underestimate her enemy, she would suffer quite a bit at the hands of this person.

Chu Xinghan even had the vague feeling that there was a formless bearing to this secular genius that even Long Juxue lacked.

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“Boss, boss, you’re famous now! I firmly believe that your name will be listed alongside those top geniuses. They’ll probably even list you as one of their competitors in the future.” Tang Hong chuckled.

“Competition?” Jiang Chen chuckled. “Is that important? I walk my path. What do the top geniuses have to do with me?”

“Alright, that’s my boss alright! Damn awesome!” Tang Hong sighed.

Completing a level five mission did indeed cause great ripples in the sky quadrant. Almost everyone was discussing the secular genius who’d appeared out of nowhere. They were all quite curious about him and also kept uncovering his glorious feats.

Champion of the first selection. Champion of the mystic quadrant. Champion of the earth quadrant.

He’d swept over almost all his opponents on this victorious march to championship. The number of people who’d tasted defeat at his hands exceeded even that.

Guo Ren had been scared to the depths of forming an internal demon and spitting out blood without Jiang Chen even making a move.

He Yan, fourth disciple beneath Master Shuiyue, had been easily trampled.

Hai Tian, third disciple beneath Master Shuiyue, had appeared all that but had been slain.

Master Shuiyue, the keeper of the earth quadrant, had lost two disciples in a row and had been pulled off her station, losing all face in front of the senior executives of the four great sects.

When these glorious feats had been unearthed one by one, the secular genius' prestige in the sky quadrant was even more amplified. He was immediately listed as one of those who could make it into the top 64.

There were even those who optimistically felt that the secular genius had hopes of vying for a spot in the final 16, becoming one of the four venerated forefathers' personal disciple.

Everyone was curious now, just where had this secular genius popped out from? Just what was his identity?

Apart from some of the geniuses in the Purple Sun Sect knowing the truth behind the matters, many could guess, but they had no clues. The premier geniuses of the Purple Sun Sect would naturally

be disdainful of gossiping like this.

Although a level five mission in the pill area was a bit more eye-catching, it still didn't register much in these genius' line of sight.

"A genius in the dao of pills, utter trash in martial dao. Even the strongest potential in pills is but fleeting winds in the ring." These were the disdainful thoughts in a great majority of them.

"In the world of martial dao, martial dao is king in the end. The dao of pills is but a supporting way." These were the thoughts of the more peaceful, objective factions.

"This secular genius possessed such a heaven-defying dao of pills. If his martial dao potential is just as amazing, then he will be a formidable opponent." This was the calm minority who had yet to lose their reason.

However, the surprise Jiang Chen brought to everyone didn't end here. He fell into a routine after this, grinding out points in the area of pills in going from level one to level five and repeating this over and over again.

He was able to gain 310 points in one full cycle.

With such a perverse point accumulation speed, his score had exploded to an astonishing 1,640 points after a month!

This speed made the entire sky quadrant sink into a strange

atmosphere.

This almost insane speed in grinding out points had patently formed a latent threat to those preeminent geniuses.

If one were to say that they had been slightly dismissive in the beginning, they could feel that the secular genius was catching up to them at top speed a month later.

Although things had yet to reach the level of a fire licking at their behinds, at this rate, even if the secular genius' score didn't surpass theirs at the end of the cycle, it would be on par with theirs.

In that moment, even the preeminent geniuses couldn't help but feel a certain sense of urgency.

They'd never thought that there would be such a pill genius in the mundane world. He'd never failed once in his repeated attempts!

This was able to be so easily summed up with a mere title of "pill genius". Even the words of "perverse genius" was insufficient to describe him.

Even the examiners were flabbergasted, much less the candidates in the sky quadrant. They'd never thought that such a dark horse would suddenly appear in the area of pills. His momentum was so fierce that all the other premier geniuses felt uneasy in their

positions.

Indeed, if this rhythm was maintained, even the preeminent geniuses would likely have to start taking some risks and increase the number of times they request a level four mission.

They would even have to attempt a level five mission. Otherwise, with this speed, being surpassed would be inevitable!

Chapter 377: Too Much Of The Limelight, Time To Suppress Him A Bit?

The secular freak genius quickly became the sky quadrant's hottest topic. Almost everyone managed to talk about it sometime each day.

There were even candidates starting to complain that the secular genius' actions were disrupting the balance of the quadrant.

"Breezing through everything with just a single move? I admit his potential in pills is astounding. But we're martial dao geniuses! We still need to make use of our fighting strength to emerge from the masses in the future. He's deviating to a side path, like walking on the edge of a blade, when he furiously grinds points like this. He's completely destroying the ecosystem of the sky quadrant!"

"Yeah, this isn't fair. Letting him grind points like this, won't all the other geniuses be forced to just gaze at his back in a few months? Who can take care of him then?"

"Indeed, there's no difference between this and cheating. He should go test his skills in other areas if he has what it takes. He only knows to freeload in the pill area; what kind of skill does he possess?"

"I think we should sign a petition in protest. This rule is too unreasonable and should be modified. A candidate can't keep accumulating points in the same area. Otherwise, his advantage is too obvious. Even the most preeminent of geniuses will be eating

his dust in a few months."

"Well said. We need to start a petition that proposes an amendment to the rules. Otherwise, we'll go on strike! We can't let a secular cultivator use such despicable methods to sit on top of our heads."

"Makes sense! How can us sect disciples be overcome by a nameless nobody? How depressing is that?"

All of the fellows kicking up a fuss were quite radical, spewing incredibly shameless words. What cheating, grinding out points, or amending the rules? All of them spoke with such self righteousness but failed to understand that their lack of skill was what led them to overlook such a method that abided by the rules.

Of course, some disagreed with those words.

After all, everyone was competition in the entire sky quadrant. Human hearts were difficult to predict, and it was impossible that they all shared the same opinions.

Some folks were hollering shamelessly, while others scorned their actions.

"What's wrong with breezing through everything in one move? Anyone who has what it takes can do the same as well. Since the rules are set thus, he's not doing anything wrong. Which one of us isn't picking our most confident area when we request missions?

Or is it that people should use their weaknesses to challenge someone else's strengths?"

"The organizers are doing things in this fashion in order to unearth geniuses. This secular genius is absolutely a genius in pills. If he doesn't make use of this overwhelming advantage, then he's truly an idiot. Calling a bunch of grapes sour just because they can't have any, how narrow minded!"

"He's accumulating points reasonably and properly. And they accuse him of cheating? These fellows are completely shameless! What ecosystem? Must the top geniuses be ranked first in order for them to call this shameless? Is it that a genius from the mundane world can't rank at the top?"

These were the two camps of thought.

Of course, there were also those who were neutral. They neither supported nor protested the developments, merely watching the proceedings with indifferent eyes.

But overall, those in favor of suppressing the secular genius' rise still held the upper hand.

This included those top geniuses. Although none of them voiced anything in public, they exerted a lot of pressure privately and strongly hinted their feelings to the organizers.

It was obvious that Jiang Chen's rise was giving them a lot of

pressure, forcing them to take risks and further stressing them.

If they didn't take some chances to challenge level four or even level five missions, then they were destined to be flung far behind Jiang Chen as time passed.

Which of these geniuses didn't have their sights set on the top? Would they be willing to see a secular cultivator use these sorts of methods to rise to the top and leave them far, far behind?

Of course not.

……

Elsewhere, the examiners that held authority in the sky quadrant gathered together. What had happened lately simultaneously gave them excitement and headaches.

They were stunned by the rise of this pill genius and racked their heads as to how they would recruit this genius for their sect.

In many ways, this pill genius wouldn't lose to a top tier martial dao genius.

Martial dao geniuses could be replaced, but a superior pill genius often couldn't be.

There were many martial dao masters in the world of martial

dao, but pill masters were few and far in between.

A pill master was quite important in the world of martial dao, and held even greater strategic meaning to a sect.

“Everyone, let’s discuss without inhibitions. If this continues, the hearts of the sky quadrant will waver, and all will be thrown into chaos.” An examiner sitting in the middle laughed wryly.

“What’s there to talk about? This can’t be allowed to continue. I recommend changing the rules or restricting him personally. He can’t be allowed to proceed like this. The heck! This is clearly deviating from the correct path, and certainly not the actions of a noble gentleman!”

However, those who were aware of the speaker’s identity were greatly dismissive of these words. This fellow was Master Shuiyue’s junior brother. The two were on exceedingly friendly terms. Such a proclamation was obviously not speaking out for justice, but on behalf of his own personal grudges.

Indeed, someone sprang immediately to respond. “Are you kidding? He’s following the rules in requesting missions and is also taking on a great deal of risk. What do you mean by the wrong road and not the actions of a gentleman? Is he not to focus on the area of his strength and to arim to excel in areas of his weaknesses? Does this measure up to the original intentions of our selection?”

The Purple Sun Sect examiner was immediately offended. “Hey! What do you mean by this? Are you purposefully singing an

opposite tune from me?”

“An opposite tune? Heh heh, I rather think it’s you who’s doing so. I recommend not bringing personal feelings into this, otherwise it’ll become very easy for you to be biased. What happened in the earth quadrant is an example to us all.” The examiner sighed.

He was obviously talking about Master Shuiyue being removed from her position.

The Purple Sun Sect examiner slammed the table when he heard this. “What did you say?! Who’s bringing in personal feelings? You, give me a clear explanation now!”

“You raise your voice because you’re in the wrong. Who are you scaring by slamming the table?” The examiner sniffed disdainfully and laughed coldly.

“Alright, alright, everyone calm down. Remember, this is an examiners area, can you all maintain some composure? With the outside being such pandemonium, how will we placate the candidates if we lose our calm?”

“Indeed, our duty as examiners is to maintain order and prevent chaos. The selection this time has to do with the future of our four sects. We cannot take this lightly.”

Others kept stepping in to smooth things over. The two

examiners glared at each other a few times but kept their tempers in check. However, the eyes they used to look at each other were full of disgust.

"I'll say one thing. There's nothing wrong with what the secular genius is doing. Personally, I admire him. However, whether he's right or wrong, he has indeed caused great ripples in the sky quadrant, making everyone uneasy and uncertain. The results of his actions have caused a negative impact in this quadrant. We should think of a way to resolve this. We would lose far more if the premier geniuses are disheartened."

"Mm, the candidate has done nothing wrong from the perspective of the rules, but taking the greater picture into account, we should restrict him a bit. Otherwise, we'll be unable to soothe the emotions of those top geniuses."

"Right, let's restrict him a bit for the bigger picture."

"Alright. The four great sects know of his potential in pills anyways. We have already accomplished the goal of unearthing geniuses. We should let him spend some time in the other areas. After all, carving a place in the area of pills alone isn't the way forward."

Most opinions were surprisingly in accordance. They all felt that Jiang Chen should be restricted a bit for the greater picture.

"Humph. Is this how we choose talent? Is this fair? We set the rules, and now that someone hasn't broken them but instead used

them to rise with unprecedented momentum, he deserves to be suppressed? If this is the case, then those geniuses with high cultivation should also be restricted. After all, they're furiously grinding out points by challenging other candidates!" An examiner with a frosty expression stood out in protest.

Winning a challenge would result in 20 points each time. This was a requisite daily mission for those top geniuses.

This was why the top geniuses had been able to streak ahead in points.

"That's not what's going on here. Martial dao geniuses engage in a conversation of martial dao when they challenge other candidates. This is a good thing for them. Why are we holding a selection? To choose martial dao geniuses, no? I think there's nothing untoward in increasing their battle ability."

"Mm. Martial dao is king in this world. The dao of pills is but supplementary."

"Indeed, a preeminent genius must have this kind of advantage."

Many people immediately stood out to rebut the cold faced examiner. The latter was one of upright personality, but it was difficult for him to make a stand against everyone alone.

He could do nothing when faced with his brethren's attitude. He could only laugh coldly, "Your suppression can appease those

premier geniuses, but have you considered the feelings of the secular genius?”

“This may be a bit unfair for him, but in consideration of the broader view, we can only ask him to give way.”

“Mm, if he’s smart enough, he’ll understand that this was a function of the circumstances. Truly, I trust that he’ll be able to understand.”

“Indeed. If not, it simply means his mind isn’t bright and he doesn’t understand how to analyze the situation. If he insists on doing things his way and makes himself a public target, then that’s also very disadvantageous to his growth.”

The examiners all spoke righteously and pretentiously, making the cold faced examiner snort in cold laughter.

“All of you posture so self righteously, and can speak so dutifully about your domineering actions in suppressing others. Hmph, at this point, one’s original sin is none other than being born of a humble background. If this secular genius had a mighty background, do you all think that you would suppress him in such a righteous manner?”

The other examiners could only smile wryly when faced with this sharp questioning. They all understood this logic, but in order to appease the rage of those top geniuses, they could only sacrifice those deemed lesser.

A secular genius' feelings could be smoothed over easily, but if a group of preeminent geniuses all grew dissatisfied, then the sky quadrant would be thrown into chaos!

Chapter 378: I'll Make The Rules One Day

Word of the examiners' accord quickly traveled out.

One of their representatives came to find Jiang Chen at his residence, explaining everything to him.

Jiang Chen was taken aback, and his tone suddenly dropped when he finished listening to the examiner. "Master examiner, to make things simple, you mean that I can't continue requesting missions in the pill area in the future, is that so?"

"Indeed. You'll be able to spend only a week out of a month in the pill area in the future. This is an accord reached by all the examiners." The examiner nodded and was quite forthright about things. He didn't worry that this secular genius would have any backlash. Since it was all of the examiners' opinions, there was nothing to be done even if he felt strongly about it."

Jiang Chen smiled coldly, "So even though I haven't broken the rules, you can just suppress me whenever you want to, is it?"

"Don't think too much. Although it's a bit unfair to you, this is also for the greater picture. Besides, it's a sort of protection for you as well."

"Protection?" Jiang Chen laughed. "Judging from this, I might actually be in trouble instead if you all hadn't done this?"

“Viewing this from a long-term perspective, do you want to become the hated enemy of all geniuses? Do you want to be public enemy number one? I trust that your goal is to join one of the four great sects. You don’t want to offend all the geniuses of your future sect before you even join it, right?”

The examiner was also displeased to see that Jiang Chen hadn’t accepted his words with good humor. You’re just a mere secular cultivator, how can you be so insensible?

Jiang Chen laughed jeeringly in his anger and nodded lightly. “I understand, so if anyone surpasses the so-called geniuses, that means they’ve given offense? This is the highest criteria of the four sects’ selection in that those so-called geniuses mustn’t come off worse in any exchange, huh?”

“Think whatever you want to think.” The examiner’s expression hardened. “Remember, you are but one of many, and going along with the flow is the wise choice in the face of the greater picture. My words end here, you digest them yourself. Regardless, you can only request seven missions in the area of pills in the future. No one will give you any missions if you go beyond this number. Whether you accept this or not, this is the final result.”

These words were the final ultimatum.

The examiner turned to leave after he finished.

Jiang Chen’s eyebrow arched as his projecting voice transformed all the qi throughout his body into a surge of fury to the heavens.

“Remember, there is no so-called greater picture. The so-called geniuses that all of you are incessantly scheming to protect will be under my foot one day in the future. Whether you accept this or not, that will be the final outcome!”

Jiang Chen felt like he had a good temper, but he’d been thoroughly enraged this time.

He’d always kept a low profile and tried to not attract any trouble, silently commencing his great plan of farming points.

Sadly, the trees may prefer the calm but the winds will not subside.

His low profile had earned him all sorts of bullying and oppression instead.

The examiners were even publicly restricting him with these ludicrous reasons.

To be honest, if the examiners had modified the rules and applied them to everyone, Jiang Chen might not have been so angry then.

But these modifications were being applied to him exclusively, this obviously meant that they wanted to suppress him. How could he possibly take this lying down?

Even a Buddha made from clay would possess some temper, much less Jiang Chen.

The examiner's body halted slightly as he heard these words and responded faintly without turning his head, "If you really do that one day, then the rules of the four great sects will also be able to change for you."

"Change for me?" Jiang Chen laughed coldly. "You're wrong. I'll be the one to make the rules that day."

Although Jiang Chen was burning with rage, he'd yet to lose his reason. He knew that the examiners dared to so blatantly suppress him because he was just a secular genius. Compared to the emotions of all the sect geniuses, it was apparent from a glance what direction the scales should tip in.

The examiner started and smiled coldly, mentally relegating Jiang Chen to someone speaking crazed words out of a daydream. Secular cultivators are country bumpkins alright, they only know to puff themselves up and overestimate their abilities.

Word of the examiners' restrictions on Jiang Chen made the rounds at first light.

Fervent discussion immediately arose in the sky quadrant once again. Most candidates were all baying with praise, thinking that the examiners were unparalleled in their justness.

There were a few candidates who retained their reason however, and felt pity for Jiang Chen. This was the harsh world of the sects.

Rules were often used to only restrict the weak and leaned towards the strong.

“Haha, this is to all of our immense satisfaction! Let’s see how he farms points now. He’ll be slapped back to his original form now huh?”

“Absolutely. Secular cultivators have limited potential in the end. Taking such an unorthodox path, he won’t amount to much in the end. At the end of the day, the selection is still a game in which only sect geniuses who are the likes of us are allowed to play.”

“Heh heh, they’ll all be able to sleep easily tonight huh?”

“I pity the secular genius, I bet he probably wants to hang himself right now, hmm? Hahaha, he was just a mere shooting star in the end, vanishing after a flash.”

All sorts of similar talk suffused the sky quadrant. There were all sorts of delight in Jiang Chen’s misery and kicking him when he was down formed an atmosphere of excitement after successful suppression.

“A bunch of cowards, despicable!” Chu Xinghan viciously slashed down in the empty air in a residence somewhere, giving rise to vicious spirit power ripples.

“Unable to defeat others and threatening the examiners to change the rules for purposes of suppression instead, this kind of selection is truly ludicrous.” Rage also burned in Chu Xinghan’s heart.

He too felt it odd. As a disciple of Master Shuiyue, he should be standing in the camp of oppressing Jiang Chen.

However, a flame of fury burning in his heart not only made him not feel proud about this, but the hot fires of anger all of a sudden made the entire selection seem pointless and boring.

“However, I’m truly curious, will Jiang Chen be finished for good, or will he rise again in the face of adverse circumstances?” The light of deep contemplation shot out from Chu Xinghan’s eyes, ones that were as bright as the stars.

“Shameless, despicable, contemptible, filthy!” Tang Hong rushed to Jiang Chen’s residence immediately after hearing of the happenings and started cursing loudly, indignant on Jiang Chen’s behalf.

“Boss, these people are ridiculous! They’re afraid that your score will catch up to them and pressured the examiners. This is absolutely oppression!” Tang Hong’s face was beet red with outrage.

How would Jiang Chen not know that this was oppression and true persecution?

However, his emotions had long since returned to the state of being impervious to desires and passions. Oppression? Persecution? That's right, but can this break me, Jiang Chen?

Absolutely not!

Jiang Chen swallowed his rage and laughed coldly. "Don't be agitated Tang Hong. This at least proves one point."

"What is that?" Tang Hong started when he saw Jiang Chen able to chat so leisurely and in such good spirits. He seemed to be wholly unaffected. Tang Hong was quite baffled by this.

"Very simple, the more they do things like this, the more uneasy this means they feel. The so-called geniuses aren't nearly as confident as they're projecting."

Jiang Chen's tone was calm as he smiled elegantly. "Perhaps they think that they can keep me down with actions like these, but their uneasiness will leave a crack behind in their fragile hearts. When they realize that all sorts of methods will be unable to suppress me, those cracks will turn into internal demons and consume them, disturbing their dao hearts."

Tang Hong was stunned. He felt that these words made a lot of sense. However, he didn't seem to quite understand them either. He was a direct guy and didn't have so many twists and turns in him.

“Boss, does this mean you’re alright with accepting this?” Tang Hong was a bit dejected.

“I accept it, but I’m not alright with it. I accept the current situation, but there will come a day that I will return it back to them tenfold in spades!”

Jiang Chen said to Tang Hong after this, “Go back first, I’m going to train now.”

He suddenly felt that he should actually thank these idiotic examiners. Thanks to this round of suppression, they’d transmuted into motivation for him that helped him find a slight sliver of inspiration.

This inspiration actually caused the shackles of his fourth level spirit realm to exhibit great signs of cracking open. These were the omens of breaking through to the fifth level spirit realm!

When Tang Hong saw this, he looked at Jiang Chen with bloodshot eyes and took his leave. He cursed all along his way back.

His voice thundered up to the heavens, and his aura was astounding.

Since he was unable to salvage anything for Jiang Chen, he could only use this kind of method to vent some ill temper for his boss. His curses were very ear piercing and direct.

“Geniuses? Bullshit! Tattling and crying like a snot nosed kid to the examiners when they can’t beat someone. Cowards! Vermin!!”

“Hahaha! It turns out that these so-called geniuses are all cowards afraid of competition. Interesting, how interesting! Chicken-hearted yet pretending to be deep and mysterious. What geniuses? Absolute shit! No wonder the four great sects are besieged on all sides and the position of the sixteen kingdom alliance hangs on a hair! It’s all because of these wusses that there are no real geniuses?”

Although Tang Hong was a direct guy, he was quite talented when it came to insulting others. He was raging down the path like a harlot shrieking on the streets. Add to that his naturally loud voice, he only felt somewhat placated when he’d loudly circled the residence area three times.

None of those geniuses were deaf, they could all hear him clearly. But they were indeed feeling guilty, and whoever jumped out to refute him now would be testifying to that fact.

Therefore, although they burned with rage, no one dared jump out.

Jiang Chen on the other hand, remained oblivious to the happenings of the outside world. He had already fully immersed himself into the world of the fifth level martial dao.

He’d charged through the shackles of the fourth level spirit realm

like a collapsing dam. Endless power surged into his spirit ocean as he finally broke through and entered the fifth level.

He opened his eyes a few hours later as a beam of wisdom shot through his clear eyes. “This kind of suppression isn’t without benefit, hmm? It’s given me an opportunity to break through in one go. It looks like all matters have a cause and effect. Disaster and fortune go hand in hand, and all is naturally ordained in the heavens.

Inspiration flowed after his breakthrough regarding all his various divine arts, making Jiang Chen sink once more into happy business.

Chapter 379: I'll Slap Whoever Dares Show Their Face

Jiang Chen stayed in his residence for the next three days, not setting a single foot outside. He turned a deaf ear to all the occurrences and furor of the outside world, and declined all guests.

After breaking through to the fifth level, his martial dao inspiration had burst forth like a geyser, forcing him to spend a great deal of time to digest the explosive changes after this breakthrough.

The God's Eye and Ear of the Zephyr broke through continuously, only stopping at the 15th level.

Boulder's Heart became even more stable at the 12th level.

Under his undying effort, Psychic's Head also entered the seventh level.

His increase in level also continued to bring inspiration for the boxing techniques of the "Divine Aeons Fist". There were vague signs of him entering the great perfection realm of the nine cycles of blooming and wilting.

The eight styles as well as interpretations of the "Vast Ocean Current Splitter" also bubbled forth as well.

The explosive flood of inspiration made him incredibly excited. If he wasn't in the secret chamber, he probably would've started practicing right then and there.

However, even simulating techniques in one's mind was a type of consolidation.

Jiang Chen immersed himself in the world of martial dao and unleashed his inspiration to the utmost, digesting what his breakthrough had brought him.

However, he was the subject of intense discussion in the outside world as his closed door session lasted for three days. All sorts of rumors and gossip kept surfacing.

"Do you see that? The so-called secular genius is so weak and fragile. A little setback is enough to do him in and make him give up on himself."

"It looks like he truly was a shooting star, burnt out in a fleeting second. Is this kind of psychological strength worthy of being called a genius? What a joke!"

"Has this fellow killed himself because he couldn't take the blow? Hahaha, it's not easy for a mundane ant to make it to this step. Do you think we've been too cruel?"

"Cruel? Please. Having poor strength of heart makes him utterly unfit for the world of martial dao. If he wants to make it in this

world, then he must be able to accept this harsh reality."

"He probably hasn't committed himself, but he'll be finished for good after this. Forget it, it's not worth mentioning an ant with subpar strength of heart."

Those so-called geniuses were all making critical remarks and putting on an air of noble aloofness.

"Pathetic."

Chu Xinghan could only shake his head internally when he heard those words. These so-called geniuses were putting on too crude of an sham. With this kind of personality, they were destined to become cannon fodder for others on the path of martial dao.

Chu Xinghan didn't believe that with Jiang Chen's personality, he'd be knocked down permanently by this. He'd even wanted to take the risk of being killed in order to kill Long Juxue that day at the Second Crossing.

A man with that kind of determination wouldn't be defeated so easily. This little setback was likely nothing in his eyes.

"Not emerging for three days, can it be that he's converted fury to drive and has decided to immerse himself in cultivation?" A thought flashed through Chu Xinghan's mind.

It made sense to him. Jiang Chen had farmed almost two

thousand points by now. He was solidly in the 50th percentile with his score and didn't need to worry about demotion.

Perhaps he was making use of this opportunity to quietly immerse himself in training and reappear with renewed vigor after his humiliation.

Tang Hong arrived outside Jiang Chen's yard at least ten times over the three days of seclusion. He paced back and forth outside the doors each time but didn't go in.

He'd always swing by after he finished his day's missions.

Although he wasn't afraid that Jiang Chen would want to take his life, he still felt a bit unstable that his boss hadn't showed his face for a few days.

"These despicable petty characters all talk about someone behind their backs. Hmph, how is it possible that someone I've taken for a boss is defeated so easily?" Tang Hong was wholly dismissive of the gossip circulating around the outside world.

He didn't think that his boss was the sort to give up on all hope after being knocked down.

His boss' strength of heart was enough to even solidly triumph over Tang Hong, how could he possibly be defeated by this minor matter?

“When boss told me to leave that day, he said he wanted to train. Can it be that he’s broken through in his cultivation?” Tang Hong stood outside Jiang Chen’s yard and paced back and forth.

He wrung his large hands and appeared a bit agitated. He would occasionally tug at his straw-like hair and completely mess it up.

Despite his appearance, all the geniuses passing by would avoid such a fierce fellow standing outside of Jiang Chen’s residence, deathly afraid of provoking this harbinger of trouble.

Everyone knew that Tang Hong was someone not to be provoked.

Those who’d talked about Jiang Chen behind his back was even more scared to bump into Tang Hong. They might very well be hauled in for a beating.

He’d never been the sort to just stick to himself.

No one would be able to withstand him if he went off into one of his moods. Who would dare irritate him, especially during circumstances like these?

However, those folks also muttered inwardly, Tang Hong isn’t right in the head, is he? He doesn’t latch onto the leg of the Iron family, but has taken some nobody from the mundane world as his boss instead.

This was as if a prince in the ordinary world refused to build

friendships with noble sons and ran to call ordinary citizens his brothers instead.

To many, these actions were so idiotic, it was like his brain had been thoroughly smashed by a door.

Except, while these self-styled smart folk may indeed be stronger than Tang Hong in using small tricks and schemes, how many of them possessed his wisdom?

Tang Hong may have a direct personality, but that didn't mean he didn't know how to read people.

He'd formed a friendship with Jiang Chen after fighting him that day. Otherwise, why would he be willing to take Jiang Chen as his boss? It obviously wasn't just because of the bet.

It was because Jiang Chen had easily trampled him in the areas of strength of heart and pills.

He'd even probed him twice in the area of martial dao before entering the Divine Maze Tower and had still failed to gain the upper hand.

This also meant that the secular genius' potential in martial dao was absolutely not interior to his, and his strength of heart and the dao of pills was far beyond his own.

This kind of person had come from the mundane world!

A candidate from the ordinary world had easily defeated him in the areas that he was most confident in. Just how strong would he be if he'd been born in the sects?

Tang Hong was forthright, but that didn't mean he was a fool.

His personality may be a tad bit crude, but he had a positive quality in that he wholeheartedly accepted and gave precedence to those truly stronger than him.

Therefore, his acceptance of Jiang Chen as his boss was an action brimming with the truest sincerity.

The door suddenly opened. Taken by surprise, Tang Hong, who was leaning on the doorframe, almost toppled inwards.

"Eh? Boss? You're finally showing your face!" Tang Hong neatly ignored the fact that he'd almost planted his face on the ground and chuckled as he steadied himself, revealing a look of concern for Jiang Chen.

"The outside world is saying that you're done for after being beaten down. What fecking bullshit. Boss, you should go, take a walk, and slap the faces of those sons of b*tches."

Jiang Chen chuckled heartily, "Face slapping, is it? I happen to like that a lot. Come, let's go slap some!"

Tang Hong had been partially joking, and blinked when he saw Jiang Chen taking it seriously. “Slap some faces? Whose?”

“Let’s slap whoever shows their face.” Jiang Chen was in a great mood.

After a breakthrough and three days of closed door cultivation, he need a place to vent his feelings after such enormous gains.

“Come, make a trip to the mission area with me.”

“Boss, you want to request a mission?” Tang Hong asked.

“Of course. My score won’t go up if I don’t do a mission.” Jiang Chen spoke the truth. Although his plan of grinding out points had been unscrupulously interrupted, that didn’t mean that he would give up.

“But they said that they would only let you request seven mission in the pill area each month.” Tang Hong still had some anger and frustration in his voice when he mentioned this, plainly still holding a grudge.

“Let’s not go to the pill area this time. Let’s go to strength of heart.” Jiang Chen smiled leisurely.

Tang Hong’s eyes lit up as he slapped his thigh. “Yeah, boss! Your strength of heart is even stronger than mine. I don’t think there aren’t that many in this quadrant who can rival you in terms of

strength of heart. Come, I'll keep you company. Are you planning on making trouble in this area now, boss?"

A hint of cold intent flashed through his eyes as Jiang Chen smiled faintly, "Hmph. They blacklist me in the pill area, I'll go smack their faces in the strength of heart and let them know that the truly strong have no weaknesses!"

Since you've restricted me in the area of pills, I'll go to the area of strength of heart instead. What can you do about that? Blacklist me again?

It would truly be the greatest joke beneath the heavens if Jiang Chen was blacklisted again.

To use underhanded methods twice because of the rise of a secular genius, those preeminent sect geniuses would really have no face left after that.

"Hells yeah, boss! I'm really looking forward to what expressions the guys who moved against you will have when they find out that you can still farm points in the area of strength of heart."

"I haven't the slightest clue what expression they'll have, and I have no desire to find out. All I know is that they'll have to swallow, mouthful by mouthful, all the shit that they spewed out."

Jiang Chen's tone was icy. He wasn't an easy target for anyone, and wasn't someone who wouldn't be able to live without the four

sects.

He was only treating the four sects as a springboard with his participation in the selection. It wasn't that he couldn't do without them, and he certainly wouldn't stop living if he was forced to part with them!

Therefore, having been provoked, Jiang Chen wouldn't play by their rules anymore.

When Jiang Chen once again appeared in the sky quadrant, those gossiping with rumors and speculations all shut up. They discovered that they'd sadly been seedy characters for nothing.

Look at this fellow's aura and spirit! Did he look like he'd been knocked down? Was there any sign of him being done for?

"Hmm? That kid's going to the strength of heart area?"

"Heh heh, he needs to gain some points. After all, he's been banned from the pill area. He needs some points, eh? Otherwise, how ugly will this look?"

"The strength of heart area? Haha, that's the hardest area to farm points."

"Whatever, let's wait for him to make a fool out of himself."

Jiang Chen ignored all those murmurs. Using the truth to slap faces was much more convincing than any length of verbal sparring.

When he arrived in the strength of heart area, no one thought that this point fiend would once again draw back the curtains on the opening act of grinding out points.

Everyone thought it was normal when he finished the level one mission on the first day.

Folks thought his strength of heart wasn't bad after he finished the level two mission on the second.

Some couldn't sit still anymore on the third day because he'd once again completed the mission, easily gaining the forty points of a level three mission.

Many pairs of eyeballs were staring at him from behind on the fourth day, wanting to see him fail. Instead, they lost their eyeballs in shock when he passed.

A level five mission on the fifth day was once again a success.

To the consternation of all who witnessed it, this cycle repeated itself again and again in the strength of heart area. After disappearing for three days, Jiang Chen the point fiend had once again appeared to test the mentalities of the top geniuses, once again testing the psychological pressure they could endure.

Chapter 380: A Meeting Of The Most High

Jiang Chen completed three cycles of challenges in a short half month. He could reap 310 points from each advancement of level one to level five. Three cycles meant that he'd farmed 930 points. In this way, his scores kept shooting up. Add to that his original 1,640 points, this meant that he had an astonishing 2,750 points a month and a half after setting foot in the sky quadrant!

Although this score was still a bit off from those premier geniuses, the difference was within a 1,000 points.

This meant that if Jiang Chen continued with this momentum in this momentum, his score would reach an eye popping 5,000 points.

This score was absolutely enough to crush all the top geniuses.

The entire quadrant sank into a bewildering atmosphere of fear in an instant.

They felt that this secular genius was a natural shit-stirrer, making everyone quail with fright inside.

"This fellow is here to purposefully kick up a fuss, isn't he? Will he only be satisfied when he throws the entire sky quadrant into an uproar?"

"Sigh, how would you say this? The pill area has banned him, so

it’s normal for him to go to the strength of heart area. Your words are a little out of line.”

“What out of line? He’s a secular cultivator, what right does he have to cockily prance around like this? He’s just purposefully slapping the faces of us sect geniuses!”

“I don’t think he even knows who you are, how would he be able to slap your face? Who the hell are you? Not to mention that he’s farming points whilst keeping a low profile, making use of only his own talents. If you’re that good, you take the field then. Stop mouthing off when you’ve got no abilities.”

If one were to say that Jiang Chen had elicited quite a lot of enmity with his crazy actions in the pill area, then his heaven-defying performance in the heart of strength area had won him a lot of those who’d remained neutral before.

A genius who’d exhibited such insane results in both areas was a true genius.

In the world of martial dao, the strong were venerated and respected.

Jiang Chen’s crazy performance had slowly won him respect.

However, this kind of respect, mostly came from the candidates ranked in the 50th percentile. Those ranked towards the front, and even those premier geniuses, hated Jiang Chen even more for his

performance.

In their eyes, this secular freak genius was absolutely flaunting his abilities to them!

If he was allowed to proceed like this, then everyone's names would be beneath his feet after a month and they would all be resigned to being left behind in the dust.

In the sky quadrant, Long Juxue stood in her residence with a cold light dancing in her eyes.

"This dumb animal thinks it isn't enough that he's been suppressed once? He doesn't seem afraid of death as he's stood out once again to claim the limelight. Seeking death indeed!"

Although those were her thoughts, she vaguely felt that if Jiang Chen was allowed to develop like this, he would become a threat.

"This filthy swine has astounding potential in pills, but what is going on with his strength of heart? The son of a second rate duke, what right does he have to possess such strong strength of heart and easily farm points in the strength of heart area?"

Long Juxue knew herself that although with her innate constitution, she would at most challenge a level four mission in the heart of strength area. The risks would be great if she took on a level five mission.

For a premier genius at Long Juxue's level, the differences between each of their rankings were exceedingly small. No one wanted to take the risk to challenge a level five mission.

This was because a level five mission was so difficult that if she accidentally failed it, she would be docked 160 points. This was absolutely unacceptable to a premier genius.

Their rankings would be swiftly left behind if 160 points were deducted in one go.

Therefore, no one had wanted to bring so much strength to bear given that it was only the third cycle of the twelve cycles in three years.

They all wanted to keep much in reserve and keep adding to their foundation, bringing it all to bear later on in a sprint.

The premier geniuses had an unspoken accord between them previously, a balance that no one was willing to stand out and break. It wasn't that they didn't want to, but that no one had the particular confidence to.

However, the appearance of new factor Jiang Chen had completely stirred up the situation of the sky quadrant.

It would be difficult for them to continue holding much in reserve. It was only a matter of time before Jiang Chen surpassed them if they didn't exert themselves.

There existed differences between the geniuses and there were often small changes in their rankings. This was all within a range acceptable to all.

But if Jiang Chen's insane speed in grinding out points was allowed to continue, he would likely leave everyone far behind in the dust in another three months. It would be impossible to catch up to him then.

"Mm? What's this?" Long Juxue reached out a hand and snatched out a message glyph. A trace of a cold smile appeared on her lips after she opened the glyph. "It looks like that bastard has already aroused public anger. A meeting of the most high? It looks like even the most preeminent geniuses of the sky quadrant can't continue sitting idly by anymore. This gathering will certainly have something to do with that dumb animal Jiang Chen. I must go and have to participate!"

A meeting of the most high was a gathering between the most preeminent geniuses in the sky quadrant.

To be frank, it was just a gathering in which the top geniuses came together to shoot the breeze.

However, the requirements necessary to enter this gathering were quite high. Only the top sixteen ranked in the sky quadrant had the right to enter.

The top sixteen mapped to the final sixteen from the selection.

This meant that this gathering of the most high was one in which they'd hardened their hearts to solidify their grip on these top sixteen spots.

Four spots on average were divvied out to each sect, but the actual numbers that fell to each sect weren't that even.

The Purple Sun Sect for instance, occupied a full six of them.

The Precious Tree Sect had four, and the Flowing Wind Sect and Myriad Spirit Sect only had three each.

Tang Hong had also received an invite to this gathering in his residence.

"A gathering of the most high? The feck is this about? This group of bastards likely can't sit still again and are cooking up some scheme against boss."

He still decided to go take a look and discern the situation however. His personality was the sort of being unafraid of the heavens and earth. Even though he knew that it was very likely he'd be ostracized by others if he went, he was still wholly unafraid. He had the mindset of I will still proceed forth boldly even int he face of mountains of blades and oceans of fire, even to the lair of a dragon or cave of a tiger!

Tang Hong ranked solidly in the top three amongst the Precious

Tree Sect.

His strength was firmly in the top twelve in the entire sky quadrant, and was sometimes even able to make it into the top ten. Therefore, even if he was a complete jerk, he was someone who wouldn't be ignored in this gathering of the most high.

Otherwise, this gathering would fail to live up to its name.

In the examiner's area, the examiners had once again gathered together. It was obvious that Jiang Chen's perverse performance had handed them a thorny problem again.

"To think that this secular genius would be such a well-rounded talent. He can grind out points so easily even in the strength of heart area. It looks like we've underestimated this genius."

"Humph, given how things have developed, so what if we've underestimated them? We've already done so once, why worry about doing it again? Just blacklist him again. What can a secular disciple do?" The Purple Sun Sect disciple, Master Shuiyue's junior brother, once again jumped up to hoist high this particular flag.

"Heh heh, such noble words of blacklisting him again." An examiner with a cold expression laughed frostily. "It was already beyond bounds to commit such a seamless act once. How do you plan on stoppering the mouths of all those beneath the heavens if you do so again?"

“Stopper? Is there such a need? The word of the four sects has been the law in the sixteen kingdom alliance since ancient time. Their mouths? The feck is that.”

“Alright, your Purple Sun Sect has always been domineering. Since you have so much confidence, blacklist him again then. I opposed this matter before and still oppose it now. I must say that you’re killing a rising genius.”

“What bullshit genius? If he’s a real genius, why doesn’t he request a mission in the martial dao area? The pills area and strength of heart—only martial dao triumphs in the end. Since he’s unable to display his prowess in the martial dao area, that makes him a fake genius!” Master Shuiyue’s junior brother had a look of disdain on his face.

“There is sense in these words. In the world of martial dao, only strength is the true way. If he cannot prove himself in the area of martial dao, then I feel that he still does not possess enough ability to set foot into the ranks of the top geniuses!”

“Indeed, we cannot dishearten all the top geniuses just for a mere unorthodox genius. It’s said that they’ve even summoned a meeting of the most high this time. It looks like they plan on allying together to suppress this secular freak!”

“This candidate’s potential is indeed astounding, but it’s a pity that he was short sighted and didn’t know to hide his shine in light of the greater picture. He is destined to fall after offending all the top geniuses. What a pity, such a pity.”

The examiner with the cold expression obviously held different opinions from everyone else. He smiled faintly, “You think that he will fall, but I happen to think that he will become the bane of all geniuses.”

“Alright, let’s stop arguing. The key issue we have to decide upon now is just what should we do?” An examiner sitting in the middle asked with a frown.

“No need for further discussion. Blacklist! Continued blacklist!”

“Yes, his actions are an obvious mockery of our authority. We cannot allow this to continue!”

“Just blacklist him already!”

Apart from the examiner with the cold expression, all the other examiners all seemed to have the same opinions. Some of them were dead set on blacklisting Jiang Chen, whereas although a few others felt that it was inappropriate, they still chose to blindly follow the rest.

The examiner’s face was livid and he didn’t speak a word.

Jiang Chen had also received word from Tang Hong in his residence and knew that the premier geniuses were holding some sort of meeting of the most high.

However, this was of no consequence to Jiang Chen.

Having trained the “Boulder’s Heart” to the twelfth level, he was easily able to handle all varieties of change. His dao heart was as strong as iron and impervious to outsider interference.

“Humph! A meeting of the most high. A bunch of frogs at the bottom of a well. A mere sixteen kingdom alliance, a tiny bit of holding, and they dare call themselves the most high? What a joke!”

From Jiang Chen’s perspective, this was indeed the laughable actions of a bunch of people with limited outlook.

“If my speculations are correct, those so-called examiners will be blacklisting me in the strength of heart area as well. Heh heh, it looks like I should make my preparations to go to the comprehensive area next for farm points.”

He was purposefully evading the martial dao area not because he was afraid, but because he wanted to do this on purpose and take a walk through all the other areas before going to the martial dao area.

The moment he deigned to descend on that area was the moment that all those geniuses would cower beneath his feet!

A beam of bright light suddenly shot out from his eyes.

All sorts of unfair treatment had transformed into an explosive bout of energy, waiting to be released from his body. Once it did, it would turn this sky quadrant upside down!

Chapter 381: The Top Geniuses Convene

A tall, strong, and bald young man sat crossed legged in the center of a spacious residence wearing golden colored armor. His features were clearly defined, as if having been chiseled out by blades and axes to the latest detail. He gave others a strong feeling of awe when they looked upon him, and had a naturally imposing aura without exerting himself to any effort.

His name was Lei Gangyang, and he was the most accomplished of the younger generation in the Purple Sun Sect.

Even Long Juxue, who had an innate constitution, didn't dare put herself higher than Lei Gangyang's at the moment. The strength of his aura was thus apparent.

She and Ceng Shi were both standing on his left side. Another three youngsters were standing on his right side. Judging from their postures, they had no qualms about Lei Gangyang's role as the leader of the younger generation in the sect.

These six were ranked in the top six of the Purple Sun Sect.

Therefore, it had been Lei Gangyang's right without a doubt, to call for this meeting this time.

Representatives from the other three sects were all present, with the exception of Tang Hong,. However, one could see that the those from the Precious Tree Sect were all maintaining a distance between themselves and weren't standing close to each other. Just

a simple stance was enough to tell that the three from this sect didn't have intentions of sticking together, and had no intention to select one of their companions as a leader.

Lei Gangyang's quick and forceful gaze swept over the Precious Tree Sect side and a hint of a smile leaked out from the corners of his lips. He was obviously happy to see such internal strife break out amongst the Precious Tree sect.

The two girls and one guy from the Flowing Wind Sect was arranged around one girl with an indifferent demeanor and pretty features.

There were also three from the Myriad Spirit Sect who were clustered around a strong young man as their leader. His name was Luo Xi, and he was a martial dao genius of the Myriad Spirit Sect. His ranking in the sky quadrant was now second to only Lei Gangyang.

Even the best amongst the other two sects couldn't challenge the position of number two.

Lei Gangyang's cold eyes suddenly glared as he looked around, his stern voice rang out shortly afterwards.

"Why is there only 15?"

His voice was neither sharp nor low, but those faintly spoken words had the aura of striking lightning, making listeners' blood

boil and roil.

Iron Dazhi on the Precious Tree Sect side had an odd smile at the corners of his lips. “Tang Hong from my sect has quite a bearing about him. Perhaps Daoist Lei’s message glyph may not have been enough to spur him to action.”

Traces of disdain appeared in both of the other Precious Tree Sect members’ faces after they heard this. Although they didn’t look Tang Hong in a favorable light, they wouldn’t strike someone of their own sect like Iron Dazhi had done.

Iron Dazhi’s heart was filled with jealousy after he failed to recruit Tang Hong that day. He naturally wouldn’t pass up this opportunity to kick Tang Hong when he was down.

“Tang Hong?” Lei Gangyang rumbled as Tang Hong’s brash image floated up in his mind. His brow wrinkled. As the first seed of the sky quadrant, this Tang Hong had dared not show him any face when he’d issued an invitation?

An ear piercing round of laughter traveled in from the outside at this moment.

“Haha, my apologies everyone. Nature called just now and I dumped a pile of shit outside. I’m late, sorry I’m late.”

Footsteps thundered forth before these words had finished as Tang Hong came striding in.

Tang Hong's body was at least a head taller than ordinary folk, and he likely towered even higher than that. He walked with the vigor of a tiger, giving one a very barbaric feeling.

When the geniuses present heard such crass words as "dumped a pile of shit", a domino effect of frowning was set off across the room. However, one of the Flowing Wind Sect female disciples covered her mouth as she laughed softly, seeming to find Tang Hong's crass words rather funny.

Iron Dazhi shouted when he saw Tang Hong walk in. "Tang Hong, what are you playing at? Aren't you quite arrogant, making everyone wait for you huh!"

Tang Hong spread his hands out. "What, do I need your approval before I shit now?"

He sauntered over to the Precious Tree Sect side after speaking and sat down, grinning at the other two. "I haven't washed my hands since shitting, you don't mind if I sit here right?"

Of the other two in the sect, a skinny young man in a white shirt frowned slightly, "Would it kill you to speak a few words less?"

Another young man in an almond yellow robe smiled, "Come Tang Hong, sit with me."

The almond yellow robe youth's name was Xie Yufan, a genius of

the Xie family.

The white shirted, skinny youth was Lian Canghai. In terms of cultivation, he ranked first amongst the four great disciples of the Precious Tree Sect and was solidly in the top four of the quadrant.

Lian Canghai however, was the Iron family's elder, Iron Long's, personal disciple. He was a genius whom Iron Long had personally mentored all along the way.

His potential was vastly superior to characters like Iron Dazhi.

Since Lian Canghai was one of the Iron family, it forced Xie Yufan to rope in Tang Hong in order to balance things out. He hoped to make use of Tang Hong's strength to form a power that would be a counterweight to the Lian Canghai and Iron Dazhi alliance.

It was a good thing that although Lian Canghai had a cold and arrogant personality, he didn't consult Iron Dazhi for directions in everything, even though he was Iron Long's personal disciple.

He sometimes even disdained being lumped in with Iron Dazhi.

Therefore, it could be said that out of the four sects, the geniuses of the Precious Tree Sect were the least united and had the most estranged relationships with each other.

Lei Gangyang was a bit displeased that Tang Hong had caused his

plans to go awry with his buffoonery.

However, he was the person who'd called for this meeting after all, so he had to maintain a certain composure.

"Everyone, there is only one reason in which why everyone has been gathered here today. What attitude does everyone have towards that secular freak?"

Lei Gangyang spoke faintly as he offered a contribution to start the conversation.

He'd thought that everyone would leap at the chance to share their opinions once the topic was open, but after waiting for a while, the geniuses of the three other sects all maintained remote expressions and didn't speak up.

Iron Dazhi twitched his lips and seemed to want to speak, but also seemed to feel that his identity had not yet reached the point in which he'd be first to speak up and thus managed to curb his impulses.

"What? Is it that no one has any opinions?" Lei Gangyang's tone dropped. "Or do you value your status so much that you're unwilling to be the first to step out and be a villain?"

His gaze swept across the faces of all the other geniuses.

Lian Canghai of the Precious Tree Sect retained the look of cold

arrogance on his face, as if a normal expression had never crossed it.

The strong young man, Luo Xi, of the Myriad Spirit Sect looked around with vigorous eyes. Not much of an expression could be gleaned from his face, giving one a feeling of fathomless mysteriousness.

The indifferent, pretty girl from the Flowing Wind Sect was Shi Yunyun. She had the faint smile at the corner of her lips, giving one a feeling as ethereal as the clouds embracing the wind.

These three were the representatives of their sects, but no one dared speak without careful consideration.

A cold voice rang out from behind Lei Gangyang. “That guy puts on airs and looks down with contempt on others, possessing not the slightest bit of respect for the disciples of our sects. His crazed momentum is an even further provocation of us. This ill wind cannot be allowed to flourish and must be suppressed.”

That was Long Juxue. She was the first to take a stand and express her opinions.

Since someone had taken the initiative, there would naturally be another who followed her. Iron Dazhi from the Precious Tree Sect side also nodded. “I concur with fairy Long’s opinions. This fellow is arrogant and bullying. I’ve seen it with my own eyes and have felt this deeply.”

He'd once attempted to recruit Jiang Chen by offering an invite to him after he'd passed the level five exam in the pills area. However, he had gained nothing but thorough humiliation from the encounter.

Therefore, even though the narrow minded Iron Dazhi didn't know that the secular genius was Jiang Chen, he wanted to thoroughly suppress him regardless.

Lei Gangyang was obviously not that interested in Iron Dazhi's opinions. His gaze once again rested on Lian Canghai, "Canghai, what do you think?"

Since Canghai had been personally called out, he couldn't refrain from responding.

"I have no opinion. All of us top geniuses have an accord that no one has brought forth their full strength thus far. His actions have ruined the agreement between us and is forcing us to change our tempo. This is indeed inappropriate."

Lian Canghai's opinion was met with great approval. Many nodded their head slightly in agreement.

They were the preeminent geniuses and had yet to fully bring their strength to endure or challenge the level four and five missions.

It wasn't that they couldn't handle those missions, but that they

felt that it wasn't time to take the risk and call upon their reserves just yet.

Lei Gangyang seemed to be quite satisfied with Lian Canghai's words. He turned to look at Luo Xi, first genius of the Myriad Spirit Sect. "Luo Xi, what are your thoughts?"

"Logically speaking, he has indeed impacted our tempo. But from a personal point of a view, I rather admire him. Looking at this from another perspective, if we were in his shoes, would we have the courage and determination to offend a group of top geniuses with no fear, even with his potential and strength?"

His words made everyone sink into deep contemplation.

Tang Hang laughed heartily. "Well said, I feel that no one here present can measure up to this kind of courage and determination!"

Everyone frowned after his words. They all knew that Tang Hong was biased. His butt was firmly seated in the secular genius' camp, and he was even willing to be the latter's follower.

"Tang Hong, you shut your mouth! Just because you're willing to wallow in degeneration doesn't mean you need to embarrass yourself here." Ceng Shi, disciple of the Purple Sun Sect's Master Shuiyue, shouted coldly.

"Yo! Who's that huh? Aren't you full of it? Are some of you filled

with righteous indignation only because you want to help your master regain some face?” Tang Hong jeered.

Ceng Shi and Long Juxue’s face both grew cold when they heard this.

Long Juxue in particular had a frosted over expression as she looked at Tang Hong. “Silly brute, you better clean up your mouth, or your tongue will be cut out by someone someday.”

This kind of threat was obviously completely useless to Tang Hong. He smiled lazily and stretched. “I’m a man and so I won’t argue with a wench.”

Pretty girl Shi Yunyun spoke up at this time. “Everyone, my Flowing Wind Sect has always remained neutral and have not become embroiled in controversy. We will not protest whatever decision is made here. Daoist Gangyang, since you’re the one who called for this meeting, please make a decision.”

“Yes, senior brother Gangyang, please give the word.” Apart from Long Juxue, those on the Purple Sun Sect spoke almost unanimously.

“Does the Precious Tree Sect and Myriad Spirit Sect support my decision?” Lei Gangyang called out.

Lian Canghai responded coldly, “Just a small matter. You make the decision.”

Luo Xi sighed softly. “What else can I say?”

Chapter 382: Jiang Chen Barges Into The Meeting

When Lei Gangyang saw no objections, he nodded and proceeded in a stern, weighty tone. “Since this is the case, I advocate making a move to suppress him. From today forth, each day our sects will send forth two people to challenge other candidates until we meet him in battle. Everyone knows what to do when they meet him in battle, correct?”

With the four sects sending out two people each, that would be eight total people everyday. Issuing challenges at this pace every single day meant that there was a high chance that they would meet Jiang Chen in battle.

Perhaps not the first day, but the second... third...

They would meet one day, even if it stretched out as far as the tenth or twentieth day.

Everyone sucked in a breath of cold air when they heard Lei Gangyang’s words. He intended to brutally deal the killing blow!

Once again, Long Juxue was the first to step out in support. “I support senior brother Gangyang. That fellow is cocky beyond belief and cannot be allowed to continue like this. The time we come across him him will surely come if we take turns issuing challenges. I, Long Juxue, hereby proclaim that should I meet him in battle, I will strive my utmost to kill him in the ring and not allow him to walk out of it alive!”

“I too am willing to participate!” Ceng Shi stood up to say.

Lei Gangyang smiled faintly, “I’m the one who called for the meeting and naturally can’t sit idly by. I started this and therefore will also take a stand. What do the other three sects say?”

There were three willing to step out from the Purple Sun Sect, this meant that the way out for the other three sects was sealed off. My Purple Sun Sect is so proactive, are you going to sit idly by and enjoy the fruits of our labor?

Lian Canghai thought momentarily before raising his hand. “Count me in I guess.”

Iron Dazhi also spoke up when he saw Lian Canghai express his views. “Me as well.”

Lei Gangyang actually wasn’t that pleased to see Iron Dazhi join. After all, he was the dregs of the Precious Tree Sect geniuses. He rather wanted to see Xie Yufan come out.

However, he needed proactive people at the moment. Iron Dazhi fit the bill, and Lei Gangyang wasn’t quite in a position to turn him down.

On the Flowing Wind Sect side, Shi Yunyun chuckled. “I will do my best and try since Daoist Gangyang has spoken thus. However, I cannot promise how I’ll do.”

Lei Gangyang was unhappy about this. You've already thought of the way out before the challenge has even begun, this is obvious non-cooperation.

On the Myriad Spirit Sect side, Luo Xi pointed at two people beside him. "I have no interest in this. Let my two junior brothers participate."

When Lei Gangyang saw that one of them was fobbing him off with an excuse, and the other was just flat out not participating, he was quite ticked off and said coldly, "Is little brother Luo seeking to profit off our labor?"

"Profit off your labor?" Luo Xi smiled faintly. "Elder brother Lei can stop right there. I'd rather like to see where the limits of the secular genius are."

"Humph, his limits end here!"

Although Luo Xi was unwilling to make a move, Lei Gangyang didn't force him. There were plenty willing to take action at the moment, and they were all the top geniuses in the sky quadrant.

Any one of them ought be enough to crush that secular genius.

Tang Hong suddenly started laughing loudly. "Fascinating, how fascinating! Look at all your ugly behaviors. How ludicrous, how hilarious!"

“What a bullshit meeting of the most high. Suppressing all dissidents and thinking only of your own profit. These so-called geniuses are all shit!”

Tang Hong threw his head back in laughter as he walked out the door.

He couldn’t hold it in anymore. This so-called meeting was just a bunch of selfish geniuses discussing how to suppress an outsider.

Tang Hong was embarrassed to keep such company.

Lei Gangyang’s eyebrows arched when he heard these words and killing intent exploded in his eyes.

“Lian Canghai, is there no one amongst the geniuses of your sect who can subdue that foolish brute?”

Lian Canghai said faintly, “He’s always been a loner and does things his own way. I have no relations with him.”

“Humph. Since you’ve said so, if he makes an offense and ends up in my sect’s hands one day, don’t you go pointing fingers or lecturing me then.” Lei Gangyang responded frostily.

“If he gives offense, that’s him courting death. What does that have to do with me?” Lian Canghai answered indifferently.

Luo Xi smiled faintly and cupped his hands at everyone. “Folks, you have much to discuss. I am not participating in this and will take my leave now.”

“We will be taking our leave as well.” Those who hadn’t volunteered all excused themselves.

Soon, only the challengers were left on the premises.

Lei Gangyan’s gaze swept over everyone’s face. “Everyone, since we’ve decided to make a move, we should not have mercy. Although our challenges will be selected randomly everyday, we will pick him one day. I only hope…”

Lei Gangyang’s ears suddenly twitched before he could finish his words and his eyes shot out a beam of light into the air. He shouted, “Who is it!”

“Are you Lei Gangyang?” A nonchalant voice sounded indifferently in the air.

A figure suddenly appeared in the air and sat leisurely on the wall. Its hands were tied around the knees appearing without a care.

“How dare you trespass on my private property?! Get down here to die!”

A cold killing intent shot out of Lei Gangyang's eyes as he waved his large palm. A strong current of qi that seemed like yang energy from the stars themselves charged forth like a dragon.

There were actually traces of electric snakes in this devastatingly masculine blow. It encompassed the dao of thunder within it.

"The Gangyang Thundersnake!" Shu Yunyun exclaimed. "I've heard that Daoist Gangyang possesses the thunder constitution. It looks like the rumors are true!"

When the figure on the wall saw this domineering blow shoot towards him, it smiled faintly and made a grasping motion, as if to catch this blow with its hands.

When Lei Gangyang saw the other was so self-confident, he grinned and laughed coldly coldly.

This kid wants to die alright. Although I've only used fifty to sixty percent of my strength in this blow, it embodies the mighty dao of thunder. Let's wait and see his hand get burned to a crisp when he catches this blow!

"Mm?" This thought had just flashed through Lei Gangyang's mind but his face darkened in the next moment, an incredulous look appearing on it.

The other had made a grasping motion, and although his body had swayed slightly, it was as if Lei Gangyang's blow had been

swallowed by a formless power when it'd rushed to the other's palm. It was snuffed out like the flame of a candle.

"What?"

Lei Gangyang was stunned. He was very confident in his own strength and looked forward to burning the other's hand to a crisp with this blow. He hadn't even imagined that i'd be easily neutralized instead.

The person on the wall was naturally Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen laughed and spoke indifferently, "Is this the strength of the so-called first genius? It's only so-so. I've heard that all of you are gathered here to to take turns in the ring until you meet me in battle?"

"Kid, you're courting death!"

When had Lei Gangyang lost face in front of his peers? He had indeed underestimated his opponent a bit just now and hadn't used his full strength, which was why it'd been countered and he'd been mocked instead.

This was an enormous humiliation for Lei Gangyang.

His body flashed as he transformed into a red blur, shooting out like a ball of ferocious flames.

“Watch my blows!”

Jiang Chen raised his arms and shot out two Fire Raven King tail feathers!

“Humph, break!” Lei Gangyang punched out with his left and right hands and swept the two attacks away. The speed of his body didn’t slow down however, and he shot swiftly towards Jiang Chen.

“Kid, you were the one who brought yourself here in search of death, don’t blame me!”

Lei Gangyang leered as his aura billowed once again. He shot upwards and punched out.

Jiang Chen laughed loudly, “Well met!”

Clang

An astonishing blade beam suddenly shot through the heavens as Jiang Chen mustered all the strength in his body. With both hands clasped around the saber, he circulated all his power to chop down viciously.

He hadn't dodged or evaded, but had met the seventh level spirit realm Lei Gangyang head on!

Of course, Jiang Chen hadn't acted brashly, but had started making his calculations as soon as Lei Gangyang had made his move. The attacks from the two tail feathers had been a distraction to buy himself some more time to prepare.

The true meaning of the "Vast Ocean Current Splitter" had been incorporated into the blade. Upon meeting a fierce opponent in battle, the potential of the saber had been thoroughly unleashed.

Jiang Chen had been making his preparations all along, deploying the magnetic power to form several invisible force fields, then called upon the power of metal essence and melded it into this stroke.

It could be said that this stroke had completely surpassed the original level of comprehension in the "Vast Ocean Current Splitter" thanks to all sorts of practice and ascension.

The stroke chopped down ferociously, with an unparalleled

momentum, at the peak of its power.

Wham!

Lei Gangyang felt his boxing aura suddenly slowed down by a shapeless power.

This slowing decreased his strength to sixty, seventy percent of his original blow.

Jiang Chen's ferocious stroke had also arrived at this moment.

The two great bouts of strength crashed fiercely into each other.

Lei Gangyang was attacking upwards and was in a disadvantageous position to begin with. In addition, with his boxing aura had been reduced to sixty or seventy percent by the shapeless forcefield, not only did he not gain the upper hand when the punch and stroke met, but he was actually momentarily suppressed by that strong blade aura.

The stroke with exceedingly strong piercing powers had actually borne through the clash and was aiming for his vitals!

Lei Gangyang was greatly shocked as his left hand drew out a crescent, protecting his vitals. He hastily backed up and landed on the ground, stumbling a few steps backwards while

Jiang Chen flipped a few times in the air from the power behind the punch. Once again landing on the wall, his chest rose unevenly as he felt his blood frothing.

“Seventh level spirit realm is worthy of its reputation alright.” Jiang Chen calmed down his churning blood with several deep breaths, regaining control over himself. He felt some admiration for Lei Gangyang’s strength.

Ever since he’d set foot on this path, Jiang Chen had rarely come off worse in an exchange, even when he challenged those stronger than himself.

Today however, he’d used his blade and all his strength to barely manage to dispel one of the other’s punches. It looked like geniuses of the seventh level were indeed domineering.

If Jiang Chen was hugely taken aback, then Lei Gangyang was the epitome of shock. He’d never thought that his fierce punch would result in but a draw and wouldn’t harm the other at all. Although he’d been attacking upwards and had been in a tough position, this was still hard for him to accept.

If Lei Gangyang was shocked, then Long Juxue and Ceng Shi were also completely shaken. Long Juxue in particular—astonishment shot through her eyes as a hint of fear finally settled in her heart.

Ever since she’d entered the Purple Sun Sect, her cultivation had improved by leaps and bounds as her potential had been tapped to

its utmost. After a while, she subconsciously felt that Jiang Chen was destined to roll around and grovel in the mundane world, destined to decadence. As such, she would be able to easily trample him the next time she met him.

It was only at this moment that she clearly realized this had all been just her daydreams.

Chapter 383: Arriving Calmly, Leaving Stylishly

Jiang Chen's arrival this time was only to demonstrate his power, and not to actually harm anyone. After exchanging blows with Lei Gangyang, he laughed coldly and swept his gaze across the faces of those assembled, seeming to want to commit these faces to memory.

"Whichever one of you unafraid of death, come challenge me. I'm waiting for you! Although, let me remind you to be thoroughly prepared to die before entering the ring!"

He laughed loudly and flipped over the wall, vanishing from their line of sight.

His laughter shook the heavens as it transformed into a howl of epic proportions, instantly filling the mountains and plains and carrying throughout the entire sky quadrant.

"What a bunch of trash! I come and go as I will, what can you lot do about it?"

Lei Gangyang was enraged as he dashed out the door. Long Juxue followed in hot pursuit.

However, all was quiet and at peace outside, without the shadow of a single person. As the echoes of his laugh reverberated in the mountain valley, Jiang Chen had vanished without a trace.

Lei Gangyang and Long Juxue looked at each other, reading a stern killing intent in each other's eyes.

"That dumb swine is indeed cocky." Lei Gangyang grit his teeth. As the first seed of the sky quadrant, his sense of superiority was very strong.

He'd summoned this meeting to also partially consolidate his position as the first seed and awe the other geniuses.

However, he hadn't thought he'd run into so many obstacles in this meeting.

If Luo Xi and the others had denied him face in not participating in his plan, then the sudden appearance of this secular candidate was a public challenge to his authority and a patent slap to his face!

To trespass onto the residence of another without being invited, that was utter disrespect. Jiang Chen directly appearing on his wall was even more of an absolute challenge.

If Lei Gangyang had been able to forcefully make Jiang Chen stay, then his authority would've greatly increased.

However, both of his moves had been casually dispelled, and the other had been as nonchalant as if nothing had happened. The exchange had seemingly been a draw.

To Lei Gangyang, fighting someone who'd provoked him on his territory to a draw was without a doubt, the biggest disgrace of all. His opponent had even sent out his voice and openly jeered at him after leaving, sending it throughout the entire sky quadrant. This was rubbing salt in his wounds!

To Lei Gangyang, this was an absolute humiliation that would cause his authority to plummet.

"Senior brother Gangyang, now do you know how impudent this dumb swine is?" Long Juxue fanned the flames and asked faintly.

"Junior sister Long, this person is your fated rival. What do you think?"

Lei Gangyang suddenly changed the topic and smiled superciliously, "Don't you think that we've gravely underestimated his strength before?"

Long Juxue could naturally identify the connotations in Lei Gangyang's voice. She said lightly, "Even with all the methods and sinister methods he has, he'll be absolutely crushed when he meets me."

She knew that Lei Gangyang was purposefully testing her, wanting to use these words to sow seeds of doubt in her dao heart. Even though they appeared to be junior and senior on the surface, they were all competition in the end.

Lei Gangyang, in particular, had witnessed Long Juxue's rise and seen how even Ceng Shi in the Shuiyue faction had been replaced by her.

It would be false to say that he didn't feel threatened.

He didn't wish for his own position of eldest senior brother in the Purple Sun Sect to be replaced by Long Juxue as well.

Although he knew, deep down within his heart, that his position in the eyes of the sect heavyweights were likely behind Long Juxue's already, as the current eldest senior brother, his strength at the moment was still ahead.

Even if he was eventually fated to hand over the reins of power as the king of the younger generation, Lei Ganging didn't wish for it to happen so quickly, and more, didn't want to be so docile about it either.

Long Juxue wasn't a fool. Although she was outwardly respectful, she had long since made her mental preparations for a coup.

When she heard the killing intent in Lei Gangyang's voice, she naturally wouldn't show weakness.

Her counterblow had the subtle shade of hint of mockery .

Her meaning was, I will crush Jiang Chen without a doubt.

However you, as the eldest senior brother of the younger generation of the Purple Sun Sect, still let him leisurely leave after two blows and lost a great deal of face.

The others had walked out by now, whilst Lei Gangyang and Long Juxue were still chatting.

Apart from Shi Yunyun with her customary faint smile on her face, the expressions of the others were all incredibly grave.

It was obvious that Jiang Chen's warning before his departure had taken effect.

Come challenge me if you're not afraid of dying!

This wasn't an empty threat. Having seen the secular freak of a genius exchange blows with Lei Gangyang, these geniuses all recognized in that moment that they had severely underestimated the secular genius' martial dao strength.

If even a genius of the seventh level such as Lei Gangyang had been unable to gain the upper hand over the secular genius, then just how powerful was this person?

A shadow was cast over the hearts of Iron Dazhi and the others. They all asked themselves, if that'd been me, would I have been able to block two of Lei Gangyang's powerful blows just now?

The answer to this simulation exercise made all of their hearts

drop, dejected.

In that moment, they all felt a bit of regret and wanted to retract their previous promise.

“This is a grudge between the Purple Sun Sect and the secular genius. Why do we need to get involved?” There were many thinking the same thoughts as Iron Dazhi.

The two Myriad Spirit Sect disciples looked at each other and cupped their hands in front of Lei Gangyang. “Daoist Gangyang, after due consideration, we feel that our Myriad Spirit Sect should remain neutral in this. Please forget about the earlier matter. We have other things to attend to and will be leaving now.”

They didn’t wait for Lei Gangyang to respond as they turned and left.

Lian Canghai’s pale and remote face also turned to Lei Gangyang. “Daoist Gangyang, I temporarily cannot see through this person’s cultivation. Since I cannot see through him, I do not have full confidence. Without full confidence, I too will have to give up on this matter in case I affect your plans.”

“Canghai, you’re the first genius in the Precious Tree Sect. Can it be that you’re afraid of that secular genius as well?”

Lian Canghai said faintly, “Not that I’m afraid, but that I dislike doing things that I’m not confident in. Daoist Gangyang, I bid you

good day.”

When Iron Dazhi saw that even Lian Canghai had taken his leave, he knew that he’d only be embarrassing himself if he stayed here with his little bit of cultivation. He walked up to Lei Gangyang and stammered, trying to think of how to broach the subject.

Lei Gangyang wasn’t interested in Iron Dazhi to begin with, and roared irritably when he saw Iron Dazhi like so, “Get lost!”

Iron Dazhi’s body trembled in anger as his expression changed, but he didn’t dare erupt in rage, simply glowering and stiffly stalking off. It wasn’t that he had no self respect, but he knew that if he dared retort with a single word in front of Lei Gangyang, he’d be beaten half to death.

After all this, apart from the Purple Sun Sect disciples, only Shi Yunyun of the Flowing Wind Sect was left.

“Yunyun, are you planning on leaving as well?” Lei Gangyang sighed when he saw Shi Yunyun walk over.

Shi Yunyun smiled. “Daoist Gangyang, since you want me to stay, then I shall stay. However, I still hold to what I say in that I can’t promise anything.”

Lei Gangyang sighed. “The geniuses of the Precious Tree and Myriad Spirit Sects are all grass on top of the wall, swaying with the wind. You alone have stayed. A friend in need is a friend

indeed, Gangyang owes you a favor."

When Long Juxue saw that Lei Gangyang was purposefully kissing up to Shi Yunyun, her heart filled with disdain. Her eyes flicked over Shi Yunyun's pretty face like a dragonfly skimming the surface of water, and demurely glanced away afterwards.

"Please enjoy your conversation, Juxue will be leaving now."

Long Juxue paid no mind to Ceng Shi behind her, not even bothering to speak to him. It was as if the first disciple beneath Master Shiuyue was just a disposable character in her eyes.

When Ceng Shi witnessed Long Juxue's arrogance, irritation rooted itself in his heart as well.

Lei Gangyang had obviously seen some hints of what was going on and laughed woodenly. "Ceng Shi, to think that you've lost your position as the boss of the Shuiyue faction so quickly. Sigh."

Ceng Shi was incredibly dejected by the fact he could do nothing. He cupped his hands at Lei Ganyang. "Senior brother Gangyang, I too will be leaving now. Count me in for challenging that kid."

Lei Gangyang was speechless at seeing how things had turned out. A perfectly fine meeting and strategy had been completely ruined.

The most depressing thing was that he, Lei Gangyang, a born

winner in life, had thoroughly lost face in all matters this time.

……

Indeed, word of the examiners once again blacklisting Jiang Chen spread again. He could only request missions seven times in the strength of heart area each month.

However, this kind of blacklisting seemed obviously weak and feeble.

He could challenge the strength of heart area seven times, and the pills area seven times a month. That made for fourteen times in a month.

If he was this accomplished in the comprehensive area, then there would be no meaning to this blacklisting at all.

He could farm points in all areas, so what use was that ban? If it came down to it, he could just split up his focus.

News of the meeting traveled to the examiners' area at first light.

"Well?" The examiner with the cold expression laughed frostily. "The secular genius that you all looked down on barged into the meeting by himself, arriving calmly and leaving stylishly in the eyes of all those geniuses. Lei Gangyang, proclaimed as the first genius, struck out twice but couldn't even make the other leave behind a single strand of hair. Do you think that this kind of genius

would be worse than anyone in the sky quadrant?”

This examiner had been against the blacklisting both times, and he’d finally found an opportunity to vent his feelings.

The other examiners were also a bit depressed by his interrogation. They had to admit that they had indeed underestimated the secular genius’ martial dao ability.

It truly was as this examiner had said. The secular genius wasn’t inferior to anyone.

Perhaps he wasn’t the strongest in martial dao potential, but to be able to withstand two of Lei Gangyang’s blows meant that he truly wasn’t weak.

Someone who was almost on par with Lei Gangyang’s martial dao ability, powerful strength of heart, and immense potential in pills —wasn’t this kind of genius the type of origin realm seed they were searching for in this selection?

They’d actually blacklisted such a good talent multiple times!

Traces of regret flashed through the hearts of all the examiners present, apart from Master Shuiyue’s junior brother.

Chapter 384: Elder Shun And Huang'er Appear Again

They'd been biased towards the top geniuses and blacklisted the secular genius before out of a simple choice.

In their eyes, there was no way the secular genius could measure up to the preeminent sect geniuses.

However, the various talents that the secular genius had continuously uncovered had slowly upended their prejudices.

They'd thought that the secular genius lacked in martial cultivation because he'd kept avoiding that area.

For one lacking in martial cultivation, no matter how strong his other talents were, he was destined to be marginalized in the world of martial dao where the strong reigned supreme. He would never become the main character.

However, the secular genius' actions had once again overturned their understanding!

He'd charged singlehandedly into the meeting of the most brilliant geniuses.

He'd fought first seed Lei Gangyang to a standstill amidst chatter and laughter.

He’d arrived calmly and left stylishly.

Like a malicious blade, the mocking words he’d left behind carved out an internal demon in the hearts of those prideful geniuses.

Indeed, the geniuses had been jeered as trash, but were bereft of the ability to do anything. This kind of psychological pressure would cast a shadow on their dao hearts.

“Ai, this secular genius!” An examiner murmured to himself. “Has he hardened his heart to become enemies with the geniuses? Has he not considered his future path?”

“Indeed! Even if he has great talent, he will need to coexist with the geniuses when he enters a sect in the future. This fellow is truly too arrogant,”

Some of the examiners were truly despondent.

Just as they were sighing, a messenger reported in outside the door. “Report! Examiners, the secular genius has gone to the comprehensive area after being notified of his restrictions in the strength of heart area.”

“What?”

“Has he gone to the comprehensive area to farm points now?”

“This… can it be that his talents cover all areas?”

The examiners all surged to their feet when they received the message, incredulity writ all over their faces.

His extraordinary potential in the areas of pills and strength of heart had been already enough to shock them. Now that this freak genius had run to the comprehensive area, did he have astounding potential there as well?

An indifferent smile crossed the face of the examiner who’d been against blacklisting Jiang Chen to begin with. “It looks like our plan of blacklisting him is about to become a complete joke.”

The others had nothing to say to these words.

Indeed, if the secular genius could also farm points in the comprehensive area, then their grand plan of blacklisting him was truly an utter joke.

How could one ban him then? If he could only request missions seven times in each area, he just needed to rotate among the various areas to continue his plan to grind out points.

If that was the case, the only way to ban him would be to restrict him from requesting missions entirely and ban him from participating.

But everyone knew that was impossible.

They were well aware that the current restrictions were already quite shameless and in complete violation of the principles of fair competition.

If they restricted him from participating, what could he do next? He might as well withdraw from the selection entirely.

What was more, they'd also tragically discovered that with this candidate's strong potential, he had no true need to keep playing with the four great sects.

Even if this kind of genius youth left the sixteen kingdom alliance and went to a bigger place, he would have no shortage of people interested in him!

The examiner's look had a few traces of mockery in it as his gaze swept across the faces of each of the examiners'.

"Everyone, do you plan on continuing your ban and push such a secular genius completely out of the sixteen kingdom alliance? Or do you cancel the blacklisting and return a fair treatment to him?"

The Purple Sun Sect examiner spoke through gritted teeth, "We should carry this through, no matter the consequences. Since we've already set on our course. If we retreat, he won't feel indebted to us. We might as well greatly increase our suppression."

Even the other examiners looked greatly awkward with these words.

The examiner with the cold look started laughing. “Have you gone mad? Increase our suppression? How? Do you plan on taking the field yourself to oppress him?”

“There’s no need for me. I just need to open my mouth and give those preeminent geniuses a chance to challenge him. I trust those geniuses will do the job cleanly and swiftly.”

The Purple Sun Sect examiner smiled sinisterly.

The other examiners contemplated his words, but didn’t say anything.

What they’d done before was indeed out of line. If they continued down this path, it really would be too unfair to the secular genius.

But on the other hand, if they didn’t do so, then this secular genius’ insane momentum would be completely unstoppable.

As time went on, all the sect geniuses would be so trampled that they wouldn’t be able to lift their heads. This would be an enormous loss to the four great sects.

At the end of the day, the examiners were people from the sects.

They all had their own selfish thoughts and didn't wish for their sect's geniuses to be completely eclipsed by the appearance of a secular genius.

Once a prodigal genius was overshadowed by another and unable to deploy their own potential to their heart's content, then their path of martial dao would become winding and twisted.

"Do so in a concealed manner. Us examiners should indeed not continue to pile up restrictions or bans. If we do so, we really will become the laughingstock of the land."

"Indeed, we should've told them to resolve their own issues before. We did not fully think through our interference."

When the aloof examiner heard that they wanted to go from public suppression to moves in the shadows, he too gave an inward sigh.

He was unable to wrench the situation around with his power alone.

……

In a secluded corner in the Eternal Spirit Mountain.

An old man with flowing, long, white hair, exuding an ethereal,

detached air, was standing with his hands behind his back, looking down at the mountains and gullies beneath his feet with a furrowed brow and a profound gaze.

His expression was solemn as he seemed to have sunk into an anxious mood.

A young girl in pale green clothes, not too far away from him, was lying on a patch of shrubbery. The girl seemed like a mountain elf amidst the haziness of the mountain mist, as if a fairy in the world of men, giving one an otherworldly feeling.

The old man's gaze would glance at her every now and then, boundless love and anxiety clear within his eyes.

"Sigh. There's been three occurrences in the last year. The healer once said that if they progressed to three times a month, Huang'er life will be in danger. Villainous heavens! Huang'er is such a pure and kind girl, with no quarrel with the world, why is she the one to be afflicted with such evil luck?"

The old man sighed in his heart, pained by his inability and worried about the girl's sickness.

The old man was naturally the resident expert at the Hall of Healing in the Eastern Kingdom, Elder Shun, and the young girl was Huang'er.

Elder Shun had been keeping an eye on Jiang Chen since the

Eastern Kingdom, identifying him as the one the clues in old man Qian Ji's divination pointed to, the one who held the cure to healing Huang'er's sickness.

Therefore, he'd kept his eye on Jiang Chen all along the way.

It had been Elder Shun who'd helped Jiang Chen from the shadows when he'd almost lost his life to Chu Xinghan at the Second Crossing.

He'd also covertly followed Jiang Chen to the Skylaurel Kingdom when the latter journeyed there.

And now that Jiang Chen had entered the legacy territory of ancient times for testing, Elder Shun had brought Huang'er into the Eternal Spirit Mountain two months ago.

That was when Jiang Chen had entered the sky quadrant.

This territory was heavily guarded, and there were four origin realm cultivators in residence. Logically speaking, the defenses were supposed to be so strong that a water splash would be unable to make it in.

However, Elder Shun had used some sort of amazing ability to enter this area as easily as walking into his own backyard, and he'd followed Jiang Chen all the way to the Eternal Spirit Mountain.

The four origin realm cultivators were present here, but they

couldn’t sense this duo at all.

It was as if the latter two were part of the mountain.

Many matters weighed heavily on the old man’s mind. Huang’er’s sickness seemed to be occurring with increasing frequency in recent years. This made Elder Shun feel an increasing sense of urgency.

“Jiang Chen, ah Jiang Chen. If you’re not the clue in old man Qian Ji’s divination, then you really will have killed me, and Huang’er’s life will have been put in danger because of you. Even though this is just my one sided yearning, I really do hope that you’re the one in the divination.”

Elder Shun sighed lightly in his heart. He was caught between a rock and a hard place now, and could only hedge his bet on Jiang Chen.

“This selection is simply too long. Three years, I need to wait a full three years, but who knows what’ll happen to Huang’er’s sickness in the meantime? Huang’er can’t afford the wait, and neither can I.”

Elder Shun had the urge to just grab Jiang Chen, but with his understanding of Jiang Chen’s personality, he knew that this would likely backfire on him if he did so.

There was an enormous power hidden within this young man’s

body, a type of power that no amount of domineering force could subdue.

Elder Shun admired that trait, and knew that he would never succeed with force.

Even though Elder Shun had been a bystander, his understanding of Jiang Chen was like the back of his hand!

Jiang Chen was wearing a mask, specific robes, and his face and voice had been altered.

Even the four great origin realm forefathers didn't recognize him, while even people beside him like Dan Fei had been unable to confirm his identity at first. However, Elder Shun had identified Jiang Chen as soon as he'd arrived in the sky quadrant.

He'd watched all of the various suppression tactics that had descended on Jiang Chen's head as he'd streaked forward in the sky quadrant.

"From the four origin realm practitioners down to the examiners in the sixteen kingdoms—all idiots. They cast aside and ignore such a wonderful genius, yet hold this kind of boring selection. They reject those within reach and seek that which is far away. How idiotic. What's even more idiotic, the sky quadrant examiners weren't overjoyed at discovering the treasure that was this genius, but instead decided to harshly suppress him. Are their brains made of bean curd dregs?"

Elder Shun didn't know whether to laugh or cry. He was speechless at the people of the sixteen kingdom alliance.

"I truly cannot wait three years. Jiang Chen, don't blame me for ruining your tempo. I can wait for you for half a year at most. Huang'er's sickness cannot be delayed."

Elder Shun murmured to himself, feeling slightly apologetic when he mentioned Jiang Chen's name.

He too knew that with the advantages of the Eternal Spirit Mountain, this was the best timing for Jiang Chen to cultivate and progress immensely. He shouldn't ruin Jiang Chen's rhythm. If he could cultivate for a full three years, Elder Shun firmly believed that Jiang Chen would crush all the so-called geniuses of the four great sects.

At that time, the only one who could barely pose a threat to him would be that girl with the innate constitution.

If it wasn't for Huang'er's illness, Elder Shun would've been willing to wait a decade or two, much less three years.

He also wanted to witness how this young genius rose to power.

It was a pity that time waited for no one!

Chapter 385: The Foundations Of The Eternal Spirit Mountain Shakes

A trace of apology flickered within Elder Shun's eyes, but it was quickly smothered by determination, as if he'd made up his mind on something.

"Elder Shun, you've stood there for so long, at times frowning and at times pursing your lips–what are you thinking about?"

The girl in the pale green clothes had slowly walked over at an unknown time, holding a little pure white animal in her hands. "Elder Shun, who would've thought that a spirit creature such as a snow fox could be found on this mountain. Look at him, his left leg has been injured. I'm going to dress his wounds."

It was as if the spring rains had graced Elder Shun's cold face as boundless love and affection appeared on it.

"You little girl you, always so kind. The snow fox looks soft and docile on the outside, but it's full of devious tricks. Huang'er, be careful of it turning on you."

Huang'er flashed her teeth in a slight smile, as pure as the mountain valley after the rain.

"I'll be careful."

Elder Shun nodded. He was only speaking a word of warning, and wasn't truly worried that the snow fox would harm Huang'er.

"Huang'er." Elder Shun called out as she turned to leave.

"Hmm?" Huang'er turned, her graceful brows arched in question as she lightly came to a halt.

"Huang'er, I'm planning on intervening, will you blame me for being a busybody?" Elder Shun was a bit hesitant. He was afraid of nothing under the heavens, but he was afraid that Huang'er would be unhappy if he made a move.

Huang'er's clear, limpid eyes darkened slightly as her brows lifted. She asked softly, "Elder Shun, it's Huang'er who has dragged you down, and moreover, you're doing so out of consideration for Huang'er. How would Huang'er possibly fault you? Except... in this legacy realm, you..."

"Don't you fret about that. I naturally have my ways. This legacy territory is strong, but these people of the four great sects are too mediocre. I only need to slightly exert myself to ensure that they sink into a great panic."

A mischievous smile flitted across Elder Shun's face, but in that smile was also a hint of disdain towards the four great sects.

It was obvious he didn't think much of them at all.

……

Reports of the events that had transpired in the sky quadrant continued to pour into the upper levels of the four great sects. The four forefathers in particular paid considerable attention to the happenings of this quadrant.

All of their hopes were pinned on the sky quadrant.

To be honest, the other quadrants were just for show. It would be nice if some talents rose out of them, but it didn't matter if none did either.

Only if the geniuses of the sky quadrant lived up to their hopes and quickly progressed, would there be hope for the future of the four great sects.

Therefore, the forefathers were willing to let a great many things slide in the sky quadrant.

Sunchaser of the Purple Sun Sect was especially happy to see an environment of suppression form after he'd deduced that the secular genius was Jiang Chen.

He didn't want this secular genius to become an obstacle in the rise of his sect's geniuses.

At his age and cultivation level, Sunchaser's dao heart was cold and cruel indeed. He took an exceedingly dim view of the life and

death of others.

If someone couldn't become one of his, then there was nothing untoward in destroying them. Otherwise, he'd be cherishing a snake in his bosom and allowing that person to become an obstacle. This was something Sunchaser never wanted to see.

As for the other three forefathers, Icemist of the Flowing Wind Sect had an aloof personality. She always occupied the center ground when handling matters, being neither radical nor conservative.

Thousandleaf of the Precious Tree Sect conducted his own investigations and had come to understand that the secular genius had very complicated relations with the geniuses of his sect.

Apart from Tang Hong, the others seemed to be quite fearful of him.

Due to this matter, Thousandleaf was also hesitant. He felt that if he didn't kick up a fuss, this was letting the Purple Sun Sect have a free hand.

But if he did, he might not be able to change the situation.

It was Ninelion of the Myriad Spirit Sect who was hopping up and down with rage. He cursed loudly at the examiners of the sky quadrant, condemning them vociferously as piles of dog turd to be openly breaking the rules like this.

His enthusiasm was set on fire when he learned that Jiang Chen had singlehandedly charged into the meeting.

He didn't conceal his admiration for the secular cultivator, and was quite pleased with how his sect's genius, Luo Xi, had performed.

Luo Xi hadn't submitted to Lei Gangyang and joined his plan of oppression, but had chosen to place himself outside of things and not become involved instead.

To forefather Ninelion, this was a attitude filled with backbone and grace.

After all, the Purple Sun Sect was perpetually domineering, a trait shared by Lei Gangyang. Ninelion was very pleased that Luo Xi had managed to stay true to himself and not compromise.

"Mm. If the secular genius could join my Myriad Spirit Sect, Luo Xi and he would shine like twin suns, and form the grandest occasion for the sect in the last millennium. I must protect this candidate at all costs."

Ninelion could no longer sit still when his thoughts reached this point. As such, he began to take some action.

He first approached venerated Thousandleaf. To begin with, the latter's attitude had been ambiguous. He too wanted to recruit the

secular genius in the depths of his heart.

When Ninelion convinced him that only the Purple Sun Sect would benefit in the end if the secular genius was suppressed, he decided to join the camp of protecting Jiang Chen after a moment's thought.

However, the two of them thought that it'd be best if they brought the solitary Icemist as well in the face of such a headstrong Purple Sun Sect.

Icemist had always remained neutral, but had to give face after the two spent quite a while speaking to her, and only then joined their cause.

Sunchaser seemed to have been long since prepared when he saw the three of them arrive together.

He only laughed coldly no matter how they tried to persuade him.

"I'm not involved in the affairs of the examiners' area. But if the sect geniuses want to challenge him and take him down a peg, this doesn't seem to be against the rules?"

Sunchaser's tone was indifferent as he seemed completely at ease.

The other forefathers were equally speechless at such a shameless

response. Indeed, candidates could challenge each other and receive points. This was a clearly delineated rule in the sky quadrant.

Ninelion laughed coldly. “It is indeed fair competition for candidates to challenge each other, but do you think that those ridiculous restrictions from before were logical?”

Sunchaser’s tone was aloof. “That was a group examiner decision. What did that have to do with me? Do you think I told them to do so? Don’t forget that members of our four sects are present among the examiners. As much face as I have, I don’t think I have enough to affect the people of your sects?”

The other three were completely speechless. As shameless as Sunchaser’s words were, they also weren’t without reason.

The matters of the examiners’ section had been a group decision. All three of them had people amongst the examiners.

Sunchaser made use of their speechlessness to suddenly say, “I’m rather of the opinion that it’s not a good thing for a secular candidate to agitate people’s hearts and make a fuss in the sky quadrant. It’s not necessarily a bad thing for the geniuses to teach him a lesson. Isn’t he a genius? Don’t they all slowly rise through various violent clashes? Which one of us didn’t slowly reach our peak through stepping on countless peers and corpses?”

In the path of martial dao, the rise of a genius was indeed filled with light from blades and shadows from swords, mountains of

corpses and oceans of blood.

The four forefathers suddenly trembled as they were speaking.

The Eternal Spirit Mountain suddenly started shaking as they spoke. The skies shook and the earth rose up in that moment.

“What?!” Their expressions changed as they dashed outside.

That such drastic actions had occurred meant that something had happened.

RUMBLE!!

The immense trembling made the Eternal Spirit Mountain howl. Everyone on the mountain was alarmed and began swaying with the mountain.

“What’s going on?”

“What’s happening?”

All the candidates ran out of their residences, shock writ all over their faces.

Jiang Chen had been sitting cross legged in his residence when he felt the disturbance. He too dashed out like lightning.

He looked down with a furrowed brow and summoned the Goldbiter Rat King, bading it to explore belowground and see if it was an earthquake.

However, the shaking stopped after a few breaths.

The degree of the tremors was as if a mountain god had sneezed. All was calm after it'd ceased, without the slightest trace of something out of the ordinary.

However, the four forefathers weren't that optimistic and kept investigating.

They all focused on the foundations of the mountain. If it'd been a slight bit of internal shaking, they wouldn't have minded it.

However, things would be greatly different if something had gone wrong with the foundations.

They'd used immeasurable wealth and spirit power to open up the Eternal Spirit Mountain. If something had gone wrong with the formation, then the mountain would forever close.

Once it closed, they would all be forever sealed inside, unless someone else opened it from the outside.

Otherwise, none of them would be able to make it out.

The forefathers shot over to the formation holding the entrance open.

Sunchaser was the fastest, closely followed by the three others.

“How does it look?” Icemist asked Sunchaser.

Sunchaser’s face was livid and full of incredulity. He looked around the formation for quite a while, the muscles twitching on his face. He felt a bitter taste fill his mouth as he murmured, “The formation’s been partially destroyed.”

The other three forefathers hastily took a look, their expressions changing greatly when they saw the destruction.

“Damn it, who did this?!” Ninelion started cursing loudly. “We paid such a high price to open this mountain, and then we could only maintain it for three years. Half of the formation’s been destroyed. At this rate, the formation can only be maintained for another half year!”

The four present were all the strongest amongst the sixteen kingdom alliance, but when they looked at each other now, their expressions were filled with wariness.

It was obvious that anything that could destroy the foundations of the formation was an existence they had to be cautious of.

“Can it be that a strong being lives in the legacy territory?” Icemist asked.

“Impossible. Even if there was a powerful being here, they wouldn’t be awake. From ancient times until now, those powerful beings would either have fallen or be deeply asleep without the presence of sufficient energy to sustain them. It’s impossible that they would be active.” Ninelion denied Icemist’s speculation.

“Was this manmade?” Thousandleaf sucked in a slight breath, his tone guarded.

Manmade?

When the four forefathers thought of this possibility, their expressions became even graver.

Chapter 386: Unexpected News

Jiang Chen had been perplexed when he felt the shaking slowly subside, but he wasn't afraid.

After a few life and death experiences, his strength of heart had been raised to the point where it wasn't affected by outside interference.

The Rat King hopped out before long.

"Young master, there are no oddities below ground. It shouldn't have been an earthquake. Perhaps it was ripples from the restrictions in the formation outside the mountain?"

The Rat King patently knew of the wonders of the mountain and understood that there were many ancient and powerful restrictions in the Eternal Spirit Mountain. He hadn't dared drill about randomly.

Jiang Chen mused briefly in his yard and felt that if this had been triggered by the restrictions in the formation outside of the mountain, then there was nothing he could do about it.

"These aren't things I should worry about. No need to pay any attention to them. I need to focus on cultivation. Even if the sky were to cave in, the four great sects will be there to shoulder it."

Jiang Chen entered his residence and continued sitting down

cross-legged to proceed his cultivation.

Ever since breaking through to the fifth level spirit realm, it was as if the doors of boundless inspiration had opened. His comprehension of martial dao was simply geysering forth.

In addition, countless suppressions he'd faced from both examiners and geniuses during this period, all of which had turned into an outside source of motivation that prompted further improvement from him.

It was now two months since he'd entered the sky quadrant and his score had reached an astonishing 3,300 points.

This score was enough to make it into the top ten. He was only three to four hundred points away from top scorer, Lei Gangyang.

At this rate, Jiang Chen had absolute confidence in surpassing Lei Gangyang in the remaining twenty, thirty days of the current cycle and reaching the top of the sky quadrant lists!

"The path of martial dao is similar to paddling upstream. Failure to advance means going backwards. With my speed, Lei Gangyang and the others will not resign themselves to their doom and wait for me to surpass them. They will certainly retaliate heavily against me after this, and the greatest of reactions will be in the challenges in the rings!"

Jiang Chen had experienced Lei Gangyang's strength during his

solo disruption of the meeting of the most high last time.

One had to admit, Lei Gangyang lived up to his reputation of seventh level spirit realm. Jiang Chen felt that there was almost no way for him to beat such a person.

However, if they met in the ring, Jiang Chen had many trump cards and thus great hope to force the fight to a draw.

“Lei Gangyang commands the other geniuses as if he were the head of a dragon. Although Long Juxue possesses an innate constitution, she has yet to surpass him. Her cultivation level is on par with him at best. Even if this is the case, I must continue to work hard.”

Although Jiang Chen valued Lei Gangyang, he didn’t see the latter as a fated rival.

Long Juxue however, was different.

With her innate constitution, all of the Purple Sun Sect’s fortune and resources were funneled in her. She was the true thorn in his side.

If he couldn’t kill her in the ring, then he wouldn’t have the opportunity to do so before he entered the origin realm.

It wasn’t that he underestimated himself, but that her sect simply valued her too highly.

Old-monster Sunchaser was a domineering person without reason. Judging from his personality, he would harshly suppress whoever made a move against Long Juxue, showing no mercy at all.

Therefore, the match in the ring was Jiang Chen's only hope.

However, it wouldn't be that easy to kill Long Juxue in the ring.

Her advantages over him were obvious. An innate constitution and limitless resources—these two alone were something that Jiang Chen couldn't currently measure up to.

If it weren't for the memories of his past life and the gains from some of his great adventures, he likely really would've been left behind in the dust by this person.

"Cultivate, I must furiously cultivate!"

Jiang Chen realized with great urgency that if he were to kill Long Juxue within the ring, he had to give himself a higher chance of success.

To him right now, what he had to raise the level of most urgently wasn't his techniques, but his cultivation level.

Although he was at the fifth level spirit realm, this kind of level

was at most mediocre in the sky quadrant.

There were at least four or five people like Lei Gangyang at the seventh level spirit realm in the sky quadrant, and as time went on the sixth leveled ones would naturally increase.

Although Jiang Chen felt no pressure at challenging someone above him, the fifth level was two levels below the seventh, and thus he would always be at a disadvantage.

Furthermore, the higher these top genius' cultivation level was, the more likely it was that they would have some trump cards up their sleeves. As the highest level of existence within the sects, it was impossible that they didn't have some aces as a last resort.

Therefore, Jiang Chen was deeply motivated to cultivate.

If it'd been someone on par with his level, he could've absolutely looked down on them and destroyed them effortlessly. He would've been unafraid even if they had quite a few trump cards.

"That woman Long Juxue is already at the peak of the earth spirit realm, the sixth level. If she breaks through the shackles of the earth spirit realm and enters the seventh level, it will only be more difficult to kill her!"

A beam of light shot in through his window as he contemplated. It was a message glyph.

“All candidates, convene at the sky quadrant public square!”

This was an order of the highest level. All candidates had to hurry to the square immediately without a trace of delaying.

Jiang Chen thought momentarily. Did something happen due to the earth shaking just now?

His body had already exited his residence with this thought, and he shot towards the public square.

All of the candidates had gathered as soon as possible.

The examiners all had grave expressions on their faces, seeming to have met something great.

The heavyweights of the four sects also filtered in. Even the four forefathers arrived soon afterwards. Everyone’s facial expressions seemed to be concealing their thoughts.

“Everyone, the four venerated ones have an essential matter to announce. Be quiet.”

An examiner stood in front and pressed down with his hands, indicating for everyone to be quiet down.

The four venerated ones had something to say? And an essential matter at that? All the candidates quieted when they saw that the

forefathers too were wearing grave expressions.

Sunchaser was the first to speak. “Everyone, enormous ripples occurred in the Eternal Spirit Mountain earlier. I trust that you have felt them as well.”

All of the candidates nodded. Something big must have happened? Why would the forefathers have been alarmed otherwise?

“We don’t wish to conceal this matter either. According to our observations, the formation beneath the Eternal Spirit Mountain has been attacked by someone. The spirit stones and spirit power we have supplied should have kept the mountain open for three years, but that the formation has been attacked, the time allotted to keeping the mountain has been halved, or even more. According to our speculations, the mountain entrance can only be maintained for another half a year.”

“What?” The candidates were stunned as a hubbub of discussions broke out.

“The formation was attacked? Then don’t we have to cut our cultivation short and leave early?”

“No way? The environment here is so good, I really don’t want to leave.”

“Yeah, I’d wanted to train for a full three years and try to assail

the sky spirit realm! Could it be that my plan is about to be toast?”

Mournful wails permeated the air. It was obvious that they’d been impacted by this news.

Even the faces of the top geniuses such as Lei Gangyang and Long Juxue changed slightly upon hearing this. They were incredibly astonished by the sudden news.

Even Jiang Chen was hiddenly surprised. “The formation was attacked? Is there a more powerful being in the Eternal Spirit Mountain? If this is the case, who can guarantee our safety after today’s attack?”

However, these questions only flashed through his mind, remaining unvoiced. He knew that his word didn’t carry much weight, and that he didn’t have much of a right to speak in the first place, so he decided that he couldn’t be bothered with it.

Whether it was three years or one and a half, the four great sects would be there to shoulder the skies should they cave in.

Sunchaser spoke loudly. “After discussion with the forefathers, we announce to everyone that the plan of a three year selection must be modified. The original timeframe will be shrunk to one year.”

“What?! One year?!”

“Three years turning to one, this is too much of a change! Didn’t you say you could hold out for a year and a half?”

“Indeed, a year is too short. It’s already been eight months or so, that means we would only have three or four months left here?”

The candidates all started yelping and complaining.

“Silence!” Forefather Sunchaser suddenly roared, his aura domineering as he exerted himself, bringing it crashing down like the tides and drowning the hubbub beneath.

All the candidates quailed and shut up nicely.

“There is naturally logic in our decision to shrink things to one year. There is only half of the effects of the formation, perhaps even less, left. Therefore, we can allow you only one year before we must select 64 candidates and then compete for the final 16.”

The finals for the final 16 required time as well. This was the big act, and the four great sects naturally wouldn’t hastily gloss over this.

Therefore, the rest of the time would be left for the final selection.

After all, the point of the selection was for the finals to select the best origin realm candidates.

“From now on, you only have three to four months left. There will be another cycle left after this one. We will select the strongest 64 after that to conduct the final selection.”

Forefather Sunchaser’s tone was domineering. “This is the how things are now. You can go back and make use of every second and minute to train if you can accept it, or get the hell out if you can’t.”

No one dared say anything when an origin realm cultivator was raging. Even though many were unhappy, this was the greater picture. If even the four forefathers could do nothing, what could they do?

Jiang Chen thought deeply after hearing this. “Accidents just keep happening. I’d thought that I lacked sufficient time before, but time is even more of the essence now. Everyone will be cultivating furiously in the next three to four months. I need to step up my plan.” Jiang Chen too felt pressure descend on him when he heard that three years had shrunk to one.

He had been confident that he could make it to seventh level spirit realm or even higher in three years.

But now that he’d received news of the reduced timeframe, and with the finals taking place right afterwards, he felt pressure stare at him in the face.

Chapter 387: The Plan To Assail The Sky Quadrant

The four forefathers obviously had no interest in explaining anything. When one reached their level, they could completely disregard the thoughts and feelings of those beneath them.

What they had to do was to act in a way that was best for the greater picture.

What those beneath them could do was to provide absolute, absolute obedience.

Jiang Chen listened to them for a bit and he understood that there was nothing that could be done. He didn't tarry as he silently retreated from the crowd and sped towards his own residence.

He felt that time was of the essence, and he no longer had any time left to waste.

Jiang Chen leisurely looked in the direction of the earth quadrant when he reached his door and sighed lightly. "Liu Wencai and Fatty Lu, if you've acquitted yourselves well, this cycle is your last chance. If you're still unable to make it into the sky quadrant in this cycle, then you'll have no chances to do that in the future."

It was now the end of the third cycle, with only twenty to thirty days left.

If the earth quadrant candidates couldn't make it into the top ten, they wouldn't make it into the sky quadrant for the fourth cycle.

Since the three year selection had been compressed into a year, the fourth cycle would be the last cycle in the selection.

Jiang Chen refocused his mind when he returned to his residence and he began laying out his plans.

"The final matches are coming up in three to four months. I trust that the sky quadrant candidates will be furiously cultivating starting from today."

The unexpected news from today put tremendous pressure on Jiang Chen.

"It looks like I need to adjust my plans again. I need to take some risks apart from building that slow and steady foundation." He quickly shuffled through some plans in his mind.

What he needed most now was to raise his cultivation level, and the quickest shortcut to that was continuously absorbing boundless spirit power, forging and strengthening his spirit ocean.

What Jiang Chen lacked the most now was a source of spirit power, and that was why he'd set his sights on entering the Precious Tree Sect.

Out of the four great sects, the Precious Tree Sect had the most resources — precisely what he needed.

“Compared to the premier geniuses, I simply don’t have enough resources. Although the cultivation environment of this quadrant is extremely superior, I’m still unable to close the gap without good resources in my hands. It looks like I need to make use of those two items… ”

Jiang Chen searched around his storage ring and took out two crystal cores with abundant spirit energy within them.

Both of them were red throughout and they sparkled with a radiant light, like they were the most splendid jewels.

One of them was bigger and it obviously had more spirit power within it. It was the core of the Redscaled Firelizard.

The other was a bit smaller and a bit dimmer, it was the core of the Fire Raven King.

“These cores embody the essence of the heaven and earth. The so-called spirit stones in the world of martial dao are mostly the cores and bones from spirit creatures of ancient times, having transformed into spirit stones with the passage of time. These cores have yet to lose their spirit power and their essence still remains. Their spirit qi is more plentiful than those of those age old spirit stones.”

Jiang Chen thought for a moment and he still decided to make use of the Fire Raven King core.

“The Raven King was the peak of the spirit realm and it’s core is comparatively easier to refine. With my current cultivation level, it would be nearly impossible refine the Firelizard’s core in three to four months!”

Jiang Chen weighed things up and he decided not to be greedy, starting with the Raven King’s core first.

Although the Firelizard was a saint rank creature and its core was far greater than that of the Raven King’s, because the the spirit power within it was too strong, Jiang Chen couldn’t master it currently.

Putting the Firelizard core away, Jiang Chen tossed the Raven King’s core up with his hand a few times.

“This is the one!”

A light sparkled in Jiang Chen’s eyes. He knew that even when it was the Raven King’s core, it wouldn’t be that simple to refine it.

However, he was still more confident about the Raven King’s core than he was about the Firelizard’s.

He wasn’t an ordinary cultivator after all. If an ordinary cultivator had brashly tried to refine a core that was at the peak of

the spirit realm, it was highly likely that the immense spirit power would invade their bodies and consume them instead.

However, Jiang Chen had many ways of controlling the backlash — part of the many opportunities from his memories of his past life.

He had too many methods to choose from in this regard.

“The Raven King’s core has sufficient spirit power, so if I fully refine it, it’s a guarantee that I can make it into the sixth level spirit realm. Let’s see if I can make it into the sky spirit realm in three to four months.”

Jiang Chen’s ambitions and goals were enormous.

His goals was to reach the seventh level spirit realm.

He was well aware that if he entered the sixth level, his chances of victory when fighting Lei Gangyang were fifty-fifty. If he fought Long Juxue, who’d broken through to the sky spirit realm, his chances of winning were about forty percent.

But if he could make it to the sky spirit realm, things were greatly different.

He could absolutely crush someone in the same level!

Even if Long Juxue was a favored daughter of heaven and had combined the fortunes of the entire Purple Sun Sect, Jiang Chen was confident that he would be able to destroy her with no doubt whatsoever.

After all, once their cultivation level's were the same, Long Juxue's so-called advantages were all lackluster, and the advantages of Jiang Chen's immense martial dao knowledge, with techniques far in excess of anything in the sixteen kingdoms, would be completely demonstrated.

"Three to four months... seventh level spirit realm... " A resolute look shot out of Jiang Chen's eyes. "I'll put it all on the line for that goal!"

Indeed, just as he'd thought, when the selection timeframe had been compressed to a year, the atmosphere in the sky quadrant changed immediately.

The geniuses who'd thought about how to farm points all returned to their residences and began to concentrate on cultivation.

There was no more point in grinding out points. The key thing here was to increase their strength.

Becoming stronger was the true way!

The final selection wasn't based off on points, but rather, it was

based on martial strength and cultivators fought for it with each punch and kick.

Therefore, the amount of people in the mission area greatly decreased almost overnight. Apart from those with lower rankings and needing points to advance, almost no one else paid the mission areas a visit.

Jiang Chen's score was now solidly in the top ten, so he naturally didn't need to mind his rank.

However, although he was focusing on his cultivation, he would occasionally make some time to farm some points to ensure that his ranking didn't fall too behind.

The last twenty to thirty days of the third cycle passed by just like that.

The last ten of the sky quadrant were brutally eliminated after the fourth cycle, and the top ten of the earth quadrant had successfully made it into the sky quadrant.

What surprised Jiang Chen was that Liu Wencai had indeed made it into the sky quadrant, and he'd even ascended the identity as the champion of the earth quadrant with fierce momentum!

"Brother Boulder, we finally met again!"

Liu Wencai's eyes were red when he saw Jiang Chen, and he

found it hard to conceal his emotional state.

Jiang Chen sized up Liu Wencai and he discovered that in these three short months, the changes that had occurred in the latter could only be described as transformative.

“Good going, it looks like you haven’t been lazy in the past three months, well done!”

Liu Wencai felt extreme gratitude towards Jiang Chen. He felt that he only achieved his current accomplishments because of Brother Boulder. If it wasn’t for the small vial of beast blood from Brother Boulder and his pointers, he never would’ve improved so rapidly.

It could be said that Liu Wencai had grown into a miracle in the earth quadrant over the past three months.

He’d risen with the irresistible force of a thunderbolt in the earth quadrant and he had swept past all his opponents, charging fiercely into the sky quadrant.

The miracle of Liu Wencai was second only to the legend of Jiang Chen in the earth quadrant.

“Brother Boulder, I owe you the gratitude of being reborn again. I have my accomplishments of today not because I joined the Myriad Spirit Sect, but because I know you. I don’t know how to voice impressive words, but if Brother Boulder wishes me to charge into

mountains of blades and oceans of fire in the future, I won't even furrow my brow."

"Wencai, all I've done is to enable you to take fewer winding paths. The key point still lay with your immense potential that was locked within you, and it is even rare amongst the geniuses of the sixteen kingdom. I've been in the sky quadrant for three months and I have yet to see anyone with potential to rival yours. It's a pity that there are only three months left untill the selection, or you would rise up like the wind and rain in the sky quadrant and raze those geniuses so badly that they would discard their armor."

Jiang Chen clapped Liu Wencai's shoulder and encouraged him.

He wasn't voicing pleasantries, but he was truly surprised at Liu Wencai's potential.

"Wencai, the road is beneath your feet. You must believe that even now, the potential within your body has yet to be fully tapped. I don't know how much potential you have either, but what i'm certain is that the power within your body hasn't been fully uncovered yet."

Liu Wencai was deep in thought after hearing these words and nodded.

"Brother Boulder... "

Jiang Chen spread out his hands and suddenly looked outside. "A

friend is coming, you guys can get to know each other today as well!”

Tang Hong’s brass voice sounded as soon as Jiang Chen had finished speaking. “Boss, we’re moving to new places today based on our rankings. Your residence likely needs to be vacated.”

Tang Hong walked in with large strides and he slightly halted when he saw that someone was already present in Jiang Chen’s yard. He scratched at his head full of messy red hair.

“Boss, who’s he?”

“The new champion of the earth quadrant, he just made it here earlier today. His name is Liu Wencai, one of my brothers in the earth quadrant.”

Tang Hong’s eyes rolled around as he sized up Liu Wencai and chuckled oddly, suddenly stepping forward to reach out a hand and made a grasping motion towards Liu Wencai.

Liu Wencai was surprised, but he reacted quickly. He probed with his right hand and made a flicking motion, dispersing the force behind Tang Hong’s grab.

When the two forces bumped together, they both took a step backwards.

“Eh?” Candidates in the lower quadrants have this kind of power

to them? Tang Hong cocked his head, the light of disbelief shining through his eyes.

Tang Hong was a straightforward person and he thought the most highly of people with true ability to them, particularly when Liu Wencai was Jiang Chen's brother!

He hadn't had any malicious intent behind his move, he just wanted to probe the other. After testing, he discovered that the other did indeed deserve his reputation and he was quite overjoyed.

"Haha, boss' brother alright! Come, let me introduce myself. I'm Tang Hong, boss' new follower in the sky quadrant." Tang Hong put his fan-like hand out and smiled a bit bashfully.

Jiang Chen smiled and said to Liu Wencai, "He's Tang Hong, a straightforward guy and my brother."

Liu Wencai's angry expression turned happy when he heard this and he also out his hand out. "Nice going, nice moves!"

Tang Hong grinned, "You're quite strong as well and you have the right to be my brother."

Liu Wencai wasn't a small guy to begin with, but he only reached Tang Hong's shoulder. When he looked at this bashful and honest big guy, Liu Wencai's first impression of him was rather good.

The three of them had become good friends after the initial clash and smiled as they entered the house, chatting happily.

Chapter 388: Long Juxue's Breakthrough

Liu Wencai was honest and loyal, whereas Tang Hong was good-natured and honest. When two honest folks were put together, it made for a rather interesting sight. They actually got along fabulously.

After drinking a few cups of wine, Tang Hong suddenly thought of something and slapped his thigh. "Boss, I almost forgot. I'm here to remind you to hurry up and move. If you miss the move out time and delay the other person moving in, you could get docked points if they tattle on you."

Jiang Chen smiled. "No worries, he won't rat on me, don't worry."

"How would you know? You haven't met them." Tang Hong was a bit skeptical.

"Haha, who says I haven't? What seems far away is actually close at hand; Liu Wencai is the champion of the earth quadrant and has been assigned residence number 91. Wencai, will you rat me out?"

Liu Wencai also started laughing.

Tang Hong paused and then realized what was going on here. He chuckled in a silly manner and scratched his hair. "I hadn't wrapped my mind around it yet, haha. Boss, you came here as the champion of the earth quadrant, and now younger brother Wencai is the new champion of the earth quadrant. This is a legacy of

championship!”

Everyone burst out laughing.

“Wencai is truly strong. Tang Hong, you should spar with him every now and then if you have the opportunity to.” Jiang Chen looked at Tang Hong in a calculating manner.

That gaze put Tang Hong’s hairs on end. “Boss, I’m not a chick, what are you checking me out for?”

Jiang Chen paid no attention to him and just examined him for quite some time, finally nodding. “Tang Hong, your body is tall and stocky, you should actually have an interesting bloodline heritage on you as well. It’s a pity that you haven’t received the best resources from the Precious Tree Sect. Wencai, remember the beast blood I gave you last time?”

Liu Wencai’s tone turned solemn when he heard this, “Brother Boulder, it’s that beast blood that allowed me to be reborn. How could I ever forget?”

“Mm. Tang Hong is my brother and I can’t treat him poorly. I also plan to gift him a portion of beast blood. However, he doesn’t have the methods of your sect and likely lacks some knowledge in beast blood refining. I’d like you to give him some pointers and help him refine the blood.”

Tang Hong started, “Boss, what beast blood?”

Jiang Chen mused silently, light flashing through his eyes as he said in a low voice, “There’s no one else here, so I won’t keep this a secret from you guys. This blood is the blood of a saint rank creature.”

“What?!” Disbelief shone in Liu Wencai’s eyes as he trembled.

He had guessed that this beast was most likely at the peak of the spirit realm, but had never imagined that it was the blood of a saint rank creature!”

Tang Hong’s mind felt a bit fuzzy; it was a rather indescribable notion. However, he knew very well what a saint rank creature meant.

“No need for theatrics.” Jiang Chen waved his hands to contain their exaggerated reactions. “Wencai, do you think there’ll be difficulty to this?”

Liu Wencai said resolutely, “We’re all brothers here, what’s the difficulty in these small matters? Not to mention that refining beast blood isn’t anything to do with the secret arts of the sect.”

Tang Hong scratched his head, “Boss…”

“Tang Hong, to draw the biggest picture possible, you should be completely remade just like Wencai. Its smallest effects will also be enough to change your potential and remove the impurities within

your body, greatly increasing your martial dao potential. This is something no medicine in the Precious Tree Sect can achieve."

Tang Hong nodded woodenly, seemingly understanding Jiang Chen's words, but also seemingly not. He knew that Jiang Chen was speaking of great matters, but he didn't quite understand how.

Jiang Chen broke things down more clearly. "Let me put it this way. I met Liu Wencai in the mystic quadrant and became friends with him in the earth quadrant. In the earth quadrant, he'd been worrying that his cultivation was insufficient, and as a result be sent back to the mystic quadrant. But now, he's arrived in the sky quadrant with great momentum, all within three short months. Tang Hong, tell me where you think Wencai's current strength would rank in the sky quadrant."

Tang Hong thought for a moment. "Ole brother Wencai's strength is a bit less than mine, but there shouldn't be much of a problem for him to rank in the top 30."

Jiang Chen smiled. "I'm going to bet that he's going to make it into the top 16 in three months, and keep going even higher than that!"

"That strong?" Tang Hong found that a bit hard to believe as he cocked his head and cast his gaze across Liu Wencai, skepticism writ all over his face.

"Tang Hong, you must believe that everyone has their own way. Wencai has found his path now, and I hope you find yours as soon

as possible.”

Jiang Chen had some hints of encouragement in his tone. “Your strength now is a bit stronger than Wencai, but the potential in Wencai’s body is now far in excess of his peers. He wouldn’t be worse off at all when placed amongst the preeminent geniuses. Your potential is also quite good, but I feel that you’re a treasure vault yet to be fully excavated as well.”

Jiang Chen took out a vial of the Firelizard blood.

“You must refine a saint rank creature’s blood. You should consult Wencai on the best way to absorb things. He’s a Myriad Spirit Sect disciple and will have a great many ideas in this area.”

As simple as Tang Hong was, he knew that this was an immensely fortuitous occurrence as he accepted the beast blood. He spoke to Liu Wencai, “Ole brother Wencai, it’s not that I don’t trust in your strength, but that I really must see if this beast blood is that strong. Heh heh, if I can be like you, then I’ll really have made it! I’m going to step on all those bullshit geniuses!”

Tang Hong’s grudge against those preeminent geniuses wasn’t just a typical one.

“Tang Hong, Wencai can’t help you for free. You need to help him assimilate into the sky quadrant as soon as possible. Accompany him in farming points and help him make it into the top 64 at least.”

Tang Hong nodded ardently. “Heh heh, no problem at all. Ole brother Wencai, come! Have a seat in my residence.”

Jiang Chen also said, “Hey Wencai, this residence is yours now. I’m going to my new quarters.”

Jiang Chen’s score had risen crazily in this cycle, and he’d made it into the number eight spot. Therefore, his residence now had changed accordingly.

……

What he hadn’t anticipated was that Liu Wencai and Tang Hong had felt like old friends at their first meeting, and they’d become the most intimate of friends after a few days.

Liu Wencai helped Tang Hong refine the beast blood, and Tang Hong helped him farm points. Their smooth cooperation became a new scene in the sky quadrant.

Although Tang Hong’s changes weren’t as ridiculous as Liu Wencai’s after refining the beast blood, his transformation was still quite astonishing.

They first started with his body.

He was big and stocky to begin with, with a tiger’s back and bear’s waist, but his figure became even bigger, even more robust, after refining the beast blood. His muscles looked like they’d been

cast from liquid bronze, giving off a sense of explosive power.

Refining the beast blood also enabled Tang Hong to add a few traces of a wild beauty, which was was fully demonstrated on his frame.

Even Liu Wencai had to sigh. “Ole Tang, you shouldn’t have been a disciple of the Precious Tree Sect. You seem more like one of ours.”

Indeed, the ferocity exhibited by Tang Hong’s body was something that Liu Wencai very rarely saw even in Myriad Spirit Sect disciples.

As for Jiang Chen, he dearly wished that he could split each day into two for his use.

Refining the Fire Raven King core was indeed an enormous task.

It was a good thing that Jiang Chen had a great deal of knowledge and many methods that enabled him to slowly and tangibly break through as time went on.

He successfully broke through to the sixth level spirit realm, three days after Liu Wencai entered the sky quadrant.

However, the sixth level was no longer enough to satisfy Jiang Chen. His goal was the seventh level, the sky spirit realm!

The Raven King core held the essence of a lifetime of the Raven King's cultivation. The abundance of its spirit power was far beyond Jiang Chen's expectations.

Jiang Chen had many refinement methods and ideas to ensure that as little spirit power as possible would be wasted. He made great use of every drop of essence.

It was a good thing that Lei Gangyang's previous plan of suppressing Jiang Chen was completely upended with the development of this accident.

No one had the time to spare for something like that now.

As time went on, the importance of the points would decrease more and more. Naturally, their interest in suppressing Jiang Chen decreased greatly.

However, Long Juxue was an exception.

That day in her residence, a pillar of splendor suddenly pierced the clouds, accompanied by the cry of a phoenix.

Long Juxue's beautiful eyes opened, brimming with confidence as an aura of "I alone am supreme in this heaven and earth" flowed around her being.

An unforeseen radiance circled around Long Juxue, as light as smoke and as hazy as mist, making one feel minuscule in comparison.

The radiance slowly took the form of a wondrous air current, soaring and hovering over her head as if an azure phoenix.

“Is this the sky spirit realm?” Long Juxue slowly breathed out a mouthful of putrid air as her entire demeanor changed.

Her eyes became even more icy as her bearing became even more aloof.

There was a strong power in her phoenix eyes, as if she could freeze someone instantly.

The sky spirit realm!

When Long Juxue’s clarion phoenix call sounded throughout the entire sky quadrant, many candidates in cultivation were disturbed.

When they looked towards the source of the sound, they saw a patch of frosty power, and an aura soaring up to the stars.

“Mm? Spirit power soaring to the heavens, this is the aura of a sky spirit realm expert!” Shi Yunyun of the Flowing Wind Sect murmured softly to herself as she gazed at that aura.

“That direction, this clear whistle. Can it be that Long Juxue of the Purple Sun Sect has broken through?” First genius Luo Xi of the Myriad Spirit Sect had a grave look in his eyes, and didn’t speak for the longest time.

Lian Canghai of the Precious Tree Sect wore a look of shock on his gaunt and pale face. “The second sky spirit realm has been born in the Purple Sun Sect. Is this sect destined to claim all the glory in this selection?”

Lei Gangyang watched the icy splendor rise to the sky, a gravity present in his expression that had never been seen before. The muscles of his face also twitched slightly.

“Long Juxue, although you’ve broken through to the sky spirit realm, you’ll have to defeat me first if you want me to give up the title of first genius in the sect!”

Ceng Shi, the first disciple under Master Shuiyue, was dejected and heartbroken. “An innate constitution, the best sect resources, and the strongest fortune. I’ve followed the honored master for so many years but was replaced in a night by this woman. The path of martial dao is cruel indeed.”

Only Jiang Chen, standing in his residence, understood what was going on when he saw the commotion. “That b*tch Long Juxue, strutting around and flaunting her power. She’s trying to awe the other geniuses, isn’t she?”

Jiang Chen naturally knew that such a display wasn't present when breaking through to the sky spirit realm. All of this was naturally something that Long Juxue had purposefully put on.

Her goal was more than obvious.

Chapter 389: Long Juxue's Mind Games

Long Juxue had made an immense show of her strength, as if she were a sovereign descending upon the sky quadrant.

One had to say, she had succeeded in her goal with that performance. Her strong breakthrough had given birth to a deep feeling of resignation, of being unable to compete with this enemy within the top geniuses of the four great sects.

It wasn't that they were doubting themselves, but that everyone knew that once an innate constitution broke through to the sky spirit realm, none of their peers would be able to hold their own in front of this cultivator.

Even someone as strong as Lei Gangyang wouldn't be able to do so.

As deep as the potentials of the others were, they were even less likely to be able to successfully challenge Long Juxue.

Only Jiang Chen felt quite disdainful of Long Juxue's actions.

The more of a mysterious front she put on and the more she wanted to awe others, the more Jiang Chen felt that she was afraid of being found out.

The entire sky quadrant had sunk into a resigned depression, but Jiang Chen remained unmoved. His dao heart was scarcely

affected as he continued to cultivate at his own pace.

Not a single misstep would be tolerated now that refinement of the Raven King core had reached this step.

It was a pity that he was still a bit short on time. After some quick calculations, Jiang Chen came to the conclusion that, at his current speed, another month of training would increase his hope of breaking through into sky spirit realm to sixty, perhaps seventy percent.

But the deadline of a year was fast approaching, and time grew ever short. He only had a twenty, thirty percent surety of breaking through at the moment.

However, the Raven King's core didn't just increase Jiang Chen's cultivation level, it also brought noticeable overall improvements to Jiang Chen's strength.

He could now control eighteen lotuses of the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice.

The fire lotus in particular was something that Jiang Chen could now deploy as easily and adroitly as a fish's fluid movement in water.

The Raven King's core had an undeniable effect on Jiang Chen's fire attribute spirit vein.

As the days passed by, there was only a month left until the year deadline. Jiang Chen was also counting off the days as well.

“At this rate, it will be very hard for me to reach the sky spirit realm within a year. Time is of the essence now, if I continue to strive for a breakthrough, my chances of success are likely only thirty percent. Using this entire last month in pursuit of this thirty percent isn’t the best move.”

The fact of Long Juxue breaking through to the sky spirit realm was already an incontrovertible truth.

“If I were to break through, I would absolutely crush Long Juxue. However, given my current rate, I should use this last month to hone my techniques. In the ring matches, my sixth level spirit realm cultivation shouldn’t meet with any difficulties if I challenge a seventh level candidate. If I possess an undeniable advantage in the area of martial techniques and methods, then it won’t be impossible for me to win out over Long Juxue!”

These were his current thoughts and plans.

If he didn’t further hone his techniques and spent the last month in pursuit of the sky spirit realm, he would be at a disadvantage if he failed since his techniques hadn’t received the proper attention.

On the contrary, if he spent this last month in further sharpening his techniques and using them in tandem with each other, then this might have the greatest benefit before the final battle.

Jiang Chen was well versed in the “Vast Ocean Current Splitter” and the “Divine Aeons Fist”. There was no need to further refine anything in that regard.

It was rather “Moonshatter Flying Daggers” that Jiang Chen had only practiced up to the first two techniques. He had yet to master the remaining two— “Brilliance Form” and “Lightning Form”.

He decided to learn these two first.

Of course, his original layered feather throwing daggers were a bit inadequate for the task now. That level of throwing daggers were enough to attack someone in the small spirit realm, but his opponents this time were the geniuses of the sky spirit realm!

Therefore, the layered feather throwing daggers weren’t up to the task anymore.

He took out seven of the Raven King’s tail feathers and decided to make a batch of Fire Raven throwing daggers out of them, using his original set as a guideline.

Crafting the Fire Raven throwing daggers would require the use of the power of metal essence. He would have to meld the essence of metal and fire together, making these new throwing daggers at least ten times better than his old set.

With the layered feather daggers as a prototype, it was easy for Jiang Chen to craft his new set.

He quickly forged seven new throwing daggers. The killing aura of the Raven King was embodied in their form, emanating a formidable killing intent even when they were just held in hand.

Jiang Chen had trained the four accompanying arts of the “Moonshatter Flying Daggers” to the required level, so he didn’t run into any problems when practicing the “Brilliance Form” and “Lightning Form”.

He’d grasped the core mysteries of these two techniques after seven or eight days and unwavering experimentation.

The “Brilliance Form” centered around “speed”.

The “Lightning Form” centered around “uncanny”.

Although the two forms seemed similar at first glance, their underlying mysteries were completely different, and thus their power would be completely different as well.

“The Moonshatter Flying Daggers are quite useful, but they may not be effective against a sky spirit realm cultivator. To crush someone in that realm, my trump cards are still the magnetic golden mountain and the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice.”

The Lotus was something that Jiang Chen had continuously viewed with high importance. He would increase the level of and continuously evolve the Lotus’ strength whenever he achieved a

breakthrough.

The mountain, that great treasure trove however, Jiang Chen had barely tapped into its abilities. Apart from using some of its metal essence power to train the “Nine Transformations of Demons and Gods”, Jiang Chen had barely used it.

He would occasionally manipulate some of the magnetic power, but only up to a certain degree. The mountain had yet to become a true trump card.

“I still don’t have enough time at the end of the day. It hasn’t been a year since I’ve arrived at the Eternal Spirit Mountain for the selection. I’ve needed to rack up my score, face oppression from all sides, and raise my strength. I really haven’t had time to properly study the magnetic golden mountain.”

Jiang Chen was also a bit frustrated. He had an immense amount of treasure, but had been limited because of time and had been unable to fully tap into all of them.

Particularly the magnetic golden mountain. Jiang Chen decided that he’d make good use of it in the time remaining.

He didn’t have any goals as lofty as summoning the Lord of the Golden Seal. As for the golden, weapon shaped monsters, there wasn’t much use for them if he couldn’t summon them on a large scale.

There was great use for the evil golden eye, but he wouldn't be able to practice using it before he reached the sky spirit realm.

The only thing he could make use of was the magnetic power.

After such a long period of exploration and familiarization, Jiang Chen had actually formed quite a few reflections in regard to controlling this power.

However, he'd never been able to spend too much time on it.

"Mm, I should thoroughly train in the magnetic power for the last twenty, thirty days. My control of it is at most the first level. I could just barely manage to produce some weak force field ripples. But if I want to make use of this level of control to affect sky spirit realm cultivators, it would truly be a difficult endeavor. If my control could rise a few levels, then there would be no problem in restraining the sky spirit realm cultivators. At least, I would absolutely have no problem affecting their speed and rhythm."

Jiang Chen didn't dare think of materializing a magnetic storm in the short amount of time he had left. That was a ludicrous thought, closer to a daydream.

If he could really call upon the magnetic storm, then he'd be able to sweep all the matches at this level. He would have the confidence to even fight someone at the peak of the sky spirit realm.

“Mm, I will focus my efforts on the magnetic power in the time remaining.” Jiang Chen had decisively made up his mind.

His timeline for assailing the sky spirit realm wouldn’t change, but his focus had to change as he couldn’t place all his bets on breaking through to the sky spirit realm.

If the time came and he had yet to break through, then he’d be caught in a very awkward position.

The heart of a gambler was very dangerous and not the path of martial dao. Jiang Chen didn’t want to place all of his eggs in one basket.

Time flew.

Half a month later, Jiang Chen was continuing to train the magnetic power. His diligent training had paid off in dividends, visibly improving his level of control.

His control of the magnetic power was at least at the third level by now.

The magnetic power that he could call upon could form noticeable magnetic force fields. Although he lacked an opponent to test its power, he was certain that if he suddenly used this in battle, it would absolutely throw his opponents into disarray.

There were still seven to eight days left. Jiang Chen decided to

make use of this time to consolidate all of his training.

Suddenly, an arrogant voice sounded outside his door.

“Jiang Chen, don’t think a mask will hide your identity. You are incapable of keeping secrets hidden from the just eye of Long Juxue. Since you refused to take the easy path to heaven and insisted on barging into the doors of hell, the sky quadrant will be your grave. Don’t worry, I won’t let you die too easily. I’m going to make an example out of you and begin my reign over the younger generation of the sixteen kingdoms. Remember, you are the one destined to be the stepping stone of my path as a genius!”

Arrogant, discourteous, and an unconcealed sense of superiority. It was as if she was issuing her final judgement of Jiang Chen.

She had sent this message silently, so no one apart from the two of them could’ve heard, and she wouldn’t have to worry about the examiners taking her to task for disturbing others.

Jiang Chen hadn’t thought that this woman would be so shameless.

A low voice escaped Jiang Chen, and his eyes turned hard. He compressed his voice and shot it out like lightning. “As if a defeated opponent is worth talking about! If it wasn’t for the protection of your master, you would’ve been reduced to a heap of bones a long time ago. You should remember well, if I could kill your brother and father that day, I can also kill you in this sky quadrant. The crimes of your Long family are inexpiable; you all

are destined to be reunited in the underworld. Why don't I send you there now and see if you meet them along the way?"

Jiang Chen wasn't frightened at all as he gave tit for tat.

How would he not understand her devious schemes? She was trying to pressure him before the matches and use a strong aura to suppress him, making him fall in defeat without a battle.

One had to say, although this looked pointless, it was an attack that would deeply pierce the heart.

If Jiang Chen really did fear Long Juxue, then he might really have been defeated by this attack.

However, she had underestimated his strength of heart. Instead of a negative effect, it only provoked an even greater will to battle from him.

Long Juxue had wanted to make use of this opportunity to suppress Jiang Chen and destroy the defenses of his dao heart. However, not only had she failed, but she'd suffered a fair share of jeering.

And, the other hadn't minded admitting to his identity at all!

What did this mean? It meant that Jiang Chen didn't fear Long Juxue at all, that he was still unafraid even after she'd broken through to the sky spirit realm!

“Jiang Chen, this isn’t the Eastern Kingdom. Do you think you can pass by the skin of your teeth, just through a witty tongue? This is still a stage for geniuses, and only favored geniuses like me are the true rulers. You are just an ant beneath my foot. Do you think you can affect me by attacking me with the matters of the mundane world? I’ll be honest, I need to thank you in helping me sever all the ties that bound me to the ordinary world and enabling me to focus on martial dao. As a gesture of my gratitude, I’ll send you on your way and then refine everyone surnamed Jiang in the Eastern Kingdom, whether they be young, old, male or female. I’ll make them all die enduring sheer agony and forever regret they have the same unlucky surname as you!”

Long Juxue’s tone was full of hate and violence.

Chapter 390: The Arrival Of The Final Match

Jiang Chen laughed coldly when he heard these words.

It looks like although Long Juxue enjoyed all the resources and fortunes of the Purple Sun Sect, her brains hadn't improved at all.

She was as arrogant and idiotic as usual.

He didn't even want to exchange verbal barbs with her.

"Long Juxue, go and take your time being a harlot shrieking in the streets if you wish, I'm not interested in keeping you company. Your plan does sound quite vindictive, but I have to remind you that you won't get the chance to commence."

Jiang Chen shut off his consciousness after speaking and didn't bother wasting time arguing with her.

This kind of crude mind games wouldn't even tickle him.

As time went on and the moment of the final battle approached, Jiang Chen's dao heart became firmer and firmer, it was as unshakeable and steady as Mt. Tai.

"Alright, the sixteen kingdoms have confined me for so long, it's time I took to the skies." Jiang Chen's chest was filled with lofty

sentiments.

He was full of anticipation and expectation for the impending battles.

He'd seldomly set foot outside in the past three months. On the other hand, Tang Hong and Liu Wencai interacted quite a bit, becoming as close as brothers.

Tang Hong couldn't help but stick his thumb up at Liu Wencai's potential.

Although Liu Wencai hadn't replicated Jiang Chen's speed in farming points, his momentum had also been quite ridiculous.

He'd made it into the top 64 within a month and a half.

Making it into those ranks meant that he'd already obtained an entrance ticket; But for insurance's sake, Liu Wencai still continued to request missions.

He purposefully wanted to temper his strength and so requested more missions from the martial dao and strength of heart areas, going at things with a style different than Jiang Chen's.

His missions were mostly level one through three, with an occasional level four.

In the last couple days, his ranking had made it into the top 30, a very solid position.

Apart from the missions in the martial dao area, Liu Wencai and Tang Hong also sparred enthusiastically everyday.

Of the two, Liu Wencai was a genius of the Myriad Spirit Sect and the descendant of generations of hunters. Having absorbed and refined beast blood for long periods of time, this added a few traces of wildness to his personality.

Tang Hong had the nickname “Barbarian” amongst the four great sects as well, the wildness on himself was even fiercer than Liu Wencai’s. He was a berserker who lived to fight.

When the two of them were lumped in together, their spars were naturally quite intense.

This kind of crazy training continuously improved their strength, quite noticeably advancing both of them.

Tang Hong was sixth level spirit realm and Liu Wencai was fifth level spirit realm.

As such, logically speaking Tang Hong should’ve held the upper hand since he was a level higher. But during the last month of their sparring, Tang Hong had discovered that he was finding it difficult to take Liu Wencai’s blows.

Fortunately, the beast blood Jiang Chen had gifted him continued to display its energy the more that Tang Hong's potential was tapped.

As the two sparred, Liu Wencai had come off worse in the beginning, then had grown to being on par with Tang Hong, before finally the latter needed to muster all of his strength to barely force a draw.

Of course, Tang Hong had an additional secret art he could deploy after refining the blood and he could use it to manipulate the strength of his bloodline and body.

Under normal circumstances, Tang Hong's strength was similar to Liu Wencai's. Should Liu Wencai used his full strength, Tang Hong might come off a bit worse for the wear.

But once Tang Hong went on a rampage, his body would suddenly increase by a third and his strength would increase by fifty percent.

He called this kind of rampaging his "berserk mode". Once this mode came out, even Liu Wencai found it hard to hold up beneath Tang Hong's attacks.

The two of them sparred like this everyday and gained quite a great deal. They admired each other greatly as they continued to fight, appreciating each other immensely and becoming brothers for life.

Their friendship had transcended the boundaries of the sects after a few months, making them forget that they belonged to different sects.

To be honest, Liu Wencai saw a trace of himself in Tang Hong. In his own berserk mode, Liu Wencai felt that it was a tapping into his own potential and making his bloodline go berserk, ascending in quality.

However, Tang Hong's berserk mode was expressed more apparently, especially when it came to his physical body.

Time passed by day by day.

Finally, it was the evening before the final battle.

The three friends were gathered together in Jiang Chen's yard.

Any one of them now was an existence that couldn't be ignored in the sky quadrant. When the three of them formed a tight rope together, that made them an enormous existence that no one dared underestimate.

Jiang Chen had participated less in the past couple of months because he had been training hard. He too was greatly gratified when he saw the changes in the two of them.

"Indeed, the path of martial dao necessitates sparring with each other. The two of you must have done your fair share in the past

couple of months. I can even see a bit of the other in the two of you." Jiang Chen laughed.

"Well? Are you confident in placing in the top 16?"

Tang Hong laughed uproariously. "My ranking has never been lower than 12th. After daily sparring with ole brother Wencai the past couple months, I may even be able to make it to top 8 if I'm lucky."

Liu Wencai wasn't as open as Tang Hong, but didn't conceal his thoughts in front of people he trusted either.

"Boss, my goal is to make for the top 12."

Jiang Chen laughed. "As long as there are no accidents, that won't be a problem at all with your strength. Don't overthink it. The path of martial dao is thus magnificent and tempting because of the boundless unknown. Perhaps, you might be caught up in the placement of top 16 today, but after a decade or a century, you might look back to see just how small and humble your mentality was today."

If one made great strides in martial dao in a decade, or a hundred years and entered the origin realm, they would indeed find their mentality quite laughable and childish if they looked back on this day.

However, Liu Wencai and Tang Hong were different from Jiang

Chen. They didn't have his experiences from his past life, and didn't have his breadth of vision. They naturally wouldn't have that depth in thought.

It was a good thing that they didn't have an inferior mindset. Tang Hong was a rough-and-ready person to begin with and had no idea what it meant to be nervous.

As for Liu Wencai, although he had a lot of thoughts and wasn't quite confident, his bearing had changed in this half year as his strength rose.

Confidence was always crafted from strength and enhanced by it.

When the dawn of the second day arrived, almost all candidates opened their eyes in the moment the first ray of sunlight streamed in through their windows.

The final matches were finally here!

All of the candidates in the sky quadrant were gathered in the sky quadrant's great square. The rankings had been tabulated and were shown to the public.

Jiang Chen hadn't maintained such a fierce momentum in the past couple of months and so his ranking hadn't continued to shoot up.

There wasn't much point to scores now anyway.

Of course, they weren't completely meaningless. At least, the placements for the final match would be determined based off rankings.

The further ahead one's placement was, the more one would have some intangible advantages.

Jiang Chen's ranking was 6th, Tang Hong was 9th, and Liu Wencai had made it to 22nd after some furious point farming.

After the final rankings were announced, the top 64 had all made it into the final matches.

The rest of the candidates were finished with the selection.

A great hubbub broke out. Those who were unable to participate in the final matches were all depressed beyond belief, particularly those with rankings close to the top 64. They pounded their chests and were quite dejected.

The four venerated forefathers and heavyweights of the sects quickly arrived.

Time waited for no one; Since the formation had been damaged, the amount of time everyone had left within the Eternal Spirit Mountain was only two to three months.

To prevent any further accidents from happening, the final matches had to commence as soon as possible.

“Everyone, those who can remain here now are without a doubt, the preeminent geniuses of the sixteen kingdom alliance. I must congratulate you. Even if you don’t make it into the final sixteen, that will not chip away at your advantage within your sect. You are the future of the sects and will become their pillars one day. I hope these final matches become a valuable experience for you, and are an opportunity to see you walk further down the path of the martial dao.”

“Alright, let’s cut a long speech short. You will be assigned numbers according to your rankings, and eliminations will occur via matches. First ranked will fight against the sixty fourth, second against sixty third, and so on and so forth. The top 32 will be chosen after the first round, and the final 16 after the second round. We will conduct further testing on the final 16 and take you as our personal disciples.”

“Of course, those who don’t make it into the top 16 shouldn’t think too little of themselves. If you acquit yourselves well or have unique talent during battle, you may still have the chance to become a personal disciple of the origin realm forefathers. All is up to you!”

“It’s said that there is no final champion in the civil subjects, and there are no runner-ups in the martial subjects. A champion must be determined in the path of martial dao. Therefore, when the list of the final 16 is announced, another ranking match will be held. The higher your final ranking is, the more value will be placed on

you. Therefore, I hope that you will treasure this stage and deploy your potential and talents to their utmost!”

Sunchaser’s voice rang out like a bell, reverberating in everyone’s ears, seemingly able pierce through a cultivator’s soul and set their blood boiling, making all of the candidates sink in fervor.

Only Jiang Chen remained as unmoving as a mountain, his heart as calm as a mirror, without a single ripple.

The promise of being a forefather’s personal disciple had no attraction to him at all. The origin realm forefathers had never been his goal for participating in the selection in the first place!

Chapter 391: The Two Biggest Wild Cards In The Final Matches

Long Juxue stood at the most eye-catching position like a proud peacock, unconsciously showing off her position as number one genius.

Although Lei Gangyang was the type to hold his plans close to his heart, Long Juxue's blatant provocation still enraged him, but he couldn't afford to explode in front of all the sect elders.

He wasn't Ceng Shi, not someone to accept his fate that easily.

He had borne the glorious halo as the first genius amongst the younger Purple Sun Sect generation since youth. He'd enjoyed this honor and privilege for twenty some years. For him to suddenly hand over this title and let Long Juxue be crowned instead, he was far from capable of doing so with serene acceptance.

To ensure that the four venerated ones and the heavyweights of the sects could observe all candidates from all aspects, the final matches didn't start in a flurried manner.

A hard rule was set; only four matches could be held a day.

Two in the morning, two in the afternoon.

Each match was limited to four hours. In this way, the four

matches a day would expend 16 hours.

Eight days would be needed to complete the first round, and only four days for the second round of sixteen matches.

After the final sixteen were chosen, the number of fights would only decrease. The total time needed to complete all the matches wouldn't exceed a month.

Although the formation could hold out for another two or three months, none of the forefathers wanted to take the risk and go down to the wire.

Jiang Chen and the two others weren't called in for the four matches on the first day.

However, according to the rules, all candidates had to be present and observe during the matches.

The candidates fighting on the first day were relatively weaker, so the matches weren't that exciting.

None of the three were called in even on the second day. Liu Wencai only had the chance to take the ring only on the third day.

He took the field with great momentum and faced off against rank number 43.

Number 43 was also at the peak of the fifth level spirit realm. On paper, it looked like he was a hair ahead of Liu Wencai's fifth level spirit realm.

Therefore, number 43 was actually secretly delighted before they met in the ring. When he saw that Liu Wencai was a rookie who'd just come up from the earth quadrant, he smiled gloatingly, "Kid, you've just charged in from the earth quadrant and spent so much effort farming points. Your rank is higher than mine, but you're going to be crushed by me all the same!"

This candidate was really quite happy, thinking that he was simply too lucky to be matched up against a rookie candidate from the earth quadrant.

However, when the fight commenced, he discovered just how ludicrous his thoughts had been.

Liu Wencai used less than fifteen minutes to wipe the floor with his opponent, as easy as using a cleaver to dice vegetables.

And, he hadn't even exercised a hint of his full strength. He'd only punched and kicked, using brute force to pound his opponent's face in.

This unexpectedly daunting momentum also shocked the examiners. When they saw that Liu Wencai looked unfamiliar, people started pulling up his information for further research.

The heavyweights from the Myriad Spirit Sect also had absolutely no idea of what they could say to forefather Ninelion.

Such a fine seed had had to fight every step of the way up from the mystic quadrant!

“The hell are you guys doing? Such a fine seed was sent to the mystic quadrant?! I’d like to know just how you divided up the disciples! Was someone up to no good behind the scenes?” Ninelion cursed loudly at all the senior executives of the Myriad Spirit Sect.

The division of disciples into quadrants had been according to potential and strength. Of course, there were many who had sent disciples to various quadrants based on personal factors, such as their familiarity with and popularity of the disciple.

The sect heavyweights really didn’t know Liu Wencai.

After all, he’d simply been too unseen in the sect before. Although it was a bit less than what he should’ve deserved with his original potential and strength in the mystic quadrant, it wasn’t completely out of line.

His potential had yet to be tapped at that time.

His true explosion into his own had come after he’d met Jiang Chen and the subsequent tempering and occurrences.

Therefore, the senior executives were a bit undeserving of this lecture.

Of course, there was reason to Ninelion's rage as well. Such a good seed had been sent to dither in the mystic and earth quadrant for so long.

If he'd been put in the sky quadrant from the very beginning and caught Ninelion's eye, receiving the proper attention from the sect, he might have been even more stunning and heaven defying now.

"I must pay attention to this seed." Ninelion privately made up his mind and firmly fixed Liu Wencai's name in his heart.

He'd made up his mind that even if this kid didn't make it into the top 16, the kid would gain a place in the plan for further, targeted training.

Ninelion was an origin realm old monster alright. The sharpness of his eye wasn't something that anyone could measure up to. He saw a certain potential and explosive power in Liu Wencai's battles.

Ninelion privately felt that when he was this kid's age, he might not have displayed such potential and explosive strength.

"Haha, to think that my Myriad Spirit Sect would have another young genius such as this one rise after Luo Xi. It looks like the

heavens favor my sect.” Ninelion was filled with pride at seeing a genius of his sect thoroughly trample his opponent, striking out with might and awe.

Jiang Chen and Tang Hong’s turn had yet to come even as the fourth and fifth days passed.

On the sixth day, Tang Hong took the field against rank number 56.

When number 56 saw that he was matched up against the infamous madman Tang Hong, his face drooped. He’d thought to put up a strong front at first, and then leverage his energy and drive to somehow triumph from a weaker position.

However, when he discovered that his opponent was Tang Hong, he knew that his plans had been in vain.

Tang Hong was the number one crazy of the sky quadrant.

This person would never be scared by an opponent’s fervor and drive. On the contrary, the more crazed his opponent was, the more insane Tang Hong would become as well.

Tang Hong’s madness could change with his opponent. The stronger his opponent was, the more berserk he would become.

Therefore, number 56 was close to listless. He was more willing than anyone to compete in terms of energy and drive, but he knew

that this would only make things worse with Tang Hong. He'd just be in for an even worse pounding.

It was finally Jiang Chen's turn on the seventh day.

His opponent was number 59.

When the fellow made it into the ring, Jiang Chen noted with surprise that it was an old acquaintance, Zhou Yi of the Precious Tree Sect.

This fellow was indeed something to make it into the round of sixty four.

However, Jiang Chen hadn't paid any attention to Zhou Yi back in the day, as he and Iron Dazhi had been defeated by him back in the capital of the Skylaurel Kingdom.

Therefore, he naturally easily trampled this kind of opponent.

The swift sword work that Zhou Yi was proud of was as effective as a child playing with a wooden sword in front of Jiang Chen.

If it wasn't for Jiang Chen not wanting to show off his strength beforehand, Zhou Yi wouldn't have lasted even fifteen minutes.

However, even though the match lasted that long, Jiang Chen still used only his fists and legs to throw Zhou Yi off the stage.

Jiang Chen, Tang Hong, and Liu Wencai all won without a shadow of a doubt in the first round.

On the eighth day, the top four candidates, the four geniuses of the sects, took the field.

Long Juxue, Lei Gangyang, Luo Xi, and Shi Yunyun.

These four had the highest scores and were the four strong seeds of this time's selection.

Originally, Lei Gangyang had been an undisputed first seed, but with Long Juxue's fierce momentum, her score had surpassed Lei Gangyang's at the last moment, and she had taken the title of first seed.

Their opponents were candidates ranked 61 to 64, candidates on completely different levels of strength.

The four geniuses won easily, not even able to warm up properly.

The next round of 32 candidates were set up after the first eight days. Candidates ranked near the top had mostly won their matches.

According to the rules, all candidates were to rest for two days after the first round.

Truth be told, they also needed the rest. One's situation needed to be adjusted to top condition before a fight.

The organizers also needed to analyze the list of names and understand the candidates who had won.

There weren't that many surprising names on the list.

There were four or five names that hadn't been thought highly of that had actually emerged from the masses. Of course, the most apparent were Liu Wencai and the secular freak genius of the boulder's heart.

Just who was this freak genius? Apart from the Purple Sun Sect, all of the other three sects were full of curiosity.

The three sects had had a few speculations, but their guesses weren't that reliable either.

However, the three sects could also see the enmity that the Purple Sun Sect bore towards the secular genius. Therefore, they were all considering how to entice the secular genius over to their side.

The list of the final sixteen was about to be produced. Once the secular genius made his mark on that list, the four great sects could make their move to recruit him.

Thus, they were all focusing their attention on the secular

genius.

As for the Purple Sun Sect, it was intensely analyzing the match line-ups.

They discovered that Jiang Chen's next opponent was their Chu Xinghan!

Chu Xinghan was ranked number 27 and had won on the first day.

"Xinghan, do you need your master to remind you who your next opponent is?" Master Shuiyue said faintly. "I've heard Juxue say that you weren't enthusiastic about suppressing that swine Jiang Chen in the sky quadrant. I can let bygones be bygones, but you must strive your utmost to kill him this time. Even if you cannot win, you must kill him no matter the cost. Even if he is gravely injured, that would be a great accomplishment as well. If you cannot do so, you will be the sinner of my Shuiyue faction and I would've unjustly reared you for twenty years. Do you understand my meaning?"

How would Chu Xinghan not understand his master's meaning? She was telling him that even if he had to detonate his own spirit ocean and take his enemy down with him, that would be what he'd have to resort to in order to fight his opponent.

This was treating him as a pawn, a pawn that was set up for sacrifice!

Chu Xinghan’s heart spasmed with pain as grief flashed through his profound gaze. He hadn’t thought that he’d only be a pawn in his master’s heart in the end!

Chapter 392: The Second Round Of Matches Begin

It was said that nothing was more lamentable than a dead heart.

Chu Xinghan suddenly felt that he had been turned into a pawn in the Shuiyue faction of the Purple Sun Sect, and the one who'd done so was the master who he'd always looked up to.

The path of martial dao was one of defying one's fate. No one was born to be the pawn of another. That wouldn't do, not even if the one casting the pawns was one's own master.

Seeing that Chu Xinghan had remained silent, Master Shuiyue's brow furrowed. "Xinghan, your dao heart has been unstable lately and you've been thinking wild, random thoughts. Have you forgotten the debt of gratitude that you owe to your master for raising you?"

"Junior brother Xinghan, you only need to drag Jiang Chen down a bit or force him to show his hand. That would be enough of an achievement. It's a bit difficult to expect from you to kill that swine. You couldn't do it that day in the Second Crossing, and you will likely be unable to do so now."

Long Juxue had faced Jiang Chen that day and had nearly been killed. It was Chu Xinghan's timely arrival that had saved Long Juxue.

But she'd wanted him to kill Jiang Chen, and Chu Xinghan hadn't done so. He'd advocated his own agenda to take Jiang Chen alive.

He'd ended up passing up the best timing to kill Jiang Chen and let him be saved by someone else instead.

Long Juxue had always held a grudge about this. What she remembered was how Chu Xinghan hadn't respected her wishes and killed Jiang Chen when she wanted him to. She'd even forgotten that he'd saved her life.

She'd held a grudge against Chu Xinghan this whole time. She was also making use of this opportunity to vent her feelings and had actually called him "junior brother Xinghan" instead!

One had to know that Chu Xinghan was a full seven to eight years older than Long Juxue.

He'd hailed Master Shuiyue as his master for twenty years before Long Juxue. But now, she was actually calling him "junior brother Xinghan"!

The second disciple beneath Master Shuiyue, a top ten disciple in the Purple Sun Sect had now become a pawn, and a disposable one at that!

All for this woman? For this heartless woman?

Chu Xinghan's eyes suddenly grew frosty as he looked coldly at Long Juxue without saying a word.

The phrase "junior brother Xinghan" had made his heart completely die inside.

Because when Long Juxue had voiced this hurtful title, his honored master Shuiyue had had a wooden expression on her face, as if all of this was natural and a given.

Chu Xinghan was as insensate as wood. Like a walking corpse without a soul, standing there dumbly.

"Think carefully, don't betray the expectations your master has of you." Master Shuiyue also furrowed her brow when she saw Chu Xinghan's display and walked away after these cold words.

Long Juxue laughed coldly and ran her gaze without restraint over Chu Xinghan's body, the disdain and contempt in her gaze were as if she was looking at trash.

Chu Xinghan's self-respect had vanished without a trace in front of his honored master and Long Juxue's cruel, stone-hearted actions.

He could almost hear his heart drip with blood.

Chu Xinghan stood dumbly beneath the moonlight, his resolute dao heart struggling in the depths of mire.

“My gratitude towards the master runs deep, but I must repay her with my life? It would be one thing if I had to lay down my life for the honored master. But for that faithless and heartless person, for that Long Juxue, the honored master wants me to be the pawn to kill Jiang Chen? This isn’t right!”

Chu Xinghan’s martial dao wasn’t as strong as Long Juxue’s, but that didn’t mean he didn’t have the will to pursue the boundless path of martial dao.

Even ants held on to their ignoble existence, much less someone with flesh and blood like Chu Xinghan.

He wasn’t afraid of death, but he really didn’t want to die in such a stupid fashion. There was no worth in this death. He really didn’t want to die for someone he hated!

“Forget it, I cannot defy my master’s orders. I have my accomplishments of today because of my honored master. Junior brothers Hai Tian and He Yan all paid their lives for the honored master’s wishes as well. I, Chu Xinghan, am a true man. Can I be the sort to forget my debts of gratitude? The honored master has given me my accomplishments of today and so I will repay her with my death.”

Chu Xinghan sighed lightly, “However, Jiang Chen has no grudge or feud with me. What am I detonating my own spirit ocean to take him with me for? Just for that heartless b*tch Long Juxue?”

Chu Xinghan was a real man alright, one with his own opinions of what was right or wrong. Although he'd only met Jiang Chen once, and under the guise of enemies, he truly admired Jiang Chen from the depths of his heart and admired his clear delineation of love and hate, of gratitude and grudge.

Whereas Long Juxue had given Chu Xinghan an impression of selfishness and slipperiness, a villain out for her own gains, as well as a feeling of—b*tches will be b*tches.

He had to put his life on the line for someone he hated to take down someone he admired!

"Long Juxue, just how are you worthy of this? Should the entire sect fawn over you just because you have an innate constitution? I, Chu Xinghan, am a fine man with a life ahead of me, why must I die for you? I can die and give this life back to my honored master, but I will never do something this stupid as to harm another without benefitting myself!"

Chu Xinghan had made up his mind in this moment.

He was going to fight with the faith of sure death. He wanted to die openly and justly beneath Jiang Chen's hand, but he wouldn't use a method as stupid as detonating his spirit ocean!

.....

His next opponent, Chu Xinghan?

Jiang Chen analyzed the competition and discovered who his next opponent was as well.

Jiang Chen wasn't unfamiliar with Chu Xinghan. A rather tall figure dressed in hemp with its eyes like the starry night with a vague hint of desolation within them, arose in Jiang Chen's mind.

If he were to say that he had any bit of good feelings towards any of the Purple Sun Sect fellows, then Chu Xinghan would be the one.

That person, from beginning to end, had never given off the feeling of overwhelming arrogance nor of considering himself far above the masses. He'd never treated those in the ordinary world as ants simply because he was a sect disciple.

According to Jiang Chen's thoughts, he would kill all Purple Sun Sect disciples on sight.

However, he left a ray of hope for Chu Xinghan. He remembered when he'd saved Long Juxue at the Second Crossing.

Had he wanted to and used his full strength, he would've absolutely killed Jiang Chen.

But he hadn't, and had given Jiang Chen a choice instead.

Although those choices had been meaningless to Jiang Chen, for someone with an absolute advantage in power to not abuse it, giving his opponents a choice instead, this at the very least depicted Chu Xinghan as a cultivator with a sense of morals and ethics.

“I, Jiang Chen, separate my grudges and favors well. You gave me a choice then, I will also give you a choice now.”

Jiang Chen had already come up with a strategy in his heart.

He threw all thoughts of the competition to the side and started training seriously again. Although he still needed some time until he could break through to the sky spirit realm, Jiang Chen’s goal was set.

He’d always believed that on the path of martial dao, a bit more effort would lead to a bit more gain.

None of the candidates relaxed during the two days of rest.

The second round officially commenced after two days.

There were sixteen matches in the second round. With four matches a day, only four days would be needed to go through them all.

The matches of the second round would naturally not be as smooth-going as the first round.

After a round of eliminations, the ones left were the elites amongst the elite. The matches between closely ranked candidates gave birth to even greater sparks.

In the four matches on the first day, there were some who paid the price with their lives and others who were heavily injured.

But all of it was worthy it.

Because anyone who won directly advanced to the top 16, becoming someone that the forefathers would focus on training.

Within the ring.

Liu Wencai's heart was as calm as still water. All that he'd experienced after entering the sect flashed before his eyes. His life until the mystic quadrant, the earth quadrant, and the turn his life had taken.

All because he'd met someone who'd changed his life, Brother Boulder from the mundane world.

Although he'd never asked about Brother Boulder's identity up until now, Liu Wencai had long since respected Brother Boulder as an elder brother, like a mentor and like a friend.

"I must win for Brother Boulder. Those who get in my way must

die!”

Liu Wencai’s faith was resolute as he looked at his opponent calmly. This opponent was Iron Dazhi from the Precious Tree Sect.

Iron Dazhi had received the heritage of the Iron family and risen to sixth level spirit realm. He stood solidly in the top four of the Precious Tree Sect’s geniuses and felt that he would have no problem making it into the top 16.

As such, his confidence at the moment was incredibly inflated.

“You’re called Iron Dazhi? If you want to introduce yourself as the heir to the Iron family, then save it. I know everything about you, and am only considering one thing here.”

“What?” Iron Dazhi laughed coldly.

“How to kick you the hell out of this ring!” Liu Wencai said faintly.

“Tsk, tsk. If I recall correctly, you’re just an ant who made his way up from the mystic quadrant. You know everything about me? So what? That traitor Tang Hong betrayed his own sect, but did he not tell you that an ant like you will never be able to go up against the strength of a sect genius?”

Iron Dazhi gave a long peal of laughter as he made a grasping motion and a long halberd appeared in his hand. This halberd was

noticeably different from the one that Jiang Chen had seen in the Skylaurel Kingdom.

This halberd was bronze in color, with some indistinct glyphs leaping around the air as he waved it, giving one a spectacular feeling as the glyphs changed in countless ways.

For the geniuses of the sect, the greatest advantage they enjoyed, apart from high potential, was resources.

Iron Dazhi's potential wasn't the best, but he was a direct descendant in the Iron family and had absolute advantage in resources. This Bronze Dragon Ironthreaded Halberd was a family inheritance, and a spirit weapon that Iron Long had greatly treasured for long.

The Black Dragon Halberd that Iron Dazhi had used before was on a completely different level to this one.

The Bronze Dragon Ironthreaded Halberd was an eight times refined spirit weapon. If it completed the nine refinement, it would become a peak existence amongst spirit weapons.

"Iron Dazhi, you'll very quickly know who's the ant here." Liu Wencai's gaze was faint as his aura flared. "Make your move."

Iron Dazhi leered. "Stubborn and refusing to see the errors of your ways. Then die!"

Iron Dazhi was highly confident with this battle. His goal was to charge into the top sixteen, and his very minimum goal in this selection.

He wanted to become a personal disciple of the origin realm forefathers!

Therefore, he wouldn’t tolerate any missteps in this fight. He immediately hauled out the legendary weapon handed down within his family and deployed it with his heritage of halberd techniques, transforming into an air current and charging towards Liu Wencai!

Chapter 393: Thoroughly Trouncing Iron Dazhi

The halberd techniques of the Iron family were renowned within the four great sects.

Iron Dazhi had indeed poured in his life's blood in practicing them. He'd attained great achievements in this area.

He turned and rolled the halberd. Ripples spread throughout the air as if dragons and fish were dancing. There seemed to be boundless carps bounding through the river waters beneath the setting sun. His aura and momentum were quite impressive.

The most frightening was that this Bronze Dragon Ironthreaded Halberd was an eight times refined weapon. It seemed to be able to draw upon heaven and earth as it moved, turning into a frightening killing machine.

The power of an eight times refined weapon was indeed alarming.

Although Liu Wencai had received some intelligence about Iron Dazhi from Tang Hong, he'd still missed out on one point, which was the Bronze Dragon Ironthreaded Halberd.

Although Tang Hong understood Iron Dazhi, he only knew that he used a Black Dragon Halberd and didn't know that the Iron family had something even stronger in reserve.

Therefore, when Iron Dazhi deployed his furious halberd techniques, he actually held the upper hand for a moment, making signs of danger appear all around Liu Wencai.

It was a good thing that Liu Wencai had recently sparred with Jiang Chen and Tang Hong every day. The experience from that had ensured that he would be able to keep a calm heart even in dire straits.

Iron Dazhi's halberd techniques were as if tempestuous winds and rains one second, surging and charring lightning the next. They seemed to glimmer with endless rippling movements, yet also seemed as immutable as a millennium of long nights.

The mentality projected from the halberd was ever-changing.

Those watching beneath the ring were enraptured. This was the most exciting match since they'd started. Iron Dazhi's domineering halberd techniques were as if bouquets of flowers and piles of brocades—pleasing to the eye and awe-inspiring. His momentum was even more astonishing, and those who normally looked down on Iron Dazhi couldn't help but have a change of heart.

Even Jiang Chen had to admit that Iron Dazhi had improved greatly from that match in the Skylaurel capital.

He'd had tangible leaps in both battle strength and cultivation level.

However, he wasn't unduly worried for Liu Wencai. This was the time to test him, and the first obstacle in his rise.

There would be no limit to the universe if he made it over.

If he didn't, then he'd always only be a stepping stone for others.

However, Jiang Chen believed that, with Liu Wencai's strength and potential, he wasn't one to just sit there and await disaster. Not to mention that there were trump cards he'd yet to use.

With his understanding of Liu Wencai, he'd been so passive before possibly to purposefully create an image to numb Iron Dazhi and defeat him with one blow at a critical moment!

Tang Hong stood beneath the stage, his large hands clenched into fists. His expression was occasionally grim-faced, occasionally glaring with rage. It was quite varied.

Those who weren't in the know would think he was worried about Iron Dazhi, but his heart was actually fretting over Liu Wencai.

The two of them had struck up a brotherhood of life and death after their rocky start, and their relationship had long since transcended lines drawn by affiliations.

The four forefathers also seemed rather interested in this match.

Forefather Ninelion in particular; his eyes sent out an ardent look as he fixed them on the two in the ring.

“Old monster Ninelion, you look a bit nervous, hmm?” Sunchaser mocked slightly.

“Meddlesome old thing.” Ninelion had always had inharmonious relations with Sunchaser. He naturally gave tit for tat when the other mocked him.

Sunchaser laughed loudly. The two of them often fought, so no one would truly erupt in open hostility.

“Thousandleaf, your sect’s disciple has a rather frightening aura. But I think he’ll actually lose.” Sunchaser then turned his head to Thousandleaf of the Precious Tree Sect.

His words were more-so trying to sow discord than state the obvious.

Thousandleaf smiled faintly, “Sunchaser, you seem to be the most agitated one today.”

These softly spoken words completely failed to go along with his words and in fact dispelled the antagonism in his words.

Ninelione laughed oddly, “He has many geniuses in the Purple Sun Sect and is deathly afraid of us catching up. This is why he’s on edge.”

“Catching up?” Sunchaser couldn’t help but give a snorting laugh. “My sect has taken the top one and two spots of the top four rankings. Catch up? What can the other geniuses bring out to catch up to Lei Gangyang, not to mention Long Juxue with her innate constitution?”

His tone brimmed with confidence.

Thousandleaf smiled slightly but had nothing to say. None of the geniuses of his sect had made it into the top four. He did indeed lack the right to speak.

Ninelion, however, riposted, “Lei Gangyang? If I recall correctly, he couldn’t even handle a secular cultivator a few months ago, hmm?”

Although these old fellows were of the origin realm, none of them were willing to come off the worse in an exchange when it came to verbal sparring.

At this moment, Iron Dazhi’s attacks were as if the mad tides. His aura was even more ferocious, making it seem like he was overturning the seas and shifting the mountains each time he attacked, piercing even the heavens!

Although Liu Wencai continued to remain at a disadvantage, he was never swallowed by the raging tide of attacks.

Iron Dazhi also became frustrated as the fight went on.

He suddenly gave a long whistle as shocking light shone out of his eyes. “Liu Wencai, you don’t dare fight me and seek to win through only dodging and evading? Alright, since you know how to escape, I’ll make it so that you have no place to go!”

Iron Dazhi’s motions changed in between his words.

The halberd technique suddenly changed from complex and intersecting to ramrod straight, as if a silver hook carving out a picture in metal, swiping sideways and downwards, creating various ravines in the air with deathly beams of yellow light.

“Liu Wencai, let’s see you dodge this one!”

The Bronze Dragon Ironthreaded Halberd kept carving out vicious light, slicing the air into rhombus-shaped fragments.

This halberd technique was named “Prison of Heaven and Earth”. It made use of strong spirit power to carve the air into countless prisons in a short amount of time, sealing off an opponent’s avenues of retreat and shutting them into the prison, setting them up for a ruthless trampling.

Liu Wencai’s facial expression changed. He knew that this

halberd technique was immensely different from those of before.

"Is this Iron Dazhi's trump card?" There was no sign of anxiety on Liu Wencai's face. Instead, there was a trace of ease and relief after a long wait.

Iron Dazhi's manner was imposing and awe-inspiring. He didn't feel that Liu Wencai would be able to escape out of the divisions of the "Prison of Heaven and Earth" once he brought this technique out.

As soon as his opponent was caught, the boundless spirit power would come churning in the span of a moment, slicing and dicing his opponent into pieces.

"Die, Liu Wencai!"

Cold killing intent exploded out of Iron Dazhi's eyes. The halberd was chopping furiously away at everything it pushed the prison towards. It was apparent that he wanted to determine the outcome of this battle here and now.

The halberd flashed out with strong light as it danced, covering the ring as if a myriad of waves, forming the image of turbulent seas.

This momentum had cut off all paths of retreat for Liu Wencai.

Liu Wencai seemed as helpless as a lone canoe afloat in the vast

oceans, likely to be swallowed at anytime or overturn with all those onboard.

However—

Change always happened in but a moment in a matchup between experts.

A short stick appeared in Liu Wencai's hand after he made a grasping motion. It looked like white jade, pure and flawless, but seemed to meld in with Liu Wencai's bearing as soon as it appeared.

Liu Wencai's aura seemed to explode by ten, no, a hundred times with this melding. His eyes shot out with the light of a wild beast.

It was as if the short stick of white jade had been suddenly activated. It brimmed with vitality, as if a sleeping divine weapon that had been suddenly awoken.

Its aura was like a dragon emerging from the seas, unable to be restrained.

Faced with Iron Dazhi's overbearing attacks, Liu Wencai gave a long whistle and suddenly roared, "Flowery punches and fancy kicks that can't stand up to a single blow! All of this, break!"

The white jade stick crashed down ferociously, layers of spirit ripples concentrating to smash unerringly onto the halberd.

Bam!

The halberd gave a ghastly, tragic cry.

That awe-inspiring momentum behind the attack fell to the floor in pieces as if a smashed mirror, destroyed beyond a doubt in an instant.

Iron Dazhi's chest felt like an enormous mountain had come crashing down on it. It sent him reeling backwards.

The halberd in his hand kept moaning mournfully, emitting a cry that didn't subside even after a long while. Iron Dazhi was unable to control it no matter how he tried.

He focused his eyes and saw that multiple cracks had appeared on the surface of the halberd. Even though its main body hadn't been injured, it was obvious that the formation of glyphs outside the halberd had been destroyed by this blow.

"How can this be?" Iron Dazhi was flabbergasted.

This was an eight times refined spirit weapon, almost at the peak of its existence!

But his opponent had used that humble-looking white jade stick to hit it just once and break apart the glyph defenses of an eight

times refined weapon?

This... this was a devastating blow! What was Iron Dazhi most proud of? This Bronze Dragon Ironthreaded Halberd was his trump card!

He'd never thought that his vaunted ace would be destroyed in an almost primal manner when he was deploying his most acclaimed technique.

A crack appeared in Iron Daozhi's heart.

Liu Wencai smiled faintly as he pointed with his white jade stick. "Iron Dazhi, I've said that we'll only know who's the ant after a battle. Now, go and experience what it means to be the ant of your words!"

Liu Wencai waved his white jade stick and commenced a tide-like flurry of attacks that came crashing down on Iron Dazhi in a vicious assault. He didn't need to use any profound techniques at the moment, using only simple, crude, and the most wild and violent of methods to beleaguer Iron Dazhi.

It could be said that all schemes were useless in the face of absolute power, as one person with sufficient strength could singlehandedly best ten cultivators.

As many methods as Iron Dazhi had, as many trump cards he had, when his ace couldn't win over the other, he would only be

suppressed at every step.

Iron Dazhi could only fight for dear life with the halberd in the face of such violent, fierce attacks.

Bam, bam, bam!

Every time he blocked a blow, his body would back up involuntarily.

One step back. Many steps back.

After a few hundred steps back, he had nowhere to go. His body crashed viciously into the pillar. A sweet scent welled up in his mouth as he spat out a mouthful of blood. He could no longer hold firmly onto the halberd. It clattered to the ground and emitted a horrifying sound. His knees buckled, and he sank to the ground on his knees.

His defeat was imminent and irrefutable.

When he saw that Iron Dazhi was kneeling on the ground, Liu Wencai didn’t finish him off. They were both disciples of the four great sects, and there was no reason for him to land a fatal blow if they didn’t have deep grudges with each other.

Not to mention that the four forefathers were present. If he still killed Iron Dazhi after he was on his knees, it would demonstrate that Liu Wencai’s mentality was lacking.

“Liu Wencai of the Myriad Spirit Sect wins this match and enters the top sixteen! Iron Dazhi of the Precious Tree Sect is eliminated!”

Chapter 394: The Fight After Comprehension

Liu Wencai's victory made him the first among Jiang Chen's group to enter the final sixteen.

Next to take the field was Tang Hong. He faced candidate number 24, a female disciple from the Flowing Wind Sect. It was obvious that her strength was far from Tang Hong's.

His battle strength had grown even more wild and ferocious after being changed by the Redscaled Firelizard's blood. The female disciple wasn't able to put up a fight for long before she was defeated.

Just as Jiang Chen had expected, Tang Hong and Liu Wencai had both successfully made it into the top 16.

On the third day, it was finally Jiang Chen's turn in the ring!

"Xinghan, remember your master's words. If you cannot obtain an accomplishment in this fight, then don't bother leaving the ring!" Master Shuiyue's tone was as cold as the frozen tundra.

She only had Long Juxue in her sights now. Even her once favored first disciple, Ceng Shi, had been placed in a secondary position, not to mention Chu Xinghan, a disciple who'd never fawned on her and was highly principled.

Chu Xinghan's potential was lower than Long Juxue and Ceng Shi's, he kissed up less often than Hai Tian, wasn't as thoughtful as He Yang, nor skilled at fathoming the honored master's opinions.

Apart from being competent and quick with tasks, Master Shuiyue indeed did not have much goodwill towards this disciple.

Chu Xinghan suddenly halted and turned back, bowing deeply to his master. "Honored master, this is the last time your disciple will hail you as a honored master in this life. With this farewell today, your disciple only hopes that the honored master's dao heart is clear and bright, unmarred by outside factors. Your disciple only wishes to tell honored master that even an ant has its own dao and wishes to be the master of its own fate, not someone else's pawn."

Chu Xinghan had long given up any thoughts of living, and had decided to let loose with everything.

Master Shuiyue's expression grew cold when she heard these words. She was about to denounce angrily him when Chu Xinghan bounded into the ring at lightning speed.

"Honored master, this Chu Xinghan has a renegade nature." Long Juxue said coldly. "Judging from his attitude, he seems quite dissatisfied with honored master's arrangements."

"Hmph, his life exists because of me, so it's only right I should control his destiny as well. He is a traitor to my Shuiyue faction if he doesn't respect my wishes!"

Master Shuiyue tone was cold. It was obvious that her experience in the earth quadrant had instilled in her a bone deep hatred for Jiang Chen. This kind of hatred wasn't any less than Long Juxue's enmity for Jiang Chen.

He was meeting Chu Xinghan again three years later.

Jiang Chen had no other stray thoughts in his mind as the scenes of the Second Crossing flew through his mind.

Looking at Chu Xinghan again, although his footsteps were resolute, there were traces of hesitation and desolation within them. Although these details didn't look like much to an ordinary cultivator, they were all completely exposed to Jiang Chen when he employed God's Eye and Psychic's Head.

He was a bit surprised. The Chu Xinghan of his memories hadn't been the sort to drag his feet like this.

He'd been quite dashing and carefree when he'd come and gone back then.

He hadn't lost his bearing even when he'd been faced with a mysterious threat.

The dao heart of this kind of person should be very strong indeed, why was he in a state? This kind of opponent made Jiang Chen's brow furrow slightly.

An unstable dao heart in the ring was equivalent to asking for death!

“Chu Xinghan has the urge to seek death?” Jiang Chen was quite perceptive and quickly identified that Chu Xinghan had come with a death wish.

If any ordinary cultivator had come with a desire to die, he would’ve done so valiantly and spiritedly, giving one a feeling of martyrdom.

But Chu Xinghan’s demeanor wasn’t one of fighting to his death, but as though he was heading for the gallows.

“This isn’t Chu Xinghan’s style!”

Though a bit surprised, Jiang Chen remained silent.

Although he admired Chu Xinghan a bit, their position now were enemies. He never sympathized with his opponents.

“Jiang Chen, I cannot defy my master’s orders, so I have come here to die. I have sought virtue and acquired it, you need not show me mercy. However, to expect me to pave the way for that b*tch Long Juxue and detonate my spirit ocean to harm you, I’d rather die than do so! I hope we can fight fairly. I hope, that I can die befittingly in battle!”

Chu Xinghan scowled as he silently sent this message over.

Jiang Chen was slightly startled and responded in the same manner, “You’ve recognized me?”

“The entire Purple Sun Sect recognized you in the earth quadrant. Jiang Chen, I didn’t think wrongly of you. You are indeed a genius. Come!”

Chu Xinghan had thoroughly seen through and comprehended everything. His emotions were quite ethereal now, and he wasn’t drowning in tragedy and sorrow.

He only asked for one fight, a most satisfying fight!

Throwing his head back in a howl, Chu Xinghan’s cry ached with the desolation in his heart, as if the very sun and moon would grieve with him.

“Fight!”

Chu Xinghan flourished his longsword as the air current behind him formed a river from the heavens, as radiant as the galaxy.

This radiant river of stars was a method exclusive to Chu Xinghan. When he called upon his spirit power, it would form a forcefield as if a river of stars.

However, Jiang Chen also wasn’t the same person he’d been

three years ago.

Although Chu Xinghan's cultivation had been steadily increasing, it was naturally nothing compared to Jiang Chen's rate of improvement.

Chu Xinghan's cultivation was also that of a newly broken sixth level spirit realm. Dazzling silver white dots of light coalesced into a sword aura that shot into the heavens.

The sword light formed an aura that surged amongst the skies.

"Sword aura rising to the heavens!"

When it came to using the sword, Chu Xinghan's sword aura was grand and magnificent. That resplendent and majestic aura wasn't just a cover for an empty shell.

Chu Xinghan had already truly mastered the art of the starscape's sword aura.

When he directed this sword aura, it instantly sent seething killing intent fiercely mincing its way towards his opponent.

The sword aura suffused the field and roiled towards Jiang Chen like groups of falling stars descending from the heavens.

"Well met!"

Jiang Chen shouted as his eyes snapped sideways, standing with hands crossed over his chest.

Suddenly, he stepped to the side and flourished his sleeves, punching out with a fist.

“Nine cycles of blooming and wilting, reincarnation is indestructible.”

Bam!

Jiang Chen’s boxing aura collided hard with the boundless sword aura, giving rise to countless spirit power ripples. In this punch, Jiang Chen had used the Divine Aeons Fist as the catalyst and melded into the magnetic, metal essence, water, and fire powers.

The strong boxing aura formed an explosive energy and swallowed the sky covering sword aura whole. The air in the ring, that had been filled with the endless sword aura, returned to normal.

Only Chu Xinghan knew how powerful the mysteries of his stroke had been. He’d thought that even if he was unable to destroy Jiang Chen with this blow, he could at least throw Jiang Chen into disarray and then gain the upper hand with a string of attacks.

It was true that Chu Xinghan held a death wish, but that didn’t

mean he'd lost his drive to win.

He was of a mindset that he should die to repay his debt of gratitude to his master.

He didn't want to use the crazy method of detonating his spirit ocean because he didn't want to betray his own principles. If he could use the sword in his hand to win fair and square, then he would have a clear conscience, with no feelings of guilt to the heavens or his own heart, to Master Shuiyue or to Jiang Chen.

Chu Xinghan also knew the saying that a man who has been away three days must be looked at with new eyes.

He had tried his best to overestimate Jiang Chen's strength, but after this exchange, he'd tragically discovered that he'd underestimated the perverse strength of this secular genius.

This had seemed a simple collision.

But there had been many mysteries contained within.

He had made the first move, whereas Jiang Chen had reacted to what he'd brought out. This meant that Jiang Chen had been just reacting, and his control and reactions were incredible.

A careless punch had easily dispelled the starscape sword aura that Chu Xinghan was most proud of!

Chu Xinghan believed that even Long Juxue would be unable to do so this easily.

Jiang Chen's might once again provoked Chu Xinghan's desire to fight. His sword flicked upwards and became one with his body, transforming into a beam of light and chopping down on Jiang Chen as if a shooting star falling to the earth.

If his sword aura couldn't contain Jiang Chen, he would opt for close quarter combat then!

His sword light flashed as he swung at Jiang Chen's neck.

When the concentrated sword aura neared a meter away from Jiang Chen, Chu Xinghan suddenly felt himself lose control as his sword aura seemed to have hit an invisible wall, its motion and speed decreasing noticeably.

Jiang Chen smiled faintly and stepped out fearlessly, flicking lightly with his middle finger from his thumb.

Fssht!

An enormous sound shattered the air.

The art from that finger flick landed on the longsword and emitted a crisp sound, ringing without stop, as if the sword had

been shocked by the flick.

The mournful ring from the sword was exceedingly ear piercing.

Chu Xinghan quirked his eyebrows and changed the motion of his sword, chopping and slicing in multiple moves as if a raging storm, attacking Jiang Chen's vitals like screaming winds and hurtling rain.

Chu Xinghan had already ascertained the gap between himself and Jiang Chen. He was privately shocked at Jiang Chen's strength while feeling a kind of sorrow for himself.

Jiang Chen was as dashing as ever, only changing his footwork as he smiled, his finger continuing flicking like he was plucking flowers. Each hit landed unerringly on Chu Xinghan's sword, neither too soft nor too heavy.

Each blow however, utterly nullified Chu Xinghan's sword aura's chances to advance, completely destroying the rhythm of his attacks and making him unable to call upon his sword aura from beginning to end without stopping.

This kind of fight made Chu Xinghan tragically aware that his opponent wasn't even exhibiting the fullest of his strength as he sealed off all of his long and short range attacks.

"Again!"

Although Chu Xinghan recognized Jiang Chen's might, it also provoked his boundless battle intent. He had entered a clear state of mind at this point and could look death calmly in the eye.

Therefore, when his posture changed again, he didn't even leave an avenue of retreat for himself. He took a purely offensive stance with no defense in it at all. He only hoped to strike out satisfyingly with his strongest attack and determine the outcome of the battle with Jiang Chen.

To conquer, or die!

When Jiang Chen saw Chu Xinghan's reckless positioning, he suddenly understood Chu Xinghan's earlier words. It looked like Chu Xinghan had been forced by that old woman Master Shuiyue to enter the ring and pit his life against Jiang Chen.

However, this proud man disdained self detonation as a way of fighting for Long Juxue.

And sadly, his gratitude towards Master Shuiyue was as weighty as a mountain.

Chu Xinghan's death wish was only to repay that debt!

"That old woman Shuiyue has eyes but is blind! Her reason had been completely clouded by that b*tch Long Juxue."

When Jiang Chen saw Chu Xinghan's ferocious attacks, he sighed

in his heart. Master Shuiyue was shunting such a good disciple to the side and had been completely turned all around by someone with that blasted innate constitution!

Chapter 395: Others May Forsake Me, I Cannot Give Up On Myself

However, the difference between strength was oftentimes not something that could be bridged by passion.

Setting aside the fact that Chu Xinghan had no intention of detonating his own spirit ocean, even if he did do as Master Shuiyue had commanded, he probably wouldn't have been able to fight back against Jiang Chen.

This was because Jiang Chen's defense amongst his peers was absolutely heaven defying.

His soft armor had been combined with the Redscaled Firelizard scale, and he'd trained the "Nine Transformations of Demons and Gods" to the third level, so the natural defenses of his body were also incredibly strong.

No matter how strong the explosion Chu Xinghan would unleash, it'd be hard for him to injure Jiang Chen.

Chu Xinghan was sixth level spirit realm, just like Jiang Chen.

But it was obviously that these two sixth level spirit realms were on completely different footings.

Chu Xinghan's strength ranked amongst the top of the Shuiyue

faction, but he wasn't part of the elite in the Purple Sun Sect, much less than the four great sects.

Therefore, although his aura flared powerfully and was quite dominating, to a true expert like Jiang Chen, this kind of fighting style was actually easier to handle.

This was because that his desperate stance was revealing simply too many flaws.

"It looks like Chu Xinghan truly has no standing in the Shuiyue faction at all. Even when I killed that Hai Tian in the earth quadrant, Master Shuiyue reacted like a crazed demon. However, when she sent Chu Xinghan up to fight with his life on the line, I see no regret or care at all. It's as if this disciple is a pawn who can be discarded at any time in this old woman's eyes."

When his thoughts traveled here, Jiang Chen became quite disdainful of Master Shuiyue's vision. Apart from having a good eye for unearthing talent, how this old woman had raised Chu Xinghan was absolutely unsatisfactory.

From the way that Chu Xinghan was putting his life out on the line, it seemed that he was returning the gratitude he felt from Master Shuiyue's efforts spent in raising and cultivating him.

Even so, he refused to go against his principles and detonate his spirit ocean and take Jiang Chen down with him. It could be seen from this that he was someone with principles.

He was someone who could give his all in everything he did because of the strong faith he held in his heart.

The strong dao heart of a person like this was absolutely not something that a vainglorious, arrogant girl such as Long Juxue could measure up to.

It was a pity that Master Shuiyue could not recognize the true gem in front of her. She could only see Long Juxue's innate constitution and ignored the truth that there was malleable talent beside her.

As he thought of this, Jiang Chen rather admired Chu Xinghan a bit more.

This was someone who could be molded.

Jiang Chen had dispelled several of Chu Xinghan's advances as these thoughts flashed through his mind.

His advantages over a peer of his level were simply too much. Chu Xinghan's sword techniques were sophisticated, and that he'd likely be able to put up a good fight if he met someone like Lei Gangyang.

Although he would definitely lose in the end as well, he wouldn't be as resigned as he was at the moment.

Those not participating in the match may not have been able to

tell, but Chu Xinghan was more aware than anyone else that although he was delivering his attacks above his usual level, Jiang Chen was still coolly composed and hadn't used his full strength.

He hadn't even used a weapon yet.

"Jiang Chen, kill me if you are going to. Why toy with me?" Chu Xinghan was depressed as he sent a message over.

However, he didn't slow down the movements of his hands.

"Chu Xinghan, I respect you as a good man and thus, I will make an exception for you in not killing you." Jiang Chen responded faintly.

Chu Xinghan's momentum was like a mad tiger as his sword aura criss crossed through the skies, crashing down upon Jiang Chen like lightning.

"Jiang Chen, I have succeeded in obtaining what I wanted and have long since held a death wish. What need do I have for your mercy?"

Jiang Chen easily called upon his methods as he continuously dispersed Chu Xinghan's attacks, sending the message back, "It's easy for one to die on the path of martial dao and difficult to live. You, Chu Xinghan, are a real man. Even if you're treated as a discarded pawn, even if others give up on you, that doesn't give you the reason to give up on yourself. When you reach the grand

martial dao in the future, your own face will burn in embarrassment when you look back on your decision you made today!”

If Jiang Chen wanted to defeat Chu Xinghan, he could do so with no effort at all in this moment.

However, he hadn’t done so. He’d kept on parrying the moves because he could tell that Chu Xinghan wanted to die. If he didn’t dissuade him on this notion, this person wouldn’t live anyways even if he didn’t kill him in the ring.

He must have to draw forth the confidence to make this fellow live on, make him understand the meaning of life.

Chu Xinghan exhibited loyalty and filial piety to Master Shuiyue. He thanked her with his death, and these were his principles. Jiang Chen rather admired this.

But Master Shuiyue’s character was obviously not worthy of a man such as Chu Xinghan dying for her.

“Chu Xinghan, you must know that your body, skin, and hair all come from your parents. You have the will to die, but have you inquired your birth parents if they wish it so? Although loyalty demands death, have you taken a look to see if the person you die for is worthy of such? Are your actions proper for the cardinal principle of righteousness?”

“When men live in this world, we must lead a dashing and free life, and die a worthy and spectacular death. If you die in such a cowardly and pathetic manner, you might think that you’ve become a martyr, been elegant and unrestrained, and able to do your mentor proud. But have you thought whether or not you can face yourself in dying in such a fashion? Can you face your own heart, the one that has always yearned for dao?”

“The path of martial dao is a heaven defying action to begin with. Fate is in your hands. Even the heavens cannot control my destiny, much less others! I only ask you one question. When you die, will your master shed a single tear for you? Will Long Juxue feel a moment’s pain for you?”

Each of the questions in this successive string rang in Chu Xinghan’s mind like a loudly tolling bell.

That others have forsaken you is not a reason for you to give up!

You have the will to do, but have you asked your birth parents to ask if they wish for you to die as well?

Can you face yourself dying like this? Can you face your dao heart?

Will your master shed a single tear for you? Will Long Juxue experience even a moment of heartache for you?

Chu Xinghan’s aura faltered and his desire to die faded with

Jiang Chen's every question.

Death was easy.

But why must he die for Long Juxue? It would be an act of loyalty to die because of a word from his master, but that would be foolish loyalty.

Just like Jiang Chen had said, would his honored master shed a single tear?

Chu Xinghan truly did want to think of the good, but when he thought of his honored master's frosty face on that stage, her heartless reminder, Chu Xinghan's heart trembled.

In that moment, all the shadows cast upon him from various emotions, relationships, grudges, and favors were cleaved away cleanly, as if a bolt of lightning had flashed through them.

A scene of bright clarity greeted his eyes.

Chu Xinghan's dao heart was firm and his side clear. He was one with great intelligence.

When he had a moment's comprehension, it utterly dispelled all of what he had been agonizing over.

Indeed, his gratitude to his master was as monumental as a

mountain, but there was time aplenty to pay that back. Why must he express it in the method of ending his own life?

Chu Xinghan retracted his sword's aura and fell backwards, saying lowly, "I concede."

When these two words were voiced, Master Shuiyue's face beneath the ring changed greatly. Chu Xinghan had conceded the match? This was completely against her wishes!

Long Juxue laughed coldly and added fuel to the flame, "Your disciple didn't view this person wrongly at all. This Chu Xinghan is indeed someone who complies in appearance yet opposes in heart to the honored master."

Master Shuiyue's face was stricken as she ground her teeth silently, a cold expression appearing on her features.

"Chu Xinghan!"

Chu Xinghan presented himself in front of Master Shuiyue after leaving the ring. He knelt with a single knee on the ground as he spoke with an assertive tone, "Honored master, your disciple is inept. I have tried my best, but cannot beat my opponent."

"Have you tried your best?" A violent light dawned in Master Shuiyue's eyes. "Chu Xinghan, you appeared to obey but secretly ignore me in the end, do you still view me as your honored master in your heart? Do you still remember the twenty years I've spent

raising you?!”

“Your disciple remembers well his gratitude towards the honored master.” Chu Xinghan said remotely.

“Then why didn’t you do as I said?” Master Shuiyue’s aura flared.

“There are too many sycophants by the honored master’s side, and too few who truly have your interests in mind. If I leave the honored master just like this, then there will be none who serve the honored master genuinely in the future. Your disciple wishes to repay the honored master for the long term…”

“Shut up!” Master Shuiyue’s body shook in her anger, the flames of fury burning in her eyes. “You lust after life and fear death, and yet you have so many excuses to show for it? Dare you say that you are the only loyal person in my faction?”

Long Juxue was also highly incensed. Chu Xinghan’s words were pointing fingers at her as well, saying that she was a sycophant and not someone who was truly good to Master Shuiyue.

This was a light that shone on her true thoughts, and an action that revealed her scars.

“Honored master, this person defied your orders and is a traitor. Your disciple will end him for you!”

Long Juxue's slender eyebrows knitted together as she sent a force from her palm, slamming it down on Chu Xinghan's chest.

Bam!

Her actions had been exceedingly swift and ferocious.

Chu Xinghan was just beginning to react when he was struck by the blow. His body flew out like a kite with a broken string as he landed viciously on the ground, his status unknown.

Master Shuiyue hadn't thought that Long Juxue would suddenly make a move either.

There was faint surprise in her eyes that was quickly replaced by indifference. "You made a move on my behalf to clean our house of traitors. That is just as well!"

Eldest disciple Ceng Shi was standing behind Master Shuiyue as the muscles on his face twitched slightly. A look of fear flashed through his eyes.

His relationship with Chu Xinghan was ordinary, but he had sympathy for his own kind, and when he saw that Long Juxue had dared assume so much power, he too was shocked.

He realized that he might end up just like Chu Xinghan.

Long Juxue's expression was aloof, with just a hint of a vague smile on her face. Her eyes raked lightly over Ceng Shi's face.

Ceng Shi was frightened and actually didn't dare meet her gaze.

"Honored master, your disciple will go over and see if he's dead." Ceng Shi felt uneasy and wanted to change the subject.

Master Shuiyue waved her hand. "What's the point? He defied orders and such is the equivalent of betraying his master. What's dead is dead, what are you looking at?"

Ceng Shi had no response for that as he returned to his position. A complicated look flashed through his eyes and no one knew what he was thinking bout.

Seed number five, Lian Canghai from the Precious Tree Sect, took the ring next. Lian Canghai had yet to make it into the top four, but his strength wasn't any less than that of Luo Xi of the Myriad Spirit Sect and Shi Yunyun of the Flowing Wind Sect.

He was ranked number five due to his score.

Indeed, once Lian Canghai took the stage, he displayed his strength as the first genius of the Precious Tree Sect. He defeated his opponent with almost unquestioned dominance.

Lian Canghai's match was something that Lei Zhiyang and Long Juxue wouldn't pass up.

After all, they were fated to meet sooner or later. Understanding one's opponent was just as important as understanding oneself.

When Lian Canghai disembarked from the ring, one of Master Shuiyue's disciples suddenly called out, "Eh, Chu Xinghan's gone!"

Master Shuiyue and Long Juxue all looked over in astonishment. There were only a few bloody traces where he'd fallen earlier, but no sign of Chu Xinghan.

"How is this possible?" Master Shuiyue and Long Juxue all ran over.

Chapter 396: Top Sixteen, Selection Of The Geniuses

Chu Xinghan had suddenly disappeared without a trace, with no clues of his whereabouts left behind.

Master Shuiyue furrowed her brow. “None of you saw what happened?”

Everyone had been watching Lian Canghai’s match just now. No one had bothered to pay attention to Chu Xinghan, whose condition was unknown. Therefore, no one responded when Master Shuiyue asked her question.

Long Juxue’s glowering expression swept around but she too came up empty handed. She smiled faintly, “The honored master need not grow enraged. That person cravenly clings to life instead of bravely facing death and surreptitiously slipped away. Even if he’s not dead, he’d be crippled after my blow. My freezing azure phoenix qi froze all of his blood vessels. Even if he was able to temporarily hold on, he won’t be able to survive for long.”

Long Juxue was very confident in her strength and wasn’t worried about anything at all.

Taking a step back, even if Chu Xinghan survived on a fluke, she still wouldn’t be afraid of anything.

She was a vaunted cultivator with an innate constitution, the

number one genius of the sect. The Purple Sun Sect had focused all of its attention and fortunes on her, what need was there to worry about a discarded disciple?

Many had actually seen what had happened in the Shuiyue faction, including numerous sect heavyweights present whose ranks were senior even to Master Shuiyue.

However, all of them chose to overlook what was happening.

This was because this matter involved Long Juxue. The sect's attentions and hopes were all focused on her now, so even these old fellows didn't dare take Long Juxue to task.

Otherwise, the sect would have incomparable losses if the genius grew irate.

Forefather Sunchaser witnessed all of this and only smiled faintly. This matter didn't cause a single ripple of emotion in his heart.

In reality, he'd seen too many such happenings. He even admired Long Juxue's actions. Domineering and high-handed, this was the true way of the Purple Sun Sect!

Chu Xinghan's matter was as if a pebble had been lobbed into the water's surface. All was as calm as though nothing had happened after a few small ripples.

No one would pay much heed to this kind of issue.

After all, Chu Xinghan was just a small disciple under Master Shuiyue. He had no impressive background or stunning potential, and even less so of fortune that the sect could not do without.

Having him or missing him, it didn't make much of a difference.

Apart from a sympathetic Ceng Shi, no one in the sect actually spared a single moment's thought for Chu Xinghan.

Ceng Shi himself was weighed down by the matters of the heart not because his relations with Chu Xinghan were that good, but purely because he felt sorrow for his own kind.

In Chu Xinghan's plight today, he saw his own downfall tomorrow.

If he'd merely had a distaste for Long Juxue before, then he truly hated Long Juxue's tyrannical demeanor at this moment.

She had dealt a killing blow even when Chu Xinghan had no conflicts of interest with her. With the verbal sparring that he, the once senior brother, had engaged with her previously, would this vengeful woman easily let him off the hook once she took his place?

Ceng Shi was pessimistic.

Although he'd made it into the top sixteen with his previous match, he wasn't the slightest bit happy at the moment.

On the final day of the second round, the four great geniuses of the sky quadrant once again took their spot in the spotlight. They took their victories without the slightest trace of trouble.

As such, the list of the final sixteen was finalized.

Of them, five were from the Purple Sun Sect, three from the Precious Tree Sect, three from the Flowing Wind Sect, four from the Myriad Spirit Sect, and one from the secular world.

This list was pretty much what had been estimated before the selection.

However, the presence of Jiang Chen was a bit jarring. He appeared quite out of the ordinary when standing amongst the sixteen.

The Myriad Spirit Sect had originally thought that they'd hold three out of the final sixteen; they hadn't factored in the abnormality of Liu Wencai.

The Precious Tree Sect's solid four spots had been decreased because of the unexpected defeat of Iron Dazhi by Liu Wencai.

Now, in this stage of the selection, the four forefathers would determine the outcome.

According to the rules of the selection, those in the top 16 who originally belonged to a sect would basically still remain in that sect.

The exception being Jiang Chen, the secular genius.

But of course, they still had to respect the cultivator's own wishes.

After all, this had to do with someone's future development. If some sect disciple didn't wish to stay in their own sect, then their original sect couldn't force them to stay and would have to let them go.

Such were the rules, but everyone was well aware that they had gone through great pains to stabilize their own geniuses' morale before setting out on the selection. There would basically be no situation of a genius betraying their own sect and going to another.

What was to commence next would be the selection of the geniuses from the lowest ranked ones to the highest.

Liu Wencai's ranking was the lowest of the remaining sixteen. He'd made it into the final sixteen with a ranking of 22, a truly remarkable feat.

One had to know that Iron Dazhi had been candidate number 11, someone solidly destined for the top sixteen but defeated by the dark horse, Liu Wencai.

“Remember, regardless of what sect and background you come from, all of you have a chance to choose. Although theoretically we promote returning to your own sect, there are always exceptions. This is a life-changing decision for your future development. Therefore, I hope that all of you exercise prudence before your choice.”

Sunchaser’s gaze swept across each of the sixteen candidates.

The other forefathers didn’t wish to be outdone and they too surveyed the sixteen geniuses.

It was obvious that they didn’t want Sunchaser’s words to enchant their own sect disciples. Although the old monsters had given their disciples repeated orders and injunctions before leaving the sects, warning them again and again to not leave the sect, and even made many promises and analyzed the pros and cons, there was always a trace of the unknown.

“Alright, the selection will now begin. Each candidate will receive some promises from us four old monsters, with the final decision choice in your hands.”

Liu Wencai was the first to step out since his ranking was the lowest.

He'd won immense popularity after his match. Even someone as strong as Iron Dazhi had been defeated. Therefore, he'd long since become a first rate genius in the eyes of the forefathers.

Each forefather had three minutes to list their promises and conditions, and the sect that the candidate belonged to had first priority.

Therefore, forefather Ninelion was the first to step out and make his case.

"Liu Wencai, I'm ashamed to say that I had never heard of your name before today. This is my negligence. However, your potential has proven that you are naturally suited for the Myriad Spirit Sect. The sect is a platform for your rise. I only have one sentence, in that you will receive the same treatment as Luo Xi if you remain. I would dearly like to see the day in which you shine with glory in the sect."

Ninelion was a straightforward person. He saw in Liu Wencai an immense potential and explosive power. It was something that even Luo Xi may not possess.

Therefore, Ninelion adored Liu Wencai so much he couldn't bear to part with him. He too was worried that Liu Wencai hadn't been valued in the sect before—would he be resentful and turn towards another sect?

It was a pity that three minutes were too short. As warmly inclined as forefather Ninelion was, it was too small of a time to

tug upon Liu Wencai's heartstrings.

The other three forefathers all gave their promises and conditions afterwards.

It was obvious that they had noticed that Liu Wencai hadn't been very treasured in the sect before. Thus, they offered quite the generous conditions.

Particularly old monster Sunchaser—he started boasting about how the Purple Sun Sect's martial dao legacy was unparalleled amongst the four great sects.

Although his words were cliche, one had to admit that they were compelling.

The four forefathers all looked ardently at Liu Wencai after saying their piece, waiting for him to make his final decision.

Liu Wencai smiled noncommittally, "I choose the Myriad Spirit Sect."

He'd actually never thought of leaving the Myriad Spirit Sect. He knew that his talents were most suited for this sect.

He'd also asked Jiang Chen privately for his opinions before, and Jiang Chen had told him that remaining still would be preferable to moving. He would be an outsider in another sect. Even if the forefather valued him highly, he'd still be ostracized by the others.

Ninelion's heartstrings relaxed when he heard these words. "Good, good! You're a disciple of my Myriad Spirit Sect alright!"

The other forefathers all felt that this was quite a pity, particularly Sunchaser. He chuckled oddly as he looked meaningfully at Liu Wencai.

Liu Wencai's choice had obviously somewhat enraged forefather Sunchaser. He'd thought that with his eloquence and conditions, it would be enough to convince Liu Wencai to defect to the Purple Sun Sect.

He could've made use of this to slap Ninelion's face as well.

But now, his nicely laid-out plan had failed.

The next one up was Luo Huang of the Purple Sun Sect. His decision was very straightforward—the Purple Sun Sect. No surprises about this at all.

Luo Huang's "Heaven Scorching Sutra" was something that marked him as the Purple Sun Sect, through and though. It would be career suicide to go to another sect.

A Flowing Wind Sect disciple was next, and they too remained in their original sect. The brand of the Flowing Wind Sect was equally as deep, and any who left would find the adjustment hard in another sect.

The fourth was Myriad Spirit Sect disciple Yuan Qinglu. He too decided to stay.

The following three came from the Purple Sun, Myriad Spirit, and Flowing Wind Sects. There were no surprises as they all chose to remain put.

Tang Hong of the Precious Tree Sect was the eighth candidate.

Sunchaser once again started scheming when he saw Tang Hong. He knew this kid was the thorn in the side of many, and was renowned for being a loner in his sect.

Therefore, he felt that this was a great opportunity to steal someone's talent.

Of course, forefather Thousandleaf was the first to speak. He had no interest in stealing other sects' disciples, but placed a great importance on his own.

Therefore, he made many promises that he would offer devoted tutelage to Tang Hong as his personal disciples, and the resources of the sect would tilt towards him, with the same privileges as Lian Canghai and Xie Wufan.

Forefather Icemist didn't seem that interested in Tang Hong, so she only spoke a few words.

Forefather Ninelion saw in Tang Hong a kind of wildness, and so he too spent a great deal of effort hoping to recruit him. However, with his understanding of Tang Hong, he felt that the odds were low.

When it was forefather Sunchaser's turn, he felt that this was a once in a blue moon opportunity to headhunt a disciple. He looked at Tang Hong with a confident smile.

Chapter 397: Unexpected Betrayal, Unexpected Face-Slapping

“Tang Hong, your potential and strength were the most underestimated in this selection. With your strength of heart, you have great potential in assailing the origin realm in the future. It’s a pity that the sect you’re in did not fully tap into your potential and didn’t develop you according to your aptitude, wasting your time before. I hope you join the Purple Sun Sect as I see in you the same potential I see in Lei Gangyang. I guarantee at least sixty to seventy percent chance that I’ll be able to raise you to the origin realm!”

Forefather Sunchaser had carefully crafted these words. He’d first driven a wedge between Tang Hong and the Precious Tree Sect, then placed him on the same level as Lei Gangyang to increase his goodwill towards the Purple Sun Sect, and finally using a sixty to seventy percent guarantee of making it into the origin realm as lure to completely enthrall this young man.

One had to say, Sunchaser’s words were quite tempting and well aimed.

He’d also perceptively grasped the awkward circumstances between Tang Hong and the Precious Tree Sect and was making full use of it to sow discord.

The Xie and Iron families in the Precious Tree Sect had always been the gatekeepers of benefits and resources in the sect due to their internal conflict. Forefather Thousandleaf acquitted himself of these conflicts and thus didn’t have as much domineering power

and sweeping drive over his sect as Sunchaser did.

Thousandleaf's gentle personality meant he had the weakest control over his sect, and was a major reason the endless conflict between the Xie and Iron families continued.

Sunchaser had seized on this point and pointed out that Tang Hong was in the middle of the Xie and Iron families' conflict. Therefore leaving the Precious Tree Sect was really his best choice.

To be honest, Tang Hong did indeed waver in that moment.

"Tang Hong, stay in the Precious Tree Sect. I'll be joining that sect as well." A message traveled to his consciousness as he strived to make up his mind.

Boss!

Tang Hong heard a message from his boss' consciousness.

Boss wants to join the Precious Tree Sect?

Tang Hong no longer hesitated when he heard this and laughed heartily, mussing up his hair with his enormous hand.

"I've decided to stay in the Precious Tree Sect." Tang Hong laughed extremely happily. When this enormous stocky fellow laughed, his eyes were as clear and pure as the boy next door, no

impurities within at all.

Thousandleaf's uneasy heart could finally settle back down after he heard these words. In the moment before Tang Hong made his choice, he had had a strong feeling that the Precious Tree Sect was about to lose this genius!

When he thought back, he realized that Tang Hong hadn't enjoyed any special treatment in the Precious Tree Sect at all.

With Tang Hong's unreserved nature, what reason would he have to be nostalgic and grateful to the Precious Tree Sect for?

Therefore, when he heard Tang Hong's decision, Thousandleaf almost couldn't believe his own ears. He was immensely grateful and warned himself sternly that he must take greater interest in the raising of the sect's disciples in the future.

Sunchaser also found those words unbelievable when he heard them.

He'd felt that he had ninety percent chance of success with his persuasion just now. With his observation skills, he could naturally see through Tang Hong's thoughts in that moment and that he was definitely wavering.

But as if he'd suddenly received some kind of revelation in that moment, wild joy had appeared on his face resulting in him decisively choosing the Precious Tree Sect.

“Someone must’ve given him directions. Who? Who dared ruin my plans?” Rage burned in Sunchaser’s mind as his ears surveyed around sharply.

However, no matter how he surveyed around, he came up empty-handed.

When he saw that Tang Hong was about to take his place again, Sunchaser suddenly asked, “Tang Hong, did someone secretly make you some sort of promise just now?”

Tang Hong chuckled, “What does this have to do with the selection?”

He ignored Sunchaser’s glowering face after that and retreated.

Sunchaser’s headhunting plans had failed once again. The fires of rage had taken hold in his stomach. He’d felt greatly assured of success the two times he’d made a move, but hadn’t thought that he’d fail again and again.

He failed even more bafflingly with Tang Hong this time. A genius that had almost been at hand had flown out of his grasp in that single instant.

Suddenly, old monster Sunchaser thought of the relationship between Tang Hong and Jiang Chen. A thought struck him as his gaze shot sinisterly towards Jiang Chen.

One had to say that the intuition of an origin realm old monster was quite stunning. He was sure of his judgement with this single thought.

“Secular brat, did you mouth off just now?” Sunchaser sent this message over. He was aware of Tang Hong and Jiang Chen’s relationship, and knew that Tang Hong was completely in Jiang Chen’s hands, wholeheartedly treating the latter as his boss.

“So what if I did?” Jiang Chen responded faintly.

He’d long since erupted in open hostilities with the Purple Sun Sect anyways. Even if it was old monster Sunchaser, Jiang Chen had no reason to yield.

“Good, good, very good!” Killing intent exploded in old monster Sunchaser’s eyes as he almost grit his teeth. “Brat, you don’t understand the greater picture and act against my sect again and again, give me a reason for me not to kill you!”

“Kill me?” Jiang Chen laughed coldly.”An origin realm forefather killing a secular cultivator during the selection? You’ve lived a hell of a long time, where’s your brain gone?”

Old monster Sunchaser wanted to keep conversing, but noticed the next person had already stepped up. It was Ceng Shi, the eldest disciple beneath Master Shuiyue.

Ceng Shi's mentality seemed a bit dejected as he seemed quite glum. A trace of anxiety would occasionally flash through his eyes. Long Juxue's domineering moves in killing Chu Xinghan had already left a great psychological impression on him.

Since he was a Purple Sun Sect disciple, old monster Sunchaser naturally had the first right to speak.

"Ceng Shi, you're of the Shuiyue faction and I know of your potential as well. But what's wrong with you today? You seem so distracted and out of sorts. There's not the slightest bit of the pride and demeanor on you that should be present on a Purple Sun Sect disciple! If you want me to take you as a personal disciple, you should bring forth some more energy! Geniuses are as common as the clouds in our sect, and your faction has Long Juxue as an example. Buck up and learn from her! Otherwise, even if you become my personal disciple, what will you bring forth to compete with Long Juxue and Lei Gangyang?"

Ceng Shi's facial muscles twitched slightly as he shrank inside, nodding continuously as though he were listening to a lecture.

The Precious Tree Sect and Myriad Spirit Sect patently had not much interest in Ceng Shi. They spoke a few words for formality's sake, completely different from old monster Sunchaser.

Rather, it was the venerated Icemist of the Flowing Wind Sect who had more of a heart for detail as a woman. She smiled at Ceng Shi, "Young man, your potential is quite good. Your path of martial dao has many areas that align with my Flowing Wind Sect. My sect has an overabundance of yin and lacks yang, a situation

that needs to be improved. If you are unhappy in the Purple Sun Sect, you can come to me. I will teach you patiently. At least, I will be more patient and more understanding of your potential than your honored master Shuiyue."

One had to say, as a woman, venerated Icemist was more attentive than the others. She'd observed the hesitation and conflict in Ceng Shi's heart, and saw that he had a bit of a fixation on motherly figure.

All along, Ceng Shi had adored Master Shuiyue as if his mother. But ever since Long Juxue appeared, he discovered that he'd slowly fallen out of favor.

Even now, Long Juxue was thus domineering, yet the honored master still cherished her and respected her wishes.

This had all been his treatment before, but had now been replaced by Long Juxue.

Therefore, he was melancholic, depressed, and even worried if he would somehow die to Long Juxue just like Chu Xinghan had!

When his thoughts travelled here, Ceng Shi steadied his gaze and grit his teeth, "I... I'm willing to join the Flowing Wind Sect. Please accept me, forefather Icemist!"

"WHAT?!" Old monster Sunchaser immediately flared up when he heard these words.

He’d kept trying to steal other geniuses from other sects prior to this but had kept failing. He hadn’t thought that his own background would be on fire in a moment’s carelessness, and his own talent had been stolen by others!

And judging from Ceng Shi’s posture, he hadn’t even needed to be stolen. It was more like he’d willingly climbed over the wall to go to someone else!

This was an extraordinary humiliation for Sunchaser, someone who liked to win. His eyes flashed with a terrifying light, like a ball of fire that wanted to reduce Ceng Shi to ash.

Ceng Shi didn’t dare resist the domineering forefather Sunchaser and quietly backed away.

Forefather Icemist had always given others a tender and gentle impression. However, when she saw Sunchaser oppressing Ceng Shi in such a manner, she grew displeased and circulated her aura, blocking Sunchaser’s advance.

“Daoist Sunchaser, Ceng Shi is now one of mine. Do not seek to bully him.” Icemist had a gentle temperament alright, but it was human nature to try to protect one’s own.

Ceng Shi had just defected to her, how would she earn his absolute loyalty if she didn’t protect him?

Sunchaser was so enraged that his very lungs wanted to explode. That a Purple Sun Sect disciple had defected to another sect was an immense shame for him.

Master Shuiyue also had a look of disbelief on her face from her position behind forefather Sunchaser. She'd never thought that her eldest disciple, someone who'd always respected her as his own mother, would betray her without a word like this and choose the Flowing Wind Sect.

Therefore, she couldn't keep it in.

"Ceng Shi, I raised you for 20 years such that you owe a mountain of gratitude to me. Is this how you repay me?" Master Shuiyue hectored angrily.

Ceng Shi also felt aggrieved and exploded in this moment. "That's right, you were very good to me before and loved me like my own mother. But ever since you've gotten your hands on Long Juxue, you ask yourself if you treated any of us like people! How many ludicrous things have you done for this heartless b*tch? You ruined your own reputation for her in the earth quadrant, third junior brother is now dead, fourth junior brother crippled! But let's set that aside. You became even worse in the sky quadrant. Why don't you ask your own conscience how you treated second junior brother Chu Xinghan? You ordered him to go die as if you were giving commands to a dog! This b*tch even tried to kill him without your permission right in front of you, yet you didn't even say anything to her! I'd like to ask, if I stay in the Purple Sun Sect, who can guarantee that what happened to Chu Xinghan today won't happen to me tomorrow? Who can guarantee that senior

brother Lei Gangyang himself will be able to continue living peacefully, and not be relegated to die by this scorpion-hearted woman, much less me?!”

Ceng Shi wasn’t keeping a filter on his mouth as he decided to hell with it all. He’d even dragged Lei Gangyang into this.

Contrary to everyone’s expectations, Lei Gangyang didn’t step out to rebuke Ceng Shi. Rather, his head trailed without a word. It was obvious that he wasn’t at liberty to voice these words, but he was quite grateful to Ceng Shi for saying them.

A heavy silence descended upon the scene at that moment.

It was apparent that everyone had been shocked by Ceng Shi’s words.

Even old monster Sunchaser’s expression had stiffened. He’d always been confident that the Purple Sun Sect was a mass with iron solidarity. He’d never thought that such a large crack would appear after Long Juxue’s appearance!

Master Shuiyue was even more livid. She had indeed somewhat deviated from the proper path because of Long Juxue during these times.

Her prized disciples had ended up being dead, crippled, or turncoats.

This was a heartless slap in the face for someone who liked to win as much as Master Shuiyue.

Chapter 398: Jiang Chen's Choice

Sunchaser's thoughts spun wildly, but immediately settled down. He laughed coldly. "You yourself are aware of your unsteady dao heart, but you blame it on others? Cowards who are afraid of competition like you aren't wanted by the Purple Sun Sect! One of Long Juxue is worth ten thousand cowards like you. Next!"

Sunchaser changed the topic with decisive charisma.

Jiang Chen felt like he was watching an immensely wonderful show. It turns out that there would indeed come a day where arrogant folks like old monster Sunchaser and Master Shuiyue would have their faces slapped as well huh!

Their expressions were equally as ugly as the others after losing face.

This was an unexpectedly good show! Jiang Chen felt quite thrilled.

It was a good thing that the appearance of the next genius glossed over the awkwardness of Ceng Shi's betrayal.

Xie Yufan from the Precious Tree Sect was up next. A genius like him who was deeply rooted and firmly planted into the Precious Tree Sect would never select another one.

After him came Jiang Chen.

The mysterious secular genius was finally going to make his decision now.

Each of the four great sect's recruitment spiel was each more tempting and fascinating than the one before.

Venerated Icemist of the Flowing Wind Sect had had her confidence greatly boosted after Ceng Shi's defection, so she made many promises to Jiang Chen, vowing that she would personally tailor a cultivation plan for him so that he could assail the origin realm with the fastest speed possible.

"Young man, your strength of heart is likely the highest amongst all the geniuses. My Flowing Wind Sect has always emphasized the tempering of the heart the most. Everyone knows that we have an excellent heritage passed down through generations. Our male and female disciples can also engage in dual cultivation, and our sect treasures extraordinarily talented men even more. As an example, there was a male genius in my sect 1,600 years ago with unparalleled gifts and potential, and so, nine great beauties within the sect then all dual cultivated with him, becoming a wonderful legend through the ages of the Flowing Wind Sect."

Dual cultivation!

This was always of the greatest temptation for any male disciple.

With an age old ancestor as an example, to have nine unparalleled beauties dual cultivate only with him, this was

incredibly ludicrous treatment. One dragon and nine phoenixes!

This kind of temptation was an absolutely irresistible allure. Particularly as the dual cultivation in the Flowing Wind Sect wasn't something that could cause a cultivator to lose sight of his goals, but would actually result in mutual nourishment and improve upon each other's cultivation.

This was a male cultivator's heaven!

It was a pity that the Flowing Wind Sect had enormously high standards for accepting male disciples. Only the ultimate geniuses would be able to enter their line of sight.

Take Tang Hong for example—his potential was so high, but the venerated Icemist had seen that his appearance was rather crude and rough, so she wasn't of a mind to recruit him.

Forefather Ninelion of the Myriad Spirit Sect had greatly admired this secular genius from the beginning. When the Purple Sun Sect had wanted to suppress Jiang Chen, Ninelion had been the one to stand out in protest.

"Good kid, I quite admire you. Although I know that my Myriad Spirit Sect may not be the most suitable for you, that doesn't prevent me from admiring you. Allow me to say one word. When you were suppressed in the earth and sky quadrant, it was I who supported you from the shadows. It's not that I want you to repay me with anything, but that I want to tell you that the doors of the Myriad Spirit Sect are always wide open for you. In addition, I also

want to thank you for uncovering such a genius as Liu Wencai for me!”

Everyone knew of Liu Wencai’s relationship with Jiang Chen.

Sunchaser was next, and his tone was wooden. “Young man, there is no grudge that can’t be overcome between the two of us. I can tell that in the end your ambitions are towards martial dao. The Purple Sun Sect can give you everything you want in terms of martial dao heritage. It isn’t as if there is no place for you by my side and the entire Purple Sun Sect. If you’re willing to join the Purple Sun Sect, I will treat you the same as everyone else.”

Even Sunchaser felt his words ring of insincerity, much less Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen knew that the Purple Sun Sect had long since guessed his identity. Therefore, given his death feud with Long Juxue, there was no future for him in that sect.

Sunchaser only wanted to trick him into entering the Purple Sun Sect, was all.

Jiang Chen smiled faintly and was noncommittal.

When it came to forefather Thousandleaf, an old man with middling eloquence, he smiled wryly when he noticed that everyone else had spoken all there was to say. There wasn’t much advantage that he could offer when it was his turn.

“Alright young man, my Precious Tree Sect has the most resources. Your potential is quite high in all areas, but you lack resources the most, don’t you? Come to my Precious Tree Sect and all resources will be yours to use.”

Thousandleaf thought for quite a while, and finally came to the crux of the problem.

The four great sects had all spoken their part, and now it was Jiang Chen’s turn to express his stance.

Jiang Chen smiled faintly, “I made an agreement with a brother, so I choose the Precious Tree Sect.”

When the three words “Precious Tree Sect” sounded from Jiang Chen’s mouth, the other three forefathers felt their hearts sink with disappointment—particularly Ninelion, who sighed lightly with great emotion.

Venerated Icemist of the Flowing Wind Sect was also a bit surprised. With the immensely tempting lure that she’d thrown out of dual cultivation with the female disciples of the sect, she’d thought that this young man would choose the Flowing Wind Sect with no doubts whatsoever.

Old monster Sunchaser had long since known that Jiang Chen wouldn’t select the Purple Sun Sect, but hadn’t thought that he’d go for the Precious Tree Sect.

“This brat could actually bear to pass up the Flowing Wind Sect and its dual cultivation! Someone with such a focused and committed mentality is one not to be easily overlooked.” Sunchaser grew inwardly stern. He’d finally realized that Long Juxue’s fated rival wasn’t as simple a character as they’d thought.

When Thousandleaf had spoken those words before, he himself hadn’t had much confidence that he would prevail. He’d felt that no matter what the secular genius’ decision, he’d never pick their Precious Tree Sect.

However, an enormous stroke of luck had descended from the sky and struck him in the head like a large meat pie. This made even the normally taciturn old man to be a bit beside himself with joy.

Although this was a selection, everyone’s goal was this secular genius. After all, there weren’t that many who’d actually betray their original sect.

Ceng Shi was just an accident.

Therefore, when Thousandleaf realized that the secular genius that everyone had discussed countless times had chosen the Precious Tree Sect, he didn’t quite know what to say.

Tang Hong started laughing heartily. “Boss, you didn’t lie to me alright. Since you’ve already selected a sect, can you take off that ugly mask and let everyone see your true face?”

Liu Wencai also walked over, “Congratulations boss. Having entered a sect, your future is bright and endless.”

All gazes snapped to Jiang Chen’s body in unison.

Some were expectant, others were curious, yet more were dejected or projected hate.

Jiang Chen didn’t put on airs as he reached out a hand to tug off his mask.

“Jiang Chen!!”

Long Juxue was the first to react and spoke in a voice full of disgust. “Having played games at being mysterious for so long, you’re finally willing to reveal your true appearance?”

“It’s him! Jiang Chen! He was the secular genius alright!” Precious Tree Sect head Jie Tianshu was standing behind forefather Thousandleaf as he exclaimed with surprise and delight.

Vice head Wang Tuo of the Myriad Spirit Sect, who’d attempted to recruit Jiang Chen in the initial selection, was also incredibly surprised as he murmured with a rueful laugh, “Jiang Chen is the secular freak genius huh? I’m such a fool, I should’ve guessed this earlier!”

“Pity, what a pity!”

Wang Tuo was besieged by both hate and regret. Why hadn’t he succeeded at that time, and just allowed his sect to pass this well rounded genius on by?

Vice sect head Jiang Rou of the Flowing Wind Sect also sighed lightly. “This Jiang Chen was hotly contested by the three sects in the initial selection. It’s a pity that although my Flowing Wind Sect has countless beautiful female disciples, we were still unable to win this genius’ heart. Why do I have a feeling that a chance to change the fate of our Flowing Wind Sect has just passed us by?”

Venerated Icemist’s gaze was deep and full of meaning. She too felt boundless pity when she looked at Jiang Chen’s back. She’d almost the exact same feeling as Jiang Rou in that moment.

However, what they didn’t know was that all the senior sect executives present, apart from the Precious Tree Sect, all had the same regret of passing over an unparalleled genius.

Even Master Shuiyue had an ugly expression on her face. A slight trace of regret subtly flashed through her heart at that moment. But for someone as headstrong as her, that was the only mark regret left on her.

Xie Tianshu was the happiest one at the moment. “Forefather, Jiang Chen is greatly renowned in the Skylaurel Kingdom. When he rejected the three sects’ invitation previously, I thought he was set on the Purple Sun Sect. It looks like I’d thought too much then.

Forefather, this child has such talent that this is a great fortune of our sect!”

Forefather Thousandleaf nodded, “I will personally mentor this one.”

Of the Precious Tree Sect geniuses, Lan Canghai was the strongest of them, but he hadn’t even been able to enter the top four. This was quite awkward for the Precious Tree Sect.

And now, Thousandleaf had found a good seed, an excellent seed who could set the entire Purple Sun Sect on fire. Just look at the Purple Sun Sect now, Shuiyue had been deposed in the earth quadrant, her disciples were either dead or crippled, and even her eldest disciple had betrayed the sect!

When it came down to it, wasn’t the source of all this Jiang Chen?

Of course, not all Precious Tree Sect members were happy. Take esteemed elder Iron Long standing next to Xie Tianshu for instance, his emotions were beyond despair at this moment.

He hadn’t thought that the secular genius would be Jiang Chen. Now how would the Iron family regain the upper hand and vindication in their grudge with Jiang Chen?

His mouth was full of a bitter taste particularly when he heard that forefather Thousandleaf say that he would concentrate on

mentoring Jiang Chen. His own direct grandson, Iron Dazhi, had been eliminated from the final sixteen.

With this contrast, Iron Long was even of the mind to ram his head against a wall.

A hubbub grew at the scene. The Myriad Spirit Sect and Flowing Wind Sect felt quite saddened about losing such a genius, and quite jealous of the Precious Tree sect.

However, their thoughts were actually in accordance in that it was still a good thing since the secular genius hadn't entered the Purple Sun Sect.

If he'd entered that sect, then it would've been adding wings to a tiger, and there would no longer be any room for the geniuses from the other sects.

Tang Hong excitedly drew close to Jiang Chen and admired his boss even more.

"Boss, I've heard that you once captured that idiot Iron Dazhi. I admired you greatly from the depths of my heart then. Haha, I hadn't thought that we'd become peers!"

Liu Wencai wasn't envious. He knew that the Myriad Spirit Sect wasn't the place for boss. Besides, from the contents of the scroll Jiang Chen had given him, his sect may not even be worthy of boss!

“Boss has joined the Precious Tree Sect possibly because he needs its resources?”

Jiang Chen was the sixth from last to take his place. The remaining five were all the top geniuses of their sects. There was naturally no reason to defect to the other sects.

Lian Canghai chose the Precious Tree Sect, Shi Yunyun the Flowing Wind Sect, and Luo Xi the Myriad Spirit Sect. Lei Gangyang and Long Juxue returned to the Purple Sun Sect.

Lei Gangyang’s heart had indeed wavered when Ceng Shi called upon him earlier. Forefather Sunchaser had privately warned him and promised him quite a few conditions before being certain this genius’ decision.

The selection was over in this regard. Apart from the unexpected factor of Ceng Shi, the greatest unknown Jiang Chen had landed with the Precious Tree Sect, making this sect the greatest winner in the end.

Even though they’d lost Iron Dazhi’s slot, they’d gained a secular genius instead. It could be said that the Precious Tree Sect had come into a stroke of fortune due to their disaster.

Chapter 399: The Ranking Battles

In a secluded corner of the sky quadrant, not too far away.

Elder Shun witnessed all of what had transpired in the sky quadrant. The moment that Jiang Chen had ripped off his mask, a look that this result was in accordance with his expectations appeared on his face.

“Huang’er, I’ve discovered that old man Qian Ji’s divination seems to be more and more the real deal. Jiang Chen is very likely to be the fated person in his divination. Exactly as what I’d thought, Jiang Chen has chosen the Precious Tree Sect. His mind is not a simple one indeed.”

Huang’er’s limpid eyes moved slightly as she walked up gracefully with the posture of a refined lotus.

“Elder Shun, you’ve been observing this person from the shadows. Why don’t you just go to him?” Huang’er was also slightly curious about Elder Shun’s intentions.

“Haha, I will go to him, but the timing is not yet right. Huang’er, try putting yourself in his shoes, if you were a cultivator from a secular kingdom, and an enormous being obviously several times stronger than you suddenly came to you, asking you to diagnose an illness—would you agree, even if you were skilled with medicine?”

Elder Shun smiled faintly, the light of wisdom dancing in his eyes.

Huang’er’s eyelashes fluttered as a trace of understanding appeared in a smile on her face with unparalleled beauty.

“Huang’er understands.”

Elder Shun smiled, “I’ve observed him and he is greatly principled. Going at it in a brusque and hard manner will never do. This is why I saved him at the Second Crossing, so that he would remember my favor and slowly accept us. Jiang Chen is one who feels gratitude. If we leave a good impression on him and strike up a good relationship, then he certainly won’t sit idly by. If I hold my identity over him and use my strength to suppress him, it might actually backfire, given his personality. Even if he agrees, he might not act wholeheartedly.”

One had to say, Elder Shun had sharp insight into human nature.

To make an analogy, this was as if someone of the royal household suddenly ran into a commoner’s house and asked the civilian to cure his ailment.

The commoner would absolutely harbor all sorts of suspicions and be afraid of being held liable for risk. They’d certainly think of an excuse to avoid this.

Once Elder Shun used his identity to compel Jiang Chen and caused him to feel very reluctant, then all would be truly over then.

Elder Shun had absolute power, but he didn't have absolute guarantee in controlling Jiang Chen and making him submit. And with Elder Shun's personality, he didn't want to bully anyone.

The most important thing was, he couldn't risk it.

If Jiang Chen was someone who would rather die than give in and didn't respond well to tough tactics, then everything would be beyond repair.

Therefore, Elder Shun had been observing Jiang Chen from the shadows, biding his time. He too wanted to take another step forward and verify whether old man Qian Ji's divination would be fulfilled by Jiang Chen.

After seeing the events of today, Elder Shun finally had more than ninety percent certain of it.

He was now considering on how best to approach Jiang Chen in a manner that wouldn't lead to contradiction, and how to entice him to act on their behalf with greatest effort.

Elder Shun knew that the difference was great when a healer didn't exert themselves to fullest effort.

……

The final sixteen had been settled in the sky quadrant.

What followed next was the ranking of the final sixteen.

“Everyone, although you have your own places, but it’s said that there is no runner up in martial dao. A ranking of the strongest must be determined amongst your martial dao geniuses. Therefore, the ranking matches to commence next are equally important. Who can ascend to the apex of the sixteen kingdom alliance? Who will reign over the other geniuses? Who will lead the future of the sixteen kingdoms?”

“Now, you have the opportunity to prove yourselves in the rings. Bring out all your potential and strength, your enthusiasm and courage, and unleash yourselves in the ring!”

Sunchaser’s words had an unstoppable momentum, with a thick sense of the intent to kill within them.

It was obvious that he wanted to regain all the face he’d lost when Ceng Shi had betrayed him. He wished to reform the Purple Sun Sect’s dignity through the ranking matches!

With the two great insurance factors of Long Juxue and Lei Gangyang, he would definitely be able to suppress all the geniuses and sweep them all.

Forefather Sunchaser’s demeanor was awe inspiring, but the cultivators all had their own plans. It was obvious that they

weren't going to boil with enthusiasm just with a few words from forefather Sunchaser and forget all about their own plans.

Everyone had their own paths for their path of martial dao.

However, they weren't exactly opposed to the idea of ranking battles.

Aside from the Purple Sun Sect, the one who was most looking forward to this was Jiang Chen.

The rules of the ranking battles were the same as the rules from before.

Number one would match up against number sixteen, two and fifteen, and so on and so forth.

The rankings were the ones previously determined in the selection.

Therefore, Liu Wencai was ranked number sixteen, and his opponent was Long Juxue.

Second place Lei Gangyang would be facing off against his peer Luo Huang.

Third place Luo Xi's opponent was Luo Shuihan of the Flowing Wind Sect.

……

Jiang Chen would be facing off against a Myriad Spirit Sect disciple.

Although Liu Wencai's potential had been excavated, his starting point was far less than Long Juxue's. So although he didn't let Long Juxue easily win this match, he didn't give her too much of a challenge either.

Ninelion also kept his eye on this match, obviously on his guard against Long Juxue dealing a fatal blow to Liu Wencai.

She did indeed have this intention, but Liu Wencai was quite smart and never gave her the chance to land a killing blow. When he knew full well that he couldn't win out against his foe, he conceded the match with a dashing grace.

Jiang Chen also easily took home the victory for his match. The Myriad Spirit Sect disciple's strength was alright, but far inferior to Liu Wencai or Tang Hong's.

Jiang Chen also felt that this outcome was a bit of a pity for Liu Wencai. If he hadn't met with Long Juxue, he absolutely would've had a chance to take another step forward.

The most fascinating match of this round was eighth place Ceng Shi and ninth place Tang Hong.

Having just defected to the venerated Icemist, Ceng Shi was of obvious mind to display his potential and strength. The two of them battled until they sank into utter darkness and chaos, but a victor still hadn't been determined when time was called.

Finally, whoever held the advantage during the fight was used to determine the victor. With Tang Hong's domineering style of fighting, he naturally held a bit more of the upper hand.

Ceng Shi lost the match with resignation, but won the ratification of his peers in the Flowing Wind Sect as a result.

After all, even first genius Shi Yunyun in the Flowing Wind Sect admitted honestly that if she met Tang Hong, she might not have been able to win.

This was because some changes had occurred in Tang Hong's body. These changes had caused his strength to increase explosively in the last three months.

After the first round, the top eight made it into the upper half, and the lower eight was assigned to the bottom half to continue and fight for a ranking.

The top eight were Long Juxue, Lei Gangyang, Luo Xi, Shi Yunyun, Lian Canghai, Jiang Chen, Xie Yufan, and Tang Hong.

The Precious Tree Sect became the greatest winner all of a

sudden.

The Purple Sun Sect had held the absolute advantage in the list of the final sixteen, as they'd had five spots.

After a round of placements, there were only two of them in the top eight, but four from the Precious Tree Sect.

That left one each for the Myriad Spirit Sect and Flowing Wind Sect.

Long Juxue's opponent in the second round was Tang Hong.

Jiang Chen's was now Luo Xi of the Myriad Spirit Sect.

As his sect's top genius, Luo Xi had held the title without a doubt before Liu Wencai's appearance. He was at the peak of the sixth level spirit realm and was only a step away from setting foot into the sky spirit realm.

This kind of opponent was indeed the strongest Jiang Chen had met so far.

However, it was Luo Xi's unlucky day to run into Jiang Chen. They were both a step away from the sky spirit realm, but Jiang Chen firmly suppressed him no matter in every aspect.

Therefore, when the battle commenced, even though Luo Xi used

all of his trump cards and deployed his fighting strength to its utmost, he was still unable to defeat Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen defeated Luo Xi without having to call upon his trump cards.

However, he was so strong that Jiang Chen was almost forced to do so.

As for Tang Hong, although he was brave and fierce, he didn't pose too much of a threat to Long Juxue. Rather, her azure phoenix freezing qi sealed off his blood vessels and almost took his life.

It was a good thing that forefather Thousandleaf was present to render timely aid.

When he saw Tang Hong injured thus by Long Juxue, Jiang Chen was also greatly incensed. He knew that this was Long Juxue demonstrating her might and prowess to him.

"Long Juxue, I'll let you strut for another two days." Unbounded killing intent surged in Jiang Chen's heart.

Lei Gangyang and Shi Yunyun also triumphed over their opponents in the other two matches.

In this way, apart from Jiang Chen taking out Luo Xi, the four great geniuses ranked in the top four all made it to the semi finals.

However, the greater picture was quite apparent now. Long Juxue and Lei Ganging were both of the sky spirit realm, whereas Shi Yunyun and Jiang Chen were peak of the sixth level spirit realm.

Therefore, everyone felt that the fight for champion would fall between the two Purple Sun Sect geniuses.

In the semi finals, Shi Yunyun would be of no threat to Long Juxue.

Whereas Jiang Chen wasn't favored to win out over Lei Gangyang either. Although Jiang Chen had had that one experience in resisting Lei Gangyang, he'd left promptly thereafter.

In the eyes of the outside world, Jiang Chen still failed to cross over into the sky spirit realm in the end, so his chances of victory in this match were scant.

"Gangyang, I hope Ceng Shi's matter hasn't casted a shadow over you. You must try your best and suppress that perverse animal Jiang Chen." Forefather Sunchaser warned.

Lei Gangyang nodded, a frightful battle intent shining out of his eyes. "Don't worry forefather, I have my sights set on the champion. Jiang Chen is just a stepping stone on my path of martial dao. I will certainly stride over him and battle fairly and openly with junior sister Long to determine who is the better!"

There were two layers of meaning to Lei Gangyang's words. One in that he was respecting old monster Sunchaser's words and would seek to kill Jiang Chen with all his might, the second that he was also expressing his stance that I, Lei Gangyang, will not hand over the position of boss without a fight. I will fight openly and fairly with Long Juxue to determine who is the best amongst us.

This also meant that I hope you senior executives won't be biased towards Long Juxue!

The birth of the semi-finalists also meant that the ranking battles were proceeding to the most delightful stages. Fascinating fights continued without end, and the last question was—would Long Juxue overcome all and successfully ascend to the top? Or will others turn by the tide through heroic efforts and halt her rise?

In terms of the general sentiment, whether open discussions or hushed whispers, almost all were favoring Long Juxue with her innate constitution.

Chapter 400: Facing Off Against Lei Gangyang, Every Blow Connects Solidly

In an enormous ring of the main square of the sky quadrant.

The first match of the semifinals was about to begin. The two sides were Lei Gangyang from the Purple Sun Sect, one who used to be first in the sky quadrant, and Jiang Chen the secular genius.

This was the semifinal match that had a more uncertain outcome of the two.

It was almost certain that no unexpected results would come from the other of Shi Yunyun and Long Juxue.

Although Jiang Chen was also challenging someone ranked higher than him, he had at least barged into the meeting of the most high before and exchanged two blows with Lei Gangyang, not ending up in a disadvantaged position at all.

This was why the outside world was leaving a bit of confidence for Jiang Chen.

If they had to pick one of the semifinal matches that held a bit more suspense about the outcome, theirs was the one. Jiang Chen seemed more likely than Shi Yunyun to create a miracle, no matter from what angle they looked at things from.

Lei Gangyang was bulky and tall, wearing golden armor and a yellow robe, appearing quite ferocious. His bald headed styling made him appear even more fierce.

His facial features were as sharply defined as if a blade had carved them all out. If it wasn't for Long Juxue's strong rise, Lei Gangyang was indeed worthy of shouldering the title of the foremost amongst the younger generation of the four great sects.

"Jiang Chen, I admit that your rise was quite sudden, and you've created a legend of grass roots defying the heavens. However, this myth ends here today."

Lei Gangyang was full of a domineering air and an irrefutable dignity.

Jiang Chen smiled faintly, "That's what every opponent thought before they met me in the ring. And yet, I still stand in the ring."

"Hmph, that's because they're incompetent!"

Lei Gangyang emitted a long whistle as the spirit qi around his body began to come vigorously alive. Red mist suffused the air, encircling the surroundings like an ocean of fire.

Lei Gangyang seemed to be the phoenix being reborn in the fiery seas.

"Jiang Chen, I forgot to tell you, I was born with soul of fire and

thunder essence. My potential and talents aren't much less than an innate constitution. My dao heart is strong, and the champion of the ranking battles will surely be mine. You are just a stepping stone on my path as a genius!"

"A stepping stone?" The corner of Jiang Chen's mouth lifted in a cold smile. "My thoughts are the same as yours. You, Lei Gangyang, are just a stepping stone to me brutally killing that b*tch Long Juxue. It's your bad luck to meet me!"

Neither of them wanted to allow the other the final word as their manners were both awe inspiring, like two divine weapons with their edges unsheathed meeting in the ring.

Every word and movement at this time was full of meaning.

What seemed like bickering was actually a part of creating an atmosphere.

Both of them were using words to heighten their bearing and suppress the other.

It was a pity though that after probing each other, they realized that they were unable to control the situation.

Lei Gangyang smiled expansively. "Jiang Chen, I rather underestimated you. Since I can't suppress you with my bearing, then let's return to the basics of martial dao and use our strength to determine the better!"

“Hmph, as you wish.” Jiang Chen refused to give ground. “Lei Gangyang, I’ll let you take three free shots.”

“How arrogant!” Lei Gangyang’s eyebrow arched.

“If three moves aren’t enough, then take ten!” Jiang Chen laughed faintly.

Lei Gangyang’s expression darkened, “Jiang Chen, if you think you can provoke me with words, then you’re simply too naive!”

“Why would I need to provoke with words in order to win?”

Jiang Chen crossed his hands in front of him, a regal bearing about him and his feet firmly planted into the ground. He stood there as if a mountain, giving Lei Gangyang the feeling that he was indestructible.

“If that’s the case, then take my punch!”

When Lei Gangyang saw Jiang Chen’s dismissive attitude, rage grew in his heart as he punched out with a single hand and broke through the air with the sound of thunder.

After their exchange at the meeting of the most high, Lei Gangyang had been quite dejected. He’d attacked Jiang Chen from below and had been disadvantaged to begin with.

But now that they were fighting fairly in the ring, he didn't believe that Jiang Chen could rely on trickery any longer!

This punch encompassed the sounds of wind and thunder and seemed to descend as the burning sun from the heavens, bringing with it high temperatures, as if it would set the very air on fire like a volcano eruption.

Those watching beneath the elevated ring all cried out with astonishment.

"It's the Rushing Solar Thunderpalm!"

"The sound of wind and thunder, the depiction of the flaring sun. This Rushing Solar Thunderpalm is one of the top five martial techniques of the purple Sun Sect. Combined with Lei Gangyang's soul of fire and thunder essence, this is practically a technique tailor made for him!"

"He's employing one of his ultimate moves as soon as he acted, it looks like Lei Gangyang wants to quickly settle the match."

"Absolutely, Lei Gangyang has his sights set on the championship. His next opponent is Long Juxue, so wrapping this one up as fast as possible is for the best. Becoming overly tangled and wasting spirit power will only harm the championship battle.

"Mm, what a pity for this secular genius. If his semifinal

opponent had been Shi Yunyun, then he might've had a chance to make it into the finals."

"Hmph, it's already ludicrous enough that he made it to this step. If he makes it into the finals, then where would the face of the sect geniuses of our generation be?"

"Indeed! If Long Juxue and Lei Gangyang meet in the finals, then the Purple Sun Sect is still the greatest winner in the end."

Those observing the match still placed the odds of victory on Lei Gangyang.

After all, Lei Gangyang was in the sky spirit realm and had been the undisputed top genius of the sky quadrant before the rise of Long Juxue. No one had been able to shake him from his position.

Lei Gangyang was someone who'd once gathered all the fortunes of Purple Sun Sect.

Even Tang Hong and Liu Wencai was inwardly nervous when they saw Lei Gangyang's momentum. They all believed in Jiang Chen, but when they saw Lei Gangyang's demeanor, they couldn't help but break out in a cold sweat for their boss.

Forefather Thousandleaf's gaze flashed with a piercing gleam, as a trace of nervousness actually grew within him when he stared at the ring.

Indeed, the sudden appearance of this genius and his desire to join the Precious Tree Sect had made the forefather feel that he'd suddenly received an enormous treasure.

Jiang Chen was the face of the Precious Tree Sect and its precious.

When he saw Lei Gangyang's obvious momentum in wanting to swiftly resolve this battle, he couldn't help but wonder, can Jiang Chen withstand this blow?

Those whose hearts tilted towards Jiang Chen were all worried for him.

Only Jiang Chen stood in the ring as immovable as a mountain. His figure was still that dashing, that calm, as if this mighty attack was as intangible as the floating clouds in his eyes.

"Matching off with boxing techniques, are we?"

Jiang Chen's eyes suddenly widened as they shot out beams of splendor.

His hands drew an arc as boundless meaning behind boxing techniques surged to the fore.

He huffed out lightly as he took a step forward, throwing his own punch forward.

This punch was as if a hundred flowers in full bloom, the feeling of spring in the air.

This punch was also as if the sudden arrival of autumn's frost, all living things withering and dying.

The wondrous changes of this punch flabbergasted onlookers. Was there such a marvelous boxing technique in this world?

Two different kinds of meaning could be realized in one punch?

In actuality, Jiang Chen's single punch was two. He'd punched out so quickly that two looked like one punch. One of them was out in the open, and the other in the shadows. This happened to perfectly display the cycle of blooming and wilting in the Divine Aeons Fist, a dictum of yin and yang, fire and water.

Bam bam bam bam!

Continual collisions rang throughout the ring.

Spirit power with impressive momentum crashed into each other, giving rise to numerous wild ripples, as if wanting to flip the entire ring.

This ripped apart the atmosphere created by the Dashing Solar Thunderpalm that had formed about the ring.

All was normal again.

Jiang Chen had been the one to react to this punch, but had actually managed to break through Lei Gangyang's ferocious boxing aura.

That made those watching beneath the ring all suck in a breath of shock.

Even forefather Sunchaser's suddenly froze. He'd been calm all along, but his eyes shot out shock at this moment. When he saw Lei Gangyang utilize his strongest boxing skill, he'd understood the intention behind his move.

But Jiang Chen's performance next completely stunned him.

Jiang Chen had met punch with punch and used a profound, mysterious boxing meaning to disperse the strong blow of the Dashing Solar Thunderpalm.

How... how was this possible?

Everyone knew that this move was as if the blazing sun, accompanied by wind and thunder. Anyone blind enough to use their physical body to take the blow would be crippled with whatever body part they used.

The momentum of the wind and thunder was enough to burn the opponent's arm, or even their entire body to a crisp.

Therefore, when Jiang Chen had punched out, those watching were all sweating profusely, thinking that Jiang Chen was about to be done for.

Even forefather Thousandleaf stood up nervously in that moment.

But after the punches had clashed together, Lei Gangyang's momentum was completely dispersed.

"Whew!" Thousandleaf's bottom hit the chair again, crazed delight in his eyes. He knew that the Precious Tree Sect had picked up a true treasure this time.

Even Lei Gangyang's ultimate move could do nothing against Jiang Chen. Judging from the latter's posture, he didn't even want to lose in terms of his manner. He hadn't used any fancy defenses, but had openly and fairly fought back an eye for an eye.

One had to know that amongst the younger generation of the four great sect, when it came to physical combat, even Long Juxue likely didn't want to go head to head against Lei Gangyang.

But Jiang Chen had did it!

Ninelion sighed with dejection and spoke mournfully, "Ole

Thousandleaf, you've really picked up a treasure this time. Pity me, an old man, who recruited this genius with so much sincerity! You just sat there and received such a treasure!"

Venerated Icemist also sighed ruefully, "I have to modify my previous opinions. Jiang Chen absolutely can fight against Lei Gangyang, and his odds of victory are fifty fifty."

The two venerated origin realm forefathers had spoken at the same time, revising their opinions of Jiang Chen upwards.

This ticked off Sunchaser, who snorted coldly. "Is there a need to praise Jiang Chen up to the heavens after one punch? Lei Gangyang is so strong that he's only just started to reveal his talents , like the tip of an iceberg."

Thousandleaf was one of sparse words. He didn't like to flap his lips and spar verbally.

Ninelion laughed coldly, "You speak like Jiang Chen's revealed all of the iceberg."

Icemist also laughed, "Indeed, Daoist Sunchaser, it can be seen that Jiang Chen hasn't used his trump cards either."

Sunchaser was greatly incensed as he fixed a stern glare at the ring, his eyes full of an unconcealed killing intent.

Chapter 401: Eastern Amethyst Qi, Dance Of The Lightning And Thunder Snakes

Lei Gangyang was also rather surprised that Jiang Chen had so casually taken his blow. He was apoplectic with rage, but his fighting spirit only grew.

He let out a long whistle, “The first punch was the appetizer, try taking another ten of my blows!”

When his whistle sounded, the skies and earth changed color as the sun and moon faded into darkness.

Lei Gangyang’s hands crossed as his boxing aura surged. Countless boxing shadows suddenly erupted like geysers. An incandescent firestorm immolated the skies, and fiery clouds fell helplessly to the ground, akin to a blazing meteor shower.

Such a concentrated boxing aura seemed to seal off all avenues of retreat.

Jiang Chen’s face was calm even in the face of such a sight. No dust marred the pristine, mirror-like state of his heart.

He deployed God’s Eye to the maximum and completely activated Psychic’s Head. In but a second, Jiang Chen had seen through the true meaning of the boxing shadows that covered the sky.

Jiang Chen stepped out, his arm a blur as he rapidly punched several times.

Bam! Bam! Bam!

Every boxing shadow met by Jiang Chen's fists was obliterated as if they were extinguished candles. In an instant, all of the fiery boxing shadows were each countered with a single punch and were scattered into bits, dissolving listlessly in the wind.

"I did as I said, I let you have ten moves."

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. His smile hadn't wavered the entire time. It just as leisurely and calm as the beginning.

Lei Gangyang was truly a bit depressed this time.

That move had been the strongest of his Rushing Solar Thunderpalm. It materialized boxing aura and sealed off space. Once enclosed, the opponent would be locked at a certain range and first vibrated to death by the boxing aura, then cooked to a crisp by the power of thunder and lightning, and finally burnt to ashes by fire essence power.

However, the scene that he'd envisioned didn't come to pass.

His opponent had met punch with punch and suppressed him with boxing techniques, breaking apart the Rushing Solar Thunderpalm he was so proud of.

Even someone as confident as Lei Gangyang felt his self-assurance crumble.

This was one of his vaunted ultimate moves! Although it wasn't quite a trump card, even Long Juxue wouldn't dare face this kind of immense physical attack head on.

He truly hadn't thought that this damned secular genius would thoroughly break his boxing technique with his own punches.

In fact, it wasn't that Lei Gangyang was too weak, or that Rushing Solar Thunderpalm was too low a grade, but that Jiang Chen had just thoroughly surpassed Lei Gangyang no matter what mysteries he was using.

The Rushing Solar Thunderpalm was part of Lei Gangyang's soul of fire and thunder essence.

One was the power of the blazing sun, the other the power of thunder and lightning.

But Jiang Chen's defenses completely ignored these additional effects. How could the power of the blazing sun break through the defense of the Redscaled Firelizard? Not only did it not harm Jiang Chen, but most of it had ended up being absorbed.

Jiang Chen might've been afraid of the power of thunder and lightning a few months ago, but ever since he'd refined a branch of

the Thundercloud Tree, Jiang Chen's body had become impervious to normal thunder and lightning attacks.

Therefore, all these additional effects were completely nonexistent to Jiang Chen, only the physical force behind the punch was left.

How much damage could this kind of physical attack inflict on Jiang Chen?

When she saw the rapidly deteriorating situation in the ring, even Long Juxue's forehead creased slightly. All along, she'd resolutely felt that her innate constitution would allow her to become a dragon returning to the sea or a tiger returning to the woods after she'd entered the sect. She was convinced that at that point, she would be able to fling everyone behind her, shooting to the skies with a speed that left them all dumbstruck.

As for Jiang Chen, she thought even less of him. He had no sect resources to rely on, and even if he'd made some progress, he would never be enough to threaten her at all. He didn't even have the right to force her to take personal action against him.

But now, in this moment, she realized that she'd been wrong, horribly, awfully, wrong.

If it He Yan's death and Hai Tian being crippled had caused no emotional ripple in Long Juxue, then Chu Xinghan's loss was enough to raise an eyebrow in surprise.

But in today's match, when Jiang Chen had been able to break through Lei Gangyang's boxing technique with unprecedented momentum, even Long Juxue had to admit that she likely couldn't recreate that feat. She was well aware of how invincible Lei Gangyang's physical body was in close combat.

If it was fist on fist, she would lose quite horribly.

But Jiang Chen had thoroughly suppressed Lei Gangyang!

Didn't this mean that Jiang Chen's physical body's capabilities were much stronger than Lei Gangyang's?

Long Juxue shelved her previous haughtiness and finally began to truly consider this question. She'd finally recognized that Jiang Chen hadn't just been blustering when he'd said he was going to challenge her.

He'd come prepared for the purpose of determining who was the better in the ring!

"Jiang Chen, you filthy swine, I've rather underestimated you. Good. It would've been boring for me to torture you to death if you hadn't the slightest bit of strength. The stronger you are, the more excited I'll be when I kill you. However, I'd like to see how you'll make it past Lei Gangyang in this match!"

Long Juxue was well aware of Lei Gangyang's strength. The Rushing Solar Thunderpalm was only one of his techniques. As the

first ranked genius within the sect, he naturally had many more trump cards.

Indeed, on the heels of his white-hot rage, a hint of an icy smile appeared on Lei Gangyang's lips. He grasped with both hands as a black broadsword appeared in his hands.

The sword was three fingers wide, with an edge as long as a grown man's arm.

When he grasped this sword, Lei Gangyang's entire aura exploded two fold.

When he circulated his spirit power, purple ripples immediately appeared around the black sword. As if they were countless little purple snakes, they entwined and wove around the black broadsword.

The purple electric snakes were lifelike, seemingly capable of coming to life any second. As they weaved around the broadsword, their numbers steadily grew, making one's scalp tingle with numbness.

"Jiang Chen, your boxing techniques are superb, but I'd like to see how you'll break through the judgement of my Sword of Raging Thunder!"

Lei Gangyang was truly angry this time. He was using one of his trump weapons.

The aura of this sword seemed to be one of great perfection. No flaws could be seen, and just one look was enough to give one the feeling that the cultivator in front of them was swallowing the heavens.

“Sword of Raging Thunder? A fully nine times refined spirit weapon!”

“Tsk tsk, he’s the former first ranked of the Purple Sun Sect alright! A fully refined spirit weapon, that’s enough to annihilate all spirit level weapons in one second!”

“This Jiang Chen actually forced Lei Gangyang to use his trump card, his divine weapon! He’s not simple alright. Even if he loses, he has enough to be proud of.”

“Heh heh, why do I feel that even though Lei Gangyang has brought out his trump card, he still might not win? Haven’t you discovered that the further Jiang Chen goes in the selection, the more mysterious he becomes? There seems to be no limit to this secular genius!”

Indeed, those observing the match were all greatly moved.

Up until now, no one had seen Jiang Chen demonstrate his limit.

Where was his limit? What were his trump cards?

No one, not even a single person, knew.

That a cultivator was capable of fighting to this point, but had yet to reveal his trump cards was the scariest!

Sunchaser's gaze was sinister. Lei Gangyang, ah Lei Gangyang. Now that you've used your trump card, the Sword of Raging Thunder, you may not be a worthy opponent for Long Juxue in the finals. However, to be able to stop Jiang Chen, even if you end up grievously injured, that will still count as an unparalleled accomplishment.

Lei Gangyang's thoughts weren't quite so complicated at the moment, all he wanted was to win!

Pfft!

Jagged rifts appeared in the air as he swung the black broadsword. It was as if he had fractured the very air, causing crack after crack to appear.

The lightning snake flashed and charged towards Jiang Chen.

"A contest of weapons?" Jiang Chen was fearless as one hand cut down with the nameless saber. Instead of retreating, he advanced, leaping forward like a tiger and slashing down viciously.

It was said that one strong expert could win out against ten, whereas one swift move could break through ten thousand

preparations.

Jiang Chen's stroke was both powerful and fast. No matter how strong that Sword of Raging Thunder was, no matter how exquisite its moves, everything paled in front of Jiang Chen's own rhythm.

Indeed, Jiang Chen's martial dao knowledge was at a divine level.

The Sword of Raging Thunder was indeed impressive, and the accompanying technique quite strange and exotic. But with Jiang Chen's Psychic's Head, he'd seen through all of Lei Gangyang's feints.

Therefore, though the momentum of his blade seemed ordinary and flat, it would always appear in the nick of time and dispel the broadsword's movement with ease.

Each stroke was just so perfect, wasting not the slightest jot of strength. Any more would seem a waste, an iota less would be insufficient to defend.

To have such a precise grasp of strength, it was completely due to Jiang Chen's enormous martial dao knowledge and heaven defying comprehension of martial techniques.

However, how would Lei Gangyang know what Jiang Chen's advantages were?

When he saw that his sword techniques all seemed to be within the other's grasp, a frigid chill gripped his heart. He almost suspected that someone had previously revealed the mysteries of his sword technique to Jiang Chen. How else could his opponent counter his every move with such calculated precision?

Indeed, no matter how Lei Gangyang switched his moves, he was always unable to break through the other's defenses. Jiang Chen's posture was always so carefree, so poetic, as if he was noncommittally sparring with Lei Gangyang.

This... was a ludicrous embarrassment!

Lei Gangyang's very lungs wanted to explode with his anger. He never would've thought that his trump cards would result in such an outcome!

"Jiang Chen, die!"

Lei Gangyang was thoroughly incensed. He pointed the Sword of Raging Thunder up at the sky as his golden armor emitted astonishing purple light.

"Eastern Amethyst Qi, Dance of the Thunder and Lightning Snakes!"

The terrifying purple qi were as if dark storm clouds. They continued to gather and then suddenly exploded into countless electric snakes, shooting outwards and filling the air around the

ring.

There were more than ten layers of purple lightning snakes encircling him in the span of a moment.

“Die, Jiang Chen!” Lei Gangyang grimaced in a horrible smile. The mad dance of his sword and the countless purple electric snakes formed an ocean of thunder and lightning. They howled and roared, becoming an enormous field of thunder and lightning and surrounding Jiang Chen within.

“No!” Thousandleaf suddenly stood up and was about lend a hand.

But how would old monster Sunchaser let him? He suddenly dashed forward and blocked Thousandleaf’s path. “Daoist Thousandleaf, you’ve always been a taciturn one. Why can you suddenly not sit still?”

“You!” Thousandleaf was frantic in his anger. His rage flared. Even with his aloof personality, he was enraged in this this moment.

How could he not tell that Lei Gangyang had hardened his heart to destroy Jiang Chen?

Only someone with power immensely stronger than Lei Gangyang could break through the siege of the lightning snakes!

Chapter 402: An Incomparable Stroke

Tang Hong and Liu Wencai were both gritting their teeth as they tried to subtly shuffle closer to the ring. However, the examiners blocked them heartlessly.

Long Juxue also laughed coldly and shook her head. “Just a clodhopper rolling around in the mud in the end, nothing presentable. He can only rest in pieces when he meets a true opponent.”

It was obvious that Long Juxue had pronounced Jiang Chen’s death sentence in her heart.

Lei Gangyang leered, obviously feeling victory close at hand. His smile curled into one that brimmed with victory’s hubris.

However—

Jiang Chen’s figure stood alone and proud amidst the vortex formed by the lightning snakes. Firm and upright, his expression remained serene beneath the skies awash with lightning snakes. It seemed more like he was standing under a faint shower of rain.

His blade gently lifted as he pointed at the sky.

In the next instant, as if issued a strange yet urgent summons, the lightning snakes metamorphosed into arcs of purple current, coalescing on the tip of the blade.

As they continued to endlessly converge on the blade, the tip of the blade magically absorbed all of the lightning snakes with seemingly no limit.

In but a breath, the sea of vicious lightning snakes that had carpeted the sky had all been sucked in by Jiang Chen's nameless saber.

Jiang Chen's eyes were as bright as the stars as they shot out a cold, cutting light. The tip of his blade descended to point at Lei Gangyang, his tone as cool as always, "Any more final moves?"

Lightning snakes?

Jiang Chen had refined the Thundercloud Tree into his body. He was long since immune to thunder and lightning. More, his past life provided numerous methods to control either of them. Although the purple lightning seemed impressive and magnificent, in the end, it had only been produced by a seventh level spirit realm. Manipulating it was nothing more than a slight exertion for Jiang Chen.

What?

Lei Gangyang's expression drastically changed. The lightning and thunder snakes that he was so proud of had been taken care of so easily, just like that!

This Jiang Chen…

Is he human?!

No matter how calm or confident Lei Gangyang was, he couldn't help but panic at that moment.

The moves he'd held the most confidence in had been broken by his opponent, and in a most nonchalant and thorough manner at that.

"Lei Gangyang, I said I'd let you have ten moves. It's been more than that. Now you take one of mine!"

The nameless treasured blade seemed to be a vicious beast from ancient times who had roused from its slumber. It immediately became one with Jiang Chen, and almost instantly formed an astonishingly powerful aura.

"Ultimate form of the Vast Ocean Current Splitter—Withering Ocean!"

This was a move in which the seas changed into mulberry trees and back again, a move in which oceans dried up and rocks disintegrated.

The mysteries of this strike had surpassed the cycle of reincarnation, surpassed eras, and was one that strode over dimensions to arrive from ancient times.

This blade seemed destined to cleave the river of time, becoming immortalized in eternity.

At that moment, all of the true meaning, essence, and inspiration behind the Vast Ocean Current Splitter appeared within his mind and transformed into this unparalleled strike. It was truly a strike that had never been seen before.

When the blade swung down, it seemed to be able to cleave through age, the secular world, through vast oceans, through everything.

Silence reigned beneath the ring.

Even the forefathers were caught in the mysteries of this strike.

They didn't understand it, nor could they see through it. The profound mysteries of this stroke had completely surpassed their understanding of blade techniques and was indeed out of the comprehension of the sixteen kingdoms.

Pfft!

This was a technique that Jiang Chen had crafted from the essence of himself since he'd reincarnated, directly stripping away all of Lei Gangyan's thoughts.

Lei Gangyang's mental state had already crumbled even before the blade descended.

He stood there, as dumb as a block of wood, displaying no reaction whatsoever.

Pfft!

When the blade light entered his body, it was as if it'd disappeared into the air.

As the beam of light shot into Lei Gangyang, a thought raced through Jiang Chen's mind. He slightly restrained his blade's momentum. The blade light followed his will, dissipating just before it sheared away Lei Gangyang's life.

Pfft!

The light broke through Lei Gangyang's skin, and blood splattered everywhere.

Lei Gangyang trembled, the light of incredulous disbelief clear in his eyes. His thoughts had already begun to dwell on death at that moment. He'd thought that his death was an inescapable fact.

He hadn't thought that Jiang Chen's strike would suddenly halt, as if he'd yanked on the reins just before the horse had gone over the cliff, leaving him a breath of life. Jiang Chen had dragged Lei Gangyang back from the jaws of death.

Clearly, it wasn't that Jiang Chen was incapable of killing him, but that he had shown mercy.

Lei Gangyang stood there insensate, a bitter taste suffusing his mouth. His eyes held nary a hint of courage or hatred.

Although he was domineering, even though he had a strong personality and was arrogant, he wasn't an idiot. He was well aware that if Jiang Chen hadn't had a passing kind thought, he would've long since been destroyed by the blade light.

That strike had been unfathomable, like an immortal from the heavens or ancient times. He'd neither been unable to understand nor defend against it.

Even if he could repeat that moment ten times, he would only reach the same conclusion—death!

"Why didn't you kill me?" Ruefulness pooled within Lei Gangyang's eyes.

"Cultivation is difficult. Go carefully and live the rest of your life."

Jiang Chen responded indifferently. He had a clear understanding in his heart right now. The door to his martial dao had suddenly cracked open when he'd hauled back on the reins of his dominating strike.

Comprehension had descended upon him when he held the decision of life and death over his opponent.

He had no blood feud or deep seated hatred with Lei Gangyang, nor a grudge that would not find satisfaction until one side died.

Killing him would only need one strike.

But not killing him meant that Lei Gangyang would never again be able to threaten Jiang Chen in this life.

Therefore, his blade had already surpassed the mere level of condemning his opponent to death.

After the silence, cheers and the applause crashed down on the stage like the tides.

It was obvious that the audience had been thoroughly conquered by Jiang Chen's bearing at that moment. Even Sunchaser's face was frozen. He was speechless even as emotion churned in his heart.

The other had already shown mercy and not killed his sect's genius. What else could he say?

Thousandleaf's tensed body immediately relaxed. Joy and delight blossomed on his face like a withered tree welcoming the spring.

“Genius, genius… this is the genius that our four sects have been searching long and hard for! To think that the true genius had been overlooked in the secular world. Dust covered the bright pearl, and true gold was buried in the sand. This was our fault!” Ninelion heaved quite a sigh.

“I actually couldn’t see through that strike. If this young man had been born in the sects to begin with, that really would’ve been…” Icemist didn’t know what words to use as she spoke. She’d realized that all words seemed meaningless in the face of Jiang Chen’s performance.

Astonishment danced in Long Juxue’s beautiful eyes. It was apparent that she too had been unable to see fully through Jiang Chen’s blade.

An uncontrollable palpitation suddenly seized her heart.

“Jiang Chen… it looks like I must thoroughly slaughter you in the final match. Otherwise, with your perverted momentum, you might actually be able to threaten me slightly in the future!”

A cold light flashed through Long Juxue’s eyes as her gaze finally held a true killing intent.

She’d truly felt a sliver of danger this time. It was the first time that she had grown conscious of the fact that someone she’d always looked down on might actually become a threat to her.

Beneath the stage, Tang Hong and Liu Wencai was dancing a jig of joy, shouting excitedly as they vented the emotions in their heart, sincerely happy for Jiang Chen.

“The next match is Long Juxue against Shi Yunyun.”

The examiner’s announcement suppressed all shock and disturbances from the audience.

When Jiang Chen walked down from the ring, all those who’d commented on him, looked unfavorably upon him, or dismissed him now gazed at him with respect. They parted automatically, afraid to even come in contact with his aura.

This unfathomable genius had used his strength to utterly silence all the hubbub. Respect, veneration, and even fear filled the void instead.

“Good going, boss!” Tang Hong laughed heartily and walked up, smashing a fist on Jiang Chen’s shoulder.

“That blow was simply too abstruse.” Liu Wencai also sighed with admiration. “I still wouldn’t know how to evade that strike even after a hundred tries.”

Jiang Chen smiled but didn’t explain anything.

This was an issue of martial dao realm. If one had yet to reach the appropriate realm, then it was a given that they would be unable to see through to the true meaning of the strike and evade it.

The second battle was between Shi Yunyun of the Flowing Wind Sect and Long Juxue of the Purple Sun Sect.

One had to say, Shi Yunyun was rather unlucky to meet an enraged Long Juxue. The latter seemed to want to vent all her hatred of Jiang Chen onto her opponent.

Even though Shi Yunyun employed certain measures at the very beginning, she couldn't hold out before Long Juxue's furious attacks. She couldn't bear the azure phoenix freezing qi at all and quickly lost.

If she hadn't forfeited in time, she likely would've been frozen to death.

When they saw Long Juxue's frankly murderous momentum, the disciples of the four sects all quaked in their hearts, unwilling to even meet her eyes.

Long Juxue's manner was simply too tyrannical.

The presence that emanated from an innate constitution seemed to brand the very heavens and earth with her mark.

"It looks like the final match is destined to be quite gruesome."

“Indeed, fated rivals meeting in the ring. They won’t rest until one dies.”

“Long Juxue is indeed terrifying, can Jiang Chen’s blade techniques break through her azure phoenix freezing qi?”

“It’s going to be difficult! The azure phoenix freezing qi is exceptionally powerful and can freeze over a thousand li. It can even freeze souls! Even though Jiang Chen is a genius, he’d dead for sure.”

It was obvious that after seeing Long Juxue’s momentum, the candidates beneath the stage had all been unconsciously conquered by her. They felt that her potential was simply too strong, and it was impossible to best her in battle.

Even Icemist couldn’t help but sigh. “The Purple Sun Sect is truly lucky. How nice would it have been had such a good seedling landed in my sect?”

Ninelion had always been contemptuous of the Purple Sun Sect, but even he couldn’t find the notes to sing a different tune when it came to Long Juxue.

Thousandleaf flicked an anxious glance at Jiang Chen. He too was worried when he thought about Jiang Chen and Long Juxue’s grudges.

“Boss, is this damn woman displaying her strength to you?” Tang Hong was ticked off. He and Liu Wencai had both lost to this woman in the ranking battles. He’d even almost been killed by her. He was naturally greatly irritated when she came up.

Liu Wencai’s gaze was also dark as he glanced at Long Juxue. He too felt that this woman was too domineering and insufferably arrogant.

It was rather Jiang Chen who had an indifferent look in his eyes. That half smile yet hovered on the corners of his lips. “Demonstrating her strength? In my eyes, this is her last bout of madness.”

He seemed calm on the surface, but a furious typhoon of killing intent raged in his heart.

Chapter 403: The Duel Between Fated Rivals

The semifinals were over, and two days were once again allotted for the finalists to rest and adjust themselves.

Emotions had to be carefully brewed before a faceoff between experts in this pinnacle match.

Jiang Chen didn't waste the two days. Although he hadn't used the Lotus in his match against Lei Gangyang, he'd comprehended theories he'd never had before in that stroke.

The blow had represented the highest level of power that he was so far able to bring forth.

It had cleaved through the obstacles of Jiang Chen's martial knowledge and heralded him into a new arena.

Jiang Chen had forced new changes and the mentality of unexpected changes in a strike that held sure death.

He'd had a faint comprehension in that moment of life and death, and that understanding had given him a strong premonition that he was about to obtain a completely new breakthrough on his path of martial dao.

Indeed, the mindset of that blow had enabled him to subtly touch the door to the sky spirit realm.

The earth spirit realm, the sky spirit realm.

Although they were but one step away from each other, there was the distance of heaven and earth between them.

The meaning behind that stroke meant that Jiang Chen had comprehended life and death, the heavens and earth.

Boundless martial dao inspiration poured forth once again like carp bounding upstream, giving him the emotion of spontaneous joy.

It was as if endless doors were opening to him, presenting all sorts of new scenes in front of Jiang Chen.

“Indeed, there is a bridge between the heavens and earth. This bridge encompasses all living beings, and controls life and death. The sky spirit realm, the sky spirit realm…”

Many thoughts surfaced in Jiang Chen’s mind at this moment. They gathered together until they formed three radiant, golden words—sky spirit realm.

Indeed, that catalyst that would set everything in motion had finally arrived.

Since refining the Fire Raven King’s core, the accumulation of Jiang Chen’s spirit ocean had reached quite an abundant level and was waiting for the moment to emerge from its cocoon.

Wham!

It was as if Jiang Chen's spirit ocean suddenly broke free of its entrappings and danced through the air like a colorful butterfly. His spirit ocean suddenly expanded by five times, akin to the earth giving birth to the heavens, the vast oceans transforming to mulberry fields, and the stars forming the universe...

Jiang Chen once again had the feeling of touching the heavenly law in this moment.

"The sky spirit realm, I've been waiting for you." Jiang Chen smiled faintly, a smile full of wisdom. He seemed like a heavenly emperor who held all in his grasp in this moment, full of confidence.

As his clear eyes opened and closed, they sparkled with stunning glamor, the light of water and fire, the light of metal, and the light of thunder and lightning.

In that instant, all of the attributes beneath the heavens continuously arose in Jiang Chen's body as if in a cycle of reincarnation. He seemed to be creating a small world.

This was indeed the case, as each cultivator's spirit ocean was a small world, and the cultivator the master of this world.

Jiang Chen thoroughly immersed himself in the atmosphere of

breaking through to the sky spirit realm. He was slowly absorbing the changes, digesting them, and was as comfortable as a dragon frolicking in the waves and surges of the ocean.

He spent the two days completely submerged within this change, completely different from Long Juxue and her enormous racket that had alarmed the sky quadrant and shown off her glory.

In stark contrast, Jiang Chen was the epitome of keeping a low profile.

“Long Juxue... you escaped with your life thanks to a fluke in the battle of the Second Crossing. Let’s see how you escape this time!” A cold light swept through Jiang Chen’s God’s Eye after his breakthrough.

He had absolute confidence that he would trounce Long Juxue in this match!

Breaking through to the sky spirit realm had made his strength and battle strength suddenly surge forward.

When he was at the sixth level realm, his chances of killing Long Juxue was around seventy percent.

Now that he was also at the seventh level spirit realm, he had absolute confidence. What he was considering now was how to suddenly execute a lethal blow so that even Sunchaser would be unable to interfere.

These two days were truly an agony for those waiting for the final match with bated breath.

Although the outside world almost all favored Long Juxue, the match had yet to begin and so there was always a hint of suspense. Who could say that Jiang Chen didn't have another trump card up his sleeve?

Up until now, the feeling that he gave others was an unfathomable one.

On the Precious Tree Sect side, almost all were on Jiang Chen's side apart from the Iron family. They had a sort of anticipation in their hearts, hoping that Jiang Chen would trample Long Juxue and take the championship.

The Precious Tree Sect needed a genius like this.

This was because the situation of the Purple Sun Sect's dominance had lasted for far, far too long in the sixteen kingdom alliance.

Forefather Sunchaser himself was giving a speech on the Purple Sun Sect side.

"You cannot underestimate this fellow. Xue'er, I cannot see through his potential. He's destined to be your rival. If you can overcome this obstacle, then your future will be without limit. If

you are unable to do so, then all your potential is as fleeting as the cloud and winds."

Sunchaser's tone was as stern as it'd ever been.

Long Juxue nodded her head solemnly. "Be at peace forefather, I won't underestimate my enemy."

Sunchaser nodded and didn't say much more. He knew that whatever he said now, even if he repeated it a thousand times, was hollow.

Only the strongest would prevail!

This match would determine who was at the peak of the sixteen kingdoms. The path of a genius could not be blocked.

.....

In the enormous ring.

The last stage of the selection and the last match was finally about to commence.

No one would've thought that those standing at the apex of the younger generation of the sixteen kingdoms would be two from the secular world, and both from that little place called the Eastern Kingdom.

It was quite ironic that all the direct descendants of the four great sects had been stomped underfoot by two ordinary cultivators.

Long Juxue stood in a flowing white dress, her face cold and her presence as radiant as the sun.

“Jiang Chen, I admit that you’re an undefeatable cockroach with an incredible will to live. You must be so proud of your little self to have climbed up, step by step from the secular world. You think you finally have the chance to challenge me, don’t you?”

Long Juxue’s tone was remote as her elegant brow arched delicately. An immense sense of superiority suffused her words and tone, and she didn’t bother concealing her dismissal of Jiang Chen.

“I will use the truth today to tell you that your hard earned gains have only gained you the opportunity to be tortured to death by me. You, are just a secular ant at the end of the day, and I am a phoenix soaring the nine heavens. The difference between us is that of heaven and dearth. I will utterly trample you into the dust in this match, giving you no opportunity to come back for all eternity!”

Long Juxue’s hatred of Jiang Chen had long surpassed the feud of a father and brother’s death. She didn’t hate that he had killed her family, but that he had displayed complete disregard of her since the Eastern Kingdom.

Long Juxue had enjoyed being the center of attention no matter where she went starting when she was young. She'd always been coveted after and praised to the skies, enjoying the treatment of one on high.

Only from Jiang Chen had she never felt this satisfaction of being well above all.

And then after she'd entered the sect, Jiang Chen had once again challenged her mental state again and again, continuously capering in front of her like a cockroach. This was completely unforgivable to Long Juxue.

Jiang Chen smiled. This smile was like the sun radiating over the land and instantly melting Long Juxue's frozen thrall over things.

"Long Juxue, I've said this before. You lost to me in the secular world and you will be unable to escape this fate today. So what if you've an innate constitution? So what if you've received the fortunes of the Purple Sun Sect on yourself? You spoke correctly. The difference between you and I are indeed like the heavens and earth, only you are that toad on the earth and will never know how tall the skies are. Don't talk of the heavens and this world in front of me, no one understands the heavens more than I do!"

Jiang Chen had quite a heroic demeanor about himself as his awe inspiring manner soared to the skies.

What was this talk of the heavens in front of him?

Who understood them more than the son of the Celestial Emperor? Long Juxue? The four great sects? They were just a few ants in some small corner on an inconsequential plane!

“There is no point in further talk. Long Juxue, I’ll send you to meet with Long Zhaofeng and Long Yinye in this match!”

Jiang Chen brought forth the nameless saber and pointed with it, an unparalleled momentum behind him as he waved it in a slash.

This slash was like the stroke that had broken through Lei Gangyang, untraceable as if an immortal from the heavens.

Long Juxue snorted coldly, “Repeating that same old trick?”

Her fingers formed a seal like a lotus as the motions formed a conduit. She shouted lowly, “Azure Phoenix Freezing Qi, Crystal Wall!”

Hum.

A wall of ice that shimmered in and out of existence formed in front of Long Juxue, blocking all of the momentum from Jiang Chen’s blade.

The freezing qi had formed a ice wall.

This method could rather put a stop to all attacks.

The freezing qi crept amongst the wall like frost. Layers of frigid frost formed around the entire ring, turning it into a misty white world like an avalanche sealing off the mountain.

“Jiang Chen, meet your death!”

Long Juxue sang out softly as her slender arms waved, a short sword magically appearing in her hand. When this short sword appeared, it was as radiant as lunar splendor.

The enormous spirit power ripples indicated that it was also a nine times refined spirit weapon.

Long Juxue’s figure was charming, as if an azure phoenix dancing gracefully in the heavy snow. Her aura soared to the nine heavens and morphed into the shadow of an azure phoenix. The short sword in her hand transformed into a frosty beam of light and shot forward with violent speed.

The entire ring had become enchanted into Long Juxue’s environment of a thousand li of ice.

“Jiang Chen, go turn into an ice sculpture!”

Frigid light cascaded downwards like a waterfall as Jiang Chen’s body suddenly halted, becoming enclosed by the icy light. Frost instantly crept over him.

In barely the span of breath, the white frost had completely enclosed this figure and an ice sculpture had formed before too long.

Long Juxue laughed softly and used the short sword in hand to draw back and forth on the sculpture, seeming to want to carve him into the image of a clown.

The sudden development of this scene caused exclamations of shock to emit from the audience.

This had been simply too quick?

Jiang Chen had been turned into an ice sculpture by one of Long Juxue's moves?

Long Juxue's strength was simply too frightening!

Everyone had had some expectations for Jiang Chen thanks to his perverse abilities, but their anticipation had been utterly smashed in a single moment.

If even Jiang Chen was unable to challenge Long Juxue, then who could?

Long Juxue stood high and proud, the short sword flying in her hands and shaving away countless flecks of ice like it were an axe.

Suddenly, Long Juxue's gaze froze as her lithe figure halted.

Because, she'd discovered that as the outside layers of ice were stripped back, the sculpture was empty inside.

Jiang Chen wasn't inside the block of ice!

He seemed to have vanished into thin air!

Suddenly, the hairs on Long Juxue's body stood on end as a prickly feeling of horror ran down all over her.

Chapter 404: Cleaving Long Juxue

“Long Juxue, I’m sure you won’t accept things if I just chop off your head with one stroke like this. What other ultimate moves do you have? Come on now, show me everything.”

Jiang Chen’s indifferent voice sounded in Long Juxue’s vicinity.

There was no way to track the source of the voice. It seemed to echo from all corners of the ring, its origin a complete mystery.

Long Juxue’s heart sank as a frosted light flashed through her stunningly beautiful eyes. She readjusted her stance to protect her vitals as she searched the surroundings with an alert expression on her face.

“Jiang Chen, what kind of man are you to be hiding and cowering like this?” Her words overflowed with viciousness, but her heart felt tight with a strange tension.

She’d finally discovered that Jiang Chen was different from all her previous opponents. It was a feeling that she couldn’t quite reason through his actions, especially what had happened just now. She really didn’t understand just how Jiang Chen had been able to escape from her icy blast. How could he have possibly escaped after being frozen by the azure phoenix freezing qi?

Whoosh!

A figure flashed out from behind Long Juxue.

But of course, it was Jiang Chen.

“Long Juxue, what else have you got up your sleeves? Don’t tell me that this is all that a so-called innate constitution and a genius that’s been invested with the entirety of the Purple Sun Sect’s fortunes has?” Jiang Chen chortled as mockery flickered through his face.

He knew this woman well, that she thought highly of herself and had an ego to beat the stars. The best way to deal with this woman was to humiliate, look down on, and even completely ignore her.

When faced with that, this woman would rage like thunder and even fly into a fury.

Once she became incensed, her dao heart would become unstable and Jiang Chen would be able to easily trample her.

Indeed, when Long Juxue heard thus, she grew enraged. “Jiang Chen, you dumb animal! You have quite a witty tongue, but I will free your body of your dog of a head today!”

Jiang Chen’s lips curved in a cold, arrogant arc. “Words, such words.”

He then folded his hands in front of his chest and completely disregarded Long Juxue’s offensive stance.

Her fury combusted into a gigantic blaze as Long Juxue's temper was completely stoked.

"Jiang Chen, your past life has given you enough good karma to be able to die beneath my azure phoenix freezing qi. I'll let you know today what it means to have an innate constitution!"

Long Juxue gritted her teeth as her hatred grew without end.

"Long Juxue, what else can you do other than blow hot air in this moment?" Jiang Chen laughed deliberately as he continued to provoke Long Juxue.

"Keeping a stiff upper lip as death stares you in the face, huh? If I were you, I'd find a remote corner where I would never be found. Perhaps you'd actually be able to live the rest of your life if you did so. But you didn't go along with the hand you'd been dealt in life and kept bouncing around in front of me, forgetting just how meaningless you are despite having had some fortuitous occurrences. Remember, I have an innate constitution, I'm the unparalleled genius—and you will always be that ant in front of me!"

Long Juxue spread out her arms after speaking as the image of an azure phoenix materialized behind her back. The image turned into six with a shake of its wings.

The six azure phoenix images turned into six beams of white light and landed in different places around Jiang Chen, surrounding

him.

“Jiang Chen, let’s see where you can run to now!”

Long Juxue also transformed herself into six with a glare of her phoenix shaped eyes and a shimmer of her body. They were real and illusionary, making it difficult for anyone to come to a conclusion.

The five copies of her and the azure phoenix images completely surrounded Jiang Chen.

Suddenly, a frosty light flashed.

The freezing qi on the ground abruptly increased immensely as three feet tall ice walls immediately rose from beneath the stage.

“Jiang Chen, you seem to have some ability that enables you to travel through the ground? I’ve frozen even the ring this time, so let’s see how you try to break through now!”

Long Juxue’s tone was cruel and full of killing intent.

As she spoke, the six azure phoenixes sped through the sky, continuously wheeling and shooting down beams of frosty light. Countless ice stalagmites had formed around Jiang Chen in short order, sealing off all avenues of escape.

“Let’s see how you can worm out of this one!”

Long Juxue’s six figures moved in unison as they flourished their short swords, sending beams of frosty light stabbing towards Jiang Chen.

“Pitiful little tricks!”

Jiang Chen suddenly whistled under his breath as six beams of red light formed and shot explosively towards the six azure phoenixes.

“Moonshatter Flying Daggers, Brilliance Form!”

These throwing daggers weren’t ordinary weapons. They’d been made from the tail feathers of the Fire Raven King, a spirit creature at the peak of the spirit realm. When its tail feathers had been made into throwing daggers, they’d been imbued with Jiang Chen’s dominating power of extreme yang.

Wham!

Six throwing daggers transformed into red light and collided with the six azure phoenixes.

Wham!

The latter were immediately broken and dispersed into shadowy

slivers.

The ground around Jiang Chen suddenly started quaking urgently. Red vines began to shoot out of the ground.

More than ten vines quickly appeared.

The red colored vines belonged to Jiang Chen's Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice, and he'd summoned forth only red fire vines this time. The Lotus had been a heavenly treasure to begin with, and was now utterly terrifying after Jiang Chen's refinement.

The dozen lotuses all spat out astonishingly powerful flames that seemed to be a dozen rampaging dragons. They continuously rumbled and opened their maw, swallowing all the ice stalagmites in an instant.

"Long Juxue, is that really all you've got now?" Jiang Chen laughed coldly as he gestured towards Long Juxue. The dozen fire lotus vines all coiled towards Long Juxue.

The vines could extend or retract, harden or remain pliable, and now that Jiang Chen had compelled them, they seemed to be a dozen ropes that could contain anything in the heavens. They intersected and formed an impenetrable net, surrounding Long Juxue instantly.

"What the hell is that?" Long Juxue was shocked senseless.

She began flailing madly about with her azure short sword.

One had to say, a nine times refined spirit weapon was quite impressive indeed. The fire lotus vines were all hacked up in the midst of the sword's dancing. However, the lotuses also possessed incredible rejuvenation abilities.

They would immediately regrow as soon as they'd been cut off. No matter how fast Long Juxue was, the fire lotuses were even faster.

Jiang Chen suddenly charged forward, leading with one fist and pushing with the other, sending a strong magnetic force field crashing down on Long Juxue.

Although the force field had yet to reach the levels of a magnetic storm, it was enough to affect her movement.

Long Juxue's body halted involuntarily after coming in contact with this force field.

"What's going on?" Long Juxue was flabbergasted as her voice drained of all color.

Jiang Chen's speed was uncommonly fast as he deployed more and more of the magnetic force field, controlling Long Juxue's speed.

Not too long after, her speed had greatly decreased. The speed of

her sword could no longer keep up with the vines' rate of growth.

Whoosh whoosh whoosh!

Countless vines wrapped around her, trussing her up like a chicken in short order.

Jiang Chen knew that the time was nigh!

Nameless saber in hand, he called out lowly, "Long Juxue, I once said that you're just a defeated opponent, and you will always be!"

He brandished the nameless saber and chopped downwards at her head.

"Halt!"

When Sunchaser saw this situation, his body turned into a ball of flames as he pounced forward frantically, reaching out with a hand to stop Jiang Chen's actions.

His speed was so extraordinarily fast that the other forefathers had no time to react at all.

When they saw that Sunchaser had rushed to the ring already, the others were dismayed and shocked. How would there be any chance of Jiang Chen surviving if Sunchaser made a move?

The development of this match had truly happened in moments of incredible speed, as quick as a bird of prey swooping down when a hare bounds upwards. The enormous uplifts and plunges sorely tested and tied up everyone's nerves.

Long Juxue had first frozen Jiang Chen in a domineering fashion, but he'd bafflingly disappeared without a trace.

She'd then deployed another ultimate move, and just when the audience had thought it would be fatal without a doubt, Jiang Chen had dispelled it again. The vines that he'd suddenly materialized were more shocking. No one knew what this was at all.

And now, Sunchaser had decided to personally act upon seeing Long Juxue in danger.

Sunchaser glided through the air as he roared, "Jiang Chen, if you kill Long Juxue, I will kill you without a doubt!"

He truly wanted to save Long Juxue, but he also knew that by the time he arrived, Jiang Chen's blade might have long since finished its swing.

Therefore, he could only issue verbal threats at first.

However, when his body neared the stage, his ears suddenly twitched as a surge of strength shot to his face, making his entire being tense up as he suddenly felt a life threatening sense of

danger.

Pfft!

The surge of strength had concentrated behind a small pinecone!

This small pinecone had come from an unknown origin and directly crashed into Sunchaser.

He brought forth all the strength in his body in the nick of time and brought his blade in front of his chest to block.

Clang!

The immense collision force bent Sunchaser's blade and sent him tumbling backwards, as if a raging current had suddenly crashed into him.

A pinecone had bent the blade of a venerated origin realm cultivator and sent him flying backwards!

Sunchaser managed to regain control of his momentum with great effort and landed on his feet, but he was forced backwards two dozen steps before barely managing to stand up straight. A sweet taste welled up in his throat as he spat out a mouthful of blood.

This sudden change threw the entire scene into disarray. The

other forefathers were astonished beyond belief, stunned senseless as they looked at this unbelievable scene.

How could this be?

What was old monster Sunchaser playing at? Of the four origin realm forefathers, his strength was solidly at the top. With his abilities, the other three hadn't even had time to react before he'd rushed to the stage.

But he'd abruptly taken a fall just like this??

Up on the stage, although Jiang Chen had felt Sunchaser pounce forward and fall back again, his dao heart was as calm as an ancient well, not a ripple to be found. He completed his downswing and cold light flashed, cleaving Long Juxue straight into two!

This scorpion hearted beauty didn't even have time to close her eyes. Her face was filled with astonishment, fear, and despair.

Bam!

The two halves of Long Juxue's bodies crashed tragically onto the ground.

"Xue'er!" Master Shuiyue was beyond distraught upon witnessing this scene, and she almost fainted.

It was over just like this? A preeminent genius with an innate constitution had been hacked into two just like this?

Everyone present felt that this was surreal, never mind Master Shuiyue.

Long Juxue had been dominant in the sky spirit realm for so long that even the original first genius Lei Gangyang had to settle for being number two beneath her ability.

The one who'd had an innate constitution and possessed potential that came about once every several thousand years in the sixteen kingdom alliance—she'd been hewed in half with just one stroke? And the one who'd done so had been a secular cultivator?

All of it seemed so utterly ludicrous and sheer fantasy, but the bloodcurdling premises reminded everyone that this was real.

Sunchaser threw his head back to the skies and howled, his rage blazing to the skies, "Jiang Chen, Jiang Chen! I swear I'll kill you!"

Chapter 405: Accidents Happen

The senior executives of the Purple Sun Sect almost zstarted a mass riot the instant that Long Juxue fell down. They'd just witnessed a genius unseen in the Purple Sun Sect since time immemorial be chopped down right in front of them!

Master Shuiyue was particularly lightheaded and swayed, almost falling to the ground in a dead faint.

She had spared no effort on Long Juxue over the past few years, racking her brains for Long Juxue's cultivation. Her goal was to allow Long Juxue to soar to the top with one move and become an unheralded genius.

Master Shuiyue had entrusted the culmination of her life, all of the ideals and dreams that she'd been unable to materialize when youth, to Long Juxue.

She'd hoped that Long Juxue would be able to set foot into the origin realm before 25, becoming the first amongst the sixteen kingdom alliance. She wanted her name to inspire awe throughout the nations.

One had to say, all the previous events and details had progressed in the direction that she'd thought. What she'd planned out was basically within sight.

However—

Jiang Chen's single strike had brutally annihilated Master Shuiyue's illusions, destroyed her unrealistic yearnings, leaving her only the bloody scene of Long Juxue being hacked into two, forever scarring her memories.

All of her beautiful dreams were shattered in that instant.

She'd tried so hard for this beautiful dream, abandoning her humanity and sanity. Her fourth disciple He Yan was crippled, the third disciple Hai Tian dead, the status of second disciple Chu Xinghan unknown, and first disciple Ceng Shi had turned traitor to the entire sect.

All of this had been for Long Juxue.

A trace of regret suddenly flashed through her heart.

Sunchaser composed himself with one breath as wariness appeared in his eyes. He shouted, "Which expert has acted? Will you come out and meet?"

Jiang Chen had cleared his heart of stray emotions when he'd killed Long Juxue just now. He was now on high alert and on his guard, just in case that old monster Sunchaser was so utterly shameless as to attack him in the former's panic.

However, Sunchaser was also wary of what had just occurred . He was huffing and glaring beneath the ring, but didn't dare to take

another step forward.

It was obvious that a pinecone being used to halt him had been too frightening, filling him with great trepidation.

“Jiang Chen, come to me.” Forefather Thousandleaf projected a lofty and towering impression at the moment.

Please. Killing one’s opponent during a match was perfectly justified.

When would the experts of a sect interfere with a match? With such a bad precedent, how could order be maintained in the great sects in the future?

Forefather Sunchaser was simply too domineering.

It was a good thing that a curious coincidence had happened, and that he had been beaten back by a formless strength when he’d drawn near to the ring.

Forefather Thousandleaf didn’t care in the slightest about Sunchaser at the moment. He only knew that the Precious Tree Sect had truly picked up a treasure, and a treasure of all the ages.

Nothing could happen to this precious genius.

This would be the turning point in which the Precious Tree Sect

moved towards glory.

A genius who could kill even an innate constitution.

Did the value of such a genius need consideration?

Even Ninelion felt a bit envious now. However, he was still happy in the end because the insufferable Purple Sun Sect's domination as number one had ended.

They were no longer the only ones who possessed strong geniuses.

"Daoist Thousandleaf, congratulations." Venerated Icemist's tone had a tint of jealousy, but she didn't lose her composure and congratulated Jiang Chen.

The Precious Tree Sect had truly been smacked in the head with this meat pie of good fortune.

Tang Hong also called out, "Boss, come on down next to the forefather in case some people attack you out of desperation."

Truthfully speaking, there were some amongst the Purple Sun Sect executives who wanted to do so.

However, with the current situation, it was obvious that the other three sects had come to an accord. If the Purple Sun Sect

acted rashly, they could very well incite fury from the other three sects.

In that way, the Purple Sun Sect would be completely at odds with the other three sects.

Jiang Chen laughed softly at the summons and flew out of the ring.

Another strong tremor shook the ground at this moment.

The magnitude of this tremor was more intense and powerful than the one before.

“This is bad, the formation is completely unstable!” Ninelion was the first to react.

Sunchaser’s face full of killing intent changed when he felt the tremors. His brow furrowed slightly as he looked at the air, casting a glowering glare at Jiang Chen for a moment. He gritted his teeth but finally decided against taking action. “The formation’s almost completely exhausted, retreat!”

Those of the other three sects didn’t dare dither. Everyone knew that when the spirit power activating the formation was exhausted, the Eternal Spirit Mountain would close forever.

Once it closed, it would be nigh impossible to leave.

Crowds gathered and surged down the mountain.

Jiang Chen didn't follow them as his body flashed and dashed to another section.

"Boss? Why aren't you leaving?" Tang Hong was astonished when he saw Jiang Chen break away from the pack.

"Tang Hong, you guys leave first, I still have some matters to take care of."

Jiang Chen had remembered something that he had to do.

Tang Hong screeched to a halt with his large feet, "Boss, do I look like someone who lusts after life and is fearful of death?"

Liu Wencai also stopped and was about to speak when Ninelion grabbed him, hectoring, "Don't blather on, leave with me!"

Ninelion now viewed Liu Wencai as his most precious treasure, how would he possibly allow the latter to stay here?

It was as if an iron wench had closed around Liu Wencai when Ninelion grabbed him. He couldn't move at all. Ninelion turned a deaf ear to all his protests and wouldn't let him down.

Thousandleaf wanted to stop Tang Hong, but was pulled back by

Iron Long. “Forefather, you cannot take this risk. Let us leave!”

Thousandleaf shouted back angrily, “Jiang Chen has yet to leave, so what am I in a hurry for?”

Iron Long cried out, “The Precious Tree Sect can do without Jiang Chen, but it can’t do without you! Forefather, we will be invaded and devoured within minutes if you’re not present!”

Thousandleaf’s thoughts moved when he heard these words, as a look of resignation shot out from his eyes. He murmured to himself, “Jiang Chen, Jiang Chen, you must take care.”

It wasn’t that he was afraid of death, but that he too knew how important he was to the sect. If he was lost in the Eternal Spirit Mountain, then the Purple Sun Sect would quickly raze the Precious Tree Sect to the ground.

Xie Tianshu and Iron Long were unsuitable candidates to even hold up the sect, not to mention responding the vicious revenge from the Purple Sun Sect.

He paused, then flew reluctantly down the mountain.

He’d turned his head back every now and then to see if Jiang Chen was following them, but he never saw anyone.

Tang Hong strode with large steps towards Jiang Chen when an enormous power suddenly pushed him.

Tang Hong seemed to have bounce into an invisible wall of air as his body flew back downwards like a kite with a broken string.

“Hot damn, what? I’m dead meat now!” Tang Hong sighed tragically, thinking that his death was at hand.

However, he actually landed solidly with both feet in the outskirts of the Eternal Spirit Mountain, suffering no damage or harm, as if he’d just lightly jumped down.

“What… what’s going on?” Tang Hong was completely baffled after his shock, a perplexed look on his face.

“Tang Hong? You came down? Where’s Jiang Chen?” Thousandleaf hasted to come up and ask.

Tang Hong scratched his head, dejection on his face. “Forefather, don’t ask me, I don’t even know myself!”

His brain a gooey mess, Tang Hong wanted to charge back up the mountain when forefather Thousandleaf grabbed him by the arm. “Do you want to die? The formation is about to close immediately, and the mountain will be closed.”

Tang Hong cried out, “But boss isn’t out yet!”

“Jiang Chen… Jiang Chen, I hope he can create a miracle again

this time like before." Thousandleaf also sighed in his heart.

There was a person in the place that Jiang Chen was currently shooting towards, it was Chu Xinghan!

Chu Xinghan had wanted to die rather than violate his principles. He hadn't chosen to detonate his spirit ocean to kill Jiang Chen, thus Jiang Chen had revised his opinion of Chu Xinghan after the battle.

This was why he'd used the Lotus to secretly save Chu Xinghan.

Charging into his residence, Jiang Chen wrapped Chu Xinghan in a blanket and sprinted down the mountain.

He knew that the formation was about to vanish, and he'd run out of time if he didn't increase his speed.

However, he also felt it odd. Logically speaking, a partially destroyed formation could still hold out for 1.5 years. There should be quite a lot of time left. Otherwise, the four great sects wouldn't have held their final match today.

They'd obviously left a lot of leeway.

However, all that buffer seemed to have disappeared in the span of an instant. Had the formation suffered another attack?

He couldn’t think about that much right now as he used all his strength he had to spare in dashing down the mountain.

Wham!

He was still running on the mountain road when a beam of spirit light pierced the heavens at the exit. Shadows shimmered into existence then, as if the world in front of him was fading in and out of existence.

“This is bad! The formation has lost its effectiveness and will close now!”

Jiang Chen was quite shocked by this. Although he was strong, he wasn’t strong enough to combat the entire Eternal Spirit Mountain at this time.

Once it closed, unless someone from the outside world came to save him. Otherwise, he’d be trapped in here forever.

The formation ripples turned into shadow with a rumble and finally closed together.

When this happened, Jiang Chen was still on a hillside.

When Thousandleaf saw the mountain close, he seemed to age a few decades in an instant. His gaze was dull as he looked at the closed formation, wanting to cry, but finding no tears.

Had a genius he'd just gained flown out of his grasp like this?

"Forefather, boss hasn't come out yet, but the formation has closed. How should the boss exit now?" Tang Hong was anxious as he hopped up and down, almost going crazy in his worry.

Iron Long hectored, "Human effort cannot stop the formation closing, what use is there in you hollering like this?"

Tang Hong was ticked off to begin with, and was in even less of a good mood when he heard those words. "You bastard, you're just jealous of good talent. You only want all the geniuses in the sect to die so that your grandson Iron Dazhi can take over everything, don't you? It's a pity that mangy curs won't let themselves be helped up over a wall!"

Iron Long's expression changed drastically when he heard this. Tang Hong's words seemed to stab a knife right into his heart.

Eternal Spirit Mountain

Chapter 406: Eternal Spirit Mountain, Impasse

When the Purple Sun Sect saw the scene of utter chaos over at the Precious Tree Sect's side, their moods grew slightly better. If one was stuck inside the Eternal Spirit Mountain after it'd closed, they were dead without a doubt.

Unless they could open the mountain again in a short period of time, Jiang Chen would certainly perish.

However, would it be that easy to reopen the mountain?

To open the mountain's seal the first time had required an incredible amount of resources from all four sects, as well as the combined efforts of all four forefathers.

What reason did the four sects have now to once again open the Eternal Spirit Mountain?

Sunchaser leered as he looked coldly at the Eternal Spirit Mountain, feeling quite vindicated.

"We go."

Sunchaser waved his hand after observing for a while and made to leave. Long Juxue's death had plunged the entire Purple Sun Sect into the depths of depression. They naturally didn't want to

remain in this heartbreaking place.

It was a good thing that the Purple Sun Sect still had Lei Gangyang.

Now the Jiang Chen was sealed within the Eternal Spirit Mountain, Lei Gangyang was once more the leader of the younger generation. This scene allowed the entire Purple Sun Sect to feel slightly gratified.

Only Master Shuiyue appeared listless and out of her wits, her face as ashen as a walking corpse that had lost its soul. Her expression was wooden, and her originally high spirits were nowhere to be found.

“Daoist Sunchaser, please hold your steps.”

Thousandleaf’s brows suddenly quirked as he called out.

Sunchaser stopped with a cold laugh, “What?”

“The core purpose of our four sects holding this selection was for the combined fates of the sixteen kingdoms. Jiang Chen is now entrapped and will die if he isn’t rescued in a month. Will Daoist Sunchaser not help a dying man?”

“Hahaha!” Sunchaser laughed as if he’d heard an absolutely ludicrous joke. “Do you think that I should enthusiastically lend a helping hand? Are you plotting to have my Purple Sun Sect put

forth resources and effort to save that Jiang Chen?”

Thousandleaf knew that Sunchaser would say that, but he reined in his temper and laughed apologetically. “We actually don’t need you to provide resources, the mountain won’t be open for too long this time. My Precious Tree Sect will take care of the outlay of spirit stones and only ask you to offer some strength. Please feel free to let us know what compensation you would like in return. I won’t even frown as long as it’s something that my Precious Tree Sect can bring out.”

If he hadn’t been forced to do so by the circumstances, Thousandleaf would’ve never wanted to beg Sunchaser for a favor.

However, the four of them were needed to activate the formation.

Missing even one would make it difficult for them to succeed.

Thousandleaf lacked people at the moment, not resources. If it only came down to resources, this was a price that the Precious Tree Sect could afford.

Sunchaser cackled oddly, “Tsk tsk, who would’ve thought that you’d value this cheap disciple that you just happened to pick up so highly? Do you think that I would care about your paltry compensation?”

“Sunchaser, don’t be so heartless. Wasn’t the point of our

selection to find geniuses? Jiang Chen is the first genius amongst the sixteen kingdoms alliance. Will you throw away the future of the sixteen kingdoms out of a personal grudge?”

Ninelion also walked over and called out, “I, Ninelion, am absolutely willing to help if Daoist Thousandleaf asks. I’m sure that Venerated Icemist is of the same mind.”

Icemist smiled slightly and nodded lightly, ”Daoist Sunchaser, why not let go of your prejudices and put forth what humble effort you can for the future of the sixteen kingdoms alliance?”

“Humble effort? Hahaha, it looks like you lot truly don’t know me. Do you think I’m the type to repay injury with kindness? Jiang Chen killed one of my Purple Sun Sect’s geniuses. I’ve already exhibited great restraint by not personally eviscerating him. Now you want me to help him? Nonsense!”

Sunchaser was quite delighted in this moment.

If he could, he didn’t mind killing Jiang Chen with his own hands. What bloody future of the sixteen kingdoms alliance, that was just one of his rallying cries.

To be honest, he’d never cared about any of this.

He just wanted to make use of that rallying cry to recruit a few more geniuses for the Purple Sun Sect.

“Selfish old thing indeed!” Ninelion cursed through gritted teeth. “If the alliance is exiled one day and perishes, how will we enjoy freedom and independence? Do you think that the Purple Sun Sect can pay attention to itself without thought of others if the sixteen kingdoms alliance declines?”

“Hmph, stuff it with your lecture! If the sixteen kingdoms alliance does decline, that’s not something that Jiang Chen can change with his strength alone. I’ll worry about the future of the Purple Sun Sect myself, when was it any of your turns to do so? Truth be told, I won’t really be leaving today. I’ll just go at it with whoever dares to touch the Eternal Spirit Mountain today!”

Sunchaser decided to just go ahead and make a shameless scene.

……

Within the Eternal Spirit Mountain, Jiang Chen didn’t know whether to laugh or cry when he saw the seal slowly close. He plopped down on a nearby block of stone and looked at the unconscious Chu Xinghan next to him.

“Can I really not make it out?” Jiang Chen gazed at the seal. Although it’d just closed, it would be impossible to open if the origin realm forefathers didn’t act in accordance.

If he attacked it rashly, he would be attacked by the restrictions on the seal.

Have the Goldbiter Rats gnaw a way out?

Looking at the strong restrictions on the seal, Jiang Chen knew apart from sending the Goldbiter Rats to their deaths, that would have no effect whatsoever on the seal.

Jiang Chen probed a bit and finally concluded dejectedly that he really couldn't make it out.

The concentration of spirit qi in the Eternal Spirit Mountain seemed to have decreased immensely after the seal had closed.

"I must figure out a way to leave. Although I can hang on for a while being sealed in, I won't make it past a few months. I'll be dead without a doubt if I remain here."

Jiang Chen knew full well that only death awaited him if he remained in here.

However, with his current strength, there was no way he could exit by himself at the moment.

"I wonder if forefather Thousandleaf is still outside? I might have a shot at living if the origin realm forefathers are willing to make a move."

Jiang Chen had never been the sort to place his hopes in others, but with no other options left, he was forced to think these thoughts at this moment.

“The heavens always leave a door open. I must hang on first.”

Jiang Chen sat down cross legged to calm and center himself for a moment.

Three days passed, and not a flicker of distortion could be seen. There wasn’t the slightest ripple of change from the seal. It was apparent that those in the outside world had yet to attempt to open the seal.

He felt slight movement from the seal on the sixth day, but the strength of the ripples were obviously insufficient to break open the seal.

“It looks like they haven’t given up on me!” Although Jiang Chen’s dao heart was as if iron, he felt slightly touched at this moment. He could tell that those on the outside were trying.

The ripples remained on the seventh and eighth day, but it was a far cry from breaking through the seal.

The ripples from the outside world finally stopped on the ninth and tenth day.

Jiang Chen smiled ruefully, “It looks like they too are helpless after trying their best.”

Others may have given up, but Jiang Chen himself didn't wish to. He cultivated and meditated every day, contemplating ways to leave the Eternal Spirit Mountain.

However, every method that he thought of required an immense amount of power to implement.

With his current level of cultivation, he was simply too far away from that stage.

None of his methods would work unless his cultivation level suddenly surpassed the four forefathers.

On this day, Jiang Chen was sitting cross legged when his ears suddenly twitched, "Who is it?"

He'd actually heard footsteps, the very real sound of footsteps!

They didn't belong to a beast or any other living creature, but to that of a human's.

The footsteps noticeably didn't belong to Chu Xinghan. He was still in a coma, and if it wasn't for Jiang Chen using pills to keep him clinging to life, Chu Xinghan likely would've died a long time ago.

"Don't be nervous, young man." It was a voice that had clearly weathered much in life.

Two people walked out from a bend in the road—one elderly and one young. The elderly appeared quite otherworldly, his hair tipped with snowy white. The young person was a girl with a slightly stooped posture. One of her eyes was big, the other small, and although her nose was quite pert, her mouth listed slightly to the left. Her features were slightly ugly, and it was a noticeable disharmonious contrast to the elder's otherworldly demeanor.

"Who are you?" Jiang Chen was slightly surprised and took a step backwards subconsciously, entering a wary state. His eyes flicked sideways to Chu Xinghan's position.

"Young man, I mean no harm. In fact, I actually quite admire you. You are loyal, stouthearted, and have a strength of character that doesn't lack compassion. I have cause to compliment you just for the act of landing in trouble because you wanted to save someone of an enemy sect. The sixteen kingdoms alliance is truly unworthy of a young man like you."

Jiang Chen wasn't distracted by the compliment as he remained on his guard.

He nodded his head faintly and asked, "Elder, who might you be? You seem to be quite aware of the happenings here?"

"Indeed, I do know everything that's happened here, as well as your background, Jiang Chen."

The elder was naturally Elder shun. He hadn't wanted to meet

the those of the four great sects and so had expelled them by tampering with the formation.

He had planned on taking Jiang Chen away in the chaos, but he'd discovered that Jiang Chen hadn't left. He'd gone to save Chu Xinghan instead.

This move made Elder Shun stick up his thumb at Jiang Chen from the bottom of his heart.

However, when Jiang Chen heard these words, he raised his eyebrow and concentrated his gaze on Elder Shun, revealing a trace of shock.

"Rising in the Eastern Kingdom through drawing in the Hall of Healing with the Heavenly Karma Pill recipe..."

"Striking out strongly against second organizer Du Ruhai and becoming the cause of his property being confiscated..."

"Striking out fiercely against all the noble sons in the Hidden Dragon Trial and killing the Long family heir Long Yinye..."

"Using your strength to suppress the Long family rebellion and almost killing Long Juxue at the Second Crossing..."

"When the Darkmoon Kingdom invaded, you coordinated with Prince Ye Rong of the Skylaurel Kingdom to kill the first general of the enemy kingdom!"

“When you arrived in the Skylaurel Kingdom, you delivered a strong setback to vice director Yang Zhao of the Dragonteeth Guard and pulled him up by the roots.”

“At the spirit king protector’s birthday banquet, you used one jug of the Nine Magnificence Dew Wine to win out over all other gifts and receive Ye Chonglou’s attentions.”

“In the fight between the princes, Ye Rong easily swept his opponents and became the crown prince thanks to your aid.”

“The Iron family of the Precious Tree Sect provoked you time and time again, but you took down Iron Dazhi instead and held him ransom.”

“And now in the selection of the legacy territory, you were the champion of the five trials in the initial selection, the champion of the mystic, earth, and sky quadrant. You defeated all opponents and became first amongst the younger generation in the sixteen kingdoms.”

Elder Shun smiled as he went over Jiang Chen’s current life’s history.

“You’ve used only three years to accomplish all this. Young man, I have to say that it is indeed a surprise to me that you were born in a place such as the sixteen kingdoms alliance.”

Chapter 407: Elder Shun Inquires About An Illness

Jiang Chen was quite surprised to hear the old man describe the current trajectory of his life.

He'd never thought that there was a mysterious person hiding in the shadows, knowing all about what he'd done like the back of his hand.

"Elder, have you been following me?" Jiang Chen's tone lowered.

"Nono..." Elder Shun waved his hands. He too was deathly afraid of Jiang Chen misunderstanding. "I just happened to notice you and felt that you were extraordinary, so I decided to continue to follow and pay attention to you. I mean no harm, and have actually saved you twice already."

"Hmm? You're the mysterious person who made Chu Xinghan back off at the Second Crossing?" Jiang Chen suddenly thought of something as he exclaimed hoarsely.

Jiang Chen immediately understood what the elder meant by two times. The first was the Second Crossing, the second was beating back Sunchaser when he'd killed Long Juxue.

Jiang Chen smiled faintly when his thoughts travelled here. This mysterious elder's strength was likely above Sunchaser's. It was pointless for him to be on his guard.

If this elder truly did bear ill will, then there was no way that Jiang Chen could resist anyways.

He immediately bowed slightly and made courteous gestures. “Jiang Chen is deeply grateful for the elder’s aid. Might I be so bold as to inquire your honorable name?”

Jiang Chen still well remembered when this mysterious elder had beaten back Chu Xinghan without revealing himself.

He’d asked who this mysterious elder was then, and said that if there was a chance, he wanted to repay the debt of saving his life.

But at that time, the mysterious elder hadn’t given Jiang Chen his name.

Elder Shun nodded slightly. “You can call me Elder Shun.”

“Elder Shun?” Jiang Chen looked at the slightly hunched over, ugly girl.

“Jiang Chen, the reason I’ve been paying attention to you is because of her. This is a granddaughter from my tribe, you can call her Huang’er.”

“Hello Miss Huang’er.” Jiang Chen nodded kindly at Huang’er, not disdaining her for her less than pleasing appearance.

Huang’er nodded slightly and smiled, “Hello.”

“Jiang Chen, you must have many questions in your heart about the situation and why I’m here.”

Jiang Chen was noncommittal and laughed softly.

“Mm, I boldly tampered with the formation because I didn’t wish to meet with those of the four great sects, and wanted to speak privately with you. There was a reason for my actions, I hope this little brother doesn’t take it amiss. When it comes down to it, I’ve acted a bit discourteously.”

Elder Shun’s manner was urbane and he didn’t put on any airs in front of Jiang Chen just because he was stronger.

This point was rather up Jiang Chen’s alley.

“Elder, you’ve done all this just to see me alone?” Jiang Chen started.

“Yes.” Elder Shun looked at the girl next to him when his words travelled here, a look of tender protectiveness appearing in his eyes.

Huang’er also felt a bit sad at this moment. Elder Shun was such a respected person, yet he had to be so polite and humble in front

of a junior because of her ailment.

It wasn't that Huang'er had fixed notions of precedence, but that she understood Elder Shun quite well.

Knowing Elder Shun's pride, he'd never shown such an affable face to even the extremely strong beings on high.

He was being so courteous to Jiang Chen solely because of her. How would this not make her feel touched and guilty?

When Jiang Chen saw Elder Shun glance repeatedly at the young girl, his eyes also moved and looked again at her.

Elder Shun sighed softly, "Little brother Jiang, you diagnosed that the princess of the Eastern Kingdom had a yin constitution, is that right?"

Jiang Chen was immensely startled. This was a secret of the Eastern Kingdom royals, and this elder knew even that?

Since the other had mentioned it, Jiang Chen naturally would put up a front and deny it.

He nodded. "Yes, this was indeed the case."

"Then can little brother Jiang discern what stubborn illness ails my granddaughter?" Elder Shun cut straight to the chase.

Jiang Chen subtly understood something when he heard this. Elder Shun had paid attention to him for so long likely because of his granddaughter's sickness.

However, he was still quite puzzled. If Elder Shun has such strength and methods, why can't he cure his granddaughter's affliction?

If even Elder Shun was helpless in front of this sickness, then Jiang Chen didn't have much guarantee as well.

Jiang Chen remained silent as he focused his gaze on Huang'er. Apart from somewhat ugly features, there seemed nothing untoward about this young girl.

Huang'er grew a bit embarrassed by Jiang Chen's scrutiny. Although she was bright and intelligent, pure without a single speck of dust about her, she was still a young girl after all. Even though she'd changed her features and had made herself look ugly on purpose, she still became a bit shy when Jiang Chen stared at her like this.

However, she was a cultured daughter of a respectful family. She could see from Jiang Chen's eyes that he had no malicious thoughts in mind. His eyes were pure and clear with no desire of violating her.

He thought for a moment before saying, "Elder Shun, I was able to diagnose Eastern Zhiruo's yin constitution that day because I

once read about it in an ancient text. I haven't full confidence in healing ailments, but if you would like me to proclaim a diagnosis, I will surely try my best to repay your kindness in aiding me."

Jiang Chen was one who clearly delineated his grudges and debts of gratitude. The other had helped him numerous times, and no matter what the reason was, Jiang Chen was still indebted to him.

Repaying debts of gratitude was the way of a true man.

"Mm, what I seek is you giving it your all. Being able to cure Huang'er or not is up to fate and cannot be your fault."

Elder Shun was quite sincere, and now that his purpose had been fully laid out, he wouldn't make any hard and fast requests that Jiang Chen had to cure Huang'er.

If old man Qian Ji's divination did indeed come true on Jiang Chen's body, then there would indeed be a change in fortunes if this young man tried his best.

Elder Shun had been more worried that Jiang Chen wouldn't try his best. Now that Jiang Chen had expressed his stance, the former was naturally satisfied.

It was rather Huang'er, who'd been sick since young, who didn't display any obvious joy on her face despite facing a change in her fate. Due to being fraught with illness for all her life, her personality had actually turned out quite optimistic.

“Elder Shun, it doesn’t seem from Huang’er’s appearance that she possesses a weak body.”

Elder Shun sighed lightly, “All the famous doctors have said that as well. It’s precisely because of this that this ailment has dragged on for twenty years, and there is still no progress even unto today. However, a doctor once said that if her sickness flares up three times in a month, then even a golden immortal from the highest of the 36 heavens will be hard pressed to save her.”

“Oh?” Jiang Chen asked upon hearing these words. “What happens when her sickness flares up?”

“When the sickness flares,” Elder Shun heaved a long sigh again. “She becomes as if a wooden puppet, unable to control her words and actions at all. She has at times comes depressed, and sometimes she would explode with a hot temper. She sometimes faints, but if she doesn’t, she would drift off into space. She might sit alone and laugh, or weep in a corner. Her eyes are empty as if a walking corpse, completely distracted. She will fall into a dead faint in the end and wakes up the next day, or the longest after three or five days.”

Elder Shun described all of the details he could think of.

Jiang Chen furrowed his brow. Many ailments exhibited such symptoms.

Shock from being frightened out of one’s wits for instance, or

entering a cultivation deviation. Developing split personalities, or having an incomplete soul from birth.

However, most of these ailments were formed at birth and was always such. They didn't express themselves at irregular periods.

This was different from Huang'er's ailment.

Jiang Chen thought for a moment and asked, "May I take Miss Huang'er's pulse?"

Taking one's pulse was an ancient method of diagnosis, but quite practical. Doing so could enable one to understand their patient's ailment and their body condition.

Jiang Chen's facial expression grew more and more solemn as time went on. He finally released his hand and said, "My apologies for intruding."

"Thank you for your efforts, Sir Jiang." Huang'er responded forthrightly.

"What do you sense?" Elder Shun's heart hung high in the air.

"It's odd." Jiang Chen sighed and shook his head lightly. "Miss Huang'er's pulse is solid and steady. The life force within her body is very strong. If I guess correctly, Miss Huang'er's level of cultivation is actually quite strong. This is at noticeable odds with the ailments that I'm familiar with. Logically speaking, someone

who is sick shouldn't have such strong life force."

"Is there any hope for her?"

Jiang Chen spread out her hands. "Allow me a moment to contemplate. These symptoms are quite strange. It doesn't look like something that she was born with, or an ailment that developed later. Odd, how odd."

Although Elder Shun was deeply anxious, he knew that this wasn't the time to disrupt Jiang Chen's thoughts.

Jiang Chen's eyes suddenly moved as he thought of something.

"Elder Shun, did Huang'er's parents have any enemies?"

Elder Shun started, why was he suddenly asking this question?

He thought for a moment and didn't deny things. "Those on the path of martial dao will always have a few enemies."

"I mean, did Huang'er's mother have any conflict with someone or offended anyone when she was pregnant? Particularly a woman."

Elder Shun thought for a bit and nodded. "There was indeed another woman who loved Huang'er's father when her parents were in love, but that happened ages ago."

“Is this woman no longer on this earth? And did she die before Huang’er was born, and died for unknown reasons?” Jiang Chen continued to ask.

Elder Shun’s body trembled. He naturally knew these age old matters, but they were all great secrets. How did Jiang Chen come to know of them?

Could Jiang Chen deduce the past?

A look of surprise suddenly shot out of Elder Shun’s eyes. Jiang Chen wasn’t just asking random questions, could it be that old man Qian Ji’s divination about this boy was going to be validated?

The light of astonishment shining out of his eyes, Elder Shun hastened to ask, “Little brother Jiang, all that you’ve said is correct. However, how did you know all this? Does all this have something to do with Huang’er’s illness?”

When Huang’er heard Jiang Chen’s questions, she too thought of her parents. This threw her emotions in disarray, and some mist welled up in her eyes in that moment.

Chapter 408: Generation Binding Curse

When Jiang Chen saw that Elder Shun had nodded in admittance, a few words flashed through his heart—the Generation Binding Curse.

This was an ancient curse that was cast by one deeply and blindly in love. The caster would refine their own soul and fuse it with the unborn child of their pregnant love rival.

This curse would condemn the yet to be born child.

Once the curse was cast, the child would be born with it.

The curse would meld pieces of the caster's soul with the newborn child's soul, becoming a part of the child.

This kind of curse was quite frightening. The stronger the caster's resentment, the more deeply the newborn's soul would be branded, and the stronger the symptoms would be when the illness flared up.

This curse was named the Generation Binding Curse because it embodied the devotion and resentment of the caster. The strength of the curse was near endless, and it wasn't something that a secular doctor could resolve.

Looking at Huang'er, her life signs were vibrant, and it was obvious that she'd received extremely sophisticated heritages with

regards to martial dao and cultivation.

However, this curse obviously didn't affect the victim's vital signs, only their soul. Once it flared up, the caster's soul fragments would start wreaking havoc in the soul of the victim.

The victim would die an agonized death only when the caster's soul fragments thoroughly destroyed the victim's soul.

When this curse was inert, the victim would be completely healthy.

But once it acted, the situation would quickly devolve into something quite gruesome and perilous, because the caster had used their life and soul to coalesce this curse. The devotion and resentment within was absolutely indescribable.

Jiang Chen had been able to determine that this was the Generation Binding Curse because most symptoms having to do with the soul was either an affliction from birth, or something that came about because of an adverse reaction to something else.

Ailments having to do with the soul or consciousness would affect the patient's life force.

Patients would usually give off others a feeble, sickly feeling.

Only the Generation Binding Curse was an malady powered by a curse and not a result of a natural deficiency in the patient's soul.

This was why it wouldn't affect the patient's body much.

Jiang Chen had read countless books in his past life and had heard of the ten great incurable ailments beneath the heavens.

The yin constitution had been ranked as first amongst them.

Although the Generation Binding Curse did not have a place amongst them, but it was a near incurable disease as well.

Therefore, Jiang Chen had a deep impression of it.

However, there was a reason why it hadn't made it onto the ranking.

This was because on a certain level, the Generation Binding Curse wasn't an incurable ailment. There were at least ways to dissolve the curse.

It was just that the dissolution wasn't something that could be accomplished in a day.

When Elder Shun saw Jiang Chen furrow his brow in deep thought, the former didn't dare make a sound. He stood on the side with dread written over his face. He also knew that old man Qian Ji's divination had basically been validated by this youth.

If this young man said that there was no hope, then it was likely

that there was no one in this world who could save Huang'er.

Therefore, even someone as strong as Elder Shun couldn't help but feel his heartbeat speed up at this moment.

"Elder Shun, I have an initial diagnosis of Huang'er's illness. It's not something she was born with, nor something she developed after."

"Then what is it?" Elder Shun started.

"It's a type of curse. If I guess correctly, Huang'er's parents must have been a heavenly matched pair that was the envy of all. There must have been another lady who suffered greatly in loving Miss Huang'er's father."

"A curse?" A thought struck Elder Shun. The details that Jiang Chen had spoken of matched up to the truth. There had indeed been another devoted lady laboriously pursuing Huang'er's father when her parents had been in love.

Except, it was only one-sided, and had ended without results in the end.

The lady had been consumed with thoughts of yearning after that and had somehow passed away one day. Could it be...?

Elder Shun's facial expression changed greatly when his thoughts traveled here. "Just what curse is it that's so domineering?"

“The Generation Binding Curse is a result of those blindly in love and using their own souls to deploy this curse as a result of their own resentment and affection. They shatter their souls into fragments and meld them into the pregnant lady’s womb, leaving a brand on the soul of the unborn child. The fragments sometimes act out and disturb the child’s soul, finally ending when the victim’s soul has been destroyed, their body dead, and their dao progress terminated.”

Jiang Chen looked at Huang’er with some sympathy. “Miss Huang’er was an innocent victim of this catastrophe and was afflicted with the Generation Binding Curse by this blindly devoted woman.”

“The Generation Binding Curse?” Elder Shun murmured to himself. He’d never heard of this name and found it quite foreign.

This curse was quite rare and basically unheard of, so Elder Shun had never encountered it before.

Huang’er was slightly dazed by Jiang Chen’s words. She had no room for doubt as Jiang Chen’s words matched up perfectly to the truth.

She hadn’t had much confidence in Jiang Chen to begin with. She only couldn’t bear to make him sad after he had protected her thus and gone to such efforts on her behalf.

However, she’d never thought that this Jiang Chen would be able

to truly diagnose her illness.

She was incredibly astonished in this moment.

She'd thought this unknown ailment was her destiny and a fate that couldn't be changed.

She'd accompanied Elder Shun because she was tired of the conflicts of where she was, sick of the politics and scheming. She only wanted to find a quiet place and find inner calm and peace.

She didn't want to return to the place where she'd been born even if she fell in the course of the journey.

However—

It was as if a bright light had suddenly blazed into existence in her heart. A hint of light had abruptly appeared in the endless darkness.

"Little brother Jiang, is there a way to dispel this Generation Binding Curse?"

Jiang Chen had been considering this question all along. From his memories from his past life, it was possible to break this curse, but the process was exceedingly complex.

And, there were more ways than one.

Jiang Chen actually didn't know how to broach the subject after Elder Shun's question.

"Sir Jiang, please feel free to speak candidly. I have seen through life and death and accepted my fate in this life. If I die, it will be my destiny. If I do not, then Huang'er will always thank your great favor in saving my life."

Huang'er spoke up before Elder Shun spoke. Her tone was leisurely and refined, her eyes clear. her great wisdom in comprehending the meaning behind life and death was apparent from a glance.

Jiang Chen abruptly revised his opinion of this young girl upwards.

"Although Miss Huang'er's eyes are different sizes, the look in them is very clear and bright. It's obvious that she is quite wise. It looks like this duo's background is not simple."

Of course, Jiang Chen only thought this but didn't ask.

He thought for a moment and nodded lightly. "I've thought for a bit, and there are three methods—plan A, B, and C. The effects of plan A are the fastest, but also the highest risk. There is but one chance of survival out of ten. Plan B requires time, fortune, but is also rather cruel. Plan C requires even more time and fortune, and relying on it may mean that a cure is never found. But if the time for plan C is nigh, its effects will be the best and sweep away all

worries once and for all.”

Elder Shun and Huang’er had thought Jiang Chen had no ideas for a cure when his brow had been tightly furrowed before.

They hadn’t thought that Jiang Chen would have three methods!

Elder Shun’s eyes lit up. “There are three ways? Please do tell us more.”

“Plan A is to use methods of refining and tempering souls to refine away the brand on Miss Huang’er’s soul. The methods are quite risky, and one misstep may result in one refining even their own soul, becoming a walking corpse. In addition, even if one doesn’t refine their own soul, the slightest injury will bring about great aftereffects. Finally, the refinement process is exceedingly complex. It is exceedingly difficult, nigh well impossible to not harm one’s own soul. I know of no one with such capabilities on this world.”

Refining one’s soul did indeed run high risks.

The muscles on Elder Shun’s face spasmed slightly, and he looked at Huang’er with tender love. How would he bear to use such methods?

Even if she was cured in this fashion, the aftereffects would result in the deficiency of a lifetime.

“Plan B then?” Elder Shun struck off plan A immediately.

“Plan B is more cruel, and that’s to utterly refine one’s soul, destroying your own soul and the soul from the curse. After that, one would pillage another’s soul. In this regard, Miss Huang’er’s body would lose her own soul, and another would inhabit her physical body. The body would still be you, but the soul wouldn’t be.”

Elder Shun’s expression was quite ugly. “What difference is there between that and death then?”

Huang’er also lightly shook her head. She couldn’t accept robbing someone else of their soul.

“Mm, this method is indeed cruel, but it sees the highest use. This is because people often choose to take a baby’s soul, pure and untainted by the secular world. This is the equivalent of the soul growing up again. However, this move goes against heaven’s will and just folk should never utilize it.”

Jiang Chen was also heavily against plan B and didn’t wish for them to use it.

Elder Shun sighed softly, a bit resigned. “Let’s talk about plan C.”

It seemed that plan A and B were neither choices they could take.

“Plan C needs time and good fortune. There is a plant beneath

the heavens called the Requiem Wood. If you are able to obtain this tree, you will be purify the soul and baptize Miss Huang'er's soul. This is a one time purification and does away with all troubles with absolutely no aftereffects. This is a last resort of plan C, but if one has to the good fortune to bump into it, it is the best of plans. It's a pity that it's exceedingly difficult to locate the Requiem Wood."

"Requiem Wood? Soul purification?" Elder Shun couldn't help but ask, "Is there anything else that can replace this item?"

"Yes, but they're all more difficult to locate than the Requiem Wood. In actuality, experts who cultivate their souls are able to purify souls purely with their own arts when they reach a heavenly level. However, those kind of experts is a level of existence that is impossible to find in our world."

Elder Shun became lost in thought when he heard this.

He'd now heard all three methods, and plan C was the most certain out of all of them. However, where would he go to find this Requiem Wood?

He'd never heard of such an item!

"Little brother Jiang, in your opinion, which one would you use?"

"If it were my kin, I would use plan C without a doubt and seek the Requiem Wood. If there is really nothing to be done, then I

would consider the plan A and refine their soul."

"I too favor plan C more, but the Requiem Wood is hard to locate, and I'm afraid I lack sufficient time. The frequency of Huang'er's ailment acting up has accelerated."

"Mm, then this means that the soul brand from the curse is becoming more and more active." Jiang Chen also frowned. It could be seen that Miss Huang'er had met with a love rival who was bore more than the usual resentment. The force of this curse was truly domineering.

With Miss Huang'er's age, her ailment shouldn't have been flaring up so often. This meant that the curse was extraordinarily strong.

Chapter 409: Saving Someone And Seeing Them Through To The End

There was a saying of “if you want to help someone, go the whole hog. If you send someone off, see them off until reaching their home.”

Jiang Chen could see that the duo had no other paths available. Otherwise, they wouldn’t have spent their time on him, a secular disciple.

With Elder Shun’s strength, to spend three years keeping a covert eye on a secular disciple for Miss Huang’er’s illness, he had truly put a great deal of thought and gone to enormous effort.

He had also aided Jiang Chen several times, so there was no reason for Jiang Chen to not try his best.

“Elder Shun, fortune is needed with regards to the Requiem Wood. If we cannot find it, it will be impossible to dispel the Generation Binding Curse. But there are ways to delay the ailment from flaring up and weakening the pain associated with the symptoms. However, I’ll need some time to prepare.”

Elder Shun was delighted to hear this. “Time is of no problem. We can very well stay in the Eternal Spirit Mountain for a year or two with no issues at all.”

He was a bit abashed at Jiang Chen’s look of confusion and

chuckled. “Actually, I only changed some things in the formation. I moved the spirit stones powering it. The formation will open again if the spirit stones are returned to where they were. The four sects had prepared to let the candidates stay here for about three years. If it wasn’t for my haste, your selection wouldn’t have ended ahead of time. Although the others are unable to, you can actually continue to enjoy this environment for what remains of the three years.”

Jiang Chen stared, mouth agape, when he heard those words. He grew even more curious about the extent of Elder Shun’s strength.

To be able to tamper with the formation beneath the nose of the four forefathers, this meant that his strength vastly outstripped theirs!

“When it comes down to it, we have at least a year and a half, perhaps two years worth of time. Is that enough?” Elder Shun asked.

“We don’t need that much time. Three months will suffice.”

Elder Shun clapped. “Then it’s settled. Jiang Chen, no matter if this matter is successful or not, I’ll owe you a favor.”

Jiang Chen smiled faintly, not placing much emphasis on favors.

Elder Shun seemed to realize that Jiang Chen didn’t care much for his promise. He laughed ruefully and sighed, “Jiang Chen, do

you know what one of my favors means?”

“Elder Shun, I, Jiang Chen, only seek to have a clear conscience when I act. You have reached out a helping hand to me twice, and I should naturally put forth my best efforts for Miss Huang’er’s sake. I would not dare ask for compensation.”

This wasn’t Jiang Chen speaking in hyperbole, he truly wasn’t expecting anything from Elder Shun.

Methods? Cultivation pointers?

Jiang Chen couldn’t care less about them all.

It was precisely because he had confidence and reassurance that he could be neither humble nor haughty and completely ignore Elder Shun’s favor and whatnot.

Those of the four sects left the outskirts of the Eternal Spirit Mountain after ten days.

Only then could the formation be reactivated without worry of being disturbed by others.

There were plenty of residences in the sky quadrant as well. Life was quite carefree with each of them occupying one residence.

Jiang Chen gave Elder Shun a list of ingredients. He wanted to

refine a kind of pill that would sooth the soul and calm the heart.

The name of this pill was the Six Daos Pill, and it was exceedingly difficult to refine.

Apart from the Six Daos Pill, Jiang Chen rummaged through the memories of his past life to pull out more information.

He'd known the Generation Binding Curse in his past life and thus knew several ways to counteract it.

There was a scripture-like chant of the "Sacred Deliverance Mantra" that would suppress the interference within the soul and calm souls when chanted.

This was something easy to manipulate and would see considerable effects.

Another kind was a musical score, the "Ethereal Soothing Melody", that had the same purpose as the "Sacred Liberation Mantra", but its effects were much greater.

This score could also be performed by many instruments, with particularly great effect from instruments with a sense of intangible otherworldliness. The guqin, ancient flute, konghou, or guzheng would be particularly effective here.

Jiang Chen pulled these two out of the depths of his memories and spent another half month to fully perfect them.

“Miss Huang’er, if you recite this ‘Sacred Deliverance Mantra’ three times every morning and night, and when you feel troubled or distracted, it will suppress the interference in your soul.”

“This ‘Ethereal Soothing Melody’ can be performed by instruments to control the discord in your soul if the symptoms flare up strongly. Although this will not cure the heart of the issue, it is absolutely effective in delaying the onset of your ailment. If utilized adequately, it will ensure that you remain unbothered by the curse for ten years. However, the curse is one of vengeance and hatred. It will not rest until you are dead. If we cannot cure the crux of it, the backlash will still catch up to you one day, and it will be incredibly strong then. Therefore, these two items can ensure that you are fine for another ten, maybe even twenty years, but it will be difficult to say the same for thirty five years from now on.”

Elder Shun spoke resolutely on the side, “I will definitely find the Requiem Wood and cleanse the curse within Huang’er!”

Jiang Chen nodded. The heavens would never leave no way out. Miss Huang’er didn’t seem like someone who would die young. Perhaps there would be a change in her fate.

At least the two of them meeting him was a change already.

A trace of gratitude appeared in Huang’er’s eyes when she accepted these two items.

“Sir Jiang, apologies for causing you to go to effort and time over

the personal matters of Huang'er."

"Miss Huang'er, I will be ashamed if you speak thus. If it wasn't for Elder Shun, I may not have even made it past the calamity at the Second Crossing."

Huang'er smiled softly. Her features were ugly, but that smile gave one the feeling of the warm rays of sunshine and a hundred flowers blooming in unison.

"Sir Jiang, Huang'er knows a little bit of music and can tell that the 'Ethereal Soothing Melody' is an uncommon item with a glance. You have knowledge is as immense as the immortals' and are someone of great talent."

Huang'er was actually a genius and had achieved great attainments in the area of music.

But she was shocked with but a single glance at the musical score. That the "Ethereal Soothing Music" was found in the secular world truly did startle her. She felt that Jiang Chen, a peer of hers, was becoming more and more enigmatic.

She hadn't thought much of Elder Shun's attention placed on Jiang Chen before, only thinking that he had received some marvelous occurrences and boasted of some potential in martial and pill daos and that was why he stuck out in the sixteen kingdoms.

It seemed like her eye was still not as keen as Elder Shun's.

When she thought of how she'd taken Jiang Chen lightly before, she felt greatly ashamed. She was a pure and kind-hearted girl, and now that she'd received Jiang Chen's aid, she couldn't help but feel guilty for her previous unkind thoughts.

"Miss Huang'er need not worry. I have been observing your countenance, and you look like someone with great fortune. You will be able to turn calamities into blessings even if you meet with disaster, not to mention with such a benevolent senior as Elder Shun, you are sure to enjoy the fruits of labor later in life."

Jiang Chen wasn't just speaking carelessly. He was able to read people in his past life and divulge some hints about their life from observing their countenances.

Miss Huang'er was indeed someone who wasn't meant to have a life that ended prematurely. It was just that she had faced some setbacks in her life, but once she overcame them, she would enjoy great fortune.

Elder Shun was also startled upon hearing these words.

Jiang Chen's words were actually similar to old man Qian Ji's. The old man's divination had also said that Huang'er was destined to meet great fortune in her life, and enjoy the sweetness in life after bitterness. She was sure to turn misfortune into fortune after meeting someone offering great aid!

To think that Jiang Chen would say the same as old man Qian Ji despite the two being separated by mountains and rivers!

It was easy to imagine the shock within Elder Shun's heart.

A trace of surprise flashed through even Huang'er's eyes. Her admiration of Jiang Chen unknowingly deepened a bit more.

"Elder Shun, I will tarry around here for another half year to a year and make use of the great environment of the sky quadrant. In addition, Chu Xinghan has yet to awaken. Perhaps some more time is needed. This time will be enough to prove the usefulness of those two items, and I will prepare some pills for Miss Huang'er as well."

Elder Shun could only be thankful Jiang Chen was doing so much. What else could he ask for?

……

As Jiang Chen lingered in the Eternal Spirit Mountain, many of the lives of those in the four sects had had their fates altered by this selection.

Within the Purple Sun Sect.

Sunchaser's anger had yet to dissipate when he returned to the sect.

“Jiang Chen!” Rage boiled in Sunchaser’s heart when he thought of this name. He still wasn’t fully at peace without having seen Jiang Chen die in the Eternal Spirit Mountain with his own two eyes.

“Shuiyue, you said that a mysterious person saved him in the secular world. What was that about?”

Master Shuiyue had yet to recover from Long Juxue being hacked into two. Her entire being was listless, distracted, and quite sullen.

She thought for a moment and then recounted the message that Chu Xinghan had brought back from the Second Crossing.

Sunchaser thought silently for a moment. “You originally said that you suspected Ye Chonglou of being that mysterious person?”

Master Shuiyue nodded. “Indeed, according to Jiang Chen’s background, it’s most likely Ye Chonglou.”

“Bullshit!” Sunchaser flew into a rage. “How would Ye Chonglou be so overweeningly arrogant as to dare threaten to take a walk in our Purple Sun Sect?”

The more Sunchaser thought about this, the more he felt something was amiss. That pinecone on the stage in particular had sent him reeling backwards. No matter where it’d come from, there must have been someone stronger than him present then

that no one had detected.

He suspected now that whoever had acted at the ring was the one who'd beaten back Chu Xinghan at the second crossing!

Purple Sun Sect's sect head, Zixu Zhenren, asked upon sensing the tense atmosphere, "Forefather, our sect suffered heavy losses in this time's selection. What should we do after Long Juxue's demise? If that person asks, how should we answer them?"

This question made Sunchaser's brow furrow even deeper and he cursed, "What else can we say? Tell them the truth. Who would've thought that Long Juxue of the innate constitution would be cleaved into two by a secular disciple?"

Zixu Zhenren smiled wryly, "I'm afraid that speaking the truth will direct their anger at us. Although we've long since come to an agreement, those people are domineering and without reason."

Master Shuiyue was utterly befuddled. "Wait, forefather, sect head, what are you talking about? What people?"

Sunchaser snorted oddly and looked around, sweeping his gaze over every senior executive's face. "I don't need to conceal it any longer since you're all here. The fate of the sixteen kingdoms has long since been decided. We lack talent, our resources are drying up, and our strength is feeble. We've long since been ostracized in the Myriad Domain and will certainly be exiled as desolate wilderness in the upcoming decades. Our Purple Sun Sect has had to make some preparations, and it was necessary to find some

backers in the Myriad Domain. Our sect cannot go down with the sixteen kingdom alliance!”

The senior executives were all flabbergasted at Sunchaser’s words.

The fate of the sixteen kingdoms had already been decided? Then the selection… was just a formality, and it seems that the sect had found a backer long ago?

Chapter 410: Precious Tree Sect, Rage Of Forefather Thousandleaf

The senior executives of the Precious Tree Sect were convening at almost the same time.

Forefather Thousandleaf plainly hadn't given up hope on Jiang Chen. He began digging into all information related to Jiang Chen upon his return.

"How ludicrous, Jiang Chen was in our Skylaurel Kingdom for almost two years, and none of you senior executives discovered this unparalleled genius? Why don't you tell me what are all of you good for?!"

Thousandleaf was a nice person, but that didn't mean he didn't have a temper.

He was quite irate at the current situation. Jiang Chen had been in the Skylaurel Kingdom for almost two years and had displayed unsurpassed abilities. His reputation had long since spread throughout the sect.

But the sect had failed to recruit this person!

Not only had they failed to recruit him, those of the sect had actually kept suppressing him and erecting blockages in his way. One of the four sites in particular, the Azure Heaven Northern Palace, had oppressed Jiang Chen time and time again.

The Iron family had also had many ignoble records in the course of suppressing Jiang Chen.

This truly incensed forefather Thousandleaf as he slammed his hand on the table.

“Are you all deaf and dumb? All any of you know to do is to fight amongst yourselves—do you realize now how large of the gap between us and the rest are, thanks to the selection? If it wasn’t for Jiang Chen’s unexpected appearance, we would’ve lost the very shirt off our backs and pants off our bodies. Xie Tianshu, Iron Long, just how do you normally cultivate the younger disciples? How do you identify talent? The sect has given you so much resources, just how have you allotted them?”

No wonder forefather Thousandleaf was infuriated. The Precious Tree Sect’s resources were quite abundant. When it came to this, they were ranked first amongst the sects. However, the disciples that they had cultivated couldn’t make it into the top four.

Even though Lian Canghai, who was nurtured by the Iron family, had achieved the highest rank, he’d only placed at number five. This was due to him being lucky in that the selection had suddenly shortened to one year. If it wasn’t for that, then Lian Canghai’s ranking likely would’ve decreased even more.

Xie Tianshu, the Xie family’s direct descendent, had only placed at number seven after putting forth all that he had.

Iron Dazhi wasn't even worth mentioning. He'd only gone to make a fool of himself.

It was rather Tang Hong, this unloved and much belittled character who had burst onto the scene with amazing and eye catching moves. He'd been much more impressive than Lian Canghai and Xie Yufan.

How would sect head Xie Tianshu and venerated elder Iron Long dare meet forefather Thousandleaf's gaze? They all felt incredibly guilty.

"Hmph, feeling guilty now?" Thousandleaf's anger had yet to dissipate as he glared, hectoring. "Look at all of you, do you know of Jiang Chen's background? Whoever knows about it, speak up! The more detailed your knowledge, the better."

The Iron family had actually investigated Jiang Chen's past before.

However, they were completely unwilling to describe just how his life had been. After all, they were the pitiful backdrop to his rise.

They were the biggest stepping stone to Jiang Chen's rise in the Skylaurel Kingdom.

They naturally didn't want to mention such a forlorn history.

Xie Tianshu knew a bit about Jiang Chen's basic information, so he briefly went over it at this time.

Forefather Thousandleaf frowned. "This is all common knowledge, everyone within the sects already knows about this. Is there any behind the scenes knowledge? Such as who is Jiang Chen's backer?"

"Is it not spirit king protector Ye Chonglou?" Xie Tianshu was surprised.

Thousandleaf snorted coldly. "Ye Chonglou walked out from our halls. I rather admire him, but this matter isn't that simple. Is there no deeper intelligence?"

Xie Tianshu smiled wryly. "That I don't know. Should we ask Ye Chonglou to come in for a visit?"

"Sect head, lordmaster Ye Chonglou has been in closed door cultivation for almost a year and has yet to emerge." A sect elder said lowly.

Forefather Thousandleaf felt vaguely irritated. There was a puzzle in his heart that he wished to solve.

He was still thinking back on the scene of Jiang Chen killing Long Juxue in the ring, but he couldn't think it through—just how did Jiang Chen accomplished this?

Born of humble origins, how many fortuitous occurrences would he have had to run into in order to rise from the dust and slaughter Long Juxue, who had an innate constitution?

And, when this matter had happened, Sunchaser had charged towards the ring, but had been halted by a force suddenly and even spat out blood when he fell.

Who had been the one to act?

None of the various sect heavyweights mentioned the matter after exiting the Eternal Spirit Mountain, but everyone was well aware and still thinking about it.

Just what kind of perverse talent did that person have to make even Sunchaser spit out blood?

That such an expert had appeared in the sixteen kingdom alliance made forefather Thousandleaf quite curious.

He wanted to know the relationship between this mysterious person and Jiang Chen.

It was because of this inquisitive desire that he'd summoned everyone to look for information about Jiang Chen.

But their performance greatly disappointed him.

That the Precious Tree Sect's intelligence network could be so poor made him almost want to go on a rampage.

Just as the atmosphere became a bit awkward, a faint sound traveled in from some corner below. "Forefather, your subordinate..."

This person was in the most remote corner, and appeared to be merely a senior executive.

This was a meeting of the highest levels, and although executives had the right to participate, they could only sit in the most remote corners.

A censure came from the elders' seats as soon as this person stood up. "Fei Xuan, you're just a small executive. What right do you have to speak here? Sit the hell back down!"

The person speaking was elder Iron Can, the son of the head of the esteemed elders, Iron Long.

The senior executive who'd stood up was the person in charge of Qingyang Valley—old man Fei Xuan.

Fei Xuan had handed over a Renewal Purity Pill to Xie Tianshu and saved his precious son's life. This had enabled him to become a senior executive, a change as big as a carp leaping over an arch to become a dragon.

He originally had not much of a right to speak, but when he'd heard that everyone was discussing Jiang Chen, he had a great deal of right to speak about this.

At first, he'd considered his position and hadn't dare say much.

But after the forefather had grown angry, and none of those seated here had any answers, old man Fei seem to vaguely feel that his chance had arrived again.

He finally stood out after giving it much thought.

Who knew that he'd subjected to a loud censure just after he stood up, before even speaking? Fei Xuan and Iron Can had formed a grudge when they were young, so Iron Can naturally wouldn't allow Fei Xuan to obtain any glory in front of him.

Forefather Thousandleaf's brow furrowed when Iron Can cried out, and he became even more displeased with the Iron father and son's performance.

Xie Tianshu was well versed at observing expressions, and his face changed as well. "Iron Can, what are you yelling and shouting about? If he has no right to speak, then what right do you, demoted to an elder-in-waiting, have to speak?"

Iron Can was ashamed and could say nothing. He really didn't dare retort back against the sect head's hectoring.

Xie Tianshu was indeed ticked off. Fei Xuan was someone he'd raised and the savior of his son's life. How dare Iron Can lecture him like this?

After beating back Iron Can, Xie Tianshu spoke warmly to Fei Xuan. "Fei Xuan, what do you have to say? I've heard that you were close to Jiang Chen in the Skylaurel Kingdom? If you offer any good intelligence, the forefather will raise you even higher."

Fei Xuan grew emotional and nodded. "This one is indeed close with Sir Jiang Chen. Sir Jiang Chen received pointers from an expert when young. According to my speculations, the person behind him is likely from a stronger domain. With Sir Jiang Chen's knowledge and methods, his mentor is definitely not someone from the sixteen kingdom alliance."

It wasn't that Fei Xuan was selling out Jiang Chen, but that he felt the latter was their own since he was a Precious Tree Sect disciple now. It should be fine as long as he didn't speak of any critical matters and only mentioned Jiang Chen's fortuitous occurrences. This would also aid the rise in Jiang Chen's position.

To be honest, Fei Xuan felt great gratitude towards Jiang Chen. He was the most worried out of anyone when Jiang Chen had failed to return this time.

After all, he'd taken Jiang Chen for his young master, and had long since viewed Jiang Chen as his great backer.

The he heard that Jiang Chen had soared to the top with

astounding moves during the selection, he'd felt that it was both to be expected and a bit shocking. After all, it was simply too stunning that Jiang Chen had killed Long Juxue, someone who had an innate constitution.

However, his intelligence made Thousandleaf's thoughts move.

"Fei Xuan is it? Where does your knowledge come from?" Forefather Thousandleaf asked with a warm expression.

"In response to the forefather, this one has dealt with Jiang Chen more and once heard it straight from his lips. According to my covert observations, Jiang Chen's words are not false."

Forefather Thousandleaf nodded, "Only this makes sense. Otherwise, a secular disciple should not have such heaven defying performances, no matter what is the case."

Having received more intelligence, Thousandleaf actually began to comfort himself. "If the mysterious expert is the one supporting Jiang Chen, he'll think of a way to free Jiang Chen from the mountain. Ai, it is our sect's fortune that Jiang Chen has chosen us. I wonder if this will still count when he emerges from the mountain?"

Forefather Thousandleaf was a bit worried, worried that Jiang Chen wouldn't think much of the Precious Tree Sect.

However, there was no point in contemplating this right now. He

swept his eyes around and stopped on Tang Hong. Forefather Thousandleaf knew that if he wanted Jiang Chen to accept the sect, he'd have to play the card called Tang Hong properly. If he played this emotional card now, he may be able to gain Jiang Chen's support that way.

"Alright, the selection is over. The future of the sixteen kingdom alliance hangs in the balance, so we have no time to waste. From today forth, I will personally tutor Tang Hong, Lian Canghai, and Xie Yufan."

Thousandleaf announced and then flicked a glance at Fei Xuan in the corner. "This Fei Xuan is not bad. He still thinks of the sect even after being exiled from the inner sect. He is an example to us all. Tianshu, you should make use more of people like this. A position of senior executive is too low, how will he be able to display his talents? I think that one such as Fei Xuan should join the ranks of the elders."

Thousandleaf had gained an abundance of useless information from the senior executives, but had gained much more useful information from Fei Xuan.

Therefore, he felt kindly disposed towards Fei Xuan and wanted to give him a hand.

After all, Fei Xuan was close with Jiang Chen. Valuing him meant another emotional card he could play.

Forefather Thousandleaf then said to the three after giving his

orders, “Come with me.”

Tang Hong however, said, “Forefather, your disciple would like to make a visit to the Skylaurel Kingdom first and take care of the people who are with boss Jiang Chen.”

Tang Hong was worried that the Iron family would vent their rage on Jiang Chen’s people in his boss’ absence. Therefore, he decided to take care of them first.

Chapter 411: Eighth Level Spirit Realm

Thousandleaf nodded with appreciation. “I’ll give you three days. Fei Xuan, you’re more familiar with the secular world, so accompany Tang Hong.”

Thousandleaf looked around in a circle when he was finished. “Remember, Jiang Chen is a member of the Precious Tree Sect regardless of whether or not he is alive or dead. His family and friends are people that we must protect as well. If anyone dares move against them, that is the same as fighting against our own. If I find out someone had done so, I will not let them off easily!”

Jiang Chen was now the Precious Tree Sect’s treasure, and its most precious one at that.

How could forefather Thousandleaf possibly allow the Iron family to harass Jiang Chen’s people? If they irritated Jiang Chen, then all would be for naught in the end!

Therefore, forefather Thousandleaf actually had personally given a warning.

When the Iron father and son duo heard this, they were both privately dejected. They knew that this meant the Iron family would be stomped underfoot by Jiang Chen in the future!

They only had one thought in their minds right now, and that was hoping that Jiang Chen never walked out of the Eternal Spirit Mountain. He better die in there!

In the Skylaurel Kingdom, everyone in the Jiang manor knew that the selection was over, but was greatly astonished that Jiang Chen hadn't walked out from the mountain.

Jiang Feng had long since left the manor, and there were only Jiang Chen's third uncle Jiang Tong and his cousin Jiang Yu left at home.

Neither of these two had the power to make the decisions in the Jiang manor, so the final word was left up to Gouyu.

"Jiang Chen is the boss of me, Tang Hong. I will not leave his family to fend for themselves. You can go to the Precious Tree Sect if you need protection. I will guarantee your safety."

"We appreciate your good intentions, but we have decided to stay here and wait for the young master's return." Gouyu's attitude was also firm.

She didn't believe that Jiang Chen would fall and resolutely believed that he would return safely.

With Xue Tong has their leader, all the other personal guards expressed determined attitudes as well. They did not want to move to the Precious Tree Sect and wanted to stay in the capital instead.

Their attitudes were clearly defined. If the young master had yet to enter the Precious Tree Sect, then neither would they as

followers. Otherwise, it would be an improper act.

Although they were all secular disciples, they had spent a great deal of time with Jiang Chen and had inherited a similar self pride.

Tang Hong also sighed with admiration when he saw this. “You guys follow my boss alright! You guys are the spitting image of my boss. Alright, wait here if you’d like instead. If anyone comes make trouble for you, just mention my name or go to the sect to find forefather Thousandleaf. In fact, the forefather himself has even given instructions about this!”

Forefather Thousandleaf, a venerated origin realm cultivator was paying personal attention to this! This made Gouyu and the others feel pride swelling from within their hearts.

What did this mean?

This meant that the young master had indeed soared to astounding heights this time. Even an origin realm cultivator valued his existence. Even if his current status was unknown, the origin realm cultivator still didn’t dare let any of his people suffer.

This obliquely reflected on the young master’s current position.

When Tang Hong left, Crown Prince Ye Rong and Tian Zhao of the Dragonteeth Guard all came to visit and inquire how everyone was doing. They didn’t give the Jiang family the cold shoulder just because Jiang Chen had yet to return.

……

Time flew as if on the back of an arrow; the days and months flashed by like a weaver's shuttle.

Half a year passed by unconsciously just like this.

After half a year of hard work, Jiang Chen had solidified his control in the seventh level spirit realm and was showing slight signs of breaking through.

The concentration of spirit power in the sky quadrant was ten times that of the outside world's. Cultivating here for half a year was the equivalent of three to five years in the outside world, or possibly even more.

Jiang Chen had faced no distractions in the half year here. He hadn't needed to consider the exams, opponents, farm points, or his ranking.

Therefore, apart from occasional conversations with Elder Shu and Huang'er in this half year, he'd spent almost all his efforts in cultivation.

The unconscious Chu Xinghan awoke after spending three months in a coma. A complex interplay of emotions flowed in his heart when he discovered that the person who'd saved him was Jiang Chen.

However, he was an open minded person after all. When Long Juxue hit him with that blow, he knew that his relationship with the Purple Sun Sect was over.

Jiang Chen didn't speak words of encouragement to him. Since he had woken up, it was up to Chu Xinghan's heart and soul if he could regain his faith and set foot on the path of martial dao again.

Chu Xinghan truly did feel his heart was dead inside in the beginning. But as time went on and he witnessed how furiously Jiang Chen cultivated everyday, he was rather touched.

He'd heard that Long Juxue had been cleaved into two by Jiang Chen in the ring.

When he heard this, a knot in Chu Xinghan's heart was undone immediately. It seemed like all his lost vitality and belief had been found again.

"Even Long Juxue of the innate constitution had been cleaved into two with one blow. It can be seen that on the path of martial dao, so-called geniuses and domineering auras are all nothing. I am a man, my master has abandoned me, my peers tried to harm me—when none of these have destroyed me, what reason do I have to wallow in self pity? What else do I have to lose?"

Chu Xinghan suddenly understood all that Jiang Chen had done for him when his thoughts traveled here, and he understood Jiang Chen's hard efforts as well.

“Jiang Chen…”

A light of deep contemplation sparkled in Chu Xinghan’s eyes as he looked in the direction of Jiang Chen’s residence. He knew that Jiang Chen had been the one to save him, and he’d only lived until now because of Jiang Chen’s pills.

Having taken a walk in front of death’s doors, Chu Xinghan had gained great comprehension and understood true human nature.

“To think that the one who’d want to kill me would be the master that I have served with great loyalty all along, and the one who saved me would be the very enemy that I wanted to kill with all my strength. How ironic! I am so laughable to have been fenced in by foolish thoughts of filial piety all my life, ones that almost condemned my own life in the end.”

Chu Xinghan thought clearly and felt that he was still the lucky one.

When thinking of the others beneath Master Shuiyue and how she lacked talent now, even his former eldest senior brother had defected to the Flowing Wind Sect.

“I must live, and keep on living!” A strong desire to live grew in Chu Xinghan’s heart. “My life was given to me from Jiang Chen. I clearly delineate my grudges and favors. I must repay this debt of gratitude even if I die.”

Once Chu Xinghan's desire to live was formed, his strong dao heart immediately gave him boundless motivation to train.

On this day, Jiang Chen suddenly felt a surging momentum in his spirit ocean that abruptly brought him to the edge of breaking through.

Jiang Chen was delighted by this. He'd thought that breaking through to the eighth level spirit realm would require a bit more time. He hadn't thought that it'd arrive so soon.

Since the timing to break through had arrived, how would Jiang Chen let it pass him by?

He gathered up his strength for one go as the spirit energy in his spirit ocean became increasingly lively, continuously assailing a higher level.

Finally, when a current of spirit qi had completed a full circulation, he advanced another step forward in the spirit realm and set foot into eighth level spirit realm.

"Hoo! I hadn't thought that the eighth level would arrive so quickly, much faster than I'd anticipated!"

Jiang Chen didn't dare tarry as he hastily solidified his foundations after breaking through to another level.

……

In a yard not too far away, Elder Shun stood with his hands behind his back, looking leisurely at the residence that Jiang Chen was in. He sighed lightly. “This Jiang Chen is truly a perverse genius. Just how many secrets are present on him? Or has he truly been possessed by a god?”

When Jiang Chen had suddenly gone from useless fop to genius in the Eastern Kingdom, general sentiment had been that he’d been possessed by a divine being.

Elder Shun had heard of it in the Hall of Healing, but had dismissed it with a sniff, utterly contemptuous of these words.

But now, he had to truly wonder, had Jiang Chen really received a divine visitation?

In this world, those with stronger cultivation and strength would have deeper understanding of the matters of the gods.

Elder Shun had never doubted the existence of the gods. It was because he believed they existed that he didn’t believe Jiang Chen had been possessed by one.

Now that he looked back on Jiang Chen’s life, there really had been divine touches all over the place. Jiang Chen was someone he paid particular attention to, so he knew quite a few more details than the forefathers.

However, Elder Shun was a gentleman after all. He didn't start prying into Jiang Chen's affairs just because of the latter's performance.

He knew that if he became nosy and started posing quite a few questions, it would surely give rise to Jiang Chen's wariness and even result in his aversion and antipathy.

In this way, this would go against Elder Shun's desires and affect the chances of healing Huang'er's ailment.

Elder Shun knew that the geniuses of the world all had their own fortunes. No one had the right to ask anything, unless they had nefarious designs.

Elder Shun didn't have any conspiracies towards Jiang Chen, so he was only grateful towards Jiang Chen's diagnosis and Huang'er's treatment. He didn't ask further about Jiang Chen's various heaven defying performances.

Jiang Chen also showed a great accord and never mentioned where these things came from.

"Huang'er, how have you felt in this half year?" Elder Shun sighed lightly and turned his head to ask.

"Huang'er has felt much better this half year in accordance with Sir Jiang's instructions. Even when the symptoms seemed that

they would flare up a few times, they could all be suppressed by the ‘Ethereal Soothing Melody’. Sir Jiang is a man of great talent.”

Huang’er was filled with great admiration and gratitude whenever she mentioned Jiang Chen.

“Mm, Jiang Chen must have an uncommon heritage that no one else knows about. Huang’er, who would’ve thought that old man Qian Ji’s divination would be thus miraculous? I am rather curious now how far will Jiang Chen go? I have even higher expectations for him now.” Elder Shun didn’t conceal his good feelings towards Jiang Chen at all.

“If Elder Shun admires Sir Jiang so much, why not take him as your disciple so you can carefully mentor him?” Huang’er’s tone held a few joking traces.

Elder Shun chuckled. “I have to say, I really did think about this. However, I’ve observed Jiang Chen and let go of this notion afterwards to prevent myself from undertaking a fruitless endeavor.”

“Why do you say this?” Huang’er started.

“Jiang Chen is exceedingly opinionated. His every step on his path has been laid out according to his plans. This is the true mind of a genius. In addition, although he knows that my strength is far in excess of the four forefathers, he’s never revealed any traces of wanting to cozy up to me. He has his self pride and his own mind. This kind of genius will naturally have his own path in rising. I

originally wanted to take him away from this, but now I feel that he should walk his own path. I should not overly intervene in his path!”

There was a tantalizing hint of something mysterious in Elder Shun’s voice.

Chapter 412: Plans To Leave, Elder Shun's Request

"Hoo!"

Jiang Chen's eyes opened again after two days of meditation. Breaking through to the eighth level had caused more dao inspiration to spring forth from within, ideas gushing forth like a newly excavated spring.

The benefits of refining the Fire Raven King core were becoming more apparent day by day.

"To think that the benefits of the Fire Raven King core would be thus. At this rate, if I continue to stay in the sky quadrant, I could likely make for the ninth level spirit realm after three months."

Jiang Chen could clearly feel that his spirit ocean had an abundance of spirit power thanks to the boundless source of energy from the Raven King core.

"Mm, this is the path of martial dao that I, Jiang Chen, wish for. This is the exciting life of martial dao!" Jiang Chen was in extremely good spirits when he sensed the vibrant spirit power in his mind.

"However, I've been away for too long. I wonder how the outside world has changed? The Purple Sun Sect will not rest after I've slaughtered Long Juxue. Although, if they vent their rage on my

people, there'll be no safe harbor for them to take shelter in the vast Skylaurel Kingdom."

Jiang Chen's heart lay with his people. He felt that although the Eternal Spirit Mountain was extremely suitable for cultivation, he would still leave resolutely.

Otherwise, having worries constantly circle him would cause his state of mind to be in disarray. This would be a disadvantageous impact to his cultivation.

"I'm now at eighth level spirit realm, and only one step away from ninth level. Once I reach the ninth level, I'll be able to do as I will in the sixteen kingdoms, barring interference from the forefathers. But even in the eighth, I have no need to fear when faced with those in the ninth level. I'll be able to put up a fight even against a spirit king."

Jiang Chen's continuous breakthroughs had also raised his confidence.

As his cultivation level rose and he mastered all of the forms of the "Vast Ocean Current Splitter", he began to develop the technique to a higher level, utilizing mysteries not found in the original method.

His comprehension of the dao of the sword had surpassed that of when he killed Long Juxue.

He’d also long since completed the nine cycles of blooming and wilting of the “Divine Aeons Fist”. The strongest aspect of this technique lay in its ability of rebirth.

The mysteries within the “Divine Aeons Fist” meant that when Jiang Chen practiced other techniques, he would be able to naturally assimilate various techniques, allowing them to reach unthinkable heights.

Jiang Chen was also well versed in the four great arts of the “Moonshatter Flying Daggers” now. Add the throwing daggers forged from the Raven King’s tail feathers, and it was like giving wings to a tiger.

The most critical thing was that as the four divine arts of the “Moonshatter Flying Daggers” continued to improve, the power of this technique would continue to increase as well.

God’s Eye, Ear of the Zephyr, Boulder’s Heart, and Psychic’s Head all continued to improve as Jiang Chen broke through.

His trump card, the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice could now control forty nine vines at any given time.

The abilities of the Lotus were dependent on his cultivation level.

The stronger his body and spirit ocean were, the stronger the Lotus was as well.

This meant that the Lotus was also continuously evolving and improving.

It was a heavenly treasure to begin with, but its current form was still a far cry from its peak condition.

Jiang Chen was well aware of this, so he cared deeply about the Lotus' evolution.

"It's a pity that I could not refine Long Juxue that day in the ring. If I could've taken Long Juxue's innate constitution, the Lotus would've risen by more than just one level."

Although Jiang Chen felt vaguely regretful, he didn't mind it terribly. There would be many more opportunities like these in the future.

Apart from the Lotus, the magnetic golden mountain was also a great treasure trove.

Ever since entering the sky spirit realm, Jiang Chen's control over the magnetic power had grown more and more refined. He could easily deploy a magnetic force field now, but he was still a ways off from a magnetic storm.

"If I could form a magnetic storm, I would be able to fight even if I met the forefathers. At the very least I will have confidence in escaping if I can't hold my own in battle."

Even though he was still a ways off from generating the magnetic storm, he'd already started practicing the evil golden eye.

The beam of light that had shot out from the evil eye on the magnetic golden mountain had left a deep impression on Jiang Chen.

This art was more useful than any hidden weapon. With a single glare, all enemies would be frozen by the immense magnetic power before they'd had time to react. How domineering of this art!

Therefore, Jiang Chen spent the majority of his time in recent days practicing this art.

It was a difficult matter to train the evil golden eye. It was a good thing that Jiang Chen had practiced God's Eye, and had a firm foundation in the arts that made use of his eyes.

He used the metal essence power everyday to forge and temper his aura.

The evil golden eye wasn't just an art of the eyes, but one of the strength of heart as well. It combined the metal essence power with strength of heart to create an enormous power that froze one's soul and consciousness in an instant, then used the metal essence power alone to spontaneously petrify them.

To Jiang Chen, this evil golden eye art was basically a divine art that was tailored for him.

He possessed everything needed to train in it, and possessed them in spades.

Having cultivated God's Eye, his eye arts were far in excess of his peers.

Thanks to Boulder's Heart, his strength of heart was so strong that even the origin realm forefathers stood in admiration.

His source of metal essence power would never be exhausted thanks to the magnetic golden mountain. Add Jiang Chen's daily refining of the elemental energy into himself to temper his body and train the Nine Transformations of Demons and Gods, he had no shortage of metal essence power.

He possessed all three requirements in abundance.

Therefore, Jiang Chen quickly picked up the evil golden eye. Thanks to his foundation in eye arts, he encountered a lot less trouble and pain in the course of his training.

With his immense strength of heart and comprehension skills, he actually achieved quite a breakthrough with the evil golden eye over these months. Although it paled in comparison to that employed by the enormous sculpture on the mountain, Jiang Chen still possessed roughly thirty percent of the sculpture's power.

"Hmm, if I'm ever able to deploy fifty percent of the sculpture's

power, then I'll be able to instantly annihilate those on the same level as me. If I possess seventy percent of its power, then I'll be able to distract even spirit kings. If I can harness a hundred percent of its power, then I'll have hope to challenge even the origin realm forefathers. If I surpass it... then I will have full confidence when facing origin realm cultivators."

Jiang Chen was well aware that there was no limit to the evil golden eye's aura, just like that one beam of strength from the enormous sculpture hadn't been its ultimate blow.

How strong the evil golden eye was, was entirely dependent on the cultivator.

If Jiang Chen made it into the origin realm, he would still be able to easily smash his peers' faces in when he deployed the evil golden eye.

He finally set foot out of the door after he'd resolidified his grasp over all his techniques. He was in a great mood as he breathed in the unique air of the sky quadrant.

I wonder how Miss Huang'er has been in my days of closed door cultivation?

Jiang Chen hadn't forgotten his responsibilities as he pushed through the door and walked towards Huang'er and Elder Shun's residences.

“What? You want to leave?”

Jiang Chen raised his desire to leave when he saw that Huang’er’s condition had stabilized. Elder Shun was slightly surprised when he heard this.

Jiang Chen nodded affirmatively. “I’ve been away too long and some matters in the secular world still weigh on my mind. I might as well go back and take a look instead of being constantly uneasy. It would be difficult for me to progress in my cultivation here in this way.”

If one’s mind was uneasy during cultivation, it would be very easy to give rise to internal demons.

Elder Shun was silent for a moment and nodded lightly, asking, “Do you plan to return to the Precious Tree Sect then?’

“Yes, since I’ve chosen them, I need to give them an answer as well. Now that crisis is rearing its head in the sixteen kingdom alliance and changes are shifting rapidly through the situation, it would be a pity to miss it all.”

Jiang Chen didn’t become arrogant even though his cultivation level had kept increasing. His feet remained firmly planted on the ground.

When he thought about how the sixteen kingdom alliance was just a small corner of the world, the joy that he’d felt in defeating

Long Juxue seemed to minuscule in comparison.

Killing Long Juxue was just the finishing touch on their grudge, it was nothing to be happy about. The truth challenges were just about to begin.

He didn't have the ambition to soar to the skies in one move, but wanted to do things slowly but surely.

Elder Shun had an obvious admiration of Jiang Chen's attitude. This young man was neither cocky nor hasty, and didn't consider himself as having rendered a great service after diagnosing Huang'er. Jiang Chen never put forth a variety of requests or wanted to learn of any gossip from him.

This young man was neither arrogant upon victory, nor dejected upon defeat. He didn't reach for anything beyond his grasp and wasn't self complacent.

"In this case, I will need to trouble you for Huang'er's ailment. That's alright, it's time to leave anyways. I will now begin to travel the world and search for the Requiem Wood. However, Huang'er is sick and thus unsuitable to accompany my travels. I am also helpless when her symptoms flare up. Would it be an intrusion to give over Huang'er over to little brother Jiang's care?"

Elder Shun had actually considered these words for quite a while, and finally spoke them after careful consideration.

He wanted to leave and seek the Requiem Wood.

However, he hadn't been able to bear to leave Huang'er and fretted over her.

After a few months, Elder Shun finally made up his mind that Jiang Chen was a dependable man before speaking these words.

Jiang Chen looked at Huang'er. She happened to be looking at him as well. Her gaze was noncommittal and leisurely, but he understood the meaning in her eyes.

Even if he declined this request, she would understand and wouldn't blame him in the least.

However, since he had made his diagnosis, Jiang Chen was of the mind to see things through the end. He knew that the Requiem Wood must be located. Since Elder Shun had made this request of him, his sense of honor had made it impossible for him to refuse.

After all, it was only natural for him to do so after his life had been saved twice.

"As long as Miss Huang'er doesn't think I am crude and base, I am happy to take care of you. Miss Huang'er herself is very intelligent, so there's not much for me to worry about at all.

Jiang Chen's words meant that he was agreeing to Elder Shun.

Elder Shun was delighted by these words. He'd been afraid that Jiang Chen would refuse.

When Huang'er heard the tone of acceptance in Jiang Chen's words, an odd light flashed through her eyes as well. Her heart trembled as a trace of being touched flashed through her heart.

She had disguised herself with such ugly features because she'd wanted to test this secular youth's character.

When she saw that he didn't have the slightest aversion to her ugly face, this was when she was certain that Jiang Chen was a true gentleman.

However, Elder Shun's departure made her slightly saddened. After so long, she'd long since grown used to their mutual reliance.

Even though she knew that his sudden leave was for her ailment, she still felt a bit lost in that moment.

Chapter 413: Return To Skylaurel Kingdom

Since Jiang Chen was to return to the Precious Tree Sect, this put Chu Xinghan in a rather awkward position.

Jiang Chen had saved Chu Xinghan's life, and he wanted badly to repay Jiang Chen, but he was still a Purple Sun Sect disciple after all. To someone as loyal as he was, the notion of him flocking to the Precious Tree Sect's banner was a bit tough to accept.

Therefore, when Chu Xinghan heard that Jiang Chen would return to the Precious Tree Sect, he was a bit dazed, then said resolutely, "Jiang Chen, I owe you my life. You can come take it whenever you want. I would rather be a wandering cultivator all my life than throw myself at the mercy of another sect. Please understand. If there comes a day that you leave the Precious Tree Sect, summon me at any time and I will be there, awaiting your orders."

Jiang Chen did indeed greatly admire Chu Xinghan and didn't want to force the man to follow him.

He smiled slightly, "It's not that I saved your life, you saved your own. With my style, I only ask for a clear conscience, not for any return."

Chu Xinghan was well aware that Jiang Chen was open and straightforward. His admiration for Jiang Chen grew even greater.

Elder Shun laughed heartily on the side, "It just so happens that I

am going to travel the four seas and lack someone to keep me company. Chu Xinghan, the fates of you and I seem to intersect. Are you willing to stay by my side and be my companion?”

Elder Shun had saved Jiang Chen from Chu Xinghan’s hands back at the Second Crossing.

Chu Xinghan had been able to set his feelings aside with good humor. This had invoked a few traces of admiration in Elder Shun.

And now, destiny had strung them all together in the Eternal Spirit Mountain.

To Elder Shun, this was fate.

Jiang Chen was also delighted to hear this. If Chu Xinghan followed Elder Shun, it would be a great stroke of fortune for him. He immediately smiled, “Brother Chu, Elder Shun is an acclaimed expert of our times. If you can stay by his side and serve him, it would be the making of a new you.”

Chu Xinghan naturally wouldn’t put on airs. Elder Shun had used just a random move that day at the Second Crossing to dispel all of his attacks. The divine arts contained within that move had been something far exceeding that of his honored master Shuiyue.

Jiang Chen had learned later that Elder Shun had used some tricks to run circles around the four forefathers.

This meant that he was much stronger than them.

Now that Elder Shun had extended an invitation to Chu Xinghan to accompany him, that was an incredible change in fortune. What reason did he have to turn the elder down?

He immediately bowed deeply and said respectfully, “Xinghan is willing to follow by Elder Shun’s side, available for beck and call at the side of your saddle to serve you.”

Huang’er felt a bit better when she saw that Elder Shun had taken Chu Xinghan for a follower. She too was worried that Elder Shun would feel lonely as he drifted too and fro in his advanced age.

Chu Xinghan also seemed like someone with a good personality, and was loyal. It would rather be a good thing to have him by Elder Shun’s side.

When the two sides had finished discussing, they left the Eternal Spirit Mountain and the legacy territory through Elder Shun’s handiwork.

Jiang Chen and Huang’er were to head to the Precious Tree Sect, and Elder Shun would take Chu Xinghan in traveling the lands to search for the Requiem Wood.

When Jiang Chen watched the departing figures of Elder Shun taking Chu Xinghan away, he sighed softly. He was genuinely

happy at the sight of such an outcome for Chu Xinghan.

When Huang'er saw Jiang Chen sigh, she asked out of curiosity, "Why does Sir Jiang sigh so?"

"Chu Xinghan's life has been tumultuous. Being at Elder Shun's side is a good final destination for him, so I'm happy for him. Of the disciples in the four sects, those who can enter my line of sight are few and far in between. Chu Xinghan is frank and forthright with his own principles. He is indeed a true man."

Huang'er was slightly lost in thought and gave a long sigh after a while. "Sir Jiang only knows to compliment others, but do you know that you are such a person as well?"

Jiang Chen laughed heartily, "I don't know if I'm a true man, but I do know that my grudges and debts of gratitude are clearly defined, and I always repay kindness. Please be at ease, Miss Huang'er, I will not let Elder Shun down and will take good care of you."

Huang'er smiled, her downcast feelings of parting with Elder Shun lightening when she saw that Jiang Chen was sincere. She felt that Jiang Chen was someone open and genuine, easy to get along with.

"Elder Shun and Chu Xinghan have gone far, and we should be on our way as well." Huang'er withdrew her gaze from the distance, steadied her emotions, and spoke to Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen nodded and set off with Huang'er, heading for the Skylaurel Kingdom.

What he hadn't thought of was that no matter how fast he went, Huang'er was able to keep tightly to his pace. She would never take even half a step in front of him, but neither would she fall too far behind.

This surprised Jiang Chen, and he became quite curious about her cultivation level.

He recalled that day when he felt her pulse that Miss Huang'er had an exceedingly deep level of cultivation, but he actually couldn't estimate her abilities.

"Miss Huang'er and Elder Shun's origins are mysterious, and their strength is unfathomable." Although Jiang Chen was curious, he didn't nose around.

The two of them occasionally conversed as they traveled, but Jiang Chen never asked where they'd come from.

On this day, they finally set foot into the capital of the Skylaurel Kingdom.

Huang'er had put on a black cape. She wrapped herself up firmly and hid her face behind a veil.

Jiang Chen felt that this was because Huang'er was self conscious

about her appearance and didn't say anything.

All was orderly in the Jiang manor, with nothing falling into disarray just because Jiang Chen was absent.

"Young master?" Xue Tong discovered Jiang Chen as soon as he reached the door and yelled out excitedly.

The other personal guards dashed out when they heard this shout, delighted beyond words.

Their last parting had resulted in a leave of almost two years. Everyone had undergone great changes in the meantime.

They had all been young folk, but had all grown and become muscular after two years.

Xue Tong in particular had broken through to the spirit realm, whereas the others were all at the peak of the true qi realm, a mere step away from the spirit realm.

Jiang Chen swept his gaze across all of their faces and smiled. "Not bad, not bad!"

When he walked in the front door, he saw Gouyu standing on the steps of the courtyard. Her figure was still stunning, but her face seemed a bit thinner, imparting more natural beauty to her.

“Young master, you’re finally back.”

Gouyu was still the eldest amongst them all and thus more mature. But no matter how she tried to conceal the agitated emotions in her heart, they were still revealed in the deepest corners of her eyes.

It was apparent her happiness upon that Jiang Chen’s return wasn’t any less than that of Xue Tong and the others.

It was just that she was the de facto person in charge when the young master was gone, and so she didn’t lose her composure like the others.

“Haha, Gouyu, you seemed to have slimmed down these past two years. These two years have been tough on everyone.” Jiang Chen grew lighthearted when he saw that all was well within the manor. “Is my third uncle and Jiang Yu well?”

“The third lord and young master Yu are all very well.” Xue Tong responded.

“Mm, let’s go inside and chat.” Jiang Chen was about to go inside when he suddenly halted, smiled, and pointed at Huang’er. “This is Miss Huang’er, a friend of an old friend.”

“Hello Miss Huang’er.”

Xue Tong and the others all made their greetings.

Gouyu also walked over with a charming smile and latched onto Huang'er's arm. "Miss Huang'er, since you are our young master's friend, be at ease here."

Huang'er smiled and was happy to see that Jiang Chen's pretty follower was openminded and friendly.

"Hello older sister Gouyu."

Gouyu saw that the other had remembered her name immediately, and that her voice was as pure as the heavenly tones. This made her entire being seem quite otherworldly and ethereal.

Therefore, Gouyu was immediately insatiably curious. Where did the young master pick up this old friend? Miss Huang'er's voice is so unworldly, the dulcet tones of a fairy. Just how extraordinary is she?

She became rather curious about Huang'er's face beneath the veil.

Huang'er also seemed to sense Gouyu's thoughts as she gave a soft smile. Girls were remarkably sharp when it came to these matters.

She knew that older sister Gouyu must have some feelings for her young master, so she couldn't help but be curious about other girls.

Huang’er was an empathetic sort as she lightly tugged her veil, revealing the ugly features.

Gouyu was slightly surprised to see this, but that surprise immediately transformed into concentrated apology. She knew that her probing just now had made Miss Huang’er misunderstand.

Huang’er’s move had been to dispel Gouyu’s curiosity and misunderstanding.

Gouyu felt rather awkward now. She was curious, yes, but didn’t mean so in a jealous manner. She felt greatly apologetic that Miss Huang’er had been forced to show her face.

“Miss Huang’er…” Gouyu murmured and wanted to explain herself.

Huang’er smiled faintly. “Older sister Gouyu, I should’ve shown you my true face to begin with. It is I who have been rude.”

Gouyu felt quite conquered by Miss Huang’er’s demeanor. She felt it quite a pity that Miss Huang’er was so kind and straightforward, but her looks were a blemish in an otherwise perfect whole. What was even more rare was that she didn’t have the slightest bit of an inferiority complex with showing her face to others. This kind of leisurely bearing could only come from a daughter of an eminent family.

Surprise and guilt filled Gouyu's heart in that moment.

She grasped Huang'er's hand that felt so soft it was almost boneless. "Younger sister Huang'er, you live here from now on. I'll be your champion if anyone dares bully you!"

Gouyu was kindly disposed to this kind and openminded girl, and her protective instincts exploded in a second.

Jiang Chen chuckled and didn't say anything.

It was yet to be determined who would protect who. However, Gouyu's personality was open, fierce, and tough. She was quite direct about her likes and dislikes, and must be feeling guilty towards Huang'er about her actions just now. Wanting to protect her was completely in line with Gouyu's personality.

Huang'er knew that this was a true and genuine girl when she saw Gouyu thus. She didn't reject Gouyu as she smiled gently, "Then I must thank my sister first."

The two of them walked inside hand in hand, chatting and laughing.

The news of Jiang Chen's return spread quickly to the palace, the Dragonteeth Guard, and every corner of the entire capital.

All of the nobles couldn't sit still as they all set out for the Jiang manor.

Please, Jiang Chen had risen from the Skylaurel Kingdom, and was now first amongst the younger generation with his return!

With this identity, who would dare mistreat him? They couldn’t wait to fawn on him enough!

Chapter 414: Dan Fei's Letter

Towards the end, even the king of the Skylaurel Kingdom was motivated to action as he brought a hundred civil and military officials to the Jiang manor to offer his congratulations.

Although the proclaimed purpose was to offer felicitations, everyone's thoughts were actually the same. They wanted to strike up a relationship with Jiang Chen, fawn over him, and pay public tribute to him.

There was no question about it. Jiang Chen's position was higher than even the king's.

As a result of his foundation and identity, the king of the Skylaurel Kingdom wasn't someone who would be afraid even when in the presence of an ordinary elder of the Precious Tree Sect.

However, a genius like Jiang Chen wasn't someone that an ordinary sect elder could measure up to.

In this half year, numerous versions of the various legends surrounding Jiang Chen had arisen, depicting his performance in the selection as extravagantly as flowers falling from the sky, unaccountably magical.

Although these legends had been added to, his string of titles was very real.

The champion of the first secular selection, champion of the mystic and earth quadrants, and victor of the final matches, he'd become the undisputed final champion through destroying powerful opponents along the way and killing Long Juxue in the end.

Long Juxue had become a legendary genius in the sixteen kingdom alliance because of her innate constitution.

However, this legendary genius had been unable to escape her fate of being cleaved to death with one stroke.

That single blow had been enough to explain everything.

Not to mention that forefather Thousandleaf, someone who'd never concerned himself with secular matters, had personally spoken that the sect would protect the Jiang family without regard to whether Jiang Chen was alive or dead.

From this, it showed just how much the Precious Tree Sect valued Jiang Chen.

And now that Jiang Chen had emerged from his confinement, he was as if a dragon returning to the seas, destined to herald a new myth of a legendary genius in the sixteen kingdom alliance.

Could they refrain from fawning over such a character?

If they missed this chance, who knew if Jiang Chen would come back to the Skylaurel Kingdom again? Even if he did, when would he do so?

This was definitely their best chance to get into his good graces.

Jiang Chen obviously hadn't expected such a development either.

Although the Jiang manor was spacious, when the nobles and powerful of the entire kingdom arrived on his doorstep, with all of them bringing their children, it made the scene entirely too raucous. These visitors itched to bring the entire younger generation from the families so that their young could learn from Jiang Chen. Even receiving one or two pointers would result in lifelong benefits.

The royal family had to step in and maintain order due to the explosive enthusiasm. They put on a royal banquet to welcome Jiang Chen, inviting all the nobles of the kingdom to attend, but limiting each family to two people.

Even so, the atmosphere was quite fervent.

Jiang Chen had long since grown accustomed to this. It was a common sight to see people flock to those with power.

He didn't refuse these arrangements and interacted closely with fourth prince Ye Rong at the banquet, using his actions to proclaim to those present that he still supported Ye Rong and was his strong

shield.

Ye Rong's gains were the greatest in this regard. Everyone up and down the capital knew that Ye Rong's position of heir apparent couldn't be touched.

Even the king himself didn't dare to make any more changes to Ye Rong's position again.

The Azure Heaven Southern Palace, Qingyang Valley, and Myriad Treasures Palace had a ball of a time at the banquet thanks to their close relationship with Jiang Chen.

Palace head Ning in particular was even more emotional. She was deeply thankful that she hadn't married off her daughter to Xiao Yu of the Northern Palace and had chosen Qiao Baishi instead. Otherwise, she'd be so eaten away with regret right now to the extent that her very insides would be green.

The Myriad Treasures Palace was close to Jiang Chen because of Jiang Yu. Vice head Shi Xiaoyao was full of compliments for Jiang Chen.

Thanks to Fei Xuan becoming an elder, Qingyang Valley had abruptly risen to the head of the four sites. All of this was thanks to Jiang Chen, so he naturally held great admiration for Jiang Chen.

Apart from the four sites, general director Shangguan Yi of the Dragonteeth Guard was also deeply appreciative and greatly

thankful that he hadn't lost his wits to stand with vice director Yang Zhao originally. Otherwise, where would he be in this banquet today?

He likely wouldn't even be sitting in his position as general director still.

The banquet ended amidst a carefree atmosphere, with some feeling unsatisfied coming up to further heighten their relationships with Jiang Chen. Jiang Chen didn't hold himself aloof as he responded to all of them politely.

Jiang Chen gathered again with those closest to him when all the guests had left.

Prince Ye Rong sighed, "Young master Chen, I count as one who tapped into your potential more in the Skylaurel Kingdom, but I must admit that I never thought you would make it to this point."

Although Tian Shao didn't say anything similar, his faintly smiling expression indicated that he quite agreed with the prince.

They were all companions in adversity, and so the atmosphere was quite lighthearted.

Jiang Chen raised his cup, "To those difficult times of misfortunes."

Everyone laughed heartily and raised their cups.

Tang Long was sitting next to Tian Shao. After a few years of development, he had grown into his own and been promoted to commander. However, he was even more respectful now when he saw Jiang Chen.

His life had been utterly changed by Jiang Chen. With his grassroots origins, him becoming a commander in the Dragonteeth Guard felt almost like a dream.

Lin Qianli of the Azure Heaven Southern Palace, Prince Ye Rong's confidante, was also present. He had attended Ye Chonglou's birthday banquet along with Jiang Chen.

When Lin Qianli had first met Jiang Chen, he'd actually been a bit opposed to the latter and even looked down on him. Now that circumstances have changed with the passage of time, he could only sigh with emotion at what had happened between the two of them.

"Young master Chen, I, Lin Qianli, have never much conceded to anyone else in my life. I admire you from the depths of my heart and concede to you." Lin Qianli was proud, but had to accept the situation in the face of a true expert.

Everyone laughed again and raised their cups.

However, everyone was well aware that Jiang Chen's path would depart from this place after tonight, and the trajectory of their lives would be greatly different in the future.

Even if their friendship didn't fade, their interactions would be few and far in between.

After they'd finished drinking, Prince Ye Rong personally saw Jiang Chen to the door and spoke in a sincere tone. "Young master Chen, your future is boundless with this departure. If you have free time one day, come and take a stroll in the Skylaurel Kingdom. The doors to the capital are always open for you."

Jiang Chen took a look at Ye Rong and then at Tian Shao and Tang Long.

He saw that their faces were all filled with sincerity.

"We've been through thick and thin. Come find me at the Precious Tree Sect if anything comes up." Jiang Chen had wanted to discuss the disadvantageous straits that the sixteen kingdom alliance was in with them.

However, telling them this now would only increase their worries. Therefore, he decided to keep it to himself.

After all, if any major changes occurred in the bigger picture now, it wasn't anything that the power of a secular kingdom could handle.

After he took his leave, Jiang Chen walked over to the Tutor Manor. After two years, Jiang Chen wanted to see if the old tutor

had succeeded in assailing the origin realm.

However, when he arrived, he saw some of the tutor's personal guards instead.

"Sir Jiang Chen? The lordmaster is still in closed door cultivation and has yet to emerge." The guard had obviously heard of Jiang Chen's legends and spoke quite respectfully.

"Oh? Yet to emerge?" Jiang Chen smiled faintly. "It seems like the lordmaster has gained much from this time's closed door training."

He then looked inside the door but didn't see Dan Fei. He was slightly surprised by that. Dan Fei and the old tutor mutually depended on each other for survival. Why would she be absent during this time?

"Is Miss Dan Fei absent as well?" Jiang Chen was curious.

The personal guard slapped his forehead. "Me and my goldfish memory. I was too agitated upon seeing Sir Jiang Chen and almost forgot the most important matter. Miss Dan Fei has left the capital for almost a year now."

"Left the capital?" Jiang Chen couldn't imagine at all how Dan Fei would leave the capital when the old tutor was in closed door cultivation.

“Yes, Miss Dan Fei also left a letter saying to give it to you if Sir Jiang Chen came looking for her. If you didn’t come, we were to burn it after three years.”

The personal guard took out a sealed letter from his clothes and handed it over.

Jiang Chen accepted it but didn’t open it. He responded. “If the lordmaster emerges from closed door cultivation or if Miss Dan Fei returns, please tell them that I’ve already returned to the Precious Tree Sect.”

The personal guard nodded his head rapidly, “Yes, yes.”

Jiang Chen didn’t want to bother the old tutor’s closed door cultivation. He felt slightly lost as he walked beneath the moonlight, threading through the alleyways dotted with shadows from the trees. For some reason, he fell into a despondent mood.

He suddenly recalled Dan Fei’s letter and opened it beneath the moonlight.

The letter was very simple, there was only—

Even thousands and thousands of words are insufficient, I will never regret pining for my love.

Jiang Chen’s fingertips trembled. How would he not understand these words? This was Dan Fei expressing her emotions and her

love for him through the letter.

He was speechless in that moment. When he thought about the various interactions he'd had in the Skylaurel Kingdom, he was a bit surprised. Logically speaking, how could Dan Fei be so straightforward with her headstrong personality?

Although the meaning behind these words were easy to decipher, but there seemed to be some deep meaning hidden within that Jiang Chen had yet to decipher.

From the calligraphy of these words, they seemed to conceal a thousand matters weighing on one's mind, such as utmost embarrassing and awkward situations. As if there were a thousand words the speaker wanted to say, but could only pen these few words in the end.

Jiang Chen looked at the words but couldn't comprehend them in the end. Just what had happened to Dan Fei that she would suddenly confess her feelings with such ardor and so openly?

These words obviously had great emotions behind them, and would arise only after one's yearning had reached to an extreme.

However, their relationship had never seemed to progress to this step. Dan Fei's face and words rose in Jiang Chen's mind, but he still couldn't make sense of things.

However, he was an open minded person. He would disdain or

hold Dan Fei's feelings in contempt. He put the letter back and stored the letter in his storage ring.

It was already the middle of the night when he returned to the Jiang manor.

However, everyone had yet to sleep. Xue Tong was the first to report the happenings of these two years when Jiang Chen returned.

"Young master, the Hall of Healing in the Eastern Kingdom would send a share of profits every three months from the three pills we left them. However, this has suddenly stopped in the past half year. Perhaps something might have happened to them? They used to be very punctual."

Chapter 415: Return To The Eastern Kingdom

Jiang Chen had long since stopped asking after the share in profits from the Hall of Healing. It was Xue Tong and the others handling it all. This was because money from the secular world had long since stopped being his main source of income.

However, he was still slightly surprised by Xue Tong's news.

The Hall of Healing had always done things properly, particularly with regards to the sharing of profits. They'd always purposefully fawned on Jiang Chen and were very prompt with delivering the money.

For it to have stopped for six months straight meant that something must've happened. The Hall of Healing wouldn't have done this on purpose.

"Can it be that robbers discovered the courier's path and intercepted the deliveries, or something has happened in the internal management of the Hall of Healing?"

Jiang Chen's brow furrowed. He really didn't care much about the division of profits.

However, he still minded the Hall of Healing a bit. He'd arranged for a position in the Hall of Healing for his steward, making him a senior executive in the Hall of Healing and receiving ten percent of

the profits.

Some others may succumb to a heart of greed because of wealth, but Jiang Zheng was loyal to a fault and would never lust after Jiang Chen's money.

When his thoughts traveled there, Jiang Chen was certain that something must've happened to the Hall of Healing.

"Have Gouyu come see me!"

When they heard Jiang Chen's summons, all the other personal guards made their way over as well.

"Young master." Gouyu stepped forward.

"Has Xue Tong informed you of the matters with the Hall of Healing?"

Gouyu nodded, having obviously been briefed earlier.

"What do you think?"

Gouyu thought for a moment before saying, "As much courage as they might ever have, the Hall of Healing would never be so bold as to withhold your share. Something must have happened."

Gouyu's thoughts were the same as Jiang Chen's.

"Since this is a case, let's make a trip back to the Eastern Kingdom." The more Jiang Chen thought about it, the more out of place he felt all this was. A foreboding feeling surged to the forefront.

When one's cultivation had reached his level, particularly his strength of heart, one's intuition was often very strong and accurate.

When everyone saw Jiang Chen thus serious, their hearts sank. Had something really happened to the Hall of Healing?

"You are all dismissed."

The Jiang Chen of now wasn't the Jiang Chen they once knew. He'd experienced much in the two years in the legacy territory and had matured greatly.

His strength of mind had risen more than ten times. He wouldn't feel panicked and disturbed even if the sky caved in.

Jiang Chen summoned all his personal guards early the next day.

He originally had eight guards, but Ke Mu, Shen Yifan, and Bi Yun had gone off to participate in the selection and had thoroughly lost contact with the Jiang manor.

There were only five left now—Xue Tong, Guo Jin, the Qiao brothers, and Wen Ziqi, as well as Gouyu, a personal guard in name, but a steward in truth.

“There must be a reason behind the Hall of Healing’s matter. I plan on going back to take a look, what do all of you think?”

Having left their homes for too long, all of them actually wanted to go back and take a look as well. Joy blossomed on their faces when they heard Jiang Chen’s words.

“Young master, just give us the order when you’d like to set out.” Gouyu was even more direct.

“This matter cannot be delayed, so we will set out now.”

All of the Goldwing Swordbirds gathered with Jiang Chen’s call. All of the Goldwing Swordbirds he’d brought with him had now evolved fully to the spirit rank.

Having these hundreds of Goldwing Swordbirds meant he had a hundred spirit rank experts by his side.

“Younger sister Huang’er, I forgot to tell you that the Eastern Kingdom is our old home. This time…” Gouyu suddenly wondered what Miss Huang’er should do if they all left.

Huang'er naturally knew that the Eastern Kingdom was their old home. After all, she'd lived there for quite a long time as well.

The Hall of Healing was also the place where she'd taken refuge.

So when she heard the name 'Hall of Healing', she too was paying a bit of attention. However, she naturally couldn't speak these words.

"Older sister Gouyu, if all of you are going, then please let Huang'er keep you company along the way."

Huang'er was open and forthright without putting on any coquettish airs at all.

After spending a day together, Gouyu was becoming ever fonder of Huang'er's personality. When she heard that Huang'er would come along as well, she was naturally delighted.

"Young master, should we notify palace head Qiao?" Xue Tong suddenly asked.

Jiang Chen thought for a moment, "That's alright. Qiao Baishi has no more ties with the Hall of Healing, let's not embroil him into these controversies. Just us is fine, let's go!"

Jiang Chen whistled lowly and leapt up on the back of the Goldwing Swordbird he'd always ridden.

The Goldwing Swordbird hadn't seen action for a very long time. It was naturally beyond itself with itself and shrieked shrilly, its sound traveling for ten li.

The others wasted no time in hopping onto their Goldwing Swordbirds to break through the air, following Jiang Chen's movements and leaving swiftly.

The skies above the capital were magnificent without parallel in that moment.

Golden shadows streaked through the heavens, soaring to the clouds and presenting an impressive sight.

The entire capital broke out in cheers and celebration. Everyone knew that the golden shadows represented Jiang Chen and a legend of the Skylaurel Kingdom!

These jubilatory sounds indicated the citizens' pride and glory, their hero worship of Jiang Chen, and their happy send off for him.

Huang'er sat on the back of a Goldwing Swordbird and heard the great rises and falls of the celebratory sounds below. Her heart was slightly touched by them.

"Sir Jiang never purposefully seeks the limelight or displays his might, but naturally becomes the center of attention no matter

where he goes and is admired and respected. This isn't just a matter of unparalleled potential and great strength. Perhaps it has much to do with his personality and charisma?"

Huang'er also smiled warmly when her thoughts traveled here. As she traveled with the wind, she only felt that the entire world had suddenly brightened and opened up to her. She had the feeling of a fish being able to leap as it could through expansive seas, and a bird soaring at will through the boundless skies.

It was as if those beside Jiang Chen all had a unique charisma that could sweep away the shadows of her heart like the sunlight of spring. They could dispel the worries of her life and expel the negative emotions wreathed about her heart.

Huang'er could admit now that the only ray of light in her heart hadn't departed along with Elder Shun.

Jiang Chen and those beside him had used their sincerity and friendliness to scatter down even more radiant beams on her. This sunlight was something that she'd never been able to find in her previous life and environment.

She rather liked this kind of simple, carefree, and lighthearted feeling. Therefore, she delighted in the current situation and wished dearly that she could erase the twenty some past years of her life, excising the scheming and pettiness that had filled her life from her memories.

She liked this kind of simple and leisurely life that was filled with

sunlight.

Jiang Chen and the others returned to the Eastern Kingdom borders within a day.

Even after multiple years, every single blade of grass and tree within the Eastern Kingdom was still as if before.

It didn't matter much to Jiang Chen, but Gouyu was quite an emotional person and actually felt a bit apprehensive now that she was close to home.

"Sister Gouyu, are you feeling a bit hesitant now that you are home?" Huang'er was a very empathetic being and asked with a slight smile.

Gouyu didn't deny it as she sighed lightly, "I'm embarrassing myself in front of my younger sister. I only remembered that my surname is 'Eastern' upon setting foot on this land."

To one of the Eastern clan, her love and hate of this land had already settled into her blood and bones. That kind of sentiment was something that couldn't just be thrown away.

"Young master, where should we go?" Xue Tong asked.

"Let's reserve an inn." Jiang Chen had cut off all ties with the Jiang family in the Eastern Kingdom and thus naturally wouldn't go to the Jiang Han manor.

Only if his ole dad Jiang Feng was present would the Jiang Han manor be the true seat of the dukedom's power.

"Gouyu, do you want to make a trip back to the palace?"

Gouyu thought for a moment, "I'd like to go visit Zhiruo."

Jiang Chen nodded. "If we can, let's take the little girl with us when we leave this time. She'll be happier living beneath your protection."

When Jiang Chen thought of Eastern Zhiruo and her yin constitution, a sort of shared commiseration grew in his heart.

"Xue Tong, make a trip to the Hall of Healing first and find out what's going on. If you can, tell Jiang Zheng to come see me."

Jiang Chen didn't want to charge in immediately to the Hall of Healing and denounce them for their crimes.

His status and identity were now different. There was no need to make the situation so awkward in the very beginning. He had come only to understand what had happened in the Hall of Healing, not to call them out publicly.

Xue Tong accepted his orders and was about to set out on his way.

Jiang Chen however, said, “A moment. Xue Tong, I no longer have much use for this Da Yu bow. You should take it. It would be greatly useful to you in terms of defense and utility.”

Xue Tong was delighted. The Da Yu bow was a four times refined spirit weapon and an absolute treasure to him!

After many years, the Hall of Healing was still the foremost power amongst the Eastern Kingdom. The Heavenly Karma Pill and two other pills were selling like hotcakes throughout the sixteen kingdom alliance. The speed at which the Hall of Healing was accumulating wealth was exceedingly fast. It quickly became one of the strongest pill powers within the sixteen kingdom alliance.

Xue Tong quickly arrived at the Hall of Healing and saw that all present were unfamiliar faces as soon as he set foot inside. There wasn’t a single person that he recognized.

It seemed as if the entire Hall of Healing had changed its appearance.

“Sir guest, what do you need?” An associate approached to ask when he saw that Xue Tong’s bearing was uncommon.

“I’m looking for someone.” Xue Tong said faintly.

“Oh? Sir, you seem to look unfamiliar, who might you be looking

for?”

“Is senior executive Jiang Zheng in?”

When the associate heard the name “Jiang Zheng”, his expression flickered slightly before immediately forming an apologetic expression, “Senior executive Jiang Zheng? He hadn’t been in lately. Sir guest has made the trip for nothing.”

“Not in? Where’s he gone?”

“This is a difficult question for me. My position is lowly and humble. I do not interact with the senior executives.” The associate’s tone rang of obvious perfunctoriness.

Xue Tong frowned. “Then who else is here amongst the executives? Is lord hallmaster Song Tianxing present?”

“No.” The associate shook his head.

“Ying Wuyou?”

“He’s not here either.” The associate’s tone became more and more unfriendly.

Xue Tong’s face sank as he looked around. Roughly a hundred armored cultivators bristling with weaponry charged out from all directions, surrounding Xue Tong with vicious expressions.

Chapter 416: Big Changes

Xue Tong was wholly unafraid when faced with this scene. He laughed coldly, “It seems that the Hall of Healing really has changed hands?”

“Kid, who are you?” The associate’s eyes were sinister as they shone with a violent light.

“It doesn’t matter who I am. I just ask you, where’s Jiang Zheng? Where’s Song Tianxing? Where have Ying Wuyou and the others all gone?”

Xue Tong possessed a decent temper and didn’t fly off the handle despite being surrounded.

“Hmph, you ask too many questions. Take him!” The associate gave the order with a wave of his hand.

When the cultivators heard the order, they all rushed over and swung their weapons, wanting to trample Xue Tong into the ground.

Xue Tong was surprised to see that these were all advanced true qi realm cultivators. When did the Hall of Healing start spending money so easily?

The Eastern Kingdom was just a third rate kingdom.

Someone of the advanced realm of true qi was at the strength of a duke.

When had the Hall of Healing's ordinary cultivators reach the advanced realm of true qi? Anything out of the ordinary was always to be suspected, so Xue Tong knew immediately that an enormous change had occurred in the Hall of Healing.

However, how would Xue Tong, one who'd set foot in the spirit realm, think anything of these true qi realm cultivators? He snorted lowly and brandished his sleeves, sending out a ripple of spirit qi. It grew into great waves, sending the cultivators who were charging flying backwards.

Xue Tong floated next to the door with a flash of his body. His gaze was cold as he looked towards the associate. "This matter is far from over. If anything's happened to Jiang Zheng or Song Tianxing, all of you can wait for your heads to hit the ground!"

Xue Tong had only come to gather intelligence and hadn't received authorization for anything else. Therefore, he didn't start a fight and decided to leave.

A light huff sounded from within the Hall of Healing just as he'd made it outside the door.

A current of awe-inspiring sword qi screamed through the air.

Spirit qi along with a thick sense of killing intent. A spirit realm

cultivator had made their move!

Xue Tong was greatly taken aback. When had a spirit realm expert appeared in the Hall of Healing?

He spun to the side to evade this fierce blow as he protected his vitals with a sweep of the Da Yu bow.

Suddenly, a few figures dashed out from the Hall of Healing as they whoosh whoosh whooshed to the courtyard in front of the Hall of Healing, encircling Xue Tong.

There were four figures, and all of them small spirit realm cultivators.

Xue Tong gaze flicked from one to another, noting their trap formation.

His face grew cold. “What? You plan on killing someone in broad daylight?”

One of the silver armor clad cultivators laughed coldly, “You were the one who didn’t recognize the situation you were in. If you want to blame someone, blame yourself for having a fat mouth. Kill him!”

The four spirit realm cultivators formed a circle formation in a breath, surging forward and slicing through the air with their swords.

Xue Tong however, felt greatly reassured with the Da Yu bow in hand.

He gave a clear whistle and a golden shadow broke through the air. It was the Goldwing Swordbird that Xue Tong had ridden on. Its sharp claws made a grasping motion and flung two vicious beams of light at two cultivators.

If any of them were caught by these clawing motions, they would certainly be ripped to pieces.

The two under attack knew the strength behind those beams of light as their swords danced, defending themselves with all their strength.

The Da Yu bow emitted popping sounds that burst through the air as Xue Tong waved it. Air currents shot out of the bow as if silk, slicing down towards the last two cultivators.

One would always end up worse off when fighting two against four.

Xue Tong used one move to force two opponents back and then whistled lowly before crouching. He shot straight up into the sky, intending to land on the Goldwing Swordbird.

“The kid’s getting away, kill him!”

The four cultivators discovered Xue Tong's intentions and rose into the air before the Goldwing Swordbird could soar away, sending their attacks in midair.

After landing on the Goldwing Swordbird, Xue Tong's heart felt greatly settled.

He brandished the Da Yu bow and pulled out two arrows.

He shot them in quick succession, sending them drilling straight towards the two pouncing on him with impressive momentum.

Whoosh!

Their two bodies hung in the air as they hadn't anticipated the speed of Xue Tong's arrows.

Neither of them reacted in time as the two arrows connected with audible sounds. However, the arrows had landed in their thighs and hadn't hit any vitals. The two behind Xue Tong drew rainbow arcs in the air with their swords, cleaving through the air towards Xue Tong.

Although the Goldwing Swordbird shot forward, the air current from their swords were faster as they carved bloody gashes into his back with soft sounds.

Xue Tong only felt his body grew cold as blood spurted out of his wounds. It was a good thing that the Goldwing Swordbird's

forward motion had negated much of the force behind the attack. So although he'd been hurt, he hadn't been split open.

Even so, Xue Tong knew that today wasn't the day to stay and fight. He gave his steed its head and broke through the clouds.

The four cultivators could only look dumbly at the vanishing golden dot in the air, dejected and regretful beyond belief. It had been four against one, but they hadn't succeeded!

The silver armor clad cultivator frowned, "Go in and report to the supervisor. This person is of unknown origins, and will likely end up getting in our way."

Two of them hauled their injured comrades and walked inside.

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When a bloody Xue Tong appeared in the inn, Jiang Chen's expression immediately darkened.

"Young master, your subordinate was inept and couldn't complete what you'd requested of me." Xue Tong had a look of chagrin on his face.

Jiang Chen suddenly stood up with a thick sense of killing intent on his face. "The Hall of Healing dared make a move against you? When did Song Tianxing become so bold?"

“It wasn’t Song Tianxing.” Xue Tong smiled ruefully. “It looks like everything’s changed in the Hall of Healing. Song Tianxing, Yin Wuyou, and steward Jiang Zheng are no longer there. A group of complete strangers look like they’re in charge of the Hall of Healing.”

“What?” Jiang Chen was completely taken aback.

The Hall of Healing was the Eastern Kingdom’s representative organization, why had they suddenly changed owners for no reason at all?

“Come, let’s go take a look.”

Jiang Chen wasn’t the sort who liked to start trouble, but he wasn’t afraid of it either, particularly when the other had laid hands on Xue Tong without so much as a by-your-leave. That was no different from them taking action against Jiang Chen.

Even if the trouble had been from the original lord hallmaster Song Tianxing’s hand, that wouldn’t have been acceptable either, not to mention those new owners who seemed to be in charge now!

And speaking of which, why had the Hall of Healing just suddenly upped and swapped out owners like this? There was definitely something afoot here.

Jiang Chen didn’t care about Song Tianxing and the others, but

Jiang Zheng was his old steward and confidante. He was someone marked by Jiang Chen, and now that he'd gone missing for seemingly no reason, Jiang Chen would absolutely not sit idly by.

Gouyu also returned from the palace as they were speaking.

"Young master." Gouyu looked like she had something to say, but stopped.

"What is it?" Jiang Chen's brow furrowed slightly. Judging from Gouyu's expression, there was indeed something that she found difficult to speak of.

"I just returned to the palace and saw Zhiruo, as well as the king Eastern Lin."

"How were they?"

Embers of rage smoldered subtly in Gouyu's eyes, "Much has happened in the Eastern Kingdom in this half year. The Eastern ancestor emerged from closed door cultivation, but was killed within the capital by an unknown assailant. The Hall of Healing was taken over an an unknown force a few months ago. They said that Song Tianxing and the other senior executives had sold the Hall of Healing to them for an astronomical price and given the organization over to them."

"The Eastern clan ancestor was killed?" Jiang Chen was also surprised by these words.

Gouyu didn't have many feelings for the ancestor of the Eastern clan. When the Long family had rebelled, this so-called ancestor had remained in closed door cultivation. Gouyu now thought that the ancestor had likely been afraid of the Purple Sun Sect backing Long Juxue, and so had used closed door cultivation as an excuse to avoid disaster.

Now that he'd been killed, she didn't mourn at all.

However, that someone had dared kill an Eastern clan ancestor in the Eastern Kingdom was simply too cocky, and they'd seized the Hall of Healing to boot!

Jiang Chen gaze snapped back to Gouyu, sensing she wasn't quite done yet.

"What else is there? Let's hear it all."

Gouyu sighed lightly and looked at Jiang Chen, "The royal family received this news not too long ago either... your Jiang family in the Jiang Han territory.. in the course of a night..."

"What?" Jiang Chen's heart sank. Although he didn't have many emotional ties to the Jiang family, that didn't mean just anyone could bully them.

"The Jiang family was razed to the ground overthe course of a night and has become ruins."

“What?!” A frosty layer covered Jiang Chen’s face in a heartbeat. “Where are the people? Are they all dead?”

“Almost all dead. There are a few core Jiang family members whose bodies we couldn’t find, but the ordinary members, including the servants, were all buried in the ruins.”

Bam!

Jiang Chen slammed a fist viciously onto the table.

This was eradicating his clan!

“Do you know who did it?” Jiang Chen controlled his emotions with great effort as he asked sternly.

“We don’t have any concrete intelligence for now. The news of the Jiang family’s destruction has been cordoned off. However, from the feedback of those who were on scene, it seemed that those who destroyed the Jiang clan were looking for something. The surroundings had been thoroughly turned over.”

It no longer mattered what the reason for this atrocity was.

The important thing was, the Jiang family clan had been annihilated!

Although Jiang Chen had no emotional ties to it, and he and his father had long since drawn lines separating themselves, it was still the Jiang family.

Jiang Chen knew that if his father knew of the Jiang family clan being exterminated, he would be absolutely heartbroken.

“Come, we go to the Hall of Healing!”

Despite the many thoughts running through his mind, he was well aware that he would have to start off with the Hall of Healing first. He had an intuition that all this had much to do with the change in ownership at the Hall of Healing.

Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh, whoosh!

Countless streaks of golden light flashed through the skies above the Hall of Healing. The golden light surrounded the upper skies of the Hall of Healing within a few breaths.

“Xue Tong, you stay here and control the Goldwing Swordbirds, encircle the entire structure. From now on, people can only enter and not leave. Kill anyone who leaves!”

The flames of Jiang Chen’s desire to kill had been stoked to new heights.

“Gouyu, follow me down.” Jiang Chen instructed.

“Yes.”

Huang’er had been tagging along behind Gouyu and thus said without thinking, “I’ll accompany Sir Jiang down as well.”

Huang’er had spent quite some time in the Hall of Healing and had some feelings for it. When she heard that something had happened, she felt she couldn’t sit idly by either.

The Hall of Healing was as if facing an enormous enemy. The entire area had been on high alert following Xue Tong’s departure. When Jiang Chen and the two others landed, cultivators rushed out en masse and surrounded the Hall of Healing inside and out.

“Who dares trespass on the Hall of Healing!”

Jiang Chen’s gaze grew cold. “I only ask one question. Is Song Tianxing still in charge of the Hall of Healing?”

“Song Tianxing? Haha! People and matters of days gone by! Piss the hell off right now if you recognize the situation you’re in! The Hall of Healing isn’t the same Hall as before. No matter how great your background, you’re dead without a doubt for offending the Hall!

Jiang Chen revealed a frosty smile upon hearing this. “Then this is indeed not Song Tianxing’s Hall of Healing anymore? Then you lot are invading robbers! Since you wanted to be a robber, then you

surely were prepared to die!”

Jiang Chen ignored the hundreds of people in front of him as he spoke, completely sidelined the sharp blades, swords, spears, and axes as he slowly advanced forward.

His powerful aura increased by ten percent with every step, slowly crushing down on the door like an enormous mountain.

Chapter 417: Jiang Chen's Rage

"Eh? What's going on? I can't move my hands!"

"Me too... this... this person knows some sort of demonic art?!"

"This is bad, this is the aura of the spirit realm! Everyone kill him altogether now!"

"Kill him! He only has a few at his back and there's hundreds of us, why would we be afraid of him!"

The few hundred cultivators were arrayed haphazardly in front of the Hall of Healing's doors and jeering arrogantly.

Jiang Chen's gaze grew icy as he suddenly glared, the evil golden eye sending out a scintillating beam of light from his eyes.

Pfft!

The light shot into all the ruffian cultivators' eyes. The cultivators shook when their eyes came into contact with the light, their bodies quickly losing all feeling.

It was like their souls had been frozen over. The surge of power caused their bodies to stiffen. Before too long, the cultivators were as still as statues, as if someone had poured liquid bronze or iron over them to cast lifelike statues.

Jiang Chen waved his hand. “Let’s go in.”

Gouyu and Huang’er looked at each other, slight shock in their eyes. This was a man who was truly enraged!

This kind of divine art even somewhat amazed Huang’er. In that moment, she felt like she couldn’t see through Jiang Chen.

Gouyu was even more flabbergasted.

However, the two were concerned about Jiang Chen’s safety and followed him in without hesitation.

“Who is in charge of the Hall of Healing now? Get the hell out here!”

Jiang Chen’s voice boomed like rolling thunder, rocking the interior and exterior of the entire Hall of Healing in an instant. His presence was awe inspiring as his voice echoed endlessly.

“Who dares trespass and act wildly in the Hall of Healing?!”

“Kill him!”

“Ah, ah!!”

Two voices had just risen in response before ghastly cries quickly followed. As they fell to the ground, it was obvious that Jiang Chen had destroyed them as soon as they'd called out.

Jiang Chen lifted his hand lightly and spoke with a merciless tone, "I will count to five. After five, if those within the Hall aren't within my line of sight, then I'll eradicate you all with no exceptions!"

"Five!" Jiang Chen began the countdown.

"Four!"

"Three!" Jiang Chen's voice counted down in an unhurried manner. His enormous aura kept spreading to every corner of the Hall of Healing.

"Two!"

When he counted down to two, those within the Hall of Healing walked out of the shadows because they could no longer bear the pressure of his aura. They walked out to the main lobby.

They were well aware that if they really stayed stubbornly inside, this strong newcomer would kill even the dogs and chickens in the Hall.

They were all cultivators. They could sense the raging fury behind the aura. This was absolutely something they couldn't

resist.

"One!"

Jiang Chen pointed with his finger and counted everyone who'd stepped out. His gaze was an arctic chill as it swept the cultivators in front of him.

"You. Step out." Jiang Chen pointed at someone in a silver robe. He looked to be in middle management.

The person cowered as his legs quivered and shook. He didn't dare not come out in the face of Jiang Chen's summons and so his teeth chattered wildly.

"He-hello." The silver robed individual couldn't even speak properly in the face of Jiang Chen's enormous aura.

"Are you in charge of the Hall of Healing?" Jiang Chen's tone was remote.

"N-no..." The silver robed individual was so frightened that he was on the verge of wetting himself. "It's... Manager Lie is in charge."

"Where is he?" Jiang Chen continued to turn up the pressure.

The silver robed individual's teeth continued to chatter as he

broke out in a cold sweat. He couldn't control himself fully beneath Jiang Chen's enormous pressure. It was as if there was a power in this young man's eyes that was forcing him to submit.

"He's... he's not in the lobby. He probably didn't come out yet."

Jiang Chen nodded lightly, revealing a meaningful smile. He sent out his consciousness and began his search.

Having reached his particular level with Psychic's Head, a mere Hall of Healing was naturally incapable of escaping the reach of his consciousness. He quickly identified three more people hiding in the shadows of the Hall of Healing who had yet to emerge.

Huang'er, at Jiang Chen's side, suddenly smiled. It was apparent that her consciousness had also detected in that moment that there were some who'd yet to emerge.

"Sir Jiang, Huang'er has a bit of a history with the Hall of Healing as well. Allow me to help."

Huang'er spread out her hands after speaking. A guzheng appeared in front of her.

Huang'er's white, slender, jade fingers brushed softly across the surface of the instrument as several notes sounded.

The music was full of only faint killing intent in the beginning, but quickly gathered into a wild intent that roiled like the raging

seas. It surged towards three corners, forcing out the three in hiding.

Huang'er was only trying her hand at this. Even Gouyu couldn't see through the profound mysteries within that moment.

Jiang Chen however was extremely shocked. The deployment of this art seemed simple, but it embodied enormous mystical theories within it . Huang'er could actually control the direction of the notes. This kind of control over sound was something that Jiang Chen knew that he didn't have at the moment.

Waves of horrifying howls resounded from several secret chambers not too long after. The three fellows were covering their ears as they ran out shrieking and wailing. From their bedraggled appearance, they seemed as though they would collapse any second.

Huang'er smiled faintly and stopped when she'd achieved her purpose, not intending on stealing the limelight. She smiled slightly, "Sir Jiang, Huang'er can only do so much. The rest is up to you!"

"Many thanks for Miss Huang'er's just act of aid."

It wasn't that Jiang Chen was unable to force these three fellows out, but he wouldn't be able to do so as easily as Huang'er had just done so.

One of the three was wearing a golden robe and looked quite well off. In this moment however, he seemed quite panic stricken and worse for the wear.

“You must be that Manager Lie?” Jiang Chen’s gaze zeroed in on the man with the golden robe.

Manager Lie finally regained his senses when the music notes disappeared, but fear filled his eyes. He looked upon Jiang Chen, “Just who are you?”

Jiang Chen shook his head lightly. “I’m the one asking the questions today. Now, if you can’t give me a satisfactory answer to any of my questions, I’ll relieve you of one of your body parts.”

“First question is, where is Song Tianxing and the others?”

Jiang Chen’s consciousness locked tightly on him, not allowing a single false word to pass his lips.

Manager Lie stammered, “Th-they… they all left. They sold us the Hall of Healing at a high price… Ah!!”

He screamed hastily as he clapped his hand to his left ear, discovering it gone.

Jiang Chen smiled, a chilling sight, “One more time. Where is Song Tianxing and the others?”

Manager Lie was scared out of his wits as he tried to stop the blood from gushing out his left ear. He almost fainted. “They... they...”

Pfft!

Jiang Chen raised his arm. The enormous metal essence power came slicing out of his hand like blades, as fast as shooting stars, cutting off the man’s right ear as well.

“Ah!!” The ghastly screech rang out again. Manager Lie’s pant cuffs grew damp as he wet himself in pure fright.

“One last chance. If you don’t answer properly, then the next thing to hit the ground won’t be your ears, but your head.” There wasn’t the slightest hint of emotion in Jiang Chen’s tone.

“I... I’ll tell you! I’ll tell you! I’ll tell you everything!”

No matter how proud he was, Manager Lie could no longer hold on in the face of a life or death crisis. He didn’t doubt the harbinger of death in front of him was speaking the truth.

“We... took over the Hall of Healing. Song Tianxing wouldn’t cooperate, so we killed him.”

“You?” Jiang Chen laughed coldly. “You wouldn’t have such guts

by yourself alone. Who's behind this?"

"We came on orders to seize the three pill recipes of the Hall of Healing. The one who ordered us was the crown prince of the Shangyang Kingdom."

The Shangyang Kingdom?

Jiang Chen flicked a glance at Gouyu. He didn't know as much about the sixteen kingdoms as Gouyu did.

Gouyu hastened to say, "The Shangyang Kingdom is one of the four great kingdoms, just like the Skylaurel Kingdom. Shangyang Kingdom's relationship with the Purple Sun Sect is the same as the Skylaurel Kingdom's with the Precious Tree Sect."

Jiang Chen's face completely darkened when he heard these words. "The Purple Sun Sect!"

His eyebrow arching, Jiang Chen suppressed the flames of fury in his heard and asked, "Why did the crown prince of the Shangyang Kingdom set his sights on the Hall of Healing?"

How would Manager Lie still have the desire to resist now? He spilled out everything he knew like pouring beans from a bamboo container.

"The Shangyang Kingdom has been quite envious of the Hall of Healing crazily reaping wealth like it has in the last couple of years

with the three recipes. The crown prince has long set his sights on them. He received some sort of hint from the Purple Sun Sect this time saying that the Hall of Healing had lost its backer, so there would be no fear of retaliation. Therefore, the crown prince finally struck with full force after planning for a very long time in order to take the profits from the Hall of Healing."

It was normal for such a rich mark to be targeted after a while. However, since they'd successfully taken over the Hall of Healing, why slaughter the Jiang family clan?

It was obvious that something else was at play here.

"You'd already secured the Hall of Healing and the three pill recipes. Why slaughter the Jiang family clan?"

Manager Lie quickly responded, "I didn't participate in the slaughter. My authority is too low and I have no right either to inquire about the reasons behind this. It's said that those above weren't satisfied with just three pill recipes. They seemed to feel that there would be much more treasure in the Jiang family, this was why..."

All the various clues slowly formed into a clear bigger picture.

When it came down to it, this half year had been when he'd been trapped in the Eternal Spirit Mountain.

The other had made their move at precisely this time. Jiang Chen

would never believe that the Purple Sun Sect wasn't behind all of this.

Purple Sun Sect, the Shangyang Kingdom...

Fury raged in his heart. He swept a cold glance across the Hall of Healing, "Last question. Where is Jiang Zheng?"

"Jiang Zheng? He was taken to the Shangyang Kingdom. It seems that there are people who want to interrogate him specifically."

Jiang Zheng was Jiang Chen's confidante and steward, yet he had lived and been taken away. What did this mean? This meant that all of this had been directed at him, Jiang Chen!

"Come, we go to the Shangyang Kingdom." Jiang Chen said.

Gouyu and Huang'er looked at each other. They knew that the flames of fury had been thoroughly stoked in Jiang Chen's heart.

It was likely that the Shangyang Kingdom would be in for a terrible time after this. There would likely even be countless numbers of heads that rolled in the Purple Sun Sect.

Those in the Hall of Healing found it incredulous when Jiang Chen and the others walked out. They had escaped disaster just like this?

One of them laughed coldly. “Sonnuvab*tch! Scaring me half to death. He’s just a silver spear tip, good for showing and nothing else. Hmph, he must’ve been scared outta his mind after hearing the Purple Sun Sect eh?”

“Of course. Who dares provoke the Purple Sun Sect in the sixteen kingdom alliance?”

Those who’d lost their wits from fright earlier now all puffed out their chests and began talking tough, as if the sniveling wretches earlier hadn’t been them.

Suddenly, someone cried out. “Stop talking, do you hear that?”

Everyone quieted down and focused on their hearing. They seemed to hear scurrying sounds coming from underground.

Suddenly, the ground began trembling violently!

Bam!

The floorboards burst open as countless golden streaks surged out like a fountain, spreading out as if locusts.

The numerous Goldbiter Rats charged out and bit whoever they saw.

Agonized screams filled the air in an instant as rivers of blood

flowed.

Chapter 418: Besieging The Shangyang Kingdom

Those still alive within the Hall of Healing were all reduced to sticks of stark white bones within fifteen minutes. Not a single complete skeleton to be found.

Jiang Chen had been thoroughly provoked this time.

Extermination!

What had happened had absolutely crossed his bottom line. Even if he no longer had relations with the Jiang family, he wouldn't sit idly by and allow such a thing to happen!

The Shangyang Kingdom was indeed one of the premier kingdoms in the sixteen kingdom alliance. Because their backer was the Purple Sun Sect, they'd inherited the sect's style and typically acted about in a domineering fashion.

The king of the Shangyang Kingdom, Wu Tan, was an honorary Purple Sun Sect elder and had quite a network within the sect.

King Wu Tan had built quite an impressive kingdom, and his son Wu Hong was equally obsessed by ambition.

Wu Hong had gone for a tour in the Purple Sun Sect half a year ago. He'd paid much to befriend many sect disciples, and had

learned about Jiang Chen's matters from those who'd participated in the selection. He'd gotten the go-ahead for some matters, and all that had caused his ambition to overflow and burst forth.

Jiang Chen was a secular kid who'd risen from the Eastern Kingdom, but had demonstrated perverse progress from beginning to end, soaring to the top of the selection and then slaughtered the Long Juxue of the innate constitution!

Just what kind of heritage had Jiang Chen received?

There was no one in the Purple Sun Sect who wasn't sparked with curiosity.

It was because of this desire to know and the general public's view that he wouldn't be able to exit the Eternal Spirit Mountain that those within the Purple Sun Sect had decided to overturn the entire Jiang family clan. They wanted to see if they could understand what the Jiang family heritage was.

Wu Hong was just a pawn in the whole matter.

But he'd received many promises from the high ranks of the Purple Sun Sect.

The senior echelons of the Jiang family clan were all wheezing on their last breaths in the dungeons of the Shangyang Kingdom. It was apparent that lengthy interrogations had taken them to the limits of their endurance.

One white haired elder in particular was Elder Xi, the most senior person in the Jiang family. Blood continued to ooze out of the corners of his mouth as he muttered curses, “All of you dog of a robber! Just do away with me in a single slice if you’ve the guts to! Don’t even think of getting anything out of me!”

A middle aged person next to Elder Xi was Jiang Zheng. He barely resembled a human from all the torture he’d gone through.

Although he was no cultivator, Jiang Zheng was a tough old bird. All sorts of torture and interrogation techniques had been used on him over these days, including everything in the handbook at least once. Yet, he’d still refused to say anything.

“Elder Xi, don’t be afraid. The young master will come save us when he finds out what’s happened!” Although Jiang Zheng was a pitiful heap on the floor, he remained steadfast.

“Save you?” A man in a royal uniform laughed coldly. “You’re still holding out hope even when things have progressed thus far? Jiang Chen is contained in the Eternal Spirit Mountain, and there’s no one on heaven or earth who can save him!”

“Bullshit!” Jiang Zheng cursed loudly. “My house’s young master is favored by the gods! He would be able to bear up beneath the heavens collapsing, much less a mountain!”

Jiang Zheng didn’t have many advantages to speak of, but when it came to Jiang Chen, he blindly admired the latter and was a

typical brainless fan.

The uniformed man smiled slightly and leveled his whip at Jiang Zheng's chin. He spoke chillingly, "You're a rather loyal servant. However, you're dumbly loyal. As long as you cooperate and tell me about Jiang Chen, I promise you endless riches and glory in the Shangyang Kingdom. Isn't that better off than your tiny place of the Eastern Kingdom?"

"Pah!"

Jiang Zheng cursed loudly. "Although I'm not good for much, the Eastern Kingdom is my home! I was born in the Jiang family, and when I die I'll become a ghost of the Jiang family! Big deal about your screwy Shangyang Kingdom! If you aggravate my house's young master, he'll topple your country and destroy your home with a wave of his hand!"

The uniformed man grew irate and waved the whip, viciously cracking it again and again.

"Enough. He'll die if you keep whipping him."

A young man who'd been sitting on the side suddenly spoke up. He wore a robe made of python skin, and was crown prince Wu Hong of the Shangyang Kingdom.

Wu Hong smiled faintly, as if he acknowledged that Elder Xi and Jiang Zheng would be tough nuts to crack.

He walked over to another Jiang family elder. “Elderly one, I can see that your position in the Jiang family is middling. As opposed to dying aggrieved like this, why not cooperate? Tell me, what heritage did that Jiang Chen receive? Any clues at all?”

The elder was taken aback, obviously hesitating.

However, he didn’t know what to say as to what heritage Jiang Chen had received either. He only knew that this useless fop had suddenly seen the light after being caned on the orders of the Eastern Kingdom’s king. As for what reason, no one amongst the Jiang family members here knew why.

“Prince Wu Hong, it’s not that I don’t wish to cooperate, but that Jiang Chen had superficial relations with us to begin with. He didn’t let us know anything about him. Apart from Jiang Zheng, none of the others had deep relations with Jiang Chen. Besides, Jiang Chen wasn’t close to any of us. You’ve truly captured the wrong people Your Highness! If we were close with Jiang Chen, why wouldn’t we have gone to the Skylaurel Kingdom with him? Jiang Feng and Jiang Chen shunned us when they were still at home.”

This person had a rather glib tongue as he tried to escape this particular disaster.

Wu Hong snorted coldly upon hearing this. “So according to your words, you know nothing about Jiang Chen?”

“Indeed.””

“Since you know nothing, then you’re useless trash. What’s the point in keeping you?” Wu Hong suddenly unsheathed his sword and beheaded the old man.

Wu Hong’s gaze was cold as he stared fixedly at Jiang Zheng and Elder Xi, saying raspily, “My patience is limited. Today is the final deadline. If we still do not obtain anything from you, then all of you can accompany the Jiang family ghosts on their way to the underworld!”

Jiang Zheng started laughing in an ugly fashion. “Kill us then, why all the talk? My young master will find you sooner or later, and being an enemy of my young master is courting death! The Wu royals should take heed of your predecessors, the Long family!”

The uniformed man was incensed upon seeing Jiang Zheng dare retort the Crown Prince. He raised his whip and was about to step forward for another lashing.

Wu Hong waved his hand and halted the man. “He won’t shed tears until he sees his coffin. Even though we can’t pry open his mouth, those within the sect will have their ways. It’s about time, those from the sect should be arriving soon.”

A long blare suddenly sounded from the skies above the entire Shangyang Kingdom as Wu Hong was speaking.

This blare rumbled forth like thunder, relentlessly. It possessed an awe inspiring presence as it came roiling forward like a tsunami. In the span of an instant, ominous clouds covered the skies over the Shangyang Kingdom like black clouds descending on a city's walls.

"Wu Hong, get the hell out here!"

A loud roar pressed down from the skies.

Wu Hong shook all over. What's going on? Who is so bold as to speak my name in Shangyang Kingdom territory?

Within the palace, the king was conquering a beloved concubine in bed. The sounds of their endeavor filled the air within the bed sheets.

Several maids were waiting by the side of the bed. All of them were stunning beauties and standing with their hands trailing by their sides. They seemed to have long since grown used to all this, and judging from their looks, could fill in for the concubine at any time.

This sudden roar shook Wu Tan as though lightning had suddenly struck him and he pushed aside the beauty next to him.

"What's going on?"

All of the guards outside seemed to be facing a tremendous foe as

they cried out, “Protect the king, protect the king!”

Wu Tan couldn’t continue his pillaging any further as he flipped over, put on his clothes, and walked outside.

“Your Majesty!”

“Who causes this disturbance outside?” Wu Tan was the ruler of a nation after all. He didn’t lose his composure.

A guard hurriedly ran in from outside the palace before long to make his report.

“Your Majesty, a circular moat has suddenly appeared around the outskirts of the palace and surrounded the entire structure!”

“Your Majesty, countless numbers of black dots fill the sky. We know not what they are, but they’ve blotted out of the sun and the sky!”

“Your Majesty, the royal experts who bridged the moat for surveillance and have all been killed!”

Wu Tan became more and more alarmed as he listened to all the intelligence fly in. Just who was being so bold to come act in such a wild fashion in the Shangyang Kingdom?

Didn’t they know that acting so uncouthly in the Shangyang

Kingdom was the equivalent of doing so at the doorstep of the Purple Sun Sect?

"Mobilize the royal experts immediately and summon the three great outer branches for protection!" Wu Tan ordered.

Just as there were the Precious Tree Sect's four great sites in the Skylaurel Kingdom, so had the Purple Sun Sect established three outer branches.

These three were directly beneath the control of the royal family, a detail in contrast to the Skylaurel Kingdom.

Wu Tan didn't panic as he orderly set plans in motion.

"Where is the Crown Prince?" Wu Tan asked after laying out his plans.

"The Crown Prince is in the dungeons, interrogating the prisoners."

Wu Tan spread out his hands. "Have him quickly depart to prevent unexpected complications from developing."

Wu Tan also understood that those who had come were unfriendly, while those who are friendly had yet to come. In consideration of his son's safety, he wasn't at ease in leaving Wu Hong in the dungeons.

Wu Hong quickly ran into the palace to see Wu Tan before long.

“Royal father, what’s going on? I’ve heard that the palace has been surrounded?” Wu Hong asked.

“What are you panicking about?” Wu Tan laughed coldly. “My Shangyang Kingdom has dominated the sixteen kingdom alliance for a thousand years. What haven’t we seen before? To act like this in front of the Purple Sun Sect’s doors, whoever the opponent is, they’re courting death!”

Wu Tan had quite an imposing air about him. He was different from the king of the Skylaurel Kingdom. He was an honorary elder of the Purple Sun Sect to begin with. His position was quite high, and his control over his kingdom was far in excess of the Skylaurel king’s.

The royal experts had all gathered before long.

As the head of the sixteen kingdom alliance, the Shangyang Kingdom’s royal experts were all of the spirit realm. The leaders in particular were all of the earth spirit realm.

Although the Shangyang Kingdom didn’t have a spirit king protector like Ye Chonglou, the nation had four champions, Tian Shu, De Qi, Lie Feng, and Cheng Yun. They were all of the sky spirit realm!

These four champions usually stayed in seclusion.

When they heard that the palace had been surrounded however, they naturally couldn't sit idly anymore and revealed themselves.

"Your Majesty, there is no need to worry. We have already contacted the Purple Sun Sect and their aid will be here in a few hours." The leader of the four, Tian Shu, stepped forward to report.

"Your Majesty, who is this madman to dare disdain the preeminence of my Shangyang Kingdom? We incapable ones are willing to shoulder Your Majesty's burdens and see what lunatics dare act wildly!" This was De Qi.

"I will go as well." Lie Feng also stepped forward.

"Then naturally I have to be present as well." Cheng Yun smiled leisurely.

The voice rang like thunder again in the skies at this moment.

"Hark my words, Wu royals! Every wrong has a source and every debt a lender. Hand over Wu Hong in fifteen minutes and there will be room for discussion. If you stubbornly persist in your erroneous ways, the Wu clan will be eradicated without leaving even a chicken or a dog in fifteen minutes!"

Jiang Chen's towering rage had transformed into a thunderous

bellow that crashed down on the Shangyang Kingdom palace!

Chapter 419: In Front Of The Formation

How arrogant!

The expressions of those within the Shangyang Kingdom all changed drastically when they heard this tone.

The newcomer talked about wanting to destroy the royal family with each word he spoke. This kind of attitude made all those present boil with fury.

The face of the Wu family clan was the face of the entire Shangyang Kingdom, and that also represented the face of the Purple Sun Sect.

And now, this unknown intruder was telling the royal family to hand over Wu Hong, or he'd annihilate the entire family!

It was said that the subjects die when their liege is humiliated.

When the royal family was humiliated, their subjects all glared ferociously in their rage and fell to their knees on the ground.

"Your Majesty, we request to take the field!"

"Your Majesty, please allow me to take a pack of royal experts with me to meet with this crazed criminal!"

One had to say that the Wu royal family had quite a strong grasp over the Shangyang Kingdom. They had brainwashed their subjects very successfully. Even the nation's four great warriors were burning with rage and self righteous battle intent.

King Wu Tan was delighted to see this, and also quite pleased by the ardent and enthusiastic situation. This at least proved that there was no problem with the royal family's authority, and that these subjects were indeed loyal.

The crowd's emotions could be used!

Wu Tan spoke lowly. "Those who have come are not friendly, and those who are friendly have yet to come. Since this person dares to besiege the royal palace, he must have quite a background. Can it be..."

"Your Majesty, who can it be?" The four great warriors all asked.

An odd light flashed through Wu Tan's eyes as he turned to Wu Hong, "Hong'er, did the pathetic Jiang wretches confess anything?"

Wu Hong shook his head and was a bit dejected. "They're all a bunch of foolishly loyal idiots. They won't confess to anything no matter how we beat them. I suspect that they just don't know where Jiang Chen's heritage is from."

"Jiang Chen?" The four great warriors were all enormously

surprised when they heard this name.

Surprise flashed through Wu Hong's eyes. "Royal father, can this person at our doorstop be Jiang Chen?"

Wu Tan immediately shook his head in denial. "Impossible! The Eternal Spirit Mountain is suppressing him. If the outside world doesn't open the seal, he'll be unable to leave no matter how strong his potential."

"Then can it be Jiang Chen's followers? Or those from the Precious Tree Sect?" Wu Hong guessed?

"No need to imagine things. No matter who it is, the fact that they've come to the Shangyang Kingdom to behave atrociously means that they are offending the Purple Sun Sect. They're dead without a doubt!" Wu Tan's tone was sinister and frosty.

His gaze swept the four great warriors. "Four warriors, this person is giving offense to the dignity of the Shangyang Kingdom. The four of you are our nation's great warriors. It's time for you to shoulder the burdens of the royal family and the Purple Sun Sect as well. Are you willing to go out and investigate?"

The four warriors exchanged a glance and all nodded.

"We are willing!"

The concerted efforts of the nation's four warriors greatly

increased everyone's confidence again. The four warriors were all death sworn of the sky spirit realm. Although they were at the seventh level spirit realm, their battle strength was enormous, and they'd be able to put up a fight even if they met someone of the eighth level spirit realm.

Unless the strongest of the Precious Tree Sect had arrived, otherwise the intruder wouldn't have a good time after making trouble in the Shangyang Kingdom!

But the Precious Tree Sect had always been conservative and kept a low profile, how would they have the guts to act wildly in Purple Sun Sect territory?

Most people thought for a bit and felt that it was the remnants of Jiang Chen's supporters. With the nation's four great warriors taking the field, there was nothing to be fearful of!

Wu Tan laughed heartily. "What are we anxious if our nation's best four warriors are personally handling this matter? Come, bestow upon them the royal wine to celebrate the four warriors' victory in advance!"

Tian Shu spread out his hands, "Your Majesty, let's not drink yet. It won't be too late to come back for a drink after we've slaughtered the intruders!"

The four warriors all nodded and selected a troop of men roughly a hundred strong. They were all spirit realm cultivators. All of them sped towards the outside.

Wu Tan waved his hand. “We will personally hold the line for the four great warriors.”

The others naturally wouldn’t tarry when the king himself was personally stepping in. The leaders of all the royal experts surrounded Wu Tan and his son, steadfast and loyal.

There was a deep moat around the outside of the palace that was thirty meters wide and deep. It encircled the palace like a river.

The four warriors had grave expressions on as they looked at that deep moat.

This moat was thus wide and deep. They absolutely couldn’t understand how it’d appeared out of nowhere!

Even a spirit king protector at the peak of the spirit realm would find it impossible to so easily carve out such a moat.

Could it be that the trespasser was an origin realm cultivator?

In that moment, the four warriors began to regret their rash actions a bit. What if the opponent was an origin realm cultivator? The four of them wouldn’t even be enough to be a mouthful for their opponent!

However, now that there were so many people looking at them,

they were caught between a rock and a hard place.

Tian Shu arched his eyebrow and looked up at the sky, “And who might you be? Do you know this is the forbidden zone of the palace?”

“Irrelevant people who don’t want to die can get the hell back!”

A stern order came down from the skies as a golden light flashed, mainly down in splendor. The light landed in front of Tian Shu, only a foot away from his feet.

Such an aura and bearing! Tian Shu had barely seen from where the light had come from.

He only felt that the light had already arrived beneath his feet as soon as it’d flashed. If the other had wanted to kill him, he would likely be a corpse by now.

His face was drained of all color in his shock, and he backed up a few steps subconsciously. Cold sweat poured down his back, soaking his clothes through in a second.

“I’ll say this one more time, I’m here only for the Wu royals. Those who are irrelevant and don’t want to die, piss the hell off!”

Jiang Chen’s voice came down coldly from the heavens, as if he were a deity that ruled over all living beings, full of stern dignity.

Ever since he'd practiced the evil golden eye, his every word and action had become all the more regal.

When he spoke these words, the natural overwhelming sense of pressure made the four warriors feel as if there was a blade hovering over their hands, making them shiver despite the lack of cold.

"Listen to me, Wu family clan. Fifteen minutes, I will only give you fifteen minutes. If I don't see Wu Hong within fifteen minutes, then the Wu family clan will be wiped off the face of this world."

This posture made Wu Hong tremble. He had been someone who was afraid of nothing and did things in a vicious manner. He had all sorts of methods for whatever he wanted.

He'd been the one to give the order to annihilate the Jiang family.

He'd also been the one to craft the plan of seizing the Hall of Healing.

However, as fierce as he was, his scalp still tingled with numbness when he was faced with a scene like this. He had a feeling that his life was in danger.

"Four warriors, the Purple Sun Sect cultivated you, the royal family hosted you, and now it is the time for you to repay the sect

and the royal family!”

Wu Tan was quite incensed when he saw that the four warriors had the intention of retreating. He sent over this silent admonishment.

Wu Tan was an honorary Purple Sun Sect elder to begin with. His cultivation level was even greater than the four warriors. So although he was taken aback, he wasn’t thrown into disarray.

He was well aware that the opponent was quite thorny.

But if they were of one heart and withstood the attacks for a few hours, all would be taken care of when reinforcements from the Purple Sun Sect arrived!

The four warriors shook all over after Wu Tan’s reminder. The king’s meaning was quite clear. If they retreated in the face of battle now, they would face the sect’s judgement afterwards.

If they forfeited now, they would be throwing away the Purple Sun Sect’s face. Even if the king couldn’t do anything to them, the sect’s strict rules would never let them off the hook. The punishment may even involve their families!

They were riding a tiger now and finding it hard to get off.

For sky spirit realm cultivators, those who could progress to this level were all ruthless individuals. When they thought through the

profits and losses, they knew that it would be unforgivable to not give it their all today.

They looked at each other and then shot towards the moat with great accordance.

“Crazed one, I dare you come out for a battle after arriving in Purple Sun Sect territory and throwing your weight around?!”

“What kind of competence do you possess in hiding yourself like this? Come out for an open battle with the experts of the Purple Sun Sect if you have the guts to!”

“Indeed, let us have a just and public battle if you dare. What kind of man are you to be playing these kinds of tricks?”

The four warriors were advancing and retreating together, obviously planning on fighting as a team. They were well aware that none of them would be able to handle this intruder in single combat.

A sharp whistle sounded in the air as Jiang Chen’s Goldwing Swordbird dived down.

When he was had flatted out about ten foot into the air, he cast a frosty gaze at the four warriors beneath. He laughed coldly, “Is the Purple Sun Sect supposed to be something?”

“Madman, who are you?”

Jiang Chen laughed distantly as his gaze was remote. He looked in Wu Tan's direction. "Who am I? You guys did so many things in the Eastern Kingdom, what was it all but for me?"

"And now, I've come."

Wu Tan and Wu Hong's chest spasmed when these words sounded; their expressions all changed greatly.

Jiang Chen!

It was really Jiang Chen!

They'd suspected this before coming here, but felt that since Jiang Chen was suppressed within the Eternal Spirit Mountain, it wasn't very likely that he'd be able to emerge.

Even forefather Sunchaser had said that it would be impossible to come out without the coordinated efforts of the four forefathers.

However, not only had Jiang Chen exited said mountain, he'd even charged to the Shangyang Kingdom's doorstep with a vengeful momentum!

Judging from his posture, he came here completely without any apprehension or fear.

Regret flashed through Wu Tan's heart in that moment. However, it only flashed through his heart and didn't appear on his face. He said lowly, "If we're going to do it, we'll go all the way. Jiang Chen and the Purple Sun Sect have long since formed a death grudge. We just need to hold him here for now until the Purple Sun Sect reinforcements arrive. They'll suppress this person and remove this concern for good!"

Wu Tan was well aware that the entire Purple Sun Sect had a bone deep hatred of Jiang Chen. Forefather Sunchaser in particular practically itching for a chance to eat the latter's flesh and sleep on his skin.

Wu Hong also started calling loudly at this moment, "Four warriors, this Jiang Chen is the mortal enemy of the Purple Sun Sect. If we can kill him today, the forefather will be sure to reward us handsomely!"

He was rather quick at thinking on his feet and adept at persuading people.

Indeed, the thought struck the four warriors as they remembered the various grudges that Jiang Chen had with the Purple Sun Sect. This was an opportunity!

If they could kill Jiang Chen and let the forefather know, then forefather Sunchaser would undoubtedly be pleased. He might even promote the four of them, and their days of fortune and glory would be here!

Jiang Chen was strong enough to kill Long Juxue, but she was only one and there were four of them. They were also used to coordinating with each other, and their battle strength in between their offenses and defenses was something that Long Juxue would never be able to measure up to!

Long Juxue couldn’t handle Jiang Chen, but they might be able to!

Chapter 420: Internal Conflict, Internal Strife

“Go, kill him!”

The four great champions had always cooperated well with each other. Four beams of light shot into the skies with splendid radiance, each of them wielding their own weapons.

Such a seemingly simple attack was actually split into four quadrants, sealing off all space. This was a common tactic they used.

Although it didn’t count as the mysteries of a formation, they cooperated very well together, and so their strength was enormous.

Jiang Chen snorted softly as he was holding the high vantage point, waved with his hand, and sent out four golden beams of light.

The golden beams streaked through the air, transforming into four shooting stars, and vanished into thin air.

Suddenly, the four champions felt their bodies grow cold as a golden colored light flashed in front of their very eyes. A gout of cold air blew straight at them, making their necks feel cold.

“No!”

In that critical moment, when they realized that something was wrong, the four beams of golden light had already flashed past their necks.

The golden light churned!

A strong crisp sound akin to snapping a wooden stick in half rang out at this point, so sharp it made one’s hair stand on end.

In the next moment, the momentum of the four great champions halted as they froze in midair.

Four bloody beams of light shone out at almost the exact same time as the four heads shooting into the skies. Their eyes were filled with incredulity as they looked towards the ground below, watching their heads somehow bizarrely separated from their bodies.

All sorts of thoughts they had at this moment soon withered into dreadful misery.

They knew that this would be the last thing they would ever witness in their lives.

Bam, bam, bam, bam!

The four headless corpses plummeted first. They crashed despairingly into the dust as blood poured out from their necks in great gushes.

Next, the four heads that had shot to a peak height in the sky began to descend as well.

Bam, bam, bam, bam! They too landed at the same time.

Dying with dissatisfaction and everlasting regret.

The four greatest spirit realm champions of the Shangyang Kingdom had been slain in the skies above the palace with one move.

The entire palace, which had at least a hundred thousand of spectators, had seen this happen.

In that moment, Wu Hong almost collapsed to his knees on the ground. Their nation's four greatest champions had been slaughtered in a second!

The opponent was so strong to the point of being terrifying.

What was even more horrifying was that this opponent came for Wu Hong.

If it were before, he would've been a key target to protect because

he was the crown prince. Even the four great champions would've given their all to protect him.

It was difficult to tell just how much of that loyalty remained after the four champions had been beheaded with one stroke.

After all, this opponent was simply too strong. He was so strong that they couldn't fight him.

King Wu Tan also felt this throat grow dry. He'd thought that even if the combined strength of the four champions couldn't win against Jiang Chen, they'd at least be able to fight him to a draw.

But the battle situation had changed simply too quickly, so fast that he didn't even have time to react.

The four champions' heads were separated from their bodies in the blink of an eye.

They were of the seventh level spirit realm! They would be high levels of existence even in the Purple Sun Sect. If it wasn't for Wu Tan having quite a bit of face, he never wouldn't be able to mobilize these four cultivators to become the nation's champions!

Wu Tan's strength was indeed above them, but that was on a single combat basis. If the four acted together, Wu Tan felt that he wouldn't be able to hold up beneath their onslaught either.

And now, they'd been incredulously killed in front of the

formation.

Thanks to that scene, the fighting spirit of Wu Tan and the royal experts were almost all instantly completed shattered.

Strong cultivators abounded amongst the royal experts, but even the strongest leader wasn't as strong as the four champions.

Even they had been instantly slaughtered, what else did the rest of them have to compete?

"Your Majesty, please return to the palace!"

"Protect the king! Protect His Majesty! Retreat to the palace, and reinforce the defenses!"

Bitterness filled Wu Tan's mouth. Retreating to the palace meant lowering his head in front of Jiang Chen. As the ruler of a nation, bowing his head now would be a fatal blow to both morale and his authority.

When they saw the king was hesitating, the royal experts all advised, "Your Majesty, this villain is strong and we cannot withstand him. We must seek succor in the palace and defend with our lives until the sect reinforcements arrive!"

"Royal father, let us take cover for now." Wu Hong also had a long face on. He knew that he had gotten himself into great trouble this time.

However, now that things were like this, Wu Hong also knew that there was no point in regretting it. He knew that since all this had been done with authorization from the Purple Sun Sect, he had no other choice but to do as they say.

If he had refused to heed the intentions of the senior executives, then the position of the Wu family would be endangered as well.

Therefore, he was well aware that he had to have done what he did, and there was no turning back once he set down that path.

However, never in his wildest dreams had he thought that Jiang Chen would be able to escape the Eternal Spirit Mountain, and also unleash all his wrath at Shangyang Kingdom without mercy!

“Father, we can always live on to fight another day! This brat is so arrogant that the Purple Sun Sect will be sure to destroy him. We’re just being ordered by the Purple Sun Sect, and Jiang Chen’s true target is them. The senior executives of the Purple Sun Sect will not sit idly by. There’s no big deal if we lose all face in front of this little thief. Wasn’t a genius such as Long Juxue also slain by this brat?”

Wu Hong wasn’t thinking as much as Wu Tan did at this moment.

He only wanted to stay alive right now and hang on until reinforcements from the Purple Sun Sect arrived.

Jiang Chen glared downwards.

“Wu Tan, I gave you a chance and you didn’t treasure it. From now on, regardless of where they are, I will come take all the lives of your Wu family clan! I will return to you tenfold the number of Jiang family members you killed!”

Jiang Chen’s voice was full of lethal intent.

Wu Tan’s face was ashen as he shouted, “Jiang Chen, every wrong has a source and every loan its creditor! If you really have the ability, you should go to the Purple Sun Sect! What are you doing here, causing a fuss in our secular kingdom? Sect disciples cannot intervene in the matters of the secular kingdoms. This is the rule of the sixteen kingdom alliance!”

“Rule?” Jiang Chen laughed heartily. “Did the Wu clan think about the rules when they slaughtered all those people in my clan? Did you speak of rules when you seized the Hall of Healing for yourself?”

“Don’t talk to me about rules! The rules of the sixteen kingdom alliance aren’t worth shit! I only have one rule—I will not attack unless I am attacked, and if I am, I will return it to you tenfold!”

Jiang Chen pointed at the circular moat. “From now on, everyone is only allowed to enter the Shangyang palace and not a single soul shall leave it. Those who dare cross this moat will be executed!”

When he finished speaking, he waved his arm and the swordbirds dived down like a rain of shooting stars. He had deployed the million strong swordbird army this time, and it really was quite a sight.

Under the leadership of hundreds of Goldwing Swordbirds, the aura of the swordbird army was ten times more impressive than their previous deployment was at the Second Crossing.

The million strong Swordbird army started screaming shrilly in unison. They created a current that swept into the cloud layers furiously. The upper skies of the Shangyang Kingdom became filled with dark storm clouds in an instant, as if the heavens were ready to pour forth a great storm.

This kind of scene was as if calamitous disaster was about to descend upon the Shangyang Kingdom. It put pressure on everyone in the kingdom, and they were frightened beyond belief.

When Wu Tan saw Jiang Chen displaying his prowess, a light had danced in his darkened face. He finally gave a wave of his hand and gritted his teeth. “Retreat into the palace and activate the highest level defenses. Open the underground tunnels and be ready to cover the retreat of the royal children and the disciples! Summon the three external branches to assist and coordinate with us on the inside.”

The three external branches of the Purple Sun Sect were all within the Shangyang Kingdom. The journey wasn’t far, and they

would be here almost as soon as they were summoned.

Jiang Chen watched Wu Tan retreat into the palace with a cold smile, and was in no hurry to pursue him.

He had utmost confidence, and these folks were only struggling on the edge of death in his eyes.

Since the Wu family clan had hardened their hearts to resist to the end, then Jiang Chen naturally wouldn't have any room for leniency in his heart.

After all, the Purple Sun Sect had never shown any form of benevolence when they were suppressing him.

Neither had the Wu clan when they slaughtered the Jiang clan or taken over the Hall of Healing.

Since they were enemies and also robbers to boot, they should naturally be exterminated. Was there any need for mercy?

So now, Jiang Chen was going to visit upon them the exact same treatment he'd received.

The Purple Sun Sect was domineering and viewed people to be as worthless as grass. They always thought they themselves were strong, and so it was the natural course of order to suppress, oppress, and take from others.

To the Purple Sun Sect, strength was everything and conferred upon them legitimacy.

Those who were lesser than them were ants, and so should be stepped on, crushed, and slaughtered.

Therefore, Jiang Chen was only returning the way of the Purple Sun Sect to their kind, that was all.

His heart was as calm as still water, without the slightest ripple in it.

He'd had enough of the Purple Sun Sect. This time, he was going to etch his image upon them so vividly that their scalps would tingle with numbness and the hairs of their bodies stand on end whenever they evoked his memory!

Defenses were heavy around the inner courtyard of the inner palace. All of the palace's mechanisms and restrictions had been activated.

But even so, Wu Tan and son still didn't have the slightest feeling of security at all.

Their opponent was simply too strong, to the point that they couldn't even estimate his strength.

“Royal father, when will the Purple Sun Sect reinforcements arrive?” Wu Tan’s heart was in his throat as he felt fear he’d never known before.

Wu Tan’s face was grave as he shook his head without another word. Now that things have escalated to this extent, they could only leave their fates in the hands of heaven. It was hard to tell whether the defenses of the palace could last until reinforcements from the sect arrived.

The father and son duo usually leisurely controlled the life and death of others in their everyday rule of the Shangyang Kingdom.

However, they had come to the disastrous conclusion that their fates were now at the mercy of someone else.

They’d always been the ones calling the shots, and the others were mere fodder. But now they had become the hunted instead.

“Your Majesty, this is bad! The manor of the Prince of Benevolence has been subjected to unknown attack! The Wu clan family members…”

“What of them?” Wu Tan’s eyes widened as his scalp tingled with numbness. The Prince of Benevolence was his younger brother.

“None… none had managed to escape.” The messenger almost didn’t dare meet Wu Tan’s eyes.

“Your Majesty, tragic tidings! The Prince of Kindness was killed in his manor!”

“Your Majesty, the manor of the Prince of Humility was ambushed, and the prince is nowhere to be found…”

“Your Majesty…”

All sorts of bad news filled in like the tidewaters. Danger suffused the entire palace like the rainwaters flooding in an old, shabby house during a downpour.

“Your Majesty, there are large numbers of royal relatives, clan relatives, and royal concubines outside requesting to enter the premises and seek protection!”

They were currently in Wu Tan’s bedchambers, and Wu Hong wouldn’t be allowed in here under normal circumstances. However, Wu Hong was temporarily allowed to be in here due to the ongoing crisis.

He hadn’t thought that when fright struck into the hearts of everyone, they would all flock to Wu Tan’s chambers as they knew the defenses around his chambers were the strongest.

Wu Tan was in a conundrum all of a sudden. There wasn’t enough space for everyone, and chaos would easily ensue when there were many people.

But if he didn't accept them, that meant he was giving up on these relatives, which would undoubtedly send an exceedingly bad signal.

"Jiang Chen, don't you dare push me too far!" Fire spat out of Wu Tan's eyes.

Chapter 421: Armageddon For The Wu Clan

“Arrange for them to be in the outer ring and send a contingent of royal experts to protect them!” Wu Tan could only compromise with this solution in the end.

It wouldn’t quite be giving up on them with this expression of intent.

However, he was well aware that this choice actually meant that he was giving up on them.

Indeed, when news of this spread, discontent had spread among those who were outside. This was just fobbing them off!

“This won’t do! This is something that the father and son duo instigated, why are we becoming the scapegoat?”

“Indeed! That newcomer has said that all will be fine as long as we hand over Wu Hong! Wu Hong has always been a troublemaker and now he’s brought about great trouble for the Wu family. Why is it that we do not have the heart to hand over such a trouble maker?”

“Give up Wu Hong!”

“Yes, we request to see His Majesty and we demand that Wu Hong is to be handed over!”

Many people had been unsatisfied when Wu Hong had been made crown prince. The princes who had the right to compete with him were even more filled with noble indignation.

Although their backgrounds weren't as lofty as Wu Hong's, but they were all royal sons and born of royal concubines as well. They were all toeing the same battle lines at the moment, and speaking out to condemn Wu Hong.

They felt that Wu Hong had been the one who brought disaster to the Wu clan!

No one would have to die as long as they handed Wu Hong over.

The protests outside became louder and traveled into the bedchambers.

Wu Tan's face was livid. They were already in such disarray before the enemy at the gates had fought their way in. At this rate, the Wu clan would collapse altogether even before the enemy hacked their way in.

Wu Hong cursed loudly, "These traitorous parasites! Royal father, please allow me to lead the men and kill some of their leaders. Let's see if they will still dare to kick up a fuss then!"

"Wu Hong, you blasted coward, get the hell out here now!"

"Troublemaker! You've pushed the royal family into a fire pit

and now you don't dare own up to what you've done?"

"Come out yourself if you're a man! Offer yourself up for redemption!"

The curses outside grew ever louder.

"We're all royal children and relatives, why is it that he can hide inside after causing trouble, but we innocent folk have to take the blame for him outside?"

"Your Majesty, you can't be this biased!"

"Hmph, majesty? Perhaps this matter has something to do with His Majesty! Maybe he's feeling guilty now himself!"

"I already said long ago that there'd be trouble sooner or later with this father and son in power!"

The situation was spiraling out of control, and the criticism had shifted from Wu Hong to the king now.

Wu Tan flicked an eyebrow and hardened his heart, giving an order to a royal expert captain. "Go, take a group of men and kill the loudest protesters. If they still protest after the first round, then execute the entire bunch of those pilfering traitors!"

The hearts of rulers were rocky or as hard as iron.

Those protesting outside were his sons, his brothers, his relatives, and his women.

But once they'd crossed his bottom line, there was only one ending for them—death.

The sounds outside changed to rounds of howls and screams after the execution order was given.

"Wu Tan, you actually dared to lay hands on your own son! You have crazed and cracked brains, the heavens will surely smite you!"

"Fatuous ruler, I'll come get you and your son even as a ghost!"

"What's happening in front of you is karma for the crimes that you and your son have committed!"

Wu Tan grew frenetic as he gave another order, "Kill. Kill them all!"

An insane light also dawned in Wu Hong's eyes. He waved his fists around, "What are you all standing there for? My royal father has given you an order, so kill them all!"

When the royal experts made their moves, those helpless royal offspring and relatives naturally had no way to resist.

After a while, the sounds of protest gave way to complete and utter silence..

The royal experts walked back in, with their blades still dripping blood. They reported back in with heavy hearts.

A derisive laugh traveled in from the air at this time. “Wu Tan, you actually took it upon yourself to take action and didn’t need me at all. You’ve exterminated your own clan with your own hands. How very well done!”

“Hearken to me, all the followers who are inside. This matter has nothing to do with you. I only want Wu Tan and his son. Leave them immediately if you want to live. I will only give you 15 minutes to make your decision. Those who stubbornly resist after 15 minutes will all be killed!”

This ultimatum were like words from the underworld that hastened death. They hung heavily over the heads of those assembled, making all of their faces ashen and the color of dirt.

They had lost all morale now that things had progressed to this extent now. They had only stayed here out of trained instinct.

Even the four great champions had been decimated in one move. As strong as the royal experts they may be, how could they possibly match up to the four champions?

Wu Tan and his son had discarded even their own kin at critical moments, so what made them, the mere guards they are, indispensable to them?

Wu Tan hastened to say when he saw the situation, “Don’t listen to his evil doctrine. It will be a great accomplishment as long as we can wait until the Purple Sun Sect reinforcements have arrived. This kid surely lacks the ability to just charge in. Otherwise, why would he have wasted so much time in blathering on outside?”

“Right, we must stay united in a time like this. This kid will be like a fish in a barrel once the sect experts arrive. When that happens, only death awaits him!” Wu Hong also spoke up in encouragement.

However, no matter how the father and son duo acted, they couldn’t raise the morale back from the dead at all.

It was obvious that the situation had become awkwardly frozen after the Wu clan had been slaughtered.

Fifteen minutes passed by quickly.

Soon, successive screams of agony came in from outside.

“Your Majesty, Vice Commander Zhang of the palace guards has died in an ambush!”

“Your Majesty, Captain He has gone missing!”

What had happened before now repeated itself. Tragic wails rose and fell as a radius of several thousand meters became a living hell.

News of deaths and experts going missing in action continuously traveled in from those guarding the outside perimeter.

“I’ve already given you an opportunity, and I will give you one last chance. Hand over Wu Tan and his son and you will live. Otherwise, my next wave of attack will leave you all dead without a resting place. Remember, this is the final ultimatum!”

Jiang Chen’s detached voice once again echoed throughout the entire palace, bringing with it an unquestionable dignity.

His words were now an infallible law, no one dared suspect it.

In that moment, Wu Tan and Wu Hong only felt all the eyes around them sparkle immensely with a wicked light.

Wu Tan’s face darkened. “What? A few threats are enough to scare you to such an extent? Do you want to commit the crime of treason?”

“Hmph! My royal father is an elder of the Purple Sun Sect. Even if you do manage to survive this precarious situation by handing us over, will the Purple Sun Sect condone your actions?”

The royal experts were all hesitating. Their desire to live truly triumphed over their notions of loyalty at the moment.

They had also formed strong doubts about Wu Tan's character when he had ordered them to kill his royal kin.

Suddenly, one of the cultivators called out, "We're all dead if we don't hand over this father and son pair. If we hand them over, we can make use of this time to escape the Shangyang Kingdom. I've had enough of being their lapdog!"

"Right! This father and son is devoid of loyalty and morals that they could kill even their family! Won't they take revenge on us afterwards? Everyone, get them!"

"That's right, we shall all work together to get them and flee after the deed's done! Even though the Purple Sun Sect's strength is undeniable, the world is thus vast, where will they go to capture us?"

What one feared most in situations like these was that no one would step forth to sound the call.

Once someone took the lead, it would instantly ignite similar thoughts and enthusiasm from others.

"Come on! Kill both father and son! It'll be better than being killed by Jiang Chen anyhow!"

“Kill them, kill them, kill them!!! Kill that dog of a father and son!”

The royal experts had all been forced up a wall. Add to that the father and son’s usual overly violent methods in managing their underlings, and their inhumane treatments of them in critical moments, emotions were running high and fully erupted at this time.

Wu Tan was strong, but there were limits to his strength. His scalp grew numb when he was faced with the swarming of hundreds of royal experts.

He grabbed Wu Hong, “Let’s go!”

They shot through the air and made for the outer perimeter.

“The shit king’s getting away! After him!”

“Don’t let them get away!”

It was obviously too much for Wu Tan to abruptly face spirit realm cultivators, but he had confidence in escaping from a place like this.

He broke free from the large numbers of experts attempting to encircle him with a few leaps and bounds, arriving in a small garden. He lifted up a section of the floorboards and revealed a long passageway.

“Hong’er, you go first, I’ll bring up the rear!”

Wu Hong was willing to flee into any path in his panic, and he immediately jumped down into the passageway.

He suddenly screamed in horror and scrambled out, wearing an expression like he’d seen a ghost.

“Rats, rats, so many rats!” Wu Hong’s face was ashen as he stammered.

There were countless numbers of golden colored rats in the passageway, piling out as endlessly as a geyser.

“How goes it, Wu Tan, Wu Hong? How does it feel to be deserted by your followers?”

Jiang Chen’s silhouette came diving down from the sky at this moment. He stood on an eave of the roof with crossed arms, looking down at the bedraggled father and son from his vantage point, his eyes full of mockery.

A violent light pierced out of Wu Tan’s eyes as he rasped out, “Jiang Chen, must you go this far? Have you thought that your actions today are utterly putting you against the Purple Sun Sect? You might exult in your slaughter today, but won’t you worry about the Purple Sun Sect knocking on your doorstep tomorrow?”

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. “When you and your son slaughtered the Jiang clan and the Hall of Healing, did you ever think that someone would punish you for each of these crimes you committed?”

“Jiang Chen, we were only following orders. The amount of Wu clan members you’ve killed have long since exceeded the numbers of Jiang clan members who’ve died at my hands. Why don’t you go and seek revenge on the Purple Sun Sect if you’ve the guts to!” Wu Hong roared furiously.

“Purple Sun Sect?” Jiang Chen snorted coldly. “I’ll naturally be visiting them eventually, or they might even show up here quite soon. However, the two of you are the chief offenders. Did you think that you would be able to avoid death just by flapping your tongue and lips? Not on your life!”

He pounced with a flash of golden light after he finished speaking.

Bam, bam!

Wu Tan thrust out his two palms and connected solidly with Jiang Chen. An enormous surge of power invaded his spirit ocean, making Wu Tan open his mouth and causing a great mouthful of blood to spew forward.

Jiang Chen had slapped him down with two indifferent blows.

“I have you now. I’m going to personally behead these two in the skies above the Shangyang Kingdom so as to awe and frighten all those who live within this kingdom!”

When he ordinarily took no action, he was calm and kept a low profile, but he would shock all those present and take the limelight as soon as he did take action. He would make it so that all those in the Shangyang Kingdom would have nightmares whenever they thought of him, Jiang Chen.

Only then would people think about the consequences before taking actions against him in the future.

High up in the skies above the capital, Wu Tan and Wu Hong were being dragged about by two Goldwing Swordbirds as if they were dead dogs. They’re were being hung high up in the sky and paraded in all directions.

Countless citizens fixed their attention on the lofty ruler and crown prince of a nation suspended in mid air.

The royal clan of the Shangyang Kingdom had suddenly collapsed, like a skyscraper had come crashing down, and the prestige that they had built in the general populace also instantly tumbled.

“Wu Tan and his son have killed my kin and annihilated my clan. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth! Today, I will slaughter only the Wu clan. Those of this kingdom should take heed from their demise!”

Jiang Chen's voice rang out from all corners in the capital.

A shout roared from thin air at this moment. "Crooked Jiang Chen, how dare you act thus atrociously? Hand over your life!"

"Jiang Chen, you're a sect disciple, yet have embroiled yourself in the conflicts of the secular world. You must die!"

"Jiang Chen, I will settle with you today the accounts of killing my disciples! Die!"

The voices were each more resonant and domineering than the last. The senior executives of the Purple Sun Sect had descended on the Shangyang Kingdom, accompanied with a vast amount of experts!

Chapter 422: The Might Of The Evil Golden Eye

A patch of red clouds swiftly churned over from the northern skies.

The redness heralded the arrival of the Purple Sun Sect. Master Shuiyue was leading the group at the front with a one-eyed elder on her left, and a silver-haired elder on her right. It looked that both their statuses were lower than Master Shuiyue and were here as her helpers.

There were a thousand fully armored sect law enforcement disciples behind them. Judging from their postures, they were all earth spirit realm cultivators.

Furthermore, there were ten golden-clad captains in this thousand strong group, all of them at the seventh level spirit realm. Overall, this was quite a strong group.

Astonishing light shot out from Jiang Chen's God's Eye as he peered into the distance, inspecting the arrivals.

He motioned his hand and the million strong Swordbird army immediately shifted to action. They shot down from the clouds and blotted out the sky, as if a meteor shower.

"Set up the formation!"

Jiang Chen's consciousness spread out as the army formed the Eight Trigrams Assimilation Formation in the skies of the Shangyang Kingdom under the leadership of the Goldwing Swordbirds.

Jiang Chen charged out in front, placing himself at the tip of the formation.

The two Goldwing Swordbirds that the Wu father and son were dangling off of circled in front of Jiang Chen, in an obviously display of force.

Gouyu was slightly surprised when she saw the Purple Sun Sect's intimidating aura. But when her eyes traveled to Jiang Chen's face, she noticed that he was calm and at ease. And although unsure why, she was greatly reassured.

A thought of absolute security grew in her mind at that moment —even the strongest opponent wasn't frightening as long as Jiang Chen was here.

It was rather Huang'er who'd at all times remained noncommittal. Not the slightest bit of emotional ripple could be seen from her. It was as if the large display and fuss that the Purple Sun Sect was kicking up didn't exist at all.

This privately surprised Gouyu. Although Miss Huang'er looked delicate and fragile, who would've thought that she'd be so steady and reserved at this critical moment?

Gouyu rather berated herself a bit for this and quietly encouraged herself.

Xue Tong and the five personal guards were also all riding on Goldwing Swordbirds, fanning out in a line behind Jiang Chen. This was the first time they were witnessing a scene like this, and although they found it a bit hard to breathe from nervousness, they were also extremely excited.

They all shared similar thoughts. The young master himself isn't afraid, then what do we guards have to fear?

When they thought about being able follow the young master to Purple Sun Sect's territory and stand up against it as equals, just this experience alone was enough for them to recount over and over again for the rest of their lives.

"Master Shuiyue, save me and my son!"

Wu Tan who was dangling in midair utterly helpless feltand completely overjoyed to see Purple Sun Sect reinforcements arrive as he cried. He kept crying out for help.

Wu Hong also shouted, "Three elders, I, Wu Hong, am completely loyal to the Purple Sun Sect..."

"Shut up!" Raging fury flashed through Master Shuiyue's beautiful eyes.

The passage of time hadn't left any noticeable crevices on her attractive face, but the fury was currently very apparent on it.

She didn't care at all about the Wu father and son's lives.

She only had Jiang Chen in her sights, and only one desire, killing Jiang Chen!

"Gentlemen, that the wicked Jiang Chen has emerged from the Eternal Spirit Mountain likely means that his cultivation level has improved again. We must work together and kill him in front of the formation. Should he escape, it will be much more difficult to kill him the next time we meet!"

The one-eyed elder snorted derisively, killing intent exploding out on his face. "This brat has set himself up as the enemy of our sect time and time again. Where will the face of the elders of the sect be if we don't finish him off today?"

The silver-haired elder also nodded sternly, "We must kill him!"

These three were all ninth level spirit realm elders of the Purple Sun Sect. Master Shuiyue's cultivation level was the highest, as she was only one step away from the title of spirit king.

The other two had roughly equal strength.

Their combined might this time was second only to forefather Sunchaser!

If it wasn't for Sunchaser having yet to emerge from closed-door cultivation, he surely would've been here himself given his hatred of Jiang Chen.

However, three great elders and a thousand elite law enforcement disciples was already a strong enough force.

Master Shuiyue arched her delicate eyebrows as killing intent danced on her charming features again. "Jiang Chen, the heavenly troops of my Purple Sun Sect are here. Today will be the day you die!"

"Heavenly troops?" Jiang Chen laughed heartily as his tone turned frosty. "How dare a mere Purple Sun Sect, not knowing the extent of the heavens and earth, call themselves heavenly troops? Fine! Shuiyue, you suppressed me multiples times in the Eternal Spirit Mountain, today is the day of reckoning!"

The one-eyed elder gave a long whistle as he raised a large axe. The axe sparkled faintly with the glint of blood, appearing eerily grotesque.

"Jiang Chen, you publicly invaded a secular kingdom today as a sect disciple. Don't think of leaving here alive even with ten sets of mouths!"

"Invade?" Jiang Chen laughed in his anger. "When your Purple Sun Sect invaded the Eastern Kingdom, slaughtered the Hall of Healing, and annihilated my Jiang clan, did you think it was

invasion then? Do you think you're the only one allowed to your actions and that I am forbidden to reciprocate? Stop wasting time flapping your lips. It's best that you've come here to meet your deaths. You're saving me a trip to the Purple Sun Sect!"

"Crazed arrogance!"

The one-eyed elder was called Elder Long Luo, and his axe was called the Dragonslayer Battle Axe—a nine times refined spirit weapon.

"Master Shuiyue, I request to take the field."

Master Shuiyue's beautiful eyes flickered as she nodded. "Elder Long Luo, be careful of this brat's wily ways!"

The one-eyed elder waved his axe and locked onto Jiang Chen, "Jiang Chen you petty villain, dare you meet me in battle?"

The immense strength of the ninth level spirit realm surged out in a domineering and imposing fashion, as if waters from a collapsing dam, leaving none behind!

"Ninth level spirit realm!"

A hint of a smile played about Jiang Chen's lips. If he possessed the level of strength he'd had when he killed Long Juxue, then it would be a bit difficult for him to face off against ninth level spirit realm.

However, he had been training diligently in the Eternal Spirit Mountain and his strength had increased immensely. His current strength was only one step away from ninth level spirit realm.

Although he'd yet to take that final step, the trump cards and divine arts he possessed on himself weren't anything that an ordinary ninth level cultivator could compare to.

It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that Jiang Chen would be able to contend with even a spirit king cultivator.

"Young master, this person's strength is enormous and we cannot meet him with force. What if we send forth the Swordbird army and take advantage of the ensuing chaos to claim victory?" Gouyu suggested.

She was third level spirit realm now and could feel the enormous pressure of ninth level spirit realm from afar. It was absolutely beyond her comprehension.

Jiang Chen's eyes narrowed into a slit as he gazed ahead. His lips suddenly move as he displayed a hint of a jeering smile. "Fight with you? And who the hell are you to have the right to fight with me?"

Jiang Chen's God's Eye suddenly opened as soon as he'd finished speaking. A golden beam of splendor suddenly shot forth in magnificence, like the blazing sun gracing the sky, and flew straight forward.

Elder Long Luo sneered. “You little animal are so cocky, huh? Is it that you want to compete in terms of aura with a ninth level spirit realm?”

The one-eyed elder cackled. How would he possibly bow in defeat? He stared fixedly at Jiang Chen with his single eye, circulating his spirit ocean with all his might and transmuting it to pressure in the form of spirit power, sending it towards Jiang Chen.

Their gazes met.

Elder Long’s gaze trembled all over as if he experienced suddenly falling into an icy cavern. The palpitation from the depths of his soul that came next numbed his entire body.

“This is bad!” Elder Long’s heart sank as he sensed something was amiss. However, his single eye had been locked down by Jiang Chen’s evil golden eye, and he couldn’t turn away no matter what.

As the two of them fought in the air, the strong force behind the evil golden eye had already pierced through the glabella after traveling through the air.

Pfft!

Elder Long’s body suddenly stiffened as his expression stiffened. With his mouth agape and his eyes wide-open, his lashes even

flickered a few times, but he didn't have the strength to even close his eyes.

Next, his limbs, torso, and entire body seemed to become as heavy as lead. As if they'd been frozen in place by some power, they grew numb and then stilled.

This change was finished in the span of a few breaths.

It was only when his body formed a faint, golden hue that Master Shuiyue and the other silver-haired elder finally realized that something was wrong, their expressions changing greatly.

"Long Luo, what's wrong?" The silver-haired elder was astonished and bounded forward to investigate.

He was utterly flabbergasted by what he saw.

When he touched Elder Long's body, it was as hard as metal, as if the latter had been coated with metal.

"What... what's going on?" The silver-haired elder had seem much in his life, but it was the first time he'd seen this bizarre circumstance.

He was so startled that he hastily retracted his hand, as if afraid that this condition was contagious. He slunk back to Master Shuiyue and said lowly, "Master, Long Luo seems to have been hit with an evil art and his body is as hard as iron."

“Impossible!”

Master Shuiyue had never heard of such bizarre occurrence either and came forward to take a look.

She was also aghast with horror when she saw.

Elder Long had been frozen in that moment, his two hands still holding his Dragonslayer Battle Axe, but his expression was frozen in an incredibly eerie fashion. His single eye seemed like it had gazed upon the most terrifying thing in the world, and the fear in his eye was completely written all over his face.

His breathing was so faint that it was almost nonexistent.

Master Shiuyue was indeed stronger than Elder Long, but not by much. Seeing that the latter had somehow unconsciously fallen victim to an evil art, her scalp tingled with numbness for a short moment.

“Jiang Chen!”

Hatred blazed out of Master Shuiyue’s eyes. She guessed that this matter had likely something to do with that dumb swine!

She gnashed her teeth and gave a long howl.

This howl shocked the heavens and moved the earth, unceasing and endless as great changes roiled over the sky.

Those in the Swordbird army closest to her all spontaneously exploded and fell down from the howl.

Jiang Chen snorted softly. “Old woman, stop your useless caterwauling. The Shangyang Kingdom will be your grave!”

Master Shuiyue hated the words “old woman” most of all.

Her originally charming and elegant face had become twisted in her anger.

“Jiang Chen, I swear I wouldn’t be human if I don’t kill you today!”

Master Shuiyue’s rage burned so intensely that even all the water in heaven wouldn’t quench it.

Various scenes of humiliation flashed through her mind. It was because of Jiang Chen’s appearance that she had fallen down from the peak of her life to where she was now.

All of this had been because of that damnable secular brat!

Master Shuiyue erupted in the following moment.

Chapter 423: One VS Two Is Still A Trampling

“Silverroc, this dumb swine is crafty and full of guile. We can only seek to render a meritorious deed for the sect and kill this criminal. Forget all notions of identity, concern, and rules. You and I will work together to kill this petty thief!” Even when incensed, Master Shuiyue still hadn’t lost her sense of reason.

Elder Long’s bizarre downfall had put her on her guard even in her great anger.

She recalled that no matter how well prepared she’d been in the past, she’d always been the one worse off when she faced Jiang Chen.

He Yan had been crippled in his fight against Jiang Chen.

Hai Tian’s match had been in a carefully selected ring, but he’d ended up dead.

In Long Juxue’s match, the one in which he surely would’ve died, it’d been Long Juxue who’d been cleaved into two in the end.

Elder Long had been brimming with confidence before he’d taken the field just now, but had turned into a sculpture in the blink of an eye. They hadn’t even found the reason why yet.

The battle strength of the silver robed elder was roughly on par with Elder Long.

He also knew that Jiang Chen was now the Purple Sun Sect's prime enemy. If this person wasn't eliminated, there would be endless trouble in the future.

Therefore, even with Elder Long's ghastly condition in front of them, he still proceeded forward out of a sense of obligation.

He grasped the air with both hands and a pair of silver, sharp claws appeared on his hands. He bared his fangs and brandished his claws, giving off an exceedingly fierce feeling.

"There is nothing that cannot be forsaken in a fight for the sect. I, Silverroc, am willing to put my life on the line to slay this knave and clear away trouble from the path of my Purple Sun Sect!"

Master Shuiyue was gladdened to see Silverroc's stern battle intent.

She had a much surer chance of succeeding with both of them attacking together.

She sent a message with her consciousness, "Law enforcement disciples, hold the formation for me and Elder Silverroc. If the opponent sends forth the spirit fowl in battle, cover us immediately!"

“Understood!” These disciples were all deathsworn from the sect, and as such, there was no doubt about their loyalty at all.

Jiang Chen gave a long laugh when he saw them murmuring, “No need for private murmurings, Shuiyue. Both of you can come at once if you’re scared. What have I to be afraid of?”

How would Jiang Chen not be able to tell that this Master Shuiyue was plotting a group fight?

He flipped his hand over and brought out a long bone from the Redscaled Firelizard. This bone was the Firelizard’s dragon bone, the strongest and most durable part of its body.

Its durability had increased even more after Jiang Chen’s simple refinement.

The Firelizard had been a saint rank creature to begin with. Its base strength was already greater than a nine times refined spirit weapon and on the same level as an origin spirit weapon.

Having undergone a simple refinement, the bone would be able to put up a fight even when it met mid tier origin spirit weapons in battle.

Jiang Chen didn’t dare take things lightly this time. He was meeting the combined blows of two ninth level spirit realm cultivators. This was why he’d brought out the Firelizard dragon bone.

This unassuming weapon was enough to give wings to a tiger in battle.

Jiang Chen stood there with an aura of invincible magnificence as he wielded the bone club, and ordered, “Gouyu, hold the formation for me and keep an eye on those troops.”

“Young master, you’re fighting one against two. Do you...” Although Gouyu was flabbergasted by Jiang Chen’s strength, she still wasn’t willing for him to meet the dual attacks from Master Shuiyue and Elder Silverroc by himself.

Jiang Chen gave a hearty laugh. “No worries!”

His Goldwing Swordbird dived as he finished speaking, letting Jiang Chen land on the ground.

“Jiang Chen, you have no idea of the immensity of the world and dared to be enemies with my Purple Sun Sect. You’re courting death!” Elder Silverroc brandished his claws after he finished his proclamation and pounced.

Master Shuiyue also coordinated with him as she turned her hands over and transformed a simple and unsophisticated rune into a cloud of white light, a cloud that spread into the sky and came crushing down.

The white light flashed and materialized into a small mountain of

ice that plummeted from above.

The temperature around Jiang Chen suddenly sank a dozen degrees.

A layer of frost formed upon all the grass and trees in his surroundings.

Jiang Chen was also slightly astonished. Master Shuiyue had had such a strong rune in her possession? The power of ice and snow within it were much stronger than the azure phoenix freezing qi that Long Juxue had originally possessed.

Master Shuiyue certainly deserved her widespread reputation, alright.

Long Juxue had leveraged her innate constitution to deploy a freezing qi that was indeed impressive, but she'd only just set foot into seventh level spirit realm.

Master Shuiyue however, was of the ninth level spirit realm and had deep foundations. This was absolutely not something that a young genius like Long Juxue could measure up to!

The small mountain of ice appeared all the more eye piercing as sunlight glinted off it.

If Jiang Chen's strength had halted at what it'd been when he'd killed Long Juxue, then he would only be able to sit and wait for

death at the moment.

But the current Jiang Chen was no longer the Jiang Chen of yesteryear.

Red light exploded out of his God's Eye as twelve ice lotus vines instantly surged forth from around him. They slowed down the ice mountain, slowly becoming twelve proudly standing columns holding up the sky.

The enormous lotus flowers blossomed, akin to the mouths of twelve voracious gluttons, biting down deeply into the iceberg like the suction cups on a leech.

The Ice Lotus was a divine level spirit entity, and such an immensely strong power of ice was naturally a beautiful meal for them.

The twelve ice lotus vines were like twelve meridians as they quickly absorbed the ice elemental power.

On the ground, Jiang Chen himself blurred into a flaming meteor and charged straight forward.

Clang!

An awful collision rang out when his bone club connected with Elder Silverroc's claws.

Ripples from the violent impact spread out in all directions.

Elder Silverroc felt his hand go numb between his thumb and index finger as his chest also felt stifled. He was greatly shocked, “This dumb swine’s strength is this domineering? He could actually take one of my blows with his level of cultivation, and looked quite at ease while doing so?”

The elder’s bloodthirsty tendencies were provoked immediately by Jiang Chen’s blow.

He grimaced, “Kid, take a few more hits from my claws!”

He shook his arms as the enormous claws seemed to meld into his arms. He leapt into the air and flared his spirit power, making it form a giant silver roc in the air.

With a low whistle, Elder Silverroc glided down in perfect form, his arms breaking through the air with overbearing momentum and clawing down fiercely at Jiang Chen.

This blow had set aside all the fancy embellishments of profound mysteries and was drawing in Jiang Chen for close quarter combat.

When Jiang Chen saw that he’d melded the weapon into his arms and become one with it, he knew that these claws must certainly be quite impressive, something that the elder was proud of.

The more that this was the case, the more that Jiang Chen's battle intent and manly demeanor would provoke doubt in him.

You think you're strong? I'm going to destroy you when you think you're in peak condition and rout everything you're most proud of!

Jiang Chen rose up, grasping the Firelizard bone club with both hands and abruptly sent it smashing down on the enormous claws with no flourishes whatsoever.

Elder Silverroc leered when he saw this. "Trying to compete in terms of durability with my silver rock claws? Break!"

The pair of enormous claws was a nine times refined spirit weapon to begin with. Add to that the elder's use of secret arts to meld it with his arms, the durability of the claws had surpassed all spirit weapons and was now a half step origin spirit weapon.

"I think not!" Jiang Chen roared lowly as he increased the strength of his arms. Boundless metal essence power instantly assimilated into the bone club.

Bam!

Another violent collision gave rise to endless ripples and created an vortex in the air that shot up to the sky. The aftershocks churned up all the sand, dirt, and rocks as well as snapped all trees and grass.

Clank!

Elder Silverroc suddenly heard a crisp breaking sound.

A heart wrenching pain suddenly travelled from his arms.

Faint lines actually appeared on the enormous claws on his arms in the next moment. The patterns and symbols that had been inscribed on their appearance had all been destroyed.

Every time a spirit weapon was refined, the refiner would meld their formation seals into the weapon. They would allow the strength behind the patterns inscribed on the weapons to be fully used.

Therefore, the more times a spirit weapon was refined, the higher its quality.

Silverroc was very confident in his pair of enormous claws. He'd wanted to catch Jiang Chen's blow, wrench his defenses apart, and then reach out a claw to rip Jiang Chen open from chest to stomach.

However, he'd never thought that his half step origin spirit weapon would be shattered by Jiang Chen's unassuming short club!

His momentary distraction resulted in another blow from Jiang Chen's club coming straight at his face.

Without his claws, Silverroc was a declawed vicious beast when facing an attack from such close quarters. His expression immediately and drastically changed.

The momentum of this bone club was extraordinarily fast, to the point where he felt that he would be unable to evade it.

"Take my sword, scum!"

Master Shuiyue had been waiting behind and building up momentum for a blow. The long sword in her hand transformed into a streak of light and flew in, stabbing straight for Jiang Chen's back.

This stroke boasted an unparalleled speed and was the full strength blow of a ninth level spirit realm cultivator.

However, Jiang Chen had his own plans in mind as well. He knew that the best way to break through a dual attack from two sides was to kill one of them first.

So although Master Shuiyue's stroke was strong, Jiang Chen still had the ability to defend himself.

But if he didn't kill Elder Silverroc, Jiang Chen would land in a disadvantageous situation when he was attacked from behind and

front.

Jiang Chen activated the lotus when his thoughts traveled here.

Whoosh whoosh whoosh whoosh whoosh whoosh!

Vine upon vine shot forth from the ground like spring bamboo bursting through the ground after the spring rains.

The vines could be pliable yet stiff, and were currently acting as various ropes to weave into a net, hurtling towards Master Shuiyue to entrap her.

If Master Shuiyue resolutely followed through with her stroke, then she would surely be bound by these vines.

She suddenly recalled Long Juxue's death.

Long Juxue had been entrapped by these vines and had instantly lost her ability to fight, resulting in her being hacked into two.

She grit her teeth and retracted the momentum of her strike, pulling her blade back to defend her vitals and backing up a dozen or so meters.

Jiang Chen seemed to have anticipated her as his bone club didn't hesitate at all, continuing its forward motion.

Elder Silverroc had no place to run to. He could only use his broken claws to block the blow.

Bambambambam!

The club descended more than ten times as Elder Silverroc could only take the blows as if he was a punching bag. He spewed out great mouthfuls of blood.

“Master, go! Go get the forefather!”

Elder Silverroc fell down with a bang, reminding Master Shuiyue to hurry and escape.

In the moment before his death, Silverroc realized that Jiang Chen’s strength was enough to destroy them all right here!

In the entire Purple Sun Sect, likely only the forefather could suppress this person’s strength. He was absolutely at the level of spirit king.

It would be a fatal disaster if he was allowed to continue to develop!

Chapter 424: Destroying Shuiyue, Enraging Sunchaser

Master Shuiyue focused her attentions when she heard the reminder that a near death Elder Silverroc had issued. A feeling of helplessness rose in her heart. She couldn't believe that Jiang Chen had improved so quickly!

The secular brat who'd been almost killed by Chu Xinghan in front of the Second Crossing years ago had progressed so rapidly in a few years? He killed two of three ninth level spirit realm cultivators facing him in almost the blink of an eye!

And now, her life was in danger as well.

A trace of regret truly flashed through her heart at this moment.

She suddenly felt that she'd paid too much of a price for one Long Juxue. She even had to pay the price of her life now!

"Shuiyue, you took part in slaughtering my clan and seizing the Hall of Healing, didn't you?"

Jiang Chen turned to advance on Master Shuiyue now that he'd killed Elder Silverroc.

The bone club in his hand locked tightly onto Master Shuiyue.

Master Shuiyue's face was drained of all color. Her eyes roared back to life again after regret flashed by, displaying a crazed look. "Jiang Chen, I admit that you're a genius, but so what? Today, I will perish together with you!"

Perish together?

Jiang Chen snorted derisively, his eyes forming the evil golden eye again. The golden light shot forth violently as it locked onto Master Shuiyue's consciousness.

The evil golden eye was most adept at destroying enemies when they'd lowered their guard.

When he'd destroyed Elder Silverroc, it had been because the elder had underestimated his opponent and hadn't paid attention to the strength behind this art.

Master Shuiyue was now absentminded and distracted, a moment in which her dao heart was the least stable.

Jiang Chen could tell with a glance that this was when an opponent's mental defenses were the weakest.

This was when the evil golden eye would find it the easiest to sneak in!

Master Shuiyue had already sunk into madness at this point, prepared to detonate her spirit ocean and take Jiang Chen down

with her in a bloody battle.

She suddenly felt a tyrannical strength shoot through her eyes when the beam of golden light arrived and dived deep into her soul.

Although she trained in the arts and techniques of ice, she too had a feeling of falling down to an icy cavern in this moment.

She circulated her spirit ocean and realized that her consciousness seemed to have been confined. She couldn't move her body according to her will!

This discovery scared Master Shuiyue witless as a thick sense of fear exuded from her eyes. She suddenly thought of Elder Long Luo.

"This is bad! I've been hit by his demonic art!"

Master Shuiyue howled tragically and tried to break free of the restrains of the evil golden eye. However, she had no idea what she'd fallen victim to and thus naturally couldn't speak of breaking free of it.

Jiang Chen laughed derisively as he once again hauled up the bone club with a flash of his body.

"Shuiyue, your biggest mistake in this life was to scout Long Juxue. Now let me send you on your way!"

Master Shuiyue's yet charming face was now filled with fear. Regret, fear, despair, and hatred all filled her heart.

Golden light flashed in front of her as Jiang Chen's bone club arrived in front of her.

"Hold, scum!"

A stern roar suddenly came from the air. The owner was a noticeable distance away, but had ripped through the void with his voice to ring next to Jiang Chen's ears like a clap of thunder.

"Old monster Sunchaser!" Jiang Chen wasn't the least bit unfamiliar with this voice.

Although Master Shuiyue's soul had been confined by the evil golden eye, she still possessed some of her consciousness and was gladdened to hear the forefather's arrival. She immediately whistled sharply a few times, calling out to him for help.

The origin realm forefather's aura was indeed astonishing. Even though he was such a distance away, his roar had encompassed the strength of his enormous true essence and had caused Jiang Chen's attack to halt briefly.

"Jiang Chen, if you dare touch a single hair on Shuiyue, I will hunt you down no matter the cost!"

Sunchaser's tone was urgent, brutal, and full of concern.

Master Shuiyue was his subordinate, but also his forbidden pleasure. There had always been an inexplicable relationship between the two of them all along.

However, their seniority was different, so they couldn't openly dual cultivate.

Even so, Shuiyue was Sunchaser's most cherished and beloved. Their relationship was exceedingly hidden, and no one within the sect knew of this.

When Sunchaser had just emerged from his closed door cultivation, he'd felt unsettled and a wave of unease. When he questioned those around him carefully and learned that Jiang Chen had escaped from the Eternal Spirit Mountain, even directly charging to the Shangyang Kingdom, and that even Master Shuiyue had brought two elders with her to the Shangyang Kingdom.

This news had greatly alarmed Sunchaser. He knew that his ill at ease feeling was because Shuiyue had met with danger.

Therefore, Sunchaser didn't pause at all as he emptied the sect of senior executives and brought them all with him.

He rushed to the Shangyang Kingdom with the fastest speed possible.

Sunchaser had already detected the situation when Jiang Chen had brought the bone club crashing down on Master Shuiyue, but sadly he was too far away and unable to rescue her. This was why he'd issued the warning.

Although Jiang Chen's attack had been slowed, this didn't decrease the killing intent in his heart.

So what of an origin realm?

Jiang Chen showed no hesitation at all even if he were to face Sunchaser's rage in the next moment.

He shook his right arm and sent the bone club smashing down.

Bam!

It connected solidly with Master Shuiyue's face and killed her on the spot.

Master Shuiyue's body crumpled, her eyes staring straight at Jiang Chen, unaccepting of her death and dying with great regret. She couldn't believe that she'd died in the moment that forefather Sunchaser had arrived to save her.

"How dare you, lowly scum!!"

Sunchaser felt as if his heart and mind were splitting open when he saw this scene. He saw Master Shuiyue fall down, but couldn't save her.

He threw his head back and howled, his rage as if the raging waves and thrashing seas that soared up to the heavens like a tsunami, covering the skies in his fury.

"Jiang Chen! I swear that I am less than human if I do not strip you of your tendons, skin you alive, and burn your bones to ashes today!"

Sunchaser had dominated the sixteen kingdom alliance for hundreds of years. Even the forefathers of the other sects didn't dare kill those of the Purple Sun Sect in front of him.

This Jiang Chen had actually dared kill Shuiyue in front of him!

This wasn't just simply killing a person, but deeply offending and a provocation against his incomparably noble position!

In the sixteen kingdom alliance, no one had ever dared naysay him as he ran rampant through all the sects.

It'd only ever been him controlling the life and death of others, and others listening to him.

When had it ever turned into someone dare challenging his authority, dictating the life and death of his sect, and being

indifferent to his threats and warnings??

All of this made Sunchaser grow almost mad in his rage.

“Die, dumb animal!”

Sunchaser transformed into a ball of red light as he flexed his hand, slamming down with a hand seal that blazed like the sun.

Pressure that was an enormous as a mountain range came crashing down.

Jiang Chen knew that he wouldn’t be able to take this hit that an origin realm cultivator had put his full force behind.

He curled up his body and had a lotus vine directly dragon him beneath the ground.

Sunchaser howled angrily in succession as his eyes grew red from bloodlust. He screamed in rage, “Jiang Chen, you will be hard pressed to escape death even if you fly through the skies and earth today!”

Sunchaser flicked his hand as a broadsword appeared in his hand, rising up in his two handed grasp as if a wheel of the blazing sun and dancing with astonishing flames.

The light from the broadsword transformed into a slab of cutting

power that cleaved straight into the ground.

Rumble!

A deep moat immediately appeared in the ground as if a bull plowing the fields, extending into the ground for a good ten feet.

A frosty look glinted in Sunchaser's eyes as he shot towards Gouyu and the others in the distance, shouting, "Kill all the intruders!"

This command was naturally issued to the Purple Sun Sect senior executives following from behind.

The Purple Sun Sect had completed emptied out this time. Sect head Zixu Zhenren and many other elders will holding actual power in their hands had all arrived.

The sect's great army has quickly made their way over to encircle Gouyu and the others.

Gouyu rather calmed down at this moment. Even though the Purple Sun Sect's army had arrived, their numbers were greatly less than the Swordbird army's.

"Younger sister Huang'er, take advantage of the pitched battle later to slip away. You're not of the Jiang family and so they won't strive to keep you."

Gouyu looked at Huang’er with a trace of apology in her eyes.

Huang’er was rather composed as she smile faintly, “Don’t bet n such a rush to leave elder sister Gouyu. Have some more confidence in your young master!”

Numerous vines suddenly shot out from the ground at this moment.

Jiang Chen’s figure suddenly bounced off of one of the vines and he leapt onto the back of his Goldwing Swordbird. The Goldwing Swordbirds all started to move and set up their defensive formations after a clear whistle from Jiang Chen.

The power of several hundred Goldwing Swordbirds setting up the Eight Trigrams Assimilation Formation was absolutely astonishing.

When Sunchaser saw Jiang Chen once again reveal himself, it triggered his rage and he growled lowly, “Jiang Chen, your death is nigh!”

Sunchaser was as if a mad beast at the moment, striking without abandon as he would and completely oblivious to everything else around him. His figure flashed as he shot into the sky.

“Chirp!!”

Several hundred Goldwing Swordbirds shifted their wings in unison. Layers of golden colored light slowly formed into a ripple that ricochetted towards Sunchaser.

Sunchaser thrust his palm towards the ripple but was shook all over instead, his arm actually growing numb!

This attack prevented his advance!

A blow from a third level origin realm had been unable to destroy his opponent's formation!

Sunchaser was shocked and furious. He waved his broadsword and swung viciously towards the heart of the formation.

The main army from the Purple Sun Sect had arrived at this point as well.

Zixu Zhenren and another group of elders all took their places, ready to join the fray in combined attacks.

Jiang Chen was incensed and reached for his storage ring, ready to take out the Millionditch Stonenest and summon the Goldbiter Rat tribe.

At the moment, patches of aqua clouds swiftly approached from the south. A low and weathered voice rolled in. "Sunchaser, do you want any face anymore? How dare you mobilize the power of an entire sect for one of the junior disciples of my Precious Tree

Sect?”

The voice belonged to forefather Thousandleaf of the Precious Tree Sect!

Judging from the looks of things, it would seem that the entire Precious Tree Sect had emptied out as well.

Sunchaser’s face grew cold when he heard this and he looked over to the south. His killing intent immediately exploded. “Everyone attack with all your strength! Kill Jiang Chen first and then terminate the Precious Tree Sect!”

He would see things through no matter the consequences.

Sunchaser was in the full throes of his fury at the moment. He hated everything associated with Jiang Chen!

And the most common way in that Sunchaser expressed his hatred was to slaughter everything in sight and wipe out the clan!

Jiang Chen had wanted to use the Goldbiter Rats, but abruptly changed his mind when he saw those from the Precious Tree Sect arrive. He laughed heartily and completely activated the Lotus, hovering around the formation and providing ad-hoc cover for the Goldwing Swordbirds.

He held throwing daggers crafted from the Raven King’s tail feathers in his hands, the God’s Eye sending out splendid light as

he searched for an opening in front of the formation.

He was prepared to give the senior levels of the Purple Sun Sect a lethal blow at any time.

Chapter 425: A Stalemate Between Origin Realms

“Everyone strike with all your might, kill him!”

Sunchaser charged out in front, his broadsword raised high and gleaming with the radiance of the blazing sun as he thrust forward with his greatest stroke.

“Blazing Molten Sun, Slash!”

The broadsword slashed down as the crimson light exploded almost a hectare wide, cleaving straight down to the center of the formation.

Concentric rings of force formed around the strike as it generated an enormous heat wave. The force ringlets fell from the skies Iike an immortal’s overturned pill cauldron, churning the air with pure incandescent flames.

The force truly was an enormous wave of wildfire.

The formation made by the Goldwing Swordbirds could absolutely defend against the attack, but the tremendous heat wave would bake their feathers. This suffocating heat wave seemed as if it would burn everything under the sky.

Jiang Chen was immensely taken aback to see this as well.

“Who would’ve thought that Sunchaser would have such tyrannical strength!”

Jiang Chen didn’t have enough attention to spare for killing the senior executives of the Purple Sun Sect at the moment. He focused on manipulating more than a dozen ice lotus vines to emanate curtains of icy power, fully sealing off the momentum of the heat wave.

Having just absorbed the power in Master Shuiyue’s ice rune, the ice lotuses were also in peak condition.

Layers of icy walls kept sealing off the air around the formation.

“Hmph, pitiful little tricks! Break!”

Sunchaser’s sword thrust was undeterred as he continued to send forth more heat waves.

Crack crack crack crack!

The walls of ice that the lotuses had created all crumbled.

It was a good thing that the ice lotus possessed strong innate defensive power. When a dozen ice lotuses were lined up together, they seemed to possess countless tentacles that transformed into a brilliant manifestation of frosty hues in the sky, roiling toward the

void and continuously cutting away at the heat wave.

This heat wave was strong, but it wasn't enough to instantly destroy the ice lotuses.

Jiang Chen was well aware that the strength behind this heat wave was greater than his. If its full force was allowed to crash into the formation, countless Goldwing Swordbirds would be injured or killed, even if the formation held up.

Jiang Chen didn't want such a thing to happen, so he summoned the Lotus, using this method to assault the heat wave and disperse some of its force. As long as the strength behind the heat wave was decimated, the strength it would have to ram the formation with would be greatly decreased.

Sunchaser hadn't seemed to anticipate that Jiang Chen would prove this thorny. He snorted coldly and slashed left and right with his broadsword, continuously hacking away at the ice lotus vines.

The strongest aspect about the Lotus lay within its regeneration abilities. As long as the Flaming Heart of Ice remained, the Lotus would be invincible.

After Sunchaser had chopped twenty or thirty vines apart, the stumps then promptly regrew new vine tendrils.

Sunchaser was quickly swallowed beneath a sea of vines before

long.

Although the vines were of no threat to him, they greatly decreased the momentum of his attacks.

This gave the Swordbird formation time to nurture a second barrage of attacks.

The several hundred strong Goldwing Swordbirds used the formation as a framework and used their innumerable sharp claws to form a whirlwind, sending it whirling towards Sunchaser.

Sunchaser was greatly infuriated. He'd never thought that he'd be caught by Jiang Chen!

He threw his head back in a howl and waved his broadsword madly, leaping into the air and transforming into a streak of red light as he broke free of the ice lotus vines' fetters.

"Break!"

Sunchaser followed through, using his charge to power his strike against the whirlwind as he cleaved down towards the whirlwind.

Wham!

The attack formed by the formation was instantly destroyed.

Sunchaser's gaze narrowed and locked onto Jiang Chen. He grew even more resolute in the depths of his fury. To round up bandits, one needed to capture their leader first. Approaching Jiang Chen and executing him was the only right course of action. Why bother with these feathered animals and monstrous vines?

Everything would be as intangible as the floating clouds as long as Jiang Chen was dead.

Jiang Chen was slightly surprised to see Sunchaser break free of the ice lotus vines with uncommon speed and no thought for his well-being.

Jiang Chen's hand plucked the air, and took out the miniature form of the magnetic golden mountain.

Sunchaser was so domineering that even the Lotus wasn't enough to stop him. If he sent out the Goldbiter Rats, he'd only be sending them to their deaths. It would make no difference at all.

He had to make use of his last trump card now.

Although Jiang Chen didn't have confidence in being able to fully deploy the golden magnetic mountain, if he tried his best and ignored the injuries that would undoubtedly rack his body, he felt he'd be confident in killing this old thief as long as he could restrain him for even the span of a breath.

However, he only had a fifty-fifty chance of successfully

activating the golden magnetic mountain.

“Come on then.” Jiang Chen’s heart was serene, but fully resolved.

Since he had chosen to fight, he also had the determination to battle to death.

At that moment, a turquoise silhouette appeared in the air. The figure pushed out with his hands and formed a turquoise ball of air that roiled through the air, halting Sunchaser’s unparalleled attack.

“Old monster Sunchaser, that’s quite enough!”

This turquoise figure was forefather Thousandleaf’s timely arrival.

When he saw Thousandleaf arrive, Jiang Chen flipped over his hand and put the magnetic golden mountain away again. Jiang Chen and forefather Thousandleaf both failed to notice that Huang’er, behind Jiang Chen, had also taken a timely step back.

No one noticed that, but Gouyu did.

In that moment of life and death, Gouyu had also rushed over with all her strength and was prepared to die with Jiang Chen.

She hadn’t thought that a light would flash beside her, and Miss Huang’er would float lightly nearby the young master like a breath of wind.

Gouyu hadn’t even seen how she’d done it.

In that moment, Gouyu even suspected that she’d seen incorrectly, because an immense presence had flickered in and out of existence from Miss Huang’er’s caped silhouette, an incomparably strong demeanor.

The presence had suddenly retracted into itself when forefather Thousandleaf had revealed himself, as if that moment of change had only been a misconception. Gouyu was extremely baffled and wondered if she had in fact seen things correctly.

Was the gentle and tender Miss Huang’er in fact concealing enormous strength?

“No, no, I must’ve seen incorrectly.” Gouyu tried to convince herself. Miss Huang’er only seemed as old as the young master. She looked genteel and fragile. No matter from what angle one appraised her from, she didn’t seem like she would possess incredible martial techniques.

Sunchaser’s attacks were halted by Thousandleaf. The former’s red brow arched, “Thousandleaf, you dare come throw your weight around in my territory?”

Thousandleaf gave off an unworldly feeling as he laughed lightly and stroked his sideburns. He said faintly. “Jiang Chen is one of my Precious Tree Sect’s members, and as the forefather of the sect, I naturally have the need to protect him. Sunchaser, why don’t we just let the events of today be bygones?”

“Let the events of today be bygones?” Sunchaser’s face contorted into an enraged grimace. “Jiang Chen butchered the royal family of my Shangyang Kingdom and killed the senior executives of my Purple Sun Sect, and you ask to just let this be? Thousandleaf, are you going senile in your old age? What right do you think you have to dictate that I leave this be?”

Thousandleaf furrowed his brow lightly, “Sunchaser, the sixteen kingdom alliance is in dire straits, and you spoke with such a strong sense of self righteousness that day during the selection. Now that some changes have occurred in the selection, you’ve completely torn up the contract and been at odds with the disciples of my sect numerous times already. You say that Jiang Chen killed the royals of the Shangyang Kingdom and destroyed your sect’s senior executives, that is true. However, who started this grudge first?”

“The Shangyang Kingdom invaded the Eastern Kingdom, annihilated the Jiang clan and seized the Hall of Healing. These things happened as well, yes?”

Thousandleaf knew that Sunchaser wasn’t one to talk reason, but he still couldn’t help but want to talk rationally with the other.

“The Jiang family? Hall of the Healing? Are those ant-like

existences on par with the senior executives of my sect?" Sunchaser was incensed. "Thousandleaf, shut your damned trap. If you've hardened your heart to protect this scum Jiang Chen, then I don't mind teaching you a lesson as well!"

As good as Thousandleaf's breeding may be, he was also enraged by these words. "Teach me a lesson? Sunchaser, I know of your arrogance, but your cockiness has reached new heights, hasn't it?"

"Hahaha, so what if I am? What can you do about it? You've always been a defeated opponent in terms of personal strength, and the fighting capabilities of your Precious Tree Sect are less than half of my Purple Sun Sect in terms of sect strength! Why can't I be arrogant!"

He lifted his broadsword and locked onto Jiang Chen from afar.

"Scum, even the gods descending upon the earth today won't save you!"

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. "I finally understand why the Purple Sun Sect has always been one to run their mouths. They've inherited it all from you. Long Juxue, Shuiyue, and those two bullshit elders all said the same things to me and now they're all dead, yet here I stand."

Since they'd erupted in open hostilities, Jiang Chen naturally wouldn't have any words of kindness for Sunchaser.

Since you're burning so fiercely, then why I don't add a bit of fuel so that you go up in even greater flames.

Indeed, these words added fuel to the flames and made Sunchaser incredibly, explosively angry.

"Die, scum!"

Thousandleaf grasped with both hands and a wooden staff-like weapon appeared in his hands. "Sunchaser, you and I are both of the origin realm, must we risk our lives in a fight?"

Sunchaser was livid in his rage. "Risk our lives? Thousandleaf, do you think you're able to make me lay my life down on the line in a battle? I don't mind sending you on your way if you truly wish to engage in a futile effort like a mantis trying to stop a chariot!"

Sunchaser was domineering because he had the strength to. He'd always been the undisputed first amongst the four forefathers in the sixteen kingdom alliance.

Therefore, he'd always had a strong sense of superiority when he faced the other three, and he was the most overbearing in terms of style and personality.

Thousandleaf also privately admitted that he would be the loser if he fought Sunchaser. Although there was but a hairline difference between the two of them, this was a crucial distinction in a match of life and death between experts.

However, he had no reason to back down now that things had progressed to this point.

He smiled faintly, a sense of openness in his smile. “Sunchaser, there is no shirking my responsibilities as the forefather of the Precious Tree Sect. I will protect my disciples. You may triumph over me, but it will be difficult to ensure that you can emerge unscathed. Once you are heavily injured, then your Purple Sun Sect will not be without its share of worries either!”

“Threatening me?” Sunchaser started laughing in an ugly fashion. “Thousandleaf, don’t think so highly of yourself. Why don’t you weigh up how much you’re worth first!”

Thousandleaf’s expression changed slightly.

A hearty laugh sounded from the air at this moment. “If Daoist Thousandleaf isn’t enough, what about with me as well?”

This laugh was vigorous and in high spirits, swiftly flying in from the distance.

The feel of this person’s presence meant that another origin realm cultivator had arrived!

Chapter 426: Sunchaser Backs Down

Jiang Chen felt infinitely close to this voice, and his lips curved slightly in a heartfelt smile.

Old tutor Ye Chonglou had finally emerged from his closed door cultivation after three years. Him emerging now meant that he'd already entered the origin realm, and he'd thoroughly consolidated his cultivation in that realm.

Otherwise, he never would've hastily exited his training, not with his personality.

Ye Chonglou was riding the Five Winged Phoenix-Dragon in the air. He landed in front of forefather Thousandleaf as if a divine deity arriving from the heavens.

Jiang Chen was also slightly taken aback when he saw the Phoenix-Dragon's proud head. He hadn't thought that this beast would awaken another portion of its bloodlines after the old tutor broke through. The Phoenix-Dragon had ascended to the rank of saint rank spirit creature!

It was twin blessings knocking the lordmaster's door!

If Jiang Chen was startled, then Thousandleaf and the Precious Tree Sect were the epitome of surprise.

"Chonglou, you... broke through to the origin realm?"

Thousandleaf was joyous and surprised.

"It was about time I shifted a bit after dithering in the spirit king realm for so long." Ye Chonglou chuckled.

Thousandleaf was utterly delighted, "I truly must congratulate you for this. I, Thousandleaf, finally have another on the same path as me with the same ideals, one who I can call brother."

In the Precious Tree Sect, Thousandleaf was one in the high reaches, unafraid of the cold in his lofty position as the forefather over a horde of juniors. Now that Ye Chonglou had broken through, this meant that there were two original realm cultivators in their camp, and that they could spar at any time.

Although Ye Chonglou had angrily left the Precious Tree Sect back in the day, his heart still resided with the sect, and was still of one mind with the sect in important matters.

Ye Chonglou smiled dashingly and looked at Jiang Chen with a thick sense of affection.

"Little friend, you're something alright! I've only entered closed door cultivation for three or so years, but you've soared to prominence and have caused this amount of ruckus. Good, good! Young folk should be thus, afraid of nothing and displaying an unrestrained and vigorous style that brims with talent. Who cares if even an emperor himself is present? Blast them all away if they dare step on your head!"

Ye Chonglou was profuse in his praise, and his bias towards Jiang Chen could be obviously seen.

Sunchaser's gaze was cold and austere as he sized up Ye Chonglou, who'd descended from the skies. He was also incredibly surprised.

Ye Chonglou had broken through to the origin realm?

This was an enormously bad piece of news! This meant that there was another origin realm cultivator on the Precious Tree Sect side. This was definitely a negative development for Purple Sun Sect dominance in the sixteen kingdom alliance!

"Ye Chonglou, you're a mere newly ascended cultivator. Are you thinking of strutting foolishly in front of me?" Sunchaser boomed lowly.

Ye Chonglou had always possessed an unbridled and dashing nature. He'd laid dormant in the Skylaurel Kingdom only because he was focusing on his dao and didn't want to keep high profile.

In addition, being unable to break through to the origin realm had given him no desire to go about in society.

But now, how would Ye Chonglou show any face to Sunchaser's mocking words? Ye Chonglou smiled remotely, "Sunchaser, who is possibly more arrogant than you? However, all of your arrogance will be useless today! If you want to fight, you should prepare

yourself to face off against the combined attacks of three origin realm cultivators!”

“Three?” Sunchaser leered. “Forgive me for not seeing it, which three?”

The Phoenix-Dragon would have none of this after Sunchaser spoke. It threw its head to the skies and gave an immense roar that crested like rolling thunder.

It was apparent that having reached the origin realm, it had gained full sentience and completely comprehended human speech. The proud Phoenix-Dragon was greatly displeased by Sunchaser’s dismissal of it.

“Mm?” Sunchaser’s pupils contracted slightly. It was obvious that he previously hadn’t noticed this steed had also broken through to the origin realm!

Boundless envy surged up in his heart in that instant. As strong as Sunchaser was, he didn’t have a origin realm steed!

By what right and virtue did this Ye Chonglou have to possess a saint rank steed?

Sunchase was thrown into disarray in that moment.

He had a ninety percent surety if he faced off again Thousandleaf.

He would still have at least fifty percent confidence against Thousandleaf and Ye Chonglou combined.

But add a fierce saint rank spirit creature to the mix, then his chances of victory were absolutely not more than 30%.

This kind of contracted spirit creature was the sort that was least afraid of death. Once it discovered that its master was in danger, it would go utterly berserk and muster forth frightening, explosive battle power.

Sunchaser would rather face three origin realm cultivators rather than two origin realms, and a saint rank creature that might go berserk at any time.

The scales of power had noticeably tipped towards the Precious Tree Sect as soon as Ye Chonglou and the Phoenix-Dragon had appeared.

As strong as Sunchaser might be, he could only barely manage to meet three origin realm cultivators in battle. There was almost no hope of victory.

Those remaining in the Purple Sun Sect were certainly stronger than the Precious Tree Sect, but how could Sunchaser ignore the immense killing machine that was Jiang Chen?

How about Jiang Chen’s million strong Swordbird army?

Sunchaser wasn't of the mind that anyone else in the Purple Sun Sect would be able to resist the Swordbird army, and particularly that mysterious formation.

With this assumptions, Sunchaser realized with shock that if they were to meet in battle today, it would very likely be the Purple Sun Sect being destroyed, and not them destroying the Precious Tree Sect.

Ye Chonglou's eyes blazed like torches as he noted Sunchaser's hesitation. He laughed heartily. "Sunchaser, fight if you will, why the apprehension? You've always liked playing with fire. Let's see if your playing this time will result in the annihilation of the Purple Sun Sect, or what?"

Jiang Chen had killed three of the senior levels of the Purple Sun Sect, but he hadn't truly harmed it. Several elders as well as sect head Zixu Zhenren all stepped forward.

They advised in low tones, "Forefather, lack of forbearance in small matters upsets great plans. They've come prepared today. The Shangyang Kingdom is sure to be destroyed if we fight, and our sect will be grievously harmed as well."

"Forefather, what our sect needs to do most now is to preserve our strength and wait for the right price to sell. We shouldn't brashly charge into battle and consume our sect's main strength. It's not worth it!"

They wouldn't have dared given advice to Sunchaser in ordinary times. But the situation was clearly laid out now. If things devolved to a battle, the first to be eliminated would be their Purple Sun Sect.

The senior executives had all participated in attacking Jiang Chen just now. Apart from Sunchaser, none of them had the strength to break through his formation.

If Sunchaser was entangled by the three origin realm cultivators, they would be completely at the mercy of others once Jiang Chen's formation sealed them in.

They would never want such a thing to happen.

Sunchaser had been arrogant and domineering for half his life, having always acted as he would with impudence, defying every law and regulation. However, he truly was hesitating this time.

When faced with the danger of sect annihilation, even one as rampantly bullying as he had to weigh up the severity of the matter.

Reason finally triumphed over impulse in the end.

He threw vicious glares at Thousandleaf and Ye Chonglou before locking his gaze on Jiang Chen, "Scum, I hope you're always this lucky!"

The flames of fury seemed ready to spew out of his hate filled eyes. Everything was indicating how incensed and frustrated he was at the moment.

Jiang Chen laughed heartily. “Old man Sunchaser, I know you’re feeling quite aggrieved right now. You want to erupt, and yet you can’t. However, for a sect that venerates the strong and have always bullied others, you should’ve long thought about the day that you would be humiliated instead?”

If looks could kill, the look from Sunchaser’s eyes would’ve killed Jiang Chen a hundred times over by now.

It was a pity that he hadn’t trained in the arts of the eyes and didn’t posses this skill.

Thousandleaf also relaxed inwardly when he saw Sunchaser choose to back down.

To be honest, he was unwilling to meet a madman such as Sunchaser in battle unless he absolutely had to. He smiled faintly as he saw Sunchaser give ground. “Since this is the case, the matters of today will end here. Sunchaser, I rather hope you think of the greater picture and set aside your prejudices.”

This was undoubtedly preaching to deaf ears like playing a lute to a cow. Sunchaser snorted coldly, a supercilious smile appearing on his face as he seemed quite dismissive of Thousandleaf’s words.

His red eyebrow arched. “What, do you plan on spending the night here after I’ve let you go?”

Although Sunchaser had decided to abstain from fighting, that didn’t mean he would be the first to withdraw his troops. After all, the Shangyang Kingdom was his sect’s territory.

Allowing someone to come in and throw their weight around, unpunished, was already past his bottom line. He would be completely unable to be the one who left first.

“Jiang Chen, let’s stop at a good spot. Will you come back to the sect with me?” Thousandleaf walked up with a slight smile.

Jiang Chen nodded. The Goldbiter Rats had long since found and secretly rescued Jiang Zheng and the others. He had gained back his principle and interest in revenge on this trip to the Shangyang Kingdom.

He felt absolutely satisfied and fulfilled having killed that old woman Shuiyue.

As for Sunchaser, although he was arrogant and a looming disaster, Jiang Chen truly didn’t have the ability to kill him at the moment.

He couldn’t bear to ask forefather Thousandleaf or lordmaster Ye Chonglou to take the stand either. After all, this was something that laid one’s life on the line. He didn’t have the right to ask this

of others.

He immediately nodded. “Jiang Chen is grateful and will remember the gratitude of the forefather coming to my aid. I will listen to the forefather for all arrangements.”

Jiang Chen had no reason to put on appearances since the forefather was being so kindly disposed towards him.

He then smiled at Ye Chonglou afterwards, “Lordmaster, I owe you again for this time.”

Ye Chonglou gave a bark of laughter, “Good kid, you still talk of things like this with me?”

The old tutor actually felt great gratitude towards Jiang Chen. If it wasn’t for Jiang Chen’s pointers, he never would’ve been able to break through to the origin realm in this life. Where would all his current glory be then?

It had always been Ye Chonglou’s ardent desire to participate in the decisions at the highest levels. However, with his previous cultivation at the spirit king level, although he had some influence, it wasn’t enough to enter the circles of the four venerated ones.

But today, his high profile entrance was also an official proclamation that he, Ye Chonglou, had also entered the ranks of the venerated origin realm cultivators!

The layout of the sixteen kingdom alliance would change from now on. It was no longer an era of the four forefathers holding sway, and it was even less of one in which Sunchaser was the sole power.

All of this had come from Jiang Chen.

As Sunchaser watched the Precious Tree Sect and Ye Chonglou talk and laugh animatedly as they left with Jiang Chen, leaving behind a Shangyang Kingdom in shambles, the carcasses of Master Shuiyue and the others, Sunchaser's expression twisted as he suddenly threw his head back and howled. This howl soared to the nine heavens as a current of rage shot into the sky, unable to find an outlet.

The Purple Sun Sect disciples all cowered and trembled below. No one dared approach.

Everyone was well aware that in the forefather's life of dominance, he'd never come off the worse after an exchange like he had today. For the forefather and the sect, this was a day of utter humiliation and disgrace!

"Jiang Chen, Precious Tree Sect, and Ye Chonglou!" Sunchaser's teeth grated audibly as resentment suffused his tone and hatred colored his eyes!

Chapter 427: Joining The Precious Tree Sect

What infuriated Sunchaser even more was the sight of the bodies of the three elders, particularly Master Shuiyue. Jiang Chen had sent his club crashing down on her face, and her originally beautiful features had become a bloody mess.

Sunchaser's heart was dripping blood. If it wasn't for the presence of the senior executives of the sect, he would've surely gripped the body and wailed loudly.

Elder Silverroc had died in an even more ghastly fashion. Jiang Chen had almost pounded him into meat paste.

It was rather Elder Long Luo whose repose was a bit different. He seemed to be as durable as a metallic sculpture, his weight reaching several hundred kilograms.

"Forefather, there's something bizarre about Elder Long Luo's death." Sect head Zixu Zhenren said carefully, deathly afraid of angering a forefather caught in the full throes of rage.

Sunchaser didn't vent his spleen on others. He inspected Elder Long Luo's corpse with a darkened face, murmuring with a sinister look after a moment, "He's fallen victim to a metal attribute art and his body's been petrified into metal. This scum is not only well versed in the the arts of water and fire, but has such accomplishments in the art of metal as well! My Purple Sun Sect will not know peace if he is not eliminated!"

Sunchaser finally calmed down from his agitated rage. He began to consider his sect's strategy in the face of this inexplicably frustrating state of affairs.

He was an origin realm old monster after all. He wouldn't be one to wallow and lose himself in grief.

"Zixu, go make the arrangements. The royal family of the Shangyang Kingdom has been annihilated and a new clan must be raised. Our control over the kingdom cannot falter."

Zixu Zhenren hastily nodded. "I'll arrange things appropriately, please be at ease."

Sunchaser's gaze was as biting as a wintry tundra as he swept his eyes across the faces of those present. "All of you present have witnessed today's disgrace. Our Purple Sun Sect has dominated the sixteen kingdom alliance for more than a thousand years. Yet during that millennium, we'd never witnessed a crisis as enormous, nor a humiliation more profound, than what happened here today. Right now, I hope alarm bells are ringing in all of your hearts, that you've solemnly realized that our sect's infallible position has been severely challenged. As we stand here, we are surrounded by great danger. If you still wish to maintain the advantage of being superior to all those within the sixteen kingdom alliance, then look sharp! Remember the shame of today, and find bravery from disgrace!"

"Remember, the Purple Sun Sect has not fallen! The Purple Sun Sect is far from conceding in defeat! I have already made progress in today's closed door cultivation. When I throw off my shackles

and ascend to fourth level origin realm, that will be the day we conquer the Precious Tree Sect! Today's debt, born of our humiliation, will be paid ten times over at that time!"

Sunchaser hadn't chosen to fight to the end today because he was only of the third level origin realm, and wasn't confident that he'd be able to take on three opponents.

The Purple Sun Sect would have no advantages at all if he couldn't destroy the three origin realm enemies.

But once his cultivation level broke through to fourth level origin realm, his strength would surge by leaps and bounds and he'd have full confidence even in the face of three origin realm cultivators.

Forefather Thousandleaf of the Precious Tree Sect was only of third level origin realm, far from breaking through to fourth level.

Ye Chonglou and his steed had only just broken through to the origin realm.

As long as Sunchaser made it through to the earth origin realm, he would absolutely be able to trample the two of them.

If the Precious Tree Sect lost their origin realm cultivators, then it would collapse without a fight, like monkeys fleeing a falling tree.

"Forefather, I must make a trip to the Eastern Kingdom and take

care of matters after this affair before returning to the Precious Tree Sect."

Thousandleaf smiled slightly. "Since this is the case, I'll accompany you."

Ye Chonglou also smiled. "I'm also curious how the fengshui of the Eastern Kingdom is to give birth to such a heaven defying genius as you?"

The two elders laughed heartily and decided on personally accompanying Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen was touched. He knew that this was them still not at ease and worried that old monster Sunchaser would come swinging back for him.

He didn't put on airs and smiled, "It will be the height of good fengshui for the Eastern Kingdom that two origin realm forefathers are deigning to visit."

Forefather Thousandleaf was in a great mood as he gave orders, "Tianshu, take the rest of the people and return to the sect first. I will accompany Jiang Chen to the Eastern Kingdom."

Xie Tianshu knew full well now that Jiang Chen was the Precious Tree Sect's treasure, one that was even more valued than a sect head.

After all, even he might not have been able to kill three Purple Sun Sect elders in a row. Even if he could, he wouldn't have been able to do so that easily.

Therefore, he knew how to behave in this situation and didn't dare envy Jiang Chen. He laughed accordingly, "What a pity that I cannot go visit such a wondrous place. You won't think me slighting you, would you Jiang Chen?"

Jiang Chen knew that the sect head wanted to build closer relations with him and smiled faintly, "The sect head has to attend to a host of matters everyday. You must extend a great deal of effort and trouble in prioritizing sect matters first."

Jiang Chen then exchanged some pleasantries with the other senior executives. He knew that the forefather had purposefully arranged things thus when he didn't see the Iron family. The forefather hadn't wanted Jiang Chen to be disgusted.

The group of people travelled back to the Eastern Kingdom.

Thousandleaf and Ye Chonglou were actually disinterested in the Eastern Kingdom. They were going to protect Jiang Chen, and to express their attitudes about him.

They could all see that Jiang Chen's future was unlimited, and that his future would be above theirs. That day wasn't too far away either.

Jiang Chen obviously didn't plan on making a big fuss of things. He escorted the Jiang family members back to the Jiang Han duchy and had Xue Tong give them a large sum of wealth. Jiang Chen also gave them the three pill recipes and had the Jiang family clean up the Hall of Healing, leveraging the strength of the Hall of Healing to rebuild the Jiang family.

Jiang Chen had long since drawn the lines between himself and the Eastern royal family, but he wasn't opposed to Gouyu doing a few things for her family.

After all, the Eastern clan ancestor had been killed and the Eastern Kingdom now lacked an expert to hold down the fort. Things would become exceedingly dangerous for them.

The heir to the Jinshan duchy, Fatty Xuan, and the heir to the Hubing duchy, Hubing Yue, happened to bump into each other at the door of a random tavern in the capital.

"Fatty, you're here too? Do you know who's come to find us?" Hubing Yue was confused.

Fatty Xuan had once successfully lost weight after being stuck in the Boundless Catacombs for a month, but his weight had rebounded after three years and he was once again that bouncing ball.

He was also greatly baffled at the moment.

Their families were now numbered amongst the four great dukes in the Eastern Kingdom. Their identities had naturally risen dramatically as well. They were first class fops in the capital.

However, Hubing Yue was different from Fatty Xuan in that he focused on martial dao. His cultivation level had improved by leaps and bounds, and he was now amongst the true qi masters.

Fatty Xuan was lazy by nature and was only nine meridians true qi at the moment.

The two had entered the tavern as they chatted with each other.

“You’ve arrived, the young master has been waiting for a while.” Xue Tong walked out from a corner and greeted them.

“You… you’re my boss’ follower?” A look of delight suddenly shot out from Fatty Xuan’s thin slits for eyes. “I heard that something happened to the Hall of Healing a few days ago, saying that boss had returned to the Eastern Kingdom. Is it… is it true?”

Fatty Xuan was truly overjoyed now. He grabbed Xue Tong’s arm with great agitation as his eyes lit up like twin suns.

Hubing Yue was slightly astonished as he paused, “You’re… you’re a spirit realm expert?”

Xue Tong smiled faintly, “Shall we, gentlemen? Let’s not keep the young master waiting.”

Fatty Xuan chuckled. “Go! Let’s go! I thought I’d never see boss again in this life!”

Hubing Yue’s eyes were shot through with red as he recalled the hardships and joys that they’d shared with Jiang Chen, as well as the gratitude of rebirth he owed Jiang Chen.

If it wasn’t for Jiang Chen, Hubing Yue never would’ve reached the level of eleven meridians true qi master in three years, even though his potential was quite good.

“Young master, the two Lordships have arrived.”

Xue Tong pushed through the door and sent a message ahead with his consciousness.

Fatty Xuan behind him couldn’t contain his glee as he arched his body and cleared out a patch of space. He squirmed through the door and pounced on Jiang Chen, tears and snot falling down together.

“Boss, I’ve missed you so terribly very much!”

Jiang Chen was also happy to be reunited with his old friends. He clapped their shoulders and embraced them, finally calming Fatty Xuan’s emotions after a while.

“Alright Fatty! I see that it’s impossible for you to lose weight.” Jiang Chen teased and looked at Hubing Yue. “Xiao Yue hasn’t relaxed his training. Eleven meridians true qi master! There is hope for you for the spirit realm, very good, very good!”

Hubing Yue’s eyes reddened further after Jiang Chen’s compliments as his emotions were also highly agitated.

Fatty Xuan laughed uproariously. “I’ve thought things through. I’ve destined to be good for nothing in this life, and being fat is my trademark. No one recognizes me on the streets if I’m not fat, how depressing is that? Bro, you don’t know how even though life has been glorious for me in the capital these years, it always felt like something was missing in my heart without you.”

Jiang Chen sighed but was speechless. This was a natural occurrence in life. When childhood friends grew up, they were destined to pursue their own paths.

Fatty Xuan had the personality of a dandy, this was fated to be his life.

Whereas Hubing Yue had noticeably changed, his temperament becoming more steady.

“Xiao Yue, Fatty, you’ll have to shoulder the responsibility of the clan one day. I only hope that you are still brothers when the day in which you grasp power arrives. I’ve come to arrange a few things this time and will be leaving shortly. If our fates are willing, we will meet again.”

Although this was cruel, Jiang Chen was well ware that the trajectory of his life was now completely different from theirs. The chances they'd have to meet in the future would only decrease even more.

Jiang Chen had Xue Tong send them on their way after a few more hours. He gave them a few things in private. The items weren't too good, nor were they too bad.

He gave Hubing Yue a Five Dragons Heaven Opening Pill.

He gave Fatty Xuan some protective treasures and a spirit weapon.

Gouyu also took care of the Eastern clan affairs as well. She brought Eastern Zhiruo to meet with Jiang Chen so as to fulfill the little girl's request.

The little girl was young and had a forthright personality. She seemed to know that Jiang Chen and her were of different worlds. Although she had a multitude of emotions in her heart, she hid them all very docilely in her heart.

Jiang Chen quietly left the Eastern Kingdom after two days and officially joined the Precious Tree Sect with his followers.

After Jiang Chen joined, Ye Chonglou announced that he was returning to the Precious Tree Sect.

Forefather Thousandleaf was of an obvious mind to spread news of this far and wide as he gave great pomp and circumstance to Jiang Chen and Ye Chonglou entering the sect. He gave out invitations to the senior executives of all the sects to welcome them to observe the ceremony.

Jiang Chen didn't oppose this. He knew that forefather Thousandleaf had been suppressed too long and needed to show off a bit, to regain some confidence amongst the four sects.

Chapter 428: Envoy From The Sky Sect

Slamming his fist on the stone table in front of him, Sunchaser's face flushed, shifting between red and white. It was obvious he was more than a little enraged.

The invitation in his hand was from the Precious Tree Sect. It was inviting him and the senior executives of the Purple Sun Sect to attend the ceremony of Ye Chonglou and Jiang Chen entering the sect.

This invitation was worded very politely, but it was a naked challenge in Sunchaser's eyes. To invite the Purple Sun Sect at this time to watch the proceedings, it was completely toying with the Purple Sun Sect, making them lose face, and even a proclamation to the sixteen kingdom alliance that from now on, the Precious Tree Sect would replace the Purple Sun Sect and become the head of the four sects!

This was something that Sunchaser found hardest to accept.

What had just happened in the Shangyang Kingdom just now had already accumulated enough ire that he had nowhere to vent. Now, the Precious Tree Sect's actions were just adding oil to the flames and fueling his rage to new heights.

If they went, it was an undoubted humiliation of the Purple Sun Sect. Seeing the Precious Tree Sect strut around, comfortable in their position, was something that no one in the Purple Sun Sect could accept.

If he didn’t go, the outside world would think that the Purple Sun Sect was already afraid of the Precious Tree Sect and didn’t even have the courage to face the latter. Not participating would be dodging the issue.

Therefore, it was truly a difficult decision for Sunchaser.

He was contemplating when he saw Zixu Zhenren stride forth, a mysterious and stern look on his face. “Forefather, there is someone outside who claims he is from the Sky Sect and has asked to speak to you by name.”

Sunchaser happened to be at a loss of what to do when he suddenly heard the news. His knitted brows arched upwards and a look of delight appeared, “Is he finally here?”

He was then a bit worried after his surprise. “I wonder if the Sky Sect envoy will fault us for Long Juxue being killed?”

Although he was inwardly anxious, Sunchaser didn’t dare tarry. It was obvious that this envoy had quite a background when even an origin realm cultivator like him had to dance careful attendance.

A blue clad man was standing with his hands behind his back in the most venerated guest receiving hall of the Purple Sun Sect. His expression was cold and remote, and he exuded a strong solitary pride.

The senior executives of the Purple Sun Sect kept smiling and seeking to wait upon the man, but the blue clad man remained expressionless and didn't give them the slightest bit of face.

Sunchaser walked over swiftly at this moment. The normally arrogant forefather was now wreathed in smiles, and one could even detect a hint of humility, even fawning, in his smiles.

"The entire Purple Sun Sect have waited and yearned, finally welcoming the day the Sky Sect envoy has graced us with your presence. Sir Envoy, Sunchaser has been remiss in greeting you."

Sunchaser threw a look at the senior executives as he spoke, indicating for them to leave.

The envoy would only be irritated by service from people of that level.

The blue clad man's arrogantly aloof expression finally loosened a bit when he saw Sunchaser appear.

"Sunchaser, it looks like your sect's morale is quite low. It's not at all as impressive as you were boasting! This Purple Sun Sect is rather disappointing."

The blue clad man's tone was faint, but it had the natural quality of one in a superior position. This made Sunchaser have to lower his head docilely and accept this lecture.

Sunchaser smiled ruefully, “Sir Envoy, it’s truly difficult to quickly summarize the reasons behind this.”

The blue clad man gave a flick of his hands. “I didn’t come here to listen to your complaints. Here, summon your innate constitution disciple. I want to assess to see if she is as she appears.”

Sunchaser knew this would be bad as soon as he heard these words. He was dumbfounded and didn’t know how to respond.

The blue clad man became a bit displeased when he saw Sunchaser dither. “What? Is it that I cannot summon one of your junior disciples?”

Sunchaser sighed lightly, “Sir Envoy, Sunchaser was incompetent and couldn’t protect Long Juxue. She was killed during the great selection!”

Sunchaser knew that there was no way to conceal things at this point in time. He could only confess. Perhaps that would provoke the envoy’s temper and gain him some sympathy.

“What?” The blue clad man was flabbergasted. “Are you jesting? One with an innate constitution was killed? Isn’t your Purple Sun Sect the dominant power in the sixteen kingdom alliance?”

“The Purple Sun Sect has always been the head of the four great

sects, this is correct. Even Lei Gangyang is enough to sweep all the disciples of the other three sects, much less Long Juxue. The one who killed Long Juxue this time was a perverse genius from a secular kingdom. I don't know what strange heritage he's received that makes his strength extraordinary. He's even killed three of my elders."

Sunchaser truly gritted his teeth whenever he spoke of Jiang Chen.

The blue clad man snorted derisively. "Isn't this new. The rise of a grass root from a secular kingdom that ended in the death of an innate constitution. What do you think your sixteen kingdom alliance is? Are there that many geniuses everywhere? Sunchaser, don't you feign compliance while acting in opposition. What is the reason? Did you send that Long Juxue to another power to pave the path of ascension for your Purple Sun Sect?"

Sunchaser was scared witless when he heard these words.

"Sir Envoy, where do these words come from? My Purple Sun Sect is but a tiny piece of land, how would we dare betray the Sky Sect? I, Sunchaser, have wholeheartedly flocked to the Sky Sect banner. I had thought to make use of the selection to awe and suppress the other three sects, building the foundations for the Sky Sect's entrance to the sixteen kingdom alliance. Unfortunately, a man's schemes are inferior to those made by heaven, and all our plans were wrecked and ruined by the appearance of a secular genius. A simple investigation will be enough to prove my words true or false!"

“Hmph! Secular genius!” The blue clad man was obviously disdainful of this matter. He felt that Sunchaser was exaggerating things. Remote, secular kingdoms could only give birth to certain levels of geniuses. Those characters were ants in the eyes of the Sky Sect.

“Sunchaser, I will be investigating this matter. You should know the consequences of betrayal if I discover the slightest falsehood. Hmph, the value of your Purple Sun Sect has decreased by at least one half without a genius of an innate constitution. We’d wanted to make an exception and give you the rank of a three star division master. Now, you are worth a rank of one star division master at most. Even this is an extra favor for you.”

The blue clad man made a grasping motion with a single hand and an ancient, unadorned badge appeared in his hand. He threw it to Sunchaser.

“This is the badge of a Sky Sect division master. With it, you are a division master of the Sky Sect. The Purple Sun Sect no longer exists, you are now the Purple Light Division.”

Sunchaser started, “Sir Envoy, why not the Purple Sun Division?”

The envoy started laughing coldly. “Purple Sun Division? Are you worthy of the two words ‘purple sun’? These two words are a taboo. The Sky Sect’s full name is the Ninesuns Sky Sect, with nine manors within the sect. One of them is the Purple Sun Manor. Now, are you sure you want to change your name to the Purple Sun Division?”

Cold sweat beaded Sunchaser's forehead when he heard these words. He was almost frightened out of his soul. This was a double taboo!

The first was a taboo in using the sect's name, and the second was a taboo using the Purple Sun Manor's name.

Sunchaser hurriedly waved his hands and said with a carefully reserved face, "No, not at all. The Purple Light Division is fine."

The blue clad man's expression was cold as he said faintly, "Sunchaser, the sect never keeps trash. We've appointed you as division master, but if you cannot show anything for your position, this badge may be confiscated at any time."

Sunchaser hastened to say, "Since we have joined the Sky Sect, Sunchaser will naturally put forth all his effort for the Sky Sect and exhaust myself in the task. I will not shrink from sacrifice even if I'm faced with mountains of blades or oceans of fire."

"Save the empty flattery. Your most pressing mission is to unite the sixteen kingdom alliance. Swallow the four sects and incorporate them into the Purple Light Division. If you can do this well, then even a rank of four star division master is possible."

The blue clad man knew the essence of being in power. One would have to dangle a sweet reward after dishing out a slap.

“Unite the four sects?” Sunchaser’s eyes rolled around as he weighed this matter, then finally laughed ruefully. “Sir Envoy, if Long Juxue had been able to develop successfully, if the secular genius hadn’t appeared, all of this might have been completed in ten or twenty years. But now…”

“Where’s the difficulty?”

“There are many, the chief of which is the Precious Tree Sect. The Precious Tree Sect is now very influential, as if the sun at midday. It’s received the addition of the secular genius as well as an origin realm cultivator, and a saint rank spirit creature. In terms of strength, the Precious Tree Sect is no longer inferior to my Purple Sun Sect… no, not less than my Purple Light Division.”

“Precious Tree Sect? The blue clad man snorted coldly. “That sect with the most spirit medicine resources that you mentioned before?”

“Yes indeed.” Sunchaser hastened to say.

“A decade or two, the Sky Sect has no time to wait that long. You must unite all sixteen kingdoms with one stroke and put all future worries to bed. The sect has sent me here to lend a helping hand at critical moments. Undue delay might lead to trouble. Although the sixteen kingdom alliance is a remote place, many gazes are now gathering here. If my Sky Sect does not take swift and ruthless action, it would not be pretty if other forces became involved.”

Sunchaser was overjoyed by these words. He knew this meant

that the envoy was personally taking action.

The blue clad man wasn't necessarily stronger than Sunchaser, but the former had the benefit of a good birth and a high status. So Sunchaser kept a very low profile in front of him because the other held his future and fate in his hands.

If Sunchaser somehow offended the envoy with a word, then the envoy would only need one word to destroy Sunchaser and the entire sect when he returned.

"Sir Envoy, with your action, unifying the four sects is absolutely a foregone conclusion. It so happens that the Precious Tree Sect is holding an induction ceremony and has invited the four sects to participate. Those from all the sects will be there at this time, and a strong blow from you will certainly result in success with one battle. The others will be submissive and meek, throwing themselves under the Purple Light Division's banner."

Sunchaser began to furiously kiss up to the blue clad man.

As the Sky Sect envoy, the blue clad man felt quite superior in the sixteen kingdoms. He didn't think there was anything inappropriate about Sunchaser's fawning, and accepted it all readily.

He was actually a bit stronger than Sunchaser. As a fourth level origin realm expert, he was a solid earth origin realm cultivator.

He completely surpassed Sunchaser both in terms of background or strength, so he didn't deign to show any humility in front of Sunchaser.

"How much longer until the induction ceremony?" The blue clad man asked after musing for a bit.

"The invitation said nine days."

The man contemplated some more. "Alright, then we must take down the other three sects in nine days on our trip to the Precious Tree Sect, incorporating them into the Purple Light Division. There can be no accidents about this. When this is complete, I will follow the orders from above and help you enter fourth level origin realm, giving you absolute strength in suppressing others and absolute authority in the Purple Light Division!"

Sunchaser's brows danced with happiness upon hearing this. This was such an unexpected delight!

Chapter 429: Divine Fruit Of The Rosy Dawn

Sunchaser had been fruitlessly spinning his wheels when the arrival of the Sky Sect envoy immediately restored his fighting spirit and swept away his dejection.

No matter from what angle one approached things, the Purple Sun Sect was the absolute winner now that the Sky Sect envoy had decided to personally take the field.

Although they'd lost the name of the Purple Sun Sect, they'd received real power instead.

What did the badge of a division master of the Ninesuns Sky Sect mean? It meant that he, Sunchaser, was no longer someone with no patron at all. He'd latched onto a powerful backer.

Even the strong factions in the Myriad Domain wouldn't be able to ignore ether existence of the Ninesuns Sky sect.

Even though he'd only received a badge of the lowest rank, no one would dare overlook him all the same.

The most critical thing was that the Purple Light Division would unite the four sects. This meant that Sunchaser would be in charge of more people, and even more experts would follow his orders.

Although they may not wholeheartedly submit to him in the short term, he'd naturally have his ways to bring them to heel in

due time as his strength continued to increase.

After all, the situation was in front of them. Either they bent the knee, or faced destruction.

In the world of martial dao, going along with the flow was the true way of survival. Sunchaser didn't feel that the senior executives of the three great sects had the willpower to defy the Ninesuns Sky Sect.

To put things bluntly, it was their great fortune that the Ninesuns Sky Sect had cast its eye on them!

If there really was those who didn't recognize the greater picture, then he'd be forced to use some strong-arm tactics and kill one or two of them to make an example for the others to see!

Sunchaser had already started planning who he'd make an example of first.

Jiang Chen!

This name was certainly in first place.

Whether they were the Purple Sun Sect or the Purple Light Division, they would never have a moment of peace as long as this person was not eliminated.

Jiang Chen made appropriate arrangements for his follower upon returning to the Precious Tree Sect.

He was now the most central figure of the younger generation in the Precious Tree Sect. The worth of his followers had naturally risen as well—they enjoyed the treatment afforded to first tier disciples.

The benefits of joining the Precious Tree Sect were apparent in this manner.

Jiang Chen wasn't actually very interested in an induction ceremony, but everyone within the sect was highly enthused about this, so he didn't want to dampen everyone's spirits.

He could understand it as well. The Precious Tree Sect had been suppressed by the Purple Sun Sect for so many years. It was a natural desire to want to make use of this opportunity of exaltation and fulfillment for widespread fanfare.

The Precious Tree Sect gave Jiang Chen the best possible treatment. They hewed out a brand new residence for him alone in a sector with the densest concentration of spirit qi.

Only sect elders could enjoy such treatment. Even Lian Canghai and Xie Yufan didn't have the right yet to enjoy such privilege.

However, no one in the sect expressed dissatisfaction about this.

Jiang Chen had killed Long Juxue of the innate constitution in the great selection, annihilated the Wu family in the Shangyang Kingdom, and slaughtered three elders of the Purple Sun Sect.

Any of these glorious achievements were accomplishments that the younger disciples needed to look up.

How many elders within the sect could've done the same, much less the younger generation?

Although Jiang Chen enjoyed all of this treatment, he didn't become cocky or full of himself. Many elder held banquets to welcome him in the days after his return. He attended them all happily and didn't arrogantly turn any down.

He knew as well that the network of connections within the sect was complex. There was nothing bad about forming good relationships.

In this way, basically all of senior executives of the sect extended olive branches to Jiang Chen, apart from the Iron family.

He rejected no one.

This won him widespread approval and a good reputation a few days after entering the sect.

Apart from Jiang Chen, the other most in the limelight was old man Fei Xuan. He'd been promoted to elder-in-waiting before, and

now that Jiang Chen had joined the sect, it had an undeniable impact to his influence.

Jiang Chen also took care to interact with him in many occasions. This also unknowingly raised old man Fei's status.

In contrast, Ye Chonglou was rather having an easy time.

Due to his cultivation level and status, he didn't need to consider anyone's face apart from forefather Thousandleaf.

Ye Chonglou was now the sect's second forefather, second only to one and above tens of thousands.

Jiang Chen finally became acclimated to the business of sect life after a few days and wrapped up various social calls as well.

When he returned to the residence that forefather Thousandleaf himself had broken ground, Jiang Chen discovered to his surprise that lordmaster Ye Chonglou had come visiting.

"Lordmaster." Jiang Chen was slightly surprised.

"Haha, what, you don't welcome a raggedy old man like me?" Ye Chonglou was in a wonderful mood. He'd returned to the Precious Tree Sect with the identity of a forefather, and the Iron family, the culprits who'd made him leave with resignation back in the day, could only look up to him. This feeling felt damn good.

“The lordmaster is an origin realm forefather, how would this kid not welcome you? I should be greatly kissing up to you!” Jiang Chen also joked back.

“You brat! Others may not know, but you definitely know what is the deal with my origin realm. If it wasn’t for you, I’m afraid I would’ve dithered in the spirit king realm for all of my life.”

A mixture of emotions coursed through Ye Chonglou. “I’ve been quiet for so long. I’d never have thought that I’d return to the sect one day and be standing at the peak.”

“Age has never been an issue in martial dao. The lordmaster possesses an undying hero’s heart. It was a given that you would make it here today.” Jiang Chen offered a few words of flattery.

The two sat down as the lordmaster suddenly asked, “Jiang Chen, I heard that Dan Fei left you a letter when she left?”

Jiang Chen was surprised by the lordmaster’s sudden question.

However, he didn’t deny it. He nodded slightly and didn’t mention the contents of the letter.

The lordmaster seemed to have guessed something as he sighed softly. “I raise Dan Fei since she was young. I might have overly spoiled her, which resulted in her slightly high brow personality. However, little Dan’s mindset is pure and kind, and she’s always

had a stubborn streak in her character and style. I was in closed door cultivation when she left this time, so I have no idea what happened. With her personality, she would've never left without a reason. I am a bit worried."

Jiang Chen also had no idea why Dan Fei had left. He too had found it odd. Dan Fei was so filial to the lordmaster, why would she leave when he was in closed door cultivation?

Jiang Chen was absolutely befuddled by the lordmaster's words.

He'd naturally understood her letter. That short letter had been her confession of love to him.

However, he still didn't understand. Even if she did have feelings for Jiang Chen, it hadn't seemed like she needed to leave the lordmaster.

When he recalled his various experiences with her, Jiang Chen sighed lightly as well. No matter from what angle one looked at things, Dan Fei was a perfect match for a man.

Apart from being slightly proud, it could be said that she fulfilled all of a man's fantasies.

However, some destiny was needed in the matters between a man and woman. Jiang Chen had always had a gentlemanly attitude in interacting with her. His thoughts had never drifted in that direction.

When he thought that Dan Fei's departure might have something to do with him, Jiang Chen naturally hoped in his heart that everything was alright for her, and that no accidents would befall her.

When he saw that the conversation had taken a slight downturn, the lordmaster changed the topic. "Jiang Chen, it's a factor of change for the sixteen kingdom alliance now that you've joined the Precious Tree Sect. In this way, you'll also walk towards the light from the shadows. There will be countless numbers of eyeballs on you from this moment forth. You should be prepared."

Jiang Chen smiled slightly and nodded, "Is it not the same for you, lordmaster?"

Ye Chonglou laughed heartily, "That is true."

He immediately sighed softly afterwards. "It's a pity that the position of the sixteen kingdom alliance in the Myriad Domain is still fraught with peril. Although you and I have entered the Precious Tree Sect, I have no insight into where the path ahead of us leads. Jiang Chen, you're still young. I see in you a kind of potential, a potential that will change the times."

"You and the Purple Sun Sect are as if fire and water now. With my understanding of old monster Sunchaser, he will never be willing to take things lying down. I'm afraid this matter is not over."

Ye Chonglou rather dreaded Sunchaser. This was a madman with a narrow mind. He would always take revenge for slights to him.

With the Purple Sun Sect's domineering style in the sixteen kingdom alliance, they would never just silently take the loss after such an enormous humiliation.

"The lordmaster speaks what I think. There must be a termination of matters with the Purple Sun Sect sooner or later. There is no benefit to further thought. What I can do is train hard."

Ye Chonglou complimented Jiang Chen upon hearing this, "Absolutely! It's rare for a young man to be neither proud nor impatient. I will protect you no matter what, even if I have to put my life on the line. I will shelter you before you grow into your strength. Do you know? What I am looking forward to the most now is seeing how far you'll go!"

Ye Chonglou was viewing Jiang Chen as one of his own juniors now. Jiang Chen's position in his heart wasn't the least bit inferior to Dan Fei's.

It wasn't only because Jiang Chen had given him pointers and helped him enter the origin realm, more importantly, the lordmaster saw in Jiang Chen an unfathomable potential.

He suddenly took out an item from his storage ring.

“Jiang Chen, this is a Divine Fruit of the Rosy Dawn, produced by the Precious Tree of the Rosy Dawn. It flowers one red fruit every hundred years, a blue fruit every three hundred years, and a purple fruit every six hundred. This is a hundred year red fruit. Forefather Thousandleaf gave it to me upon my return. He gave me two that day, and I give one to you, saving the other for Dan Fei. In my heart, you and Dan Fei are as if children by my knees. This hundred year red fruit can help you advance another step forward in the spirit realm.”

The Precious Tree Sect was called such because they had a treasured tree within the sect named the Precious Tree of the Rosy Dawn. It was roughly three thousand meters tall and covered an area of approximately 66 hectares.

The Precious Tree Sect was founded for this tree, and maintained its fortunes because the tree was still standing.

The Divine Fruit of the Rosy Dawn was exceedingly precious. It only produced thirty fruits, of which ten had to be harvested in the red fruit stage, another ten in the blue fruit stage, and the rest had a chance to mature into purple fruit.

A duration of six hundred years was necessary to complete one flowering cycle.

Therefore, those two red fruits were not to be dismissed. They were the result the accumulation of hundred years.

Jiang Chen hadn’t thought that the lordmaster would gift him

such a valuable present. When he heard the sincerity in the lordmaster's voice and how he mentioned Jiang Chen in the same breath as Dan Fei, a warm current flowed through his heart.

The lordmaster was a frank and forthright person. His affection and protection of Jiang Chen were not false. After all, the lordmaster erupted in open hostilities with the Iron family in the Skylaurel Kingdom back in the day.

And now, he was gifting Jiang Chen this Divine Fruit. Jiang Chen possessed the innocent heart of a child in both his past and present life. He naturally understood that there was no falsehood in the lordmaster's regards.

This fruit encompassed the love and protection, expectations, emphasis, and all sorts of feelings that the lordmaster had towards Jiang Chen. This filled Jiang Chen's heart and moved him beyond all measure.

Chapter 430: The Iron Family Submits

The lordmaster was the epitome of dashing grace as he laughed once heartily after pressing the fruit into Jiang Chen's hand and then drifted away.

"Jiang Chen, all resources are available to you in the Precious Tree Sect. I am but adding brilliance to your present splendor. Continue training! There are still roughly seven days to the induction ceremony. I hope you will appear on it with an even stronger posture."

The lordmaster came and left as he would. This was also to prevent Jiang Chen from having any psychological pressure.

Jiang Chen knew that the lordmaster was acting like this on purpose. This weighty gift was no superfluous item.

Jiang Chen had also heard of the Precious Tree of the Rosy Dawn.

However, forefather Thousandleaf hadn't mentioned the fruit of this tree to him in the days that he'd entered the sect. It was obvious that this resource wasn't something that even a young man like Jiang Chen could commandeer.

The lordmaster had gifted him even the Divine Fruit of Rosy Dawn, how was this possibly just mere added grace? This was absolutely a precious gift.

Jiang Chen's gaze flickered as he looked at the fruit that was so red, it seemed to be glowing. What he lacked most at this moment was resources like this.

"It looks like joining the Precious Tree Sect was a truly wise decision. With the lordmaster's personality, the fact that he has returned to old grazing pastures in the Precious Tree Sect is surely because he wishes to be a protective detail for me. The lordmaster's intentions are truly touching.

With Jiang Chen's knowledge of the lordmaster, he would've never returned to the sect without reason after he'd left. His return was more than likely a reflection of his desire to pave the way for Jiang Chen.

"The lordmaster values me so highly. I naturally cannot forgive this debt of gratitude. Perhaps I should find some opportunities to repay his kindness."

It wasn't that Jiang Chen was arrogant—he truly had many ways to help the lordmaster. It was that he'd purposefully held back at times in order not to make too many stunning and shocking moves.

This was because if he wanted to help the lordmaster, whatever he took out would be an enormous feat that was sure to stun.

Therefore, he'd always exercised quite a bit of restraint and had almost never made a move unless a chance to cropped up by coincidence. He also made his moves with utmost skill and care.

Like when he'd resolved the issue of the Five Winged Phoenix-Dragon for instance, or that time when he'd written down his thoughts in cultivating spirit creatures or given the lordmaster pointers to breaking through to the origin realm.

Jiang Chen had done all of that very carefully to prevent himself from coming across as too out of this world.

He flung up the Divine Fruit of Rosy Dawn in his hand and decided to make good use of it. It could help a cultivator unequivocally break through to another level in the spirit realm. It was more than your typical good item.

"My cultivation is now at the peak of the eighth level spirit realm. If I take this fruit, does that mean I can immediately set foot into the peak of the ninth level?"

Jiang Chen was greatly moved when his thoughts traveled here.

The temptation of the ninth level spirit realm made him urge to try.

Although there were seven or so days left until the induction ceremony, Jiang Chen still decided to give it a try. If the Divine Fruit of Rosy Dawn was as legendary as rumored, then this time would be plenty enough.

He summoned his followers when his thoughts traveled here.

“Gouyu, you’re now third level spirit realm and there is much room for you to improve. I have a batch of Fire Raven cores here. It should be enough for you to break through to the sky spirit realm. Some other resources you’ll need are also here as well.”

“Xue Tong, your path is different from Gouyu. The Fire Raven cores are unsuitable for you. I’ve prepared some pills for you and some spirit essence distilled from spirit medicines. They will all be extremely useful for your training.”

“Qiao Shan, Qiao Chuan, Guo Jin, and Wen Ziqi, I’ve prepared a gift for each of you. All of you take a Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill and break through to the spirit realm first.”

Jiang Chen had also grown aware that the strength of his followers needed to improve. Otherwise, if great disruptions truly occurred in the Myriad Domain, it wouldn’t do to be without sufficient strength.

He announced that he was entering closed door cultivation after making all of his arrangements.

The only people unhappy ever since Ye Chonglou and Jiang Chen had announced joining the Precious Tree Sect was the Iron family.

The Iron family and their confidantes quickly realized that the atmosphere within the sect had changed. The senior levels that had close relationships with them before suddenly distanced themselves.

Apart from a few neutral senior executives, the previous situation in the sect had been one of the Xie family and the Iron family being equally matched rivals to each other.

But yet in a few short days, those apart from the Iron family's lineal branches all seemed to form an accord and consciously became estranged from the Iron family.

It was obvious that no one was dumb. All could see the awkward situation that the Iron family was in now. The forefather had been dissatisfied with their performance to begin with.

They were also dead rivals with the Xie family, not to mention the past conflicts that new members Ye Chonglou and Jiang Chen had had with them.

The two strongest forces in the Precious Tree Sect were enemies with the entire Iron family. Given the circumstances, the decline of the Iron family was a foregone conclusion.

Elder Iron Long gave a long sigh within the headquarters of the Iron family, his face appeared aged and resigned.

Iron Dazhi was like a gamecock that had lost the fight. His head trailed and his spirits were lowly. He'd perceptively realized over the past couple of days that he'd lost the feeling of superiority of being able to summon the wind and call for rain as he was able to previously.

The sect geniuses who'd always called him "Brother Iron" also began avoiding his presence.

"A petty villain glorifying in his success, truly a petty villain becoming triumphant!" Only Iron Can seemed very unwilling to accept this outcome. "Jiang Chen is but a country bumpkin, what right does he have to climb on top of our heads? Why are the heavens this unfair? Our Iron family has a thousand years worth of heritage, is a country bumpkin to lord it over us like this?"

Iron Can gritted his teeth, outraged injustice suffusing his tone.

Iron Long glared angrily, "Shut up! Aren't you the cause of all of our troubles? Would this be the situation today had you been able to keep Yang Zhao and Lu Wuji under control? Perhaps Jiang Chen would even be in our camp! How do you not say that you're not good enough to accomplish anything, but more than enough to spoil things?"

Iron Long felt rage grow whenever he looked at Iron Can.

Even Iron Long had accepted things wholeheartedly now that things had progressed to this point, whereas that trash Iron Can was still running his mouth. This incensed Iron Long, making him deeply regret that his son didn't live up to his expectations.

When he thought about it, Jiang Chen's various grudges and conflicts with the Iron family had raised because of Lu Wuji. Lu Wuji happened to be the nephew of Iron Can's woman.

If Iron Can had been slightly stricter with Lu Wuji, would Lu Wuji have dared act so wildly? Would Lu Wuji have offended Jiang Chen to the point where relations couldn't be salvaged?

Therefore, everyone had the right to speak, but only Iron Can had no right to speak when it came to Jiang Chen.

Iron Long huffed out angrily and turned to look at the motionless Lian Canghai. He was Iron Long's true disciple and once the first within the sect.

"Canghai, you trained with Jiang Chen in the same quadrant. What do you think of him?"

Lian Canghai's mouth was filled with a bitter taste when he recalled matters. He'd originally been completely dismissive of Jiang Chen, noticeably underestimating this secular genius.

And now, Jiang Chen's momentum was set, but he'd tragically discovered that he was unable to become closer to Jiang Chen because of his master's stance.

However, Lian Canghai still responded to his master's question carefully. "When Jiang Chen was farming points in the sky quadrant, I'd thought him one to employ trickery and be opportunistic—someone who wouldn't amount to much. It was only when he barged into the meeting of the most high by himself that no matter in terms of bravery or strength, this person was bound to rise up. To be able to defeat two of Master Shuiyue's

major disciples in a row means that his rise wasn't a fluke. In addition, it's said that he even killed an expert like Master Shuiyue in the Shangyang Kingdom. It isn't that I wish to bolster another's morale, but it's truly unsuitable to become enemies with him."

Iron Long sighed softly. He too knew that Jiang Chen wasn't someone to be enemies with. However, given how things were now, was there hope for the two parties to be reconciled?

Black lines of ill temper descended down Iron Can's face when he heard this. "Canghai, don't you think your words help the enemy too much and should go against your conscience?"

Lian Canghai was Iron Long's true disciple, and so his seniority wasn't lower than Iron Can's. His brows arched when he saw Iron Can thus out of line and he snorted derisively. "Go against my conscience? Elder Iron, isn't this hyperbole? Everyone is now part of the Precious Tree Sect, can it be that Elder Iron thinks that the Iron family should fight to the death with Jiang Chen? Forgive my bluntness, but your thoughts will push the Iron family into a bottomless abyss."

Although Lian Canghai was young, he wasn't the least bit inferior to Iron Can in terms of identity, status, and strength.

Therefore, he didn't give Iron Can any face when he acted so wildly.

Iron Long slammed his hand on the table and glared ferociously at Iron Can, "Iron Can, if you continue to refuse to see the error of

your ways, then don't blame me for destroying you with one palm for the future of the family!"

"Dazhi, you're my lineal grandson. You tell me how my Iron family should interact with Jiang Chen?"

Although Iron Dazhi's personality was also domineering, he was different from Iron Can's narrow mindedness. He knew how to advance and retreat, and what the bigger picture was.

He laughed ruefully, "Grandfather, I used to hate Jiang Chen very much, but now I feel I don't even have the right to hate him. Think about it, he's younger than me, but has already killed three elders of the Purple Sun Sect. In his eyes, even our entire Iron family is likely nothing, much less me. I rather think that if our Iron family is to survive, there's nothing humiliating about lowering our posture and asking to reconcile with him. With the momentum of his rise, the Precious Tree Sect will be unable to keep him sooner or later, but our Iron family must forever remain in the sect."

Even Lian Canghai was slightly astonished by Iron Dazhi's words and revised his opinion of the latter.

It looked like failure wasn't a bad thing for some people.

It looked like Iron Dazhi had matured quite a bit after several setbacks and failures. He could actually analyze the bigger picture and come to this conclusion.

Lian Canghai also nodded. “Dazhi’s words make great sense. If Jiang Chen truly rises, the sect is but a small temple in the end and cannot keep him. If he does not, then the Purple Sun Sect is first in line to wish to destroy him, what need is there for the Iron family to make a move? Therefore, no matter from what angle we pursue things from, there is no reason for the Iron family to continue to be at odds with him. We should go along with the flow for survival and make peace with him, even the Xie family. This will show those within and outside of the sect that the Iron family can see the larger issues!”

Iron Long was delighted by these words. He could tell from them that Lian Canghai and Iron Dazhi had truly grown up. They were thousands of times better than that good-for-nothing Iron Can.

“Good, I am much gratified that Canghai and Dazhi hold these opinions. What face can our Iron family not put down for the sect? If Jiang Chen rises, the Precious Tree Sect is sure to benefit and so we must reconcile with him beforehand.”

Iron Long had been of this mind to begin with, and now that Iron Dazhi and Lian Canghai’s words had paved the way, it was much easer to make this decision.

Chapter 431: Calming Internal Conflict, Induction Ceremony

The Iron family was quite sincere in wanting to reconcile with Jiang Chen. However, when they arrived with large amounts of presents, they discovered that Jiang Chen was in closed door cultivation.

It was a good thing that Gouyu was born a princess and knew the proper procedures. She didn't seal off the door to reconciliation, but didn't accept the Iron family's presents either.

"My house's young master did have a few grudges with the Iron family, but that was in the past and all has been resolved. Whether we are friend or foe now all depends on your intentions. My house's young master is a forthright person and has only grand plans in mind. How would he still have the thought to spare for your small grudges? We do not attack unless we are attacked."

Gouyu's words were quite suited to the occasion.

She wasn't rejecting the Iron family, nor was she agreeing to the reconciliation. She was just expressing the attitude of 'I won't attack others unless I am attacked'.

The representative who'd come on behalf of the Iron family this time was one of Iron Long's brothers, Iron Tang. He was also an elder in the sect and had a relatively high status.

He was comparatively more steady and didn't insist on continuing when he saw that Jiang Chen truly was in closed door cultivation. However, he could also make out that Jiang Chen had no intentions of beating his Iron family to death with one stick. This was to say that the attitude of the Iron family would be the determinant of how the reconciliation went.

When he received this hint, Iron Tang was servile and obsequious and forced the presents onto Gouyu.

"Miss Gouyu, these presents are the thoughts of the esteemed elder Iron Long to congratulate Jiang Chen on entering the sect. You must accept them, or else I will be unable to explain myself when I return."

Iron Tang completely humbled himself, giving off the posture of I'm not leaving until you accept them.

Gouyu was resigned and waved her hands. "Then leave them if this is the case. It will be up to the young master to decide if he accepts them or not after he emerges from closed door cultivation."

Iron Tang finally left happily when he heard these words.

The other followers were all delighted by Iron Tang's departing figure.

"Sister Gouyu, it looks like the Iron family is thoroughly afraid of

our young master.” Guo Jin sighed.

Gouyu smiled faintly, turning her gaze to Xue Tong. “Xue Tong, what do you think of the Iron family wanting to make peace?”

There was logic in her actions of not asking anyone else but Xue Tong.

When Lu Wuji had colluded with the Hidden Death assassins, they’d snatched Xue Tong then. He’d suffered quite a bit during that time and been pinned with great crimes.

Although the culprits were executed, Iron Can, who’d harbored the culprits, still remained free and clear of the law. Although this matter wasn’t directly linked to Iron Can, Gouyu was worried that Xue Tong would have certain thoughts.

Xue Tong rather recognized the straits they were in. “The young master has just arrived in the Precious Tree Sect and it’s also an inappropriate time to have poor relations with the Iron family. Taking an overly firm tone will give others a feeling that we’re domineering. Although the young master has the right to, us subordinates, should avoid bringing trouble to him. We should give the Iron family an opportunity to make peace if they want to. At the end of the day, it’s them who are worse for the wear after our various conflicts.”

Gouyu also smiled. When it came down to things, the Iron family truly were the ones who’d come off worse for the wear after multiple engagements with the young master.

Now that the young master had grown into his strength, even Iron Long may not be able to win in a fight if he personally took to the field himself. What could the Iron family bring out to contend with the young master?

Not to mention they had the protection of lordmaster Ye Chonglou as well.

The young master's position within the Precious Tree Sect was as impregnable.

Since he possessed both a good position and advantages, what need did he have to destroy a negligible Iron family and give rise to unfavorable discussion?

……

Iron Long stood outside forefather Thousandleaf's residence in a bowed position. He had stood there for two hours already, waiting to see the forefather.

Iron Long knew that the forefather was very disappointed in the Iron family lately. It was one thing to be locked in internal conflict with the Xie family, but they'd actually suppressed Jiang Chen from the beginning and hadn't recruited him early into the sect early on. This had caused this supreme genius to wallow in the secular kingdom for all these years. This was what forefather Thousandleaf was most depressed about.

With Jiang Chen's potential, if he'd entered the Precious Tree Sect two years earlier for further training, he might even be at the spirit king realm now, just a step away from the origin realm.

How precious was two years to a genius?

Of course, this was all forefather Thousandleaf's understanding of things. In reality, Jiang Chen had run into many fortuitous occurrences whilst adventuring in the secular world, such as the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice in the Maze Realm Autumn Hunt.

Or the secular selection for another, in which he'd gained the magnetic golden mountain,the cores of the Fire Raven King and the Redscaled Firelizard...

"Forefather, esteemed elder Iron Long has been waiting outside for about two hours."

Thousandleaf had been of a mind to leave Iron Long out in the cold for a bit longer. But in the end he was still a benevolent forefather, and spread out his hand after thinking for a bit, "Let him enter."

Tears almost flowed down Iron Long's face when he heard that forefather Thousandleaf was willing to see him.

"Forefather, Iron Long has been foolish and has come to beg for the forefather's forgiveness."

Forefather Thousandleaf snorted derisively. “Beg for my forgiveness? You also know that you’ve committed a crime?”

Iron Long was deeply unsettled, “Your subordinate is guilty of being incompetent in managing my men, giving rise to a lot of trouble. Iron Long is willing to accept whatever punishment the forefather wishes to decree.”

“Hmph, if I wanted to punish you, I would’ve done so a long time ago. This matter is already very clear, begging me would be of no avail. Your family has offended Jiang Chen and forefather Ye Chonglou.”

Iron Long sighed dejectedly. “I also know how ludicrous things were back in the day. I am sincerely admitting to my wrongs now and would like to set aside prejudices to offer up strength for the Precious Tree Sect. I have also consciously realized that only through internal unity will a sect grow strong. This is the only way forward.”

Iron Long was quite familiar with forefather Thousandleaf’s personality. The more you humbled yourself and adopted a modest personality, the happier the forefather would be.

Indeed, Thousandleaf’s expression softened. “It is right that your thoughts turn this way. However, if you say one thing but mean otherwise, resulting in a second offense, then even I will not be at liberty to intercede for you.”

“Please be at ease forefather. I absolutely have no other thoughts. If either forefather Ye Chonglou or Jiang Chen wished to move against my Iron family, we would’ve perished long ago. This means that they are magnanimous. If my family still doesn’t know how to appreciate what is good, then I will have no words of complaint even if the forefather kills me yourself.”

Iron Long knew that the forefather’s mindset was weakening when the latter’s tone became a bit softer. He hastily expressed his viewpoint.

“If this is so, I will find forefather Ye Chonglou to discuss this matter. The only way forward for the sect is if we unite together. The Purple Sun Sect has been able to keep dominating for so long was precisely because they are united and do not engage in internal conflict.”

Thousandleaf also gave a promise and then said, “But you must also consider carefully. If any untoward developments happen again, then your Iron family will truly be left to eke out survival on your own. I trust that with forefather Ye Chonglou and Jiang Chen’s open mindedness, they will not continue to wax eloquent on past wrongs. The key of the matter is Iron Can of your house. He is an expert at causing trouble. Are you sure that he is not professing obedience, but truly submitting with good grace? Is he finished causing trouble?”

Iron Long felt a jolt of surprise. It looked like although the forefather didn’t say much normally, he was well aware of what was going on.

He hastened to reassure, “If that vile spawn Iron Can dares cause further trouble, I’ll end him myself!”

Forefather Thousandleaf nodded. “Say these words to forefather Chonglou then.”

He made a gesture and formed a message glyph, sending it on its way.

Ye Chonglou’s hearty laugh resounded before long. “What might Daoist Thousandleaf need from me?”

Upon hearing this, Iron Long found it difficult to sit still. He had to stand up with his arms by his sides, looking down humbly as a complex mixture of emotions passed through his heart.

When Ye Chonglou had drifted amongst the mundane world, his position had been far less than Iron Long’s lofty status. They had both been evenly matched.

But now, Ye Chonglou was referring to forefather Thousandleaf as fellow daoist. The origin realm was truly a boundary in life that marked the stark difference of two completely separate lives.

Ye Chonglou seemed to think of something when he walked in and saw Iron Long.

Thousandleaf smiled, “Chonglou, Iron Long has just come to find me to admit his mistakes and express sincere repentance.

However, he's worried that you and Jiang Chen will still seek redress for past wrongs. Are you willing to give the Iron family a chance?"

Ye Chonglou was now one of the origin realm—why would he care about a mere Iron family? He smiled faintly. "It's easy to convince me. You only need to convince Jiang Chen and I will express no other opinions."

Thousandleaf laughed heartily, "Chonglou has always had a generous temperament. Iron Long, you need to express your attitude in front of forefather Chonglou. Any hypocritical behavior will not be condoned. Otherwise, there won't be a single place for your family in the entire sect."

It had been a difficult journey to arrive at this wondrous situation that favored the Precious Tree Sect. If the Iron family stirred up any internal conflict again, then they truly would be universally condemned.

Ye Chonglou also knew that Thousandleaf possessed a soft heart and was planning on giving the Iron family a chance. He decided not to be a villain and spoke noncommittally, "Everyone in the sect is busy readying for the induction ceremony. Your Iron family should also move to action and accomplish some things for everyone to see."

Iron Long was delighted by these words and knew that this meant Ye Chonglou's position was softening. Joy filled his heart and he hastened to say, "Yes, yes. Your subordinate will go now and make preparations. I will help sect head Xie make this a

glorious and magnificent induction ceremony.

Iron Long was very smart with his words and had struck the right tone with his posture. His words of “help sect head Xie” fully expressed that his Iron family wouldn’t even resist the Xie family anymore. He would thoroughly submit to the sect head.

The matter with the Iron family was just a minor interlude, but it loosened the atmosphere in the sect. When all sides united together, this greatly enhanced the effectiveness of the Precious Tree Sect.

The preparations were handled competently over the next couple of days.

Then, those from the three sects started trickling in.

The first to arrive was the Myriad Spirit Sect. Forefather Ninelion gave the Precious Tree Sect quite a lot of face as he personally led a group that was comprised of almost all of the Myriad Spirit Sect’s elite disciples.

The two sects ordinarily enjoyed good relations, so it was natural that the Myriad Spirit Sect would give the Precious Tree Sect face.

The Flowing Wind Sect also arrived ahead of time after the Myriad Spirit Sect had arrived. Similar to the Myriad Spirit Sect, venerated Icemist had brought almost all of her elite disciples alongthis time.

However, those from the Purple Sun Sect had yet to arrive even on the day of the induction ceremony.

It looked like they had hardened their heart to give no face and not come.

However, forefather Thousandleaf didn't mind this at all. The entire sixteen kingdom alliance knew that the Precious Tree Sect had thoroughly suppressed the Purple Sun Sect in the battle of the Shangyang Kingdom.

In the eyes of the outside world, the Purple Sun Sect's absence was a kind of evasion—they were frightened of the Precious Tree Sect.

All was in readiness for the induction ceremony, only forefather Thousandleaf's commencement was needed.

He smiled slightly, "Distinguished guests, we are flattered by your attendance at the induction of forefather Ye Chonglou and Jiang Chen. To express our appreciation, my Precious Tree Sect has prepared a gift for you. Each sect will receive one Divine Fruit of the Rosy Dawn."

The Precious Tree Sect boasted of great wealth to gift one of these precious fruit without further ado. This was an undoubted move to win over people's hearts.

But even if this was so, this still greatly shocked the other two sects. This was quite a display!

The Divine Fruit of the Rosy Dawn was the hallmark treasure of the Precious Tree Sect. Even sect geniuses may be unable to receive one unless in times of crisis.

But here the forefather was, bringing the Fruit out as a gift to thank the two sects for showing up!

Chapter 432: A Domineering Arrival

This gift made those of the other two sects feel that this trip was greatly worth it.

Forefather Ninelion swept his gaze in a circle and suddenly asked, “Daoist Thousandleaf, there are two stars to the induction ceremony, how come I only see one?”

The news of Ye Chonglou setting foot into the origin realm had long since travelled throughout the sixteen kingdom alliance. Everyone knew of him.

But Jiang Chen, the one who’d killed three Purple Sun Sect elders and been suppressed within the Eternal Spirit Mountain had yet to appear.

Forefather Thousandleaf smiled, “It’s an unfortunate coincidence that Jiang Chen announced that he was entering closed door cultivation a few days ago. He must have had some comprehension of martial dao and is facing a critical moment before a break through. Everyone will certainly be able to see him if you are able to linger in the Precious Tree Sect.”

It was indeed a bit of a pity that Jiang Chen wouldn’t be able to attend the induction ceremony. It was a bit of a flaw in an otherwise perfect occasion, as if the crown was missing its most brilliant gem.

“Daoist Thousandleaf, did you perhaps purposefully hide Jiang

Chen, afraid that we'll come steal him from under your nose?" Ninelion started joking.

"What? Does that petty villain Jiang Chen dare not show up at this induction ceremony and great fanfare that the Precious Tree Sect has put up?" A low and sinister voice suddenly traveled from midair.

Everyone was shocked to hear this.

Old monster Sunchaser?

The Purple Sun Sect hadn't arrived earlier or later, but had come at precisely this time, just what did they intend with this?

Usually, when one arrived when the party was in full swing, the goal wasn't to participate in the party, but rather to ruin it.

A shrewd light danced in Thousandleaf and Ye Chonglou's eyes when they heard this voice. Their gazes cut across the air like sword light as they looked outside the door.

Large numbers of Purple Sun Sect members descended from a red mass of clouds in the sky, swiftly approaching the Precious Tree Sect from the distance.

Judging from the looks of things, they too had arrived in full force.

Forefather Thousandleaf's expression grew frosty. Those who had come were not friendly, and those who were friendly had not yet come. The Purple Sun Sect's sudden appearance had been unannounced by the Precious Tree Sect disciples. What did this mean? It meant that the newcomers had barged in without the Precious Tree Sect's approval.

Guests would normally report their arrival when they arrived at the foot of the mountain. The host would then go down to welcome them.

For someone to directly bypass the entrance and charge into the core area like the Purple Sun Sect—their intentions were quite clear. It was absolutely a provocation, absolutely here to stir up trouble.

"Daoist Sunchaser, is this how your Purple Sun Sect behaves as guests?" As good as forefather Thousandleaf's countenance was, he couldn't accept such crude behavior.

Sunchaser was out in front and laughed uproariously. "Who told you I'm here as a guest?"

When he said this, all those in the Precious Tree Sect surged to their feet in an aggressive and intimidating manner, glaring at Sunchaser with anger in their eyes.

If he wasn't here as a guest, then he was here to pick a fight!

Sunchaser sneered haughtily as he looked sideways, sweeping his glance throughout the entire assembly. He said leisurely, “I’ve long since heard that the Precious Tree Sect has a Precious Tree of the Rosy Dawn. Thousandleaf, an esteemed guest has arrived. Go and bring out some of its fruits!”

Thousandleaf was completely incensed by these words. Sunchaser’s odd posturing was actually concealing his covetous intentions towards the Precious Tree. Thousandleaf immediately displayed his stern self righteousness and his wariness increased greatly.

His gaze turned to those behind Sunchaser.

There were actually a few unfamiliar faces in the vanguard of the entourage. A blue-clad man was leading three gray-clad men. They were at obvious odds with the rest of the Purple Sun Sect.

The blue-clad man in particular, exuded a frosty and arrogant presence, as if those participating in the induction ceremony were like dirt in his eyes, unworthy of a single glance.

This person possessed an awe-inspiring demeanor without a need to do anything at all. He had a natural, stifling presence that made others fear and respect him.

“Daoist Sunchaser, my sect invited you to this wondrous gathering with good intentions, what is the meaning behind your brutish actions? Since this is the case, my sect no longer welcomes

you. Send the guests out!”

Forefather Thousandleaf also burned with rage.

Sunchaser laughed heartily, “Send the guests out? It’s easy to summon a deity and much harder to send it off. Thousandleaf, cut the blather. I’ve come today to settle some old scores with you!”

Ye Chonglou slammed his hand on the table and shot to his feet, “Sunchaser, do you intend on behaving unbridledly in my Precious Tree Sect’s territory?!”

Sunchaser laughed coldly and flicked a glance at Ye Chonglou as if he was looking at an idiot. “You’re right, I’ve come today precisely to act as I will!”

Wham!

Everyone in the scene erupted in an uproar. All those in the Precious Tree Sect started exhorting loudly.

“Shut up!” Sunchaser suddenly growled lowly, looking sternly at Thousandleaf. “Three matters. First, hand over Jiang Chen. Second, hand over the Precious Tree. Third, pledge allegiance to me.”

“Piss off!”

These three conditions made those of the Precious Tree Sect explode in loud curses.

“Screw off and go the hell back to your Purple Sun Sect to keep being ostriches with their heads in the sand!”

“Purple Sun idiots, haven’t you had enough casualties after those elders? Have you come here for more of you to die?”

“Screw the hell off, our sect doesn’t welcome crazed dogs!”

One of the gray-clad individuals behind the blue-clad man suddenly sharpened his gaze and shouted lowly, “How noisy!”

The gray-clad person flashed over like lightning and reached out to one of the Precious Tree Sect disciples. His speed was abnormally fast, even Thousandleaf and Ye Chonglou didn’t react in time.

Crunch!

The disciple’s throat was crushed just like that.

“This will be your downfall if you keep making a ruckus.” The gray-clad person threw the corpse aside as if he was throwing trash away.

With that, the gray-clad person was about to dash backwards.

Ye Chonglou was enraged and slammed the table. His green robes rustled as he threw a punch towards the gray-clad person, “Die, madman!”

The gray-clad person chuckled and drew circles with his hands, calling upon all the strength in his body and punched out towards Ye Chonglou’s blow.

Wham!

Enormous forces crashed against one another and the gray-clad person was sent backwards a few steps from Ye Chonglou’s force, landing precisely where he’d been.

A trace of surprise flashed through Ye Chonglou’s eyes as his body wavered.

He was inwardly stunned beyond belief. The other was only a spirit king, but he’d taken Ye Chonglou’s blow and suffered no injury!

However, Ye Chonglou’s rage only built up when he didn’t succeed with one blow. “Where do you intend to hide after killing one of my sect?”

He was about to follow up after these words.

But suddenly, the blue-clad man in front of the other three snorted derisively as a sharp gleam flashed through his eyes. He brandished his sleeves, “Stand back!”

It was as if the sleeve contained the heavens and earth as the force behind this flourish transformed into a momentum that roiled and churned up to the skies, crashing into Ye Chonglou.

Ye Chonglou was caught off guard and was sent flying from this force. His body involuntarily flew backwards and he crashed into a large pillar.

Bam!

The tremendous collision sent the pillar trembling. A sweet taste welled up in Ye Chonglou’s mouth as he almost spat out a mouthful of blood.

Everyone was stunned by this.

The blue-clad man had only shook his sleeves to call up enough momentum to send a bonafide origin realm cultivator flying. This was astounding even if Ye Chonglou was only of the first level origin realm.

There were many venerated experts from the four sects present, but all of them privately felt that they wouldn’t be able to do anything on this level.

Thousandleaf was taken aback and bounded to Ye Chonglou. He asked lowly, “Chonglou, are you alright?”

Ye Chonglou managed to take in a mouthful of air and slowly exhale it along with the impurities in his body and suppress the churning of his spirit ocean. He spoke after a short while, “Be careful brother Daoist. Those who have come are not friends, and those who are friends have yet to come. This blue-clad man is only stronger than Sunchaser, and definitely not weaker.”

Whoosh whoosh whoosh!

All those within the Precious Tree Sect rushed to gather behind the two forefathers after the fighting broke out. Whistles resounded throughout the Precious Tree Sect in that moment as the sect’s highest level of alertness was raised.

“Sunchaser, your Purple Sun Sect is thus domineering. Have you hardened your heart to set your foot over my sect?” Thousandleaf repressed the fury in his heart.

“Thousandleaf, are you always going to be this fussy like a woman?” Sunchaser jeered. “It’s still those same three three conditions. The Precious Tree Sect will be removed from the list of the sixteen kingdom alliance today if you don’t agree!”

It was an overweeningly dominant declaration, a completely naked threat.

Ninelion had kept himself in check for a long time and finally spoke angrily, “Sunchaser, it’s the Precious Tree Sect’s joyous day today. Don’t you think you’re much too out of line with your wild rampage? Even with the grudges between the two of you, you should decide on a day to settle them openly. Just what is the meaning of all this?”

“What? You want to stick your neck out?” Sunchaser snorted coldly. He was also ill-disposed towards Ninelion and could make use of this opportunity to vent his spleen.

Ninelion was enraged. “If it was just the grudges between your Purple Sun Sect and the Precious Tree Sect, then it would indeed be inappropriate for my sect to intervene. However, these friends don’t seem to be from your sect? I don’t care where you’ve invited these helpers from, but your actions is a blatant violation of the rules of the sixteen kingdom alliance. My Myriad Spirit Sect would never idly sit by for this. Venerated Icemist, what are your thoughts?”

Icemist sighed softly. She’d always taken the neutral position and didn’t like to become overly embroiled in conflict. However, she’d just accepted a gift from the Precious Tree Sect, and the Purple Sun Sect’s behavior was truly out of line.

If it’d just been a conflict between two sects, she would absolutely take no stance. But to involve outsiders into the sixteen kingdom alliance, this was absolutely breaking the rules and something that would never be permitted by the four sects.

“Daoist Sunchaser, what grudges exist that cannot be settled

internally? To let outsiders intervene is upending the rules that have been set for a thousand years in our alliance." Icemist expressed her opinions.

"Haha, rules? Sixteen kingdom alliance? Everyone, what are the rules? They're standards that the strong have come up with to constrain the weak. Now that I am the strong, I set the rules. The sixteen kingdom alliance? That's ancient history. Soon there will be no place for the alliance in the Myriad domain, yet you still chatter at me with talk of rules?"

Sunchaser's words were so unorthodox that they flabbergasted those of the other three sects. They were all privately astonished, has old monster Sunchaser gone mad?

If he hasn't, why would he utter such crazy words?

The forefathers of the other three sects all grew extremely cautious at this moment as they inspected at the blue-clad man, unease stirring in their hearts.

Could it be that Sunchaser had let the wolf into the house and wanted to betray the entire sixteen kingdom alliance?

Chapter 433: Domineering Arrogance, The Agreement Of Nine Matches

Sunchaser's words made the originally wavering Flowing Wind and Myriad Spirit Sects instantly stand on the Precious Tree Sect's side.

This was because everyone had a foreboding premonition.

"Old monster Sunchaser, I think you've lost your mind! You make the rules? Who the hell do you think you are? It isn't down to your sect calling the shots in the sixteen kingdom alliance!" Ninelion's personality was the most short-tempered out of those present and he began cursing loudly.

Sunchaser cackled. "Old monster Ninelion, you frogs in the well are absolutely blind to the greater picture. The sixteen kingdom alliance is destined for change. Only destruction awaits otherwise."

Suddenly, the blue-clad man behind Sunchaser took a step forward and reached out with his hand to interrupt Sunchaser.

This man was the envoy from the Ninesuns Sky Sect. His blue robe placed him in a position noticeably higher than the other three gray-clad men.

His gaze was deep and it seemed like a chilling wind blowed against those assembled when his eyes swept over them.

“Everyone, allow me to introduce myself. I am Zuo Lan, a rank four inspector of the Ninesuns Sky Sect. Sunchaser is the representative that my sect has chosen for the sixteen kingdom alliance.”

The Ninesuns Sky Sect? Rank four inspector?

Everyone was completely befuddled. What was that? They’d never heard of it before. What Ninesuns Sky Sect? What inspector?

Thousandleaf, Ninelion, and Icemist exchanged glances with each other. They all saw confusion in the other’s eyes. And although Ye Chonglou had travelled through many places, he’d never left the Myriad Domain.

There was nothing about a Ninesuns Sky Sect in the Myriad Domain in his memories.

Zuo Lan displayed a contemptuous smile when he saw the looks of ignorance on the origin realm cultivators. What a pitiful bunch of frogs at the bottom of a well.

Sunchaser sidled over and smiled apologetically, “Sir Zuo Lan, these bumpkins have long resided in remoteness, how would they know the dignity of the Sky Sect? The summer insects know not of what winter is. Only harsh methods can be used on people like them. These despicable trashes won’t submit docilely if they’re not beaten upon.”

Zuo Lan's background was otherworldly, but he wasn't as familiar with the situation of the sixteen kingdoms like Sunchaser. His understanding of them was naturally less than Sunchaser's.

Zuo Lan had planned on using the authority of the Ninesuns Sky Sect to intimidate and awe those present.

Sunchaser however, wanted Zuo Lan to make a move and bully these old fellows, killing a few people in the end to force everyone to submit.

Thousandleaf and Ninelion all burned with rage when they heard Sunchaser's shameless words. Sunchaser was being ludicrously shameless, not only was he leading the wolf into the house, he was even voicing such traitorous words!

However, Zuo Lan's presence and strength were all noticeably stronger than the forefathers'.

The former's posture spoke volumes of his preparation beforehand.

"Let's speak candidly. My Ninesuns Sky Sect has conscripted the sixteen kingdom alliance. We have formed the Purple Light Division with the Purple Sun Sect as the foundation. Sunchaser is temporarily holding the position of Division Master. From today forth, the term 'sixteen kingdom alliance' no longer exists, and the four great sects are thus disbanded. There is only the Purple Light Division here, and you must submit to it. Those who adhere will

prosper, those who defy us will die!”

Zuo Lan was from the Sky Sect and naturally embodied its dignity and aura. His words were as if an imperial decree, allowing no room for questions.

“Now, those of you who do not accept this can step forth and speak.”

Zuo Lan suddenly took a step forward and flared his aura. The presence of a fourth level origin realm immediately filled the skies, making the expressions of the origin realm cultivators around him change drastically.

The spirit realm cultivators close to him suddenly felt their breathing become labored, as if a thousand tons were pressing down on them. Their faces grew beet red, and they seemed like they could explode in any moment.

“Releasing his origin power externally, his aura pressing down as if the earth itself, this is the earth origin realm!” Ye Chonglou gasped lowly and murmured, “No wonder he was able to send me flying with a single flourish.”

Of those present, even the strongest—Sunchaser, was only at the peak of the third level origin realm.

Thousandleaf and Ninelion were at the third level origin realm, and Icemist only at the peak of the second level. And of course, Ye

Chonglou had just recently broken through to the first level.

This was to say that whether it was first or third level, they were all only in the minor origin realm.

And this envoy from the Sky Sect was in the earth origin realm!

Although there was only one division between the two, the difference in strength was as to a far-reaching mountain range.

Precisely due to the fact that Zuo Lan had come from a place such as the Ninesuns Sky Sect, his strengths would be far in excess of the origin realm cultivators of the sixteen kingdom alliance in no matter what aspect.

Zuo Lan's posture was a blatant declaration that he was going to use force to suppress all dissidents.

Whoever didn't agree with him could step forth!

Zuo Lan's haughty gaze swept across the various origin realm forefathers. He suddenly smiled. "I'm of the earth origin realm, and if I were to use my strength to suppress you, you'd think that I used brute force to oppress you and never accept the result."

Zuo Lan pointed slightly with his right hand after speaking and indicated those wearing gray robes. "These three are my underlings, also inspectors of the Sky Sect. Their cultivation has yet to break through to the origin realm and their existence is at

the bottom in the Sky Sect."

Zuo Lan's eyes leisurely shifted across the three spirit realm cultivators of his sect. "Spirit realm versus spirit realm, you can pick your representatives as you will. As long as anyone can triumph over my men, then you still have the right to negotiate today's matters. If none can win, then submit docilely. Remember, me not killing anyone now doesn't mean I will spare you all!"

Spirit realm matching off against spirit realm, this wasn't an out-of-line request.

If the three sects felt that facing off against an earth origin realm such as Zuo Lan was unfair, then there were still plenty of experts at the peak of the spirit realm amongst them. There were even spirit kings.

The origin realm cultivators looked at each other, all feeling quite repressed in their hearts. The situation was very clear, the other wasn't here just for the Precious Tree Sect.

They were here for all of them.

Although they didn't know what the Ninesuns Sky Sect was, it was obvious that none of them wanted to bend the knee and bury the foundations of their sects just to flock to some bloody Purple Light Division banner as Sunchaser's underling.

This was an enormous insult to the three great sects. They'd

rather die in battle than join Sunchaser's side.

The three sects formed a united front with great accord in the span of an instant.

However, judging from the other's posturing, their opponent didn't seem to care if they'd form an alliance at all, seeming to think that the three sects would lose no matter what.

Origin realm to origin realm, or spirit realm to spirit realm, the three sects had their picks.

They could either battle or submit.

There were only these two options left to them.

If they submitted, this meant that they would forever lose the heritage of their sect and become a vassal underneath Sunchaser.

If they fought and still lost, they'd be hard-pressed to escape the fate of being an underling.

However, in the world of martial dao, those who didn't fight were cowards. No matter how strong or how frightening one's opponent was, only through taking the field would one be able to grasp their fate with their own hands.

"Disciple Tang Hong is willing to fight!" Tang Hong had been

itching for a fight since a while ago.

Tang Hong's enormous body shook as he ran forward, grasping a large club in his hand. It was the dragon bone of the Redscaled Firelizard that Jiang Chen had gifted him.

Sunchaser's eyes squinted when he saw this club as it looked somewhat familiar to him.

Tang Hong pointed with the club, "Which of you is up?"

A gray-clad man with a star drawn on his chest snorted derisively. "What's someone like you doing out here making a fool out of yourself? Get the hell down!"

The man walked up the stage after speaking and flung a punch out at Tang Hong.

This person occupied the lowest position and had the weakest strength amongst the Sky Sect envoys. However, within the momentum of his punch, the sounds of wind and thunder were actually subtly exhibited. It was obviously not weak and was at the level of ninth level spirit realm.

This punch brought with it a force that would level mountains and upend the seas. How was it something that Tang Hong, a cultivator who'd yet to enter the sky spirit realm, could hope to withstand?

Tang Hong felt the scene in front of him were filled with boxing shadows in an instant as the other blocked off all avenues of movement in an instant.

“This is bad!”

“Tang Hong, hurry and retreat!”

Those on the Precious Tree Sect side all exclaimed a shocked warning.

“Haha, overconfident fool!” Cold jeering sounded out from the Purple Sun Sect’s side.

“Tang Hong’s brains are damn useless alright. How could a mere earth spirit realm cultivator dare step forth and make a fool of himself?”

“This punch is going to crush him half to death!”

Tang Hong suddenly smashed down with the club in his hand in panic as he called upon all the strength in his body. He roared, “I say block! Block, block, block!!”

Bam!

The strong force from the club smashed into the boxing aura. A red light flashed as Tang Hong’s body flew backwards. He

stumbled a dozen steps before finally finding his footing.

"Hmm?" The gray-clad person was rather surprised. Even someone in the first level origin realm may not have been able to take his blow. Yet this foolish brute who was only of the earth spirit realm had broken apart a good portion of his boxing aura with one blow. This was quite strange.

"Brat, you were lucky just now. I'll kill you for sure with this blow!"

Tang Hong' blood was roiling. Although he hadn't been severely injured, he could summon almost no strength after taking this punch.

Forefather Thousandleaf flourished his sleeves and swept away the force behind the other's punch. "We concede this match."

Thousandleaf was placing quite a bit of importance on Tang Hong now, second only to Jiang Chen. He would never allow something to happen to Tang Hong. He also knew that Tang Hong's cultivation level was far too low compared to the other's. There was no room for contest in this match at all.

Thousandleaf speculated that it must have mostly been the aid of that marvelous club's help in that blow just now that Tang Hong had escaped serious injury.

Zuo Lan smiled faintly. "I only give you nine matches. I have

three of my subordinates here, and they will each fight three times. If any of you win even one match between equal levels, then you will have the right to negotiate with me. If you're unable to win even once, then you're trash. Trash should have the self-awareness as trash and submit docilely, be content hangers-on. If you persist in your stubbornness, I don't mind erasing the three sects from this world!"

Zuo Lan's dominance was different from Sunchaser's.

Sunchaser's was using vicious words to express himself. He often failed to scare others at all.

However, Zuo Lan's dominance was one that blended into his natural bearing. It was as if he'd been born with the right to be thus and made other's heart palpitate with fright.

They would have the right to negotiate if they won if even one match out of nine.

If they couldn't, then the fate that awaited the three sects was to be a pawn of others and utterly lose the dignity and heritage as a sect.

Although the other was overbearing, they had indeed given the sects a chance.

If they couldn't win even one match, then what right did they have to haggle over terms?

Chapter 434: The Momentum Of Utter Trampling

The three gray robed men stood in a row. Each one had one star, two stars, and three stars respectively embroidered on their chests. Their formation abreast indicated the difference in their positions and levels.

The blue clad man stood in front of them with his arms crossed, superiority in every line of his body. “None of my underlings are over thirty years old. They are, respectively, of the ninth level spirit realm, peak of the ninth level, and spirit king. Each person will take the field three times. You three sects can first discuss amongst yourselves and send out those you think has the highest chance for victory.”

The gray clad individual with one star embroidered on his chest was the one who’d just defeated Tang Hong.

He was also the youngest, roughly twenty or so years old. His brows were as sharply defined as a sword, and hints of frosty arrogance and cockiness played about his thin lips.

“I am Wu Chen, ninth level spirit realm, who dares challenge me?”

Wu Chen’s gaze was haughty as he swept his eyes dismissively across the entire assembly. Unconcealed mockery dripped from his tone as he spoke, “Are the so-called three great sects all turtles who prefer to cower in their shells?”

There were groups of ninth level spirit realm cultivators in each of the four sects. However, no one dared take the initiative at this critical moment.

Everyone held some reservations in their hearts. This matter had to do with the future of the three great sects. In the face of such titanic repercussions, a single failure would result in immense pressure and may even cause one to be remembered as a traitor through the ages.

Wu Chen's gaze was full of disdain as he looked around once more. He laughed heartily, "Do the so-called three great sects have not even the courage to fight? Are cowards like these worthy of learning martial dao?"

He actually sat down cross legged after these words and planted himself in the middle of the field, laughing deliberately, "Since you're all so chicken-hearted, I'll wait here until you build up enough courage. Wake me up when you have the guts to walk down here!"

Wu Chen closed his eyes and began to meditate.

This move completely triggered an acrimonious wave to spread amongst the cultivators from the three sects. This was an enormous humiliation!

That Wu Chen was holding this kind of attitude in a match between cultivators was without a doubt the great insult possible

to the three great sects, one that left them no face whatsoever.

Zuo Lan wore a faint smile. He didn't disapprove of Wu Chen's actions at all, but rather looked upon him with a hint of admiration.

This kind of blatant provocation would whittle away at the morale and mindset of the three great sects.

The sect forefathers could no longer pay heed to posturing or face anymore. They grouped together and began discussing nervously.

"Those who have come are not friends and neither is Wu Chen's strength simple. We should send out our strongest ninth level cultivators. Even if the first one up doesn't win, we must aim to tire him out and win a fight at all costs. If we don't prevail over Wu Chen, then we'll have even less hope when it comes to dealing with the peak of the ninth level and spirit king realms."

The three sects had cultivators at the peak of the spirit realm as well.

However, they didn't actually have any cultivators who were a half step into the origin realm, those who could be called a spirit king!

They used to have Ye Chonglou, but now he had stepped into the origin realm as well.

This meant that the three sects' only hope was to win a match at the ninth level spirit realm or peak of the ninth level.

If they didn't, they wouldn't have a chance to win at all.

"Forefather, I am willing to fight." A ninth level spirit realm cultivator spoke up behind Precious Tree Sect head Xie Tianshu. Eyes turned to look at the speaker, vice head Li Yuan.

At the ninth level spirit realm, Li Yuan counted as his sect's strongest fighting power.

The head elder of the Flowing Wind Sect also stepped out. "I too am willing to fight."

Another vice head on the Myriad Spirit Sect also volunteered out of a strong sense of duty.

They were all of the ninth level spirit realm—the highest fighting power that the sects could bring to bear.

If they wouldn't, then the rest would do even less.

This was Precious Tree Sect territory, so vice head Li Yuan would naturally be the vanguard. He raised a cupped fist salute to everyone else, "Everyone, the sect stands above all. I will seek the farthest limits of my ability with this fight even upon pain of death. If I so happen to fall, please take care of my family for me."

It was apparent that Li Yuan knew that his opponent came from some momentous place. His sheer arrogance was a measure of his ability. Li Yuan had a premonition that no matter what, he would absolutely be unable to triumph in this match.

But even though he felt this premonition wash over him, Li Yuan wasn't willing to shrink back. As long as he was able to force his opponent to expend enough energy to drag him down in the match, it wouldn't be a waste of a battle.

"Wu Chen, save your arrogance! I, Li Yuan, will fight with you!"

Wu Chen's eyes suddenly opened, a celestial light shooting out. A bark of laughter rang through the air as he rose.

"Have you made your choice?"

Wu Chen suddenly shook his finger, casting his gaze up and down Li Yuan. He leered and pointed with a finger, "Ten moves, I need only ten moves. If I don't beat you into the ground with ten moves, then count it as my loss!"

Presumptuous, domineering, yet full of confidence.

Li Yuan was one of the top cultivators in the sixteen kingdom alliance if one set aside the forefathers. He'd always been one of the few standing at the peak of power.

And now, he was being thus humiliated by a young man who only looked around twenty years old. As shrewd as he was, even he felt the blood rush to his head in that moment.

“Arrogant thug, do you really feel that there’s no talent left in our three sects?!”

Li Yuan glared ferociously and grasped the air, a mace appearing in his hand.

Li Yuan’s mace was a bit longer than ordinary maces. It’d been crafted from the fossilized bone of an ancient beast. Its might was not to be underestimated—it was a nine times refined spirit weapon!

A beam of yellow light pierced through the air as the mace stabbed forward. It formed a vortex that grew rapidly, spreading out through the air.

Dots that were images of Li Yuan’s mace materialized from the vortex, appearing everywhere in the surroundings. It was like countless needles were rushing towards his opponent, eye-catching to the extreme.

Wu Chen laughed heartily, “Parlor tricks!”

He didn’t retreat, instead striding forward, not even using a weapon. He rubbed his hands together, causing golden sparks to coat his hands, appearing as if he’d automatically put on gloves.

His hands seemed to resemble the claws of a golden dragon as he clawed the air in front of him. Numerous claw shadows reached out towards the mace like countless hands.

Crack!

As Wu Chen's body shifted between a fast advance and retreat, he reached out with two fingers and unerringly grasped the tip of Li Yuan's mace with his right hand.

Wu Chen snickered as he then reached out with his left hand, his middle finger flicking forward from his thumb as fast as lightning.

Ding!

A tragic breaking sound rang out.

Li Yuan hurriedly backed up but it was too late. The mace in his hand had been broken in two by the force behind that flick!

The fingers on Wu Chen's right hand were still holding the broken segment of the mace, the look in his eyes dismissive beyond belief. He threw away the broken segment as if he were throwing away scrap metal.

"Are the so-called four great sects all as trashy as this?

Wu Chen shook his head lightly, disdain writ over his face. “A ninth level spirit realm as useless as you should just stay home instead of sticking your neck out to make up the numbers. Don’t come out and make a fool of yourself.”

Wu Chen’s body surged forward after speaking as the shimmering golden gloves on his hands sparkled faintly, all sorts of illusions and glyphs transforming as his hands formed several seals.

The golden light suddenly radiated outwards and formed the shape of an ancient, fierce beast that rose up and pounced towards Li Yuan.

“No!”

Turbulent waves of emotion rose in the hearts of the forefathers beneath the ring as they watched this development.

They knew that the newcomers had uncommon cultivation and immense strength, but realized just how large a gap could exist between peers of the same level after exchanging moves.

Apart from the forefathers, only Xie Tianshu and Iron Long dared say that they were confidently stronger than Li Yuan in the Precious Tree Sect. However, those two were of the peak of the spirit realm.

Li Yuan’s single move just now had resulted in his nine times

refined spirit weapon being destroyed. His opponent had used only that move to force Li Yuan into dire straits.

The difference between the two wasn't one of a spar between two in the same level, but a one sided trampling!

A despairing thought appeared in the forefathers' minds at this moment, not to mention Li Yuan's—would they win against Wu Chen even if they sent out those of the peak of the spirit realm?

And this Wu Chen was the weakest, lowest ranked, and most junior amongst the three from their opponent's side.

If the other two took the field, would they roll over everyone below the origin realm?

Li Yuan was enveloped by the golden light and retreated madly, but discovered there was no place to retreat to. The fear in his heart was easy to imagine. He hadn't thought that his nine times refined spirit weapon would be destroyed with a single move and that he would then be forced into this desperate situations with a second move.

Li Yuan lost hope, feeling only that everything was over in that moment. He hadn't thought that he would lose so thoroughly and utterly.

He'd been ready to taste defeat before he took the field. He had been ready to fight to the death.

But when he truly faced off with his opponent, he realized that the other was so much, so much stronger than he'd thought.

To put it bluntly, he hadn't even had the chance to lay his life on the line before being instantly taken out.

Thousandleaf couldn't help but put on a thick skin and step forward. A green light surged out of his outstretched hand and dispelled Wu Chen's attack.

He then reached out and pulled Li Yuan back.

Zuo Lan smiled mockingly, his tone bored, "Are you all kids who need adults to step in when you can't win?"

Li Yuan was ashamed beyond measure. He felt that even if all the humiliation in his life was combined, it still wouldn't match up to how he felt at this moment.

Wu Chen became even more cocky. His gaze was sharp and flinty as he looked at the two candidates from the Myriad Spirit and Flowing Wind Sect.

"Do the two of you want to come one by one or do do you want to come together?"

"Don't be too cocky, arrogant thug! I am Wang Tuo, vice head of

the Myriad Spirit Sect. I will do battle with you.”

Wang Tuo was precisely the person who’d openly recruited Jiang Chen during the initial selection. His position was second to only forefather Ninelion and the sect head. His strength and position were all top tier.

Whenever one of the Myriad Spirit Sect battled, they were always accompanied with their contracted spirit beast. A fierce beast which combined features of a tiger and panther bounded out with Wang Tuo, its eyes gleaming with a ruthless, violent light. The beast’s every move spoke of its ravenous hunger to rip its prey apart.

“What, you brought a helper because one isn’t enough?” Wu Chen jeered. “Even so, what do I have to fear? I gave him ten moves, and for you, I’ll also need no more than ten moves!”

Having learned his lesson from Li Yuan’s fight, Wang Tuo was in no hurry to attack.

He’d observed things for a bit and noticed that Wu Chen’s strength came from his gloves. If he was guessing correctly, those gloves should be an origin realm spirit weapon.

Otherwise, it never would’ve broken apart Li Yuan’s mace so easily!

Chapter 435: The Momentum Of Defeat

Wang Tuo had learned from Li Yuan's match and decided to focus his efforts on defense.

Wu Chen was strutting on about counting the match as a loss if any of the three sects could hold out for longer than ten moves. Although Wang Tuo intensely despised Wu Chen's arrogance, given Li Yuan's previous showing, Wang Tuo didn't dare take things lightly and so decided to first make it past ten moves.

When he saw Wang Tuo's posture, a trace of contempt filled Wu Chen's eyes. He grasped at his waist and pulled out a whip.

This whip was a good ten meters long and hummed through the air when Wu Chen shook it slightly. It was as if he held a legendary green water dragon in his hand. Once infused with spirit qi, it seemed to come alive, giving off a vitality as indomitable as a dragon and as lively as a tiger.

"Will cowering in your shell take you past ten moves?" Wu Chen smile's was a cold thing as he stepped forward, the long whip drawing out a beautiful arc through the air.

The whip whistled through the air and churned up countless currents of air, sending rocks and dust flying and closing off all paths.

Wang Tuo had wanted to close in on Wu Chen using a pincer tactic with his contract beast, but that whip's movements sealed

any opening he could find.

The attacks of a long whip were very difficult to defend against, especially as its attack range was quite large. It would be a nightmare to a defender once the attacker started exerting himself.

Wang Tuo was suffering unspeakably at the moment.

He'd thought that Wu Chen would continue using those mysterious gloves and had planned on employing a defensive strategy. He hadn't thought that Wu Chen would have so many tricks up his sleeve and would take out a long whip instead.

The whip continuously ate away the space he could move as it cracked down. Spirit power formed into shadows of the whip as each image severed the air further.

Wang Tuo could only feel that his range of movement growing more and more constricted. At this moment, he knew that his downfall would be the same as Li Yuan and he wouldn't make it past even one move.

He whistled and exchanged some messages with his contract beast. Wang Tuo suddenly howled lowly as the contract beast actually drilled into the ground, vanishing without a trace.

Wang Tuo's hand flickered as he brought out a treasured blade with a tiger's head at the hilt.

The blade danced furiously as beams of light spurted out, sweeping away all of the afterimages of the whip in an attempt to widen Wang Tuo's range of movement.

As his blade carved the way forward, he knew that his attack wouldn't threaten Wu Chen at all. However, there was hope in him gaining a bit of space of himself.

As long as the contract beast could leverage Wang Tuo's aura to distract Wu Chen, then Wang Tuo would have a chance after all.

Wu Chen smiled coldly as his ears suddenly twitched, as if he'd caught something.

His gaze suddenly grew frosty as a sliver of a smile stretched his lips. He shook the whip and suddenly stabbed it into the ground, the whip suddenly as hard and as durable as metal.

Whoosh!

The whip seemed to be alive as it sank into the ground with ample spirit power.

Rumble!

In the next instant, Wu Chen's arm shook once, and flung his arm viciously upwards. The long whip broke free from the earth like pulling out a daikon root. Chunks of earth flew everywhere as the contract beast was hauled out of the ground

The long whip was wrapped tightly around the contract beast like a trussed up chicken.

The contract beast was whining and growling, fear and panic in its eyes as it kept crying out for Wang Tuo to save it.

Wang Tuo and the contract beast had stuck together, and helping each other through many difficulties. They were as close as brothers. And now that he saw the contract beast being tied up, Wang Tuo was enormously shocked. Discarding all thoughts for his own safety, he charged crazily at Wu Chen, raising a blade to chop down on his face.

“Hmph, one couldn’t do anything to me, and neither can two!”

Wu Chen’s tone was harsh as a layer of golden radiance suddenly washed over his arm. The radiance instantaneously reached the whip and flashed, a tremendous explosion sounding afterwards.

Wham bam!!

The contract beast’s body immediately exploded into shreds like a chunk of crushed tofu, flinging blood and flesh into the air.

Wang Tuo’s momentum had been exceedingly fast. He was caught up in the gory rain and ended up drenched in the bloody remnants of his contract beast.

There was even a strand of intestines hanging off his neck.

His eyes almost split apart with their pain amidst this blood and gore. Wang Tuo almost fainted dead away.

The contract beast that had followed him for so many years had been made into meat paste with one move and flung all over him!

Wang Tuo had been in the world for so long, and had dominated the four sects—when had he ever come off this worse for the wear in a match?

He ground his teeth and almost sank into insanity, bellowing like a tiger's roar, "I'm gonna kill you even I die!"

Wang Tuo's treasured blade flashed in the air, as his momentum reached its peak. Like an enraged tiger, he charged forward giving off an aura of laying his life on the line. The blade sliced down a devastatingly powerful frost qi, cutting down at Wu Chen's neck.

However, without the contract beast's cover, Wang Tuo was like a fierce beast with no claws. He was hardly a bigger threat than Li Yuan at this point.

Wu Chen stepped aside as casually as he would when taking a stroll in his backyard. He leaned backwards, out of the way of Wang Tuo's blow, and lifted his foot. The foot came down directly onto Wang Tuo's buttocks.

Bam!

Wang Tuo's body shot high into the air like a rubber ball.

No!

Forefather Ninelion could no longer bear to watch as his body flickered. He reached out with a hand and grabbed Wang Tuo.

It was a good thing that although this kick had been fierce, it hadn't been fatal. However, it was still enough to confine Wang Tuo to bed for several months.

Ninelion had a fiery temper. He glared fiercely at this overweeningly proud young man with his head held high. "So vicious at such a young age?"

Wu Chen smirked contemptuously. "It wasn't that I'm vicious, but that they're too trashy. Do I show mercy to even trash?"

He then completely ignored forefather Ninelion and looked in the direction of the Flowing Wind Sect. "Who else?"

The head elder on the Flowing Wind Sect who'd been readying to take the field completely lost her will to fight after seeing Li Yuan and Wang Tuo's defeat.

She knew that it would just be a lesson in self humiliation if she

stepped forward. There was no chance of winning at all. With a soft sigh, the elder moved soundlessly behind Venerated Icemist. It was apparent she wasn't going to fight.

The scene sank into awkwardness again. No one had the guts amongst the three great sects to answer the call. This made the forefathers both infuriated and resigned.

Wu Chen was so dominating that almost no one in the ninth level spirit realm could fight him. Whoever did so was asking to be humiliated, and was close to courting death.

"Forefather, now that things have come to this stage, only I can take the field now."

Precious Tree Sect head Xie Tianshu smiled ruefully. He knew that it'd be unrealistic for him to look to others to make a move instead of himself.

A gray-clad man behind Wu Chen sneered when Xie Tianshu stepped forward and jumped out himself. "Wu Chen, you can go rest now."

There were two stars embroidered on the newcomer's chest. His position was obviously higher than Wu Chen's.

Wu Chen chuckled when he saw the other's move. "Brother Gu, you couldn't hold back anymore, huh? That's just as well, this trash is yours!"

Xie Tianshu was of the peak of the spirit realm, as was the two star gray-clad man. They were the ones who should face off, logically speaking.

“Sky Sect second rank inspector envoy Gu Xiong. Challenger, report your name! I do not beat nameless pawns.” This gray-clad man was tall and stocky with firm muscles. Although he wasn’t as childish or biting with his tone as Wu Chen, his words were still filled with pride.

“Envoy Gu, this person is Xie Tianshu, head of the Precious Tree Sect.”

Spiritual Master Zixu on the Purple Sun Sect side seemed to offer a reminder in a fawning manner.

Gu Xiong gaze was arrogant as he surveyed the scene in front of him, his well built body giving him the advantage of one in a superior position. He sized up Xie Tianshu and laughed coldly, “Do the so-called sects only have this little bit of foundation to them? The sect head himself has to take the field? Heh heh, you call yourselves a sect? What an insult to the name! If you come to your senses, you should join the Purple Light Division earlier rather than later. Otherwise, the fact that you dare call yourself a sect is the greatest blasphemy of all, utterly worthy of death!”

The sect head of the Precious Tree Sect was one in which all the attentions and fortunes of the sect were focused on. He wasn’t someone that the vice sect head could measure up to.

The sect head's strength, cultivation level, and equipment were all at the apex of the sect.

Xie Tianshu was unassuming before he made a move, but soared to the height of the skies when he finally did. The light from his sword dancing was filled with spirit power, as if a spirit snake on the prowl, attacking with uncanny moves.

Gu Xiong was firmly rooted in his posture and faced Xie Tianshu with empty hands.

He punched out with his fists and could actually block Xie Tianshu's fierce sword qi with that alone.

Xie Tianshu's heart was calm. He knew that he was shouldering an important mission, the like he'd never taken on before. It had to do with the life and death of the sect! Therefore, his every stroke was filled with all of his comprehension of the dao of swords he'd accumulated in his life.

He actually managed to free himself of the overwhelming pressure in that moment and began to slowly showcase all the meanings behind the sword that he had yet to comprehend.

Xie Tianshu's sword technique was named the "Tender Rain Sword". It was as gentle as the spring winds and rain, as if all things on earth were coming back to life, as if spring revisiting the world, as soft as a drizzle of light rain.

When the meaning behind the stroke was completely demonstrated, the battle situation became embroiled in the conception of gentle rains drifting through the air.

The sword qi acted like strands of silk, permeating every bit of the air with countless numbers of thin rain drops.

Gu Xiong was at a disadvantage because he'd been empty handed to behind with, having given the first move advantage to Xie Tianshi. He was actually forced backwards in the face of Xie Tianshu's display of uncommon skill, limited to just passive defense.

"Gu Xiong, can it be that this little bit of meaning behind the sword is enough to make you lose the guts and courage of a cultivator?" Blue-clad Zuo Lan was exceedingly put out by what he saw and not quite shouted.

Gu Xiong's body trembled as he seemed to attain some sort of inspiration, some kind of clarity from Zuo Lan's words.

Pfft pfft pfft pfft pfft!

Gu Xiong shook as several strikes in a row connected with him, drenching him in his own blood.

"Fantastic!"

The Precious Tree Sect erupted in a hubbub and cheered when they saw Gu Xiong wounded by the sword qi.

Zuo Lan; however, revealed a mocking smile. He knew his provocation had worked.

Gu Xiong reached out with his tongue and licked off the blood that had sprayed onto his face, his expression becoming even more of a grimace.

“Is the power behind the sword qi of a so-called sect head this mediocre?” A broadsword with a rather ridiculous design appeared in Gu Xiong’s hand.

When he gripped the sword, Gu Xiong’s presence suddenly increased multiple times. He was like a violent beast awakening from slumber as man and blade became one, his form as if a demon god from ancient times emanating a dominating aura.

“Eat my blade!”

Gu Xiong leered, raising his hands up high and brandishing the sword over his head. He seemed to have gathered all the forces across the galaxies for this strike as he cleaved through the air, like a bright wheel of suns ripping through the dark of the night. He split the air with a beam of light. Xie Tianshu’s carefully nurtured atmosphere was completely shattered by this strike.

Clang!

Blades collided with each other as the dominating presence of the sword qi actually increased by three, four times and hurtled towards Xie Tianshu.

“Ah!!”

Xie Tianshu’s chest felt muffled as the sword qi invaded his body.

Pfft!

He spat out fresh blood and tumbled from the sky.

Gu Xiong had been hemmed in by Xie Tianshu’s sword qi a moment ago, but a mysterious power seemed to have awakened in him. The momentum of his blade burst forth spontaneously as it crashed forcefully and suppressed the meaning behind Xie Tianshu’s sword. With one move, Gu Xiong had broken apart Xie Tianshu’s defenses and wounded him!

Chapter 436: Jiang Chen Emerges From Closed Door Cultivation, Strikes Back With Strength

Xie Tianshu, defeated!

Gu Xiong rested the sword on himself and appeared different from the menacing Wu Chen. He couldn't seem to be bothered to chase after Xie Tianshu at all, allowing him to fall from the ring, defeated.

"Weak, too weak. If even the sect head is this pathetic, who else is able to put up a fight?"

Gu Xiong was full of primal charisma and an awe inspiring connotation filled his words. This made it so that the peak of the spirit realm experts actually didn't dare meet his gaze.

"Who else?"

Zuo Lan smiled faintly and started applauding. "Only three matches have passed since the agreement of the nine matches. Don't say I'm bullying you. Send out whatever you've got. Only when you accept your complete and utter loss will you wholeheartedly toil away for my Sky Sect."

There was no mockery or irony in these words, just full of the superiority of one in a stronger position. He didn't bother to conceal it at all, but this was undoubtedly the greatest humiliation

to the three great sects.

"Accept a complete and utter loss? Pah!" Ninelion was the first one to reject this. "I don't care where you come from or how strong you might be. I only know that the sixteen kingdom alliance has always been our territory. I reject it from the bottom of my heart that you want to come and act how you will in our territory!"

"Reject?"

Zuo Lan's face grew frosty. "Reject? Then send your people to fight until you're all meekly submissive. You're old monster Ninelion of the Myriad Spirit Sect? Do you think you're quite something just because you're an origin realm cultivator?"

"Do you think it's an insult to slave away for my Sky Sect?"

Zuo Lan snorted derisively in quick succession. "I have to say, you think too much. Someone on your level is as common as the hairs on an ox in our Sky Sect. Your laughable self confidence and dignity is a joke in front of the authority of the Sky Sect. I don't even know how many within the sect can crush you with one finger!"

"Do you think I value your strength in wanting to bring all of you under control? That I have some use for you?" Zuo Lan's tone was dismissive. "The reason why I spare your lives is because even if a place is a desolate wasteland, any domain listed within Sky Sect territory needs some guard dogs. You all are just the watch dogs that I've chosen. No matter how strong you are, the strong experts

of the Sky Sect wouldn't deign to come here at all!"

Watch dogs!

These two words stabbed deeply into the hearts of all those present from the three sects.

Even those from the Purple Sun Sect had on some awkward expressions. However, they were more aware than anyone that they truly were only watch dogs.

And this was the Sky Sect giving them face. If the Sky Sect was incensed, any random expert they sent would be able to crush the entire sixteen kingdom alliance.

"Cut out the blather. There are six battles left out of nine. Either you continue fighting, or you submit!"

Zuo Lan's tone suddenly changed as he pushed forth his aura. The pressure from the earth origin realm filled the scene and made everyone from the three sects feel stifled and anxious.

Even the forefathers felt woozy and nauseous. They almost wanted to vomit.

Those with spirit realm cultivation all broke out in a sweat and couldn't stop themselves from vomiting.

The earth origin realm was only a step away from the forefathers, but the energy and aura that Zuo Lan was displaying seemed to be a far cry from the earth origin realm that they were familiar with.

“This is bad! Although Zuo Lan is only of the fourth level origin realm, his level of cultivation is at least two to three times higher than the earth origin realm we’re familiar with. His strength alone is enough to challenge us four origin realms. Add to that the traitor Sunchaser, the three sects will only be surprised even if we fight with all we have.”

Ye Chonglou’s thoughts were spinning exceedingly quickly as countless ideas flashed through his mind all of a sudden. A beam of inspiration rose.

“Hold!”

Ye Chonglou waved his hands and called out.

Zuo Lan’s gaze was remote as he looked at Ye Chonglou. “What? Do you plan to be the first to surrender? Very good. It’s said that those who suit their actions to the times are wise. The sixteen kingdom alliance is but a tiny bit of land that’s backwater and barren. The people here are destined to be lower class, destined to be slaves for others. To be able to fall under the banner of my Sky Sect is great fortune in your lives. If you’re willing to toil away, perhaps you might fight your way to glory and wealth one day. Wouldn’t that be an act that honors your ancestors? Isn’t that much better than being frogs at the bottom of a well in your remote backwater?”

Ye Chonglou's expression chilled. "Envoy Zuo, you think too much. Surrender? I've lived for a great deal of time and have no plan of betraying my ancestors to eke out a living."

Zuo Lan's brow knit together as his pupils contract rapidly. Killing intent exploded out of him. "Then you are making fun of me?"

Ye Chonglou was hit with an overbearing flare of Zuo Lan's aura. The former's chest heaved heavily, but he managed to hang on. He said determinedly, "You said that only three matches have occurred out of the nine. Are you unilaterally announcing your victory now?"

Zuo Lan started. He looked around the premises and smirked disdainfully. "What, do you think there are any in your three sects who dare fight?"

"Yes!"

When Ye Chonglou spoke this word, another more ferocious and determined voice also voiced this word amidst an air current.

One voice was close at hand and the other far away, but they seemed to have reached a prior agreement as they opened their mouths and spoke at the same time.

Ye Chonglou's brow arched when he heard this voice and delight

blossomed on his face. “Jiang Chen, you’ve finally emerged from closed door cultivation?”

A low howl traveled forth as sound waves suddenly rippled forth from the empty air. The nameless blade trapped to his back, Jiang Chen came in on the wind and landed in the middle of the scene.

The current Jiang Chen had long, dominating brows, eyes sparkling with celestial radiance, and his twenty year old body seemed even more well balanced and upright. He seemed perfect no matter what angle one looked at him.

Jiang Chen’s appearance drew the looks of all three sects. Everyone’s gaze had been a bit dull and depressed beforehand, but the light of hope now shot out from their eyes. It was as if a trace of light had appeared in endless darkness, and they’d found someone to place their hopes on. Everyone’s spirits were revitalized in that instant.

Zuo Lan hadn’t thought that someone else would suddenly appear at this moment.

“Who are you?”

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. “And who are you?”

The light of hatred shot out from the eyes of all the Purple Sun Sect members present when they saw Jiang Chen appear. It was a reaction in marked difference to that of the other three sects.

“Master Zuo Lan, this vile swine is Jiang Chen. The Sky Sect’s favored Long Juxue of the innate constitution was killed by this scum!”

Sunchaser’s eyes grew red when he saw Jiang Chen, as if he’d truly seen an enemy. He itched to pounce and tear Jiang Chen to shreds, hacking his corpse into ten thousand pieces.

“Jiang Chen? You’re that so-called secular genius?” Zuo Lan’s gaze was arrogant as he sized up Jiang Chen. “A mere spirit realm, but the three sects reacted to your arrival like they’d seen a savior. What, is a mere spirit realm pawn wanting to assume the role of a savior?”

Zuo Lan’s tone was full of disdain. He was obviously completely dismissive of Jiang Chen. His place was high, he’d come from the Sky Sect, and he was of the earth origin realm. He naturally wouldn’t think much of a spirit realm cultivator like Jiang Chen.

In Zuo Lan’s eyes, anyone below the origin realm was an ant.

Zuo Lan found it hilariously ludicrous that an ant wanted to hop out and be savior, and that the three sects were full of anticipation that he would save them.

Jiang Chen attitude was noncommittal, unmoving in the face of the pressure from the earth origin realm. He’d entered closed door cultivation for seven days this time and had refined the Divine Fruit of the Rosy Dawn to break through the ninth level spirit

realm, entering the peak of the spirit realm in one go. With the strength and quality of his fighting capabilities, he had the right to be hailed spirit king now.

However, the title of spirit king could only be obtained after the accumulation of time and battle victories.

Jiang Chen qualified for the title in all areas of requirements now, he only lacked experience. This would be rectified through continuously defeating cultivators on the same level as him.

Zuo Lan's aura was strong, but after Jiang Chen's repeated breakthroughs, his Boulder's Heart had reached ever increasing levels. The state of his strength of heart had long since reached a stage of more than ten times that of one of his peers.

Add to that some of the essence he'd absorbed from the magnetic golden mountain—it'd added a certain quality of being as stable as a mountain to his demeanor.

"Savior?" Jiang Chen smiled remotely. "I'm not any savior, but neither are you some sort of cataclysm that will destroy the heavens and earth."

Ye Chonglou spoke, "Envoy Zuo, the agreement of the nine matches has yet to conclude. Now that our candidate has arrived, do you only want to stand here and continue the verbal sparring?"

Zuo Lan snorted coldly after Ye Chongou's sarcastic words.

“That’s just as well, it looks like you lot won’t repent until you fail completely, like refusing to cry until you see your coffin! This Jiang Chen must be an unsurpassed genius in your heart and your last hope.”

“However, you will soon see that your so-called hope is just your unilateral delusions. It will burst just like a bubble after one poke.”

Zuo Lan suddenly raised his voice after speaking thus and shouted, “Gao Xiang, Gu Xiong, Wu Chen—which amongst you is willing to do battle?”

“I am!”

“I am!”

“I am!”

The three gray-clad men all took a step forward and stared courteously at Jiang Chen like hunters measuring up their prey. None of them bothered to conceal the mockery in their eyes.

“Jiang Chen, don’t underestimate your opponents. Three experts from the three sects all took the field just now and lost utterly. Even sect head Xie Tianshu was defeated by that Gu Xiong. There’s another who has yet to fight—the one with the three stars. His cultivation level should be even stronger than Gu Xiong’s at the realm of spirit king. I exchanged blows with this person just now and he actually took one of mine!”

Ye Chonglou reminded Jiang Chen that of the three to fight, Gao Xiang had yet to display his strength. They'd exchanged a punch, and when Ye Chonglou wanted to follow up on it, Zuo Lan had prevented him from doing so. He naturally had to alert Jiang Chen to the fact that this person could take one of his blows.

Jiang Chen nodded faintly, his face as calm as the waters of an ancient well. His gaze turned towards the three and then suddenly at Zuo Lan. "Envoy Zuo is it? It's not that we can't spar, but will you immediately get the hell out if I win?"

Zuo Lan laughed in his anger. "Win? Even the sect head of the Precious Tree Sect would find it difficult to win. What right does an unweaned brat like you have to speak about winning?"

Wu Chen was unruly and hot-tempered as he cracked his whip, charging to Jiang Chen. "Kid, let Master Wu send you on your way. Die!"

He cracked the whip and sent it snaking towards Jiang Chen's neck. The whip was like a lesser dragon, full of consciousness and moving faster than lightning.

Jiang Chen only smiled slightly and suddenly concentrated the God's Eye. He saw through the trajectory of the white amidst the various illusions and realities. He suddenly grasped at the air as if snatching a fly.

The shadows of the whip that had filled the air were instantly

dispelled by a miraculous power, vanishing with no trace at all. The other end of the whip landed in Jiang Chen's hand.

Jiang Chen's gaze was remote. "You dare run your mouth with this little bit of ability? One of you isn't enough, all three of you come at me together and save me from doing things one by one."

He pointed with his left hand at the whip as he spoke.

Pfft pfft pfft pfft! The whip started crackling and popping with flame after Jiang Chen's point, as if it'd been set on fire. The fire consumed the whip with an astonishing speed, like it was crawling up the lead wire of a cannon and instantly traveling to the other end.

Wu Chen was frightened senseless and hurriedly flung out his hands.

Chapter 437: One Point, One Palm. Astounding His Opponents

This point encompassed the strongest power of fire essence that Jiang Chen currently possessed. He'd absorbed the Fire Raven King's core, assimilated another two caverns worth of fire essence spirit veins, and now had refined the Divine Fruit of the Rosy Dawn. The fire essence power running through him had reached a frightening stage.

This point was a technique that he'd practiced during his closed door cultivation, called "Supernova Point". This technique could destroy a plane of existence or an entire continent when trained by the proper cultivators. Its power was astounding.

Jiang Chen had only scraped the surface of this art, but when he focused the power of fire essence onto his fingers, the power behind the sudden outpouring of the blazing essence was enough to destroy everything.

It was a good thing that Wu Chen had quickly withdrawn his hands. But even so, his hands had still been burned by the residual heat from the immense fire essence power. His entire palm would've likely been crippled it hadn't for the mysterious gloves.

The frightening scene shocked Wu Chen beyond belief. His expression changed greatly as he stumbled back a few steps and looked at Jiang Chen in fright.

Wu Chen had previously crushed Li Yuan of the Precious Tree

Sect and Wang Tuo of the Myriad Spirit Sect one after another. His confidence had been greatly inflated and he'd felt immensely superior to the cultivator sin the sixteen kingdom alliance.

Therefore, when he's napped his whip over, he'd thought that he could thoroughly destroy Jiang Chen. He never would have thought that this opponent would be completely different from all his previous ones.

Jiang Chen had used almost the same way that Wu Chen himself had used on his previous two opponents to absolutely dominate Wu Chen.

He was Jiang Chen alright, the situation was completely turned around as soon as he made a move.

The previously overweeningly proud Wu Chen was now ashen faced. He wore a completely panicked look and made those of the other three sects all feel that they could puff out their chests and lift their heads with pride.

Although Jiang Chen had yet to complete the induction ceremony, all of them now were viewing him as the spokesperson of the three sects.

He was their only hope to save face and salvage a losing situation.

The forefathers all exchanged several looks and could reach from each other's gaze a sliver of comfort. It was obvious that they saw

hope from Jiang Chen.

Zuo Lan had also not anticipated that Jiang Chen would be so different.

He was well aware of Wu Chen's strength. Although Wu Chen was ninth level spirit realm, he could absolutely put up a fight when facing a spirit king of the sixteen kingdom alliance level.

But this Jiang Chen however, had used one finger to destroy the whip that Wu Chen was proud of and almost took his hand in the process.

Even Zuo Lan hadn't seen just what method this had been.

Wu Chen had come off worse in the exchange, and Gu Xiong's large body immediately jumped out, grasping the broadsword in his hand and raising it with a flourish, calling upon the strength from the ninth heavens and cleaving down on Jiang Chen's head with the momentum.

"Are you even worthy of using a blade?"

Jiang Chen snorted derisively, taking a step forward and rising to meet the blade's momentum, neither dodging nor evading. He seemed to be throwing himself to the blade's edge.

"What's he doing??" Those watching beneath the ring were all dumbfounded.

The forefathers also stared at each other, at a loss of what to do. They didn't know what Jiang Chen was cooking up.

Even though Zuo Lan was of the earth origin realm, he too found this scene incredulous. He knew better than anyone just how strong the strength behind Gu Xiong's blade.

Jiang Chen was so careless as to charge headfirst into the momentum of Gu Xiong's blade, was he seeking death?

Jiang Chen was indeed no courting death. As he moved, his God's Eye circulated quickly as he clearly saw through the trajectory of Gu Xiong's stroke.

Although his stroke was fierce and fast, his movements were all dissected under the function of the God's Eye, as if in front of a slow motion lens.

Jiang Chen was able to see through clearly and form a counter to Gu Xiong's stroke with one glance.

Gu Xiong's movements then seemed to become a naughty child playing with a wooden sword in front of Jiang Chen, posing no threat at all.

Jiang Chen suddenly flicked his wrist and used his palm as a blade, cleaving out diagonally with one slice.

An eye piercing flash of golden colored light appeared with his hand blade, striking unerringly on the back of Gu Xiong's blade and giving rise to a metallic collision sound.

Gu Xiong felt the area between his thumb and index go numb as a bizarrely strong surge of strength traveled up through the back of his blade up to his hand, spreading throughout his entire arm and invading his organs.

Gu Xiong felt like lightning had touched him, instantly becoming paralyzed.

Jiang Chen sliced out again with his palm.

Another crisp breaking sound rang out as Gu Xiong's broadsword was broken into two halves.

"You dare parade your blade techniques with such a dilapidated piece of scrap metal? Get the hell off the stage!"

Jiang Chen roared lowly and stomped one foot onto Gu Xiong's stomach.

Bam!

Gu Xiong flew out like a sandbag that had been kicked off, flying out more than ten meters in bedraggled fashion and landing with a thud, kicking up a mess of dust.

Gu Xiong, who'd just defeated the head of the Precious Tree Sect, seemed to be as helpless as a child who'd just started walking in front of Jiang Chen.

Wu Chen and Gu Xiong had both trampled several senior executive powerhouses of the three great sects not too long ago, but they had been revisited with the same cruelty in the blink of an eye.

Jiang Chen had crushed them with an ease that was more than ten times what they'd displayed against the senior sect levels just now.

"Thousandleaf, I, Ninelion, have lived for quite some time and have never been jealous of any innate constitution, but I'm really quite jealous of your Jiang Chen."

Icemist also sighed with a complicated tone, "The Precious Tree Sect's foundations are solid with this extraordinary genius. It would be an easy matter to pass on your legacy for tens of thousands of years."

Thousandleaf was enveloped by bliss at the moment. He didn't know what to say and could only grin foolishly. He'd already speculated about Jiang Chen's abilities to the greatest of his abilities.

However, Jiang Chen's performance had still exceeded his estimations.

To be honest, when the forefathers had seen Wu Chen and Gu Xiong easily roll over the sect executives, they'd truly felt helpless and resigned in that moment.

But Jiang Chen had swept away everyone's dejection with his appearance and completely turned around the battle situation. He'd even used the same methods as their opponents and had even done so in a more stunning fashion.

Ye Chonglu was the happiest amongst the forefathers. A mix of emotions assaulted him when he saw Jiang Chen's performance.

He'd always firmly believe that Jiang Chen was exceed him, but he'd never thought that this day would arrive so quickly. With Jiang Chen's current display, he absolutely had the right to be mentioned in the same breath as Ye Chonglou, even though he was still only of the spirit realm.

The three great sects were all excited beyond belief.

Zuo Lan and the Purple Sun Sect however, all felt incredulous. It was as if Wu Chen and Gu Xiong had been swapped out for someone else. They completely lacked the bearing they'd had earlier in crushing the three great sects and had been thoroughly trampled instead.

"Just what kind of fortuitous occurrences has that scum Jiang Chen received? Why has his strength risen so quickly?!" Sunchaser was the epitome of dejection.

From the momentum and strength behind his moves, Sunchaser could see that Jiang Chen had improved greatly from his battle in the Shangyang Kingdom. It could even be said that his strength had improved by leaps and bounds.

How would he know that after Jiang Chen had taken the Divine Fruit of Rosy Dawn, he'd broken through and not only entered ninth level spirit realm, but he'd continued to climb and charged into the peak of the spirit realm. He was even worthy of the title of spirit king.

Since entering the peak of the spirit realm, Jiang Chen's God's Eye had had tangible improvements, and his eye for detail had now entered the aspect of noticing the most minute details.

Cultivators on the same level as him wasn't on the same level at all.

He'd trained the "Nine Transformations of the Demons and Gods" to the third level, where he was now training his tendons and bones. His hardened body of immensely solid tendons and bones were now stronger than a nine times refined spirit weapon. Add to that the inner armor that he'd refined from the scale of the Redscaled Firelizard, it'd enabled his body to attain and enormous breakthrough.

Therefore, the force behind his hand blade just now had been in excess of ordinary nine times refined spirit weapons. Add to that his unique advantage in his spirit ocean, this enabled his use of

spirit power to be far beyond his peers.

Gu Xiong and Wu Chen had both received enormously good heritages from the Sky Sect, and their cultivation and equipment were all far beyond cultivators in the sixteen kingdom alliance.

Such were their advantages.

But these were only advantages compared to those of the sixteen kingdom alliance.

Jiang Chen was an exception. Compared to Jiang Chen, none of their techniques or equipment were of any use in front of Jiang Chen.

This was particularly true for techniques. In Jiang Chen's eyes, as advanced as their methods were, that was still just a method. With Jiang Chen's experience from his past life and the God's Eye that he trained in this life, he could see through to the heart of his opponent's technique with almost just one glance.

Once Gu Xiong and Wu Chen lost their advantages, they were no different from the senior executives of the four great sects.

This was why Jiang Chen had so easily trampled his opponents with one point and one palm, destroying two weapons and their fighting spirit.

This wasn't a simple crushing of cultivation level, but also one of

martial dao knowledge and a holistic victory.

"Do I need to say this one more time? Just one of you isn't enough, all there of you can come at me."

Jiang Chen's tone was faint. Although he wasn't purposefully strutting around, his words and strong attitude was enough to make those of the three sects feel greatly proud of themselves.

After continual humiliation from Wu Chen and Gu Xiong, they'd now returned it to the two in spades.

"Jiang Chen is it?" Zuo Lan suddenly spoke. "I admit that I underestimated you before. That Long Juxue of the innate constitution actually did not die a wronged death in your heads. However, the fate of a low birth is a disadvantage that you will never be able to overcome. How about this, pledge allegiance to me and I shall mentor you. Be one of my envoys and work for me. This will be better than living out your life in drudgery in this backwater."

"As long as you agree, all previous matters can be forgotten!" Zuo Lan was very domineering as he didn't seek opinions from Sunchaser or the Purple Sun Sect at all.

Zuo Lan was actually recruiting Jiang Chen! The forefathers of the three sects all had mixed emotions in that instant, deeply worried about losing something precious to them.

Chapter 438: The Aura Of The Earth Origin Realm

Although Zuo Lan's sudden recruitment was unexpected, it was made at a very ingenious time. The emotions of those in the four sects were all very complicated.

The three sects were all patently worried that Jiang Chen would change his mind and be tempted by Zuo Lan's words. Although he hadn't offered any promises, he was an earth origin realm cultivator after all and possessed quite a background. He was much stronger than the Precious Tree Sect.

In addition, Jiang Chen had only verbally agreed to joining the Precious Tree Sect. He hadn't even completed the induction ceremony yet. Would such a Jiang Chen have any feelings for the Precious Tree Sect at all?

In the face of such a stark contrast between strength, would Jiang Chen choose to remain in the sect and not answer Zuo Lan's call?

It was no wonder they were worried. After all, many would choose to flock to the banner of the stronger Sky Sect in these circumstances and toil for Zuo Lan, not the weak Precious Tree Sect.

If Jiang Chen did so, then the sects' last trump card was gone. They would have no other choice but to lay their lives on the line in defying Zuo Lan.

If they didn’t, they could only accept the harsh reality of becoming the other’s vassals.

The three great sects were worried, and the Purple Sun Sect was a mess of envious hatred.

There was a deep feud between Jiang Chen and the Purple Sun Sect. If Jiang Chen chose to accede to Zuo Lan, his position would rise intangibly and even eclipse that of the Purple Sun Sect.

If that was the case, they would never be able to exact revenge on Jiang Chen in the future, much less act against him.

Sunchaser’s heart felt as if a viper had sunk its teeth in. But since Zuo Lan had spoken, Sunchaser didn’t dare pipe up at all.

The atmosphere at the scene was exceedingly odd in that moment.

All pairs of eyes focused on Jiang Chen. It was apparent that everyone wanted to see how Jiang Chen would decide.

A small smile played around on his face. Jiang Chen seemed contemptuous of giving a response.

Zuo Lan seemed to read something from Jiang Chen’s smile. His tone hardened, “Jiang Chen, this is your last chance. Your birth is

base and lowly. If you don't take advantage of this opportunity to change your fate, you'll be relegated to the fate of a wild dog in a remote backwater even if you have some potential. And, you should know that death is the only future that awaits you in defying an envoy of the Sky Sect.

"Sky Sect?"

Jiang Chen had always been extraordinarily sensitive to the word "sky" in this life, and was particularly ticked off by "geniuses".

That Zuo Lan proclaimed himself from the Sky Sect really irked the hell out of him.

"Sky". That was the birth of Jiang Chen's past life and unparalleled honor. Judging from Zuo Lan's piss poor appearance, his sect wouldn't be much better. How dare they call themselves the Sky Sect?

It was one thing to call themselves the Sky Sect, but how dared they mouth off without shame in front of the son of the Celestial Emperor about fate and a base birth?

Zuo Lan never would've thought that his pompous words would thoroughly cross over that bottom line in Jiang Chen's heart and elicit his deep irritation.

"Zuo Lan, don't talk about wild dogs. You should really look at yourself in the mirror. This is Precious Tree Sect territory, but

you're here yapping your heads off. What are you if not wild dogs?"

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. "Remember, only I am master of my destiny. I don't need to change anything and absolutely do not need to rely on your Sky Sect to change my fate. Whether it's the Sky Sect or the underworld, I am ashamed to keep such company as long as you are here!"

Those of the three sects all cheered raucously and applauded vigorously, filling the air with a wave of applause.

Jiang Chen's attitude had been more than clear in his words and he'd clearly declined Zuo Lan's recruitment, thoroughly planting himself on the side of the Precious Tree sect.

The forefathers looked at each other, immensely gratified. Only Ye Chonglou nodded his head lightly, as if long since anticipating this result and had nothing but admiration for Jiang Chen's decision.

Although none in the Purple Sun Sect cheered, they all relaxed inwardly.

Sunchaser in particular was baying with laughter inside. "That scum Jiang Chen is young after all in not knowing the depths of the heavens and earth. He's passed by his only chance to change his life. Good. This way, I won't have to worry about the Sky Sect envoys not supporting my decision to kill him in the future. This kid is dead without a doubt after offending Zuo Lan!"

Zuo Lan's face abruptly darkened upon hearing these words.

He'd never have thought that his series of proposals and even threats wouldn't result in even a split second of hesitation in the other.

Jiang Chen had not only rejected him, but jeered that they were the wild dogs instead and said he was ashamed to be in the same company as Zuo Lan!

The phrase of "whether the Sky Sect or the underworld" was an even more blatant desecration of the Sky Sect! Zuo Lan was from the Sky Sect and very proud of this. He would never allow for a single word of disrespect to his sect!

A layer of frost instantly appeared on his face. "Kid, you will be submitting to pressure after turning down my invitation! Desecrating the Sky Sect will result in the annihilation of your clan. Jiang Chen, accept your fate!"

Zuo Lan began to build up his momentum after speaking, bent on doing things himself.

"Hold!" Forefather Thousandleaf couldn't sit still at this time. Jiang Chen had already thus expressed his stance, there would really be no excuse if the forefathers still didn't step out and protect him.

“Envoy Zuo Lan, Jiang Chen has already won two matches according to the agreement of the nine matches. You were the one who said that as long as we win even one match…”

Zuo Lan laughed heartily, “I only said that you would have the right to negotiate with me if you won even one match. I already proposed my terms to Jiang Chen just now and he declined. Since he has declined, you have no more right to negotiate.”

Thousandleaf didn’t have a comeback to that. The other had indeed said that they would have the right to negotiate if they won won match.

Zuo Lan’s fan grew frosty as his tone suddenly chilled. He called out, “From now on, the Precious Tree Sect, Myriad Spirit Sect, and Flowing Wind Sect no longer exist! Those who are willing to surrender, come to me. Those who are not will die!”

“You only have this one chance. Those who do not step over within the span of ten breaths will be viewed as defying the Sky Sect. There will be a slaughter with no exceptions!” Zuo Lan’s gaze was domineering as he swept it across the three sects.

Forefather Ninelion was incensed. “Zuo Lan, the elite disciples of our three sects are all here. Do you truly want to fight to the death?!”

Zuo Lan smiled remotely. “Fight to the death. You sure think highly of yourself. Why do I need to risk my life to kill you? What right do you have to speak of fighting to the death with an earth

origin realm cultivator?!”

Zuo Lan’s body shifted like a ghost as soon as he’d finished speaking, shooting towards forefather Ninelion.

Forefather Ninelion didn’t dare take his charge lightly given Zuo Lan’s fierce momentum. Ninelion’s hands covered his vitals as he took a few steps backwards, the sect treasure of a rosary made of beast bones around his neck suddenly shooting out beams of purple light, forming an enormous restriction of protection. At the same time, Ninelion’s hands pushed outwards and formed an origin realm qi wall with a surge of qi.

It was obvious that Ninelion didn’t dare underestimate Zuo Lan’s vigorous attack.

However, as strong as Ninelion’s defenses were, Zuo Lan’s attacks were even stronger.

The latter had already flashed to Ninelion in the span of a moment.

Ninelion punched out with fast reflexes, also just managing to defend himself against as he hastily attacked.

He then took the other’s single punch with both his hands. The purple splendor from the rosary exploded and then disappeared. Ninelion’s body was flung several meters backwards from this punch.

If it hadn't been for the defensive capabilities of the rosary, Ninelion likely would've had broken bones and ripped tendons from this punch.

The other forefathers congregated around him, fanning out to block off Zuo Lan.

Thousandleaf asked in a low voice. "Ninelion, how are you?"

Ninelion's blood churned and roiled. He felt like the punch had smashed his spirit ocean. He gathered his strength several times before finally managing to regain his calm.

"Hoo!"

Ninelion exhaled a breath of putrid air, clearing out some of the irritation in his heart.

"What a strong punch!" A trace of wariness flashed through his heart and he spoke to the others in a low voice. "Everyone be careful, the boxing aura from this thug is vicious. He doesn't seem like fourth level origin realm at all."

Everyone's hearts grew stern when they heard this.

To be honest, Zuo Lan really was only of fourth level origin realm. However, he was from the Sky Sect, and so the various

profound mysteries and divine arts he trained were all from the Sky Sect.

The Sky Sect was a super sect, its foundations were at least tens of thousands times over and absolutely not something that a small sect like the Precious Tree Sect could measure up to.

Therefore, Zuo Lan's fourth level origin realm was a completely different concept than the one in the forefathers' minds.

Jiang Chen didn't dare to lag behind. He stood next to Ye Chonglou and asked in a faint tone, "Envoy Zuo, once the declaration of war has been proclaimed, it will be difficult to retract. Are you sure you want to fight to your very last breath?"

Zuo Lan snorted derisively. "How many times must I repeat myself? A fight to the death? Down to my very last breath? That is just your wishful delusion. If I, Zuo Lan, wish to kill all of you, it will be no different than killing a dog!"

After concluding his words, Zuo Lan's gaze continued his inspection and swept past the disciples of the three great sect once more.

"You still have five breaths worth of time. All of you only have this amount of time to be in charge of your destiny. After the five breaths, those that still disobey the decree of the Sky Sect will all be killed without exception!"

“Four.”

“Three.”

“Two.”

“One.”

Zuo Lan’s face was devoid of expression and was as apathetic as frost on the ground. There wasn’t the least bit of human emotion on him, as if the people he was speaking to were all a pile of stones, a cluster of statues.

When he counted down to one, Zuo Lan’s face had completely darkened. “Outstanding, indeed outstanding. I didn’t think the three great sects were all tough birds. Looks like all of you will not be convinced until death stares at you in the face. That’s just as well, I’ll send all of you on your path to the netherworld then.”

When he finished, he suddenly flared his aura, and it was as if endless tidewaters and enormous waves had surged into the great hall at that time.

The suffocating pressure from the earth origin realm aura made the tiles on the ground shatter. Countless cracks spiderwebbed through the surroundings.

“What a strong aura! This is bad, I can’t open my eyes!”

“Ah! My ear drums burst!”

“Damn it, just what is going on?”

Cultivators with lower cultivation levels all began crying out tragically towards the rear of the three great sects.

Zuo Lan’s mindset was exceedingly perverted. He seemed to thoroughly enjoy the cries of his prey. The smile on his face became even more manic and wanton.

“You chose this path for yourselves, accept your fate!”

Zuo Lan increased the pressure from his aura again.

At this time—

Strum...

A minute sound came from the air, piercing through with incredible force through the flaring of the aura that was crashing down as if a tsunami. It was like a small blade of grass had suddenly poked out through a crack in the stone.

Strum strum strum...

The sound carried forth unceasingly after it's sounded. It was like the rain, first pattering down droplets, then a gentle drizzle. It turned into an enormous downpour in the span of a second and formed an undeniable momentum within a few breaths.

This was the sound of a qin!

To be more exact, it was the sound of a guzhen!

It had thoroughly transformed from the hint of a weak sound to a force of a torrential downpour in only a few breaths.

It even started gathering into wind and wisps of clouds in another moment, as expansive as the waves beating down on the shore.

Zuo Lan's aura was slowly suppressed by the music sounds that had come from an unknown location.

After not too long, the sound of the gushed became to form invisible blade fragments, cutting into Zuo Lan's presence.

Whoosh!

Suddenly, all of Zuo Lan's aura collapsed beneath the dicing of the music notes.

Chapter 439: Zuo Lan Flees In A Panic

The thrumming of the guzhen's rhythm was constantly fluctuating, at times fierce and at times melodious.

But there was an indistinguishable strength within this unpredictable rhythm, a strength that brooked no opposition from Zuo Lan's aura.

Zuo Lan's expression suddenly changed drastically, the light in his eyes vanishing as he searched his surroundings with fear and shock, trying to ascertain where the music notes had originated from.

However, he was destined for disappointment. The notes seemed to be coming from all directions, and there was no way to pinpoint their source.

Zuo Lan was still caught in the depths of his shock and suspicion, his eyes tinged with genuine surprise. All of a sudden, he deflated like a fully inflated ball being pricked by a needle.

His expression took on a more thoughtful look as he took another glance at the three sects. He grit his teeth and waved, "We go!"

Zuo Lan was suddenly retreating!

The forefathers of the three sects all looked at each other, completely baffled.

Zuo Lan had been building up his strength and about to erupt in full glory. Everyone had been ready to fight to the death. How could he have given up all of a sudden?

Even Zuo Lan's three subordinates found this hard to believe, much less the three sects.

However, in the end, they answered to him and naturally didn't voice objections. They followed behind him with greatly sullen visages.

The Purple Sun Sect was even more caught off guard.

Sunchaser, in particular, had already been rubbing his fists and wiping his palms, ready for a great battle. He hadn't thought at all that Envoy Zuo Lan would suddenly wheel around as if he'd seen a ghost.

This completely demoralized Sunchaser. He'd already decided in that moment that he would have to use his strongest methods possible to kill Jiang Chen.

He wouldn't be able to live in peace if he didn't eliminate Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen was simply growing too quickly, so quickly that even he, an origin realm forefather, felt exceedingly uneasy.

At this rate, it wouldn't be long before Jiang Chen could directly threaten old monster Sunchaser's existence.

At that time, he and the entire Purple Sun Sect would thoroughly bereft of security.

When he considered how deep the feud between the Purple Sun Sect and Jiang Chen was, it was easy to imagine the depths of fear and unease in Sunchaser's heart.

However, Zuo Lan had already retreated, and those of the Purple Sun Sect naturally couldn't linger.

Sunchaser had a darkened face of awkwardness as he too gestured and took the Purple Sun Sect slinking away.

The three great sects immediately began booing and heckling when they saw the Purple Sun Sect turn tail.

"Old dog Sunchaser, go back and lick the arses of your Sky Sect envoys!"

"We'll beat you old and young dogs if you dare come and throw your weight around again!"

The younger disciples of the three sects were all still enraged and cursed loudly.

Sunchaser almost spat out blood when he heard the venomous haranguing. For now, he had to pinch his nose and restrain himself no matter how ugly the words he heard were.

After the Sky Sect had withdrawn, the Purple Sun Sect couldn't kick up a fuss by themselves. They'd be courting death if they faced the three great sects alone.

With the three sects' currently furious emotions, it was highly likely they'd be caught in a lynching if they were just a bit slower about leaving.

Although Sunchaser was confident, he wasn't blind enough to think that he would be able to resist the combined efforts of all three sects.

Sunchaser's group finally caught up to Zuo Lan and the others when they were 50 kilometers away from the Precious Tree Sect.

"Honored Envoy, we held the advantage just now, why did we suddenly leave?"

Sunchaser asked, baffled, when he finally caught up to Zuo Lan.

Zuo Lan's face was ashen, a hint of wariness still in his eyes. He looked back in the direction of the Precious Tree Sect and snorted softly, but didn't respond.

Sunchaser didn't dare erupt in rage even though he'd ended up

with a face full of dust. He could only follow glumly behind Zuo Lan, walking forward with his head down.

Zuo Lan's heartstrings finally slowly relaxed after they'd travelled speedily for approximately three hours. He had truly been quite frightened just now.

He'd never have thought that there would be a hidden expert within the Precious Tree Sect, at least one capable of using ethereal music notes to destroy his origin realm aura.

Even though Zuo Lan didn't know who the other was, he was certain of one thing. The expert with the guzhen was even stronger than him.

They'd been able to use mere music notes to destroy his aura from such a far distance, and even with such overwhelming dominance at that.

However, the Precious Tree Sect was just a small place, how could it be concealing this level of an expert?

Zuo Lan couldn't come to an answer no matter how he thought about it, so he called over Sunchaser and asked, "Sunchaser, apart from Thousandleaf, is there an even stronger expert within that sect who has yet to emerge?"

Sunchaser was completely turned on his head by this question.

“A stronger person? Sunchaser shook his head unconsciously. “That’s not possible. I’ve held court in the sixteen kingdom alliance for so many years and know the four great sects like the back of my hand. I wouldn’t miss intelligence of even a promising disciple, never mind someone stronger than Thousandleaf. What kind of stronger existence is there in the Precious Tree Sect? If there is, all those within it would never keep such a low profile.”

The four great sects were in constant competition. If anyone had such an absolute trump card, they would take it out every now and then to awe the other three sects, even if they didn’t show it off all the time.

Not displaying an advantage wasn’t the style of the four great sects.

Zuo Lan was deep in thought. He too didn’t believe that the Precious Tree Sect would have any sort of unparalleled expert. However, what he was certain of was that the owner of the guzhen was much stronger than him. Of that, there was no doubt.

Could it be that some sort of hidden expert was residing in the sect and didn’t wish for the sect to be attacked? If this was the case, then the situation had just taken a complicated turn.

As the Sky Sect’s envoy, he was here to settle the sixteen kingdom alliance and support the men of the Purple Sun Sect in uniting the alliance.

If he didn’t complete this mission, then his inspection tour would

be deemed a failure.

A failure was fine, but not receiving the Sky Sect's reward for completion or negatively impacting others' viewpoint of him, this was something that Zuo Lan didn't want to see.

"Sir Zuo Lan, are you suspecting whether some sort of expert has appeared in the Precious Tree Sect?" Sunchaser suddenly asked.

"Sunchaser, you claim that you know everything in the sixteen kingdom alliance. How come you haven't heard of an expert in residence in the Precious Tree Sect?"

Zuo Lan's tone was rather displeased. His sudden withdrawal today had indeed taken the edge off his spirit. He felt rather embarrassed when he even thought about it.

"Sir, when it comes to this expert, your subordinate has always had some suspicions. However, I've never been able to obtain confirmation and so didn't dare speak of nonsense in front of the honored sir."

"Tell me what you know."

Zuo Lan's tone was irritated. He was quite irked that Sunchaser had withheld information.

"Sir, I've been wondering that an enormously strong expert has been supporting Jiang Chen and helping him rise. Otherwise, a

young man born of an ordinary kingdom has no reason to climb so high, so fast."

Sunchaser voiced his speculations and then delved into the details of them. Much of this had come from Master Shuiyue.

If he'd only been suspicious before, then when Jiang Chen had killed Long Juxue in the ring and he himself had been beaten back with a pinecone, Sunchaser was certain in that moment that there was an incredible expert behind the scenes.

However, he'd been unable to determine whether this expert was here by coincidence or because of Jiang Chen.

But now with Sir Zuo Lan's current posture, he'd obviously been scared off by an incredible expert. This expert very likely had a great deal to do with Jiang Chen.

When he finished listening to Sunchaser's words, Zuo Lan's brow knit together. "So that arrogant kid Jiang Chen had an incredible expert as his backer. No wonder he was so cocky."

Sunchaser still refused to accept things and asked, "Sir Envoy, is this matter over just like this? Do we abandon our work when we're one step away from success?"

Sunchaser was obviously highly dissatisfied with this result. Jiang Chen wasn't dead, and the Purple Light Division hadn't swallowed the other three sects.

Whether it was his personal grudges or his ambitions, none of them had materialized.

Zuo Lan laughed coldly. “What? Do you still want to return to the Precious Tree Sect?”

Sunchaser was a bit awkward. “Even if there is an incredible expert, they are still courting death in going against the Sky Sect. Sir Envoy, just how strong is that expert?”

Sunchaser was even more curious about this question.

Zuo Lan sighed softly. “I don’t know how strong they are, but of one thing I am certain, and it’s that although the expert didn’t reveal themselves, they are far stronger than me. If the Precious Tree Sect has gained their protection, it will be exceedingly hard to swallow it.”

Sunchaser was enormously depressed to hear of this.

What he wanted most was to teach a lesson to the Precious Tree Sect! If he couldn’t do this, then there was no fun in being the division master of the Purple Light Division.

“Alright, return to the Purple light Division first. Sunchaser, you do not need to continue inquiring about this matter. Since an incredible expert has intervened, I must request guidance from my superiors. I trust that even stronger envoys will arrive before long.

Hmph. I hadn't thought that a mere sixteen kingdom alliance would be this knotty and difficult to handle. This was rather out of my expectations."

Zuo Lan had thought that with his strength, his three subordinates, and the Purple Sun Sect, they would absolutely be able to sweep the three great sects and awe them all.

All had been proceeding in this fashion to begin with. Although the extra factor of Jiang Chen had appeared, but Zuo Lan had believed that as long as he took the field himself, then even Jiang Chen wouldn't be a problem.

Sunchaser's heart was quite unsettled. The sixteen kingdom alliance was just this small place. Zuo Lan's arrival had been quite shocking already.

If an even stronger envoy arrived, he really didn't know how he'd wait upon them.

While Zuo Lan and Sunchaser were busy being paranoid, so were the forefathers of the other three sects equally bemused.

Zuo Lan's presence had been so domineering just now that they'd barely managed to hang on, but a wave of notes from a qin had seemed to sound.

In the next moment, Zuo Lan had run away like he'd seen a ghost.

“Who can tell me what’s going on here?” Ninelion was mystified.

Thousandleaf and Ye Chonglou looked at each other, equally dumbfounded. They knew nothing either.

If those of the Precious Tree Sect were clueless, then the others were even more puzzled.

It was rather Jiang Chen who had a grave expression on his face as he seemed to guess at something.

He too had heard the notes and felt them strongly cut away at Zuo Lan’s aura, destroying it like crumpling a dead branch.

“Can it be? Was it her?”

A hazy figure appeared in his mind at that moment, but this matter was of great importance, and so Jiang Chen kept quiet to avoid giving rise to unnecessary speculation.

Chapter 440: The Inheritance From The Precious Tree Of The Rosy Dawn

“Jiang Chen, did you hear those notes just now?” Ye Chonglou actually asked Jiang Chen first after he contemplated for a bit.

The lordmaster had a habit now that he would always ask Jiang Chen first regarding anything that seemed bizarre or was inexplicable.

Jiang Chen didn’t deny things and nodded his head. “I heard it, and that Zuo Lan seemed rather frightened of it?”

Ye Chonglou sighed. “That playing was able to instantly destroy Zuo Lan’s aura from such a distance away. The cultivation of the one who made that move is absolutely above Zuo Lan.”

Zuo Lan was of the earth origin realm. His aura was something that even the combined efforts of the forefathers could barely stand up to.

However, this overweeningly proud character been scared off by just a string of music notes.

One had to say, there was always one thing to overcome another. The gap between the strong and the weak in the world of martial dao was simply too great.

“Jiang Chen, do you know the origin of the instrument’s sound?”

Jiang Chen shook his head. “I am equally as baffled. Perhaps there is some expert hidden around the Precious Tree Sect, or a reclusive forefather within the sect?”

Although Jiang Chen had some thoughts, he had yet to confirm them himself, how would he possibly voice them prematurely?

The induction ceremony had more or less been affected by the debacle from Zuo Lan and the others.

Although the ceremony was continuing, the emotions of those assembled were greatly different. Because of Zuo Lan and the Sky Sect’s appearance, even old monster Sunchaser had betrayed the sixteen kingdom alliance. This was simply too much pressure for the three great sects.

Even though Zuo Lan and the others had withdrawn today, it was obvious that the matter was not over yet, and the Sky Sect he represented was even less likely to let things lie the way they were.

Therefore, troubles were sure to arise one after another in the future.

Forefather Thousandleaf took out a green Fruit of the Rosy Dawn to both reward Jiang Chen and stimulate everyone’s excitement again.

The green fruit flowered only once in three hundred years. It was the advanced version of the red fruit with a much stronger effect.

If one used it in the spirit realm, the cultivator would be able to rise two levels in a row and purify their spirit ocean.

The green fruit would form only once in three hundred years, and there was no absolute guarantee about its success. Ordinarily speaking, there was only a fifty percent of a red fruit becoming a green fruit.

This was to say that out of the ten red fruits left on the Precious Tree of the Rosy Dawn, no more than five would become green fruit!

It went without saying the success rate of those further becoming purple fruit.

After a cycle of six hundred years, normally only one or two, at best three, would become purple fruit.

The three that they'd once collected was absolutely a record for the Precious Tree.

Forefather Thousandleaf had the eldest seniority in the sect and the oldest age, but he was only three hundred some years not, not yet four hundred.

Since he'd taken charge of the Precious Tree Sect, the most

advanced fruit the Precious Tree had produced was a green fruit. He'd never even come across a purple fruit.

It was said that a purple fruit would be able to help an origin realm cultivator unconditionally rise one level.

Therefore, forefather Thousandleaf greatly yearned after the legendary purple fruit. He'd halted at third level origin realm for many years now and had been unable to find the opportunity to break through.

Therefore, he ardently desired the purple fruit to mature.

This meant that the most precious fruits Thousandleaf had on hand at the moment was the green fruit. Taking one out to give to Jiang Chen showed just how much he valued Jiang Chen.

Even Ye Chonglou hadn't received a green fruit from Thousandleaf.

"Jiang Chen, this green fruit can help you unconditionally rise two more levels in the spirit realm. With your current level, taking it will give you a chance to enter the origin realm!" Ye Chonglou came forth to offer his congratulations.

He wasn't jealous. Whether the green fruit or red fruit, he didn't have much use for either of them. What was useful to him now was only the purple fruit.

Unfortunately, even forefather Thousandleaf didn't have a purple fruit.

Although Jiang Chen didn't necessarily have need for the green fruit, he didn't decline it either. He'd joined the Precious Tree Sect for its resources.

Forefather Thousandleaf had been quite clear just now that this green fruit was a reward for Jiang Chen defeating Wu Chen and Gu Xiong just now.

Jiang Chen had no reason to refuse it since it was a reward.

After the mess from Zuo Lan, the guests from the other two sects were disinterested even though forefather Thousandleaf had brought out the green Divine Fruit of the Rosy Dawn. They wished to return home.

They were all afraid that those bastards would go make a mess at their sects.

Therefore once the induction ceremony was complete, those of the other two sects all raised their intentions to leave. Even though Thousandleaf invited them to stay, none of them were in the mood to linger.

"Fellow daoists, I know not the background of the Sky Sect, but they are absolutely a very strong existence. Otherwise, with Sunchaser's personality, he never would've easily flocked to their

banner. If even Sunchaser is willing to betray the inheritance of the Purple Sun Sect, then it can be seen that the Sky Sect has vast ambitions. Our three sects are rich pickings in their eyes. They won't rest until they have us. From today forth, our three sects should further enhance our communication and provide aid in times of need. We absolutely cannot allow them to defeat us one by one."

Although Sunchaser was normally indifferent to fame or gain, he placed great importance on the heritage of the Purple Sun Sect. He would never wish to see the sect be swallowed whole and incorporated into some Purple Light Division.

He wouldn't necessarily be willing even if he was invited to be Division Master, much less be Sunchaser's minion.

After all, Division Master was just the head of a Sky Sect division. Once they became the division of the Sky Sect, that would mean that the Precious Tree Sect had lost its autonomy and had to listen to the Sky Sect in all matters.

What if the Sky Sect set their sights on the Precious Tree of the Rosy Dawn? Would they hand that over on bended knee as well?

Ninelion nodded when he heard Thousandleaf's reminder. "Daoist Thousandleaf speaks sense. Us three sects are crickets on the same rope. We are leaves of the same branch and must remain united. Otherwise, we will be separately defeated by the Sky Sect."

Icemist sighed lightly and said glumly, "Let's take one step at a

time. If a mere inspection envoy was so domineering and they've come off worse in this exchange, I'm afraid that a stronger cultivator will arrive next time. Our three sects are but a piece of meat in their eyes. I'm worried if we'll truly be able to hold out if we continue resisting?"

These words were slightly out of spirits. It was apparent that Icemist was a bit pessimistic about the future of the three sects.

Ninelion spoke angrily, "Even if we can't hold out, we must not become Sunchaser's dogs! There is no undefeatable sect beneath the heavens, only indestructible heritage. If they really wish to employ brute force, then we'll just go down in a blaze of glory then. As long as the sect heritage has yet to be destroyed, then we can arise from the ashes even if the sect is destroyed. But if we start to cower and wish to give up from our own mindset, then what is destroyed is our heritage. That is when our sect has truly been destroyed."

A heritage wasn't the mere inheritance of a sect's methods or knowledge, but a type of mentality and spirit. If they gave up, that would mean that this kind of spirit was at an end.

Once this spirit was extinguished, then even if a sect had ten million people, it would still be one without a foundation.

Take for instance, the Sky Sect envoy wanting to assimilate their sects into a Purple Light Division under Sunchaser's command. This meant that they would all become Sunchaser's troops and become his vassals in all things, unable to act of their own accord.

This was something that Ninelion would never be willing to accept.

Jiang Chen was quite admiring of Ninelion's heroic manner. In contrast, a woman such as Icemist seemed to lack that bit of seeing things through to the end at this critical moment.

When it came to the sect's legacy, the spark of this spirit was sometimes more important than passing down techniques or methods. If a sect's mentality was strong, then even if they were down to the last disciple, he would still find a way to pass on the torch of the sect so that it would never be extinguished.

Jiang Chen had seen all beneath the heavens in his past life and weathered the passage of a million years, seeing many great powers rise and fall. Hadn't some sects still vanished in the traces of history in the end?

Why had that been?

Because those sects had only profit in their eyes, and none of spirit or faith. No goal or legacy that people who would willing to lay their lives out on the line.

Ninelion sighed and walked up to Jiang Chen, clapping his shoulder. "Jiang Chen, if you were a disciple of my Myriad Spirit Sect, then I would ignore all talk of a Sky or Earth Sect. Keep training well! I believe that you'll trod on the so-called Sky Sect one day, hahaha!"

Ninelion's hearty laugh was quite infectious. It could be seen from this that Ninelion possessed quite some mettle and was a forthright person. He wouldn't frown ceaselessly even if the pressure from the Sky Sect was a monumental as a mountain.

Jiang Chen also smiled faintly, "My brother Liu Wencai has unparalleled potential. I'm sure that one day, he will be worthy of being hailed as one who can shoulder the sect on his shoulders."

"Alright! I will surely focus great attention of cultivating Liu Wencai just because of those words."

Liu Wencai was standing behind forefather Ninelion, and he cast a look of gratitude at Jiang Chen at this time. He walked up with Tang Hong. The three of them laid their palms on top of each other and bid the others farewell.

"Take care!"

"Take care!"

The Precious Tree Sect regained its calm after sending off the two great sects.

If it wasn't for Zuo Lan's party, the Precious Tree Sect should've been immersed in boundless joy at this moment for the emergence of two great experts, an origin realm forefather and a genius at the peak of the spirit realm.

All middle level executives and above of the sect were gathered beneath the Precious Tree.

Forefather Thousandleaf stood in front of it, calling out loudly, “Everyone, this is the first time that the garden of the Precious Tree of the Rosy Dawn has been opened to everyone. I want to tell you that it is because of this tree our sect has been able to pass down our legacy for a thousand years. If we lose our legacy, then we will fine it greatly difficult to retain the tree. Your children and grandchildren, your disciples and juniors will never be able to enjoy the fruits and protection of the tree! Tell me, do you wish to be a sect disciple with the spark of spirit, or be someone’s lackey in joining that so-called Sky Sect?!”

“We vow to live and die with the Precious Tree Sect, and will protect the Precious Tree unto death!”

All of those present wept tears and cried blood.

Even if those in the sect had never dared looked upon the Precious Tree, it had long since become a totem in their hearts and branded itself into their souls.

The Precious Tree was their legacy, their spark of spirit, and their only faith.

They could fight internally or conduct ludicrous acts, but they would never tolerate blaspheme against the tree. This was because it was the pillar of morale for all of the sect’s disciples.

They may not be able to enjoy the fruits themselves, but the sect had its rules. If they reached the qualifications to one day, or their children did, the sect would naturally pass on its fruits to them.

The Precious Tree was something that all those in the sect partook in.

Chapter 441: A Hundred Flowers Bloom When Huang'er Smiles

Jiang Chen sat beneath the Precious Tree of the Rosy Dawn, perceiving this towering tree with senses. Spirit entities such as the Precious Tree all possessed their own consciousness.

Although this consciousness may not give rise to a living being, one could still conduct a formless sort of communication through careful comprehension.

Jiang Chen had eaten a red fruit and had partook of some of the critical factors melded into the fruit. It was as if he'd formed a wondrous mental connection with this towering tree all of a sudden. This relationship was different to that of flesh and blood, but felt even more subtle and mysterious compared to it.

Forefather Thousandleaf's sensational words weren't enough to waver Jiang Chen's dao heart or brainwash him. However, Jiang Chen's feelings had somehow, unknowingly integrated into the Precious Tree of the Rosy dawn.

Of course, it wasn't because of Thousandleaf's words, but that Jiang Chen had somehow built a bridge with the Precious Tree in his meditations, bringing forth a kind of communication.

He felt that this kind of communication was quite useful and would have great benefits on training his strength of heart.

Time passed in seconds and minutes. Jiang Chen sat cross legged as if an old monk deep in his meditations, entering a profound and mystical state.

After who knew how long, Jiang Chen suddenly opened his eyes to see that the stars had dotted the sky, scattering over the heavens as if on a chessboard. It was actually already twilight.

The mid and senior level executives next to him had long since disappeared.

“Heh heh, Jiang Chen, you’re finally awake.”

Forefather Thousandleaf’s voice suddenly sounded from the other end of the Precious Tree, and his body walked out in short succession.

“Forefather.” Jiang Chen rose to bow and greet the forefather.

Thousandleaf waved his hand. “Jiang Chen, you no longer need to bow in greeting when you see me from now on. You have the right to, and I care not about these details.”

Jiang Chen could feel the sincerity in the forefather’s words and smiled faintly. “Forefather, I’ve sat here for a day and rather provided quite a laugh for everyone.”

“Hahaha!” Forefather Thousandleaf laughed heartily and lifted his head to look at the immense, starry skies, laughing merrily.

“Jiang Chen, you say that you’ve sat there for a day?”

“Can it be more than a day?” Jiang Chen was taken aback. He’d fully immersed himself and enjoyed that condition. It was as if the immortals had entered closed door cultivation. There was no sun or moon in the mountains, and so he had no idea just how much time had passed.

Thousandleaf extended three fingers.

“Three days?” Jiang Chen was quite surprised.

“Thirty days, precisely a month. It was a day of the waning moon when you entered this garden, and now it is another starry night of a waning moon a month later.”

Thirty days!

Jiang Chen also found this hard to believe. He hadn’t thought at all that he’d end up sitting down for thirty days in one go. However, he quickly accepted things when he thought about it.

After thirty days of meditation, Jiang Chen could noticeably sense the immense rise in his strength of heart, and that his mindset was a lot calmer.

Inspiration about all aspects of martial dao also burst forth in endless streams.

“Jiang Chen, your destiny has much to do with the Precious Tree at this time. Otherwise you wouldn’t have sat underneath it for a month in meditation.”

Forefather Thousandleaf handed a token to Jiang Chen. “This is the entrance token for the Garden of the Precious Tree. You can enter and train anytime with this token. But remember, do not go near the Divine Fruits. There are strong restrictions placed on all of the fruits. If you attempt to touch the fruits without removing the restrictions, you will surely be attacked.”

Although the Divine Fruits of Rosy Dawn were precious, Jiang Chen had no more use for them in his current stage, except if a purple fruit was produced.

“Be at ease forefather, I am not a greedy person. I have already taken a red fruit and have another green on my hands. I would never steal what has been entrusted to my care.”

Thousandleaf laughed heartily, “Good, Jiang Chen. I have not viewed you wrongly after all.”

Jiang Chen had gained much after a month of meditation. When he returned to his own residence, he discovered that his followers hadn’t been overly worried.

They’d all heard that Jiang Chen was training in the Garden of the Precious Tree and were very excited to see him return.

It was many that they'd heard many of the legendary heroics of their young master over the year. The overwhelming dominance of the Sky Sect envoy that day, continuously defeating the experts of the three great sects, with Jiang Chen strongly emerging out of closed door cultivation in the critical moment when even the forefathers were helpless. He visited upon the intruders the same treatment they'd given the three sects and broke through their arrogant aura, turning the situation with one move.

It could be said that everyone within the sect had been discussing Jiang Chen over the course of this month, discussing the genius who was second only to the two great forefathers.

That battle had been quite obvious. Even the sect head had been unable to defeat Sky Sect's Gu Xiong, but Jiang Chen had easily trampled Gu Xiong in the end.

What did this mean?

It meant that Jiang Chen's strength was invincible in the spirit realm and was enough to crush all spirit realm cultivators. He was an absolute spirit king.

"Have you all grown accustomed to life in the Precious Tree Sect?" Jiang Chen swept his gaze across all their faces.

Judging from their expressions, they were all very satisfied with life in the Precious Tree Sect and was living quite a good life.

“Good, none of you have disappointed me.”

Jiang Chen was indeed a bit surprised that after a month, Guo Jin, the Qiao brothers, and Wen Ziqi had all broken through to the spirit realm and become true spirit realm cultivators.

Xue Tong had even broken through to the third level spirit realm.

Gouyu had even more astonishing results, ascending to the fourth level and becoming a true earth spirit realm expert.

The Precious Tree Sect boasted of a superior environment and rich resources that made their cultivation level advance by leaps and bounds. But of course, this had an inseparable connection with Jiang Chen’s aid.

His Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill had brought very noticeable changes to them. However, when they’d been in the Skylaurel Kingdom, their cultivation hadn’t advanced rapidly due to environmental limitations.

Now that they’d entered the sect and could enjoy the benefits of abundant resources in a wondrous environment, the advantages of the Five Dragon Opening Heavens Pill were fully displayed.

Jiang Chen thought about things again and again and decided to gift the green fruit to Gouyu.

Gouyu's age was eldest and was the leader of his followers. Her strength was the strongest now, and having the green fruit would be akin to giving wings to a tiger.

With her potential and level, she would absolutely have the ability to assail the sky spirit realm within a year.

As for Xue Tong and the others, they were younger and thus their cultivation was a level lower. They wouldn't be able to make full use of the fruit even if he gave it to them.

Although Jiang Chen had much in resources, he would only use it where it was needed the most.

After divvying up some of the resources, Jiang Chen spoke a few more words of encouragement and dismissed the others, leaving only Gouyu behind.

"Young master, do you have further instructions?"

"Gouyu, there are no outsiders here. Calling me 'young master' feels quite odd. Oh right, I happened to rewarded with a green Divine Fruit of Rosy Dawn when I accomplished the achievements against the Sky Sect on a fluke. I have not much use for this fruit, and it wouldn't be a waste to give it to you."

"Green fruit?" Gouyu was startled and cried out hoarsely. "A fruit of the Precious Tree of the Rosy Dawn? I have heard that it

produces fruit only once every hundred years.”

“A red fruit comes about only once every hundred years, a green fruit once every three hundred. This green fruit will unconditionally help you rise two levels in the spirit realm.”

Jiang Chen tossed the fruit and it drew a beautiful arc over to Gouyu.

Happiness had come too swiftly for her. She was a bit caught off guard as she subconsciously caught the green fruit. Her sexy lips trembled as she patently found things hard to believe and was deeply agitated.

What was the concept of an unconditional rise in two levels in the spirit realm? It was absolutely flabbergasting!

And yet the young master had given a fruit like this to her just like this.

Gouyu was truly assaulted by a mixture of emotions at this moment. She wasn’t only thankful for her original decision to follow Jiang Chen now, but was also completely shocked by just how immense the young master’s genius was. Even something like the green fruit that all the geniuses of the Precious Tree Sect salivated over was not much use in his eyes!”

This was what Gouyu felt was the most incredible and shocking.

“Young master, just… just what level are you?”

“I’m but one step into the origin realm.” Jiang Chen smiled. “However, I don’t know whether when I’ll be able to take this final step. I hope those of the Sky Sect cause trouble later rather than sooner. I have a feeling that meditating beneath the Precious Tree seems to be advantageous in me training my strength of heart. After taking a red fruit, I seem to have built up a mysterious connection with the Precious Tree.”

“The origin realm? One step away?”

Gouyu was stunned and didn’t know what to say.

When she thought back to the Hidden Dragon Trials and how Jiang Chen had found it difficult to gather even three meridians true qi, she didn’t know how to describe a genius who was now touching the doorstep of the origin realm in the span of a few years.

Jiang Chen laughed heartily, “I’m going to go visit Miss Huang’er.”

Jiang Chen had a question in his heart that he wanted to ask. Although he didn’t feel that Miss Huang’er would admit to things, he wouldn’t feel right if he didn’t ask it.

“Sir Jiang, why do you not enter when you hover outside the door?”

Huang’er’s gaze seemed to be able to cut through all obstacles and sense that her visitor was Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen started. He’d just arrived with light footsteps because he didn’t want to alarm Miss Huang’er. He’d been worried that Miss Huang’er was practicing her music or reciting scripture or something and couldn’t be disturbed.

He hadn’t though that Miss Huang’er would point out his actions with one word.

He pushed through the door and entered the small yard. Miss Huang’er had cleaned it up quite nicely, and there were many plants and flowers placed within the yard, giving it a lively appearance.

Jiang Chen was also temporarily mesmerized when he saw that there was another world within the yard. Although he was no expert, he too had some thoughts when it came to gardening.

The layout of the yard was open and grand, with the placement of the flowers and plants giving subtle rise to another kind of meaning in their layout.

“Sir Jiang, Huang’er has heard that you’ve made a great accomplishment as soon as you entered the Precious Tree Sect. Congratulations and felicitations! True gold can shine anywhere it is.”

Miss Huang’er’s soft and clear voice had a kind of warm closeness in it, warming the hearts of listeners.

“It’s no major accomplishment. The one who scared off the Sky Sect envoys with a few music notes however, is the person who has truly rendered this meritorious service. Miss Huang’er…”

Huang’er laughed softly, her smile as radiant as a hundred blooming flowers in that instant. “I’d planned on concealing it from you but couldn’t in the end. Alright, Huang’er admits to doing so then.”

Chapter 442: The Origin Of The Ninesuns Sky Sect

Huang'er was forthright and didn't attempt to deny her involvement.

As a gentleman, Jiang Chen didn't continue his line of questioning once Huang'er had admitted her part in things.

Huang'er actually looked at Jiang Chen with a slight smile. "Sir Jiang, Elder Shun once said that he estimated that you would enter the origin realm in three years. I scoffed at the idea then. Today, two of those three years have passed, and here you stand, already at spirit king, but half a step away from origin realm."

Jiang Chen was also surprised. Elder Shun had thought so highly of him that he'd thought Jiang Chen would break through to the origin realm in three years?

One had to understand that there were many factors as to why Jiang Chen had had such a smooth journey so far. However, many of these factors had been ones that Elder Shun would've been unable to anticipate beforehand. Even so, the elder had made that prediction three years ago, a testament to his foresight and breadth of vision.

Jiang Chen was rather curious at this moment, just what was the cultivation level of this grandfather and granddaughter duo?

Although Jiang Chen had known and seen many things in his past life, it was difficult to ascertain someone else's cultivation level unless they purposefully displayed their strength.

Elder Shun and Huang'er kept such a low profile that Jiang Chen had no way of estimating their strength.

Only one thing was absolutely certain, that Huang'er's cultivation level was far above the earth origin realm.

Jiang Chen wasn't dejected or envious. His strength would rise one step at a time as long as he held true to his path.

"Sir Jiang, the Sky Sect will absolutely not rest easy after coming off worse in the exchange that day. The Precious Tree Sect's foundations will find it difficult to withstand their blows. What plans do you have?"

Jiang Chen started slightly, not having anticipated Miss Huang'er's words.

"I don't know how strong the Sky Sect is, but since I've joined the Precious Tree Sect, I cannot leave as I would. The world of martial dao constantly turns, and there exists no one who can take advantage of both sides. At the end of the day, it's best to have some principles. Although I've just entered the Precious Tree Sect, I seemed to have built a marvelous connection with the Precious Tree after a month's meditation beneath its branches. I have a feeling that although the Precious Tree Sect lacks sufficient foundation and is weak, it's a sect that will pass down a legacy of

spirit.”

Jiang Chen’s words weren’t putting him up on a pedestal. Although it hadn’t been long since he’d joined the Precious Tree Sect, he’d found a sense of home after sitting beneath the Precious Tree for a month.

Therefore, when Miss Huang’er had asked him what his plans were, he didn’t speak lofty words of dignity with self righteous zeal. His heart was filled with the resolution to never submit to the Sky Sect. Even though he wouldn’t quite go to the lengths of dying together with it, he would absolutely fight to the last minute.

It wasn’t because he had great feelings for the Precious Tree Sect, but because he had a deep emotional connection to the Precious Tree.

Huang’er’s question had also been a probing one. When she heard Jiang Chen’s response, she too nodded lightly and was privately impressed by how accurate Elder Shun’s assessment of Jiang Chen had been.

Sir Jiang was truly one who valued relationships, a genuinely dependable person.

Huang’er had come to experience human nature in abundance since childhood. Most had sought to conspire against each other and nurse their schemes close to the heart. Someone as open and forthright, as perfectly straightforward in his actions like Jiang Chen, and also direct and decisive about his debts of gratitude and

grudges, were few and far in between.

Huang'er suddenly felt that taking up residence in the sixteen kingdoms was actually not a bad thing. At least, the people she'd come in contact with during this time had all been very friendly and quite openminded.

Taking those next to Jiang Chen for example, they were all very friendly and polite. They didn't ostracize her for her looks.

It was precisely because of this that Huang'er felt a bit ashamed of herself. She felt that concealing her features and purposefully appearing thus rather showed her as being not as transparent as the others.

However, since things had developed thus, she couldn't revert to her original looks any longer. She could only continue down this path.

She didn't want the others to misunderstand her because of her looks and exile her instead, causing her to lose the friendships she'd made.

Huang'er was similar in age to Jiang Chen. The years in which she'd traveled around outside with Elder Shun were the most she'd seen of the ramshackle life of a wanderer.

However, they'd also been the happiest and most simple time of her life as well.

There was no need for plotting or politics, no need for anything complex.

She truly treasured this time, and had even wished that these days could continue, with no changes ever appearing.

However, the wind continues to blow even when the trees wish to stay still.

The Sky Sect envoy had broken the peace she'd found during this time. She hadn't wanted to become embroiled in this conflict.

However, the envoy had been unforgivingly tyrannical. Had they swallowed the Precious Tree Sect, it would've impacted her life here as well.

She, and those she'd recently befriended, would see changes develop in their quiet lives.

This was something Huang'er never wanted to see happen, which was why she couldn't help but make a move to protect this simple and joyful lifestyle.

At the same time, she truly viewed Jiang Chen as a friend after the times they'd spent together.

Huang'er was a considerate person, she didn't want Jiang Chen

to know that she'd helped. Although she knew that he wasn't the sort to care unduly about face, some criticism would develop if the others knew that he'd relied on the help of a woman in the end.

She didn't even want him to know it was her.

However, Jiang Chen was such a smart person that he'd been able to guess it was her from the sound of the music. Since he had asked, she naturally wouldn't deny her involvement.

It was a good thing that Jiang Chen was an openminded person.

However, she couldn't help but remind him, "The Precious Tree Sect is truly lucky to have Sir Jiang. However, the Sky Sect has quite a background to them and thus a strategy needs to be in place for their arrival."

Jiang Chen knew nothing about the Sky Sect.

Although he'd seen much in his past life, it was impossible to know everything on every plane like the back of his hand.

Not to mention that he wasn't certain at all if the continent on this plane of existence was a part of the myriad worlds he had known in his past life. After all, the universe was vast, and the various worlds just a small corner of the cosmos.

However, Jiang Chen felt that this world should have something to do with the myriad worlds in his past life.

There were simply too many things here that he'd seen and understood before.

However, he didn't know anything about the structure of this world.

A thought struck him. Miss Huang'er was so mysterious and so powerful, she must be from a powerful place. Why not take advantage of the opportunity to ask her?

"Miss Huang'er, do you know of the Sky Sect's background?"

"Mm, the Sky Sect, full name Ninesuns Sky Sect, comes from the Upper Eighth Realm and is one of the eight great powers of that realm. They would count as a premier force in this world."

A premier force even in this world, that was an impressive background indeed.

Huang'er smiled faintly as her slender fingers probed slightly, taking out an ancient book and placing it on the stone pedestal.

"Sir Jiang, this ancient book is named 'The Annals of Mountains and Rivers'. It records the structure of our world and chronicles all the territories, powers, and cultures within. Although simple, it's a book that acts as a map. This book has helped Elder Shun and I greatly in our travels these years. If Sir Jiang is interested, you can peruse this book."

Jiang Chen accepted the book with the words “The Annals of Mountains and Rivers” written on the cover.

When he flipped open to the first page, the words “The Annals of the Divine Abyss Continent” appeared.

Such a book would never appear in a place like the sixteen kingdom alliance. In this small backwater, ninety nine percent of its people would never even have left their birthplace.

Even the extreme experts had only been to the Myriad Domain or other territories within. They’d never walked out of the area.

Therefore, a precious tome that encompassed the entire world would never appear here.

Jiang Chen caressed the book, sensing the passage of time contained within. He was more sure than ever that Miss Huang’er and Elder Shun had an impressive background.

Ordinary characters would never have such a literary work.

Jiang Chen didn’t shy away as he began to leaf through it seriously.

This continent was named the “Divine Abyss Continent”. The main part of the continent was divided into the Upper Eight, Mid

Sixteen, and Lower Thirty Two Realms. The rest of the continent was made up of countless areas of desolate wilderness, the sea, and mysterious locations that wouldn't be seen in maps.

However, when Jiang Chen saw the words "Divine Abyss Continent", his heart spasmed.

He couldn't help that reaction when some memories from his past life floated upwards in his heart. The face of his first father, the Celestial Emperor, flashed in front of him.

When he recalled his father's careful and attentive care, the efforts he'd put into refining the Sun Moon Pill, how his father's fate was still unknown after the heavens had shattered...

Jiang Chen truly found it hard to control himself.

The words of "Divine Abyss Continent" really tugged on his heartstrings, since his father's title had been Emperor Taiyuan—the emperor of the deepest abyss.

That single word "yuan" summoned endless memories from Jiang Chen's past life.

The powers in the Divine Abyss were divided into upper, mid, and lower ranks, from rank nine to one.

The Ninesuns Sky Sect was naturally a first rank sect. All first rank sects would have the word "sky" in their names, illustrating

their pinnacle level of existence with direct access to the authorities.

As for the four great sects in the sixteen kingdoms, they were likely seventh rank powers. In the greater scheme of things, that would place them firmly in the lower rank.

Jiang Chen couldn't help but sigh when he read up to here.

That a first rank sect was looking upon a seventh rank Precious Tree, Myriad Spirit, and Flowing Wind Sect with favor also meant that the former was assured of victory.

Jiang Chen could understand in that moment why Zuo Lan had been so arrogant and domineering.

Even a rank four inspector from a first rank sect had the right to call the shots and do as he wished in the sixteen kingdoms.

Ordinarily speaking, who would be able to prevent the light of a first rank sect from shining on a small place like the sixteen kingdom alliance? Even a sneeze from a first rank sect would be enough to destroy a seventh rank sect.

Jiang Chen closed the book lightly and smiled ruefully. "The Ninesuns Sky Sect is a big house with great undertakings. I don't know if their appetite is too big in wanting a poor place like the sixteen kingdom alliance, or if a door had slammed on their brains. No matter how one looks at it, it really is disgraceful for a first

rank sect to bully seventh ranks."

Huang'er smiled. "The competition between the eight powers in the Upper Eight Realms is wild and venomous. They itch to extend their influence to every corner of the Divine Abyss Continent. Using the Ninesuns Sky Sect as an example, they seek to make the sixteen kingdom alliance one of their divisions. I estimate that they have at least three thousand of these divisions scattered throughout the continent."

Chapter 443: Regal Pill Palace, Intentions To Ally

Three thousand divisions!

Jiang Chen also smiled ruefully when he heard this number. Was there any meaning to having this many divisions?

With his past life, he was well aware that the strength of a faction didn't lie in how broad their territory or domain was, but if there was a spark of spirit and an immense power of legacy to cause everyone in this faction to revolve around the legacy. The faction's people would entrust their life and death to the strength of this legacy. Only in this way would the faction be eternally strong.

Although blinding expanding influence and territory looked to be building one's strength on paper, this kind of facade was completely useless in critical moments.

If a sect's core legacy collapsed, then as much territory it held would all be as intangible as the winds. All would scatter as if monkeys escaping a fallen tree.

"The senior executives of the Ninesuns Sky Sect are either all crazy or equally arrogant. Even if they had thirty thousand divisions, all means nothing if they are unable to have their subordinates submit wholeheartedly, much less three thousand."

Jiang Chen sighed lightly and shook his head. He also knew that

the Precious Tree Sect was entirely too minuscule compared to the Ninesuns Sky Sect.

As united or as fierce of a resistance the Precious Tree Sect put up beneath the might of the Sy Sect, it would be impossible for them to obstruct the Sky Sect's further progress.

It was now a question of how much the Sky Sect was willing to put in for this division.

Huang'er was slightly surprised. If it'd be any other young man speaking Jiang Chen's words, Huang'er would've thought he was boasting without much meaning and putting on a front of a deep and wise person.

However, when Jiang Chen spoke, all had seemed so natural and given, truly the reflections after deep thought and not empty words of grandeur.

"If Elder Shun heard Sir Jiang's words, he would absolutely think the person in front of him was his bosom friend. It seems to be true that the truly strong forces in this world aren't those overweeningly arrogant sects with their tentacles scattered in every corner, but those hidden in the shadows. Once these powers make their move, the sun and moon will shift colors, the mountains and rivers shatter, and even order collapse..."

"Mm? Does Miss Huang'er mean that this Sky Sect isn't the strongest power in the Divine Abyss Continent even though it is a first rank sect?"

Huang’er smiled faintly and nodded lightly.

However, she didn’t overly explain. She wasn’t being demure or pretending to be a mysterious sage, but didn’t want to speak too much in case she affected Jiang Chen’s dao heart.

However, Jiang Chen’s curiosity was only directed towards the structure of this world. He didn’t really care about how strong the powers were.

Even the strongest powers were only thus in this plane of existence, and the strongest planes of existence were beneath the heavens.

“Sir Jiang need not worry, with a genius of your caliber, it’s only because you’ve been limited to the sixteen kingdom alliance that things are thus. Otherwise, had you been born in the Upper Eight Realms, your name would’ve long since resounded beneath the heavens. However, the drawbacks of birth are but a factor in the initial stages. The path of martial dao is long, and with your potential, you will make up for lost time sooner or later and become a legendary character in the Divine Abyss Continent!”

Huang’er was worried that Jiang Chen’s emotions had been affected by these words, and so her response was half encouragement and half compliment.

Jiang Chen smiled dashingly. “Miss Huang’er doesn’t need to worry about me, I have never fretted over my birth. I quite agree

with Miss Huang'er's words that one's birth is never an issue. In the long path of martial dao, he who runs first may not run to the last."

Huang'er also smiled winsomely when seeing Jiang Chen's forthright attitude. She'd been worried about Jiang Chen's dao heart, but it looked like she'd be overly anxious.

Gouyu's voice suddenly sounded from outside the courtyard at the moment.

"Younger sister Huang'er, is the young master inside? Forefather Thousandleaf and Chonglou are looking for him."

"Yes, big sister Gouyu."

Huang'er rose to open the door, walking back hand in hand with Gouyu.

"Young master."

Jiang Chen laughed heartily, "Keep Miss Huang'er company for a while, I'll go and see what the forefathers have in mind."

Huang'er smiled faintly and didn't say anything, a slight smile on her face as she watched Jiang Chen leave.

Gouyu giggled, "Younger sister Huang'er, look at you stare at my

young master. Do you like him?”

The two girls had spent so much time together that even though their personalities were completely different, they coexisted extremely happily.

Gouyu was open and fiery, exceptionally vigorous in her style, her hates and loves clearly delineated and her words direct.

Huang’er was openminded in her thoughts and demeanor, compassionate and empathetic, giving others a feeling of being bathed in the spring wind.

When she heard Gouyu tease her so, Huang’er only smiled faintly as her long lashes flickered a few times above a pair of lively eyes. There were no impurities in her limpid eyes, no irritation, no depression, and no regret.

“Sister Gouyu, your house’s young master isn’t an item in a pool. I’m sure there are many girl in the sixteen kingdom who are already crazy for him. Do you want to add another set of troubles for him?”

Huang’er’s tone was carefree and had a few joking hints within it, artfully deflecting Gouyu’s joke.

Gouyu also sighed lightly when she heard these words. “I don’t know about the young ladies of other houses, but the main disciple of forefather Chonglou, Dan Fei, has deep feelings for my young

master. Except, she seems to have disappeared lately with not a trace to be found."

Gouyu and Dan Fei had once traded harsh words in the Jiang manor, but Gouyu knew that Dan Fei had no malicious intent and so didn't really dislike her.

In reality, when Gouyu had once confessed her feelings for Jiang Chen, she had indeed admired and felt something for Jiang Chen, but it was more out of a desire to repay the promise she'd made before the Hidden Dragon Trials.

After she'd calmed down over this period of time, Gouyu was rather well aware of what place she occupied. She knew that there was more than a small gap between Jiang Chen and her.

To be fair, she wasn't a good match for Jiang Chen no matter how she looked at things.

Therefore, the current Gouyu didn't have much in the way of love for Jiang Chen now, but rather viewed him as family.

She truly admired him.

Most men, even if they didn't like her, would take advantage of the opportunity after she'd confessed her feelings to obtain some benefits from her body.

However, Jiang Chen hadn't done so and hadn't devoured her to

nothing.

This made her respect and care for him even more.

Jiang Chen had obviously felt her affections, which was why he'd reciprocated so and given even a treasure as the green fruit to Gouyu.

One had to know that that was something even the geniuses of the sect didn't have the right to touch.

When Huang'er heard Dan Fei's name, she smiled slightly and didn't say anything. "Big sister Gouyu, I've grown a new crop of tea lately, please try some."

The two walked inside, chatting and laughing.

……

When Jiang Chen arrived at forefather Thousandleaf's residence, the two forefathers had been waiting for a while already.

"Jiang Chen greets the two forefathers."

"Jiang Chen, come, sit here." Ye Chonglou patted the seat next to him and called out to him.

There was no one else present apart from the two forefathers. It could be seen from this that Jiang Chen's position now exceed sect head Xie Tianshu's and esteemed elder Iron Long's.

Jiang Chen sat down and asked, "The two forefathers must have an important matter to summon me so urgently?"

"View this first."

Thousandleaf spread out his hand and summoned a message glyph to his palm.

This was a glyph with a bit more information than usual. Jiang Chen furrowed his brow when his was done. "Myriad Domain, Regal Pill Palace?"

"Indeed, the Regal Pill Palace is a premier existence in the Myriad Domain as well." Ye Chonglou nodded.

The glyph was from the Palace and said that they had already sent out an envoy. They were en route, and would be here in roughly a day.

The glyph also hinted that the Regal Pill Palace desired to ally and promised to help the Precious Tree Sect resist the pressure from the Sky Sect.

In addition, the Palace didn't wish to swallow the Precious Tree Sect at all. The sect could forever maintain its heritage.Their only

request was to share the genius Jiang Chen.

Thousandleaf smiled ruefully, “Jiang Chen, to think that your name would spread to the Myriad Domain in such a short amount of time. Even a top entity as the Regal Pill Palace looks covetously upon you. Jiang Chen, you should know how conflicted I and wise brother Chonglou are?”

Jiang Chen could naturally understand. It was naturally two entirely different concepts if the sect had him, or didn’t have him.

From the two forefathers’ attitude, he could see that they had long since viewed him as the hope of the sect.

No wonder they were in a dilemma about this condition for help from the Regal Pill Palace.

They ardently craved help on one hand, but felt that this price was too big on another. What if Jiang Chen went to the Palace in the end when the two sects shared Jiang Chen. What advantages would the Precious Tree Sect have then? How would they keep Jiang Chen?

Jiang Chen knitted his brows together instead. “The Regal Pill Garden is only a premier faction in the Myriad Domain, but the Sky Sect is one of the eight forces from the Upper Eight Realms. Does the Palace really have the ability to fight against the Sky Sect?”

As of the preeminent sects in the Myriad Domain, the Regal Pill Palace was likely a fifth rank sect, or fourth at most.

The Myriad Domain was one of the Lower Thirty Two Realms. The strongest sect to be found here would be a third rank sect, but none existed thus yet.

The Sky Sect however, was a first rank?

Jiang Chen couldn't identify what basis the Palace had to resist the Sky Sect. Could they possible be here to defraud the Precious Tree Sect and leave after making some gains?

It was one thing to be scheming about him. Jiang Chen was a grown man and knew how to recognize plots. But things would be difficult if they were scheming about the sect.

However, Ye Chonglou said, "A Regal Pill Palace by themselves would indeed lack sufficient strength to challenge the Sky Sect. However, the former has a backer as well. The roots of the various factions are all intertwined in complexity. No one stands alone. Take the four sects of the sixteen kingdom alliance for example, we were able to operate at peace for so long before because no one cared about this place and therefore us. We were regarded as a remote backwater, soon to be exiled as desolate wilderness at any time. But now, the Purple Sun Sect has let the wolf in and caught the eye of the Sky Sect. This spells absolute destruction for the alliance. With my understanding of the terrain and history of the alliance, the Sky Sect is absolutely not setting their sights only upon the four great sects, but viewing the alliance on a whole as a new stronghold, a setting ground."

“A setting ground? What do you mean?” Jiang Chen was baffled.

Ye Chonglou gave a long sigh. “These are just my speculations. No one apart from me in the alliance has spent time to think about this. I have kept watch over the fortunes of the alliance. After countless research and comprehension of the secrets of the alliance, I’ve reached to one conclusion. The alliance was to be exiled as desolate wilderness and was fringe territory after sealing the ancient demon tribe. Why has the alliance never been valued in the Myriad Domain? Why does the Myriad Domain occupy a low position in the Lower Thirty Two Realms? There is but one reason, and that this was once a taboo ground for humans, the ancient battlefield between humans and the demon tribe!”

Chapter 444: Envoy From The Regal Pill Palace

Ye Chonglou's words were so shocking that even forefather Thousandleaf's facial expression changed drastically.

It was rather Jiang Chen who recalled a past matter. When he'd returned to the Jiang Han territory once, he'd sent his younger cousin Jiang Yu to be in charge of a spirit garden.

However, all of the medicine ingredients in that patch of land had matured overnight.

When Jiang Chen had investigated and sent people out to do the same, the conclusion he'd come to was that it was a place of great ill.

That the spirit ingredients had ripened overnight was actually a very inauspicious sign.

When he'd left the Eastern Kingdom, he'd taken his closest family with him from the Jiang Han territory and hadn't continued pursuing the matter.

The reason was simple, he'd ascertained that it was omen of great ill, and so he hadn't wanted to uncover or provoke this trouble.

When he heard lordmaster Ye Chonglou's words, he felt that

there was a great possibility to the lordmaster's words.

"Chonglou, you say that our sixteen kingdom alliance is a place where demons are sealed?" Thousandleaf found this a bit hard to believe. "If this is so, then why does the Sky Sect set up a division here?"

"I'm only speculating. As for the Sky Sect, a great sect as them may not fear the demon race. In addition, the fringes of this seal is the most advantageous for observing them. The place of the seal also encompasses the fortunes of the demon race. If the Sky Sect wishes to grow stronger, then there is much benefit to be had in the fortunes, treasures, and various foundations of the demon race. However, there is too little information in the world about the demon race. I can't fathom why the Sky Sect is setting up a base of operations here either. However, if there's a reason for why interests them in such a poor backwater here, the only one would be the seal."

Ye Chonglou's information was quite limited, and he had a pitifully low understanding of the ancient demon race.

So although his theories were flabbergasting, they didn't convince forefather Thousandleaf.

It was rather Jiang Chen who found this very plausible.

"Jiang Chen, what do you think about the Regal Pill Palace's suggestion?" Forefather Thousandleaf was patently not very interested in talk of the sealing grounds of the demon race. He

changed the topic with a question to Jiang Chen.

"The two forefathers should make the decision in great matters of the sect. Just let Jiang Chen know if you need me to do anything. I will not refrain from doing anything that is within my abilities."

Thousandleaf was quite satisfied with this response and smiled. "We plan on accepting the Regal Pill Palace's suggestion of an alliance, but they ask to have joint custody over you. The problem is, the two of us worry that the Precious Tree Sect is less than the Regal Pill Palace and won't be able to keep you."

Although he said this in a joking manner, it did indeed represent the worries of the two forefathers.

Ye Chonglou also looked at Jiang Chen with a hint of a smile. "Jiang Chen, I trust your character very much so, and your potential even more. By nature, you're not a person to remain within a pond but will soar into the skies as a dragon one day. There will come a day in which both the Precious Tree Sect and the Regal Pill Garden will be unable to retain you. We only hope that there is always a place for the Precious Tree Sect in your heart. When you come into your strength in the future, please protect the sect a bit if the conditions allow."

Ye Chonglou was more familiar with Jiang Chen of the two, so his words were direct and a call to the heart.

In reality, Ye Chonglou quite trusted Jiang Chen and knew that

he was a loyal person who treasured comradeship. He would've done so even without these words from the forefathers.

Ye Chonglou was saying this for Thousandleaf's ears in order to abate his concerns and take out the best resources for Jiang Chen to use, fully cultivate and help Jiang Chen.

"Please be at ease, forefathers. I have never been one to forget my roots. What I have comprehended and gained beneath the branches of the Precious Tree during this time makes me feel that I share part of my destiny with it. Once a disciple, always a disciple. No matter what disasters occur, as long as I have one breath of life in me, I will ensure that the Precious Tree Sect isn't snuffed out."

Forefathers Thousandleaf and Ye Chonglou were all overjoyed. They knew his character, and if Jiang Chen had spoken thus, that meant these were truly his thoughts.

"Forefathers, I leave matters of allying to you. I will take my leave now."

Jiang Chen wasn't familiar with the Regal Pill Garden. Even if they were a premier first rank sect in the Myriad Domain, he had no plans to leave his sect for the moment.

He was in no hurry to cultivate when he returned to his residence.

Having reached the level of spirit king and being once step away

from the origin realm, this gap wouldn't be bridged through tempering his spirit ocean and an appropriate amount of time spent in cultivation.

Breaking through to the origin realm required strength of heart and a breakthrough in the consciousness. That split second of inspiration was also vital for breakthrough.

There were many spirit kings in this world, but likely less than one out of a hundred could make it to the origin realm.

Training one's strength of heart was quite a mystical journey.

Jiang Chen always had a bit more inspiration and more gains from his meditations beneath the Precious Tree. He also had the slight feeling that if he wanted to break through to the origin realm as soon as possible, he should spend more time meditating beneath the tree.

That month of meditation had swiftly raised the level of his mental fortitude. Add to that his practice of the Boulder's Heart, this enabled his strength of heart to reach new heights under the two pronged approach. He'd reached the requirements of the origin realm.

All was in readiness from spirit force reserves to his strength of heart. All he needed was that flash of inspiration.

When it appeared, the origin realm would be accessible through a

simple piece of paper, apparent after one poke.

Jiang Chen was in no hurry, as he knew this breakthrough required a steady, calm mindset like all his training beforehand.

Great haste does not always bring about success.

One night, Jiang Chen was sitting down cross legged beneath the Precious Tree, paging through the “Annals of the Mountains and Rivers of the Divine Abyss Continent”. This book, borrowed from Miss Huang’er, had been greatly useful in understanding this world.

“Does this Divine Abyss Continent have anything to do with the myriad of worlds in my past life?” Jiang Chen tried to ascertain some clues form this ancient tome.

It was a pity that although the information within was quite well rounded, it was a shallow exploration on a whole as it didn’t chronicle the secrets of the continent.

This could be viewed as a classic, and not an arcane codex.

Even so, Jiang Chen still gleaned much from it.

This book gave a thorough overview of the eight powers in the Upper Eight Realms. This also gave Jiang Chen a deeper understanding of the Sky Sect.

“So it turns out that this Sky Sect is quite particular, even the inspectors are divided into twelve ranks. With Zuo Lan’s cultivation at earth origin realm, he was only a fourth rank inspector! There are eight more levels above him. The Sky Sect truly has deep foundations. However, from Miss Huang’er’s words, it seems that there are even more mysterious powers in the continent. Can it be…”

Huang’er and Elder Shun were both equally mysterious, and it could be seen from her speech and demeanor that they had quite an impressive background—maybe one even stronger than the Sky Sect?

If this was the case, why had she left her home to drift around outside? Since Elder Shun knew of her illness, why not take her home?

Jiang Chen guessed that there must be certain reasons at play here. However, he knew that there was no point in inquiring about certain things if folks didn’t speak of them.

In a secret cave residence somewhere in the Precious Tree Sect, a man in an almond yellow robe sat in the place of honor, with forefather Thousandleaf and Ye Chonglou sitting to his side.

The yellow clad man was the envoy from the Regal Pill Palace. There was a large Bagua embroidered on the back of his almond yellow robes, the unique symbol of the Regal Pill Palace.

“This is the personal letter from the head of my palace. Please take a look first.

His attitude wasn’t arrogant. Rather, a faint smile hung on his face, giving others a feeling of quiet confidence.

Thousandleaf accepted it and scanned it, handing it to Ye Chonglou for a look as well.

Ye Chonglou also took a look. The letter was written in a genuine and sincere tone. From the perspective of the Regal Pill Palace head, he was being quite courteous and kind to men of talent.

“Gentlemen, the Ninesuns Sky Sect has stretched out their hands in all directions these years with a domineering air. Their influence had not stretched into our Myriad Domain before. However, the Sky Sect has erected more than ten divisions in the Myriad Domain in the past ten years, and these are only the ones out in the open. No one knows how much influence they’ve garnered in the shadows. Although the sixteen kingdom alliance is in a remote backwater in the Myriad Domain, our palace head has long since valued the Precious Tree Sect. He does not wish to see the sect swallowed by the Sky Sect. You should also know that your strengths are precisely ours in the Myriad Domain as well. Therefore, our two sects have quite some commonalities from a certain perspective.”

Forefather Thousandleaf nodded his head slightly. The Precious Tree Sect was most skilled at growing spirit medicine ingredients, and the Regal Pill Palace’s foundations in the art of pills was the strongest in the Myriad Domain.

They did indeed have this in common.

“Gentlemen, you know our condition. Please speak your mind if you have any conditions. Since we are to ally, we should lay bare our hearts and have a frank conversation.”

The man from the Regal Pill Palace appeared quite easygoing, but that was because of his background and that his cultivation was above even forefather Thousandleaf. Therefore, despite his relaxed manner, the forefathers were still at a disadvantage.

“We only have two concerns.”

Ye Chonglou knew that it wasn’t convenient for Thousandleaf to voice them, so he spoke instead. “Firstly, how do you propose sharing Jiang Chen?”

“Secondly, will the Regal Pill Palace covet my sect’s Precious Tree of the Rosy Dawn?”

The yellow clad man smiled slightly. “The Precious Tree is indeed a treasure, but the resources of my Regal Pill Palace far exceed the Precious Tree Sect. Apart from the purple fruits holding some allure for us, we find no value in the red and green fruits. However, the purple fruits are produced once every six hundred years. This duration is too long, why would my sect think further on this? My sect has heard of Jiang Chen killing Long Juxue of the azure phoenix constitution and have divined that this boy has great fortune. Otherwise, with my Regal Pill Palace’s legacy, why

would we need to ally with the Precious Tree Sect?”

In the world of martial dao, there was often a matter as “borrowing fortunes”. If a notable character had innate, great fortune, then all the parties having to do with this character could borrow his fortune and find great success and prosperity as well.

The Regal Pill Palace had set their sights on Jiang Chen’s great fortunes!

Chapter 445: Initial Alliance Agreement

“Gentlemen, although it’s rare for two sects to share a disciple in the world of martial dao, it’s not unheard of either. Jiang Chen has great fortune and will surely benefit both our sects. What say you?”

The yellow-clad man looked at the forefathers with a sincere expression.

Although the Regal Pill Palace was strong and had absolute advantage compared to the Precious Tree Sect, they couldn’t be haughty about this matter. Nothing forcibly-done would be agreeable, just like a fruit forcefully plucked would not be sweet.

In addition, if the Regal Pill Palace used force, then it was bound to result in backlash and may even push the Precious Tree Sect towards the embrace of the Sky Sect.

After all, although the Palace looked more suited to the Precious Tree Sect from the looks of things, their strength was far below the Sky Sect’s. Although it had its own backers, it would never be as convincing as holding strength in one’s own hands.

“If the Regal Pill Palace has only this one condition, then my Precious Tree Sect is willing to ally. Combining our resources also makes it more advantageous for Jiang Chen’s cultivation and growth.”

Thousandleaf also nodded. “How should we proceed with the

alliance?”

The yellow-clad man smiled happily upon hearing this. “Good! You are forthright and decisive folk. I will immediately relay the message back to the Regal Pill Palace now, and the sect will announce our alliance to the Myriad Domain.”

Ye Chonglou suddenly said, “We have a small request as well. The alliance ceremony must be held in our Precious Tree Sect.”

The yellow-clad man remained silent for a moment. He didn’t dare easily agree to this and had to inquire his superiors.

“I cannot make the decision in this matter, I must ask for guidance from my palace head.”

The yellow-clad man formed a hand seal and produced a jade slip for transmitting his consciousness, inserting some information inside.

Ordinary message glyphs wouldn’t be able to traverse this long distance, so more complicated treasures were needed for communication.

The yellow-clad man’s jade slip brightened in an obvious response after a moment.

He laughed loudly after reading the message within. “My palace head seems to value greatly this alliance. He says that as long as the

Precious Tree Sect agrees to the alliance, we will follow your wishes in all of these small details. My palace head says that we must prepare for the ceremony immediately and use the name of the Regal Pill Palace to invite the various powers in the Myriad Domain to the Precious Tree Sect."

Thousandleaf and Ye Chonglou were overjoyed to hear this. It seemed that the Regal Pill Palace head was placing high importance on Jiang Chen indeed, to be willing to personally lower himself to come to the Precious Tree Sect to attend the ceremony.

This was giving the Precious Tree Sect a great deal of face.

In addition, the Regal Pill Palace had exceedingly great repute in the Myriad Domain. It was a preeminent force in this area. Who would dare not show face to an invitation from them?

Almost none existed who would openly deny face to the Palace in the Myriad Domain.

This was because the Palace boasted of a unique advantage in the Myriad Domain that placed it unequivocally first.

As the various sects all needed a myriad of pills, they all had to toe the line and show respect to the Regal Pill Palace.

Therefore, unless a faction planned on erupting in open hostilities with the Palace, no one dared to not attend this ceremony.

Finally, the two sides agreed on holding the alliance ceremony in the Precious Tree Sect after half a month.

The Precious Tree Sect had just held an induction ceremony for Ye Chonglou and Jiang Chen a short while ago, but that ceremony had been completely wrecked by Zuo Lan and his cronies.

This alliance ceremony was obviously even more important, so the sect would have to spend a great deal of time and effort to host it.

Ye Chonglou planned on doing everything himself and personally oversee this matter.

The yellow-clad man was an elder in the Regal Pill Palace named Wen Lang. He held a rather high position in the Palace.

Once the two sides had agreed on everything, Elder Wen Lang asked to see Jiang chen, but was told that Jiang Chen was comprehending martial dao beneath the Precious Tree.

“Haha, the cultivation of geniuses are extraordinary and cannot be disturbed. Since this is the case, I’ll have to wait until he emerges.”

Wen Lang knew when to advance and retreat, not appearing domineering just because of his psychological advantage. He was easygoing in all matters, putting Forefather Thousandleaf and Ye

Chonglou greatly at ease.

Although the alliance had been set in stone, the fact that a seventh rank sect was to ally with a fourth rank sect, the sheer difference in position and strength made Thousandleaf and Ye Chonglou feel more or less a bit uneasy.

When the Regal Pill Palace received the Precious Tree Sect's final response, they spread the news of their alliance the next day in the entire Myriad Domain.

Word of this caused immense waves in the Myriad Domain.

All sorts of powers were shocked. Had the Regal Pill Palace gone mad? The sixteen kingdom alliance was an absolute morass at the moment.

Anyone who set foot in it could sink in deeply.

And yet the Regal Pill Palace had announced an alliance with the Precious Tree Sect at this critical moment?

This meant that the former wanted to intervene in the sixteen kingdoms.

To explore things further, this meant that they were playing with fire and prepared to challenge the authority of the Ninesuns Sky Sect. Everyone knew that the Precious Tree Sect had offended the Sky Sect and refused their desire for assimilation.

The Regal Pill Palace was snatching food from the mouths of the Sky Sect.

Therefore, all sorts of discourse arose in the Myriad Domain in this moment. All sorts of bafflement, censure, speculations, and skepticism abounded.

However, the Regal Pill Palace's usual style wasn't one of a power that would randomly commit foolish acts. On the contrary, the Regal Pill Palace was an entity that always proceeded safe and steady. They did things with absolute certainty, not loosing the falcon until spotting the hare.

And now, they were running the risk of defying the will of the people to ally with the Precious Tree Sect! There must be some benefit to this that no one could see.

Speculations flew thick and furious as to what that might be.

However, no one could reach a conclusive answer.

The Regal Pill Palace's invitations reached all sects and factions in the Myriad Domain. It was written very clearly that everyone was invited to attend the ceremony at the Precious Tree Sect.

Although the invitation didn't mean to force anyone to action, it expressed very subtly that the Regal Pill Palace was highly valuing this alliance and hoped that everyone would give them face.

The connotations were very clear. If someone didn't attend, that was showing the Palace no face. Therefore, when this invitee had a request to make of the Palace in the future, they too would give no face.

The powers in the Myriad Domain were as numerous as stars scattered across the night sky.

There were six large sects at the same scale as the Regal Pill Palace, all solidly fourth rank sects.

There were at least 20 a step down as a fifth rank sect.

There was another hundred or so yet another step down as sixth rank sects.

The four great sects in the sixteen kingdom alliance could manage to scrape by as seventh rank sects. They were at the bottom of the totem pole in the entire Myriad Domain.

They didn't even measure up to the third rate power, no wonder they'd been marginalized.

If the four sects banded together, their strength on paper could possible vault them into the ranks of the sixth rank sects, or barely qualify them as a third-rate power.

Roughly two hundred powers had accepted the Regal Pill Palace's invitation, and the attention given to this matter was enormous.

……

"Is the Regal Pill Palace crazy? Must they drag us into their madness? How troublesome for everyone!"

The Myriad Domain, Sacred Sword Palace. An enormous sword hung in the hall of a tall and rugged sanctuary, inspiring awe.

A middle-aged man with a deep look in his eyes and wildly-dancing long hair stood beneath the sword, murmuring to himself.

At the same time, various sect heads of some other first-rate sects in the Myriad Domain were clutching invitations in their hands, their brows tightly knitted together, obviously not at all understanding the Regal Pill Palace's intentions.

The Tristar Sect was another preeminent power in the Myriad Domain, a rank four sect like the Regal Pill Palace and Sacred Sword Palace.

The three sect heads of the Tristar Sect were gathered in a secret chamber. There were a few others present apart from the three, one of which was Inspector Zuo Lan of the Sky Sect!

Zuo Lan was sitting lower down at the moment, his expression wooden with none of his previous arrogance.

From the position he occupied, it could be seen that he didn't have much of a right to speak in this gathering, and that his status was the lowest one there.

There were two others, also wearing the accoutrements of a Sky Sect inspector, sitting in front of him. There was no difference between their uniforms and Zuo Lan's, apart from the color.

One of them was green, the other purple.

It was obvious that the purple-clad inspector had the highest status. The three sect heads in front of him were almost fawning on him.

There were twelve levels to the Sky Sect inspectors.

They would wear four different kinds of uniforms, with ranks ranging from lowest to highest of gray, blue, green, and purple.

From one to three five-pointed stars would be embroidered on the robes, representing different levels.

A gray one star was naturally the lowest level, a first rank inspector.

Three gray stars meant a third rank inspector.

Zuo Lan was a blue one star, a fourth rank inspector.

At this moment, apart from the purple and green clad experts, there were eight other inspectors wearing blue as well.

All of them looked to the purple clad inspector as their leader.

The single star on his purple robes indicated his status as a tenth rank inspector. This level of inspector was of first rate existence in the Sky Sect. He would be treated with the highest level of courtesy wherever he went.

“Zuo Lan, repeat what happened when you visited the Precious Tree Sect.”

The purple-clad inspector’s tone was remote as he directed his words at Zuo Lan.

Zuo Lan felt as if he’d descended into an icy cavern with this single look, the frost biting at his bones. He didn’t dare tarry and truthfully conveyed all that had happened.

He was a docile as a domesticated sheep in front of his strong leader, with none of his previous self assurance.

“A mysterious melody broke down your aura? When had such experts resided in the sixteen kingdoms?”

The tenth rank inspector snorted derisively and turned to look at the sect heads.

The most senior sect head smiled awkwardly. “The sixteen kingdom alliance is a desolate backwater. We’ve almost never paid attention to them and truly don’t know the answer. However, according our understanding, the strongest within them is only at the third level origin realm, nothing in the greater picture of the Myriad Domain. Many factions are calling for their removal from the Myriad Domain.”

“If this is the case, then explain this invitation to me. Explain this alliance between the Regal Pill Palace and the Precious Tree Sect. Who can give me an answer?”

The tenth rank inspector was quite displeased and found the competency of those beneath him sorely lacking.

The situation now was greatly impacting the overall plans of the Sky Sect!

Chapter 446: Regal Pill Palace Head

The Tristar Sect was a new power in the Myriad Domain. It'd only been a few hundred years from their rise until now. However, they'd been able to become a first rate power in the Myriad Domain in just a few hundred years.

The secret behind this was support from the Ninesuns Sky Sect.

The powers beneath the Sky Sect were as varied as the stars in the heavens, blossoming in all directions. The Tristar Sect was that only in name. In reality, it was just a front for the Sky Sect.

If it wasn't for Zuo Lan meeting with defeat in the Precious Tree Sect this time, the higher ranked envoys would've never come and gathered in the Tristar Sect.

After all, the Tristar Sect was a secret front, and the Sky Sect wouldn't want its identity to be revealed if it was unnecessary.

This tenth rank inspector came from the headquarters of the Ninesuns Sky Sect. To put things bluntly, his single word could decide the fate of the Tristar Sect.

Therefore, although his tone was strong, the sect heads of the Tristar Sect all stood there docilely, with no one daring to show their unhappiness on their face.

The most senior sect head smiled apologetically. "Please cease to

be angry, Sir Feng. They are courting death that they dare fight against the Sky Sect. In your subordinate's perspective, why not allow the Regal Pill Palace be since they wish to die? The Sky Sect merely needs to send some more experts to suppress the Regal Pill Palace and can take advantage of this to display all your cards. Destroy the Regal Pill Palace, make an example of them, and see which other sects dare act so wantonly?"

The tenth rank inspector snorted derisively, "Make an example of them? Do you think the Regal Pill Palace is any random chicken or duck, available for the slaughtering? Do they not have any backers even with their unbridled behavior?"

The sect head of the Tristar Sect more or less had some ulterior motives behind his suggestion. Suppressing the Regal Pill Palace and having the Tristar Sect step into the light and become the Sky Sect's representative in the Myriad Domain, the Tristar Sect would be the strongest in the area then and able to do whatever they wanted.

This would absolutely be a great stroke of fortune for the development of the Tristar Sect.

However, his suggestion had been rejected out of hand by the inspector.

It wasn't that the Sky Sect couldn't make a move on the Regal Pill Palace, but that it would involve the forces backing the latter and could ignite a chaotic mess.

Although the Sky Sect was in a rush to expand, there was no need to take rash action and make enemies everywhere.

“Collect all information regarding the Regal Pill Palace and the Precious Tree Sect. Give it to me within three days. We absolutely need to destroy the alliance. This cannot be allowed even if the party involved is the Regal Pill Palace. Although the overall arrangement of the sixteen kingdoms isn’t terribly important, those above highly value it. If we don’t handle this well, all of us present may be punished.”

The inspector left with a flourish of sleeves when he was finished.

It was obvious that he was quite dissatisfied, whether towards the Tristar Sect or the competencies of Zuo Lan and the others.

As a strong power in the Myriad Domain, the Tristar Sect’s influence on organizations below it was too weak, resulting in the situation that they couldn’t do anything in the situation that was developing.

They hadn’t roped in a single of the four great sects in the sixteen kingdoms. This was an utter failure on the Tristar Sect’s part.

Those in the Myriad Domain felt incredulous towards the Regal Pill Palace’s decision.

And truthfully speaking, there were also many who were voices

of dissent within the Palace.

At this moment, the palace head of the sect was having a secret meeting with two highly revered and influential elders in the internals of the palace.

These two were the chiefs of the elder council. One of them was the chief elder, and the other the former chief elder.

These two represented the will of the elder council.

The palace head wore a pale-green long robe, his body slender and his complexion as clear as jade, as if a baby's face. He had a natural pair of phoenix eyes and looked quite gentle and tender, giving one the impression of a lady when they first looked at him.

However, a shrewd light sparkled with every blink of the phoenix eyes, projecting the impression of his eyes being as deep as the starry sky.

This person was Regal Pill Palace head Dan Chi.

He was also the undisputed most highly ranked expert in the Regal Pill Palace. Even those reclusive old monsters in the Palace had to admit that his martial dao potential was at he head of the sect.

Dan Chi had only just surpassed a hundred years old.

At his age, there were many cultivators in the Myriad Domain still fighting in the mid ranks, toiling away for a chance to reach a more superior position.

But Dan Chi had already ruled over the Regal Pill Palace for forty years.

This was to say that Dan Chi had only been fifty years old when he took the reins of power.

In the world of martial dao, this age was merely still being a child, in contrast to the world of mortals.

Yet Dan Chi's control over the sect at such an age was a testament to his potential and talents.

At this moment, he was squinting slightly and smiling without a word in the face of the two elders' earnest entreaties full of spittle flying everywhere.

He opened his phoenix eyes slightly when the two elders had dry mouths, holding the relaxed confidence of being able to cope with all strategies and schemes.

"Elder Chang Feng and Elder Jin Gu, I have naturally considered all that you've spoken. I have given a great deal of thought to the matter of the alliance. If the two elders have no desire to attend, you can stay in the Regal Pill Palace and hold down the fort. I will

personally lead the team to the Precious Tree Sect.”

Dan Chi didn’t explain anything in response to the two elders’ words, but told them directly that he had made up his mind regarding the alliance.

Accept it if you can, accept it if you can’t.

These words were enough to demonstrate Dan Chi’s bearing and control.

The two elders looked at each other, the epitome of resignation.

“Palace Head, the Ninesuns Sky Sect would’ve have set their sights on the sixteen kingdom alliance for no reason. There really is no value enough in a mere Precious Tree Sect that is worth us running the risk of offending the Sky Sect. How would you hope to convince everyone with such intangible and uncertain talk of this Jiang Chen’s fortunes?”

Dan Chi laughed softly. “Convince everyone? Why should one who accomplishes great things be overcautious and indecisive? Another party may have very well taken a step forward after you’ve spent a great deal of time convincing everyone. I, Dan Chi, have my own opinions and charisma in conducting my affairs. I won’t consider fawning up to everyone and have no need to convince everyone.”

The domineering tone thoroughly displayed the mighty presence

of the head of the Palace.

“Palace head, you are monopolizing power! A single misstep can possibly drag the entire Palace into the morass, leaving us unable to extract ourselves. To put it bluntly, offending the Sky Sect can possibly be our doom!” The current chief of the elder council, Elder Chang Feng was huffy with anger by now.

Dan Chi didn’t anger and smiled faintly, “Elder Chang Feng is right, I am monopolizing power. Since the Regal Pill Palace wishes for me to be its head, I naturally have the final say in this matter. If anyone thinks I am ill fitting for this position, they can all band together to censure me. As long as everyone thinks I am unsuited to be palace head, I will immediately dust myself off and leave without lingering.”

Elder Chang Feng and Jin Gu were both speechless.

To be honest, Dan Chi had had a decisive and swift manner in his decades as palace head. Every single matter he’d undertaken had been fraught with controversy.

But, the Regal Pill Palace had improved greatly as a whole these decades, and the unity and influence of the sect had noticeably increased.

Previously, the Palace was known throughout the Myriad Domain for their mastery of pills, but their martial foundations were still a bit weak compared to the powers in the Myriad Domain.

When Dan Chi took the stage, he greatly emphasized martial dao geniuses. He felt that since the sect held an advantage in the area of pills, it should leverage this strength and holistically develop their strength in martial dao.

In the world of martial dao, an advantage in the arena of pills was an indirect one.

Only strength in martial dao was the truest strength.

Dan Chi had wholeheartedly been scouting for martial dao geniuses over the past decades and cultivating martial dao strength. The sect had to admit that there had been great gains in this area during this time.

Although there was still a gap between them and other first rate powers in the area of martial dao, that difference had shrunk noticeably.

Therefore, Dan Chi was greatly beloved by everyone in the Regal Pill Palace. It was laughable to speak of censuring him.

With his popularity in the Palace, any who dare criticized him was creating trouble for themselves and would drown in spit from everyone in the sect.

The two elders were well aware of this, so they could only try to privately reason with Dan Chi and not encourage everyone to

impeach him. That would absolutely be a fruitless endeavor.

They actually weren't opposed to the alliance for the sake of opposition. From their experienced perspective, they felt that it was demeaning the sect to create such a big fuss for a mere young cultivator in the sixteen kingdoms and ally with the Precious Tree Sect.

What kind of sect was the Precious Tree Sect? Seventh rank at best.

The Regal Pill Palace was a solid fourth rank sect.

The Palace had voluntarily extended an offer for alliance in the face of such a pronounced difference and was even heading to the other's territory for the ceremony!

Dan Chi's decision was such self humiliation.

It was one thing to make a fool of themselves, but another to take the risk of offending the Ninesuns Sky Sect.

And all of this was for a so-called genius cultivator?

What kind of genius could arise from the sixteen kingdoms? Was it worth it to go to all this trouble?

The two elders didn't think positively of this at all. In their eyes,

the sixteen kingdoms were a poor backwater. They wouldn't even take a serious look at that kind of place, not to mention any sort of genius actually arising from it.

If even that kind of place had geniuses, then why would the sixteen kingdom alliance be in that half dead state?

Geniuses weren't born that easily in the world of martial dao.

This kind of deep rooted thoughts and prejudice made the two elders completely unable to accept Dan Chi's decision.

It was such a humiliation that the Regal Pill Palace, a fourth rank sect, the most noble sect in the Myriad Domain, would have to bend the knee and go to a small place like the Precious Tree Sect!

The two elders had seen much in their advanced age, and it was very difficult to turn this kind of bias around.

"Elders, I have led the Palace for so many years, and although I am a bit dominating in my style, when have I ever led the Palace astray? Jiang Chen could kill one of an innate constitution, and was able to suppress the inspector of the Sky Sect even with his humble background. How many in the Myriad Domain has this kind of potential?"

Dan Chi hadn't wanted to explain himself, but the two elders had great influence in the sect and so he could only patiently offer up a few words. He immediately rose afterwards, "I have spoken all I

will. If the two elders still disapprove of my actions, let's see if my decision today was correct in a decade or two."

He waved his hands after speaking, indicating a send off of the guests.

Chapter 447: Gathering At The Precious Tree Sect

The two elders sighed and left the secret chamber.

As Dan Chi watched the two leave, a confident smile played at the corners of his lips. “Having an elder at home is like having a treasure. But the two elders of my home like to butt heads with me. However, they mean well. It’s just that some things cannot be spoken of in detail.”

He smiled faintly, thinking of the mysterious elder who’d come to visit a while ago. Emotions swirled in Dan Chi’s heart when he thought of the mysterious elder.

The elder had used a random, careless move to thoroughly trounce Dan Chi.

It had been that elder who told him of Jiang Chen in the Precious Tree Sect, and had him keep this person in mind, paying attention so that no accident would befall Jiang Chen.

Of course, the mysterious elder hadn’t treated him poorly. He’d given Dan Chi some cultivation pointers and passed on a secret art to him.

When Dan Chi practiced this art, he was immediately dumbfounded and knew that he’d gotten quite a deal this time.

The most critical factor was that the mysterious elder's pointers had enabled his cultivation to breakthrough in a short two months.

This had been the most amazing of all. The mysterious elder's level of martial knowledge and cultivation level was magical to the point of turning rock to gold with a single touch.

"Ai, that senior didn't tell me his name in the end. To think that I, Dan Chi, would have such a fortuitous occurrence in my life that a mysterious expert would give me pointers! What a pity that the senior only stayed a few days. If he'd been able to teach me for a year or so, I surely would've been able to be hailed first in the Myriad Domain. The Regal Pill Palace would even have hope of making a play for the position of a third rank sect." Dan Chi felt deeply moved when he thought of the mysterious elder.

"I must heed well the senior's remarks. He wants me to use all of the Palace's strength to search for a treasure called Requiem Wood. I cannot be lazy in this matter. And for this Jiang Chen to be so highly recommended, he must be someone the senior greatly values, if not the senior's disciple. Perhaps the senior is purposefully tempering him in the Myriad Domain. I have received pointers from the senior and must take good care of him and not let the senior down."

Dan Chi was also very curious about a young genius that would prompt such esteem from the senior and was in quite hurry to see him.

He'd been quite surprised by the information he'd collected

about Jiang Chen's rise.

The Eastern Kingdom was absolutely a kingdom of the lowest level in this world. How could the son of a small duke from this region have shown such genius in his rise and accomplished so many astounding feats?

These matters may appear easily accomplished from Dan Chi's level, but any one of these feats could be hailed as miraculous for one rising from the mundane world.

For a cultivator to create a miracle once, that could be deemed an accident or a fluke.

Bu to do so again and again and with different kinds of miracles, that was no longer something that could be summed up with the word "accident".

Particularly killing Long Juxue of the innate constitution, and killing the elders of the Purple Sun Sect—these battle accomplishments all validated Jiang Chen as a genius.

Suppressing the inspectors of the Ninesuns Sky Sect had been even more ridiculous.

Dan Chi would've doubted this as false news if it hadn't been for irrefutable intelligence.

But the reports came in one after another, none of them fake.

There wasn’t a hint of exaggeration in suppressing the Sky Sect inspector.

This news thoroughly stunned even Dan Chi.

This genius would be another stroke of fortune for him.

It was an opportunity to discover a genius, and a personal chance for him.

If he could make use of Jiang Chen to build a close relationship with the mysterious senior, then it would be a chance that Dan Chi would never have again.

Dan Chi was one to do things with strong charisma. He wouldn’t dither about uncertainly after capturing an opportunity and would make a decisive move.

In reality, many sects had received news of Jiang Chen suppressing the Sky Sect’s envoy.

However, without an exception, the heads of these sects all felt that it was Jiang Chen showing off too keen an edge. Offending the Sky Sect was to court death, and none of them would need to become involved.

Only Dan Chi, thanks to the reminder from the mysterious elder and his own sharp judgement, made a bold move and decided to cozy up to Jiang Chen first.

A genius trying his best in the ordinary world and still able to suppress an envoy that had been greatly cultivated by the Sky Sect, was there a need to doubt the value of this genius?

What kind of sect was the Sky Sect?

A first rank sect! Their inspectors weren't any random cat or dog off the streets. Which one of them weren't a genius chosen from ten thousands?

Which of them hadn't enjoyed the rich resources of the Sky Sect?

And here was Jiang Chen, someone who'd carved his path from the mundane kingdoms.

His circumstances of birth and growth had been so inferior, but he'd been able to still suppress his enemies. This was enough to prove just how astounding his potential was.

The Regal Pill Palace formed an impressive convey and officially set out for the Precious Tree Sect after seven days beneath Dan Chi's guidance.

No matter if the powers within the Myriad Domain were willing or not, they all sent out more respectable representatives to attend the alliance ceremony.

Everyone in the Precious Tree Sect was beyond excited when they learned that they were to ally with a first rate sect in the Myriad Domain.

Under Thousandleaf and Ye Chonglou's leadership, the Precious Tree Sect almost emptied itself to welcome the arrival of the Palace's entourage.

In the moment that Dan Chi appeared, hearts up and down the Precious Tree Sect beat rapidly. Even Thousandleaf had a feeling that he was meeting his idol.

Dan Chi's cultivation had long since departed the origin realm, becoming a first rate sage realm cultivator.

How would those in the Precious Tree Sect not be emotional that such a character had personally come to the sect?

No sage realm cultivator had ever emerged in the Precious Tree Sect. Dan Chi's arrival was breaking their historic record.

"A sage realm expert visiting is lending luster to our humble house." Thousandleaf sighed with emotion.

Dan Chi laughed heartily, "I've heard that the Precious Tree Sect has a magical Precious Tree of the Rosy Dawn, and now that a genius such as Jiang Chen has appeared, all this is enough to demonstrate the sect's extraordinary fortunes. Mm? Where is Jiang Chen? Why do I not see him?"

Dan Chi was able to identify with a sweep of his eyes that Jiang Chen was not amongst the Precious Tree Sect members.

Although he didn't know this genius and had never seen him, Dan Chi was able to draw this conclusion with one look. Such was the vision of an expert.

"Palace head, Jiang Chen has been comprehending dao beneath the Precious Tree. Even I haven't seen him in all this time." Elder Wen Lang, who'd arrived to negotiate earlier, smiled in explanation.

"Haha, a genius cannot be disturbed in his cultivation. Come, let's go inside and talk." Dan Chi's smile was quite bright and clear. Although the Precious Tree Sect was a bit shabby in their eyes, there was no reason for the Regal Pill Palace to look down on their ally.

Besides, the Palace was here for Jiang Chen. They didn't really think they'd be able to obtain any reinforcements from the Precious Tree Sect.

That would simply be too unrealistic. The difference between the two were too great.

The various parties that the Regal Pill Palace had invited to attend the ceremony also arrived after the Palace.

“The representatives of the four families of the Great Cathedral have arrived!”

“The representative of the Sacred Sword Palace has arrived!”

“The representative of the Walkabout Sect has arrived!”

“The representative of the Dark North Sect has arrived!”

“The representative of the Tristar Sect has arrived!”

There were six first rate powers in the Myriad Domain, all of which were fourth rank sects. They were the Great Cathedral, Sacred Sword Palace, Walkabout Sect, Dark North Sect, Tristar Sect, and the Regal Pill Palace.

That made for one hall, two palaces, and three sects.

The hall’s strength was the strongest, having the hints of being able to become a third rank sect. The Great Cathedral was made up of four families.

They were the undisputed first in the Myriad Domain in terms of martial strength and foundations.

The two palaces and three halls were on par with each other and all had their strengths.

These six sects formed the strongest faction in the Myriad Domain.

The second rate and third rate factions beneath them had also received the invitation of the Regal Pill Palace. They were far inferior to the Palace.

Many of them had been startled by the attention when they received their invitations, and even less likely to not respond. The representatives they sent were their elites, giving the Regal Pill Palace more than enough face.

The other first rate powers had also shown great support and sent people who held actual power in their sects, as well as the elite geniuses from their younger generation.

It was obvious that everyone had received word that the Regal Pill Palace was allying with the Precious Tree Sect because of Jiang Chen.

Therefore, everyone was quite curious just what kind of genius was this Jiang Chen, that the Palace had made such a crazy move?

The geniuses of the various sects had found the intelligence of Jiang Chen suppressed the Sky Sect's inspector hard to swallow. Hence, they'd all suggested in coming to watch the show.

It was apparent that geniuses walked a lonely path and would never submit to each other.

Although the Precious Tree Sect was a bit shabby, there was no problem in it containing a few thousand guests.

The alliance ceremony was held in the spacious square on the outskirts of the Precious Tree.

The towering Precious Tree could be viewed from far way in the square. It was impressive and grand, as if cutting straight into the clouds.

If there was anything worth mentioning for this sect, that would be this Precious Tree.

But to those first rate heavyweights, even the Precious Tree wasn't enough to hold their eye.

No one looked at it again after flicking a careless glance at it.

"Honored guests, thank you for giving face to my Regal Pill Palace and the Precious Tree Sect today in coming to attend the alliance ceremony. The wine that you drink today is the exclusive Goddess Jade Brew from Palace. I hope everyone can drink to their heart's content!" As the party wanting the alliance, Dan Chi was naturally the first to speak.

"I, Dan Chi, represent the Regal Pill Palace do hereby burn incense and swear that starting today, my Regal Pill Palace and the Precious Tree Sect enter into an alliance. We will support each

other. If one side is trodden upon, the other must provide aid with no conditions attached. From henceforth on, we will share in each other's glory and humiliation, and be of the same breath and branches."

Dan Chi began to solemnly recite his pledge after he lit a few sticks of incense.

Thousandleaf was actually a bit nervous in front of so many pairs of eyes, but he still mimicked Dan Chi's gestures and language and began his recitation as well.

The representatives of the various powers all hid meaningful smiles at this scene.

It was obvious that this scene looked beyond comical in their eyes.

A fourth rank sect allying with a seventh rank, and making such big fuss of things? How laughable!

Some didn't even bother hiding the traces of mockery in their smiles.

Chapter 448: Strange Phenomenon In The Skies

Smearing animal blood on their lips, they swore to the heavenly law.

The alliance ceremony had been conducted in a very formal fashion. The two made their vows and paid their respects to the heavens.

“Heh heh, it looks like the Precious Tree Sect are some lucky bastards. What does the Regal Pill Palace see in them anyway?”

“I hear that they’ve set their sights on a genius disciple called Jiang Chen?”

“What genius disciple? Do you see any genius disciples amongst the Precious Tree Sect disciples?”

“A so-called genius disciple is likely just a pretext, isn’t it? The Regal Pill Palace’s true goal is probably the Precious Tree?”

“Heh heh, that’s probably it. The Regal Pill Palace is most proficient in the dao of pills. If there’s anything about the Precious Tree Sect that holds an allure for the Palace, it must be the Divine Fruits.”

“How laughable! The Precious Tree Sect thinks a meat pie has

fallen from the sky in their good luck, but little do they know that this is leading the wolf into the house."

"Heh heh, sheep allying with wolves. They're looking to die!"

"Oh come now, perhaps the Palace really wants that genius? I've heard that genius killed the Purple Sun Sect's innate constitution disciple and suppressed the inspector from the Sky Sect?"

"Hmph, suppressed the inspector from the Sky Sect? Who knows if that's true or not? Did you see it with your own eyes? It's very possible that the Precious Tree Sect exaggerated things to give themselves face."

"But it doesn't feel like it... I've seen information about that Jiang Chen, and the momentum of his rise is very peculiar. He was originally the heir of a small duke in a third rate kingdom within the sixteen kingdoms, but within a couple years he rapidly rose to walk amongst the clouds. It all feels quite miraculous."

"Hmph, I still think the rumors exaggerate. Otherwise, why doesn't this genius show his face today and open everyone's eyes?"

Similar discourse rose and fell in every corner of the guests' area.

It was apparent that no one looked favorably upon the current alliance. Most felt that the Regal Pill Palace had ulterior motives.

The ritual involving paying their respects to the heavens and

smearing beasts' blood on their lips came to an end at this time.

The sect heads on both sides exchanged tokens symbolizing the successful establishment of the alliance.

Dan Chi's face was filled with delight as he said with a laugh, "From now on, my Regal Pill Palace and the Precious Tree Sect are allies. All the fellow daoists present please bear witness. From henceforth, the Precious Tree Sect and the Regal Pill Palace are brother-sects. Please take care of the Precious Tree Sect disciples as they travel around in the future."

These words were delivered subtly, but it was a warning to everyone that when those of the Precious Tree Sect walked about the jianghu in the future, you better not bully them like they come from a humble sect or abode. The Regal Pill Palace is backing the Precious Tree Sect now, whoever bullies them is pitting themselves against the Palace.

Those assembled could still read between the lines.

Forefather Thousandleaf and Ye Chonglou looked at each other, a hint of joy flashing through their eyes. Dan Chi's attitude at least, was filled with sincerity.

A voice rang out from the guests' area at this time. "Sage Dan Chi, it is indeed a great thing that the Regal Pill Palace and the Precious Tree Sect have allied. However, there are numerous rumors swirling these days and everyone is rather curious, why has the Regal Pill Palace chosen to ally with the Precious Tree Sect

at this critical moment?”

“Indeed, Palace Head Dan Chi, we’ve heard that this sect is the prey of the Sky Sect. Aren’t the Palace’s actions making an enemy out of the Sky Sect?”

“Heh heh, I’ve rather heard that the Palace Head employed his utmost charisma for a genius youth in order to form this alliance. Palace Head Dan Chi, just who is this genius youth? Why doesn’t he show himself so everyone can take his measure and see if the Palace Head’s actions were worth all this?”

Those running their mouths were all heavyweights in the Myriad Domain and great personages who’d come from the six first-rate powers in the Domain.

Only this type of people dared voice such words at such an occasion. It was blatant that there were many who were privately irked that the Regal Pill Palace and the Precious Tree Sect were forming an alliance.

They subconsciously felt that this was the Regal Pill Palace expanding its territory. As another first-rate power in the Myriad Domain, the Regal Pill Palace was actually a latent threat to others.

Compared to the heavyweights of these sects, Dan Chi lacked much in terms of age and experience. However, he occupied a superior position and exuded the aura befitting it.

Dan Chi smiled noncommittally at these provocative questions.

“The consequences of whether or not my actions were worth it will fall on my Regal Pill Palace alone. I will experience the warmth and cold of the aftereffects, what need is there for you to assess the worth? As for the Sky Sect, the Myriad Domain is our territory. Does everyone think that preventing the Sky Sect from encroaching onto the Myriad Domain is the responsibility solely of my Palace? If we allow the Sky Sect to expand as they will, all of us present will be their vassals in less than a hundred years. I’m afraid you’ll see your own sect being made a fool of before you can poke fun of my Palace.”

Dan Chi laughed heartily, not affected at all by the slander from the outside world. Looking favorably upon my actions or not, I do as I wish.

“Palace Head Dan Chi is a forthright person alright, but we’ve all traveled such a great distance to participate in this ceremony. You should at least let us broaden our worldview, hmm? Just how amazing is the genius for Palace Head Dan to lower his gaze?”

“Indeed, look at how many geniuses in the Myriad Domain have come because of these news? They have come to see just how impressive the genius from the sixteen kingdoms could be. Palace Head Dan can’t just dampen spirits like this.”

“I heard that the genius killed one with an innate constitution and suppressed an inspector of the Sky Sect?”

“The rumors are so ludicrous, they’re making a mountain out of a molehill, no?”

Everyone could only refocus on Jiang Chen when they saw that they couldn’t faze Dan Chi. It was alright if they poked fun at the rumored genius that Dan Chi wanted, right?

If this was a fake genius, then Dan Chi’s intentions behind this alliance were suspect. If this was so, everyone could make use of the opportunity to wax eloquent.

If this genius really did have a bit of talent, then everyone could hoist high the dueling banner and send out their elites, thoroughly trouncing the genius and suppressing his glamour. They could cut off the genius’ path and suppress the weighty momentum behind this alliance, indirectly dissolving this alliance.

Dan Chi was contemplating when a shrill scream suddenly rang out.

“Eh? What’s that?!”

This voice stood out quite a bit and shifted everyone’s focus in its direction.

The man’s face was incredulous as he pointed at the sky, stammering out with agitation, “Look… look at the sky!”

Everyone was curious and looked towards the boundless skies his

finger was pointing at.

Their expressions all changed drastically with a single look.

A strange phenomenon had appeared in the skies while they were exchanging words.

At this moment—-

Clouds were filling the heavens, half of them black and the other half white, cleaving the sky in two. It seemed to be a clash between two waves of clouds, forming an enormous vortex and churning up the entire sky. The black and white clouds were clearly outlined, each keeping to their side and forming the shape of two fish in a yin yang—the Taiji fish.

This enormous Taiji fish vortex loomed over the entire horizon.

Thick layers of clouds continued to intertwine and be sucked into the yin yang vortex.

The center of the vortex seemed to lead straight into a hidden realm of the universe. It embodied countless profound mysteries and caused the black and white clouds roil towards that center.

Suddenly, the center of the vortex shot forth with blinding chromatic light that abruptly illuminated the lands of the Myriad Domain.

Mesmerizing splendor rained down over a wide span of territory as calmness descended.

In that moment, the vividly-colored air currents actually formed rainbow bridges in the air!

The cloud layer continued to coalesce, grow, and change—coagulating into a magnificent view of the shapes of numerous celestials!

There were deities, fiercely glaring Buddha warrior attendants, dragons and lions, goddesses of the nine heavens, immortal mountains and treasure towers, tall buildings and pavilions, Buddha seats, blades and swords, spears and halberds…

Dragons soared and brightly-plumed phoenixes danced through the sky.

Chirp chip!

At this moment, countless birds' cries traveled from all around. Numerous auspicious birds flocked in from every direction to gather around the celestial beings, emitting happy cries.

There were azure lesser phoenixes, rainbow-colored lesser phoenixes, vermillion birds, and divine phoenixes all gliding in an elegant dance around the figures in the skies.

It seemed that all the living beings on the ground had been startled as well. They rushed out of their territories and headed for a higher ground, baying and roaring in reaction to the strange phenomenon.

In that instant, everything below and within the heavens raged and roared as all living beings seem to form a marvelous accord and created this phenomenon that resonated between the skies and earth.

Everyone was dumbfounded by this scene.

They held their breaths and looked incredulously at the scene in front of them, unable to return to their senses for a long time.

Huang'er was playing on her instrument within the Precious Tree Sect. Her guzheng's strings paused briefly and emitted a dull sound, disturbing her thoughts.

She too was extremely surprised when she lifted her head and saw the phenomenon. She put down her instrument, rose softly to her feet and looked incredulously at the landscape painting itself across the boundless skies.

She had been entertaining herself just now and had entered a state in which she was oblivious to the world. Such a state was a type of extremely deep meditation of the heart.

This kind of state was absolutely on par with Jiang Chen's

Boulder's Heart.

Even so, she'd been startled awake. This was enough to prove how grand of an influence this phenomenon exercised.

Huang'er's gaze was deep as she looked at the scene in front of her. Suddenly, her slender eyebrows quirked as a trace of surprise appeared and she looked in the direction of the Precious Tree of the Rosy Dawn.

This was because she could faintly feel that the center of the Taiji fish, the radiant splendor shooting in all directions, the communion with the earth, the source of everything, originated from the Precious Tree Garden!

A thought struck Huang'er as she looked astonished. She murmured, "Could it be... can it be that Sir Jiang has broken through to the origin realm and triggered this phenomenon? It's impossible for a cultivator to cause this even when breaking through to the sage realm!"

Although Huang'er felt this was incredulous, she had a unique cultivation method that bestowed upon her exceedingly strong observation skills. She could faintly grasp that the source of this phenomenon was Jiang Chen, who was cultivating in the garden.

"Elder Shun... Huang'er is truly in awe of your foresight. If you were here at this moment, you would likely want to have him inherit your cultivation method?"

Huang’er sighed lightly, genuinely happy for Jiang Chen from the depths of her heart.

“Ask not where a hero comes from. Sir Jiang is a remarkable prodigy with great wisdom, immense breadth of mind, and a magnanimous bearing. Indeed, even wonders among skies and lands have arisen because of him. This marks the rise of an unparalleled power. The heavenly law cannot be hoodwinked. Only Sir Jiang is worthy of such enormous fortune.”

The entire Divine Abyss continent was shocked and awed by this occurrence, even some old monsters who were usually unconcerned from worldly affairs were completely taken aback.

How many years had it been since a phenomenon of this magnitude had occurred?

Chapter 449: Jiang Chen Enters The Origin Realm

“That direction is... the Myriad Domain? What’s happened there?”

“Could it be that a peerless powerhouse has appeared there?”

“Such frightening phenomenon must be the precursor to the emergence of a great being who can shake the Divine Abyss Continent to the core!”

The old monsters of the Divine Abyss Continent all stared toward the Myriad Domain, full of questions, confusion, and astonishment.

This phenomenon lasted for roughly two hours before slowly fading away. Everyone still hadn’t taken in their fill of it and they all stood there wonderstruck, staring dumbly at the skies, unable to believe that what they’d just seen was real.

Jiang Chen sat cross-legged beneath the Precious Tree, akin to a stone statue.

The circulation that had formed within his body at this moment was at the exact same wavelength as the various celestial forms in the sky, resonating with them.

He never would've thought that he would trigger such terrifying phenomenon when he ascended to the origin realm.

From the memories of his past life, those who could form such an astounding scene were only cultivators at the peak of the mortal plane ascending to the heavenly plane.

In this moment, a seal that wavered in and out of existence appeared in his consciousness.

There were nine spheres circulating the edges of the seal, as if water droplets forming another seal in the shape of a chain.

There was a mysterious seal within this chain, something beyond Jiang Chen's grasp.

But as his consciousness reeled, he could feel the frightening power within the seal, as if it contained an ancient demon or ferocious beast that would destroy the entire Divine Abyss Continent if set free.

"Could it be that my reincarnation wasn't just happenstance, but had something to do with my Celestial Father? Otherwise, why the seal in my consciousness?"

Even though Jiang Chen had trained the Boulder's Heart in this life, never would he believe that a seal with such tremendous power would appeared out of nowhere.

He felt countless iron needles stabbing at his soul if he tried even slightly to meditate upon that mysterious strength.

With the current level of his consciousness, he was unable to even scratch the surface, much less unravel this mysterious power.

Jiang Chen guessed that this strength must have something to do with his father from his past life.

In the moment that he broke through to the origin realm, his consciousness had spun at high speeds as his bodily operations had cycled swiftly, accidentally brushing the seal and triggering the phenomenon.

Jiang Chen had been a bit dumbfounded in that instant.

Fortunately, he'd seen much in his past life and guessed that this phenomenon had something to do with his breakthrough. He'd hastily controlled his consciousness and avoided the seal in his mind. Otherwise, the phenomenon might have been even more ridiculous and lasted even longer.

Countless old monsters lying in wait within the entire Divine Abyss Continent cast sideways glances full of wariness at the Myriad Domain.

Meanwhile, Jiang Chen submerged himself in the gains he'd made and the joy of breaking through to the origin realm.

Once the gateway to the origin realm was open, countless doors to martial dao opened as well.

The Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice was growing at a rate visible to the human eye, having unlocked another set of it's abilities after Jiang Chen entered the origin realm.

He could now simultaneously manipulate seventy two fire and ice lotuses.

The most critical thing was that many of the attributes of the Lotus were being slowly excavated after he'd entered the origin realm. Since there was a "yao" character in its name, it embodied quite a few magical attributes.

Yao is translated as Bewitching here, due to the other properties of the Lotus that we'll see. Yao is a type of demon/monster/unnatural or malicious spirit in Chinese culture. As you can see, there are a lot of meanings for it!

Jiang Chen naturally couldn't overlook them.

"The Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice is also known as the Illusory Lotus of Fire and Ice. Now that I've entered the origin realm, I can use the Lotus to make illusory copies of my body and have the Lotus simulate myself, bewitching my opponents."

He would meet drastically different opponents after entering the origin realm. Jiang Chen knew that he would have to continuously innovate new techniques, else his methods would be completely grasped by ever stronger opponents and as a result he would be

completely suppressed in battle.

Apart from the art of “illusions”, the “Supernova Point” that Jiang Chen was cultivating as well could be melded with the Lotus.

The Supernova Point was a divine art, one that concentrated vast amounts of spirit power into a single finger before abruptly unleashing the power to destroy all.

Jiang Chen’s “Supernova Point” naturally wasn’t strong enough to destroy a planet just yet, but he could leverage the Lotus as a source of power.

A vast amount of strength from the ice and fire lotuses could turn into incredible lethal power when concentrated on his finger.

He’d conducted a small experiment against the Sky Sect inspector Wu Chen.

But he’d barely scratched the surface of this technique then, and had yet to venture further into training it.

Now that he had broken through to the origin realm and received an enormous increase to his strength, there was an inexhaustible source of origin power seeping through to his spirit ocean that enhanced his strength several times over.

The various forms of the Lotus had also increased multiple times over.

As such, the sources of his strength were even more abundant, at least five times over what he had access to in the spirit realm.

“The Supernova Point has innumerable mysteries. Although I can’t train the more complex ones right now, simple attacks infused with origin power will be destructive enough for me to do as I wish within the origin realm.”

Jiang Chen would only train three moves for now.

The first: Skyblaze Supernova Point

The second: Profound Dark Supernova Point

The third: Galaxy Supernova Point

The first incorporated boundless fire elemental energy concentrated into an attack that scorched the skies, as if a volcano erupting with incredible destructive force in an instant.

The second absorbed boundless ice elemental energy and concentrated into a mysterious, dark power of glacial ice, giving one the feeling of suddenly being crushed by a hundred ice mountains, freezing even the meridians.

The third, and most powerful one, leveraged boundless metal elemental energy concentrated magnetic power to lock the

opponent in a prison of space before slicing it into fragments in an instant. This move was a metal elemental attack of the highest density and would dice one to death instantly.

These three moves were all heavenly techniques with astounding mysteries to them. The current level that Jiang Chen was training at wouldn't result in even a hundredth of their peak forms.

But even so, Jiang Chen was confident that even if he faced off against that envoy Zuo Lan at this moment, he had absolute certainty in beating him face to face.

The advantages brought by the memories of his past life became even more apparent after he'd entered the origin realm.

When he'd been in the spirit realm, he'd been confined for various reasons and hadn't been able to deploy his memories to his maximum advantage. He'd only been able to use the barest sliver of the magnetic golden mountain and the Lotus.

But now, this treasure vault of his would be slowly uncovered as it brought to him a spontaneous, explosive increase of battle strength.

Apart from the Lotus, the magnetic golden mountain could also bring to Jiang Chen matchless fighting abilities!

He'd been focused on summoning the magnetic storm throughout the time he trained with the magnetic power.

Magnetic power alone wasn't a particularly strong restraining force against opponents, and was unable to influence opponents stronger than the user during a battle.

However, a magnetic storm was different. That was the berserk version of magnetic power. It was similar to the mysteries of wind. A refreshing breeze was no threat, but it was a different story when formed into a storm.

Such was the strength of the magnetic storm.

Once formed, it would devour everything like a rampaging wild beast. Even a cultivator stronger than him would be thrown in disarray, if not swallowed, when suddenly caught by a storm.

Wouldn't his opponent be easy targets then?

The potential of the magnetic golden mountain was astounding, and the magnetic power a boundless, limitless source.

Apart from the magnetic storm, Jiang Chen's training with the Evil Golden Eye was slowly progressing down the right path. His mastery over it was only at the novice level so his power was limited to only attacking someone on the same level once, or trampling the lower level cultivators.

But after entering the origin realm, the power of the Evil Golden Eye had similarly greatly increased. A single glance could shoot

directly into his opponent's soul. Even if he was challenging someone stronger than him, a single glance would be enough to make his opponent lose their concentration.

Jiang Chen was quite confident that if he matched up against Zuo Lan now, he'd be able to distract the other with the Evil Golden Eye.

He could clearly feel his strength increase holistically since entering the origin realm. His various techniques and methods had all improved in spades.

"The origin realm is an entirely different realm alright. Perhaps, after some time, I'll be able to refine the magnetic golden mountain another step further and summon the golden monsters, or even the Lord of the Golden Seal."

If he could fully activate the magnetic golden mountain, he would absolutely have an enormous treasure on his hands.

Jiang Chen lost himself in the joy of breaking through to the origin realm and continued training, ignoring all events and words of the outside world.

At this precise moment, those who had come to witness the ceremony in the outskirts of the Precious Tree Garden had yet to recover from the phenomenon they'd just observed.

That scene had given them too much of a psychological impact

and was wholly outside their range of comprehension.

Those present were all heavyweights in the Myriad Domain. There were even those over 500 years old, but they'd never even heard of a scenario such as this, much less seen it with their own eyes.

It took them a long time to recover from the impact it brought to their hearts.

Dan Chi was the first to recollect himself and suddenly laughed loudly. "Good, good! This heavenly phenomenon is a greatly auspicious omen. No matter for what reason it has arisen, for our alliance to receive such a display and borrow such a fortuitous start is absolutely an indicator of the best of fortunes. This is foresight that the alliance between the Regal Pill Palace and the Precious Tree Sect is a match made in heaven."

Dan Chi borrowed the fortunes resulting from such a phenomenon as he naturally wouldn't pass up an opportunity to connect it with the alliance ceremony.

In the world of martial dao, talk of fortune and luck would always exist, however subtly.

No one could refute Dan Chi's words. They were all still caught up in the unexpected events that had just occurred and had no way to challenge his words.

To be honest, the presence and momentum of what had just happened had been too astonishing. They truly didn't dare speak out of line of this, lest they angered the gods.

In that moment, those against the alliance couldn't help but wonder, could it truly be that the gods had shown favor upon this alliance and created such a stunning phenomenon?

It went without saying that those in the Precious Tree Sect were all filled with delight. They all felt exalted and knew that no one would ever dare look down on them in the Myriad Domain in the future.

"Daoist Thousandleaf, the heavens find favor with our alliance and this was truly fated in the stars!"

Thousandleaf was also beaming broadly and nodded repeatedly.

"Bullshit!" A loud rebuke suddenly travelled in from the distance.

Chapter 450: Sky Sect Against The Regal Pill Palace

The rebuke sounded like a clap of thunder on a sunny day, making everyone's blood boil. Domineering and prideful, it filled the sky before the speaker had even arrived.

Roughly a dozen figures swiftly shot over.

Dan Chi's gaze sharpened as he squinted in the direction of the newcomers, a cold smile playing about his lips. It was apparent that this scenario had been within his expectations.

It would've been entirely too strange if the alliance ceremony had gone off without a hitch and the Sky Sect hadn't come to make trouble.

"Which friends have come? Why hide yourselves since you have come as guests to my Myriad Domain? Why not show yourselves so that we, the masters of the Myriad Domain, can properly host you?"

Dan Chi's melodious voice billowed forth, traveling on the wind into the distance.

His voice alone reverberated 500 kilometers in every direction.

The expressions of the heavyweights of the Myriad Domain all

become extraordinarily complicated after Dan Chi had spoken. They could sense the changes in his strength from these words alone.

"Mm? Dan Chi's cultivation has risen again?"

"No wonder he's being so arrogantly cocky, his cultivation level has advanced once more!"

"Dan Chi is only a hundred years old, yet his cultivation level is so impressive already. If he breaks through to the sage realm one day, then won't his Regal Pill Palace become the lords of the Myriad Domain?"

These heavyweights all felt a Gordian knot of emotions. Dan Chi was the youngest of the powerhouses in the Myriad Domain, and had the least amount of experience to boot.

However, his potential was astounding and rate of improvement close to miraculous. He was the last to begin but the first to reach the goal, constantly breaking records in the Domain.

It was impossible for the heavyweights to not harbor the slightest bit of unease in their hearts as they saw the momentum of his rise.

When they saw that his strength had improved again, it naturally didn't sit well with them.

"Hmph, it's just because this Dan Chi has impressive potential

that he's stepped beyond his means and dares face off against the Sky Sect. It'd be best if the Sky Sect suppresses him, or he'll become the tyrant of the Myriad Domain sooner or later."

"Good, good, good! It looks like Dan Chi has hardened his heart to fight against the Sky Sect to the end. Listen to his tone, he fancies himself the ruler of the Myriad Domain! Heh heh, the Sky Sect is stretching their hands into the Myriad Domain and the Regal Pill Palace wants to be the ones to stick their necks out. I hope both of them end up sorely injured!"

Everyone present had their own schemes. Apart from a minority that continued to have a good friendship with Dan Chi, most were delighting in his misfortunes and hoped to see the Regal Pill Palace fight to a bitter end. It'd be best if both fought to the end and ended up gravely wounded.

That way, the Regal Pill Palace would decline and the Sky Sect would no longer have the ability to set foot in the Myriad Domain. That would be the best outcome.

The powerhouses all took it easy as they held the attitude of watching a fire from the other side of the river. They watched as a dozen silhouettes landed in front of the Regal Pill Palace, the wind of their arrival ruffling their robes.

The figures were all wearing the unique accoutrements of a Sky Sect inspector, but with vastly different coloration.

The leader wore purple accessories and had a large, five pointed

golden star embroidered on his chest.

When they saw his attire, the heavyweights of the Myriad Domain all sucked in a breath.

The purple adornments indicated that this was a tenth rank inspector!

This person was naturally the tenth rank inspector who'd appeared in the Tristar Sect before. The people he was leading were all three star inspectors, equivalent to ninth rank inspectors.

These others all wore blue accessories. Zuo Lan was actually the weakest amongst them and stood in the back.

The blue uniforms either had three stars or two stars embroidered on their chest. It was obvious that they were all higher ranked than the one star Zuo Lan.

"You are Dan Chi?" The tenth rank inspector's tone was ice as his vicious gaze cut like a knife, surging with killing intent as he spoke to Dan Chi.

Dan Chi smiled noncommittally and asked instead of responding, "Who might you be?"

The tenth rank inspector's face grew frosty alright. How could he not realize that this was one of Dan Chi's tricks?

Dan Chi hadn't followed his line of conversation but asked who he was instead. This seemingly careless exchange hid the deeply meaningful battle of words.

They were both trying to seize the control of the discussion.

Dan Chi's actions had been an obvious proclamation of his initiative. I'm the master here, so naturally I'm the one asking you.

This was a clash of authority, a formless battle for authority and morale. The first round had concluded even before the battle fires had been lit.

The sect heads of the Myriad Domain all quailed inwardly. Dan Chi was the youngest heavyweight of the Myriad Domain alright. His commanding presence and air didn't give even an inch in the face of a tenth rank inspector from the Sky Sect. He had given them no quarter.

"Dan Chi, don't you be so full of yourself! Master Feng is the tenth rank inspector of my Sky Sect, on speaking terms with our sect head. Mere leaders of the sects in the lower regions, how dare you be so discourteous? Have you never been taught the courtesies of the sects?"

Zuo Lan had conducted his affairs unsuccessfully before and had decided he wanted to regain some face here, standing out and blustering.

“Sky Sect envoy?” Dan Chi smiled, looking utterly unconcerned. “If I recall correctly, there is no subordinate relationship between the Myriad Domain and the Sky Sect. We will naturally extend the warmest of welcomes to the Sky Sect envoy if he has come as a guest. But if he is here to cause a fuss or raise trouble, then I, Dan Chi, have no intention of welcoming him.”

The tenth rank inspector’s eyebrow rose, “Dan Chi, I didn’t come here to waste my time bandying words with you. My sect has long since deemed the sixteen kingdom alliance as the Purple Light Division and have placed it onto the blueprints of our sect’s plans. Even if you are the local head of the Myriad Domain, you should understand the rule of precedence. Are you attempting to take food from the mouth of the Sky Sect?”

“Don’t want to waste words on me? Pardon my candor, I feel that you’re full of nothing but hot air. What Purple Light Division, what sect blueprint? Has the Precious Tree Sect agreed to this? The lands know of the Sky Sect’s culture of dominance. However, as high-handed as you may be, you haven’t degraded yourself to forcefully occupying other sects, have you? I don’t give a damn about you setting up a Purple Light Division and taking over the Purple Sun Sect, but the Precious Tree Sect has never given verbal or written consent of consent to the Sky Sect. If they have agreed to something along those lines, bring it out as proof. If it really exists, I will dust myself off and leave without another word, and will even offer you gifts in apology. But if you have no such evidence, then drop your paltry argument.”

“Hmm?”

The inspector's expression grew chilly. "So this means that the Regal Pill Palace had hardened its heart to oppose the Ninesuns Sky Sect?"

The Ninesuns Sky Sect, one of the eight great powers of the Upper Eight Realms, was more than ten times the Regal Pill Palace whether in terms of foundations or strength.

Therefore, at critical moments, if the Sky Sect couldn't reason with someone, they would use the presence of a first rank sect to overcome someone in the most direct and tyrannical way.

However, the inspector obviously didn't understand enough of Dan Chi's personality.

A trace of mockery flashed through Dan Chi's face. "Oppose? The Ninesuns Sky Sect is far away in the Upper Eight Realms, millions of kilometers away from my Myriad Domain. Just how do we begin talking of opposition? The Precious Tree Sect and Sky Sect have nothing to do with each other, so why cannot my Regal Pill Palace ally with the former? Must we obtain the Sky Sect's approval for this as well? If this is the case, then the Sky Sect is simply exercising too much jurisdiction."

Although he wasn't blatantly defying the Sky Sect, the undertone behind his words was quite obvious. Don't try using your power to suppress me, I won't roll over and play dead for you.

The inspector chuckled coldly and nodded with a sinister

expression. “Truly a crazed person who doesn’t know the heights of the skies and depths of the earth. Since this is the case, the old rules apply. In the world of martial dao, the strong are venerated. Dan Chi, I hope your strength is as strong as your glib tongue.”

Dan Chi flicked his eyebrow. “What, you want to throw your weight around in my Myriad Domain by virtue of your dozen men?”

The inspector snorted derisively, “When has my Sky Sect ever been afraid of anyone when it came down to numbers?”

The senior sect head of the Tristar Sect stepped in appropriately at this time. “Gentlemen, please calm yourselves. You are both experts of our times. It is simply too unchivalrous to start a mob fight.”

The Tristar Sect being a front for the Sky Sect was a secret that no one knew in the Myriad Domain.

His actions now were something that he’d discussed with the Sky Sect inspector beforehand.

“Sect Head Zhu, what wise insight do you have?” Dan Chi asked mildly.

“Although the strong are respected in the world of martial dao, we are all experts here. There is no grace to be had in everyone rushing into a fight. Neither will it solve the issue at hand. I would

like to propose the structure of a bet. The winner would be considered the victor of this argument and their word considered law."

The tenth rank inspector had yet to open his mouth when a ninth rank inspector in green robes butted in from the side. "Bet? And how do we bet? You Myriad Domain sects are plainly all in collusion with each other, so why should we listen to your opinions?"

He purposefully spoke in this manner to conceal any hint that the Tristar Sect had anything to do with the Sky Sect.

Indeed, Sect Head Zhu's tone grew displeased. "My Myriad Domain has never won on the basis of numbers. Since sir seems to believe we are all colluding with each other, then I will keep my mouth shut."

It was rather the tenth rank inspector who spread out his hands and gestured for his man to move aside. He spoke to Sect Head Zhu. "What opinions do you have? Share them with us."

"The core of the conflict between your two sides stems from the grudges between the Purple Sun Sect and the Precious Tree Sect, growing further to become a conflict between the Sky Sect and the Regal Pill Palace. Why not set an agreement of five or three matches, and whoever wins has the right to speak."

This suggestion appeared quite just, and all those present for the ceremony nodded, showing their support of a good idea.

“Dan Chi, this is the suggestion of your fellow daoist in the Myriad Domain. Since you wish to be a fierce and ambitious person, do you dare determine the outcome through a bet?”

Dan Chi laughed heartily, “I wouldn’t bat an eye if even the head of the Sky Sect himself arrived. Here, it’s just you, and you’re trying to scare me with a bet?”

“If you’re not afraid, then we’ll make our bet. Five matches or three? You can decide.”

“Three are enough, what need of five?” Dan Chi didn’t want to drag things out either and made another proposal. “Only peers of the same level can battle each other. The minor origin cultivators against another similar, earth origin to earth origin, sky origin to sky origin. Since you and I are sage cultivators, we must be mortal sage to mortal sage, and earth sage to earth sage.”

Indeed, the strongest present was of the earth sage realm. There were no sky sage realm existences in attendance.

Zuo Lan walked over to murmur a few words in the tenth rank inspector’s ears when he heard this.

The inspector smiled faintly and nodded. “We will follow your suggestion. However, since the origin of this matter was between the Purple Sun Sect and the Precious Tree Sect, then those from their sect should participate. I propose that we send two each from our sects, and the Purple Sun and Precious Tree send one each. The

outcome will be determined in three matches!”

The faces of those in the Precious Tree Sect all changed drastically when they heard this, and Dan Chi immediately saw through the other’s scheme.

The Regal Pill Palace would end up at most with one win and one loss if they fought the Sky Sect since apart from Dan Chi, no one else in the Palace had absolute confidence in winning.

But for the Precious Tree Sect, it was obvious that no one would be able to defeat old monster Sunchaser.

As opposed to calling this a hidden plot, it was more of a blatant scheme that mercilessly took advantage of the fact that no one in the Precious Tree Sect could defeat Sunchaser.

The most critical thing was that the Regal Pill Palace had no reasonable cause to decline this suggestion. The whole matter had indeed arisen because of the grudges between the two.

And considering the Precious Tree Sect was the host of the ceremony, it wouldn’t do if they didn’t exert themselves at all.

Chapter 451: Wait For Me To Behead Sunchaser's Dog Of A Head

Dan Chi sank into deep thought, simulating the three matches. If the Precious Tree Sect was unable to win theirs, then it was very likely that they'd lose the bet.

"Well? Dan Chi, I've heard that you've quite a bit of charisma in the Myriad Domain and are full of drive and ambition. If we lose the bet of three matches, the Sky Sect promises to no longer interfere in the alliance between the Precious Tree Sect and Regal Pill Palace. If you lose, you go back wherever you've come from!"

The look that the tenth rank inspector was shooting over was overbearing with provocation.

He and Sect Head Zhu of the Tristar Sect had coordinated from within and without in order to create an atmosphere forcing the Regal Pill Palace down the path of no retreat. They could only answer the call of battle.

This kind of method was much better than simply attempting to bathe the Regal Pill Palace in blood.

The Sky Sect was strong, but not invincible. Their foundations weren't particularly strong in the Myriad Domain. If they fought head to head with the Regal Pill Palace, they would face pressure from the other sects when they tried to make a move into the Myriad Domain.

The Regal Pill Palace was the local snake—the regional tyrant of the Myriad Domain after all. It was said that even a strong dragon wouldn't suppress a local snake.

If the Sky Sect engaged in a bloody fight with the Regal Pill Palace, they would absolutely pay a heavy price. This was at obvious odds with the Sky Sect's plans.

Not to mention that the Regal Pill Palace must have a patron backer if they dared act as such.

Dan Chi sank into a dilemma.

Ye Chonglou's ears suddenly twitched as a trace of surprise appeared on his face. Following that, he walked up and spoke a few words next to Dan Chi's ear.

Dan Chi's expression froze momentarily, revealing a look of inquiry.

Ye Chonglou nodded very firmly.

Dan Chi thought briefly and suddenly laughed heartily. "Alright, we'll settle on three matches then. However, how do I know if your words can represent the Sky Sect?"

The tenth rank inspector was contemptuous when he saw Dan

Chi and Ye Chonglou's surreptitious actions. He smiled proudly. "I am Feng Beidou, a tenth rank inspector of the Sky Sect."

"Alright, since this is so, it is indeed a pleasant matter to have the issue settled through force. Who will you send out to fight?" Confidence was writ all over Dan Chi's face.

Dan Chi's change of expression was just a show to maintain his calm in Feng Beidou's eyes.

"You and I are both the heads of our groups and naturally need to take the field. In addition, this ninth rank inspector is the heart of my Sky Sect and will of course rightfully be taking place. As for the Purple Sun Sect, Sunchaser is the obvious representative."

Sunchaser had kept quite a low profile this time as he kept to the rear of the entourage. He was well aware that in a situation like this, he was just a hangers-on.

Even the one he was afraid of, Zuo Lan, was a mere follower. How much of a right to speak did he have then?

Sunchaser's heart trembled with emotion when the inspector said that he would be participating. The eagerness was apparent on his face as he looked forward to achieving certain triumph in this battle and winning Master Feng's favor.

Sunchaser had had a long-nurtured confidence that he would be able to come out on top against the Precious Tree Sect. Even

Thousandleaf had long been weaker than Sunchaser, and quite obviously weaker at that.

As for the others, such as Ye Chonglou, they weren't on the same level as Sunchaser at all.

Dan Chi smiled faintly when he heard this and surveyed those behind him. "Who is willing to fight with me from our Regal Pill Palace?"

Several senior executives immediately stepped forward to express their intentions.

They were all top cultivators in the Palace, with all of their cultivations exceeding the origin realm, placing them in the mortal sage realm.

Dan Chi was very satisfied to see that everyone had a strong desire to do battle.

He selected one of the strongest, "Xuan Zhen, you accompany me."

The called-upon Xuan Zhen was one of the vice heads of the Regal Pill Palace, boasting of the second level sage realm, the highest cultivation amongst all of the Palace's mortal sage realm cultivators.

His cultivation was second only to Dan Chi's, an earth sage realm

expert.

Xuan Zhen had a head adorned with silver hair and a face as expressionless as a zombie's, giving off an exceedingly frosty air.

"Haha, there is an abundance of talent in the Regal Pill Palace. Good, good!" Feng Beidou smiled faintly. "I wonder who are you sending out to do battle from the Precious Tree Sect side?"

The senior levels from the Precious Tree Sect all looked at each other. Who would be able to stand up against old monster Sunchaser?

A distant voice sounded from the air at this time. "I will."

When those words rang out, a golden silhouette suddenly appeared, as if a beam of sunlight shooting down from the high skies.

Feng Beidou's forehead creased as he looked at the newcomer.

This person was young, his brows well-defined. Starry, iridescent pair of eyes sparkled on his handsome face, and his chiseled face looked like a masterpiece. It was exceedingly stereoscopic, giving one a firm and indomitable feeling.

"Jiang Chen!"

Exclamations sounded forth from the Precious Tree Sect.

Forefather Thousandleaf was also a bit surprised. Ye Chonglou however, was unfazed. Jiang Chen had walked out from the Precious Tree Garden a moment ago and sent a message to him.

Jiang Chen had learned of all that had happened, and decisively asked to take the field when he heard of bet of three matches.

Feng Beidou frowned, looking at the subordinate next to him in obvious inquiry of who this young man was.

Zuo Lan hastened to say, “Master Feng, this is Jiang Chen.”

Feng Beidou’s gaze focused and a sharp light surged out from his eyes like lightning. It shot towards Jiang Chen, attempting to see straight through him.

Jiang Chen remained as unmoving as a mountain, slightly lifting an eyelid slightly and unconcernedly glancing at Feng Beidou.

Although he could feel the immense pressure of earth sage realm aura, Jiang Chen’s strength of heart had advanced more than five times over since breaking through to the origin realm.

Add to that the Evil Golden Eye and the God’s Eye, Jiang Chen was able to ignore all arts of the eyes.

Feng Beidou's gaze was like a rock thrown into a golden-colored ocean, causing not even the slightest of splashes.

"Mm?" Feng Beidou was enormously surprised. His glance just now had contained only twenty percent of his aura. He'd thought that he would be able to see through Jiang Chen with but a glance, and perhaps even have Jiang Chen make a fool of himself.

He hadn't thought that it would be as ineffective as a rock sinking into the ocean.

A trace of surprise surged into Feng Beidou's eyes.

He'd heard of Jiang Chen's name before, a fellow who had defeated some gray-clad inspector. Standing from the height of Feng Beidou, he couldn't be bothered to even contemplate a spirit realm fight.

Therefore, he didn't have a deep impression of Jiang Chen.

However, after this glance, he knew that this name would be deeply branded into his consciousness.

Eyes turn bloodshot when enemies meet.

Sunchaser cackled, roaring out, "Jiang Chen, has everyone in the Precious Tree Sect died? A mere spirit realm cultivator such as you dares take the field? That's fine as well. It's to my taste that you're courting death! I vow that I am less than human if I don't kill you

this time!”

Hatred soared up to the skies. Anyone could make out the vengeful spite in Sunchaser’s tone.

It was obvious that after coming off worse for the wear after multiple engagements with Jiang Chen, Sunchaser’s hatred for Jiang Chen wouldn’t abate until Jiang Chen was dead.

Everyone was filled with anxiety in the Precious Tree Sect.

Forefather Thousandleaf urged in a low tone, “Jiang Chen, Sunchaser is one step away from breaking through to the earth origin realm. You…”

“Indeed Jiang Chen, don’t bite off more than you can chew.” Ye Chonglou was similarly deeply concerned.

“Forefathers, the grudge between Sunchaser and me needs to end someday. I’ve just entered the origin realm and need someone to test myself against. Sunchaser would do so wonderfully.”

“What?” Thousandleaf was dumbfounded, astonishment blossoming on his face as he stammered, “You… you broke through to the origin realm?”

Jiang Chen nodded lightly.

Thousandleaf and Ye Chonglou looked at each other, uncertain what to say in that moment. The speed of this breakthrough had been simply too astounding.

Jiang Chen hadn't even entered the earth spirit realm when he participated in the initial selection.

He'd continuously broken through in less than two years, reaching the skies in a single leap by entering the origin realm!

One had to know that whether it was Thousandleaf or Ye Chonglou, they had both built up to the step for far, far too long and had waited countless of years before taking it.

Ye Chonglou in particular had almost despaired before Jiang Chen had enlightened him with a single phrase.

However, Jiang Chen had easily stepped across the juncture to the origin realm just like that!

As the saying went, making comparisons would be the death of one.

It was a good thing that Jiang Chen was one of theirs and part of the Precious Tree Sect.

The two forefathers could see delight in the other's eyes. They knew that the enormous gamble they'd taken with Jiang Chen had paid off in spades.

Sunchaser had no patience for the Precious Tree Sect to catch up with each other. He hopped straight into the ring.

A murderous aura flared as his eyes were shot through with red. He roared, “Whoever is representing the Precious Tree Sect, come swiftly to your death! Jiang Chen you lowly crossbreed, aren’t you trying to pretend that you’re all that? Get the hell in there!”

Jiang Chen suddenly glared with his God’s Eye when he heard these words, killing intent exploding within him.

“Forefathers, please allow me continue this chat with you later. Wait for me to behead Sunchaser’s dog of a head first!”

The word “crossbreed” was absolutely Jiang Chen’s bottom line.

He was extremely respectful towards his fathers in both lives. Calling him a crossbreed wasn’t just an insult to him, but an insult to his fathers in both lives.

Golden light flashed as Jiang Chen swooped to the side opposite of Sunchaser.

“Shut your mouth, old dog Sunchaser. The era of your Purple Sun Sect dominating the sixteen kingdoms is over. With our match today, let me personally end the overbearing dominion your sect has enjoyed over the years, end this era, and send you to the underworld to reunite with your old mistress!”

Jiang Chen stood with his hands behind his back as he spoke, his presence inspiring awe as he stood tall like mountain.

His vast origin power soared to the skies like a thousand-meter mountain, boundless, majestic, invincible, and imposing. There was the faint hint of thunder rolling through his words that shook the heavens and earth.

“Mm? Jiang Chen has broken through to the origin realm?”

“How is that possible? Even if he has, how could his aura be this strong?”

“This aura is absolutely on par with that of an earth origin realm expert! When did he break through to the origin realm?”

Those voicing these words were all from the four great sects in the sixteen kingdoms.

The folks invited from Myriad Domain were all grew somber when they saw this scene, whether or not they thought much of Jiang Chen before.

Even the proudest of the young Myriad Domain geniuses had to chalk up Jiang Chen as a strong future rival once he circulated his aura!

Chapter 452: Battling Sunchaser

Even the heavyweights on par with Dan Chi in the Myriad Domain were a bit moved when they saw the sudden aura rising from Jiang Chen, not to mention the young geniuses.

“Is he that Jiang Chen? Such a genius actually exists amongst the younger generation of the sixteen kingdoms?”

“Tsk tsk, incredible! This kid looks no more than twenty-something, not only has he broken through to the origin realm, but his strength is so strong as well! It looks like the sixteen kingdoms have indeed been underestimated.”

“Could it be that the legends speak truly of this kid killing the one with innate constitution and suppressing the Sky Sect?

“Dan Chi has always been one to act alone. It looks like the target of his enormous gamble this time may very well be this Jiang Chen!”

The powerhouses of the Myriad Domain were all inwardly stunned. They’d been all perplexed at first and felt that Dan Chi was playing with fire.

As for gossip in the outside world saying that he was doing so for Jiang Chen, everyone had been contemptuous of this saying and felt that he was just using it as an excuse.

However—

Jiang Chen's entrance had changed everyone's thoughts.

This made the powerhouses of the Myriad Domain all thoroughly understand—the greatest reason why Dan Chi had done so was indeed likely because of Jiang Chen.

"Jiang Chen... you!" Sunchaser was similarly dumbfounded at this time, mouth agape and unable to form a sentence.

He almost thought that he was hallucinating just then.

The overweeningly dominant Sunchaser had actually become ashen-faced from Jiang Chen's aura a moment ago, unable to speak at all.

He'd requested to fight just now because he was certain the Precious Tree Sect was food in his mouth. He'd had an absolute psychological advantage over the Precious Tree Sect all this time.

He felt that he could thoroughly trample anyone who took the field.

In his heart, he'd never considered that Jiang Chen would be his opponent. As strong as the latter was, he was only of the spirit realm.

It was only less than a year since the trials of the Eternal Spirit Mountain.

Jiang Chen had only just entered the sky spirit realm then.

As strong as Jiang Chen was, it should've been impossible for him to break through to the origin realm in less than a year.

Therefore, Sunchaser hadn't put him in the list of candidates at all.

However, his sudden appearance and assertive movements had completely thrown his plans in disarray, shattering his beautiful dreams.

Not only would Jiang Chen be his opponent, he was now also an origin realm cultivator.

It was one thing to just break through to the origin realm, but the aura that he was displaying at the mere first level origin realm was actually stronger than Sunchaser's at peak third level!

Sunchaser couldn't accept this at all at first blush.

When Zuo Lan saw the situation, he too was steely-faced. Despite him originally gloating, his feelings immediately sank rock bottom.

It had been he who had suggested Sunchaser fight a match, thinking that a victory was in the big. However, things had taken an unexpected turn with Jiang Chen's appearance.

Feng Beidou hectored upon seeing Sunchaser lose his composure, "Sunchaser, is a young man who had just set foot into the origin realm enough to scare you?"

Sunchaser grew somber when he heard this and immediately reacted.

He was an old monster who'd come into his fame over a hundred years ago alright. He knew that he had no path for retreat after Feng Beidou's words.

It wasn't just a struggle for superiority between Jiang Chen and himself now, but one between the Sky Sect and the Regal Pill Palace.

The outcome of this match would determine his survival and the fortunes of the entire Purple Sun Sect.

If he lost, not only was he done for, but his entire sect as well.

The Sky Sect would never allow one defeated to control the Purple Light Division.

Countless thoughts spun through his head as Sunchaser slowly calmed down. He was someone about to enter the earth origin

realm soon! As genius as Jiang Chen was, how strong could he possibly be?

The sudden flare of his aura just now had indeed been strong, but that was very likely just posturing. With his scant twenty years of age, how could Jiang Chen measure to someone renowned for the past hundred years such as Sunchaser?

Sunchaser felt that he would never lose when it came to foundations, battle experience, and assortment of harrowing trump cards.

Feng Beidou suddenly waved his hand and sent an item shooting towards Sunchaser. He sent a message with his consciousness, “Sunchaser, only victory is allowed and not defeat. I bestow upon you this spirit pearl of fire and ice for protection. All attacks of fire and ice in the origin realm will be nullified against you.”

Sunchaser was overjoyed and quickly accepted this item.

His hatred of Jiang Chen was as deep as the seas, and he’d naturally done a fair bit of research on Jiang Chen. He knew that Jiang Chen’s Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice was exceedingly difficult to defend against.

Since the spirit pearl of fire and ice could nullify all attacks of fire and ice, didn’t that mean the Lotus that could move like a ghost was completely ineffective against Sunchaser?

Sunchaser's desire to fight instantly grew several times. If that eerie Lotus couldn't do anything to him, then Jiang Chen alone was prey caught in his hands already.

Dan Chi couldn't help but snort derisively when he saw this. "Envoy Feng, this kind of cheating isn't fair play now, is it?"

Feng Beidou said faintly, "I didn't send anyone to help, nor did I break the rules. How am I cheating? Bring out anything good that you have and let Jiang Chen use it. I'll wait to marvel what you might have."

The Regal Pill Palace naturally had their own foundations and treasures, but were truly nothing much compared to a first-ranked sect like the Sky Sect.

Dan Chi was about to speak when Jiang Chen waved his hand. "Palace Head Dan Chi, what need is there to borrow anything in order to behead a mere old dog?"

Dan Chi laughed heartily when he heard this. "Good! That's how a young hero should be! You should let your light shine when need be. Jiang Chen, I'll wait to drink and chat to your success in beheading Sunchaser's dog of a head!"

Sunchaser's face was livid as he roared, "Jiang Chen, youthful pride isn't your fault, but to be so arrogant as to respect no one, is! I will settle our old and new grudges today! I swear I am less than human if I don't rip you apart into thousands of pieces!"

Sunchaser made a grasping motion with his hands after speaking, producing a broadsword in his hand.

“Jiang Chen, you scum, die!”

The spirit pearl of fire and ice wasn’t just for defense, it would enhance attacks as well.

Sunchaser possessed a fire spirit constitution and had spent half his life tempering his fire cultivation. Prior to Jiang Chen’s appearance, his cultivation in the fire elemental energy had been the first amongst the sixteen kingdoms.

Dire cracks appeared in the air as Sunchaser swung the broadsword. Boundless fire elemental energy blazed forth, forming a wall of fire.

A fire dragon churned and created a sea of flames.

The sea of flames looked simple, but possessed the unique aura of the origin realm. It was as if the elemental energy had formed a cage that sealed off the air.

Once Jiang Chen was encircled by this sea, his only fate was to be refined to bits and pieces.

However, this kind of attack was simply too crude to Jiang Chen.

He opened his hands and vines from sixteen ice lotuses, astonishing in thickness and size, instantly formed and gave rise to all sorts of ice barriers. They created an ice wall as solid as a mountain in the blink of an eye.

Bam!

The flame waves instantly halted when they crashed into the ice wall.

The two enormous powers dissipated with a loud hiss, just like the powers of fire and water ramming into each other.

Jiang Chen made hand seals and transformed the waves from the melted ice wall into the force of the Vast Ocean Current Splitter, taking the opportunity to counter-attack.

The pace of the battle had moved swiftly and the shift in his technique was so exquisite that it was like the moving clouds and flowing waters, accomplished smoothly in a single breath.

Dan Chi's face was wreathed in smiles when he saw how adeptly and easily Jiang Chen utilized his techniques.

"Jiang Chen hasn't disappointed me alright. To speak nothing of his body condition, the usage of these techniques alone is enough to hail him as a super genius. Good, good, good! It looks like I've made the right bet this time again."

Dan Chi was a very charismatic and ambitious person. Ever since he'd taken control of the Regal Pill Palace, he'd desired to spread his wings and bring the Regal Pill Palace to the peak of its glory.

He himself was a martial dao genius just as well. To be able to hold his own with the other old monster heavyweights of the Myriad Domain was a testament to his potential and talent.

It was precisely because Dan Chi was younger and possessed such charisma that he was an extraordinary sect head in the Myriad Domain. He had lofty ambition and noble aspirations, a decisive and authoritative style that enabled him to do as he pleased. He was never the sort to dither or hem and haw.

Just like how he'd proceeded allying with the Precious Tree Sect.

Dan Chi had set his eyes on Jiang Chen and proceeded forward no matter the criticism and objections from the outside world, never holding any regret.

He'd now received the return for his actions in the form of Jiang Chen!

Sunchaster snorted softly, not panicking when he saw the force from this stroke roll forth. He swept across with his broadsword and deflected the oncoming attack.

However, turbulent emotions arose in Sunchaser's heart from this short exchange.

With his cultivation near the earth origin realm and the aid from the spirit pearl of fire and ice, he actually hadn't gained the upper hand at all!

Jiang Chen's rate of improvement had truly astounded him.

"If I can't kill this troublemaker today, I may actually be the one to be trounced and killed by him next time! I must kill him no matter the cost today!"

A murderous light shone in his eyes as killing intent exploded ten times over.

"Bastard, it's either you or me today!"

Sunchaser reached with his hand as he spoke, a string of red prayer beads appearing within.

As soon as he flung the prayer beads into the air, they actually grew bigger! Each bead actually transformed into a sinister and horrifying skull.

Sunchaser cackled, "Jiang Chen, you have the chance to taste what it feels like to be burned by heavenly fires today!"

He pointed with his broadsword as the prayer beads started rotating rapidly. The twenty four skulls hummed as they closed in.

The skulls were blazing bright, as if each of them nurtured a volcano inside that would erupt with wanton abandon at any moment.

“Heavenly fire, descend!”

The twenty four skulls seemed to be alive in that moment as their orifices lit up, shooting forth with blue flame that rumbled downwards.

With their open orifices, the twenty four skulls seemed like an endless stream of heavenly fire, shooting downwards like meteors. It was as if a pill cauldron had been overturned and countless heavenly meteors had descended into the mortal realm.

And the flames were all blue!

When flames turned blue, this entailed that the fire wasn’t ordinary, but one with extraordinary origin.

Although it was an exaggeration to call it heavenly fire, it was definitely not on the same level as ordinary fire elemental energy!

Chapter 453: Chasing Sunchaser

“Be careful Jiang Chen, this are the true flames of the origin realm, something that the flames of the spirit realm are unable to measure up to.” Thousandleaf couldn’t help but speak up in reminder on the outskirts of the match.

Although Dan Chi hadn’t made a sound and appeared quite at ease, he couldn’t help but be a bit worried internally.

Having received Feng Beidou’s treasure, Sunchaser’s strength was sure to have been enhanced. Otherwise, a mere Sunchaser would’ve never displayed such terrifying strength with this move alone.

If this match had occurred before he’d broken through to the origin realm, Jiang Chen would’ve never dared use the Lotus to meet these true flames of the origin realm.

But now—

The Lotus had had a tangible breakthrough in its form after breaking through to the origin realm.

It was a heavenly level of spirit creature to begin with. Even that spirit pearl of fire and ice was far less than the Lotus in terms of quality.

However, the Lotus was currently far from evolving into its

ultimate form.

It’s just that Jiang Chen had tapped into all of its strengths after breaking through to the origin realm.

He’d made up his mind to thoroughly chase after and trounce Sunchaser this time.

He wouldn’t reduce any of his momentum in caution in matter what treasure Feng Beidou gave to Sunchaser.

A cold smile played about the corners of his lips.

Suddenly, whooshing sounds came into being around Jiang Chen as seventy two vines grew almost in unison around him, as if seventy two wild lesser dragons rising up from the abyss.

Thirty six fire lotuses were arranged on the outer layers, with thirty six ice lotuses arrayed inside, protecting Jiang Chen in the core zone.

The evolved Lotus had more of a fey and unnatural presence to it.

Petals shifted as they overlapped, with the petals from the ice lotuses forming thirty six defensive walls around Jiang Chen in an instant.

The vines of the fire lotuses rise even higher, fighting for space in

the air as if the lesser dragons were fighting for to be first.

The petals of the fire lotuses opened like the bloody, yawning maws of ancient beasts. They swallowed each gout of flame as fast as lightning.

This situation seemed to be one in which the heavenly fires were locusts filling the air, and the fire lotuses were birds that were devouring the locusts, making swift and clean work of their prey.

The fire lotus vines twisted and swayed, agile to the extreme. When thirty six fire lotuses all moved at the same time, the impressive scene was actually one in which the hundred or so gouts of flame were unable to break through the blockade of the fire lotuses.

“Mm?”

Feng Beidou was surprised when he saw this play out. “This lotus is quite eerie and bizarre. What is it?”

“This lotus actually has attributes of both fire and ice!” Dan Chi was also slightly startled by this. Joy bloomed on his face. “He is one of great fortune indeed.”

When everyone saw that Jiang Chen was actually able to hold up beneath Sunchaser’s attack, those in the audience were equally astonished.

Thanks to the effects of the spirit pearl of fire and ice, Sunchaser's attack was more than double what he could muster at his peak condition.

This kind of attack put him on par with an expert of the earth origin realm.

But Jiang Chen, a twenty year old young man had dispelled his attacks with such a magnificent presence!

"What?!" Incredulity shot out of Sunchaser's eyes. He knew that Jiang Chen had a miraculous lotus, which was why he'd used most of his strength in this attack.

However, his true flames at the origin level had been completely devoured by the other. This was simply too great of a blow to Sunchaser's confidence.

This was the move that he was most proud of and the one that he thought was fatal without question!

If Jiang Chen had used all of his strength and barely managed to block it, then Sunchaser might not have been as surprised then.

But to have it all swallowed by the fire lotuses, this feeling was like a punch at full strength had landed on cotton, as if a stone had been chucked into the ocean without the slightest ripple resulting from it.

Jiang Chen had deployed the Lotus with his fullest strength just now out of caution as well.

He too was privately startled when he saw the fire lotus devour all of the flames, and his ice lotus defenses remained completely unused.

Jiang Chen had only known that the Lotus has greatly increased in power following his breakthrough to the origin realm.

He never would've thought that the fire lotuses' devouring abilities would've risen so much all of a sudden. He'd thought that the fire lotuses would be insufficient and a portion of the fires would land, putting the ice lotus defenses to use.

Who knew that the Lotus would give Jiang Chen such an enormous surprise!

He became more confident in that moment.

Having experienced Sunchaser's trump card, Jiang Chen's bearing became much more confident as he laughed heartily.

"Old dog Sunchaser, if this is all you've got, then this day next year will be your memorial day!"

After the thirty six fire lotus vines had swallowed the flames, their forms were enhanced even more. Each fire lotus was as if a gluttonous wild beast, broiling forth with overbearing momentum

and pouncing towards Sunchaser with intersecting light from the flames.

Sunchaser sucked in a breath when he saw the fire lotuses bearing down on him. He could feel the noticeable difference in momentum between the attack from the Lotus this time and the one he'd weathered last time.

He'd been able to hack off multiple vines when he swung his broadsword last time.

This time, the bones had obviously improved many times over from no matter what aspect one looked at it.

The thirty six fire lotus vines continued to extend, intersecting and entwining with each other in midair, forming narrow cages in the air in the blink of an eye.

The most frightening thing was that when the fire lotuses neared Suncahser, they had become obviously much thicker, the girth of a grown man's thigh.

In addition, the fire lotus vines were noticeably more tenacious than last time.

Sunchaser swept sideways with one stroke.

One vine was severed and fell to the ground.

However, Sunchaser's momentum was also halted. There was actually no more power behind this stroke after his first cut.

"How is this possible?! I could hack off multiple vines with just one stroke last time. But now, sixty to seventy percent of my strength was enough for only one vine?"

The other vines all circled forth when this thought traveled through his mind, continuously pressing forward as if they wanted to crush the very air around Sunchaser.

The vine that he'd chopped away at returned to normal with a quick shake of itself.

Unless the Flaming Heart of Ice was destroyed, cutting off the vines were absolutely not sufficient to extinguish the life of a Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice.

A trance of fear and panic swept through Sunchaser's heart when he saw this.

The strength and tenacity of the evolved form of this unnatural lotus was far beyond his expectations.

He continued to swing his sword, severing a vine with every swing, but the speed of his movements couldn't keep up with the fire lotuses' shifts at all.

The air around him was being gradually conquered after a while, forcing him into an ever decreasing circle.

When he saw this scene, Feng Beidou's face was as dark was the deepest water. He'd obviously witnessed the extraordinary aspects of Jiang Chen.

Sunchaser wouldn't be able to hold up at all at this rate.

Dan Chi's feelings were precisely the opposite of Feng Beidou's, feeling that he'd picked up a treasure. A twenty year old young man was able to suppress an old monster in the origin realm having just entered the origin realm himself!

Even if he surveys everyone within the Myriad Domain, Jiang Chen was an eye catching existence nonetheless.

Although Dan Chi's eyes remain firmly fixed on the battle, his consciousness was covering the entire area and had long since witnessed the reactions of the young geniuses of the Myriad Domain.

"Heh heh, these young geniuses in the Myriad Domain have always thought quite highly of themselves and never even looked properly at a remote place such as the sixteen kingdoms. Jiang Chen's performance today is forcing them to set aside their egos and properly look at this genius from a faraway place!"

It was just as Dan Chi was thinking, the young Myriad Domain

geniuses present was finding it difficult to recover from the shock in their hearts.

They had heard of Jiang Chen's repute as a genius, but only truly understood in the moment why his name would spread from a mere sixteen kingdom alliance to the entire Myriad Domain.

Even the most preeminent genius in the Myriad Domain had to admit that this level of cultivation would ensure that Jiang Chen was listed in the future lists of geniuses in the Myriad Domain.

Feng Beidou's expression was dark, whereas Zuo Lan behind him felt as if he'd fallen into an icy cavern. He had a feeling that if Sunchaser failed, the Sky Sect's plan to enter the sixteen kingdoms would be an utterly failure.

He would also be affected as a result.

When his thoughts travelled here, Zuo Lan couldn't reign his temper in as he shouted, "Sunchaser, if you cannot win this fight, then the entire Purple Sun Sect will be your funeral object!"

Zuo Lan no longer stayed demure at this time.

Sunchaser was hit with a jolt to the heart when he heard this. Even though Zuo Lan didn't represent Feng Beidou's intentions when he spoke, he wasn't that far off either.

"The envoys of the Sky Sect all have hearts of stone and will

surely do as they say. If I lose this match, the sect will surely be done for!”

Sunchaser’s heart burned with anxiety, but all his methods were unable to break through the defenses of that bizarre lotus.

He was incredibly conflicted for a moment as the domineering Lotus had sealed off all space around him.

Scenes of hate and prior grudges flashed continuously through his mind.

“Jiang Chen!” The flames of fury burned within Sunchaser, turning his eyes bloodshot as he rasped out, “Don’t be too cocky too early! I’ll drag you down with me even if I die!”

Sunchaser had the sudden thought of going down in a blaze of glory with his enemy.

Jiang Chen snorted derisively as waved with a single hand, sending forth an explosive ray of golden light.

The golden light coalesced into a gale wind the next moment, churning into a terrifying storm cloud and shining throughout the entire area.

“Mm? What’s that?”

Everyone was dumbfounded by the sudden appearance of the golden light that had now roiled into a golden tornado with the backdrop of a storm.

Sunchaser felt his body sink into what felt a swamp in the next moment. It completely ignored his commands.

“No! What evil tricks has the kid used this time?!” Sunchaser roared continuously and tried to circulate his qi, attempting to detonate it and take Jiang Chen down with him in a suicide attack.

However his wishful thinkings were all confined in the restraints of the magnetic storm.

The magnetic storm was like golden mud, opponents being unable to escape from it unless they had a great divine art.

The golden light turned and formed a vortex, quickly sucking Sunchaser’s body in like a leaf.

The golden light seemed to be a millstone, grinding but once after taking in Sunchaser’s body and causing a ghastly cry to ring out.

Blood splattered everywhere in the next second.

Chapter 454: Destroying Sunchaser, Shocking Feng Beidou

Golden light churned as blood flew everywhere.

Sunchaser's cries were still ringing in the air when his body had finished being churned to bits. Not even a shard of bone was left as he was completely ground to dust.

Suddenly, the air shifted as a strange pearl shot out from the magnetic storm.

A fire lotus happened to extend one of its petals and swallowed the pearl.

Jiang Chen extended his arms and all the vines retreated with whooshes, instantly vanishing without a trace.

Apart from a ground strewn with gory bits, there was no other sign of Sunchaser.

Jiang Chen's speed from making his move to grinding up Sunchaser had been so fast that the eyes of everyone assembled hadn't moved swiftly enough to follow. There was only a puddle of blood and pieces left of Sunchaser when they reacted.

The assembly was quite without a sound, so deathly still that even a pin drop could be heard.

Even someone as strong as Feng Beidou hadn't been able to see what had happened when Jiang Chen's ball of golden light burst out.

Dan Chi seemed to have a nebulous understanding of what art Jiang Chen had used.

Only when the Lotus swallowed the spirit pearl of fire and ice did Feng Bediou react, a frosty glare shooting out of his eyes.

"You vile animal, how dare you land a fatal blow?!"

He reached out with a single hand after he spoke, shooting to Jiang Chen with a shift of his body.

Dan Chi arrived at almost the same time, probing out with his palm.

The two earth sage realm cultivators thrust a palm out at each other, the enormous origin power churning outwards like waves, freezing the very air at the scene.

Dan Chi followed through on his motion and sent Jiang Chen out of the ring.

He then swung back and stood there dashingly, laughing leisurely, "Envoy Feng, is the second match you and me? That's

just as well!”

Although the two earth sage realm cultivators had exchanged but one palm, they’d immediately probed the depths of each other’s cultivation.

Feng Beidou grew inwardly stern as he was extremely shocked.

“Isn’t this Dan Chi only at fourth level sage realm? Why is the power behind his blow so immense? It’s absolutely not subpar to fifth level sage realm. Has this Dan Chi recently broken through again?”

Feng Beidou has broken through in the past couple of days to the fifth level sage realm. This strength plus his own foundations from the Sky Sect had made him feel that he could overpower anyone in the Myriad Domain.

With the information he’d gathered, the most that any of the Myriad Domain heavyweights were was only fifth level sage realm.

As for Dan Chi, reports showed he was only at fourth level sage realm.

But Feng Beidou had felt power through the blow just now that’s not in any way inferior to his.

He sank into silent contemplation when faced with the proud, expansive Dan Chi.

He couldn’t afford to lose this match. Once he lost to Dan Chi, it would spell the end of the entire Sky Sect plans for the sixteen kingdoms, not just himself.

Once this happened, he would become a laughingstock within the Sky Sect no matter how high his position. He may even be punished and his future bleak as a result.

Feng Beidou had planned on having Sunchaser win, then sending out his ninth rank inspector and win out over the vice head of the Regal Pill Palace.

In this way, he wouldn’t have to take the field himself after winning two matches.

However, Sunchaser’s defeat knocked everything askew.

Dan Chi was precisely betting on this and using the psychological advantage of Jiang Chen’s went to start up the offensive, immediately gaining the upper hand in terms of momentum.

The dominance of the momentum of a sage realm cultivator was wholly different to that of the origin realm.

The origin realm was a process of refining spirit power, and using the essence of spirit power to form a nascent soul within the body.

The sage realm was the ascension of the origin realm.

If an analogy was made between the nascent soul of the origin realm and a towering tree, then the sage realm was a method of training the world within one's body, as if countless towering trees forming a forest.

Therefore, sage realm cultivators were also hailed sages of inner cultivation.

Sages of inner cultivation were divided into nine levels, but people were used to calling them mortal sage realm, earth sage realm, and sky sage realm to differentiate between the levels.

First to third level sage realm were all mortal sage realm. When one broke through to the mortal sage realm, three flowers would blossom over their heads.

Fourth to sixth level were earth sage realm. Golden lotuses would surge out of the ground when one broke through, presenting a most impressive sight.

Seventh to ninth were of sky sage realm. When one broke through to the sky sage realm, the phenomenon would be even more grand. Blossoms would rain down from the heavenly maids, the delicate fragrance of a cascade of flowers would travel for hundreds of kilometers.

Dan Chi had broken through to the earth sage realm ten years

ago. At his age, he held the record for the youngest to break through in the last millennium in the Myriad Domain.

He'd halted at the fourth level for the past decade, unable to advance.

Nothing changed until a while ago when Elder Shun had traveled to the Regal Pill Palace and resided for seven days, teaching Dan Chi many things, and telling Dan Chi about Jiang Chen, as well as issuing a reminder regarding the Requiem Wood.

In the last seven days, Elder Shun had passed on a few arts to Dan Chi according to the latter's cultivation leanings, giving him pointers that helped him ascend to the fifth level.

With Elder Shun's teachings, Dan Chi's cultivation had instantly taken a step forward to a new step. The tutelage from the seven days had brought Dan Chi to a whole new world of martial dao.

Dan Chi's worldview had been qualitatively enhanced as well, greatly boosting his confidence.

Therefore, even though he faced a tenth rank inspector from the Sky Sect at this moment, he didn't mentally shy away in the least. He was actually the one who issued the challenge instead.

Add to that Jiang Chen's utter victory, he held another psychological advantage.

The ninth rank inspector wearing the blue robe of three stars immediately detected the subtle undercurrents of the situation. He snorted softly and took a step forward to say, “It’s always been soldier against soldier, general facing general since ancient times. I am a ninth rank inspector of the Sky Sect, and am willing to face any expert of the Regal Pill Palace apart from Palace Head Dan Chi.”

The appearance of this person instantly broke the odd tension of the scene.

It was apparent that this Hua surnamed inspector also knew of the great momentum behind Jiang Chen’s victory, making it so that Feng Beidou was no longer confident of a surefire win over Dan Chi.

He had to step out and shatter this odd situation.

He was confident that apart from Dan Chi, he would be able to win out over anyone else in the Regal Pill Palace.

As long as he took home a victory, morale would swing back over to the Sky Sect side. Feng Beidou would no longer have a psychological disadvantage if he took the field then.

Feng Beidous was delighted and rather admired his knowing subordinate. He chuckled, “Hua Qianshan, ninth rank inspector. He is my right hand man. Dan Chi, if anyone apart from you can win out over him, then my Sky Sect will concede the bet.”

Feng Beidous smiled slightly, removing himself from the awkward situation.

A mocking smile played about Dan Chi's lips as he looked at Feng Beidou deeply with a meaningful gaze. He suddenly smiled bizarrely and laughed. "Envoy Feng, retreating from the brink of battle and sending out a subordinate instead? Doesn't this tell everyone that you were afraid just now? A vaunted Sky Sect envoy avoiding battle? Now won't this damage Sky Sect reputation if it were to travel?"

You, Feng Beidou, want to send your man out first and avoid this awkward situation? That's running from battle!

Dan Chi was going to call him out on it and leave him no place to hide.

Indeed, Feng Beidou's fan chilled. "Avoiding battle? Dan Chi, you think too highly of yourself. It'll be all the same if you challenge me after your Regal Pill Palace has made it past Hua Qianshan."

"Haha, aren't Envoy Feng's words just trying to deceive yourself? If my Regal Pill Palace makes it past Hua Qianshan, what right does your Sky Sect have to issue another challenge? Envoy Feng, by running and hiding like this in the face of the fear in your heart, you won't have the slightest chance to win even if there is a third match!"

Dan Chi continued to strength his insinuations in order to force Feng Beidou into a corner.

One had to say, his mental attacks were quite useful. Feng Beidou found himself in an awkward situation after just a few words.

Even the various heavyweights of the Myriad Domain all felt that Dan Chi was dominating Feng Beidou's presence.

A mighty tenth rank inspector of the Sky Sect was being dominated? This made the scales of victory in everyone's hearts unconsciously tilt towards Dan Chi.

Dan Chi smiled dashing and turned to speak to Vice Head Xuan Zhen, "Xuan Zhen, it's for the best if you win this match, but matters not if you lose."

Xuan Zhen nodded slightly. He felt even less pressure since Dan Chi had spoke such and only needed to give it his best.

Hua Qianshan of the three starred blue robe was the at the peak of the second level sage realm, nearing third level.

When the Sky Sect's legacy was thrown in the mix, his strength was quite astounding. When the battle began, Xuan Zhen was forced to constantly play defense.

It was a good thing that the latter was deserving of his title as a vice head in the Regal Pill Palace.

Even though he was constantly on the defensive, it didn't appear that he would lose anytime soon.

Even though Hua Qianshan's attacks were as numerous and powerful as the tides, Xuan Zhen's defenses were as if a needle hidden in cotton. He would show some of his light occasionally and make a brilliant comeback, making Hua Qianshan unable to fully immerse himself into the attacks.

This kind of tempo utterly mesmerized the audience.

Although the exchanges at this level didn't seem as magnificent as the fight between Jiang Chen and Sunchaser, there was a lot more to this match to those in the know.

Apart from a few sage realm experts present, even those at the peak of the origin realm could only somewhat manage to grasp what was going on.

As for the four great sects of the sixteen kingdoms, they were basically just watching a show. They only knew that the match was astounding, but had no idea what made it so.

Apart from Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen was focused on observing the fight, his eyes boring into every move like torches, not willing to let a single detail escape.

The memories from his past life had already set him apart from others. Training the God's Eye and Evil Golden Eye had made his vision far surpass others.

In this way, a fight that even Forefather Thousandleaf and the others were unable to understand was highly fascinating to Jiang Chen. He observed all of the essence of this match.

"The experts of the sage realm all have admirably wonderful momentum. At times unrestrained, at times reserved. They have a momentum that triggers the heaven and earth between their attacks and defenses. If an origin realm cultivator tried to partake in such a match, they likely wouldn't even make it past one move." Jiang Chen watched as he reflected.

In the world of martial dao, the difference of one entire martial dao realm was indeed a difference between heaven and earth.

In the true qi realm, spirit realm cultivators could slaughter them in a second, whereas origin realm forefathers could trample all spirit realm cultivators.

Now that sage realm cultivators were fighting in front of him, it was apparent that origin realm cultivators were just as insignificant as ants as well!

Chapter 455: A Fight Between Earth Sage Realm, Golden Lotuses Surge

The sect heavyweights of the Myriad Domain continuously sent silent messages to their sect geniuses, explaining some of the key points of this battle.

The first rate sects had all brought their premier geniuses this time. Although they were quite a ways away from the sage realm, they had witnessed many things, including matches between those of the sage realm thanks to being born of the great sects.

They naturally comprehended much thanks to the analysis of their sect powerhouses.

As for the young geniuses of the second and third rate powers, their potential was a bit worse to begin with, and their powers of comprehension a bit less. Add to that the strength of their sect's experts were far removed from that of the first rate sects, it was obvious that their explanations were much were crude.

Only Jiang Chen had no need for a running commentary.

Dan Chi didn't seem inclined to pay him any attention either. Rather, he leisurely watched the match with a slight smile on his face.

Dan Chi had quite a stratagem up his sleeve at the moment.

Whether Xuan Zhen won or lost, neither outcome would affect his dao heart.

In fact, Dan Chi rather wished that Xuan Zhen wouldn't win, so that he would have the opportunity to fight Feng Beidou.

Dan Chi deeply yearned for this battle.

He craved the challenge of facing off with a tenth rank inspector of the Sky Sect. This fight would be the one that spread his name throughout the Myriad Domain.

Suddenly, Dan Chi looked sideways in Jiang Chen's direction.

He saw that Jiang Chen was watching with great interest, missing not the slightest detail from the ring. The light of contemplation and theorization even appeared in his eyes as the fight progressed.

"Mm?" Dan Chi found this interesting. "Jiang Chen looks thoughtful at a match between the sage realm. Can it be that he understands it?"

Dan Chi found this incredible.

He looked again at the origin realm cultivators around him. Although they were all watching intently, the look swirling in their eyes indicated that they only understood parts of this match.

However, Dan Chi saw traces of something else from Jiang Chen.

“Astounding, simply astounding. If it wasn’t for tangible evidence, I would never believe that this genius is only twenty years old. Just what kind of feng shui does the Eastern Kingdom boast to have cultivated this kind of genius?”

Dan Chi was quite curious about Jiang Chen at this moment.

“The mysterious elder issued repeated reminders for me to pay attention to Jiang Chen. It looks like he must be a genius who the mysterious elder has personally raised and is fated to rise in the Myriad Domain.”

Dan Chi recalled Elder Shun and although the latter had never told Dan Chi his name, the mysterious senior had long since possessed the status of a god in Dan Chi’s heart.

Seven days worth of pointers from Elder Shun had been worth more than ten years worth of effort and accumulation from Dan Chi.

Pointers at his stage of cultivation were something that no legacy or pills were able to help him with.

It was just like how one saw vastly different scenery and worldview from a thousand meters versus ten thousand meters.

Increasing his martial dao cultivation was one thing, the most vital thing was that Elder Shun's pointers had improved his knowledge of martial dao.

Dan Chi couldn't help but speculate when he looked at Jiang Chen, "Jiang Chen must have an inexplicable relationship with the mysterious senior. The senior must be a reclusive expert from the Upper Eight Realms. He might even be an 'emperor realm' cultivator!"

The emperor realm was after the sage realm.

Those at the peak of the emperor realm were hailed Great Emperor.

Great Emperors were the pinnacle of existence in the entire Divine Abyss Continent.

These characters almost never ventured out. If they did, a mere stop of their foot was enough to make the entire Continent shake.

From Dan Chi's understanding of the Continent, the Upper Eight Realms were of the highest existence.

Even he only somewhat knew of the even more mysterious places beyond. He heard of them occasionally, but didn't know what was true or false.

"Even if this mysterious senior isn't a Great Emperor, he is surely

at the peak of the emperor realm. That I, Dan Chi, could receive seven days worth of pointers from him is good fortune of three lives. If Jiang Chen is the personal disciple of that senior, then his future is without bounds! However, I wonder why the senior has let him remain in the Myriad Domain. There must be a covert reason behind this. Since the senior wishes to act through my Regal Pill Palace, then I cannot shirk from this responsibility. Not only is this my chance, it is an opportunity for the Regal Pill Palace!"

Dan Chi had long since revered Elder Shun as a deity, and was treating Elder Shun's words as infallible law.

Suddenly, a thought struck Dan Chi as he moved lightly to Jiang Chen. He smiled faintly, "Young friend Jiang Chen, I am Dan Chi, the Palace Head of the Regal Pill Palace."

A light winked through Jiang Chen's eyes when he saw Dan Chi.

"Jiang Chen greets Sage Dan Chi."

"Haha, no need to stand on ceremony. Everyone has been belittling, slandering and suspecting me, or even thinking that I've gone mad in allying with the Precious Tree Sect. But from now on , they will envy, admire, or even hate that I've picked up a treasure."

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. "Sage Dan Chi is no ordinary person and thus does no ordinary actions."

No ordinary person and thus does no ordinary actions.

This judgement greatly pleased Dan Chi and he became wreathed in smiles. He looked upon Jiang Chen with a great deal more favor after these words, and he vaguely felt that someone who understood him stood in front of him.

Dan Chi had always had a unique style in the way he did things. He never did followed protocol and often did things out of the ordinary.

His methods were completely embodied by Jiang Chen's words.

Indeed, he was no ordinary person, so his actions were often unexpected and therefore extraordinary in the eyes of outsiders.

"Good, good!" Dan Chi lauded. "Jiang Chen, I only have one thing to say, and that's the doors of the Regal Pill Palace are always open to you. Of the talents in the younger generation that I know, if you rank second, no one will dare rank first."

This was an exceedingly high compliment.

Jiang Chen didn't attempt to humbly decline the compliment as he smiled openly and then looked to the ring again.

"Jiang Chen, what do you think of this match?"

“Every move and technique of those in the sage realm all trigger reactions in the heaven and earth and are full of meaning. Vice Head Xuan Zhen does not have a high chance of winning this match.”

Jiang Chen spoke candidly.

Dan Chi also laughed heartily. “My compliments! Few origin realm cultivators can have the same foresight as you. Jiang Chen, even if I were to place you in the rankings of the Myriad Domain geniuses right now, you would absolutely make it into the top thirty.”

“Top thirty?” Jiang Chen chuckled. ‘It looks like there is much motivation for me to train well.”

Top thirty?

This wasn’t the ranking that Jiang Chen wanted.

Even top ten or five wasn’t the ranking that Jiang Chen wanted, much less top thirty.

What he desired was always that highest position. If he didn’t climb to the peak of the Divine Abyss Continent, then to him that meant he hadn’t succeeded.

The son of the Celestial Emperor, a million years in his past life. If he couldn’t reach the top of a continent in a plane of existence

with these advantages, then he would've truly failed from beginning to end.

The situation in the ring changed as they spoke.

A loud explosion rang out.

Xuan Zhen and Hua Qianli had slammed their palms together more than a dozen times. Xuan Zhen took a few steps backwards as their figures flashed to and fro, with Hua Qianli retreating a dozen steps as well.

Xuan Zhen clutched his chest with an ashen face and sighed bitterly, "Palace Head, your subordinate is incompetent."

Although Hua Qianli had won, it had been a very hard fought battle.

"Master Feng, your subordinate was lucky enough to not fail my mission." Hua Qianli raised his hands in a cupped fist salute, but both combatants suddenly opened their mouths at the same time and spat out a mouthful of blood.

Although Hua Qianli had won a hard fought battle, he'd paid the price with a mouthful of blood.

Feng Beidou nodded slightly, but he actually felt extremely awkward.

He even wished that Hua Qianli had lost in that moment. That way, he wouldn't have to take the field.

Even when he returned to the Sky Sect, he could point to Hua Qianli and Sunchaser as the ones responsible.

But now with Hua Qianli's win, he had to take the field as well.

Unfortunately, Dan Chi was absolutely commanding the mood of their match. Feng Beidou and been adjusting his mentality during the previous fight, but the crack that had appeared in his heart was yet to be repaired.

He knew that as long as this crack didn't heal, he would have a slim chance of winning in a fight against Dan Chi.

Whereas Dan Chi obviously planned on not giving Fei Beidou a single chance. He barked out in laughter, "Envoy Feng, it looks like our match is unavoidable. Whether it's your Sky Sect taking up position in the sixteen kingdoms alliance, or my Regal Pill Palace successfully allying with the Precious Tree Sect, the winner of our match will determine the outcome!"

Dan Chi had a grand presence to him as he circulated his qi as he spoke, golden light flaring out behind him and soaring to the clouds. Sage realm qi currents continuously flowed out of him to form golden lotuses as he took each step.

“Golden lotuses surging out of the earth!”

“It’s golden lotuses! He’s an earth sage realm expert alright!”

Three flowers over one’s head was the sign of the mortal sage realm, whereas golden lotuses was the hallmark symbol of an earth sage realm cultivator.

Suddenly, the golden currents drew Dan Chi’s body upwards as he shot into the sky in a beam of light.

“Feng Beidou, although we’re not of the sky sage realm, our cultivation has reached the level of fighting in the air. The Precious Tree Sect territory is small and likely will not hold up beneath our movements. Why don’t we fight in the air for our match. Are you brave enough to take the challenge?”

Sage realm cultivators could fly through the air through their own arts.

When they reached sky sage realm, it was as if they’d grown wings and possessed full freedom of movement.

Although Feng Beidou and Dan Chi were of the earth sage realm, they too had certain abilities to fly through air. Although they wouldn’t be as carefree as those in the sky sage realm, they could still fly smoothly through the air via certain arts.

Everyone was taken aback by Dan Chi’s proposal.

It wasn't that no one fought in the skies, but that this was usually done through steeds.

True fighting in the skies from only the cultivators themselves was quite rare.

It was an impossible sight in the sixteen kingdoms.

Blood thrummed through Jiang Chen's veins and adrenaline surged as he watched Dan Chi rise into the air in a column of golden colored light.

"Sage realm cultivators can fly through the air. It looks like I still have a long path to walk until I reach this step!"

Jiang Chen sighed, full of anticipation for the sage realm.

Chapter 456: A Match Full Of Suspense

The match between two sage realm cultivators had surpassed everyone's imagination. However, the two drifted further and further away, rising higher and higher as they fought. They were soon two black dots that were vanishing in the endless heavens.

This made those who were observing the match quite depressed.

The younger disciples in particular all wanted to summon their steeds and follow up on this match.

However, they halted by the heavyweights of their own sects.

"Boss, don't you have a Goldwing Swordbird? Let's go and take a look?" Tang Hong walked over with his eyes shining brightly with interest. It was obvious he wanted to witness the face off between sage realm cultivators.

Jiang Chen smiled leisurely, shaking his head slightly.

His powers of understanding weren't less than those of the heavyweights of the Myriad Domain in the slightest. He was naturally aware that there was an accord between Palace Head Dan Chi and Feng Beidou.

No matter who won, this match would involve the dignity of the sage realm cultivators.

Therefore, no matter who lost, no one wanted those beneath them to see them in such a state.

This was why the two had fought increasingly higher until they'd disappeared in the sky.

It was apparent that they wanted to find a place where they could give free reign to their abilities and battle to their heart's content.

If anyone acted insensibly at this time and followed to watch the match, they would offend both parties.

The powerhouses of the Myriad Domain were all slippery foxes and naturally understood the subtleties in this, which was why they'd prevented their disciples from acting on their impulses to observe the match.

"Heh heh, Tang Hong, your powers of comprehension are strong, but they're still less than Jiang Chen's. Palace Head Dan Chi and that Envoy Feng do not wish to be disturbed by the outside world. Whoever goes to watch the match will be offending both experts."

Forefather Thousandleaf walked over and issue an earnest warning.

Tang Hong mused for a bit and then grinned, looking up at the vast skies and sighed, "When will I, Tang Hong, be as strong as them?"

Jiang Chen laughed. “All is possible.”

On the Myriad Domain side, many were speculating about the fight that they couldn’t see.

Most still favored Dan Chi.

There weren’t any tricks to an exchange between experts. Whoever possessed a more dominating momentum would normally hold the initiative. It was easy enough to predict the outcome when one side controlled the initiative.

Although Feng Beidou hailed from the Sky Sect, it was a large sect after all. Even though his position was high, he wasn’t at the peak of his sect.

There were many at his level in the Sky Sect, so even if he’d received the heritage from the Sky Sect, he wouldn’t enjoy an unbelievable amount of resources from the sect.

Dan Chi was completely different. He was the Palace Head of the Regal Pill Palace, the one who held the greatest right to speak.

Therefore, he had the first right to divvy up all of the resources within the sect.

There was also no ground for criticism amongst all this. After all, his strength was the strongest and he made the greatest contributions to the Regal Pill Palace, and was the critical factor

why the Regal Pill Palace was on par with the other great powers within the Myriad Domain.

Therefore, when it came down to Dan Chi versus Feng Beidou, there wasn't much of a difference that one was from a fourth rank sect and the other a first rank sect. The proportion of resources that both received were precisely the opposite.

Feng Beidou shared the Sky Sect's resources with countless others at the same level as him, after those stronger than him had had their pickings.

Dan Chi, on the other hand, could use whatever he wished from the Regal Pill Palace.

Forefather Thousandleaf's countenance was grave as he looked at the vast skies.

Although nothing could be seen from the clear skies, his eyes never shifted away from them, not even for a moment.

His posture spoke volumes of just how nervous he was.

This match that they couldn't see would determine the fate of the Precious Tree Sect.

If Feng Beidou won, the the Precious Tree Sect would forever be relegated to being a Sky Sect vassal.

If Dan Chi won, then the Sky Sect would never interfere in the alliance between the Precious Tree Sect and the Regal Pill Palace.

This was two vastly different fates.

“Jiang Chen, who do you think will win this match?” At some unknown point, Lordmaster Ye Chonglou had started viewing Jiang Chen as one on a higher plane of existence as he sought Jiang Chen’s opinion.

“Palace Head Dan Chi has at least a seventy to eighty chance of winning.” Jiang Chen had his own way of judgement.

Forefather Thousandleaf and Ye Chonglou looked at each other, the nervous in their hearts abating slightly.

The two venerated origin realm cultivators couldn’t help but admire the calm in Jiang Chen’s demeanor.

Compared to his calm, the mindset of the two of them were far less than Jiang Chen’s.

When they looked at the location of the previous match and how there were only bloody fragments left of Sunchaser, Thousandleaf and Ye Chonglou were both assailed with a mix of emotions.

That overweeningly dominant Sunchaser had been annihilated,

just like that.

Although they had predicted that Jiang Chen would one day end his grudge with the Purple Sun Sect, they hadn't thought that this day would come so quickly.

The Purple Sun Sect was utterly done for with Sunchaser's death.

A beam of light flashed through the sky roughly two hours later. An astonishing arc drew across the skies like a flash of lightning as it suddenly fell to the ground.

The gazes of those assembled hurriedly flicked over. It was Dan Chi!

The envoys from the Sky Sect seemed to receive some sort of silent summons at almost the same time. Their expressions all changed greatly as they left rapidly.

Folks with faster reactions immediately understood what had happened with these series of changes.

"Sage younger brother Dan Chi, it looks like congratulations are in order." A sect heavyweight gave a long peal of laughter.

"Indeed, sage brother Dan Chi is a young ruler of great talent and bold vision in the Myriad Domain alright, to be able to defeat a Sky Sect tenth rank inspector. Congratulations, felicitations!"

Everyone walked up to offer their well wishes.

Although these words didn't represent the true thoughts in their hearts, such was the situation and no one would possible erupt in open hostilities with Dan Chi. They would have to keep faking it even though it was a sham.

Those of the Tristar Sect was all bizarrely taken aback. They were a side division of the Sky Sect and were naturally stunned to see the sect's envoy defeated by Dan Chi.

But their reactions couldn't appear out of the ordinary at this time. They could only pretend to remain calm and walk up to tender their congratulations.

Still, there was someone who couldn't help but ask, "Sage younger brother Dan Chi, just how did the fight between you and Feng Beidou go?"

Everyone saw that Dan Chi was still neat and orderly, not the slightest bedraggled hint about him. It looked like he'd taken that win quite easily?

This was something that no one was able to accept.

Dan Chi could win, but if he'd done so so easily against a tenth rank Sky Sect envoy. Then that was no good for any of them.

Even if he'd dogged the footsteps of the Sky Sect entering the Myriad Domain, Dan Chi was a hotly ambitious fellow. There would come a day in which he was the greatest threat in the Myriad Domain.

This was making to denying a tiger the front door, but having a wolf slip in the back.

However, Dan Chi was someone of the Myriad Domain and no one could come up with any reason to kick him out.

Dan Chi laughed leisurely with a mysterious smile. "Feng Beidou comes from he Sky Sect and his strength is no small thing. It was difficult to determine who was more superior between the two of us, and I had to rely on my glib tongue in the end to convince him to back out."

No one believed this excuse.

However, Dan Chi offered no other response no matter how they asked.

He only continuously brought out fine wine to treat all of the guests.

Jiang Chen had given off great splendor in this match, and was now naturally the focus of all sorts of powers.

Countless geniuses kept coming up to toast him. Jiang Chen

declined no one and offered the fullest courtesies.

However, he also noticed that those who came to toast him were the disciples from the second rate, or even third rate sects in the Myriad Domain.

The geniuses of those top sects were each more demure than the last. They would only occasionally use a sort of measuring look to size up Jiang Chen.

There was a hint of provocation and even a desire to incite something in their gazes.

It was apparent that they didn't plan on happily welcoming his sudden appearance in the Myriad Domain.

Jiang Chen didn't care in the slightest.

The experiences of his two lifetimes had crafted his noncommittal attitude.

He wouldn't purposefully curry favor with anyone, nor would he purposefully take a dislike to anyone.

As for whether or not someone else liked or accepted him, it mattered not to Jiang Chen at all. He was well aware that there would be boundless scenery in the path of martial dao, and those who would cross paths with him weren't that many.

Everything else was but illusions of smoke, not worth paying attention to.

The banquet lasted for a few more hours before ending.

The guests patently didn't wish to spend too much time in a place like the Precious Tree Sect, and they all took their leave.

Dan Chi suddenly started laughing loudly when all the guests had left. He rose and gazed upon the arc of the bright moon that had risen in the night sky.

"We see not the moon of ancient times, yet the moon of today has once shone upon those in ancient times. Powerhouse cultivators have been as numerous as a school of silver carps moving down the stream since ancient times, yet how many have witnessed eternity? If those of my generation do not achieve the limitless dao, then we will one day become a mark in history as we sit drinking happily beneath this moon, destined to never keep this moon company. Jiang Chen, do you feel that there eternity exists in the world of martial dao?"

Dan Chi suddenly felt an upwelling of emotion as he asked, gazing upon that bright arc in the sky.

Dan Chi's words had also triggered some of Jiang Chen's emotions.

The moon hanging in the sky had shone upon countless years, generation upon generation, great waves washing away the sands. How many once unsurpassed experts ultimately became a pile of white bones in the end?

On the path of martial dao, if one couldn't achieve eternity, it was all for naught no matter how much strength and power one possessed.

Sighing softly, Jiang Chen nodded decisively. "We seek immortality in our pursuit of martial dao. I firmly believe that if there is a peak to this path, then that peak will enable us to surpass reincarnation and obtain eternity."

No one had more authority to speak on this matter than Jiang Chen.

This was because his past father, the Celestial Emperor, was one who had surpassed the cycle of reincarnation.

However, Jiang Chen had no clues as to whether his father was still alive after the cataclysm from the heavenly law.

But as the ultimate peak of martial dao, eternity surely did exist at the limits of the universe.

Jiang Chen had never doubted this.

Dan Chi laughed heartily upon seeing this. "Good! Great minds

think alike. Jiang Chen, you are one in my Regal Pill Palace from now on. Do you have any objections?”

“The sage one has committed such an earth shaking action for me. If I were to refuse, would that not be incredibly ungrateful? From henceforth, the Regal Pill Palace and Precious Tree Sect are both my sects.”

Jiang Chen didn’t have any lofty, stirring words, but this expression was more trustworthy than any promise.

Thousandleaf and Ye Chonglou both looked at each other, deeply gratified.

Chapter 457: The Olden Times Of The Myriad Domain

"When did you break through to the origin realm, Jiang Chen?" Dan Chi suddenly asked this random question out of nowhere.

Jiang Chen started, "A few days ago actually. I've been solidifying my grasp over my breakthough all this time."

Truth be told, he'd actually held back on his words.

He'd actually broken through today, and the phenomenon in the heavens that had been triggered as a result all had to do with him.

Except, this matter was simply too astounding, and so he subconsciously wanted to conceal it.

Dan Chi sighed lightly when he heard this, seeming to have not received the answer he wanted. He wasn't discouraged however, "Did you see the stunning phenomenon earlier today?"

Jiang Chen grew cautious as he nodded his head. "I saw it in the Precious Tree Garden as well. This disturbance was the reason why I stopped training and prepared to leave."

His response was flawless.

It wasn't that Jiang Chen was a fake person or that he

purposefully wanted to lie to anyone, but that he knew if he admitted that he'd caused such a stunning disturbance in merely breaking through to the origin realm, the effects from his words would cause utter chaos.

He would absolutely become the center of attention if he spoke truthfully.

This was an unwise decision for Jiang Chen. The more he had the limelight before he had enough strength to dominate the Divine Abyss Continent, the more dangerous it would be for him.

That a mere origin realm like him to have caused so much disturbance would certainly elicit the interest of many old monsters, not to talk of anything else. If anyone became curious and nabbed him for further study, he'd be in great trouble then.

Therefore, he decided to craft a white lie with regards to this question.

The look in Dan Chi's eyes suddenly became exceedingly deep.

"Everyone, the current situation in the sixteen kingdoms is but the tip of the iceberg. According to my calculations, the Myriad Domain will encounter even more chaos from now on, with possibly turbulent times ahead for the entire Divine Abyss Continent. This may be the arrival of a grand era, or the harbinger of great disaster."

“Perhaps you might think I’m being a bit of an alarmist, but the truth is, the Myriad Domain will certainly fall into chaos within ten years, and the entire situation of the Continent falling into disarray as well.”

Dan Chi’s tone had suddenly become quite grave.

A thought struck Ye Chonglou as he heard these words, having the feeling of great minds thinking alike.

He’d said similar in the Precious Tree Sect the other day, mentioning that the territory of the sixteen kingdoms was where the seal of the ancient demons were located.

“Sage Dan Chi, does your disturbance have to do with the ancient demon race?” Ye Chonglou plucked up his courage to ask.

Dan Chi sighed. “Not just the demon race. Different races stand in great numbers throughout the Divine Abyss Continent, with thousands and tens of thousands of different factions. From my vantage point, I am completely unable to foresee how the future of the world will look.”

If even an expert at Dan Chi’s level was saying so, that made the others even more apprehensive.

“Jiang Chen, I have been inferring the development of the Myriad Domain everyday for the last twenty years. There are no factors outside the scope of my deductions. However, you are an

unknown factor. I have never deducted your appearance, but there is a subtle fortune about you that even I am unable to predict. If the great disaster arrives in the future, then you may be the only one in the Myriad Domain who is able to break through the stalemate."

"What?" Even Vice Head Xuan Zhen, at Dan Chi's side, was slightly surprised by his head's words. "Palace Head, even you are unable to resolve the situation?"

Dan Chi laughed slightly. "Me? Xuan Zhen, although I am proud and certain of myself, I am only the mere head of a fourth rank sect in the end. When this disaster arrives, even the first rank sects may not be able to remain unscathed, much less than me, a mere Dan Chi!"

Everyone felt an immense weight press down on their hearts after these words. All felt quite stifled.

Forefather Thousandleaf couldn't help but ask, "Honored sage, just how strong is a first rank sect?"

"How strong?" Dan Chi's tone was full of admiration and yearning. "I'm unable to describe how strong they are, but ten Regal Pill Palaces, even a hundred of us may not be enough to contend against a first rank sect. The heavyweights of the first rank sects are all Titled Great Emperors."

"Titled Great Emperors?" Thousandleaf and Ye Chonglou exchanged glances. They were wholly unfamiliar with this

division.

“The emperor realm ranks above the sage realm, and only those at the peak of the former have the right to attempt to be a Titled Great Emperor. To become a Titled cultivator, one must have two victories over two other Titled cultivators or have four other Titled cultivators vouch for them to receive this title.”

Any of the Titled Great Emperors were highly proud personages with unparalleled self assurance. A group vouching for a candidate was almost impossible.

Therefore, the only way to become a Titled Great Emperor was to defeat two in battle and remain undefeated by them.

“Sage One, how many Great Emperors might there be in the many domains of the Divine Abyss Continent?”

“How many?” Dan Chi shook his head with a wry smile. “Those who are known to the outside world aren’t that many, but the true number of Great Emperors are absolutely not as few as they appear. The lifespan of a Great Emperor is at least three thousand years. Apart from those who have accidentally fallen in death, how many reclusive Titled Great Emperors might there be since ancient times? This is a tough riddle to answer.”

A Great Emperor could live at least three thousand years, at most six thousand. If they grasped even more profound secrets to life, it was possible that they could even live beyond ten thousand years.

Therefore, to Titled Great Emperors, the conflicts of the mundane world were often insufficient the arouse their interest.

Their pursuit lay in the even more mysterious heavenly law, garnering the ability to cast off their mortal body and peep at the heavenly law, ascending to an even more advanced stage of life.

The Divine Abyss Continent was as vast as the open seas, the size of its territory was far beyond the imagination of Thousandleaf and the others. Even the numbers of Titled Great Emperors were unable to be calculated, much less the total number of experts in the emperor realm.

“Setting aside the Titled Great Emperors, experts in the emperor realm are numerous in the Continent. However, there isn’t a single one in the Myriad Domain. With this contrast, this should be enough for you all to understand the gap between the Myriad Domain and the truly preeminent powers.”

There wasn’t a single emperor realm expert in the Myriad Domain, yet there were many in the entire continent.

“Ai, our sixteen kingdoms have always been frogs at the bottom of a well. We’ve always been worried that the various powers in the Myriad Domain would give up on us, but now it looks like that the Myriad Domain is in an equally awkward position in the Continent.”

Ye Chonglou was widely travelled and had seen his fair share of things. If even he was expressing such sentiment, then it was easy

to imagine the emotions in the hearts of others.

"The Myriad Domain shouldn't have been thus. We weathered a catastrophe six hundred years ago, with several of our emperor realm cultivators falling during it. The once mighty Myriad Empire also disintegrated as if a house of cards. From then on, the Myriad Domain was gravely injured and never regained its former glory. Otherwise, we wouldn't have absolutely no emperor realm cultivators at all even if we are just a lower region."

None in the Precious Tree Sect knew of this old history.

The Myriad Empire?

"This is to say that the Myriad Domain once had emperor realm cultivators?" Ye Chonglou was shocked.

"Naturally. There are more or less a few emperor realm cultivators holding down the fort in the other lower regions. the Myriad Domain is an anomaly. There is less than a hundred years until the redrawing of the territories that occurs once a millennium. If we do not produce an emperor realm cultivator in the next hundred years, then our downfall will be desolate indeed. We either be swallowed by others or become their vassals, or we might be thoroughly split up and lose the title of one of the lower regions."

Jiang Chen found this a bit hard to believe. "None of the forces in the Myriad Domain have a hidden emperor realm cultivator?"

Dan Chi shook his head resolutely. “Absolutely not. If there was, this expert only needed to step out and raise a cry to rebuild the Myriad Empire and unite us all. We wouldn’t need to worry about losing the title of a lower region even if we don’t revive the glories of yesteryear.”

“Then it looks like the Sky Sect was betting on this in deciding to make their move in the Myriad Domain, and in such an unbridled fashion as well.” Jiang Chen analyzed.

“Indeed.” Dan Chi nodded. “The various factions of the Myriad Domain now are all trying their best behind the scenes, bringing all their force to bear. Everyone wants to be the first to unite the Myriad Domain, rebuilding the Empire again. It’s a pity that the royal family has been thoroughly exterminated. If any sect boasted of an emperor realm cultivator one day, that sect would have the right to become the protector sect of the nation and can suppress the other faction. Although this isn’t a written rule, everyone privately acknowledges this idea.”

Whoever first boasted of an emperor realm cultivator would have the right to speak, and the initiative to rebuild the Empire!

“Sage One, just what catastrophe did the Myriad Domain experience that year, that the royal clan was exterminated? This is simply a bit too ridiculous, isn’t it?” Ye Chonglou asked out of curiosity.

“Ai, it’s truly a shame of the Myriad Domain. When the Myriad Domain was mighty and proud, the royal sons had likely grown accustomed to doing as they would in the bordering territories.

One particular royal son actually used despicable methods to sully a girl as he was traveling the Divine Abyss Continent. However, the girl had a very extraordinary identity. She was the sacred girl of a mid region who was experiencing the mundane world. The ruler of that mid region was enraged that their sacred girl had been violated and declared war on the Myriad Domain. One mid region possesses strength that is at least five times that of a lower region. He gathered the forces of some of his vassals and practically ground the Myriad Domain into the dust. If it wasn't for someone in one of the upper regions speaking out on our behalf, telling them that enough was enough, the entire Myriad Domain would've likely been annihilated. Even so, all of the cultivators at the sky sage realm and above were slaughtered, and the entire royal clan exterminated, not even a chicken or dog allowed to live."

Even though it'd been six hundred years already, the matter still seemed extremely grisly when Dan Chi spoke of it.

The listeners seemed to be able to feel the tyranny and dominance of the mid region faction from Dan Chi's words, and could almost smell the bloodshed from six hundred years ago.

The slaughter of all those in the sky sage realm and above, and the extermination of the royal bloodline.

It was likely that all within the Myriad Domain would've been razed had the one in the upper region not spoken out.

This incident had always been the same of the Myriad Domain, and all of the sects happened to act with great accordance together

in making this part of history taboo, utterly sealing off this humiliating memory.

If it wasn't for Dan Chi, Ye Chonglou and Thousandleaf would've had no way of learning about this.

Chapter 458: The Utmost Realm In The Myriad Domain

"Every powerful territory has a strong country exercising rule over the land. Some of the regimes hold actual power, others are just symbolic representation. But as long as there is one strong, ruling country present, that means this territory is united and as one. Right now, the Myriad Domain is a pile of loose sand, with no representative empire."

"The highest form of organization we can aspire to in the lower and middle regions is that of 'empire'. Only the Upper Eight Regions has the right to build a dynasty. What is a dynasty? An existence even stronger than an empire. A dynasty does not crumble even after weathering wind and rain. Some of the dynasties in the Upper Eight Regions have a history of over five thousand years!"

Dan Chi suddenly shook his head with a smile. "We seem to have gone off on a tangent. My greatest ambition in life is to rebuild the Myriad Empire. I don't want the Myriad Domain to become someone else's territory after a few hundred years, and us Myriad Domain natives to be someone else's slaves. This is our territory, and our ancestors have sweated, bled, and developed the land here. We cannot forfeit this land on our watch!"

Dan Chi had never even spoken of this in the Regal Pill Palace.

But now, he had finally opened up his heart here today.

Not for anyone else, but for Jiang Chen.

“Jiang Chen, if you are willing to aid me, I will give you whatever resources you seek from the Regal Pill Palace.”

Dan Chi suddenly looked at Jiang Chen with ardent sincerity.

“Sage One, I am but young, isn’t it embarrassing that you are placing such value on me?”

Dan Chi waved his hand, “Jiang Chen, I am not one for pleasantries. Although the Myriad Domain is vast and there are many sage realm experts, there are few who have caught my eye in recent years. There are less than ten who’ve done so in the younger generation, and you, you are the only one who has bestirred my heart. I have a sharp eye for people and I see in you a great fortune. The level of your fortune is absolutely enough to cleave open new land. Don’t be in a hurry to agree either. This matter is easily spoke of but hard to attain. I hope you respond only when you’ve thought things through. Even if you don’t agree, the alliance between our sects will still be in effect.”

Dan Chi was rather open and aboveboard. He didn’t threaten Jiang Chen with the alliance.

Jiang Chen could see in Dan Chi’s eyes a true heart of great aspirations and lofty ambitions. This heart was enough for Dan Chi to place his life on the line.

Cleaving open new land and building an empire—that was an enormous temptation to any man with ambitions and ideals.

Jiang Chen was no exception.

In the world of martial dao, it was impossible to always avoid conflict and risk.

Jiang Chen knew that if he were to proceed down this path, it was impossible to pay attention only to himself forever. He had to make some decisions in the face of the greater picture as well.

He could also see that Dan Chi's goals weren't only for himself. This was an exceedingly rare point, and one that Jiang Chen admired the most.

"Sage Dan Chi, although I am not an ambitious person, this kind of challenge seems quite interesting. If there comes a moment in which you can use my paltry strength, I will absolutely not demur."

Dan Chi laughed heartily. "Good, good! Although I know not where that phenomenon came from, it is surely an auspicious sign that it appeared in the Myriad Domain. I believe that this is an omen that our alliance is off to a perfect start."

Dan Chi was always that confident and so full of boundless enthusiasm.

“Gentlemen, although the Precious Tree Sect is in a remote location, this is also an opportunity for the Precious Tree Sect. You too must make a decision if you are content in exercising sovereignty over a small part of the domain, or are willing to follow the development of the situation. It will be a bit too late to choose when the situation has already formed. However, any decision will bear its own risk. I will not force you in this matter.”

Dan Chi turned to speak to Forefather Thousandleaf and Ye Chonglou.

Having weathered so many trials, the two had long since thought things through.

It was also impossible to remain ruler of their own little plot of land in these times.

The Sky Sect had reached out with its evil paws and the Myriad Domain was in a perilous situation. The surrounding territories were a ticking time bomb, ready to explode at any moment.

Even if the Precious Tree Sect dug a hole to hide themselves with, they would be hard pressed to escape.

They were well aware that if it wasn’t for the Regal Pill Palace’s surprise appearance, it was an unknown if they would’ve been able to dodge this disaster.

“Sage Dan Chi, it’s impossible for the Precious Tree Sect to

remain aloof in solitude as the greater picture develops. We are willing to follow behind the Regal Pill Palace and offer up what aid we can."

Forefather Thousandleaf said this seriously.

No matter what, their footing would be a bit more firm in the Myriad Domain with the Regal Pill Palace's backing. They'd have the taller Regal Pill Palace holding up the skies first if the latter happened to cave in.

If it was a disaster that not even the Regal Pill Palace could make through, then there was even less hope for the Precious Tree Sect.

Therefore, the smartest choice for the Precious Tree Sect now was to lash themselves to the Regal Pill Palace's war chariot. They shouldn't think too much or be a fence-sitter who swayed with every wind.

"Alright, since you are this forthright, I too will say this. As long as my Regal Pill Palace exists, so will the Precious Tree Sect."

This guarantee was worth a thousand gold, and had more weight than any promise.

Forefather Thousandleaf and Ye Chonglou were overjoyed to hear this.

"In addition, the various powers will converge on the ruins of the

Myriad Empire in three years to hold a memorial for the glories of the late Empire. This ceremony is held once every thirty years and hailed the Myriad Grand Ceremony. A new generation of the Myriad Hidden Dragon Rankings will be produced at this ceremony, and all the genius disciples will have the chance to cultivate in the Utmost Realm in the Myriad Domain."

"The Utmost Realm? What is that?"

"The Utmost Realm is a kind of place that almost every region has. It's a place in which the emperor realm experts enters at the end of their life, releasing the final essence of their life. The Utmost Realm is where the emperor realm cultivators of our Myriad Domain have gone to await rebirth since ancient times."

The so-called rebirth was essentially death. There was almost no chance that an emperor realm cultivator would retain memories of their past life after going through the wheel of reincarnation.

Therefore, this kind of awaiting rebirth was basically just waiting to die.

However, an emperor realm cultivator was an enormous sum of riches to those in the lower regions. It would be such a pity if they fell just like this.

Therefore, the Utmost Realm was a place in which the emperor realm cultivators could preserve the final traces of their dignity.

They could leave behind their own heritage, life's work, treasures, and matters of their life...

Of course, the Utmost Realm also represented a trace of hope.

If an emperor realm cultivator could receive the inspiration of others in such a realm and break through, they might transform into a Great Emperor after comprehending the peak of the emperor realm.

Their lifespan would be greatly increase all of a sudden.

Of course, the chances of this happening was one in a million. This had once occurred in other lower regions.

However, such a thing had never happened in the Myriad Domain. No one had ever emerged as if a butterfly from the cocoon after entering the Utmost Realm and ascending to Great Emperor.

Not everyone was lucky enough to run into something with such low chances.

"Jiang Chen, you've broken through to the origin realm at such a young age—your potential is absolutely amongst the top in the Myriad Domain. However, your origins were a bit lower and you're temporarily behind the other top geniuses of the other sects. But, many things can happen in three years. I believe that you will absolutely catch up after three years. Your name is sure to grace the Hidden Dragon Rankings!"

Dan Chi encouraged Jiang Chen to the maximum.

Forefather Thousandleaf however, asked, “At what ranking does one need to be in order to enter the Utmost Realm?”

Thousandleaf was beside himself at the thought of the temptation of the Utmost Realm, but he knew there was no hope for him in this life. However, there were still a few young geniuses in the Precious Tree Sect.

“The top 100 can all enter. However, there are nine levels in the Utmost Realm, and different rankings will enter different levels.”

“Top 100, top 100...” Thousandleaf’s eyes swept past Tang Hong and the others.

It was obvious that he more or less had some thoughts.

Ye Chonglou however, asked, “Sage Dan Chi, at roughly what level will one need to be to rank within the top hundred?”

“Sixth level origin realm is the lowest. Even if one reaches the earth origin realm, one needs to display extraordinary arts to have a chance to enter. However, seventh level origin realm is a surefire bet.”

“This means that the top geniuses of the Myriad Domain have all

reached the sky origin realm?!”

Thousandleaf was astonished.

“If the top geniuses couldn’t enter even the sky origin realm, then there really would be no hope for the Myriad Domain.” Dan Chi sighed. “Some of the top geniuses of a few strong flower regions are at the peak of the origin realm and half step sage realm. Some top geniuses in the mid regions are at the mortal sage realm, with even more uncommon ones at earth sage realm. As for the ones in the Upper Eight Regions…”

Dan Chi also sighed lightly when his words ended here. His cultivation level was to a perverse degree in the Myriad Domain to have reached fifth level sage realm in less than a hundred years.

However, if he was placed in the Upper Eight Regions, he would at most be on par with their first rate geniuses. Some of the better ones could even trounce him.

Those who were hailed geniuses were all below forty years old.

Those over forty would normally not be placed in the same age bracket.

Thousandleaf’s expression was as if a bitter gourd as he sighed ruefully, “Can there be sky sage realm powerhouses amongst the top geniuses in the Upper Eight Regions?”

“But of course.” Dan Chi’s tone had also grown exceedingly grave when he talked about this area of the world. “It’s a good thing that there’s not too many of them. Take the Sky Sect for example, that Feng Beidou is pretty strong, hmm? However, he’s nothing compared to their top geniuses. It’s said that there are twenty sky sage realm geniuses in the younger generation of the Sky Sect. Those who are even stronger made it to the peak of the sky sage realm at their young age, with all the momentum of making it to half step emperor realm. These previous geniuses were all born with golden spoons in their mouths. Their every step was taken in the fast lane, receiving all of the best resources and fortunes of the sect. Any of them would be personages who can summon the wind and rain in the Divine Abyss Continent after a few decades.”

Dan Chi’s words were a bucket of cold water over the Precious Tree Sect’s heads.

They’d been secretly delighted that they could strut about proudly with a genius like Jiang Chen.

However, they now knew how narrow minded and ignorant they were compared to the rest of the Continent.

It was rather Jiang Chen who flicked his eyebrows once after hearing all this.

“Half step emperor realm is it?” Jiang Chen nodded his head slightly. Although he was an incredible distance away from the emperor realm, he wasn’t discouraged at all.

He firmly believed that he would reach that step sooner or later.

All geniuses would be as substantial as the clouds in front of him when he reached that step.

There was no one in the Continent who understood the heavens better than him, and no one had the right to call themselves a genius in front of him!

Chapter 459: Traveling To The Regal Pill Palace

Jiang Chen wasn't depressed after he learned of the enormous gap he had to surmount. On the contrary, he was even more motivated to train.

"I was able to make three great strides in a few years and enter the origin realm from the true qi realm. Why cannot I continue this momentum and assail the sage realm, or even emperor realm in a few more years?"

What Jiang Chen lacked the least now was confidence.

The Precious Tree Sect had also understood this gap at the same time and would no longer stand still, refusing to make progress and clinging to their boring, sectarian views.

Forefather Thousandleaf said without hesitation, "Sage Dan Chi, my Precious Tree Sect has a favor to ask."

"Please, speak." Dan Chi was a forthright person who wasn't overly concerned with details.

"Our two sects are both raising Jiang Chen, I hope to send a few more young disciples to the Regal Pill Palace for further training. With how the situation is changing, I'm worried that if these young folk will be unable to keep up with the times if they remain in the Precious Tree Sect."

Thousandleaf pointed at Tang Hong and the others. “These are the cream of the younger generation in the Precious Tree Sect. Although they aren’t on the same level as the premier geniuses of the Regal Pill Palace, they are still the elite of my sect.”

Dan Chi had naturally since seen that Tang Hong was brothers with Jiang Chen.

As for the others such as Xie Yufan, Lian Canghai, and Iron Dazhi, they were all the best the Precious Tree Sect had to offer. Along with Tang Hong, they made up the four geniuses of the Precious Tree Sect.

Dan Chi would naturally not decline this kind of small matter. He waved his hand and smiled, “These are all small matters since our two sects have allied together. Jiang Chen, what do you think?”

It was apparent from Dan Chi’s sudden inquiry of Jiang Chen that he quite valued Jiang Chen’s opinions.

Iron Long from the Precious Tree Sect almost couldn’t sit still when he heard this question, his heart clenching with anxiety. He was quite worried that Jiang Chen was holding a grudge and would prevent Iron Dazhi and Lian Canghai from proceeding to the Regal Pill Palace.

Lian Canghai and Iron Dazhi both knew that this was an opportunity to change their fates. Their hearts shot to their throats, the very picture of anxiety as they looked at Jiang Chen

nervously. Desperately worried about the outcome, they almost couldn't bear the suspense.

Their future and destiny were in his hands at this moment, how would they not be nervous?

Jiang Chen wasn't the sort to bear a grudge. The Iron family had been more or less sincere in their softened attitude, and they'd sent over vast amounts of resources to make up to him afterwards.

Although he hadn't accepted them, he had no need to go toe to toe with them, not with his current status.

"It'd be more lively with more people as well. It also saves me from going to the Regal Pill Palace myself, all by my lonesome. In my view, the younger generation will need someone to keep us in line. Why doesn't Forefather Thousandleaf hold down the fort at the Precious Tree Sect, and Venerated Chonglou lead the group to the Regal Pill Palace?"

Jiang Chen hadn't forgotten Lordmaster Ye Chonglou.

If choosing between Forefather Thousandleaf and Ye Chonglou, he was still biased towards the latter.

Although Forefather Thousandleaf had helped him greatly and seemed to be a sincere person, all of that aid had been added grace to what was already beautiful.

Ye Chonglou was different. It had been Lordmaster Ye Chonglou who'd stretched out a helping hand when Jiang Chen was at his lowest and in need of help. He'd sent Jiang Chen the warmth of coal when he was stuck in the snow.

This kind of relationship was different.

Dan Chi smiled, "This would be for the best. I will be able to discuss with Daoist Ye if anything comes up."

Forefather Thousandleaf naturally wouldn't object. He too felt that it would be a good thing if Ye Chonglou went to supervise these young men.

Sage Dan Chi also arranged for the group of Regal Pill Palace disciples to take up residence in the Precious Tree Sect.

Of course, to avoid the matter of disciples not willing to spend a prolonged period of time in the Precious Tree Sect, the group would be rotated every half year.

In addition, those who came to stay in the Precious Tree Sect would see their sect benefits doubled.

This way, those who were sent to the Precious Tree Sect didn't have much of an opinion, and were inwardly delighted instead.

“We walk towards high heights. It is naturally a good thing for Sir Jiang to go to the Regal Pill Palace. Huang’er is Sir Jiang’s patient and is naturally happy for your future path.”

There was no surprise in Huang’er’s tone, as if Jiang Chen leaving for the Regal Pill Palace was completely within her expectations.

“It’s just a pity that I’ll have to bid farewell to the flowersI’ve cultivated in these past couple of days. I will rather miss them.”

Huang’er sighed lightly, some yearning filling her tone.

If anyone else had said those words, she would’ve appeared quite coy and fake. However, the presence that Huang’er exuded seemed to make this flora part of her family, that her words were an outpouring of true emotion.

As for Gouyu and the others, they were long since used to this kind of migration. When they heard that Jiang Chen had a better place to go to, they would naturally follow him to the end.

Third uncle Jiang Tong and cousin Jiang Yu had long since settled into their lives in the Skylaurel Kingdom and were flourishing very well.

Cousin Jiang Yu in particular, had earned a place among the senior ranks in the Myriad Treasures Palace, married, had children, and was living a life that was the envy of others.

Qiao Baishi was enjoying marital bliss with Elder Ning, sharing a tender love and also held a high position with authority in the Azure Heaven Southern Palace.

Everyone had their own stable lives; each with power, and status that they never would've thought possible in the Eastern Kingdom. This was enough.

Jiang Chen naturally wouldn't disturb them now that they reached their own happy endings.

"Young Master Chen, are you really not taking me with you?" Old man Fei Xuan had a look of dejection on his face.

He was absolutely and thoroughly willing to go with Jiang Chen, but the latter wasn't planning on taking him this time.

"Ole Fei, you're an elder in the Precious Tree Sect, a position with immense authority. None of us know what things will look like in the Regal Pill Palace, so why waste time there? Why not develop with peacefully in the Precious Tree Sect and support Forefather Thousandleaf? If you still think of what I've done for you, then please take care of my uncle, cousin, Qiao Baishi and the others."

Fei Xuan nodded, "But of course. Forefather Thousandleaf would've made sure of that even without your say so. Who would dare touch them?"

Just who would be so blind as to provoke Jiang Chen's family?

Yang Zhao and Lu Wuji had been unable to bear up in the face of Jiang Chen's wrath even before he'd been discovered by the sects.

Now that his name was known throughout the sixteen kingdoms, who would dare tug on the tiger's whiskers?

Once everything had been arranged, the group set out under Ye Chonglou's guidance to hasten to the Regal Pill Palace with Dan Chi and the others.

When a well wrapped Huang'er showed up with a cape in the entourage, Dan Chi threw a surprised look her way.

When the group passed through Myriad Spirit Sect territory, Jiang Chen thought of his brother Liu Wencai. He said to Dan Chi, "Sage Dan Chi, I have an old friend, a brother in the Myriad Spirit Sect. I know not when I'll see him again with my departure. I'd like to go see him. Please go ahead if you have urgent matters, I'll catch up."

"Sure, we'll go on ahead first then." Dan Chi responded readily.

Apart from Tang Hong, none of the others in the Precious Tree Sect had any relationship with Liu Wencai. Therefore, Jiang Chen brought his followers and Tang Hong up the mountain towards the Myriad Spirit Sect.

Dan Chi's gaze grew a bit thoughtful as he watched them leave.

"Lordmaster Ye, is the caped young girl a Precious Tree Sect disciple?" Dan Chi suddenly asked.

Ye Chonglou shook his head. "No."

"Then what is her background?" Dan Chi was quite curious.

"I've never seen the girl before, but judging from her acting like sisters with his follower Gouyu, she is likely a friend from the Eastern Kingdom?"

Huang'er was very mysterious as she dwelled in deep seclusion and rarely emerged. The lordmaster naturally had no idea of her background.

"The Eastern Kingdom?" Dan Chi smiled wryly and dismissed that thought. The Eastern Kingdom was uncommon enough to have already produced one Jiang Chen. It seemed quite impossible for it to produce another even more mysterious young girl.

Dan Chi actually discovered a deep sense of profoundness on Huang'er that he couldn't wholly see through.

He was unable to determine just how strong she was, just a vague sense of being unable to grasp her fully due to the mysterious aura

about her.

He couldn't help but be curious when faced with this kind of indistinct perception.

After many many checkpoints, Jiang Chen made it through the restricted areas of the Myriad Spirit Sect and finally reached their inner door.

This sect's territory was much larger than the Precious Tree Sect's.

Along the way, the roar of tigers and the screeches of apes washed through the air. All sorts of spirit creatures bayed to the heavens, a tumultuous cacophony of noise. You could find spirit creatures in the mountain valley, on the highest peaks, as well as in and around the creeks and rivers that wound through the mountain.

Different sects had different styles, and the Myriad Spirit Sect was quite different indeed.

"Boss, what brings you here?" Liu Wencai was delighted to see Jiang Chen. "My sect head actually came out of closed door cultivation when he heard you'd arrived and is setting up a banquet to welcome you."

Venerated Ninelion of the Myriad Spirit Sect quite admired Jiang

Chen. His personality was very similar as well.

When Jiang Chen had said to Venerated Ninelion that Liu Wencai was worthy of the sect's attention and care, Ninelion had taken Jiang Chen seriously.

Liu Wencai was now Ninelion's true disciple, his position near the top of the sect.

He'd even suppressed those once premier Myriad Spirit geniuses.

Jiang Chen wasn't surprised. There was an enormous power within Liu Wencai that, while still yet to be fully uncovered, was astounding enough after being catalyzed by the Redscaled Firelizard bloodline.

He would absolutely be able to dominate anyone in his sect.

"Boss, Tang Hong, congratulations and best wishes for you to realize your ambitions in the Regal Pill Palace, placing your name on the Myriad Hidden Dragon Rankings one day!"

Liu Wencai was quite forthright and genuinely happy for Jiang Chen and Tang Hong.

"Wencai, you too will shine greatly one day with your potential. Your name will appear on those rankings as well."

Jiang Chen's tone was firm, he thought quite highly of Liu Wencai.

The latter smiled slightly, "Perhaps we might meet again in the Myriad Domain in the near future."

"Oh? Why do you say that?" Jiang Chen started.

"The alliance between the Precious Tree Sect and the Regal Pill Palace opened a new door to the Myriad Domain. The four families of the Great Cathedral have extended an olive branch to our sect now, and the sect head is considering which family would be more appropriate to ally with."

The six powers of the Myriad Domain were known as one hall, two palaces, and three sects.

The 'one hall' referred to the Great Cathedral, the undisputed leader and strongest of the six powers.

When its four families gathered together, they possessed the strength of a third rank sect.

This was a rather surprising bit of news, but it was absolutely a good thing for Liu Wencai that the Great Cathedral wanted to ally with the Myriad Spirit Sect.

Chapter 460: The Identity Of A Core Disciple

Venerated Ninelion did indeed greatly admire Jiang Chen. He even sought Jiang Chen's opinion on the alliance during the banquet he personally hosted. Jiang Chen didn't hold back either, offering up his analysis that with the current development of the greater picture, under the caveat that the Myriad Spirit Sect could retain its legacy, it wouldn't be a bad idea to ally with the Great Cathedral. That would be lot more palatable when compared to becoming a Sky Sect vassal.

Venerated Ninelion could also see that it would be very difficult to remain independent under the current circumstances. With the strength of those involved, only a finger would be needed to crush a mere sixteen kingdom sect. No matter how receptive or unwilling they were, the smartest thing to do in light of the circumstances was find an appropriate backer.

After catching up with Liu Wencai for a bit, Jiang Chen took his leave and descended the mountain, smiling when he left, "Wencai, I look forward to meeting you again in the Myriad Domain."

Tang Hong also walked up and loudly smacked his fist onto Liu Wencai's chest. "If you can't make it into the rankings after three years, don't go around telling others you're my brother!"

Liu Wencai laughed heartily, "You too!"

Tang Hong cracked his knuckles, "I've already thought it through. If I don't make it into the rankings, I swear to never

return to the sixteen kingdoms!”

Tang Hong was brawny, quite oblivious, and direct as a cannonball. However, people like him had the most resolute determination. He would charge towards the target, taking long strides now that he had identified his new goal.

Riding his Goldwing Swordbird, Jiang Chen caught up to the entourage half a day after leaving the Myriad Spirit Sect. They all returned to the Regal Pill Palace after a few more days.

The Regal Pill Palace was located at the center of the Myriad Domain. Its territory was ten times larger than of the sixteen kingdom alliance The various large and small factions within it were as numerous as the hair on oxen. There were dozens of factions like the four great sects in the Regal Pill Palace’s territory. There were also a few sixth and fifth rank sects that docilely lived under the rule of the Regal Pill Palace.

The Regal Pill Palace complex was, at first sight, magnificent. It stretched deep into the mountains, with burgeoning flowers placed all over the central palace and residences. Yet among the beauty hid restrictions that protected everything within a few hundred miles. If it wasn’t for someone leading the way, anyone attempting to reach the heart of the Regal Pill Palace complex would be attacked at least a hundred times by the restrictions.

“Jiang Chen, holding this sect medallion will ensure that these ordinary restrictions will not attack you in the future. However, do not trespass into some of the core areas without authorization. Even sage realm cultivators might come off worse in an exchange if

the restrictions activate.”

There were surely quite a few forbidden areas in a fourth rank sect.

Dan Chi brought Jiang Chen and the others to the Hall of Internal Affairs and arranged temporary quarters for them. “Jiang Chen, as new arrivals, you will enjoy the same treatment as my sect disciples receive. However, as they do to my sect disciples, the sect rules will also apply to you as well. You will all receive a status that corresponds to your cultivation level. Do you have any objections to this?”

The rules still had to be observed even after an alliance had been struck.

Jiang Chen smiled. “But of course. If us foreign disciples had a backdoor to take advantage of, it would too ludicrous for anyone to accept.”

The others all nodded as well, indicating no objection to these arrangements.

The Hallmaster of Internal Affairs didn’t dare drag his feet when Dan Chi himself had personally arrived, coming out to welcome the group himself.

Jiang Chen’s cultivation level was at the origin realm, making him a core disciple in the Regal Pill Palace. Therefore, he received a

core disciple medallion. Having entered the sky spirit realm, Tang Hong received an inner disciple medallion. Lian Canghai, Xie Yufan and Iron Dazhi were all one step away from sky spirit realm and thus had to start at the level of probationary inner disciples.

No matter what, being a probationary inner disciple was still better than an outer disciple.

The Regal Pill Palace boasted an incredible amount of resources, supported by a territory abundant in natural wealth. Of that, there had been no exaggeration. Inner disciples, even probationary ones, had their own separate residences with private yards. Although the property was a bit small and close to the other inner disciples, it was still a private sanctuary. They wouldn't have to be crammed in with others like the outer disciples. For a core disciple like Jiang Chen, the level of his residence was even higher.

The Regal Pill Palace possessed a mountain that contained Rosy Valley, in which the sect had hewn out a thousand areas in the walls as residences for their core disciples. As a core disciple, Jiang Chen had the right to take up residence in Rosy Valley. In addition, the resources allotted to core disciples were quite generous. Even though he was a fair distance aways from the true disciples, Jiang Chen didn't have many requests since he'd only just arrived.

Sect disciple hierarchy goes from outer, inner, personal, true.

Status and benefits would be something one earned. He didn't have to throw his weight around as the newcomer in the area. As time went on and his strength increased, these things would be naturally taken care of when his reputation was made.

The Hallmaster of the Internal Affairs had also said that the Regal Pill Palace wasn't opposed to disciples earning resources through their own labor. Accepting sect missions, for one, was one of the best ways to earn resources. Many of the true disciples in the Regal Pill Palace used this method to acquire resources. The cultivation fanatics, in particular, were never satisfied by the regular resource allotment. They could only gain more through sect missions.

Once the arrangements were made, the Hallmaster led Tang Hong and the others to settle in. Gouyu and the other followers naturally followed Jiang Chen into the Valley. Many of the core disciples had followers. The Regal Pill Palace was theoretically unopposed to the core disciples having their followers.

There were even inner disciples who didn't mind being the followers of some core disciples, just so they could obtain a better cultivation environment and move into Rosy Valley. With the others settled in, Dan Chi kept Jiang Chen behind and took him to the former's residence.

As the head of the sect, Dan Chi's residence was naturally the most sacred area within the Regal Pill Palace, located on a towering peak in the mountain valley. "Jiang Chen, you are the only one of the younger generation to enter my palace." Dan Chi was less than a hundred years old. He was still a teenager in the world of martial dao, so he hadn't taken a personal disciple yet.

Apart from a few medicine boys who served at his side, the entire residence seemed very quiet. Yet, Jiang Chen could see something in the layout, the terrain, and the way that spirit qi wreathed

around the residence. This residence had been built according to the terrain and was absolutely the place in the entire Regal Pill Palace with the best feng shui.

"Jiang Chen, it's just you and me here. Feel free to speak candidly of matters that you may not be able to at the foot of the mountain." Dan Chi smiled.

"Sage one, I am very satisfied with everything, there's nothing that I can complain about." Jiang Chen spoke the truth.

"Haha, very good!" Dan Chi complimented. "I'd been afraid that with your youthful heart, you might feel put out if you felt that your treatment wasn't as good as you'd thought it'd be."

"The sage one jests. I have never complained about anything even when I was in the secular world. A holy cultivation ground such as the Regal Pill Palace is the foremost amongst the Myriad Domain, what could I complain about? Status and benefits will not fall into my lap. It would be hard for others to accept me if I enjoyed the highest treatment as soon as I arrived."

Dan Chi wouldn't have found it odd if those words were spoken by someone over a hundred years old. However, for a twenty year old like Jiang Chen to possess such bearing, not fighting or complaining for better treatment, it made Dan Chi feel that his hard efforts had not been wasted.

"Jiang Chen, I have to say that I greatly admire your bearing. With your mindset and attitude, I'm afraid that the Myriad

Domain will be unable to contain you sooner or later. You are no small fish to drift around in a small pond. I believe that in a decade or two, even the first ranked sects will be fighting over you!”

Dan Chi chuckled, “Jiang Chen, I’ll get the ugly words out of the way first. I will keep an eye on you here, but won’t give you preferential treatment. In the sects, the disciples are in constant competition, and it’s impossible for internal conflict not to exist. Therefore, it will be up to you to slowly determine how to survive here. I am your patron, yes, but only in great matters. I treat everyone the same within the sect. You must carve out your own space through your own efforts and have everyone submit to you of their own accord. Only then will you have the right to represent the Regal Pill Palace and face the geniuses of the other sects. This is how you will obtain the right to face the challenges on an even greater stage. Do you understand my words?”

It’d been said since ancient times that a strict master would raise highly accomplished disciples. Although Dan Chi didn’t count as Jiang Chen’s master, the former didn’t plan on letting Jiang Chen grow up in a greenhouse. He wanted to push Jiang Chen into the sect and have the furnace of the sect temper and mold Jiang Chen.

If Jiang Chen couldn’t even handle the competition within the sect, that would prove Dan Chi’s appraisal wrong. I can give you resources and status, but not preferential treatment. This was the method in which Dan Chi would cultivate Jiang Chen. How would an even stronger wolf or tiger grow if he didn’t face competition from his kind?

“Of course, I’ve done my utmost to recruit you to the Regal Pill

Palace, and your Precious Tree Sect will certainly say I'm miserly if I don't offer anything. I must present to you a welcoming gift. Jiang Chen, have your pick of methods, pills, origin weapons, or any other requests. Remember, you can only make one request." Dan Chi smiled.

Jiang Chen would naturally not decline something like a welcome gift.

Dan Chi was his senior, if only in name, and so a welcome gift was only natural. There was nothing for him to feel embarrassed about.

He didn't lack any secret methods or arts, and didn't want pills or the like. If he wanted, he could refine those himself.

Origin level weapons... the Redscaled Firelizard bone was the most ideal natural origin weapon. If he assimilated a few formations and glyphs into it after some refining, the bone would become even more powerful. Therefore, he really didn't know what he needed at present.

"Heh heh, sage one, I really don't know what I need right now. How about this, let's keep this welcome gift on file, and I'll come collect when I need it?" Jiang Chen asked in a half joking tone.

"Haha, alright, it will be as you say then." Although Dan Chi thought this was surprising, he still readily agreed.

He was also privately curious, Jiang Chen doesn't want anything? Seems like he lacks nothing. That also makes sense. The mysterious senior was so strong, would he leave Jiang Chen with nothing?

Elder Shun was always the best answer for anything that Dan Chi couldn't puzzle through.

However, he never would've thought that what Jiang Chen possessed actually didn't have much to do with Elder Shun. On the contrary, it was Elder Shun who needed Jiang Chen's help.

"Alright Jiang Chen, the core disciples in the Rosy Valley must have learned of your arrival as well. They should all be waiting for you. Go meet your peers. Young folk should be with young folk and give rise to greater sparks. The friction between geniuses is what births cultivation inspiration and motivation!"

Dan Chi waved his hand and sent Jiang Chen out of his residence with a flicker of a formation.

Chapter 461: Jiang Chen Refuses To Be Taken Down A Peg

Jiang Chen passed through Rosy Valley unchallenged, thanks to his medallion of a core disciple. However, his group of followers were a bit more... conspicuous.

The Qiao Brothers, Guo Jin, and the others were all in the first or second level spirit realm. They stuck out like a sore thumb in Rosy Valley.

One had to know that the core disciples in the Rosy Valley were all firmly in the origin realm. Most were in the earth origin realm, and a few had even reached the sky origin realm.

Even if those geniuses were to accept followers, they wouldn't accept those with a low cultivation level for no reason at all.

The weakest of their followers were in the sky spirit realm, or even spirit kings.

Those in the small spirit realm such as Xue Tong and the others were almost nonexistent in Rosy Valley. Even the medicine boys running errands in the Rosy Valley were mostly in the earth spirit realm.

Therefore, the guards to the Rosy Valley had wry expressions of surprise when they saw Jiang Chen's followers. They found this scene rather amusing.

Gouyu's personality was bold and unconcerned, but she could also feel that their cultivation level seemed to be something embarrassing for Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen was rather calm. This so-called gap was only temporary. It was only due to those in the Valley being born in a better place and thus receiving better resources from the Regal Pill Palace.

If Gouyu, Xue Tong, and the others had been born here, there was a high likelihood that they would be inner disciples, if not core disciples.

Gouyu's cultivation level had been rising without pause after eating a green Divine Fruit of the Rosy Dawn. She was now at the peak of the earth spirit realm. However, this level of cultivation was still nothing compared to the other followers of the core disciples.

A few of them, wearing the obvious adornments of followers, crossed their paths along the way. All of them were, at minimum, at the sky spirit realm.

Their faces displayed unconcealed mockery when they saw Gouyu and the others.

Some even started muttering, "Look at what the cats dragged in. When did the requirements of the Rosy Valley become this lax?"

“Indeed, the Rosy Valley is a place reserved for geniuses among the core disciples. How did people who aren’t not even worthy of running errands make it in here?”

“Pfft, is this kind of trash worthy of entering the Valley? They’ll be thrown out sooner or later.”

Although these murmurings weren’t loud, they were perfectly audible to Jiang Chen and the others.

Jiang Chen’s gaze grew frosty, flicking over to these fellows.

These followers didn’t dare cause trouble when faced with Jiang Chen’s aura. They shrank in on themselves and quietly slunk away.

Although they didn’t feel much pressure speaking idly about Gouyu and the others, they still didn’t dare act impudently in front of Jiang Chen.

They wouldn’t be able to seek justice anywhere if Jiang Chen beat them up. Although their masters could make an appearance and regain face for them, it wasn’t worth it to take a beating for free!

Gouyu was a bit depressed. “Young master, we’ve lost face for you.”

Jiang Chen laughed, carefree, “This is called snobs throwing their weight around. This is all they’ll ever amount to in their lives. Is there a need to fuss about such short sighted people?”

Huang’er also took Gouyu’s arm lightly. “Big sister Gouyu, these people accumulate no virtue with their mouths and do not have the appropriate breadth of mind for martial dao. Sir Jiang is correct, there’s no need to bother with them. I trust that sister Gouyu will be far beyond them in a few years.”

Huang’er was as considerate as always. Her every word and gesture always gave one the feeling of a breath of fresh, spring air.

Although Gouyu was dejected, she felt a lot better after Huang’er’s words.

She grasped Huang’er’s hand, her eyes smoldering with determination. “Younger sister Huang’er is right. How could I, Gouyu, possibly admit defeat to these people? They were merely born in a slightly better place than me. I’ll make them look up to me in a few years!”

She’d always been one to not admit defeat to a guy. Now that she was being contemptuously dismissed, her self-respect had been severely challenged.

Huang’er laughed lightly, “Precisely the case! Sister Gouyu is incredibly clever—there’s no doubt you’ll be able to do it!”

Gouyu also smiled, “You’re the clever one! If I were a guy, I would definitely fall for you.”

“What a pity that sister Gouyu is not a male.”

Gouyu’s spirits had taken a great turn for the better, and remained in good cheer as the group arrived at Jiang Chen’s residence.

The Rosy Valley had plenty of room, with quite the distance between each residence. There was ample private space to prevent being disturbed.

Jiang Chen’s residence wasn’t actually the best in terms of terrain, and in truth, it was one of the lower quality ones in the Rosy Valley.

This was because Jiang Chen was only of the first level origin realm and lacked the qualifications for a higher level residence.

Even so, this residence was still much grander than the one he’d had in the Precious Tree Sect.

Gouyu and the others were all delighted when they entered the doors, completely sweeping away their previous melancholy.

This residence was designed in quite a grand fashion. There was a cultivation area, living quarters, relaxation area, receiving area, pill refinement room, and weapon refinement room. Areas for all

sorts of purposes could be found here.

Even if he had another ten or twenty followers in addition to his paltry few, they would've all been able to live comfortably as well.

"Younger sister Huang'er, look at this medicine garden! You'll have ample space to exert yourself in the future for your flowers!" Gouyu was quite excited.

Huang'er smiled slightly, taking a stroll around the residence.

She would be spending part of her foreseeable future here.

Jiang Chen was catching up with everyone after they'd all settled in when a voice came in from the outside. "Senior brother Jiang Chen, my house's master, senior brother Yan Hongtu tells you to make a visit."

The voice came from a follower.

When Jiang Chen walked outside, he saw a spirit king cultivator standing outside, wearing the adornments of a follower.

Although the person looked at Jiang Chen respectfully, there was a subtle sense of superiority about him. It was apparent that he wasn't quite accepting of the core disciple who'd just entered Rosy Valley.

“Senior brother Yan Hongtu?” Jiang Chen’s brows furrowed. He wants me to make a trip just when I’ve arrived?

Logically speaking, certain courtesies still had to be extended even if the other wanted him to make a trip. Sending a random follower to pass on a message—there were obvious hints of contempt and even blatant provocation in this action.

If this senior brother Yan Hongtu was truly interested in the newcomer, he should’ve been the one to pay the visit. After, Jiang Chen was newly arrived in the Valley and wholly unfamiliar with everything.

“Correct. Senior brother Yan Hongtu is one of the masters of the Soaring Clouds area of Rosy Valley.” A thick sense of pride suffused the words of the spirit king follower.

It was as if being senior brother Yan Hongtu’s follower was the utmost pride and joy of his life.

Jiang Chen nodded his head lightly, “Tell me the address. I’ll pay him a visit when I have the time.”

Although Jiang Chen was a bit displeased, he didn’t erupt in open hostilities.

“What do you mean pay a visit when you have the time?” The follower blanked momentarily and looked at Jiang Chen incredulously. “Senior brother Jiang Chen, you don’t know the

rules because you've just arrived, right? In the Soaring Clouds area, senior brother Yan Hongtu is bestowing favor if he wishes to see someone. Who doesn't immediately spring to action when they hear of his summons, afraid to be even a moment too late? Are you... are you sure that you'll wait until you have time to? You'll make senior brother Yan Hongtu wait?"

Halfway through, his words were tinged with an odd tone, a supercilious smile plastered on his face.

He was obviously telling Jiang Chen, how dare you reject our actions in giving you face? It is such a great honor that senior brother Yan Hongtu wishes to see you. How dare you drag your feet?

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. "I still have some things to attend to and won't be able to see you out."

He wasn't an easy target or a yes man. Am I to trundle over immediately to listen to your speeches whenever you, Yan Hongtu, summons me?

Jiang Chen wasn't the sort to be easily summoned even when he was free, never mind at a time when he was busy, as he was at the moment.

It wasn't that no one could stir him to action, but that he didn't even know this senior brother. Their relationship was far from the point of him being on call.

It was obvious that this Yan Hongtu wanted to take Jiang Chen down a peg. How would Jiang Chen possibly play along?

The follower was absolutely flabbergasted when he saw Jiang Chen's attitude.

Apparently, senior brother Yan Hongtu was his sky, his everything in the world.

He'd never thought there would be someone who dared resist against his senior brother's will in the Soaring Clouds area. There had once been a core disciple who hadn't obeyed, but he'd been taught quite the lesson in the end!

There were four areas in the Rosy Valley, and although the Soaring Clouds area was the lowest level, Yan Hongtu had absolute authority here since he was the boss.

There really had been no rookie over these years who'd dared dragged his feet when Yan Hongtu issued a summons.

"You must think things through carefully, senior brother Jiang Chen. If you don't go now, even if you want to in the future, you may not have the chance."

Jiang Chen's expression grew frosty. "I'll go when I want to. Can the master of your house kidnap me and force me there if I don't want to?"

Jiang Chen was also irate at this point.

A follower was still a follower in the end. He didn't dare act too atrociously in front of a core disciple. He only chuckled coldly and cast a pitying look at Jiang Chen.

In his eyes, the future of this rookie who'd offended senior brother Yan Hongtu was basically over.

Yan Hongtu was a twenty something year old genius in the Regal Pill Palace. An aquiline nose punctuated a thin, vicious looking figure. He lived in the best residence in the Soaring Clouds area and held power over everything in this section.

He could absolutely be promoted to a higher level area with his cultivation level and strength, but he liked the power and prestige of holding sway over an area.

It was said that one would rather be the mouth of a chicken than the behind of a cow.

He'd rather be the boss of the Soaring Clouds area than be subject to someone else's orders in a higher level area.

Over the years, Yan Hongtu had maintained his personal strength and authority at the peak. No one dared naysay him.

Which core disciple in this area would dare show him such lack of face?

His face instantly darkened when his follower brought this message back.

“He’ll come visit when he has time to?” Yan Hongtu flew into a rage. “When did the rookies of the Soaring Clouds area develop such personality?”

“Senior brother Yan, that kid looks like a country bumpkin and obviously doesn’t think much of you. In my view, this kind of stubborn country mule will have no idea who the boss here is if we don’t rough him up a bit.”

The follower also added fuel to the flame, his tone dripping with provocation.

“Hmph, I’ve heard that this Jiang Chen has quite a name for himself in the Precious Tree Sect. He probably really thinks he’s something in the Regal Pill Palace.” A few hints of derision appeared on Yan Hongtu’s ruthless face.

“Pah! Who the hell is he? A small place like the sixteen kingdoms alliance has completely exaggerated him. He’s just a clueless rookie in the Rosy Valley. He’ll coil himself up even if he’s a dragon, and lay flat if he’s a tiger!” The follower carried on in the same vein as Yan Hongtu and started talking tough.

Chapter 462: The Demigod Of Wood

Yan Hongtu attempting to take Jiang Chen down a peg wasn't out of the latter's expectations. Jiang Chen would have anticipated something along these lines even if Dan Chi hadn't warned him beforehand.

He was a foreigner after all, and had suddenly taken up residence in the core disciples' territory. It was virtually impossible for everyone to accept him straight off the bat, not to mention the reputation that came along with him. The sage one himself had deigned to ally with the Precious Tree Sect because of Jiang Chen!

Just this point alone was enough to make Jiang Chen a target of public censure.

Everyone was a genius here, and what genius would submit to another?

Jiang Chen was the genius from a small place and had suddenly received so much attention from Dan Chi. Who wouldn't nurse some little grievance or plot in their hearts? How many wouldn't suffer from the slightest upwelling of jealousy? This Yan Hongtu was just one of their representatives. Of course, Jiang Chen also knew that some things were unavoidable and had to be subdued head on in order to survive in the sects.

"Young master, it seems that this Rosy Valley isn't all that either. Vile characters seem to abound like ghosts around here." Gouyu huffed.

Jiang Chen was rather noncommittal. “Where there are people, so will there be the jianghu. Where there is the jianghu, so will there be conflict. Since we have arrived, let us relax and enjoy things.”

Literally lakes and rivers, indicative of the greater world.

He was about to return to his courtyard when another voice rang out. “Daoist Jiang Chen, please hold your steps.”

Jiang Chen turned his head to see a young man standing a few paces away. He possessed a natural grace and elegant brows, dressed in an outfit that looked almost like a priestly frock. All of this culminated in an ethereal feeling even at his young age.

“I am Mu Gaoqi, a newly ascended core disciple last to enter the Rosy Valley before you. I have heard of your name and come to pay a visit. Am I intruding?” Mu Gaoqi seemed even a year or two younger than Jiang Chen.

So the saying went, whoever comes is a guest. Jiang Chen wasn’t an unreasonable person, and one didn’t reach out to slap a smiling face. This Mu Gaoqi had come ever so politely and didn’t seem to possess malicious intent.

“Please come in.” Jiang Chen nodded, showing the other the way in. The female followers excused themselves when they saw that they had guests. Being even more of a reclusive person, Huang’er would never appear in front of strangers.

Xue Tong had also planned on dismissing himself after he'd brought in tea for the guest. It was patently obvious that the mockery the followers had been subjected to after entering the Rosy Valley had made them more or less self conscious. They were deathly afraid of losing more of Jiang Chen's face if they stayed.

"Xue Tong, you're not an outsider. Stay and listen to the discourse of a Regal Pill Palace genius. This will also be a learning opportunity for you." Jiang Chen wasn't willing to let cracks appear in the dao hearts of his men. His actions were an attempt to goad Xue Tong and the others into triumphing over their low self esteem.

Mu Gaoqi hastened to bow at the waist and smile, "You praise me too highly."

Jiang Chen smiled faintly, "I've only just arrived and don't know the rules of the Rosy Valley. I'll salute Brother Mu with this cup of crude tea first then."

Being a humble man, Mu Gaoqi was a bit startled and flattered by Jiang Chen's proactive toast. Jiang Chen observed the young man's language and countenance and felt that the other truly wasn't here to create trouble. Mu Gaoqi was careful and deliberate in his every motion, acting cautiously in all affairs. He appeared quite different from the other sect geniuses, not at all the type that threw his weight around in a domineering fashion.

"Brother Jiang Chen, this younger brother should be a year or two younger than you. You can call Xiao Mu or Gaoqi. Brother Jiang Chen's name has pierced my ears like thunder these past few

days in the Regal Pill Palace. I've specially brought over some pills for my intrusion today, I hope Brother Jiang Chen doesn't think little of them." Mu Gaoqi brought out a few small pill flasks as he spoke and placed them on the table.

"Heh heh, my martial dao potential is quite mediocre in the Regal Pill Palace, but I have a bit of potential in the area of pills due to my innate wood constitution. My path into the Rosy Valley was crafted from pills and the small advantage I have in refining them. Contained in these three flasks are: the Origin Fostering Pill that enhances the effects of cultivation in the origin realm, the Spirit Consolidation Pill that will quickly raise a spirit realm cultivator's level, and the Seven Star Coalescence Pill that will instantly recover half of your origin energy after prolonged battle. I was limited by various conditions and couldn't refine too many higher quality Origin Fostering Pills due to its high requirements. The Spirit Consolidation Pill, on the other hand, functions very much like the Divine Fruit from the Precious Tree of your Precious Tree Sect. Heh heh, it was thanks to this pill that I made it into the origin realm!" Mu Gaoqi gave a careful introduction of these unexpectedly very precious pills.

"Daoist Gaoqi, isn't it a bit too precious to present such valuable pills at our first meeting?" Jiang Chen smiled slightly.

Mu Gaoqi hastily responded, "These pills may be more precious to others, but I can easily refine them again after they've been used up due to my mastery of the dao of pills. In addition..."

"In addition what?" Jiang Chen laughed.

“Alright…” Mu Gaoqi’s handsome face reddened. “I actually have some personal motives in coming here. I have a matter to request because I’ve heard that Brother Jiang Chen has a natural affinity for fire and water.”

“What makes you say that?” Jiang Chen couldn’t help but laugh when he saw Mu Gaoqi blush as he spoke. This fellow is such a bashful character; he likely isn’t one of those with evil in his hearts.

“It’s just that I was training in the outside world a while ago and discovered a clear spring with a few other sect disciples. It looked like a spring with an underground water source. When I took a sample of the water to test it, I discovered that it was a spring containing very pure wood spirit energy. I’m naturally very sensitive to wood spirit power since I have a natural born wood constitution. Therefore, we decided to try and locate the source of the spring, but discovered that the spring travels through a deep cavern. We were blocked by the exceedingly complex terrain inside the cavern after walking less than a tenth of its length. The cavern fluctuates wildly between hot and cold temperatures. Fire spews out from beneath the ground and rampages around like a dragon when it’s hot, and the surroundings become as cold as the highest peaks, seemingly able to freeze our very blood when it’s cold.” Mu Gaoqi’s gaze was fixed on Jiang Chen as he spoke.

It appears that constitutions have levels as well, with innate > natural born.

Jiang Chen seemed to grasp something at this point, an understanding of what Mu Gaoqi’s intentions were.

“Brother Jiang Chen, we’d strike it rich if we can find the source of the innate spring.” Mu Gaoqi’s tone became a bit agitated. “My natural born constitution is one step away from the innate level. The potential in my body will surely evolve to an innate wood constitution if baptized in the spring. And it’s not just me, any cultivator who undergoes treatment from the spring will see their bloodlines and potential evolve. This is an enormous opportunity!”

“And you want my help?”

“No no…” Mu Gaoqi quickly denied. “How would this pitiful amount of pills be enough to solicit your help? I merely wish to offer a favor and invite you to join us.”

“Invite me to join you?” Jiang Chen was actually a bit tempted. ‘When do you set out?”

“I think roughly three months from now. There’s still plenty of time for us to make our own preparations. Of course, not that many know of this yet. The disciples who found it have a tacit understanding that none of us will spread the word about this. Otherwise, we won’t be able to claim any of it if any of the stronger disciples found out.” Mu Gaoqi’s personality was a bit more introverted, and his network within the Regal Pill Palace was nothing special. Most introverted folks were slow to warm up to others and found it difficult to trust others. This was why he hadn’t dared to invite any of the stronger geniuses.

In addition, according to his speculations, one with the ability to train in both the fire and water attributes was eminently suited to go adventuring through that cavern. Add to that Mu Gaoqi’s

complete idolization of Sage Dan Chi; he'd felt that the one who his idol valued so highly was worthy of trust—this was why he'd taken the relatively bold move of inviting Jiang Chen after careful consideration.

When he saw Jiang Chen remain silent without a word, Mu Gaoqi hastened to add, "Brother Jiang Chen, if you think that I'm not showing enough sincerity, I can promise you that I can be in charge of all the Spirit Consolidation Pills that your followers need in the future. You don't even have to prepare the ingredients. What do you say?" As a resident of Rosy Valley, Mu Gaoqi naturally knew that Jiang Chen's people had become the butt of all the jokes in the area.

A vaunted core disciple in the earth spirit realm with small spirit realm cultivators as his followers? This was a unique sight within the Rosy Valley, and it was difficult not to become a laughingstock.

"Daoist Gaoqi, I will agree for now since you think so highly of me. However, I will withdraw my participation at any moment if I find that the truth is different from what you've described or if you've sought to conceal anything from me." Jiang Chen said everything up front first.

Mu Gaoqi was overjoyed and cried out excitedly, "May the heavens smite me if I've held anything back! However, those who discovered the spirit spring with me all have higher cultivation levels. I'm afraid we might run into some trouble later on."

"Worry not about any of that." Jiang Chen wasn't worried about the strength of others, but more concerned with if there was any

scheme or trap here. At least presently, he could be at ease since Mu Gaoqi had offered his sworn word.

Mu Gaoqi's psychological defenses against Jiang Chen gradually relaxed after the two had hammered out the details. He began to speak of some of the details behind the Valley to Jiang Chen. "There are roughly a thousand disciples in the Rosy Valley. One who has just entered the origin realm as I is at the bottom of the heap. It's a good thing that others don't bully me too much because I'm well versed in refining pills. They call me the "Demigod of Wood" due to my proficiency in the dao of pills."

Mu is his surname and also translated to "wood"

"Haha, you do have a bit of an ethereal air about you that the immortals would have!" Jiang Chen laughed.

"It might have something to do with my natural wood constitution. Oh right, Brother Jiang Chen, I've heard that Yan Hongtu has summoned you? Was there such a thing?" Mu Gaoqi asked.

"Indeed, how is this person?" Jiang Chen continued to ask.

Mu Gaoqi revealed a trace of a wry smile. "This person is one not to antagonize in the Soaring Clouds area. Brother Jiang Chen, I recommend you find an opportunity to express that you've submitted to him." Mu Gaoqi's personality was cautious and one that didn't easily speak ill of others. It could be seen from his tone and attitude just how domineering and rampant this character normally was.

Jiang Chen smiled faintly and didn't keep speaking. He shifted direction to ask, "Is this Rosy Valley divided into different sections?"

"Indeed. There are four: Soaring Clouds, Peerless, Sky Pillar, and Sovereign areas. The Soaring Clouds area holds the lowest amongst the core disciples. Those in the Peerless area are a bit higher, but the true apex core disciples dwell within the Sky Pillar and Sovereign areas. Those who have the right to enter the Sovereign area are the real true disciples of the Regal Pill Palace and the premier geniuses. There aren't too many of them. They have the right to assail the sage realm and have too big of a gap with us." Mu Gaoqi's tone was also filled with fear and admiration when he spoke of the Sovereign area.

"Yan Hongtu is the tyrant of the Soaring Clouds area, isn't he?"

"You could say that. Senior brother Yan's strength is actually enough to enter the Sky Pillar area, but he gains much in controlling the Soaring Clouds area. He's king here and naturally doesn't want to leave."

In his current, easily abused position, Yan Hangtu was the recipient of all sorts of fawning; he could even collect protection fees. There was no way in hell he wanted to leave!

Chapter 463: Great Barkers Are No Biters

Mu Gaoqi obviously didn't wish to speak too much about Yan Hongtu, merely reminding Jiang Chen that submitting to the local tyrant was leagues better than offending him. To that end, he was even willing to spend his own money to smooth things over for Jiang Chen.

"Brother Jiang Chen, if you are unwilling to set aside face or spend money, I can bring over some more pills that you can use to fob him off with and end this matter. He won't make trouble for you in the short term if he gains some benefits from you." Mu Gaoqi's careful personality destined his style to be passive and weak. He would rather spend money to resolve problems than fight for himself.

Jiang Chen didn't look down on the other for that. He knew that Mu Gaoqi had no backer in the Regal Pill Palace, and his martial dao potential wasn't at the level of a favored son of heaven. One who eked out survival in the cracks of life was fated for a life philosophy of being prudent and humble. It wasn't Mu Gaoqi's fault.

They exchanged another round of pleasantries before Mu Gaoqi took his leave. The latter reminded Jiang Chen over and over again before he left not to butt heads with Yan Hongtu.

Jiang Chen dismissed his words with a smile. "Be at ease, Daoist Gaoqi, the matter between us will not be delayed."

Jiang Chen had never purposefully provoked anyone, but neither would he deliberately fawn upon another. If Yan Hongtu had wanted to be friends, Jiang Chen naturally would've treated him in the same manner. But if he wanted to step on Jiang Chen, the latter would never compromise.

It was as Sage Dan Chi had said, conflict and inner turmoil was unavoidable when trying to survive in the sect. In the world of martial dao, the weak were nothing more than fodder for the strong.

Yan Hongtu had no previous grudge with Jiang Chen, so the former obviously just wanted to suppress Jiang Chen and use this to raise his own profile, solidifying his rule over his domain. However, Jiang Chen wasn't about to quietly submit. It wasn't that he couldn't take a step back on the path of martial dao, but that there was no need to do so here.

"Mu Gaoqi is not a treacherous sort, just one with a softer personality. He's able to survive in the cracks, but he lacks the bit of drive and brilliance of one who seeks the peak of martial dao." Jiang Chen had a good impression of Mu Gaoqi as he mindlessly toyed with the pills the latter had brought. These didn't hold much allure for him, but the latter's nickname as the Wood Demigod wasn't for naught.

Pills of such quality didn't exist in the sixteen kingdom alliance—particularly that Spirit Consolidation Pill, the one that Mu Gaoqi had gifted roughly forty of.

"He's not a miserly one, at least." Jiang Chen didn't have much

use for the Spirit Consolidation Pill, but it really was quite useful for cultivators in the spirit realm. Although it was a bit of an exaggeration to compare it to a Divine Fruit, it wasn't too far off either.

Jiang Chen summoned Gouyu and the others, giving each four pills. He planned on giving Tang Hong four of the remainder, and doling out each of the final pills amongst the other Precious Tree Sect disciples. Even though he didn't have much of a relationship with them, they were all Precious Tree Sect members in the end. They were now crossing the river in the same boat. Giving them each a pill would be doing them a favor as well.

As for the Origin Fostering Pill, Jiang Chen observed the five of them in the palm of his hand for a moment. He had some use for them, but with his preferences, he wasn't quite satisfied with their quality. He kept two and decided to give the rest to Ye Chonglou.

The lordmaster had just broken through to the origin realm, and although his potential had yet to be fully explored, the area of improvement left to him was nothing compared to a young person's. Perhaps these pills would be more suited for Ye Chonglou.

It was rather the Seven Star Coalescence Pill that was a rare find for Jiang Chen. He'd refined those sort of pills back in the Eastern Kingdom, and the Vast Oceans Pill was still a hot item in the sixteen kingdoms alliance.

However, that particular pill was only useful in the true qi realm. Its effects were greatly decreased in the spirit realm, and

completely inadequate in the origin realm.

"Seven Stars Coalescence Pill? Recovering origin energy... it looks like I must assimilate into the local culture after entering the Regal Pill Palace and place greater emphasis on pills."

The Regal Pill Palace was a sect that had been founded for the dao of pills. If a disciple didn't know how to refine pills, then they weren't a proper Regal Pill Palace disciple.

However, Jiang Chen had lacked time in the past two years to further his studies in the dao of pills. Otherwise, there truly wouldn't be anyone in the Divine Abyss Continent who had more potential in this field than him. He had been a pill master renowned through the realms in his past life!

Jiang Chen summoned Gouyu after he'd portioned out the pills. "Gouyu, go find Lordmaster Ye Chonglou and take these pills to them." He would send a message with his consciousness on how to proportion the pills, so there was no need to tell Gouyu about that.

Wen Ziqi walked up afterwards, "Young master, the spirit medicines you gave last time have been consumed. The Silvermoon Monsterapes have large appetites now and eat quite a lot."

She was spending enormous time and effort on separately raising the two Apes. However, as time went on, the Apes also entered a period of rapid growth. The sudden explosion of their appetites meant that their development was about to accelerate. This was a

good thing, but presented an enormous expense for Jiang Chen.

He had many resources, whether from the Precious Tree Sect or the legacy territory from ancient times. But even so, there were many who depended on him, so it was difficult to make ends meet. Add the several hundred Goldwing Swordbirds that Jiang Chen had always kept at his side, that meant he had another couple hundred spirit realm cultivators to feed. Their appetites were equally astounding.

“Who would’ve thought that I, Jiang Chen, would have to start worrying about day to day living?” The Regal Pill Palace’s resources were ten times that of the Precious Tree Sect, but they were still noticeably insufficient in his hands because he had so many vassals who needed them. Gouyu and Xue Tong were followers and not official disciples, so they received no resources.

“It looks like I still need to earn money eh!”

This wasn’t difficult for Jiang Chen, particularly in the Regal Pill Palace. He decided to still attack this problem from the angle of refining pills.

The Silvermoon Monsterapes, Goldbiter Rat King and Goldwing Swordbirds were all clamoring for food, awaiting bloodline evolution. If they didn’t receive enough resources, their strength would never develop at the proper pace.

Jiang Chen recalled that apart from the standard amount allotted from the Regal Pill Palace, he could also undertake missions to earn

resources, or even travel outside the sect and gain resources in that manner.

“It looks like I should go see what missions are available.” There was much he needed to be familiar with in order to settle into sect life as soon as possible, having newly arrived in the Regal Pill Palace.

He sat down cross legged, meditating for a moment and unearthing a few ancient pill recipes from the memories of his past life that were suitable for the origin realm.

“Collect resources, refine pills and increase strength.” These were the matters that Jiang Chen needed to pay the most attention to. He glanced at the time and saw that Gouyu had left for roughly three hours. It should have been enough to visit Ye Chonglou and return, yet there was no sign of her.

As he mused, Huang’er appeared at his door with scattered footsteps. “Sir Jiang, sister Gouyu has left for so long and is unfamiliar with the people and terrain here. Huang’er is a bit worried.” Huang’er had built an exceedingly deep relationship with Gouyu during this time, and was thinking the same thoughts as Jiang Chen.

“Mm, I was just thinking the same. But this is the Regal Pill Palace, so nothing untoward should have occurred.”

Even so, Jiang Chen didn’t linger. Gouyu was his follower and had always performed her job without cause for censure. Jiang

Chen rather admired her frank directness.

The other followers were also worried when they heard that Gouyu had yet to return and followed Jiang Chen out on his search.

They actually heard Gouyu's raised voice in the midst of an argument at the Valley entrance even before they'd walked up. "Nonsense! By what right do you bar my entrance?" Gouyu had her hands on her thin waist as she argued with the guards at the entrance in a charming and non-threatening way.

"The Rosy Valley is the residence for geniuses. You have no right or papers, of course you can't enter."

"Bullshit! I just left from here and now I can't enter? You're just purposefully making things difficult!" Gouyu was also growing more and more irritated by now.

"Heh heh, so what if we are? What are you going to do about it? You can enter however you'd like if you have the medallion of a core disciple. Stay the hell away if you don't!"

"Are the followers of the core disciples not human? Can we not enter? Then why can those followers enter and leave as they wish?" Gouyu pointed at the other followers entering and leaving the Valley.

"And how do you compare to the others? Who's your master?

What's your cultivation? A mere earth spirit realm? Even the medicine boys running errands have a higher cultivation than you. You blasphemy the Rosy Valley with your presence!"

"Right, know your place! You're not even sky spirit realm!"

"Alright, either go the hell away or don't blame us for taking action!" These guards all spat vicious words, their countenances at their most superior.

"Tsk tsk, I'd like to see just how you will take action!" Jiang Chen's voice rang coldly from behind them. "Gouyu, come in." There was a kind of authority in his voice that no one dared question.

Jiang Chen's God's Eye swept through the guards, gleaming, "I will help anyone who touches even a hair on her head reincarnate immediately."

He was obviously not joking. It was said that great barkers are not biters. It was fairly obvious that these guards were targeting Gouyu by blocking her. Their target? Him.

Otherwise, with Gouyu's identity and status, and being a great beauty to boot, these guards had no need nor motivation to make things difficult for her.

Since he'd trained the Evil Golden Eye, Jiang Chen's gaze was starting to possess more and more of a royal's dignity. The

heavenly intimidation within his eyes left the guards at a bit of a loss, as if their very souls were being held fast. They couldn't move at all.

Gouyu snorted softly and walked in openly. "Young master, the items have been delivered to the lordmaster. He thanks you greatly."

Jiang Chen waved his hand and stared at the guards, his tone ice. "Open your eyes and take a good look! These are my followers. Whoever dares give them trouble when they enter and leave in the future is challenging my good temper. Repetition of such a matter will not be tolerated. If this happens again, I don't mind killing some of you to help stimulate your memories."

Chapter 464: Stunning Four Seats With One Point

Obviously, these guards weren't at too high a level. Otherwise, they wouldn't be stationed at the door. Most of them were at the sky spirit or spirit king level, placing them at the same level as most of the core disciple followers.. They would only have the right to live within the Rosy Valley once they entered the origin realm. Before then, they could only slave away as someone else's follower or earn resources through missions.

Therefore, the origin realm was a moat in the top Myriad Domain sects. Breaking through to the origin realm opened up a wide path of light for one, but until one did so, one's fate was dipped in mediocrity. When a cultivator broke through to the origin realm, it was akin to a carp transforming to a dragon after leaping through the dragon's gate.

But of course, there were more than a hundred thousand disciples who had yet to reach the origin realm, and only so many who could do so. It was apparent from a glance at the Rosy Valley that those who could break through were few and far in between, even in a fourth rank sect like Regal Pill Palace.

Even if Jiang Chen didn't have much seniority, he was still a core disciple in the end. If he really wanted to start a killing spree and find an excuse to kill a few guards, he'd be the one in the right no matter who he talked to.

Jiang Chen had weathered all sorts of violent conflict in the past of his rise. Killing intent formed naturally in the subtle

undercurrents of his words. The guards all became as silent as cicadas in cold weather, not daring to make a peep.

They had received orders from others to find an opportunity to pick at Jiang Chen and make life difficult for him. But they were limited to his followers. Someone of Jiang Chen's stature wasn't something they could afford to antagonize.

Jiang Chen's followers were all very gratified by the scene he was making. They knew that his anger was for their sake, to gain face for them and back them up. All sorts of taunts and jeers had drenched them ever since they'd first set foot into the Rosy Valley. As a result, the followers were feeling rather self conscious. Jiang Chen's actions and words firmly tamped down the cracks in their dao hearts.

"Tsk tsk, isn't your temper a bit big for someone who's just arrived in the Valley? Flaunting your status with a few guards at the gate? You think you're hot stuff, do you?" A chilling voice rang forth not too far away, a few other mocking voices quickly following up.

"Heh heh, perhaps he's used to being the bully of a little place and hasn't gotten rid of that nasty little habit after arriving at the Regal Pill Palace."

"This is the Regal Pill Palace! He should put away that country bumpkin temper of his from the sixteen kingdoms. Otherwise, he's going to end up on the short end of the stick sooner or later." These words were accompanied by the appearance of several figures.

Three core disciples blocked the path with their followers. Whether by chance or design, they happened to obstruct Jiang Chen's path back to his own residence.

Jiang Chen smiled faintly and swept God's Eye over these fellows. They were roughly second and third level origin realm. This kind of character was likely cannon fodder for others in the Soaring Clouds area. He revealed a meaningful smile and slightly furrowed his brows, "Great barkers are no biters. What do you mean by this?"

"A country bumpkin alright, no manners at all!"

"Someone who dares offend even senior brother Yan Hongtu is seriously idiotic."

The three fellows all spoke words of censure, completely forgetting that they were the ones who'd jeered at Jiang Chen first and block the way.

Jiang Chen's face darkened. He couldn't be bothered wasting more time with them, "Two words. Piss off."

It was obvious at a glance that Yan Hongtu had sent these minor characters to test him. Jiang Chen was utterly disinterested in playing along with this kind of farce. However, his attitude provoked anger from the others.

Although their positions were nothing much in the Valley, they were still core disciples after all and possessed the pride of one.

This was particularly true in front of Jiang Chen. They felt they were obviously superior in terms of seniority or cultivation level. Such as it was, it was the normal course of action to humiliate and trample Jiang Chen. However, this country bumpkin had dared to retort in such an arrogant tone? And that to three core disciples? This was an unprecedented affront to their pride!

“Jiang Chen, it looks like we need to teach you what the rules of the Valley are!” The three core disciples glanced at each other, striking a formation in the shape of the 品 character, completely sealing off Jiang Chen’s path.

The Regal Pill Palace didn’t forbid disciples from sparring with each other. Disciples only needed to request permission from the sect if it was a fight to the death. Otherwise, they were allowed handle minor scuffles and conflicts amongst themselves. Thus, these kind of face offs were quite common in the Valley.

“Trash like you want to talk rules with me? I’ll just ask you this, are you going to piss off or not?” Jiang Chen arched one brow and raised his voice.

“Jiang Chen, I’ll give you two choices! Either you kneel down now and beg for mercy, or I’ll beat you until you’re on your knees and begging for mercy!”

Jiang Chen’s eyes narrowed to slits. His face darkened as he

suddenly raised his right index finger, pointing into the distance.

"Piss. Off!" His shout rolled forth like a crack of thunder as the Evil Golden Eye shot out with a vicious light, cutting through the sky like a flash of lightning. A beam of starlight blazed out from his finger and swept through the void with boundless frostiness. The temperature in the air dropped in an instant, causing the very air to freeze.

The frighteningly icy light burst through the air, freezing the ground beneath the three core disciples in the span of a breath, the immense power of ice crashing down on them like a collapsing ice shelf.

"What??"

"No!!"

Jiang Chen had combined the power of the Ice Lotus and the Supernova Point for this move. Its full name was the Profound Dark Supernova Point. This single point brought forth the chill of the deepest depths of winter, sealing everything in permafrost.

The restraining power behind the wintry current was quite domineering, instantly locking off the entire area. The three core disciples were encased in ice, their blood freezing at a speed visible to the human eye.

Their weak followers were almost instantly frozen into ice

sculptures, with only a pair of despairing eyes exposed to the outside world, blinking frantically in their boundless fear and despair. It was as if they'd experienced the most frightening thing in this world.

The three core disciples were scared out of their wits. They couldn't prevent this power of ice from invading their bodies no matter how they resisted!

Jiang Chen's finger hung in midair. Their life and death rested on the slightest twitch of his finger.

A hint of a mocking smile appeared at his lips as he retracted his finger. The terrifying frosty power immediately dissipated and the brightness of the day was restored.

Blood and qi finally resumed their normal circulation finally came back when the pressure of the wintry force withdrew. The disciples circulated their qi for a few cycles before dispersing the icy energy that had invaded their bodies. When this was done, they looked at Jiang Chen with newfound fear in their eyes.

They were nominally of the same sect after all, so Jiang Chen hadn't struck a fatal blow. He'd only given them a warning.

Nothing was more persuasive than the threat of death.

As arrogant as the three core disciples were, they too knew that it would have been as easy as the flip of a hand had Jiang Chen

wanted to destroy them just now. How would they dumbly continue to block the path now?

As they looked at Jiang Chen leave with fanfare, the three bedraggled disciples looked at each other and saw a thick sense of dread in each other's eyes.

"This kid... has such frightening power at a mere first level origin realm? He's completely on par with the earth origin realm geniuses!"

"Ai, let's not talk about it. Let's go back and tell senior brother Yan Hongtu first. We've seriously lost a great deal of face this time."

"Jiang Chen..."

The three core disciples had been brought right to death's door and had lost all of their previous cockiness. Heads down, they walked off.

"Young master, that finger just now was damn cool! When can I, Qiao Shan, be that amazing??"

"We'll be able to do that sooner or later if we follow the young master. When we were bumming around in the Eastern Kingdom, when would we have ever have imagined that we'd enter the spirit realm one day?" Guo Jin had a great deal of faith in Jiang Chen.

“That’s right! Let’s see if those dogs can still look down on us after the young master’s made his move!” The Qiao Shan and Qiao Chuan duo were filled with a thick sense of pride in their words, feeling justified in walking around with heads held high.

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. “Let’s go back first. This matter isn’t over yet. Those three minor characters were only Yan Hongtu’s vanguard, completely insignificant.”

Since Yan Hongtu was the tyrant of the Soaring Clouds area, there was no way he would let this matter rest. However, Jiang Chen wasn’t afraid either. If one wanted to rise in the world of martial dao, there would always be a tiger or obstacles in the way.

If Yan Hongtu was so blind as to come knocking on Jiang Chen’s door, he would be kicked out in overwhelming style. There would never be an end to things if Jiang Chen gave way!

His intuition was quite correct. His residence was surrounded by people early the next morning.

To be more accurate, it was surrounded by a group of followers.

It looked like all the followers of the core disciples had been mobilized. They had all congregated outside Jiang Chen’s residence. They had gathered under the banner of forcing Jiang Chen’s followers out for inadequate cultivation. Even the errand boys were of the sky spirit realm!

Thus, they had come to protest with self righteous tones, denouncing Jiang Chen and wanting him to banish his followers.

Jiang Chen smiled coldly. Yan Hongtu is surely behind these people. “You want to use this method to cause frustration for me?” He walked out leisurely and sized up the crowd. He estimated at least a thousand people were gathered at his door.

Jiang Chen wasn’t one easily angered, but that didn’t mean he had no temper whatsoever. “All of you, shut up! I will count only to ten. If even a shadow of your presence is in my eyes after ten, I’ll annihilate every single one of you!”

Jiang Chen was truly enraged now. So much nonsense and irritating affairs had cropped up just two days after setting foot into the Rosy Valley. This was severely impacting his day to day routine.

“Ten, nine, eight, seven…”

Jiang Chen wasted no more words and didn’t attempt to convince these people. He knew that Yan Hongtu had sent all of them. They didn’t dare not come, and indeed, had no choice but to come.

Therefore, no reasoning or words would sway them. The only option was force.

“Six, five, four, three…”

Jiang Chen's tone grew frostier the more he counted down. Killing intent began to gather, and an icy chill pervaded the atmosphere.

"Hmph! Jiang Chen, you're simply too arrogant! This is the Rosy Valley, do you think you can kill whoever you want to kill?"

"That's right. Jiang Chen, these demands are all very reasonable. You're just opening up with death threats without even listening to them. Do you have any respect for the rules?"

"Don't think you can throw your weight around so brazenly just because you have some skills to your name. Your bit of cultivation is still far from the peak of Rosy Valley!"

Waves of provocative shouts rose and fell. Jiang Chen knew that the hand in the shadows had finally emerged.

Chapter 465: Huang'er Makes Her Move

Jiang Chen was in complete readiness as he stood in front of the door. The aura of a lone spear holding back the entirety of the enemy forces radiated from him alone. He would be just as calm and reserved as usual even if the wind howled like horde of hungry beasts, rain lashed down in an unending storm, or ten thousand troops thundered towards him..

Suddenly, his God's Eye flickered as he shouted, "Be open and righteous if you've come to make trouble! A vaunted Regal Pill Palace core disciple like you shouldn't act like a petty ruffian in a marketplace, stirring up an ignorant mob to cause a ruckus! I feel disgusted for you even if you don't!" By the time he was done speaking, his God's Eye had completed a sweep of the surroundings, up to five miles in every direction.

Silhouettes flickered in the distance from all directions, shooting towards him. Clearly, Yan Hongtu had quite a bit of charisma. Whether these people were here of their own accord or not, the influence he commanded in the Soaring Clouds area was obvious.

"Any more of you? Come on out!" Jiang Chen snorted coldly.

All the core disciples parted to the sides, leaving a path down the center in the middle. Standing at the end of the path was a young man in a silver robe. His eyes were as sharp as daggers, and the combination of his aquiline nose and sharp eyes gave him a sinister inclination. He took long strides down the path as several core disciples formed an escort for him.

“Senior brother Yan.”

“Greetings to senior brother Yan.”

“Welcome, senior brother Yan! Jiang Chen, how dare you not quickly welcome the senior brother?”

Jiang Chen flicked a faint glance at this overweening senior brother. He was thoroughly enjoying lording it over this scene, taking it for granted. It was apparent that he was used to being feted and quite enjoyed the treatment of ten thousand people fawning on him.

This person’s cultivation level should be at fifth or sixth level origin realm. Although he hadn’t reached the sky origin realm, this was more than enough to hold an absolute advantage in the Soaring Clouds area. The heart gives birth to the appearance, and judging from the looks of this person, he was the sort to seek revenge for the slightest grievance, an exceedingly ruthless and vicious man. He was the kind to thoroughly exhaust all the methods to achieve his goals. Whoever dared cross him or offend him would undoubtedly face his unscrupulous revenge.

He must have purposefully planned this gathering today to suppress Jiang Chen. But a hint of a smile tugged at the latter’s lips. He obviously wasn’t going to play along.

When Yan Hongtu saw that Jiang Chen was so haughty as to not express anything at the sight of him, he was even more incensed, feeling as though his throne had just been severely challenged.

“You’re that Jiang Chen?” Yan Hongtu walked up and looked at Jiang Chen with a supercilious smile, an arrogant look in his eyes.

“Yan Hongtu, is it? I have no interest in wasting words with you. Bring out your weapons if you want to really make a fuss. Who are you trying to disgust by compelling these ignorant folk to come make trouble?” Jiang Chen was completely exasperated by these paltry tricks. He didn’t even have the interest in breathing the same air as characters like these.

What a stereotypically petty villain.

“How dare you, Jiang Chen, call senior brother Yan by his name!

“You dare disrespect senior brother Yan in the Soaring Clouds area, do you wish to die??”

“Senior brother Yan is the master of the Soaring Clouds area and is showing you face in coming to your residence! Do you understand the rules at all, crude little bumpkin?!”

Yan Hongtu didn’t need to say anything. His underlings spoke all that needed to be said, denouncing Jiang Chen loudly in an unbridled attempt to kiss up to Yan Hongtu.

Jiang Chen laughed coldly. Toadies like these could found everywhere. At this point, he was used to the sight of them. Jiang Chen’s eyes flicked up to rest on Yan Hongtu’s face, a mocking

tone to his voice as he said, “I, Jiang Chen, only respect true talent and those with a laudable spirit. Are any of you worthy of my respect?”

Yan Hongtu smiled through his anger, “Jiang Chen, I’ve heard of your name and your arrogance, so don’t say I’m bullying you. These followers are also disciples of the Regal Pill Palace, each with their own dignity. Bringing in any random stray cat or dog off the streets into the Regal Pill Palace is an affront to all of us, a blatant disregard for the rules!”

“Rules? What rules? Does the sect have such a rule?” Jiang Chen snorted derisively.

“The sect doesn’t, but the Soaring Clouds area does. Even if this area doesn’t, then it exists because I say it does!”

Yan Hongtu’s tone was tyrannical, leaving no room for argument, “Even the errand boys in the Soaring Clouds are of the sky spirit realm. Although you don’t think it’s humiliating to bring in riffraff from the street, this is our dignity on the line!”

“Right! Jiang Chen, you’re throwing away face for our area!”

“We can’t let this kid wreck the rules!”

“Jiang Chen, there are plenty of inner disciples available if you want to search for followers. Bringing in these strays is blasphemy towards this sacred land!”

“The Soaring Clouds area will never allow such trash to exist here!”

These core disciples were obviously colluding with each other. Their heckling rose and fell, a tide of verbal haranguing landing on Jiang Chen.

As if he’d heard nothing, Jiang Chen’s brow arched, and he barked, “Shut up!” His voice tolled like a bell, stunning the raucous crowd into silence.

Jiang Chen smiled indifferently, “What the hell do any of my followers have to do with you lot? I only know the sect’s rules and don’t know what kind of bullshit rules this area has. If such a rule truly exists, change it immediately. If it doesn’t, go back to whatever hole you crawled out of. Run away as hard as you’re scheming about me, now!”

Yan Hongtu spread out his hands and leered, “Jiang Chen, are you truly going to go against the tides and offend the entire Soaring Clouds area?” He was quite devious with his words, deliberating setting the situation up as Jiang Chen against the entire area.

Jiang Chen was about to speak when light, peaceful footsteps sounded. He only needed the briefest of moments to know that those agile footsteps belonged to Miss Huang’er.

She’d already walked up next to him whilst Jiang Chen was still

being surprised. “Yan Hongtu, is it? You target the followers with every word you say. How about this, since all your followers are here, I’ll play one song. If any of them can remain standing here at the end of my song, then we’ll leave. If on the contrary, then don’t make an issue out of us again in the future.” Huang’er’s voice was ethereal and otherworldly, as if a valley of orchids or a clear spring.

Everyone was surprised by this voice. When they saw that the speaker was an exceedingly ugly young girl, this made them feel even more strange.

Huang’er ignored all of their reactions and hesitation and flipped her hand over. An ancient zither hovered in midair, and her slender, flawless fingers began to play. Strong notes started to reverberate through the air in short order, violently thrashing to form a melody that raged with violence. Shining spears and armored horses appeared, along with the crashing of thunder, avalanches from the highest mountains, and a tsunami that surged high enough to blot out the sky.

These killing notes seemed to embody a certain type of magic to them, cutting straight through a person’s soul. A thought struck Jiang Chen as he watched Miss Huang’er’s fingers fly. He was incredibly astonished to discover a terrifying attack on the soul held within the melody.

This formless attack instantly destroyed the mental defenses of the cultivators with a mediocre strength of heart. Caught up in their enormous fear, the illusions ran roughshod over them.

In addition, this kind of attack wasn't just an illusionary one, but a tangible one using the sound waves themselves. A dual attack on the soul and the body, indeed, some of the followers with low cultivations began to scream, covering their ears as agonized wails tore themselves free of their throats.

However, this kind of attack wouldn't be evaded just because one covered their ears. This kind of attacking melody seeped into every pore. Every inch of their skin was fair game.

As the howls of misery grew louder, some of the followers began to flee in disarray. More and more followers escaped when they couldn't contend with the notes.

The courtyard was deserted in a little less than half an hour. Not a single follower could be seen, and that was when Huang'er's white jade-like fingers lightly pressed down on the zither, abuptly muting the notes that rang through the air.

As the music stopped, some of the core disciples with lower levels of training felt their chests lighten, as a mountain's worth of pressure had suddenly disappeared. The blue sky that'd seemed ready to collapse in on them regained its clear sunniness.

All of them secretly wiped away sweat, their hearts still palpitating in fear and the drums of retreat starting to beat in their minds. They hadn't necessarily been of one mind with Yan Hongtu previously, and had come because they were quite afraid of Yan Hongtu. They feared not showing him face.

But now, who was willing to lead the charge for him in the face of such a strong, domineering power? If that ugly girl had kept playing just now, even their mental defenses may not have held on. Once their strength of heart was damaged, progress would be quite difficult in the origin realm.

The desire to leave rapidly grew in most of them. They were unwilling to become embroiled in this conflict. The more astute ones even observed that Yan Hongtu's position as the local tyrant might be severely impacted by Jiang Chen, or perhaps even utterly destroyed!

Huang'er clasped her hands together, and the ancient zither vanished as if she'd turned a trick. She smiled softly at Jiang Chen and quietly retreated to the side.

When Jiang Chen saw that Huang'er's music had scared off a thousand sky spirit realm cultivators, he too applauded with hearty laughter. He looked at Yan Hongtu, feeling even more lighthearted than he had before. "What do you say to that, Yan Hongtu?"

Yan Hongtu would've never thought that Jiang Chen would have such a strong follower by his side. This had suddenly placed him in an extremely passive position. "Hmph! Even if this follower is strong, the others are weak. That is the truth." He snorted coldly, obviously not about to let the matter rest.

Jiang Chen burst out in laughter, "If we're talking in terms of strength, then doesn't this mean all of the followers in the Rosy Valley can get the hell out in front of mine?"

Yan Hongtu had no comeback to that.

Jiang Chen's follower could indeed sweep all the others away in terms of strength. Their banner and protest was completely ineffectual in that manner. "Jiang Chen, I can let the matter of the followers go. However, you're creating quite a storm in just a few hours of your arrival in the Rosy Valley. As the master of the area, I will not allow you to publicly flaunt our rules and customs!"

Jiang Chen was quite ticked off by this bringing up of nebulous rules over and over again. "Yan Hongtu, think of some new tricks if you want to make trouble. What rules, what customs? Who the hell are you? Who said you make the rules here? My rule is simple; I do not attack unless I am attacked. If you attack, I'll return it to you tenfold! So tell me, do you want to enter a contest of civil subjects or martial dao? Hurry up and throw down the gauntlet, I don't have time to waste on you."

He truly didn't think much of a character like Yan Hongtu. The others in the area may fear him like they did a tiger, but he was nothing more than a capering clown in Jiang Chen's eyes!

Chapter 466: A Contest Of Controlling Fire

“Have you heard? The master of the Soaring Clouds area, Yan Hongtu, wants to duel with the new core disciple Jiang Chen!”

“I’ve heard that they’re betting on three matches, using martial dao and pills as the first two arenas. If the results of the first two are inconclusive, they’ll choose another subject for the third bet.”

“Heh heh, I hear the forfeits are quite large!”

“Aren’t they now! If Jiang Chen loses, he’ll need to be Yan Hongtu’s follower for three years. If Yan Hongtu loses, he’ll have to hand over his stipend for the next three years to Jiang Chen. It’s been set down in paper and ink, and apparently they’ve made an oath to the heavens and earth!”

“A follower for three years on one hand, and three years of stipend on the other. These two really have some balls, huh!”

“Hmph, Yan Hongtu is sinking to new lows of depravity. It’s one thing to play around at being a king in the Soaring Clouds area, but now he’s bullying newly ascended core disciples! He really is disgracing himself.”

“The monkey reigns in the mountains when the tiger is absent. Yan Hongtu is a smart one alright. He knows that he’d only be a nameless pawn if he entered the Sky Pillar area, yet he is a king if he remains in the Soaring Clouds area.”

“I’ve heard that Jiang Chen has a truly impressive background. The Palace Head formed an alliance with the Precious Tree Sect just for him, and Jiang Chen actually trounced an inspector from the Sky Sect when he was only in the spirit realm. He’s not someone to overlook!”

“Heh heh, there’s also something called hyperbole. So what if it’s an inspector from the Sky Sect? Aren’t there medicore and trashy people in the Sky Sect? ”

“No matter what, Yan Hongtu won’t gain much face even if he wins after bullying a disciple who recently ascended into the origin realm. If he ends up losing though, then he’s completely done for in this life.”

“That’s very true. A character like Yan Hongtu is destined not to amount to much. He’s probably thought this through, otherwise he wouldn’t be acting such a fool like this.”

The news of Jiang Chen and Yan Hongtu dueling spread through the Rosy Valley like wildfire.

“Young master, all of Rosy Valley is talking about the duel.” Xue Tong was a bit worried. Yan Hongtu was at fifth level origin realm and the boss of the Soaring Clouds area, far beyond Jiang Chen in both cultivation level and seniority. It would be a bald faced lie to say that Xue Tong wasn’t worried at all.

“Xue Tong, what are you worried about?” Gouyu was completely

dismissive of the hubbub. “If the young master dares answer the challenge, then he must have his own reasons. When have you ever seen the young master lose any bet?”

This made a lot of sense once everyone had the opportunity to think it over.

“Haha, the young master is a natural winner! He was like this in the Eastern Kingdom, the Skylaurel Kingdom, again in the sixteen kingdoms alliance, and will definitely be the same in the Regal Pill Palace!” Qiao Shan’s voice boomed loudly.

Mu Gaoqi, also known as the Demigod of Wood, came rushing over as they chatted amongst themselves. He had a wry smile on his face, “Brother Jiang Chen, you were simply too impulsive. Yan Hongtu has been renowned for many years and possesses an absolute advantage in the Soaring Clouds area! Even if you wanted to duel him, you should’ve waited a few more years before doing so!” It was clear that Mu Gaoqi was truly worried.

“Have no fear, Doaist Gaoqi. I promised that I would explore the spirit spring with you three months from now. I have no intention of delaying that deadline. What the hell is that Yan Hongtu? Is he even worthy of me being his follower for three years?”

It wasn’t that Jiang Chen was arrogant, but that he had long since thoroughly probed just how much weight there was to Yan Hongtu.

Mu Gaoqi sighed when he saw Jiang Chen this determined.

“Brother Jiang Chen, there are many rules to a contest of pills. I’ll explain them to you first so you’re not caught off guard…” He was obviously the most anxious one right now. If Jiang Chen happened to lose and became Yan Hongtu’s follower, then his own plans would be deeply affected as well.

That spirit spring was simply too important to him.

Jiang Chen didn’t decline Mu Gaoqi’s enthusiasm and patiently lent an ear to all his explanations. Jiang Chen was more or less familiar with the rules after one go through. Although Mu Gaoqi had never participated in a duel, he’d witnessed at least fifty, if not a hundred of them during his time in the Rosy Valley.

Such conflicts weren’t rare, and the application for the duel was quickly approved.

An elder had taken the responsibility from the Regal Pill Palace side to organize the duel. “Our Regal Pill Palace was founded on the basis of the dao of pills. When the disciples of our sect duel, the first duel is one of pills, and only then martial dao. Are there any objections?” He looked at the two he was addressing; Jiang Chen’s expression was at ease whereas Yan Hongtu brimmed with confidence, itching for the chance to prove himself.

“I have no objections.” Yan Hongtu’s voice rang out loudly, seemingly wanting to suppress Jiang Chen using volume alone.

Jiang Chen said faintly, “No objections.”

The organizer nodded when he saw the two combatants express no objections. “Alright, as there are myriad topics that pills touch on, the topics will be selected at random. A referee will oversee the match, and the match must stay within the bounds of the sect’s rules. The victor will be determined after three matches. I will now begin to select the topics.” He’d selected three crumpled bits of paper from a randomly scattered pile as he spoke.

“The topics of the three pill matches will be: fire control, cauldron inspection and pill refinement.”

A ghost of a smile curled Yan Hongtu’s lips, utter confidence in every crease of his face. He’d heard many rumors of Jiang Chen’s martial dao potential, and was well aware of his opponent’s strength. However, he was at fifth level origin realm, whereas Jiang Chen was at first level. There was no reason for Yan Hongtu to fear.

As for the dao of pills, he was even more confident given his background of the Regal Pill Palace. Jiang Chen was from the poor backwater that was the sixteen kingdoms alliance, how much could he possibly have seen of the dao of pills?

Skill in the dao of pills?

Yan Hongtu smirked contemptuously, completely dismissing Jiang Chen in his heart. “Jiang Chen, let me teach you a lesson today in what a true disciple of a great sect is, a true genius of the Regal Pill Palace! Hah! Do you think you’re worthy?” Yan Hongtu’s provocation was full of disdain.

Jiang Chen truly couldn't be bothered with verbal sparring. That Yan Hongtu seemed to be quite confident in his ability in the dao of pills. Well, the higher he soared with that faith, the more satisfying it would be for Jiang Chen to crush him.

It was always such a gratifying feeling to smack an enemy down like a fly using the art they were most adept at.

"The first topic is controlling fire. Control over fire is an absolute prerequisite for setting foot on the path of pills. If one cannot even control fire, then they are an absolute failure of a pillmaster."

"Do you see the twelve small cauldrons in front of you? There are twelve types of fire within, including but not limited to, heavenly fire, earthly fire, ghost fire and odd fire. But at their very heart, they are all fire. Both of you have fifteen minutes. Whoever can awaken the higher number of fires using their arts within this period will be the victor. Remember, your skill with fire must first resonate with them before awakening them."

Resonance with the origin of the flames was a common subject in the area of fire. And to be honest, this method was widely used by fire experts to test many different kinds of fire. The true heavyweights, those at a heavenly level, were well versed in the methods of resonating with various sources of fire to investigate their properties.

Fire was one of the original forces of the universe. Who knew how many types, shapes and forms of fire existed between the

heavens and earth? Some types of skyfire were as small as a speck of dust, but held enough power within them to destroy an entire city, or even a world.

“Your fifteen minutes starts now.” The first match officially started with the judge’s command.

Yan Hongtu, the epitome of confidence, made a hand seal and brought a flame in the shape of a peony into existence. His gaze was full of gravitas as he started setting up flames around the small cauldrons.

One had to say that Yan Hongtu was quite adept at controlling fire. It only took a blink of an eye to awaken two cauldrons of fire. When he flicked a glance over at Jiang Chen, he saw Jiang Chen looking intently at the cauldrons as if they held mesmerizing patterns, not making a move at all.

“Haha, this country bumpkin has no idea how high the heavens go! He probably doesn’t even know how to control fire!” Yan Hongtu’s preconceptions were unshakeable, and he only saw Jiang Chen at a complete loss of what to do.

Jiang Chen had indeed not begun to act. He also had no interest in how much fun Yan Hongtu was having. He’d entered that state where he had once again lost himself in thought. The distractions of the outside world washed off him, leaving his dao heart unaffected.

He observed each small cauldron and analyzed it, a wealth of

information flowing through his mind.

"Mm, this is the Phantom Whitefire, that's Volcanic Trueflame, and Heartwood Spiritfire, Azurethunder Oddfire over there...." Jiang Chen's mind kept analyzing the origin of the flames in the small cauldrons, and had completely seen through all of them in short order. He snapped his fingers, a bizarre fire glyph appearing in mid air. He stretched it to and fro, like strumming a zither, creating a uniquely beautiful melody and rhythm.

The small cauldrons suddenly lit up like candles being lit in succession. Flames of every color and shape flared into existence.

One flower, two flowers, three flowers...

Twelve flowers of different flames were joyously burning after a short span of time. The flames climbed higher and higher, seemingly dancing with joy at finally finding someone who wholly understood them. The flames seemed to form a strange sort of communication with Jiang Chen's fire glyph.

"Mm?" The referee had also thought that Jiang Chen hadn't known how to control fire when the latter hadn't made a move earlier. But now that Jiang Chen had finally moved, the flames in the little cauldrons moved like they'd been lit all along. The referee's mouth hung open, categorically stunned at the sight.

The rhythm of the dancing flames being lit was simply too beautiful. It had gone from left to right in single file, as neat and orderly as standing in line. It was just like someone had lit them

easily and swiftly, at a dead even tempo.

Jiang Chen's movements had been incomparably elegant, making him a joy to watch. At that moment, the fifteen minutes ran dry.

Yan Hongtu had been wholly focused on his cauldrons, awakening seven fires by the time the bell rang. He turned with a gleeful face, ready to see Jiang Chen make a fool out of himself. However, the sight that faced him turned him to stone. The arrogant smirk still hung on his face, but now appeared quite ironic.

All twelve flames had been awakened in the twelve cauldrons, and their figures were far superior to his own.

"How... how is this possible??" If it hadn't been for the referee present, he almost wanted to believe that Jiang Chen had cheated!

Chapter 467: Winning In The Dao Of Pills, Facing Off With Martial Dao

Clapclapclapclap!

It took a while for the referee to come back to his senses. When he did, he immediately began to applaud without reservation. He was beside himself with admiration. “Jiang Chen, it had never occurred to me that you might be a genius at controlling fire. You’ve awakened the flames in every cauldron! That is an exceedingly rare feat even amongst the younger generation. Haha, Sage Dan Chi’s eye for talent is really to be admired.”

The referee was human too; he had his own standards for beauty and admiration. Jiang Chen’s hand just now had elicited honest appreciation from the referee, and so he didn’t stint the young man his due praise.

Of course, this didn’t impact the impartiality of his judging.

“Yan Hongtu, you’ve lost the first of the three matches concerning pills. You still have two more chances, but if you lose in the next topic, cauldron inspection, then you’ll have lost in the arena of pills.”

If Jiang Chen won two out of the three matches, then there was naturally no need for a third match.

Yan Hongtu had yet to come to his senses from his defeat in the

battle of controlling fire. He'd displayed his skills to the pinnacle of his ability, awakening seven flames. He'd even thought he was performing beyond his abilities, and was quite something. But just when he'd believed victory was within his grasp, Jiang Chen had awakened all twelve flames. This had upended everything! There was no way he could accept this! However, the referee's voice reminded him that he had already lost the match of of controlling flames. If he lost the cauldron inspection match, then he would lose this part of the bet.

This meant that no mistakes could be tolerated in the next topic. "Hmph, Jiang Chen! You must've eked out a fluke of a win using some trick. But cauldron inspection relies on the keenness of one's vision and breadth of their experience. Don't you think you can slip by with trickery again!" Yan Hongtu still felt that Jiang Chen had cheated his way into awakening all twelve flames. Otherwise, how could it possible that a backwater place like the sixteen kingdoms could produce a cultivator with such impeccable skill at controlling fire? That level of skill only made sense if displayed by a genius disciple of a large sect like the Regal Pill Palace!"

Jiang Chen couldn't be bothered to argue as he serenely waited for the referee to begin explaining the next topic.

"The second topic relates to cauldron inspection. There is one cauldron in front of each of you, both exactly the same. Each of these cauldrons have certain defects. Your task will be to find those flaws, no matter how minute they may be. Whoever finds more will be declared as the victor. One point will be detracted for every false identification made. Once again, the allotted time is fifteen minutes."

The rules weren't complex. A point was added for proper identification and a point subtracted for false positives. Jiang Chen almost wanted to laugh when he heard this. This competition was almost tailor-made for him! When his God's Eye was combined with the Evil Golden Eye, it would be too easy to search for the flaws in these cauldrons. When his God's Eye was activated, even the tiniest of flaws would be magnified more than ten times over.

"The cauldron inspection match begins!" The referee's bellow started the clock for the second subject.

Yan Hongtu knew that things had come down to the wire. Therefore, he immediately flung himself over to the cauldron as soon as the referee shouted and began to carefully inspect it.

Jiang Chen remained as laid back as ever. He gestured once, forming a chain of fire that hoisted the cauldron into the air in front of him.

He thrust out nine successive gouts of flame, setting the surroundings of the cauldron afire. This was his unique method of inspecting cauldrons, a method that had been invented by a divine level expert!

When a cauldron was heated and primed by fire, its flaws and obscure insufficiencies would be enhanced, becoming even more apparent. This kind of method was actually but a small trick, with not much use for it. Many pill masters used it to evaluate cauldrons before pill refinement, to ensure that the cauldron wouldn't explode halfway through the process.

However, this small trick would be the trump card in Jiang Chen's hand that took home the victory.

All of the cauldron's flaws revealed themselves beneath Jiang Chen's God's Eye after it'd been heated. There was simply no place for them to hide.

Psh psh psh psh!

Jiang Chen continuously slapped his mental mark onto each flaw, and in less than fifteen minutes, had found all fifteen flaws in the cauldron.

When he looked at the time again, he noted that less than two thirds of the allotted time had gone by. He didn't posture proudly, but unhurriedly retracted his hand seal and retrieved his fire, placing the cauldron on the stage again.

Although the answer had yet to be revealed, Jiang Chen's bearing and casual grace still drew private admiration from the referee. At the very least, methods like Jiang Chen's way of inspecting cauldrons were something the referee himself had never seen, to say nothing of anything else.

When those present saw how Jiang Chen stood there with quiet confidence and a dignified bearing, moving with such calm gestures and a carefree attitude rarely seen in one so young, it was already enough to make Yan Hongtu come up short in their eyes.

The bell rang as soon as the fifteen minutes were up.

Yan Hongtu cried out agitatedly, “I’ve found eleven flaws, there are definitely no more! I’ve totally achieved full marks in this topic! There’s no way that I’m not the winner this time!”

The referee laughed wryly when he saw Yan Hongtu so incapable of keeping his composure. “Yan Hongtu, who told you you achieved full marks? Who also told you there were only eleven flaws? This cauldron has a total of fifteen flaws.”

“What? Fifteen?? How is that possible?! How come I only found eleven??” Yan Hongtu was stunned, but then immediately laughed. “Eleven is still plenty. Jiang Chen, how many did you manage to find, huh?”

Jiang Chen smiled indifferently, “Not many, just fifteen.”

“What?!” Yan Hongtu started to guffaw. “You’re dreaming, aren’t you? You can’t cheat in this topic, a flaw won’t appear somewhere just because you say there’s one!”

Jiang Chen really couldn’t be bothered to bandy words with someone like him and spoke to the referee, “There are fifteen flaws in total on the cauldron, and I’ve tagged each one with my mental mark. The marks won’t fade anytime soon, please feel free to inspect the cauldron.”

Although the referee had yet to go over the results, Jiang Chen's bearing made him feel that there was no way this candidate was mistaken.

Indeed, the referee nodded after inspecting Jiang Chen's cauldron. "Jiang Chen has located all fifteen flaws. Yan Hongtu, you located eleven. As such, Jiang Chen wins again. Jiang Chen has won two topics in a row in the arena of pills, and this competition is now over!"

"Impossible!!" Yan Hongtu couldn't accept this result at all. Jiang Chen won? The country bumpkin Jiang Chen won? On what basis?!

"Honored referee, are you mistaken somewhere? This Jiang Chen comes from the sixteen kingdoms; he's probably never even touched pills before! How can he possibly win twice?! And so perfectly each time?! Who would believe that?!"

The referee's expression grew cold, "Yan Hongtu, are you doubting my impartiality?" Yan Hongtu felt his hairs stand on end, chills running down his back when the referee leveled a glare at him.

Judging a competition was a duty that was on par with those of the Hall of Punishment in terms of impartiality. Whoever dared question his objectivity was questioning the entire Regal Pill Palace.

"I don't dare question the honored referee, but I suspect Jiang

Chen of cheating!” Yan Hongtu refused to accept the outcome as he felt his loss was entirely the wrong result.

“Cheating?” The referee laughed coldly. “If he is able to cheat right in front of me, a sect elder, then that’s his ability. Just how might he have cheated without knowledge of the topics beforehand? You tell me how he cheated!”

Yan Hongtu had nothing to say in response.

Even if Jiang Chen had some sort of special treasure, that still wouldn’t count as cheating. That was part of his abilities and his fortune. A competition of pills was conducted by pitting the holistic strengths of both parties against each other.

“Yan Hongtu, don’t duel if you can’t afford to lose. You should be able to accept a loss if you want to duel. Questioning the referee is courting death!” Yan Hongtu trembled like a cicada in cold weather at the sight of Jiang Chen’s eyes, afraid to say anything else.

He glared ferociously at Jiang Chen, “Jiang Chen, you may be able to use trickery to obtain victory in the dao of pills, but let’s see how you do that in the ring!” He turned his head without looking back after that and rushed straight for the martial dao stage.

“Jiang Chen, meet me in the ring if you’re a man!” Yan Hongtu even purposefully left this parting shot, as if afraid Jiang Chen wouldn’t show up.

Jiang Chen laughed leisurely, “Yan Hongtu, you can’t conceal the weakness in your heart no matter how loudly you jeer. Remember, three years worth of stipends, even a day less won’t do!” A character like Yan Hongtu wasn’t worth his interest, but three years of his stipend was definitely worth his interest. He was damn poor now, after all!

Standing in the ring, Yan Hongtu stared at Jiang Chen with all-consuming hatred. It was obvious that his loss in the area of pills had thoroughly enraged his pride. He felt that Jiang Chen had utterly offended him.

“Life and death is up to the heavens in the ring. However, you are but peers in the same sect sparring against each other. I hope you are not blinded by hatred and pull your blows when you land them. Otherwise, if you kill someone in the ring today, someone else may kill you in the ring tomorrow.” Another organizer was in charge of referee duties for the arena of martial dao.

These words held much warning in them. When sect disciples sparred, it was far from a matter of life and death, so there was no need for killing blows.

Two wrongs don’t make a right. A duel between those of the same sect rarely ended in a death. After all, everyone had a patron or someone backing them. If you killed someone today, it was hard to guarantee that someone stronger than you wouldn’t come for you tomorrow.

Therefore, participants never broke the unspoken rule of not fighting to the death in one of these duels. However, Yan Hongtu

was currently blinded by hate and had thrown all those unspoken rules to the back of his mind.

Right now, he only wanted Jiang Chen to die! He would be able to salvage his dignity, lost from his defeat in the dao of pills, if he trounced and tortured Jiang Chen to death.

Jiang Chen could naturally detect this unbridled killing intent from Yan Hongtu, and had long since seen through his personality. Not only was this person narrow minded, vicious and sinister, but it was apparent just how domineering and cruel this person was from seeing so much killing intent triggered from simple internal conflict.

However, what fear did the current Jiang Chen possess in the face of a fifth level origin realm now?

He'd felt his martial dao advance in leaps and bounds everyday since entering the origin realm. The development of his various arts had bolstered Jiang Chen's confidence to the point where he had full faith even facing the peak of the earth origin realm. He even had the courage to battle a sky origin realm cultivator.

Since Yan Hongtu was offering to make an example out of himself, Jiang Chen didn't mind using him as a stepping stone to make a name for himself in the Rosy Valley.

The rise of one's martial dao path wouldn't come with no rhyme or reason, just as status and benefits was continually built up and accumulated through conflicts with geniuses. Yan Hongtu's

provocation of Jiang Chen was actually a nice opportunity for the latter to let his name resound!

Chapter 468: The Pitched Battle Between Origin Realm Cultivators

If one wanted to be entirely accurate, an origin realm cultivator is more aptly named a nascent soul cultivator. Distillation of spirit power allows one to refine a spirit essence from one's body. This spirit essence is the nascent soul, replete with a form, consciousness, and the ability to materialize outside the body. As a result, the strength of an origin realm cultivator was a qualitative step higher than a spirit realm cultivator.

Jiang Chen's strength had increased so rapidly precisely because he'd broken through to the origin realm. The speed of his improvement now far outstripped his previous rate in the spirit realm. At that time, he could challenge cultivators a level or two higher than him, but crossing too many levels was quite an undertaking.

If he fought against an earth spirit realm cultivator when he was in the small spirit realm, Jiang Chen could at most pray to defend himself. It was almost impossible to win. But now that he was in the minor origin realm, he had a ninety percent chance of victory when fighting an earth origin realm cultivator.

It wasn't that an earth origin cultivator was that weak, but that his potential had simply exploded through the gate after entering the origin realm. Like a geyser finally finding an outlet, his breakthrough had led to his techniques improving by a minimum of three to five times over. Some techniques had evolved to an entirely new level, improving ten times over!

Yan Hongtu was well on his way to forming a tyrannical momentum about him, his battle intent whipping around him. He was releasing his origin realm aura without reserve, his intention to skin and eat Jiang Chen alive quite blatant.

It had been quite a while since a physical match had appeared in the Rosy Valley. The dull constancy of sect life lent quite an appealing allure to martial matches. Core disciples from all corners of the valley made their way over to gather around the ring.

No one wanted to miss a duel between core disciples. Followers in particular thronged around the ring, creating several circles of audience members. Although some of the stronger core disciples valued themselves too highly to appear in public, they still kept an eye on the happenings in private.

If one discarded Jiang Chen's great fame and connection with Sage Dan Chi, he was just a core disciple who'd barely entered the origin realm. As mighty as the rumors had made him out to be, the gap between his strength and Yan Hongtu's was there for all to see.

When a first level origin realm was matched up against a fifth level, the difference of four small levels was an enormous disparity no matter how one looked at it, not to mention that Yan Hongtu had always been training in the Regal Pill Palace.

No matter how much of a genius Jiang Chen could be, he'd still only been training in a small place like the sixteen kingdoms alliance all along. In the eyes of the audience, the disparity in the level of martial dao between the two was a gulf that could never be crossed.

The Regal Pill Palace was a top sect of the Myriad Domain, and at best, one could describe the Precious Tree Sect as a third or fourth rate sect. The gap was obvious no matter what angle one took to approach the matter.

"That's odd, so odd! I hear that Yan Hongtu's already lost to this Jiang Chen in the arena of pills. Does this genius from the sixteen kingdoms have such enormous pill potential?"

"Either he's too strong or Yan Hongtu is too useless. Yan Hongtu has no drive to improve and just cowers in the Soaring Clouds area everyday to play at being king. He's content at being a frog at the bottom of a well and has completely let himself go!"

"You make sense. Senior brother He, who do you think will win this match?"

"Martial dao is different from that of pills. One can find opportunities to employ trickery when competing with pills, but martial dao is a test of true talent. One's true skills are the basis that proves a victor. In my view, as low as Yan Hongtu has sunk, if he can't even take down a first level origin realm, then he can really ram himself to death against a block of tofu."

"That's true, it would be the most colossal joke beneath the heavens if a fifth level origin realm couldn't even triumph over a first level origin realm. Such a humiliating record has yet to appear since the Regal Pill Palace's founding, right?"

“Heh heh, that’d be hard to say. When Palace Head Dan Chi was young, he also challenged a senior brother in the earth origin realm. However, the person he challenged had just entered the earth origin realm and had yet to consolidate their grasp on their cultivation.”

“Tsk tsk, what right does Jiang Chen have to be compared to Sage Dan Chi? Sage Dan Chi has the highest level of martial dao potential in the last three hundred years of our sect’s history!”

“That’s right, Sage Dan Chi absolutely has the right to be hailed a king or emperor in the future. With him leading our sect, the Regal Pill Palace will absolutely walk forward into an age of glory and construct an empire!”

Dan Chi’s popularity with the young guard was really very high. They all deeply loved and revered him, each viewing him as their idol. On the other hand, they possessed a deeply skeptical attitude towards Jiang Chen. Although he had been personally chosen by Sage Dan Chi, their deeply rooted prejudices posed an immense barrier towards accepting that a small place like sixteen kingdoms alliance could produce a stunning genius.

Jiang Chen had long since tuned distractions out in the ring. His obliviousness was proof that he’d entered his peak condition. Although he had completely seen through Yan Hongtu, the latter was still a fifth level origin realm cultivator. The slightest bit of carelessness would mean the end of the match. Jiang Chen would have to fully exert his battle ability this time. It certainly wouldn’t be as easy as trampling old monster Sunchaser.

“Jiang Chen, stop posturing around!” Yan Hongtu roared loudly as a frosty gleam appeared in his sinister eyes. “Only the strong are revered in the ring. All of your smoke and mirrors are useless here!” He shook his arms when he was done, emitting a long whistle.

The totem of an enormous eagle suddenly formed behind Yan Hongtu’s back. Jiang Chen knew that this was likely the materialization of Yan Hongtu’s nascent soul.

“See how I’ll devour you, Jiang Chen!!” The sharp sound waves of Yan Hongtu’s wild howl gathered into an enormous wave, cresting ever higher as it surged towards Jiang Chen. The mysteries behind the sound wave formed by the howl were quite impressive. It was a simultaneous physical and mental attack.

Jiang Chen didn’t let down his guard as he swiped the air, creating a defensive air current from the magnetic force that wrapped itself around this giant wave of sound. Magnetic force was the most adept at destroying force fields and controlling the other’s strength and tempo.

The defensive air current formed from magnetic force never gave the sound wave a chance to exhibit its true strength, grinding it down until it shattered into fragments with a muted crack.

“What?!” Yan Hongtu was dumbfounded. Although his sound wave attack wasn’t any sort of trump card, it was still nonetheless a very frightening attack.

A mere first level origin realm cultivator had been able to destroy it using a simple forcefield defense? This result was utterly outside Yan Hongtu's expectations.

"Hmph!" However, his shock didn't dampen his fighting spirit. Yan Hongtu's body flashed as his arms seemed to transform into a pair of eagle wings, launching himself into the sky.

"Eagle Rays, shoot!"

Yan Hongtu's art was one that fully assimilated the form and strikes of an eagle into his techniques, giving rise to a domineering offensive.

He dove from his superior position in the sky with incredible speed, his ferocity and speed increasing his offensive ability with every moment. Jiang Chen continued to unleash magnetic force around him, molding it into a protective forcefield once again.

Bam!

The impact didn't seem to faze Yan Hongtu, as he continued to accelerate even more. His speed grew until he became just a trail of light constantly blitzing Jiang Chen's defense, diving to and fro. Endless silhouettes formed frighteningly fast and strong attacks, a barrage that didn't even stop for a breath. The mystery that governed this entire offensive was a single concept, "speed".

Unparalleled speed would break ten thousand arts.

“This won’t do, there’s no advantage in combating speed with such a passive defense!” Jiang Chen was well aware of the shortfalls of his current position. Yan Hongtu’s attacks were so fast that he would likely even find gaps in the Lotus’ perverse defensive capabilities. He was also utterly capable of taking advantage of such opportunities too. His specialty was obviously an offensive that made use of his tremendous speed and overbearing force—a true fifth level origin realm alright!

His thoughts whirling, Jiang Chen formed a counter strategy. He made a hand seal and enclosed himself in boundless magnetic power. Twelve fire and ice lotus vines appeared on the ground in the next moment, and an even stranger scene appeared as the magnetic power flickered.

The twelve vines actually all transformed into replicas of Jiang Chen and dashed to the four corners of the ring.

“What’s going on?” Yan Hongtu had been luxuriating in the feedback of his attacks when he suddenly noticed that multiple Jiang Chen’s had appeared on the ring.

“Hmph, illusions? Trying to scare me off with this little sleight of hand?” Yan Hongtu displayed disdain after a brief pause. A quick flick of his hand brought out more than a dozen throwing daggers.

“Eagle Wings, Timestream!”

The throwing daggers shot unerringly to the twelve figures as

fast as shooting stars.

Pfft pfft pfft!

All of the throwing daggers found their target. Yan Hongtu roared with proud laughter as he paused, “Jiang Chen, so what if you have a thousand, or even ten thousand copies of yourself? No matter which one is your real form, being hit by my eagle throwing daggers would only result in your crushing defeat!”

Which Regal Pill Palace disciple wasn’t an expert in pills? Since they were familiar with pills, they were naturally well versed with using poison.

Yan Hongtu’s personality was wily, and seemingly without a bottom line. Of course there was poison on the throwing daggers. This poison was quite vicious in its make, directly invading the consciousness and heart. It would instantly numb the nerves, block blood vessels, and fog one’s mind.

Thus, when he saw that his throwing daggers had pinned down all twelve copies of Jiang Chen, Yan Hongtu knew that he had won for certain. He was very confident in his usage of poisons. What he had to do now was to slowly appreciate Jiang Chen struggling for his life. Yan Hongtu had already made up his mind to kill Jiang Chen in the ring. No matter what his background is, offending me, Yan Hongtu, leads only to death!

How would he continue to solidify his position of power in the Soaring Clouds area if he didn’t kill Jiang Chen as an example?

The light from the twelve figures slowly receded, revealing the true forms of the twelve lotus vines.

The Lotus of Fire and Ice was a spirit entity to begin with, lacking human flesh and blood. The poison was completely ineffective against it. Human poison would never have an effect even if it were to be splashed on tree roots.

Yan Hongtu's heart suddenly sank. The twelve figures had all been fake! "Then where's Jiang Chen?!" Since they were all fake, where was the real Jiang Chen? One of the most frightening things in the ring was undoubtedly the sudden disappearance of one's opponent. The full knowledge that an unnatural ghost aiming for one's throat was in the vicinity, but also the horrifying lack of knowledge of where it was."

"Playing with throwing daggers, Yan Hongtu? From where I'm standing, your abilities are closer to that of an unweaned brat!" Mockery suffused Jiang Chen's tone as his voice echoed from all corners of the ring. There was also a Soaring Eagle form in his Moonshatter Flying Daggers. There were actually similarities between that and Yan Hongtu's throwing dagger technique, but the lines of Yan Hongtu's technique were far inferior to the perfection of the Soaring Eagle form of the Moonshatter Flying Daggers.

Besides, Jiang Chen's true body had never been within Yan Hongtu's attack range. Even if he had been, Jiang Chen naturally had his ways of striking back.

Yan Hongtu's face changed greatly as he realized he had no way of determining where Jiang Chen was from his voice!

Chapter 469: Fame With One Match

Jiang Chen's voice had barely echoed across the ring when more than a dozen copies of himself appeared. Yan Hongtu was absolutely flabbergasted. All of the silhouettes looked so realistic, he couldn't tell the real from the fake.

"Yan Hongtu, we are of the same sect, but you insist on being so overbearing. You reign supreme over the Soaring Clouds area and are accustomed to trodding upon others. So today, let me show you the feeling of being stepped on!"

All of a sudden, a storm started into whirl into existence around the ring. A golden glimmer to its winds, the storm instantly covered the ring, like an endless golden ocean.

"Magnetic storm!" Jiang Chen had been building up to this for quite a while, and the power of the magnetic storm that now erupted was enough to eclipse everything Yan Hongtu had done. With Yan Hongtu's current strength, Jiang Chen's magnetic storm wasn't enough to swallow him whole. However, if many storms gathered together, then their combined might would still be quite terrifying.

Yan Hongtu suddenly felt that he'd been caught up in a strange tempo. His movements had suddenly become sluggish, fettered by the storm. "What's going on? Why's my body suddenly so heavy?" He was immensely shocked.

Yan Hongtu lost his balance when a tendril from the storm

wrapped around his waist. He was about to move away with a flash of light when further tendrils firmly held his limbs down.

This was when all of the various copies of Jiang Chen reverted back to their real forms. Countless vines had transformed into durable, tenacious ropes that thoroughly trussed up Yan Hongtu.

As much skill and ability that Yan Hongtu had to him, he was caught in a position where he couldn't exercise any of it.

Jiang Chen's true form suddenly flickered and appeared in front of Yan Hongtu. The nameless saber raised high and whisked past Yan Hongtu's head.

Fft!!

The blade's light flashed.

Cold gripped his body as Yan Hongtu's heart spasmed. He screeched loudly, but soon realized he was fine. Only a tuft of hair on his head had been shorn off.

"Jiang Chen, kill me if you will, why toy with me?!" He flew into a rage from his humiliation.

Jiang Chen's expressed darkened. "It's not that I won't kill anyone, but that I don't feel like killing anyone. Sage Dan Chi brought me to the Regal Pill Palace. Killing you would only lead to people faulting Sage Dan Chi for bringing in a troublemaker,

besmirching his reputation. If it was just up to me, I wouldn't frown even once if I beheaded you ten times over."

Jiang Chen's voice suddenly increased in volume. "I only have one principle, and it's that I do not attack if I am not provoked. If I am, then retaliation is a foregone conclusion. This is your first warning, Yan Hongtu, and I spare you today in consideration of Sage Dan Chi's face. If there is another time, my blade will show no mercy no matter who it falls on!"

Jiang Chen was making use of Yan Hongtu's matter to proclaim to the entire Rosy Valley of his creed. Do not piss me off. Whoever does so next will not pay the mere price of a few hairs.

Yan Hongtu was ashen-faced. He'd never thought that he'd be trampled so easily with a cultivation of fifth level origin realm. No matter how fierce he was normally, he wouldn't dare bluster at this point. If he managed to irk Jiang Chen, he'd be dead with a single stroke, no matter how much courage he had.

Those watching beneath the stage of the ring were dumbfounded, struck speechless. It'd been a battle that everyone thought Yan Hongtu was sure to win, but instead, it'd ended so quickly. Moreover, in such a bizarre fashion too. The latter had lost almost so thoroughly and suddenly, no one had the chance to figure out how Jiang Chen was fighting.

Everyone's hearts were different shades of solemn in that moment. They didn't doubt Jiang Chen's words in the slightest. That he didn't kill Yan Hongtu didn't mean that his next challenger would be so lucky.

Jiang Chen withdrew his arts and strode down from the ring, ignoring all of the flabbergasted and insensate looks around him. Things were as he'd thought, status and treatment were to be fought for. He trusted that no one would dare point fingers or gossip about him in the Rosy Valley after this match. Moreover there would definitely not be anyone as be no one as insensible as Yan Hongtu, wanting to make an example out of Jiang Chen to show off their own power.

Jiang Chen wasn't an easy target, but a tough bird that would break their teeth if they tried to devour him!

The world of the sects was just this odd. The weak never received any respect, and the more the strong fought and displayed their brilliance, the more they'd receive widespread attention.

Summaries of what had happened spread like wildfire after the battle had ended, and Sage Dan Chi naturally received his news at first light.

"The eye of the sage one is indeed different! Haha, it's only Jiang Chen's third day in the Rosy Valley, but he's already beaten Yan Hongtu into the ground. It looks like the order of the Rosy Valley is about to be upended!"

"I have to say, Jiang Chen is changing my view of the sixteen kingdoms. Whether or not it's to their credit that they cultivated a talent such as Jiang Chen, it at least proves one point—even the smallest and most unassuming of places can give birth to

geniuses!”

“Sage one, you should discover and recruit more geniuses like these!”

These were all Sage Dan Chi’s confidantes, so there were a slight fawning tone in their words. However, Jiang Chen’s performance was so perverse that it was no trouble for them to ladle on a little more praise than usual.

It was rather Sage Dan Chi who didn’t have much of a reaction. To him, defeating a mere Yan Hongtu was no great feat. With his knowledge of Jiang Chen, even a sixth level origin realm might not have won against Jiang Chen, much less a fifth level.

Dan Chi’s eye for talent was quite keen. He’d thoroughly studied the fight in which Jiang Chen had utterly trounced Sunchaser. He’d felt that Jiang Chen had been quite at ease and hadn’t displayed all of his abilities in that fight. Therefore, Dan Chi’s estimation of Jiang Chen’s strength had long since reached the level of the peak of the earth origin realm. He even felt that Jiang Chen could hold his own even when pit against a sky origin realm cultivator.

This was purely a conclusion he’d reached after minute observation. Therefore, Dan Chi really wasn’t that interested in Jiang Chen’s fight against Yan Hongtu. He was much more interested in Jiang Chen’s performance in the competition of pills.

When Dan Chi had learned from the referee of what had

happened, it took his quite a while to recover from the throes of his shock. If the referee's descriptions hadn't been exaggerated, then Jiang Chen's performance in the dao of pills far outstripped his display in the ring.

"Jiang Chen...." Several more traces of expectation grew attached to this name in Dan Chi's heart.

The changes after Yan Hongtu's challenge were indeed great. When Jiang Chen returned to the Rosy Valley, he felt a noticeable decrease of hostility that had been replaced with respect and awe. After all, the outside world now felt that Jiang Chen's strength was enough to compete against the peak of the earth origin realm, and this level of strength all lived in the Sky Pillar area. Unless their brains had been crushed by a door, no one else wanted to become a second Yan Hongtu.

Having been defeated in one match, Yan Hongtu had left the Rosy Valley that day and journeyed outside to train. It was obvious that he had no face left after this match, and he didn't even have a reason to hate Jiang Chen since it had been him stirring up trouble all along.

It had been Yan Hongtu stirring up trouble all along. Jiang Chen had only been forced to answer his calls. Jiang Chen hadn't even killed him in the end, although not out of consideration for Yan Hongtu, but for Sage Dan Chi in not wanting to slaughter his own peers. It could be said that Jiang Chen was displaying the very height of genteel manners.

The Demigod of Wood Mu Gaoqi was undoubtedly the most

surprised. He'd been encouraging Jiang Chen to take a step back ever since he'd heard that the latter and Yan Hongtu had butted heads. He didn't look favorably on their match at all. But who knew that Jiang Chen would trample Yan Hongtu so easily? Mu Gaoqi was so surprised that his eyeballs almost fell out of their sockets.

"Brother Jiang Chen, I was short-sighted and did not recognize Mt. Tai. I am ashamed!" Mu Gaoqi was now a common fixture at Jiang Chen's residence.

"All's well as long as we haven't delayed the exploration of the spirit spring." Jiang Chen smiled faintly. He naturally knew that Mu Gaoqi hadn't thought much of his chances, and that Mu Gaoqi had kind intentions. After all, logically speaking, a mere first level origin realm did indeed not have the foundation to fight against a fifth level origin realm.

"Heh heh, I feel more steady at heart after seeing how strong Brother Jiang Chen is." Mu Gaoqi was also willing to thoroughly display his sincerity as he took out some more pill flasks. "Brother Jiang Chen, these are some Spirit Consolidation Pills. I promised you last time that I would take care of all the pills that your followers need."

Jiang Chen smiled and flicked a glance at the pills. "Daoist Gaoqi, it's bad to always put you out of pocket. I have a few things that I'd like to ask you."

"Not at all, not at all. Please ask whatever you'd like, Brother Jiang Chen. In truth, I am half a private investigator myself. My

intelligence network is quite formidable" Mu Gaoqi was well versed in refining pills, and many core disciples who didn't want to waste their own time in refining pills or had lesser pill potential would all ask Mu Gaoqi to refine their pills for them. After a while, it was easy for Mu Gaoqi to obtain intelligence that was useful to him, so his intelligence network was quite strong.

"I urgently need some resources at the moment. What do you think is the fastest shortcut to obtaining resources in the Regal Pill Palace?"

"Accepting sect missions and adventuring outside." Mu Gaoqi blurted out. "There are many levels to the sect missions and the rewards are high. The risks are great in adventuring outside, but the gains are correspondingly greater."

"Are there no other ways? For instance, operating a business in pills?" Jiang Chen probed.

"A business in pills?" Mu Gaoqi was surprised. "There is a habit of trading pills in the sect, but who is so bored as to refine pills all day and night? It's just a huge drain of time, and impacts one's martial dao training. Leaving that alone, the key point is the lack of exclusive recipes. The pills that you refine, so too can others. It simply doesn't work as a viable method to gain wealth." Mu Gaoqi refined pills for others, but had never given serious thought to creating a pill business. After all, pills weren't in such shortage within the sect. A pill that only you could refine would never be so popular as to the point of being sold for profit.

Jiang Chen sighed lightly, it looked like he wouldn't be able to

accomplish his plan alone. “Is there an organization that runs the pill business in the Regal Pill Palace?” He asked further.

“Pills are uniformly distributed in the sect. There are many barter transactions and other deals made with the sect, but the best pills are always in short supply. As for outside of the sect, there are certainly several external powers and secular factions who operate their own business, but the quality of their pills is absolutely inferior to ours.” Mu Gaoqi shook his head, seemingly disapproving of Jiang Chen’s sudden stroke of insight.

Chapter 470: The Endless Recruitment Of The Elders

Jiang Chen roughly understood Mu Gaoqi's meaning. The best pills in the Regal Pill Palace were all distributed uniformly. They didn't exist in large enough quantity to make a profit from selling them. As for ordinary pills, they were useless to core disciples, so there was abundant supply with no demand. There was no market for them in the sect. Therefore, while there was indeed some small trade between the disciples in the Regal Pill Palace, but there was no opportunity for a larger scale market.

"Daoist Gaoqi, if I were to say that I have a unique pill recipe that none of the other sects have, with above average effects, would there be a market for it in the sects?"

This question made Mu Gaoqi start slightly. "Brother Jiang Chen, do you mean that?" He blinked his eyes quickly, his lashes fluttering on his cheeks.

"Don't bother with the validity of my words for now, analyze the market for me."

Mu Gaoqi nodded. "If there really is a unique recipe and pill that is eminently suited for the core disciples, there would still likely be a market for it. However, I still think it'd be very difficult to establish a large scale market. There are many reasons. Firstly, the sects allocate pills to all of the disciples, preventing a shortage in this area. Secondly, everyone's cultivation resources are limited and thus lack sufficient purchasing power. Thirdly, the sects may not allow personal operation of business." When Mu Gaoqi

finished his words, he'd immediately slashed Jiang Chen's great plan to gather wealth in half.

Jiang Chen had already readied a recipe and had planned on making a great deal out of things, even leveraging the partnership model that he'd originally formed with the Hall of Healing. He was particular fond of earning money without putting forth any effort, splitting a share of the profits without any investment at all.

However, he hadn't thought that there wouldn't be a market at all for his great plan in the sects. All the same, he wasn't dejected. He decided to pay further attention to the situation.

The way he'd partnered with the Hall of Healing had first brought in money from the Eastern Kingdom, then hauled in massive revenue from the entire sixteen kingdom alliance. In the same vein, Jiang Chen believed that as long as he possessed an absolute advantage with his pill recipe, he could also earn money, and great amounts of it at that, because the Myriad Domain was vast.

He'd at least be able to stop worrying about resources. However, he was proceeding much more cautiously than he had in the Eastern Kingdom. He wouldn't easily take out a pill recipe, since recipes at this advanced level were a much less casual affair here than the Hall of Healing. If he accidentally slipped up and elicited too much attention, his troubles would only increase. He might even attract a fatal disaster. After all, the recipe that he was going to bring out this time was quite excellent, to the point where it would cause others to go mad.

“Brother Jiang Chen, if you have a recipe, I would advise you to not make money off of it. The best thing to do is to offer it to the sect and add to your accomplishments, exchanging it for resources. If you spend so much time and effort to get a business going, being successful is one thing, but us cultivators can’t afford to waste so much time and effort. Besides, if the sect finds out that you have an exclusive recipe and didn’t offer it up, they might come make trouble for you.” Mu Gaoqi’s thinking was on the straight and narrow after all. He didn’t ask Jiang Chen about his recipe, but focused his efforts on analyzing the situation.

“Brother Jiang Chen, I’ve built up a small amount of savings over the years. I can be in charge of the pills for your followers for the next three months. The stipend you get every month should be enough for you to use.” It was readily apparent that Mu Gaoqi was going all out to recruit Jiang Chen as a comrade. He didn’t want Jiang Chen to waste his time on unlikely endeavors, nor did he want Jiang Chen to possibly stir up trouble.

If it wasn’t for the preset timeline of three months, he would be fully in favor of setting out immediately for the spring.

Regardless, Jiang Chen could still feel Mu Gaoqi’s sincerity and also knew how important that spring was to him. After he sent Mu Gaoqi off, Xue Tong spoke with some worry, “Young master, Mu Gaoqi is being so generous that I fear the place he is inviting you to is certainly very dangerous. Otherwise, he wouldn’t need to be so eagerly attentive!”

Jiang Chen smiled faintly, “This I’m naturally aware of, but the spring is also as he says, a life changing opportunity for him. It’s

normal that he's so eager! Since he is treating me sincerely, I won't let him walk away empty handed. But if he's up to any tricks, I can withdraw at any time and leave him with nothing."

With Jiang Chen's ability in reading others, he was certain that Mu Gaoqi was being quite sincere with no ulterior motives in inviting him to join the group. The latter was being so generous because he didn't want Jiang Chen to exert any effort and possibly run afoul of someone. If an accident befell Jiang Chen, it would impact his great plan of exploration.

"Never mind this, I'll go to the Hall of Spring and Autumn first. Apparently we can request missions there. I'll at least first gain an understanding of the mission levels and their corresponding rewards. If the rewards are rich enough, I can actually request a few to do. If they aren't, then I'll forget about them." Jiang Chen now understood the struggles of daily living as he was in charge of looking after his people. He didn't want to waste large amounts of time in completing sect missions, only to receive a pitiful amount of rewards in the end. He had to understand the rules first.

He was about to set out when visitors suddenly appeared outside his door, claiming to be the elders of the Regal Pill Palace.

"Regal Pill Palace elders?" Jiang Chen was a bit surprised. His fight with Yan Hongtu shouldn't have been enough to alarm the true experts, shouldn't it?

Although there were more than a hundred elders in the Regal Pill Palace, their position in the sect was still exceedingly high. They all held great power and exercised it in different areas.

“I am the elder of the Herbal Hall, Linghu Xian. May I come in for a chat?” This elder possessed white hair with a child’s complexion, appearing to be in sprightly spirits and very hearty.

The Herbal Hall was one of the top three halls out of the nine in the Regal Pill Palace. It was listed as part of the top along with the Hall of Might and the Hall of Spring and Autumn.

The Herbal Hall was in charge of refining pills, cultivating ingredients, and held sway over the production of pills.

The Hall of Might was without a doubt the foremost of the halls. It oversaw every part of cultivator training, including techniques, secret arts, weapons, and others. The entire ensemble fell under its jurisdiction.

The Hall of Spring and Autumn was in charge of distributing pills and all sect resources.

Of course, these were just their areas of responsibility. It was the Palace Head and the elder council who held true power in the sect. However, they couldn’t possibly personally oversee everything. Therefore, the halls still possessed great power in the areas they were in charge of.

Since Elder Linghu Xian was in charge of the Herbal Hall, he must be a pill master.

“Please come in, Elder Linghu.” Although Jiang Chen didn’t know why he was here, he couldn’t detect any hostility. Perhaps the elder wasn’t here for Yan Hongtu?

Jiang Chen wouldn’t purposefully fawn on this sect heavyweight, but neither was he willing to easily offend him.

“Little friend Jiang Chen has moved into the Rosy Valley for three days, yet there are none in the Regal Pill Palace who are unaware of your name. It seems that gold will shine through no matter where it is.” Linghu Xian chuckled, voicing some generic pleasantries amidst his compliments. Jiang Chen naturally didn’t take him seriously either.

“Ai, a young man with his group of followers. You haven’t had it easy since arriving at the Regal Pill Palace either.” Linghu Xian’s tone suddenly changed. “Jiang Chen, has everything been smooth for you in the past couple of days?”

“Many thanks for Elder Linghu’s concern, things have been relatively smooth.”

“Mm, mm. The number of people coming to make trouble for you after Yan Hongtu’s defeat at your hands will certainly be much less. However, coming from the Precious Tree Sect, your foundation might not be to your satisfaction. Do you lack cultivation resources?”

Jiang Chen couldn’t help but laugh internally, not knowing just what Linghu Xian was up to. He didn’t have any sort of

relationship with this elder. Linghu Xian's sudden concern was absolutely not genuine. I wonder what he wants to know?

"A lack of resources is only temporary. As time goes on and the path levels itself out, I trust that there won't be many problems with my resources." Jiang Chen spoke candidly and didn't deny that he was a bit short on funds at the moment.

Linghu Xian chuckled. "Alright, I'll cut to the point. Since you are short on resources, I happen to have an easy job here that pays well. I wonder if you might be interested?"

"An easy job with good pay? What kind of good job is this?"

"Heh heh, I'm going to refine a pill soon and need to recruit some more outstanding medicine boys to act as a support. Jiang Chen, are you interested?"

Medicine boy?

Jiang Chen smiled. You're quite bold, aren't you, wanting me to be your medicine boy? He immediately shook his head and declined, "I've never been a medicine boy and don't have much interest in it."

Linghu Xian chuckled again. "It might be a bit too much to call them medicine boys, they're actually assistants. Consider it a bit more, little friend. I won't mistreat you in terms of resources."

For some reason, Jiang Chen didn't have a good impression of Linghu Xian. Although the old fellow had a polite smile on, little hints of insincerity here and there made him appear overly shrewd. Jiang Chen didn't particularly care for interacting with people like these. Therefore, whether it was being a medicine boy or an assistant, he wasn't interested at all.

Jiang Chen declined politely no matter what Linghu Xian said. The elder's face finally began to darken and turn ugly. He left with a flourish of his sleeves, obviously very dissatisfied with Jiang Chen's lack of showing him face.

A few more elders visited after Linghu Xian left. Their purpose was all the same. This bizarre scene rather surprised Jiang Chen. Why had all these elders suddenly come looking for him? They all happened to be refining pills with great coincidence, and every single one of them happened to need a medicine boy?

The matter was quite odd, making Jiang Chen even less likely to agree to anyone. He was well aware that if he said yes to anyone now, he would definitely offend the others.

A full eight elders from the Herbal Hall came to visit Jiang Chen's residence over the next couple of days, all wanting to recruit Jiang Chen. He politely declined them all as he didn't understand the situation.

He was indeed lacking in resources, but he didn't want to sell himself in such an unknowing situation, particularly when so many elders were coming to recruit him. Something must be amiss.

He decided to first look at the sect's missions at the Hall of Spring and Autumn. All he needed was his own efforts to feed and clothe himself! He had no interest at all in working for these elders, and being awarded that little bit of resources after they'd profited off his labor.

Chapter 471: An Eight Star Mission

The missions of the Regal Pill Palace ranged from one to ten star, with difficulty ranging from easy to difficult. To the core disciples, there was nothing hard about any missions below five stars, and the rewards were nothing to them either.

Jiang Chen browsed the five star missions and felt that although their rewards were acceptable, it wasn't tempting enough to someone who urgently needed resources like him. He looked at the six star missions but wasn't quite satisfied with them either.

Their rewards didn't whet Jiang Chen's appetite, and these missions were all very time consuming. If he was going to take up long term residence in the sect, then these missions would be rather appropriate. But Jiang Chen had promised Mu Gaoqi that he would go explore the spiritual spring after three months, so he was unable to accept the lengthier missions.

"Are there any more technically difficult ones that take up less time?" Jiang Chen had already walked to the seven star missions as he murmured to himself.

The one in charge of this area was a middle-aged man. He smiled upon hearing this, "There are naturally missions that have a higher technical barrier to them, but I'm afraid that they may not be suited for you young folk."

Jiang Chen hurriedly responded, "They really exist?"

The organizer was surprised, “Are you truly not joking?”

“Truly. If such missions exist, please introduce them to me, Sir Organizer.”

The organizer sized Jiang Chen up and laughed, “I won’t be able to introduce some of them to you, but there’s been a few missions that have hung there for quite a while. Many young geniuses have tried them for the rewards, but no one has succeeded even now.”

“Mm yes! I want those missions.” Jiang Chen was delighted, just because other people don’t know how to do them doesn’t mean I don’t know how to. I, Jiang Chen, am well versed in handling all sorts of difficult matters and problems.

The organizer laughed, “ I know of an eight star mission that was posted by a senior elder. The elder had already gained his position when our previous Palace Head held his position. With Sage Dan Chi at the helm now, this elder is now a venerated elder, a top five position in the elder council.

A high position and seniority, this kind of elder would certainly have stunning amounts of wealth and a strong foundation in the sect. The mission that he posted would certainly come with great rewards.

Jiang Chen was immediately interested when he heard it was an eight star mission. He extrapolated that if he completed it, then resources for himself and his followers would be taken care of for the next two years. There was no reason for him to give up such a

mission, and he hastily responded, “What mission is this? I want to request this eight star mission.”

“I actually don’t know the details, just that a dozen or so have requested it in the last couple of years, but none of them have completed it.”

“This is the one then.” Jiang Chen considered no further.

“Are you sure? Don’t blame me for not reminding you, but those who didn’t complete the mission had quite a tough time from that elder.”

Jiang Chen chuckled, “I’m sure, I’m sure. Hurry and give me the mission.” That others couldn’t didn’t mean that he would fail as well. If it was a pill related mission, Jiang Chen didn’t think there’d be anything that would stump him. As long as it wasn’t a time consuming mission, what problems would he be unable to resolve, hmm?

The organizer handed over the mission medallion to Jiang Chen. “The elder’s mental mark is on here. You only need to infuse it with your own consciousness in order to read the mission content. The mission location, content, requirements as well as the rewards are all on there.”

Jiang Chen slowly left the Hall of Spring and Autumn after receiving the medallion, infusing his consciousness into it. He suddenly grew inwardly stern when his consciousness slammed into the elder’s mental mark.

Mission: Hexarune Dragon Pill

Mission Location: Regal Pill Palace, Hundred Elders Peak, Yun Nie Residence

Mission Requirements: Increase the quality of the refined pills

Mission Rewards: A thousand Origin Fostering Pills, one half sage weapon, and enormous amounts of spirit medicines

Jiang Chen wasn't concerned with the content of the mission, what he cared about were the rewards. He was immediately tempted upon seeing these rewards.

A thousand Origin Fostering Pills!

One half sage weapon and enormous amounts of spirit medicines!

"He's a venerated elder alright, now this is truly generous rewards!" Jiang Chen's heart pounded when he saw these rewards.

This elder had such a high position and had lived so long that he probably treated something like an Origin Fostering Pill as eating stir fried beans. Even three thousand was likely no pressure for

him, much less a thousand of them.

A half sage weapon was even more of a great item. Apart from the nameless saber with an unknown rank at the moment, even the weapon modified from the Redscaled Firelizard bone was only of origin level.

The Firelizard was a saint rank creature, which equated to the human origin realm. Only when spirit creatures reached a true saint rank would they be the same as a human sage realm. Spirit creatures didn't have nascent souls, so they weren't called origin rank creatures, but saint rank instead.

As for the elder's reward, a half sage weapon was an existence even more amazing than an origin rank weapon. It was a heavenly weapon for a sage realm cultivator.

There wasn't even a number placed on the spirit medicines, just "enormous". What did that indicate? It meant that one could have as much as they wanted. One could see from the rewards that the elder truly valued the Hexarune Dragon Pill.

"Hexarune Dragon Pill?" Jiang Chen went through his prior life's memories, but found no mention of this pill.

"No worries, the methods for pills may vary, but the principle is the same. I will surely be able to analyze the source of what's wrong as soon as I look at the pill recipe of the Hexarune Dragon Pill." Jiang Chen had spent most of his time on divine and heavenly matters in his past life. The Hexarune Dragon Pill wasn't

a particularly renowned pill name. It was normal that he didn't remember it.

However, any extraordinary pill would have an enhanced version of it. "Perhaps I studied the enhanced version in my past life. All is a mystery without the recipe. Forget it, let's make a trip first."

Jiang Chen possessed great skill and courage. He decided that he would take the risk once for that tremendous reward. If all failed, he'll just be in for a yelling and possibly even a beating. He was a Regal Pill Palace disciple at the end of the day, he wouldn't be beaten to death just for not completing a mission now, would he?

Jiang Chen felt even less pressure as his thoughts traveled down this path. Elder Yun Nie wasn't one of the elders who'd tried to recruit him before, so there was no conflict between the two.

He didn't meet with any resistance when he entered the Hundred Elders Peak with the mission medallion. However, when the guards saw that it was Elder Yun Nie who'd issued the medallion, they looked at Jiang Chen with looks of surprise intermixed with pity.

It was apparent that Elder Yun Nie's mission was widely famous throughout the sect. Many young disciples had gone to request this mission, but had been discovered that they were just trying their luck.

Elder Yun Nie had given them all a thorough beating for their efforts, leaving them with momentous of black eyes and puffy

bruises. Although it didn't lead to any problems, it was still quite embarrassing.

As time went on, everyone knew that this wasn't a mission to request. The disciple would end up being thoroughly worked over if things didn't work out. So when they saw Jiang Chen walk in brimming with confidence, sympathy was written all over the guards' faces.

"Another young man not afraid of being beaten. Heh heh, Old Li, how do you think this kid will be beaten up? Will there be more lumps on his face or his head?"

Another guard sighed. "Old Yu, your eyes have gone dull. The one who's just walked in is Jiang Chen, the one's who's been so famous lately, the genius that the Palace Head himself as anointed. I've heard that he displayed amazing skills in the pill competition with Yan Hongtu. Perhaps he'll be different."

Old Yu laughed, "So what? Elder Yun Nie's mission isn't something that the younger generation can take care of. In my eyes, the kid's still in for a beating."

Jiang Chen paid no heed to the various discussions behind him. However, he roughly understood the elder's temper from the whispers behind him. "It looks like he's an eccentric old man with a rough temper." That was his initial assessment. "However, I appeal to young and old alike, and specialize in taming ornery folks. The old man wants to beat me? Not happening!" His confidence was unstoppable when it came to pills.

Jiang Chen quickly arrived at the entrance of the Yun Nie residence, and the elder's followers quickly blocked his way, only letting him in when they knew he was here for the mission. However, they all inwardly shook their heads when they saw how young Jiang Chen was. Their expressions clearly said, another one for a beating.

Jiang Chen ignored all the various odd looks and walked in unconcernedly. He was attracted by the residence as soon as he set foot inside. He had to admit, the residences of the Rosy Valley were utter trash when compared to the elders' residences.

An expansive home of happiness was flourishing with advanced spirit medicines everywhere. Order reigned in every area, appearing both luxurious and grand.

"Another one for the mission?" Elder Yun Nie walked out when he heard the news.

Both of them were slightly surprised when they saw each other. In Jiang Chen's imagination, this Elder Yun Nie should be a shifty looking, mean and ugly old man. He hadn't thought that the elder would look like a weak scholar, middle aged and appeared quite lonely in his blue robes. He wasn't the run down old man in Jiang Chen's imagination at all, and less apparent that he was a violent elder who liked to beat others.

As for Elder Yun Nie, he was surprised by Jiang Chen's youth. After his habit of beating others traveled, no more young folks

dared come try their luck and treat his residence as a tourist stop. He hadn’t thought that a ridiculously young one would come by today!

Chapter 472: The Hexarune Dragon Pill

However, Jiang Chen wasn't mesmerized by Elder Yun Nie's appearance. An elder skilled with refining pills wouldn't have any problem at all maintaining his looks. This young looking elder was at least two, three hundred years old. Otherwise, he wouldn't have the seniority of working for two generations of Palace Heads.

"Elder Yun Nie, disciple Jiang Chen is so bold as to come and accept the mission."

Elder Yun Nie rarely ventured outside and never cared much for matters of the outside world. Even though Jiang Chen's name had spread throughout the entire Regal Pill Palace in the past couple of days, he was completely in the dark.

If one had to find ten people who did as they wished in the Regal Pill Palace, this elder would surely rank in the top three. He wouldn't care even if the whole city had been set aflame. There was only pills, refinement, and pill refinement in his life. In addition, he had a particular habit that no one could disturb him when he was refining pills. He also had a standing gag order on gossip and rumors in his residence. Therefore, his followers all very much kept the rules. No one dared wag their tongues or speculate wildly here.

Elder Yun Nie didn't care that Jiang Chen had introduced himself. He waved his hand, "I don't care what you're called. Tell me, how certain are you?"

This style that cut straight to the point took Jiang Chen a bit off guard. However, he still said, “I need to understand the recipe first.”

Elder Yun Nie snorted coldly and waved his hand again, “Come! Drag him out for a beating and throw him out afterwards.”

He comes in wanting to look at the recipe straight off the bat! This fellow is even worse than the others! The ones who came before mostly came to take a tour and observe when I refined pills, wanting to learn a thing or two. This fellow is something alright, wanting to look at the recipe! His appetite is quite large! Will the Hexarune Dragon Pill still be an exclusive secret if you go and memorize the recipe?

Therefore, Elder Yun Nie subconsciously felt that Jiang Chen was here to swindle him, to try and snatch his secrets.

Jiang Chen had quite an innocent look on his face, “Please wait, Elder Yun Nie. You should at least give me a reason if you wish to beat or punish me? How do you know I’ll be unable to complete this mission?”

Elder Yun Nie snorted derisively, “You’ve been harboring some sly schemes about my recipes at such a young age. Why should you not be beaten?”

Jiang Chen couldn’t help but laugh when he heard this. He’d asked about the pill recipe at the start because he didn’t have the slightest intention of stealing the elder’s knowledge. He was the

reincarnation of a divine pill master, why would he covet this kind of secular recipe? It was because he didn't have this kind of thought that he hadn't thought Elder Yun Nie would be on his guard like this either. When he thought about it carefully, he felt that he'd been rash.

He laughed ruefully, "Elder Yun Nie, I certainly have no intentions of stealing your recipe. How about this, why don't you hide some of the ingredients on the recipe or give me some refining dregs so I can study them? Even if you are worried about me stealing the recipe, I can't attempt to solve this problem of yours without some clues, no?"

Jiang Chen's words made sense as well. Since the elder had posted the mission, he had to offer a venue for candidates to understand the mission, right? Otherwise, how would they complete it?

Elder Yun Nie swept his sharp gaze over Jiang Chen and spread out an arm, saying to his followers, "You are dismissed for now." He wasn't an unreasonable person. After all, his high status of being a venerated elder meant that he naturally couldn't be bothered to argue with a young disciple.

"Go, obtain some refinement dregs." The elder gave further orders as he vanished into his residence. Soon enough, he walked out with a partially redacted pill recipe, handing it over to Jiang Chen. He spoke no further, standing off to the side with crossed arms with a cold smile. It was obvious he wanted to see just what this kid had up his sleeves.

Usually, when the young disciples came by to attempt the mission, they'd be more or less unsure of themselves. Flaws could be easily discerned in their words and gestures. But the young man in front of him was younger than any of them, with none of their doubts discernible. This slightly surprised Elder Yun Nie.

Jiang Chen naturally had the bearing of a master when it came of the dao of pills. When he received the dregs, he sniffed them a few times and turned them over a bit. He even used a finger to pick up a trace and placed it on his tongue for a taste.

The entire process continued for roughly half an hour. A confident smile slowly began appearing on Jiang Chen's face. He didn't even look at the recipe.

"Elder Yun Nie, allow me to guess. This pill's main ingredients should be the Heavenly Net Ganoderma, with the supplemental ingredients Sweethua Grass, Nine Tribulation Mauve Bamboo, juice from the Ancient Moon Cicada, Buddha Water Fruit, Black Tortoise Crabapple..." Jiang Chen listed multiple ingredients in one breath, as if counting off his family's treasures.

He'd purposefully hidden some materials because identifying them would cause him some problems. If he labelled them, his performance would be too perverse and would actually give rise to suspicion. He also knew that offering up these items was enough to elicit true attention from the other.

Indeed, Elder Yun Nie's expression flickered rapidly before he suddenly started laughing loudly, "Not bad, kid! You're a bit interesting."

It was obvious that Jiang Chen's actions had straightened out his image in the elder's eyes, changing the latter's bias against him. "Elder Yun Nie, can I look at the recipe now?" Jiang Chen chuckled.

The elder laughed. "Yes, go ahead! To think you were hiding your talents so deeply, eh? What did you say your name was just now?"

"Elder, his name is Jiang Chen, a genius of the sixteen kingdoms that Sage Dan Chi brought back personally a while ago. The sage one even allied with the Precious Tree Sect in order to recruit him..." A follower immediately stepped forward and summarized Jiang Chen's background.

"The sixteen kingdom alliance?" The elder was faintly surprised, but seemed to accept things when he heard that Sage Dan Chi had personally been involved. "One who could draw the palace head's attention is worthy of his reputation alright. Very good, very good!"

The trusted follower continued, "This disciple competed with Yan Hongtu in the dao of pills, apparently awakening all twelve flames at once, displaying a high mastery of fire. In the competition of pill inspection, he used a unique method to locate all fifteen flaws in the cauldron."

Elder Yun Nie couldn't help but nod. "Very interesting indeed. Palace Head Dan Chi certainly does act quickly and decisively. With his mysterious ways, he almost always makes a surprising

move. It looks like recruiting this young genius will be another one of his trademarks." It could be seen that this elder quite respected Palace Head Dan Chi. There wasn't a hint of disrespect towards the sixteen kingdoms in his words from beginning to end.

Jiang Chen's thoughts were wholly on the pill recipe at this time. He analyzed it briefly after handed it, and almost immediately, one of his speculations jumped out as an answer.

"The Hexarune Dragon Pill. Haha, I understand, I've got it. There is indeed an advanced version of this pill in the divine realm called the Ennearune Heaven Grievance Pill. This pill is the most ideal for weathering tribulations. Almost all cultivators can make use of this when they face tribulation upon important breakthroughs. This isn't the most outstanding of its type, but certainly a fine product. The Hexarune Dragon Pill should be related, but it's noticeably a pared down version. It's shrunk greatly whether in terms of effects or materials."

"With its name of Hexarune, its effects should be less than one tenth of the Ennearune Pill." Jiang Chen had come to this conclusion after analyzing the materials.

It was much easier for Jiang Chen to understand this pill once he identified the original that it was based off of. He quickly ran through the refinement process and several important issues of the pill in his mind. When he'd organized his thoughts, he was utterly confident in what he was about to say.

"Elder Yun Nie, this pill should be medicine for weathering tribulations, correct?" Jiang Chen chuckled.

The elder was astonished and looked at Jiang Chen, visibly moved. A thick sense of surprise was in his eyes. “How do you know?”

“According to my analysis of the materials and the structure of this pill, I feel that many materials within this pill aim to clear internal demons, purify the body, resist external disasters, and protect the physical body. When so many ingredients are thus mixed together, this should be the main direction of the pill.” Jiang Chen offered his judgment.

Elder Yun Nie was flabbergasted. A ridiculous notion suddenly blossomed in his mind at this moment. He actually thought that maybe the question that had troubled him for quite some time would be resolved by this young man.

“Have you seen this pill before?” Even the elder found his question ludicrous when he asked it, because there was no possibility such a pill existed in the sixteen kingdoms.

Jiang Chen shook his head. “No, I haven’t.”

The elder continued, “The process always occurs quite smoothly when I refine this pill, but the quality of the finished product is always just a little bit unsatisfactory. The resulting pills are barely up to par, but at most of lower rank. To be honest, calling it lower rank is also a stretch. I just don’t understand why the quality of the pill never improves when I’ve followed the recipe exactly, with no mistakes occurring in the process and no ingredient

substitutions?”

This question had troubled the elder for twenty, nearly thirty years. It could be said that this mission had existed before Jiang Chen’s current body had been born.

However, no one had been able to solve it. Elder Yun Nie had tried to refine it five times over the years and always failed. It wasn’t that he didn’t want to keep trying, but that the costs for producing the Hexarune Dragon Pill were too high. Collecting each ingredient required enormous effort and money. It wasn’t an easy task for him even with his status and wealth.

Therefore, although he had the ingredients for a sixth try, he didn’t dare begin. He was too afraid of failure. Repeated failures had deeply impacted his confidence, and although he controlled his emotions well, Jiang Chen could more or less see a hint of anxiety from Elder Yun Nie’s words.

“Elder Yun Nie is so troubled by this pill that he barely pays attentions to sect affairs. Otherwise, he wouldn’t have had no reaction to my name.” Jiang Chen mused. His name was quite famous during this time, and it was tied to Sage Dan Chi. Anyone of the Regal Pill Palace should know of him, but this elder hadn’t the slightest clue. It was apparent that his life had been consumed by this pill.

Chapter 473: Pill Refinement Pointers

Elder Yun Nie's words gave Jiang Chen a few ideas, but he was in no hurry to express them. He smiled faintly. "Elder, the success or failure of refining pills is determined by the details. As such, I don't dare jump to any conclusions before seeing your refining process. However, the act of observing your refining is maybe be suspect if I intend to copy your techniques. Therefore, it is up to the elder's say if this kid can observe your refinement."

Jiang Chen was neither hurried or panicked. He wasn't in a rush now that he'd successfully captured the elder's attention. There was no more need to go banging on the door. All he had to do was pretend to be demure and wait for the elder to come beg him.

If the elder felt that his refining process was a classified secret, then this kind of paranoid person wasn't worth working with. Jiang Chen naturally didn't need to beg this elder for crumbs. Jiang Chen believed that as long as the elder still bore a shred of hope for the Hexarune Dragon Pill, he would absolutely be willing to take this risk. Not to mention that Jiang Chen was a Regal Pill Palace disciple after all. Even if he was to learn something from Elder Yun Nie's refining process, the benefits would stay within the same house.

Elder Yun Nie's gaze was profound as he listened to Jiang Chen's words, looking meaningfully into this young disciple's eyes. He suddenly smiled brilliantly, "Don't suspect a man you use, don't use a man you suspect. Palace Head Dan Chi is willing to bet the future of the sect on you. Even if I am inferior to Dan Chi, what harm is there in betting a mere recipe?"

Elder Yun Nie's easygoing attitude made Jiang Chen's heart lighten. He was worried that this elder would have an ornery temper and was suspicious of everyone's motives. He hadn't thought that Elder Yun Nie would be so forthright and agree so easily.

"It looks like I've rather underestimated this elder's temperament. Maybe those disciples who were beaten had expressed themselves poorly, disappointing the elder?" Jiang Chen could also see that the importance Elder Yun Nie placed on this pill had exceeded everything.

The pill refining room.

Jiang Chen followed Elder Yun Nie in to find that this refining room was on a completely different level than those in the sixteen kingdom alliance. The ones here were already starting to make use of formations.

"Mm, the Regal Pill Palace is a premier sect in the Myriad Domain alright. They're already begun to introduce formations into their pill refining. Not bad, not bad." Jiang Chen's gaze swept across the room, piercing through the mysteries of this formation. However, his face stayed unchanged as he followed the elder serenely.

The elder was rather surprised to see Jiang Chen's calm demeanor. A disciple from the sixteen kingdoms isn't the slightest bit taken aback to see my refining formations? He doesn't even

seem to be pretending to understand. Could he possibly know about this formation?”

Now that his thoughts had reached this point, Elder Yun Nie was seized by the urge to test Jiang Chen. “Jiang Chen, what do you think of this refining room?”

How would Jiang Chen not understand the elder’s intentions? He smiled, responding, “I’ve never seen this kind of refining room in my life before. The sixteen kingdoms alliance do not have this kind of resources.” His words were precisely chosen, only saying that he’d never seen it in this life before. Elder Yun Nie would naturally not pick up the key point in Jiang Chen’s response.

“Do you know what the glyphs around the cauldron mean?” The elder continued to probe. Jiang Chen found it funny. You want to test me with such a crude formation? But he knew it wasn’t the time to show off.

He laughed humbly and said, “This is likely a formation glyph used to create a formation that can supplement pill refining. I’ve only heard of this from the elders in the sect. This is the Regal Pill Palace alright! My horizons have been greatly broadened.”

Since you want to probe me, I’ll respond by feeding your ego. In reality, this level of a refining formation was far from satisfactory in Jiang Chen’s eyes. But how could he say something like this?

Elder Yun Nie was naturally overjoyed at hearing this.

“Elder Yun Nie, shall we begin?” Jiang Chen didn’t want to waste any more time.

The elder hesitated for a moment, but nodded, “There’s nothing to gain from dragging this on. Jiang Chen, the materials I have on hand can only refine three pills at the most. If all three of these chances fail, then I have no idea when I might collect all the ingredients for the pill again.”

Jiang Chen knew what the elder meant. He was telling Jiang Chen that he didn’t have many chances to waste! Jiang Chen thought for a moment and nodded, “Elder Yun Nie, if you don’t mind, can you describe the previous steps you’ve taken? Don’t leave out a single detail in the process or switch the order of the steps you took.”

They’d all ended in failures anyway, the elder wasn’t particularly hesitant in sharing his experiences. He summarized what he’d done before, with Jiang Chen interrupting at key moments to clarify things.

Although the Hexarune Dragon Pill was on a completely different level than the Ennearune Pill, the core principles stayed the same. As such, since Jiang Chen had refined the latter in his past life, he wasn’t that unfamiliar with the lesser version of the pill. He had a good idea of the process after listening to Elder Yun Nie’s explanation.

This pill was actually less than a tenth of the difficulty of the Ennearune Pill. Jiang Chen thought for a moment and came to an initial conclusion of the elder’s problem. Whether it was the

Hexarune or Ennearune, the key matter lay in carving runes into the pill. The runes would change the effects of the pill within, and the act of carving the runes would stimulate the medicine effects inside and increase the pill's quality.

Carving the runes required heavenly fire, and the Hexarune Dragon Pill required six kinds of heavenly fire to purify the pill in preparation for rune carving. This was precisely where the elder's problem lay.

The Hexarune Dragon Pill had six supplemental ingredients that melded with the main ingredient to coalesce the essence into one pill. If there was an error in the order of the fires, it would impact the quality of the pill. When it came down to it, the order of each ingredient and fire was highly crucial to the process.

These details were the key to success.

Elder Yun Nie had paid careful attention to the details but had still overlooked the matter of order. He had put all the supplemental ingredients in at the same time when he should have done so successively. The ordering of the fires would depend on how he'd placed in the ingredients.

If something was awry with the order, then the subtle processes within the pill cauldron would be thrown into chaos as well. Once this happened, it would be very difficult to produce an upper rank pill.

It wasn't an issue with the ingredients or the fires, but the core

techniques of the pill refiner.

“Elder Yun Nie, I have some thoughts after analyzing this recipe and your refining dregs. They might be of some use to you.” Jiang Chen couldn’t very well open the discussion with blatant criticism, so he embarked on a circuitous route to the truth.

“Please, go ahead.” The elder had started using the word “please’ at some unknown point.

“The Hexarune Dragon Pill is formed amidst six heavenly fires in accordance with six supplemental ingredients. There is likely a certain precedence that should be observed to ensure that the combination of materials and pills reaches a perfect level…”

Elder Yun Nie’s body trembled with Jiang Chen’s words, as if a bolt of lightning had cleaved into his consciousness, piercing through the barrier around his thoughts. The only reason he’d been this deeply disturbed by his dilemma was because his knowledge hadn’t reached the requisite level to comprehend his true issue. Jiang Chen’s subtle reminder had caused him to acquire that last spark of inspiration, finally reaching spontaneous enlightenment.

“Right, that’s right! Why hadn’t I thought of this before?” His eyes sparkled with fervor as he hurriedly began his preparations.

“Elder, your mind and heart are not at peace. This is far from the ideal time to begin refining. I would recommend meditating to calm your heart before refining the pill.”

Elder Yun Nie was slightly startled. This young man had such strong observation skills and his every word hid great reason within them. How was this the breadth of mind a young man was supposed to have?

Sitting down cross legged, meditating to calm the heart, lighting the fire for the cauldron…

Elder Yun Nie had actually gone through the motions many times, so he was well versed with these steps. It was only when he added the supplemental ingredients that he felt a bit nervous.

This time, Jiang Chen spoke up at appropriate moments and had the elder place in an ingredient every fifteen minutes, introducing a type of heavenly fire each time. These fires had been collected from their respective sources and was being added through the formation.

When Jiang Chen saw this, he grew more contemplative, “It looks like the pill masters of the Regal Pill Palace aren’t particularly gifted in controlling fire. Although it’s good to transport the fire through the formation, it’s best if the pill master can do so himself. This would allow them to exert more control over the process, perfecting the details. At the same time, accidents can be quickly suppressed.”

These were all just asides. If nothing untoward happened, conducting the fire through the formation and with his own hands were all the same. However, a truly genius pill master would never

use a formation for something he could do himself.

Time passed slowly.

Jiang Chen slightly activated his God's Eye, observing the minute changes in this cauldron. He had a feeling that the elder wouldn't fail this time. Even if he didn't succeed in a supreme rank pill, he would at least produce a mid, or even upper rank pill.

Elder Yun Nie seemed to have this feeling as well, that things were a bit different from his previous failures. He couldn't voice his emotions adequately at all.

Smoke finally started to waft from the cauldron as the fire went out. An alluring fragrance of medicine started to gently drift from the cauldron.

Elder Yun Nie couldn't wait and yanked the cover off the pill cauldron. A lustrous and resplendent Hexarune Dragon Pill made its long awaited appearance.

"Upper rank." Jiang Chen immediately made this pronouncement after a flick of his eyes.

Chapter 474: Rewards After Pill Formation

Elder Yun Nie was excited beyond words and decided to take advantage of this streak to refine more pills. But perhaps to his agitation at producing an upper rank pill for the first time, he let slip a tiny flaw into his refining and ended up producing a mid rank pill on his second try.

By the time he'd begun the third attempt, he'd regained his equilibrium and followed his tempo from the first refining attempt, producing another upper rank Hexarune Dragon pill.

Although a supreme rank pill hadn't made an appearance, two upper and one mid rank pill were far beyond Elder Yun Nie's expectations. Before Jiang Chen's appearance, his wish had only been to refine a satisfactory lower rank pill. But now, his accomplishments had exceeded his wildest dreams.

"Congratulations to Elder Yun Nie!" Jiang Chen didn't lust after these pills at all. For one, he had no use for them at his current stage of cultivation. For another, he could easily refine the same if he collected enough materials. Moreover, he had a thirty to forty percent surety of producing supreme rank pills. However, judging from the elder's delighted, face splitting smile, Jiang Chen knew that the elder was very satisfied with this time's haul.

Since he was, he should pay up with his rewards? At the end of the day, that's all Jiang Chen really cared about.

"Hahaha, Jiang Chen, you have the honor of claiming the

greatest achievement in this task of refining this Hexarune Dragon Pill. I've heard that you are very talented in controlling fire and inspecting cauldrons. Well? Want to hop out of the Rosy Valley and come to my Herbal Hall?" Elder Yun Nie may not usually set foot outside, but he was the Hallmaster of the Herbal Hall, the true holder of its reins.

Jiang Chen smiled wryly when he heard this hall's name. His name was likely anathema in that hall at the moment. He really had declined too many elders who'd come to recruit him.

"What is it?" Elder Yun Nie saw Jiang Chen's wry smile. "Does my little friend look down on the Herbal Hall?"

Jiang Chen hastily shook his head. "I would never dare. It's just that my reputation must be akin to mud in the Herbal Hall right now. Heading over there would just put me in the limelight as public enemy number one."

"What makes you say that?" The elder was completely baffled. He'd been at home lately and hadn't inquired about matters in the outside world. As for the Herbal Hall elders failing in their recruiting, it was an embarrassing matter to begin with, so they wouldn't publicize it either. This was why Elder Yun Nie was completely unaware of the ripples Jiang Chen had caused.

Jiang Chen was straightforward and quickly recounted the various visits from the elders seeking to recruit him.

Elder Yun Nie couldn't help but guffaw as Jiang Chen went over

his recent experiences. Soon after though, he started to curse vociferously, “Those bastards with an eye to the future! It was a good thing that you weren’t recruited by them. Otherwise, you would’ve never gone to request a mission at the Hall of Spring and Autumn and I would still be sitting here wondering if my pill would ever be refined. It seems the strings of fate work in mysterious ways.” Elder Yun Nie’s laughter was still ringing through the air as he shouted, “Come! Bring out the rewards I’ve long left in storage!”

His followers quickly brought out the rewards. A thousand upper rank Origin Fostering Pills—much higher than Mu Gaoqi’s pills. Five half sage weapons that Jiang Chen could have his pick of.

“I uphold my word, Jiang Chen. These weapons have all come from various daoists in the Myriad Domain. I have no need for them, so take your pick.”

Jiang Chen didn’t bother deliberating, and immediately picked up a bow and its accompanying quiver of arrows. The bow had a vibrant golden body, an almost domineeringfeeling emanating off it.

“Haha, this is Sunpiercer. Although officially classified as a half sage weapon, its power can easily rival that of a once or twice refined sage realm weapon.” Elder Yun Nie smiled.

Jiang Chen quite liked the bow and returned the smile, “Then this disciple will be so bold as to ask for this bow.”

Elder Yun Nie was truly in a fantastic mood. “You can come collect the spirit medicine rewards whenever you need them. Take whatever you can find in my storage. As for now, come come come, let’s chat for a while. You can pick out some medicines before you go back.” The successful refining of the Hexarune Dragon Pill had cleared many years worth of the elder’s internal demons. He was naturally in high spirits, feeling that life was just so wonderful.

Elder Nie Yun’s followers were flabbergasted at his generosity. However, when they remembered that Jiang Chen had helped the elder resolve his issue of many years, the seeds of envy that normally would’ve taken root were banished. In fact, they came to the silent conclusion that they definitely needed to cultivate a good relationship with Jiang Chen. Judging from this young man’s position, he was bound to become a frequent guest of the elder. Now, not only did Palace Head Dan Chi look favorably on him, the elder owed him a favor. He was bound to become an influential force in the future. There was no time like the present to fawn up to him. After all, when he truly came into his own, becoming a pinnacle existence within the sect, it would be too late then.

Jiang Chen naturally wouldn’t decline the elder’s goodwill after he’d received his rewards and saw that the elder wanted to treat him some more. He accompanied the elder on a tour of his residence.

With his recent actions, Jiang Chen had certainly offended many of the Herbal Hall elders. Although he didn’t know what position Elder Yun Nie held in the Herbal Hall, he was sure it was a position of some clout. Otherwise, the elder wouldn’t have wanted him to join the Herbal Hall.

“Jiang Chen ah, I must thank you for resolving my age old internal demons. With this upper rank pill, I have more confidence in assailing the earth sage realm.” Elder Yun Nie opened his heart to Jiang Chen, sighing emotionally.

“Then this kid will congratulate the elder’s success in advance!” Jiang Chen said sincerely.

“Haha, you’d be the person who’s rendered the greatest service if I can attain the earth sage realm. Oh right, Jiang Chen, it looks like you don’t know that much about the Regal Pill Palace. Has Palace Head Dan Chi not explained the matters of the sect to you?”

Jiang Chen responded seriously, “The Palace Head has given me a general gist, but he may wish for me to personally experience the minor details.”

Elder Yun Nie nodded, “The Palace Head has great vision and ambition. He’s less than a hundred years old, whereas I am almost three hundred years old. But if we look at the history of the Regal Pill Palace in the past three hundred years, the person I respect the most is still Palace Head Dan Chi.”

Elder Yun Nie paused when he finished, then continued to speak, “If you weren’t someone that Sage Dan Chi values, I really might not have been at ease letting you try today.”

Jiang Chen smiled, he knew that Elder Yun Nie was speaking the truth. From his perspective, it was normal to be suspicious of a

young man.

"Jiang Chen, allow me to introduce myself. I, Yun Nie, am an elder personally appointed by the last Palace Head. When Sage Dan Chi took the position, he raised me to the position of venerated elder. Currently, the elder council has three venerated elders, and I'm one of them. I oversee the Herbal Hall and Elder Jin Gu supervises the Hall of Spring and Autumn, which leaves the extremely reclusive Elder Lian Cheng in charge of the Hall of Might."

Jiang Chen was slightly startled to hear this. "So you are the Hallmaster of the Herbal Hall! This kid is truly ignorant and hopes that the elder will forgive me for any discourtesy."

Elder Yun Nie waved his hand, smiling, "Don't you put on that act with me. You even dared to decline invitations from eight Herbal Hall elders! Although I'm the Hallmaster, my face is not necessarily more than all of them combined!"

"Elder, you jest." Jiang Chen hastened to say. Then, he spoke seriously, "This kid has a naturally lazy disposition and felt that there would be too many restrictions involved in being a medicine boy for the elders. This is why I declined them."

That was at least part of the truth.

Being a medicine boy honestly meant that he was just an errand boy to be ordered to run hither and thither. Jiang Chen's personality was undisciplined, and he'd never had the habit of

running errands for others, not in this life or his past.

"It's right that you declined them." Elder Yun Nie laughed. "One can only blame them for lack of vision, treating a supreme genius as you as a mere ordinary pill genius. I still stand by my words; the doors to the Herbal Hall are always open to you if you wish to come here. I promise that no one will dare suppress, seek revenge on, or even ostracize you for previous matters."

"The most important thing is that your potential in the dao of pills is incredibly high. The Hall of Healing usually has many pill refining missions, with correspondingly rich rewards. If you take on those missions using the identity of a Herbal Hall pill master, it would allow you to amass a great deal of resources quickly. I suspect you're greatly in need of resources, what with your recent arrival to the Regal Pill Palace. Otherwise, you wouldn't have come to request the eight star mission from me, would you?" Elder Yun Nie was indeed taking Jiang Chen into his confidence. It was rare for one in his position to speak so frankly to a young man, but it demonstrated how much he valued the disciple in front of him.

Jiang Chen nodded, "Jiang Chen will surely remember the elder's great favor for me. If I am to join any hall in the future, my first choice will surely be the Herbal Hall." He had yet to clearly understand the intricate balance within the sect, so he wasn't in a hurry to join any halls. Even the knowledge that the Herbal Hall was one of the top three halls in the sect didn't move him.

Elder Yun Nie's gaze was profound as he looked meaningfully at Jiang Chen, nodding slightly a moment after. A true genius was supposed to be like this, not making decisions lightly. He should

retain a clear head at all times, unswayed by passing temptations. Jiang Chen's actions lived up to Elder Yun Nie's expectations.

"I am filled with more and more admiration for Sage Dan Chi's eye for talent. Hidden as you were in the sixteen kingdoms, he was still able to uncover a beautiful gem. I am truly in awe! Jiang Chen, do your best not to disappoint Sage Dan Chi. We both share a common goal when it comes to supporting the Palace Head." Elder Yun Nie spoke a few words of encouragement.

Suddenly, one of his followers walked in from outside. "Elder Linghu of the Herbal Hall has come to visit."

Elder Linghu? Jiang Chen immediately thought of the elder who'd tried to recruit him. Linghu Xian had been the first to visit.

Elder Yun Nie waved his hand, "Tell him I'm refining pills and won't be seeing him." The follower nodded and walked back outside.

The elder snorted lightly, "All of them want to make use of a backdoor, how ridiculous! They can put all that scheming to rest as long as I am in charge of the Herbal Hall. Jiang Chen, this Linghu Xian should've been one of the elders who tried to recruit you?"

Jiang Chen nodded, not denying things.

"Do you know why he's come to visit?"

Jiang Chen shook his head, at a loss. Judging from Elder Yun Nie's tone, it was for an important matter. Linghu Xian likely wanted to make use of a personal relationship to accomplish his own goals. However, Elder Yun Nie had his own principles and would never let anyone do that.

Chapter 475: The Allusion Of The Pill Battles Of Mt. Rippling Mirage

“Linghu Xian isn’t the first to visit, nor will he be the last.” Elder Yun Nie sighed lightly. “There are approximately twenty elders in the Herbal Hall, and roughly half of them have been by. This is the second time Linghu Xian has come. Jiang Chen, he must’ve tried to recruit you for this.”

“Oh? What for?” Jiang Chen was rather curious now.

“All of this has to do with the quota for the Mt. Rippling Mirage Pill Battles.” Elder Yun Nie sighed again. “There a mountain called Rippling Mirage in the Myriad Domain, known for producing spirit herbs. The mountain was previously under royal control, but controversy has arisen over its jurisdiction since the Myriad Domain Empire was destroyed. The various sects have fought endlessly over it, but still cannot settle the matter of ownership. It’s remains unsettled even today, but the spirit herbs produced by the mountain sorely tempt all the great factions in the Myriad Domain. They often fight over this resource, resulting in many fatalities and injuries. The sects all felt that things couldn’t continue this way, and so came to the agreement that a gathering of pill battles would be held every thirty years, with the results of the battles determining the quota of each sect allowed into the mountain.”

Jiang Chen had never heard of what Elder Yun Nie was speaking of. It was apparent that the four great sects of the sixteen kingdoms didn’t have the right to participate in such a matter.

“Within the Myriad Domain, the six of us fourth rank sects have always been the strongest and the main force behind the Pill Battles. There are twenty other fifth rank sects with the right to participate, but the quota allotted to them is only half of the fourth rank sects’. As for the sixth rank sects, they have no right to even ask about the happenings, with the same going for those beyond the sixth ranks. Therefore, everyone is keeping a nervous eye on the quota for the Mt. Rippling Mirage Pill Battles. Our Regal Pill Palace only has eight slots as well.”

Elder Yun Nie smiled, “Eight slots may seem a lot, but the relationships within the sect are complicated and intersecting. It’s not as easy task to divvy up the eight slots. The Herbal Hall is in charge of pill refinement and spirit herbs cultivation to being with, so it naturally falls to me to decide who fills the eight slots.”

Jiang Chen suddenly understood everything. The list of who would participate was held in Elder Yun Nie’s hands. It was up to his say so who went and who didn’t. It wasn’t hard to understand then why the Herbal Hall elders wanted to call upon their personal relationships.

“Eight slots is a good sum. Although there are many Herbal Hall elders, not all of their strength is the same, correct? Just pick the best ones.” Jiang Chen responded.

“Only four of the eight will be given out to the Herbal Hall elders, the remaining four must go to the younger generation. The elders must’ve wanted to bring you along to the Pill Battles to increase their changes of victory. However, they have yet to actually obtain a spot, so wasn’t at leisure to tell you some things. It can be seen

from this point that they still think highly of your potential in the dao of pills."

"This is to say that the Mt. Rippling Mirage Pill Battles is conducted via one elder bringing one younger disciple? Four elders pairing off with four younger pill masters?"

Elder Yun Nie creased his face into a smile and nodded, "What do you say, are you interested? My Regal Pill Palace has always been amongst the top when it came to this, and as the Hallmaster of the Herbal Hall, I'm bound to participate. If you're willing to go, I'll leave my partner spot open to you."

Elder Yun Nie spoke interestedly, hints of encouragement and anticipation in his eyes. "Jiang Chen, you must know that if your ranking veers towards the front in the Pill Battles, you'll be able to enter Mt. Rippling Mirage to pick spirit herbs. You can pick as much as you want in ten days, with half of it going to the sect, and the other half to you. What do you think? Think about it some."

Since Rippling Mirage was the most sophisticated land producing spirit herbs in the Myriad Domain, there was bound to be plenty of treasure in it. Jiang Chen knew that Elder Yun Nie was tempting him, but still couldn't keep his heart from pounding with temptation.

"Jiang Chen, I had planned on reserving this spot for other young geniuses in the sect before you'd appeared. The spots are limited, hmm?" Elder Yun Nie's expression was like he was holding a lollipop and trying to tempt a little child.

Jiang Chen sighed. “Alright, Elder Yun Nie, I confess I’ve been persuaded. When will the Pill Battles be held?”

“Once every thirty years, so that makes it another seven to eight months before the next one takes place. Competition for the slots wouldn’t have been so fierce otherwise.”

Seven to eight months? Jiang Chen made some quick calculations and felt that there was no problem to make it to the Pill Battles if all went well with his exploration of the spring with Mu Gaoqi. “Jiang Chen is beyond grateful for the elder’s great favor.” Jiang Chen’s intentions were to accept this spot with his words.

Eldr Yun Nie waved his hand, “I don’t like to hear polite words. What you are to do is to deploy your abilities to the utmost and bring glory to the younger generation of the Regal Pill Palace. I’ve heard that the other fourth rank sects have recruited and emphasized the training of many pill geniuses over the past thirty years, preparing to make a stunning showing in this time’s Pill Battles. Although our sect has always performed well and taken the lead, many unknown factors exist in the younger generation. If those sects particularly emphasize the cultivation of the young disciples, fierce competition may arise in this time’s Pill Battles. My Regal Pill Palace was established on basis of pills, and if we lose our advantage in this area, that will greatly affect our development plans in the future.”

The Regal Pill Palace’s greatest advantage lay in the dao of pills. If the younger generation of another sect outstripped them in this area, then their advantages would be continuously whittled away

until the other sects overtook them. This was what the Regal Pill Palace never wanted to see.

Elder Yun Nie was most worried about this. Because the Regal Pill Palace had always led the pack in the area of pills, many of the senior executives were used to this kind of advantage. The long accustomed psychological advantage had caused the young disciples in the Regal Pill Palace to constantly think themselves superior in the arena of pills. They no longer had the motivation and drive as they did before, placing more emphasis on martial dao.

Although this wasn't a bad thing, it also wasn't good thing for the Regal Pill Palace to maintain its advantage in pills. The other sects in the Myriad Domain have greatly valued the development of the dao of pills in the last hundred years, obviously not wanting the Regal Pill Palace to have a monopoly in this field. The development of pills was like other matters, one must forge ahead against of the current or be driven back.

If the Regal Pill Palace remained complacent in its past glory and advantages, continuing to make its daydreams of the top sect in pills, then one day, it would be surpassed.

Jiang Chen understood Elder Yun Nie's concern as well. He had only just entered the Regal Pill Palace, but he too could tell that the younger generation of the sect was far more infatuated with martial dao than pills.

It wasn't a bad culture to have, but something that had to be paid attention to in a sect that valued their expertise with pills such as

the Regal Pill Palace. But of course, these were all matters for the senior executives to worry about. Jiang Chen knew that he didn't have to express any opinions on this matter.

However, he was quite interested in this Mt. Rippling Mirage Pill Battle. To be able to have his pick of resources for ten days straight! The very thought set Jiang Chen's blood boiling. And to think he was worrying about resources. If he could ravage the mountain for ten days, then maybe he wouldn't have to worry about resources for the next ten, twenty years!

The various sects wouldn't be so crazy over Mt. Rippling Mirage if its resources weren't that rich either. Jiang Chen could absolutely imagine that it was a cornucopia for spirit herbs.

"Alright Jiang Chen, keep the Pill Battle slot a secret for now. Let's go haul your spirit medicines." Elder Yun Nie was something alright. He didn't say pick or grab, but used the word haul. That meant that whatever Jiang Chen wanted, he would have.

A few more traces of respect grew in Jiang Chen's mind towards the elder when he heard this. Those who could become a great personage like a Hallmaster had uncommon bearing indeed. One could see from this reward and the slot for the Pill Battles that the elder was truly "trusting those he used, and not using those he didn't trust."

Jiang Chen was stunned by the heaps and piles of spirit medicines and herbs when he visited the residence's storage. Even though Elder Yun Nie had told him to take what he would, Jiang Chen wouldn't have really cleaned the place out. He targeted his

efforts to taking a portion that would be enough for him and his followers to use for a year.

Having resolved his resource shortage for a year after leaving the Yun Nie residence, Jiang Chen was in great spirits and felt that life in a sect was rather interesting after all.

“Sage Dan Chi, Elder Yun Nie... I can tell that the two are very much alike. The Regal Pill Palace didn’t climb to its current position through luck. With these kinds of characters holding down the fort, the Regal Pill Palace won’t have to worry about its fortunes for the next hundred of years.”

One had to say, Jiang Chen had a great impression of the elder after spending less than a day with him. The outside world was rampant with rumors of how mean-spirited and vicious he was, how much he would beat people, but it seemed that those were only baseless rumors after all. One who was able to give him one of the Pill Battle slots the first time they met, possessed a kind of demeanor and charisma that was worthy of Jiang Chen’s admiration.

When he walked out in glory from the Hundred Elders Peak, the guards all looked at each other with skepticism on their faces. He naturally knew the reason behind their reactions, but just smiled and passed them by.

The guards were completely baffled by Jiang Chen’s carefree figure. “No way! Did this kid not go to Elder Yun Nie’s residence?”

“That’s impossible! If he didn’t enter any residence and just strolled around in such an important place as the Hundred Elders Peak, the patrol would have caught him a long time ago.”

“That’s true. Since he went in and requested Elder Yun Nie’s mission, how would he not have suffered a beating? He even looks really happy?”

Old Li, who’d been on duty when Jiang Chen had first entered the Hundred Elders Peak, smiled with pride. “Look at that, I’ve got the true eye for talent here! I told you guys that Jiang Chen is a pill genius, and that things may be different this time. It turns out I was right! Hahaha, I admire myself more and more!”

The other guards were speechless, they really didn’t understand what was going on. Could it be that Jiang Chen really finished the mission? But why did this all look so unreal? An eight star mission that no one had completed in twenty, thirty years had been taken care of by a young man who’d just entered the sect?

Chapter 476: Breakthrough, Peak Of Second Level Origin Realm

Jiang Chen immediately entered closed door cultivation to refine pills when he arrived back at his residence. The resources from Elder Yun Nie temporarily allowed him to cast off poverty, bidding a fond farewell to being poor.

He was refining Spirit Consolidation Pills for Gouyu this time. Although Mu Gaoqi had given him quite a few, Jiang Chen wasn't satisfied with their quality, and truth be told, they didn't come in enough quantity either.

When he saw how the geniuses of the Regal Pill Palace treat the Spirit Consolidation Pills like one would rice, and the comparative poverty of his followers as they struggled through the sixteen kingdoms, Jiang Chen had realized how his new sect raised geniuses. Those who specialized in the civil subjects were poor, and those in the martial, rich. The gap between the poor and the wealthy in this world of martial dao wasn't just an ordinary gap at all.

Take Gouyu and the others for instance, their potential wasn't low at all. They weren't the least bit inferior to most of the geniuses in the Regal Pill Palace. The only reason their cultivation level was far below their peers was due to their lack of resources. This time, Jiang Chen would thoroughly take care of this gap in resources.

He emerged from closed door cultivation after half a month, bringing out a thousand Spirit Consolidation Pills. At minimum,

they were upper rank pills, and a tenth of them were even supreme rank pills.

Jiang Chen doled them out according to each person. Gouyu, Xue Tong, and all the other followers received two hundred each, as did Tang Hong. As for Lian Canghai and the others, he only gave them ten.

As the saying went, do not reveal one's wealth. Those who weren't his closest friends naturally wouldn't have the right to enjoy these benefits. If it wasn't out of consideration for Lordmaster Ye Chonglou, he wouldn't have spared a thought on those three.

With these two hundred Spirit Consolidation Pills, Jiang Chen believed that his people wouldn't have to worry about resources until they reached the peak of the spirit realm. Particularly Tang Hong, he had already reached the sky spirit realm, and these pills may allow him to enter the ranks of spirit king and assail the origin realm.

Jiang Chen had to admit that compared to the Regal Pill Palace, the Precious Tree Sect had simply pathetic levels of resources! Even that Divine Fruit of the Rosy Dawn was at most worth twenty Spirit Consolidation Pills, and only the preeminent geniuses being worthy of using them. In the Regal Pill Palace, any elder could easily refine several thousand Spirit Consolidation Pills, with any young genius of talent possessing the ability to refine their own.

One had to say, a seventh rank sect such as the Precious Tree Sect was more than ten times inferior than the Regal Pill Palace in

terms of resources.

When Gouyu and the others received the pills, it was like a fish introduced to water. Their cultivation exploded into action. Gouyu even started her assault on the sky spirit realm.

Jiang Chen didn't relax either. There were still two months or so until his agreement with Mu Gaoqi. He would naturally not fall behind on his training.

"Only when I entered the origin realm did I learn that my distance from the top geniuses of this world is still that broad. I will never be weaker than others in this life!" Jiang Chen tossed a crystal core from hand to hand. He decided to start refining the core of the Redscaled Firelizard. An origin level core was enough to make his cultivation level fly forward in a short amount of time.

He estimated that the Firelizard had been of the earth origin realm when it was alive. This core would allow him to charge into earth origin realm in a short amount of time. Add the Origin Fostering Pills into the mix, and Jiang Chen could realistically set his sights on attaining the sky origin realm in three years. Although he was only first level origin realm now, he was confident that his predicted time frame was all he needed to overcome six levels of cultivation.

Refining the Firelizard core was a long and arduous process, taking over a full month of Jiang Chen's concentrated effort. As he refined the core, the Firelizard's powerful origin power surged

through his body, surrounding and nourishing his nascent soul. The film that lay over first level origin realm was torn apart as Jiang Chen soared to the peak of second level origin level!.

"The Firelizard core actually holds more than ten times the energy of the Raven King's! What a pity that he was past the prime of his life and was dragged down to death by a flock of spirit realm Fire Ravens." Jiang Chen sighed, thinking that if it wasn't for the Firelizard having lost most of his cultivation as a result of him nearing death, even ten times the number of Fire Ravens wouldn't have been able to take him down, much less that pitiful flock.

Even a tiger would be bullied by dogs when it descended the mountain.

Jiang Chen had no time to rejoice when he broke through. Even though he'd achieved this in a short amount of time, he knew that this was an advantage brought to him by the Redscaled Firelizard core. It would continue to add to his cultivation for a year until he reached earth origin realm. Only then would the power within the core be fully consumed.

"It looks like I should identify an archery art after receiving Sunpiercer from Elder Yun Nie." The half-sage weapon that Jiang Chen had received was destined to become a lethal weapon. God's Eye combined with the bow would make Jiang Chen a lethal foe to face. Its power would be even more frightening that the Moonshatter Flying Daggers.

After all, although the Moonshatter Flying Daggers art was strong, he didn't have throwing daggers with the requisite

strength. The ones he'd crafted from the Fire Raven tail feathers didn't possess as much power in the origin realm as they had in the spirit realm. But he didn't deny the technique's strength, especially as he had yet to even train its accompanying arts to their peak.

The God's Eye and Ear of the Zephyr were both at the twentieth level, a far cry from the peak of the thirty second. He'd only progressed to the sixteenth level for the Boulder's Heart, with latecomer Psychic's Head up to the ninth level.

"I've only excavated one tenth of the mysteries of the Moonshatter Flying Daggers. When I train all four arts to their peak levels and possess throwing daggers that complement them, that will be when I truly shatter the moon and stars!" Jiang Chen would also naturally continue to focus on the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice and the magnetic golden mountain. This two treasures had enormous potential and were far from being used to their utmost. They weren't even displaying a tenth of their abilities yet.

He'd had several visitors when he was in closed door cultivation, with Mu Gaoqi being the most frequent. The latter had never sought to disturb Jiang Chen after he found Jiang Chen had entered closed door cultivation. But as the date of their agreement drew ever closer, he became more and more anxious, worried that Jiang Chen would forget their agreement amidst his training. If that happened, Mu Gaoqi would certainly be in hot water. He hadn't made any backup plans after inviting Jiang Chen. If the latter couldn't make it, then finding emergency help would be very difficult. Ordinary helpers wouldn't be as suited as Jiang Chen

either, nor set Mu Gaoqi at ease like his new friend could.

It was good thing that Jiang Chen finally emerged three days before their agreed upon date. “Brother Jiang Chen, you’ve finally come out. I was getting really anxious!” Mu Gaoqi’s heart settled back in his chest when he saw Jiang Chen.

“Daoist Gaoqi, I would’ve never gone back on my word after making a promise to you. When do we go?”

“Three days from now!” Mu Gaoqi had chosen the date long ago. “I’ve prepared everything, we just need to depart in three days.”

“Alright then, we go in three days.” Jiang Chen sent him off after agreeing to the time, then summoned the Goldbiter Rat King. “Ole Gold, I’ve been thinking of ways to help you evolve your bloodlines. We have a chance to right in front of our eyes.”

The Rat King had broken through to the origin realm ever since eating the flesh of the Firelizard last time. However, the overall evolution of his tribe was what he was most concerned with. He was delighted to hear Jiang Chen say so. “Young master Chen, what chance?”

Jiang Chen went over the information concerning the spiritual spring brimming with wood energy. “Ole Gold, exploring this spring will definitely not go that easily. However, I will give you a chance when we enter. You need to first identify a pack of elites amongst your tribe, a group with superior bloodlines, and stand ready.”

The Rat King had been willing to follow Jiang Chen and leave the maze realm because the latter had promised he would help elevate the Goldbiter Rat's bloodlines. This was something to do with the future and fortune of their entire tribe!

In their years of following Jiang Chen, they had accomplished many things for him and was a great aid in times of need. Jiang Chen also knew that the key to their continued loyalty lay in whether he would be able to help their bloodlines ascend.

He'd kept this matter on his mind, and had finally located a clue this time from Mu Gaoqi. If Mu Gaoqi's intelligence was right, then that spring was a natural place of spirit power. If the Goldbiter Rats were baptized in such a place, it would greatly increase their chances of bloodline evolution.

If this tribe really possessed the bloodlines of the ancient Goldbiter Kingrats, the bloodline would certainly show up in certain tribe members. If they could awaken more of their heritage memories, the strength of their tribe would increase multifold.

Jiang Chen still needed helpers, and the Goldbiter Rats were currently his best card.

The Rat King was extremely agitated, "Young master Chen, if our tribe can ascend back to the ancient bloodline, you will be the greatest savior of our tribe. I swear that I will always be loyal and serve the young master!"

The Rat King was very smart. He had followed Jiang Chen for so many years and long since observed how extraordinary this human was. This human was his tribe's destined one. If they wanted to change their fates, the only correct choice was to follow him.

"Miss Huang'er, I might need to go for a short while. How are you feeling lately?" Jiang Chen had nothing to worry about when it came to his followers, but since Elder Shun had left Miss Huang'er in his care, he had to do his best to take care of her.

Even though he too knew that she was no ordinary person, in his heart, no matter how mysterious she was or how much power she hid, Miss Huang'er was still a patient who Elder Shun had entrusted to him.

Miss Huang'er smiled, "Huang'er feels much better since Sir Jiang has started your treatment. I play the 'Ethereal Soothing Melody' everyday and bask in the joy of life. That is all."

"That puts my mind at ease. I can only hope that Elder Shun finds the Requiem Wood sooner rather than later to set all worries to rest." Having spent some time with Huang'er, Jiang Chen was rather appreciative of the genteel and kind young girl. He only felt that a fairy in the mortal world shouldn't be tormented by such affliction.

Huang'er nodded lightly, thinking to herself, If the Generation Binding Curse is dispelled after the Requiem Wood is located, I must return home. Is life there really better than what it is here?

Ripples of emotion grew in her heart as she sank into quiet contemplation of her dilemma.

Chapter 477: Geniuses Converge On Bluesky Mountain

Huang'er and Elder Shun had traveled around the world these years, living an extremely simple life that could almost be termed boring beyond belief. But even so, Huang'er felt it to be a marked improvement over her previous life. At the very least, she didn't have to be submerged in daily plots and scheming. She had been surrounded from birth by intrigues and machinations.

She was thoroughly sick of those crazy struggles.

Ever since Elder Shun had brought her out from the shadows to meet Jiang Chen and the others at the Eternal Spirit Mountain, her life and mindset had changed drastically, as had her heart.

Gouyu was forthright and passionate, loving and hating with equal fervor. Jiang Chen's bearing was profoundly extraordinary, both just and aboveboard. Xue Tong and the others were all stoutly loyal to Jiang Chen. Each of their personalities were vibrant and frank, with no ulterior motives about them. She could completely open her heart around them, not needing to be on her guard at all.

This kind of life was simple, happy, and full of light every day. She'd unknowingly fallen deeply in love with this kind of life some time ago. This simple and happy time had also been unblemished by the torment of the Generation Binding Curse due to Jiang Chen's temporary treatment. She'd almost forgotten her cares and worries.

She wished things would never change.. If only this could continue forever.

So when Jiang Chen mentioned the Requiem Wood and the matter of dispelling the curse, she wasn't filled with delight, but rather a faint sense of loss. She even quietly hoped that that day would never come. She'd grown used to this ordinary and real lifestyle.

Three days later, after Jiang Chen had made the appropriate arrangements for those left in his residence as well as specially visited Sage Dan Chi to let him know, Jiang Chen left the Regal Pill Palace with Mu Gaoqi. With the numerous disciples entering and leaving the Rosy Valley every day, neither Jiang Chen nor Mu Gaoqi elicited much attention, since neither counted as the most preeminent disciples in the Valley.

Jiang Chen summoned the Goldwing Swordbirds soon after leaving the sect. Although Mu Gaoqi had his own steed, its speed was obviously far below Jiang Chen's advanced Swordbird. When Mu Gaoqi saw Jiang Chen's Goldwing Swordbird, he was also filled with admiration.

Jiang Chen was also quite generous as he immediately gifted one to Mu Gaoqi. "Daoist Gaoqi, this Goldwing Swordbird has an exceedingly finicky appetite. The more pills you feed it, the faster it will break through."

Mu Gaoqi nodded continuously, "Of course, that's a given."

The trip to the outskirts of the mountain still took a full four days even on the back of the Goldwing Swordbirds. Many peaks and knolls, wreathed by mist, could be glimpsed in the depths of the mountains as they flew above. It was impossible for the Swordbirds to follow the curve of the land.

When they alighted, Mu Gaoqi reminded Jiang Chen, “Brother Jiang Chen, this is the Million Range Bluesky Mountain. There are many monsters and beasts here, as well as all sorts of frightening bugs. Various strange lifeforms exist here too, such as fatal trees, vines, and flowers. You must be careful when walking around here.”

Jiang Chen nodded, “Where did you arrange to meet the others?”

“We agreed upon a place inside the mountain. Brother Jiang Chen, if they ask about you, don’t reveal your true name. Just make up a fake one.” Mu Gaoqi was being quite conscientious as he reminded Jiang Chen over and over again of the important details.

Jiang Chen naturally had no particular opinions. He was here for the spring with wood spirit energy. Everything else were just minor details to him. He would do what Mu Gaoqi told him to do as long as it didn’t exceed his bottom line.

Jiang Chen activated his God’s Eye and Psychic’s Head along the way, striking out cautiously. Although they met with many tests, nothing became a threat with Jiang Chen taking proactive action to resolve them.

Mu Gaoqi led Jiang Chen to a rock outcropping after roughly an hour. There were all sorts of oddly shaped, enormous stones around this place. Some were upright, but others flat on the ground. Some protruded diagonally, with the assorted forms giving onlookers quite the visual impact.

“This is the place.” Mu Gaoqi looked around and murmured to himself. “It looks like we’re the first ones here.”

Jiang Chen smiled faintly and didn’t refute his words, when in reality, his Psychic’s Head had already sensed three groups of people hidden in the rocks. They only walked out when they saw it was Mu Gaoqi.

All three groups had come in pairs. It seemed that they’d agreed on allowing everyone one assistant each. No one had broken the agreement in this area.

When Mu Gaoqi saw these people walk out from the shadows, he immediately became a bit nervous. “I thought I was the earliest; I hadn’t thought that you all were even faster,” he stammered.

“Gaoqi, we’re all depending on your pills this time, did you bring enough of them?” One of the cultivators was attired in a golden robe, the longsword slung across his back making him look quite fierce.

“I did, I did!” Mu Gaoqi chuckled.

“And this is?” The golden clad cultivator sized up Jiang Chen with a measuring look.

Mu Gaoqi hurriedly responded, “This is one of my peers in the Regal Pill Palace. He put a lot of effort into the pills I’ve refined, so I brought him with me today.”

Jiang Chen could see that Mu Gaoqi’s tone was quite humble. Clearly, his first level origin realm status was one of the lowest in the group. If it wasn’t for the others needing his pills, he likely wouldn’t have had the right to participate.

Jiang Chen paid silent attention to those around him. The duo containing the golden-clad, longsword wielding man was likely from the Sacred Sword Palace.

The other two had the moon, sun and stars embroidered on their robes. They were likely from the Tristar Sect.

The remaining two were wearing inky black robes, marking them as Dark North disciples.

Jiang Chen hadn’t seen their faces before, but he’d seen the clothing during the alliance ceremony between the Precious Tree Sect and Regal Pill Palace. It seemed like those participating in this venture were cultivators from all the first rate sects in the Myriad Domain. Apart from the Great Cathedral and the Walkabout Sect, the rest of the six great sects were all accounted for.

The golden-clad one from the Sacred Sword Palace frowned, “Is the Great Cathedral so arrogant? Why aren’t they here yet?”

“Feng Wanjian, is your mouth always this foul?” An angry shout sounded through the empty air as soon as the Sacred Sword Palace cultivator had finished complaining. Following the bellow, two stocky silhouettes swiftly flew down from the rocks.

The latter two characters of his name mean “ten thousand swords”, very appropriate given his sect

The two were wearing robes made of animal skins, revealing sturdy arms and thighs, giving off a primal aura. Their hair was in messy disarray, giving them a distinct touch of a wild lion. The one walking in front was tall and well-built, seemingly to crush the rocks with each stride he took. His gait was oddly graceful, like that of a tiger on the hunt.

When this person appeared, Feng Wanjian of the Sacred Sword Palace went white and shut his mouth appropriately.

“I’m not late, am I?” The Great Cathedral disciple flashed a toothy grin. A noticeable scar on his right cheek became even more fierce looking with his smile. “Allow me to introduce myself. I am Yue Pan of the Sacred Lion family in the Great Cathedral. My junior brother has invited me to meet all the various geniuses in the Myriad Domain here today.” The disciple behind Yue Pan was also from the Sacred Lion family, named Xu Gang.

Feng Wanjian glared at Xu Gang with dissatisfaction. “What do

you mean by this, Xu Gang? Didn't we agree that we'd bring helpers on the same level? We're all of the minor origin realm, so what the heck do you mean by bringing along an earth origin realm helper?"

Xu Gang's word were steady as he explained, "When I first invited senior brother Yue Pan, he was only at third level origin realm. Then, two days before we left, he broke through to earth origin realm. I couldn't exactly go back on my word after I'd invited him, could I? If I'd invited him but didn't bring him in the end, he might've told others and thus attract the attention of some of the stronger disciples. At that point, would there be a spot left for any of us for the spring?"

Xu Gang's words made quite a bit of sense, at least to the point where the others couldn't refute him.

Jiang Chen also took a look. Out of the six from the Sacred Sword Palace, Tristar Sect and Dark North Sect, they were all of the minor origin realm. The strongest of them were but third level origin realm, with none in the earth origin realm.

The Great Cathedral disciple showing up with an earth origin realm comrade broke this careful balance.

Mu Gaoqi actually smoothed over the situation at this point. "In my opinion, so what of an earth origin realm. We all decided on exploring this area together." However, Mu Gaoqi held a bare minimum of status in the group, and was easily ignored when he spoke. Feng Wanjian flicked a glance at Mu Gaoqi, snorting coldly as he did so. His gaze flicked towards Jiang Chen, and unconcealed

disdain appeared in his eyes. It was apparent that Mu Gaoqi had no right to speak at all in this group. When they saw that his helper wasn't even third level spirit realm, this gave him even less of a right to speak.

Xu Gang chuckled and walked towards Mu Gaoqi, "Daoist Gaoqi, we agreed that you would supply the pills last time. Are you ready? If so, now would be a good time to hand them over."

Mu Gaoqi bobbed his head. "I've prepared them." He took out a great deal of flasks and bottles from a storage ring, "These are Vitality Pills that clears and cures poison, these are Jade Iceheart Pills that will soothe burns, these are Yang Coalescence Pills that will dispel frigid air, and these are Immutable Profound Heart Pills that will clear internal demons." He distributed out a portion into everyone's hands, not forgetting to include Jiang Chen as well.

It was obvious that he'd spent quite some effort in preparing these items and had fulfilled his responsibilities to the letter.

But these folks weren't polite or considerate at all. They immediately began inspecting the pills after receiving them. It was apparent that they had a suspicious mindset, and although Mu Gaoqi was as honest as could be, they were still worried that he had done something to the pills.

When Mu Gaoqi saw their actions, he didn't dare say anything even though he felt a bit aggrieved.

By the time they'd finished checking the pills, the meeting time

had long passed. Xu Gang looked below, “Those pussies from the Walkabout Sect probably didn’t have the guts to come. The time has come and gone, let’s head in.”

Even though everyone was quite dissatisfied that Xu Gang had brought an earth origin realm cultivator along, this proposal was met with general approval. This meant that they would have one less set of opponents.

Only Mu Gaoqi spoke timidly, “How about we wait a bit more? We all agreed on moving together, wouldn’t it be bad if we don’t wait for them?”

Jiang Chen sighed internally when he saw Mu Gaoqi act so subservient. Mu Gaoqi was likely used to being the good guy and didn’t want to offend anyone. However, when this kind of weak personality was combined with a lack of strength, who would pay attention to anything he said?

Chapter 478: Fists Determine Reason

Indeed, Xu Gang laughed heartily, “How about this, Daoist Gaoqi, you two stay here and wait. We’ll go in and scout ahead first. You can bring up the rear when the Walkabout Sect shows up.”

“I think that will do. Daoist Gaoqi is highly principled and most suited to wait here.” Feng Wanjian also concurred.

Mu Gaoqi may be cautious and wary in nature, but that didn’t mean he was a fool. It was obvious from Xu Gang and Feng Wanjian’s spectacle that they wanted to ostracize him. Mu Gaoqi’s lips twitched, but even so, he remained silent and just stood in place with a flushed face, like a wife who’d been bullied.

Jiang Chen could tell that each of these people had their own schemes. None of them viewed Mu Gaoqi as an ally. Now that his pills were divided amongst them, his importance was coming to an end. Judging from their posture, the four sects wanted to leave him out in the cold.

Jiang Chen followed quietly behind Mu Gaoqi. He decided to wait and see first. If this group really planned on leaving Mu Gaoqi out of the spoils, he naturally wouldn’t agree.

The five pairs walked into the depths of the rock outcropping and soon arrived in front of a deep cave at the end of a narrow stone corridor. Mu Gaoqi and Jiang Chen were at the rear and about to enter when a golden-clad silhouette suddenly blocked the way in front of them.

It was that Feng Wanjian.

“Daoist Gaoqi, didn’t we agree that you’d wait outside for our friends from the Walkabout Sect? In that case, I think you shouldn’t be going inside, hmm?” Feng Wanjian’s tone was faint, yet full of an overbearing presence.

Mu Gaoqi quibbled, “Everyone should enter and leave together. If we wait, then everyone should wait together.

Feng Wanjian jeered and gave a shout of laughter, “You alone proposed waiting, so naturally you’re the one who waits. Doesn’t everyone agree with me?”

The other three pairs all burst into uproarious laughter. One less pair meant two fewer contenders and more for them to share when they reached the spring. It was obvious that since Mu Gaoqi was the weakest, there was no pressure at all in ostracizing him. In addition, his main value lay in pills. Since he’d handed them over, there was no point in him entering the cave. He wouldn’t be of any use apart from dragging them down.

“See, you waiting here is what everyone hopes for.” Feng Wanjian shrugged and extended his leg to carve a long line on the hard, stone ground. He commanded coldly, “Wait beyond this line and don’t go past it. Don’t blame me for treating you unkindly if you do!”

As good an upbringing as Mu Gaoqi had, he too was a bit enraged

at this moment as well. However, he was weak and was accustomed to giving way in front of others. He didn't know what to do even though he was seething and could only hold everything in with a beet-red face.

"Daoist Feng, you... you go too far in bullying others!" This was the only thing he said after trying for a good long while.

Feng Wanjian laughed heartily, "Haha, this is everyone's opinion! Too bad you had to be such a loudmouth."

Jiang Chen had made no move or sound up until now. He suddenly walked in front of Mu Gaoqi and stared at Feng Wanjian with a cool gaze. He asked casually, "Do you mean to forget about past favors and burn the bridge after you've crossed the river, thereby ostracizing our Regal Pill Palace?"

Feng Wanjian didn't think anything of Jiang Chen because the latter hadn't said a single word or expressed any opinions since showing up. He also only looked to be second level origin realm. With the social skills of a trash like Mu Gaoqi, he likely wouldn't have invited anyone strong, so the others had also ignored Jiang Chen.

Feng Wanjian had been the same. When he saw Jiang Chen speak, the former smirked arrogantly and flicked a glance at Jiang Chen. "And who are you? Do you have the right to speak here?"

Jiang Chen didn't say a word, merely walked up, stuck out a foot, and swiped the line on the ground, smoothening the carving in an

instant.

"Go to hell!" Feng Wanjian was incensed by Jiang Chen's actions. How dare someone erase the line he'd carved! This was a huge provocation to him!

He threw a punch directly towards Jiang Chen's chest, but he'd yet to touch his opponent's chest when he suddenly felt his wrist become numb.

His wrist hand landed in Jiang Chen's hands in the next moment. Jiang Chen pulled, yanked, and flung Feng Wanjian out like a broken kite, making him slam fiercely into a large tree ten meters away.

Bam!

Although this collision wasn't fatal, it was an undoubted loss of all face for an origin realm cultivator.

Jiang Chen walked past like there was no one had been there.

"Does anyone else have an opinion?" His gaze was deep as he swept it in a circle across the faces of those present.

Feng Wanjian was a disciple of the Sacred Sword Palace, and although his hand-to-hand skills weren't as proficient as his skill with the sword, it was still rather astonishing that he'd been casually thrown out like this.

The atmosphere at the scene instantly grew quite interesting. Everyone's gazes involuntarily looked towards Yue Pan, the only earth origin realm present.

When Yue Pan's gaze met Jiang Chen's, he immediately laughed heartily. "You have hidden your skills well, posing as a pig to eat a tiger. I am quite in awe." He swept his gaze around the scene after speaking, "The more of these kinds of strong comrades, the better. Anyone opposed to them is also opposing me, Yue Pan!"

Yue Pan was tall and buff, appearing quite brutish and savage. Who would've thought that he'd change tack so quickly? The ones from the other sects all looked at each other, askance for a moment.

When Feng Wangjian scrambled to his feet, his hand was already on the handle of his sword. But his heart sank when he heard Yue Pan's words and he glared fiercely at Jiang Chen before suppressing his anger in the end.

It was apparent that Feng Wanjian could also see that if even Yue Pan didn't dare offend the person that Mu Gaoqi had invited, then this newcomer's strength wouldn't be too far off from Yue Pan's. The latter had made this kind of proclamation. If he, Feng Wanjian didn't realize what situation he was in, then he'd be going head to head against the Regal Pill Palace and the Great Cathedral.

Feng Wanjian may have been arrogant, but he didn't have this level of confidence.

The other Great Cathedral disciple, Xu Gang chuckled. “That was just a small misunderstanding. We are all still close comrades since we’ve cleared things up. Our cooperation is needed to investigate this cavern.”

Jiang Chen watched the quick about faces from the two Great Cathedral disciples. Each had been more ludicrous than the other. This Xu Gang had planned even on taking down Mu Gaoqi a moment before, but now it had all turned into a misunderstanding and they were close comrades.

This kind of person was much more frightening than a cocky fellow like Feng Wanjian, one with eyes at the top of his head.

Those from the Tristar and Dark North Sect had kept a low profile all along. They naturally wouldn’t step forth to be a villain when they’d just seen how strong Jiang Chen was.

When Mu Gaoqi saw that Jiang Chen had exerted control over the situation with a single move, he too was quite agitated. Traces of gratitude appeared in his eyes as he looked at Jiang Chen. This spring of wood spirit energy was simply too important to him. If he’d been ostracized and couldn’t enter, then all the efforts he’d conducted in the past couple of days and his plans would all be completely destroyed. The minor conflict just now had given him a great psychological blow.

Strength was king. What use was refining pills if he had no strength? He’d given them the pills, but they’d still erupted in

open hostility just like that. All of his pills hadn't been as useful as Jiang Chen's single move. Fists determined reason alright!

The group walked through the entrance and was greeted by the sight of an extremely spacious cave entrance. It was pitch-black, as if a black curtain was hanging across. Even Jiang Chen's God's Eye could only extend to a tenth of its usual range.

"The darkness of this cavern isn't natural. My God's Eye should be able to see through the night as if it were day, but I can only see up to a tenth of the usual in this dark cave. It looks like there's something special about this cavern that can restrict all light."

Xu Gang halted his footsteps and said to a Tristar Sect disciple. "Gao Yi, we agreed that your sect would prepare the night pearls. You prepared them, didn't you?"

The thinner of the two chuckled, "Of course." He flicked his fingers as he talked, shooting the pearls to those present. Everyone held one, including Mu Gaoqi.

Their view brightened a bit with the pearls in hand, but the pearl didn't have much use for Jiang Chen. Vision wasn't the most important sense in the cavern.

"There are all sorts of earthen fire attacks in this cavern, and they're triggered if the area is illuminated with torches. The pearls are relatively better." Mu Gaoqi said quietly.

“Let’s go.” Xu Gang waved his arm and took the lead, striding forward first.

Yue Pan however, smiled, “I’ll bring up the rear.” The two from the Great Cathedral were both in the lead and rear, patently very distrustful of the others and also demonstrating the domineering style of the strongest sect in the Myriad Domain.

Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi walked in the middle, the former fully employing his Boulder’s Heart and Psychic’s Head, following behind the group and heading into the depths of the cavern.

The cavern was dim and quiet, sloping downwards the further one went in. Jiang Chen’s wariness was seven parts for this cavern and three parts for Yue Pan behind them.

Although the two from the Great Cathedral weren’t extraordinarily strong, they were the type to quickly turn on you, and one had to exercise utmost caution when working with this kind of people.

The group felt the cold air become heavier after roughly an hour.

“The hell? It seems colder here than it was last time.” Gao Yi of the Tristar Sect complained softly.

“Hmph, we’ve only gotten this far, yet you’re already complaining?” Xu Gang glared at Gao Yi with displeasure.

Gao Yi chuckled, “I was thinking, will those from the Walkabout Sect show up behind us?”

Xu Gang snorted derisively, “They won’t get anything even if they show up because they were late.” Gao Yi murmured obsequiously to that.

Jiang Chen wasn’t listening to any of this. He’d felt something was off the moment they’d entered the cavern. There was actually a faint trace of a presence in the air. It was so very faint that if Jiang Chen hadn’t trained the Psychic’s Head, he never would’ve caught on this presence. When his thoughts travelled here, he sent a silent message to Mu Gaoqi, “Be careful Gaoqi. Someone’s been here before our group.”

Mu Gaoqi steeled himself when he heard this, but didn’t say anything. He had learned his lesson and had seen through these fellows. He would never speak up out of kindness even when he knew danger lurked ahead.

Chapter 479: Danger Emerges

There seemed to be no end to the inky depths of this cavern. Their footsteps gradually slowed as the chilly air continued to grow heavier. Apart from the sound of their scattered footsteps, the cavern was eerily quiet.

It almost felt like they'd entered an independent world, completely cut off from everything beyond this endlessly dark cavern.

Jiang Chen suddenly shoved something at Mu Gaoqi, "Gaoqi, take this." It was the spirit pearl of fire and ice that the tenth rank inspector Feng Beidou from the Sky Sect had given Sunchaser before Jiang Chen and Sunchaser had fought during the Precious Tree Sect alliance. When Sunchaser had been torn apart by the Lotus, it had swallowed the pearl as well, coming into Jiang Chen's hands. Although Feng Beidou was pained at the loss of this treasure, he wasn't so thick-faced as to demand it back. After all, his sect had indubitably lost that match. Now that this cavern was setting off Jiang Chen's senses, he decided to take some precautions in case he was unable to save his fellow disciple, and gave the pearl to Mu Gaoqi in the event of an emergency.

Being Feng Beidou's treasure, the pearl was a sage realm level item. Mu Gaoqi immediately felt a wondrous sensation suffuse his body when it passed into his hands. His senses instantly reached an equilibrium that was neither felt too cold nor hot, as if he was immersed in the most gentle of spring weather.

With the exception of Mu Gaoqi, the chill from the air pervaded

everyone's bodies, slowing their circulation, numbing their limbs, and generally slowing them to different degrees. It was a good thing that Mu Gaoqi had prepared many Yang Coalescence Pills beforehand, they now proved quite useful in dispelling the cold from their bodies. Everyone took one, driving out much of the chill in their bodies.

A feeble light suddenly appeared in the distance in front of the group.

"That's it!" Gao Yi grew excited. "Look! That light marks where the lava area begins."

The group had been unable to resist the scorching heat from the lava last time, which was why they'd stopped. Now that they'd reached the place they'd left off last time, everyone began to agitate.

Jiang Chen's footsteps suddenly paused at this point. He turned his body ever so slightly, as if he was going to turn around. Yue Pan's hearty laugh abruptly broke out from behind him, "Are we there? Fantastic!" He walked quickly towards the front after speaking, seeming to want to be the first to enter the next area.

Jiang Chen's heart hardened slightly, killing intent flashing through him as Yue Pan had passed by them. This was because the moment he'd paused, he'd sensed Yue Pan surreptitiously gathering his momentum to launch an ambush!

Jiang Chen's Psychic's Head imparted immense mental strength,

allowing his senses to be far sharper than others. As such, no matter how deeply Yue Pan hid his intentions, Jiang Chen could still see right through him. This time, Jiang Chen's sudden pause had disrupted Yue Pan's rhythm, forcing him to stifle his actions.

However, Yue Pan's reaction had been exceedingly fast. He'd immediately changed his attitude and spoken those words, attempting to hide his ulterior motives. But, how could that minor level of scheming possibly hoodwink Jiang Chen?

Jiang Chen sent a silent message to Mu Gaoqi, "The two from the Great Cathedral bear us ill will, you need to be careful."

Mu Gaoqi nodded lightly. His illusions about these people had been shattered, and he'd finally seen through to their true natures.

The faint light was as if a bright lamp that led the way forward. Earth origin realm Yue Pan in particular kept charging forward, and the others quickly followed, dashing to the fore in an attempt to obtain an advantage.

"Don't rush." Jiang Chen's razor-sharp observation had picked up something. He pulled Mu Gaoqi back, preventing him from charging ahead with the others.

Mu Gaoqi responded, "We walked this path before, and there's no danger between here and the lava area."

Jiang Chen said faintly, "No danger before doesn't mean there's

no danger now.” A ghastly scream suddenly rang out from the front as they conversed.

“Who’s here!?”

“Who?!”

“Ah! Ambush!” Several screams rang out; it was obvious the front was already a chaotic mess. When Jiang Chen peered forward, he could already see four bodies twitching on the ground —the two from the Dark North Sect, one from the Tristar Sect and one from the Sacred Sword Palace.

Ten had entered the cavern from the five sects. Apart from Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi walking in the back, eight had charged to the front. But now, four had fallen to the ground. This scene left everyone openmouthed with astonishment and horror.

Yue Pan suddenly roared, “Someone’s there. Over there! Halt!”

A crisp collision sounded in the air as he spoke.

Clang!

Sparks flew everywhere as his weapon blocked an incoming crossbow bolt. His counter attack was also slowed because of this. He shot a cold glare to the front, but didn’t have the courage to follow up. It was then that Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi finally caught up, still trailing at the back and not approaching the scene too

closely.

Feng Wanjian roared angrily, “Mu Gaoqi, you’re a pill master! What the hell are you doing dragging your feet at this time?! Get over here and attend to their wounds!”

Mu Gaoqi was a bit intimidated by Feng Wanjian’s yell, but was immediately reminded of Jiang Chen by his side. As a result, even though his lips twitched, his feet remained firmly planted in the ground.

Jiang Chen flicked a dismissive glance at the bodies on the ground, “What are you yelling about? They were hit by a strong poison and have already died. Even the gods won’t be able to save them, what are you looking at us for?”

Feng Wanjian was immensely startled. One of those bodies was his partner from the sect! If something happened to him, then he’d be fighting a lone fight from here on. The unlucky one from the Tristar Sect was Gao Yi. His peer had been fortunate enough to escape disaster.

“Mu Gaoqi, come take a look first. They might not be dead.”

Mu Gaoqi shook his head. “I’m not doing that, this poison is very evil. It could even spread if I get any closer. If any of you are unafraid of death, you can take a look for yourself.”

The expressions of those remaining all changed drastically at Mu

Gaoqi's words. They unconsciously moved away, taking another seven, eight steps further away from the four down. Mu Gaoqi was by now utterly disappointed in them. If it hadn't been for Jiang Chen earlier, he wouldn't even have had the right to enter earlier. He sure as heck wouldn't risk his life for them now.

Feng Wanjian howled, "Poison? Is it the Walkabout Sect?"

The Walkabout Sect was the one most skilled at using poison out of the six premier sects in the Myriad Domain. Therefore, when Mu Gaoqi mentioned poison, everyone's first thought was to suspect that they were the ones behind this.

Xu Gang of the Great Cathedral still had a pounding heart. "No wonder they didn't show up! It looks like we were too naive. They showed up a long time ago and laid a trap for us to carelessly jump in!"

The Tristar Sect disciple suddenly glared viciously at Xu Gang. "Xu Gang, you despicable scoundrel! That concealed weapon was heading for you earlier, but you used my junior brother as your shield! My sect head will definitely hear of this when I return to the sect. We will want an explanation from your Sacred Lion family!"

Xu Gang smiled casually, "Lin Feng, don't you go slandering others now, hmm?"

Lin Feng retorted angrily, "Xu Gang, confess to what you've done!"

Xu Gang laughed lightly, “Vision here is so poor, are you sure you saw me use Gao Yi as a shield? Besides, since we’ve come here, everyone should be aware of how dangerous things can get. Our life and death is something we hold in our own hands. I will die without complaint if you have the ability to use me as a shield.” His tone was as shameless as a bandit’s.

Lin Feng was tongue tied, actually at a loss for words in the face of such shameless words. Feng Wanjian’s face was black as he first looked at Xu Gang, then at Jiang Chen. It was apparent that subtle changes had occurred in the situation after this disaster.

The pair from the Dark North Sect was gone, and there was only one left from both the Tristar Sect and his Sacred Sword Palace. Only the Great Cathedral and Regal Pill Palace still had a full team with no injuries.

“Daoist Lin Feng, you and I are alone now. It seems that we would be wise to form a team.” Feng Wanjian spoke silently, “This Xu Gang and Yue Pan are both the domineering sort. Mu Gaoqi has no opinions worth speaking of, and the fellow he brought is really weird. It’s best if we can make the dogs fight amongst each other.”

Lin Feng had also calmed down. He knew that erupting in open hostilities with the Great Cathedral at this time only lead to certain death. Ignoring Xu Gang, that earth realm cultivator Yue Pan had yet to say anything. If Yue Pan was willing to, he could absolutely wipe the floor with Lin Feng. When his thoughts traveled here, Lin Feng sorted softly and locked gazes with Feng Wanjian. The two of them surreptitiously moved a bit closer.

Yue Pan suddenly smiled, “Alright, enough arguing. The true killer is still loose in the cavern as we stand here. It looks like all of our plans combined haven’t been as devious as those laid by the Walkabout Sect.”

Feng Wanjian also nodded. “The most important issue is that the Walkabout Sect has a head start on us. The more we stand here blathering, the more time they’ve had to make it to the spring.”

Even though this was the case, no one wanted to take the lead after being ambushed. It was Yue Pan who finally laughed loudly, “Looks like I’ll have to be the vanguard since none of you want to walk in the front. However, I’ll say this first, if everyone arrives at the same time, I have first priority to anything good.”

“Hmph! Based on what?” Lin Feng was unwilling to accept this.

Yue Pan chuckled, “Then you walk ahead. I’ll give you first priority then.”

Lin Feng’s heart quailed as he looked down at the dead Gao Yi. He wouldn’t take the lead even if they beat him to death!

Xu Gang smiled easily, “Since no one wants to walk in the front, then no one has the right to dispute senior brother Yue Pan’s suggestion.” Thanks to the change in numbers, Xue Gang’s domineering style was beginning to slowly reveal itself as well.

“Does the Regal Pill Palace have any opinions?” Feng Wanjian looked nonchalantly over, obviously wishing to start up conflict between the two sects.

Jiang Chen smiled noncommittally, “Daoist Yue Pan runs the highest risk in taking the lead, so he naturally should have first priority. This is also only just and fair.”

Yue Pan laughed heartily, “This daoist makes quite some sense. Ah yes, I haven’t asked your name yet.”

“My surname is Chen.” Jiang Chen remembered Mu Gaoqi’s reminder and offered up a fake name.

“Haha, Daoist Chen is deeply conscious of what is right and wrong. Yue Pan has great admiration!” Yue Pan took the lead and started walking forward again, while Xu Gang kept abreast with the others in an unhurried fashion. It could be seen that the two from the Great Cathedral had great cooperation between the two of them. If one walked in the front, the other would always trail at the back. Both were able to support each other and prevent ambushes.

Things were quiet this time, with no more surreptitious attacks. With no further action to speak of, the group quickly arrived at the lava area. It was as if they’d instantly gone from a winter wonderland to the mouth of an active volcano, the temperature instantly rising to a harsh summer’s peak.

Chapter 480: Chaos In The Lava Region

The Walkabout Sect disciples would naturally not stick around after launching an ambush. After all, even though they were gifted in using poison, they would still die without a doubt if the group managed to catch up and mob them. Even so, Jiang Chen remained on guard. He wasn't afraid of not being able to detect hidden weapons, but there was no detriment to Yue Pan taking the lead.

That so-called first priority was just a verbal agreement. Who would follow that when push came to shove? Besides, would Yue Pan really make it to the end? No one knew that for sure either.

The boiling lava frothed like boiling pot of water, constantly bubbling and churning. Occasionally, enormous waves several meters long, would crash onto the shores of the lava lake.

Even though those present were of the origin realm, they could still feel the heat of the lava. If they were knocked about by the waves and caught by the lava current, they would most likely die in agony.

If they wished to cross, they had to pass over the enormous lava lake in front of them. It looked several hundred meters wide and wouldn't be difficult to cross this distance with their skills of flight. However, continuous plumes and waves of lava rose fiercely from the center of the lake. If they couldn't make use of another force when they flew and was hit by a rogue wave, then they would be in deep trouble. There were also lifeforms crouched within the lava and danger would be even more heightened if they revealed themselves and attacked.

The two from the Great Cathedral looked at each other, smirks playing about their lips. They simultaneously activated a yellow slip that appeared in their hands, covering each disciple in a strange light.

“Folks, we’ll be going on ahead first. Catch up with us at your leisure.” Yue Pan and Xu Gang flew swiftly ahead as if they’d sprouted wings, turning into streaks of light and making for the opposite shore. Their speed was so fast that they seemed to land instantly on the other side like meteors.

“Flight glyphs! The Great Cathedral was truly willing to spare some wealth on this!” Lin Feng grumbled, disgruntled, as he seemed to remember something. Mu Gaoqi’s scalp also grew numb when he looked at that raging lava and the heat waves coming off it.

Feng Wanjian cursed noisily, “Fecking assholes! They could’ve given us a ride with the flight glyphs too!”

“Brother Feng, we must hurry. Those two Great Cathedral scum will absolutely not wait for us if they arrive first.” Lin Feng offered.

The two looked at each other and Feng Wanjian nodded, “Brother Lin, follow me!” He murmured an incantation, suddenly spreading out his arms and radiating out approximately thirty beams of harsh light in front of him.

The thirty beams of light were his throwing swords. They hovered over the lava lake, forming a rainbow bridge in midair. There was only sixteen meters between each sword. This distance was akin to walking on flat ground for origin realm cultivators.

Feng Wanjian and Lin Feng blurred into streaks of light as well, using the floating swords as platforms as they charged towards the other side. Their speed, while not quite as meteoric as that of the Great Cathedral disciples, was also quite fast.

However, just as they were halfway across, an enormous air bubble suddenly exploded from the center of the lava lake, bursting open with a loud roar.

Bam!

More than ten gouts of lava shot up like a fountain spurting into the air. Like a lesser-dragon erupting from the seas, the lava was directly in Feng Wanjian and Lin Feng's path.

When Lin Feng saw this, he knew that Feng Wanjian wouldn't be able to spare any effort to defend against the lava when wholly focused on manipulating the swords. He was also all too aware that both of them were done for if either of them were injured. If Feng Wanjian fell, then he too was dead without a doubt!

He gritted his teeth and waved his large hand, triggering the "Tristar Incantation".

“Three Stars Surround the Skies!”

Three beams of light shot out from his hand, whirling around them as air currents until they became a transparent barrier enclosing them. The two didn’t slow down their steps as they continued to shoot forward.

Bam bam bam!

Air bubbles continued to explode as the lava lake seemed to suddenly boil over. Enormous waves of lava reached for the cavern’s heights as the shadows of humanoid and monstrous forms capered within, seemingly intent on ripping Lin Feng and Feng Wanjian to pieces.

“Brother Lin, hold!” Feng Wanjian was deeply anxious. He was concentrating every iota of energy he had in maintaining his bridge of swords, and couldn’t spare anything to respond to the lava monsters.

Lin Feng understood the situation they were in without Feng Wanjian’s reminders. Had they faced so many monsters on the ground, he wouldn’t have been afraid at all. But right now, they were midair, and the only footholds they had were hovering swords that were sixteen meters apart. A single misstep would mean that they would plummet into the boundless depths of the lava.

Under these circumstances, Lin Feng couldn’t display more than thirty percent of his usual strength. But even so, he still did his

best with the “Tristar Incantation”. The tristar air currents he formed broke off from them to intercept the lava monsters again and again, but there were simply too many. It was as if the two had stirred up a hornet’s nest as all of the lifeforms in the lava lake seemed to wake, rising up in irritation.

A distance of several hundred meters was nothing for an origin realm cultivator, but currently, it seemed like a chasm, with heaven on one side and hell on the other. Every step forward required a strategy to deal with the ever increasing number of monsters assaulting their position. Even their path back was obstucted as the lava monsters surrounded them, howling savagely.

The strength of the lava monsters were far below Lin Feng and Feng Wanjian’s third level origin realm, but what they didn’t have in cultivation, they made up in numbers and a peculiar body composition. Every single lava monster possessed a fire constitution, so normal attacks couldn’t kill them at all. In addition, their attacks were imbued with fiery lava, scorching to the touch. This kind of temperature was something that even the duo was unwilling to touch.

In this regard, Lin Feng and Feng Wanjian were forced to a standstill above the lava lake.

“Brother Lin, hurry up and break through! I can only control this many swords for a limited time!” Feng Wanjian was quite worried as manipulating flying swords was an activity that greatly drained origin energy. Moreover, he was controlling thirty at once! It wouldn’t have been as much pressure if they’d crossed in a few

breaths, but now that he had to maintain them, the drain was getting larger and larger.

Xu Gang and Yue Pan were watching this scene from a dark corner on the other side, both of them chortling.

“Senior brother Yue, was this step a bit too vicious?” Xu Gang cackled.

“What a pity those two trash took the lead here. My goal wasn’t them!” Yue Pan looked at the other side from the shadows.

The two had used the flight glyphs to fly over the lava lake, and Yue Pan had very surreptitiously thrown a spirit glyph into the lake when they’d almost arrived. It didn’t explode until it’d reached the bottom of the lake.

When it exploded, it immediately enraged all of the lifeforms at the bottom of the lake. Yue Pan’s drastic measure had been quite vicious, and aimed at Jiang Chen.

From everything he’d seen so far, Lin Feng and Feng Wanjian weren’t threats at all. It was only the mysterious Regal Pill Palace disciple Jiang Chen that gave him an inscrutable feeling.

He’d wanted to ambush Jiang Chen before, but hadn’t succeeded. Yue Pan had wanted to commit murder with a borrowed knife, but two other unlucky bastards had charged into the trap first, with the two from the Regal Pill Palace safe on the side.

Xu Gang watched for a while. “Senior brother Yue, now that the beings in the lake are all awake, that’ll keep them busy for quite a while. It’ll be difficult for the two from the Regal Pill Palace to cross. I think we should be on our way. It’d be bad if the Walkabout Sect made their way there first.”

Regret flashed through Yue Pan’s eyes. “What a pity, a pity.” He’d wanted to stay and admire Lin Feng and Feng Wanjian’s grisly deaths, but when he remembered that those bastards from the Walkabout Sect were already ahead, he wasn’t in the mindset to stay and watch the fun.

“Let’s go. Bastards from the Walkabout Sect, I’ll make today your death anniversary when I catch up with you!” Yue Pan was full of resentment towards the Walkabout Sect. Even though he hadn’t been injured in the ambush, he had still been greatly frightened.

The two kept their previous formation of one in the front and one in the back, moving swiftly forward. The Dark North Sect had all died earlier, with Feng Wanjian and Lin Feng soon to follow in their footsteps. That meant that both the Tristar Sect and Sacred Sword Palace representatives would also be annihilated shortly. The two from the Regal Pill Palace wouldn’t be able to cross the lava lake and so wouldn’t be a threat either. Therefore, their only competition was the Walkabout Sect up ahead. When he thought of how their competition had beaten them to the draw and plotted against him, his anger grew deeper. He and Xu Gang had fancied themselves clever and kept scheming against others, but who would’ve thought that this sect was one step ahead of them! This was nothing more than humiliation.

Lin Feng was dripping with sweat. The enormous heat wave and ferocious lava monsters was fatiguing him immensely.

“Brother Lin, are you still not going to use your full strength? Don’t tell me you don’t have the Star and Moon Glyph of your Tristar Sect?!”

Lin Feng was very depressed. He did have the glyph, but that was his trump card! Was he going to use it just a fifth of the way through the lava region? He didn’t want to!

Feng Wanjian gave a shout as a lava monster churned away one of the swords beneath his feet. The frightening heat radiating off the lava monster burned into his soles. If any more swords suffered that fate, they wouldn’t be left with a foothold anymore!

Feng Wanjian kept redeploying the swords in other areas to come support them, so that they would have a place to push off from.

“Lin Feng, if you still don’t use the Star and Moon Glyph, I’ll just withdraw the swords and we can just die together!” Feng Wanjian yelled crazily.

Lin Feng also knew at this point that if he didn’t use the Glyph, the only path left was death. He grasped the air, and an exotic, heavenly glyph appeared in his hand. Light flashed as the glyph immediately emanated golden starlight for hundreds of meters. Radiance from countless stars instantly illuminated a radius of several hundred meters.

Wham!

Wherever the starlight shone, all of the lava monsters caught within suddenly froze as their bodies instantly turned frost-white, immediately frozen into ice sculptures. They plunged into the lava lake below, exploding from the heat difference on impact and releasing plumes of blue smoke.

“Let’s go!” Without the interference of the lava monsters, the swords turned into flowing streams of light as the two cultivators shot towards the opposite shore.

Just then...

WHAM!

Like a long suppressed volcano, a force that could level mountains and eradicate seas blasted out from within the lava lake. The enormous explosion instantly overturned the surface of the lake, and tidal waves of lava hundreds of meters tall surged outward. Unprepared for the magnitude of this backlash, Lin Feng and Feng Wanjian were engulfed by waves of lava several hundreds of meters tall!

Chapter 481: Schemes And Plots

“It’s over.” Lin Feng and Feng Wanjian had thought they could smoothly cross the lake after using the Star and Moon Glyph, but they hadn’t thought that things would take a drastic turn in the next instant.

As their bodies were engulfed by the several hundred meter tall wave, even mobilizing every scrap of origin power in their bodies wasn’t enough to stop their downward momentum. The deeper they descended, the fiercer the heat became, as if it would swallow and melt them whole. They were well aware that heat of this intensity would melt their bodies even if their bodies were cast in bronze or iron.

However, the instant before they impacted the lava, a vine appeared before their eyes. The vine twisted into an intricate knot around them and flung them both over to the other shore.

Whoosh whoosh!

Their bodies sped through the air like loosed arrows.

This reversal in fortunes happened in the blink of an eye. Even as they landed, stumbling from the abrupt halt, their faces were ashen and their hearts still hammering fiercely from their near scrape with death.

Wham!

The wave in the lake once again reared to a height several meters taller than before. Inside the wave was the figure of a monster the size of ten ancient elephants. Eyes the size of lanterns glared furiously at the humans.“Despicable humans who dare interrupt this king’s slumber!”

Feng Wanjian and Lin Feng both subconsciously took a step back, seeming to find a sense of security the further away they drew from this immense monster.

“This is the Lord of Lava!” Feng Wanjian’s heart was still palpating with fear. The enormous wave that had suddenly exploded just now was obviously from the aura of the Lord of Lava blasting forth. But what was with the vine that’d just appeared?

Feng Wanjian and Lin Feng were completely befuddled when their bodies suddenly stiffened. they both looked to the side at the same time. They were stunned to see that the two figures next to them were the two from the Regal Pill Palace.

“You guys…” Feng Wanjian was flabbergasted. “When did you get over here?”

Mu Gaoqi snorted softly, “Feng Wanjian, if it wasn’t for my senior brother Chen, you’d be food for the Lord of Lava now. How dare you ask how we made it over here?”

Feng Wanjian and Lin Feng looked at each other, at a loss for words. They also knew that there was no one else here apart from

the Regal Pill Palace disciples. Even though the two were jerks, they knew that they owed the Regal Pill Palace another favor.

"Many thanks for your noble act." For all his faults, Lin Feng could read the situation well, walking over to give Jiang Chen a cupped fist salute.

Jiang Chen waved his hand, "I only saved you to sabotage the Great Cathedral's plot, that's all."

"Great Cathedral?" Lin Feng started.

Feng Wanjian reacted swiftly and began to curse loudly, "That fecking Great Cathedral, they were the ones behind this alright! Or else, why would everything be calm and peaceful when they flew over, but so many disturbances pop up when our turn came around? They were definitely up to something!"

Jiang Chen smiled faintly, "Yue Pan thought himself smart and tossed in a spirit glyph, disturbing the lifeforms in the lake. He meant to leave us in the lurch!"

Lin Feng's expression also changed greatly. "The Great Cathedral is a sect with vile, base bloodlines alright! Such vicious brutality! They are forever my enemy if I make it out alive!"

Feng Wanjian couldn't help but include the Great Cathedral's mothers in his greetings as well. "Xu Gang that bastard, he had ulterior motives to begin with. We all kept our word and only

brought minor origin realm helpers, but he and his earth origin realm! Hmph! We'll see which sect has the last laugh!"

Meaning that they were cussing at the Great Cathedral duo and their mothers as well.

Jiang Chen glanced over at the lava region. The Lord of Lava was almost going berserk as it kept firing off streams of lava at the shore, ramming repeatedly against the shores. It looked like he wanted to swallow everyone whole.

However, the lava lifeforms could only rampage in lava. They could do nothing when their enemies left that environment. Everyone would be safe now that they were on dry land.

When Feng Wanjian and Lin Feng saw the crazed Lord of Lava, they realized that this creature wasn't too intelligent, but was very obstinate. Even though they were safe now, their hearts once again began to beat faster with fear.

"Let's go." Jiang Chen waved his hand and took the lead with Mu Gaoqi.

Xu Gang and Yue Pan of the Great Cathedral had left quite a while ago, and those from the Walkabout Sect were further ahead. Jiang Chen was determined to obtain the spring, so he wasn't willing to fall behind by too much.

Lin Feng and Feng Wanjian naturally didn't dare compete with Jiang Chen anymore. After all, he'd saved their lives. In addition, they were all third level origin realm and had a clear idea of the

prowess they possessed. The Lord of Lava's aura in the lava region was at least at the peak of the earth origin realm, yet Jiang Chen had made it over to the other side without setting off anyone's alarm bells. He even had the ability to save them from their predicament.

This level of strength was quite frightening. They were now well aware that the mysterious expert Mu Gaoqi had brought wasn't someone who they could contend against. Feng Wanjian had even laughably drawn a line in the ground before entering the cavern, not letting them in. When he thought about that act now, he felt chills run down his back, truly viewing himself as a capering clown. The other could've killed him in a second if he wanted to.

"Brother Feng, just what kind of freak did Mu Gaoqi invite? He's only in minor origin realm, but why do I feel like he's stronger than Yue Pan?" Lin Feng was full of questions.

Feng Wanjian smiled ruefully, "You're asking me, but who do I go ask? Brother Lin, we need to get things straight from now. First, the Great Cathedral is our mutual enemy. Second, we don't have the strength to fight against this one from the Regal Pill Palace. No matter what conflict happens later, we must stand by the Regal Pill Palace, otherwise..."

Lin Feng was also in full agreement, "I too agree. Although the one from the Regal Pill Palace is strong and very mysterious, he's not a murderous demon and is completely different from those two scum from the Great Cathedral. We just need to be polite to them and in return, they won't make a move against us. Otherwise, he wouldn't have saved us."

Feng Wanjian nodded. “We should catch up. I hope the Walkabout Sect sets up another ambush and gets caught up in an enormous dogfight with the vile Great Cathedral.”

The current situation had fated that Lin Feng and Feng Wanjian wear the same pants, standing in the same boat. A pair from the Walkabout Sect, two from the Great Cathedral, another two from the Regal Pill Palace, and the pairing of Lin Feng and Feng Wanjian made for four pairs.

After the setback they’d just experienced, Lin Feng and Feng Wanjian were already leaning towards the Regal Pill Palace. Therefore, it was basically three sets of people competing for the spring.

The extreme cold came back with a vengeance not long after they left the lava region.

“Gaoqi, be careful. The two from the Cathedral are about 2.5 kilometers ahead of us.” The sensitivity of Jiang Chen’s Psychic’s Head was at its sharpest since his vision was obstructed. Mu Gaoqi completely trusted Jiang Chen by now, and didn’t doubt his words in the slightest.

“Don’t be in a rush to go in. Xu Gang and Yue Pan seem to be plotting something. They’ve stopped too.” Jiang Chen prevented Mu Gaoqi from walking forward. He could discover those from the Great Cathedral at this distance, but he didn’t have to worry about them detecting him.

He focused on his senses for a moment and confirmed his feelings. “It looks like the Great Cathedral is planning on fighting the Walkabout Sect. The Walkabout Sect was planning on ambushing us again, but the Great Cathedral discovered this and are prepared to counter ambush. There’ll be a good show soon enough.”

Since the two sects were going to face off, Jiang Chen had no reason at all to disturb them. The two forces that were about to run into each other were both like snakes and scorpions. It was best if both sides ended heavily wounded.

As Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi had stopped, Lin Feng and Feng Wanjian soon caught up to them. They were curious when they saw their benefactor halting on the path.

Mu Gaoqi said, “The Great Cathedral is facing off with the Walkabout Sect up ahead. Let’s stay back for now.”

Feng Wanjian was delighted. “And I was hoping just now that they would engage in a fracas, are they really about to bite each other? Haha! Fantastic! I hope both of them are heavily injured!”

The Walkabout Sect ambushed the group, and the Great Cathedral had schemed against them. Feng Wanjian wasn’t kindly disposed towards either sect at this point. But he hated the Great Cathedral to the depths of his bones.

Jiang Chen closed his eyes without a word, fully utilizing his

Psychic's Head. However, there was only so much he could sense, being this far away.

Roughly an hour passed.

Feng Wanjian grew a bit fidgety and couldn't help but ask, "Are they still at a stand off? Did they fight yet?"

Everyone's eyes flicked in unison over to Jiang Chen. He was also slightly surprised at this moment. He'd been paying attention to the conflict between the Great Cathedral and the Walkabout Sect, but all had returned to calm after a short while.

"Brother Chen, what's the situation?" Lin Feng also asked.

Jiang Chen furrowed his brow, "It's quiet again after a short conflict. Has the outcome already been determined?"

Lin Feng hastily responded, "Let's go take a look. No matter who won, it's good for all of us. It's best if they're all down and out."

Jiang Chen felt that things were a bit odd, but waiting around wasn't entirely the productive move. "Be careful, let's go take a look." Jiang Chen reminded Mu Gaoqi.

The four of them cautiously walked forward, and soon detected a faint light in the distance. There was a wide karst cave, except that this cave was quite spacious. There was a large platform situated in the middle, surrounding by grotesquely shaped rocks. The entire

scene looked quite sinister.

Karst topography is a landscape formed from the dissolution of soluble rocks such as limestone, dolomite, and gypsum.

Xu Gang was actually the first to enter everyone's vision. He was currently caught between two enormous boulders, spitting up blood and wheezing his last breaths. Someone from the Walkabout Sect lay in a puddle of blood not too far from Xu Gang, fresh blood splattered around them.

The other Walkabout Sect disciple had fallen in front of a rocky curtain, along with Yue Pan. An exotic and rare spirit herb was at the end of the curtain. There was a long wound in the disciple's chest as he crawled arduously towards the spirit herb. Every time he moved forward, he left behind a widening trail of blood. On the other hand, Yue Pan's face was gray. He seemed to have been hit with severe poison and had no more strength to move.

Feng Wanjian was delighted beyond belief to see this. He laughed heartily, "Haha! Look at you now! When a dog bites a dog, each ends up with a mouthful of fur. Good, good, good! How damn satisfying!"

Lin Feng also smiled happily. "These scum deserved what they got!"

The Walkabout Sect had ambushed them with hidden weapons, and whether it was the Tristar Sect or the Sacred Sword Palace, both had lost members to that ambush. Then the Great Cathedral had plotted against them in the lava region. This grudge went

without saying. When they saw how the two sides were both gravely injured, how would Lin Feng and Feng Wanjian not be overjoyed? Jiang Chen hadn’t anticipated either that the situation would turn out this way.

Chapter 482: Waste Of Scheming, Easy Trampling

“Gaoqi, remain here.” Jiang Chen said. Although the two sides in front of them were heavily injured, Jiang Chen’s intuition told him that something was a still bit off. Something strange was entwined in the air of this unfamiliar place, forcing him to stay on his guard.

Lin Feng and Feng Wanjian didn’t care much for that as they strode over, already hefting their swords to enthusiastically send the four on their way. Feng Wanjian stopped in front of Xu Gang, chuckling, “Xu Gang, you vile swine! You broke our oath and brought in an earth origin realm cultivator. Your karma has arrived!” He swung down at Xu Gang’s neck after speaking.

Jiang Chen didn’t stop them. He was more interested in that rare spirit herb. However, he felt something untoward the moment Feng Wanjian struck downwards, and instantly halted in his steps, preparing to back up. At the same time, a ghastly cry came from Feng Wanjian as he collapsed in a heap on the ground.

The Walkabout Sect disciple who’d been lying in a pool of blood stood up with a sinister smile. He didn’t look injured at all!

Almost at the same time, the light from a blade flashed from where Lin Feng had dashed to Yue Pan, and his head was separated from his body. The ashen-faced Yue Pan also leapt up, also looking full of vigor.

Bam bam bam!

Xu Gang sprang into action without delay, with the enormous boulders crushing his body suddenly flying at Jiang Chen with incredible force. The other Walkabout Sect disciple also jumped up and drew back his bow. The nocked arrow transformed into a streak of light as it shot towards Jiang Chen.

The balance had been critically altered in those crucial moments. Feng Wanjian had fallen from a sneak attack, and Lin Feng had been bisected in a single blow. The four who had originally been struggling for life had Jiang Chen surrounded from all four corners, already launching their killing blows.

It was a good thing Jiang Chen had been on his guard earlier. When he saw the boulders crashing down on him and the arrow flying through the air, he snorted softly and clenched his hands once, sealing off the air around his body with a magnetic storm.

Wham!

The boulders exploded as soon as they hit the storm's front, and the speeding arrow vanished after being ground away by the storm. Jiang Chen's eyes flashed coldly as he looked at each of the corners.

"So it seems the four of you were plotting together?" Jiang Chen laughed coldly at them. He hadn't anticipated this scene from the Walkabout Sect and Great Cathedral. Seconds away from attacking each other, they'd formed an alliance and agreed to play dead to

create this facade.

“Kid, state your name!” Yue Pan leered. “I don’t create nameless ghosts with my blade.” The eyes of the two from the Walkabout Sect rapidly darted around, a thick sense of killing intent within them.

Jiang Chen’s gaze was at ease as he looked at the latter two, “You’re dealing with the devil here. Aren’t you afraid of becoming sacrificial lambs to the Great Cathedral later?”

A disciple with almost triangular-shaped eyes snorted derisively. “That’s our matters, you don’t need to worry about that.”

Xu Gang yelled, “Kid, don’t try turning us on each other!”

Jiang Chen smiled faintly, “Do I even need to?”

Standing off in the distance, Mu Gaoqi was greatly beset with worry. He had produced a sword and was preparing himself to leap into the battlefield. Although his strength was only first level origin realm and on a completely different level from those present, he knew he couldn’t sit idly by as his comrade was surrounded.

“Gaoqi, back up some.” Although Jiang Chen was standing with his back to Mu Gaoqi, it was as if he had eyes on the back of his head as he stopped Mu Gaoqi’s impulsiveness.

Xu Gang suddenly grinned, “Mu Gaoqi, if you want to come down here to your death with that little bit of talent of yours, we won’t mind sending you on your way as well.”

Even a rabbit would bite if it was forced up a wall. Mu Gaoqi spoke in a rare moment of anger, “Xu Gang, don’t you overstep yourselves! The duos from the other three sects have been all eliminated now, what else do you want?”

Xu Gang snorted softly, glaring at Jiang Chen. “Mu Gaoqi, you’re something else, aren’t you? Where did you find this rogue cultivator? Even we were almost fooled by how deep he’d hidden himself.”

That the Great Cathedral and the Walkabout Sect could set aside their previous grudges and team up against Jiang Chen meant that they had realized Jiang Chen was the true threat in this expedition. This was why they’d set aside their differences to create this ruse of injuring themselves to lure their enemy. It was a pity that Lin Feng and Feng Wanjian had escaped death from the lava lake only to die here.

Yue Pan flourished the blade in his hand. “Alright, less talk now. This kid isn’t an ordinary character since he could escape from the boiling lava lake. If the four of us don’t take him out together, none of us can dream about calmly proceeding later.” It was obvious that they were definitely in agreement on that point.

Mu Gaoqi cried out loudly, “Be careful, the Walkabout Sect uses poison!” Jiang Chen knew that without Mu Gaoqi’s reminder, but it was truly displaying their incompetence in front of a true

connoisseur if they wanted to use poison on Jiang Chen.

Back when he'd been playing with poison in his previous life, who knew if the Walkabout Sect had even formed yet!

Xu Gang and Yue Pan were both Great Cathedral disciples and possessed frightening battle strength at close quarters combat. On the other hand, the Walkabout Sect disciples were skilled at long range combat, and excelled at using strange poisons from the shadows to control the battlefield.

If they hadn't all sworn to the heavens previously that they wouldn't act against each other before killing their opponent. Yue Pan and Xu Gang would've never been willing to expose their backs to the two from the Walkabout Sect.

Two figures pincered Jiang Chen between them, their speed leaving a trail of sand and rocks in the air. Yue Pan's style was fierce, dominating opponents with sheer momentum, whereas Xu Gang favored a vigorous attack, bursting with power. They were very similar in style, but their ease in coordinating this attack revealed how often they'd worked with each other. The twin attacks coming from either side would result in a combined strength that was far greater than the sum of its parts.

The two from the Walkabout Sect had sealed off the battlefield with their arrows and poisoned darts, using concealed weapons to harass Jiang Chen in tandem with Yue Pan and Xu Gang.

Mu Gaoqi was frantic and surreptitiously circled around to the

back of one of the Walkabout Sect disciples, only to hear the latter snort derisively, “Mu Gaoqi, don’t blame me for killing you if you step within three hundred meters of me!”

Mu Gaoqi had wanted to backstab the fellow from behind, and even more worried now that his plans had been seen through. He knew that he was only of first level origin realm and had never focused on martial strength. He had no advantages whatsoever if he wanted to face off with these third level origin realm cultivators.

Yue Pan’s blade had locked onto Jiang Chen at this moment. “Time to meet your maker, kid!” Yue Pan’s downward swing suddenly accelerated by a few notches. Light from the blade flashed by as the weapon bit deeply into Jiang Chen’s shoulder.

Pfft!

The blow cleaved Jiang Chen clean in two. Xu Gang’s blow also landed in that split second opening, smashing explosively onto Jiang Chen’s upper body. He twisted his sword, making Jiang Chen’s head explode loudly.

Xu Gang and Yue Pan looked at each other, highly pleased with themselves. They’d been practicing this concerted move since they were ten, and had never failed even against opponents a bit stronger than them. However, when the two had finished basking in the afterglow, they felt slightly nonplussed. The atmosphere felt a bit bizarre, and something felt off. It was like they’d overlooked a key detail.

Their strike had been clean and to the point, with no flaws to it whatsoever. Except, the feedback from that crisp and vigorous stroke was eerily similar to a giant gourd, and they felt none of the usual thrill that came from dismembering their opponent.

“Something’s wrong!” Yue Pan took a look at the corpse and finally noticed. There was no blood.

“Yue Pan, what the hell are you guys doing?” The two from the Walkabout Sect had also discovered this outlandish situation and began yelling loudly.

Everyone suddenly felt the ground tremble beneath their feet, which rapidly grew in intensity till it felt like the earth was about to split apart.

Bam bam bam!

Countless explosions rocked the air as numerous holes suddenly appeared in the ground. Vine strands sprang out like the tentacles of a monster, instantly sealing off the area.

As for Jiang Chen, he landed in front of Mu Gaoqi with a twist of his body, looking none the worse for wear.

The expressions of Yue Pan and the others changed drastically as they discovered the vines around them were all lotus vines, each of them the frost-white limbs of the Ice Lotus. The vines surrounded

the four disciples like an igloo.

“What the hell is this?” Yue Pan was feeling quite weirded out by this turn of events and slashed at one of the vines. It broke with a snap.

“Haha, it’s merely form! Good for looks and nothing else. It’s just a bunch of trash!” His sword danced with brilliance in the air as he slashed at a second vine.

Whoosh!!

Cold light flared brilliantly as this stroke slashed down. A faint layer of frost had grown on the longsword that was slashing down on the second vine. In the next second, it spread rapidly, covering the entire sword.

“No! This is freezing qi!” Yue Pan hurriedly threw away the sword and backed up, but a vine had snuck up behind him, as if it were a spirit snake. Its flower petals probed forwards, then wrapped around Yue Pan like an enormous mouth as countless currents of white frost instantly froze Yue Pan.

Crunch, crunch!

The flower petals shook a few times as its enormous biting force crushed Yue Pan’s body to pieces and digested it. The remaining disciples could do nothing but watch with mouths open in horror.

Xu Gang reached out, intending to use his old trick of having a scapegoat attract the vines while he made his escape. However, he had barely begun to reach out when two vines behind him wrapped around his waist and hoisted him into the air. He was immediately immobilized as he flew through the air.

Xu Gang was scared out of his wits, “Surrender, I surrender! Daoist Chen, I surrender!”

The other two Walkabout Sect disciples weren’t any better off. They had already been trussed up by the ice vines, and the immense freezing power of ice continuously assaulted their nascent soul, as if wanting to even freeze their circulation.

“Mercy, Daoist Chen! We surrender! If you need help in exploring the spirit spring, we’re yours to command!” The two from the Walkabout Sect knew that their life and death was up to a single thought of the other. If they still didn’t surrender now, they wouldn’t ever have a chance to.

Jiang Chen’s face was detached. “Mine to command?”

“Yes, yes! You know too that Mu Gaoqi is weak and insufficient. We’re the useful ones in moments of need!”

“That’s right, if you tell us to go east, we’ll never go west!”

Mu Gaoqi didn’t have the slightest reaction even though these people were calling him weak. He was completely shellshocked. He

knew that Jiang Chen was strong, but had never imagined that Jiang Chen would win so easily when surrounded by four people. What kind of counter attack was this? It was a complete smackdown!

Chapter 483: Rune Of Heavenly Water, Prison Of Water

In the end, Jiang Chen had his own principles. He wouldn't have antagonized these people if they hadn't laid hands on him. After all, they had put quite some effort into their schemes, but unfortunately, those plans couldn't entrap one of Jiang Chen's strength. Sadly, this group was sly, slippery, and deeply selfish. They'd actually banded together to act against him! There was no way he would show them mercy.

He waved his hand and the petals of the ice lotus opened up, swallowing the struggling fellows whole.

Jiang Chen didn't feel the slightest ripple of emotion as he watched this scene expressionlessly. The world of martial dao was just as cruel as this. If he was soft hearted and let them off, they would undoubtedly raise even more trouble when they left and returned to the sect.

He'd never liked to create trouble for and hobble himself with restraints of his own making. Mu Gaoqi was still speechless, trying to make sense of the near unbelievable turn of events.

Jiang Chen's strength and presence gave him a formless pressure. He knew that it would be beneficial to himself when he invited Jiang Chen, but he hadn't thought that everyone else would end up dead at this point.

"Gaoqi, do you think I should've let them go?" Jiang Chen

suddenly smiled and asked.

Mu Gaoqi stammered, not knowing how to respond. He was weak by nature, and had made it to this step in his cultivation purely by using pills. He'd never experienced any tempering from cruel bloodshed. Therefore, he didn't have a strong grasp of the law of the jungle.

"Gaoqi, if you don't have this kind of mental preparation, you should refrain from adventuring outside that often in the future. This kind of experience isn't suitable for you." Jiang Chen sighed lightly and looked ahead. "Let's go." He'd already arrived at the rock curtain by the time his words had rung in My Gaoqi's ears. He stood above the the herb, only plucking it after careful consideration and coming to the conclusion that nothing was untoward.

Meanwhile, Jiang Chen's words rang like the morning bell, causing great waves of emotion in Mu Gaoqi's heart. When he thought back to everything that had happened on this expedition, he had to admit that he was still too naive. He'd thought that everyone would treat him fairly after he'd offered up the pills and would work together with him in exploring the spring. Reality had proven otherwise, and nothing had proceeded as he'd thought. If he hadn't invited Jiang Chen, then at best, he would've been blocked outside the cavern, or even worse, slaughtered if he'd insisted in coming in.

Feng Wanjian had blocked him from entering, and those from the Great Cathedral had agreed. The Walkabout Sect had long since laid in wait after entering and attacked them all from the

shadows. If it hadn't been for Jiang Chen pulling him back, Mu Gaoqi surely would've been the first to fall given his cultivation level. When they arrived at the lava region, Yue Pan of the Great Cathedral had schemed against them. If it wasn't for Jiang Chen, Mu Gaoqi wouldn't have made it past the lava region at all. If he'd lacked even the slightest iota of luck, he would've fallen into the lava and fed to the lava monsters. And now in the karst cave, would he have had a better fate than Lin Feng or Feng Wanjian if not for Jiang Chen? Obviously not!

Mu Gaoqi had a moment of profound insight when he ruminated up to this point.

"The jianghu is vicious, the jianghu is savage! The senior executives of the sect always tried to make us understand this in the sect, but I was too naive. I always felt that because my pill potential was extraordinary, others would always kiss up to and fawn over me. Who would've thought that the ugliness of humanity would be revealed in its entirety during the search for the spring? I likely would've died four times over had it not been for Brother Jiang Chen."

The great world, the scene that cultivators interact in.

No words were as convincing as reality. Mu Gaoqi thoroughly let go of the burdens in his heart after this moment of realization and called out, "Brother Jiang Chen, wait for me!"

There was only the two of them left now that all the others were dead. Mu Gaoqi hadn't been this far before either, so they could only slowly explore. It was a good thing that he had a wood constitution, so he could more or less sense the spring's location.

The two of them made slow progress forward based on these clues.

This ancient cavern was like one of those bottomless pits from the legends. The further in they went, the more Jiang Chen could feel that this cavern must have had a remarkable purpose in ancient times. The further down they went, the more sensitive Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi's perception became.

"We should be almost there!!" Mu Gaoqi spoke enthusiastically, his voice a bit shrill from excitement.

Jiang Chen reached out a hand and made a gesture to be quiet. "Gaoqi, speak with your consciousness. If a strong entity lives within this heavenly land, you'll wake it with your yelling."

Mu Gaoqi blushed deeply, feeling that he'd completely lost face for himself. He was still too untested after all, and wasn't able to keep his cool in the face of such a tiny matter.

"Brother Jiang Chen, do you sense any danger?" Mu Gaoqi asked with his consciousness.

Jiang Chen himself didn't know either if he was being paranoid. The ones who'd entered the cave were all dead, but his intuition was still warning him that danger was still present.

"Caution is the parent of safety. Gaoqi, the closer we get to our destination, the more dangerous things will become." Jiang Chen slowed down and extended his consciousness to scan all the flora

and fauna around him. The two of them passed through an endless black corridor to be suddenly greeted with a patch of green light.

"We should be here." The scene opened up to them after they rounded the bend. There was a naturally formed lake in this underground world that seemed like an emerald embedded in this boundless night. The surface was as calm and smooth like a mirror, the waters a pure jade-green and emitting a dense mist of abundant spirit qi, lulling onlookers.

"Brother Jiang Chen, we're rich, we're really rich!" Mu Gaoqi couldn't hold back his excitement and shouted with glee.

Jiang Chen's heart stirred as he suddenly felt his intuition spike, but a glance around revealed no overt signs of danger. However, his ears twitched as he heard water dripping down, coming to a halt at their feet.

He raised his head for a look, and suddenly saw two drops start to descend. Jiang Chen's God's Eye suddenly contracted and magnified this falling water drop, revealing the dense runes that were appearing within it.

"This is bad!" Jiang Chen immediately reacted—this was an attack that had transmuted the attacker's consciousness into liquid! That seemingly minuscule droplet contained immense and devastating destructive power. This attack was absolutely beyond the scope of the origin realm!

Before Jiang Chen had time to respond, the two water drops had

already expanded. Like a waterfall crashing down from the nine heavens, the droplet instantly engulfed the two in a gigantic burst of water.

After the water washed over them, two enormous bubbles remained, imprisoning Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi within. The water curtain seemed thin, but it seemed to be composed of the strongest power beneath the heavens. No matter how much force Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi exerted, they were unable to pierce the bubble.

Jiang Chen had yet to run into anything like this since he'd set foot in the world. When he saw that the bubble was unaffected by his normal attacks, he decided to pursue another path. He called upon his fire attribute arts and sent the Skyblaze Supernova Point sizzling towards the water curtain.

The result was unchanged. As if he'd tossed a pebble into the ocean, the bubble remained completely intact and nonresponsive.

The Supernova Point was currently Jiang Chen's strongest single target attack. But even that only caused the runes in the water to flare when it hit the water curtain, but failed to harm the curtain in any way.

Mu Gaoqi was punching and kicking over on his side, but that too proved futile. The most frightening thing was that Jiang Chen kept sending messages to Mu Gaoqi, but the latter didn't respond at all. It seemed that the water curtain could also block all communication into and out of it, making it so that Jiang Chen was rendered incapable of contacting the outside world.

“Hmph! Two mere origin realm rats want to break through my Rune of Heavenly Water?” A figure suddenly flashed out of the shadows in the walls.

This person was stooped and a little hunchbacked, but even so, he was very tall and bulky. He held a wooden cane in his hand, his vicious eyes gleaming like a hungry wolf’s. He took several leisurely circles around Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi, inspecting them.

Jiang Chen was surprised to see that this man wore the same clothes as the two Walkabout Sect disciples.

“This person is an expert from the Walkabout Sect?” Jiang Chen was astonished. Those two had invited such an expert? But if this was the case, why did the two disciples choose to ally with Xu Gang and Yue Pan? Something wasn’t quite making sense here.

The hunchbacked expert murmured to himself. “Only these two rats have come squirreling over, so this means that the others are dead? These two look to be from the Regal Pill Palace? This isn’t right, according to my predictions, it should’ve either been the two from the Great Cathedral making it this far, or the two useless disciples from my Walkabout Sect. Why is it the two from the Regal Pill Palace?”

However, he didn’t seem to care very much about this question after thinking over it. “Hmph, it’s easy enough to kill the rats from the Regal Pill Palace. If I wasn’t worried for the scent of blood

disturbing that being, I would've killed both of you a long time ago."

The hunchback walked to Mu Gaoqi and stomped on the water curtain, cursing loudly, "Particularly you, idiot! Screaming and yelling as if you were afraid the entity here wouldn't detect you? What an absolute f*cking idiot!"

The two of them couldn't communicate with the outside world, but the hunchback's words were as clear as crystal. Mu Gaoqi was beside himself with regret, feeling that he'd dragged down Jiang Chen again.

It was rather Jiang Chen who sat down cross-legged, oblivious to the outside world when he realized he had no way of breaking through the curtain of water.

The hunchback expert was indeed an elder in the Walkabout Sect and had happened to hear some of the two disciples' conversation before they'd set out. He'd surreptitiously followed them after learning of the spring with the wood energy, and used his strength to bypass the two to reach the spring first. However, when he arrived, he discovered a warning line drawn around the spring, a line left behind by a strong entity.

The strength of this entity was such that even a second level sage realm as he felt a bit stressed. Therefore, he'd been brainstorming on how to quietly bypass this entity, or at the very least not awaken it.

This was when Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi had arrived. The latter's excited shout had completely irritated the hunchback, so he'd used his arts to imprison the new arrivals.

It wasn't that he didn't kill people, but more that he was worried that the killing intent and scent of blood would disturb the entity if he did so. Even so, Mu Gaoqi's previous shout still set him a bit on edge. He became lost in thought as he gazed at that line.

Chapter 484: Dragon!

All of a sudden, thunder-like cracks rang out from the shores of the lake. The several hundred stone stairs next to the lake's surface trembled as the ground rumbled. The rumbling intensified, until the cavern itself began to quake. Enormous boulders shook loose from the rocky walls. It was a good thing that Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi were protected by the water curtain, which deflected all the rocks for them.

The hunchbacked expert had a dark face, shooting an intense glare of utmost killing intent at Mu Gaoqi. He knew that the last yell had still disturbed the great being, completely ruining his plans!

Whoosh!

A green light abruptly shot up from the ground in front of the lake, creating a frightening rift in the earth. A black tail suddenly poked out through the crack. It extended into the air, seemingly probing the air. After a moment, it slapped down audibly towards the hunchback.

The hunchback had been on his guard ever since the earth had started to quake. He immediately dodged towards the stairs when he saw the tail sweep at him. He produced a thin blood colored blade and chopped down on the tail as it drew close.

Jiang Chen quailed momentarily when he saw this odd tail. "The tales say that only the tail of a dragon is seen, the head is never

glimpsed. This is a dragon's descendent! A child of dragons resides here?!" His usually calm temperament was shattered by this revelation.

The power hidden in the bloodline of a dragon's descendent was utterly horrifying. Even the most humble and diluted of dragon bloodlines was still a part of the dragon race. Without question, they were one of the strongest bloodlines in ancient times.

The hunchback's strike landed on the tail and skittered off in a shower of sparks, leaving behind a clear, ringing sound.

Clang!

It actually hadn't broken through any of the scales on the black tail! The hunchback was also immensely shocked.

Although he hadn't used his full strength, he had calculated his power precisely, as well as the location the blow would land. Even if he didn't slice the tail open, he still should've broken through a scale or two!

But who knew that apart from a spray of sparks, this strike would not even leave behind a blemish on the tail! The hunchback broke out in a cold sweat at the sight. He swayed to the side and shot towards the rock wall next to him.

Slap, slap, slap!

The dragon tail seemed to possess a certain sensory magic that allowed it to predict the hunchback's movements. It pursued him without pause, cleaving through the ground like a knife through hot butter. It easily left deep furrows in the walls and caused countless rocks to fall in its wake.

The rumbling of the rocks made it seem like the cavern would collapse at any time. Jiang Chen watched the fight with unblinking eyes. "The dragon has only revealed its tail, but that alone is enough to force a second level saint realm to scurry in all directions. It looks like the power of this divine dragon is quite terrifying!"

It would be false to say that he wasn't the least bit frightened. However, he wasn't willing to miss this level of a fight, and he absolutely wanted the divine dragon to win. Otherwise, once the Walkabout Sect sage realm killed the dragon, Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi would be next on his list.

"This hunchback expert keeps dodging to the left and right but refuses to leave. Does he have anything else planned?" Jiang Chen's sharp eyes found an odd point. The battle situation was quite apparent. The Walkabout Sect hunchback didn't dare take the tail head on, indicating that his strength was far below that of the divine dragon.

However, not only did the expert not attempt to escape, it even looked like he had something up his sleeves.

"Let's see what this Walkabout Sect old fellow wants to do." Jiang Chen couldn't take a closer look as long as he was trapped in

the water bubble, and so was clueless as to the hunchback's plan.

However, of one thing he was certain, the hunchback was very set on the spring. He refused to back down even when he was facing a dragon.

The momentum of the dragon tail's attacks were quite shocking. Each sweep of the tail left deep grooves in the rock walls. If it landed on a human body, then even one of the second level sage realm would likely have his bones broken and tendons snapped, dying after spitting out blood.

"Just what is this old man planning?" Jiang Chen still had no clue after observing for a while, but suddenly realized with a glance to the side that Mu Gaoqi's face was turning purple. He was about to faint.

The water curtain maintained a vacuum, and although origin realm cultivators didn't need fresh air to live, the immense sealing abilities of the water curtain had an extremely strong corrosive effect, making the weaker Mu Gaoqi feel like he was unable to hold on.

Jiang Chen looked again at the water curtain, certain that it was impossible to break. However, that didn't mean he didn't know how to escape. He had laid out an escape plan long ago. He looked down at the ground and activated the Lotus.

The Rune of Heavenly Water was quite amazing and could even partially restrict the ground, but the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and

Ice was a divine level treasure. The Rune didn't have the same level of power underneath the ground. A lotus soon appeared beneath Jiang Chen's feet after ramming its way through the water curtain.

Jiang Chen made a hand seal and created a copy of himself from the Lotus, placing it within the water curtain before allowing the lotus to bring him underground. Ever since he'd entered the origin realm, he'd fully tapped into the illusory arts of the Lotus. When he fought Yan Hongtu not too long ago, as well as one against four when fighting Xu Gang, Yue Pan, and the others, the copies had all been put to great use.

Jiang Chen repeated the same actions and saved Mu Gaoqi from the water prison as well.

"Brother Jiang Chen, where are we?" Mu Gaoqi slowly came to, but still felt rather groggy.

"We're in the depths of the earth. Don't fuss, the Walkabout Sect old thief is fighting a dragon. Although we're quite a bit aways, I can't promise that we're out of their perception range."

Whether it was the second level sage realm hunchback or the mysterious dragon, both were existences far beyond the two of them. Mu Gaoqi was startled and tightly shut his mouth. He'd already caused trouble once with his speech, he'd finally learned his lesson this time.

Jiang Chen sat down cross legged. Even though they were

hundreds of meters below ground, he could still feel the stunning battle taking place above them.

Enormous aftershocks kept rippling through their surroundings, and the two of them could feel the intense trembling even from deep within the ground.

Mu Gaoqi slowly recovered his senses and suddenly remembered Jiang Chen's words. He was shocked, "Brother Jiang Chen, what did you say? Dragon?!"

Jiang Chen nodded, "Correct. Dragon."

Any creature with the bloodline and form of a dragon could be called a dragon. Only when the bloodline became so diluted that their descendants could no longer shift into dragon form would they lose the right to be called a dragon. But even so, as long as a creature had the bloodline of a dragon, no matter how much their form had changed, they would call themselves the descendants of dragons. After all, even the slightest of association with the word "dragon" was a cause for pride. Since ancient times, it has always been one of the most noble of bloodlines, the truest king of beasts. Even the slightest drop of dragon blood meant that they were one of their descendants.

Currently however, judging from the dragon's tail and scales, this creature was definitely a true dragon. Jiang Chen wasn't sure of its particular bloodline, but it could definitely keep the true form of a dragon.

A dragon like that had a very pure bloodline no matter how far down in the world it had come. After all, changes to its body had to do with purity of its bloodline.

“Then… then can we get out?” Mu Gaoqi’s thoughts weren’t on the spring at all.

Dragon!

Dragons existed only in legends of the Myriad Domain. Even the premier experts of the Myriad Domain would pay solemn attention when they heard the legends of dragons. They were spoken of as invincible existences. Therefore, Mu Gaoqi had no thoughts of seizing a spring with wood spirit energy from a dragon. He only wanted to know if they could make it out alive.

“I don’t know. If the situation called for us to escape, that old thief from the Walkabout Sect should’ve ran long ago. However, he didn’t go, which indicates he must have noticed something. What reason do we have to flee since he isn’t doing so?” Jiang Chen had seen too many true dragons in his past life, and often saw ones with the highest of lineages. Therefore, he wasn’t the least bit afraid of dragons.

Even if the strongest of the ancient dragons might’ve been stronger than his father, the Celestial Emperor, he’d never seen one of that caliber in his past life, and those certainly didn’t exist in the current plane he lived in.

When he took into consideration his knowledge of the ancient

beast language and his equal skill in the noble dragon language, he decided to stay. In contrast, he was more at ease if the dragon killed off the hunchback expert. Jiang Chen would rather have dealings with a dragon than his fellow man.

He could possibly communicate with a dragon, but he'd never be able to communicate with an evil heart.

"Gaoqi, you stay here and don't move a muscle. I'm going up to take a look." Jiang Chen was concerned about the battle situation and was likewise worried about the spring. If he turned tail and left, he would likely regret it for the rest of his life.

Only with great risk comes fortune. He didn't wait for Mu Gaoqi to respond as he made a hand seal. One of the petals of the lotuses retracted and folded Mu Gaoqi in. He was now imminently ill at ease about Mu Gaoqi. If he didn't restrict his movements, the fellow might run around haphazardly later and ruin things again.

It was better for Jiang Chen to restrict his movement now and have him just stay where he was. There were only good things to be had from training inside the Lotus, and the spirit pearl Mu Gaoqi had should resist the Lotus' power.

Chapter 485: Jiang Chen Reveals Himself

Jiang Chen had no lack of ability or courage, and he fully exploited the Lotus' enormous capability to surreptitiously move upwards. Numerous ice and fire lotuses had taken up residence a few meters beneath and around the cavern. Jiang Chen's consciousness descended upon them to observe the brutal fight.

The cavern was a wreck, fallen boulders dotting the area.

A black dragon was coiled atop an enormous boulder, staring viciously at a particular rock wall. The hunchback had already lost an arm, and his chest and back were covered with bloody wounds. He was panting heavily.

"You despicable human, how dare you set up a poison formation in my territory! What sect are you from?! When this sage one leaves this area, I'll make sure to annihilate your sect!" The dragon's awe-inspiring voice reverberated around the cavern, echoing to and fro.

"Hahaha!" The hunchback began to laugh maniacally, in spite of his injuries. "Such big talk! I might actually be slightly afraid of you if you weren't poisoned to this state. You still want to throw your weight around after being hit with my Spirit Restraint Powder? Dream on!" His words set off a spasm of coughs, hacking up large mouthfuls of blood.

It was obvious that he'd used poison to ambush the dragon, but had been injured in turn as well. Given his grievous wounds, he

couldn’t muster enough strength to end the dragon with one last blow.

Jiang Chen wasn’t sure if he should be happy or worried at this sight. The hunchback’s deviousness was too frightening. He hadn’t made a move when he’d first arrived at the spring, but had instead set down a poison formation first. It was obvious that he’d long been prepared for such an outcome.

As for the dragon, it hadn’t noticed the poison formation when it first woke up. It’d immediately attacked fiercely and ferociously, taking in more poisonous air as it did so.

Although its powerful attacks had injured the hunchback, the dragon had also been heavily dosed with the Spirit Restraint Powder, leaving it unable to concentrate its dragon breath anymore. It too was unable to give the hunchback a lethal blow.

One true dragon and one second level sage realm had both suffered great losses.

“Vile human, don’t think I don’t know your intentions! As good as the spring is, it won’t purify your lowly bloodline.” The dragon was incensed.

The hunchback laughed leisurely. “Just keep talking tough! I won’t die from these injuries for a short while anyways. But with your poison, even with the true essence of a dragon, how long can you hold on without aid? Three months? Six months? One year? I’ve got more than enough time to spare. When you die, I’ll peel off

your skin, pull out your tendons, bleed you dry, feed on your heart, and then refine your core, hahaha!! The bloodline of a dragon and a spring with wood spirit energy, what a fortuitous occurrence that the heavens have given me! There hasn't been an emperor realm cultivator in the Myriad Domain for hundreds of years. It looks like I'm predestined to become a Great Emperor and unite the Myriad Domain!"

If one could absorb the bloodline of a dragon, ascending to the emperor realm was a given. Add the baptism of the spring, and it wasn't farfetched to think that he'd become a Titled Great Emperor that everyone in the Divine Abyss Continent would look up to.

The hunchback started laughing proudly as he started to imagine his future, but his laughter choked off into silence as a violent light shone in his eyes, "Who's there?!"

Although Wei Wudao was gravely injured, his consciousness was unimpaired, and he felt a ripple of another consciousness in the shadows, observing them. The shout he let out shook the rock walls in its intensity, rock shards falling as they fragmented into pieces.

The hunchback's name

That ripple of consciousness had been Jiang Chen in the shadows. The Lotus had almost perfectly concealed him, and he'd been very careful, but he hadn't thought that Wei Wudao would be even more shrewd than a rat! He immediately retracted his consciousness and ceased observing.

Wei Wudao looked around for a bit, but came up empty handed. “That’s odd, I definitely felt a consciousness spying from the shadows. Although it hid itself well, there’s no mistake about it.” Wei Wudao suddenly looked at the two water curtains. The two figures were still inside. “Weird, was it my imagination? Those two origin realm rats have no future but death under the suppression of my Rune. There’s no way they can escape. Can it be that there’s some remnants left alive from that pack of minor origin realm cultivators who entered the cave earlier?”

Wei Wudao suddenly jerked in surprise when his thoughts reached that point. It wasn’t that he was afraid of those minor origin realm cultivators. He was confident he could handle them all, even if they came charging in as a horde. Even a lean camel was bigger than a horse, and his injuries were only to his body. His battle strength might be below par, but that wasn’t enough to prevent him from dealing with a few minor realm cultivators.

Wei Wudao’s gaze was about to shift from the water curtain when a thought struck him.

“Wait... wait!” Something flashed through his mind. The quick glance he’d taken just now had set off a slight warning bell. His body flashed as he landed next to the water curtains like a large bird of prey. The closer he was to the water curtain, the further he was from the dragon. Therefore, he didn’t feel the slightest pressure from this movement.

“How can this be!?” He looked at the two figures in the water curtain, particularly Mu Gaoqi. His face had been almost turning purple from suffocation earlier, but why was he actually more rosy

cheeked now? This doesn't make sense!

Wei Wudao paced around the curtain, looking carefully at the two. However, he couldn't see anything through the water either. If a level two sage realm cultivator looked carefully at the illusion that Jiang Chen was channeling through the Lotus, they would've certainly seen some flaws. But when viewed through the curtain and his heavy injuries obscuring his perception, he could call upon only half his cultivation. Therefore, he couldn't see much of anything no matter how hard he looked.

Wei Wudao's unease only grew as he slapped his hand against the water curtain, a blue light from his hand seal covering the water curtain.

Pop! Pop!

The two water curtains popped as two figures landed in front of Wei Wudao.

"Hmm? This isn't them!" He was greatly shocked and slammed his hand down on the two lotuses. They swayed and then drilled deep into the ground.

This turn of events left Wei Wudao openmouthed with surprise. He'd been out and about in the world for who knew how long, and had imprisoned many with his Rune. Even sage realm cultivators would find it almost impossible to escape if confined by his rune, but now two origin realm rats had escaped! He was both angered and anxious.

He was angry that his Rune had proven ineffective, and anxious that the two origin realm rats might come back with reinforcements, ruining his advantage for taking the spring for himself.

A true dragon and a spring of wood spirit energy. This was a fortuitous occurrence bestowed by the heavens! What portion of it would be his if stronger people arrived? He didn't even dare think about it!

As he blanked momentarily, he was suddenly struck with joy. That peeping consciousness he'd sensed just now must have come from the two minor origin realm cultivators.

Since they haven't left yet, there's no need for them to leave now!

Wei Wudao suddenly smiled and flicked his hand, a jade-green vertical bamboo flute appearing in his right hand. "A mere origin realm wants to display your incompetence to me? My 'Hypnotic Requiem' melody will destroy your consciousness, even if you're hidden thousands of feet in the ground." Wei Wudao had many hidden techniques, and this particular melody was useless on dragons, so he hadn't bothered to use it. The souls of dragons were simply too strong, and the consciousness of a dragon was almost invincible. Wei Wudao had never thought of using this method to suppress the dragon. However, it was perfect for two mere origin realm cultivators.

Jiang Chen knew that things had taken a bad turn when his consciousness had been discovered. However, he wasn't nervous as he decided to just break out of the wall and land on the other side, placing the dragon between him and Wei Wudao.

The dragon had obviously long since detected Jiang Chen's presence. He looked Jiang Chen up and down as the human broke out of the wall.

Jiang Chen grinned and greeted it in the dragon language, "Five claws and horns. You're a true descendent of the dragons!"

The dragon trembled when he heard the dragon tongue, staring at this human young man with incredulity. "Human, you know dragon speech? Are you the reincarnation of a true dragon?"

"...no no, there's no presence of a dragon about you."

"I'm not the reincarnation of a dragon, but I'm a friend of the dragons." Jiang Chen spoke in flawless dragon.

The two of them chattered away in the dragon language, completely stunning Wei Wudao. He glared fiercely at Jiang Chen, "Kid, just what kind of background do you have?"

Jiang Chen smiled, completely at ease, "Does that matter, Wei Wudao? Are you going to get the hell out now yourself, or will you wait for the experts from my sect to come and destroy you?"

“You!” Wei Wudao scanned the surroundings and found no sign of Mu Gaoqi’s consciousness. He suddenly started, “Your companion fled?”

Jiang Chen laughed. “Do you think we’d be so dumb as to stay here for you to capture? Of course he went back to get reinforcements!”

“Went back?” Wei Wudao’s eyes spun in thought. “You’re a disciple of the Regal Pill Palace, and it takes at least four to five days to make a round trip from there. By that time, I’ll have assimilated the dragon blood, refined the core, been baptized in the spring and gone on my merry way. Your sect can only come to pick up your carcass!” Wei Wudao lifted the flute and prepared to play.

Jiang Chen had come out because he’d been worried about this “Hypnotic Requiem”. He could resist its effects, but Mu Gaoqi, hundreds of feet below, wouldn’t be able to. This was why Jiang Chen had come out to face this Wei Wudao.

Of course, he wasn’t the sort to put himself in sure danger like a moth to flame. He’d broken out of the wall because he’d already made his own plans. He would never stand face to face with his enemy without preparations beforehand. But even with Wei Wudao’s injuries, a second level sage realm still wasn’t someone Jiang Chen could handle.

“Wei Wudao, who are you trying to frighten with a mere ‘Hypnotic Requiem?’ Why don’t you get a taste of this first!” Jiang Chen pulled back on Sunpiercer after speaking, sending out three arrows in quick succession like meteors flaring across the sky,

aimed straight at Wei Wudao.

“Pathetic little tricks!” Wei Wudao’s flute flicked left and right and knocked the arrows away with ease.

Chapter 486: Use Of All Trump Cards, Destroying Wei Wudao

The dragon was also immensely disappointed once it saw Jiang Chen's cultivation level. "Young man, even this sage can't help but suspect your intelligence. You could've escaped, why did you come out to your death? Your cultivation is leagues apart from his!" The dragon sighed in the dragon language.

When Jiang Chen had first appeared and spoke fluent dragon, the dragon had actually felt a bit of anticipation for this human's next move. But when he actually saw Jiang Chen make his move, his hope evaporated like a snowflake in the desert. Although the youth had a decent strength, that was at most when facing off against a sky origin realm cultivator. It was absolutely a different case when compared to a sage realm cultivator.

Even though Wei Wudao had successfully knocked aside Jiang Chen's arrows, he was still slightly surprised at the strength behind them. A minor origin realm cultivator is capable of exhibiting the battle ability of a sky origin realm cultivator!? A trace of alarm began to grow in Wei Wudao's heart. If he didn't kill this kind of opponent, he would only be fostering trouble for himself in the future.

He sneered, "Kid, do you think you can avoid death by hiding behind that little eel? I admit that your cultivation isn't bad, you even count as one of the premier geniuses of the Myriad Domain. However, the dumbest thing you've done yet was running out to play the hero even though you had the opportunity to escape. Since you've come so boldly, how would I be able to face the senior

executives of your Regal Pill Palace if I were to let you go? Even giving you Sunpiercer, just who are you to old man Yun Nie?”

As an elder of the Walkabout Sect and a master of poisons, Wei Wudao often sparred with Elder Yun Nie of the Regal Pill Palace. In fact, he had a bit of a grudge with the elder. He immediately recognized the weapon when Jiang Chen brought out Sunpiercer. From there, it was easy enough to conclude that this youth had a relationship with that elder of the Regal Pill Palace.

Sunpiercer was just something that Jiang Chen was using to cover up his true attack. Instead of responding, he just laughed, making a hand seal as he did so.

Whoosh whoosh whoosh whoosh!

A slew of vines tore through the walls and ground of the cavern. At first count, they numbered around eighty, each as thick as a full grown tree. They wove through the air, clustering together to form a bristling wall. Every twist and curve of the vines gave off a palpably lethal aura.

“The hell is this?” Wei Wudao was stunned. However, he was still a sage realm expert. A little complication like being besieged by vines wasn’t enough to faze him. “Kid, you certainly have some ability to boast about. At least, being able to dual train water and fire is quite the feat. But.. so what!? Do you think that you could rely on mere minor origin realm cultivation to try and refine me with fire? Or use ice to seal me in?”

The Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice was unequalled, but only when it was facing a strength on par with or slightly above it.

The enormous gap between the minor origin realm and the mortal sage realm wasn't something that could be crossed on a moment's whim, so Wei Wudao naturally had reason to dismiss Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen furrowed his brow, "Wei Wudao, were you uninjured, I may not have dared to try challenging you. But, here you are, a single strike away from crumbling. This sort of risk is definitely worth it for the spring."

It was like Wei Wudao had heard a truly amusing joke as he broke out in hearty laughter. "It looks like you truly believe you have a chance! In which case, let me give you a look, an abject lesson on how puny a minor origin realm is in front of a sage realm cultivator!" He put away the flute, drawing instead the blood-red longsword he had used before.

Pfft pfft pfft pfft!

Wei Wudao's body was a shadow as it flashed by four of the vines. The four vines were severed with barely any resistance, falling limply to the ground.

Jiang Chen's pupils contracted swiftly, apparently surprised by a sage realm cultivator's overbearing ability. When he faced off against Sunchaser and Yan Hongtu previously, at most, they could only sever one vine. Wei Wudao had sliced away four with a single

careless stroke. He well deserved the reputation of a second level sage realm cultivator. However, Jiang Chen wasn't disheartened. He manipulated the fire lotus, sending gouts of flame through the air. His finger stabbed forward and the air began to sizzle and sear.

"Skyblaze Supernova Point!" Supernova Point was his strongest attack he'd developed so far. It was like an inferno had descended from the skies, a white hot pyre to its target. The terrifying fire elemental power congealed at the very tip of his finger until it streaked through the air with an explosive blast.

Wei Wudao was also quite surprised when he saw the strength behind this finger. Such domineering strength is coming from a minor origin realm cultivator?

He laughed heartily, "Interesting, hmm? But, go back and suckle at your mother's teat for a few more years before coming to challenge me!" He extended his hand and several runes rippled out, expanding in the air. Suddenly, the water curtains of the Rune of Heavenly Water cascaded down in front of Wei Wudao, defending against the Skyblaze Point with barely a ripple.

On the other side, Jiang Chen wasn't dejected by this development. Instead, he chuckled and suddenly reached out with his right hand, his fingers constantly flickering gently through hand seals as if he was playing the zither.

Suddenly, all the lotuses began swaying to an odd rhythm. The cadence gave off a mesmerizing feeling, not at all like the battle crazed tempo that had just happened. A strange raspy sound echoed in the air, emitted by the vines as they swayed.

Wei Wudao held his breath for a moment, feeling strange. “What are you playing at, kid?” He fell silent, trying to figure out what was happening. The battle’s rhythm had suddenly flipped from a furious back and forth to this drastically slowed tempo. There was definitely something odd going on.

But what was strange about it?

Wei Wudao stared at the rhythm of the lotuses, determined to read something from it. There seemed to be a frightening attack held within this bizarreness that would spell disaster for him at any second.

Except, no matter how he stared, he couldn’t see through it. He suddenly yawned as a thought flashed through his mind. It might be nice to take a nap.

That thought didn’t seem to come alone, as it was followed by many more like, surging into his consciousness like a locust plague. As he looked at the vines sway, milky-white mist began to drift from from, an oddly appropriate accompaniment the rhythm.

“What’s going on?” Wei Wudao’s heart suddenly sank as he felt his body soften. He actually had the urge to drift away to sleep.

His consciousness began to dissipate.

“Wei Wudao, you’re injured. It won’t ever heal if you don’t rest.

Take a nap.” This voice kept reminding him in his consciousness, hypnotically lulling him to sleep. He felt that something was amiss, but a strong sense of drowsiness kept muddling his senses.

He suddenly shook his head and his body.

Jiang Chen hastily yelled when he saw this, “Wei Wudao, look here!” Just now, he’d been releasing the sap from the Divine Tree of Dreams from the vines. He’d first obtained it in the Valley of Destruction during the initial selection in the sixteen kingdoms. Since even he had almost fallen to its hypnotic scent, he’d learned his lesson and collected large amounts of sap, but hadn’t had a chance to use it after refining it.

He’d released it through the Lotus just now to hypnotize Wei Wudao. Even the swaying of the vines was an imitation of the tree.

However, Wei Wudao’s strength of heart was still stalwart, even though he was deeply injured. He desperately hung onto a sliver of wakefulness, and wasn’t completely lulled by the Divine Tree.

It would’ve sent him into eternal slumber once the hypnosis took effect. It was a pity that there was that final step left.

When Wei Wudao shook himself all over, Jiang Chen knew that the Divine Tree hadn’t fully succeeded. But it had provided him with an opportunity, a chance where his enemy’s consciousness was at its weakest, and his defenses the lowest. At that moment, Jiang Chen fully activated the Evil Golden Eye and infused it with all the metal power he could control, melding the two into a

brilliant beam that shot into Wei Wudao's eyes.

Wei Wudao's consciousness was already half asleep thanks to the Divine Tree's hypnosis. Although he was still hanging onto a sliver of consciousness, he still wasn't fully awake and was thus at his most vulnerable. On the other hand, Jiang Chen's every move had been for the sake of this blow with the Evil Golden Eye. In fact, it could be described as an attack sent at his peak condition.

Even one sitting at the peak of the sky origin realm would likely lose in the face of this sparkling missile. But it still wouldn't be enough to take down Wei Wudao... had he not been in his current condition.

Whoosh!

He shook all over as it suddenly felt like thousands of golden needles had shot into his eyes, drilling into the depths of his blood vessels.

"No!" Although Wei Wudao didn't know what kind of art this was, but he knew the signs of trouble when he saw it, and he'd definitely sensed it when that golden light burrowed into his body. He suddenly threw back his head and howled, "Little swine, I..."

But his voice petered out into silence before he could rant more. His pupils contracted rapidly as all his circulation seemed to freeze. The power of metal in that Evil Golden Eye had thoroughly assimilated his circulation and froze instantly.

Jiang Chen didn't hesitate when he saw that he'd succeeded. He gathered up the immense power of metal once again and stabbed at the air from afar, focusing his power into a meteoric streak that shot towards Wei Wudao.

Supernova Point!

This was his strongest point thus far, combining the power of metal essence with the strongest power of metal from the magnetic golden mountain, coalescing into the "Galaxy Supernova Point".

If an expert from ancient times demonstrated this move, the power within would be enough to crush the stars, moon and sun.

Bam!

Just like a supernova, Wei Wudao's body suddenly exploded. The boundless attack utterly fragmented him. His nascent soul didn't even have time to emerge before it too was incinerated to dust.

Jiang Chen himself was secretly impressed by the power behind this finger. The strength of this move was far beyond his expectations.

Now that his enemy was dead, Jiang Chen also breathed a sigh of relief. He'd used almost all his power and all his trump cards this time. Even so, a large part of why he'd won was Wei Wudao's heavy injuries. Otherwise, even all of his arts would've been incapable of defeating this second level sage realm.

Chapter 487: Dancing With Dragons

Jiang Chen had absolutely taken a huge chance with this battle. He'd revealed multiple trump cards over the course of this battle, including the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice, the Divine Tree of Dreams, the Evil Golden Eye, and the Galaxy Supernova. The fight had lasted for just a few moments, but he was as exhausted as if he'd battled for three days and three nights.

Drained beyond belief. He was almost completely wrung out.

On the other side, the dragon was in complete shock. It'd nearly succumbed to despair when it saw Jiang Chen's initial three arrows. But the match had quickly taken turns that even it'd never expected. That human youth it didn't think much of had actually killed Wei Wudao!

Although Wei Wudao himself wasn't much in the dragon's eyes, he was still a second level sage realm cultivator. Even injured, that was still an existence that couldn't be underestimated.

This young man was just a minor origin realm cultivator, but possessed a battle ability far beyond his cultivation, and a number of techniques that made the dragon's scalp go numb. Suddenly, it didn't know whether to be happy or depressed.

Wei Wudao was deader than dead, so the antidote to his Spirit Restraint Powder was certainly in this young man's hands. To the dragon, this meant that he'd kept the wolf at bay, only for the tiger to slip in through the back door.

The atmosphere became a bit heavy, and the dragon could no longer take it. It fixed his gaze on Jiang Chen, who was sitting on the stone steps, and rasped, “Young man, what do you intend to do to me?”

Jiang Chen started, then started laughing. “I said I’m a friend of the dragons, why would I do anything to you?”

The dragon tilted his head and widened its eyes, staring at Jiang Chen, obviously unable to tell if those words were a lie or not.

Jiang Chen opened his palm. “This is the antidote, I obtained it just now.”

The dragon was greatly surprised. He’d swept the carcass with his consciousness just then and hadn’t found the antidote. So the youth took it alright!

“How did you obtain it?”

Jiang Chen smiled without responding. He had so many lotuses that acted like extensions of his limbs. Anything they could reach was as if already in his pocket!

“Alright…” The dragon sighed. “No matter what, you’re still a bit better than that old ruffian. What do you want?”

Jiang Chen smiled. “I only have two requests.”

“What requests?” The dragon revealed a trace of wariness. “Don’t tell me you want to enslave me. That’s impossible! One of the noble dragon race will never be a slave!” The dragon spoke firmly, cutting off this idea before it could bloom.

Jiang Chen knew much about the dragon race, even more than this dragon in front of him. Dragons were indeed the nobility among all beasts. However, there were many that had been enslaved by humans in the ancient times. Even his own father rode a dragon carriage hauled by nine five-clawed golden dragons when he traveled. There was no such thing as not enslaving a dragon.

The strong were revered, and no race was able to escape this odd logic. However, Jiang Chen knew that it was unrealistic to expect this dragon to docilely bow down to him in servitude. He smiled faintly, “Your strength is far greater than mine. I don’t dream of enslaving you. However, I do plan on signing a treaty with you, to form an alliance. This is my first request.”

“A treaty?” The dragon blinked, mulling over the request. After a moment, he nodded. “I can consider a mere treaty. However, you can’t force me to this and that. I will go back on my agreement then.”

Jiang Chen laughed, “We’re allies, I won’t be attempting to enslave you. However, don’t think that there are no benefits for you in this treaty. To be honest, even though you’re a true dragon, you’ve awakened less than a hundredth of the ancient dragons’ bloodline in your body. What if I could awaken your heritage, and

gift you the arts of the dragons? What if I could help you fly through the air and ground, be hailed a Great Emperor, transform into human shape, summon the wind and rain, break through the void, and ascend to the heavenly dao?”

Jiang Chen’s every word in the dragon language slammed against the dragon’s heart as if a spell.

“What are you saying?”

“I’ll say this only once.” Jiang Chen smiled. “You are a true dragon, but you’re currently holing up in this remote corner of the Divine Abyss Continent. You have no confidence in showing yourself before you’ve reached your full strength. If you do, you’re afraid that those who call themselves emperors will capture and enslave you. You don’t need to deny anything, because the only way that no one knows of you in the Myriad Domain, with your peak sage realm cultivation is if all this is true.”

The dragon was silent. It was indeed a true dragon that had awakened from a dragon egg after countless years of nurturing in this spring of wood spirit energy. It knew nothing of the outside world, just fragments from his inherited memories that awoke through the years.

It’d grown strong in the couple hundred of years that it’d stayed in the spring, but had never left. It was lonely, but had no companions to speak to. There was no one it could depend on, or succor.

It was a good thing that as its cultivation level had risen, its memories had continued to awaken and it had learned more and more. Its memories were the reason it hadn't dared leave the spring, the fragments that informed it that there were many races in the world that eclipsed it in strength. The experts of these races all shared a common interest, and that was to enslave dragons.

Having a descendent of a dragon as their steed, a contracted beast, was a very fashionable thing amongst them.

It was a true dragon, so it would more than likely become very popular as soon as it appeared. Therefore, it both yearned for the outside world and worried that it would be hunted down as soon as it appeared. This contradiction left it bereft of the conviction to step away from the spring, and in that moment, its thoughts had been laid bare by Jiang Chen. It couldn't find the words to refute him.

"Youth, you speak of impressive sounding things, but how do I know you're not lying to me?" The dragon was still very much on its guard.

"I hold your life and death in my hands right now, what need do I have to lie to you? Besides, I've always valued keeping my word. As a show of faith, take this secret method of the dragon race and study it first." Jiang Chen sent over a secret method of the dragons with his consciousness after speaking.

"Mm?" The dragon immediately detected upon receiving the method that this really was a cultivation art of the dragons!

Jiang Chen smiled. “I also have the method that dragons use to transform. With your cultivation, you should have long been able to transform. Your inherited memories must not contain this technique, does it?”

As one of the royal races of ancient times, the dragons had noble lineages and extraordinary status. Jiang Chen had naturally studied them thoroughly. He could easily take out a handful of those techniques, and it was made even easier since this dragon was still just a baby compared to the dragon races in his past life. It couldn’t even count as having undergone an initial awakening, only a half step awakening at most. He could naturally bluff a baby dragon.

“A transformation technique?” The dragon’s eye gleamed. “Do you mean that?” It couldn’t help but become excited at the thought of being able to transform. If it could shift into a human form, he’d be able to travel the four seas without worrying about being hunted down.

Jiang Chen laughed leisurely, “Forget it if you don’t believe me. There should be nothing amiss with the method I just sent you, right?”

“Youth, just who are you? According to my inherited memories, you shouldn’t know so much at your cultivation level.”

Jiang Chen didn’t directly respond to this question. He smiled instead, “You may be the only true dragon in the entire Myriad

Domain, and I'm the only person in the entire region who understands dragon tongue. I may even be the most special existence in the Divine Abyss Continent!"

For some reason, the dragon grew thoughtful when it heard Jiang Chen's words. Its draconic intuition told it that this human youth didn't seem to be blustering. "I can agree to the matter of the alliance, name your second condition." The dragon's tone softened.

"The second condition would be the spring. This is your territory, but I want to make use of its power to baptize my body."

"That's not a problem!" The dragon agreed without a moment's pause. "The spring has an endless supply of spirit power and can purify itself. It will still recover over time even if ten, hundreds, or thousands of people are immersed here. If you like it, I don't even mind if you take the entire spring away."

"Take it away?" Jiang Chen grew curious. "How would we do that?" He really didn't have the kind of treasure that could swallow rivers or move creeks to just abscond with this spring.

The dragon chuckled, "A trade! You give me the transformation method and I'll help you move the spring."

Jiang Chen's interest was piqued, "What about the treaty?"

"You don't have a bad heart, I can agree to the treaty. I can even

gift you some dragon crystals and dragon blood if necessary. But, I've heard you humans are very treacherous and often betray your allies. Therefore, we can be allies, but you must swear to the heavens that we won't betray each other."

The dragons were a proud race, and would never ignore, regret, or betray a treaty. But humans were different. There were numerous stories of humans betraying even their kin for profit. Dragon crystals or a drop of dragon blood were an exceedingly valuable item for anyone. However, to this enormous dragon, dragon crystals were just its solidified fecal matter, and although dragon blood was precious, it wasn't much to give up just a bit of it.

It certainly wasn't an empty boast to claim that dragons were full of treasure from head to toe.

Jiang Chen smiled, gratified at the offer. "Alright! It would be remiss for me to keep hemming and hawing since you're being so forthright. Let's happily settle on this then!"

One man and one dragon sat on the banks of the spring after they chatted, swearing to the heavens and signing a treaty of allies. The dragon seemed to have quite a good impression of Jiang Chen as well as it didn't overly haggle over the details. The two concluded their treaty in a lighthearted atmosphere.

Jiang Chen flung over the antidote when they were finished, "You only need to eat the antidote for it to work. Remember, don't be in a rush. Expel all the toxins, lest you give rise to countless trouble in the future."

Chapter 488: Cutting The Hair And Washing The Marrow, An Enormous Change

The atmosphere lightened considerably after the treaty was signed. When the dragon began to expel the toxin, Jiang Chen even purposefully assumed his role as pill master to probe the dragon's body, ensuring the complete removal of toxins. He didn't hold back either, as he transmitted the "Dragon Transformation Method" to the dragon.

"This transformation method isn't an easy thing to train either, and won't be grasped overnight. However, the foundation of this transformation method has to do with the arts of your dragon race. True dragons can be large or small, can rise or hide themselves. You can grow large enough to spit clouds and mist, or so small that you are virtually invisible. If you wish to soar the four seas, then you must master this foundational method and train in the skills of the dragons." Jiang Chen didn't need to resort to any tricks if he wanted to tame this dragon. He only needed to show it some of his abilities.

Indeed, the dragon's admiration for Jiang Chen grew even stronger after it received the "Dragon Transformation Method". "Youth, it's not a bad thing to ally with you!"

Dragons were proud by nature and normally weren't much for compliments. As such, their rare occasions of praise came from the heart.

“Since you’ve been so forthright, I, a son of the dragons, won’t lie to you either. If you wish to move the spring away, you must first move that Taiyi Jade Vine. That Jade Vine is the only source of the spring’s energy. Once you remove the Jade Vine, I will suck up the water for you.

The dragons could summon the wind and rain, or overturn rivers and seas. That was their natural gift, and there was no need for them to be taught how to do so. They could suck dry a massive river, much less this small lake.

Jiang Chen smiled. “Not yet,” and summoned the Goldbiter Rat King. “Ole Gold, I’ve found the natural place of spirit power. Have you selected your children yet?”

The Rat King stared at the jade green spring with narrow eyes, delight suffusing them. “Young master Chen, you didn’t lie to me alright! Fantastic, fantastic! I’ve already selected a hundred of my children and they’re ready at any time.”

The Goldbiter Rats were small, so not a lot of spirit power was required to evolve their bloodlines.

Jiang Chen laughed and responded, “Ole Gold, you’re in too much of a rush. The spring’s owner is here, don’t you intend on greeting him?”

The Rat King had simply been far too agitated, with eyes only for the spring. He hadn’t noticed the large dragon coiled atop it at all. When he finally saw the dragon on the stone steps, he couldn’t

help but tremble all over and hid behind Jiang Chen. “This… this is a… dragon… dragon!”

The royals of ancient times, the dragons possessed a naturally intimidating aura. This was why the Rat King was almost scared into a faint when he saw the dragon.

“Just look at you! This is a true dragon, the owner of this place and also our friend. Hey now, buck up, you’re the descendent of the Goldbiter Kingrats! Although they weren’t the equivalent of the dragons in ancient times, they were still a frightening race!”

The Rat King chuckled and cowered, still appearing a bit shell shocked.

The dragon suddenly spoke, “Descendent of the Goldbiter Kingrats? I have a few memories of them, a terrifying race capable of swallowing the heavens. They’re supposed to be unnaturally fierce, so why are their descendants so cowardly?”

Forget swallowing the heavens, the Rat King wished the ground would swallow him whole.

Jiang Chen smiled, changing the subject, “You’re a dragon, but you should at least have a name when you walk about outside, hmm?”

The dragon started. It really had never considered having a name. It asked blankly, “Do I have to have a name?”

The Rat King couldn't help but muffle laughter when he heard that idiotic question.

"And what are you laughing at?" The dragon's face chilled. A mere rat dared laugh at a dragon?

The Rat King's expression changed drastically as he tucked his head in and crept behind Jiang Chen again, quietly sniggering off on the side.

Jiang Chen nodded. How about this, you have a body of black scales for armor, so I'll call you Long Xiaoxuan."

Long = dragon, xiao = small, xuan = black. Jiang Chen's essentially calling him Little Black Dragon.

"Why small?" The dragon asked dejectedly.

"Unless you like being called Long Daxuan?" Jiang Chen smiled wryly, "Don't blame me for not warning you now, but Daxuan really doesn't sound good, and it's easy to appear older than your years."

Da = big

"Then let's do Xiaoxuan." The dragon said, depressed.

"Alright, alright, I'll call you Brother Long in the future if you don't like the name Xiaoxuan. This way, everyone will think your

surname is Long.”

“That’s more like it!” The newly crowned Long Xiaoxuan nodded with satisfaction.

“Alright, Brother Long, you’ve already received the method and if you don’t mind, please take some cover. Your presence will surely badly scare those Goldbiter Rats. Plus, I have a companion with a natural-born wood constitution who’s waiting for baptism in the spring.” Jiang Chen hadn’t forgotten Mu Gaoqi.

The latter was magically delivered to the edge of the spring after a short while.

“Brother Jiang Chen, is this a dream?” Mu Gaoqi couldn’t believe the sight in front of his eyes. This had to be a dream.

Jiang Chen waved his hand, “Gaoqi, don’t speak nonsense. I don’t know where that old thief and the dragon have gone to, but now is our chance.”

Mu Gaoqi suddenly came to his senses after Jiang Chen’s words and nodded his head furiously, “Yes yes, I’ve gone silly in my joy.”

Mu Gaoqi actually had some speculations in his heart, but he didn’t dare voice them when he saw Jiang Chen’s no nonsense manner. After so much, he would be a fool if he couldn’t see how extraordinary Jiang Chen was.

“Let’s go!” Jiang Chen grabbed Mu Gaoqi and leapt into the spring.

Two splashes accompanied the two as they landed in the spring. The water of the spring was quite temperate, neither hot nor cold. As the two sat in it, they could feel spirit power of unparalleled purity sinking into each of their pores, surging in to fill their bodies.

“This is amazing!” Mu Gaoqi couldn’t help but cheer.

Jiang Chen was greedily absorbing all the wood elemental energy, scouring his body of impurities. As a wood constitution body, Mu Gaoqi was truly a fish in water this time. The Goldbiter Rats were hiding in another corner, far away from these two. There was plenty of spirit energy in this enormous spring.

The baptism occurred for a full half month before the spirit energy in the spring began to ebb. At that time, both Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi had achieved their goals.

Jiang Chen had broken through to third level origin realm, but Mu Gaoqi had had an even greater gain. While he didn’t take in as much spirit energy as Jiang Chen, his gifts of a wood constitution had worked in tandem with the spring’s energies, wholly purifying his body to the level of an innate constitution—one which actually far surpassed that of Long Juxue’s!

Although she too had possessed an innate constitution, there were still more or less some impurities within. But Mu Gaoqi had

eliminated all his flaws, and naturally had much higher potential. There were naturally differences in the level of innate constitutions. Mu Gaoqi now could be counted amongst the peak of the Myriad Domain when it came to potential.

"Congratulations Gaoqi, you'll soar to the skies from now on." Jiang Chen smiled.

Mu Gaoqi bowed deeply with cupped fists, saying seriously, "Elder brother Chen, there would be no me without you. My accomplishments of today are purely because of Brother Jiang Chen's help. I will never forget this favor as long as I live! If elder brother Chen has any requests in the future, I will be sure to handle it with all my efforts!" Mu Gaoqi was a smart person as well, he'd even changed what he called Jiang Chen from "Brother Jiang Chen" to "elder brother Chen". Even though it was just a slight change, the meaning behind it was vastly different.

Brother here is a polite, slightly removed term such as "friend". Calling someone elder brother bring a much more personal touch to the conversation and is more respectful. Translation will keeping using Brother Chen for brevity's sake.

"Gaoqi, you and I have been through thick and thin, and since you call me elder brother, I don't mind telling you that I intend on taking the spring away with me. There won't be any spirit spring with wood energy here in the future."

Mu Gaoqi was astonished at hearing this. "Brother Chen, you mean to take the spring? How... how do you intend on doing this?" He couldn't imagine such a thing.

“I naturally have my ways.” Jiang Chen smiled faintly and didn’t respond. He didn’t want to spread the news of his alliance with Long Xiaoxuan just yet.

There were advantages to someone with a cautious nature. Take Mu Gaoqi for example, he knew what questions to ask and what not to, what could be voiced and what had to be kept a secret. He knew that he shouldn’t keep asking when he saw that Jiang Chen didn’t give him any details. He scratched his head, “Brother Chen, then I’ll wait for you outside?”

Jiang Chen nodded. “Sure, you be careful too. I may not be that quick about things, you can go back first if you want.”

Mu Gaoqi responded without hesitation, “I’ll wait for you at the entrance.” He was well aware that if Jiang Chen wanted to move the spring, it would be a monumental undertaking. Even though Mu Gaoqi deeply wished to observe, he still reined in his curiosity.

Soon after he left, the Goldbiter Rats also finished their baptism. One had to say, the spring had had a great effect on inducing the Rats to evolve. The ones that had been selected had cast off their old selves and evolved their bloodlines. It could be said that they’d reached the skies with one leap, particularly the Rat King. He’d grown incredibly strong in one month, breaking through to and reaching the peak of the origin realm in one month! His children had all broken through to the origin realm as well, their speed in advancement so fast that even Jiang Chen wanted to call them perverse.

“Having ancient bloodlines is indeed different!” Jiang Chen

sighed, whereas Long Xiaoxuan just snorted dismissively, clearly not holding a high opinion of the Goldbiter Rats' evolution. Jiang Chen smiled ruefully at the sound, "Brother Long, your lineage is noble and your heritage excellent, you don't understand the troubles of the Rats!"

The Rat King walked over, seriousness in every fold of his body. "Young master Long, it is thanks to your spring that us Goldbiter Rats have been able to reach where we are today."

Long Xiaoxuan apparently liked being sweet talked. He felt that he'd gained quite a bit of face with the moniker "young master Long" and spoke proudly when he saw how the Rat King humbled himself in front of the dragon, "As long as you know that you should be grateful!"

"Alright, we're all friends in the future. Brother Long, I've obtained the Taiyu Jade Vine, it's your turn to demonstrate your art now."

Long Xiaoxuan nodded, taking to the air and opening his mouth. A strong suction force suddenly covered the lake's surface. The jade-green spring waters turned into a green wave, filtering into Long Xiaoxuan's mouth as the lake's waters grew increasingly shallow...

Chapter 489: Returning With Fruitful Results

The spring had been completely sucked into Long Xiaoxuan's abdomen. The Rat King was flabbergasted at the sight, sighing, "Amazing, wonderful! The king of beasts, truly the royalty amongst us all! This ability to swallow the skies and devour the earth is absolutely at the peak of all beasts. Young master Long, Ole Gold is most impressed!"

The Rat King's personality was a bit similar to Mu Gaoqi's. They were both cautious and wary. However, the Rat King had lived for hundreds, if not a thousand years, so it'd long since grown comfortable with itself. He had more of a scamp's air around him, the slipperiness of someone familiar with social conventions. These words were obviously to kiss up to Long Xiaoxuan and make the dragon happy.

In terms of strength and lineage, the dragon was indeed far superior to the Rat King. But in terms of age, Long Xiaoxuan actually wasn't much older than Jiang Chen. It was just that he'd been nurtured by the spring ever since he lay curled in his egg, and some of his inherited memories had awakened before he'd hatched. It had been several hundred years or so since Long Xiaoxuan's memories had been awakened, but he had only broken out of his egg in the last thirty years or so. Only then had his body begun to develop. Dragons were naturally proud, and didn't possess a high emotional intelligence, so he felt quite pleased and high on the Rat King's compliments. He even felt that the lowly Goldbiter Rats didn't seem that ugly to his eyes anymore.

Jiang Chen knew full well what was going on, but didn't spoil things. "Brother Long, have you finished learning the foundations of the Transformation Method?"

Long Xiaoxuan didn't respond. He just shook his body as a faint haze of light suddenly covered his enormous body. His body started to shrink continuously beneath that light, and quickly became as small as a mustard seed.

"Well done! Hiding your true form, you're a dragon alright!" Jiang Chen applauded and laughed, stunned at the training potential of the dragons. Human cultivators would be unable to truly master this kind of art that hid one's form, even if they trained to the point of becoming a Great Emperor.

The waters of the spring had been thoroughly sucked dry, and all sorts of precious and exotic treasures were revealed. The Goldbiter Rats didn't dare keep the treasures to themselves. They collected them all and offered them to Jiang Chen.

The treasures were actually the dragon's accompanying treasures. The entire body of a dragon was a treasure, even their defecation. They would all transmute into treasures over time, particularly when nursed by the spirit spring. All sorts of spirit stones were present in heaps and piles, whereas all sorts of spirit herbs dotted the ground.

"Brother Long, do you still want these treasures?" Jiang Chen asked for Long Xiaoxuan's opinion.

“I long since put away the useful items.” Long Xiaoxuan was quite dismissive of what remained. Jiang Chen knew that dragons had high standards, and happily claimed all the treasures for himself. These spirit stones and herbs were absolutely an astounding amount of wealth. Even though he’d temporarily bid farewell to a shortage of resources, no one wanted to return to poverty after one bout with it in the martial world.

The further one proceeded in their cultivation, the greater the need for resources. Therefore, no one would ever think they had too many resources, only that they had too few. The finite amount of overall resources meant that it was impossible for everyone to have sufficient resources, limiting the amount of people at high cultivation levels. Ultimately, it comes down to strength, luck, and intelligence to fight for all of them.

Jiang Chen swept around in an arc and confirmed that there was nothing of value left before finally leaving. Long Xiaoxuan concealed himself and left with Jiang Chen. He could feel the dragon’s nervousness. Although the dragon was strong, with even ordinary emperor realm cultivators unsure of winning out over him, he’d never set foot outside of this area since regaining his memories. It would be a lie to say that he wasn’t anxious by this sudden departure.

“Don’t worry Brother Long, although the outside world is devious, with our strength, there’s nothing to worry about unless we run into any reclusive experts.” Jiang Chen spoke silently to the dragon.

Although Long Xiaoxuan was nervous, he wouldn’t admit to it at

all. “You think too much, I just can’t bear to leave this place. Who told you that I’m worried??”

Jiang Chen smiled and didn’t say anything else. All things needed time.

They ran into no obstructions as they left, but Jiang Chen discovered that Mu Gaoqi had yet to leave because he’d been trapped by the lava region. Unexpectedly, the Lord of Lava treasured grudges. It was actually still guarding the area after so many days, just waiting for them to return.

Mu Gaoqi scratched his head with some embarrassment when he saw Jiang Chen arrive. “Brother Chen, this Lord of Lava seems to have lost its mind. My strength is low and I’m not certain I can make it over. I could only wait here for you.”

Jiang Chen nodded, although Mu Gaoqi’s strength had risen by quite a bit, the effects of this remaking was destined to be less impressive when compared to the Goldbiter Rats. Most humans had no heritages or bloodlines to awaken. As such their strength wouldn’t suddenly increase explosively.

With Mu Gaoqi’s cultivation level, it was already stunning that he was touching third level origin realm by now. Jiang Chen himself had broken through to the third level, and his cultivation continued to increase in minute amounts. This Lord of Lava was likely at the peak of earth origin realm. At Jiang Chen’s current strength, he felt no pressure in facing off against the Lord of Lava.

He stood with his arms crossed, shooting forth the God's Eye at the Lord of Lava. "Formed from the coalescence of the earth's fires, you've reached your current cultivation after much effort and time. Don't block the way, and I won't make trouble for you."

The Lord of Lava was already incensed, and began to scream. The lava of the lake rose, covering his body. With the added protection, the Lord of Lava quickly turned into the size of a small mountain. "Human, you are but a puny ant in front of this lord! How dare you speak so boldly!"

Jiang Chen laughed heartily, "Ant? That means you're not moving then?"

The Lord of Lava waved its large hand and sent a torrent of heat waves crashing into Jiang Chen. "Die, ant!"

Nine fire columns as thick as fire dragons churned towards the humans.

Suddenly, a black light flashed across the Lord of Lava's body as a bafflingly strong force suddenly manifested as a water vortex, catching the nine thick fire columns.

Szzt, szzt, szzt, szzt!

The nine fire columns all vanished into the air as if they'd sunk into the depths of the sea.

“You...” The Lord of Lava was dumbstruck at the sight. It was obvious that this scene was completely out of its expectations.

Long Xiaoxuan hadn’t shown himself, but Jiang Chen knew that the dragon had made a move.

The Lord of Lava seemed to sense something, as extreme fear suddenly suffused its eyes. It shrieked like it’d seen a ghost and shrank, the enormous body suddenly turning into nothing as it fled deep into the lake.

The lake was suddenly as calm as a mirror, without a single air bubble marring its surface. This reaction speed rendered Jiang Chen speechless. He knew that the Lord of Lava must’ve sensed the dragonic aura of Long Xiaoxuan.

“Heh heh, you sure fled fast. Chalk one up to you recognizing the situation.” Jiang Chen called out to Mu Gaoqi. “Let’s go, the Lord of Lava won’t make trouble anymore.” After speaking, he turned into a streak of light and flew over the lake.

If it wasn’t for the harassment from the lava monsters, it would be an easy thing for origin realm cultivators to leisurely fly over the lake. Mu Gaoqi followed quickly when he saw Jiang Chen fly over.

At some point in this journey, he’d started to unconditionally trust Jiang Chen. If Jiang Chen said that the Lord of Lava wouldn’t dare harass them, then it truly wouldn’t dare harass them. They met with no further obstacles as they traveled through the cavern.

The light of day greeted them as they took their first steps outside.

It'd been almost a month. As Mu Gaoqi breathed in the fresh air and thought about everything that had happened, he truly felt that he'd aged decades. When he thought about how those who'd entered this area was now dead without even a corpse remaining to them, while he himself had received the baptism of the spring, causing his cultivation to increase greatly and his constitution advancing to an innate level, this put him in a wonderful mood.

All this was thanks to Jiang Chen. Mu Gaoqi cast a worshipful glance at Jiang Chen, inwardly rejoicing at his initial decision. If he hadn't invited Jiang Chen, but any other genius of the Regal Pill Palace, he would likely be a pile of withered bones by now. Even if he hadn't died in the hands of the Walkabout Sect, he would've died to Xu Gang and Yue Pan of the Great Cathedral. Had he been able to make it to the spring by some fluke, he ultimately would've died in Wei Wudao's hands.

"Gaoqi, this matter ends here. Don't mention it when we return to the sect, let's go."

Mu Gaoqi nodded and then seemed to think of something. He took out the spirit pearl of fire and ice. "Brother Chen, this is yours."

Jiang Chen waved his hand, "I have no use for it. Since I gave it to you, keep it as a memento."

Mu Gaoqi trembled slightly, how could he accept such a valuable

item? “I… Brother Chen, this won’t do!”

“Keep it, I’ve given it to you.” Even though it was the treasure of a sage realm expert, Jiang Chen had the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice, so he really had no need for the pearl.

At this point, Mu Gaoqi could be viewed as someone who’d gone through life and death with Jiang Chen, so using this bit of benefit to thoroughly bind Mu Gaoqi to him wouldn’t be such a bad idea either. Besides, with Mu Gaoqi’s potential and gifts now, he was destined to be an uncommon figure in the future. Gifting him the spirit pearl could be viewed as a long term investment.

Mu Gaoqi was quite touched when he heard Jiang Chen’s words. He accepted happily, feeling even more gratitude towards Jiang Chen. He also made up his mind to carefully follow in Jiang Chen’s footsteps in the future.

Chapter 490: The Battle Over Residences In The Sovereign Area

When he returned to the Regal Pill Palace, Jiang Chen decided to first pay a visit to Dan Chi's residence to catch up on news before returning to his residence.

Walking in, he found that all of his followers had immersed themselves in training, not setting a single foot outside. The residence was still orderly, but it was rather Huang'er who'd taken up some of the daily tasks of cleaning and keeping everything neat.

When Jiang Chen stepped inside, he was greeted by the sight of Miss Huang'er holding a broom, gently sweeping some fallen leaves in the courtyard. Evidently she was taking very good care of the place, as the entire residence was spic and span.

"Miss Huang'er, why are you the one being imposed on for these chores?" Jiang Chen was a bit embarrassed when he saw this development. She was his patient! How was she being asked to do this kind of menial work?

Huang'er dimpled, "Sir Jiang, you're back? I'd just thought that things can't be a mess when you return. You might be displeased otherwise. So, I swept a bit since I had some free time on my hands. Huang'er is clumsy and can't do much anyways."

Jiang Chen smiled, "If Miss Huang'er is clumsy, then no one can be considered good with their hands."

As the two chatted, Huang'er's eyes suddenly flicked, "Sir Jiang, you... you seem a little different?"

"Mm, I had some fortuitous occurrences this time." Jiang Chen knew that Huang'er's observation skills were sharp. She was able to quickly detect many things.

"Sir Jiang is truly an unparalleled genius. You were uncommon to begin with, and now have completely remade yourself with this change. Huang'er believes that Sir Jiang will be on the same level as the top geniuses in the Upper Eight Realms before too long." Huang'er sighed with amazement. Her expression then flickered as she raised the broom and smiled at Jiang Chen. "Sir Jiang, a guest comes calling. Huang'er will go to the rear yard first."

Jiang Chen was moved. He'd just sensed that there were footsteps approaching the residence, but to think that Miss Huang'er felt the same as well! He looked at Huang'er's lithe, graceful silhouette in deep thought. I wonder where Elder Shun and Huang'er are from? Far from their homes, they're drifting through desolate regions such as the Myriad Domain. They must have their own reasons other than the Hundred Generations Curse? One can find a sense of nobility from Miss Huang'er's actions, but she sets aside her bearing to be friendly with everyone. Her actions betray her breadth of mind as far beyond that of ordinary, short-sighted girls...

Jiang Chen was a bit curious, but he didn't intend to plumb the depths of this particular mystery. As he stood there ruminating, someone sent in a message from outside, "Senior brother Jiang

Chen, Elder Yun Nie requests your presence at his residence."

Elder Yun Nie had found out the second Jiang Chen had stepped foot inside his home. It was almost impressive that there were no secrets in the Regal Pill Palace that was hidden to the Elder. In any case, he should've gone to see Elder Yun Nie after seeing Sage Dan Chi. Jiang Chen smiled and walked out, "I was just about to pay a visit to Elder Yun Nie, but he's summoned me first. Let's go!"

The guards were flabbergasted when Jiang Chen once again appeared at the Hundred Elders Peak.

"This Jiang Chen is a bit too ridiculous, isn't he? Elder Yun Nie personally sent a person to invite him over? A message glyph would've done the job just as well!"

"Oh what do you know? Jiang Chen is destined to be extraordinary. Sage Dan Chi personally traveled to recruit him and Elder Yun Nie values him this highly. In my eyes, Jiang Chen will sooner or later become an influential person in the Regal Pill Palace. He might even become the successor!"

"Oh come on. That's too much. Do you know what the successor is? How is it that easy to become the successor to the Regal Pill Palace?"

"Don't believe me? Wait and see. I completely trust Sage Dan Chi and Elder Yun Nie's eyes." The guards were still gossiping even after Jiang Chen had disappeared from sight.

“Jiang Chen, I’ve invited you here today to thank you for your help, amongst other things. You’ve helped me successfully break through to fourth level sage realm and become another earth sage cultivator of this sect.” Elder Yun Nie was in a great mood as he smiled and continued. “Secondly, I wanted to ask if you’re interested in competing for a residence in the Sovereign Area of the Rosy Valley?”

“Congratulations to Elder Yun Nie for breaking through to the earth sage realm!” Earth sages was absolutely the first tier amongst experts in the Regal Pill Palace. Even Palace Head Dan Chi was only fifth level sage realm.

“Haha! The lion’s share of the credit goes to you for this accomplishment! The Sovereign Area of the Rosy Valley has created four new residences, and competition is fierce for them. I made a decision for you when you weren’t here and put your name down for a lot. You won’t blame me for my decision, will you?”

There were four areas in the Rosy Valley. Jiang Chen’s current Soaring Clouds was the lowest level, and Peerless was quite small as it was where the female disciples lived. Sky Pillar was the one level above Soaring Clouds. Sovereign wasn’t segregated by gender, and those who lived in it had their own separate residences, each with land of almost a hundred square miles that didn’t overlap with the territory other geniuses.

This kind of independent residence was absolutely the highest class of residences for the younger generation of the Regal Pill Palace, whether in terms of spirit qi in the environment or its

facilities. Although Jiang Chen's current residence wasn't bad, it was on a completely different level compared to the Sovereign Area.

"Sovereign?" Jiang Chen arched his eyebrow. "I've heard that the land in a radius around each residence belongs solely to the disciple?"

"Exactly so. Those are the best residences for the younger generation. Jiang Chen, such a chance must not be missed, you can't afford to lose out on it!" Elder Yun Nie smiled. "Both Sage Dan Chi and I look favorably on a young genius like you. You'll be restricted in what you can do if you continue to skulk in the Soaring Clouds Area. The Sovereign Area is where your stage is!"

Elder Yun Nie's words also caused ripples of great emotion in Jiang Chen's heart. He'd come to the Regal Pill Palace to embrace further challenges. What was the use in coming if he didn't even dare take the challenge for a residence in the Sovereign Area?

"Many thanks for Elder Yun Nie's favor. How many residences might there be in the Sovereign Area?" Jiang Chen asked.

"There were only eight residences, and now four more have been added this time. Thus, competition has gotten, hmm, impassioned." Elder Yun Nie looked at Jiang Chen with brightly shining eyes. "The apex geniuses should live in the apex areas. Jiang Chen, although you are young, you undoubtedly have the aura of a sovereign. I feel that you should pursue this challenge whether you succeed or not. In addition, half of the allotment of the residences will be reserved for pill masters this time."

“Oh? How is this so?” Jiang Chen blinked rapidly, his interest piqued.

“The first eight residences are all currently taken by martial dao geniuses. This time, I analyzed the situation for the Palace Head to secure two slots for pill geniuses. This is to say that martial dao geniuses will be competing for two of the slots this time, and the other two are reserved for pill geniuses. Since you seem to be a peak genius in both daos, you can make the decision yourself as to which to choose.”

“Of course, there are some reminders that I must voice first. In terms of pills, I feel that your potential will give you quite a guarantee for success. As for the two slots in martial dao, you’ll face enormous competition from large numbers of sky origin geniuses from the Sky Pillar Area. I feel that you have no need to reject what is near at hand to seek what is far away.” Elder Yun Nie looked quite favorably upon Jiang Chen, but still wanted to share his opinions.

There were two slots reserved for each, and the dao of pills was relatively easier given where Jiang Chen’s cultivation was currently at. Although he wasn’t afraid of the impending fight from the sky origin geniuses, it was apparent that it would consume more time and effort.

Jiang Chen’s current cultivation level could easily win over those at the peak of the earth origin realm, but the results were still up in the air if he were to face a sky origin realm genius.

Geniuses in large sects such as the Regal Pill Palace were bound to have numerous trump cards in hand. Given that Jiang Chen had yet to enter the earth origin realm, he was well aware that he couldn't say that he was assured of a victory against the large swathes of sky origin realm geniuses.

He might have a chance if he used all of his trump cards. But doing so for a mere residence in the sect clearly wasn't his style. He thought briefly. "Alright, then I'll participate in the competition for the pill dao residences." He quite liked the idea of an independent residence with a high degree of solitude, especially after taking the spring with the wood spirit energy. He also needed a place large enough to hold it. A residence that was his alone fit the bill perfectly. Therefore, he set his sights on the prize and was determined to win it.

Elder Yun Nie also laughed heartily when he saw that Jiang Chen had taken his advice. "Good, good, good! Promising and worthy to be taught. Jiang Chen, you have lived up to my hopes for you."

A follower on the side couldn't help but say to Jiang Chen, "Senior brother Jiang Chen, the elder fought ferociously in the council meeting this time in order to secure these two slots for pill geniuses. He even pounded the table in front of first elder Lian Cheng in heated argument for quite some time before finally obtaining them."

Elder Yun Nie chuckled and glared at his follower. "You talk too much. Dismissed."

The follower's heart spasmed in fright as he hastily stepped away

to the side. Jiang Chen was also quite surprised by this matter. Palace Head Dan Chi had only smiled merrily when he'd paid his visit and hadn't said anything. However, his expression had been quite... interesting. Now that Jiang Chen thought about it, this had probably been the reason why?

Elder Yun Nie spread out his hands. "Jiang Chen, I didn't go against Elder Lian Cheng just for you. Our Regal Pill Palace was founded for pills, and this has been our tradition for a thousand years. But now, martial dao flourishes whereas we have become complacent about our achievements in pills. Many of us are arrogant and still heady from the halo of being number one sect in pills. We are unable to extract ourselves, and it will be very dangerous to continue this way. This is why I went to the point of fighting with Hallmaster Lian Cheng of the Hall of Might. As the Hallmaster, his perspective is naturally one of having more martial dao geniuses enter the Sovereign Area."

Jiang Chen nodded. The Hall of Might was the foremost hall in the Regal Pill Palace, and Elder Lian Cheng the foremost elder on the council. Elder Yun Nie's Herbal Hall ranked number two, and he was likely the only one amongst the elders who dared argue against Hallmaster Lian Cheng. Even though he said it was for the good of the sect, Jiang Chen knew that there was still more or less a desire to protect and nurture Jiang Chen behind Elder Yun Nie's actions.

The warmth of gratitude rose in Jiang Chen's heart in that moment. "Elder Yun Nie, this disciple will bring forth everything I have to obtain a place in the Sovereign Area to repay your immense favor!"

Elder Yun Nie applauded loudly. “Good, good! I too wish for you to stun all those present in this competition. This way, who will dare say anything when I add you to the list of those participating in the Pill Battles of Mt. Rippling Mirage?!”

Chapter 491: Gifting Pills To Ye Chonglou

Jiang Chen returned to the Rosy Valley after leaving Elder Yun Nie's residence.

"Hello, senior brother Jiang Chen."

"Senior brother Jiang Chen!"

The guards all greeted Jiang Chen with smiling faces when they saw him, without a hint of their former ornery attitudes. So the saying went, one did not reach out to slap a smiling face. Jiang Chen knew that these guards were all just eking out a life when they'd made things difficult for him before. The same went for why they were greeting him warmly now.They had to do this in order to survive.

He nodded without saying anything. That would suffice as a response. These people were acting this way likely because he had defeated Yan Hongtu, and he'd received Elder Yun Nie's favor as his position rose accordingly.

Palace Head Dan Chi showed a preference for him, but obviously wouldn't interfere with matters in the Rosy Valley. Elder Yun Nie was different. He'd gone to the level of shouting down another elder during a council meeting. When this news made the rounds, getting more embellished with the telling, it took on a completely different meaning.

Elder Yun Nie was blatantly favoring Jiang Chen. Who would

dare not show respect to an honored guest of the Hallmaster of the Herbal Hall?

When Jiang Chen returned to the residence, he went into temporary closed door cultivation. He had yet to fully digest the gains from the wood spring. His physical body had been refined multiple times, greatly enhancing its original talent. The reforging from the Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill in particular had reforged his potential to that of a “genius” level. Now that he’d been baptized in the wood spring, his potential had risen once again to that of “upper genius.”

Although his innate potential was still lower than those of the most perverse, most preeminent geniuses, the gap between him and that category had drastically decreased. “The gaps of bloodlines and physical body can likewise be decreased. Further, no one else in the Divine Abyss Continent will have the advantages that I possess.” Jiang Chen was filled with confidence. Ever since arriving at the Regal Pill Palace, his knowledge and understanding of this world had progressed, along with his confidence.

“The Sovereign Area, geniuses of the sky origin realm, Pill Battles of Mt. Rippling Mirage, Myriad Domain Hidden Dragon Rankings, the Myriad Grand Ceremony, the Paramount Realm....” All of these challenges started to ignite Jiang Chen’s fighting spirit. He knew that these challenges would be the trials by fire that would accelerate his growth. His current rate of improvement was already verging on the perverse, but he still wasn’t satisfied.

“Father left me that year with a letter and set out for the Upper Eight Realms alone. Although my cultivation level has entered the

origin realm after a few years, I am still a ways off from the geniuses of the Upper Eight Realms. If I follow his steps now, father will surely be displeased." Jiang Chen was worried about Jiang Feng, his father in this life. His father had given him so much support and care when he'd arrived in this life and won his wholehearted affection. Jiang Chen solemnly respected Jiang Feng's loyalty and stoutheartedness.

"Sage realm... I must head for the Upper Eight Realms when I enter the sage realm. I must definitely spread my name throughout the Upper Eight Realms so that father knows I have not let him down." Jiang Chen had originally felt that he would count as having made it once he entered the origin realm. But now it seemed that if he wanted to be able to say that he'd come into his strength in the Upper Eight Realms, the origin realm was far from enough. The sage realm was the absolute lowest possible starting point. He felt that his father would have no reason to disapprove if he entered the Upper Eight Realms after ascending to the sage realm. It was just that as the years passed, Jiang Chen grew fraught with worry for his father when he thought of the dangers in the Upper Eight Realms.

"Mm, time is of the essence. I can't relax for a single day." Jiang Chen began training again with an even firmer heart. Three days later, he emerged from his session.

Soon after he exited his session, Mu Gaoqi came to visit in high spirits. He was quite excited to see Jiang Chen. "Brother Chen, did you know that the Sovereign Area has released four new residences?"

Jiang Chen nodded. “Did you sign up for the competition?”

Mu Gaoqi nodded enthusiastically. “I’d actually missed out on the signup cutoff, but I went to see Elder Yun Nie. He knew that I’d out with you a while ago and agreed to put my name in. Brother Chen, there are two slots for pill geniuses this time. It’d be wonderful if both of us can make it into the Sovereign Area.”

Jiang Chen smiled, “Are you confident?”

Mu Gaoqi thought for a while. “I gave it some thought, and it occurred to me that my potential for pills is definitely comparable to the upper core disciples. Also, many pill geniuses are also martial dao geniuses, so they may go for the martial dao spots instead. Therefore, I still think that there’s hope.”

“Gaoqi, you have many good parts, but you tend to keep too low a profile sometimes. If you’re going to fight for something, pour everything you have into it and have confidence in yourself. You have an innate wood constitution and superb potential in pill dao. With the spirit pearl that I gifted to you, you’ll soon be able to control fire with more precision than ever before. And that is after discounting your baptism in the wood spring. If you still have no confidence after this, what else can we do?”

Mu Gaoqi laughed bashfully. He was cautious by nature, but actually was very confident in this time’s challenge for a spot in the Sovereign Area.

“It’s all thanks to Elder Yun Nie fighting for us this time.” Mu

Gaoqi sighed.

“Make your preparations! I’ll see you in the Sovereign Area.” Jiang Chen said bracingly. He himself was now fully prepared and had consolidated his gains from the trip. Although he was but third level origin realm now, he was still immensely confident in competing for a position this time.

After he sent Mu Gaoqi on his way, he decided to pay Lordmaster Ye Chonglou a visit. Jiang Chen still had a particular regard for Ye Chonglou. If he had to identify a senior who’d helped him selflessly in the sixteen kingdom alliance, then it was most likely the elder whose vision was beyond the sixteen kingdoms.

“Jiang Chen! What brings you by today?” Ye Chonglou was delighted to see Jiang Chen. As an origin realm forefather in the Precious Tree Sect, he was here to look after the geniuses from the Precious Tree Sect. But in reality, there wasn’t much of a place for him in the vast Regal Pill Palace. If it wasn’t for consideration of the alliance, those in the Regal Pill Palace wouldn’t pay him much heed at all. It was a good thing that Palace Head Dan Chi had made his position clear, so no one went too far towards Ye Chonglou.

Even so, Ye Chonglou would still run into some poor attitudes every day, and sometimes even the occasional jeer. However, the lordmaster was open minded and knew that the Precious Tree Sect had overreached itself in being connected to the Regal Pill Palace, so he greeted all those sour words with a smiling face. But in the depths of his heart, he was still a bit depressed. He’d been a proud person for more than half his life. However, his cultivation level was really nothing in the Regal Pill Palace. Even an ordinary

administrator in the Hall of Spring and Autumn was comparable to him.

Jiang Chen had a sharp eye and could tell from the lordmaster's countenance that he wasn't having an easy time of things here. "Lordmaster, are you unhappy here?"

Ye Chonglou sighed softly and began comforting Jiang Chen instead. "Jiang Chen, what part of the human heart have I not seen at my age? It's nothing much. What does my situation matter if you young folk are doing fine?"

However, these weren't Jiang Chen's thoughts. The lordmaster had been a vaunted figure in the Skylaurel Kingdom and was used to wealth and respect. If he was subjected to eye rolls everyday here, how could he be at peace? "If the lordmaster is unhappy here, why not come with me to the Rosy Valley?"

Ye Chonglou waved his hand. "Forget it, this is the time that you rise above the masses. Don't let this bit of matter from this old man affect your mentality. Jiang Chen, I've heard of your matters in the Rosy Valley. Very good! You've made a name for the disciples of the Precious Tree Sect in that fight with Yan Hongtu!"

Jiang Chen laughed heartily. He'd actually forgotten about that minor character. "Oh right, how are the others now?"

"Tang Hong is doing well, his rate of improvement is the fastest. Of the other three, Lian Canghai is more or less acceptable. Iron Dazhi and Xie Yufan have less exceptional potential, they likely

will be unable to make it into the origin realm." The lordmaster sighed lightly, obviously not thinking highly of the latter two's future.

Jiang Chen nodded. "Without the supplementation of resources, all is as fleeting as the winds in martial dao cultivation. Of course, if their own foundation is insufficient, even the aid of pills would only given then a fifty-fifty chance of assailing the origin realm. I'll think of something for them for making it to the origin realm, but the road after will be up to their own making."

Apart from his brother Tang Hong, Jiang Chen really didn't care about the others. But as fellow disciples of the same sect, if he had the ability to help them, he would be happy to do so. This would count as repayment of Lordmaster Ye Chonglou's aid that year. "Oh right, lordmaster, here are a hundred upper rank Origin Fostering Pills. It should be enough for you to ascend to the earth origin realm." Jiang Chen placed a flask in front of the lordmaster.

"Upper rank Origin Fostering Pills? A hundred of them?" Ye Chonglou was thrown into disarray and kept waving his hand. "Jiang Chen, how can I accept this? You're now of the origin realm; you can use these pills. I'm just a pile of old bones with limited potential. It'd be a waste of all these pills. Where did you get so many pills in the first place? Did Palace Head Dan Chi give them to you?"

Ye Chonglou didn't have much status in the Regal Pill Palace and so was unaware of the detailed intelligence about Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen smiled, "I happened to complete a mission for Elder

Yun Nie of the Herbal Hall. He awarded me a few upper rank pills. Lordmaster, accept them with ease. These pills will be useful!”

Ye Chonglou gave a long sigh, admiration and approval suffusing his eyes. “Jiang Chen, the greatest accomplishment in my life was to locate your sparkle in the mundane, and befriending a genius such as you. Otherwise, I would be doomed to toil in mediocrity and die in the Skylaurel Kingdom.”

Such was fate!

“Lordmaster, you don’t need to be polite with me. To be honest, if it wasn’t for your care, I wouldn’t have made it past the Iron family in the Skylaurel Kingdom.” Jiang Chen was one who deeply valued loyalty and his relationships. He would return the slightest bit of help that others offered him in spades. In addition, he wasn’t here to just give the lordmaster a few pills.

“Lordmaster, I have something even more important to give you apart from the Origin Fostering Pills. This item must be kept a secret, lest troubles rise without end.”

Ye Chonglou trembled slightly when he heard these words, a grave look in his eyes. Something that would make Jiang Chen voice these words was an incredible item indeed.

Chapter 492: Blood Of A True Dragon

A spirit box and a small flask were placed on the table in front of them. Jiang Chen created several soundproof barriers, and also deployed the Lotus around them to ensure that no one was surreptitiously keeping an eye on them. “Lordmaster, this item is quite extraordinary.”

“Jiang Chen, what is this? I’m afire with curiosity even at my old age.” The lordmaster also asked.

“This flask contains two drops of dragon blood. The blood of a true dragon, and at that, from the noblest of dragons, the five clawed dragon. The box contains a dragon crystal.”

“What? True dragon?” The lordmaster’s face changed drastically. Ye Chonglou, a man who’d lived more than half his life with an unshaken bearing, almost fell to a sitting position on the ground. Now ashen faced and his throat dry, he stammered, “You mean, a true… true dragon?”

“Yes, a pure descendant of the dragons and not one of the variants. Its source is one that has a direct lineage of the dragons. As you can see, this is no ordinary matter.”

The lordmaster couldn’t speak for the longest time. He had sunk so deep into shock, he couldn’t extricate himself from it.

Dragons! They were a legendary existence. Even though he’d lived for so long, he’d only ever read about them in ancient books.

The history of the Myriad Domain didn't have any records of a living dragon either. But Jiang Chen had actually managed to lay his hands on the blood of a true dragon! No matter how much unconditional trust the lordmaster placed in Jiang Chen, he found this more than a bit difficult to believe.

Jiang Chen also knew that this was simply too stunning, but these two items would be very useful to the lordmaster. If his Five-Winged Lesser Phoenix-Dragon partook of the blood, it would surely waken more memories from its heritage, and its strength would advance in leaps and bounds instead. Then, if followed up with a baptism in the wood spring, the Phoenix-Dragon would absolutely become a force to be reckoned with in the Myriad Domain.

Ye Chonglou had spent many years with the Phoenix-Dragon that he too had the slight dragon aura about him. His strength would surely be reforged from inside out, completely remaking him into the epitome of someone coming late into their strength. All this was Jiang Chen's expression of gratitude for the lordmaster's help in previous years.

Jiang Chen knew that some things needed some time to digest as well, so he didn't say anything and only waited for the lordmaster to come back to himself.

Ye Chonglou reacted after a long while. "Jiang Chen, do dragons really exist?"

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. "The lordmaster spends day and night with the lesser-dragon. You only need to open the flask to sense

the two drops of blood to know if they're real or fake."

Ye Chonglou felt that Jiang Chen's words made sense and carefully picked up the flask. He cracked the stopper open and was about to bring it close to him when his entire body trembled. His hand shook, and Ye Chonglou almost lost his grasp on the flask. An enormous and bizarrely strong force was making his heart speed up, and the blood in his veins began to rumble and boil. It was almost setting his body on fire!

"This... this..." Ye Chonglou was stunned senseless. The immense power and bafflingly aura had sent Ye Chonglou, an origin realm expert, into a daze. And all this from only two drops in the flask! It was easy to imagine how strong the source of the blood was.

"This really is the blood of a dragon! It's true!" Ye Chonglou and the Phoenix-Dragon depended on each other, and though he wasn't too familiar with the aura of dragons, the spirit creature still held hints of it. Although there were only two drops in the flask, that familiar and incredibly strong feeling was obviously more than a hundred times stronger than the phoenix-dragon. The purity of that strength had almost shattered Ye Chonglou's blood vessels! It was truly astonishing.

"Lordmaster, in order to meld with the dragon blood, you must refine the dragon core first. Only when your body holds the mark of dragons can you successfully absorb the dragon blood. Otherwise, the blood will certainly make your veins explode and maybe even reduce you to a pile of ashes." Jiang Chen was very familiar with just how domineering the dragon lineage was, thanks

to his past life.

These words made Ye Chonglou so agitated that he didn't know what to do. "Jiang Chen, how can I even thank you?" He smiled ruefully. "Even if I wanted to put up a front and decline your great favor, I can't bring myself to do it at all. This temptation is far too great!"

"Lordmaster, it's not big deal when you're refining the dragon crystal, but if you wish to absorb the dragon blood one day, you must find a remote location. Otherwise, when others sense the aura behind this dragon blood, they will absolutely try to seize it, no matter the cost."

One drop of blood from a true dragon was enough to send cultivators into a frenzy. An ancient race of royals, dragons had a lineage and heritage that passed unbroken since time immemorial. When one absorbed their blood, the higher their level of cultivation, the greater their gains might be. If those in the emperor realm obtained the dragon blood, they might even trigger memories from the heritage locked within and achieve an unexpected breakthrough!

This reminder was of grave importance. If news of the dragon blood was leaked, the best case scenario was assassination, and the worst case scenario would implicate the entirety of the Regal Pill Palace.

Ye Chonglou also had a grave look on his face. "Jiang Chen, I will certainly take good care of this precious dragon blood, and will definitely come discuss with you before I assimilate it."

“That would be good as well.” Jiang Chen nodded. “I’m about to participate in the competition for a residence in the Sovereign Area. Once I succeed, a residence with a radius of a hundred miles of land will all become my private property. When the lordmaster wishes to assimilate the dragon blood there, no one will come interfere at all.”

“The Sovereign Area?” The lordmaster was stunned. “I’ve heard that that’s where the most premier geniuses of the Regal Pill Palace reside.”

“Indeed, it’s because this is where the most premier geniuses reside that I am guaranteed of my success this time.” Jiang Chen spoke with a confident and assured tone, not a hint of doubt in his words.

“Good, fantastic! Jiang Chen, I said before that the fortunes of the Precious Tree Sect might change with you in the mix. It looks like that was simply a foretelling of events writ in the heavens, hahaha! If you are able to secure a residence in the Sovereign Area, your name is sure to spread wide and far. At that time, the pressure on my survival may lessen slightly.”

Jiang Chen nodded, “Ah yes, Lordmaster, I’d like to see Tang Hong.”

“Of course, let me take you there.”

Tang Hong had long since broken through to the origin realm

and had been made an inner disciple as soon as he'd entered the Regal Pill Palace. They naturally went to the area where the inner disciples resided.

Inner disciples were split into levels just as like the core disciples, however, their residential area was far inferior to the Rosy Valley. They lived in Mt. Great Drum, with tens of thousands of inner disciples living in a radius of a thousand miles in the area. Their living quarters were actually in groups, much like Jiang Chen's during his trials in the Eternal Spirit Mountain. Only the most high level inner disciples had the right to a solitary residence with its own yard. But even these solitary residences weren't even a tenth of the ones in the Rosy Valley.

Ordinary disciples lived four to a residence, or eight and sixteen, a clear delineation of their levels.

Jiang Chen was a core disciple, and the privileges of a core disciple let him easily enter the prohibited areas of Mt. Great Drum. When they saw his clothing, the guards all smiled ingratiatingly, almost wishing that they could carry Jiang Chen in on their backs.

The various encounters all made Ye Chonglou sigh with emotion. "Jiang Chen, do you know that this is the easiest time I've ever had trying to enter the mountain? I've always had to wait for half a day previously and be subjected to all sorts of difficulties and delays. Sometimes, I couldn't even enter. These guards just wanted to scrounge all sorts of benefits from me. Except, the goods that our Precious Tree Sect could bring out were sometimes even below their regard."

Ye Chonglou couldn't help but be filled with mixed emotions at all this. At his age, he'd always have to sweet talk the guards whenever he tried to enter, and smile so much that his face ached. Yet nothing was as useful as Jiang Chen's attire as a core disciple.

Jiang Chen didn't even need to speak a single word before being personally shown the way in, everyone flashing him a smiling face. That feeling made even the reserved Ye Chonglou feel like he could walk with his head held high, washing away the endless eyerolls and difficulties.

When the guards heard that Jiang Chen was looking for someone, they immediately sprang into action and looked through their files, locating Tang Hong's residence. The enthusiastic captain on duty very quickly brought the duo to the right location.

Jiang Chen offhandedly rewarded him with an Origin Fostering Pill. "Thanks for the effort. This Lordmaster Ye is my friend and will be passing repeatedly through Mt. Great Drum in the future..."

The captain's eyes gleamed when he saw the pill. He nodded and bowed, assuring him repeatedly, "This little one understands, this little one definitely understands. When the lordmaster enters the mountain in the future, I promise his passage will be swift and speedy."

Jiang Chen waved his hand when he saw that this captain understood very well what he meant. "Dismissed, I'll go in

myself.”

“Yes, yes.” The captain looked enviously at this yard. He thought that this core disciple had come to select a few followers from the inner disciples. Once selected, they would be able to cultivate in the Rosy Valley. Training there for one day was the equivalent of three to five days in the outside world. Which disciple didn’t yearn for the Rosy Valley?

When Ye Chonglou walked up and lightly knocked on the door, someone’s head poked out from inside. When they saw it was Ye Chonglou, their expressed chilled. “How dare you intrude on the prohibited areas of the sect?”

Although Ye Chonglou was of the origin realm, his clothing denoted that he wasn’t an important person in the sect, so these inner disciples would naturally not show him any pleasant faces.

However, that head immediately caught a glimpse of Jiang Chen behind Ye Chonglou.

What? A core disciple?

The owner of the head immediately rushed out and opened the door, a fawning smile on his face. “This senior brother must be from the Rosy Valley? What might you be looking for here? Tsk tsk tsk. I wondered why the magpies were chirping so loudly when I woke up this morning, so it was a vaunted personage gracing our courtyard! You bring luster to our humble house!” This fellow changed tack with the slightest breeze, and was quite glib with his

ass kissing.

Jiang Chen smiled faintly and walked in through the open door. The core disciples didn't even need to exert any aura when they appeared to produce a sufficiently dominating presence. None of the inner disciples dared be slow on the uptake as they hastily walked up to greet Jiang Chen.

"I'm looking for Tang Hong, where is he?" Jiang Chen glanced around but saw no sign of his brother.

When they heard the name of Tang Hong, a somewhat ugly expression crossed some of their faces. One or two of their expressions even involuntarily showed... a trace of fear.

Chapter 493: Tang Hong Becomes A Golden Thigh To Hug

Hugging a thigh means finding a patron in Chinese, and a golden one is a pretty darned solid choice. Translated literally for the humor.

“You, come here.” Jiang Chen pointed at the fellow who’d just opened the door, his eyes so sharp they seemed to pierce through his soul. “Speak, where’s Tang Hong?”

The person shivered all over as Jiang Chen’s God’s Eye locked onto him, his teeth actually starting to chatter uncontrollably. “I… I…”

Jiang Chen’s tone chilled. “You don’t know?” The disciple dropped to his knees when Jiang Chen increased the degree of his aura by one factor. He was unable to bear up any longer and sagged bonelessly to the ground.

“I’ll tell you, I’ll tell you… Tang Hong’s gone to wash clothes.”

Wash clothes?

Jiang Chen was completely baffled by these words. A vaunted Regal Pill Palace inner disciple had to do such errands as wash clothes?

Ye Chonglou sighed lightly. “Jiang Chen, the inner disciples are different from the core disciples. They don’t enjoy preferential

treatment and need to take care of their own day-to-day needs. They don't have the right to have followers either."

Jiang Chen nodded and looked at the disciples in front of him, roughly understanding what was going on. He snorted coldly, "This is to say, Tang Hong isn't just washing his own clothes, is he?"

As he spoke, Tang Hong's trademark rolling footsteps sounded outside the courtyard. Tang Hong was stockily built, and his gait was like a tiger, vigorous and powerful. His every step seemed like they would split the ground. When the echoes of his footsteps reached the ears of those present, the expressions of two inner disciples immediately underwent a grave change and almost wished that wings would sprout from their backs, so that they could flee the scene immediately.

Jiang Chen's suspicions were confirmed as their faces went ashens. Tang Hong walked in with two wicker baskets of washed clothing on a bamboo pole. He was about to speak when he saw the crowded courtyard, but a look of delight appeared on his face when he saw Jiang Chen.

"Boss? What are you doing here? Hahaha!" He threw the baskets aside and strode forward, grabbing Jiang Chen for a hug. He was beside himself with joy. "Boss! I heard that you made quite an impressive showing in the Rosy Valley!"

When the two inner disciples heard Tang Hong call Jiang Chen "boss" and saw how close the two of them seemed to be, they trembled all over, a bitter taste in their mouths.

Jiang Chen nodded. “Tell me, is washing clothes part of your duties or something that others have forced on you?”

Tang Hong was now peak of eight level spirit realm, almost at ninth level. The two awkward looking inner disciples with the ashen faces were obviously the leaders of this courtyard, at ninth level spirit realm.

Tang Hong grinned, “Boss, don’t worry about these small matters. Even though they forced it on me, I’m using this as a way to improve my strength of heart, surging forth with valor after experiencing humiliation! I never would’ve had this chance in the Precious Tree Sect.” In the Precious Tree Sect, although Tang Hong wasn’t part of the Sect Head or Iron Long’s faction, with his potential, no one would dare issue orders and force him run errands. When he arrived at the Regal Pill Palace with insufficient strength and a lowly background, he naturally became the target of bullying.

Jiang Chen hadn’t thought that Tang Hong was using this humiliation to temper his strength of heart. He grew thoughtful, it seemed that Tang Hong was making preparations to assail the origin realm, a breakthrough that needed great mental fortitude. This kind of hardship and shame was absolutely a trial for his strength of heart.

“Boss, don’t worry about things like this.” Tang Hong laughed confidently, only the depths of his eyes betraying his cold resolve. He stared straight at the two ninth level spirit realm inner disciples. “Zhang Lie, Gong Yue, I’ll remember you two bastards. I

washed clothes for you not because I was afraid of you, but because I wanted to temper my heart. Don't worry your heads, I'll challenge you before too long and beat the shit out of you guys! Just you wait! Hahahaha!!" Tang Hong wasn't the least bit inferior to these inner disciples in terms of potential. He was only behind them for now because of the difference between the Precious Tree Sect and the Regal Pill Palace.

Differences in birth had led to differences in resources, forcing him to walk a slower path. Now that Jiang Chen was taking care of him, Tang Hong's conditions had long since bypassed all those inner disciples. He would be able to strike back with full force as soon as he broke through to ninth level spirit realm, and he would be completely capable of beating down all those who'd bullied him. In that way, the various humiliations and bullying that he'd suffered before would actually be transformed to motivation, an enormous gain for the training of his strength of heart.

When Jiang Chen heard these words, he knew that although his brother seemed crude, he was someone with great intelligence and decided not to interfere.

"Come, Tang Hong, take a walk with me." His gaze was indifferent as it swept past the other inner disciples, as if committing them to memory. The inner disciples all averted their eyes, not daring to look at Jiang Chen.

Tang Hong laughed heartily, "Boss, my plans to temper myself is now in shambles thanks to you. But no matter, I was just about done anyway. I feel like I'll be breaking through within the month."

Jiang Chen took a tour of Mt. Great Drum with Tang Hong before returning to Ye Chonglou's residence.

Ye Chonglou had a faint smile on his face the entire way. He knew that this was Jiang Chen purposefully putting on a show in support of Tang Hong, letting the inner disciples know that Tang Hong was Jiang Chen's brother. This way, anyone who wanted to bully Tang Hong would have to think twice first.

"Tang Hong, you must live up to Jiang Chen's care for you." Ye Chonglou reminded.

Tang Hong grinned. "Don't worry, Lordmaster. When I reached the Regal Pill Palace, I understood that I'm but a frog in a well. But, I firmly believe that I'll be able to break through to the origin realm within a year.

Tang Hong was known for great strength of heart already when he was in the Precious Tree Sect. If he ascended to spirit king, he would have great hope in breaking through to the origin realm.

When they arrived at Ye Chonglou's residence, Jiang Chen gave a few more pointers to Tang Hong as well as some spirit stones and Spirit Consolidation Pills. However, of the dragon blood and crystals, he said not a word. Ye Chonglou knew that it wasn't that Jiang Chen didn't want to gift them, but that Tang Hong was incapable of using such items at the moment. Giving them to him would actually be harming him instead.

“Tang Hong, come find me in the Rosy Valley when you make it into ninth level spirit realm. I’ll bestow upon you a gift of fortune.”

“Boss, you’ve already given me too much. If this continues, won’t I have to promise myself to you to thank you? What a pity that I’m no beauty.” Tang Hong quipped.

Ye Chonglou couldn’t help but smile, but he was still very happy to see Tang Hong’s rate of growth. At this speed, there was much hope for the Precious Tree Sect.

Jiang Chen finally rose to leave after chatting with the lordmaster and Tang Hong for a while. “The competition for Sovereign Area residences is about to begin. Await my good news, gentlemen.”

Tang Hong laughed heartily. “With the boss making a move, that residence is already within grasp! I’ll go take a look then and broaden my visions as well, hahaha!”

When they parted, Jiang Chen returned to the Rosy Valley while Tang Hong returned to his residence within Mt. Great Drum. When the latter reached his quarters, he could feel the difference in treatment. The captain on duty even came up to greet him warmly, as if the two were originally close friends.

Tang Hong may look rough around the edges, but his heart was

quite meticulous. He knew this was all because of his boss. “Boss, it looks like I still need to depend on you in the future. A core disciple is the center of attention no matter where they go.” The experiences that he’d just been exposed to just made Tang Hong’s fighting spirit increase even more.

When he returned to the yard, those who lived with him were all overflowing with enthusiasm, as if welcoming back a victorious hero.

“Brother Tang Hong, you’ve come back!”

“Brother Tang Hong, you’ve washed clothes for us for so long. Here are some spirit stones. Although it’s not much, it’s a token of our appreciation, please don’t decline them.”

“Brother Tang Hong, I have two Spirit Consolidation Pills, upper rank…”

Tang Hong was openmouthed with surprise. “You… what… the heck?”

“Ai, Brother Tang Hong, please be magnanimous. It was us who were immature before and offended you. But that was Zhang Lie and Gong Yue fanning the flames. The two of them are too scared now, and have requested to switch residences.”

“Left?” Tang Hong’s eyebrow arched. “Those two bastards will be unable to escape their beating no matter where they go!”

“You guys have always been threatened by them. Ah forget it, I won’t argue with the likes of you. I’ll accept the items, and we’re all still be brothers who live underneath the same roof in the future.” Tang Hong was a generous one. These fellows were weaker than him and would never dare bully him under normal circumstances. It was only because Zhang Lie and Gong Yue kept pushing at them that they had been forced into creating a ruckus. Given that they were now offering gifts in apologies, giving him spirit herbs and spirit stones, his straightforward personality naturally wouldn’t continue to let him hold a grudge.

“Great!” One of the disciples said. “I said that Brother Tang Hong was a broad-hearted genius! He’s sure to enter the Rosy Valley in the future!”

“Brother Tang Hong, you’re the boss in this house in the future. You’re still the boss no matter who comes!”

“Right, we’ll support Brother Tang Hong to the end!”

“Brother Tang Hong, please take care of us brothers in the future when you enter the Rosy Valley. I’ve heard that the core disciples of the Rosy Valley can have followers. Don’t forget us brothers at that time!” Although these fellows were lowly, they were all smart people. Who couldn’t tell that Tang Hong was destined to have a bright future ahead of him with such a close relationship with/, Jiang Chen?

Who was Jiang Chen?

He was a core disciple that Palace Head Dan Chi had personally anointed, a genius highly valued by Elder Yun Nie. There were also rumors that he was aiming for a residence in the Sovereign Area this time. Even the once overweening Yan Hongtu had been absolutely powerless in front of Jiang Chen.

Yan Hongtu's cultivation level had been fifth level origin realm, the undisputed tyrant of the Soaring Clouds. And what of him? He'd still been beaten to smithereens and had to leave the Rosy Valley and train outside to avoid the aftermath?

Beating one of the fifth level origin realm as a minor origin realm, this kind of genius was destined to exist at the apex of the Regal Pill Palace. And Tang Hong was his death sworn brother!

Compared to these inner disciples with no patrons and had to fight for everything themselves, he was undoubtedly a golden thigh that they had to hug onto fiercely.

In Mt. Great Drum, those inner disciples with connections and pull had long since latched onto a core disciple, becoming their follower and earning the right to train in the Rosy Valley. Those who remained on the mountain were those with no connections and background. They'd be idiots if they didn't latch tightly onto the golden thigh that appeared at this time!

Chapter 494: The Openminded And Straightforward Palace Head Dan Chi

The contest for the residences raised a great furor in the younger generation of the Regal Pill Palace. Apart from those with absolutely no hope, almost everyone in the Rosy Valley was eying the four places covetously. If they could move to the Sovereign Area, that represented the peak of the younger generation of the Regal Pill Palace!

There were currently only eight residences in the entire Rosy Valley. With the new four, it would make for a total of twelve. There were more than a thousand core disciples in the Regal Pill Palace, ten thousand inner disciples, and more than a hundred thousand outer disciples. With this scale of people, how great of an honor it would to be the honored twelve above them all! How lofty one was!

There was no doubt that as soon as one entered the Sovereign Area, as long as their path was smooth and they didn't accidentally fall halfway, they were sure to be a heavyweight in the sect after a few decades, one with power!

The list of those interested in competing for the residences was more ridiculous than imagined. More than two hundred signed up for martial dao, and more than three hundred signed up for the dao of pills. This was to say that almost half of the core disciples in the entire Rosy Valley had entered the competition this time.

Jiang Chen wasn't surprised by this. The competition of pills was lower risk, relatively speaking. Although competition would be

just as fierce, at least they wouldn't be injured. Therefore, it wasn't unexpected that more would sign up for the dao of pills.

The entire Regal Pill Palace sank into a fervent atmosphere before the contests had even begun. Jiang Chen's heart was as still as water. After all, he hadn't come to the Regal Pill Palace for long. Although his name was on the list, he wasn't one most favored to win.

It was rather Mu Gaoqi who was one of the top five candidates. Jiang Chen was actually number ten or so. But of course, this was only the speculations of the outside world. No one was able to truly speculate just who would win out in the end.

Jiang Chen once again appeared in Dan Chi's residence on the eve of the competition.

"Greetings to Palace Head Dan Chi."

"Haha, not bad kid! How long has it been since you've come to the sect? Even the Hallmaster of the Herbal Hall is speaking on your behalf. Jiang Chen, you're not bad at all." Dan Chi looked at Jiang Chen with smiling eyes, then shock suddenly blazed out of them. "You're third level origin realm already? In this short span of time?!"

"I happened to obtain a core of a Redscaled Firelizard by chance and refined in, managing to break through after that."

“Nice going kid, ‘just managing to break through’ eh?” Sage Dan Chi laughed heartily. “You’ve risen from first level origin realm to third level in just a few months. This, this is called just managing to break through?” Dan Chi’s tone was full of admiration. “To think that my breakthrough speed was already quite rare in Regal Pill Palace history. It seems like you’ll whip right past my record.”

“And that is all due to the Palace Head’s mentoring.”

“Haha, to be honest, I haven’t done anything other than bringing you to the Regal Pill Palace. Everything else has been up to you. Jiang Chen, Elder Yun Nie is very confident in your chances of seizing a residence in this time’s Sovereign Area. What about you? How confident are you?”

“If I’m participating in the pill contests, I have a ninety percent confidence in my chances. If martial dao, then sixty to seventy percent.” This was Jiang Chen’s own estimation for himself, so there was no need to hold back anything.

“Ninety percent?” Palace Head Dan Chi was slightly shocked. “This means that the rumors of Elder Yun Nie successfully able to refine the Hexarune Dragon Pill thanks to you are true?”

Jiang Chen nodded and didn’t deny things. He trusted that if the Palace Head was asking thus, he must have received concrete intelligence to this regard.

When Dan Chi saw Jiang Chen nod, his expression also became complex. He sighed with a smile. “To think that this is the case! I’d

only thought that I'd discovered a martial dao genius for the Regal Pill Palace, but your potential for pills is even more amazing!"

In terms of pill dao potential, there was likely no other like Jiang Chen. Palace Head Dan Chi furrowed his brow after this emotional reflection, seeming to be thinking of something. He sighed again after a long while, "Jiang Chen, you've taught me a lesson this time, and Elder Yun Nie even more so."

Jiang Chen was surprised. "What do you mean, Palace Head?"

"I would have to start with me taking the reigns of power in the Regal Pill Palace. Before that, the sect had emphasized the tradition of pills and had never deviated. When I took control and elevated the Hall of Might to the foremost of the nine halls, the Herbal Hall retreated to secondary importance. I don't know if Elder Yun Nie has ever resented me for this. From our current culture, the Regal Pill Palace has indeed overlooked the dao of pills over the past decades and overly focused on martial dao. This is indeed at great odds with the traditions of my Regal Pill Palace. To go beyond is as wrong as falling short. Now that I look back on things, I feel that I've been too radical and actually ended up throwing away the traditional advantages of the Regal Pill Palace." Palace Head Dan Chi was a martial dao genius, and he'd emphasized the development of martial dao after taking his position. It'd been a matter of his personal style in raising the Hall of Might to the first hall.

The effects of his actions had been apparent. In the last few decades, whether in terms of experts or young disciples, there had indeed been an upsurge in martial dao geniuses. In contrast, the

numbers and quality of talent in the dao of pills had greatly decreased. It was apparent from this time's competition entrants that there were almost no premier pill masters anymore.

This had greatly moved Palace Head Dan Chi, and he began to reflect on his strategy. He didn't feel that there was anything wrong in promoting martial dao, but it was a grave mistake that this had indirectly affected development in pills.Therefore, when Elder Yun Nie and Hallmaster Lian Cheng had been screaming at each other from across the table, he'd been deeply moved and ultimately agreed to Elder Yun Nie's suggestion.

If martial dao geniuses lived in all twelve residences of the Sovereign Area, what would that mean then? It meant that Regal Pill Palace's tradition of pills had been utterly refuted and abandoned. Elder Yun Nie's rare loss of composure wasn't due to personal gain, but for the heritage of the sect and for protection of the sect's traditions.

"Jiang Chen, what do you think of this matter?"

Jiang Chen thought briefly before grasping where the dilemma was here. "In the world of martial dao, martial dao is always first. There's nothing wrong about that. However, the Regal Pill Palace was founded for pills, and this advantage cannot be discarded. In cycles of martial dao, the names of the strong and weak often change. But rises and declines in the dao of pills rarely occur. The latter emphasizes tradition and foundations more, whereas the changes of martial dao are often determined by just a couple of geniuses."

Palace Head Dan Chi nodded his head lightly at Jiang Chen's words. It was just like he'd said, the establishment of the Regal Pill Palace had enabled it to maintain its leadership in the Myriad Domain because the dao of pills focused on foundations and heritage.

Yet, martial dao was different. If an unparalleled genius appeared in a sect, such a development would benefit the entire sect, just as even one man's pets became immortal when he ascended to heaven. In the same vein, if an expert of a sect suddenly fell, it would also cause the sect to take a sharp downwards turn, possibly plunge immediately into decline.

Compared to the stability in the dao of pills, there were many more unknown factors in the world of martial dao and too many coincidences.

It wasn't a bad notion to greatly revitalize the position of martial dao in the Regal Pill Palace, but Jiang Chen felt that it was an unworthy trade off if the price was the sect's original advantage in pills. Of course, that hadn't been the Palace Head's original intentions, just that things had unconsciously developed thus.

"Jiang Chen, you're the only one who dares speak so openly and honestly in the younger generation." Palace Head Dan Chi sighed softly. He was one with great ambitions, but not an arrogant and self serving autocrat. Everything he'd done had been for the goal of reconstructing the Myriad Empire.

Although he'd never spoken of this ambition, the senior executives of the Regal Pill Palace could still more or less sense his

intentions. Using Elder Yun Nie as an example, he was well aware of Palace Head Dan Chi's aspirations. Therefore, even though Dan Chi had weakened the Herbal Hall's position, he didn't actually hate the Palace Head. On the contrary, he quite agreed with the Palace Head's goals and lofty aims.

A great sect should indeed possess such ambitions and direction. But in terms of details, Elder Yun Nie still felt firmly that the Regal Pill Palace should never lose its advantage in pills. Never! The truth of the situation was that the Regal Pill Palace's traditions were slowly vanishing.

"Elder Yun Nie spoke in confidence with me last time regarding his concerns for the Pill Battles of Mt. Rippling Mirage. He said that although the Regal Pill Palace was still foremost in the Myriad Domain thirty years ago, he was uncertain if this is still the case thirty years later."

Jiang Chen also knew that Palace Head Dan Chi was blaming himself for his oversight. He could only speak up in comfort, "Looking at the greater picture, the Regal Pill Palace has made great strides in martial dao. Our foundation and traditions still exist in the dao of pills, we just need time to adjust ourselves so that we can rise again."

Sage Dan Chi laughed heartily, "Indeed! What is frightening isn't a temporary loss of advantage, but refusing to change even when knowing that the advantage is lost. I am no god, it's impossible that I make no mistakes. The direction of the Regal Pill Palace will not veer from the proper course as long as we make the appropriate corrections. Jiang Chen, your appearance truly is

timely. You have formed a bridge of communication between me and Elder Yun Nie. I also hope that you can soar to the skies with one move this time and attain a residence in the Sovereign Area."

"I will try my best." Jiang Chen nodded. "In actuality, Elder Yun Nie still speaks highly of your ambitions and strategic mind." Elder Yun Nie had indeed mentioned this before and spoken highly of Dan Chi. Jiang Chen had to admire Elder Yun Nie's personality as well.

Business was business, and personal affairs another matter entirely. He was scrupulous in separating public affairs from privates matters. And at the same time, Palace Dan Chi was openminded and straightforward, not covering up his mistakes but openly admitting to them and looking for ways to resolve them. This was indeed the mindset that a one of great talent and bold vision should have.

With Dan Chi at the helm and an elder like Yun Nie, the Regal Pill Palace was sure to live long and prosper.

Chapter 495: The Tussle Begins

Jiang Chen's presence acted as a lubricant, creating a smooth bridge of communication between Palace Head Dan Chi and Elder Yun Nie.

"Jiang Chen, our chat today has cleared up many things for me and put me in a wonderful mood. I have to say that despite the difference in our ages, you are truly one of my good friends. Alright, go make your preparations for the pill battles, I look forward to your exciting performance!" Dan Chi spoke another few words of encouragement and made a grasping motion in the air, pulling out a pill cauldron. "Jiang Chen, this cauldron is the Skyweave Cauldron, something my teacher gifted to me when I was young. It's a pity that it never could display its full splendor in my hands. Now that my teacher has passed on, I have utterly disappointed his sentiments in giving this to me." Dan Chi sighed lightly, traces of regret, shame, and nostalgia in his tone. "And now, I pass this cauldron onto you. Perhaps the hopes that my teacher had for me back then will be fulfilled by your hands."

This Skyweave Cauldron was one of the top five cauldrons in Regal Pill Palace history. It had boasted an illustrious name in the past thousand years, and Jiang Chen was able to identify its exceptional qualities with one glance. Although it wasn't on par with divine level cauldrons, this was without a doubt a preeminent cauldron in the mundane world. The Regal Pill Palace truly did have a stunning foundation in pills.

Jiang Chen didn't actually find it that easy to accept such a precious cauldron all of a sudden.

“Haha, what of this? You’re embarrassed to accept it? I once promised you when you entered the sect that I would give you a welcoming present. You said you hadn’t thought of one then, and I’ve made the decision for you today. As a martial cultivator, the Skyweave Cauldron is a bright pearl covered in dust in my hands. Perhaps it can shine with its true glory in your hands. At long last, I might be able to slightly make things up to my teacher.” Dan Chi had set his goals in martial dao and made it his ambition to rebuild the Myriad Empire. He would never be content being just a pill master. Everyone had their own plans, and the cauldron truly wouldn’t be able to give full display to its brilliance in such a person’s hands.

When Jiang Chen saw the look of true sincerity on Palace Head Dan Chi’s face, he knew that this was the Palace Head’s desire to pass on his heritage and thus no longer protested. He nodded, “This kid will accept the Palace Head’s great favor with a thick face. If I am able to refine a Hexarune Dragon Pill in the future, I will surely place the first batch in your hands.”

“What? The Hexarune Dragon Pill?” Sage Dan Chi was startled. “You only viewed the recipe once and was able to memorize the steps to refining it?”

Jiang Chen smiled without saying a word. Compared to the advanced version, the Ennearune Heaven Grievance Pill, the Hexarune Dragon Pill was so much simpler in both theory and process. Jiang Chen didn’t even need to peruse it fully before coming up with the proper refining process.

“Good, good, good! A young man should have this kind of confidence. Since this is the case, I shall impatiently await your Hexarune Dragon Pill, hahaha!” Sage Dan Chi was in a wondrous mood. No matter the angle, Jiang Chen looked pleasing to the eye. If it wasn’t for Elder Shun’s existence, he almost wanted to accept Jiang Chen as his personal disciple. However, reason told Dan Chi that Jiang Chen was someone Elder Shun valued. He absolutely had no right to take Jiang Chen for his own.

When he sent Jiang Chen on his way, Dan Chi suddenly recalled the phenomenon in the skies the day he’d allied with the Precious Tree Sect. He’d always felt that the earth shattering phenomenon had something to do with Jiang Chen. “Ai, if that phenomenon really had something to do with Jiang Chen, then that youth’s future is truly limitless. Even the reclusive Titled Great Emperors hadn’t been this beloved by the heavens when they’d broken through to the origin realm.” But of course these were all Dan Chi’s speculations.

With regard to the residences of the Sovereign Area, this was a matter of grave importance that almost the entire sect mobilized for. Palace Head Dan Chi was acting as head judge and overseeing the competitions. Hallmaster Lian Cheng of the Hall of Might was in charge of the contests of martial dao, and Elder Yun Nie of the Herbal Hall was in charge of those for pills. Elder Chang Feng and Elder Jin Gu, two elders of noble character and high prestige, were in charge of supervising the proceedings for cheating.

The sacred ground for these competitions, Shen Li Palace was situated within the Rosy Valley. It was divided into the martial and

pill areas inside, with almost all the senior executives gathered at the great hall to the doors of the Palace at the moment.

Palace Head Dan Chi looked around with solemn gravity, opening his mouth to proclaim loudly, “The residences in the Sovereign Area should be reserved for the utmost of geniuses. We have created four more this time in order to uncover even more geniuses. As a fourth rank sect, our advances in martial dao and pills should be proceeding at the same pace. Therefore, two residences have been reserved for pill dao geniuses this time.”

Although the words didn’t blatantly criticize himself for his past failings, the intention for self correction was obvious. Standing next to the Palace Head, Elder Yun Nie was slightly surprised by this. He looked at Sage Dan Chi, then at Jiang Chen, sinking into thought.

“In the contest for the residences, I only emphasize one point. The proceedings must be fair without malpractice for selfish ends. No matter how great your status or your background, you must rely on your own strength in the contests. Once cheating is discovered, you will be eternally barred from participation. If anyone decides to help in the background, know that the investigation that follows will leave no stone unturned, no matter one’s position. The sect’s rules will be applied to all!”

Order came from rules, and ruling over a sect required charisma. Palace Head Dan Chi had never been one to relax the rules, and he enforced them with an iron fist. His words brought the geniuses participating to solemn attention. Even those harboring secret schemes in their hearts all quietly shelved their ideas. Everyone

knew that Palace Head Dan Chi was a man of his word. Whoever challenged the rules in the Regal Pill Palace would surely be subjected to the most severe of punishments.

After Dan Chi finished his speech, Elder Lian Cheng and Elder Yun Nie all spoke a few words on behalf of their areas. Following that, everyone filed into their respective areas. Mu Gaoqi and Jiang Chen headed for the pill area together.

“Brother Chen, I believe that you’ll be number one, and I’ll be number two, heh heh!” Mu Gaoqi’s confidence had noticeably risen after being baptized in the wood spirit spring. Jiang Chen had told him last time to be not overly humble in some matters, to stride forth with bold confidence.

Jiang Chen was nodding when a sharp voice pierced their ears. “Mu Gaoqi, when did you stoop to such depths? There are so many geniuses in the Rosy Valley for you to kiss up to, but you choose to suck up to an outsider? And what is this talk about being number one? Is number one that easy to obtain?” The person speaking was a young genius with red lips and white teeth. He had gentle and refined features, but his nose was tilted to the sky and an arrogant look was playing around in his eyes. It was obvious at a glance that he was the sort of person who felt that apart from himself, everyone else beneath the heavens was extraneous.

“Hmph, Linghu Feng. I’ll say what I want and you talk what you want. Don’t you have somewhere else to stick your nose?” Although Mu Gaoqi didn’t jeer back, his tone had noticeably cooled.

Linghu Feng started, obviously not having expected that the normally docile Mu Gaoqi would actually talk back to him. “Yo! Mu Gaoqi! I’ve underestimated you huh? You’ve learned to talk back now, eh? Do you think you’ve grown up into a real man now or what, huh?”

Mu Gaoqi responded unhappily, “Linghu Feng, don’t throw away what face we’re giving you. Show off everything you’ve got in the pill contests. I’ll accept your superiority if you can win a residence, or do you think you’ll obtain one just by talking big here?”

Linghu Feng laughed heartily. “Mu Gaoqi, do you think a little wretched tramp like you is worthy of talking about ability with me? Have you let that little bit of talent in refining pills get to your head, huh? Remember, there’s only two slots in the pill battles. It won’t be your turn no matter what!” There was a vicious undercurrent to his cocky tone.

Mu Gaoqi obviously didn’t wish to argue with him. He pulled at Jiang Chen, “Let’s go Brother Chen.”

Jiang Chen nodded. There was truly no need to be angry at a prancing clown like this.

“Jiang Chen, is it? I’ve heard of you. An outsider with an unstable foundation, and you think yourself capable of competing for these residences? Why don’t you take a piss first and take a good look at yourself?”

Jiang Chen’s body suddenly froze as God’s Eye gleamed and

swept up and down Linghu Feng's body. "Idiot." With that one word response, he walked inside with a dismissive smile.

Linghu Feng had purposefully provoked Jiang Chen, but was slightly surprised to see Jiang Chen hold himself back. He was about to speak again when a light cough sounded by his side. He turned back to see his own grandfather, Linghu Xian by his side with a few Herbal Hall elders. Bringing up the rear was none other than Elder Yun Nie. The elder's expression was emotionless as he walked inside, flicking a noncommittal glance at Linghu Feng in passing. The glance alone made Linghu Feng break out in a cold sweat.

"Control yourself!" Linghu Xian's silent message sounded just as Linghu Feng started panicking. "If you anger yourself first in wanting to provoke Jiang Chen, what kind of great deeds will you be able to accomplish in the future? With such a great opportunity in front of us this time, see how I'll take care of you if you don't win a residence!" Linghu Xian snorted lightly as well, walking in after sending his grandson the message.

There were three hundred disciples participating in the pill contests, making it exceedingly difficult to narrow down the selection to just two. Therefore, this pill contest topics had been divided into preliminaries and final contests. The preliminaries would run until only thirty were left.

Mu Gaoqi stood below with Jiang Chen, introducing those they'd just seen. "Linghu Feng is the lineal grandson of Elder Linghu Xian of the Herbal Hall. His potential in spirit medicine is not bad, and he's ranked in the top three for the competition this time. His

arrogance is backed by ability, as he comes from a family devoted to learning for generations."

"The one that's most favored to take the top this time is Ouyang Chao, another lineal grandson of an Herbal Hall elder. His grandfather Ouyang De has a slightly higher position compared to Linghu Xian. That little girl Lin Hui'er is also favored to win as well." Mu Gaoqi patiently described all their major competition.

Elder Yun Nie began announcing the rules at this time. "There are five topics in the contests. The first thirty to complete the topics will make it into the final contests."

"The five topics are cauldron inspection, fire control, seed identification, medicine assembly, and recipe analysis."

"I take it that no further explanation is needed for cauldron inspection and fire control. This is basic homework for the Regal Pill Palace. Seed identification is the act of finding the designated spirit herb seed within a thousand seeds, and medicine assembly is to complete a predetermined number of matches within a collection of spirit herbs. As for recipe analysis, we will give you five recipes for you to analyze. Your task will be to locate the only one with no mistakes."

The five topics weren't actually that complicated.

Chapter 496: A Dominating First

Jiang Chen was familiar with cauldron inspection and fire control after his bet with Yan Hongtu. Although the contents were different, the format was the exact same, so he felt absolutely no pressure. To Jiang Chen, this kind of testing was as effortless as eating and drinking. He would be able to utterly dominate in cauldron inspection and fire control. Therefore, he sped into the third test at the fastest speed possible—seed identification.

This segment had a slightly higher difficulty, but it still posed no challenge to Jiang Chen. Out of a thousand seeds, one had to choose the only five seeds that had the same attributes. There were only five of them, so the slightest mistake would disqualify a contestant. In addition, one of the seeds was a dead seed, and they had to pick it out too.

Jiang Chen utilized his God's Eye to scan for the most minute of details, employing it like a magnifying glass and enlarging all the attributes of the seeds in his eyes. His fingers flew as he quickly picked out the five seeds. Dead seeds might have been a difficult twist for an ordinary alchemist, but it was still nothing to him.

Dead seeds were simply seeds with no signs of life. He merely sensed for a bit and picked it out from the five. He maintained his overwhelming momentum in the third test.

When the others saw how fast Jiang Chen was, they were completely baffled and shocked. Even the most favored contenders had only just entered the third test, whereas Jiang Chen had already made it into the fourth.

The fourth had to do with assembling medicines, and the difficulty was again slightly higher than the previous. There were 99 spirit herbs present, contestants were required to find eighteen combinations from them. The so-called medicine assembly was just matching up spirit herbs. In the world of refining pills, ingredients could be divided into main ingredients and supplemental ingredients. Identifying and using herbs as main ingredients, supplemental ingredients or both was an art. The matter of how to match them together was another question entirely. In the end, whoever grasped the most knowledge would have the highest level of pill dao.

This kind of game was child's play to Jiang Chen. He only needed to look at these spirit herbs, touching and smelling them once to fully know them inside and out. He quickly made 36 combinations, and there was no error with any of his pairings.

The judge's jaw dropped at the sight of Jiang Chen breezing through the segments. How was this a contest? It was a tutorial! These methods, this speed, this attitude—it was even more relaxed than a tutorial.

At this moment, the most stunned one present was undoubtedly Elder Yun Nie. He was naturally aware of Jiang Chen's high potential in pills. Otherwise, he would've never been able to so easily destroy Yan Hongtu, much less help Elder Yun Nie complete the refinement of the Hexarune Dragon Pill. However, Jiang Chen was still young, and the elder had always thought this might've been a fluke.

Perhaps Jiang Chen had happened to come into contact with this pill at sometime. However... judging from his domineering performance, Elder Yun Nie now understood that Jiang Chen was an absolute genius in matters of spirit medicine. Such a genius had likely never appeared in the history of the Regal Pill Palace. He was simultaneously beset by astonishment and rising excitement.

In the past couple of decades, the elder had been concerned that Sage Dan Chi was overly emphasizing martial dao and thus was greatly affecting the Regal Pill Palace's pill dao. More and more young folk were overlooking the practice of pills in favor of martial arts. It could even be said that the level of pill dao level in the sect had been gradually decreasing in the past sixty years. This decline had not materialized in the elder generation, but in the form of no successors appearing in the younger generation.

This was also the truth. If it wasn't for a shortage in talent, a pill master such as Mu Gaoqi who'd just entered the origin realm would've never been able to strut around with such pride.

Elder Yun Nie was even more worried about the Pill Battles of Mt. Rippling Mirage. He'd obtained intelligence over the past decade or so that indicated the six premier sects of the Myriad Domain were all furiously cultivating pill geniuses. The Tristar Sect and Walkabout Sect in particular had raised many young geniuses under their wing.

In comparison, the young geniuses of the Regal Pill Palace had thrown away the traditions of their ancestors and devoted themselves in pursuing martial dao. Martial dao was a nice thing, Elder Yun Nie was well aware of this. But their focus had been too

narrow, resulting in a loss in their traditional advantage in pill dao along the way. Therefore, Elder Yun Nie was quite worried. He was uncertain if the younger pill masters would be able to triumph against their counterparts from the Tristar Sect and Walkabout Sect in the battles of Rippling Mirage.

He was finally able to heave a sigh of relief as these worries vanished—because he'd discovered Jiang Chen!

While Elder Yun Nie was lost in thought, Jiang Chen had increased his pace and arrived at the fifth topic of analyzing pill recipes. This was the hardest of the five, because only one of the supplied recipes were correct, with other four being erroneous. The contest requested that all five had to be analyzed regardless of their errors, and the contestants had to provide a justification for choosing the correct and erroneous recipes.

This was the greatest barrier amongst the five topics, and the clearest indicator of pill master's level. But even with the enhanced difficulty, it was still nothing to Jiang Chen.

He'd actually been paying attention to the other contestants as well. When he saw that Mu Gaoqi and the others had only just completed the third round, he felt that he would be too shocking if his speed was this fast. Therefore, he purposefully slowed down a bit and used his consciousness to observe the others.

The most favored Ouyang Chao whom Mu Gaoqi had introduced before, the lineal grandson of some Herbal Hall elder; the previously provocative Linghu Feng, lineal grandson of old man Linghu Xian, and the tiny female pill master Ling Hui'er were all

Mu Gaoqi's strongest rivals. Jiang Chen took a look at them and saw that Mu Gaoqi was holding his own against them. However, he could also tell that whether it was Mu Gaoqi or the other three, all of them were holding some strength back, seemingly hesitant at bursting forward with all their strength. They were slightly surprised at Jiang Chen's momentum, but kept their heads and didn't lose themselves in shock, preventing their mindsets from being affected.

They felt that if they had called on their full capabilities early on, it would affect their performance in the final rounds. Therefore, they were highly dismissive of Jiang Chen's actions, thinking that this outsider was purposefully showing off for the limelight. Mu Gaoqi however, naturally knew differently. He knew that this was Jiang Chen's true strength.

Jiang Chen purposefully held himself back in the fifth topic, but he was still the first to complete. The examiner who looked over his results was also quite astonished, because not only had Jiang Chen passed every topic, he'd done so with perfect results. The examiner surreptitiously walked over to Elder Yun Nie and murmured a few words in the elder's ears. The elder smiled slightly and nodded lightly. It was apparent that he was quite impressed at Jiang Chen's results.

Standing off by Elder Yun Nie's side, Linghu Xian perked up his ears as he heard the examiner's soft words. Shock jolted his heart as he narrowed his eyes, casting a glance full of wariness at Jiang Chen as enmity flashed through his heart. Emotions rocked his heart like great waves. "That lad Jiang Chen rejected my invitation last time and now is gaining great recognition in the competition for the residences. Is this animal trying to ruin my plans?"

Linghu Xian greatly spoiled, doted on, and was biased towards his grandson Linghu Feng. He was absolutely sure of his grandson's victory in the fight for the residences this time, but felt a sliver of danger now that he'd witnessed Jiang Chen's unbroken momentum. Linghu Feng already had to face competition from Ouyang Chao, Ling Hui'er and Mu Gaoqi. He was completely dismissive of Ling Hui'er and Mu Gaoqi. They were just a bunch of unorthodox disciples. No matter how high their potential was, it was limited without the support of a Herbal Hall heavyweight.

Ouyang Chao was different. He was also the lineal grandson of a Herbal Hall elder, and his achievements in pill dao was a hair stronger than Linghu Feng. This meant to say that one of the two residences reserved for pill masters was already predestined for Ouyang Chao, and Linghu Feng had to fight for the remaining one. In Linghu Xian's eyes, his grandson should've led the pack in the fight for the remaining residence. But when he saw Jiang Chen's dominating performance in the preliminaries, his confidence developed a hairline crack. As Linghu Xian then looked at Ling Hui'er and Mu Gaoqi, it was obvious that they were both still holding back, they clearly wouldn't be pushovers.

Jiang Chen took first place and entered the finals as the champion. Ouyang Chao was the runner up, Linghu Feng third, Ling Hui'er fourth, Mu Gaoqi fifth and so on...

The rankings surprised no one, apart from Jiang Chen in the lead. They still had to wait for the others to finish the contests and form the list of top thirty for the finals before proceeding. The other geniuses all completed the five topics after roughly two hours, and the final rankings for the preliminaries could finally be

finalized.

The first ones to be disqualified weren't the ones last to finish, but the ones who'd made errors in the previous contests. Any mistake was grounds for disqualification. Therefore, those who'd finished later still had the chance to make it into the top thirty.

The final list was produced after four hours of checks and census. Jiang Chen remained first, his rank unshakeable.

"It's been a long and tiring day, but the list for the final round is now out. The finals will commence early tomorrow morning. Go back and recover your strength, the tests for the final will be much tougher than the preliminaries." With Elder Yun Nie's parting words, the preliminaries drew to a close.

Chapter 497: Threats And Temptation

“Brother Chen, you’re simply too awesome!” Mu Gaoqi’s brows danced as they left Shen Li Palace. He was sincerely happy to see Jiang Chen take the championship in the preliminaries.

Jiang Chen himself was rather calm. With his foundations in the dao of pills, it was only right and proper that he’d taken home the championship in the preliminaries.

“Hmph, victory for now means nothing, just like being fat initially is nothing. It’s only the final weight that tips the scales. The hell kind of use is a champion of the preliminaries? The residences of the Sovereign Area will only be settled in the finals. What kinda use is gaining the limelight in the preliminaries?” Vicious, cold mockery rang out behind them. It was Linghu Feng’s irritating voice again.

Mu Gaoqi snorted derisively. “Pssht. Linghu Feng, why didn’t you take the championship if you’re so good? Don’t tell me you’re jealous, hmm?”

Linghu Feng glowered at Mu Gaoqi in a sinister fashion. “Huh, Mu Gaoqi? Who would’ve thought that you’d grow a pair? You don’t believe that I can run you right out of the Rosy Valley, ah?”

Jiang Chen didn’t wait for Mu Gaoqi to respond when he heard this. He reached out a hand to stop Mu Gaoqi, laughing coldly, “Now that I really don’t believe.”

“Jiang Chen, don’t you strut around either! I know you have someone backing you up, but you’re just a country bumpkin. A mere rookie trying to throw your weight around in the Regal Pill Palace!” Linghu Feng didn’t dare tell Jiang Chen that he would run the latter out of the sect. He could only glare viciously at Mu Gaoqi with an expression that shouted “just you wait!”.

However, Mu Gaoqi wasn’t the same person of old. He wasn’t stopped in his tracks by Linghu Feng, merely shrugging with a cold snort, dismissing Linghu Feng’s threats.

Some of the other core disciples had walked out at this time. Jiang Chen didn’t want to make a spectacle of himself like Linghu Feng was so keen on doing, and so left with Mu Gaoqi.

Linghu Feng cursed loudly as he watched Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi leave. “A wuss and a bumpkin, the shame of our Regal Pill Palace!”

Suddenly, someone walking up to him smiled leisurely. “Linghu, if you’re looking down on them that much, why are you so angered by them? I say, are you feeling a bit insecure?”

“What do you mean by that, Ouyang Chao?!” Linghu Feng was even more incensed when he saw that the newcomer was Ouyang Chao, the heavily favored candidate in the Regal Pill Palace.

Ouyang Chao responded noncommittally. “I didn’t mean anything. I’m just saying that if you’re feeling low on self confidence, you should back out while it’s still early.”

“Bullshit! What do I have to doubt?! I’m a proper scion of the Herbal Hall, how can a country bumpkin compare to me? How can a wuss like Mu Gaoqi compare to me?”

“Is that so? I don’t know about Mu Gaoqi, but I feel that Jiang Chen is exceedingly likely to claim a residence in the Sovereign Area.” Ouyang Chao’s tone was relaxed.

This of course, further displeased Linghu Feng. “Pah! You talk like he’s not one of your competitors! Aren’t you afraid of him threatening your position?”

Ouyang Chao shrugged. “I don’t care. If he really is stronger than me, then I’ll go for the second slot. If there are two stronger than me, then my skills are just inferior. I’ll accept that and try harder.”

Linghu Feng was almost breathless with rage. He knew that Ouyang Chao was jeering in saying that he’d go for the other residence if Jiang Chen was stronger than him. If this was the case, there’d be nothing for Linghu Feng.

Linghu Feng’s gaze wandered around and stopped on a little girl. A sinister grimace crossed his face. “Junior sister Ling, this Jiang Chen is being so blatantly cocky that he’s slapping our faces! He’s not even in the top five favored candidates but is coming on so strong. He’s obviously making a statement to us!”

The little girl was short in stature, and her cheeks that were heavy with baby fat made her both cute and likable. If it wasn’t for

her enormous womanly wiles that even her disciple uniform couldn't conceal, it was likely that no one would think she was eighteen years old when looking at her. She was one of the favorites of this time's competition, Ling Hui'er. Famous amongst the pill masters in the Rosy Valley for both her potential and her youthful looks, all the male disciples drooled over her, especially when combined with the fatal attraction of her chest.

"Senior brother Linghu, Hui'er has no grudge with senior brother Jiang Chen. He has no reason to make a statement to me." Ling Hui'er made a face and walked off, beaming. It was obvious that she hadn't been affected by Linghu Feng's crude provocation.

When he looked around and saw how the smiles on everyone else's faces carried a bit of mockery within them, he knew that he'd become a laughingstock.

……

"Gaoqi, this Linghu Feng possesses extreme pettiness of character. Come to my residence tonight, I can share some pill dao reflections with you."

Mu Gaoqi was overjoyed. He'd long since viewed Jiang Chen as a god and was quite excited that he'd been invited to Jiang Chen's residence. He knew that this was Jiang Chen thinking enough of him to go to this much effort.

"Of course! This is a most welcome opportunity." Mu Gaoqi was actually worrying about the possibility of Linghu Feng getting up

to any tricks in the middle of the night, like disturbing his sleep or otherwise. It wouldn't be a good development for him if this happened.

Although Palace Head Dan Chi had said that whoever cheated would be punished, one still had to guard against some things.

Jiang Chen made the appropriate arrangements when he arrived at his residence. Mu Gaoqi was a frequent visitor anyways; his appearance wouldn't cause much surprise. It was actually Mu Gaoqi who was slightly taken aback when he saw Gouyu and the others. His venerated brother's followers seemed to have grown mightily in a few short months.

Jiang Chen was of a mind to teach Mu Gaoqi a few things with this invitation. Although Mu Gaoqi possessed good potential already, he was still a bit shaky in his theoretical knowledge. His potential was very high due to his wood constitution and his ability in refining pills. However, there was much in his foundations that lagged far behind Ouyang Chao and Linghu Feng, scions of the Herbal Hall. Jiang Chen wanted to shore up these gaps for Mu Gaoqi tonight. Although pill dao theory was as vast as the misty ocean, if one grasped one part of foundational theory, one would be able to grasp all of it.

Mu Gaoqi thought it odd at first, but he was stunned as he continued to listen. He knew that an immense stroke of luck had fallen into his lap. Much of what Jiang Chen was teaching him was absent even in many of the scrolls in the Regal Pill Palace library. The theory in particular started off easy, then quickly ventured into deeper territory. This kind of mindset and level completely

shattered Mu Gaoqi's usual understanding.

The two became more engrossed in their conversation as they chatted. Mu Gaoqi didn't even notice the sky darkening to night as he'd sunk into the chat. Suddenly, a visitor came knocking.

"Elder Linghu?" Jiang Chen was a bit surprised that Elder Linghu Xian from the Herbal Hall was paying him a visit.

Linghu Xian's youthful looks contrasted his white hair, standing there with a benevolent smile on his face. However, Jiang Chen didn't relax his guard at all. For Linghu Xian to come knocking at this time was a hint of nothing good to come, particularly as he'd tried and failed to recruit Jiang Chen last time as a medicine boy. There was an obvious grudge between the two. He's also clashed twice with Linghu Feng today. Being his grandfather, it was impossible that Linghu Xian would sit idly by.

"Haha, what, are you not going to invite me in to sit?" Linghu Xian smiled.

Jiang Chen frowned. "It's the finals of the competition tomorrow and we are in tense preparation. What business might Elder Linghu have?"

Linghu Xian's smile remained in place, "Let's go talk inside, let's go inside."

Jiang Chen was about to decline with a darkened face, but

Linghu Xian spoke lazily, “Jiang Chen ah, you declined me last time I came to visit, are you not even going to let me in the door this time? Then I’ll stand at your door all night!”

When he saw how shameless the elder was being, Jiang Chen snorted softly, not knowing what the elder was up to. However, given that Linghu Xian was willing to play the fool at his age, Jiang Chen could only let him in.

When they’d taken their seats inside, Linghu Xian smiled. “Young friend Jiang Chen, I still quite admire you. I’ve actually been planning on asking Elder Yun Nie to make you an administrator in the Herbal Hall; how about it? You’ll receive the stipend of an administrator and that of a core disciple. It’s a wonderful deal to be able to draw on two stipends.”

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. “I’ve only entered the Regal Pill Palace for a short amount of time. I’m afraid I haven’t the fortune to enjoy your largess.”

Linghu Xian’s forehead creased when he saw Jiang Chen turn him down without a second thought. “Jiang Chen ah, I only have the best intentions. Don’t always look at me with such prejudiced eyes! We can chat about anything!”

“My apologies, Elder Linghu. If this is the only thing you’re here about, I find no need for us to continue talking. I still need to prepare for tomorrow, so I won’t keep you any longer.” He waved his hand and issued his intention to show his guest out.

Linghu Xian had not reached his current position without possessing a face thicker than the city walls. He didn't mind in the slightest when he saw Jiang Chen gesture to send his guest off. He just laughed leisurely, "Jiang Chen, name your price. I'll give you whatever I can as long as you're willing to withdraw from the competition for the Sovereign Area residences. Even my proposal to enter the Herbal Hall still stands. I know you're from the Precious Tree Sect and are certainly short on resources. I happen to have quite a bit of family wealth to draw on. If you want it to, we can absolutely make this transaction happen."

He is indeed here for the residence. Jiang Chen looked at Linghu Xian with a faint smile. "One, I'm absolutely confident in winning a residence. Two, your grandson still may not win one even if I withdraw."

"His success and failure is not your burden to worry about. Our transaction will remain in effect as long as you back out." Linghu Xian was very confident in his grandson. Only Ouyang Chao was only a bit stronger than Linghu Xian when the unknown factor of Jiang Chen was removed. He truly wasn't worried about the others.

Jiang Chen laughed, at ease, and lightly shook his head. "Elder Linghu, Palace Head Dan Chi emphasized most gravely that cheating would have dire consequences. Strictly speaking, your words are already cheating on behalf of Linghu Feng."

Linghu Xian's expression grew frosty. "Jiang Chen, be careful with what you say. I'm only worried about your future out of the goodness of my heart. Isn't it just a residence? There will be

doubtless be more created in the future and act as opportunities for you. I can promise to help you obtain one in the future if you promise me this now. The Sky Pillar Area is second only to the Sovereign Area. That's not too much of an insult for a Precious Tree Sect newcomer like you, is it?" His words conveyed both overt and covert disdain for Jiang Chen's background.

Jiang Chen gave a bark of laughter. "Even half a sentence is too much when the conversation is unpleasant. Elder Linghu, I'm from the Precious Tree Sect alright, but who told you that I'm unworthy of the Sovereign Area? I gave you some face because I respect you as an elder of the Herbal Hall. But I'll have to report this to Palace Head Dan Chi if you refuse to leave."

Linghu Xian's expression changed drastically when he heard Dan Chi's name. He surged to his feet in a rage. "Good, good, good! Jiang Chen, you're something else, huh! You've got some guts! You're the only junior who dares treat me like so in all my years of dominating the Regal Pill Palace!"

"The Precious Tree Sect, is it? Sixteen kingdoms alliance, hmm? Jiang Chen, I'll remember that!"

Jiang Chen frowned. Did Linghu Xian meant to covertly suppress the sixteen kingdom alliance and attack the Precious Tree Sect?

Chapter 498: Jiang Chen Strikes Back, Linghu Runs Into Bad Luck

With Jiang Chen's understanding of Linghu Xian, the old man may look friendly, but overflowed with rotten schemes. Petty beyond belief and narrow-minded to boot, he would stop at nothing to achieve his goals. Jiang Chen had declined him twice now, so their relationship was as inharmonious as fire and water—particularly this time, since Jiang Chen's rejection was a direct blow towards his grandson's opportunity.

Once Jiang Chen obtained a residence and Linghu Feng failed, Linghu Xian would be sure to take his revenge. He might not be brave enough to act against Jiang Chen in the Regal Pill Palace, but he could absolutely send people to harass the Precious Tree Sect in private, or even act against it.

"Linghu Xian, you and your grandson have challenged me time and time again. If you cross my bottom line, I'll let you know what it means to feel regret!" Killing intent flashed through Jiang Chen's eyes as he saw the elder depart.

If Linghu Xian and Linghu Feng wanted to fight with Jiang Chen, they were welcome to try. He wouldn't be afraid of them in the slightest. The only thing he was afraid of were despicable, petty characters who would focus their attention on those unrelated to this matter. Take the Precious Tree Sect for instance, although Jiang Chen didn't have a deep relationship with them, he didn't want to see them affected because of his matters. Given that Linghu Xian had issued this kind of threat, Jiang Chen wanted to nip it in the bud. He absolutely couldn't dither until Linghu Xian

acted. It would be far too late by then.

When Mu Gaoqi saw Jiang Chen's solemn expression as he walked back into the residence, he hastily inquired why. Jiang Chen didn't hold back his thoughts and summarized everything.

Mu Gaoqi began cursing loudly, "The Linghu clan has always been arrogant, and Linghu Xian is a particularly sly old fox. Many people in the sect know not to provoke him, as he tends to be vicious in return. Whoever becomes embroiled with him is certainly unlucky. Brother Chen, you need to be on your guard against him."

Jiang Chen nodded. "This man is petty and narrow minded, and I must stay on my guard. He must think he has me for sure. Don't worry, I won't give him a chance to make a move."

Mu Gaoqi was much more at ease when he saw how confident and relaxed Jiang Chen was.

"Alright Gaoqi, let's ignore this and continue our discussion about pills." Jiang Chen then proceeded to give Mu Gaoqi many pointers with great patience that night. As the discourse continued back and forth, Mu Gaoqi felt like the clouds had parted over the horizon of his understanding. He realized that he had entered a world that was far more magnificent than he'd realized.

"Brother Chen, a conversation with you is worth more than ten years of study. You are truly my benefactor. If I amount to anything in the future, it will because you shone a light on the path

forward for me, Brother Chen." Mu Gaoqi thanked Jiang Chen from the bottom of his heart.

"You and I grew to know each other as well. I wouldn't have spoken of all this to you if it wasn't for your kindness and honesty. Gaoqi, you taking down a residence in tomorrow's finals is more convincing than any words of gratitude you can voice."

Mu Gaoqi nodded firmly. "Brother Chen, I only had fifty to sixty percent assurance before, but now I feel that I have a ninety percent guarantee. I must seize a residence after you do! I'll have those snobs know that I, Mu Gaoqi, am not the coward they hold in their eyes!" His personality previously had been a bit cowardly. He'd always rather come up short in any matter than others, and always treated others nicely, wanting to be the good guy and please everyone.

However, at the end of the day, he hadn't found favor in anyone's eyes. There weren't many core disciples who'd truly taken him into their confidence in Rosy Valley. It wasn't because he wasn't friendly or sincere enough, but that his martial dao potential and cultivation level were truly insufficient. In terms of pill dao, although his potential was good, it wasn't at the level where he dominated everyone else in the younger generation.

The two spent the rest of the night gathering their strength, sitting down cross legged in meditation. The two arrived in vigorous spirits at Shen Li Palace early the next day, and were met with a supercilious look from old man Linghu Xian. He swept right past Jiang Chen, a warning look flashing through his eyes.

This was evidently his final warning.

Jiang Chen pretended not to have seen it and laughed coldly in his heart. “Old Linghu, I don’t mind sending you and your grandson on your way if you want to court death!”

When Linghu Xian saw Jiang Chen only smile coldly and ignore him, he grew incensed and sent a silent message. “Jiang Chen, I give you a final chance. Find an excuse to withdraw now, and all our previous matters can be forgotten. Everything I promised you before still stands. You’ll regret it if you refuse!”

Jiang Chen’s footsteps suddenly halted as he looked at Linghu Xian with a mocking look. He purposefully spoke loudly, “Elder Linghu, I’d like to see how you’ll make me regret things.”

Linghu Xian hadn’t expected that Jiang Chen would suddenly speak out loud. He’d sent the previous messages with his consciousness before so that he could naturally deny things now. He put on a baffled expression, “Jiang Chen, are you speaking to me?”

Playing dumb!

A cold smirk played about Jiang Chen’s lips. “Elder Linghu, is it fun to play dumb at your age in front of all these young folk? You dared threaten me in my residence last night and now you’re publicly sending me a silent message with another threat. What, now you don’t have the courage to admit to things?” Jiang Chen purposefully spoke loudly and immediately attracted several

curious stares. Several elders in charge of the proceedings all walked up, wanting to ask what was going on.

Linghu Xian spoke with a self righteous look plastered across his face. “Jiang Chen, perhaps my grandson Linghu Feng clashed verbally with you yesterday? Even if that’s the case, you don’t need to frame me like this, do you? Everyone knows about my character in the Regal Pill Palace. You’re just a newly entered disciple, do I need to threaten you? What would I threaten you for?”

Elder Yun Nie happened to walk in at this point. His brow furrowed when he saw how many people had gathered, “What’s going on?” Someone immediately walked up with a report.

Elder Yun Nie looked at Linghu Xian, then at Jiang Chen. From his position as the Hallmaster of the Herbal Hall, he couldn’t blatantly succor Jiang Chen and suppress his own subordinate. “The Palace Head himself is overseeing the competition for the Sovereign Area residences. I don’t care who is in the right and who is not, only know that I will be the first to take to task anyone who dares disturb the proceedings.”

Linghu Xian nodded successively, as if in full agreement. “Indeed! I also resolutely support Elder Yun Nie. Those who maliciously seek to disturb the competition should be punished!” His tone was full of justice as he put on a great act.

Jiang Chen snorted derisively and grasped with his hand, sending a message glyph in a beam of light hovering in the air. “Elder Linghu, you can’t have forgotten what you said last night, could you? There happens to be so many people present, so why

don’t I ask everyone to take a listen?” He made a quick gesture and the message glyph materialized in the air, playing back the previous day’s conversation.

When Linghu Xian had come visiting, Jiang Chen had secretly taken precautions, and recorded the conversation between the two into a message glyph. The technical requirements needed to do so weren’t high, and Jiang Chen’’s sophisticated methods had left Linghu Xian without an inkling that such an act had taken place.

The atmosphere immediately became awkward, as a message glyph would essentially recreate the entire scene. Linghu Xian knew things would only get worse when he heard the replay. He suddenly gave a great shout and leapt forward, grasping at the glyph before a third could be played. “How dare you simulate my voice and frame me, kid?! You deserve to die for your crime!”

He was about to bound forward when Elder Yun Nie snorted and flourished his sleeves, sending Linghu Xian skidding back a few steps with a flash of light. His face was stony. “Why are you nervous if you aren’t feeling guilty?”

The other elders all nodded, their gazes laden with contemptuous overtones as they looked at Linghu Xian. It was obvious that they believed the contents of the message glyph.

The glyph disappeared as soon as it’d finished its playback. Elder Yun Nie’s chilly gaze was merciless as he stared at Linghu Xian, full of authority.

“Elder Yun Nie, you must believe me! I have such a high position, what need would I have to suppress a new disciple? Everyone, you all should uphold justice! Tell me, what reason would I have to suppress Jiang Chen?” Linghu Xian had an imploring expression on his face as he stumbled and stammered through an explanation, trying to persuade his peers in the Herbal Hall to speak out or argue on his behalf.

However, who would stand out to speak for Linghu Xian in the face of such incontrovertible evidence, even if they had a strong relationship with him? He wasn’t much for making friends to begin with, and with the competition for slots in Mt. Rippling Mirage staring them in the face, many Herbal Hall elders were secretly applauding in their hearts. It was good enough that they weren’t fanning the flames at this moment, let alone speak up on his behalf.

One less Linghu Xian meant one less competitor for the slots of the Pill Battles!

“Elder Yun Nie, I... I’ve really been framed! Jiang Chen has a conflict with my grandson and wants to suppress Linghu Feng so that he can’t enter the competition! These are despicable methods he’s using to suppress the competition!” Linghu Xian screamed hoarsely, but Elder Yun Nie’s eyes only grew colder and colder.

“Linghu Xian, are you stupid, or do you take all of us for fools?” Elder Yun Nie responded coldly. “Voices can be imitated, but do you think we aren’t able to tell apart an imitation from reality? Good, very good! You’re something else, aren’t you Linghu Xian!?”

Linghu Xian's expression changed drastically. "I... I'm innocent! Elder Yun Nie, you can't persecute me!"

"Persecute you?" Elder Yun Nie asked frostily. "You disturbed the competition and paid no heed to the Palace Head's words, and you dare say that I'm persecuting you?!"

"I... I don't accept this! I want an appeal! I want to accuse Jiang Chen of framing me!"

Elder Yun Nie couldn't be bothered wasting further words with him. "Where are the law enforcers? Strip him of his elder robe first!"

He was an elder if he wore the robe, and nothing without it.

Linghu Xian started screaming and raving, "Yun Nie, you're framing me! Everyone knows that Jiang Chen is your man and you're using his hand to persecute me!"

Elder Yun Nie smiled faintly and looked at the other elders. "Everyone, Linghu Xian says I am persecuting him. You are all witnesses, what do you think?"

An elder immediately jumped out. "Linghu Xian is a thief calling for others to stop the thief! How can any of us fail to determine the veracity of that recording? And he certainly has motive enough to really threaten Jiang Chen."

“Yes! This miscreant dares openly flaunt the Palace Head’s words, he should be handled according to the sect’s regulations!”

People band together to push down a falling wall. Everyone knew that Linghu Xian was done for, so no one minded adding a few footprints on his body.

Chapter 499: Astounding Answering Speed

One had to say, Linghu Xian had been well and truly caught in a web of his own making. As the Hall of Law Enforcement investigated, his crimes began to pile up, including threats towards disciples participating in battle, insubordination towards the Palace Head, and severe interference with the objectivity of the competition. Linghu Xian had even threatened the Precious Tree Sect, so he had the added crime of undermining the alliance between the two sects added to his list. When punishment was handed down for his crimes, he was immediately removed from his position and sent to the Regal Pill Palace dungeons.

Linghu Feng was likewise stripped of his competition qualifications and replaced with the disciple who'd ranked 31st.

With Linghu Xian gone, the power of the Linghu clan also plummeted. The Herbal Hall elders who were dissatisfied with Linghu Xian to begin with also stepped out to expose his crimes. When everything came into the light of day, it was greatly shocking and actually involved the loss of several lives.

Everyone within the Regal Pill Palace was enraged as they bore witness to a list of crimes too numerous to even fully record. Palace Head Dan Chi and several heavyweights came to an immediate decision that when the competition ended, Linghu Xian's head would be displayed for all to see!

The rules had been strictly adhered to ever since Palace Head Dan Chi had taken power. All of the crimes that Linghu Xian had committed were enough for him to die ten times over. When he'd

settled on Linghu Xian's sentence, Dan Chi once again lectured the sect, a forbidding expression on his face. "Why is our Regal Pill Palace one of the six great sects of the Myriad Domain? It's not only because of our rich heritage, but our strict sect rules. The rules that are the product of the combined effort of all those who have guided our sect with vision. A bad egg such as Linghu Xian envies talent and is corrupt. If he is not eliminated, he is certain to become the scourge of the sect. I hope the younger generation will treat this as the warning it is. The sect is everyone's sect. Whoever seeks to bring disaster to it is the enemy of us all. The rules will be strictly enforced, and no one is exempt!"

It was easy to imagine the strong deterrence that the example of Linghu Xian set. "Elder Lian Cheng, Elder Yun Nie. Please keep a closer eye on things and don't let any more unexpected developments occur in the competition." The two elders bowed as they received their orders.

Linghu Xian was suitably punished, and Linghu Feng was revoked of his right to participate. This interlude imparted a more tense atmosphere to the competition. Everyone was finally aware of how important this competition was to the senior echelon of the sect.

The contests began after the interlude. The thirty pill dao geniuses participating in the finals gathered in a hall inside Shen Li Palace.

Elder Yun Nie swept bright eyes across the faces of all the participants. "Everyone, Palace Head Dan Chi, Elder Lian Cheng and myself have come to a decision after lengthy discussions last

night. Anyone who enters the finals this time can advance to the Sky Pillar area for cultivation, even if you do not ultimately win out in the finals."

The Sky Pillar Area was second only to the Sovereign Area in the Rosy Valley, and was far superior to the Soaring Clouds and Peerless Areas. Some of the participants in the finals were originally from the Sky Pillar Area, so this news didn't have much meaning for them. But for those from the Soaring Clouds and Peerless Areas, this was obviously a solid benefit.

Many of those in the finals knew that they didn't stand much of a chance of winning out. After all, there were only four combined spots from the martial and pill dao competitions. But to be able to advance to the Sky Pillar Area without obtaining a Sovereign Residence, that was an unexpected boon!

"Alright, I now pronounce that the pill dao finals as officially open. Begin!" Elder Yun Nie gave the order to officially start the finals.

"Ten years of practicing martial dao, a hundred years of refining pills. What does this saying mean? I'm sure all of you are well aware of its meaning. If a genius practices martial dao, not only will he see great improvement in ten years, but his speed determines his potential and future. The dao of pills, however, is a long term venture. Just as wine ages into its true fragrance, ten years is sufficient to identify a martial dao genius, yet a hundred years worth of winters and summers are needed to see the true potential of a pill dao heavyweight. Just from this, it is easy to see that the path of pill dao is not for the faint hearted."

Elder Yun Nie continued. “You emerged from the masses of the Regal Pill Palace disciples and number among the top 30. You each have displayed a strength beyond your peers, and this is something to take pride in. Even if you do not succeed in the finals, I would hope that you do not give up on yourself, because competition in the dao of pills is one that spans decades. Perhaps you may not be on the same level as the premier geniuses today, but history has shown many pill masters who have risen to prominence well into their lives. Since my Regal Pill Palace was founded for pill dao, we have the foundation and ability to cultivate pill masters of all ages. Of course, I hope that all of you will bring forth your all. Leave no regrets behind, and give it your best shot.”

Elder Yun Nie began announcing the rules after a round of encouragement. “My Regal Pill Palace emphasizes four points in cultivating pill masters. The first is theory; this is the foundation. Progressing forward is something as intangible as the fleeting winds without a solid theoretical foundation. The strength of one’s theory will determine the level of a pill master.

“The second is vision. To a pill dao genius, strong vision and minute observation skills is the key that unlocks the prowess of a superb pill master.

“The third is strength of heart. A pill master faces critical moments at every refining, and without the requisite strength of heart to support their refining, they are sure to make mistakes at critical moments. It is very difficult for those to become a superb pill master.

“The fourth is one of manipulation. After all is said and done, dexterity is still vital. The deftness of a pill master’s hands is the most direct display of one’s competency.

“Therefore, we have four areas in the finals: theory, vision, strength of heart, and manipulation.”

Jiang Chen nodded inwardly after hearing Elder Yun Nie’s words. The Regal Pill Palace may not be comparable to the divine level of pill dao powers, its fundamentals were perfectly formed. Its thoughts were completely accurate from a pill dao perspective. These were indeed the four most important points for pill dao.

“And now, the first category of theory will officially begin. The time limit is two hours, and there will be a hundred points in every category. We will generate rankings based on the scores, and if two scores tie, the first to complete will be ranked higher!”

The rules stated that everyone would enter secret chambers according to their ranking in the preliminaries. Everyone was to be in their own sealed off chamber for the theory category. Each chamber was outfitted with all sorts of containment restrictions that made it impossible for participants to communicate with the outside world, preventing all cheating.

Jiang Chen had once arrived in the same world for the pill dao tests of Eternal Spirit Mountain. He’d used pill dao that year to farm points, drawing great attention to himself and inciting the geniuses of all four sects as well as the organizers to team up to suppress him. Therefore, he wasn’t the least unfamiliar with this kind of testing condition.

He entered the secret room and saw three scrolls placed on the table, having to do with the theory tests. He opened all of them to see that there were ten questions on each scroll. There were questions that were worth two points, worth three points, and ones worth five points.

There were 10 two point questions, worth 20 points total. 10 three point questions, 30 points total. 10 five point questions, 50 points total. The thirty questions all together made for 100 points.

Jiang Chen quickly glanced through the questions. They went from easy to complex in increasing difficulty. The two point questions were quite basic and didn't cover a wide range of topics. They all had to do with raising spirit herbs and analyzing their properties, as well as spirit herb combination questions. This wasn't difficult for a pill dao genius who'd made it through to the finals. He quickly went through the scroll.

Although the difficulty of the second scroll rose slightly and covered more topics, it was still a walk in the park for Jiang Chen. He quickly finished with it as well.

The five point questions were undoubtedly the hardest, and each question was very unique as well, covering a wide range of topics. Not only did it ask about growing spirit herbs and refining pills, it talked even more about the control of fire and cauldrons. The final three questions even had to do with ancient recipes, and they were undoubtedly the defining ones of this category. This was because when it came to ancient recipes, if one's knowledge and breadth of experience was shallow in any area, it was possible that they

wouldn’t be able to even start answering the questions.

With Jiang Chen’s grasp over ancient pill recipes, there wasn’t another who would top him in the entire Divine Abyss Continent, much less the Regal Pill Palace. To him, even if he didn’t recognize the recipe, he only needed to somewhat analyze it and find the advanced version in the memories of his past life. After working backwards from the advanced recipe, he’d be able to dissect the recipe in front of him.

It was just like the Hexarune Dragon Pill. He hadn’t known what it was originally, but after some analysis, he understood that it was the same as the Ennearune Heaven Grievance Pill, just simplified.

Jiang Chen finished all three question in one stroke. He then double checked his work, made sure it was fine, then rolled up the scroll and walked out of the secret room. Only one hour had passed.

Outside of the testing center, all the heavyweights of the Herbal Hall were sitting there solemnly, keeping an eye on all candidates. They were slightly surprised when he walked out. Only half of the allotted time had passed!

“Jiang Chen, once you exit the testing area, you won’t be able to return.” An elder spoke up in warning.

Jiang Chen smiled and nodded his head. “In response to all the elders, I have finished my scrolls and request entry to the second category.”

“What?” Ouyang De, one of the elders present, was flabbergasted. He looked at Jiang Chen incredulously. “Jiang Chen, you’re finished?”

“In response to the elder, I’m finished.”

Elder Yun Nie had been smiling without a word since he’d seen Jiang Chen walk out. He spoke up at this time. “Since you’re done, you can enter the second category. Send him along.”

An administrator immediately took Jiang Chen to the second area, leaving behind several shell shocked elders. Those thirty questions weren’t that easy, particularly the five point questions! Jiang Chen had finished them in only half of the allotted time? This performance was a bit too perverse! Or was it that he’d given up on them because they were too hard?

Chapter 500: Temporarily First

Many of the elders guessed that Jiang Chen had simply passed over the more difficult questions to finish faster. Given the difficulty level, it was an entirely reasonable supposition. Candidates who finished faster would hold a greater advantage if everyone's scores were similar.

"This Jiang Chen is still too young, it seems. He couldn't retain his composure and thought the finals would be as casual as the preliminaries." An elder sighed softly.

It was apparent that some of the elders had already made their own judgements about the quality of Jiang Chen's answers, given that he'd finished in an hour. They all felt that Jiang Chen was doing this for the limelight, placing far too much emphasis on speed. This kind of method would absolutely impact the quality of his answers.

Elder Yun Nie, on the other hand, remained serene and impartial. Jiang Chen was someone he had his eyes on. From what he knew of Jiang Chen, the latter wasn't the sort to lose his cool so easily. He must have had his own reasons for handing in his answers this early.

However, the rules prevented him from looking at Jiang Chen's scroll before all the others had finished. All the scrolls had to be graded at the same time.

At that moment, Mu Gaoqi was answering the last couple of five

point questions in his room. He was quite agitated at this moment, because he'd just discovered the fruits of his discussion with Jiang Chen last night. The last three questions were directly referencing two of the ancient recipes they'd talked about! This made Mu Gaoqi feel that a stroke of luck had descended from the heavens and smacked him upside the head.

"Brother Chen, you are truly my benefactor." Mu Gaoqi was excited beyond belief. "It's impossible for me to get anything wrong on the two point and three point questions, and I'm quite certain about the five point questions earlier. If I can answer two of these final questions correctly, I'll be able to sit at a solid 95 points! Even Ouyang Chao won't be able to do this, right??"

It would be a lie to say that Mu Gaoqi wasn't flustered at this moment. However, he quickly calmed down. He knew that now wasn't the time to be proud. He who laughed at the end would laugh the loudest.

When he reached the last question, Mu Gaoqi was at a loss when faced with the ancient recipe. But he quickly made the decision to give up on it. As opposed to wasting time here, he was better off checking his other answers. He should make certain there were no mistakes and hand it in earlier to gain more time. After all, it was highly likely that a competition of this caliber would come down to completion time when deciding the final rankings.

Mu Gaoqi's greatest gains after following Jiang Chen, apart from pill dao knowledge and the baptism in the spring, was the shift in his personality. He'd been indecisive and spineless before, afraid of loss, but now there were some hints of determination and resolve

in his personality.

Outside of the testing area, the elders were still sitting there. Even fifteen minutes after Jiang Chen, not even one person had walked out. “Heh heh, everyone, who do you think will be second?” An elder started chatting to pass the time.

“I’m going to guess that it’s Elder Ouyang’s grandson, Ouyang Chao?”

“Mm, I too look favorably upon Ouyang Chao. He’s a scion of the Herbal Hall after all! From where I sit, he’s a dependable asset, with a solid foundation in theory. He’s absolutely a hot contender this time!”

“Haha, it seems that everyone thinks the same as me. We think highly of Ouyang Chao!”

Elder Ouyang De smiled gently, his heart filled with pride. He firmly believed that his direct grandson Ouyang Chao would seize one of the residences. He’d never once doubted it. Even if Linghu Feng hadn’t been stripped of his qualifications, Ouyang De didn’t believe that anyone could threaten Ouyang Chao. Even though he couldn’t quite see through Jiang Chen, even if the latter had taken a slot, the other would still go to his grandson.

Therefore, he was quite at ease and had a proud smile on his coolly composed face. A figure walked out of the chambers as they continued chatting.

“Mm?” Ouyang De’s body suddenly trembled, because he was the

first to realize that this wasn't his grandson, but someone else. This person was noticeably younger than Ouyang Chao, and a few hints of a lighthearted, carefree attitude about him that didn't resemble Ouyang Chao. His robe and upswept hair made him appear quite ethereal, and it gave him a vaguely otherworldly feeling.

"Mu Gaoqi?" An elder recognized the person.

One had to say, Mu Gaoqi truly didn't have much influence in the sect. He didn't have much of a backer in the Herbal Hall, and wasn't a scion of the Hall either.

Elder Yun Nie was slightly surprised to see Mu Gaoqi. He knew of the name, and that Mu Gaoqi had recently grown close to Jiang Chen, but what surprised him at this moment wasn't just Mu Gaoqi's speed, but rather his demeanor.

There was a particularly otherworldly aura that wreathed around Mu Gaoqi, making him appear quite extraordinary. This kind of aura was almost nonexistent among the pill dao geniuses of the entire Regal Pill Palace. No wonder the Regal Pill Palace disciples all called him the Wood Demigod. He certainly wasn't a simple character indeed.

"Disciple Mu Gaoqi has completed the first category and requests to enter the second." Mu Gaoqi's personality had previously been weak, but now he seemed to able to stand on his own two feet in front of so many sect elders. He didn't look the least bit uncomfortable.

"Mm? This Mu Gaoqi is normally vacillating and cowardly, unable to even speak in front of sect heavyweights. How is he so at ease today, and neither cringing nor arrogant to boot?" Some of the elders were surprised as well.

The more Elder Yun Nie saw of Mu Gaoqi, the more he liked what he saw. He nodded, "Go, lead him to the second category."

After Mu Gaoqi left, Ouyang De's expression became a bit ugly.

Everyone favored Ouyang Chao, and he had tacitly agreed to it as well. But the second to come out was Mu Gaoqi, not his grandson!

"Heh heh, young folks now are unable to remain calm. In my eyes, a pill dao genius should be as steady as Ouyang Chao!" An elder firmly in Ouyang De's camp tried to comfort the elder in this manner. "Indeed, Ouyang Chao's mindset is steady and he keeps his cool in the face of adversity. This is the basic quality of a pill master."

Yet the other elders seemed to have temporarily gone deaf, not joining in on the stream of praises. It was obvious to everyone that Hallmaster Yun Nie seemed to admire Mu Gaoqi a tad. Since the Hallmaster liked this boy, it wasn't a good idea to overly praise Ouyang Chao. When it came to fawning on Ouyang De or Elder Yun Nie, did such a decision even need second thought?

Ouyang Chao finally emerged after two thirds of the allotted time had passed. One couldn't glean any trace of emotion from his face. Baby faced Ling Hui'er walked out shortly thereafter, with her stunning body on display. When the others saw how she was slightly pouting, they could tell that she wasn't quite satisfied with how she'd displayed her skills in the first category.

Ouyang De actually really wanted to ask Ouyang Chao how he'd done, but he controlled himself in the end. If he asked now, he would give others something to criticize about and might even disturb Ouyang Chao's train of thought. As such, he kept his mouth shut.

The second category was that of vision, and it was a truly important dividing line for a pill master.

Supreme observation was required to prevent any accidents from happening when refining pills. An eye for detail was even more

necessary when determining the growth of spirit herbs, and an absolute prerequisite for selecting seeds of proper grade.

There were only ten questions in this category, and each was worth ten points. There were five topics to focus on, identifying seeds, flames, cauldrons, pills, and recipes. There were two questions within each topic, for a total of ten questions.

For someone trained in the God's Eye like Jiang Chen, his vision truly had no equal. Add that to his rich knowledge of pills, there was no doubt about his victory.

He used an even shorter span of time to complete the ten questions of the second category. When he emerged, most candidates had only just finished the first category, and the elders who'd previously questioned him were speechless.

They were no longer certain that Jiang Chen was purposefully pursuing speed. Even if a young pill master was a genius, they still wouldn't have this speed.

He likewise displayed an implacable momentum in the strength of heart category, completely unstoppable in his progress. When he emerged from the third category, the scores for the answers to theory had just been tallied up.

Jiang Chen's name was at the top of the ranking with a full score.

Astonishment rippled across the scene. The elders were struck

speechless, and had no idea how to react. They even felt their faces burn with the feeling that Jiang Chen had slapped them all.

"What a perverted genius, this is absolutely astounding! Finishing the scrolls in an hour. And with full marks... is Jiang Chen really from the sixteen kingdoms?"

"Indeed! It makes more sense if he came from the Upper Eight Realms! From the sixteen kingdoms? This doesn't make any sense at all. Just how strong are the Regal Pill Palace's foundations that they could cultivate such a genius?"

All of them sighed, hearts awash with deep emotion.

A few of them whose thoughts ran a bit quicker couldn't help but wonder if Palace Head Dan Chi was colluding with Elder Yun Nie to ensure that Jiang Chen won? However, they didn't say anything.

If this wasn't the case, then why was Jiang Chen so powerful? He didn't seem like it at all! It didn't make sense for him to achieve this score with his age and background.

Of course, they could only speculate. They didn't dare voice anything out loud. Wouldn't they just be courting death if they questioned the Palace Head or Elder Yun Nie?

Ouyang De's face was ashen; he was the most dejected out of the group. Thanks to Jiang Chen's performance, his grandson was firmly suppressed. The most critical thing wasn't just that Jiang

Chen was first in the rankings, but that Ouyang Chao had only come in third place! Mu Gaoqi actually held second!

Jiang Chen: 100 points

Mu Gaoqi: 95 points

Ouyang Chao: 93 points