

三界独尊

SANJIEDUZUN

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Sovereign of the Three Realms

Arc 2: Eastren Kingdom Strife

(Chapters 90-130)

Sovereign of the Three Realms (三界独尊) written 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!*

Custom TL synopsis: Sentenced to death because of farting in the first chapter. 'nuff said.

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Chapter 90: Surrounding the Jiang Han Manor

“Yinye, Xue’er, describe once again the matters of the day.” In order to ascertain Jiang Chen’s death, Long Zhaofeng spoke again.

Long Yinye describes the circumstances once again, with Long Juxue filling in the details.

“Mm, according to this, Jiang Chen is dead without a doubt.” Even the usually cautious Long Yi nodded. “Your Lordship, with the death of Jiang Chen, the Eastern family’s pawn is gone. They are without moves all of a sudden. Why don’t we...”

Long Zhaofeng smiled faintly, exuding more and more the confidence of one in a superior position.

“Yinye, didn’t you say that this Jiang Chen ambushed you in the Boundless Catacombs? This is Jiang Han’s provocation towards our own Soaring Dragon. As the foremost amongst dukes, how can we allow the defiance of an inferior duke to pass by like this?”

The so-called ambush was naturally something that they had made up.

However, Long Yinye’s comprehension was high, and he immediately understood his father’s overtones. This was him wanting to make a big fuss out of matters in order to find an excuse to start something with the Duke of Jiang Han, and take a step forward in testing the royal family’s attitude!

At this time, the royal family’s attitude was ambiguous.

If Jiang Chen was dead, was this Jiang Han dukedom worth Eastern Lu’s strong support?

Long Zhaofeng wanted to test Eastern Lu’s bottom line. If Eastern Lu continued to support the Jiang family, then Long Zhaofeng could absolutely wax eloquent on the matter of the conflicts between the

various dukes to one up Eastern Lu.

This title of first duke was bestowed by your Eastern family. If an inferior duke wasn't punished for defying the first duke, then wherein lay the purpose of the laws of the kingdom?

If Eastern Lu chose to give up on the Jiang family, then he, Long Zhaofeng, could take advantage of this opportunity to eliminate the Jiang family. For one, he would be able to remove one of the royal family's pawns, and secondly, he could suppress the royal family's prestige. He would make an example of the Duke of Jiang Han to terrorize those dukes who had yet to flock to his Long family's banner!

As heir to the Duke of Soaring Dragon, Long Yinye immediately grasped the twists and turns of what this entailed.

His face displaying joy, "Father, that Jiang Chen ambushed your son. He represents the Duke of Jiang Han and is insulting the golden banner of our Soaring Dragon manor. Your son will lead a troop of elites and demand an explanation from that Jiang family!"

"Mm. The Jiang family is a small man intoxicated by success. For him to be so impudent, we must have an explanation. Long Yi, you accompany Yinye!"

Long Yi was the first amongst all the Long family guards. He was an eleven meridians true qi master both in reality and in name! His training was even close to the level of Duke Long himself!

"Your subordinate obeys!" Long Yi bowed as he accepted his orders.

In that moment, the elite troops of the Long family immediately set out under the leadership of Long Yinye and Long Yi. These three thousand soldiers descended upon the Jiang Han manor with a threatening manner.

When those dukes who had pledged allegiance to the Long family heard of this news, they also found similar excuses as they all sent

out squadrons of their personal guards to meet up with the elite troops of the Long family.

In the span of a moment, the troops that had been formed to denounce the Duke of Jiang Han exceeded more than twenty thousand!

In the capital, who other than the royal family dared to deploy twenty thousand troops?

Therefore, when the twenty thousand troops appeared on the streets, the entire capital once again sank into endless chaos as everyone's hearts were in a state of turmoil.

Although this band of troops were raising the banner of denouncing the Duke of Jiang Han, everyone knew that deploying so many troops within the capital was already a flagrant overreach of ducal authority.

The Duke of Soaring Dragon's motion was an unmistakable provocation of the royal family's authority!

Within the palace, Eastern Lu also found it difficult to sleep and eat these days.

More than thirty percent of the heirs had been lost in the trial, this time around. Although Eastern Lu was shocked, but he wasn't too discomforted.

However, the most important thing was that Jiang Chen still hadn't returned.

What did it mean when he didn't return at this time? This meant that Jiang Chen was very likely murdered at the hands of the Long siblings!

"Long family!" Eastern Lu's face was dark. He was depressed and didn't know which way to turn. The sudden emergence of the pawn that was Jiang Chen had obtained quite a bit of extra time for him

during this period.

But now, during this critical moment, Jiang Chen had vanished, and he was most likely already dead!

This meant that all his plans were abruptly at an impasse. Just like a chain that had suddenly been broken, unable to rotate .

Additionally, with the current situation in the capital, many of the dukes were now frightened. Several of the originally neutral dukes had all flocked to the Duke of Soaring Dragon for various reasons.

Over these past couple of days, the influence of the royal family had waned and it had become extremely passive.

Not only was he at a disadvantage with regards to the greater picture, but Eastern Lu's heart also ached for his daughter. If Jiang Chen died, who would he go to for his daughter's illness?

"Jiang Chen ah, Jiang Chen. Why couldn't you hold out for a bit longer?" Eastern Lu was extremely vexed. If it wasn't for these reasons, he wouldn't care at all about Jiang Chen's death.

But, the situation in the capital needed Jiang Chen.

With Jiang Chen present, at least there'd be someone to hold the Duke of Soaring Dragon's attention and maintain the impasse a bit longer.

Because Jiang Chen was dead, this balanced impasse was broken. There was nothing preventing the Duke of Soaring Dragon's mind from running off. Perhaps he would move the decisive battle ahead after this time's Hidden Dragon Trials concluded!

Eastern Lu was quite depressed. It wasn't that he didn't want to suppress the Duke of Soaring Dragon, but with the situation at hand, he didn't have the surety or the right timing to do so.

"Your Majesty, something big is happening!"

Just as Eastern Lu was utterly exhausted from anxiety, one of the eunuchs came running in hurriedly, panting heavily. "We've just received an urgent report from Lord Tiandu saying that the Duke of Soaring Dragon and some other accomplices have mustered troops of twenty to thirty thousand and have already surrounded the Jiang Han manor under the banner of punishing the Duke of Jiang Han!"

"What?" Eastern Lu was the king of the nation, but was also astounded when he heard this news.

Made his move?

In that moment, he almost thought that the Duke of Soaring Dragon had made his move and already rebelled!

But logic told him that it was not yet the best timing for the Duke of Soaring Dragon to rebel.

"What is their reason for sending a punitive expedition against the Duke of Jiang Han?"

"Their reason is that Jiang Chen ambushed the Long siblings during the trials in the Boundless Catacombs. They say that an inferior duke has insulted the face of the first duke. It is against the laws of the kingdom if he isn't punished severely." The eunuch was also quite nervous.

"We know now. You are dismissed."

The eunuch was perspiring heavily as he backed away. Princess Gouyu came rushing in as soon as he had left.

"Royal brother, is Soaring Dragon declaring war?" Princess Gouyu's jade features were angry, appearing quite infuriated. Whether for public affairs or private matters, she didn't wish for Jiang Han to be assaulted.

"Gouyu, you've come, I am very troubled." Eastern Lu could expose his heart only in front of his younger sister.

"Royal brother, the Duke of Soaring Dragon can absolutely not be allowed to behave as he will in this matter!" Princess Gouyu's attitude was quite firm.

"Ai, Gouyu. The bigger picture is most important." Although Eastern Lu's attitude was ambiguous, Princess Gouyu still discerned something.

"Royal brother, are you giving up on the Duke of Jiang Han just like this?" Princess Gouyu exclaimed, shocked. "Have you thought of what the neutral dukes and other dukes loyal to you will feel if you even give up on a loyal subject such as the Duke of Jiang Han?"

"However, Gouyu, have you thought about the fact that the Long family is raising the banner of the kingdom's laws now. They have a good pretext for making trouble. If we protect the Jiang family, the Duke of Soaring Dragon can make an issue of this and coerce me. Finally, they can still raise the banner of the law and make me personally move against the Jiang family. If matters develop this way, wouldn't it be showing our cards before the time is right and fighting the Long family earlier?"

"Then fight we will. Royal brother, you always think too much. If we had suppressed them earlier, then how would Long Zhaofeng be where he is today?" Princess Gouyu's tone also became urgent.

Eastern Lu snorted, "Fight? It's easy for you to say. The elder grandfather is in closed door cultivation right now, and will need two more months before he emerges. Why don't we just hold up underneath it all until the elder grandfather emerges. When the spirit dao practitioner appears, which duke dares cause trouble beneath the heavens? The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting, to cease warring and suppress the Duke of Soaring Dragon without causing civil war. Would it not be to the populace and nation's benefit if we don't expend the country's resources?"

Eastern Lu was the king of a nation and considered the gains and

losses of a country. If he could avoid civil war, then he would avoid civil war.

After all, once civil war began, countless numbers would be depleted and the strength of the nation would be greatly affected. Even if the royal family won this battle, it would be a pyrrhic victory!

The costs of a pyrrhic victory were high. The internal strength of a country would decrease and strong enemies from other countries would be sure to eye them covetously.

A slight move in one part may affect the situation as a whole!

“Royal brother, soldiers are a weapon for murder, the saints only resort to them when they have no alternative. But, the way of being a monarch is one of not lightly deploying troops and not purposefully avoiding conflict. If you only consider the strength of the nation, if you only consider this and that and don’t have the resolve to fight, then I’m afraid that when you wish to fight, you will discover that you have none who will fight by your side.”

Princess Gouyu wasn’t exaggerating things to scare Eastern Lu. Lacking the courage to fight as the ruler of a nation, how would you ask those beneath you to follow you steadfastly?

There was a general feeling of insecurity, and in fact this situation had already appeared.

Why had the situation tilted endlessly towards the Duke of Soaring Dragon lately? It precisely had to do with Eastern Lu’s attitude. As the ruler of a nation, he continuously failed to bring out appropriate measures to counter the domineering aura of the Duke of Soaring Dragon. How would the dukes and subjects view him. Moreover, how would they submit to him?

Eastern Lu was silent without a word. Princess Gouyu was his blood sister and only she would plainly speak of such things to him.

Except, he still thought that without Jiang Chen, the Jiang family

wasn't worth him fighting the Duke of Soaring Dragon now.

He needed time. He needed to wait until the elder grandfather emerged!

Two months, he only needed to wait for two more months.

"Royal brother, you cannot hesitate any longer. If you continue to hesitate..."

Eastern Lu lifted his head, his gaze resolute. "Gouyu, I know you admire Jiang Chen. But now, Jiang Chen is no longer present. The strategic importance of the Jiang family is of no consequence now. My decision is made, I will have Tiandu withdraw his troops. This is a grudge between the dukes and they should resolve it between themselves!"

Eastern Lu had sent the Tiandu army to take up residence near the Jiang Han manor to protect them.

This command to withdraw troops meant that Eastern Lu was giving up on the Jiang family.

Gouyu's heart ached incomparably, her face starkly white as she looked at Eastern Lu in disappointment. "Royal brother, is this your final decision? You're that certain that Jiang Chen really died?"

"Whether he's dead or not is insufficient to prevent this matter from happening. I need time. I don't wish to expend the strength of the nation to fight a decisive battle right now! Gouyu, you know, as soon as the elder grandfather emerges, all will be resolved..."

"Enough!" Princess Gouyu could listen no longer as her charming features flushed red. She said angrily, "I'm not listening! Royal brother, I've heard enough of these words. Elder grandfather, elder grandfather. You're the ruler of the nation, if you need to rely on the elder grandfather for everything, then what does it matter who sits on the throne!"

Princess Gouyu stomped her foot and walked huffily out after speaking her words.

Eastern Lu's expression was ugly as it turned green and white. He was as dumb as a wooden chicken. He hadn't thought that even the sister who respected and supported him the most would have had this sort of attitude at this moment.

Chapter 91: Jiang Chen, Descent of the Divine Weapon

Princess Gouyu felt anxious and furious, her mind completely blank as she left the capital.

She felt that she'd let Jiang Chen down, her mind full of the interactions she'd previously had with Jiang Chen.

The first time they'd met was in the imperial harem, where Jiang Chen had thoroughly lectured her.

The second time was at the Soaring Dragon manor, where Jiang Chen had sworn at the Pill King Garden, and sworn at the Duke of Soaring Dragon. That was the first time she'd seen a different side of Jiang Chen.

Afterwards, every interaction caused Princess Gouyu to tremble — to be surprised and overjoyed.

Jiang Chen had even given her pointers regarding the shackles of her martial dao, and had helped her join the ranks of the eleven meridians true qi masters.

Including the twenty percent dry shares from the Hall of Healing, and the glory of him suppressing the Long siblings in the Hidden Dragon Trials...

From beginning to end, Princess Gouyu couldn't believe that such a breathtaking genius would fall just like this.

She wouldn't believe it. Until she saw Jiang Chen's corpse, Princess Gouyu would never believe.

Since her royal brother wouldn't protect the Jiang family, her actions to protect them wouldn't be an official matter, but a personal one.

At the doors of the Jiang family's manor, Commander Tiandu said, "Long Yi, this is a grievance between you, the dukes. His Majesty can

wash his hands of it. However, know when to stop. Don't disturb the citizens or run wild in the capital. Otherwise, my Tiandu army is not a pushover."

Long Yi smiled sinisterly, "Be at ease Commander Tiandu, our Long family have always conducted our matters with reason. We only seek to resolve our old score with the Jiang family, and absolutely won't disturb or embroil anyone else within it, especially the citizens."

"That would be best." Commander Tiandu waved his hand, and left with the vast swathes of the Tiandu army.

Long Yinye smiled. What did the retreat of the Tiandu army mean? It meant that Eastern Lu had bent and given way! This also meant that the limelight of the Long family had already exceeded that of the royal family!

"Listen well, old and young of the Jiang family. Your unfilial son Jiang Chen ambushed the heirs of the Soaring Dragon dukedom within the Boundless Catacombs, and violated all of the heavenly laws of morality, defying the authority of the first duke. We are here today on orders of the duke of Soaring Dragon for a punitive expedition. Any of the Jiang family servants, followers, and guards, who are willing to turn over a new leaf, bring out the head of a Jiang family member with you. This is your chance to do a deed of merit. Otherwise, when this large army rushes in, no one shall be left alive."

Long Yi's voice rang out like a bronze gong, carrying the power of eleven meridians true qi with it as it spread throughout the entire Jiang family.

This was seeking to divide the masters and servants of the Jiang family — attempting to cause internal discord without even a fight!

However, Long Yi had underestimated the Jiang family's degree of unity. All those within the Jiang family had faces full of tragic fury, the resolve to fight to the death imprinted on them.

Even the new followers that Jiang Chen had recruited had faces full of resolution. Their determination to live and die with the Jiang family was apparent without any need for words.

Jiang Feng's expression was bitterly wry. He knew that, with the withdrawal of the Tiandu army, the Jiang family had still become Eastern Lu's discarded pawn in the end, and been given up on by Eastern Lu.

"Everyone, if you leave now, I, Jiang Feng, will not find fault with you." Jiang Feng said, as he swept his gaze in a circle.

The nearly one thousand death warriors of the entire Jiang family all shook their heads resolutely.

"Your Lordship, what kind of people would we be if we left now?" Jiang Ying's fierce eyes held tears. "We've been indebted to Your Lordship these years for all your care, this is where we repay you with our deaths."

Jiang Ying suddenly drew out his sword. "A Jiang family man can fall in battle, but can not surrender!"

"Fall in battle, no surrender!" Charged voices and righteous ardor were suffused with the resolve to rather die than be insulted.

"Your Lordship, when the fight starts later, we will block the opponents. Retreat when you find a good opportunity, and return to the Jiang Han territory. While there's life, there's still hope." Jiang Ying counseled in a low voice.

Jiang Feng smiled faintly, "How am I, Jiang Feng, someone who drags out an ignoble existence?"

"Your Lordship, the greater picture is what's more important."

Jiang Feng shook his head, his gaze deep as he looked to the direction of the north east. The Boundless Catacombs were located there — news of his son was located there.

Only, Chen'er, are you still alive?

If you're still alive, then what fear do I have if I die in battle? As long as the bloodline of my Jiang family remains, then there's no fear that the events of today will remain unavenged.

If you're not alive, and I live out a dismal existence, what meaning is there in that?

"The Jiang family can fall in battle, but not surrender." Jiang Feng's gaze suddenly became incomparably resolute as he yelled, his longsword in hand, and his heroic spirit soaring to the heavens. "Long Yi, come inside and fight to the death!"

Jiang Feng was a newly ascended true qi master. But ever since Jiang Chen had passed onto him the "Secret of the Nine Laughing Oceans", his training had advanced at a tremendous pace, and his knowledge of the martial dao had risen by by more than just a single level.

Whether in terms of martial dao or experience, at this moment, Jiang Feng was actually fully on par with an eleven meridians true qi master.

Long Yi uttered a cry, "Alright, Jiang Feng, I will spill your blood first, and take your head!"

Long Yinye also called out loudly, "Everyone ready! He who captures the Jiang Han manor and obtains Jiang Feng's head will be rewarded with ten thousand gold!"

An army thirty thousand strong roared in unison as their voices shook the clouds.

The battle could be triggered at any moment.

"Hold!" Princess Gouyu's figure abruptly dashed in at that critical moment. "Long Yinye, I command you, in the name of the organizer of the Hidden Dragon Trials, to immediately withdraw your troops."

"Withdraw my troops?" Long Yinye smiled. "Princess Gouyu, don't get things wrong. This isn't the Hidden Dragon Trials, but represents the grievances between dukes."

"Your claim of Jiang Chen ambushing you happened during the Trials. As the organizer of the Trials, I naturally have the authority to intervene."

"You?" Long Yinye laughed coldly. "This is something that even His Majesty, the king, isn't paying attention to. Don't you think that your intervention is a bit inappropriate, Your Highness?"

Princess Gouyu wielded her sword in her hands. One person and one sword stood on the stone steps outside the Jiang family manor.

The aura of an eleven meridians true qi master emanated without reservation. Her almond eyes raked over the scene, as she swept her gaze across the Duke of Soaring Dragon's associates. "Have all of you forgotten that this is the capital? Long Yinye doesn't know any better, and so you don't know any better as well?"

"Princess Gouyu, I'll remind you once again that this is a grievance between dukes. Since even His Majesty the king has washed his hands of the matter, you have no business in intervening in this matter."

Long Yinye's tone was becoming more and more domineering and tyrannical.

"I just so happen to want to intervene today." Although Princess Gouyu was of the weaker sex, she was exceedingly stubborn. Her tone was indifferent and determined, "You'll have to step over my dead body first, if you wish to move against the Jiang family."

Long Yinye had never thought that even after Eastern Lu had given up on the Jiang family, Princess Gouyu would protect the Jiang Family with such a resolute attitude.

"Princess Gouyu, is the Jiang family really worth your actions?" Long

Yinye wasn't angered, and smiled instead.

"This has nothing to do with the Jiang family, I'm doing so only to ensure peace of my conscience." A sense of firm determination was suffused within her diffident words.

"Since that's the case, then forgive me for my offense." Long Yinye was not one to have compassion for women. "Army, be at the ready — no matter who's in the way, kill them!"

"Kill!"

The army roared in unison.

"Kill."

In the moment that the great army prepared to move, a remote voice suddenly echoed through the air. It was sudden, but effective, as it penetrated and pierced through gold, shattered rock, and penetrated straight through the heavens.

A shrill bird cry accompanied this "kill", as it broke through the air with the sound of ripping silk. At the same time —

A golden shadow suddenly dove down from the clouds with the speed of lightning.

Just as this golden shadow dove down, another sound of ripping silk split through the air, driving a stream of light as fast as a shooting star, as it descended with a loud crash.

An arrowhead — an arrowhead with unparalleled strength — shot unerringly towards Long Yinye.

This arrowhead was shot accurately towards Long Yinye, in front of the thirty thousand strong army.

"Be careful young duke!"

The unexpected arrival of this arrow was without any precursors, as

if the immortals in the heavens had shot this life reaping arrow from the clouds.

Long Yi was the first to react, but too late to use his weapons to block the arrow. He hit upon an idea in his desperation, and abruptly shoved Long Yinye.

The arrow had already arrived by then, and pierced through Long Yi's shoulder. Its momentum wasn't decreased as it shot through him and out behind him, coincidentally shooting through the chest of the heir of Yanmen, Yan Yiming, who was standing behind him.

Pfft. Pfft.

The power of this arrow was as if a meat skewer, finally stopping after it shot through the fifth person.

Long Yinye had been pushed down by Long Yi, and was extremely bedraggled. He was about to rise, when two more whooshes broke through the air from the clouds.

The same arrowhead, the same power, the same wily angle.

This time, it was arrows to the left and right — two arrows in succession — making it impossible for Long Yinye to escape.

"Protect the young duke!" Long Yi was greatly agitated and leapt towards Long Yinye. Except, his shoulder was injured and he was still a step behind.

He flung himself forward and took another arrow to the back.

The other arrow shot unerringly into Long Yinye's forehead, the arrowhead instantaneously piercing through the helm and drilling into his skull. The strong true qi sent Long Yinye and the arrow flying into the crowd, causing great disarray to the formation.

"Oh no, the young duke's been shot!"

"The young duke's been shot!"

This frightening scene completely dumbfounded the thirty thousand strong army, and caused them to dissolve into mass chaos.

This unexpected development had caused changes too fast for them to react to.

By the time they'd gathered their wits, Long Yinye's forehead had taken an arrow and his status was unknown. Long Yi's shoulder and back had been hit, and he was gravely injured.

"Look, the sky! Up in the sky!"

Shrill and domineering bird calls rang out from the air, cutting through the sky.

Two golden shadows burst through the clouds, hovering in the air above the manor.

"It's Goldwing Swordbirds!"

"There seems to be someone on it, it looks like Jiang Chen!"

"And another one... Eh, he looks familiar, who is it?"

"It looks like the heir of Jinshan, Fatty Xuan!"

"No, that person isn't fat at all, how would he be Fatty Xuan?"

On the back of the bird, Fatty Xuan was extraordinarily pleased with himself in that moment. He was fired up with boundless enthusiasm, and felt that his life had reached its peak at this step. He gathered up his true qi and yelled out, "You monsters and freaks dare assault a duke's manor under broad daylight. Do you have any respect for the nation's laws?"

"It really is Fatty Xuan."

Some of the heirs who had flocked to Soaring Dragon's banner finally

recognized Fatty Xuan's voice.

Jiang Chen held a bow in his hand, and pointed to the thirty thousand strong army from afar. Although it was only a bow and arrow, when it was locked onto the army, all of them shuddered with fear, and had the feeling that armageddon had arrived.

The leader of an army could be changed, but an ordinary person should have his own unswervable goal.

This thirty thousand strong army just so happened to be ordinary people whose goals had been taken.

There was no other reason. Even the mighty Long Yi had taken two arrows, and the arrogant Long Yinye had taken a headshot.

To descend from the sky with such aura and occupy a commanding height, it was easy to imagine the deterring force he emanated.

The world of martial dao was still one of the strong. Admiring the strong, and thus fearing the strong, was an eternally immutable truth.

“Long Yinye is the head of the evil that attacked my Jiang Han manor — and he has now been executed. You've been bewitched by him. Whether you choose to fight, or to make peace — to live or to die — it is your choice.”

Jiang Chen's voice finally sounded from the back of the Goldwing Swordbird.

This scene made the heart of Princess Gouyu on the ground tremble — she was utterly dumbfounded. But she knew within her heart that she'd probably never be able to forget this scene for the rest of her life.

This was the descent of the divine weapon, as it turned back the powers of darkness.

This was the stuff of legends — of storytellers. Yet it was now playing out in real life, in the skies of the capital above the Jiang Han manor!

Chapter 92: Killing and Displaying a Show of Force

“Throw down your weapons and leave. You will be spared from death. Those stubborn in their negativity and defiance will die!” Fatty Xuan called out loudly on the back of the Goldwing Swordbird.

He also knew that he was a green leaf — a green leaf that was there to set off the big red flower that was Jiang Chen.

Except, this moment and this scene let Fatty Xuan clearly know that even if he was a green leaf, he was sure to become a legendary green leaf from today onwards in the Eastern Kingdom.

Those vassals who were not directly related to the Duke of Soaring Dragon had already lost their fighting spirit and had all thrown their weapons down.

Those troops directly under the Duke of Soaring Dragon’s control also became headless flies in this situation where Long Yinye was dead, and Long Yi was gravely injured. They all looked at each other, at a loss for what to do.

At this moment, a captain with one eye leapt forward. “The Duke has nurtured his soldiers all for today’s battle. How many can Jiang Chen kill with that bow and arrow of his? Chin up if you’re a good son of the Long family! Rush in and kill Jiang Feng! Wipe out the Jiang family!”

“Ah!”

An arrow as swift as lightning had already pierced through his throat after he’d finished speaking.

“Who else is there?” Jiang Chen’s voice was remote. There was already another arrow on his bow as if he had performed a magic trick.

He had looted this bow from Xue Sha, and there actually weren’t that

many arrows within the quiver — only twenty or thirty. That attack on Long Yi and Long Yinye just now had used three.

There were still roughly twenty or so arrows, yet Jiang Chen wasn't worried about a thing.

He'd shoot whoever popped out.

Although there would be a few amongst these people who were unafraid of death, not everyone would be willing to seek one's doom in the face of absolute power, when they knew that death was certain.

As long as he killed those that poked their head out, and made an example of them, he was sure to be able to destroy their fighting spirit.

"There's me."

"And I!"

Whoosh, whoosh.

Two more arrowheads once again found their way unerringly into the throats of these two captains.

Upon seeing that there were those who still hadn't given up hope, Fatty Xuan called out, "Long Yinye is already dead, and your master is gone — is it really worth it to waste your life like this?"

These words had a devastating impact.

Indeed, Long Yinye was dead. Who were they working themselves to the bone for?

Princess Gouyu waved her longsword and admonished, "You have been sent out without righteous cause, and acted without justification. The death of Long Yinye and the grievous injuries of Long Yi are proof. Why haven't you retreated? When the Tiandu army

arrives, all of you will be dead without a complete corpse.”

Princess Gouyu represented the royal family. Her words were the straw that broke the camel's back, finally making the Long family's fierce, elite soldiers waver with uncertainty.

Someone threw down his weapon. Where there was one, there would be two. Swathes of soldiers threw down their weapons afterwards. The people's courage was gone as fast as the receding tide water.

In the span of a moment, the great thirty-thousand strong army that'd gathered in front of the Jiang Han manor doors had completely scattered.

There were only the corpses of Long Yinye and a few captains present, along with Long Yi crouched on the ground, his status unknown.

Jiang Chen was a cautious person. He shot out another arrow that penetrated Long Yi's skull, nailing him firmly to the ground. It was only then that he descended from the clouds.

At this moment, a din of cheers sounded from within the Jiang Han manor.

Too amazing. This change was too unexpected.

They were already prepared to fall in battle, and had formed a resolution in the face of certain death. Who would've thought that such a change would occur so suddenly?

There was nothing left of the thirty-thousand strong army that had been like a pack of wolves or tigers.

And they, a thousand strong, hadn't even had a chance to get their hands dirty.

The descent of this divine weapon seemed like aid gifted from the

gods.

Those of the Jiang family all looked at Jiang Chen as if exalting a saint. Those eight personal guards of his were also moved beyond belief.

This was their master, the one that they were following. These scenes just now had caused their blood to thrum and boil.

Admiration, worship. These words were insufficient to express the depths of their current emotions.

They only knew that even the position of first duke within this kingdom was likely not worthy of becoming this master's goal.

"Chen'er." Although Jiang Feng was experienced and steady, he too also slightly lost his composure in this moment. His large hands grasped Jiang Chen as tears swam in his fierce eyes.

He was overjoyed, overjoyed that his son had returned safely.

He was proud, proud that his son had turned the raging tide.

Fatty Xuan hopped down from the back of a Goldwing Swordbird and made a beeline to Long Yinye's corpse, giving it a few vicious kicks. "Aren't you awesome? Don't you walk over everything? Isn't it the ones who adhere to you that ascend, and those that defy you who die? Why don't you show me how awesome you are now?"

Fatty Xuan had received more than his fair share of bullying from the upper echelons of the noble heirs during ordinary times in the capital. This Long Yinye was the representative figure of those elite heirs.

This person was domineeringly tyrannical. His many evil deeds were too numerous to inscribe on all available bamboo strips.

That was why Fatty Xuan had forgotten himself in his actions. He'd vented quite a bit of ill will.

After kicking him for a few times, Fatty Xuan drew out his waist knife and chopped off Long Yinye's head. He then walked towards Long Yi, and imitated his previous actions.

Holding the two heads, Fatty Xuan called out, "Brother Chen, I'm making a trip to the Soaring Dragon manor."

One could tell that Fatty Xuan's grudge against Soaring Dragon went uncommonly deep. This was putting on a show of force at the first possible chance!

Jiang Chen called over a Goldwing Swordbird and murmured to it a few reminders in the beast language. He patted Fatty Xuan's shoulder. "You can go, but don't linger. Strong practitioners abound at the Soaring Dragon manor, don't trap yourself in there."

Fatty Xuan smirked, "Brother Chen, you know I'm most afraid of death. I promise that I'll never descend to within firing range of their bows and arrows, will that work?"

The act of killing someone and then displaying their head was already a bit over the top.

But, compared to what the Duke of Soaring Dragon had done to the Jiang family, this wasn't even worth mentioning.

The two sides were in a blood feud by now, and wouldn't rest until one side was dead. Jiang Chen naturally had no further reservations. He would counterattack the Duke of Soaring Dragon, using whatever means necessary.

Jiang Chen firmly believed that if he hadn't made it back in time, the downfall of his clan members would be even more worse off. Long Yinye was sure to be ten times crueler than himself.

With Long Yinye's brutal and bloodthirsty personality, he was sure to invent even more ruthless tricks in order to terrorize the other dukes.

Having been born into a royal household, Princess Gouyu was accustomed to these sort of happenings. She felt that there was nothing untoward about Long Yinye's head being cut off.

"Jiang Chen, I knew that you would come back." Princess Gouyu walked up.

Jiang Chen looked at Princess Gouyu and sighed lightly, "Your Highness, I, Jiang Chen, owe you for today's grace of a helping hand. I will be sure to return this favor to you."

"Don't talk like this Jiang Chen. I came for my own peace of mind, not that I was counting on your return. Besides, I..."

Jiang Chen spread out his hands, "This is my personal principle."

Princess Gouyu wasn't happy to see Jiang Chen like this. Her heart rather sank instead. She knew that the relationship between Jiang Chen and her royal brother had broken apart at last.

Jiang Chen made no mention of the king, and had only said that he owed her, Princess Gouyu, a favor.

What did this mean? This meant that Jiang Chen had no more illusions about her royal brother, Eastern Lu.

"Ai." Princess Gouyu sighed in resignation, her emotions exceedingly complex.

Jiang Chen's miraculous appearance today, and his unparalleled performance, had completely upended her understanding. Even Long Yi, an eleven meridians true qi master, had been unable to contend with Jiang Chen's heavenly shot.

Just how strong was Jiang Chen?

To be honest, after Jiang Chen had eaten the Rare Jade Fruit in the Boundless Catacomb and had broken through, he'd successfully ascended to ten meridians true qi and joined the ranks of true qi

masters. Even in a direct confrontation, he'd have the ability to battle an eleven meridians true qi master.

Not to mention that he was using Xue Sha's treasured bow and his heavenly arrows, further adding to his power. Add to that his advantageous position from above, his wizardry with the bow and arrow, and that he had caught the others off guard.

Besides, the diving force of the Goldwing Swordbird had also unconsciously made things easier for Jiang Chen. It had led to an increase in supporting power, perfecting the force from his arrow.

And, Long Yi had more or less had a self sacrificial mindset in saving Long Yinye. If he hadn't paid heed to Long Yinye, and only been concerned about his own escape, he would've been entirely able to escape, since Jiang Chen's first arrow hadn't been aimed at him.

The pity was that he was Long Yi, a loyal servant of Soaring Dragon. He had paid the price himself as well in trying to save his master.

An army of thirty thousand strong had scattered like birds and animals. All of them fled frantically back to the Soaring Dragon manor. However, as fast as their feet were, they were unable to measure up to Fatty Xuan's Goldwing Swordbird.

Whilst these deserters were halfway through their trek, Fatty Xuan had already arrived in the air above the Soaring Dragon manor.

Fatty Xuan was a somewhat silly person. He gave no thought to his old man's stance, as he hovered in midair, calling out loudly. "Long Zhaofeng, come out!"

This sudden yell caused an uproar around the Duke of Soaring Dragon within a radius of several kilometers.

Who was this? They were much too bold, and actually dared to say the Duke of Soaring Dragon's name? Was he courting death?

Duke Long's right eyelid kept jumping. It was as if thunder had struck

out of nowhere when he heard this abrupt yell, and his entire being spasmed.

“Who is it?”

Some of the strong practitioners loyal to Duke Long had long since rushed to the roof.

“Who the hell are you to dare come and act wildly at the Soaring Dragon manor?” These Soaring Dragon practitioners only felt that it was rather odd to see someone riding a bird up in the clouds. They felt that an expert from one of the hidden sects had graciously arrived, as all of them tilted their heads back, as if confronting a formidable enemy.

“Act wildly? I’m here to give you a present! Tell Long Zhaofeng to come out!”

Fatty Xuan felt really damn good inside. What was this? This was him becoming a new person!

To think that he, Fatty Xuan, someone who’d always been the target of bullying in the capital, could directly voice Duke Long’s name today... What was properly standing up with his head held high? What was the peak of a life? Nothing would surpass this moment today.

Long Zhaofeng heard clearly, and he too vaulted up to the roof, standing in a high place, and threw his head back to ask, “Who might you be, and what gift do you bring?”

Fatty Xuan was a slippery fellow as he hid in the far reaches, not showing his face. His head was crouched down on the back of the Goldwing Swordbird, presenting an exceedingly bizarre appearance.

“What gift? I ask you, where is your son Long Yinye? Where is Long Yi?”

Long Zhaofeng started, not comprehending but responding, “Long Yi

has accompanied my son YinYe on an outing to resolve some personal matters. I anticipate that they will return shortly. Who might you be, are you a friend of my son YinYe?"

Seeing that since this person rode a Goldwing Swordbird, he likely had a powerful background. Given this, Long Zhaofeng restrained his tone and even injected a few traces of joviality.

"Haha, resolving some personal matter is it? They'll return shortly?" Fatty Xuan smiled as he spoke.

"Yes."

"You're wrong, they've already returned. Take this."

Fatty Xuan threw down the package and it fell through a great distance. The momentum behind a throw from such a high vantage point was quite strong, and Duke Long didn't dare underestimate it. He struck a firm horse stance and encircled it with his hands, catching it firmly after making a few circles.

Long Zhaofeng was completely befuddled. He was perplexed by the other's words of, "They've already returned. Take this," and had the vaguest hair-raising feeling.

Chapter 93: The Duke of Soaring Dragon in a Messy Disarray

The moment he opened the package, the Duke of Soaring Dragon turned into a messy disarray. He was petrified.

Long Yinye's head had a large hole in the forehead and widely staring eyes from an unpeaceful death. Those eyes met Long Zhaofeng's the instant he opened the package.

"Ah!" A mouthful of blood sprayed out from Long Zhaofeng's mouth.

"Your Lordship, what's wrong?" The personal guards around him all ran over.

"Kill him, kill him, kill him!" Long Zhaofeng was like a mad demon as he pointed towards the sky and gave the command over and over again.

Fatty Xuan laughed loudly, "Long Zhaofeng, you allowed your son and daughter to kill other heirs in the Boundless Catacombs. Did you never think this day would arrive? There is karma even in the immediate life and it comes swiftly. Hold your son's head and go slowly cry in the corner!"

"Kill him!" Long Zhaofeng painfully cried out with all his strength.

However, Fatty Xuan was a person who was afraid of death. How could he ever situate himself in the midst of danger? He patted the back of the Goldwing Swordbird's head and immediately shot into the clouds.

"Hahaha, Long Zhaofeng. You kill others and should know that there would come a day when someone else kills you! Long Yinye is merely the first step in the destruction of your Long family!"

Fatty Xuan thoroughly enjoyed this verbal interplay, finally turning back happily and leaving in triumph.

Even Long Juxue, who was training being closed doors in the Long manor, was disturbed. Her body flew as it dashed up to the roof, but she soon saw Long Yinye's head staring back at her with wide eyes.

"Brother!" Long Juxue was also dumbfounded.

So what is she had an azure phoenix constitution? So what if a hidden sect had marked her with their attention?

This wouldn't change the reality of her elder brother's decapitation at the hand of others!

Would a strong potential and a powerful background revive Long Yinye?

No!

Long Juxue's face turned slightly pale and her tone was frosty. She asked, "Who did it?"

The faces of the personal guards were all drained of blood as they shook their head. "We're not sure. Someone rode a Goldwing Swordbird just now to... to deliver the young duke's head."

"That person's voice was familiar." Although Long Juxue was grieving, her mind was not engulfed in confusion.

"Could it be Jiang Chen?" A personal guard asked hoarsely.

"It wasn't Jiang Chen's voice!" How could Long Juxue fail to discern Jiang Chen's voice? When Jiang Chen was mentioned, she suddenly thought of someone else. "Right, that voice. I remember now. It's Fatty Xuan, the heir of Jinshan! One of Jiang Chen's lackeys."

"Duke of Jinshan?" A trace of killing intent once again flashed through Long Zhaofeng's fierce eyes.

He had just now been wallowing in the pain of losing his son and could not break out of it. After a short period of turmoil, he slowly

came back to his senses. When he heard the three words 'Duke of Jinshan', his desire to kill rose sharply and quickly.

"Yinye, Long Yi, your brave souls must be close. Keep watching! I will be sure to avenge you. Jiang and Xuan family clans, I will exterminate you, piling up your corpses into mountains and making rivers out of your blood!"

Long Zhaofeng wept tears of blood as he swore.

"Long Er, pass along my commands. All those dukes who have flocked to the Long family banner must travel to the Soaring Dragon manor within two hours!"

Long Er's heart contracted. He knew that the duke was moving up the timetable for the battle!

The elite soldiers of Soaring Dragon finally made it back in twos and threes from the streets outside.

"Your Lordship, terrible things have happened. The young duke he..."

A layer of frost covered Long Zhaofeng's face as he said to Long Er, "Dispose of these incompetent, deserting buffoons!"

"What? Long Yinye went to punish the Duke of Jiang Han and was shot on the spot from the skies by Jiang Chen? Long Yi was also killed as well? And the heir of Yanmen, Yan Yiming?"

"Jiang Chen came back? He didn't die? Long Yinye was shot by him?"

The news of Long Yinye being killed, the fall of Long Yi, and Jiang Chen returning with a great vengeance spread throughout the capital in only fifteen minutes.

Those dukes who had already flocked to the Duke of Soaring Dragon's banner were even more astounded, their mouths full of a bitter taste.

They almost couldn't believe their ears. With the Duke of Soaring Dragon's elites and the eleven meridians true qi master Long Yi holding down the fort, how could anyone have been killed by Jiang Chen?

They couldn't make sense of it!

However, truth as solid as iron forced them to believe this.

"Your Lordship, the Duke of Soaring Dragon has sent an urgent summons for Your Lordship to discuss pressing matters at the Soaring Dragon manor."

Almost all of the dukes that had sought succor with the Duke of Soaring Dragon received the same piece of news afterwards.

To go or not to go?

Some dukes were a bit hesitant. Jiang Chen returning with a vengeance and the death of Long Yinye had caused some sudden ripples in the plot that was originally a foregone conclusion in the capital.

This turnaround had been entirely out of the blue.

They had to admit, they were wavering. They were beginning to suspect whether or not the Duke of Soaring Dragon would truly be so successful in his coup. Would he really make a clean sweep of obstacles wherever he went?

Except, they already had no other choice. They had long since boarded the Duke of Soaring Dragon's ship. If they didn't go now, when the dust settled and everything was reckoned for, those of them tagged with Duke Long's label would still not end up with pleasant downfalls.

In the moment that they had made their decision, they were destined to be unable to disembark from that ship.

Even if they didn't want to, they still had to go, .

They had no other choice now. They must unite beside Duke Long's side and help him in his coup to turn the land of the Eastern Family into the land of the Long family.

Only in this way could they unmake this dangerous situation, and transform themselves into meritorious founding nobles with a shake of their bodies.

If they shrank back and allowed the Duke of Soaring Dragon to be destroyed, then they too would not be far from death.

One had to say, Duke Long's charisma was still exceedingly strong. Even the fall of Long Yinye was insufficient to shake his charisma and domineering air that was as enduring as the land and sky.

Long Yinye was dead, but Duke Long had many sons. He could always appoint another young duke and spend some more time in cultivating him.

As long as Long Juxue was fine, and as long as the azure phoenix constitution remained, Duke Long's backer would not disappear. After all, that azure phoenix constitution had caught the attention of the experts of the hidden sects!

The experts of the hidden sects were a legendary existence, and were an absolutely much more domineering force than the forefathers of the Eastern clan.

Although your Eastern family forefather is a spirit dao practitioner, at the end of the day, he is only one person, utterly isolated.

When compared to the strong ones of a sect, you would be alone and helpless!

This was why the Duke of Soaring Dragon could rope in so many dukes.

Out of 108 dukes, there was actually fifty or sixty dukes who had already thoroughly sided with the Duke of Soaring Dragon.

There was still a portion loyal to the royal family, and another portion that was neutral.

“Everyone, under the circumstances, I won’t voice empty blather. Everyone has expressed their attitudes. I, Long Zhaofeng, will also not mince words! The Eastern clan is immoral and favorites sycophants, persecuting the faithful and honest. My son YinYe was killed when he went to punish the Duke of Jiang Han. They say it’s Jiang Chen’s doing, but do you believe that a mere son of the Jiang clan could have such power? The experts from the royal family must have had a hand in this! I, Long family, announce today that I am raising arms to send a punitive expedition against the Eastern clan!”

“Raising arms for a punitive expedition, the Long clan replacing the Eastern clan!”

All the dukes stood up and raised their arms, shouting loudly.

“Very good, my Long family, on this day, will raise an army of justice to suppress an immoral ruler! Everyone present is a duke, please command your troops to raise an army of justice and cooperate in this great cause!”

“We are willing to raise an army of justice and aid the duke of Soaring Dragon in suppressing an immoral ruler, heralding in a new dynasty and age!”

No matter how shameless the act in struggles of power, an excuse both dignified in form but insincere in substance would have to be found. Even someone such as Duke Long was no exception.

It was a coup in actuality, but he still sought to craft himself an image of unparalleled benevolence and justice. It seemed that only in this way would he feel at ease and contented.

“Everyone, I have a suggestion.” The person speaking was the Duke

of Yanmen, Yan Jiuzhuang. His son Yan Yiming had been the one that had also been shot by Jiang Chen in front of the Jiang Han manor doors.

“What valued suggestion does Duke Yan have?” Long Zhaofeng exuded a generous air.

“The time needed for all of us to raise our armies and cleave a path to the capital will take anywhere between three to eight days. Even though we have already brought our personal guards with us and laid out our elite troops, compared to the Tiandu army, at best we can say that we’re evenly matched. As opposed to rebelling now, why not wait until the big army arrives.”

“Then we just wait? How can we swallow the events of today?” The person speaking was another duke. His son had also been shot to death, under the same arrow that had killed Yan Yiming. They had been part of the meat skewer.

“Of course we don’t just wait around! I can raise the call of cleaning evil ministers from the king’s side and first lay siege to Jiang Han manor, Jinshan manor, Hubing manor...”

“Duke Yan’s suggestion is quite sound!” Long Zhaofeng’s eyes gleamed.

Although his version was that an expert from the royal family had killed Long Yinye, but many of his personal guards had seen with their own eyes that the person who had killed Long Yinye was Jiang Chen. Who else could it be?

He had said so just now to fabricate a feud with the royal family and find a banner of justice and righteousness for him.

Therefore, the person that Long Zhaofeng actually hated the most at this moment was Jiang Chen. The person he most wanted to delight in killing was Jiang Chen!

Within the palace, Eastern Lu’s complexion was wan and pale, his

eyes full of regret and vexation.

He had also received intelligence at the earliest possible timing that Jiang Chen had returned, and returned with a vengeance. In fact, the manner of his return had been sculpted into a legend by the rumormongers in the capital.

Although Eastern Lu didn't wish to admit it, he had to admit it. He had made a crappy move once again! He had actually given up the Jiang family underneath the pressure from the Duke of Soaring Dragon, and he had given up the strong power that he could have once drawn to his side.

Upon thinking of Princess Gouyu's words, Eastern Lu practically wanted to slap himself. The ruler of a kingdom didn't even measure up to his sister, a woman, in generosity and bearing.

"Has the capital fallen into chaos?" Eastern Lu shook his head, calming himself with effort. "Jiang Chen's return is not necessarily a bad thing! Even though Jiang Chen and I are divided in heart and practice, there's no fear in that. Now that Jiang Chen has killed Long Yinye and Long Yi, forming a blood feud with Long Zhaofeng, the scene of two tigers battling is unavoidable. If I can provide support from the shadows and add fuel to the flame so that they battle into a state of chaos and darkness, I may yet stand to profit without working for it!"

Eastern Lu started making his calculations, planning on how he would profit from this and how he would set Soaring Dragon and Jiang Han at each other's throats.

"If Soaring Dragon triumphs, his vitality will still surely be greatly undermined. I will then coordinate with the elder grandfather's power to make a strong move. I will surely be able to cow the other dukes into submission and oppress the Duke of Soaring Dragon."

"If Jiang Chen's side wins, then I will use the strategy of treating him kindly to win his heart. I will use Princess Gouyu or Ruo'er as bait

and fence this person into the royal family. If he wants to, I can even give both Gouyu and Ruo'er to him, and have aunt and niece both serve him as well. Except, this matter can't be known publicly, I must work from the shadows."

Eastern Lu's thoughts became more and more random and deviated more and more from the proper path.

When his thoughts traveled here, his brow unknit and he became much more cheery. Jiang Chen's return made him much more at ease.

Even if Jiang Chen couldn't win, as long as he could drag out enough time for the elder grandfather to emerge from closed door cultivation, everything would be alright.

Chapter 94: The Responding Strategy

They knew that the death of Long Yinye was only the start of this conflict. The true battle was not even on the horizon yet.

After a short while, the Duke of Jinshan and the Duke of Hubing had also heard the news and arrived.

These two were Jiang Feng's best friends, and even if they hadn't set foot on the Jiang family ship, the Duke of Soaring Dragon wouldn't let them off the hook either.

Jiang Chen was overjoyed to see that Hubing Yue was safe and sound. This made him feel a little bit less guilty.

However, at this moment, Jiang Chen had no time to catch up with Hubing Yue. He had already secretly called for Qiao Baishi.

Qiao Baishi rushed to meet Jiang Chen as soon as he received the summons.

"Baishi, I'm sure you also know of the sudden changes within the capital and the conflicting sides."

Qiao Baishi's emotions were also similarly agitated. "Honored master, there were rumors earlier in the capital that you had fallen in the Boundless Catacombs, but I refused to believe them. I know that honored master is one with great fortune and would never die prematurely. However, to think that honored master would return in such a legendary manner..."

"Heh heh, legendary manner? That's just rumormongers embellishing the facts. Baishi, you're a calm person and thus should know that the capital will soon be engulfed in chaos."

"Mm." Qiao Baishi sighed lightly, but his eyes gleamed. "What marvelous ploy does honored master have?"

"The greater picture has already been formed for the capital's chaos. I cannot stop it either. With my Jiang family's strength, we will be unable to save the situation. It would be a joke to directly confront the Duke of Soaring Dragon."

Although Qiao Baishi wasn't willing to admit it, he also knew that Jiang Chen spoke the truth. As the first duke beneath the heavens, the Duke of Soaring Dragon's foundations were simply too deep.

He definitely wasn't someone that the Jiang family, a mere duke of the second rank who had risen to power within a short period of time, could contend against.

"Baishi, I've decided to retreat."

"Retreat?" Qiao Baishi was startled.

"Of course. However, not retreat back to the Jiang Han territory. With the current situation, I won't make it far out of the capital. I plan on breaking the whole up into parts, dissolving the personal guard of my Jiang family, and hiding them in every corner of the capital. I plan on having you arrange some of the core people."

Qiao Baishi's blood boiled at seeing Jiang Chen place so much trust in him. "Please be at ease honored master, the foundations of the Hall of Healing within the capital will only be deeper than the Duke of Soaring Dragon's, and not shallower. There will be no danger of anything going wrong in concealing a few people."

"Mm. If I don't have family considerations, I'll be able to thoroughly play with the Long family." A trace of a cold smile leaked out from the edges of Jiang Chen's lips.

"Honored master, you're going to battle the Long family all by yourself?" Qiao Baishi asked in shock. This was simply too legendary?!

"Single-handedly? I'm not that bored. I have my methods, you don't need to ask. You'll know about them when the time comes."

Jiang Chen smiled mysteriously.

For some reason, Qiao Baishi had already grown accustomed to Jiang Chen's somewhat mysterious, yet greatly comforting smiles.

Every time, at a critical moment, honored master had been able to claim victory with unconventional tactics.

The truth had proved this point time and time again.

So upon seeing Jiang Chen smile like this, Qiao Baishi's heart was at ease.

"Honored master, I'll go back and make some preparations. I'll be able to take your people in at any time." Qiao Baishi rose and took his leave.

"Baishi, you've gone to great trouble. I will remember your service when this matter is concluded satisfactorily."

Qiao Baishi was in fine fettle. The benefits he had enjoyed under Jiang Chen were already quite high. Those amazing pill recipes had caused Qiao Baishi's position within the Hall of Healing to almost now be on par with that of the Lord Hallmaster's.

Except, Qiao Baishi's worldview was now also broader. With such a master, why should his vision be limited to a mere kingdom?

Looking at his honored master's posture and disposition, it was obvious that a mere kingdom would not tie him down.

After concluding his discussions with Qiao Baishi, Jiang Chen walked towards the main hall. At this moment, Jiang Feng, the Duke of Jinshan, the Duke of Hubing, and others were discussing nervously.

They had discussed a few responding strategies, but always felt that these strategies were useless in the face of absolute power.

"Brother Jiang, it looks like the strategy to take now is still to seek

help from the royal family.” The Duke of Jinshan sighed softly.

Jiang Feng shook his head lightly. “Two wise younger brothers, I am not opposed to you seeking help from the royal family. But according to my knowledge of Eastern Lu, the two of you shouldn’t have high expectations from him.”

One could hear that Jiang Feng was both utterly and bitterly disappointed in Eastern Lu.

Even with the Jiang family’s accomplishments, the Tiandu army had retreated just like that. How was this the behavior worthy of a king? This was practically a treacherous and a ruthless ruler.

Hearing his father’s opinions of Eastern Lu, Jiang Chen clapped his hands together and laughed loudly. “Father, you’re finally seeing it clearly. The Eastern clan is indeed unworthy of our loyalty. I have a plan for the situation at hand, will all of you listen to it?”

“Oh? Chen’er, what marvelous plan do you have?”

Whether it was Jiang Feng, the Duke of Jinshan, or the Duke of Hubing, none of them dared to view him as a foppish dandy anymore.

Jiang Chen smiled and described his plan.

“Breaking the whole up into parts, avoiding the edge of advance?” Jiang Feng murmured.

The Duke of Jinshan nodded slightly, “Sage nephew’s plan is sound. Except, one needs exceedingly deep connections in order to avoid the Duke of Soaring Dragon’s pursuit within the capital.”

“I naturally have my ways with regards to that. Uncles, are you willing to trust your nephew?”

The Duke of Jinshan sighed. He too had heard of his son’s “great act” that had thoroughly offended those of the Soaring Dragon family.

His son had even committed the deed of hauling Long YinYe and Long Yi's head to the Soaring Dragon manor as a show of force. The Duke of Jinshan knew that there was no way back for him. He had to take the same path as the Jiang family and see it through to the end.

"Wise nephew is as if a man of great wisdom who often appears the fool. All sorts of miraculous feats have been enough to demonstrate this. My line will follow your arrangements."

"Ah, whatever. Having been an official all my life, it's a rare thing to have two good brothers such as you two. My Hubing line will live and die with you." The Duke of Hubing also expressed his attitude.

The three dukes actually didn't have that many troops at their temporary manors in the capital. The Jiang Han manor had just over a thousand, and both the Duke of Jinshan and the Duke of Hubing had only a few hundred people.

After dispersing the various people on the outer fringes, there were only a hundred or so core people left in each house.

They added up to three, four hundred people, a figure comparable to a stone sinking to the bottom of the great sea in the large capital.

It was because Jiang Chen had forcefully shot and killed Long YinYe that the capital had been plunged into a state of chaos.

This type of chaotic situation was the best cover.

As for the Soaring Dragon manor, all of Duke Long's underlings were also discussing their grand plans within the manor at the moment. All intelligence networks existed in a state of half collapse.

This made Jiang Chen's plan of withdrawal even more convenient.

After six hours, Jiang Chen's plan of retreat was completely concluded.

There was not a single soul left in the empty corridors of the three

great manors.

“Chen’er, are you not leaving?” Night had fallen and Jiang Feng pushed a door open and stepped through. He asked Jiang Chen considerately, sitting in the middle of the courtyard.

“Father, I’m the biggest target. If I don’t go, the bulk of their attentions will be placed onto me. By not leaving, I can provide the greatest cover to you all.”

Jiang Chen was clearly aware that the others were all of little value and interest to the Soaring Dragon household. If they could cleanly slaughter the others in one fell swoop, that’d be great.

But, if Jiang Chen disappeared, then the Soaring Dragon household would never be satisfied no matter how many people they killed.

As long as he, Jiang Chen, was present, then the others wouldn’t be the focal point and would thus be a bit safer.

Jiang Feng was vaguely moved. A hundred emotions crisscrossed his heart when he looked at his son’s calm and relaxed face. When had his son become so dependable?

He was gratified but said nothing more. He quite admired his son’s manly courage.

Patting Jiang Chen’s shoulder, he said, “Son, your old dad’s most accomplished achievement in this life isn’t attaining that ranking of duke of second rank, but you. Since you’re not leaving, you naturally can’t force your old man to leave! Even Fatty Xuan can fight by your side. At the end of the day, your old man is still a true qi master. How little face would I have in hiding hither and thither?”

Jiang Chen laughed involuntarily. He knew that this was fatherly love, true fatherly love.

Father and son going into battle together. What else could be more persuasive evidence of fatherly love?

Slight ripples of emotion spread out throughout Jiang Chen's heart. He was touched.

"Alright, then us father and son will simply let it all go and do something great. We'll cause even the mountains and rivers to change color and the moon and sun to be without light." Jiang Chen was also voiced a lofty sentiment.

To be honest, with his current circumstances, Jiang Chen had long since seen through that Duke of Soaring Dragon and that royal family. Who cared if you, Duke of Soaring Dragon, had an impressive backer? Who cared if you, the royal family, had some elderly grandfather?

Jiang Chen ignored them all.

The Duke of Soaring Dragon was nothing good, and how was that Eastern Lu anything good either?

Jiang Chen had already decided that he held his destiny in his own hands. This was more persuasive than anything. Depending on the heavens or the earth, in the end, one still had to depend on themselves.

And he, Jiang Chen, had already grasped enough strength.

"Your Lordship." Jiang Ying's body suddenly dashed out of the darkness.

"Jiang Ying, what news?"

"In response to Your Lordship, the Duke of Soaring Dragon has summoned the dukes on his side and raised the call of clearing out the evil ministers from the king and exterminating the crafty sycophants. He has pointed the spear at our Jiang Han manor."

"Despicable." Jiang Feng trembled from his rage. In terms of crafty sycophants, was there anyone who was greater than the Duke of Soaring Dragon himself, Long Zhaofeng?

"Father, don't be mad. Long Zhaofeng is but rotten bones in the graveyard, a grasshopper after autumn. He won't be able to hop around for too long."

He was waiting, waiting for the moment of the final battle to arrive.

Jiang Feng also didn't know from where Jiang Chen was getting his confidence. But upon seeing Jiang Chen thus, the former more or less gained some confidence as well.

After all, with the Goldwing Swordbirds, they would have no trouble fleeing if they couldn't win in battle.

The father and son duo thus sat in the courtyard for the entire night. The moment dawn broke, Jiang Chen patted his father's back.

"Father, we should go."

"Go where?" Jiang Feng felt it a bit odd.

Jiang Chen whistled lowly and two Goldwing Swordbirds shot out from the shadows.

"Father, hop on. Come with me." Jiang Chen whistled and the two Goldwing Swordbirds took the father and son duo shooting into the clouds, vanishing in the dawn over the capital.

"Chen'er, where are we going?"

"To find reinforcements of course." Jiang Chen smiled and pointed at the valley ahead. "The advance guard is up ahead. The main army will also be here between a few hours or half a day."

Jiang Chen muttered something after finishing speaking. In the span of a moment, countless Swordbirds fluttered out of the valley as if locusts, covering the sky and blotting out the sun, filling half the sky instantaneously.

Within one full division, there were more than ten thousand

Swordbirds. Each Greenwing Swordbird was equivalent to four meridians true qi.

Each Silverwing Swordbird, of which there were several hundred, was equivalent to a practitioner in the advanced realm of true qi.

There were also ten Goldwing Swordbirds. Each of them was equivalent to a human true qi master.

The most important thing was that the Swordbird division controlled the skies, holding an advantageous vantage point. Once battle was engaged, the benefits of that advantage would be more than readily apparent.

The feathers of the Swordbirds were as if knives. Ordinary arrows wouldn't even be able to make a dent at all.

Chapter 95: Rare Jade Fruit

Jiang Feng was thoroughly dumbfounded. He knew that his son must've had some miraculous encounters. Otherwise he never would've turned from someone who couldn't even pass the foundational exams to becoming someone that was a thorn in the side for the Duke of Soaring Dragon.

"Chen'er, these... these Swordbirds, they are all very obedient to you?" Jiang Feng felt a bit out of breath.

"Father, this is my trump card. With just a single order from me, they will battle to the death at any time!"

Jiang Feng's facial expression was unimaginably queer. He was both excited by his son's miraculous changes, but at the same time also vaguely lamented the state of the universe and pitied the fate of mankind.

"Chen'er, these birds are bloodthirsty. If they move towards the capital and only attack the Duke of Soaring Dragon, that is justifiable because his crimes more than deserve death. But if they rage out of control, then the capital and people will be plunged into misery and suffering."

At the end of the day, Jiang Feng was still a member of the Eastern Kingdom. He had always been benevolent, and although he had a deep and abiding feud with the Duke of Soaring Dragon, but his thoughts were still on the possibility of involving innocent citizens if this bird army went towards the capital.

"Father, I have complete control over the Swordbird army. However, since father is worried about involving the citizens of the capital, your son can also lure the Soaring Dragon Family out of the capital first and then fight to the death."

"That would be for the best if it can be done." Jiang Feng was not one to speak empty words of kindness and benevolence. "My Jiang family

has a blood feud with the Duke of Soaring Dragon, and neither of us will rest while the other is still alive. If we don't make use of this opportunity to completely eradicate the Long family by the roots, we will only be plagued with troubles in the future! There will be no place for us to stand in the great Eastern Kingdom."

"Father's words are exceedingly true. Although the heavens are thus vast, the great sons of my Jiang family may not have to find a foothold only in the Eastern Kingdom. Not to mention, it's not a given thing as to whether or not this kingdom's land still belongs to the Eastern clan after this war." Jiang Chen laughed lightly.

"If it's not named Eastern, would it be named Long instead? This must be avoided at all costs." Although Jiang Feng had given up all hope on Eastern Lu, but he'd still rather have the Eastern family continue to control the kingdom if he had to choose. If the kingdom fell into the hands of the Long family, it would be an absolute disaster for the Jiang family.

"Father, why must it be named Long instead of Eastern? Have you ever had this thought father, for the kingdom to bear my Jiang family? Why should this be out of consideration?" Jiang Chen's tone was noncommittal.

"Eh?" Jiang Feng's stalwart body trembled. "Chen'er, your words..."

"Are treason and heresy?" Jiang Chen chuckled. "Father, in the world of martial dao, the strong is revered. This Eastern clan did nothing more than wrest their land away from someone else. It's said that everyone takes a turn in sitting in the emperor's seat, and it's my family's turn this year. Except, my Jiang family may not be interested in being a mere ordinary kingdom."

Jiang Feng didn't speak for the longest time. He had to say that his son's words made a great deal of sense and caused him to feel a bit tempted.

As a duke, Jiang Feng wasn't one who was foolishly loyal. On the

contrary, he had his own opinions about the political situation.

Therefore, Jiang Chen's words truly did cause his heart to palpitate with excitement.

Indeed, why couldn't the Jiang clan be a contender?

Were princes, marquises, generals, and ministers all born into their positions?

The Eastern family clan was immoral, so why should the Long family be allowed to vie for their position and not the Jiang family?

Jiang Chen also knew that his old dad was undergoing a fierce mental battle. But if one thing was certain, it was that his old dad was tempted.

Who didn't want stamp their names on the pages of history?

What male didn't wish to achieve meritorious acts, carve out new lands, and be hailed as king and overlord?

Who made the rule that the sons of the Jiang family couldn't ascend to the throne and sit as the ruler of a nation?

"Father, this is a 'Rare Jade Fruit'. If you eat it, it will unequivocally raise your training by one level." Jiang Chen had received six Rare Jade Fruits from Mang Qi. He'd eaten three on the spot, and brought back the remaining three.

"Unequivocally raise my training by one level?" Jiang Feng was astonished.

"Mm. This is a spirit fruit that has absorbed the spirit energy of the heavens and earth. It's quite rare, even one glimpse is difficult to attain in a hundred years."

Jiang Feng absolutely trusted his son, but, he couldn't help but ask, "Chen'er, wouldn't it be a better thing if you were to eat this spirit

fruit?"

"I've already eaten it." Jiang Chen smiled. "There's no use in eating too many."

"Oh, then I won't decline. Haha." Jiang Feng didn't hesitate upon hearing that his son had already eaten up. He took the Rare Jade Fruit and ate it in two or three bites.

"Father, you'll need a few days to train after eating this fruit in order to break through. I'll find a secluded spot in this part of the mountain valley and arrange for a portion of the Swordbirds to stand guard over you!"

"Chen'er, where are you going?" Jiang Feng was curious.

"If Father won't let me bring the army to create a large disturbance within the capital, your son should at least go back and take a look. What if that Long clan does the perverse thing of searching throughout the city? I still have to look after the people there, right?"

Jiang Feng's heart tightened, "Right, right. Although the Hall of Healing has firm foundations within the capital, but they don't have any military power within their hands. If the Duke of Soaring Dragon throws all caution to the winds, then even the Hall of Healing will become very passive."

Jiang Chen knew this very well and nodded, his gaze flitting off towards the direction of the northeast.

The first thing he had done when returning to the Jiang Han manor was to take out Mang Qi's tooth and infuse it with true qi, asking Mang Qi to send out the army of Swordbirds to await his commands.

Mang Qi was quite concerned with Jiang Chen's matters and immediately counted out twenty divisions of Swordbirds. A full two to three million Swordbirds set out on their way in massive, streaming columns. They arrived in roughly half a day.

At this time, the capital had dissolved into a state of utter chaos and confusion.

On the Duke of Soaring Dragon's side, the elite personal guards of dozens of dukes had all gathered at one place. An army of fully ten thousand elite soldiers had surrounded the Jiang Han manor, Jinshan manor, and Hubing manor.

All the houses in the streets and alleyways of the capital had shut and barred their doors. No one dared to set a foot outside.

Not a single person ambled along idly on the empty streets. All the shops had also closed their doors, deathly afraid of being embroiled into this undeserved calamity.

Everyone knew that the capital had sunk into chaos, utter confusion, and disarray.

A slaughter was about to take place in the capital.

A cruel and brutal battle for power was about to begin exchanging blows .

Except, when the great army had surrounded these three manors, they discovered that these manors had long since been abandoned and not a single person was to be found.

"What? Escaped?" Long Zhaofeng surged to his feet when he received the news.

"Not a single person was to be found in the three manors!"

"Search, search the entire city! Several thousands worth of people from three families couldn't have possibly all vanished in a single night." There was a layer of frost on Long Zhaofeng's face.

His fist was clenched tight, so tight that his knuckles creaked and cracked.

The depths of his hatred right now couldn't be washed away by the waters of three rivers and five oceans. He even hated the Jiang clan more than he hated the royal family!

He only wanted to seize power from the royal family.

But his hatred of the Jiang clan stemmed from the death of his son!

Long Yinye was the son that he, Long Zhaofeng, had been most proud of, and his most distinguished heir.

Long Zhaofeng's eyes were filled with the anguish and the hate of losing a son. To think that he, the Duke of Soaring Dragon, had been domineering all his life. It was always him who'd exterminated other family clans and him who killed those of other families.

When had it turned into those of the Long family being killed?

Therefore, Long Zhaofeng was not only enraged, he was furious! This wasn't a simple matter of vengeance, but a greater matter of protecting the power and dignity of the Long family, as well as making an example for others to see!

"Your Lordship, the several thousand people of these three families couldn't possibly have gone anywhere in the span of one night. They must be hiding somewhere."

"Yes, the city gates are shut, they can't leave the city either."

"That may not be true. If they bribed the guards and had a royal order, it wouldn't be impossible for them to leave under cover of the night!"

The strategists working for the Duke of Soaring Dragon all expressed their opinions.

Long Zhaofeng nodded faintly. "This is simple. Send people to inquire at all the city gates. Our Long family has connections at every city gate."

The Duke of Soaring Dragon had plotted a coup and thus would pay special attention to this subject of city guards. He must have also expended a lot of thought and effort to smuggle in a lot of spies and make a lot of connections.

Just as he was speaking, another one of his confidantes walked in. "Your Lordship, your subordinate has already investigated all the various city gates. There was absolutely no large scale movement of people last night!"

Long Zhaofeng was overjoyed. "In that case, then they must be within the capital! Seal off the capital, dig three feet into the ground, and find them!"

He had a good pretext for making his moves, and under the banner of vengeance for his son, he had even fewer reservations .

If the royal family wanted to intervene, then he had the excuse of gaining revenge for his son.

If the royal family didn't intervene, then he had even fewer reservations.

By now, all the armies of the various dukes were being dispatched and already heading to the capital. Even if Eastern Lu wanted to have a showdown, Long Zhaofeng wouldn't be afraid.

Within the palace, Eastern Lu's complexion was wan and he had some black circles beneath his eyes. It was obvious that he hadn't slept at all during the night.

"Your Majesty, the Jiang Han manor, the Jinshan manor, and the Hubing manor are all deserted. It's as if they vanished within a night."

"What? They fled?" Eastern Lu was also greatly shocked upon hearing this news.

The Jiang family had fled? If this was the case, then the wishful

thinking of profiting without effort would be nonexistent!

He was betting on the Jiang family and Long family fighting a bitter battle, and both sides suffering heavy losses so that his Eastern clan could profit from the middle!

“Your Majesty, the Duke of Soaring Dragon has gathered the personal guards of dozens of dukes under the banner of vengeance for Long Yinze, and is searching throughout the capital for members of the Jiang family. There is an atmosphere of fear and trepidation within the capital now, and such a fearful din that even the dogs and chickens have no peace.” The commander of the Tiandu army, Wei Tiandu, also had a deeply worried face.

“Your Majesty, urgent intelligence! The dukes from various territories have sent back urgent news that fifty to sixty small and large dukes have signs of large deployment of troops within their territories, and they’ve already started on their way. Judging from the direction of the army, they are heading straight for the capital!”

Internal intelligence reports came flying in ceaselessly like flakes of snow.

Wei Tiandu gave a great start of shock. “Your Majesty, the Duke of Soaring Dragon is finally rebelling!”

Eastern Lu’s body wavered slightly. “Fifty to sixty dukes? This Long Zhaofeng has actually lured this many dukes to his side?”

Eastern Lu flew into a great rage. He drew out his rapier and chopped the table in front of him into two with a wave of his hand. “Damned things! My Eastern clan has always treated them well, why do they all rise against me? Why do they all go and lick Long Zhaofeng’s ass? Who is he, Long Zhaofeng, to deserve such treatment?”

“Your Majesty, your subject feels that we should immediately send an emergency summons to those dukes loyal to Your Majesty and

have them deploy troops quickly to aid the king and protect the land!"

It was as if Eastern Lu had awoken from a dream as he hastily commanded the eunuchs to carry out his royal decree, summoning all the dukes into the palace to await his commands.

One had to say, Eastern Lu had been too careless in his grasp of the situation as a king of a nation. He had been too passive, and always plotted and schemed in small areas, while missing the greater picture. When he was finally enlightened, the situation was already greatly disadvantaged towards him.

Chapter 96: Eastern Lu, Here's Your Dukedom Back

Out of the 108 dukes, more than half of them had already openly sided with the Duke of Soaring Dragon.

"The remaining half of the dukes should be loyal to me. Even if there is a forty-sixty split, I have the Tiandu army, the city guard, the royal personal guards, as well as the royal experts and the court officials' elite personal guards. My strength will absolutely not be lower than that of the Duke of Soaring Dragon."

Eastern Lu was calculating the other's strength. As long as the rest of the dukes were loyal to him, and he added to that the trump cards the royal family held, what need did he have to fear the Duke of Soaring Dragon?

Of course, Eastern Lu hadn't given up his illusions even now. He was still dreaming of forcing others to submit without a fight.

Except, reality was much crueler than he thought. The rest of the dukes that trickled into the palace one by one only numbered between twenty and thirty.

This was to say that the neutral attitudes of the other twenty to thirty dukes were quite clear. They wouldn't side with Soaring Dragon, but neither would they listen to the royal family's deployment.

To Eastern Lu, these neutral dukes were a disaster for the royal family.

However, the twenty to thirty dukes who entered the palace were true friends of the Eastern clan. They were diehard Eastern supporters. They also knew that if the Eastern clan was done for, it would be the end of the road for them too. Once the Duke of Soaring Dragon seized power, he would absolutely not allow them to live free and unfettered lives.

Their profits had long been tied together with those of the royal

family. No matter if they were willing to or not, they had to render services to the royal family unto their deaths.

If the royal family lived on, their fortune and prosperity would live on as well.

If the royal family was no more, their family clans would, without a doubt, be annihilated and be replaced by those aristocratic families behind them, who were eyeing their positions with covetous eyes.

Out of the four great dukes, the Duke of Vermillion Bird had clearly sided with the Duke of Soaring Dragon.

The Duke of White Tiger and the Duke of Black Tortoise had sided with the royal family.

These twenty some dukes now looked towards the Duke of White Tiger and Black Tortoise for guidance. With these two great pillars strengthening them, it more or less gave them some confidence.

“Your Majesty, the Duke of Soaring Dragon rising in revolt is now a fact. According to your subject’s thoughts, we should gain the advantage by striking first, and by deploying the Tiandu army, city guards, royal personal guards, and royal experts to suppress the Duke of Soaring Dragon. Otherwise, the capital will be in grave danger when their army arrives.”

“The Duke of White Tiger speaks sensibly. If we suppress the Duke of Soaring Dragon now, not only is our power not too weak, we’re even slightly stronger than him!”

Eastern Lu contemplated. He had tragically discovered that this battle seemed to be unavoidable and couldn’t be delayed. His plan of delaying until the elder grandfather emerged from his closed-door training wouldn’t work.

“Royal brother, the personal guards of the Duke of Soaring Dragon have been rampaging through the streets of the capital and disturbing the citizens. Will you continue to sit idly by?” Princess

Gouyu was also extremely agitated these days, and frantically rushed in.

“Gouyu, good timing. We were discussing with the various dukes...”

“Royal brother, the capital will change owners if you just keep discussing. They’re searching around for and arresting members of the Jiang family now, how is this not terrorizing the other dukes as well? If he does arrest members of the Jiang family, how will the other dukes think and feel? Even if they have loyal inclinations to the royal family, will they have the courage to stand up to the Duke of Soaring Dragon’s threatening demeanor?”

Princess Gouyu was irate. She was irate that her royal brother hadn’t listened to her, and had actually withdrawn the Tiandu army when Long Yinye had besieged the Jiang Han manor previously.

After he had made the wrong move then, the balance of the heavens had tilted immediately. The royal family had been severely disadvantaged afterwards, and had lost the people’s hearts.

Although these dukes proclaimed their allegiance to the royal family, it wasn’t because they were loyal, but that their profits were too closely tied in with the royal family’s and couldn’t be broken apart.

Why would they fight along with the royal family if they had a way out?

“Your Highness, the Jiang family is a subject of the royal family but has gone missing and fled at this critical moment. You shouldn’t care too much about the remnants of a family who decided to flee on the brink of battle.” Some dukes spoke out.

Princess Gouyu’s phoenix eyes glared, “What do you mean fleeing before battle? The Jiang family cannot turn the situation by themselves. Without the protection of the royal family, it’s a wise choice to avoid the edge of advance.”

“Heh heh, having been fed and paid by our ruler, we should be loyal

and follow our liege's every thought and step. If Jiang Feng is willing fight to the death with the Duke of Soaring Dragon, then I'll think highly of him... who doesn't know how to run away?"

Eastern Lu also nodded. "Gouyu, the Jiang family's actions have caused Us great disappointment. We wish to suppress the Duke of Soaring Dragon, but have no obligation towards the Jiang family."

Gouyu was speechless. Her heart sank to the bottom after hearing Eastern Lu's words. She knew that there was no convincing her royal brother.

What nonsense was this about the Jiang family's actions disappointing him? Why didn't he think of how much his previous actions have disappointed the Jiang family?

Gouyu smiled bitterly, her expression ghastly. "Royal brother, if you want me to fight to my death, your little sister will obey your commands at any time. Your sister will not be involved in these courtly matters anymore."

Nothing was more lamentable than a dead heart. Princess Gouyu could see the shadows of the ruler of a dead nation on Eastern Lu. She saw the shadows of a vacillating failure.

"Gouyu, you must remember to stand by my side at this moment. Don't think of those random thoughts anymore. Jiang Chen fled before the brink of battle, you don't need to think about him anymore."

Princess Gouyu's mouth was filled with a bitter taste. She was stricken, yet said nothing as she walked outside.

At this moment, a shrill bird call sounded from the air, with a loud yell ringing out from overhead. "Eastern Lu, come out."

It was Jiang Chen.

A trace of surprise and joy flashed through Gouyu's almond-like

eyes. Had Jiang Chen changed his mind in the end and was willing to aid her royal brother in suppressing the Duke of Soaring Dragon?

"It's Jiang Chen." All the dukes had made out Jiang Chen's voice.

Eastern Lu's face was purple. This Jiang Chen dared to say his name without any of the courtesies that should be observed by a subordinate to his superior.

A crisp metallic sound of metal striking the ground crashed onto the stone steps of the palace.

Everyone looked in the direction of the sound and saw a jade encrusted gold medallion. The design was unique and was the emblem of the right to a dukedom.

"Eastern Lu, take back this dukedom medallion. Henceforth, my Jiang family has broken off all relations with your Eastern family and we will have nothing more to do with each other in the future."

Jiang Chen's voice was remote as he rode a Goldwing Swordbird, occupying a high vantage point. He was coldly invincible in the air, causing Eastern Lu and the other dukes to all feel a bit ashamed of their ungainly appearance.

"Jiang Chen, you are fed and paid by the king, yet you fled before the brink of battle. Your Jiang family..."

"The Eastern clan was unworthy of my Jiang family first. You all are not blind, and should be able to see it. Don't give me the bullshit of the subject must die if his liege commands it. Now that chaos reigns under heaven and the strong are revered, if you have the time to waste in empty blather with me, why don't you spend it on thinking how to deal with the Duke of Soaring Dragon instead."

Jiang Chen turned to leave after he finished speaking.

"Jiang Chen." Princess Gouyu's heart ached. Tears gathered at the corners of her eyes as she cried out sorrowfully, "Is there really

nothing more we can do? I beg you, help me one more time.”

Princess Gouyu was a proud and headstrong person. Her background was awe inspiring and her cultivation high. When had she ever pleaded with anyone at all?

But, at this moment, she was begging Jiang Chen with tears on her face.

“Gouyu, I can help you escape the sea of fire that is the capital, but I won’t help that coward Eastern Lu.”

Eastern Lu’s face burned.

“Jiang Chen, you and the Duke of Soaring Dragon have a blood feud. Even if you don’t help my Eastern clan, you should at least put aside your differences and help us fend off the Duke of Soaring Dragon together.” Princess Gouyu tried persuading again.

“Long Zhaofeng? Heh heh, rotten bones in a graveyard is all he is. If his Long family wins this battle, I naturally have my ways to annihilate the Long family. What need do I have to cooperate with Eastern Lu?”

Princess Gouyu felt a mix of complicated feelings. Of all these people, she knew Jiang Chen the best and knew that there were simply too many secrets hidden on him.

She had no doubt that Jiang Chen absolutely had the power to wipe out Long Zhaofeng. Except, with the way things were, what reason did Jiang Chen have to help the Eastern clan?

“Jiang Chen...” Princess Gouyu said painfully. “Treat it as that my Eastern clan has wronged you. I only have one favor to ask, can you take Ruo’er away from here? If you can, please take care of her for the rest of her life.”

“That I can do.” Jiang Chen nodded.

Eastern Lu snorted coldly. "Jiang Chen, what need do We have for you to take care of Our daughter? My Eastern clan has numerous methods to suppress the traitor Long Zhaofeng. How is my royal family's princess someone that an uncivilized churl like you can dirty?"

"Royal brother!" Princess Gouyu was aghast. He was cutting off the last avenue of retreat.

Indeed, Jiang Chen's expression darkened. "Gouyu, if you need me to take care of Princess Zhiruo, find a way to contact me. I'm leaving."

Gouyu's body collapsed and she sat dejectedly on the stone steps, her heart as dead as ashes.

She had also thoroughly given up on Eastern Lu.

The Duke of Soaring Dragon's search and arrest grew more and more violent. The entire capital was engulfed in chaos. Corpses could be seen lying everywhere on the streets.

When rules and regulations lose their power, violent factions will rage out of control — like a wild beast out of its cage — bringing forth untold disasters.

People started to die in the capital. Many died.

Killing and raiding. Noise so loud that chickens and dogs could get no rest. Ghosts wailed and wolves howled. No peace whether day or night.

It was a good thing that the place Qiao Baishi had arranged for was exceedingly secluded and they didn't have to worry about it being found immediately. Except, with these kinds of methods continuing, Jiang Chen was also worried if the Hall of Healing could withstand it.

He thought, and still decided to retain the initiative in his hands.

He immediately deployed large numbers of Goldwing and Silverwing

Swordbirds to enter the city at night, removing all the core family members who still remained within the capital in several batches.

Under the cover of night, the mobility of aerial troops was quite high. All the people had been sent out of the city within two hours.

After continuous days of fruitless searching, the movement finally turned into revolt.

That night, the Tiandu army and the elites of the Duke of Soaring Dragon had their first conflict.

Afterwards, two of the commanders of the city guard announced their allegiance to the Duke of Soaring Dragon. The city guard fractured from the inside.

Following that, one of the commanders suddenly revolted while executing his duties within the palace. He brought his troops to charge down the palace and met the royal personal guards in pitched battle.

The capital became overwhelmingly disorderly in the span of a night.

Jiang Chen, at this moment, had detached himself from the situation and was quite at ease. His people had left the capital and the main force of Swordbirds had mostly arrived.

As soon as he gave the order, they would charge into the capital. Whether it was the Duke of Soaring Dragon, or the royal family, he would be able to suppress them within two hours.

Except, the battle wasn't at an impasse for too long. Eastern Lu had never thought that the Tiandu army and city guards, entities he'd always viewed as staunch subjects, would be divided by the Duke of Soaring Dragon.

The Tiandu army and the city guards were rife with internal discord, greatly chipping away at the royal family's battle strength.

Long Zhaofeng had made many preparations in the dark for this coup and had recruited many experts. Their battle strength was not the least bit subpar in comparison to the experts of the royal family's retainer.

The royal experts were tied down. That meant one less trump card for Eastern Lu.

Three days later.

The palace's outer defensive perimeter had been penetrated. The Eastern clan and the royal personal guards hung onto the core parts of the palace with a death grip, making their final stand. The personal guards of those loyal to the royal family had basically been exterminated.

The dukes had retreated to the palace within the Eastern clan, stubbornly fighting to the end.

The outskirts of the palace, three levels within and three levels on the outside, had been fully besieged.

The Eastern clan was on the verge of destruction.

Chapter 97: The Perilous Circumstances of the Eastern Clan

Eastern Lu's hair turned white in one night. All the territory in the world belonged to the king, but as the ruler of a nation, he could only hunker down within his palace walls right now and make the final struggles like that of a caged beast.

It was said that a rout is like a landslide.

If the Tiandu army and city guards hadn't been divided and remained as a thick slab of steel, Eastern Lu would have absolutely been equal in influence and power to Long Zhaofeng within the capital.

The pity was, Long Zhaofeng had set his plans into motion many years ago, and successfully infiltrated even the Tiandu army and city guards.

In this way, the original impasse had turned into a one-sided rout.

Eastern Lu felt bitter in his heart. He knew more clearly than anyone that he was trapped within the palace, that he could only make the struggles of a caged beast and that he wouldn't last much longer.

Unless the elder grandfather emerged from closed-door cultivation early and turned the tides.

"Gouyu." Eastern Lu's eyes were red. "I was wrong, ridiculously wrong. I regret not listening to you. I know that I didn't lose to Long Zhaofeng, but rather lost to myself, losing the heart of the people."

Men speak kindly in the presence of death.

At this moment, as he reached his end, Eastern Lu had suddenly comprehended that Gouyu had always been right.

Except, there was no medicine he could take to cure the regrets he had in this world.

Gouyu had fought for three, four days in a row and was weary beyond belief. Even as an eleven meridians true qi master, fighting for so many successive days still took a huge toll.

Princess Gouyu's reaction was remote and aloof upon hearing Eastern Lu's "heartfelt words".

It was too late to speak of this.

"Gouyu, I know that you also look down upon me in your heart. There's no use in saying these words now that the situation has developed thus. No matter what, you and I are still brother and sister. The blood of the Eastern clan flows through our veins." It was rare for Eastern Lu to openly reveal his emotions.

"You're right, that is why I am fighting bitterly here for the Eastern clan." Princess Gouyu's tone was cold.

"Ai! Gouyu you can hate me, I deserve it. Let it be this way then. Gouyu, since the situation is thus, I ask only one thing from you. Take Ruo'er and Lin'er with you, and flee as far as you can. As long as the bloodline of my Eastern clan exists, after the elder grandfather emerges from his closed-door training, there will be a day in which these lands will be ours again. This is my last request. Dear sister, you cannot refuse this request."

Eastern Zhiruo and Eastern Lin, they were Eastern Lu's most beloved daughter and son.

"Escape? There is an invisible net preventing all escape, how can we escape?" Princess Gouyu's mouth was full of a bitter taste. Jiang Chen had extended an olive branch, but Eastern Lu had rejected him in an adlepatated decision.

Now that the great army was already here and the palace had been surrounded so that not even a drop of water could be leaked out, how was she to get in touch with Jiang Chen?

In fact, where was Jiang Chen now? Princess Gouyu had no idea.

"Gouyu, chin up. Although I've been outmaneuvered by Long Zhaofeng, how could our Eastern clan be out of trump cards? I still have one last ace up my sleeve. Although it's not enough to turn the tide and emerge victorious, there's still a forty, fifty percent assurance of cleaving out a bloody path and covering your escape."

Eastern Lu's words expressed his death wish.

Eastern Lu's gaze rather cleared up after these words, suffused with a clarity of thoroughly understanding things.

"Gouyu, you don't need to persuade me. These are sins that I have committed, and so I will use my life to bear the consequences. In the future, tell Ru'er and Lin'er that although their father was a self-indulgent and useless ruler, he was at least a man who took responsibility!"

Eastern Lu's voice became a bit choked up when he spoke of this.

"Royal brother..." Although Princess Gouyu was vexed with Eastern Lu's obstinance and adherence to his own judgment, and wished dearly that he'd listened to her so that the situation of today never came to be, but they were blood siblings after all. Princess Gouyu's heart also ached slightly upon seeing Eastern Lu like this.

"Remember, carve a way out in the chaos that will ensue also! I'll also have Wei Tiandu help hew out the way for you. Remember, don't be irresolute and hesitant, seize the right moment, you must escape!"

Eastern Lu clapped his hands slightly a few times when he finished speaking, and eight people clad in black walked out of the darkness.

"Your Majesty."

"Everyone, now that things have gotten to this stage, I can only ask you to fight together with me.."

"We are willing to die for Your Majesty!"

These eight people were all true qi masters, true qi masters that even Princess Gouyu hadn't seen before!

"Gouyu, these eight death guards have been by my side since I was eight. Apart from me, no one else knows they exist."

Eastern Lu took out a jade bottle and poured out ten pills. "This is the 'Great Dao Berserk Pill'. After taking it, it will enable a true qi master to double his strength for a short amount of time, or even more."

The eight death guards said nothing as they all walked up and swallowed a pill.

Eastern Lu's gaze was deep as he looked at this pill for a while, then threw his head back and swallowed it.

"The last one is for Wei Tiandu." Eastern Lu sighed lightly. "Are all of you ready?"

"We are willing to die for the king!"

The eight of them spoke in unison, their words carrying resolute determination.

"Good, I will personally join the battlefield in a while and draw their attention. You will aid me in delaying them for as long as possible, and attracting as many experts as possible."

"Come in, Tiandu."

Wei Tiandu walked in from outside and swallowed the last pill without hesitation.

"Tiandu, I will be taking the battlefield myself and will undoubtedly attract many of the other side's experts. You will be in charge of the front. No matter what you do, hew out a path of blood, and protect Princess Gouyu and the others as they retreat!"

Wei Tiandu bowed as he accepted his orders, "As long as there remains one breath of life within Tiandu, Tiandu will be sure to cover the escape of Your Majesty's bloodline!"

Eastern Lu nodded, "Make your preparations, someone send for Lin'er and Ru'er!"

After one hour, the sky had started to slowly darken as another cycle of night was about to arrive.

Eastern Lu slowly moved his gaze across the faces of all those who assembled.

"Are you willing to die in battle with me?"

"We are willing to die for Your Majesty!" The eight death guards, Tiandu army, and a thousand royal experts all responded in unison.

"Good, then let me personally exchange a few moves with Long Zhaofeng!"

Eastern Lu's body moved, and he took the lead in flying out as soon as he'd finished speaking.

"Long Zhaofeng, you have committed high treason and have risen in rebellion to usurp the throne. Dare you meet Us in battle?" Eastern Lu was the ruler of a nation and lived off the fat of the land. Very few people knew that he was an eleven meridians true qi master himself!

Long Zhaofeng's army had already surrounded the palace so that not even a drop of water could leak out. It could be said that victory was already within his grasp.

Long Zhaofeng's underlings were already planning on how they would coronate Long Zhaofeng, how they would celebrate and drape the royal yellow robes over him.

"Mm? Eastern Lu?" A vicious killing intent flashed through Long

Zhaofeng's eyes.

"Duke Long, this Eastern Lu is at the end of his days. He is struggling in his death throes by inviting you to battle. We now hold the glorious victory in our hands, why bother with some fiddly single combat with him?"

Long Zhaofeng nodded slightly. His being was now priceless. Although he didn't fear a fight to the death with Eastern Lu, he felt that there was no need with the current situation.

It would be incredibly unworth it if something happened to him.

"Eastern Lu, don't be naive. Recognize the situation and surrender with dignity. You're the ruler of the nation after all. I, Long Zhaofeng, can give you a dignified death. If you persist in stubborn defiance, when the great army rolls forward, any one person can stomp you to death!"

Long Zhaofeng was in high spirits as he tried to undermine Eastern Lu's fighting spirit.

"Hahaha, Long Zhaofeng, are you a coward who avoids battle? If you don't even have the courage to fight, how will you command the obedience of the dukes? How will those beneath the heavens submit to you?"

Eastern Lu tried to goad Long Zhaofeng into action.

"Eastern Lu, you're just a homeless, stray dog. With Duke Long's noble, precious body, do you think you even have the qualifications to fight Duke Long in single combat?"

The duke of Yanmen, Yan Jizhuang, was one of Long Zhaofeng's loyal supporters. He was the first one to jump out and start yelling.

"Treachorous ministers and usurpers!" Eastern Lu decisively picked up a bow and arrow and sent an arrow whistling towards Yan Jizhuang.

“Who is willing to slaughter enemies with Us?”

The aura of Eastern Lu’s eleven meridians true qi spurted out impressively, as countless arrows flew through the air towards Duke Long’s side after that initial shot.

He picked up a large blade afterwards with a wave of his hand, leaping up into the air and dazzling the eyes with the blade’s light. It was as if a dragon was leaping over the abyss as an eye-catching splendor sparkled out. It came crashing down onto Duke Long with a huge motion.

“We will follow Your Majesty in slaughtering traitors!”

The eight death guards split up on both sides and started charging along with Eastern Lu like wolves and tigers.

Afterwards, large numbers of royal experts also rushed into the fray, unafraid of death.

Although the amount of these people rushing towards the Soaring Dragon army was as if a stone sinking into the ocean, the instantaneous explosion of power and lethality was still quite awe inspiring from all these true qi masters.

Lights flashed and shadows of the blade danced. Blood and flesh flew everywhere.

In the span of a breath, dozens of Duke Long’s personal guard were hewn to death.

“Kill them!” Duke Long’s eyes glared as he gave the order in a loud voice. “Whoever kills Eastern Lu will be made lord of ten thousand households!”

At this moment, a tragic scene was depicted.

On the royal family side, the royal experts and royal personal guards all bore the demeanor of fearlessly and vigorously undertaking this

matter for their liege. They crashed endlessly into the Duke of Soaring Dragon's camp like the tidewaters.

In that moment, bloodthirsty yells shook the sky.

Wei Tiandu brought with him three hundred elite troops as he gave a long yell, "Kill the traitors, kill!"

His long spear danced as he also charged for the world outside the palace.

Wei Tiandu was an eleven meridians true qi master to begin with. After taking the "Great Dao Berserk Pill", his battle strength increased swiftly.

One long spear thrust out like a dragon leaping out of the seas, and a fierce tiger coming down from the mountains.

Beams of light shot from the spear and sent a great patch of enemies flying.

Princess Gouyu wielded a short sword as she brought along Eastern Lin and Eastern Zhiruo in her wake, following behind the three hundred Tiandu elites.

She only had one thought in this moment, take her royal brother's children to safety!

She gave no thought to the consequences and threw herself into the fray.

Once these three hundred Tiandu elites put forth their all, the battle strength that exploded out of them enabled each person to hold off ten others alone.

Not to mention the addition of a berserk eleven meridians true qi master Wei Tiandu. This made their powers of destruction even more frightening.

A small opening was created not too long after.

“Princess, hurry up and take their Highnesses and leave!” Wei Tiandu urgently called out as his long spear danced like a mad demon, sweeping away the enemies that surged like tides next to him and stabbing them to death.

“Oh no, someone wants to escape!”

On Long Zhaofeng’s side, someone immediately detected Princess Gouyu’s intention to break through the siege.

Long Zhaofeng yelled out, “Long Er, Xue’er, take a pack of experts with you and stop them. Not a single one can be allowed to escape!”

“Understood!” Long Er and Long Juxue accepted their orders.

Wei Tiandu was truly putting his life on the line. None of his moves were defensive in nature. All of them were fierce, violent attacks that brought with them an incredible destructiveness.

His every attack and move sought to create an opening.

They only needed to create one crack to enable Princess Gouyu and the others to escape in the chaos!

The streets of the outside world were only around ten meters away now.

Chapter 98: Jiang Chen Makes His Move

Although they fell down bravely, tragically, and despite every person killing at least more than ten times their worth of enemies, the great army continued to surge forward like the tidewaters.

However, Wei Tiandu finally carved out a break thanks to his tremendous destructive power.

His long spear wavered as he continuously drew out rings of true qi, sweeping away as many of the enemy as he could within a space of twenty or thirty meters.

“Princess, go!”

The only moment had finally appeared.

Wei Tiandu had already suffered from multiple hits from blades and swords. Fresh blood splurged out endlessly as many large and small cuts turned him into a bloody figure.

Except, a tragic yet content smile was on Wei Tiandu’s face at the moment.

“Come, come at me!” Wei Tiandu roared crazily. “I want all of you to die!”

The stance of an eleven meridians true qi master putting his life down on the line was indeed astounding. The break widened even further.

Princess Gouyu grabbed one child in each hand and circulated her true qi, yelling lowly, “Let’s go!”

With Eastern Lin and Eastern Zhiruo, her feet pushed off the ground and her body flew through the air, bounding out of the ring of battle, and dashing quickly for the outside streets.

Wei Tiandu and his spear stood sideways on the great avenue,

crashing and thrusting out to his left and right, stabbing more than ten elites of the Soaring Dragon side who ran up in pursuit to death.

At this moment, a shadow wavered in the air as if a light breeze was blowing.

A light fragrance wafted out as green sleeves danced. A sword like a poisonous snake pierced into Wei Tiandu's right ribs in a slanted direction.

The person behind the ambush was Long Juxue, here on orders.

"Wei Tiandu, die!" Long Juxue's gaze was remote as her slender arms raised and the light from a sword's blade drew an arc in the air. It slashed across Wei Tiandu's chest, bringing his organs trailing out after.

Wei Tiandu's mouth was full of blood as both eyes glared at Long Juxue. He laughed ghastly, "So you're the evil scourge? That so-called azure phoenix constitution? I will go down with you!"

Wei Tiandu was quite brave and fierce. His organs were trailing outside of him as he threw his spear away, stubbornly reaching out with both hands towards Long Juxue, attempting to latch onto her.

"Huh. Struggling in your death throes." Long Juxue's body moved as she slashed out with her sword twice, relieving Wei Tiandu's arms from his body.

Wei Tiandu roared like a tiger, but still refused to give up. He leapt forward like a tiger, opening his mouth wide in an attempt to bite Long Juxue.

Except, being so heavily injured, how could he do anything to a young genius like Long Juxue?

A sword aura flashed past Wei Tiandu's neck like frost as a head shot up towards the skies.

Long Juxue said coldly, "Put the head away, display it to the public tomorrow."

Long Er and some other true qi masters ran off in pursuit towards the direction of Princess Gouyu's escape.

If Princess Gouyu hadn't had two people with her, she could absolutely escape from the ring of battle with her cultivation as an eleven meridians true qi master.

Whether it was Long Er or Long Juxue, or any of the other true qi masters, none of them would be able to hold her down.

But, the two children together weighed two hundred pounds. This greatly decreased her speed. Long Er and the others caught up with them before she'd even made it down one street. There was less than two hundred meters between the two parties.

"Gouyu, I respect you as a dignified person. Stop and I'll leave you a complete corpse in death." Long Er called out.

"Blasphemy." Long Juxue had caught up from behind and hectorated. "Long Er, who gave you the authority to make such promises lightly? My lord father has named this woman as someone he wants, how can we let her die easily and swiftly?"

"Gouyu, you considered yourself a world above others when you were in charge of the Hidden Dragon Trials. Did you ever think that there would be a day like this?" Long Juxue laughed coldly. "I will take both you and your niece, tear off all the clothes on your bodies and let all the men in the kingdom look upon your naked bodies. Then, I will find one hundred of the dirtiest men in the kingdom and have them service you one by one."

Long Juxue's words were suffused with a cruelty and ruthlessness that was at odds with her age.

"Auntie, put us down, hurry up and escape. Avenge us in the future!" Eastern Lin called out.

"Auntie, hurry up and run. Go find Jiang Chen!" Eastern Zhiruo still hadn't forgotten Jiang Chen at this moment. She felt that in this world, only Jiang Chen could save her and save her auntie.

"Escape? Where to?"

Long Juxue made a hand motion. Long Er and the other six or seven true qi masters increased their speed and dashed forward.

A hundred meters... fifty meters... thirty meters.

They were coming closer and closer into attack range.

At this moment, that piercing and familiar bird call once again broke through the firmament of the heavens.

Once, twice...

It seemed to coalesce into countless sounds after a while, concentrating into a sea of bird calls.

Gold light streaked through the skies, bringing with it an awe-inspiring presence.

Whoosh.

Whoosh, whoosh.

The arrows that streaked through the sky were like death reaping runes as they shot towards the pursuing crowd.

Bam, bam.

Two true qi masters were caught off guard and flipped over themselves when these arrows with strong momentum connected.

Princess Gouyu had already closed her eyes and was prepared to die, her heart was completely in despair.

When she heard the familiar bird calls, a warmth rose up in her

heart. It was like when a drowning person suddenly clutched onto a straw. She knew that she was safe.

Their savior was here.

"Throw them up here." Jiang Chen called down to Gouyu from his lofty vantage point.

Princess Gouyu hastily threw Eastern Lin and Eastern Zhiruo one after another into the air. Jiang Chen made a gesture and the two Goldwing Swordbirds flew sideways in the sky, catching them firmly.

Another one dashed towards Princess Gouyu. Gouyu raised her feet and mounted as well.

When she was astride the back of the Goldwing Swordbird, a heavily hovering stone in Princess Gouyu's heart was finally placed down.

"Jiang Chen!" Long Juxue had slashed her way through with a sword and violent beams of hate shot out from her eyes when she saw Jiang Chen's sudden appearance.

"It's me." Jiang Chen raised his bow and arrow and shot another arrow at Long Juxue.

This woman was even more ruthless than Long Yinye, she had to be eliminated.

However, Long Juxue was obviously prepared for his arrow as her body immediately flashed behind a large tree. She grit her teeth, "Jiang Chen, are you trying to push the clock back and stubbornly resist my Long family to the end?"

"Long Juxue, the moment that your Long family sent assassins to kill my father, our families were destined to a fate of not resting until one side was dead. Within the Boundless Catacombs, even the members of the 'Hidden Hand' whom you had colluded with were unable to kill me. You have missed your only chance. From today on forth, your Long family can only await my endless vengeance!"

Jiang Chen whistled sharply after he'd finished talking and called out to the Goldwing Swordbirds, preparing to leave.

Eastern Zhiruo sobbed as she pled, "Brother Jiang Chen, please save my royal father."

Jiang Chen's gaze was remote as he looked in the direction of the palace. He sighed lightly, "It's too late."

It was indeed too late, because the Duke of Soaring Dragon was already surging in this direction with the army. It was obvious that the outcome over at the palace was a foregone conclusion.

Looking at the great army that advanced in a black mess like the tidewaters, Jiang Chen said, "Gouyu, let's go."

It was as if knives churned in Princess Gouyu's heart, she too knew that her royal brother must have fallen. She grimly bore up beneath the tragic in her heart and led Eastern Zhiruo and Eastern Lin away.

"Jiang Chen." Long Zhaofeng's army had finally arrived.

"This is my Long family's grievance with the Eastern clan. Didn't you announce that you had broken off all relations with the Eastern clan? Why do you intervene now?"

Long Zhaofeng was the representative character of his time alright. He could actually suppress his hatred in losing a son and still speak to Jiang Chen thus in this moment.

"Do I need a lecture from you when I, Jiang Chen, choose to do something?" Jiang Chen laughed coldly.

Although the great army formed a dark sea of humanity below like the surging tidewaters, what reason did Jiang Chen have to fear?

"Huh. And I thought you had a backbone, but you're still only one of the Eastern clan's lackeys in the end. Except, is the Eastern clan worthy of your loyalty?"

Long Zhaofeng's arm rose with a head clutched in his hand. It appeared exceedingly sinister in the dark of the night. "This is Eastern Lu's head. This is the fate that has befallen the one you serve."

"You have taken his head today, there will naturally be someone who takes yours, just like your son." Jiang Chen snorted in laughter.

Long Zhaofeng's body wavered, he almost spat out a mouthful of blood. This Jiang Chen was impenetrable and impossible to goad into action.

"Royal brother!"

"Royal father!"

Princess Gouyu and Eastern Zhiruo were overwhelmed by grief when they saw this scene.

Jiang Chen called out coldly. "Hurry up and leave. If you don't, then you too will be unable to leave."

Long Zhaofeng yelled out, "Archers, whoever shoots down Jiang Chen will also be made lord of ten thousand households!" The depths of Long Zhaofeng's hatred for Jiang Chen was not something that could be summed up with a few short words.

Except, how would Jiang Chen give him this opportunity? The Goldwing Swordbird easily swept away the arrows that shot into the sky, streaking through the sky with a dashing figure and vanishing in the distance.

"After them!" Long Zhaofeng was unable to contain his anger.

The sweet joy he'd had in killing Eastern Lu had mostly disappeared after Jiang Chen's act.

If he couldn't kill Jiang Chen, so what if he wore the royal robes of yellow? So what if he held the position of king?

As long as he hadn't exacted revenge for his son's death, he would have never fully vented his spleen.

"Long Zhaofeng, wash your head well. I will come for it sooner or later." In the great expanse of the sky, Jiang Chen's remote voice seemed to emit from the air. Intangible and ethereal, mysterious and difficult to locate.

What did it mean to feel aggrieved? Long Zhaofeng's current feelings were aggrieved.

He, Long Zhaofeng, had been domineering and tyrannical all his life, the hero of his generation and now even the territory of the Eastern clan was within his hands.

But, he could not devise a suitable plan against a mere youth.

Shame. This was practically the epitome of shame.

"Convey my order! Gather the troops of the various dukes, I want to personally conquer the Jiang Han territory. I want the Jiang family to disappear from the landscape of the kingdom, and the Jiang bloodline to disappear from this world!"

Long Zhaofeng was thoroughly infuriated.

"Your Majesty."

All the people around him knelt down.

The Duke of Yanmen was the first to speak. "Your Majesty, the traitor Jiang Chen must be killed, and the Jiang family clan must be exterminated. But Your Majesty has just consolidated your grasp on the nation and must first ascend to your throne, and consolidate the heavens and earth. Only in this way will the public's hearts be assuaged and the lands united as one. Afterwards, those matters of conquering a territory will certainly be achieved irresistibly like sweeping up dead leaves."

“Please ascend to the dragon throne first Your Majesty.”

“Please ascend to the dragon throne first Your Majesty.”

The voices sounded out in unison and filled every corner of the capital.

Long Zhaofeng ascended to the throne and changed the name of the kingdom to Zhao, the Great Zhao Kingdom.

This news made its way into every corner of the capital over the course of one night, traveling to every household.

Some rejoiced and others sorrowed in that moment.

Those who supported the Eastern clan were all privately disappointed and exceedingly pessimistic.

Those who supported Long Zhaofeng proclaimed the news from the rooftops and congratulated each other on the prospect of getting good appointments.

Within the Hall of Healing, they too had received swift intelligence and the executive levels had gathered together at the fastest speed.

“I said long ago that it wasn’t a good thing to walk too closely with the Jiang family.” That Elder Blue was the first to step out and jeer mockingly.

“Your networking strategy was obviously wrong, number three.” The second hallmaster Yue Qun also stood out in admonishment.

“Absolutely wrong, our Hall of Healing is in great trouble this time. We thoroughly offended the Duke of Soaring Dragon in that fight with the Pill King Garden. No, he’s not the Duke of Soaring Dragon now, he’s now His Majesty.” Another elder spoke up.

In the span of a moment, fully one half of the senior executives of the Hall started admonishing Qiao Baishi.

Even the lord hallmaster Song Tianxing hadn't anticipated on such a large backlash. One had to know that when the Hall of Healing benefitted previously, these people had praised Qiao Baishi up to the heavens.

Chapter 99: Changes in the Hall of Healing

Qiao Baishi's heart was full of wryness. His gaze was filled with some bitterness as he swept his eyes across these people's faces.

These were his colleagues in the Hall of Healing? These were his so-called brothers in life and death?

When the Heavenly Karma Pill, Vast Ocean Pill, and One Buddha Powder were produced and available on shelves, what attitude did these people have? Each of them couldn't keep their mouths closed from laughing so much, praising that he was wise and brilliant and had accomplished a great service for the Hall.

But now, how short of a time had it been until it had all been forgotten? They could easily distort the facts just because the Duke of Soaring Dragon had risen to power, and twist all of his previous achievements into crimes.

One had to know that the profit the Hall of Healing had gained from these three medicines in the past couple of months was profit they would have had to previously earn over three years.

This was to say that the profits of the Hall of Healing had increased manyfold in a short period of time.

This didn't even take into account future anticipated revenue — and that could all be estimated.

Qiao Baishi's heart grew cold as he said remotely, "If you thought I was wrong, then why didn't you speak up earlier? How come you didn't object when we originally introduced those pill medicines?"

"What kind of attitude is this? What's wrong in us saying a word or two about you? Do you not think that our Hall of Healing is not now a thorn in the side of the newly ascended ruler?" The second hallmaster Yue Qun admonished.

Elder Blue also said sourly, "Huh, you won't allow others to speak against you just because you have a bit of accomplishments to your name? Mark my words, you had ulterior motives in introducing those pills."

"Ulterior motives?" Qiao Baishi was enraged. "Have I diverted a single bit of money that the Hall has earned into my pockets?"

"Who knows?" Elder Blue was completely unwilling to back down.

"Enough." Song Tianxing slammed his hand down on the table and said upon seeing that the two were about to dissolve into a yelling match.

There was still quite a deterring force from the lord hallmaster's words. All of them immediately shut their mouths and didn't dare say anything else.

Qiao Baishi stood up and cupped his hands, "Lord Hallmaster, I, Qiao Baishi, do not wish to argue over this matter. The annals of the Hall's history will attest to my merits and faults. I was raised by your hand and I have nothing to say if you wish to punish me. But these people... huh. They're not worthy."

Qiao Baishi also had a lofty and unyielding character. These people normally didn't do anything, but now all of them wanted a piece of the action if there were benefits to be had. All of them shirked responsibility when something went wrong, and pushed everything onto him.

How was Qiao Baishi an easy target for them to bully at will?

Song Tianxing sighed lightly, "Number three, the bigger picture is greater than the individual. If Long Zhaofeng hadn't usurped the throne, our Hall of Healing needn't have feared his status as first duke. But now..."

"Lord Hallmaster, I suggest that we hand over Qiao Baishi. He is a confederate of that Jiang Chen, if we hand him over to the king, it will

absolutely appease some of his anger. Also, His Majesty has just recently conquered this land. The country has disintegrated and the people's hearts are shaky. There are untold multitudes of injured, he will need the Hall of Healing as well." Elder Blue's suggestion was a drastic method to deal with the situation.

"I feel that Elder Blue's suggestion is quite good." Second hallmaster Yue Qun also assented.

"I agree with this suggestion."

"I too agree."

To think that a large half of the senior leadership actually favored handing Qiao Baishi over!

"Lord Hallmaster, this isn't fair! The third hallmaster has accomplished deeds of valor in battle. Does his deeds become crimes merely because of a change in the political situation?"

"Absolute bullshit. If Qiao Baishi really has won distinctions in battle, then the Hall needs him to accomplish even more achievements now. Sacrificing just him to preserve the entire Hall is the biggest accomplishment of all."

"Indeed, if you want to talk about worthy deeds, then helping the Hall distance itself from danger is a worthy deed."

These senior executives were truly shameless. Even lord hallmaster Song Tianxing felt embarrassed when he heard these words.

Just as these senior executives were chattering ceaselessly and embroiled in fierce arguments, a low curse suddenly sounded in the air. "Quarreling amongst brothers in the same family late into the night, and quite energetically at that? Can a body get any rest around here?"

This voice was aged, but it was suffused with a presence that demanded respect from others.

“Elder Shun has spoken?” An elder was astonished.

Elder Shun was only the Hall of Healing’s resident expert, but his position within the Hall was greatly revered. Even the lord hallmaster Song Tianxing himself had to treat him with the utmost respect.

When Jiang Zheng had marketed the recipe for the Heavenly Karma Pill to Qiao Baishi, all the senior executives had been unable to make a decision. It was only through Elder Shun’s verification that Qiao Baishi was able to make up his mind.

Song Tianxing smiled awkwardly and apologized, “Elder Shun, we’ve disturbed your rest in the middle of the night. We are deeply sorry. It’s just that the winds of change have blown into the capital and the Hall needs to discuss a responding strategy.”

“Discuss what? Discuss how to give up the only person of talent within the Hall to amuse and placate the anger of the new king?”

Elder Shun’s voice was filled with contempt as he cut straight to the point with sarcasm.

Those senior executives who had wanted to hand Qiao Baishi over all looked on with uncomfortable faces, feeling indignant but not daring to voice it.

“Song Tianxing, my granddaughter and I have no interest in intervening with your internal affairs. However, Huang’er and I have both verified that Heavenly Karma Pill. If you all think that Baishi has acted incorrectly, then that also means we were wrong as well.”

“Not at all, not at all.” Song Tianxing knew more clearly than anyone else the power that Elder Shun had.

“If that’s not the case, then what are you blathering on about? Winds of change in the capital? Do you think everything is over now that Long Zhaofeng has ascended to the throne?”

Elder Shun’s words left everyone dumbfounded.

Song Tianxing gathered his courage to ask, "Elder Shun, we are silly and foolish. Does Elder Shun think there are further twists and turns about to take place in this matter? Who in the kingdom can contend with the Long family's power now?"

"Huh. I have no interest in the stupid affairs of a change in royal power. I'll only say one thing, Qiao Baishi cannot be touched. Whoever moves against him is making a move against me."

Elder Shun remained silent after saying these words. He gave no further responses no matter how much Song Tianxing asked or what he said.

Song Tianxing hadn't wanted to punish Qiao Baishi in the first place. After all, Qiao Baishi was a treasured subordinate that he had personally mentored. He had once wavered for the profits of the Hall, but that had certainly not been his true intentions.

He took advantage of the situation to find a way out. "Alright, since Elder Shun has spoken, it's inconceivable that any of you have greater foresight than our Elder Shun. Since the dust has settled within the capital, even if the Long family wishes to settle their debts, it won't be the Hall's turn for the time being."

Qiao Baishi felt dispirited, but said nothing and kept silent. He actually felt quite desolate inside. To think that despite devoting his entire life to the Hall of Healing, he still needed a resident expert, one whom he ordinarily had no dealings with, to save his life in the end.

"There's no real reason to stay with the Hall of Healing." Qiao Baishi thought of Jiang Chen, and remembered this mysterious and honorable young master, and a current of warmth rose up in his heart.

Compared to his honored master Jiang Chen, Qiao Baishi felt that these colleagues were as boring and disgusting as maggots.

In another room in the Hall of Healing, a girl dressed in green sat beneath a single lantern. Her features were stunningly beautiful as if an immortal had descended upon the mortal realm.

“Elder Shun, it’s rare to see you fly into a rage.” The girl played listlessly with the lantern wick as traces of worry were evident between her brows, appearing all the more wondrous beneath the lantern’s light.

“Heh heh, Huang’er, the senior leadership of this Hall of Healing are simply ridiculous. Qiao Baishi is a crane amongst chickens, and it was a foregone conclusion that he would be envied by others. Yet they wanted to hand him over to Long Zhaofeng! It seems like this Hall of Healing is also a place that envies the wise and not worth lingering in.”

Elder Shun sighed lightly, his tone a bit bleak. “If it wasn’t for old man Qian Ji’s wondrous divination skills showing him a sign that the clue to curing your sickness would be obtained in this common kingdom, why would I be so bored as to subject Huang’er to the agonies of boredom in this forsaken place?”

The girl in question, Huang’er, instead smiled, “Elder Shun, the matters of divination are vague and insubstantial. It may exist, and it might not. Why should we overly care about them? Let destiny take her course. Besides, if we hadn’t come out, my sickly body would only be subjected to endless eyerolls and constraints at home.”

The girl’s smile was suffused with a kind of hazy, undefined, and mysterious feeling. Her beautiful and bright clever eyes sparkled with a light not of this mortal life, as if a current of clear spring from the heavens.

“Huang’er, don’t you think it’s a bit odd that the Hall of Healing recently introduced the Heavenly Karma Pill, Vast Ocean Pill, and One Buddha Powder? The quality and rank of these pills have obviously surpassed the limits of this ordinary kingdom.”

"Yes, I've also obtained a few of these pills from Song Tianxing for research. They are indeed not ordinary. With these pills, if the Hall of Healing manages things well, it won't be a problem for them to dominate the surrounding sixteen kingdoms."

"The point isn't how the Hall of Healing will do, but rather where did these recipes come from? I seem to remember that the Heavenly Karma Pill was purchased from the hands of a Jiang family's servant."

"The Jiang family?" Miss Huang'er held a few traces of uncertainty.

"Yes, the Duke of Jiang Han. I've inquired around and learnt that Jiang Feng's character is alright, but he's quite ordinary in all other areas. However, I've also heard that his son is quite odd. He behaved atrociously at the Rites of Heavenly Worship and was beaten half to death by Eastern Lu. He then started treating Eastern Lu's daughter and diagnosed her with something called a yin constitution. In addition, the servant Jiang Zheng is the body servant of this Jiang Chen. Wouldn't you say that there's something odd with regards to this Jiang Chen?"

"How can there be something odd about the son of a duke?" Miss Huang'er was a bit perplexed.

"It's quite strange indeed. I even suspect that he is the mastermind behind the Heavenly Karma Pill. Including the Vast Ocean Pill, One Buddha Powder, his shadow is in the background behind everything that's happened in the Hall of Healing. The sudden change in the winds and clouds of the capital this time were also heralded by this person. Also, this person can actually control the Goldwing Swordbirds and he even killed the son of Long Zhaofeng."

The more he spoke, the more Elder Shun felt that things were increasingly bizarre. "This person was the shame of the capital a few months ago and couldn't even pass the foundational exams. How many months has it been? He's turned into the man of the hour that can influence the situation in the capital with a shake of his body. Huang'er, would you say that something will come true on this

person?"

"Something will come true?" Huang'er smiled lightly. "Elder Shun, do you want to say that Elder Qian Ji's divination will be fulfilled by Jiang Chen?"

"Anything is possible." Elder Shun also thought that it was a bit farfetched. No matter from which angle one contemplated from, the son of a duke didn't seem to fulfill the signs.

But, he couldn't sit idly by and ignore the slightest clue, even if it didn't seem like a clue.

"If there's a chance, I'm going to meet this Jiang Chen." Elder Shun made up his mind.

Nothing more was said that night.

Early next morning, a news bomb was dropped onto the Hall of Healing. Qiao Baishi had left and left behind one letter bidding his farewells to Song Tianxing. The words within the letter made it clear that with this departure, Qiao Baishi would never come back to the Hall of Healing.

This was to say that Qiao Baishi had broken off all relations with the Hall of Healing.

Song Tianxing was dismally downcast, he knew that his waffling attitude had hurt Qiao Baishi's heart.

"Fleeing for fear of punishment. If he didn't have a guilty conscience, why would he run away?" Elder Blue interspersed her talk with curses, putting on the air that she'd long since seen this coming.

"You, shut up!" Song Tianxing burst into anger. He was exceedingly irritated. Qiao Baishi's departure had seemed to cause him to lose quite a lot in a single moment.

Chapter 100: Long Zhaofeng, I've Waited a Long Time for You

Just as Song Tianxing had said, a thousand things were waiting for Long Zhaofeng when he ascended to his throne. He didn't have the time to immediately make trouble for the Hall of Healing.

Long Zhaofeng gave a command the first day he took his throne and gathered all the dukes on an expedition into the south to march on the Jiang Han territory, and punish the traitorous Jiang Feng father and son.

In addition, Long Zhaofeng would personally join this expedition.

Everyone knew that Long Zhaofeng's hatred of the Jiang family ran as deep as the ocean. Jiang Chen had shot his most beloved son, Long Yinye, to death with one arrow. The pain of losing his son caused Long Zhaofeng to be unable to be happy, even after taking the throne.

It was like the brightest jewel on the crown had been taken away by someone.

The army, in full battle array, awaited its commands, ready to set out at any given time.

Long Zhaofeng wore a full length cape and looked quite majestic. Handpicked elites were beneath his command and he walked to the front of the great army surrounded by the soldiers of the various dukes.

"We have just ascended the throne, but unfortunately the traitorous Jiang family are succoring the leftover evil of the Eastern clan. They are attempting to defy my royal Long family and in doing so, they are defying the entire kingdom. The kingdom will not know peace until the Jiang family is annihilated and the Eastern clan exterminated. We have the feud of losing a son to the Jiang family as well. We are personally taking the field today, are you all willing to punish traitors with Us?"

"May Your Majesty live ten thousand years, may the Long family live ten thousand years!"

"Suppress the Jiang family, annihilate the Jiang clan!"

"Suppress the Jiang family, annihilate the Jiang clan!"

The army called out in unison, their spirits soaring to the firmaments, rocking the heavens and moving the earth.

"Forward!" Long Zhaofeng waved his long whip as the great army moved forward. It was an army of a million strong as it split into three armies, making their way south to the southern borders and Jiang Han territory.

"Jiang Chen, Jiang Feng, I swear that I will not return to the capital if I don't fill up and level out the Jiang Han territory and slaughter all of your Jiang family, young and old." Long Zhaofeng swore a blood oath.

Astonishing killing intent also emanated from Long Juxue, her features like icy frost. With regards to Jiang Chen, her hatred of him was bone deep.

This kind of hatred was not simply because Jiang Chen had killed her elder brother Long Yinze, but the kind of hatred that also stemmed from other emotions, such as jealousy.

Logically speaking, she, Long Juxue, had an azure phoenix constitution and had attracted the attentions of a heavyweight in a hidden sect. She was the golden girl.

And true, she had enjoyed a smooth, easy life for more than ten years in her path as a genius. She had suffered no setbacks and had always occupied the spot at the top, lauded by tens of thousands, pursued by tens of thousands, and adored by tens of thousands.

But, this situation had changed because of Jiang Chen's appearance.

Bai Zhanyun, Yi Taichu, these heirs of the four great dukes had

originally been followers kneeling at her feet, but had started keeping their distance from her with Jiang Chen's appearance.

This could have been forgiven, but Jiang Chen had actually publicly refused her request of the Dragonbone Sun Grass in the Hall of Healing, and hadn't left her any face at all.

If it was said that these were just matters of face, then the issue of Jiang Chen winning out over her in the Hidden Dragon Trials, when his eight personal guards were the first to complete the exam, had been an act of seizing with one stroke the superiority that the Long family had preserved for hundreds of years.

And in the Boundless Catacombs, under that careful and intricate planning along with two spirit weapons, as well as four killers of a true qi master level, it still hadn't been enough to kill Jiang Chen.

All of these things added together were enough to stoke Long Juxue's killing intent towards Jiang Chen to its peak.

She had been foiled time and time again when she went up against Jiang Chen, even with her azure phoenix constitution. This made her jealous and gave her a sense of danger.

Her exceptional advantages would be further nibbled away at if this Jiang Chen was permitted to live and continue to grow.

Even if Jiang Chen was inferior to her and hadn't attracted the attentions of the heavyweight of any sect, Long Juxue was absolutely unwilling to see the halo of another genius exist next to her own halo within the bounds of the kingdom.

The great army advanced forward with great strength and vigor.

The road from the capital to the southern border was long. Many territories, cities, mountain passes, and dangerous areas would be passed.

The Second Crossing was one of those mountain passes.

Tall and rugged mountains bordered both sides of this mountain pass. The pass was built according to the mountain, easy to defend and difficult to attack.

The Second Crossing was located in the land of the Duke of Yanmen, Yan Jiuzhuang's territory.

The general in charge of this pass was Yan Jiuzhuang's beloved confidante. Except, the head of this beloved confidante had long since been separated from its body.

Last night, when it was dark and the winds strong.

Countless numbers of fierce fowl flew in from an unknown origin under the cover of night, assailing the mountain pass.

In almost less than fifteen minutes, the mountain pass had fallen to the endless numbers of violent fowl. All of the defending soldiers had been turned into food for these wild birds.

"Chen'er, is Eastern Lu truly dead?"

Above the mountain pass, Jiang Feng, having broken through to eleven meridians true qi, still found it hard to accept this reality.

"He's dead and has reaped what he sowed. No one can be blamed for his downfall." Jiang Chen didn't have much sympathy for Eastern Lu.

It wasn't that Jiang Feng felt sorrowful, it was just that the Eastern Kingdom had been under the rule of the Eastern clan for far too long. Eastern Lu's sudden death, the collapse of the Eastern clan, power transferred to someone else — this caused Jiang Feng to have some problems adjusting.

"Long Zhaofeng is committing many sins." Jiang Feng had also seen much these days. The turmoil in the capital and endless slaughter had truly created rivers of blood in the capital in just a few days.

“He won’t prance around for much longer.” Jiang Chen’s tone was remote. “According to the calculations, the great army that he’s personally leading should be arriving soon?”

Jiang Chen hadn’t chosen the Second Crossing without reason.

This place was easy to defend and hard to attack. The terrain was advantageous in concealing his great Swordbird army. He would ambush Long Zhaofeng’s great army here and thus chose this place to be Long Zhaofeng’s resting ground.

Jiang Chen knew clearly that the first thing Long Zhaofeng would do after taking his throne would be to conquer the Jiang Han territory, fight against the Jiang clan, and exterminate the Jiang clan.

Jiang Chen’s aim was equally clear, and that was to kill Long Zhaofeng, kill Long Juxue, and exterminate the Long family.

This wasn’t a personal grudge, but a battle in which both families wouldn’t rest until one side was dead.

This battle must end in the complete annihilation of one side. Otherwise, if one side didn’t fall, the other would never have peace.

“Jiang Chen, are you truly certain that our small amount of people will be enough to fight in this pass against Long Zhaofeng’s great army that has turned out in full force?” Princess Gouyu was thoroughly weary after the past couple of days, but she cared even more about the situation at hand.

“Gouyu, when have you ever thought that I, Jiang Chen, have done something without assurance of success?” Jiang Chen smiled faintly and asked in response.

“But, Long Zhaofeng pulled off a successful coup and the various dukes have acceded to his rule. If he’s gathered together the various armies of the dukes, he will have roughly one million troops. Although this pass is easy to defend and hard to attack, if everyone in the million strong army charges forward, it will more than enough

to overwhelm this pass ten times.”

Princess Gouyu wasn't a brainless person, she still had some knowledge of the matters of war.

“Charge?” Jiang Chen smiled leisurely. “They won't have the chance to charge. They'll only have one choice. If they can escape, that will be their fate. If they can't, they'll die.”

Jiang Chen's tone suddenly descended as killing intent exploded in his eyes.

Soldier and small pawns can run away.

None of the Long family would be allowed to go.

He wouldn't forget the scene of the Duke of Soaring Dragon sending people to assassinate his father Jiang Feng. He wouldn't forget the scene of his father's face black with poison. Likewise, he also wouldn't forget the scene in which Long San tried to kill him when he was executing a mission. It was even more so impossible for him to forget the scene of Long Yinye and Long Juxue partnering with four great killers in the Boundless Catacombs, forcing himself into desperate circumstances.

If it wasn't for the fact that he was lucky and had all sorts of trump cards, he would've died an unknown numbers of times already.

Jiang Chen wasn't someone who treasured and nursed grudges, but he also wasn't a living Buddha, able to meekly let the saliva dry when someone spat in his face. It wasn't the simple matter of a grudge between him and the Long family now, but a matter of who lived and who died.

“They're here.”

Jiang Chen's ears moved slightly as his Ear of the Zephyr picked up the sounds of the great army marching, fifteen kilometers out.

"They're here?" Princess Gouyu's feminine features changed slightly as she listened intently, but couldn't hear anything.

Jiang Feng also perked up his ears but similarly didn't hear anything.

Standing like a sculpture on the top of the mountain pass, Jiang Chen remained silent without speaking. His gaze was resolute and full of killing intent, silently awaiting the moment of slaughter.

"Long Zhaofeng, I hope you're already wearing the royal robes. Otherwise, you'll never have a chance to wear them again in this lifetime."

The thought flashed through Jiang Chen's mind.

After a short while, Princess Gouyu and Jiang Feng finally heard the disturbance. The aura and killing intent of a million strong army proceeded forward, that suffocating feeling of oppression caused Princess Gouyu's heart to involuntarily contract as she looked uncontrollably in Jiang Chen's direction.

He was as steady as ever, almost as if he was sitting quietly and meditating, but with the small smile on his face slowly spreading out.

"Is... is he really this assured of victory?" Princess Gouyu's heart was in a disarray. This suddenly appeared youth had completely upended and redefined all her knowledge and the barriers to her heart in a few short months.

The great army had finally arrived.

Long Zhaofeng wore durable armor over his royal robes and turned to the Duke of Yanmen by his side, "Duke Yan, the Second Crossing is just ahead right? Why do they still not respond after your intelligence has been delivered?"

Yan Jiuzhuang was also a bit surprised. The defending general of the Second Crossing was his beloved general. Logically speaking, he

wouldn't shirk his duties so.

"Shall your old subject send someone to scout ahead?" Yan Jiuzhuang asked weakly.

"No need. The army will proceed forward. Tell him to open the pass. Duke Yan, you should be more cautious in using someone who neglects his position so." Long Zhaofeng said faintly.

Sweat poured down Yan Jiuzhuang's back. How could he not discern his king's notes of displeasure from these words?

At this moment, a figure suddenly appeared above the mountain pass like a divine entity descending and looking down upon mortals, as it flicked a glance at the great army beneath.

"Long Zhaofeng, I've waited a long time for you."

Jiang Chen's voice was as calm as water, but also came surging towards the great army like great waves of the vast ocean crashing down one after another.

"It's Jiang Chen." Many immediately recognized him.

"Jiang Chen." Long Zhaofeng's eyes immediately became bloodshot as endless rays of hatred shot towards the sky over the mountain pass when he saw his enemy.

"Little petty villain Jiang Chen, why are you here? Where are the defending soldiers and general?" The Duke of Yanmen called out.

"Defending soldiers and general? Those worthless things are only good for feasting and drinking just like you, Yan Jiuzhuang. They've already reported to the underworld. Yan Jiuzhuang, the road to the underworld isn't far. You should still be able to meet up with them if you hurry on your way now."

Jiang Chen's cold voice traveled down from the top of the mountain pass.

“Jiang Chen, do you think that seizing one mountain pass is enough to obstruct the southern momentum of my great army?” Long Zhaofeng smiled coldly as he called out.

“Obstruct?” Jiang Chen’s tone was filled with disdain. “Long Zhaofeng, you think too much. I chose this pass only because I thought this area was more suitable to be your resting place.”

What?

Resting place? The million strong army almost laughed. Was Jiang Chen crazy? Even if he had a few troops with him, he dared to voice such lofty words of taking the life of a king with just one mountain pass?

Was this the daydreams of an idiot?

Chapter 101: Tremble, Long Family

It could be said that in the entire kingdom, for both those who had already conceded to Long Zhaofeng and those who hadn't before, there was only one choice, and that was to accede to his rule.

Of all the powers within the kingdom, there were almost none that could threaten the existence of the Long family, much less contend against them.

After all, the Long family had just won the heavens. Their presence as a superior being was enough to roll over all dukes.

Of course, a few people also knew that Jiang Chen was an exception.

Long Zhaofeng had summoned the great army in order to prune the great thorn in his side, Jiang Chen.

Except, no one thought that Jiang Chen had any qualifications to fight against the might of the entire kingdom.

Eastern Lu had been so powerful and yet he barely lasted past a few days.

As for Jiang Chen, Long Zhaofeng placed such an emphasis on him not because of how strong the former was, but because the depths of enmity between the Long family and the Jiang family could not even be washed away with all the waters in the sea.

Upon hearing such wild words come from Jiang Chen, the soldiers of all three armies naturally felt that Jiang Chen was merely voicing his wishful thinking.

"Who will capture this traitor for me? You will be granted one million gold and made the Duke of Jiang Han."

Long Zhaofeng waved his long whip and pointed it at Jiang Chen.

Although he was now the ruler of a nation, Long Zhaofeng was also

infuriated and enraged by Jiang Chen's arrogant attitude.

A million gold, Duke of Jiang Han.

These honors tempted all the experts beneath his banner. What did they train for if it were not for wealth and honor?

If a martial dao practitioner couldn't enter the spirit dao, then all was a mirage, insubstantial and fleeting. What they undoubtedly wished to gain was prosperity and fortune in this life.

Being a duke or general would offer the greatest wealth apart from being a king or emperor.

In the span of a moment, all the experts that were on the Long family's payroll stepped forward. They had all recently been promoted to true qi master royal experts.

"Your Majesty, your subjects are willing to capture and kill this traitor."

Long Zhaofeng was greatly pleased. "You are all of one united mind and will all be rewarded when you kill him."

"Our gratitude to the lord." The six true qi masters looked up at the top of the pass with gazes full of fervor. Kill Jiang Chen, seize the dukedom, and gain one million gold.

No one could resist this temptation.

It was surprisingly Long Juxue by Long Zhaofeng's side who warned them gravely, "Do not underestimate your enemy. Jiang Chen is adept in shooting at a great distance and rides a Goldwing Swordbird. This is extremely odd."

"We appreciate the princess's reminder."

Long Zhaofeng waved his hand and Long Er walked forward. "Your Majesty."

“Long Er, tell all the true qi master level archers to prepare themselves. They must shoot Jiang Chen down the moment he tries to make his escape on the Goldwing Swordbird.”

“Your subject understands his orders.” Long Er bowed as he received his order.

The great army hadn't set forth without any preparations at all this time. The Long family had made specific preparations for Jiang Chen's Goldwing Swordbirds.

They also knew that the Goldwing Swordbird was a violent bird at the level of a true qi master. Ordinary archers would be entirely unable to harm it.

Only experts at the level of true qi masters using strong bows and fierce arrows attacking ceaselessly would be able to keep the Goldwing Swordbird at bay.

“Long Er, this Jiang Chen thinks he's occupied the vantage point of high ground and isn't riding on the back of the Goldwing Swordbird. This is the best time to kill him. When he mounts on the Goldwing Swordbird and takes to the sky again, even the arrows of a true qi master will be unable to keep pace with him.” Long Juxue reminded once again.

Long Er contemplated something and nodded vaguely, saying to the six true qi masters who were readying themselves to rush into the fray. “You six must keep him on the ground at all costs and don't let him mount a Goldwing Swordbird.”

The six true qi masters responsible for rushing Jiang Chen and the eight true qi master level archers were all ready.

This was mobilizing almost all of the core strength available to Long Zhaofeng.

“Kill!”

The six true qi masters responsible for rushing Jiang Chen all wore soft armor and helmets that could defend against arrows. They were fully armored and charged up to the top of mountain pass.

True qi masters truly did have an extraordinary presence.

A scene of a huge cloud of dust swirling up from the ground appeared, forming six tornadoes of dust as if six dragons emerging from the seas, flying up to the sky above the pass.

As they glided, all of them brandished their weapons and attacked straight towards the top of the pass.

This attack wasn't to injure the enemy, but the best defense was a good offense, and this attack was also to defend against a possible ambush from the top of the pass.

As for Jiang Chen standing at the top of the pass, his eyes were clear and they had the intelligent sparkle of reason. His eyes glared and a cold light shot out in exploding rays.

"Well received."

His powerful arms moved consecutively as six Leathered Feather Throwing Daggers tore through the air like a multitude of shooting stars, drawing out marvelous and cunning arcs, shooting down towards the six true qi masters charging upwards.

At the same time, Jiang Chen gave a long whistle as the nameless blade came up. From the high vantage point, his arms trembled once as they swept up a true qi current like the tidewaters.

Vast Ocean Current Splitter, displaying the true colors of a hero.

This blade was indeed the reversing of a vast ocean current, and was indeed a hero by himself.

"The wave breaker form of the Vast Ocean Current Splitter, cleave!"

Having now ascended to the ranks of true qi masters, Jiang Chen's comprehension of the "Vast Ocean Current Splitter" naturally improved with his breakthrough. This highly knowledgeable move now surpassed all of his previous stages, and did so at a substantial level.

The stroke at the peak of one's skills, a stroke enough to make the rivers and oceans flow in reverse, came crashing down from the top of the mountain pass like a tsunami, sweeping across the entire pass and roiling towards the six figures dashing upwards.

The blade's aura that had formed from concentrated true qi was like a violent beast that selected its victims, quickening the breathing of the six true qi masters in an instant.

The six terrifying throwing daggers brought with them a mysterious power and arrived first at wily and brutal angles.

In this moment, the six true qi masters all sniffed a certain presence at the same time —

The presence of death.

This terrifying presence was unstoppable like the tidewaters. It gave birth to an instinct that if they didn't retreat, they would die.

Hesitation occurred only in that crucial moment.

But the six people had entirely different fates.

Three people retreated after their apprehension. They were hit by the throwing daggers and it was like they had been electrocuted in their chests. Blood sprayed out from their mouths as they backed up, but they retained their lives.

Those who didn't immediately back up after hesitating but rather, still continued up against the current were also hit by the throwing daggers. The strong true qi of "Vast Ocean Current Splitter" also infused into them at the same time, utterly shattering their internal

organs as they spat out blood and died.

One move, six true qi masters. Three were dead and three were injured.

Jiang Chen brandished his blade and pointed down at Long Zhaofeng from afar. He was majestic, domineering. "Long Zhaofeng, I killed your son and now you send these worthless things to their deaths. Are these the ways that you should have as the ruler of a nation?"

His manner was imposing, his bearing so steely that he wouldn't even bat an eye if Mt. Tai collapsed in front of him.

It was as if the mountains and rivers had changed color and the rivers and oceans had flowed backwards as soon as Jiang Chen had spoken.

This caused a perfect silence to prevail amongst the million strong army in an instant. It was as if the great mountain valley and the million strong army were just air, without sound or hint of life.

Even Long Zhaofeng was stunned by Jiang Chen's shocking manner in that moment.

"This Jiang Chen, when did he... when had he..." The Duke of Yanmen murmured. He almost didn't believe his eyes.

One had to know that just a few months ago, Jiang Chen couldn't even pass the foundational exams.

Long Zhaofeng was infuriated and he yelled, "Long Er, convey my orders. All true qi masters must step out and kill him. Kill him! Kill! Kill! Kill!"

"Understood!"

Long Juxue's slender brows were slightly knitted as she looked coldly in Jiang Chen's direction, "Jiang Chen, I admit that you have a bit of

potential and ability. However, this is the end of the line for you.”

“Is that so?” Jiang Chen’s expression was wooden. “But you’re right. This is the end of the line. I’ve had enough fun.”

Suddenly, Jiang Chen raised his voice and called out, “Gouyu, Eastern Lin, Eastern Zhiruo, open your eyes and take a good look and see how I kill Long Zhaofeng, this treacherous usurper.”

“Jiang Chen, smooth talking is useless. A mere mountain pass will be trampled flat with one gesture to my million strong army. My Long family will trample your Jiang Han territory and slaughter all of your Jiang family members.” A viciousness like a poisonous viper was revealed on Long Juxue’s beautiful features.

“Hahaha, you’ll need to have that ability first. Million strong army? Destroy my Jiang Han territory and slaughter my family members? Not too shabby, Long Juxue, you’ve made my determination to annihilate your Long family even more resolute.”

Jiang Chen ignored the million strong army beneath him after he’d finished speaking, as if they were clay dolls.

Long Juxue had seen people who were bold, who were unafraid of death, but it was truly the first time that she had seen someone still so carefree and leisurely even when an army of a million strong was beating down his doors.

Except, Jiang Chen’s confident and self-assured manner vaguely made Long Juxue a bit bafflingly uneasy.

Why was she uneasy? She had a million strong army behind her, hundreds of true qi masters to support her, and she commanded the most elite strength in the kingdom.

But she couldn’t shake off this uneasy feeling.

Long Zhaofeng didn’t think that much as his face darkened, “Xue’er, there’s no need to argue with him any longer. Attack the pass

immediately, kill Jiang Chen, slaughter the Jiang family, and trample the Jiang Han territory!"

The million strong army roared like tigers in unison.

Drastic changes in a political situation, the shouts and yells of a million people in one gathering formed an impressive atmosphere, as if the mountains were collapsing and the earth cracking. This immediately raised the somewhat glum morale.

"Kill Jiang Chen!"

"Slaughter the Jiang clan!"

"Seize the dukedom and become Duke of Jiang Han!"

"Kill!"

The mountain winds howled as war drums were beaten fiercely. Battle cries shook the heavens as soldiers flourished their weapons.

In front of the million strong army, the Second Crossing appeared thin and fragile, as if it would topple down if everyone in the million strong army exhaled one breath.

At this moment, Jiang Chen murmured something and suddenly, a long whistle rang out, followed by several sharp short whistles.

In between this whistle, it was as if the mountains on either side of the pass were collapsing as enormous rumbling sounds roared out. Countless rocks were falling down, as if the mountain would explode at any moment, as if a slumbering ancient beast within this mountain valley was awakening.

"What?"

With her azure phoenix constitution, Long Juxue's potential was exceedingly high. She could vaguely detect a sense of the mountains and rivers changing colors, and the heavens and earth becoming

dark and gloomy.

In this moment, a terrifying scene appeared.

Within the mountain valley...

Whoosh whoosh whoosh whoosh whoosh whoosh.

Countless Swordbirds and innumerable wings shot out of the mountain valley like arrows loosed from a bowstring, dashing out from their hiding place deep within the mountain.

Within the span of one breath, they covered the sky and blotted out the sun. The sky was black no matter where one cast an eye. There were Swordbirds everywhere. Countless Swordbirds covered the entire heavens like an enormous sky curtain.

Suddenly, the light of the heavens and the direct sunshine of noon utterly vanished from the mountain valley.

Chapter 102: A Crushing Trample

An innumerable amount of disastrous Swordbirds flooded out of the mountain valley.

Tidewaters were often used as a descriptor, but even tidewaters were still contained within the rivers and seas.

This tide of Swordbirds occupied the entire sky, occupied all available space. These fierce and violent beasts were covering every corner and spot of the sky.

Within the vision of the million strong army, countless black dots were as thick as stalks in a field of flax. They were filled with Swordbirds circling and dancing in the sky.

The Greenwing Swordbirds formed a green sea of Swordbirds. It was like the dams of the river in heaven had collapsed and an opening had formed in the sky above the Second Crossing, draining the waters away with abandon.

There were innumerable Silverwing Swordbirds interspersed amongst the green ocean.

There were even many Goldwing Swordbirds within. Many golden shadows, and a plentitude of golden streaks of light could be seen across the sky. There were at least several hundred threading throughout the mass.

The clouds and wind had changed color, the sun and moon without light.

The million strong army finally knew the meaning of these words.

The originally hoity-toity million strong army was suddenly reduced to an exceedingly miniscule existence compared to the sea of Swordbirds, just like the lights of fireflies would pale in the presence of the sun and moon.

“Long Zhaofeng, you are wise and brilliant to have worn the royal robes early to have fun at playing king. You can take these beautiful dreams with you as you go skipping off to the underworld to reunite with your son.”

Jiang Chen’s tone carried a few hints of cruel banter as he looked at the greatly appalled Long family members.

“Protect the king!” Long Er made a prompt decision. Who had the courage to attack Jiang Chen now? He knew that life or death would be decided in this moment.

Jiang Chen circulated his true qi and called down in a clap of spring thunder, “I, Jiang Chen, only want to kill the Long family members and do not wish to harm those who kneel in surrender. Those who do not will be viewed as loyal to the Long family unto death and will surely die.”

“Do you all hear that? Apart from the Long family, those who kneel and surrender will not be killed. Those who do not kneel will be viewed as loyal to the Long family unto death and the sworn enemies of the Jiang family. You will be shown no mercy.” Jiang Feng was filled with magnanimity and kindheartedness, he too didn’t wish to kill innocents.

Although the members of the million strong army were basically the Long family’s dependents, the soldiers and generals of the army were just all following orders. This wasn’t a crime.

Long Er was greatly alarmed and hurriedly called out, “Don’t believe the Jiang family’s blather. This tide of Swordbirds is a natural disaster, their promises cannot be believed. The Swordbirds are dumb beasts, how would they know who is a Long family member and who isn’t?”

Except, at this time, what effect would Long Er’s words have? Those powers who had originally been forced to accede to the Long family immediately threw down their weapons, and thumped to their knees

in a continuous wave of sound.

Long Er shouted gravely, "Those who kneel will be viewed as defectors having gone over to the enemy's side, and will all be executed!"

After he spoke, Long Er dashed into the formation and hacked more than ten soldiers down onto the ground like he was chopping away at vegetables.

Except, how would he kill all those kneeling by himself alone?

Many followed after the first person kneeled. After a short while, roughly seventy to eighty percent of the million strong army was on their knees. The remaining people were either the Long family's elite troops, the Long family's loyal confidantes such as the Duke of Yanmen, or the people who had a deep grudge with the Jiang family previously.

A large Goldwing Swordbird suddenly emitted a sharp, long whistle!

With that, several hundred Goldwing Swordbirds launched an attack at almost the same time, transforming themselves into golden-colored shadows as they dived down.

In their eyes, the humans below were the best meal, particularly true qi masters — their flesh and blood were the most nutritious type of food.

Thousand of Silverwing Swordbirds also dived down soon after.

Afterwards —

Waves of Greenwing Swordbirds crashed down one after another as if they were waves from the ocean.

A splendid sight formed in front of the Second Crossing for the span of an instant.

It was as if meteors were falling from the skies. Gold, silver, and green colored ones fell endlessly.

Swordbirds had sharp beaks and razor sharp wings. Their feathers were even harder than any human armor. Normal arrows would absolutely be unable to cause any damage to them at all. A majority of the arrows were brushed aside by them when their claws waved.

Even if an occasional arrow from a strong practitioner managed to hurt them, how would they be able to shoot down all the Swordbirds that were coming at them like the tidewaters?

Even if they could shoot down two with one arrow, or three with one arrow, how many arms were there to raise a bow, and how many arrows were there for them to shoot?

"Ah, my eyes!"

"No, I don't want to die, don't eat me!"

"I surrender, I surrender, stop your beaks. Stop your beaks!"

Blood and flesh randomly flew through the air as arrows flew wildly. It was a scene of total chaos in front of the Second Crossing.

In the beginning, the great army managed to scrape together some semblance of resistance, but as increasing numbers of Swordbirds joined into the fray and the strong experts on the ground were continuously divided up and eaten, the scene almost became a one-sided massacre.

"Awrk!"

"Awrk!"

Eating the flesh and blood of these strong practitioners satisfied the Swordbirds in every respect and they continuously emitted excited bird cries.

"I can't hold on anymore, run!"

"Everyone escape into the mountain valley, it'll be good if even one gets away!"

Except, escaping under these circumstances was undoubtedly wishful thinking.

There were Swordbirds everywhere, both within and outside, up and down the mountain valley. Whenever there was the slightest sliver of space or the slightest opening, a Swordbird would immediately appear.

These Swordbirds all vied with each other for the purposes of feeding themselves. How could they let anyone escape?

Long Zhaofeng was also exceedingly bedraggled at this moment. Within a defensive ring of horses, he was making desperate struggles under the protection of his remaining true qi masters.

It was a good thing that the power of several true qi masters was also frightening. Even with several hundred Goldwing Swordbirds attacking them, they were unable to immediately break through this strong line of defense.

After all, this was the decisive moment between life and death. It was impossible for any of the true qi masters to hold anything back. Whether it was their trump cards or their most powerful treasures, they employed them all on the battlefield.

If they didn't use them now, then in this lifetime, they wouldn't have the chance to use them again.

Add to that the fact that true qi masters could always force out their strongest battle potential when in dire straits, their fierce way of fighting that didn't fear death also caused the Goldwing Swordbirds to be unwilling to go head to head with them.

After all, with this situation, the Swordbird army was already

engaging in a one-sided massacre. The kings of Swordbirds were also intelligent and unwilling to do something like trading a life for a life.

Therefore, this was why a defensive formation formed by all the true qi masters was able to withstand the Swordbird army attacks raining down like the tidewaters, but the others weren't that lucky.

Each division of the army had formed defensive units, but these units were unable to have any effect in the face of such seamless aerial attacks.

Yet another formation was dissolved and destroyed with a ghastly wail and howl. Every body of flesh and blood was swept to the floor by the Swordbirds, churned up, and eaten.

"No more, damn it, no more! I surrender!"

"I surrender. What the point of fighting for life and death? Who are we protecting?"

"Yes, all the true qi masters have run off to protect that so-called king, and we stand here and await death?"

The soldiers' morale had finally dissipated, and they woke up after those fierce, blindly loyal supporters were continuously swallowed up by the Swordbird army, until only some stubborn resisters were left.

There was no point in fighting like this.

With this, more and more divisions all kneeled down and paid lip service to surrender.

After an hour, apart from Long Zhaofeng still managing to hold on within his crowd of true qi master protection, there were no more stubbornly resisting troops remaining anywhere else.

They could either surrender, or be swallowed by the Swordbird

army.

It was an odd thing. Once someone kneeled down and surrendered, the Swordbird army would stop their attacks. Although they would circle over the soldiers' heads endlessly, they really did restrain themselves from the temptation of flesh and blood.

Thick crowds of kneeling soldiers out of the million strong army covered the entire mountain valley. Only white skeletal frames were left of those stubborn resisters. There were fully tens of thousands of these frames.

"Jiang Chen, stay your hand. I am willing to surrender."

Within Long Zhaofeng's defensive formation, the Duke of Vermillion Bird, Hong Chunlei, couldn't take it anymore. He was about to have a mental breakdown.

He had thrown himself under Long Zhaofeng's banner partially because of the trend of the greater picture, and partially out of coercion and resignation. He had only wanted to retain his position as one of the four great dukes, but now had discovered that he had stirred up such a hornet's nest by following Long Zhaofeng, and fallen into the dire circumstances of today.

How did he have the courage and faith to continue fighting to the death for Long Zhaofeng?

Brandishing the weapon in his hands, he leapt out of the battle ring and knelt with both knees, intending to surrender.

His knees had just started bending when a cold draft swept over the back of his neck. A blade flashed and his head was sent rolling.

Long Er said sinisterly, "Those who go over to the enemy's side will die."

Bloodthirsty shock tactics were no longer enough to awe and frighten others at this moment. The momentum towards defeat had

formed. Even though Hong Chunlei was beheaded, many other strong experts still began to squirm out of the battle ring.

Even some of the true qi masters that Long Zhaofeng had bought, those experts who had just been titled "royal experts", didn't have the desire to fight on.

Although the battle ring had yet to collapse, the Swordbird army surged like the tides with a momentum that wouldn't let up at all. They could fight and kill, but their hands were trembling from weakness, having fought until now. The Swordbirds they had killed were merely 1/100, or even 1/1000 of the Swordbird army.

What was the point in a continued battle like this?

Long Er's body was covered in blood as he called out, "Cover His Majesty's retreat and all of you will be meritorious subjects and made lord of ten thousand households."

The stimulus of lord of ten thousand households stirred some fighting spirit in these royal experts' hearts. Fortune and prosperity was gained in the midst of danger, and they would put their lives on the line to be ruler of ten thousand households.

Long Zhaofeng was overjoyed and promised, "Of those who fight by my side today, those who live will be made lord of ten thousand. Those who die will have their families be awarded one million gold and have endless prosperity passed onto their progeny."

"Long Zhaofeng, on this day you continue to make promises that you cannot fulfill. Make lord of ten thousand households? Do you think you can leave this place alive?"

Jiang Chen laughed involuntarily upon hearing those words.

Long Zhaofeng was speechless. The situation was greater than the person. It wasn't that he didn't want to kill Jiang Chen, but that he'd never thought that Jiang Chen could deploy an army of Swordbirds. This was something that had never been heard of from time

immemorial.

Above the pass, Princess Gouyu, Eastern Lin, and Eastern Zhiruo watched this scene with vindication.

Karma in the present life had arrived swiftly.

A few days ago, Long Zhaofeng had led a great army to lay siege to the palace and killed everything within and outside of the palace, leaving not even the chickens and dogs.

And now, he was surrounded by a Swordbird army and his life hung by a thread.

Princess Gouyu was filled with astonishment and her heart completely in disarray. She finally understood where Jiang Chen's confidence came from, and finally knew why Jiang Chen viewed the million strong army as a trifling nothing.

It wasn't arrogance, it wasn't ignorance, it was just that he had absolute power.

"Royal brother, your noble spirit shouldn't be far. Do you see this? Long Zhaofeng is not far from death. In this moment, Long Zhaofeng is tasting the same death struggles that you experienced in the last moments of life." Princess Gouyu said silently in her heart.

The attacks of the Swordbird army continued.

The Swordbirds attacked endlessly like shooting stars and meteorites, assailing the nerves of every stubborn resistor. It was like they walked along the edge of life and death every time they beat back an attack.

Their nerves had been stretched to the breaking point, and they didn't know either how many more attacks they could fend off.

Chapter 103: Long Family's Desperate Flounders

The worst thing was, high above the mountain pass, the god of death Jiang Chen had yet to make his move.

That life reaping arrow, that presence from occupying an advantageous vantage point. When he had made his move, he had reaped the lives of true qi masters as if he was harvesting crops.

Under such heavy pressure, any true qi master with even a slightly lower level of training, or if anyone was hit by a Swordbird, would be immediately knocked to the ground, hauled away, and portioned out.

The flesh and blood of a true qi master was absolutely a rich meal for the Goldwing Swordbirds.

More than ten Goldwing Swordbirds would divvy up every true qi master that fell. Those who didn't get a portion would become even more ferocious. The desire to feed made them even more violent and ruthless.

More and more true qi masters couldn't hold up beneath the onslaught.

Long Zhaofeng's level of training was also astonishing. The training of an eleven meridians true qi master allowed him to barely protect himself within the crowd.

Long Juxue followed closely by her father's side, staying not even half a step away. A cold, sinister hatred suffused her phoenix eyes that slanted upwards. The gaze of hatred seemed like it could seal others in ice and shatter them.

Long Zhaofeng's heart shuddered as he looked around and discovered that the number of true qi masters by his side had decreased by a full third.

"Can it be that the heavens truly wishes for my death today?" A

desperate thought grew out of Long Zhaofeng's heart.

He wasn't willing to accept his fate, and didn't wish to die like this. He still had great aspirations. He wanted to sit on the throne for another hundred years, then look upon his land for another hundred.

"Jiang Chen." Long Zhaofeng suddenly cried out. "Must you and I really fight to the depths of not resting until one side is dead?"

Jiang Chen hadn't expected that Long Zhaofeng would spout such naive words in this moment. He only smiled coldly but said nothing.

All words were in vain now. Following up victory with hot pursuit, pulling out the evil by its roots was the only way.

"Jiang Chen, listen to me. I know you have true ability and that you're a genius. My daughter, Long Juxue is also a genius. To have two geniuses in such a small kingdom is the heavens' concern and allowance of solitude for our patch of land. Why must you geniuses be at each other's throats? Why can't geniuses set aside their differences and form an alliance of the strong?"

Long Zhaofeng's voice was rushed as he rallied all his powers of eloquence. "Jiang Chen, as long as you stop, I'm willing to swear an oath to the heavens and earth and betroth my daughter to you. You know that my daughter is of an azure phoenix constitution and that even the heavyweight of a hidden sect looks upon her favorably and wishes to take her in as a disciple. If you kill us today, then you would be offending the entire sect. In contrast, if you stay your hand today, you can return with a beauty in your arms. You might even be able to enter the sect with my daughter in the future, becoming a story that is on everyone's lips in the kingdom. Then, I can leverage on your husband and wife's strength to expand our domain, expand to new frontiers, and unite the surrounding sixteen countries to establish a dynasty. Wouldn't this satisfy both sides? Your Jiang family would also share in the prosperity and good fortune. Isn't that much better than being a small duke?"

One had to say, Long Zhaofeng's words were quite bewitching, and those shining words seemed to make a great deal of sense.

He would be able to return with a beauty in his arms if he stopped the war. Long Juxue was the most beautiful woman in the kingdom, endowed with superior potential, and had been favored by the hidden sects as well. To marry such a woman was the dream of every young man in the kingdom. If the strong cooperated with the strong, there truly was a high chance of expanding to new frontiers and building a dynasty.

Not halting the war and killing the entire Long family could potentially offend an entire sect and bring about pursuit and hunt.

One could say that Long Zhaofeng's words had grasped a delicate situation and cut straight to the crux of the matter. Anyone with a brain would know how to choose.

Long Juxue also felt quite astonished at first, her cherry lips moved slightly as she wanted to say something, but she decided not to say anything in the end and calmly looked in Jiang Chen's direction.

"Jiang Chen, you've also seen my daughter's attitude. She has been proud her entire life but that doesn't mean she is devoid of appeal. She admires men who can control and dominate her. In the entire kingdom, you, and only you are able to conquer her and win her heart. Look at my daughter, she has good looks, beautiful breasts, and a well-rounded bottom. If I make a general observation of the surrounding sixteen countries, you won't be able to find another woman like her."

A beautiful woman and power, these were the two strongest temptations for men. These were also what men most yearned for, and it had an allure that they couldn't resist.

Long Zhaofeng had thrown out both of these temptations in one breath.

Even Princess Gouyu, who stood atop the pass, was frozen. She became encumbered with troubles and worried about personal gains and losses. Her heart trembled as she stood beside Jiang Chen. She didn't even have the courage to look at Jiang Chen.

She was worried, what man in this world would be able to withstand such temptation?

Even Eastern Zhiruo asked in a shaky voice, "Brother Jiang Chen, do you want that woman? I..."

Princess Gouyu likewise said in a quivering voice, "Jiang Chen, Long Juxue is as poisonous as a scorpion. Wedding her would be like storing a poisonous snake by your side."

Even Jiang Feng spoke up, "Chen'er, it is impossible for our Jiang family and Long family to live together under the same sky. This girl Long Juxue is absolutely not a good match."

Long Juxue stood beneath the pass and called out clearly, "Jiang Chen, I know you have something going on with those two Eastern women. That's fine, if you like them, have them as maids who serve your needs in the bedchamber. That is fine as well. I, Long Juxue, only admire strong men."

Jiang Chen had continued to keep a faint smile on his face the entire time. If it were any other son of a duke, he would likely be unable to hold up beneath Long Zhaofeng's promises and temptations.

After all, both beautiful women and power were a deadly aphrodisiac to men.

Except, although land and women were tempting, did Jiang Chen need to obtain those from Long Zhaofeng's hands?

It was obvious that Jiang Chen didn't need to!

Would Jiang Chen, the exalted son of the Celestial Emperor in his past life, be short of temptations such as land and beautiful women?

Who knew how many beautiful women awaited Jiang Chen's attention?

Who knew how many lands awaited his grasp and control?

In the end, these weren't Jiang Chen's greatest goals.

When Princess Gouyu heard Long Juxue's ridiculous, shameless words, her straightforward personality happened to recall the one sided agreement she had struck up with Jiang Chen before, that if he could defeat the Long family, he could have both her and Ru'er. When she thought of this, Gouyu's face also reddened slightly.

It was rather the normally bashful Eastern Zhiruo who yelled out with her loudest volume with a flaming hot face, "My brother Jiang Chen doesn't want you for his woman!"

"Jiang Chen, what are you hesitating for? What man doesn't want land and beautiful women?" Long Zhaofeng called out loudly.

Jiang Chen chuckled. He hadn't said anything because he wanted to see how much more of a ludicrous performance the Long father and daughter would put on.

"Lands and beautiful women?" Jiang Chen shook his head with flagging interest. "Long Zhaofeng, under the circumstances, is selling your daughter's looks your last ploy?"

"Jiang Chen, I..."

"Shut up! Long Zhaofeng, I said a long time ago that the Second Crossing was the best place for your burial grounds. Your daughter? Genius? Beauty? Hahaha, so what? A venomous scorpion of a woman, a pink skeleton. Even if she took off all her clothes and presented herself at my door, I, Jiang Chen, would still have no interest in her. Long Juxue, save your affections and airs for tempting the ghosts and ghouls in the underworld."

Jiang Chen's face grew cold as soon as he'd finished speaking as he

once again spoke words from the beast language, issuing the strongest call to attack.

All the Goldwing Swordbirds received their commands and called out in succession, sending forth their troops.

Waves of attacks like tidewaters once again flooded the skies above the Second Crossing.

“Jiang Chen... you’ll regret this!” Long Zhaofeng was at the end of his road and was making his final struggles.

“My daughter possesses an azure phoenix constitution and had been personally hand picked to be the disciple of Master Shuiyue of the Purple Sun Sect. If you move against my Long family, that is the equivalent of defying Master Shuiyue and the entire Purple Sun Sect.”

The Purple Sun Sect was one of the four great sects within the alliance of the sixteen surrounding kingdoms.

Master Shuiyue was one of the nine elders of the Purple Sun Sect with incredibly strong power and influence, enough to rank in the top ten of the Purple Sun Sect. No one dares to defy a sect heavyweight of this level within the entire sixteen surrounding kingdoms, not to mention a mere Eastern Kingdom.

Except, these threats were pale and weak in front of Jiang Chen.

There wasn’t a ripple of emotion on Jiang Chen’s face. On the contrary, an even stronger urge to kill surged in Jiang Chen’s eyes.

“Purple Sun Sect?” Jiang Chen smiled coldly in his heart. “Even ten Purple Sun Sects wouldn’t be enough to obstruct my desire to exterminate your Long family.”

Offending the Purple Sun Sect was a matter of the future. Who knew the matters of the future with certainty?

In this moment, the Long family had to be annihilated, otherwise there would be no end of trouble in the future. Destroying the Long family, removing Long Juxue – how much would a dead genius be worth?

A heavyweight of the Purple Sun Sect might not be willing to go to such extreme lengths for a dead so-called genius.

Jiang Chen had already stepped onto the back of a Goldwing Swordbird in between his whistles, drawn back the bow, notched an arrow, and sent it shooting towards Long Zhaofeng.

This man had wanted to put his Jiang family down to their deaths on numerous occasions.

Today, Jiang Chen wanted to take down this person first. Once this person was dead, the greater picture would be set!

The arrow breaking through the air brought with it a piercingly cold true qi, attacking with a strong momentum.

“Protect His Majesty!” One had to say, Long Er was an absolutely loyal underling. Just like Long Yi and Long San who had gone before him, they were Long Zhaofeng’s most trusted deathsworn.

They were the personal guards that Long Zhaofeng had selected when he had gone through the Hidden Dragon Trials.

They had experienced life and death with Long Zhaofeng for decades, and Long Er had long since given his life to Long Zhaofeng.

Except, once Jiang Chen started his bow and arrow attack, how could Long Er be able to withstand it?

Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh...

Continuous sounds rending through the air rang out continuously. Incomparable true qi was infused onto the arrows, ripping through the air. When true qi and air collided into each other, streaks of fiery

sparks burned through the air like blossoming fire dragons, shooting towards Long Zhaofeng in cunning angles.

Dong dong dong.

Continual numbers of deathsworn flung themselves at Long Zhaofeng, using their bodies to block these domineering arrows.

Pfft, pfft.

Three or four true qi masters were pierced by these arrows.

Long Zhaofeng was even more bedraggled now. Not only did he have to face the threat of the arrows, but there were several Goldwing Swordbirds circling over his head and sending strong blasts of true qi at him. Their intimidating aura was completely on par with Jiang Chen.

Long Er was covered with blood, as if he was a being made of blood.

“Long Er, protect Xue’er, leave! Don’t mind me. As long as Xue’er remains, there will surely be a day for revenge for the Long family.” Long Zhaofeng also knew that this situation was one of certain death. He couldn’t escape, and Jiang Chen wouldn’t let him escape.

His only hope was to cover Long Juxue’s retreat!

As long as Long Juxue left and returned to the Soaring Dragon manor, taking one or two of the Long’s bloodline with her the bloodlines would remain unbroken. There would then come a day that they would rise again.

“You want to leave?”

Jiang Chen smiled coldly and raised his hand to shoot another arrow, piercing through Long Er.

The arrow drilled through chest, before passing cleanly through his back exiting out the back. A bloody mist arose from Long Er’s chest as

his mouth also spewed out blood. He widened his eyes as he looked at Long Zhaofeng.

"Your Lordship, your subject... is going on ahead of you."

Long Er fell down with a thud after he finished speaking.

Long Zhaofeng had no time to look at Long Er as he madly waved the weapons in his hand. "Xue'er, I, your father, will cover your retreat. Go!"

In this moment, Long Zhaofeng was both bitter and sorrowful. How familiar was this scene? Hadn't Eastern Lu sacrificed himself like this a few days ago in order to enable Princess Gouyu's escape?

Was this karma?

Long Zhaofeng was an eleven meridians true qi master. His level of training was much stronger than Jiang Feng and Princess Gouyu. After all, he had entered the realm of an eleven meridians true qi master a long time ago.

Whereas Jiang Feng's and Princess Gouyu's realm had only just stabilized.

Therefore, once Long Zhaofeng paid no heed to his life, his battle strength was quite astonishing. One had to say, humans could often erupt with amazing strength when they were forced into desperate circumstances.

There were actually two Goldwing Swordbirds in a row that cried out in ghastly agony and fell lifelessly from the sky when they were hit by Long Zhaofeng's great blade.

Jiang Chen yelled out loudly once and fired three arrows in quick succession. Whoosh whoosh whoosh. The three successive arrows brought with them an intense momentum as they shot towards Long Zhaofeng.

As strong as he was, Long Zhaofeng was already at the limits of his endurance when surrounded by so many Goldwing Swordbirds.

The three arrows broke through the air like shooting stars.

Chapter 104:

Withheld for Poirposes

Annihilating Long Zhaofeng, Arrival of the Sect

[collapse]

Bang, bang, bang!

Three arrows connected solidly with Long Zhaofeng's critical parts, but he was wearing soft armor that actually prevented the three arrows from penetrating through.

However, even though they didn't pierce Long Zhaofeng, a strong infusion of true qi rushing into his body was enough to vibrate his body so much so that he spat out countless mouthfuls of blood, as his internal organs were heavily injured.

"Xue'er, go!"

Long Zhaofeng roared like a tiger, like he was completely mad as he covered Long Juxue's dash towards the depths of the mountain valley.

Jiang Chen snorted lightly, you want to leave?

More than ten Goldwing Swordbirds with hundreds of Silverwing Swordbirds formed a net from which there was no escape, completely blocking off Long Juxue's path!

Long Zhaofeng spat out more blood when he saw the situation and knew that things were beyond salvation. Even his daughter wouldn't make it out.

At this moment, he only felt a breeze over his head. By the time he reacted, Jiang Feng's Goldwing Swordbird had already swept over like lightning.

Frosty light flashed from a blade as it sliced down.

The gleam raced over Long Zhaofeng's neck as a crisp, breaking sound rang out. Long Zhaofeng's head flew towards the skies with a pair of eyes filled with hate, that didn't even have time to close in acceptance.

He wasn't reconciled to his fate! He had been in high spirits just two hours ago, wearing the royal robes, a sovereign descending unto the world, and controlling an army of a million strong. And now, his head and body were in two different places and he had become a ghost beneath Jiang Chen's blade.

Nothing illustrated more the great peaks and valleys of life!

"Jiang Chen! I swear I'll kill you!" Long Juxue screamed shrilly when she saw her father's head and body in different place.

Jiang Chen's heart was apathetic as he spurred on the Goldwing Swordbird beneath him towards Long Juxue. Swear you'll kill me? How would I even give you the chance to do so?

The Long family had committed countless sins and killed people like they were flies. Whether it was Long Yinye or Long Juxue, dying ten times over was still likely insufficient to wash away the sins on their body.

Therefore, Jiang Chen only had one thought right now and that was to be ruthless and spare none, to pull up everyone by their roots!

Particularly this Long Juxue, she must die!

"You swear to kill me? Why don't you reincarnate ten more times!" Jiang Chen had already urged the Goldwing Swordbird to within fifty meters of Long Juxue as he spoke.

Long Juxue was surrounded by the great Swordbird army, and had patently reached the end of her resources.

When she saw Jiang Chen arrive, a hint of a bizarre smile actually appeared Long Juxue's charming face, a smile disfigured by hate. Suddenly, a string of faint rippling runes surged up around Long Juxue's side. The water-colored runes swiftly expanded, just like an enormous ripple spreading out on the surface of water.

Jiang Chen's thoughts suddenly raced as a feeling of danger he'd never experienced before assaulted him.

Before he even knew where he was, he had already tightly clamped onto the Goldwing Swordbird beneath him and turned, skewing sideways around a hundred meters.

He also emitted piercing whistles from his mouth, warning the Swordbirds attacking Long Juxue.

At this moment, light like the splendor of the moon suddenly flared out in the air surrounding Long Juxue. The silvery, moon-like runes radiated within the surrounding hundred meters within an instant.

With a speed that the human eye could barely keep pace with, all of the Swordbirds, trees, shrubbery, rocks, and corpses around Long Juxue's body turned into dazzlingly white ice sculptures in an instant.

The energy emanated by these runes was ice spirit power that was without parallel!

A piece of paper filled with writings of strange runes in Long Juxue's hands was also being continuously destroyed. It sparkled with a bizarre light, slowly turning into dots of frost white light within her hands. Sparkling dots, like the fragments of stars, slowly disappeared into nothingness.

Upon seeing that Jiang Chen had avoided imminent disaster and escaped from her lethal blow, Long Juxue's hate filled, charming eyes shot out looks of terrible self-pity.

This was her absolute last trump card, the spirit rune that Purple

Sun Sect Master Shuiyue had personally left for her that year — the Shuiyue True Rune!

The power of this Shuiyue True Rune was seventy percent of Master Shuiyue's strength. Its force was exceedingly great, and could spontaneously turn all living things within one to two hundred meters into ice sculptures.

She couldn't bear to use this Shuiyue True Rune even when her father was in dire straights. She'd originally wanted to use it in her final attempt to escape.

Long Juxue had felt like just now was the best timing!

The pity was, with such a good opportunity at hand, she still hadn't managed to kill Jiang Chen.

Even though she didn't wish to accept this kind of outcome, she didn't dare tarry any longer. Her body dashed away as she made for the deep reaches of the mountain valley. Out of all the Swordbirds that had originally been attacking her, apart from a couple lucky Goldwing Swordbirds that had escaped by a fluke, several hundred Swordbirds had been frozen into ice blocks around her and they all crashed to the ground.

"Jiang Chen, you got lucky this time! The next time, when I return from the Purple Sun Sect, it will be the very day your Jiang family is annihilated!"

As Long Juxue spoke, she had already bounded up into the thickly overgrown mountain valley. There were towering trees everywhere within the mountain valley, and they covered the skies and blotted out the sun. When Long Juxue made it into the mountain valley, she was like a bird within the forest or a fish swimming in the seas. Except, Jiang Chen remained unmoving as he looked at the dense patch of mountain valley. A strange smile leaked out from the corners of his lips as he started counting down within his heart.

“Four, three, two, one...”

Indeed, Jiang Chen hadn't even counted to five when he heard Long Juxue's shrill scream. It was like she'd seen a ghost as she quickly dashed out of the mountain valley again, her hair streaming wildly loose.

Hulala!

The sounds of a huge patch of flapping wings traveled out of the mountain valley, as if a sea made of winds was howling.

Countless numbers of Swordbirds shot out of the mountain valley like sharp arrows, once again covering the skies above the mountain valley.

It turned out that after Jiang Chen got into contact with Mang Qi through that tooth carved with weird patterns, the amount of Swordbirds that Mang Qi sent out was truly astonishing.

The army of Swordbirds that had surrounded the Long family army just now had only been half of that number.

There was another half laying dormant on both sides of the mountain valley.

Long Juxue had thought herself clever in escaping into the mountain valley, thinking she could leverage the terrain of the mountain valley in escaping. She hadn't expected that she'd fallen into an even more terrifying trap.

Long Juxue despaired and kept screaming shrilly. The light from her sword flashed as she waved it wildly, marking her death struggles beneath the oppression of the Swordbirds.

“Jiang Chen, if you kill me, the Purple Sun Sect won't let you off the hook!”

It was a pity that such weak threats such as these were like flies

buzzing in Jiang Chen's ears. Although they were noisy and irritating, there wasn't any strength to them at all.

He slowly lifted the treasured bow and locked onto Long Juxue with the tip of the arrow from afar.

A long night is fraught with dreams. Jiang Chen didn't wish to give rise to any further complications. This Long Juxue was the disciple-in-waiting of a sect and would eventually have all sorts of endless treasures and ways about her.

Jiang Chen didn't wish to have anymore troubles crop up.

Encompassed with the most powerful strength of Jiang Chen's ten meridians true qi and gathering vast waves of true qi like rivers and seas, a frightening streak of light shot straight for Long Juxue's forehead with an impressive momentum.

As if a shooting star chasing the moon, an arrow that would surely kill!

Jiang Chen was full of confidence. If Long Zhaofeng hadn't died, it would have still been difficult for Long Zhaofeng himself to avoid this arrow under the circumstances.

As for Long Juxue, although she possessed uncommon potential and boasted of an azure phoenix constitution, she was still young, and her training had yet to reach perfection!

When Long Juxue heard the arrow breaking through the air, she too felt the rapid approach of death. But, she was at the end of her tether and was incapable of action.

"Jiang Chen, I'll come after you even when I'm a ghost!" Long Juxue screamed shrilly.

At this moment, an unexpected development took place!

The arrow speeding forth like a shooting star had already come

within ten meters of Long Juxue when it was suddenly caught by what seemed to be an invisible hand!

The arrow suddenly stopped in midair like the emergency brakes had been hit!

The next moment —

The arrow broke into pieces and scattered onto the floor with a sharp crack.

“Who’s there?” Highly alert, light shone out of Jiang Chen’s eyes, his Boulder’s Heart activated to the maximum as he sensed the surrounding area on all sides.

There was a dangerous presence that faded in and out of existence. It seemed quite far, yet also quite close, making it difficult for Jiang Chen to pinpoint it precisely.

Even the Boulder’s Heart was unable to sense where the danger was coming from. The God’s Eye, and Ear of the Zephyr was even more unable to capture traces of the enemy’s movement.

The atmosphere in the entire Second Crossing suddenly turned bizarre beyond belief.

Long Juxue has escaped from the face of certain death. Agitated looks of disbelief also shone out from her beautiful eyes. She knew that help must have arrived!

All the Goldwing Swordbirds seemed to have also received some sort of command as they all adopted a posture of facing a great enemy, continuously gathering at Jiang Chen’s side.

The knife-like wing feathers of every Goldwing Swordbird were extended, as their sharp eyes alertly monitored every rustle in the bend of the grass.

At this moment, the glimmering rays of sunset wavered into

existence in the air of the mountain valley, and two shapes walked out.

One of them wore flowing turquoise robes and looked to be 22 or 23. He was slightly tall, had regular features, and a tapered chin. He also had a rather dashing and uncommon air about him.

The other one was wearing brown clothing and was slightly shorter. The only point of interest about him was the flattened nose on his face, and two eyes that were suffused with a sense of sinister ruthlessness.

There was a purple sun stitched on the right chest pocket of both their clothing, appearing quite unusual and fey.

When Long Juxue saw the purple sun on their clothing, a joyful expression blossomed on her face. "Two senior brothers, are you senior brothers from the Purple Sun Sect?"

"You must be junior sister Long Juxue?" The turquoise attired man smiled slightly as he asked.

"That's me, may I know senior brother's honored name?" Long Juxue was as excited in this moment as if she'd seen her savior, her kin.

"I'm called Yu Jie, one of the ten major disciples beneath Master Shuiyue. Junior sister Long can call me senior brother Xu." This turquoise wearing Yu Jie had several traces of warmth and politeness in his tone, obviously tagging Long Juxue as someone with high importance.

"This is Xu Zhen. You can call him junior brother Xu when you enter the sect in the future." Yu Jie pointed at the brown clad companion next to him.

"Xue'er greets her two senior brothers." Long Juxue was in dire straits right now and didn't dare strike up any airs in front of Xu Zhen. She thus called them both her senior brothers.

Except, Yu Jie frowned slightly. "Junior sister, you needn't be so polite. In the world of martial dao, the strong are revered. It wouldn't be appropriate for you to call him senior brother."

When Xu Zhen heard these words, he didn't find it distasteful, but rather chuckled, nodding his head and arching his back. "Senior sister Xue'er, in our Purple Sun Sect, those who have higher potential and strength are naturally ranked much higher. If you call me senior brother within the halls of the sect, then I really wouldn't know where to put my face."

Long Juxue laughed lightly instead, "Xue'er hasn't formally entered the sect yet, please allow me to call you both senior brothers for now."

One had to say, Xu Zhen was quite touched by the falsely humble show that Long Juxue was putting on. His shifty eyes suddenly shot out killing intent as he looked towards Jiang Chen in the distance.

"Senior sister Xue'er, who is this fellow that dares to pursue and attempt to kill disciples of my Purple Sun Sect? I, Xu Zhen, will kill him and vent a breath of ill temper for senior sister!"

Xu Zhen rolled his small eyes with a few traces of kissing up to Long Juxue as he stepped out and walked up, the aura around his body suddenly increasing many times.

The strong aura permeated the mountain valley immediately as countless Greenwing Swordbirds simply couldn't withstand the pressure from this aura, and fell down one by one from the sky like dumplings being dropped into a pot for cooking.

Chapter 105: Without Equal in the World

“Hahahahaha....” That Xu Zhen was extremely proud of himself as he threw back his head and voiced a long shout. This call formed a strange undercurrent of strength as ripples of a strange power continuously spread out. Within a hundred meters of his being, those Greenwing Swordbirds who hadn’t had time to escape kept crying out in agony as they fell one by one from the sky.

“Oscillations of spirit qi, this is a spirit dao practitioner!” Above the Second Crossing, Princess Gouyu’s expression also suddenly changed drastically. She called out to a Goldwing Swordbird and leapt on its back, immediately rushing over to Jiang Chen’s side.

Even Jiang Feng, who was always valiant and fearless of nothing, paled when he heard the words “spirit dao practitioner”. He also summoned a Goldwing Swordbird and dived down the pass.

One had to know that Jiang Feng had a tremendous amount of self pride such that not even Long Zhaofeng, the first duke, could cow him into submission. But when he heard the words spirit dao practitioner, he too greatly lost his composure.

In such a common kingdom, a spirit dao practitioner was the existence of legends.

Even without Princess Gouyu’s reminder, at this moment, Jiang Chen had already made the judgement that these two people were spirit dao practitioners from the Purple Sun Sect.

This Xu Zhen was obviously playing up his strength. The imposing presence of his spirit dao aura increased with each step he took, making the Swordbird army on all sides scatter in disarray and continuously retreat.

Although Jiang Chen was two to three hundred meters away from this person, with every step that Xu Zhen took, the latter was using his spirit dao to suppress Jiang Chen, whether by accident or by

design.

This unformed pressure was not like that of the glint and flash of cold steel, and was more frightening than any flashes and shadows of the swords could ever be.

Jiang Chen could clearly feel that by his side, his father's breathing had started becoming uneven, and even his own upper and lower teeth couldn't help but chatter together.

Princess Gouyu wasn't that much better off. Although her self-control was slightly stronger, the sight of her slender shoulders slightly trembling betrayed her current difficult situation.

It was rather Jiang Chen, with only ten meridians true qi, who could just so happen to bear up beneath the onslaught thanks to the aid of "Boulder's Heart" operating at its maximum.

However, Jiang Chen knew very well that if this continued any longer, his father and Princess Gouyu would likely collapse on the spot if this fellow took another few steps forward.

He immediately whistled loudly and longly, his voice thundering out, "Evil spirit, what are you playing at?"

This roar encompassed a divine ability to dispel internal demons. One roar was enough to help his father and Princess Gouyu walk out from under the influence of those internal demons.

This power also washed away Xu Zhen's momentum. Although it wasn't an equal match of strength, it was still able to offset a great portion of it.

"Eh?" The turquoise robed male, Yu Jie, displayed a slightly surprised look. His brow furrowed afterwards, "Xu Zhen, hurry and go about your business if you're going to do anything."

"Understood." Xu Zhen smiled gruesomely. "Kid, you can actually compel these Swordbirds to fight. That's a bit strange. Who's your

patron? Let's hear his name!"

Jiang Chen's eyebrows rose slightly but he looked at Xu Zhen with a cold smile, ignoring him.

"Kid, master Xu's patience is limited. I'll ask you again, who's your patron?"

If it was any ordinary practitioner, Xu Zhen absolutely would not ask a single word and would have taken action immediately. He'd display great abilities and kill the other person to curry favor with Long Juxue.

Except, Xu Zhen was both curious and a bit greedy about Jiang Chen's wondrous methods in controlling the Swordbirds. He was also slightly worried that if the other also had an impressive background, he'd take great delight in brashly killing the other now, but would suffer the repercussions in the future.

"Why should I tell you who my patron is?" Jiang Chen said faintly.

"Jiang Chen, don't you dare be arrogant. These two are genius disciples of the Purple Sun Sect, and you dare talk back at them with your status as a mere common practitioner. You're courting death!" Hatred was written all over Long Juxue's face as she said to Xu Zhen, "Senior brother Xu, this Jiang Chen is only the son of a duke and likely stumbled upon this method to compel the Swordbirds during the trials in the Boundless Catacombs. My Soaring Dragon manor has made a full inquiry into all the generations of the Jiang family and know that he has no patron."

Long Juxue couldn't kill Jiang Chen with her current strength, so she wanted to borrow the strength of her two senior brothers in order to kill Jiang Chen.

Her eyes became red and teary at the same time as she looked at Yu Jie by her side, "Senior brother Yu, this Jiang Chen has killed both my father and my elder brother, as well as many members of my Long

family. If he is not eliminated, then he will surely become your little sister's internal demon. Your little sister is a weak girl with no father or brothers, and she is left forlorn without a protector. I ask senior brother to make a judgment for your little sister."

Long Juxue possessed high acting skills and tears flowed downwards as she spoke, a veritable weeping beauty. Yu Jie couldn't help but want to put his arms around her and comfort her with soft words.

"Junior sister, be at peace. Within the territory of these sixteen kingdoms, no matter who his patron is, there are none that our Purple Sun Sect can't afford to offend. This kid has killed your father and brother. This is the equivalent of killing someone from the Purple Sun Sect. Your foolish brother will make a judgment on your behalf today." Yu Jie couldn't hold up against the tears of a beauty and patted his chest as he promised.

After he spoke, Yu Jie took one step forward as his body seemed to waver in and out of existence. He appeared to arrive in front of Xu Zhen with this single step.

"Junior brother Xu, you are dismissed. I'm taking over now." Yu Jie's tone was coldly arrogant. Although they were both disciples of the Purple Sun Sect, Yu Jie had an obvious feeling of superiority in front of Xu Zhen.

Although Xu Zhen was a bit surprised, he knew how to behave and backed down, offering up some fawning words as he did so. "Using an ox cleaver to kill a chicken? Since senior brother Yu wishes to personally torture this kid, it's this kid's fortune of lifetimes past to die at the hands of senior brother Yu."

Yu Jie's face was expressionless as he didn't have much of a reaction to Xu Zhen's bootlicking.

His cold eyes swept the scene, shooting out frosty looks as he looked upon Jiang Chen standing a few hundred meters away. "You're called Jiang Chen? I'll give you two choices right now. The first is to tell me

the secret to compelling the Swordbirds, and I'll give you a swift and clean death. The second is that you take this secret with you to the grave. I'll slowly torture you to death first, and then kill your father, then rape and kill the woman beside you, before finally going to your family clan and killing everyone within it."

Yu Jie's tone wasn't opening this up for discussion, it was an order.

The disciples beneath one of the nine great elders of the Purple Sun Sect were close to the existence of a god in an ordinary kingdom, whether in terms of status or strength. This was what gave him the right to take a commanding position and speak in such lofty terms.

In other words, although Jiang Chen had the ability to compel the Swordbirds, this only made him a slightly odd common practitioner in Yu Jie's eyes.

Common practitioners were common practitioners after all. To those sect disciples high on top, accustomed to looking down upon living creatures, common practitioners were like ants.

"Jiang Chen, my senior brother takes pleasure in the welfare of living things and has given you a chance to choose. If you know how to behave, then hurry up and hand over the secrets to compelling the Swordbirds. Otherwise, your entire Jiang family clan will be hard pressed to escape death." Xu Zhen called out from the sidelines.

"Takes pleasure in the welfare of living things?" Jiang Chen looked coldly at these two Purple Sun Sect disciples. "I'm rather curious, why is it that every so-called sect disciple must be as hypocritical as you two, and imitate you in having their noses to the sky? Choose? Who do you think you are? Why must I choose?"

"Oh? You don't choose?" Yu Jie laughed in his extreme anger. "Do you think that with your status as a common practitioner, you can still daydream about a counter attack on us geniuses of the Purple Sun Sect?"

Xu Zhen also laughed in contempt, "What wild fantasies."

"Genius?" Jiang Chen also laughed. In this world, who dared to call himself a genius in front of him? Which genius would have a better understanding of the heavens than him, Jiang Chen?"

"The power of a sect lies in enjoying all resources under the heavens and the adoration of the common people. It should uphold the peace beneath the heavens and bring benefits to the common people. Look at all your faces. Hypocritical, greedy, arrogant, domineering... I'd like to ask, what part of your entire body is worthy of the label of a sect disciple?"

Jiang Chen's tone was awe-inspiring as he spoke gravely, "If these so-called geniuses, so-called sect disciples are all people like you, then allow me to topple all of you off your pedestals and firmly stomp on every single one of you. If even people of your quality are called geniuses, then that is the ultimate insult to the heavens."

Jiang Chen was thoroughly enraged.

In his previous life, he was the exalted son of the Celestial Emperor and had seen countless premier geniuses. Each of these geniuses had a unique personality to varying degrees.

But here, there were no redeeming factors to be found on the two sect disciples standing in front of him, and they dared call themselves geniuses!

And to dare tell him to make a choice with a tone like that of a judge, this undoubtedly enraged the self-esteem hidden deep within Jiang Chen's heart.

This self esteem stemmed from the heritage of a former son of the Celestial Emperor.

Jiang Chen's arm had already slowly lifted up when he finished speaking, the arrowhead locking onto Yu Jie and suddenly shooting out.

"This, is my choice."

Jiang Chen gave a long whistle, and it was as if all the Goldwing Swordbirds, having remained alert and battle-ready, were of one mind. They flew fearlessly in front of Jiang Chen, circling endlessly as they formed a thick wall of Swordbirds.

"Jiang Chen, you're seeking death!" Yu Jie didn't move as he watched that arrow moving like a shooting star. A beam of light materialized and flickered between his eyes.

Suddenly, Yu Jie's raised his arm and a beam of cold light formed a shadowy palm, grasping towards that arrow.

A crisp breaking sound rang out. The arrow had turned into dust and scattered downwards.

A random blow from a spirit dao practitioner was more than enough to crush this tried and true metal arrow into dust.

"Jiang Chen, you must die today. No one in the heavens or on the earth will be able to help you."

Yu Jie's footsteps moved again as he seemed to become a beam of wavering green runes. Truth and illusion, falsehoods and reality. He seemed to sway like the willow boughs and fly wildly like the river reeds.

There were countless shadows in the air when suddenly, a turquoise blur flashed across Jiang Chen's eyes. The next moment, Yu Jie seemed to shatter the laws of space as he suddenly appeared within ten meters of Jiang Chen.

"I only need one finger to kill you." Yu Jie's voice was remote as the fingertip of his right hand pointed. Frosty light shot out, as if a cold star had shattered in the heavens and flared out with breathtaking splendor.

Imposing icy air was like a life-reaping rune from hell as it firmly

locked onto Jiang Chen's forehead.

Jiang Chen only felt that his breathing was exceedingly hurried as a Goldwing Swordbird dashed in from behind, colliding headfirst with this fingertip of light.

Frigid light exploded outwards as the frightening spirit power connected with the Goldwing Swordbird. The Goldwing Swordbird, which knives and swords couldn't even penetrate, immediately exploded beneath the attack of this fingertip and exploded into a mist of blood, scattering across the air.

The Goldwing Swordbird had been fierce and unafraid of death, dying on Jiang Chen's behalf.

At this moment, all the Goldwing Swordbirds emitted desolate bird cries and resolutely encircled Jiang Chen. One layer upon another, surrounding him such that even water wouldn't leak through.

The Silverwing Swordbirds also moved beneath the emotional cry of their wails. The tens of thousands of Silverwing Swordbirds also flew over and clumped together like a pile of sandbags.

In the next moment, the most numerous Greenwing Swordbirds also moved like the tidewaters surging towards the same direction.

This scene utterly flabbergasted those who had stayed behind in the Second Crossing to watch the battle.

This scene would be sure to leave behind an unforgettable memory for the rest of their lives.

"Damned feathered animals, die!"

Yu Jie's sleeves flourished as strong spirit power attacks swept away all the Swordbirds that had surged to his side, like a strong wind forming a tornado.

Layer upon layers of such a protective perimeter could only serve to

somewhat slow his forward movement.

Chapter 106: A Mighty Slash

Yu Jie's attack was actually strong enough that it was able to completely ignore the Greenwing Swordbird army. He continuously swept aside the Swordbird army like he was sweeping away trash.

The rings of the defensive perimeter loosened out and were broken up one by one in the face of Yu Jie's powerful attacks. This defensive wall that stretched between heaven and earth was slowly being pried open by Yu Jie, becoming more and more thin and fragile.

"Jiang Chen, I said that no one on heaven or earth would be able to save you!" Yu Jie's voice was remote, as spirit power continuously rippled out from his two sleeves.

Rings upon rings swept away the Swordbirds flying towards him.

Bam, bam, bam...

The lower level Greenwing Swordbirds couldn't hold up beneath the onslaught of this sort of spiritual power. They all turned into a bloody rain under the pressure of this power, as their flesh and blood all exploded.

"Chen'er, hurry and flee. Your father will cover your retreat with these Goldwing Swordbirds!"

"Right, Jiang Chen, take Ruo'er and Lin'er with you. Run as far as you can!" Princess Gouyu also despaired, and was prepared to give up her life to cover Jiang Chen's retreat.

"Flee?" Jiang Chen's bloodshot eyes shot out a frightening light. There was only battling to the death — at this moment, fleeing would only hasten death!

"Father, Princess Gouyu. These are both disciples of a sect, and their goal is me. When your son starts battling to his death in a moment, both of you take advantage of the right timing to leave first!"

Although Jiang Chen was facing life or death circumstances, his inner being was calm, without any agitation. He knew very clearly that if he ran, both Yu Jie and Xu Zhen would use everything at their disposal to attack him.

Besides, with his father and Princess Gouyu's strength, they wouldn't even have the effect of keeping their opponents in check.

"Chen'er, what's the point in us leaving if you don't leave?" Jiang Feng grew agitated.

"If I go, then everyone will die together!" Jiang Chen roared lowly.

Suddenly, Jiang Chen's throat moved slightly as a strange language was emitted from his throat. This language seemed to carry with it a presence from far and ancient times.

Each word and phrase was like the language of the gods and demons of old, making the Goldwing Swordbirds by Jiang Chen's side all call out ceaselessly.

It was as if this was a spell that could speak to the blood of the Goldwing Swordbirds, that could rouse the Goldwing Swordbirds' violent tendencies, and triggered an emotion of being bound by a common hatred for an enemy.

Suddenly, all the Goldwing Swordbirds seemed to receive the same command as they scattered in a great rustle. Their wings danced as they circled in the air.

As each Goldwing Swordbird circled in the air, their golden colored wings flashed golden light and formed a round, golden vortex in the middle of the air.

Within the vortex, Jiang Chen's eyes suddenly widened like those of an ancient deity or a demon opening its eyes, as he shot out in stunning splendor. At the same moment, the nameless saber on his back seemed to receive a certain kind of summoning.

A long howl from the blade came from the unadorned nameless saber. It too bloomed with the silver light of the moon. Jiang Chen's hands grasped it.

"The third form of 'Vast Ocean Current Splitter' – Wave Surge!"

Jiang Chen didn't retreat, but rather moved forward under Yu Jie's threatening advance. His honor permitted no turning back as he thrust his blade outward, drawing a beautiful arc through the sky.

Within this scene, the golden colored sea and silvery splendor from the blade actually coalesced into a stream of gold and silver colored light. Man and saber seemed to have merged as one.

A stunning slash. The mountains and rivers changed colors as the vast seas trembled and were astounded.

Wave Surge!

The slowly advancing Yu Jie had been like a hunter toying with his prey, who held victory firmly within his grasp. In his eyes, whether it was Jiang Chen or that innumerable Swordbird army, they were all ants in the throes of despair — things he could step on or ravage at will.

He hadn't used his full strength to give Jiang Chen and the others a lethal blow, because he was playing with them in order to amuse Long Juxue.

He knew that if he'd killed Jiang Chen instantly, it would've helped Long Juxue get her revenge, but it wouldn't've been enough for her to feel satisfied.

Only when the prey was thoroughly tortured, had lost all dignity, and was showing all sorts of ugly behaviors, would it then be perfect to vent one's anger by slapping them to death with one palm. Only then would there be satisfaction.

Although Yu Jie was one of the ten great disciples beneath Master

Shuiyue, his ranking was quite low. It could even be said that he'd barely managed to squeeze in to be a member of the ten great disciples.

Therefore, although it looked like his status was high, once Long Juxue and her innate constitution had entered beneath the tutelage of Master Shuiyue, there'd be a day that she'd surely become the premier genius beneath Master Shuiyue. It was highly likely that she would even surpass the ten great disciples one day.

Thus, although Yu Jie temporarily possessed a higher status than Long Juxue, that was because she had yet to formally enter the sect. She was just stock that had potential.

When Long Juxue's potential was converted to strength, it would become something that Yu Jie would be unable to measure up to.

Hence, Yu Jie's current actions were purposefully to curry favor with Long Juxue, and make it so that she would remember this favor of his.

When Long Juxue grew strong and mighty in the future, she might spare a thought for past relationships, and take care of him in some way.

The Swordbird army was powerful, but that was only to ordinary practitioners and common armies. The advantage of superior numbers was completely nonexistent when faced with a spirit dao practitioner.

Not to mention that, as one of the ten great disciples beneath Master Shuiyue, Yu Jie wasn't on a level that a spirit dao practitioner like Xu Zhen could even aspire to reach.

Everything had been going perfectly at first. Although Jiang Chen had a great Swordbird army that protected him fearlessly, the Swordbird army was unable to form any sort of strong defensive perimeter in front of Yu Jie.

Annihilate, trample, and devastate!

Yu Jie had originally planned on this easy act of crushing dry weeds and smashing rotten wood as a greeting gift to Long Juxue — to declare that he was on her side with action and bloodletting.

However, he himself hadn't expected that such unexpected developments would appear!

In his eyes, not only did Jiang Chen — who he viewed as on the same level as an ant — not flee, nor did he continue to hide like a turtle, instead he rushed out from the defense of the Swordbird army.

Not only did he dash out, but he also made this unsurpassed slash!

Except, the pride of a sect disciple instinctively made Yu Jie feel that this was merely one of Jiang Chen's performances, a last ditch effort.

Snorting lightly, the corners of Yu Jie's proud mouth leaked a trace of a contemptful smile. His finger lifted slightly, as a ring of blue light expanded from his fingertip.

He said faintly, "Floundering desperately before dying, kneel!"

It looked like the strength from a single fingertip, but it actually contained seventy to eighty percent of the spirit power within his body. It formed a beam of white light that was as real and illusionary as wavering runes.

"Lunar Vortex Illusion!"

An accumulated blow encompassing the mysteries of water swept through the air, with strong oppressive momentum.

The Lunar Vortex Illusion was a spirit dao attack containing the mysteries of water.

Wave Surge, the third level of mysteries in Vast Ocean Current Splitter!

It was as if a confrontation preordained by fate had unwittingly appeared in the air over the Second Crossing.

It looked like a coincidence, but it was actually destined!

“Heh heh, senior brother Yu Jie has been forced to attack with the mysteries. This kid can be proud of himself. But this is where it ends.” Xu Zhen sighed in astonishment from afar.

When Long Juxue saw Yu Jie’s mighty blow, its power was so strong that her emotions still surged even when she was so far away. Every inch of her skin was in great discomfort — like needles were stabbing her — and her breathing became hard to control.

Jiang Chen resided in the heart of the attack, and was facing a mighty blow that wasn’t even on the same level. What reason did he have to survive this?

Long Juxue felt greatly satisfied, but also felt that letting Jiang Chen die in this manner was giving him an easy way out.

But, with Long Juxue’s current status, she naturally couldn’t make any further demands of Yu Jie. She only locked her gaze onto the battlefield, not wanting to miss a single detail of Jiang Chen being tortured to death.

“Jiang Chen, it’s your lucky day that you can die just like this!” The hate in Long Juxue’s heart was unabated. “Except, before I send your family and the remnants of the Eastern clan to reunite with you in the underworld, I, Long Juxue, will make them fully taste the cruel tortures of this world.”

The blue ring of light continued to expand from Yu Jie’s fingertip like a blue spirit power dome. It cascaded out layers of blue ripples, as if wanting to firmly enclose everything in its path to attack Jiang Chen.

The slash of Wave Surge finally billowed into its target.

In the moment that the light from the blade and the blue ring

connected, the golden-colored true qi being released by the hundreds of Goldwing Swordbirds suddenly coalesced into a golden-colored sea.

This golden-colored sea seemed to form some sort of connection, as it all coalesced into a streak of golden colored light in this moment, infusing itself into Jiang Chen's fascinatingly enchanting slash.

The saber's aura instantly grew by ten, then a hundred times!

"What?"

Victory had been within his grasp, and Yu Jie had felt that he was just crushing an ant, when his eyes suddenly shot out a beam of astonishment.

With the perception of a spirit dao practitioner, he naturally had the ability to detect the changes in that moment.

Except, when he attempted to react, the strong slash from the saber had already arrived.

"I say break!"

Jiang Chen roared mightily, as the nameless saber built up to waves and billows as it churned up a thousand layers, landing solidly onto the blue ring.

The blue ring had been impregnable, but started cracking open from the middle when the light from the blade came crashing down.

It was like a peerless master slashing and cleaving through waves, and ending rivers with one stroke.

"No!" When Xu Zhen saw this in the distance, he cried out. "Be careful senior brother Yu!"

Except, how could've Yu Jie not realized that something was dreadfully wrong when Xu had also perceived the danger? However,

everything was happening too quickly.

When he planned on coalescing his second hit, the light from the saber had already broken through his spirit dome and landed on his chest!

The arrogant sect disciple, the proud Yu Jie, he who had threatened with every step forward, finally retreated backwards in the face of such a powerful blow.

He actually backed up more than ten steps!

Pfft. Even one as strong as Yu Jie couldn't help but spit out a mouthful of blood, as the spirit meridians within his body had also suffered injury.

"How can this be?" Long Juxue's almond-like eyes were greatly widened. She had stared without blinking, in order to see Jiang Chen harried and haggard figure — his despair and helplessness.

She had never thought that with her strong concentration, she hadn't seen Jiang Chen tortured to death, but the unparalleled senior brother Yu Jie forced to back up with one slash!

Her heart began trembling uncontrollably — she didn't even have the courage to look at Jiang Chen!

This slash had almost completely turned the situation around.

Except, she simply couldn't understand. How could Jiang Chen have forced a spirit dao practitioner, whose existence was the stuff of legends in the Eastern Kingdom, to retreat with a single stroke?

Chapter 107: Harming a Spirit Dao Practitioner

Not only was Long Juxue perplexed, but even a fellow spirit dao practitioner such as Xu Zhen had a face full of incredulity. He too, couldn't make sense of what had just happened.

Why had such a large change suddenly taken place in the situation? It was originally a posture of them rolling over and trampling the other, why had Jiang Chen suddenly displayed such powerful battle power?

Even Xu Zhen, who was standing off to the side, could feel the frightening capability of that slash. He knew very clearly that it was only because senior brother Yu Jie was strong enough, that he'd been able to endure that dreadful slash, and only spit out a single mouthful of blood in return.

If it was him, Xu Zhen, on the line, he probably wouldn't have simply spat out one mouthful of blood.

Even though they all had spirit armor protecting their bodies, the power of that slash was likely powerful enough to damage his spirit meridians, and cause him to lose the ability to battle immediately.

After cleaving down with this one slash, Jiang Chen surprisingly didn't continue to attack.

A shrill bird call rang out, and a Goldwing Swordbird dived down to catch Jiang Chen. He laid on its back, panting heavily, and threw both a Vast Ocean Pill and a Heavenly Karma Pill into his mouth.

To be honest, Jiang Chen had been making a move in difficult circumstances just now. He had comprehended the third form of the Vast Ocean Current Splitter – Wave Surge, in dire straits.

If Jiang Chen was a spirit dao practitioner, even one who'd just entered the spirit dao, he would have likely been able to confront Yue Ji head on with that blow, and even trample over the latter.

But, he was of the true qi realm after all, and his personal level of training was ten meridians true qi.

Therefore, he'd circulated his true qi to its maximum with that slash just now, even exceeding his limits. This thrust had been a breakthrough for his mental strength as well.

But his physical body was still within the realm of a true qi master at the end of the day, and wasn't as indomitable as that of a spirit dao practitioner.

Therefore, this slash had already been outside the limits that his physical body could endure. When he absorbed the infusion of true qi from several hundred Goldwing Swordbirds, it was as if he'd suddenly taken a hit from several hundred true qi masters.

He had leveraged the mysteries of the blade to induce, concentrate, and expel these several hundred currents of true qi. Logically speaking, he was only a medium for such a strong power, and not the recipient of it.

But even inducing it for such a short period of time, for just that one particular instant... the damage brought upon him by that energy had been enough to cause Jiang Chen to feel greatly discomfited all over. It was as if all the meridians in his body were going to burst open. He was temporarily unable to gather his strength, and attack with a second slash.

It was a good thing that this astounding slash had expelled this explosive power in the nick of time.

Even one as strong as Yu Jie was likely unable to withstand a blow that had concentrated several hundred hits from true qi masters, even if he met it with a blow at the peak of his body's condition.

Not to mention that he'd only used seventy to eighty percent of his strength.

Jiang Chen had displayed a weak side to his enemies before, in order

to numb his opponents and to create an illusion for them so that they wouldn't take any precautions, and would really think that they'd be able to torture Jiang Chen to death like crushing an ant.

All of these false moves were the line up to this slash, that would rescue him from a desperate situation.

Upon seeing that Yu Jie had only spat out a single mouthful of blood, Jiang Chen felt that it was both a pity and had a healthy respect for sect disciples.

This slash had condensed the strength of several hundred Goldwing Swordbirds, but had only sought the price of a single mouthful of blood from the other.

One had to say, this degree of injury was lower than Jiang Chen had expected.

Except, Jiang Chen was unable to give any further consideration to that at this moment.

Although all the meridians within his body were trembling like they would split open at any moment, he still whistled to make several Goldwing Swordbirds lead the great numbers of Silverwing Swordbirds further up the Second Crossing.

The remaining several hundred Goldwing Swordbirds retained their previous posture, circling in the air. Even though they'd met a strong enemy, none of them had the urge to turn around and flee backwards without Jiang Chen's command.

The Goldwing Swordbird that Jiang Chen was riding on circled back to the rear of these several hundred Goldwing Swordbirds.

Jiang Feng and Princess Gouyu had long since been deposited back onto the Second Crossing by the Goldwing Swordbirds leading the Silverwing Swordbirds.

All the Silverwing and Greenwing Swordbirds seemed to have

received some sort of command as they all flew backwards, and landed on the four corners of the Second Crossing, guarding it so that not even a drop of water could leak out.

Above the Second Crossing, all those who were on Jiang Chen's side were already standing on top of the mountain pass.

Jiang Feng, Princess Gouyu, all of the Jiang family's subordinates, as well as Jiang Chen's eight personal guards.

"Guo Jin, don't hold me back. Ah, Qiao Shan, am not a turtle who hides in ma shell. The young duke is being surrounded and us'ns, as personal guards, are just standing here watching. What the heck is this?"

"Yeah, if you don't go, then let us'ns brothers go!" Qiao Chuan also roared like a tiger.

Guo Jin had a completely frosty expression on his face as he stopped the two brothers in their tracks.

"Other than adding to the mess, what else can you do if you go now?" Guo Jin lectured them.

"Even if us'ns add to the mess, that illustrates our loyalty as underlings. Even if we die, if we can gain a little bit more time for the young duke, it'll be a worthy death."

"Right, revenge is never too late. As long as the young duke can leave, he'll have the chance to avenge us brothers in the future."

Qiao Shan and Qiao Chuan kept kicking up a fuss, and wanted to summon Goldwing Swordbirds to carry them to the frontlines.

Guo Jin couldn't hold them back no matter how hard he tried.

"All of you be quiet and listen to Xue Tong. He's the captain, and the young duke's cousin."

Everyone's gazes locked on Xue Tong.

Xue Tong's eyes had never left the frontlines of battle. His gaze was calm and steady, and he hadn't been thrown into confusion because of the disadvantageous situation.

"Well, Xue Tong, say something!" Qiao Shan was an impatient sort.

"Qiao Shan, have any of us reached the level of true qi master with our training?" Xue Tong asked faintly.

"No." Qiao Shan was in an ill temper. "So does that mean we become turtles who hide in our shell if we're not true qi masters?"

"Then, have we comprehended a hundred percent of the Eight Trigrams Assimilation Formation?" Xue Tong asked again.

"Nonsense, we've only understood sixty to seventy percent of the formation. Why do you keep asking all this nonsense?" Qiao Shan grew impatient.

"Since we're not true qi masters, and we haven't yet understood one hundred percent of the formation, can we really help shoulder the young duke's burdens if we go now?" Xue Tong asked back with a furrowed brow.

"With the young duke's benevolence, he's never given up on us in critical moments. If we brashly proceed forward and delay his plan as a result, then we wouldn't be achieving acts of valor, but being villains instead."

"Plan?" Qiao Shan's brow knit together. "Xue Tong, you say that the young duke has a plan? How can you tell?"

Xue Tong's gaze was deep as he looked at the Goldwing Swordbird army that was circling in midair.

"Look at these Goldwing Swordbirds. Don't you think that their deployment and organization look quite familiar?"

Wen Ziqi had been silent all along, but was a girl beautiful in appearance, and clever in mind. Her brow spread out when she heard Xue Tong's words, as if something she was thinking had been verified. "Xue Tong, you also think it looks familiar?"

"Oh? Miss Ziqi also thinks so as well?" Xue Tong was a bit surprised.

Wen Ziqi nodded. "I think that this is the layout for the Eight Trigrams Assimilation Formation. We have eight to make up the formation, and these Goldwing Swordbirds have also been divided into eight parts. Each part has thirty to forty Goldwing Swordbirds. If I'm guessing correctly, the young duke has already passed on the mysteries of the formation to the Goldwing Swordbirds just now, through certain methods."

Although the Goldwing Swordbirds were fowl, their intelligence was absolutely not inferior to humans since they'd been able to evolve into Goldwing Swordbirds.

Even though Goldwing Swordbirds might not have the level of comprehension that humans possessed with regards to understand formations, but Jiang Chen's high fluency in the beast language enabled him to communicate with the Goldwing Swordbirds.

These Goldwing Swordbirds were the strongest level of existence within the Swordbirds. Their enlightenment and development of intelligence was also surely the greatest.

If a couple hundred Goldwing Swordbirds laid out the Eight Trigrams Assimilation Matrix, it would be enough to contend against a spirit dao practitioner, even if they only brought ten to twenty percent of the formation's mysteries to bear.

One had to know that this was the equivalent of several hundred true qi masters setting up a formation.

"Eight... Eight Trigram Assimilation Formation?" Qiao Shan felt that his brain was a bit dull as he widened his eyes and looked carefully.

He scratched his head, "That really seems to be the case."

"Do you still want to rush up and add to the mess now?" Guo Jin chuckled.

"Guo Jin, don't give me a slap to the face. What the heck good are we, if Goldwing Swordbirds are setting up the formation?" Qiao Shan's face also reddened as he spoke.

As for Xue Tong, he stared towards the front unblinkingly as several traces of worry appeared in his tone. "The young duke seems to have also been injured in that last, dangerous blow."

"He's the young duke alright. I'd already despaired under these circumstances, and was ready to accompany the young duke in death." Qiao Shan sighed with amazement.

Up in the sky above the pass, it was eerily quiet.

No one out of the million strong army, kneeling where they stood, dared make a sound.

They all knew that whoever emitted a sound to break the silence would likely face a great anger that would topple mountains and overturn the seas.

As soldiers, they had no way of participating when the immortals fought.

As strong as he was, hadn't the Duke of Soaring Dragon died just like that? Those legendary spirit dao practitioners had said they would crush Jiang Chen, yet hadn't they suffered a counterblow as well?

No one could make sense of the situation.

Xu Zhen had also been stunned by Jiang Chen's saber aura. If it was before, he would've been the first to rush up, but he too hesitated in this moment.

Even Yu Jie had spat out blood because of Jiang Chen's saber aura. Xu Zhen's training paled far in comparison to Yu Jie's. Would he win out if he rashly proceeded forward?

Even if he could win, he didn't dare move forward without a word from Yu Jie.

This was a huge taboo.

Even Yu Jie couldn't handle Jiang Chen. What would the outside world say if he, Xu Zhen, ran up to clean up? They would say that senior brother Yu Jie was less than him, Xu Zhen!

Wasn't this creating trouble for himself?

Therefore, Xu Zhen hesitated and didn't move forward in the end.

Yu Jie was likewise shocked and furious when he spat out a mouthful of blood. This result was obviously something completely out of the blue. He had thought that the battle would be over with his carefully readied blow.

Except, not only was the battle not over, but he'd been injured by the other's strong slash.

It wasn't that Yu Jie didn't want to speak, but that this slash had caused a pain in his chest when he breathed. It took several circulations of his spirit qi to barely clear his air passage.

Although this slash hadn't harmed his core, it had caused no small damage to his meridians.

If it wasn't for the extraordinary capability of the spirit armor on his body, it might have even harmed his core and shattered his internal organs, making him instantaneously lose his strength.

Yu Jie's heart was still palpitating, as cold sweat poured down his back.

He was also a bit irritated. What was up with this Xu Zhen? Why hadn't he come up and stalled for a bit at this moment?

It was a good thing that Jiang Chen hadn't followed up that strike with another. Otherwise, he wouldn't've had the spare effort to defend against, it before his breathing had been smoothed out.

When he resolved the pain in his chest, Yu Jie instantaneously recovered his self confidence. His original arrogant demeanor vanished completely, to be replaced with a sinister expression.

"Jiang Chen, I admit that I've underestimated you." Yu Jie's tone turned rather remote, but a sense of great wrath could be felt through this remoteness. Even Jiang Feng, Gouyu, and the others above the Second Crossing, could clearly feel it.

Every movement and gesture of this spirit dao practitioner seemed to be exude a strong influence that could directly point at a practitioner's heart, and shock their very soul.

Chapter 108: Swordbirds Setting Up a Formation

What irritated Jiang Chen the most, was that Yu Jie's lofty and aloof tone seemed to be a hallmark of sect disciples. They looked down their noses at everyone else, and treated all common practitioners like ants.

Jiang Chen was quite put out of sorts by such arrogance.

He hadn't been this haughty during his past life — and he'd been the son of the Celestial Emperor! Jiang Chen had befriended a wide range of people beneath the heavens, without regards to the level of their status. He had also never put on a supercilious face just because his status had been lofty.

"Yu Jie is it? You've said enough bullshit. You said you were going to use one finger to take care of me earlier, and then said that no one could save me between heaven and earth. I'm still right here, perfectly fine, after all that blather. Deploy your true abilities if you have any. If you don't, leave Long Juxue behind, and get the hell back to your sect."

Although Jiang Chen was injured, he'd recovered a great deal from his injuries thanks to the effects of the pills. Not to mention, his injuries weren't a result of a direct head on collision, so the impact on him wasn't as great as on Yu Jie.

He also knew that Yu Jie was likely putting on an act.

Although Yu Jie hadn't been severely injured, he must've suffered somewhat. Otherwise, with his slash as a common practitioner causing Yu Jie to spit out a mouthful of blood, Yu Jie's pride would surely cause have caused him to counterattack with the greatest divine abilities he possessed, and not just stand there flapping his mouth.

"Alright. Good. Very good." Yu Jie laughed in the midst of his extreme rage, as killing intent surged in his heart.

It was just as Jiang Chen had thought, Yu Jie had indeed suffered some injuries. His meridians had been injured, and he'd only have around seventy to eighty percent fighting strength left, if he forced himself to fight.

If he used everything available to him, Yu Jie had a ninety percent chance of killing Jiang Chen.

However, if Jiang Chen once again displayed the same mighty fighting strength that he'd just projected, while Yu Jie tried to go after him with an injured body, the backlash from the power might worsen Yu Jie's injuries.

If it harmed his core, it might bring about severe consequences to him during the prime training period of his life. That, in turn, could greatly affect the progress of his training, and even make him come to a standstill.

The cost would be a bit too great.

But if he didn't fight, he would be sure to lose face in front of Long Juxue. His idea of currying favor with Long Juxue, and thus building a foundation for his future, would become an empty void.

It was a difficult decision.

He had planned on using words to probe Jiang Chen's capabilities, and then make further plans, but he hadn't thought that Jiang Chen wouldn't give him any room to probe at all. He'd riposted with a stream of sarcasm and mockery, forcing his dignity and pride as a sect disciple down a path of no return.

If he, Yu Jie, took one step back after the words had been said, there was sure to be a shadow cast over his path of martial dao in the future. It'd also leave behind a poor impression in Long Juxue's heart.

"Jiang Chen, I wanted to give you an easy and quick death, but it looks like you're dead set on being at odds with my Purple Sun Sect. Since that's the case, even if I pay a small price today, I will still

thoroughly cleanse your Jiang family clan, and let the world know that there's only one result for challenging a sect — death.”

At this moment, these threats were on the same level as empty blather in Jiang Chen's ears. Even if these things hadn't happened, would these sect disciples let his Jiang clan off the hook?

Yu Jie had blown so much hot air undoubtedly to regain some face.

Smiling coldly, Jiang Chen's lips quirked into a lopsided leer. “Yu Jie, are all sect disciples as long winded as you?”

“You have a slick tongue. I, Yu Jie, will help you understand today that even if you have some potential and talent, you're still a pile of shit in front of a sect disciple.”

Yu Jie was also truly infuriated. He realized that even when exchanging words, he was unable to gain any advantage over the other.

Jiang Chen smiled upon hearing those words, “If I'm a pile of shit, then you can't even handle a pile of shit. So what does that make you? Less than the maggots? Display your true abilities! I'm looking down on you because of you only being able to flap your lips.”

Yu Jie's face darkened. He knew that he had no chance of winning a verbal spar.

He snorted lightly, and grasped at the air with one hand. A sword suddenly appeared in his hand.

This sword was like a spring of autumn water, exuding spirit power that caused one's heart to tremble.

“Autumn Water Sword!” Xu Zhen's voice cracked as he called out, a trace of envy and jealousy appearing in his eyes. “Jiang Chen is dead for sure. The Autumn Water Sword! To think that the honored master favors senior brother Yu so much as to bestow this kind of spirit weapon on him...”

“Xu Zhen, control the situation for me, and contain those feathered animals. I’m going to personally kill that dumb beast, Jiang Chen.”

Yu Jie projected a superior demeanor as he gave his orders.

Since Yu Jie had spoken, Xu Zhen didn’t dare to not listen. He chuckled, “It’s my honor to put forth effort for senior brother Yu.”

The two sect disciples locked onto a section of the sky from right and left.

Jiang Chen still remained fearless. The more the other acted like this, the more it proved that he wasn’t on firm ground. Yu Jie was such a proud person, but he was willing to let go of face and call in reinforcements at this moment.

What did this mean?

This meant that he had surely suffered some internal injuries, and that his self confidence wasn’t as strong as before.

Although powerful strength was scary when faced with a strong practitioner, that wasn’t the most frightening.

The most frightening was powerful strength, and an even stronger conviction.

When in battle and both sides’ strength were on par with each other, it was often the one who was fearless in the face of death, and had faith as resolute as steel, who would stay laughing until the end.

With his practice of “Boulder’s Heart”, Jiang Chen had become aware by now, and understood that he who dares, wins in an unavoidable confrontation.

He was also taking a gamble on the power of the “Eight Trigrams Assimilation Formation”, and the comprehensive skills of the Goldwing Swordbirds.

The string of beast language he'd spoken before, was to pass on some of the mysteries of the "Eight Trigrams Assimilation Formation" to the Goldwing Swordbirds.

He knew that under the oppression of the two great spirit dao practitioners, the advantage in numbers would halt them momentarily, but it would still be absolutely unable to turn the tide around, and even more impossible to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat.

His only bet was on the "Eight Trigrams Assimilation Formation".

Although he was only sharpening his spear just before going into battle, Jiang Chen had no choice.

Of course, he had his advantages in the form of several hundred Goldwing Swordbirds. With their numbers, once they set up the formation, even if they could only deploy ten percent of its power, that destructive power would still be exceedingly terrifying with such numbers.

"Senior brother Yu, I'll contain those feathered beasts. You suppress Jiang Chen." Xu Zhen said fawningly.

With a wave of his hand, a chain knife appeared unknowingly within his right hand. A length of dense chain was entwined on his arm, and was connected to a sharp, curved knife on one end.

Beneath the glare of the sun, the curved knife at the end of the chain reflected out dark red light. It was apparent with one glance that it had been quenched in the blood of multiple opponents.

Xu Zhen had the desire to put on an act. He shook his right hand, and made the chain sound out crisply in his hand. The chain also started shaking afterwards.

The curved knife formed a cutting, sharp disc as it moved. Frightening glints from the knife flew out continuously from the round disc.

Xu Zhen leapt up and soared through the air, attacking towards the sky.

“Yin Yang Lotus, cleave the air!”

Xu Zhen whistled sharply, as the chain knife gave off the aura of death. He thundered towards the sky as the knife's light flashed everywhere, flaring out a frightening knife aura of spirit strength.

Jiang Chen's lips moved slightly as he murmured something.

Suddenly, the Goldwing Swordbirds in the sky started moving, exchanging places with each other.

Although they were moving, their tracks were filled with a mysterious wonder.

Roughly thirty or forty Goldwing Swordbirds moved out in unison abruptly, true qi spewing madly from their mouths, shooting down like rain and hail towards the rising Xu Zhen.

If it was merely the blows of thirty to forty Goldwing Swordbirds in concert, Xu Zhen wouldn't have thought that it was scary at all.

But, this joint blow was obviously not a blind, disorderly hit. Under the aid of this strange formation, these attacks seemed to form some sort of wondrous rhythm, a magical tempo.

When they were combined, it actually coalesced into a power that was enough to threaten Xu Zhen.

The light from the chain knife had just swept past, when the joint effort from the Goldwing Swordbirds also poured down.

The two forces clashed together, and the light of the chain knife was actually halted.

Another band of Goldwing Swordbirds attacked in unison with the same rhythm, and the same method closely thereafter, pouring

down madly — like the rivers of heaven were draining out.

Xu Zhen was greatly astonished. He hadn't thought that these feathered animals would have the ingenuity to be able to form such an intricate partnership, and know how to attack in unison.

And this attack in concert, obviously brought with it a mystery that one couldn't quite grasp fully.

"What the hell, I say break!" Xu Zhen's chain knife moved once again, as he circulated his spirit strength, brushing aside the strength of the second blow.

Except, he could dissipate the first blow, the second blow even, but hadn't thought that this attack would be without ends or limits.

The third blow and fourth blow were all quite orderly, and had nearly no moments of pause between them — as if the waves of the great sea, one after another, were crashing down endlessly.

The "Eight Trigrams Assimilation Formation" was the same as its name, locking down all eight directions with spirit power, and dividing the air into eight quadrants, completely locking the space down. Participants were able to attack and defend both inside and outside the formation.

Xu Zhen had brashly rushed upwards, and had already blundered into the heart of the formation. What welcomed him was naturally wave after wave of crazy attacks.

If this formation was deployed by spirit dao practitioners, then it would truly be inexhaustibly marvelous, with innumerable variations.

Although the Goldwing Swordbirds weren't spirit dao practitioners, they were the equivalent of true qi masters. Each quadrant had roughly forty Goldwing Swordbirds.

If purely in terms of summing up their total strength, forty Goldwing Swordbirds were on par with an ordinary spirit dao practitioner.

With the effects of the formation, the combined strength of forty Goldwing Swordbirds had obviously more than doubled. Their offensive capabilities was enough to threaten a spirit dao practitioner on Xu Zhen's level.

These eight quadrants sent out wave after wave of successive attacks. It was almost a seamless string of oppressive attacks, the equivalent of seven to eight equally strong practitioners beating down on Xu Zhen.

The difference in strength was immediately apparent.

Xu Zhen barely managed to fend off the fifth and sixth attacks, when he realized that he'd fallen victim to a trap. He shouted out, "Senior brother Yu, hurry and make your move. These feathered animals seem to know some formation, and it's really quite strange!"

Yu Jie actually had seen that something was wrong even without Xu Zhen calling out. With Xu Zhen's attack power, particularly the "Yin Yang Lotus" method that his chain knife was deploying, it should've been the best way to break through these Goldwing Swordbirds.

Except, Yu Jie hadn't thought that apart from the first wave of attacks, Xu Zhen wouldn't have any chance to make a move. He had been besieged almost immediately.

Yu Jie knew that he couldn't wait anymore. If he waited any longer, and paid the price of Xu Zhen as well, then it really would be losing a tremendous amount of face.

Although Xu Zhen's life or death didn't matter very much to Yu Jie, he didn't want to create the image of a villain who didn't care about his fellow sect disciple in front of Long Juxue.

Particularly when Xu Zhen had gone to attack those feathered beasts under his orders.

"Jiang Chen, die!"

Yu Jie didn't mince words this time, as he brandished the longsword in his hand. The sword vibrated with a humming sound, as if a dragon's call had sounded out, and swept through the wilderness.

Chapter 109: Killing One of the Spirit Realm

Jiang Chen laid prostrated on the back of one of the Goldwing Swordbirds, and had refrained from using his true qi up until now. He was currently absorbing the medicinal effects of the Heavenly Karma Pill and Vast Ocean Pill in order to recover from his injuries and to recover the true qi within his body.

That situationally-reversing blow just now, had expended too much of his true qi, and had overloaded his meridians and body beyond their capacity.

Through the aid of these two pills, Jiang Chen's injuries were finally mostly healed.

He knew that Yu Jie had continuously refrained from making a move, not because he didn't want to, but because he was injured. The injuries within his body made him cautious in taking action, and made him hold back from using his full strength.

If it wasn't for Xu Zhen crying out for help, Yu Jie would have likely continued stalling for time.

However, Jiang Chen wouldn't let Yu Jie stall any longer.

He crouched on the back of the Goldwing Swordbird, both to absorb the effects of the pills, and to construct a strategy. He knew that even with the Eight Trigrams Assimilation Formation, the Swordbirds were deploying it as they learned it — and could only bring into play the merest bits of the formation.

If it wasn't for the Goldwing Swordbird's overwhelming strength in numbers, Jiang Chen would have absolutely no advantage in confronting two spirit dao practitioners.

Therefore, Jiang Chen didn't wish to delay and cause undue troubles.

He had to first eliminate one of the two spirit dao practitioners, and

prevent them from working in collusion.

If he had eight or ten days to practice the “Eight Trigrams Assimilation Formation”, that would be more than enough to take on Yu Jie and Xu Zhen with his numbers in Goldwing Swordbirds.

But deploying a formation that they had just learned... it would be difficult to avoid having flaws appear if their opponent rushed against it.

Killing a spirit dao practitioner sounded quite incredible. If any other practitioner within the Eastern Kingdom had this thought, then it would've been because they'd gone completely mad.

But, Jiang Chen wasn't the same as other people.

He had the ability to, and his trump card.

The first target he wanted to kill wasn't Yu Jie, but Xu Zhen.

He could tell that Xu Zhen's level of training was lower than Yu Jie's, and at this moment, he was already embroiled in the center of the formation. Xu Zhen was flailing about wildly trying to handle the waves of attacks.

Jiang Chen knew that he was still a bit far off from killing Xu Zhen through his own attacks alone. But he had more than sufficient ability to distract Xu Zhen.

When Yu Jie's Autumn Water Sword was readied to strike at him, Jiang Chen suddenly stood up and released his already prepared bow.

The arrow was like a shooting star as it flew towards Xu Zhen in the middle of the formation.

At this moment, Xu Zhen was already complaining incessantly to the high heavens. He hadn't ever thought that he would run into danger in a common kingdom, and fatal danger at that.

Before he'd left the sect, Xu Zhen had set off with a mindset of throwing his weight around in a common kingdom, and stepping on others. He felt that when a sect disciple arrived in a common kingdom, everything should be easily crushed as easily as breaking away dead branches.

Except, the scene in front of his eyes filled him with remorse beyond words. He really did regret getting involved in this mess. Why had he come with Yu Jie to this forsaken place?

Just to curry favor with a future genius?

"Senior brother Yu, I'm going to go down if you don't make a move!" Xu Zhen ignored the pride and dignity of a sect disciple, and called out loudly for help.

It was at that moment that a frightening sound broke through the air, and sounded by his ear.

"Ambush?" Xu Zhen was already unable to cope with the situation, and was in a quandary. The waves and waves of attacks had left him greatly weary.

Although he heard the sound breaking through air, he also knew clearly that if the rhythm of his movement changed, even slightly, he would be ground to death by the waves of attacks.

There was nothing for him to do but to grit his teeth, bend slightly to the side and take the blow from the arrow.

Xu Zhen knew that this sound was absolutely a result from Jiang Chen attacking with a bow and arrow. He had once destroyed one of Jiang Chen's arrows when they'd fought one on one before.

Except, the current Xu Zhen tragically didn't even have the opportunity to dodge.

The arrow penetrated Xu Zhen's back with strong momentum.

Much of the powerful true qi was dissipated by the spirit armor, but a small amount still poured into his body, making Xu Zhen's internal organs tremble and vibrate.

"What? There's more?" Just as Xu Zhen was heaving an easy sigh of relief, he suddenly discovered that the sounds of breaking air hadn't stopped.

Another arrow, with the same tempo, the same curve, and the same path.

"This is bad!" Xu Zhen abruptly realized that Jiang Chen actually had ingenious control over his rapid fire arrows. The second arrow had been concealed behind the first arrow visually, auditorily, and even by feeling, making even an expert like Xu Zhen overlook it.

The second arrow arrived just when Xu Zhen felt things had taken a not too encouraging turn.

Another arrow landed squarely, in the same position.

Although the spirit armor afforded great protection, the destructive power of a blow landing in the same place twice was drastically different.

Hiss. Xu Zhen hastily sucked in a breath. When the true qi invaded and attacked his body, he almost wanted to vomit immediately.

Although the attack wasn't fatal, it made his body suddenly withstand an exceedingly great amount of pain in an instant.

It was this momentary pause that allowed a streak of golden colored light to descend upon, and blast into Xu Zhen's chest.

He was finally unable to evade the more terrifying blow.

Xu Zhen spewed out fresh blood as his eyes went bloodshot, the chain knife in his hand flying furiously as he roared out madly, "You want to kill me? You feathered animals and creatures like ants dare

to kill me, a spirit dao practitioner?"

"Die! Yin Yang Lotus, cleave through all in the air!"

Xu Zhen's chain knife whirled furiously like a mad demon, the intention to fight to the death having been goaded out of him. Although he'd taken a blow to the chest, it had stimulated his bloodthirsty fighting tendencies as well.

When Jiang Chen saw this, he wasn't surprised, but was rather happy.

If it was a fight between single opponents, Xu Zhen's brutal counter attack could shock his opponent's heart, and have a slight deterring effect.

But within this attack formation, Xu Zhen wasn't facing a single entity, but hundreds of Goldwing Swordbirds that didn't even have human emotions.

The violent natures of these Goldwing Swordbirds were thoroughly stimulated when they saw their own kind being slaughtered ceaselessly.

So when they saw Xu Zhen's counter attack, these Goldwing Swordbirds didn't retreat. Their violent natures were in fact heightened, as wave after wave of concerted attacks rained down endlessly.

Xu Zhen's counter attack in his death throes didn't even have the chance to fully gain steam, before he was drowned in a sea of formation attacks.

Another wave of attacks landed on Xu Zhen.

The boundless attacks tossed Xu Zhen back and forth like a ball.

"Ah..." Xu Zhen's ghastly screams sounded out continuously, nursing resentment and hatred. He had nowhere to expend his strength in

the face of this formation. His dire cries grew lower and lower beneath the waves of attacks.

At this moment, Yu Jie's attacks still hadn't penetrated the formation from the outside.

The "Eight Trigrams Assimilation Matrix" could both attack and defend. When Yu Jie was mobilizing his attacks from the outside, Jiang Chen had already adjusted the formation structure. Four quadrants would attack and four quadrants would defend.

Within the main inner attacking quadrants, they would increase the frequency of attacks with the goal of coming to a quick resolution and getting rid of Xu Zhen.

For the main outward defending quadrants, they were to prevent Yu Jie from fighting into the interior at all costs.

All of this had been within Jiang Chen's calculations, and his successive arrows had been adding fuel to the flame, hastening the speed of Xu Zhen's demise.

When Xu Zhen's body flopped, and fell from the sky, a weight was lifted off of Jiang Chen's heart.

Although this fight had been dangerous and chancy, he could now at least be assured that he wouldn't be defeated.

Within the formation, Jiang Chen pulled on his bow and shot an arrow towards Yu Jie on the outside.

"Yu Jie, this is the performance of you sect disciples? You sent your peer up to spearhead the attack, whereas you were cowardly and afraid of death, cowering in the back."

Rivers and seas were also being overturned in Yu Jie's heart at this moment, and his mind was completely upset and confused.

He hadn't thought that they would meet such an obstacle on this trip

to the Eastern Kingdom — an obstacle big enough that junior brother Xu Zhen had lost his life.

Although Xu Zhen's potential and strength had been ordinary, he had still been a disciple of the spirit dao and of the sect. If word got out that he had been killed in the common world, he would likely become a joke amongst the sects.

Jiang Chen's mockery also made him unable to voice his bitterness.

He hadn't truly wanted to send Xu Zhen to his death. His original intention had been for Xu Zhen to distract the Goldwing Swordbirds so that he could kill Jiang Chen in peace, without fear of intervention.

Except, he hadn't thought that Xu Zhen would make his way into a death trap with this move.

Who would've thought that these feathered and clawed beasts would understand attacking in unison — Would understand the dao of formations? Even sect disciples would find this point incredulous.

"How is this Jiang Chen an ordinary practitioner? Is this kid a wolf in sheep's skin, a spy from another sect in the common world?"

Yu Jie almost gave birth to this misconception.

How could a common practitioner be so strange and bizarre? Yu Jie couldn't believe this at all, and wouldn't accept this at all.

He could come up short in front of other sect disciples, but he would never accept being disadvantaged by a common practitioner.

"Jiang Chen, I swear I'll kill you!"

A great change had taken place in Yu Jie's mindset. Hatred and shame intertwined and churned continuously in his mind.

It was as if Jiang Chen's every move and gesture, every blade of grass and tree in this Second Crossing was mocking him, jeering the high

and mighty sect disciple.

“Autumn Waters Fill the Sky, cut!”

“Qi of Heaven and Earth, explode!”

One had to say, Yu Jie’s strength was more than double Xu Zhen’s. It was truly astounding when his divine abilities were continuously deployed.

A domineering sword aura filled the air, cutting so that the empty air trembled, the clouds scuttled away, and the fog scattered.

But, the “Eight Trigrams Assimilation Formation” grew stronger when it met stronger opponents. Under Jiang Chen’s continual guidance, the Goldwing Swordbirds’ confidence grew continuously, as they comprehended more and more of the formation. Their teamwork grew more and more well practiced.

In this way, the battle strength that had grown manifold as a result of Yu Jie’s explosion, was dispersed and negated by the continual increase in formation strength.

Yu Jie became more alarmed the more he fought.

He wasn’t even thinking of avoiding injuries, damage to his meridians, and negatively impacting his future training anymore. The fighting capability that was exploding out of him was absolutely at least three times Xu Zhen’s.

However, even such frightening destructive power and divine abilities were unable to break through the weird formation that the Goldwing Swordbirds had created. He was unable to rush into the formation and kill Jiang Chen.

In actuality, Yu Jie had continuously revised his expectations. He didn’t even want to be further entangled with these Goldwing Swordbirds anymore. He only wished to rush into the formation and annihilate Jiang Chen, so that he could offer an explanation to Long

Juxue and for the dead Xu Zhen.

He would also have an acceptable explanation when he returned to the sect.

However, he discovered tragically that he couldn't even rush through the outward defenses of the formation, not to mention dashing to the center to kill Jiang Chen.

"This Jiang Chen is so strange, that if he is allowed to develop further, he'll become a thorn in the side of my Shuiyue line. I'll find it hard to sleep and eat at ease in the future, if I don't kill him."

Yu Jie had thought through his emotions by now, but he'd reached the limits of his power unless he threw caution to the winds, and used his blood essence to trigger the secret arts.

Triggering the secret arts could increase his fighting capabilities by another level.

However, the price of triggering the secret arts was also astounding. It would certainly cause grievous injury to him, not to mention impacting his future training.

If even the secret arts couldn't break through this formation, then even a true qi master would be able to take his life when he was so injured.

Deploying the secret arts meant gambling with his life, and his future.

Chapter 110: A Frightened Yu Jie

Should he deploy the secret arts or not? Yu Jie hesitated, but still restrained himself in the end.

He knew that currying favor with Long Juxue was a must, but he couldn't put everything on the line either. If he found it difficult to proceed in his training in the future, then he'd be worthless in the eyes of Long Juxue as well.

Such a price wasn't worth it, no matter how he looked at the situation.

"Yu Jie, you don't have to hold on in the face of extreme pain. I can give you a choice. Leave Long Juxue behind, and you may go." Jiang Chen readjusted the formation, and was actually quite at ease.

"My slash has already caused injury to you. The more you battle, the worse your internal injuries will become. If we keep dragging things out like this, the first one to die will be you."

Jiang Chen attacked psychologically with every step.

The fight was in a stalemate at this moment, and they were competing with endurance.

In actuality, the Goldwing Swordbirds had also fought to an exceedingly weary state, even though they were fighting in groups.

They hadn't dared relax their guard against a spirit dao practitioner, and had brought one hundred percent of their strength to bear.

If this continued, the only advantage that the Goldwing Swordbirds had, was that they could substitute in for each other.

Whereas Yu Jie had to go at it alone from beginning to end.

However, Yu Jie was a sect disciple after all. Maybe he had all sorts of spirit medicine that would help him hold on even longer.

Yu Jie knew that Jiang Chen was making a psychological attack, but he too hesitated under the circumstances. He knew that although his attacks were wild and violent, it would also expend quite a lot of energy.

If he could break through this formation in a short period of time, he would have roughly a thirty percent chance of winning.

But if he still couldn't break it after an hour, then he would be the one in danger.

When his spirit power was consumed, the dominating presence he held, that of a spirit practitioner, would fall greatly, and his battle capabilities would also greatly decrease. With the number of Goldwing Swordbirds, they would be able to swallow him whole, and not even leave scraps of bone behind if they just attacked randomly.

Except, if he ran away with his tail between his lands after a few threatening words from a common practitioner, where would he put his dignity and pride as a sect disciple?

If word of this got out, he would become the preeminent joke amongst all the sects.

And, Xu Zhen had died on this trip. If he couldn't even leave with Long Juxue, this mission would be an undoubted failure. How would he explain himself to Master Shuiyue when he went back?

Yu Jie knew that he could neither advance nor retreat now that things had gotten this far. He could perhaps gloss things over for Xu Zhen's death, but Master Shuiyue would never forgive him if he didn't bring Long Juxue back.

"Jiang Chen, junior sister Long Juxue is a disciple personally handpicked by my Master Shuiyue. If you allow me to take her with me, then the matters of today can still be resolved."

Yu Jie knew that he couldn't afford to continue on in this way. He knew that both sides were gambling on who could hold on longer,

but he, Yu Jie was a sect disciple, the golden boy. He didn't want to make a bet with a desperado like Jiang Chen.

"I gave you a chance to leave, but you didn't want to leave. Then stay here together." Jiang Chen's words just now were also a test.

In reality, he knew that if he let even one of them go, he would've been creating endless troubles for himself in the future.

Now that things had developed to this point, he had to eliminate evil at its roots, and not let even one of them go, whether or not that had any effect.

Except, he also knew that the Goldwing Swordbirds had expended a lot of their fighting capabilities. It was an unknown factor whether or not they could outlast Yu Jie.

Therefore, his words just now had been half truth and half falsehood. He'd wanted to probe Yu Jie's attitude.

Seeing Yu Jie waver internally, Jiang Chen formed a covert plan.

He gave a surreptitious command to the Goldwing Swordbirds leading the army above the Second Crossing to have a portion of the Silverwing Swordbirds swoop down and ambush Long Juxue.

When the Swordbird Army had retreated earlier, they were led by a few Goldwing Swordbirds. They hadn't joined the fight earlier, and hadn't expended much of their energy. They still had a vigorous fighting spirit.

After receiving Jiang Chen's command, they brought several hundred Silverwing Swordbirds, and dived down upon pass like arrows loosed from a bowstring.

Their target was Long Juxue.

Long Juxue had already exhausted herself in the great fight earlier. She didn't have the protection of Xu Zhen by her side now, and had

abruptly become utterly isolated.

If Long Juxue hadn't been engaged in the battle earlier and hadn't expended her resources, she would've been able to hold out for a while against a few Goldwing Swordbirds, even though they would've given her great trouble.

But now, she had come off the tail end of the great battle and didn't have much true qi left in her. Although she had pills recovering her true qi, it looked like she'd only recovered forty to fifty percent.

It was impossible to hold up against the continued waves of attacks from several Goldwing Swordbirds and several hundred Silverwing Swordbirds with half of her fighting abilities.

She was in a precarious position after a few rounds. Her hair was flying wildly everywhere, and she was utterly run down. She called out, "Senior brother Yu Jie, come save me!"

How could Yu Jie not have seen the situation below?

Except, he had been entangled by the situation on his side as well. Although he hadn't been surrounded by the core of the formation, even the outer rings of the formation wouldn't permit him to leave as he pleased.

However, Long Juxue's plea was incredibly urgent.

If he didn't save her, and Long Juxue was lost, he would absolutely be unable to explain himself when he returned to his honored master.

"Confine him!"

How would Jiang Chen let Yu Jie leave so easily at this moment? Although he couldn't kill Yu Jie, it was completely doable for him to delay him momentarily with the more and more familiar "Eight Trigrams Assimilation Formation".

After receiving Jiang Chen's strong order, the Goldwing Swordbird

army became even more fierce. The formation changed, and they clung onto Yu Jie with a death-grip.

The original four quadrants of defense and four quadrants of offense all turned into offense.

Eight quadrants started attacking at once, increasing their power and effect by more than twofold.

If Yu Jie kept attempting to retreat, he would have to contend with countless numbers of blows.

Any of this formation's attacks were enough to worsen Yu Jie's injuries.

Yu Jie's heart was torn with anxiety as he knew that if he didn't make it down there, Long Juxue would be dead without a doubt.

If he were to make it down and disengage from up here in a short amount of time, he'd have to take one or two hits. But these one or two hits would absolutely worsen his injuries.

"What to do?!" The fires of fury burned in Yu Jie's heart as he roared out raspily, "Jiang Chen, don't you push someone too hard. If anything happens to junior sister Long, you'll face the flames of wrath from my honored master Shuiyue."

Jiang Chen snorted coldly. He was saying this now? This Yu Jie was seriously too childish. With the way the situation had developed, this feud would never be resolved if he didn't kill Long Juxue.

If Master Shuiyue valued Long Juxue this much, she would surely strike out on her beloved disciple's behalf. He'd have to face Master Shuiyue's rage sooner or later anyways.

Jiang Chen chuckled and continued to give orders, "Delay Yu Jie, I'll go kill Long Juxue myself."

Jiang Chen didn't have the slightest ounce of pity towards the Long

family.

If it hadn't been for him, the Jiang Han manor would have long since been bathed in blood by the Long family. This Long Juxue was even more malicious, and had a murderous heart. If he let her go like this, there'd be no end of troubles in the future.

He raised the nameless saber and was about to dive down when his consciousness suddenly perked up. An undetectable trace of danger suddenly flashed through the part of his consciousness training the "Boulder's Heart".

"What's going on?" The mental strength of Boulder's Heart was exceedingly sensitive and it generally wasn't prone to error.

Jiang Chen visibly held himself back and grasped the nameless saber in his hands, on the alert, and battle ready. His entire being was like a taut bow, ready to fire out sharp arrows at any time.

At that moment, countless beams of white light shone out from around Long Juxue's body down below. Beams of silver light danced around like silvery carp, darting to and fro in the air.

Dreadful screams sounded out in the next instant.

The Silverwing Swordbirds exploded in midair, turning into clouds of bloody mist and spreading out continuously.

Several hundred Silverwing Swordbirds were annihilated almost in the span of a single breath. They blew apart one after another, and fell towards the ground.

Around a hundred Silverwing Swordbirds had been destroyed in the time it took to take a single breath.

The Goldwing Swordbirds had wanted to use their durable golden feathers to stand up to the white light that was like silvery carp, but when their feathers intersected with the white light...

Pfft pfft pfft pfft.

The Goldwing Swordbird's indestructible feathers were ripped apart like paper. Agonized cries rang out as these Goldwing Swordbirds were shredded to pieces by this silver-white light.

Jiang Chen was dumbfounded when he saw this scene.

When Yu Jie and Xu Zhen had attacked together earlier, they had leveraged their strong spirit power to oppress the Swordbird Army. Those killed were mostly Greenwing Swordbirds.

Several Goldwing Swordbirds had also been killed, but those that had died had been the result of solid attacks. The Goldwing Swordbirds had only died because they'd used their bodies to protect Jiang Chen.

And this time, he hadn't even seen the person, just the dancing of the silvery-white light. Six or seven Goldwing Swordbirds, and a hundred Silverwing Swordbirds, had been annihilated within the span of a single breath.

This level of strength was horrifying.

Long Juxue had thought she was dead without a doubt, and hadn't reckoned on this scene happening. Her panicky and frantic eyes finally recovered some semblance of calm.

She knew that even stronger reinforcements must have come from the Purple Sun Sect.

"Yu Jie, what's the matter with you? You couldn't even handle such a simple matter?" A low voice traveled out of the air. The owner hadn't appeared, but a mysterious sense of presence caused the blood of any listeners to churn and roil when they heard his voice.

Yu Jie had been in poor shape indeed, but was overjoyed when he heard this voice — like an extremely thirsty person finding a bubbling spring.

“Senior Brother Xing Han?”

Yu Jie’s voice was both agitated and fearful.

Jiang Chen’s heart tightened as he commanded the formation to change. All the Goldwing Swordbirds immediately halted their attacks, and resumed a position of defense.

At the same time, his “Boulder’s Heart” began warning him uncontrollably.

This unseen and only heard opponent gave Jiang Chen a powerful sense of pressure — the type of despair that occurred when one absolutely couldn’t measure up to one’s enemies.

Yu Jie ignored Jiang Chen and the others at this moment, and landed back on the ground in front of Long Juxue. His eyes stared fixedly at the empty air.

A slit seemed to be drawn in a patch of clouds in the horizon to the west. A cold beam of frigid light shot out like a shooting star, stepping onto the white clouds and riding on the shooting star, landing in front of Long Juxue.

This person was wearing clothes made of hemp, and his body was rather tall. His originally imposing appearance encompassed a few traces of faint desolation, but a heart pounding sense of depth was able to be found between his brows.

“I greet senior brother Xing Han.” Yu Jie’s previous arrogance and attitude had completely disappeared, as if this newly arrived “senior brother Xing Han” occupied an even higher position in his heart than his own father.

Chapter 111: Senior Brother Xinghan

"Yu Jie, you would've wrecked the honored master's affairs if I hadn't come. You couldn't even handle a small matter such as this, and almost caused the honored master's hand picked disciple to lose her life. In my eyes, your title as one of the ten great disciples was really just to fill the numbers."

This senior brother Xinghan didn't seem as arrogant as Yu Jie, but his faintly spoken words of censure were enough to cause Yu Jie's forehead to be covered in sweat.

"Senior brother Xinghan, I..." Yu Jie couldn't express himself.

"Forget it." Senior brother Xinghan waved his sleeves, and said to Long Juxue, "Junior sister Long, I am your foolish brother Chu Xinghan, the second disciple beneath Master Shuiyue. The events of today have caused a great fright to junior sister."

Long Juxue was a weeping beauty like a pear blossom bathed in the rain, a look that caused those who saw her to not help but love her as she said sorrowfully, "If it wasn't for senior brother Xinghan rushing here in time, I... I probably wouldn't have been able to see the honored master again."

Chu Xinghan nodded his head slightly, flicking a sideways glance at Yu Jie and saying nothing else.

Both of his feet stomped, as his entire being floated up in midair. A blue whirl of air blossomed beneath his feet like a lotus flower, slowly bringing him up into the air.

"You're called Jiang Chen?" Chu Xinghan's eyes were as deep as the Milky Way as he seized up Jiang Chen. He was different from Yu Jie. Arrogance was absent from his gaze as he looked at Jiang Chen — rather, traces of gravity were present instead.

"Indeed."

Although this Chu Xinghan didn't throw his weight around like Yu Jie, nor did he consider everyone beneath his notice, his simple gestures caused Jiang Chen to be in great discomfort, as if a violent beast had fixed its eyes on him.

"To think that a common practitioner could cause such a ruckus. You're really not simple." Chu Xinghan nodded his head. "If I wanted to kill you, your Goldwing Swordbirds wouldn't be able to save you."

Jiang Chen wanted to come back with a response, but said nothing after thinking for a while.

Chu Xinghan's strength was indeed much greater than Yu Jie. They were likely not even on the same level.

If he had time to practice the "Eight Trigrams Assimilation Formation" for three months, Jiang Chen might've had a thirty percent chance of standing up to Chu Xinghan. But right now, at this moment, he had nothing to rebutt against Chu Xinghan with.

However, Jiang Chen wasn't a lamb being led to the slaughter. Although Chu Xinghan was very strong, Jiang Chen wouldn't go down without a fight.

"How about this," Chu Xinghan said after considering for a while. "If I use divine abilities to suppress you, I'll inevitably gain a reputation of the strong bullying the weak. I'll give you two options."

Jiang Chen's gaze was calm and aloof, and he didn't open his mouth. He waited, accumulating his strength.

"The first choice, is that you return to the Purple Sun Sect with me. Your feud with junior sister Long will be decided upon by our high arbiter. This decision will result in a ninety percent chance of death for you, but you'll also have a chance to live."

"The second choice is that I kill you, right here and right now, and take your head back to the sect to fulfill my duties to the honored master." Chu Xinghan's aura pulsed slightly when he finished

speaking.

Suddenly, a Milky Way seemed to arise around Chu Xinghan's body. The profound and strong power and mysteries gave others a feeling of being too deep to be fathomable.

"With regards to the second choice, I trust that you don't suspect I don't have the power to?" Chu Xinghan's tone had been quite calm and unhurried throughout all of this.

If it had been Yu Jie who'd proposed these two choices, Jiang Chen would have surely thumbed his nose at him.

But Chu Xinghan had a certain presence about him when he spoke these words. His strength of presence and power, forced Jiang Chen to consider him seriously.

"The first choice of returning to the sect with him looks like it's a chance out of this, but is actually dragging out my feeble existence. I've traversed the wheel of life and reincarnated, how could I let others hold my fate in their hands and dictate my life or death? I might not be able to choose how I was born, but as a practitioner, I can at least decide how I'll die."

There wasn't a single trace of hesitation in Jiang Chen's mind. He might as well die fighting right now if they wanted him to bend his knee, surrender, and go docilely with them back to the Purple Sun Sect to receive his judgment. He would then suffer through crying shame and crowning humiliation, before finally being executed.

Dying in pitched battle was a glorious death.

Bending at the knee and begging for life might not result in his survival in the end.

When his thoughts traveled here, Jiang Chen smiled dashingly and a trace of a proud curve made its way to his lips. "Chu Xinghan, you're different from Yu Jie. At least I see the bearing of a sect disciple on you. I respect you, but I choose none of these choices. Perhaps you

can kill me, but I'll also make you pay a hefty price."

His tone rang out clearly.

Jiang Chen's attitude seemed to be within Chu Xinghan's expectations. The latter's slightly miserable eyebrows abruptly lifted.

"Alright. If there wasn't a grudge between us, I'd quite admire you. However, the profits of the master are above all. Jiang Chen, I won't hold back once I start."

As Chu Xinghan spoke, the Milky Way that wavered in and out of existence behind his back became even more resplendent.

Of course, it wasn't a real Milky Way, but an illusion formed by his personal aura. The bright Milky Way had countless stars dotted and sparkling in it like a silver sea. Each star was like a silver carp, bounding through the crystalline ripples.

This silver white light had been the terrifying strength that had slaughtered the Goldwing Swordbirds and several hundred Silverwing Swordbirds in but a second just now.

"Magnificent Xinghan, sword aura shooting to the clouds, go!"

Chu Xinghan flourished his sleeves and waved his right arm, a sword having appeared in his hand. With the glint of the sword as a guide, the Milky Way behind him abruptly roiled and churned, as the countless silvery white dots of light coalesced into a frightening silvery white sword aura, like innumerable shooting stars, as it moved towards Jiang Chen.

He had deployed an ultimate skill with his first move.

Yu Jie was watching from below and swallowed audibly twice. This level of divine ability and method was a level that he absolutely couldn't aspire to.

When a true qi practitioner such as Long Juxue watched this

terrifying and glorious attack, her heart rippled with emotion, and the gaze she looked at Chu Xinghan with became gentle and warm.

She couldn't help but think, "I'd thought senior brother Yu Jie was strong before, but who would've thought that he is an utter buffoon in front of senior brother Xinghan. When I enter the sect, my worldview needs to be enhanced a bit. This Yu Jie isn't good enough to accomplish anything, but is more than enough to spoil things."

Unbeknownst to her, Long Juxue's inner heart had already settled on changing her backer. Yu Jie's performance was a huge joke when compared to senior brother Xinghan's.

Long Juxue was a proud young girl; she didn't want to find a good-for-nothing backer.

As for Jiang Chen in the midst of battle, he was suffering unspeakably. Chu Xinghan's strength was much more than he'd imagined.

The thousands of silvery white sword aura strands kept leaping at him like shooting stars. Even the highly defensive "Eight Trigrams Assimilation Formation" found it hard to withstand the attack.

Pfft pfft pfft.

Several Goldwing Swordbirds on the outside exploded and died when they were grazed by the sword aura, with no exceptions at all.

The formation continuously tightened, protecting Jiang Chen at its core. These Goldwing Swordbirds, wild and savage as they were, were still loyal and steadfast, protecting Jiang Chen with their lives at this moment.

Strange emotions surged in Jiang Chen's heart. He really hadn't thought that these Goldwing Swordbirds would be fearless to this point merely because of an order from Mang Qi.

Jiang Chen had never been a heartless person. He wasn't the sort to

hide and grasp at life while the Goldwing Swordbirds fended off disaster and fought for an additional moment for him.

He suddenly gave a long whistle as a resolute light shot out from his eyes. The whistle pierced through the clouds, and the rest of the million strong Swordbird army suddenly appeared in the skies above the Second Crossing. They once again filled the entire sky.

“Chu Xinghan, since you’ve forced me, then I’ll self destruct along with you. Although you’re strong, can you kill all of this million strong army? Even if you kill me, I’ll still kill Long Juxue!”

Jiang Chen abruptly made up his mind and decided to self destruct along with his enemies.

Even if he was killed by Chu Xinghan, he’d still take Long Juxue down with him. If he died without killing Long Juxue, he’d still bring troubles to other people as well.

If he killed Long Juxue and eliminated this source of trouble, the Purple Sun Sect might not slaughter the rest of his family clan due to a consideration of face.

Chu Xinghan’s mind was also agitated momentarily when he saw this scene. As strong as one was, he was still a bit shocked when millions of lives suddenly appeared in front of him.

“Yu Jie, protect junior sister Long. I’ll finish this quickly.”

Chu Xinghan was an exemplary disciple of the sect alright. He saw straight through Jiang Chen’s intentions. Jiang Chen knew that he couldn’t fight against Chu Xinghan, and so had changed his target to Long Juxue instead.

If it hadn’t been for Master Shuiyue’s orders, Chu Xinghan actually didn’t want to kill Jiang Chen. However, this had to do with the honored master’s affairs, and as unwilling as Chu Xinghan was, he couldn’t hesitate at all.

“Jiang Chen, die!”

Chu Xinghan’s brandished his longsword, and his aura grew even stronger. The resplendent Milky Way behind him wavered and shook with him, changing into the light of countless stars — as if meteorites were descending from the heavens.

The aura of this blow was actually three to four times stronger than the blow prior.

A newly practiced “Eight Trigrams Assimilation Formation” had no hope of blocking such aura. Jiang Chen sighed tragically in his heart and knew that life or death would be decided in this moment.

Suddenly, Jiang Chen raised the bow in his hand.

Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh, whoosh.

Four to five arrows shot out in close succession. All of them made unerringly for Long Juxue.

Jiang Chen held a mindset that he would die at this moment — he only hoped that he could kill Long Juxue. The million strong Swordbird army also dived down en masse.

Unafraid of death, unafraid of destruction.

Even Yu Jie felt the hair on his back rise in fright when he saw this scene. The attacks were so concentrated that even the scalps of spirit dao practitioners were numbed.

Not to mention that he, Yu Jie, had some grievous injuries.

Only Chu Xinghan was abnormally calm with a deep gaze in his eyes, as if the million strong Swordbird army was still insufficient to cause a great ripples of emotion within his heart.

Chu Xinghan was very calm indeed because he knew that Jiang Chen and the formation set up by the Goldwing Swordbirds would be

unable to withstand this blow.

This was a blow that would make a clean sweep of things and end the battle.

The sky was murky over a dark earth, and the sun and moon without light. It was as if the sky and earth were groaning sadly from this battle, and the sun and moon were melancholic because of this battle.

Suddenly —

A beam of light shot through the clouds and sky that were covered up by the countless number of Swordbirds.

It was like a bolt of lightning had been emitted from the black clouds as it streaked across the sky.

Before the light faded, it happened to land amidst the Eight Trigrams Assimilation Formation.

A bizarre scene occurred at this moment.

The light was as if a large sword of heaven and earth — cleaving a horizon out of thin air, and building a dam out of nothing — becoming a barrier in front of Chu Xinghan's attacks that were coming at Jiang Chen like tidewater.

The attacks raining towards him like a meteor shower seemed to ram into an invisible wall of air, and were swallowed whole.

The breezes were gentle, and the wind calmed in the next moment.

The beam of light had disappeared, and Chu Xinghan's devastating blow was as if a large stone had sunk into the great sea, swallowed without a trace.

This abrupt development shocked both Jiang Chen and Chu Xinghan.

"Who's there?" Chu Xinghan roared lowly as his deep gaze roved

alertly in his surroundings, attempting to search out the person who had interfered flagrantly.

At the same time, Chu Xinghan was greatly astounded internally. Chu Xinghan had almost used his trump card with that blow just now.

Whether someone on the level of even his honored master Shuiyue could easily ward off a blow like that was an unknown factor.

A faint beam of light had emerged from somewhere and had completely swallowed his blow. This power was absolutely overwhelming.

Chapter 112: Jiang Chen is Under My Protection

If had been a direct confrontation, spirit qi would've flown out in every direction at the scene if Chu Xinghan's blow had been directly cancelled out. Any life within several hundred meters would've been affected, with likely nothing remaining alive.

However, for this bout of strength to so effortlessly swallow Chu Xinghan's blow without raising a single ripple, it was truly too frightening. It was like throwing a huge stone and having it disappear into thin air.

Even if a huge stone was thrown into the water, it would still create a few splashes and give rise to a few ripples.

However, this blow hadn't even kicked up a splash.

What did this mean? This meant that this abruptly interfering person was at least ten times stronger than Chu Xinghan!

Chu Xinghan had started training since he was eight and had met countless rivals and killed countless experts. On his path of training, he had met many strong opponents.

However, Chu Xinghan had never experienced such an overwhelming power even from his honored master Shuiyue. He even suspected that this power didn't come from one of the sects in the alliance of the sixteen kingdoms.

Jiang Chen's shock wasn't any less than that of Chu Xinghan's.

He was prepared to go down fighting just now, but who would've thought that this sudden development would cause the battle to yet again go in a different direction?

"Disciple of the Purple Sun Sect is it? All of you can go back now. Jiang Chen is under my protection."

A stately voice traveled out through the air. It seemed to be a bit aged and old, and brought with it an undefiable sense of oppression, making listeners have no choice but to obey what it said.

“Senior... who might you be?” Chu Xinghan wasn’t an impetuous sort, as he cupped his hands, made the greeting of a junior to a senior, and asked respectfully.

“You don’t need to ask about my name.”

The stately voice seemed a bit unamused, “Go back and tell both Immortal Zixu and Shuiyue of the Purple Sun Sect that the grudge between Jiang Chen and Long Juxue will be settled by the two of them only. If anyone from the Purple Sun Sect makes a move against Jiang Chen, I wouldn’t mind going for a stroll into the Purple Sun Sect one day.”

Chu Xinghan was someone who knew when to advance and when to retreat. He knew that this great power wasn’t someone that he could contend against at all. He nodded, “Many thanks to our senior for not bothering with us juniors. I will be sure to convey senior’s words verbatim when I return.”

Submitting docilely and honestly in the face of absolute power was the only way. Chu Xinghan wasn’t foolish, he knew that the senior expert was letting him go because the senior couldn’t be bothered in dirtying his hands.

If he didn’t know when to stop and talked back offensively, the senior may destroy him with one finger.

In addition, to be honest, Chu Xinghan didn’t feel any regret in resolving the matter this way, nor did he feel humiliated. Submitting before a stronger person was adapting his actions to the time.

Besides, his own intentions also didn’t really want to kill Jiang Chen.

After all, the feud between Jiang Chen and Long Juxue had nothing to do with him. If he hadn’t been here on the orders of his master, he

wouldn't have even wanted to get involved.

Chu Xinghan's thoughts were different to those of Yu Jie's.

Yu Jie had wanted to curry favor with Long Juxue and lay the groundwork for fawning over the genius Long Juxue.

Chu Xinghan was a genius and had the reservation and pride of one. He felt that it was beneath his dignity to curry favor with Long Juxue. Even if she did rise to greater heights with future accomplishments, Chu Xinghan's personality wasn't one that would spur him to curry favor with others.

"Junior sister Long, your foolish brother has tried his best in the matters of today." Chu Xinghan said to Long Juxue as he returned to the ground.

Although Long Juxue felt that it was a pity, she also knew that Chu Xinghan had truly tried his best, given this situation. Who would've thought that an unparalleled expert would suddenly appear out of nowhere?

She was a smart person and knew that the only reason that they could leave this place alive was because the mysterious expert valued his status and didn't wish to bully the weak.

Otherwise, he could kill the three of them as easily as blowing away dust.

Although Yu Jie was a bit unreconciled with this conclusion, he didn't dare say anything else. He knew even more so than Long Juxue how frighteningly powerful a person who could easily dispel one of senior brother Chu Xinghan's full strength blow was.

"Let's go!" Chu Xinghan said lowly as he didn't dare tarry. He took Long Juxue with him and pushed off with his feet. A cloud of blue frost rippled out like a blue lotus as they flew into the sky and vanished into thin air.

Jiang Chen watched Chu Xinghan and the others leave. Although not resigned to this conclusion, he didn't say anything.

All sorts of bizarre turns had suffused the events of today. This battle hadn't been one of Jiang Chen's accomplishments either. He naturally knew that he didn't have the ability to make Chu Xinghan leave Long Juxue behind.

In addition, Jiang Chen was someone with moral integrity. He would be inviting insult if he wanted Long Juxue to stay at this moment. He would kill Long Juxue, but not by swaggering about with borrowed influence.

Sighing lightly, he cupped his hands and called out. "May I know senior's honored name? Jiang Chen will never forget the aid rendered today. Will the senior please leave your name behind? I hope to compensate you should the opportunity presents itself in the future."

However, Jiang Chen also knew that in the eyes of this kind of expert, the kind of compensation that he could offer as an ordinary practitioner probably had no allure whatsoever.

But Jiang Chen's words came from his heart and he felt that he had both the potential and foundation to do so.

"Compensation?" The voice in the air chuckled. "Alright Jiang Chen, this old fellow will remember your words from today. I hope there will be a day that you can offer me some compensation."

After these words had been said, the voice began to roll far away like thunder, vanishing in the distance.

"Honored senior, please hold your steps!" Jiang Chen wanted to say some more words.

But silence greeted him. There were no more responses.

Jiang Chen hadn't even seen his savior's face in the midst of all of

this. He laughed wryly as he looked at the ravaged landscape with bodies strewn everywhere, sighing lightly in his heart.

Below the Second Crossing, the million strong army was still crouched on the ground. No one had dared moved a single finger until now. Even when just the effects of the great battle had spread to them, it still caused people to die in great swathes. Thus, no one had dared scream or moan in agony.

Jiang Chen felt worn out. He also felt extremely regretful that the head of this evil, Long Juxue, hadn't been killed. He looked at the great army again. They were all just along for the ride.

Jiang Chen naturally didn't have the heart to start a slaughter again.

Although Long Juxue hadn't died, the Soaring Dragon household was basically annihilated. The task of cleaning up the rest of this mess could be returned to the Eastern clan for their attentions.

Back at the Second Crossing, everyone surrounded Jiang Chen and peppered him with questions.

Jiang Chen had suffered in torment throughout his battle, but so had those standing on top of the mountain pass.

Jiang Chen spread out his hands. "The people of the Purple Sun Sect will likely be afraid to create more trouble. The only pity is that Long Juxue got away and will be a source of trouble in the future."

He waved at Princess Gouyu. "Your Eastern clan should be able to handle the task of cleaning up the aftermath by yourselves?"

Jiang Chen didn't have the slightest interest in the struggle for power between the royal family and the Long family. He hadn't gone against the Duke of Soaring Dragon because he supported the royal family, but rather because the Long family had gone too far in bullying others and wanted to end his Jiang family multiple times.

The battle of the Second Crossing had ended in the destruction of

the Long family and the Jiang family's rise to fame.

However, the chaos of the Eastern Kingdom wouldn't be over as quickly. It was good thing that there was still Princess Gouyu and Eastern Lin as Crown Prince, so that the bloodlines of the royal family hadn't ended.

Princess Gouyu employed various methods afterwards to gather the armies of the dukes loyal to the royal family and exterminated the remnants of the Long family with swift and ruthless action.

Executing the heads, killing accomplices.

All the dukes that had been coerced by Long Zhaofeng wouldn't be prosecuted.

These were the rules set by Princess Gouyu.

She also clearly knew that if the fallout was too widespread, the chaos within the kingdom wouldn't end. Killing a few leaders, exterminating the Soaring Dragon manor, and revitalizing the authority of the royal family would do.

The current Eastern Kingdom couldn't afford anymore losses.

But of course, this process couldn't be concluded within a few days.

The Jiang family remained neutral throughout all of this and didn't participate.

The royal family actually placed the Duke of Jinshan and the Duke of Hubing, people who'd always been friendly with the Jiang family, into important positions at this time, making them the two powers that the royal family depended most heavily on in the rise of royal power again.

As for the Jiang family, whether Jiang Feng, the Duke of Jiang Han or Jiang Chen, who had shown extraordinary talents in the battle of the Second Crossing, they all kept an uncommonly low profile. They

remained within the River Wave City, not venturing out of the house and stayed home all day.

At the battle of the Second Crossing, Jiang Chen had managed to retreat relatively unscathed after a few developments, but he felt deeply ashamed inside.

Although he hadn't submitted or compromised in front of Chu Xinghan, the feeling of not being in control of his own destiny and having his life and death being decided by others made Jiang Chen feel quite angry.

Back in the Jiang Han territory, the first thing that Jiang Chen did was to personally train the Goldwing Swordbirds and pass onto them the mysteries of the "Eight Trigrams Assimilation Formation."

He also knew full well that to suddenly improve his strength by leaps and bounds within a short period of time was unrealistic.

But expectations could be held for the dao of formations. If several hundred Goldwing Swordbirds could comprehend seventy to eighty percent of the "Eight Trigrams Assimilation Formation", then they would become a great force to be reckoned with.

In addition, the variations of the "Eight Trigrams Assimilation Formation" were numerous. It could also be broken into countless smaller formations, reassembled into mid-sized formations, and reformed once again into a large formation.

The changes between large, middle, and small were at one's will and desire. Once seventy to eighty percent of the essence of the formation had been grasped, the power of the formation would be eye-opening.

At the very least, he wouldn't be at a loss when he met someone on the level of Chu Xinghan again.

Apart from Jiang Chen, all the others were making valiant efforts after experiencing disgrace. Jiang Chen's eight personal guards had

felt the shame of how a subject should die for his liege when his liege experienced humiliation.

Every person put forth their greatest effort as they trained without a thought for themselves.

Two months passed silently by. Jiang Chen's level of training saw even greater progress as he took another step forward and made it to eleven meridians true qi.

As was common knowledge, entering the realm of an eleven meridians true qi master was almost reaching the limits of the true qi realm.

Within the martial dao arena of the alliance of the sixteen kingdoms, an eleven meridians true qi master would either successfully enter the spirit realm as he advanced, or roam the realm of true qi for the rest of his life.

As for ascending to the level of twelve meridians true qi, no one had ever heard of someone breaking through to this level, at least not in these common kingdoms.

Ever since the dawn of time, there had been no shortage of geniuses within the world of martial dao. They'd all explored the way of twelve meridians true qi, but all ended up missing the best timing to transform to the spirit realm in the end, with no exceptions. They were moody until the end of their days like a resplendent star slowly sinking to the earth.

Logically speaking, Jiang Chen should've been preparing for the transformation to spirit qi.

However, Jiang Chen had no intention of assailing the spirit realm. He had thoroughly assimilated into this world and pretty much established his martial dao foundations.

The next step was to absorb the memories of his past life and begin digging deeper in his exploration.

The so-called twelve meridians of the true qi realm was just a minor way of training.

There were many major ways of training in Jiang Chen's memories, even divine ways of training.

His foundational skills were in great readiness at this moment, and it was time to break out of the cocoon and become a butterfly!

Chapter 113: Master Shuiyue

The Purple Sun Sect' — this name was a legendary existence to the alliance of the sixteen kingdoms.

The hidden sects were exceedingly mysterious in the eyes of the common kingdoms, and were holy places that others greatly yearned for. If a common practitioner could attract the attention of a hidden sect, then he would surely become an immortal, and those near him could ride his coattails to success as well.

There was no shortage of hidden sects within the alliance of the sixteen kingdoms. But there were four that were considered the strongest — and the Purple Sun Sect was one of them.

On this day, sunlight had just struck the hallowed grounds of the Purple Sun Sect.

A surface of water that was as smooth as a mirror presented a boundless sight. It shimmered as ripples moved across it, giving others a feeling of stately holiness.

This body of water was named the Shuiyue Lake. There were interconnecting islands within the lake, scattered all over like stars in the sky, or pieces on a chessboard. This was the place where the line of Shuiyue of the Purple Sun Sect resided.

Gentle light wreathed the Shuiyue Lake as an auspicious air circled the islands.

At this moment, within a jeweled hall somewhere deep within the depths of an island, was the Master Shuiyue's base of operations —

A plaque was hung over the great door, marking the entrance into the hall. The words "Shuiyue" were carved into it with a Chinese calligraphic style used for seals. It was majestic and grand, with an artistic feeling about it.

Within the hall, Chu Xinghan stood with his hands hanging by his side, while Yu Jie and Long Juxue both stood to the right of him. All of them had lowered their heads and were looking downwards. No one dared to make a sound.

A woman was sitting cross-legged on the lotus throne in front of them. She looked to be roughly thirty years old; her features were elegant, and an ethereal air could be found in her luxurious self bearing.

Except, when her eye of justice opened slightly, it was suffused with a power that both shocked and awed onlookers.

“Xinghan, go over the particulars of this matter from beginning to end once again, and leave nothing out. Yu Jie and Juxue, you two listen as well. You must fill in the gaps if senior brother Xinghan misses any parts.”

The lady on top of the lotus throne was obviously Master Shuiyue.

Chu Xinghan nodded, as he went over everything in his mind once again. He then took in a deep breath, and carefully explained in detail all that had happened at the Second Crossing.

Chu Xinghan particularly conveyed the words of the mysterious expert — he conveyed those without leaving a single word out. He portrayed those in their entirety and didn't dare make the slightest mistake.

Once Chu Xinghan had finished, Master Shuiyue faintly raised her eyebrow, and looked at Yu Jie and Long Juxue, obviously looking for their affirmation.

“Honored master, senior brother Xinghan has been quite thorough. That was indeed how the mysterious expert spoke. That Jiang Chen was indeed wildly arrogant. He didn't give the line of Master Shuiyue any respect to begin with.” Yu Jie grit his teeth with anger directed towards Jiang Chen when he recalled that battle.

“Nonsense such as this doesn’t need to be spoken.” Master Shuiyue snorted lightly. She was also quite dissatisfied with Yu Jie’s incompetency in getting things done.

If Yu Jie had been able to take care of this matter decisively and cleanly, Chu Xinghan may not have needed to make a move, and perhaps even the mysterious expert wouldn’t have been able to make it to the scene in time.

Of course, this was just a hypothesis.

When she considered the situation as a whole, Master Shuiyue was truly disappointed by Yu Jie’s incompetency.

At the heart of it all, Master Shuiyue was a very biased person who shielded shortcomings and faults. She already knew of the feud between Jiang Chen and Long Juxue. With her biased personality, she would definitely strike out on Long Juxue’s behalf.

Although Chu Xinghan had conveyed the mysterious expert’s tone with seeming seriousness, but Master Shuiyue had been proud and alone all her life. Who had she ever feared?

How could she possibly turn a blind eye to the matters of her disciple just because of a few threatening words?

“Xue’er, strange phenomenon of the heavens and earth were triggered when you were born. What does this mean? It means that you are a gifted genius of martial dao. At the end of it all, the martial dao practitioners of our generation must cleanly sever the ties that hold us down. Therefore, if you don’t gain vengeance for your family’s grievance, it will surely leave behind a shadow in your heart and affect your future training. Your master will keep this issue of your vengeance within my heart.”

Long Juxue was accustomed to playing coy and knew that Master Shuiyue would coddle her. She sobbed slightly, lowly. “Xue’er has no family or patron now. I can now only look to my honored master to

act on my behalf.”

Master Shuiyue had trained for more than half her life, and her reputation of being biased was renowned throughout the sects.

“Who is this Jiang Chen that he can compel a great Swordbird army to fight for him and be so fearless of death?”

Even someone as strong as Master Shuiyue could make neither heads nor tails of this matter. One had to know that it wasn't a matter of having great strength to compel spirit beasts and fowl to battle.

There were those who were adept at mobilizing spirit animals to battle within the sects, but each sect had their own unique methods.

Some leveraged written talismans, and others used secret incantations or other mysterious arts of control. Of course, there were those who used their divine abilities to dominate the spirit animals into becoming their own fighting strength.

But no matter which sect it was, those were secrets that wouldn't be passed on.

Even within the vast Purple Sun Sect there were almost none who possessed this power. The Purple Sun Sect was almost a completely blank piece of paper in the arena of compelling spirit animals to battle.

Therefore, Master Shuiyue was rather curious with regards to this Jiang Chen.

However, although she was curious, Master Shuiyue still placed a heavier emphasis on the genius who was Long Juxue. An innate constitution such as the azure phoenix constitution also numbered amongst the scant few when making a general observation of the history of the Purple Sun Sect.

What did it mean to be born with such a constitution?

This meant that one would be able to easily set foot into the spirit dao with almost no barriers. The path of training after entering the spirit dao would also be much smoother when compared with ordinary spirit dao practitioners, and their speed of improvement would also be much faster.

“Xinghan, your master is giving you a mission. Go investigate Jiang Chen’s origins, but remember, do not make a move against Jiang Chen.”

Master Shuiyue gave her orders to Chu Xinghan, but she was a biased person after all. She cared about both people. Although she favored Long Juxue even more, she couldn’t possibly send Chu Xinghan to his death.

After all, of her disciples, Chu Xinghan was still one of the top three geniuses. Since the mysterious elder had spoken, it would absolutely be inappropriate if she sent her disciples to make a move against Jiang Chen.

There would be fewer reservations as long as they only investigated and didn’t make a move.

“Xue’er.” Master Shuiyue looked towards Long Juxue again. “Although this Jiang Chen knows some unorthodox ways, at the end of the day, his potential is still inferior to yours. Even if he’s had a few fortuitous encounters, it’s still nothing compared to the constitution that you were born with. You will surely leave him behind in eight to ten years.”

The meaning of Master Shuiyue’s words were veiled; what she actually wanted to tell Long Juxue was that “your master will eventually help you get your vengeance.”

However, as a master, she couldn’t send her other strong disciples to kill Jiang Chen, as this might very well attract fatal disasters for the other disciples.

Long Juxue was a smart person and she nodded, "Honored master, the grudge between Jiang Chen and your disciple is utterly irreconcilable. Your disciple will be receiving tutelage from the honored master starting today and will learn the honored master's divine abilities. It will then be as easy as killing a dog when I meet Jiang Chen in the future."

Master Shuiyue nodded in satisfaction. "You possess an innate constitution alright. Your potential and comprehension is top class. Xue'er, if you kill Jiang Chen through using the efforts of others, you will unavoidably leave behind a slight stain on your training. This stain may affect you when you are scaling to even higher levels in your path of martial dao in the future. You possess an innate constitution, and your master is far beneath you in terms of potential. There may even come a day in the future in which you claim the highest rank of power within the entire Purple Sun Sect, not to mention being the head of the line of Shuiyue."

Long Juxue thinned out her lips slightly and her beautiful head inclined a bit. "Xue'er will be certain to train diligently as to live up to honored master's great kindness, and obtain face for the line of Shuiyue."

One had to say, Long Juxue was quite skilled at fathoming the human heart. She could tell from Master Shuiyue's words that this honored master greatly valued the line of Shuiyue, and dearly wished to shine with pride and glory throughout the entire Purple Sun Sect.

Indeed, Master Shuiyue smiled with gratification when she heard those words. "That would be most excellent! I traveled hundreds of kilometers to be the first to arrive in the Eastern Kingdom to form the ties of master and disciple with you. This act is the one act that I am most proud of in my life. Xue'er, you will train with me from today onwards."

Yu Jie, who was listening below, couldn't help but feel a bit envious and jealous. One had to know that although he was one of the ten great disciples of the line of Shuiyue, there had been exceedingly

few chances for him to receive the honored master's personal guidance. It had basically been up to him to train once the master had brought him in.

On the few occasions that he had received a few pointers from the master, Yue Jie had been so excited that he'd been unable to sleep for a few days.

The extraordinary prodigy Long Juxue was indeed different from the rest. The honored master wanted to keep Long Juxue by the master's side for personal tutelage. This was treatment that even senior brother Chu Xinghan hadn't enjoyed.

Chu Xinghan was expressionless as he didn't feel anything was inappropriate here.

A thousand things were waiting to be done within the Eastern Kingdom.

Unknowingly, a month had passed since the battle of the Second Crossing. The internal chaos had basically been settled thanks to Princess Gouyu's connections and charisma, as well as assistance from the other dukes.

Eastern Lu had fallen in the Long family rebellion, and his only son Eastern Lin had been saved by Jiang Chen. Eastern Lin naturally ascended to the throne, becoming the Eastern Kingdom's new king.

More clarity was also slowly imparted on the situation within the capital. Those vassals of the Duke of Soaring Dragon who deserved to be executed were executed, those who should be pruned were pruned, and those who should be marginalized were marginalized.

The Pill King Garden, for instance, a spirit medicine power that was a dependant of the duke, vanished utterly from the annals of the Eastern Kingdom. All of the members of the Pill King Garden were promptly executed and displayed publicly, with no exceptions granted.

As for the Hall of Healing, due to the fact that it had been at odds with the Duke of Soaring Dragon before, its position rose even higher with the incoming tide. They had been the foremost heavyweight of the kingdom in the market of spirit medicine to begin with. After this battle, their position once again rose even higher and further cemented their place as foremost heavyweight.

Morale was strong within the entire Hall of Healing and a sense of optimism permeated its halls.

However, the lord hallmaster Song Tianxing of the Hall of Healing couldn't find it within himself to be happy.

This was because the senior executives of the Hall had almost unanimously turned against their own side in the mess created by the Duke of Soaring Dragon and pointed their ire at the third hallmaster, Qiao Baishi. The direct consequences of such an act was Qiao Baishi's resignation letter.

There would be none of the three heaven-defying pills without Qiao Baishi. Without those three otherworldly pills, the orders that the Hall of Healing had accepted before would all be jokes in comparison.

Although they could cancel orders and return deposits, once a spirit medicine heavyweight like the Hall of Healing started returning deposits, this meant that they would face an unprecedented assault on their reputation and public perception.

Therefore, Song Tianxing couldn't be happy at all.

It looked like the royal family depended greatly on the Hall of Healing right now, but that was because the royal family had just weathered tremendous chaos and endured great losses. They needed the Hall's strength.

Speaking for themselves, if the Hall wanted to expand, they would still have to rely on spirit medicine and a variety of products.

Without Qiao Baishi's three spirit medicines, it would be almost impossible for the Hall of Healing to obtain greater expansion.

Song Tianxing regretted his actions deeply and what had transpired that night. Apart from a few of Qiao Baishi's diehard supporters, almost all the senior executives had condemned Qiao Baishi, and wanted to hand him over for the Duke of Soaring Dragon's ministrations.

Song Tianxing had also shown hesitation in that moment and hadn't firmly supported Qiao Baishi.

The act of placing one step wrong had resulted in all his steps being wrong.

Chapter 114: Self Satisfied Senior Executives of the Hall of Healing

Many of the senior executives of the Hall of Healing were excited by the royal family's high regard and were jubilant about sweeping away an opponent such as the Pill King Garden.

During a meeting between the senior executives, the fourth Hallmaster, Wang Li, spoke animatedly, "Lord Hallmaster, since the royal family has weathered a crisis, now is when they need us the most. Perhaps the position of our Hall will greatly increase once again. We should make use of this opportunity to expand our operations, and to open branches in every territory of the kingdom. Wherever there's a duke present, there should also be a branch of our Hall. In this regard, the Hall will both permeate and be deeply entangled throughout the entire country. Our income and status will all greatly increase."

Fourth Hallmaster Wang Li was a year or two younger than Qiao Baishi, and could be viewed as one of the future pillars of the Hall. His position had been similar to Qiao Baishi originally, and he'd even been in the running as a future Lord Hallmaster.

However, Qiao Baishi's astounding performances had continuously stifled Wang Li's ambitions, and gave him no room to give free rein to his abilities.

Now that Qiao Baishi was out of the picture, the position of Lord Hallmaster of the Hall of Healing was basically Wang Li's.

Therefore, Wang Li had become a bit jumped up lately — strutting around with the demeanor of the future leader a bit.

Many of the senior executives throughout the Hall completely bought Wang Li's act. They fawned over him, and curried favor with him both publicly and privately — giving off the air that they were gathering at his side.

Several of the elders added in their assenting remarks upon hearing

Wang Li's words.

"Hallmaster Wang is correct, our Hall should take advantage of this opportunity to expand and widen our influence to all the territories. There is indeed a great need to construct branches in all the duchies."

"Hallmaster Wang looks far ahead, and aims high with both vision and ambition." The Blue surnamed female elder had always been on bad terms with Qiao Baishi. She'd also been one of the most outspoken ones against Qiao Baishi last time.

"Unlike some people who have no respect for the other senior executives when they have a bit of accomplishment, it's actually a fortuitous happening for the Hall that someone like that has left."

Elder Blue was filled with resentment. Although Qiao Baishi had already left, her mouth was still without virtue, as she alternated between taunting and jeering at Qiao Baishi.

Although Qiao Baishi was no longer present, he still had two loyal supporters within the Hall. Elder Blue was even including his friends in her hatred.

These words were naturally abusing one person, while pointing at someone else.

Even the Second Hallmaster, Yue Qun, stroked his beard and chuckled, "Lord Hallmaster, our Hall has fallen upon quite a spot of luck this time. We should make use of this opportunity to expand."

Song Tianxing's face had darkened continuously as he'd allowed the chatter to go on around him in.

He was in an incredibly bad mood, and was very disheartened.

He didn't find the superficiality of human relationships odd. He hadn't even found it strange that Qiao Baishi had been scoffed at and mocked by these people.

What was odd, was that these people didn't have the slightest bit of sensitivity towards the matter of politics, and kept saying that they wanted to expand.

Had the Hall of Healing really never had the chance to expand their operations during the past hundreds of years? Why hadn't they expanded?

It was because it was a taboo area!

How long had it been since the matter between the Duke of Soaring Dragon? Had these people all already forgotten?

How would the royal family allow any power to expand without limits, or let any influence penetrate every territory within the kingdom in the future?

These were the daydreams of an idiot, and it could be said that they were looking for death.

It wouldn't be allowed, even if the Hall of Healing didn't have the power to command troops within its hands. If an entity had too much influence, it would be sure to conflict with royal authority as time went on.

The Duke of Soaring Dragon was a prime example. It would be strange indeed if the Eastern clan allowed any power to expand without limits after the case of Long Zhaofeng.

The sad thing was that none of these people could see such simple logic. Their minds were filled with enthusiasm and only wished to expand.

Seeing that Song Tianxing wasn't saying anything, the second hallmaster Yue Qun laughed, "Boss, everyone is very gung ho. Why don't you say a few words as well?"

Song Tianxing had a belly full of frustrations as he swept his gaze around coldly with a thunderous looking face. "I can understand that

all of you are in high spirits. I'll only speak of two matters today."

"First, I'd like to ask you all that, as the first duke beneath the heavens, why was the Duke of Soaring Dragon destroyed in the end?"

"Second, who can fill in the gaps after Qiao Baishi has left? Who amongst you has the ability to clean up the aftermath? I'll say this right here and now, that if anyone has the ability to fill in for Qiao Baishi, and can take care of the aftermath left in his wake, I'll make that person the next great Lord Hallmaster."

Song Tianxing spread out his hands after he spoke, "Why don't you discuss it amongst yourselves."

Upon seeing that Song Tianxing's reaction wasn't very pleased, the fervent atmosphere cooled down slightly.

Yue Qun squeezed out a smile and said, "It was a fluke that the Duke of Soaring Dragon was destroyed. Who would've thought that the million strong army would be subdued by the power of Jiang Chen alone?"

"Indeed. Perhaps the Duke of Soaring Dragon just didn't have the makings of an emperor in this lifetime."

"This situation truly is a bit bizarre. I thought that it would be the foregone conclusion for the Long family to conquer the kingdom. Who would've thought that the final outcome would be thus?"

"Haha, but this is a great thing for our Hall."

The senior executives were all quite at ease when they discussed the matters of the Long family. The blustering and aggressive manner that had been present when they were pointing fingers at Qiao Baishi, and when they were clamoring to hand him over to Long Zhaofeng, was completely absent.

However, Song Tianxing's brow grew even more furrowed when he heard this response.

He raised his eyebrows, and looked at the fourth Hallmaster Wang Li. “Number four, you take the floor. What understanding have you reached regarding the Duke of Soaring Dragon’s demise?”

Wang Li knew this was a test from the Lord Hallmaster, and didn’t dare easily dismiss the matter. He thought for a moment and then opened his mouth to say, “Both luck and reason played a role in the destruction of the Long family. On the other hand, this also demonstrates that with the Eastern family’s royal heritage of a few hundred years, their destiny is still stronger than the Long family’s. And, as the truth has illustrated, the Lord Hallmaster was correct in resolutely defending his stance. You possessed foresight in doing so.”

Wang Li conveniently kissed up to Song Tianxing as well. When everyone had wanted to hand over Qiao Baishi to Long Zhaofeng, and strike a compromise with the Long family, or even submit to them, in the end it had been Song Tianxing who’d prevailed over all dissenting views. He’d stoppered the mouths of those who wanted to bow down to the Long family after Elder Shun had spoken.

The truth had revealed that the action of not submitting to the Long family had been beyond wise and brilliant.

Otherwise, it would be an unknown whether or not the current Hall of Healing would be receiving the royal family’s favor.

After Wang Li had offered up this fulsome flattery, he naturally felt that he had responded quite aptly. However, Song Tianxing shook his head inwardly. This Wang Li didn’t measure up to Qiao Baishi alright — he paled far in comparison instead.

He had raised the first question to take these people down a peg or two, using the matter of the Long family to warn them not to always think of expanding.

Business could be expanded, but territory and influence could absolutely not be expanded.

It was a pity that no one grasped his intentions.

Suddenly, an elder sitting in a corner to the right raised his hand, "Lord Hallmaster, if I may say a word?"

The elder who had raised his hand was surnamed Ying, and was one of the few solid supporters that Qiao Baishi had left. He had been ostracized by the senior executives during this time, and was slowly being marginalized.

The others wore a faint smile upon seeing that he wished to speak. They had on looks of watching a good show, as if a funny joke was in front of them.

"Elder Ying, the lord hallmaster hasn't asked you. What are you trying to do by being so falsely proactive?" Elder Blue's words were laced with sarcasm.

"Elder Blue, if I recall correctly, you're also an elder, and your ranking isn't that much higher than mine. I hardly think that you have the right to point fingers and decide when I can or can't speak. I don't know what you're puffed up with importance about?" Elder Ying flicked a glance at Elder Blue as his voice was full of contempt.

"You... you... I'm not lowering my status by arguing with you." Elder Blue sat down huffily.

"Elder Ying, what valued opinions do you have? Please speak."

Song Tianxing thought fondly of old friendships, and knew that Elder Ying was one of Qiao Baishi's confidantes. His love for Qiao Baishi extended to his confidantes, and thus he also held a good view of Elder Ying.

"Lord Hallmaster, I'm more of a crude person, and so beg your pardon if I offend with my words." It looked like Elder Ying had much on his mind that he wanted to say.

"Speak freely whatever is on your mind. We're all colleagues here,

what offense could possibly be given? This is all for the future of the Hall." Song Tianxing set the tone.

"Alright, then I'll speak frankly. I feel that a key issue still hasn't been addressed in the midst of all this discussion to respond to the Lord Hallmaster's question regarding the Duke of Soaring Dragon: Why did the Duke of Soaring Dragon collapse? Simple — his influence and power threatened his master!"

"The Long family has operated painstakingly these years, in order to have a finger in many pies. They had a foothold in many duchies. In this way, the Long family had a multitude of accomplices, and their influence was wide ranging. The final result was that their influence exceeded the royal family's, and ignited this catastrophe."

Elder Ying didn't pause as he continued, "All of you said earlier that you wanted to make use of this opportunity to build branches of the Hall in all sorts of ducal territories. What I want to say, is that this kind of blind optimism is not only the wrong choice for the future of the Hall of Healing, but is courting death at the heart of it. This is pushing the Hall into the abyss of destruction."

Song Tianxing's eyes abruptly lit up when Elder Ying finished. The former had been very disappointed prior because no one had comprehended this point.

It would seem that Elder Ying was a wise person. The saying that things, and people, of the same kind came together, did indeed hold true. Elder Ying was close to Qiao Baishi. It would seem that he had true skill and genuine knowledge.

"If the Hall was to extend our fingers to every territory, then I believe that the day the royal family were to move against the Hall wouldn't be too far off. The Long family is a lesson of a failed predecessor. Our Hall has a long and illustrious history, and many wise men have numbered amongst the generations of forefathers. Wouldn't they have wanted to expand as well? To build a branch in every duchy? Why haven't they done so? Because they're smart people. They knew

that business was just business. They avoided stirring up unnecessary trouble, and didn't attempt to increase their influence to the point that it eclipsed the royal family's. This isn't expansion — this is seeking death!"

Elder Ying laughed coldly as he exhaled a long breath when he finished speaking. It was as if he had vented all the ill humor he had accumulated during this time in one go.

He sat down firmly, "This is what I wanted to say, pardon me if I've given offense."

It could be seen that Elder Ying had thought things through, and wasn't afraid of giving offense now. He was being marginalized anyway, why continue to take the blows lying down? He would say whatever he wanted, why would he have qualms of offending others?

One had to say, although he hadn't left any considerations of face in his words, they opened the ears of the deaf, and the eyes of the blind. Even if the senior executives present were isolating him, consciously or unconsciously, they all had to admit that these words had pointed out a core issue that they hadn't thought of.

Truly, the Duke of Soaring Dragon was an example of a failed predecessor.

However, the Fourth Hallmaster Wang Li had an angrily darkened face. The expansion idea had been his, and Elder Ying's words were undoubtedly a slap to his face.

"Elder Ying, your words are a bit of an exaggeration. You're raising an alarm just to scare people." Wang Li was a bit unhappy.

Chapter 115: The Danger Behind Self Satisfaction

Elder Ying had already taken a seat and had closed his eyes. He didn't intend to speak any further. When he heard Wang Li's interrogative words, his anger boiled again.

Elder Ying rolled his eyes, "What 'raising an alarm to scare people'? I don't think I've exaggerated anywhere."

Wang Li spoke loudly, "It's true that the Long family held the right to move troops, and that their influence threatened their masters. But our Hall is only conducting business. We seek only profit, not power. How can we be lumped in with the Long family business?"

"Hahaha..." Elder Ying laughed loudly. "Those of the Eastern clan need to be the ones to believe your words. It's not difficult for you to persuade me and the ardently fervorous of the Hall — however, it would be quite hard for you to persuade the royal family."

Elder Ying's words made a great deal of sense. After the events of the Long family, the royal family would surely be as if a bird startled by the merest twang of a bow string. They absolutely wouldn't allow a second Long family to appear.

"Our Hall has always had a good reputation, how could the royal family be unaware of that?" Wang Li said coldly.

"Our reputation has indeed been good. And that's because our Hall has never expanded to all the duchies, and hasn't extended our grasp too far. This was in turn due to the fact that our Hall knew our place, and when to retreat and advance. We didn't expand blindly. If we expand blindly in the future, only the heavens will know what will become of our reputation. Besides, isn't it the pure whim of the person in charge that decides whether or not we're truly just doing business? If the person with control over the Hall of Healing had the slightest bit of ambition, and made a few moves in the dark... it might even be easier for them to form a power like the Long family

than it was for the originals.”

“Bullshit. You’re making evil arbitrary assumptions. This is throwing dirt onto your own face, Elder Ying! Are you an elder of the Hall anymore?” Wang Li was infuriated.

Elder Blue also screamed shrilly, “Some people love to gain notoriety by making shocking statements — like master, like slave. You’re all cut from the same cloth.”

Elder Blue’s crosshairs had once again been locked onto Qiao Baishi.

Elder Ying was enraged as he slammed his hand down onto the table. “You with the Blue surname, I’ve tolerated you for more than a day or two now. Old woman, you’ve finally laid things out clearly. What master, what slave?! You go around being bitterly sarcastic everyday, as if afraid that no one would know that your tongue is shaped like a viper’s.”

“Ying Wuyou, don’t you put up a tough front with me! You’re Qiao Baishi’s slave alright. You’ve said so much only because you’re jealous of the Fourth Hallmaster — jealous that he’s the man of the hour — jealous that he replaced your master’s position!” Elder Blue simply decided to lay it all out.

Ying Wuyou nodded his head savagely. “Alright, good. Very good. Since we’ve reached this point, let’s see what your downfall is. If our future is dependent on sheer mediocrity like you, then the foundation of the Hall, built up over hundreds of years, will surely be destroyed within twenty years! Me, jealous? What is there to be jealous of from someone who can’t even see the greater picture? You’re right, I’m Qiao Baishi’s friend, and his diehard supporter. This isn’t because of personal relationships, but because I think highly of his character and admire his skills. Unlike you, who defends those who belong to your faction alone, and attack others who don’t. You’re a tuft of grass that’s easily swayed by the wind. If the Lord Hallmaster had listened to you last time, and bowed down to the Long family, then you wouldn’t even have the chance to be standing

here today or to be flapping your lips.”

Ying Wuyou turned to Song Tianxing and said resolutely, “Since these words have already been spoken, I shall speak clearly Lord Hallmaster. I also have an answer to your second question. Throughout this vast Hall, no one can fill in the missing gap made by Qiao Baishi. No one will be able to clean up the aftermath, unless Qiao Baishi returns! It’s ludicrous that these people sit here and speak with confidence and composure, but are unaware that the Hall is facing a monumental crisis.”

“Crisis? Ying Wuyou, stop being an alarmist and crying wolf! Will our Hall really fall to pieces without Qiao Baishi?” The Second Hallmaster Yue Qun was also displeased as he hectored.

Elder Blue jeered, “So the saying that one fan is enough to negate the criticism of ten is true. Ying Wuyou, you’re truly one of Qiao Baishi’s brainless fanboys. You really place a high importance on Qiao Baishi. Is it such that the Lord Hallmaster isn’t as important as Qiao Baishi in your heart?”

One had to say that this woman had the gift of gab, and was quite skilled at driving a wedge between people.

However, as the Lord Hallmaster, how would Song Tianxing buy this act? He spoke with a darkened face, “Cut out the nonsense. Let’s discuss the second question since Elder Ying has mentioned it.”

Ying Wuyou smiled faintly, “Lord Hallmaster, I don’t have much to discuss. I’ve already said that no one can replace Qiao Baishi. I feel that a weight has been taken off my shoulders now that I’ve said my piece. To be frank, I had planned on resigning after today. The future of the Hall has nothing to do with me anyways, but the Hall has cultivated me since I was young, and I have great affection for the Hall. I said those words not because of a personal grudge, but because I am truly thinking on behalf of the future of the Hall. Lord Hallmaster, you will be the one to decide how the Hall will proceed. However, I want to say that Wang Li isn’t a qualified successor, and

that a woman as narrow minded as Elder Blue, who depends on selling her coquettish charms and nepotism, is even more unsuitable to remain in the position of an elder. The more of these people there are, the narrower the future of the Hall's path will become."

Resignation? Another senior executive was leaving?

Apart from Wang Li's faction, there were still quite a few neutral factions within the Hall. They were greatly surprised when they heard that Ying Wuyou was also resigning, and also vaguely felt that this was inappropriate.

Why was it that people were leaving one after another during a time that the Hall was growing more prosperous everyday?

Could it be that there really was something wrong with the Hall?

"Resignation? Haha, why don't you say it's that you're no longer able to carry on within your position?" Elder Blue laughed coldly. "Without your master Qiao Baishi supporting you, you don't have any further place within the Hall, right? By raising a false alarm, you want to sow some confusion in the Hall before you depart, don't you?"

Ying Wuyou laughed coldly and his gaze was completely fearless, as he swept it in an open and honest way across everyone assembled. "Everyone, I, Ying Wuyou, have a clear conscience. It's a bit boring flapping my lips at this woman. I'll only say one final thing, and that that's with Qiao Baishi's departure, the three medicinal pills will also halt production. All the orders that we've received will be cancelled, and our Hall's reputation will also be heavily impacted. Under these circumstances, these people only think of how to expand our influence, without contemplating how to clean up such a mess. Are they the brainless ones, or am I just a worrywart?"

Ying Wuyou was about to leave, and had no reservations about anything. He'd put all his cards out on the table, and caused absolute silence to prevail.

Song Tianxing's most worrying concern had finally been raised by Ying Wuyou.

"What? You mean the Heavenly Karma Pill, Vast Ocean Pill, and One Buddha Powder? Does the Lord Hallmaster not know their recipes?"

"Qiao Baishi played this hand? This really is too..."

"No way? All those orders belong to the various influential powers of the kingdom. None of them are good targets to offend."

"Lord Hallmaster, is this true? This... isn't this too ridiculous?"

Song Tianxing sighed lightly, "This is why I raised the second question. Qiao Baishi did indeed have exclusive knowledge of the three pill recipes. I didn't have a hand in this either."

Everyone in the Hall was stunned. They had always viewed Qiao Baishi as someone the Lord Hallmaster had groomed and mentored.

Since Qiao Baishi was in charge of refining these three pill recipes, then as someone behind the scenes, the Lord Hallmaster should have naturally known them as well.

This was a familiar, accustomed train of thought.

However, Ying Wuyou's words had cruelly punctured their matter-of-factness and pierced their daydreams.

Even the Lord Hallmaster hadn't grasped the three spirit medicines.

This was without a doubt, a thunderclap from a blue sky.

Those aforementioned expansions in territory and scale, had been built on the foundation of these three pill medicines. Without these three pill medicines, what difference was there between the Hall now and what it'd been like previously? On what basis, and with what income, did they have for expansion?

They were dumbfounded. Even Wang Li was a bit dumbfounded.

Yue Qun was also flabbergasted as he murmured to himself, "Lord Hallmaster, wasn't this contract signed with the young duke of Jiang Han? As long as we continue our partnership with the young duke Jiang..."

Song Tianxing laughed wryly, "Continue our partnership with young duke Jiang? That's easy to answer. Haven't you seen that the Jiang family's actions right now are quite strange? These actions are an obvious precursor to fading out of the Eastern Kingdom."

"Indeed. I heard that the Eastern clan wanted to erect four new great dukes, and nominated the Jiang family as the first duke, but were respectfully declined by the Jiang family."

"This Jiang family could destroy the Duke of Soaring Dragon — why would they pay any attention to the title of the first duke? Can it be that the Jiang family is harboring intentions of rebellion?"

Song Tianxing was in an emotional turmoil as he spread out his hands, "Stop chasing the wind and clutching at shadows. The Jiang family's movements are to avoid following in the Long family's footsteps, and to avoid alarming the sovereign with their influence. Besides, the Jiang family valued our Hall because of Qiao Baishi."

Elder Blue felt a bit put out when she thought of Jiang Chen. He'd given her no face at all the first time he'd come to the Hall of the Healing.

Later on, Elder Blue had pinched her nose and suffered through things for the sake of cooperation.

When she heard Song Tianxing's words, she hurriedly said, "We signed a contract. If the Jiang family rips up the contract, then we can sue them for damages!"

Ying Wuyou snorted with cold laughter and felt that this Elder Blue was seriously idiotic. The Hall of Healing had begged Jiang Chen to sign the contract. Would there truly be anything within the contract

that would give the Hall an opening to sue with?

When begging someone to sign a contract, would they dig a trap for themselves? Of course they'd be able to leave whenever they wanted to. Sue? Damages? This woman was more than typically stupid.

Yue Qun's old face was also struck dumb as he squeezed out a smile. "It looks like the crux of the matter lies with the young duke of Jiang Han. We'll have to curry some favor with the Jiang family."

Song Tianxing laughed dejectedly. Curry favor with the Jiang family? They'd have to give you the opportunity first. If the Jiang family had truly cared about this partnership, wouldn't they've sent a representative over sometime during the one month that had passed?

The Jiang family hadn't even sent a servant. This indicated that the Jiang family was no longer interested in this partnership at all.

"Lord Hallmaster, why don't we send someone to the Jiang Han territory?" Wang Li asked probingly.

"Send someone? Are you willing to go?" Song Tianxing asked.

Wang Li puffed his chest out. "Human effort can achieve anything. Although this mission is a bit difficult, I am willing to try for the future of the Hall."

Determination was good, and Song Tianxing didn't have the heart to deny him. He was just about to agree, when Ying Wuyou smiled faintly off on the side. "If the Fourth Hallmaster meets Qiao Baishi on this trip, how will you react?"

"Qiao Baishi?" Everyone was greatly startled. Qiao Baishi's movements had been uncertain after he'd left. Could it be that he'd flocked to the Jiang Han banner?

Even Song Tianxing was a bit surprised.

“Wuyou, you mean that Qiao Baishi is in Jiang Han territory?” Song Tianxing asked gravely.

“Indeed. He once told me, before he resigned, that if he were to leave the Hall, he would only seek out Jiang Chen, and wouldn't go anywhere else.” Ying Wuyou sighed lightly.

“This...” Everyone was astounded and speechless.

If Qiao Baishi was in the Jiang Han territory, then this meant that he had strong relations with Jiang Chen. If the Hall sent anyone at this moment, then they would be inviting humiliation on themselves!

Chapter 116: The Mysterious Grandfather and Granddaughter Duo

Even Second Hallmaster Yue Qun was shocked senseless with this information.

“Qiao Baishi has such a solid relationship with Jiang Chen?”

Song Tianxing also hadn't expected this twist. He had trained Qiao Baishi from the start and knew of Qiao Baishi's feelings for the Hall.

That day when all of the senior executives were convening, almost everyone had wanted to hand over Qiao Baishi to the Long family. This had truly and deeply wounded Qiao Baishi's feelings and made him feel despair.

Except, Song Tianxing hadn't reckoned that Qiao Baishi would've thrown himself to the mercy of Jiang Chen, the son of a duke.

Elder Blue however, added fuel to the flames and mocked, “This was well within expectations. Qiao Baishi has long since been harboring thoughts of helping outsiders. I'm not surprised at all that he flocked to Jiang Chen's banner. I just wonder how many secrets of the Hall did he take with him?”

Song Tianxing was thoroughly enraged when he heard these words. “Elder Blue, I command you to shut up! Do you have the bearing of an elder at all? Must you be so diametrically opposed to someone who's already left? If you have the spare time to jeer at someone who's already left, why don't you spend it on contemplating how to prolong our cooperation with the Jiang family?”

“I...” Elder Blue had been admonished but didn't dare to retort a single word. The dignity of the Lord Hallmaster was present. Although he was normally peaceful and amiable, his presence was quite frightening when his temper was roused.

“I have no wish to listen to anymore useless blather. I still have those same words. Whoever can further our cooperation with the Jiang

family will be the next Lord Hallmaster. All other words are empty hot air and I have no desire to listen to them.”

Song Tianxing swept his gaze in a circle. “Which one of you is willing to make a trip to the Jiang Han territory?”

The person who’d originally put himself forward, Wang Li, involuntarily shrank back when Song Tianxing’s gaze swept over him. He wanted to go, but knew that it would be a futile effort since Qiao Baishi was there. There would be no way that the partnership could be continued and he may even end up with a faceful of dust from Qiao Baishi’s ridicule.

Elder Blue also ducked her reddened face and didn’t dare to even respond when swept by Song Tianxing’s gaze. She had even less of a right to speak.

It was an unknown factor if she’d even be able to make it back alive if she went to the Jiang Han territory.

“Number two, how about you make a trip?” Song Tianxing looked at Yue Qun.

Yue Qun’s old face flushed as he scratched the back of his head. “Boss, I’m an old man unskilled at social maneuvering. Not to mention that I’m old and have no common language with youngsters. It would look odd no matter what if I went to find Jiang Chen. Would he even be willing to receive an old man like me?”

All the other senior executives hung their heads and cast their eyes downwards when Song Tianxing’s gaze traveled by. No one stepped forward to volunteer.

Song Tianxing sighed lightly and shook his head. Now that things had gotten to this point, would he really have to make a personal trip ?

When he saw Ying Wuyou, Song Tianxing’s eyes suddenly brightened. “Wuyou, why don’t you make the trip to the Jiang Han

territory on behalf of the Hall?"

"Lord Hallmaster, I've already decided to resign. Please look elsewhere to resolve this matter. Besides, I also think that with the Hall's current situation, the result would be the same even if the Lord Hallmaster himself made a personal trip. It's a foregone conclusion that you will return empty-handed."

Wuyou felt like he'd vented a breath of ill will when he saw the crowd of senior executives standing around with their heads down. He felt damn good inside. Weren't you guys great at adding insult to injury? Weren't you just ostracizing Qiao Baishi?

Without Qiao Baishi, you can't do anything at all.

Now what? Don't wear a long face everyone!

It wasn't that Ying Wuyou was delighting in the mishaps of others, but that he felt vindicated and pleased. Previously, these people had shown no mercy when attacking Qiao Baishi.

And look at things now. They weren't able to handle anything without begging for Qiao Baishi.

Yue Qun was still a bit unwilling to accept things. "Wuyou, do you think that the young duke Jiang Chen would really forgo a partnership with the Hall just because of Qiao Baishi? Qiao Baishi is alright, but does he really have so much charisma as to affect the the young duke Jiang's decisions?"

Ying Wuyou chuckled. "I don't know whether or not Qiao Baishi has that much charisma, but I know one thing. Every time something has happened to the Jiang family, Qiao Baishi was the first person they called upon. When the Duke of Jiang Han, Jiang Feng, was ambushed, Qiao Baishi was the one who was called to cure him. When the Jiang family was retreating, they concealed their tracks through Qiao Baishi's efforts. You tell me whether or not the Jiang family values Qiao Baishi?"

Yue Qun laughed wryly, "Well this is absurd. Do we really have to invite Qiao Baishi back?"

Yue Qun felt even his own face burn when he said this. When he had admonished Qiao Baishi, he hadn't left any face for the other party.

Inviting Qiao Baishi to return — only someone with as thick a face as him was able to say something like this.

The others didn't even have the courage to suggest this, particularly Elder Blue. When she heard these words, her thickly done up face changed to a pale white.

"Invite Qiao Baishi back? Will our Hall really die without him?" Elder Blue couldn't help but say.

"If you can, then why don't you go?" Yue Qun lost his temper.

Song Tianxing sighed. "Wuyou, you were just now speaking in anger when you wanted to resign. How about this, you make a trip to the Jiang family. If you can convince the Jiang family, then you'll directly be promoted to Third Hallmaster."

All the others couldn't do it if they went. Ying Wuyou was good friends with Qiao Baishi. They had a chance only if he went.

A light like that of a viper's shot out from Wang Li's eyes when he heard this.

"Lord Hallmaster, this isn't fair! A lowly ranked elder rising to the position of Third Hallmaster all of a sudden. This... this isn't fair. I can't accept it!"

Wang Li felt extremely upset as he raised a hue and cry.

Song Tianxing said coldly, "If you can succeed, I'll directly name you the next Lord Hallmaster. Can you do it?"

Wang Li grit his teeth and his two eyes became bloodshot. He wanted to agree, but knew very well that he didn't have the ability to.

Ying Wuyou spread out his hands. "Lord Hallmaster, y'all dont need to keep bickering over me. I will go to the Jiang Han territory, but to visit an old friend. The matters of the Hall have nothing to do with me. All of you... can do as you see fit."

Ying Wuyou placed his elder medallion lightly on the table after he'd finished speaking, and turned to float away. Ying Wuyou had seen through everything and knew that there was no place for him within the endless internal strife within the Hall.

As long as people like Yue Qun, Wang Li, and Elder blue were present, even if he could complete this mission, his future prospects would also be dim.

Therefore, as opposed to suffering humiliation and disgrace from them, he might as well leave freely and dashing!

Song Tianxing's mouth moved slightly, but he said nothing. He suddenly felt completely listless and a supreme lack of interest. He waved his hands and only said, "Dismissed."

...

Elder Shun and the mysterious girl Huang'er were respectively sitting and standing within a secret chamber of the Hall. They had clearly heard all the happenings during the senior executives convention.

"This great building is about to collapse. Song Tianxing's personality and methods are all fine, but it's a pity that he lacks that pivotal bit of presence in a crucial moment." Elder Shun sighed lightly.

The young girl called Huang'er was wearing a pale green outfit as she stood by the window, idly toying with a few flowers and grass. Her clear eyes appeared to be quite serious and her whole being seemed like it was part of a painting.

"Elder Shun, haven't you not cared about the matters of the Hall before?"

Elder Shun chuckled, "Well, after all, as we've stayed here for quite a period of time, I've still paid some attention. It looks like we're going to leave now."

"Leave?" Huang'er started.

"Mm, leave." Elder Shun nodded decisively. "Huang'er, what do you say to us heading for the Jiang Han territory, or going somewhere else?"

"Head for Jiang Han territory?" Huang'ers slender arms paused slightly as a trace of levity flashed across her goddess-like features. "Elder Shun, are you truly paying that much attention to that Jiang Chen?"

"Haha, Huang'er you're correct. I like that Jiang Chen very much. If this wasn't the case, why else would I have lent him a helping hand that day in the Second Crossing?"

Huang'er smiled faintly as she played with the flowers and grass, not saying anything.

"Huang'er, I have to say, a great power was concealed within Jiang Chen's body during that battle of the Second Crossing. It was a great enough power that moved even an old man like me. The Swordbird army followed his commands to cover the skies and blot out the sun, triggering countless changes in the heavens. All those scenes were truly awe inspiring."

"Furthermore, those three spirit dao disciples that the Purple Sun Sect sent out one after another — one died and one was injured. If it wasn't for the last one being too strong, I likely wouldn't even have needed to make a move. Jiang Chen refused to submit even under those circumstances. That refusal to admit defeat is quite up my alley."

Elder Shun smiled as he spoke. He knew that there was no way that Huang'er would be interested in something like this. Except, they had spent so much time cooped up in a small place like the Eastern Kingdom that there were truly too few things that was worthy of being discussed.

At least there was that little bit of uniqueness about Jiang Chen that he could chatter on about.

The most important thing was that Elder Shun stubbornly felt that the divination signs that old man Qian Ji had seen were that Huang'er's sickness would have the chance of finding a cure within the Eastern Kingdom. Elder Shun even more stubbornly felt that some hints of this chance seemed to be related to Jiang Chen.

Even if it was the slightest of hopes, it was enough to tempt Elder Shun.

After all, with his identity as the ordinary son of a duke, Jiang Chen's recent string of heaven-defying performances had far outstripped the limits of his identity.

In the years that he'd spent in the Eastern Kingdom, Elder Shun had paid attention to everything, and the only thing that even vaguely surprised him was Jiang Chen's performance.

Who else was there, apart from him?

Long Juxue? An azure phoenix constitution?

In Elder Shun's eyes, a so-called innate constitution was just that. The level of a sect like the Purple Sun Sect couldn't even provoke any acknowledgement from Elder Shun.

If it hadn't been for Elder Shun valuing his identity, he could have turned Chu Xinghan and the others into dust with a flick of his fingers that day in front of the Second Crossing.

He hadn't done so because he valued his own being and didn't wish

to engage in a dispute with his juniors. He also didn't want to give too many hints to Jiang Chen and allow Jiang Chen to feel like he had a patron behind him.

He wanted to further observe Jiang Chen and see just how much potential he possessed, and how he would develop with his every step.

If he really was a promising person, Elder Shun didn't mind continuing to keep an eye on him. If it was just a brief appearance like the morning dew, Elder Shun could extract himself from the situation at any time and ignore Jiang Chen, allowing him to live and die as he would.

These were Elder Shun's most truthful thoughts.

He wouldn't give up as long as there was a single trace of hope. But, if he discovered that this hope was false, then Elder Shun obviously wouldn't spend too much time on it.

After all, the affairs and people of the Eastern Kingdom were on a level too low for excess attention from Elder Shun.

If it wasn't for Huang'er's illness, Elder Shun probably would have never even set foot onto such a common kingdom in the next ten thousand years.

Chapter 117: Jiang Chen Comprehending Dao

Jiang Han territory, River Wave City.

Ever since the Jiang father and son pair had returned, the atmosphere of the entire Jiang Family had become quite fervent. All of the Jiang family sons and disciples were united in a display of celebration that had been never seen before. Never had they been more enthusiastic.

The battle of the Second Crossing had already been revised into countless versions and become a legendary story within the Jiang Han territory.

The same theme permeated through the multitude of versions, and that was that the young duke had displayed an invincible martial prowess and stemmed the tide by himself, engaging the million strong Long family army in a fierce battle in front of the Second Crossing!

He had killed Long Zhaofeng, annihilated the Long family accomplices, and terrorized the million strong army. He had turned back the tides of darkness by himself and had lent a supporting hand to the Eastern clan in their time of crisis.

Even the Duke of Jiang Han, Jiang Feng, had to admit that, at this moment, the reputation of his son far outstripped his in the Jiang Han territory by now.

Jiang Feng naturally wouldn't be jealous of something like this. Every father had great ambitions for his son, and the only person that every man could accept as being stronger than himself was his own son.

Being surpassed by his son was the pride and joy of every man.

Of the ten major tribes of the Jiang Han territory, the Redbud Tribe had been annihilated and was now under the sway of Jiang Tong's

son, Jiang Yu.

The other nine tribes had completely submitted and would send someone over to the River Wave City every two or three days to express their stance, with every one of them being docilely obedient.

This was no wonder. If even the renowned Duke of Soaring Dragon had been annihilated with a flip of hand, would they, small tribes, dare to rise in mutiny?

The small thoughts and plots they had previously hatched were all quietly buried in the face of the truth.

The Jiang father and son pair were the earth and sky of the Jiang Han territory now!

Even if the duo wanted to raise troops, rebel, replace the Eastern clan, and rule over the entire kingdom, these people would still go with the flow and assent.

In their eyes, the royal family was currently in decline and had a million things to attend to. Even if Eastern Lin had ascended the throne, the royal family still wouldn't be able to rise again without more than ten years of recuperation and strength building.

The Jiang family, on the other hand, was like the sun at high noon and inspired great awe throughout the country. If they were to replace the Eastern clan now, it was more than highly likely that no duke or family would dare to resist or speak out otherwise.

However, it seemed that the Jiang father and son pair had no thoughts in this regard at all. They soundly rejected all of the various rewards and appointments from the Eastern royals, not to mention the idea of raising an army to march against the Eastern clan.

Jiang Chen had thrown the medallion of the dukedom back to Eastern Lu that day and had expressed words that the Jiang family was cutting off all relations with the royal family and would no longer listen to any of the Eastern clan's commands.

Even if Eastern Lin's ascension had been due to the efforts of the Jiang family, they still had no intention of accepting bequeathments of rewards.

The title of first duke beneath the heavens had also been rejected by the Jiang father and son pair.

It was a good thing that the Eastern clan also recognized that they had no power to change the Jiang family's attitude. They would have been overjoyed if the Jiang family was willing to accept their rewards. They also wouldn't dare force them to accept either if the Jiang family was unwilling to.

Jiang Feng was taking care of some matters in the manor one day when the Duke of Jinshan and the Duke of Hubing suddenly came to visit.

The Duke of Jinshan and the Duke of Hubing were Jiang Feng's best friends when he was the Duke of Jiang Han, and they had very deep and strong relationships. In the conflict against the Long family, these two families had loyally stayed at the Jiang family's side, even at all costs.

Although that had also been a function of the greater picture at that time, the relationships between the three families still ran deep.

"Heh heh, my two wise younger brothers have come to visit me. I, Jiang Feng, no longer hold any government post. Will my two wise younger brothers mind?" Jiang Feng joked.

"Brother Jiang, one is allowed to be carefree when not holding a government post. I rather admire your carefree days." The Duke of Jinshan sighed.

The Duke of Hubing also laughed. "To be honest, the Duke of Jinshan and I only have our accomplishments today due to borrowing brother Jiang's influence. We are ashamed, ashamed."

"Haha, we're all brothers here, don't be an outsider. Come on inside."

Jiang Feng laughed uproariously and was still quite satisfied with these two best friends. He was quite happy for them.

The kingdom had undergone great turmoil and these two families had grasped this chance to recruit quite a few talents. Their strength had abruptly surged forward and each had made use of the Jiang family's influence to become one of the new four great dukes.

"Brother Jiang, I've heard that the royal family has the inclination to bestow upon the Jiang family the title of first duke beneath the heavens. However, I don't understand as to why brother Jiang has turned this down? We have all toiled away for the greater portion of our lives and have finally reached this point. This should be the time when we're working together in tandem to make our fortunes." The Duke of Jinshan asked.

The Duke of Hubing also nodded. "If anyone else sat in the position of first duke, I and the Duke of Jinshan would be the first to find this unacceptable. Who else is qualified to be the first duke apart from the Jiang family?"

Jiang Feng smiled faintly. "Two wise younger brothers, did Eastern Lin send you?"

The Duke of Jinshan and Hubing both smiled and nodded.

"Brother Jiang, what plans does the Jiang family have now? We hope you reveal a few hints for us. You also know that there's a general feeling of insecurity within the kingdom since you haven't spoken. No one is sure of anything."

Jiang Feng smiled faintly, "My Jiang family will no longer involve ourselves in the power struggles of the Eastern Kingdom from henceforth on. You can go back and tell Eastern Lin that he can be at ease in being king. He doesn't need to worry that the Jiang family will mimic the Long family. To speak with great impudence, if we had the intentions to, we needn't have waited until now."

The Duke of Jinshan nodded, "Brother Jiang indeed makes a great deal of sense. His Majesty isn't worried about this."

"Alright, your foolish brother has said all that needs to be said. From this moment on, us brothers will only talk about old times and not of the matters of court."

"Haha, brother Jiang, no rush. We've been entrusted with yet another matter."

"What is it?"

"This is what has happened. The Lord Hallmaster Song Tianxing of the Hall of Healing set out to host a banquet and treated us brothers a few days ago. He wants to bring some people to visit brother Jiang, but is afraid of disturbing you. Therefore, he's asked us two to come ask if brother Jiang has the free time and desire to see them?"

The Duke of Jinshan actually hadn't wanted to do this favor, but unfortunately the Hall of Healing still had a great reputation and status. He hadn't wanted to offend them either.

Not to mention Song Tianxing had actually humbled himself quite a lot this time, feting them with food and wine, and also giving them presents and pills. This made them unable to deny this favor and brush his face aside.

"Song Tianxing?" Jiang Feng started slightly. "They probably wish to see Chen'er?"

The Duke of Jinshan hastened to nod his head. "Yes yes, they wish to visit wise nephew Jiang Chen and actually urged our two brats to come speak on their behalf. However, those two kids were quite devious and only concerned themselves with rejecting the request, causing us two old fellows to come here and ask brother Jiang with a thick skin."

Jiang Feng didn't say anything and set down the cup in his hand. "I'm not at liberty to decide Chen'er's matters for him. He's also been in

closed door cultivation for half a month and probably won't emerge any time soon. The Hall of Healing entourage has probably already reached River Wave City?"

"Yes, they've all arrived and have taken up lodgings within the inns. They seem to be quite sincere. If wise nephew Jiang Chen is in closed door cultivation, it should be fine to have them wait for a while."

"Since this is the case, then let's have them wait. To be honest, I'm not too sure when Chen'er will emerge either." Jiang Feng spoke the truth.

The Duke of Jinshan and the Duke of Hubing both smiled and nodded. They had a sense of being unable to fully grasp the Jiang father and son pair. Although they had gone through life and death together, now that things had developed to this step, they discovered that many things were no longer as easy-going as before.

Although Jiang Feng was just a civilian now, and they were powerful, noble dukes, in front of Jiang Feng, it rather seemed that they were the ordinary people, and that he was the powerful, noble duke instead.

Having participated in the battle of the Second Crossing and witnessing Jiang Chen's miracles, even if dukes such as them, who had seen great happenings, wanted to chip away at Jiang Chen's eye popping performance, it would be impossible to do so.

Therefore, their current cautious reservation was a given.

...

The current Jiang Chen had already been behind closed doors for half a month. He had continuously explored and adjusted his method of training after breaking through to eleven meridians true qi previously.

"It's said that there are twelve meridians true qi. Why do all

practitioners halt at eleven meridians true qi? Why is it that no one tries for spirit dao only after achieving twelve meridians?"

Jiang Chen had slowly felt a trace of a profound theory after half a month of exploration and comprehension.

This wasn't a matter of potential, but a problem with the laws of training within this world.

The so-called twelve meridians true qi was actually stopped at eleven meridians true qi. The missing meridian was like the last number that had gone flying away.

The missing "one" was all-inclusive and covered all the phenomena of the universe.

This "one" was the difference between a minor way and a major way.

In actuality, this "one" hadn't gone missing for no reason. It was just that this "one" had transformed into infinite possibilities.

This meant that boundless possibilities and phenomena existed between the true qi realm and the spirit dao realm.

Some people laboriously pursued perfection with regards to this "one", but could never find fulfillment.

Some people would suddenly comprehend this "one", and break out of their cocoon, becoming a butterfly and ascending into the spirit dao.

This "one" was the bridge between the true qi realm and the spirit dao.

You were unable to see or touch this bridge.

If you could make it across, you would set foot into the infinite great dao and enjoy a lifespan of hundreds of thousands of years.

If you couldn't make it across, at the end of the day, you would still

be a mortal, having failed in escaping the abyss of the mundane.

“Laughable. Pitiful. The practitioners of this world all think that twelve meridians true qi is a realm. This is an error of knowledge and a true obstacle in martial learning. This is a problem that not even potential can resolve.”

If it hadn't been for the memories of his past life and if Jiang Chen hadn't been one of the leading authorities in research, he likely wouldn't have comprehended this point either.

In actuality, once you comprehended the final “one”, that meant that you'd already entered “twelve meridians true qi” and had completed yourself to perfection. You had already set foot on the bridge.

This “one”, narrowly speaking, was indeed “twelve meridians true qi”. But speaking from the perspective of martial dao meaning, this was a bridge of martial dao – the separation between the heaven and earth that was the mortal and spirit realm.

The bridge was different to different people.

The bridge has ceaseless possibilities for different people.

Jiang Chen had a feeling of sudden enlightenment when he grasped this point. At the end of the day, the “one” was used to mould his inner self. It was a kind of settling of the mundane martial dao, a type of ascension for the common martial dao, and a farewell ceremony for pursuing a higher level of life.

To speak even more frankly, it was establishing the final foundation for entering spirit dao.

Finally, whether you were eleven meridians true qi or twelve meridians true qi, the process of transmuting true qi to spirit qi was to transmute all your true qi into one dantian, one spirit ocean.

This spirit ocean was the true goal of a true qi realm expert.

Therefore, those experts stubbornly searching for “twelve meridians true qi” would either fail in the end, or realize that they’ve lost their way and would turn back to assail the spirit dao.

This was because twelve meridians true qi was a false theory. It was a type of true meaning of martial dao, a type of inspiration from martial dao.

Chapter 118: Jiang Chen Emerges from Training

The air of depression that had been left behind from the great battle had been swept cleanly away.

What did the successes and failures of a single moment matter?

Experiencing life and death was a commonplace matter on the path of the martial dao. If one were to brood on momentary setbacks, how would one face the greater waves and winds in the future? How would one overcome the obstacles that would crop up in their travels?

Enlightenment on the path of martial dao happened to be the most ideal way to triumph over these random thoughts, as well as to sweep away internal demons. This was why half the path of martial dao lay in training, while the other half lay in meditation.

Meditation could help one understand theory, sweep away internal demons, and bring about various sorts of instantaneous enlightenment. This kind of instantaneous enlightenment was most likely a sort of comprehension of a martial arts technique, but could possibly be comprehending some form of knowledge.

After Jiang Chen had resolved his questions regarding “twelve meridians true qi”, his obstacles in knowledge of the true qi realm were all swept away.

This was to say, that he could singlemindedly assail the path of spirit dao now.

However, Jiang Chen was in no rush. With his familiarity with martial dao training, he knew that assailing spirit dao wasn't the hard part. The difficulty in this laid in how wide and how far the path of spirit dao could be expanded.

If the martial dao and the human body were a patch of earth, then spirit dao and spirit power were the seedlings that grew on the

human body.

The power of martial dao was ever changing and mutable.

Out of all three thousand great daos, and countless divine abilities, all of them could be relegated to elements and qi between heaven and earth.

Metal, wood, water, fire, and earth were the five basic, fundamental elements that were the building blocks of all matter.

Wind, thunder, light, and darkness were the derived elements.

In conclusion, there were nine major elements.

The number of elements that a spirit dao practitioner could hew out in his spirit ocean would determine the width of his spirit dao's path.

How far one could walk in the spirit dao realm would be the length of their spirit dao path.

How wide, and how far, could the path of the spirit dao be?

Much of this current world thought that this would entirely be decided by one's potential after entering the spirit realm.

The truth was that this wasn't this case.

The true determinant of how far and wide one's path of spirit dao was, was actually set before one entered the spirit realm, not after.

This was also the "one" that troubled the practitioners of this world.

This was also the boundless potential encompassed by the bridge between eleven meridians true qi and the spirit realm.

There were both innate factors, and acquired factors, when discussing martial dao potential.

It was a pity that the people of this world could only see the innate

factor, and paid no heed to acquired factors.

Long Juxue for instance, enjoyed the attention and love of thousands, because of her innate constitution.

And yet, Princess Gouyu, with such a resolute heart for the martial dao, was still unable to attract the attention of a sect no matter how hard she tried.

“Ai, even the sects value potential so; they even make light of temperaments when selecting these talents. It’s apparent that something is greatly amiss with the martial dao knowledge of this world.”

Jiang Chen sighed lightly, but didn’t have an excess of emotions.

Even if the martial dao knowledge of this world was greatly behind – even if there were various shackles in this world – he would just avoid being fettered by the rules of this world, and evade being assimilated by the shortcomings of this world.

He, Jiang Chen, would walk a path that no one had walked before. He would create a new, and heretofore unseen road, on the path of martial dao.

This road might even upend the rules of martial dao within this world several hundred, even thousands of years from now. It would be sure to become the new rules — the new signpost!

After he emerged from training, the morning light fell upon Jiang Chen. It added a few traces of sunshine to his being, and imbued him with vigor and vitality.

“Chen’er, you’ve emerged from training?”

“Father, are you used to such carefree days?” Jiang Chen chuckled.

“I’d love to be carefree, but unfortunately, mundane matters keep me entangled. The Duke of Jinshan and Duke of Hubing came to visit two

days ago. They're both old brothers of mine, and I'm going to accompany them around the city."

"Oh, they're here? The situation within the kingdom has just settled. As the new four great dukes, don't they need to help shoulder the royal family's burdens?"

Jiang Feng smiled wryly, "Aren't they here on behalf of the royal family's burdens?"

"They're here to probe our Jiang family's attitude?" Jiang Chen smiled. This wasn't outside his expectations. With the Jiang family's current reputation, it was normal for the royal family to be on pins and needles.

"Mm." Jiang Feng nodded. "Chen'er, I've also been considering. Where should the future of our Jiang family lie?"

Jiang Chen had actually long since considered this question.

No matter what, they absolutely couldn't tarry in the Eastern Kingdom. For one, given the political situation, the Jiang family would always weigh on the royal family's hearts if they stayed.

The second reason that Jiang Chen had never voiced was the land with the spirit vein in the Redbud territory.

The bizarre occurrence that had appeared in the land with the spirit vein last time and all sorts of investigative reports gave Jiang Chen a sole conclusion. This place was sure to be an ill-omened land.

Therefore, there was no future for the Jiang family if they remained here.

Upon hearing his father's questions, Jiang Chen thought momentarily and said, "Father, a man walks towards the highest reaches. The heavens are vast, why should our Jiang family worry that there is no place for us now that we've reached this point?"

Jiang Feng laughed heartily, "These words have never been more true. Remaining within the Eastern Kingdom truly provide much of a challenge anymore."

Unless Eastern Lin vacated the throne, Jiang Feng really felt that there wasn't much of a challenge to staying within the Eastern Kingdom.

"Right, Chen'er, there's another matter. I've heard from the Duke of Jinshan that Song Tianxing has led an entourage of senior executives from the Hall of Healing to our River Wave City. They would like to call upon you. I haven't made a decision for you with regards to this matter. These people are still in River Wave City, do you wish to see them?"

"The Hall of Healing?" A trace of a smirk was revealed at the corners of Jiang Chen's lips. "They've finally come? Their reaction is truly slow, I thought they weren't coming anymore. This matter isn't important, let's hang them out to dry for a while longer. Qiao Baishi is my disciple, they dared to bully my disciple, and almost handed him over to Long Zhaofeng. Wouldn't you say these people are despicable? Shouldn't I take them down a peg or two?"

"Eh? Qiao Baishi is your disciple?" Jiang Feng's eyes widened.

Jiang Chen suddenly realized that he'd spoken too fast, he chuckled, and scratched his head, "Father, don't go spreading this information, just keep it to yourself."

"Hey, you brat, speak plainly to your old man!" Jiang Feng couldn't help but call out when he saw Jiang Chen turn around and run off after saying those words.

Jiang Chen chuckled and vanished like the wind.

"This darned brat." Jiang Feng was wreathed in smiles as he heckled. He truly couldn't find anything at fault with his son.

Jiang Feng felt his chest full of contentment and accomplishment

when he thought of his son.

...

“Honored master! Your disciple Qiao Baishi greets you.” Qiao Baishi was overjoyed to see Jiang Chen.

“Baishi, there’s no need to stand on ceremony. I trust that you’ve already heard that the senior executives of the Hall have arrived in River Wave City?” Jiang Chen asked when he saw Qiao Baishi.

“Yes, your disciple received word a while ago. Your disciple also had a matter to report to honored master a few days ago, but didn’t dare disturb the master behind closed door cultivation.”

“Oh? Is it with regards to the Hall of Healing?” Jiang Chen blinked.

“You could say that. I didn’t have that many good friends in the Hall previously. There was an elder called Ying Wuyou who was my staunchest supporter. He resigned a few days ago and came to me, seeking shelter. Your disciple didn’t dare promise him anything before asking honored master’s opinion. I’ve only let him live here, and will listen to honored master’s arrangements for him.”

Qiao Baishi’s posture was quite low, his words and actions were filled with respect for Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen waved his hands, “Since he is your trusted confidante, it is fine for you to make the appropriate arrangements. You don’t need to ask me for such small matters.”

Pausing, Jiang Chen’s eyes suddenly shifted, “You said he’s an elder within the Hall of Healing?”

“Yes.” Qiao Baishi hurriedly explained. “But I know his character, and he’s definitely not here on behalf of the Hall.”

“Haha, I’m not suspecting that he’s here to instigate you to rebellion. I mean that since he’s an elder of the Hall, perhaps this person can be

mentored.”

Jiang Chen smiled and said, “Look at the Hall of Healing. It’s filled with idiots like Elder Blue. I’m not at ease with cooperating with such idiots either.”

“What do you mean?” Qiao Baishi’s eyes lit up as he suddenly thought of something. “Does honored master mean that he wishes to support Ying Wuyou and control the Hall of Healing?”

“Baishi, this is my bottom line. If the Hall wishes to engage in a partnership, then we’ll start discussing on basis of this bottom line. If this is unacceptable, then they can go back to where they came from.”

Qiao Baishi greatly rejoiced upon hearing these words and bowed, “Honored master has expended much care and thought, your disciple is everlastingly grateful.”

Jiang Chen’s actions was actually also giving face to Qiao Baishi. To be honest, with Jiang Chen’s current thoughts, he had no desire to linger in the Eastern Kingdom and had no need to cooperate with the Hall of Healing.

He did so purely to give face to Qiao Baishi. In this way, not only would Qiao Baishi’s confidante gain power, but it could also lessen Qiao Baishi’s remorse for leaving the Hall of Healing.

Jiang Chen knew that the Hall of Healing had cultivated Qiao Baishi. If he dusted himself off and just left like this, Qiao Baishi would surely feel internal guilt and remorse.

However, if they steered the Hall onto the right path through Qiao Baishi’s efforts, then his conscience wouldn’t be plagued by too much guilt.

Qiao Baishi was a smart man and naturally understood Jiang Chen’s care and thought. A warm current flowed in his heart as he looked at Jiang Chen, full of even more admiration.

It was amazing that the honored master was so understanding and amenable to reason, and to be so worldly at such a young age.

This would truly help Qiao Baishi resolve his previous feelings for the Hall, and could also help the Hall avoid from taking a downhill path at the same time.

“Baishi, remember, you’re my disciple. It’s right and proper for me to think of you. You have full rein to take care of this matter. Remember, hold onto the bottom line. You must finely control who can’t be left and who must be marginalized. If you think something can’t be done, you can also use the power of the royal family appropriately. Princess Gouyu will surely give you this amount of face.”

Jiang Chen didn’t wish to get involved in the matters of the Hall of Healing. With Qiao Baishi’s competencies, he firmly believed that Qiao Baishi could take care of things.

Qiao Baishi was filled with happiness, “Your disciple... your disciple understands. Your disciple will now summon Ying Wuyou to pay his respects to the young duke.”

“That’s fine, but there’s no need for him to know the relationship of master and disciple between us. You only need to let him know that I will spare no effort in supporting you. That will be enough.”

Qiao Baishi brought Ying Wuyou soon after.

Ying Wuyou had also met Jiang Chen before, but the circumstances of today weren’t of those prior. Jiang Chen had been an ordinary young duke when they’d met previously, and he only had that one precious recipe from ancient times.

At this moment, the young duke’s reputation was undoubtedly like that of a thunderclap piercing the ear, a legendary existence. Ying Wuyou was cautious and reserved as he respectfully moved forward, “Ying Wuyou pays his respects to the young duke.”



Chapter 119: Terms of Negotiation

“Ying Wuyou. I’ve heard Baishi mention you before and know that you are a man with principles and strength of character. This is excellent. The Hall of Healing precisely lacks people like you.”

Jiang Chen nodded and spoke a few words of encouragement.

When he heard these words, Ying Wuyou felt the pressure on him ease slightly. It looked like young duke’s impression of him wasn’t that bad.

“There are no outsiders here so I’ll speak frankly. Baishi has already left the Hall and will be following me in the future. It’s impossible for him to return to the Hall. However, the future of the Hall still needs someone at the helm. I’ve discussed this with Baishi and we feel that your character and abilities are on par with the Fourth Hallmaster Wang Li. Therefore, we’d like to use you as a term of negotiation in our discussions with the Hall. You can discuss further with Baishi on what the details should be.”

“Me?” Ying Wuyou started and blurted out, “I came to seek shelter with brother Baishi and not to borrow your strength...”

“We know all of this.” Jiang Chen chuckled. “This is also the very reason as to why we’ve decided on you. If you’d come to borrow our influence, we wouldn’t have even considered you. If you can appropriately control the Hall, you will be rendering a great service to mankind and this will also be the best way to follow Qiao Baishi.”

Qiao Baishi also encouraged, “Wuyou, you and I are most intimate of friends. I am quite at ease with your competence and character. I also know that you’ve offended quite a lot of people with your departure this time. The journey back will be difficult. But be at ease, we hold the initiative! The senior executives of the Hall are due for a purging. Those who should be made an example of will be dealt with, and those who should leave will be forced out. If an agreement

cannot be met, we'll forgo cooperation with the Hall. I can at the very least guarantee you food at every meal if you follow me."

"If they're willing to cooperate, we will certainly borrow strength from all sides to help you effortlessly control the Hall. You and I were both cultivated by the Hall, and have certainly not expended less time and effort on the Hall than them. Wuyou, are you willing to shoulder this burden for me?"

Ying Wuyou didn't express his stance. To be honest, he was tempted.

Following Qiao Baishi was a decision of his heart, but he truly did have a very deep connection to the Hall of Healing. If the lineup of the senior executives of the Hall could be adjusted and the useless trash washed out, then he could easily return to the Hall as the successor to the Lord Hallmaster. He could then control of the matters of the Hall. This was indeed a very strong temptation.

"Brother Baishi, I..."

"Don't hem and haw. You have the ability, just tell me if you have the charisma." Qiao Baishi was a decisive person.

A surge of strong emotion agitated Ying Wuyou's heart and he nodded his head abruptly. "Alright, since the young duke and brother Baishi both think so highly of me, I, Ying Wuyou, will give it a try even if I end up on the executioner's block. The Hall has given birth to me and nurtured me. I can't bear to watch it be destroyed in the hands of these lowlifes."

Ying Wuyou was also filled with a bellyful of resentment whenever he thought of Wang Li, Elder Blue, and the others.

....

In one of the large inns in River Wave City, the Hall of Healing had been quite generous and reserved a large yard.

Almost all the senior executives had arrived in the Jiang Han

territory.

They had already stayed for a full five days within this inn. Over the past five days, they had obtained intelligence from all sorts of venues that said the young duke was truly in closed door cultivation.

However, they couldn't obtain any intelligence with regards to Qiao Baishi. It was as if Qiao Baishi was purposefully evading them.

On this morning, several senior executives were sitting dejectedly within a house drinking tea. A cloud of gloom hung over them and they were unable to find any energy within themselves.

Suddenly, a string of rushed footsteps sounded from the outside as one of the middle management members from the Hall hurriedly walked in.

"Lord Hallmaster, there's news, there's news! I've heard that the young duke has emerged from closed door training."

"What?" Song Tianxing was overjoyed as he surged to his feet. "Then, did we send over our calling card?"

"Yes, your subordinate did so personally. However, the young duke's household only accepted the calling card and didn't express anything else. It seems that we're to continue waiting."

Song Tianxing went, "I see" and sat down, contemplating something with a grave expression.

He had visited all the appropriate people during this period of time and treated all those that he should treat. He'd even mobilized the Duke of Jinshan and the Duke of Hubing.

Who else could carry a heavier weight than these two?

Princess Gouyu?

Song Tianxing knew that he didn't have enough sway to mobilize

Princess Gouyu to speak on his behalf. Besides, Princess Gouyu was renowned for being not moved by entreaties.

There was basically no hope of getting her to speak on their behalf.

“Continue waiting. Report immediately to me if there’s any news.”
Song Tianxing waved his hand.

Elder Blue couldn’t help but roll her eyes. “Please, who does he think he is, putting on airs like this? Not to mention the fact that he isn’t a young duke now. Even if he was a young duke, he shouldn’t put on airs like this.”

Song Tianxing’s ferocious eyes glared, “Shut up! I’ve allowed you to come this time in order to give you a chance to adjust your attitude and apologize to both the young duke and Qiao Baishi. If you continue to speak irresponsibly, do you believe that I will force you out of the Hall right now?”

“I... ” A flash of a humiliated expression appeared on Elder Blue’s heavily made up face, but she still didn’t dare talk back to Song Tianxing.

It was actually Yue Qun who chuckled and eased the situation, “Lord Hallmaster, be calm, hold your horses. At this moment, we need to be united internally as well .”

“Elder Blue, you adjust your mentality as well. Remember, even if you’re very unwilling to, you still must docilely listen to the Lord Hallmaster. Apologize and offer presents where you must. Submit when you must. You’re an elder. So what if you have to humble yourself for the future of the Hall?”

Elder Blue was still a bit emotional and finally said a few words after taking a while to recollect herself, “I understand.”

It could be seen that she still did as she pleased in front of Yue Qun. To be honest, she had obtained her position of elder through Second Hallmaster Yue Qun’s efforts.

She had once made her way to Yue Qun's yard everyday for three months straight. She served him day and night, employing all sorts of techniques in bed and subservient coquetry before finally obtaining her position after Yue Qun had had his fill of fun.

Therefore, it was rather normal if Elder Blue was a bit more unbridled in front of Yue Qun.

Just as an awkward moment prevailed, more footsteps came in from outside the door. An unfamiliar voice said, "The friends from the Hall of Healing are here right? I'm here on behalf of Mister Qiao Baishi to convey that we will be holding a banquet in the Rainflower Pavilion at the Jiang family's secondary residence. The banquet will be in honor of various old friends. We hope you will give face and attend."

"Qiao Baishi?" Song Tianxing took rapid action as he darted to the door and opened it.

However, there was only an invitation left on the doorstep as the messenger had already left.

Even so, it was as if Song Tianxing had discovered a precious treasure. He completely set aside the dignity of a Lord Hallmaster and picked up the invitation himself.

"It's Qiao Baishi's handwriting. Heh heh. It seems like Qiao Baishi still remembers old friendships. No one can be absent tomorrow, all of you must attend."

Song Tianxing passed the invitation onto Second Hallmaster Yue Qun. When Yue Qun had taken a look, he then passed it onto Fourth Hallmaster Wang Li as they all looked it over.

...

Song Tianxing and the others woke up early the next morning, cleaned themselves up properly, and prepared to set out. Before they left, Song Tianxing reminded them again and again, "All of you, remember, humble yourselves later. If anything goes wrong because

of your attitudes this time, you'll be the sinners of the Hall."

Elder Blue had an aggrieved look on her face as she flung an angry glance at Yue Qun. The old fellow coughed dryly twice, rolled his eyes, and looked outside the door as if there was some fascinating landscape outside. He completely ignored her.

If it came down to the wire, there was no way that Yue Qun would provide back up for Elder Blue now. It didn't matter what injustices one suffered, this matter had to do with the future of the Hall. The Rainflower Pavilion was a secondary residence of the Jiang family. The surroundings were elegant, secluded, and peaceful.

When the Hall of Healing entourage arrived, Qiao Baishi had already been waiting there for a while.

After exchanging a few pleasantries, the atmosphere was a bit awkward as everyone took their seats.

Song Tianxing looked around his surroundings and couldn't help but ask, "Baishi, where is the young duke?"

"The young duke has to take care of more pressing matters today. I'm the one holding this banquet today to treat my old friends. The saying goes that business deals can fall apart, but relationships shouldn't. Although I'm no longer in the Hall, I did once swear an oath to the Hall."

Ying Wuyou smiled off on the side, "Here, let me pour wine for you, Lord Hallmaster."

After three rounds of wine had been drunk, Qiao Baishi and Ying Wuyou were quite enthusiastic as they kept urging the others to drink more wine. What they never mentioned, however, was the affairs of the Hall.

Song Tianxing was anxious and it was finally Yue Qun who spoke up, "Baishi, ah, we were all quite saddened when you left last time. We've come to pay our respects to the young duke this time and also

to apologize to you, and to express our regrets.”

“Apologize?” Qiao Baishi chuckled. “It’s all in the past, not to mention I’m quite fine here. You don’t need to feel apologetic.”

This answer was as if Yue Qun’s strike had landed on cotton candy, making him at a loss of how to respond.

“Ahem... Baishi, ah, we’ve come to pay our respects to the young duke this time because we wished to discuss the partnership between us...”

“Partnership?” Qiao Baishi set his cup down lightly. “If I recall correctly, the young duke chose to cooperate with me originally. I’ve already left, what partnership are you talking about?”

Yue Qun had once again hit a wall and could only continuously drink wine in his loss for words. He threw a look at Song Tianxing. That look meant, *I can't handle this, you'll have to do this boss.*

Song Tianxing sighed, “Baishi, the Hall was at fault for how we treated you in the past. We’ve come with the utmost sincerity this time. What does the young duke think about the partnership? If there’s any room for discussion, then anything can be discussed. If there’s no room for discussion, then also let us know so we can die a straightforward death.”

Song Tianxing’s words were much more sophisticated. He’d seized on the point that Qiao Baishi still had feelings for the Hall, and the mention of the so-called straightforward death was undoubtedly to tug on Qiao Baishi’s heartstrings.

However, Qiao Baishi and Ying Wuyou had already been mentally prepared before the negotiations and naturally wouldn’t give up their bottom line with these words.

Qiao Baishi raised his cup, expressionless, “Lord Hallmaster, I salute you. Since you’ve brought up this matter, I won’t put on an act any longer. I can make the decisions on this matter without the young

duke having to make an appearance. However, I can speak on behalf of the young duke but I can't speak on behalf of your Hall of Healing."

"What... what do you mean?" Song Tianxing was a bit taken aback.

Qiao Baishi smiled faintly and remained calm and composed as he filled up Song Tianxing's cup again.

"My words are easy to understand. The young duke can consider working with the Hall of Healing, but it depends on who from the Hall of Healing he's working with."

The more clever of those present immediately seemed to understand something when Qiao Baishi delivered his words.

Chapter 120: The Unexpected News from Strong Oppression

"Baishi, if you've changed your mind, the doors to the Hall are absolutely open to you. Does this even need to be discussed? I can make a decision now so that you'll still be the Third Hallmaster if you come back!" Song Tianxing was jubilant.

Qiao Baishi couldn't help but laugh. He hadn't thought that his words would cause Song Tianxing to misunderstand him.

"Me, the Third Hallmaster?" Qiao Baishi shook his head with a rueful smile.

Off to the side, Elder Blue couldn't hold it in any longer, "Is the position of Third Hallmaster not enough? Do you wish to replace the Lord Hallmaster in one fell swoop?"

"You, shut up!" Song Tianxing and Ying Wuyou yelled almost in unison.

Qiao Baishi had long since grown immune to this woman as he chuckled. "I've already lost interest in the position of Hallmaster a long time ago. If the Lord Hallmaster wishes to listen to my terms, then I'll speak frankly."

"Go ahead." Song Tianxing was in a great mood when he heard that there were conditions that could be discussed. At the end of the day, wouldn't it just be an outrageously high price? Go ahead and name it! As long as the Hall of Healing could withstand it, they would endure it no matter how high it was.

"The terms actually aren't much of any terms at all. They're all in consideration of the future of the Hall. First, Ying Wuyou will return to the Hall as the Third Hallmaster and future successor. I will then hand over the three spirit medicines to him with full authority. None of you will be allowed to have a hand in them."

This was the most basic condition.

Song Tianxing hurriedly nodded, "There is absolutely no problem in this. When Wuyou wanted to leave, I also tried my hardest to keep him."

Qiao Baishi nodded, "The second condition is that the ranks of the senior executives of the Hall of Healing must be cleansed. Those who should leave must be expelled, and those who should be punished should be punished. Take Elder Blue for instance, I'm quite curious as to what basis she has to be on equal footing with the other elders? And as for Wang Li, he's too radical and is completely unsuited for the Hall of Healing. He must be expelled as well. In addition..."

Qiao Baishi listed six or seven names of senior executives in one go.

The faces of those called darkened whenever they heard their names.

The area of this blow was indeed quite large. After this adjustment, almost half of the senior executives of the Hall of Healing would be eliminated.

Those who would be raised up to fill their positions instead would naturally be Qiao Baishi's old friends and Ying Wuyou's people.

Song Tianxing didn't have any changes in expression as he listened. In actuality, great waves and billows were roiling in his heart. But as Lord Hallmaster, he'd long since gotten used to keeping a straight face even when Mt. Tai was collapsing in front of him.

Truth be told, he wasn't shocked or enraged, but rather secretly delighted.

It could be said that Qiao Baishi's suggestion struck many chords within Song Tianxing. He'd always been contemplating the issue of cleaning house for the senior executives.

But who should be made an example of first? This question was quite irritating.

Now that Qiao Baishi had raised the issue, he could be the villain. He, Song Tianxing, merely needed to go with the flow. With the two working in tandem, they could possibly wrap up this purge just like this.

Yue Qun's old face collapsed, "Qiao Baishi, are you kidding me? Are these your conditions? You're interfering with the internal affairs of the Hall of Healing."

"Indeed, you're someone who's already left. What right do you have to intervene with the private affairs of the Hall?" Fourth Hallmaster Wang Li was thoroughly enraged and couldn't control his temper.

Qiao Baishi smiled faintly, "I said earlier that we can conduct negotiations. I can speak on behalf of the young duke, but can't make decisions for your Hall of Healing. If you don't wish to discuss terms, you don't have to discuss then."

Wang Li put down his cup with a heavy thud. "How do we discuss this? This is a slap to the face! Take down me, Wang Li? Qiao Baishi, you dare speak of such an outrageous thing?"

"Lord Hallmaster, you told me to swallow insult and humiliation slightly, apologize, and offer gifts. All this I can do. But do you see, they want to take me down. How can I bear this insult?" Elder Blue also complained.

"Ludicrous! There's no way we can continue these negotiations." Yue Qun's face darkened as well.

Song Tianxing's cold, sharp gaze alighted on these three and he nodded his head slightly. "Good, very good. I've always suspected that there was an underground organization within the Hall, and that someone was creating a group for selfish purposes. I only suspected this before, but now it looks like the three of you have long since colluded together."

"You... boss, what do you mean by this?" Yue Qun was the most

senior out of all of them and couldn't help but talk back.

"Don't play the fool with me. Elder Blue slept with you for three months before she became an elder. This isn't false now, is it?"

"Wang Li is your prodigy in name, but he's actually your illegitimate child. Did you think that no one beneath the heavens would know this secret?"

Song Tianxing then swept his gaze over the faces of those who'd been called out. "Who amongst these isn't someone that you've promoted? All of you have, step by step, nibbled away at the Hall! Did you really think that I had no idea?"

Song Tianxing used the situation as an excuse to finally erupt.

He also knew that this was his only chance and opportunity to make use of the situation. It was the best timing with which he could use to exterminate Yue Qun's group of people.

Qiao Baishi laughed loudly and clapped his hands, "So it turns out that the Lord Hallmaster is able to penetrate deeply into all things. Yue Qun, you've posed as a person of high morals and arranged places in the senior executives for your illegitimate son and mistress to cause trouble. Don't you have the slightest awareness, even now, of what you've done to the Hall all these years?"

Yue Qun's old face seemed to age ten years all of a sudden!

Bam!

Wang Li viciously lifted his hands and flipped the banquet table, sending everything clattering to the floor with a crash.

"What a bullshit negotiation. No more talk now, we return to the capital!"

"Right, what kind of negotiation is this, this is a dinner in which treachery was planned! Our own boss didn't protect his own people

but struck out on behalf of outsiders. We should go back and have a good discussion on who should be in charge of the Hall.”

“You feel like leaving?” Qiao Baishi laughed coldly.

Like the tidewaters, countless elite soldiers surged out from the four corners of the Rainflower Pavilion.

With the four Sheng battalion brothers at the head and Jiang Chen’s eight personal guards, large amounts of elite soldiers surrounded the Rainflower Pavilion so that not even a drop of water would leak out.

The dagger was revealed when the map was unrolled. There was no suspense about what happened next.

The seven or eight people on the list were almost all detained without a fight. What came out of the blue was the fact that Second Hallmaster Yue Qun, who’d always appeared old and worthless, was actually an eleven meridians true qi master.

Except, even in that case, there was no place for him to deploy his martial arts when surrounded by a large army. He broke through a few times, but still couldn’t shake himself free of the formation set up by Jiang Chen’s eight guards. He finally found it hard to escape his destiny of being captured.

“Lord Hallmaster, desperate times call for desperate measures. I hope you don’t mind that I’ve intervened in the internal affairs of the Hall. My feelings for the Hall are much deeper than these people.” Qiao Baishi said with some penitence.

“Baishi, speak no further. I’m the one who should be apologizing. If it wasn’t for me continuously having an indecisive standpoint as Lord Hallmaster, you wouldn’t have left the Hall in the first place. I know you’re set on leaving. I will raise Ying Wuyou and let him gradually control the Hall.”

“As long as the Hall can prosper and develop, then I, Qiao Baishi, will

have a clear conscience.”

“Song Tianxing, Qiao Baishi, you despicable, petty villains! How dare you join hands and scheme against me!” A tied up Yue Qun roared from his disorderly position.

“Yue Qun, you formed a clique for your own selfish interests. How dare you rage and roar?” Ying Wuyou laughed coldly.

“Go to hell! Formed a clique for selfish interests? Song Tianxing, I only rue that I didn’t make a move against you earlier! I regret this bitterly! But, don’t you be too proud too early. Why do you think I’ve spent more than ten years kissing up to you in your Hall of Healing? Let me tell you something, I’m not a person from the Eastern Kingdom. For the past ten years, I’ve been a spy in the Hall of Healing. I’ve long since used various venues to convey the message of the Eastern Kingdom’s internal conflict back to the Darkmoon Kingdom. It won’t be long before the iron hooves of the Darkmoon Kingdom trample the mountains and rivers of the Eastern Kingdom! Hahahahaha!!”

“Darkmoon Kingdom?” Song Tianxing and Qiao Baishi looked at each other as they both sucked in a breath.

The Darkmoon Kingdom was a kingdom contiguous to the southern part of the Eastern Kingdom. It was stronger than the Eastern Kingdom and had always eyed its neighbor covetously.

Unfortunately, Yue Qun’s words were probably not random ravings grounded in nothing.

However, Qiao Baishi recovered his composure very quickly.

“Darkmoon Kingdom is it? That’s fine, we weren’t able to find a suitable excuse to kill all of you earlier. Since you call yourself a spy from the Darkmoon Kingdom, then we’ve actually gained sufficient grounds to kill all of you.”

“Kill me? Haha, do you think I’d be afraid? I am a citizen of the

Darkmoon Kingdom and a ghost of the Darkmoon Kingdom if I die. I won't even crease my brow if I die for my country."

"You... old thing, are you crazy? Are you really a spy from Darkmoon Kingdom?" Even Elder Blue was frantic.

She was a born and bred citizen of the Eastern Kingdom and not some Darkmoon spy. She had originally slept with Yue Qun to climb up to her current position of elder.

She'd been captured now, but still may not be put to death. However, if she was associated with a spy, then she would be dead without a doubt.

Wang Li was also stunned and started cursing loudly. "Old man, you've really thrown me to the wolves. You said you would support me to the highest position and help me expand the branches of the Hall to all the territories within the kingdom. Was all of this a lie?"

"Ai, they weren't really lies. You're my son, how could I deceive you? Those words were built on the premise of the Eastern Kingdom not having internal strife. Without internal discord in the Eastern Kingdom, the Darkmoon Kingdom wouldn't have a window of opportunity. I'd only be able to cultivate you and have you take control of the Hall. Who knew that even the best laid plans would fall to pieces in the face of reality."

"Since this is the case, then what did you come to the Jiang Han territory for?" Wang Li cursed.

"Come to the Jiang Han territory?" Yue Qun grimaced in laughter. "For the pill medicine recipes of course. Even I'm jealous of those recipes. If I could bring that back to the Darkmoon Kingdom, then I'd be the greatest meritorious statesman in the Darkmoon Kingdom!"

Wang Li was completely dumfounded. He'd discovered that in this old fellow's heart, his position as an illegitimate son was completely inferior to the position of the Darkmoon Kingdom.

Elder Blue wailed like ghosts and howled like wolves, "Lord Hallmaster, I was wrong. I will redeem myself with good service, please give me a chance. I... I know how to warm a bed, I'm also extremely skilled with techniques, and I'm well versed in pleasuring men with my mouth..."

This woman had gone completely crazy.

Qiao Baishi wouldn't hear any of it and waved his hand, "Take them all away, I'm going to visit the young duke."

Although he didn't know whether or not Yue Qun's words were true or false, but this piece of news was startling enough. If this was the case, then a sword was hovering over the Eastern Kingdom's neck.

There was a sharp sword that could behead the Eastern Kingdom at any time!

...

"Yue Qun? Spy for the Darkmoon Kingdom?" Jiang Chen was also a bit shocked by Qiao Baishi's report. He'd sent Qiao Baishi to the negotiations and didn't even mind using a bit of brute force. He hadn't thought though, that such dumbfounding news would be unearthed.

The Darkmoon Kingdom had always been at odds with the Eastern Kingdom. Over the past couple hundred of years, battles between the two were a common occurrence.

"Young duke, this matter is likely not false. The Long family caused internal strife and the royal family has been hollowed out as well. It'd be truly bizarre if the Darkmoon Kingdom didn't take advantage of this opportunity to invade."

Jiang Chen nodded, this matter forced him to treat it with all due consideration.

The Jiang family didn't have any further relations with the Eastern

Kingdom to begin with. However, once the Darkmoon Kingdom began their invasion, the Jiang family would be the first to be impacted, given their location in the southern frontier.

After all, the Darkmoon Kingdom was located to the southwest of the kingdom. Once an opening was created, the Jiang family was almost surely the first line of defense that would suffer an attack.

Just as he was hesitating, one of his men suddenly reported in. "Young duke, there's an envoy outside the manor who says he's an envoy from the Darkmoon Kingdom and seeks an audience."

The Darkmoon Kingdom?

Jiang Chen and Qiao Baishi looked at each other. An envoy from the Darkmoon Kingdom had arrived when they were just discussing about them. This speed was simply a bit too fast, wasn't it?

Chapter 121: I'm Telling You That You're a Frog at the Bottom of a Well

Although Jiang Chen didn't really want to receive the person from the Darkmoon Kingdom, he wanted to understand the movements of all sides given the current situation. Perhaps he could obtain a bit of intelligence from this Darkmoon envoy?

"Darkmoon Kingdom envoy Qi Can greets young master Jiang." The Darkmoon Kingdom envoy was short and looked like an ordinary citizen. There was nothing particularly remarkable about him.

This kind of person couldn't be identified if he was thrown into a crowd.

However, this person's nose was slightly flat, and his eye sockets were rather sunken. Judging from his appearance, he did indeed have a few traces of the traits from the Darkmoon Kingdom.

"Young master Jiang?" Jiang Chen's lips curled into a humourless smile.

"Heh heh, I've heard that the Jiang family has rejected the appointments and rewards of the Eastern clan and declined the title of first duke. So, if I guess correctly, the Jiang family doesn't hold any government positions anymore. Calling you young master Jiang seems to be the most fitting, is it not?"

Jiang Chen smiled faintly, "You're a smart man. What I don't understand however is: When did I, Jiang Chen, have any interaction with your Darkmoon Kingdom worthy of you taking the trouble to come visit me?"

"I'm here as a lobbyist to enlist your support."

"A lobbyist?" Jiang Chen's eyebrows creased slightly. "Could it be that you believe my Jiang family will betray the people of my own kingdom?"

"Heh heh! Although you say that, the Eastern clan is already on the decline. What reason is there for you to continue to profess your loyalty? Moreover, I've heard that on that day in the capital, Eastern Lu gave up on your Jiang family as though he was discarding a pawn without even the slightest bit of hesitation.

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. How could such a minor character understand the lofty ambitions that he, Jiang Chen possessed?

"My Darkmoon Kingdom is not so, what we value the most are those with true skill and genuine knowledge. The Jiang clan is precisely the type of strong clan that the Darkmoon Kingdom admire the most. Our king is willing to invite the Jiang family over with the title of first duke. The land that the Darkmoon Kingdom will enfeoff is three times the size of your Jiang Han territory. As for gold and beauties, you'll have as much as you desire."

"Gold? Beauties?" Jiang Chen smiled faintly.

"Indeed. The financial power of the Darkmoon Kingdom is something that the Eastern Kingdom can't even hope to match. With the selection of beauties in the Darkmoon Kingdom, we can find whatever type you can think of, whether coquettish or innocent. They're certain to be prettier than that Princess Gouyu and that Eastern Zhiruo. Sexier too!"

Jiang Chen found the sight of him waxing eloquently rather funny..

"Do you think that the males of my Jiang family live for wealth and beautiful girls?"

"The fine sons of the Jiang family naturally have their own aspirations. However, in this realm, wealth and beautiful women are the best representation of ability, and the best embellishments of power. Without the adornments of wealth and beauties, so what if one stands at the peak of power?"

"Besides, if your Jiang family continues to stay within the Eastern

Kingdom, given the previous example of the Long family, the royal family will never grant you power. You may enjoy wealth and prosperity, but you'll never grasp much power. The notion of rising to become a very high official will be nothing more than an extravagant hope for you."

The envoy's spittle flew with abandon as he brimmed with self confidence.

Qiao Baishi had long since been filled with flames of angry indignation as he stood to the side. Although he'd left the Hall of Healing, he was still a citizen of the Eastern Kingdom at heart.

Perhaps he didn't have any loyalty to the royal family, but he had an exceedingly deep connection to the country and land that had given birth and nurtured him.

This envoy from the Darkmoon Kingdom dared to so eagerly advocate for a rebellion.

This was the height of humiliation for Qiao Baishi.

In this world, whether one was a practitioner or an average citizen, they all felt a sense of identity when it came to their own country and homeland.

This country could see internal strife, and dynasties could change.

But these were all internal issues for the kingdom.

This absolutely didn't mean that they would accept the invasion of other kingdoms or humiliation from foreigners.

Although Jiang Chen's soul was not directly connected to the Eastern Kingdom, he more or less had some feelings for this land after assimilating with the memories of the previous Jiang Chen.

Furthermore, if it were the past Jiang Chen, he would never have accepted such a thing as betrayal.

Therefore, the Darkmoon Kingdom's planned mutiny was a complete joke to his ears. He hadn't admonished or rejected this envoy was because he wished to hear what other interesting tidbits this person would reveal.

When he saw the envoy stop, Jiang Chen asked with a smile, "What else? Just this?"

The envoy had an odd expression on his face, "Isn't this enough?"

Jiang Chen chuckled, "Allow me to summarize. First duke, wealth, and beauties right? But have you thought about the fact that if I so desire, I can also easily obtain these things in the Eastern Kingdom, and probably even more. Wouldn't you say so?"

"The Eastern Kingdom?" The envoy revealed a trace of mockery in his smile. "Does young master Jiang think there's still a future for the Eastern Kingdom? The two greatest powers of the royal family and the Duke of Soaring Dragon have almost been completely exterminated in their conflict. This country is now an empty shell. It won't recover for at least dozens of years."

"So what?" Jiang Chen asked blandly.

"Heh heh, young master Jiang, you understand the situation but are just feigning the fool, right?" The envoy also laughed. "Then as you wish, I'll simply speak even more clearly. Your Jiang family will continue to enjoy wealth and prosperity if you flock to the Darkmoon Kingdom. If you remain within the Eastern Kingdom, you may very well be buried with it as well."

"Oh? Why do you say that?"

"Since things have progressed to this point, there's nothing to be further concealed. The news of your Eastern Kingdom's internal conflict has long since made its way back to the Darkmoon Kingdom. The armies of all the dukes within the Darkmoon Kingdom have now gathered and will mobilize their forces to conquer the Eastern

Kingdom within ten days. With your Eastern Kingdom's current strength, just what will you bring out to obstruct the great armies of the Darkmoon Kingdom?"

"Our king has also heard that your Jiang family has a way to compel Swordbirds to battle. This is the reason why our ruler values your Jiang family. In the vast Eastern Kingdom, the only family to catch my king's attention is your Jiang family."

"So you are saying that my Jiang family should actually thank your king for his special regards?"

"There's no need for gratitude and the like. If we can work together in harmony and cooperate in service of my king, then that would be for the best. My king has exceedingly great ambition and his mind encompasses the world. Conquering the Eastern Kingdom is but the first step. His final goal is to unify all sixteen kingdoms. If we can obtain the Jiang family's aid, it will surely be like giving wings to a tiger for His Majesty's great plan."

"At that time, my king will become the great emperor who has unified the lands, and the Jiang family will certainly become a mighty family with your name engraved in glory and strength, remaining immemorial throughout the ages."

"Young master Jiang, a valiant man aims for lofty goals beneath the heavens. I believe a fine man like yourself should know what to choose? Is it to leave a legacy of eternal glory or be a good-for-nothing and follow a kingdom in decline to be buried alive with the dead? Do you need to give it anymore thought?"

One had to say, this envoy Qi Can was quite a smooth talker. A marvelous persuasiveness permeated his every sentence.

However, his eloquence was completely useless in front of Jiang Chen.

Whether it was unifying the land or having an immortal name

throughout history, this was still the ambitions of an ordinary person at the end of the day. Jiang Chen's ambitions didn't lie in this realm at all.

"Young master Jiang, I've spoken all that I can, why don't you consider it?" Qi Can chuckled.

"It does sound quite good."

Jiang Chen chuckled and suddenly walked outside with regular, even steps. "Qi Can was it? Do you see this well outside the door?"

"I do, I saw it before I entered the door." Qi Can was nonplussed.

"Have you heard of the story of the frog at the bottom of the well?" Jiang Chen asked again.

"Frog at the bottom of the well? It's a story for educating children, right? How could I have not heard of it?"

Jiang Chen nodded and looked quite gratified. "That's good. Let me put it this way, you're currently like the frog at the bottom of the well. You've spent quite some time painting a picture, but those blueprints that you think are so magnificent are but a patch of sky as big as an opening of a well."

"You... young master Jiang, what do you mean by this?" Qi Can's facial expression changed.

"What does this mean? My house's young master is calling you a frog at the bottom of a well, do you still don't understand? If you don't understand even this, how can you be a lobbyist?" Qiao Baishi smiled coldly as he walked up and berated him.

"A frog at the bottom of a well?" Qi Can couldn't help but start laughing, "Young master Jiang, you simply think too highly of yourself! Your Jiang family does have some skills to its name, but you've only gained some prestige within the Eastern Kingdom. The strength of my Darkmoon Kingdom isn't something that your

Eastern Kingdom can measure up to.”

“Strength?” Jiang Chen’s tone was a bit melancholy as he recalled the experiences of his past life. He sighed lightly, “I have already seen the strongest existence there is, but the pity was that it was annihilated just like that.”

In his past life, Jiang Chen’s father had been the Celestial Emperor and he had been the son of the Celestial Emperor, ruling over the heavens and various worlds. And even then, so what? Wasn’t it all gone just like that?

The Darkmoon Kingdom was still nothing more than a stronger common kingdom. It was making a fool out of itself blowing its own horn in front of Jiang Chen and showing off its force.

How could Qi Can know that Jiang Chen’s current state of mind had already weathered a reincarnation between his current life and prior life? How would he comprehend the endless sorrow and desolation within Jiang Chen’s tone?

He laughed coldly and said with arms akimbo, “Young master Jiang, I’ve delivered all that I have to say. If you refuse to realize your error and persist in your stubbornness, there will be no room for you to negotiate when the great armies of my Darkmoon Kingdom arrive.”

Jiang Chen was recollecting the past events of his previous life and a sentimental air had wrapped itself around his heart when he suddenly heard Qi Can’s spirit dampening threats.

His face darkened, “Qi Can, go back and tell your king that although my Jiang family has nothing to do with the Eastern clan, this land has given birth to my Jiang family and nurtured it. If your Darkmoon Kingdom dares to set one filthy foot on this land, by my hand, you will be unable to return after your visit.”

It wasn’t that Jiang Chen was arrogant, or that he had any feelings of loyalty to the Eastern Kingdom.

It was that there was a type of emotion within Jiang Chen's bones, an emotion reminiscent of pride, an emotion that evoked memories of old friendships.

This land had nurtured generations of Jiang family ancestors, and the body of him, Jiang Chen, had been nurtured and raised by this land.

At the heart of it all, his flesh and blood had already melded into this land.

Perhaps he would depart not long in the future, but he would never permit the footsteps of evil to trample this land. This wasn't simply an invasion, but also blasphemy towards the emotions that Jiang Chen felt in his heart!

In addition, this Qi Can's words were overtly and subtly filled with a sense of threat. This made Jiang Chen incredibly irate. He hadn't been frightened even when a stronger sect than the Darkmoon Kingdom had sought to suppress him.

Even if this Darkmoon Kingdom was stronger than the Eastern Kingdom, how could Jiang Chen allow himself to feel threatened by them?

Chapter 122: Princess Gouyu's Complex Emotions

One had to say, Jiang Chen's emotions had also infected Qiao Baishi's. Qiao Baishi widened his eyes and bellowed, "Qi Can was it? My house's young master has already spoken his piece. Leave while you still can! Envoys can't be slaughtered in the battle between kingdoms, otherwise I'd be the first to chop you up and feed you to the dogs."

Qi Can was also dumbfounded. He had realised that in the eyes of others, his eloquent speech just now had been nothing but a joke?

Was this Jiang family crazy? Did they think that they could rely on their own paltry strength to defend against the entire Darkmoon Kingdom?

"Young master Jiang, you... really won't consider it for a bit?" Qi Can still didn't give up.

"Get out!"

Jiang Chen shouted softly as a current of true qi shot out. Qi Can's entire body flew through the air as the formless current surged violently and washed him out of the door like a kite in the wind.

Just as he was about to gather his qi and fight back, his feet suddenly touched ground as he landed solidly on the road.

"Outward projection of qi, lifting heavy items as though they weigh nothing! Could he be... an eleven meridians true qi master?" Previously, Qi Can had still been a bit arrogant, but now he'd been frightened into breaking out in cold sweat.

How could he dare to continue behaving atrociously?

Jiang Chen's strength had surpassed his imagination. A youth in his teens was actually able to utilize true qi so ingeniously!

Qi Can's forehead broke out into a cold sweat when he thought of this and didn't dare to voice any more foolish words. He cupped his hands and scampered off. Jiang Chen had let him go, but he was afraid that Jiang Chen's underlings would be displeased and refuse to let him off the hook.

The news of an invasion from the Darkmoon Kingdom had indeed not been random drivel from Yue Qun.

"Honored master, what should we do about this?" Qiao Baishi also seemed to be at a loss. His chest was filled with the passion of patriotism but he also clearly understood that with the Eastern Kingdom's current strength, at least half of the 108 dukes were without battle capabilities at the moment.

Of the remaining half, their hearts were jittery and they would be of not much use.

As for the royal family, their elites had almost all perished in the chaos caused by the Long family. The newly rebuilt royal strength was basically just the result of a hasty last minute effort. Their power was limited.

Observing the kingdom as a whole, there was almost no elite strength that could fight against the Darkmoon Kingdom on the front lines!

"What else can we do? When water rises, the earth will dam it. When enemy soldiers advance, the general will fend them off." Jiang Chen wasn't panicked. The battles and wars of ordinary kingdoms were not a great source of stress for him.

Even the experts of a sect hadn't been enough for him to bow his head in submission. How would a mere Darkmoon Kingdom give him cause for concern?

"Baishi, accompany Song Tianxing and the others back to the capital with greatest haste. I don't wish to have dealings with the royal

family, but when it comes to a war between two kingdoms, they should still be informed of everything as soon as possible.”

Jiang Chen couldn't help but sigh when he finished speaking. The Eastern Kingdom was really in quite a mess. The order of their entire system had collapsed in the wake of the chaos caused by the Long family.

Logically speaking, with the strength of the Eastern Kingdom, they were sure to have agents undercover in the Darkmoon Kingdom who could provide them with flows of intelligence.

However, after that battle, almost all of the strength of the Eastern royal family had completely perished. Even if they had intelligence networks, this network had almost all crumbled.

When its intelligence network broke, the entire country would be like a headless fly.

It would be impossible for normal operations to commence within three to five years.

If it wasn't for Jiang Chen accidentally obtaining this information, the royal family would likely still be in the dark when the Darkmoon armies appeared at the border.

Desperate times called for desperate measures.

Jiang Chen sent out two Goldwing Swordbirds to lead a flock of Silverwing Swordbirds and take the Hall of Healing retinue back to the capital at the fastest speed possible.

The speed of the Silverwing Swordbirds was quite astonishing. Coupled with the fact that the birds took turns to carry the riders, their progress was exceedingly fast and they made it back to the capital on the same day.

Song Tianxing and Qiao Baishi were both born and bred citizens of the Eastern Kingdom. Patriotic fervor flowed in both their veins.

They didn't hesitate and directly sought an audience with Princess Gouyu.

Logically speaking, they should've sought an audience with the king, Eastern Lin. But Eastern Lin was a teenaged youth and basically acted only as a figurehead at the moment.

Princess Gouyu was ruling in place of the king behind a screen.

If Song Tianxing had been alone, he might not have been granted an audience with Princess Gouyu. But Qiao Baishi was different. He was Jiang Chen's trusted subordinate, of that Princess Gouyu was well aware of.

She quickly dressed herself appropriately and summoned the two into the palace.

"We greet Princess Gouyu." Song Tianxing and Qiao Baishi came forward to pay their respects.

"How come the two of you are united again? You've come to find me in such a hurry, has something urgent happened?"

Song Tianxing looked at Qiao Baishi and indicated for him to speak.

Qiao Baishi didn't shirk either and said gravely, "Princess, we've received news this noon that the Darkmoon Kingdom has gathered a large army and will invade our Eastern Kingdom within ten days' time."

"What?" Princess Gouyu's face changed drastically. Recently, she had felt a vaguely foreboding sensation and had also held a certain anxiety.

Except till now, she had naively comforted herself that the Darkmoon Kingdom may not make a move, or that they may not move so quickly.

However, this kind of self comfort was in the end, just merely self

consolation.

Not only had the Darkmoon Kingdom made their move, but the speed of their action had been faster than she'd anticipated.

"This news, are you certain?" Princess Gouyu had lost her composure slightly but immediately recovered the poise and calmness of someone in a superior position.

"Without a doubt." Qiao Baishi responded. "An envoy from the Darkmoon Kingdom came to the Jiang Han territory to recruit the Jiang family this morning. He promised countless wealth and prosperity and the vacant seat of first duke as an invitation to the Jiang family."

Princess Gouyu couldn't help but feel a bit frantic when she heard these words. She knew full well that Jiang Chen wouldn't be drawn by wealth and prosperity, but she still couldn't help but ask, "Did Jiang Chen agree?"

"My house's young master turned up his nose and berated the envoy harshly before rejecting him." Qiao Baishi held nothing back.

For some reason, Song Tianxing's heart contracted painfully when he heard Qiao Baishi voice the words, "My house's young master", as if he had suffered a loss.

Princess Gouyu was somewhat moved by these words as she looked deeply at Qiao Baishi. She then said, "Now that I know of this matter, I will immediately set off to see Jiang Chen."

"Alright!" Qiao Baishi nodded.

"Wait a moment, I'll bring Ru'er with me." As though she was slightly unconfident, Gouyu suddenly thought of Eastern Zhiruo.

Perhaps, in Gouyu's heart, Eastern Zhiruo was the best emotional card she could play, and also the best chip to persuade Jiang Chen with?

When Gouyu had heard that the Darkmoon Kingdom was about to invade, she'd initially felt a bit panicked. But somehow, after a while, she relaxed internally for no reason at all.

It was as if she had received psychological support which made her feel that it was impossible for the Darkmoon Kingdom to invade the kingdom successfully.

As for this subconscious psychological reliance, she was no longer shy or embarrassed now to admit that it was naturally because of Jiang Chen.

The strong shock and impact of the battle of the Second Crossing had left an imprint on her heart that would be difficult to forget even in a hundred lifetimes. It was a type of mental brand that could never be erased.

Jiang Chen's mysticality, strength, enigma, guts, pride, and character had been thoroughly displayed without regret in that battle.

This kind of youth was a perfect man in the proud Princess Gouyu's eyes. He was the only man who could conquer her proud heart.

Eastern Zhiruo had already fallen asleep but was overjoyed upon hearing that they were going to see Jiang Chen. Her drowsiness was completely swept away and she chattered about, wanting to set out immediately.

Since this was a matter of grave importance, Qiao Baishi didn't hesitate as he brought Princess Gouyu, Eastern Zhiruo, and a crowd of royal personal guards along with him in his return to the southern border.

They flew all night and arrived back in the Jiang Han territory before daybreak.

When she saw Jiang Chen again, Princess Gouyu felt a mix of emotions. Strands of change seemed to have taken place on the youthful yet resolute face of the teenager.

This face wasn't strange to her and was as familiar as always.

But that feeling was as though the distance between the two had grown a lot longer again.

Truly, there was a type of bearing on Jiang Chen that made even Princess Gouyu feel ashamed of her unworthiness. It was an indescribable sort of nobility, an unspeakable kind of mysticism.

"Jiang Chen, you're already an eleven meridians true qi master?" As she recalled the rise of this youth, Princess Gouyu still felt that it was quite surreal.

Half a year ago, he seemed to have been someone who couldn't even pass the foundational exams of the Hidden Dragon Trials!

How could someone undergo such complete metamorphosis in half a year's time?

Princess Gouyu couldn't make sense of it, and neither did she want to.

Jiang Chen nodded his head slightly, "Let's not mention this small matter. Right, Gouyu, I've heard that your Eastern clan has an old ancestor? He hadn't appeared during the Long family's rebellion. Will he still fail to appear even when a strong enemy is about to invade?"

Princess Gouyu smiled ruefully, "The ancestor is undergoing closed door cultivation. But he should be coming out soon?"

She wasn't sure of herself when she said those words. Besides, the Eastern clan might have an ancestor, but so did the Darkmoon Kingdom.

If it came down to their elders facing each other, it was said that the ancestor of the Darkmoon kingdom was an old freak who had lived for a thousand years. Both his lifespan and level of cultivation were higher than those of the Eastern clan's ancestor.

Jiang Chen smiled and didn't speak further.

"Right, that girl Zhiruo has also come?"

"Yes, but we hurried here overnight so she didn't rest well. She should be catching up on sleep now. You've missed her?" Princess Gouyu's tone was a bit odd.

"Miss her?" Jiang Chen broke out in laughter. "You lass, your mind is always filled with random things. You don't mean to tell me that this time, the two of you have come here to fulfill your promise?"

Princess Gouyu's charming face reddened. Of course she knew what Jiang Chen was referring to. She had once promised that if he could suppress the Long family in the Hidden Dragon Trials, he could have his pick of either Zhiruo or her, or even both of them together.

Princess Gouyu herself didn't know where she'd gotten the courage then to say those words. To be honest, she felt extremely conflicted. She felt a bit embarrassed and afraid, but also vaguely felt that if that was really the case, it wouldn't be so bad.

However, hearing Jiang Chen bring up this matter when they were standing face to face, even the normally brash Princess Gouyu scrambled for a bit as a red blush danced across her cheeks.

"Jiang Chen... you... you... you..." Princess Gouyu really wanted to one up him and say something that would fortify her will. However, when her sexy lips parted, she didn't know what to say.

"See, you've regretted it haven't you? Pretend I haven't said anything then." Jiang Chen purposefully said with a dark look on his face.

"No, it's not that. Jiang Chen..." Princess Gouyu hastened to explain, her eyes sparkling with the light of shyness, a sight that would normally have been impossible to see. Her voice was so low that even she herself couldn't hear it. "Jiang Chen, you... don't misunderstand me. If you really desire it, you... you can... have me."

This headstrong woman immediately bit her lip afterwards and gathered her courage, "I know you... you may not think much of me. But, apart from you, I, Gouyu, will never look favorably upon any other man in this life."

Chapter 123: Will You Take Ruo'er as Your Wife in the Future?

Jiang Chen was stunned. He'd only been teasing Princess Gouyu and had cracked a joke with her, intent on intimidating her a bit. Who would've thought that with Princess Gouyu's personality, she'd take it so seriously?

This made it difficult for Jiang Chen to back down, like he was riding a tiger.

Chuckling, Jiang Chen walked forward, reached out his finger and lightly tweaked Gouyu's straight and sexy nose. "Alright, then I'll take this bit and call it even."

In the moment that Jiang Chen reached out, Gouyu's heart almost leapt into her throat. Although she possessed a strong personality and walked and talked like a man, in the end, she was still a lady.

She'd always concealed the shy bashfulness of a girl beneath a strong, dominant exterior.

When things really came to a head, the jade-like skin of the shy girl, whom no one had ever touched, still tensed up involuntarily.

At one point, she had really thought that Jiang Chen was really going to make a move.

Who would've thought that Jiang Chen would take such a serious attitude towards this simple matter and only superficially tweaked her on the nose. This situation was very much like a big brother doting on the little sister from next door warmly and innocently.

Gouyu's heart pounded furiously. Although she felt vaguely disappointed, she also seemed to feel a bit relieved. Her maiden heart was in a chaotic uproar.

"Let's go and see Ruo'er." Jiang Chen smiled, turned and took a few steps.

When Princess Gouyu saw that Jiang Chen truly didn't possess any ulterior motives, she exhaled a long, easy breath and strove to calm her emotions. She gathered up her courage again and walked in front of Jiang Chen.

Her clear eyes and white teeth was all the more comely beneath the morning sun. Her eyelashes fluttered lightly, as if she'd gathered all the strength in her body to say, "Jiang Chen, it doesn't matter how you view me, you're the first and only man to have touched me. From this day forth, I won't let a second man touch me."

Princess Gouyu felt almost completely drained after saying this. She had never thought that it would be tougher to say some words than it was to face a million strong army.

"Don't let your thoughts drift. If Ruo'er sees you like this later, she'll really think that I've done something to you." Jiang Chen chuckled.

A trace of a warm smile appeared on Princess Gouyu's lips. "Ruo'er is so innocent that her thoughts won't travel in that direction."

"Innocent indeed, she didn't even understand spitting blood from the mouth, haha."

Jiang Chen laughed heartily as all of a sudden, Princess Gouyu's face turned bright red again. She bit her lip lightly and stamped her foot, "Jiang Chen, you're such a rogue."

The allusion of spitting blood from the mouth originated from that banquet at the Soaring Dragon manor, when Jiang Chen had reposed against the heir of White Tiger, Bai Zhanyun.

He'd meant to allude to the scene of a woman giving birth, but Eastern Zhiruo hadn't taken the hint at that time and had even asked Jiang Chen what he meant.

Even Princess Gouyu had thought for quite a while before understanding.

Princess Gouyu hung back and kept a distance from Jiang Chen. Her emotions were complicated as she gazed upon the back of the teenager.

When Jiang Chen had tweaked Princess Gouyu's nose just now, the gesture had been warm, innocent and stirred up endless emotions from her.

Her elder brothers Eastern Jun and Eastern Lu, because they'd been born in a royal family, had been like machines with power and had never committed such an intimate act towards her.

Jiang Chen's motion had let Princess Gouyu vaguely feel the affection of an elder brother, the emotions that a little girl would have towards the big brother next door.

Except, this Jiang Chen was five or six years younger than her.

As soon as Eastern Zhiruo woke up, her first thought was to find brother Jiang Chen. She was very excited when she saw Jiang Chen and Gouyu arrive and pulled on Jiang Chen's hand, saying in her charming and innocent voice, "Brother Jiang Chen, do you know? Nowadays, I don't like to ride a carriage when I travel in the capital."

"Why is that?" Jiang Chen was perplexed.

"I like riding the Goldwing Swordbirds." Eastern Zhiruo encircled her hands around Jiang Chen's arms and shook it lightly, pleading, "Brother Jiang Chen, how about you give me one of the Goldwing Swordbirds?"

It wasn't uncommon to see little girls attracted to pets and all sorts of cool looking things. Riding a Goldwing Swordbird was much cooler than riding a horse carriage.

"A Goldwing Swordbird is an intelligent and civilized spirit bird. I'm afraid you'll be unable to control it if I gave one to you. How about this, I'll give you a baby Greenwing Swordbird. You can raise it from young. I'll also give you a few pills so you can rear it slowly. It will

surely evolve into a Goldwing Swordbird in a few years, and will be even more thoughtful towards you if you strike up a solid relationship with it.”

For some reason, although Jiang Chen was sometimes brusque and impatient towards Princess Gouyu, he was always exceedingly patient towards Eastern Zhiruo.

In his heart, he truly did view Eastern Zhiruo as a little sister. Perhaps this was because Eastern Zhiruo possessed an yin constitution, the same condition that he had been afflicted with in his past life.

He played with and kept Eastern Zhiruo company very patiently all day.

During this day, Jiang Chen completely ignored all thoughts of an invasion by Darkmoon Kingdom and the situation of the Eastern Kingdom. He only accompanied Eastern Zhiruo on her random wandering all day.

Princess Gouyu also did the same.

Eastern Zhiruo still hadn't had her fill of fun when the sun had gone down but she was a docile girl and knew that her aunt must have had an urgent matter that made her travel such a great distance to the Jiang Han territory.

“Brother Jiang Chen, Auntie, let's go back. Ruo'er is also tired after playing all day.”

Upon returning to the River Wave city and after eating dinner, Jiang Chen smiled faintly at Princess Gouyu. She'd been about to speak, but she bit her lip in hesitation. “Go to sleep, the Jiang Han territory is the place where my Jiang family has been born and brought up in. Unless I, Jiang Chen, am no longer here, the Darkmoon Kingdom's dirty iron hooves will never set foot on it.”

Princess Gouyu's charming eyes moved faintly, as if water would drip

out of them. She asked again, "What else?"

"What else?" Jiang Chen smiled faintly, "Isn't this reason enough?"

"Not enough." Princess Gouyu seemed to be feeling wronged.

"Then I'll add Zhiruo as well, is this reason enough?"

Princess Gouyu's gaze dimmed faintly, as if she seemed to have expected that Jiang Chen would say that, but she wasn't able to keep herself from asking.

She also couldn't help but feel a bit sad after asking.

"Ruo'er is innocent and kind. No one is willing to see her hurt in this world. Jiang Chen, you... will you take Ruo'er as your wife in the future?"

Princess Gouyu lifted her face as she stared unblinkingly at Jiang Chen, as if she would never let it rest until she received an answer.

"Just what are you thinking about everyday? Me taking Ruo'er as my wife?" Jiang Chen started laughing uncontrollably. "Ruo'er is innocent and naive, seeing her is like seeing my own sister. How could I have such weird thoughts?"

Jiang Chen wasn't putting on airs as he truly didn't have any other thoughts towards Ruo'er. Everything he'd done was because of Eastern Zhiruo's honest personality, as well as her innocent and naive character.

In addition, there was Eastern Zhiruo's innate yin constitution. Two similarly afflicted people could empathize with each other due to their shared emotional resonance.

Whenever he saw Ruo'er, Jiang Chen couldn't help but recall his past life. Protecting Ruo'er was a function of Jiang Chen protecting the complex knot of resignation he'd felt in his past life.

As for marriage, Jiang Chen actually didn't have the heart to speak on.

Whether male or female, once one had an yin constitution, they would then only give birth to generations of children with yin constitutions.

It was a tragic fate.

This was to say, if Ruo'er gave birth in the future, her children would also possess yin constitutions. It was unavoidable.

Although they would have to face this cruel reality sooner or later, Jiang Chen didn't have the heart to voice it so early. He couldn't bear for such an optimistic young girl like Zhiruo to shoulder a set of shackles upon her heart that didn't belong to her in the first place.

...

The Darkmoon Kingdom, within the palace.

The king of Darkmoon Kingdom sat on his dragon throne as he surveyed his surroundings, full of an arrogant and haughty air.

Qi Can had already returned to the Darkmoon Kingdom. This unremarkable character was actually one of lobbyists that the king of Darkmoon Kingdom relied on most heavily. He appeared a bit bedraggled right now.

He crouched on the ground, thoroughly recounting to the king of the Darkmoon Kingdom everything that had happened to him in the Jiang Han territory.

The king of Darkmoon was around forty years old, and had a wispy beard on his chin. His looks were dignified and solemn, his aura uncommon. In particular, his eyes were as ferocious as a tiger's and they looked around brilliantly, appearing quite domineering.

His large hands grasped the dragon throne with vigor and force,

giving others the ferocious feeling of being able to tear violent tigers apart and cleave through huge stone.

"Your Majesty, that Jiang Chen couldn't tell good from bad. Your subject brought to bear all sorts of skills but Jiang Chen would hear none of it. He instead humiliated your subject and said that your subject was a frog at the bottom of the well. He further held my Darkmoon Kingdom in all sorts of contempt and was exceedingly discourteous."

Qi Can also knew that it would be impossible to recruit the Jiang family. He decided to add fuel to the flames and fan up the flames of trouble, thoroughly exaggerating for a bit.

A trace of killing intent shot out from the Darkmoon monarch's tiger eyes. "This Jiang family lad is quite ungracious. It is his honor that we wished to recruit him. This brat is ignorant in his youth and has no respect for anyone after gaining a few tricks. The assembled, combined armies of my Darkmoon Kingdom will use this Jiang family to spill the first blood on the floor!"

"May our king live ten thousand years, may Darkmoon live ten thousand years!" The assembled nobles genuflected and called out.

The king of Darkmoon was greatly pleased and was in high spirits. "My Darkmoon Kingdom will begin its conquest of the sixteen kingdoms with the Eastern Kingdom!"

"Your Majesty, according to intelligence, the Jiang family is adept in compelling the Swordbird army. This type of aerial army poses great destructive power towards ground troops. The great armies of our Darkmoon Kingdom should prepare to face them seriously."

"Humph. Although the Swordbird Army is strong, it's not as if my Darkmoon Kingdom has no corresponding strategy. Firstly, my Darkmoon Kingdom also has the Black Riders, adept at aerial tactics. Although the fighting capabilities of the black crows are ordinary, when combined with a Black Crow Rider, their battle capabilities are

quite astonishing. Three thousand Black Riders are sufficient to contend against an army of a hundred thousand Swordbirds. There will be various elite archer troops on the ground, combined with numerous formations, why would we fear the Swordbird army then? Not to mention, does this mere Jiang family intend to fight against the entire combined army of my Darkmoon Kingdom with just the strength of one family alone?"

It was shocking to think of the strength of a single family fighting against the elite armies of an entire kingdom.

The officials and courtiers of the Darkmoon Kingdom were all extremely optimistic as they engaged in heated discussions and debates with anyone who volunteered opinions.

The king of Darkmoon smiled, "We have also considered this point, so we have obtained the services of the first general of the kingdom, General Ren Feilong, to personally lead the armies."

Ren Feilong was hailed as the first general of the Darkmoon Kingdom. He had only risen to prominence within the last decade or so, but had accomplished countless achievements for the Darkmoon Kingdom.

What need did they have to fear from a mere Jiang family with him leading the armies?

This was practically a tiger hunting sheep, with no doubt about the conclusion at all.

Although the Jiang family was strong, and the rumors of them ending the Long family being quite miraculous, those of the Eastern Kingdom would be the only ones willing to believe and accept such legends.

To an enemy kingdom like the Darkmoon Kingdom, they subconsciously felt that the rumors had been exaggerated. From the bottom of their hearts, they did not believe that the Jiang family was

as miraculous and strong as the legends said.

Chapter 124: I Make the Decisions in My Territory

On the Eastern Kingdom's side, Princess Gouyu made straight for the capital after spending one day in the Jiang Han territory. She sent an order to the dukes at the same time for them to combine all their armies and convene at the southwestern border.

The entire Eastern Kingdom sank into a panic the instant the order to the dukes went out. Everyone knew that the Darkmoon Kingdom was located at the southwestern border of the kingdom.

The Darkmoon Kingdom had always been a sworn enemy of the Eastern Kingdom, and the relationship between the two was famously acrimonious amongst the alliance of the sixteen kingdoms.

The two countries would wage a war against each other almost every ten or twenty years.

It'd either be a pitched full out battle or small skirmishes.

Hate and discord had been passed down through the generations for these two countries, and had reached the point of no possible reconciliation unless one side fell. Whether monarch or citizens, the two sides would grit their teeth with bone-deep hatred whenever the other country was mentioned.

Originally, although the Eastern Kingdom had been a bit weaker, it had never been so weak as to lose power and shame itself over the hundreds of years.

However, at this moment in time, after the two great powers of the royal family and the Long family had clashed with each other, the country's strength had been depleted by nearly one half.

This was precisely when the Eastern Kingdom was at its weakest.

The Darkmoon Kingdom taking advantage of this opening to swoop in was akin to robbing an owner when his house was on fire.

Even small tradesmen and porters would be able to grasp the truth of this. The current Eastern Kingdom truly had no ability to hold their ground against the Darkmoon Kingdom.

The most important thing was that the strongest and most mysterious Jiang family of the kingdom seemed to have turned down the royal family's rewards. This was to say that the kingdom's sole strong fighting force, the Jiang family, would very likely refuse to fight on the kingdom's behalf.

This despairing news spread out across the entire kingdom in waves.

However, at this moment, Princess Gouyu's charisma was brought to the fore.

She issued orders and simultaneously proclaimed to the land that the Eastern Kingdom had long since been prepared for the Darkmoon Kingdom's invasion, and that the elite troops of the kingdom had already been deployed to the southwestern border. They were on the alert and ready for combat.

As for the family that everyone followed with interest in the kingdom, the Jiang family would be fighting for the kingdom and wouldn't let the dirty iron hooves of the Darkmoon Kingdom set even half a step onto Eastern Kingdom territory.

One had to say, this kind of news was most invigorating at this time.

The entire Eastern Kingdom was astir. People were filled with joy and heartened when they heard that the Jiang family would protect the kingdom's frontiers.

The Jiang family hadn't been too extraordinary before, but they had managed to turn the tide against the Long family's rebellion in order to help the royal family solely based on their own power.

They had annihilated the Long family, exterminated their associates, and awed an army of a million strong.

After the embellishments and rumors of a few months, all of these legends had caused the Jiang family to completely replace the Long family's position and cement themselves as the true pillar of the kingdom.

When everyone learned that the Jiang family would still fight for this kingdom, a jubilant atmosphere prevailed throughout the country.

As for Jiang Chen, he kept his low profile as usual.

When he knew that the Darkmoon Kingdom was about to invade, Jiang Chen had once again contacted Mang Qi and asked him to send out a large flock of Swordbirds, as a provision in case of unexpected need.

It was a good thing that the Swordbird army within the Boundless Catacombs were as numerous as the hairs on an ox. The large army that Jiang Chen had brought last time had deployed only one tenth of its numbers.

Mang Qi sent out another large army, giving Jiang Chen a bit more reassurance.

He also knew that the Darkmoon Kingdom would've surely paid attention to the intelligence that he could compel the Swordbird Army.

That they still dared to boldly invade despite knowing so proved that they had some sort of plan in place for the battle capabilities of the Swordbird army.

This battle would possibly not be easy.

A shrill bird cry came from the air as a beam of gold light landed. It was a Goldwing Swordbird.

"Young duke." A man jumped down from the back of the Goldwing Swordbird. It was the captain of his personal guard, Xue Tong.

"Any news? What have you investigated?" Jiang Chen asked.

"Quite a bit. The Darkmoon Kingdom has gathered the armies of 36 dukes this time, and the general in charge is the first general of the Darkmoon Kingdom, Ren Feilong."

"Ren Feilong?" Jiang Chen knew nothing of the Darkmoon Kingdom and had naturally never heard of Ren Feilong's name.

"Yes, this man is not forty years old yet and joined the military when he was thirteen. His accomplishments out of a hundred battles have made him become the god of Darkmoon Kingdom's armies. He's revered as the first general within the kingdom, and is said to deploy troops like a god and emerge victorious from every battle."

"Deploy troops like a god? Emerge victorious from every battle?" Jiang Chen smiled faintly. It was possible to emerge victorious when ordinary, common armies met in battle.

But if one were to say that another deployed troops like a god, Jiang Chen might not necessarily be willing to accept that. It wasn't that he didn't accept this on the basis of a difference in the skill of war, but that at the end of the day, core battle strength was what mattered when two countries engaged in battle.

It was important to observe the art of war, but in many times, there was simply no place for the art of war in the face of absolute strength.

"Young duke, your subject has investigated and obtained a bit of information regarding Ren Feilong. This person is the main general of the armies and it's necessary for us to be on our guard." Xue Tong was being quite cautious.

Jiang Chen accepted the information and started perusing it. This information was almost wholly concerned with Ren Feilong's previous battles, and all sorts of examples and retellings abounded.

Almost all sorts of battles were covered.

Ren Feilong was an uncommon talent in the arena of deploying troops. However, this person was labeled as the first general and was the classic example of the blood of the rank and file winning the general his promotion.

This person was resolute and decisive with his troops. He gave no thought to costs and sacrifices in crucial moments.

His treatment of enemies, and even prisoners, was exceedingly cruel. It was said that during a particular battle, this person had actually killed three hundred thousand prisoners.

Therefore, Ren Feilong had another name, "the god of slaughter".

"His many military accomplishments are but built on the back of slaughter and bloodshed. He kills even captives. This Ren Feilong is a mere butcher in the army." Jiang Chen came to this conclusion.

However, a few more traces of wariness grew within his heart. He had to admit that this person's leadership capabilities and skills in deploying troops were indeed unpredictable and mysterious.

Jiang Chen reflected that although his Swordbird army was great, it relied too heavily on primitive tactics of numbers after all. There was nothing of strategy and tactics at all.

If the Darkmoon Kingdom had made sufficient preparations in battle, it may have the means to fight against this tactic of a sea of numbers.

After all, his opponent was a famous general that ranked first in the kingdom.

Wouldn't it be playing into the other's hands if he were methodical in his actions?

"Xue Tong, if we fight seriously and conventionally against someone skilled at using weapons, we'd definitely be going with their wishes. What do you say?" Jiang Chen asked with a smile.

Xue Tong thought for a moment, and with some emotions flickering across his face, asked, "What do you mean, young duke?"

"If they want to talk strategy, then we won't talk strategy. If they like to use the art of war, then we're going to deploy unconventional tactics instead. This is my territory, I make the decisions here."

"Young duke, what wise ideas do you have?"

"It's not that they're wise ideas, but where are our advantages? They lie within the Swordbird's mobility. Instead of sitting here and waiting for the armies of the Darkmoon Kingdom to arrive, why not strike out proactively?"

"Strike out proactively?" Xue Tong arched his eyebrow, pondered, and then smacked his forehead. "That's right, we seem to have sunk into an odd mental loop. Why must we sit here and wait for the Darkmoon army?"

Indeed, what was the advantage of a Swordbird Army? It was mobility. What was mobility? It meant that they could fight at any time and retreat at any time.

To fight and retreat, the initiative laid within their hands.

The Darkmoon Kingdom may have prepared many tactics to anticipate the Swordbird army's tactic of numbers, but these strategies would still require some time to set up.

But the Swordbird army was most suited for ambushes. My army would strike like the wind before your strategy had enough time to set up.

When your formation is set up, I would then retreat like the wind again.

These harassment tactics and guerrilla warfare may not result in high damage, but it could harass the opponent, impact their morale and make them too fatigued to respond.

Jiang Chen became more excited the more he thought. "Xue Tong, assemble all the troops and contact Princess Gouyu to have her send ten thousand practitioners who are adept at archery. It would be even better if they were in the advanced realm of true qi."

Ten thousand advanced realm practitioners would be very difficult to gather in the span of a moment.

But the grudge between the Darkmoon Kingdom and the Eastern Kingdom had pretty much reached the level of turning every citizen into a soldier of the Eastern Kingdom. When the order was issued, all sorts of experts mobilized immediately and set out on their way with the fastest speed possible to the Jiang Han territory.

On one hand, this was to protect the country and attack the Darkmoon invasion, this was the pride, duty, and obligation of all practitioners.

On the other hand, these practitioners also wanted to catch a glimpse of the legendary Jiang Chen, the genius who had suppressed the Long family's rebellion by his strength alone.

The resolution to defend one's home country and the emotions of personal admiration were combined. The number of advanced realm practitioners who surged into River Wave City within a single day was over six thousand.

There were around nine thousand on the morning of the second, and that number had increased to twelve to thirteen thousand by noon.

Even Jiang Chen hadn't expected the depth of their fervor.

He had to sigh with emotion, the loyalty of this world's practitioners to their country was absolutely no joke.

It was a good thing that as a duke, Jiang Feng wasn't short of people who could command troops. These ten thousand or so people were quickly divided into four great teams.

Every three thousand people was one great team, every three hundred one mid-sized team, and every thirty one small team. Each level would have a captain and vice captain.

Time was still of the essence.

The second batch of Swordbirds from Mang Qi's side had already arrived and lay concealed within the vast mountains.

Jiang Chen rotated out all the Goldwing Swordbirds and Silverwing Swordbirds from the second batch and combined them with the Goldwing and Silverwing Swordbirds from the first batch.

In this manner, he had roughly eight hundred Goldwing Swordbirds and more than ten thousand Silverwing Swordbirds.

Each of the four great teams had roughly two hundred Goldwing Swordbirds and three thousand Silverwing Swordbirds. This was to say that every practitioner who had answered the summons would be equipped with at least one Silverwing Swordbird.

"Everyone, the Darkmoon Kingdom has sharpened their weapons and watered their horses, their great army will charge into our land shortly. As practitioners of the Eastern Kingdom, since you've come here, you don't need me to exhort and rally your heart to protect our territory, right?" Jiang Chen rode a Goldwing Swordbird and hovered in midair, like the arrival of a god of war.

"You are all brave warriors of the Eastern Kingdom, protecting your home and country is your duty, and your utmost honor."

"The Darkmoon Kingdom is led by a man called the first general of their country, Ren Feilong. This person deploys troops like a deity. Our Eastern Kingdom doesn't have the ability fight against them face to face."

"However, if we allow this Darkmoon Kingdom army to invade, this Ren Feilong has another monniker of the god of slaughter. He's a butcher. Not only will he trample our land, but he will also kill our

citizens, kill your parents, your brothers, and your children.”

“Are you willing to stand here and wait for them to arrive on your doorstep to slaughter your kin, or are you willing to follow me and proactively meet the enemy in front of your country’s doors? Are you willing to use your blood and life to defy them, or are you willing to use the blood and bones of your kin to dye their medals of service red?”

Chapter 125: The Mysterious Visitor

One had to say, Jiang Chen wasn't particularly well-versed in the area of boosting his troops' morale, but these words were very direct.

Besides, the invasion of the Darkmoon Kingdom was the accumulation of generations of hatred between the two countries. He almost didn't need to do anything to inspire everyone to fight to the last moment, bleed to the last drop of blood and kill to their dying breath.

Under Jiang Chen's fortifying words, one by one, the practitioners all raised their arms to call out loudly and swear blood oaths that they would willingly follow Jiang Chen unto their deaths to keep the enemy at bay beyond the kingdom's borders.

"Kill the enemy! Kill the enemy!"

More than ten thousand advanced realm practitioners roared in unison, their voices shaking the clouds.

"Hahaha, this is interesting, most interesting."

Suddenly, a long laugh was heard from the empty air. This laughter actually pierced strongly through the shouts of ten thousand as though it was made from gold or stone, penetrating the air and stabbing into everyone's eardrums.

"Who is it?" Jiang Chen's brow furrowed as his Ear of the Zephyr moved slightly, his God's Eye already shooting towards an empty patch of space to the east.

"Friend, come on out."

A green figure broke through the sky like lightning in the air to the east.

The currents of air within the sky were suddenly separated swiftly

into two sides, like a water surface that had been parted by a speedboat.

The green figure became bigger and bigger. It was actually a wild beast with wings on its back. Its fangs were hideous and it was many times bigger than a Greenwing Swordbird.

The meaty wings that covered the sky and blotted out the sun were even more towering and colossal than those of the Goldwing Swordbird's.

A finely dressed youth sat on the back of this creature. His adornments resplendent, he was carefree and at ease even beneath the gazes of ten thousand people.

This person's bearing was extraordinary. Although he looked just one or two years older than Jiang Chen, he exuded a subtle hint of a mature manner.

Judging from the level of his training, he hadn't seemed to have broken through to spirit dao yet, but he was undoubtedly at the peak of the true qi realm and solidly an eleven meridians true qi master.

The youth's gaze was profound and deep. The ten thousand strong army were like clay figures in front of him as he ignored them completely. His target was clear as he flew towards Jiang Chen.

"You're Jiang Chen?" The youth with the extraordinary bearing smiled faintly as he looked at Jiang Chen, but a sense of friendliness permeated his smile.

"I'm Jiang Chen. Who might your esteemed self be?" Jiang Chen was a bit perplexed.

"Allow me to introduce myself, I'm called Ye Rong and I'm from the Skylareland Kingdom." A type of confidence and ease that prompted subservience from others was continuously found in the youth's smile. The first impression he left on others was one able to generate a sense of affinity with them.

"The Skylaurel Kingdom?" Jiang Chen's face showed faint traces of emotion. "If I remember correctly, the Ye surname is the national surname for the Skylaurel Kingdom?"

"Heh heh, brother Jiang Chen speaks correctly. I am the fourth prince under the current king in the Skylaurel Kingdom."

"Fourth prince?" Jiang Chen smiled. "The Skylaurel Kingdom is hailed as one of the four great kingdoms in the sixteen kingdom alliance. Their strength is domineering and their existence amongst the pinnacle of the sixteen kingdoms. Why brings Prince Ye to this remote, backward place?"

Ye Rong chuckled. "Brother Jiang Chen is quite humble. There are currently many rumors and underground intelligence regarding Jiang Chen in the entire sixteen kingdoms. My avenues of intelligence are slightly broader so I've received my knowledge just a bit earlier than others."

"Heh heh, so even Prince Ye also believes these dubious rumors?"

Ye Rong smiled, "I'd half believed and half doubted them initially, but..."

Ye Rong paused and swept his eyes over the ten thousand strong army, the proud Goldwing Swordbirds and the Silverwing Swordbirds with their highly arched necks and highly spirited battle intent.

"I have no choice but to be a believer now that I've seen this." Ye Rong seemed to be quite glad. "To know a man by repute is not as good as seeing him face to face. It looks like not only have I arrived early on this trip, I've also come very aptly."

Jiang Chen faintly furrowed his brow. "Prince Ye, I'm not sure if you've come early or late, but I can be certain that you've come at an unfortuitous time."

"Haha, I rather think that I've come at a perfect time. Surely, the

reason why brother Jiang Chen has called for this oath taking rally is to advantage of the Swordbirds' mobility to harass the armies of the Darkmoon Kingdom?"

"Hmm? How do you know this?" Jiang Chen truly did have this thought, but who would've imagined that this youth would reveal the secrets of heaven with one word?

"Heh heh, I would do the same if I were brother Jiang Chen. Great minds think alike."

Jiang Chen was a bit impatient, "Prince Ye, please speak directly."

"Heh heh, he who comes from afar is still a guest, right? I would like to request a cup of wine from brother Jiang." Ye Rong still remained unhurried and unflappable. "However, I won't just drink this wine and offer nothing in return. I'll gift brother Jiang a strategy to beat back the enemy. I'm sure you'll find it useful."

It was impossible for Jiang Chen to throw all his bearing to the wind now that these words had been spoken. After all, Ye Rong was the prince of a great nation at the end of the day, and his demeanor hadn't been haughty or overbearing.

He had been amiable and polite and his bearing was actually quite nice.

It would be shameful for Jiang Chen to reject such a person and shunt them a thousand miles away.

"In that case, you honor us, Prince Ye. I'm afraid there is no decent wine that is befitting your noble taste in such wild mountains and plains."

"When drinking with a bosom friend, even a thousand cups are still too little. When we drink wine, we are partaking in the mood. As I've seen brother Jiang today, I'm sure I'll be satisfied with even drinking village brew."

One had to say, this Prince Ye seemed to exude a manner that made others feel that they wished to follow him with every word he said. He was always able to speak to the heart of the listener.

“Prince Ye, I, Jiang Chen, salute you.” Jiang Chen lifted his cup.

“Alright, to our great satisfaction!” Ye Rong threw his head back and drained his cup.

After they had drunk three cups, Jiang Chen set down his cup.

“Prince Ye, the timing of battle cannot be delayed so let’s cut a long story short.”

“Alright, then I’ll condense what I have to say. I’ve come here due to two matters this time. One, to help you beat back the enemy, and two, to invite you to develop your skills in my Skylareel Kingdom.”

“Oh? How would you elaborate on these words?”

“These two items originally had no connection to each other. If we must define a relationship, then the first item can be viewed as the greeting gift for the second item.”

Jiang Chen gazed indifferently at Ye Rong, “Is there a reason for this?”

“The reason is simple. I admire you and need you. And you need a bigger stage. I don’t want to voice alarmist words. I just want to say that going to the Skylareel Kingdom is definitely at least ten times better than staying in the Eastern Kingdom.”

Of that, Jiang Chen couldn’t deny.

The Skylareel Kingdom was one of the four great kingdoms in the alliance of the sixteen kingdoms. These four kingdoms were the apex of existence within the sixteen kingdoms, and were first rate kingdoms.

The Darkmoon Kingdom was roughly a second rate kingdom.

As for the Eastern Kingdom, it had always hovered between a second rate and a third rate kingdom. After this civil unrest, it was without a doubt, a third rate kingdom.

Therefore, there was truly no basis of comparison between the Eastern Kingdom and Skylaurel Kingdom.

"Jiang Chen, from my investigations I know that you're a proud man. I invite you to the Skylaurel Kingdom not as a follower, but as a guest."

"A guest?"

"Indeed. I know that proud men will never be willing to live under someone else's roof. Therefore, our relationship can be defined as one of employer and employee, and not as master and servant." One had to say, Ye Rong carried himself very humbly and he was full of sincerity.

"Why me?"

Ye Rong laughed meaningfully. "Jiang Chen, you're the same as me — gold buried in sand, our shine temporarily hidden. To speak candidly, I'm only a second or third rate prince in the Skylaurel Kingdom. There are at least four or five princes that are much more superior to me. It isn't that they're better than me, it's that their lives are good in the sense that they were born into a strong position. They have good mothers, whereas my birth mother doesn't possess a high standing and lacks a prominent family background. I don't have any sort of backer."

"No backer..." Jiang Chen remembered the feud between him and the Long family and recalled Long Juxue. When one spoke of backers, he truly was similar to Ye Rong in this aspect.

"Jiang Chen, you have no backer either. I've heard that you've formed a blood feud with one of the genius disciples of the Purple Sun Sect. This is to say that in your lifetime, at least half of the great doors to the sects have been sealed off to you. If you stay in the Eastern

Kingdom, it will be impossible for you to attract any attention from the sects. However, if you come to the Skylaurel Kingdom, everything will be different. As strong as the Purple Sun Sect is, they will not impact the Skylaurel Kingdom because the supporter of the kingdom behind the scenes is the Precious Tree Sect of the four great sects."

The Precious Tree Sect was one of the few great sects that was on par with and advanced shoulder to shoulder with the Purple Sun Sect.

"This is to say, if you display exemplary performance in the Skylaurel Kingdom and attract the attention of the Precious Tree Sect, entering the Sect to train is also a path as well. This way, you won't have to worry about being constantly surveilled by the Purple Sun Sect in the future. With the protection of the Precious Tree Sect, it's of no matter that you've offended the disciple of the Purple Sun Sect. Within the alliance of the sixteen kingdoms, the disciples of the Precious Tree Sect are on par with the disciples of the Purple Sun Sect."

Ye Rong's tone was at ease as he smiled and continued, "Therefore, the two of us are the same. We both need each other. Brother Jiang, I've thoroughly gone through everything with you, please consider it for a bit."

Jiang Chen pondered silently for a moment and asked, "What strategy do you have to make the enemy back down?"

Ye Rong displayed a meaningful smile. "My strategy is quite simple and crude, and that is to kill the first general of the Darkmoon Kingdom, Ren Feilong."

"Obtain the head of the general of a million strong army? This... do you take me for a spirit dao expert?"

"I know you're not a spirit dao practitioner, but you've once fought against one. I have full faith in your abilities. However, you'll need some aid in assassinating Ren Feilong."

"What sort of aid?" Jiang Chen asked.

"A spirit weapon of course." In between Ye Rong's smiles, he suddenly brought out an inky black longbow as though he was demonstrating a trick.

This bow immediately exuded the tantalizing presence of spirit qi when it was placed on the table.

"A spirit bow?" Jiang Chen's brow arched slightly.

He was not lacking in theoretical knowledge of the world he'd reincarnated in, but was only short in matters of all sorts of hardware, weapons, pills, and various ingredients.

"This is a four-times refined spirit weapon with extraordinary power. If Jiang Chen possesses this spirit weapon, it would not be entirely impossible for you to fight against even Chu Xinghan."

Jiang Chen was tempted, but repressed his greed.

"If I accept this bow, does this mean I've agreed to be in your service?" Jiang Chen asked blandly.

"These two are separate matters. Borrowing the bow takes precedence, we can discuss later with regards to you being in my service. We can slowly mull over the various conditions."

"We don't need to discuss further, I agree." Jiang Chen had somewhat approved of Ye Rong after testing him for a few times. He could tell that Ye Rong was sincere.

The Jiang family would surely leave the Eastern Kingdom one day. As one of the strongest kingdoms in the sixteen kingdom alliance, the Skyl Laurel Kingdom would be quite a nice place to set themselves down in.

Chapter 126: Gold Buried in the Sand

Ye Rong was overjoyed to hear these words. "Brother Jiang, does this mean that you've accepted?"

"Well spoken, we're all gold buried in the sand, our shine temporarily hidden. However, you and I are not the sort to accept being buried in the sand forever. Perhaps, you and I teaming up would be the ideal decision."

Pa pa pa pa.

Ye Rong applauded and laughed heartily. "Good! Such satisfaction! Jiang Chen, I, Ye Rong, haven't met someone as straightforward as you in a long time. Come, let's drink!"

"Drink!"

Jiang Chen had been running about to and fro ever since he was reincarnated into this world. He'd had almost no chance to explore the outside world. Apart from Fatty Xuan and Hubing Yue who were left behind by his predecessor, he had almost no one who he could call a friend.

Princess Gouyu could possibly be counted as one, but the relationship between the two had basically exceeded the range of friendship.

As for the others, they were either his kin or his subordinates.

This Ye Rong was the first person that he felt he could get along well with, and someone that he could become friends with. At least, the two of them were birds of a feather.

"Brother Jiang, I feel like we're old friends despite this being our first meeting. Take this Da Yu¹ bow and this quiver of arrows as my greeting gift. There are 36 arrows within it that form a set with the bow. Divine arrows must accompany a precious bow in order to

deploy its greatest effectiveness.”

Ye Rong was in a great mood as he discovered the two had much in common after drinking a few cups of wine with Jiang Chen.

“Prince Ye, don’t call me brother Jiang. You should be a year or two older than me, you can call me Jiang Chen or lil brother Jiang.”

“Heh heh, then I shall call you younger brother Jiang or wise brother. Oh right, Jiang Chen, this Da Yu bow will only increase your chances by an additional ten percent. It won’t be able to guarantee your success in killing Ren Feilong.”

Indeed, even with a spirit bow in hand, Ren Feilong would have countless numbers of experts protecting him in an army numbering tens of thousands. It wouldn’t be simple to kill him.

“Unless, brother Ye do you have any other better ideas?”

“I do have other ideas, but they’re a bit ruthless.” Ye Rong was slightly hesitant.

“Ruthlessness is of no concern in a battle between two armies. If the Darkmoon Kingdom kills their way into the Eastern Kingdom, then with Ren Feilong’s nickname as the god of slaughter, he’ll be a full fledged butcher. The death toll of my Eastern Kingdom’s citizens will likely measure in the tens of thousands.”

Ye Rong nodded. “One truly can’t have so many reservations when two armies meet in battle.”

After he spoke, Ye Rong seemed to execute another trick as he reached out with his right hand. A snake dotted with green spots appeared on the back of his hand and it entwined around Ye Rong’s arm.

This snake had a pair of thin and small eyes, the black, slitted eyes located on the two sides of its triangular head exuded a frightening sense of viciousness.

“Younger brother, this snake is called the Sevenstar Joined Moon snake. Its venom is quite strange. The blood of anyone poisoned with this venom will boil and their organs will undergo aberrations. They’ll slowly change into bloodthirsty monsters. These monsters’ appetites are bizarre as they’ll have a primeval urge to feed and will lust after living people and fresh blood. Imagine this, if a batch of people were afflicted with this poison out of a million strong army and one bites another, then they’ll be linked like a string of seven stars. They’ll be interconnected, and it won’t be long before the million strong army will fall apart without making battle.”

“Sevenstar Joined Moon snake?” The memories of his past life floated up in Jiang Chen’s mind. This snake did possess a strange venom that could spread continuously, like Ye Rong had said.

As long as someone afflicted bit another person once, then the person bitten would spread this poison. Following this train, one would infect ten, and ten would infect a hundred.

How much of this suffering would a million strong army be able to endure?

However, it was said that this venomous snake was very difficult to raise. How did Ye Rong acquire one?

“Younger brother, don’t look at me that way. This snake isn’t something that I can afford to raise. I’ve borrowed it from a friend in the Precious Tree Sect and only have fifteen days with it before I’ll have to return it to him. If he knew that I used it to intervene in the battles of common kingdoms, I’d likely be incriminated.”

Ye Rong seemed troubled as he spoke these words. It could be seen that he had truly spent a large amount of capital to recruit Jiang Chen and gain his friendship.

“Brother Ye need not worry. The venom of the Sevenstar Joined Moon snake can be refined into a completely different poison, so that others won’t be able to recognize that it’s the Sevenstar Joined Moon

venom.”

“Refined?” Ye Rong blinked a bit in disbelief. “Younger brother, you know how to refine poison?”

Jiang Chen laughed heartily. “It looks like your intelligence gathering wasn’t thorough enough. I actually do know a thing or two about this unconventional method of poison.”

“Oh? This is a pleasant surprise. The roots of the way of poison ultimately originates from the dao of pills. Younger brother, can it be that you’ve carried out some research on the dao of pills?”

“I know a thing or two about it.” Jiang Chen smiled humbly.

“Younger brother, if you truly are talented in the field of pills, then your chances of entering the Precious Tree Sect will greatly increase. The Precious Tree Sect heavily emphasizes potential in the dao of pills. The Precious Tree Sect exists at the apex of the four great sects of the sixteen kingdom alliance in the area of pills.”

Jiang Chen was immediately inspired with the Sevenstar Joined Moon snake and he combined the various methods in deploying poison in his past life to instantly brainstorm many more tactics.

When Jiang Chen reappeared the next day, a few more traces of a confident smile was on his face.

After a day and night of refining, he had already refined great batches of the Sevenstar Joined Moon venom into mutated forms of venom.

This venom was poured into several hundred small flasks and passed out to the captains of the great, middle, and small teams.

...

It was the seventh day since the Darkmoon army had left the capital of the Darkmoon Kingdom.

On this day, the great army had chosen to convene in an empty mountain valley. They only started making camp after ensuring that their lines and formations were arranged properly.

They would arrive at the border after two more days of marching, and then the Eastern Kingdom would be visible in the distance.

The Eastern Kingdom's fertile lands, sexy beauties, and countless wealth seemed to be waving at them.

Ren Feilong had summoned all the high ranking officers within the army to the tent of the commander-in-chief.

"Everyone, we'll be arrive the frontier of our Darkmoon Kingdom after crossing this Bayun Valley. We'll split the army into two, one to take the Eastern Kingdom's Westcreek territory, the other to make a feint at the Eastern Kingdom's Jiang Han territory."

"Make a feint at the Jiang Han territory?" A highly ranked officer asked out of curiosity.

"Yes. The Jiang family has a grip on the Jiang Han territory, and are versed in compelling the Swordbird army. If we attack them head on, although we have many methods to counter them, it will still be a war of attrition in the end. They won't care no matter how many Swordbirds die, but we'll have to use the lives of our soldiers and generals. It's not worth it."

"The commander-in-chief speaks truly. There's no need to expend ourselves against the Swordbird army. As long as we create an opening in the Westcreek territory and have the great army pour in, the troops can follow from behind in an unending stream. Our army will have already surged into the Eastern Kingdom before the Jiang family reacts. At that time, they'll be hard pressed to attend to two fronts. We'll then employ a pincer move and surround them with several squadrons from different sides. They'll be unable to focus on one thing without losing sight of another, and hence will be defeated without even battling."

The person speaking was another high ranking officer, and one of the more renowned Dukes from the Darkmoon Kingdom.

The first part of his words had grasped Ren Feilong's invasion strategy, but the second part still didn't comprehend the latter's intent.

"It's undoubted that our great army will pass through the Westcreek territory to enter the Eastern Kingdom, however, this is only one of our many plans. Our real ace in the hole is to come in through the southeastern part of the Eastern Kingdom. We'll take a roundabout path for a couple thousand li² and then turn to slip into the Jiang Han territory."

"Ace in the hole?" The crowd of officers showed some skepticism.

"Indeed, our great army is only preparations on the surface. The real trump card to deal with the Jiang family isn't us. We're just posturing. I'd like to ask everyone, even if we have an army a million strong or even more, how much would we lose in a direct confrontation to destroy the Swordbird army? Thirty percent, or even fifty? If our casualties reach fifty percent, then our morale will be such that we are unable to continue fighting. The Eastern Kingdom ultimately still has some fighting capabilities, so at that point, it would be difficult to determine who is the victor or loser if we fight to the death. Therefore, to capture the Jiang family, we must spring a surprise attack."

"A surprise attack?"

"Indeed, a surprise attack." Ren Feilong brimmed with confidence. "The trump card I'm sending out is comprised of true qi masters. They'll infiltrate the River Wave city in the Jiang Han territory, and we're sure to have long since made preparations for our Darkmoon Kingdom spies within the city. We'll work in collusion, one from outside and one from within to sneak into the River Wave city, then strike swiftly to attack the Jiang Han manor, like a sudden clap of thunder leaving no time to cover one's ears. Our target is Jiang Feng."

“Jiang Feng?”

“Yes, as long as we capture Jiang Feng and the Jiang family clan members, then Jiang Chen will hold back from taking action for fear of involving his kin. He’ll lose his fighting capabilities. As fierce as he is and even if he can compel the Swordbird army, there’s no way that he would sacrifice his clan for the Eastern Kingdom. Therefore...”

All the other officials were suddenly enlightened when Ren Feilong’s words traveled across the room. They all praised him highly, “The commander-in-chief is undoubtedly great. This sort of arrangement that mingles true and false truly makes one gasp in admiration.”

The army’s various maneuvers, all sorts of attacks and feints were all actually illusions. Their true goal was to provide cover for the trump card and to numb Jiang Chen as they made a surprise raid on the Jiang Han manor.

One had to say, Ren Feilong’s strategy arrangement was unconventional, but it happened to be the most appropriate and one most likely to succeed.

If they didn’t use this method, the Darkmoon Kingdom would pay a heavy toll to defeat the Swordbird army.

“Alright, everyone make your preparations. The army will continue to move forward tomorrow and split into two on the border. We’ll follow the battle plan, with no mistakes allowed.”

With Ren Feilong’s arrangements, these officers were in even higher spirits. Their emotions had been a bit complicated originally.

After all, they’d never experienced fighting a Swordbird army. They felt that it was quite a sticky situation when they thought about it.

Even if they won, it would be a pyrrhic victory since they would pay a heavy cost.

If the commander-in-chief’s tactics worked, then they would be able

to capture the Jiang family with unstained swords. It would be absolutely perfect.

Just as the officers were about to head back to their camps, a shrill horn sounded from the outskirts.

This meant an enemy was attacking them.

“Everyone get ready! Enemies approach!”

Just as this voice rang out, countless winged birds suddenly appeared in the night sky beneath the rays of the moon. They were akin to an enormous black curtain, covering the sky and blotting out the moon, making furiously for this part of the mountain valley.

“It’s Swordbirds, Swordbirds!”

Some in the great army started calling out and shouting.

“Why are you panicking? Set up the round shield formation.”

The round shield formation was the best way to fight against high aerial attacks. The round shield formation could guarantee that the momentum caused by diving from the air would have almost no damage.

“Arrow formation, ready!”

“Long spear formation, ready!”

These two formations were part of the same formation system that the round shield formation belonged to.

If the round shield formation was to defend against high aerial attacks, then the arrow and long spear formation was the set up to attack the Swordbirds.

One had to hand it to them, the Darkmoon Kingdom troops had made a significant amount of close knit preparations for the Swordbird army.

Just as everyone stood stiffly at attention on the ground and prepared to fight, the Swordbirds actually flew over in the air above them and didn't even want to dive down. They whooshed past like an enormous black curtain being drawn swiftly through the sky. They came fast, and they left fast.

1. Da Yu is the name of a legendary ancient ruler who successfully controlled the floods.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yu_the_Great 2. One li = 0.5 km = 1/3 mile

Chapter 127: Toying with the Darkmoon Kingdom Army

"Damn it, are they playing a joke? I thought they were going to ambush us!"

"These dumb feathered beasts can only scare the people of the Eastern Kingdom. They're aren't much in the face of our mighty Darkmoon Kingdom army."

The soldiers and officers of the Darkmoon Kingdom all cursed loudly. They'd spent quite a while setting up their formation, but this flock of Swordbirds had just flown by without dropping even a single feather.

"What the hell!"

But, the officer in charge of directing the formations didn't dare to lower his guard and didn't dare to disperse the formation. He only gave the order a full fifteen minutes later when he saw that the Swordbird army wasn't going to make a return.

"Retreat!"

The formation was taken down amidst a clatter of complaints and curses. Everyone sat down again in pairs, back to back, intending to rest where they stood.

After all, this was marching and fighting. They had to march during the day, so even if they couldn't lie down on the ground at night, they still had to sit down and rest for a bit.

It hadn't been even fifteen minutes after they'd sat down when the shrill horn call sounded again.

"The enemy's attacking again, get up! Set up the formation, set up the formation!"

It was happening again with another batch of Swordbirds flying over

from the direction of the Eastern Kingdom. This time, there were roughly several thousand Swordbirds. They were all Silverwing Swordbirds under the leadership of the Goldwing Swordbirds, with not a single Greenwing Swordbird in sight.

“There are people on the back of the Swordbirds! It’s a real ambush this time!”

“Set up the formation and the long spear formation, prepare to attack!”

Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh!

Chirp, chirp, chirp!

The dense black Swordbird army had once again deceived on the Darkmoon Kingdom army. Although there were riders on the backs of the Swordbirds this time, they still didn’t commence any attacks and just glided past high up in the air. Even the strongest archers couldn’t shoot to that altitude.

Tricked once again.

The soldiers and officers of the Darkmoon Kingdom were a bit inflamed with irritation. They’d just closed their eyes for a bit when two batches from the Swordbird army had flown by. It seemed like they were going to fight, but then they hadn’t. Just what the hell did they plan to do by flying back and forth like this?

The formation was taken down. This time however, a half hour passed by before the shrill horn sounded abruptly, once again shaking the soldiers out of their sleep.

“The enemy approaches, the enemy approaches! Get up! Set up the formation, set up the formation!”

The formation was once again set up with everyone in a fluster. It was a good thing that these were highly trained and disciplined soldiers. Even if they were rubbing the sleep out of their eyes, the

speed and efficiency of which they set up their formations wasn't delayed in the slightest.

The formation was quickly set up again amidst a clatter of noise. The Swordbird army that had been detected once again flew over from the direction of the Eastern Kingdom.

"It's probably just harassment again this time right? There's only a few thousand Swordbirds, they're not capable of doing that much damage. If it really comes down to a fight, the exterior formations will be enough to destroy them."

"They won't fight for sure. These dumb beasts are just here to make trouble so that we can't get a good night's sleep!"

"Damnit, the Eastern Kingdom has no strength and can only pull these stinking tactics!"

"They don't properly fight in a battle between two armies and only use these little tricks. How shameful!"

The soldiers railed their enemy with insults but were also full of resignation. Who had made the rule that base tactics were off the table when two armies fought? This was labeled 'all is fair in war'.

After all, their Darkmoon Kingdom commander-of-chief was a god of the army who was also well versed in using devious tactics.

"Sigh. Take down the formation. It's all just harassment after all. They don't have the courage to fight face to face with the brave warriors of the Darkmoon Kingdom!"

"The Eastern Kingdom is filled with cowards!"

"Useless scum of the Eastern Kingdom, come down and fight if you dare! What skill do you have in just flying back and forth over our heads?"

The soldiers beneath called out invectives and attempted to infuriate

the Eastern Kingdom practitioners riding the Swordbirds.

“Since you want to fight, then let’s fight!”

A response traveled down from the air and suddenly all the practitioners on the back of the Swordbirds took out the longbows behind them. Arrowheads with fire and oil tied to them suddenly rained down onto the camp beneath them.

When several thousand people fired at the same time and each shot out twenty arrows, that still made for a total of ten thousand arrows.

When ten thousand arrows descended on such a small space, their destructive power was quite great.

Although the formation beneath them blocked most of the arrows, a minority of the arrowheads still landed on the tents.

When the flaming arrowheads landed on the tents, they began to burn furiously.

After that, some soldiers caught on fire.

After a round of furious shooting, the Swordbird army didn’t linger at all as they left with great fanfare, leaving behind a sea of fire beneath them.

“Put out the fire! Hurry up and put out the fire!”

Even though a great majority of the ten thousand flaming arrows had been destroyed, several thousand had still landed on the ground, enough to ignite a large swath of fiery ocean.

The internal organization of the great army was a bit bedraggled for the moment because of the fire.

Ren Feilong immediately gave the order, “Black Riders ready! Guard the skies, if you meet the Swordbird troops, fight immediately! You are only allowed to win and not allowed to lose!”

The Darkmoon Kingdom had actually prepared an aerial army as well, named the Black Riders.

However, the Darkmoon Kingdom had limited resources in this area and had managed to scrape together an army of only three thousand strong. The black crows were far fewer in number when compared to the Goldwing Swordbirds so they could at most be on par with the Silverwing Swordbirds. But the men of this troop were all of the advanced realm of true qi and had met rigorous selection criteria. Their system of training was also exceedingly robust.

They were truly much stronger compared to the hastily assembled Swordbird riders that Jiang Chen had put together.

Another wave of the Swordbird army arrived not long after the Black Riders had taken to the air. In this way, the anticipated battle in mid-air started taking place.

Whether in terms of tactics or training, the Black Riders were truly much stronger.

However, the Swordbird riders also had an edge, and that was the natural advantage of the Swordbirds themselves. The Swordbirds were fierce spirit beasts and their defensive capabilities were astounding, and absolutely not something that the Black Riders could hope to measure up to.

When all these advantages were cancelled out, the fighting capabilities of the two were roughly on par with each other.

However, the Swordbird riders obviously didn't have the desire to stay fighting. After they exchanged several rounds with the Black Riders, they left with great waves of their wings.

The Black Riders even started suspecting the number of waves this Swordbird army had. Could it be the same flock of Swordbirds circling in the surroundings and flying back and forth?

After all, flying in the air was different to walking on the ground. One

could just make a circle and come from the east, make another slight circle and come from the east again.

With just this type of circling, they would mislead others that there seemed to be many waves of Swordbird riders.

However, no one would be able to be certain whether it was one wave or multiple waves of Swordbird riders. Therefore, the Black Riders captain decided to follow this wave and see just what the Swordbird riders were up to.

The pursuit had just started when suddenly, great waves of Swordbirds surged out from the three directions of east, west, and north.

"Damn it, we walked into a trap. That was inducing us to leave our home base! Set up the formation, ground army, set up the formation!"

The Black Riders had been diverted to the south, completely taking out their aerial defenses. In this manner, the people below couldn't concentrate on dousing the fires, and had to set up formation to be on their guard against attacks from the sky.

However, since the fire had started burning, the soldiers couldn't set up the formation however much they wished to. Although they all wore armor, they were made of blood and flesh after all. No one could withstand the strong momentum of the fire.

At this time, the three Swordbird squads in the sky attacked in unison. Countless arrows rained down like rainwater splashed from a gourd ladle, pouring down from the sky.

Due to the raging fire below, the defensive formation was not as solid as before.

As soon as the round shield defensive formation became unsteady, many gaps would then appear. In the face of such a densely packed hail of arrows, any gaps would be fatal.

Agonized screams rang out all of a sudden, to be followed up with even more painful cries.

Those who were hit screamed and those who were burning cried out. The great army sank into a chaos of movement in the span of a moment.

It was a good thing that the army was highly trained and they immediately found their footing after temporary unrest. Those in charge of dousing the fire and those in charge of setting up formation each focused on their tasks. Everything was in good order and well arranged.

Except, after this round of attacks, even though the main strength of the army hadn't been harmed, but several thousand soldiers were still more or less injured by the arrows.

After all, the arrows shot down by the three squads of more than ten thousand people still made for twenty to thirty thousand arrows. Even if they didn't pierce anyone to death, it was enough to bombard many to their deaths.

The effectiveness of harassment tactics and guerilla warfare apparent, the Swordbird army didn't stay and fight. They left with great fanfare once again, leaving the great army beneath them screaming out curses.

The altitude of the Swordbird army had made it impossible for them to fight back.

When travelling from high to low, even if the force of the arrows were weak, they still at least had the potential to injure and kill. But when they shot into the air from the ground, the force of their arrows was naturally greatly decreased.

Even the practitioner with the best arm strength could barely manage to cover the distance with his shooting range. But how would something that just managed to reach them be enough harm

to the Swordbirds?

The feathers on the Swordbirds were as tough as iron and steel, a perverted existence.

Therefore, the battle had resulted in a furious Darkmoon Kingdom army with no outlet to vent their anger.

However, no one within the Darkmoon Kingdom army could have anticipated that the true disaster was only just about to begin.

A soldier who had been injured by an arrow suddenly crawled up stiffly and pounced, biting down on another soldier's throat.

"Ah!" A ghastly cry rang out, with the bitten soldier claspng his throat painfully. Fresh blood splurged profusely out from his throat.

Shortly afterwards, another soldier whose wounds were being tended to by his comrade had his eyes suddenly turn blood red and his teeth chatter. He extended his head, and bit down viciously on the back of the hand of the comrade bandaging him up.

"You... you're freaking crazy! I'm dressing your wounds and you bite me?!"

However, these sort of scenes was only the beginning.

One, two...

Bizarre screams and cries broke through the calm of the army. All sorts of wails, heckling, and curses spread throughout the mountain valley.

The enemy's ambush had ended, but why did these shrill cries and curses ring out continuously?

The great army in the mountain valley suddenly sank into a perplexed panic. The panicked feelings spread outwards like an epidemic.

However, once the frightening poison had any sort of momentum, the speed of its spread wasn't any slower than the spread of those frightened feelings.

After an hour, the great army in the valley had already completely dissolved in chaos. In the beginning, the captains, lieutenants, and various sorts of generals had been able to keep order.

However in the end, this sort of situation became completely out of control and slowly spiraled into pandemonium.

Once fear spread, even a rock solid army would be overcome, not to mention that this type of fear wasn't brought by the enemy, but appeared from within the camp itself.

Internal panic was much more frightening and damaging than an external enemy.

Chapter 128: Killing the First General

“Commander-in-chief, something’s gone terribly wrong. The army is in complete chaos. The injured soldiers are all leaping on each other and biting their own comrades. Those who were bitten went on to bite others after a short time as well. One passed it onto ten others, ten passed it onto a hundred others. Even if we were to kill them now, we wouldn’t be able to get rid of them all. The soldier’s hearts are all jittery, and they can’t find it within themselves to kill their comrades.”

In the beginning, within the commander-in-chief’s tent, Ren Feilong had thought that it was merely some small scuffles and fights. He actually hadn’t wavered in the slightest when the battlecries shook the sky just now.

He knew very well that these Swordbird riders were just here for harassment, and would never dare to cross swords with the bulk of their power here. The Eastern Kingdom didn’t possess such fighting capabilities, and this truly wasn’t a place that was suited to be a battlefield either.

However, Ren Feilong’s confidence this time had been that of overconfidence.

“Commander-in-chief, we really can’t keep things under control anymore. The great army has already fallen into disarray. We need to stem the chaos or the great army will completely collapse.”

Ren Feilong viciously smashed the teacup in his hand onto the ground. “Useless! A bunch of useless trash! A couple thousand Swordbirds are enough to disturb my million strong army?”

“Commander-in-chief, it’s different this time. Who would have thought that our soldiers would suddenly attack each other? Additionally, they seem to be under some sort of magic spell. The soldiers are constantly biting each other and not open to reason at

all. It's like they've all fallen victim to some bizarre poison and are already as good as dead."

"Bizarre poison?" Ren Feilong's eyes widened. "Can it be... this is bad!"

Ren Feilong suddenly recalled a frightening possibility and hastily gave an order, "Draw in the army and count off. Anyone who's been bitten is to be immediately executed. Draw in anyone who hasn't been bitten and prepare to break through the various camps. Look over each other and surveil each other. Not a single person who's been bitten is allowed to slip through the cracks."

Ren Feilong was truly a bit shaken this time. He'd been a part of the army for thirty years, accomplished countless achievements, and seen numerous battles of life and death.

However, the battle of tonight was absolutely different when compared to anything before. It could be said that it wasn't a battle at all, but a disaster.

"Commander-in-chief, your subordinates will cover your retreat."

"Commander-in-chief, come this way. Everyone open your eyes and look carefully! Those who are bitten are to be executed with no exception."

It was a chaotic mess at the scene and the surroundings of Ren Feilong's camp were no exception.

There were almost no complete squads remaining now that the situation had developed to this point. The squads had all been completely separated and it was pure luck as to whether or not someone had been bitten.

It was a good thing that this area was filled with the army's experts. Those who hadn't been bitten congregated in groups of several hundred, with ten thousand being gathered before long.

They dashed left and right and finally carved out a path of blood.

At this moment, the illumination of the moon in the night sky suddenly dimmed again, as if something was covering it.

Countless numbers of Swordbirds suddenly appeared again in the next second, and another round of frightening arrow attacks rained down like torrential rain.

“Kill! Kill the Darkmoon Kingdom robbers, kill Ren Feilong!”

“Ren Feilong, you’re called the first general of the Darkmoon Kingdom, but you’ll probably have to title yourself the unlucky butt-head of the Darkmoon Kingdom after today’s battle, right? Hahahahaha!”

Ren Feilong almost vomited blood in anger after hearing these words.

This battle had truly been too depressing. He had almost been continuously toyed by his opponents and hadn’t had the slightest ability to fight back.

All of his preparations, all of his so-called battle tactics had been completely useless.

Yes, he’d truly been played with.

When it came down to it, the Swordbird army of the Eastern Kingdom hadn’t killed that many in the Darkmoon Kingdom. The Darkmoon Kingdom’s injuries were almost all a result of internal strife.

Ren Feilong’s face was darkened as he fled in a panic into the night, beneath cover from his subordinates.

At this moment, whether it was the round shield formation, the arrow or long spear formation, all of them had completely collapsed and couldn’t be formed at all.

Without these great formations, it would require much more effort to

fight against the Swordbird army.

In the beginning, the Swordbird army had only served as harassment. Without the cover of the great formations, the altitude of the Swordbird army had moved lower and lower and some had even dived down to engage the soldiers in close combat.

“What’s the hold up with the Black Riders? Why haven’t they returned to protect the commander-in-chief yet?”

“Commander-in-chief, we can’t run around randomly like this without a goal. We need to find cover and avoid these aerial troops. Otherwise our advantage in numbers will slowly be whittled down by them.”

“Commander-in-chief, the shrubs and trees over there are thick, why not we...”

Ren Feilong broke out in loud curses, “Thick growth of shrubs and trees, are you trying to head to your deaths? Most of our soldiers have been turned into biting demons, how will we break free in the trees in which vision is limited? Besides, this is a season of dry and withered grass and trees. If the enemies once again attack with fire, then we’ll truly be at the end of our rope.”

Entering the woods would make it inconvenient to evade the biting soldiers and one would have to be on guard against fire attacks from the enemy.

If they didn’t enter the woods, they’d have to face pursuit from the Swordbird army.

They were in a bind.

...

High up above in the sky, two Goldwing Swordbirds flew side by side. There were people riding on their backs. One of them was Jiang Chen, while the other was Ye Rong.

Ye Rong had his own mount to begin with, but he didn't wish to draw undue attention to himself in the battle between the Darkmoon Kingdom and the Eastern Kingdom. Therefore, he didn't ride his own mount and rode a Goldwing Swordbird instead.

"Younger brother, do you see that? There, right there, the one in the silver armor and white robe is Ren Feilong. Do you see the soaring dragon¹ embroidered on his white robe? That's his unique trademark."

"This Ren Feilong still keeps up his appearances even when death is staring at him in the face? What's he doing in not ripping off that white robe of his when escaping?" Jiang Chen truly did suspect that there were a few screws loose in the head of this so-called first general.

"The so-called first general is just a mortal after all. He's no better than ordinary people in the face of great disasters and calamity. This time, he's facing a perverse person such as you, it's fated that he will lose. Alright, let's not idly chit chat. I'll make an empty show of strength to create an opportunity, but you'll have to be the one to land the fatal shot, for both your archery skills and equipment are superior to mine."

Ye Rong chuckled, patted the Goldwing Swordbird and suddenly dived straight towards Ren Feilong.

"Ren Feilong, do you know who I, Jiang Chen am?" Ye Rong called out in a strange voice, bluffing on purpose as the long bow in his hand was drawn back.

Whoosh!

The bow was as if it were a full moon, while the arrow as if a shooting star.

"Protect the commander-in-chief, protect the commander-in-chief!"

The personal guards of the general below all flung themselves at

Ren Feilong, without a thought of their own lives, seeking to block the arrows descending like shooting stars with their own bodies.

Ye Rong may have falsely offered Jiang Chen's name, but his training at the level of a eleven meridians true qi master was true and solid. Adding the diving force of a Goldwing Swordbird onto that, the momentum of these arrows was truly imposing.

Pfft!

The arrow transformed into an air current and hurtled downwards, piercing through more than ten people.

It was a good thing that the personal guards next to Ren Feilong were all unafraid of death and that there were sufficient numbers of them. That meat shield formed from a mass of humanity was more useful than any armor.

The charisma of the first general wasn't empty bluster. One could glean a thing or two from these personal guards' death defying actions in blocking arrows.

Ye Rong continuously shouted out and his arrows didn't halt, pouring down continuously without a hitch. His skills were actually so good that they weren't any less than Jiang Chen's at all.

In the span of a moment, a sky full of arrows had turned into beams of light, covering nearly all possible angles of attack.

This type of archery skill could only be described as marvelously divine.

Jiang Chen was also mesmerized in that moment. He'd almost forgotten that Ye Rong was making space for him and the final lethal blow had to be executed by him, Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen also itched to display his skills when he saw Ye Rong's dazzling performance.

Hoisting the Da Yu bow in his hand, the solid feeling unique to a spirit weapon immediately surged upwards. Even his breathing was at one with the rhythm of this spirit weapon in that moment.

With an arrow in hand, he notched it to the bowstring!

Jiang Chen suddenly compelled the Goldwing Swordbird to dive downwards like a streak of golden colored light, like a white rainbow piercing through the sun.

At the same time, the Da Yu bow was as if an awakening monster, its frightening power shot out with a roar under Jiang Chen's control, accompanying the the golden light's momentum.

A golden colored current appeared in the sky, more resplendent and dazzling to the eye than the bright moon.

"Oh no! Protect the commander-in-chief!"

All creatures between heaven and earth seemed to awaken in that moment, as if this arrow was the morning sun, causing all creatures to wake and take control of this world of darkness.

There were no frills or flourishes to this arrow, but it uniquely held the essence of the dao of the bow.

It was swift, accurate, vicious, and wily.

The golden colored light was like a meteorite that could destroy cities, a flame sent by heaven that could ignite the very air.

Whoosh!

The arrow found that tiniest sliver of empty space in the midst of Ye Rong's multitude of arrows.

Whoosh!

The golden colored light was like sunlight piercing through a transparent item as it pierced through Ren Feilong's face. Ren

Feilong's entire head suddenly caved in, and a large, black hole appeared on his face. From forehead on down, an empty, large and black hole was scooped out of his helmed head. The golden colored light completely obliterated everything between his forehead and his chin.

The most stunning thing was that this featureless head was still wearing a helm. This made the situation even more bizarre.

The great army stopped in that moment. Everyone's eyes shot out looks of disbelief. Their hearts seemed to stop beating in that instant.

The commander-in-chief, dead?

The first general of Darkmoon Kingdom, the pride of the kingdom, had died such a strange death on this bizarre night?

Bam!

Ren Feilong's body fell down with a loud crash.

When he fell, the morale of the Darkmoon Kingdom utterly collapsed.

"The commander-in-chief is dead, everyone flee for your lives!"

"No! How can the commander-in-chief be dead? The commander-in-chief is the first general of our Darkmoon Kingdom, the god of war of our kingdom, the god of the army! How can he possibly be dead?"

In the armies of the Darkmoon Kingdom, Ren Feilong was god, the true god. However, this god had fallen just like this.

This scene undoubtedly destroyed everyone's faith and belief.

They couldn't accept this truth. As the god of the army and the commander-in-chief, how could Ren Feilong just die in the wilderness of this mountain valley?

This all looked so ridiculous, like it was a nightmare.

With Ren Feilong's death, Jiang Chen's plan was pronounced a thorough success. This plan of ambush could be labeled as perfect. It'd actually succeeded in one stroke with the combination of all sorts of odd tactics and the ingenious Ye Rong factor. Even Jiang Chen felt that this was a bit incredulous.

Ren Feilong's life had been filled with stunning military accomplishments. He'd killed countless people, held the titles such as the god of the army, the first general, the butcher, god of slaughter, etc.

Yet in this moment, all these titles became history with his crashing thud.

This night was destined to become the Darkmoon Kingdom's nightmare and would truly lead the Darkmoon Kingdom to walk into a night of long-lasting darkness.

1. Feilong means flying/soaring dragon in Chinese.↵

Chapter 129: Gouyu's Astounding Decision

In the battle of Bayun Valley, two thirds of the Darkmoon Kingdom's army were either injured or dead, and commander-in-chief Ren Feilong had been shot and killed in front of the formation by Jiang Chen.

The Darkmoon Kingdom's vitality was greatly injured and the kingdom's strength greatly decreased after this battle.

The Bayun Valley became an unlucky place for the Darkmoon Kingdom, with its citizens forever prohibited from entering.

As for the Eastern Kingdom, it had made a clean sweep, and all practitioners who had participated in this battle received the title of Brave Dragonslayer.

The battle was destined to go down in the annals of history, but it would be retold with two completely different moods in their respective histories.

When they learned of Darkmoon's defeat in battle, the Eastern Kingdom had felt a bit baffled instead. One had to know that on the Eastern Kingdom's side, various dukes had all gathered together and the great army had assembled, but no battle had been fought. They hadn't even seen the enemy before the war was over, with even the enemy's commander-in-chief Ren Feilong being shot and killed.

This battle caused Jiang Chen's reputation to spread throughout the surroundings kingdoms. His name finally entered the horizon of the senior levels in the alliance of the sixteen kingdoms.

Even the first general of the Darkmoon Kingdom, Ren Feilong, had perished at the hands of this person. This caused the senior levels of the sixteen kingdoms to place a high importance on Jiang Chen.

The Darkmoon Kingdom didn't rank amongst the top of the sixteen kingdoms, but Ren Feilong, the genius of troop deployment, was

universally renowned throughout the lands.

Who would've thought that this publicly acclaimed god of the army would die so ignobly.

An awe inspiring life story and the reputation of a lifetime was wiped out in a single day, in this battle, on his deathbed.

...

River Wave City gradually recovered its calm half a month after the battle of Bayun Valley. The pack of true qi master practitioners that the Darkmoon Kingdom had sent out had planned on ambushing River Wave City, but received the grievous news of the end of the war, and the death of Ren Feilong as soon as they snuck into the city.

When this trump card received news of even the commander-in-chief passing away, they naturally lost all will to fight and retreated back to the Darkmoon Kingdom with dust on their faces.

They also knew that if they were to make a move now, they would undoubtedly be heading to their deaths.

On this day, Jiang Chen assembled all of the Jiang clan members and made a frank statement without any reservations.

"Everyone, my Jiang family has set down its roots in the Jiang Han territory for hundreds of years. Today, I, Jiang Chen, have made my decision to leave. I will support those of you who are willing to stay, and will not object if there are those of you who wish to follow me."

"Young duke, you're leaving? Where to? Will you come back in the future?"

"In the future?" Jiang Chen chuckled. "The world is so vast, and the Eastern Kingdom is but a small corner of this world. It would truly be a difficult thing to say whether I will return or not."

"Chen'er, third uncle and Xiaoyu will absolutely go with you." Jiang

Tong expressed his stance.

However, the other elders were a bit hesitant. Although they knew that Jiang Feng and son were very strong, and that they would have a greater future if they followed the two, but they still had other thoughts.

Besides, they also felt that as opposed to leaving, why not remain in the Jiang Han territory, and continue to indulge in wealth and prosperity?

The most important thing was, if the Jiang father and son left, then the kingdom's bestowment would fall onto their heads. Who knows, maybe they could strut around for a bit and enjoy the trappings of a duke of the first rank.

The clan members may have all originated from the same lineage, but as subsequent generations diluted their heritage, differences in intimacy between relations would naturally surface.

Jiang Tong was Jiang Feng's younger brother, brothers from the same mother, and would naturally leave with Jiang Feng.

Jiang Yu was Jiang Chen's younger cousin and was considered as his younger brother as well. He'd always been quite reliant on Jiang Chen, so it wasn't a strange thing to him to leave as well.

As for the others, their blood ties to the Jiang father and son weren't that strong. They were merely members of the same clan. They wouldn't necessarily be willing to steadfastly follow Jiang Chen in drifting about.

At the heart of it, different people had different aspirations.

Jiang Chen knew what these people were thinking when he looked at them. In all honesty, he hadn't planned on bringing all of them with him either.

Despite these people being his clan members in name, truthfully

speaking, Jiang Chen didn't feel much of a connection to them. Since all of them had their own selfish motives, Jiang Chen wasn't at liberty to say anything. He couldn't very well force them now, could he?

"Elder Xi, your status will be the highest in the Jiang family once my father and I leave. Our Jiang family has been good to the kingdom and good to the royal family. We've accomplished our share of achievements. If there are bequeathments, it's alright if you want to divide it up. But remember this, family members cannot point swords at each other and brothers cannot harm each other. Otherwise, I will tell the royal family to withdraw all the honor and prosperity and have the family be a free and leisurely aristocratic family."

Elder Xi chuckled, "With this old man here, how would they dare create trouble and point swords at each other?"

Elder Xi beamed delightedly upon hearing Jiang Chen's promise. Who would've thought that he'd have the chance to enjoy the feeling of being a duke in his old age?

"Since this is the case, we'll leave in a few days. The Jiang family will be in your care in the future."

Elder Xi sighed, "Must you really go?"

This was already mere empty pleasantries. To be honest, he couldn't wait for the Jiang father and son to leave. Only with the departure of Jiang Feng and son, as well as Jiang Tong and son, would he have the right to inherit the dukedom!

Although they were of one clan, everyone had at least this bit of selfish motive.

Jiang Chen shook his head inwardly when he saw how Elder Xi was and how no one else ventured any particular thoughts on this matter. *A selfish nature alright! They immediately itched for us to be gone when they heard that we were leaving, so that we could hand over all*

honors and prosperity to them.

With this temperament, I wouldn't take them even if they wished to leave with me, Jiang Chen thought privately. He was too lazy to bother with whether the spirit land in the Redbud Tribe region was a harbinger of fortune or disaster. People had their own destinies.

Since these clan members couldn't let go of the prosperity in front of them, then Jiang Chen naturally would not worry about what disasters might befall them in the future.

...

Princess Gouyu arrived with Eastern Zhiruo two days later.

She'd come with the medallion of a dukedom from the royal family to once again, confer the Jiang family the title of a duke of the first rank, and to use the dukedom to protect the southern frontiers of the kingdom.

As the elder with the longest record of service, it was right and proper that Elder Xi became the new Duke of Jiang Han. He was absolutely bursting with happiness.

The bestowment was just a ceremony, Princess Gouyu was completely unconcerned with who would be the next Duke of Jiang Han. Her heart had been in complete disarray over the past couple of days.

When she learned that Jiang Chen would leave the Eastern Kingdom, she'd been in a state of utter stupefaction.

Although she'd also known that Jiang Chen wasn't born to remain in a small pond, that he would be off to ride in the wind and clouds sooner or later and transform into a dragon that soars through the nine heavens, but she still found it hard to bear when this day finally arrived.

She knew very well that this could possibly be the final farewell.

From henceforth, Jiang Chen would set foot on a great avenue of sunshine, while she, Gouyu, would be as if a flower in full bloom, with only a slow wither and droop left to her after blossoming to the perfection of beauty.

"Jiang Chen, must you really go?" Princess Gouyu held onto her last trace of hope. She really wanted to pray for Jiang Chen not to leave, but reason told her that the Eastern Kingdom truly couldn't contain Jiang Chen.

"If I don't go, I'll bring disaster to the Eastern Kingdom sooner or later. The feud between Long Juxue and I will remain unresolved for every single day she remains alive."

Jiang Chen knew this was a slightly cheap excuse.

"I so dearly hope that time can linger and stop at when we first met. Even if you scold me again, even if you scold me every day, that... that would be good as well."

Gouyu's tone was a bit sentimental. Tears actually started plopping out dispiritedly as this headstrong girl spoke.

She didn't wipe them off, and only squeezed out a smile, smiling through her tears. "Alright, Jiang Chen, I know that you've always thought that I have a weird temper, that I'm violent, unreasonable, and a tomboy. Alright, I won't conceal it any further today and let you see my weak side, and let you know that all girls shed tears... Actually, it's really tiring for me to act like that everyday. I also rather envy Ru'o'er, envy her light heartedness and naive innocence... Jiang Chen, I no longer have such pure unsophisticatedness, and will never be able to obtain it again... Would you say that it's truly not that good for a girl to be so headstrong?"

Jiang Chen sighed lightly, "Everyone's personality is different. There's nothing wrong with keeping true to yourself and maintaining a resolute heart like you do."

"Really?" Prince Gouyu's beautiful eyes oscillated, a few traces of joy encompassed in her crystalline tears. This was the first time that she'd heard Jiang Chen compliment her.

"Of course it's true. Although I yell at you often, but I'm yelling at the cocky side of you. In actuality, I rather admire your strong adherence to martial dao and the sacrifices you make for your family."

Jiang Chen had no need to purposefully humor her with lies.

"Jiang Chen, do you know that I've waited half a year for a compliment from you? Are you purposefully amusing me now that you're leaving?"

"Do you think I'm that superficial?" Jiang Chen smiled ruefully. "Alright, wipe off your tears. I'm seriously not used to the sight of you crying. If I must choose, I'd rather see the Princess Gouyu in high and vigorous spirits, with a sense of unwilling to admit defeat perpetually permeating about her."

Gouyu wiped at the corners of her eyes, her beautiful eyes sparkling with light, "Do you mean that?"

"Absolutely, I guarantee it."

Princess Gouyu broke out in a smile. "Alright, I've decided."

"Decided what?" Jiang Chen was startled.

"I've decided not to be Princess Gouyu anymore. I've been a princess for three generations of the Eastern clan. It's time to throw this identity away and truly live for myself."

"Very good! Returning to your roots. This is as you should've been!" Jiang Chen laughed heartily.

"Princess Gouyu winked, "I've also made another decision."

"And what have you decided?"

"Jiang Chen, listen up. From now on, I'm not a princess, but a martial practitioner of eleven meridians true qi. I want to be your follower."

"What?" Jiang Chen was flabbergasted. He truly hadn't anticipated this move by Gouyu.

"You haven't misheard. I want to be your follower on your path of martial dao, just like your personal guards." Gouyu drew up her well rounded bosom, gazing firmly at Jiang Chen with her beautiful eyes, as if not permitting Jiang Chen to voice a single word in protest.

"Is... is everything alright with your brain?"

"Cut your blather, I'm wide awake. Jiang Chen, you just told me to be true to myself and maintain a resolute heart, and return to the real me. Being your follower is my own intent. Don't let your mind wander, although I'm treating you as my only man, but the reason I want to follow you is not to pester you, but to pursue the paramount of dao."

"Paramount of dao? Do you think that's something I sell in my family store? Do you think it's something you can pursue just because you want to?" Jiang Chen rubbed his nose.

"Keep pretending. Don't think I don't know anything. Jiang Chen, there's countless secrets on you. When you gave me a few pointers and helped me enter the ranks of the eleven meridians true qi masters, I had the vague inclination to hail you as my master. Now, this impulse has finally materialized into reality. I feel quite at ease and very happy."

Chapter 130: A Generous Jiang Chen

One had to say, when a woman became stubbornly willful, even the strength of ten oxen wouldn't be able to get her to change her mind.

This was even more so for someone with as resolute a heart as Princess Gouyu. She had utterly freed herself from the identity of a princess the moment that she'd fully understood her own thoughts, and voluntarily adopted the identity as Jiang Chen's follower.

She was unwavering in her intent no matter what Jiang Chen said.

"Say no more Jiang Chen. Even if you hit me, yell at me, or drive me out, I would still be thick skinned and hard to shake off." Gouyu had actually started pulling out these underhanded moves.

"Alright, you win." Jiang Chen understood Gouyu very well. Once this woman went nuts, she would be like a wild horse that'd slipped its harness. No matter whether you yelled at her or drove her away, all of it would prove to be useless.

The only thing to be done was to let her behave as she would.

Three days later, Jiang Chen's entourage officially set off. Jiang Chen's eight personal guards numbered amongst his followers, but he didn't take the four Sheng battalion brothers with him and sent them back to the Tiandu army instead.

After many experiences and much training, the four Sheng battalion brothers all successfully made it into the senior ranks of the Tiandu army and had become personnel that the royal family relied on.

Jiang Feng brought the head of his personal guard, Jiang Ying and a few of his trusted followers.

Jiang Tong and son brought a few family members with them. The entourage totaled to around twenty or thirty people. Of course, this also included Gouyu and Qiao Baishi.

When they heard that Gouyu was willing to become Jiang Chen's follower and accompany him in his travels, Jiang Feng and Jiang Tong both felt rather taken aback. They both suspected: Just what was so alluring about Jiang Chen that even a lofty princess would give up endless wealth and prosperity to become his follower?

It was a good thing that Jiang Chen thought highly of Gouyu and made her the captain of his guard, placing her in charge of training his eight personal guards. With Gouyu's level of true qi master, she did indeed have the qualifications to do so.

As Jiang Chen's disciple, Qiao Baishi was naturally a close follower.

As for Jiang Chen's steward, Jiang Zheng, Jiang Chen had arranged for him to be in the Hall of Healing at the side of Ying Wuyou. Since he also had ten percent dry shares, his days within the Hall of Healing could be considered very leisurely and enjoyable.

Jiang Zheng's life goal could be counted as having been reached its peak, the three realms characteristic of a greatest steward had all been materialized.

Jiang Zheng actually wished to keep following Jiang Chen, but he knew that he wasn't a practitioner. If he continued to hang around the young master, not only would he not amount to much, but he might even become a burden for the young master.

This kind of arrangement was actually the best.

When they left, Eastern Zhiruo had been quite depressed and kept kicking up a fuss that she wanted to go with Jiang Chen. However, Jiang Chen knew that Eastern Zhiruo's body was fragile and not suited to long distance travel at all.

Jiang Chen had also left special instructions with the Hall of Healing with regards to Eastern Zhiruo's condition and made many preparations, ensuring that Eastern Zhiruo wouldn't have any anxieties regarding her life.

Although an entourage of twenty or so people looked quite small, no one dared rob them no matter where they traveled to once they learned that it was Jiang Chen's group.

Everyone knew that there was a million strong Swordbird army at Jiang Chen's beck and call. When that black, dense mass surged out, one wouldn't even know how they'd died.

Jiang Chen especially took the time to visit Mang Qi when he passed by the Boundless Catacombs.

When Mang Qi saw Jiang Chen, he sighed. "Master, I could sense that you had met danger, but sadly, I had no way to leave. I'm incredibly sorry."

"This matter isn't your fault. Now that I think about the situation, I rejoice in my narrow escape."

However, Mang Qi scoffed and took exception to Jiang Chen's words, "Master, you were born with great fortune and won't die that easily. Although I was a bit worried, I also knew that you would definitely turn calamities into blessings. At most, it'd be a fright without danger."

"Oh? You have that much confidence in me eh?"

Mang Qi laughed heartily, "I do indeed have more and more faith in you. Oh right, you should still take the Swordbird army with you. If laid out appropriately, it will still give you a helping hand in moments of need."

"I won't take the large army. The Goldwing Swordbirds will be enough."

Eight hundred Goldwing Swordbirds would be enough battle strength. If he brought the rest of the Swordbird army with him, the numbers would be too overwhelming and shocking. It would be easy to incite national panic whenever he crossed borders.

It would be better to avoid such incidents as much as possible.

When he heard Jiang Chen say this, Mang Qi also nodded. "The battle capabilities of the Goldwing Swordbirds are not bad. The strength of the Greenwing Swordbirds only lies in numbers. If you truly need them, contact me at any time."

"Naturally."

Mang Qi nodded, thought for a bit and said, "Right, so are you headed to the Skylareland Kingdom? The Boundless Catacombs runs through the underground world of the entire alliance of the sixteen kingdoms, and extends even beyond the range of the sixteen kingdoms. If you meet any danger within the Skylareland Kingdom, you can find a way to make it to the Boundless Catacombs there and mention my name. Perhaps you'll receive some help from the outskirts of the Catacombs."

Mang Qi's influence existed only in the outskirts of the Boundless Catacombs.

...

The Skylareland Kingdom was located in the center region of the sixteen kingdom alliance. Its position was slightly to the south, its territory was vast and resources abundant.

In terms of territory, the Skylareland Kingdom was at least the size of three Eastern Kingdoms.

In terms of resources, it wasn't a level that a third rate kingdom like the Eastern Kingdom could even aspire towards.

The Skylareland Kingdom was at the apex of the sixteen kingdom alliance for all sorts of training resources. After all, there was the huge backer, the Precious Tree Sect, standing behind the Skylareland Kingdom.

The Precious Tree Sect was one of the four great sects within the

alliance of the sixteen kingdoms, and a heavyweight that could throw its weight around with the Purple Sun Sect.

Riding on the backs of the Goldwing Swordbirds caused the journey to be quite easy. Jiang Chen and his group transversed the lands of three or four kingdoms and finally arrived within the borders of the Skylaurel Kingdom after roughly ten days.

They had just entered the borders of the Skylaurel Kingdom when their Swordbird army was halted by a Wyvern Knight who served as a frontier guard.

“Who are you? How dare you fly within the borders of the Skylaurel Kingdom?”

Wyverns were a common sight within the borders of the Skylaurel Kingdom. Actually, Ye Rong had also been riding a variation of the wyverns, but its pedigree was much more noble.

Jiang Chen wasn't irritated when the Wyvern Knight stopped him and brought out the medallion that Ye Rong had given him. “I'm a friend of Prince Ye.”

“Mm. The medallion is real. Since you're a friend of the prince, you do have the right to fly within the Skylaurel Kingdom. However, please proceed according to this flight path. Remember, don't fly around randomly. There are many powers within the kingdom and they've defined many forbidden zones. If you follow the wrong flight path, you may cause plenty of unnecessary trouble.”

This Wyvern Knight was rather responsible and warm hearted as he gave Jiang Chen's group a few key pointers.

Jiang Chen nodded and brought out a bottle of pills. “Thanks brother, here are a few qi replenishing pills named the Vast Ocean Pill. You will be able to instantaneously recover fifty percent of your true qi. Treat it as a token of my appreciation and thank you for your tips.”

The Wyvern Knight started and automatically caught the bottle that

had been flown over. When he pulled open the stopper and held it up to his nose for a sniff, his facial expression immediately changed slightly.

He had thought that the other was joking and had carelessly given him some non mainstream pills.

But who would've thought that this truly would be qi replenishing pills with such high potency. They would be ranked as precious items even within the marketplace of the Sky Laurel Kingdom!

The Wyvern Knight was overjoyed, "As expected of an honored guest of the prince. By what right do I have to accept such a rich reward? I am not worthy of it!"

Although he said he was unworthy, but the hand grasping the pill bottle was clasped firmly around it, as if afraid that the wind would blow it away if he loosened his grasp. He looked like he had received a precious treasure.

It was no wonder that he had lost his composure like this. His status as a Wyvern Knight patrolling the borders looked illustrious on the surface but his position wasn't actually that high.

His income was even more pitiable. Although he could occasionally seize a few items, they were but a drop in the bucket when used in martial dao training.

A precious qi replenishing pill on this level was truly a luxurious item for him. He'd never even dared think of it before, much less actually purchase it.

"I've traveled the various kingdoms and have seen many border patrols. It's quite rare to meet someone as warm hearted as you." Jiang Chen smiled. "Tis but a small gift that's not worth mentioning."

The Wyvern Knight chuckled and scratched his head, a bit embarrassed. "Right, since you're not in a hurry, I'll tell you a few more prohibitions."

"After you enter from here and fly out a distance of roughly twelve hundred li along this path to enter this region, you must be on your guard. If you see someone wearing a red robe embroidered with blue lines, you must be absolutely careful. That kind of person is not someone you should provoke."

"Oh? What kind of strong person is this?"

"That would be someone of the Azure Heaven Northern Palace. The Azure Heaven Northern Palace is one of the secular locations of the Precious Tree Sect within the Skylaurel Kingdom where rites are performed. They're located in the northwestern region of the Skylaurel Kingdom and have absolute influence!"

"Azure Heaven Northern Palace." Jiang Chen silently committed these four words to memory.

"Then here, this secluded valley with dense and thick mist. Do not linger here at all costs. Although the people here aren't as domineering as those of the Azure Heaven Northern Palace, it's also a place where one is likely to get into trouble. If you don't handle things properly, then you'll be seized to become a medicine slave. They won't kill you or beat you, but instead, just make you toil for ten, twenty years. This place is called Qingyang Valley."

"Qingyang Valley..." Jiang Chen committed this name to memory as well.

"Once you have crossed the Qingyang valley, there are still some powers but they're not enough to endanger your life. Even if there is any trouble, the identity of the fourth prince will be enough to resolve it. In conclusion, be extra cautious when you're around the Azure Heaven Northern Palace and Qingyang Valley as you head to the capital."

"When you arrive at the capital, then it goes even more without saying that everyone you meet within the kingdom is somehow related to royalty if you really dig into their background. Therefore,

try not to offend anyone. It looks like that you're friends with the prince but most of the time, this identity won't be useful. It isn't that the prince's identity isn't enough, but that his identity is too sensitive. There are more than ten princes within the capital and they all keep an eye on each other, attempting to find shortcomings that can be exploited. They attack each other and seek to crush each other. Every prince within the capital handles himself with utmost care, as if treading on thin ice. Therefore, when you arrive at the capital, don't go barging in flying through the air. You must enter the capital on foot, otherwise you'll have violated a huge taboo!"

One had to say, the Wyvern Knight was an honest man. He'd tried his best to come up with ideas for Jiang Chen after benefitting from him.

"Haha, thank you brother for going to the trouble of giving us this overview. I feel much more confident."

The Wyvern Knight chuckled. "No problem, not a problem. Right, my name is Tang Long and my home is also in the capital. Since you're going to the capital, can you take a few things back for me?"

"Of course, this is but a small favor."

Tang Long hesitated for a moment and then spoke seriously, "I... it's not that I don't trust you guys, but I just want to repeat myself. Don't get into trouble in those places. In addition, the items I wish to send home are urgently needed and must arrive within seven days. It would be quite troublesome if it's tardy, so..."

"Be at ease, tell us the address. We will definitely not offend anyone and delay your matters."

Tang Long chuckled as he handed over an address to Jiang Chen.

Glossary

Jiang Feng (江楓): Father of Jiang Chen and duke of Jiang Han province in the Eastern Kingdom

Jiang Fu (江福): Head steward of Jiang Han manor

Jiang He (江賀): Direct grandson of Elder Xi

Jiang Tong (江桐): The younger brother that Jiang Feng relied most heavily on, Jiang Chen's third uncle. Honest, sincere and contained.

Elder Xi (溪老): Clan elder with the longest record of service

Jiang Xiong (江雄): Son of Elder Xi

Jiang Ying (江鷹): Jiang Feng's right hand man and loyal vassal. Leader of the Jiang family Iron Guard

Jiang Yu (江雨): Jiang Tong's son. Fragile and slim, calls Jiang Chen brother.

Jiang Zheng (江正): MC's long suffering steward/body servant

Yinglan Tribe (應藍): Tribe of Jiang Chen's mother, controlled by the Lan family

Jiang Chen's Personal Guard

Bi Yun (畢云): Iron Mountain Tribe of the Jiang Han territory

Guo Jin (郭進): Grandson of royal tutor Guo Shun. Father was labeled a deserter and thus he grew up in abject poverty and shame

Ke Mu (柯牧): Summer Tribe of the Jiang Han territory, six meridians true qi

Qiao Chuan (喬川): Qiao Baishi's nephew, brothers with Qiao Shan

Qiao Shan (喬山): Qiao Baishi's nephew, brothers with Qiao Chuan

Shen Yifan (沈一帆): Jade Dragon Tribe of the Jiang Han territory, six meridians true qi

Wen Ziqi (溫子琪): Newest disciple of the North Sect of the Star Argus Palace. 15/16 years old with a delicate and exquisitely wrought body

Xue Tong (薛同): Son of Jiang Chen's mother's younger sister

Characters Celestial Emperor: Father of Jiang Chen in his previous life

Sectmistress Jade (玉夫人): Sectmistress of the North Sect of the Star Argus Palace in the Large Rock County

Jing Cai'er (荊彩兒): Daughter of Jing Man, seven meridians true qi

Chief Jing Man (酋長): Chief of the Redbud Tribe

Lu Boyu (陸伯鈺): Disciple of the South Sect of the Star Argus Palace

Ma Datong (馬大同): Du Ruhai's best friend

Mang Qi (蟒奇): Spirit level beast in the Boundless Catacombs, swore an oath of allegiance to Jiang Chen if Jiang Chen could free him

Ouyang Fei (歐陽菲): Disciple of the North Sect in the Star Argus Palace. Flighty, lovesick personality

Qian Ji (千機老人): An old man with wondrous fortune telling abilities. His divination sent Elder Shun and Huang'er to the Eastern Kingdom

Shen Rong (沈戎): Sectmaster of the South Sect in Star Argus Palace. 40 years old

Sheng brothers: Four brothers from commander Tiandu's Sheng battalion

Spirit alchemist (靈藥師)

Xiao Ma (小馬): Man loyal to Du Ruhai

Xie Qiang (謝強): Member of the South Sect of Star Argus Palace

Xue Sha (血煞): Boss killer of the Hidden Hand killers hired to kill Jiang Chen

**TL Note regarding names: Most character surnames are tied in with their dukedoms, ie. Hubing Yue and Hubing dukedom, Jiang Chen and Jiang Han dukedom (his dukedom name is separated into two words because he's the MC and only Jiang is reflected in his name). For Xuan fatty, Xuan is his name and fatty is his game (™ by Kidyeon). I would surmise his full name is Jin Xuan Xuan (gosh that's so girly)

Eastern Kingdom Dukes and Nobles Bai Zhanyun (白戰雲): Heir to White Tiger Dukedom

Boss Song (宋老闆): Owner of Turquoise Hall

Courtmaster Wang (汪苑主): Grand Courtmaster of the Pill King Garden

Du Ruhai (杜如海): Assistant Keeper, one of the main organizers of the Hidden Dragon Trials. Second in command but first in terms of actual power

Duke of Tianshui: Nameless duke who has a strong rivalry with Jiang Feng

Examiner Hua (華考官): Examiner in charge of "The Papers of Military Strategy" (兵道篇)

Examiner Zhao (趙考官): Examiner in charge of "The Articles of Spirit Medicine"

Minster Fan (兵部范尚書): Minister of War

Guo Shun (郭順): Princess Gouyu's first martial dao tutor

Hong Chunlei (洪春雷): Duke of Vermillion Bird dukedom

Hong Tiantong (洪天童): Heir to Vermillion Bird dukedom

Hubing Yue (壺丘岳): Best friends with Jiang Chen and heir to Hubing dukedom

Organizer Ma (馬總管): Middle aged organizer for the Hidden Dragon Trials

Ouyang Ping (歐陽平): Heir to the Sunchaser dukedom

Shui Qingshu (水青樹): Heir to Tianshui dukedom

Xuan Xuan (軒軒): aka Fatty Xuan. A person shaped like a meatball and best friends with Jiang Chen. Heir to Jinshan dukedom

Xuan Yuan (宣袁): Six meridians true qi, sudden contender for heir to Jinshan dukedom

Yang Zong (楊宗): Former best friends with Jiang Chen, didn't support him in the beginning of the novel

Yan Jiuzhuang (燕九莊): Duke of Yanmen dukedom, at odds with Jiang Han

Yan Yiming (燕一鳴): Bully and heir to Yanmen dukedom

Yi Taichu (易太初): Heir to Black Tortoise Dukedom

Vice Minister Zhang (戶部張侍郎): Vice Minister in the Ministry of Revenue

Zhou Tan (周坦): Young boss of a the premier Zhou money house in the capital, from which Guo Jing borrowed money from for his mother's illness

Eastern Royal Family

Ceremonial guards (金瓜武士): Guards wielding a weapon in front of the Aurum Imperial Hall. Symbolizes royal power

Eastern Lin (東方麟): Eastern Lu's son

Eastern Lu (東方鹿): King of the Eastern Kingdom

Eastern Jun (東方駿): Gouyu's elder brother, heir to the kingdom when he fell to betrayal and an ambush

Eastern Zhiruo (東方芷若): The princess of Eastern Kingdom and Eastern Lu's daughter, suffering from a body with a yin constitution

Gouyu (勾玉): Eastern Lu's sister, main organizer of the Hidden Dragon Trials

Wei Tiandu (衛天都): Trusted commander of the Tiandu army for Eastern royal family

Xia Ting (夏庭): Eunuch to Eastern Lu

Eastern Kingdom Purple Sun Sect Master Shuiyue (水月大師): One of the nine great elders of the sect, ranking in the top ten of the sect

Xu Zhen (徐振): One of Master Shuiyue's ten major disciples. Long Juxue's junior brother

Yu Jie (余玠): One of Master Shuiyue's ten major disciples, low ranking. 22 or 23 years old. Long Juxue's senior brother, wields the Autumn Water Sword (秋水劍)

Chu Xinghan (楚星漢): Second disciple of Master Shuiyue

Immortal Zixu (紫旭真人):

Eastern Kingdom Soaring Dragon Family Long Er (龍二): Long Yi's younger brother

Long Juxue (龍居雪): Daughter of Long Teng, invited to join the Purple Sun Sect

Long Yinye (龍吟野): Son of Long Teng, Long Juxue's brother

Long Zhaofeng (龍騰): Number one ranked duke in Eastern Kingdom, great ambitions to take over the kingdom

Long San (龍三): Soaring Dragon underling, ten meridians true qi. Sent to kill Jiang Chen

Long Yi (龍一): Long San's brother and hired Hidden Hand to kill Jiang Chen in the third Hidden Dragon Trial

Zhang Qi (章七): A death warrior under Long San's command. The only one to escape Jiang Chen's initial attack of throwing daggers

Eastern Kingdom Hall of Healing Administrator He (何執事): Administrator (acts like a store manager)

Elder Blue (藍長老): Elder in the Hall of Healing

Huang'er: Elder Shun's granddaughter, suffering from internal ailment

Qiao Baishi (喬白石): Third hallmaster in the Hall of Healing

Song Tianxing (宋天星): Lord hallmaster in Hall of Healing

Third hallmaster (三殿主): Third highest ranked person in the Hall of Healing

Elder Shun (舜老): Foreigner, resident expert in the Hall of Healing

Wang Li (王離): Fourth hallmaster in the Hall of Healing, previously overshadowed by Qiao Baishi

Elder Ying (應無憂): Ying Wuyou, good friend of Qiao Baishi

Yue Qun (岳群): Second hallmaster in the Hall of Healing

Darkmoon Kingdom Qi Can (齊參): Envoy from the Darkmoon Kingdom

Ren Feilong (任飛龍): First general of the kingdom, known for his godly tactics in war and brutality

Skylaurel Kingdom Royal Family and Related Dan Fei (丹妃): Girl adopted by Tutor Ye since young and treated like a grandchild

Dragonteeth Guard (龍牙衛): Guard is divided into ten troops with a general and vice general assigned to each troop. There are ten large squadrons beneath each troop, with each squadron numbering ten thousand. There's one commander and two vice commanders for each squadrons. General director > three vice directors > ten generals > ten vice generals > commanders > vice commanders > lieutenants > captains

Lu Wuji (律無忌, 律都統): Vice general of the Dragonteeth Guard, close relations to a vice director of the Guard and with the Northern Palace

Qi Tiannan (齊天楠): Vice director of the Dragonteeth Guard, ranked number three

Shangguan Yi (上官翼): General director of the Dragonteeth Guard

Tang Long (唐攏): Wyvern Knight on the border, home within the capital

Tian Shao (田大隊長): A commander in the Dragonteeth Guard

Wyvern Knight (翼龍騎士): Aerial border guards

Xin Wudao (辛無道): Dragonteeth Guard

Yang Zhao (楊昭): Vice director in the Dragonteeth Guard. General Lu's uncle

Ye Chonglou (葉重樓): Spirit king protector of the kingdom, tutor of the princes

Ye Dai (葉岱): First prince of the Skylaurel Kingdom

Ye Hao (葉壕): Fifth prince of the Skylaurel Kingdom

Ye Qiao (葉橋): Second prince of the Skylaurel Kingdom

Ye Rong (葉融): Fourth prince of the Skylaurel Kingdom

Ye Zheng (葉錚): Third prince of the Skylaurel Kingdom

Skylaurel Kingdom: Four Great Sites Bei (貝大人): Administrator in charge of penalties and punishments for the Northern Palace

Fei Xuan (費玄): Head instructor of the Qingyang Valley. Eccentric personality

Feng Yan (封炎): Disciple of the Myriad Treasures Palace

Senior brother Kuang (龐師兄): Of the Azure Heaven Northern Palace

Lin Qianli (凌千里): Core disciple of the Southern Palace. Accompanied Prince Ye to Tutor Ye's birthday banquet

Liu Can (劉燦): A womanly youth who chased after Jiang Chen during the latter's trip to the capital and has just entered the spirit realm

Shi Xiaoyao (石逍遙): Vice head of the Myriad Treasures Palace

Yi Qiansui (易千隨): A senior disciple of the Azure Heaven Northern Palace

Zhou Kai (周圭): First vice director of Dragonteeth Guard, second to only the general director

Zhang Meng (張蒙): Northern Palace disciple that sought to make trouble for Jiang Chen and was beaten to death

Zhuge Yan (諸葛言): Head of Myriad Treasures Palace

Skylaurel Kingdom: Precious Tree Sect

Four Seasons Hall (四季堂):

Han Xianke (韓仙客): One of the five pill geniuses of the Four Seasons Hall

General Azure phoenix constitution: A rare constitution that first needs to have the evil humors of extreme yin purged from it (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_argus)

Bell of the Waking Dragon (醒龍鐘)

Carnal Prayer Mat: Ancient Chinese porn novel

Drum of the Shocking Dragon (驚龍鼓)

Maze Realm Autumn Hunt (迷境秋獵)

Enigmatic cloud wood (玄云原木): Wood that possesses a yin character

Five Winged Phoenix-Dragon (鳳蛟五翼獸): Dragon's head, two wings on its back, but its tail was like a phoenix with three wings on its rump

Four treasures of the study (文房四寶): writing brush, ink stick, ink slab and paper

The Great Formation of Heavenly Soul Confinement (諸天萬靈鎖神大陣): A formation starting from the fourth level of the Boundless Catacombs downwards that prevents any creature within spirit dao from leaving

Hidden Death (追命暗門): Killer organization not from Eastern Kingdom, employed to kill Jiang Chen

Hidden Dragon Trials: Examinations that take place every 20 years testing the heirs of each dukedom. Dukedoms were retained only if the heir passed. The four great dukes were allowed to have two candidates each, with the more optimal score being recorded
First foundational exam: Candidate must be at least the true qi realm

Second foundational exam: Practice Eastern Amethyst Qi until candidate reaches perfection level and maintain it for an hour in a room filled with level four sword aura

Third foundational exam: Theoretical exam testing “The Articles of Martial Arts”, “The Articles of Spirit Medicine”, “The Papers of Power and Influence”, and “The Papers of Military Strategy” (《武學篇》、《靈藥篇》、《權術篇》、《兵道篇》)

Final examinations: Candidates receive two chances to apply for missions of 1 – 9 different ranks. Failure to complete both applications leads to automatic forfeiture of the dukedom, to be replaced by an aristocratic family. Once the initial ranking is determined, combat competition commences to determine final rankings

Nine Magnificence Dew Wine (九華玉露酒): Properly known as Nineflower Dew Wine (九花玉露酒)

Purple Sun Sect (紫陽宗): Lead sect of the four sects of the sixteen kingdoms

Rare Jade Fruit (玉奇果): A fruit that grows in Mang Qi’s quarters in the Boundless Catacombs, will raise the level of training of ordinary practitioners by one level, no strings attached

Royal engraved dragon medallion: A token that allows the holder to freely enter and exit the palace, does not have to kowtow when meeting the king

Skysilk Armor: Gift from Princess Gouyu, made from the silk worms in barbarian territory

Six Panel Door (六扇門):

Swordteeth Flying Fox (劍齒飛狐): A cub was offered as a birthday present to Ye Chonglou

Yin constitution: a body in which yin and yang are out of balance. Yin reigns supreme in a Yin body and the owner cannot be a practitioner

Locations Aquarius Maze Realm (寶瓶迷境): One of two maze realms held by the Precious Tree Sect of the Skylaurel Kingdom, with 3 – 5 times difficulty of the regular Maze Realm

Aurum Imperial Hall (金鑾殿): Eastern Lu's throne room

Autumn Crane (松鶴樓): Tavern in which Three Laugh Powder was slipped into Jiang Chen's food and drink

Azure Heaven Northern Palace (乾藍北宮): One of the Precious Tree Sect's secular places where rites are performed in the Skylaurel Kingdom. Its people are arrogant and domineering

Bayun Valley (巴云谷): Mountain valley on the Darkmoon Kingdom border next to the Eastern Kingdom

Black Tortoise (玄武): Dukedom in the Eastern Kingdom, ranked fourth. Name is also one of the four major constellation divisions

Boundless Catacombs (無盡地窟): Located in the northeast of the Eastern Kingdom, endless catacombs that had never been fully explored.

Darkmoon Kingdom (黑月王國): One of the members of the sixteen kingdoms alliance, contiguous to the Eastern Kingdom, it's always eyed its neighbor covetously

Four great sites of the Precious Tree Sect in the Skylaurel Kingdom: Azure Heaven Northern Palace (west), Azure Heaven Southern Palace (south), Qingyang Palace (central), and Myriad Treasures Palace (多寶道場) (capital)

Pill King Garden (丹王苑): Competitor to Hall of Healing, used to have a business deal with the Jiang Han duchy. Hierarchy: Grand courtmaster (大苑主)

Garden of Returning Spring: Brothel

Hall of Healing: Pharmacy and place of healing. Market leader for

pills in the Eastern Kingdom. Hierarchy: Lord hallmaster > second hallmaster > third hallmaster. Hallmasters > Administrators

Hall of the Nine Underworlds: A time honored store that specialized in printing paper money to burn for the dead

Hubing (虎兵): Dukedom in the Eastern Kingdom

Jian Han (江漢): Dukedom in the Eastern Kingdom

Jinshan (金山): Dukedom in the Eastern Kingdom, has suffered successive years of flooding recently

Myriad Treasures Palace (萬寶宮): One of the largest marketplaces in the Eastern Kingdom. Pill King Garden held a pill exhibition here

Purple Cloud Peak (紫云峰): A small mountain in the Redbud region of the Jiang Han territory

Qingyang Valley (青羊谷): A valley within the Skyl Laurel Kingdom where trouble makers are seized to work as medicine slaves for ten to twenty years

Red Moon county (赤月府): County in the Tianhu territory in which a serial rapist appeared

Second Crossing (二渡關): A mountain pass in the Eastern Kingdom bordered by tall and rugged mountains. Easy to defend and difficult to attack.

Soaring Dragon (Long Teng) (龍騰): Dukedom in the Eastern Kingdom, ranked first. Name is also one of the four major constellation divisions

Star Argus Palace (星鸞宮): A palace in the Large Rock county of the Tianhu territory in which the North and South Sects fight over the right to live in it every ten years. North Sect (北宗) consisted of all women, and South Sect (南宗) consisted of all men

Star City (星城): A city built in the 50 km surrounding Star Argus Palace

Temple of the Farmer God (神農堂): Competitor to Hall of Healing

Tianlang Library: Library in the Celestial kingdom

Tianhu (天湖鎮): Territory comprised of ten counties, including Red Moon (赤月), Black Forest (黑森), Large Rock (巨石)

Tianshui (天水): Dukedom in the Eastern Kingdom

Thousand Horse Hall (萬馬堂): Does business with the Star Argus Palace

Turquoise Hall (松石館): Retailer specializing in spirit and strange stones in the capital of Eastern Kingdom

River Wave City (波江城): City in Jiang Han territory

White Tiger (白虎): Dukedom in the Eastern Kingdom, ranked second. Name is also one of the four major constellation divisions

Vermillion Bird (朱雀) (朱雀): Dukedom in the Eastern Kingdom, ranked third. Name is also one of the four major constellation divisions

Yanmen (雁門): Dukedom in the Eastern Kingdom

Martial cultivation Martial dao: Chinese martial arts, the path to strength in this world. There are twelve major acupoints in a person's body, and twelve meridians (internal passages) that flow through them. One clears a meridian by clearing an acupoint, and coalesces the body's energy into one level of true qi.

Basic Martial dao - True Qi	
Meridians True Qi	Realm
1 - 3	Initial Realm of True Qi

4 - 6	Intermediate Realm of True Qi (進階真氣境)
7 - 9	Advanced Realm of True Qi (高階真氣境)
10 - 12	True Qi Masters (真氣大師)
12	Supreme True Qi Master
Dao of Spirit - Converting True Qi to Spirit Qi	

Spiritual energy (神元)

Methods Martial dao methods were divided into five great degrees of 'common', 'spirit', 'saint', 'earth' and 'heaven' degree (凡級, 靈級, 聖級, 地級, 天級). They are then further divided into minor ranks 'inferior', 'middle', 'upper', and 'supreme' rank (下品, 中品, 上品, 極品).

Proficiency in methods divided into five achievement levels of 'minor achievement', 'skillful', 'perfection', 'flawless' and 'great perfection' realms (小成, 純熟, 大成, 無漏, 圓滿). Legendary Realm (傳說層次) sits on top of "Great Perfection".

Cultivation deviation (走火入魔): When a practitioner unsuccessfully battles their internal demons and their training backfires on them

Eastern Amethyst Qi (紫氣東來訣): Created by an ancestor of the Eastern royal family. Method used in the process of founding the kingdom. Foundational portions encompass two martial arts techniques

- Amethyst Cloud Palm (紫云掌)
- Eastern King Point (東王指)

Eight Trigram Assimilation Formation (八荒攝靈陣): A battle formation in which eight people become one. The formation locks down the eight trigrams (directions) with spirit power and divides the air into eight quadrants, completely locking the space down. Participants are able to attack and defend within and without the formation.

Lunar Vortex Illusion (水漩幻月波): Move containing 70%-80% of Yu Jie's strength

Moonshatter Flying Daggers (碎月飛刀): A throwing dagger technique that could pierce the sun and moon and destroy the stars. Four accompanying abilities to be trained: "God's Eye", "Ear of the Zephyr", "Boulder's Heart", "Psychic's Head".

Secret of the Nine Laughing Oceans (九笑滄海訣): Accompanying martial arts technique

– Vast Ocean Current Splitter (滄海逆流刀) with seven total forms

Wave Slash (劈波)

Wave Breaker (斷浪)

Wave Surge (驚濤)

– Divine Aeons Fist (枯榮神拳). Its mysteries are many times greater than the Vast Ocean Current Splitter, encompassing the mysteries of nine cycles of blooming and wilting (life). Comprehension of each successive reincarnation cycle would double the technique's power
Yin Yang Obliteration (陰陽磨)

Sword from the West (一劍西來): A way of concentrating true qi onto the fingertip and attacking the opponent with currents of true qi

True Acupoint Resonance (真穴共振): Method to locate acupoints within the body

Vast Waves Method (滄浪訣): Jiang family hereditary method. Middle grade, could be practiced to nine meridians true qi. Offshoot of the "Secret of the Nine Laughing Oceans" (九笑滄海訣). Accompanying martial arts techniques of

– Wave Breaker (破浪刀)

– Sea God Fist (海神拳)

Volant fire meteors (飛火流星): Locking onto a predefined area and raining down qi attacks

Willow Step: Yanmen exclusive heritage, allows practitioner to move elegantly and quickly through the air

Yin Yang Lotus (陰陽蓮花): Move from Xu Zhen, carried out by his chain knife

Medicine One Buddha Powder (一佛散): A type of mind calming medicine twice as effective and at half the price of similar products on the market

Pills (medicine) Pills: Specially refined medicine in the shape of a ball

Dao of pills: The art of researching and refining pill medicines

Great Dao Berserk Pill (大道瘋魔丸): A pill that enables true qi masters to double their strength or more in a short period of time

Pill of Dragon and Tiger Blood (龍虎化血丹): Qi replenishing pill from the Pill King Garden in an attempt to supplant the Hall of Healing

Divine Returning Qi Pill (一神回氣丹)

Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill (五龍開天丹): Offers ninety percent surety that no accidents will occur when assailing the spirit realm. It coalsces the five types of qi within a person's body and helps them cleave open the spirit ocean

Four Seasons Eternal Spring Pill (四季常青丹)

Heavenly Karma Pill: Gold standard for healing physical hurts. Jiang Zheng holds a 60/40 split with the Hall of Healing

Peaceful Ruler Pill (明王淨心丹)

Profound Celestial Pill (仙靈柔玄丸):

Pill Trial Warrior (試丹勇士): A high risk profession undertaken by low level practitioners looking to make a quick buck with no hope on the path of martial dao. They would test pills on themselves whenever a new one was introduced.

Renewal Purity Pill (洗塵素心丹):

Sun Moon Pill: Grants long life. The Celestial Emperor refined it for Jiang Chen so that he could enjoy life as long as the sun and moon

Vast Ocean Pill (滄海丹): A qi replenishing pill that can instantaneously recover forty to fifty percent of a practitioner's true qi

Spirit Ingredients Black Spirit Wood (烏靈木): Needed to gain admittance to the Azure Heaven Southern Palace's public clinic

Bluelily Grass (藍萱草): Ingredient to make Nine Magnificence Dew wine

Cloudflower Grass (云英草)

King of Mauve Jade Ginseng (紫玉參王)

Mystic Ruler Grass (通心明王草): A key ingredient for refining the Peaceful Ruler Pill

Three Immortal Grass (三仙草):

Wooden Pellets (木杵子): Ingredient to make Nine Magnificence Dew wine

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