

三界独尊

SANJIEDUZUN

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Sovereign of the Three Realms

Arc 4: Maze Realm Autumn Hunt

(Chapters 184-219)

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 184: Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill, Finally Entering the Spirit Realm

The power of the Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill was indeed violent and fierce. Even with Jiang Chen's directions, the power of martial dao formed into an assault that was practically a huge explosion within his body.

One had to say, the pain brought to the human body from this kind of assault was quite frightening.

Even with Jiang Chen's firm foundation in the true qi realm, he was still in so much pain from this kind of assault that his forehead broke out in cold sweat.

It was as if his vital organs and entrails were being churned to pieces and reformed, before being churned to pieces and reformed once again.

This cycle repeated itself as five tyrannic surges of power rampaged through Jiang Chen's system.

Time passed day by day amidst this neverending cycle.

As time progressed, Jiang Chen became used to the pain brought by this assault. The five rampaging sources of strength were also slowly tamed and gradually quietened within Jiang Chen's body.

As for Jiang Chen's dantien, it had already turned into a grey cloudy ball, as though it was a sea of stars within the boundless void, giving one an ethereal feeling.

Jiang Chen observed himself internally and knew that the initial steps of the pill's modification of his body had been completed. The fledgling form of an ocean of qi had formed within his dantien.

"Hmm, the indomitableness of this ocean of qi is not bad." Jiang Chen probed a bit and discovered that grey, foggy ocean of qi

seemed to contain a powerful force.

Jiang Chen opened his eyes, disbelief written all over his face. "Who would've thought that assailing the spirit realm would be so easily successful!"

It was indeed easier than Jiang Chen had thought. Although the force from the Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill had been strong, but it'd only put Jiang Chen through trials by pain, instead of bringing him any legitimate danger.

The most important thing was, Jiang Chen had thought he needed to be behind closed doors for a while, but from the time he had taken the pill to when the ocean of qi initially formed, it had yet to be seven days.

"It seems that less time was needed than I'd thought?"

Jiang Chen was quite satisfied with the results of his closed door cultivation this time.

"Who would've thought that I was still in the true qi realm before closed door cultivation. Seven days later, I'm truly a spirit realm practitioner now."

Jiang Chen was different from other practitioners. Most couldn't even begin to imagine the path that ordinary practitioners would have to take to transmute true qi into spirit.

However, Jiang Chen had the memories from his past life and aid from a heaven-defying pill like the Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill. These dual advantages made it so that he didn't need to experience the progression of half step spirit realm like many other practitioners.

He was a spirit realm practitioner in both name and strength now.

Although his spirit ocean has just formed, it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that thanks to the pill forging this spirit ocean,

his level may not be strong, but he was absolutely at the pinnacle in terms of potential.

“The spirit ocean has formed, it’s as if wings have been added to my back. Now, I must elevate my other areas.”

“The arts of God’s Eye, Ear of the Zephyr, and Boulder’s Heart are all progressing steadily. Now that I’ve entered the spirit realm, greater efforts are naturally needed before my goal can be attained. The four great arts that I couldn’t train before entering the spirit realm can finally be mastered now!”

Jiang Chen was happiest about being able to train “Psychic’s Head”.

This was the most important art amongst the four supplementary ones in the “Moonshatter Flying Daggers”.

It could be said that “Psychic’s Head” combined the mysteries of the previous three, concentrating the seven senses of the human body into one. After aggregating mental strength, all seven senses undergo a breakthrough to resonate amongst one another, thereafter pursuing the realm of the illuminated seven senses.

If he succeeded in his training, then his might would be doubled as though adding wings to a tiger.

The most important thing was that he’d be able to practice attacking with the mysteries of the “Moonshatter Flying Daggers”.

“So it turns out that Psychic’s Head uses the spirit strength within the body to stimulate the seven senses and form the perception of illuminating them. This is an amazing art indeed.”

Jiang Chen felt that this art was absolutely marvelous as he started training it.

“The Psychic’s Head elevates the five senses of the human body to seven senses, then forms a resonance between them. In this way, even if I’m in the midst of a blazing fire, sunken in the deep sea, or

trapped in the great abyss of the earth, I can still move as though I am walking on land with no obstacles at all."

The Psychic's Head meant that any of your senses could be employed as you wished, as if it had its own consciousness and heart.

After three more days, Jiang Chen once again took inventory of his gains.

"Very good, God's Eye and Ear of the Zephyr have all repeatedly broken through after my breakthrough to the spirit realm. They're already at the ninth level, whereas Boulder's Heart has also reached the fifth level. Psychic's Head has actually cracked open the door to the second level after three days!"

Jiang Chen was very satisfied with what he'd reaped.

"This is not bad. My current condition makes me completely eligible to practice the great techniques. The lowest requirement of the great technique of the 'Moonshatter Flying Daggers' is that God's Eye and Ear of the Zephyr must all be at level seven, Boulder's Heart at level five, and Psychic's Head at level two."

"Now, apart from the Psychic's Head having just reached the requirements, the other three have greatly exceeded their requirements. It's time to practice the great techniques!"

Jiang Chen had discovered that although he had many ways to attack, he was still a bit short in terms of being able to dish out fatal blows.

This would resolve a situation as urgent as fire singing his eyebrows.

"Great techniques at an initial stage of power — Flying Eagle Form, Pouncing Tiger Form!"

There were two great techniques at an initial stage of power for Jiang Chen to choose from. The Flying Eagle Form pursued the bizarre and unpredictable, whereas the Pouncing Tiger Form sought for

domination.

"They're both great techniques at an initial stage of power. I should probably learn both of them." Jiang Chen thought as he began to study the mysteries of the two.

The Flying Eagle Form mandated comprehension of the mysteries of wind, since it used the rhythm of wind to inflict bizarre and unexpected injuries.

The Pouncing Tiger Form on the other hand, emphasized the unbridled fierceness of water. It was as if the surging waves and sea were pouncing like a springing wolf, completely swallowing the opponent.

"If these two great techniques are matched to each other, they would complement each other quite well." Jiang Chen discovered that the creator of the Moonshatter Flying Daggers had been truly thoughtful, as the two great techniques at the initial stage of power actually complemented each other.

An absolutely wondrous innovation suddenly flashed through Jiang Chen's mind.

"Mm? When I train the Divine Aeons Fist, one of my hands is the moon and the other is the sun. Would there be a completely different effect if I combined the meaning of the Divine Aeons Fist with these two great techniques? Flying Eagle with the left hand, Pouncing Tiger with the right hand. They will be just like the moon and sun. The opponent will surely not know how to defend against this kind of attack!"

This sudden thought greatly piqued Jiang Chen's interest.

At this moment, he was like a fierce beast that wasn't choosy in his hunger. These martial techniques were his prey and food that he was greedily taking in.

Another half a month passed by...

“Hoo! It looks like there are many changes along the path of martial dao. One cannot remain the same forever. The two great techniques of the initial stage of power can be used individually and can be combined after the changes I’ve made. When these two are combined however, their power will be equivalent to a great technique of intermediate power!”

Jiang Chen was overjoyed. With his knowledge of martial dao, this kind of experimentation was but a small effort.

“If the current me met those Northern Palace disciples, I should have been able to kill them within seconds. Even if I met that Liu Can, I still have a seventy to eighty percent chance of defeating him if I combine the great techniques!”

Jiang Chen was hugely confident.

Jiang Chen reconsolidated his grasp of the Divine Aeons Fist and Vast Ocean Current Splitter next. After entering the spirit realm, all his martial techniques had once again been improved in all aspects. In particular, attack power had undergone titanic changes.

“Tutor Ye gave me the Skylaurel Kingdom Medallion most likely because he was entrusting some sort of hope to me. However, his words were true. I, Jiang Chen, am myself. I don’t need to curtail my actions because of anyone. I should do whatever I think is right. What need do I have to concern myself with other people’s thoughts? So what of the first prince? What of the Northern Palace? Why should I, Jiang Chen, accommodate these people? From now on, I will trample whoever becomes a stumbling block or an obstacle on my path of martial dao!”

After breaking through to the spirit realm, Jiang Chen’s confidence had increased by quite a lot.

By this time, Jiang Chen had remained behind closed doors for a full month.

"Young master, you've emerged from closed doors?"

"Young master!"

Jiang Chen's gaze swept across his followers one by one. "Alright, good, it looks like you guys haven't slacked on your training during this time since you've all improved."

Xue Tong in particular hadn't let Jiang Chen down. He had broken through to the ranks of true qi masters as he'd hoped.

"Xue Tong, I'm in awe of your potential. I will work hard to fight to be the second person to break through to the realm of true qi masters!" Guo Jin was loath to lag behind.

In this month, Guo Jin, Wen Ziqi, and the Qiao brothers had all broken through eight meridians true qi and entered nine meridians.

The other three were a bit slower in comparison, but they could enter nine meridians true qi at any time.

When he heard Guo Jin voice such lofty and aspirational words, Qiao Shan called out, "Yo, Guo! Number two's definitely mine."

"Don't forget me, Qiao Chuan!"

Although Wen Ziqi didn't say much, her beautiful eyes also shot out a thick sense of competitiveness.

"It's good that you have the heart to compete. But, you're also brothers. Remember to compete in a friendly way and bear your limits in mind." Jiang Chen warned.

Xue Tong smiled, "Be at ease young master, I'll keep my eye on them at all times."

Gouyu also smiled, "If this bunch of hooligans dare rebel, I'll be the first to destroy them."

Ever since Gouyu had become Jiang Chen's follower, she had done an

outstanding job in handling both internal and external affairs. This made Jiang Chen feel a bit embarrassed.

“Gouyu, come with me for a second.” Jiang Chen beckoned and led her to the secret chamber.

“Jiang Chen, you...” Although Gouyu had an open and forthright personality, the space with the secret chamber was narrow and confined. This made her feel a bit ill at ease.

“What’s this stammering about you and me? You’ve lingered long enough at eleven meridians true qi. What thoughts do you have with regards to the comprehension of the spirit realm?”

A light shone in Gouyu’s beautiful eyes. “Jiang Chen, do you mean to give me pointers?”

“Are you still that martial dao-holic Gouyu? Do you have no confidence when no one gives you pointers?”

Gouyu’s full chest puffed out. “Jiang Chen, don’t you underestimate me. I’ve never given up training in martial dao. I, Gouyu, will become a spirit realm practitioner! I’ll prove to those sects that I, Gouyu, can still enter the spirit realm even without their resources! I’m not the slightest bit inferior to those so-called innate constitutions.”

Chapter 185: First Prince Ye Dai Seeks an Audience?

Although the Long family had been thoroughly cowed and suppressed, Gouyu still held deep enmity towards the Long family. The existence of Long Juxue was absolutely a thorn in the side of the headstrong Gouyu.

This thorn had always made she who possesses proud self esteem feel ill at ease.

Although Gouyu had never mentioned it, she'd never been willing to accept and concede defeat in the face of Long Juxue's constitution. What kind of basis was that for the sects to look at Long Juxue with different eyes?

She was going to prove that she, Gouyu, was just as good!

She didn't have abnormal potential, but she had an even more resolute heart of martial dao that would make up for it.

Jiang Chen looked at this serious woman and suddenly felt a few stabs of being unable to look on further. This woman was a princess and could've stayed within the Eastern Kingdom to continue and enjoy the lofty and luxurious treatment provided to the royal family.

However, she had followed him without hesitation and become his follower.

What did she want? Breakthroughs in martial dao, naturally.

Jiang Chen wouldn't deny that Gouyu felt dependence, gratitude, and even some vague emotions between man and woman towards him. However, Jiang Chen had never wanted things to go down that path.

It wasn't that Jiang Chen didn't think much of Gouyu, but that he knew that they would eventually walk separate paths and were destined to be unable to fly together as a pair.

This was a woman that he was destined to let down. Therefore, his heart softened when Jiang Chen looked at Gouyu and her resolute demeanor.

“Even if she’s not my woman, I’m going to at least let her live a life that is even more glorious and brilliant than she would’ve ever thought.”

When Jiang Chen’s thoughts travelled here, he suddenly smiled, “You’re right, you can still enter the spirit realm even without a sect. Now, I’ll give you a chance to enter the spirit realm.”

“What did you say?” Astonishment shot out from Gouyu’s beautiful eyes. She had thought that she’d misheard.

“Do you want to enter the spirit realm?”

“Yes.” Gouyu nodded her head without hesitation.

Jiang Chen flicked his finger and a middle rank Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill landed in her hand. “This pill is called the Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill, and will give you a 90% chance of entering the spirit realm. This pill can also shape your spirit ocean, crafting it into one with unparalleled potential. Remember, I haven’t given even Xue Tong this pill yet, so you must keep it a secret.”

Gouyu’s face was filled with shocked surprise as she stared dumbly at the pill in her hand. Her eyes suddenly grew red.

This feeling of being helped by Jiang Chen, being given pointers by him and being taken care of by him, suddenly sent her memories back a few months, back to when they were all residing in the Eastern Kingdom.

“Jiang Chen, you...”

“Stop. I don’t like a fussy or dithering woman. You’re my follower and it’s a natural course of action for me to give you a pill.” Jiang Chen was unable to stand it when women cried.

Gouyu bravely wiped away at her eyes. She was disappointed to realize today that she seemed to have grown used to Jiang Chen's aid, used to his pointers, and accustomed to receiving benefits from Jiang Chen.

"This pill will assault your entire physical body and will reforge your body, forming the spirit ocean within it. This process will be very painful. Remember, you must hold up beneath it. If you do, the sky will be the limit. You'll set foot into the spirit realm and soar as you wish from henceforth."

Gouyu lightly puckered her lips as she could no longer find the appropriate words suitable for expressing her current emotions.

"Jiang Chen, it looks like I, Gouyu, am destined to owe you during this life. My life is yours whenever you want to call in these bestowments."

"I don't want your life, I only hope that you will always remain that tenacious and unyielding Eastern Gouyu who has her sights set only on martial dao!"

Gouyu started as Jiang Chen brushed past her and walked out.

"Jiang Chen.... You, you really are a devil. You have me, Eastern Gouyu, falling so helplessly into the deep abyss that is you..." Gouyu murmured to herself. "Forget it, forget it. I've done all of this voluntarily. Jiang Chen, do you know? Your excellence has spoiled my worldview. I would rather willingly and happily lose myself in your abyss than while away the rest of my life amongst mediocrity. I know... I'm not worthy of you, and that a great distance separates us. However, even if I am a slave or a servant, I am still willing to follow you for the rest of my life. Do you know? The splendor that you so carelessly radiate is enough to light up my entire world..."

Gouyu was almost raving in agitated silliness. She stood there in the secret chamber, both happy and sad.

"Young master, first prince Ye Dai is outside seeking an audience." Someone quickly delivered this report when Jiang Chen walked out.

"Ye Dai?" Jiang Chen was startled and then waved his hand. "Denied!"

"Young master, this prince Ye Dai has a thick face and refuses to leave. He says that if the young master doesn't receive him, you will be sure to regret it for the rest of your life."

"Regret? Because of him?" Jiang Chen laughed coldly and thought that his underlings were probably unable to shoo Ye Dai away.

"Ignore him, I'll go chase him away."

When he walked to the door, he indeed saw Ye Dai standing there. His tall and fit body was like a willow tree swaying in the wind. His demeanor was sophisticated and graceful. He presented a rather pleasing view if one only considered his looks.

"Jiang Chen, I'd planned on standing here and not leaving until I've see you." Ye Dai smiled faintly, as if the two weren't rivals who'd had some friction between them, and were rather old acquaintances.

Jiang Chen smiled faintly, "First prince, relations between the two of us don't seem to be familiar enough for such boring jokes to be cracked?"

Ye Dai thought nothing of it as he maintained his graceful manner, "Jiang Chen, I admit that I was a bit unhappy and even a bit envious of you the day of the honored tutor's birthday banquet. However, when I returned home, I felt that this wasn't the way to approach things. To be honest there's no death feud between the two of us. You're now the holder of a Skylareel Kingdom Medallion, and I am the most supported and loved prince in the Skylareel Kingdom. Why must the two of us be engaged in competition against each other instead of cooperation?"

"Cooperation? Ye Dai, are you drunk? What is there to cooperate between the two of us?"

"That's not necessarily the case!" Ye Dai shook his head and spoke seriously. "You can cooperate with number four of my house, so you can definitely cooperate with me."

"Do you think I, Jiang Chen, is someone who will become a turncoat and change who I support?" Jiang Chen smiled coldly.

"Jiang Chen, you can think on it. I can even be the mediator and have you make up with the Northern Palace if you nod your head. The matter of you killing their disciples can be resolved with a smile. Dead people are already dead, those alive surely can't embroil themselves in endless conflict because of a dead person. And you see, I have many contacts within the Precious Tree Sect. With your potential, you're sure to enter the Precious Tree Sect in the future. I can absolutely pave the way for you and make it smoother for you to receive an even higher position. In addition..."

"Stop." Jiang Chen was impatient. "Ye Dai, just what do you want to say? You want to recruit me? I can tell you clearly, I'm not interested."

"Just because number four was one step ahead of me and made a trip to the Eastern Kingdom?" Ye Dai was unwilling to accept this. "He's just an opportunistic fellow. If it wasn't for the fact that I was busy then, I definitely would've made a trip to the Eastern Kingdom as well if I'd know such a person as you existed. You don't believe me Jiang Chen? Do you think number four can really fight me for the position of Crown Prince? Are you really willing to hang around a prince with no background and make a blunder that will affect the rest of your life?"

Jiang Chen laughed, "Ye Dai, you speak with great gusto, but I'm completely uninterested in this struggle for Crown Prince and this so-called grand royal endeavor. I help Ye Rong because he's my friend, and you, Ye Dai, are not my friend. It's that simple."

"Then we can also be friends." Ye Dai hastily said.

"The moment that I entered the Black Dungeons destined that the

two of us would not be friends.” Jiang Chen waved his hands and frowned, “I’ll ask you one thing, are you getting the hell out of here or not?”

Ye Dai’s face grew frosty and knew that he couldn’t keep up the act. He spoke harshly, “Jiang Chen, are you determined to pursue your mistaken beliefs and oppose me to the end?”

“Oppose you? You think too much. Go back and look at your reflection in a puddle of your own pee. Is something like you worthy of me, Jiang Chen, opposing you?”

“Alright, very good! Jiang Chen, you’ll pay a great price one day for your stubbornness and ego. Then, you’ll be crying, shouting, and kneeling in front of me, begging for forgiveness.”

Ye Dai left these vicious words behind and left with a flourish of his sleeves.

He had held great hope this time and forcefully restrained his disgust as he put on the act of a someone kind and considerate to men of talent, hoping to eventually recruit Jiang Chen.

He also knew that it would be difficult for him to publicly oppress Jiang Chen once he had the medallion.

Since he couldn’t publicly oppress him, why not recruit him? Ye Dai discovered that the advantages of recruiting Jiang Chen greatly outnumbered the disadvantages.

There was only one drawback in that he’d have to smooth over things with the Northern Palace and Lu Wuji.

But the benefits would be innumerable.

However, he discovered that his carefully laid out plans had all been for naught. Although he had all sorts of advantages and an impressive background, so what of that? Jiang Chen paid no attention to any of that at all.

Jiang Chen shook his head, "He has no idea what he should be doing."

He was about to go back inside when the clatter of hooves suddenly sounded from the other end of the street. A man on a horse was swiftly approaching Jiang Chen.

"Younger brother Jiang, I've heard that you've been in closed door cultivation. Did you emerge today?" The person on the horse had seen Jiang Chen from afar and raised his hand, calling out in greeting.

"General Tian?" Jiang Chen was surprised to see that that person was Tian Shao of the Dragonteeth Guard.

The horse galloped straight up to the door before Tian Shao suddenly hauled back on the reins, making it come to a complete stop. Tian Shao jumped down and wrapped Jiang Chen in a huge bear hug.

"Younger brother, we haven't seen you in a month. The fourth prince rather misses you."

"General Tian has a spring in his step. Looks like you've had quite some gains recently." Jiang Chen chuckled.

"And it's all thanks to you. You gave me the chance to ask a question of Tutor Ye last time. After his pointers, I feel that I've progressed on that path of martial dao again and have already felt the edge of the half step spirit realm.

Tian Shao had been at the peak of the true qi realm so it was an incredible breakthrough that he'd reached half step spirit realm.

"Oh right, I forgot to tell you, Lin Qianli has already thrown off the mortal shackles and risen to the first level of the spirit realm. All of a sudden, he's become one of the most accomplished disciples in the Southern Palace. His chances of entering the Precious Tree Sect in their next open recruitment are very high.

Tian Shao also felt slight awe towards Lin Qianli when he thought of him.

“Lin Qianli’s heart of martial dao is quite resolute. I’m not surprised that he broke through.” Jiang Chen smiled. “I must congratulate him next time I see him.”

Tian Shao smiled, “I told you that once you spend some time with him, you’ll discover that he’s absolutely a friend worth having. He sings your praises now, and gets up in people’s faces if they even hint at anything bad about you. You two have had your friendship grow from an exchange of blows.”

Jiang Chen smiled, nodded, and then asked, “Oh right, old Tian, have you come looking for me because of anything in particular?”

Tian Shao smacked his forehead, “Ai, look at me. I almost forgot the official purpose of my visit. The Maze Realm Autumn Hunt that’s held once every five years will be taking place in ten days. Are you interested in participating?”

“Maze Realm Autumn Hunt?” Jiang Chen stared. What was that?

Chapter 186: Spots in the Maze Realm Autumn Hunt

Tian Shao saw that Jiang Chen looked a bit lost. He hadn't been in the Skylaurel Kingdom for that long and likely had no prior knowledge regarding the Maze Realm Autumn Hunt, so Tian Shao explained, "The Autumn Hunt is a festive occasion for the practitioners of the Skylaurel Kingdom. It's held once every five years. Almost all the practitioners at the level of true qi master and above will be participating."

"What's so special about it?"

"This Maze Realm is a very special place. Only the Precious Tree Sect has the coordinates of its entrance. But even with the coordinates, it isn't something that the Precious Tree Sect can open whenever it wants to. The Maze Realm is typically open once every five years. If you don't leave the Maze Realm within a month, then you'll be trapped in it forever."

"Forever?"

"Yes." Tian Shao nodded his head resolutely. "Forever."

"Doesn't it open once every five years? There's still a chance of making it back alive then?"

Tian Shao smiled, "Absolutely not. This is because the space within the Maze Realm is different every time. The Maze Realm has existed within the Skylaurel Kingdom for several hundreds of years and its interior design has never repeated itself. This means that the Maze Realm that appears each time is actually a different world."

"Oh?" Jiang Chen was actually a bit curious now. He hadn't thought that an independent space would exist in a small place like the Skylaurel Kingdom, much less flowing independent space.

Jiang Chen naturally knew that this so-called Maze Realm was a crack between different planes of existence, the overlapping portion

of different planes of existence, or possibly some form of disorder within the same plane of existence.

There was usually a very defined rhythm to the operations of such a space.

“This Maze Realm Autumn Hunt seems quite interesting. I have a belly full of theory now but lack practical experience. This Autumn Hunt is a chance to test my theories out.”

After his thoughts traveled here, Jiang Chen asked, “Old Tian, how does one sign up for this Maze Realm Autumn Hunt?”

Tian Shao was overjoyed to hear these words, “Do you want to participate? If you want to, you don’t have to worry about signing up. The fourth prince will take care of everything for you.”

“Oh? Ordinary people can’t sign themselves up?”

Tian Shao smiled ruefully, “Only those of second rank noble or above have the right to participate. Those who have the right to participate will also receive some quotas on the number of followers they can bring. It’s similar to participating in Tutor Ye’s birthday banquet but the Autumn Hunt is on a much larger scale than that old tutor’s banquet. At least several thousand people participate each time.”

“That many?”

Tian Shao nodded, “Just think about it. So many princes, sons and daughters of nobles and courtiers, the descendents of all the dukes, and the disciples of all sorts of factions; there are truly many spots.”

“Will the Precious Tree Sect send disciples to participate?” Jiang Chen was rather curious about this.

“The inner disciples of the Precious Tree Sect won’t be participating, so only the outer disciples of these four great sites will participate in the Maze Realm Autumn Hunt.”

Jiang Chen suddenly understood. So the four great sites only counted as the outskirts of the Precious Tree Sect. It was only those who truly trained within the Precious Tree Sect who were viewed as inner disciples.

Inner disciples wouldn't take part in the Maze Realm Autumn Hunt.

"Do you think it's odd that although the Precious Tree Sect controls the coordinates, none of their inner disciples participate?" Tian Shao smiled.

"It is indeed a bit odd." Jiang Chen nodded.

"The reason is actually very simple. The Precious Tree Sect holds two such maze realms like this. The other is called the Aquarius Maze Realm. That maze realm has three to five times the difficulty and danger level of the external Maze Realm. The Aquarius Maze Realm is what holds true attraction for the inner disciples of the Precious Tree Sect."

Jiang Chen finally truly understood. It wasn't that the Precious Tree Sect disciples weren't participating, but rather, they found the level of this time's Autumn Hunt completely beneath them.

But Jiang Chen didn't look down on it. He didn't want to pass up such a good opportunity.

"Old Tian, then please ask the fourth prince to save a spot for me. Wait, if there are enough spots, then please leave me another one as well."

Tian Shao smiled and nodded his acceptance before he suddenly asked, "I seemed to have seen the first prince just now?"

"Ach, don't even bother mentioning such a brainless person." Jiang Chen flapped his hands, completely uninterested in the topic of Ye Dai.

Tian Shao laughed heartily. There weren't many people in the entire

Skylaurel Kingdom who dared call the first prince brainless. Jiang Chen was absolutely the youngest, most unique of them all.

After sending off Tian Shao, Jiang Chen thought for a bit and felt that this Autumn Hunt was a chance to train. If he could find some opportunities during the trials, he'd surely be able to greatly increase his battle strength and progress on the road of the spirit realm.

Since he planned on participating in the Maze Realm Autumn Hunt, he naturally needed to make some preparations.

Jiang Chen never fought a battle without being prepared beforehand.

He made a visit to the Myriad Treasures Palace and prepared some necessities. He also checked in on Jiang Yu. Not only had he thoroughly assimilated into the Myriad Treasures Palace in the span of a month but he was also exemplary at fulfilling his position with sound and colour. Even an old eccentric like Shi Xiaoyao thought him worthy of praise.

Jiang Chen left only after imparting a few words of encouragement. He also planned on making a trip to the Southern Palace. After he arrived at their location in the capital, he learned that Qiao Baishi had followed Elder Ning back to the Southern Palace headquarters. He'd left almost half a month ago.

Jiang Chen purchased a few things at the counter before turning to leave. Since Qiao Baishi wasn't present, Jiang Chen also didn't want to linger.

When he was walking out the front door, he suddenly heard a round of shouting, "I've already said that the public clinic is over. The spirit alchemists have already left. Even if you kneel here until you faint, we will not be able to help you no matter how much we want to. We're only businessmen and don't know how to treat patients."

"Great sir associates, please. Look, we've even prepared our diagnosis fee. Please, can you guys make an exception for us?"

"Ai, I say, what can't the two of you listen to reason? Since you have the diagnosis fee, why didn't you come when our Southern Palace was holding the public clinic?"

"Ai, we ran into some accidents on our way here and the diagnosis fee was confiscated. We finally settled the case, but the public clinic was already over by then. Isn't it just our bad luck?" The man was also quite dejected.

Jiang Chen walked in upon hearing the man's voice and couldn't help but call out, "Tang Long?"

This man was the first Skylareland Kingdom citizen that Jiang Chen had met upon entering the kingdom. He was that Wyvern Knight who had been patrolling the border.

When the person heard Jiang Chen call his name, he was momentarily stunned when he turned his head, "It's you!"

A trace of awkwardness and shame flashed across Tang Long's face and he looked a bit embarrassed, "I heard my woman say that she brought the Black Spirit Wood here to ask for help, but it was taken from her. You were the one who lent her a hand, but that caused you to become embroiled in the case instead."

It wasn't that Tang Long was devoid of gratitude, but that his status was far too low for him to have the right to know any inside intelligence. He was just a Wyvern Knight on border patrol. There was too big a gap between him and the Dragonteeth Guard.

He only knew this much. As for how the case was resolved and if his savior had been released, he'd tried to learn the result, but no one paid any attention to him.

Tang Long knew that his words didn't carry much weight, so he had given up after a while.

When he saw Jiang Chen now, he naturally felt a bit embarrassed and felt that he owed Jiang Chen something.

Jiang Chen didn't know Tang Long's thoughts as he smiled, "How come you have the time to come back to the capital this time?"

Tang Long's face dimmed, "Forget it, I heard that something had happened at home and deserted my post to come back. I've been fired by the border guard now.

"That's right, are — are you alright? I've heard my woman say that you were involved in a case and offended the Northern Palace. You're alright?" Tang Long widened his eyes.

He was the lowest blade of grass in the capital. He had absolutely no inkling of the situation within the capital, and hadn't even clarified Jiang Chen's identity.

"Aren't I just fine? The Dragonteeth Guard returned the stick of Black Spirit Wood to you, right? What are you doing?"

Tang Long was much relieved after seeing that Jiang Chen was fine. "This Black Spirit Wood was what I asked you to bring back last time in order to make it to the Southern Palace's public clinic. Who would've thought that I made it in time, only for something unexpected to crop up. My woman said that if it wasn't for you last time, she probably would've been beaten to death by the robbers from the Northern Palace."

"What did you guys need the public clinic for? It doesn't look like the two of you are sick."

Tang Long sighed, "My younger brother is the one who is sick. He was diagnosed with palsy when he was young and can only spend his days in a wheelchair. I was thinking that if I could ask a spirit alchemist to help him, then maybe he'd be able to stand up."

He then cast a look of resignation at the fellow from the Southern Palace after speaking.

The associate obviously knew of Jiang Chen's background and his expression changed as he started panicking, "You're young master Chen? Young master Chen, it really isn't our fault! The public clinic has long since ended and we lowly associates have no abilities to treat patients!"

Jiang Chen spread out his hands, "Alright alright, there's none of your business here. What are you afraid of?"

It was as if a huge burden had been lifted off of the associate's chest. "Young master Chen, would you like to come sit inside?"

"Forget it, you are dismissed."

The young associate nodded and bowed, smiling happily, "Yes, yes. Young master Chen, then this one will take his leave first." He walked off as quickly as possible.

What kind of person was Jiang Chen? The young associate had seen it for his own eyes, the way Zhang Meng had been directly hauled out by Sir Bei from the Southern Palace and beaten straight to death that day in the transaction area .

When he left the transaction area, he'd beaten yet another disciple of the Northern Palace to death.

How could the disciples of the Southern Palace not know of someone as fierce as this?

Tang Long felt it odd that the associate feared Jiang Chen that much. "You... haven't you only just come to the Skylareel Kingdom? Why does this associate seem quite afraid of you? He doesn't seem like someone who's that polite."

Tang Long felt a bit surprised.

Jiang Chen smiled. "Come, I'll take you to a place. Perhaps there, we can help your younger brother find a spirit alchemist."

Tang Long started, "Really?"

"Why would I lie to you?" Jiang Chen smiled. Tang Long was a warm, enthusiastic man and Jiang Chen happened to need to make a trip to the Qingyang Valley and talk to old man Fei about something anyway.

He'd just so happened to run into Tang Long. Helping him out of convenience would allow Jiang Chen to repay his good intentions in introducing the particulars of the capital to him.

"I'll say this first, I only have this stick of Black Spirit Wood for the diagnosis fee. I won't be able to take anything out if the price is higher. Sell my house? My family has only three run down straw huts that no one would want even if I gave it to them." This Tang Long was quite down to earth alright; his thoughts were also very simple and unadorned.

Jiang Chen liked interacting with simple and unadorned people like him and smiled, "What are you worried about? I won't ask you to pay since I'm the one who brought you here. Not to mention, they wouldn't dare take my money."

Tang Long was half skeptical and half believing. He thought that Jiang Chen was someone who'd just arrived in the Skylarell Kingdom. How could he speak with such a lofty tone? He was also curious at the same time — as someone who'd killed a disciple of the Northern Palace, how could he be brazenly walking about on the streets now?

Chapter 187: The Weird Sect Disciple

When Jiang Chen arrived at the Qingyang Valley location in the capital with Tang Long and his wife, Tang Long's face turned green as he read the words "Qingyang Valley" on the sign.

"Qing... Qingyang Valley?" Tang Long stammered as his legs were like they'd been staked into the ground, unwilling to take a single step forward. He looked at the sign with trepidation, as if the sign would eat him.

"What's wrong?" Jiang Chen thought his reaction was a bit odd.

Tang Long had a rueful look on his face, "Brother, just where do you come from? Your methods are simply too out there! This is the Qingyang Valley location, aren't you afraid of being kidnapped to be a medicine servant for them because you brought me here?"

"A medicine servant?" Jiang Chen didn't know whether to laugh or cry. The most senior leader of the Qingyang Valley, old man Fei, was now rightfully and properly his medicine servant!

Jiang Chen hadn't really wanted that to happen, but it'd been old man Fei who'd begged him with a thick face.

So, snatch him to be a medicine servant? Old man Fei would first need to have the guts to accept him as one!

"Don't worry, would I sell you out?" Jiang Chen smiled. "Let's go."

"Not going. I'm scared!" Tang Long shook his head, he was quite determined.

"You're really not going? Then I'm going to wash my hands of your matter."

Tang Long hesitated and he raised his head to look at the sign again, as if wrestling over a tough decision in his heart.

"I'll go in, but first, you need to tell me who you are." A moment of brilliance suddenly struck Tang Long as he asked an exceedingly good question.

Just as Jiang Chen was finding it both irritating and hilarious, a voice suddenly called out from behind him, "Jiang Chen."

Jiang Chen turned around in surprise and he saw a fellow wearing all black robes and a cape standing awkwardly at the side of the door.

"It's you?" Jiang Chen would never have thought that the person calling out to him would be the Precious Tree Sect disciple, Han Xianke! This was the genius disciple who had clashed ferociously with him in a verbal sparring match, and he had even thrown down the brutal words that if he lost to Jiang Chen, he'd be Jiang Chen's dog.

Han Xianke was obviously finding it a bit awkward and he was hesitating as well. He seemed to want to talk to Jiang Chen, but he also seemed to find it difficult to open his mouth.

Jiang Chen was rather indifferent. He hadn't taken Han Xianke's words spoken in anger seriously. Sect disciples like Han Xianke were all like this. Their eyes were on the top of their heads and they placed themselves loftily above everyone else.

Jiang Chen had no blood feud with him, so he wasn't particularly of a mind to be ruthless to Han Xianke.

"It's me." Han Xianke still walked over after hesitating for a long while.

"You haven't returned to the Precious Tree sect yet? What are you doing hanging around brainless idiots like Ye Dai in the prime of your life? I find it a poor waste even if you don't." Jiang Chen shook his head. When did sect disciples have so much time on their hands?

Han Xianke's face flushed beet red, "I... I actually don't have any

relationships with Ye Dai. He paid a high price to invite me here.”

“You don’t need to explain things to me. I didn’t take anything that happened that day seriously.” Jiang Chen was rather surprised that Han Xianke would take the initiative to talk to him.

According to the typical style of sect disciples, they would’ve hated his guts with a passion. They would want to exterminate him, stomping him beneath their feet as demanded by their style.

This Han Xianke was actually greeting him first. This really did surprise Jiang Chen.

“Ai... ” Han Xianke sighed. “I haven’t gone back to the sect, but I haven’t hung around Ye Dai either.”

“Then what are you doing? Don’t tell me you want to leave the sect and resume a secular life?”

“I... I don’t know what I want to do either. I wanted to find you, but I couldn’t sacrifice my face enough to do so. I had to just randomly walk around in hopes of bumping into you, and I really did do so!”

“What do you want from me? Do you still want to fight to determine who’s better?” Jiang Chen was completely baffled by Han Xianke.

He was a sect disciple after all. Could he not conduct himself as a sect disciple would?

Jiang Chen felt rather unused to how Han Xianke was acting. In Jiang Chen’s eyes, all sect disciples are malicious-looking and seek revenge for the smallest grievances.

“Jiang Chen, I thought carefully after I left that day and realized that I didn’t hate you at all. If I insult others, they are sure to insult me. When I was humiliated by you that day, I had brought shame on myself. And, when I reflected carefully on your words, they did indeed make a lot of sense. Sect disciples shouldn’t use their sect’s name to suppress others, but should instead use their true abilities

to convince others of their superiority.”

Han Xianke became more agitated as he spoke, “I felt that I was stronger than the Qingyang elder and humiliated him without mercy so that he had no way out. Then, since you’re stronger than me, isn’t it normal for you to humiliate me? Since this is the case, what reason do I have to be unable to accept what has happened to me? Comparing my feelings to other people’s, I was indeed in the wrong first.”

Jiang Chen wouldn’t have found it strange at all if Han Xianke had thrown himself into a no holds barred deathmatch.

But as Han Xianke nagged on and on, muttering and reflecting on his actions, Jiang Chen felt greatly astonished.

He almost wanted to suspect that Han Xianke had put on a show of torturing himself to win Jiang Chen’s confidence because Ye Dai had told him to do so.

After his careful observation, he realized that this wasn’t a trick. A sect genius like Han Xianke was absolutely not someone that Ye Dai could compel.

Besides, Han Xianke had a drawn and long face. It was apparent that he really had spent the month wandering around outside. If a sect disciple were to put on an act, he definitely could never produce such a realistic act of dejection.

The most important thing was that the perceptive ability of Jiang Chen’s “Psychic’s Head” was exceedingly strong. He could clearly capture the true emotions behind Han Xianke’s words.

Han Xianke was truly revealing his sincere sentiments and speaking from the depths of his heart.

This was what surprised Jiang Chen most . He never would’ve thought that a sect disciple with his eyes on the top of his head and no one in his sight would become so humble after a round of

setbacks.

It looked like although the sect disciples all put on sneering expressions of superiority over everyone else, they still possessed vastly different personalities on the inside.

Han Xianke was likely one of those disciples who was spoiled but not bad at heart.

“Han Xianke, since you say these things, it seems that you’ve been somewhat enlightened. That’s not necessarily a bad thing. Maybe this enlightenment will be beneficial to you in your future training. If you’re purposefully waiting for me to give you an explanation, it’s alright. I was just going with the flow that day and do not hold a grudge. I have no blood feud with you.”

Jiang Chen wasn’t someone who ruthlessly hounded others either. He was still a kind person to a certain extent, and willing to coexist peacefully with other people.

If Han Xianke could see his faults and change his ways, then he was much stronger than any ordinary sect disciple. Jiang Chen naturally wouldn’t stand on the little points for someone who knew his faults and was willing to change.

When Han Xianke heard Jiang Chen’s words, his entire being seemed greatly revived. “Jiang Chen, this means I haven’t waited a month for you in vain.”

“You actually still did wait in vain, because I really thought nothing of it, haha.” Jiang Chen smiled.

“No, it was not in vain. Jiang Chen, although my words that day were a bit extreme, I’m willing to hold myself to them. I will be your follower from now on.”

That day, in the heat of the moment, he had said that he would be Jiang Chen’s dog if he lost. Those were words spoken in anger.

But Han Xianke was a proud person. The pride of a sect disciple wouldn't let him run away from paying up after a loss.

"Taking in a sect genius as a follower? Aren't you afraid that those of your sect will drown me in their spittle?" Jiang Chen waved his hands. "I already said that I won't pursue this matter. You can go back with a clear conscience and light heart."

"No." Han Xianke shook his head resolutely. "If I'm not a man of my word, then what kind of sect genius am I, Han Xianke? Not only will I grow fat from eating my own words, the heart of my martial dao will be affected as well. If I return like this, then I am sure to fall from my position in the Sect and be exiled to the outer branches after ten or so years. Jiang Chen, you must take me as a follower. I mean it."

"I..." Jiang Chen discovered that he'd been defeated. Han Xianke had spoken in a circle, finally reaching the conclusion that he must become Jiang Chen's follower!

Tang Long on the other hand, was utterly flabbergasted. If he hadn't been with Jiang Chen all along, he would almost have suspected that the two were putting on an act.

A genius sect disciple was begging Jiang Chen to take him as a follower!

This was the genius disciple of the Precious Tree Sect!

Tang Long's brain was a complete, muddled mess. His poor limits of comprehension were entirely useless. His knowledge of the world was absolutely unable to make sense of the bizarre scene that was happening in front of him.

As for Han Xianke, he'd obviously already made up his mind and didn't care at all that there were others present.

He only had one thought at this moment which was to become Jiang Chen's follower. He couldn't grow fat from eating his own words nor could he become a turtle who withdrew his head into his shell.

"How about we talk about this matter later?" Jiang Chen changed the topic. "I have something to do first. See, I have two friends with me who I'm taking to the Qingyang Valley to find a spirit alchemist to treat his brother."

"Treat an illness? Is there anyone in the Qingyang Valley who's more skilled at that than I am?" Han Xianke wouldn't let Jiang Chen change the topic at all. "Although I admit that I was at fault that day, I still insist that my level is higher than those of the Qingyang Valley."

Jiang Chen couldn't deny this either. He wasn't sure who was better between Han Xianke and old man Fei, but compared to some middle aged chubby man, Han Xianke was surely better.

"Where's the patient? These two? They're not sick." Han Xianke looked at them and could immediately see that Tang Long and his wife weren't sick at all.

Jiang Chen suddenly had a brainchild. Look for a spirit alchemist? Han Xianke was knocking at his door, and it'd be a shame to not use someone who'd come looking.

"Tang Long, if you want your brother to be healed, bring him here immediately and have Sir Han take a look. Ordinary folk wouldn't normally have the chance to make the acquaintance of a genius disciple from the Precious Tree Sect."

Tang Long's mind was blank and he didn't react until Jiang Chen was about to kick his butt. He immediately became overjoyed and kept nodding, rushing out in the direction of his home.

"He's your friend?" Han Xianke was curious. How did Jiang Chen make such a lowly friend?

"A chance acquaintance. He's an enthusiastic fellow."

"Just a chance acquaintances?" Han Xianke was startled. He discovered that he could see less and less through Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen nodded. "I still need to make a trip to the Qingyang Valley. Are you coming in with me, or will you wait here for Tang Long?"

Han Xianke hesitated and finally said, "Then, I'll wait here."

Jiang Chen looked at this fellow and laughed ruefully inside. What an odd day! How had he run into this abnormally muttering guy? He'd rather fight Han Xianke than have the guy stick to him like toffee!

Chapter 188: Dan Fei's Invitation

What disappointed Jiang Chen was that old man Fei wasn't in the capital but had instead been missing for quite a while. There was no trace of old man Fei in the entire Qingyang Valley.

"Is this old man playing hide and seek with me?" Jiang Chen mused inwardly. But he also believed that even though old man Fei was crafty, he wasn't the sort to run away from his obligations.

If old man Fei was really that sort of person, Jiang Chen wouldn't have given him the recipe for the Renewal Purity Pill. He'd observed the old man a few times and confirmed his temperament before giving that recipe to him.

"This old man has been pining after this pill for forever, surely because of its particular use. In that case, he must be furiously collecting materials in preparation of refining this pill?"

It was a good thing that although old man Fei had left, he had given instructions to these disciples that if Jiang Chen came by, they'd have to serve Jiang Chen as if they were serving their own ancestor.

Therefore, when Jiang Chen arrived, all these associates were incredibly fervent. Jiang Chen handed over the list that he'd prepared earlier and all the items were collected in short order, with the associates refusing to accept any money for the items.

Such ardent zeal made Jiang Chen feel almost a bit embarrassed to have lectured old man Fei.

After lingering for a while inside, Jiang Chen didn't want to while away the time outside with Han Xianke so he drank two small cups of tea before finally making his way out of the door.

At this moment, Tang Long happened to arrive with his younger brother. Large beads of sweat dotted his forehead.

Even though he was part of the army, to make a return trip in such a short amount of time with only his two legs was still a very difficult thing

Han Xianke was a man of his word and didn't put on any airs.

He took a quick glance, flourished his sleeves, and poked a few times at some acupuncture points on Tang Long's younger brother's leg. Then, he took out a few gold needles and poked at various key nerves in his younger brother's body.

"Ah!" Tang Long's brother cried out as a mouthful of previously blocked blood sprayed from his mouth. Black blood also started flowing out of the seven orifices of his head.

"Alright." Han Xianke put away his gold needles. "You brought him here in time. If you had waited another half a year, not even the gods would have been able to save this man."

"Al... alright?" Tang Long hadn't even had time to react. "The treatment is done just like that?"

"Ignore it if you don't believe me." Han Xianke's regular demeanor as a sect disciple once again reared its head.

Tang Long smiled awkwardly as he grasped the Black Spirit Wood in his hands. He wanted to offer it as a reward, but was then worried that he was acting too hastily. What if his brother hadn't truly been cured?

Jiang Chen really wanted to burst out laughing when he saw Tang Long's hesitant figure.

"Tang Long, take your younger brother back. Oh right, before that, go to the Qingyang Valley and obtain some medicine that will strengthen the body. They're not that expensive. Tell them I sent you."

This time, Tang Long had happened to catch a glimpse of Jiang Chen

coming out of the Qingyang Valley office.

"If you want your younger brother to be able to stand up, you still have to use the requisite medicines. Sir Han also already taken care of the palsy, but it's still up to him to go through the recovery process. Using better medicine will help him heal faster."

Jiang Chen actually had good medicine, but those were the ones for practitioners to take when they were injured. The body of Tang Long's younger brother wouldn't be able to cope with such high-level medicine.

Tang Long was a complete believer this time. He held the Black Spirit Wood in his hands, unsure whether to offer it to Jiang Chen or Han Xianke.

Jiang Chen smiled, "I've already said that no diagnosis fee is needed. If you find that item cumbersome, why don't you sell it to the Qingyang Valley? They'll give you a fair price."

Han Xianke was the genius disciple of a sect. How could he find any value in a stick of Black Spirit Wood? Only useless trash like that senior brother Kuang would try to steal something like that.

Why would a true sect disciple want something like that?

Taking a look at Han Xianke's resolute face, Jiang Chen felt a headache develop. "Then, ah, let's have a chat. I have no opinion about you wanting to be my follower, but let's talk about this only after I enter the Precious Tree Sect. How about that?"

"You want to enter the Precious Tree Sect?" Han Xianke started before becoming overjoyed. "Then what are we waiting for? I'll recommend you right now."

"The time isn't ripe yet." Jiang Chen shook his head. Recommendation? Jiang Chen didn't want to make it into the sect through someone else's power. Besides, he didn't want to start off pathetically as a low ranked disciple. He wanted to make a big

entrance in a blaze of glory.

Besides, he hadn't been in the Skylaurel Kingdom for long. His foundations were not yet solid, and he had yet to find suitable positions for those around him.

It was obviously not yet the right timing to enter the Precious Tree Sect.

He didn't want others to think that he'd gotten in by some under-the-table means as soon as he entered the sect.

Jiang Chen spent a lot of time and effort to finally convince Han Xianke that when he entered the Precious Tree Sect in the future, he would carry out the words he had spoken today and accept him as a follower.

Han Xianke still hadn't seemed that happy, so Jiang Chen had to further promise that he would let Han Xianke visit him once every three months.

Amongst all the followers he'd ever taken, Jiang Chen had never had such a follower forcibly foisted on him before. Han Xianke was the type to never rest until he reached his goal.

"Han Xianke has rather shown me another side of sect disciples." Jiang Chen sighed lightly. Sect disciples had their eyes on top of their heads and all sorts of eccentric tempers. But, Han Xianke possessed an indefatigable and undying sense of resolution and a type of intelligence that followed enlightenment. This wasn't something that any regular person could measure up to.

Sect disciples weren't useless after all; it was just that they often displayed the awful sides of themselves and made others feel that that all sect disciples were good-for-nothings.

After all, in order to become a sect disciple, all of them surely had that a spark of something special about them.

...

When he returned home, Jiang Chen discovered that he had an unexpected visitor...

Dan Fei!

She was Tutor Ye's half granddaughter, half disciple, and the woman that Jiang Chen was currently most afraid of bumping into.

But, she'd come knocking on his door. He couldn't very well turn his head and walk away now, could he? He could only force himself to walk up and greet her with a wry expression, "Look who the wind blew in! Sister Dan Fei, what brings you here?"

Dan Fei looked like she was in a good mood today as she wore a light green robe, with the appearance a quietly elegant apricot berry, giving others a very refined impression.

Except, her skirt emphasized her wondrous body, making her appear even more alluring. The skirt rippled like water and billowed slightly, complementing her snow white skin and exquisite features, and even adding a few ethereal traces to her face.

"Jiang Chen, I had thought that I'd need to wait half a day for you." Dan Fei put down the tea cup on the table with a shadow of a smile.

Seeing that she was smiling, Jiang Chen felt that she likely wasn't here to interrogate him. Almost a month had passed since the birthday banquet so there'd be no point in holding a grudge about it anymore.

Although he'd turned down the old tutor's good intentions, he'd also explained his reasons for doing so. Even if those reasons were made up, he had still taken care to spin them into sincere white lies.

"Young master, you're back. Miss Dan Fei has waited a long time for you." Gouyu had been keeping her company, but it seemed that these two women who had similarly beautiful features, the same

impressive body, and same proud natures were destined not to become friends.

The two remained silent for a long time while staring at the empty air.

"Mm, Gouyu, entertain our guest first. I've just been out and am incredibly tired. I'm going to take a shower and get a change of clothes first." Jiang Chen wanted to make use of the opportunity and run away.

Dan Fei laughed softly and said leisurely, "To think that Jiang Chen, renowned throughout the capital and unafraid of even the country's princes would be this afraid of seeing me, a weak woman?"

Jiang Chen smiled ruefully. This woman was a strong character alright. Although she didn't have malice written all over her face and wasn't threatening, but several of her noncommittal words had made it so that he could neither retreat nor advance.

However, Gouyu responded, "Miss Dan Fei, the young master of my house is only treating you with all due respect. He's not afraid of you."

Dan Fei smiled leisurely again, "What a loyal gal. Jiang Chen, to think that you were keeping a young wife in a golden house. You rather know how to enjoy yourself."

Gouyu refused to admit that she was inferior. "Who are you calling gal? Who knows who's the older one?"

Dan Fei smiled, "At least my age won't be smaller than you?"

Gouyu stuck her chest out proudly and said with burning fighting spirit, "Who knows who's smaller if we don't compare ourselves?"

Those who knew what they were talking about would know that they were referring to age. Those who didn't would likely think that they were comparing chest sizes instead after seeing Gouyu's gesture.

These two women had vastly different personalities. Gouyu's enthusiasm raged like fire, whereas Dan Fei's intelligence sparkled with exquisite elegance.

One was a fiery red tree peony in full bloom, and the other a graceful camellia that was still friendly.

These two different women had created a battlefield in the living room, with a battle that saw neither the light of the blade nor the shadow of a sword commencing.

"Alright, alright. Are all women roosters that like to fight?" Jiang Chen was quite depressed as he plopped into a chair. "Sister Dan Fei, speak what's on your mind and don't mind that I'm stinking with sweat."

Dan Fei smiled in satisfaction as her red lips curled slightly upwards, making a small gesture that was an indication of her power at Gouyu.

Gouyu laughed coldly and walked behind Jiang Chen, "Young master, you've had a long day. Let me rub your shoulders and pound your back."

Jiang Chen discovered that these two women were dead set on facing off against each other.

"Jiang Chen, the Four Seasons Eternal Spring Pill you gave me last time was quite nice. I heard that Elder Ning of the Southern Palace immediately shaved twenty years off her looks after taking it. Your personal maid is so dutiful, so why don't you give her one as well?" Dan Fei chuckled as she asked her question.

Gouyu smiled, "Who says I don't have any? Our young master's given me a ton. I'll have enough to use from when I'm forty years old to when I'm four hundred."

Dan Fei was a bit depressed that her blow had no effect whatsoever.

Jiang Chen hastily changed the topic when he saw the situation. "Sister Dan Fei, what of the honored tutor's Phoenix-Dragon?" He'd wanted to ask if it'd been castrated, but that really wasn't the sort of thing to ask in front of two beautiful women.

"It's all been taken care of and the lordmaster is quite happy. He's told me to come ask you to meet him for a drink. Look, you've kept him waiting for so long. Aren't you an awful person?"

Jiang Chen didn't believe that Dan Fei was merely here to invite him to go drinking. He rubbed his nose. "Ordinary people aren't able to drink the lordmaster's wine. Sister Dan Fei don't try to act dumb, please speak candidly."

Dan Fei shot a swift smile of beauty, "I'll only tell you if you promise me first."

"I promise I'll definitely do it if it's something I can do. But how can I agree to something that I can't do? What if you tell me to run naked through the streets? That I definitely won't do." Jiang Chen started joking around with her as well.

"Who wants you to go streaking? You dratted person." Dan Fei hectorated, but she wasn't really angry. "Have you heard of the Maze Realm Autumn Hunt? I have a few spots at my disposal, are you interested?"

"Eh..." Jiang Chen was speechless.

"What? You were just saying that you'd do it for sure if you could do it. You can't even do this?" Dan Fei's charming face was a bit unhappy

Chapter 190: Tang Long Runs into Enormous Trouble

Tang Long was also completely bewildered. Even until now, he still hadn't figured out how his luck had been so good that he could have made the acquaintance of such a strong person.

"Brother, say something. I think I heard that the person who cured me was a disciple of the Precious Tree Sect? Brother, you're so amazing, you can even ask favors of a disciple of the Precious Tree Sect?"

Tang Long smiled ruefully when he saw his younger brother's eyebrows dancing with pleasure. "Tang Zhong, you think too highly of your ole brother. A disciple of the Precious Tree Sect? I'm not even fit to carry their shoes."

"But..."

"Don't but this or that. If I knew a disciple of the Precious Tree Sect, would I have been fired by the border guard? It's difficult for the three of us to even eat now. It's a good thing that we sold the Black Spirit Wood for a bit of money. If we spend thriftily, we should be able to last two or three years on that money." Tang Long returned to reality from his dreams.

He also knew that he'd met someone who could change his life. Last time, at the border, Jiang Chen had been generous to begin with, directly gifting him an upper rank Vast Ocean Pill.

This time in the capital, if it hadn't been for this person, not only would the Black Spirit Wood have been stolen, but his woman likely would also have been beaten to death.

Because of his matters, he'd caused the guy to become embroiled in a case. Even so, Jiang Chen hadn't blamed Tang Long, but had gone on to save his younger brother instead.

Tang Long sighed. He hated owing favors to other people, but he also

knew that the amount he owed Jiang Chen would also be unlikely to ever be returned in this life.

"Jiang Chen... just what kind of person is he?" Tang Long was truly curious. "He's not afraid of the Northern Palace; the Dragonteeth Guard can't keep him locked up, and even the disciples of the Precious Tree Sect obey his commands. This... Is Jiang Chen a senior elder of the Precious Tree Sect?"

"Forget it, forget it. He pitied me and happened to offer me some help. I, Tang Long, am born of the earth like an ant. I'm destined to be of a different world from him."

With effort, Tang Long flung away those random emotions and said to the young girl, "Xiaoqing, why don't you go make dinner? We've been busy all day and we're hungry now. The Black Spirit Wood has fetched a nice price, so go buy something that's not only delicious but will also nourish Tang Long so that he'll be on his feet sooner rather than later."

Tang Zhong was greatly touched to hear his older brother's words. "Brother, when I can stand up and walk, I'll go find a job as well. I won't always be the one who'll let you down."

"Silly boy. Our mom and dad are gone. My wife was a child bride who was slated to be mine since young and she also has no mother and father. The three of us are a family and we depend on each other for survival. Who would take care of you if we didn't?"

Tang Long patted his younger brother's shoulder, "Don't think random thoughts. Just concentrate on recovering from your illness for now. You're still young and the road ahead is long."

Although he spoke thus, Tang Long still felt quite tragic at heart when he saw his house that only had its four bare walls. Right now, he was unemployed as well so he needed to quickly find work to carry the family on his shoulders.

His fiance Xiaoqing silently took some paper money and walked outside the door, ready to buy some fish and protein, anything to nourish her brother-in-law's body.

She'd just stepped out the door when she suddenly screamed, her face ghastly white with fright as she fled back like a frightened deer.

"What is it?" Tang Long hastily ran to the door.

"Tang Long, we've finally found you!"

"Damned fellow, you decided to go home on your own and drag us all down with you."

"Tell us, how are you going to pay up for all this? Did you think that all would be fine after you just walked away?"

Four people had come. They were all youths around twenty years old with weapons at their waist as malice written over their faces. They all looked like they wanted to find fault with someone.

"Yu Dui, what are you guys doing here?" Tang Long felt a bit awkward as he wiped his hands off on himself.

"What are we doing here?" A bald, burly man with no eyebrows pushed Tang Long's chest. "What do you think we're here for? You left your post on your own accord and made us suffer for it. I was dragged in because of you and got caned thirty times. Am I going to just suffer that for free?"

"And us, we were all caned twenty times. Tang Long, how are you doing to pay us for this?!"

The other three team members also called out, completely appearing as though they'd rush up to beat up Tang Long even as they exchanged harsh words.

These people were all Tang Long's companion-at-arms. Although they weren't that close, they had still all worked together in the same

team.

"Yu Dui, I was at fault in this matter. I had urgent matters at home and only resorted to leaving when no one approved my vacation request. How about I treat you all one day and we'll eat up at one of the taverns? How about that?" Tang Long met rudeness with a smile as they stood at the door. He didn't step aside and didn't invite these men in to sit either

He knew that although these people were his colleagues, they'd always maintained a mediocre relationship with him. These guys were characters with questionable morals and were renowned thorns in the side of the border guard. They were scoundrels that were half military men and half robbers.

Tang Long disliked what he saw in them and hence interacted very minimally with them. It was apparent that they had come looking for trouble. They wanted to make an issue of this and create trouble for Tang Long.

"Treat us to a meal?" The bald, eyebrow-less Yu Dui smiled sinisterly. "Tang Long, do you think that we're so poor as to be unable to afford even a meal such that we need you to treat us to one?"

"No, that's not it. I'm treating you in order to express my apologies and to thank everyone for previously taking care of me." Tang Long kept his smiling face on.

"Yu Dui, stop wasting words with this kid. Haul him out for a beating. We'll have suffered all those canings for nothing if we don't beat him half to death!"

"Right, this kid usually walks a different path from us. I feel that he purposefully left his post without authorization this time to drag us down with him. There must be some dirty tricks up his sleeve. If we don't beat him up, he'll never know that we brothers aren't someone to cross!"

“Beat him up!”

Tang Long’s face changed as he took a deep breath. “Yu Dui, let’s chat about this outside, shall we? My family’s here, let’s not disturb them.”

The bald, eyebrow-less Yu Dui chuckled. “Family? Just now, I saw a young lass who looked quite nice. Who’s she to you?”

“She’s my woman.” Tang Long’s heart lurched uneasily. He’d heard of this baldheaded eyebrow-less Yu Dui’s reputation. This fellow lusted after wine, wealth, and women. Particularly women.

“Your woman? I’ve heard that she’s only your fiance?” Yu Dui smiled, but he wasn’t really smiling.

“Although we haven’t held the wedding yet, Xiaoqing’s grown up in my household and we’ve agreed to be husband and wife since young. Yu Dui, these piddling, worthless trivialities of chicken feathers and garlic skin aren’t worth dirtying your ears over. Let’s take this outside.”

Yu Dui swatted away the hand that Tang Long extended and yelled, “Take your hand away! If you reach out again, I’ll chop off your dog claws!”

“Tang Long, you can certainly treat us if you want. Have your woman serve Yu Dui wine. If she makes him happy, we can pretend that nothing happened!”

“Yes, yes. Your woman will do. Yu Dui, what do you think?”

Yu Dui chuckled as his fierce gaze traveled over Xiaoqing’s body. “Tang Long, have your woman accompany us brothers in a night of drinking and I can promise that I won’t pursue this matter any further.”

Tang Long’s face changed. “Impossible.”

"No room for discussion?" Yu Dui's smile suddenly vanished. "Tang Long, does this mean that you don't plan on begging us for forgiveness?"

Tang Zhong was trembling from fury as he listened from inside. He couldn't help but break out in a string of expletives. "You there, is this how you bully men and tyrannize women, oppressing colleagues whilst you wear the uniforms of the army and draw the kingdom's stipend? Is this still the attitude of the Skyl Laurel Kingdom? Do you still respect the laws of the land?"

Tang Zhong arrived at the door in great agitation as he pushed his wheelchair forward.

Yu Dui blinked. "Is this your crippled younger brother?"

"Haha, is something wrong with your brother's brain? Bullying men and tyrannizing women? Laws of the kingdom? A cripple like you dares to talk to us about the laws of the kingdom?"

"Do you know what are the laws? We're strong, and so we're the law."

"Damned cripple, get the hell away or we'll beat you up as well in a bit!"

Baldy Yu Dui's face darkened. "Tang Long, I'll give you one last chance. Have your woman come out. We'll even pay for the wine. We just want her to keep us company for one night and we'll let her go tomorrow morning for sure."

Tang Long's hands trembled. The humiliation!

If he hadn't been at home, he would've taken them on in his anger. But reason told him that if he threw his life away now, then his brother and Xiaoqing would follow him in death.

But if he didn't give it his all in taking them all, these guys would surely turn to violence. They were all desperadoes who not only had greater statuses and but also better connections than he did. Going

against them meant that death was the only way.

"Well?" Beneath his robes, Tang Long's hand curled into a fist.

"I'll count down. Ten, nine, eight..." Baldy Yu Dui started counting.

These people were experienced in committing foolish acts and all sorts of evil. They had naturally scouted things out before coming and knew that Tang Long had no background whatsoever. No matter how they bullied him, he'd have no way of coming back for revenge.

They'd actually also heard that Tang Long had a good-looking fiance. They'd had a bit to drink before this and the alcohol had gotten to their heads. They came crashing over in a heap towards Tang Long, but was actually scheming on his woman.

All that bullshit had been mere excuses.

"Five, four, three..."

Tang Long felt despair encroach upon him. He knew that he had no avenue of retreat. Making up his mind, he decided to give it his all in a single attempt.

Even if he died, he would never let Xiaoqing be violated by these animals. Even if he died, he'd bring down Yu Dui with him!

"Tang Zhong, get inside." Tang Long grabbed the wheelchair and pushed Tang Zhong inside.

"Two, one!" Yu Dui's voice was incredibly cold.

"Beat him to death. Apart from that woman, beat them all to death!" Baldy Yu Dui gave the order.

At this moment, a voice traveled in from outside the small alley, "Tang Long, does Tang Long live here?"

This voice rather stood out.

Even Yu Dui and the others who were about to pounce suddenly paused, not to mention Tang Long.

Yu Dui was ticked off and said to one of his men, "Go take a look and see who's making a fuss. If they don't know what's good for them, then kill them as well."

"Who do you want to kill?" Yu Dui's order had just been given when the voice from outside traveled to the door.

The newcomer was about thirty years old and dressed in casual clothing. He looked like he was a martial dao practitioner as his eyes were as sharp as a falcon's, raking Yu Dui and the four others with a single glance.

"And what are you looking at?" One of Yu Dui's men glared from behind him.

"I'll dig your eyeballs out if you keep looking." Another man threatened.

The man in casual clothing looked up and down the four and burst out laughing. "You're the border guard? Since when did the border guard start acting with such impunity in the capital?"

He was too lazy to pay further attention to these people afterwards and simply looked at Tang Long, "You're Tang Long?"

Tang Long looked at this person. He didn't know him either, but the arrival of someone new at this time was an opportunity. He hastened to nod, "I'm Tang Long. May I know your name?"

Chapter 191: Must You Really Throw Your Weight Around?

The plain-clothed man revealed a trace of a smile when he saw Tang Long admit to his identity. "Mm, that means I've found the right man. I'm here on someone else's orders to take you somewhere."

Tang Long looked at Yu Dui and his men, then back at his home again.

The plain-clothed man smiled, "If it's inconvenient, you can bring your family as well."

Tang Long was overjoyed, "Yes, yes. I'll come with you right away."

He didn't know this man and didn't know where they were going, but he wouldn't hesitate even if they were heading for a chasm of dragons or tiger lair right now. If he didn't leave but stayed instead, then these border guards would take all their lives. Xiaoqing would surely even be taken away and violated until she died.

"I say, aren't you getting something wrong here?" Baldy Yu Dui said sinisterly.

"What am I getting wrong?" The plain-clothed man smiled faintly.

"Our border guard is arresting a traitor right now, who the hell do you think you are to swagger in here? Do you believe that I'll chop you in half with a single slash of my sword?" A swarthy shorty jeered from behind Baldy Yu Dui.

The plainclothes man chuckled. "I don't really believe you, and don't you try to fool me either. The border guard doesn't come to the capital in order to handle their cases. Only the Dragonteeth Guard has the right to inquire about cases here. Even if the border guard were to arrest someone, they'd have to go through the Dragonteeth Guard."

"Whatever. This is a special case! Who the f*ck are you? If you're not

going away when we tell you to, then you won't leave either!" The swarthy shorty waved the executioner's blade in his hands and roared out angrily.

"What, you want to resort to violence?" A shadow of a smile hung on the plain-clothed man's lips.

Baldy Yu Dui stared at this nondescript man. "Just who are you? We have a bone to pick with this Tang Long, if you want him for something, you'll have to wait your turn, don't you think?"

"I say, why do you guys have so much nonsense to say? This isn't the border, it's the capital. If you want to investigate a case, then go to the border. Stop spouting bullshit, I don't have that kind of time to waste on you."

"How arrogant!" A vicious glint dawned in Baldy Yu Dui's eyes. "You're so arrogant as to not even give us border guards the respect we deserve. Don't you even think of leaving either!"

With a wave of his hand the four of them formed a line, thoroughly blocking off the doorway.

The plain-clothed man had maintained an aloof expression all along and didn't lose his temper. When the four of them set up their formation, his face finally darkened, "So you do want to make use of your advantage in numbers to bully the minority?"

"That's exactly what we're doing, what are you going to do about it?"

"You have no backup and want to shove your nose in here. You're looking for death!"

"If you have the ability to, then call more people here and display your influence for us to see! Yeah we're making use of our superior numbers to bully people, people like you!"

The nondescript man laughed in his anger. "Good. Good. Good!"

He suddenly flourished his sleeves and a cloud of red flames flew into the air like a rocket, sending out a fog of smoke.

"This is bad, he's calling for backup!"

"Kill them, make it a quick battle!"

Tang Long stood in front of the casually dressed man, "Sir, I'll stall for a bit, you go inside first."

The man chuckled, "No rush, don't worry, a good show will take place shortly."

Baldy Yu Dui's face suddenly changed drastically, "Just who are you?"

The man laughed carefreely, not even bothering to look at the balding commander. He leisurely raised his head to look at the sky, "Won't you find out who I am very soon?"

Baldy Yu Dui was greatly shocked to see this man was neither panicked nor frantic. A scary, foreboding feeling suddenly rushed to the forefront.

Whoosh!

Ear-piercing bird cries suddenly sounded in the sky.

Then, chirp, chirp, chirp...

Countless more ear-piercing bird cries rang across the air.

Yu Dui felt chills all over his back and he hastily turned his head around. What greeted his eyes were silhouettes shooting across the azure sky, surging forth from all directions.

"Yellow Winged Lesser Dragons?"

"You... You're from the Dragonteeth Guard?"

Within the span of a few breaths, hundreds of Yellow Winged Lesser

Dragons had arrived. They all had a fierce momentum and exuded a strong killing intent as they hovered in midair.

"Commander Gu, you summoned us?"

"This subordinate greets Commander Gu!"

"Everyone from the eleventh team accounted for and reporting in!"

The Dragoteeth Guard all made downward salutes to their commander.

The casually dressed man nodded slightly, "These four men are from the border guard. They've overstepped their jurisdiction and threatened me, saying that they're going to leverage their strength in numbers to bully the weak. What do you make of this?"

"The border guard? Why are they not on the border and are throwing their weight around in the capital?"

"And they dare threaten our great Commander Gu?"

"Commander Gu, there's nothing more to say. Arrest and execute them!"

The four border guard members were stupefied and trembling from head to toe at this moment, completely reduced to a gibbering mess. Even Baldy Yu Dui's whole body was shivering at this moment, his face ashen-colored.

"Com... Comman... Commander Gu... this is a misunderstanding, absolutely a misunderstanding. We're actually not here for a case, just joking around with brother Tang Long." This baldy was someone adaptable to the circumstances. Although he was nervous and afraid, he still strived to defend himself.

"Misunderstanding? So you threatening me just now was a misunderstanding?"

“Yes, truly a misunderstanding. Us border guards admire the Dragonteeth Guard the most. Great Commander Gu, we are all colleagues. This is an internal conflict, we hope that you lift your hand in mercy and don’t blow this up into a greater matter.”

“Don’t blow this up? If I hadn’t called in my men, would you have blown this matter up? If my men hadn’t come, your weapons would likely be using me for target practice by now? Was it you guys who want to make this a big deal or is it me? I’ve come to look for someone, but you want to kill me along with them. The border guard truly is something alright.”

Commander Gu was no pushover. He was here on behalf Vice General Tian Shao’s orders this time, to find someone called Tang Long and recruit him for the Dragonteeth Guard.

Although Commander Gu didn’t know who Tang Long was, Vice General Tian Shao himself had given the orders and emphasized that this person was young master Chen’s friend!

Who was young master Chen? He was someone who dared offend even first prince Ye Dai himself, someone whom even honored Tutor Ye wanted to take as a disciple, a person of great abilities who held the Skyl Laurel Kingdom Medallion!

How would Commander Gu make light of an affair having to do with his friend? Therefore, when he’d gotten off work and received Tian Shao’s orders, he’d changed into ordinary clothes and searched for Tang Long straightaway. He was wearing casual clothing because he didn’t want to make too big of a deal.

Who’d knew that him keeping a low profile would result in these borders guards running rampant. They’d snorted in front of and glared at him, a commander of the Dragonteeth Guard, saying that they were going to use their superior numbers to bully the minority.

Trying to force a showdown of power and numbers with a commander of the Dragonteeth Guard in the capital, these fellows

were looking to humiliate themselves!

“Great Commander Gu, we were wrong, it was our fault. We’re willing to offer gifts in apology and a recompensation.... As long as the great Commander Gu calms his anger, we’re absolutely willing to pay.”

“Money? Do you think the Dragonteeth Guard lacks money?”
Commander Gu’s face darkened. “Do you think I lust after money?”

“Lay down the weapons in your hands if you recognize the situation you’re in. Prepare to be arrested and offer no resistance, or you’ll be killed without exception!”

As a commander in the Dragonteeth Guard, Commander Gu commanded ten thousand Dragonteeth Guard. He was someone who was rather influential in the capital.

Some border guards raising a hue and cry in front of him were indeed courting death!

Baldy Yu Dui fell to his knees with a thump, begging in a trembling voice, “Great Commander Gu, please spare us, spare us. We surrender, surrender! Do anything you want as long as you don’t kill us!”

The fellows that had been ruthlessly domineering just now were all on their knees on the ground now, kowtowing like chicks pecking rice and wailing in their anguish.

Commander Gu was blind and deaf to it all as he turned around, “Tang Long, I’m here on orders from Vice General Tian Shao of the third Dragonteeth Guard army to invite you to join the Dragonteeth Guard and join my team. Are you interested?”

Tang Long was still floundering in the midst of confusion at this moment.

The great rises and falls of the scenes just now had occurred far too quickly. The feedback to his brain couldn’t quite keep up with what

was happening.

It had been Baldy Yu Dui and his men, with malice written all over their faces, who had been about to turn to violence and kill people just now. How had this Dragonteeth Guard commander suddenly emerged?

And, he'd brought with him so many Dragonteeth Guard who were as fierce as wolves and tigers.

Yu Dui and the others had been throwing their weight around just now, but were now begging on the ground like dead dogs and kept asking for mercy.

This change was too much of a shock to Tang Long.

"This... this is influence, this is power." Tang Long sighed with emotion in his heart and looked at the cowering figures of Yu Dui's group. He felt damn good at heart, and so he hadn't reacted yet to Commander Gu's invitation.

"Brother, brother, Commander Gu is asking you a question!" It was Tang Zhong inside the house who first recovered his wits.

"Ah? What?" Tang Long suddenly came to and scratched his head. "Commander Gu, I was too worked up just now. Were you asking me to join the Dragonteeth Guard?"

"Yes." Commander Gu had a smile tugging at the corners of his mouth. "Think about it."

"No need to think about it, I'm definitely saying yes! I, I must say yes!" Tang Long could barely keep his enthusiasm in.

What else was there to think about?

Just how awesome was the Dragonteeth Guard? All had been displayed just now.

Besides, he'd been fired by the border guard and was unemployed now. He thought he was dreaming to be chosen by the Dragonteeth Guard.

This was leaping from hell to heaven in an instant!

Although he didn't know why he'd been suddenly recruited by the Dragonteeth Guard, somewhere deep in his subconsciousness, he felt it likely had something to do with his great benefactor, Jiang Chen.

"Tang Long, you're very lucky." Commander Gu laughed and patted his shoulder, passing a medallion over. "Start off as a sixth rank Dragonteeth Guard."

The Dragonteeth Guard had interns, followed by the ninth rank, eighth rank, seventh rank, sixth rank... proceeding forth level by level until a first rank Dragonteeth Guard. Only then would one have the right to be a captain, lieutenant, commander and from there on finally being eligible for vice general!

There weren't many rookies that started off as a sixth rank Dragonteeth Guard. It wasn't unheard of, but it was very rare. Such fortuitous things belonged to those noble sons with an exceedingly strong background or those with connections.

Tang Long becoming a sixth rank Dragonteeth Guard as an ordinary commoner was absolutely a miracle that defied the heavens.

No wonder even Commander Gu said he was lucky. He was indeed lucky. A nobody like Tang Long would've become a corpse long ago thanks to those border guards if he hadn't been lucky.

"Commander Gu, I'd like to ask, why..." Tang Long still wanted to get to the bottom of things, despite guessing that it was likely due to Jiang Chen.

"Tang Long, I'm rather curious, what's your relationship with young master Chen? Such a personage as young master Chen actually

personally reminded our General Tian to look after you and bring you into the Dragonteeth Guard. He also said that you're a reliable and dependable person. It seems like young master Chen was right."

Commander Gu rather admired Tang Long. When those border guards had intended to do something just now, Tang Long had stepped in front of him. He was truly someone who could be relied on to stand his ground under such circumstances!

Chapter 192: Tang Long Becomes a New Person

Young master Chen!

Tang Long had thoroughly confirmed his suspicions now, it was indeed that great benefactor again!

Tang Long was touched. He'd never thought that a person he'd randomly met whilst patrolling the border would become the great harbinger of luck in his life. Jiang Chen had helped him time and time again, with this time's tantamount to sending coal during when stuck in snow.

"I... young master Chen, young master Chen, he's... my great benefactor." Tang Long was deeply moved and finally regurgitated the words "great benefactor" after building up to this delivery.

Commander Gu was actually also quite curious, and when he saw Tang Long speak thus, he thought that Tang Long and young master Chen's relationship was indeed quite deep. He'd have to take good care of Tang Long in the future.

If I displeased General Tian, how would I continue to be a commander?
Commander Gui was also rather grateful to Tian Shao.

It was because of Tian Shao being promoted to a vice general that the position of commander had been freed up and Tian Shao's superiors had asked him to recommend someone to fill the position of commander.

Tian Shao could've absolutely recommended the original vice commander, but he hadn't and had instead promoted him all the way from the position of lieutenant.

A lieutenant directly promoted to commander. It was therefore apparent the depths of Commander Gu's gratitude towards Tian Shao. Therefore, he would bring forth his greatest efforts in tackling what Tian Shao asked him to do.

It was precisely this series of promotions that had resulted in the timely appearance of Commander Gu, finally helping Tang Long escape disaster and change his life forever.

"Tang Long, how should we handle these fellows? Do you have any suggestions?" Commander Gu simply decided to give Tang Long as much face as possible.

"I get to decide?"

Commander Gu smiled. "You're the person at the heart of all this. They intended to commit murder. As the intended victim, you absolutely have the right to inquire after this. Intention to commit murder and robbery within the capital are all crimes that are served with the death penalty."

Commander Gu was hinting at Tang Long that he could pursue this to their death and give these guys the death sentence to prevent trouble in the future.

Baldy Yu Dui and the others were all old hats, how would they not understand these connotations? They knew that this was Commander Yu hinting at Tang Long to put them to death, and they hastened to throw themselves onto the ground.

"Tang Long, old brother Tang... I, old Yu, was wrong. I had eyes but failed to see, thus offending you. Seeing that we were colleagues before, please let us go this once. We're... we're willing to be your dogs!"

"Big brother Tang, we were wrong! Our minds were in an idiotic haze and we offended you. Do you remember? I once gave you a bun to eat when you were starving."

"Big brother Tang, don't kill me. I have a younger sister, I'm willing to give her to you as your concubine."

"I have a younger sister too, and she's a twin! Big brother Tang, you're now part of the Dragonteeth Guard, a sixth rank guardsman. You

have a noble's identity, it's a customary for you to have multiple wives!"

Tang Long smiled coldly. He knew these fellows all too well. They were chameleons. They were afraid of death now and begged for mercy, but once they were freed, they would become poisonous vipers with a quick change of heart.

They were well-versed with such tactics.

"Commander Gu, these people trespassed on private property and wanted to beat and kill me. They wanted to make off with my wife as well, a thousand deaths wouldn't atone for their crimes! I want to lodge an accusation against them and inform on them!"

"Alright, trespassing private property, intent to kill, and attempting to steal another's wife. Any of these are worth a death sentence. Come, arrest them and take them back to be executed!"

When these fellows heard this order, they swooned with fright and attempted to resist. However, resistance in the face of several hundred Dragonteeth Guard only undoubtedly increased the rate of their own suicide.

They'd just hefted their blades and swords in preparation of advancing on Commander Gu when they were shot to death by countless sharp arrows, turning them into porcupines.

"Clean up the area and take the bodies back to report in."

Commander Gu killed a few people as if he were killing a few chickens, paying them not the slightest bit of attention. He turned and spoke to Tang Long, "Tang Long, I'm giving you three days of respite. Report to the Dragonteeth Guard headquarters in three days! Remember, don't be late. When you enter the Dragonteeth Guard, you follow the Guard's rules!"

"Understood!" Tang Long drew his body up and made the gesture of a soldier, snapping off a military salute.

"Alright, we'll leave first for now. You take care of matters at home." Commander Gu waved his hand and a group of Dragonteeth Guard left like the wind, along with the bodies.

The momentum of a myriad of Yellow Winged Lesser Dragons all taking off together was enough to cover the sky and blot out the sun. It was a mighty and wonderful panorama, enough for emotions to surge and roil in Tang Long's chest, greatly agitating him.

He'd be able to join in a team like this in mere days and become one of them. He could live proudly just like them!

"Brother, that was too cool just now!" Tang Zhong pushed himself forward on his wheelchair with great excitement, wishing dearly that he could stand up.

Tang Long also smiled ruefully, "That was cool alright, but let's not have a repeat of what happened just now. I'd almost thought that we were done for earlier and was prepared to throw everything to the wind and fight them to the death."

"Brother, you're part of the Dragonteeth Guard, a sixth rank guardsman. Let's see who dares bully us in the future!" There was deep pride in Tang Zhong's voice. He was almost ready to take flight and soar to the sky in his excitement.

Tang Long also felt as if he was dreaming. If it weren't for the traces of blood on the ground, he'd almost suspect that he had been dreaming just now.

"Xiaoqing, you've suffered a fright, haven't you?"

Tang Long turned and looked at his wife, frightened like a little deer, feeling somewhat apologetic.

Xiaoqing shook her head, "Brother Tang Long, I'm fine. I'm not afraid as long as you're here."

Tang Long smiled, "Don't you worry. Our family will be fine in the

future. Go buy some fish Xiaoqing, I'll get some water and clean our doorway. These blood trails don't look good."

"Alright."

Although Xiaoqing had been a bit frightened, a child from the slums would have often seen scenes filled with blood and gore. She wasn't frightened to the point of being unable to venture forth from her door.

She was about to set out when she noticed that many heads were poking out of the houses in the alleyway. All these people had long since crammed the little alleyway full of people.

"Yo, Xiaoqing, where are you going?"

"Don't go out, our house has just cleaned up half a sheep, take a sheep leg with you."

"Xiaoqing, look, here's some fish that your Uncle Zhang caught earlier this morning. It's quite fresh. Here, take two back to eat, don't look down on them now."

"Xiaoqing, our house doesn't have much, just a few chickens. I'll catch a hen for you and make a stew out of it for you. It's more nutritious that way."

"Xiaoqing, our house only has an old hen that we can't bear to slaughter. It lays an egg everyday. Auntie has brought a basket of eggs for you. Look at you, your face is a bit pale and you don't look too good. You need to take in more nutrients."

Xiaoqing was at a bit of a loss. These neighbors usually weren't this enthusiastic and warm hearted! Why did their passion burn so fiercely all of a sudden?

Although Xiaoqing was introverted, she didn't like taking advantage of others either. She kept turning them down and attempted to push through the alleyway to go to the market streets.

"Xiaoqing, don't be such a stranger. Look, it's so dark already. When will dinner be served if you go out to the markets just now?"

"Not to mention that maybe the vendors have long since packed up. It's late in the afternoon and the fish won't be fresh either. Don't go, don't go."

"Tang Long, don't you know to treat your wife well? Come come, tell Xiaoqing to come home and accept all these items. Don't be strangers. Us uncles and aunts have all watched both of you grow up. Isn't it natural for us to help you?"

Tang Long smiled. These neighbors had all suddenly appeared to offer their affection and love. This was absolutely impossible normally.

Them acting so out of the ordinary today was naturally because of the Dragonteeth Guard!

That shocking scene just now had enabled him, Tang Long, to advance like a carp leaping over the dragon's gate, and become a sixth rank Dragonteeth guardsman.

A sixth rank Dragonteeth guardsman was equivalent to receiving the position of a sixth rank noble. The family of his would thus cast off the identity of commoners and become nobles.

Although it was only a sixth rank position, within the slums, particularly this alleyway, this was definitely the first and possibly the last!

"Xiaoqing, since the uncles are so enthusiastic, then accept their items. We'll reimburse them some money later and save making a trip."

Tang Long smiled and cupped his hands. "The matters of just now must have frightened everyone just now."

"No, not at all. Tang Long, you've gone up in the world now. You'll be

leaving us before long, right? Remember to come visit us often in the future.”

“Yes, don’t forget these poor streets in the future.”

“I knew that kid Tang Long would do something great when he was small. Dragonteeth Guard, tsk tsk, you’ll be flying to and fro across the sky in the future. Glorious indeed!”

“Little Six, do you see that? Stop being up to no good in the future and learn more from your brother Tang Long. If you can enter the Dragonteeth Guard, even as an intern, I, your father, will die happy.”

Dinner that night in Tang Long’s house was as sumptuous as it’d never been before. He didn’t invite the neighbors to join in. There were too many for him to extend invites to.

He could only give them all some money later on.

“Brother, I salute you with this cup of wine. You’ve really shot into the sky with one impressive feat this time. Our Tang family in the future will count as nobles as well.”

Tang Long too felt a multitude of emotions. “Come, us brothers should drink to our deceased parents. Xiaoqing, you as well.”

After a few cups, Tang Zhong spoke again, “Brother, they’re always talking about young master Chen. Do they mean Jiang Chen? I think we should probably go thank him?”

“Yes, there is a need for this. When I report in to the Dragonteeth Guard, I’ll ask around for where young master Chen lives, otherwise I won’t even know where to go to thank him.”

...

At this moment, Jiang Chen had no idea of Tang Long’s fate and that such a thorough twist had happened in a short two hours. He’d only felt that Tang Long was not a bad person and that he’d been fired

from the border guard. That's why he'd happened to say something to Tian Shao and asked him to pay some attention to Tang Long.

Jiang Chen held on persistently over the next couple of days, inducing the five dragons of qi to form the spirit ocean, forge the spirit ocean, and increase his strength.

The Maze Realm Autumn Hunt neared as the days went on.

Dan Fei approached in a stately manner on this day.

However, Gouyu was already behind closed door cultivation this time and was assailing the spirit realm. The two women didn't meet in an unavoidable confrontation this time.

"Jiang Chen, why have I heard that you seem a bit unwilling to form a team with me?" Dan Fei's smile held hint of mischievousness in it.

"Sister Dan Fei, did you come all this way just to ask me this?"

Dan Fei lifted her chin as she opened her palm, a simple and unsophisticated ring appearing in her hand. "This is a storage ring and can be viewed as my payment to you, so that you brat, can stop nagging all day, as if you're that unwilling to form a team with me. Now will you stop running your mouth?"

A storage ring?

Jiang Chen had been incredibly busy since he'd arrived in this life that he really hadn't had time to consider items like storage rings. He only just recalled that such things existed in this world when he saw Dan Fei take one out.

Chapter 193: Dan Fei's Sincerity

This storage ring was indeed a good item. With a flick of Dan Fei's slender fingers, Jiang Chen caught it in his hands and accepted it unceremoniously.

In his past life, it had been a common occurrence for him to play with such items. Such a crude and simplistic storage ring like this one naturally proved to be easy for him to manipulate.

He played with it for a bit and looked it over. There wasn't much storage space but it would be sufficient.

"Darned brat, you accepted it with a thick skin and you don't even thank me?" Dan Fei was slightly surprised to see that Jiang Chen understood how to use the storage ring with no pointers, and in fact, seemed quite adept at it.

Jiang Chen chuckled, "Didn't you say that this was payment? Since it's payment and not a gift, why do I have to thank you?"

"Are all men this shameless?" Dan Fei was a bit speechless.

"I don't know about others, but I value my face. Sister Dan Fei, I've heard that you've always participated in the Autumn Hunt solo. Why would you want to form a team this time?"

Dan Fei rolled her eyes at Jiang Chen, "Do you simply want to imply that you possess boundless charisma?"

"Heh heh, isn't that the case?" Jiang Chen chuckled merrily.

"Stop flattering yourself. All you men are the same in my eyes. Alright, I don't have time to chatter meaninglessly with you. Since we're forming a team, there are some things I don't want to keep from you."

"Are we finally getting down to business?" Jiang Chen still carried on

in that heartless bent.

"Jiang Chen, would it kill you to be serious?" Dan Fei's gorgeous eyebrows flicked upwards. "This time, I only have one goal in participating in the Autumn Hunt, and that is to catch a baby spirit animal of the spirit rank."

"A baby spirit animal?" Jiang Chen was a bit surprised, "Is there anything special about that?"

"Yes, it is quite important." A very grave expression appeared on Dan Fei's jade-like face. "I've failed the first two times and hence, I must succeed this time."

"Why?"

Although a baby spirit animal was quite precious, it wasn't to the point of catching it being a must, was it? Not to mention that although a baby spirit animal was rare, it wasn't as if it was something that could only be found in the maze realm, wasn't it?

Dan Fei's charming eyes focused on Jiang Chen, "Jiang Chen, you can't breathe a word of what I tell you today, do you understand?"

"Then don't tell me."

"Jiang Chen!" Dan Fei was a bit infuriated. "Can't you display the dependability of a man!"

Jiang Chen smiled, "Would I lack the proper grasp of what can and cannot be spoken? Why do you feel the need to emphasize this again?"

"Alright." Dan Fei's lips moved. "I was wrong then. You must surely be thinking that a baby spirit animal can be obtained in the outside world, so why go into the maze realm? This is obviously a superfluous move, right?"

"Is it not?" Jiang Chen truly did think so.

"If it was just to keep it as a pet, there is indeed no difference. But, these baby spirit animal are different. The lordmaster wants to study them."

"Study them?" Jiang Chen was baffled. What was there to study about a spirit animal?

"Yes, study. Actually, the lordmaster has had some results already, but because this matter holds great weight, the lordmaster has never announced it to the public."

"Just what's going on here? Can't you tell me everything in one go?"

"Results of studies show that the baby spirit animals in the outside world basically remain at the spirit rank when they're mature, even if they were born into the spirit rank. They don't have much potential to evolve. Although their strength did increase, there wasn't much evolution in their bloodline. Spirit animals from the maze realm however, are different. Their strength increases at a rapid pace, and their bloodlines actually automatically evolve!"

"This is to say that the Phoenix-Dragon was most likely obtained from the maze realm? Did you enter the maze realm thirty years ago? Or did the honored tutor enter it?"

Dan Fei's white jade-like cheeks darkened. "Jiang Chen, am I that old? I wasn't even born thirty years ago! The lordmaster was already a spirit king thirty years ago, how could he enter? The Maze Realm Autumn Hunt is barred to all practitioners past the small spirit realm stage."

The spirit realm had a total of nine levels. Levels one to three were called the small spirit realm.

Levels four to six were of the earth spirit realm.

Up to level nine was the sky spirit realm.

Past the ninth level was the peak of the spirit realm which is also

hailed as spirit king. A practitioner at this level was at the peak of realm and could set foot into the next realm at any moment.

“The Maze Realm Autumn Hunt would actually exclude practitioners above the small spirit realm?” Jiang Chen felt vaguely curious. A strange dimension like this was rather uncommon.

In this regard, this maze realm wasn’t just typically odd.

Ordinarily speaking, secret realms were just an independent space, one created by a super strong art or ability. Restrictions for minimum allowed strength often existed.

However, restrictions for a maximum amount of strength were relatively fewer.

“Yes, therefore, the strongest who can enter the Autumn Hunt this time are those of the third level spirit realm. Those stronger will be unable to make it inside.” Dan Fei explained. “The Phoenix-Dragon was a baby that someone obtained from the inside thirty years ago and gifted to the lordmaster.”

“The lordmaster has raised this Phoenix-Dragon for thirty years. He’s discovered that when the Phoenix-Dragon was a baby, it was considered to be in the first level spirit realm at most, perhaps a half step spirit realm even, because apart from having a spirit ocean and a consciousness, it was practically a blank piece of paper. However, thirty years later, the current Phoenix-Dragon has strength equivalent to fifth level spirit realm and can be placed on par with a human earth spirit realm practitioner.”

When Dan Fei mentioned the Phoenix-Dragon, a trace of desire also flashed through her limpid eyes.

“The Phoenix-Dragon is of an ancient bloodline and thus innately possesses the ability to evolve. What’s so strange about that?” Jiang Chen actually felt there was nothing to uncommon about this either.

“The lordmaster has received more than just the Phoenix-Dragon

from the maze realm in his current age. All of them have the ability to evolve their bloodlines. This is something that our local spirit animals don't possess at all. Although the increase in strength and speed are similar between the two types, the evolution of bloodlines means that their potential will increase in the future. This is completely different. Jiang Chen, do you understand what I mean?"

Jiang Chen found it privately laughable. Would he not understand? Old tutor Ye Chonglou may not understand all that he understands.

"Sister Dan Fei, what do you think the final potential of that Phoenix-Dragon will be in the end?"

"According to the lordmaster's estimations, its potential could even surpass the lordmaster's accomplishments. The lordmaster is at the peak of the sky spirit realm right now, respectfully hailed as a spirit king by others. However, the lordmaster postulates that this Five Winged Phoenix-Dragon has a certain potential to advance to the saint rank. A saint rank spirit animal is equivalent to a venerated original realm human practitioner."

When her words traveled here, Dan Fei's tone was suffused with yearning. From her mouth, the words of "venerated original realm practitioner" seemed to be words to address gods that shouldn't be blasphemed as she voiced them carefully and piously.

Except, when Dan Fei saw Jiang Chen's indifferent expression, she couldn't help but exclaim, "Jiang Chen, do you understand or not?"

"I do."

"If you do, then why don't you have any reaction at all?" Dan Fei said ill temperedly.

"It's because I understand that I have no reaction. What kind of reaction do you think I should have? Must I yell and holler exaggeratedly and have an unimaginably queer expression on my face? And then should I display unlimited yearning like you? Am I

only able to understand if I react like that?" Jiang Chen felt this was hilarious.

"Isn't that the case?" Dan Fei thought this was all rather matter-of-fact.

"Bullshit. That's called pretending to understand when you don't. You don't truly understand. The Five Winged Phoenix-Dragon is an ancient bloodline at the very least, does it only have that little bit of potential in your eyes? Just a spirit creature who can breakthrough to the saint rank? It looks like you truly don't understand the true potential of an ancient bloodline."

"What... what do you mean?" Surprise flickered across Dan Fei's elegant face.

"You still don't understand what I'm saying? Don't make such unreasonable comparisons for an ancient bloodline. Although the Five Winged Phoenix-Dragon is an ordinary ancient bloodline, just about any ancient bloodline has greater potential than an ordinary spirit animal, and more than just a little!"

"Jiang Chen, you're always talking about ancient bloodlines, and you also mentioned the matter of bloodlines evolving last time. This is why the lordmaster wanted us to form a team. Jiang Chen, since you also understand these things, why don't you help me? We can team up and research this together. If our studies produce a saint rank spirit creature, then the martial dao situation of the neighboring sixteen kingdoms will be utterly changed!"

"What do you mean?" Jiang Chen had discovered that the changes in topic in this conversation with Dan Fei whipped along with lightning fast speeds. They'd just been talking about spirit creatures and had suddenly leapt to the martial dao order of the sixteen kingdoms.

"Don't you understand? The strongest in the sixteen kingdoms are the four hidden sects, the Precious Tree Sect, Purple Sun Sect, Flowing Wind Sect, and Myriad Spirit Sect. The four great sects have

a similar level of strength and each have their own areas of focus. However, the strongest practitioners amongst the four great sects are only of the minor original realm. If we can continuously raise saint rank spirit creatures that are on par with original realm practitioners, wouldn't that be enough to change the martial dao layout of the alliance of the sixteen kingdoms?"

Dan Fei became more and more agitated as she spoke. She felt extraordinarily accomplished when she thought of that wondrous future. When she thought of that great future and of the fact that she was one of its creators, she knew her name was sure to go down in the annals of history of the sixteen kingdoms.

Dan Fei felt that Jiang Chen had no reason to turn down from being part of such a glorious matter.

"Well? Jiang Chen, don't you feel a sense of duty in matters like these?" Confidence brimmed in Dan Fei's beautiful eyes.

Jiang Chen rubbed his nose and smiled ruefully, "Changing the martial dao layout of the sixteen kingdoms?"

"Yes." Dan Fei nodded.

"What does this have to do with me? Whether or not the martial dao layout of the sixteen kingdoms changes or not doesn't seem to have much to do with me." Jiang Chen couldn't help but say so.

"You..." A layer of frost immediately covered Dan Fei's beautiful features. She stood up huffily. "Jiang Chen, do you have any sense of responsibility at all? Are you even a disciple of the sixteen kingdoms?!"

"I... of course I am. But is it really that important to change the layout of martial dao?" Jiang Chen found it a bit incomprehensible.

Dan Fei was truly exasperated at Jiang Chen's failure to measure up to her expectations. Her graceful figure trembled a bit in her anger. "Jiang Chen, can you not disappoint me this much?"

“Alright.” Jiang Chen was at a loss for words. “I’ll try my best due to the storage ring, anyhow. However, I’ll be frank, you aren’t allowed to interfere with what I do in the maze realm after we enter, and you aren’t allowed to question me either.”

The sun immediately parted the clouds on Dan Fei’s face when she heard Jiang Chen agree to help. She spoke with a happy smile, “Alright, then it’s settled! As you help me catch a baby spirit animal, you can do whatever you want!”

Dan Fei immediately discovered that Jiang Chen had a few hints of a meaningful smile on his face when she said the last four words and immediately knew that she seemed to have spoken in error. Like the autumn moon, her face immediately flushed bright red.

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Chapter 194: The Maze Realm Autumn Hunt Begins

With the advent of the Autumn Hunt, the atmosphere within the capital grew fervent again. Sons of dukes who owned various territories all arrived in the capital before making their way to the outskirts of the Precious Tree Sect to enter the maze realm.

This time, there were almost five thousand people who had signed up.

Therefore, there seemed to be insufficient spots to go around as some of the spots were even being sold for up to a million silver.

“The Precious Tree Sect knows how to earn money alright. All they’re doing is opening up the maze realm but they’re taking twenty thousand silver as a signup fee for each entry.”

Five thousand spots with twenty thousand silver paid by each person, just this revenue alone was quite impressive.

This didn’t include the fact that half of all gains obtained from the Autumn Hunt had to be turned over to the Precious Tree Sect.

“This Precious Tree Sect is earning money without putting forth any effort at all.” Jiang Chen sighed.

“Young master Chen, this is your first time participating in the Autumn Hunt, so you need to be careful. In particular, you need to keep an eye on the time and remember it in pursuit of accomplishment. Otherwise, if you stay inside without exiting the place, things will be gravely serious for you.” Tian Shao chuckled.

Jiang Chen privately thought that even if he himself wasn’t afraid of death, that incredibly motivated woman Dan Fei would surely be afraid.

“Old Tian, why aren’t you joining this time?”

Tian Shao smiled, "We military folk can't participate. Not just me, but people like Xin Wudao and Lu Wuji as well."

Ye Rong nodded, "Those with military appointments can't attend. Otherwise, if all the military experts leave, won't things be thrown into disarray if something changes in the country?"

Jiang Chen pushed Xue Tong to the forefront and smiled, "Fourth prince, Xue Tong is my prized assistant who has just ascended to eleven meridians true qi master. I'm putting him in your hands this time!"

"Greetings to the fourth prince." Xue Tong's tone was quite mature as he made a respectful bow.

"Heh heh, it is indeed true that there are no weak troops beneath a capable general. Jiang Chen, your follower is likely a bit younger than you? It's really quite rare for one to have this level of training at such a young age."

Jiang Chen smiled, "As strong as his training is, he still must cast off the mundane and enter the spirit realm. Otherwise, all is empty talk. The other reason why I've given him this chance to go through this trial is because it is an opportunity to train."

The group of people chatted and laughed until another group suddenly approached them. The person in the lead was first prince Ye Dai.

Eyes blaze with hatred when enemies come face to face.

Storm clouds immediately floated to the surface of Ye Dai's previously slightly smiling face.

Rather, it was Ye Rong who chuckled and called out, "Big brother, you're here too."

"Are you the only one who is allowed to come?" Ye Dai asked expressionlessly in return.

Ye Rong smiled, "I thought big brother wouldn't be participating because of how priceless your body is."

"Number four, you seemed to have grown rather proud lately. I hope you have a successful Autumn Hunt." Ye Dai waved his hand with a supercilious smile and brushed past them with his group of followers.

Jiang Chen seemed to be deep in thought as he looked upon the backs of Ye Dai and his group. Then, he spoke up in reminder, "Fourth prince, it looks like this Autumn Hunt won't be that peaceful."

Ye Rong's expression was grave. "The Autumn Hunt has never been peaceful. No matter what, I have no way to retreat this time."

"What do you mean?"

The muscles on Ye Rong's face twitched slightly as he spoke gravely, "There's news from the imperial harem that our royal father has decided to name a Crown Prince in the first month of the next year."

"It's late autumn now, which means that there's only three to four months left."

"That's right. This intelligence has come rather suddenly and now all the princes are looking for all opportunities to show themselves off in front of our royal father." Ye Rong's tone was solemn. "Ye Dai's mother's side has great power and influence. They've already formed a power at court, advocating and building up momentum to advance Ye Dai's interests. If I don't demonstrate enough charisma during this time's Autumn Hunt, it will be very difficult for me to make a play for the position of Crown Prince."

Tian Shao sighed. "It's a pity that younger brother Jiang Chen's aid has been co-opted by Miss Dan Fei. If younger brother Jiang Chen was helping the fourth prince, then this Autumn Hunt would surely be quite exciting."

Ye Rong chuckled. There was nothing that could be done with

regards to Dan Fei requesting Jiang Chen. No matter what, there was no way that Ye Rong would turn down Dan Fei.

And thinking about it, given that Dan Fei had repurposed Jiang Chen, she would surely feel that she owed him a favor. If Dan Fei could speak a few words on his behalf in front of the honored tutor, that would make up for the possibility of a loss here.

Jiang Chen smiled but didn't say anything.

He wasn't that interested in the struggles between the princes and who ended up becoming Crown Prince. However, he was still a guest of Ye Rong in name after all, and so emotionally speaking, he still wished that Ye Rong could inherit the land and seize the position of the Crown Prince.

At least, with Ye Rong as Crown Prince, his people would have an easier time in the Skyl Laurel Kingdom.

If Ye Dai was Crown Prince, then a ton of crappy, irritating matters would surely crop up in the future.

"Jiang Chen!"

Just as everyone was chatting, a light, ethereal voice traveled in from the distance. Dan Fei had arrived.

Dan Fei's outfit today was a stark contrast to her usual simple and elegant style. A clean cut practitioner's leather robe was accompanied by leather shorts that covered half of her thighs.

Two slender calves beneath her knees were wrapped with specially crafted ties and she wore a pair of leather boots on her feet. Carrying a bamboo basket on her back, her entire demeanor was quite different from usual.

When she saw the pairs of eyes staring right at her, Dan Fei smiled leisurely, "And what are you all looking at? Haven't you ever seen a beautiful woman before?"

Ye Rong smiled wryly, "Sister Dan Fei, you truly have a multitude of shifting styles. You comported yourself with a graceful and refined style before, and now with a mere shake of your body, you possess a heroic martial spirit."

"Stop sucking up to me. What are you all doing here staring off into the distance? It's almost time to set out." One could see that Dan Fei was in an exceedingly good mood today.

Everyone chatted and laughed as they convened and set out together.

They left the capital and walked roughly three, four hundred li before arriving at the mountain range on the outskirts of the Precious Tree Sect.

The Precious Tree Sect was one of the hidden sects partially because its territory wasn't as simplistic as how the outside world perceived it. There was actually another opening within the mountain range on the outskirts their territory. No outsiders were able to enter the true world of the sect without the sect's unique coordinates.

A Precious Tree Sect elder was in charge of the Autumn Hunt. On the Skyl Laurel Kingdom's side, they'd actually asked lordmaster Ye Chonglou to be the one in charge.

Looking at how the elder from the Precious Tree Sect was greatly deferential to lordmaster Ye Chonglou, it could be subtly seen that the real master of the Autumn Hunt was still Ye Chonglou.

Jiang Chen was faintly surprised by this.

Dan Fei however, had a faint smile on her face. She'd obviously known all this in advance.

"The lordmaster has always greatly valued the Autumn Hunt. In reality, the Precious Tree Sect is only providing a backdrop. The true power still lies with the lordmaster." Since she was in a good mood, Dan Fei explained a bit to Jiang Chen when she saw the surprise on

his face.

"Heh heh, since the lordmaster is in charge, can we cheat?" Jiang Chen smiled and asked.

"What do you fill your head with?" When Dan Fei was unhappy, her delicate brows knit slightly. "You're my teammate now, how can you have such thoughts that don't strive towards progress?"

Jiang Chen shrugged. He knew that verbally sparring with women was the most boring thing in the world. He would never win.

"Once you enter the maze realm, you're completely cut off from the outside world. You won't be able to exit before the time's up. There's no way for you to cheat even if you wanted to."

Dan Fei couldn't help but say angrily when she saw Jiang Chen's distracted demeanor, "Jiang Chen, I'm beginning to wonder if forming a team with you was the right decision. Can't you be a bit more serious?"

"Heh heh, does Miss Dan Fei want to fire me?"

Dan Fei rolled her beautiful eyes and bit out, "You want me to fire you? I won't!"

The two of them bickered on and off until the Precious Tree Sect elder walked on stage and lightly pressed downwards with his hands a few times.

"Order, order. The maze realm is about to open. Each team will enter one by one according to the order you have been given. There's a transportation matrix within the coordinates of this entrance. No one knows where you'll be transported to once you set foot inside, so you must prepare yourself mentally and emotionally."

"The rules are as usual. The Precious Tree Sect will take half of your gains and you can keep the other half. In addition, the Autumn Hunt will also be ranking the top three as well this time. When you emerge

from the transportation matrix, you can look up how the rankings are calculated and what the rules are. The more you hunt, the higher your ranking will be. Those in the top three will receive additional rewards.”

“Additional rewards? Is the Precious Tree Sect taking money out from their own coffers?” Jiang Chen hadn’t known that those in the top three would have additional rewards.

“You think too much. The Precious Tree Sect will only sit there and rake in money without earning it. How could they take any of it out?” Dan Fei’s tone seemed to disapprove of the Precious Tree Sect’s style.

“Then where are these rewards coming from?” Jiang Chen was curious.

“There can be no wool without a sheep. The benefit comes from the price paid. All teams need to hand over half of their haul. Out of that half, ten percent will be taken out as a reward for the team in first place. Another ten will be taken out to reward second and third place. Second place will receive sixty percent of that ten, and third place forty percent of that ten.”

Jiang Chen didn’t know whether to laugh or cry when he heard those words. “This Precious Tree Sect are certainly as mean as misers. They’re earning half of all the gains without doing anything and taking twenty percent of that out as a reward. So they’ll just pocket the remaining eighty percent?”

“Why do you think sects are so strong? Because they’re drowning in money? They rely on miserly methods like these and only take in resources without paying any out.”

Jiang Chen smiled and thought this to be rather sensible. A sect had to concentrate their spending of resources on the elites if it wanted to be strong.

It was mostly ordinary commoners who participated in the Maze

Realm Autumn Hunt. They were destined to be unable to become sect disciples. It was obviously impossible for the sect to take out its own resources as a reward.

“Let this old fellow say a few words.” The voice of honored tutor Ye Chonglou rang out at this time. “The Maze Realm Autumn Hunt is a momentous occasion for the Skylareel Kingdom, and a rare trial for all of you. This old fellow doesn’t have much to ask of you, except these words of advice. The theme of the Autumn Hunt lies in hunting prey. You best not bring your personal grudges inside. In principle, the Autumn Hunt forbids bloodshed between teams and resolution of personal grudges. Of course, these taboos are not strongly entrenched and are tough to enforce. However, I’d like to emphasize that unless you conceal it well or do so flawlessly, once someone informs me of your actions and you have been investigated, killing someone else in the midst of the fighting inside the maze will bear the same crimes and penalties as killing someone in the outside world.”

It was difficult to forbid manslaughter, but it would carry the same risks as it did in the outside world. Once someone was found out, they would bear the same punishments as they would’ve in the outside world.

Chapter 195: A Bizarre Combination Running into Bizarre Matters

In contrast to other small teams, Dan Fei's only had two members. This was rather unique. However, although they were only two, they were also the ones who drew the most eyeballs and most attention.

There was no reason other than Dan Fei's outfit. For those noble sons and disciples used to seeing Dan Fei's elegant and refined clothing, her primal and revealing side made the testosterone within their bodies rapidly increase uncontrollably.

"That's odd, I thought Miss Dan Fei always acts independently? Why does she have a companion this time? Who's this brat? How can he form a team with Dan Fei?"

"What the hell? Are the manners and morals of this world changing? Even the Dan Fei who comes and goes freely has started to form teams. Oh heavens, my goddess is forming a team with another man by herself. Damn it, damn it!"

"Just who is that fellow? I need to find out more about him later. Could it be that Dan Fei, who holds such high standards actually has a sweetheart?"

"Ai, if I could form a team with Miss Dan Fei, I'd be willing to pay any price."

If the countless men's nagging mutterings and all of their whining complaints towards Jiang Chen had all transformed into spittle, it would've been enough to drown Jiang Chen eight to ten times over.

Jiang Chen was quite at ease as he stood there. He maintained a distance of half an arm's length away from Dan Fei while completely ignoring all the envy and hate from the others.

A vicious gaze descended upon Jiang Chen from a distance. The owner of that gaze was the first prince Ye Dai.

"Jiang Chen, what rights do you have to be forming a team with Dan Fei? Has number four also fallen beneath Dan Fei's skirts? Otherwise, how could he bear to let Jiang Chen form a team with someone else?" Ye Dai's internal emotions were quite distorted and he was itching to stomp Jiang Chen into the ground with one foot and then occupy his spot.

It wasn't that Jiang Chen was pretending that he was all that. He also knew that forming a team with Dan Fei was a matter that held extreme risk and would form lots of grudges for him.

Since he couldn't change this fact, he could only shut off his five senses and simply get into meditation. Otherwise, staring back at all those vengeful and mournful looks from others for too long would only bring bad luck.

After roughly an hour, Dan Fei's elegant hands viciously pinched Jiang Chen's waist, "Stop playing dead, it's our turn to go in."

"Eh?" Jiang Chen felt a wave of pain as he followed Dan Fei into the transportation matrix in a haze of befuddlement. White light seared his vision as they entered the transportation matrix.

When his vision had returned to normal, in the next instant, they'd already arrived in the world of the maze realm.

There was an enormous lake in front of them, and its surface was as clear as a bright mirror as it reflected the white clouds and blue sky. It was so beautiful that with a mere glance, their breathing quickened.

They'd landed on the banks of a lake.

As Dan Fei looked at this scene that was as pretty as a picture, she was in a good mood and couldn't help but sigh, "This is so beautiful. This is the prettiest landing spot I've encountered in the three times I've participated in the maze realm trials."

Right after her words were spoken, a ripple occurred without

forewarning on the surface of the water. An arrow of water directly shot towards them as a fierce copperhead crocodile that was enclosed within the arrow of water aimed to bite down directly on Dan Fei's beautiful neck.

Jiang Chen's reaction was exceedingly swift as he sent a punch crashing over, "Damned animal, get lost!"

This punch was both accurate and swift as it viciously thudded into the pouncing copperhead crocodile's chin when it was just a meter away from Dan Fei.

The copperhead crocodile released a ghastly wail as its entire chin was completely pulverized, turning into a bloody mess. The body of the copperhead crocodile once again fell into the water along with its ghastly scream.

Although Dan Fei was still relatively calm after having been met with an ambush, her spirits had more or less been dampened.

Her beautiful eyes looked at Jiang Chen as she faintly smiled. "And I thought you didn't know how to cherish the fairer sex."

Jiang Chen chuckled, "Don't think too much of it. I was afraid that the honored tutor would rip me apart after I returned if something happens to you."

"Heh heh, don't explain yourself. I don't like to listen to an explanation like that."

Her slender legs were already moving up the shore of the lake as she spoke, walking towards the grassy field in the distance, leaving Jiang Chen who was behind a back that was both alluring and filled with untamed wildness.

Jiang Chen had to admit that this woman truly did have the right to be proud of her body.

"Sister Dan Fei, nice focus." Jiang Chen quickly caught up and said

with a smile.

“What nice focus?” Dan Fei’s cherry blossom lips twitched. “I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“Nice acting skills as well. I’m rather curious, if I hadn’t sent that creature flying just now, when would you have dodged?”

Dan Fei chuckled but didn’t respond, she moved quickly towards the front with light footsteps.

“Jiang Chen, you’re my bodyguard along the way. I won’t make a move unless I have to!”

Dan Fei’s curvaceous and toned body created an exceedingly beautiful sight in the midst of this vast expanse.

Jiang Chen was resigned. He knew that in terms of schemes and bad tempers, this woman was more adept at both of them. He sighed lightly. He decided to go along with the flow since he was already along for the ride.

Jiang Chen actually wouldn’t mind if she doesn’t make a move. He truly hadn’t planned on hunting that much prey this time anyways, he rather train instead.

Placing himself in an unfamiliar environment that could result in danger or lethal threats at any time, such an environment was the greatest allure of the trial.

Dan Fei’s speed wasn’t slow along the way, but she also wasn’t wandering absentmindedly. She would occasionally stoop by the side of the road and take a look here, take a sniff there, looking for something in all directions.

They’d walked about twenty to thirty li and had been harassed seven or eight times.

Except, up until now, the harassment had come from mortal rank

spirit creatures, which was equivalent to the human true qi realm. Although their battle strength was similar to premier human true qi masters, they were still inconsequential in front of Jiang Chen.

There were two that were particularly violent and fierce that were directly pounded to death with a few punches and kicks from Jiang Chen.

There were another two that took the long way around and ran away with their tails between their legs as soon as they saw Jiang Chen. It was unknown if he'd used some particular skills to scare them off.

This matter was extremely bizarre in Dan Fei's eyes.

Likewise, Jiang Chen also found Dan Fei's actions incredibly baffling.

The two of them seemed to be feeling wronged and acting out of spite as neither paid attention to the other. This bizarre combination walked roughly seventy to eighty li before Dan Fei could no longer bear it and broke the silence first.

"Hey, Jiang Chen, are you a man or not? Will it kill you to say something?"

Jiang Chen started. "What do you want me to say? Aren't you looking for a baby spirit animal? I was afraid I'd interrupt your concentration if I talked to you."

It was an impressive sounding excuse that resulted in another eye roll from Dan Fei.

"Why are you such a good-for-nothing? Didn't I give you a storage ring? Why aren't you collecting the cores of those violent beasts?"

"What's the point in collecting trash? A waste of time and energy." Jiang Chen shrugged his shoulders. He really wasn't putting on airs. Those beasts were of the mortal rank and they wouldn't fetch much money, no matter how many he collected. They'd also take up space within the storage ring as well.

"Trash? Jiang Chen, do you think you have a lot of money? Don't you know that beast cores can be sold? We spent twenty thousand each in sign up fees for us to get in here, do you understand that?"

"I'm not the one paying." Jiang Chen beamed.

"I'm the one paying!" Dan Fei's beautiful face darkened, appearing like someone slightly infatuated with money. "Don't forget, I hired you. If you don't collect the creatures' cores, you're ruining my wealth! Not to mention the hunting gains will be ranked after we exit."

"Rankings? Not interested."

Dan Fei's cherry lips opened as she wanted to say something, but was interrupted by Jiang Chen. "I say, are you here to earn money or to find a baby spirit animal? I think I know why you failed the previous two times that you entered. Sister Dan Fei, I'm not admonishing you, but really, don't be blinded by your love for money!"

Dan Fei nearly puked blood in her anger. She was the one who paid the entrance fee, while this brat was acting high and mighty. Not only was he not picking up beast cores, but he was even self-righteously lecturing her being mad about money.

Damn it, this was simply too loathsome.

"Don't you dare refuse to accept the fact that we're not here to earn money! It's easy enough to earn money in the outside world. Why spend so much time and effort to enter the maze realm to earn money? Anyways, I'm not picking up the beast cores. You pick them up if you want to!"

Jiang Chen spoke with a complete ruffian's tone. *I'm just not going to pick them up.*

Emotions flickered over Dan Fei's beautiful cheeks, and she seemed to think something through for a while. She exhaled lightly as her

tone changed.

“Alright Jiang Chen, let’s just say you’re right. Let’s keep going.”

Dan Fei had never been lectured like this by someone before, and she’d truly felt a bit aggrieved in the beginning. However, she was an incredibly intelligent woman and felt that Jiang Chen made a great deal of sense after thinking about it.

They only had a month’s worth of time. If she squandered it here and there, the time would be up quite quickly.

Although the beast cores were worth a reasonable amount of money, they couldn’t be compared to the main mission of this trip. And, if she wished to make money, there were innumerable opportunities in the outside world like Jiang Chen had said. What need did she have to come here and suffer through all this?

When she thought through this logic, Dan Fei’s ruffled emotions smoothed themselves. However, the pride of a woman made her unable to reconcile with Jiang Chen with laughter and chatter immediately.

It was a bit odd that as the two traveled on, the various mortal rank creatures that they encountered didn’t harass them at all. It was as if they were wary of something. The creatures took a spin around ten meters from the two and would then walk away without the slightest intention to attack.

Dan Fei thought that these creatures were intelligent and knew that they couldn’t afford to provoke the two. However, things became odder and odder the more she thought about it.

How could mortal rank beasts have such high intelligence?

Her beautiful eyes covertly observed Jiang Chen with a few traces of surprise, but she could glean no hints from him. There was nothing from Jiang Chen’s face that served as evidence that connected him to this matter.

“Bizarre. I’ve already participated in the Autumn Hunt twice. In my previous experiences, I had to spend the majority of my time fending off the harassment by these violent creatures. This trip is truly odd.” Dan Fei didn’t understand what was happening, but her intuition told her that this surely had something to do with Jiang Chen.

However, based on Dan Fei’s understanding of the nature of these beasts, she felt that this was impossible!

Dan Fei’s emotions were quite complicated as she took these questions down the road with her. She wanted to ask Jiang Chen, but was worried that he’d fob her off with some excuse if she’d asked.

She pretty much guessed that even if this had something to do with Jiang Chen, this fellow would never admit it.

At this step, Dan Fei also firmly believed in the lordmaster’s judgment of Jiang Chen. There was definitely a unique mysteriousness about him.

Everything that happened to him, any single one of the occurrences, were full of baffling connotations.

Just as Dan Fei was letting her thoughts run wild, Jiang Chen who was ahead of her suddenly halted, his entire being was like a bowstring that had been pulled taut and full of poised momentum.

Chapter 196: Let's Talk About the Split in Profits Before We Cooperate

"What's wrong?" Dan Fei was slightly surprised to see Jiang Chen's sudden out-of-character performance.

Jiang Chen said in a low voice, "There's a spirit rank spirit animal ahead, and more than one."

"Is that true?" A look of surprise shot out of Dan Fei's eyes when she heard Jiang Chen's words. She hastened to ask, "You can sense them? How far away are they? Are their young with them?"

Jiang Chen furrowed his brow in contemplation and smoothed it out slightly after a long while, "They're already gone. No young, all adult spirit rank creatures."

"Oh, no young? What a pity." Disappointment flashed across Dan Fei's beautiful features.

"I think you've gone crazy in your desire for a baby spirit animal? Even if there was one, how would you steal it? Do you want to be attacked by a crowd of spirit animals?"

Dan Fei stuck out her tongue as she chuckled, "How can one get the tiger's cubs besides going into the tiger's caves?" Some risk has to be taken in order to obtain the baby spirit animal."

Whenever this woman spoke of a baby spirit animal, her limpid eyes would shine with a fervent ardent light that was definitely not present normally.

This expression was as though a landlord or an old moneybag was looking at a pile of gold, silver, and jewelry with shining eyes.

"This woman is normally refined and demure but she's actually this frightening when she goes mad." Jiang Chen solemnly warned himself that he'd have to control this woman's impulses. Otherwise, if she lost control and barged into a spirit creature's abode without

second thoughts, she really could might very well cause both of them to lose their lives.

A spirit rank spirit creature had a pure bloodline.

Sometimes, the rules of the world were wondrous. Whether it was human practitioners or in spirit animals, the purer a bloodline was, the more powerful their strength, but the weaker their reproductive abilities

For spirit creatures with pure bloodlines, their shortest reproductive cycle was ten or twenty years. Those with longer cycles could reach thirty to fifty years. There were even some spirit creatures who could only have a chance to procreate once every hundred years.

Therefore, in the spirit creature world, if you touched the young of a spirit creature that was in its reproductive cycle or feeding its young, that would be worse than making a move against the creature itself.

Once a spirit creature discovered that its young had been stolen, the vehemence of its revenge would be on quite an insane level.

It was because of this consideration that Jiang Chen kept warning himself that he must carefully control Dan Fei's impulses.

After they walked for a day, they saw that night was slowly falling. There happened to be a patch of boulders up ahead. The enormous rocks were naturally embedded into the gentle slope, forming a unique scene.

"Let's spend the night here. It's a rough and jagged mountain area up ahead. The unending mountain ranges will likely greatly complicate the situation." Jiang Chen raised a suggestion.

Truthfully, he was already mentally prepared for Dan Fei's refusal. What he hadn't thought that was Dan Fei actually nodded, "Then let's rest here for the night."

This maze realm was odd indeed. Temperatures were high during

the day, but there was quite a nip in the air when the mountain wind blew at night.

Jiang Chen was alright since his clothing could fend off a bit of the cold. Dan Fei's outfit had absolutely no coverings for the section between her thighs and calves. She wrapped her arms around her legs as she curled up, burying her head between her legs and trying her best to ward off this bone piercing cold air.

Who knew that this cold air would become worse as the night went on?

Towards the end, even Jiang Chen couldn't help but circulate the spirit power within his body to warm himself. He took a look at Dan Fei only to see her quailing in the wind, her body starting to shiver and shudder.

However, Dan Fei had a stiff upper lip. She didn't make a sound although it was very cold.

Jiang Chen suddenly seemed to remember that there was some equipment in the storage ring that had been prepared by Gouyu. He'd paid no attention to it at the time and just thrown it all inside.

He opened it to see that Gouyu had been quite thorough with her preparations. There was even a wool blanket inside!

Jiang Chen took out the blanket and walked in front of Dan Fei, throwing it around her with an easy wave of his hand. "Cover yourself up. Speak up if you're cold, you're almost turning into a quail with all your shivering."

Jiang Chen shook his head and returned to where he had been sitting. He dug out a long robe and wore it backwards in front of him. He leaned against a large rock and slowly sank into meditation again.

The night wasn't actually that peaceful. Jiang Chen sensed spirit creatures pass by several times while he was meditating, sometimes close by, sometimes far away.

The ones that were close flew past them a mere five hundred meters away.

Jiang Chen almost wanted to wake Dan Fei up a few times and leave this place where trouble was apt to find them. However, he restrained himself in the end. If these spirit creatures appeared so commonly, then one of them would find them sooner or later.

However, these spirit creatures never tarried when they passed by. They were obviously completely uninterested in human flesh and blood.

"Just what's going on to cause these spirit creatures to appear so frequently?" Jiang Chen couldn't understand it, but he didn't dare to relax his guard.

The night finally passed. When the morning rays shone on the hillside, the cold air of the night was immediately dispelled and it returned to a comfortable temperature.

Jiang Chen opened his eyes to see that Dan Fei had already prepared breakfast.

The woman had obviously come prepared, she'd prepared a sumptuous feast. Jiang Chen walked over and helped himself unceremoniously.

Dan Fei handed over a cup of juice from an unknown fruit and said softly, "Thank you for your blanket."

"Then I should thank you for your breakfast?" Jiang Chen smiled lazily and gulped down the juice in one swallow. "We head west today. Perhaps, we can really find you a baby spirit animal if we're lucky!"

Jiang Chen wasn't joking. There had been at least seven or eight spirit rank beasts coming from the northwest direction in the last day and night, quickly heading south.

Although he didn't know what was happening in the south, there

must be a reason for all these spirit beasts leaving their homes. Their rear would surely be weakly defended if they had all left.

Perhaps, the two of them could truly take advantage of this opportunity to swoop in when the spirit creatures' homes were empty.

However, this opportunity had to be grasped at the right time. Otherwise, they'd be in for a world of trouble when the spirit beasts returned.

Of course, it was an unknown factor whether or not there were any young spirit beasts that those spirit creatures that had left.

When Dan Fei heard the words baby spirit animal, her eyes lit up, "Jiang Chen, do you have any suggestions?"

"Seven or eight spirit creatures moved swiftly towards the south in the last day and night. I speculate that something must have surely happened in the south, or is about to happen. These beasts came from the northwestern direction, and so I'm guessing that their homes should be in that area. If we are careful and travel towards the northwest, perhaps we really will run into a spirit animal home with cubs in it if we're lucky?"

Dan Fei's eyes gleamed, "Jiang Chen, this is a good idea. Were there really seven or eight spirit creatures that passed by yesterday?"

"Don't tell me you didn't sense them."

"I only sensed two of them." Dan Fei responded honestly, the light of delight shining out from her beautiful eyes. "Jiang Chen, to think that your consciousness is this strong and this sensitive. It looks like I've asked the right person when I recruited you!"

"Stop kissing up to me. We agreed that if there really are baby spirit animals, it's yours if there's only one. If there are extras, the rest are all mine." Jiang Chen brought up his conditions.

Dan Fei started, "What do you want with baby spirit animals?"

Jiang Chen laughed easily, "Why can't I want them since you guys want them? If I recall correctly, my knowledge of spirit animals should be stronger than both of yours."

Dan Fei was at a loss for words.

She thought momentarily and then nodded, "How about this? The first one is mine, the second is yours. If there's a third, it's still yours. The fourth is mine and so on and so forth. Apart from the first one, all the odd numbered ones are yours and even numbered ones are mine. How about that?"

Dan Fei didn't want to suffer losses, and so, she emphasized a certain sentence after making her proposal, "Don't haggle if you're a man. Don't forget, I was the one who paid for your entrance fee!"

Jiang Chen was speechless. This woman really was unwilling to come up short in anything.

Although Jiang Chen had accepted Dan Fei's invitation for the Autumn Hunt, he also had a certain goal in this trip.

His goal was a spirit rank creature.

Whether it was alive or dead, they were all Jiang Chen's targets.

Having entered the spirit realm, he was well aware of how important the cores of a spirit rank spirit creature were. The ones of mortal ranks creatures were worthless, but the ones of spirit rank creatures couldn't be mentioned in the same breath.

The cores of a spirit rank creature embodied rich spirit power. They were the nutritious supplements that all practitioners most yearned for. The cores were some of the best items to help shape the spirit ocean and raise spirit power.

However, Jiang Chen still possessed a bit of a gentlemanly demeanor

and he couldn't contest every inch of land when he saw that Dan Fei was so serious. He could only take one step back. "Remember, I'll hold you to your words. Otherwise, if it comes down to it, you won't obtain even one baby spirit animal."

Dan Fei giggled, "You brat, am I someone to turn hostile like that?"

"Perhaps you're not, but you change into a completely different person when you mention baby spirit animals, like you've gone crazy. We should specify terms clearly at first and use a great deal of courtesy later in making this agreement."

Dan Fei's fair and clear jade hands plucked at a few strands of hair that the wind had blown into disarray, but she wasn't the slightest bit infuriated by Jiang Chen's words.

The two of them ate breakfast, packed up and set off on their way again.

"Jiang Chen, I have a method of observing baby spirit animals. Add to that your extraordinary sensing skills, that makes our cooperation flawless without a trace." Dan Fei was in high spirits.

However, Jiang Chen wasn't as optimistic as her. Putting aside the matter of whether or not the spirit creatures who'd left had babies, wouldn't they have companions guarding their homes if they did?

Although these spirit animals were at the initial or even mid spirit rank, their battle strength was quite astonishing.

Particularly when they were protecting their young, their strong battle strength would increase explosively.

Therefore, ordinary adventurers would rather fight humans of equal strength rather than face an enraged spirit creature.

The two of them actually did find two spirit creature homes using the method that Dan Fei had mentioned. However, there were no babies in their homes.

Although there were some good items in their lairs, some spirit rank flowers, grass, and medicine, Dan Fei was heartily disinterested in all of them since there were no baby spirit animals.

Although Jiang Chen was thoroughly disinterested in the mortal rank cores, he took everything that was in the spirit rank, even if it was just flowers and grass.

“Heh heh, Jiang Chen, I thought you viewed money like dirt.” Dan Fei finally found an opportunity to make a dig at Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen rolled his eyes. “Sister Dan Fei, the level of your venomous tongue is simply too inferior. If you want to make me feel the bite of sarcasm, you’ll have to work on your skills.”

Dan Fei was immediately struck dumb. She discovered that this man was invincible when he wanted to be shameless.

Chapter 197: Dan Fei Goes Crazy Too

Another three days passed. During these three days, Jiang Chen sensed at least twenty to thirty spirit creatures making their way south in a great hurry.

These were only the ones that he could sense and didn't even include those far off in the distance.

"Something huge must have happened in the south. However, our chances increase as these spirit creatures leave. According to my judgment, there are definitely female spirit creatures in the suckling period amongst them. If I'm sensing this correctly, there's are definitely baby spirit animals ahead. All that remains to be seen is when this woman can find them!"

Jiang Chen wasn't as optimistic as Dan Fei. No matter how she urged him on, he neither quickened nor slowed his pace, journeying onwards by his own tempo.

On the afternoon of the sixth day, Dan Fei finally made a discovery.

"Jiang Chen, I'm willing to bet that there are baby spirit animals in the valley ahead."

"Are you sure?"

Dan Fei's tone was a bit agitated, "I'm sure. I've conducted many years of research in this area. I know how to determine if there are baby spirit animals present."

Jiang Chen's nose twitched slightly as he nodded, "There are indeed a few traces of the scent unique to suckling young in the air. However, how do you know if it isn't a spirit animal who happens to be feeding her young passing by here?"

"There's a difference between simply passing by and long term residence."

"If a spirit animal is passing by, then there will only be one scent trail. However, long term residence will result in a more even distribution. This is only one of the points. Look at the surrounding spirit herbs and these flowers and grass, they all bear the teeth marks of young spirit animals who have nibbled on them."

"In addition, baby spirit animals have a unique scent. This is also different from a mother's scent."

Dan Fei lightly clenched her feminine fist, saying excitedly, "Jiang Chen, I can guarantee that there is a baby spirit animal here. I finally see the hope of success this time!"

"Don't have your head turned with success!" Jiang Chen doused her with a timely bucket of metaphorical cold water. "Even if there are baby spirit animals here, how can you ascertain that their mother has left? How can you promise that there are no other companions here protecting them?"

"Remember, the violent nature that explodes out of any spirit animal when it discovers that its young is being threatened is incredibly difficult to contend with. We need to win through intelligence and not through fighting fire with fire."

Finally, the two of them discussed briefly and decided that Jiang Chen should go scout ahead first, fix onto the baby spirit animal's general location and then steal it afterwards.

The Psychic's Head divine art that Jiang Chen was practicing naturally had a way to withdraw a body's aura into the seven senses and then send it outwards.

There was another cave within the mountain valley.

Grotesque rocks dotted the somewhat steep terrain around the outside of the cave. However, this was no great problem for practitioners.

After Jiang Chen observed the scene for a while, he used Psychic's

Head to sense things. A slight solemnness crept into his heart.

"There are indeed baby spirit animals present, and there's four of them!"

Jiang Chen's heartbeat sped up involuntarily as immediately afterwards, he then felt another strong presence.

"This is bad, there really is a guardian there. I knew that it couldn't be that easy to steal baby spirit animals." Jiang Chen muttered inwardly but was in no hurry to make his move.

He returned to where Dan Fei was waiting and outlined the situation for her.

"Four babies? That many?" Dan Fei's eyes lit up.

"Don't be happy just yet. Apart from the four baby animals, there's still another spirit animal that's the equivalent of a human third level spirit realm practitioner. Do you think you can handle it?"

"Well..." Dan Fei's slender eyebrows knit together slightly. This was a thorny problem. "Since the other spirit creatures have gone to the south, why hasn't this one?"

"You're asking me, but who should I ask?"

Dan Fei was silent for a moment, "This sort of situation is also within the scope of my plans. Given the protection of an adult spirit creature, we need to find a way to draw it out. We'll lure the tiger out of the mountains, or in other words, we'll entice it to leave its vantage point and then steal the baby spirit animals."

"Luring the enemy out is something that's easier said than done." Jiang Chen smiled. "If we don't execute it properly, we could very well pay the price with our lives."

"Don't talk about such unlucky nonsense!" Dan Fei hectored lightly. "Jiang Chen, I have a medicine which the lordmaster himself put

together that can make spirit animals fall asleep and lose their attacking abilities for a short amount of time. If we can make the guardian spirit animal sleep for a short period of time, we won't be without a chance."

"How long can this be maintained?" Jiang Chen asked.

"Roughly fifteen minutes!" Dan Fei thought briefly before replying.

"Fifteen minutes? That's way too short. We won't have gotten far in fifteen minutes. The spirit creature will easily find us by sensing and following the presence of the babies."

Dan Fei smiled. "Don't you worry, I have a way to conceal the presence of the baby spirit creatures if we get them, so that the adult one won't be able to follow us through their presence."

Jiang Chen still shook his head. He understood that old tutor Ye Chonglou might have the ability to do so, but there were no absolutes in the affairs of the world. Sure, one could cover the presence of the baby spirit animals, but how far away could they get in fifteen minutes? Once the spirit animals utilized the strength around them and all embarked instantly to engage in a carpet bombing style search, it'd still be very easy to find the two.

Although fifteen minutes wasn't a short amount of time, but they really may not be able to make it out.

"Jiang Chen, are you a man or not? Don't you men say that wealth comes from danger and risk? We're just taking a larger risk to obtain four spirit animals. If we can do that, no matter how much prey all of the rest of them have hunted, we're still first place for sure after we leave."

Piles and mountains of ordinary creature cores were still less convincing than a core of a spirit creature.

Ten spirit creature cores were still less valuable than one living spirit creatures.

This was reality. A mortal rank was less than a spirit rank, and of the spirit rank, a live spirit animal was preferable to a dead one.

Who would know if you were the one who'd killed it if the spirit creature was dead? Who knew if it wasn't the spirit rank creature which had died of natural causes at the end of a long life?

It was different if it was alive. As everyone knew, it may not be that difficult to kill a spirit creature, but it would be greatly difficult to capture one alive.

"No need to blather on. Your plan is too risky, I'm not agreeing to it. Unless you destroy me, I'm absolutely not agreeing to this plan."

"Then do you have a better plan?" Dan Fei laughed coldly. "Jiang Chen, although you know a little bit of the way of spirit animals, but the lordmaster and I have conducted research for many years in this area. We're definitely much more professional and knowledgeable than you are. Don't forget that you're the assistant I hired. I'm the one who should be calling the shots!"

"Heh heh, I'm not agreeing to this even if you say a thousand or ten thousand words. You will have no way of executing this risky plan if I don't nod my head."

Jiang Chen was truly a man of his word. Although Dan Fei was a bit of a distance away from him, he would get up and follow her as soon as her body left his vision.

Dan Fei was so mad that she stomped her feet. "Jiang Chen, if... if you're so afraid, then you go back first."

"It's a bit late to tell me to leave now, isn't it? At any rate, the lordmaster will rip me apart if anything happens to you."

Dan Fei's delicate brows knit together with an audible click and she could only sulk by herself.

With the advent of night, Dan Fei's anger didn't show any sign of

dissipating. Jiang Chen paid no attention to her small temper tantrum and sat cross legged, entering a meditative state.

Ever since he had entered the world of the maze realm, Jiang Chen had passed every day in a state of high alert. As he perceived the mysteriousness of the maze realm, the strength of his heart increased quickly.

In particular, with this general situation, the secret art of the Psychic's Heart had advanced to the third level.

Dan Fei wrapped herself in her blanket as if she'd already fallen asleep but after two hours, her eyes that were as bright as the stars suddenly opened slightly. Her lashes fluttered slightly as she looked in Jiang Chen's direction.

Her jade hand below the blanket was holding a small jade bottle. She lightly uncapped it and dumped out a continuous stream of white powder.

This white powder slowly spread with the scent of some ordinary flowers and grass.

After a while, Dan Fei squirmed out from the blanket and strode in front of Jiang Chen, pushing his head lightly twice. A proud smile was revealed in the curve of her lips. "Damned brat, let's see how you'll stop me now? You're still a bit far off from contending with your sister."

She flung the blanket onto Jiang Chen, "When I come back, maybe you'll still be deep in the throes of sleep!"

Dan Fei was more than a little proud of herself as her slender legs strode forward, making for the direction of the cave.

After taking two steps, a mischievous notion suddenly traveled through her mind. She smiled strangely and returned to where Jiang Chen was. Grabbing a piece of charcoal that had been partially burnt, she drew a stroke left and right of Jiang Chen's lips, giving him

a mustache.

“Heh heh, the look isn’t complete just yet.” She added another three strokes across and one stroke down as she muttered to herself, writing a large 王 character (The first character of the phrase of 王八, which can be translated to “son of a b*tch”).

After that, she threw the piece of charcoal away randomly and dusted off her jade hands. “Alright Jiang Chen, you’ll see how your sister gets the baby spirit animals! Save yourself the effort of puffing yourself up in front of me and acting like you’re all that!”

Dan Fei was just as Jiang Chen had said. When it came to baby spirit animals — she would turn into a complete madwoman.

One had to say, although Dan Fei was a woman, she had some guts. Although she hadn’t succeeded in capturing a baby spirit animal in the two times that she’d experienced the trials of the maze realm, it had cultivated a side of her that was full of courage.

She quickly came to the edge of that cave.

A long, thin bamboo pipe appeared in her hand like magic. There was a slot on the top of the bamboo pipe — a mechanism that could be manually triggered.

Dan Fei poured a bottle of “Mind Enchantment Powder” into the bamboo pipe. She then took out another bottle and poured it in as well, as if deathly afraid that it wouldn’t be enough.

She closed the slot again after pouring in the powder. Pulling on the pipe with her right hand, she extended it by a few centimeters. All of the powder was now evenly dispersed in the front of the pipe.

Dan Fei put the pipe up to her mouth and snuck into the cave step by step.

She also knew that even if the guardian was asleep, its spirit energy wouldn’t be completely retracted. It’d certainly still be relatively alert.

Therefore, she was quite cautious and didn't dare let up her guard in the slightest.

The bamboo pipe dangled out of her cherry lips as she crept, step by step, into the cave.

"Roar!!" A violent roar suddenly resounded in the cave before a wind of blood and gore assaulted her directly. It was the adult spirit creature bounding out of the cave.

Whoosh .

Dan Fei's small mouth exhaled as a breath infused with the scent of orchids sent the powder spraying out of the bamboo pipe. It formed a powdery arc as it shot towards the spirit creature pouncing on her.

As she made this dangerous and risky move, Dan Fei's body rolled, burrowing into lower ground on the side and avoiding this furious blow from the spirit creature.

Bam !

The spirit creature's claws had gouged out a deep pit where she had been standing.

The spirit creature was about to pounce downwards as it roared, but the medicinal effects of the powder took effect in that moment. The spirit creature wavered as it couldn't keep its footing and then fell down.

Chapter 198: Thank Goodness for Jiang Chen

Hoo!

Dan Fei breathed out a long sigh of relief from her low vantage point. That was truly dangerous. The spirit beast had been so close to jumping down and attacking her.

She didn't think that she could fend off a furious below from this spirit beast in such confined quarters.

"It's a good thing that the lordmaster's Mind Enchantment Powder is strong enough. However, that was also good luck just now. If it hadn't been leaping towards me, and if I hadn't used double the usual amount, perhaps it wouldn't have fallen so quickly if the medicine hadn't been as strong. I would've been the one suffering from bad luck had it been that little bit slower."

Dan Fei was still in a state of shock when she jumped up, she wanted to kill the spirit creature while she was at it. However, she also knew that the spirit creature had a tough pelt and thick flesh. It'd take some effort to kill it.

"Forget it, let's grab the babies first and assess the situation later."

Dan Fei's flitted forward on lotus steps and swept into the cave. She saw four babies with their heads back, their stomachs gurgling as they called out.

They were furry and fuzzy, obviously having just been born.

Dan Fei had no time to determine what spirit animals they were, she put all four in the bamboo basket on her back. She closed the lid tightly and didn't linger for another second, dashing outside.

She didn't even glance at the various spirit herbs, grasses, and fruits within the cave.

“Humph. If it was Jiang Chen, that addict to wealth, he definitely wouldn’t pass these things up. It’s apparent from this that my focus is much stronger than his.”

In the instant that she swept past the spirit creature again, Dan Fei had the momentary notion to kill the beast and be done with it once and for all.

However, she was still cognizant in terms of understanding her level of martial proficiency. Her true strength was at but the first level of the spirit realm. Killing the spirit beast that lay here would likely take quite a bit of time.

What if this spirit creature had companions that happened to come back at this time, wouldn’t that be awful?

Dan Fei decided to not be greedy and left the cave first.

After fleeing from the cave and breathing in the air from the outside world, Dan Fei felt completely at ease. The success of obtaining baby spirit animals made her feel incomparably happy.

She only wanted to hurry back to where Jiang Chen was and thoroughly show off of him, making him admit that he was inferior!

Just as her thoughts traveled down this path, Dan Fei’s suddenly changed drastically because a tragic cry of sorrow came from the cave, transforming into a long howl afterwards!

This voice shook the heavens, seeming to want to collapse the entire cave.

“This is bad, the Mind Enchantment Powder has lost its effectiveness this quickly. That spirit beast is much stronger than I’d imagined.”

Sweat instantly beaded on her forehead.

She hadn’t made it far from the cave at all. If the spirit creature was fast, it could catch up to her in the span of a few breaths.

Having never known what fear was, Dan Fei's heart was now in a panicked mess as her frantic emotions showed on her face. Her legs churned and ate up the distance, exerting every last drop of strength in her bones.

Bam bam bam.

An earth shattering tremble came from the direction of the cave, approaching her with extreme speed. Its momentum was as if it would bring down the entire mountain valley.

"Oh no, it's coming!" Dan Fei was shocked senseless in that moment.

She hadn't thought that the spirit animal would awaken so quickly, and that it would be so fast in chasing her.

Her speed wasn't slow, but it was blatantly obvious that the spirit creature was even faster.

It had closed the gap to within a thousand meters in a few breaths.

"Can it be that I, Dan Fei, will lose my life here today? Jiang Chen... Jiang Chen, hurry up and wake up. Flee!" Dan Fei felt a bit of regret in this moment.

Why didn't she listened to Jiang Chen? Why had she acted arbitrarily?

But it seemed a bit too late for regrets at the moment. Dan Fei could feel the pressure of the third or fourth level spirit realm beast behind her. It came thundering towards her with a dominant force. Its aura made her two legs almost unable to move.

"Idiotic woman, get down!"

A low shout suddenly cut across the night at this crucial moment.

Three sounds broke through the air in succession afterwards, as three arrows ripped through the air like shooting stars, flying brilliantly at the spirit animal in hot pursuit behind her.

The enormous spirit animal was actually a giant ape. Its silvery fur appeared even more translucent and gleaming beneath the splendor of the moon.

When the giant ape saw the arrow attack, it gave another long whistle.

Its arms spread out as it punched, punched, and punched for a third time. It actually used the strength of its punches to blast those arrows to bits!

“Awrooo!” The giant ape roared again after punching the arrows away and it rushed forward.

Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh.

Another three arrows shot forward unceremoniously.

The giant ape followed the same set pattern as the aura from its boxing punches once again smashed the arrows to bits.

Although the two rounds of arrow attacks hadn't harmed the giant ape, they noticeably dogged its footsteps and reduced its forward momentum.

“Idiot woman! Why haven't you left yet?”

The voice naturally came from Jiang Chen. Jiang Chen had only been entranced by the Mind Enchantment Powder for a short while before recovering his wits. He used the divine art of Psychic's Head to expel the remaining poison from the powder and he immediately guessed that Dan Fei had made a reckless move.

This Mind Enchantment Powder couldn't even keep him, a practitioner of the first level spirit realm, under for that long. It'd likely be even less effective when used on that adult spirit creature.

When his thoughts travelled there, Jiang Chen also became greatly anxious. He rushed in this direction with the fastest speed possible,

just so happening to run into Dan Fei when the giant ape was about five hundred meters from Dan Fei.

If he'd been even a bit slower, that crazy woman would've definitely been slapped into meat paste by the giant ape that was like a small mountain.

Dan Fei had no spare attention and effort to argue with Jiang Chen now, she knew that her presence was extraneous. She picked up her pace to make for the outside perimeter.

"Jiang Chen, don't linger in battle, go!"

This woman wasn't without loyalty after all, she didn't voice heartless words that wanted Jiang Chen to distract that spirit creature.

However, if Jiang Chen extracted himself and left at this time, both of them would most likely be unable to make it out with the speed of the giant ape.

To engage in a contest of speed, endurance, and environment in someone else's home turf, they were at an disadvantage in all aspects.

Judging from the punching method that the giant ape used in demolishing the arrows, it likely had a style that was more crude and forceful, a representative of those that did wild and fierce battle.

If it wasn't for this giant ape's level of strength at a solid fourth level spirit realm, Jiang Chen actually felt an itch to do battle and almost wanted to deploy the Divine Aeons Fist to box with it.

Jiang Chen actually really wanted to experience the physical kind of fight in which fists were meeting fists.

However, it was obviously not a good opportunity at the moment. The giant ape's strength was much greater than his. Facing off against it in a boxing match, even though Jiang Chen had the mysteries of the Divine Aeons Fist, he wouldn't make it past ten blows from the giant

ape.

It was a good thing that the Da Yu bow was a four times refined spirit weapon. When Jiang Chen entered the spirit realm, his skill in the use of spirit weapons had once again risen noticeably.

It was absolutely incomparable to when he was in the realm of true qi.

Even this giant ape with the tough skin and thick flesh seemed to know the might of these arrows. It only dared to use its fists to smash into the arrows and didn't dare use its tough skin to block it.

However, when it used its fists to break the arrows apart, its forward momentum was naturally affected.

Jiang Chen remained unmoved no matter how it roared in a threatening manner. The Da Yu bow in his hand pinned the giant ape down with unerring accuracy.

The giant ape was beside itself with anxiety but it could do nothing. If it wanted to move forward, it could have ignore the attacks from the arrows, but the giant ape knew full well that as strong as its body was, it couldn't ignore the attacks from these arrows and use its body to withstand the attacks from the arrows.

It roared continuously in its anxiety and punched out with increasing speed, the aura of its punches becoming fiercer and fiercer.

The boulders around it were continuously demolished and shattered as it punched out.

Jiang Chen also found it tough to bear up beneath the onslaught. Although the Da Yu bow could pin down the giant ape, it had a limited number of arrows.

If he continued using them like this, he'd run out of arrows in a short while.

He was using the original arrows that were a set with the Da Yu bow this time, and not the lower quality arrows that he'd bought afterwards.

If those arrows had been used, they wouldn't have had any effect on the giant ape.

"There's still twelve more arrows, I can hold it off for another fifteen minutes. I hope that idiot woman hasn't been too dumb and isn't waiting for me in a place not far away. Otherwise, these delaying tactics will have been in vain."

Jiang Chen only prayed that Dan Fei was far away.

As long as Dan Fei had cleared the area, Jiang Chen didn't mind engaging this giant ape in a little game of tag.

Although the giant ape was fast, it had a large body after all. Jiang Chen had a spirit ocean that had been formed by the Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill, what he lacked least was boundless spirit power.

This was the advantage of a superior spirit ocean. He was able to store a lot more spirit power than ordinary practitioners.

Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh!

Another round of arrow attacks, but the giant ape seemed to have gained a full understanding of Jiang Chen's attacking method now. It could actually slowly advance forward as it used its fists to demolish the arrows at the same time.

"Damn it, who the hell said spirit creatures were dumb? The giant ape is obviously familiar with my tactics now. This is bad. If this continues, it will quickly draw close to me, unless I increase the concentration of my attack. I have no chance of winning at all in close combat!"

Jiang Chen's grasp of the battle situation was also exceedingly

sensitive.

Increase the concentration of his attacks? When he saw that there were only nine arrows left in his quiver, Jiang Chen couldn't help but smile ruefully. There were only nine arrows left. There was a limit to how much he could increase the concentration of his attacks.

Once he shot off these nine arrows, the Da Yu bow would be worthless. He, Jiang Chen, would be akin to having crippled one of his arms.

When he calculated the time, it'd be fifteen minutes since Dan Fei left. If she ran at full speed, she should've gone far from here.

When Jiang Chen's thoughts traveled here, he didn't linger in battle and turned and ran.

"Ai, if only I could bring a Goldwing Swordbird into this trial. How would I be so bedraggled now?" Jiang Chen started missing the Goldwing Swordbirds at this time.

Although the giant ape was strong, it wasn't a flying type in the end. If Jiang Chen could take to the skies, even a mid spirit ranked creature would be able to do nothing to him.

However, thinking of the Goldwing Swordbirds now was to just console himself with false hopes. It wouldn't solve his problem at all.

His mind elsewhere, Jiang Chen brought his greatest speed to bear and began to retreat. When the giant ape saw Jiang Chen running, it started chasing him with great, thudding steps, hot on his heels.

Jiang Chen knew that the giant ape's speed was still a bit faster than his when he heard the rhythm of these footsteps.

He deployed the God's Eye and looked ahead, planning on finding the best escape route.

When he looked around, he almost spat out a mouthful of his

ancient blood.

Dan Fei, that idiotic woman, was standing not too far away, waiting for him!

Come enter the SOTR Chapter 200 contest!

Chapter 199: Victory from the Jaws of Extreme Danger

Jiang Chen didn't know whether to curse at her or feel touched at this moment. She wasn't a cold-hearted, vicious woman after all. She hadn't left him behind to make good on her own escape.

Dan Fei was like one of those orchid flowers blooming in the night that were spoken of but never seen. Her slender body stood atop a large tree as she gazed anxiously in Jiang Chen's direction. Deep anxiety was written all over her incomparably beautiful face. The surge of stubbornness that was usually flittering deep around the corners of her eyes was now fully displayed.

"This crazy woman..." Jiang Chen knew that it was pointless to curse at her now as he prepared to stop and once again engage the enemy.

"Jiang Chen, take three steps to your left to avoid an area of 100 meters, then take another three steps right to avoid an area of sixty meters and finally, fly over an area of 30 meters without coming in contact with the ground!" Dan Fei's deeply worried voice rang through the night sky like the startled calls of a nightingale.

Mm?

Jiang Chen had planned on slowing down his footsteps when a thought struck him as he listened to these words. Had this crazy woman not made it far because she was laying traps here?

He was a resolute man and didn't hesitate under these circumstances. He took a turn to the left, then to the right, and finally abruptly kicked off the ground at the thirty meter section according to the route pointed out by Dan Fei. His body flew just like a giant bird gliding through the air.

After entering the spirit realm, although he couldn't yet fly, soaring through the air was no problem at all. Add to the fact that there were two big trees on the side that he could push off from, Jiang

Chen landed on a branch next to Dan Fei after a few rises and falls.

"Why didn't you escape when I told you to flee?"

Dan Fei's sexy lips pursed as her feminine face displayed stubborn look. "Am I so disloyal in your eyes as to leave a comrade behind and flee?"

Jiang Chen had wanted to say that she'd wrecked his original plans, but thought that there was absolutely no point in bringing that up now. He rolled his eyes and grabbed Dan Fei's hand, taking her on a glide through the air.

"Jiang Chen, this entire area's been planted with Mind Enchantment Powder. I don't believe that that big thing won't fall victim to it again!"

Dan Fei's body quivered slightly when her small hand was grabbed by Jiang Chen. A strange feeling like she'd been electrocuted spread throughout her body, but she still spoke calmly.

"What bloody use is that? The spirit creature's fallen victim to it once and will surely be on its guard against it."

The giant ape had tracked them to within the hundred meter area as they were speaking and actually used a large hand to cover its nose, making its way to Jiang Chen and Dan Fei with large strides.

"Do you see that?" Jiang Chen flung Dan Fei onto a nearby tree with a large swing, roaring, "Don't tarry this time, go! I'll catch up to you!"

Dan Fei was depressed to see her carefully laid out trap being seen through with a single glance from the giant ape. She hadn't imagined that although the giant ape looked like all brawn and no brains, it actually had very sharp mind!

Jiang Chen grabbed the Da Yu bow as he couldn't afford the luxury to pay attention to the fact that there weren't that many arrows left. He had to make a final gamble. If he won the bet, perhaps they'd be able to break free.

If he didn't win the gamble, they'd be in a great deal of trouble!

Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh!

Three arrows in succession flew towards the giant ape. The giant ape's speed was exceedingly fast, but the arrows could still slow it down.

Plus, one of its hands had to cover its nose, so it only had one giant hand left to freely move around.

Bam, bam!

Two punches fended off two arrows, but another remained right in front of it. The giant ape had no choice but to remove the hand covering its nose and throw out a punch.

Bam! The arrow close at hand was also brought down.

Jiang Chen took out all of the remaining six arrows at this moment, *whoosh, whoosh, whoosh!*

Six arrows in succession locked onto the giant ape with the fastest speed and greatest strength Jiang Chen could bring to bear from six different angles, speeding towards it mercilessly.

The power and intensity of the six successive arrows forced the giant ape to halt its footsteps. The giant ape had just entered into the thirty meter area at this time.

Jiang Chen had fired the six arrows in unison precisely for this exact moment.

This area was certain to be where Dan Fei had set up most of the powder, which is why she had him travel through the air.

The attack from the six arrows arrived at the same time. The giant ape would either have to not use its boxing skills and use its body to block the arrows instead, or it'd have to throw its full strength into

punching out the arrows.

If it used its full strength in boxing moves however, it would naturally have to use spirit power. When the spirit power circulated, the Mind Enchantment Powder in the surroundings would also circulate at greater speed. It'd be difficult for the giant ape to not take any of it in while it fought!

It would take in the powder whenever it breathed!

This kind of calculation was precise down to the most minute details, exact to the point of its execution being defined in the closest meter.

When Jiang Chen had thrown Dan Fei onto the branch, her heart had kept pounding. Even though Jiang Chen had once again told her to run, it was as if her feet had taken root and she couldn't move, no matter how much she wanted to.

"Awrooooo!"

The giant ape was also quite fierce and it seemed to know that there was Mind Enchantment Powder in this area. Its entire body suddenly sped up as its thick legs stomped fiercely onto the ground. Its enormous body shot through the air like a round, silver ball.

Bam, bam!

The giant ape actually used its body to take the hits from two arrows.

The strength of this bound was extraordinary as the ape shot towards the big tree that Dan Fei was on.

When Jiang Chen saw this sudden development, a nameless anger grew in his heart. That idiotic woman hadn't left yet!

Quicker than words could tell, Dan Fei's heart leapt in fright when she saw the giant ape bound up and come careening towards her. She knew that this was because the giant ape had sensed the presence of the baby spirit animals and was rushing towards her

without regard of its own life.

“Dodge!”

Jiang Chen was a bit far from Dan Fei at this time. If he rushed to save her and used his body against the giant ape’s in a contest of force, he would, without a doubt, be grounded into meat paste.

A blow at the peak of anger from a mid spirit rank beast, even though injured, was still a very frightening blow. Being hit with that blow through the air would likely result in immediate death after spitting out blood, not to mention being body-slammed by it.

In that critical moment, Jiang Chen’s hands raised slightly, the sun in one hand and the moon in another. His two arms were like two great trees as the shape that his hand was formed in shifted slightly, forming the concept of a cycle of blooming and wilting.

Two throwing daggers had also appeared in his hands at this time.

“Moonshatter Flying Daggers, I hope you don’t fail me this time!” Jiang Chen’s thoughts churned swiftly. He was finally going to use the throwing dagger technique that he’d trained arduously before the trials, the one that he combined with the concept of the Divine Aeons Fist. He was deploying the Flying Eagle Form with one hand and the Pouncing Tiger Form with the other.

Two completely different great techniques were being melded into one, using the true meaning of the Divine Aeons Fist.

Whoosh!

The throwing dagger in his right hand first gave rise to a wave of qi as fierce as fire, transforming into the momentum of a ferocious tiger descending down a mountain and pouncing towards that furiously charging giant ape.

The throwing dagger in his left hand shout out at almost the same time, as if a clear breeze in the night sky, stealthily moving through

the air —

Flying Eagle Form!

Pouncing Tiger Form in his right hand, Flying Eagle Form in his left.

The two vastly different dagger-throwing techniques formed two completely distinct forces and auras in this moment through the philosophy of life and death behind the Divine Aeons Fist. It was as if the radiance of the sun and splendor of the moon intersected in the sky!

The fur on the giant ape was like steel needles, and it suddenly stood on end. With the level of training the giant ape had, it could naturally discern the boundless killing intent shooting towards it from the side.

This killing intent was absolutely enough to threaten its life.

However, it didn't have the ability to think of so much at this moment!

It only had one thought right now, and that was to take back the babies and slap this damned human female to death!

Dan Fei was still a woman who had seen great occasions after all. After starting slightly, she knew that there was no way she could withstand the giant ape's momentum when she saw it heading towards her. She dodged into the air and used all the strength in her body to shift upwards and to the side.

The giant ape clawed viciously and connected with the big tree that Dan Fei had been standing on!

Bam!

The big tree fell down with a thud as its entire trunk had been blown to smithereens and countless wooden splinters. The branches and leaves scattered every which way. Innumerable leaves were sucked

into the air from the spirit power and then fell back onto the ground, pouring down like a rain of leaves.

The giant ape's ruthless blow was still a bit too slow.

Dan Fei's body had left the big tree and her face was filled with panic as she landed on a patch of empty ground more than two meters out.

Jiang Chen's Moonshatter Flying Daggers attack also arrived at the same time.

The giant ape had completely overextended itself with this punch and repeated his move one too many times. It lacked stability as its body hung in the air.

Pfft, pfft!

The throwing daggers entered its body. One landed within its waist and the other into its head.

The strong force almost shot them straight through the giant ape's body!

"Awrooo!"

The giant ape couldn't remain in the air after taking the hits from the throwing daggers. It roared in extreme fury after landing on the ground.

Suddenly —

The giant ape's entire body suddenly started expanding like a balloon with a astonishing speed.

The giant ape's body had expanded to the size of a huge balloon as all the steel needles of its fur stood on end, as if spikes stuck onto its surface. It appeared quite eerie and frightening beneath the moonlight.

Jiang Chen knew that something was wrong when he saw this strange sight and roared, "Dodge it!"

Bam!

The surface of the giant ape's body suddenly exploded as a tremendous force sent its skin, blood, and flesh flying in all directions.

Countless numbers of steel needle spikes also shot forth from its body due to the force of the explosion!

Danger!

Although Jiang Chen was further away, he didn't dare lower his guard as he instinctively crouched and covered his head with his hands.

Psst, psst, psst, psst!

Countless numbers of ape fur-spikes landed on the ground like steel nails.

Jiang Chen opened his eyes to discover that he'd been rather lucky to not get hit by any of these spikes.

After the giant ape's suicidal blow, its entire body was a bloody, gory mess. It was like it'd lost a great deal of weight as its external skin and fur were completely gone. It looked like it'd been scalped alive as even starkly white bones could be seen.

Bam!

After using its life in this final blow, the giant ape finally collapsed.

Jiang Chen didn't have time to breathe out in relief yet as he hastily ran over to Dan Fei. Dan Fei was curled up sideways on the ground, more than ten ape fur-spikes nailed onto her body.

Arms, ribs, chest, and thighs.

"Doesn't this idiot woman know to face upwards with her back?" Jiang Chen was quite speechless, but quickly figured out that she was curled up on the crowd instead of crouched because she didn't want the baby spirit animals on her back to take the hits instead of her.

Jiang Chen really didn't know whether to curse her for being idiotic or for being a fool right now.

Under these circumstances, if she crouched on the ground, the bamboo basket and baby spirit animals would've surely blocked most of the attacks.

At most, only her thighs would've been pierced.

However, she'd chosen such a position because she didn't want the baby spirit animals to get hit. This resulted in more than ten places of her body being hit.

It was a good thing that none of them were fatal wounds when inflicted from such a distance. Jiang Chen helped her up. Even her butt had ape fur spikes on it, and so she couldn't sit down. She could only lean against the side of a tree.

"Jiang Chen, are the baby spirit animals alright? Hurry and take a look for me."

Jiang Chen paid no attention to her and plucked out some ape fur-spikes. His face suddenly changed, "Stop, don't circulate spirit qi to heal your wounds. Stop circulating!"

Dan Fei was frightened by his sudden change in tone. "What? Aren't they just some superficial wounds?"

Jiang Chen's face was ghastly white, "These spikes are poisonous."

Dan Fei's body wavered as her face was drained of all color, "Poisonous?"

Chapter 200: Jiang Chen, Can You Help Me?

Jiang Chen's expression was quite grave as he picked up another few ape fur-spikes and inspected them carefully. He nodded his head with great certainty. "They're poisoned alright. Look at these spikes. They're starkly white, an obvious sign that they embody a strong poison. It's a good thing that your level of training is within the spirit realm. If you were within the true qi realm, you'd probably be a corpse by now."

Even though Dan Fei was usually calm when anything cropped up, she was still a woman and so when she heard there was a deadly poison, her charming face was also aghast as a sense of panicked fear was evident in her beautiful eyes, something that would've usually never been visible.

"Jiang Chen, will... will I die?" Dan Fei bit her lip lightly, her voice was coated with some tragic tones.

Jiang Chen really wanted to sweet talk her, but everything had happened so quickly that he too was uncertain whether or not any hope remained for Dan Fei.

"Don't talk for now and sit cross legged. It's best if you meditate and keep calm. Remember, don't circulate true qi and give pressure to your spirit ocean. Otherwise, once the poison attacks and breaks through the spirit ocean, you'll be dead without a doubt."

Jiang Chen warned her severely.

Dan Fei was like a docile little bride at this moment as she nodded with aggrievance. There was none of her usual resplendence as a strong woman in her beautiful eyes. What emanated now was the frightened panic and grievance of an injured lamb.

Jiang Chen was a great master of pills in his previous life and had made great study in the dao of poison.

He took out a small pill cauldron and put the fur-spike from the giant ape in it to study.

He did that a few times, then got up and walked up to the body of the giant ape. Jiang Chen took out a knife and cut open the giant ape's flesh, putting some into the pill cauldron for further study.

His motions were crisp and precise, and he completed all this with extreme speed. Finally, Jiang Chen stood up again, his gaze returning back to Dan Fei.

Although the time had been short, it felt like decades for Dan Fei. A thick sense of expectation shot out from her beautiful eyes, but a few traces of anxiety could also be found within it. It was obvious that she was afraid of Jiang Chen coming to a tragic conclusion.

"Hmm? Didn't I tell you to sit cross legged and meditate? Why are you still standing?" Jiang Chen's face was full of confusion.

"I..." Dan Fei's charming face reddened, and the color of sunset burned her neck and the back of her ears. "I... I'm not at liberty to sit."

Jiang Chen started, and then remembered that Dan Fei's butt seemed to have taken a hit as well. He really wanted to laugh, but it didn't seem appropriate in this kind of situation.

"Alright then, remain standing and don't think random thoughts."

When Dan Fei saw Jiang Chen's reaction, she naturally knew that Jiang Chen had understood what she meant. She was both embarrassed and angry. In the end, she couldn't help but ask, "Jiang Chen, is there an antidote for this poison?"

"This poison is only one from the surface, from the skin and hair. The flesh and blood of the giant ape don't have any poison in them. This is the good news, but also the bad news."

"How can it be both good and bad news?" Dan Fei was a bit anxious.

"Jiang Chen, just how bad does it look? Can you speak candidly? Am I really about to die..."

Dan Fei's eyes grew red. As gracious and ethereal as she was, when faced with her own death at the age of twenty some years old, she still displayed the side of a girl.

"The good news is that a poison not of the flesh and blood will take longer to take effect. However, the bad news is that because it's not a poison of the flesh and blood, its flesh and blood can't be used to fight poison with poison. This poison from its skin and hair is quite bizarre. Items corresponding to the poison need to be found before the poison can be cured. This is a very headache-inducing problem."

If he could find the items that would contain the poison, Jiang Chen had a great deal of assurance that he could cure this poison. However, it wasn't an easy thing to find the items that would be the cure in this vast maze realm beneath the night sky.

"This is to say that there really is no hope for me?" Dan Fei was on the verge of tears as boundless sorrow welled up in her eyes. It suddenly turned into a clear resolution in the blink of an eye. "Jiang Chen, if I die, cremate me and bring my ashes back to the lordmaster. And, you must bring these baby spirit animals to the lordmaster too, alright?"

Did this count as a dying wish?

Jiang Chen sighed softly in his heart and comforted her, "Don't be so pessimistic. A poison from the skin and hair doesn't take effect that quickly. I'll keep searching, perhaps I'll be able to find the items to counter it?"

"Heh heh." Dan Fei smiled indifferently as her previous fear and panic were swept away after thinking things through. "Jiang Chen, you don't need to comfort me. I, Dan Fei, have been without parents since I was little. The lordmaster raised me. You must think me stupid for caring so much about the baby spirit animals. However,

you don't understand the kindness that the lordmaster has shown me..."

"Forget it, there's no point in talking like this right now. You rest and I'll go search. The giant ape lived in this area and the poison from its skin and hair couldn't have formed spontaneously. It must have something to do with its surroundings. Perhaps I can really find the corresponding items to cure this poison."

Dan Fei suddenly paused, "Jiang Chen, what do you mean by corresponding items for the poison?"

"All things beneath the heavens have what mutually reinforce and neutralize each other. It's possible that the poison of the giant ape's skin and hair was formed by the environment around it. Since there are items that can form this poison, there will be items to counteract it. Otherwise, without a balance, the poison would've long since seeped into the giant ape's flesh and blood. How could it possibly exist only on its hair and skin?" Jiang Chen thus analyzed.

Dan Fei suddenly thought of something as a gleam of light flashed through her charming eyes. "Jiang Chen, I remember. There were a lot of spirit herbs and grasses within the giant ape's cave. I was in a hurry then and didn't have time to pick them up. Could it be..."

"What did you say?" Jiang Chen's eyes lit up. "There were lots of spirit grasses and herbs within the cave?"

"Yes!" Dan Fei was also excited. She seemed to find a strand of hope within Jiang Chen's eyes.

"Stay here and don't move, I'll go take a look. Remember, don't draw upon your spirit ocean. Wait for me to return; even if you run into enemies, try to drag out the encounter as long as possible!"

It was a good thing that the cave wasn't that far away. Jiang Chen retrieved the arrows and throwing daggers on the ground as he sped along the way.

He retrieved the arrows whenever he came to places where they'd crossed paths.

The arrows were the accompanying items of the Da Yu bow, tempered into steel. Although they'd been blasted away by the giant ape's fists, they hadn't been damaged in the slightest and naturally ought to be retrieved.

Jiang Chen arrived at the cave very quickly.

The cave was cold and deserted. When he swept into the cave, his eyes set on a patch of ground where spirit grass and herbs were growing, as well as some spirit rank trees.

"Hmm? This many?" Jiang Chen's eyes quickly fell on a fey purple flower. "This... this is the Purple Moon Demon Flower?"

Jiang Chen had instantly uncovered that the giant ape's poison had come from the Purple Moon Demon Flower.

The Purple Moon Demon Flower complemented and neutralized the Jade-Faced Buddha Grass.

"There's indeed Jade-Faced Buddha Grass in here! I've struck gold this time!" Jiang Chen was overjoyed and didn't have much time to consider things. He turned the cave inside out and put everything away into his storage ring.

With the Jade-Faced Buddha Grass, Jiang Chen knew that he had a ninety percent chance to save Dan Fei.

He packed everything up and didn't linger, speeding back with the fastest speed possible.

Dan Fei was desolated. She couldn't quite stand and couldn't quite sit. It felt like the world had abandoned her in that moment as she appeared quite helpless.

As strong as she was, she only had one notion in her mind right now,

and that was for Jiang Chen to return, to hurry and return.

She wore her eyes out as she gazed anxiously, looking fervently in the direction that Jiang Chen would return from.

Under the night sky, Jiang Chen's figure glided as if on the moon, moving exceptionally swiftly.

Dan Fei's desolate feeling was like an empty bottle that had been filled with water all of a sudden. She felt settled as a bizarre sense of reassurance made her firmly believe that Jiang Chen could save her.

"You're lucky, I've already found the origin of the poison and the item to neutralize it." Jiang Chen smiled. "It was a good thing that you remembered to observe your surroundings when you were stealing the babies. If you hadn't reminded me, I probably wouldn't have known that there were spirit herbs that complemented and neutralized each other's poison."

Dan Fei's face reddened as she felt a little awkward. Her expression was very natural, but her gaze avoided Jiang Chen as she felt vaguely ashamed of herself.

She'd greatly criticized Jiang Chen in her heart when she saw those spirit grasses and herbs back then, thinking that Jiang Chen, an addict of money, would surely pick up all the spirit herbs and grasses. She'd even indulged in self-glorification, thinking that her focus was actually much stronger than Jiang Chen's.

She'd suddenly thought of the spirit herbs in the cave earlier because she remembered her thoughts in the cave more deeply, was all.

When she heard Jiang Chen mention the matter of the cave, Dan Fei naturally felt her face burn.

With the item to neutralize the poison, what followed next was much easier. Jiang Chen refined the Jade-Faced Buddha Grass and mixed

some spirit medicine to heal wounds within it, refining a spirit liquid as an antidote in a short amount of time.

Jiang Chen put the liquid in front of Dan Fei and smiled, "Treat yourself, I'll take a look around."

As headstrong as Dan Fei was, she was quite touched at this moment. When she looked at Jiang Chen's hugely charcoal-marked-up face, she felt a bit of self-accusation. She had to admit that although Jiang Chen was cocky, he still had some reliability and manliness at critical moments.

When she thought of her own willfulness and her prank, Dan Fei felt a bit uneasy.

"Jiang Chen, go wash your face."

"Wash my face?" Jiang Chen was baffled. A woman's heart was strange alright. I'm giving you the antidote and you want me to go wash my face?

"Don't ask me why. Find a place with water and don't look, just wash your face thoroughly." Dan Fei's heart raced at this moment. She was also worried that if Jiang Chen discovered her prank on his face, he would become angry and leave her behind without a thought.

Jiang Chen was speechless and didn't know what farce this woman was going through now. He carelessly waved his hand. "Hurry and treat your poison. If this poison is left for long periods of time, it'll ruin your looks."

There were no words more threatening or had more destructive power than those. Dan Fei hastily tightened her grasp around the antidote.

When she looked at Jiang Chen again, he'd long since cleared a large distance.

"This jerk, have the grace of a man!" Dan Fei also knew that Jiang

Chen had walked so far away as to make things convenient for her and let her apply the antidote.

After all, she was injured in more than one place, and even delicate areas such as her ribs and chest had injuries. She'd have to take off her clothes in order to apply the antidote.

If she took off her clothes, her more sensitive body parts would be more or less revealed. Jiang Chen had naturally walked away to avoid making her feel awkward.

Jiang Chen walked a few hundred meters away. He still felt extremely tense when he thought of the battle just now. That battle had absolutely been fought in the jaws of danger.

However, coming back to things, if it hadn't been for Dan Fei's Mind Enchantment Powder that more or less constrained that giant ape, Jiang Chen's attacks likely wouldn't have been enough for the giant ape to take heavy injuries and allow him to give that last, fatal blow.

Dan Fei's voice traveled to him from a distance just as he was lost in his thoughts, "Jiang Chen, come here for a second."

Jiang Chen started and thought that something was wrong as he hastily dashed back.

Dan Fei had applied the antidote to most of her injuries by now. Her expression was a bit awkward as her pearly-white teeth bit down lightly on her lips. A red blush flew wildly through her beautiful face as she spoke with a voice as low as a mosquito's buzz, "Jiang Chen, I... I can't reach the injuries there. Can you... can you help me?"

Of all the positions on her body, the place that she couldn't reach was naturally her buttocks.

This injury wasn't like any of the others. It wasn't easy to tend to it if one couldn't see it. And if one didn't apply the antidote to it and get rid of the poison, it would cause them trouble to no end.

When Dan Fei heard that this poison could destroy her features, this was what she was most afraid of. So as she hemmed and hawed, but in the end, the fear of destroying her looks still triumphed over her embarrassment.

Jiang Chen's mouth opened wide. He hadn't anticipated that Dan Fei would request his help for such a manner!

Chapter 201: Dan Fei's Punishment

The spirit medicine gave off a chilly warmth as it was slathered on Dan Fei's buttocks. The medicinal effects it had gave off a weakening and itchy feeling, nearly making her entire body feel weak and powerless. She felt the weakening and itchy sensation seep down into her heart from the surface of her skin. There was something that was scratching at her heart, it was an indescribable feeling.

In that moment, she wished both for Jiang Chen to hurry and finish applying the liquid, and she vaguely felt that this feeling didn't seem that bad and she didn't want it to end so quickly.

However, her sense of shame triumphed in the end and she cleared her throat, about to speak.

Jiang Chen had already finished applying the antidote and he pulled up her leather shorts. "I'm done."

Although he only applied a bit of healing liquid, it had been a great test for him. Despite seeing countless numbers of beauties in his past life, the body of his current life was still that of a hot-blooded youth.

Dan Fei's figure was indeed very worthy of pride. When Jiang Chen was applying the antidote, he'd been able to feel those extremely perky buttocks. It would be a falsehood to say that he wasn't disturbed with a woman on his lap at all.

It was a good thing that there was only one injury here, decreasing the amount of time that Jiang Chen spent in awkwardness.

Dan Fei was also quite embarrassed as she stood up and she didn't dare meet Jiang Chen's eyes. She only said lowly, "Thank you."

Jiang Chen smiled dashingly and he walked a distance of about twenty to thirty meters away, leaning against a tree as he sat down cross legged.

"It's still some time before daybreak, get some rest."

Dan Fei didn't sleep at all that night. All sorts of notions flitted through her head throughout the entire night. She berated herself for her willfulness first, then she was excited about capturing four baby spirit animals. She was then still a bit panicked about the poison, but then, she celebrated surviving a disaster.

But mostly, the moment and sensation of Jiang Chen slathering the spirit liquid on her buttocks seemed to be frozen in time. It was locked to and deeply imprinted in her consciousness. It wouldn't go away no matter how much she refused to think about it.

Before today, Dan Fei wouldn't even roll up her sleeve when she interacted with men in the outside world. Very few touched even her arm, much less than such an embarrassment inducing place.

And today, without any forewarning, she had been touched by a man in such close quarters, and in such a sensitive place to boot.

Dan Fei had always preserved her personal purity, and thus, it was difficult for her heart to not pound like a madly dashing fawn at this moment. She would occasionally become lost in a deep reverie, and sometimes, she couldn't help but revisit the sensation in her mind.

Utilizing the cover of night, she cast a guilty look at Jiang Chen. When she saw that Jiang Chen maintained his stance of sitting cross legged and that he was an unmovable as a mountain, Dan Fei's thoughts were even more in a disarray.

"What is wrong is me?! This brat Jiang Chen hasn't done anything to me. He can treat this calmly, so why am I the one thinking wild, random thoughts?" When Dan Fei saw that Jiang Chen was unmoving as a mountain, she both slightly admired him and also felt slightly depressed.

In her view, Jiang Chen should be like her, unable to find peace all night long as well.

Her thoughts had free rein all night until the faint rays of dawn scattered down from the sky. Dan Fei only came to her senses when a night's worth of ridiculous thoughts were dispelled by the morning light, and her mind regained its clarity.

When she checked herself again, she noticed that the injuries had already healed. The most amazing thing was that there was almost no trace of any injury on the surface of her wounds.

"Just what miraculous medicine did Jiang Chen use? It healed my external injuries quickly, and there's no trace left on my skin at all. It's as if it was never injured!"

Dan Fei discovered that the more time she spent with Jiang Chen, the more she discovered that there were many unfathomable secrets hidden on this young man's body.

The lordmaster had an eye for them alright, he had long since discerned Jiang Chen's unique aspects.

Dan Fei hadn't come into much contact with Jiang Chen before, and now that she had many opportunities to interact with him, she realized that he appeared harmless to man and beast, and even a bit of a lazy scoundrel when she thought about it.

However, there seemed to always have been a mysterious halo hidden on Jiang Chen's body.

From that day at the banquet, he'd used a jug of wine that seemed so poor that one almost couldn't bear to take it out and turned it into the best gift with a shake of his body.

The Five Winged Phoenix-Dragon had been more dead than alive, and so many experts had been unable to give a conclusion. He'd shed light on this mysterious matter with some careless words.

Elder Ning was more than forty years old, but one Four Seasons Eternal Spring Pill had immediately made her twenty years younger. Dan Fei had found out, through private investigation, that this pill

did indeed have something to do with Jiang Chen.

When she took another look at how Jiang Chen had made almost no major movements since arriving in the capital, she realised that he had turned situation in the capital inside out unbeknownst to all. Even the usually calm and steady first prince Ye Dai had ended up with dust on his face several times, and he almost departed from his usual urbane grace and lost his composure several times.

The usually well-behaved fourth prince Ye Rong, who seemed to hold himself aloof from the world, had suddenly risen to fame, his influence rising to prominence. He almost had the air of being on an equal footing as the first prince.

The Skyl Laurel Kingdom Medallion hadn't made an appearance in thirty years, yet, the lordmaster had abruptly given it to this young man all of a sudden.

A large number of bizarre things had cropped up after they made it into the maze realm.

The mortal rank creatures had circled around them whenever they saw him, as if there was a miraculous halo around Jiang Chen that caused even the mortal rank creatures to give way.

Jiang Chen's methods in that fight against the giant ape had caused her to be even more shocked. The throwing dagger techniques that he deployed at the end gave even Dan Fei, someone who regularly watched the lordmaster practice, a sense of gazing upon a high mountain and being unable to see through him.

He then healed her wounds. His knowledge and manipulation of all sorts of spirit medicines and poisons had demonstrated a level of ability that was absolutely not something that a young man would possess.

When he'd administered the antidote to her just now, Dan Fei had even been mentally prepared to allow that darned brat to take a

small bit of advantage of her. However, Jiang Chen had been refined and civil, as if that dratted rogue from before wasn't him at all.

He was at times lazy, and at times like a thug. Sometimes violent like a demon, other times as unfathomable as a sage. He was also sometimes as courteous as a gentlemen.

These drastically different traits actually appeared on the same person. Dan Fei had to admit that she really couldn't understand Jiang Chen.

Dan Fei once again prepared breakfast when she got up. She then found a source of water and immersed a piece of cloth in it, not wringing it dry.

She walked to Jiang Chen, "Stop pretending to be asleep and wipe your face."

When she saw that Jiang Chen still retained traces of her graffiti, Dan Fei felt amused and she suffered from a guilty conscience.

Jiang Chen suddenly opened his eyes, "Offering your attentions for no reason whatsoever, something is definitely up. This is your second attempt to get me to wash my face, is there something on it?"

Jiang Chen stood up and went to find a water surface to take a look at what was going on with his face.

Dan Fei was greatly worried and she cast away all thoughts of demureness. She grabbed Jiang Chen's arm and swiped at his face with the cloth.

Jiang Chen grabbed her jade hands and yanked the piece of cloth down to see the black charcoal marks on it.

"Sister Dan Fei, to think that you have such a child's heart to draw on my face. It looks like you won't know that I'm not one to trifle with if I don't punish you!"

Having said that, he hauled Dan Fei up with his left hand and smacked her butt, slapping her seven to eight times in one go.

This change was extremely sudden, and Dan Fei hadn't thought it was at all possible that Jiang Chen would use this sort of method to punish her.

After being swatted a few times, the pain on her butt was one thing, but Dan Fei was acting like her entire being had been electrocuted and she stood there, petrified.

"He... he hit my butt?" Dan Fei's brain was a muddled mess. She only felt that Jiang Chen had domineeringly broken through a territory that no one had ever trespassed before. A sense of embarrassment and shame surged up as she fell onto the ground, crying with a sense of aggrievement.

Jiang Chen had completely forgotten Dan Fei's identity in his vexation.

He suddenly came to himself after the seven or eight hits had finished.

He seemed to have gone overboard? If this punishment had landed on that little girl, Eastern Zhiruo, the little girl would've chuckled merrily and acted even more wildly.

If it'd been on Gouyu before she'd become his follower, she would resist unto her death and maybe even fight him. Now that she was his follower, she'd likely take it quietly and then be sullenly angry at him.

However, Dan Fei, a woman who usually looked quite open and accepting, had actually burst out crying!

Her charming shoulders were shaking slightly. Although she hadn't broken out into loud sobs, she couldn't help but sniffle and appeared to feel quite wronged.

Jiang Chen had handled many problems in his past life, but he never had much talent at handling a woman's tactics of crying, making a fuss, and then threatening to harm herself.

He wanted to say something when his consciousness suddenly shifted and his entire being shot through the air to a region in the west like a javelin.

"Who is it? Sneaking around, show yourself!"

When Dan Fei heard Jiang Chen's words, her body also wavered slightly as she also stood up, carefully concealing her slightly reddened eyes.

There were disciples of the Skylareal Kingdom all over the maze realm. Dan Fei didn't want her current condition to be glimpsed on by others.

"Liu Can, is that you?" Jiang Chen's tone chilled.

A dark figure dashed out of some shrubbery in the west. It was the Azure Heaven Northern Palace disciple, Liu Can.

"Liu Can, what are you doing here?"

Liu Can looked at Jiang Chen and then looked at Dan Fei, smiling coldly, "I was just passing by, what does that have to do with you?"

"Get out of my way."

A beam of killing intent flashed through Liu Can's sinister face, "Jiang Chen, this is the maze realm, you better keep a clean mouth and don't give me an excuse to kill you."

"Kill me?" Jiang Chen laughed leisurely. "You, eunuch?"

When Liu Can heard this degrading term, the expression of a poisonous viper surfaced on his face, "Jiang Chen, you dumb animal, I'll let you strut around for a while!"

Contrary to expectations, Liu Can, who had a bone deep hatred of Jiang Chen, actually didn't continue making trouble for him. Liu Can's figure flashed as he vanished in the vast plains.

Jiang Chen's brow furrowed as he looked in the direction that Liu Can had vanished in, contemplating something.

Dan Fei had already walked over by now. Her expression was faint as if nothing was out of the ordinary. It was like the matter of swatting the butt hadn't happened at all.

A woman's heart was unfathomable. Although Jiang Chen saw Dan Fei like this, he didn't actually dare to treat her like nothing had happened.

"This maze realm is expansive, but he happened to pass by coincidentally. Do you believe that?" Jiang Chen asked.

"Doesn't matter." Dan Fei's attitude was detached. "He wouldn't dare to act wildly in the maze realm even if he had ten people's worth of guts."

"Although that's the case, I still feel as uncomfortable as if I'd eaten a mosquito, thinking that a pair of eyes is taking furtive glances at me in the dark." Jiang Chen was still ticked off.

"Kill him if you find him an eyesore!" Dan Fei said noncommittally.

"What?" Jiang Chen started. "Wasn't it said that personal grudges can't be settled in the maze realm?"

Chapter 202: A Ye Dai Prepared to Kill His Own Brothers

"Rules are dead, life and death is alive." Dan Fei's tone was noncommittal and it suddenly turned faint. "The rules say that men shouldn't bully women, but didn't you still bully me?"

Jiang Chen smiled awkwardly and rubbed his nose, at a loss for words.

The atmosphere was a bit strange as an ugly silence prevailed. It was Dan Fei who broke this awkward atmosphere.

"Jiang Chen, I'm sorry."

"What for?" Jiang Chen frowned. "It seems that I should be the one saying that."

"I shouldn't have been willful and I shouldn't have drawn on your face." Jiang Chen hadn't thought that Dan Fei's tone would be like this.

"Alright, I admit that the pressure from last night's matters may have been a bit great and it got to me for a bit. It's never a right thing for a man to hit a woman."

In actuality, Jiang Chen hadn't really laid into her with those swats. It'd been like an adult lecturing a child and giving them a bit of punishment.

"You keep talking about it." Dan Fei admonished with a pout.

"Alright, I won't speak on. I just want to say... nice elasticity." Jiang Chen laughed heartily.

"Damned scoundrel!" Dan Fei cursed in her anxiety, and then sighed remotely. "Jiang Chen, you're really a little demon. I've never suffered so much in my entire life."

"You suffered? I'd think you probably wanted to laugh in your sleep

after getting four baby spirit animals.”

Dan Fei’s emotions indeed changed immediately when the baby spirit animals were mentioned. She had a faint and proud smile as she lowered the bamboo basket on her back.

The four furry and fuzzy babies were obviously not familiar with the ways of the world. They gurgled and emitted all sorts of sounds, making various faces at Jiang Chen.

“Jiang Chen, would you say that they’re hungry?”

“No sh*t, don’t you see that they’re so hungry that their eyes are tinged green?” Jiang Chen threw a couple of fruits that he’d gotten from the cave in the basket.

The four babies started violently fighting each other for the food, as he had expected.

What Dan Fei hadn’t expected was that although the four babies seemed to coexist in great harmony normally, the four of them became abnormally fierce when food appeared, and all that seemed to affect the posture of laying their lives down on the line in fighting for food.

“The world of the spirit creatures is indeed that of the weak becoming prey to the strong and survival of the fittest!”

“What do you mean?” Dan Fei didn’t quite understand.

“It’s simple. Although these four baby spirit apes are born of the same mother, only one will survive in the end. They must kill and eat their kind, with one emerging from the masses as the final winner in the end. You can tell from their posture in fighting for food. Perhaps, when they’re fully grown, they might even fight the adult giant apes who gave birth to them to the death in a bid for territory. These are the rules of survival of spirit creatures. Survival of the fittest in natural selection. They were born into this cycle of life and no one can escape it.”

Jiang Chen wasn't speaking in vain. His understanding of spirit creatures identified most spirit creatures as thus. The higher their intelligence was, the more they were so.

One mountain would not allow two tigers to exist on it. Such was the philosophy.

It was rather those lower beasts whose intelligence had yet to flower, or those spirit beasts who, by nature, liked to form packs, and gathered in large groups.

The Goldwing Swordbirds for instance.

Of course, it wasn't just limited to the Goldwing Swordbirds. There were too many spirit creatures species to count in this big, big world. The numbers of spirit creatures who liked to gather together were as many as the hairs on an ox. Some were in such large numbers that they became a disaster, such that kings of spirit creature that were stronger than them by tens or hundreds of times had to give way in front of them.

Dan Fei was deep in thought as her charming eyes rested briefly on Jiang Chen's face. She sighed, "Jiang Chen, is there anything you don't know?"

"Is there anything I don't know?" Jiang Chen chuckled as a tragic trace suddenly shot through his face. There really was something he didn't know.

He suddenly thought of his father, the Celestial Emperor, in his past life. How was he now? And how had he reincarnated into this world?

He really didn't know this. Even if he was unsurpassed in his knowledge and his learning from his past life crossed all planes of existence, he knew nothing when faced with this problem and he had no clues at all.

"Miss Dan Fei, take for instance, if we're in a circle right now. All that we know is what's in this circle. There are many more unknowns in

the world outside the circle. It's only when we set foot outside of that circle that we know our original knowledge was much, much too little."

Jiang Chen's round of emotional reflection wasn't putting on a contemplative air, he was truly speaking from the heart.

A beam of surprise shot out from Dan Fei's beautiful eyes. She didn't think that Jiang Chen, with his openly humorous personality, would suddenly voice such deep words.

"Let's go." Jiang Chen called out to her, just as Dan Fei was slowly turning over Jiang Chen's words in her mind.

"Where are we going?" Dan Fei asked.

"Liu Can is part of Ye Dai's group. I keep thinking that his appearance was a bit odd. We should go take a look and see if that kid Ye Dai is up to something."

Dan Fei started. She didn't actually want to become involved in the struggles and politics between the princes. From her aloof perspective, it was all the same no matter who was Crown Prince or king.

Even if Ye Dai or Ye Rong was king, they wouldn't dare act atrociously in front of her, Dan Fei.

However, after last night's battle, Dan Fei seemed to have unknowingly accepted the fact that their roles had changed. She'd gone from keeping a death grip on the reins of power to naturally listening to Jiang Chen's orders.

Jiang Chen's speed was neither fast nor slow as his route didn't seem to have been decided by any particular scouting ahead or thought.

"Jiang Chen, can you find Liu Can and the others by blindly walking around like this?" Dan Fei couldn't help but ask.

"Heh heh, just follow me!"

Dan Fei had long since gotten used to Jiang Chen not playing by the book. She could only keep her head down and continue to follow him.

After two or three days, they'd still had no results. Dan Fei almost wanted to suspect that Jiang Chen had gotten things wrong somewhere? But seeing his look of complete confidence, Dan Fei still restrained the questions that almost bubbled up to her lips several times.

"Alright, it looks like we're close. Sister Dan Fei, do you want to go with me or wait for me outside?"

"Are you sure they're close by?" Dan Fei was still a bit suspicious.

"What am I doing here if I'm not?"

Jiang Chen was about to say something when he suddenly grabbed Dan Fei's hand and dashed into the bushes by the side of the road. He said lowly, "Don't make any sounds."

The two of them hid for a while behind the bushes and they saw that two people quickly walked down from the mountain road ahead of them. One of them was first prince Ye Dai.

The other had an arrogant expression with his face tilted towards the heavens. His body shape was mediocre and he wore a uniform. He was a Precious Tree Sect disciple!

However, a sect disciple willing to participate in the Maze Realm Autumn Hunt most likely didn't have any particularly high status either. At the very least, he wouldn't be one of the top disciples within the sect.

"This is the place." Ye Dai halted at the beginning of the road.

"Brother Chen, let's wait."

The Precious Tree Sect disciple nodded and didn't say anything. His gaze was like a hawk's as it patrolled the surroundings, obviously on high alert.

However, Jiang Chen and Dan Fei had long since been prepared and they couldn't be detected by him.

Ye Dai's eyes lit up after a while, "They're here."

Indeed, a group of people were quickly approaching from the western side of the road. It was a small team with eight people. Third prince Ye Zheng was at their head.

"Number three." Ye Dai called out.

Ye Zheng quickly walked up, smiling, "Big brother, I've finally met up with you."

Ye Dai clapped Ye Zheng's shoulder and said quite intimately, "Number three, their positions have been locked onto. My scouts can basically be certain that number four's small team is in a mountain valley about fifty li in the southeastern direction. They seem to be hunting a spirit creature."

"Heh heh, that kid Ye Rong has really thrown himself into this." There was a trace of sarcasm in Ye Zheng's tone.

"Number three, there's nothing untoward about the people you brought with you, right?" Ye Dai's gaze took a spin and looked at all of them.

"Big brother, do you still not trust me? Rest easy about the people I've brought, they're all my confidantes. As long as we pull this matter off flawlessly, I promise that no one will be able to trace it back to us when we leave."

A trace of ruthless bloodthirst seeped out from Ye Zheng's mouth.

"Alright, we'll get rid of number four first and then number two."

There were a resolute intent to kill in Ye Dai's tone, as if he wasn't killing his own brothers, but discussing on how to kill chickens.

"Big brother, we've discussed this. If you take the throne in the future, you can't decrease the amount of fortune you give me."

"Haha, number three, we've been close since we were small, would I mistreat you? Us two brothers are the same kind of people. When we pool our efforts together in the future and expand into new territories, perhaps the neighboring sixteen kingdoms will be unified because of us? At that time, I'll definitely bestow the largest piece of land upon you and have you be in control of the borders of multiple kingdoms!"

Ye Zheng chuckled, "Alright, us two brothers will join hands and do this!"

"Come, rendezvous with my team first." Ye Dai was quite intimate as he walked abreast with Ye Zheng, heading up the mountain.

When the group of people got far, Dan Fei sighed lightly, "The lordmaster didn't form a wrong opinion of Ye Dai."

"Let me guess what the lordmaster said? Hmm, grandiose ambition but puny talent is definitely part of the assessment, perhaps words like pretending to be sanctimonious but willing to do whatever it takes to reach his goals?"

"Mm? You did guess some of it correctly. But a great majority of the noble sons pose as a person of high morals, so the lordmaster wouldn't have said that. 'Great ambitions but little talent, extremely cruel and merciless' was the lordmaster's assessment of Ye Dai. Therefore, when Ye Dai fancied himself clever and asked that question about unifying the sixteen kingdoms, this actually greatly reduced the lordmaster's impression of him."

Jiang Chen firmly condemned Ye Dai, "Grandiose ambitions but puny talent, his abilities are insufficient but he harbors ambitions that his

abilities cannot match. This isn't a good thing, it will bring about disaster to the Skylaurel Kingdom."

Dan Fei was rather surprised by Jiang Chen's powers of comprehension, to see that he understood that with the merest of hints. This made sense. Although Jiang Chen came from the Eastern Kingdom, when it came to the greater picture of any single kingdom, the matters were all mostly the same.

"Do you want to know what the lordmaster's view of Ye Rong is?" Dan Fei suddenly asked with a smile.

"Oh? Let's hear it." Jiang Chen was close to Ye Rong after all, and so he was a bit curious.

"The lordmaster's view of Ye Rong was only thus — if he can endure for this moment, he will be worthy of assuming the world."

"His praise was that high?" Jiang Chen did indeed have a good impression of Ye Rong, but he'd never thought that the lordmaster would have such high praise for him. One had to know that Ye Rong had been exceedingly low key before. His existence amongst the princes was that of being ignored by everyone in all sorts of occasions.

"Yes. Ye Rong has the finesse of a royal son and the even rarer breadth of the mind of a monarch. He's not blindly cruel and ruthless like Ye Dai, nor is his mind as narrow as Ye Dai's as to be unable to hold the world."

Chapter 203: The Mantis Stalks the Cicada, Unaware of the Oriole Behind

Dan Fei's clever eyes looked at Jiang Chen, a faint smile on her face, "Do you think that just because you and the lordmaster think the same that all heroes think alike?"

Jiang Chen rubbed his nose, "You've already said it for me, what else can I say? Frankly speaking, I don't really care who the Crown Prince is or who the king is. However, I'm a guest of the fourth prince after all, and should do something for him. Besides, from my perspective, him being Crown Prince is better than Ye Dai being in that position, no?"

Jiang Chen's voice suddenly paused, "How come you're not surprised by them killing each other? Did you guess it would happen a long time ago?"

Dan Fei displayed a smile full of wisdom, "It wasn't that I guessed it a long time ago, but that the lord master guessed it a long time ago. The talk about deciding the Crown Prince's position early next year was actually a purposeful leak authorized by the lordmaster. He wanted to make use of this in order to observe and study everyone's reactions."

"This examination seems to be a bit big, isn't it a bit difficult to stop it now?" Jiang Chen smiled.

"Why would this be considered big? Everything is under control." Dan Fei smiled in response.

"What makes you say that? They're about to take action. Once the slaughter starts, who knows how many will make it out alive?"

"If only one makes it out, then he's the Crown Prince. If everyone emerges unscathed, then Ye Rong is the Crown Prince. It's that simple."

"Does this mean that you decided that it would be Ye Rong long ago?" Jiang Chen was a bit surprised.

Dan Fei shook her head and smiled mysteriously, "It isn't that we've long since decided on Ye Rong. This conclusion was only reached after the Skylaurel Kingdom Medallion was given to you at the lordmaster's birthday banquet."

"Eh, I command that much face?" Jiang Chen was a bit ashamed. He hadn't participated in the struggles between the princes at all. Could it be that he could sway who the Crown Prince was, merely by participating in a birthday banquet, carelessly giving out a random gift, and answering a difficult question? This... this was too ridiculous!

"Don't be doubtful, the lordmaster is never wrong in his assessment of people. Although he hasn't spoken clearly, his meaning is still quite clear. Whoever has Jiang Chen at their side will obtain the position of Crown Prince."

"The king is able to agree to such terms? Can he sit idly by while his sons kill each other?"

Dan Fei sighed. "Jiang Chen, if I were to say that you're naive, you're actually slippery beyond belief. If I were to say that you're sly and crafty, you're sometimes quite naive as well. To make it to the position of monarch, who amongst them hasn't killed their own siblings? You even know that the spirit apes will fight and kill each other such that only one is left alive in the end. Do you really think that the rules of survival in the homes of emperors are more gentle than those of the spirit creature world?"

Jiang Chen smiled dashingly. This was true.

Weren't there rumors that the previous king of the Eastern Kingdom, Eastern Lu, had colluded against the previous Crown Prince Eastern Jun, only taking his throne after the latter's death? Given that that existed already, it made sense that that similarly existed within the

Skylaurel Kingdom.

Guo Jin's father had been dragged into this matter, and the entire Guo family had suffered a precipitous decline as a result and had fallen into decay.

If Ye Rong were superior enough to walk out alive from this law of the jungle situation, that meant he could withstand trials, and that he had the potential to be king, no matter if it was strength, breadth of vision, or luck.

In contrast, if he died from this little bit of competition, then although his talents outshone those above him, he still hadn't possessed enough fortune and luck to become a monarch.

They would then have no other choice than the second best. The law of the jungle would determine who walked out alive and who was king.

When his thoughts finally flowed smoothly, Jiang Chen smiled, "Sister Dan Fei, I can't sit idly by since I've run into this. I'm still a guest of the fourth prince after all. When one's master is humiliated, his subject seeks death."

Dan Fei gave a winsome smile, "Don't you put on that kind of act with me. Do you think I can't tell that you aren't one of those subjects with high principles?"

Jiang Chen strode forward quickly on the mountain path, with Dan Fei following quickly thereafter. "You're making a scene with great fanfare. Aren't you afraid of being discovered and silenced by them?"

"Don't I have you, a great beauty? I believe that, even though they've lost all judgment, they won't do anything to you!"

"You overestimate my allure. Women are but the decorations of life in the eyes of men. How many emperors from ancient times haven't loved both land and women?"

Jiang Chen laughed heartily. "No wonder you speak so bluntly to those princes. You've long since seen right through them."

Dan Fei said huffily, "Stop talking nonsense. Jiang Chen, tell me the truth, are you hiding something from me?"

"Do I really need to tell you that? Of course I am." Jiang Chen smiled. "Don't you worry, I'll be able to find them one step before they're able to discover me."

He'd anticipate the enemy's movements, and discover traces of the other one step before they discovered him!

Although Dan Fei didn't know why Jiang Chen was so confident, she couldn't find it within herself to doubt him even the slightest bit when she looked at him brimming with confidence.

Jiang Chen didn't follow behind Ye Dai and the others. Rather, he speedily headed to the southeast.

Since he knew that Ye Rong and the others were around fifty li to the southeast, Jiang Chen naturally wouldn't tarry, and made for the mountain valley with full speed.

Ye Dai and the others would still have to make a round of preparations before meeting up. Jiang Chen was quite confident that he could make it to the mountain valley before them.

Indeed, Jiang Chen and Dan Fei made it to the mountain valley after only fifteen minutes.

There was a scout of the first prince's at the entrance the mountain valley. Jiang Chen took Dan Fei in a circle past the scout's eyes and ears, and snuck into the mountain valley.

"Jiang Chen, are we heading in to meet up with them or...?"

"Let's not find them first, in order to avoid acting rashly and alerting the enemy. If the fourth prince knew we were here, his formation

would change, and it'd be easily picked up by the scouts."

Dan Fei was lost in thought as she nodded.

"How much of your Mind Enchantment Powder is left?" Jiang Chen asked with a smile.

"Just three bottles." Dan Fei took stock of her inventory.

Jiang Chen chuckled. "Looks like I'll have to use some of my equipment."

Jiang Chen had extraordinary potential in the area of pills, and was naturally quite adept at using poison. He'd made many preparations.

He had two or three choices for items similar to the Mind Enchantment Powder.

Dan Fei saw Jiang Chen almost put on a magic show as he continuously took out a variety of bottles and cans. They appeared to both his left and right as he set them up around him.

Jiang Chen quickly set up a perfect trap.

Dusting off his hands, Jiang Chen smiled. "They're almost here. Shall we take cover and wait, so we can watch the show?"

"Jiang Chen, does this count as helping Ye Rong cheat?" Dan Fei's laughter tinkled.

"This is called making our position impregnable. How could this be called cheating? If we were to really cheat, we'd kill Ye Dai outright. This is just called justified self defense, alright?"

...

There were seven people in total in Ye Rong's small team. Apart from Xue Tong, the remaining six were all his handpicked men.

However, Xue Tong had unexpectedly brought a lot of surprises to

him during this Autumn Hunt, particularly throughout the course of hunting. Xue Tong's skill with the bow and arrow were unparalleled as he distinguished himself greatly with his contributions.

Xue Tong's age was young, yet his mind was very calm. He'd participated in the brainstorming before every hunt, and had always been able to find the holes in the plans. He'd been able to pick up on various clues, and been able to take down prey with one hit.

Ye Rong had originally felt that allowing Xue Tong into the team was only giving face to Jiang Chen. He hadn't thought that Xue Tong's abilities would be his unexpected gain.

In terms of absolute power, apart from Lin Qianli in Ye Rong's team, there were two other guards at the half-step spirit realm.

The other three, including Xue Tong, were all at the peak of true qi.

As for Ye Rong himself, his level of strength was also only at the peak of true qi.

In terms of absolute power, apart from Lin Qianli who could solidly overpower Xue Tong, if the other two half step spirit realm personal guards were to engage in a mutual hunt of each other with Xue Tong in this maze realm, it'd be difficult to determine who would come out on top in the end.

"Fourth prince, this spirit creature is heavily injured, and we've already trapped it within the area. Lin Qianli has already gone to search for it, we're certain it won't escape."

Ye Rong nodded, "We mustn't make any mistakes this time. One spirit creature is more valuable than a hundred violent beasts. The first prince has many spirit realm practitioners in his team this time. I'm worried that their haul will far outstrip us in this time's Autumn Hunt."

There were still traces of envy in Ye Rong's tone. The first prince had had a good birth, and had an impressive background. His network

was broad, and he was easily able to call upon spirit realm practitioners—even disciples of the Precious Tree sect.

Although Ye Rong was also acquainted with the Precious Tree Sect disciples, it was impossible to expect them to toil on his behalf.

At the end of the day, his foundations were still inferior, and he didn't have enough of a background or enough connections.

Ye Rong sighed in his heart. If Jiang Chen hadn't been reassigned by sister Dan Fei this time, he would've absolutely had hope to make a play for the championship in this time's Autumn Hunt.

But now —

He could only try his best. Although there'd been intelligence that the Crown Prince would be finalized next January, Ye Rong didn't believe that a single Autumn Hunt was enough to determine everything.

However, he also couldn't rest on his laurels. He had to at least demonstrate a proactive attitude.

Xue Tong walked over at this moment. "Fourth prince, this mountain valley is narrow, and the entrance and exit are also quite cramped. This area is a bit bizarre."

"Xue Tong, are you worried about something?" Ye Rong's greatest advantage was that he was adept at listening to his troop's opinions, and that he was able to easily grasp his underlings' meaning.

"Your underling is worried that someone is purposefully manipulating the spirit creature in order to lead us here. Otherwise, how would we have the luck to randomly meet an injured spirit creature? And, the plains are quite vast, why would it escape to a quiet valley with no exit?"

"You think that someone is purposefully manipulating it?"

"Yes. Your underling has just checked the terrain. There's only one entrance to this mountain valley and one exit. We've darted in as if we were running headlong into a cloth bag." Although Xue Tong wasn't one of Ye Rong's men, he was still willing to speak what was on his mind since they were on the same team.

Ye Rong mused silently for a bit. After spending a few days together, he actually didn't hold any more doubts about Xue Tong's analysis. He was actually rather superstitious about it.

In terms of power, Lin Qianli and the others in the spirit realm were naturally stronger than Xue Tong. However, in terms of observation, judgement, and skills of analysis, Xue Tong was absolutely top of his class.

"Fourth prince, there will still be opportunities later if we don't succeed in hunting this spirit creature. However, our team can't afford to gamble. If we're surrounded in this valley, we'll never make it out. And if a slaughter happens here, the outside world will never know."

Xue Tong had already spoken very clearly.

Ye Rong's face changed as he was finally moved. "Convey my orders, give up on the hunt. Leave the valley immediately!"

He was born from a king's household after all. He knew the gravity of the situation after connecting the many dots together.

How was the Maze Realm Autumn Hunt not a struggle of scheming and plotting between the princes? Although it was clearly delineated that no killing was allowed, the rules were dead and only people were alive.

Xue Tong's words woke Ye Rong up to this possibility.

Chapter 204: First Prince, We Meet Again

His two personal guards were just about to notify Lin Qianli after Ye Rong gave his order, when Xue Tong's ears suddenly twitched, and his facial expression changed.

"Someone's entered the valley!"

Ye Rong's face turned frosty. His two personal guards were deathsworn who'd followed him since he was young. They took up positions on his left and right, protecting Ye Rong behind them.

The other members of the team also quickly gathered after hearing these words.

Lin Qianli, in the midst of hunting the spirit creature, also seemed to sense the danger. He dashed back to the team with a few bounds. Everyone within the team gathered on a patch of empty ground in the mountain valley.

"Hahaha, this maze realm is indeed small. Number four, who would've thought that us brothers would meet here in this place." Ye Dai led the way and strode in with large strides through the entrance.

A large group of people followed behind him. He had nine people in his team to begin with, not to mention third prince Ye Zheng's eight members.

The two teams combined numbered seventeen people in total.

Out of these seventeen people, there was one second level spirit realm practitioner and three at the first level on Ye Dai's side, whereas Ye Zheng also had one first level spirit realm practitioner.

There were also four half step spirit realm practitioners in addition to that.

Spirit realm practitioners and half step spirit realm practitioners combined, there were nine practitioners in the spirit realm — more than half of their team.

The other eight, including Ye Dai and Ye Zheng, were all at the peak of true qi, and their battle capabilities weren't weak.

When Ye Rong saw that Ye Dai and Ye Zheng were walking together, he was inwardly stern.

"Big brother, let's not interact in the future. We're hunting a spirit creature here, you're not intent on flagrantly interfering are you?"

Ye Rong smiled. "This spirit creature has an exceedingly high level of training. Our team can't handle it. You happen to have a lot of people and experts, perhaps you can try."

Ye Dai looked at Ye Rong with a supercilious smile.

"Stop pretending number four. Do you really think we've come to this valley to steal a spirit creature from you?" Ye Zheng asked with a cold smile.

"Third brother, what do you mean?" Ye Rong's face darkened.

"Don't you think that this mountain valley is peaceful and quiet, and that the view is good? It should be a good place to serve as your final resting place, don't you think?" Ye Zheng sneered.

"Big brother, is this what you've come for?" Ye Rong stared at Ye Dai.

Ye Dai smiled faintly, "Number four, if you were as honest and well-behaved as before, and didn't incite trouble and cause confusion, I wouldn't have oppressed you. However, you started acting up, and set yourself against me time and time again. You even hardened your heart in the capital to fight me for the limelight. Tell me, how should I view you?"

"Big brother, you and I are both of our royal father's bloodline, and

thus competition should be fair between us brothers. Or is it that, as the eldest brother, you don't even have the tolerance to accept competition between brothers?"

"Fair competition? What right do you have to compete with me? I, Ye Dai, am the eldest son of the direct line of descent. My mother's side have been officers for three generations, and our family's power is second only to the king. Countless opportunities have awaited me since birth. I've been destined to take over our royal father's position. Every single one of my steps has been premeditated and paved, taking me closer towards the dragon throne. You're a bastard born of a minor concubine. What do you have, other than half of our royal father's blood? What right do you have to compete with me?"

There were no outsiders here, and they weren't in the capital. Ye Dai decided to lay it all out, and no longer keep up any pretenses.

"Big brother, this is your theory of qualification? If you were destined to take our royal father's position since birth, then what need is there for us princes?"

"All of you exist just because he wanted to satisfy a momentary animalistic urge!" Ye Dai didn't respect even his royal father in this moment.

When Ye Zheng heard these words, a shadow also briefly flashed across his face. However, he tucked it away neatly and concealed it.

"This is to say that you've made up your mind today to kill me?" Ye Rong said coldly.

"You've got that right. However, seeing that we're brothers, I can give you the chance to take your own life." Ye Dai smiled sinisterly. "If you wait for us to make a move, then you'll be in for some pain. I promise you that I won't give you an easy death."

"Good, good. You're our royal father's son alright. You pose as a person of high morals alright. Ye Dai, I've seen through you!"

“Haha, so what if you’ve seen through me? What does it matter if you conceal your true identity well? All of your previous posing is useless in the face of absolute power. I merely need to wave my hand now in order to thoroughly crush you.”

Ye Rong’s gaze shot to Ye Zheng. “Number three, you’re his accomplice, but haven’t you thought that my circumstances today will be those of yours tomorrow? Do you think he’ll let you sleep soundly beside his bed?”

Ye Zheng laughed heartily, “Number four, do you think trying to play us off against each other will work at this time? I haven’t the slightest bit of interest in the position of Crown Prince. I also admit that I’m inferior to our big brother in many ways, what do I have to compete with? Since I can’t compete with him, I might as well behave properly in this situation, and play my role well. Those who suit their actions to the time are wise. You simply don’t recognize the times when you see them.”

Ye Dai nodded his head in great admiration, obviously very pleased with Ye Zheng’s declarations.

Ye Rong sighed lightly, looking at Lin Qianli, and then looking at his two personal guards.

Lin Qianli said faintly, “Don’t look at me, you valued me as one of the best in the kingdom, and this is how I’ll repay you. I won’t abandon you in your time of need.”

“We shall protect the fourth prince unto death!” His two personal guards also had resolute tones.

Xue Tong sighed and grasped Xue Sha’s bow, striking a pose of fighting to the death.

Even though he understood that there was no hope in this battle, there was nothing called submitting to capture with folded arms in the world of practitioners.

"Ye Rong, are you really going to continue putting up a stiff resistance? Floundering desperately at death's door?" Ye Dai shouted.

"Ye Dai, I can die if you want me to die. However, these people don't have much of a connection with me, and have only temporarily formed a team with me. Why must you spare none?"

"Haha, number four, are you still playing the corny act of false benevolence at a time like this? Do you think I'd be touched by you and let them go?"

Ye Dai's face darkened. "Don't be naive. Following you was their original sin, a death sentence! I'll ask you one final time. Will you take your own life, or wait for me to slaughter you?"

Ye Rong's expression was full of ruefulness. "Everyone, to think that I've dragged you down with me this time... don't mind me when the battle begins, make it out if you can."

"Xue Tong, your mind is clear. If you can escape in the heat of battle, go find Jiang Chen. Find Miss Dan Fei!"

Xue Tong sighed lightly. It was apparent that it'd be impossible to escape, judging from the other side's posturing.

"Fourth prince, there's no use in saying anything now. We fight for our lives." A resolute look of fighting for his life appeared on Xue Tong's face.

Fight for their lives!

Ye Rong pulled out his longsword and called out in a hearty shout, "Ye Dai, you've always stylized yourself as the heaven's favored one, and praised yourself as being better than us. Do you have the guts to face off against me? Otherwise, even if you triumph over me with superior numbers, not only will I not accept this defeat, neither will the other princes."

"A one on one? Do you think you're worthy of one?" Ye Dai paid Ye Rong no heed, and gave orders in a clear voice, "Whoever kills him and takes his head will be made the lord of tens of thousand when I take the throne in the future!"

Ye Zheng also cried out, "Leave none alive, kill them all!"

Just at that moment —

Clapclapclap!

A sudden piercing round of applause traveled out from the bushes within the mountain valley.

"Who's there?" The battle had been about to commence when it was halted by this sudden ear piercing round of applause. All gazes looked in the direction of the sound.

Two figures dashed out of the bushes and landed amongst Ye Rong's team.

One of them had a jeering smile on his face — Jiang Chen. The other was expressionless, and wore a remote look, frost covering her features. Who was it but Dan Fei?

"Jiang Chen?" A look of disbelief shot out from Ye Dai's eyes as he also sent an angry look towards Liu Can of the Northern Palace. "Didn't you say you'd kept an eye on them, and that they weren't nearby at all?"

Liu Can's eyes were also filled with the look of having seen a ghost.

How... how was this possible? He'd definitely detected that they weren't nearby. How had they appeared here, after disappearing for two, three days? And how had they found Ye Rong's team?

"First prince, they truly weren't with Ye Rong's team before. Can it be that they ran into him by coincidence?" Liu Can explained with a wry expression.

“Useless trash!” Ye Dai cursed lowly.

If only Dan Fei had appeared, not only would Ye Dai not have been mad, but he’d actually have been quite happy. However, adding Jiang Chen into the mix along with Dan Fei’s appearance, made the situation completely different.

He’d be able to take out Jiang Chen as well if he appeared. This was a fantastic development that he could only hope for.

But with Dan Fei, although Ye Dai was ruthless, he’d always maintained an attitude of respect, fear, and one of currying favor with her. To kill Dan Fei as well... this was something that he couldn’t decide on immediately.

“Liu Can, stop pretending. You purposefully left a lot of clues behind along the way so that I could follow you. Didn’t you want me to find you lot?”

Liu Can’s expression changed drastically. “Jiang Chen, don’t you dare make unfounded accusations. When did I leave clues behind, and since when was I purposefully luring you here?”

Jiang Chen smiled without saying a word. He naturally hadn’t followed Liu Can’s clues, but had left a particular powder on Liu Can that enabled him to follow the scent and make his way here.

He’d purposefully said this obviously, in order to make things difficult for Liu Can, and to create trouble between Liu Can and Ye Dai.

Indeed, Ye Dai’s face turned frosty when he heard these words. “What do you mean by this Liu Can? Can it be that you purposefully lured them here?”

Liu Can panicked, “First prince, you believe his nonsense?”

“Liu Can, you dare commit your deeds, but don’t dare own up to them? Didn’t you lure me here so that there’d be a fight between

evenly matched forces, resulting in you earning a profit without even working for it?"

Liu Can swore loudly, "Jiang Chen, you motherf*cking shit! I'm not a freaking prince, what the hell is this about earning a profit without working for it?"

""Who knows? Perhaps you've thrown yourself under second prince Ye Qiao's banner? Perhaps the scene today is something that second prince Ye Qiao crafted?" Jiang Chen chuckled.

Ye Dai's expression became uglier and uglier as his look at Liu Can became colder and colder!

Chapter 205: First Level Spirit Realm? One Shot, One Second, One Kill!

Liu Can was in a panic, "First prince, do you not know what kind of person I, Liu Can, am? What kind of a thing is the second prince? He's not even fit to carry your shoes. What kind of future would I have with him?"

"First prince, don't listen to Jiang Chen's blather. That person is devious and wily, he must be trying to drive a wedge between us."

At this moment, the aloof Precious Tree Sect disciple in the second level of the spirit realm faintly gave voice to reason.

Ye Dai started and then immediately understood. "Yes, yes. My thanks to Brother Chen's for his advice."

"Jiang Chen, don't you foment disunity. It's good that you've come, all of our grudges from the capital will be resolved today!"

Jiang Chen chuckled. "Resolved? If you want to resolve things, then you should harden your heart to also slaughter your most respected sister Dan Fei. Otherwise, aren't you worried that she'd expose your secret of killing your brothers? If a word of that gets out, how will you ever take the throne?"

This was actually what Ye Dai was most conflicted about right now. Jiang Chen had landed a hit on his Achilles' heel with a single blow.

He did indeed have an almost wicked possessive desire when it came to Dan Fei.

However, he was unwilling to make sacrifices for Jiang Chen and the throne.

Except, he knew that Dan Fei was different than the others. If the others died, any investigations would go nowhere. But if Dan Fei died, then old tutor Ye would never simply give up his investigation.

Once the old tutor investigated and followed the trail all the way to him, Ye Dai, he wouldn't be able to keep his head, much less the throne.

Dan Fei wasn't merely an adopted daughter or disciple to the old tutor. She was the old tutor's psychological sustenance and more precious than the old tutor's own daughter!

Ye Dai truly didn't have it in him to kill Dan Fei.

Emotions flickering through his face, his gaze on Dan Fei's face, Ye Dai said hoarsely, "Sister Dan Fei, I know you've always been hoodwinked by number four and so favor him a bit more. Are you truly going to set foot in the struggle between us brothers and take Ye Rong's side?"

Dan Fei's gaze was remote as she flicked a glance at Ye Dai. "Ye Dai, I hadn't thought of becoming involved in the struggle between you brothers before today, I hadn't picked a side either. However, I'm truly disappointed in your actions today."

"Sister Dan Fei, since ancient times, only the victors have been remembered. I have had no other choice since the very day I was born in the royal household. You follow the honored tutor and should also know that the heritage of the throne and the passing of power has never been without a bloodshed. I ask not of you to help me, I only beseech you remain neutral, pretend you witnessed none of today's events. So long as you do, I, Ye Dai, will be grateful to you for the rest of my life. If I were to ascend the throne in the future, I'd gladly to offer up to share the lands with you."

"Offer up to share the lands with me?" Dan Fei smiled disdainfully. "Ye Dai, do you believe all women beneath the heavens to care about that bit of power your family holds?"

"Sister Dan Fei, being a motherly model of a nation and the mother of a nation is naturally an incomparable wealth. In addition, if I were to cleave and form a ruling dynasty through the neighboring sixteen

kingdoms in the future, is the dignity and awe of being the mother of a whole empire not one to bring glory to your ancestors? What other fortune and wealth could possibly measure up to this?"

One had to say, Ye Dai's eloquence was amazing. His persuasion carried both a confession of his feelings, and a subtle temptation.

Jiang Chen almost wanted to burst out laughing as he listened. Ye Dai's eloquence was really extraordinary.

As Ye Dai became more and more ardent with his words however, Dan Fei's charming face darkened further and further.

"Ye Dai, shut your foul mouth. I don't want to have your laughable comments dirty my ears." Dan Fei's face ice-cold as she spoke frostily.

"You... have you finally hardened your heart to stand on Ye Rong's side?" Ye Dai's eyes were filled with anguish. But that anguish quickly turned into raging fury. "What's so good about him? His birth? His methods? Or his political games better than mine? Dan Fei, why must you always stand on his side and always help him out when he runs into trouble, yet always ignore me when I do? Dan Fei, I revere you as goddess, and yet you treat me as a pig or a dog?"

"You think too much. I've said that I have no interest in the struggles between you princes."

"Alright, since you have no interest, leave immediately. I promise I won't touch you if you swear an oath not to mention the things of today."

Dan Fei's shapely body remained where she was, not moving in the slightest. She didn't say anything and only looked at Ye Dai with a noncommittal look.

"Are you leaving or are you not?!" Ye Dai growled.

"I don't want to kill you. If you don't leave and don't swear, you're

forcing my hand. Dan Fei, don't force me!" Ye Dai raged like a wild beast.

"I'm not forcing you to do anything. You're forcing yourself."

Ye Dai's eyes suddenly shone with determination. "Alright, since this is the case, don't fault me for being heartless Dan Fei. Carry forth my orders, kill everyone besides Dan Fei without exception. And if she bars you, kill her as well!"

Jiang Chen laughed leisurely, "After so much talk, are you finally revealing your true colors?"

Ye Dai's face darkened as he roared, "And I will richly reward whoever kills Jiang Chen for me!"

With Jiang Chen's appearance, Ye Dai discovered that the person he hated the most and ranked first among those he wanted to see dead wasn't Ye Rong, but Jiang Chen instead!

"I'll do it!" Liu Can grinned hideously and charged from his side, barreling towards Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen remained as unmoving as a mountain, flicking his wrist and displaying a throwing dagger in his hand —

The Flying Eagle Form!

A cold light flashed as the throwing dagger vanished into thin air. By the time everyone finally realized what was going on, they'd discovered that the throwing dagger had already sunk into Liu Can's throat.

Liu Can's body had just sprinted out less than ten meters when it abruptly stiffened, his hands forming a death grip around his neck, his eyeballs bugging out of his skull like a dead fish's.

Producing gurgling noises out of his throat as his hands clenched desperately, as if he wanted to grasp onto the life escaping his body

and shove it back into himself.

However, it was all in vain.

Bam!

Liu Can's body slumped down with a thud and sent countless bits of dust flying.

This turn of events had taken place extremely quickly, as if lightning had flashed through the scene.

When everyone came to their senses, Liu Can had already turned into a corpse.

Even Ye Rong's side was flabbergasted, not to mention Ye Dai's side being utterly stunned. Apart from Dan Fei having a noncommittal expression and without any particular reaction, everyone else was insensate as wooden chickens.

"Jiang Chen, you... you killed Liu Can with one strike? At the first level of the spirit realm?" Lin Qianli made noises of astonishment and walked up to look at Liu Can's bedraggled body, his eyes full of awe and admiration.

Xue Tong also walked up, "Young master."

Jiang Chen clapped Xue Tong's shoulder, "Not bad, you were the only one in the entire team who observed the terrain of the mountain valley and identified the red flags."

Ye Rong's team all blushed deeply. However, Jiang Chen was right. No one had thought to observe the terrain apart from Xue Tong, and no one else had considered that this might be a trap.

Except, everyone was even more curious in just when had Jiang Chen arrived? How had he known that the first prince's team had designed such a trap?

Ye Dai looked at Liu Can's body and couldn't believe his eyes for a while. Jiang Chen had killed Liu Can of the first level spirit realm in one second with one strike?

"Brother Chen, this Jiang Chen is quite troublesome. It looks like it's time for you to take the field." Ye Dai's gaze looked towards the Precious Tree Sect disciple, the second level spirit realm practitioner.

"Huh. The potential of the disciples from the Northern Palace is limited alright. This so-called first level spirit realm is likely inferior to even that of the half-step spirit realm of my Sect. Prince Ye Dai, killing Jiang Chen doesn't seem to be part of our agreement. How will you compensate me taking action?"

The Precious Tree Sect disciple had a detached tone. It was obvious that he was only hired by Ye Dai and not one of his deathsworn.

Ye Dai clenched his teeth. "Your pay will be doubled. As long as you kill Jiang Chen, your pay will be doubled compared to what we previously agreed to."

"Triple!" The Precious Tree Sect disciple Chen Li extended three fingers. "No haggling allowed. This Jiang Chen is a true first level spirit realm practitioner. It will take a bit of effort to kill him. If it was something like Liu Can, I wouldn't have wanted three times. I would've wanted two times at most."

"Triple is triple then. Take action now!" Ye Dai was also quite decisive.

A hair raising smile surfaced on Chen Li's face as he nodded. "The first prince is indeed resolute. I will have Jiang Chen's head!"

Ye Rong hastily said from his side, "Honored sir is a disciple of the Precious Tree Sect, what need is there for you to become embroiled in the royal family's struggles? He offers three times the agreed upon fee, I'm willing to do five times as long as you're willing to not make a move and remain neutral. How about that?"

Chen Li chuckled and halted his footsteps as expected. He looked at Ye Dai, "First prince, your younger brother seems to be more generous than you."

Ye Zheng hastily said, "Brother Chen, don't listen to him. Ye Rong is a destitute pauper, how would he have that much money to give you? My big brother is offering three times, I offer three times as well. This makes six times in total. One final price, let's not haggle anymore. Kill Jiang Chen for six times the agreed upon price and we'll make good on our agreement when we leave!"

The smile on Chen Li's face grew broader and broader. What he wanted most right now was for the two sides to keep topping each other's bid so he could profit without working for it.

Ye Rong grit his teeth. "I'll do ten times!"

Jiang Chen smiled at this point, "Fourth prince, since when did you have so much money? Ten times? If you have ten times the agreed upon amount, give it to me and I'll take all their heads for you."

Chen Li had wanted to keep listening to Ye Rong's offers, but the smile on his face abruptly vanished when he heard Jiang Chen's words and he spoke frostily. "Ye Rong, you have no further chances."

"Even if you offer a hundred times now, you must all die!"

"Jiang Chen, you're first!"

Killing intent exploded in Chen Li's eyes.

Jiang Chen laughed leisurely. "I definitely wouldn't be that optimistic if I were you."

Chen Li laughed hideously. "Optimistic? I'm a genius of the sect and my training is at the second level of the spirit realm. You're just at the first level spirit realm. Do you think you can take me on with your throwing dagger techniques?"

“Whatever, I’ll let you see what’s a true disciple of the sect today, and what’s a true genius!”

Chen Li’s aura suddenly expanded after he concluded his short speech and he drew upon his spirit ocean. Spirit power surged out of his body as his body was ensconced by a dense red light, as if a ball of fire blazing to the heavens.

However, Jiang Chen seemed to not see any of this as he smiled faintly, seeming to think Chen Li was a clown.

“You can still smile when death is staring you in the face!” Chen Li roared. “I wonder if something’s wrong with your head or if you can really back up your talk.”

Jiang Chen spoke easily with a smile, “Oh I can smile alright, but I think that you’ll be unable to soon enough. The more you draw upon your spirit ocean now and the more awesome you try to be, the faster you’ll discover how weak you’ve become.”

“What?” Chen Li’s heart suddenly sank as he seemed to discover that strands of a weird presence was seeping into his spirit ocean.

Chapter 206: After Joy Comes Sadness for Ye Dai

"Oh no, I can't seem to gather my true qi!"

"Mm? Something's wrong. My spirit ocean seems to have sucked in something!"

"Ah, my true qi can't be gathered either!"

Everyone on Ye Dai's side started yelling all of a sudden.

Ye Dai's face also greatly changed, because he too discovered that he couldn't summon his true qi. Not only his men, but even he himself had an empty dantian, as if his true qi was locked by something and he couldn't gather the slightest bit of it.

Chen Li's face had drastically changed. It was as if he was a duck whose throat was being clutched by a hunter as he emitted raspy sounds, "Jiang Chen, you used poison?"

"Congratulations, you've guessed correctly. Chen Li, is it? How many times the agreed upon rate do you think you can get now?" Jiang Chen had a shadow of smile on his face.

Chen Li's disposition was ashen faced as his arrogant flames seemed to have been directly put out with a bucket of cold water. His face was filled with a terrified look, "Jiang Chen, if... if you dare kill me, the Precious Tree Sect will never let you go."

Jiang Chen's face darkened, "Give me a reason not to kill you."

"I... " Chen Li's first notion was to say that *'I'm a genius of the Precious Tree Sect and a disciple of the Sect. You'd be making yourself out to be an enemy of the Sect if you killed me.'*

However, he wasn't a complete idiot after all. Those sorts of weak threats weren't useful in a moment like this.

You wanted to kill the opponent first and now you were caught in

their plot. Why would they not kill you now because of a few threats? How was that possible at all?

"Jiang Chen, tell me what you want. I will bring it out if I can. We have no enmity between us and we'd both be dying because of wealth. I kill you because I've been hired by another and because I seek wealth. If you kill me, there's nothing in it for you, so why bother? You can gain great benefits if you don't kill me. I can also swear to the heavens that I'll never seek revenge on you and cause trouble."

One had to say that Chen Li was a very practical person. When he saw that the circumstances weren't looking right, he would immediately beg for mercy and present his soft side. He wouldn't dither about at all.

"I can, not kill you. I don't need your ransom money and I don't need you to swear an oath to the heavens. I only have one request."

"Please tell me!" Chen Li was overjoyed and rushed Jiang Chen. "Tell me, I can agree to any request."

"Only one of you can leave this place alive. I'll let you go if you kill them all." Jiang Chen said with a faint smile.

"Do you mean that?"

"Do I look like someone who jokes?" Jiang Chen faintly asked.

Dan Fei walked up at this time. "Jiang Chen, please give me some face and let them go this time."

Jiang Chen was dumbfounded. "Why?"

Dan Fei said faintly, "Just tell me if you agree or not!"

Jiang Chen was momentarily struck speechless.

"If you kill them now, it'll be easily traced back to you when we leave. You'll be a public enemy of the Skylaurel Kingdom then. Even if you

have the Skylaurel Kingdom Medallion, it wouldn't help you. That Chen Li is a disciple of the Precious Tree Sect. It'll be troublesome if you kill a disciple of the Sect."

Dan Fei looked at Ye Dai. "I'll be sure to report to the lordmaster the truth that Ye Dai wanted to kill his own brothers. His days as first prince are numbered. His enemies will naturally take care of him then, why dirty your hands?"

Jiang Chen was of a mind to turn her down, but Dan Fei was quite resolute in her request. He could only look at Ye Rong with resignation, "Fourth prince, I will no longer involve myself in this matter. You do as you see fit."

Ye Rong looked ruefully at Dan Fei and decided to make a friendly gesture at no extra cost to himself. "Sister Dan Fei, I'll listen to you. However, I'm afraid that Ye Dai is unwilling to give up and he will still make trouble for us when we leave this mountain valley."

Dan Fei didn't allow Ye Dai to be killed also because she was thinking of past history. Whether it was Ye Dai or Ye Zheng, they had both received tutelage from the lordmaster and they had grown up a step at a time in his care.

Although Dan Fei wasn't kindly disposed towards them, and she disliked them even, she still wasn't willing to see them die here.

Ye Rong was the same as Jiang Chen in that he was more than unwilling to see the situation develop thus. However, the greatest difference between him and Ye Dai was that he could contain his anger of the moment.

Since Dan Fei had promised that she would make a report to the lordmaster when they got out, Ye Dai was as good as nothing. As long as Ye Dai was stripped of his titles, he, Ye Rong's, greatest competitor was no more.

Since Ye Dai was no longer a threat to him making a play for the

throne, there would be more than enough chances to kill him in the future even if Ye Rong didn't kill him today.

Ye Dai thought he was dead without a doubt and didn't hold any hope. When he suddenly heard that Dan Fei was begging for mercy on his behalf, he was overjoyed.

"Number four, don't kill me. Anything is yours if you don't kill me. I promise that I won't contest for the position of Crown Prince when we leave, and that I'll be a powerless royal who doesn't inquire after matters of politics in the future. I can also swear to the heavens that I will never seek revenge for what happened today and I will never cause trouble again."

Ye Rong's brow creased. "It's not that I'm not killing you, it is because sister Dan Fei is sparing your dog of a life."

Dan Fei also felt disgusted by Ye Dai's ugly display. "Ye Dai, conduct yourself well. You're being let off the hook this time because I'm begging for mercy for you on the lordmaster's behalf. You won't be that lucky next time."

"Yes yes, sister Dan Fei, it's all my fault. My mind was in a haze. I was blinded by power and I will absolutely turn over a new leaf when we leave."

Jiang Chen shook his head with resignation. Bad habits could never be changed, just like a stray dog that would always resort to eating sh*t if it had nothing else to eat. Ye Dai was just that sort of dog.

It was actually allowing latent danger to exist if they let this kind of person go. According to Jiang Chen's intentions, killing him with one strike would be the cleanest way to handle this.

However, since Dan Fei's words had come to this point, Jiang Chen couldn't very well insist on still moving forward. After all, this was still nominally Ye Rong's decision.

If Ye Rong could bear to do so, then why wouldn't he, Jiang Chen, be

able to?

Ye Dai was just a prancing clown at the end of the day. Jiang Chen wasn't afraid of him at all, and his vision didn't rest on the layout of the single city and pond that was the Skylaurel Kingdom.

Honestly speaking, Jiang Chen didn't have to fear that Precious Tree Sect disciple even if he hadn't used poison.

Dan Fei looked a bit apologetically at Jiang Chen. She knew that her request was a bit out of bounds. She'd accomplished nothing in this battle. So logically speaking, she had no right to be making such a request of Jiang Chen.

"Thank you." Dan Fei walked close to Jiang Chen and spoke in a low voice.

"It's nothing." Jiang Chen wasn't a person who was mindful of personal gains and losses. The Northern Palace disciple he hated the most was dead, and so, the great majority of his anger had been dissipated.

"Let's go." Ye Rong also walked close to Jiang Chen. "Jiang Chen, it's all thank to you this time. Otherwise, the consequences would have been unbearable to contemplate."

Ye Rong's heart still fluttered a bit with fear when he thought about what had happened. He'd been in the throes of despair with what happened today already and hadn't dreamed that he'd be able to make it out alive. He was prepared to fight to the death.

He didn't think that matters would suddenly develop in this direction and that a one eighty turn would suddenly occur.

The first prince had been strutting with pride and he thought that victory was within his grasp when he'd been suddenly slapped down.

And Ye Rong, who'd been slated for a sure death, had turned into the

final victor. However, Ye Rong didn't dare style himself as the victor as he knew that all of this was due to Jiang Chen.

Without Jiang Chen, they'd probably all be cold, hard corpses by now.

Although he spared their lives, Jiang Chen hadn't planned on curing their poison. It was a good thing that the poison wouldn't last long and it would automatically disperse after roughly two hours.

Lin Qianli and Ye Rong's two personal guards showed no mercy however, as they made off with all of Ye Dai and Ye Zheng's hunting trophies.

They'd spared the people, but they would have to still take some interest.

Even Ye Rong didn't stop them.

Ye Dai and the others had retained their lives, how would they dare erupt in hostilities with Ye Rong's men over a bit of personal belongings? They all felt indignant but they didn't dare voice it as they docilely handed over their goods.

When the group of people walked out of the valley, Ye Rong was in a fantastic mood. Misfortune had come as a blessing in disguise. He never would've thought that they'd come in chasing a spirit creature but would end up precipitating all those events to happen.

They'd truly reaped rich rewards this time, and he wasn't thinking about the hunting trophies that they had taken from Ye Dai. Ye Rong didn't care about those gains at all.

His greatest gain was that he'd defeated Ye Dai. Clearing the biggest obstacle in the war to be Crown Prince was the greatest gain of all.

The group of them walked forward when Xue Tong, scouting the road ahead, suddenly quickly dashed back. He was carrying something in his hand. It was an exceedingly small spirit creature and it'd seemed to be tortured by someone. There were countless numbers of

injuries on its body and it dripped blood along the way. It appeared to be dead for a long while.

"Young master, we discovered this up ahead. The injuries of this spirit creature are quite bizarre. It looks like someone's purposefully tortured it to death."

...

About fifty or sixty meters from the mountain valley, second prince Ye Qiao looked in a carefree manner at the mountain valley.

"Ling Xuan, is there any new intelligence?"

"In response to the second prince, the latest intelligence is that the first prince and third prince have already met up and they are heading to the mountain valley. It looks like the two parties will meet up."

Ye Qiao's demeanor was leisurely. "Good, good. The heavens really are helping me, hahaha."

"Remember, infuriate that pack of Goldbiter Rats at all costs. You must spark a horde of rats to the greatest degree possible and lure them to that valley. We're going to clear out the lot of them without using a single soldier or pawn from our side."

A ruthless light shot out of second prince Ye Qiao's eyes.

"Ling Shi, go with Ling Feng. Particularly Ling Feng, he's well versed in the habits of spirit creatures and he knows how to madden them. He knows even more about how to incite a horde of beasts and he knows how to lead them to the mountain valley."

Ye Qiao nodded in satisfaction. "It's said that soldiers are expensive because they're elite and not because of their numbers. Ye Dai is an idiot because he always brings a huge pack of practitioners with him and he always spends money wrongly to hire those sect disciples, but he still ends up with a face full of dust every time. He has a good

background and he is used to using great power to oppress his enemies, but he forgot that the true practitioners, the truly superior ones, find their brains more useful than force!”

“The second prince is wise!” Ling Xuan also smiled. “It was our luck that allowed us to discover the Goldbiter Rats’ nest.”

“Alright, it’s about time for us to retreat. Once the horde of rats is set into motion, they’ll be absolutely and incredibly destructive. It’s likely that nothing within a radius of a hundred li will be safe. Notify Ling Shi and Ling Feng to be careful of their safety. Remember to leave methods of contact so they can reconvene with the team as fast as possible.”

Ye Qiao retracted the smile on his face as he cast a final look in the southwestern direction with his sinister look. He laughed lightly as he said, “Ye Dai, Ye Rong, and you idiot Ye Zheng, I hope you aren’t my brothers in your next life. Even if you reincarnated ten times, you’re destined to lose if you fight me.”

“I, Ye Qiao, am the true candidate for Crown Prince. The only candidate!”

Chapter 207: The Tide of Rats Is Coming!

When he saw the heavily injured spirit creature, Jiang Chen's brow creased vaguely and he asked, "Where did you discover it?"

Xue Tong pointed ahead, "Not too far ahead. There was a trail of blood along the way. I wonder who was so perverse as to kill a spirit creature by slowly torturing it to death."

Jiang Chen didn't answer, but looked at the spirit creature again and again. "This wound was purposefully inflicted. It looks like this wasn't done to kill it at all, but rather to torment it."

"Yes, could it be that Ye Dai and them who did this?" Ye Rong frowned. "Ye Dai doesn't seem like such a person to do this, it isn't his style."

"Let's take a look ahead." Jiang Chen didn't know what to say either, and couldn't offer any conclusions by just looking at this brutally injured spirit creature, which didn't have an inch of unmarked skin left.

When they arrived at the location where Xue Tong had found the spirit creature, they saw traces of blood all along the way, extending all along the path. There was blood everywhere. It seemed that the spirit creature had bled an unknown amount of distance.

"Did this spirit creature die from blood loss??" Lin Qianli was shocked.

Jiang Chen touched the traces of blood on the ground. "The blood hasn't dried yet, so it hasn't been long. Based on the amount of time that's elapsed, I would guess that Ye Dai and them didn't do this. Besides, Ye Dai's target is the fourth prince. They wouldn't leave these bloody traces without rhyme or reason, and create unnecessary openings for enemies."

"Could it be that someone else did this?"

"Meh. Who cares who did this? There are several thousand noble sons and disciples who participated in this Autumn Hunt. It'd be normal for a few twisted minds to crop up."

Everyone's goal was to hunt spirit creatures, the more the better. However, most wouldn't use such maltreatment when hunting. This truly was a bit brutal and perverted.

Jiang Chen nodded and left the body on the ground. "No matter who it was that did it, they were quite lucky to meet one out by itself. They'd be in great trouble if they met a pack of these spirit creatures."

Lin Qianli was quite curious, "What kind of spirit creature is this? Does Brother Jiang know of it?"

"This is a Goldbiter Rat, a branch of the ancient Goldbiter Kingrat bloodline. They may not be strong in ones and twos, but when these Goldbiter Rats mobilize, they number in the thousands and tens of thousands, sometimes even hundreds of thousands. This matter is quite strange, we should hurry and leave. If we're so unlucky as to really stir up a Goldbiter Rat nest, we'll be in a world of trouble."

Jiang Chen wasn't saying frightening things just to raise alarm. He'd heard some of the rumors of the Goldbiter Rats from ancient times. There were some ancient, great personages who'd adventured through all sorts of planes, and some had accidentally stirred up nests of the Goldbiter Rats, in turn causing incredible trouble in but an instant.

Ordinarily, in these kinds of circumstances, unless they had overwhelming divine arts, they'd basically be chased by the Goldbiter Rats to the despairing point of them finding no road to heaven, and no gate to hell.

In other words, it was a death sentence.

"Let's go, let's go." Lin Qianli felt goosebumps rise on him as he

listened.

“Go, avoid the blood traces.” Ye Rong gave the order.

They circled past the blood traces and walked roughly ten li, when the same strange thing happened again. There was another Goldbiter Rat corpse lying in the road, and its injuries were just as blood as before — too ghastly to look at.

Jiang Chen’s face changed drastically this time. “Fourth prince, it looks like we have trouble.”

“What do you mean?”

“Two Goldbiter Rats in a row definitely isn’t a coincidence. One pervert is possible, but two at the same time isn’t likely. And look, these Goldbiter Rats’ corpses have appeared on paths that we would’ve had to take. If we circle past this one, we’d have to go back to the other one. If we’d chosen another direction just now, there would definitely have been Goldbiter Rat corpses along our way.”

“Is the matter this odd?”

“We’ll know if this is the case if we go back and take another direction, no?” Lin Qianli strode out and walked in front.

With Jiang Chen’s judgment, everyone’s feelings became complicated.

They actually hadn’t made it far before they returned to the original intersection and walked off in another direction. Indeed, they hadn’t walked twenty li when they saw another body of a Goldbiter Rat. It was the same awful wounds and the same trail of blood.

Jiang Chen’s expression became graver and graver. It was apparent that he’d expected this corpse to appear.

“Jiang Chen, is something really afoot?”

Jiang Chen's expression was grave, when his ears suddenly twitched, and his body suddenly hit the ground. He put his ear to the ground and listened carefully, his facial expression suddenly changing greatly.

His first feeling when he saw the first corpse was a very weird one. An uneasy hunch had kept making him feel quite uncomfortable.

At this moment, he could absolutely be certain that this had been man-made, and that it was a very cruel and thorough plot to end them all!

"I think we've been surrounded by a Goldbiter Rat tide!"

"What?" Everyone was greatly shocked. "Jiang Chen, are you joking?"

Lin Qianli also laid flush to the ground, but didn't hear anything. "Jiang Chen, are you mistaken?"

Jiang Chen didn't say anything but called upon the Psychic's Head divine art, sensing in all directions, a serious look on his face.

Dan Fei's emotions also became heavy. She'd known Jiang Chen for a period of time, and had never seen him with such a solemn expression.

She'd never seen the attitude of being confronted by a formidable enemy in Jiang Chen. He hadn't been this grave even when he'd confronted the giant ape.

"Jiang Chen, just what've you heard?" Ye Rong walked up to ask.

Dan Fei lightly admonished him, "Don't disturb him."

Dan Fei was well aware that Jiang Chen was weighing up countering strategies or analyzing the situation when he wasn't speaking. To speak to him now would be disrupting his thoughts.

Ye Rong smiled and didn't say anything more.

After a while, Jiang Chen said to Xue Tong, "Have a listen."

Xue Tong nodded and crouched on the ground, like Jiang Chen he used the Ear of the Zephyr to listen. His expression also shifted drastically when he had a listen.

It was as if the land in all directions had been surrounded by this exact sound, and it extended to an unknown distance.

This sound was extremely sharp and ear-piercing. When all the sharp, ear-piercing sounds gathered together, it formed a storm that could swallow everything and was churning over the land!

This engulfing momentum was slowly tightening its radius and closing upon them, tighter and tighter.

"Young master, we've been caught like dumplings!" Xue Tong blurted out.

Being caught like dumplings meant that they'd been surrounded and had become the filling of dumplings.

Lin Qianli once again knelt on the ground and took a listen. He could make it out this time and his face changed drastically. Everyone else all knelt on the ground to listen as well.

This time, as long as one wasn't deaf, everyone could hear the rolling tide of the rats as their great rat army advanced.

Although they couldn't see them yet, this enormous momentum had so shocked some of those present so much that their faces were ashen, as if they were facing armageddon.

"Follow me." Jiang Chen's gaze went off in a certain direction.

Jiang Chen seemed to be a beacon of light at this time. Everyone quickly followed him and dashed, there was a large mountain in that direction. Plant growth wasn't too thick on the mountain, and there was a large forest of boulders.

“Go to that patch of rocks. Pick the highest and biggest rocks and hide on it, the faster the better!” Jiang Chen directed as he took out all of the poison powder on his body and scattered layers upon layers of them around the rock forest. He circled left three times and then right three times.

Unfortunately, there was a very small amount of poison powder left at this moment. After scattering it three times in each direction, it was still far from the effect he had imagined.

Jiang Chen was resigned. He could only do so much now.

“It’s a pity that I couldn’t bring the Goldwing Swordbirds. Otherwise, with their speed in the air, we may have a chance.”

He could only say that there might be a chance because there were many forms of the Goldbiter Rats. Some of them had wings like bats.

Once the Goldbiter Rats grew wings, their agility would be incredibly frightening. Although their speed wasn’t particularly fast, they had strength in numbers. When the tide of rats surged up, covering the skies and the ground, even someone who possessed strength that was ten times, a hundred times greater than them, would fall easily.

It wasn’t that Jiang Chen didn’t want to flee, but that he’d already identified that there was no passage through the oncoming rat tide that covered a radius of more than ten li in this area in all directions. There wasn’t a gap at all. Even if a gap slightly formed, countless Goldbiter Rats would immediately fill it.

Standing on top of the giant rocks, everyone’s expression was extremely grave.

Despite the fact that they managed to flee to this high ground, no one dared to be optimistic. Although they didn’t know how powerful the Goldbiter Rats were, they’d at least heard of beast tides. Even the strongest amongst practitioners never makes it out after encountering a tide of beasts.

Since ancient times, practitioners that could get away after being surrounded by a tide of beasts were few and far between.

"They're coming!" Jiang Chen's God's Eye was the first to discover the rat tide covering the skies and ground, rolling over everything in their wake.

As far as the eye could see, in all directions, a golden colored ocean was moving even faster than waves that moved across the ocean. The speed of their forward movement was truly like a surging tide.

There was no extraneous color as countless numbers of golden colored entities formed a golden colored ocean, densely concentrated and covering almost all the earth.

It didn't whether it was large trees or shrubbery, wherever the tide passed, everything was drowned by the boundless horde of rats.

"This many?!" Lin Qianli also cried out in astonishment.

As the tide surged forward, everyone else saw it as well.

In the beginning, they'd been hoping that it would be just a small rat tide. But when it finally entered their vision, that was when they knew just how frightening and how awe inspiring the rat tide was.

Apart from the color gold meeting the eye, there was only golden color no matter where they cast their eyes. The entire vast plains had been completely covered by the golden colored rat tide. The unbounded golden ocean and the currents formed by the advance of the Goldbiter Rats gave off dazzling splendor beneath the sun's rays, as eye-piercing as the ripples on the ocean.

Squeak, squeak!

Squeak, squeak, squeak, squeak!

The rat tide emitted excited calls as it converged into a surging ocean.

Everyone could already feel a suffocating sense of oppression before the tide had even arrived in front of them.

Those ear-piercing cries gathered into creeks and rivers and continuously churned into their ears, churned into their brains, and churned into their souls.

The gathered flow of their ear-piercing cries had almost drowned them all before the rat tide had even advanced to those who were present.

Chapter 208: Thoroughly Surrounded by the Rat Tide

Jiang Chen sat cross legged, deploying the divine art of Psychic's Head to the extreme. His eyes were like a hawk's as he sent the God's Eye into the tide of rats.

Jiang Chen had no other methods at this time either. This wasn't something that human strength could stand against. Even a spirit king practitioner would be as miniscule as a grain of corn in the wild sea in this boundless tide of rats. They wouldn't be able to raise much of a ripple at all.

The light of wisdom had dawned on Dan Fei's face at this time. She sat on a stone slab and was less than five to six meters away from Jiang Chen.

She also knew that if even Jiang Chen couldn't find a way out, then the only thing they could do was the silently await the arrival of death.

Perhaps the line of defense that Jiang Chen had laid down could delay the advancement of the rats, but beneath the oppression of the endless hordes of rats, there wasn't much difference between having that small radius and having no boundary at all.

It was like using a ladle to empty a river of its waters. It was an absolutely futile gesture and completely not on the same footing.

"Jiang Chen, just what is he thinking about right now?" Dan Fei wasn't the slightest bit afraid in this moment. She only possessed a sort of unperturbed calm.

As she watched Jiang Chen sit there cross legged, with a demeanor that would be noncommittal even if Mt. Tai collapsed in front of him, Dan Fei had to admit that Jiang Chen wasn't a simple person alright.

Even prince Ye Rong, someone who'd seen countless large and varied occasions, wore a rueful smile on his face under the

circumstances.

He had chuckled to himself when he triumphed over his political enemy Ye Dai. Who would've thought that destiny would change so drastically in the next second?

A tide of rats...

Ye Rong gazed as this boundless ocean continuously churned forward with extreme speed. It would slowly spread to their area in less than fifteen minutes and then take over this area, swallowing them whole, and devouring them so that not even the bones were left.

"Is this to be my fate?" Ye Rong felt extremely pained. In the moment, what difference was there in success and failure, win and loss?

He could imagine that Ye Dai's crowd was in an even lower mountain valley. They had surely been overrun by the tide of rats by now and devoured cleanly.

Ye Dai and the others were definitely already within the stomachs of the tide of rats by now.

However, the current Ye Rong couldn't find it within himself to be happy at all, because this irresistible and undeniable fate would soon befall him..

When his thoughts traveled there, Ye Rong couldn't help but become a bit melancholy. When his gaze looked at Jiang Chen, a sudden thought struck his mind as a luxurious strand of hope suddenly blossomed in the depths of his despair.

"Jiang Chen! Right, we still have Jiang Chen! Jiang Chen has yet to give up, so I, Ye Rong, still have the chance to make a comeback! Perhaps, perhaps Jiang Chen has a way out?"

Ye Rong strived hard to find a bit of hope to comfort himself with, as if he was trying with all his might to protect a flickering, feeble flame

in the boundless darkness.

This was the last trace of hope.

No one wanted to disturb Jiang Chen at this time and no one dared to.

If it was said that everyone still held out for one last bit of hope in their hearts, then Jiang Chen was the source of that hope. It was only because of Jiang Chen that they hadn't been filled with so much despair to the point of committing suicide.

"Ah!"

"Save me, don't kill me!"

"No, I don't want to die!"

Rounds of ghastly screams came from the road beneath them.

A thought struck Ye Rong. How could he not make out the horrified screams coming from Ye Dai's team?

Dan Fei also heard them as her delicate brows knit slightly. She couldn't help but look downwards. There were a few figures making their final struggles within the boundless golden sea.

It was indeed Ye Dai, Chen Li, and the others.

Although the poison within their bodies had dissipated by now, even if their strength was ten times or a hundred times greater, it was still futile in the face of this immense tide of rats.

Their death struggles would only continuously provoke the violence from the rats and incite their bloodlust.

Ye Dai cried out in despair, "Ye Rong, don't you feel proud of yourself at my death. You're going to become their next meal soon! Hahaha, we fought each other back and forth but still end up doomed to the same fate!"

“Number three’s already been eaten, and I’m about to as well. Ah! My thigh... number four, it’s going to be your turn soon. Tell me, wouldn’t you say that number two is feeling quite smug at this moment? Perhaps he’s the one who set this tide of rats in motion and he’s at someplace right now, watching our downfall and waiting for the message of our deaths! We fought each other and let him pick up the spoils!”

“Number two?” Ye Rong’s heart sank. One makes pretty speeches on his deathbed. Perhaps there truly was a bit of truth in words that Ye Dai was speaking in his death struggles.

When he thought of the Goldbiter Rat corpses along the way, it was apparent that this tide of rats had been artificially triggered. Then, who would have done so?

There was definitely manmade factors behind this, and it was obvious that the other had grasped his movements and the movements of first prince Ye Dai.

Who else would have been interested in his and Ye Dai’s movements?

Second prince, Ye Qiao!

Ye Qiao’s figure floated the surface of Ye Rong’s mind. His mouth full of bitterness, he said, “Number two, it appears that you’re the final winner in the end!”

The figure of second prince Ye Qiao also flashed through Dan Fei’s mind. That person had always been intangible and undefinable through the years. He had fought with first prince Ye Dai for so many years, and although he’d always been firmly suppressed, he’d never fallen.

Had he really set these events into motion?

Dan Fei smiled with resignation. It wouldn’t change things if they knew that Ye Qiao was the one who’d done so in this moment.

There was no point in knowing if he'd been the one.

The boundless tide of rats had pushed its way to the foot of the mountain and started continuously pushing up the slope. Although their speed wasn't as fast when going uphill, it would only be a span of a few breaths with the tide's current speed before it reached everyone.

Squeak, squeak, squeak, squeak!

Squeak, squeak!

The sharp sounds of the Goldbiter Rats grinding their teeth, the chewing sounds of them swallowing all that blocked their path, the sounds of them tearing and swallowing all traveled into their ears.

The closer they were, the clearer the sounds became.

Finally, the endless tide of rats surged to their feet from all directions.

If it wasn't for the three rings of defensive poison powder that Jiang Chen had scattered, the tide of rats would've likely already climbed onto them and started ruthlessly tearing away at them.

As for Ye Dai, Chen Li, and the others below, there was utter silence from them.

It was obvious that they'd already been so consumed that there weren't even any bones left.

Clang!

Lin Qianli drew his sword and shouted, "Die if we must! Since we're going to die, I'll take some of these Goldbiter Rats down with me! You want to eat me? You'll pave the road for me first with some of your lives!"

"Don't move!" Jiang Chen suddenly roared lowly.

Lin Qianli had raised his sword and was about to attack when Jiang Chen's shout stopped his momentum in his tracks.

"Jiang Chen, given how things are, will their mouths show us mercy if we don't do anything?" Anguish was written all over Lin Qianli's face.

"Don't rush, they have an innate fear of this poison powder. Don't provoke them. They're still probing and may not have the courage to charge over."

"Sitting here and waiting to die is harder to bear than the feeling of being killed immediately by them." Lin Qianli's words resonated with a lot of those present.

Ye Rong spread out his hands, "Everyone, let's listen to Jiang Chen and sit down. We really can't stop them. There's no point in killing a few of them."

Ye Rong had rather reasoned through things at this moment.

If this was fate and couldn't be reversed, then what was the difference in killing a few more or a few less at this time?

This wasn't the Goldbiter Rats' fault at all. If they were to blame someone, they should blame the person behind all this. If it hadn't been for someone tormenting the Goldbiter Rats and leaving a trail of blood behind on purpose, making a show of aggression towards the rats, the tide of rats wouldn't be this fierce and destructive either!

Dan Fei also sighed lightly in her heart at this moment as she looked at the unending tide of rats. "I only thought of catching baby spirit animals, but what use is any of that now that there are Goldbiter Rats wherever we look? Heh heh, come to think about it, I really was crazed. As for Jiang Chen, he seems to be..."

She couldn't help but look over again when she thought of Jiang Chen.

As for the hordes of Goldbiter Rats below, it was obvious that they'd become impatient as they started making an assault on the defensive rings of poison powder. The first ring was breached in a short amount of time.

Although large swathes of Goldbiter Rats fell to the poison and lost the ability to fight, reinforcements from behind immediately filled the gap like waters rushing into to fill a hole.

When they saw one ring of defenses being broken through, everyone's emotions became even more downcast.

"Going to die. We're definitely going to die this time!"

Jiang Chen suddenly stood up at this moment as stunning beams of light shot out from his God's Eye. His Psychic's Head was also deployed to the extreme.

His gaze suddenly locked onto a far distance to the south.

His mouth opened as he voiced a series of bizarre characters and tones.

What people could be certain of was that Jiang Chen was speaking, but no one understood what he was saying. Even someone as widely read as Dan Fei couldn't understand a single word of what he was saying.

"What's he doing?" A strange thought flashed through Dan Fei's mind.

"Jiang Chen? What are you doing?" Ye Rong was also baffled.

Some of Ye Rong's personal followers even thought that Jiang Chen had cracked under the pressure and had gone completely crazy.

Xue Tong also looked at Jiang Chen with some surprise. He'd followed Jiang Chen for a long time and knew that Jiang Chen would often have surprising moves.

However, even Xue Tong didn't know what the young master was up to this time. Was he speaking or chanting some incantation?

An unexpected scene took place at this moment.

A ripple suddenly cleaved through the boundless tide of rats from the south. This ripple actually churned through with the momentum of a tornado, bringing with it golden colored light.

The aura of this light was incredibly domineering. The Goldbiter Rats around it were greatly startled as it charged over and they all voluntarily made way, allowing the golden colored light to make its way through.

The golden colored light landed on a nearby forest of rocks. It was actually an enormous Rat King that was ten times bigger than the Goldbiter Rats!

The Goldbiter Rat King's body was like a wolf's as its golden colored fur sparkled, sending out a dazzling light.

Its golden colored gems for eyes were as resplendent, giving onlookers an indescribable feeling of wooziness that they couldn't define when they looked at it.

"Human... did you summon me?"

The enormous Goldbiter Rat King asked in the beast language.

Jiang Chen used the ancient language of the beasts to communicate, "You're their king?"

"Yes, but, human, you understand the ancient language of the beasts? Who are you?"

"I'm an innocent bystander! You triggered the tide of rats to obtain revenge for your descendents. However, we definitely weren't the ones to kill those Goldbiter Rats. Accurately speaking, we were framed!"

“Don't give me the bullshit of being framed! You entered this place in order to hunt. To come here with that intention is already an original sin! You must die for killing my descendents. There are no exceptions even if you understand the ancient language!”

The tone of this Goldbiter Rat was quite resolute.

Chapter 209: Jiang Chen as Beautifully Eloquent as a Lotus

"What a pity, what a pity. What a pity that the bloodline of the ancient Goldbiter Kingrats tribe has decayed so much that as they lived on, the word 'king' present in their ancient ancestors' names has disappeared entirely. Remember, you're the descendents of the Goldbiter Kingrats. Being called the Goldbiter Rats now is indubitably the greatest insult to your ancestors."

"What do you mean?" The Goldbiter Rat King's gaze was cold and sinister.

"What do I mean? The race of the Goldbiter Kingrat was the smartest and most ancient tribe with the most magniloquent speech. To think that their descendents have become so unreasonable and are unable to communicate at all!"

"Communicate? You humans slaughter us spirit creatures, and yet you want speak of communication?" The Goldbiter Rat King laughed coldly.

"Every injustice has its perpetrator, every debt – its debtor. Don't prattle as though you spirit creatures don't brutally kill one another. Natural selection, law of the jungle, these are the rules of survival. Spirit creatures hunted by humans, humans devoured by spirit creatures. This is the rhythm of life that's remained unwavering for millennias."

"You're correct, and as such we're going to devour you!" The Goldbiter Rat King sneered.

"Devouring me is of no difficulty, all of you can accomplish it. However, you'd be unable to evolve to the Goldbiter Kingrat bloodline, and will forever remain an ignoble race, forever deposed of becoming kings of the spirit creature world. To think that the ancient Goldbiter Kingrat once dominated the heavens, now that was a stupendous race! What a pity, what a shame."

"Huh, will we be able to evolve to the Goldbiter Kingrat if we don't devour you? Human, this king knows of your wily and crafty ways, please do not insult the intelligence of the Goldbiter Rats' tribe! You think a few words in the ancient beast language will be enough to convince me? Dream on!"

"Haha, indeed, indeed. But I still have to say, as a king of the Goldbiter Rats, you're just a bit taller in this mass of dunces. You're still the Goldbiter Rat King, just the king of some Goldbiter Rats. You shall never be a Goldbiter Kingrat. Remember, although there's the word 'king' in both names, the difference in the order of these words is tantamount to the difference between heaven and earth. No matter how you send a call for a tide of rats, it will never change the fact that you're just the king of Goldbiter Rats, and not a true ruler of the ancient and noble Goldbiter Kingrats!"

The Goldbiter Rat King was a bit anxious and angry from embarrassment, but it still contained its anger, "Human, just what are you playing at? I have no interest in only recounting my ancestors' history with you. Our Goldbiter Rat race has an innate heritage of memories and knows well the origins of our bloodlines. Our bloodline is inferior and we can't evolve to the Goldbiter Kingrat, that much is true. However, as inferior as our bloodlines are, we're still not prey that you humans can hunt at will! If you want to hunt us, you must pay the price!"

"It looks like you are indeed a race of inferior intellect. As a king, are your eyes also only filled with hate and not the slightest bit of consideration for the future of your race?"

"Future of my race? You, a human, want to talk to me about the future of the Goldbiter Rats? Do you not find that laughable?"

"Not at all."

"And what gives you the right to say that?" The Goldbiter Rat laughed coldly.

"Because, perhaps I can help you evolve into an ancient bloodline and evolve into the Goldbiter Kingrat."

"Preposterous!" The Goldbiter Rat King didn't believe him at all. "We can't evolve into an ancient bloodline even with the heritage of memories. How dare you, a human with no relation to my tribe, speak so brashly?"

"I have my ways. You have the heritage of memories, that much is true, but you know not how to call upon your memories. You know none of how to select superior bloodlines nor how to cultivate them. Only the combination of both superior bloodlines and the heritage of memories will give rise to the chance of evolving a true Goldbiter Kingrat! Only when the Goldbiter Kingrat appears will your race have the chance to become the true rulers of the spirit creature world!"

"How... how do you know all this?" The Goldbiter Rat King wavered. It had been firmly resolved to not trust any humans at all.

Even though Jiang Chen understood the ancient language of the beasts, it hadn't planned on trusting Jiang Chen either.

However, it vacillated in this moment.

Because, Jiang Chen's words were indeed all of the Goldbiter Rats' deeply held secrets. If one wasn't familiar with the deeply held secrets of the Goldbiter Rats, one wouldn't be able to talk of superior bloodlines, heritage of memories, and all that.

"I said that I happen to understand a few of the secrets with regards to evolving bloodlines. Perhaps, I can help you!"

"Do you think I'd believe you?" The Goldbiter Rat King was on its guard.

"Why not take this gamble? Besides, devouring the lot of us just means a meal of flesh and blood. Having us isn't too much, not having us isn't missing out. This kind of gamble is a lossless proposition for you. If you win, the payout will be enormous. If you

lose, then you just lose out on eating a few humans.”

Jiang Chen wore a faint and relaxed smile on his face as he continued, “I’m not looking down on you, but the level of your bloodline is really too low. I don’t see even a single flying Goldbiter Rat amongst you. This is enough to prove just how low your bloodline is. If you don’t proactively try to evolve yourselves, there will be no difference between you and ordinary rats in the future. You’ll become meals for other spirit creatures sooner or later and have absolutely no future to speak of!”

These words hit the Goldbiter Rat King where it hurt the most.

The Goldbiter Rat King unexpectedly didn’t retort back because he understood that the human was actually correct in his words. The quality of the bloodline of his race was becoming poorer and poorer. Although they looked quite awe inspiring in the tide of rats, it was merely because they had superior numbers.

The aura emitted by a truly fierce spirit creature would be enough to suppress a tide of rats!

In the world of the spirit creatures, bloodlines were very important. A low level bloodline meant potential was low and that strength would be low. Without strength and status, one would be oppressed, hunted, and devoured.

These were the rules of nature.

“Human, are you really speaking truly?”

“I said that I know a few things about the evolution of bloodlines, but I don’t guarantee anything either. Therefore, I say that you can take a gamble. I too am gambling.”

The Goldbiter Rat King’s thin eyes looked at Jiang Chen, “Human, if you hadn’t known the ancient beast language, I wouldn’t have appeared just now. If you hadn’t spoken of the secrets of my Goldbiter Rat tribe, I wouldn’t have spoken that much to you. You’re

right, if I lose, that just means I miss out on feasting on your flesh and blood. If I win, the entire race benefits. Regardless of anything, I'll take this gamble!"

Jiang Chen's words just now had greatly impacted it psychologically. Jiang Chen had said that it was just a Goldbiter Rat King, and not a Goldbiter Kingrat.

Jiang Chen had been too right about the difference between the two.

He said that as a king, it only knew hatred and vengeance, and possessed none of the vision to consider the future of its tribe. Those words had a huge impact on the Goldbiter Rat King.

When a race was at their level, they were actually already at an extremely low level. In the spirit creature world, they were almost the lowest level of existence. They could only exist beneath the ground and couldn't fight any spirit creature for territory. They also didn't have any right to demarcate a zone of their sphere of influence.

They were bound to only live beneath the ground and scurry and skitter to any place they could find.

This was the tragedy of their race. They only felt the slightest bit of self pride when facing humans.

When the tide of rats had churned over the land just now, they only felt a vague pleasure in surviving when they saw the humans' death struggles when being swallowed.

However, they were very aware that the humans that came here mostly possessed ordinary levels of training. They too were the lowest level in the true world of martial dao.

A true person with power at the apex of existence would be able to destroy them all with a single divine art.

Dan Fei was completely flabbergasted by Jiang Chen and the Goldbiter Rat King's communication. She'd never thought that a

human could actually speak to a Goldbiter Rat King.

And they'd carried on their conversation for such a long period of time!

Although she couldn't understand it at all, but she could feel that the Goldbiter Rat King's attitude was slowly softening and compromising.

"Just how many more secrets does Jiang Chen have? No wonder he could identify the problem with the Five Winged Phoenix Dragon, and do it so carelessly. Judging from his conversation with the Goldbiter Rat King, it's obvious that the knowledge that Jiang Chen possesses isn't as simple as he's described. If he really did receive tutelage from a mysterious expert when he was young, just how frightening would the level of existence of this expert be?"

Dan Fei's mind was in complete disarray. She'd been a bit unaccepting of Jiang Chen in the Tutor's Manor, and although the lordmaster had a high opinion of Jiang Chen, Dan Fei was still a bit reluctant to accept that.

She'd always felt that the lordmaster valued Jiang Chen as a talent because the young of the Skylaurel Kingdom were simply too good-for-naught, and not because Jiang Chen was that special.

However, the matters that'd happened over and over again had destroyed Dan Fei's suspicions and conquered her mulishness.

She seemed to understand now why those mortal rank spirit creatures had circled around them whenever they saw Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen actually knew how to communicate with them!

One could only imagine the level of shock within Dan Fei's heart. She and the lordmaster both raised spirit creatures and knew how hard it was to communicate with them.

In Dan Fei's eyes, it was almost impossible for humans and spirit creatures to communicate with no barrier at all. Even the lordmaster

thought it impossible.

The spirit creatures they raised could at most crudely communicate through gestures and understand a few orders.

At many times, it was just a type of accordance and not true communication through language.

At the end of the day, humans and beasts were of two completely different worlds and cultures. Their languages and thoughts were far too different. Unless one learned the other's language or understood the other's thought, it would be impossible to communicate with one another.

However, no one had ever heard of the existence of a beast language within the Skylaurel Kingdom, not even within any of the neighboring sixteen kingdoms.

"Has Jiang Chen really learned the beast language before? Otherwise, how can he communicate with them?" Dan Fei's mind was filled with all sorts of doubts as her curiosity towards Jiang Chen subtly increased by a lot.

If even Dan Fei was thus, Ye Rong and the others found it even harder to believe. It was a good thing that they were tactful and stayed within the corner quite timidly.

They couldn't help at all in this moment. The only thing they could do was not add to the mess and not infuriate the tide of rats, giving them a reason to attack.

And then —

The only thing they could do was to silently pray that Jiang Chen could convince the Goldbiter Rat King.

Chapter 210: The Goldbiter Rat King Compromises

The Goldbiter Rat King had actually been persuaded by Jiang Chen.

“Human, I admire you. You’re the first human to make me voluntarily call for a retreat. However, I hope that you can fulfill your promise.”

After saying this, the Goldbiter Rat King emitted three short, hasty whistles to the boundless sea of rats. This was the signal to retreat.

The Goldbiter Rats who received the signal all turned their heads and began to retreat.

Within the span of a few breaths, all the Rats that had been occupying the peak of the mountain had fully cleared out. When the humans looked again at this mountain slope again, there was no upright tree apart in the expanse of brown dirt across the slope.

“I only have a month here and now, there’s only less than half a month left. Either all of you leave with us, or I’ll pass all I know on to you within the span of this half month!”

The Goldbiter Rat King creased its brow. It understood a slight bit about the maze realm and knew that no humans survived here.

It was impossible for these humans who all came from the outside world to live here in the long run.

“Perhaps leaving this place is a good decision?” The Goldbiter Rat King thought. “I’ve long since heard that this is a closed off world that’s completely separated from the world outside. I’ve also heard that the world outside is very exciting with boundless resources, countless numbers of strong lifeforms, and all sorts of races. Perhaps, when I arrive in the outside world, I’ll find more clues related to the evolution of our bloodline?”

“I choose to leave this place.” The Goldbiter Rat King decided.

“I obviously can’t take this many of you with me. What plans do you

have?"

"This isn't a problem. Our Goldbiter Rat race has a unique survival space called the Millionditch Stonenest. Each Stonenest can contain millions of our descendents. This Stonenest has to do with the secret arts of space and it's one of our hereditary skills. Just like a beehive, those not of our race will be unable to comprehend it."

"The Millionditch Stonenest? How big is one?" Jiang Chen seemed to remember that the Goldbiter Kingrat indeed possessed something called the Millionditch Stone, but he'd never paid attention to what that was. So it was a nest for the Goldbiter Rats?

"It can be big or it can be small. The smallest are the size of a fist, and the largest are the size of this rock."

"The size of this rock?" Jiang Chen could not help but be rather impressed. Any race would have their own unique abilities. Something like this Millionditch Stonenest would be quite astonishing to humans.

Although these large rocks were the size of a large buffalo, in the end they weren't very big at all. To be able to contain millions of Goldbiter Rats, this was quite rare.

"This Millionditch Stonenest has to do with the secret arts of space. There must be layers of interspaced levels within that use the secret arts of space to an incredible and exquisitely fine level. It looks like each race has their own admirable intelligence and incredible divine arts."

But humans actually had this sort of divine arts as well. Take a space ring for instance, a small ring could be deployed for a great use to hide the heavens and hold the earth or be deployed for smaller reasons like storing people and items. Wasn't this utilizing the secret arts of space as well?

At the end of the day, the actual theory behind the Stonenest was

similar to the storage items that humans used.

It was just a different race, intellect, and method.

This tribe of Goldbiter Rats had roughly two to three billion members. Even if they were contained in Stonenests, several hundred would be needed. It was a good thing Jiang Chen's space ring was spacious enough to hold them all.

However, no one could tell if it was a good thing or bad to take this nest of Goldbiter Rats away with him.

Jiang Chen and the Goldbiter Rat King discussed to have his tribe prepare themselves first before he picked them up. It was better to stay out of sight for something like this.

Otherwise, if his companions know that he'd brought two to three billion Goldbiter Rats out with him, it'd absolutely terrify everyone!

If word of this got out, it was likely that all the kings of all sixteen neighboring kingdoms would find it difficult to eat and sleep.

This was definitely more frightening than the Goldwing Swordbird army.

Although there were great numbers of Goldwing Swordbirds, they weren't to this terrifying level.

In addition, the raw destructive power of the Goldbiter Rats exceeded that of the Swordbird army. The Goldbiter Rat King in particular was equivalent to the later portion of the human spirit realm, which made it part of the sky spirit realm. That also meant that its cultivation was not too far away from spirit king.

However, when had the race of the Goldbiter Rats fought solo battles?

When they saw the tides of Goldbiter Rats actually retreat in front of their eyes, Ye Rong and the others all had a dazed sense of

surrealism. They almost suspected that what had happened earlier was just a bad dream.

However, when they looked at the ground where the Goldbiter Rats had rolled over, where every inch had been completely devastated, they had to believe that the tide of Goldbiter Rats had indeed passed by just now.

Hoo!

It felt good to escape from the jaws of death!

When Dan Fei saw a shadow of a smile appear on Jiang Chen's face, she walked over in curiosity, "Jiang Chen, you actually convinced the Goldbiter Rat King to retreat?"

"How did you do it?" Dan Fei was truly curious.

Jiang Chen smiled, "I happened to understand a bit of the beast language and randomly chatted with it a bit. We got to know each other after some back and forth. It's looking for the enemies who killed its descendents so I said it had nothing to do with us. They seemed to use a special method to investigate that we really weren't the ones, and so they left."

These words were half true and half false making Dan Fei unsure whether or not to believe them.

She suddenly remembered something and rebutted, "If they knew how to investigate, then they should've figured out that it wasn't Ye Dai and the others. Why were they swallowed whole?"

"Too bad they didn't understand the beast language? This is the disadvantage of not being cultured." Jiang Chen was in a great mood. Although he hadn't killed Ye Dai and the others, their crimes were inexpiable and they were destined to be unable to escape this disaster.

Ye Rong was in an equally good mood.

It was a good feeling to be able to escape from death, but because Ye Dai was well and truly dead this time, he naturally had reason to be happy.

When brothers had progressed to this point, there was no brotherly affection left. Only unceasing conflict to death remained.

Ye Dai was so, as was Ye Rong.

"Fourth prince, wait here a moment for me. I'm going to make a trip to that mountain valley. I seem to remember that there were some spirit ingredients there. We left in such a hurry that I didn't pick them."

Jiang Chen found an excuse and quickly left Ye Rong and the others behind.

He naturally left to pick up the Goldbiter Rats. He'd be able to take them out of here as soon as they entered the Millionditch Stonenests and were stored in his space ring.

When he arrived at the mountain valley they had agreed upon, the Goldbiter Rat King had already been waiting there for a long while.

"Ready?"

"Ready!" The Goldbiter Rat King sighed. "Human, I'm handing over the fate of the entire tribe to you. I don't know if this is the right decision or a stupid mistake. I hope you haven't lied to me!"

"If you don't want to go with us, I can pass on my secrets to you. Of course, I don't understand much and I can't guarantee that it'll be useful for you guys."

"Say no more, I've already decided to go with you. This world is sealed off and has no future at all. I've heard that the outside world is vast and endless. Now that's heaven."

"Where there's heaven, there's also hell. Don't glorify the outside

world." Jiang Chen smiled.

"As long as you haven't lied to us, I won't blame you even if my tribe is destroyed by a superior power after we leave. This is my choice, and also a decision that I've had to make for the tribe."

Having said that, the Goldbiter Rat King also entered the Stonenest.

Jiang Chen put away the Stonenest with the fastest speed possible and also took the opportunity to walk around the valley and collect a few spirit ingredients to convince the others before finally turning back afterwards.

"Let's go!" Jiang Chen called out when he saw Dan Fei and the others. The group set off again.

When they passed by the bones of Ye Dai and the others, Ye Rong stopped and said to the two personal guards, "We came in empty handed, but we can't very well leave that way. Ye Dai has oppressed me since small, but he's dead now and should still be buried someplace. Find a place and bury them."

Even though the word he used was bury, there really wasn't much to bury at all. There were only a few bits of bone remaining that were difficult to identify.

The two personal guards collected them all and just buried them all together.

At this moment, even the bones had been nibbled away at so that only shards were left. There was naturally no personal belongings left. Taking a step back, even if there were personal belongings remaining, the group wouldn't pick them up either.

The group walked out of this area and arrived in a vast expanse of space. There was no destruction from the tide of rats in this area.

As soon as they walked into the safe zone, they saw that there was another team in front of them. When the team in front of them saw Jiang Chen and the others walk out, their faces all filled with shock.

“Ye Qiao!” Fourth prince Ye Rong was the first to discover that this team did indeed belong to Ye Qiao’s men.

“Number four?” Ye Qiao was sitting on a piece of green rock. When he saw Ye Rong’s team from a distance, his face displayed an interesting interplay of expressions.

His jaw was so agape that one could shove a large egg into it. He would never have thought that someone would be able to make it out alive from a place where the Goldbiter Rats had rampaged over!

“Second brother, this is a bit of a coincidence.” Ye Rong quickly suppressed the fires of anger within his heart and made a greeting with a small smile.

Ye Qiao was also wreathed in forced smiles as he quickly walked up, his pair of eyes looking Ye Rong up and down. When he saw that Ye Rong was absolutely clean and didn’t look as though he’d been in a fight. He was completely befuddled.

One wouldn’t be this clean even if they went on vacation!

Had Ye Rong not run into Ye Dai’s team? That wasn’t right. The scouts had reported back that Ye Dai’s group had entered the mountain valley, just a step behind Ye Rong’s team.

There was no exit from the valley. The two teams were bound to meet in unavoidable confrontation.

Even if they hadn’t erupted in conflict and settled things peacefully, how could the boundless tide of rats let them go?

It was completely impossible for Ye Qiao to believe that they escaped from the tide of rats. The power and momentum of the rats would have killed even a team ten times stronger, not to mention these guys!

“Second brother, what are you looking at me this way for? Why do I feel like you think it’s odd to see me? Should I not be appearing

here?" Ye Rong asked, his words full of double entendre.

"Haha, how can that be? why would that be so?" Ye Qiao laughed heartily. "It's just that I see that you look so clean. Those who didn't know better would think you've come here on vacation. Have you not killed any spirit creatures?"

"Mm, second brother, you look quite carefree as well. Are you sitting here admiring the scenery? Or are you waiting for some news?" Ye Rong asked with a faint smile.

Ye Qiao started. Does this kid know something?

However, Ye Qiao immediately rejected this notion. He'd conducted things in complete secrecy this time. Ye Rong was in the mountain valley and couldn't possibly have known.

"I happened to be passing by and was reorganizing my team. To think that I would run into you, number four. Oh right, have you seen our big brother after you've come here?"

"Second brother, haven't you never gotten along with our big brother? Why are you asking after him?"

Ye Qiao smiled lamely, "What kind of overnight grudge exists between brothers? Oh right, number four, when I was about to enter, I heard the people inside say that there was a frightening tide of rats that had erupted inside. Were the rumors false?"

Ye Qiao still couldn't help but probe Ye Rong. He didn't suspect at all that Ye Rong already knew of the connection between him and the tide of rats and so he kept asking him.

Ye Rong decided to play dumb to the end, "Tide of rats? What tide of rats? There were just a few golden colored rats. Second brother, you exaggerate."

"Oh, then it's second brother who's gotten it wrong." Ye Qiao didn't want to accept it, but given how Ye Rong was acting, he knew that he

likely wouldn't be able to get anything of use out of the latter.

Chapter 211: Ye Qiao is the Mastermind Behind the Scenes

Jiang Chen however, suddenly took a few steps forward, moving past Ye Qiao to the side of his personal guards.

He shot a sharp gaze to the two of them and asked faintly, "Second prince, are they your personal guards?"

"Hmm?" Ye Qiao started.

"What are their names?" Jiang Chen asked again.

"Jiang Chen, you're a vaunted Skylaurel Kingdom Medallion holder, yet you're so interested in my two personal guards?" Ye Qiao smiled. "They're personal guards who've been with me since I was little. They have no first names or surnames."

"No first names or surnames? Even dogs have a first name. Second prince, it isn't right to treat your men like this."

Ye Qiao's face darkened. "Jiang Chen, what do you mean by this?"

"What do I mean?" Jiang Chen chuckled. "Second prince, after leaving the maze realm, don't get any nightmares, okay?? I've heard that the tide of Goldbiter Rats is very frightening."

A piercing killing intent flashed through Ye Qiao's eyes, but he repressed it in the end. He was different from Ye Dai. As the first prince, Ye Dai had great power and backing. This had allowed him to act recklessly and outrageously since young, and as such he was used to using absolute power to trample over his opponents.

Ye Qiao was different. He was more adept at using his mind and understood even more the importance of seizing the opportunity when the time is right.

In terms of absolute strength, his team had a ninety percent chance of annihilating Ye Rong's team. However, to erupt into conflict at this

moment didn't mean they would be able to quickly end the battle.

They were also in an open space. Once they started fighting, he would be unable to guarantee that he'd kill all of Ye Rong's people. Once someone managed to escape, the consequences would be unthinkable.

In the hidden struggles between the princes, you could deploy countless schemes in private. There was no harm as long as you weren't discovered and there was no evidence.

But once you engaged in open slaughter, unless you could guarantee that you could pull it off flawlessly without any holes, there was no turning back. Once the news of this event travelled, all of his previous efforts would be in vain.

Not to mention that Ye Qiao had the same reservations as Ye Dai, and that was Dan Fei.

Although Ye Qiao's thoughts towards women were much better than Ye Dai, he still drooled over Dan Fei, but not as crazily as Ye Dai did.

He drooled over Dan Fei for one because she was a breathtaking one in the capital and her conduct was above the masses. The most important thing was that her background was simply too impressive. Taking Dan Fei as a wife would mean obtaining the honored tutor's support.

Having the honored tutor's support meant having the world.

Ye Rong chuckled, "Second brother, for you to be so carefree, you must have had a large haul. It looks like I can't fall behind and I will take my leave first."

"Heh heh, not at all, not at all." Ye Qiao's mind wasn't fully here.

"Second brother, say hello to our big brother if you see him." Ye Rong smiled and left with his team.

...

When they'd walked roughly ten li away, Jiang Chen suddenly stopped.

"Fourth prince, I sniffed out traces of blood on the two personal guards and those traces of blood matches with the ones from the Goldbiter Rats. Those two people were definitely the culprits who framed us."

"Are you sure?" Ye Rong had used words to probe Ye Qiao as well. He was ninety percent sure that Ye Qiao was behind this matter.

Except that no matter how certain he was, he had no solid evidence in the end. Although it was strange that Ye Qiao had appeared here, Ye Rong could only probe him give his lack of evidence.

"I am hundred percent sure. Fourth prince, you should leave first. We cannot just let this matter go like this.. If I don't kill the second prince, I must at least kill his two personal guards and take him down a peg. This will prevent him from having any other thoughts along this road."

Ye Rong's thoughts raced, "You're going in alone? How about having Qianli accompany you?"

"No need. Have Qianli go with you guys. He's the strongest and will be able to take care of you guys along the way. Although I don't have a one hundred percent certainty of killing his two personal guards, I still have a seventy to eighty percent chance."

"Jiang Chen, I won't object since you've made your decision. However, you shouldn't do anything to number two in case you might bring trouble onto your own head. He'll be in great trouble when I go back and lodge a complaint against him."

Although he said this, Ye Rong actually did wish for Jiang Chen to kill Ye Qiao along with the others, he just couldn't speak plainly in this way.

Jiang Chen cupped his hands, nodded, touched his feet to the ground, and left for unknown whereabouts.

When Jiang Chen left, he circled away and let the Goldbiter Rat King out. "I've found the culprit who killed your descendents. You can sense for yourself if he's the one or not. You will likely sense the blood of your descendents on him."

The Goldbiter Rat King was greatly enraged, "Where is he?"

Jiang Chen said, "About twenty to thirty li away from here. If you encircle him from here, I think they will have no choice but to flee in the direction we left from earlier!"

The Goldbiter Rat King laughed coldly, "Flee? That area's my territory. They want to flee? Not a chance!"

Jiang Chen chuckled, "Let's not waste time. I'll circle around and occupy that intersection first so that they have no place to run to!"

The Goldbiter Rat King nodded, "That works too. I'll send ten troops of my children to surround the premises. We'll use the fastest speed to occupy the path to the mountain valley. This way, they won't have any place to escape to."

...

As for Ye Qiao's side, a thick sense of killing intent danced in his eyes when he watched Ye Rong's team disappear from view.

"Your Highness, this... something is odd here." Ye Qiao's underling Ling Xuan said lowly.

Ye Qiao also felt that this was extremely odd. "Ling Xuan, number four is extremely clean all over. He doesn't look like he had encountered the tide of rats at all. Can it be that the tide of rats isn't as frightening as we thought?"

Ling Xuan shook his head. "We saw it on the outskirts as well. The

tide of rats stretched to the heavens and covered the ground. There was almost no gap at all. As strong as they were, they should've never made it out. Not to mention that the route we arranged was to surround that mountain valley completely. When the tide of rats arrived, they would've had nowhere to go."

"Ling Shi, Ling Feng, come here." Ye Qiao called out to his other two personal guards. These two were the ones that Jiang Chen had purposefully pointed out just now.

"Your Highness, your underling respectfully requests that you give the order for us two brothers to go after Ye Rong's team. We cannot swallow the humiliation that Jiang Chen gave to the two of us."

Ling Shi and Ling Feng were all practitioners of the first level spirit realm. They were adept at killing in secret, particularly in long distance tracking.

This was why Ye Qiao had sent them to trigger the tide of rats.

"Second prince, with your underling's analysis, Ye Rong's side must have had their suspicions. Their words all seemed to suggest it. Jiang Chen in particular didn't target anyone else but purposefully pointed out Ling Shi and Ling Feng. Did he really discover some traces?"

Ye Qiao's gaze was sinister as he looked at Ling Shi and Ling Feng. "How sure are you two of annihilating their entire team?"

"If we faced them in direct combat, we'd only have a twenty percent chance. If we used our strengths in tracking and assassination however, we'd have an eighty percent chance. In addition, us brothers are adept at concealing and disguising ourselves. We absolutely won't expose the second prince."

Ye Qiao's thoughts raced as he thought of Ye Rong and Jiang Chen's words. They made him feel vaguely uneasy.

"Can it be that number four really has grasped some evidence? Ye Dai and Ye Zheng didn't come out, they're dead for sure. If number

four grasped some evidence of this and went back with it, all of my previous efforts will have been in vain if he hands it in. At that time, the position of Crown Prince will naturally fall into his hands!"

Ye Qiao nodded when his thoughts travelled here and said gravely, "Remember, your moves must be ruthless. Since you're going to make a move, make sure you cut the weeds and pull up the roots!"

"Understood!"

"Go, make it a quick and tidy battle!" Ye Qiao gave the order.

He had nothing to hesitate over now that matters had progressed to this phase. He had already done the bigger deed and killed his greatest competitor, Ye Dai. He couldn't very well leave that fellow Ye Rong alive to mess up his grand plans. As long as Ye Rong was dead, he wouldn't have any competitors amongst the princes.

Although the princes weren't just limited to the four of them, the remaining princes were either mediocre or too young. They wouldn't be able to compete with him.

"After killing Ye Rong, I, Ye Qiao, will become almost the only candidate!" A dense killing intent flashed through Ye Qiao's eyes.

"Ling Xuan, you go investigate in that area as well and see just what's going on. Remember, place personal safety above all. Don't enter if the tide of rats has yet to disperse. You're my deeply trusted confidante. Even if I gain the world, it would not be perfect without you."

This was Ye Qiao's strength. He was adept at swaying human hearts. These words were spoken so naturally that his men would be willing to die for him.

"Understood, I will go take a look." Ling Xuan was the head of the personal guards and he turned to say to the others, "You guys must make sure to protect the second prince."

“Understood.”

Ling Xuan had been about to set off when his ears suddenly twitched and his body abruptly halted, a trace of gravity showing in his eyes.

“What is it?” Ye Qiao started slightly when he saw Ling Xuan’s movements.

Ling Xuan’s facial expression suddenly changed as he crouched on the ground and listened for a while. A look of fright suddenly appeared on his face. “This is bad!”

“What’s wrong?”

Ling Shi and Ling Feng, who’d just left, came flying back at this moment. Their faces were also filled with terror.

“Your Highness, hurry and retreat. The tide of rats has encircled us in the front and is coming for us!”

“What?” Ye Qiao was thrown into a panic when he heard these words. The tide of rats? Why would the tide of rats be in front of them? They were on the outskirts of the tide and hadn’t sensed the tide of rats pass by here at all. Why would it suddenly change directions and come backwards?

“The route of the tide of rats is very strange. They made a huge circle to flank us. They’ve actually surrounded us now!” Ling Xuan had made out the tide of rats’ line of movement now and made his conjecture.

“Hurry, hurry, Ling Xuan, hurry and find a way where the tide is the thinnest. Use the fastest speed possible to carve a path of blood out. We cannot afford to be surrounded by them!”

Ye Qiao was anxious. How could he have possibly thought that the tide of rats he had so arduously set into motion, would leave Ye Rong’s group alone and surround him instead?

Ling Xuan knew of the dangers of the tide of rats and he crouched down to listen carefully to the movements of the tide in an attempt to devise an escape route. As long as the tide hadn't fully closed in on itself and completely surrounded them, then with their speed and under the conditions of not stopping at all, they still had a chance to break free.

"Your Highness, it's really strange. Apart from the mountain valley, all the other areas have been surrounded by the tide. There's no area of weakness at all." Ling Xuan said.

"The direction of the mountain valley?" Ye Qiao's brow furrowed. "Isn't there only one way in for that valley and no exit? Won't we be dead for sure if we go in?"

"The mountain valley is a dead end, yes. But we may be able to find other paths on its outskirts. If we circle around it and don't enter the dead end, perhaps we'll still have enough time." Ling Xuan wasn't sure himself either. Although they had investigated the terrain, they had only investigated it and the real situation was still an unknown.

If the paths of the mountain valley were not easy to take and needed to be climbed, then their speed would greatly decrease. If that was the case, then they would run the danger of the tide of rats catching up with them.

Chapter 212: Second Prince, Enjoy Your Last Moments

Ye Qiao also knew that right then, time was life so there wasn't much time for him to deliberate.

"Alright, let's make for the mountain valley!" Ye Qiao made the decision on the spot.

The group of people didn't bother thinking about chasing after Ye Rong now. In their eyes, by this time, Ye Rong had definitely already been swallowed by the tide of rats.

This was because the tide had come from the direction they'd just left in. Since they'd left in that direction, they would naturally run into the tide of rats. There was no way they could survive!

Although he was also running for his life now, Ye Qiao was actually a bit excited apart from feeling nervous.

For Ye Rong to die in this fashion was even better than him sending someone to assassinate Ye Rong. If everyone died beneath the tide of rats, Ye Qiao would emerge an innocent man. His reputation would bear no stain and this result was absolutely perfect.

Ye Qiao's group made haste and quickly arrived in the mountain valley.

Ling Xuan analyzed the terrain. "Second prince, there are two roads in this area that will both take us around the mountain valley. We should be able to make it to open ground after this. At that time, the power of the rat tide will be greatly diminished. They can't possibly overrun the entire maze realm."

"You make a judgment and see which road is better. This matter can't be delayed; we can't waste any more time." Ye Qiao was still a bit cautious.

Ling Xuan and the others gathered together and quickly chose a

road.

"Your Highness, according to our analysis, we should go left. That route should take us past the mountain valley faster. We can..."

Ling Xuan's voice suddenly faded as an exceedingly bizarre expression floated onto his face as though he'd seen a ghost. His eyes looked straight ahead, staring at an area before them.

"Ling Xuan, what is it?" Ye Qiao couldn't help but follow the direction of his gaze when he saw Ling Xuan's strange reaction.

"Jiang Chen?"

Ye Qiao's entire body shuddered as he too, displayed an expression of disbelief. What was Jiang Chen doing here? Hadn't he already left?

And, he'd left in the opposite direction too. Could he teleport? Now that was too ridiculous!

Jiang Chen naturally didn't know how to teleport. He had merely used the difference in time to loop around the mountain valley. They weren't that far apart so looping back around only required him to traverse a few hundred li. Jiang Chen hadn't expended much time at all when he had traveled at full speed.

Besides, with the Rat King controlling the rat tide, they had grasped the perfect moment to act. He'd waited until the rats had occupied the mountain area before herding Ye Qiao and the others to the mountain valley.

In this way, Ye Qiao was like a turtle in a jar.

"You're in such a hurry, second prince, what's wrong?" Jiang Chen had an easy smile on his face.

Ye Qiao had no energy to bullshit with Jiang Chen at this moment. "Jiang Chen, I don't have the time to verbally spar with you. Where's number four? Didn't you guys set off in that direction? Why did you

circle back?"

Jiang Chen smiled, "The fourth prince? They're on their way of course. I had some matters to take care of so I came back. I'll immediately go and meet up with them after I take care of things."

"On their way? Meet up?" Ye Qiao smiled. "Jiang Chen, does this mean that you were really the only one to come back here?"

Ye Qiao had been a bit worried when he first saw Jiang Chen — worried that number four had also come back instead of being swallowed by the rat tide. His heart settled down again when Jiang Chen said that he was the only one who had returned.

"Just me, second prince. You've yet to answer my question. What are you doing here?"

Ye Qiao displayed a meaningful smile, "Nothing much. We heard that there was a spirit creature here and wanted to try our luck. Jiang Chen, go conduct your business and reconvene with number four when you're done. I'm going to hunt the spirit creature and won't chat any longer. We'll go our separate ways now."

Ye Qiao was feeling quite gleeful inside. Jiang Chen, do you think you're hot shit? If you've got the guts, stay here and don't leave! And you still want to meet up with Ye Rong? Ye Rong and the others are likely shards of bone by now!

He naturally wouldn't be so kind as to remind Jiang Chen about the tide of rats behind them.

Jiang Chen chuckled. "Hunting a spirit creature? The second prince is in such a hurry that it doesn't seem like you are simply hunting a spirit creature. Could it be that you have some unspeakable secret?"

Ye Qiao's face froze as he shouted, "Jiang Chen, watch your tone! I'm going about my business; how dare you slander me?"

If it wasn't for the fact that time was of the essence, Ye Qiao would've

surely rushed up with his personal guards without a second thought and chopped Jiang Chen up into little pieces. However, he didn't have the leisure to do so at the moment.

The rat tide would here arrive at any moment. Wasting more time with Jiang Chen would mean that the danger they were in would increase.

"Second prince, I also mean well. I know of an area with a lot of spirit creatures. There's too many to kill, even. If the second prince likes to hunt spirit creatures, I can guarantee that you'll like it."

"Huh. No need for your generosity. Go tell your master of it. Come, let's go!" Ye Qiao snorted coldly and didn't pay any attention to Jiang Chen.

"Second prince, do you honestly think that you can still leave?" Jiang Chen chuckled.

"What do you mean?" Ye Qiao's body halted as killing intent flooded his face. He suddenly turned back to glare at Jiang Chen.

"What do I mean?" Jiang Chen took a few leisurely steps forward. "Second prince, you must be feeling quite proud of yourself at this moment. You think you're so smart as to destroy those two idiots Ye Dai and Ye Zheng with a borrowed knife, and then happen to stick it into the fourth prince as well. In this way, you'll be the only one left out of the four who had the most amount of hope to attain the position of Crown Prince. You'd be justifiably made the Crown Prince without a doubt after leaving the maze realm, wouldn't you?"

"What... what are you talking about? What borrowed knife? You're absolutely ridiculous Jiang Chen! I'll kill you for sure if you keep spouting nonsense!"

"You wouldn't dare." Jiang Chen smiled faintly. "You don't even have the courage to linger here. Would you dare kill me if even I stood here and let you attack me?"

"Jiang Chen, what are you trying to say?" Ye Qiao's heart chilled.

"What am I trying to say? Can you really not guess? You're such a smart person and even now, you still can't see it? You triggered the rat tide and killed both Ye Dai and Ye Zheng. Do you think you can get away with that?"

"You... you're making ludicrous accusations!" Of course Ye Qiao continued to deny things. He still thought that Jiang Chen was making things out of midair and didn't have any proof.

"It doesn't matter whether I am or am not. Either way, you can't leave."

"Your Highness! The rat tide has already cut off all routes. We're surrounded!" Ling Xuan suddenly realized that the two directions leading away from the mountain valley had already been thoroughly blocked.

They were truly turtles in a jar now!

"What?!" Ye Qiao's expression changed greatly.

"Jiang Chen, you were purposefully playing for time, weren't you?" Ye Qiao's eyes were vicious as he grit his teeth.

"You guessed correctly." Jiang Chen chuckled and didn't deny it.

"Crazy lunatic!" Ye Qiao cursed loudly. "Do you think that you can get away even if you delay us? Do you think your master can escape?"

Jiang Chen smiled faintly, "Me delaying you has nothing to do with Ye Rong."

"Then what was it for?!" Ye Qiao was infuriated.

"The reason's simple. You guys made a move on me first so I'm just here to collect on debts. Remember, although I may be easy to talk to, you will die for pissing me off."

Jiang Chen's tone turned cold. "Don't play innocent with me. Your two men did their job quite nicely, but they should at least clean the traces of blood off themselves. Not wiping their asses after taking a dump, what's the deal with that, eh?"

Ye Qiao's face was quite ugly now, "This means that you purposefully came here to hold us up?"

"You're right." Jiang Chen laughed softly.

"Hahaha, crazy, you're completely crazy. You've succeeded in delaying us but now what? We're all going to die together. Madman, a madman!" Ye Qiao shook in his anger.

"You think too much, I said that I was here to collect on debts. I'll leave as soon as I'm finished!"

"Leave? Dream on! That way there has long since been blocked off by the rat tide. Both ways out have been surrounded by now. You want to leave? Not unless you stick wings on your back."

"I know."

"Then what are you smirking about if you know?" Ye Qiao's eyes revealed his internal struggle.

"Because I'm the one who triggered the rat tide this time. The fact that we could emerge unscathed from last time's rat tide means I can do the same this time."

Jiang Chen laughed heartily as his body flashed before he landed on top of a tall and large tree. "Ye Qiao, enjoy your last moments. I'll stand here and admire the view of your death struggles!"

Wham, wham, wham!

The rat tide converged on them from all directions like a tidal wave.

The golden colored seas once again swept across the land.

All the members of Ye Qiao's group were all flabbergasted and petrified. As they looked at the rat tide swarming from all directions, despair grew in their hearts!

A flash of brilliance suddenly hit Ling Xuan as he called out, "Everyone, go bring down Jiang Chen! This brat isn't afraid of the rat tide and so he must have a plan. We'll have a shot for survival if we take him with us!"

This suggestion helped Ye Qiao come to his senses.

He'd been on the brink of despair when the light of hope shot out from his eyes. He too called out, "Right, everyone work together and capture Jiang Chen!"

Ling Xuan's level of training was the highest as he grasped the air with one hand and his longsword with the other. He flew towards Jiang Chen with a desperate motion.

Ling Shi and Ling Xuan also knew that this was a battle of life and death; how would they retain any of their strength? They also split up left and right in a pincer movement as they shot towards Jiang Chen.

"Hurry, hurry! The rat tide is arriving soon!" Ye Qiao screamed out with all his might. "Everyone go! What are you guys doing standing there in a daze? Go!"

Out in front, Ling Xuan only had one notion at that moment, and that was to capture Jiang Chen and force out the method to avoid the rat tide.

Otherwise, only death awaited them.

He was very well aware that the rat tide wasn't something that human strength could withstand. There was only a strand of hope if they wanted to avoid the rats.

The aura of his sword was like a dragon; the stroke arrived in front of

Jiang Chen in the span of a second.

Suddenly —

The unexpected happened.

Just as his body was about to draw near Jiang Chen, a surge of strength broke through from the earth and shot towards the heavens, bringing with it a wave of mud like an erupting volcano.

An enormous Goldbiter Rat leapt out from the mud wave, pouncing towards Ling Xuan with a flash of golden light, completing ignoring the force behind his strike.

A crisp breaking sound rang out as the sword was halted in its tracks. The Goldbiter Rat had merely clenched its paw and shattered it into shards.

In the next moment, the Goldbiter Rat's other paw had landed on Ling Xuan's chest. Its sharply fanged mouth opened as it chomped down on Ling Xuan's neck!

Ling Xuan's neck was immediately bitten through.

Chomp, chomp!

That Goldbiter Rat actually grasped Ling Xuan's body and started gnawing away at it. It had finished eating Ling Xuan within a few breaths.

Ling Xuan, a solid first level spirit realm, a practitioner who'd been about to set foot into the second level, was like a child who'd just learned how to walk in front of this Goldbiter Rat. He had been completely defenseless. The imposing sword strike had been easily defused with a light grab.

If Ling Shi and Ling Feng on the two sides hadn't reacted quickly and if the Goldbiter Rat hadn't been more interested in Ling Xuan, they likely wouldn't have escaped this disaster either.

After all, this Goldbiter Rat was simply too strong and its speed too fast. These so-called spirit realm practitioners were a complete joke compared to the Goldbiter Rats.

Chapter 213: Jiang Chen Has More Plans

The sight of the Goldbiter Rat holding Ling Xuan's body in its paws and biting down hungrily at it caused Ye Qiao's scalp to go numb. It was as if his entire body had been struck by lightning. He trembled uncontrollably all over and his teeth chattered.

Ling Shi and Ling Feng looked at each other with a despairing but resolute intent to kill in their eyes. The two shadows swept left and right as they once again charged towards Jiang Chen.

They had no other choice now. They had hope to live only if they captured Jiang Chen. This goal hadn't changed even with the death of their boss Ling Xuan.

If they couldn't take down Jiang Chen, they were dead without a doubt.

At this moment, they only hoped that boss Ling Xuan's death would distract the Goldbiter Rat so that it wouldn't be interested in taking the two of them.

Their arts and speed were deployed to their extreme in this moment of life and death.

Ling Feng and Ling Shi could almost see hope again at this point.

The Goldbiter Rat moved again at this time. Its speed was so fast that it surpassed their powers of comprehension.

Golden light flashed.

Pa pa!

Two crisp sounds rang out as Ling Feng and Ling Shi's hovering bodies were slapped down like rotten mud.

When everyone took another look at them, their skulls had been flattened. Upon landing on the ground, their bodies no longer

showed any signs of life.

Two spirit realm practitioners had been destroyed in the blink of an eye.

All of a sudden, Ye Qiao felt he became completely lifeless as he finally experienced the despair that Ye Dai and Ye Zheng had felt in that moment.

As he looked at the golden colored sea churning over the land, and then cast a glance at the corpses of his spirit realm personal guards lying on the ground, Ye Qiao didn't react at all as he was swallowed by the boundless rat tide.

The rat tide made a clean sweep of things and slowly began to retreat after fifteen minutes, continuously returning to the Millionditch Stonenests and leaving behind a ground covered by bone shards.

...

Jiang Chen caught back up to Ye Rong and the others after an hour.

"Jiang Chen? Back so soon?" Ye Rong was a bit surprised to see Jiang Chen return. He'd been gone only for how long?

"I'm back." Jiang Chen displayed a bizarre grin.

"It's done?"

"I didn't do anything. I don't know what went on in the minds of second prince and his party. They actually entered the mountain valley area and were destroyed by the rat tide."

"What?" Ye Rong was shocked. "Destroyed by the rat tide? Ye Qiao, is he..."

"They are all dead. A bunch of bone shards all over the ground is what's left of them." Jiang Chen shook his head with a sigh, as if this

matter had nothing to do with him.

Dan Fei looked at him meaningfully, only somewhat believing him, but she didn't say anything.

It was rather Xue Tong who had a hint of a smile on his lips and didn't say anything.

"Forget it, he brought evil onto himself. Let's go. This place is truly uncanny."

After having so many things happen, Ye Rong wasn't much excited by Ye Qiao's death. He just wanted to leave this maze realm as soon as possible.

Besides, the main opponents who could compete with him, Ye Dai and Ye Qiao, had already been destroyed by the rat tide.

Ye Zheng had dug his own grave in following Ye Dai, being Ye Dai's dog, and had accompanied Ye Dai to the grave. Naturally, he was of no threat to Ye Rong.

With regard to this matter, Ye Rong's mind had long since travelled back to the capital. He had no particular thoughts about the Autumn Hunt itself.

As for Dan Fei, she was coming back with a full haul after obtaining four Silvermoon Monsterape babies. She didn't have any particular opinions anymore as she had already lost interest in the Autumn Hunt.

It was rather Jiang Chen who, despite accompanying Dan Fei in, was the most proactive now. He wasn't particularly enthused about hunting spirit creatures at all. However, he swept up all the spirit ingredients and herbs he found and thus came away with quite a haul as well.

As time progressed, they would sometimes bump into other teams, but everyone walked away unscathed since there were no conflicting

interests.

On this day, the team traveled south and walked in the opposite direction of the exit.

“The Autumn Hunt will end in another seven days. We should hurry back to the appointed location, what do all of you think?” Ye Rong suggested.

Dan Fei thought for a moment but didn't say anything. Her beautiful eyes looked at Jiang Chen, obviously seeking his opinion.

Jiang Chen said, “You head for the exit first, I'll meet up with you there before the time approaches.”

“What do you have planned?” Dan Fei was curious.

Jiang Chen smiled as his eyes looked into the distance towards the south. “I just feel that it's a bit of a pity to just leave like this after making a trip in.”

Ye Rong and Dan Fei looked at each other, both a bit shamefaced. They'd accomplished both of their goals this time, but Jiang Chen hadn't seemed to gain much of anything despite contributing the most effort.

Ye Rong had gained the most this time as his competitors had all been swallowed by the rat tide, indirectly sending him to the throne.

Dan Fei had obtained the baby spirit animals she wanted, thus she did not come in vain.

It was Jiang Chen who'd gone to all the effort, but they were the ones who'd ended up benefitting. Therefore, they could understand why he wanted to linger around a bit longer.

“Jiang Chen, watch your safety.” Ye Rong clapped Jiang Chen's shoulder.

Dan Fei originally wanted to accompany Jiang Chen, but when she saw that Jiang Chen had no intention of inviting her, she naturally didn't make herself unwelcome.

"Take care." She seemed to have a lot of things to say but only said those two words in the end.

Jiang Chen left the team, dithered for a bit and then made swiftly to the south.

Ever since entering the maze realm, all the spirit creatures that Jiang Chen had encountered had headed in that direction. This made him curious; just what was happening there? What was it that was caused so many spirit creatures to continuously be congregated in that area?

These spirit creatures all seemed to be in quite a hurry to the point that even those usually interested in the flesh and blood of humans didn't bother to stop and attack when they passed by human camps.

"Something more tempting must be happening in the south!"

...

The area to the south was an enormous, deep abyss. There were boundless caverns at the bottom of the abyss that ran in all directions and their entrances were numerous.

Jiang Chen hid himself well outside the caverns.

Suddenly, the ground beneath his feet trembled as the head of the Goldbiter Rat King poked out.

"Young master Chen, this cavern is incredibly big. Many spirit creatures are gathered there, as if waiting for something to happen."

"Oh? How many spirit creatures?" Jiang Chen asked lowly.

"Roughly ten or so. The ones that are strong are similar to me. Those

who are weak are at least mid rank spirit realm." The Rat King was at the advanced rank spirit realm.

"That many? What are they waiting for?"

"I didn't go near them and I don't know what they're waiting for. But according to my senses, there should be something special beneath the caverns that all the spirit creatures want to claim for themselves."

"A special item? What can it be?" Jiang Chen was quite curious.

"In my speculation, it should be some spirit item, like a spirit fruit, a spirit source or something. These spirit creatures wouldn't spend so much time occupying this territory if it wasn't something particularly useful." The Goldbiter Rats were renowned for being timid.

Even though not many of these spirit creatures would be assured of a victory over it, the Goldbiter Rat King still didn't dare draw near. They were naturally cautious and timid. It was a trait shared by all the Goldbiter Rats.

"Go, take me there for a look."

It was very easy for Jiang Chen to enter the caverns with the help of a Goldbiter Rat King that could drill and fly through the ground. He followed the Rat King in continuously threading through the ground.

The caverns were deep and dark, twisty and windy, quite serpentine in its makeup.

Jiang Chen deployed his Psychic's Head to the maximum and directed the Goldbiter Rat King to continuously dig in front. The Rat King's drilling abilities were truly amazing.

"Slow down, we're almost there. Don't alert the other spirit creatures." Jiang Chen reminded it.

Jiang Chen and the Rat King both knew that if they entered through

the currently existing passages, they'd be discovered by the spirit creatures entrenched in the area, no matter which tunnel they took.

Although the Rat King's strength allowed him not to fear these spirit creatures, and its appearance wouldn't even alarm the other spirit creatures, it was another thing entirely if the Goldbiter Rat King appeared with a human in tow. If it was just the Rat King, that was just another spirit creature and another competitor at most.

Spirit creatures had incredibly high intelligence and an innate wariness of humans. If they discovered that the Rat King had brought a human here, it would be greatly ostracized and perhaps even be attacked by a mob.

Jiang Chen didn't come here to become a living target for these spirit creatures. He had come to take a look at just what the spirit creatures were fighting over.

Jiang Chen was the reincarnated son of the Celestial Emperor. He didn't lack any theories or knowledge. What he lacked was all sorts of divine materials and earthly treasures. It was apparent that the item all these spirit creatures were fighting over wasn't ordinary, given that there were so many of them here.

"I've participated in the Autumn Hunt because I wanted to put myself through trials and search for all sorts of good items. Since I've chanced into it this time, I naturally won't let it go. Although it'll be a bit dangerous, I should still make a play for it!"

Fortune came from risk. With high risk came high rewards.

Jiang Chen naturally understood this, and so he had the Rat King cleave a new passageway. He didn't excavate it through to the end and stopped when they were about two to three meters away from the outside world.

This distance allowed him to observe the scene through the Psychic's Heart without any worry about being discovered by the spirit

creatures in the outside world.

The Rat King was cowardly. If it wasn't for Jiang Chen's promise, it wouldn't have wanted to get embroiled in this at all. Therefore, when Jiang Chen called it to halt, it naturally wouldn't refuse.

However, it was rather curious. Just how was Jiang Chen going to observe the situation outside from within the walls?

What it didn't know was that Jiang Chen's Psychic's Heart could feed information to his five senses. He made use of this divine art to sense everything outside and fed it into his eyes, able to see things without seeing them at all.

Jiang Chen deployed the "Psychic's Heart" to the maximum. He saw through the transference of imagery of an enormous chasm, with hundreds of spirit creatures surrounding all corners of the abyss.

These spirit creatures were all staring fixedly at the depths of the deep chasm, with the fervent light of greed emanating from their eyes. It was as if there was something that would make them go crazy beneath the chasm.

"It looks like there's something nice below!"

The perceptive abilities of Psychic's Heart were exceedingly strong. He could even sense that there seemed to be two incredibly abundant spirit powers being contained below the chasm. One of them was the pure spirit power of ice and the other was the pure spirit power of fire.

These two miraculous powers emanated faint blue and red light within the chasm. The two colors blended together and made the entire chasm look quite eerie.

"Can it be that there are two different treasures within this chasm?" This eerie scene made it difficult for Jiang Chen to get a grasp on things. Theoretically speaking, ice and fire were opposing elements. These two powers constrained and neutralized each other. Logically

speaking, they wouldn't be able to coexist!

Chapter 214: The Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice

Although Jiang Chen was curious, he wasn't impulsive. He really wanted to charge out of the wall and make it to the side of the chasm to take a good look. But reason told him that unless he had the strength of old tutor Ye and was able to subdue all the spirit creatures, he'd be torn to pieces by all the spirit creatures if he walked out like that.

Although it was quite dreary, he could only wait patiently. After all, these hundreds of spirit creatures obviously hadn't waited only a day or two.

Although some spirit creatures would occasionally interact, most of them remained solitary.

It was apparent that the world of spirit creatures was different from the world of humans. They rarely formed groups and cliques.

"Damn it, I was here the earliest and I have been here more than twenty friggin' days. How much longer do I have to wait before it appears?" A spirit creature complained anxiously.

"What's the point of coming early? The Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice flowers has seven seeds at most. There's so many of us here now that there'll definitely be a massacre later."

"Then we'll kill each other! Who's afraid of that?"

"The first one to die will be those in the mid rank spirit realms. I'm a flippin' advanced rank spirit creature and my battle strength is at least in the top ten. I'm going to get a seed of the Lotus of Fire and Ice no matter what anyone says this time!"

"Ai, that depends on where the seeds appear. If they appear in a bad place, what then?"

"I'll take it from whoever gets it then!"

“Spare the effort. Everyone’s thinking the same thing, but it’ll still be the strongest spirit creatures who will remain laughing in the end.”

It was a good thing that Jiang Chen understood the beast language and he could comprehend the communication between them, even though such interactions were exceedingly few.

However, he still obtained some useful information from these snippets.

“The Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice?”

Jiang Chen wasn’t unfamiliar with this name. It was precisely because he was familiar with it that he felt very surprised. The maze realm had something like that?

The Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice was an item of incredible existence.

Once spirit power was awakened in it, it’d be saint rank at the very least, and that was only the start. Most Lotuses could reach earth rank or even heaven rank when they matured.

Jiang Chen had even occasionally heard of Lotuses evolving to the divine rank in his previous life.

With Jiang Chen’s knowledge of the maze realm, the strongest spirit creature here was at most of the saint rank. Since even the spirit creatures wouldn’t be stronger than saint rank, something on the level of the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice shouldn’t have appeared here at all. After all, the difference between ranks was simply too great.

“Can it be that there’s another secret in the maze realm?” Jiang Chen guessed as he began to speculate.

He’d been familiar with the Lotus in his past life and he knew that as long as spirit power awakened in the Lotus, it would have the ability to materialize itself.

In addition, the most precious thing about the Lotus wasn't its seeds.

The most precious thing about it was the spirit of its essence – the Flaming Heart of Ice.

As long as its essence wasn't destroyed, it wouldn't be harmed even if the body of the Lotus was destroyed. It'd reborn again after a while.

The Flaming Heart of Ice was usually concealed quite thoroughly within the depths of the earth. The Lotus protected its Heart with utmost care.

This was because the Heart itself was like a baby, without any ability to attack and extremely fragile. Once it was discovered by enemies and attacked, it would have no defensive capabilities whatsoever.

However, the battle capabilities of the Lotus itself were incredibly frightening.

The Lotus was formed by the powers of ice and fire. The horrifying strength formed by such frightening mysteries would rank it at least in the top ten plant spirits in the world.

To think about it for a moment, in all the planes of existence and all the worlds, the attacking power of the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice could rank in the top ten. This was definitely not an undeserved title.

"I wonder to what level has this Lotus evolved to? If it's only a spirit rank, it won't be able to handle all the spirit creatures looking at it covetously, even with its strong attack power. If it's at the saint rank, then even though there are a lot of spirit creatures, they may still fall in the end... "

Jiang Chen mused.

Although he also knew that a seed from the Lotus of Ice and Fire would help him proceed more smoothly and faster on his path in the

spirit realm, the Lotus seed was only a spirit fruit of one time use. It'd be gone after taking it and refining it.

Although it could help a spirit realm practitioner breakthrough a bottleneck, it would be nothing after one use.

Therefore, as good as this item was, it wasn't worth for Jiang Chen to take such a risk and attempt to steal the seed in front of all the spirit creatures. Regardless of whether or not he'd be able to avoid the attacks from the Lotus, the spirit creatures wouldn't be able to stomach a human stealing food that was near their mouths.

"Although this Lotus is nice, it's not worth putting my life on the line." Jiang Chen's appetite and ambitions were much greater than these spirit creatures.

"With all these spirit creatures hovering, if that Lotus gets distracted and spends all its energies on these spirit creatures, there may actually be an opportunity for me!"

Jiang Chen had his advantages. His knowledge of the Lotus was much greater than the spirit creatures.

The spirit creatures were gunning for the seeds, yet Jiang Chen's goal was the spirit essence of the Lotus, the Flaming Heart of Ice!

If he could refine the Flaming Heart of Ice and meld it into his spirit ocean, Jiang Chen would receive the arts of the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice. This kind of encounter was something that countless numbers of Lotus seeds would be unable to match up to.

The seed of the Lotus was just that, a seed.

Yet, the Flaming Heart of Ice was the true distillment of the Lotus' essence.

"Ole Gold, listen to my commands later." Jiang Chen told the Goldbiter Rat King.

The Rat King seemed to discern the impulsiveness of taking a risk in Jiang Chen's slightly crazed eyes. It spoke a bit timidly, "Young master Chen, what do you want to do? You're not thinking of going out and fighting these spirit creatures?"

Jiang Chen chuckled, "Fighting them? That thing is nothing to me. Listen to my commands later on and dig further into the ground."

"And do what?"

The Rat King was about to say something when Jiang Chen suddenly said lowly, "Don't speak. Don't open your mouth, and don't circulate any spirit power!"

Jiang Chen's face had suddenly changed and turned extremely grave.

His Psychic's Head was deployed to the maximum when he suddenly felt an extreme tremor through the surface of the depths of the chasm.

These tremors weren't typical tremors. It felt like countless numbers of large hands were continuously reaching out of the depths of the chasm.

"It's the Lotus, it's starting to emerge from the ground!"

This notion flashed through Jiang Chen's heart.

Indeed, great changes occurred in the perimeter of the chasm after a while. It was occasionally bone piercingly cold, and at times incredibly hot.

"It's the two elemental powers of the Lotus intersecting and exerting themselves!"

Jiang Chen also knew that Lotus was born with two elemental attributes, one was extreme cold and the other was extreme heat. These two usually conflicting powers coexisted in perfect harmony in

the Lotus. It was precisely because of the combination of these two powers that the Lotus' attacking abilities were ranked in the top ten amongst all planes of existence.

"Why is it suddenly hot and cold?"

"Yeah, this is really uncanny. Is the Lotus about to emerge?"

"It's got to be, it's got to be!"

At this moment — *bam!*

An enormous bang rocked the chasm, making the earth tremble and walls shake.

Hundreds of vines erupted out of the chasm in the next second. Each vine was as thick as the thighs of the spirit creatures.

The green vines changed at a speed noticeable to the human eye. All sorts of embryonic lotuses began to form on the vines.

The embryonic forms of the lotuses went through a cycle of the four seasons within the span of a breath with extreme speed.

Enormous lotuses had formed on all of the vines after a few breaths. Each of these lotuses were as large as a bull.

These lotuses were either a brilliant, flaming red or an icy, frosty blue.

Each lotus was uncannily beautiful and they exuded a tempting presence.

The lotuses slowly flowered and produced seeds above them.

All of the spirit creatures were green with envy at this point.

"It's the seed! Get it!"

"Go! Whoever gets to it first gets it!"

All the spirit creatures made their move in that instant, rushing to each of the flowering lotuses with the speed of an arrow. Their goal was only one, and that was the Lotus' seed.

More than a hundred Lotuses had suddenly appeared. These spirit creatures almost didn't need to fight amongst each other. Almost each one could obtain one seed.

Jiang Chen used the Psychic's Head to observe the scene through the wall. He was privately astonished. This scene was too bizarre.

The Lotus had abruptly blossomed so many flowers. It was obvious to see how strong its essence was.

Only a strong spirit essence could give rise to such strong life. Although this Lotus didn't display power to the point of making one despair, Jiang Chen still felt that something was wrong here. With the Lotus' character, it wouldn't allow its seeds to be so easily taken by the spirit creatures.

"What's going on here? There's around a hundred spirit creatures here and they can all obtain a seed? This scene is a bit too harmonious, isn't it?"

Jiang Chen suddenly felt that this scene wasn't as simple as it appeared.

Indeed. A spirit creature abruptly cried out, "No!"

The spirit creature had landed on top of the lotus as it was enveloped by the enormous lotus. The petals actually acted like a lips, first opening and then closing, swallowing the spirit creature into it.

Jiang Chen was startled, "That's it! This must be the case. The Lotus is tempting the spirit creatures to it and then trapping them, absorbing their spirit power and catalyzing its own evolution!"

When he understood this, Jiang Chen suddenly felt waves of fear

about the Lotus' intelligence.

He was also quite glad that he hadn't rushed out like these spirit creatures to fight over the seeds. His fate at this moment would most likely be like these spirit creatures, already having become the spirit creature's fertilizer?

Chapter 215: Circling Around Behind It, Stealing the Spirit Essence

The scene within the cavern was a complete chaotic mess. After the first spirit creature was swallowed, it was quickly followed by a second and then a third.

The devouring appetite of the Lotus was incredibly frightening. Once a spirit creature was enclosed by it, it would be unable to break free at all and struggle until it died.

Some stronger spirit creatures with faster reactions immediately understood what was happening and fled when they saw the other spirit creatures being devoured by the petals of the Lotus.

However, the hundreds of vines around the chasm were like hundreds of tentacles as they formed a dense net surrounding everything.

Add to that the enormous mouth that was the Lotus, the spirit creatures were unable to escape from the encasement of the sea of vines no matter where they fled.

Jiang Chen immediately spurred on the Rat King when he took in the situation. "Ole Gold, hurry, and follow me down. We'll circle around behind it."

"Behind it?"

"Don't ask and follow my instructions. We need to be quick, so hurry." Jiang Chen rushed the Rat King onwards and started drilling towards the depths of the ground.

The Rat King also used all of its strength as it moved like it was swimming through water. The rock walls didn't affect its speed at all whilst drilling.

One had to admit, the Goldbiter Rats had a great talent in drilling indeed.

"Mm, we're about two to three thousand meters in. This is the place." Jiang Chen calculated accurately using the Psychic's Head.

Indeed, when the walls were broken through, a man and a rat found themselves at the bottom of the chasm.

In front of Jiang Chen's Psychic's Head, any place was like bright daylight for him and his vision wasn't impaired at all. Add to that searching with the God's Eye, he quickly locked onto the right location.

"Go, over there, that's the place."

The temperature was actually as warm as spring beneath the chasm. Neither the bone piercing cold nor the blazing hot fire was present.

Jiang Chen knew that this was the balance formed by the Flaming Heart of Ice. It was only under these conditions that the evolution of the Heart would be the fastest.

"Hurry, hurry, we must be fast!" Jiang Chen threaded through the bottom of the chasm.

He knew that he was in a race against time with the Lotus and hoped that the spirit creatures would be able to contain it for a bit longer.

Jiang Chen would be safe as long as the Lotus hadn't completely retreated.

He'd have to face hundreds of Lotuses by himself if the Lotus finished its meal and withdrew!

Every single one of those Lotuses was at least at the peak of the spirit realm.

Once that happens, Jiang Chen would be dead without a doubt.

However, if Jiang Chen was able to get to the Heart and absorb it before the Lotus does, then all the Lotuses would immediately wither

without the support of its spirit essence. They wouldn't be able to threaten him then.

Time was of the essence, and it was now a race against time.

Jiang Chen's footsteps suddenly halted as fog billowed upwards in front of him. It gave one a mysterious feeling like finding an altar in the middle of water.

"That must be the place!"

Jiang Chen's heart suddenly pounded because he knew that this was an opportunity, but one that came with a lot of risks.

He was about to rush over when his footsteps abruptly halted because he discovered that there were eight vines around the altar in the water. There were eight Lotuses around the altar, protecting it tightly.

"Damn it, this Heart is extremely cautious alright." Jiang Chen was depressed as hell. He could see the item in front of him, but he had no way to get to it.

Each of the eight Lotuses were at the peak of the spirit realm. To approach with Jiang Chen's current level of training meant seeking death.

However, he wasn't willing to leave empty handed.

"Ole Gold, we may have to sacrifice some of your descendants!" Jiang Chen turned and said to the Rat King.

The Rat King smiled ruefully. "Must we really do this?"

"If I don't become stronger, how can I help your tribe become stronger?" Jiang Chen was quite rational.

The Rat King laughed wryly, "I almost don't know whether this choice is worth it or not."

“Ole Gold, this doesn’t sound like you.”

“Say no more. I’ll summon a group of children to attract the eight Lotuses. As for whether you can obtain what you want, that will be up to you!”

“Alright. As long as your descendants can distract them for three to five minutes, I promise that I’ll have the item in hand!”

The Rat King didn’t hesitate as it summoned a couple thousand Rats to rush towards the altar within the water.

The Goldbiter Rats were as fierce and fearless as always, regardless of what environment they were in. They rushed towards the altar and started ferociously tearing away at the vines of the eight Lotuses.

Jiang Chen laid in wait until all eight Lotuses were contained by the Rats before taking a leap upwards and landing on the altar within the water.

Jiang Chen looked downwards and saw a spirit item shaped like an infant on the altar. It was half blue and half red, sparkling like a crystalline entity and exuding an astonishing presence.

The dense vines around the spirit item were obviously born from it and were extending from it.

“This is the Flaming Heart of Ice!”

Jiang Chen was about to reach out and grab it when his hand was almost burnt to a crisp by a wave of heat before he’d even touched the Heart.

He hastily snatched his hand back.

“That’s right, the Heart is half blazing flame and half frosty ice. I’ll be unable to take it without using special equipment. I’d only be able to destroy it.”

“However, if I can use the mysteries of the Divine Aeons Fist and hold the moon in one hand and the sun in the other, wouldn’t that happen to match the mysteries of the Heart?”

Jiang Chen’s hands twisted into certain hand seals as he deployed the mysteries of the Divine Aeons Fist. He held the sun in one hand and the moon in another, and placed both hands on the Heart.

“What are you?!”

“A lowly human dares to pollute me?!”

“Damn it, what are you doing?! Don’t touch me!”

The Heart possessed inordinate intelligence. How else would it give birth to so many Lotuses to swallow the spirit creatures, absorb their spirit power, and help itself evolve?

However, the Heart itself had no battle capabilities. It couldn’t resist at all with both of Jiang Chen’s hands on it.

“Human, are you absorbing my spirit power? No, you’re actually refining me! How... how are you doing it? You can actually refine me?”

The Heart was panicking by now. It hastened to summon the Lotuses back to attack Jiang Chen.

Indeed, it wasn’t long afterward before the Lotuses on the surface of the chasm were continuously summoned back down by the Heart.

The Rat King on the side was resigned. It obviously couldn’t watch Jiang Chen be swallowed by the Lotus, so it could only continuously summon out its children and use the tactic of superior numbers to continuously harass and restrain the Lotuses.

It was a good thing that Jiang Chen had a high comprehension of the Divine Aeons Fist. Furthermore, he had studied the Lotus in depth. This continuously boosted his rate of absorption.

As his rate increased, the Heart's defensive capabilities decreased. The amount of Lotus it could control also continuously decreased. As its spirit essence was continuously siphoned away, the attacks of the Lotuses it had summoned downwards also grew weaker and weaker.

Finally, when Jiang Chen retracted his hands after fifteen minutes, the Heart had disappeared completely from the altar within the water as it'd been completely absorbed by Jiang Chen.

The vines from all the Lotuses also swiftly withered at a noticeable pace after the Heart had disappeared.

Jiang Chen quickly dashed out of the altar and came to the side of the Rat King. "Hurry, let's go."

The Rat King summoned the rest of his children to return back into the Stonenest as they left hurriedly through the tunnels they had come from, leaving behind a scene of devastation.

All of the spirit creatures who had survived the disaster came down not long thereafter.

All of the Lotuses had withered and died above the chasm, this greatly shocked the spirit creatures hanging on by the tips of their claws.

Although there were only less than a third of the spirit creatures left at this point, those who could survive until now weren't your average strong spirit creature.

They weren't satisfied with merely living through what'd seemed like sure death, and wanted to investigate the bottom of this chasm.

They were all greatly astonished when they happened upon the scene of great devastation.

"It was this altar controlling the Lotuses?"

"No, there's no spirit power on this altar at all, how could it have controlled the Lotuses?"

"Eh? There's the lingering presence of humans here?"

"Can it be that a human secretly snuck in and stole the spirit essence of the Lotus?" A spirit creature who had great knowledge suddenly remembered the matter of the spirit essence.

"A human?"

"Everyone, come look, there's a passage here!"

"There really is a passage! This must be how the human got in."

"Yes, judging from this size, it looks big enough for a human."

"That's odd, this passage looks new. Does the human know how to drill through the earth? This is a bit strange."

"Whatever, after the human!"

A few smaller sized spirit creatures rushed into the passage and tried to follow it.

A few bigger spirit creatures couldn't squeeze themselves in no matter how they tried. They could only go back the way they had came and take a look at the situation when they got to the surface.

Except, Jiang Chen was as if a fish in water at this moment. He quickly arrived back in the outside world thanks to the Rat King guiding him.

After the Rat King returned to the Stonenest, Jiang Chen rushed out of the cave with the fastest speed possible and left the mountain valley.

He had no worries after he left the valley. The maze realm was so vast, he only needed to retract his presence to make it impossible for the spirit creatures to follow him.

After he ran madly for a thousand li, Jiang Chen found a quiet area and had the Rat King dig a cave. He hid in it and started closed door cultivation.

After absorbing the Heart, Jiang Chen's current spirit ocean almost wanted to explode. He needed to cultivate behind closed doors for a moment to fully subvert the heart for his own use.

It was also Jiang Chen's good luck that he'd trained in the Divine Aeons Fist and had a high grasp of its mysteries. There was no way he could taken the Heart otherwise.

Any practitioner who hadn't grasped the concept of the sun and moon and the dual existence of the yin and yang would've been directly burnt to a crisp by the power of fire or frozen into an ice cube by the power of ice if they'd brashly tried to take the Heart.

It was only through dual employment of the yin and yang and alternatively absorbing each side could the Heart be slowly absorbed.

Jiang Chen also knew that he'd made out like a bandit this time. The Autumn Hunt had finally not been in vain.

Chapter 216: Returning with Rich Rewards

Jiang Chen finally walked out of the cave five days later. The Flaming Heart of Ice had been fully refined by now and became a seed within his spirit ocean, becoming an additional ability in his arsenal.

There was less than two days left until the day the exit would appear. Jiang Chen didn't dare tarry as he hurried to the appointed time and place.

There was only half a day left when he finally made it there.

Dan Fei and Xue Tong were all very anxious as there was such a short amount of time left until the deadline. If Jiang Chen missed it, he wouldn't be able to get out even with all his abilities.

"Haha, Brother Jiang Chen, you've finally appeared. Sister Dan Fei was about to head back and look for you if you still hadn't appeared." Ye Rong happily walked up.

He was sincerely grateful from the depth of his heart towards Jiang Chen. Without Jiang Chen, he likely wouldn't even have made it out alive from the Autumn Hunt this time round.

It was because of Jiang Chen that he had benefited from misfortune and swept away all the contestants for Crown Prince.

Dan Fei was slightly embarrassed to hear Ye Rong's exaggeration, "Ye Rong you little monkey, what are you blathering on about?"

"Heh heh, now that Jiang Chen's back, this means that we haven't lost a single person and the entire team has returned safe and sound." Ye Rong hastily changed the topic.

"Ai, the losses during this time's Autumn Hunt has been truly great. Look, only this amount of people have come back by now. It looks like only half of the group has made it back?"

Ye Rong sighed. "Who knew that so many spirit creatures would suddenly appear in these last few days and hunt all of us so ferociously? If we hadn't come back early, things probably wouldn't have gone so smoothly for us. Jiang Chen, were you not pursued by the spirit creatures in these past couple of days?"

Jiang Chen shook his head wryly, "I've been in closed door cultivation the past couple of days and didn't run into them."

He found that there was a look of "I wouldn't believe you even if I was beaten to death" in everyone's eyes. He could only laugh ruefully, "I really was in closed door cultivation. What's with all of the looks you're giving me?!"

"Alright." Ye Rong smiled. "It was a good thing that you were in closed door cultivation. I heard from the survivors that there were more than ten spirit creatures hunting through the realm for human practitioners. Most of the participants in the Autumn Hunt have lost their lives in the past couple of days."

Jiang Chen laughed with resignation inside and also wondered, could it be that the spirit creatures who didn't die to the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice are hunting for me?

This was a possibility.

However, Jiang Chen would never admit to this even if he was beaten to death.

No other accidents occurred in the remaining half day. Jiang Chen walked to the exit transportation portal with the rest of the entourage, porting out in batches.

When his footsteps once set foot on Skyl Laurel Kingdom territory, he felt a wave of emotions at the thought of so many things that were occurring and how different everything was.

A group of Precious Tree Sect disciples were maintaining order at the exit.

Jiang Chen knew that although they were maintaining order, it'd be more accurate to say that they were actually guarding the proceedings. They were worried about practitioners slipping away and making off with their fruits of labor from the Autumn Hunt.

As the host of the Autumn Hunt, the Precious Tree Sect would be able to take half of all that was gained without any effort on their behalf, no matter how much or little. Therefore, it wasn't surprising that the Sect would be on full alert.

Letting one escape meant they would receive less of the spoils.

Even Ye Rong's status as a prince didn't make him an exception. He also had to hand over his storage items and open them, taking out all his gains and give half away.

When it was Dan Fei and Jiang Chen's turn however, old tutor Ye Chonglou walked over and said to the disciple making inspections, "I was the one who sent those two in, so there's no need to inspect them."

The old tutor was quite domineering as he took one of them in each hand and led Jiang Chen and Dan Fei away. The disciple could only stare open mouthed, furious but not daring to mouth it.

They weren't afraid of anyone in the entire Skylareland Kingdom, not even the king, but they were quite fearful of this old man.

They could only wave their hand in irritation, "Next!"

They had a belly full of anger but with nowhere to vent it, the next group of people in line naturally became their scapegoats.

The old tutor led Jiang Chen and Dan Fei to the side.

Dan Fei smiled merrily, "Teacher, those disciples don't seem very happy?"

"The hell does that have to do with me. At your teacher's level, the

emotions of those disciples are naturally not of any importance. They can be happy or sad for all I care.”

“Little girl Dan, your gains seem to be great this time.” The old tutor was in a wonderful mood as he looked at the bamboo basket on Dan Fei’s back.

“Hehe, things never go beyond a third attempt. If I didn’t get some sort of gain this time, Little Dan wouldn’t have dared to come out and see my teacher.”

The old tutor laughed. “And how was my suggestion to form a team with Jiang Chen? I’m willing to guess that Jiang Chen didn’t put forth any less effort than you this time.

Dan Fei’s beautiful face reddened. Well... she really couldn’t deny that bit.

Jiang Chen however, smiled. “I was just an assistant, what help could I have possibly been?”

Dan Fei pouted, “Teacher, this time I made an agreement with Jiang Chen that half of the spirit creatures we’ve obtained must be split with him.”

The old tutor smiled dashingly, “That’s a given. Since you were a team, the spoils of war should be evenly split.”

Dan Fei had been a bit worried that the lordmaster would have some opinions. The unease in her heart abated somewhat when she saw the lordmaster’s attitude.

The lordmaster’s gaze looked at the crowd and his forehead creased slightly. “The amount of people who have come out this time seems to be quite low.”

“Lordmaster, out of the four princes who participated in the Autumn Hunt this time, all of them are dead except for Ye Rong.” Dan Fei suddenly recalled this matter.

"Mm?"

"Both Ye Dai and Ye Zheng conspired with each other to destroy Ye Rong, but were constrained by Ye Rong and Jiang Chen. I pleaded for mercy on their behalf, but... ai. We ran into the rat tide in the end. Ye Dai and Ye Zheng were unable to escape disaster and were swallowed by the rat tide. Ye Qiao, who had triggered the rat tide, ended up smashing up his foot with his own rock and was swallowed by the rat tide."

The lordmaster's gaze was far away as he listened silently and didn't respond.

"You didn't run into the rat tide?" The lordmaster asked after he'd finished listening.

"We were also surrounded by the rat tide, but..." Dan Fei's gaze looked towards Jiang Chen at this moment as she didn't quite know how to say it.

"Heh heh, it seems that there's something more to this?" The lordmaster chuckled.

"Nothing much, just that I happened to know a bit of the beast language and chatted with their leader. I just persuaded them, that's all." Jiang Chen spread out his hands.

The lordmaster smiled meaningfully but didn't comment on anything else. He sighed. "To think that releasing a rumor would result in another struggle for the position of crown prince. Everything has been illuminated in a moment and after the dust has settled, Ye Rong has indeed become the final victor."

"This isn't necessarily a bad thing." Jiang Chen smiled.

His eyebrow suddenly quirked as he made his apologies in a low murmur, walking swiftly to Ye Rong's side.

"Xue Tong, who was the person who just walked past you?" Jiang

Chen walked up to ask.

Xue Tong shook his head. "I don't know. He only talked with me for a bit and asked for my name. Maybe it's because he saw that I was with the fourth prince."

"Did you tell him?"

Xue Tong nodded subconsciously, "Young master, is something amiss?"

Jiang Chen thought for a moment and lightly shook his head, "I feel that that person's been observing you all this time. Perhaps it's my wrong impression. Forget it, it's just a small matter. I'm probably thinking too much."

Xue Tong also knew that with Jiang Chen's personality, he definitely wouldn't randomly ask this question. Xue Tong scanned the crowd but didn't find a trace of that person.

Although he felt it was odd, he didn't say much.

"Heh heh, Tutor Ye, I heard that you directly took two young people out just now, making things difficult for the disciples afterwards. Everyone in the line afterwards keeps saying that it's unfair and are constantly causing trouble for us."

A Precious Tree Sect Elder smiled merrily as he walked towards the old tutor.

Old Tutor Ye narrowed his eyes, "Who cries foul? Tell them to come find me."

The elder smiled, "How would they dare say that in front of you? They could only complain incessantly at our disciples and refuse to cooperate."

"Elder Iron, what are you telling an old man like me this?"

"Ai, I just wish that you'd make things easier for us and be a good role model."

Ye Chonglou laughed heartily, "This is just a bad coincidence. The two young people I took away entered the Autumn Hunt to broaden their worldview and didn't gain much. How will they be able to give you half?"

Elder Iron's facial expression froze. "Lordmaster, this isn't the kind of thing to do?"

"There is nothing to do or not about it. If you don't think this is alright, have Sect Head Xie come find me or have your great elder come find me as well."

The lordmaster's tone was indifferent as he obviously didn't want to waste his spittle in talking to the elder.

Elder Iron also seemed to be a bit fearful of the lordmaster as he gave a few glances at the latter but didn't say anything in the end. He left with an angry flourish of his sleeves.

Elder Iron halted when he walked in front of Jiang Chen. "You're one of the ones that Tutor Ye brought out right?"

"Yes." Jiang Chen nodded.

"I'm an elder of the Precious Tree Sect. Young man, I'll ask you, how much did you hunt and bring down inside?"

"Lordmaster Ye seems to have already discussed this? I won't blather on then." Jiang Chen knew that this elder was attempting to include Jiang Chen in his schemes.

"Playing tricks with me huh?" Elder Iron's face darkened. "You're young with not bad potential. Do you want to impede your own future for a small matter like this?"

The connotations of this was that you're young and will still fall into

my grasp if you want to enter the Precious Tree Sect in the future. Why don't you docilely hand over the items now and avoid damaging your own future.

Jiang Chen smiled noncommittally as the corners of his eyes and lips drooped. He didn't want to pay any more attention to this fellow. How would he not know that this fellow was trying to start something? If he, Jiang Chen, really handed over half of his items, he would've been used by this fellow to indirectly slap Lordmaster Ye's face.

The items were a small thing. This Elder Iron was obviously making use of the opportunity to face off against the lordmaster.

"What kind of attitude is this?!" Elder Iron felt a surge of rage in his heart when he saw Jiang Chen being so cocky.

Old man Ye strutted around because his strength was extraordinary coupled with great seniority, so he couldn't do anything to old man Ye. But the hairs hadn't even fully grown on this brat, so how dare he behave like this?

And it looked like his attitude was even more arrogant than the old man!

"Elder Iron, every wrong has a source, and every debt a debtor. Go vent your ill feelings on whoever's roused them. I'm young and I can't take this kind of shock."

Jiang Chen's tone was noncommittal as he obviously wasn't falling for Elder Iron's act.

Chapter 217: Pressure from the Elder of the Precious Tree Sect

Elder Iron was the epitome of frustration right now. He wanted to threaten and scare Jiang Chen for a bit and make him hand over the items. He wanted to take advantage of this to slap the old lordmaster's face and poke holes in his bullshit.

Who knew that this kid would put up such an impenetrable front and even hint that he was picking on the weak and afraid of the strong, only picking on a young man because he couldn't handle Ye Chonglou?

Although this was the truth, speaking the truth at an occasion like this made Elder Iron lose a great amount of face.

"You... what's your name? What house do you belong to in the Skylarell Kingdom? Do you understand decorum? Do you know who I am?!"

Jiang Chen flicked a baffled look at Elder Iron, thinking, *is something wrong with your head? I've already called you Elder Iron, how would I not know who you are?*

Of course, he couldn't very well continue butting heads with Elder Iron here. He laughed wryly and decided to take his leave. Although the old mad dog barking in front of him hadn't bitten anyone, it was still displeasing just to listen to him.

However, Jiang Chen taking a step away thoroughly infuriated the Elder Iron.

This... this was complete disregard of an elder of the Precious Tree Sect!

"Halt!"

Jiang Chen ignored him, but Ye Rong walked over and pulled on Jiang Chen's arm, "Younger brother, just say some words and gloss the

matter over.”

Elder Iron pointed at Ye Rong, “Little fellow, you go away! It’s none of your business.”

Ye Rong laughed wryly, “Elder Iron, he’s young and you’re an esteemed elder. Don’t be mad.”

Elder Iron’s anger had nothing to do with Jiang Chen’s age. He was ticked off at Jiang Chen’s uncooperative attitude.

“Alright, alright! Alright. The young men of the Skylaurel Kingdom have more and more attitude these days. Brat, don’t think that I won’t find out who you are just because you didn’t offer your name.”

Jiang Chen lightly pushed Ye Rong’s hand away and arched his eyebrows, “Elder Iron, you don’t have to ask around. I’m called Jiang Chen. Remember, Jiang as in the great river, and Chen as in dust.”

“Good, good! Brat, you’ve got some guts. Jiang Chen is it? I can clearly tell you now that you don’t need to think about even setting foot into the Precious Tree Sect doorway in this life.”

Elder Iron had pondered for a while to come up with what he thought was his most devastating threat.

Jiang Chen hadn’t planned on stirring up trouble today, this was truly called an undeserved catastrophe. Elder Iron had been met with a face full of dust from Ye Chonglou and he had vented his resulting rage on Jiang Chen.

However, Jiang Chen wasn’t a punching bag.

He’d already planned on keeping quiet seeing that the other was an elder of the Sect and he had tried his best to not pay attention to this fellow.

Who would’ve thought that this fellow would become more and more outrageous? He’d actually said publicly that he was blacklisting Jiang

Chen on the Precious Tree Sect's behalf.

Jiang Chen had held his temper in for so long and he could no longer do so. As good as his manners were, he was ready to erupt when confronted with such an unreasonable fellow.

"Elder Iron is it? I really hadn't cared about whether or not I could enter the Precious Tree Sect before, but since you've thrown down the gauntlet, I'm going to make it in just for you. Not only will I enter the Sect, I'm going to do so with great fanfare and celebration. Your Sect will beg me to enter! This is all I'm going to say, watch how things go in the future."

Jiang Chen couldn't be bothered to look at the elder after venting this annoyance. He laughed coldly and left with a flourish of his sleeves.

Elder Iron had obviously overestimated his influence and power, as well as underestimated Jiang Chen's fortitude. In his knowledge, all young people from a mundane, ordinary kingdom were supposed to be humble and almost grovel in front of the Precious Tree Sect. Add to that his status as an elder, he'd thought that the young man in front of him would be unable to bear up if he exerted even the slightest bit of pressure.

What young person in the Skyl Laurel Kingdom could bear it if he voiced the idea of blacklisting them from the Sect?

He'd thought that the young man would surely submit and lower his head in apology. Who would've thought that the young man wouldn't follow his predefined plan at all?

Not only had he not submitted and asked for mercy, he'd been even cockier than an elder of the Precious Tree Sect!

The elder had never thought that the young men of current times would have such character and temper!

Shaking all over in his fury, Elder Iron stabbed with his finger, "Jiang Chen, I don't care how much of a background you have, if you make it

into the Precious Tree Sect anytime in this life, I'll let you use my head as a seat cushion!"

He was a vaunted elder of the Precious Tree Sect and he had lost so much face in front of a young man that he couldn't retreat. It was easy to see that the fires of rage were burning within his heart. He also made up his mind that even with Ye Chonglou's recommendation, he would still collude with some compatriots and completely reject this Jiang Chen brat!

As long as he, Elder Iron, was within the Precious Tree Sect, he'd never allow Jiang Chen to enter the Sect!

Being one of the elders of the Sect, Elder Iron had great deal of power. It was an easy thing for him to deny a common disciple's request to join the sect.

As strong as Ye Chonglou was, he still wasn't the head of the Precious Tree Sect!

The atmosphere at the scene had been a bit stifled when all various disciples were incredibly surprised by this conflict.

In their eyes, this was simply too incredulous.

An ordinary disciple butting heads with an elder of the Precious Tree Sect? Had a door slammed on or a donkey kicked this young man's brains? Wasn't yelling at an elder of the Precious Tree Sect courting death?

See, now he'd gotten blacklisted by the elder.

As talented as you may be or as much potential as you had, how great could you grow if you could never make it into a sect? You'd only have some mundane wealth and fortune.

However, would you be able to enjoy your mundane wealth and fortune in peace after insulting an elder of the Precious Tree Sect?

Whenever the elder thought of you some day in the future, he'd be able to dispatch a disciple to trample you with a flick of his finger.

"This Jiang Chen had it too easy in the capital that he dared even strut around in front of the Precious Tree Sect. He's in for it now!"

"Hah! He deserves it! I really wish there'd be more people like Jiang Chen so that I'd have less competition when the Sect holds its open recruitment in the future."

"This kid has some guts alright. I'd probably lack even the courage to speak if it was me up there."

"Ai, he's unlucky too in that an elder of the Precious Tree Sect was creating trouble for him. If he handed his things over, he would've offended Tutor Ye. If he hadn't, he'd be offending Elder Iron. He was destined to come up short when caught between two powerful people."

The disciples present had all sorts of thoughts. Some felt that this was a pity for Jiang Chen, and others secretly felt that this was unfair to him. Of course, there were also others who gloated over Jiang Chen's misfortune and there were even more who wished that he would be even unluckier.

Since Jiang Chen didn't care about the attitude of even an elder of the Precious Tree Sect, why would he care about what the bystanders thought of him? He walked out of the valley entrance as if nothing had happened.

When he passed by Dan Fei, she felt a bit apologetic. Her beautiful eyes alighted on Jiang Chen as her mouth moved slightly, but she wasn't sure how to comfort him.

This thorny matter had indeed been started by the lordmaster, and he bizarrely hadn't stepped out to smooth things over for Jiang Chen.

This made the others present feel even more sorrowful for Jiang Chen. They all felt that he had become Tutor Ye's discarded pawn

and been thrown away.

It was because of this that the guilt within Dan Fei's heart grew even stronger.

As she watched Jiang Chen walk outside all alone, Dan Fei's upper cheek twitched a few times as she looked a bit aggrieved at the lordmaster.

What greeted her was the sight of a merrily smiling Lordmaster Ye, as if all this had nothing to do with him.

"Little Dan, are you thinking why I was so recalcitrant as to not help Jiang Chen?"

Dan Fei did indeed have such a thought within her heart, but she had always greatly respected the lordmaster and naturally wouldn't admit to this.

"Heh heh, this little fellow is quite interesting. I like watching him reveal and shine in his true glory. Young men should dash forward and should exploded every now and then. It's only then that they are energetic."

"Lordmaster, it's just that I'm afraid that Jiang Chen will think that we have no loyalty." Dan Fei truly did feel guilty when she thought of Jiang Chen's contributions up until now. "Jiang Chen must be feeling very aggrieved right now."

"Little Dan, if you think this way, that means you don't know our little friend Jiang Chen well enough." The lordmaster laughed meaningfully. "Alright, let's not chat of this any more. Let's go as well."

Many matters weighed heavily on Dan Fei's heart along the way. She naturally didn't have much enthusiasm for anything.

Even Ye Rong felt slightly indignant on Jiang Chen's behalf. It wasn't his fault today at all.

It had been Elder Iron's fault, who was purposefully looking for bones to pick.

Elder Iron had then picked on Jiang Chen to make an example of when he couldn't do anything to Tutor Ye. That was a truly low move, but although Ye Rong felt this way, there was nothing he could do about it.

When he returned to the capital, Ye Rong said to Xue Tong, "Xue Tong, go back and comfort your young master that plans can be slowly formulated for this in the future. There's got to be another way, just like a road always appears when the carriage arrives in front of the mountain."

Xue Tong was rather open minded about it all as he laughed. "Don't worry fourth prince. Perhaps Elder Iron thinks that my young master's words are quite arrogant, but with my knowledge of the young master, he may not actually think highly of an elder of the Precious Tree Sect."

Ye Rong felt speechless in that moment. *Even his followers are this cocky!*

However, he supposed it made sense. Jiang Chen had created countless numbers of miracles all along the way. Just like Ye Rong had said in the beginning, Jiang Chen was gold buried in the sand. He was destined to shine brightly with great radiance one day.

With Jiang Chen's stunning talents and knowledge, it really may not be Jiang Chen's loss if the Precious Tree Sect didn't want him. With such a young genius as Jiang Chen, there'd be plenty of sects who would fight for him.

The Precious Tree Sect wasn't the only strong sect amongst the sixteen kingdom alliance.

When Jiang Chen returned home, he saw that all had been peaceful in the month that he's been gone. Nothing particularly special had

occurred. What surprised Jiang Chen was that after a month, Guo Jin's level of training had advanced by leaps and bounds as he'd taken another step forward in breaking through to nine meridians true qi after Xue Tong. He had entered the ranks of the true qi masters!

"It looks like Xue Tong's remaining Rare Jade Fruit will end up going to Guo Jin."

Gouyu had still yet to emerge from closed door cultivation. It looked like she had received much after taking the Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill and was likely trying to assail the spirit realm all in one go.

The person who'd had the best time during this period would be Qiao Baishi. As time progressed, Elder Ning of the Azure Heaven Southern Palace became more and more unable to tear herself away from Qiao Baishi.

The two of them actually did fall in love the more time they spent together. Although Elder Ning was a few years older than Qiao Baishi, this wasn't a problem at all.

Elder Ning had taken the initiative and chased after Qiao Baishi. To think that Jiang Chen had actually ended up foretelling what would happen to the two of them!

However, Qiao Baishi was still quite cognizant of the greater picture and knew his place. Even though he'd confirmed his relationship with Elder Ning, he was still absolutely loyal to the Jiang family.

He would come visit every two or three days whenever he was in the capital to see if he could help with anything.

Chapter 218: Jiang Feng's Martial Dao Goals

"Chen'er, I heard Xue Tong say that you got into a conflict with an elder of the Precious Tree Sect when you left?"

"Father, don't worry about this. It's just a small matter." Jiang Chen knew that his father was worried about his future. But in Jiang Chen's eyes, a mere elder of the Precious Tree Sect was really not someone worth worrying about.

Jiang Feng sighed, "Chen'er, your father still thinks it a bit incredible when I ruminate over all that has happened to you. My abilities are paltry so I can't smooth the way for you any longer. It will be up to you to pave your own road step by step in the future."

"Oh right, father, you've lingered at the peak of true qi for long enough. It's about time to start assailing the spirit realm. I have a Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill here. It's a wondrous medicine for making any attempt to reach the spirit realm. It will give you a ninety percent chance of success."

Jiang Feng was greatly astonished, "What did you say? Ninety percent?"

In fact, Jiang Chen had given a conservative estimate as he taken out an upper rank pill this time. An upper rank actually gave the user a 99% chance of success.

It was only because his father's age was slightly older than the optimal timing to transmute his qi into spirit, that Jiang Chen was giving a ninety percent estimation.

The last time he'd refined the Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill, there'd been five acceptable ones. Two of them were of lower rank, one was of middle rank, and two were of upper rank.

He'd given the middle rank one to Gouyu.

He'd taken one of the upper ranked pills himself, and the remaining one was naturally for his most beloved father.

"Father, word of this matter cannot travel. Take this pill in closed door cultivation. You should have no problem in making it to the spirit realm."

Jiang Chen was using the calmest tone he could say those words in but they still sounded like a ringing bell in Jiang Feng's ears, sending tremors through him to the extent that he couldn't react at all.

Ever since he'd set down the mantle of the Duke of the Jiang Han, he'd striven his hardest in the area of martial dao. He had always wanted to break through to the spirit realm.

But time and time again, he'd been able to find no inspiration and couldn't identify an opportunity to breakthrough.

He knew that at his age, he'd already missed the prime opportunity to transmute to spirit.

The best timing was before thirty years old.

And he, Jiang Feng, was already almost forty. Although this age wasn't that awkward, it was definitely no longer within the golden period to transmute to spirit.

Therefore, he'd been contemplating lately whether or not he still possessed a way forward in the area of martial dao.

His conclusion was tragic but he wasn't willing to accept that even though his son had grown up into a towering tree that was enough to protect this family.

In the depths of his heart, Jiang Feng had a matter resting heavily, a matter that he would have to take care of personally.

It was a matter that even his son could not take care of for him.

Therefore, his heart of martial dao had never died. He'd even advanced to the point of resting neither day nor night in his training in the past year.

But the results had brought him disappointment and dejection.

Just as he had become completely lost, his son Jiang Chen actually told him that this pill would give him a ninety percent chance to break through to the spirit realm!

Jiang Feng was speechless for a long while before finally recovering. He grabbed Jiang Chen's hand with agitation as tears of emotion flowed out of the corners of his eyes. His lips trembled lightly, "Chen'er, are you lying to me?"

"I don't have the courage to lie to my old man." Jiang Chen smiled. "Father, don't be so shocked. Not only can this pill help you break through to the spirit realm, it can also shape your body and your spirit ocean, making your spirit foundation much stronger than ordinary people. When you cast off the mundane and enter the spirit realm, you'll have much more potential than ordinary spirit realm practitioners. Such is the true effect of the Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill."

"Chen'er, why do I feel like all of this is a dream?"

"Father, I promise you that this is only the beginning. The spirit realm is merely a stepping stone in the path of martial dao."

Jiang Feng surged to his feet with great emotion and grabbed the pill, "Chen'er, I'm going into closed door cultivation!"

Jiang Chen sighed lightly in his heart as he watched his father. "Father's potential for martial dao is actually quite high. Unfortunately, he was caught in the mundane shackles of dukeship and missed the best training period. The Jiang family's hereditary martial dao method is also much too inferior, further constraining his development. This pill will enable him to enter the spirit realm

and reset everything. I hope that father will walk farther down the path of martial dao.”

Jiang Chen actually had a great haul from this time’s Autumn Hunt.

Firstly, he had half of the four Silvermoon Monsterapes brought out of the maze realm. That made for two that were his.

In addition, although he hadn’t tamed many fierce monsters or spirit creatures along the way, he’d foraged many spirit ingredients, grass, and fruits. These items supplemented much of his deficiencies in the area of spirit ingredients.

Of course, his greatest gain was the Goldbiter Rat tribe that numbered in the hundreds of millions.

He had now formed a very cooperative partnership with the Rat King — basically the rat tribe’s fates were tied to his. They had become his trump card to be deployed when necessary. It was a great power that was enough to shake a kingdom.

One thing on par with the Goldbiter Rats was naturally the refinement of the Flaming Heart of Ice.

By this time, the Heart had now become a seed within his spirit ocean and would grow into a frightful divine art one day if used properly!

Jiang Chen knew that the quality of the Heart was actually very high. It was only because it had been at the bottom of the chasm that it couldn’t absorb much spirit power, and thus had a slow rate of evolution.

Now that Jiang Chen had refined it into his spirit ocean and was using his spirit power to feed the Heart, he’d be able to develop the divine art of the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice one day, to be used as he wished. Not only would such power be unexpected when facing off against his enemies, but it’d be frightening and shocking as well.

He would need some time to develop this ability.

Although Jiang Chen had absorbed the Heart, he would still need time to manipulate how to integrate it into his spirit ocean and make it into one of his trump cards.

On the whole, he'd walked away with impressive gains from the Autumn Hunt.

Although there'd been some unpleasantness with Elder Iron of the Precious Tree Sect when he left, Jiang Chen didn't think much of it at all.

"I have to admit that Dan Fei's words that day pointed me in a new direction of thinking. The raising of spirit beasts, the evolution of their bloodlines — these are all good schools of thoughts. With so many Goldwing Swordbirds and my a partnership with the Goldbiter Rats, if I follow this train of thought through, I can absolutely raise some Goldwing Swordbirds to the spirit realm. Once the Goldwing Swordbirds enter the spirit realm, their strength will be incredibly frightening."

However, although this was the case, with the Goldwing Swordbirds' potential alone, it'd be difficult for them to enter the spirit realm.

Jiang Chen also knew that this plan would need long term planning and couldn't be accomplished in one night.

The raising of spirit creatures needed treasures from heaven and earth. The amount of resources that such an act would take was enormous. If one hadn't achieved a certain status, one would be completely unable to bear the burden of those pricey materials.

Although Jiang Chen was not lacking in money, that was only on a mundane, ordinary level. It wasn't much to look at once he reached the spirit realm.

If a spirit realm practitioner truly wanted to develop fully, the amount of resources needed wasn't something that an ordinary

family or mundane power could afford.

The gold, wealth and power of a common family amounted to nothing at all in the spirit realm.

Of course, this was all relative as well.

In the spirit realm or an even higher realm, there was business to be done and transactions to be conducted. There were always venues to earn money.

Except, the higher one's level was, the more advanced the ways of conducting business and the subjects of said business were.

"Sigh, I still need to earn money. How will I back up these plans if I don't have money?" Jiang Chen sighed with emotion.

"Young master, Miss Dan Fei seeks an audience." His men came to report this just as he was thinking about it.

"She's probably here with the baby Silvermoon Monsterapes." Jiang Chen walked outside.

Dan Fei stood up from her chair when she saw Jiang Chen walk over.

"Jiang Chen, are you alright?" Dan Fei asked.

"Haha, you're not just here to comfort me, are you? It's alright. Whether it's an Elder Iron or Elder Copper who wants to threaten me, they're all barking up the wrong tree."

Dan Fei understood that this fellow really hadn't taken any of it to heart when she heard Jiang Chen's words. But even so, she still felt a bit guilty, "Actually, you were also innocently drawn into today's matter."

"Forget it, let's not talk about those things. These two baby Monsterapes are for me, right?" Jiang Chen saw that two baby Monsterapes were placed in the bamboo basket next to the chair.

"Yes." Dan Fei nodded.

"See, talking back at Elder Iron is not that bad. If I'd been scared by him, those two Monsterapes would've turned into just one." Jiang Chen self-deprecated.

Dan Fei now truly believed that he wasn't disturbed by the matter of Elder Iron. Otherwise, he wouldn't have the capacity to joke about this.

She mused silently for a bit as she played with the tea cup with one graceful finger. Her delicate eyebrow suddenly arched as she asked, "Jiang Chen, what plans do you have for the future?"

Jiang Chen started, "Why are you suddenly asking me this?"

"I..." Dan Fei stammered. "I want to ask, do you really want to enter the Precious Tree Sect?"

"Elder Iron would be rather proud of himself if I don't join." Jiang Chen smiled.

"Well, if you follow the lordmaster, he'd absolutely be willing to pass on all his teachings to you. You wouldn't be confined by the rules and behavior of the sects." Dan Fei hesitated and once again offered Jiang Chen an invitation.

Jiang Chen laughed leisurely. Dan Fei still didn't understand his world after all.

He wished to enter the sect neither to take someone as a master nor to learn techniques.

He was entering the sect for its resources, and to interact with more sect geniuses.

One would only emerge from the masses and challenge the true peak after continuously accepting and overcoming challenges on the path of martial dao.

All this were not things he'd be able to obtain by following the lordmaster!

Dan Fei was speaking of the details of only one small pond — a single city, but what Jiang Chen was considering was a grand ambition that spanned the heavens.

Dan Fei's expression darkened slightly when she saw that Jiang Chen didn't respond before she immediately recovered her original indifference after this moment of dejection.

"Jiang Chen, if there's nothing else, I'll be leaving now."

"Yes. Sister Dan Fei, please go back and tell the lordmaster that I know he was only testing me with regards to Elder Iron. I won't bear a grudge."

Jiang Chen spoke only after Dan Fei had set foot outside the door.

Dan Fei halted briefly before walking out, her beautiful form slowly vanishing around the corner.

Chapter 219: Qiao Baishi and His Conflict with His Future Mother-In-Law

Three days later, a matter so significant occurred that it rocked the entire Skylareal Kingdom.

Fourth prince Ye Rong was officially vested as the Crown Prince, becoming the heir to the Skylareal kingdom.

All the various struggles and interplay regarding the position of Crown Prince became history from then on. Although the clan of Ye Dai's mother was strong, it was a strength built on the premise of having an heir to the kingdom.

Now that Ye Dai had perished in the maze realm, that so-called greatness had all become but mere smoke.

In order to ensure that Ye Rong's position as Crown Prince would be stable, the royal family began to strip away the power from the clan of Ye Dai's mother. They, and even some of the powers behind second prince Ye Qiao, slowly faded out of the capital.

This was to create momentum for the Crown Prince and remove the obstacles in front of his feet, paving the way for him!

Since the Crown Prince had been decided, there was no need for any opposing powers. Those tumors naturally had to be cleared away.

Jiang Chen felt sincerely happy for Ye Rong. Just like Ye Rong had said, he and Ye Rong were actually both gold buried in sand.

Now that Ye Rong had emerged as a piece of true gold from the yellow sands, he'd turned into a sparkling, distinguishable gold.

Ye Rong's first act as Crown Prince was to reward his confidantes and followers.

As his greatest harbinger of fortune, Jiang Chen was awarded with

the position of a second rank noble and enjoyed all accompanying privileges.

To the Jiang family, although their power and influence had yet to reach the peak they'd had in the Eastern Kingdom, this was already quite impressive for a family who'd arrived in the Skylaurel Kingdom a mere half a year ago.

After the public investiture ceremony, Jiang Chen and the Jiang family finally officially set foot in the noble circles of the Skylaurel Kingdom and became an existence known to every household throughout the kingdom.

All sorts of versions regarding the relationship between Jiang Chen and Ye Rong arose, making him out to be more impressive even than the gods.

However, the rumor mills didn't have to go to great efforts as merely having the Skylaurel Kingdom Medallion was enough to have everyone in the kingdom pay homage to him.

As for how Jiang Chen had helped Ye Rong to his position, how he'd helped Ye Rong take out his other competitors within the maze realms, numerous versions of those stories abounded. Each was as if the teller had been present and had seen things with their own eyes.

Naturally, none of these tales came even close to the truth.

Naturally, Jiang Chen paid no heed to the rumors from the outside world. Whether it was a fourth rank or second rank noble, in the end, it was only to find a safe place to settle down for the Jiang family.

Jiang Chen didn't give much thought to mundane wealth and fortune.

Jiang Chen had just returned from outside one day when the guard at the door reported, "Young master, a Dragonteeth Guard is outside and seeks an audience."

“Dragonteeth Guard?” Jiang Chen started. “Send him in.”

The Dragonteeth Guard usually rarely acted alone. Was it Tian Shao? But Tian Shao was a common visitor to the Jiang family, his men would’ve definitely recognized him.

After coming in, Jiang Chen discovered that it was actually Tang Long who had come!

“Young master Chen.” Tang Long was actually a bit reserved after coming through the door. He rubbed his hands down his sides, as if not quite sure where to place them.

He’d been in the Guard for two months now and had finally figured his way around things. He often heard the name Jiang Chen when chatting with his comrades.

However, if anyone asked him about Jiang Chen’s matters, he would usually gloss it over with a laugh and a smile. In his comrade’s eyes, Tang Long definitely had some relations with Jiang Chen to be able to receive the position of a sixth rank Guard as soon as he’d entered the Dragonteeth Guard.

Except, Tang Long knew quite well that he really didn’t have much to do with Jiang Chen. To be frank, he’d only ever seen Jiang Chen once. All other matters had occurred because Jiang Chen had casually deigned to offer a helping hand.

The aid from those carefree actions however, had changed his entire life.

Therefore, Tang Long was grateful to Jiang Chen from the bottom of his heart. He’d always wanted to find a chance to visit Jiang Chen and express his thanks.

However, thanks to his low self confidence, he was afraid that he’d be looked down upon by Jiang Chen and his men if he visited with empty hands.

He'd hemmed and hawed for two months until he'd managed to scrape some money and buy something. He'd then finally mustered his courage and come to visit.

"Good man, you look absolutely different with the Dragonteeth Guard uniform on you." Jiang Chen chuckled. "How's your little brother doing?"

"He... He can walk normally now. He only spends some time on the wheelchair because his body is a bit weak. It will take him some time to completely recover."

"Mm, that would take some time for one to recover and adjust." Jiang Chen nodded and looked at what Tang Long had brought. He smiled, "Don't bring anything with you next time you come find me, or else I'll have my men sweep you out the door. You said you earned a bit of money, then buy more stuff for your woman. She's a good woman and you should cherish her."

"Yes, yes." Tang Long hastened to nod repeatedly.

"Mm. I'll accept it this time, but this should not occur again. So, how does it feel after two months in the Dragonteeth Guard?"

"Everything is quite good. My comrades are all very nice to me." Tang Long started laughing in a silly fashion as he scratched his head, a bit embarrassed. "Everyone thinks I'm good friends with young master Chen and so gives way to me in many places."

Jiang Chen chuckled heartily, "You and I have interacted so many times, it'd be nice to call you my friend. You're someone who Tian Shao has recruited into the Dragonteeth Guard. Tian Shao has unlimited potential. He may even advance to the position of grand director of the Dragonteeth Guard. You should follow him closely."

"Yes, I'll go about my business properly so that I don't lose face for General Tian."

Tang Long suddenly remembered something as he spoke and

gathered his courage to speak, "Young master Chen, I think there's a matter that I should tell you."

"What is it?"

"The last time we went on an outing to conduct a mission, I happened to hear the disciples of the four great sites discuss something, saying that some sort of heavenly treasure was about to emerge in some mountain valley of the Southern Palace. It's said that many Precious Tree Sect disciples know of this matter and are making their moves."

"Heavenly treasure?" Jiang Chen smiled. "What kind of heavenly treasure can exist in this mundane world?"

Tang Long smiled in a simple and honest way, "I don't know either, I only heard them talking about it. But if even the Sect disciples are interested in this, it likely won't be fake intelligence?"

Tang Long's intentions were actually quite simple. He purely felt that this intelligence may be of use to young master Chen. Out of a sense of gratitude to him, he felt that he should notify Jiang Chen of this news.

The sound of footsteps rang out on the other side of the door at this moment. Xue Tong walked in.

"Young master, Qiao Baishi requests to see you."

Xue Tong also started when he saw Tang Long, "You?"

Tang Long also had an impression of Xue Tong, but his face changed slightly when he took a look at Xue Tong. "You... last time I saw you, were you not only a true qi master? You're now at the peak of a true qi masters?"

Only a short amount of time had passed, no wonder Tang Long was so surprised.

Xue tong smiled and looked at Tang Long's uniform. "You're also doing quite well for yourself, you've made it into the Dragonteeth Guard."

Jiang Chen had merely lifted a finger to help Tang Long, so he'd never mentioned the man to his men.

"Tang Long, since you've come, have a drink with us. Xue Tong, tell Baishi to go to the back yard."

Tang Long's emotions had been a bit muddled during this visit and he was feeling rather uneasy. He subconsciously wanted to flee when Jiang Chen invited him in for a drink.

But Xue Tong didn't allow him to protest as he pulled on his arm, "Old Tang, don't stand on ceremony now that you're here. To be honest, if it hadn't been for your enthusiastic introduction of the things in the Skylareland Kingdom when we'd just arrived, we might have really met our downfall at the hands of the Northern Palace."

Tang Long was slightly embarrassed, "That was just a small act. Besides, young master Chen gave me such a good pill."

"Don't be so formal." Xue Tong patted Tang Long's shoulder. "Come, all my other brothers are here. You know them as well."

A banquet held at home was naturally very casual.

Although Tang Long was a bit restrained, the presence of the sillies Qiao Shan and Qiao Chuan in Jiang Chen's personal guards made it easy to get to know everyone. Not long after, Tang Long had mingled in with the crowd.

Except, Qiao Baishi didn't seem particularly happy.

"Baishi, what's wrong? You don't seem very into this. Is it that men in love become more sentimental?" Jiang Chen joked.

Qiao Baishi smiled wryly, "Young master Chen, to be honest, I hadn't

thought that I would develop anything with Elder Ning when you had me go to the Southern Palace. Perhaps it was fate from our past lives that she would look favorably upon someone like me, coming from a small place. However, the head of the Southern Palace has given an edict lately that ordered Elder Ning to cut off all relations with me."

"Why is that?" Jiang Chen felt it odd.

"They're probably looking down on me for coming from a small place and without a great backer. They think I have no future and am not a suitable match for Elder Ning."

"That's bullshit!" Jiang Chen was greatly enraged. Qiao Baishi was his disciple. Who the hell was that head of the Southern Palace to disdain one of his disciples?

"Is this head a man or a woman?"

"Woman, and Elder Ning's birth mother at that. Very few people in the outside world knows this, Elder Ning told me this in private."

"This..." Jiang Chen was a bit speechless. If it was only the head of the Southern Palace, then she was merely a supervisor. If it came down to it, Elder Ning could just quit.

But since it was Elder Ning's birth mother, this made things a bit tricky.

The conflict between a mother-in-law and son-in-law was one of the most difficult problems to tackle beneath the heavens.

"How does Elder Ning feel about this?" Jiang Chen asked.

"Her attitude has been quite resolute as she's continuously fought against her mother's will."

"Then there's no problem. As long as Elder Ning holds on, all will be fine. She's just a mother-in-law, at the end of the day. Baishi, you've seen many things in your time, can you not even handle an old hag?"

Qiao Baishi smiled ruefully, he'd never met such a matter before either, so he really didn't know what to do.

"Young master, I have no clues what to do right now and seek guidance from you."

"There's no guidance to give. Go ask that head what conditions does she want and just handle them! Don't you know to use the Four Seasons Eternal Spring Pill to handle an old hag?"

Qiao Baishi started and a light shimmered in his eyes afterwards, "That's right, how did I forget this bit?"

Using the Four Seasons Pill was a trump card against old women!

"Of course, just the pill alone won't be enough. Just have her list whatever conditions she has. The Southern Palace is just a mundane sect for the Precious Tree Sect. There's nothing about it. Baishi, don't have an inferiority complex. Remember, when you want to have marital relations with the Southern Palace, it's they who are out of their league, not you. Don't get this backwards, if you do, don't say you know me in the future!"

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 Yinze (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 Skylareal 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 Skylareal 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 Skylareal 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 (木杓子): Ingredient to make Nine Magnificence Dew wine

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