SOVEREIGN OF THE THREE REALMS

BOOK 08

Plow Days

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Sovereign of the Three Realms

(三界独尊)

by

Plow Days

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Synopsis

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

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

Genius?

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

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Chapter 501: The Only Uncertainty

Although it was only the results from the first category, Ouyang De still couldn't accept his grandson being ranked at number three. In his heart, he'd never thought that Ouyang Chao would fall short of the champion's rank, much less than be ranked at number three! Not only was this a humiliation for Ouyang Chao, it was even more so for Ouyang De.

He'd been the crowd favorite before the competition and had enjoyed so much support, all sorts of fawning compliments and lavish praises. The continued flattery had been music to Ouyang De's ears, and he'd accepted it all.

If Ouyang Chao really did lose out, it would make the Ouyang clan a laughingstock in the eyes of everyone.

Jiang Chen was a lone man kicking up a dust cloud up front, far ahead of the others and soon vaulting into the fourth category of manipulation. This category involved both refining pills and cultivating spirit herbs. There were three topics in total.

The first was about cultivating spirit herb seeds. To succeed, one had to plant the spirit herb seeds and have them germinate in three days. Completion was worth 20 points.

The second topic of refining pills was worth 40 points. If the pill refined was of lower rank, that would earn 10 points. Mid rank would be 20, upper rank 30, and supreme rank 40 points.

The third was relatively complex, requiring candidates to draw a refinement formation. This would undoubtedly the highlight of the competition, and was worth 40 points.

All three of them together were worth 100 points.

Jiang Chen received the seeds and its the accompanying materials, traveled to the cultivation area and observed the soil there to make an analysis before returning to the testing area. He made a few adjustments to the materials on hand and returned to the cultivation area to plant his seeds.

With that, the first topic was temporarily concluded; all that remained was regular fertilization. Jiang Chen made some time calculations before entering the second topic of refining Origin Fostering Pills.

The Origin Fostering Pills were the most popular pills in the Regal Pill Palace. Along with Spirit Consolidation Pills, these were the two pills most used in the sect.

Those who could refine the Origin Fostering Pills by themselves amongst the younger generation were few and far in between. A few decades of work were needed to do so successfully. Although Mu Gaoqi didn’t boast of proper training, his innate wood constitution and potential in pills allowed him to stand among the few who were capable of refining the Origin Fostering Pills alone.

For those geniuses entering the finals, this was also the first time that they were attempting to independently refine the Origin

Fostering Pills. As for Jiang Chen, although he hadn't personally refined this pill before, it didn't mean he didn't know how to. He only hadn't wanted to waste this time. After all, the thousand Origin Fostering Pills he'd gained from Elder Yun Nie was enough for him to use for a long time.

The materials for the Origin Fostering Pills seemed to be enough for six pills from one cauldron. The contest requested candidates hand in their highest quality pill. Therefore, it was fine if there was one supreme rank and five other trash pills in the cauldron. Of course, special marks had been made on the ingredients so that there was no possibility of taking out a pre-made Origin Fostering Pill to cheat.

Jiang Chen entered the pill refinement room and took out the Skyweave Cauldron that Palace Head Dan Chi had gifted him. "Palace Head Dan Chi must've had certain hopes in gifting this cauldron to me. If I can't use this cauldron to refine a supreme rank pill, that would be an insult to the cauldron." Jiang Chen thought so in his heart, but was in no hurry. He meditated on the complete refinement process in his mind once and simulated it once as well, before finally beginning.

He didn't place all the ingredients in the cauldron in his first go, but used the amount for one pill to experiment. He produced an upper rank pill on his first try.

Jiang Chen wasn't satisfied and went back over his refinement process, once again firing up the cauldron again. On his third try, a supreme rank pill emerged from the cauldron.

The Origin Fostering Pill wasn't a particularly complex pill. Many elders refined it in batches in the Regal Pill Palace. With Elder Yun Nie as an example, he always refined cauldrons worth of Origin Fostering Pills, with twenty to thirty pills to each cauldron. They were usually upper rank. If he bent his mind to it and refined them pill by pill, then it wouldn't be difficult to refine supreme rank pills as well. Even when he refined in batches, Elder Yun Nie had a twenty to thirty percent chance of forming a supreme rank pill.

Jiang Chen's second topic was over with the emergence of the supreme rank pill. When he left the pill refinement room, Jiang Chen went to fertilize his seeds, then took a quick break before taking the third challenge, the final of the competition. All would be complete after this one.

Jiang Chen had striven for perfection in all his previous undertakings and his results had been almost flawless. Most of these tests were child's play to him. However, this last one did pose a slight bit of technical difficulty.

To Jiang Chen, he had studied formations in his past life, but he hadn't had much experience in manipulating pill refinement formations in this life. Still, this didn't stump him, merely making him spend a bit more time, and time was the last thing he was short on. He was ahead of the other geniuses by almost an entire category. When he'd entered the last category, many were still at strength of heart. There weren't many who'd entered the fourth category at this time, so he had plenty of time.

Mu Gaoqi had emerged from the strength of heart category at this time and had performed above his usual level in the first and second categories. But strength of heart had always been his weakness, and although it'd seen some improvement thanks to Jiang Chen during this time, he still hadn't performed up to his own expectations.

"Sigh, I really need to do well in this category, it can't be the one that drags me down. It's a good thing that I did well in the first two. If I perform like normal in strength of heart, it would just so happen to cancel out the advantage I built up in the first two. Let's put the true test in the fourth category! Manipulation of pills is my strength!" Although Mu Gaoqi was a scion of the Herbal Hall and was called self-taught by others in the Regal Pill Palace, his ability in manipulation was widely acknowledged. He had more of a unique advantage thanks to his innate wood constitution.

The rankings for the first three categories were refreshed shortly after all the candidates entered the fourth category. Jiang Chen was still solidly first at full marks.

All the elders were numb at this point, and their thoughts ranged at the extreme of the spectrum. One side acknowledged that Jiang Chen was a genius, the other was certain that Palace Head Dan Chi and Elder Yun Nie were colluding to cheat for Jiang Chen.

Those who thought Jiang Chen were cheating were waiting to see him make a fool of himself in the fourth category. If he received full marks in the first three and saw a tremendous drop in his scores in the last, that was absolute evidence of cheating and grounds for them to bring up complaints. Therefore, they all

watched him with ulterior motives and waited Jiang Chen to fail spectacularly.

This group of people included Ouyang De. He now thought with great bias that there was someone helping Jiang Chen cheat. However, what he was slightly satisfied with was that Ouyang Chao's scores had finally rushed forward, beating Mu Gaoqi to take third place with 280 points.

Mu Gaoqi had had a poor performance in the strength of heart category and was now at third with 270 points and tying with Ling Hui'er. There was another with 260 points, and the rest weren't more than 240 points. There was basically no Sovereign Area residence for them in the future.

Of course, nothing was absolute. The fourth category was quite intricate and it was still very possible for something different to develop in the fourth category, particularly as the fight for second was a tight race.

Although Jiang Chen was at 300 points, those who thought he was cheating felt certain that he would reveal his true colors in the last category and be dragged down from his throne. Although Ouyang Chao's advantage wasn't that apparent at number two, Ouyang De felt even more reassured when he saw his grandson at number two. With his understanding of the self-taught Mu Gaoqi, it was highly unlikely that he would surpass Ouyang Chao in the fourth category.

Of course, Ouyang De didn't know that Mu Gaoqi had been baptized in the spirit spring, nor did the former know that Mu

Gaoqi now possessed the spirit pearl of fire and ice. Only Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi knew of these two trump cards.

The baptism in the spirit spring had enhanced Mu Gaoqi's potential. He would be even more masterful at cultivating spirit herbs, refining pills, and exercise more minute control over ingredients. The spirit pearl would enable him to have finer control over fire, and the greatest ace of all was the discourse the two had the night before. This had helped Mu Gaoqi obtain at least 20 more points in the previous categories!

This was why he was solidly in the top three, otherwise, with the previous Mu Gaoqi, his distance from Ouyang Chao would be definitely more than 10 points!

Shortly after Mu Gaoqi and the others entered the fourth category, Jiang Chen was sitting in the pill refinement room, looking at his almost completed formation etching. This was just an initial draft, and as easy as breathing to Jiang Chen.

If it wasn't for the fact that he'd yet to attempt this in this life and had acted rather cautiously, he wouldn't been long since completed by now. Although simple, he was still very prudent. This had to do with 40 points, and he wouldn't allow for any mistakes.

Jiang Chen finally carved in the final stroke after an hour. Apart from the formation etching, there was also much to do with spirit stone allocation, intra-formation resonance, its arrangement... There was much theory even to a novice formation.

Jiang Chen heaved a long sigh of relief when he confirmed that there were no mistakes after a round of checking. He had been hard at work for almost two straight days by now, and although he felt a bit tired, all of this was worth it. He firmly believed that with this kind of performance, a Sovereign Area residence was absolutely within his grasp. All he had to do now was to silently wait for the spirit seed to sprout and also wait for the final results.

He wasn't worried about himself. All he was uncertain of was whether or not Mu Gaoqi could triumph over Ouyang Chao. He was most concerned about Mu Gaoqi's performance in the strength of heart category. If Mu Gaoqi made it through, then he'd have no problem winning out over Ouyang Chao. If to the contrary, the competition between the two would be up in the air and be determined in the last possible second.

Chapter 502: Final Rankings, Assignment Of Residences

After handing in his formation etching, Jiang Chen left the pill refinement room and walked into the seed cultivation area, checking and fertilizing his seeds. From his understanding of the seed's growth, he had a ninety percent guarantee of making it sprout before three days. This was also the only topic he was left waiting on.

Jiang Chen's seed successfully sprouted after two days, and after handing in the seed, he was completely done. He didn't leave though, choosing to wait in Shen Li Palace to see the final results. Only when everyone finished would they begin the scoring of the fourth category and present the final rankings.

When the elders who suspected he was cheating saw Jiang Chen the first to emerge, they couldn't help but feel a slight sense of shock. In their eyes, Jiang Chen had previously demonstrated such an unstoppable momentum only because Palace Head Dan Chi and Elder Yun Nie were helping him. Following that train of thought, he wouldn't be able to stop himself from faltering in the last segment. All they had to do was wait and watch him make a fool out of himself.

However, they'd never imagined that Jiang Chen's speed and momentum would only maintain its ferociousness in the final category! If he was cheating, would he have been able to complete the fourth category so quickly and easily? At that moment, a trace of surprise grew into a seed of suspicion in the hearts of all the elders. Ouyang De in particular was absolutely mystified by this

turn of events.

“Does Jiang Chen really possess such perverse potential?” Ouyang De really didn’t want to believe it. He was sure that the sixteen kingdoms did not have the resources or foundation to raise such an unbelievable pill dao genius. But regardless of his suspicions, he could only silently wait for the final results.

Ouyang De didn’t have much effort to spare on Jiang Chen at the moment, he was more concerned about Ouyang Chao. “Chao’er, if Jiang Chen takes a slot, you have no path of retreat. You must take the remaining slot! Otherwise, our Ouyang clan will lose immense face!” He was inwardly greatly conflicted.

Apart from Jiang Chen, Mu Gaoqi had the easiest time in the fourth category. The innate constitution that had been the result of the spirit spring baptism showed its true colors now. He breezed right through the topic of spirit herb cultivation and Origin Fostering Pill refinement. He was intimately familiar with the third topic too. He knew he had no patron, so he had spent a great deal of time and effort to study pill formations. Therefore, none of these were difficult for him, particularly pill refinement. With his enhanced innate constitution, he was more familiar than ever with the properties of the Origin Fostering Pill. With some care in refining, he too refined a supreme rank pill. Drawing the formation was also no problem either.

His advantages from the baptism in the spring had come fully through in this topic, as he only took two days to make his seed sprout. All in all, he actually became the second person to walk out of the fourth category. When the elders saw him emerge, they

were all greatly astonished.

In their eyes, the Ouyang Chao praised for his solid foundations should've been the favorite of the fourth category. The self taught Mu Gaoqi had actually possessed such speed as well? This really was outside of everyone's expectations!

Ouyang De's heart spasmed without warning when he saw Mu Gaoqi walk out with such confidence. Although it wasn't an ominous premonition, he still felt disgusted, like he'd eaten a fly.

Half a day later, Ouyang Chao completed the fourth category, becoming the third to walk out. When he saw that Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi were already waiting in Shen Li Palace, he started slightly. A slightly complicated look appeared in his eyes.

"Chao'er, how do you think you did?" Ouyang De hastened to ask. It was over anyways, so he didn't need to remain silent.

Ouyang De responded honestly. "Apart from the Origin Fostering Pill being of upper rank, I think the others were fine."

Ouyang De nodded. "Good, good." If his grandson only lost ten points with the pill, there was no problem there. Ouyang De didn't even consider for a second the possibility that Mu Gaoqi could obtain full marks in the fourth category!

Mu Gaoqi stood there, expressionless as he heard this. This was because Jiang Chen had already silently told him not to say

anything, and just silently wait for the results.

The fourth to emerge was actually Ling Hui'er! After her, the other contestants slowly started filtering out one by one, with all thirty of them having completed the fourth category after a few hours.

The judges immediately started checking on the results. Most completed the first topic of cultivating the spirit seed in the time allotted, with very few exceptions. A vast majority had solidly obtained that topic's 20 points. The distinguishing line would come in the second and third topics.

Thirty pills were placed in thirty spirit boxes, each with their own number.

"Number one, Jiang Chen, supreme rank!"

"Number two, Ouyang Chao, upper rank!"

"Number three, Ling Hui'er, upper rank!"

"Number four, Mu Gaoqi, supreme rank!"

.....

Shen Li Palace fell silent when Mu Gaoqi's result came out. If it was said that Jiang Chen's supreme rank results were within

expectations due to his perverse potential, Mu Gaoqi's results were absolutely frightful! He certainly had potential, but under normal conditions he didn't even refine an upper rank Origin Fostering Pill. How had he performed so much above par and refined a supreme rank today?

No one was in the mood to pay attention to the scores after that. Those left obviously had no hope in overtaking these two. As the results of the second topic came out, the final rankings were adjusted to reflect their scores. Jiang Chen was still far in the lead, but now Mu Gaoqi had tied with Ouyang Chao, with Ling Hui'er ten points behind them.

Jiang Chen had full marks from the first three categories, whereas Ouyang Chao had 280 points, Mu Gaoqi and Ling Hui'er were tied at 270. With the first two topics of the fourth category, everyone had firmly obtained the first 20 points. Mu Gaoqi had been awarded 40 points for his supreme rank pill, whereas Ouyang Chao and Ling Hui'er had been awarded 30 points. But now, Mu Gaoqi had naturally caught up to Ouyang Chao. Both were at 330 points, and Ling Hui'er at 320. Only Jiang Chen was still far ahead at 360 points. He hadn't lost a single point up to now. It was up to the final topic.

When Ouyang Chao saw that Mu Gaoqi had beaten him in pill refining, he too was greatly taken aback. He hadn't expected this at all. Mu Gaoqi, on the other hand, was suffused with contentment as great waves of emotion rocked his heart. This was because he knew that he had the residence firmly in hand! He was absolutely sure that he'd committed no flaws in the third topic and wouldn't lose any points. Then with his current ranking ahead of Ouyang Chao and his faster speed, then according to the rules, he would

firmly beat Ouyang Chao on the basis of his faster time.

It was obvious that at this time, whether it was Ouyang De or Ouyang Chao, both felt a keen sense of danger.

The results of the third topic were quickly tallied up. As they were revealed, it fell solidly within everyone's expectations. Jiang Chen, Mu Gaoqi, Ouyang Chao and Ling Hui'er hadn't lost a single point in this topic and had received full marks.

This way, the final scores stood at:

Jiang Chen, 400 points, full marks!

Mu Gaoqi and Ouyang Chao, 370 points, tied for second.

Ling Hui'er, 360 points, ranked behind Mu Gaoqi and Ouyang Chao.

Of the rest, the highest had 340 points, and the rest were even further away from the upper circle. The days of tough competition had finally generated the final rankings.

Elder Yun Nie and several judges double checked the score, making sure that there was no error before making their formal announcement. "Champion Jiang Chen receives one residence in the Sovereign Area, and runner up Mu Gaoqi receives one as well! The rest who weren't originally in the Sky Pillar Area will receive a residence in this area. Elder Yun Nie and the various elders of the

Herbal Hall can attest that this was a fair competition with no objections."

This proclamation was the final nail in the coffin. It would be officially announced when Palace Head Dan Chi casted a final eye over things and went through the final ceremony.

Ouyang De's gaze was lowered as he suddenly shouted, "I have a question!"

The Ouyang clan were the losers in this. There were those who sympathized with them, and others who delighted in their misfortune and cheered on the circumstances.

Elder Yun Nie was rather calm. "Elder Ouyang, please share your questions."

Ouyang De yelled out, "I just find it strange that Jiang Chen comes from the sixteen kingdoms. We all know what kind of place it is, and I will never believe that the sixteen kingdoms can raise a pill genius superior to the best we have to offer! Do you believe it?! Leaving Jiang Chen aside for now, Mu Gaoqi is one of ours. Everyone should be quite familiar with him. Although he has potential, do you think his scores this time reflects his usual ability? Has he ever refined a supreme rank pill before today?"

Ouyang De had lost his composure. Many elders shook their heads inwardly, musing that Ouyang De was really demonstrating how he couldn't handle a loss this time. With so many pairs of eyes staring at the competition, it was practically impossible to get

away with cheating.

Elder Yun Nie smiled faintly. “If Elder Ouyang has questions, you can participate in a recount and re-examination of the results. I for one, am completely willing to accompany you on this endeavor. It’s good to have questions. Our sect’s mandate is to be fair and just. It’s because that we adhere to this principle that Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi can rise from the roots.”

To put it in other words, if they didn’t firmly uphold impartiality, then there was no need in competing over the residences. They could be handed out to the scions of the Herbal Hall.

Ouyang De had hardened his heart to make a scene and leapt up. “Good! I want to request an investigation into their scores. I just don’t believe that an outside monk is more skilled at chanting scripture, and that a self-taught rogue can defeat the scion of the Herbal Hall!” The outside monk was naturally pointing fingers at Jiang Chen, and the self-taught rogue was Mu Gaoqi. That left his grandson Ouyang Chao as the scion of the Herbal Hall.

Chapter 503: Innate Wood Constitution Of High Order

One had to say that Ouyang De was certainly one to take advantage of his high position to flaunt his seniority. But of course, he came up empty handed when Elder Yun Nie accompanied his investigation. Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi had made it to their places with true talent. There wasn't any cheating at all.

Ouyang De's actions merely made himself a laughingstock, nothing else. He rigorously looked over things a few times but found nothing. Palace Head Dan Chi had heard that the pill dao competition had run its course at this point, and hurried over to take stock of the results. After he checked through things, he finally confirmed that there were no doubts about the results of the competition and once again announced the ownership of the residences.

Mu Gaoqi could no longer control himself. He wept with joy, jumping up and down in his excitement.

Ouyang Chao's face was dark as his heart bled, but he didn't say anything. He still wanted to hold onto some shreds of his dignity, such as it was.

Ling Hui'er was deep in thought. She blinked her large eyes, staring at Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi, seemingly baffled at the turn of events. Her fatally alluring chest heaved slightly, providing quite a pleasing sight.

“Jiang Chen, Mu Gaoqi, I congratulate you on behalf of the Regal Pill Palace.” Palace Head Dan Chi smiled, bestowing the medallions to the Sovereign Area residences on the two. When he handed the medallions over, his smile disappeared and his tone turned grave. “The two of you should remember this well. The Sovereign Area means that one is sovereign. You will enjoy extraordinary treatment in your residences, but also remember that you shoulder a responsibility greater than anyone else. Your every word and action, move and gesture will represent the younger generation of the Regal Pill Palace as well as the sect as a whole.”

With great power comes great responsibility.

Jiang Chen took the medallion. “Jiang Chen will remember the Palace Head’s words well.”

Mu Gaoqi was at a loss of what to do and kept nodding. “I’ll remember to not lose face for the Regal Pill Palace!” After all, he was born of humble beginnings. He hadn’t developed the glacial composure that Jiang Chen displayed by virtue of his experience. It was impossible for him not to be nervous under these circumstances.

The elders all laughed loudly, both amused by and contemptuous of Mu Gaoqi’s clumsy performance. It was certainly quite a sight to have such a bumpkin take up residence in the Sovereign Area. Although no one quite understood how Mu Gaoqi had risen so strongly, they were still more or less prejudiced against him. Ouyang De was even more derisive, feeling some hatred and contempt writhe in his heart.

It was rather Elder Yun Nie who suddenly smiled. “Mu Gaoqi, I am the Hallmaster of the Herbal Hall, yet I hadn’t discovered a hidden gem like you, leaving you to shine with glory only today. I’m of a mind to make this up to you; are you willing to become one of my disciples?”

At his point of his life, Elder Yun Nie only had followers, and no personal disciples. Who would’ve thought that he’d personally speak up to take Mu Gaoqi as his disciple at this time? The young folk present all looked at Mu Gaoqi with exceedingly envious eyes.

Elder Yun Nie was one of the top five authorities in the Regal Pill Palace, and stood at the peak of power as the Hallmaster of the Herbal Hall. He had no heirs, but now wanted to bring in Mu Gaoqi. If Mu Gaoqi could take Elder Yun Nie as his master, that would be akin to a carp leaping over the dragon’s gate and turning into a dragon in a brilliant exhibit of glory. His value would instantly shoot through the roof, quickly becoming one of the hottest people amongst the youngest generation. Once he was one of Elder Yun Nie’s disciples, who would dare laugh at him for being an unorthodox, self-taught disciple who wasn’t fit for public occasions? Mu Gaoqi was so agitated that he couldn’t speak.

Jiang Chen hastily sent him a silent message. “Gaoqi, this is a rare opportunity. What are you still hesitating for?”

Mu Gaoqi’s brain was nearing a complete shutdown. He only came to his senses when Jiang Chen nudged him, and he hastily walked up to perform the ceremony of taking another as his master.

“This disciple is willing, absolutely willing, a thousand and ten thousand times willing!” His voice was tight with unshed tears as memories surged through him. Fellow disciples rolling their eyes at him, grievance upon grievance piling atop each other, shame, humiliation, how he’d struggled in the cracks of the sect to eke out a path to the future, how he could only hide behind a smile as others suppressed him or play along as others exploited him... All of that pain, all of that dishonor, they would never come back! Not from this moment!

Elder Yun Nie chuckled. “Good, it seems that I now have a disciple. Mu Gaoqi, you’re not bad. There are so very few who can still maintain the heart of a child when they’ve climbed to the height of a core disciple. Your past experiences will become the wealth that paves your future.”

Mu Gaoqi could only nod, his eyes red as he tried his best to keep himself from breaking down.

Jiang Chen also smiled. “Congratulations to Elder Yun Nie gaining a good disciple! An innate wood constitution is truly rare.”

“What?!” Elder Yun Nie was taken aback, and Palace Head Dan Chi’s attention snapped to him, also immensely astonished. An innate constitution?

Jiang Chen had purposefully said this because he wanted to build a name for Mu Gaoqi and force the others to swallow their contemptuous attitudes. The skeptical attitudes of those that looked to Ouyang De as their leader really pissed Jiang Chen off. What foreign monk? What self-taught disciple? Although Ouyang

De had a high position, Jiang Chen wasn't some soft persimmon. He wasn't the sort to not strike back when someone struck out at him. His words were absolutely a blow aimed at Ouyang De.

However, his words were also a bolt of thunder in the ears of those present, making their eardrums hum with the impact.

Innate wood constitution?

An innate constitution was already uncommon enough, but an innate wood constitution was even rarer. Such a constitution meant that a future grand pill master stood in front of them.

Dan Chi also asked, "Jiang Chen, are you sure that he's an innate wood constitution and not just a regular wood constitution?"

Jiang Chen smiled. "If the honored Palace Head and Elder Yun Nie will test him, all will be immediately revealed."

Many knew that Mu Gaoqi had a wood constitution, but knowledge of an innate wood constitution was news!

Ouyang De was first startled, but then immediately smirked coldly. He wouldn't believe Jiang Chen's bullshit! If Mu Gaoqi really did possess an innate wood constitution, he would've been tested when he first entered the sect. It wasn't the sort of thing that would be revealed now.

Elder Yun Nie knew that Jiang Chen wasn't the sort to speak

carelessly. He immediately took out a testing crystal ball. “Gaoqi, come here.”

Mu Gaoqi walked over docilely. “Honored master.”

“Infuse the ball with your wood spirit energy so that I can see your potential.” Elder Yun Nie’s tone was solemn. This was a matter of great importance. If Mu Gaoqi really did have an innate wood constitution, then he would’ve struck gold, and so would’ve the Regal Pill Palace!

Mu Gaoqi took a deep breath in before placing his palm on the ball. He circulated his wood spirit energy and fed a steady stream into the ball. A beam of pure and clear green light instantly grew inside the ball, growing to the thickness of a pinky and rapidly cycling inside the ball.

One ring, two rings, three rings…

Elder Yun Nie and Palace Head Dan Chi’s face grew graver with every additional circle of the green light. Their expressions changed to slight surprise after twelve rings. The elders who’d suspected that Jiang Chen had been running his mouth squashed their dismissive thoughts as they began to pay rapt attention, faces growing solemn. An ordinary wood constitution would be quite amazing if they could produce twelve rings. More than twelve rings meant extreme potential, and judging from the speed of Mu Gaoqi’s green light, it showed no signs of slowing down.

It whipped past eighteen rings without a moment’s pause and

quickly crept to twenty four rings.

Elder Yun Nie and Palace Head Dan Chi looked at each other, delight suffusing their eyes. Having passed eighteen rings, they could be certain that this was an innate constitution. If it went past twenty four rings, then it would be a constitution of high order. Mu Gaoqi's spirit force still saw no signs of pausing.

Thirty rings...

It finally slowed down after thirty rings before slowly puttering to a stop at thirty six rings.

"Thirty six rings!" Elder Yun Nie's face was full of shock and joy. "Good, good, good! Not only are you an innate wood constitution, it's one of high order!"

Palace Head Dan Chi also began laughing loudly. "This is truly a genius bestowed from heaven. In the history of my Regal Pill Palace, we've at most had an innate wood constitution of mid order, never one of high order!"

"Elder Yun Nie, I must congratulate you on picking up a treasure!" Palace Head Dan Chi was genuinely happy for Elder Yun Nie. The relationship between the two was now quite harmonious because of Jiang Chen.

Elder Yun Nie also smiled. "This isn't just a delight for me, but one for the entire sect. An innate wood constitution of high order

is a blessing bestowed upon us by the spirits of our ancestors, so that our Regal Pill Palace heritage can continue! An innate wood constitution of high order can bring good fortune to the sect for three hundred years!”

Palace Head Dan Chi also nodded. “Indeed, and that’s just a conservative estimate. When our sect had an innate wood constitution of mid order, that conferred hundreds of years of good fortune upon the sect and enabled us to vault up into the ranks of the first rate sects in the Myriad Domain. In my eyes, if Mu Gaoqi develops well, we stand a great chance of joining the numbers of the third rank sects!” Both heavyweights were unceasingly praising Mu Gaoqi.

In that moment, those who had denounced Mu Gaoqi as self-taught or as a bumpkin all felt their faces burn. This was absolutely a stunning slap to their faces. They, to a man, had looked down on Mu Gaoqi, but he’d actually hid such stunning, frightening potential!

Elder Yun Nie also sighed. “It was my negligence to have allowed such a pearl as Mu Gaoqi be covered in dust until now. This discovery is all thanks to Jiang Chen.”

Palace Head Dan Chi also smiled. “Jiang Chen, you are truly broad hearted in recommending sage talent. You and Mu Gaoqi well deserve the Sovereign Area residences!” These words set everything in stone.

As jealous as Ouyang De might be, he could do nothing now. His grandson was a fine man, but how could he measure up to an

innate wood constitution? Although Ouyang Chao had lost, he had won glory in being defeated by such a genius. It was rather Ouyang De who'd displayed unbecoming behavior.

Ouyang Chao thought deeply for a moment and walked up to speak to Mu Gaoqi. "Gaoqi, I dismissed you before and thought my victory was guaranteed. I've learned of your potential only today. I wholeheartedly accept my defeat at your hands."

Ling Hui'er curled her lip, forced to accept the results as well.

Chapter 504: Taking Up Residence

The unexpected discovery of Mu Gaoqi sent the Regal Pill Palace into an immediate uproar. The Herbal Hall was even more excited. Being focused on pills, they knew more than anybody else what an innate wood constitution of high order meant.

To put it bluntly, such a constitution was rare even in the Upper Eight Realms, much less a Lower Realm like the Myriad Domain. Therefore, Mu Gaoqi's shocking emergence marked a raucous celebration in the Regal Pill Palace.

At the same time, those whose thoughts ran a bit further silently contemplated, "If Mu Gaoqi with an innate wood constitution of high order was only number two, then what potential does Jiang Chen have, with his full marks? Why didn't Elder Yun Nie take Jiang Chen as a disciple, instead accepting Mu Gaoqi? Could it be that Jiang Chen is so much more talented than Mu Gaoqi that even Elder Yun Nie doesn't dare accept him as a disciple?"

All sorts of speculations and questions spread through the crowd as everyone gave their curiosity about the two who had won in the competition of pill dao free rein.

Since the competition was over with, Elder Yun Nie also took advantage of the situation to announce, "Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi will take two of the slots reserved for the younger generation in the Pill Battles. The other two spots will be chosen from a selection of the pill dao geniuses."

The other geniuses had no objections to this order, but the martial dao geniuses who occupied the eight original residences in the Sovereign Area became restless. These eight people represented the pinnacle of strength among the younger generation of the sect, the face of the young Regal Pill Palace. They were martial dao geniuses, but their pill dao potential wasn't that bad either. They had long since entered the Sovereign Area, so they still hadn't fully registered Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi as one of their own. Frankly, they weren't necessarily willing to accept this command even if Mu Gaoqi was proven to be an innate wood constitution of high order. In their minds, such a constitution only represented future potential, but the Pill Battles were going to happen in the next couple of months. Therefore, the top geniuses had been eying the slots for the Pill Battles for a very long time, carefully maneuvering themselves for a spot.

The Pill Battles meant a chance to enter the mountain and harvest precious spirit herbs. Mt. Rippling Mirage was the most miraculous area of pills and medicine in the Myriad Domain. The ten thousand miles of the mountain contained many fortuitous encounters, treasures, and boundless marvelous changes. Perhaps, a single encounter or opportunity would be enough to change their fates, helping them break free of their cocoon and cast off their current shackles! Therefore, these geniuses had convinced themselves that they absolutely had to obtain spots for the Pill Battles.

However, since Elder Yun Nie had spoken, he naturally couldn't take it back. In addition, Elder Yun Nie was in charge of the spots for the Pill Battles. He knew who should and shouldn't go. Since he'd personally chosen Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi, he naturally felt that their pill dao potential and level was beyond the geniuses in the Sovereign Area.

The pill dao competition had ended first, and the two residences for the martial dao geniuses were finally decided upon after three days. The eventual champions were two from the Sky Pillar Area. One was at half step sky origin realm, the other solidly in the sky origin realm.

“A Sovereign Area residence?” Gouyu and the others were overjoyed when they heard Jiang Chen describe where they would be moving to. A private property with a radius of a hundred miles, that was absolutely a superior residence! Although their current residence in the Soaring Clouds area was an independent residence that occupied almost a hundred hectares, it was still comparing an ant to an elephant when compared to a residence in the Sovereign Area.

Huang’er naturally had no reason to object. Although she’d planted many flowers and grasses, she could absolutely move them since they were only moving within the Rosy Valley.

“Brother Jiang Chen, congratulations on the move! Is there anything I can help with?”

“Brother Jiang Chen, I’ve come by to see if you need help moving to your Sovereign Area residence!”

“Brother Jiang Chen, feel free to throw any manual labor at me! I’ve got thick skin and flesh, and I’m most suited for this kind of work, hahaha!”

Roughly a dozen Soaring Cloud disciples crowded Jiang Chen's residence in the blink of an eye, all extremely enthusiastic, as if they'd been friends with Jiang Chen for several decades. They'd completely forgotten how they'd personally participated during Yan Hongtu's suppression of Jiang Chen.

Although Jiang Chen could deny them face with a slap, he wasn't interested in this kind of empty pleasantry either. He smile faintly, "I've only just arrived in the Regal Pill Palace and don't have much to pack up. My followers are more than enough. I won't need to trouble you all."

The Soaring Cloud core disciples all knew that Jiang Chen was moving to the Sovereign Area, becoming the most superior existence in the Rosy Valley. Therefore, all of them wanted to curry favor with Jiang Chen and try to latch onto his thigh.

"Senior brother Jiang Chen, you moving into the Sovereign Area with such an awe-inspiring momentum is our pride and example for us Soaring Cloud disciples. We'd like to host a banquet for you, senior brother, and send you off well. We should let the others know not to look down on our area when you enter the Sovereign Area."

"I don't like to make a fuss of things, so we can forgo the banquet and associated events." Jiang Chen declined them decisively. These people were fickle and capricious. They fawned over him when he had power, but would absolutely be the first to jump out to step on him if he lost power.

Jiang Chen didn't want to associate with such fair-weather

pettiness.

Mu Gaoqi was also met with the same sweet dilemma on his side. One had to say, he felt a bit like he was floating on a cloud. He'd been elevated from the bottom to a Sovereign Area senior brother that everyone buttered up to in an instant. He really was a bit caught on this high and almost agreed after all sorts of coaxing and compliments.

It was a good thing that one of Elder Yun Nie's followers called him away at this point to meet Elder Yun Nie. "Gaoqi, you've an innate wood constitution of a high order, a first in Regal Pill Palace history. However, your mentality necessitates further tempering." Elder Yun Nie's tone was stern. "There is a saying that dragons do not comport themselves with snakes. You're now different from those people. If you stay with them, they'll only mold you into a vulgar and mediocre man. I was quite admiring of your relationship with Jiang Chen before, but you seem to have lost a bit of yourself now."

Mu Gaoqi's heart spasmed. It was as if a pail of cold water had been poured onto his head, making him shiver all over.

Indeed, what had happened to him? A small man intoxicated by success? If he had to find a term to describe himself now, that really did seem a bit fitting. Those people had dismissed him out of hand before, but had his ego been so stroked just because they were suddenly fawning over him? Was this all he amounted to? If this was the case, how would he face Brother Chen's mentorship, his honored master's heritage, and his own innate wood constitution?

An audible thunk sounded as Mu Gaoqi fell to his knees when his thoughts reached this point. “Honored master, your disciple was wrong.” Mu Gaoqi spoke woodenly, great beads of sweat breaking out over his forehead.

“Hmph! You should imitate Jiang Chen. Think nothing about praise or condemnation from the outside world. If you have your head in the clouds just from the praise of a group of Soaring Cloud disciples, then you’ll revert to your previous timid and cowering personality when you’re suppressed by the geniuses in the Sovereign Area. There isn’t the slightest bit of good in this for your development. Remember, you must remain unmoved by either gain or loss. Dwell on this more, there is great meaning in those words. If you had displayed a better performance in the strength of heart category this time, you wouldn’t have tied with Ouyang Chao. Training in strength of heart is your biggest weakness.” Elder Yun Nie’s words were a clap to his head, completely ripping apart his bit of vainglorious puffery.

“Honored master, your disciple promises to learn from senior brother Jiang Chen in the future such that I will remain unmoved by neither gain or loss.”

Elder Yun Nie sighed lightly. “Gaoqi, I placed you and Jiang Chen on the list for the Pill Battles because I wished to test the two of you. I wanted to have you face the questioning of the premier geniuses in the Sovereign Area to see how the two of you perform under pressure. If you move to the Sovereign Area in your current state, there is no question that you will be ripped to pieces. At least to the extent where not a shred of skin will be left on your body. At worst, it’s possible that you would never recover from it.”

Mu Gaoqi abruptly came to his senses, finally understanding his honored master's intentions. "Your disciple has been a fool. From today forth, your disciple will temper his strength of heart and reflect daily."

"Mm, you must make it past the challenge of strength of heart yourself. No one will be able to help you. Go. Move to the Sovereign Area today and don't hang around the Soaring Clouds Area any longer." It wasn't that Elder Yun Nie looked down on the core disciples in the Soaring Clouds, but that he had extremely high hopes for Mu Gaoqi. It wasn't empty bluster to say that an innate wood constitution of high order could bring about several hundred years of good fortune to the Regal Pill Palace. Therefore, he didn't wish for Mu Gaoqi to lose himself in empty, useless flattery.

Not only did Mu Gaoqi not resent his master after such a lecture, but he was full of gratitude instead. He knew that his honored master had lectured him for his own good. If he really did lose his direction by all that flattery, then all of his potential would be as good as dust in the end.

"Hurry to the Sovereign Area. There are only a few months till the Pill Battles. You need to make your preparations, particularly in strength of heart."

"Understood! Your disciple has received his orders." Mu Gaoqi responded seriously.

“Go, you can come to my residence anytime if you run into any difficult questions.” Elder Yun Nie looked at Mu Gaoqi with encouraging eyes.

A residence in the Sovereign Area was indeed superior and uncommon, a fact that Jiang Chen immediately felt after setting foot onto his own territory. The spirit power in this area wasn’t the least bit below the residence in Hundred Elders Peak. Although the range of this area was less than the Peak’s, its superior spirit power still made Jiang Chen feel that this endeavor had been worth it.

Compared to the Soaring Clouds Area, the concentration of spirit power was at least three to five times greater. In addition, each residence acted as its own world and had restrictions unique to the sect defending it. One wouldn’t be able to even enter without a unique token. This meant that Jiang Chen truly owned this hundred miles radius territory.

Gouyu and the rest of his followers had their own houses and gardens. Huang’er also chose a small yard in a peaceful area, transferring her flora over. The environment there was expansive, calm, and independent—markedly better than the Soaring Clouds area.

Many people entered and left the Soaring Clouds Area, and it wasn’t as quiet as this place. Huang’er in particular liked it much better.

After settling everyone in, Jiang Chen took a spin around the territory. He wanted to find a dangerously steep area to install the wood spirit spring.

Chapter 505: The Conception Of A Formation

After walking around for a while, Jiang Chen still chose the ground beneath a karst cave system. Although it didn't have a naturally formed crater, Jiang Chen wasn't worried. After all, he had a free labor force in the form of the Goldbiter Rats. After a day of excavation, they managed to dig out an enormous pit just slightly larger than the one that originally held the wood spirit spring. It was perfect for holding the lake's waters.

There was also ample spirit energy in this area, so Jiang Chen planted many spirit herbs that had the wood attribute to conceal the presence of the Jade Vine. He replanted the Jade Vine before summoning Long Xiaoxuan to release the waters of the lake.

The spring was reformed in a mere two hours.

Jiang Chen circled the cave a few times and felt that the cave didn't have much in the way of defenses. "Although a restriction is in place on the border of my residence, it really is appalling that none of my personal restrictions are in place around the residence."

Since he now had his own place, Jiang Chen didn't wish for just anyone to easily walk in and out of his territory. It wasn't that he was unfamiliar with formation restrictions. The only thing he couldn't immerse himself in during his past life was cultivation; everything else was fair game. The way of formations naturally wasn't left unexplored.

However, formations were toys for the rich. The amount of spirit stones that a formation would consume was easily commensurate to the amount of resources that ten cultivators would consume. If Jiang Chen wanted to set up a formation of his own, the amount of spirit stones he'd consume for sage level defenses would be absolutely stunning!

With the current depths of his pockets, he wasn't capable of affording this kind of black hole level consumption at all. But it was a good thing that he had an enormous flock of Goldwing Swordbirds, and an even greater group of Goldbiter Rats at his beck and call. Now that he had his own property, he could absolutely establish the Rats in the cave. Of course, the wood spring itself would still be Long Xiaoxuan's territory. No one apart from Jiang Chen would be able to easily approach. The Goldwing Swordbirds and Goldbiter Rats would be arrayed as the first and second layers of defense. This way, he'd be able to set up multiple layers of manmade defenses.

However, this was just a temporary situation to deal with the current circumstances. There was still a urgent requirement for a strong defensive formation. Jiang Chen started to examine the terrain around his residence. The building structures weren't that far from the karst cave. After analyzing the layout, the name of a formation rose in his heart—the Nine Gates Incineration Formation.

The terrain rose and fell in nine waves, as if the nine gates beneath the heavens. With this kind of topography, that particular formation seemed very appropriate.

The Nine Gates Incineration Formation was one that Jiang Chen had a deeper than usual impression of in his memories. This formation wasn't a divine level formation, but one that combined all sorts of heritages in the mundane world. Jiang Chen was versed enough in the formation to hold off Titled Great Emperors if he could activate it to its fullest.

Of course, that wasn't a realistic notion at the moment. He didn't have that much in terms of spare resources. Only if he had the resources of the entire Regal Pill Palace at his disposal would he have seventy to eighty percent guarantee of fully activating the formation. But obviously, he didn't even bother entertaining this kind of wishful thinking at all. His current goal was to defend against sage level experts, and that would be enough. Thirty percent of the formation's power would be sufficient to handle those kinds of experts, but the amount of materials needed to barely reach thirty percent was equally stunning.

For one, refining the formation flag was a critical step. Although it wasn't as complex as refining divine weapons, it was a direct determinant of how the formation would perform.

There were stringent requirements for the materials used to make the flag as well as the materials for drawing the formation. Apart from that, there was an exorbitant number of spirit stones needed to maintain and operate the formation.

With Jiang Chen's current stipend, he'd have to save up for ten years to be able to activate and sustain thirty percent of the formation's strength for a year. If he wanted to keep it running for

a decade or a hundred years, then he'd need to save up a hundred to a thousand years of his stipend. It was an absolutely staggering amount.

Jiang Chen estimated that only the elders of the sect would be able to bring out such a figure, and the figure would cause no small degree of heartache at that. "I don't expect it to operate for a hundred years. At minimum, five years. Five years is a must." Jiang Chen estimated that five years was the lowest he would accept. However, even that required fifty years of his stipend. Despite being favored by Dan Chi, it was an unrealistic notion to think of getting a fifty year advance on his stipend. If he tried to obtain this amount through sect missions, one that would reward him that many spirit stones would be much more difficult than the eight star mission of refining the Hexarune Dragon Pill for Elder Yun Nie. Missions obviously wouldn't resolve Jiang Chen's immediate need for spirit stones.

"I still need to earn money in the end." Jiang Chen once again felt the woes of not having enough money. Although he had quite a few valuables on him now in the form of the dragon blood, the crystal, and the wood spirit spring, these were all his trump cards. They couldn't be exposed at any cost. Once they were exposed, Jiang Chen would have no end of troubles. He didn't want to do this if he didn't have to. Otherwise, one drop of dragon blood would've been enough to resolve all his problems.

Of course, it wasn't as if he didn't have any other viable avenues. If he went to find Palace Head Dan Chi or Elder Yun Nie, they might very well just lend him the resources he needed. However, Jiang Chen wasn't willing to make this request. Only when one spent money they earned themselves would one feel satisfied about

spending it.

When Jiang Chen had departed from the wood spring back then, he'd also received a large amount of spirit stones. He did a quick count of how much he had, and came to the conclusion that the not insignificant sum would resolve half of his need immediately.

But that's only half. Where do I go to fill the hole for the other half? Jiang Chen quietly mused. He had many methods, but they all needed time. The one thing Jiang Chen lacked the most at the moment was time. He didn't want to spend most of his time earning money for his formation and thereby neglect his cultivation. That would just be losing sight of the main goal for small gains.

"Forget it, I'll take things one step at a time. I'll be training in the Sovereign Area for the foreseeable future anyways, and there are already defenses set up in the outskirts of the Sovereign Area. Most ordinary folk won't be able set foot in my territory." Although Jiang Chen wanted to immediately set up the formation, he knew that it wouldn't be done quickly. It was already a decent level of privacy from the restrictive formations set up in the outskirts of his private residents. Ordinary people couldn't bypass those.

He wanted to set up some precautions to prevent unwelcome guests. If someone happened to visit uninvited and possessed great arts, his secret concerning the wood spirit spring would be revealed without a doubt. Although with Long Xiaoxuan sitting guard and capable of killing intruders to keep the secret, if the person who barged in was a senior executive of the Regal Pill Palace, he didn't feel that he could kill the man.

When he returned to his house, Jiang Chen was about to enter closed door cultivation when a message glyph suddenly came in from outside his walls. “Senior brother Jiang Chen, I am here on behalf of my master to invite you to the monthly meeting of the Sovereign Area in three days, to sip tea and discuss pills as well as the overall development trends of the Myriad Domain.”

Gouyu made her way out just as the message sounded, returning with an invitation not long after. The invitation was quite exquisitely designed. It seemed a lot of attention had gone into making it.

“Daoist Jiang Chen, as Sovereign Area geniuses, we stand at the peak of the sect and look out over the world. I will be holding the monthly meeting at my humble abode in three days to engage in a session of tea tasting, pill discourse, as well as a conversation about the lay of the land and trends of the times. Wouldn’t that be wonderful? You have newly come to the Sovereign Area and are certainly interested in the literary pursuits. Your presence is requested. Please do not leave us waiting for long.” The name Shen Qinghong was signed with great flourish at the bottom.

Jiang Chen naturally remembered this character. He was one of the peak existences in the younger generation of the Regal Pill Palace. It was said that he was half step sage realm. That put him at one of the top three in the Sovereign Area.

The monthly meeting of the Sovereign Area?

Jiang Chen toyed lightly with the invitation. He knew that it was half a real invite and half a probe. If he didn't go, it would mean a decisive split with the group. He would become the target of everyone's suppression in the Sovereign Area in the future and the laughingstock of the entire Rosy Valley.

Although he didn't mind that, he wasn't willing to display weakness. If he went himself, he'd likely meet with multiple difficulties. This gathering would be a hotbed of malicious intent. These Sovereign Area disciples were all experts and would never show him a polite face. Throwing obstacles in his way was a bygone fact. If he didn't handle it properly, it'd be very likely that he'd end up with a face full of dirt or even make a fool out of himself.

However, Jiang Chen didn't bother thinking too much. No matter how complex this monthly meeting would turn out to be, he had no other choice.

He had to go.

If he didn't, he would be painted as a coward and drop in the esteem of the entire sect. The most critical thing was that he had a great deal of Palace Head Dan Chi and Elder Yun Nie's favor. If others looked down on him, it would be an indirect blow on the two as well.

Jiang Chen put the invitation down, having come to a decision already. Whether it was the lair of a dragon or the cave of a tiger, or mountains of blades and oceans of fire, he had no reason to decline.

Mu Gaoqi came visiting in a hurry after a short while. Jiang Chen had expected this as well. Mu Gaoqi must've also received an invitation and found it hard to decide. He'd come to ask for Jiang Chen's opinion.

"Brother Chen, this monthly meeting is just an excuse to snub us at the very beginning. They don't accept that you and I have already received a spot in the Pill Battles, and likely want to create all sorts of difficulties for us."

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. "And so you're afraid now?"

Mu Gaoqi's heart spasmed as he thought of his honored master's lecture two days ago. He resolutely made up his mind. "I'm not afraid, Brother Chen! I'm here to tell you that I'll be going no matter what. I'm an innate wood constitution of high order and my pill dao potential is the greatest in Regal Pill Palace history. I cannot appear weak and lose face for my honored master." Although this kind of expression was a bit stilted, Jiang Chen could still detect the undercurrent of Mu Gaoqi's determination.

"Gaoqi, you and I share a common fate. I have here an art to train strength of heart and vision. I now pass them onto you, but you must promise to keep this a secret." Jiang Chen passed on "God's Eye" and "Boulder's Heart" to Mu Gaoqi with his consciousness.

"Brother Chen, my accomplishments till today have been purely due to you. You've taken such good care of me, I won't have a single word of complaint even if you smack me to death because of

continued immaturity. I won’t share what you’ve given me even if others beat me to death.” Mu Gaoqi may have a weaker personality than others, but he still had his own principles.

Chapter 506: The Monthly Sovereign Area Meeting

Every single one of Jiang Chen's followers trained in these two arts, so it wasn't some exclusive method that he was passing onto Mu Gaoqi. Jiang Chen was investing this much in Mu Gaoqi because he saw potential worthy of doing so in the latter. Mu Gaoqi's personality was loyal and honest, worthy of trust.

The Regal Pill Palace was treating Jiang Chen well, and this would be how he would repay their favor, by raising a great future pill master for them. Nevertheless, he only passed on these two and nothing else, because as a pill master, what Mu Gaoqi was weakest in currently was vision and strength of heart. If he could obtain some achievement in this regard and shore up the gaps in his abilities, then his growth rate would skyrocket. To be honest, Jiang Chen was rather looking forward to the day.

"Gaoqi, although I've been of some use in helping you achieve what you have today, the key still lies in your potential and your intelligence. If you didn't possess a wood constitution and have knowledge of the wood spirit spring, you never would be where you are today no matter how much I helped you. Of course, you and I are both Regal Pill Palace disciples now. We put forth effort on behalf of the sect. Everything I do, everything you do, is all for the sect."

"Yes, yes." Mu Gaoqi nodded in quick succession. He identified deeply with the sect, and had an even greater sense of belonging after gaining Elder Yun Nie as his master.

“There are still three days until the meeting; go back and make your preparations.”

“Brother Chen, I understand! Don’t worry, I won’t disappoint any of you.” Mu Gaoqi’s confidence was gradually increasing thanks to Jiang Chen’s continual help. Although it wasn’t possible to immediately wipe out all the weak spots in his personality, he was at least improving. His confidence level was noticeably higher compared to when he’d first met Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen gave no further thought to the monthly meeting over the next three days, instead immersing himself in cultivation. With so many Origin Fostering Pills on hand and after refining the Firelizard core, Jiang Chen was now gathering his momentum at the peak of the third level origin realm. He was only a step away from earth origin realm, and he was very confident that he’d be able to set foot into it after the monthly meeting.

When he’d set foot in the Regal Pill Palace, he’d set his goal on breaking through to the sky origin realm in three years. A few months later, he was only a step away from the earth origin realm. This wasn’t slow, but neither was it particularly fast.

“Time waits for no one. The Myriad Grand Ceremony in three years is the meeting of the most powerful of the younger generation in the Myriad Domain. All the geniuses of the younger generation will converge, and the resulting clash will be extraordinary. If I cannot enter the sky origin realm in three years, what right would I have to compete for the Myriad Domain Hidden Dragon Ranking? What would I be able to bring to the Grand Ceremony? What right would I have to compete for the chance to

enter the Paramount Realm in the Myriad Domain?”

Back during the Regal Pill Palace and the Precious Tree Sect alliance ceremony, Palace Head Dan Chi had told Jiang Chen a bit of the story behind the Myriad Domain. Jiang Chen was now aware of what the Dragon Rankings represented, what the Grand Ceremony indicated, and what the Paramount Realm meant. If he couldn’t even come out on top at a gathering of the Myriad Domain geniuses, what right would he have to challenge the Upper Eight Realms?

When he thought about how his father had already spent so many years in the Upper Eight Realms, Jiang Chen felt his heart afire with anxiety. “Strength! I, Jiang Chen, still need to urgently increase my strength.”

He received Mu Gaoqi’s message glyph as soon as as he emerged from closed door cultivation. The two of them made their way to Shen Qinghong’s residence together.

Shen Qinghong was ranked as one of the top three in the Sovereign Area, with subtle hints of being number one. His strength was touted as between peak origin realm and half step sage realm. But of course, that kind of title was just a compliment. He was still just peak origin realm in reality.

Just as most spirit kings at the peak of the spirit realm liked to call themselves half step origin realm, so did origin kings at the peak of origin realm like to call themselves half step sage realm. Shen Qinghong did have the right to look down on everyone else with pride though. At 28 years old, he was only six years older than

Jiang Chen, but his cultivation level had already reached the peak of the origin realm.

Of course, Jiang Chen was neither admiring nor envious. There were a multitude of geniuses in this world, and those who could reach the top in the Regal Pill Palace naturally had tremendous potential. If he'd been born in the Regal Pill Palace and not the Eastern Kingdom, his cultivation would've broken through to the sage realm by now. In the end, it still came down to a matter of resources. The Regal Pill Palace's resources couldn't be compared to the paltry resources that Jiang Chen had been exposed to in the Eastern Kingdom, Skylaurel Kingdom, and Precious Tree Sect.

"Brother Chen, I feel that they'll make trouble for the two of us about the spots for the Pill Battles."

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. "Gaoqi, you've an innate wood constitution of high order. Even if their martial dao potential is higher than yours, they have no right to point fingers at your performance in the arena of pills. You must have at least this level of confidence in yourself."

"Yes, I'll listen to Brother Chen." Mu Gaoqi smiled and responded, "Brother Chen, I've felt my strength of heart soar after cultivating Boulder's Heart these past couple of days. It will surely leap even higher in the future!"

Of that, Jiang Chen had no doubt. If even Boulder's Heart was unable to raise his strength of heart, then Mu Gaoqi would really be trash. He would still be trash even with his innate constitution.

If strength of heart didn't scale with one's cultivation level, one was destined for a destitute future.

The two laughed and chatted until they arrived at Shen Qinghong's residence. His followers had long since been standing to welcome them. When they saw the two arrive, two followers in uniforms walked up in welcome. "Senior brother Jiang Chen, senior brother Gaoqi, our young master has been waiting for a while."

These two followers were actually minor origin realm! That slightly startled Mu Gaoqi; he hadn't ever encountered a figure so high that even his followers were minor origin realm. Jiang Chen however, had a relaxed expression on his face as he followed the two into the residence.

Each of the Sovereign Area residences had their own unique aspects; all superior locations. Shen Qinghong's residence was the best that the Rosy Valley had to offer, no matter how one looked at things. Its various furnishings and design were all arranged perfectly.

Jiang Chen took a quick look around and noticed a restriction placed on the outskirts of the residence, and noted two more in place after entering the residence.

"Tsk tsk, just how wealthy is Shen Qinghong that he can afford to spend so much? These formation restrictions are absolutely the height of opulence!"

The visible eye could see nothing of the formations, and Jiang Chen wouldn't have discovered them either had he not made an extensive study of formations. He made a mental comparison and had to sigh with amazement at how much money Shen Qinghong seemed to possess.

Jiang Chen's initial plans for the Nine Gates Incineration Formation wouldn't even amount to a third of Shen Qinghong's.

"This Shen Qinghong is either the son of a wealthy family or the lineal descendent of a wealthy family in the Regal Pill Palace. Ordinary disciples wouldn't have such a strong foundation." Jiang Chen kept speculating as he examined his surroundings and grew curious of Shen Qinghong's background. "Gaoqi, what's Shen Qinghong's background?"

Mu Gaoqi hurriedly responded when he received Jiang Chen's message. "Shen Qinghong has quite a background. His honored master is Elder Lian Cheng, the Hallmaster of the Hall of Might, hailed as the first elder in the Regal Pill Palace. His grandfather is Elder Jin Gu of the Hall of Spring and Autumn."

This background greatly took Jiang Chen aback. So this is the case!

No wonder he could afford to spend so much. This kind of expenditure elicited admiration from even Jiang Chen. The personal disciple of the Hall of Might would have stunning power. The grandson of the Hall of Spring and Autumn would have

stunning wealth at his disposal, since that hall was in charge of all the resources in the sect. There was no way that a grandson of that hall would be short on resources.

This was a typical example of second generation power and wealth. Superior birth, respected position, and high potential made for a solid winner in life. He was one in which the fortunes of the sect were concentrated on.

Before long, Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi were led to a magnificent and resplendent palace. There was a single man in the center of the great hall. His complexion was as clear as jade, and he exuded an elegant and refined presence. Red lips, white teeth, deep eyes and vigorous eyebrows framed a perfect face. It was astonishing, no matter what angle one looked at him, he was perfect.

“Young master, Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi have arrived.”

This visually perfect young man was naturally Shen Qinghong. “I have long since heard of your names. Come, take a seat. Bring forth the tea!”

Jiang Chen walked in leisurely into the great hall and cupped his fists. “Senior brother Shen’s residence is majestic and grand. No wonder it has been chosen by the top genius in the Regal Pill Palace.”

Mu Gaoqi also cupped his fists. “Gaoqi greets senior brother Shen.”

Shen Qinghong only smiled faintly. “Come, take your seats.” He didn’t actually actually voice any pleasantries in response, making Mu Gaoqi feel a bit awkward. Jiang Chen however, didn’t mind and casually selected a seat off to the side. He wasn’t interested in trying to posture and establish superiority.

Shen Qinghong looked perfect, but he still lacked that sliver of proper bearing. This greatly reduced Jiang Chen’s first impression of him.

He knew that as second generation youth born into wealth and power, it was normal for Shen Qinghong’s eyes to be firmly atop his head and lack the slightest modicum of respect for anyone. While it was enough to fool girls, it was nothing to Jiang Chen.

When Mu Gaoqi saw how Jiang Chen remained composed, he didn’t say anything else and just sat down next to him.

Jiang Chen took a look around as he took a seat. As his eyes swept across the hall, he noticed several others keeping a close eye on the proceedings. However, the geniuses of the Sovereign Area seemed to be on their guard against each other, keeping their interactions brief. Everyone sat there silently with their eyes closed, as if they were storing energy and afraid that interacting too much would result in revealing their trump cards.

From their behavior, Jiang Chen realized that they were just pretending to be mysterious and mentally dismissed them. He too leaned against his chair and closed his eyes to rest. If anything decided to come, he’d just deal with it. He wouldn’t purposefully start trouble, but he wanted to see just what would develop in this

monthly meeting.

Chapter 507: Suppression And Counterattack

Mu Gaoqi broke Jiang Chen's silent resting with a mental message, "Brother Chen, there's always been talk of four kings in the Sovereign Area. Those would be Shen Qinghong, Jun Mobai, Ling Bi'er, and Nie Chong. Shen Qinghong and Jun Mobai have reached the peak of the origin realm and are called half step sage realm. Ling Bi'er and Nie Chong are ninth level origin realm. Ling Bi'er in particular is Ling Hui'er's older sister and known for her sexy style. She also happens to have the strongest pill dao potential. The other Sovereign Area disciples are well behind the four kings."

Jiang Chen's expression suddenly grew a bit odd, and Mu Gaoqi also seemed to sense something off as everyone's eyes suddenly snapped open, shooting stern looks over to Mu Gaoqi in unplanned unison. The looks felt like like the spontaneous eruption of sword aura, sending chills raking over Mu Gaoqi.

Shen Qinghong smiled slightly. "Junior brother Gaoqi. I forgot to tell you that my palace is called the Noble Palace. There's a particular restriction here that prevents silent messages. When you use your consciousness to send a message, it will travel through various paths into everyone's ears, making it no different from speaking conversationally."

Mu Gaoqi was immensely embarrassed. This was the first time he'd come to Shen Qinghong's residence, how would he know of that restriction? He immediately understood why everyone had snapped their eyes to him. Did everyone hear what I said just now?

Ling Bi'er in particular looked like she wanted to kill Mu Gaoqi with just her eyes. An coldly arrogant look drilled into Mu Gaoqi as a frosty expression covered her face. Mu Gaoqi smiled awkwardly back at her.

It was rather Jiang Chen who smiled with ease. "Noble Palace, hmm? Noble Palace. What a nice name. If those of honor and virtue truly resided within the Noble Palace, it would actually be a beautiful tale for the ages."

"Mm? Jiang Chen, what do you mean by that? Are you insinuating that someone here has no honor?" An eighth level origin realm genius looked at Jiang Chen with hints of provocation.

Jiang Chen didn't care in the slightest, smiling faintly. "Whether one has honor or not will not change due to a mere word from me."

The man slammed his hand down on his chair, his tone growing hard. "What a cocky kid! It's your honor to be able to sit here today, and to have senior brother Qinghong give you face! Don't you actually think you have the right to be on the same level as us! Remember, those who are here to just make up the numbers will reveal their true form one day and be thrown out of the Sovereign Area sooner or later."

These words were obviously aimed at Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi. Mu Gaoqi felt a bit like he was sitting on needles, but Jiang Chen

was still as coolly composed as ever. “Indeed, so you must take care.”

The person started and only understood after a beat that Jiang Chen had just mocked him as the useless one to make up the numbers instead. He immediately grew enraged. “Jiang Chen, what do you mean by this?!”

Although this person wasn’t one of the four kings, he was still a part of the original eight members who had entered the Sovereign Area so many years ago. He had a natural sense of superiority over Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi and rejected them from the depths of his heart. He felt that the Sovereign Area shouldn’t have expanded. The eight slots should’ve remained as that forever. Only then would his nobility and uniqueness be emphasized. The sudden addition of four people made him feel that the value of a Sovereign Area residence had been greatly reduced all of a sudden, making him feel like he’d suffered quite a loss. He grew even more irritated when he saw Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi. These two were merely minor origin realm but now had the same status and benefits as him, one of the sky origin realm! How could he ever accept this?!

The others smirked to see him jump out. They didn’t try to hold him back, delighting in this newfound misfortune as a rapt gleam appeared in their eyes. How would Jiang Chen not see through this?

“So it seems that this so-called monthly meeting is just an opportunity to take us newcomers down a peg? Senior brother Qinghong, is this how you treat guests?” Jiang Chen’s words took everyone greatly aback.

Jiang Chen had dared to rebut the words Rong Zifeng at eight level origin realm, and was openly questioning Shen Qingrong's hospitality! This greatly astonished all the others. A few of them started to take a closer look at Jiang Chen.

Shen Qinghong's brow creased faintly. It was apparent that with his level and his usually domineering style, even the other three kings wouldn't dare have the guts to question him like this. What gave Jiang Chen, a foreigner, the kind of guts to be so impolite even if he had a backer?

Suddenly, a young scholar wearing black and white Taoist robes smiled slightly. "Everyone, please take a breath. We are all disciples of the Sovereign Area and thus represent the face of the Regal Pill Palace. If we yell at each other until we're red in the face for small matters like these, it will be the height of vulgarity. I, Jun Mobai, propose that we discuss the way of pills and converse vigorously about the greater picture of the state of affairs in the Myriad Domain. How about that?"

Jun Mobai looked rather like a scholar who normally consumed a steady diet of books and poetry in his black and white Taoist robe. He appeared quite genteel, giving him a wise and refined feeling. He was the only one among the four kings who gave other an amiable and approachable feeling. The other three were either aloof and domineering, such as Shen Qinghong, or frigidly beautiful as Ling Bi'er, or shone with a fierce light like Nie Chong.

When Mu Gaoqi heard Jun Mobai express his views, he hastily concurred, "Senior brother Mobai makes sense. Since we are all of

one sect, we should coexist harmoniously and in unity."

"Mu Gaoqi, who the hell are you? Is there a place for you to speak here?" Rong Zifeng, the one who'd provoked Jiang Chen before, laughed coldly as he looked at Mu Gaoqi. "A pill dao genius is indeed something, but nothing if he is killed. Not to mention that you have yet to even develop to that step, but even if you did, you can shove off to the side in front of a true martial dao genius. There's no place for you here."

These words were a direct slap across the face. As even tempered as Mu Gaoqi was, it didn't mean he would accept this kind of humiliation. His face darkened, "Senior brother Rong Zifeng, your words make some sense, but you don't seem to be a true martial dao genius either. If I recall correctly, you're already 35. I'm only 19 this year. You're a full sixteen years older than me. How do you know that I won't reach your level of martial dao cultivation in sixteen years?"

Not only did Jiang Chen not stop Mu Gaoqi from losing his temper, he was actually inwardly gleeful to see this. He wanted Mu Gaoqi to lose his temper more often, as sometimes authority and status were built up in this method. If you always presented a smiling face and was always even tempered, others would feel that you had no temper and was an easy target. Not much respect would be forthcoming. On the contrary, the more of a temper you had, the more others might fear you.

Jiang Chen applauded lightly and started laughing. "Junior brother Gaoqi's words speak to my heart. As the saying goes, don't bully a youth for being poor. With senior brother Rong's age, you

shouldn’t be acting tough with younger men. There’s no glory in defeat, and nothing more than additional loss of face if you lose.”

Jiang Chen really wasn’t kindly disposed towards someone like Rong Zifeng. There was no grudge between them, yet he just had to jump out to try and step on them. But was Jiang Chen someone so easily stepped on?

Rong Zifeng’s face darkened. His age was one of the greatest blots on his record in the Sovereign Area. All the other geniuses were below thirty, but he was already at thirty five.

The sexily dressed Ling Bi’er suddenly frowned and spoke in an icy tone. “Rong Zifeng, cut the blather. First of all, you’re not much of a martial dao genius, and second, who says pill dao geniuses need to stand to the side in front of martial dao geniuses? Who says they have no right to speak?”

Of the four kings, Ling Bi’er’s potential in pill dao was the highest, so Rong Zifeng’s words were also an enormous affront to her.

Rong Zifeng broke out in a cold sweat after hearing Ling Bi’er’s words. “Junior sister Bi’er, I… I didn’t mean to impugn you.”

Ling Bi’er was in an ill temper. “Back off, I don’t want to hear your nonsense.”

Rong Zifeng was inwardly incensed to have been lectured by a

woman, but he didn't dare do anything. He could only back away with a lowered head. His greatest backer in the Sovereign Area was Shen Qinghong, and when the latter saw this sight, he said, "Junior sister Ling, I think that although Zifeng's words were somewhat extreme, they still made sense. Martial dao is the establishment of the world in the Profound Continent. Those who can create clouds with one palm and summon rain with another are almost all martial dao geniuses."

Ling Bi'er responded coolly. "Then I'll congratulate senior brother Shen in advance for when you can walk out of the Regal Pill Palace and summon the wind and rain to bring glory to our sect."

It was patently obvious that the four kings weren't the picture of harmony. Ling Bi'er was even prouder than Shin Qinghong, and left him no face at all.

The latter smiled modestly. "That day will come."

Ling Bi'er's lips curved remotely, a look of contempt flashing through her stunning face, but she didn't continue arguing with Shen Qinghong.

"Alright, back to the topic at hand." Shen Qinghong spread out his hands, the very picture of overwhelming might. "Now that we're all here, the old rules apply. Trying pills and discussing martial dao, these are the traditions of our monthly meetings."

Rong Zifeng leapt to his feet. "I'll serve as a modest spur to

inspire others to come forth with valuable contributions. I'd like to try our newly promoted junior brothers. Frankly, it would be bullying if I challenged you one on one. Why don't all four of you come at me!"

This Rong Zifeng really didn't know how to interact with others. Not only had he offended Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi with his words, but now he'd gone and insulted the other two newly ascended disciples in martial dao as well. The latter two hadn't said anything up until now because they were newly arrived, and because they knew they didn't have the right to speak. But Rong Zifeng wanted to force them to submit, it would be impossible for them to continue with a low profile.

"What kind of words are these, senior brother Rong? You against four of us?"

Rong Zifeng smirked arrogantly. "You're not my opponent in single combat, and the four of you together may not even be able to take ten of my moves."

Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi had both won their residences through pill dao. Their loss of face from Rong Zifeng's challenge weren't as great as the two who'd won through martial dao. The latter two felt immensely humiliated. They placed their hands on their sword hilts, with expressions that looked like they were fully ready to fight Rong Zifeng to the death at a single wrong word.

All eyes shot to Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi. Everyone wanted to see if they had the courage to take up the challenge. Although they had won their residences through the pill competition, if one

didn’t even have the courage to take up a challenge in the world of martial dao, one would simply be too spineless for much use.

Chapter 508: If We're Going To Bet, Let's Make A Bigger Bet

Jiang Chen's fingers tapped lightly on the armrest of his chair, following his own rhythm as he sat back. Even in the face of gazes flicking at him from all corners of the room, he was completely at ease.

"Stop pretending to be so mighty and mysterious, Jiang Chen. Answer the challenge if you have the guts, or bow your head if you don't!" Rong Zifeng barked in laughter and looked on with contempt.

"Rong Zifeng, do you have any self respect at all?" Mu Gaoqi leapt to his feet, his voice rising in anger, "A sky origin cultivator of such an age, and yet you feel no shame in challenging us minor origin cultivators?"

Rong Zifeng smiled sinisterly. "Don't worry, Mu Gaoqi, I won't bully you. Come on up. If I can't handle you in one move, then just count that as my incompetence. As for Jiang Chen, if you can even take three of my moves, then you can count that as me losing!" It was a thoroughly provocative tone.

"So what if you lose?" Jiang Chen smiled faintly. "You're just flapping your lips. I have no interest in playing such a boring game."

"Then what do you want to do?" Rong Zifeng snorted derisively.

“Since you want to play, let’s really play then. Whoever loses gets the hell out of the Sovereign Area.” Jiang Chen responded decisively.

Everyone snapped to attention when these words rang out. Jiang Chen was vicious alright! Although Rong Zifeng was putting up such a tough front, he didn’t actually dare agree to such a large bet.

“What? You were talking so tough just now, was that just for show? Did your balls turn into raisins when we upped the stakes a bit?” Jiang Chen flicked a mocking glance at Rong Zifeng.

Shen Qinghong frowned. “We’re all geniuses in the Sovereign Area. There’s no need to go so overboard for some light sparring. In my eyes, placing some bets are fine, but there’s no need for words such as leaving the Sovereign Area, spoken in the heat of the moment.”

The genteel Jun Mobai also agreed this time. “Indeed, a small bet will liven up the proceedings, but it’s likely that even the higher echelons will be displeased if the bets are too large.”

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. “Rong Zifeng, I know you can’t afford to lose. How about this, tell me what you can afford to bet?”

Rong Zifeng was already beyond incensed from Jiang Chen’s provocative words. “Jiang Chen, don’t think I don’t dare bet against you! I’m just afraid of someone whining to the Palace Head once they lose. Since you want to bet, then let’s bet Origin

Fostering Pills and spirit stones. Do you dare take me up on that?”

“Come come, tell me how much you can bet.” Jiang Chen gave an indifferent chuckle.

Rong Zifeng gnashed his teeth. “Two hundred upper rank Origin Fostering Pills and five hundred upper rank spirit stones! Do you have the guts to match that?” This wasn’t an insignificant sum to Rong Zifeng, it was one to two years worth of his stipend.

“That little?” Jiang Chen smirked disdainfully. “Too little, not interested.”

Rong Zifeng’s expression grew cold as he spoke frostily, “Jiang Chen, you’re just a foreign disciple. How much wealth can you possibly have to stand here blustering in this manner?”

“You can come laugh at me later if I can’t afford the bet. Don’t get muddled now, right now it’s me who’s looking down on your capital.”

Rong Zifeng wanted to say something else, but Shen Qinghong suddenly interjected. “In that case, let’s increase it by fivefold. Zifeng, I’ll pay for you if you don’t have enough.”

Jiang Chen laughed heartily. “Good, good! It’s the ostentatiously wealthy senior brother Shen alright! The supreme geniuses of the Sovereign Area are generous indeed.”

Shen Qinghong grew unaccountably irked by these words. He got the distinct feeling that Jiang Chen was somehow mocking him, insinuating that his cultivation level was the result of investing obscene amounts of wealth in himself.

“Come! Take out a thousand upper rank Origin Fostering Pills and three thousand upper rank spirit stones!” A follower immediately went to prepare the bet when Shen Qinghong waved his hand.

When Rong Zifeng saw that Shen Qinghong had somehow ended up backing him, he was inwardly delighted and leered at Jiang Chen. “Jiang Chen, I’m borrowing from senior brother Shen for now. You’ve made a great fuss till now, don’t tell me you can’t take out this piddling amount of capital?”

Jiang Chen had been making a great deal of things precisely because he’d been setting up this moment. What he lacked most at the moment were spirit stones! The Nine Gates Incineration Formation needed a staggering amount of spirit stones, and he could only fill up the void by half with what he had on hand. The three thousand upper rank spirit stones would partially fill the rest of the void. If he could collect another two or three thousand spirit stones, he would be able to operate the formations for approximately five years.

Shen Qinghong’s followers quickly brought forward a thousand Origin Fostering Pills and three thousand spirit stones. Although this was a sizable sum of money, it was still a pittance compared to his overall net worth. “Junior brother Jiang Chen, do you have enough pills and stones? Do you need to borrow some in advance

from your humble brother here?" Shen Qinghong purposefully put on a courteous front. Once Jiang Chen used any of his resources, he'd never be able to escape from Shen Qinghong's gasp!

"Thank you for your concern, senior brother. Although I can't compare to senior brother Shen's immense wealth, I can still afford to play with this kind of a small bet." Jiang Chen took out a thousand upper rank Origin Fostering Pills and three thousand upper rank spirit stones as he spoke. These spirit stones counted as nearly two thirds of his current wealth.

He lightly placed the forfeit on the table and looked at Rong Zifeng with a deep gaze. "Well, how are we betting? Is it by the three moves you were just boasting about, or do we come up with another plan?"

"Three moves are indeed a bit inappropriate. That's not quite fair." Shen Qihong shook his head, plainly not wanting to risk a potential loss for Rong Zifeng.

Jun Mobai smiled. "We can't really bet on basis of actual strength when it comes down to a sky origin realm facing a minor origin realm, can we? The way I look at things, how about five moves?"

Lin Bi'er looked meaningfully at Jiang Chen. "Five moves seems rather fair."

Three of the four kings had spoken, and the last, Nie Chong, shot a sharp look at Jiang Chen. "This Jiang Chen isn't exactly weak

since he was able to defeat Yan Hongtu. He has the strength of the peak of the earth origin realm. I say at least ten moves should be allowed for fairness."

"Mm. Ten moves it is." Shen Qinghong nodded.

Jiang Chen maintained a faint smile on his face throughout this exchange. He didn't care in the slightest what number these folks ended at. Even though Rong Zifeng was at eighth level origin realm, when it really came down to a fight, Jiang Chen wasn't afraid of his opponent. He was at the peak of the minor origin realm. If he really exerted his full strength, he'd have no problem fighting Rong Zifeng to a standstill, even if he didn't win. If he went so far as to bring out his trump cards, he'd even have a thirty percent chance of winning.

Therefore, no matter whether it was three, five, ten, or even a hundred moves, Jiang Chen didn't care in the slightest. Rong Zifeng would never beat him.

Having received Shen Qinghong and Nie Chong's support, Rong Zifeng felt greatly emboldened. "Ten moves it is then. Jiang Chen, I will absolutely crush you within those ten moves. All our peers here can be my witness."

"Come, let's meet in the ring!" Rong Zifeng's body flickered as he was the first to dash out.

Shen Qinghong also stood up. "Sparring is a great event in our Sovereign Area. Let's go watch, everyone!"

Jun Mobai smiled slightly. “Enormous forfeits for a duel between geniuses. This is indeed an entertaining event. Junior sister Ling, let’s go take a look!”

Ling Bi’er responded faintly. “I can hear. I don’t need your invitation.”

Nie Chong smirked distantly as he leaped into the air and transformed into a streak of light, disappearing into the unknown before people’s eyes.

The two geniuses that had been promoted through the martial dao competition looked at Jiang Chen with some gratitude and pity. “Jiang Chen, if you lose, we’ll shoulder some of the cost for you.” The two geniuses knew that Jiang Chen’s match was also shielding them from disaster. Otherwise, with Rong Zifeng’s proclamation of one versus four, it would be an incredible blow to them if they lost.

Mu Gaoqi also put himself forth eagerly. “I’ll take on a third!”

However, Jiang Chen just laughed leisurely. “Don’t you guys even think about it!”

Mu Gaoqi and the other two were dazed as they saw Jiang Chen’s figure already dashing forward. His long laugh was carried on the wind back to them, “This Rong Zifeng comes bearing gifts with open hands. You guys want to share in the spoils? No way!”

Mu Gaoqi started as he finally understood Jiang Chen's meaning. Brother Chen was actually full of confidence and had never even considered the possibility of him losing! The other two geniuses also blinked and started laughing ruefully. They increased their speed and sped towards the ring, not wanting to miss even one moment of the match.

Shen Qinghong was obviously accustomed to holding such matches as he even had a special ring built for just this kind of occasion. Rong Zifeng was currently standing in it, adopting a mighty and glorious pose that spoke of his unparalleled power. He was releasing the aura of the sky origin realm without holding back. His aura covered the entire sky over the ring, giving others an exceedingly stifling feeling.

"Brother Chen, you must be careful. Although he's not one of the four kings, his original ranking in the Sovereign Area was number six. He's quite strong." Mu Gaoqi sent a quick reminder to Jiang Chen. Jiang Chen nodded lightly and walked up the steps to the ring.

The aura of the sky origin realm was not to be underestimated. The entire ring was suffused with an enormous sense of pressure, making Jiang Chen feel quite repressed.

"Mm? What's this? An art of gravity?" Jiang Chen felt a tremendous weight settle on him as he set foot into the ring, seemingly restricting his movements.

Rong Zifeng's gaze was piercingly cold as he gazed at Jiang Chen as if he were looking at an idiot. "Jiang Chen, I don't know what kind of backdoor deal you made to make Palace Head Dan Chi value you so highly, but it's high time that I rip that lying, thieving mask to pieces and let everyone understand that a country bumpkin is forever only a country bumpkin. You'll never be on the same level as true geniuses!" The grave authority in his tone made it seem as if he were the ruler in the ring; as if his every word and gesture was an imperial edict.

"True genius?" Jiang Chen suddenly let loose with a peal of laughter. "Do you mean you? Sorry, I don't see any genius in front of me, just a piece of garbage busy dallying in his own daydream."

Rong Zifeng's face stilled as he circulated his aura, appearing as an enormous mountain in front of Jiang Chen. His talents lay in the earth attribute, and all of his arts and methods lay in that area as well. "Jiang Chen, you can still talk tough even when facing death! My Great Earth Flood will restrict your movement by two thirds! Let's see how you can still act cocky then!"

"Great Earth Flood" was one of Rong Zifeng's arts of gravity. Once deployed, it would increase gravity in the surroundings by several folds, becoming a restrictive force that would greatly hinder his opponent's movements.

Rong Zifeng rubbed his hands together once and turned a piece of paper scribbled with runes into nothing. Suddenly, dots of light the color of yellow soil formed a meter tall air current of stardust. It was a current of air generated by the art, but it was obvious that this dust wasn't ordinary dust. Each particle was incredibly dense,

and moved as if it could form an enormous restraining effect.

Chapter 509: Enormous Arm Of Buddha's Warrior Attendant

Jiang Chen's own arts did indeed lack ways to counter earth based moves. None of the skills in his repertoire would be able to hold this Great Earth Flood back, but that didn't mean he was helpless.

He extended his arms, and eighty one ice and fire lotuses erupted from beneath the ground like snakes, surrounding him in their mist. Jiang Chen stood within a flower with a gentle look in his eyes. He reigned supreme in the world of the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice. Even the Great Earth Flood would falter before the Lotus that could drill through even the most durable of mountains. Therefore, when the Lotus emerged, the force of the Great Earth Flood was ablated to a reasonable degree.

"Rong Zifeng, you only have ten moves. Make them count!" Jiang Chen was holding back enough to even verbally spar with his opponent during the battle.

Although Jiang Chen was slightly surprised by the earth attribute art that Rong Zifeng was training, this level of gravitational restraint wasn't enough to render him helpless. If it'd been a sage realm expert deploying the gravity art, then perhaps Jiang Chen would've truly been immobilized. However, Rong Zifeng was far from strong enough.

A cold hint played about Rong Zifeng's lips when he heard the taunt, responding with a shout, "Jiang Chen, since you're obviously seeking death, I'll be happy to send you on your way!"

His arms suddenly ballooned, rapidly becoming as thick as a pair of elephant legs. Each arm was five meters long, and resembled a giant tree trunk. His fists radiated yellow ripples the size of a great drum.

Wham!

Rong Zifeng slammed his fist down, but his target wasn't Jiang Chen. He punched the ground as hard as he could.

Bam!

The ring shook fiercely like it had been hit by an earthquake. Jiang Chen's body swayed as he kept his balance through the shaking.

Rong Zifeng's other fist whistled through the air, instantly filling the space in front of Jiang Chen. The enormous fist's descent was accompanied by countless soil-colored runes, full of the domineering aura of a sky origin realm cultivator.

Jiang Chen was inwardly impressed when he saw the overwhelming force behind the punch. The geniuses in the Sovereign Area well deserved their titles. Rong Zifeng wasn't number six on the Sovereign Area rankings for nothing.

When the enormous fist came crashing down, Jiang Chen didn't remain idle. He directed eighteen ice lotus vines to whip towards that enormously thick arm. "Wind around it!"

With a quick gesture, he manipulated the vines to twine around the arm. As soon as the vines were fully wrapped around the arm, he made a different seal with his hands, “Freeze!”

Eighteen ice lotuses spat out beams of frost, as the air filled with crackling sounds. The enormous arm was covered in a layer of hardened ice. The combination of the ice and the vines managed to bring Rong Zifeng’s punch to an abrupt and forceful halt!

“Great! That’s one!” Mu Gaoqi shouted from below. He’d sucked in a quick breath when he saw just how frightening this punch was. If it were him in the ring, he likely would’ve long been pounded to a fine meat paste. It was a good thing that Brother Chen was amazing and had even managed to counterattack after catching this punch.

Rong Zifeng’s fist was sealed, and the enormous surge of ice energy was even seeking to freeze his arm solid. He roared loudly as a brown haze appeared on his arm.

Wham!

The arm flexed, growing thicker again as various green tendons trembled beneath the skin like water snakes, as if they were struggling with everything they had. The vibration from the green tendons actually fractured the ice to pieces, causing it cascade to the floor in great sheets.

“Jiang Chen, take another of my punches!” This time, Rong

Zifeng swept his arm over in a sweeping move that sought to clear everything before him. If the Lotus could catch that previous blow that bore down with the weight of Mt. Tai, then this arm that swept everything up in its path was aimed straight at the stalk of the Lotus.

Snap snap snap snap.

More than ten vines were instantly snapped by the crushing momentum, but Jiang Chen was ready. A magnetic storm whirled into existence around him as it went careening into Rong Zifeng's arm. Rong Zifeng felt like he was punching through a patch of turbulence as the magnetic storm grated away all the force he brought to bear.

"Haha, move number two. Go Brother Chen!" Mu Gaoqi was both excited and agitated as he hopped from foot to foot beneath the ring. He was completely enthralled by the fight, utterly oblivious to Shen Qinghong's furrowed brow of displeasure. Mu Gaoqi was well aware that he was destined to be suppressed by Shen Qinghong in the Sovereign Area. Now that hostilities had broken into the open, he had no reason to walk on eggshells around Shen Qinghong.

Although he was weak and cowardly, the Mu Gaoqi of today wasn't the Mu Gaoqi of yesteryear. His mindset had slowly started to transform.

Jiang Chen activated the fire lotuses and fiery vines began to breathe flames like the dragons of old, wreathing around Rong Zifeng's arms in a blazing sheath.

Rong Zifeng cackled. “Jiang Chen, don’t waste your efforts. My Gorilla Arm is impervious to fire and water. You want to use these paltry abilities to defeat my Arm? Dream on!” He began punching rapidly, building his rhythm as he sent his fists crashing towards Jiang Chen.

Rong Zifeng was quite irked that he hadn’t connected with his first two moves. His “Gorilla Arm” technique didn’t just have those two moves, but also a set of continuous attack techniques. Once he had the chance to deploy them, it was as if an ancient gorilla had awakened in a fury, forcing the heavens to tremble in fear.

Bam bam bam!

The boxing aura soared to the skies as it battered the Lotus’ defensive perimeter, slowly reducing its coverage.

Ever since Jiang Chen had obtained the Lotus, he’d never lost a battle. But currently, the Lotus had indeed been suppressed to its lowest output. It wasn’t that it wasn’t up to par, but that it was indeed difficult to contend with this crazy barrage of attacks with only the power of fire and water.

It was a good thing that there were many lotuses, and that Jiang Chen could now control 108 vines at the same time. Although his defenses were gradually giving ground, the Lotus’ defenses wasn’t something that could be easily destroyed. The monstrous regenerative power of the Lotus managed to stave off the constant

destruction, becoming the keystone of Jiang Chen's defense.

"This won't do at all. Staying on the defense will only cement my loss. I can't just let him whale on me like this without a proper response, can I?" With that thought, Jiang Chen once again began forming hand seals and letting countless golden currents stream out of his fingers. This time, the magnetic storm he was building was many times greater than the one before. Jiang Chen suddenly pushed with both hands and sent the storm whirling towards the threatening Rong Zifeng.

Rong Zifeng was having a great time hurling punches to his heart's content. He was caught off guard as the magnetic storm smashed into him. He swayed on his feet, almost lifted off the ground from the force of the storm. He hastily retracted both arms and sent his palms thrusting forward.

Wham!

One had to say, the Arm did indeed possess an incredible power. This push was enough to tear the frightening magnetic storm into a shower of golden fragments of light, disappearing into the void. The two had already exchanged seven moves.

"Go Brother Chen! This guy only has three moves left!" Mu Gaoqi called out loudly.

Rong Zifeng was enraged. If they'd kept the original bet of three moves, he would've lost already. He had never imagined that Jiang Chen would be so strong. When he deployed his Gorilla Arms, even

the four kings would have to let him obtain center stage for a while, only defeating him when he ran out of strength. But now, it hadn't defeated Jiang Chen even after seven blows in a row? Jiang Chen, a mere cultivator at the peak of the minor origin realm? This fellow only seemed to be a pill genius!

Rong Zifeng couldn't accept this at all.

Jiang Chen suddenly laughed coldly. "Rong Zifeng, it's time you take one of my blows!" His words were accompanied by his finger, which rose to point into the air.

All of the fire lotuses spewed out countless tongues of flame as he moved. His fingertip sucked in all of the fire, turning incandescent. Go! Jiang Chen stabbed forward with his finger and the terrifying force behind it filled the air.

"Skyblaze Supernova Point!" If this point was at its pinnacle, it would be capable of annihilating planets. Its destructive power was astonishing, and as Rong Zifeng hesitated, it sprang at him as it could set the very sky on fire. A wave of anger sent a flush through Rong Zifeng as he thrust his arm forward, ripples emanating from his palm.

Bam!

When the force behind the finger collided with the palm thrust, the defenses formed by the ripples exploded, and Rong Zifeng felt his arms grow hot as the enormous forces collided with each other.

At this time, Jiang Chen's moves suddenly changed as he stabbed forth with another finger, one even more profound than the last. "Supernova Galaxy Point!"

This move was the most devastating one he could harness at the moment. It attempted to tame the boundless metal energy and transform it into a terrifyingly destructive energy. The two moves arrived at almost the same time despite being deployed after each other.

By the time Rong Zifeng felt the burning sensation spread through his arm, the Supernova Galaxy Point had already arrived.

Wham!

The terrifying finger was a golden flash of light as it sank into Rong Zifeng's arms. Immediately, an earth shaking explosion reverberated in the ears of the spectators.

When the dust cleared, Rong Zifeng's enormous arms was nothing more than gore, flesh and blood splattering across the ring. The Supernova Galaxy Point had forcefully twisted them into scraps of flesh. The jaws of everyone present dropped.

Everyone, including Shen Qinghong, were well aware of how frightening the Gorilla Arms were. But now, right before their eyes, it'd been torn apart by a minor origin realm cultivator! Even if Rong Zifeng's bones and tendons were left intact, this was something that had never happened before!

Mu Gaoqi was overjoyed. “Fantastic! The ninth move! Only one left, Brother Chen! Hang on and victory will be yours!” Mu Gaoqi’s shouts were deafening in the silence, and was also a unquestionable blow to Rong Zifeng’s psyche.

“Jiang Chen!!” Rong Zifeng threw back his head and howled, killing intent exploding into flame in his eyes. “You… you harmed my Gorilla Arm! This is unforgivable! I will tear you to shreds for this blasphemy and eradicate you, no matter your background or patron!”

Rong Zifeng had gone mad as he looked as his arms dripping with blood. This was a humiliation he’d never tasted before!

Chapter 510: Jiang Chen Wins The Bet

Mu Gaoqi frantically gesticulated beneath the ring, as if he wanted to lend Jiang Chen every iota of his strength to withstand Rong Zifeng's final blow. In Mu Gaoqi's eyes, a minor origin realm facing a sky origin realm was very much the heroic efforts of a rabbit against a lion. If Jiang Chen could remain undefeated after ten blows, it would be an absolutely epic battle.

"Mu Gaoqi, you're starting your victory parade a bit early. Do you think that this is all that Rong Zifeng, number six of the Sovereign Area, has to him?" Nie Chong, ranked fourth amongst the four kings, sneered coldly from his seat.

Shen Qinghong's lips curved slightly, a hint of smile tugging at them. "To think that a mere peak of the minor origin realm could force Zifeng to use his trump card, what a rare sight. What a pity that he's simply too young."

Ling Bi'er also sighed softly, seeming to pity Jiang Chen. At the same time, she seemed to despise Rong Zifeng even more. Her sexy lips moved slightly, but she said nothing.

It was rather the genteel Jun Mobai who chuckled. "That Jiang Chen is quite interesting. Rong Zifeng has his trump cards, but who knows whether Jiang Chen has any trump cards hidden away? Would someone be personally chosen by the Palace Head or be this valued by Elder Yun Nie without having some trump cards? Would he be able to enter our Sovereign Area?"

Jun Mobai was always the one most at odds with Shen Qinghong since the two fought over the first ranking within the Sovereign Area. The two were similar in potential and strength, but Jun Mobai was just slightly inferior to Shen Qinghong in one area, birth. Although Jun Mobai had a renowned master, that background paled in comparison to the Hallmaster of the Hall of Might, not to mention Shen Qinghong's grandfather, the Hallmaster of the Hall of Spring and Autumn.

A tinge of arrogance colored Shen Qinghong's smile. "Mobai, your potential is high, but you are far too radical at times. You're always dreaming of a star rising from the masses that can topple a genius, but do you think ludicrous events like that happen so often beneath the heavens?"

These words were confident and relaxed, but held poisonous insinuations within. They implied that Jun Mobai was as lowly as dirt, and elevated Shen Qinghong to the pedestal of a noble genius. It was a thinly veiled warning for Jun Mobai to forsake any thought of challenging him, Shen Qinghong, because Jun Mobai was unworthy!

Jun Mobai was no fool, and naturally understood the meaning that was concealed within those unassuming words. Then again, so did the others. He smiled gallantly, noncommittal as he turned his attention back to the ring. "Time will tell. After all's said and done, I still favor Jiang Chen."

Mu Gaoqi threw a grateful look at Jun Mobai when he heard these words. Only Jun Mobai dared to openly support Jiang Chen apart from himself in the Sovereign Area. Although his support

may not be sincere, he had still spoken the words.

At this moment in the ring, the earthen colored air current had coiled itself in the ring. Under the influence of the dirt colored runes, Rong Zifeng's enormous arms were healing rapidly as they flew into and out of his arms. He held up the air above his arms, as if he was a giant holding up a mountain overhead.

Streams of soil colored air currents constantly gathered in his hands, condensing into a chain of mountains. The origin energy of each mountain was thick and powerful, giving off an overpowering aura. Rong Zifeng cackled as every tendon on his body expanded to cartoonish proportions, as if they would explode at any moment.

"Jiang Chen, let's see how you escape from the gravity of my Skymountain!" Rong Zifeng's enormous arm trembled as he flung the mountain range down on Jiang Chen.

The enormous power descended from the skies with awe-inspiring momentum, forming a gravitational cage that fully trapped Jiang Chen inside.

"Meet your doom!" Rong Zifeng roared as he pushed downwards with both arms. The mountain of origin energy pressed down like the heavens themselves, combined with stunning, earth shattering momentum.

Wham!

The impact of the origin mountain threw up great clouds of dust, completely obscuring Jiang Chen's form. It looked like he hadn't managed to escape the gravity cage of the origin mountain, and had been crushed beneath the mountain. Rong Zifeng's eyes were bright as he stared at the mountain resting amidst the dust cloud. He threw back his head in a laugh as he struck a victor's pose, "Jiang Chen, you're the first minor origin cultivator to have forced me to use my trump card. But this is where it ends. Ten moves exactly!"

Rong Zifeng laughed proudly, knowing that even if Jiang Chen hadn't died beneath this move, he was almost definitely crippled. He exerted his origin power again, raising the origin mountain into the air with just his arms. A crater several feet deep was revealed, but there was no sign of Jiang Chen's carcass within. He seemed to have disappeared into thin air.

Rong Zifeng cocked his head. His Skymountain was indeed strong, but not to the point of crushing someone into oblivion. It was certainly possible to crush Jiang Chen into meat paste, or leave all his bones and tendons broke. It was even possible to reduce him to a morass of mud, but definitely not the point of dust.

Suddenly, unease flashed through Rong Zifeng's heart. A cold sneer sounded from right behind him, sending a shiver down his back, "Rong Zifeng, are you unilaterally announcing victory?"

Rong Zifeng's body trembled as he slowly turned around to see Jiang Chen behind him. The latter had a vaguely disinterested expression as a tinge of mockery played about his lips.

“You…” Rong Zifeng was immensely startled. “How did you escape?”

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. “Did I need to?”

Rong Zifeng looked like he’d seen a ghost. He’d just seen Jiang Chen crushed with his own eyes, how had that gone wrong? Could it be that Jiang Chen could turn into a gust of wind and slip away? How was that possible? He never heard of an art that enabled one to transform their body into the wind and escape. Even a Titled Great Emperor would find that impossible.

But no matter how dejected, skeptical, or baffled he was, he couldn’t reject the facts. Jiang Chen was standing right in front of him without the slightest trace of injury.

Mu Gaoqi leaped into the air. It wasn’t the first time that he’d seen Jiang Chen deploy this art. He was fully aware that his strange lotus could transform into the figure of Jiang Chen. However, although he’d been watching from beneath the ring the whole time, he too hadn’t seen when Jiang Chen had demonstrated this sleight of hand. But then again, none of this was important now!

Mu Gaoqi leapt up. “Nice going, Brother Chen! You win hahaha!”

Clap clap clap!

Jun Mobai was applauding and laughing below. “Brilliant, simply

stunning. A peak of the minor origin realm forcing an eighth level origin realm genius to the point of pulling out his trump cards, yet still able to come outunscathed. Jiang Chen, you are simply too stunning." He smiled slightly after speaking as he glanced at Shen Qinghong.

"Brother Shen, it seemed the underdog's victory did indeed happen. It looks like you were wrong again." Jun Mobai hadn't retorted when Shen Qinghong had jeered at him earlier, but now Jiang Chen had used truth itself to strike back hard at Shen Qinghong.

Shen Qinghong smile was an icy, chilling thing. "Mere smoke and mirrors. Rong Zifeng simply underestimated his opponent. If they have a rematch, Jiang Chen would lose without a doubt."

"Don't forget, Brother Shen; Rong Zifeng is already thirty five and Jiang Chen only twenty. Did Brother Shen have this level of fighting ability at Jiang Chen's age?" Jun Mobai chuckled softly as he riposted

Shen Qinghong snorted lightly. "Mobai, you seem to greatly admire this foreign kid. What, does he trigger your inferiority complex and help you stand a little taller?"

Jun Mobai laughed leisurely. "He rather does strike some nerves, but it should be yours that's been triggered, no? There goes a thousand upper rank Origin Fostering Pills and three thousand upper rank spirit stones, just like that."

“They’re but mere items, hairs on an oxen. Only you would care about these small matters. Mobai, your cares are simply not on the same level as us, eh?” Vicious words flew as the two sparred verbally, with neither backing down.

Jiang Chen couldn’t care less about the clash of words between two half step sage realm cultivators below the stage. He cared much more about the forfeits he’d just obtained. Under the eyes of everyone, he walked down from the ring and leisurely put away his winnings. During the entire charade, Rong Zifeng watched him with eyes that could set set tinder aflame.

“Glorious, how glorious! Senior brother Shen, I must thank you for your helping hand. Otherwise, I wouldn’t have been to gain so much from Rong Zifeng.” Jiang Chen wasn’t kindly disposed towards Shen Qinghong, so he decided to stoke his temper a bit more.

Although Shen Qinghong was inwardly blazing with rage, he still maintained his veneer of disdain as he casually waved, “Treat these small things as a welcome present.” His gaze flicked past Nie Chong’s face as he spoke.

Nie Chong suddenly nodded lightly and bounded in front of Jun Mobai. “Brother Jun, I’ve been practicing a couple of sword arts regarding life and death these days. I’ve had some breakthroughs and wish to spar with you.”

Nie Chong was ranked last amongst the four kings, and Jun Mobai was ranked second. Challenging Jun Mobai was naturally a bid for his position. Jun Mobai swept an indifferent gaze across Nie

Chong's face as he smiled slightly. "Nie Chong, as long as that mindset of a slave remains, your sword arts will never advance to the great perfection realm. You've a long ways to go to challenge me. But since you've asked, I'll help crush your hopes." He walked into the ring with ease and great magnanimity.

His words were both to take Nie Chong down a peg and incite some discontent. Nie Chong was obviously issuing this challenge on Shen Qinghong's instructions. That's what Jun Mobai referred to as the mindset of a slave.

Nie Chong grew incensed as Shen Qinghong's face also changed drastically. But this was how the four kings competed with each other, and Jun Mobai had always been Shen Qinghong's greatest rival. Even more irritatingly, a nettle like Jiang Chen had popped out today. Shen Qinghong was feeling thoroughly irked.

Jiang Chen had no desire to flaunt his victory after his match. He began watching Jun Mobai and Nie Chong's match quite seriously. Nie Chong's sword arts of life and death did indeed stand out as a unique set of arts. But when compared to Jun Mobai, he still lacked that all encompassing aura.

Indeed, Nie Chong began losing the upper hand when his aura peaked after ten moves. Jun Mobai then defeated him easily.

This displeased Shen Qinghong even more. His right and left hand men were Nie Chong and Rong Zifeng, but now both had been defeated in short order. This made him feel that his position was in grave danger.

Chapter 511: You Have Questions? The Hell Does It Have To Do With Me

Shen Qinghong was of a mind to take the field himself, but he had his position to think of. He was still the top genius in name and so couldn't bear to lower himself to challenge Jun Mobai and Jiang Chen. He could only repress the fury in his belly and return to the Noble Palace.

"Junior sister Ling, you have the most right to speak when it comes to pill dao. What are your thoughts about Elder Yun Nie setting two spots for the Pill Battles aside?" Shen Qinghong turned the focus of the discussion to the quota for the Pill Battles. Mu Gaoqi's thoughts churned as he realized Shen Qinghong was making trouble again.

There wasn't the slightest ripple of emotion on Ling Bi'er's cold and charming face. The tone of her response was equally void of any inflection, "Elder Yun Nie is the pillar of our sect and he must have his own reasons for his actions. I have nothing to say."

Ling Bi'er may be an icy beauty, but that didn't mean she was a fool. How could she not see through Shen Qinghong's words to see that he was trying to use her as a weapon toobject to Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi? Although she was surprised and even slightly irked by their meteoric rise, she'd learned about Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi's scores from her sister Ling Hui'er. Her sister had also seemed to accept her loss with grace.

Ling Bi'er knew that her younger sister's potential wasn't much lower than her own. If even her sister admitted she was inferior to

Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi, then there wasn't much she could be upset about.

The key point was that she was already top in class for pill dao potential in the Sovereign Area. There were four slots allocated to the younger generation when it came to the Pill Battles. Even if Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi took two, one of the remaining would still go to her.

Shen Qinghong threw another look at Nie Chong when he saw that Ling Bi'er wasn't taking the bait. Although Nie Chong was part of the four kings, he'd always been Shen Qinghong's loyal sidekick. Even though he'd just lost his challenge to Jun Mobai, a sharp light still shone on his face. There wasn't the slightest hint of dejection to be found in his countenance. "Everyone, I feel as if there are some thoughts that I'm compelled to air."

He rose to his feet, his back ramrod straight. "I feel that there's a degree of bias in how the spots for the Pill Battles have been determined. Everyone knows that those of the Sovereign Area must first be considered for any event that represents the sect. However, this time, two from the Soaring Cloud area have been chosen to represent us. Who knows if something else is at play behind the scenes?"

Rong Zifeng had been the villain in the sparring, and now it was Nie Chong's turn to play a fierce offense.

Shen Qinghong nodded slightly. "There is sense in junior brother Nie's words. The situation does seem a tad inappropriate. Of course, I would never suspect Elder Yun Nie of any schemes to pull

himself ahead, but I'm rather curious how junior brother Jiang Chen and Gaoqi have soared to the skies with just their cultivation level of minor origin realm. Moreover, even managing to obtain a residence in the Soaring Cloud Area. Just what stunning potential do these junior brothers possess to be so astonishing? Let's put this matter to rest today. We are all gathered here today, so why don't we ask the two junior brothers to show off a thing or two? This will broaden our perspectives and erase the bafflement in our hearts."

Multiple pairs of eyes turned towards Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi. Even Jun Mobai and Ling Bi'er were no exception. Just because they didn't stand up to suppress the two didn't mean they weren't curious. It was impossible for them not to hold the slightest objection to these two young men from the Soaring Clouds Area seemingly skipping over them to obtain spots for the Pill Battles.

"Junior brother Jiang Chen, you've placed first in the pill dao competition. Why don't you show your hand at pills a little and dispel everyone's prejudices?" Shen Qinghong's look was serene, but a light flickered deep in his eyes.

When Jiang Chen met Shen Qinghong's gaze, he could tell that the latter had practiced some sort of eye art. But even so, how would Jiang Chen be afraid of anyone? There were actually a few traces of a compulsion art underlying Shen Qinghong's gentle tones. Jiang Chen smiled faintly as his God's Eye activated, suddenly shooting out a beam of golden light towards Shen Qinghong's eyes like a sharp arrow.

Pfft pfft pfft pfft!

The sounds of their gazes produced an audible clash. Shen Qinghong's eyelids flickered, betraying his shock. His compulsion art had been utterly destroyed by Jiang Chen's golden beam.

Jiang Chen's smile was slightly mocking as he replied in an unruffled tone, "So you have some questions, but what does that have to do with me? Why must I show what I've got?"

It's your business if you've questions, but do I have the obligation to enlighten you?

Shen Qinghong's look grew frosty. This Jiang Chen was completely unbridled, leaving him no face at all! Even Jun Mobai didn't dare act so brazenly in front of him.

Nie Chong slammed his hand down on the table. "Jiang Chen, aren't you fearless in your ignorance! How dare you act like this in front of senior brother Shen?! I can only presume that you don't want to remain in the Sovereign Area any longer!"

"That's right. Jiang Chen, even the sect elders show senior brother Shen face. He has reached half step sage realm, and once he breaks through, he will become the core of the sect. An unparalleled existence! A mere minor origin realm like you leaves senior brother with no face! Are you trying to end your days in this area?" Rong Zifeng had been furious ever since he'd lost the bet to Jiang Chen and come off the worse after the blow to his resources.

"Indeed Jiang Chen, you're a bit much. Although you do have a

few hints of being a genius, the Sovereign Area has its own rules, and your behavior is tantamount to flouting them with impunity."

"Jiang Chen, you're likely used to doing whatever you wanted in the Precious Tree Sect. But now that you're in the Regal Pill Palace, how are you worthy of your residence with such crude and rude behavior? In my eyes, we need to hold a serious discussion about your continued placement in this Sovereign Area."

Those speaking all looked to Shen Qinghong as their leader in the Sovereign Area. They were his men through and through.

Even when faced with this crowd of poisonous admonishments, Jiang Chen's expression didn't change at all. That confident and relaxed smiled never wavered even as his eyes narrowed and swept across those assembled. "Groveling in the dust and desperately licking boots. Forming cliques and factions. These are the so-called geniuses of the Sovereign Area? I, Jiang Chen, am ashamed to be even be named as one of you." Jiang Chen's tone was completely contemptuous. He looked indifferent to the gazes that were suddenly set aflame by his words. Every pair of eyes promised him a sure death.

His tone suddenly changed as he continued. "I'd thought that the geniuses of the Sovereign Area were all unique geniuses with their own path. Who would've thought that there were so many who only knows to fawn on the rich and powerful? I feel rather sad for Palace Head Dan Chi. He'd created new residences to cultivate extraordinary geniuses who could rise above the common herd. Why don't all of you take a piss and look at your reflection? Are you worthy of the Sovereign Realm with such subservient

behavior?”

His God’s Eye shone with a brilliant presence as his words echoed. His quick barrage left everyone’s mouths hanging open in shock, so stunned that they were at a loss for what to say.

Jun Mobai clapped loudly. “Junior brother Jiang Chen’s words speak straight to my heart. Since we occupy positions of high station, it is our responsibility to set an example for the younger generation within the sect. Sadly, some people can’t seem to shake off the mentality of a slave and never realize their true self. Therefore, what other great accomplishments can they achieve in this life apart from being a sidekick?”

Although Ling Bi’er didn’t say anything, she nodded slightly, plainly agreeing with Jiang Chen and Jun Mobai’s words. She was a pill dao genius, a martial dao talent, and one of the few who weren’t willing to run with Shen Qinghong in the Sovereign Area. Just like Jun Mobai, she walked her own path and refused to kiss up to Shen Qinghong or submit to his power.

Shen Qinghong’s faction held absolute advantage in the Sovereign Area. Although Jun Mobai and Ling Bi’er didn’t coexist peacefully with him, they rarely publicly attacked him like this. Jiang Chen’s appearance this time had brought all their conflicts to the fore, and the situation immediately became dangerously explosive.

Shen Qinghong had always sat firmly on his throne, but who would’ve expected that his throne would be shaken to this extent by the repeated losses of the day? Jun Mobai’s words only

criticized Nie Chong and Rong Zifeng, but Jiang Chen was publicly defying Shen Qinghong!

However, he was the local tyrant in the Sovereign Area, and although he was enraged, he still sneered coldly. “Junior brother Jiang Chen, it’s all well and good to show off our light and edge. But if one lacks the corresponding ability that can back up their bluster, that’s not called unsheathing one’s edge, but the blind bravery.”

Nie Chong also shouted out. “That’s right! Jiang Chen, it’s no use if you only have a glib tongue. Who knows if there’s a hidden force at work behind the scenes regarding your Pill Battle slot? Your refusal to show your abilities is simply a sign of a guilty conscience! The more you have a guilty conscience, the more it points to some unspeakable secret in the shadows!”

“Moron.” Jiang Chen laughed leisurely. “You seem so confident that you’ve found some secret of mine. Then what are you waiting for? Call all your backers and sign a collective petition tattling on me. Go make a big deal out of things! Go protest to the Palace Head. What are you doing wasting time here with me?”

Nie Chong laughed coldly. “Do you think this matter is over like this?”

Jiang Chen shrugged lightly. “Whatever you want.” He stretched, getting to his feet with an unconcerned smile, “Senior brother Shen, are these boring tricks the entirety of the so-called monthly meeting? My time is valuable; don’t waste it in the future. I’m leaving.”

Mu Gaoqi also leapt up when he saw Jiang Chen walk out, following his brother out. He also shook his head and sighed as he left behind his parting words. “For all I’ve heard of the vaunted Sovereign Area, nothing was more telling than seeing it in person. It would be an exaggeration to say its reputation is unearned, but it’s been truly disappointing.” Mu Gaoqi had solidified his determination to follow Jiang Chen. He didn’t waver even when facing Shen Qinghong.

As Shen Qinghong saw the two leave, a look of killing intent shot out of his cold set face.

Jun Mobai also smiled noncommittally. “Brother Shen, there is indeed no meaning to this monthly meeting. I will also not attend in the future.”

Ling Bi’er also stood up. “I have no interest in attending either. Enjoy yourself, senior brother Shen.”

The two newly ascended martial geniuses also expressed their intent to leave. They’d just been insulted by Rong Zifeng and naturally wanted nothing to do with Shen Qinghong.

In this way, six of the twelve geniuses in the area took their leave, leaving only Shen Qinghong’s group of five and another fellow who couldn’t make up his mind. However, the fellow ultimately decided to stay after thinking about things for a while.

“Senior brother Shen, this Jiang Chen is simply too cocky, we

must take him down with extreme prejudice!" Rong Zifeng huffed with anger. "It's a pity that I underestimated this vermin earlier!"

"Senior brother Shen, even that trash Jun Mobai is starting to strut about. It looks like he has quite some ambition and wants to sway Jiang Chen to his side, setting himself up as an equal against you." Nie Chong also spoke.

Shen Qinghong's cold expression suddenly changed as he revealed a chilly, arrogant smile. "Completely useless trash like clay chickens and pottery dogs. I was going to announce something today but forget it, they will all come to know in a few days. Then they'll realize how unwise and idiotic their actions today were!"

Nie Chong's expression abruptly transformed. "Senior brother Shen, are you breaking through to the sage realm?"

Chapter 512: Handing Out The Wood Spirit Spring

"Junior brother Jiang Chen, please wait a moment." Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi had yet to depart a ways from Shen Qinghong's residence when they heard Jun Mobai calling out to them from behind.

Jiang Chen paused briefly. "What insights does senior brother Jun have?"

"Heh heh, junior brother Jiang Chen's words today have made me greatly feel that I've found someone on the same wavelength as me. My residence isn't far from here. How about coming over to my place for a drink?" Jun Mobai asked ever so politely with a smile, projecting a refined and genteel feeling.

However, Jiang Chen still declined. "My interest has been sapped for today. If there is a chance to in the future, let me treat senior brother Jun instead."

Ling Bi'er had also emerged from the residence at this moment, but stopped at roughly three hundred meters away from them. When she saw Jun Mobai cozy up to Jiang Chen, her dark brows drew together slightly, seeming to take exception to what she was seeing.

Jiang Chen happened to be facing her at that moment, and so his God's Eye still clearly took in the slight pursing of her mouth and slant of her eyebrows. He just didn't know if she was disdainful of

himself, or contemptuous of Jun Mobai.

Jun Mobai wasn't angered by Jiang Chen's refusal and still smiled as warmly as the spring winds. "Sure. I've heard that junior brother Jiang Chen is an unparalleled genius from the sixteen kingdoms. I've long since heard of your name and have anticipated your arrival."

Jiang Chen nodded and didn't look in Ling Bi'er's direction, walking off with Mu Gaoqi. Jun Mobai watched Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi leave, the slight smile on his face very thoughtful as if he seemed to be contemplating something. Ling Bi'er had also walked over at this point.

She paused next to Jun Mobai, speaking tonelessly with a cool voice. "Senior brother Jun, one Shen Qinghong is enough in the Sovereign Area. Do you want to be the second one?"

"Eh? Junior sister Bi'er, what makes you say that?" Jun Mobai started slightly.

Ling Bi'er smiled indifferently. "You should be clearer than me with regards to senior brother Jun's ambitions. Why ask me?" She drifted off in a fragrant whirl after speaking, dashing forward and vanishing from Jun Mobai's line of sight.

His expression sank. "Self-righteous woman who thinks she's right."

As Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi walked, they suddenly heard the increasingly faster patter of footsteps behind them. Ling Bi'er was catching up and obviously had the desire to pass them. When her lithe figure overtook them, she suddenly spoke, "I quite admire your courage in defying Shen Qinghong, but be careful of being used as cannon fodder by others. Take care of yourself well!"

She seemed to be talking to thin air with her words and not addressing Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi. She didn't even pause when speaking, but darted past them in a fragrant breeze and quickly bounded three hundred meters away from them. However, the two were well aware that her words were meant for Jiang Chen.

Mu Gaoqi sighed. "Brother Chen, you've got some face! I've heard that senior sister Bi'er is a notable icy beauty in the Regal Pill Palace. She doesn't give much face to senior brother Shen, yet you command a lot of face, she spoke to you of her own volition!"

Jiang Chen didn't know whether to laugh or cry. "This is her speaking to me of her own accord? Why do I feel like she was speaking to the air?"

Ling Bi'er was a notable genius in both pill and martial dao. Add to that her natural beauty and removed bearing, she exuded the cold pride of a kind of holy lotus growing on an iceberg. One could say that she was the dream lover of more than ninety percent of all young disciples in the Regal Pill Palace.

She had high potential, status, cultivation level, and was beautiful to boot, with extraordinary bearing. She was also highly competent, making her one of the most perfect girls in the younger

generation of the sect. Even Mu Gaoqi had quietly harbored admiration for her in his youth. However, he was indifferent in nature and viewed the matters between man and woman with a cooler eye. Thus he was not as lovestruck as the other young men. But even so, he felt that with all the female disciples in the Regal Pill Palace, Ling Bi'er was absolutely the most resplendent and perfect pearl amongst all of them, glowing with her own light.

She had a younger sister called Ling Hui'er, the one who'd ranked number four in the competition for the Sovereign Area residences. Although they were sisters, their personalities were completely different. This duo were the most popular people in the entire sect. Jiang Chen was slightly oblivious of all this due to his recent arrival in the Regal Pill Palace, and he didn't pay much attention to Mu Gaoqi's exaggerated tones.

When Jiang Chen returned to his residence, he left Rosy Valley.

He'd settled the wood spring matter and planned on baptizing Ye Chonglou and Tang Hong with it. This was crucial for them, and the earlier the better.

When he re-emerged, he was wearing the robes of the Sovereign Area and was naturally greeted with respect and others gathering around him wherever he went.

When Ye Chonglou and Tang Hong heard that Jiang Chen was taking them to his residence in the Sovereign Area, they were naturally very excited. Ye Chonglou was quite cognizant of the situation and didn't mention the others from the Precious Tree Sect. He was well aware that Jiang Chen didn't have much of a

relationship with the others. They had to leave out Lian Canghai, Iron Dazhi and Xie Yufan for some matters.

Jiang Chen welcomed them into his residence and summoned a few more followers. There were eight in total including Gouyu. “Folks, there are no outsiders here so I’ll speak frankly. I’ve gathered you here today because I want to gift you an enormous stroke of fortune.”

Ye Chonglou and Tang Hong had heard Jiang Chen mention this before, but Gouyu and the others were completely oblivious. As for Huang’er, she was now an honored guest in his household and Jiang Chen had no need to exclude her from these matters.

“I have a wood spirit spring that is a naturally formed place of qi. It can wash away the impurities within your bodies and purify the blood vessels, upgrading the potential contained within your bloodlines. This is an opportunity to remake yourself and cast off the old.” Jiang Chen cut straight to the point.

“Wood spirit spring? Naturally formed place of qi?” A hint of incomprehension formed in everyone’s eyes. Only Huang’er possessed only slight astonishment in her eyes.

“Sir Jiang, a wood spirit spring and naturally formed place of qi? The Regal Pill Palace has such a treasure?” Huang’er felt it a bit odd. “If the Regal Pill Palace possessed such a treasure, it shouldn’t be only a fourth rank sect.”

Jiang Chen smiled. “I’ve brought this spring back from the

outside world and it doesn't belong to the Regal Pill Palace. In addition, apart from those present, only Mu Gaoqi knows of this matter."

Everyone snapped to stern attention. This meant that they were to keep this secret.

"Alright, I've made some plans. Since Miss Huang'er is the guest, I've arranged her to be the first to be baptized in the spring."

Huang'er laughed softly. "Sir Jiang, you should probably leave Huang'er out? How could I supplant the host?" Huang'er was the daughter of an eminent family and had a poised and dignified air about her. She didn't want to usurp the host's position.

It was rather Gouyu who twined her hands around Huang'er's slender arm. "Younger sister Huang'er, you hold yourself aloof from worldly success and are kindhearted. No one will envy you. Not to mention that as the guest, you naturally go first."

Jiang Chen nodded. "Miss Huang'er, if my thinking is right, your potential may not need the purifying effects of the wood spring, but its waters are some of the purest in the world and useful in cleansing the soul. It will be helpful in battling the vengeful aura of the Hundred Generation Curse. Not only should you go, but you should bathe in its waters every month. Don't worry, the spirit power within the spring will regenerate and with the cycles of the planets. As long as its foundations aren't harmed, the wood spirit spring will never dry up."

“As for the rest of you, one baptism will be enough for simple evolution of your bloodline. It won’t be of much use to you if you enter the spring again, so each of you will have one turn ranging between three to seven days. Two or three can bathe in its waters at a time.”

There was plenty of spirit qi in the wood spirit spring, and Jiang Chen, Mu Gaoqi, and the Goldbiter Rats had all bathed in it at the same time. It was only because of the divide between men and women that he didn’t arrange fro them to all enter at the same time.

Indeed, when Gouyu heard this, she wrapped her arm around Huang’er’s thin waist. “I will wash with younger sister Huang’er. Ziqi, will you join us?”

Wen Ziqi’s tender face reddened. Her shy nature still hadn’t improved all that much in the face of so many men. ““As sister Gouyu says.”

“Heh heh, us three girls will go first?” Gouyu smiled at Jiang Chen.

“Sure, that would be for the best.” Jiang Chen then looked at Xue Tong again. “Xue Tong, you and Lordmaster Ye, as well as Tang Hong, will be another group. Guo Jin, Qiao Shan and Qiao Chuan will be the last.”

Jiang Chen brought them all to the cave after dividing them into groups. He had long since told Long Xiaoxuan his plans. If he

brought others here, he was to coil up in a corner and not reveal himself, for fear of scaring others.

Long Xiaoxuan was quite satisfied with his current lifestyle. He had received so many benefits from Jiang Chen and would naturally not go against his wishes. Just as Jiang Chen arranged for everyone to be baptized in the wood spirit spring, all sorts of rumors flurried in the outside world.

The content of the rumors all had to do with Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi. They pointed out that there was something at work behind the scenes in the two gaining spots for the Pill Battles. These rumors had been obviously packaged by others. Not only were they targeting Jiang Chen, they were even more so targeting Elder Yun Nie. They insinuated that the elder had lost his impartiality in running sect affairs, and that he'd been too careless in allocating spots for the pill battles. There were so many geniuses in the Sovereign Area, yet these two newcomers to the area had taken over two slots.

Even if Mu Gaoqi was of an innate wood constitution of high order, that still wasn't enough to prove anything. After all, a constitution only represented future potential. It didn't mean that his current pill dao potential was higher than those supreme geniuses in the Sovereign Area.

"Venomous scum!" Even someone as good-natured as Mu Gaoqi was truly angered this time. "Brother Chen, Shen Qinghong must be behind this! Hallmaster Elder Lian Chen of the Hall of Might and Hallmaster Elder Jin Gu of the Hall of Spring and Autumn must have joined forces to make trouble for my honored master. I

say, they're not merely setting eyes on the Pill Battle slots, but even my honored master's position as Hallmaster of the Herbal Hall!"

Jiang Chen looked at Mu Gaoqi with a slight smile. He hadn't thought that Mu Gaoqi's breadth of mind would improve by so much, so quickly. He could actually consider matters from this height now.

Chapter 513: Tempting The Ancient Cicada

“Be calm, Gaoqi.” Jiang Chen smiled faintly as he completely dismissed the rumors. “I only ask you this, is your innate wood constitution of high order pure fabrication?”

Mu Gaoqi shook his head. “Of course not.”

“And did you cheat your way into winning your Sovereign Area residence?”

“Of course not.”

Jiang Chen laughed heartily. “Then what are you worried about? A wise man does not believe every rumor that comes flying by. As long as you stay confident, what do you care if they circulate random falsehoods?”

Mu Gaoqi scratched his head. He truly admired Jiang Chen’s ability to keep calm in any situation. He could tell that his Brother Chen truly wasn’t panicked, and that was why he wasn’t all afluster.

“Brother Chen, I’m different from you. I still haven’t trained enough in strength of heart. Ai, I’m worried that they’ll make a move against my honored master.” Mu Gaoqi greatly venerated Elder Yun Nie.

“Is Elder Yun Nie worried about this?” Jiang Chen laughed.

“My honored master lives happily everyday and couldn’t care less about rumors in the outside world. His attitude is rather similar to yours, Brother Chen. But these scum have no reservations or qualms in any rumors they create! I’m worried that this will damage my honored master’s reputation if this continues.”

“Elder Yun Nie couldn’t care less because he has the confidence to do so. I will speak no grand words for your master, as he truly doesn’t hold the advantage in martial dao in the sect. But in terms of pills, whether it be the Hall of Might or the Hall of Spring and Autumn, everyone else would become a bystander.”

Mu Gaoqi sank into contemplation when he heard these words.

“Gaoqi, let them hop up and down for a while. I’ll step forward and clarify things when it becomes necessary, but when I do so, they should be prepared for a face-slapping then.” It wasn’t that Jiang Chen didn’t want to step forward, but that he was biding his time, waiting for the right moment.

Jiang Chen wasn’t angry about these fabricated rumors that sought to make trouble out of nothing. On the contrary, he was actually secretly delighted. He wanted these rumors to spread to their peak, until every soul in the sect had been informed. Then he would decisively stamp them out, destroying the schemes of those behind the scenes. As such, he played his part; refraining from responding and even staying within his residence, he purposely fed the misconception that he had a guilty conscience and didn’t dare address the rumors. The more he did this, the more the others

would act and feel that they were in the right, justifying themselves by using Jiang Chen's performance as proof of his guilt.

Then, their efforts would further intensify, culminating in a harsh slap to their faces when Jiang Chen finally stepped out. But of course, face slapping was secondary; what Jiang Chen wanted more was to strike it rich. He'd already set his sights on Shen Qinghong when he'd seen how rich the latter was. This whale of a target had presented himself at the opportune moment to solve all Jiang Chen's spirit stone troubles for the Nine Gates Incineration Formation.

Jiang Chen was more aware than anyone else that it was Shen Qinghong behind the rumors, and how it involved the two great powers behind him.

"Gaoqi, ignore these troubles and go back first. Cultivate 'Boulder's Heart' well and I'll make an appearance in a few days to resolve things." Jiang Chen naturally wouldn't step out right then because he'd actually been feeling the subtle stirrings that he was about to break through to the earth origin realm over the past couple of days. He knew that only a thin film separated him from the earth origin realm. He naturally didn't want to pay attention to anything else at this critical moment.

Jiang Chen entered closed door cultivation after he sent Mu Gaoqi off. The baptism in the wood spirit spring would lead to long-term benefits, and refining the reservoir of origin energy in the Redscaled Firelizard's core would be the key that would allow him to break through to the earth origin realm in such a short

time.

All of his preparation came together as Jiang Chen successfully broke through to the earth origin realm after twelve days. He spent another few days consolidating his grasp over his level and reinforcing his various techniques. Now in the earth origin level, he quite valued the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice. Although the Lotus was strong in the fire attribute and had immense regenerative skills, it was still a bit weak in terms of durability.

Thus, he decided to combine the attributes of the magnetic golden mountain and the Lotus. Once the magnetic power was assimilated into the Lotus, its ability to withstand attacks would increase to the point of perfection.

Whenever he'd used the Lotus to set up a defensive perimeter in previous battles, there was always the possibility that a strong opponent could destroy the Lotus' actual body. Although the Lotus could regenerate infinitely, that was still highly disadvantageous when in battle.

Jiang Chen could now harness some two hundred ice and fire lotus vines at the same time. His defense and attack range had expanded by yet another step.

"I possess the Lotus, but the Lotus' attack is affected by the level of the Lotus itself and I can see no great breakthroughs in this area at this time. Only if I obtain a strong source of fire or ice energy will the Lotus' strength be further strengthened."

The Lotus was a renowned spirit entity beneath the heavens, very pure in its multiple forms. If one sought its weakness, the only qualm they would identify would be its slightly weaker defense and not quite strong offense. But its unique strength came from its flexibility with multiple forms and the regenerative abilities of its Flaming Heart of Ice. It was also an entity that could be assimilated with any item of a similar attribute.

The Lotus could devour almost all sources of fire and ice energy, with no conflict at all. Therefore, the Lotus' greatest strength lay in its devouring abilities. Each of the numerous vines that Jiang Chen could control was an enormous suction cup, imbued with terrifying devouring abilities.

"There are boundless sources of qi beneath the heavens and on this earth, and the ones with fire and water attributes are far too numerous to count. The Lotus has absorbed much along the way, but it has yet to meet a particularly dominating source that it can add to its offensive arsenal. This is why its attacking power has yet to reach an earth shattering level."

Jiang Chen knew that this also required a fortuitous opportunity. It had already been a great stroke of fortune to capture the Lotus. If he was able to absorb heaven defying sources of qi to boot, that would really be too perverse. Jiang Chen knew that these matters could only be wished for, not planned for.

It was a good thing that although the Lotus couldn't display its full potential in offense, it was enough to help him in challenging others stronger than him. He'd put the Lotus' illusionary abilities to good use in his most recent battles, using the Lotus to befuddle

his opponent and successfully evade powerful blows.

Apart from the Lotus, the magnetic golden mountain was also a valuable treasure. Jiang Chen's first task after entering the earth origin realm was to summon the Thundercloud Golden Cicada.

The Cicada had been spending its days peacefully in the magnetic golden mountain and was a bit put out to be summoned. "Human big brother, you said that you wouldn't disturb me for ten years after I gave you the Thundercloud Tree branch!" The Cicada was a bit unhappy, pouting like a little girl throwing a small tantrum.

"Haha, Little Cicada, I wanted to ask you how far along your bloodline evolution's gotten?" Jiang Chen chuckled.

"Far from any progress!" The Cicada responded in a miffed tone. "Human big brother, I'm going to go back and train if there's nothing else."

Jiang Chen naturally had something to discuss since he'd summoned it.

"Little Cicada, what are you in a hurry for?" Jiang Chen laughed leisurely. "I have a great stroke of fortune here that can absolutely accelerate your bloodline evolution."

The Cicada made a moue. "Don't lie to me, Human Big Brother."

Jiang Chen smiled faintly and summoned the Goldbiter Rat King.

“Little Cicada, look at Ole Gold if you don’t believe me. Remember how far along he was when you last saw him?”

The Cicada focused for a second, and began to shriek, “How is this possible? Big Golden Rat, you’ve awoken your heritage of memories? How come your bloodline has increased by so much all of a sudden? It’s at least ten times stronger than before!”

The Rat King chuckled. “Young master Chen helped me, of course! Little Cicada, don’t you be too hoity toity. My bloodline’s of of the ancient Goldbiter Ratkings, but even I am willing to follow the young master. A young Cicada like you wants to talk terms with young master Chen? A great stroke of fortune is in front of you, yet you don’t seem that willing. How laughable!”

The Cicada stared at the Rat King, tsk’ing with amazement. “Odd, how odd!” It suddenly tilted its head to the side and asked Jiang Chen, “Human Big Brother, do you really, really have the ability to facilitate my bloodline’s evolution?”

Jiang Chen nodded faintly.

“Alright, you won’t be giving it to me for free. Tell me, what are your conditions?”

“Didn’t Ole Gold say so? Follow me and I’ll gift it to you.”

The Cicada thought for a bit and said, “Human Big Brother, you’re not a bad man. Following you and accepting your orders

isn't a big thing. However, you must promise that you will never harm me."

Jiang Chen spoke seriously. "Little Cicada, your body is of no great use to me. Although the ancient Golden Cicada can be refined into pills, that would be a true waste of a heavenly treasure. I, Jiang Chen, would never do such a thing such as kill a chicken for its eggs. Little Cicada, your bloodline have yet to evolve and so your memories haven't fully awakened. You likely don't know your potential."

The Cicada and Rat King both started. Judging from Jiang Chen's tone, he seemed quite familiar with the former, but he was only a human around twenty years of age!

"Human Big Brother, do you know how much potential I have?" The Cicada grew curious.

"Heh heh, I won't say anything else, but a Golden Cicada's wings are one of the precious few types that can instantly regenerate, the art of Cicada Shell is one of fake death and deceive heavenly experts, its bloodline is one that's impervious to a hundred poisons and its body can withstand ten thousand strikes of lightning."

"Impervious to a hundred poisons? Withstand ten thousand strikes of lightning?" The Cicada was astonished, and the Rat King even more so.

The Rat King's eyes spun like crazy. "Young master Chen, this tiny Cicada is that strong?"

“Old Gold, if you could recover your level of a Kingrat, your strength would surpass the Cicada’s. All beneath the heavens would tremble at the sound of your name.”

The Rat King chuckled and curled its whiskers, as proud as if he could already see the day waving at him in the not-so-distant future.

The Cicada was uninterested in the Rat King’s look of almost unholy glee. Instead, it turned its attention to Jiang Chen, “Human Big Brother, you say you have a way to help evolve my bloodlines. What is this method? I will certainly serve you if you help me awaken my heritage.”

“Good! I’ve been waiting for this!” Jiang Chen laughed leisurely and calculated the time. Gouyu and the others should be about done. The wood spirit spring was absolutely a timely gift for the Cicada, anxious to advance its bloodlines. Jiang Chen had been counting on this. It was why he’d summoned the Cicada. The more he himself cultivated, the more he would need the Cicada’s bloodline to increase his own strength.

Chapter 514: A Dominating Proclamation

After coming to an agreement with the Cicada, Jiang Chen decided to officially let the Cicada bathe in the spring ten days later. Apart from agreeing to follow Jiang Chen, the Cicada had to offer up one drop of blood after its bloodline underwent evolution.

Even though it was just a single drop of blood, if the droplet was one refined from an ancient bloodline, it would copy all of the Cicada's memories and heritage. That would be enough to obtain most of its talents.

Jiang Chen was rather excited as he thought of all the talents the Cicada had. The wings would allow him to refine shapeless wings and soar through the air. This was something only sage realm experts would be able to do! If he obtained this flight skill, it would be an even more stable ability than the sage realm's flight skill. After all, there were all sorts of restrictions to flight in the sage realm. Only when one reached the sky sage level would one be able to make full use of their own strength to glide through the air. But even so, such flight was still inferior to truly possessing wings.

After all, the flight of human cultivators were often supported by spirit energy. It made heavy demands on the amount of energy from the body and consumed quite a bit of the body's resources. Even the strongest expert couldn't remain indefinitely afloat, whereas having wings meant that flying was a type of instinct, an art. There was no need to consume an enormous amount of spirit power to maintain it.

That was the advantage.

Apart from the Cicada's wings, there was also its feigned death art in the Cicada's Shell. This was tantamount to an extra life to a cultivator. Moreover, the bloodline of an ancient Golden Cicada was impervious to a hundred poisons and impenetrable even when hammered by ten thousand strikes of lightning. This was the stuff of dreams for a cultivator. If any cultivator possessed even two of these gifts, they would become a top genius in any great sect.

However, Jiang Chen's goal wasn't to become a top genius in just the Profound Continent, but to become an existence that stood at the peak of this world and on the boundless heavenly dao. Therefore, he wouldn't let go of any opportunity to strengthen himself.

He had many techniques to wield now. "God's Eye", "Ear of the Zephyr", "Boulder's Heart", and "Psychic's Head" were all improving steadily. The power of "Supernova Point" had also explosively increased after he'd broken through to the origin realm. The power of the Evil Golden Eye was one that always increased with the cultivator's level, and Jiang Chen felt that there was still much potential hidden within this eye art.

Apart from an immense immobilizing ability, the Evil Golden Eye could also counter many other eye arts. Yet, Jiang Chen felt that this was far from enough. There were many uses for such arts. One could use it to entrance an opponent, or put an opponent under compulsion, or even destroy another's consciousness. The more one studied the various arts of the eyes, the more incredible they became. One look could disturb the clouds in the sky, and one glance could topple mountains.

But of course, these wouldn't be accomplished in a day. Apart from the Evil Golden Eye, Jiang Chen had also trained the "Nine Transformations of Demons and Gods" to the fifth level, to the point where it was refining his inner energy. He'd been unable to break through this stage.

Well, frankly, it wasn't that he couldn't, but that he didn't want to at present. This art's fifth level was a crucial turning point. Everything prior to the fifth level was a foundation for what the art could truly blossom into, an advanced art.

The most ideal situation for refining inner energy was to proceed with all five elements. That meant one would refine the energies of the five elements: metal, wood, water, fire, and earth all at the same time at the same pacing.

Also a Buddhist belief that each element corresponded to one particular organ. Only through cultivation of each and other practices would one reach the highest plane of existence.

Jiang Chen currently had the Lotus representing the fire and water attributes, and the magnetic golden mountain for metal. Thanks to his baptism in the wood spirit spring, his inner wood attribute potential had greatly increased as well. The only thing he lacked was a fortuitous occurrence with the earth attribute. Once he collected a source of that power as well, then he'd truly be able to proceed with all five elements. If he could reach this most ideal state, then his momentum in advancing through this art in the future would be unstoppable.

It was because of this that Jiang Chen wasn't in a rush to break

through to the fifth level. Even if he had to wait, he wouldn't give up on the earth element. The "Nine Transformations" wasn't something that could be completed in a night either.

It was actually the first two techniques Jiang Chen had started training, "Vast Ocean Current Splitter" and "Divine Aeons Fist", that were beginning to fade away. Although these techniques were not bad, they were starting to fall behind as his opponents grew stronger.

"The 'Vast Ocean Current Splitter' has fully displayed its brilliance in the way of the blade, but it isn't the pinnacle of its path. Yet, I cannot give this path up." Jiang Chen toyed with the nameless saber in one hand. It looked so simple at a glance, so humble that it gave one a feeling of not having the slightest edge at all. Yet, he knew that this was an extraordinary blade. What Jiang Chen didn't understand was how such a mysterious blade ended up in a small place like the Eastern Kingdom? And the most intriguing thing was that it had lain in the warehouse of a corrupt official, unused by anyone, as if a bright pearl hidden in a pile of sand with its light completely obscured.

Jiang Chen was mulling over this strange event when a message glyph broke his train of thought. "Young master, we have completed our baptism."

Jiang Chen rose and walked out of the secret chamber. When he saw his retainers, all were glowing with health and vigor. They each exuded a presence that spoke of them casting off their old selves. Tang Hong in particular had broken through to the origin realm!

Lordmaster Ye Chonglou had also charged to the peak of the minor origin realm as well, and was only one step away from the earth origin realm. Gouyu was a spirit king now, and was only separated from the origin realm by a thin piece of paper that could be poked through at any time. Xue Tong's cultivation level was also at the peak of the ninth level spirit realm. Although he was one step away from Gouyu, it was only a matter of time before he broke through to the origin realm. Qiao Shan and Qiao Chuan had both entered the sky spirit realm as well. The changes were exceedingly stunning.

Even a sage realm cultivator would be thoroughly remolded in the wood spirit spring, let alone spirit realm cultivators. The lower one's cultivation level was, the greater the benefits, and the higher the level they'd break through.

"Good, it looks like you guys haven't disappointed me. If you maintain this momentum, it'll be enough to stand shoulder to shoulder with the core disciples in the sect." Jiang Chen was in a great mood. These people had followed him all the way from the Eastern Kingdom, and he naturally needed to make preparations for their respective futures.

"Miss Huang'er, it looks like the wood spirit spring does indeed have some purifying effects on the Hundred Generations Curse. I see that the bad luck about you seems to have greatly dimmed. It appears that I can be at ease. You can live here peacefully before Elder Shun finds the Requiem Wood."

Huang'er nodded softly, her voice ethereal as she expressed her

thanks. “It’s many thanks to Sir Jiang’s for offering shelter.”

Jiang Chen smiled. “I’m rather fearful now that Miss Huang’er has said so. You are a part of the family here. How could this be considered offering shelter?”

Gouyu giggled and enfolded Huang’er’s arm with hers. “In my eyes, since younger sister Huang’er is family, you’ll just live here in the future!”

“Mm! Younger sister Huang’er, we’ll have company here if you stay!” Wen Ziqi overcome her bashful nature in a rare moment of speech.

Huang’er was quite touched. If she could choose, she would truly want to stay here and just live with everyone in this simple and happy lifestyle.

“Lordmaster, Tang Hong, my residence has a radius of fifty kilometers. Even a couple thousand people taking up residence wouldn’t find it crowded. Why don’t you stay here for now and think about leaving when you’ve consolidated your strength?”

Tang Hong chuckled loudly, obviously having the same thoughts. “Boss, I plan on mooching off you here until I break through to the origin realm!”

The Sovereign Area was filled with abundant spirit energy, and it wasn’t at all comparable to Mt. Great Drum, the area reserved for

the sect's inner disciples.

After he settled the group in, Jiang Chen did some rough calculations, and realized that almost a month had passed. He hadn't set foot outside his doors for almost a month now. He had neither inquired about or listened any of the matters outside of the residence. He had rejected all the guests, no matter who they were, and hadn't even opened his doors. Therefore, he had no idea just how crazily the rumors in the outside world had spread.

Since he'd spent a month behind closed doors, the outside world had speculated without limit and felt that he was utterly undeserving of his reputation. They felt that he'd retracted his head into his shell ever since obtaining the Sovereign Area residence and didn't dare come out to meet people.

Not only did people suspect that there was someone helping him cheat his way to a spot in the Pill Battles, but even that his residence had been won unfairly. These speculations had only been circulating in a small circle, but gained substance in the face of Jiang Chen refusing to set foot outside.

It was said that three people spreading reports of a tiger could make the world believe in the tiger's existence. When it came to rumors, the longer and greater they spread, and the more delayed the subject's reaction to step out and correct them, the more it would be construed as truth. Apart from being aimed at Jiang Chen, it was very obvious that they were also pointing at Elder Yun Nie, and judging from how it was spreading, it might embroil Palace Head Dan Chi as well.

The Palace Head had brought in Jiang Chen, so suspecting Jiang Chen meant suspecting the Palace Head. On the other hand, Mu Gaoqi had done his best to suppress his emotions and continue practicing “Boulder’s Heart” to consolidate his strength of heart. Still, he was still a bit antsy about the rumors. He felt that it was high time to step out, but Elder Yun Nie always lectured and warned him to learn from Jiang Chen, to ignore the disturbances of the outside world.

However, on that day, the doors to Jiang Chen’s residence were suddenly thrown open as a heaven-battering proclamation was made.

“If anyone in the Rosy Valley cannot accept the glory and position that I, Jiang Chen, possess here, you can bring forth a thousand upper rank origin spirit stones and commence a battle of pill dao with me in my residence. No matter who comes, as long as they bring the proper amount of spirit stones, I will meet them in battle. Whoever triumphs over me will gain both the Pill Battle spot and the Sovereign Area residence.”

This proclamation instantly demolished the tide of questioning like a great ball of explosives.

Wasn’t it Jiang Chen who was afraid of facing the speculations? Wasn’t Jiang Chen running from reality?

But now, Jiang Chen had stepped forth!

Whoever didn’t accept this situation could come challenge him,

but they had to bring forth a thousand upper rank origin spirit stones. What did this mean?

Too obvious!

I don’t have that much time to waste, so pay up if you want to fight me!

Chapter 515: The Dao Of Wealth

“What? Jiang Chen is willing to accept challenges?”

“Tsk tsk, this kid hasn’t set foot outside for a month. Was he in closed door cultivation to train in pills and pray for emergency help at Buddha’s feet?”

“Very likely! Elder Yun Nie must’ve put him through special training during this month!”

“Tsk tsk, whoever triumphs over him can have a Pill Battle slot. Looks like I should look into whether I want to challenge him or not!”

“Do you have a thousand upper rank origin spirit stones to spare?”

“Ai, looks like it’s a game for the rich.”

As conversations about Jiang Chen’s proclamation started to overtake Rosy Valley, many people started to hatch their own schemes. Evidently, the allure of a Pill Battle spot was hard to resist. But the thousand upper rank origin stones was a severe entry barrier, so much so that people felt lacking in strength even when they had the heart. It was impossible for one to possess such wealth if one wasn’t born of a wealthy family in the Regal Pill Palace.

In Dan Chi's residence, Palace Head Dan Chi and Elder Yun Nie were casually chatting, their expressions relaxed.

"Palace Head, where on earth did you find such an impressive genius? It's rare to find a young man with such maturity." Elder Yun Nie smiled.

"To be honest, allying with the Precious Tree Sect was a gamble. But it seems my wager paid off. Jiang Chen has become the touchstone for the sect, winkling out all the mediocre talent within." Palace Head Dan Chi sighed softly.

Elder Yun Nie nodded with a slight smile. "Not only a touchstone, but even more so a mirror revealing monsters. All of the malicious characters in our midst have caught themselves in various embarrassing positions this time and revealed their true forms."

Palace Head Dan Chi shook his head lightly as his expression turned grave. "Elder Lian Cheng, Elder Jin Gu, and Ouyang De of your Herbal Hall... who else?"

"Just these three alone are enough to shake the foundations of our Regal Pill Palace." Elder Yun Nie's tone grew stern. "Palace Head, we need you to put on an obvious display of strength this time. It's the only way we can thoroughly cow them."

"Yun Nie, the one to suffer the most from my actions has been your Herbal Hall, and yet you have been the hall that has supported me the most staunchly. Selecting you as a venerated

elder that year was the most outstanding thing I've done."

Yun Nie spoke quite seriously, "I, Yun Nie, simply act in the best interests of the sect. Personal interests rank second. Although Palace Head has a stern and sweeping manner, you do not act for personal interests either. In terms of the bigger picture, you and I are cut from the same cloth. Who would I support if not you?"

Although the two had slightly different mindsets, they were both acting for the future of the sect and men who truly cherished the same ideals.

"Just as you say, the rumors this time act as a mirror for detecting monsters. Who would've thought that even Elder Lian Cheng, one who has demonstrated a high caliber of morals and principles would stoop to involve himself in those murky waters." Palace Head Dan Chi's tone was a bit regretful.

"Elder Lian Cheng is a straightforward person. Although he has some selfish motives, he isn't a great villain. I rather think that his involvement in this matter wouldn't venture too deeply. It should be mostly due to Shen Qinghong borrowing the elder's name. With what I understand of Elder Lian Cheng, he isn't someone who will incite trouble and bring disaster to the sect."

Elder Yun Nie's words actually mildly surprised Palace Head Dan Chi. It wasn't that long ago that the two elders had been screaming at each other across a table at an upper echelon meeting. It could even be said that the two had formed quite a grudge between them on that day. Who would've thought that Elder Yun Nie would be speaking on behalf of Elder Liang Cheng this time?

“Yun Nie, your exemplary conducts speaks of your noble character. You do not flout public law for personal gain and have the true presence of a sage.” Palace Head Dan Chi sighed in appreciation.

“Palace Head gives me absurd praise above and beyond what is due. Compared to your great actions, I am only doing my job.”

“Haha, don’t be overly humble. Yun Nie, when it comes to great actions, Jiang Chen is truly making a great move this time. He first ignored everything in the outside world for a month, then suddenly opened the doors of his residence to issue his challenge. This move will crush the rumors like dry tinder and spread his name far and wide.”

“Jiang Chen does indeed often make stunning moves.” Yun Nie smiled. “He also seems to have a magic about him that enables those by his side to become more and more outstanding. Take Mu Gaoqi for example, who would’ve thought that he’d be so remarkable? This time, Jiang Chen brought a thousand upper rank origin spirit stones as his fee for a public challenge. What a move. On one hand, it resolves his resource dilemma, and simultaneously weeds out those who lack sufficient strength by acting as a barrier for entry.”

Elder Yun Nie smiled at this point. “I’d like to see how these people will clean up after themselves.”

Palace Head Dan Chi’s eyes shifted. “Yun Nie, this means you

possess great confidence in Jiang Chen's pill dao potential? Even the original geniuses in the Sovereign Area can't successfully challenge him either?"

"Even Mu Gaoqi with his innate word constitution of high order admits defeat in front of Jiang Chen. As for those in the Sovereign Area, even Ling Bi'er might not be able to surpass Jiang Chen. If the others wish to challenge him, they'll only be bringing embarrassment down on themselves." Yun Nie possessed absolute authority in the area of pill dao. His judgement was unconditionally peerless. Palace Head Dan Chi had no reason to doubt his words.

He had made an alliance with Precious Tree Sect purely for Jiang Chen. This had brought a great deal of pressure down on him from within the sect. Several senior elders had strongly objected to it, but Dan Chi had somehow overridden them. Now, the more eye-catching Jiang Chen's performance was, the more justified Dan Chi would be in supporting Jiang Chen.

He hadn't blatantly supported Jiang Chen from the beginning because first, he wanted to see how adaptable Jiang Chen was; and second, he hadn't wanted to leave any ammunition for the senior executives to use. He didn't want to leave the impression that Jiang Chen could only find his footing in the sect because of the Palace Head's help.

Now that Jiang Chen was using all sorts of truth to demolish the rumors, it continuously provided more validation to Dan Chi's original decision.

One had to say, Jiang Chen's domineering proclamation had thrown a wrench into everyone's plans.

Within Shen Qinghong's residence, Shen Qinghong and his group were all sitting around, faces grave.

Rong Zifeng bit off his words as he broke the silence, "That vermin Jiang Chen is indeed slippery. A public challenge, but with the requirement of a thousand upper rank origin spirit stones. Which ordinary genius has enough capital to challenge him?"

Nie Chong also nodded. "Some expert must be teaching him in the background. How else would that little thief suddenly come to possess such smarts? Senior Brother Shen, this proclamation has instantly quieted much of the speculation stirring around."

Shen Qinghong was also quite irritated. It'd been his team who'd masterminded this malicious rumor mongering. He'd even had the Hall of Might and Hall of Spring and Autumn helping them from behind. In the month that Jiang Chen had remained in closed door cultivation, they'd almost convinced the majority of the sect that Jiang Chen's lack of a response came from his guilt. But suddenly, his one announcement had destroyed all of their conspiracies.

"Senior Brother Shen, how about I answer the challenge and probe Jiang Chen's ability in pill dao?" A Sovereign Area genius took a proactive approach to the matter. This genius was Shen Anyang, also known as Shen Trifire. He was called thus because he'd had the opportunity to refine three kinds of fire beneath the heavens, thanks to a certain encounter. His pill dao potential was quite renowned amongst the younger generation of the Regal Pill

Palace. He wasn't much weaker than Ling Bi'er.

When he saw Shen Trifire step forth, Shen Qinghong displayed an expression of encouragement. "Good, Trifire, it'd be best for you to go figure out this kid's limits. If you win, the thousand upper rank stones belong to you. If you lose, count them on me."

Shen Qinghong's reign on the throne of the Sovereign Area came from three factors. First, his potential and cultivation level, second, his esteemed birth, and last, his generous ways.

Shen Trifire was delighted to hear this. "Many thanks to Senior Brother Shen!"

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In the Sovereign Area outside of Jiang Chen's residence, Jiang Chen had set up a pill dao ring and was awaiting challengers. One had to say, a Pill Battle spot possessed great allure. The very day he set up the ring, he immediately had two challengers.

Jiang Chen had been quite generous and allowed his opponents to set the rules and bet. The two ended up slinking away in less than two hours, not daring to even voice a single tough word, and two thousand upper rank stones silently made their way into Jiang Chen's pocket.

"Gaoqi, I've had a revelation. Pill ring battles are definitely the way forward." Jiang Chen joked. "Do you think I should raise the

stakes and make it so that only those with three thousand stones can challenge me?”

Mu Gaoqi was deeply admiring of Jiang Chen’s high spirits and completely relaxed air. He knew that his Brother Chen’s bearing was an innate aspect of him, and something that he would likely never be able to learn.

Several figures dashed forward as they conversed.

Jiang Chen chuckled, “Some more fat targets have presented themselves.”

The newcomers were Shen Trifire and a few of his followers, striding towards them in a domineering fashion. Shen Trifire had originally been ranked number seven amongst the eight, and his level of cultivation was at eighth level origin realm, but he was weaker than Rong Zifeng. But when it came to pill dao cultivation, he was far superior.

Shen Trifire wore the accoutrements unique to the Sovereign Area geniuses, embroidered flames decorating his robes, making them stand out quite a bit. “Jiang Chen, Shen Anyang of the Sovereign Area has come to answer your challenge.”

Mu Gaoqi spoke next to Jiang Chen’s ear. “Brother Chen, Shen Anyang is also known as Shen Trifire. He has extraordinary pill dao potential and is one of Shen Qinghong’s most steadfast supporters.”

Jiang Chen smiled faintly, his gaze sizing up Shen Anyang's face. Jiang Chen laughed. "Shen Anyang? A genius of the Sovereign Area like you naturally can't be as low class as those junior brothers. If you want to challenge me, you must offer up three thousand upper rank origin spirit stones."

This move took Shen Anyang down a peg and caught him off guard. Shen Qinghong had only given him a thousand stones. If he bet three thousand, he'd have to front two thousand. If he lost, Shen Qinghong might not reimburse him after the fact.

His dominating momentum was instantly halved. Jiang Chen's move was pure genius. Even though Shen Anyang knew that Jiang Chen was denying him face, he hesitated for a bit. Once he did, his momentum took a large hit.

A thought struck Shen Anyang as he inwardly cursed at Jiang Chen. "This brat is wiley alright! This has thrown everything into doubt, and once I hesitate, cracks will appear in my dao heart. If I bet with him, I must pay two thousand stones myself. Can it be that this kid was prepared exactly for this development and has done so precisely to generate this effect?"

Shen Trifire knew that he was caught between a rock and a hard place. It'd be difficult for him not to agree. If he didn't battle because of the spirit stones, it would leave a shadow on his psyche, and he'd find it incredibly difficult to advance in the future.

Chapter 516: Jiang Chen's Amazing Arts

Shen Anyang grit his teeth and took out three thousand upper rank origin spirit stones, placing it on the table.

Jiang Chen's expression at the sight of the three thousand stones could only be compared to the merrily beaming face of a landlord or an old moneybags with eyes filled with treasure. "Very good! Shen Trifire, anyone willing to be a bearer of gifts is an honored guest of my residence. Tell me, shall we drink first or cut straight to the chase?"

The more relaxed Jiang Chen's tone was, the greater Shen Anyang's ire grew. This Jiang Chen looks too much like a poser. He's just a foreign kid, and he's only made it to the Sovereign Area through sheer luck. How dare he put himself on such a high pedestal in front of a member of the Sovereign Area's old guard? This irked Shen Anyang to no end.

He felt that Jiang Chen was purposefully playing at being relaxed and putting on airs. This would only make sense if their roles were reversed! It'd always been the senior playing up his glory in front of the junior disciples; when had it ever been a junior strutting in front of a senior brother?

"Jiang Chen, I have no interest in drinking with you. Stop dilly-dallying around. I'm here today to do one thing, rip off that fake facade of yours and unmask this great con of the ages. Who would want to drink with you? Not to mention, who the hell are you?! Are you even worthy of me drinking with you?"

Jiang Chen laughed leisurely. “Well aren’t you spurning my good intentions, taking them for ill will? Well, I won’t hold it against you this time since you come so urgently to offer a lovely gift of money. So, how do you want to bet? Set down the terms.”

Shen Anyang had come prepared. He snorted coldly, “I wish to have contests of fire control, pill recipe, and pill refinement with you.”

“Use these three topics to determine the victor?”

“Yes, these three!” Shen Trifire’s tone was quite resolute, but he was sneering inside. These three topics were his strongest points in pill dao. He’d been prepared for Jiang Chen to try and negotiate, but Jiang Chen had unexpectedly accepted his suggestions without hesitation. Shen Trifire was absolutely delighted beyond measure.

Jiang Chen smiled. “This isn’t a ring for fire, so how do you propose we compete in fire control?” There were usually special rings used for competitions in controlling fire, and Jiang Chen hadn’t prepared this particular one for fire control.

Shen Trifire waved his hand and laughed. “That’s laughably easy. You and I are both pill masters, and there are many ways to compete in controlling fire. How about this, I’ll produce a cauldron and you and I can both deploy our arts. Whoever heats up the cauldron the fastest will be the winner.”

Preheating a cauldron was one of the steps of pill refining. It would prep a cauldron appropriately for all later steps. When the

cauldron reached its optimal temperature, it would emit a resonance. When this sound appeared, it meant that the refiner had succeeded in successfully preheating the cauldron.

"Shen Trifire, you're a Sovereign Area genius after all, do you have any self respect at all? Reaching out for a yard after being granted an inch just because my Brother Chen isn't quibbling with you?! You've determined how the bet works, you've brought the cauldron, and you've set all the rules. Do you dare say that you're not hiding any schemes in your heart?"

Shen Anyang was indeed plotting something. The cauldron he was going to bring out was one that he always used when he was pill refining. As such, he was intimately familiar with it, so preheating it was essentially child's play. But it seemed he had quite a thick face, since he only snorted derisively when Mu Gaoqi revealed his schemes. "Mu Gaoqi, is this your ring? What nonsense are you blathering about? I'll come challenge you whenever you have the balls to set up your ring!"

Mu Gaoqi opened his mouth to retort, but Jiang Chen interrupted first, "Gaoqi, take a break for now."

Mu Gaoqi looked to Jiang Chen the most, and since Jiang Chen had told him to back down, he could only quietly walk to Jiang Chen's rear. However, he still wore a look of contempt as he turned to Shen Anyang and clenched his right hand into a fist with his thumb pointing down.

In this world, this gesture was a complete dismissal of the other; an indication of the other's utter helplessness. Shen Anyang was

already feeling guilty, so although he was incensed by this gesture, he was unable to erupt in response.

"Shen Trifire, we can go with these rules out of consideration for your three thousand stones. Take out your cauldron." Jiang Chen smiled faintly.

When it came to pill dao, whether it was Shen Trifire, Shen Qinghong or even an elder of the Herbal Hall, Jiang Chen still viewed all of them as nothing more than dirt. When Shen Anyang observed Jiang Chen's arrogant attitude, he felt both humiliated and secretly joyful for his plan's imminent success.

He didn't put on airs as he took out a cauldron, placing it on a stone plinth and pretending to speak very generously. "Jiang Chen, don't accuse me of cheating later. You can inspect this cauldron first."

The inner workings of the cauldron was clearly visible to Jiang Chen with a single sweep of God's Eye. He clearly understood that it was a cauldron that Shen Trifire used often. A cauldron that a pill master was well acquainted with was as familiar as his own arms. When it came down to it, he could indeed be suspected of using trickery when his own cauldron was the competition's focal point. But since Jiang Chen had dared to agree to the terms, he naturally thought nothing of Shen Trifire's tiny advantage.

"You first or me?" Jiang Chen smiled faintly.

Shen Trifire thought of a moment and said generously, "The

person who goes first is at a disadvantage. I won't take advantage of you, so I'll go first."

Jiang Chen knew precisely what his opponent was thinking when he saw Shen Trifire so on his guard. He was worried that Jiang Chen would somehow sabotage his cauldron so he wanted to go first. However, he phrased it so self-righteously that he seemed to be taking a loss by going first.

"Since the first to try is worse off, I don't mind taking the hit." Jiang Chen smiled.

Shen Trifire's expression changed as he hastily responded, "Allow me."

Jiang Chen had wanted to poke fun of the other to begin with, so he was perfectly willing to let the other go first. He waved his hand, "You go."

"Someone come, mark the time."

In this world, one could mark time through burning incense, turning over hourglasses, or a variety of other methods. When time started, Shen Trifire immediately assumed the proper stance and and circulated the three fires within his body. The immense fire elemental energy swirled in his palm, dancing like a lively sprite beneath the cauldron.

Jiang Chen nodded inwardly to himself as he watched this

spectacle. Shen Trifire's fire energy was indeed something. Although he didn't possess an innate fire constitution, he was close enough. However, Jiang Chen couldn't help but turn his nose up when he observed Shen Trifire's fire manipulation abilities. One had to say, when compared to the methods of the divine experts, the Regal Pill Palace's heritage of fire control was unquestionably childish!

Apart from having some merits due to his fire energy, and even if Shen Trifire's methods in fire control were far in excess of his peers, he was still somewhat unpracticed in the end. However, such showy fire manipulation skills were enough to take Mu Gaoqi aback, as tendrils of respect grew in his heart.

The stick of incense which they were using to keep time had a rough length of fifteen minutes. The cauldron emitted a happy resonance when the burned part of the incense was creeping towards the halfway mark.

The preheating was complete.

The incense was then extinguished to preserve Shen Trifire's time record.

"Jiang Chen, I didn't even use half of the allotted time. Your turn." Shen Trifire was full of pride. He was absolutely confident that Jiang Chen wouldn't be able to beat him. He had many years of history using this cauldron; it was akin to his right arm. If it hadn't been for this, Shen Trifire would've taken a lot longer to preheat a cauldron.

As talented as Jiang Chen is, he'll never surpass me!

Shen Anyang was supremely confident in his results.

When the cauldron cooled down, Jiang Chen waved his hand. "Start the time." Another stick of the same incense was lit.

Jiang Chen spread his hands upwards, and various sources of fire rose in the heart of his palms. It was as if he was performing a magic trick as he kept forming seals, causing the shape of the flame to change with each hand seal.

The fire eventually resembled a stacked tower as it grew in height. Forty nine levels of flames danced around him in an orderly fashion, as magnificent as a towering, resplendent building.

This method made Mu Gaoqi whoop and holler. What was a flashy technique?! This was a flashy technique! Shen Trifire's fire manipulation skills weren't fit to be seen in comparison.

When Shen Trifire saw just how wondrous Jiang Chen's fire control was, he too was struck with disbelief. One can actually layer fire upon itself? I've never heard of such a method!

Jiang Chen's face was calm as his seals changed again, adding on more flames. Soon enough, the forty nine levels formed a nine by nine grid of eighty one flames, nine levels high. In the heavenly

levels, this method of fire control was called the “True Fires of Ninety Nine”. Using this method to preheat a cauldron would cut down the amount of time needed to preheat a cauldron to one ninth of the original time.

The incense hadn’t even burned down to a fifth of its length when the pill cauldron emitted sounds of happy resonance.

“What?!” Shen Trifire’s mind was thrown into disarray. He stared incredulously at the cauldron, categorically unable to fathom why his cauldron had been preheated so easily.

Jiang Chen gave a peal of laughter. The incense had barely just managed to burn to a fifth of its length. They didn’t even need to compare the incense for Shen Trifire to know that he had utterly lost. The amount of time Jiang Chen had used was less than half of his. Even a halfwit would be able to tell who had won and lost.

Mu Gaoqi guffawed loudly. “Brother Chen, you’re absolutely amazing! What kind of fire manipulation was that? That looked so cool!”

Shen Trifire’s face was ashen. It was impossible not to admit defeat, but in his heart of hearts, he still didn’t accept it. “You were lucky in the first round, but we’re competing based on best out of three. You’ve only won the first round, so don’t get uppity!”

Jiang Chen nodded with a slight smile. “That’s right, a victor is declared only after two wins. If I recall correctly, the basis of the second bet are pill recipes. How would you like to compete?” He

was being quite generous, completely willing to play along no matter what Shen Trifire wanted to do.

Shen Trifire responded, “You and I will both produce a pill recipe and conceal three of the supplemental ingredients within. We will analyze each other’s recipe for an hour and fill in the missing ingredients. Whoever fills in more of them wins. If we tie, then whoever finishes first is the winner. How about that?”

“Must it be the ingredients originally listed in the recipe? Or are substitutes allowed?” Jiang Chen asked.

There were numerous ingredients in pill dao that could act as substitutes for each other.

“Substitutes are fine, but they must be reasonable. If the other has doubts, we can ask the Herbal Hall to mediate.” Shen Trifire responded.

Jiang Chen nodded. “Since this is the case, you and I will prepare two copies of the same recipe. One of them will retain all of the ingredients, and the other will conceal three of the supplemental ingredients. This will make it easier for us to compare and decrease controversy when the competition comes to a close.”

Shen Trifire thought for a moment. “That’s doable, but we must swear to the heavens that the pill recipe is correct. The contest is meaningless if we randomly change the contents of the recipe.”

Jiang Chen smiled. “Naturally.”

The two went off to a side to prepare their respective recipes.

Chapter 517: Shen Trifire Bows In Defeat

One had to say, Shen Trifire was destined for a tragic outcome if he wanted to compete with Jiang Chen with pill recipes. Even if one searched through every nook and cranny of the Divine Continent, one wouldn't be able to find someone on the same level as Jiang Chen in pill dao.

Jiang Chen's mind ran swiftly through a variety of obscure, unpopular pill recipes. He selected one at random, making down two copies and obscuring three supplemental ingredients from one of them.

Shen Trifire had obviously come prepared. He also had an exceedingly obscure pill recipe in hand, one he'd obtained from one of the sect elders. This pill wasn't an ordinary pill at all, and its application was rather odd as well. It followed an obscure offshoot on the path of divergent pills. A hint of a cold smile played about Shen Trifire's lips when he was finished preparing his recipe. If Jiang Chen could decipher this recipe, then he was a genius indeed.

When the two were finished with their preparations, they both swore using the heavens as witness that they weren't using a fake recipe to cheat. When they finished their oaths, they traded their recipes with each other.

Jiang Chen swept his eyes over Shen Trifire's half completed recipe and smiled faintly. "Tsk tsk, Shen Trifire certainly came prepared. If I don't mistake my guess, this is a recipe from the divergent pill faction."

Jiang Chen had been a great pill master that had cast his eyes and ears over everything beneath the heavens in his past life. His knowledge of pill dao encompassed everything and anything. How would he not know this about the divergent pill faction?

They were called thus because they specialized in using medicine in the most devious way possible. They walked on the edge of a blade, seeking the most bizarre and strange way to craft pill recipes. The only common point of their pill recipes was that it would always contain something unexpected.

The pill masters of this faction were all great geniuses. Their greatest hobby was to use uncommon methods and ridiculous approaches to complete a pill recipe. The odder a method was, the happier and prouder they'd be.

Although they weren't a mainstream faction in pill dao, they weren't one to be easily overlooked. Jiang Chen was quite familiar with their ways, so he could put himself in their shoes. He looked over the recipe, managing to assemble a basic structure of the recipe after a little bit of analysis. He thought for a bit longer and began to slowly deduce the answer, filling in the missing three ingredients after a short while.

The ingredients had a couple of substitutes, so Jiang Chen also wrote in two more alternatives for each of the ingredients, just to be safe. According to the rules, writing in substitutes would also count as the right answer, but he could only write down two substitutes each. This mean that he could write down a total of nine ingredients for the three supplemental ones.

When Jiang Chen finished, he looked at the time to discover that less than half the allotted time had passed. When he looked at Shen Trifire again and how his forehead was tightly furrowed, it was obvious that his opponent hadn't a clue about his recipe. Jiang Chen snickered coldly to himself. Doesn't Shen Trifire fancy himself clever, hmm? Coming to bet against me with a recipe after receiving one from the divergent pills faction?

His opponent was just looking for humiliation with these actions. Jiang Chen had supplied a recipe that wasn't particularly obscure, but it wasn't one that Shen Trifire would know of at his current skill level. In addition, with his level of pill dao and knowledge, Shen Trifire didn't have the ability to deduce the right answers either. Thus, Jiang Chen was certain that Shen Trifire was at his wits end right now.

He didn't pity his opponent as he laughed with ease, "Daoist Shen, I've already completed your recipe. It's just you left."

Shen Trifire's heart suffered a great shock as he stared incredulously at Jiang Chen. When he saw the other's confident smile, Shen Trifire couldn't help but wonder, can Jiang Chen actually see through a recipe from the divergent pill faction?

"Impossible! Utterly impossible! He must have given up after seeing such a complex recipe. He's just guessing wildly and filling in random ingredients, trying to get lucky and beat my time." Shen Trifire did his best to shore up his confidence, but that undercurrent of worry still managed to gnaw at his heart. As time dragged on, he searched for any clues in the recipe, but to no avail.

It wasn’t until time was almost up that he blindly filled in a couple of answers out of resignation, hoping to score some points out of sheer, dumb luck. After all, even a blind cat could run into a dead mouse.

However, there were millions upon millions of spirit herbs in the world, and it was almost impossible for him to correctly identify the right ones when relying solely on luck.

The two recipes from earlier were laid out for the two to compare answers.

When Shen Trifire looked at Jiang Chen’s original answer, he was immensely depressed. He couldn’t help but curse, “Jiang Chen, what kind of recipe is this?! You’re cheating!”

Jiang Chen smiled faintly, “We’ve made our oaths to the heavens and earth. They will naturally punish me if I have. Don’t you worry about that.”

In the world of cultivation, oaths to the heavens and earth were highly effective. No one dared violate an oath sworn to the heavens and earth since retribution was always swift and calamitous, almost always occurring in this life.

Jiang Chen’s answers were right on point for Shen Trifire’s recipe. As a result, the latter had utterly lost this round, and further, had wholly and completely lost the bet.

Mu Gaoqi applauded. “Brother Chen has won two out of three matches. Shen Trifire, you’ve lost!”

Shen Trifire’s face was ashen; he couldn’t accept the reality in front of him at all. He hadn’t even been able to see through the three matches he’d come prepared with to the end. He had lost miserably.

“Jiang Chen… you… you…” Shen Trifire was so furious that he began to splutter, incapable of speaking a full sentence.

“Shen Trifire, do you still not accept the outcome?” Mu Gaoqi laughed coldly.

Shen Trifire’s mind was immediately cast back to the scene of the previous two rounds. No matter how he looked at it, Jiang Chen has trounced him as easily as beating a three year old! Could he not accept the outcome? There was no way he could reject it.

In that instant, Shen Trifire deflated. Like a defeated fighting cock, his head fell in dejection as he put away the pill recipe, only looking up at Jiang Chen to fix him with a meaningful glance. “Jiang Chen, if this is your true pill dao level, then you are already capable enough to take up residence in the Herbal Hall and fight for an elder’s position. I, Shen Trifire, acknowledge my defeat.” He was rather straightforward now; he had nothing left to lose anymore. When Shen Trifire realized that he really couldn’t contend with Jiang Chen, his heart was flooded with a sense of peace.

When Jiang Chen saw Shen Trifire ceding the challenge, he smiled faintly. “You have a natural born fire constitution and possess three fires refined into yourself. You have a great potential and should’ve been a unique genius in terms of martial or pill dao. Why are you content with relaxing under the shelter of another’s strength?”

Shen Trifire’s expression suddenly changed, sighing lightly. He didn’t say a word as he packed up his items, and took his leave without turning back. It was obvious that Jiang Chen’s words had hit a soft and tender part of his heart.

Geniuses were supposed to go their own way and rise above the common herd. Jiang Chen’s words at Shen Qinghong’s residence that day had struck a nerve, and now Shen Trifire himself had tasted defeat at Jiang Chen’s hands. The words he’d just heard had struck an even deeper chord in him.

He thought back, back to when he was proud and confident, back to his vigorous spirits from when he’d first made his way into the Sovereign Area. But ever since entering the area and coming face to face with the conflict between Shen Qinghong and Jun Mobai, he had subconsciously taken Shen Qinghong’s side.

Seeking succor from the strong and powerful was but human nature. It wasn’t a grave mistake that Shen Trifire had made, but he’d gradually lost himself in the mindset of a vassal and had grown content with his current condition. He had come to accept that it would be a good thing to become Shen Qinghong’s trusted right hand man.

After they'd fully grown into their power and took charge, if Shen Qinghong was the Palace Head, then he would least be in charge of the Herbal Hall, no? His contentment with the current situation and daydreams had made Shen Trifire's steps grow heavier and heavier. He had lost his own personality in the haze of his daydreams.

However—

Jiang Chen's words now acted like a morning bell, tolling through his mind and waking him up with a start, making him reflect deeply on his current situation. The more he thought, the more he began to sweat heavily. He'd finally taken a clear look at the path he'd been walking on to learn that he'd long gone astray from the path of a genius!

"Young master, do we return to senior brother Shen's residence?" A follower asked carefully.

Shen Trifire spread out his hands, his gaze still introspective. "No. I'm going into closed door cultivation and never becoming involved in the conflicts of the Sovereign Area ever again."

The follower blanked, then became lost in thought himself.

The news of Shen Trifire's defeat didn't spread. Shen Qinghong waited and waited, but didn't even receive a hint of response. When a couple of hours passed, his rage was writ all over his face, but an uneasy feeling also reared its head in his heart.

If Shen Trifire had won, he should've been back by now. If he'd lost, there would've been time enough for him to report back in. But now, it seemed like he'd simply vanished into thin air, leaving no echo whatsoever. This greatly perplexed Shen Qinghong.

"Da Yong, go check outside Jiang Chen's residence to see what happened with Shen Trifire." Shen Qinghong gave one of his followers an order.

Da Yong was Shen Qinghong's right hand man, as competent as they come. Within the hour, he had returned with news. "Young Master, apart from Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi leisurely sampling tea in front of his residence, there is no one else. Shen Trifire has disappeared without a trace."

Shen Qinghong was slightly astonished. "What? Where on earth did Shen Trifire go?"

Rong Zifeng was taken aback. "Can it be that Jiang Chen's offed Shen Trifire?"

Nie Chong snorted coldly. "What kind of crazy talk are you spouting? This is the Regal Pill Palace! He'd be courting death if he dared kill his own peer. Even still, though this kid has some achievements in martial dao, he's still not enough to kill Shen Trifire."

Rong Zifeng also smiled ruefully. He knew that Shen Trifire was eighth level origin realm, that the former's cultivation was also slightly worse than his own. Although Jiang Chen did have some

skill to his name, his prowess was entirely due to a couple of unorthodox tricks. He wouldn't be able to believe it either if Jiang Chen had truly killed Shen Trifire.

"Then where's Shen Trifire gone? Did he go make his challenge at all?"

A witness ran in as they hurriedly conversed. "In response to Senior Brother Shen, Shen Trifire left without a word after battling Jiang Chen outside his residence. He went straight back to his own residence and is said to have permanently sealed himself in for cultivation, not to emerge until he reaches a goal."

This news made everyone's mouth drop. What was Shen Trifire doing? He should've come back! Even if he had lost, he should've come and said something, or at least sent someone with a message for his senior brother even if he'd entered closed door cultivation!

"That bastard Shen Trifire! How boorish and rude!" Rong Zifeng cursed loudly.

Chapter 518: Elder Lian Cheng

Shen Qinghong's face was as cold as permafrost as the temperature dropping several degrees around him. Shen Trifire's actions had obviously enraged him. He had never imagined that Shen Trifire would take his spirit stones to challenge Jiang Chen and then just enter closed door cultivation without another word.

"That trash must've lost!" Nie Chong took the opportunity to add fuel to the flame.

Shen Trifire's actions had caught the entire Shen Qinghong group on the back foot. Multiple people had gone to challenge Jiang Chen and failed in the attempt. If they let this go and didn't continue to challenge Jiang Chen, then all their momentum, all their previous plans and carefully created slander, would go down as a pitiful whimper. Instead, all it would serve would be prime marketing service for Jiang Chen!

On the other hand, who would be their next challenger when even Shen Trifire had failed? Rong Zifeng? Nie Chong?

These two were Shen Qinghong's strongest confidantes, but their pill dao potential wasn't necessarily stronger than Shen Trifire. Then, who would go? Shen Qinghong himself?

Shen Qinghong rather wanted to, but reason told him that he had to be exceedingly cautious before making any decision. With his position as the top genius in the Sovereign Area, his every action against Jiang Chen would be minutely examined and exaggerated

in the telling. Whatever the result, it would be spread far and wide.

If he won, it would be a natural course of order because he was the top genius. But that wouldn't be enough to prove Jiang Chen as a fake. But if he lost, then his reputation would be ruined, and he would inadvertently raise Jiang Chen to becoming the representative of the Regal Pill Palace's younger generation. And there was no way he would ever accept that.

"You guys are dismissed for now. I'm going to make a trip." For all his faults, Shen Qinghong was a decisive man. He didn't hesitate as he made his way to the Hundred Elders Peak. He appeared at the doors of a certain residence before long.

This residence was tElder Lian Cheng's, the foremost of the venerated elders. Shen Qinghong's grandfather, the Hallmaster of the Hall of Spring and Autumn, Elder Jin Gu also happened to be there as well.

"Qinghong, you've really gone overboard this time. It'll be difficult for you to salvage the situation now." Elder Lian Cheng was an old, bald man, but his brows and eyes were as sharp as a hawk's.

Elder Jin Gu sighed lightly. "Old brother Lian Cheng, who would've thought that this Jiang Chen would be so wild and intractable? Qinghong should've been respected as the highest ranked personage in the Rosy Valley, but this Jiang Chen didn't even have the most basic of manners. We can't blame Qinghong for growing angry in this."

Elder Lian Cheng smiled slightly, a shrewd light flickering in his eyes. “What do you say we do then, Jin Gu? Challenge Jiang Chen? If Qinghong wins, it will be seen as nothing more than the natural course of nature. If he loses, then all our previous efforts are lost.”

Elder Jin Gu was also exceedingly dejected. “It’s all Elder Yun Nie’s fault in the end. If it hadn’t been for him ardently backing his proposal, how would Jiang Chen had made it to the Sovereign Area if it’d just been decided by martial dao?”

His was a typical personality of blaming everyone else for his faults, the type to fault the latrine if he was unable to take a dump.

Elder Lian Cheng however, was completely dismissive of his complaining. “Jin Gu, you’re just deceiving yourself if you truly believe your words. If Jiang Chen is a true genius, he would have made it into the Sovereign Area sooner or later. In my view, the older generation has no need to overly intervene now that things have developed to this point. Let the youngsters handle it. Whether they succeed or fail will be up to their methods and plans.”

Elder Jin Gu hastily spoke up. “Old brother Lian Cheng, Qinghong has too many problems to cope with in this situation. He’s the first genius of the sect and exists in an environment of unfair competition to begin with. There’s nothing to it if he wins; everyone will think that it should’ve happened. But if he happens to fall behind by just even a tad, he is destined to be mocked. This isn’t fair!”

Elder Lian Cheng shook his head slightly, a bit speechless at Elder Jin Gu's method of education. He couldn't be bothered to respond and turned to Shen Qinghong. "Qinghong, do you think yourself that your position is unfair to you?"

Shen Qinghong had nothing to say in response. He didn't know what his honored master meant.

Elder Lian Cheng's voice was quiet, "Your current position is one that receives the pinnacle of treatment and resources. Have you ever considered that it is likewise unfair to others? If you wish to complain now about unfairness, I will be sorely disappointed in you."

Shen Qinghong grew solemn. He'd actually come to ask his honored master for advice for his next step, but he hadn't expected his master to lecture him even to the extent of a verbal smack on the head. He was at a loss of what to do for the moment.

Elder Lian Cheng sighed softly. "For you, Qinghong, a noble birth and a high start is both a boon and a crutch. Your cultivation path has been smooth and easy, having experienced almost no obstacles in the Regal Pill Palace before. Unfortunately, it is also the reason why you now find yourself at the end of your rope."

"What say you, Jin Gu?"

Elder Jin Gu was actually rather dissatisfied at the moment. You're Shen Qinghong's martial dao master; are you going to sit there and allow your disciple be met with setback after setback on

your watch?

Even though Elder Lian Cheng did make some sense, Elder Jin Gu didn't care about that in the slightest. What he minded was that his grandson's position was being challenged! This was no different than his own territory being threatened. Why would Elder Jin Gu bother spending any time thinking about theory and philosophy? The only thought he would spare was to defend his territory, and destroy anyone who even considered threatening him.

"Old brother Lian Cheng, I feel that no matter what, Qinghong can't lose this amount of face. If we let that petty character Jiang Chen succeed, then Qinghong's position in the Sovereign Area will certainly be impacted in the future. Furthermore, with this recent uprising, Jun Mobai and Ling Bi'er have started to make their moves as well. I'm afraid that this is causing a chain reaction!"

Jun Mobai and Lin Bi'er had cast covetous eyes on Shen Qinghong's position to begin with. With the addition of an even more unreasonable Jiang Chen, Shen Qinghong had to deal with three hotly ambitious disciples harrying his position. This did not bode well for him. As such, Elder Jin Gu didn't want to foster the development of such an atmosphere. He wanted to suppress this ill wind and make an example out of Jiang Chen.

Elder Lian Cheng was momentarily speechless by Elder Jin Gu's resolve. He is truly so short sighted! He turned to his disciple, "Qinghong, you speak. How do you intend on resolving this? What kind of help would you like from your master?"

“Your disciple still harbors hope, and I wish to put an end to things with a decisive fight against Jiang Chen in the pill competition.” Shen Qinghong didn’t hold back his true thoughts

“Are you certain?” Elder Lian Cheng asked slowly, a look of judgment in his eyes.

Shen Qinghong nodded firmly. “Jiang Chen has already affected my dao heart. If I don’t suppress him, then cracks are sure to form.”

Elder Lian Cheng sighed softly. “We are born with nothing into this world, and we leave with nothing in our hands. Troubles do not exist innately in our hearts, but are shoved in as we pursue material goods and psychological enjoyment. Qinghong, your master read these words a long time ago in an ancient tome and reflected on them for sixty years before comprehending them. You think far too much, which creates the chance for your dao heart to be affected by others. If you followed the dao with a resolute heart and avoided creating so much trouble, paying no heed to contests of pride, then you wouldn’t have caused so many things to happen at all.

“Your martial dao potential is extraordinary, and you are a genius but half a step away from entering the sage realm. Why are you so inflexible as to not have this slightest bit of tolerance? With your level, would you not gain a spot for the Pill Battles? Even if Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi have claimed two, there is no question that you and Ling Bi’er would take the other two with no contest at all. But now? You’re merely using your position of utmost genius to hassle a few newly ascended geniuses.

“Don’t you think that your goal should be placed at the Myriad Grand Ceremony yet to come? Or even the mysterious Myriad Paramount Realm?” Elder Lian Cheng spoke persuasively, but his gaze never left Shen Qinghong’s face. It was as if he wanted to see through all of his disciple’s thoughts.

Shen Qinghong’s reply was wooden, “Honored master’s teachings make sense. Your disciple is indeed a bit blinded by the circumstances, and not seeing Mt. Tai. However, I have made up my mind regarding this challenge and wishes that the honored master will support me.”

A trace of disappointment flashed through Elder Lian Chen’s heart. He really wished that Shen Qinghong would experience spontaneous enlightenment and let go of his convictions towards this challenge, forgetting the troubles that Jiang Chen had brought him. In all honesty, his disciple had never personally placed himself on the opposing end from Jiang Chen. He could absolutely remove himself with grace and dignity at any moment, displaying his bearing as the first genius. It was even possible to become friends with Jiang Chen.

And yet—

Shen Qinghong hadn’t made this decision.

Elder Lian Cheng was disappointed in him. He absolutely did not look favorably on Shen Qinghong’s decision to battle. Although he and Elder Yun Nie had yelled at each other and pounded on a table

at each other, they still admired the other. However, neither of them would ever admit that.

Seeing Palace Head Dan Chi and Elder Yun Nie both so supported Jiang Chen, Elder Lian Cheng would never believe that this youth was someone who'd cheated his way to where he was. When Shen Qinghong had made trouble for Jiang Chen all along and slandered his name a month ago, none of this had been Elder Lian Cheng's idea. It was just that he was Shen Qinghong's martial dao teacher, and he naturally couldn't take a public stance to pour cold water on his disciple. At the same time, he wanted to make use of this opportunity to thoroughly assess Shen Qinghong's will. It now seemed that although his martial dao potential was exceptional, his maturity still needed to undergo necessary tempering.

"How do you plan on competing with him?" Elder Lian Cheng asked.

"Your disciple wishes to compete in pill refinement with him, with one match declaring the winner. Therefore, your disciple would like to borrow the Skypeak Cauldron."

Elder Lian Cheng's gaze sharpened as he looked thoughtfully at Shen Qinghong. "As I understand it, Jiang Chen's cauldron is the Skyweave Cauldron that Palace Head Dan Chi gifted to him. Borrowing my Skypeak Cauldron would place you on the same footing."

There were five treasured cauldrons in Regal Pill Palace history. They were the Skyscatter, Skyweave, Skypeak, Skyorigin, and Skywood Cauldron. Of them, the Skyscatter and Skywood

Cauldron were honored in the Hall of Ancestors in the Regal Pill Palace. There was yet anyone to appear who was destined to use them.

Palace Head Dan Chi owned the Skyweave Cauldron, and he'd given it to Jiang Chen. Elder Lian Cheng owned the Skypeak Cauldron, and Elder Yun Nie owned the Sky Origin Cauldron. These five treasured cauldrons had witnessed the Regal Pill Palace's rise and glory. The Skypeak and Skyweave Cauldrons hadn't appeared in public for a hundred years. Therefore, Elder Lian Cheng hesitated when Shen Qinghong made his request.

When the five divine level cauldrons were used against each other, it would become one of the great, momentous occasions for the sect and be recorded in the annals of history. The elder was hesitating because he didn't want this battle to become a public and memorable record of Shen Qinghong's failure.

Chapter 519: An Opportunity To Get Rich Comes Knocking

“Please agree, honored master!” Shen Qinghong dropped to one knee as his voice grew determined. “This challenge weighs on my heart like a knot. Whether or not I win, I will immediately enter closed door cultivation and break through to the sage realm in one go.”

Elder Lian Cheng sighed lightly. To begin with, he doubted that Shen Qinghong would have any issues in breaking through to the sage realm, but the elder really didn’t want him to challenge Jiang Chen. At this moment, his disciple’s thoughts about Jiang Chen were simply a matter of pride. But a loss here would cement the event as Shen Qinghong’s humiliation and cause his heart to become clouded with hate.

Even if Shen Qinghong broke through to the sage realm, his dao heart would be tainted by this hate. This would just be disadvantageous for Shen Qinghong in the long run.

Elder Lian Cheng had high expectations for Shen Qinghong’s heights in martial dao. He even felt that his disciple had a bit of hope of assailing the emperor realm. Even if he had no idea how big this hope was, having the sliver of one was better than none. But if Shen Qinghong was caught up in other things, then he would find it hard to concentrate on the path of martial dao. Failure to concentrate on his martial path would cause his hope for emperor realm to vanish.

Yet, when he saw how resolute Shen Qinghong was, Elder Lian

Cheng knew there was no stopping his disciple. “Fine. Qinghong, this is your choice. Here is the Skypeak Cauldron, take it.” Elder Lian Cheng took out the cauldron.

“Many thanks to the honored master!” Shen Qinghong was delighted.

Elder Jin Gu also displayed a happy expression. “Old brother Lian Cheng, you chose to support your disciple after all! If Qinghong wins over that Jiang Chen, then he will no longer have any opponents in the arena of pill dao in the younger generation.”

Elder Lian Cheng waved his hand. “Qinghong, you and I have had the destiny to be master and disciple. In that stead, I give you one piece of advice. Think less of gains and losses, and lesser of victory and defeat. If you are able to do so, then regardless of the final result, you will have obtained something from the match. Go ahead. Be well.” The elder waved his hand after speaking. “You are dismissed.”

Elder Jin Gu took Shen Qinghong away with him when he saw Elder Lian Cheng’s gesture. As they departed, Shen Qinghong spoke up.

“Grandfather, honored master seems to disapprove of me fighting Jiang Chen?” Shen Qinghong still very much respected Elder Lian Cheng.

Elder Jin Gu smiled. “He’s the Hallmaster of the Hall of Might. He’s naturally not happy if you choose to compete with others on

the basis of pill dao. Pay no heed to any of it anymore. If you can suppress Jiang Chen, you will remain the king in the Sovereign Area in the future. Whether it be Jun Mobai or Ling Bi'er, none of them will be able to contend against you in the future."

"Your grandson will do his best." Shen Qinghong travelled rapidly back to the Rosy Valley after taking his leave of Elder Jin Gu.

When Elder Lian Cheng saw Elder Jin Gu and Shen Qinghong leave together, a trace of pity glittered in his eyes. It was obvious that he didn't think much of this fight against Jiang Chen at all. He thought for a moment and sighed. "Ah, alright then. Qinghong is still my disciple. Let me take a trip on his behalf and see if this matter can be salvaged." He'd already risen to his feet as he murmured to himself, and walked outside.

Elder Lian Cheng arrived in Dan Chi's residence before too long had passed.

"Haha, what wind blows Elder Lian Cheng by?" Palace Head Dan Chi was slightly surprised to see who'd come knocking.

Elder Lian Cheng didn't hide anything as he sighed wryly. "It shames me to speak of it, but I'm here on behalf of my good-for-nothing disciple, Shen Qinghong."

"Oh? What makes you say that?" Palace Head Dan Chi wasn't sure what was going on.

“This kid and Jiang Chen are keeping themselves busy being hostile to each other in Rosy Valley. This old man is here this time to see if there’s any room to maneuver. When two tigers fight, one is certain to be hurt. To our Regal Pill Palace, it might not be a good thing for geniuses to overly clash. Palace Head, I’m here with a thick face to request that you make an appearance and see if you can convince Jiang Chen to take down the ring?”

Palace Head Dan Chi laughed lightly and personally handed a cup of tea over. “Have some tea, Elder Lian Cheng. It is indeed inappropriate for the young to go overboard in a matter of pride. However, so many things have happened in the past month that have greatly affected Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi’s reputation. Some of the ill winds have even blown onto me and Elder Yun Nie. Elder Lian Cheng, I’ll be frank. The situation’s a bit difficult to have me step out and convince Jiang Chen to take down the ring, and it is similarly difficult for him to stop as well. After all, you didn’t prevent this from happening when the situation could’ve been controlled.”

“Yes, indeed, I’ve been remiss in this matter.” Elder Lian Cheng quite clearly blamed himself. “I hold great responsibility in how this matter developed. If I could’ve stopped this matter earlier, it might not have grown to this point. Jiang Chen’s actions are born out of his frustrated anger. I can understand that well.”

Dan Chi was silent for a moment and said, “Elder Lian Cheng, you and Elder Jin Gu both highly favor Shen Qinghong. Why are you opposed to him contending with Jiang Chen this time?”

Elder Lian Cheng smiled ruefully. “Palace Head, it’s because I

know Qinghong well that I anticipate he has no chances of winning at all."

"Oh?" Palace Head Dan Chi smiled. "If I guess correctly, Elder Jin Gu must not be holding the same views?"

"Ai." Elder Lian Cheng sighed. "It's precisely because Elder Jin Gu doesn't think so and insists on traveling down this path that he has brought Qinghong to this step. Palace Head, I'm setting aside my face only in the hopes that you will think of the greater picture of the sect, and see if you can convince Jiang Chen to take down the ring."

Palace Head Dan Chi smiled faintly. "Shen Qinghong is overbearing and threatening. The only thing he wishes to do is fight. If I have Jiang Chen take down the ring, I'm afraid that with the temperament of a young man, they will both be unable to accept this outcome."

Elder Lian Cheng laughed in extreme ruefulness. "Must we damage one in the fight between two tigers? Qinghong's martial dao potential is extraordinary, and he is the greatest hope to spread the name and glory of our Regal Pill Palace in the Myriad Grand Ceremony. If he is injured over this, then it is a blow to our sect as well!"

Palace Head Dan Chi might've agreed with these words before Jiang Chen's appearance. But now, he didn't feel that Shen Qinghong was the sect's only hope in the Grand Ceremony.

However, the greater picture was important, so the palace head nodded. “Elder Lian Cheng, you would surely think that I didn’t try my hardest in convincing him if I went alone. Why don’t the two of us, and Elder Yun Nie, go together? If Jiang Chen can take a step back and let it all dissolve, I would be happy to see this outcome as well as you.”

……

Jiang Chen had received no end of challengers since he’d set up his ring. But now, he’d already gathered all the spirit stones he needed.

“Brother Chen, after Shen Trifire’s defeat, unless senior sister Ling Bi’er herself comes to challenge you, I’m afraid no one else will dare come anymore.” Mu Gaoqi smiled.

Jiang Chen was about to respond when his expression suddenly flickered. The light of his God’s Eye sparkled rapidly as he looked to the skies. “Important personages are coming!”

“Jiang Chen, open the restrictions around your residence. I, Elder Lian Cheng and Elder Yun Nie have come to visit.” A message descended from the skies.

Jiang Chen was slightly surprised and passed down his orders. “Open the residence, it’s the Palace Head and two venerated elders!” He welcomed the three heavyweights who held the greatest authority in the sect into the guest side-palace a moment later, and also took out his remaining flasks of Nine Magnificence

Dew Wine without hesitation.

The fragrance from the wine instantly drifted through the air.

“Hmm? It’s the Nine Magnificence Dew Wine?” Elder Lian Cheng’s nose twitched slightly. “I’ve heard that the Walkabout Sect is skilled at making this wine, but to think that the sixteen kingdom alliance possesses this wine as well?”

Although Dan Chi and Yun Nie weren’t those who lusted after the delights in a cup, they had more or less dipped their fingers into the topic of alcohol. After all, when wine was infused with spirit herbs, it was both a pleasure and a way of nourishment for cultivators.

“This disciple is seized with fear at the combined arrival of the three great ones. How could I not take out some of my best wine in flattery?” Jiang Chen said half jokingly, completely at ease even at the arrival of these distinguished guests. These three were the three most powerful people in the Regal Pill Palace.

“Jiang Chen, I’ve never liked to beat around the bush.” Dan Chi set down a cup of old vines. “Elder Lian Cheng has come to find me this time representing Shen Qinghong in reconciling the two of you. He wishes for you to take down the ring. We won’t force you to either way; we’ve just come to ask if this possibility exists.”

The slight smile of Jiang Chen’s face suddenly froze. “You are the elders of the sect, and logically speaking, Jiang Chen should follow your words. However, the flying rumors of the past month have

slathered me with mud. If I take down the ring, it will only perpetuate the slander and leave the outside world to speculate that I actually do not live up to my reputation, that I've made it into the Sovereign Area and obtained the Pill Battle slot only through connections. All three of you are elders who have high morals. You all should understand this disciple's awkward situation?"

Palace Head Dan Chi and Elder Yun Nie both looked at Elder Lian Cheng to see what he would say. After all, Jiang Chen spoke the truth. Taking down the ring would tell the outside world that he had a guilty conscience. This was simply too much to ask of him!

"Jiang Chen, even Shen Trifire has been unable to triumph over you in the past couple of days. That has already indirectly dispelled the rumors from the outside world. Of course, it's easy to understand the rage in your heart at being slandered. If I wasn't Shen Qinghong's martial dao master, I would've never made this request." Elder Lian Cheng's attitude was quite sincere. "To be frank, Shen Qinghong has borrowed the Skypeak Cauldron from me to battle it out with your Skyweave Cauldron. The battle between the five divine cauldrons of the Regal Pill Palace will surely be written into official history. I also know that Shen Qinghong has almost no chance of winning. This is why I've come with a thick face to ask you to take down the ring. It is indeed somewhat unfair to you, and I'm not an unreasonable person. Let me know whatever conditions you have for taking down the ring."

When Jiang Chen saw that Elder Lian Cheng wasn't suppressing him in a dominating manner, he knew that the elder was wary of the palace head and Elder Yun Nie. To be honest, Jiang Chen wasn't much interested in slapping Shen Qinghong's face. His

interest solely lay in spirit stones and resources. Now that the palace head and Elder Yun Nie had come, although they didn't say anything outright, it was apparent that they too wished for things to be minimized. As for why? Naturally it was for the greater picture of the sect.

Jiang Chen wasn't a miserly person. It had been a conflict of pride up to this point and hadn't yet developed to a death feud. It wasn't impossible for him to take a step back and take down the ring.

Of course, the caveat was that it had to be worth his while. If he didn't receive enough benefits, it would be impossible for him to voluntarily take a step back and forgive the other's provocation.

Judging from Elder Lian Cheng's words, the elder was willing to be fleeced on Shen Qinghong's behalf if Jiang Chen stepped down. This is a rare opportunity to get rich that's come knocking! Jiang Chen was immensely tempted.

Chapter 520: Demanding A High Price

“Can I really propose any condition?” Jiang Chen chuckled, an utterly innocent and harmless expression on his face.

Palace Head Dan Chi smiled. “Jiang Chen, if you take down the ring, it’ll be you who’s making a sacrifice. It’s fine for you to have some conditions. The sect clearly delineates between punishment and reward. Of course we can’t sacrifice your benefits for the sake of others.”

“Alright then, a poor person like me has bigger priorities than fighting over pride. Solid, tangible benefits are much more important.” Jiang Chen spoke in an accommodating tone. “Then this disciple will be so bold as to make his requests. Ten thousand upper rank origin spirit stones, fifty kilograms of aubergine gold, fifty kilograms of starcloud dust, and fifty kilograms of vermillion cinnabar. Mm, if Elder Lian Cheng has any upper rank Origin Fostering Pills, please bestow a couple thousand of them as well. This junior won’t mind at all.”

To any of the younger generation, this kind of price would’ve absolutely been a heavy fleecing. But to the three heavyweights, even though the amount wasn’t that little, it wouldn’t stretch their coffers too much either. After all, at Elder Lian Cheng’s age, his accumulated wealth was astonishing, and this little bit of items were just like the hairs on an oxen.

Elder Lian Cheng blanked momentarily, then burst out into a hearty laugh. “Good, good! A young man who doesn’t hide and conceal his thoughts, cutting straight to the point and voicing his

mind. That's how it should be! I'll take care of these for you. They will arrive in your residence in three day's time."

Jiang Chen laughed. "Elder Lian Cheng is indeed decisive. Alright! I'll take down the ring whenever the three elders wish me to."

Elder Yun Nie suddenly spoke up. "I rather think the ring should remain."

"Hmm?" The other three looked at Elder Yun Nie in puzzlement. Wasn't everything settled already?

Elder Yun Nie nodded. "Since this match-up was going to happen, removing the ring now will not dissolve their internal demons. I rather think that this is a chance that we should capitalize on."

"A chance? What do you mean?" Elder Lian Cheng asked solemnly.

"Shen Qinghong aims too high and has no shortage of arrogance. If Jiang Chen takes down the ring, he is certain to continue making trouble and spread rumours of Jiang Chen's cowardice. While this isn't good for Jiang Chen, it also doesn't address the underlying problem of Shen Qinghong's personality and the need for him to face some setbacks. Without appropriate tempering, his internal demons will continue to remain as they are. If we want to address everything, I think the match should continue, but it should end in a tie. The battle between the two divine cauldrons will be a

wondrous tale told through the ages, and the battle between two geniuses will certainly elicit curiosity throughout the Regal Pill Palace. The other disciples will yearn after the geniuses even more, and this will also serve as an equal source of motivation for them. It will enhance their sense of belonging in the sect."

"End in a tie?" Palace Head Dan Chi and Elder Lian Cheng looked at each other, vaguely feeling that Elder Yun Nie's words made sense.

"Indeed, a tie. This will make Shen Qinghong retreat in the face of difficulties and will retain face for him as well. This maintains both his and Jiang Chen's face, and make him understand in his heart of hearts that there is always a higher peak, a stronger expert. This is equally advantageous for his development." Elder Yun Nie continued.

Shen Qinghong's greatest problem to this day was his overconfidence, and that no one within the sect had truly made him experience the feeling of defeat. No one could give him the feeling of an insurmountable obstacle. Speaking positively, this meant that he was confident. On the flip side, it had also bred his blindly arrogant personality.

Palace Head Dan Chi relaxed and smiled, seeming to understand something. "Yun Nie, your suggestion is nice. But how difficult is it to ensure that the match ends in a tie?"

Elder Lian Cheng also nodded. "Indeed, a tie would be perfect, but a victor will be determined easily if this isn't managed well."

Elder Yun Nie cast a profound look at Jiang Chen, a hint of a smile playing about his face. “We’ll have to ask the person in question whether this can be done.”

Jiang Chen rubbed his nose, smiling ruefully. “Elder Yun Nie, this is too much of a test for me, isn’t it?”

“Heh heh, Jiang Chen, I know that you’ll have the ability to do this.”

Jiang Chen sighed. “Why do I feel like I’ve wandered unsuspectingly into a trap?”

Palace Head Dan Chi laughed heartily. “Jiang Chen, be more decisive and just tell us yes or no.”

“Can I say no?” Jiang Chen asked dejectedly.

Elder Lian Cheng smiled. “If this match can end in a tie, I’ll still pay the conditions we settled on.”

“I’ll add on another five thousand upper rank origin spirit stones.” Palace Head Dan Chi chuckled.

Elder Yun Nie also smiled when he saw this. “Then I can’t be miserly either; I’ll throw in another five thousand stones.”

Palace Head Dan Chi smiled. “Jiang Chen, can you do it now?”

Jiang Chen beamed in satisfaction. “I think that’ll be enough? I’ll be blunt first, none of you can dodge your debts after the fact, hmm!”

Palace Head Dan Chi also purposefully kept a stern look on his face. “Remember, it has to be a tie! I’m not paying up if it’s not a tie!”

Jiang Chen chuckled. “Don’t worry, don’t worry. I’ll make it a tie for the clink of wealth.”

Dan Chi and Yun Nie smiled at each other to see Jiang Chen act this way. Although Elder Lian Cheng was also smiling happily, he was secretly shocked. Just how great is this disciple’s pill potential that he dares agree to this? His potential and cultivation in pills must be overwhelmingly higher than Qinghong’s. Otherwise, where would he have the confidence to accept? A tie can’t be had just because one wants one. How would he be able to maintain a fine control over this if he lacked extreme potential and strength?

Although he was stunned, Elder Lian Cheng spoke, “Good! Then I’ll await the good news of this match from my residence.” Even he had to admit that Elder Yun Nie’s proposal was the best. It was more preferable to have the match than to take down the ring, and a tie was the best outcome. This would allow Shen Qinghong to retreat in the face of difficulties and not have him lose face, resulting in a shadow over his heart.

Jiang Chen was absolutely delighted when the three heavyweights left. What a haul! The three heavyweights had offered twenty thousand stones in total. When added to his original pile, it was enough to have his Nine Gates Incineration Formation operate at half power. His original hopes had only been for thirty percent, but if he could power it at half of its full power, it would be enough to withstand a sky sage realm expert. This was an unexpected surprise for Jiang Chen!

Palace Head Dan Chi and Elder Yun Nie both sent over the promised five thousand stones not long after they went back. It was obvious that they were very confident in Jiang Chen and had sent over the stones early.

They wouldn't ask for the stones back even if he didn't manage a tie. This was their encouragement for Jiang Chen. They knew him very well by now. He would only use spirit stones as the stakes only if he was in urgent need of them. Therefore, this was their way of helping Jiang Chen, using a method that couldn't be traced, to support him. Jiang Chen naturally knew this as well.

"Palace Head Dan Chi and Elder Yun Nie are wise men who are open and aboveboard. I am not so heartless to ignore how well they're treating me; I must help them realize their great wishes." Jiang Chen knew that whether it was Palace Head Dan Chi or Elder Yun Nie, they both wished for the Regal Pill Palace to flourish vigorously and develop into a third rank sect; rebuild the Myriad Empire; and unite the Myriad Domain.

"If I am to leave the Regal Pill Palace in the future, I must first help them attain this long cherished wish!" Jiang Chen made a

private vow. “Elder Lian Cheng doesn’t seem like a villainous person either, just one who sides with his young more. Since he’s Shen Qinghong’s martial dao teacher, he won’t treat me as candidly as Palace Head Dan Chi and Elder Yun Nie. He will send over the promised payout only after my match concludes with Shen Qinghong.”

A tie!

One had to say, this was a type of bet that Jiang Chen had never encountered before. It would certainly be a challenge to accomplish, but he was confident. Since he’d made an agreement, he was even more motivated. This was a match of pill dao that had twenty thousand spirit stones and a bunch of other materials at stake! At the same time, he also felt pity for Shen Qinghong. A Sovereign Area genius had sunk so far that his master had to secretly buy off his opponents. Was it because Shen Qinghong had led too good a life? He really was overdue for a lesson about pride.

Shen Qinghong made a proclamation the next day— he would personally come to Jiang Chen’s residence on the morrow and engage in a tremendous battle with him.

The entirety of Rosy Valley boiled over when this news hit the streets. Shen Qinghong’s existence in Rosy Valley was a vaunted existence, almost at the level of myth. If the youngsters in Rosy Valley were to pick someone they admired and envied, eight out of ten would choose Shen Qinghong. The remainder might choose Jun Mobai or the recently hot Jiang Chen.

However, when looking at the length of time Shen Qinghong had

held his position as first ranked, his impressive background and his untouchable backer, the vast majority of the younger generation guessed that he was most likely the next palace head.

Even if he wasn't, he was likely one of the most favored candidates. Such a unique genius wanted to compete with Jiang Chen, a newly ascended genius, in pills? Emotions of all sorts, from surprise and speculation to shock and enthusiasm suffused the Rosy Valley.

"Is that Jiang Chen really that impressive that even senior brother Shen needs to make a move himself?"

"Senior brother Shen's potential has always been a mystery. Is he finally going to show himself?"

"I really envy Jiang Chen! Even if he loses, there is great honor in his defeat."

"Indeed, Jiang Chen is really something. His rise is explosively meteoric!"

"He has the skills to his name as well, otherwise he wouldn't have moved into the Sovereign Area. I've also heard that those who have challenged him lately have all failed, even Shen Trifire!"

"Those are just rumors; how many of you saw that with your own eyes? I just refuse to accept this Jiang Chen!"

“Me too! What right does a foreign disciple have to bask in the limelight of our sect?”

“That Mu Gaoqi is suspicious as well. How come he suddenly has an innate wood constitution of high order?”

“Has someone really helped Jiang Chen cheat? Let’s see how senior brother Shen tramples him!”

Some Rosy Valley core disciples still found it hard to accept Jiang Chen. They didn’t have any grudges with Jiang Chen; they just couldn’t accept a new person suddenly becoming so strong and overtaking all of them. It was a purely emotional reaction of envy, admiration or just simple greed. However, there were also those who retained their senses. Through their coolly logical assessment, they were certain that Jiang Chen wasn’t a product of cheating, but the genuine article. But of course, they naturally wouldn’t step out to defend him.

Jiang Chen didn’t care about the rumors and discourse that swept the Rosy Valley up in a storm. Words were no more tangible than the floating clouds in his eyes. Only that twenty thousand stones were real, tangible benefits in his eyes.

He couldn’t wait for Shen Qinghong to come knocking.

Chapter 521: The Utmost Pill Battle (I)

Shen Qinghong hadn't rushed to Jiang Chen's residence at first light after receiving the Skypeak Cauldron. He'd gone back to make his preparations and adjust his condition to the most optimal state.

The next day, he brought a large retinue and set up camp on Jiang Chen's doorstep, ready to engage in a battle of the ages.

When he arrived, he found that Jiang Chen wasn't even at home. This left Shen Qinghong at a bit of a loss.

He'd sent out the challenge early yesterday morning! In his eyes, Jiang Chen should've been here, waiting. However, he discovered that his thoughts had been rather one sided. Compared to the other Rosy Valley geniuses, Jiang Chen didn't play by the book. If it'd been anyone else, they would've long since waited patiently had they heard that Shen Qinghong was arriving.

"That little thief Jiang Chen is truly petty!" Rong Zifeng had no place to vent his anger as he fumed.

Nie Chong called out to Shen Qinghong. "Senior brother Shen, I'll go cause a fuss."

Shen Qinghong waved his hand, his face frosty. "Don't be in a rush; this kid is definitely playing a mind game and wants to mentally exhaust me beforehand. How would I allow him to succeed?"

“Then we wait here?” Nie Chong asked with a bit of uncertainty.

“We wait!” Shen Qinghong waved his hand. “Proclaim to the entire Valley that I am waiting at his doorstep. If Jiang Chen doesn’t emerge, then he has a guilty conscience and is afraid.”

Rong Zifeng was delighted. “Fantastic! Jiang Chen wants to play mind games, but the senior brother’s move shoves all the pressure on his side. Let’s see how he cowers in his shell then!”

Shen Qinghong smiled proudly and sat down cross legged, growing quiet. He knew better than anyone present that Jiang Chen wasn’t an easy target. He had to keep himself in peak form for this match.

Rong Zifeng had just sent out their proclamation when the doors to Jiang Chen’s residence opened. Jiang Chen walked out, yawning and stretching. The vestiges of sleep were apparent on his face as he peered forward. “So early?”

Jiang Chen looked blearily at Shen Qinghong, astonishment filling his tone. “Yo, isn’t this senior brother Shen?”

How would Shen Qinghong not know that Jiang Chen was doing this on purpose?

“Cut the blather, Jiang Chen. You can’t avoid this match.”

Jiang Chen stretched again, and his tone took an undercurrent of urgency. “Senior brother Shen, how many spirit stones did you bring?”

Shen Qinghong’s face darkened. This Jiang Chen was just like an old miser! Talking about spirit stones every other sentence, how was this the kind of a bearing a genius disciple should have?

“I won’t keep you company if you don’t have the spirit stones.” Jiang Chen complained. “Wait for me, I’ll go wash up. Although, I’ll be blunt first. With senior brother Shen’s position, I’m not playing with you if you don’t have at least ten thousand upper rank origin spirit stones.” Jiang Chen plodded slowly back in after speaking.

When he saw Jiang Chen’s doors close once again, Shen Qinghong was almost overwhelmed by the urge to go on a rampage and disregard his mannerly demeanor. This Jiang Chen is simply too lazy! He’s treating me, the first ranked genius, like dirt! He shows not even a speck of basic respect! All he talks about are spirit stones, is he possessed by a destitute ghost?

It was a good thing that ten thousand spirit stones were still but a mere hair from his leg. No matter what tricks Jiang Chen was going to play, he wouldn’t give up! He was going to tear Jiang Chen’s facade into shreds and thoroughly step on him!

Execute one as a warning to a hundred!

Jiang Chen trudged back into his sight an hour later. “Senior

brother Shen, show me the ten thousand stones first or I'm going back inside."

Shen Qinghong smirked dismissively and waved his hand, having one of his followers lay out the ten thousand stones. "Jiang Chen, your breadth of vision is only worth this bit of wealth. If you can win over me, these stones will be yours."

Jiang Chen chuckled. "I made a rough calculation. Senior brother Shen is the first ranked genius, and it'll be tough to defeat you. I can at most come to a draw with you."

How would Shen Qinghong know Jiang Chen's words were a trap? He snorted coldly. "If I can't defeat you, these spirit stones will be yours even if I lose."

Jiang Chen's eyes gleamed. "Really?? Everyone listen up! If I can fight to a draw with senior brother Shen, he'll gift me these stones as a welcoming present!"

When Shen Qinghong saw how much Jiang Chen cared about the stones, his opinion of his opponent dropped by another notch. "Did this penniless Jiang Chen have the fear of being poor beaten into him from that poor backwater region? His breadth of vision is so low, he only cares about spirit stones. Even if this kind of person has some potential, his future is severely limited. He's probably even less than Jun Mobai! Ah forget it, I cannot pay attention to this kind of drama in the future after today's match. I must concentrate on assailing the sage realm."

Shen Qinghong's contempt for Jiang Chen only grew the more he thought about it.

Jiang Chen could naturally guess Shen Qinghong's thoughts. He didn't bother enlightening the other about his mistaken assumptions. "Senior brother Shen, you've waited so long already. Tell me, how would you like to bet?"

Shen Qinghong almost sobbed when he heard these words. He'd waited so long and arduously for them! He cut straight to the chase. "Jiang Chen, the assessment of a pill master ultimately has to be done with pill refining. I will bet on refining pills with you, with one match determining the victor."

Jiang Chen nodded and ask faintly. "We can bet on the speed of refining pills, sure. What pill do you plan on refining?"

Shen Qinghong responded, "It's not up to you or me to decide what pill to refine. Let luck decide that."

"How?"

"You come up with five recipes, and so will I. We'll select one at random from the ten of them. That's the fairest."

Shen Qinghong was different from Shen Trifire. He was proud at heart and disdained using small tricks to try and put one over Jiang Chen. Jiang Chen rather admired this straightforwardness of his.

He didn’t object to Shen Qinghong’s suggestion and smiled. “What if the recipes we take out are quite obscure and the other hasn’t seen it before?”

“So the recipes can’t be obscure, and whoever suggests the recipe must also have the ingredients to refine the pill.”

Whoever offered up the recipe would have to bring the ingredients. This was rather fair and would prevent someone from taking out a very obscure recipe. Jiang Chen thought for a minute. It seemed that Shen Qinghong had come prepared.

“Alright, we’ll go with that then.”

Jiang Chen didn’t care what pills they were refining. His abilities in pill dao weren’t anything that Shen Qinghong could estimate.

Jiang Chen thought for a moment and wrote down five pill recipes. Shen Qinghong also prepared five, and placed them all into wax balls he’d prepared. Mu Gaoqi represented Jiang Chen, and Nie Chong represented Shen Qinghong.

The two of them shook the bamboo container separately, completely mixing up the ten wax balls. No one could possibly cheat by the time the jumbling was done.

“Who will choose?” Shen Qinghong asked.

Jiang Chen smiled. “Doesn’t matter, you go.”

“You go.” Shen Qinghong frowned. He didn’t want to give others the chance to say that he’d cheated.

The two of them were trying to hand off responsibility to the other when a hearty laugh sounded from the side. “If the two of you trust me, then let me!” The person speaking was standing a hundred meters away, wearing the outfit of a Confucian scholar—Jun Mobai. He was waving a folding fan and looked the very picture of an elegant gentleman.

“Junior sister Ling, since you’re here, why don’t you do it.” Shen Qinghong suddenly directed his words to corner, refusing Jun Mobai’s offer.

Ling Bi’er had been standing off to the corner when Shen Qinghong called her out. She didn’t hide as she walked out from the shadows. She was outfitted in a brilliant white robe that easily rivalled the delicate snow. Her face was as frosty as ever as she greeted everyone. As she walked forward, it was like a glacial peak descending on everyone present. Behind her came a diminutive young girl who looked quite young, but had a pair of stunning weapons on her chest. She was wearing a short, leopard skin skirt which revealed a pair of snow-white thighs, full of the vigor of youth. The twin peaks of fatal attraction shook as she walked, swaying and rocking with her movement and dazzling the eyes. The girl behind Ling Bi’er was her twin young sister, Ling Hui’er.

Of the pair, one had an icy bearing and gave others the feeling of being inviolable. The other was young and sexy, full of the

strength of a young girl. They were obviously quite different in terms of bearing.

"Jiang Chen, you won't mind if junior sister Ling selects the recipe, won't you?" It seemed that Shen Qinghong purposefully wanted to suppress Jun Mobai as he ignored the latter's offer to volunteer.

Jiang Chen smiled casually. "I didn't mind when it was senior brother Shen doing the picking, why would I mind senior sister Ling?"

Although Ling Bi'er had an indifferent nature, giving others the feeling of an ice beauty, she was still a relatively dependable person. She walked up with no change in expression or another word, reaching out her jade-like hand into the container, fishing out a wax ball.

It was rather Ling Hui'er who cocked her head, looking at Jiang Chen with a hint of a smile. "Jiang Chen, how did you know that my sister is your senior sister? Are you younger than her?"

Jiang Chen hadn't thought that Ling Hui'er would ask this kind of question. He grinned at her as he responded. "Those who entered the sect first are the seniors. With your sister's strength and status, calling her senior sister is only proper."

Ling Hui'er chuckled. "You've got a sweet mouth alright. No wonder my sister says you're quite a character."

Ling Bi’er’s face frosted over even more as she admonished her sister. “Hui’er, be quiet! There’s no place for you to talk here.”

Ling Hui’er stuck her tongue out and made a funny face at Jiang Chen, “Jiang Chen, I’m favoring you! Remember, if you win, you have to teach me how to refine pills.”

She giggled and then retreated behind Ling Bi’er like a little child who had made a mistake. She stayed docilely behind Ling Bi’er, allowing her sister to berate her as she would.

“Aeonian Dream Pill!” The pill chosen was revealed when the wax pill was crushed. Shen Qinghong smiled faintly. “Jiang Chen, it looks like luck is on my side. This Aeonian Dream Pill is one of mine.”

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. “Luck has never been important in the dao of pills. Your recipe is of a higher order and you need to prepare the materials. This time, I’ve actually saved on the costs of the ingredients.”

Shen Qinghong smirked coldly. All Jiang Chen talked about was the cost of this and that. In his eyes, Jiang Chen wasn’t fit to be presented in public at all. Yet Jun Mobai and Ling Bi’er kept cool heads, staying true to their role as bystanders.

They didn’t think that Jiang Chen’s attitude was one of saving on ingredients. In contrast, they were taken aback by his self-possessed attitude. The recipe was Shen Qinghong’s and this should’ve put Jiang Chen at a great disadvantage, but the latter

didn’t seem to think so at all! If it wasn’t Jiang Chen missing a few screws in his head, then that meant that he didn’t care what recipe was selected. To be so blithe was only something they’d expect from someone who was completely confident of success, confident that they’d worked everything out.

Had Jiang Chen’s pill dao potential already reached the realm of firmly suppressing everyone else with ease?

Chapter 522: The Utmost Pill Battle (II)

Both of them had nine sets of ingredients. This Aeonian Dream Pill wasn't that obscure a pill recipe. It was primarily used to temper consciousness and strength of heart. Alternatively, if one's consciousness was damaged from an attack of the mind or soul, one could use the Aeonian Dream Pill to aid in recovery.

However, it was a highly difficult pill to successfully refine. It required a very precise refining method. As a result, no one had been able to refine a supreme rank version of the pill thus far in the Regal Pill Palace. Apart from a few pill masters such as Elder Yun Nie, there were few who could even manage an upper rank version.

The two had an hour to familiarize themselves with the recipe and to consider how to refine it. For a pill masters, this was necessary preparation time. Jiang Chen had never refined it before, so he was at a disadvantage. Since it was Shen Qinghong's recipe, he must have given it a go before. His confident smile also betrayed that fact.

Shen Qinghong let out a long peal of laughter after an hour. "Time's up, let's begin."

Jiang Chen smiled. "Hold. How are we betting, what counts as a draw, and what counts as a loss? Let's lay out the rules first!"

"Naturally, the usual rules apply. We'll compete on the basis of the highest level pill from these nine sets of ingredients. If the

quality of the pill is the same, then whoever completed refinement first will be the winner. If the quality is the same and we finish at the same time, then it counts as a draw."

Compared to winning, Jiang Chen cared much more about how to tie. After all, his only mission in the bet was to finish in a draw, and not actually win against Shen Qinghong.

The Skypeak Cauldron. The Skyweave Cauldron.

The two treasured cauldrons of the Regal Pill Palace appeared in front of everyone. Even the stern Ling Bi'er's eyes held a hint of thoughtfulness. The five treasured cauldrons were the highest honor in the Regal Pill Palace. They represented the utmost glory for a pill master.

All of their past masters had been tremendous personages of great importance in sect history. Which one of them hadn't achieved great accomplishments for the sect in the past?

And which of these treasured cauldrons hadn't had a venerated history in the Regal Pill Palace?

Now, two of them were in the hands of the younger generation. Ling Bi'er had a high self assessment of herself in the area of pills and felt that she was on par with Shen Qinghong. However, due to her background and patron, she hadn't been able to receive the legacy of one of the five treasured cauldrons. Jiang Chen was but a newly ascended genius, but had already received the gift of the Skyweave Cauldron from Palace Head Dan Chi! Not only was this

stunning, but it was also a bit jealousy inducing.

Pill refinement began!

All eyes were focused on this battle.

The Skyweave Cauldron versus the Skypeak Cauldron!

This was a battle destined to go down in history. It represented the highest level of the younger generation and determined the future direction of the sect.

Jiang Chen didn't use any flashy techniques in preheating the cauldron, merely using an ordinary method. After an hour spent comprehending the Aeonian Dream Pill, he was already well versed in its refinement method. With his current level of training, this level of a pill didn't stump him at all. The difficulty lay in that he wasn't sure where Shen Qinghong's level was. What kind of level of pill should he refine to ensure that he would end in a draw with his opponent?

"Whatever, I'll try my best to make sure that I have a pill from each level. That way, I'll be able to respond accordingly no matter what level pill he refines." This laughable request of a tie was running Jiang Chen ragged straight down to the bone. Even more difficult than grasping the level of pill was making sure that they spent an equal amount of time refining. Jiang Cheng had to split some of his attention to keep an eye on Shen Qinghong's progress. He had to match his speed to a degree of precision that ensured they finished together. That alone imposed high requisites for his

fire control. The slightest deviation would cause a difference in time.

It was a good thing that the observation skills of Jiang Chen's "Psychic Head's" were enough to parse the most minute of details. He didn't feel any pressure at all in observing his opponent's progress in an open-air environment like this.

In this regard, Jiang Chen's method seemed too much on the straight and narrow as he followed Shen Qinghong's progress. He sped up if Shen Qinghong was moving quickly, and slowed down if Shen Qinghong dragged. It was just that he did all this extremely deftly so that no one else could see his control. They were actually rather impressed by how focused Jiang Chen was. After all, it was his first time refining the Aeonian Dream Pill. It was already quite a feat to be on a similar level with Shen Qinghong.

There weren't that many secrets to this pill for Jiang Chen. He didn't want to show off any elaborate moves, so he just strictly followed the prescribed routine. As long as he did that and paid attention to all the details, Jiang Chen firmly believed that the level of his completed pill wouldn't be that low.

A pill master's foundations would be displayed in multiple aspects. Jiang Chen quietly observed Shen Qinghong's actions as he refined his pills. In his opinion, Shen Qinghong's methods focused overly on flashy techniques. He still lacked a bit of reliability in the details. This was the common fault of a young pill master.

Jiang Chen surmised, "It would be impressive if Shen Qinghong's

cauldron could result in even an upper rank pill. However, it's impossible for him to refine a supreme rank. He's already made some small errors here and there." The flaws weren't large, but in Jiang Chen's eyes, they were enough to affect the final product.

After roughly two hours, Jiang Chen sensed the signs of a pill forming in Shen Qinghong's cauldron. As for Jiang Chen's side, it was about time as well. He adjusted his tempo to sync with Shen Qinghong's rhythm. Suddenly, the Skypeak Cauldron emitted a sound like a dragon's croon or a tiger's howl, with the Skyweave Cauldron doing the same at almost the same time.

This was a sign of a pill forming!

Everyone was taken aback. They'd formed a pill at the same time! How could such a coincidence have happened?

Even the knowledgeable and widely read Ling Bi'er and Jun Mobai looked at each other, incredulity shining in their eyes.

Ling Hui'er patted her surging chest. "That scared me, how come the tone of a pill forming sounded at the same time? Did they plan for it to happen at the same time?"

Ling Bi'er admonished her, "Don't speak nonsense!"

Shen Qinghong was also looking over with a face of disbelief. As the only one aware of the true undercurrent of the duel, Jiang Chen naturally had to go through the full act now. He too put a

look of astonishment on his face. Even Mu Gaoqi was taken in. The two contestants then looked at Ling Bi'er at the same time.

She said solemnly, "The two of you formed a pill at the same time. Time will not determine the victor. As such, the result will depend on the level of your pills."

Jiang Chen smiled leisurely and looked at Shen Qinghong. "Senior brother Shen, I'd like to keep everyone in suspense first. You're the guest, so you should take out your highest level pill first."

It wasn't that he didn't want to take his out, it's just that he really didn't know which pill to bring out. He'd just discovered a supreme rank pill in the Skyweave Cauldron! This would instantly crush Shen Qinghong if he took it out.

But could Jiang Chen bring it forth? Of course not!

He could only have Shen Qinghong show his pill first so that he could respond accordingly. A draw, this has to be a draw.

Shen Qinghong smiled modestly, flipping over his hand to reveal an upper rank Aeonian Dream Pill. "Jiang Chen, my highest pill is an upper rank pill. Bring yours out. You'll beat me if you can bring out a supreme rank version."

Everyone gasped in astonished, an upper rank Aeonian Dream Pill! This was something that even only a few elders in the Herbal

Hall could manage! Even Ling Bi'er's heart suddenly trembled. She'd never known the depths of Shen Qinghong's potential, but the questions in her heart had been swept away after she saw the upper rank pill. His potential would absolutely not be any worse than hers! Add to that his unique background, backer, and the Skypeak Cauldron, his accomplishments in pill dao were only likely stronger than hers, not weaker. Despondency filled her heart all of a sudden, and she looked involuntarily over at Jiang Chen.

Everyone's gaze flicked to Jiang Chen.

They all didn't think much of Jiang Chen now. The Aeonian Dream Pill wasn't that easy to refine. Even the elder heavyweights of the sect couldn't refine a supreme rank. My ass he can refine a supreme rank version!

Even Mu Gaoqi was a bit nervous. His palms were sweaty as he mutely looked at Jiang Chen. Nie Chong and Rong Zifeng had already started to swell in arrogance. They were just waiting for the sight of Jiang Chen to make a fool out of himself or see him outmatched.

Jiang Chen looked at each of them and laughed leisurely. "What need do I have for a supreme rank? If I remember correctly, a draw works just as well? I happen to have refined an upper rank Aeonian Dream Pill as well! Please verify it."

He stored all the other pills into a flask with a flourish of his sleeve, and came up holding an upper rank pill in his hand. When those assembled looked at his pill, they saw a pure, solidly upper rank pill. Even Shen Qinghong was rendered completely speechless

at the sight.

The proudly prancing Nie Chong and Rong Zifeng were instantly petrified. As everyone froze, Jiang Chen swept away the ten thousand stones. He grinned, “We did agree just now! Senior brother Shen didn’t win, but neither did he lose. If we tied, then the stones are all mine. Haha, I have no choice but to accept them then!” Jiang Chen’s grating laughter and money hungry style instantly changed the atmosphere.

What kind of person was this?

He cared about nothing in a match of pills but the ten thousand upper rank stones. Is this fellow that possessed by an impoverished ghost?

Shen Qinghong was speechless, but he also felt like he had narrowly dodged a bullet as cold sweat poured down his back. Although he hadn’t won, he hadn’t lost either. He’d retained face and found a way out of this situation. He smiled faintly. “We already talked about this beforehand, Jiang Chen. It’s no big deal to gift you the stones.” Without wasting any more time, he waved his hand and left, trailed by a crowd of followers who had yet to react.

Chapter 523: The Authority After One Battle

Although Shen Qinghong left in a heroic manner, inwardly he was utterly shellshocked. When he calmed down and reflected over the battle, he felt like there were too many suspicious points. But, he couldn't pinpoint anything in particular. The whole match had just felt... eerie. How likely was it to finish refining a pill at the same time? Yet, it had happened in this match!

Shen Qinghong would never believe that Jiang Chen had purposefully thrown the match in his favor. But no matter what, Shen Qinghong was certain that Jiang Chen's pill dao potential was absolutely not inferior his, but was possibly greater. This was because he'd more or less obtained what he wanted with the least expense possible in refining the Aeonian Dream Pill. He'd refined this pill before, but it was Jiang Chen's first time coming in contact with it.

It was because he had come to those conclusions that Shen Qinghong had left without a fuss. He knew that taking the easy way out was the best way to handle the situation given what had happened. Continued entanglement would just invite humiliation upon himself. He also felt it odd when he thought closely of Jiang Chen's greedy display. No matter how he looked at it, this Jiang Chen didn't have a reason to view wealth so highly, almost as if it were his life. Could it be that all of this was an act?

Shen Qinghong didn't dare keep thinking. The best of the thirty six stratagems was to retreat!

And this was how a battle that was supposed to be a clash

between the greats concluded as a most bizarre tie.

Shen Qinghong naturally didn't care about the ten thousand spirit stones. This kind of loss to him was just a hair off his leg. It was Jun Mobai who looked meaningfully at Shen Qinghong's back and then at the absolutely delighted Jiang Chen. He suddenly smiled, "Congratulations junior brother Jiang Chen. There will be no more rascals who dare question your position and results in the future."

Jiang Chen smiled offhandedly. "Many thanks, many thanks. Thank you all for coming out."

His unspoken intent of refusing to entertain guests was obvious. Jun Mobai had wanted to strike up a friendship with Jiang Chen, but could tell from Jiang Chen's tone that he had no intention of inviting anyone in today. Jun Mobai smiled gallantly and raised a cupped fist salute to Jiang Chen. "Junior brother Jiang Chen, I extend to you the same offer. Come by my residence whenever you're free, I'll be waiting at any time."

"Your invitation is quite generous." Jiang Chen politely responded with some pleasantries.

When Jun Mobai left, Ling Bi'er glided up to Jiang Chen as if a jade tree piled high with snow. "Junior brother Jiang Chen, can I ask you a question?"

Jiang Chen smiled. "What is it?"

“I’m just purely curious, can I take a look at your leftover Aeonian Dream Pills?” Ling Bi’er’s tone was indifferent, the icy representative of the broad, cold moon.

Jiang Chen’s thoughts raced. Has Ling Bi’er detected something? He’d purposefully put away the remaining pills just now to avoid the eyes and ears of others. He was deathly afraid of someone detecting the supreme rank pill. The entire game would go up in flames if anyone discovered it, and his goal of a tie would be a failure.

“Heh heh, I was lucky and refined an upper rank pill. All the rest are low quality dregs and not fit for senior sister’s eyes.” Jiang Chen chuckled as he glossed over the topic.

Ling Bi’er nodded slightly, a meaningful look in her expressive eyes as she looked at Jiang Chen deeply. “Since this is the case, I will take my leave now.” She turned to speak to Ling Hui’er, “Hui’er, we’re going back.”

The baby-faced and well endowed Ling Hui’er bounded over to Jiang Chen like a little deer on her vigorous legs. Combined with her leopard skin miniskirt, she was overflowing with a youthful wildness. “Jiang Chen, even senior brother Shen couldn’t beat you. It looks like I well deserved that loss that time!”

“Heh he, junior sister Hui’er, your pill dao potential isn’t low either. When you reach my age, your pill dao potential just might surpass me!” Jiang Chen humored her.

Ling Hui'er chuckled. "You speak like you're that much older than me. I'm 17 this year, and my sister is 20. How old are you Jiang Chen?"

This girl was innocent and naive. Her baby face made it very difficult for feelings of resistance to develop in one's heart. Jiang Chen smiled. "I'm 21, I guess."

"What do you mean, you guess? Don't you know how old you are?" Ling Hui'er pouted, seeming to detect that Jiang Chen was only humoring her.

Jiang Chen smiled ruefully. He really didn't care much about his age in this life. If he really put his mind to it, he seemed to be around twenty one years old.

Ling Bi'er frowned slightly; she really was at a loss when it came to her younger sister. She'd even revealed her age! "Hui'er, why aren't you leaving yet?"

Ling Hui'er stuck out her tongue again when she saw her sister irritated. "Remember Jiang Chen! You have to teach me how to refine pills when you have time! I'll come find you next time!"

Mu Gaoqi sighed as he watched the sisters leave. "One is as proudly aloof as the frosty moon, the other as enthusiastic as fire. Two sisters from the same womb, and yet how come their personalities are so different? They each have their own strengths as well. No wonder they're the most accomplished sisters in the Regal Pill Palace!"

Jiang Chen sent him flying with a kick. “Look at all you’re good for!”

Mu Gaoqi flipped over and stood up, dusting off his butt as he chuckled. “Brother Chen, don’t be like that! I have no intentions of taking your woman from you. A gentle and graceful young woman is a gentleman’s best mate. I feel that these sisters will be unable to escape from Brother’s Chen’s grasp sooner or later… Ah!!”

Another kick sent him flying a dozen or so meters.

“Brother Chen, can you not be this harsh!” Mu Gaoqi clutched his butt as his cry of agony came from far away.

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“Sister, why did you want to look at Jiang Chen’s leftover Aeonian Dream Pills just now? Are you interested in failed pills?” Ling Hui’er purposefully changed the topic because she was afraid her sister would grow angry with her for speaking to Jiang Chen.

Ling Bi’er suddenly halted in her tracks. Only when she looked at her younger sister would her chilly gaze have some hints of warmth to it. “Hui’er, could you bother using your brain sometimes?”

Ling Hui’er felt quite aggrieved. “Sister, what did Hui’er do now? Why are you lecturing me again?”

“Why did you tell him our ages?” Ling Bi’er asked.

Ling Hui’er giggled. “Sis, are you angry because of that? Anyone who really wants to would easily be able to find out our ages. I don’t think senior brother Jiang Chen is a bad person!”

Ling Bi’er sighed lightly and shook her head slightly, saying nothing more. She was both fond of and exasperated by her younger sister, and no idea what to do with her at all.

When she saw her sister ignore her again and start walking, Ling Hui’er laughed lightly and scampered up, tugging on Ling Bi’er’s arm, “Sis, you still haven’t told me why you wanted to look at the failed pills? Or do you actually like Jiang Chen and trying these crude methods to get close to him?”

Ling Bi’er was completely petrified. This thick headed sister of mine will say anything! “Ling. Hui’er.” The elder sister’s face darkened. “You won’t be calling me sister anymore if you keep spouting this kind of nonsense.”

“Hehe, it’s just that I think it’s weird. Everyone says you’re a frigid beauty, but the frigid beauty asked a boy to look at his trash pills today, then…”

Ling Bi’er suddenly asked, “Hui’er, do you think the pills left over really are trash ones?”

Ling Hui'er could hear the oddness in her sister's tone. She lifted her small face and asked quizzically, "Didn't Jiang Chen say so himself? He said they were all dregs."

"And this is why I say you're too naive." Ling Bi'er exhaled a breath as fragrant as orchids, her tone profound. "I was standing quite close after he took out the upper rank Aeonian Dream Pill, and I subtly sensed that the spirit power pulses from his Skyweave Cauldron were far more concentrated than from Shen Qinghong's Skypeak Cauldron."

"So what of that?" Ling Hui'er blinked her large eyes, her curly eyelashes fluttering and dancing with the motion.

"I suspect that he even had a supreme rank pill hidden within his cauldron! There's no explanation for the strengthened spirit pulses otherwise. He also concealed it very quickly, as if afraid that someone would see and hastily stood up after putting away all the Aeonian Dream Pills."

There were no outsiders here apart from her own sister, so Ling Bi'er spoke freely of her suspicions.

However, Ling Hui'er seemed to be acting as if she was listening to a myth. Her skepticism showed in her words as she asked, "This can't be, sis? If I'm Jiang Chen and Shen Qinghong bullied me that badly, to the point of creating rumors to slander me, there's no way I wouldn't take out a supreme rank pill to slap his face!" She shook her head like shaking a rattle drum, continuing, "Even the elders of our sect are unable to refine a supreme rank pill! Although I know that Jiang Chen is quite amazing, but is he

stronger than Elder Yun Nie? And, he could've thoroughly crushed Shen Qinghong if he'd taken it out and replaced Shen Qinghong as first in the Rosy Valley. What reason would he have had to not do so?"

Her multitude of reasons made quite a bit of sense. Ling Bi'er had naturally thought of this as well, but she still stuck to her original convictions in her heart. Perhaps it was a misconception, but she felt deep down that Jiang Chen was still holding something back, that his mysteries hadn't been fully brought to the surface. If he really had done what she'd thought, then his pill dao potential and cultivation level was... monstrous.

This was more frightening than winning over Shen Qinghong!

Everyone knew that it was easy to win in a pill competition, but it was rather difficult to create a tie. Only when one had a complete advantage and absolute certainty would they be able to do with such ease.

A sliver of doubt circled around Ling Bi'er's heart. Although things weren't as full blown as Ling Hui'er had said, she was indeed a bit curious about Jiang Chen and a trace of an investigative desire had sprung up in her mind. This was a new development to the icy beauty Ling Bi'er.

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News of the tie quickly spread throughout the Rosy Valley and Regal Pill Palace. Then, the Palace Head, Hallmaster of the Hall of

Might and the Hallmaster of the Herbal Hall jointly issued a statement asking for all disciples to stop propagating rumors. It also named and complimented Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi's pill dao potential, as well as made reference to the legendary battle between the Skyweave and Skypeak Cauldron. It also encouraged the youngsters of the Regal Pill Palace to interact more and to oppose each other less.

When this statement was made, it squashed all the rumors. Everyone grew truly conscious of the fact that Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi's rise were out of solid, real ability, and it became an incontrovertible fact. Even Shen Qinghong's martial dao master had publicly admitted to this.

Jiang Chen didn't actually care about slander from the outside world; he cared much more about Elder Lian Cheng's word. The elder was a man of his word, and his conditions were secretly delivered the next day, along with three thousand upper rank Origin Fostering Pills.

"I'm rich!" Jiang Chen was just about capering inside when he saw his war trophies piled in front of him.

Chapter 524: Formation Preparations

The various matches that Jiang Chen had accepted in the ring had already brought in thirty thousand spirit stones for Jiang Chen. The five thousand each from Palace Head Dan Chi and Elder Yun Nie made for ten thousand. Elder Lian Cheng had sent over another ten thousand, and Jiang Chen had fleeced another ten thousand from the fat target that was Shen Qinghong when they tied. Add all that to Jiang Chen's store of spirit stores brought him to a sum total of close to sixty thousand upper rank origin spirit stones—a full threefold increase over his original expectations.

"These sixty thousand stones can power fifty to sixty percent of the formation. Once it's set up properly, it can be maintained for ten years." Jiang Chen made a couple of quick mental calculations. According to his initial plan, roughly twenty thousand stones would've been enough for thirty percent of the formation. There was great hope for sixty thousand stones to bring forth fifty to sixty percent of its power.

"When it comes to formations, naturally the more powerful the better. If I can activate all of the power behind the Nine Gates Formation, then even an emperor realm expert will be hard pressed to break through it. Even fifty to sixty percent of its power will be enough to defend against a sky sage realm expert." It wasn't that Jiang Chen didn't trust those of the Regal Pill Palace, but that the wood spirit spring was of such importance that he didn't wish for its existence to be revealed.

If its existence was leaked, it would incite mass chaos across the Myriad Domain and even attract attention from still stronger powers to come seize it. While this formation may look like it was

preventing those from the Regal Pill Palace from intruding, it was also protecting the sect from the disaster that could strike if the wrong news was spread.

After he'd obtained his newest ingredients, Jiang Chen had collected everything he needed for the formation. But of course, when it came to formations, especially such a big one, it wasn't something that could be completed in two or three days.

Jiang Chen was in no hurry. The first step was to refine the flag formation. The fifty kilograms of aubergine gold he'd gathered from Elder Lian Cheng had been for the flag formation. This material wasn't the optimal material for the formation flag, but it was already an exceedingly good material in the Myriad Domain. He would likely unable to find better here, or not in the Regal Pill Palace.

The starcloud dust and vermillion cinnabar were all materials needed to set up the formation and to carve the runes. A formation would cover a broad area, but it was made up of many small details. It had to be completely flawless, since a slightly weaker link in the chain would affect the quality of the entire formation.

Since Jiang Chen had gone to so much effort and cost for all this, he naturally wouldn't allow any errors to develop. This formation would be one of his guardians for at least the next decade. But of course, his goal wasn't satisfied by simply stopping here. This formation could be continuously improved, and his aim was to deploy the full power of this formation so that it could truly defend against an emperor realm cultivator. This would naturally be a long term endeavor and not something to be completed overnight.

Refining a flag formation would require specialized equipment. He didn't have any such facility in his residence. It was a good thing that there was a Hall of Refining that specialized in all matters of weapon forging. It ranked sixth amongst the nine halls of the Regal Pill Palace.

A minimum of eighty one flags would be needed to have the formation realize its maximal potential. Since Jiang Chen didn't have such high aspirations at the moment, he was looking to refine only thirty six flags. This would only decrease the formation's power and range.

He had made a promise with the little Cicada last time that he would let it bathe in the waters of the spring after ten days. There were still a few days left until the promised time, so Jiang Chen decided to refine the flags first. Since time was of the essence, he didn't linger and headed straight for the Hall of Refining.

With his current reputation, no one dared treat him lightly when he arrived. Who didn't know that he was the favorite of Palace Head Dan Chi and Elder Yun Nie? Even Hallmaster Lian Cheng of the Hall of Might had accepted Jiang Chen's current position. Therefore, although Jiang Chen didn't command the same treatment and prestige as Shen Qinghong, he wasn't far off.

Although the Hall of Refining was an important organization, there was still quite a difference between it and the Hall of Might or Herbal Hall. When an administrator saw Jiang Chen, he used an almost fawning tone to ask, "What pleasant wind has blown you to our hall, junior brother Jiang Chen? Do you need to refine some

sort of weapon? Our Hall of Refining specializes in solving these kinds of problems for sect geniuses!”

Jiang Chen smiled and looked at the administrator. “Is it possible for me to borrow your refining room?”

An awkward expression appeared on the administrator’s face. “Borrow the refining room? Junior brother Jiang Chen, there… there is a strict rule that no one outside of the Hall of Refining can borrow our facilities.”

“Please make an exception in my favor.” Jiang Chen reached out his hand and shook the administrator’s hand, handing over a pill flask.

The administrator clutched a pill flask and beamed at him. “Junior brother Jiang Chen is the premier genius of our Regal Pill Palace. There are always some exceptions to the rule! I’ll go make the request for you in a bit. There will be no problem at all if the Hallmaster nods in assent.”

“Then I’ll ask the senior brother to speak a few more good words on my behalf.”

The administrator understood completely, smiling, “Of course, of course. It’s also the honor of our Hall of Refining to put forth some effort on behalf of junior brother Jiang Chen!”

The administrator knew that Jiang Chen was a genius at pill

refining. The items that he gifted would certainly be uncommon. How would the administrator not put forth some effort on Jiang Chen's behalf now that he had received some benefits? He gave an order, "Treat junior brother Jiang Chen well, I will go discuss with the Hallmaster."

When the administrator entered the inner hall, he surreptitiously took out the pill flask and peeked inside. It was ten upper rank Origin Fostering Pills! His heart rate doubled at the sight. One had to know that an administrator like him only received a stipend of roughly thirty Origin Fostering Pill a month, and all of them at lower rank at that. These ten upper rank pills were the same as thousands of lower rank pills! This was a good ten months of his stipend!

"Tsk tsk, he who has wealth speaks louder than others! He's a pill refining genius alright! It looks like growing close to one is the only way forward!" The administrator was delighted and even more resolute that he had to handle this properly for Jiang Chen. If he could use this opportunity to build a relationship with Jiang Chen, he'd have no end of good benefits if Jiang Chen randomly bestowed some pills on him in the future.

Hallmaster Lu Duan personally came over after a short while. This hallmaster was a big fatty, resembling a rolling meat ball as he walked over with quick steps. "Jiang Chen, I am so ashamed that I didn't come welcome you!"

It was the first time that Jiang Chen had met this hallmaster, so he was rather surprised by this hearty greeting. A fleshy hand grasped Jiang Chen's and shook it vigorously. "Jiang Chen, my

Hall of Refining rarely sees an honored guest like you. Come come come, come sit, come sit. Your presence graces my hall, and I will personally prepare a cup of tea for you."

Jiang Chen was rather embarrassed by Fatty Lu's fervor. "How is Jiang Chen worthy of Hallmaster Lu's hospitality?"

"Haha, worthy indeed, quite worthy!" Lu Duan grinned and tugged Jiang Chen into walking inside. Jiang Chen could only follow him inside out of resignation. Jiang Chen was a bit at a loss for words to have a fatty, and a male fatty nonetheless, holding onto his hand.

It was a good thing that Fatty Lu went off to brew tea after heading inside. Jiang Chen sat down, attended by the administrator.

"Come Jiang Chen, have some tea. Our Hall of Refining is a bit crude and there's nothing particularly good here. Don't mind our weak tea, I hope you don't mind." Fatty Lu had come back bearing tea. He was enthusiastically offering Jiang Chen high quality tea, but describing it as weak tea.

"Hallmaster Lu, I'm here to borrow the refining facilities of the Hall of Refining. This request may be a bit out of line, so if it's possible, I'd like to make some reparations." Jiang Chen wasn't willing to stand on pleasantries as he once again explained his intentions.

Fatty Lu chuckled so much that his cheeks and jowls jiggled.

“The rules don’t allow it, but Jiang Chen, you’re an utmost genius of the Regal Pill Palace, so you should naturally be treated as an exception.”

“Then I must thank Hallmaster Lu for helping me achieve my aims. Consider this as a small token of appreciation from me, I hope the hallmaster doesn’t look down on it.” Jiang Chen naturally wouldn’t be miserly since Lu Duan had agreed so forthrightly. He pushed a flask of pills to Hallmaster Lu.

The fatty chuckled but didn’t accept the flask. He pushed it back to Jiang Chen. “Jiang Chen, if you really want to thank me, I have a favor to ask.”

Jiang Chen started, then said, “Please feel free to speak frankly, Hallmaster Lu. If it’s something that Jiang Chen can do, then I will surely try my best!”

“The matter is this. My cultivation level has dithered at the peak of the origin realm for two decades. Whenever I start to sense the sage realm, I’ve always been afraid to try because I lack that bit of skill. It all comes down to missing a Hexarune Dragon Pill. I’ve heard that you helped Elder Yun Nie refine that pill, but don’t know if…”

Jiang Chen knew what the other meant when he heard these words. He took a glance at Lu Duan. This fatty truly had halted at the peak of the origin realm and was lacking that final step.

Lu Duan sighed dejectedly. “Jiang Chen ah, I am 160 years old

this year and past the prime age to break through. Once a young man like you enters the peak of the origin realm, it wouldn't be too farfetched for you to break through to the sage realm, even with the tribulations from some internal demons. But for someone like me with immense internal demons, I'm afraid that the tribulations will be too strong when I attempt to break through. If only I had a Hexarune Dragon Pill, my chances would be so much greater. I'm not afraid of death with this fat body of mine, but my poor eight year old daughter and five year old son…"

As the fatty poured out his heart amidst sobs, his style and acting skills reminded Jiang Chen of an old acquaintance in the Eastern Kingdom, Fatty Xuan.

Two fatties, similar styles and the same acts.

"Hallmaster Lu, the Hexarune Dragon Pill belongs to Elder Yun Nie. I really don't have any, but if you can collect all its ingredients one day, I can help refine it for you. I can't promise a supreme rank, but certainly a mid rank version."

Fatty Lu's eyes gleamed. "Do you mean that?"

Jiang Chen laughed. "I am a disciple of the Regal Pill Palace and my words carry weight."

Fatty Lu laughed heartily. "Good, great! In that case, the facilities of my Hall of Refining are always open to you. Use them as long as you'd like, however you'd like! Let me know if there's anything you need me for!"

Chapter 525: Assimilating The Golden Cicada's Bloodline

It actually wasn't that Jiang Chen didn't want Fatty Lu to get his hands dirty, because to be honest, as the hallmaster, he was certain to be more skilled than Jiang Chen in the area of refining items. The reason Jiang Chen decided to do it himself in the end was while he had been familiar with refining in his past life, he'd rarely had a chance to practice in this life. If he had a few chances for practical application, he'd be a first rate refiner, if not a top master refiner. Also, something like refining a formation flag was best done personally. Even if he could, he wouldn't be at ease handing it over to anyone else either. It was a good thing that he'd received more than enough aubergine gold from Elder Lian Cheng, so he had the materials to waste if need be.

He successfully refined the required thirty six formation flags after seven days. He'd actually refined more than fifty, but he wasn't quite satisfied with the initial ones and destroyed them all. The ones who remained were the finest of his creations.

With the formation flags completed, Jiang Chen didn't linger and prepared to leave the Hall of Refinement.

Fatty Lu made several attempts to keep him back. "Jiang Chen, it's rare for you to visit; let me play host this time. Come, let's have a few drinks."

Jiang Chen really didn't have the time to stay and drink. "Hallmaster Lu, if you don't think it beneath you, please come stay as a guest at my residence next time. I'm rather short on time these

days and need to make many preparations for the soon to come Pill Battles."

Fatty Lu nodded and sighed. "I won't be keeping you since this is the case then. Come by as much as you like when you have the time. You can treat the Hall of Refining as half a home too."

The fatty's socialization skills were nothing to laugh at, and he had quite the glib tongue. He'd managed to quickly struck up a brotherhood with Jiang Chen. His behavior was easily explained though. Whenever Sovereign Area geniuses came by the Hall of Refining, they weren't entirely enthused at the sights. After all, since this hall was neither the Hall of Might or Herbal Hall, it was of little value to them and destined to not have much in common with them. Therefore, even though Fatty Lu was an honorable hallmaster, very few of those top geniuses was willing to open their hearts and be friends with him.

Jiang Chen was the first, and that was why he was so highly valued.

To put it bluntly, Fatty Lu's position as the Hallmaster of the Hall of Refinement wasn't even necessarily on par with the top five elders of the Hall of Might or Herbal Hall.

"Hallmaster Lu, please come find me at my residence any time when you've collected all of the ingredients for the Hexarune Dragon Pill." Jiang Chen wasn't the sort to be ungrateful and burn a bridge after he'd crossed it.

“I will, I will.” Fatty Lu was utterly delighted. He’d wanted to ask Elder Yun Nie to refine the pill for him, but his position was far too distant from the master of the Herbal Hall, so he hadn’t dared make the request. After all, Elder Yun Nie was a venerated elder and one of the three heavyweights of the Regal Pill Palace.

When he returned to his residence, it was time for Jiang Chen to make good on his agreement with the Golden Cicada. He didn’t go back on his words, summoning the Cicada and sending it to the wood spirit spring. When the Cicada saw the spring, it was wholeheartedly convinced of Jiang Chen’s words and joyously hopped into the waters.

The Cicada was different from any other spirit creature. It was the type that dined on the wind and supped on dew. Not only would this spring baptize its body, but it would also serve as the Cicada’s food. Absorbing its waters would naturally give it an edge for reforming its bloodlines. And of course, it wasn’t that other spirit creatures couldn’t drink the waters, but that the effects of them drinking the waters was vastly inferior to the little Cicada’s.

The Cicada’s baptism was destined to be a long process, and Jiang Chen didn’t want to watch over it every second of the day. He spent his days setting up the formation, and his nights in training.

The little Cicada completed its bloodline evolution after roughly a month, and its form had undergone great changes. It had changed from the size of a fist to the size of a watermelon. It was a full meter when it extended its wings. “The little Golden Cicada greets the master.”

According to their previous agreement, the Cicada had to submit to Jiang Chen after completing its bloodline evolution and take Jiang Chen to be its master.

“No need to call me master, little Cicada. I’m called Jiang Chen, so you can call me young master Chen like the others.”

“Then I’ll call you big brother Chen.” The little Cicada had spent a long time with Jiang Chen and was familiar with his personality. It knew that this human master wasn’t one of those immensely evil and violent villains. It also knew how lucky it was to have such a master.

Although the Golden Cicadas possessed a noble bloodline, their attack strength was limited, so they had to seek succor from other races throughout the harsh worlds. Of those who offered shelter, humans were a race that the Cicadas turned to more often than not. In taking Jiang Chen for his master, the Cicada had found a great backer and didn’t have to spend his days in fear and apprehension anymore.

“Haha, call me whatever you like.” Jiang Chen was in a great mood as he asked, “Now that your bloodline evolution is complete, have any of your heritage of memories awakened?”

The little Cicada was also incredibly astonished when they spoke of this. “It’s just like you said, big brother Chen. We are indeed impervious to all poisons and lightning.”

As for the arts of the Cicada Wing and Cicada’s Counterfeit, it

had long since known of those two abilities. For Jiang Chen, his memories from his past life had laid out the little Cicada's abilities in crystal clear fashion. But to the little Cicada, all of this was quite wondrous. Big brother Chen had known of all this before his heritage of memories had awoken. Does he have the ability to see the future?

"Don't look at me like that, little Cicada. Actually, if your memories fully awaken, you'll know that the arts of metamorphosis that your tribe possesses are even more amazing. When you train them to their peak, you'll have the ability to transform into all sorts of shapes. This is something that's even more incredible than what you see now."

The Golden Cicadas' combat ability was indeed pretty much trash. But in return, they were talented in almost every other field. In particular, their metamorphosis arts could bewilder anyone, shifting into any shape and form imaginable. This was how this race had survived in the worlds despite their poor battle strength. However, these methods were equally useful for the other stronger races.

The Cicada tittered. "Big brother Chen, you'll have to wait until I enter the sage realm to get the art of metamorphosis! Do you want to learn it?"

Jiang Chen was indeed a bit green eyed with desire for this particular art. But although the little Cicada had awakened its memories and had its bloodline improve rapidly, this rapid advancement of its cultivation had only brought it to the level of the human minor origin realm. There was still a long way to go if it

wanted to enter the sage realm.

"Teehee, big brother Chen, I'm teasing you. I'll now give to you the drop of blood I promised! When I learn the art of metamorphosis and shift into human form, I'll give you another drop of blood essence so you also have the chance to train this art."

Such were the Golden Cicadas. They were very opposed to humans before they took a master, but once they did, they were the epitome of loyalty. Every decision they made from that point on would place their master as their highest consideration, carefully taking in all aspects.

The little Cicada squeezed out a drop of essence blood as it spoke. A drop of rain, filled with an ethereal spirituality, landed in front of Jiang Chen. He opened up his hand and absorbed this drop of blood, assimilating into his own blood.

It was a common thing for a human cultivator to absorb beast blood, but this drop of blood from the Cicada bloodline was extraordinary. To Jiang Chen, it was temporarily more valuable than even dragon blood!

After all, the bloodline of the dragons could strengthen one's energy and blood, increase the purity of the human bloodline, enhance the cultivator's aura, and help the cultivator practice many more stronger arts. However, the bloodline of the Cicada could help Jiang Chen receive the heritage of the entire Cicada race. Arts such as the Cicada Wing, and Cicada's Counterfeit, as well as inherent abilities such as immunity to all poisons, and a defense that could withstand ten thousand strikes of lightning

were all things that the dragon bloodline couldn't possibly supply.

Of course, this wasn't to say that the bloodline of the Golden Cicada was more noble than the dragon's, it was just that the Cicada's bloodline was more suited for Jiang Chen. The dragon bloodline could help him obtain more battle power, but that wouldn't occur overnight. Jiang Chen also had many ways to increase his battle strength, so he wasn't limited to just using the dragon bloodline, but the arts available through the Cicada's were irreplaceable.

If Jiang Chen's bloodline would show a high degree of fusion with the Cicada's and his powers of comprehension were high, he'd be able to grasp all of the arts of this race. The only pity was that the little Cicada itself still couldn't train the arts of metamorphosis. Otherwise, this drop of blood would've been even more valuable.

"Little Cicada, train near this wood spirit spring in the future. I'll plant the Thundercloud Tree next to the spring, and it'll surely grow into a patch of Thundercloud Trees in the future."

Jiang Chen needed a certain amount of time to assimilate the drop of blood after absorbing it from the Cicada. How this process went would directly determine how much of the Cicada's legacy he'd be able to obtain. Jiang Chen didn't dare treat it lightly and immediately announced a seven day seclusion.

It was a commonplace occurrence for cultivators to go into closed door cultivation. There was someone doing so every two or three days in Jiang Chen's residence. Because Jiang Chen had

understood much of the Golden Cicadas in his past life and had his own unique views on assimilating bloodlines, he made enormous gains during this time and used an almost perfect way to meld this bloodline with his.

Having done so, Jiang Chen noticeably felt the additional attributes of his body. “My body is truly impervious to all poisons and durable to the point of repeated lightning strikes. I finally don’t have to worry about becoming scorched and burned when I met a strong thunder genius in the future, or anyone who specializes in the thunder attribute.”

Boundless confidence suddenly rose in Jiang Chen’s heart. He’d already had a certain immunity to thunder ever since he’d refined the stick of Thundercloud Tree, but now that he’d refined the bloodline of the Cicada, his immunity to the arts of thunder had risen by more than tenfold! Ordinary arts of thunder posed absolutely no threat to him now.

As for poison, he was a master of poison to begin with, and his immunity to poison had been extremely high even before assimilating the Cicada’s bloodline. Now that he had this additional inherent defense, it acted as an extra layer of insurance. Jiang Chen could now no longer think of any poison that could harm him in all the planes beneath the heavens. As for Cicada’s Wing and Cicada’s Counterfeit, those arts couldn’t be obtained overnight, but they were the two arts that he’d yearned for the most. Particularly Cicada’s Wing, the temptation of flight was greater than anything else in Jiang Chen’s heart. If he was able to fly during the origin realm, that would absolutely be a great advantage!

Chapter 526: Successful Formation Setup

The Pill Battles of Mt. Rippling Mirage drew closer and closer as time went on.

Having assimilated the Golden Cicada's bloodline, Jiang Chen spent his days either cultivating or setting up the Nine Gates Formation. If he concentrated wholeheartedly on setting up the formation, it would only take a month or so. But doing so while training on the side meant that it would take him at least three months to complete it. It'd been two months since he'd started setting up the formation, and there was still two months more to the Pill Battles. There was still plenty of time.

Gouyu, Ye Chonglou and the others didn't understand the way of formations, and could only guess randomly when they saw Jiang Chen busying himself day in and out.

One fine day, Tang Hong's hearty laughter rang out from the rear mountain. He had broken through to the origin realm! He seemed to have set off a chain reaction as Gouyu also broke through not long after, followed closely by Xue Tong. They had both finally grasped their respective dao.

In this way, Tang Hong could rightfully take up residence in the Rosy Valley, and Jiang Chen decided to have a serious chat with his followers, Gouyu and Xue Tong. "Gouyu, Xue Tong, now that you have broken through to the origin realm, you're qualified to become a core disciple in the Regal Pill Palace. If you remain my follower, you won't be able to have your own residence. If you join the Regal Pill Palace, you can become a core disciple and have your

own place.”

Xue Tong immediately understood Jiang Chen’s meaning. He shook his head and spoke with a resolute tone. “I, Xue Tong, will only follow the young master in my life. Talk of being a sect disciple is nowhere as attractive as following the young master.”

Gouyu flicked a disapproving look over. “Jiang Chen, have you been considering how to get rid of me all this time? Even if I can’t be your woman, I’m still going to follow you. That so-called identity of a sect disciple is completely meaningless to me.”

Jiang Chen laughed ruefully as he looked at the steadfast duo. At least for the time being, he knew that they wouldn’t turn their backs on him no matter what.

Gouyu glared at him, “If you give us this choice again in the future, we won’t let you off this easily! Hmmph!”

Amongst Jiang Chen’s followers, Gouyu was one who had the bearing of a boss sister. As long as she was in the right, she would even dare shout at Jiang Chen. Hers was a forthright personality.

The other followers, provoked by Gouyu and Xue Tong’s breakthroughs, increased their efforts at cultivating. As a result, their strength improved rapidly as they all entered the peak of the spirit realm.

This sent the outside world into an uproar. When Jiang Chen had

arrived, the strongest of his followers had only been earth spirit realm. But now, two of them had reached the origin realm, and the rest had firmly consolidated themselves at the peak of the ninth level spirit realm! That such miraculous changes had occurred in them in such a short amount of time left the entire Regal Pill Palace astonished and motivated by the pressure. The martial dao potential of those from the sixteen kingdoms were all so frightening, so what reason did the rest of the others from the Precious Tree Sect have to rest on their laurels? One had to say, Jiang Chen's appearance had brought an unexpected momentum to the Regal Pill Palace overall, encouraging the younger generation to take their training more seriously.

Jiang Chen finally finished setting up the formation with a month to go until the Pill Battles. With that done, he too breathed out a long sigh of relief. He had ensured that the formation possessed at least sixty percent of its full strength and would be enough to block all those at sky sage realm and below when activated.

He refined another five formation jade tokens, giving one to Ye Chonglou, Gouyu, Xue Tong, and Huang'er, leaving one for himself. The first three were his own people and didn't need further instructions. When Huang'er received the token, she smiled slightly. "Huang'er will certainly look after the formation carefully given such trust from Sir Jiang."

Huang'er spent much time inside and rarely ventured out during her days, occasionally visiting Gouyu and Wen Ziqi. She lived an exceedingly simple yet content life, and was entirely happy. Therefore, she had long since regarded this place as half her home in the depths of her heart, and viewed it as a place worth

defending.

"Miss Huang'er, the wood spirit spring will be highly beneficial for you if you bathe in it monthly. It's just that knowledge of the spring's existence is of utmost importance and cannot be revealed, which is why I've spent enormous time and effort to set up such a formation and enclose all of the inner residence into its defenses.

Huang'er spoke sweetly. "Sir Jiang is highly talented; this formation is surely extraordinary."

Jiang Chen chuckled. "It's merely a small thing, but can be activated in times of danger. It will just remain so in normal times. Miss Huang'er, please remember to go to the spring every month. If you like it and wish to go when you have nothing else to do, that's just as well."

"Many thanks to Sir Jiang's generous care. Huang'er will remember this well." Huang'er was indeed touched. She'd purposefully masqueraded an ugly appearance because she hadn't wanted to show her true form to others, but she now felt that her gesture had been rather superfluous.

Jiang Chen was an open and straightforward person. He was striving his best to take care of her due to Elder Shun's charge and didn't keep her away from something as important as the wood spirit spring, allowing her to use it as she would. He had never ostracized or ignored her for her looks. It was apparent that he wasn't one who judged people on the basis of their appearance.

Now that she gave it some thought, Huang'er grew deeply ashamed of her move to conceal her features. She wasn't a girl who put on such airs to begin with, but had disguised herself with ugliness thanks to a stray fancy. But now, she didn't know how to deal with the situation.

"Ai, let's have things develop naturally. It's just that my actions are a bit untoward given how sincerely everyone is treating me." As Huang'er watched Jiang Chen's retreating back, there were some soft ripples stirring her heart. For some reason, she always felt quite relaxed when interacting with Jiang Chen, and felt none of the repulsion she usually did when facing the young men of her homeland.

It boiled down to the fact that although those young men were exemplary and accomplished, they always felt a bit too forced, as if they were putting on an act. It was difficult to feel close to them, whereas Jiang Chen was open and stood in the light. He neither withheld favors to elicit gratitude or judged others by their looks, nor did he pretend to be elegant or dashing in front of her.

Once he settled everything in the residence, there were only a few concerns hanging over Jiang Chen's heart.

When he finished up everything, Palace Head Dan Chi sent over a message glyph, inviting him to come over. The palace head had done him many favors and helped him a great deal, so Jiang Chen naturally didn't drag his heels and immediately got up, making his way over to Dan Chi's residence.

"Jiang Chen, you've been rather busy these days hmm? Not bad

at all kid, it looks like you're going to break through fifth level origin realm!" Dan Chi could see with a glance that Jiang Chen was at the peak of fourth level origin realm.

"I'm going to strive to break through to the fifth level before the Pill Battles." Jiang Chen didn't need to put on a facade in front of the palace head.

"What an incredibly insane genius!" Palace head Dan Chi sighed. "I feel absolutely no sense of superiority about my cultivation speed in front of you. I spent two years to ascend from first level to fifth level origin realm, but you've spent less than a year! I daresay that even the geniuses of the Upper Eight Realms are barely capable of matching that."

Jiang Chen laughed. "It comes down to the Regal Pill Palace possessing superior resources, and that is wholly thanks to you, Palace Head! If you hadn't brought me here, where would I have gotten so many resources?"

The vast quantity of Origin Fostering Pills had indeed been of great use to Jiang Chen.

"Oh pfft. Although those pills can induce faster cultivation, they're not nearly as incredible as to produce this speed. You must've had some other fortuitous encounters. Never mind, I won't keep asking. I've called you here because I want to ask you; where did you get your Nine Magnificence Dew Wine?" Dan Chi chuckled.

“The Nine Magnificence Wine?” Jiang Chen was startled, but spoke honestly. “I was once taught by an extraordinary expert when I was small and learned some tricks from him. This was when I learned how to craft the Wine.”

“Oh? You know how to craft it?” A hint of something else crept into Dan Chi’s tone.

“Yes.” Jiang Chen didn’t deny it. It wasn’t that difficult to refine this wine, and with his current cultivation level, it was a remarkably easy task that he didn’t need to expend much effort on at all. His abilities had been limited in the Skylaurel Kingdom because of limited resources, but now in the Regal Pill Palace, he almost didn’t think much of a spirit rank Nine Magnificence Dew Wine.

“Good, wonderful! Jiang Chen, the Myriad Domain has a particular tradition of wine tasting whenever we meet up. Ever since my Regal Pill Palace has been founded, we’ve yet to have taken out a decent wine. Instead, the Walkabout Sect has claimed the limelight in this area. I feel that if we can take out the Nine Magnificence Wine in the Pill Battles, we’ll be able to beat down their proud stance a bit. It certainly helps that the Walkabout Sect has always been our greatest opponent in pill competitions.”

Jiang Chen smiled as he immediately understood the palace head’s meaning. The Nine Magnificence Wine wasn’t any sort of secret that couldn’t be passed on, so he had no reason to keep it to himself. “Palace Head, there are ranks to this wine as well. Those would be mortal, spirit, origin, saint, earth, and sky rank. Which one would you like? Let’s set aside the earth and sky rank, I don’t

know how to craft those."

But he actually did. It was just that these two levels were too frightening—the Regal Pill Palace probably couldn't even prepare all of the materials.

"I tasted the spirit rank last time, correct? Then we can taste the origin rank."

"No problem. We can try even the saint rank as long as we have enough materials." Jiang Chen thought, since you want to use wine to make a stand, then I'll give you a saint rank version so that the Regal Pill Palace can really bask in glory.

The Regal Pill Palace had treated him well, so this bit of payback was only right.

Palace Head Dan Chi was delighted. The spirit rank had been so stunning already, and the saint rank was a full two ranks ahead of that. This would certainly be a heavenly brew that the Myriad Domain had never seen before in all its history. "Alright! What materials do you need? I'll collect them all for you even if I have to dig through all ten thousand miles of the Regal Pill Palace."

Jiang Chen smiled. "We don't have to go quite that far. I'm sure the Regal Pill Palace can prepare them all. Please take out brush and ink, I'll write down the recipe for you."

"Good, good! Jiang Chen, I owe you one!" Dan Chi was in great

spirits. Although he wasn't one who lusted after the delights of a cup, infusing wine with spirit herbs was still a genteel pastime in the world of martial dao. Almost every cultivator liked the pleasures of a cup, it was just a matter of how much they did.

The palace head often crafted wine for himself and tried adding all sorts of spirit herbs into it, but he'd never had great gains. It was either too much medicine and mediocre wine, or good wine but a simple product. The Nine Magnificence Dew Wine tasted sublime and was hailed as an ethereal brew. Dan Chi could only imagine how much of an impact they would have throughout the Myriad Domain as soon as they brought it out.

Using wine to spread their name and gain profit to enhance the Regal Pill Palace's influence was also setting the foundation for rebuilding the Myriad Empire in the future!

Chapter 527: The Ling Family Sisters

Jiang Chen casually handed over the recipe for the sage rank Nine Magnificence Dew Wine to Palace Head Dan Chi. As for actually crafting the wine himself, when he saw how eager the palace head was to try, Jiang Chen knew that he probably didn't have to do that himself.

"Haha, Jiang Chen, this recipe is worth cities!" Joy danced on Palace Head Dan Chi's brows as he became fired up with high spirits.

Jiang Chen teased, "Surely Elder Lian Cheng wouldn't think so."

Palace Head Dan Chi laughed heartily when he heard this. "You kid! You make even Elder Lian Cheng the butt of your jokes. However, your words only goes to show that you don't know Elder Lian Cheng well. He's the number one alcohol fiend of our Regal Pill Palace. When it comes to drinking wine, the elder will surely be the biggest fan of the saint rank Nine Magnificence Wine. Perhaps he'll even become your fan after he hears about it."

Jiang Chen hastily said, "Palace Head, this recipe is just a small thing, please don't out me. The glorious results from this kind of achievement is only appropriate when attributed to you, Palace Head."

It wasn't that he didn't want the credit to his name, but that there was no need for so many halos around him right then. He also didn't want everyone to come asking for him to craft this saint

rank wine for them wherever he went. That would bring no end of trouble onto his head.

Palace Head Dan Chi started, but immediately understood Jiang Chen's conscientiousness. "Jiang Chen, it is truly rare that one at your age is not vainglorious and greedy for adoration. This is your biggest difference when compared to Shen Qinghong."

Jiang Chen smiled faintly and didn't compliment himself. "Palace Head, I will head back to my residence now."

"Go on, I await your stunning accomplishments at the Pill Battles." Dan Chi encouraged.

When Jiang Chen left, Dan Chi looked at this recipe with astonishment. If this recipe was in the Upper Eight Realms, it would be fiercely fought over by many people, to say nothing of the Myriad Domain. And Jiang Chen had taken it out just like this, with no dithering at all.

This action alone was excellent evidence of his bearing and charisma. He had taken out such a precious recipe with no expectation of gratitude or favors in return, and hadn't even mentioned payback.

"Ai, it seems like allying with the Precious Tree Sect and inducting him into the Regal Pill Palace wasn't just a fortuitous occurrence for him, but also a stroke of fortune for me as well." Dan Chi sighed in his heart, recalling Elder Shun's reminders and his pointers. Only a few short days had been enough for him to cast

off his shackles and see rapid improvement in his cultivation. He was now in sixth level sage realm and was fully qualified to assail the sky saint level. Once he did, he would become a premier existence in the Myriad Domain.

Dan Chi was an ambitious person with great plans, and he saw the hope to realize his goals in Jiang Chen!

“What a pity that Elder Shun only taught me for a few days. If I could’ve benefited from his pointers for half a year or even longer, I might even have the right to make for the emperor realm.”

……

Back in his residence, Jiang Chen once again tried assailing the fifth level origin realm. With so many Origin Fostering Pills at his disposal, he had no reason not to try. According to his calculations, there was still roughly a month until they had to set out for Mt. Rippling Mirage.

“A month’s time is plenty!”

Just as Jiang Chen entered closed door cultivation, news came from the Herbal Hall that the list of the eight participating in the Pill Battles had finally been decided.

From the senior generation were: Hallmaster Yun Nie, Vice Hallmaster Wang Yue, Second Vicemaster Ouyang De, and a regular elder of the Herbal Hall, Che Ziwu.

From the younger generation: Jiang Chen, Mu Gaoqi, Ling Bi'er, and Shen Qinghong.

Jun Mobai and Shen Trifire, as well as Ouyang De's grandson Ouyang Chao had all been passed over.

Those from the older generation were all elders with noble character and immense prestige. The others naturally had no objections to this outcome. Although Ouyang De and Che Ziwu's cultivation weren't as high as Palace Head Dan Chi or Elder Lian Cheng, it wouldn't do for the two heavyweights of the Regal Pill Palace, the palace head and hallmaster of the Hall of Might to participate in the Pill Battles themselves.

It was rather the younger generation that would always suffer controversy no matter who made the cut. Jiang Chen was actually the subject of the least protests now. After all, his performance in repeated pill challenges had been perfect, and the three heavyweights within the sect had all affirmed Jiang Chen's pill dao potential. There could be no wrong about that.

In the same vein, Mu Gaoqi's innate wood constitution of high order was enough to shut down all speculation. Even if he wasn't a representative of the highest level of pill dao, considering the sect was cultivating him as the long term premier genius in pill dao left his appearance on the Pill Battle list without question.

As for Ling Bi'er, she had been the first in pill dao in name long before the Sovereign Area had recruited Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi,

but even so, there were still those who didn't accept her placement. Because she usually remained in the Sovereign Area, she didn't have many opportunities to display her abilities.

As for Shen Qinghong, the top genius amongst the younger generation, although his pill dao potential was unknown, enough could be gathered from his draw with Jiang Chen. But apart from that, he hadn't had any convincing displays of prowess. Therefore, there were also those who privately felt that he was going based of his background and martial dao potential, and that Ling Bi'er had been chosen for her pretty face.

Of course, these speculations were all whispered behind closed doors. No one dared come out to publicly accuse anyone. To be honest, those speculating didn't have the slightest confidence that their level of pill dao could be better than Shen Qinghong or Ling Bi'er's.

Regardless, Jiang Chen wasn't affected by the list's publication. He wasn't that surprised when he learned of the results, and was prepared to enter closed door cultivation when guests came knocking outside his residence.

"Oh it's you?" Jiang Chen was slightly surprised to see his guests, the Ling sisters.

"Senior brother Jiang Chen, do you not welcome us?" Ling Hui'er widened her eyes as her long lashes danced, exuding a playful demeanor.

It wasn't that Jiang Chen didn't welcome guests, but that he really didn't have time to cater to guests when he was about to go into seclusion. However, he had a good impression of these girls, so he had no reason to keep them at arm's length. He chuckled and said, "Come in, come in!"

Gouyu was also slightly astonished to see these sisters visit. "What a pair of dazzling sisters!"

Ling Bi'er was as flawless as white jade and as radiant as the jewel of a frozen mountain. Ling Hui'er was the picture of youth and as beguiling as a dancing flame. Even one as confident as Gouyu felt that she paled slightly when compared to Ling Bi'er's looks. Of all the girls she'd ever seen, likely only Dan Fei of the Skylaurel Kingdom could compare to them. Ling Hui'er's youthful radiance and her surging chest that seemed like it would break through her clothes at any moment made even the sexy Gouyu feel that she didn't measure up to the little girl.

Jiang Chen remained serene as usual, showing no sign of entrancement by this pair of bedazzling sisters. It wasn't that he was putting on an aloof act, but that he'd seen too many beauties beneath the heavens in his past life and had long since developed an immunity to them. He'd even tactfully declined to share his bed with the most stunning of them.

Gouyu didn't linger after serving tea.

"Senior sister Ling, what insights might you have to impart with your visit this time?" Jiang Chen asked courteously.

It was Ling Hui'er who grew unhappy with this line of questioning as she pouted, "Senior brother Jiang, you're too much! I'm obviously here with my sister, but you only ask after her and not me!"

Jiang Chen laughed ruefully and rubbed his nose. "Alright, that's my fault. It won't happen again."

Ling Bi'er's delicately arched eyebrows wrinkled slightly and she spoke to Ling Hui'er, "Hui'er, you promised me before we came that you wouldn't joke around and take this lightly. This is why I let you come. We'll go straight back if you continue to behave like this."

Ling Hui'er was obviously quite spoiled by her sister as she tittered and leaned back on the chair. She was supported by a pair of slender, jade-like arms as her legs swung to and fro. She began swaying leisurely.

"Junior brother Jiang Chen, please forgive our intrusion from this visit." Although Ling Bi'er looked the part of a frosty beauty, she still understood the social niceties of the world.

"Not at all, please feel free to speak frankly if senior sister Ling has anything to ask."

Ling Bi'er nodded. "I was lucky enough to obtain a spot in the Pill Battles, but I still have some questions with regards to pill dao and would like to discuss the dao with junior brother Jiang Chen, to

verify our thoughts and help each other improve.”

So she’s here to discuss thoughts on pill dao. Normally, Jiang Chen wouldn’t be opposed to this, but since he was preparing to go into seclusion to assail the next rank of martial dao, how would he have the time to do so now?

Ling Hui’er was slightly surprised to see Jiang Chen not immediately respond. “Junior brother Jiang Chen, are there any difficulties?”

Jiang Chen didn’t beat around the bush as he smiled wryly, “I was planning on going into closed door cultivation to assail the shackles of martial dao. Senior sister Bi’er’s timing is a bit unfortunate, but what area would the senior sister like to discuss about?”

Ling Bi’er bit her lip slightly to hear this, a bit disappointed, but she wasn’t the sort to force what she wanted on others. Regret tinged her tone as she said, “Martial dao cultivation is an important matter. In that case, I will not disturb you, junior brother. I’ll come call upon you at the next opportunity then.”

“You flatter me greatly.” Jiang Chen hastily responded. “I’d be more than delighted to engage in a discourse of pill dao reflection.”

Ling Hui’er couldn’t bear to hear them be so polite to each other and spoke loudly, “Are you serious, senior brother Jiang Chen? A beauty like my sister has come knocking to share thoughts with you, but you turn her down! Are you a man or not?!”

Ling Bi'er flushed red when these words rang out as she snapped, "Hui'er, what are you going on about?!"

Even Jiang Chen was feeling a bit awkward at these words.

"What, sis?? You speak bluntly to even Shen Qinghong. Don't think I don't know that you rejected his invitation to be his dao partner! Senior brother Jiang Chen, in my seventeen years of living, this is the first time I've seen my sister speak to a boy first..."

"Ling Hui'er, Shut. Your. Mouth!" Ling Bi'er's face had frozen into a crimson mask as she looked like she wanted to crawl into a hole in the ground.

This younger sister of hers, who wasn't good enough to accomplish anything but was more than enough to spoil things, was such a buffoon! Ling Bi'er was experiencing the height of embarrassment.

"I won't shut up! You always say I'm young and too small for things. I'm 17 already! How am I too small!" Ling Hui'er grew more agitated as she started to really feel her speech, and leaped up, sticking out her impressive assets. "I'm even bigger than you in some areas!" She puffed out her surging chest again.

Jiang Chen was instantly speechless. This Ling Hui'er really dares to speak of anything!

Ling Bi’er just wanted to die in that moment. She had really humiliated herself this time! Her idiot of a sister was trying to compare chests with her in front of a young man!

Chapter 528: Ling Bi'er's Trouble

Jiang Chen's involuntary glance at Ling Bi'er's chest when he heard these words almost made her want to faint in shame.

Oh heavens!

She flushed crimson as she suppressed the urge to unsheathe her sword and fall on it. Although Jiang Chen hadn't meant to act frivolously towards her, and his actions had been a natural reaction to her sister's words, she still felt like her body had been completely seen through by that look.

Jiang Chen coughed lightly when he saw how awkward the situation was. "Please wait momentarily, I'll be back with some snacks."

He was a smart man, and knew that if he didn't duck out of sight at that moment, Ling Bi'er would be hard pressed to resolve things. She held onto a chair for dear life after Jiang Chen left, slowly patting her chest as she glared at her sister. "Hui'er, do you want to anger your sister to death?"

Ling Hui'er thought nothing of it. "Sister, this senior brother Jiang Chen is too wicked! When a beauty like you comes knocking at his door, that's such fortune that he's spent several lifetimes cultivating for! How dare he not give you face! Hmph! This kind of man deserves to be single for his entire life!"

Ling Bi'er was completely speechless. She'd honestly only come

to trade reflections on pill dao, but now her sister had twisted her intentions into seducing a man! How would the proud Ling Bi'er be willing to accept this? "Ling Hui'er, if you spread any more groundless rumors, I'll ground you for three years of closed door cultivation after we get back!"

This was Ling Bi'er's ultimate move, and it had the desired effect. Ling Hui'er's face changed drastically as she clapped one hand over her mouth, a look of horrified panic on her face. "I won't say anymore, sis! Hui'er just thought that you felt something for senior brother Jiang Chen and so wanted to give the two of you a push. It's a perfect match; what's not good about it?"

Ling Hui'er hastily waved her hands with an ashen face as her sister leveled a look that could kill at her. "I won't say a single word more, I promise!"

Ling Bi'er clutched her chest with her hands as her gentle, tender face began to drain of color. Tears began to pool in her eyes. "Hui'er, mama passed away early and papa ventured into all sorts of strange places to support the two of us. Then he was afflicted with an exotic poison when I was seven and you five. He grasped my hand on his sickbed and reminded me to bring you up well and take good care of you. After we entered the Regal Pill Palace, even the elders of the Herbal Hall were powerless in the face of this strange poison. Do you truly understand the burden on our shoulders? I wanted to gain some inspiration from Jiang Chen after observing that he is a rare genius in pill dao, but you keep leading the conversation astray and speaking nonsense. Do you think I don't know senior brother Shen's thoughts? Do you think I still have any time for the follies between men and women? I will not marry as long as papa is still afflicted with his poison. What

would it matter if I were to dedicate the rest of my life to whoever can cure papa? Hui'er, my reputation is one thing when you start sprouting nonsense, but won't that cause junior brother Jiang Chen to think less of us? Won't that make papa suffer some more?"

Ling Hui'er wasn't a heartless person as her tears started plopping down her face the more her sister talked. She grabbed onto her sister as Ling Bi'er started sobbing. "Sister, I was wrong! Don't cry, please? It's Hui'er who did wrong, Hui'er who acted poorly. I'll listen carefully to you from now on sister! I love papa too, Hui'er will be just like you! Hui'er will dedicate the rest of her life to whoever can cure papa's poison too!"

The two sisters hugged each other tightly and cried together.

It was Ling Bi'er who came back to her senses first as she suddenly realized how unseemly it was to be bawling like this in Jiang Chen's territory. She wrested her emotions under control with great effort and wiped away the tear tracks that trailed down her cheeks before helping her younger sister. "Don't cry, Hui'er. No matter what, I'll find the spirit herb that's the antidote to papa's poison on Mt. Rippling Mirage this time."

The two sisters were both a bit embarrassed for a while. After all, this was Jiang Chen's residence, and although he wasn't with them at the moment, it was still rather embarrassing for the two of them to have engaged in a crying session like this. It was a good thing that it took a while for Jiang Chen to return with some spirit fruits. The time had given the two the chance to grasp some degree of equanimity.

“My apologies, junior brother Jiang Chen. Please excuse our behavior.” Ling Bi’er’s voice was a bit subdued, whereas Ling Hui’er hid behind her sister and looked at Jiang Chen with bright eyes.

“Junior sister Hui’er is cute and innocent, with a deeply endearing temperament. Why would I have to excuse her behavior?”

Ling Bi’er’s clear eyes snuck a glance at Jiang Chen as she sighed dejectedly. “Since junior brother Jiang Chen is about to go into closed door cultivation, us two sisters will take our leave first.”

Ling Hui’er suddenly stepped out from behind her sister to walk in front of Jiang Chen. “Senior brother Jiang Chen, since everyone says you have the highest pill dao potential in the younger generation, do you dare let me quiz you?”

Jiang Chen laughed heartily. “What would junior sister Hui’er like to test me with?”

“Do you know of an unparalleled poison amongst the list of rare and exotic poisons in the world called Divine Befuddlement Miasma?”

Jiang Chen started. Why would Ling Hui’er suddenly raise this poison as a topic? He caught a sudden tremor running through Ling Bi’er’s body in his peripheral vision as her sister brought it up. It seemed that she was equally interested in this topic, but was

just too embarrassed to bring it up. He thought briefly, “I once heard a learned expert speak of all the rare and exotic poisons in the world, and the Divine Befuddlement Miasma is hard pressed even to rank in the top 100 out of all poisons that exist. It’s not a particularly strong poison, so it seems a bit over the top to call it an unparalleled poison, no?”

Ling Bi’er’s body shook again when these words were spoken, barely managing to stay on her feet. Ling Hui’er however, had an incredulous expression. “Not even in the top hundred? Senior brother Jiang Chen, are you making stuff up? I’ve heard that no one can cure this Divine Befuddlement Miasma!”

It truly was difficult for this poison to rank in the top 100, but perhaps it was a more obscure and hard to cure poison in the Divine Abyss Continent. Jiang Chen smiled carelessly and nodded. “I only heard the expert speak of it casually. Its rank may not be accurate.”

He naturally didn’t want to argue with a little girl. Indeed, the slight expression that had appeared on Ling Bi’er’s face dimmed immediately after he spoke these words, and Ling Hui’er hopped from foot to foot in her anger. “How can you speak so firmly of things you’ve only heard of?!”

Jiang Chen only smiled at Ling Hui’er’s censure. Arguing with a little girl was a futile and exhaustive effort. He would never do something so pointless.

Ling Bi’er however, was someone intelligent within and beautiful without. When she saw Jiang Chen act thus, she guessed without a

doubt that there was something that he wasn't speaking of. When she came to this conclusion, she was struck by an impulse and blurted out, "Junior brother Jiang Chen, did the expert you spoke of ever say if there was a way to cure this poison?"

She was deathly afraid that Jiang Chen would think that she wasn't being sincere, so she solemnly performed the curtsy of one asking for tutelage. "Junior brother Jiang Chen, Bi'er sincerely requests your knowledge and will be gratified if I receive any pointers."

Ling Bi'er was different from Ling Hui'er. If it'd been Ling Hui'er, Jiang Chen certainly wouldn't taken her seriously and just waved the matter away. But Ling Bi'er wasn't one to easily ask for help, and thus if she did, it was a serious matter indeed.

Although Jiang Chen didn't want the spotlight, Ling Bi'er had come knocking and was requesting his aid so sincerely that he wasn't at liberty to continue to playing the fool. "I suppose one could identify the Divine Befuddlement Miasma as an exotic poison. The crux of the poison's complexity lies in the fact that it's an amalgamation of many poisonous gases. There are even instances of various Miasmas coming together to form a unique one. As such, the antidotes and cures required for each Miasma is also unique. This complexity is why it is listed among the rare poisons. Those afflicted with it will see their consciousness sink into a foggy state, spending their days in a coma. If one has ways to extend life, then the patient can hang on. But If the patient is poor and without such methods, then they are unfortunately destined for death."

Jiang Chen was familiar with the Miasma, and his words were only the shallowest theories behind it. Yet these words were enough to send Ling Bi'er's chest heaving with feeling. If it wasn't for the fact that she was used to controlling her own emotions, she probably would've already burst into tears.

In all these years, she had broken her heart with worry over her father's matter. She'd flipped through almost all of the tomes in the Regal Pill Palace, but had never found an inkling of the cure to the Miasma. All these years, she had held onto her belief in the cure, but her hopes had been dashed year after year. She'd visited all of the elders in the Herbal Hall in search of aid, and even Elder Yun Nie, one who had made slight study of the Miasma, was helpless after seeing her father's symptoms.

In the entire Myriad Domain, the sect most adept at poison was the Walkabout Sect. She'd visited them in person once when she was 17. However, no one had paid any attention to her there. There were a few elders who seemed a bit interested, but placed the condition of taking Ling Bi'er to be their dao partner and have her offer up her body first before coming to the Regal Pill Palace for a look.

They only said they would take a look, and had left the matter of whether or not they could cure her father untouched.

Ling Bi'er was the type who rather die to preserve her chastity. Even a foreign man touching her hand would elicit a vehement reaction from her strong personality, much less offering up her body. How would she ever agree to using her body in exchange for a promise to come evaluate her father? Of course, she never agreed

to anything of the sort.

But from then on, she swore that she would even be willing to become the servant of the one who could cure her father's Miasma, and if no one did, then she would remain chaste her entire life.

That vow was also a signal to those old men with lewd thoughts in their heads that although she could sacrifice herself for her father, she wasn't a girl that anyone could easily philander. You will never hoodwink me with a promise!

And now, she had received information about the Miasma from a newly inducted disciple. Although it was just a few words, it was more dependable than anyone she'd met before since Jiang Chen's description of the symptoms were an exact match for her father's. It was as if he'd seen her father with his own eyes. She was certain that Jiang Chen had absolutely not known of her father's matter before this.

The spark of hope that had been extinguished again and again involuntarily flickered to life in her heart. She wasn't willing to give up even the slightest bit of hope. Her voice shook slightly as the anxiety for a favor and worry of losing hope again warred in her expressive eyes. "Junior brother Jiang Chen, according to what you say, is there a cure for the Miasma?"

She felt her entire body grow weak after asking this, barely able to remain standing. The storm of emotions roiling through her made her both anxious to know the results, and also deathly afraid that Jiang Chen would say that there was no cure possible.

Chapter 529: A Crazy Ling Hui'er

Jiang Chen's God's Eye had long caught the hints that Ling Bi'er had betrayed with her reactions. He quickly came to the conclusion that someone related to her was afflicted with the Miasma. He naturally wouldn't ask who, but anyone who could cause a cold, reserved beauty such as her to lose her composure would absolutely be someone she loved deeply.

Jiang Chen was a smart man and didn't want to force the situation, so he thought for a bit and nodded. "The Miasma is hard to cure. Ah, to be more accurate, it's not difficult to cure, but difficult to diagnose. If one can come to a precise diagnosis, then the antidote is not hard to engineer."

A light flickered in Ling Bi'er's eyes as her heart was awash with roiling emotions. Indeed, Elder Yun Nie had said something of that nature before, but he hadn't been this clear about it. He'd only said that he was unable to give a proper diagnosis for the Miasma. If he could, perhaps he could come up with an antidote according to the symptoms.

Although the elder hadn't been as straightforward as Jiang Chen, their meaning was similar in that this was hard to diagnose. Conversely, there was more hope in being able to come up with a cure if they were able to pinpoint the causes.

Ling Bi'er stared blankly for a moment. She actually didn't know how to raise the question now that it was staring at her in the face. Beg Jiang Chen to heal her father? Pledge to marry herself to him? These were things that Ling Bi'er would be willing to swear to, but

voicing such embarrassing words in front of a young man was something she'd never be able to do. One as young and handsome as Jiang Chen made it even more difficult for her to broach the subject.

It was rather Ling Hui'er with her happy obliviousness who looked at Jiang Chen up and down with a bit of an assessing gaze. "Senior brother Jiang Chen, speak honestly, do you know of the vow that my sister once swore?"

Jiang Chen was completely baffled, and had no idea what she was talking about. "What vow?"

Ling Hui'er's jaw dropped. She wasn't sure if Jiang Chen was acting, or that he really didn't know. But she came up with another brilliant idea with a cock of her head. She smiled mischievously and flashed an exceedingly cute smile. "Senior brother Jiang Chen, do you think Hui'er is cute?"

Jiang Chen rubbed his nose, completely unused to Ling Hui'er's style. Why is she suddenly asking whether she's cute or not? Of course, he was well aware of how disastrous it'd be for him if he dared say that a girl wasn't cute. He could only nod, "Junior sister Hui'er is innocent and cute, the epitome of a child's heart. Naturally you are very cute."

"Then would you smile even in your dreams if such a cute Hui'er became a maid for you to order about?" Ling Hui'er giggled but her eyes were fixed intently on Jiang Chen's face. "You're not allowed to change the topic; this is a very serious question! You must answer!"

Jiang Chen didn't know whether to laugh and cry. "Junior sister Hui'er has immense potential and is doing just fine in the sect. Why would you want to be my maid? If I order you about as my maid, how many geniuses would come fight me to the death for doing so?"

Ling Hui'er became even prouder when she heard Jiang Chen's words and puffed out her chest. "What business is it of theirs? What can they do if I'm doing what I like?" She then flashed what she thought was a crafty smile. "Senior brother Jiang Chen, if you help me, Hui'er will be your maid in the future! You can have me warm the bed if you want, or ask me to serve you in bed too. You can do whatever you want~"

Ling Bi'er was aghast at these words. "Hui'er, what are you blathering on about!?"

Ling Hui'er wasn't willing to back down. "Sister, do you think you're the only one who's worried about papa? Can't Hui'er do something for papa? Being a maid for senior brother Jiang Chen is so much better than serving those gross, old bats!"

Jiang Chen couldn't bear to listen any longer as he smiled ruefully. "Hold on, junior sister Hui'er. Please, what favor is it that you'd like of me? I'll help you if I can, but speak no more of being a maid. I don't want to lose years off my life!"

Please. If I have the most popular sisters in the Regal Pill Palace serve as my maids, I'd become public enemy number one!

Ling Hui’er smiled charmingly and flashed a proud smirk at her sister. “Do you see that, sis? You twisted and turned and beat around the bush so much, but none of that was as useful as Hui’er’s direct honeypot! I told you senior brother Jiang Chen is a good man and he’d help! You should’ve just spoken directly.”

Ling Bi’er sighed lightly. If this was an ordinary matter, she would’ve shut Ling Hui’er down by now for speaking like thus. It wasn’t that she didn’t want to cut straight to the heart of the matter, but that her personality destined her to be unable to speak as wildly as her younger sister, completely carefree. “Junior brother Jiang Chen, I’m sure you’ve guessed some of what’s at hand here. My father mistakenly ventured into a taboo zone when I was young and happened to be struck by the Divine Befuddlement Miasma. He slept groggily for a few days after he returned and has since been lost in a coma. More than a decade has passed now and us two sisters have been completely powerless after trying all the ideas we had. If junior brother Jiang Chen has any ideas, Bi’er will be happy to repay you even if I am to be a cow or horse for the rest of my life.”

Ling Bi’er immediately flushed crimson after speaking these words. The scarlet shade crept all the way to the back of her ears and even down to the nape of her neck.

Jiang Chen could tell that these two sisters weren’t putting on a show. One was sincere, and the other direct. He could tell from the looks in their eyes that they had indeed tried everything over these years. Jiang Chen wasn’t the sort to leave someone in the lurch, not to mention they were of his sect. “Senior sister Ling, the Miasma is indeed hard to diagnose, and I don’t dare make any

guarantees. However, I will pay a visit after my seclusion to make plans after assessing your father's condition. I promise that I will try my best as long as I am able to."

The Divine Befuddlement Miasma wasn't a typical poison, so Jiang Chen didn't quite promise he'd heal the patient before seeing him.

Ling Bi'er was overjoyed at hearing these words and nodded rapidly. "Mmhmm! We will be deeply grateful as long as junior brother Jiang Chen goes to take a look, even if you cannot heal our father."

Jiang Chen waved his hand. "Speak not so gravely; it's but a small matter."

Ling Bi'er knew that Jiang Chen was going into closed door cultivation and politely took her leave with her sister.

Jiang Chen was in no mood to keep entertaining guests as he'd set his goal of reaching fifth level origin realm before the Pill Battles. After all, an additional bit of strength in the Pill Battles would entail a greater chance of winning.

After seeing the Ling sisters out, he was about to turn around when he heard the patter of footsteps behind him and saw that Ling Hui'er had snuck back. Her face was red with exertion and she had a somewhat odd expression on her face. The beautiful scenery on her chest trembled as she jogged, giving others the impression of great motion. "Senior brother Jiang Chen, can I talk

to you?”

Jiang Chen was puzzled as Ling Hui’er dragged him behind a patch of trees before he could open his mouth. “What is it, junior sister Hui’er?”

Ling Hui’er bit her thin lip lightly as tears swam in her large eyes, seemingly conflicted. She suddenly grabbed Jiang Chen’s hand and pressed it onto her full chest. “Senior brother Jiang Chen, take a good feel. Hui’er is the real deal! If you can cure my papa, Hui’er will let senior brother Jiang Chen feel whenever you’d like in the future.”

Jiang Chen wasn’t a sanctimonious person, but as his hand was pressed into Hui’er’s well rounded chest and he felt how springy it was, he felt that he was committing a crime as he looked into her still young face at seventeen years old. His expression shifted as he snatched his hand back like he’d stuck it into lightning. “Junior sister Hui’er, you don’t need to be thus.”

Ling Hui’er didn’t understand as a somewhat lost expression appeared on her face. She seemed to be frightened to the point of tears by Jiang Chen’s move. “Senior brother Jiang Chen, when I listened in on the other senior brothers, they all say that they like this part of a girl. Don’t you like it?”

Jiang Chen laughed ruefully. If one were to describe this girl as clever and someone to think out of the box, then alright, that was indeed her. But when she behaved naively… she was simple almost to the point of being idiotic.

“Senior brother Jiang Chen, do you think Hui’er is being too easy? It’s not like that! Apart from Hui’er, no one else has touched me here! This is just paying interest up front. Senior brother Jiang Chen will try your best to cure papa only after you’ve tried the goods. Hui’er promises that no matter who it is in the future, Hui’er won’t let anyone else touch me here…”

She then seemed to think that her words weren’t solemn enough as she then added on, “Only a senior brother Jiang Chen who’s cured my papa can do so.”

Jiang Chen wasn’t a saint. He’d had some normal reactions after Ling Hui’er had said so much, but reason still won out in the end. He paused, focused his attentions, and spoke seriously, “Since I’ve promised you, junior sister Hui’er, then I will surely try my best. Hurry and go back; don’t let senior sister Bi’er worry.” He was worried that Ling Hui’er would do more crazy things and hurriedly turned to walk away after saying thing.

Ling Hui’er hurried to catch up and spoke a bit urgently, “Senior brother Jiang Chen, do you not like Hui’er? Even if you don’t, my sister made a vow that if you can cure papa, she‘ll serve you for the rest of her life as well!”

What in absolute tarnation! Jiang Chen couldn’t hold up beneath this onslaught anymore and formed a wall of air with a sweep of his hand, blocking Ling Hui’er from advancing. “Go back first, junior sister Hui’er. Let’s talk about this in the future.” Jiang Chen was now truly afraid of this thickheaded girl. She was really willing to say just about anything!

Ling Hui'er immediately halted and cocked her head to the side, bursting out in a giggle, "What are you being shy for, senior brother? Let me tell you something, although sis isn't as big as me there, she's not small either. Hehe, she never let me bathe with her, but I've taken a peek before. Sis' body..."

Her expression suddenly changed as her words tumbled out of her mouth, and she clapped a hand over her mouth. Her smile froze as she smiled in a way that was uglier than crying, "When did you come back, sis?"

If it'd been any ordinary time, Ling Bi'er would've grounded her for three months of seclusion for spouting all this crazy nonsense. But already weary from everything that'd happened, she only sighed. "Hui'er, junior brother Jiang Chen is going into closed door cultivation. Stop bothering him and come back to the residence with me." She didn't care if her sister had agreed or not after she spoke and grabbed Ling Hui'er's belt, drifting away like she was picking up a chick.

It was odd. Had it been in normal times, Ling Bi'er would've been the personification of rage and embarrassment had she heard her younger sister speak to other young men of her chest and sneaking peeks at her bathing. But now, she was uncharacteristically calm.

She'd actually seen all of her sister's actions, and had clearly seen Jiang Chen's reactions. She'd borne clear witness to how he hadn't taken advantage of the situation. In her heart of hearts, Ling Bi'er had to admit that Jiang Chen was a true gentleman. He wasn't expecting something for his help, and wasn't making use of the

situation to scheme and lay claim to their bodies like those lecherous old men.

However—

A woman's personality was just so odd sometimes.

The more Jiang Chen acted thus, the more Ling Bi'er pitied herself. She only felt that despite others venerating herself and her sister, the two of them were nothing more than ordinary fellow disciples in his eyes. His promise and words had only been because they were of the same sect. It was not because of any other reason or any thoughts about them that he'd agreed to take a look at their papa.

Chapter 530: Fifth Level Origin Realm

Thanks to this pair of sisters, one as cold as frost and the other as innocent as a newborn, Jiang Chen was now a bit worse for the wear. He cleared his mind before raising his head with a rueful smile, lifting a foot and preparing to enter closed door cultivation. His ears suddenly twitched as he shot a look towards the dense forest. “Who is it?”

Scattered yet leisurely footsteps sounded from the trees as a slender, pale arm lightly lifted aside a tree branch and revealed a charming figure.

“Miss Huang’er?”

The slender girl was wearing a pale green robe, and her other arm was hooked into a bamboo woven basket. It was obvious that she’d been picking something in the woods.

The current Huang’er was wearing a mask that neatly hid her face. The faint mist of the woods wreathed around her lithe body as if unfurling from her very being, subtly hinting at an ethereal, celestial bearing.

Jiang Chen was stunned. He’d seen everything beneath the heavens in his past life and had made the acquaintance of many wondrous girls in this life as well. The sexy and direct Gouyu, the demure and noble Dan Fei, the gentle and shy Wen Ziqi, the icily removed Ling Bi’er from earlier and the innocent and naive Ling Hui’er were all examples of stunning, rare beauties of this world.

Yet, it was this exceedingly ugly, young girl hiding behind her mask who was now causing Jiang Chen to lose his composure.

He lost himself to thought. The people of the world liked to compare girls with unusual bearing to deities, but Jiang Chen had to admit that if it came to one who seemed like a god, the current Huang'er was the most perfect representative he could think of.

If one set aside the matter of her features, Huang'er's refreshing and otherworldly demeanor made her seem like she'd walked out of a painting. Her refined and tasteful behavior, along with her charming manner and grace, truly make her seem like a fairy. A portion of her pure, white arm was currently revealed as she floated over on dainty footsteps that seemed to be unsullied by dust. It was incredibly difficult to describe her, as if one really had set foot into a painting. "Sir Jiang, there are some flora within the woods that Huang'er likes very much. I'd like to take some back to plant, but seemed to have alarmed you instead."

Huang'er's voice was gracious and suffused with a sense of compassion, lifting the mood of those who heard up to a happy lightheartedness.

Jiang Chen was feeling a bit guilty at the moment as he chuckled, "Then I won't disturb Miss Huang'er." He waved his hand as he finished speaking and strode back in.

Huang'er dimpled, focusing her gaze on the somewhat bedraggled Jiang Chen. Hints of a kind smile appeared in her eyes, as if thinking this version of Jiang Chen was more interesting. "Sir Jiang is a rather honest gentleman. The Ling sisters each have

their own strengths, and to see them is to love them. It's quite rare that Sir Jiang can treat them with such courtesy."

She'd actually seen all of Ling Hui'er's actions from far away, and for some reason, a trace of emotion had rippled through her serene heart in that moment. But when she saw Jiang Chen jerk his hand away and not act with abandon like an ordinary, frivolous man, a hint of happiness actually flashed through her heart. She didn't think this was her bearing any feelings for Jiang Chen, but more a sense of admiration for his actions. However, these were all just thoughts in her mind. With how empathetic she was and her bearing as a girl from a cultured family, she would never tease Jiang Chen with this.

If it'd been Dan Fei, she would've absolutely grown jealous and spoken a few noncommittal words in teasing jest.

If it'd been Gouyu, she would've formed some biases against Ling Hui'er even if she hadn't said anything.

Only Huang'er had ever so kindly changed the topic, saying that she was here picking spirit herbs. It was plain to see that she was afraid that Jiang Chen would worry that she'd seen something and would be embarrassed because of the misunderstanding. One had to say, her sympathetic gesture had given Jiang Chen an opportunity to resolve the situation without having to leave awkwardly.

……

After returning to his training grounds, Jiang Chen sat down cross legged and meditated for a while before clearing out all of the random thoughts in his heart. After all of his beautiful emotions had been dispelled, what left the deepest impression on Jiang Chen's heart wasn't Ling Hui'er's full, buoyant chest, but Huang'er's stunningly elegant image.

He'd actually felt his heart pound with emotion then.

It was as if that feeling had always been there, a stirring of the heart that had seemed destined to happen in that moment and circumstance. However, Jiang Chen wasn't the sort to lose himself in a daydream. The experiences of two lifetimes had long since left him in control of his emotions.

"My task at hand is to assail the fifth level origin realm. I can't be distracted any longer. The Pill Battles of Mt. Rippling Mirage will be a meeting of masters, and it is certain that strong experts will arrive en masse. Each additional increase in strength is one additional bit of ability to my name." As Jiang Chen's thoughts reached its natural end, he fished out some Origin Fostering Pills and origin spirit stones to begin his training.

Assimilating the Firelizard core had filled him with abundant spirit energy. Add to that the pills and stones, he had no need to make use of the dragon crystals at all. To be honest, when it came to origin qi, the dragon crystals were by far superior to the stones and pills. However, he didn't want to use them for now. It would be a waste of such supreme material if one were to refine it for the fifth level origin realm. It wouldn't be too late to use the crystals when he was at sixth level origin realm and attempting to reach

the sky origin realm. To Jiang Chen, breaking through to the fifth level after biding his time and efforts for so long was only a matter of time.

He successfully broke through to fifth level origin realm after roughly twenty days and could feel the noticeable increase of origin spirit power in his body. He believed that if he faced off against the eighth level Rong Zifeng in his current state, he would have at least a fifty to sixty percent chance of winning.

Jiang Chen spent another three days consolidating his new level and enhancing all of his techniques and methods. As one's cultivation level increased, all of one's techniques would absolutely improve as well. What Jiang Chen hadn't thought would happen was that he seemed to sense the pulses of the Golden Cicada bloodline. It seemed as if the Cicada Wing was about to appear.

"Haha, it looks like I perfectly assimilated the Cicada bloodline! If all goes to plan, I'll be able to utilize the Cicada Wing when I break through to sixth level origin realm. If I can make it into the sky origin realm, the Cicada Wing would add to my abilities as if giving wings to a tiger, allowing me to fly. What fear would I have of mortal sage realm cultivators then?"

If human cultivators wanted to fly, the sage realm was the starting point. Those at the mortal sage realm could fly for a short time, and even longer in the earth sage realm. At that point, even aerial fighting was possible. True freedom in the skies would come upon reaching the sky sage realm. However, no matter what stage one was at, flying was an activity that posed an excessive drain on

origin power.

The Cicada Wing would grant him a pair of invisible wings on his back, making flight one of his own abilities. Being his own ability, it would not consume any origin power at all. This would be an absolutely lethal trump card up Jiang Chen's sleeve.

"The sky origin realm!" When Jiang Chen thought of the benefits of entering the sky origin realm, he could only shiver in anticipation. Once he entered that realm, not only would he be able to train the Cicada Wing, he'd also be able to refine the magnetic golden mountain and truly turn it into a treasure for his own use.

He thought about how suddenly summoning a mountain in the midst of battle would result in an unforgettably lethal effect when he challenged those greater than him, not to mention his peers, given the strong magnetic power of this treasure and the mountain's own weight. And if he could summon the Lord of the Golden Seal in its strongest form, his battle strength would be even more astonishing!

Even Jiang Chen himself didn't know how much potential lay within the Lord of the Golden Seal, and how frightening his final form would be. But he could predict that the potential of the mountain would only be equal, if not greater, to the potential of the Lord of the Golden Seal.

Jiang Chen was inwardly brimming with expectation.

He took a look around after emerging from closed door cultivation and noticed that those around him had also drastically improved their cultivation during his closed door session. Gouyu and Xue Tong had consolidated their cultivation in the first level origin realm, whereas a new flower had bloomed on the old tree that was Ye Chonglou. After receiving so much attention and help from Jiang Chen, his cultivation had risen greatly as well, making him a fourth level origin realm cultivator.

The others such as Guo Jin and the Qiao brothers were also showing signs of breaking through to the origin realm. It was truly a scene of prosperity and growth.

There were only seven days left until the retinue set out for the Pill Battles. Jiang Chen didn't forget his promise to the Ling sisters, and sent a message glyph over to Ling Bi'er's residence.

She quickly appeared at the door to welcome him in, but Ling Hui'er was nowhere to be found this time. "Junior brother Jiang Chen, Hui'er is young and has committed many ludicrous acts. Please forgive her nonsensical words. I've shut her in for half a year's worth of closed door cultivation, and she's not allowed to set one foot out of the residence before I come back from Mt. Rippling Mirage." Ling Bi'er displayed the air of a stern sister.

Circumstances change with the passage of time, and Jiang Chen was an easy going person who'd long since forgotten the matters of that day. He smiled slightly. "Junior sister Hui'er still retains the heart of a child. It's not a major concern if she makes the occasional startling statement. Please go ahead, senior sister."

Ling Bi'er nodded slightly and took the lead, showing Jiang Chen the way into her residence. She was obviously one of those who cared a great deal about her reputation, as she kept a certain distance even when walking with Jiang Chen. It wasn't that she was predisposed against Jiang Chen; it was simply her natural personality.

Ling Bi'er's residence was different from Jiang Chen's grand style. It was much more exquisite, the mood as quiet and beautiful as a fairy realm.

The two sister's father was named Ling Su, and he looked to be around forty years old. However, his long coma had left him with a wan complexion, making him appear as haggard as the withered branches of a tree. If it wasn't for the faint hint of breath about him, one would almost wonder if this was a corpse.

Jiang Chen took out a set of silver needles from his storage ring and placed them into Ling Su's body, then sent his consciousness to probe the patient.

"Don't do that junior brother Jiang Chen! The Miasma is within my father's consciousness. It could infect you."

If it was any other pill master or alchemist, they never would've dared to rashly probe the patient with their consciousness, because the Miasma was highly infectious. It would spread as soon as another consciousness touched it.

However, Jiang Chen was prepared. The Cicada's bloodline

would render him impervious to all poisons, and that didn't account for all the methods at his disposal for avoiding poison in the first place. The Miasma wouldn't find an opening from him.

The greatest barrier to curing Ling Su was the inability to probe his body with consciousness. No great pill master, including even Elder Yun Nie, was willing to risk their consciousness in a probe. This was why they hadn't been able to suggest a treatment of the symptoms.

Jiang Chen smiled slightly and spread out his hands. "Senior sister Bi'er has no need to worry about me, I have my own methods to avoid the poison. There can be no cure for your father if we cannot inspect him with our consciousness."

Chapter 531: The Thorny Problem Of The Divine Befuddlement Miasma

There was an incontrovertible sense of confidence in Jiang Chen's tone. Although Ling Bi'er acted as frosty as ice, she wasn't a cold-hearted person. Even though Jiang Chen had set her at ease, anxiety was still written over her face.

Although she wanted to cure her father's illness, she didn't want to implicate innocents in the process. Particularly a good man such as Jiang Chen who had said nothing of payment gone straight to work diagnosing the patient. After all, even Elder Yun Nie hadn't dared use his consciousness to probe the Miasma.

Ling Bi'er remained where she was when she saw Jiang Chen already extending his consciousness. She wanted to stop him, but was afraid that she'd ruin everything if she made a disturbance. Anxiety and worry filled her charming face as she froze in place. But when she saw him standing there, looking completely at ease, her fretting heart began to slowly calm down. She ended up standing off to the side, warily focusing her attentions on the proceedings. She'd never stood so close to a man before in her life, or observed a young man with such gravity. In that moment, she suddenly realized that although this young man was only one year older than her, there was a steadiness within his movements that was rare for their age. He had the bearing of a great master, something that she'd only ever felt from sect heavyweights such as Elder Yun Nie.

She was incredibly astonished, and even the frozen mountain that was her emotions showed signs of melting, as an almost

undetectable wavelet rippled over it. If it'd been any other young pill master who decided to so rashly probe with his consciousness, Ling Bi'er might've thought that he was trying to curry favor with her and her sister, and would've immediately stopped him. But as time passed, she felt that Jiang Chen was truly confident in what he was doing.

Jiang Chen opened his eyes fifteen minutes later and retracted his consciousness.

"Junior brother Jiang Chen..." Ling Bi'er called out and suddenly remembered, this Jiang Chen was one year older than her. Wasn't it placing herself on a pedestal if she still called him junior brother?

Jiang Chen nodded with a slightly furrowed brow. "Senior sister Bi'er, your father's Miasma is indeed complex. There are many kinds of Miasma, and it would be easy to handle if there was only one. However, there are four different kinds of Miasma in your father's body, and they have interacted and assimilated with each other over the years. They seem to have developed thousands if not tens of thousands of links between them, and it will be exceedingly difficult to peel them back, layer by layer."

He wasn't trying to scare Ling Bi'er or be an alarmist. If this diagnosis had been made right when the patient had been struck by the four Miasmas, before they'd started to meld with each other, than a cure would've been easier to divine based off the symptoms. But now that things had developed to this point, while it couldn't be said that there was no hope for a cure, the process would be exceedingly complex.

The poison of the Miasma was like a silkworm's cocoon, each strand intertwining with one another. The same held true for how the Miasmas interacted with each other. The difficulty level for curing this poison had just skyrocketed, and just like unraveling silk from cocoons, it brooked no mistake. If even the slightest detail was overlooked, the Miasma would react and possibly push the patient to the point of no return.

Ling Bi'er's face dimmed when she heard Jiang Chen's words. "Does that mean there is no hope to cure the Miasma?"

Jiang Chen shook his head. "There is hope, but it's incredibly difficult and the process is highly complex. Dangerous conditions could develop at any second."

He didn't draw out the suspense as he solemnly explained the situation in great detail. Ling Bi'er was extremely intelligent and quickly regained her calm after his explanation. Firstly, her father's Miasma was difficult to cure, but there was still hope. The process would be difficult and could fail at any time, resulting in a worse situation. In addition, a tremendous amount of time and effort, as well as extreme precision was needed for the cure. Not even the slightest mistake would be tolerated.

"Jiang Chen, if I were to try to cure my papa, what do you think my chances of success are?" Ling Bi'er felt that it was too much to ask of Jiang Chen to spend so much time and effort to cure her father, so she wanted to do it herself. Although she felt that there was a gap in ability between her and Jiang Chen, she was still a pill dao genius of the younger generation after all!

Jiang Chen smiled ruefully. “If I were to speak truthfully, your chances are almost zero.”

Ling Bi’er started. “Why is that?”

“Because you cannot use your consciousness to enter your father’s mind and observe the Miasma. You won’t be able to peel back the layers of poison this way.”

This wasn’t a scare tactic, but the honest truth. If it wasn’t for Jiang Chen’s double layer of insurance in the form of the Golden Cicada bloodline and unique method of avoiding poison, he would’ve never dared to rashly extend his consciousness. As for actually curing the poison, the time and effort needed would be at least a hundred times, or even a thousand times what he’d spent in diagnosis.

Jiang Chen hadn’t anticipated that Ling Su’s poison would be this complex either. Most Miasmas would be able to cured via targeting the symptoms after a proper diagnosis was made. But Ling Su’s Miasma was the product of four different poisons. He could’ve still targeted the symptoms had they not melded together, but now that they had, the difficulty involved had just risen to a different league.

It’s just like looking at several strands of rope. They were easy to organize if gathered in singular strands. But once their fibers and threads were messily tangled into a ball, it would become no easier to untangle than the Gordian Knot. Unraveling poison also had the

added challenge that any mistake could put the patient's life in danger.

With Ling Bi'er's cultivation, she might have twenty to thirty percent chance if she knew how to avoid being poisoned herself, but the Miasma was not something she could get away from. The only outcome if she tried to treat her father would be her getting infected too.

Ling Bi'er knew that this wasn't Jiang Chen trying to scare her. Even Elder Yun Nie hadn't dared probe this poison. If she tried, she'd likely be infected as soon as she extended her consciousness. Only someone with a unique method to keep themselves safe like Jiang Chen could even attempt it.

She bit her red lip lightly and didn't bother maintaining a demure bearing at the moment. "Junior brother Jiang Chen, I know my request is intrusive, but might you be able to teach me your unique methods of evading poison?"

She seemed greatly afraid that she was overstepping the bounds and immediately emphasized. "Don't worry, I won't ask you to do it for free. You can raise whatever conditions you'd like. Although I can't offer you much in terms of spirit stones and pills, I can pay them back slowly in the future."

Jiang Chen sighed inwardly to see Ling Bi'er act thus. This resolute girl has borne much too heavy a burden on her frail shoulders for her father. This made him inwardly snap to respectful attention as well. "It's not a problem to teach you how to evade poison, but the method I teach you will only give you a

50% chance in evading infection from the Miasma."

Again, this wasn't to scare Ling Bi'er, but that Jiang Chen's poison evasion methods was partially a result of the Cicada's bloodline of being impervious to poison. This was his most critical insurance and obviously something he was unable to take out to share with Ling Bi'er, since it had to do with the Golden Cicadas from ancient times. "In addition, even if you avoid infection, your chances of success are only thirty percent."

Ling Bi'er's tone was resolute. "I'm willing to try even if there's only a hint of success. Papa has been suffering with this condition for so many years that if he knew I was facing this decision, he would support my actions as well. Even if I fail, it's better than dragging out this suffering."

Jiang Chen deeply respected this firm attitude. No man would be likely be as determined or decisive than Ling Bi'er when facing this kind of dilemma. "Senior sister Bi'er, I can teach you the method of evading poison, but I must emphasize that this will only halve the chances of you being attacked by the Miasma. If you make the slightest mistake, the Miasma will consume you and you will succumb to the same condition as your father."

Ling Bi'er's body trembled slightly, but resolve still filled her charming face. It was then that the door banged open and Ling Hui'er came running in. "No, sis! Hui'er won't allow this! It should be Hui'er taking this risk! Sis can take care of Hui'er if something happens to me, but if something happens to sis, what will Hui'er do with no support and shelter?!"

“Hui’er, don’t make a fuss!” Ling Bi’er was both saddened and resigned to see that her younger sister, supposedly in closed door cultivation, had snuck out and was fighting with her to save their father.

Ling Hui’er turned around and stared at Jiang Chen with a pair of pure, wide eyes. “Senior brother Jiang Chen, don’t leave tonight. Hui’er will keep you company if you teach me how to avoid the poison. I’ll trade for it with my body! Hui’er doesn’t want sis to have to repay you stones and pills every year if something happens to me…”

Jiang Chen couldn’t help but recall what happened the last time he saw Ling Hui’er and smiled ruefully. “When did I ever say I want you two to repay me? I can pass on this method to you free of charge, but Hui’er, with your personality, the chances of success are less than ten percent.”

Although Jiang Chen knew that it was quite cruel to speak in this manner, he still had to give them a kindly reminder for the sake of their safety.

Ling Hui’er started, seemingly disbelieving that Jiang Chen would be so generous, but also a bit unaccepting of his words. “Why is it only ten percent for me and up to thirty for sis? How high are the chances if you do it yourself?”

Jiang Chen smiled wryly. Ling Hui’er’s questions were always shrewd, such that he was unable to respond. He’d actually made some internal calculations before speaking. Even if he took the field himself, he’d need at least ten days to half a month to cure

this poison, and he only had roughly an eighty percent chance of success as well. The most critical caveat was that he had to find the items that acted as antidotes to these four different kinds of Miasmas, create the perfect liquid medicine as the cure, and then induce it into the patient through consciousness.

The entire process was exceedingly complex. If Jiang Chen had been able to recover back to the peak condition of his past life, he'd naturally have the fullest of guarantees. But now, he only had seventy to eighty percent assurance to work with.

The two sisters seemed to be in great accord with each other. Ling Hui'er was staring at him piteously, and Ling Bi'er's sprightly eyes were shifting around, looking at him helplessly. They were like two little girls lost on the road, making Jiang Chen sigh continuously with their plaintive gazes. He reflected that Ling Su possessed quite great fortune to have such a pair of wonderful daughters.

"If I do it, I should have more than a fifty percent chance of success." He didn't quite paint himself into a corner and left a bit of wiggle room.

Chapter 532: Converging On Mt. Rippling Mirage

A fifty percent guarantee was already incredibly stunning for the Ling sisters.

“Fifty percent?” Ling Hui’er latched onto Jiang Chen’s arm and swung it fiercely. “Then you have to save my papa, senior brother Jiang Chen! Hui’er promises that as long as senior brother tries his best, Hui’er will not forget about the thing that she promised the senior brother that day, whether you succeed or not!”

Jiang Chen didn’t know whether to laugh or cry when he thought back to the events of that day. Hui’er often voiced incredibly astonishing words despite her young age. Now that she was swinging his arm, the astonishing weapon that was her chest would rub against his arm every time it crossed her body. The incredible springiness of her mounds of flesh kept squeezing Jiang Chen into increasingly dire straits. He flung a plea of help with his eyes towards Ling Bi’er, controlling his mind with effort and preventing himself from reacting physically. If he had that kind of reaction at this kind of time, it would truly be an enormous embarrassment in front of the sisters.

Ling Bi’er pulled Ling Hui’er aside when she saw Jiang Chen thus. “Hui’er, don’t be discourteous. This matter is of grave importance and junior brother Jiang Chen must have his own considerations.”

Ling Hui’er pouted with her small mouth. “Sis, you can’t fight with me about this!”

Ling Bi’er was speechless and she walked forward to perform a ceremonious bow. “Junior brother Jiang Chen, I have never requested anything of anyone in my life. Bi’er is asking you for this favor on behalf of our papa. In return, no matter the result, us sisters will be your servants, as if cows or horses, in gratitude.”

Jiang Chen was now utterly lost for words. This pair of sisters was quite, quite shrewd. This situation was developing as if he was an enormous villain forcing the two to sign contracts selling themselves to him. He waved his hand a few times. “Senior sister Bi’er, what talk is there of payment between those of the same sect? We first have to collect all of the items corresponding to an antidote. Light will only be somewhat shed on this matter after the trip to Mt. Rippling Mirage. Everything is just talk if we cannot find the appropriate spirit herbs.”

Ling Bi’er froze slightly, with delight overflowing from her eyes afterwards. “Does this mean you’ve agreed to help, junior brother?”

“You sisters have done so much for your father already, I am not so cold hearted to be untouched by the sight of your efforts. How can I stand idly by and do nothing?”

The sisters were overjoyed to see Jiang Chen agree. Ling Bi’er wiped lightly at the corners of her eyes, whereas Ling Hui’er cheered exuberantly. “Senior brother Jiang Chen, Hui’er will keep her word. I will not forget about that day. We can pinky swear if you don’t believe me!”

Ling Hui’er stuck out her pinky to swear with Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen smiled. “Junior sister Hui’er, some things need not be mentioned again. If I do this out of expectation of payback, I’m sure the two of you wouldn’t be at ease allowing me to treat your father either.”

Ling Hui’er’s face went blank, seeming not to understand. In the sect and the Rosy Valley, all of the young geniuses looked at her with covetous eyes, as if wanting to devour her. She felt that senior brother Jiang Chen should be the same, but what did he mean by his words? Her thoughts were simplistic, so she immediately came to the conclusion that Jiang Chen didn’t like her. After staring blankly for a while, she put her head back and asked, “Senior brother Jiang Chen, do you not like Hui’er? Ah yes, you must like my sister, right?”

Ling Bi’er immediately blushed flaming crimson after hearing these words, but she didn’t reprimand Ling Hui’er this time, instead pretending she hadn’t heard a thing as she walked over to her father’s bed. Nevertheless, her attention was laser focused on Jiang Chen’s reaction. One thought was dominating her mind at the moment, I do want to know how junior brother Jiang Chen views us two sisters!

“Junior sister Hui’er, you and your sister are both beautiful women with your own unique strengths. Who in the sect wouldn’t like you? However, if I take advantage of you during this precarious time, then I would be less than human.”

Ling Hui’er seemed to understand his words, but not quite all at

once. But when Ling Bi'er heard these words, her spirits drooped slightly in response. She could tell that Jiang Chen was treating them differently from the other geniuses in the sect. He was helping them not because of who they were, but because he truly wanted to help them.

Ling Bi'er was actually a bit sad upon realizing that. She felt that all of the young men in the sect who held her and her sister up as fairies from the heavens were less preferable than Jiang Chen looking at them differently. It was a pity that she didn't feel that from his words.

Although a bit disappointed, she still made up her mind. "Even though I am but a girl, I am someone who keeps my words. If junior brother Jiang Chen can really cure papa, then I will never regret being a maid or slaving away like a beast of burden for him."

There was a reason why Ling Bi'er appeared so icy and distant on the surface. This kind of standoffish bearing was eminently useful in protecting the two sisters in this kind of environment. Moreover, her father's ailment had truly imparted a few degrees of sternness and melancholy to her personality. A frosty exterior would also keep ne'er-do-wells away, serving as a kind of self protection. However, even the firmest iceberg would melt when coming in contact with a heated force. It might even cause the melting ice to form surging rivers.

In the end, the human heart was made of flesh and blood. Although she came off coldly, the heart beating in her chest was still passionate. It'd just been that no one had ever been able to capture her heart and make it beat in tandem with their own. But

now, she seemed to vaguely detect the rhythm of another. However, being someone who was naturally slow to warm up to another, Ling Bi'er grew a bit nervous at this moment and even began to overly care about gains and losses, becoming afraid. She knew full well that she was inferior to her younger sister when it came to matters of the heart.

Her younger sister was still a child at heart, loving and hating directly and fiercely. Ling Bi'er felt hard pressed to suppress her embarrassment when she thought of her younger sister's actions. She felt her ears burn at even the thought of doing something similar. Grabbing a man's hand and placing it on her chest was something that Ling Bi'er would never be able to do!

Jiang Chen didn't say anything as he picked up the brush off on the side, starting to write and draw on a paper he pulled towards him. He quickly finished writing out a diagnosis. There were four kinds of Miasmas within Ling Su's body, and four different kinds of cures were necessary.

"Senior sister Bi'er, you should pay extra attention to these four kinds of spirit herbs during this time's trip to Mr. Rippling Mirage. If you can't find them, I've written down their respective substitutes as well. Try to collect as much as you can. I'll also keep an eye out when I enter the mountain as well."

Ling Bi'er hastily shunted away all the random thoughts in her mind when she saw Jiang Chen handing over the list, carefully receiving it. "Bi'er will deeply remember junior brother's immense favor."

Jiang Chen didn't linger any longer. "Let's speak of the rest after the Pill Battles. I'll take my leave now."

He made his final preparations after returning to his residence, and put all of his attention and time into preparing for the Pill Battles in the final two days. He received a few retellings of the Pill Battles and their origin from Elder Yun Nie, of how the Pill Battles had proceeded lately, and the various pill dao geniuses from the various Myriad Domain sects in the past couple of years. It made for quite a thorough dossier.

The groups converged on Mt. Rippling Mirage after two days. Although it was a pill competition, all the sects were placing significant emphasis on the proceedings.

From the Regal Pill Palace side, Palace Head Dan Chi was personally heading up the entourage with great fanfare as a show of support to Elder Yun Nie. Jiang Chen had given all the appropriate orders with regards to his residence before setting out and convening with the group as they headed over to Mt. Rippling Mirage together.

Mt. Rippling Mirage was thousands of kilometers away from the Regal Pill Palace, located in the southwest of what had been the Myriad Empire. It was where spirit herbs grew most abundantly in the entire Myriad Domain. Before the Empire had fallen, its strength had been so great that it exercised control over all the major sects in the Myriad Domain. Therefore, the Empire had always enjoyed all the best resources.

When it'd fallen, the six great sects had divvied up the remaining

treasures to fuel a quick pace of growth, forming the situation seen today.

The six great sects had once fought ferociously over the resources of Mt. Rippling Mirage, resulting in a great number of injuries and casualties. No one sect was willing to submit to anyone else, which was how the agreement that gave rise to the Pill Battles had been formed.

The entourage arrived successfully after a few days of travel. When they arrived, they found that Mt. Rippling Mirage wasn't just a single mountain. More accurately speaking, it encompassed several mountain ranges; a vast territory that covered several thousands of kilometers. When one looked out over the area, the outskirts were covered by a fog that was tinged with faint blue, seeming to billow like waves that left much to the imagination.

This was how Mt. Rippling Mirage had received its name.

The Myriad Empire had raised a Rippling Mirage Hall outside this collection of mountain ranges. Located on the outskirts of Mt. Rippling Mirage, it was an enormous villa where the royal family used to gather the various powers of the Myriad Domain. Even then, it was large enough to host everyone summoned, so the few hundred people that the 6 fourth rank sects and 20 fifth rank sects was hardly enough to fill the premises.

When he saw the grand and magnificent Rippling Mirage Hall, Jiang Chen could imagine how prosperous and strong the Empire had been before. The level of architecture that this hall displayed was far above and beyond even the best building in the Regal Pill

Palace.

"Hahaha, young brother Dan Chi, it's been a few years since we've last met. You are even more elegant than before." A hearty laugh rang through the air without warning. The newcomer was dressed in a black robe and walked over with great strides, moving directly towards them as if an enormous wave from the great seas.

"Ole brother Tian Ming, you came personally as well?" Dan Chi beamed merrily at the sight of him and walked up in welcome. The two embraced, laughing heartily.

Elder Yun Nie explained lowly off on the side, "That's Honored Master Tian Ming, the sect head of the Dark North Sect. His position is high and noble, and he has the closest relationship with Palace Head Dan Chi. The Dark North Sect is also the closest with our Regal Pill Palace, and we interact most with them."

These words were naturally for Jiang Chen and the other younger folk. The younger generation would be taking over the sect sooner or later, and it'd be beneficial for them to gain an understanding of the political layout of the Myriad Domain.

Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi looked at each other, both obviously recalling that the Dark North disciples had been the first to have been ambushed and killed by the Walkabout Sect's concealed weapons on that trip to the spirit spring. They'd thought that this sect was weak because of that, but this notion was swiftly dismissed after seeing Honored Master Tian Ming. His cultivation level was at seventh level sage realm! Even higher than Dan Chi's as a sky sage cultivator!

Chapter 533: Provocation Of Heavyweights

Elder Yun Nie had apparently seen Jiang Chen's confusion as he sent a silent message over. "Jiang Chen, Palace Head Dan Chi took the reins of power when he was less than fifty years old. Now, he is still less than a hundred, and there is no other heavyweight in the Myriad Domain who is at the peak of fifth level sage realm, about to break through to the sixth like he is."

Jiang Chen understood without Elder Yun Nie's explanation. His current confusion wasn't the difference in strength between Palace Head Dan Chi and Honored Mastered Tian Ming, but that he wanted to know what level the other sect heads were at.

In the world of martial dao, different territories, different levels, and different resources would give birth to different levels of geniuses. When Jiang Chen had been in the Eastern Kingdom, becoming a true qi master at the age of twenty was quite a feat. In the Skylaurel Kingdom, it was quite something to be half step spirit realm at twenty years old. In the four great sects, only one who set foot into the earth spirit realm at age twenty was counted as a genius. And in the Regal Pill Palace, one had to break into the origin realm around twenty years old to have the right to enter the Rosy Valley and be hailed a genius. Whereas in the Myriad Domain, the top geniuses between the ages of twenty and thirty were measured on the basis of whether or not they could assail the sage realm. However, the Myriad Domain was just a lowly Lower Realm in the end.

In actuality, there weren't more than fifty amongst the younger generation who truly possessed the ability to assail the sage realm. Such were the limits of the Myriad Domain. Once a top genius

entered the sage realm, their cultivation speed would fall drastically. After entering the sage realm, it would be incredibly difficult to take another step forward.

Take Shen Qinghong, for instance. If he made it into the sage realm before thirty, then his next step would be to advance to the earth sage realm. If he could do so before sixty years of age, then he would be classified as a genius on par with Dan Chi. If he did so after sixty, then he was at most on Elder Yun Nie's level. If he still couldn't break into the earth sage realm after he turned a hundred years old, then he was destined to be disqualified from the running for the sect head's position.

Of course, this wasn't an absolute either.

The difficulty would increase once again after entering the earth sage realm. Each step forward would be fraught with hardship. Dan Chi had enjoyed smooth sailing back in the day and had entered the earth sage realm before sixty years of age. But once he had consolidated himself within it, he had been caught in a bottleneck due to his prior smooth progress. It wasn't until he met Elder Shun that he had broken through this bottleneck and made it into the peak of the fifth level sage realm, ready to break through to the sixth level at any moment.

Meeting Elder Shun had been his fortuitous occurrence. If it hadn't been for this, even if he had broken through the fifth level sage realm, he never would've had the ability to break through multiple times as he had done now.

After all, the best resources were limited in the Myriad Domain,

and enormous fortune was needed to take another step forward. Without a doubt, meeting Elder Shun had been the making of the current Dan Chi.

Tian Ming patted Dan Chi's shoulder and smiled, "Ole brother, I'd long since heard that you'd broken through to the fifth level sage realm. It looks like you'll break through to the sixth level sage realm at any time. You are certainly the sect head that is richest in youth and richest in strength! In my view, you'll catch up to me in another three to five years!"

Honored Master Tian Ming was more than three hundred years old, three times greater than Palace Head Dan Chi, but they were obviously old friends and had personalities that meshed together well.

"Old brother Tian Ming, your lifespan will become inexhaustible once you break through to the sky sage realm. You'll even have the hope to become a Titled Emperor then." Dan Chi laughed.

Tian Ming laughed heartily. "Titled Emperor? I have no such ambition. If I can make it to the peak of the sage realm whilst I live, that alone will allow me to die without regret."

So he said, but everyone knew that these surely weren't Honored Master Tian Ming's thoughts. At the very least, he wouldn't be accepting of this kind of thinking.

"Oh right, ole brother, I should've gone to congratulate you on forming an alliance with the Precious Tree Sect last time, but one

of my personal disciples was at a critical moment in his training and that set a few things back. I hope you don't think badly of me."

Heavyweights from all the sects had indeed participated in the alliance ceremony, but Honored Master Tian Ming had indeed been absent, with his vice head Spiritual Master Chi Ming attending in his stead.

Palace Head Dan Chi smiled carelessly. "Ole brother is needlessly distancing himself with these words." He then waved his hand at his entourage of young folk. "You all, come and greet the sect head of the Dark North Sect."

The Dark North Sect head chuckled merrily, his smile growing wider after sweeping his eyes over Jiang Chen and the others. "Mm, I remember this wise nephew is Shen Qinghong, correct? If I recall, you're the disciple of Elder Lian Cheng, about to set foot into the sage realm. You truly deserve the title of genius alright."

His gaze then halted briefly on Ling Bi'er and nodded approvingly. "Ninth level origin realm, a top genius. Good, very good!"

When he saw that Jiang Chen was only fifth level origin realm, Honored Master Tian Ming was slightly taken aback. "This wise nephew looks a bit unfamiliar."

"Haha, ole brother, this is Jiang Chen, and the young genius that my Regal Pill Palace and the Precious Tree Sect are raising together."

“Oh? This is sage nephew Jiang Chen, the one you allied with the Precious Tree Sect for? It seems it is rather I who didn’t recognize greatness.” Tian Ming chuckled and nodded repeatedly. “Good, good. With your cultivation level of fifth level origin realm, and Palace Head Dan Chi and Elder Yun Nie’s great favor, you are certainly an extraordinary young genius. You will surely amount to much in the future.”

This Honored Master Tian Ming looked to be the extremely nice sort, offending none, complimenting even youngsters and not impacting their confidence. This was rather rare, so Jiang Chen didn’t forget his manners and thanked him, “Many thanks for Sect Head Tian Ming’s auspicious words.”

Honored Master Tian Ming’s gaze rested on Mu Gaoqi last. He found this sight even rarer and couldn’t help but laugh. “The Regal Pill Palace is a great sect founded on pill dao alright. This sage nephew is the youngest, with a cultivation at the peak of the second level origin realm. He must be a superb pill dao genius to be able to participate in this gathering. Am I possibly wrong?”

Mu Gaoqi was unavoidably nervous at facing a sky sage realm expert, so it was Palace Head Dan Chi who laughed good-naturedly, “This one’s pill dao potential is indeed extraordinary. He has an innate wood constitution of high order, and a pill dao genius that my Regal Pill Palace will focus on cultivating in the future. I’ve brought him out to see the world this time.”

The Regal Pill Palace naturally had to package Mu Gaoqi’s identity as one with an innate wood constitution. This kind of

figure had a certain reputation that would attract more attention and spread the Regal Pill Palace's name throughout the world. The effect of such a representative character would be far reaching. If Mu Gaoqi had great accomplishments in pill dao one day, then there would be many who came to join the Regal Pill Palace based on his fame alone. A character such as him would be enough to affect the sect's fortunes for a thousand years, and even had the potential to raise the sect to new heights through his power alone.

After all, this kind of potential would be fiercely fought over even in the Upper Eight Realms. An innate constitution wasn't that rare in the Upper Eight Realms, but one of high order was a rare find of one in a million. However, an innate wood constitution of high order was one that would only be found once in ten billion. A figure possessing that constitution would be hotly fought over the instant they appeared.

As long as an innate wood constitution of high order wasn't accidentally lost and the sect took good care of the genius for a couple of decades, they would certainly grow to become strong support for the sect. For martial dao sects, what they lacked the least were martial dao geniuses, but what they wanted the most were extreme pill dao geniuses. It wasn't that they lacked the resources or recipes needed to refine pills, but that they lacked the best pill masters. Compared to the shortage of resources, there was a greater shortage of great pill masters.

Indeed, when Honored Master Tian Ming registered this introduction, the light of incredulity immediately shone from his eyes. His face became wreathed in smiles as he sighed with appreciation. "Incredible, incredible! An innate wood constitution of high order that's difficult to find in even one out of ten billion

has appeared in the Regal Pill Palace. It looks like your sect has truly found favor with the heavens; you have no end of good fortune! A martial dao genius such as you appeared first, then a pill dao genius such a sage nephew Mu Gaoqi second. In my eyes, the Regal Pill Palace will surely become the force that lifts up the Myriad Domain in a hundred years!”

Mocking laughter traveled in from nearby. “Ole Tian Ming, it looks like your old habit of complimenting just anyone up to the skies really needs to change.”

The voice boomed out like a broken gong, extremely irritating to the ears. Its owner was a tall and stockily built man, giving one the feeling of a wild, unbridled style. He had an enormous sword strapped to his back and walked with great vigor and poise, purposefully displaying his strength and giving off the feeling of a sword ripping through the air as he strode forward.

This person was indeed Sacred Sword Palace Head Wang Jianyu. However, Honored Master Tian Ming’s shrewdness and excellent upbringing didn’t falter. He wasn’t incensed by these words, and instead chuckled. “You’re always so sharp, Jianyu. How come you’re here by yourself during the time’s Pill Battles?”

Wang Jianyu smirked and didn’t respond. He walked up to Palace Head Dan Chi instead. “Not bad huh, peak of fifth level sage realm. But…” When he cast his eye over Jiang Chen and the other young disciples, a hint of mockery curled into his smile. “What a pity that there isn’t a single sage realm cultivator amongst your younger generation. What a pity, such great pity.”

It was obvious to everyone that he was here to provoke the Regal Pill Palace.

Palace Head Dan Chi also smiled indifferently. “Palace Head Wang, the Pill Battles of Mt. Rippling Mirage have to do with pill competitions. If you wish to glorify the martial prowess of the Sacred Sword Palace, it won’t be too late to do so at the Myriad Grand Ceremony in three years’ time.”

The Pill Battles were where the pill masters could contend with each other, whereas the Grand Ceremony was where the younger generation met in martial dao. Wang Jianyu’s jeering based off of martial dao at the Pill Battles was indeed a bit inappropriate.

Wang Jianyu laughed heartily. “The Myriad Grand Ceremony, haha! I hope that three years is enough time for someone from the younger generation of the Regal Pill Palace to emerge in a way that makes everyone’s eyes light up.” He was about to leave after he finished speaking when he suddenly smiled mysteriously. “Oh right, let me add on that my Sacred Sword Palace has already had two young geniuses break through to the sage realm. They’ll be sure to soar to the top with one move in the Grand Ceremony, hahaha!”

Chapter 534: Bi'er's Pursuer

Wang Jianyu departed with a flourish and left behind a slightly awkward atmosphere. Palace Head Dan Chi had a faraway expression on his face, a slight curve upturning his lips, obviously wholly unaffected by this kind of provocation. It was rather Shen Qinghong whose darkened face showed how he'd been impacted by this exchange. When he heard that the geniuses of the Sacred Sword Palace had already made it to the sage realm, and saw that he still remained that one step from this advancement, it made him feel quite dejected. Jiang Chen, on the other hand, had come to the silent conclusion that the Sacred Sword Palace and Regal Pill Palace were far from friends. They might even be rivals.

Indeed, Elder Yun Nie spoke lowly, "Relations between the Sacred Sword Palace and our Regal Pill Palace have chilled due to a dispute over a vein of spirit energy a few decades ago. The old palace head had yet to pass on then, and he used the strength of the eighth level sage realm to thoroughly suppress Wang Jianyu to seize the spirit vein."

So that was what had happened, no wonder Wang Jianyu was so hostile towards them. When the old palace head had passed on, the sect had hastily erected Dan Chi as his successor. Honestly, it'd been slightly forcing Dan Chi beyond his abilities, akin to driving a donkey to dance. However, Dan Chi had prevailed mightily against adverse forces even at his young age, which resulted in him winning support from all over the sect. Even Elder Lian Cheng, the one who had been most heavily favored to be the next palace head, had to admire Dan Chi's charisma and methods.

Honored Master Tian Ming chuckled, "Ole brother Dan Chi,

Wang Jianyu's vile mouth is renowned throughout the Myriad Domain. Come, let us walk over as well. My disciples are waiting to greet you. Did you know that you're the goal that the younger generation works towards? You are their idol at having gained control of the Regal Pill Palace at less than fifty years old!"

Palace Head Dan Chi laughed loudly. "I'm afraid I'll have to blush from old brother's words."

The group headed in as they chatted and laughed, with an immediate increase in people as they walked into Rippling Mirage Hall. Those of the 6 fourth rank sects were the center of attention no matter where they went.

As Palace Head Dan Chi walked in, many from the fifth rank sects walked up to greet him courteously. There were eight spots each in the Pill Battles for the 6 fourth rank sects, and four spots each for the 20 fifth rank sects. The strength of the fifth rank sects was obviously far inferior to that of the fourth rank sects. Each fourth rank sect was roughly the combined strength of three to five of their weaker brethren. A strong fourth rank sect like the Great Cathedral might even be ten times the strength of a fifth rank sect!

It could be seen that the various Myriad Domain sects were placing great emphasis on the Pill Battles, as all the sect heads had personally led the groups from their sects. Several heavyweights standing at the most prominent position focused their gazes over at Dan Chi and Tian Ming when the two walked in. When Jiang Chen looked back over, he saw that there were seven sitting at a long table.

“You can move about freely for a while, I will be speaking to the sect heads for a bit.” Dan Chi spoke as he moved in that direction with Tian Ming. “The four sitting together in that direction are the family heads of the four great families in the Great Cathedral. They are the strongest four in the Cathedral and are at least sixth level sage realm. The strongest of them is the head of the Sacred Elephant family. At ninth level sage realm, he is widely held as the strongest expert in the Myriad Domain.

“You all have just met Wang Jianyu. You should’ve met Sect Head Zhu of the Tristar Sect previously, and no matter whoever else, you should never overlook the wizened elder in the corner. He looks simple and honest, like a farmer from the countryside, but he is one of the characters you should be the most careful of in the Myriad Domain. Some would rather offend the head of the Sacred Elephant than this elder from the Walkabout Sect. He’s Sect Head Wei Wuying and he shares a similar cultivation level with Honored Master Tian Ming. However, his skills in poison make him devious and mysterious, and incredibly hard to defend against.”

Judging from the set up, it was apparent that the Great Cathedral was the strongest amongst the six great sects in the Myriad Domain. All of the others had only the sect head sitting at the table, but the Great Cathedral had all four family heads present. They didn’t seem out of place at all since no one doubted their right to sit there.

Wang Jianyu’s obvious display of his power made Jiang Chen recall Feng Wanjian, the one who’d been present on that trip to the wood spirit spring. Their styles were very similar. Those who liked to show off their abilities may be strong, but they didn’t inspire fear. The Walkabout Sect was unpredictable and eerie, just like

Sect Head Wei Wuying, who was still insisting on sitting in the most remote corner even when everyone was together. He was one of those who instinctively concealed himself deeply. Compared to everyone else, this was the type that was frightening.

Tristar Sect Head Zhu seemed to be middle of the pack from all aspects. He never sought the limelight and was the sect head that kept the lowest profile in the Myriad Domain. Honored Master Tian Ming was the nice guy of the Myriad Domain. With a smooth and tactful personality, he only spoke good words, and never offended anyone. In contrast, the Great Cathedral was the most domineering. It was just as Xu Gang and Yue Pan had demonstrated during the trip to the spirit spring, they were both domineering and intelligent. The Great Cathedral was indeed the first sect in the Myriad Domain, and had always viewed themselves as such as well.

Elder Yun Nie was naturally quite popular in these kinds of situation. Many old friends came up to chat with him, and he spoke to the four youngsters, “You all should go and mingle. Young folks should interact with each other more.” He left the four where they were and went off to catch up with several old friends.

It was Mu Gaoqi’s first time at such a celebrated gathering, and so he felt more or less ill at ease. Jiang Chen however, was cool and collected, showing not the slightest hint of nervousness. This slightly surprised even Ling Bi’er, someone used to gatherings like these. Junior brother Jiang Chen was from a small place like the sixteen kingdoms, and logically shouldn’t have seen much of scenes like these. She’d been worried that he wouldn’t be used to things.

But now it seemed that she'd been overly worried. Ever since the two had struck up a friendship, Ling Bi'er had felt closer to Jiang Chen and would sometimes think on his behalf in things.

Shen Qinghong had always fancied himself the boss of the younger generation of the Regal Pill Palace. He took the opportunity to laugh heartily, "Junior sister Bi'er, you and I are more familiar with the various disciples of the great sects. Why don't you show junior brother Jiang and Mu around?"

Ling Bi'er's delicate brows knitted together slightly. "Senior brother Shen, please call me junior sister Ling instead."

For some reason, she had an instinctive rejection of Shen Qinghong being so forward as to call her so intimately. She was even faintly repulsed by it. She had somehow relegated "Bi'er" as her private property and refused to allow just anyone to call her that.

Shen Qinghong felt slightly awkward, but still smiled dashingly. "Junior sister Ling, it's our two junior brothers' first time at such a gathering in the Myriad Domain. We should show off our attitudes as their senior brother and sister."

Ling Bi'er nodded slightly but didn't say anything, unconsciously flicking a glance at Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen shrugged. "Everyone can do as they wish. What do you think, Gaoqi?"

Mu Gaoqi was quite honest, “I’ll follow Brother Chen.”

When Shen Qinghong saw Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi thus, he only thought it was because they were feeling self conscious about their low cultivation level and inwardly sniggered. He struck up an elegant air and said to Ling Bi’er, “It looks like junior brother Jiang and Mu aren’t quite interested. Junior sister Ling, why don’t you take a spin with me? I took a look and saw that each sect has basically sent out their strongest line-up. This is indeed a grand gathering.”

When Ling Bi’er saw that Jiang Chen had no intention of taking a walk around, she was naturally disinterested as well. She responded faintly, “I’m a bit tired after the long journey. You go, senior brother Shen, I’ll stay here and take care of the junior brothers.”

Shen Qinghong was shamed and angered by Ling Bi’er’s repeated rejection. He had long since viewed Ling Bi’er as a chunk of meat for his own consumption, and had even often fantasized about the beautiful scene of taking both sisters at the same time. When he saw how indifference was written all over Ling Bi’er’s icy cool face, it was obvious that she wasn’t that interested in him. This poured a bucket of cold water all over Shen Qinghong’s pride and self respect. However, he possessed some shrewdness and understood the theory of haste not necessarily being a path to success. He comforted himself with the thought that Ling Bi’er was uninterested in anything right now because of her father’s illness. One day, I’ll get both sisters!

He flashed a gallant smile as his thoughts traveled down this path. “Since this is the case, this foolish brother will not continue to force junior sister. I will go catch up with a few old friends.”

Shen Qinghong obviously wanted to flaunt to his network as he started continuously greeting others after taking a few steps forward. He was the top disciple in the Regal Pill Palace in name, so others naturally had to give him a bit of face. In this regard, it rather appeared that he knew a lot of people and was quite popular.

He was quite proud of himself and looked at Ling Bi’er every now and then. However, his actions were merely playing to the gallery in Ling Bi’er’s eyes, not to mention that her thoughts weren’t on him at all. Shen Qinghong was flirting with someone who was completely blind to his efforts.

“Long time no see, junior sister Ling.”

A green shadow suddenly flashed out from a pillar to the left. A young cultivator in the outfit of a Walkabout Sect disciple walked over, smiling merrily at Ling Bi’er.

When she saw this person, a hint of distaste flashed through her previously distant eyes.

“Junior sister Ling, do you not remember your foolish brother after just two years? Do you know how painfully I’ve yearned for you in these two years?” The young man had an exaggerated expression on his face that was tempered with a few hints of

sinister ruthlessness, giving others an eerie and forbidding feeling. It seemed that the entire Walkabout Sect subscribed to this style.

Ling Bi'er spoke indifferently. "My memory isn't too good. Who are you?"

The man laughed leisurely and smacked his forehead in an overdramatic fashion. "Ai, it looks like junior sister Ling still holds a grudge against me. I've been thinking of your father's matter every day the past two years, and as long as the junior sister is willing to marry me, I, Wei Qing, guarantee that I will cure your father's Miasma."

When Ling Bi'er had been unable to find help in the Regal Pill Palace, she'd once visited the Walkabout Sect by herself and called upon many poison experts. Wei Qing was the one most adept with poison in the younger generation and furthermore was the sect head's nephew. That made him one of the most popular people in the younger generation of the Walkabout Sect.

When he'd set eyes on Ling Bi'er, it was as if he'd seen a fairy. Compared to the scheming and caustic women of the Walkabout Sect, he'd fallen in love with Ling Bi'er's heavenly demeanor. However, she was quickly on her guard when she saw how exaggerated and uncircumspect he was. This kid was just like the lecherous farts in the Walkabout Sect, only thinking of how to conquer Ling Bi'er and not bothering with the Miasma at all.

When Ling Bi'er thought of matters of the past, she naturally wasn't kindly disposed towards those from the Walkabout Sect. She responded frostily, "No need, my Regal Pill Palace was founded

on the basis of pill dao and so will have the antidote sooner or later."

Wei Qing chuckled, "If the Regal Pill Palace could find a way, you wouldn't have gone to my Walkabout Sect either. Why must you keep me at arm's lengths after two years? How do you know I'm unable to cure the Miasma if you don't even give me a chance?"

While this person looked urbane and genteel, he actually had a gift for shameless, tireless pursuit.

Chapter 535: Femme Fatale?

That fellow hadn't received the slightest bit of favor from Ling Bi'er when he'd coaxed and pestered her incessantly with his pursuit before. His desire to conquer Ling Bi'er had only grown increasingly fierce over the years, almost developing into one of his internal demons.

Such was humanity sometimes. The more one couldn't obtain something, the more they would desire it.

As a genius of the younger generation in the Walkabout Sect, Wei Qing thought very highly of himself with his impressive background. He felt that he was more than a good match for Ling Bi'er. Although she was a genius of the Regal Pill Palace, she didn't have much of a foundation or a decent backer. But he... he was different. He had extraordinary potential, a powerful background, and was one of the candidates to inherit the Walkabout Sect in the future.

In his eyes, there shouldn't be any difficulty in him pursuing Ling Bi'er. However, he was different from Shen Qinghong. Although the latter also liked Ling Bi'er, he still had that bit of backbone that made him retain his manners.

Wei Qing was born in the Walkabout Sect, a sect that didn't care about bearing or demeanor. They were proponents of practicality and only cared about results, never minding the methods used to reach them. Therefore, Wei Qing only knew how to badger and hound, backed by an unending drive to never stop until he reached his goal.

Shen Qinghong had yet to walk far when he suddenly heard someone harass Ling Bi'er. In his eyes, this was someone blatantly making moves on his woman! His face frosted over as he walked back and stopped in front of Wei Qing. "Wei Qing, what do you mean by this?"

Wei Qing didn't think much of this new face in front of him and responded in exaggerated tones. "Yo! Isn't this that first genius of the Regal Pill Palace?"

Shen Qinghong bit his words off coldly, "My house's junior sister Ling doesn't welcome you. Stay away from her."

Wei Qing had a very thick face and didn't feel ashamed about his actions at all. "What? Are you jealous? Haha, I say, you should give up! They say that those at the waterfront pavilion are the first to catch the rising moon. You've been in such an advantageous position for years but still failed! It's obvious that junior sister Ling isn't the slightest bit interested in you. Brother Shen, why not give the chance to me? I'm sure we'll be able to come to an agreement."

Shen Qinghong was incensed. "Piss off!"

Wei Qing's face darkened. "Shen Qinghong, I'm trying to give you face here!"

"Are you going to leave or not?" Shen Qinghong projected a domineering aura. In terms of cultivation, this Wei Qing was only at the peak of eighth level origin realm, and would be a pushover if

it came to a fight.

A hint of a violent light started twinkling in Wei Qing's eyes as he nodded lightly. "Good, very good. Shen Qinghong, you better not bump into me in Mt. Rippling Mirage. If that happens, my face is the last thing you'll ever see!"

If it'd been anyone else at eighth level origin realm speaking these words to Shen Qinghong, a half step sage realm, they'd be made fun of as a laughingstock. However, those of the Walkabout Sect were known for being insidious and cunning, and very adept at using poison. It would be impossible to stay on guard once they employed poison at a gathering like this.

A trace of wariness flashed through Shen Qinghong's heart, but now that things had developed to this point, he could only continue in the same vein. He snorted coldly in response, "Just you wait!"

He'd already made up his mind that if he saw Wei Qing in Mt. Rippling Mirage, he would make the first move and use his strength to completely suppress Wei Qing.

As the two conducted this verbal duel, they suddenly discovered that Ling Bi'er had already taken Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi away to another corner.

Wei Qing snorted coldly. "Shen Qinghong, you're hallucinating if you think the other party is willing. Did you think you were the hero saving the beauty? She thinks nothing of your act at all!"

A shadow passed over Shen Qinghong's face. As he watched Ling Bi'er's departing back, he was assaulted by a mix of negative emotions. He rather envied Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi. Would junior sister Ling rather be with them than me?

One had to say, Ling Bi'er was the center of the younger generation's attention no matter where she went. She was the dream lover of all the disciples in the Rosy Valley of the Regal Pill Palace, and was also the focus of everyone's attentions in the entire Myriad Domain.

"It's been a few years, junior sister Ling. Your beauty has surpassed itself again!"

"Junior sister Ling, this foolish brother is Zhu Feiyang from the Tristar Sect. Do I have the honor of having the junior sister enjoy a drink with me?"

"Junior sister Ling..."

People seemed to arrive in an unending stream of intrusions, rapidly pushing at the upper limits of her tolerance. Any other time, she would've graced them with an cool expression, but this time, Jiang Chen was with her. Her irritation only grew with these never-ending pick up lines. She could hardly wait for the pill competitions to begin.

Jiang Chen also seemed to detect Ling Bi'er's frustration as he raised an idea, "Senior sister Bi'er, it's quite boring here; why

don’t we walk around elsewhere?”

Mu Gaoqi hastened to agree. “Yes yes, let’s walk around elsewhere. Brother Chen, you go walk with senior sister Ling. I’ll go find my honored master.”

Jiang Chen laughed lightly. “And what do you need from your honored master? Walk with us.”

Ling Bi’er nodded. Although she had some good feelings towards Jiang Chen, she would be at a bit of a loss if she was left alone with him. She grew even more panicked when she saw how ambiguous Mu Gaoqi’s tone was, as if trying to create an opportunity for the two of them. Unbeknownst to her, her nervousness was also spiced with a bit of anticipation.

The three were just about to step outside when Wei Qing swaggered over in pursuit. A cheeky grin split his face as he spoke boisterously, “Junior sister Ling, it is rare that the six sects find the time to meet. Why is junior sister not taking advantage of this opportunity that comes but once in a blue moon? Why waste this great chance to interact and spar with the top geniuses of the Myriad Domain on two junior brothers who don’t amount to much? Don’t you think that this is a grievous pity?”

Jiang Chen’s originally good mood evaporated when he heard those words. When these fellows had continuously come to chat up Ling Bi’er, he hadn’t been in a position to say much. But this Walkabout Sect fellow was mocking both him and Mu Gaoqi in his attempt to pick her up! What junior brothers who don’t amount to much? Jiang Chen’s footsteps halted and he snorted derisively.

“Top genius? Do you mean yourself?”

Wei Qing had always occupied a lofty position in his sect, and had voiced such arrogant words that blatantly disrespected those around him who knew how many times in his thirty years of life. Those who he looked down upon had never dared talk back, and he’d truly only viewed Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi as minor characters just now. His thoughts had been completely occupied by Ling Bi’er. So when Jiang Chen retorted, his first reaction was a shocked blink before his temper flared. His face grew dark as he aggressively responded, “What? You got something to say?”

Jiang Chen had an unconcerned expression. “So what if I do?”

Wei Qing chuckled coldly. “When Shen Qinghong tried to play the hero saving the beauty just now, I could still view him as an opponent. But you… what the hell are you?”

It was obvious that Jiang Chen’s cultivation level at earth origin realm was utter trash in Wei Qing’s eyes. He might possibly be a pill dao genius in the Regal Pill Palace, but when had Wei Qing given a pill dao genius any respect?

“Junior brother, pay no heed to such pointless people. Let’s just go.” Ling Bi’er obviously didn’t want her own matters to draw in Jiang Chen as well. However, one’s control slips when one’s mind is preoccupied with worry. In fact, things had been manageable when she had stayed quiet. Now that she’d spoken, she’d unconsciously revealed the fact that she cared about Jiang Chen.

Wei Qing's shifty gaze immediately detected this subtle undercurrent. His gaze turned frigid and his heart lurched. He immediately started assessing Jiang Chen coldly. Is Ling Bi'er's taste so different from most that she likes the junior brothers of her own sect? Sizing up Jiang Chen, Wei couldn't find anything special about the kid in front of him. At most, he could admit that Jiang Chen had slightly better visuals.

Jiang Chen had no desire to spar verbally as he nodded in acquiescence to Ling Bi'er's words. He ignored Wei Qing's territorial gaze and walked off beside Ling Bi'er.

Aren't you pursuing Ling Bi'er, hmm? Jiang Chen purposefully shifted closer to her, maintaining a distance that didn't hint at anything, but also indicated that their relationship was closer than normal.

Indeed, Wei Qing glowered with jealousy when he saw. How could he not tell that this minor character from the Regal Pill Palace was doing this on purpose, and Ling Bi'er was playing along with him!? He felt like a clown, as if he'd completely been made a fool.

"Brat, you'd better pray for your own well-being that you don't make it into Mt. Rippling Mirage!" Wei Qing's teeth made an audible sound as he ground them in anger.

Shen Qinghong suddenly drifted across to him, not losing an opportunity to mock, "How about it, hmm? The vaunted Sir Wei turned down by the beauty. Do you feel like you're sweeping the floors with your self respect?"

Wei Qing's original hostility was actually swept away when he saw Shen Qinghong. He laughed coldly, "Shen Qinghong, what are you strutting about for? Is Ling Bi'er any better to you?"

Shen Qinghong was speechless, and the two actually shared a moment in common misery.

"What's that kid's background?" Although Wei Qing didn't think much of anything about Jiang Chen, and frankly couldn't even be bothered to ask about this minor character's name, the fires of envy within were like a poisonous viper gnawing at his heart, filling him with unspeakable discomfort.

"Heh, have you not heard of my sect allying with the Precious Tree Sect?"

Wei Qing blinked and then seemed to recall something. "He's the Precious Tree Sect disciple? What's his name again?"

"Haha, Sir Wei should go obtain his own intelligence. When all is said and done, we're of the same sect. How could I ever betray one of my own?" Shen Qinghong was secretly delighted to see Wei Qing aiming his ire at Jiang Chen, but maintained a pure and lofty look as he walked away with a dashing flair.

A corner of Wei Qing's mouth twitched as he snorted coldly. "Posturing buffoon. Is everyone from the Regal Pill Palace this fake?"

The trio from earlier walked out of the side door of the Hall and soon arrived in a backyard.

“Junior brother, that Wei Qing is sinister and scheming, and eschews all morals and principles in the pursuit of his goals. You must be on your guard after offending him with those words. As narrow-minded as he is, he is certain to take revenge. I’m worried…”

Jiang Chen nodded slightly. “Don’t worry senior sister. I’ll be fine as long as he doesn’t irritate me. If he does, that day just happened to be his unluckiest day.”

This wasn’t Jiang Chen tooting his own horn, but that he really wasn’t looking twice at these so-called poison experts. He was completely immune to poisons, so what would he fear Wei Qing for? Not to mention that apart from the Goldwing Swordbirds, he’d brought all his other strong spirit creatures this time as well. Long Xiaoxuan, the Goldbiter Rats and the ancient Golden Cicada were all trump cards he was keeping in reserve.

He’d come to strip Mt. Rippling Mirage of all its treasures, and the Goldbiter Rats were here precisely to make off with all of the spirit herbs on the mountain. Long Xiaoxuan was shaping up to be a great assistant. He’d been becoming irritated with boredom in the wood spirit spring anyhow, and it was a perfect time to take him out on a trip and learn more of the world. Long Xiaoxuan himself was eager for nothing less.

When she saw how confident Jiang Chen was, Ling Bi'er was left without anything to say. She could only secretly make up her mind that if she entered Mt. Rippling Mirage, she would think of ways to protect Jiang Chen from Wei Qing's revenge. Even if it impacted the amount of time she had to harvest spirit herbs.

Chapter 536: Baffling Killing Intent

Roughly an hour later, a bell rang through Rippling Mirage hall, summoning the scattered disciples back. The 6 fourth rank sects sat in the first row, a clear marker of their position. The 20 fifth rank sects were relegated to the second row. Whether it be their sect head or disciples, every one of them kept a lower and more docile profile. The sect heads of the six great sects were all sitting on a dais, their stature and grandeur evident at first glance.

Due to the brevity of his tenure and his cultivation being the weakest at present, Palace Head Dan Chi was sitting at the very end. However, no one would think less of him because of his position. Everyone present knew that this sect head at the end could very possibly overtake the others in another hundred years and sit at the head of the six great sects. After all, of those present, the youngest excluding Dan Chi was well over two hundred years old. On the other hand, Dan Chi was less than a hundred years old, almost adolescent in the lifespan of martial dao. One was still a teenager after two hundred years of martial practice.

Contrasting Palace Head Dan Chi's position, the Regal Pill Palace was still number one of the Pill Battles, and retained a corresponding position, even if they'd only won by the skin of their teeth. Thus, they stood first amongst the six great sects. This immensely shocked Mu Gaoqi and made him feel quite proud, whereas Shen Qinghong, used to throwing his weight around, put on the indifferent facade he so loved.

Ling Bi'er's mind was filled with thoughts of her father's ailment, so she naturally wasn't thinking about the honor of being first. Perhaps to her, it was the natural course of order that the

Regal Pill Palace was ranked first since it'd been founded for pill dao. It'd be odd indeed if her sect wasn't first. Only Jiang Chen's thoughts had long since flown to Mt. Rippling Mirage. He was giving free rein to his imagination of what he could find there.

Although these were the Pill Battles of Mt. Rippling Mirage, the judges were also the sect heads of the six sects. Of course, since they were all renowned personages and heavyweights, they wouldn't actually resort to cheating when judging. As the representative of the champion of the last Pill Battles, Palace Head Dan Chi was in charge of making the opening remarks.

"Everyone, we stand here today not just in front of a sacred mountain that harbors spirit herbs. Mt. Rippling Mirage represents the legacy of the Myriad Domain, an everlasting testament to our history. It has witnessed the glories of the Myriad Domain's yesteryear and has sadly watched its decline due to certain disastrous occurrences. When we cultivators enter the mountain, remember that we are not merely participating in the Pill Battles of today. When we enter the mountain to harvest herbs, we should remember our rich history and find bravery after experiencing shame."

The other heavyweights were slightly taken aback by Palace Head Dan Chi's words. They'd thought that Dan Chi would merely announce the rules to the Pill Battles, not that he would go and mention the history behind the Pill Battles, and much less that he'd reference the history of the Myriad Empire's decline and use it to encourage the cultivators of the Myriad Domain. His words weren't inappropriate, but they still felt a bit odd in the ears of those assembled.

It was a good thing then that Dan Chi didn't continue in this vein and switched to the rules. "For the Pill Battles this year, there will be a senior group and a junior group. The top thirty of each group will earn the right to enter Mt. Rippling Mirage. After prolonged discussion with everyone, the entrance method this time will be different from the usual. The top ten can enter for twenty days, the next ten for ten, and the final set of ten can enter in the last five days."

This meant that the top ten would benefit from the longest period of time, a full twenty days, to harvest spirit herbs. The next ten would have to wait until ten days had elapsed before they could enter, and the final group of ten would only be able to take advantage of the last five days.

This was a clear delineation between the various parties.

Dan Chi continued. "This arrangement has been made to increase the amount of competition and enable pill masters of different skills to receive different levels of benefits. It will also heighten the differences between various skill levels."

This arrangement was actually much fairer. Otherwise, if everyone surged in at the same time, disregarding their scores, it would actually be unfair to the pill masters.

Dan Chi paused purposefully at this point to give everyone time to digest the new rules.

To be honest, there was quite a bit of competition to reach the

top 30, but even then there were a couple of spots for the fifth rank sects to fight over. The thirty spots each for the senior and junior groups meant for a total of sixty spots. The combined representatives from the six great sects numbered only forty eight. This meant that at least twelve spots would remain for the fifth rank sects even if everyone from the six great sects made it into the top 30.

Of course, as a fourth rank sect, the odds were astronomically low for them to avoid taking a sport in the top 30. For the 20 fifth rank sects, fighting over the last twelve spots was where their true efforts would come to bear. Although, there would be that small hope that one of them would be able to seize the food from the tiger's mouth and take one of the fourth rank sect's spots.

With four entrants each from the fifth rank sects, their participants numbered eighty. When eighty people fought over twelve spots, that meant roughly one out of eight would be successful. This was indeed tough competition.

However, the fifth rank sects didn't dare complain. When the Myriad Empire had still existed, the gap between the fourth and fifth rank sects hadn't been that great, and spot allocation for Mt. Rippling Mirage hadn't seen that much of a difference. But now, the six great sects almost completely controlled events of the Myriad Domain. The fifth rank sects could participate in some affairs of the region in name, but they'd largely been marginalized.

As a case in point, there was no longer a path for a fifth rank sect to be promoted to fourth rank. Nor were there any resources or opportunities available to them to change their lot.

After Elder Yun Nie heard the rules, he spoke to the other seven representing the Regal Pill Palace. “The rules are different this time, so I hope no one keeps anything back and gives it their all. It’s said that the Walkabout Sect has sent a well rounded team this time and is rather formidable. The Tristar Sect has also shown the signs of an unexpected momentum, so we must stay on our guard. These two are our biggest rivals, and have even released word that they want to take the position of Pill Battle champion from us.”

No matter what internal conflict the Regal Pill Palace may have, everyone was a fellow comrade-in-arms when they walked out on the stage that was the Myriad Domain. They all fought for the Regal Pill Palace and their own benefits at the same time.

Everyone nodded with grave expressions. Vice head Wang Yue was a firecracker and snorted. “The feck is the Tristar Sect? How much ability do they have to their name that they can go head to head with us in pill dao? I would believe it if you said Walkabout Sect. But the Tristar Sect has always been mediocre to lower tier in the Pill Battles. What right do they have to speak tough words like these?”

Ouyang De was similarly dismissive, feeling that the Tristar Sect was just inviting humiliation down on themselves since they dared publicly lay down a challenge. The Regal Pill Palace’s true opponent was the Walkabout Sect. They were also a sect strong in pill dao, but favored sinister ways and the usage of poison. However, they all equally valued pill dao and had always been the Regal Pill Palace’s strong rival. As for the other sects, the Regal Pill Palace didn’t feel like they were of any threat.

Elder Yun Nie specifically sent a message to Jiang Chen, “Jiang Chen, I have one request. I hope that not only do you guarantee a spot in the top ten, but that you show off all your abilities. Personal scores will be added to the final score that determines our overall ranking. The champion of the personal competition will also benefit from additional points, and this will play a critical role in the rankings.”

If it hadn’t been for Elder Yun Nie’s reminder, Jiang Chen really had just planned on scraping by in the top ten. He hadn’t wanted to seek out the limelight in this kind of occasion. To put things bluntly, he was only here for the spirit herbs.

“Jiang Chen, although Palace Head Dan Chi haven’t given you explicit orders, he must also wish for you to use your full strength and defend our position as reigning champion. I wasn’t being an alarmist just now when I spoke of the Tristar and Walkabout Sects. There is indeed a strange atmosphere of energy about the Tristar Sect. No one else might think much of it, but I have indeed received some news this time that the Tristar Sect has been up to a lot.”

The Tristar Sect?

Jiang Chen’s gaze happened to glance in their direction, but immediately discovered a similarly sharp glance shooting towards him at almost the same time. When their eyes met, a hint of killing intent flashed through the other’s eyes and vanished. This person was as if a stone sculpture. He had sharply chiseled features and projected immense calm, giving others a feeling of deep

profoundness.

A thought struck Jiang Chen; this person actually gave him the feeling of being quite uncommon. He'd been observing the representatives from all the sects after entering the Rippling Mirage Hall, paying attention to each of the young geniuses of the six great sects. Although this was the Pill Battles, at least half of each sect's martial dao geniuses had arrived as well. Some of the top geniuses were also showing themselves.

There weren't many who could leave an impression on Jiang Chen, but the look that this person leveled at him made him take note. When he took another look at this person, Jiang Chen saw someone as calm as the unruffled, serene seas, still giving one the feeling of an unfathomable depth.

"The Tristar Sect actually has such a character? This person's demeanor gives off an otherworldly feeling that exceeds the Myriad Domain. Where did that kind of feeling come from?"

Even if there were differences between the various top geniuses in the Myriad Domain, it would be as minor as the difference between ninety steps and a hundred. Yet this person made Jiang Chen feel that the gap between the top geniuses of the Myriad Domain and this person was as if ninety steps and hundred fifty steps. If this had been the only case, Jiang Chen would've merely paid some more attention to this person. But when their gazes had met just now, Jiang Chen had vaguely detected a hint of killing intent from the other.

This greatly surprised Jiang Chen. He hadn't had any prior

interactions with the Tristar Sect and had never seen this person before. What kind of grudge would he have with this person? What would make someone meeting him for the first time have such a mindset?

He inwardly snapped to solemn attention, feeling that something was afoot. However, he couldn't immediately come up with a reason. "I need to be on my guard against this one since he wishes to kill me." Jiang Chen increased his awareness and started observing this person through Psychic's Head instead of God's Eye.

However, this person concealed himself well and was as tranquil as a lake's waters after concealing the light of his edge. But, that brief instant just now had allowed Jiang Chen to understand the surging undercurrents hidden beneath this exterior. This person was an uncommon person that he had to guard against.

"Senior sister, do you know the people from the Tristar Sect?" Jiang Chen suddenly turned to ask Ling Bi'er in a low voice.

Ling Bi'er looked over the Tristar Sect. "I know two of them. Zhu Feiyang, the direct grandson of the sect head, and Mei Ruoxi, a female genius disciple. The other two are unfamiliar to me, and they likely haven't shown themselves before. I would've remembered them had I seen them even once."

Ling Bi'er had a photographic memory. Otherwise, with her lack of an impressive background, how would she have become a top three genius in the Rosy Valley at the tender age of twenty?

Chapter 537: A Grand Bet

Jiang Chen only needed to take another glance around to know that that person wasn't Zhu Feiyang. That was because Zhu Feiyang was just like his name, full of good spirits, and similar in bearing to Tristar Sect Head Zhu by his side. Since it wasn't the Tristar Sect's top genius, but one with an even more frightening potential than him, this made Jiang Chen even more suspicious.

Feiyang means soaring, glorious spirits, and Zhu means well wishes.

"His killing intent might be understandable if he admired senior sister Bi'er and was someone she knew, just like Wei Qing. But if this person is someone the senior sister doesn't know, he's someone she's never interacted with before. There's naturally no talk of love for the senior sister then, so this hostility and killing intent has a different source than Wei Qing's."

But apart from matters between men and women, what reason would this person have to hate Jiang Chen?

Jiang Chen mulled over his past again and again. He'd only interacted with the Tristar Sect disciples during the wood spirit spring trip, but no one in the outside world knew of that expedition. Otherwise, Jiang Chen's murder of Elder Wei Wudao from the Walkabout Sect would've absolutely raised a great uproar.

As the opening ceremony continued, Palace Head Dan Chi announced the topics of the pill competitions on behalf of the six great sects. The first of fire control, second of cauldron pre-

heating, third of cultivating spirit herbs, and fourth of refining pills.

In reality, although the level of competition would change from year to year, the content of pill competitions would always remain the same. The only difference was that the Pill Battles emphasized practical application and noticeably tested less of theory. This was a limitation that the other sects had imposed on the Regal Pill Palace. After all, the Regal Pill Palace had deep foundations and the richest knowledge banks. Forcing the competition to have very little to do with theory was undoubtedly a kind of limitation on the Regal Pill Palace.

Of course, Palace Head Dan Chi completely understood this, but also was fully aware that it was pointless to object when the other sects had reached an accord on this. Therefore, he decided to pretend that he knew nothing.

After the rules were announced, each sect sent out representatives to swear that they wouldn't cheat in the Pill Battles and affirmed a declaration of fair play. When all of this was complete, all sides announced a brief break. The Pill Battles would officially commence after two hours.

Having received Elder Yun Nie's request, Jiang Chen knew that he couldn't slack off in the upcoming competition. He had to try his best to obtain the championship. He wasn't opposed to this, since obtaining the champion's rank wasn't detrimental to his plans. Dan Chi and Elder Yun Nie had both helped him immensely, so it would be a kind of repayment on them if he took home the championship.

Jiang Chen sat on a chair and closed his eyes, using Boulder's Heart to finish adjusting his mentality and clearing his mind of the matters of the outside world. Mu Gaoqi was learning from his lessons with Jiang Chen, and imitated whatever his brother did. He too took a seat to meditate, not wandering around.

It was rather Shen Qinghong who seemed to flourish at these gatherings. He kept hunting down others to chat and joke around with, as if trying to show that he had friends throughout the world. Elder Yun Nie sighed inwardly when he saw Shen Qinghong thus. Although Shen Qinghong's martial dao potential was good, his personality was already showing problematic signs.

At this point, Wei Qing suddenly jumped up from his seat with the Walkabout Sect, one next to the Regal Pill Palace. He smiled, "Everyone, everyone! It's rare that we have such a complete gathering of geniuses in the Myriad Domain. After all, the Pill Battles happen only once every thirty years. We're all young here, and so we should have the atmosphere of a group of youngsters gathering."

Wei Qing talked a good talk, but it was apparent that everyone knew this person was difficult to get along with. They allowed him to wax eloquent, but no one really responded to him. They all looked sideways at him, wondering what this fellow was cooking up again.

Wei Qing didn't mind this as he chuckled, "I propose setting up a bet."

Many eyes lit up when he mentioned the word ‘bet’. Very few geniuses were willing to admit that anyone was better than them, so there was always great interest in a bet. But they were also aware of who exactly was proposing this bet. Someone immediately interjected with a cold laugh, “Wei Qing, what kind of plot do you have this time? Out with it directly!”

“Right, speak plainly and don’t talk in circles. You Walkabout Sect people are never straight with your words; it’s so irritating listening to you.”

Wei Qing laughed. “It looks like everyone’s the impatient sort. Fine, then I’ll speak directly. I ask only this, how sure of victory are you all in the Pill Battles? To put it more bluntly, how many of us are here to seize the championship?”

Everyone reacted differently to the provocative question. There were more than ten disciples present who felt they had the right to attempt for the championship, and their eyes flicked towards Wei Qing as they waited to see just what he was up to.

Wei Qing laughed heartily. “I propose that we bet on the eventual champion. Since we’re all confident we’ll win, what’s there to be afraid of? I’ll start off in hopes of creating something wonderful. I bet twenty thousand spirit stones that I’ll win. Who dares bet against me?”

“Hmph, a bet is a bet. Who’s afraid of you? I, Lin Hai, will be the first to take a stand against you!” Lin Hai was a pill dao genius from the Dark North Sect and had come here with the intention of winning the championship.

Shen Qinghong's wealth was only surpassed by his love of flaunting it. Of course he would join in a bet when the forfeit was only twenty thousand spirit stones. He smiled, "How could I be absent from such a wondrous happening?"

"Count me in!" Zhu Feiyang, first disciple of the Tristar Sect, chuckled. He then looked at the person next to him with a faint smile. This person was the mysterious cultivator who had locked eyes with Jiang Chen previously and revealed a hint of killing intent.

Jiang Chen had been unobtrusively observing this mysterious cultivator, and saw his lip twist when he saw Zhu Feiyang look over, as if contemptuous of such a bet. In the end, though, he still nodded, "Since this is the case, I, Ding Tong, will participate as well."

Ding Tong?

Jiang Chen took silent note of this name and committed it to memory.

Shen Qinghong suddenly chuckled as well. "Junior brother Jiang Chen, you love to gamble in the Regal Pill Palace. What, did you give up gambling after setting foot in the outside world?"

Jiang Chen smiled and delivered a devastating response, "Twenty thousand spirit stones are too little. Why not fifty thousand?" He grinned afterwards, turning to Ling Bi'er and Mu

Gaoqi by his side. “Senior sister, Gaoqi, I didn’t bring that many spirit stones this time. I’ll have to borrow some from you guys first.”

Mu Gaoqi smiled, “No problem, Brother Chen always wins when he makes a move. I have roughly thirty thousand here, you can borrow it all!”

Ling Bi’er also seemed to be intrigued by Jiang Chen’s big move. She nodded, “I have thirty thousand here as well, take it all if you wish, junior brother.”

The words “take it all if you wish” bathed Shen Qinghong and Wei Qing’s hearts in flames of envy. The other geniuses who harbored affections for Ling Bi’er also quietly took their measure of Jiang Chen. They really didn’t understand why Ling Bi’er looked at this fellow differently.

“Hmph, a deadbeat who lives off women!” Wei Qing looked disdainfully at Jiang Chen. “Are you sure you’re in? This is a bet of who will become the champion. Do you really believe you have the right to participate?”

Jiang Chen smiled nonchalantly. “I just so happen to like gifting fancy, glittering spirit stones. What can you do about it? Don’t tell me you’re too chicken to follow my bet?”

Wei Qing laughed heartily. “Me? Afraid? What a joke! I’m just afraid that you won’t be able to explain yourself when you lose a woman’s money!”

Wei Qing spoke in a greatly exaggerated fashion and elicited a round of laughter from those present. Jiang Chen maintained his look of cool indifference on his face. How would such childish provocation rouse a reaction from him?

It was rather Ling Bi'er who fired back with a livid face, "Wei Qing, what are you going on about? Junior brother Jiang Chen is helping cure my father's Miasma. I would take out even three hundred thousand stones without hesitation if I could, not to mention a mere thirty thousand. How is he like you, someone who only flaps his lips without action?"

Mu Gaoqi also piped in from the side. "Looking down on my Brother Chen? What a joke, Wei Qing! You're not even fit to carry my Brother Chen's shoes with that little bit of skill of yours!"

Wei Qing's face frosted over as he looked at Shen Qinghong. "Do all you people from the Regal Pill Palace like to run your mouths?"

Shen Qinghong chuckled. "Sir Wei, junior brother Jiang Chen really does have good pill dao potential. Instead of beating around the bush, why don't you come straight out and say if you've the guts to bet fifty thousand spirit stones?"

Wei Qing laughed coldly, "Whoever doesn't dare to can cry uncle!" He looked around the premises. "Fifty thousand spirit stones. Speak up, whoever dares follow."

They were all top geniuses; which one of them would back down

in front of the others? Some of them immediately stood up to indicate that they would join. The bet soon collected nine participants.

Jiang Chen and Shen Qinghong represented the Regal Pill Palace; Wei Qing and Wei Xing'er from the Walkabout Sect; Lin Hai from the Dark North Sect; Wang Han from the Sacred Sword Palace; and finally, Yuan Yuan from the Sacred Ape family of the Great Cathedral.

Wang Han from the Sacred Sword Palace knew that he didn't have much hope in seizing the championship, but he couldn't have the Sacred Sword Palace alone have no representatives in the bet. The other five great sects all were participating, so it would only be a blemish on the Sacred Sword Palace if he didn't grit his teeth and sign up as the lone candidate.

First female genius Mei Ruoxi of the Tristar Sect had wanted to participate at first, but had given up in the last moment for unknown reasons.

The others, including Jiang Chen, all were supremely confident in their chances to win. As the banter escalated, the forfeit grew to four hundred and fifty thousand spirit stones.

Wei Qing smiled, "A bet is an elegant activity. I hope there's no one who can't take the loss graciously. Only the champion will walk off with all of the stones."

This amount of spirit stones was an enormous sum to anyone

here. Apart from Jiang Chen, almost everyone here were the wealthiest of the second generation in their sects. But even so, this was still a stunning amount of money. This merely added more motivation to seek the championship.

The elder of the various sects naturally wouldn't be against this. After all, competition amongst the geniuses would only spark greater fighting strength and dig out the limit of their capabilities. Although, once Jiang Chen brought all his abilities to bear, his chances of winning it all would be greater than any genius present.

Jiang Chen was completely delighted at the thought of four hundred and fifty thousand stones. He'd randomly thrown out the figure of fifty thousand, and hadn't thought that so many would take him up on it.

"It looks like all these top geniuses in the Myriad Domain are lovely whales, with plenty of spirit stones. It would be a waste to not take it from them." Jiang Chen had made up his mind. No matter what, he would bring home the championship of the personal competition!

Chapter 358: The Pill Battles Begin

“Go Brother Chen! Hahaha, you’ll be rich if you bring home the championship!” Mu Gaoqi was now Jiang Chen’s biggest and most ardent fan. He was completely certain that Jiang Chen would be the ultimate victor.

Ling Bi’er didn’t say anything, but the encouraging look in her eyes was also in obvious support of Jiang Chen seizing the championship.

Elder Yun Nie laughed heartily. “Good, good! Some motivation resulting from the clash and conflict of geniuses isn’t a bad thing either. I’m rather curious, who will eventually grab the seat of champion in this group?”

He was an elder of the Regal Pill Palace after all, so he wasn’t quite at liberty to step out and support Jiang Chen in front of Shen Qinghong.

The young geniuses were clashing fiercely, but the elders were quite calm and stately. It was apparent that most of the elders thought there to be very little doubt over the champion this year. In the end, the battle would come down to a scarce few.

The bet of four hundred fifty thousand spirit stones caused all the geniuses who weren’t participating to be quite envious. Those from the fifth rank sects were even more jealous. Born in a fifth rank sect, there was still a difference in pill dao between them and the top geniuses of the fourth rank sects. They could only stand off

to the side as bystanders in such a grand gathering as this.

Taking a step back, even if their pill dao cultivation was at the level where they could realistically fight for the championship, the sad reality was that they would then be low on funds. They wouldn't be able to suddenly take out fifty thousand upper rank spirit stones for a bet. Even the elders of a fifth rank sect would be hard pressed to do such a thing. Only the rich scions of the fourth rank sects would be able to be so free with their money.

The atmosphere had become quite charged after this grand bet was set up. The visual and psychological impact of four hundred and fifty thousand spirit stones stacked up in a corner was quite stimulating. All of the participating geniuses stayed silent in the remaining preparation time, each using the time to ready themselves and await the beginning of the competition.

"The time has arrived, will all participants enter the lobby for the contest of fire control. Elders to the left, geniuses to the right."

The lobby for the contest of fire control had once been a monumental undertaking by the Myriad Empire. There were a full three hundred and sixty fire control formations in this lobby. Each of them were independent of each other and served as the formations used in a competition of fire control.

There were thirty six sources of fire in each formation, each one a particular kind of flame found beneath the heavens. The battle of fire control would be determined by the number of flames a candidate could awaken within a set amount of time as well as the amount of resonance they could form with the fires.

The more they could awaken and resonate with, the more successful they were.

Each source of flame was ten points, making for a total for three hundred and sixty points. But if a candidate could awaken all thirty six flames within a set time, they would be awarded another forty points. That was to say, the highest number of points one could gain in this section was four hundred points.

“Everyone, enter your respective formations.”

There were observation platforms overlooking the lobby that allowed spectators to grasp the entire situation, forming a complete picture of what was going on. This was naturally where the judges were located, where the six great sect heads would be holding down the fort.

All of the contestants entered the formations according to their assigned number at that command.

Jiang Chen entered third; his number coming from the fact that the Regal Pill Palace had been champion of the last Pill Battles. As such, the numbering started from them. As the most senior disciple, Shen Qinghong was number one. Ling Bi’er was number two, Jiang Chen three and Mu Gaoqi four.

It wasn’t Jiang Chen’s first time participating in a fire control competition. He’d already done so once before when he’d first arrived at the Regal Pill Palace and competed with Yan Hongtu. He

had a number of things he wanted to test out in fire control, so he wasn't in a hurry to start when he entered the formation, instead spending time observing the formation.

Jiang Chen's accomplishments in the area of pill formations were nothing short of first-class. A glance here and a short look there was enough for him to understand the rough theory behind the formation and plumb the intricacies of its operations.

"This fire control formation isn't that complex. It merely uses a simple formation to induce all sorts of fires to make it convenient for pill refinement. This kind of formation is only an entry level formation in the greater picture of things, and likely isn't as profound as the entry formations of a divine level."

This formation naturally posed no difficulty to Jiang Chen, and he quickly gathered his thoughts. He formed a quick hand seal and ignited a flame in the palm of his hand.

There were three critical factors to activating the flames within the formation. Firstly, the cultivator needed to be equipped with the ability to summon flames, as in, they had to be able to be able to call flames themselves. Secondly, they needed to recognize the distinctive characteristics of each flame. Finally, they had to use various hand seals and their own fire element within them to trigger the flames within the formation and form a resonance with them.

Jiang Chen enjoyed an exceptional advantage in the form of clear insight into formations and a strong grasp of many types of fires. Not all fires could be triggered only after understanding them, but

comprehending the particular characteristics of the flame itself would make it easier to activate it using one's unique techniques.

The most adept pill masters would use the simplest and most effective ways of activating the flames. However, the most efficient path was something built upon rich knowledge and exemplary techniques. To his credit, Jiang Chen not only had deep knowledge, but had superb techniques to back him up. These were all advantages that none of the youngsters of this level of existence could measure up to. Therefore, although Jiang Chen's internal power of fire wasn't the most extraordinary, his uncommon wisdom and ways were enough to bridge this gap and send him bounding far ahead of the others.

"Although I have the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice, I've yet to absorb any high level fires of the heavens or earth. As such, my internal fires aren't particularly heaven defying. If I'm to refine high level pills, I'll have to do so through the aid of pill formations. However, there are some pills with harsh requirements that go beyond pill formations. It looks like I still need to find a strong fire of the world to bolster my foundations." Jiang Chen had already gone through several hand seals as his thoughts ran rapidly through his mind.

Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh...

Jiang Chen lit multiple flames in the formation like he was turning a magic trick. His extraordinary techniques dazzled the eyes of the beholder. His techniques were as extravagant as flowers raining from the sky. Each fire in the formation flared like a firework, brilliantly radiant.

However, he controlled the fires such that he kept a low profile in his small formation. The sect heavyweights observing the competition hadn't even had a chance to look over in his direction yet. Only Dan Chi's gaze never left Jiang Chen's formation. Although he also kept an eye on Shen Qinghong, Ling Bi'er, and Mu Gaoqi, his primary focus always remained with Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen's position now in the younger generation was now beyond anyone's, including Shen Qinghong's. Although Shen Qinghong had extraordinary martial dao potential, that was only the level of the Myriad Domain. To put it bluntly, it was pleasing to have a genius like this, but they wouldn't have much of an effect on the fortunes of the sect.

Jiang Chen however, was different. He had a particular bearing and potential to him that could affect the fortunes of the entire Regal Pill Palace, and possibly even the sect's destiny as well. This wasn't something that Dan Chi was making up, but a conclusion he'd reached after careful observation and repeated validation. With Jiang Chen and Elder Shun's relationship, how would Dan Chi not understand Jiang Chen's value to the Regal Pill Palace?

He even suspected now that the stunning natural phenomena he'd seen when allying with the Precious Tree Sect had been a result of Jiang Chen breaking through to the origin realm. He had no proof of it for now, but if his guess was valid, then Jiang Chen's potential would be truly monstrous. To elicit such phenomena when breaking through to the origin realm, this was absolutely someone with at least the potential of a Great Emperor!

Dan Chi's gaze remained glued to Jiang Chen. When he saw Jiang Chen's wondrous performance, he wondered, how is this a young genius controlling fire? This is absolutely the strongest pill dao legend of the Divine Abyss Continent controlling fire!

His superb control and amazing techniques left even an expert like Dan Chi guessing at their underlying theory. He only knew that while Jiang Chen's ways looked simple, they encompassed deep and complex meanings.

While Dan Chi watched Jiang Chen, the latter's movements didn't slow as they fluidly moved from seal to seal. Inexorable as the tides, those who didn't understand the theory behind this were watching a good show, but only experts could fully understand what was going on.

Finally, Dan Chi had identified the key to the matter. Although the other pill dao geniuses also activated each flame quickly, their movements were disjointed, with no continuity between lighting one fire and the next. It was as if they were hitting a wooden dummy, pausing, then moving onto the next one after they'd defeated the current one.

On the other hand, Jiang Chen was different. His movements seemed like one continuous motion. There was a connected theme behind the awakening of each flame, just like one playing the zither and brushing one's hands over the strings. The vibration of each string produced a flowing melody that gave listeners a strong, rhythmic feeling. Apart from Jiang Chen, no other genius possessed this coherence.

How would he be able to do this without possessing a full understanding of the formation and the flames? How else would he be able to do all this so easily and effortlessly, in a way that allowed all his movements to flow so smoothly together?

"Jiang Chen..." Dan Chi was completely delighted. "Just how many more surprises will you bring me?"

Having watched him for half the competition at this point, Dan Chi was certain that Jiang Chen would absolutely come out ahead in this topic. He took a look at the other three and saw that their progress was similar. Ling Bi'er was actually slightly ahead, and Mu Gaoqi was neck to neck with Shen Qinghong. Both of them were making steady headway.

Although Mu Gaoqi had an innate wood constitution of high order, his foundation was fundamentally weaker after all, and he'd lacked the sufficient time to grow. Bringing him to the Pill Battles this time was just to expose him to more of the world. Dan Chi hadn't actually expected Mu Gaoqi to try for the championship. After all, even the best potential needed time to grow. Mu Gaoqi was a long term reservoir of battle strength, and he represented the future of the Regal Pill Palace.

"Haha, Dan Chi, my Walkabout Sect will absolutely prevent your Regal Pill Palace from taking the championship again this time! My sect's Wei Xin'er is an innate fire constitution, and the thirty six flames..."

Walkabout Sect head Wei Wuying was about to boast to Dan Chi when he suddenly screeched to a halt halfway through, as if his

throat was constricted. His pupils contracted violently as his attention was caught by something in Jiang Chen's direction. It was his first time noticing this nameless young man from the Regal Pill Palace, but he was absolutely unable to move his eyes away!

Chapter 539: Champion Of Fire Control

As someone who sat as the head of the Walkabout Sect, how could Wei Wuying not see the intricacies of Jiang Chen's movements? A single look was all it took for him to be enthralled by Jiang Chen's techniques. Stunning technique, and a flawless rhythm, even Wei Wuying himself might not be able to replicate this process perfectly, let alone all the young geniuses present. The most frightening things was, not only was this Jiang Chen completing everything fluidly, he was far ahead of the others.

As a direct comparison, Wei Xing'er, his hopeful champion with the innate fire constitution was actually quite a ways behind Jiang Chen!

Dan Chi laughed leisurely, "I don't know about anything else, but the champion of fire control absolutely won't be coming from your Walkabout Sect today!"

Wei Wuying was speechless, and his gloomy, darkened face became incredibly sinister.

Another commotion started in a different area. "Everyone, look! That Tristar Sect disciple is actually stronger than even Zhu Feiyang?!"

Everyone looked over after this exclamation. It seemed that the fellow named Ding Tong had a mastery of fire control that allowed him to to exceed Zhu Feiyang's speed by a hair. One could even say the former had a clear advantage.

Dan Chi had originally only been paying attention to Zhu Feiyang, and had seen that his speed was comparable to Shen Qinghong. But Ding Tong was even faster than Zhu Feiyang, and even more mind bogglingly faster than Wei Xing'er. Although he was a little behind Jiang Chen, there wasn't much of a gap between the two!

"Tsk tsk, this is a huge dark horse! It looks like Ding Tong is going to lock down the champion of the fire controlling competition without a sound!"

"I hadn't believed the rumors beforehand about the rise of the Tristar Sect, but who would've thought that Ding Tong would be this extraordinary? Where did he come from? Everyone, have you heard of his name before?"

Tristar Sect Head Zhu smiled demurely. "You don't need to guess randomly, everyone. Ding Tong is a genius that my sect happened to chance upon. His emergence as a dark horse this time was something we anticipated as well."

It was obvious that no one had paid attention to Jiang Chen's performance.

However, at this point, Honored Master Tian Ming from the Dark North Sect suddenly grinned. "While Ding Tong may be good, he's not the best today. The true dark horse is in the Regal Pill Palace."

“The Regal Pill Palace?” Everyone turned their attention to that area and were instantly dumbstruck. Much like Wei Wuying, their expressions showed varying stages of petrification and amazement.

Two thirds of the time allotted had passed by now, and Jiang Chen was wrapping up. He’d already ignited thirty of the thirty six flames! And judging from his momentum, the remaining flames weren’t going to slow him down at all. He even seemed like he would light them up all in one go.

This pace was absolutely monstrous. Every single person present was an expert; how could they not understand the significance of what they beheld?”

“What.. What is that youngster’s name?” It was obvious that not everyone knew Jiang Chen, and many sect heavyweights looked curiously at Palace Head Dan Chi.

He smiled, “You all should be familiar with this child. He hails from the Precious Tree Sect and is now one of the most exemplary pill dao geniuses of my Regal Pill Palace.”

Dan Chi purposefully emphasized “one of” as he was also thinking of Mu Gaoqi.

“He’s that Precious Tree Sect disciple? Jiang Chen?”

“No way? The Precious Tree Sect can raise such a genius? Have you gotten something wrong?”

“Are you trying to pull the wool over our eyes, Dan Chi?”

Honored Master Tian Ming spoke up, “This is indeed the Precious Tree Sect disciple. I can bear witness.”

Tristar Sect Head Zhu had attended the alliance ceremony and could recognize Jiang Chen after careful scrutiny of his features. He spoke with a darkened face, “It is indeed that Precious Tree Sect disciple Jiang Chen.”

A hubbub broke out after Sect Head Zhu confirmed his identity. They obviously hadn’t thought at all that this young man would be from the Precious Tree Sect.

“The Precious Tree Sect has such heaven defying pill dao level? I don’t believe that!”

“Perhaps this one had stunning pill dao potential and only improved tremendously after entering the Regal Pill Palace?” Several sect heads looked skeptically at Palace Head Dan Chi, anticipating his response.

Palace Head Dan Chi smiled, “He does indeed have superb potential, and we have been focusing our attention on cultivating him since he has joined our Regal Pill Palace.”

He naturally wouldn’t say much more, glossing over the situation with a few words. As their conversation continued, Jiang Chen had

already started tackling the last three flames.

“This boy’s fire control techniques are verging on the ridiculous. Ole brother Dan Chi, are these the unique techniques of your Regal Pill Palace?”

Palace Head Dan Chi laughed heartily. “I’m truly not at liberty to say.”

As everyone watched in astonishment, Jiang Chen lit the last three flames with a finishing touch of his seal sequence. The instant all thirty six flames were lit, they began to resonate with each other, streams of fire whirling around the formation. The entire formation was activated as a majestic pillar of flame roared into being, a grand finish to his display of prowess..

Each flame was unique in their attributes and abilities, yet all thirty six flames danced in unison.

“All thirty six have been awakened?”

“Formation resonance?”

“This child’s potential in fire control is beyond the level of the Myriad Domain! He’d be competitive even if he was placed in the Upper Eight Realms!”

“Incredible, absolutely incredible! Ole brother Dan Chi, you’ve really happened upon a treasure from the sixteen kingdoms this

time!”

“Congratulations ole brother, this is absolutely a supreme treasure! Even I’m a little green-eyed with envy!”

When those assembled looked back over at Ding Tong, he’d only ignited thirty flames, and his speed was dropping with each additional flame he lit. Wei Xing’er was just a step behind Ding Tong, with only one flame separating the two.

Tristar Sect Head Zhu stared fixedly at Ding Tong, mightily encouraging him inwardly. As time counted down, he naturally hoped that Ding Tong could complete summoning all thirty six flames before time ran out. If this was the case, the first competition would end in a draw.

The Pill Battles rankings were determined solely through points. If the points were the same, then the rankings would be determined by the rankings of the previous Pill Battles. Whichever sect ranked higher in the previous Pill Battles would then rank higher this time. If they were in the same sect, then rankings would be based off one’s number. The higher one’s number was, the higher their ranking.

However, Sect Head Zhu’s wishful thinking fell flat. When time was up, Ding Tong was still one flame away from completion, and his frustration was obvious to the crowd. He smacked his right fist viciously into his left palm, angry and dejected. He was plainly quite depressed about not activating the final flame.

Wei Xing'er was in third place, as she'd activated thirty four flames and was second only to Jiang Chen and Ding Tong. The next couple of rankings, which included those participating in the bet, had all only ignited thirty three flames. Ling Bi'er had also produced thirty three flames, with Mu Gaoqi just a single flame behind.

In this way, Jiang Chen's name was guaranteed to be far out in front after the first competition ends. He was also the only one to complete summoning all thirty six flames and according to the rules, he'd be able to receive another forty points. In this way, he'd just received 400 points for the first competition, placing him solidly in the lead. Ding Tong was in second just behind him, ranking at number two with three hundred and fifty points. Wei Xing'er was third with three hundred and forty points.

The scores for those placing fourth to tenth were all the same. They were Shen Qinghong and Ling Bi'er from the Regal Pill Palace, Wei Qing from the Walkabout Sect, Zhu Feiyang from the Tristar Sect, Lin Hai from the Dark North Sect, Yuan Yuan from the Sacred Ape Family of the Great Cathedral, and Wang Han from the Sacred Sword Palace in that order. They were all at three hundred and thirty points. Mu Gaoqi from the Regal Pill Palace came in eleventh. There were a few others with similar number of flames, but the Regal Pill Palace disciple's ranking still outstripped them.

Overall, the Regal Pill Palace had performed the best in the first competition. Jiang Chen's sudden rise had left a huge dent in the Tristar Sect and Walkabout Sects' plan to challenge the Regal Pill Palace's position.

When he'd first brought up the idea of a fifty thousand upper rank spirit stone bet, everyone had felt that this Regal Pill Palace rookie was merely fearless in his ignorance. It wasn't until the first competition ended that they'd come to understand that he was hiding his talent. Masquerading as a pig to eat a tiger! He had taken full marks in the first competition, and now he was far in the lead! This first competition topic alone had been enough to give him a boost of fifty points ahead of the first runner up.

"Old brother Dan Chi, your Regal Pill Palace really keeps its cards close to the chest, huh!" Tristar Sect Head Zhu's voice held a sour hint of jealousy as he spoke. The overall strength the Regal Pill Palace had displayed had robbed him of his confidence and left him a bit despondent. Even the weakest of the four disciples from the Regal Pill Palace, Mu Gaoqi, was ranked at number eleven after the first round. This display of prowess was quite frightening!

Wei Wuying of the Walkabout Sect was even more dejected. On the whole, his sect had acquitted themselves well. But, his two trump cards of Wei Xing'er and Wei Qing had been his greatest guarantee at seizing the championship, and to their credit, they'd performed well. However, this Jiang Chen's sudden emergence from the Regal Pill Palace had completely thrown their plans on its head! Then a bizarre freak occurrence like Ding Tong had surfaced from the Tristar Sect, pushing Wei Xing'er, someone who he thought was slated to win, down to third. His plans crumbling before his eyes, it was natural that he was depressed.

While others celebrated, there would be always be those wallowing in sorrow. The Tristar Sect took second place overall after the first round, and the Walkabout Sect third. When they left the fire control hall, Wei Qing's gaze was permafrost cold as he

sized up Jiang Chen, not hiding his killing intent towards this mysterious disciple. He had to admit that he'd underestimated Jiang Chen. He'd treated this disciple as an unknown nobody before, thinking that Ling Bi'er was purposefully using Jiang Chen as a shield. But now, it seemed that things weren't that simple!

"Don't get cocky yet kid, you were just lucky in the first round." Wei Qing snorted coldly.

"Is that so? Then, I hope you get lucky in the next round and show me." Jiang Chen's smile was just a bit disinterested. His thoughts weren't on Wei Qing at all, because there was an even more frightening source of hostility that he had to stay guarded against. Ding Tong had been a hair's breadth away from him, on the verge of receiving full marks as well. This had greatly surprised Jiang Chen, and he was almost certain that this Ding Tong was definitely beyond the level of the Myriad Domain. Jiang Chen had received full points purely because of the knowledge from his past life and his heaven defying techniques. But Ding Tong had almost received full marks in an equal amount of time, and had only been the barest difference away from him! In Jiang Chen's eyes, this wasn't something that a Myriad Domain level genius could handle. This conclusion was clear just from looking at the the other geniuses. Even the best of the Myriad Domain, Wei Xing'er with an innate fire constitution, had only activated thirty four flames.

Chapter 540: Renewed Frenzy

In contrast to Jiang Chen's subtle wariness, in addition to being depressed, Ding Tong was even more shocked after learning of Jiang Chen's scores. He received full marks! This was completely unacceptable to him! As far as he knew, he'd made only the smallest of errors in the first round that had ultimately prevented him from receiving full marks. The difficulty of the fire control competition had been designed to reach the extreme. The smallest of errors would prevent one from successfully igniting all the flames and receiving full marks.

With the level of skill present in the Myriad Domain, no one would ever hope to receive full marks. Even the other top geniuses of the Myriad Domain had only ignited thirty four flames! There's something very off about this Jiang Chen! The amount of killing intent in Ding Tong's heart doubled even as his shock grew.

"No wonder that Palace Head Dan Chi would protect him and the Precious Tree Sect at all costs. His pill dao potential is this perverse! He would be a peak existence even in the Upper Eight Realms! I must kill this person before he has the chance to grow!" Ding Tong had a premonition that Jiang Chen would become the biggest obstacle to the Tristar Sect claiming the championship this year.

A variety of emotions assailed each of the various sect heavyweights. They were both envious and admiring. It seemed that Dan Chi had once again demonstrated his charisma and vision. When he'd allied with the Precious Tree Sect, all of the various great sects in the Myriad Domain had thought him mad, forming a grudge with the Ninesuns Sky Sect for a mere Precious

Tree Sect. But now, it appeared that anything Dan Chi did was after careful calculation and consideration.

His potential in fire control alone was enough to astound the entire Myriad Domain. If this kind of person reached full maturity, he would become a heavyweight that would impact the fortunes of the Regal Pill Palace for hundreds of years.

“This Dan Chi really has some charisma to unearth a treasure like this!” They hid their envy, but they also couldn’t help but feel admiration for Dan Chi’s vision.

After everyone made brief adjustments to their mental state, they went into the second round of the competition.

This time, the topic was preheating the cauldron.

Jiang Chen had experienced this competition many times. When he’d been in the Regal Pill Palace and fought Shen Trifire, he’d used the almost magical method of the “True Fires of Ninety Nine” to render Shen Trifire speechless in his defeat and leave in utter humiliation. When this wondrous way was used, only one ninth of the usual time was needed to preheat the cauldron.

Everyone entered the preheating area in the relevant hall according to their numbers. There was a cauldron in front of everyone, and although it looked simple and primitive in its design, it was obviously no ordinary item. What was even rarer to see was that it looked like the same cauldron was set in front of everyone. No one could find a difference in level or exterior

appearance.

“All of you have the exact same pill cauldron in front of you. This is the most common cauldron seen in pill dao, but these particular ones were forged from Frostheart Iron, so it will be more difficult to preheat. However, once it’s primed for refining, no other cauldron can match the purity of the pills it refines.

“The rules of this round are that each of you have a basic count of forty breaths. If you complete the preheating in forty breaths, then you’ll receive the full marks of four hundred points. Each additional breath of time you take after forty will result in subtracting ten points. If you spend more than seventy breaths, you will have no score for this round.”

Completing the challenge within forty breaths would net the candidate full points. Each additional breath after that would result in a ten point deduction, meaning that all four hundred points would be run down after forty additional breaths. Of course, a full point deduction would never happen to these geniuses. No matter how bad they were, they would never use more than 55 breaths to complete the task.

“Alright, now that the rules have been explained, your time starts... now!”

All the cultivators snapped to attention, springing instantly into action. This was a race in which time was points, and each breath was precious. They had to bring every lesson they’d learned in their lives to bear in order to complete this task.

The “True Fires of Ninety Nine” that Jiang Chen had utilized last time naturally made its appearance again. He summoned a flicker of the flames within his body into his palm, and started piling up the flames on top of each other as his fingers flew through hand seal after hand seal. In short order, a raging bonfire was formed around the cauldron. Nine gouts of flame marked each corner, with a total of eighty one flames accumulating in short order.

The sight of the flames stacked atop each other was incredibly magnificent, bedazzling the eyes of anyone watching. Although these eighty one flames looked like they were simply stacked on top of each other, it required a sophisticated technique, deft use of spatial arts, as well as superior observation skills. These skills were all required in abundance, and none of them could be trained overnight.

After Jiang Chen had concluded his competition with Shen Trifire, Mu Gaoqi had badgered Jiang Chen to teach the same technique to him. Jiang Chen hadn’t kept it a secret and had generously taught Mu Gaoqi this method. Even though Mu Gaoqi had yet to advance to the level of grasping all eighty one flames, he could still build up thirty six gouts of flames. If he stacked any more, he would lose control of them and fail to execute the technique.

Jiang Chen needed quite a bit of time to build his True Fires of Ninety Nine, with thirty breaths elapsing in the blink of an eye. But once his setup was complete, he’d be able to shorten the amount of time he would’ve needed to finish preheating to a ninth of that timeframe.

The many heavyweights keeping an eye on Jiang Chen were a bit baffled by his actions. When Wei Wuying saw that Jiang Chen had used up thirty breaths of time already and was still playing with a flashy fire control technique, he couldn't resist the temptation to mock him. "Ole brother Dan Chi, your Jiang Chen seems to favor showy techniques over substance, hmm? It's already been thirty breaths, but he's still accumulating flames. It's pretty alright, but is a bit of fire here and there actually useful in preheating a cauldron?"

Wei Wuying couldn't help but jeer openly when he saw Jiang Chen thus. It was obvious that he still hadn't accepted Jiang Chen receiving first in fire control.

Tristar Sect Head Zhu also laughed. "There are forty breaths given as the basic amount of time and his moves are eye dazzling alright, but..."

His voice suddenly choked off as he stared straight at Jiang Chen, jaw agape. Dan Chi on the other hand, was still quite at ease. Although he didn't understand why Jiang Chen was doing what he was doing either, with his understanding of his disciple, the latter wasn't the sort to be flashy without substance. He would never do something that was just emptily pretty.

Indeed, just as Wei Wuying and Sect Head Zhu were halfway through their mocking words, Jiang Chen's fire ensconced cauldron suddenly resonated with the ringing sound of a dragon's croon or tiger's howl. It'd taken him only seven breaths from the time he'd finished stacking his flames to a successful preheating!

Add that to how long he'd taken to build up his flames, he'd only spent thirty seven breaths in total.

First again?!

The heavyweights looked at each other, feeling as if they'd suddenly experienced a break from reality. They didn't believe their eyes at all. Just what techniques had this Jiang Chen used to finish preheating a cauldron in eight breaths? This was completely outside the scope of their understanding!

No one else finished their preheating during the rest of the forty breaths.

What was astonishing was that the next person to complete his preheating after Jiang Chen was Mu Gaoqi! One breath after the allotted time, his cauldron rang out as well, deducting only ten points from his score and receiving a total of three hundred and ninety from this round.

When time had ticked to forty two breaths, Wei Xing'er and Ding Tong completed their preheating as well. But since they had gone two breaths past the allotted time, they had twenty points docked and took home only three hundred and eighty points each.

After those two, Wei Qing finished at forty three breaths, and Ling Bi'er at forty four breaths. All of the other top geniuses finished at around forty five breaths, and many more completed their preheating as time went on. The final person finished when sixty breaths had elapsed.

The second round was now over, and Jiang Chen had once again defended his title of champion with full marks. The most stunning thing was that after two rounds of full marks, he now had a score of 800. Although first runner up Ding Tong had also displayed a heaven defying performance, he only had 730 points, a full seventy points below Jiang Chen. Wei Xing'er was in third place with 720 points, leaving her eighty points lower than Jiang Chen.

As for fourth place, no one had anticipated Mu Gaoqi would spring so far from behind. Although he had yet to grasp Jiang Chen's "True Fires of Ninety Nine", his "Minor Fires of Sixty Six" had allowed him to go only a single breath over the time limit, catapulting his score up into fourth place with 710 points.

The overweening Wei Qing was stuck at fifth place with 700 points, and Ling Bi'er at sixth with 690 points. There was a large group with 680 points ranked just behind Ling Bi'er. When the results of this round came out, Jiang Chen once again became the center of attention. This who hadn't looked at him before all began to glance sideways at him.

They hadn't thought at all that this competition would turn out this way. Just what heaven defying techniques does Jiang Chen possess for him to gain full marks in two rounds in a row? Everyone present knew how difficult these competitions were, since this wasn't their first time participating. Even a mysterious genius like Ding Tong hadn't been able to obtain full marks when he'd brought his full efforts to bear, and Wei Xing'er with the innate fire constitution had failed to do so as well since she had yet to reach the level of a great master. But Jiang Chen had done it! And he'd come from a small place like the sixteen kingdom

alliance. Although he'd benefited from dwelling in the Regal Pill Palace, he'd only been present for a year or so. Was a year enough to let a minor character from the sixteen kingdoms develop to the point of trampling over them? Who would believe that?

Although Dan Chi was inwardly surprised, he then recalled Jiang Chen's relationship with Elder Shun. He must've received Elder Shun's legacy, and so these scores make sense!

However, those from the Tristar and Walkabout Sect rejected these results with every fiber of their being. They'd hardened their hearts to take the championship from the Regal Pill Palace this time. A mere Jiang Chen was seemingly enough to send all their plans into disarray; how could they possibly accept this?

Chapter 541: Attacked By All Sides

“Ole brother Dan Chi, this Jiang Chen is simply too perverse, isn’t he? His level seems beyond what we should have in the Myriad Domain!” Wei Wuying was the first to step forth and start trouble. When he saw that even Wei Xing’er could only hold down third place with such an exemplary display of skill, and Wei Qing could only manage fifth place with his stable performance, he couldn’t accept the situation. Although there were two more rounds to go, who knew if Jiang Chen would still set such a ridiculous standard of performance?

Even though the Regal Pill Palace would still demonstrate a strong overall strength without Jiang Chen, the Walkabout Sect would absolutely have a chance of challenging them then. With Jiang Chen so far in the lead, it didn’t seem as if there was any doubt about the champion of the genius group. The additional fifty points he would receive then would create a further advantage for the Regal Pill Palace in the final rankings of the Pill Battles. The only way for Wei Wuying to prevent this was to step forth and question Jiang Chen.

When Wei Wuying stepped forth, so did Tristar Sect Head Zhu. His ambitions for the champion’s seat was still burning brightly as he smiled. “I also find this to be rather odd. Jiang Chen hails from the sixteen kingdoms, and even if he’s had the benefit of being trained in the Regal Pill Palace, he still shouldn’t be displaying such a stunning performance.”

The others smiled and didn’t say a word. Wang Jianyu of the Sacred Sword Palace had always been at odds with the Regal Pill Palace, so he chose to jump on the bandwagon as well. “The two

sect heads make sense, Jiang Chen is indeed a suspicious character."

The Sacred Sword Palace had always ranked near the bottom in the Pill Battles rankings, and were mostly just here to make up the numbers. They had no real ambitions in this regard. However, when this matter had to do with the Regal Pill Palace, their intrinsically hostile relationship left the Sacred Sword Palace with an obligation to step out to support an objection against their hated enemy.

The family heads of the Great Cathedral stayed silent, merely smiling. Only Honored Master Tian Ming of the Dark North Sect chuckled. "What is there to be suspicious about or not? The Pill Battles are a tradition left behind from the time of the Myriad Empire. Are you possibly suspecting him of cheating?"

Dan Chi smiled faintly. "If you three have such effort to spare in suspecting Jiang Chen, why don't you spend it teaching your own disciples? Is it important why Jiang Chen's performance is so heaven defying? Ask not where heroes come from. It's not at all important where Jiang Chen comes from and why is he such a genius."

Dan Chi wasn't someone who could be easily sliced and diced. He would never allow these fellows to use this as an opportunity to create trouble. As long as Jiang Chen hadn't cheated, it was irrelevant how insane or suspicious his performance was.

"That's not how things often go though. There's always something sinister at play when things appear out of the ordinary.

I rather think we should investigate this.” Wang Jianyu chuckled.

Dan Chi’s face grew cold. “Wang Jianyu, don’t tell me you’re jealous?”

Wang Jianyu smiled. “My Sacred Sword Palace has never had much ambition in the Pill Battles. What jealousy is there to speak of? I’m merely speaking out of a sense of fair play.”

“Fair play? Well, that is certainly a grave matter. I welcome Palace Head Wang to come out with any evidence of Jiang Chen cheating, so I can expel such a cheating disciple from my Regal Pill Palace. But if not, it would be wiser if you shut that mouth of yours in case others make it out to be a case of jealousy. We’re all heavyweights of the Myriad Domain after all, and can’t make a fool of ourselves in front of the juniors.”

Honored Master Tian Ming also smiled. “I say, don’t be so caught up in Jiang Chen’s performance. It’s not a bad thing for the Myriad Domain to produce such a heaven defying genius! Do you want our Myriad Domain to always be a nobody, or worse, be disqualified the next time the domains are drawn?”

Wei Wuying smiled sinisterly. “Old Tian Ming, you always wear the same pants as Dan Chi. You can save those words of yours, hmm?”

Palace Head Zhu nodded. “I advocate investigating this Jiang Chen.”

Palace Head Dan Chi's face darkened. "Investigate what? Jiang Chen's background is clean, so what's there to look into? I only say this, bring out whatever evidence you've got, or stop worrying if you have none. Have the Pill Battles devolved to the point where those who excel are suppressed? If everyone thinks my Regal Pill Palace is being superfluous, then just say so. Why bother scrounging around for such a crude excuse?"

Wei Wuying sneered. "A clean background? And who can prove that? Jiang Chen is from the sixteen kingdom alliance, that's already half a desolate wilderness to begin with. I'm sure everyone remembers the last gathering where we discussed whether or not to exile them, and almost everyone agreed. The reason? Is it only because the sixteen kingdom alliance is weak? Who doesn't know that that's the fringe territory where the ancient demon tribe is sealed? Who can guarantee that those from the sixteen kingdoms don't have the background of the demon tribe?"

The expressions of the sect heavyweights drastically changed as those words rang in the air. It was apparent that the words "ancient demon tribe" had left a deep feeling of danger in them, and it seemed that none of them were exempt from this reaction.

Sect Head Zhu immediately interjected. "Sect Head Wei's words aren't without reason. The ancient demon tribe may be dead, but it hasn't collapsed yet. It would only require the slightest opening for them to rise from the ashes again. Even the slightest spark can ravage the plains with fire. I also feel that we must stay guarded against this."

Wang Jianyu was happy to add fuel to the flame, laughing, "We

must be cautious about the remnants of the demon tribe. Out of considerations of security, I recommend making a thorough investigation. We'd rather kill a thousand erroneously rather than letting one free! That Jiang Chen's perverse potential is something that our Myriad Domain level could not have cultivated."

Even the family heads from the Great Cathedral didn't remain neutral this time and nodded as well. It was apparent that they didn't dare relax their guard when it came to the ancient demon race, even if they didn't necessarily feel that Jiang Chen had anything to do with them. They would investigate things thoroughly now rather than let anything slip by.

When Dan Chi saw that four out of the six great sects were advocating for investigating Jiang Chen, he was completely incensed and knew that they were meaning to band together to suppress Jiang Chen. However, Dan Chi wasn't just any easy pickings. He was well versed in these battles, snorting coldly in response, "If you wish to look into even someone with a clean background, then I'd like to ask, is the background of every disciple you recruit clean and pure? Sect Head Zhu, why don't you tell me where your Ding Tong is from? Has anyone heard of him before?"

Sect Heads Zhu's face stiffened as a strange look flashed through his eyes. "Ding Tong is one of our Tristar Sect disciples."

"Is that so? Then will Sect Head Zhu tell us more about this disciple's background? I'm all ears."

Sect Head Zhu snorted coldly. "Is there a need to do so?"

Dan Chi laughed heartily. “Since you want to investigate Jiang Chen, I can reel off his background at any time. Why can’t you do the same for Ding Tong so everyone can verify his background? Or is it because the Regal Pill Palace is the champion that you want to suppress us?”

These words stumped Sect Head Zhu into speechlessness.

Wu Weiying was delighted to blow up this matter even more. Jiang Chen and Ding Tong were both ranked higher than Wei Xing’er anyways. If both of them could be kicked off, then she would be the current champion. He grinned, “Dan Chi makes sense as well. If we investigate Jiang Chen, we naturally need to look into Ding Tong as well. To be honest, I’ve heard of Jiang Chen before today, but I’ve never heard of Ding Tong. Have any of you heard of him?”

Everyone was familiar with Jiang Chen’s name from when the Regal Pill Palace allied with the Precious Tree Sect, but Ding Tong was a true dark horse in that no one had ever heard of him before the Pill Battles.

Wang Jianyu of the Sacred Sword Palace was on good terms with Tristar Sect Head Zhu. He smiled, “Don’t be distracted by Dan Chi, everyone. He’s merely purposefully stirring up the waters and making the situation murky to distract from the real problem here.”

Dan Chi shot a cold glare at Wang Jianyu. When all was said and

done, the latter was still a sect head! Yet here he was, being so openly shameless as to publicly tout a set of double standards. Dan Chi shook his head with a light sigh. “No wonder the Sacred Sword Palace has never sought to better themselves. With a sect head such as you, even those below you know nothing better because of the unworthy example you set at the peak.”

Wang Jianyu was enraged. “Dan Chi, do your words indicate that you think your Regal Pill Palace already reigns over my Sacred Sword Palace?! Since we’re all here today, why don’t our two sects finally decide who truly owns that spirit vein, huh!?

When the Sacred Sword Palace and Regal Pill Palace fought over the spirit vein years ago, Wang Jianyu had continued to bear a grudge ever since the former Regal Pill Palace Head had suppressed him in that fight. He’d always wanted an excuse to strike back and gain face, so relations between the two could truly only be described as acrimonious in the extreme.

Dan Chi smiled coolly. “There are naturally many opportunities for your Sacred Sword Palace to strive for glory in the Myriad Grand Ceremony. Have you already made up your mind to disturb the proceedings of the Pill Battles today?”

The family head of the Sacred Elephant family of the Great Cathedral rose to his feet at this moment to try to smooth things over. “Everyone, let’s not bicker and argue here. Investigating whether someone is of the ancient demon race is easy enough. Although it had many branches, the lineage of the ancient demons are still quite different from us humans. Since Jiang Chen and Ding Tong’s backgrounds are suspect, in my view, they should

both be tested. Otherwise, it would be unfair to both the Regal Pill Palace and Tristar Sect. Ole brother Dan Chi and Sect Head Zhu, what do you say?"

Dan Chi nodded, "I agree wholeheartedly with the Family Head's words."

Sect Head Zhu hesitated momentarily and also nodded. "Then let us test both of them."

There were naturally many ways to test bloodlines in the Myriad Domain. Jiang Chen and Ding Tong were summoned and notified of the controversy between the great sects. When Jiang Chen saw that Palace Head Dan Chi had already agreed, he didn't say anything else. He had nothing to do with the ancient demon race anyways, but it was a good thing he hadn't assimilated the dragon blood. It would be difficult to explain the presence of a dragon bloodline when it was detected. Even if he wasn't of the ancient demon race, it would still be very astonishing to possess the bloodline of the dragon race. Up until now, Jiang Chen had only assimilated the blood of the Golden Cicada. Although that could also be detected, it was noticeably different from the ancient demon race, and was a very pure bloodline to boot. Plus, those of the Myriad Domain might not necessarily recognize this particular bloodline.

As for the Firelizard and Raven King cores, although he'd refined them, they hadn't contained their respective bloodlines. As such, it wouldn't be reflected in Jiang Chen's blood, so he wasn't opposed to the testing.

It was rather Ding Tong who was further irritated when he heard that he had to undergo testing. His second place ranking already irked him, but since all the six great sects' heavyweights were present, his belly full of ire had to go unappeased. Resigned, he could only agree to undergo testing.

Blood samples were quickly taken, and all of the heavyweights participated in testing Jiang Chen's blood. Their final conclusion was that it was completely void of even traces of the demon race's bloodlines. Since there was no demon lineage in his blood, Wei Wuying could no longer find any more excuses.

Chapter 542: Ding Tong Extends An Invitation

“Hmph, even though Jiang Chen isn’t from the demon race, there’s still something noticeably off about his bloodline. Can’t you see it?” Wei Wuying was still unwilling to accept this outcome.

Wang Jianyu nodded. “Indeed. Although this is the bloodline of the human race, there are some odd components to it. In my eyes, this bloodline is still worthy of investigation.”

The Sacred Ape family head from the Great Cathedral suddenly laughed out loud. “The two of you should stop raising objections just for the sake of opposing the Regal Pill Palace. It’s a very common thing for cultivators to assimilate the bloodlines of various animals. Almost all of the disciples of my Great Cathedral have assimilated similar bloodlines. Are you going to look into each and every single one of them?”

Someone had finally stepped out to speak in defense of fairness. He sighed, “Still, this bloodline is very rare. Even in my eyes, it’s still a very impressive lineage. No wonder Jiang Chen’s potential in pill dao is so high, this bloodline could be the reason why!”

The Sacred Elephant family head also sighed. “You’ve really found a treasure this time, ole brother Dan Chi. Are you willing to give Jiang Chen over to my Great Cathedral? Demand whatever price you will, his bloodline is a great match for the style of our sect!”

Dan Chi chuckled and declined resolutely. “Family Head, I might be able to painfully part with anything else, but I’ve gone to the depths of antagonizing the Ninesuns Sky Sect for him. Would I part with him that easily?”

The Sacred Elephant family head seemed to have anticipated this response as he huffed out lightly. “What a pity. Ai, it seems like my Great Cathedral should have a broader vision. We let the Regal Pill Palace pick up a treasure this time.”

Wei Wuying had played the role of a petty person the entire time, but he had yet to give up hope. “There’s no problem with Jiang Chen, but we still need to look at Ding Tong’s bloodline.”

Ding Tong’s bloodline was also quickly analyzed, and surprisingly, although he didn’t have any lineage from the ancient demon race, the energy within his bloodline was abnormally strong. It actually surpassed all the geniuses in the Myriad Domain. The vitality and life-force in Ding Tong was thrumming with vigor, a level that exceeded even the extreme limit of the Myriad Domain. He didn’t seem like someone from the Myriad Domain at all.

“Well now this is odd. How could such a sophisticated bloodline appear in the Myriad Domain?” The Sacred Ape family head was a bit suspicious as he examined Ding Tong. The latter only snorted coldly as he retained his usual dismissive look in front of the sect heads. Jiang Chen also felt it odd, just what was Ding Tong’s background?

Tristar Sect Head Zhu sneered coldly. “Well? Is there the lineage

of the ancient demon race in Ding Tong's bloodline? If there isn't, can we end this farce already?"

Wei Wuying was currently the epitome of awkwardness. He'd been the one raising the greatest fuss, but the tests had proven that neither Jiang Chen or Ding Tong were of the ancient demon race despite the irregularities in their blood. There was no reason for them not to participate if they weren't of that ancient demon race. After all, bloodlines were a different matter for martial dao geniuses, and everyone had their own gifts. No one could guarantee that everyone's bloodline was of pure human and without the slightest bit of impurity. Even his Walkabout Sect often absorbed the bloodlines of poisonous materials to enhance their own body's ability in dispelling poison. When it came down to lineage, theirs actually veered more on the edge of evil than anyone else's.

Dan Chi laughed coldly and flicked a glance at Wei Wuying. "Aren't you quite disappointed now, Sect Head Wei?"

The other had an incredibly thick skin, slipping on the veneer of a satisfied, happy chortle. "I am quite gratified! That these two young geniuses aren't of the ancient demon race, this is simply the great fortune of the Myriad Domain!"

Dan Chi then looked at Wang Jianyu and spoke faintly. "Ole Wang, what a waste of being the villain this time, hmm?"

Wang Jiangyu snorted coldly. "It's not like I had any ulterior motives. Everything I did was for the greater good. I can face myself with a clear conscience."

Witnessing this exchange, Jiang Chen almost wanted to harrumph. These old fellows were one more shameless than the other. They were plainly suppressing those who were different from them, but they wanted to wrap it up in the outfit of righteous justice.

After the hubbub had died down, the day's competition took a break, and everyone returned to their respective areas for a quick rest.

Jiang Chen inquired after the situation in the elders' group, learning that their competition had been exceedingly fierce. Even Elder Yun Nie, with his tremendous pill dao ability, had only won second place. An elder from the Walkabout Sect had actually used the barest of advantages to win out over Elder Yun Nie. This had cast a slight pall over the elders from the Regal Pill Palace. It was a good thing that the young geniuses had performed above their usual level, including even Jiang Chen. Everyone's scores were good, and Shen Qinghong's were actually the lowest amongst the four. But even so, because of his advantage when it came to a tie, he ranked number seven.

A first, fourth, sixth and seventh, these rankings were absolutely unheard of. Not only had the team of geniuses not been left in the dust, but they were greatly in the lead.

Palace Head Dan Chi summoned everyone together to give them a little pep talk. "Everyone, there are multiple factors at work in the Pill Battles. It's said that the elder from the Walkabout Sect has absorbed a skyfire acclaimed as one of the utmost sources of fire

beneath the heavens. Although this skyfire isn't ranked highly, its power is easy to imagine. Therefore, it's only due to luck that he's ranked first for now. Our Regal Pill Palace still holds the overall advantage in the Pill Battles.

"For the young geniuses, everyone has acquitted themselves well. Your results have been nothing but a pleasure. If you can maintain this advantage, then our Regal Pill Palace can still leverage our greatest advantage to take home the championship this time." He turned towards Jiang Chen, "Jiang Chen, it's impossible to not incite jealousy from others when you're so extraordinary. I hope the bloodline testing didn't result in any psychological pressure on you."

Jiang Chen smiled nonchalantly. "Such desperate actions from cornered beasts aren't worth bothering with."

Palace Head Dan Chi laughed with admiration. "Fantastic! This is the bearing of a true expert indeed! The more composed you are, the less they can do anything to you. In the end, they can only slink away in envy and jealousy.

"Mu Gaoqi, you have brought glory for the Regal Pill Palace this time. Elder Yun Nie truly had impressive forethought in accepting you as a disciple."

Mu Gaoqi smiled honestly, "The third topic of spirit herbs is my forte. I must take advantage of the opportunity to consolidate my position and advance myself further."

His stunning results in the second round of cauldron preheating had been entirely due to Jiang Chen. Although he'd only grasped a third of the True Fires of Ninety Nine that Jiang Chen had passed onto him, that had been enough for him to make a great showing in the second round. His results had sent him flying into second place, lifting his overall ranking from tenth to fourth. The third round of cultivating spirit herbs was what he was most skilled at. He was an innate wood constitution of high order, a gift that was a perfect match with cultivating spirit herbs. This advantage bred great confidence in him for raising his ranking further. He even hoped to make it into the top three this time! He knew that he didn't have much hope when compared with Brother Chen, but he wasn't satisfied simply trailing behind Ding Tong at number two and Wei Xing'er at number three.

"Shen Qinghong, your martial dao potential is extraordinary and your pill dao potential first rate. You need to use this advantage well and utilize the Pill Battles to temper your strength of heart. This will only bring benefits to you with no downfalls. If you are fortunate enough to find enlightenment in the Pill Battles and benefit from an enhanced mental state, then your future accomplishments will exceed even your master Elder Lian Cheng. But if you don't, everything that you have built will not be enough to prevent you stumbling in front of obstacles of your own making."

Dan Chi was quite sharp when it came to assessing people, and his diction and choice of words was carefully precise. He wanted to give pointers to Shen Qinghong, but whether or not Shen Qinghong could actually take in his words would be up to him. After all, he was Elder Lian Cheng's disciple, and Dan Chi couldn't overstep his boundaries to truly use harsh methods to force Shen Qinghong to shape up.

“Ling Bi’er, your martial dao potential is extraordinary, as is your pill dao potential. Right now, you and Shen Qinghong are on very similar levels. In the same vein, you also have an internal dilemma to resolve. However, it differs from Shen Qinghong’s burden, and I’m reassured to see how you’re handling it. Your calm personality guarantees that your performance will not skew wildly from one extreme to another.”

Ling Bi’er had suffered multiple hardships since her youth, fostering her steady personality. Palace Head Dan Chi had naturally picked up on that strength of hers, and had spoken to each of the youngsters before he was done. As for the four elders, they were all notable characters and held high positions in the Regal Pill Palace. The palace head naturally wouldn’t need to talk to them, and their performance had been more or less stable.

In terms of overall ranking, even if they hadn’t overtaken the Walkabout Sect, at least they weren’t losing. Add that to the genius group’s performance, it seemed that as long as they maintained their current course for the next two rounds, they still had high hopes of taking home the championship.

Everyone returned to their lodgings after the meeting wrapped up.

Jiang Chen had returned and was sitting down cross legged when a message glyph suddenly flew into his room.

“Jiang Chen, dare you come out for a meeting?” The glyph was

from Ding Tong.

Jiang Chen's thoughts raced. Ding Tong had shown him a flash of killing intent before, and so Jiang Chen's wariness against this person was even higher than against Wei Qing of the Walkabout Sect. What does he want with this late night invitation? He wanted to turn it down, but after spending a moment in thought, still walked out. Ding Tong flashed out from behind a column when Jiang Chen reached the side pavilion.

"So you really did dare come." Ding Tong's tone was dispassionate as he remained fully hidden in the inky shadows.

Jiang Chen responded faintly, "What insights would Daoist Ding like to impart with this late night summoning?"

Ding Tong's gaze raked over Jiang Chen's body like knives in the night sky, hovering around him like blades. It was enough to force someone's hairs to stand on end.

"I'll give you a suggestion." Ding Tong said quietly.

"What?"

"Quit the Regal Pill Palace and Pill Battles." There was an indisputable sense of arrogance in Ding Tong's tone, as if he were issuing orders.

Jiang Chen broke out into a smile. "On what basis?"

Ding Tong responded coldly. “You’ll regret it if you refuse.”

Jiang Chen smiled casually. “I don’t even know how to write the word regret. What else do you have to say in the middle of the night? Might as well let it all out at once.”

“Leave the Regal Pill Palace and join the Tristar Sect. I will guarantee you a life of riches that will be more than ten times what you would have had in the Regal Pill Palace.”

“You sure talk big.” Jiang Chen smiled slightly.

“You don’t believe me?” Ding Tong’s gaze chilled.

Jiang Chen waved his hand. “It doesn’t matter if I do or not. I seek prosperity, but don’t need anyone to bestow it upon me. With that domineering tone of yours, you’re likely no Tristar Sect disciple either. I have one word of advice for you. Although the waters in the Myriad Domain aren’t deep, they’re not something that just anyone can play in. Be careful of drowning here if you don’t pay attention.” He refused to listen to any more nonsense after that and drifted inside.

“Jiang Chen, since you refuse to see the error of your ways, then Mt. Rippling Mirage will be your resting place!” This was a barely concealed warning and a blatant threat.

“Ding Tong, if you have the spare effort to think of me, why

don’t you have a good ponder on how to hide your fox’s tail?”

Chapter 543: Jiang Chen's Strange Actions

In the instant Jiang Chen had felt Ding Tong's hostility before the Pill Battles, he'd known that there could be no compromise with him. Ding Tong hadn't come calling because he truly wanted to recruit Jiang Chen, but rather because he'd realized that it wasn't possible to surpass Jiang Chen in the Pill Battle Rankings. This was nothing more than an intimidation tactic to scare Jiang Chen into backing out.

Did he think Jiang Chen a three year old child, to be hoodwinked by these kinds of tricks? Nevertheless, Ding Tong's actions were certainly enough to keep Jiang Chen on his guard. His origin was a complete mystery, and Jiang Chen had enough cause to suspect that he wasn't actually part of the Tristar Sect. His participation in the Pill Battles was probably part of some unspeakable conspiracy as well. The only thing that remained shrouded was whether Ding Tong was keeping the Tristar Sect in the dark, or were they in on the plan as well?

As far as Jiang Chen could tell, especially with the suspicious behavior Sect Head Zhu had shown, he felt it likely that the Tristar Sect was in it up to their ears. Sect Head Zhu hadn't been as calm as Palace Head Dan Chi when Ding Tong was undergoing the bloodline tests, even though he'd hid it well. Jiang Chen's God's Eye had reached a level where that slight flicker in Sect Head Zhu's emotions had been clear as day. However, at this point, all this was merely suspicion and supposition. It wasn't enough to create a plausible argument. Besides, this plot seemed to implicate many, and his current identity and status weren't enough to persuade the crowd of his words. He might even cause the Regal Pill Palace to fall into an awkward situation. Moreover, he was already under general suspicion due to his outstanding results. If he decided to

try and point out something amiss about Ding Tong, it would only look odd to onlookers.

As a result, Jiang Chen decided to do nothing for now and just silently observe Ding Tong.

After a night of rest, the competition continued bright and early the next day. The third round involved spirit herbs, and Mu Gaoqi's eagerness for battle was on the verge of exploding.

However, this competition of spirit herbs wasn't just simply cultivating a spirit herb or two.

"Now, please enter each area according to your number. There, you will find three thousand seeds. Your task is to locate the five seventh level saint rank seeds hidden among them. Each seedling must correspond to the five elements of metal, wood, water, fire, and earth. Then, you must germinate those seeds within seven days."

When the rules were announced, it was apparent that this was one of the more complex rounds. Not only did they have to pick out only five seeds from three thousand, but they had to make sure that the seeds corresponded to the five elements, which had further implications when they had to be cultivated into seedlings. And to boot, all of this had to be completed in seven days!

"Remember, there are 600 total points that one can win in this round. Identifying the five seeds will result in 100 points, each seed being worth 20 points. Growing each seedling earns you 100

points. However, don't think that simply growing a seedling nets you the full hundred points. The quality of the seedling is paramount. If the seedling is of lower rank, you will receive 30 points. Middle rank seedlings will earn 60 points, and upper rank, 80 points. Only supreme rank seedlings will you earn the full 100 points.

"Therefore, if you want to receive all 600 points, you must identify the five correct seeds and raise them to be supreme rank seedlings. Of course, if you identify the wrong seeds from the beginning, then your efforts for the latter half will all be for naught. Remember, seventh level saint rank seeds. If you pick the wrong rank or attribute, you'll forfeit all your points. This round is where the wheat will be separated from the chaff. If you don't acquit yourself well, you could lose a great deal of points and see your ranking fall drastically."

Everyone stood at solemn attention. If they performed well in this round, they could seize a lot of points. But if they didn't, they would lose quite a bit instead. This was truly a double edged sword.

"Do you see the ground beneath your feet? This area is where you'll be cultivating your spirit herbs. All of the materials you need have been made ready for you. Finally, there are no restrictions on using any heaven defying materials you already own. Apart from not leaving this area, there are no other restrictions on this round."

Every area was covered in seals that cut off communication to the outside world. Each candidate could use any method or technique

they wanted, but they couldn't ask for outside help.

"Alright, the competition and time of seven days starts... now. You are now forbidden from leaving for the next seven days. If you set even a toe outside this area, you will be deemed as having cheated and will receive a zero for this round."

The costs of cheating were high. Once someone was deemed as having cheated, they would basically have to withdraw from the Pill Battles. There was no way they would be able to obtain a decent ranking.

Jiang Chen closed his eyes and took a moment to breathe, listening closely to all the rules. The more one prepared, the more likely that they would be able to save time later. As such, there was no need to start at a frantic pace. It wouldn't be too late to make his move after he'd carefully heard all of the details. He only slowly opened his eyes after the examiner announced the start of the round.

There were a full seven days to this round with a lot of flexibility. This was why Jiang Chen wasn't overly focused on speed. Haste made for waste.

Three thousand seeds were an astonishing number to comb through. Pill masters with slightly lower cultivation levels would find it very difficult to pick out the 5 seventh level saint rank seeds of the five elements—and this was from the perspective of the Myriad Domain geniuses. If it were up to those from the Precious Tree Sect to attempt this, possibly even Forefather Thousandleaf would be unable to accomplish this. But of course, this was as easy

as a simple twitch of his fingers to Jiang Chen. No matter what level the seeds were, he only needed to touch them, perform a simple examination, and take a sniff to be able to determine their level. Even if there were the occasional ones he was uncertain of, he'd be able to draw a firm conclusion after taking another look.

He'd gone through all of the seeds in roughly fifteen minutes, selecting about twenty likely candidates and sweeping the rest to the side.

Of these twenty, he had selected high, low, and medium saint rank seeds. The only requirement they had was to select seventh level saint rank seeds that corresponded to the five elements. He'd actually locked onto the proper five seeds a long time ago, but had suddenly thought of something else as he'd selected the seeds.

Jiang Chen took a look at the current conditions. It was already difficult enough to cultivate all five into supreme rank seedlings. It was also apparent that the organizers were quite stringent, and that almost no one could walk away with full points under these conditions. However, Jiang Chen was striving for full marks.

He also knew that if he could gain full points in this round, his score would leave everyone else behind in the dust. This opportunity was just far too good to pass up. His pill dao potential had been thoroughly revealed in the previous two rounds anyways, so he didn't mind exposing himself a bit more.

His strange actions baffled Palace Head Dan Chi. "What's Jiang Chen doing? He's selected so many seeds; is he planning on cultivating all of them and then picking the successful ones?" He

was puzzled, and couldn't fathom what Jiang Chen was planning.

It wasn't that this method wasn't allowed. If anyone really could cultivate large numbers of seeds into seedlings and then pick out the five correct choices, there was nothing in the rules against it. At the same time, it was an impossible task. And the reason for that was threefold.

First, the materials provided had been precisely portioned out. They were just enough to cultivate the minimum 5 seventh level saint rank seedlings. There just weren't enough for cultivating all twenty seeds.

One could alleviate that problem by forking over money for materials, but the second problem still remained. Everyone only had that bare patch of dirt to work with. There was only so much space, and it certainly wasn't big enough to house more than five seeds.

Third, raising seedlings required infusion of one's energy. An overly dense concentration of seeds was bad for the development of the spirit herbs, and if they didn't receive enough spirit energy over the seven days, then there may not even be five seedlings at the end.

To use an analogy, the degree of comfort between having five people in a house and fifty in the same house were completely different. With the same amount of resources and space, the more seeds that were cultivated, the less spirit power and space were available for each seed, and that would affect their rate of development.

Therefore, Palace Head Dan Chi couldn't understand Jiang Chen's actions no matter how he thought about it. If he hadn't known that Jiang Chen wasn't the sort for tomfoolery, he would've thought that his disciple was playing with fire.

Naturally, there were others who thought precisely that, such as Wei Wuying, Tristar Sect Head Zhu and Wang Jianyu from the Sacred Sword Palace. Jiang Chen's performance had been so stunning before that he naturally attracted many gazes in this round. Wei Wuying was utterly delighted to see Jiang Chen behave so erratically. He hadn't thought that Jiang Chen would have such sophisticated methods when he witnessed the cauldron preheating round earlier, but he was absolutely sure of his judgement on Jiang Chen's current actions. Jiang Chen was going against every ounce of basic knowledge of spirit herb cultivation. The result was obvious, all actions that went against common knowledge were destined to be fruitless.

However, they'd learned their lesson this time, and didn't make a dig at Jiang Chen or jeer at him. They only watched him coldly, prepared for a good show. If Jiang Chen came crashing down in this round, then his previous advantages would have been rendered meaningless.

"You won't find trouble if you don't go looking for it. This Jiang Chen is too full of himself and has gone courting death!" Wei Wuying was completely looking down on Jiang Chen now. He didn't believe that such random crazy actions would result in a high score!

Sect Head Zhu was also privately rejoicing, only wishing that Jiang Chen would continue this run of madness and hand the championship over to Ding Tong. As for Wang Jianyu, he had no ambitions when it came to the Pill Battles. The only thing he wanted to see was the Regal Pill Palace's abject humiliation.

Chapter 544: Art Of Spirit Reaping

These fellows who were delighting in the misery of others were also privately observing Palace Head Dan Chi's reaction. Dan Chi's expression never flickered from a solemn gaze; he was obviously unsure of what Jiang Chen intended. Thus, they realized that Jiang Chen was absolutely going rogue and this wasn't something that the Regal Pill Palace had arranged for beforehand. Since it wasn't a hidden special technique of the Regal Pill Palace, they were now certain that Jiang Chen was trying to cast around for a way forward.

To put it bluntly, they figured he was hoping to get lucky by cultivating all his spirit seeds and picking the best from them. It wasn't that the results would not be accepted, but the plan had some severe caveats in terms of sufficient space, materials, soil and time. But during a competition, all of the above were limited. Jiang Chen was simply dooming himself with his actions! So what if he was lucky and able to germinate his seeds, would their quality be acceptable then?

With inferior quality lower or mid rank seedlings, his score wouldn't be that high either. If the top geniuses put on a good performance, they could absolutely leap past Jiang Chen in one go. Of course, even as the center of attention, Jiang Chen was completely lost in his own world, paying no heed to the reactions of the outside world.

It was no wonder that no one understood what he was doing. The technique he was using this time was far more unique than what he'd used previously. It didn't resemble the techniques of the Myriad Domain at all, not even the most extraordinary ones. Of

course, he needed some extra materials other than the ones provided, so he took them from his storage ring.

He divided his area into two, and planted twenty seeds in one half. His actions looked random, but he was actually laying down a small spirit reaping formation in this half, creating a formation of the five elements. These twenty seeds weren't his main focus.

The focus of his attentions lay in the other half, where he also set down the same spirit reaping formation, but instead accompanied by the 5 seventh level saint rank seeds this time. They were the true stars of the show.

The two formations formed a link, a one way transmission of energy from one half to the other. The right half was the true focal point of the energy, nurturing the five seventh level saint rank seeds. The left half would merely collect the spirit power produced by the twenty seeds and funnel it to the five seeds of the five different elements on the right. In spirit herb cultivation, this technique was called the Art of Spirit Reaping. To put it simply, it used the characteristics of spirit herbs to form a nurturing formation of the five elements. The theory behind this wasn't complicated, but an exact, precise calculation of space, spirit herb characteristics, terrain, and usage of materials was needed to set up the formation.

The slightest deviation would result in completely wasted efforts.

At the end of the day, this was still a highly technical and difficult undertaking. It was likely that no one apart from Jiang Chen could use these methods in the Myriad Domain. There may

not even be anyone who could understand what he was doing.

Wei Wuying and Sect Head Zhu were almost dancing in joy. They'd seen Jiang Chen planting the spirit seeds with their own eyes. Although Jiang Chen's methods looked mysterious, they didn't believe that Jiang Chen would be able to do anything now that he'd mucked it up this much!

Jiang Chen didn't do anything else after making his preparations. This technique had a particular advantage over the ones his competitors were using; he didn't need to keep an eye on his seedlings all the time. As a result, he decided to sit down cross-legged and start meditating.

Seven days was a long time, and he didn't want to waste all this time. The formation had been set up and he'd done all he could. All that remained was to patiently await the fruits of his labor.

Jiang Chen didn't believe that he couldn't cultivate supreme rank seedlings out of mere seventh level saint rank seeds in seven days after he'd used the Art of Spirit Reaping. After all, if it wasn't for his desire to obtain all the points in this round, he wouldn't have used such a complicated technique. At the very least, using the same methods as the others, he would've definitely produced upper rank seedlings, and he had a decent chance of obtaining supreme rank seedlings. However, if he wanted to guarantee supreme rank seedlings, the conditions imposed by the organizers were far too restrictive. Of this, he was quite certain. In addition, his technique could also give him some free time. He wouldn't need to constantly keep an eye on it, making his job much easier than the others.

Apart from Jiang Chen, Mu Gaoqi was also in his element. Like wings added to a tiger, the advantages of a wood constitution of high order were clearly noticeable. He only needed to quickly observe with his consciousness to easily identify which seed had the most potential.

Cultivating the seeds came even easier. He didn't need any special techniques, as he easily grasped each seed's special characteristics and used the simplest method to appropriately handle them. Everything was completed flawlessly. This was his advantage, an advantage that no one else could possibly emulate. Mu Gaoqi's techniques were far beneath Jiang Chen's, but his innate potential gave him a leg up that Jiang Chen didn't possess.

Apart from Mu Gaoqi, Ding Tong was the only other with an apparent advantage. He'd brought over a spirit liquid from somewhere that induced the growth of spirit herbs. Although this wasn't an advantage innately from his potential, it was certainly an advantage that came from one's resources.

The seven days started passing one by one, with changes seen every day in the competitors patches of dirt. On the other hand, the first three days passed and absolutely nothing could be seen on Jiang Chen's side.

He wasn't worried at all, but Palace Head Dan Chi was! Three days had passed already, and the seeds of all the other top geniuses had started sprouting already. Tender new shoots could be seen poking through the ground, their elemental leanings very apparent. Jiang Chen however, still somehow remained steady and

completely confident.

In the eyes of Wei Wuying and the others, this behavior was just indicative of Jiang Chen giving up on himself. The fourth day had already dawned, and his seeds had yet to make a move. What was this if not making a mess as he gave up? There were only a little over three days left. Even if Jiang Chen had a divine ability at his disposal, could he make spirit herbs grow at a crazy speed? This obviously went against common sense.

Palace Head Dan Chi was also having trouble understanding this move of Jiang Chen's. He trusted Jiang Chen very much, and still felt that Jiang Chen had some sort of plan even though the latter was behaving this way. However, there was no proof of said plan, even as the remaining time waned. If it wasn't for Jiang Chen's coolly composed expression, he would've suspected that Jiang Chen wanted to forfeit the race.

"This Jiang Chen must've absorbed some heaven defying fire to put on such a performance in the first round of fire control, and obtain stunning results in the second of cauldron heating. But, his true form is coming to light in the third round. It looks like he doesn't have any experience in cultivating spirit herbs in the sixteen kingdom alliance and is completely helpless. He can only muck around blindly. Hmph! How does one amount to anything in cultivating spirit herbs without at least three to five years of learning?" Wei Wuying was already certain that Jiang Chen had never learned how to cultivate spirit herbs, and his perfect scores in the first two rounds had been nothing but a fluke.

Sect Head Zhu's thoughts were similar, and he was naturally

delighted beyond words when he saw Jiang Chen with still no real progress. He was most happy to see Jiang Chen perform below his usual standard, because that would send Ding Tong up to the champion's seat.

Wang Jianyu of the Sacred Sword Palace wasn't even paying attention to his own sect's geniuses anymore. He spent most of his efforts paying attention to Jiang Chen. It was obvious that his interest in suppressing the Regal Pill Palace was greater than watching over the development of his own disciples. "Hmph, this kid is rather good at playing the mysterious card, hmm? It's already the fourth day, and his seeds are the only ones that haven't sprouted at all. The others have more or less sprouted, and here he sits, pretending to be calm. He even has the mind to meditate!"

He wanted to burst out laughing. If it wasn't for the fact that they were in the middle of a competition, he would've started jeering at Palace Head Dan Chi already. Cultivating martial dao in the middle of the Pill Battles, this Jiang Chen is such a weird freak.

However, Jiang Chen's seeds finally sprouted on the afternoon of the fourth day.

"Hmph, it's too late now. He's almost an entire day behind the others. There's only seven days total; how can he possibly catch up, starting so much later than everyone else?" Wei Wuying was a bit startled to see Jiang Chen's seeds sprout. He had postulated that Jiang Chen didn't know how to cultivate spirit herbs at all, but it looked like his thoughts were wrong.

On the fifth day, when everyone took a look at Jiang Chen's area

again, they noticed that there were 20 seeds that had all sprouted on the left hand side, and only five seeds on the right. Astonishingly, the five on the right had grown furiously in the span of a night, and their height had pretty much caught up to the others. Although there was still a bit of a distance between them and the seedlings of the top geniuses, it was apparent that Jiang Chen's seedlings were catching up at a furious rate.

This finally made Dan Chi's slightly furrowed brow smooth out as he inwardly brushed away the sweat from his forehead. "Jiang Chen, that kid! Just what is he up to with this move? He truly started scaring me."

The others were greatly astonished. They almost couldn't believe their eyes. Jiang Chen's seeds had sprouted a full day later than the others, but their growth had already caught up to everyone else's, and were continuing to grow at that incredible rate! Those who had been waiting to see Jiang Chen make a fool out of himself all felt that subtle prick of being played by him.

On the sixth day, Jiang Chen's spirit herbs overtook the majority of the other seedlings and began showing signs of reaching the level of the top geniuses. Moreover, Jiang Chen's seedlings looked distinctly superior to everyone else's crop, whether in terms of color, luster, and vitality. Even Ding Tong, the one who'd been in the lead before Jiang Chen had caught up, had seen the gap of his advantage shorten to almost nothing.

Dan Chi smiled, he knew that Jiang Chen must've used some esoteric technique this time. Those seemingly ludicrous actions must have been the components of a highly sophisticated

technique that no one else could understand. Dan Chi also naturally attributed all of this to the mysterious Elder Shun. He was happily going down the path that all of Jiang Chen's marvelous techniques had been passed down from Elder Shun.

Chapter 545: A Triple Champion

Time swiftly progressed until the seventh and last day dawned. The participants all had extremely solemn expressions on their faces. That is, all of them, apart from Jiang Chen. He was completely confident in his results. Under the yoke of the Art of Spirit Reaping, the five seventh level saint rank seeds had grown exceptionally well. Even if the judging was to start at that very moment, they would be identified supreme rank spirit herbs.

The twenty seedlings in the left half were shrunken, as if they really hadn't gotten the chance to grow. That was only natural, since the formation was siphoning the spirit energy they produced and using it to fertilize the five seedlings in the other half. The growth of the twenty seedlings had been purposefully stunted. They had only grown so as to keep the formation active. However, removal of the five seedlings that was the recipient of their energy would allow the twenty undernourished seedlings to return to their original vitality. In the end, they would be none the worse for wear.

On the seventh day, the heavyweights of each sect started craning their necks to examine each of the candidates' seedlings. Although they were too far away for a detailed observation, the color and size of the seedlings could allow them to form a rudimentary judgement.

Jiang Chen's seedlings had soared ahead of all the others. The most astonishing thing about his crop was they their growth had been evenly distributed across all the seedlings. As if they'd shaken hands on an agreement, each of the seedlings were even in height, size, looks, luster and quality. They were flawless. This kind of

balanced development was the most frightening aspect of his seedlings.

In contrast, although Ding Tong's seedlings had had the aid of a heaven defying spirit liquid, there was still obvious individual differences between all of his seedlings. This was enough to demonstrate that his abilities had yet to reach perfection. In contrast, Mu Gaoqi had performed extremely well, ending up neck and neck with Ding Tong.

Although Wei Xing'er possessed an innate constitution of fire, it didn't prove to be an advantage in this round of spirit herb cultivation. Her performance was just passable, yet Wei Qing's crop was only surpassed by Jiang Chen, Ding Tong, and Mu Gaoqi.

The seventh day finally came to an end, and the candidates were all instructed to vacate their area. A loud hubbub occurred as the candidates made their way out of their respective areas. Once again, each of the crop yields were carefully scored, and their totals tallied. Jiang Chen once again took home full marks for this round with no contest at all, becoming a stunning triple champion. His overall score was an absolutely flabbergasting 1400 points. His grasp on the champion's seat was almost a sure thing.

Ding Tong was runner up for this round, but he'd only received 540 points in this round for a total of 1,270, placing him second overall.

The most surprising result came from Mu Gaoqi. He'd actually received 540 points as well, and his overall score had shot up to a stunning 1,250 points, vaulting him into third place overall!

Wei Qing had leveraged his performance in this round to overtake Wei Xing'er, taking the fourth place in rankings with 1,220 points.

Wei Xing'er was now in fifth place with 1,200 points due to mediocre performance in the third round.

Ling Bi'er had done better then Wei Xing'er, closing the gap and now occupying sixth place overall. She was just 10 points behind.

Next, Shen Qinghong, Zhu Feiyang, Lin Hai, Yuan Yuan and Wang Han actually all had identical scores: 1,180 points, and occupied the seventh to eleventh positions. That did mean that the difference between Wei Xing'er's fifth ranking and Wang Han's eleventh rank was simply a matter of 20 points. It also meant that one of the top geniuses was destined to be pushed down to eleventh. A single rank's difference may be small, but there was a world of difference in the level of treatment between tenth and eleventh.

The top ten could enter Mt. Rippling Mirage and harvest for twenty days, but the next ten could only enter for ten days and then only after ten days had elapsed for the top ten. It was obvious that their chances of getting anything good would be greatly decreased.

Therefore, after the three rounds were over, the competition for the top ten instantly heated up. The struggle over number ten was actually fiercer than the struggle over the championship. With

how things had developed, the championship was originally up to the top four candidates. However, Jiang Chen's momentum in taking full marks for each round was slowly sending his competition up a wall. Those going up against him could only feel a deep sense of helplessness. No matter how optimistic they tried to be, they had to admit that as long as Jiang Chen performed at his usual level in the fourth round, there was almost no hope for them to seize the championship from his hands.

Ding Tong in particular had a belly full of ire and nowhere to vent. He'd almost gone on a rampage when he learned that Jiang Chen had taken full marks again. He'd used a heaven defying spirit liquid in this round, barely skirting the lines of cheating. Even with that, he'd not only failed to close the distance between them, but the gap had widened instead. What was the point of the fourth round if this sort of pattern continued?!

Ding Tong was here for the championship. Taking home second place would be nothing but a humiliating failure. But sadly, the only thing he could do when faced with this kind of Jiang Chen was to huff, puff and glare. On the other hand, it was Mu Gaoqi who surprised everyone. Apart from Palace Head Dan Chi knowing what had happened behind the scenes, all the other heavyweights of the sect found this batch of Regal Pill Palace candidates to be incredibly mystifying.

"Dan Chi, your Regal Pill Palace is quite odd. Shen Qinghong and Ling Bi'er have the biggest reputations, but the true talents seem to be this Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi. Was this a facade to allow them to shine brilliantly?"

Dan Chi only smiled and refrained from commenting when he was asked these kinds of questions.

“We all know of Jiang Chen’s background, but where did this Mu Gaoqi come from? The Regal Pill Palace disciples truly take our breath away in astonishment.”

Dan Chi smile faintly. “Wei Wuying, do you want to investigate Mu Gaoqi now? I’m afraid you’ll be sorely disappointed. He’s always been a Regal Pill Palace disciple, he’s just kept a lower profile.”

Mu Gaoqi’s sudden rise and unimpeded momentum to reach the top three was now forcing Wei Qing and Wei Xing’er of the Walkabout Sect to occupy fourth and fifth. Wei Wuying was finding this a rather bitter pill to swallow.

However, Mu Gaoqi’s heaven defying performance in the spirit herb cultivation round was above reproach, and the farce of investigating Jiang Chen couldn’t be repeated on Mu Gaoqi. It would only invite contempt and scorn. Face was as thin as tree bark, and although Wei Wuying was thick-skinned, he wasn’t that shameless.

Instead, it was Wang Jianyu who spoke sourly. “One at fifth level origin realm and the other at third level origin realm. Are the pill dao geniuses of the Regal Pill Palace all cultivated on the foundation of sacrificing martial dao?” At this point, he was reduced to nitpicking, like looking for a bone in an egg.

“Ole Wang, this should resonate deeply with your Sacred Sword Palace! Sacrificing pill dao for martial dao—why else does your Sacred Sword Palace always come in last at the Pill Battles?” Dan Chi laughed softly, obviously not leaving Wang Jianyu any face.

The latter snorted coldly, “Martial dao strength is ultimately the support for the establishment of a sect. As strong as pill dao is, it will never amount to much!”

Dan Chi was quite contemptuous of this kind of perspective. “There’s only a few years until the Myriad Grand Ceremony. We’ll see just how much weight your so-called martial might holds then!”

Whether folks accepted it or not, Jiang Chen’s dominating score was evident, and brooked not an ounce of skepticism.

After seven days of spirit herb cultivation, many of the candidates were exhausted, and so the competition was paused for everyone to rest for a day. This was a perfect time to adjust themselves, but it didn’t matter to Jiang Chen. His performance in the three rounds had left him assured that the championship was already in the bag.

The fourth round was one of pill refining, and he believed that as long as he performed up to his usual standards, the championship wouldn’t go to anyone else. Pill refining was one of his strengths, after all.

“Brother Chen, a triple champion! That’s wonderful! I knew

those people were just gifting you the spirit stones, hahaha!" Mu Gaoqi looked sincerely happy for Jiang Chen.

"You're performing well, Gaoqi. It looks like your strength of heart has increased. Keep your cool and you may remain number three after the fourth round."

Mu Gaoqi was in noticeably good spirits. He laughed, "Brother Chen, my goal before was to enter the top ten. Now, it looks fully attainable, so I don't have any mental pressure and can display my abilities to their fullest. Everyone is strong in refining pills, but I'll try my best to remain in the top ten and go for top five!"

"Mm, Wei Qing and Wei Xing'er from the Walkabout Sect are all strong opponents. It's a logical outcome if any of you three can make it into the top ten. However, I believe that you'll be able to widen the gap between you and the others in at most ten years."

An innate wood constitution of high order was a rare existence in even the Upper Eight Realms, and was absolutely a potential that lorded over everyone else in the Myriad Domain.

Ling Bi'er came to visit as they were chatting, and Mu Gaoqi smiled ambiguously when he saw her. He chuckled, "I'll go away now, Brother Chen."

Jiang Chen pretended that he was going to smack Mu Gaoqi a good one when he saw how the latter's smile was asking to be hit. Mu Gaoqi ducked, clutching his head, and scurried off with that cheeky grin still plastered on his face.

“Junior brother, it looks like that little scamp Mu Gaoqi is truly looking up to you.” Ling Bi’er also smiled softly when she saw Mu Gaoqi thus. She felt that relationships between fellow sect disciples should indeed be this heartwarming.

“Please take a seat, senior sister Bi’er.”

Ling Bi’er nodded slightly. “Congratulations to you, junior brother. It looks like you’ve locked in the championship of the Pill Battles already.”

Jiang Chen didn’t put on airs as he nodded with a smile. “The palace head and Elder Yun Nie have given their marching orders, I dare not return without it!”

Ling Bi’er immediately felt her heart lighten when she saw how serious Jiang Chen was. She somehow felt a boundless source of magic from Jiang Chen, that somehow anything that was impossible would be possible if he put his hand on it. After repeated psychological impacts, she now had great confidence in Jiang Chen. Perhaps he really could cure the Divine Befuddlement Miasma that had tormented her father for more than ten years. When she thought of this, Ling Bi’er had to suppress the urge to sob. Jiang Chen’s image had become greater and greater with increasing clarity in her heart. He would unconsciously float to the top of her mind every day and night.

The two of them looked at each other, and Ling Bi’er somehow felt a bit shy when she met Jiang Chen’s relaxed and easy gaze. She

hadn’t had much of a purpose in visiting him this time, merely wanting to take a look at Jiang Chen and congratulate him.

It was at this time that a sweet and soft voice travelled in from outside. “Senior brother Jiang Chen, little sister Wei Xing’er is so bold as to come visit you.”

Chapter 546: Temptress Wei Xing'er

Wei Xing'er?

An alluring face immediately surfaced in Jiang Chen's mind. Wei Xing'er exuded a naturally seductive presence, one that came from deep within her very bones. Her every movement and gesture gave others the feeling of an intimate seduction.

When Ling Bi'er heard Wei Xing'er introduce herself, her brows knit together as her face grew cold. She was obviously not kindly disposed to this name.

"Senior sister Ling Bi'er, do you know this woman?" Jiang Chen asked in a low voice.

Ling Bi'er was silent for a moment before responding, "We shouldn't talk about people behind their backs, but junior brother, you should be careful of this woman."

She wasn't the sort to gossip about others behind their backs. Even when she found some matters to be the height of distastefulness, she still wasn't willing to voice her opinions on them. In reality, Wei Xing'er had the reputation of a damnable temptress in the Myriad Domain. She possessed a fair face, but a foul heart.

Opening the door, Jiang Chen was greeted by Wei Xing'er leaning on the doorframe, a hint of a tantalizing smile on her face and the look in her eyes so piteous that it seemed as if tears would fall any

second. Her sinuous waist was resting on the side of the door, further showing off the curves of her body and exuding amorous charms. Her body was perfect no matter what angle one assessed her from. When combined with her gorgeously stunning face, she was a head turner that everyone yearned after.

However, when her limpid eyes caught sight of Ling Bi'er behind Jiang Chen, she instantly froze. Her alluring posture instantly fled from her body, only to be replaced with the hostility of a fighting cock. It was as if there was a quality to Ling Bi'er that made Wei Xing'er spontaneously overflow with enmity.

"Tsk tsk, I hadn't thought that the Myriad Domain's acclaimed icy beauty would be here feasting on meat close at hand. Ling Bi'er, don't tell me you're longing for love!"

Ling Bi'er seemed to know of Wei Xing'er's madness as she flung a quick riposte, "Impossible person." She ignored the weighty hostility emanating from Wei Xing'er after speaking and spoke to Jiang Chen, "I'll be going now, junior brother, you be careful."

Wei Xing'er instantly glared ferociously. "Ling Bi'er, exactly what do you mean by that!?"

Ling Bi'er ignored her and drifted away after stepping through the door, leaving behind a furious Wei Xing'er. She'd never liked Ling Bi'er's proud stature. She'd always felt that Ling Bi'er was just putting on an act and pretending to be all high and mighty just to attract male attention. Yet somehow, all those men were suckers for abuse and fought each other daily to draw closer to Ling Bi'er.

Although Wei Xing'er was equally a man's lady, many liked her for her open personality. To put it bluntly, they just wanted her for her body. There was even a saying amongst the young folks of the Myriad Domain, saying—take Ling Bi'er for your goddess, take Ling Hui'er for a wife you can groom, and take Wei Xing'er for your whore.

Even with her reputation, she'd never actually known a man, but her reputation and popularity was on a completely different level than Ling Bi'er's. But whether she was jealous or angry, none of that would change the truth. This was why she'd exploded with enmity at the sight of Ling Bi'er.

Wei Xing'er smiled charmingly after seeing Ling Bi'er drift off. "Jiang Chen, are you interested in chatting for a bit?"

"About what?" Jiang Chen smiled faintly and showed no desire to keep her at arm's length.

"What would you like to chat about?" Wei Xing'er focused her eyes on him with great tenderness, light dancing on her brows as her words filled with some ambiguous hints.

Jiang Chen spread his hands out. "Miss Wei has come to find me, yet asks me what to chat about. This is posing a difficult question indeed."

Wei Xing'er chuckled. "Don't be so serious!"

Jiang Chen smiled casually, but was unwilling to relax his guard. This temptress had a natural sense of seduction to her, and her every dimple and laugh was designed to catch one off guard. If it wasn't for Jiang Chen's Boulder Heart and his solid strength of heart, he likely would've succumbed to her temptation already. How could he not tell that she was trying to seduce him?

"Jiang Chen, Xing'er might actually be older than you by a year or two in terms of age. You can call me older sister Xing'er. Do you know? I once swore a vow that if a man can beat me in the Pill Battles, I would give myself to him and be his dao partner." Wei Xing'er's voice was sweet and soft, with every word and phrase possessing a kind of unique charm that gently pressed each syllable into the other's heart. She leaned slightly forward as she spoke, sending a cloud of fragrance over and causing the glorious scene beneath the nape of her neck to come tantalizing into view, showing half of her cleavage.

To a hot-blooded cultivator, this kind of situation would've been fatally tempting. But her actions didn't seem enough in front of Jiang Chen. He just seemed surprised, "Then it seems that both Ding Tong of the Tristar Sect and Wei Qing of your sect are lined up in front of Miss Wei as well."

Wei Xing'er burst out in laughter. "You little imp who doesn't understand flirting! If Xing'er liked them, would I be here talking to you?"

"Eh..." Jiang Chen was speechless.

Wei Xing’er rolled her eyes at him and stuck out a slender finger to poke at the air above Jiang Chen’s forehead. She pouted, “I knew it! Ling Bi’er must be talking about me behind my back and made you biased against me. Hmph, all of those dirty men out there who want to sleep with me, but how would I be the type of person to let them succeed!”

She extended her pure-white arm as she spoke, showing that its skin was as flawless as a white lotus root. There was a spot of red on her arm. “This is my chastity dot. If I lost my virginity, I would lose this dot as well. Jiang Chen, Xing’er also struggled for a long time before coming here. Xing’er knows that you may look down on me because of rumors from the outside world, but Wei Xing’er is someone who dares to love and hate passionately. I happen to like young geniuses like you, and those so-called men of the Myriad Domain aren’t worthy of conquering me at all.”

Wei Xing’er’s tone became a bit dejected as her words came to this point. “Look into my eyes if you don’t believe me. They won’t lie if I speak the slightest false word.”

She stepped in front of Jiang Chen at this time and exhaled a fragrant breath. Her firm and perky chest was almost touching Jiang Chen as she looked deeply into Jiang Chen’s eyes, as if not allowing him to look away.

Jiang Chen’s face was coolly composed, and his eyes didn’t evade her gaze. Their eyes met, and emotions rippled through her eyes as if her grievances were wrestling to get out. There were three parts sorrow, three parts passion, and a few more parts of a seductive beauty that invited pity. That tender gaze was like the strongest

alcohol, as if to look at her eyes was to become drunk. Her gaze became even more blurred over after a while, and the seductive look on her face even more intense. The fragrance emitting from her lips seemed to be capable of melting the entire world. Jiang Chen's body swayed and wavered, his gaze fogged over as if he was under a spell. It was almost as if he'd lost his soul.

Wei Xing'er retracted the seductive look on her face as a smile curved her lips. "Hmph, as much as a genius as you are, you're still a little unlearned. A man who hasn't known the pleasures of women is at most just an unweaned brat. You're a little too young to be playing cool with me."

She smiled arrogantly as she reached out and patted Jiang Chen's face lightly. "Little fellow, you should rejoice that I actually like your face. Otherwise, things wouldn't as as easy as becoming muddleheaded for a few days. You're the luckiest person out of all the victims to fall for my Azure Smokesnare Powder."

She started dragging Jiang Chen as she spoke, planning on placing him back on the bed. But as she pulled at him, she realized that he wouldn't budge at all. She seemed to be hauling on an enormous boulder that weighed hundreds of kilograms. She actually stumbled herself and fell back into his embrace, with those half covered globes crashing on his broad chest.

"Ah!" Wei Xing'er cried aloud and realized that a hand had been clamped tightly around her wrists in a death grip.

"Now that wasn't very nice, Miss Wei!" The bespelled Jiang Chen had firmly caught her with arms like steel as a sharp look blazed

out of his eyes. How was this someone who was enthralled?

When Wei Xing'er had flung an art of seduction at him earlier, she'd thought that she had Jiang Chen in the bag and so had relaxed her guard. This move had always worked on males both young and old. She'd never failed, so who would've thought that Jiang Chen would be completely fine after she'd employed the Smokesnare Powder?!

In terms of cultivation, Wei Xing'er was close to the sage realm. Her level was much higher than Jiang Chen, but here she was, immobilized by him!

"You..." Shock filled her eyes. "Why are you perfectly fine?!"

"What do you think would happen to me?" Jiang Chen's tone turned frosty. "Using the Azure Smokescreen Powder to make me spend the next couple of days in a fog so I perform below my standard in refining pills—you thought you'd benefit then, didn't you!"

Wei Xing'er possessed an indolent nature, and when she saw that even her Smokesnare Powder couldn't do anything to Jiang Chen, she knew that he was different from the others. She tittered, "Alright, Xing'er concedes. I can't seduce you, I can't poison you. You can do whatever you want with me now."

Her eyes looked up at him, a throbbing seductiveness back in them as she gave off the impression that Jiang Chen could punish her any way he wanted to. He was immediately left speechless yet

also inwardly on his guard. This temptress had a very flexible personality, and a tough character to break. This move of allowing Jiang Chen to do whatever he wanted looked like a lazy way out, but it was one that was difficult for him to respond to.

There wasn't enough of a crime here to kill her, and if he punished her or injured her in any way that impacted her performance in refining pills, the Walkabout Sect would surely use this as an excuse to make trouble for him.

A gentleman did not bicker with a woman. It wasn't that he was unable to use poison in kind on her, but how would he resolve the situation then? He stared blankly for a while, but couldn't think of how to proceed.

Wei Xing'er smiled alluringly. "If you can't think of what to do with this older sister, then let me tell you something. My body is pure, and if you'd like, just take me. I'm a weak woman and will have to find shelter in a man's embrace sooner or later. Why not let you take the advantage? I already like the way you look. I couldn't even bear to use too much poison when I used it against you. How else do you think you escaped the strength of my Smokesnare Powder?"

Jiang Chen remained at a loss for words, but suddenly reversed his grip and reached around her, spanking her butt three times in a row. He didn't hold back his strength, so the three smacks damaged her skin and flesh, but not her bones or tendons.

"Wei Xing'er, your moves are useless on me. I'll let you go this time, but if there's a repeat occurrence, I won't let you off the hook

then!” He pulled open the door and made a gesture of showing his guest the door. “You can see yourself out!”

Wei Xing’er stood there, stunned after her spanking. Although she gave the outside world the impression of a lascivious and scheming woman, she’d never really been touched by a man before. The sensitive areas about her body were even more of a taboo area, and if any man tried making moves on her there, they would quickly be dead or crippled.

But today, the taboo zone that was her butt had just been spanked crisply, like teaching a child a lesson!

Chapter 547: The Way Of Divergent Pills, Jiang Chen Finds An Opening

Even with Wei Xing'er's coquettish and wanton personality, she was still stunned by Jiang Chen's three spankings. She'd never known shyness in her life, but she'd completely lost her composure now. Her almond-shaped eyes glared at Jiang Chen. "You... you dared hit me there!"

Jiang Chen snorted coldly. "What are you still here for? Haven't you been spanked enough?"

Wei Xing'er grew incensed. "Hmph! Just you wait, Jiang Chen! One day I'll make you drink the water with which I wash my feet!"

She flushed red and turned to flee. She even viciously slammed the door shut on her way out.

Jiang Chen's expression was indifferent as he murmured to himself, "This Wei Xing'er seems to think that the greatest beneficiary of her using the Azure Smokesnare Powder would have been the Walkabout Sect. In reality, had she succeeded, Ding Tong would've been the one lucking out instead."

However, if Jiang Chen had been successfully disabled and prevented from participating in the fourth round, it certainly would've impacted the overall scores of the Regal Pill Palace. At that point, it may have been possible for the Walkabout Sect to surpass the Regal Pill Palace. Jiang Chen frowned as his train of thought ran into darker straits

This Wei Xing'er possessed a wanton and indulgent personality. If Jiang Chen hadn't known how to read people or if Ling Bi'er hadn't reminded him beforehand, or even if he'd been unaware of the Walkabout Sect's deft use of poison, then he may not have been as guarded as he had been. Thankfully, since he'd been forewarned, that Smokesnare Powder hadn't posed a threat to Jiang Chen.

But even so, he still didn't dare relax his guard around her. Her natural sense of seduction came from her inherent glamour constitution. Her every gesture and look, even her words were suffused with the skills of charm. Strung together, they were enough to boil a man's blood and overcome his reason with lust.

This small interlude wasn't enough to disabuse Jiang Chen of his sense of self. He sat down cross legged to recompose himself, and shortly forgot about the entire matter.

The candidates all reconvened after a day, gathering in the most holy of halls in the Rippling Mirage Hall, the Dan Li Palace. It was a sacred place for the refinement of pills and pill competitions.

A thousand refining formations glittered within the hall. Each formation was enclosed by restrictions that clearly separated its interior and exterior. Once again, the elders took the left side, and the geniuses the right.

"All candidates, enter your respective refining areas according to your number."

The candidates only took a short while to find their respective formations. Entering their formation would activate the restrictions, sealing them inside.

“From this moment on, no one can leave this area until the competition is over. If you attempt to leave on your own, you will be attacked by the formation.”

Everyone was well aware of this rule, and so weren’t surprised by the announcement.

“Once again, a perfect score in this topic of refining pills is 600 points, same as the previous topic of spirit herb cultivation. Similarly, there are also three sections within this one round, each worth 200 points. Your time for this round has now been extended to half a month.”

This meant that the candidates couldn’t leave this area for the next half month.

“The first section consists of completing pill recipes. There are ten incomplete recipes in front of you, each missing a variety of ingredients. Your task is to fill in the missing pieces. Keep in mind that a recipe may be missing more than one ingredient. There may even be up to three ingredients that have been removed. Incorrect answers and omissions will both be regarded as failures, earning you no points for that recipe. This round has a total of 200 points available, meaning each complete and correct recipe will earn you 20 points.”

Ten recipes worth 20 points each. These rules were rather straightforward, but the caveat was that incorrect answers or omissions would also dock all the points that could be earned from that recipe. This was a much more difficult requirement to satisfy for the pill masters.

“The second section deals with the analysis of pill medicines and recipes. Each of you will be given a pill. Your task is to analyze the pill and reconstruct the recipe by writing down the ingredients. Once again, this section has a total of 200 available points. With ten ingredients for each recipe, each correct ingredient can net you 20 points. However, each incorrect answer will result in a 20 point deduction. The more incorrect answers you put down, the more points you will be docked. So remember, if you are not confident in your answer, don’t write down the ingredient.”

Everyone listened to these rules with solemn faces. This section was even stricter than the previous, with points being docked for incorrect answers. If one answered eight correctly yet two incorrectly, this meant that one would only earn six answers’ worth of points. That would greatly affect their final score. As such, it would be most prudent to leave answers blank if they weren’t sure of their choice. The only silver lining was that even if they lost all their points for this section, their winnings from the previous section would be untouched. Otherwise, their score for this round could even dip into the negatives.

Jiang Chen remained as serene as a mountain. No matter how strict the rules, they wouldn’t be able to affect his ability. The strong would always remain the strong. As long as his pill dao foundation remained intact, it wouldn’t matter how stringent the

rules became. In the end, this competition tested one's foundations, and he was confident in his.

"The third and final section will test your skills in pill refining. Once again, a perfect score is 200 points. This section will not only test your ability to refine pills, but also your logical reasoning skills. Each of you will receive a list of refining ingredients. From that, you will have to craft a pill recipe, then refine the pill according to your recipe. The resulting pill will be evaluated according to a grading scale ranging from A to D. A grade of D will considered as 50 points, C as 100 points, B as 150 points, and A as 200 points.

"You might be curious about how the grading scale evaluates your pill. I can tell you that if you refine a pill of the true saint rank, then even if the pill is a lower rank pill, you will receive a grade of A and the corresponding 200 points."

"If the pill is an upper tier saint rank pill, it must at minimum be an upper rank pill to receive full marks.

"If the pill is a mid tier saint rank pill, then it must at minimum reach supreme rank of great perfection to be awarded full marks."

The mention of "true saint rank" and "saint rank" referred to the classification of the pill itself. Whether the pills were successfully refined or not, each pill was strictly classified within a larger framework of pill dao. As for lower, mid, upper, and supreme tier —those were the categorizations that dealt with the quality of the refined pill. Even mortal rank pills could be divided based on their quality. Jiang Chen naturally understood this theory. Generally

speaking, it seemed that the higher the pill's level was, the greater its chance of receiving an A grade. But if the pill level wasn't high enough, then it was up to the quality of the refined pill to determine the final grade.

With the rules of the competition announced, the pill refining round could begin.

The first segment was one of recipe completion.

Ten recipes were arrayed in front of Jiang Chen. Everyone had the same set of recipes, making the competition quite fair.

When it came to pill recipes, it really wasn't easy to stump Jiang Chen. Setting aside the fact that he'd seen most of them before, even if he hadn't, he could easily extrapolate the missing ingredients from the ones left in the pill recipe.

He took less than two hours to finish completing the recipes, but he didn't dare be careless and carefully checked everything over once. Due to the rules of this segment, overlooking even one ingredient or answering one incorrectly meant that he would forgo all the points for that recipe.

Jiang Chen didn't wish to make a mistake in this area. Nevertheless, there were still two recipes in front of him that were so obscure that he wasn't a hundred percent sure he had extrapolated the right answers.

Of course, he wouldn't waste any more time here. Even if he didn't get those correct, he would only lose 40 points in total. Given that he already held an almost 200 point lead over second place, he could afford a 40 point loss. Besides, what guarantee was there that Ding Tong would claim the full 200 points for this section? At the very least, Jiang Chen didn't think it possible.

Still, there was no such thing as an absolute. If Ding Tong had done his research properly, a healthy dose of luck would make it possible for him to correctly fill out all the recipes in this first section. Although Jiang Chen had known much in his past life, he still hadn't devoted much time to researching pill recipes in this life. Most of his accomplishments had come from relying on his formidable memory. But if he'd had a couple of decades to devote to research, Jiang Chen firmly believed that no recipe in the Divine Abyss would be capable of stumping him.

He entered the second section right after he'd checked over his answers from the first. This section involved analyzing pill medicines and recipes, which was actually the reverse process of refining pills. One had to deconstruct a refined pill, distilling its essence down to its core ingredients and then reconstruct the pill recipe.

Jiang Chen loved this kind of pursuit in his past life. He would always summon his pill dao disciples to join him in deconstructing a pill he'd newly received and then reconstruct its recipe. This test wasn't foreign to him at all.

A pill cauldron was also needed to deconstruct pills, but the procedure involved in it was diametrically different than the

process of refining pills. If nothing else, it required a far more delicate touch.

Ordinarily speaking, there weren't that many pill masters in the Divine Abyss Continent who were willing to spend time and effort to analyze pills. It was a frustratingly complex process that devoured one's energy and mental strength. It was only because of the almost preposterous amount of spare time Jiang Chen had at his disposal in his previous life that he'd immersed himself in the pursuit of deconstructing pills.

However, when he'd braced himself for the task of delving into the pill analysis and picked up the pill he'd been allocated, he couldn't help but burst out in laughter. He actually recognized this pill!

"The Skyheart Rebirth Pill!"

Jiang Chen immediately recognized the pill that rolled around in his hand. It was one of the hallmark products of the divergent pill faction. The effects of this pill were actually similar to the One Buddha Powder that Jiang Chen had introduced in the Eastern Kingdom, but far more advanced. In terms of level, if the One Buddha Powder was level one, then the Skyheart Rebirth Pill was at least level twenty. This pill was used for calming the heart and mind. It was extremely useful to powerful cultivators for suppressing internal demons and clearing the consciousness of stray thoughts.

Contextually, this pill was a rare treasure in this world. It was almost nonexistent in the Myriad Domain.

“Could it be that this pill is a part of the Myriad Empire’s legacy, and that the various sects are unable to put it to use?” Jiang Chen’s guess was correct. There were many legacies that had been left behind by the mighty Myriad Empire in the Rippling Mirage Hall. Lifting the restrictions and selecting the appropriate test items from within required the combined efforts of the six great sects. It also had the added benefit of ensuring that no one would be able to cheat. However, as long as the pill appeared in the Pill Battles, it would then be spread to the rest of the Myriad Domain.

Chapter 548: The Longevity Pill

Since Jiang Chen recognized this Skyheart Rebirth Pill, he didn't need to spend too much effort on it anymore. The process of deconstruction was still needed to figure out the ingredients though, since there was the chance that substitute materials may have been used in the making of this particular pill. If he'd simply put down the original ingredients, it may be marked as incorrect. As such, he decided to unravel the pill's true ingredients by breaking it down to its basic elements.

The analysis and distillation process went relatively smoothly, since he already knew this was the Skyheart Rebirth Pill. When he was done, he was sure that no substitute materials had been used in the making of this pill. Jiang Chen knew that he wasn't being overly cautious, since this was a pill from the divergent pill faction. Its ever-changing style and peculiar use of ingredients made it a difficult pill to analyze. He had to remain vigilant.

After deciphering the ingredients, Jiang Chen wrote the dozen ingredients down. This segment had been surprisingly easy.

"Heh heh, who would've thought that I'd luck out in this section. However, it seems that many will fall in this section. The divergent pill faction's pills are the hardest to identify. It would not be unreasonable to anticipate that many will be stopped short here." Jiang Chen naturally wasn't delighting in the misery of others, but was actually worrying about Mu Gaoqi and Ling Bi'er. If they recognized the style of this pill, then they would be able to forge onwards. But if they treated it as an ordinary pill, then it would be incredibly difficult to analyze. However, Mu Gaoqi and Ling Bi'er weren't ordinary geniuses. If this stumped them, then it was

highly likely that everyone would be equally stumped by this divergent pill faction's pill.

Jiang Chen didn't continue dwelling on his thoughts, and composed himself before advancing to the third and last section. With the lead he'd secured from the second section, Jiang Chen was fairly certain that he'd locked in the championship of the genius group.

There were a full hundred ingredients arrayed in front of him for the third section.

"This segment not only tests one's powers in pill refinement, but also their ability to theorize logically, their observation, as well as their fundamental knowledge."

With so many materials, there were more than just one or two pills that candidates would be able to refine. As Jiang Chen's eyes swept over the ingredients, the names of several pills flashed through his mind, but were quickly discarded all one by one. They all came to about mid tier saint rank, so he would have to refine a supreme rank pill to gain full marks. Jiang Chen wasn't willing to take this risk. It was a risk since he only had enough ingredients at his disposal for at most three pills. It would be a bit difficult to ensure the production of a supreme rank pill from just three pills.

He quickly came up with an upper tier saint rank pill recipe. He only needed to refine an upper rank pill to win 200 points. Jiang Chen thought about it some more and then looked at the ingredients again, still choosing to discard it. "Logically speaking, it's not difficult to refine an upper rank Phoenix Croon Pill. It's at

eighth level saint rank, but the Fledgling Phoenix Grass here isn't of the best quality. Some unwanted developments might happen if I were to refine it."

Jiang Chen wanted a slow, but inexorable finish. In the end, he decided not to go with the Phoenix Croon Pill. He looked at the hundred ingredients, in no hurry to make a move. He knew that since the organizers had made a rule about a true saint rank pill, it was possible to create a pill recipe that would result in a true saint rank pill. Then, even if he refined a lower rank quality pill of that level, he would still take home full points. In other words, if he could create a pill recipe that gave him a true saint rank pill, he would gain full points no matter what level his completed product was.

In the world of pills, pills were divided into mortal, spirit, saint, true saint, earth, and heaven rank pills.

Saint rank pills corresponded to the origin realm of cultivation, and true saint to the sage realm. That meant that ordinary sage realm cultivators utilized pills of the true saint rank. In addition, each rank was further divided into lower, mid, and upper rank levels.

Jiang Chen kept combining and recombining the ingredients in his mind.

He had completed the first and second section in the record time of less than a day, so he had plenty of time to kill on this last segment. Naturally, all the sect heavyweights were keeping a close eye on him. When Palace Head Dan Chi witnessed Jiang Chen's

overbearing momentum and the speed at which he'd blasted through the first two segments, he was immensely gratified. His actions in recruiting Jiang Chen and allying with the Precious Tree Sect were being validated as incomparably wise.

With the painful lessons from the first three rounds, Wei Wuying and the others were now numb to Jiang Chen's brilliance. They were convinced it was impossible to speculate or evaluate Jiang Chen with their logic. After all, he'd caught up and surpassed the others after starting off much later than any of them in the previous round of spirit seed cultivation! They'd never heard of anything of the sort before. Now, even as they watched him explosively sprint through the first two sections of the fourth round, they didn't dare bring up any suspicions of cheating. All they could do was bury it deep in their hearts and try to focus on their tasks.

Of course, that didn't mean to say that they weren't hoping that Jiang Chen would become caught up in his arrogance, overestimate himself, and fail to perform at the level he'd demonstrated before. But their hopes seemed doomed, since his demeanor was as solid as Mt. Tai. It didn't seem like his performance would be marred in any way.

Wei Wuying couldn't help but complain in his heart, "That brat Dan Chi really lucked out this time. What kind of monstrous character is this Jiang Chen? I don't believe that a mere sixteen kingdom alliance could've raised this kid. What a pity that Xing'er didn't get anything from him when she went to probe him. Even her charm skills couldn't shake him! Just what is with him?!"

Almost no male in the Myriad Domain could withstand Wei Xing'er's charm skills. Jiang Chen was in the prime of his hot-blooded youth, how had he not been conquered, especially considering that he'd never tasted a woman before?

Wei Wuying really wanted to sit Wei Xing'er down for a chat and go over what had happened, but she was his junior after all. Although she wasn't directly related to him, some things were still a bit awkward to speak of.

Sect Head Zhu was even more depressed. "Ai, it's looking more and more impossible to shake the Regal Pill Palace's position in pill dao through this time's Pill Battles. How will I explain this to the Sky Sect when I return? Although they didn't send their best in the form of Ding Tong, this genius is still someone who has some stature in their sect! I'd thought that he would leave the rest of the geniuses in his dust as he took the genius' championship, but who knew that no matter how well he did, Jiang Chen would still one up him? No wonder the Regal Pill Palace went to the lengths of allying with the Precious Tree Sect for him. He's once again thrown the Sky Sect's plans for the Myriad Domain into disarray..."

Although the Tristar Sect was one of the fourth rank sects in the Myriad Domain, it had only accomplished their feats with the hidden help of the Sky Sect. The Tristar Sect was an important pawn of the Sky Sect in the Myriad Domain, and Ding Tong had been specially charged with helping the Tristar Sect set up the board for their next move. However, no one had anticipated that he would be met with setback after setback on his first stage in the Mt. Rippling Mirage Pill Battles. Jiang Chen's absolutely stellar performance was actually firmly suppressing Ding Tong!

“It all comes down to the fact that the upper echelon of the Sky Sect underestimated the heights of the Myriad Doman. Even setting Jiang Chen aside, there’s still Mu Gaoqi, Wei Xing’er, and Wei Qing in the mix. Although Ding Tong is ahead of them, he doesn’t possess the absolute advantage that Jiang Chen is displaying.” Sect Head Zhu sighed inwardly. He too felt deeply helpless at the appearance of Jiang Chen, a genius rarely seen even in a hundred years.

As Wang Jianyu of the Sacred Sword Palace witnessed Jiang Chen’s rise to claim the championship, he too found it difficult to accept. His envy of such a genius had been overwritten by his desire to kill Jiang Chen and root out this competition. “Jiang Chen is a treasure that Dan Chi picked up in the sixteen kingdoms alliance, and it looks like he’s able to affect the entire fortunes of the Regal Pill Palace. The growth of such a person only forebodes ill for my Sacred Sword Palace. If a chance arises, I must eliminate this person and suppress the Regal Pill Palace’s fortunes.”

The four family heads of the Great Cathedral were equally shocked at Jiang Chen’s dominating performance. However, the Great Cathedral had always set itself up as the top sect in the Myriad Domain, so even if they had certain thoughts, they definitely wouldn’t express them. Besides, they were too busy plotting on how to headhunt Jiang Chen and lure him over to the Great Cathedral. They were well aware that their weakness lay in their lack of a heaven defying level pill master. Once this hole was plugged, the Great Cathedral was destined to make it into the ranks of the third rank sects in the next couple of decades.

Jiang Chen spent several hours putting his thoughts in order.

Suddenly, inspiration struck and he slapped his leg. This is it! “A true saint rank pill!”

The name of a pill flashed through his mind, floating upwards out of his memories. “The Longevity Pill!”

If a sage realm cultivator used this pill, it would increase their lifespan from five hundred to eight hundred years. This actually wasn’t much to a cultivator of that realm, but it was an incredibly tempting thing if that much lifespan appeared at the end of one’s life, when they were decrepit and aging. Their hopes of breaking through would reignite, and if they managed to do so, the breakthrough would provide a further boost to their longevity.. When all was said and done, this wasn’t simply a matter of increasing one’s life to eight hundred years. “Eh, although the Longevity Pill is technically a true saint rank pill, it actually approaches the level of an earth rank pill. Surely the organizers hadn’t done this on purpose...”

Jiang Chen suddenly began to hesitate. He trusted that since the organizers had arranged for a true saint rank pill to be possible out of all these combinations, it wouldn’t be the pill he’d just thought of. Rather, it should’ve been a pill that was barely on the cusp of a true saint rank pill. The Longevity Pill was a pseudo earth rank pill already, which usually meant that only those in the emperor realm had the right to use it. Although it wasn’t solidly in the earth rank level, it wasn’t too far off. In addition, only those in the sage realm could take this particular pill. If anyone of a lower realm consumed the pill, its effects would immediately force them to explode. If anyone of a higher realm, such as the emperor realm, took it, then they would only receive an increase in lifespan of twenty years.

Jiang Chen sank into a mire of irresolution. He knew that once the Longevity Pill was introduced into this world, it would cause an immense uproar and unfathomable consequences. But then, another thought struck him. “I’ve continuously kept a low profile since I’ve reincarnated. It’s about time I showed off some of my skills after entering the Regal Pill Palace. Although there may be some negative fallout from bringing this pill into this world, there will no doubt be some opportunities that also arise. At the very least, it’s going to fill my coffers to bursting. I’ll never have to worry about resources no matter where I go!”

When his thoughts reached this point, Jiang Chen’s resolution hardened. No matter what, he was going to refine this Longevity Pill!

Chapter 549: Rich Fruits Of Achievement

Jiang Chen was a practical man of his word. He took out the Skyweave Cauldron and meditated for a moment, mentally simulating the process of refining the Longevity Pill a few times until he was utterly confident. He opened his eyes, ready to begin.

He first circulated the fires within himself and once again used the True Fires of Ninety Nine to preheat the cauldron. When the cauldron resonated, Jiang Chen randomly picked up two ingredients and threw them in carelessly.

These two ingredients weren't actually for refining the Longevity Pill. When he threw them in, he secretly shot out several beams of fire as well, turning them into ash. He then haphazardly threw in some more ingredients, using the flames in his body to repeatedly turn them into ash. He knew that he needed to conceal his true actions from the others, he couldn't allow anyone to derive the pill recipe and ingredient list of the Longevity Pill from his actions. He was sure that the various heavyweights would be keeping an eye on him. Given the impact that this pill would have on the world, there was no doubt people would go insane trying to copy it.

This was why he was purposefully confusing their eyes and ears by mixing in irrelevant materials in his refining process. It would keep the others from copying him. Although countless people would attempt to discern the original components of his pill and then deduce his recipe after it was made, it wouldn't be an entirely simple matter. After all, this was a pseudo earth rank pill, and not so easily reconstructed.

If any such pill could be successfully broken down, then there wouldn't be such a thing as unique pill recipes in this world. It would also invalidate the preciousness of pill recipes. The pill recipe would always be the most useful way to refine a pill. Reverse engineering wasn't impossible, but many pills had ingredients which couldn't be separated into their parts after they'd been combined.

The more sophisticated a pill, the more this was so. Of course, there were no absolutes in life. It all depended on one's prowess. A divine level expert analyzing a pill of the mundane world would be able to parse apart even the most obscure recipe. However, Jiang Chen firmly believed that his sleight of hand would thoroughly obfuscate the recipe for this Longevity Pill.

Furthermore, even if someone had the luck to deduce the recipe, replicating this pill refining would take an identical technique and control over fire. After all, ingredients weren't the only things that determined a successful pill refining. The pill master's techniques, idiosyncrasies, control of fire, and all sorts of details would determine the fate of a cauldron of pills.

Jiang Chen put in the ingredients for the Longevity Pill in an orderly fashion only after he had done all he could in concealing his actions. He also knew that what he'd done would more or less affect the quality of the pill, but he had confidence that although there would be some flaws, he would still be able to successfully refine a pill. Since as long as he succeeded, he'd be able to take home full marks even if it was of lower rank, thanks to the innate level of this Longevity Pill.

The organizers may not recognize the pill, but they would definitely be able to detect its level. At pseudo earth level, even the lowest level version would stand out like a crane amongst chickens after Jiang Chen took it out. Thus, its refining process was quite extraordinary and required a great deal of effort. Even Jiang Chen didn't have complete confidence in his success. After all, his cultivation level was only fifth level origin realm. Refining a pseudo earth level pill was like reaching for the moon. If it wasn't for his solid foundations from his past life, he wouldn't have the slightest possibility of success.

It was a good thing that the Skyweave Cauldron and Lotus granted him advantages that no one else had.

The Longevity Pill was one that gathered together materials that could extend one's lifespan and created an effect that truly fought the heavens for more years of life. After Jiang Chen tossed in all the ingredients, he began manipulating the fires within his body to slowly fill the area around the Skyweave Cauldron. The Longevity Pill was a pill that required long, meticulous work.

If the fire was too strong, then the refinement was doomed to fail. The pill needed a comfortable pace to ensure refining. Jiang Chen focused his attentions wholly on controlling the flames.

If there was the slightest detail amiss in refining the Longevity Pill, the spirit nature of the ingredients would dissipate due to the heat and decrease the chance of actually forming a pill. This was akin to cooking food. Some dishes needed to be quickly stir-fried with screaming hot flames, and others needed to be left to simmer into a delicious broth. The Longevity Pill was precisely the kind

that needed to slowly simmer to reach perfection.

All the various ingredients were slowly melting within the Skyweave Cauldron, their spirit power seeping out drip by drip. At this critical moment, it wasn't just a matter of control over fire, the pill also needed Jiang Chen's unique techniques to continuously purify and manipulate the spirit power that was being produced.

This pill used quite a number of ingredients, and every drop of the spirit power contained within them had to be fully utilized. Once lost, the chances for successfully refining this pill would drop drastically. The nine ingredients turned into nine streams of vivid spirit liquid within the Skyweave Cauldron, rushing to and fro the cauldron as if dragons gambolling in the sky.

Jiang Chen didn't dare relax an iota of his focus. This was the most crucial moment for the Longevity Pill. If any one of the spirit flows escaped his control, then all of his previous effort would be for naught. Controlling nine streams of spirit power at the same time was a bit rough even for Jiang Chen. He began perspiring slightly because of his nervousness, and God's Eye stared down brightly at the depths of the cauldron. It was by far the most taxing refining process he'd undertaken since he'd set out on his journey, and the most difficult pill he'd attempted in this life. The level of the Longevity Pill far surpassed that of the Hexarune Dragon pill, and was far more complex to boot.

Three days passed... then five days... seven days...

As the days flew by, the end of the purification process drew

closer. Even with Jiang Chen's incredible strength of heart, the evening of the seventh day had brought him near the end of his rope. But he knew, it wasn't yet time to relax. There was still room for mistakes to occur. The last step of this difficult purification process was to combine the spirit flows together. As long as they could be gathered and seamlessly melded together, the following steps would be easy. However, the process of coalescing these nine flows would be the most dangerous. If he'd misjudged their relative proportions, they would start fighting each other as soon as they came into contact.

Under those circumstances, the best case scenario was a refining failure. At worst, the cauldron would vanish in an explosion that would no doubt harm the pill master. Jiang Chen had to admit, this latest stunt of refining the Longevity Pill was risky. After seven days of purification, the ingredients had been distilled to the very essence of spirit power and were particularly lively. In truth, if he'd misjudged the proportions at any time over the past seven days, that would've led to an imbalance between the nine spirit powers and resulted in them attacking each other instead. That would have spelled immediate failure.

Palace Head Dan Chi had been observing the proceedings from above and had placed the majority of his attentions on Jiang Chen these past few days. He was greatly astonished to see sweat bead his disciple's forehead.

Never once had Jiang Chen displayed anything other than pure confidence and complete assurance. But now, he was showing signs of a struggle?

“What’s going on here?” Palace Head Dan Chi was slightly taken aback. With Jiang Chen’s strength, an upper tier saint rank pill would be no trouble at all! Even if he wanted to refine a lower tier true saint rank pill, it would not be so difficult as to make Jiang Chen go to this level of effort. But how would Dan Chi know that Jiang Chen wasn’t refining anything akin to a lower tier true saint rank pill? He was going far beyond the horizon, all the way to a pseudo earth rank pill!

Jiang Chen formed a hand seal and commanded one of the spirit flows to move. Each hand seal was as comforting as the spring breeze, without the slightest bit of error to them. The nine spirit forces were now at their friskiest. If Jiang Chen formed his hand seals too quickly, it would impact the operating speed of the cauldron and cause flaws to form when the ingredients melded together.

The nine flows of spirit power continuously converged on the center of the Skyweave Cauldron at a perfect speed and angle under the command of Jiang Chen’s string of nine hand seals.

“Meld, meld!” Jiang Chen chanted inwardly, his mind completely focused on the task at hand. He didn’t dare spare the slightest thought for anything else, and the thought of the effort of seven days straight coming to a head made his emotions ripple slightly. But he also knew that if he couldn’t control his emotions and let it affect his refining, his efforts over the past seven days would go down the drain. Therefore, Jiang Chen activated Boulder’s Heart and adjusted his mindset to completely wipe out his emotions, like a dried up well devoid of ripples, before thoroughly melding the nine flows together.

Wham!

The Skyweave Cauldron suddenly began trembling as the nine converged spirit forces resonated with each other. The force of their resonance caused the cauldron to shiver along with them.

Any other ordinary pill master would've thought that something had gone wrong, but Jiang Chen knew better. This was the resonance that should occur with the melding of various sources of spirit power for the Longevity Pill. As long as the forces of resonance didn't exceed a certain degree, that meant that there was no problem with this melding.

The resonance rang out for three breaths of time before slowly subsiding. Jiang Chen's heart had been in his throat, and slowly started to settle back to its original position. It had been a long, arduous ride, but the nine spirit forces of the Longevity Pill had finally successfully melded together.

The most difficult process had been successfully completed, and all that was left was to control the fires to nudge the spirit power into coalescing into pills. "Almost none of the spirit power from the ingredients had been lost from the cauldron. As such, there should be three or four pills from this batch."

According to the rules, pill masters could keep the pills produced from this section. This was also a form of reward for the candidates. When Dan Chi saw Jiang Chen's expression relax, he knew that Jiang Chen must've made it past the most difficult stage. "Just what is Jiang Chen refining? I saw him throw in at least twenty ingredients before he started. Just what complex pill

is that to need so many ingredients?”

Most pills needed at least five ingredients, and at most around ten. Those which required more than ten were extremely complicated pills. Those that required more than twenty ingredients were a rarity in Regal Pill Palace history.

Jiang Chen’s cauldron of Longevity Pills were officially finished after roughly five more days. The results slightly surprised him; there were actually four pills! He’d thought that they would all be lower tier, but hadn’t thought that there would be two which barely scraped the threshold for mid tier. “Mm! My efforts haven’t been wasted. If it wasn’t for me spending so much time on focusing on the purity of the pills, they likely wouldn’t have reached mid tier.”

Jiang Chen was naturally gratified when he saw his results. This was the highest rank of pills he’d refined since reincarnating!

Chapter 550: Verbal Sparring

The fourth round had a time limit of fifteen days. Of those fifteen days, Jiang Chen had used one to complete the first two sections, and twelve refining the Longevity Pill. In total, he had spent thirteen days completing this round. He'd lost his advantage in speed for this round, as there were at least twenty participants who'd finished before him. However, apart from a few who stood around with noncommittal expressions on their faces, most of them looked a bit dejected.

It was apparent that the difficulty of this section had forced everyone not to perform up to their usual standards. After all, the pursuit of refining pill had never focused on speed, but rather the type of pill and their effects. As such, the first to complete may not necessarily be the best level pill presented. It was up to the judges to decide on the grades of A, B, C and D.

In addition, whether it was the first two sections of completing the pill recipe or deconstructing the pill had been difficult for them as well. No one dared say that they were fully confident in taking home all the points.

Jiang Chen didn't want to waste the last two days, so he decided to meditate in the competition area. Time was too precious to waste two days in pointlessly waiting for the competition to end.

True to the rules, the contest ended two days later. With the restrictions lifted, everyone left their areas. All of the answer sheets were taken away, and only one pill needed to be left behind to qualify as a result of the third section, no matter how many pills

the cultivator refined. Jiang Chen stored three of his pills and left one lower rank as his result.

"All contestants are to return to the main lobby in the Rippling Mirage Hall to await the scores. Please be warned that the wait time will be longer this time, as we need to tally up the overall scores of this time's Pill Battles in addition to the scores of the fourth round."

All of the candidates filed into the main hall after this announcement boomed through the competition area.

"Brother Chen!" Mu Gaoqi trotted up to Jiang Chen from behind, an excited look on his face, "Brother Chen, was the pill from the second section from the divergent pill faction?"

When Jiang Chen saw Mu Gaoqi's brows dancing on his face, he knew that the latter had done well. He smiled, "Does that mean you were able to decipher its ingredients?"

Mu Gaoqi chuckled. "Not entirely, but I judged that it was from the divergent pill faction and so could identify roughly eight ingredients. I think I got those right."

If he had been able to deduce that it was from the divergent pill faction, then that knowledge alone would be able to give Mu Gaoqi quite an advantage.

"It was indeed a product from the divergent pill faction, the

Skyheart Rebirth Pill." Jiang Chen nodded and clapped Mu Gaoqi on the shoulder. "Let's go." He was quite satisfied that Mu Gaoqi had been able to reach that conclusion.

"Hmph! Jiang Chen, stop acting as if you're all that! That pill was taken from a sealed off, taboo area. It's not something that can be found anywhere in the Myriad Domain. As if you would be capable of analyzing it for what it is!" A jeering voice rudely interrupted their conversation from behind. Jiang Chen didn't even need to turn around to know it was Wei Qing. Jiang Chen only smiled in response. The truth would be far more convincing than any debate now, so he couldn't be bothered to argue.

Ling Bi'er also caught up to them. "Junior brother, what ingredients would you say that the Skyheart Rebirth Pill possesses?"

She too had deduced that it was a product of the divergent pill faction, but the Skyheart Rebirth Pill was something outside her knowledge. It was impossible for her to know of it. But even though she didn't know what pill it was, she could still analyze what ingredients the pill was made of. Even if she couldn't fully deconstruct it, each additional ingredient she could identify was another twenty points.

"How many ingredients did you identify, senior sister?"

"I'm only confident about seven of them. I wasn't sure about the remaining three, so I didn't dare write them down." Ling Bi'er responded honestly. They would be docked points if she wrote down the wrong answers, so Ling Bi'er had taken the same path as

everyone else and refrained from haphazard answers.

"Let's go out and chat." Jiang Chen only reeled off the ten ingredients after they'd left behind those behind them.

Mu Gaoqi was delighted. "Haha, Brother Chen, then all eight of the ones I identified should be right! What a pity that there were two more, but they're too obscure that I didn't figure them out at all. My dao cultivation is still too shallow."

Ling Bi'er was also quite admiring, but also felt gratified. "The seven I identified were all correct as well, but I still fell behind junior brother Mu."

But she didn't envy him. The three of them chatted and laughed as they arrived in the main lobby. When Shen Qinghong saw them moving as a group, he felt greatly put out. He was foremost amongst the younger generation of the Regal Pill Palace, but he was actually feeling quite ostracized at the moment. However, he wouldn't express his jealousy in front of his peers. "You must have performed quite well, given how lighthearted you all are."

Jiang Chen smiled casually as Ling Bi'er also smiled faintly. It was Mu Gaoqi who nodded with a smile, "Senior brother Shen, we're discussing the contents of the fourth round."

Unfortunately, Shen Qinghong wasn't in the mood to discuss it. He hadn't performed poorly, but neither had he done well. He had no hope for duking it out for the championship and had come to terms with it. He would be satisfied if he remained in the top ten.

In his eyes, pill dao was merely an auxiliary skill in the end. In the world of martial dao, it was martial dao geniuses who would greet the world with a proud smile. They alone would be able to call themselves the masters of the world. Therefore, he never put down the feeling of superiority in his heart.

When he saw that Ling Bi'er was willing to give up on herself and lower herself to mix in with Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi's crowd, he was a bit envious. Although, he'd never admit anything of the sort to himself. He only felt that she was wallowing in the behavior of a degenerate.

Those from the Walkabout Sect also arrived at the same as the Regal Pill Palace disciples. The Walkabout Sect was last time's runner up, so they took the seat beside the Regal Pill Palace. Wei Qing's gaze was cold as he cast a look of death at Jiang Chen, revealing a hint of a cruel smile. Jiang Chen knew that Wei Qing truly hated him by now, but what did he care? He best not want to cause trouble, or I don't mind sending him off on his final journey inside Mt. Rippling Mirage. He'd already slain a Walkabout Sect elder, so he didn't mind adding a mere Wei Qing to his list.

The disciples from the Tristar Sect also walked in. Zhu Feiyang flicked a glance over at Shen Qinghong. "Ole brother Qinghong, you're ranked as the top genius in the Regal Pill Palace at the end of the day, yet why do I see that you're ranked last amongst your fellows in the first three rounds?"

This was an open provocation, almost an outright attack on Shen Qinghong. In response, Shen Qinghong laughed disinterestedly, "Zhu Feiyang, you don't seem to have the best score amongst your

sect either.”

Zhu Feiyang laughed heartily, “Junior brother Ding Tong’s potential is extraordinary. It’s not a big deal that I’ve come up short next to him, but it’s a different case that you’re last amongst the four from the Regal Pill Palace.”

Wei Qing also snorted coldly off on the side. “Perhaps the great Sir Shen is displaying his might and glory as the great senior brother and letting his junior brothers take their turn in the limelight. That’s also possible.”

“Hahaha, old brother Qinghong, is that so?” Zhu Feiyang was smiling in an extremely exaggerated fashion, his expression and tone full of mockery.

Wang Han of the Sacred Sword Palace also walked over with a smile. “Your reputation is so great as the first genius of the Regal Pill Palace, but your pill dao scores are pretty much the same as mine. Ole brother Qinghong, it’s not that I want to shake your confidence, but there really isn’t a place for you on the list of geniuses of the Myriad Domain.”

Zhu Feiyang and Wang Han had already broken through to the sage realm and were truly in first level sage realm, but Shen Qinghong was still separated by that final step. It was that separation of a line that made the other two feel so full of superiority. As for Wei Qing, his cultivation level was lower than Shen Qinghong’s, but everyone knew that his skill with poison let him rank amongst the top geniuses. Even Zhu Feiyang and Wang Han would rather offend Shen Qinghong twice over before even

thinking of offending Wei Qing.

The three of them had actually reached an unspoken accord that they would target Shen Qinghong and incite internal conflict in the Regal Pill Palace. Shen Qinghong was proud and arrogant, and his face grew ashen when so many banded together to bully him, but he was left without a riposte.

Jiang Chen suddenly snorted coldly. “If I recall correctly, this is the Pill Battles of Mt. Rippling Mirage, not the Myriad Grand Ceremony. Isn’t it too early for you all to flaunt your martial might?!”

Wang Han was the direct grandson of Wang Jianyu and held great enmity for the Regal Pill Palace. When he saw Jiang Chen butting in, his gaze grew cold and he shouted, “And who the hell are you? Do you even have the right to talk when the top geniuses are talking?”

Zhu Feiyang sighed. “Kids these days have no respect for the rules and seniority. Ole brother Qinghong, as their senior brother, have you not been teaching them properly?”

Wei Qing added fuel to the flames off on the side as he chuckled. “Perhaps the great Sir Shen harbors hate in his heart because he feels that his beauty has been seized from him!”

These fellows were becoming more and more outrageous as they spoke. Mu Gaoqi’s face had gone beet red with indignation. If it wasn’t for his low status, he would’ve broken out in loud curses a

long while ago. Ling Bi'er frowned slightly and was about to speak up when Jiang Chen smiled faintly. "And here I thought you self-styled top geniuses were actually something. Don't tell me you're acting this way because you can't afford to lose at the Pill Battles!"

He relaxed into a chair after speaking. "Flustered with rage, the faces of some petty villains are certainly an ugly thing to see. Tsk tsk, so the so-called top geniuses of the Myriad Domain have only this little bit of self-restraint!"

Jiang Chen didn't glare maliciously or speak gruffly, but those offhand words made them snap their mouths shut instantly.

"Brat, what are you prancing around for? The scores aren't even out yet. Do you think that you're destined to have the highest scores in the end just because your ranking was high in the first couple of rounds?" Wei Qing would never accept Jiang Chen no matter what.

Jiang Chen laughed leisurely. "Regardless of whether or not I have the highest score, there's no doubt in my mind that I'd only be ranked higher than you all."

Wang Han sniffed derisively. "In the world of martial dao, pill dao is ultimately just embellishment, a superfluous auxiliary skill. The ones who will truly command the world are martial dao geniuses. Kid, it's not that I want to affect your confidence, but pill dao geniuses have been destined to cower at the feet of martial geniuses since ancient times to eke out a living. You won't be an exception either."

Zhu Feiyang also nodded slightly. “These words make great sense. Kid, only when your names graces the Myriad Dragon Rankings will you barely obtain the right to talk to us. Right now, you are far, far away from such an achievement.”

Jiang Chen remained composed, but couldn’t help but let out a bark of laughter. “You talk as if you really think you’re martial dao geniuses.”

Everyone frowned at those words. This kid really had an exaggerated opinion of his abilities! Is he overconfident because his Pill Battles results are excellent, and he actually thinks he’s something? Or has he forgotten that anyone here can torture him to death after he enters Mt. Rippling Mirage?

It was at this moment that Elder Yun Nie brought the other elders in their direction. The other young men were more or less wary when they saw Elder Yun Nie, retreating to the side after a cold snort.

Chapter 551: A Proud Walkabout Sect

Shen Qinghong heaved an internal sigh of relief when Elder Yun Nie walked over. He was truly feeling a mix of emotions at the moment. He'd indeed felt anger bubble up from within him when Zhu Feiyang and Wang Han were bullying him just now, and Wei Qing had obviously fanned the flames to put him in an uglier spot. But to be honest, he had nothing that he could say to defend himself.

He was inferior to Zhu Feiyang and Wang Han in terms of cultivation level, and below Wei Qing when it came to pill dao scores. If he'd tried to retort, it would've only led to greater shame being piled on him. But at that low moment, it'd been Jiang Chen who'd stepped out to rescue him from the situation, successfully attracting the ire of the crowd.

Shen Qinghong had never known what it meant to feel gratitude, but in that moment, he'd finally felt an inkling of that emotion. In times of crisis, it was those from his own sect who'd stepped forward to help him. None of those so-called friends he'd cultivated had come forward at all. It'd been Jiang Chen, the one who'd always been at odds with him, who'd taken a stand for him.

Moreover, it'd been Elder Yun Nie's appearance at this time that'd scared the group off, someone he equally disliked. After all, Elder Yun Nie had openly argued with his master before. Yet it was the two he normally had the worst opinion of who'd saved him from his awkwardness today.

Elder Yun Nie's expression was a bit solemn. "How did you all

do?" He looked at Shen Qinghong first with a hint of expectation. After all, he was the top genius of the Regal Pill Palace.

"I didn't do so well in the second section and could only identify five or six ingredients. I don't think I'll be able to obtain full marks in the third section either." Shen Qinghong didn't dare hide anything at the moment.

Ling Bi'er also responded, "My situation is similar to senior brother Shen's."

"How about you, Gaoqi?" Elder Yun Nie skipped over Jiang Chen and asked Mu Gaoqi next.

Mu Gaoqi smiled faintly. "I think I did well. I was lucky enough to refine an upper tier saint rank pill, so I should be able to win full points in that section. I only missed two ingredients in the second section, and my other ingredients were correct."

"Oh? How are you so confident in your answers?" Elder Yun Nie smiled.

"Brother Chen said so."

Elder Yun Nie and the other elders all looked at Jiang Chen, their gazes a bit odd.

Elder Yun Nie smiled. "Jiang Chen, you've become the answer key, haven't you? Did you really identify the Skyheart Rebirth

Pill?”

Mu Gaoqi jumped in before Jiang Chen had the chance to speak. “It really was the Skyheart Rebirth Pill! Haha, Brother Chen, you’re too amazing!”

The elders were rendered instantly speechless after Mu Gaoqi’s words. They looked at each other, already convinced about the futility of further questioning. Mu Gaoqi’s words had already given them their answer.

Elder Yun Nie sighed. “The elders have met an incredible opponent this time, and I don’t believe we’ll be able to retain first place with our overall performance. It seems that your genius group’s scores will be the key to protecting our first place.”

Apart from Elder Yun Nie’s stable performance, the other elders had only acquitted themselves nominally, with no performance that was terribly eye catching. If the genius group had done the same, then the championship that the Regal Pill Palace had defended multiple times would surely be seized by one of the other sects this time.

That was the worst result in Elder Yun Nie’s eyes. He cast his gaze over at Jiang Chen; obviously aware that the crux of this dilemma lay with Jiang Chen. If he could take the champion’s position of the genius group, an additional hundred points would be added to the Regal Pill Palace’s overall score. Only then would they have the hope of keeping the overall champion’s position.

Jiang Chen knew of Elder Yun Nie's thoughts and gave him a small, confident smile. Elder Yun Nie heaved a long sigh of relief in his heart when he saw how self confident Jiang Chen was. Although he knew that Jiang Chen was their ace, if the latter hadn't performed well in the fourth round, then they might lose the championship of the genius group as well.

Elder Yun Nie had been highly confident in his ability to claim the championship of the elder group were it not for the sudden appearance of an elder possessing a divine fire. It had thrown their initial plans into disarray and cast a shadow over Elder Yun Nie's chances for seizing the championship.

If the elders didn't cinch the championship of their group, then they would lose the extra hundred points that they would've otherwise received. If the geniuses also failed to secure their championship title, then it would spell no end of trouble for the overall Regal Pill Palace rankings.

Jiang Chen had reason enough to be confident, because apart from the slight uncertainty in the first section in this round, he was certain that there would be no issues with any of the other sections. He was guaranteed to be the champion of his group, and would outpace the first runner up by far.

The elders of the Walkabout Sect also arrived, striding forth as if mature trees welcoming the spring. Pride and confidence was splayed all over their faces, and it was apparent that they were very satisfied with their results this time. They were greatly assured of their chances in seizing the Regal Pill Palace's throne. At least, they were certain that the performance of the Walkabout

Sect elder group was superior to the overall performance of the Regal Pill Palace elder group. It was now down to whether the genius group had done the same as well.

As long as their genius group didn't lose to the Regal Pill Palace, then the Walkabout Sect was destined to overthrow the Regal Pill Palace and take home the championship.

This would be a historical moment! Even taking a step back, if their genius group lost to the genius group of the Regal Pill Palace, the overall championship would be theirs as long as their elder group score had a more than 200 point gap! Their buoying confidence stemmed from the performance of a heaven defying elder in their elder group. He had simply acquitted himself too well, and the others had put forth a stable performance to support him. When it came down to the wire, old fellows such as them wouldn't bother wasting time in verbal sparring, so they all settled in to await the final results after some superficial pleasantries.

The elder group's scores were out after roughly two hours. In line with everyone's expectations, Elder Wu Hen took first place with 1,880 points. This awarded him another 100 points, bringing his score to a stunning 1,980 points.

Elder Yun Nie was in second place with 1,830 points, and some elder from the Tristar Sect had come in third.

A loud hubbub broke out when the elder group scores came out. As a first in the Myriad Domain, Elder Yun Nie had actually lost the championship for the elder group! This was absolutely a note for the historical record!

The overall group ranking for the elder group were soon tallied as well, and the Walkabout Sect had actually taken first place thanks to their overall performance! They were approximately 300 points higher than the elders of the Regal Pill Palace! This kind of gap left the four great elders from the Regal Pill Palace with ashen expressions. Apart from Elder Yun Nie, the others were completely ashamed of themselves. They knew that Elder Yun Nie had already done quite well. He'd only lost to Elder Wu Hen because the latter had a skyfire; this advantage was simply too much to close.

They were the ones who were truly dragging the Regal Pill Palace elder team down.

The rest of the elder group were ranked as Tristar Sect coming third, then Dark North Sect, Great Cathedral, and lastly Sacred Sword Palace. There was no surprise that the Sacred Sword Palace had come in last, but the entire scene erupted into a hubbub once again when the rankings were fully revealed. Cries of congratulations and felicitations rang out around the Walkabout Sect, and those from the Sacred Sword Palace in particular drew close to tender their congratulations. The Walkabout Sect's elder group was ahead of the Regal Pill Palace by nearly 300 points. This had almost guaranteed their position as overall champion. As strong as the Regal Pill Palace genius group was, could they close this kind of gap?

Elder Yun Jian of the Sacred Sword Palace chuckled. "Congratulations, Daoist Wu Hen. It looks like the pill dao landscape of the Myriad Domain will transform with this time's Pill Battles. With the Walkabout Sect charging ahead to seize the championship, please remember to take care of us Sacred Sword

Palace in the future, so that we might learn from you and improve ourselves."

Elder Wu Hen smiled. "Daoist Yun Jian is too polite. Our two sects are as if brothers. Aren't your words simply too polite?"

This sham of a conversation between the two placed the Regal Pill Palace in an exceedingly awkward position. On one side was their biggest competitor in this time's Pill Battles, and the other was the Regal Pill Palace's hated rival. That the two were coming together to congratulate each other, wasn't this a blatant denial of face to the Regal Pill Palace?

As shrewd as Elder Yun Nie was, the edges of his vision were touched with scarlet rage as he witnessed this play. Ouyang De's face was like a thundercloud on the verge of erupting, and he was barely holding himself back from cursing them to kingdom come. It was rather Jiang Chen who maintained a composed expression and a secretive smile as he observed the relationships between the various sects of the Myriad Domain.

It seemed that the Walkabout Sect wanted nothing more than to take the title of first sect of pill dao from the Regal Pill Palace, and were eccentric and difficult to predict. The Sacred Sword Palace and Regal Pill Palace had a simple relationship, that of irreconcilable fire and water. On the other hand, the Great Cathedral was busy styling themselves as the pre-eminent leader of the sects and focused on knocking down the Tristar Sect. Only the Dark North Sect maintained good relations with the Regal Pill Palace.

Mu Gaoqi snorted softly, his lips twitching continuously, patently irritated by the masquerade these two sects were putting on.

Elder Yun Nie extorted everyone behind him in a low voice. “Chin up, everyone! Our Regal Pill Palace has lost this battle, but we have yet to lose the battle of talent! Gaoqi, your potential destines you to be someone who will come to dominate the pill dao arena in the Myriad Domain. In the future, it would not be an exaggeration to say that you alone will be able to command the winds and clouds. Don’t be distracted by momentary gains and losses.

“Remember, tempering iron requires strong tools. Without exception, everyone needs to put forth effort if a sect is to be strong. Once you fail to maintain that drive, others will come to step on and suppress you. If glory finds the sect, it finds us all. If the sect falls, so do we all. Starting from myself, I hope everyone can learn their lessons from this experience and contemplate the reason for our loss from ourselves.” Elder Yun Nie didn’t say much else as he waved his hand. “Let’s wait for the genius group’s scores.”

There was no point in speaking more about it now. The genius group’s scores were also tallied before long, and the various sect heavyweights also walked out. Although Dan Chi had a calm expression in the front, a trace of delighted glee had yet to dissipate in the corners of his eyes. Walkabout Sect Head Wei Wuying’s face was as black as night, his expression as if he’d suddenly plummeted from a great height. Tristar Sect Head Zhu also shook his head lightly, plainly a bit disappointed.

Elder Yun Nie had sharp eyes and immediately caught sight of this scene. When he saw how the palace head was forcefully holding in a joyous expression, a spark of hope ignited in him. Could it be that the genius group's performance was so heaven defying that they'd turned the situation around?? When he took another look at how Wei Wuying had an absolutely darkened face, appearing almost enraged, his hopes began to rise. This didn't seem like the expression of a sect that had just won the championship!

All of a sudden, Elder Yun Nie's heartbeat sped up. His gaze couldn't help but drift over to Jiang Chen's direction to see that him still treating everything noncommittally. A faint smile drifted around and off Jiang Chen's face.

"To think that the one who would save the Regal Pill Palace in its final moment would be this miraculous youth!" Elder Yun Nie sensed the answer floating up in his heart. Now all that was left was to see how the geniuses had performed... and how they'd bridged the 300 point gap the Walkabout Sect's elder group had created!

Chapter 552: The Ultimate Comeback

The rankings for the genius group were quickly calculated. Jiang Chen had actually received 580 points in the fourth round, losing only 20 points in one of the questions regarding the completion of a pill recipe. This way, out of the total 2,000 points possible for four rounds, he'd taken 1,980 points for himself. As the champion of the genius group, he received another 100 points to reach a total of 2,080 points!

It was one thing for Jiang Chen to have such an inordinate score, but Mu Gaoqi had also soared above the rest in the fourth round. He'd lost only sixty points in the fourth round and had tied for second with Ding Tong at 540 points. In this way, his final score was an astonishing 1,790 points. This was second only to Ding Tong's 1,810 points. In the end, Mu Gaoqi had managed to rank third overall.

Wei Xing'er had come in fourth with 1,720 points, and Wei Qing fifth with 1,710 points. Ling Bi'er was sixth with 1,670 points, and the remaining seventh to tenth spots were divvied up between the disciples of the great sects. Because Shen Qinghong had only made a mediocre showing in the fourth round, he'd barely managed to secure a spot in the top ten, coming in tenth. Wang Han of the Sacred Sword Palace had been the one who'd lost the rat race and dropped to eleventh.

Jiang Chen laughed heartily when the scores came out and bounded over to the mountain of spirit stones with extreme speed, shoving them all into his bag without another word. "Many, many thanks to everyone giving me this opportunity."

Everyone here were notable personages. It had been Wei Qing who had put together the bet, and those who had participated were all top geniuses. There was no one present who would go back on their words for a mere fifty thousand spirit stones. Jiang Chen's score did indeed place him at the top of the genius group, but it was just that they all felt that they'd lost face when he'd gone over to collect the spirit stones. If looks could kill, Wei Qing in particular would've murdered him right then and there.

This had been a bet that he'd put together with great effort so that he could strike it rich, but instead, Jiang Chen had reaped all the benefits. To add insult to injury, he, as the one who'd started everything, had only placed fifth.

With the announcement of the genius group's scores, the final scores had also been tabulated. The combination of the genius and elder group scores would become the overall score of each sect for this time's Mt. Rippling Mirage Pill Battles.

To make matters interesting, the Regal Pill Palace genius scores were actually ahead of the Walkabout Sect geniuses by roughly 700 points. Jiang Chen in particular was a full 360 points ahead of Wei Xing'er, their highest scorer. Second place in the Regal Pill Palace, Mu Gaoqi, was a full 80 points ahead of the Walkabout Sect's second place, Wei Qing. And although Ling Bi'er and Shen Qinghong hadn't displayed performances that were as impactful as Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi, their combined scores were enough to suppress the remaining geniuses from the Walkabout Sect. In this regard, it was no surprise that the Regal Pill Palace genius group had a roughly 700 point lead over the Walkabout Sect's genius group. When that was applied to the overall scores, an astonishing

result came to the fore. The Regal Pill Palace had, in one fell swoop, closed the 300 point gap, overtaken the Walkabout Sect, and then lengthened their lead by roughly 400 points. It was an undeniable first place finish.

This comeback of the century sent everyone present reeling with astonishment and disbelief. The Walkabout Sect in particular were utterly flabbergasted. They had never dreamed that their nearly 300 point lead would be so perfectly reversed into them being led by more than 300 points. The genius group, with Wei Xing'er and Wei Qing at their head, were dumbfounded. This was a humiliating outcome, one that was nigh impossible to swallow.

In another surprising turn of events, the Tristar Sect had almost managed to catch up to the Walkabout Sect using the stable performance of their genius group. Their overall ranking was number three, but they were obviously not satisfied with the result either. However, with the awkward situation of the Walkabout Sect first laughing and then ending up crying, the Tristar Sect didn't end up losing their composure as much.

On the Walkabout Sect's side, the cocky expressions of those elders were now akin to fighting gamecocks who had lost, darkened and sunk to the lowest of depths.

The Sacred Sword Palace scores were as expected, solidly in last place. However, this wasn't the most awkward of matters for them right now. What was particularly awkward, and rather galling, was that they had just indicated their goodwill to the Walkabout Sect earlier and congratulated them ahead of time for winning the championship. These results were a couple of fierce slaps to their

faces, burning their cheeks with shame.

"Heh heh, congratulations Elder Yun Nie."

"Congratulations, Daoist Yun Nie. The Regal Pill Palace well deserves this win!"

"The Regal Pill Palace is the first sect for pill dao in the Myriad Domain after all! This kind of foundation and lineup of geniuses is simply stunning."

"Indeed, Daoist Yun Nie. It's likely that no one will be able to shake the Regal Pill Palace's position in the next thousand years, not with the type of advantage you possess. You were able to send out just your unknown youths to put on such a stunning display!"

Mu Gaoqi and Jiang Chen had been relative unknowns beforehand, but they were now the biggest reasons why the Regal Pill Palace had defended their championship title once again.

Elder Yun Nie's emotions had just been through incredible highs and lows, but he was still worldly-wise after all. He had regained his composure enough to thank them all one by one. One had to say, apart from being hated rivals with the Sacred Sword Palace, the Regal Pill Palace still enjoyed decent popularity in the Myriad Domain. The Dark North Sect was its brother sect, and those of the Great Cathedral had a good impression of the Regal Pill Palace as well. As for the Walkabout Sect, they viewed the Regal Pill Palace as a latent competitor, but that was another story. The Tristar Sect was a mysterious entity and did things by themselves. They

weren't close with anyone, but also not particularly hostile with anyone either.

The fifth rank sects were actually the most friendly with the Regal Pill Palace, because the Regal Pill Palace was actually much more amiable compared to the other fourth rank sects. This wasn't only because the Regal Pill Palace had allied with a small power like the Precious Tree Sect, but also because the Regal Pill Palace rarely put on the airs of a fourth rank sect to bully the numerous fifth rank sects. When it came to the division of profits, the Regal Pill Palace were amongst the few that would step out to speak for the fifth rank sects.

Although this was but one of Palace Head Dan Chi's strategies, it had certainly garnered visible results. When the Walkabout Sect elder group had been in the lead, only a few of the fifth rank sects had come up to tender their congratulations. But now that the Regal Pill Palace had made this great turnaround, almost all of them came up to share in the moment.

Jiang Chen hadn't thought either that the Regal Pill Palace would enjoy such high popularity with the fifth rank sects. As the primary reason why the Regal Pill Palace had been able to defend the championship this time, there were naturally many who came up to befriend and greet him. Jiang Chen didn't put on any airs and responded to each and every one of them. This continued for quite a while before everyone returned to their seats.

Elder Yun Nie sighed. "Palace Head Dan Chi has always advocated that we be considerate and kind to men of talent. Our sect has refused almost no sect who's asked us to refine pills for

them over these years. This is merely the visible proof of how we've been able to collect on those favors. I have to admire the palace head's vision."

The other elders also nodded as well. Ouyang De spoke, a tinge of shame in his voice. "Elder Yun Nie, I was rather a bastard before and full of myself. I have truly seen the light this time. If it wasn't for your keen eye for talent that uncovered such geniuses as Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi, I'm afraid the Walkabout Sect would have truly taken the championship from this time's Pill Battles. Then I, Ouyang De, would've been condemned as a traitor of our sect throughout the ages."

Ouyang De had been nursing a grudge against Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi because of the matter of the Pill Battle spots. He'd really wanted to obtain a spot for his grandson, Ouyang Chao. But it now seemed that had he really done so, his grandson wouldn't have had any effect other than dragging the Regal Pill Palace down. If that had happened, he really would have been the ultimate sinner in Regal Pill Palace history. If Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi had been swapped out for pill dao geniuses on the level of Ouyang Chao, then there would've been no doubt of the Regal Pill Palace's defeat at the hands of the Walkabout Sect.

"Jiang Chen, Mu Gaoqi, you two are very good. Truly very good. I will have Ouyang Chao learn more from both of you when I return." Ouyang De had finally seen through the clouds now. Although his grandson was a scion of the sect and a genius in his own right, he was on a completely different level compared to Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi. As opposed to continuing to butt heads with these two geniuses, why not befriend them? Ouyang De had some valuable insights from this time's Pill Battles regarding

internal conflict. Ultimately, he realized, it had no future for the sect. When the Regal Pill Palace had trailed behind the Walkabout Sect by roughly three hundred points, there had been no lack of people who'd immediately come forth to step on them. Such was how disinterested and uncaring the world was.

Elder Yun Nie's words had given them great food for thought. One had to be strong themselves if they wished to temper iron. A sect had to be united internally, with everyone exerting force in unison to benefit the sect and make it stronger. Only when the sect was strong would others be prevented from stepping on them. Only then, would the sect be respected wherever they went.

At that moment, the organizer on stage gestured for silence. "Everyone, please be quiet. The rankings are out for the Pill Battles, and you can now raise any objections you may have. If there are no objections, then we will seal the scores and announce the end of the Pill Battles."

Wei Wuying was the first to jump out. "I have objections!"

His face had turned as dark as the depths of the sea in his bad mood. It was obvious that when the elder group had raced ahead with such an incredible lead, he'd thought that the championship was already in his hand. But the genius group had suddenly collapsed, and the trophy that had been at the tips of his fingers had slipped through and landed in someone else's lap.

"What objections do you have, Sect Head Wei?"

Wei Wuying zeroed in on Jiang Chen without hesitation. “I have objections about Jiang Chen’s scores! How did he know about the Skyheart Rebirth Pill? Only his answer was correct! In addition, the pill he refined at the end doesn’t seem to have been in our plan!”

When Dan Chi heard Wei Wuying target the Regal Pill Palace, the former snorted coldly. “Does he need to report to you how he knew? What does it matter if the pill wasn’t in the plan? The critical thing was that the pill was a true saint rank pill, that’s all!”

The so-called plan was the fact that the ingredients they’d supplied had been carefully calculated beforehand. At most, it was designed to allow a pill at the initial true saint rank. However, Jiang Chen’s Longevity Pill had been in noticeable excess of that standard. This was why Wei Wuying had raised the objection of it not being in the plan.

Once Wei Wuying had spoken thus, Wang Jianyu immediately joined the conversation with a sneer. “It is indeed suspicious that it’s not in the plan. What do you think, Sect Head Zhu?”

Sect Head Zhu chuckled. “I only think it to be rather odd. The pill does indeed look extraordinary, and seemingly not on the level of the Myriad Domain.”

Everyone’s gaze turned towards Jiang Chen. The Sacred Elephant family head smiled. “ No need to argue about this. Why don’t we ask the man himself? Little friend Jiang Chen, what pill is this?”

Jiang Chen walked indifferently forward amidst countless gazes. “In response to the various sect heads, this pill is named the Longevity Pill. If a sage realm cultivator ingests it, it will extend their lifespan to a maximum of eight hundred years.”

“What?” All of the expressions on the elders changed drastically when they heard this. They were all sage realm cultivators! Who wouldn’t be tempted when they heard that they could extend their lifespans?

Chapter 553: The Uproar Brought By The Longevity Pill

Even someone as composed as Dan Chi was visibly moved by those calmly spoken words. He was less than a hundred years old and was in no immediate need of the pill. However, he was knowledgeable enough to immediately understand the value of this pill. He hastily pulled Jiang Chen behind him. “Jiang Chen, there’s no need to speak anymore.”

Beneath the stage, Elder Yun Nie also couldn’t help but shoot to his feet, his expression one of shocked understanding. As one of the pill dao heavyweights of the Myriad Domain, he was even more clear about the pill’s worth than even Palace Head Dan Chi’s. When Jiang Chen spoke of the Longevity Pill, it was as if Elder Yun Nie’s brain had been rocked by an explosion. However, he was immediately struck by the importance of the situation, and instantly regained his calm.

“Old brother Dan Chi, now what are you doing?” The Sacred Elephant family head chuckled. “It’s the first time we’ve all heard of the Longevity Pill, we should take advantage of this opportunity to increase our knowledge.”

Palace Head Dan Chi smiled faintly. “The Pill Battles are over. Since this pill reaches the necessary requirements for the score it was awarded, then it’s in line with the rules of the contest. Nothing else needs to be said. We cannot repeat ourselves and grow bolder each time. When Jiang Chen had good scores previously, you asked to test his lineage. Now that his pill’s level is high, you want him to explain where it comes from. Everyone,

how can you bear to treat a young junior thus? Does this not speak to your conscience?”

From Palace Head Dan Chi’s perspective, he naturally wanted to protect Jiang Chen. Based on what Jiang Chen had described, this pill would cause an absolute uproar when it got out. It was a wonderful thing for the Regal Pill Palace, but was also both fortune and disaster for Jiang Chen.

Naturally, its upside was that Jiang Chen’s name would be spread far and wide, but the pressure it brought was a significant drawback. Having grasped both the recipe and refining method of such a high level pill, Jiang Chen would undoubtedly become a popular figure. There would absolutely be countless others who would make a move on him with ulterior motives.

Wei Wuying laughed darkly. “Ole brother Dan Chi, now you’ve placed yourself in the wrong with your words. As long as you have a clear conscience, what reason would you have to fear speculation?”

Palace Head Dan Chi only snorted coldly. “Sect Head Wei, just say so if you feel that you can’t afford to lose. We might possibly see ourselves bestowing the Pill Battle championship title on you.”

His words were sharp and incisive, doing double damage to Wei Wuying. He leapt up like a cat that’d had its tail stepped on. “Dan Chi, what exactly do you mean by that!”

“Alright, alright now.” The Sacred Elephant family head stepped

forward to smooth over the situation. It was clear as day in his heart that the Regal Pill Palace would never stoop to cheating, and he was well aware from beginning to end that it was impossible for anything untoward to be about Jiang Chen. His origins were no secret at all thanks to the Precious Tree Sect and Regal Pill Palace's public alliance. His background had long since been thoroughly investigated.

The Walkabout Sect was causing trouble because they'd just seen the championship vanish before their very eyes. The Sacred Sword Palace was causing trouble because they were hated rivals with the Regal Pill Palace. Now that the Longevity Pill had appeared, there was only one thought in the family head's mind. Somehow, he had to obtain this pill!

This family head was the strongest amongst the four families in the Great Cathedral. He was the most senior, but also the most elderly. He didn't have many years of life left to him. Although his cultivation was the highest in the Myriad Domain, it wasn't much of a point of pride if one didn't have enough years left to live. Therefore, his was the heart which had pounded the most when he heard Jiang Chen mention the effects of the Longevity Pill.

"Ole brother Wei, ole brother Dan Chi, both of you should just speak fewer words. There are so many eyes watching the Pill Battles; what wrong could occur under our watch?" The family head's words were blatantly biased towards the Regal Pill Palace. It wasn't that he'd suddenly discovered his conscience towards this much abused sect, but that he now had something he wanted to ask of them.

Dan Chi nodded. “Since the Sacred Elephant family head has spoken, I think it’s time to announce the end of the Pill Battles and distribute the spots for Mt. Rippling Mirage. Continuing this farce would only disgrace ourselves. A vaunted fourth rank sect should have the bearing of a great sect so as to not become a laughingstock for the world.”

The Sacred Elephant family head also knew that it was asking a bit much to have the Regal Pill Palace share the Longevity Pill. He could only ask privately if they could make a transaction, but he also knew that if he didn’t please Dan Chi at this moment, there was no way in hell that Dan Chi would sell the pill to him.

“Mm, my Great Cathedral has no objection to these results. What say you, ole brother Zhu?” The family head was well aware that the Dark North Sect would absolutely support the Regal Pill Palace. So apart from the Sacred Sword Palace and Walkabout Sect, all that remained was the Tristar Sect’s attitude.

Tristar Sect Head Zhu smiled wryly. “To be honest, although I have many questions in my heart, I feel that I should accept the truth with how things have developed. Since we can’t find any evidence, it’d be a waste of time to continue arguing here. We might as well start distributing the spots to enter Mr. Rippling Mirage.

“This makes sense, I say we accept these results as final.” Honored Master Tian Ming of the Dark North Sect grinned.

Wang Jianyu of the Sacred Sword Palace looked at Wei Wuying, but saw the latter sigh softly, seemingly out of resignation, and not

voice a single word of protest. Wang Jianyu's original intention had been to cause trouble to the very end, but as the last of the six great sects, the Sacred Sword Palace really didn't have much right to kick up a fuss.

With the fourth rank sects having reached an accord, the fifth rank sects naturally wouldn't have any objections. They accepted from the bottom of their hearts the fact that the Regal Pill Palace had taken the championship.

Distributing the spots was a rather easy task. The top 30 of the elder and genius groups had the right to enter Mt. Rippling Mirage. The first ten of each group had 20 days to spend, and the next ten had ten days worth of time. The last ten had five days.

"Alright, the Pill Battles of Mt. Rippling Mirage end here. Opening the restrictions around Mt. Rippling Mirage will take a few more days. As such, everyone can continue staying here. Use this time to interact with each other. Previous rules will be once again in effect, and a few small-scale trading fairs will be allowed during this time. Everyone can exchange for what they like."

The various great sects of the Myriad Domain all had their respective specializations. This was how they were able to sit on the throne of a fourth rank sect. The Great Cathedral had the richest lineage and strongest power. The Sacred Sword Palace pursued swords as the true way and reigned sovereign over sword dao. The Regal Pill Palace was founded on pill dao and had no equal. The Walkabout Sect was the worst to antagonize due to their prowess in poison. The Tristar Sect was adept at crafting talismans, and the Star and Moon Glyph was their trademark

work. The Dark North Sect was located deep in the north of the Myriad Domain and had the richest resources. Each of the six great sects had their strengths and their own trump cards.

To the candidates of the six great sects, it wasn't a matter of whether or not they'd receive a spot to enter the mountain, but just a matter of when they'd enter.

On the Regal Pill Palace side, all of their four geniuses had made it into the top ten and would be amongst the first batch to enter. They would enjoy twenty days worth of harvesting time. From the elder group, only Elder Yun Nie and Vice Hallmaster Wang Yue had made it into the top ten. Ouyang De and the other elder Che Ziwu was only in the top twenty, and therefore the second batch. After the spots were allocated, the first part of the Pill Battles of Mt. Rippling Mirage were announced to have come to an end.

To Jiang Chen, the first part was merely warm up. His true goal was to enter the mountain to harvest spirit herbs. This Mt. Rippling Mirage was the best peak in the Myriad Domain for harvesting spirit herbs, and doubled as the royal spirit herb garden back in the days of the Myriad Empire, reveling in royal fortunes. This history alone made it clear that this mountain was no ordinary landscape feature.

"Come here for a moment, Jiang Chen." Palace Head Dan Chi called out to him. Elder Yun Nie was also quietly standing next to Dan Chi. It was obvious that the two heavyweights wanted him for something.

Back in his residence, Dan Chi enclosed his secret chamber in a

soundproof shell before he spoke, “You were far too impulsive today Jiang Chen. Whether that Longevity Pill is real or fake, you shouldn’t have said that it could extend one’s lifespan to eight hundred years.”

Elder Yun Nie also sighed. “The consequences for those words will be severe. Jiang Chen, tell us, is the Longevity Pill that miraculous?”

Since Jiang Chen had dared announce the pill, he naturally wouldn’t dare not admit to it. He nodded and confessed all he could share, “The Longevity Pill does indeed have that kind of miraculous effect. However, only sage realm cultivators can use it. To take it when one has yet to enter the sage realm means bodily detonation. Taking it beyond the sage realm will result in a lack of benefit. It will only extend lifespans by three to five years.”

Palace Head Dan Chi and Elder Yun Nie looked at each other, the light of surprise and shock dancing in their eyes. It was obvious that they were stunned by the news that Jiang Chen had brought, and were also certain at the same time that this wasn’t something Jiang Chen had randomly made up. Although they were long since used to all sorts of heaven defying performances from him, their hearts were still plunged into an emotional turmoil this time. If Jiang Chen was willing to offer the pill to the sect, it alone would be enough to bring unmeasurable wealth to the Regal Pill Palace! If they handled things well, then it could even birth a real chance of having the Regal Pill Palace vault into the ranks of a third rank sect after a few decades!

However, how could they broach the topic of having Jiang Chen

offer up the Longevity Pill? After all, technically speaking, Jiang Chen wasn't someone who their sect had cultivated. If it'd been a direct descendent of the sect, they might've been able to have him hand over the pill and give him some benefits in return, focusing some attention on raising him. But Jiang Chen was not a direct descendent of the sect, and the Regal Pill Palace had merely supplied a platform for his heaven defying rise. They hadn't actually contributed to his rise at all. Their faces weren't so thick as to demand the pill.

When Jiang Chen glimpsed their complicated expressions, and how they were restraining themselves from speaking, he could roughly guess their thoughts.

"Palace Head, Elder Yun Nie, since I've spoken of the Longevity Pill, I don't have the desire to hoard it. I owe a debt of gratitude to the Regal Pill Palace for being my patron, and you two have done your best to mentor me. There are no outsiders here. Treat this pill as a bit of my contribution to the sect." Jiang Chen's proactiveness in raising this subject dialed down some of the awkwardness. But it was now the two heavyweights who were speechless.

They've been thinking of how to convince Jiang Chen, but who would've thought that he'd actually speak of it first. This made them feel that even a young man's bearing was greater than the two heavyweight's.

Dan Chi smiled ruefully. "Jiang Chen, Elder Yun Nie and I are the ones embarrassed after your words. All of us have seen your accomplishments for the sect. Setting aside this time's Pill Battles, you have brought about a new culture to the Rosy Valley, setting

the best example for the young disciples in the Rosy Valley and inspiring in them a kind of ferocity and bearing they lacked before."

Elder Yun Nie was also of the same opinion, but he still felt a bit embarrassed at just accepting the Longevity Pill with no reward. "Jiang Chen, this pill is too precious and it may not be a bad thing for you to give it to the sect. But if you have any requests, please speak of them. We would hate to be treated as outsiders."

Chapter 554: Pill King, Pill Emperor

Jiang Chen didn't raise any grand wishes, just thirty percent of the profits from the pill. This made Palace Head Dan Chi and Elder Yun Nie both sigh greatly with admiration. The profits brought by the Longevity Pill would be nothing less than spectacular. There wasn't much difference between Jiang Chen's actions and just giving away the pill for free.

"Jiang Chen, thirty percent of the profit is much too unfair for you."

Jiang Chen smiled. "I can indeed harvest wealth if I keep the Longevity Pill to myself, but only I will grow rich from that. If I give it to the Regal Pill Palace, the profits brought about for the sect will be a meritorious achievement that will last for a thousand years. I may not be a saint, but I quite admired what I heard of Palace Head Dan Chi's great ambitions that day. Although I may not be able to accompany the sect head in heralding in a new era, but at least I can do my own part in bringing it to fruition. Treat the Longevity Pill as my effort towards this endeavor."

Palace Head Dan Chi's heart harbored great ambitions to revive the past glories of the Myriad Empire, to re-establish a royal family and unite the Myriad Domain. Jiang Chen hadn't felt much resonance with such thoughts at first, but after experiencing the Pill Battles and seeing the crazed level of scheming the various sects resorted to, he could finally identify that there was indeed a reason why a domain was strong or weak.

United they were strong, divided they were weak.

The various great sects in the current Myriad Domain were no different than a tray of loose sand. No one accepted anyone else, and everyone stayed guarded against everyone else's sabotage. With such belligerent backbiting, how could the Myriad Domain ever hope to grow stronger? The sight of this sorry situation was what let Jiang Chen realize how precious Palace Head Dan Chi's grand plans were, and how great his vision was.

Although the Longevity Pill was rare, this kind of pill recipe was merely a lower level recipe in Jiang Chen's memories. But to a fourth rank sect of the Myriad Domain, this pill was undoubtedly worth cities!

When he saw Jiang Chen thus, Dan Chi sighed. "Yun Nie, I have to admit, it certainly seems that the waves that push from behind are the ones who provide the momentum in a river. I don't think the Myriad Domain has ever seen such a youth as Jiang Chen, with such bearing at his age!"

Elder Yun Nie couldn't help but admire the palace head by now. "The Palace Head's vision in bringing Jiang Chen to the Regal Pill Palace was truly a stroke of genius."

Palace Head Dan Chi nodded, then suddenly recalled something as an item appeared in the palm of his hand. "Jiang Chen, everything about you is good, but only that space ring of yours is a bit behind the times. This Meru Ring is one that I received from a master refiner when I was traveling through the Upper Eight Realms. You can have it!"

Mt. Meru is a sacred mountain with five peaks in Buddhist

cosmology and is considered the center of all physical, metaphysical, and spiritual universes. There is also a Buddhist story that mentions storing Mt. Meru into a mustard seed, referencing that even something as small and limited as a mustard seed can store an existence as infinitely large as Mt. Meru.

Although a Meru Ring was precious, it obviously wasn't on the same level as the Longevity Pill. This was just a token of Dan Chi's sentiments.

Elder Yun Nie thought for a bit and took out a pill flask. "Jiang Chen, this pill is named the Origin Doubling Pill. I refined this from a jug of Firstwind Dew that I obtained when I was still traveling the world. I only have three left. Treat it as a token of my thoughts."

Firstwind Dew!

Jiang Chen had never heard of the Origin Doubling Pill before, but he had definitely heard of Firstwind Dew. This was one of the purest sources of water in the world.

All of the five elements came from various sources. Just as there was a source of fire, there was naturally a source of water. Wood had its sources as well—the wood spirit spring was actually a wood source, and the Tayi Jade Vine that produced the spirit energy another more high quality one. Finally, the magnetic golden mountain was actually a source of metal.

When he saw how Jiang Chen looked a bit perplexed, Elder Yun

Nie was actually slightly surprised. Jiang Chen, with his stunning potential, clearly had never actually heard of the Origin Doubling Pill before! Otherwise, he wouldn't have had this blank reaction upon hearing the pill's name.

Palace Head Dan Chi smiled. "Elder Yun Nie's present is quite a generous gift. Jiang Chen, this Origin Doubling Pill will unequivocally help you ascend to the next level of the origin realm. If you enter the sixth level origin realm one day, you'll be able to use this pill to break through to the seventh level in one go!"

Jiang Chen was slightly moved and hastily offered his thanks. "Many thanks to Elder Yun Nie's gift!"

Elder Yun Nie was also gratified to witness Jiang Chen's reaction. "Compared to the value of the Longevity Pill, this Origin Doubling Pill really isn't anything."

In truth, it actually wasn't a difficult pill to refine. What made it difficult was that the ingredients required were just hard to find. For example, Firstwind Dew wasn't something so easily run into. It was actually an earthly treasure that one could only hope for, and not plan on.

Jiang Chen was actually smiling ruefully in his heart. Elder Yun Nie is truly extravagant! He actually used Firstwind Dew in refining the Origin Doubling Pill. This was one of the most wasteful ways to use this material. One had to know that no matter how amazing the Origin Doubling Pill was, it was still just a saint rank pill at the end of the day. Although it sat at the peak of the saint rank, it would never be able to surmount that last barrier.

However, the Firstwind Dew was an ingredient on a level far above the saint rank.

But of course, there was no way Jiang Chen would actually voice any of this. To him, the Origin Doubling Pill wasn't a bad thing.

"Ah right, Jiang Chen, you can take only one of this pill. Taking it again would not result in any effect." Elder Yun Nie reminded him at this point.

This was common pill dao knowledge. Any level advancing pill was usually a one-time use only. The effect wouldn't trigger upon the second ingestion, unlike the Origin Fostering Pill which could be used over a long time to increase one's energy.

Having accepted benefits from the two seniors, Jiang Chen knew that it was time for him to express some things as well. He immediately took out a brush and paper to write down the recipe for the Longevity Pill.

Dan Chi and Elder Yun Nie both sighed with admiration after they took a look at the recipe. This Longevity Pill was actually quite ingenious! It was such a high level pill, but didn't impose stringent requirements on ingredients. None of its ingredients were difficult to collect. This way, at least they could be certain that the Longevity Pill wouldn't be in short supply because of ingredients.

Of course, the difficulty of the pill lay not in the ingredients, but the refining process. It was a type where it tested a pill master's

skills to the extreme.

This precisely illustrated the saying that outsiders watch for the show, and professionals watched for the process.

Elder Yun Nie and Dan Chi gazed in thought for a while, then looked at each other. It seemed they'd just reached some sort of understanding of this Longevity Pill.

Dan Chi suddenly looked at Jiang Chen, a complicated look in his eyes. He couldn't help but laugh. "Alright you, Jiang Chen! You certainly were well prepared in bringing out the Longevity Pill. If I remember right, you threw in more than 20 ingredients when you were refining the pill, but there are less than half that in here in the real recipe. Speak candidly, did you already anticipate that this pill would be furiously copied once it was revealed, and so did all those deceptive actions beforehand?"

Jiang Chen smiled, not denying anything. After all, he had done that on purpose. Otherwise, he'd have suffered a great loss if someone had gone and just copied his actions to recreate the pill!

Although the refinement method wasn't something that could be learned with a single glance, he was still incredibly careful. He didn't want to leave the slightest gap for anyone to slip into. This conscientious move delighted Palace Head Dan Chi and Elder Yun Nie. They'd been slightly concerned that the other heavyweights had memorized all of the proper steps during Jiang Chen's refining process. Now, it looked like they'd worried too much. That problem had already been foreseen and avoided.

“Elder Yun Nie, do you think you can manage to refine this pill?” Palace Head Dan Chi asked.

Elder Yun Nie took a moment to contemplate the recipe. “With such a detailed pill recipe, I have a roughly sixty to seventy percent assurance in refining it. It’s just a matter of expending more resources. Setting aside Jiang Chen masking his true actions, the others still might not have learned his process even if they had the benefit of close observation.”

Apart from reconstructing the original ingredients, there were all sorts of knacks and hidden hand seals hidden in this refining process, not to mention sophisticated requirements imposed on the control of fire for this pill. A mistake in any of the details might result in completely wasted effort, yet Jiang Chen’s recipe clearly delineated all of the smallest details. This was basically handholding a great pill master like Elder Yun Nie through the process.

The more Elder Yun Nie read this recipe, the more agitated he became. He itched to instantly fire up his cauldron to try his hand at refining the pill. When he’d read the entire recipe eight times over, Elder Yun Nie finally sighed. “Jiang Chen, with your pill dao skills, honestly, apart from resources, we can offer you no other help, particularly in terms of technique. You would certainly be feted even if you were in the Upper Eight Realms. At this rate, you will certainly become a pill king in the future, even…”

Even Elder Yun Nie didn’t dare go on beyond that point. Palace Head Dan Chi laughed heartily. “Elder Yun Nie, there are no

outsiders here; don't be so cautious. We're behind closed doors complimenting ourselves. What are you being embarrassed for?

"Then let me continue on. Jiang Chen, Elder Yun Nie has high hopes for you. However, there's no uncertainty of you becoming a pill king. It's rather that legendary level of pill emperor that should be your goal."

Pill king, pill emperor?

Jiang Chen was rather unfamiliar with these titles. Although he was widely read in his past life, every plane of existence had different denotations for pill master titles. He guessed that these two were the strongest titles in the Divine Abyss Continent.

When he saw that Jiang Chen was having trouble understanding, Elder Yun Nie explained, "Pill king and pill emperor are both titles in the world of pill dao. A pill master is divided into nine levels, and only when one is above the ninth level does one have the right to receive the title of great pill master. Great pill masters are also divided into nine levels, and only when one is greater than the ninth level does one have the right to join in the pill king tests. Only when one passes those tests does one have the right to be hailed as a pill king."

"Pill king tests!" Jiang Chen had never heard their like in the Myriad Domain before.

Elder Yun Nie felt a bit awkward. "It's normal that you haven't heard of them, because none of the sects or organizations in the

Myriad Domain have the right to participate in those tests.”

“There are qualifications?” Jiang Chen was baffled.

“Only a publicly acclaimed third rank sect founded for pill dao has the right to participate in the pill king tests. In addition, a third rank sect can only participate in the tests up to the third level pill king. A second rank can go up to sixth rank pill king, and only a first rank sect can go beyond that.”

“Eh, then doesn’t that mean only a few sects have the right to participate in the seventh rank pill king tests?” Isn’t it easy to have a shortage of talent then?

“The Upper Eight Realms aren’t just comprised of first rank sects. There are also some pill dao organizations and other agencies. Although their power isn’t as grand as a first rank sect, they are not to be underestimated either. They also have the right to participate in the tests above seventh rank pill king.”

“Then what about pill emperor?”

Elder Yun Nie sighed. “A pill emperor is a legendary existence. No sect or organization is able to sit for its test.A pill emperor must be at the peak of ninth level pill king or be able to suppress all other pinnacle pill kings when they meet. One can also become a pill emperor if one has made a grand contribution in a certain area, or have successfully created their own pill dao school of thought…”

There were many avenues to being hailed pill emperor, but they all had one thing in common—public recognition!

Chapter 555: Two Heavyweights Fight Over Jiang Chen

One could obtain the title of a pill king just through passing a couple of tests. But the title of pill emperor was only bestowed on someone after they'd accomplished a remarkable feat or formed their own pill dao school of thought. Only then would they be publicly acclaimed as a pill emperor, and have their name resound beneath the heavens.

"A pill emperor is born only once in a millennia, and even then there are times when millennia can pass without seeing the birth of one. The pill emperor of our time has secluded himself from the world and lives in the Divine Abyss Continent. Or so we think, since we haven't heard of any rumors about him in our Myriad Domain." Elder Yun Nie sighed lightly, a shiver in his voice from emotion.

In the Myriad Domain, the Regal Pill Palace was undoubtedly the first amongst the sects when it came to pill dao, and Elder Yun Nie was the undisputed master in the region for pill dao. However, in the greater picture of the entire Myriad Domain, Elder Yun Nie was just an ordinary pill master. He didn't even have the right to participate in the pill king tests.

"Jiang Chen, in our Regal Pill Palace history, only the first forefather had received the title of pill king. Even then, it was was only second level pill king. Even so, it was enough to let him amass enough resources to found a sect in the lower realms. If he had been a fourth or fifth level pill king, he would've been capable of establishing a sect even in the mid realms and still leave a

wondrous legacy. If he had become a seventh level pill king or above, he would have been a precious guest in the Upper Eight Realms, and the honored elder of a first rank sect. In the worst of scenarios, while he may not have been capable of shouldering a first rank sect, he wouldn't have had the slightest problem with a second rank sect!" Palace Head Dan Chi smiled. "There have been no more than ten pill kings in the entirety of Myriad Domain history. Of them, most have come from the Myriad Empire royal family."

When the Myriad Empire had ruled the territory as an unchallenged existence, the sects had not been the strong existences they were now. They'd only become this strong after the Myriad Empire had fallen and they'd divvied up the resources.

Jiang Chen was spontaneously enlightened, and began to comprehend what kind of power a pill king and emperor held in the Divine Abyss Continent.

Elder Yun Nie, someone titled as first in pill dao in this region, still wasn't a pill king. It only went to prove that the title of a pill king wasn't so easily obtained. However, apart from himself, Jiang Chen felt that there was another who had the potential to obtain such a title. That would be none other than Mu Gaoqi.

They chatted for a while longer before Palace Head Dan Chi smiled. "Jiang Chen, it will take a few more days for the restrictions to be lifted. You can make good use of these days. Multiple small trading fairs will start between the large sects. If you go take a look, perhaps you might even chance upon a treasure!"

When they parted ways, Jiang Chen was in no hurry to return to his residence, instead making for the main lobby of Rippling Mirage Hall. He naturally wouldn't pass up any trading fairs. Resources could flow in either direction, and that so happened to be what he lacked the most at the moment. Resources didn't just include spirit herbs and pills, but also various earthly treasures as well. In the world of martial dao, resources were multi-faceted.

Shen Qinghong, Mu Gaoqi and Ling Bi'er were all within the lobby as well. Shen Qinghong had a vast hoard of wealth, but wasn't too interested in this trading fair. In addition, after the impetus provided by Wang Han and Zhu Feiyang's mockery, he was finding courage after knowing humiliation and knew that he had to break through the sage realm sooner rather than later. Otherwise, when faced with people like them, he would never be able to fully lift his head as the top ranked genius of the Regal Pill Palace.

"You're here too, Brother Chen!" Mu Gaoqi had set up a small stall, evidently very interested in this trading fair.

Ling Bi'er hadn't set up a stall, but was looking around. It was apparent that she was looking for something. Jiang Chen had given her a list of the spirit herbs needed to cure the Miasma. She wanted to see if she could find anything she needed in these trading stalls. However, even after a few circles, she came up empty handed.

"Junior sister Ling, I see you walking to and fro. Is there something you need?" Wei Qing suddenly showed up in front of

Ling Bi’er, smiling merrily. “Tell me about it, and maybe I can help!”

Ling Bi’er had no good feelings towards this kind of fawning behavior, nor even any for Wei Qing himself. She furrowed her brows slightly and turned her body, walking past Wei Qing.

Unfortunately he seemed to quite enjoy being endlessly rebuffed. As the most exemplary genius from the Walkabout Sect, how would he lack for girls? What he lacked was a challenge like this! Therefore, the more Ling Bi’er brushed him off, the more exciting he felt the challenge had become.

“Hmph, you’re acting all high and mighty in front of me now, but just you wait until I have you. As ready you are to die for your chastity now, I’ll turn you into a slut once you’ve tasted my ultimate techniques!” Wei Qing was plainly very confident about Ling Bi’er and had long since viewed her as something that belonged to him. As he watched her alluring figure leave, he swore a silent vow that he would get his hands on Ling Bi’er, no matter the cost.

When Mu Gaoqi saw from a distance that Wei Qing was bothering Ling Bi’er again, he was quite irritated inwardly. “Brother Chen, this Wei Qing is truly too cocky. He keeps chatting up senior sister Ling Bi’er like a filthy fly.”

In Mu Gaoqi’s eyes, he’d long since classified Ling Bi’er as his Brother Chen’s woman. This Wei Qing was really courting death in approaching her again and again!

Jiang Chen smiled. “Gaoqi, be careful and take it easy if you meet him in Mt. Rippling Mirage. He’s vicious and ruthless. He’s bound to take revenge for any slight.”

Mu Gaoqi nodded. “Don’t worry Brother Chen, I’ll be careful.”

Mt. Rippling Mirage was enormous, and everyone would be randomly scattered inside after going through the entrance formation. Although there was still a chance to run into each other while they were inside, it was in no way guaranteed.

“Daoist Jiang Chen.” A voice came from behind as they chatted. Jiang Chen turned his head to see a Dark North Sect disciple dressed in a robe. He actually had a similar bearing to Mu Gaoqi, but wasn’t quite as handsome as him. Instead, it seemed that he was a touch more melancholic. “This humble one is Ku Zhu of the Dark North Sect. I am here on our sect head’s behalf to invite you for a meeting.”

Honored Master Tian Ming?

Jiang Chen was slightly surprised, but immediately surmised why the honored master was looking for him. When he considered how close the honored master was with Palace Head Dan Chi, he naturally couldn’t turn down this request. He nodded at Mu Gaoqi, “Gaoqi, keep an eye on things here for me. I have a list here, and if these spirit herbs or their substitutes appear, grab them all for me.”

“Sure, Brother Chen! Don’t worry, I’ll keep an eye on everything here.” Mu Gaoqi agreed readily. His admiration of Jiang Chen was second only to that of Palace Head Dan Chi and his honored master Elder Yun Nie. He probably even estimated Jiang Chen as his closest friend. He was more aware than anyone else that if it hadn’t been for Jiang Chen, he wouldn’t have placed third on the overall ranking!

Ku Zhu was delighted to see that Jiang Chen was so easy to talk to. He’d been fretting over what to do if Jiang Chen hadn’t been willing to go.

“Daoist Ku Zhu, let’s go.”

Ku Zhu nodded, a perpetually bitter expression on his face as he led the way forward. They hadn’t walked far before someone else walked out from their right. It was a Great Cathedral disciple. “Brother Jiang Chen, Xiang Qin from the Sacred Elephant family greets you. Do you have a moment? My family head would like to speak with Brother Jiang.”

Ku Zhu spread out his arms with a look of alarm, like a fighting gamecock gearing up for a match. “Senior brother Xiang Qin, I was the first to invite senior brother Jiang Chen.”

Xiang Qin frowned slightly at seeing this. “And you are…?”

Ku Zhu said stiffly, “I’m Ku Zhu of the Dark North Sect. Senior brother Xiang Qin, please step out of the way. The sect head is waiting for me to return.”

Ku Zhu was a hardheaded person alright; he didn't know how to beat around the bush when it came to speech. Xiang Qin could also subtly detect this from his style of talking. He was one of the top geniuses in the Great Cathedral after all, and didn't want to lower himself to Ku Zhu's level. He paid no attention to the Dark North Sect disciple, and raised his hands in a cupped fist salute towards Jiang Chen. "Brother Jiang, my family head invites you with full sincerity. Please show me some face here."

Jiang Chen was also caught in a difficult position. He flicked a glance at Ku Zhu. "Brother Xiang, we're supposed to heed the call of our elders. However, Daoist Ku Zhu was here first. If I leave him here and go with you, that won't do either."

Xiang Qin seemed to also think that this was asking a bit too much. He looked at Ku Zhu. "Junior brother Ku Zhu, how about this? You can go back and tell Honored Master Tian Ming that I forcefully invited Brother Jiang, and that I'll go and express my apologies in person later."

This is the precursor to forcefully taking Jiang Chen from him! Ku Zhu's eyes widened in a glare when he heard this. "No! Not unless you kill me! The only way you'll be taking senior brother Jiang Chen from me is over my dead body!"

Xiang Qin's face grew cold. He was the top genius of the Great Cathedral, and there weren't many in the younger generation of the Myriad Domain who would dare rebut his words. Even the most exemplary Lin Hai would be respectful in front of Xiang Qin. Who does this Ku Zhu think he is?

“Don’t throw away the face I’m trying to give you. Even Lin Hai wouldn’t be acting like this in front of me.” Xiang Qin’s voice carried a note of warning. However, he’d underestimated Ku Zhu’s temper.

“Lin Hai is Lin Hai, and I am myself. I only know that the sect head has ordered me to invite senior brother Jiang Chen. What does it have to do with me who you are?”

Jiang Chen knew that things would become increasingly worse if they went much further in this direction. He could only step forth to try and smooth the ruffled feathers. “Gentlemen, how about this? Both of you can go back first and have a discussion about this. If it’s nothing too special, why don’t we sit down together and discuss this? We can save the trouble of arguing who has precedence.”

“No!” Both Ku Zhu and Xiang Qin shook their heads when Jiang Chen finished speaking. It was obvious that they were both determined to have Jiang Chen.

They stood there, locked in a stalemate when a long peal of laughter suddenly sounded. “Sage nephew Xiang Qin, I have a long standing appointment with sage nephew Jiang Chen to introduce him to the genius disciples of my Dark North Sect. What is the meaning of this willful obstruction of yourself?”

It was Honored Master Tian Ming himself! As fierce as Xiang Qin could be, he didn’t dare act wildly in front of the honored master.

“Haha, Tian Ming ah, I just so happened to want to speak with sage nephew Jiang Chen as well. You can’t just take him from me.” The Sacred Elephant family head also seemed to pop out of nowhere.

If an analogy was struck that Xiang Qin facing off against Ku Zhu was a meeting between pawns, then Honored Master Tian Ming and the Sacred Elephant family head was a meeting of generals. Jiang Chen had become the choicest slice of meat at a buffet in a flash.

The originally bustling main lobby instantly grew solemn and quiet. All sorts of surprised glances flicked over as their owners watched the situation develop. Two great sects were fighting over Jiang Chen! Just what was going on here?

As the focus of the attention, Jiang Chen didn’t know whether to laugh or cry. The current situation was absolutely something he didn’t want to see. No matter which side he chose, he was destined to offend the other side. Even if this had nothing to do with him, he was suddenly faced with a decision to choose.

More and more people made their way into the main hall. Some of the other heavyweights from the other sects also walked out when they heard the commotion.

Chapter 556: Furiously Fighting Over The Longevity Pill

“Haha, now isn’t this quite a gathering? Everyone, what kind of show is this? Jiang Chen is a young man who’s just set foot in this broad world of ours. Don’t go scaring him now.” Palace Head Dan Chi’s voice had barely broken the silence before his figure appeared. He’d obviously made his way as quick as he could after hearing the news. Protecting Jiang Chen was his first and only priority here. How would he not know what kind of thoughts were running through the heads of these old fellows? They were just here to swindle the Longevity Pill from Jiang Chen.

Honored Master Tian Ming chuckled merrily at the sight of Dan Chi. “Ole brother Dan Chi, you have to come uphold justice! It was I who invited sage nephew Jiang Chen first, but Family Head Xiang wants to take him away by force! I can’t win against this strong-arming tactic even when I’m in the right! Ole brother Xiang, you’re the older brother. What harm is there in giving way before your younger brother once or twice, hmm?”

Honored Master Tian Ming was renowned for his ability to coax others into acceding to his wishes. These words were clearly a small persuasion for the family head into giving way. They were both sect heads of fourth rank sects, and Tian Ming was already keeping a low enough posture as it was. In the end, he was indeed in the right since he had invited Jiang Chen first. The family head of Sacred Elephant was named Xiang Wentian. He actually wasn’t the domineering sort ordinarily, but he seemed to have steeled his heart to be unreasonable this time. He waved his hand and smiled faintly. “Tian Ming, I would’ve let you have your way if it was anything else. I won’t play around with words in front of you. By

my calculations, I have less than sixty years left to spend on this Myriad Domain of ours. But you want the Longevity Pill as much as I. I could step back from any other matter, but how could I do the same when it comes to my life?”

Sage realm cultivators could live at least fifteen hundred years, and could stretch that up to two or three thousand years. That the family head had just stated his remaining lifespan as less than sixty years birthed a natural curiosity to know exactly long he’d lived.

Honored Master Tian Ming also smiled wryly when he heard the family head’s words. “Ole brother Xiang, to be truthful, I was injured when cultivating a few decades ago and damaged my lifespan. I don’t have many years of life left either.”

Everyone was surprised that these two heavyweights were suddenly sharing their woes with each other. When it came to the Longevity Pill, all the other heavyweights were also quite tempted, but their lifespans hadn’t reached a dangerous low yet. However, this kind of pill was the best as an emergency reserve. It would never hurt to have a pill or two stashed away.

As the atmosphere at the scene grew more and more heated, Wang Jianyu of the Sacred Sword Palace became increasingly irritated. Why the hell does your Regal Pill Palace always hog the limelight, and have others always chase after you?! You want to take an advantageous position with an uncommon product? As if I’d just let you! His thoughts suddenly spun furiously for a moment, and a smile creased his face. “Elder brother Xiang, Tian Ming, both of you should keep your calm. If even a young disciple can refine this pill, I’m sure it can be mass produced. When that is

set in motion, the two of you can buy as much as you'd like. That is... unless the Regal Pill Palace wants to hoard its stockpile and can't bear to take it out."

This was a blatant attempt to drive a wedge between the two sect heads and an overt attempt to rake the Regal Pill Palace over hot coals. Yet, it wasn't entirely ineffective, as Family Head Xiang looked at Palace Head Dan Chi with a solemn gaze. "Younger brother Dan Chi, what's the situation with this Longevity Pill? Your Regal Pill Palace won't be doing something so untoward, hmm?"

Palace Head Dan Chi smiled faintly and looked deeply at Wang Jianyu. "Everyone, I do apologize. If we could produce this pill in bulk, we wouldn't have waited until today to release word of it. I don't know if Sect Head Wang has just lost his common sense or is purposefully stirring up trouble with his words. If we could produce this pill in bulk, my Regal Pill Palace would've soared to the top a long time ago. Why would we wait until this kind of gathering to release it?"

Everyone felt that Dan Chi's words made sense after they'd thought over it some. If the Regal Pill Palace really could produce the Longevity Pill in bulk, they would've long since taken it out and made a killing. Why would they remain silent to this day? This kind of pill would never want for demand. No matter how much was produced, it could all be sold.

After all, the wealth of sage cultivators was astonishing. This kind of pill that could extend their lifespan would absolutely be sold for a monumental price. To take Family Head Xiang as an

example, even if he were to take out half of his wealth in exchange for one pill that extended his life by five hundred years, he would do so without the slightest crease of his brow.

"When it comes to pill refining, my sect's Elder Yun Nie has more authority to speak than I do."

Everyone's gazes turned towards Elder Yun Nie, who had been prepared for this in advance. "Although the materials for this Longevity Pill are precious, that is still not the most important limiting factor for refining this pill. In fact, the most vital limiting factor is that its refining process is exceedingly complicated, and its rate of success almost depressingly low. Moreover, the process is highly demanding of one's consciousness. Each attempt at refining must be accompanied with at minimum ten days to half a month of rest and recovery. This kind of pill would never be able to be mass produced. Even if a pill king were to undertake the task, he would at most manage one attempt every ten days, with no more than three pills appearing in his cauldron at the end.

"As for the pill masters of my Regal Pill Palace, I'm afraid that only I am currently capable of refining this pill apart from Jiang Chen. As it stands right now, this pill can only be refined once every month or two at its utmost maximum. In addition, Jiang Chen is young, and cannot spend a long period of time exhausting his consciousness for pill refining. The sect won't let him do so either. After all, martial dao cultivation is the true focus of a genius."

Elder Yun Nie's words were impenetrable. No one could find any fault with them. However, all of them couldn't help but look

sideways at Jiang Chen and feel inwardly greatly contemptuous. In their eyes, Jiang Chen's little bit of cultivation didn't make him any sort of martial dao genius. He might as well focus wholeheartedly on the grand task of refining pills. However, they naturally couldn't voice such words in this situation. If they did, they would greatly offend Jiang Chen and then could kiss goodbye to any hope of gaining a Longevity Pill in the future.

Wang Jianyu snorted coldly. "Even if you fire up the cauldrons only once every three months and refine three pills each time, that's still quite a number in the long run."

Elder Yun Nie couldn't help but burst out in laughter. "Sect Head Wang is a sect head after all! How can you voice such naive words? Refining the Longevity Pill is a task that drains the consciousness and runs the risk of harming the mind. Whether it's cultivators or pill masters, even if an exhausted consciousness can recuperate, it will still harm their foundations in the long run. Do you mean for my sect's pill masters to risk their lives to refine pills? To put it bluntly, even if we fire up our cauldrons once every three years for this refining, that's still an enormous drain on the mind after a few decades or a hundred years, let alone once every three months. In the best case scenario, we would end up harming the mind. At worst, we would risk complete mental collapse."

This wasn't Elder Yun Nie being an alarmist. The Longevity Pill recipe was indeed uncommon, and if it wasn't refined by a pill master with extreme skill and a robust mental state of mind, it would indeed be a great drain on the consciousness. Jiang Chen hadn't been afraid because he'd trained in "Boulder's Heart" and "Psychic's Head". His consciousness had been perfectly tempered, and was in fact on par with that of a pill king. The most important

thing was, he was just trying things out and wouldn't possibly be continuing to refine this pill for the long haul.

To Jiang Chen's level of consciousness, the drain on his mind if he had to refine the pill twice a year was almost negligible. Besides, the drain on the mind could also be repaired through pills. But of course, he naturally wouldn't speak any of this. He knew Elder Yun Nie wanted to increase the value of this pill and starve out the market.

The others naturally had nothing to say after Elder Yun Nie's detailed explanation. One couldn't simply demand the Regal Pill Palace pill masters to risk their lives, could they? It was up to them whether or not they wanted to refine this pill.

Wang Jianyu kept a stiff upper lip even after being put in his place by Elder Yun Nie. "This pill is yours, and it's all down to you flapping your lips on how it's to be managed!"

Dan Chi smiled. "So you do know that this pill belongs to us? Then it's up to us to decide how we want to refine it."

Xiang Wentian frowned with impatience as he listened to them bicker. "Younger brother Wang, stop being a bother here." He then looked at Dan Chi. "Younger brother Dan Chi, tell me, will there be a Longevity Pill allotted to me?"

Palace Head Dan Chi responded seriously, "Apart from Jiang Chen refining the Longevity Pill once so far, even Elder Yun Nie has yet to attempt it. As for the one that Jiang Chen has refined,

that's his private property. I'm not at liberty to make decisions for him."

So the topic had come back to Jiang Chen again. Xiang Wentian had to have it, and so his glittering eyes moved to Jiang Chen. "Sage nephew Jiang Chen, name whatever price you will for your Longevity Pill. We can all compete on basis of price if it comes down to it!"

The Great Cathedral possessed a grand repository of wealth and wasn't afraid to show it. The conversation had now shifted to a war of wealth. When Xiang Wentian's words rang out, some of the other sects also started thinking rapidly. Someone immediately took the opportunity to call out, "I say, why don't we have an open auction with the pill going to the highest bidder!"

These words spurred the others into motion. "Right, fair competition with it going to the highest bidder is the principled thing!"

"This is rather good. This way, everyone has a chance, and no one will have complaints if they lose."

Honored Master Tian Ming smiled ruefully. It wasn't that his Dark North Sect didn't have money to spare; they were also wealthy and willing to flaunt it. Their advantage in resources was very apparent sitting in the northern end of the Myriad Domain. It was just that if this turned into a competition with the Great Cathedral in terms of wealth, only a huge loss awaited. He'd wanted to grab Jiang Chen and conduct a private transaction, and all things considered, he'd gotten there first. But after the Sacred

Elephant family head's shenanigans, it was now an open competition. Tian Ming was undoubtedly the most dejected one present, and not to mention that he had the closest relationship with the Regal Pill Palace. So whether in a public arena or private area, he should've held priority. However, he knew that this had nothing to do with the Regal Pill Palace, and that it could only be chalked up to Xiang Wentian of the Great Cathedral being too domineering.

Xiang Wentian was at seventh level sage realm, and his personal strength was the unquestioned peak of the Myriad Domain. He was also the head of the Great Cathedral, a sect that boasted the strongest martial strength in the Myriad Domain. If he didn't want to be reasonable, there was nothing anyone else could do. Yet, Honored Master Tian Ming was unresigned. He had to have the Longevity Pill, and even if it came down to bidding, he had to win at least one of them. Who knew when another would next appear!

The other sect heavyweights were as equally tempted as Honored Master Tian Ming and Xiang Wentian. Since the competition was now open to all, who said they needed to leave it to those two? Whoever had enough charisma and willingness to bid could compete.

In this way, everyone's thoughts began to churn. Only Wang Jianyu remained stubborn in his recalcitrance. He still felt all of it to be a show that the Regal Pill Palace was purposefully putting on to convince the crowd that the pill was a rare and difficult thing to obtain. But after being chastised by Xiang Wentian, he didn't dare offer his contrary words. That Great Cathedral family head might do something outrageous when venting his ire. Wang Jianyu couldn't afford to lose his face here. So although the Sacred Sword

Palace was known for being cocky, it still reined itself in when faced with the Great Cathedral.

And this, was how an auction began with a thunderous uproar.

Chapter 557: A Preposterous Bidding War

Although it was a spontaneous auction, the atmosphere was abnormally fervent. The one hosting the auction was a fifth rank sect head. He had no wishes or desires and was fully aware that he didn't have the resources to battle for the pill. In addition, his sect had received no end of benefits from the Regal Pill Palace in the past, so he had naturally volunteered to host this auction.

"Everyone, can I say a few words?" Wang Jianyu couldn't help but open his mouth again when he saw the auction about to start.

Xiang Wentian could barely keep his anger in check when he saw Wang Jianyu jumping out again. "Wang Jianyu, you have the most amount of issues here. Hurry up and fart out whatever you have!"

He wasn't ordinarily such a crude person, but he simply couldn't remain composed when he'd fully understood the effects of the Longevity Pill. Being able to extend his lifespan up to a maximum of eight hundred years was an incredible temptation! However, this Wang Jianyu wouldn't stop running his mouth, buzzing around like an annoying fly!

Wang Jianyu felt a bit awkward at hearing that, but still summoned his courage and raised his hands in a cupped fist salute towards Xiang Wentian. "Elder brother Xiang, it's not that I want to keep talking, but has everyone considered what would happen if this Longevity Pill doesn't have the effect of extending lifespans? What then?"

These words were like a cold bucket of water on everyone's fervor. The value of the pill had blinded everyone, but Wang Jiangyu's reminder awoke them to this potential problem. What if the Regal Pill Palace was boasting and had severely exaggerated things? The scene instantly cooled as everyone looked over to the Regal Pill Palace.

Palace Head Dan Chi was quite forthright as he spoke. "Haha, all's fair in the world of transactions. If everyone feels that this is too risky, then we can cancel the auction. After all, it's not us who are desperate to sell the pill."

Elder Yun Nie also smiled. "Since everyone feels this as the case, then let's cancel it." He rose and prepared to walk off the stage.

When Jiang Chen saw that the two heavyweights had both spoken, he naturally rose to his feet as well. "I was the one who refined the Longevity Pill, and my original intentions were to save it for the elders of my sect. If it hadn't been everyone here fighting over it, I hadn't planned on selling it either."

Xiang Wentian was starting to panic now. He hastily rushed forward and pulled at Dan Chi. "Ole brother Dan Chi, don't speak words out of anger. Ole brother Yun Nie, show me some face. Let's all calm down, calm down."

Palace Head Dan Chi roared, the very picture of enraged innocence. "Ole brother Xiang, it's not that I don't want to show everyone face, but there are some here who deny my sect the proper respect it is due! At the end of the day, we're all fourth rank sects. We all behave with a certain bearing. But right here, we have

someone who insists on nitpicking at the details, fanning the flames of drama, and crying wolf when we've placed our hands on our hearts and opened the doors of our sect to do honest business. What would you do in our situation?!"

Wang Jianyu snorted coldly. "Dan Chi, don't try to pretend that you're that innocent. Why would you feel so guilty if your Longevity Pill is really that miraculous?"

Xiang Wentian's patience had been well and truly overdrawn. It was plain to him that the Regal Pill Palace was erupting in anger. If Wang Jianyu continued down his path, then he really might ruin everything. "Wang Jianyu, shut the hell up! Another word out of you will mean nothing less than declaring the entire Sacred Elephant family as your enemy!"

Notwithstanding Xiang Wentian's true feelings of rage at potentially missing out on this opportunity, his wrathful performance was also to ensure that the Regal Pill Palace was reassured by his show of support. That way, hopefully, they might not really put the Longevity Pill away.

Honored Master Tian Ming also chimed in. "If none of you believe in the effects of this pill, I'll gladly take it off your hands. I'll take on the risk freely, no need to fear if it's an exaggeration."

"Dream on!" Xiang Wentian rolled his eyes.

Wang Jianyu had received a faceful of dust at Xiang Wentian's words. He'd wanted to sow some seeds of doubt, and douse

everyone's fervent behavior with questions of the Longevity Pill's legitimacy. But he hadn't thought that Xiang Wentian's desire was completely beyond his imagination!

Xiang Wentian tried every possible method of coaxing he knew before he finally persuaded Dan Chi and Elder Yun Nie to stay. In all fairness, the latter two hadn't actually planned on cancelling the auction, they just wanted to teach Wang Jianyu a lesson he wouldn't soon forget. Don't you like to run your mouth? Keep running it and see what happens, hmm!

When Jiang Chen saw that the two had taken their seats again, he too smiled and prepared to return to his seat.

Wei Wuying suddenly laughed, "Well, just how many years of life can this Longevity Pill offer? We should at least know this!"

Xiang Wentian had just sat down when he saw Wei Wuying stepping forth next to create trouble. He rolled his eyes and was about to erupt again when Jiang Chen suddenly stood up with a smile. "I'm the one who refined the Longevity Pill, and this is only a lower rank version. However, I hereby announce that if the Walkabout Sect and Sacred Sword Palace participates in the auction, I will take back the pill. For your information, a lower rank pill will have no problems extending one's life by five hundred years. You will feel the pill repair your bodily functions immediately after ingesting it. Payment will be immediately refunded if an effect isn't apparent."

Jiang Chen didn't engage in empty bluster. There was nothing more convincing than an on-the-spot refund. The expressions of

those from the Walkabout Sect and Sacred Sword Palace immediately changed when Jiang Chen was done speaking. Wang Han slammed his hand down on the table, “And who the hell do you think you are, Jiang Chen? Are you worthy of banning my Sacred Sword Palace?!”

Wei Qing also looked at Jiang Chen sinisterly. “Kid, your arrogance really knows no bound, huh! It looks like I really need to teach you a lesson on how a young, ignorant junior should act!”

Jiang Chen smiled faintly, completely ignoring the two. He looked at the host instead. “We can begin.”

However, this nonchalant attitude sent Wang Han into paroxysms of fury. He shot to his feet, absolutely infuriated at this dismissal. “Jiang Chen, get the hell down here right now! I’ll teach you how you should act in front of your seniors!”

However, a deep growl emanated from Xiang Qin from the Great Cathedral, “Wang Han, sit your ass right back down! One more word and I’ll break an arm. Two more words, and you’ll have to learn how to wield your swords with your feet!”

Xiang Qin was well aware of how deeply his family head desired the Longevity Pill, and these fellows were continually disrupting the proceedings with unmitigated abandon! As Xiang Wentian’s direct grandson, how would he not understand what this pill meant to his grandfather? Moreover, how could he not understand how meaningful it was for him? If his grandfather could live another five hundred years, that meant his backer would also live another couple hundred years. This was greatly advantageous for

Xiang Qin's development.

If his grandfather fell, then not only would the Sacred Elephant family lose their position as the head of the Great Cathedral, but he would also likely lose the qualifications to become the next Sacred Elephant family head. After all, he had yet to fully grow into his power and fill out his wings. He had to further consolidate his position as the future Sacred Elephant family head under his grandfather's care. Therefore, Xiang Qin was all too aware of the significance of this pill.

Even though Wang Han brimmed with killing intent, he still didn't dare stand up to the first genius of the Sacred Elephant family. He knew that Xiang Qin was nothing if not a man of his word. Thus, Wang Han glared threateningly at Jiang Chen, his face filled with angered humiliation. It was clear that he had placed the blame of his embarrassment firmly on Jiang Chen's head.

On the other hand, Wei Qing's personality was devious and crafty. Although he itched to kill Jiang Chen right then and there, he couldn't afford to take a public stance against a genius of the Great Cathedral either. He too sized up Jiang Chen in a sinister fashion and plotted on how to handle this thorn in his side.

Jiang Chen stayed as collected as ever, letting the provocative looks slide off him like rain on a rock.

With the Sacred Sword Palace and Walkabout Sect barred from the proceedings, the auction had lost some serious competition for the Longevity Pill. The fifth rank sects obviously didn't have the

sufficient wealth to participate, and the Regal Pill Palace naturally wouldn't step forth to bid either. As a result, the only bidders left were the Great Cathedral, the Dark North Sect, and the Tristar Sect.

"This is a lower rank Longevity Pill that can be taken by a sage cultivator to extend their lifespan by five hundred years. The starting bid will be placed at three hundred thousand spirit stones. The auction begins now."

There weren't that many rules when it came to this spontaneous auction. The auctioneer had barely gotten the words out before the Dark North Sect immediately shouted out, "Five hundred thousand!"

Well well. The bid had immediately jumped to five hundred thousand spirit stones. This figure had just exceeded Jiang Chen's winnings from his bet. Interestingly, that bet had been based on individual participation as well. Apart from his own principal, there had been four hundred thousand spirit stones spread between eight participants. This Longevity Pill had been refined from free materials, but the money earned from it was going into his own pocket. The fifth rank sect geniuses couldn't help but admire Jiang Chen. They didn't even have ten thousand spirit stones on hand, let alone five hundred thousand! But here was Jiang Chen with a pill he'd refined in the competition soaring to a price of five hundred thousand spirit stones. To make matters even more exciting, this was only the beginning!

The Tristar Sect didn't dither around either. "Six hundred thousand!"

Xiang Wentian cackled. “One million!”

When it came to the depth of their pockets, the Great Cathedral and Dark North Sect were actually on par with each other. But Xiang Wentian’s momentum was indeed frightening. It was obvious that with less than 60 years left of life, his desire for the Longevity Pill was bordering on obsessive. One wasn’t born with things like spirit stones, and they weren’t something he could take when he finally departed this world. He was determined to purchase this pill even if he used up all the wealth in the sect.

Of course, to the peak existence in the Myriad Domain, a million spirit stones was akin to an ordinary person’s thigh hair. It was next to nothing to him.

Honored Master Tian Ming knew that Xiang Wentian was trying to use his aura to suppress any more bidding, and naturally didn’t back down. “1.5 million!”

“2 million!” Xiang Wentian added another five hundred thousand as soon as Honored Master Tian Ming had finished speaking, as if two million upper rank spirit stones was as a bauble like two candies left over in his pocket.

Tristar Sect Head Zhu laughed ruefully. He finally saw things clearly. These two madmen were hellbent on turning this into a bidding war. He’d originally held an opportunistic mindset earlier and thought he had a chance at the winning bid. But with these two lunatics in the mix, getting the Longevity Pill would be

nothing but a dream. Shaking his head, Sect Head Zhu decided to withdraw.

Honored Master Tian Ming was a nice guy, but he was also incensed by this kind of provocative bidding. “3 million!”

“4 million.” Xiang Wentian’s tone was as carefree as if he was offering four million pebbles. One had to say, Xiang Wentian’s presence was truly domineering. The aura of bulling through until he reached his goal had already given him an upper hand in the auction, and this kind of grand bidding war was filling the hearts of the fifth rank sects with awe. They’d never seen such generous bids!

Four million upper rank spirit stones for one pill! Even the annual expenses of a sect likely wouldn’t reach this figure. Even the elders and heavyweights of the fifth rank sects had likely never witnessed such an explosive scene, not to mention the young geniuses. Young and old stood stunned at the sight of these two bidding. They couldn’t help but swallow noisily when they turned to look at Jiang Chen in admiration and worship.

Chapter 558: The Longevity Pill That Turns Back Time

Honored Master Tian Ming wasn't willing to play second fiddle to this madman as he hiked the price up to five million. However, Xiang Wentian's eyes had gone bloodshot in his desire. He didn't even blink as he tossed in a bid of six million spirit stones.

The situation was quickly getting out of hand. If this continued, these two maniacs might resort to something ludicrous in their frenzy for the pill. Off to the side, Wei Wuying was watching coldly. If he had been allowed to speak, he would've gladly added some more fuel to the fire and turned it into a complete mess. Things would be perfect if he could incite a fight between the Great Cathedral and Dark North Sect.

Wei Wuying was the sort who loved a good show, but didn't particularly care about how it came about. The unluckier others were, the happier he was. Besides, with how the competition had developed, he too felt that the price of the Longevity Pill had far exceeded its true value. Six million stones! Even if he were to take out so many stones in one go, it would still tug painfully at his heartstrings.

Wang Jianyu had been forced to sit in silence after being blasted by Xiang Wentian, but his thoughts ran a similar path to Wei Wuying's. His only hope was that the bidding would boil over to the point where it would rage completely out of control. If the situation reached that point of no return, he could step forward to fan the flames a little and embroil the Regal Pill Palace in the whole mess. If both the Dark North Sect and the Great Cathedral also

formed a grudge with the Regal Pill Palace over this incident, then the Regal Pill Palace would become the hated enemy of all the other sects in the Myriad Domain. He would naturally be delighted to see this happen, and would laugh even in his sleep if it really did.

Honored Master Tian Ming was now caught between a rock and a hard place. Judging from Xiang Wentian's attitude, there was no way he would stop. Tian Ming also knew that that no matter how he upped the price, the other would always be nipping at his heels. This old man was obviously ready to go to the point of bankrupting his family in order to obtain the pill and save his life.

As he hesitated, Xiang Wentian smiled coldly. "Why aren't you bidding, old man Tian Ming? Doesn't your Dark North Sect possess a great deal of wealth? Continue!"

Honored Master Tian Ming was different from Xiang Wentian. Although the former's sect had money, it had to come from sect funds in the end. Although he was the sect head, he had other heavyweights in his sect that could put pressure on him. But when it came to the Sacred Elephant family, Xiang Wentian's word was law and no one dared disobey him. Honored Master Tian Ming had already lost in terms of prerequisites. However, he didn't feel comfortable in just giving up just like this. He ignored the darkening faces of his elders and cried out, "7 million!"

Xiang Wentian could also tell that Tian Ming was at his limits and couldn't really hold on. He laughed arrogantly, "I'll put down 8 million! Old man Tian Ming, dare you carry on?"

Tian Ming privately cursed at Xiang Wentian for being a madman and refused to step down. “I also offer 8 million and a jug of Darknorth Starsand. This is the best material in the Myriad Domain to use for refining weapons and glyphs.”

Xiang Wentian immediately laughed heartily. “Are you out of money and resorting to precious materials to guarantee your bid? I’ll offer 10 million and the full skin of a Lightning Antlers Python. This python skin can be used in crafting earth rank glyphs and runes!”

Tian Ming was speechless as he glared silently at Xiang Wentian, knowing that this crazed old man had indeed thrown everything to the winds. Even if they continued bidding on the pill, Tian Ming didn’t have the same advantage of throwing everything to the wind. “Fine, this one goes to you, ole brother Xiang. I can’t move you with pleas, nor can I best you with wealth. If there’s another Longevity Pill, you can’t take it from me then!”

These words were clearly capitulating on the auction, and looking for a concession. Xiang Wentian laughed heartily and didn’t press his point when he saw Tian Ming conceding. “What does another pill have to do with me? This pill isn’t candy. It’s of no more use to me after I take one.”

When he finished, he looked at Jiang Chen with hotly burning eyes. “Jiang Chen, this Longevity Pill is now mine, right?”

Jiang Chen smiled faintly and looked at the impromptu auctioneer. The latter chuckled. “Is there anyone offering a price higher than the Sacred Elephant family head?”

No one topped that bid even after three rounds of questions. It was obvious that no unsuspecting person would come fight for this pill now. In addition, anyone who stepped forth to try to seize it now would be publicly setting themselves against the Sacred Elephant family head. The price of doing so would be unimaginably horrifying.

Bam! The impromptu auction was declared at an end when the gavel came down. Xiang Wentian was delighted and reached into his robes for a storage ring he'd long since readied. He flung it forward carelessly onto the auction table. "Ten million upper rank origin spirit stones and the skin of a Lightning Antlers Python. It's all in here, check it yourself. Where's the Longevity Pill? Give it to me, give it to me!"

Xiang Wentian couldn't wait another second. Nothing was more urgent than the pursuit of life.

Jiang Chen carefully took out the pill and handed it over. He was about to give a few reminders of its effects when Xiang Wentian forestalled him by snatching the pill and started beaming merrily at it. "Good, good! It's clearly apparent with a glance that this pill is uncommon. I've once seen some of the earth rank pills that emperor realm cultivators take, but none of those can measure up to this one! How could this be fake? Only idiots would think this is fake, hahaha!"

Xiang Wentian was immensely proud of himself. It appeared that he'd seen the Longevity Pill before, but just hadn't revealed the level of this pill before. Now that he had it in hand, he was happily

revealing its level. It was obvious that although ten million upper rank stones was a great deal of his wealth, he felt it a completely fair trade to receive a pseudo-earth rank pill that would lengthen his lifespan in return! These days, no dream was as alluring as the chance to extend his life. In addition, with his cultivation at the peak of the sage realm, an additional 500 years gave him the confidence to try for the emperor realm.

Once he succeeded in ascending to the emperor realm, then he would've truly made it. An emperor realm cultivator appearing after several hundred years was absolutely of monumental significance! Not only would the Great Cathedral soar to new heights, his overall lifespan would see yet another breakthrough.

One's lifespan would increase by at least a thousand, possibly even two or three thousand years when breaking through from the sage to emperor realm. He would then have ample time to assail even higher realms. For a cultivator of his level, what was more alluring than the idea of extending his lifespan again?

As he listened to Jiang Chen mention a few things regarding the Longevity Pill, Xiang Wentian went ahead and popped the pill into his mouth.

Taking it on the spot!

Everyone was both surprised and amused by this scene. The mightiest, strongest cultivator in the Myriad Domain was actually this impatient?

When the Longevity Pill hit Xiang Wentian's stomach, it dissolved and traveled to every inch of his body through his meridians. On the outside, his body was suddenly covered with a light red haze that was speckled with green. Upon seeing this, Jiang Chen recognized it as the pill starting to come into effect.

The red haze indicated the strength of Xiang Wentian's bodily functions, and the green specks represented the medicinal effects of the dissolving Longevity Pill. As time passed, the faint green specks faded away, and the red haze grew increasingly stronger and vibrant. Xiang Wentian's skin also began to crack, the fissures expanding like a python shedding its skin. The dead skin broke into flakes, falling off like like chunks of mud that had been plastered onto a wall.

Beneath the dried flakes, fresh new skin peeped out. Xiang Wentian was shedding his skin like a python in exchange for new skin! Black impurities began to flow out of his orifices and fingertips in short order. Jiang Chen knew that the process of shedding dead skin was the renewal of the body's exterior, much like an old tree gaining new shoots. The black sludge was the concentrated form of all the impurities that had accumulated inside the body after all these years being forced out by the medicine in the form of bodily waste.

Jiang Chen nodded slightly as he analyzed the pill's effects. By this point, even those who had the worst observation skills could tell that the Longevity Pill was living up to its name. Perhaps they couldn't understand what the black sludge was, but the picture of new skin beneath the molting old skin was something even fools could understand.

As the haze of light slowly began to fade, Xiang Wentian's features began to come back into view. As it died away, it revealed a face that was no longer marred by wrinkles, and a head of hair that looked like it'd been dyed from snowy white to jet black. In the short time since Xiang Wentian had taken the pill, his entire being seemed to have reverted back from his elderly frame to that a healthy middle aged man!

When everyone managed to pick their jaws off the floor, an uproar broke out. The crowd was absolutely flabbergasted by the amazing effects of the Longevity Pill.

"Grandfather, you're... you're younger!" Xiang Qin was both surprised and overjoyed. He couldn't help but yell loudly. If Xiang Wentian was the happiest after this entire episode, then the second happiest would absolutely be Xiang Qin.

The other family heads from the Great Cathedral also walked up to offer their congratulations.

"This is wonderful, ole brother Xiang. This Longevity Pill is indeed wondrous to be able to turn back time like this. This is absolutely incredible!"

"Ole brother Xiang, you often sigh that the prime of life is transient and that you want to borrow another five hundred years from the heavens. It looks like you've obtained your wishes!"

"The Longevity Pill lives up to its name!"

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. If the Longevity Pill had sold according to market value, it would've fetched one or two million spirit stones at most, which was already an eye-popping price! He'd made out like a bandit from this auction. As for the claim of reversing time, that was merely an exaggeration. The pill didn't actually do that. It cleaned all the impurities from one's body and stimulated the remaining lifeforce hidden in one's body. No one, not even the most pinnacle cultivators, could dig out all of their lifeforce's potential. There would always be various reasons or causes that damaged or suppressed the body's natural mechanisms.

What the Longevity Pill did was to clear away all those impurities suppressing or damaging the body's mechanisms and thoroughly excavate the potential in a human's life. In actuality, this lifespan should've originally belonged to Xiang Wentian, but had been left untapped due to various reasons. All the pill had done was to take it back. The emperor realm cultivators actually had a similar kind of pill available to them as well, but its level was even higher.

Xiang Wentian knew his body's condition far better than anyone else. He could feel how light his steps seemed to be. He'd bid farewell to that declining body of his and replaced it with one full of life. "Hahaha, Jiang Chen, my money was well spent! My body has absolutely returned to what it was five hundred years ago. It's not a lie at all that the Longevity Pill can extend life by five hundred years. Now, which of you would dare say that my money wasn't well spent?"

Money wasn't anything to Xiang Wentian. Having extended his life was something truly worth celebrating!

Chapter 559: A Thrilling And Exciting Effect

Just a short while ago when the price of one Longevity Pill had shot to the skies, the onlookers had felt it to be a ludicrous amount for a pill. That is, that was the thought in everyone's mind except the two fighting over it. Even if the two heavyweights from the Regal Pill Palace had found this price to be verging on the ridiculous, not a hint of it crossed their faces. But having seen Xiang Wentian's stunning transformation, all doubts and skepticism were now gone with the wind.

Everyone could more or less understand the miraculousness of pills. But for a pill to have such amazing and instantaneous effects like the Longevity Pill was still a first for everyone, even those with a wide array of experience. They all looked at Xiang Wentian, not even blinking for fear of him reverting to his previous form if they did. This scene was just like magic. But no matter who, everyone was convinced that the Longevity Pill had the power to turn back time.

"Congratulations, ole brother Xiang!" Palace Head Dan Chi was the first to come forward in congratulations. Although he was surprised, he was even more delighted. He could see the glorious future of the Longevity Pill from Xiang Wentian's transformation.

Xiang Wentian laughed heartily. "Haha, ole brother Dan Chi, I definitely owe your Regal Pill Palace one this time!"

Xiang Qin also walked in front of Jiang Chen. "Brother Jiang Chen, you are my brother from now on. Whoever makes trouble for you in the Myriad Domain invites trouble from me, Xiang Qin!"

Xiang Qin sent a fierce glare in all directions when he was done, taking special care to linger in Wang Han and Wei Qing's direction. He was obviously aware that Jiang Chen had earned their enmity.

Jiang Chen smiled in response when he saw Xiang Qin's enthusiasm. "I am truly flattered and overawed by Brother Xiang's courtesy."

Xiang Qin had a generous personality as he too smiled, "Brother, you have such pill dao potential at your age. You must come and visit our Great Cathedral often!"

"I will certainly visit Brother Xiang when I have the time!"

The two acted like old friends at their first meeting, a sentiment that made Wang Han grit his teeth to watch. He also knew that Xiang Qin was going to these lengths as a public warning to him and Wei Qing not to touch Jiang Chen. However, even as Wang Han ground his teeth together, this only reaffirmed the determination to see Jiang Chen dead. If Jiang Chen was allowed to come into his full strength, then he really might become an enormous threat to the Sacred Sword Palace in the future! With the undying enmity between the Sacred Sword Palace and Regal Pill Palace, the stronger the Regal Pill Palace became, the harder it would be for the Sacred Sword Palace to remain at ease.

"Congratulations, ole brother Xiang." Tristar Sect Head Zhu also came forward with good wishes.

Xiang Wentian was the preeminent martial dao cultivator within the Myriad Domain after all. How would the others dare not show him face? Even the previously lectured Wang Jianyu stepped forth with a smile plastered on his face. Thankfully, Xiang Wentian was too elated to follow up on what happened earlier, thanking everyone with smiles. Only Honored Master Tian Ming slouched, dejected, in a corner. He'd fallen into depression when he'd lost the bidding. He'd even hoped at one point that the pill was fake! Now seeing how magnificent Xiang Wentian's changes were after he'd taken the pill, he was assaulted by another storm of regret. However, rationally, he also knew that competing with that crazy old Xiang Wentian in terms of wealth was a lost cause to begin with. He had been doomed to lose from the beginning. "I say, ole brother Dan Chi, I'm reserving the next Longevity Pill that's refined. No one can take it from me!"

Honored Master Tian Ming was a clear-headed person and knew that this matter really couldn't be blamed on the Regal Pill Palace. He'd lost fair and square, and no one could be placed at fault. Although this had nothing to do with the Regal Pill Palace, Palace Head Dan Chi still felt a bit guilty towards Honored Master Tian Ming. "Ole brother Tian Ming, the next Longevity Pill to be refined is definitely yours."

Honored Master Tian Ming finally smiled when he heard this. "Good, good! I won't short you on the price either. I'll pay just as much as ole brother Xiang did."

Honored Master Tian Ming's words set down a base price for the Longevity Pill at ten million upper rank origin spirit stones. One had to say, this figure was a particular exorbitant one. But since even Xiang Wentian and Honored Master Tian Ming had bought

the pill for this price, no one could find a problem with it.

A high price made for an upscale strategy. They already had a ringing endorsement from Xiang Wentian, so the Regal Pill Palace wouldn't worry for lack of buyers. Which heavyweight amongst the six great sects would be unable to take out ten million stones, to say nothing of anything else?

Ten million stones for five hundred years of life. This was a good trade no matter how one looked at it. Even many of the fifth rank sect heavyweights were tempted. There weren't that many sage realm cultivators in the fifth rank sects, but there were still a couple.

The sect heads of a fifth rank sect could still take out ten million spirit stones. It just might be a heavier burden for them as it might represent more than half of their personal wealth.

"Ole brother Dan Chi, I'd also like to reserve a pill. Can I do so?" Tristar Sect Head Zhu chuckled.

Dan Chi smiled. "We will prioritize Myriad Domain requests for the Longevity Pill. Of course, it is indeed difficult to refine this pill, so we can't guarantee when a second and third pill will be produced."

"Haha, I can wait, I can wait." Sect Head Zhu hurriedly responded with a smile when he saw that Dan Chi didn't turn him down.

It was those of the Sacred Sword Palace and Walkabout Sect who were the most dejected now. Jiang Chen had already clearly indicated that he wouldn't be selling this pill to members of their sects. They were people who demanded face; how would they be able to take this lying down? Wang Jianyu in particular quite desired a Longevity Pill, but he knew that if he stepped forward with a reservation request, that'd only be inviting humiliation down on himself. He flourished his sleeve, snorted, and left.

When Wei Wuying of the Walkabout Sect saw Wang Jianyu leave, he laughed wryly in his heart. He knew that he had offended the Regal Pill Palace quite a lot just now, and flicked a glance over to Elder Wu Hen. Elder Wu Hen smiled and walked up. "Daoist Yun Nie, you and I have been friends for a hundred years now. You won't really be banning my Walkabout Sect from this pill, will you?"

Elder Yun Nie smiled. "The Walkabout Sect possesses a high caliber of talent in pill dao as well. Normally, you don't purchase any pills from my Regal Pill Palace either. Furthermore, there's temporarily no one who has a need for this pill in your sect."

"Palace Head Dan Chi, I'm from the Nearmoon Sect. I'd like to be so bold as to reserve a Longevity Pill..."

"Palace Head Dan Chi, this little brother would also like to reserve a pill."

All of the fifth rank sect heads stepped forward in this moment, and those who had some relationship with Palace Head Dan Chi took an additional step forward. It was apparent that the Regal Pill

Palace had a good network of connections and a stellar reputation. These fifth rank sect heads all knew that the Regal Pill Palace was kinder than the other sects when it came to business negotiations.

Elder Wu Hen looked at the scene developing in front of him. “Daoist Yun Nie, you wouldn’t sell to the fifth rank sects and still bypass our Walkabout Sect, would you?”

It wasn’t that Elder Yun Nie was purposefully not agreeing, but that the Longevity Pill was Jiang Chen’s recipe. Jiang Chen had already made his position clear in not selling to the Walkabout Sect and Sacred Sword Palace, so Elder Yun Nie wasn’t at liberty to overrule Jiang Chen’s words. “Daoist Wu Hen, we can slowly discuss the particulars of business between our two sects in the future. This matter is immensely important, and I can’t make the decision on behalf of our Regal Pill Palace either.”

Elder Yun Nie could only fob Elder Wu Hen off for now.

What followed next had nothing to do with Jiang Chen. Although he had refined four Longevity Pills, he’d only taken out the lower rank one for the auction. There was one more lower rank as well as two mid rank pills that Jiang Chen wasn’t planning on taking out for now.

By his estimations, he calculated that even Elder Yun Nie would only be able to refine two or three pills a year. There was no way that he’d be able to refine any more. Elder Yun Nie’s consciousness might not even be as strong as Jiang Chen’s, since the latter had the benefit of Boulder’s Heart and Psychic’s Head supporting him. As for pill refining techniques, there was even less of a comparison

to be drawn there.

Jiang Chen estimated that if Elder Yun Nie were to refine the pill, his chances of success would very low. He'd likely only make an attempt once or twice a year. His consciousness wouldn't be able to take it if he made any more attempts than that. Unless Elder Yun Nie ascended to the level of pill king, it was unlikely he'd ever reach the point of making an attempt once every three months. At that point, his chance of success would also be higher, and he'd definitely produce one or two pill in each attempt. After all, no pill king would be able to measure up to Jiang Chen in his past life in any aspect of pill dao technique.

Ling Bi'er was genuinely happy for Jiang Chen when she saw everyone mobbing her sect for a chance of a Longevity Pill. This junior brother Jiang Chen seemed to be all encompassing! She was suddenly a bit more confident in his abilities to cure her father's Miasma.

Mu Gaoqi was even more delighted. The more Jiang Chen succeeded, the happier he was. "Brother Chen, you've really come into some wealth this time." He sighed with admiration.

"Did you pay attention to the spirit herbs for me?" Jiang Chen responded with a question.

Mu Gaoqi smiled ruefully. "Brother, everyone switched their attention to the Longevity Pill in the hubbub. No one was in the mood to sell anything."

Ling Bi'er also walked over at this time. "Congratulations, junior brother Jiang Chen. From now on, there will be no one who doesn't know your name in the entirety of the Myriad Domain."

Jiang Chen flashed a dashing smile. "That doesn't matter; there's actually not that much advantage in being famous."

Being a celebrity did indeed bring its own worries. A large group of young folk from the Myriad Domain came over to greet Jiang Chen. Among them were both fourth rank sect geniuses as well as fifth rank sect geniuses. Everyone had the same thought; they had to build a good relationship with Jiang Chen. With his deep pill dao potential, he would certainly become a pill king one day, rising up to becoming a person of incomparable value in the Myriad Domain.

Even the various sect heads had to show him a bit of respect now. If his martial dao potential was a bit higher, then he might even become the legendary figure of his generation in the Myriad Domain! Therefore, apart from the few geniuses who looked upon Jiang Chen with hate, almost all of the young geniuses who'd come to Mt. Rippling Mirage wouldn't pass up the opportunity to get to know Jiang Chen. Even if they couldn't become good friends, it would be good to become acquainted with Jiang Chen.

It was because of this that Jiang Chen decided to just go into closed door cultivation when he returned to his residence. He didn't want to waste time exchanging meaningless pleasantries. Why not make use of this time to cultivate instead?

The restrictions placed on the outskirts of Mt. Rippling Mirage

were lifted three days later. The top ten from both the elder and genius group would be the first batch sent into the mountain, with the full twenty days of harvesting available to them. This was the benefits granted to the winners of the Pill Battles, and they would equally split any gains with their sect. But of course, it was up to each individual person's discretion just how much they took out to hand over to the sect. In the years of the pill battles, the amount that was truly taken out and handed over to the sect was less than thirty percent, never mind fifty!

The various sects didn't do much to enforce a strict split either. If individual sect members grew strong from this lax behavior, it would still trickle down to the sect in the end. Therefore, the sects weren't too strict when it came to this requirement. Otherwise, it was quite easy to tighten the screws on things if they so desired.

Chapter 560: Mt. Rippling Mirage

The first batch of twenty to enter Mt. Rippling Mirage had already congregated outside the mountain. The heavyweights of the six great sects were in charge of controlling the formation around the mountain. As they activated the formation, a rainbow-like bridge shimmered into existence in front of everyone.

“This is the transportation gate of Mt. Rippling Mirage. All of you have in your hands a jade token that was specifically refined to correspond to this formation. Remember, when the twenty days are up, the formation will automatically transport you out. The token will help you locate the nearest transportation matrix, in case you run into any danger. If you crush it in the vicinity of a matrix, you will be automatically transported out. There are multiple matrixes within the mountain, and any of them will be able to teleport you out.”

The jade tokens in everyone’s hands were actually to save their lives. Spirit herbs weren’t the only things that grew on the mountain, all sorts of danger lay hidden on its slopes.. If anyone met with danger they couldn’t handle, it’d be best to leave voluntarily. Of course, although there were many transportation matrixes within the mountain, they weren’t everywhere. Someone with particularly ill luck may not run into a single one even if they searched for hours. Each year, there were always a few folk who died on the mountain. In unlucky years, roughly 25% of the ones who departed for the mountain would never come back. That meant that out of sixty, at most a dozen would die..

With this first group of twenty, the Regal Pill Palace took up two spots from the elder team, and four from their genius team. It was

Mu Gaoqi's first time participating in such a grand affair, and he was obviously still a bit nervous. When he set foot on the rainbow bridge, the normally chatty Mu Gaoqi was uncharacteristically quiet.

"Don't be nervous, Gaoqi!" Jiang Chen encouraged.

Mu Gaoqi managed to smile, "You be careful Brother Chen! The matrix will fling us into different corners of the mountain. I've heard that the mountain is as vast as the seas, with no end to them. I wonder if we'll be able to meet once inside!"

If they could, Mu Gaoqi would love nothing more than to form a team.

Jiang Chen smiled. "It'd be best if we could bump into each other. Gaoqi, don't try to stick it out if you run into danger. Find a transportation matrix to make your escape."

Mu Gaoqi's cultivation level was undoubtedly one of the lowest amongst the candidates. Out of the ten geniuses present, his cultivation was absolutely at the bottom. Things would be alright if he met folks that he could reason with, but if he ran into someone like Wei Qing, then, he'd be in for it.

However, the Regal Pill Palace upper echelon took the protection of Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi seriously. They handed each one an air escape rune before they set out. This rune could instantly transport its holder fifty kilometers from their present location. Although that wasn't very far, it would certainly take the bearer

away from any area of immediate danger. They'd then have greater hope of finding a transportation matrix and crushing the jade token to escape.

"Remember, when the matrix activates, don't circulate your energy to fight against it. Otherwise, you might be devoured by the formation." A solemn reminder rang in everyone's ears.

An enormous rumble then sounded as a rainbow colored beam filled the area, enfolding the twenty bodies and turning into a rainbow streak of light that disappeared into the void.

Within the beam, Jiang Chen only felt that his senses were completely torpid, like his body had returned to its most basic state. He couldn't see, hear, or smell anything. It felt like everything had returned to an unformed chaos.

Each of his limbs felt like it was being suppressed by incredible pressure, akin to countless mountain ranges crushing him. Trying to move his limbs was almost a futile effort. This feeling continued for a short while, and then a rumble spread to his ears.

The multicolored lights in front of him faded away as his senses regained their usual level of receptivity.

"Mm, am I in Mt. Rippling Mirage now?" Jiang Chen looked around and found himself on a hillside halfway up the mountain. The ground was carpeted in green, and a purple bamboo tree patch dotted the hillside off to the side. A faint mist wreathed around the purple bamboo forest, giving it the ethereal feeling of a fairy

realm. Jiang Chen's senses penetrated into the somewhat loose dirt beneath his feet as he breathed in the incomparably fresh air. His first impression was that of spirit power, a density and concentration of energy that exceeded even that of the Regal Pill Palace's Rosy Valley.

Jiang Chen called upon his God's Eye and swept his gaze in all directions. His scan didn't reveal any signs of danger for the time being. His gaze moved back to the curious patch of purple bamboo.

"This purple bamboo has grown straight and tall, fed by abundant spirit energy. What's even rarer to see is that it seems to be full of an ethereal air. Miss Huang'er will surely like it if it's transplanted into the Sovereign Area."

Although there was ample spirit power within the purple bamboo, its use in the martial dao world tended more towards aesthetic purposes. There were those who used it to create the xiao, flutes, and other instruments. It could also be used to craft weapons, but its battle strength wasn't particularly noteworthy. It could be said that it was neither a battle oriented item, nor a spirit herb.

With a little bit of effort and time, Jiang Chen had uprooted the patch of bamboo and stored it away. If anyone had been around to see Jiang Chen's actions, they would've surely feared for his brain or laughed at him. He was spending his precious time on such an utterly useless item.

He didn't tarry after digging up the bamboo trees. Time was indeed precious, and he didn't want to return empty handed after

20 days. With Jiang Chen's pill dao potential, he was virtually a fish in familiar waters when harvesting spirit herbs from Mt. Rippling Mirage. As the day grew long, not a single saint rank spirit herb remained unharvested in Jiang Chen's wake. As for those below saint rank, he couldn't be bothered with them. Truthfully, even saint rank herbs didn't hold much allure for him. After all, they only matched up to the origin realm for human cultivators. Only the true saint rank spirit herbs were on the level of the sage realm.

Although Jiang Chen was at the peak of fifth level origin realm, everything he used were naturally treasures of a higher realm. His standards didn't put anything below rare saint rank spirit herbs in his sight. However, this didn't meant that these items wouldn't be of any use. After all, his people needed resources too. The ones offered by the Regal Pill Palace wouldn't last long.

In three days, an area of fifty kilometers around Jiang Chen had been stripped of all saint rank spirit herbs. He hadn't gotten his hands dirty himself, instead summoning the Goldbiter Rats. He'd simply selected a few thousand of the more shrewd and strong-looking ones. It would've been a shame not to make use of the free labor. Since they'd already benefited multiple times from Jiang Chen, the Goldbiter Rats had long since viewed him as their master. They wouldn't slack off just because of this kind of task. Moreover, Jiang Chen had also stipulated that a third of all saint rank herbs obtained would belong to them, and any herb below the saint rank was theirs to enjoy. With such a deal in place, the amount of spirit herbs Jiang Chen received over three days was more than the amount that five hundred people could've harvested.

It wouldn’t be an exaggeration to say that he’d nearly razed the mountain down to its bones.

As for Long Xiaoxuan, he couldn’t even be bothered to crack open an eyelid when it came to this level of spirit herbs. To him, he was simply accompanying Jiang Chen because he wanted to see and understand this world. What did he care about saint rank spirit herbs?!

However, even though he was the descendant of a dragon, he’d lived by the wood spirit spring since birth. This had instilled a nebulous fear of the outside world in him, which made it easier for Jiang Chen to get the dragon to behave. Otherwise, if Long Xiaoxuan went on a rampage and ran riot through the mountain, it’d scare people witless!

In the bigger scheme of things, scaring people would only be a small matter. If he was discovered by the heavyweights, then they wouldn’t be able to find peace no matter where they went in the Myriad Domain. Although there was no one in this region who could handle a dragon’s wrath, there were numerous experts in the other regions who would find it laughably easy to take Long Xiaoxuan down. Any random emperor realm cultivator would be enough to pose a threat. After all, in dragon years, Long Xiaoxuan had only just been born; he had yet to fully grow into his formidable battle strength. To make matters worse, he had almost no battle experience to speak of.

At the end of those three days, Jiang Chen left the area. Despite having collected quite a few saint rank spirit herbs, his appetite had yet to be whetted. He’d looked forward to entering the

mountain for so long that he wasn't satisfied with just this level of herbs now that he was finally here.

A few hours later, a figure landed in the same area Jiang Chen had just spent three days in. It was that mysterious Ding Tong of the Tristar Sect!

"Mm, according to my unique mark, Jiang Chen seems to have lingered here for a very long time." Ding Tong took a spin around the area. Much to his surprise, the spirit herbs in the area seemed to have been thoroughly ravaged. There wasn't even one decent herb that'd been left behind in one piece.

"How could this have happened?" Although Ding Tong wasn't overly interested in spirit herbs at the moment, he was still a bit perplexed at the sight of this strange scene. Judging from the tatters left behind, it looked like a thousand harvesting teams had churned through the area, leaving just a measly few pickings behind.

"This isn't right, how could large numbers of people come through Mt. Rippling Mirage? The first batch numbers no more than twenty people. This place shouldn't look like this even if we all harvested for ten days and nights straight!" Ding Tong found this barren landscape incredibly difficult to comprehend, but he quickly refocused. His goal here was to track Jiang Chen, not investigate this strange spirit herb phenomenon. When they'd all entered the mountain, he'd used a unique method to unknowingly leave a mark on Jiang Chen's body. It was how he'd tracked Jiang Chen to this specific location through the vast mountain.

Ding Tong was different from Wang Han and Wei Qin. The latter two had visibly displayed their hatred of Jiang Chen, but Ding Tong had carefully concealed his killing intent ever since he'd called Jiang Chen out for a discussion. One could say that his primary goal in Mt. Rippling Mirage was the death of Jiang Chen, not the harvest of spirit herbs. After investigating the area for a while, Ding Tong once again activated his unique tracking method and left for another area of the mountain.

……

As Jiang Chen travelled between areas, a feeling of frustration and disgust suddenly surged in his heart. A foreboding feeling had needled his consciousness ever since he'd entered the mountain, fading in and out of existence. He'd thought at first that it was simply the danger inherent to Mt. Rippling Mirage that'd caused the frisson of alarm to spike again and again.

But after spending a few days in the mountain's interior, he had yet to meet anything that would pose a life or death danger to him.

However, this annoying feeling kept niggling in his heart, increasing with every step he took. It seemed that something, somewhere, had just taken a turn for the worse.

Chapter 561: Ding Tong's Background

As the irritating feeling showed no signs of abating, Jiang Chen decided to find a desolate area to stop. He released a batch of Goldbiter Rats and instructed them to set up a perimeter guard in a fifty kilometer radius around him. He himself headed into a deep valley and sat down cross-legged.

His thoughts were in a bit of a mess at the moment, and he had to sit down and meditate to sort them out. He had to at least sort out where this annoying feeling was originating from. If he didn't get to the bottom of this, it would unceasingly dog his thoughts and leave him unable to concentrate on his matters. He didn't want something as wonderful as going on a harvesting rampage through Mt. Rippling Mirage to be marred by some unpleasantry.

"My intuition has yet to prove me wrong since training the Boulder's Heart and Psychic's Head. This kind of hunch is absolutely not a delusion. Since it doesn't seem to be springing from the the dangers of the mountain's interior, there must be an external source. Just who could it come from?"

Jiang Chen's thoughts were still relatively ordered, so he went over everyone who'd been in the batch to enter the mountain. "There should be three in the genius group who hate me with a passion, Wei Qing, Wang Han, and Ding Tong. Wang Han is ranked number eleven, and isn't in the first batch. Although Wei Qing is slightly superior in martial strength, he poses no threat to me. He's still too wet behind the ears to be able to use poison on me. So is it... Ding Tong?"

As Ding Tong's figure floated across Jiang Chen's mind, he began to feel more and more certain that this person was the culprit. Ever since his first appearance, Jiang Chen had felt that this Ding Tong was someone who stood head and shoulders above the peak Myriad Domain geniuses. He was the only one Jiang Chen couldn't see through. Jiang Chen felt like he was inches away from confirming that the other wasn't a simple Tristar Sect disciple.

It might have been that the strength that he was obviously concealing that made it apparent that his level was beyond that of the Myriad Domain.

Jiang Chen recalled the night that Ding Tong had asked him to step outside. He'd tried to convince Jiang Chen to withdraw from the Pill Battles and join the Tristar Sect. This bizarre occurrence had only made Jiang Chen suspect Ding Tong even more. When he had resolutely rejected Ding Tong's offer, the latter had stated that Mt. Rippling Mirage would be his resting place if Jiang Chen insisted on venturing into the mountain.

Jiang Chen would've thrown those words to the back of his head had they come from anyone else. But he didn't think that Ding Tong was just blowing hot air. It was actually possible that he possessed enough martial strength to be lethal to Jiang Chen.

However, that was only one suspicious occurrence. The geniuses weren't the only ones who'd entered Mt. Rippling Mirage. Any of the others could equally be a threat to Jiang Chen, particularly the old monsters in the elder group.

Any of the ten elders possessed an absolute strength that could

suppress Jiang Chen. With his identity as the champion of the Pill Battles, his Longevity Pill, and the wealth that he'd received during the Longevity Pill auction, all that was more than enough motivation for someone to make a move against him.

A man's heart was incomprehensible, which was why one had to always be on their guard.

Yet, none of this was what Jiang Chen was most worried about. What irritated him the most was the feeling that someone was following him. It was as if the sense of danger couldn't be evaded no matter where he went. It meant that the danger's source was never far from him. It pointed to a single conjecture; he was being tracked, somehow. But... how?

This question refused to fade away, thoroughly irritating Jiang Chen. Therefore, he decided to remain where he was. Instead of walking to and fro, he might as well remain here in wait for the danger to come to him.

After roughly four hours, the Goldbiter Rats standing guard on the perimeter used a variety of methods to send a continuous warning signal to Jiang Chen. Finally, it seems that this mysterious danger had found him. He was actually curious as to who was so determined that they'd follow him into Mr. Rippling Mirage, ignore the slopes and slopes of precious spirit herbs, and focus all efforts on tracking him!

As his thoughts spun, a domineering figure appeared at the entrance of the valley and marched in with great strides.

Ding Tong!

A beam of shrewd light shot out from Jiang Chen's God's Eye when he saw this figure. Ding Tong's consciousness was evidently equally strong, capturing Jiang Chen's position with one glance.

Their gazes locked.

Pfft!

Electricity actually sparked through the air as their respective eye arts exchanged blows in midair. However, it seemed that Jiang Chen wouldn't be losing to Ding Tong quite that easily in this regard.

"Hmm?" A trace of surprise flickered in Ding Tong's eyes before he laughed leisurely. "To think that a little piece of flotsam like you would actually have a bit of ability to your name!"

When he saw that Jiang Chen's response was only an indifferent smile, and the apparent lack of fear on his face, Ding Tong started in surprise. But it didn't last long as he seemed to remember something and laughed even more heartily. "Kid, should I admire your courage or pity your idiocy? I don't seem to see any fear on your face. Can it be that you've forgotten my warning to you?"

Notwithstanding his ostensibly leisurely demeanor, Ding Tong was rather ticked off. He'd tracked Jiang Chen down all this way,

just like a proper little prey. But his prey didn't seem to be what he expected, not nervous, wary, or cowering with fear in front of a hunter. The nonchalant smile on Jiang Chen's face just seemed to rub Ding Tong the wrong way.

"Fear? And who the hell are you to make me feel fear?" Jiang Chen looked at Ding Tong like he was looking at a complete fool.

Ding Tong didn't rouse to anger as he laughed coldly. "A glib tongue won't save you, nor will pretending to be calm. Jiang Chen, whether you're pretending to be calm or are truly idiotic, I can tell you with the utmost certainty that the only way you're leaving the mountain today is in an everlasting dream!"

Jiang Chen's expression changed. "Ding Tong, what do you want to do?!"

Ding Tong felt a sweet thrill run through him when he saw Jiang Chen's expression finally change. "What, now you know to be afraid? Aren't you something, even the champion of the Pill Battles? What a pity, it was both the most glorious day of your life... and the last!"

Jiang Chen turned both aghast and livid. "Just because I took your championship?"

Ding Tong sniffed contemptuously. "A mere Myriad Domain championship? What do I care about that?"

“Hmph! If it isn’t for the championship, we have no grudges between us. What reason do you have to do anything to me?” Jiang Chen growled.

“Hahaha, no grudges!” Ding Tong clapped loudly. “Well said, we do indeed have no grudges between us. However, the sight of you just pisses me off and I want to kill you. What are you going to do about it?”

“The sight of me pisses you off? What kind of reason is that? Senior brother Ding Tong, is it that you want my spirit stones? I can give all of them to you!”

Ding Tong laughed proudly when he saw Jiang Chen start to beg for mercy. “Aren’t you naive? That’s right, I’ll take your spirit stones and all the goodies in your ring. However, that’s after I kill you!”

Jiang Chen was ashen-faced by now, his voice turning into a pleading rasp. “Senior brother Ding Tong, we can talk about anything! I declined your demand to withdraw from the Pill Battles, but you also said that you don’t care about the championship. I can give you all the stones if you just tell me the reason. Right, I have a Longevity Pill here that I can also give you. I can even give you the pill recipe if you want it…”

“The Longevity Pill recipe!” Ding Tong’s tone sharpened. This was indeed a treasure. He was only interested in the spirit stones because there were ten million of them. He couldn’t be bothered with anything else. However, the Longevity Pill recipe was a far different case.

Ding Tong knew that if he obtained this heaven defying recipe, it would absolutely be an enormous stroke of fortune for him. Even someone ten times stronger than him wouldn't be able to decline the recipe, much less him. "You have the recipe!"

Jiang Chen hastily responded, "How would I be able to refine the pill if I didn't have the recipe? Senior brother Ding Tong, I'll willing to offer up the Longevity Pill if you let me off. I can also teach you if you don't know how to refine it! You want me to join the Tristar Sect? I'll announce that as soon as I leave! I don't owe the Regal Pill Palace anything anyways!"

Ding Tong's lip curled up in a disdainful smirk. "The Tristar Sect! Jiang Chen, I can give you a quick death on behalf of the recipe, and I'll even spare your people when I leave. However, if you don't hand it over nicely and force me to use soul searching methods, you'll be in for it then!"

"Soul searching methods!" Jiang Chen's expression changed drastically. "How does the Tristar Sect have such vicious methods?!"

"The Tristar Sect!" Ding Tong laughed heartily and suddenly unleashed his aura. A baffling strong aura uprooted the earth and shattered the air.. It was... the aura of an earth sage realm cultivator!

"You...!" Jiang Chen's face was the color of dirt as he stumbled a few steps backwards. "You're an earth sage realm cultivator!"

Ding Tong's cultivation level was actually on par with Palace Head Dan Chi! Although Jiang Chen had been putting on an act earlier, he was still a bit surprised to see Ding Tong's true strength. This show of his was meant to purposefully leave himself open so that Ding Tong would reveal his background. Now that Ding Tong had revealed his true strength, he was absolutely certain that Ding Tong was no mere Tristar Sect disciple.

"You... you're not a Tristar Sect disciple." Jiang Chen stammered.

"So you're not a complete idiot. What the hell is the Tristar Sect? What a bunch of trash! The Sky Sect has set up this pawn for so long, but in the end, it can't even cause the slightest ripple in this garbage region."

"The Sky Sect! You're from the Ninesuns Sky Sect?" Jiang Chen suddenly discovered a kernel of truth amidst the blather.

Ding Tong smiled dismissively. He naturally didn't care that someone he'd mentally consigned to death had recognized him. "Hand over the pill recipe and I'll leave you a complete corpse for your last rites!"

Jiang Chen spoke as if he had a bitter taste in his mouth. "So you're from the Ninesuns Sky Sect. Then this means that the Tristar Sect has long since flocked to the Sky Sect's banner?"

He recalled that when the Regal Pill Palace had allied with the

Precious Tree Sect, the Tristar Sect Head Zhu had been the one who'd proposed having the Regal Pill Palace compete with the Sky Sect envoy. If Jiang Chen still didn't understand that the Tristar Sect was a spy for the Sky Sect, then he'd truly be an utter fool.

"Since you've come to understand the true nature of events, then you should know that your actions towards the Sky Sect are unforgivable!"

"Because I killed old monster Sunchaser!"

"What the hell is Sunchaser? You killed Long Juxue! That innate azure phoenix constitution was earmarked as a cultivation cauldron for the third senior brother of the Ten in my Sky Sect! Third Senior Brother Yong Xingyun trains in the Dragon Phoenix Sword and was a mere step away from a breakthrough. You killing Long Juxue meant you broke his path of martial dao! You tell me, who in this world can save you now? Who can save you?" Ding Tong looked at Jiang Chen as if he were looking at a dead man, a cold smile twisting his face.

"Then, you were just making empty promises when you said I'd have a future that would be ten times that of the one in the Regal Pill Palace!"

Ding Tong laughed loudly. "It seems your idiocy is ultimately curable after all. I tempted you with all that just because I didn't want to spill blood then. I was going to take you back to the sect so Third Senior Brother could personally take care of you. Jiang Chen, it's you who gave up an opportunity to live longer!"

Chapter 562: Who's The Prey Now?

"Jiang Chen, on behalf of the pill recipe, I can make an exception and answer any of your final questions. You can die a knowledgeable ghost." Ding Tong had no other impression of Jiang Chen other than prey already in his grasp.

"Did you purposefully come down from the Ninesuns Sky Sect to the Myriad Domain to kill me?" Jiang Chen suddenly asked.

"You think far too highly of yourself. Coming here just to kill you? Do you think you command that much face? You hop up and down in the Myriad Domain, but you're just a small cockroach in the eyes of the geniuses of my sect. I, Ding Tong, was originally here to help the Tristar Sect put their plans into motions. You're just something I'm taking care of on the side."

The geniuses of the Sky Sect were all quite confident and sure of themselves. With Ding Tong's background of the Sky Sect, he didn't even think much of Tristar Sect Head Zhu, much less than Jiang Chen. Although the sect head's cultivation level was just a bit superior to Ding Tong's, Ding Tong was less than one tenth the sect head's age. With the latter's potential and cultivation, he naturally wouldn't think much of a sect head from a mere Lower Realm region.

As for Jiang Chen, although his pill dao potential was stunning, Ding Tong was using the mighty gaze of a superior in assessing the Myriad Domain. So, he naturally didn't place much importance on Jiang Chen. In the Upper Eight Realms, pill kings were as common as chickens, and great pill masters as numerous as dogs. How

would a fourth rank sect like the Regal Pill Palace, someplace without a pill king to their name, ever enter his eyes?

Their own Ninesuns Sky Sect had nine manors and more than three thousand divisions. Even if the Sky Sect wasn't founded for pill dao, they had at least a dozen pill kings on a stipend, to speak nothing of anything else. So what did he care about a mere pill dao genius from the Regal Pill Palace? If it wasn't for the Longevity Pill being radically above the Myriad Domain's level, and Ding Tong having verified its effects with his own eyes, he wouldn't have thought much about it either.

"That means your Ninesuns Sky Sect has long since had the desire to swallow up the Myriad Domain?" Jiang Chen flung out another question. "The Tristar Sect has likely existed in the Myriad Domain for many years already."

"Hmph. Doesn't a small character like you feel embarrassed asking these kinds of questions? You're hard pressed to save even yourself, and here you are worrying about the Myriad Domain. How laughable!" Ding Tong looked at Jiang Chen as if he was looking at an idiot. "If the Tristar Sect hadn't been supported by my Sky Sect, how would a mere fifth rank sect have risen to fourth rank so easily?"

He waved his hand impatiently. "Enough of the idle chatter. Don't think that delaying tactics are going to save you. There's no one else in a radius of a hundred kilometers, and no one will be able to save you even if they come flying to your rescue! Jiang Chen, are you going to hand over the recipe like a good boy and wait to die, or do you want me to do it myself and search your

soul!” Ding Tong’s face darkened, his patience reaching its end as his killing intent flared.

Jiang Chen suddenly grinned. “Is your appetite that small, hmm? A mere Longevity Pill recipe is enough to buy you off? I also have the recipe for the Pine Crane Pill that can extend the lives of emperor realm cultivators for five hundred years. Wouldn’t you rather have that too? I also have a magnetic golden mountain with an unending source of metal power, don’t you want it? Not to mention the exotic variant of a divine level Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice. Don’t you want that? Oh right, I haven’t even brought up the blood and two crystals from a true dragon. Aren’t you interested in any of that?”

Jiang Chen flipped over his hand to display a few dragon crystals. He tossed them lightly in the air, a bizarre curve to the edges of his lips.

Ding Tong’s pupils abruptly contracted rapidly as his eyes lit up with enthusiasm. It was obvious that he had also recognized what Jiang Chen was casually playing with. Those were true dragon crystals! It was a first for even Ding Tong to recognize a dragonic aura that was so pure.

“Do you... do you really have the blood of a true dragon?” He whispered.

Jiang Chen laughed leisurely and took out another small flask. “You don’t believe me?”

When the stopper to the flask was flicked open, the massive presence of dragon blood filled the air, making Ding Tong's body twitch involuntarily. A look of unparalleled greed instantly appeared on his face. He murmured, "It really is the blood of a true dragon! Kid! It looks like I've completely underestimated your wealth! I was originally just going to kill you to fulfill Third Senior Brother's orders. To think that there was such an unexpected surprise in this little errand! Hahaha, it looks like I made the right move in coming to the Myriad Domain this time!"

Ding Tong laughed proudly. It'd been the sect who'd sent him here, and he hadn't been too pleased about it to begin with. He was just fine training in the Sky Sect's abundantly rich spirit energy. In his eyes, being sent to the Myriad Domain was no different than being exiled to the border or a wasteland. Therefore, it was only because he had to follow orders that he was here.

But now that he saw Jiang Chen take out the dragon crystals, Ding Tong was utterly delighted. He'd never dreamed that items as extraordinary as dragon blood and crystals was hidden in such a forsaken place. One had to realize, a drop of such pure dragon blood was hellishly difficult to obtain even in the Upper Eight Realms! As for dragon crystals, although they weren't as precious as dragon blood, they were still exceedingly rare treasures. If he could obtain the pieces in Jiang Chen's hand, his personal wealth would soar to stunning levels, not to mention the incalculable benefits that the dragon blood would bring him.

Ding Tong stopped laughing and gazed deeply at Jiang Chen, his lips drawing back into a teasing smile. "Jiang Chen, it looks like I owe you some sincere thanks for making this trip worth it. In return, I've decided to make your death a less painful one than

normal. So I'll ask you one more time, are you going to hand over the recipe nicely or do I have to do it myself?"

Ding Tong's aura, the aura of an earth sage realm cultivator, was a terrifying thing. He was also in the mood to purposefully terrorize Jiang Chen, so he exerted his aura to its maximum, floating into the air. After all, one could fly when one had an earth sage realm cultivation.

Ding Tong looked down from a lofty height, as if a solemn god descending to the earth. His very presence covered a span of several thousand meters. Although Ding Tong had the ability to search one's soul, he didn't particularly want to use it. It was particularly draining on the consciousness, and there wasn't even the guarantee of complete information. Besides, it was much more pleasant to force Jiang Chen down with his aura and capture him without a single drop of blood spilt. Completely suppressed, the prey would then hand over the Longevity Pill recipe of his own initiative. In Ding Tong's eyes, if Jiang Chen didn't want to suffer through torture before his death, his best choice was voluntary participation. Ding Tong looked down at Jiang Chen from a position of superiority, judgement in his gaze as he examined his prey.

"I'll give you ten breaths of time." There was a finality in Ding Tong's tone as if all he saw in front of him was Jiang Chen's cooling corpse. His aura surged and roiled, crashing onto Jiang Chen as if thousands of mountains in rapid succession. Ding Tong felt that Jiang Chen would collapse before ten breaths had elapsed.

However—

To his great surprise, Ding Tong actually discovered a smile playing about the corners of Jiang Chen's lips. This smile was actually quite bizarre, and almost seemed to have a trace of mockery hiding within it.

"You can actually still smile?!" Ding Tong's gaze was like the tundra before he suddenly wondered whether Jiang Chen had been scared completely out of his wits. Shouldn't he be looking on in horror and shivering out of fear by now?

"And why can't I? Ding Tong, it seems I need to sincerely thank you too."

"What are you thanking me for?" Ding Tong's gaze was akin to absolute zero at this point. For some reason, Jiang Chen's smile was going the extra mile in pissing him off. This idiotic excuse for prey simply didn't have the self awareness of knowing when it was being hunted. Ding Tong decided to change his mind. Regardless of whether Jiang Chen handed over the pill recipe or not, he would certainly not have an easy death no matter what. That smile was irksome enough to deserve a slow torturous death. Jiang Chen would only die after he'd suffered as much as he could.

"First of all, thank you ever so much for telling me that there's no one around for a hundred kilometers. I owe you a second thanks for telling me that there's an idiot called Yong Xingyun hiding and waiting for me up ahead. It would've been a great bother if I'd reached the Upper Eight Realms without knowing that someone had already put me in their sights, wouldn't it? "

Ding Tong started in surprise, and immediately began laughing loudly. “Do you still think you have a future?”

Jiang Chen nodded. “I certainly have a future, but you definitely don’t.”

Ding Tong’s pupils contracted violently as he laughed; a cold, cutting thing, “A mere fifth level origin realm? Are you sure you’re not talking crazy?”

Jiang Chen didn’t respond as he smiled faintly, “Tell me what cultivation level your third senior brother Yong Xingyun is. I’ll see if he has the privilege of having me remember him.”

One had to say, Ding Tong was completely flabbergasted at this flippant attitude Jiang Chen was displaying. At this point, he was wondering whether Jiang Chen’s brain had just fried itself. Had he so utterly lost his mind when faced with a struggle of life and death that he’d started spouting this idiocy? “Do you think I’ll let you off just because you pretend that you’ve gone insane? An origin realm ant like you, are you even worthy of asking about my Third Senior Brother’s cultivation level? But since you’ve asked, I won’t mind opening up your eyes. Third Senior Brother sits right now at the peak of the sage realm, at half step emperor realm. Even that Dan Chi of your Regal Pill Palace can never dream of reaching this stage, never mind a mere insect like you!”

Ding Tong suddenly felt that explaining so much to an ant was a bit beneath himself. His expression darkened. “Jiang Chen, looks like you’re refusing a toast to drink a forfeit instead.”

Jiang Chen nodded. “Half step emperor, hmm? This makes things a bit more interesting. I suppose if Long Juxue hadn’t died, she actually would’ve pushed him into the emperor realm if she’d properly functioned as his cauldron.”

Ding Tong laughed coldly. “As long as you know.”

Jiang Chen had completely cleared up all of his doubts at this point. He smiled faintly at Ding Tong. “Ding Tong, the biggest mistake of your life wasn’t joining the Ninesuns Sky Sect. But rather, even as a Sky Sect disciple, you’d made your way to the Myriad Domain. From there, of the series of bad decisions you’ve made, the worst of your crimes was to come and irritate me like this.”

“Brother Long, it’s up to you!” Jiang Chen chuckled softly as he swiftly backed away.

Before Ding Tong could react, a black light exploded in front of him. In the very next moment, he felt like the very air around him had been sealed, encircled by numerous invisible nets. An aura that was no inferior to his, like that of a god’s descent, filled the void.

“What the hell?” Ding Tong growled. Although he was inwardly surprised, he was still a genius of the sixth level sage realm after all. An unexpected situation was hardly enough to rock his composure.

He lifted his hands, and brought them down in a motion that resembled two great blades cleaving through the waves. He hurtled forwards, propelled by the wind, as if he wanted to slash through the cage of air that had trapped him. Two hand blades cut through the space like white tipped waves and crashed into the invisible nets with an explosive bang.

Clang!

Rays of black light shimmered in the air. Something that looked like black scales was crisscrossing through the entire area, completely locking down the space. Ding Tong's attack had created an ear piercing shriek, but had otherwise proved to be completely useless, like a rock sinking into the ocean.

"How is this possible?" Ding Tong was breaking out in a cold sweat. A faint foreboding feeling was crawling up his spine as he faintly felt that things weren't looking so hot. He'd thought that Jiang Chen's calm earlier had been a ploy, but now, here, something in his analysis had gone terribly, awfully amiss.

Chapter 563: Destroying Ding Tong

As an earth sage realm genius, Ding Tong was a true disciple even in the Ninesuns Sky Sect. Although his strength was too lacking to rank him among the ten great true disciples, he was still strong enough to rank within the young sect geniuses' top three hundred. He had participated and survived many of the Upper Eight Realms' trials by fire, walking the line between life and death multiple times. However, all of those experiences paled before the sense of fear that flooded his body at this moment. The Regal Pill Palace genius who had seemed to be prey, had in fact been looking at him as prey all along.

He'd acted so nervous and frightened earlier plainly because he wanted to toy with Ding Tong and solicit intelligence.

Ding Tong suddenly realized that despite him treating Jiang Chen as a fool, the tragic truth was that he was the real fool.

Wham, wham, wham!

No matter how Ding Tong charged it, he was unable to break through the black cage that trapped him. He was on the verge of panic as he roared loudly, "Jiang Chen, just what trick are you using? What the hell is this? Don't tell me that this is a formation!"

A faint smile crossed Jiang Chen's face as he casually responded, "Ding Tong, aren't you a genius of the Ninesuns Sky Sect? Decisive and resolute, don't you view all life as common dirt? What seems to be the problem? Now that you're experiencing that feeling for

yourself, how does it feel?”

Ding Tong bit out his words. “Jiang Chen, I confess that I underestimated you, but do you dare do anything to me? If I fall here, the entire Myriad Domain will accompany me as my grave offerings!”

“And who are you trying to scare, huh!” Jiang Chen sniffed dismissively and shouted, “Brother Long, stop playing. I have no more time to waste; make your move!”

A speck of light the size of a mustard seed suddenly flashed in the air, transforming into an enormously large figure which bared its fangs and brandished its claws.

“A... a true dragon!” Ding Tong’s eyes went wide like he was scared witless. His face was ashen as a bitter taste filled his mouth.

“Jiang Chen... I surrender, I surrender!” Ding Tong’s very soul was lost in the depths of fright as the aura of a true dragon descended on him. How could he not realize his death was practically staring him in the face? Even the proudest genius would feel a primeval fear rising within them when faced with impending death.

But now that things had developed to this points, how could Jiang Chen be so foolish as set the tiger free to return to its mountain? Long Xiaoxuan’s body danced as he flexed his claws, whipping through the air to snag Ding Tong’s body. The latter was as helpless as a newborn chick in front of the dragon.

“Mercy, mercy!!” Ding Tong screamed hoarsely. “Don’t kill me Jiang Chen, I’ll be your dog!”

“Brother Long, do you think I need this kind of dog?” Jiang Chen smiled.

Long Xiaoxuan chortled and opened his mouth, throwing Ding Tong in. Ding Tong didn’t even have time to protest when the dragon’s mouth closed with a sickening crunch.

Crunch, crunch.

Ding Tong’s cry of agony hadn’t even echoed before Long Xiaoxuan swallowed, very like he was eating a plate of stir fried beans. Ding Tong’s soul core didn’t even have time to flee. With Long Xiaoxuan’s cultivation level at peak sage realm, and his body of a true dragon, he was capable of battling first or even second level emperor realm experts as long as he had a bit more time to mature. A mere sixth level sage realm Ding Tong was incapable of summoning even the slightest defense in front of Long Xiaoxuan’s Dragon Domain.

The Dragon Domain was one of the dragon race techniques that Jiang Chen had bequeathed to the dragon back them. A technique that used draconic aura and scales to form a cage in mid air, bluntly put, it was a true qi forcefield that sealed the opponent. It was notoriously difficult to escape since the draconic aura alone could cause the collapse of a weaker opponent’s consciousness.

For all his faults, Ding Tong had still been the disciple of a great sect in the end, so his performance had been up to par. Long Xiaoxuan had obviously reached an initial level of success in the Dragon Domain technique. A normal sixth level sage realm cultivator would've had his consciousness shatter right where he stood, never mind trying to break free of the Dragon Domain.

Ripples of emotion still rocked Jiang Chen's heart as he watched Long Xiaoxuan swallow Ding Tong. Jiang Chen didn't regret Ding Tong's death, but his appearance had greatly shocked Jiang Chen. Although he had an ace fighter in the form on Long Xiaoxuan now, Jiang Chen still felt the information he'd learned to be highly alarming.

First and most importantly, the Tristar Sect was the Sky Sect's pawn in the Myriad Domain! That alone testified to the amount of time the Sky Sect had been laying the groundwork for their plan, as well as how assured they were of success in the Myriad Domain. With this, Palace Head Dan Chi's great ambitions of uniting the Myriad Domain was diametrically opposed to the desires of the Sky Sect.

Although this conflict was still in the shadows, once it was brought forward to the light, it would not take much for the Sky Sect to swiftly crush the Regal Pill Palace.

"i must find a way to let Palace Head Dan Chi know of this." Jiang Chen felt that his sense of honor impelled him to do so. However, how should he bring it up? Tell the palace head that he killed Ding Tong, a sixth level sage realm genius himself? What would the palace head think after that? Would he be able to keep

Long Xiaoxuan's secret?

It was altogether obvious that he wouldn't be able to spill the truth. And even if he did reveal the Tristar Sect as the Sky Sect's pawn, his current identity wasn't enough to make anyone in the Myriad Domain believe him. It would only plunge the Regal Pill Palace into deep suffering and maybe even incite conflict beforehand.

When he thought about an enormous organization such as the Sky Sect setting up its plans throughout the Myriad Domain, Jiang Chen felt a heavy weight on his heart. No matter how much of a fuss the Regal Pill Palace kicked up, no matter how domineering the Great Cathedral was, they would still just be trampled by the Sky Sect's absolute power. The only reason the Sky Sect had yet to make their move was because they hadn't finished setting up the chessboard, or had some other reservation holding them at bay.

Once open conflict was triggered and there was no need for subterfuge, there was no force in the Myriad Domain capable of standing up to the army of the Ninesuns Sky Sect. Even all of the sects added together in the Myriad Domain wouldn't constitute a tenth of the Sky Sect. Two or three emperor realm cultivators from the Sky Sect and a host of sky sage realm experts would be enough to sweep the entire Myriad Domain, to say nothing of anything else. This was the danger from the greater picture of things.

And on the individual level, Jiang Chen was already being targeted by a true disciple of the Sky Sect before he'd even left the Myriad Domain, and a true disciple ranked in the top three of the

sect at that! If Ding Tong's words were to be believed, Yong Xingyun's strength as of right then sat at the peak of the sage realm, half step emperor realm. If this kind of cultivation really did descend on this area, then even Long Xiaoxuan would likely only be able fight him to a draw, much less Jiang Chen.

However, an ace fighter such as Long Xiaoxuan shouldn't be deployed in the first place. Accidental exposure might just create the situation of defending the front door from the wolf but letting the tiger in the back. If he didn't reveal Long Xiaoxuan's existence, he might only elicit Yong Xingyun's attention. But if he did reveal the former, then he'd elicit attention from the entire Divine Abyss Continent. Even the old Titled Great Emperor monsters would come to try and enslave the dragon. After all, having a dragon steed would be an unheralded glory in the Continent.

"Strength, it all comes down to not having enough strength in the end," Jiang Chen sighed. Although he had Long Xiaoxuan as a trump card, he still felt a deep sense of inadequacy when faced with such an enormous entity as the Ninesuns Sky Sect. Even if he could reveal Long Xiaoxuan at any time, the dragon's current strength wouldn't be able to easily contend against the Sky Sect. Despite his rate of cultivation shooting forward recently, Jiang Chen's physical foundations from the Eastern Kingdom were simply too poor. If it hadn't been for all his fortuitous occurrences, he likely would've still been dithering about in the spirit realm.

Compared to peers his age, Jiang Chen already counted as a top genius of the Myriad Domain. But those of the Upper Eight Realms were born with golden spoons in their mouths. Their innate potential and the resources available to them were all greatly superior compared to Jiang Chen. The only advantage he had were

the memories from his past life, but even those were unable to replace the effects that cultivation resources brought.

Compared to the top geniuses who'd benefited from long term access to rich resources, Jiang Chen had only been able to draw upon proper resources after he'd entered the Regal Pill Palace. However, he'd only joined the sect for less than a year, a completely insignificant amount of time. Yet, Jiang Chen firmly believed that as his resources continued to grow richer, his training would certainly be able to catch up.

"Let's not think so much. The harvest in Mt. Rippling Mirage is the perfect opportunity to accumulate resources. This comes about once every thirty years, and who knows if I'll even be in the Myriad Domain in the next thirty years?" Jiang Chen flung aside all these random thoughts and decided to treasure what was at hand.

So what of the Ninesuns Sky Sect! Even someone as strong as his father in his past life, the Celestial Emperor of all realms, had been destroyed in the face of the cataclysm! The Sky Sect was a first rank sect alright, but it was far from a good reason for Jiang Chen to halt in his path. He believed that the Sky Sect would absolutely investigate Ding Tong's death, but once Mt. Rippling Mirage was sealed, it would be very difficult for the Sky Sect to launch their investigation. Unless they blatantly destroyed the restrictions around Mt. Rippling Mirage and forcefully tried to blunder in, but even then time would still wash away clues. Who could tie it to Jiang Chen then?

Not to mention that even if Jiang Chen admitted that he killed

Ding Tong, likely no one would believe him, not with Ding Tong's cultivation level. There were also no signs of battle at the scene. Long Xiaoxuan had instantly killed Ding Tong, so any clue left behind would be even harder to discern. He looked around and ascertained that there were no traces of anything before hastily leaving the area.

Jiang Chen finally stopped at a place a few hundred kilometers away after traveling for half a day. He looked around and discovered that he was close to a lake. The lake was a glossy blue mirror, as if a natural gem embedded into the ground. It reflected the green mountains in the surroundings, further enhancing the view. When Jiang Chen saw how stunning the scene was, he immediately recognized it as a place endowed with the energy of the universe. A place such as this would absolutely be nurturing treasures.

He looked around and noted no signs of any human tracks. Apparently this was a place yet to be discovered by anyone. He extended his consciousness and surveyed the area with the God's Eye, actually noting more than a few true saint rank spirit herbs dotting the landscape.

"This is a good place alright! Truenet Flower, Moonheart Grass, Snakeform Ganoderma, Azure Vine..." Jiang Chen's eyes roved over the spirit herbs brightly, quickly identifying all of the true saint spirit herbs. Spirit herbs at this level were no ordinary items. Any of them were exceedingly precious. With Jiang Chen's current position in the Regal Pill Palace, he'd likely have to go to quite a degree of effort to obtain true saint rank herbs. But it was precisely this level of herbs needed to refine true saint rank level pills.

In particular, the Saintnet Pill! If cultivators at the peak of the origin realm obtained this pill, then their chances of successfully assailing the sage realm would rise by thirty to fifty percent. This meant to say that even if one hadn't properly set up the foundations for the sage realm, this pill would still give them a great boost to succeed when they were trying to ascend to the sage realm!

Chapter 564: The Hidden Chameleon Cloudpine

Jiang Chen no longer stood on ceremony and summoned a group of Goldbiter Rats, marking the beginning of his voracious looting. However, he personally harvested the true saint spirit herbs. Harvesting spirit herbs of this level required a bit of technique. The Goldbiter Rats could be used for transportation, but Jiang Chen decided to do things himself when it came to higher level spirit herbs. He'd feel quite heartbroken if even a single one was damaged.

He finished collecting the roughly dozen true saint herbs around the lake very quickly, then glanced at the waters again. "What a pity I have the wood spirit spring already. Otherwise, taking this lake away with me would be a good idea as well."

Although this lake wasn't a spirit spring, it was clearly awash with spirit power since it nurtured so many spirit herbs. If he could take it with him, it would be a good tool to use to cultivate spirit herbs. However, the wood spring was superior to this lake, so it didn't hold any allure for him.

After the Goldbiter Rats cleared a rough circle around the area, there weren't many good pickings left by the lake. Jiang Chen raised his foot, about to leave, when his gaze suddenly halted on the lake. He almost doubted his eyes as he looked rather incredulously into the waters.

Reflected onto the waters was a pale yellow pine tree, but no such tree stood on the opposite shore of the lake.

“This…” Jiang Chen froze in his tracks and looked disbelievingly at the scene. “Is this a delusion?”

He suspected that he had seen incorrectly, but once again noted the reflection when he peered at the water’s surface. However, this time, the pine tree seemed to be green in color instead. A look of delight blossomed on his face as he smacked his head. The sight had stirred a certain memory in his head. He circled the lake and made for the other shore.

When he’d meandered in a few circles on that shore, Jiang Chen suddenly made a hand gesture. Metal energy flowed from his body, pervading the immediate surroundings in an instant. The very next moment, a stunning event occurred.

A ramrod straight pine tree, roughly three meters tall, materialized in front of Jiang Chen.

“Haha, it really is the Hidden Chameleon Cloudpine! I’ve made it, I’ve really made it!” Jiang Chen was overjoyed. If it hadn’t been for the reflection on the water surface, he would’ve overlooked the existence of the Cloudpine.

He smacked his forehead again. “And here I thought I’d picked up some treasures with a dozen true saint rank spirit herbs! I almost overlooked the really good stuff.”

It was obvious that this Cloudpine had just started growing. It was only three meters tall, thus marking it as no more than twenty

years old. This meant that it had just matured past a sapling. Although this Cloudpine really wasn't anything from a celestial perspective, it was of the sky rank in the mortal plane. What true saint rank, earth rank—all of them could shove over in front of the Hidden Chameleon Cloudpine!

This was an entity that was of solid sky rank, and of a higher level of existence amongst all sky rank flora. What was even more frightening was that the Cloudpine would ascend into higher and higher ranks as it grew. The Cloudpine that Jiang Chen had seen in his past life had been far greater than sky rank. But this one had just been born, and so could only be ranked in the sky rank for now. This particular species of pine had a constantly shifting, ever-changing appearance as its color and shape often morphed.

Its greatest characteristic was that it could use this transformation ability to conceal itself. Ordinary eyes, even ones trained in various eye arts, would be hard pressed to discover its existence. This "hidden" characteristic even extended beyond hiding its appearance to concealing its very presence.

Jiang Chen would've missed this tree had it not been for sheer coincidence. "The Hidden Chameleon Cloudpine is reflected in water and revealed by metal. This is a real Cloudpine alright! What a stroke of fortune, great fortune!" Jiang Chen circled the Cloudpine a couple of times, excitement filling his heart. Even if he left Mt. Rippling Mirage right now, he could still count it as a profitable trip after gaining the Cloudpine. He'd originally planned on just coming in to loot the area of its true saint rank spirit herbs and raid another round of saint rank herbs. He'd left to the hands of fortune as to whether he'd be able to find any earth rank herbs.

But who would've thought that his luck would be so good as to run into a sky rank spirit tree? This Hidden Chameleon Cloudpine was no ordinary spirit tree. Its entirety was a treasure. Its pine needles would shed once a year, with its potential increasing one level each time it did. The pine leaves and needles it shed were all exceedingly precious pill refining materials. It would also bear fruit once a year. Although it wouldn't bear that many fruits, but the pine cone of the Cloudpine was one of the two major ingredients in refining the Pinecrane Pill!

If the Longevity Pill was claimed as a pseudo-earth rank pill used to extend the lives of sage realm cultivators, then the Pinecrane Pill was a solid sky rank pill that extended the lives of emperor realm cultivators. Of the two major ingredients required to concoct it, one of them was the pinecone of this Cloudpine.

One Longevity Pill had been enough to make those old monsters at the peak of the sage realm stir themselves into a frenzy. Following that logic, one Pinecrane Pill was likely capable of disturbing even the emperor realm old monsters of the entire Divine Abyss Continent. Possibly even great emperor level cultivators would take heed.

This was because each Pinecrane Pill had a fifty percent chance of success even if consumed by those in the great emperor level. If the Pinecrane Pill extended an ordinary emperor realm cultivator's life by eight hundred years, then a great emperor would receive three to five hundred years. This made this pill's value several hundred times greater than the Longevity Pill's.

However, refining the Pinecrane Pill required some exacting

conditions, and utilized ingredients several hundred levels higher than the Longevity Pill. Take the Cloudpine pinecone for instance. It was normally an ingredient difficult to locate in the entirety of the Divine Abyss Continent, and there was no substitute for it in the Pinecrane Pill recipe. The other main ingredient, the Goldencrown Cloudcrane heart, was actually easier to find. Yet both were equally important to concoct the pill.

Even if one had a thousand Cloudcrane hearts, they would still be useless without the Cloudpine pinecone. It would still be impossible to refine the Pinecrane Pill. It was said that the pine crane extended life, which was how the pill had come by its name. Both ingredients were crucial for the pill to be successfully refined!

Even so, refining the Pinecrane Pill wasn't the most precious use of the Cloudpine. Its most cherished use lay in the area of refining weapons. Its branches may not be sharp enough to refine into weapons, but they were uncommonly useful in dispelling spirits and averting evil. The Cloudpine's ability naturally countered monsters and demons.

In the world of cultivation, there were those that specialized in monsters, demons, and ghosts. They were the epitome of evil to cultivators who specialized in proper martial dao legacies. The former were always exceedingly hard to deal with if anyone ran afoul of them, as this kind of cultivator was hard to track and possessed eccentric techniques, making them difficult to defend against. They had all sorts of evil items and vicious methods to ensnare an opponent before they could muster a defense. However, if one had a weapon refined from Cloudpine with them in those moments, not only would the weapon sound a warning, but it would also play a key role in eradicating those evil beings. A

weapon made of Cloudpine could easily kill evil entities that precious weapons forged of metal were unable to take out.

Therefore, a Cloudpine weapon still occupied a high position in the greater picture of things. With this weapon in hand, all evil spirits and entities would be left unable to approach. It was a form of unseen insurance, and was a classic example of the theory that all things had a natural counteragent.

The five elements nurtured each other in turn, so this Cloudpine would grow faster when growing in waters with a dense spirit qi concentration. No wonder it had found a home on the shores of this lake.

Transplanting this pine tree wasn't an easy task. Jiang Chen spent several hours before finally moving it into his space ring. To ensure that the Cloudpine wouldn't weaken or begin to decline, he even purposefully doused it with water from the wood spirit spring. It was a good thing that the Cloudpine had just matured past a sapling and wasn't too big, just a tad over three meters. Jiang Chen on the other hand, was naturally transporting much of the wood spirit spring with him.

Once the Cloudpine was moved, the spirit energy that had accumulated was immediately released. Jiang Chen instantly knew that this was a bad development when he saw the spirit energy spreading. He'd thought of all contingencies but had forgotten this point. The energy that had been produced by the Cloudpine had been stored into the soil beneath it. But now that the tree had been removed, the accumulated energy that had yet to be digested was instantly released and transformed into a beam of spirit light that

shot up into the sky.

"This is bad!" When Jiang Chen saw the spirit light shoot up, he knew that his doings here would be exposed soon if he didn't leave. It would be a tricky matter if those with ulterior motives came and realized the existence of such a treasure. Although he wasn't afraid of trouble, he didn't want to be entangled with the newcomers if they happened to be an elder or two. It was all the same to him, but if he ran into those from the Walkabout Sect or Sacred Sword Palace, they would certainly harbor thoughts of killing on their minds.

Jiang Chen wasn't afraid of anyone making trouble for him since he had Long Xiaoxuan. But this lake extended in all directions and was obviously not a secluded area. If he summoned Long Xiaoxuan here and alarmed others, that would create only greater trouble for himself. Therefore, he would choose the best strategy out of the thirty six stratagems. Jiang Chen decided to flee.

A short while after he'd left, two figures quickly arrived at the lake, plainly drawn by the phenomenon of spirit power rising to the air. The two visitors were from the Walkabout Sect, and were a duo of an elder and young genius. The elder was the champion of the elder group in the Pill Battles, Elder Wu Hen, and the younger was Wei Qing.

The two rushed to the banks of the lake and saw the remaining spirit power still geysering out without stop. It seemed that the energy stored by the Cloudpine wouldn't dissipate that quickly.

Elder Wu Hen's triumph over Elder Yun Nie to seize the

championship of the elder group was an unspoken testament to his potential in pill dao. Although it had been partially due to the skyfire, his talent in pill dao was still above reproach. Elder Wu Hen frowned after circling once around the lake. “There must have been a very high level spirit herb here, and one that’s just been taken by someone else.”

Wei Qing asked curiously when he saw Elder Wu Hen so cautious. “How high level?”

“If my guess is correct, it should be a sky rank spirit herb!” Elder Wu Hen spoke gravely.

“What?! Sky rank?” Wei Qing was greatly taken aback. There hadn’t ever been a sky rank spirit herb cultivated in the entire history of the Walkabout Sect! One had to understand that normally only emperor realm cultivators had the ability to use earth rank spirit herbs. Those who could use sky rank herbs were few and far in between. Only Titled Great Emperors had the right to occasionally use them, but it was still difficult for them to be able to use it on a normal basis. This meant that even Titled Great Emperors would fight over sky rank spirit herbs!

Chapter 565: Intent After Glimpsing Wealth

Killing intent instantly appeared on Wei Qing's face as he looked into the distance. "Elder Wu Hen, the person who snatched the sky rank spirit herb should've gone in this direction. Why don't we catch up to him..."

He didn't finish his words, but both of them knew what he wanted to say. Elder Wu Hen had a steady personality and knew that it was an extreme taboo to kill within Mt. Rippling Mirage. If news leaked, it would create friction between the great sects and even spark all out battles. But the lure of a sky rank herb was greatly tempting.

"Elder, if we pass this one up, there won't be any more chances. If he manages to get a fair distance away, it's likely he won't even admit to it if we find him." Wei Qing encouraged, "With one sky rank herb, our Walkabout Sect might be able to cultivate emperor realm cultivators. By then, our sect will be able to summon the wind and rain in the entire Myriad Domain, and reign over everything!"

The various great sects had vied with each other ever since the Myriad Empire had fallen. There wasn't a single one who didn't harbor the desire to dominate the Myriad Domain, lord over the rest, and become the dictator of the Myriad Domain. The Walkabout Sect was no exception to that burning ambition.

Elder Wu Hen took a moment to think, and nodded. "Let's do it, but we need to act with utmost confidence. In my eyes, the person who's taken the sky rank spirit herb likely isn't of the elder group.

Those old farts are all cunning and wily. None of them would care about this spirit power geysering to the sky. It's most likely a young genius."

Wei Qing leered. "A young genius is best. He'll be easier to handle."

Elder Wu Hen nodded. "No matter what, it has to be clean. If the target is a young genius, you can go lull him into carelessness first. I'll ready some methods to trap him. Otherwise, if he wished to escape, he'd be able to leave whenever he came in range of the transportation matrixes."

The transportation matrixes covered a large area within the mountain. If one ran with all their might, they would be able to reach a matrix's range within four to six hours. If they were lucky, they would even be able to run into one within fifteen minutes and be able to escape after crushing the jade token. Even emperor realm cultivators would be unable to stop the person from absconding then.

Wei Qing chuckled and gave his elder a thumbs up. "Elder's thoughts are the most thorough after all. It's definitely the oldest gingers that are the spiciest!"

The duo picked up speed and sped towards the traces they'd picked up. One had to say, Elder Wu Hen was quite something; his perception was even more sensitive than a dog's. Jiang Chen had shielded his presence as much as he could along the way by suppressing his aura, but the residual spirit power from the Cloudpine still left a detectable trace on his body. If he had the

time to sit down for an hour, he could absolutely refine the spirit traces on his body and become truly invisible. But he was well aware that if he did, he might face an even greater danger. Mt. Rippling Mirage was big, but if he was unlucky, it'd be highly likely that someone would set their sights on him. That bit of spirit power surging into the air was far too large to avoid alarming anyone nearby. They would come barreling in his direction before too long.

Jiang Chen's speed was already quite fast, but Elder Wu Hen was a fourth level sage realm cultivator. His speed naturally surpassed Jiang Chen's. It didn't take long before Elder Wu Hen's consciousness swept in front of him to find Jiang Chen speeding along on the ground. In addition, that wisp of spirit power around Jiang Chen was the same as the one from the lake.

"It's him!" Elder Wu Hen was greatly taken aback. Wei Qing was only barely managing to keep up because he had activated his flight rune and was following along in the elder's wake. When he discovered that the person below was Jiang Chen, Wei Qing was delighted beyond measure. This really was stumbling across something by chance after traveling far and wide in search of it! If he had to pick someone he wanted to kill the most in this time's Pill Battles, Jiang Chen would absolutely rank first.

It wasn't just because of the bet that'd been brought to shambles, and not just because for he'd lost the championship of the genius group in the Mt. Rippling Mirage Pill Battles. The most basic reason was Ling Bi'er and that utterly dismissive attitude Jiang Chen had shown in front of him. That kind of attitude was what Wei Qing found hardest to accept from anyone. He would've managed to handle it had Jiang Chen been as arrogant as Shen

Qinghong.

However, a mere fifth level origin realm like Jiang Chen, a mere ant, dared put on airs in front him, Wei Qing! And he dared show off his love with Ling Bi'er as well— utterly inexcusable. Even though he felt that Ling Bi'er had been using Jiang Chen as a shield, this shield was simply too cocky and too irritating. How would killing intent not bubble from the depths of Wei Qing's heart? He suddenly started chuckling coldly. "Elder Wu Hen, is this killing three birds with one stone?"

"What three birds?"

"The sky rank spirit herb, the Longevity Pill recipe, and my grudge with this kid. This is three birds at least." Wei Qing's tone dripped with viciousness. As he looked at Jiang Chen below, his gaze was that of looking at a dead person.

"Circle past him!" Elder Wu Hen activated a rune that would conceal one's presence but didn't descend. He swooped past Jiang Chen and put Wei Qing down a few kilometers ahead. "Wei Qing, he has to pass through here. You keep him here while I go make some preparations. Don't let him get away."

Elder Wu Hen was being extremely cautious. Even when the situation was similar to a lion hunting down a rabbit, he felt that he still had to bring his full strength to bear. This opportunity was a once in a lifetime chance. He knew that he would regret it for the rest of his life if Jiang Chen escaped.

……

Meanwhile, although Jiang Chen was covering ground with every iota of speed he could muster, he also hadn't let his guard down. He had deployed his consciousness to its fullest extent, and Psychic's Head immediately sensed enormous danger coming. This forewarning wasn't any less than the one from Ding Tong pursuing him. "It looks like someone's still set their sights on me in the end." Jiang Chen sighed tragically and halted, looking behind him to see just who had come in pursuit. But no matter who it was, he wouldn't be treating the situation lightly.

Apart from Mu Gaoqi, every single one of the first batch who'd entered Mt. Rippling Mirage possessed cultivation levels that were in excess of his. If he didn't summon Long Xiaoxuan, he would be in for a tough fight no matter who he ran into. If it was one of those earth sage realm elders, he'd have no other choice than to flee if he didn't summon Long Xiaoxuan.

Jiang Chen didn't want to cause trouble, but that didn't mean he was afraid of trouble. If someone really was so blind as to keep forcing him down a narrow road, Jiang Chen didn't mind sending them down the same path as Ding Tong instead. I will not strike back if no one gives offense, but if someone offends me, I have no problem returning it tenfold.

Jiang Chen was still rushing forward while thinking when God's Eye focused on something in the distance. He suddenly screeched to a halt. "Wei Qing!"

Jiang Chen was a bit taken aback. It was obviously not a good

thing that Wei Qing had appeared here, and judging that all-knowing expression and relaxed posture, he'd been lying in wait. But Jiang Chen had approached from the opposite direction, only to run into Wei Qing waiting in the front. Did he have the ability to see into the future? Multiple thoughts quickly ran through Jiang Chen's mind.

"Jiang Chen, if I recall correctly, I warned you long ago to not bump into me in Mt. Rippling Mirage. Why is it that you can't seem to remember that, hmm?" Wei Qing spoke with exaggerated tones as he sized up Jiang Chen with a mocking look.

Jiang Chen flicked his glance casually over Wei Qing, smiling derisively. "Is this mountain your home? Or did you build this road? I walk where I want; what can you do about it?"

Wei Qing was slightly surprised. When Jiang Chen had been cocky in Rippling Mirage Hall, Wei Qing had understood that to be a result of his sect's backing, and that Jiang Chen hadn't believed that Wei Qing would really do anything with Ling Bi'er off on the side. But now, Jiang Chen was caught out all alone. Shouldn't he have been shuddering with fright now that he'd bumped into Wei Qing? How was this kid's cockiness still unaffected?

"Idiot!" Wei Qing spat out with a cold smile. "You're probably still dreaming, thinking this is the Rippling Mirage Hall! Do you think that old fogey Yun Nie can still cover for you? Do you think Ling Bi'er can still protect you?"

Jiang Chen furrowed his brow impatiently. "So the so-called top genius in the Walkabout Sect is only good at running his mouth?

What do you want to do? I don't have time to waste on you right now."

His thoughts were indeed not with Wei Qing. Jiang Chen was certain that Wei Qing had caught up from behind. Jiang Chen could also capture the traces of spirit power on Wei Qing's body, just like Wei Qing had done on him. Both had clearly originated from the Hidden Chameleon Cloudpine.

Therefore, Jiang Chen was certain that Wei Qing had managed to overtake him from behind and was here to stop him. However, there was no way he would be able to do that from the ground. Jiang Chen strongly suspected that Wei Qing had flown through the sky. But in order for that to be true, it was highly likely Wei Qing had a comrade, and one whose strength was at the sage realm. Therefore, Jiang Chen was in no mood to spar with Wei Qing. He kept using Psychic's Head to continuously scan where the other was hidden.

"Kid, I admit that you really can put on an act. Let's speak frankly. Hand over the Longevity Pill recipe, the sky rank herb you've just obtained, and then kill yourself for your sins. Then I'll consider leaving you as a whole corpse." Wei Qing's tone was domineering, as if his words dictated the natural order of the world and that he, Wei Wing, ruled over the Myriad Domain. His tone was that of one qualified to pick from other people's lives and wealth at his whim.

"Are you dreaming?" Jiang Chen couldn't help but be taken aback by Wei Qing's naiveté.

Wei Qing leered. “Don’t be a fool! Do you dare say that you didn’t receive a sky rank spirit herb just now? Dare you say that you don’t have the Longevity Pill recipe on you?”

Jiang Chen smacked his head and displayed a bizarre smile. “Well now, I happen to actually have both of those. Now how about that? You want them?”

Wei Qing was delighted to see Jiang Chen admit to it. He immediately flashed a vicious smile. “I want it all, and also your cheap, base life!”

Jiang Chen’s consciousness suddenly sensed a sliver of another presence. He had been humoring Wei Qing thus far to try and discover where the other person was. When he sensed a trace of another consciousness, Jiang Chen felt a jolt. It was the presence of that Elder Wu Hen!

Jiang Chen snorted softly. “Wei Qing, you really are shit. Do you travel with a house servant? Pardon me, but I won’t be hanging around to play any longer.”

Chapter 566: Killing And Counter Killing

If it'd just been Wei Qing, Jiang Chen wouldn't have hesitated in immediately summoning Long Xiaoxuan to make quick and decisive work of him. But the elder in the shadows made the duo difficult to deal with. He knew there was a decent chance of destroying the two with Long Xiaoxuan, but it wasn't an absolute guarantee. The Walkabout Sect was well known for being adept at using poison, and Long Xiaoxuan had come off worse in the exchange when he'd battled Wei Wudao back at the spirit spring. Elder Wu Hen was stronger than Wei Wudao, and if he managed to make any preparations to catch Long Xiaoxuan off guard, the situation would rapidly turn dangerous.

Jiang Chen wasn't brainless; The fact that Elder Wu Hen was still hiding his presence was a dead giveaway that he was setting up a devious trap. If Jiang Chen couldn't get away immediately, they would spring the trap and he would really be in trouble.

"Trying to leave, huh?" We Qing flashed a hint of a sinister smile when he saw Jiang Chen want to leave. He immediately charged at Jiang Chen without hesitation. "Kid, how far do you think you'll get, huh!?"

Jiang Chen didn't even turn his head. "Come after me if you dare!" He didn't fear a mere Wei Qing. The focus of his concentration was Elder Wu Hen. Although Wei Qing was the top genius of the Walkabout Sect, his martial dao strength wasn't on par with Wang Han and Zhu Feiyang, the other geniuses at first level sage realm. His cultivation level was more than a small step away from Shen Qinghong at peak origin realm, half step sage realm.

His skill with poison was the reason he was listed among the top geniuses. His martial cultivation was only at peak eighth level origin realm. As for poison skills, it amounted to nothing but child's play in front of Jiang Chen. What Jiang Chen feared the least was poison.

When Wei Qing saw how Jiang Chen's tone was still as arrogant as ever as he fled, his rage only increased. If it'd been Shen Qinghong doing this, Wei Qing would've raised his guard some. But a mere fifth level origin realm? Not to mention the edge that his poison arts gave him? Wei Qing felt that he would've been able to trample Jiang Chen even without these. Killing intent surged in his heart as he saw Jiang Chen flee further and further. He'd really be made a laughingstock if word got out that he'd let Jiang Chen slip through his fingers. An elder and genius of the Walkabout Sect unable to hold and capture a mere fifth level origin realm young man? This would absolutely be a great humiliation.

"Stay, kid!" Wei Qing suddenly flung his arm out as he sent a few poison thorns shooting forward.

As Jiang Chen hastily leaped forward, he learned of a poison formation set up in front of him that covered a few kilometers. He naturally wasn't afraid of it, but knew that if he passed easily through it, it would set off alarms in the other's mind. Therefore, as he bounded forward, he formed a couple of plans in his mind. When he heard Wei Qing's footsteps thudding behind him, he knew that Wei Qing was in close pursuit.

Jiang Chen suddenly stumbled, falling into a shrub. As he

vanished beneath the branches, he activated the Lotus and had one of the vines transform into his double to lie in wait in the bushes. Jiang Chen himself was brought into the earth by a lotus and quickly tunneled through the earth, controlling a hundred lotuses to seal off the area. He'd be able to use the vines to truss Wei Qing up as soon as he came close. Jiang Chen wasn't planning on using the Lotus to immobilize Wei Qing forever, he just needed a moment to guarantee a killing blow.

Wei Qing was slightly surprised to see Jiang Chen stumble into the shrubbery, but he was delighted as he sped to catch up. But he was naturally cautious, stopping when he was a hundred steps away from Jiang Chen. "After all that, that's all you got, kid?"

Wei Qing was thrilled to see that Jiang Chen sprawled between the bushes as he spasmed in apparent pain. "Aren't you supposed to be quite something? Don't you have a senior sister protecting you? Aren't you supposed to be the Pill Battles champion?" Wei Qing was working himself into a lather as he spoke, noticing that they were within the vicinity of Elder Wu Hen's poison formation. At that moment, he knew that Jiang Chen was done for, and strode over to him. He stuck out his foot and stepped on Jiang Chen a few times. "Why don't you keep strutting around, huh? A fifth level origin realm trash dares to throw his weight around me, huh?"

Wei Qing laughed heartily. "Elder Wu Hen, this kid is done; we don't need to set up an ambush for him." He'd just finished speaking when the foot he'd rested on Jiang Chen's body was suddenly constricted. He looked down to find a vine entangled around his entire leg. It'd actually wrapped itself ten times around his ankle, all the way up his thigh. What the hell is this? Wei Qing was scared out of his wits. He'd never seen such a bizarre scene.

How could someone who was about to die suddenly turn into a vine?

Countless vines suddenly appeared from around him as he pondered, shooting towards him like numerous vipers.

No!

Wei Qing wasn't an idiot, he knew that he had fallen into Jiang Chen's trap. But by the time he'd understood, it was too late. The vines had wrapped themselves around his limbs, and there were multiple ones entwined around his chest and waist. He was more wrapped up than a triangular dumpling. This development made Wei Qing's expression change drastically. "Elder Wu Hen, save me!"

Elder Wu Hen had been lying in wait behind Wei Qing as he set up the formation. He revealed himself when he heart this cry and was equally surprised to see Wei Qing's bedraggled state. Those vines were simply too baffling and too bizarre. He took to the air and flew towards Wei Qing. However, he'd only just jumped up into the air when his pupils suddenly contracted violently. He looked fixedly behind Wei Qing, a trace of fear appearing in his expression. "How dare you, Jiang Chen you little thief!"

When Wei Qing saw that Elder Wu Hen dash towards him but come to a halt screaming Jiang Chen's name, he'd be an idiot to not realize that Jiang Chen was behind him. Jiang Chen was standing fifty meters behind Wei Qing at that moment, Sunpiercer drawn back to its fullest extent and the notched arrow locked onto Wei Qing's life from afar. "Wu Hen, if you take another step

forward, this bow will have no mercy when it fires."

Elder Wu Hen roared furiously, "Don't you dare, Jiang Chen!"

Jiang Chen flicked his eyebrow. "Try moving forward another thirty steps, I'll gladly let you collect Wei Qing's corpse!"

He relaxed his draw a little, and let Sunpiercer twang. Whoosh! An arrow drew an arch through the air like a meteor, instantly sinking into Wei Qing's thigh.

"Ah!!" A ghastly, agonized scream reverberated amongst the clouds as Wei Qing's thigh acquired a new hole.

Jiang Chen laughed, his expression not even flickering. "Elder Wu Hen, it looks like you don't care about Wei Qing's life or death anymore."

Elder Wu Hen yelled out in a severe tone, "Jiang Chen, if you dare kill Wei Qing, it will be the beginning of a war between the Walkabout Sect and Regal Pill Palace!"

"Bullshit!" Jiang Chen laughed coldly. "So you hunting me down is right and proper, but me killing you in return will start a war. What kind of shitty, idiotic logic is this?" He didn't keep wasting time with Elder Wu Hen. "Take another step forward if you dare!"

Elder Wu Hen lifted his foot, but didn't dare place it forward. Wei Qing had been heavily favored as a genius in the Walkabout

Sect. Even Sect Head Wei Wuying valued him highly. He had already been earmarked as a future successor from the current young generation. Thus, he could only grit his teeth, not daring to make a move. He raised both hands. “Jiang Chen, I can refrain from moving forward, but you have to release Wei Qing first.”

“Release him?” Jiang Chen burst out laughing. “What kind of nonsense are you coming up with at your age? What, I’ll let him go so you two villains can team up to come after me again?”

“Then what do you want?” Elder Wu Hen growled.

“Nothing much, we can just wile away the time here. Everyone will transport out automatically when time is up, or we’ll have whoever passes by here judge the situation.”

Elder Wu Hen responded coolly. “Let him go first. Wei Qing needs medical attention after taking that arrow. Leave if you want; I swear that I won’t do anything to stop you.”

“And how can I trust you?”

“What will it take for you to?” Elder Wu Hen was quite shrewd.

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. “Swear to the heavens and earth.”

Elder Wu Hen hesitated for a moment, his simmering rage obvious on his face. “Alright, I’ll do as you say. Don’t go back on your words then.”

He then pointed to the sky and swore, “I, Wu Hen of the Walkabout Sect, swear to the heavens and earth that I will not make a move to stop Jiang Chen from leaving. If I do, then may the heavenly tribulation descend to annihilate me.”

This kind of oath was very powerful. No cultivator, even Great Titled Emperors, would dare swear to the heavens easily. Once you did, you couldn’t go back on it. When this kind of oath was broken, thunder and lightning would descend onto the earth to destroy the oath breaker.

Elder Wu Hen glared at Jiang Chen after swearing. “I’ve already swore the oath, so you can let go of Wei Qing now!”

Jiang Chen laughed heartily, mockery all over his face. “Elder Wu Hen, do you think that you’re the only smart person beneath the heavens?”

Elder Wu Hen’s expression shifted. “Jiang Chen, what do you mean by this?!”

“Stop pretending!” Jiang Chen suddenly grinned and shot another arrow.

Pfft!

This one drilled through Wei Qing’s other thigh.

“Ah!! Elder Wu Hen, save me!!” Wei Qing screamed continuously in pain.

Elder Wu Hen’s expression changed drastically as he roared with rage. “Jiang Chen, you’re going back on your word! Don’t think I really won’t dare kill you!”

“Kill me? You run your mouth as if you don’t want to kill me. If you weren’t afraid of involving Wei Qing, you would’ve likely killed me ten, or even a hundred times over by now!” Jiang Chen laughed coldly as he jeered at Elder Wu Hen.

“You old bastard, trying to play those kind of tricks at your age! You swore not to make a move yourself, but the poison formations around this area will be able to keep me here, right? Even if they can’t, your summoned creatures will be able to ambush me from behind, right? You’ve kept a lot of plans up your sleeve, but do you think those parlor tricks are of any use?”

Jiang Chen couldn’t help but admire this old fox. He’d put on that pained front just now and pretended to be enraged, as if reluctantly making that oath. All of this had actually just been an act. The old fox had long since made his preparations with the poison formations and summoned creatures lying in wait beneath the ground ready to deal Jiang Chen a fatal blow at any time.

With these backup plans in place, why would he possibly need to make a move himself? However, how would a perceptive person like Jiang Chen not realize what devious tricks this old fellow was playing at? Besides, the creature that this sly fox had sent out was laying in wait beneath the ground. How could it evade the Lotus’

pursuit?

Chapter 567: Plotting And Scheming

Elder Wu Hen was a circumspect and farseeing person. He had indeed played a small trick when he'd sworn that oath, leaving himself many loopholes to take advantage of. However, he hadn't imagined that his carefully constructed plot would be exposed with a single word by Jiang Chen. This was a huge surprise to Wu Hen, and left him speechless.

He was finally realizing in this moment that he couldn't view Jiang Chen as an ordinary genius disciple. Although this Jiang Chen was only fifth level origin realm, he was absolutely a formidable foe. If it wasn't for Wu Hen being present, Wei Qing's chances of making it out alive would've been very low if he'd run into Jiang Chen by himself. There was nothing more convincing than the truth at hand.

"Jiang Chen, I admit that I underestimated you. Killing someone is just the simple act of making their head touch the ground. Tell me, what will it take for you to let go of Wei Qing?" Elder Wu Hen shifted moods very quickly. Not only did he not enraged by Jiang Chen revealing his plan, but he immediately set aside considerations of face and negotiated directly with Jiang Chen, putting on the act that he was admitting defeat.

But the more he acted this way, the more on guard Jiang Chen was. Those of the Walkabout Sect were highly flexible. They could be domineering when needed, or endure when they had to. These types of people made for the scariest foes.

"Let go of Wei Qing!"

Jiang Chen grinned. “When you two plotted to ambush me, did you think of letting me go? But now that he’s in my hand, you want me to let him go?”

Elder Wu Hen’s tone was cold as he sized up Jiang Chen’s surroundings with eyes like a viper. “What do you want to do, if you don’t want to let him go? Kill him? If you kill him, I will most certainly kill you. You’re just a fifth level origin realm. Are you so naive to think that you’ll be able to escape my blow of thunder!”

Jiang Chen admitted that if it came down to a fight, he had no chance of winning against a sage realm cultivator. But that didn’t mean that he was afraid of Elder Wu Hen. Jiang Chen had many trump cards in his sleeve even without his ace of Long Xiaoxuan. He had an eighty percent guarantee of making it out with his life even if he couldn’t beat Elder Wu Hen.

“Old fox, don’t pride yourself on your seniority. If you really are as great as you say, Wei Qing wouldn’t be in my hands right now.” Jiang Chen rebutted rudely.

Elder Wu Hen was shrewd, since no matter how Jiang Chen insulted him, his expression never changed. His face was like a vast and deep sea, making it difficult for others to read his inner thoughts. He spoke convincingly with a look of solemn gravity. “It’s good for young people to have flair, but you also need to understand how to judge the hour and size up the situation. You’re wasting a great deal of time here. Why don’t we call a truce? There are countless spirit herbs in Mt. Rippling Mirage, do you want to pass up this chance to get rich with open hands? Although I

suspect that you've gotten a sky rank herb, but have you thought that even if you kill Wei Qing, you'll become public enemy number one within this mountain as soon as I leak this news? Even if you leave the mountain beforehand, do you think you can guarantee that this herb will remain in your hands?"

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. "That seems to be something I should be worrying about, not you. You've spoken so much, but all you've been giving off is a feeling of false charity. According to your words, I rather need to beg you to keep my secret, hmm?"

"As long as you let go of Wei Qing, we promise to not tell a fourth person that you've obtained the sky rank spirit herb." Elder Wu Hen promised solemnly.

Jiang Chen flashed a mocking smile. "Do you want to swear another oath to the heavens to gain my trust? How do you plan on creating a loophole this time? You won't tell a fourth person, but you'll tell a group of them. It won't be only a fourth person then, there'll be a fifth, sixth, and seventh. That still leaves an enormous loophole for you, doesn't it?"

Elder Wu Hen was chock full of devious schemes, always leaving a backdoor for himself when he spoke. It was a good thing that Jiang Chen was on his guard against this kind of person. Therefore, he wouldn't believe anything Elder Wu Hen said.

Elder Wu Hen was inwardly startled again. He had the oddest feeling that the person he was dealing with wasn't a young man at all, but rather another old fox. He had so many fallbacks in place, but Jiang Chen hadn't missed a single trick so far. So this time, he

didn’t retort, but rather smiled faintly. “Jiang Chen, I won’t bother to defend myself since you don’t believe me. You word the vow that you want me to swear. Will this do now?”

He was only playing for more time because he’d secretly sent out a message glyph notifying the other elder of his sect of what had happened here. As soon as that elder arrived and the two of them joined forces, it would be easy enough to destroy Jiang Chen with one in the open and one in the shadows. Elder Wu Hen wouldn’t agree to anything that Jiang Chen asked for right now. His priority right then was to stabilize the situation. His comrade would be here in at least half a day, or at most a day.

Elder Wu Hen was absolutely certain that he would be able to to obtain the sky rank spirit herb in the end. If Jiang Chen really left Mt. Rippling Mirage, he would have no chance to seize the herb out in the open. Therefore, he had to keep Jiang Chen here no matter what cost he needed to pay. He could even sacrifice Wei Qing if he had to. But things hadn’t reached that step quite yet, so he didn’t want to take a risk with Wei Qing’s life just yet. After all, he would be hard pressed to explain himself if he returned with a dead Wei Qing.

He would only take this step if there was no other choice. Wu Hen believed that even if he sacrificed Wei Qing for the sky rank spirit herb, he would still be pardoned if he returned with the spirit herb. Wei Qing was outstanding, but he was only a genius. There were still a few others just as exemplary as Wei Qing in the Walkabout Sect. In addition, although he was skilled in poison, his potential in martial dao wasn’t the best. It was a fatal flaw in the otherwise impressive Wei Qing.

Compared to Wei Xing'er's innate fire constitution, Wei Qing lacked a great deal in potential as well. Thus, if it was Wei Xing'er, Elder Wu Hen might not have dared sacrifice her, since not only did she possess a fire constitution, she was also a direct descendant of the sect head.

Jiang Chen wasn't willing to continue wallowing in this mire either, he was furiously brainstorming how to escape. The most domineering way was to summon Long Xiaoxuan and swallow Elder Wu Hen. However, Jiang Chen was worried that the elder might have trump cards up his sleeve and use poison on Long Xiaoxuan. The dragon had fallen victim to the Spirit Restraint Powder already at the wood spirit spring. This Elder Wu Hen was noticeably more ruthless and vicious than that Wei Wudao. No one could guarantee that he didn't have anything else lying in wait. Then, if Long Xiaoxuan was enthralled, Jiang Chen would be left in a dire situation then. Therefore, Jiang Chen didn't want to go head to head with the elder in a territory in which he'd set up poison formations.

After thinking silently for a while, Jiang Chen formed a plan. "Old fox Wu Hen, I can release Wei Qing, but it's not likely that you'll give up on the sky rank spirit herb even if I want you to. How about this, I'll add two conditions. I'll release Wei Qing immediately if you can meet them."

"What are they?" Elder Wu Hen responded noncommittally.

"First, the matter of the sky rank spirit herb cannot be revealed in any shape or form whatsoever. Secondly, you cannot prevent my departure in the next four hours in any shape or form. I will let

Wei Qing go if you can meet these two conditions. However, given that you like to play tricks, you must swear to the heavens to these two conditions using the name of the Walkabout Sect. The heavens themselves will annihilate your sect if you go back on your word."

A light flashed through Elder Wu Hen's eyes. This kid is certainly ruthless!

"Then what about four hours later?" He asked faintly.

"If you have the ability to track me after four hours, then that's up to you. I won't complain."

Elder Wu Hen thought momentarily and nodded. "Alright, then we'll settle on that. However, don't you play any tricks either. What if I swear but you still don't let go of Wei Qing, what then?"

"I will naturally also swear to not move against Wei Qing in any shape or form."

Elder Wu Hen closely pondered for a moment and felt nothing amiss with these arrangements. He had many ways to find Jiang Chen after four hours as long as the latter didn't leave the mountain. Judging from Jiang Chen's posture, he wasn't willing to leave Mt. Rippling Mirage either.

"I'm adding a condition that you can't leave the mountain before time is up." Elder Wu Hen said faintly.

“What business is it of yours if I leave or not?”

Elder Wu Hen smiled slightly. “Why act dumb? If you leave the mountain, how will I seize your spirit herb then?”

Jiang Chen laughed heartily. “Good, good! You should’ve been this straightforward from the beginning. Men die for wealth, and birds die for food. I promise you that I will not leave this mountain before the full twenty days are up. However, accordingly, you will need to add that once time is up, you cannot try to seize the spirit herb in any shape or form once we leave.” He wouldn’t be able to take it from me anyway once we leave, even if he has the ability to.

“That’s fine.” Elder Wu Hen snorted coldly inside. As if us two sage realm cultivators can’t track you down within twenty days!

“Then swear to this. Remember, don’t play any tricks. Wordplay won’t fool me so take advantage of this chance to stop playing tricks. If you try anything else, I’ll cancel our agreement at any time.” Jiang Chen reminded with a icy smile.

“I, Wu Hen, swear to the heavens and earth that I will not reveal the existence of the sky rank spirit herb in any shape or form…”

“Add another line of whether within Mt. Rippling Mirage or after you leave.” Jiang Chen reminded him.

“I, Wu Hen, swear to the heavens and earth that whether in Mt. Rippling Mirage or outside it, I will not reveal the existence of the

sky rank spirit herb in any way, shape or form. I will also not seek to stop or track Jiang Chen in any way, shape or form in the four hours after he leaves. If I violate these two promises, then may the heavenly tribulation descend to annihilate my Walkabout Sect!" Elder Wu Hen didn't bother playing any tricks and did as Jiang Chen said.

Just as Wu Hen was making this solemn vow, Wei Wuying suddenly sneezed randomly outside Mt. Rippling Mirage. After Wu Hen made this vow, he stared at Jiang Chen. "Now it's your turn."

"I, Jiang Chen, swear to the heavens and earth that I will not make a move against Wei Qing in any way, shape or form. I will not leave Mt. Rippling Mirage within the twenty day time limit, or may heavenly tribulations descend to annihilate me."

The two analyzed each other's vows and couldn't find any flaws.

Elder Wu Hen nodded as a vicious look surfaced in his eyes. "In this case, go. I've promised not to do anything in the next four hours, but I've made no promises for after that."

Jiang Chen smiled bizarrely. "Bring it on four hours from now then." He then made a hand seal and had the Lotus retract, vanishing in front of Elder Wu Hen's eyes with a flicker of his body.

Chapter 568: A Dejected Elder Wu Hen

When he saw Jiang Chen vanish from his field of vision, a dense killing intent was birthed in Elder Wu Hen's heart. It was the first time he'd gotten the feeling of going all out against someone and still finding it a difficult battle—and this was against a mere fifth level origin realm! If it'd been any other occasion, a fifth level origin realm was but an ant in Elder Wu Hen's eyes. He could destroy the other with a mere flip of his hand. Why would he have to go to such lengths?

All his precautions and schemes today had failed, and he'd had to resort to swearing an oath which allowed Jiang Chen to leave in style. Although he was confident that he wouldn't have a problem tracking down Jiang Chen, allowing him to leave with such flair was no small humiliation.

As for Wei Qing, he still had two holes drilled through his thighs. He took advantage of his newfound freedom to swallow several pills and apply some external medicine to his wounds. Although the medicines weren't of the level of crafting new flesh over bone or reviving the dead, their effects were still praiseworthy. Wei Qing's wounds quickly recovered to the point where they didn't affect his movements. He walked over to Elder Wu Hen, nursing a bellyful of hate. "Elder, you let the kid just leave like that?"

Wu Hen rolled his eyes. "What would happen to you if I didn't?"

Elder Wu Hen was actually very dissatisfied with the current situation. If it hadn't been for Wei Qing underestimating their foe, how would they have ended up in these straits? Food that had been

on the verge of entering their mouths had flown away. Although it was assured that they'd find it again, it would still consume much more time and effort to trap now. Wei Qing felt both humiliated and buoyed by Elder Wu Hen's counter question. "I'll go after him!"

"You shut up!" Elder Wu Hen roared furiously, glaring at Wei Qing. "Not good enough to accomplish anything, but more than enough to spoil things! Do you want our sect to be judged by the heavenly oath if you go chasing after him now?!"

Wei Qing was taken aback by Elder Wu Hen's vehemence before he remembered this matter and was greatly embarrassed, particularly when he heard the elder's first line. Hearing "Not good enough to accomplish anything, but more than enough to spoil things" was as if a whip had just snapped across his heart, bringing him enormous shame. However, no matter how arrogant he was, he wouldn't dare throw his weight around in front of Elder Wu Hen.

Even though Elder Wu Hen wasn't the strongest elder in the Walkabout Sect, he was the one with the highest pill dao potential in the Walkabout Sect. He was ranked as one of the top five people within the sect. No matter how much potential Wei Qing had, at the end of the day, he was still only a genius with potential. He was still a wet behind the ears rookie compared to one of the most influential elders. And, it was true that he had been the cause of the trap going awry. If he hadn't been captured because he'd underestimated Jiang Chen, it was highly unlikely Jiang Chen would've left so easily.

Wei Qing was a proudly aloof genius in the end, and he couldn't just sit there and be lectured harshly by Elder Wu Hen. He blurted out, "This Jiang Chen is really bizarre! Elder Wu Hen, your poison formations didn't have the slightest effect on him! Does this kid not fear our poison formations at all?"

He looked like he was confused about Jiang Chen, but he was actually subtly sending a jab; aren't you something, Elder Wu Hen? Why didn't you keep him here with your formations?

This question was also one that Elder Wu Hen was most hard pressed to answer. "Wei Qing, I can give you only one suggestion if you bump into Jiang Chen again."

"What?" Wei Qing started in surprise.

"Turn and run." Elder Wu Hen said indifferently. "Run as far as you can."

Wei Qing's face darkened; he couldn't contain his anger any longer as he exploded, "Elder Wu Hen, I know I made a mistake just now that led to my capture which ruined things. But you don't need to jeer at me, do you? Who hasn't made mistakes in their youth? Who hasn't underestimated the enemy when young? If I hadn't been so confident in your poison formations, I wouldn't have let him so easily walk in front of me either!"

Wei Qing was indeed making some sense. If he hadn't been so assured of the poison formations working, he really wouldn't have been captured so easily.

Elder Wu Hen smiled faintly. “I’m also rather surprised by the formations failing. However, my suggestion just now wasn’t criticism towards you. Believe me if you wish, or not if you don’t.”

Wei Qing started. “Jiang Chen is just an overly slippery fellow; why is he worthy of so much admiration from you?”

“That kid is slippery alright, but the crux is that his methods are ever-changing and never seem to run dry. They’re not something you can defend against. I don’t know what kind of abilities he has, but he could even pick up on something as covert as me summoning a spirit creature to ambush him. Are you confident of facing off against an opponent of this caliber?”

Wei Qing stood there openmouthed with shock as he struggled to find words.

“Your specialty is poison, but even my poison formations couldn’t hold him. What good do you think your skills would be?”

Wei Qing wasn’t willing to accept this analysis. “Even if my poison skills don’t hold up against him, his cultivation level is only fifth level origin realm. I can crush him with pure strength alone.”

“You’d probably only die faster if you think this way.” Elder Wu Hen quirked his lips and then waved him off. “Alright, you go think things over. Don’t interrupt my thinking.”

He couldn't be bothered to explain it further to Wei Qing. Wei Qing was a flighty and easily irritated character. Elder Wu Hen's view of this disciple had changed greatly after seeing how he'd handled this matter.

This matter rankled greatly in Wei Qing's heart. All he could see was Elder Wu Hen belittling him to enhance Jiang Chen's prestige. But as unfair as he found things, he would never outright yell at Elder Wu Hen in argument.

……

Jiang Chen walked for roughly an hour before stopping. He located a source of water and changed his clothes, giving them a thorough wash. "That Elder Wu Hen is exceptionally devious alright. Although the poison formations didn't pose much of a challenge, they still left trackable traces on me. That crafty old fox left backup plans at every step."

Jiang Chen circulated his spirit power to renew the presence around his entire body, then summoned some agile Goldbiter Rats, giving them the clothes he'd just changed out of and sent them in different directions. In this way, not only had he cleanly wiped his trail, but he'd also laid many false ones for Wu Hen.

"Wu Hen, you think yourself clever, don't you? Let's see how you catch me." Jiang Chen was quite confident in himself. If Elder Wu Hen could still catch up to him after all this, then Jiang Chen would really accept his defeat. As for Wei Qing, Jiang Chen was already thinking of him as a dead man. He knew how to use poison, just like those of the Walkabout Sect. Those arrows that'd

been shot through Wei Qing had been smeared with a rather unique poison Jiang Chen had refined from the Divine Tree of Dreams.

Jiang Chen had used a similar poison refined from the Tree and a couple of other methods to take out Wei Wudao back at the wood spirit spring. This poison that he'd left in Wei Qing's body had an incubation period, and would strike at him anytime between ten days to a month. Once it did, even gods and ghosts would find it hard to cure Wei Qing. It'd also be completely futile for the Walkabout Sect to dream of curing a poison that Jiang Chen had created.

Wei Qing would die a baffling death, and the Walkabout Sect would only be able to swallow this mouthful of blood. They wouldn't be able to pin the blame on Jiang Chen, since the incubation period was so long. Moreover, Mt. Rippling Mirage was a strange and unpredictable place. Who knew if whether Wei Qing had run into some sort of bizarre poison in the mountain?

Jiang Chen was now more curious about the mountain after obtaining the sky rank Hidden Chameleon Cloudpine. Logically speaking, as abundant the spirit herbs were in Mt. Rippling Mirage, it was just a royal herb garden left behind by a Lower Realm empire. Sky rank spirit herbs wouldn't raise an eyebrow in the Upper Eight Realms, but it was quite rare for one to appear in the Lower Eight Realms, particularly a destitute empire like this.

"This Mt. Rippling Mirage is an interesting conundrum." Jiang Chen began to feel more and more certain that there was more than what met the eye after walking for a few more days within

the mountain. There seemed to be many mechanisms hidden within the terrain.

Blue lakes with water as still as mirrors, for instance. Jiang Chen had run into three of them over the course of these few days. They all had abundant spirit power around them. However, there were no more sky rank spirit herbs in these ones, just a lot of true rank spirit herbs. They once again lined Jiang Chen's pockets.

He ran into another lake on the ninth day, but it was obvious that someone had already passed by this lake. There were only a few low level spirit herbs left, with almost nothing else. Someone had already done a thorough sweep of the premises.

"It looks like everyone's disinterested in spirit rank herbs." Jiang Chen looked around and noted that there weren't any signs of a sky rank spirit herb appearing in this lake either. He couldn't help but laugh ruefully. "Not every lake will have a sky rank herb. If this was the case, then we'd be in the Upper Eight Realms instead of the Lower Eight Realms."

Sky rank herbs weren't that common even in the Upper Eight Realms. Jiang Chen's curiosity about the mountain's topography grew as the lakes appeared in increasing numbers. It was a pity that he couldn't fly. Otherwise, he'd want to take a look from the heights to see just how many lakes were around. He took casual, leisurely strolls and immersed himself in the joy of harvesting spirit herbs.

……

On the other hand, Elder Wu Hen and his comrade Elder Wu Qi were having a particularly depressing time. It'd been several days since they'd started tracking Jiang Chen, but they hadn't even managed to catch a hint of his shadow. Elder Wu Hen was holding a piece of Jiang Chen's old clothing that he'd changed out of, and flung it viciously down. "This little scum is truly wily! Not only does he know that I left marks on his body, he even knows how to refine them and use them to lure us here!"

Elder Wu Qi also found this to be an incredible situation. How could he not understand how complex Elder Wu Hen's methods were? But here he was, bested by a young disciple. This had never been seen before! "That Jiang Chen kid is this devious! Brother Wu Hen, are you sure that there's a sky rank herb on him?" Elder Wu Qi had come up empty-handed after accompanying Elder Wu Hen on a wild goose chase for a few days. He couldn't help but want to shift focus. After all, they were all here to harvest spirit herbs and accumulate wealth, not to engage in these completely meaningless games.

Elder Wu Hen's expression was livid as he looked coldly at Elder Wu Qi. "What, do you think I'm playing you for a fool? Why would I waste time tracking him if it wasn't for the sky rank spirit herb?"

Elder Wu Qi's position wasn't as high as Elder Wu Hen. He hastily offered a artful smile when he saw Elder Wu Hen was displeased. "Then let's continue our chase. Since he swore not to leave, and we still have another eleven days, why don't we notify all Walkabout Sect disciples who've entered to immediately report to us if they find any trace of Jiang Chen? We can even utilize those from other sects and offer them benefits for them to be our

eyes and ears. We can heavily reward anyone who finds Jiang Chen!”

There would always be heroes putting themselves forward in the face of great rewards. Elder Wu Hen nodded enthusiastically at this idea. “Let’s do it this way then!”

Chapter 569: Unexpected Discovery

Although they would offer high rewards, they wouldn't be proceeding in a haphazard manner.

Elder Wu Hen spoke, "The crux lies with the Sacred Sword Palace and the Tristar Sect. The Great Cathedral has just received the Longevity Pill and won't help us against the Regal Pill Palace. The Dark North Sect wears the same set of pants as the Regal Pill Palace, and will certainly inform the Regal Pill Palace as soon as they hear this news."

Elder Wu Qi nodded. "That makes sense. The second batch of people is about to enter soon, and there are many Sacred Sword Palace disciples and elders within them. I remember that Wang Han has a strong hatred of Jiang Chen. If we offer a high reward, I'm sure he'll be willing to help."

Wei Qing also drew close at this point to interject, "Wang Han is a narrow-minded person. Harvesting spirit herbs is of secondary importance for the Sacred Sword Palace this time, and making trouble for the Regal Pill Palace is their primary goal. I'm sure that even if we don't give him any reward, Wang Han would be willing to give us clues once he learns that we're hunting Jiang Chen down."

Wei Qing quite understood Wang Han's perspective on this, as the two of them were actually very similar in this regard. Wang Han was both prejudiced against Jiang Chen and hated Jiang Chen because the latter had refuted him in public, whereas Wei Qing nursed a grudge because Jiang Chen was affecting his attempt to

get the girl.

……

“Oh?” A Tristar Sect elder revealed a teasing smile as he skimmed a message glyph. “Just what kind of grudge does Jiang Chen have with the Walkabout Sect? Merely supplying tips is enough to gain a hundred thousand upper rank origin spirit stones?”

The previous first disciple of the Tristar Sect, Zhu Feiyang, also received a message glyph at almost the exact same time. “A hundred thousand upper rank origin spirit stones? And I’ll be able to obtain it if I immediately tell the Walkabout Sect when I discover traces of Jiang Chen?” A smile crept onto Zhu Feiyang’s handsome face. “It’d be a pity to turn away wealth that comes knocking at my door. It looks like the Walkabout Sect has hardened their heart to seize the Regal Pill Palace’s Longevity Pill recipe!”

The second batch of twenty entered the mountain after the first ten days were up, and so word of this bounty from the Walkabout Sect spread more and more. Those from the Walkabout Sect also appeared in increasing numbers within the mountain.

Jiang Chen had avoided people as much as possible over the past few days since he didn’t want to run into anyone. Although he’d easily thrown off the Walkabout Sect’s pursuit, he was well aware that his pursuers wouldn’t give up so easily. It might even be that all those who were newly entering Mt. Rippling Mirage now had a primary mission of locating Jiang Chen, and harvesting spirit herbs had become of secondary importance.

Jiang Chen knew the value of a sky rank spirit herb better than anyone else there. Even breaking away from the Regal Pill Palace would be worth it for a sky rank herb. It was a good thing that he'd curbed the Walkabout Sect's actions with wordplay when they'd negotiated back then, so as much as they wanted the spirit herb, they would never be able to reveal this secret. Otherwise, judgement from the heavenly oath would descend upon the Walkabout Sect.

That day, Jiang Chen happened to be passing by a cliff when he heard fierce sounds of fighting originating from the other side of the mountain. He briefly extended his senses for a moment and determined that the combatants didn't seem to be those of the Regal Pill Palace. Since it wasn't one of his own in jeopardy, he couldn't be bothered to stick his nose in. He was about to leave when he heard one of them bellow, "Du Lihuang, don't you be too ridiculous! I discovered this true saint spirit herb first!"

Jiang Chen seemed to recall hearing this voice before.

He listened carefully and discovered that it was actually the little daoist Ku Zhu from the Dark North Sect. This little fellow seemed taciturn and withdrawn, but he actually hid an ox-like temper and stubbornness. As for Du Lihuang, Jiang Chen recognized him as a Sacred Sword Palace disciple that he hadn't had much interaction with. His cultivation level was second only to Wang Han and another genius at the first level sage realm in the Sacred Sword Palace.

"Cut the bullshit. It doesn't have your name on it, so it's not

yours. There's no difference between you discovering it first and me discovering it second! What, can I take this mountain back home with me if I'm the one who discovers it first?" Du Lihuang's tone was domineering and completely unreasonable.

Ku Zhu grew agitated in his frustration. "Shameless, despicable!"

Du Lihuang laughed heartily. "Don't try that on me, little daoist Ku Zhu. I'll give you ten breaths of time. Don't blame me for taking action if you don't get the hell out after that. This Aletheia Icegrass is mine!"

The characters of the first part of this spirit herb seems to be part of the name of a particular flower in Chinese—a flower growing on the banks of the three rivers of the underworld, said to be able to summon the memories of the dead whilst they were still alive. The connotations made me think of the river Lethe in Greek mythology, whose effects are the opposite of this flower, washing away the memories of the souls when they were alive. "Aletheia" is the state of being evident, factuality and reality. It's the opposite of the word "Lethe", and the meaning seems particularly appropriate given the uses for this spirit herb. Hence, I borrowed a bit from Greek culture here!

"Aletheia Icegrass!" Jiang Chen's thoughts raced when he heard the name of the spirit herb. Although this spirit herb was just an ordinary true saint rank herb, it was one of the necessary items needed to cure the Miasma that was troubling Ling Bi'er's father. Jiang Chen wouldn't have been interested in it otherwise. He'd planned on leaving, but now halted his footsteps. He couldn't pass up this Icegrass like this.

He'd entered Mt. Rippling Mirage for so long, but it was the first time he'd bumped into one of the four vital ingredients for the Miasma. Even just one was already rare enough. As Jiang Chen pondered, Du Lihuang engaged Ku Zhu in battle.

Du Lihuang was at ninth level origin realm, whereas Ku Zhu was at seventh level. The two were a full two levels of cultivation apart. Adding the fact that the Sacred Sword palace focused on sword dao, which made their battle strength a tier stronger than the other sects, Ku Zhu quickly found himself fighting an uphill battle. However, he was rather fierce and quite stubborn. He refused to concede even a single step even when he started coming worse off in the exchanges. He put up a stubborn resistance in front of the Aletheia Icegrass, as if he was defending his own territory, and refused to give even an inch of ground.

On the other hand, Du Lihuang was cocky and overbearing. "Ku Zhu, I don't want to kill you, but that doesn't mean I won't kill. Don't blame me for being heartless if you still insist on staying in the way."

Ku Zhu was a pile of stubborn old bones. The more someone threatened him, the more it provoked his inner pride. "Du Lihuang, don't think about seizing the Aletheia Icegrass unless you kill me today!"

Du Lihuang frowned. "You refuse a toast only to drink to a forfeit!" Truthfully, he really didn't want to kill anyone in Mt. Rippling Mirage, unless he found a Regal Pill Palace disciple. Untold troubles would follow if it was revealed that he'd killed someone. Although he was confident he could do this cleanly and

smoothly, it'd be disastrous if Ku Zhu managed to get a message out somehow. The Sacred Sword Palace might even end up warring with the Dark North Sect! This was a consequence that he alone couldn't bear. However, Ku Zhu's attitude was like a stone in a latrine, hard, foul, and completely infuriating Du Lihuang.

Ordinarily speaking, when sect disciples met, the stronger disciple would dictate the terms. If one side found that they were the weaker one after exchanging moves, they would have the self awareness to back out. Yet, Ku Zhu didn't have that sort of mentality at all. Du Lihuang did indeed have the urge to kill someone as irritating as this.

However, it wasn't that easy for him to kill Ku Zhu either. Although Ku Zhu's cultivation was a bit weaker, his defense was quite ferocious, and he was finding ways to hold on with a few of his Dark North Sect secret techniques. Even Du Lihuang wasn't finding it easy to break through Ku Zhu's defenses time and time again if he didn't call upon his own secret arts in return.

As they ferociously fought with each other, Jiang Chen quietly snuck in through the ground and used the Lotus to steal that blade of Icegrass. He did so covertly and extremely surreptitiously.

Du Lihuang and Ku Zhu's battle raged on as both fully focused on each other. They didn't even realize that the spirit herb they were fighting over had already been taken. Jiang Chen had used their fight as cover and had planned on dusting himself off and leaving. However, when he thought about it, the Dark North Sect was on good terms with the Regal Pill Palace. Moreover, Ku Zhu would certainly end up dead if the two kept fighting like this.

He laughed heartily and sent over a message from afar. “Gentlemen, thanks for the Aletheia Icegrass. Have fun sparring with each other!”

His words were actually to help Ku Zhu out of the situation. He rather admired Ku Zhu’s personality and so didn’t want him to die to Du Lihuang’s sword for no reason.

Indeed, the message immediately caused the two fighters to freeze. When they looked in the direction of the Icegrass, both their expressions froze. Du Lihuang’s face immediately grew ugly and cold. “Who dares steal from me?!”

However, only silence answered him. There was no response at all.

Jiang Chen couldn’t be bothered to engage in a pointless fight with Du Lihuang. He’d gotten the Icegrass, it was time to leave. He naturally wasn’t afraid of Du Lihuang, but there was no way he’d uncover his own trail for this. Du Lihuang wasn’t scary, but the elders of the Walkabout Sect were definitely scary.

Ku Zhu remained motionless for a long moment before nodding in deep thought. He looked at Du Lihuang expressionlessly before he turned to leave.

Although Du Lihuang was incensed and privately cursing at Ku Zhu for ruining his affairs, there was no point in killing the other now that the Icegrass had been taken. “Kid, this is the last time.

Remember this well, I will certainly kill you the next time you wreck my plans!”

These threats were nothing more than a breeze to Ku Zhu. Not even a hint of reaction flickered on his his face.

Du Lihuang leapt up and sped off, in hot pursuit of the one who’d called out. The voice had been obviously doctored, so he couldn’t tell who it was, but he was certain that it had come from this direction. He ought to have a decent chance to catch up if he gave chase now. Although he wasn’t confident that he had the true saint herb in the bag, it was a blatant provocation that someone had just waltzed in to take his prize. Du Lihuang was a high spirited and arrogant person, how would he be able to take this lying down?

Jiang Chen sped through the ground at the highest speed possible after obtaining the Icegrass. Du Lihuang ended up chasing for quite a while, but never picked up a trail he could follow.

Fifty kilometers into his chase, he ended up on a wide path, with absolutely no idea where to go. He looked around blankly, but to no avail.

Rage grew in his heart as his thoughts spun furiously, and he slashed viciously at one of the large trees off on the side.

Wham!

His sword aura swept out as the large tree collapsed, all of its

branches and leaves torn to shreds.

“Are you looking to die?!” A figure suddenly burst out from beneath the tree, cursing loudly. The figure hurtled towards Du Lihuang like a bolt of light, and lashed out in a punch.

Du Lihuang had no idea that someone was hidden at the roots of the tree either, and the rage in his heart erupted when he saw that this person was charging at him without another word. He slashed at the figure with his sword without another thought.

Bam!

His sword aura was still roiling towards the figure when the punch arrived, numbing Du Lihuang’s body with the reverb. The boxing aura covering the fist transformed into a stunning attack and slammed into Du Lihuang’s shoulder through his sword aura.

Bam!

He somersaulted into the air as his body was thrown back several meters, spitting out a mouthful of blood along the way.

Chapter 570: The Appearance Of The Ancient Herb Garden

This unknown figure had shot out of the ground and sent Du Lihuang flying with a single punch, but his anger still wasn't satiated. He was angrily stalking towards the prone Du Lihuang, intent on ending him right there when someone called out in the distance, "Brother Yue! Hold! Stay your hand!"

The person who'd punched Du Lihuang's lights out looked about 23 years old, but a mane of brown hair around his shoulders currently gave him the appearance of a furious lion. He was the genius heir to the Sacred Lion family of the Great Cathedral—Yue Baize. His strength was on par with Xiang Qin of the Sacred Elephant family, nearing second level sage realm. How was his punch something that Du Lihuang of the ninth level origin realm would be able to take? Although Du Lihuang had been able to bully Ku Zhu, he wouldn't last a single exchange with Yue Baize.

Yue Baize was in a towering fury, but halted from his mission to kill Du Lihuang as he turned to look sharply in the direction of the shout. Speeding towards the two was the white-robed first disciple of the Sacred Sword Palace, Wang Han, another first level sage realm genius.

Wang Han closed the distance rapidly until he arrived in front of Du Lihuang. He quickly fed him a pill, then tapped several acupuncture points before finally bringing back Du Lihuang to the world of the conscious. Du Lihuang's mind was in a foggy, confused state until he saw the glowering Yue Baize, who had fury writ plain over his face. He was both incensed and frightened. He'd

finally understood that it'd been Yue Baize who'd struck at him so furiously just now.

"Wang Han, get the hell out of the way!" Yue Baize was still deeply enraged, as evidenced by the knuckles that popped as he clenched his fists. It was evident that he was planning on releasing every ounce of his rage on Du Lihuang's body right up until he'd squeezed the other to death with his bare hands.

Wang Han's aura turned chilly as he questioned in a low voice, "Brother Yue, just what matter is it that's caused you to act so?"

Yue Baize couldn't be bothered to explain. "Are you going to move or not?"

At the end of the day, Wang Han was also a sage realm genius. How could he let himself be overcome by Yue Baize's aura? Those of the Great Cathedral were always cocky, and Wang Han had put up with this charade for far too long now. When they'd been fighting over the Longevity Pill earlier, Xiang Qin had directly threatened him then. Wang Han hadn't retorted then due to considerations of sect relationships. But now? Now Yue Baize was freely threatening him!

Wang Han had focused on sword dao for twenty three years and was one to not hide his light to begin with. How would he accept this repeated humiliation? Anger ignited in his heart as Yue Baize spoke with an utter lack of regard for him. He didn't look at Yue Baize and spoke to the side instead, to Du Lihuang. "Junior brother Du, just what is going on here? Brother Yue has no grudge with you, so why did he hit you? Speak freely; although our Sacred

Sword Palace doesn't willingly provoke others, we're not people that just anyone can step on."

As the senior brother of the younger generation in the Sacred Sword Palace, how would he be able to retain his stature if word got out that he didn't stand up for his peers? Therefore, his words were neither fawning or humble, and in fact carried subtle undertones of anger.

When Du Lihuang saw that Wang Han wanted to step forth on his behalf, he didn't conceal anything either. "Senior brother Wang, I was pursuing someone but didn't catch up to them, so I destroyed a random tree. Then, this person emerged from the ground and didn't bother understanding the situation at all before punching me. How do I know what madness he's up to?"

Wang Han flicked a glance at the destroyed tree and spoke coldly, "Brother Yue, it's not like this tree is a particularly rare species. I don't understand your actions in wanting to kill my junior brother just because he destroyed a tree. That's simply too overbearing!"

Wang Han's tone was highly displeased. This tree was only a spirit rank tree, not even worth a second look. If Yue Baize was making a move because of this tree, then Wang Han would have much to say about it.

Yue Baize's fierce eyes narrowed in a glare. "Wang Han, does that mean you're going to stick out your neck for this?"

Wang Han snorted coldly. "Well, isn't that funny? Can't I ask

why you want to kill my junior brother? Me, sticking my neck out? I'd say you're trying to be a tyrant!"

Du Lihuang's internal injuries had taken a slow turn for the better after being fed the pill. He was now standing next to Wang Han, his hand on the hilt of his sword and ready to spring into action. As soon as anything happened, he would throw all caution to the wind and team up with Wang Han against Yue Baize. Although there was a large gap between his strength and and Yue Baize's, if he teamed up with the top genius of the Sacred Sword Palace, they'd definitely be able to fight, and possibly even kill Yue Baize.

Yue Baize looked at the two of them coldly, also sizing up their strength versus his. Although he knew that he was a bit stronger than Wang Han, both sides would still end up heavily injured after the Sacred Sword Palace's secret arts. When throwing in a Du Lihuang to the mix, he was actually at a disadvantage when outnumbered like this. Not to mention that he was lying here in wait not for fun, but to track down a particular spirit creature. The spirit creature liked to inhabit this particular spirit tree. Yue Baize had sensed this creature's presence around the tree, which was why he'd hidden beneath the ground to await his prey.

But who'd know that Du Lihuang would lose his mind for no reason when passing by and destroy the tree? This had thrown Yue Baize's plans into complete disarray. Born of the Great Cathedral, Yue Baize had always been domineering and tyrannical. How would he not be incensed when someone had ruined his plans? No wonder he'd come charging out to kill Du Lihuang without another word. He also wasn't afraid to see Wang Han brimming with battle intent. He gave a sharp nod, "Wang Han, you want an

explanation? I'll give you an explanation! I entered the mountain yesterday and only have ten days worth of time. Then I happened to run into a Silverlion, and found this Lion Pagoda Tree to be its favorite habitat. I've lain in wait for a day now, waiting for the Silverlion to return. Your idiot junior brother really is something. He just passes by here, loses his mind, and then destroys the tree for no reason at all. You want an explanation from me!? Well, tell me, where do I go for mine?!"

The Silverlion was an absolutely sacred spirit creature to the Sacred Lion tribe. Not only could they form a contract with this spirit creature, they could also use its blood to enhance their own bloodlines. The Great Cathedral was particularly adept at using the blood of various spirit creatures to strengthen and temper their bodies to break through the shackles of martial dao. Du Lihuang's unintentional venting had completely destroyed Yue Baize's plan.

Wang Han finally understood why Yue Baize had reacted so violently, but he couldn't back down now with how things had developed. "Even if my junior brother ruined your plan, it's not punishable to the point of death, is it? It's just a Silverlion, is that more important than a genius at the peak of the origin realm?"

Yue Baize snorted coldly. "The hell does the peak of the origin realm have to do with me? Can it strengthen my bloodline? Can it help me break through? Can it strengthen my body? I'll kill Li Duhuang if you don't give me an explanation today, even if I have to waste all ten days I have here!"

Wang Han's face darkened. He knew that every single of those Great Cathedral folk were crazies. They would definitely

accomplish whatever they'd said. "Brother Yue, it's said that one has to be lenient whenever it's possible. Even if junior brother Du has ruined your plans, he didn't do so purposefully. Is it not enough that your punch made him spit blood?"

"You want to trade a mouthful of blood for my Silverlion? Wang Han, don't you think you're much too naive?" Yue Baize's hackles had gone completely up as killing intent exploded out of him.

Wang Han was at a loss for words, this Yue Baize was employing the logic of a robber! He hadn't even gotten the Silverlion, but he was talking as if he had and it'd been Du Lihuang who'd let that creature go.

"Brother Yue, you haven't captured the Silverlion yet, so how is this a fair comparison? If that beast really does like this area, it will certainly return. Brother Yue may yet capture it if you remain here in wait. You might actually be missing the opportunity to capture it as you dither with us."

Yue Baize broke out in loud curses. "Bullshit! The Silverlion is a highly cautious creature. As if it'll return when it sees that the Lion Pagoda Tree has been destroyed! Wang Han, I don't care how glib your words are today, Du Lihuang must die today if you don't give me a satisfactory explanation!"

Wang Han's gaze chilled. "What kind of explanation do you want?"

"Compensation, or death!" Ye Baize continued in his

domineering fashion.

Wang Han shook his head. “Impossible. Yue Baize, we can do this all day. You’re the one who injured someone and you want compensation? Do you think my Sacred Sword Palace is some random pushover?”

Yue Baize laughed oddly. “So this means you think my Great Cathedral is easy to bully?”

Wang Han snorted derisively. “No one wants to bully your Great Cathedral, but it’s you who’s aggressively overbearing.”

Yue Baize spread out his hands. “Stop putting on that act with me. Wang Han, I know the two of you want to team up against me. Just because I don’t make my move today doesn’t mean I won’t do so tomorrow. You may have helpers, but I’m not here all by my lonesome either!”

Wang Han knew that those of the Great Cathedral were extreme in their style and quite united in their actions. If Yue Baize summoned reinforcements, it would turn into an absolute nightmare for them. There weren’t that many Sacred Sword Palace people entering the mountain to begin with. Yue Baize only needed to meet up with Xiang Qin to be able to trounce all four genius disciples from the Sacred Sword Palace.

Wang Han thought momentarily and said to Du Lihuang, “Junior brother Du, since some people seem quite unreasonable, you should go find a transportation matrix and leave Mt. Rippling

Mirage, lest some people chase after you endlessly."

It wasn't that Wang Han was afraid, he was just being cautious, and he didn't think he needed to embroil themselves in a fight with the Great Cathedral right then. When it come to those insane people, pissing off one of them was akin to pissing off the entire lot. He didn't want to fight a bunch of crazies, so having Du Lihuang depart the premises was the best course of action.

Du Lihuang also recognized the circumstances and became resigned. He nodded with a quick jerk of his head, "Alright."

Yue Baize's face darkened as his rage threatened to explode. Just when he was about to blow up, his face flickered, and he flipped his hand over to read a message glyph. At almost the same instant, Wang Han received one as well. Both of their faces turned grave as they read it through.

Wang Han suddenly smiled and spoke to Yue Baize, "Brother Yue, the appearance of a hundred lakes and a rippling mirage is a phenomenon that comes about only once in a millennia here. According to the words left behind by the Myriad Empire, these are the signs of a hidden ruins emerging. It rarely emerges even once in a few millennia, and the spirit herbs there are possible even more precious than that Silverlion by ten, or even a hundred times. Do you still want to stay here and waste time?"

Yue Baize had obviously received the same message, notifying him to meet at a certain place. He weighed the situation and glared ferociously at the two. "Wang Han, this matter isn't over!"

He left with the force of a yellow tornado after speaking, swiftly vanishing from Wang Han's sight.

Du Lihuang felt a bit awkward. "Senior brother Wang, then..."

Wang Han thought for a moment. "A rare sight is appearing in Mt. Rippling Mirage. An ancient ruin will certainly reveal itself this time. That hidden herb garden has only appeared once in Myriad Empire history, and that one time was enough to confer more than a thousand years of glory onto the Myriad Domain. Back then, the Myriad Empire obtained several sky rank spirit herbs, resulting in the appearance of four emperor realm cultivators in the next few decades. This was one of the most glorious times of Myriad Domain history. Junior brother Du, don't leave yet; come with me. Our Sacred Sword Palace must have a slice of the pie no matter what this time!"

Chapter 571: Once In Three Thousand Years

Wang Han and Du Luhuang also immediately transformed into two rays of light and sped in the direction Yue Baize had left in.

The place remained silent for a moment, and a figure emerged from the ground. Surprisingly, it was Jiang Chen. He'd sensed Du Lihuang's chase and remained hidden, drawing closer only when he sensed Du Lihuang and Yue Baize exchanging blows. When he saw that Du Lihuang had unintentionally gotten himself into quite a bit of trouble, and saw Wang Han facing off against Yue Baize, Jiang Chen had thought that he was in for a good show between the geniuses. Who knew that the two parties would immediately set aside their grievances and instantly leave after receiving some messages?

"The appearance of a hundred lakes and ripples of mirages? Ancient ruins, hidden herb garden, what's all this?" Jiang Chen suddenly received two message glyphs in quick succession as he stood there, puzzled. One was from Elder Yun Nie, and the other from Ling Bi'er. They both mentioned the same thing; the emergence of a hundred lakes and ripples of mirages...

Elder Yun Nie's glyph also mentioned that Mu Gaoqi had met up with him already.

This was actually the person Jiang Chen had been the most worried about. With Mu Gaoqi's cultivation level, he was without a doubt the weakest genius participating in the Pill Battles. Now that he had met up with Elder Yun Nie, Jiang Chen was much more at ease.

An ancient ruin, and a hidden herb garden. This string of news greatly tempted Jiang Chen. He was about to walk forward when he suddenly came to a halt.

“If even I’ve received news, then so must have those of the Walkabout Sect. Perhaps it might turn out to be a smokescreen that they’ve sent out to lure me out? Perhaps hoping to catch me halfway?” Jiang Chen was thinking through things with an extra layer of caution. If this news was true, then the elders of the Walkabout Sect could very well ambush him halfway and take the sky spirit herb. But if this was false, the elders would still attack him on his way in. No matter whether this news was true or not, things wouldn’t look too good for him if he just charged in haphazardly. As he worked out the ramifications of the news, Jiang Chen decided to still be as careful as possible.

He decided to first take a walk around the outskirts. Everyone was charging inwards to the meeting point right now, so the area would be rather busy. The outskirts actually turned into a haven for him, and he made many gains after wandering around for another day.

Things were precisely as he had surmised. Elder Wu Hen and Elder Wu Qi had thought that Jiang Chen would fall into their trap like a moth to a flame. However, they still came up empty-handed even after keeping careful watch for quite a while.

Elder Wu Qi was a bit dejected, “Brother Daoist Wu Hen, I feel like that kid has been thoroughly scared out of his wits. He’s probably made up his mind to not show up. In my opinion, we

should go to the rendezvous first. If we're any later, they'll probably leave us behind and go by themselves."

Elder Wu Hen gritted his teeth. He hadn't thought that Jiang Chen would be so slippery and not even show a sliver of his face under these circumstances. His irritation was sky high, and he had no place to vent his anger. "Ancient ruins, hidden herb garden..." Elder Wu Hen's heart was also dripping blood. He too knew of that herb garden's existence and how it had once propelled the Myriad Empire to new heights. However, he just somehow felt that compared to the sky rank herb that Jiang Chen definitely had, those unknown rumors weren't worth that much. What if they'd been exaggerated?

"Brother Daoist Wu Hen, if that ancient herb garden is real, there may yet be sky rank herbs once it opens. Jiang Chen could find a sky rank herb even in the lakes of the outskirts, how could there be none in the herb garden itself? With our Walkabout Sect's strength, we'll figure out a way to seize a sky rank herb as long as it appears!" Elder Wu Qi continuously tried to convince Elder Wu Hen. His heart was actually afire with anxiety. He didn't want to waste time on this pointless waiting. He felt that waiting for Jiang Chen to walk into their trap was a nothing more than fanciful thought. What if he didn't come? They'd have wasted their time for nothing. He'd already gotten a sky rank spirit herb, there was no need to become embroiled in these muddy waters again.

Elder Wu Hen was still a bit hesitant. He really didn't want to give up just like this. "Let's wait a bit longer. We can go to the meeting point if he still hasn't shown up by daybreak."

Elder Wu Qi sighed lightly, realizing that Elder Wu Hen must hate Jiang Chen a great deal. From a certain aspect, the sky rank herb was no longer the primary motive here, but rather Elder Wu Hen's own pride.

"Alright, let us hope that that scum shows up tonight." Elder Wu Qi also knew just as well that there was little hope of that.

There were indeed a handful of disciples who passed by them, but they were all of other sects. Elder Wu Hen kept watch almost all night long, but not hair nor hide of Jiang Chen was seen. When light began to appear in the east, Elder Wu Hen knew that there was nothing to be done and didn't voice a word of protest. He silently withdrew the poison formation with Elder Wu Qi and made for the gathering spot.

"There's no need to be frustrated, Brother Daoist Wu Hen. If Jiang Chen appears at the meeting point, we'll still have a chance to make a move towards him. If he doesn't, we'll also have the chance to obtain a sky rank spirit herb with the opening of the ancient herb garden." Elder Wu Qi attempted to comfort the other. With the way things had progressed, these were the only platitudes that he could offer.

Jiang Chen was loitering around the outskirts but remaining in contact with Ling Bi'er. They weren't far away from each other now, and could speak to each other silently.

"Haha, it seems that Elder Wu Hen is indeed laying in wait for me outside and only rushing to the meeting point now. Mm? Elder Wu Qi is also accompanying him?" Jiang Chen had made an agreement

with Ling Bi'er that she would tell him as soon as Elder Wu Hen appeared at the rendezvous point. He'd just received her message that Elder Wu Hen had appeared, as well as Elder Wu Qi.

"Elder Wu Qi, hmm?" Jiang Chen was a bit surprised. "That Elder Wu Hen wouldn't have really gone and violated the oath to leak news to Elder Wu Qi, would he?" His thoughts instantly started turning another direction after these words. "Ah, he was purposefully playing for time earlier and must have messaged Elder Wu Qi before swearing to the oath!"

He was sweating profusely when he finished speaking aloud. Elder Wu Hen was truly a wily old fox. Jiang Chen had been so careful, but had still almost fallen victim to a trap. If he hadn't retreated in time, then he really might've been ambushed by those two old fellows by the time Elder Wu Qi made it there!

"That old fox Wu Hen is really thoroughly slippery. I need to be even more careful when I meet him next." This Elder Wu Hen didn't display his emotions easily and kept his cards close to his heart. He was clearly adept at creating falsehoods that lured others into relaxing their guard. Unless one could completely trample him, one had to constantly be on their guard against him, no matter what. But since Elder Wu Hen had already gone to the rendezvous point, Jiang Chen was no longer worried about traps.

He quickly sped over and arrived at the meeting point with an enormous bound after roughly two hours. Almost all the forty people in the two successive batches that had entered the mountain had gathered here at this point. Elder Wu Qi was slightly surprised by his presence and glanced quickly at Elder Wu Hen.

Jiang Chen caught this small movement out of the corner of his eyes. This made him even more certain that the old fox had long since used some method to notify Elder Wu Qi. Otherwise, he wouldn't have dared reveal the secret of the sky rank herb after the oath was sworn. The heavens themselves would've descended to deliver calamitous judgment onto the Walkabout Sect if he'd broken that oath. The human heart could be lied to, but the heavenly dao would brook no falsehood.

"You're finally here, Brother Chen!" Mu Gaoqi was overjoyed to see Jiang Chen. Although Ling Bi'er didn't wear her heart on a sleeve like Mu Gaoqi, her delicate features also relaxed slightly as she saw him.

Jiang Chen joined up with the Regal Pill Palace retinue and ignored the looks of assessment from Elder Wu Hen and Elder Wu Qi. These two fellows were likely burning with fury, but didn't dare do anything to him.

"Junior brother, I found one of the spirit herbs on your list—Tranquil Jade Sumi." Ling Bi'er walked over joyfully to tell Jiang Chen her good news.

Jiang Chen smiled slightly and responded in a low tone, "I've gotten one as well. Let's talk about it later."

He didn't dare talk about the Aletheia Icegrass. Once that was exposed, he would attract hatred from both Ku Zhu and Du Lihuang.

Ling Bi’er was overjoyed by his news. Jiang Chen had once said that he would have seventy to eighty percent chance in awakening her father if they collected these four main ingredients. Now that she’d found one and junior brother Jiang Chen had found one, there were only two spirit herb ingredients away from curing her father.

There was finally a glimmer of hope after a decade of struggling with this ailment. Ling Bi’er felt her nose tingle in this moment as she suppressed the urge to bawl loudly. She looked at Jiang Chen, a vague, murky feeling arising within her heart to join the gratitude that had already settled there. Her heart, which had remained serene and tranquil for twenty years, had now begun to stir to life. Her junior brother Jiang Chen had descended from the skies as if an immortal on a white horse, pulling her out of the mire to resolve all her problems. Before he’d arrived, all those forefathers of pill dao and those so-called geniuses had all run their mouths, but none of them had stepped forward to resolve the issue.

Jiang Chen nodded at Ling Bi’er and walked over to Elder Yun Nie, speaking a few words before confirming the veracity of the rumors, that it wasn’t something Elder Wu Hen had made up. “Jiang Chen, no one had known of those rumors before either. There were quite a few ancient books in the ruins of the Myriad Empire after it had fallen. Apart from the heavyweights of the fourth rank sects in the Myriad Domain knowing of this, it hasn’t traveled to anywhere else.”

The emergence of a hundred lakes, a rippling mirage, ancient ruins, hidden herb garden...

“How much of these rumors are true?” Jiang Chen was curious.

“Since they were recorded in even the annals of Myriad Empire history, there shouldn’t be much falsehood to them. History speaks of this ancient herb garden as a divine miracle, and that the Empire was truly strong for a while because of its appearance. To put it bluntly, this ancient herb garden is what created the strong Myriad Empire of yesteryear.” Elder Yun Nie explained patiently, but gave a sigh as he came to a close. “It’s a pity that this scene has only appeared once, three thousand years ago. Therefore, everyone suspects that this herb garden appears only appears once in three thousand years.”

Jiang Chen nodded lightly. With his understanding of ancient ruins and forbidden areas, they usually all had their own pattern in opening. If they lost that pattern, then there would be only one reason—

Order had collapsed.

Chapter 572: The Ulterior Motives Of The Tristar Sect

“Everyone, most of us have arrived by now. In that case, I have a few suggestions to offer, if you’re willing to hear them out.” An elder from the Great Cathedral spread his hands to calm the crowd as he addressed them.

No one spoke as they all turned to look at him. The speaker was Xiang Gan, the foremost elder of the Great Cathedral. Although he wasn’t as old as Xiang Wentian of the Sacred Elephant family, he was still around nine hundred years old and a pillar of his sect. This kind of old monster boasted an unparalleled strength and was absolutely a top tier existence in this crowd. Therefore, none of the others objected to him speaking up.

“The first, and the most important issue, lies with the matter of confidentiality. I trust that none of you need me to go over the Myriad Domain’s history. This ancient herb garden has once brought glory to the region, and the care with which it was kept secret is the reason why the Myriad Domain has yet to be conquered by others. This matter of confidentiality isn’t just one of the herb garden, but one that has to do with the fates of all our sects. I trust that no one here wants an armed force to invade one day and seize our territory, claim our resources, and enslave our descendants?”

Confidentiality was certainly a must. Everyone nodded in acquiescence.

“Right, we must keep this secret. Everyone must rise up together

and condemn those who reveal its presence!”

“We must keep this secret, or we’ll bring down disaster on ourselves.”

Elder Yun Nie also nodded. “I quite agree with Elder Xiang Gan in this matter. If we don’t keep this to ourselves, we will surely invite calamity.”

When someone with as much authority as Elder Yun Nie had spoken, those from the other sects naturally couldn’t remain quiet. They all spoke of their intentions to keep the secret.

In the end, Elder Xiang Gan nodded. “Verbal promises are useless. I hope everyone can swear a heavenly oath, that apart from the heavyweights of our sects discussing the matter of the ancient herb garden, no one can reveal its existence in any way, shape or form. This includes us heavyweights as well, we cannot reveal its existence in any way, shape or form. If any sect reveals its presence, then that sect must be punished by a heavenly tribulation!”

“Right, only the heavenly oath can bind us all!”

Elder Xiang Gan’s solemn gaze swept past everyone’s face. It was evident that he didn’t want anyone to slip through the cracks.

Most were highly supportive of this proposal, because this matter didn’t only affect their personal gains and losses, but had to do

with the survival of each sect. It even impacted the future development of the Myriad Domain.

Jiang Chen stood behind Elder Yun Nie, his face carefully expressionless. His attention wasn't on the Walkabout Sect, but rather discreetly on the Tristar Sect. Of the forty total from the two batches who should be present, there should've been six from this sect. Yet, there were only four present. Jiang Chen knew that Ding Tong occupied one of the slots, but he would never appear now. That still left one person from the Tristar Sect who was absent.

Everyone had agreed to Elder Xiang Gan's proposal, even the two elders from the Tristar Sect. They too nodded and felt that this should remain confidential. Jiang Chen found that to be a bit odd. Could it be that these elders didn't know that the Tristar Sect had privately thrown in their lot with the Ninesuns Sky Sect? They would certainly reveal the secret then, so why were they acting so natural and proactive now?

Once the oath was sworn, they would be bound to silence and therefore unable to pass this secret along. Apart from the two elders present, there were also two young disciples present as well. One of them was Zhu Feiyang, and the other was a girl named Mei Ruoxi. Jiang Chen had a previous impression of her.

He used God's Eye to covertly observe Zhu Feiyang, noting that while his expression was natural and he'd put on a dashing air, there was still an unnatural hint in his gaze. However, Jiang Chen never would've noticed had he not been keeping a close eye on Zhu Feiyang. It was rather Mei Ruoxi who didn't betray the slightest

reaction. She only nodded slightly when she heard Elder Xiang Gan's suggestion, and her expression didn't seem to be an act either.

"Zhu Feiyang must know of the arrangement between the Tristar Sect and Ninesuns Sky Sect. As for Mei Ruoxi, either her acting skills are too good or she's still in the dark. And what's going on with those two elders? Logically speaking, they shouldn't be this proactive, right? Is it because they're unaware of their interaction with the Sky Sect and so don't have a guilty conscience?" Jiang Chen didn't think that to be the case, because although the two elders appeared quite proactive, they were still acting to a certain degree. But what did they benefit from doing so?

"How will they leak this to the Sky Sect once they swear a heavenly oath?" Jiang Chen kept turning this question over in his mind. If possible, he would like nothing more than to expose the Tristar Sect. But reason told him that if he exposed the Tristar Sect now, he would have no evidence or credibility.

With the Sacred Sword Palace's dratted personality and the Walkabout Sect's own hostility towards him, they would certainly ally together to speak against Jiang Chen. Then, it would be easy enough to catch him on the back foot. He was not so brash as to play a losing hand.

Jiang Chen sank into thought, and suddenly felt occasional looks of hatred shooting towards him from the Walkabout Sect's side. He didn't need to turn his head to know that it was coming from Wei Qing.

Jiang Chen naturally couldn't be bothered with someone who was about to die. But when his thoughts wandered to the Walkabout Sect, he suddenly remembered something.

"Right! That should be it!" Jiang Chen abruptly recalled Elder Wu Hen's heavenly oath. There had been nothing wrong with it, but that he'd already sent the information onto Elder Wu Qi before he'd made the oath. In this regard, he couldn't be viewed as having violated the oath whether in terms of cause and effect or precedence.

"Could it be that the Tristar Sect is also attempting a similar play?" The more Jiang Chen thought it through, the more likely it looked to him.

As his thoughts spun rapidly, those from the Great Cathedral had already finished their vows. The content was quite stringent, and not the slightest loophole could be detected. The Dark North Sect and Walkabout Sect also walked forward to swear their oaths. When it came to the Regal Pill Palace, Elder Yun Nie and the others all swore, and Jiang Chen walked up to emulate them too. The Sacred Sword Palace was next, and there was no problem with them either.

Last came the Tristar Sect, and one of the elders spoke with a solemn expression, "I swear that I will not reveal the matter of the ancient herb garden after leaving this place, and promise that those who have learned of this matter here today will not reveal this secret to the outside world in any way, shape or form. If we do so, then may the heavenly oath annihilate my Tristar Sect!"

Jiang Chen couldn't help but laugh coldly inside when he heard this wordplay. This oath seemed just as stringent as everyone else's, but the other sects might not have this kind of loophole when they made their oaths. However, Jiang Chen suspected their secret and picked up on the loophole immediately.

"After you leave!" He snorted coldly. "Herein lies the loophole. If he reveals the existence of this place before he leaves, then that's not within the boundaries of the oath. Then his so-called heavenly oath won't be binding!"

What a nice verbal feint! The words of swearing not to "tell the outside world in any way, shape or form of what we learn of today" would have no meaning at all then. All one had to do was to reveal the secret before making this oath, then what did it matter if the one who knew the secret revealed it or not? Only one was needed to reveal it, and that person wasn't covered under the oath.

"Nice plotting and planning!" Jiang Chen had to admire these old fellows. Not a single one of them were easy characters, and each were more slippery than the other. He flicked a glance over at Elder Wu Hen. It was apparent that even one as slippery as Elder Wu Hen hadn't detected the hidden catch in this Tristar Sect elder's words. Elder Wu Hen would've never dreamed that the Tristar Sect was the Ninesuns Sky Sect's dog! Only Jiang Chen, because of his previous experience, knew that the Tristar Sect was the Myriad Domain's traitor and would pay attention to this loophole. How would the others pay attention to something as miniscule as this when they didn't know the Tristar Sect's particulars? Not to mention that everyone was already thinking it was just and right to contain the secret. As a member of the Myriad Domain, it wasn't a simple matter of becoming a public enemy if

they revealed this secret, but really a type of suicide as well. When the enemy invaded and swept everyone present up, then who would be able to emerge unscathed?

Elder Xiang Gan smiled with satisfaction when those of the Tristar Sect finished their oaths. “Good, I trust that no one has any more doubts of the secrecy of our undertaking here.”

Jiang Chen however, sent a silent message to Elder Yun Nie. “Elder, there should be forty here, but there’s only thirty five. There are five who have yet to arrive.”

Elder Yun Nie didn’t think much of it. “They must not have gotten here in time, or were already lost?”

Jiang Chen was actually giving the elder a subtle reminder, but the elder wasn’t understanding the hint. So he prodded him once again, “There’s a loophole in everyone’s vows that they can take advantage of. They all said that they will not reveal the secret after leaving, then what if they tell their absent comrades before they swear the oath? Then that means the oath doesn’t apply to those not here.”

These words were clearly spoken and instantly reminded Elder Yun Nie. His expression shifted as he suddenly said, “Ole brother Xiang Gan, can this little brother speak a few words?”

Xiang Gan gave the Regal Pill Palace quite a bit of face as he smiled, “What would ole brother Yun Nie like to add on?”

The two sects had just conducted a Longevity Pill transaction and so were in a honeymoon period. Elder Yun Nie spoke, “According to logic, there are now forty people inside on the thirteenth day, but there are only thirty five present. This means five are yet to arrive. Everyone’s oath has spoken of not revealing the secret after we leave, but there was nothing said of before swearing the oath. What if someone has already alerted their companions before swearing? Then those who have yet to arrive wouldn’t be within the scope of the heavenly oath! Wouldn’t this be a small loophole?”

Elder Yun Nie’s words weren’t particularly aimed at anyone, but everyone nodded slightly after he spoke. He seemed to make a great deal of sense.

Chapter 573: The Sacred Sword Palace Elicits Public Anger

Elder Xiang Gan paused briefly as he digested the words, and then slapped his thigh. “Ole brother Yun Nie is a thoughtful one after all! We almost let such a loophole slip past us! Everyone, count up your people and report anyone from your sect who has yet to arrive! This is no small matter, so no mistakes will be tolerated!” Elder Xiang Gan was a highly principled person and immediately issued orders after receiving this reminder.

Jiang Chen relaxed slightly when he saw that Elder Xiang Gan was emphasizing an ironclad oath. He’d done all he’d could at this point, and had given all the reminders he could. That the Tristar Sect was colluding with an enormous entity like the Ninesuns Sky Sect was something that he couldn’t change on his own. Jiang Chen could only take things one step at a time. So, he would just keep a careful eye on the situation, and expose the Tristar Sect at a suitable moment.

He discreetly kept an eye on their reactions, and noted that the two Tristar Sect elders did indeed have a barely perceptible shadow flash past their brows after Elder Yun Nie’s speech. Zhu Feiyang even frowned unconsciously. Mei Ruoxi however, nodded lightly, quite in agreement with Elder Yun Nie.

“It looks like Mei Ruoxi’s still in the dark. Her level isn’t high enough to know.” Their reactions was more than enough for Jiang Chen to form a basic analysis. It turned out, Zhu Feiyang absolutely knew the truth.

Those who had yet to arrive were quickly tallied up. There were two from the Tristar Sect, and one each from the Dark North Sect, Sacred Sword Palace, and Walkabout Sect.

“I don’t care what methods you use; get in contact with them immediately. If you are unable to do so, you must swear the oath again to include those absent. No oversights will be tolerated. This isn’t aimed at you, but out of consideration for the greater picture of the Myriad Domain.” Elder Xiang Gan’s words were tough, but indeed reasonable.

Elder Wu Qi of the Walkabout Sect responded, “The other elder of our sect should be here shortly.”

“There’s a disciple missing from the ranks of our Dark North Sect, but we’re unable to get in touch with him. He may be lost to us. However, we can swear the oath again and include him within it whether alive or dead.”

The Sacred Sword Palace also spoke up to report that they’d gotten in touch with their person and that they’d be here momentarily. Only the Tristar Sect remained mum.

“Elder Tan Lang, what of your Tristar Sect?” Elder Xiang Gan smiled faintly.

The elder in question was feeling extremely conflicted at the moment, but could only accept reality. “The other elder of my sect will be here shortly. We’re unable to get in contact with disciple Ding Tong at the moment.”

Elder Xiang Gan nodded, “Then we can only swear the oath again.”

Elder Tan Lang was dejected, but he could only smile faintly. “But of course.”

The others all arrived after roughly another hour. Apart from the missing Dark North Sect disciple, Ding Tong of the Tristar Sect was also absent. The other thirty eight candidates were all present, and they were mostly of the six great sects.

“Alright, there are still two who are not here. All of the various sects need to reaffirm their oaths.” Elder Xiang Gan was absolutely impartial and didn’t allow anyone to gloss over things. Everyone ultimately swore their oaths again under his supervision.

Elder Tan Lang was the epitome of dejection. Not only had they lost their loophole, but another alarming issue had cropped up—where was Ding Tong? Even Zhu Feiyang found this odd, much less Elder Tan Lang. Ding Tong was such a great character, how could he possibly have met with an accident in Mt. Rippling Mirage? However, neither Elder Tan Lang nor Zhu Feiyang knew that Ding Tong hadn’t done anything other than make straight for Jiang Chen after entering Mt. Rippling Mirage. Ding Tong was prideful by nature and didn’t think much of a so-called genius like Zhu Feiyang. Therefore, there were many things that Ding Tong hadn’t told the Tristar Sect at all.

Such as the fact that he was also there on Third Senior Brother

Yong Xingyun orders to kill Jiang Chen, for example. He would never have been inclined to reveal this. This was also why Elder Tan Lang and Zhu Feiyang wasn't connecting his disappearance to Jiang Chen. Even if they knew about it, they likely wouldn't have thought that someone as strong as Ding Tong would've been taken out by Jiang Chen.

Elder Xiang Gan only spoke again after verifying that there was nothing amiss with everyone's oath. "This is the thirteenth day, and the formations to the mountain will close in seven days. Thus, time waits for no one. I'd like to obtain everyone's opinions now. Do we wait for the third batch to arrive before entering the ancient herb garden, or do we go in now?"

"Now, now! Time is precious and we'll only have five days left when the third batch enters. It's not worth it to waste three days waiting for them."

"Right, we need to go in first. Three days is more than enough to get a lot of good things!"

This didn't even need to be discussed at all. Everyone advocated for entering right then.

Elder Xiang Gan took a look around and smiled. "It looks like everyone has the same thoughts. But if we go in first, what of those who come after?"

"What about them? We can't wait."

“Right, we can’t pass up on this opportunity. Why don’t we leave behind a few folks to wait for them?”

“Mm, that’s certainly an idea.”

Elder Xiang Gan laughed softly. “Who’s willing to stay?”

Everyone suddenly became deaf and mute after he asked this question, pretending they hadn’t heard. Who was willing to stay? No one was willing to give up the chance to enter the ancient herb garden. It wasn’t fair no matter who stayed behind. But they couldn’t not leave someone behind. When the third batch entered and saw the phenomenon of the hundred lakes materializing and the rippling mirage, they would certainly recognize the signs ofthe ancient herb garden. Without the heavenly oath binding them, they could very well reveal its existence after leaving.

Elder Yun Nie thought momentarily. “How about this, every sect will leave someone behind. That’s fairest to everyone.”

It was actually the Walkabout Sect who was the first to agree to this proposal. Elder Wu Hen nodded expressionlessly. “I think this is fair. The best is if the one who stays behind is an elder level personage. Only this way will they be able to enforce restrictions on the third batch.”

But now, the elder from the Sacred Sword Palace refused to agree. He was the only elder present from the Sacred Sword Palace. If he stayed, then only three of the young disciples could enter, placing Sacred Sword Palace at a great disadvantage. Of the eight

from the Regal Pill Palace and the Walkabout Sect, they'd all entered within the first two batches. It wasn't critical whether they had one more or one less within the herb garden.

"That would be inappropriate. There's only four of us here from the Sacred Sword Palace, and leaving behind the only elder for the three youngsters to go in isn't fair." The Sacred Sword Palace elder shook his head.

However, none of the other sects agreed. Apart from the Sacred Sword Palace, the others had more or less a full complement present. Apart from the Tristar Sect, all of them had at least six present. The Regal Pill Palace and Walkabout Sect even had all eight of their people there. Although the Tristar Sect and Dark North Sect had each lost a person, there were still six each from their two groups. There was also six present from the Great Cathedral. Only the Sacred Sword Palace had just four.

Elder Yun Nie smiled faintly. "Is it only fair that each of the other sects will leave behind one, but none remain from your Sacred Sword Palace?"

The Sacred Sword Palace elder snorted coldly. "Yun Nie, your Regal Pill Palace may have been the champion of the Pill Battles, but your words don't carry any weight here!"

Elder Xiang Gan frowned. "Then do you have any better suggestions, ole brother Chen?"

Elder Chen paused, but shook his head. "I have no good

suggestions, but I will absolutely not agree to remain outside."

Elder Xiang Gan's face darkened. "Since Elder Chen thinks it unfair and objects to a proposal that everyone thinks is reasonable, we can't force him either. In this case, we should just wait another three days and enter the ancient herb garden only after the third batch of people come in."

Vigorous complaints started shooting off when those words dropped.

"How will that do? I say it's fair that one person from each sect stays! Elder Chen, none of us have any opinions to the contrary, but your Sacred Sword Palace is the only one that has an issue?"

"Right, you can't ruin things for everyone just because you don't agree!"

"One rat stool is enough to ruin a pot of soup. Some people should strive not to become public enemy number one of the Myriad Domain!"

Those of the Sacred Sword Palace all had frosty expressions after hearing these words being thrown at them. The young disciples had livid expressions, visibly displeased by this kind of mockery.

Elder Chen snorted coldly. "Then we wait three days! I have nothing against that."

The others from the Sacred Sword Palace would enter in the third batch. It would be fairer when all of them were present.

“I object!” Xiang Qin from the Great Cathedral roared out.

Yue Baize from the Sacred Lion family also sniffed derisively. “I too object. I happen to have a grudge to settle with Du Lihuang of the Sacred Sword Palace as well.”

“I also think it’s a joke to wait three days.” First disciple Lin Hai of the Dark North Sect also stepped forth.

Shen Qinghong nodded as well. “What, do you expect us to sit here and wait for three days, all of us glaring at each other? What a joke!”

Zhu Feiyang from the Tristar Sect also laughed. “It is indeed inappropriate to waste three days.”

Wei Qing from the Walkabout Sect chuckled as well. “Brother Wang Han, I have to remain neutral this time.”

The Walkabout Sect was actually the least willing to wait three days. But considering that there were signs of the Sacred Sword Palace and the Walkabout Sect forming an alliance, he wasn’t at leisure to step forth in open objection.

Although the older generation had yet to speak, the attitudes of the younger generation had already said it all. No one was willing

to wait three days.

“Old brother Chen, public opinion is hard to dispute. You should decide what to do then.” Elder Xiang Gan didn’t threaten, but his words were obviously an ultimatum.

“Old bother Xiang, we only have four from our sect here at the moment. If I stay behind, won’t the three youngsters be at a disadvantage after they go in? Why must my Sacred Sword Palace silently eat this kind of loss just like that?” Elder Chen was still unaccepting.

“How ludicrous! Why are there only four here from your Sacred Sword Palace? No one forced this situation down your throats. Who are you to throw blame around when it’s your own abilities that came up subpar?”

Those who’d entered the mountain were based off the Pill Battle rankings. The other four from the Sacred Sword Palace were ranked 21 to 30 and would come in with the third batch.

“I’ll stay!” Vice Head Wang Yue of the Herbal Hall volunteered from the Regal Pill Palace’s side. He was second only to Elder Yun Nie in the Herbal Hall, so his words carried great weight.

A green haired elder volunteered from the Walkabout Sect. “I’ll stay as well.”

“I’ll remain behind.”

“I too.”

Elders from the Great Cathedral and Dark North Sect also quickly stepped forth as volunteers.

Chapter 574: The Rippling Mirage Formation

Each of the remaining five sects had assigned an elder to stay behind after a little conversation amongst themselves.

All eyes turned to affix the Sacred Sword Palace. Evidently, if the sect tried to blather or argue again, they would attract harsh criticism and combined suppression from the other five sects.

Elder Chen's face looked hard and bitter. "We're all from the Myriad Domain. We should be crossing the river in the same boat in this situation. Are you all trying to band together to shunt the Sacred Sword Palace aside?"

Everyone remained silent. At this time, silence was golden.

Elder Xiang Gan waved his hands dismissively and said impatiently, "Ol' Chen, you're just wasting everybody's time now. Right now, everyone is trying to persuade you with fair and kind words; you don't want to incite mass outrage, do you?"

"That's right! Are you staying or not? We just need a single word of agreement from your Sacred Sword Palace. Stop wasting our time."

"Elder Chen, either you stay behind or all of your Sacred Sword Palace remains here."

“Elder Chen, you could stay here with the younger generation of Sacred Sword Palace if you’re afraid they’ll be bullied inside. You can then enter together with all of your people when they arrive three days later. We won’t object to that either.”

The situation looked like it would soon grow out of hand in the face of such boiling emotions. No one could remain calm when the ancient herb garden was right in front of them. Think of the rumors! This herb garden had caused the Myriad Empire to enter an unprecedented era of glory! Now that it had appeared three thousand years later, this presented another chance for the Myriad Domain to shake up their world. They would lose out tremendously if they didn’t take advantage of this.

If it was even Palace Head Wang Jianyu in front of everyone here at this moment, the crowd might still refuse to show him face, much less a mere Sacred Sword Palace elder.

Jiang Chen had kept quiet all along and hadn’t fanned the flames further. He knew that whether in terms of status or martial dao strength, he had no right to speak. It’d be best if he kept quiet and silently collected his wealth.

Since the Walkabout Sect now had a good relationship with the Sacred Sword Palace, Elder Wu Hen tried to help resolve the issue. “Ol’ Chen, if you have faith in me. I will help look after the disciples from your sect after they enter. Although I can’t guarantee they will do such-and-such, but I can promise you that they won’t be mistreated.”

If there was anyone who could be called the most eager to enter

the ancient herb garden, that would be Elder Wu Hen. So, it was a matter of course for him to try smooth things over. Elder Chen contemplated this new offer for a while. He noted the other sects' covetous demeanor; if he didn't agree to this, then Sacred Sword Palace might really be ostracized and be a common public target.

"How could I possibly refuse Brother Wu Hen's words? Ol' Xiang, I can stay behind, but I want you to promise me that you won't let our younger generation suffer or get taken advantage off inside there." Elder Chen knew of the enmity between Du Lihuang and the Great Cathedral's Yue Baize. If by any chance, the Great Cathedral's younger generation were to create trouble, the Sacred Sword Palace's youngsters would absolutely come off worse in the following exchanges.

Xiang Qian said faintly, "I can only make sure that my Great Cathedral won't seek revenge from the Sacred Sword Palace. Other than that, I cannot promise anything else."

Elder Chen was actually worried that those crazies from the Great Cathedral would take the opportunity to make trouble for them. "As long as Great Cathedral doesn't make trouble for us, then there's nothing for me to be worried about. Not to mention that Elder Wu Hen will look after my people."

Elder Xiang Qian nodded, "Then, it's decided. You six will stay behind and wait until the third batch of people has arrived before you enter again. Remember, make sure they swear to the heavens. There must not be a single loophole. Whoever refuses to make the oath shall become the common enemy of the entirety of the Myriad Domain. Anyone will have the right to punish them."

Everyone was in favor of those words.

The elders who'd chosen to stay behind sat down cross-legged as a group after making various agreements, whereas the others all dashed inside, one after another.

More mirror-like lakes appeared in front of everyone after moving approximately twenty kilometers inward. Jiang Chen had seen many of these lakes when he was outside. He'd thought it odd then, and had felt that there were certainly a lot of lakes in Mt. Rippling Mirage. He'd obtained his Hidden Chameleon Cloudpine from one of them as well.

It was a pity that although there were many spirit herbs growing around the lakes, but they were mostly low level. Even earth rank spirit herbs were rare, with a complete absence of sky rank spirit herbs. It was obvious that Jiang Chen's had been a happy accident.

The more they walked in, lakes started appearing in higher frequencies, ranging in size and ship and dotting the landscape like stars in the sky. The appearance of a hundred lakes and the rippling mirage. Casting an eye over things, there were many more than a hundred lakes here.

Muffled rumbling sounds like rolling thunder traveled into everyone's ears in the distance as they walked another fifteen kilometers. Everyone unconsciously picked up the pace. Elder Yun Nie issued some reminders in a low voice, "Everyone be careful, and don't panic. It's impossible for there not to be any risk in the

ancient herb garden.”

A waterfall that looked like the rivers of the nine heavens soon came into view. It was as if someone had torn a rip in the bed of the heavenly rivers, forcing it to crash down endlessly. The waterfall extended into the clouds, and its width was unmeasurable. It pounded the rocks from great heights with dominating momentum, causing a slight pain as one’s eardrums began to ratter.

There were hazy ripples of water around the waterfall, seemingly real but also illusory. They were tangible mirages without material form, presenting the visual impact of indistinct, ethereal beauty. When the sunlight shone on the ripples, it fractured into stunning colors that interwove in the air, creating long arcs of rainbows and appearing extraordinarily beautiful in the air.

“Tsk tsk, is this the true Mt. Rippling Mirage?” Everyone was captivated by the marvelous sight in front of them. They’d just entered Mt. Rippling Mirage, but hadn’t thought that there would be even more beautiful illusionary sights within. It gave rise to endless wonderful daydreams.

However, Jiang Chen could discern that the layers of intersecting ripples were actually part of a very strong defense formation. If ordinary folks didn’t detect the formation and rushed up to examine it, they would absolutely be instantly destroyed by the formation. However, he could also see that the formation seemed to be slowly opening as the ripples shifted and changed. Apparently the three thousand year cycle was marked by the opening of the formation.

“It looks like the rumors weren’t false.” Jiang Chen knew that the formation would be thoroughly open after another hour of helping it along, loosening up its layers.

“Heh heh, Baize, behind the waterfall must be the entrance to the ancient herb garden. How about you and I take the lead?” Xiang Qin from the Sacred Elephant family was chomping at the bit and invited Yue Baize from the Sacred Lion family to come be part of the vanguard.

However, Elder Xiang Gan not quite shouted, “Don’t be reckless!”

Xiang Qin started. “Elder, I remember that the rumors say that when the water curtain of the waterfall opens, that is considered the entrance of the herb garden. Was that wrong?”

“It’s accurate, but to recklessly charge in like you’re doing and disturb the formation is no different from just going to your death!” What level was Elder Xiang Gan’s cultivation? He’d naturally see through the ripples to the profound mysteries of this formation.

“Formation?!” Xiang Qin’s eyes widened, betraying his astonishment, as he took a closer look at the hazy mirages. “Those beautiful rainbows are a formation?”

“Hmph, would it be called the ancient herb garden if it was so easy to enter? A formation that opens once in three thousand years, even emperor realm cultivators likely don’t dare charge in

blindly, much less you!”

Apart from the elders present, it was likely only Jiang Chen who’d been able to detect the formation in the younger generation. Even if the Dark North Sect specialized in formations, or whether its young disciples curbed their impulses and were patiently listening to an elder analyze the formation, they were only scratching the surface. There was no hope for them to thoroughly analyze the formation. But even so, they were able to tell that the formation was slowly opening.

Xiang Qin was dejected. “So there’s a formation; do we just sit here and wait? Or do we team up to try to break through it together?”

Lin Hai from the Dark North Sect suddenly laughed. “Brother Xiang Qin, although I don’t fully understand this formation, I can tell you that even if all of our strength increased by tenfold, we still wouldn’t be able to break the formation.”

“That ridiculous?” Xiang Qin knew that the Dark North Sect specialized in formations, and so didn’t doubt Lin Tai’s words.

“Don’t worry, the formation is slowly opening. It looks like the rumors of the formation opening once every three thousand years were true. If the formation doesn’t open by itself, I’m afraid that we would be at a loss for options even if all the experts in our six sects were here.” Elder Xiang Gan nodded.

Elder Wu Hen looked expressionlessly at the Rippling Mirage

Formation and occasionally flicked a hurried glance at Jiang Chen. It was obvious that his emotions were indisputably complicated at the moment. He lusted both for the ancient herb garden and Jiang Chen's sky rank spirit herb.

Jiang Chen's consciousness was strong, and so even though Elder Wu Hen hid it well, Jiang Chen still sensed it every time Elder Wu Hen snuck a peek his way. "Hmph, that old man is still coveting my sky rank herb."

Jiang Chen wasn't afraid. With so many present, Elder Wu Hen wouldn't dare to openly seize his spirit herb, no matter how domineering he was. He didn't become distracted either, but took the opportunity to carefully examine the formation. It should be something created by an ancient expert back in the day. He estimated that the one who could set up this formation was a formation master who was at least a Great Titled Emperor, or even beyond.

"It looks like the Divine Abyss Continent didn't survive the ages with its present level of strength. The strongest people in the Myriad Domain sits at the peak of the sage realm, and curiously enough, Mt. Rippling Mirage is already present in a mere lower realm like the Myriad Domain. This indicates that there were at least Great Titled Emperors present here in ancient times." Jiang Chen felt that the Myriad Domain had suddenly become entirely mysterious, with all sorts of secrets just waiting to be discovered.

A flare of bright light marked the two hour point, and the hazy, ethereal ripples as well as the intersecting rainbows all suddenly evaporated into the air. Next, that unending water curtain parted

from the middle, revealing a set of ancient and simple silver-colored stone stairs. The stairs were full of an ancient and desolate air, giving one the feeling of setting foot into a desolate and barren era.

"The formation's open, let's go!" Those from the Great Cathedral charged in as soon as Elder Xiang Gan's mouth finished the order.

Chapter 575: The Sage Fledgling Grass

Those from the Walkabout Sect didn't want to be left behind either. They also dashed in under Elder Wu Hen's guidance, followed closely by the Regal Pill Palace and Dark North Sect. The Tristar Sect was hot on their heels, and the three young geniuses from the Sacred Sword Palace naturally brought up the rear.

Wang Han was livid as he watched the Walkabout Sect charge in first. He cursed inwardly, "Wu Hen that old bastard talks a good talk about taking care of us, but he runs faster than a rabbit! Even mountains will fall if you rely on them, and so will water flow away if you try to rely on it. Relying on yourself is the way!"

He spoke to his two junior brothers, "Junior brother Jin, junior brother Du, keep a low profile after you go in. Be on your guard against the Regal Pill Palace."

Wang Hang was well aware that the Regal Pill Palace and Sacred Sword Palace were absolutely irreconcilable. The Regal Pill Palace would have the best opportunity to start trouble after entering the herb garden.

Du Lihuang nodded. "The Regal Pill Palace shouldn't be so bold as to start something if we don't leave Elder Wu Hen's line of sight."

With how things had developed, they still had to shamelessly stick to Elder Wu Hen despite his obvious unreliability. Otherwise, the Sacred Sword Palace disciples would be in for a world of

trouble if those from the Regal Pill Palace encircled them.

"We'll keep as low a profile as possible in the first three days. When our people come in with the third batch, how will we be afraid of them when our Sacred Sword Palace is so strong?" Another genius called Jin Feng responded.

"Yep, so let's settle on this. Let's go in." Wang Han waved his hand and brought his two junior brothers charging in with him.

Jiang Chen followed the Regal Pill Palace elders into the water curtain, leaping up the simple stone steps. There seemed to be no end to them as they endlessly twisted and turned. Several thousand steps later, it opened up to a beautiful valley carpeted in green. Clouds and mists wreathed the valley, and the air was thick with spirit power. As they looked into it from afar, the sight of spirit power whirling into the skies made everyone wonder if they'd set foot in an immortal realm.

"The ancient herb garden!"

These words immediately flashed through everyone's minds. They all knew of it, but had never dreamed that there would be such a large mountain valley hidden within. Judging from the scene in front of them, it was at least a hundred kilometers in radius.

This ancient herb garden is this big? As Jiang Chen pondered the view, those who had entered all shot towards the valley like dumplings being dumped into a pot of water. Each figure vanished

into the haze and mist like stones thrown into water. Jiang Chen didn't hesitate either, streaking towards the mist as well.

He felt a surge of power enclose him like a ripple of water, accelerating him as well as cushioning his descent as he landed on the ground. When his vision recovered from the sudden speed, he discovered that he was deep within the mountain valley. Interestingly, there was no one around him. It seemed that everyone had been sent to different locations. Jiang Chen looked around with God's Eye and secretly summoned a few hundred Goldbiter Rat elites. He silently commanded them, "Go, take all spirit herbs that are saint rank and above. You get half of everything."

Jiang Chen wasn't going to be shy about things at all. He was here already, so why hold himself back? If it wasn't out of consideration that the other Goldbiter Rats were too weak and easily exposed, Jiang Chen would've released all the Goldbiter Rats.

That would've been a bit too over the top though.

If several million Goldbiter Rats had all surged out from the Millionditch Stonenest, they would absolutely be able to make off with everything in the ancient herb garden in the span of a day. But Jiang Chen wasn't that impulsive.

Some of the ordinary Goldbiter Rats' cultivation levels weren't even in the spirit realm. They'd definitely be exposed if they were all released. Once their existence was known and those experts struck back in fury, there would be no end to the ways they could

annihilate the Rats. The Walkabout Sect alone could cause a genocide with their poison techniques, let alone any of the other sects. So although Jiang Chen really wanted to make off with the entire ancient herb garden, he was sensible enough to keep his head.

The Goldbiter Rats had the unique gift of a rather sensitive sense of smell. They were very attuned to spirit herbs and thus highly efficient in finding them. The joint operation from several hundred Goldbiter Rats was enough to lead to large scale gains as well.

As for Jiang Chen himself, he was the epitome of caution. Although there was no one around him, everyone was alone after entering the ancient herb garden, and no one could guarantee that they wouldn't be stabbed in the back.

"The ancient herb garden is on another level indeed. Although this is only the outskirts, the level and quantity of spirit herbs present isn't even comparable to the outside world." Jiang Chen was as if a fish in water along the way as he judged the amount of spirit power present, making off with rich gains every minute. However, although there were more saint rank and true saint rank herbs in the outskirts, there weren't that many earth rank spirit herbs. He only ran into one after walking for half a day, and its quality veered on the lower side.

Jiang Chen's eyes suddenly shifted as he saw a patch of spirit herbs in front of him.

"Mm? This is ...the Sage Fledgling Grass?" Jiang Chen saw that

the patch held blades of spirit grass that looked like infants, interwoven and entwining around each other. They grew together, in large swathes. A rough estimate put several thousand plants in this one patch. Even though Jiang Chen had made great gains before, he was still quite shocked at the sight of this.

"The Sage Fledgling Grass is the key ingredient from the Heroic Sage Pill! The thousands of Sage Fledgling Grass here is enough to refine thousands of Heroic Sage Pills!"

What was the Heroic Sage Pill? It was a type of pill that sage realm cultivators would use in the course of their cultivation. It was similar to the Spirit Consolidation Pill of the spirit realm and Origin Fostering Pill of the origin realm. The higher one's cultivation level was, the more high end one's resource needs would become. The ingredients for such resources would also become more rare.

Take the Spirit Consolidation Pill for example. That was a low level pill in the Regal Pill Palace. As long as one was an inner disciple, one wouldn't want for the pill at all. Some top geniuses like Shen Qinghong had abundant supplies of Origin Fostering Pills. He didn't need to worry about those resources at all.

However, the Heroic Sage Pill was different. In a place like the Myriad Domain, the resources used by the sage realm cultivators were noticeably more precious. This was why there were very few sage realm cultivators in the Myriad Domain. Even a fourth rank sect like the Regal Pill Palace had less than thirty sage realm experts, and the strongest amongst them only ranked in earth sage realm.

A domineering fourth rank sect like the Great Cathedral had noticeably more sage realm cultivators, but their numbers didn't number in the triple digits either. For fifth rank sects, they only had single digit numbers of sage realm cultivators. Some even only had one or two.

This result had mainly come about because of resource constraints. The lack of resources had caused sects to ration their resources for sage realm cultivators, slowing down their cultivation speed. The causal link there was easy to understand. Thus, it was natural that few at the peak of the origin realm were able to break through to the sage realm.

Jiang Chen looked at the large swathes of Fledgling Sage Grass, almost disbelieving his eyes. Although the Grass was a true saint realm spirit herb, its uses weren't something that ordinary true saint realm spirit herbs could compare to. Its ability to be refined into the Heroic Sage Pill was enough to make it one of the most popular true saint spirit herbs.

Just one or two blades were enough to incite fights. If they numbered more than ten, then it was a big transaction. If reaching up to a hundred blades, then it was an absolutely enormous business deal. As for one thousand blades, there was no sect that could suddenly take out this sum of Grass. Even a sect founded for pill dao like the Regal Pill Palace was no exception. But now, there were several thousand blades in front of him! How could this not shock him?

Although Jiang Chen was sorely tempted, he was in no hurry to

make a move. He would never believe that such a large, dense swathe of Sage Fledgling Grass was there for him to harvest as he would.

Just as he was making observations with Psychic's Head, a figure suddenly darted forward and stopped at a distance a few hundred meters from Jiang Chen. The newcomer was Wang Han from the Sacred Sword Palace!

Wang Han also paused slightly when he saw Jiang Chen, killing intent flashing through his face. When his gaze stopped on the Sage Fledgling Grass however, delight also dawned on his face.

"Sage Fledgling Grass?" Wang Han was the disciple of a large sect after all, he was fully capable of identifying most herbs. The visual impact of several thousand blades of Sage Fledgling Grass momentarily stunned even someone who had such lofty standards as Wang Han. However, he only lost his composure for a moment. He immediately looked back with a severe gaze at Jiang Chen. Jiang Chen obviously came here before me, why hasn't he made a move?

The two of them had long since formed a grudge. Just like Jiang Chen and Wei Qin had their differences, so did Jiang Chen and Wang Han. Wang Han smirked coldly, "Jiang Chen, you don't seem all that lucky."

Jiang Chen smiled faintly, "What? You want to claim this all for yourself?"

“You have a problem with that?” In Wang Han’s eyes, what was the difference between a mere fifth level origin realm and an ant? Even if it was Shen Qinghong present, Wang Han thought himself qualified to completely dismiss the other. Ever since breaking through to the sage realm, Wang Han’s standards had grown even higher. There were few in the younger generation who could catch his eye anymore in the Myriad Domain. None of the Regal Pill Palace were included in this list, because the strongest of them, Shen Qinghong, was but half step sage realm. He wasn’t worthy of Wang Han’s attention before taking that final half step.

“So what if I do?” Jiang Chen smiled lightly.

“Go die if you feel otherwise!” Wang Han was decisive and ruthless. He couldn’t be bothered wasting words with Jiang Chen at all as he shook his arms, a beam of sword light behind him soaring to the skies. As this beam rose, it flickered once and emitted hundreds of sword qi blades.

“Die!” Wang Han waved his hand and chopped down fiercely. The boundless sword qi suddenly sealed off the area and rained downwards!

This frightening strength seemed like it would cleave straight through the sky, and arrived in front of Jiang Chen in the span of a breath. It was a good thing that Jiang Chen had long since found a place to escape to. With a brief shudder, he dove beneath the ground.

Bam!

When the sword light landed, frighteningly deep moats ten meters deep instantly crisscrossed the ground where he'd been standing.

"Mm? This kid could evade my Frosty Desolation?" Wang Han was slightly surprised. However, in the next instant, two terrifying auras surged to life behind him. A domineering presence accompanied this strength, and when Wang Han felt it, he immediately realized that his life was now on the line. Without a doubt, he knew... that either one was more than enough to take his life!

Chapter 576: Jiang Chen's Rich!

Wang Han didn't dare take a second to hesitate. He frantically leaped into the air, blurring into a streak of light as he sped for the thick woods on the left. A quick look back confirmed his fears as two enormous wyverns were diving at him. These wyverns were interestingly designed, as their wingspans were abnormally large. A full nine meters wide, the fleshy wings on their back seemed like they could cover the skies.

Wang Han had just evaded the first blow, but the two wyverns hadn't planned on stopping at all. A quick flap of their enormous wings, and they were speeding in Wang Han's direction. Their maws gaped wide as bolts of terrifying purple electricity arced towards Wang Han.

Wang Han was scared out of his wits. These two were thunder wyverns! Judging from their demeanor, they were at least as strong as a human sage realm cultivator. How would Wang Han be able to evade their attacks all by himself? His thoughts spun furiously and came to only one conclusion, flee!

The several thousand blades of Sage Fledgling Grass were indeed highly tempting, and could even change the Sacred Sword Palace's destiny. But compared to his life, of course his life came out on top as more valuable.

Whoosh!

Wang Han spurred himself onwards with a gust of chilly air,

activating a transportation glyph as he hurtled through the air. It was obvious that he knew he had no way to match the wyverns in speed. He would be caught if he was even half a step slower, and that would lead to only his death. In addition, he had already come up with a plan, so he couldn't keep the wyverns on his tail any longer. He had to leave them where they were so they could turn back to Jiang Chen.

Wang Han was well aware that killing Jiang Chen with these wyverns around was near impossible. If he led the wyverns away from here, that would actually be making things easy for Jiang Chen. He would never willingly help Jiang Chen harvest the Sage Fledgling Grass by luring away the wyverns. Wouldn't that be just peachy, hmm? Therefore, Wang Han was very decisive and activated a transportation glyph, breaking through the air in a burst of speed, and throwing the wyverns completely off his trail. He would leave the two wyverns to Jiang Chen. He'd still have a chance to come back for the spirit herbs as long as the wyverns destroyed Jiang Chen. When he died, the secret of the Sage Fledgling Grass would die with him, and Wang Han would be able to pick up this treasure.

One had to say, Wang Han had made quite a good plan on the spur of the moment. The two wyverns were hot on his tail when they suddenly witnessed a flash of light, which completely wiped out any traces of their enemy. The two wyverns looked at each other, unsure of what to do. They were the guardians of this area. As humans hadn't entered this ancient herb garden in three thousand years, that meant that they hadn't had any opponents in three thousand years either. That meant they'd almost never had any run-ins with any enemies.

The two wyverns butted their heads against each other and conversed, eventually coming to the conclusion that they wouldn't be able to catch up to this slippery enemy. They could only turn and head back dejectedly.

They'd only been gone for ten breaths of time to chase Wang Han, but they were shellshocked upon returning. The several thousand blades of Sage Fledgling Grass had all gone missing in that short period!

The wyverns were incensed beyond rationality. The Grass was their food, and someone had stolen it all before they'd had time to enjoy it.

"Aoo!!!"

"Aaoooo!!"

The two wyverns threw their heads back in a long howl to the sky, venting their extreme rage.

"Boss, these humans are too wicked!"

"The person who stole our Sage Fledgling Grass must be the comrade of that human in white! We only need to find that human to be able to find the person who stole the Grass!" Another wyvern lowered its head and growled, looking at the devastation on the ground and how not even half a blade of Sage Fledgling Grass remained behind. They were near to crying tears of flame in their

rage.

“Right, it must be that human’s comrades. I remember his face, let’s go! We’ll go hunt him down!”

“Let’s go!”

The two wyverns were obviously not very intelligent as their mind had yet to truly open up. They had no other thoughts other than concluding that it must be Wang Han’s comrade who’d stolen the Grass. Far away, the person in question had just rematerialized out of the light of the transportation glyph and sneezed suddenly as chills ran all over his body. Wang Han had no idea at all that the two wyverns had invoked a death grudge against him.

He stood where he was and smirked proudly. “Jiang Chen, I hope those two wyverns show you a good time. Champion of the Pill Battles? Let’s see how cocky you can be in front of those wyverns!”

He was strutting in pride when a cold light suddenly flashed in front of his eyes. Two spots of black suddenly appeared in the direction that he was looking in, making straight for him. Wang Han widened his eyes and trembled all over with shock. “Damn it, I even used a transportation glyph, but they’ve caught up so quickly?”

His eyeballs almost fell out in his fright and he didn’t dare linger, immediately speeding off in a ball of cool light. Wang Han had one more transportation glyph, but it was a life-saving treasure. He didn’t want to just waste such a precious thing.

Compared to Wang Han's agonizingly stressful circumstances, Jiang Chen was quite relaxed. When the wyverns had chased after Wang Han the first time, Jiang Chen had called upon a thousand Goldbiter Rats and cleaned up the entire patch of Sage Fledgling Grass. The strength behind Wang Han's stroke just now had been enormous enough to force Jiang Chen to take cover beneath the ground. As a result, he'd remained hidden from the two wyverns. Therefore, when they'd taken off in hot pursuit of Wang Han, he'd stolen all of the Sage Fledgling Grass and shifted all the blame to Wang Han. According to the two wyverns, whoever had stolen the Sage Fledgling Grass was certainly Wang Han's comrade.

Jiang Chen's pockets were now bulging after obtaining several thousand blades of Grass. He wouldn't have any regrets even if he was forced to leave the ancient herb garden right then. He escaped the area through the ground, popping up about roughly fifty kilometers away, only when he was certain that there was no danger. He knew that the wyverns hated Wang Han with a passion now and would chase after him relentlessly, sworn to kill him.

Jiang Chen looked around and noticed nothing more of value around. At least, he couldn't be bothered to collect ordinary spirit herbs anymore. He took a few steps forward to get his bearings, deciding to head deeper into the ancient herb garden. The further one traveled, the higher the levels of the spirit herbs were and subsequently, the greater the chances of high level spirit herbs appearing.

With the Goldbiter Rats emptying out every place they crossed, Jiang Chen only needed three days to fill up his storage ring to a third of its capacity. After these three days, Jian Chen noticed

another group of people entered the ancient herb garden. It seems like the third batch has also entered.

He kept low profile these last few days, proactively evading others as much as possible. With Elder Wu Hen's personality, he would never give up on the Cloudpine. Jiang Chen didn't want to reveal his tracks and attract his attention. He wouldn't have been afraid of ordinary old monsters, but those of the Walkabout Sect were all scheming, devious, and quite adept at poison formations. He wouldn't be guaranteed of victory under this setup even if he summoned Long Xiaoxuan, not to mention the dragon was a trump card he shouldn't reveal under any circumstances.

Jiang Chen came here to harvest spirit herbs, not to engage in pointless conflict. As for Elder Wu Hen, there was no rush to deal with him. There would be plenty of time to settle the score once Jiang Chen raised his strength.

On this particular day, Jiang Chen was getting ready to set out at the first ray of dawn when the light of a transportation glyph touched the ground three hundred meters in front of him. A distraught figure coalesced before fleeing with great speed.

"Gaoqi?" Jiang Chen discerned the identity of this figure at a glance! He was about to open his mouth and call out to Mu Gaoqi, when he noticed the bedraggled state Mu Gaoqi was in; grave injuries covered his body and it seemed he would collapse any moment now from exhaustion. It was obvious someone was chasing after him, and he had used the transportation glyph to shake off the enemy's pursuit.

Jiang Chen was about to greet Mu Gaoqi but forcefully restrained himself. He judged from Mu Gaoqi's posture there was a mark placed on him, so even after using the glyph he was unlikely to escape his pursuers.

Mu Gaoqi leaned against a big tree and swallowed some pills, taking a moment to recover . He grit his teeth, stood back up, and sprinted off into the depths of the shrubbery.

Two more figures arrived at the tree a few breaths after Mu Gaoqi left—they were Du Lihuang of the Sacred Sword Palace and Wei Qing of the Walkabout Sect.

Wei Qing walked around the great tree and smiled sinisterly. "He was here just a moment ago. He can't be far."

Du Lihuang looked at Wei Qing with some admiration. "Brother Wei, your tracking skills are simply amazing! You're even able to find him even after he used the transportation glyph?"

Wei Qing chuckled. "My Walkabout Sect has a secret art of tracking. Once we have a mark, it's rare for us to lose it." When these words left his mouth, he felt his heart spasm. He recalled that one anomaly, Jiang Chen! Their exclusive tracking mark had somehow failed on Jiang Chen back then. Not only was it seen through, but it was even exploited by Jiang Chen who scattered his clothes in every which way to make fools out of Elder Wu Hen and Elder Wu Qi.

Fortunately, it was evident Mu Gaoqi didn't hold a candle to

Jiang Chen. Wei Qing scanned the terrain and pointed in the direction of the thick growth. “The kid’s gone in there. Heh heh, looks like he’s at the end of his rope.”

“Heh heh, let’s go after him!” The two looked at each other and charged into the thick growth

Those two seem really determined on killing Mu Gaoqi. The Sacred Sword Palace and Walkabout Sect even seem to be cooperating to achieve their evil plans. Jiang Chen’s eyes glittered as he looked at their departure, killing intent exploding in his heart. Above all else, Mu Gaoqi was his first good friend in the Regal Pill Palace, how could he let these two hunt his friend down so blatantly?

Mu Gaoqi had finally ran out of ideas. He had even used the transportation glyph to escape his pursuers, but he couldn’t shake them. He tried to send a message glyph to Elder Yun Nie to request for help, but with his cultivation level he was unable to bridge the distance! He considered asking Jiang Chen for help too, but dismissed that thought quickly. Although Jiang Chen was strong, Du Lihuang was at the peak of the origin realm and Wei Qing possessed great skills in poison, they weren’t easy to deal with. He would only be dragging his brother down with him if he asked for help!

Chapter 577: His Only Crime Was His Wealth

After Mu Gaoqi scurried into the thick growth, he slowed down to a walk as he felt his body become weaker and weaker. He knew he had most likely fallen victim to Wei Qing's poison. With his innate wood constitution and his baptism in the wood spirit spring, Mu Gaoqi didn't fear ordinary poisons. Unfortunately, the poisons of the Walkabout Sect were anything but ordinary, quite devious even. Although the poison took effect at a much slower rate than normal due to Mu Gaoqi's uncommon foundations, once he fully activated his origin power, it would still reach all corners of his body.

His feet lost their strength, his every step heavier than the one before. When he finally couldn't support his body any longer, he sat down heavily on the ground. "To think that I, Mu Gaoqi, would fall here!" Tragic feelings assailed his heart. He really didn't want to accept this. He had an innate wood constitution, and was going to fall to his end in this ancient herb garden before he'd had time to show the world his splendor!

Two figures dashed through the shrubbery behind him, landing on either side of Mu Gaoqi. In front of him stood Wei Qing, and behind him was Du Lihuang.

Wei Qing sneered. "Well kid, finally done running away? Or perhaps you want to go for another bout, hmm? Trying to run after you've been hit with my Walkabout Sect's Spirit Restraint Powder? Dream on!"

Although Mu Gaoqi was an intelligent person who usually acted pragmatically and cautiously in response to circumstances, he wasn't someone without courage, particularly so in the face of death. He knew he would die here, but he still refused to lower his head. "Wei Qing, do your worst if you're not afraid of inciting a sect war!"

Wei Qing barked in laughter. "A sect war? Mu Gaoqi, do you take me for an idiot? With your minor origin realm, how far can your message glyph travel? If it could really reach old ghost Yun Nie, why isn't he here to rescue you?"

"Hmph! My sect will definitely conduct an investigation if I die!"

"And what the hell will they investigate? The next time the ancient herb garden opens won't be for another 3,000 years. Who will remember you? Who do you even think you are? Your Regal Pill Palace might not do anything on a large scale even if it was Shen Qinghong, much less just you, Mu Gaoqi!"

Wei Qing was utterly contemptuous of Mu Gaoqi. Du Lihuang, on the other hand, looked at the scene in puzzlement. Mu Gaoqi didn't seem worth wasting time on in his eyes. Was it really worth spending so much effort on a mere minor origin realm cultivator? However, he was always happy to see a Regal Pill Palace disciple down on their luck. If Wei Qing hadn't made a move, Du Lihuang would have been more than happy to go up against Mu Goaqi in a one on one and finish him off with a single stroke. But since Wei Qing insisted on being the villain, he didn't mind enjoying the show.

“Brother Wei, he is only at the minor origin realm. Why are we wasting our time on him? I say you just kill him with a single stroke?” Du Lihuang really did wish to stop wasting time. They were in the ancient herb garden chasing after a mere minor origin realm cultivator. If this wasn’t wasting time, what was? If Wei Qing hadn’t promised such rich rewards, he would have never tagged along.

Wei Qing chuckled. He was plotting on a far deeper level than Du Lihuang. He waved his hands in the air, and said, “If junior brother Du has important matters to attend to, feel free to do so now. I’ll play with this kid for a bit.”

Du Lihuang nodded. He guessed Wei Qing was curious as to how Mu Gaoqi was able to place third. Or perhaps, Wei Qing was interested in Mu Gaoqi’s knowledge on some pill dao secrets or even the Longevity Pill recipe. In fact, Du Lihuang was also curious about this, but he knew this wasn’t the place or time to participate. With a weak smile, he said, “Since that’s the case, would Brother Wei be so kind as to pay up the promised rewards?”

Wei Qing chuckled. “Naturally. If it wasn’t for junior brother Du, it wouldn’t have been this easy to run this kid down.” He took out a storage ring and threw it to Du Lihuang. “It’s all in there, check it out. You’ll see I keep my word.”

Du Lihuang laughed heartily and accepted the storage ring. He hadn’t done too much, but just enough to help Wei Qing close in on Mu Gaoqi and poison him. Du Lihuang felt it only right that he was rewarded for this. He scanned the contents of the storage ring, and as he did, his happy expression froze and a chilly glint flashed

through his eyes. Du Lihuang stared at Wei Qing, and asked, “Brother Wei, why are you giving me an empty storage ring? Are you trying to make fun of me?”

Wei Qing started. “Empty? How is that possible?”

Du Lihuang judged from Wei Qing’s reaction he had made an honest mistake. He threw the ring back, and snarled, “See for yourself.”

Wei Qing caught the ring and slowly stuffed it away without so much as glancing at it. He revealed a bizarre smile as he crossed his hands in front of his chest, staying motionless otherwise.

Du Lihuang became infuriated by this attitude. “Does Brother Wei refuse to own up to his debt?” He wasn’t in this for charity. Du Lihuang spent a great deal of time with Wei Qing taking down Mu Gaoqi. With his unruly personality, how would he accept leaving empty-handed?

Wei Qing chuckled. “Junior brother Du, you only came along for a walk with me. While I captured Mu Gaoqi, you didn’t do anything. I tracked him down. I locked onto his position. I poisoned him. Tell me, just what did you do?”

These words enraged Du Lihuang to the point he almost spit blood. “Brother Wei, if it wasn’t for me being here, would it have been so easy for you to poison that boy?” Fire raged in Du Liahuang’s body. If it wasn’t out of consideration for the fact their two sects, the Sacred Sword Palace and Walkabout Sect, were on

good terms lately, he would've unsheathed his sword and challenged Wei Qing to a duel.

Wei Qing didn't refute Du Lihuang, laughing wildly instead. "Junior brother Du, don't be so greedy. Didn't you already obtain two earth rank spirit herbs? That advanced Purplecloud Ganoderma is truly unparalleled for curing poison."

Each and every word that left Wei Qing's mouth brought Du Lihuang's fury to a new level. He cursed, "Wei Qing, do you have any shame at all, like a certain monopoly hungry company stealing this chapter? I got that Purplecloud Ganoderma before I even met you! Are you going to pay up or not? Speak up!"

"Nope." Wei Qing smiled leisurely.

"You are not afraid I will reveal everything that happened today?" Du Lihuang laughed coldly. Honestly speaking, he was already planning on doing so. If he could help incite a sect war between the Regal Pill Palace and Walkabout Sect, that would be perfect. Sacred Sword Palace could could sweep in at just the right time to remove the thorn in their side once and for all. Even if Regal Pill Palace was destroyed at that time, they would be gravely injured.

Wei Qing was still smiling ever so brightly. "Junior brother Du, weren't you planning on doing so already anyway?"

Du Lihuang laughed loudly. "Naturally. I even collected evidence. When I release it, Mu Gaoqi's death will be on your

head.”

Mu Gaoqi was surprised to see the two turn on each other so suddenly. Not that it mattered much. He was hit with the Spirit Restraint Powder and already lost all strength. He simply couldn’t escape, even if those two fought each other.

Wei Qing should be nervous from Du Lihuang’s words, but instead his smile grew ever wider, turning frighteningly sinister even. He sighed and looked at Du Lihuang with a pitiful expression. “Du Lihuang, did you really think I didn’t see all the little moves you made? Either way, I do have to thank you.”

“Thank me for what?” Du Lihuang’s face frosted over.

“Thank you for gifting me an advanced Purplecloud Ganoderma and another earth rank spirit herb.”

Du Lihuang burst into laughter. “Wei Qing, are you dreaming?”

“One of us is, but it’s not me.” Wei Qing’s sinister smile grew even stronger. “Have you heard of the saying that a man’s wealth is his own ruin? What right do you have to obtain an advanced Purplecloud Ganoderma? Your most idiotic move was asking me to verify it for you! Hahaha!”

Du Lihuang was at the peak of the origin realm, but for some reason, the hair on the back of his neck stood on end when he looked at Wei Qing’s smile. Although his cultivation was ahead of

the eighth level origin realm Wei Qing, he still felt like he had been toyed with. Du Lihuang abruptly moved to circulate his qi, but discovered that there was none in his dantian at all.

"Y-you poisoned me?!" Du Lihuang lost all color in his face, as though all blood was drained from his face in a single second. He found this incredulous. Although he was in Wei Qing's company all along, it wasn't like he hadn't been on his guard. But even with all the precautions he took, it still wasn't enough. He had failed!

Wei Qing flung up the storage ring. "Du Lihuang, had you not wanted payment, I might have had to go through some trouble poisoning you. But luckily you're a greedy bastard, like thieves taking these words without consent. There was enough Spirit Restraint Powder in this storage ring to take out three people. My apologies, but I'll take your earth rank spirit herbs, and I'll reluctantly take your life as well!"

Wei Qing spoke of this lightly, but Du Lihuang was completely horrified. Even Mu Gaoqi was left openmouthed in astonishment. He never expected for his two opponents to be scheming against each other to such depths, which eventually erupted in this scene playing before him. The scheming of Wei Qing was so well thought out, it left Mu Gaoqi horrified horrified. Wei Qing is already so devious with those on his own team, much less me!

Du Lihuang roared out raspily. "Wei Qing, aren't you afraid of inciting a sect war if you kill me?"

"A sect war? Do you think I'll announce to the world I killed you?" Wei Qing smiled faintly and took measured steps toward Du

Lihuang.

Du Lihuang's pupils widened with great speed. He didn't even have the energy left to send a message glyph. To make matters worse, when the Spirit Restraint Powder took effect, it robbed him of all autonomy. He couldn't even access his storage ring to destroy the two herbs anymore.

"Brother Wei, why can't we talk this out? We, our two sects, should be facing our enemy from a united front! Aren't we giving Regal Pill Palace a huge boon by infighting?" Du Lihuang begged for mercy. It was obvious there was no other path left for him to walk.

To his misfortune, Wei Qing had a heart of steel; a few words couldn't move him. Wei Qing showed the barest hint of a smile. "Of course, I will move against Regal Pill Palace, but it doesn't matter whether I do that with or without trash like you." While he spoke, a short sword appeared in his hand before it flashed explosively through the air with a sweep of his sleeve. The sword cut right through Du Lihuang's throat, sending his head flying. He didn't even have time to close his eyes.

Chapter 578: A Series Of Bizarre Events

Wei Qing was decisive and forthright as he killed Du Lihuang with a single stroke. He scattered some powder on Du Lihuang's corpse. Sizzles and green smoke arose from it before long. The corpse melted at a speed visible to the eye, becoming a pool of thick, green water which seeped into the shrubbery. Not a single trace of the corpse was left, with only the noxious fumes indicating something transpired here. Wei Qing now held Du Lihuang's storage ring in his hand and after inspecting its contents, a satisfied expression forming on his face to see the two earth rank spirit herbs were safely in the storage ring.

Wei Qing grinned. "Although Du Lihuang was a brainless idiot, he was lucky enough to get two earth rank spirit herbs. What a pity, idiots will always be idiots. He didn't have the fortune to enjoy his luck, so I'll have to trouble myself and enjoy it in his stead."

Mu Gaoqi felt disgusted by Wei Qing's shameless lack of face. He even kept his calm demeanor while killing his comrades like slaughtering chickens, ruthless and vicious. He was a lion wearing a smiling mask, a true hypocrite.

It was next to impossible to guard against such people. They could kill their teammates as though it was nothing, just what depths would they not stoop to? Mu Gaoqi felt his stomach turn; he wanted to vomit.

"Don't be afraid, junior brother Mu. You're different from that piece of trash. I killed him because he was insatiably greedy. In

fact, the Sacred Sword Palace and your Regal Pill Palace are at odds with each other. Shouldn't you be grateful? I just killed an enemy of your sect after all!" Wei Qing beamed.

If Mu Gaoqi wasn't here to watch the whole show, he might've been convinced by this performance. But after he'd witnessed how calculating Wei Qing was behind that smile of his, he only felt repulsed by him. "Wei Qing, just kill me already, don't put on such an act. You even kill your teammates like it's nothing, what makes you hesitate now?" Mu Gaoqi came to the conclusion it was best to simply ignore anything that came from Wei Qing's mouth.

Wei Qing smiled. "Junior brother Mu, I've already explained to you why I killed Du Lihuang. I actually really dislike the Sacred Sword Palace. I'd much rather be on friendly terms with the Regal Pill Palace. It is no secret I greatly admire junior sister Ling Bi'er. It's because of her I've come looking for you."

Mu Gaoqi started. "If you're looking for senior sister Ling, what did you hunt me down?"

"Hunt you down? If I was, wouldn't I have already killed you?" Wei Qing feigned complete innocence.

"So am I also just imagining I'm suffering from the effects of the Spirit Restraint Powder?" Mu Gaoqi asked mockingly.

"I was just putting on an act for Du Lihuang to see. I can give you the antidote at any time, however..."

“However what?” Mu Gaoqi glared at Wei Qing.

Wei Qing smiled leisurely. “Jiang Chen and I have a slight misunderstanding. I’m afraid this misunderstanding will leave a bad impression in junior sister Ling Bi’er’s heart. I’d like you to contact junior brother Jiang Chen so I can personally clear this up.”

Mu Gaoqi laughed heartily. “Wei Qing, do you take me for a three year old?”

“What do you mean?” Wei Qing asked as his face sank.

A cold grimace formed on Mu Gaoqi’s face. “The entire Myriad Domain knows the kind of person you are! You’re a viper, don’t try to cover it up with the face of a gentleman. You can’t find Brother Chen, so you’re using some underhanded method to get to him!”

“Why do you act like I want to hurt him?”

Mu Gaoqi was given a masterclass in acting by Wei Qing who wore a look of complete innocence. “Hmph, that goes without saying! I know you threatened Brother Chen back in the Rippling Mirage Hall to not run into you in Mt. Rippling Mirage. Do I have to explain everything? Like how you want to vent your embarrassment of losing face in front of senior sister Bi’er?! Did you think I didn’t know this?”

Wei Qing acted aggrieved, “Junior brother Gaoqi, do you take me

for a narrow-hearted person? I already forgot such small matters of pride. Do you want me to make a heavenly oath? If I'm lying about my intentions for seeking brother Jiang Chen, may I be smote down by thunder and lightning!"

This was quite a vicious oath, but Mu Gaoqi still didn't buy it. "If it isn't that, you must have another despicable motive, like the pill recipe for the Longevity Pill or something." Mu Gaoqi was convinced Wei Qing was a villain; he didn't believe for a second Wei Qing was being honest.

With a serious tone, Wei Qing spoke, "I can swear I'm not looking for him because of the Longevity Pill, nor for his pill potential or the championship of the Pill Battles!"

Mu Gaoqi refused to let his guard down, showing suspicion to everything Wei Qing said. What is he playing at?

Wei Qing redoubled his efforts when he saw the hesitation on Mu Gaoqi's face. "Junior bother Gaoqi, I can indeed be a tad forceful in my methods at times, but I'm really not looking for junior brother Jiang Chen to seek revenge on him. On top of that, we have a common enemy in the Sacred Sword Palace, why don't we shake hands on a truce?"

It couldn't be denied, Wei Qing's acting was on point. However, after the show he'd watched earlier, no matter how beautifully Wei Qing painted his words, he wouldn't fall for them. "Wei Qing, just give up already. I'm not a three year old, don't bother trying to find Brother Chen through me. If you really want to make amends, there will be plenty of opportunities to do so."

Wei Qing's expression hardened when he realized his charade was seen through. "Mu Gaoqi, does this mean you're turning down a toast only to drink a forfeit? Do you think there's nothing I can do to you?"

Laughing heartily, Mu Gaoqi said, "Revealing your fox tail already, huh? Finally, your real face! You should wear it more often, it suits you!"

Wei Qing snorted coldly. "You may have a stiff lip now kid, but just wait until I feed you some poison. I'll have you beg for death. Let's see if you still have a big mouth then!"

Wei Qing couldn't track down Jiang Chen. He merely hunted down Mu Gaoqi so he could use him to lure out Jiang Chen. Wei Qing wanted his sky rank spirit herb after all.

After being casually dismissed by Elder Wu Hen, defeat, anger and hatred had slowly filled his being. He only saw one way out: kill Jiang Chen and seize the sky rank spirit herb! He finally caught Mu Gaoqi after expending much time and effort, but his victim now refused to cooperate. Wei Qing was livid with how things had progressed.

He took out a flask of poison with a flip of his hand and walked toward Mu Gaoqi, a cold chuckle resounding in the forest. "Kid, this powder will make you think death isn't all that bad. Let's make sure you get a good taste of the feeling. It doesn't end there, you see, I have all sorts of ways to deal with you. It'll be a

competition, let's see who wins, your mouth or your bones!"

When he was about to start, he heard faint rustling sounds in the thick growth behind him.

"Who's there?!" Wei Qing's ears twitched, his figure wavered, and his eyes locked on a spot behind him. He flinched the moment his eyes found their mark, almost losing his grip on his short sword. A figure stood in the depths of the woods!

That wasn't the strange part. What was odd was that it was Du Lihuang!

He'd killed Du Lihuang, reduced his corpse into a puddle of ooze, and saw his remains drain into the ground, how was he standing there now?!. It wasn't as if he was a seed that could take root and grow back to its prime! Terror flashed through Wei Qing's mind before he snorted coldly, "Smoke and mirrors!"

He shot two arrows from his sleeves at the figure. This was a technique he honed to perfection over twenty years. Their speed was so fast they weren't any slower than a bolt shot from a crossbow. They sparkled with an eerie green light, making them even more difficult to discern in the woods.

Pfft! Pfft!

The two arrows hit Du Lihuang at the same time, toppling him over into the thick growth. Another figure appeared and dashed to

Wei Qing from his left. It was another Du Lihuang! Du Lihuang was like a cockroach that just wouldn't die. Wei Qing felt his hairs stand on end. Everytime he slayed one, another copy would appear somewhere close by.

The Walkabout Sect had a devious reputation in the Myriad Domain, and due to it, he saw many of the bizarre and unexplainable things in life. Although he was afraid, he still calmed himself down and focused on the matter at hand. He shot two more arrows from his sleeves, accurately hitting the latest Du Lihuang copy; this copy was to his left.

The sound of rustling leaves entered his ears. This time a figure from his right dashed at him from the thick growth. It was Du Lihuang again! Du Lihuang's face was ashen, as if he was unwilling to accept his death. He instilled a feeling of terror into Wei Qing and Mu Gaoqi.

"Wei Qing, repay me with your life!" Du Lihuang spoke with a haunting voice, giving all who heard it goosebumps. Even one as bold as Wei Qing sucked in a breath in fear.

"Who the heck is it? Come out if you dare! Why play these petty tricks?!" Wei Qing screamed out. He didn't believe this was Du Lihuang—he had killed Du Lihuang himself, how could he have come back to life?

"Heh heh, Wei Qing, you killed my body, not my soul. I will tell the sect of your sins. Wei Qing, just you wait... wait... wait..." The voice sounded desolate as it trembled and echoed, turning the atmosphere incredibly eerie.

All color had drained from Wei Qing's face, furiously shooting arrows in all directions. "Die!"

Thud.

Yet another Du Lihuang copy dropped to the ground.

Wei Qing swept his eyes over the thick growth surrounding him, a cold smile plastered on his face. "Come on, show me some more tricks. Show me all you got!"

Anyone who saw him would think Wei Qing was about to succumb to his anger, but instead he was cautiously setting up a plan. Under the pretense of being nervous to the point of losing control over his emotions, he set up a small poison formation, covering an area of up to thirty meters around himself. He knew someone was pretending to be Du Lihuang, and although he hadn't quite figured out what was going on, he at least had a plan to deal with his enemy. Wei Qing was confident that regardless who the enemy was he had a 90% chance of killing them the moment they entered the formation!

He turned to face Mu Gaoqi, and as he did, his body trembled violently. Mu Gaoqi was immobilized behind him this whole time, or so he thought, because the kid was gone!

Wei Qing's heart spasmed painfully with embarrassing fright. He extended his consciousness to its limits and searched in all directions. His first reaction was that Mu Gaoqi had taken

advantage of the opportunity to escape. However, afflicted by the Spirit Restraint Powder, Mu Gaoqi shouldn't be able to get far.

After searching up to five kilometers in all directions, Wei Qing still hadn't found so much as a of his former prey. How did that kid vanish? How could he possibly travel such a distance in the blink of an eye? My Spirit Restraint Powder isn't that weak!

All of a sudden, a feeling of foreboding creeped into Wei Qing's mind. When he thought of all these bizarre events together, a terrifying thought emerged.

Chapter 579: Jiang Chen, You Wolf In Sheep's Clothing!

Du Lihuang's miraculous revival had been followed by Mu Gaoqi's bizarre disappearance. If Wei Qing still couldn't put two and two together and realize someone had it out for him, he would've truly lived his life in vain.

"Who, who is it?!" Even the always calm and collected Wei Qing began to panic in the face of such bizarre happenings. He stood in the middle of the clearing, exercising every last bit of consciousness as he swiveled his head to and fro in an attempt to find the culprit.

Suddenly—

Whoosh whoosh!

Sounds broke through the air as several throwing daggers hurtled toward him with the strength to shatter stars. A grave killing intent permeated the woods, startling Wei Qing. He didn't lose control and dodged the throwing daggers with quick footwork. Wei Qing focused his vision on where the throwing daggers came from, and shot several arrows in that direction.

About to stabilize his footing, Wei Qing felt as though his feet were imprisoned. He couldn't move them in the slightest. Startled, he looked at his feet. Vines were already tightly wrapped around the lower half of his legs, and they seemed to be climbing up higher and higher.

It’s him! was all he could think of as an exceedingly humiliating memory flashed through his mind. Wei Qing was scared out of his wits as he raised the short sword in his hand, preparing to cut down at the vines. However, countless vines surged up to entwine around his body, entangling his waist, chest, arms, and finally his neck. Any part of his body that could exert force was tightly locked down, leaving Wei Qing unable to struggle free no matter how he tried.

“Jiang Chen, Jiang Chen!” Wei Qing was about to lose his mind. Wei Qing still vividly remembered the first time he’d chased after Jiang Chen. How he had fallen victim to those vines, much like how he had now. He fell for Jiang Chen’s petty trick again! Wei Qing’s heart sank as the words of advice from Elder Wu Hen ran through his mind: If you ever run into that Jiang Chen again, turn around and run. Run as fast and as far as you possibly can!

Wei Qing had never taken the advice to heart, instead telling himself Elder Wu Hen had tried to take a swing at his self confidence by throwing around wildly exaggerated words of ‘advice’. With the belief that Elder Wu Hen had merely used him to build up the reputation of others, he set off to redeem himself. His plan was simple. He would hunt down Mu Gaoqi and use him to get to Jiang Chen. Once he had his hands on Jiang Chen, he would kill him, take the sky rank herb, and show Elder Wu Hen how wrong he was!

It only dawned on him now that Elder Wu Hen was merely looking after his own. He felt like a fool, falling for the same deadly trick twice. Wei Qing knew his life was quickly coming to an end.

Last time, he'd been lucky enough to receive help from Elder Wu Hen to break free. This time around, he was all alone; there was no backup. No matter what method he employed, there was no way reinforcements would arrive in time.

Back when he'd chased down Mu Gaoqi and plotted against Du Lihuang, he had done so flawlessly. He felt as though everything beneath the heavens was within his grasp. Whether it was Mu Gaoqi at the minor origin realm or Du Lihuang at the peak of the origin realm, both had been his toys to play with. Wei Qing's confidence had soared to new heights over these last few days.

Wei Qing struggled with all his might, but he knew like no other how hopeless the situation was. He was caught by the Lotus, something even geniuses at first level sage realm might not be able to struggle free from! Anxiety filled his every vein. Wei Qing knew he would be dead if he couldn't struggle free of these vines. He greatly regretted not taking Elder Wu Hen's words of advice to heart. I should just have let him be, damnit!

Wei Qing saw a person dash out of the thick growth and come to a standstill about 50 meters in front of him. It was Jiang Chen!

Fire spat from Wei Qing's eyes as they were locked onto Jiang Chen. "Jiang Chen, can you only hide in the shadows and ambush people? Fight me fair and square, if you dare!"

Jiang Chen laughed leisurely, a hint of ridicule in his eyes. "There might be those with the right to say that, but you, Wei

Qing, don't make me laugh! All you have up your sleeves are tricks and unorthodox methods, when have you ever fought fair and square? Do you want me to believe Du Lihuang died to you in a fair fight?"

Wei Qing's face alternated between ashen-pale and beet red, he couldn't refute a word Jiang Chen had said.

"What are you going to do?" He rasped out.

"What do you think?" Jiang Chen still wore that same, small smile on his face as he closed the distance.

Wei Qing's thoughts spun rapidly. He'd set up the poison formation such that it covered roughly thirty meters around him. If Jiang Chen walked within its range, then he might have the chance to make a comeback. He carefully hid any of trace of it on his face, instead shifting it to a darkened expression, "Don't tell me you're feeling indignant about Du Lihuang?"

"The hell does Du Lihuang have to do with me? You chased after Mu Gaoqi because of me, no? Since you're looking for me, how can I not give you face and not show up?" The smile at the corners of Jiang Chen's mouth raised Wei Qing's hackles like nothing he'd ever encountered before. He had always fancied himself a smart man, but it was only now that he realized how far away he was from Jiang Chen's level.

The mantis stalks the cicada, unaware of the oriole behind.

He'd thought he was truly something because he'd taken out Du Lihuang and captured Mu Gaoqi in one fell swoop. But Jiang Chen was fully aware of everything, since he'd been waiting in the background. Worst of all, Wei Qing had had no idea he'd been there!

Wei Qing's confidence hit an all-time low as he finished his mental comparison. He could only pray that Jiang Chen would enter the poison formation's range and be attacked. As long as Jiang Chen was attacked by the formation, he could still see hope of killing Jiang Chen in return.

Jiang Chen's small smile morphed into a bizarre grin. "Are you thinking that you can turn the tables if I walk into your poison formation?" It was like his gaze could pierce right through Wei Qing's thoughts.

These words stabbed into Wei Qing like a claymore into his gut, savagely cutting through his final layer of defense as if it was nothing more than a thin veneer of paper.

"You..." Wei Qing's eyes widened in shocked disbelief. He felt winded, as if a sledgehammer had just smashed into his chest. His poison formation may have been set up on the spur of the moment, but he was sure it was done subtly enough to not leave any clues behind. But Jiang Chen had seen through it with one glance! He'd identified Wei Qing's trump card before the trump card could even be slapped down. Like an inflated balloon suddenly pricked, Wei Qing lost his authoritative air as his face grew ashen. Yet, he kept doggedly muttering, "Jiang Chen, you can't kill me! You absolutely can't kill me!"

“Give me one reason why not.” Jiang Chen’s deep gaze was in and of itself proof of his resolution and determination.

“If you kill me, you’ll ignite a sect war!” Desperate, Wei Qing blurted out the first thing that came to his mind.

Jiang Chen couldn’t help but laugh at the irony of that particular excuse. “I seem to recall that both Mu Gaoqi and Du Lihuang used these excuses before. Now, how did you respond back then?”

Mu Gaoqi and Du Lihuang had indeed mentioned sect wars, but Wei Qing had been full of pride as their presumptive killer, and had responded in a high and mighty fashion. To think that karma had struck so quickly, and that he was now the prey for others to slaughter as they would. The words he’d used to reject Mu Gaoqi and Du Lihuang were now nothing more than utter jokes.

“You... if you kill me, my Walkabout Sect will surely be able to find that you did it!” Wei Qing’s rising panic was evident.

“I seem to recall someone making fun of a mere fifth level origin realm ant all this time. Kill you? I don’t think anyone would even give it the benefit of the doubt if that idea was raised!” Jiang Chen’s bizarre grin was now turning supercilious as he mocked Wei Qing’s excuses.

Wei Qing crowed in delight, “Jiang Chen, you wolf in sheep’s clothing! Elder Wu Hen has long since reminded me to be careful of you. If you kill me, then you’re the first person that Elder Wu

Hen will suspect!”

“So what?” Jiang Chen’s turned stormy. “Will that old fox stop pursuing me if I don’t kill you? Will he stop coveting my sky rank spirit herb?”

Wei Qing was completely nonplussed. His eyes suddenly gleamed as his panicked brain finally gave him something to use. “If you kill me, then no one will be able to cure Mu Gaoqi’s poison! Killing me means killing one of your peers!”

“Is that so?” Jiang Chen’s smile changed yet again as he took out a pill flask. “Oh, what’s this? I seem to have had the antidote to the Spirit Restraint Powder for a long time now? What a wonderful surprise!”

He’d obtained this antidote from Wei Wudao back at the wood spirit spring and had used one dose on Long Xiaoxuan. Jiang Chen had always felt that there would be a use for the remaining flask one day, so he’d kept it close at hand. Who would’ve thought that it would come in handy so quickly?

“Where did you get that antidote from?” Wei Qing was flabbergasted as deeply rooted fear and despair dawned in his eyes. Mu Gaoqi’s poison was his last ace. Now that it too had proven useless, he knew that it was over for him.

“Someone called Wei Wudao gifted it to me.”

Wei Qing trembled all over. “You... you even killed Elder Wudao?! No wonder, no wonder...” His eyes were now devoid of everything but despair. He truly regretted his behavior that had led to this situation, and wished with all his heart that he had listened to Elder Wu Hen.

Jiang Chen made a quick hand seal, and several fire lotuses suddenly drew themselves erect. A concentrated burst of flames spat form them, instantly reducing Wei Qing to ash. Thanks to the soundproof barriers around the place, he evaporated from the world without even a scream to mark his departure.

Jiang Chen really hadn’t planned on moving against Wei Qing at all, since the poison from Divine Tree of Dreams would ensure that Wei Qing would die after ten days to half a month when the poison took effect. However, this fellow’s ruthless ambition had finally elicited Jiang Chen’s fury.

Mu Gaoqi had watched all of this occur in the distance with an ever increasing knot of emotions. He’d despaired initially, convinced that his road would end here. But to think, Brother Chen had saved him again! That overweening Wei Qing had been as week as a newly born lamb in front of Jiang Chen and had been burnt to a crisp. What was true strength? This was true strength!

“Are you feeling a bit better, Gaoqi?” Jiang Chen had annihilated Wei Qing without the slightest ripple of emotion, akin to slapping a mosquito to death. His expression was relaxed and at ease, like he’d done nothing of particular note.

“Brother Chen, I’m much better.” The medicine was to be taken

internally and applied externally. Wei Wudao's antidote was the real deal.

"Mm, have a seat. I'll see what other easy pickings there are around here." Jiang Chen walked over to where Wei Qing had died and picked up a few storage rings.

"Be careful, Brother Chen! There's poison on them!" Mu Gaoqi hastily reminded.

Jiang Chen faint smile emanated confidence as he waved Mu Gaoqi's concerns away. "No worries, these small poisons won't stump me."

He'd refined the Golden Cicada's blood and was now impervious to almost all poisons. How would he care about this little smear of poison? Jiang Chen also picked up Du Lihuang and Wei Qing's storage rings. There weren't that many items in Du Lihuang's ring, but Jiang Chen took out the two earth rank spirit herbs.

"Presents for everyone. Gaoqi, take this. You can use this advanced Purple Ganoderma to refine the Immortal Pill and cure most of the poison."

Mu Gaoqi started as a wave of warm emotion flowed through him. "Brother Chen, first you save me, and now you gift me the spoils. I...." Mu Gaoqi sniffed, tears rising up to assault him. Brother to brother, Brother Chen's care for him was even warmer than that of blood brothers. Ever since visiting the wood spirit spring, it'd always been Brother Chen taking care of him, helping

him, and saving him at critical moments. If it wasn't for Brother Chen, Mu Gaoqi felt that he would've died three to four times over already in the dark depths of this jianghu.

Chapter 580: Meeting Wang Han Again

The advanced Purple Ganoderma was a panacea for most poisons, and an utmost treasure at that. It was almost at the level of sky rank. Regardless, it wasn't that useful for Jiang Chen, since he was impervious to most poisons

"Take it, Gaoqi. May it be a reminder of the lesson you learned today." Jiang Chen handed the Ganoderma over to Mu Gaoqi before focusing back on Du Lihuang's ring. There was a blade of Phoenixwing Grass, another exceedingly rare earth rank spirit herb used for treating injuries. If refined into a pill, it would be worth cities.

Apart from the Phoenixwing Grass and Purple Ganoderma, there were also a few books regarding sword methods and several swords. Jiang Chen wasn't all that interested in these methods but the swords weren't too bad. Next were several tens of thousands of upper rank origin spirit stones and some pill medicines. Jiang Chen didn't spare the medicines a second glance, they were too ordinary. The Sacred Sword Palace was indeed more than a few steps behind when it came to pills. He turned his attention to Wei Qing's ring.

There were a lot more interesting things in Wei Qing's ring. All sorts of poisonous grasses, poisons, and methods regarding poisons. Wei Qing could be described as the very epitome of all poisons. There were also many pills in his ring. The Walkabout Sect was also a great sect founded for pills, so the level of the pills in Wei Qing's ring wasn't too bad. However, even these pills were of a far too low quality to interest Jiang Chen.

It was apparent Wei Qing had struck it rich in the herb garden. Of the large amounts of spirit herbs within his ring, there were two of the earth rank! In addition, he had three times the amount of true saint and saint rank spirit herbs Du Lihuang had. It was obvious that Wei Qing was quite adept at locating spirit herbs, and that he'd had a much richer harvest.

Jiang Chen was only interested in the two earth rank spirit herbs.He emptied out the ring and returned to Mu Gaoqi's side. "Gaoqi, we need to go and find a quiet place to get you out of those clothes and get rid of the scent on you."

The two of them quickly left the clearing. Du Lihuang and Wei Qing were both top geniuses in the Myriad Domain. With both of them dead, it would certainly cause the Sacred Sword Palace and Walkabout Sect to sink into a frenzy. Although Jiang Chen made sure no clues were left behind, he didn't want to spend any more time here than necessary.

The two had found a remote location. It took Mu Gaoqi a full day to recover and refine the mark Wei Qing had had put on his body. When both were ready, they put on a fresh set of clothes and set off.

"Gaoqi, remember, we never encountered those two. It didn't happen." Jiang Chen reminded once again.

"Don't worry, Brother Chen, I know." Mu Gaoqi's mentality had matured greatly after the tempering of several life and death

experiences. The two of them traveled as they chatted, heading deeper into the mountain. Although it was their first time in, time was of the essence as there were only three days left.

“Gaoqi, did you run into anyone else from our sect earlier?” Jiang Chen asked.

Mu Gaoqi shook his head when he recalled something. “Brother Chen, I heard that a few elders headed into the deepest area of the ancient herb garden a few days ago. They seemed to have discovered something.”

“Oh?” Jiang Chen’s interest was piqued. “Then we have to go take a look!” They picked up their speed and flew into the depths of the ancient herb garden.

Although the ancient herb garden was broad, it was different from Mt. Rippling Mirage that extended for hundreds of kilometers. It was roughly a hundred square kilometers, rather small in comparison. Even though the two faced some tough situations, they were rapidly closing in on the inner area of the ancient herb garden after roughly six hours.

They occasionally ran into geniuses from other sects along the way, but everyone seemed to be in a hurry and didn’t seen inclined to scheme and plot against each other.

“Gaoqi, it looks like you were right. There’s no other explanation I can think of for why everyone is rushing over there. Let’s pick up our speed!” Jiang Chen was about to increase his speed when he

suddenly came to a halt and stared at the slope to his left.

"Scarletheart Fruit?" Jiang Chen was moved. This Scarletheart Fruit was merely a saint rank spirit herb, it wasn't even close to the true saint rank, but it was exceedingly rare. This Scarletheart Fruit in particular was a bright red within and without, translucent in its splendor. This was a very high quality Scarletheart Fruit.

On any other day, Jiang Chen wouldn't have paid attention to this spirit herb, even though it was one worth noting. However, it happened to be one of the four spirit herbs needed to cure Ling Bi'er's father. "Gaoqi, wait a moment, I'm going to pluck that Scarletheart Fruit."

With a small movement he shot into the air and arrived next to the spirit herb in a moment. He was about to pluck the Fruit when he saw a figure quickly approaching from the front. As the figure weaved to and fro, Jiang Chen saw it was Wang Han from the Sacred Sword Palace.

He was incredibly worse for the wear, his face ashen and mud stained his white shirt. There were even blades of grass and twigs stuck in his hair. Jiang Chen was perplexed by Wang Han's disheveled appearance. However, a thought came to mind and he instantly sent a silent message to Mu Gaoqi. "Gaoqi, hurry and leave! Go meet up with Elder Yun Nie."

Mu Gaoqi was caught off-guard and stood in place, hesitating momentarily, when Jiang Chen said with a commanding tone. "Don't just stand there, run!"

Mu Gaoqi realized with a tremble of his heart that Jiang Chen wasn't joking. He snuck a glance at Jiang Chen, then stomped his foot on the ground and swiftly flew off.

Back on the slope, Jiang Chen placed the Scarletheart Fruit into his storage ring and was about to take shelter when Wang Han spotted him. The latter was momentarily stunned before boundless hate and resentment floated up on his face.

Jiang Chen!

Wang Han hadn't thought that Jiang Chen was still alive, and even seemed to be having quite a comfortable time at that. He was enraged and why shouldn't he be? The two wyverns chased after him for the last few days without break, leaving him in a bedraggled, disheveled state. The culprit was none other than Jiang Chen!

Wang Han would've never been hunted down by these two wyverns if not for Jiang Chen. When he saw Jiang Chen, unharmed and enjoying himself, fire erupted in his eyes. Wang Han was about to raise his sword and attack Jiang Chen when a devious thought struck him. He pierced downwards with his sword and sent a strong gust of air with his personal mark towards Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen was greatly experienced and had witnessed the Walkabout Sect deploying the same trick before. How would he be fooled by this kind of trick? He snorted derisively and dived

underground.

Wang Han was thoroughly enraged as he hacked repeatedly downwards, carving a path through the air and fissuring the slope with over ten deep cracks.

“Cowering in your shell again, Jiang Chen!?” Wang Han cursed loudly. He’d been hunted down day and night. Stressed and on high alert, he was teetering on the edge of complete collapse.

He’d wanted to leave his presence on Jiang Chen to divert the attention of the two wyverns away from him and onto Jiang Chen. His plans were foiled when Jiang Chen who didn’t fall for the trick, how would Wang Han not be infuriated?

He stomped his feet in great frustration but knew he couldn’t stand still any longer. If he didn’t move, the wyverns would catch up again. Wang Han felt gloomy. Just why did the two wyverns hold such a grudge against him? After his plan to transfer the threat had failed, Wang Han could only rush into the inner core of the herb garden. His last bit of hope rested on the elders of his sect now. If he could run into one of the sect elders, he wouldn’t need to worry about the two wyverns any longer.

Two long whistles rang out from the distance, sounding amongst the hillside like rolling thunder. Wang Han trembled all over and didn’t dare linger another moment. He crushed another transportation rune and vanished. Although the rune wouldn’t take him far, it would slow the wyverns down a bit. Even though it wouldn’t thoroughly throw them off, they would at least have to expend some effort to get back on his track.

Every second was vital. Time was life.

The light from Wang Han's transportation rune vanished the moment the wyverns came screeching in. It was apparent they were used to Wang Han using the transportation runes since they didn't lose their bearings. They communicated with each other a bit, then flew off in two different directions. They decided to encircle Wang Han in a pincer movement.

Jiang Chen only revealed himself after the two wyverns were long gone. With a faint smile on his face, he watched the two wyverns dwindle into two shadows before they disappeared from sight. Karma was chasing after Wang Han.

"This kid has some methods to him though. He's still able to run away even after being chased down for so long. It looks like the Sacred Sword Palace has invested quite a lot on their top disciple!" Jiang Chen knew Wang Han's speed was lacking compared to the two wyverns. The only way he could still be escaping was if he used vast amounts of treasures such as the transportation rune. Judging from his actions just now, he was using them like scrap paper!

Sacred Sword Palace was more than a little wealthy, and they were deeply vested in Wang Han.

Jiang Chen didn't dare tarry either. He estimated he wasn't far from where everyone was converging, and guessed that Wang Han was most likely trying to reach his elders. It would be difficult for

the two wyverns to kill Wang Han. Jiang Chen was worried about Mu Gaoqi and quickly chased after them.

Although the wyverns were strong, he wasn't afraid of them. They were far beneath Long Xiaoxuan in strength. In addition, they could only cower in submission when confronted by Long Xiaoxuan and his lineage of a true dragon. Besides, Jiang Chen had no need to summon the dragon. He could subdue the two wyverns by virtue of the dragon blood Long Xiaoxuan had gifted him.

After traveling for roughly an hour, he could hear the violent sounds of battle in the distance. Jiang Chen took a closer look and saw that a group of sage rank cultivators were circling in the air, engaging the wyverns in an intense fight. The six great sects had the obvious strength in numbers when it came to sage realm cultivators, but the two wyverns' flight abilities were much more advanced than these cultivators'. So although they were encircled, their lives were in no danger whatsoever.

Jiang Chen advanced rapidly when he saw that Mu Gaoqi and Ling Bi'er were already waiting for him. When the two saw him, they flung their arms high in the air, waving to him.

Chapter 581: The Divine Island

Jiang Chen swept his eyes over the area and noticed that most of the participants had already gathered here. At rough count, there were fifty cultivators, including the seven of the Regal Pill Palace, It seemed that Vice Hallmaster Yue had entered with the third batch of candidates, and had met up with Elder Yun Nie.

Elder Yun Nie and three other elders had taken up strategic positions, covering the four cardinal directions in order to protect their young geniuses. They were genuinely worried that the two wyverns would change targets and start diving.

When he saw Jiang Chen, Elder Yun Nie called out to him. “Jiang Chen, come over here.”

Although Jiang Chen wasn’t afraid of the two wyverns, he couldn’t appear too out of the ordinary at the moment. He picked up his speed and entered the defensive formation.

Mu Gaoqi ground his teeth. “Wang Han was up to no good when he lured those two monsters here!”

Jiang Chen just smiled. In truth, it was almost the opposite. If Wang Han hadn’t been smart enough to lure the two wyverns to this area, he would’ve been brutally hunted down by the two sooner or later.

Jiang Chen surveyed his surroundings. A large lake took its stately place at the bottom of the valley, and everyone was using its

east shore as a gathering point. The lake brimmed with spirit power, manifested by a delicate mist. It looked mysterious and unfathomable, provoking an endless source of imagination. The lake was as if a sleeping beauty, full of magical attraction that irresistibly drew the curious glances of those who saw it.

In the middle of that vast aqueous expanse, Jiang Chen spotted a cluster of islands. It was clear that spirit power was almost overflowing from those islands, lovingly spilling over into the air and entwining around the islands. Thanks to the evaporation of the spirit power, rays of light portended peace and prosperity in the air, giving the islands an exceptionally divine air, as if an immortal realm of great fortune.

Jiang Chen recognized those islands as the true core of Mt. Rippling Mirage, and the center of the ancient herb garden! Although he was quite a distance from the abundant spirit power that spilled and flowed in the air above the islands, he still felt physically and mentally refreshed as it wafted over on the wind. Just this hint made it apparent just how rich the spirit power of the islands was.

“It looks like the islands will be the main point of contention in the last three days.” Jiang Chen discreetly turned his attention to the battle raging in the skies above him. He noticed that although all the sects were engaging the wyverns with gusto, they were also keeping a covetous eye on the islands in the lake.

The defensive perimeter below was continuing to constrict as more sage realm cultivators began to join the fray. The Regal Pill Palace was no exception as two other elders joined Elder Yun Nie

and Vice Hallmaster Yue on the battlefront.

Although the two wyverns were quite ferocious, they found it hard to keep up with the increasing number of sage realm cultivators joining the battle. The more extraordinary of the Myriad Domain young geniuses were also itching to join as well. For example, on the Sacred Sword Palace's side, Wang Han had recovered his overweeningly arrogant attitude after he'd adjusted his state. He'd changed into a pristinely white outfit, and strutted over to the Regal Pill Palace's side. He spared Jiang Chen an angry glare, fire dancing in his eyes, "Kid, don't think this is the last of it!"

Jiang Chen shrugged and smiled faintly, clearly not paying heed to those words. Jiang Chen would treat even Wang Jianyu of the Sacred Sword Palace as though the other had merely farted, much less a Wang Han.

Wang Han felt like he'd punched a ball of cotton when he saw how thoroughly Jiang Chen was ignoring him. His ire unspent, he suddenly caught sight of Shen Qinghong out of the corner of his eye. He smirked coldly, "Old brother Shen, you're a genius of the Myriad Domain's younger generation, and as such should help shoulder our elders' burdens. As the first genius in the Regal Pill Palace, are you planning on just watching from off to the side?"

Elder Yun Nie suddenly glared down fiercely. "Wang Han, if you want to go battle, you are entirely free to. What are you running off your mouth here for?"

Wang Han was still a bit cautious when it came to Elder Yun Nie,

so he laughed loudly. “Is the so-called first genius of the Regal Pill Palace just a title to lay claim to false fame? A lie that stands for the ages? Since that seems to be the case, you should all take a look at how I, a genius of the Myriad Domain, battle those monsters!”

He explosively blasted into the air after those words, stimulating his energy to make his sword erupt with light. The light from the sword rent the void as it inscribed a frosted arc that shone with the splendor of the galaxy. It finally impacted in a blow, striking the back of one of the wyverns.

Attacking the wyverns when so many experts were also attracting their attention was simply taking advantage of the situation. The strike looked stunning, but in the end, it was a mere prick in the back. However, even that was enough to make Shen Qinghong quite depressed.

Wang Han was a sage realm cultivator after all, and he’d already grasped the initial techniques of flight whereas he, Shen Qinghong, remained that small step away from the sage realm. Therefore, he couldn’t join this kind of fight even if he wanted to. This was obviously Wang Han mocking him. Shen Qinghong’s face was a bit white as the look in his eyes danced, feeling like blades were cutting across his heart as he watched the figures bob and weave in the air. For someone as proud as Shen Qinghong, the repeated humiliations he’d experienced during this Mt. Rippling Mirage trip had greatly decreased his self confidence.

It was rather Jiang Chen who smiled mysteriously to the side, “Wang Han’s in for it now!”

His words had just landed in the ears of the others when the other wyvern suddenly sensed Wang Han's presence and let out a long howl of fury. It strafed the air with its wings, forcing the sage realm cultivators beside it to leap back in a hasty retreat. It opened its mouth, and released what seemed to be an endless surge of purple lightning that struck at Wang Han with swift ferocity.

The lightning bolt rent the air as it exploded into countless purple lightning snakes that careened through the sky. Although the sage realm cultivators next the wyverns had fast reactions, they still weren't fast enough to catch lightning as it snaked down to Wang Han at a terrifying speed.

Wang Han had been feeling quite proud about ambushing the wyvern when he was unexpectedly confronted by a sky covered with jagged purple lightning homing in on him. Fright drained the color from his face and he threw all thoughts of image to the winds. He dove desperately, as fast he could, letting himself crash into the ground with a frightening boom.

He was all too familiar with the power of the lightning, and knew that escape in any other direction would only result in him being cleaved in two by the lightning's edge. Only by free falling downwards and slamming into the ground would he have a chance to live.

Indeed, the two Sacred Sword Palace elders below reacted swiftly and flung out several talismans in a row. The talismans all radiated green light to form streams of green air currents, mysteriously catching all of the purple lightning like green carpets.

Wham wham wham!

The purple lightning and green air currents clashed against each other with ear piercing shrieks, sending the air around them into disturbance as gusts and turbulence rocked the air.

Wang Han's speed was nothing to laugh at, so although he'd slammed himself into the ground and looked quite the worse for wear, he hadn't actually suffered injury from the lightning. Bedraggled, he picked himself from the ground and bolted for the defensive encirclement.

Shen Qinghong spurted out in laughter. "Wang Han, is this what you meant by battling that monster?"

Many watching on the ground burst out in raucous laughter, obviously amused by Wang Han's comical downfall. Wang Han had always possessed a genteel bearing, self-styling himself as the top genius of the Myriad Domain. He'd lost a great deal of face in falling down in such an ignoble manner this time. He was so incensed that he almost spat out a mouthful of blood, but settled for glaring frostily at Shen Qinghong, unbounded killing intent surging out of his eyes.

Shen Qinghong had been feeling a bit self conscious before, and a bit wary of Wang Han who'd broken through to the sage realm before him. Yet, the sight of such an unkempt Wang Han easily dissolved the knot in his heart. He felt then that there was nothing to fear about this Wang Han. Turning the focus of his gaze to Jiang Chen, he also felt that this young genius wasn't as irritating to the eye as he'd first believed. Shen Qinghong had suffered the mockery

and laughter of the sage realm geniuses throughout this trip to Mt. Rippling Mirage, and each time, it'd been his peers who'd stood up for him. Shen Qinghong's comprehension wasn't weak, and his mental state had been tempered repeatedly on this trip, which was how he could come to such conclusions.

Mu Gaoqi asked with curiosity, "Brother Chen, how did you know that Wang Han was in for it?"

Jiang Chen smiled faintly, but didn't respond. It was plain to him that the two wyverns viewed Wang Han as the culprit who'd stolen the Sage Fledgling Grass. Why else would they have chased him for days on end without respite? Wang Han's seemingly dashing strike had done nothing more than expose the fact that he'd entered their attack range. Of course they would attack him! However, this conclusion was something that'd come out of the various grudges that had formed when the two of them had fought over the Grass. It was rather difficult to succinctly explain.

The elder of the Sacred Sword Palace also found this situation to be rather odd. "Wang Han, these two wyverns seem to be abnormally fixated on you. Just what have you done to make them hate you thus?"

Wang Han stared viciously at Jiang Chen as he intentionally raised his voice, "Senior Elder, this is all because that little bastard Jiang Chen stole several thousand blades of Sage Fledgling Grass and pinned the blame on me!"

Wang Han's words had been spoken quite loudly, such that even the cultivators battling the wyverns in the air had heard them

clearly. They rang in everyone's ears as if a crack of thunder.

Several thousand blades of Sage Fledgling Grass?

Everyone doubted their ears in that second. Ten blades was already a small fortune, and a hundred was a great transaction. But several thousand blades? What kind of concept was that?

Even all the blades of Grass in the six great sects were piled together, they still wouldn't amount to several thousand blades, but this Jiang Chen had several thousand of them all to himself? Therefore, the atmosphere at the scene instantly became quite awkward. All eyes were on Jiang Chen, as if wanting to see straight through him.

It was a good thing that Jiang Chen had realized beforehand that Wang Han would certainly reveal this if he was provoked enough. So, when everyone looked over at him, his lips curved upward slightly as he looked at Wang Han as if looking at an utter idiot.

Mu Gaoqi was the first to leap up. "Wang Han, don't you go falsely accusing others! Several thousand blades of Sage Fledgling Grass? What kind of dream do you think you're in?"

Wang Han gave a long peal of laughter. "What, Jiang Chen, you have the guts to do it, but none to admit it?"

It was apparent that Wang Han was delighted to see everyone look at Jiang Chen with such avaricious eyes. Don't you think

you’re quite something, Jiang Chen? Don’t worry, I’ll slander you first regardless of whether or not you have the Grass!

Everyone’s attitudes were quite congruent when it came to matters like these. They would rather believe it to be true than not. Thus, everyone looked at Jiang Chen with traces of judgement.

Elder Yun Nie snorted coldly upon seeing the hints of judgement and jeered, “Wang Han, this isn’t the first time your Sacred Sword Palace is pinning a crime on someone else. When Jiang Chen’s score was in the lead in the Pill Battles, your sect said that something was amiss with his bloodlines and wanted to check them. Do you want to try the same trick again? You have truly inherited Wang Jianyu’s style.”

Chapter 582: Being Framed

Without a doubt, Wang Han's words had a great effect on those cultivators fighting the wyverns. They quickly deployed various arts as if they were on stimulants, swiftly beating the wyverns black and blue.

It was apparent that those previous displays of intense fighting were all just an act. All of the elders had been idling on the job, and merely going through motions with no one exerting themselves. But after hearing Wang Han's news, everyone all wanted to know the truth of the matter and so naturally stopped holding back, deploying their strongest moves.

With so many sage rank cultivators fully displaying their abilities, how could the two wyverns, equivalent to the human sage rank, be their match? Faced with the many vicious attacks, the wyverns soon fled with despondent shrieks echoing for miles.

These elders were completely disclined to give chase, and all dropped back to the ground like dumplings falling into a pot. Their attitudes fully exposed the fact that the thousands of Sage Fledging Grass had deeply stirred their interests. No one was willing to miss out despite not knowing whether things were true or false. Normally, even a few dozen of Grass would be considered a great wealth, the notion of thousands was setting their blood on fire. Who was still interested in playing with those wyverns?

Seeing this scene, Jiang Chen could not help but laugh inwardly. These bunch of old codgers are all so wily and deceitful. The previous fighting seemed so intense, but in fact everyone was

holding back. No one was truly calling on their full strength at all. They were all bestirring others to action and scheming against each other. It seems the internal struggles of the Myriad Domain are very severe indeed. Jiang Chen also knew that these elders would be covetous of the Sage Fledging Grass and make trouble for him. Fortunately, I've already prepared for this. Jiang Chen was thus pleased but remained silent.

Elder Wu Hen from the Walkabout Sect was hiding amongst the group of elders, but constantly glaring at Jiang Chen with ill-intent. He was also very surprised. What kind of dog shit luck does this Jiang Chen have? First he finds a sky rank herb and then he discovers thousands of Sage Fledging Grass? Is this kid born with innate fortune?!

Though Elder Wu Hen's heart was ablaze, he also felt very conflicted. Should he question Jiang Chen directly or remain silent? If he brought up the matter, the sky rank herb may be exposed. Even if there were thousands of Sage Fledging Grass, it'd be impossible for all of them to fall only into his hands. But, if he didn't use this opportunity to find fault with Jiang Chen, then it would be even more difficult to make trouble for Jiang Chen after they left Mt. Ripping Mirage. Thus, Elder Wu Hen was suffering from incredible inner turmoil.

Contrarily, the Sacred Sword Palace's Elder Chen stepped out and accused loudly, "Elder Yun Nie, everyone knows that your Regal Pill Palace shields its own. However, protection shouldn't be so blatant, right?"

Elder Yun Nie scoffed. "What blatant? How can we compare to

your Sacred Sword Palace's shameless protectionism?"

Elder Chen gestured impatiently. "Everyone here was working hard to fight off those two wyverns, yet your disciple was silently gathering a fortune. That isn't proper!"

"Right, Elder Yun Nie. It can't be that everyone is obligated to help out your disciples when they cause trouble!" Tristar Sect's Elder Tan Lang added on.

"Could it be that everyone wants to dump this crock of nonsense onto our Regal Pill Palace just because of Wang Han's one-sided allegations? Is it reasonable for there to be thousands of Sage Fledging Grass to exist?" Elder Yun Nie aggressively refuted.

An elder from the Walkabout Sect immediately stepped out, "If this wasn't true, I don't think sage nephew Wang Han would make something like this up out of thin air." This elder was called Wu Hui. Since he wasn't aware of the sky rank herb, he instinctively stood out to confront the Regal Pill Palace.

In but a moment, the Sacred Sword Palace, the Walkabout Sect and the Tristar Sect seemed to have allied together to pressure the Regal Pill Palace. Elder Yun Nie smiled faintly. "We still have three days left. If everyone wants to stand around here flapping their mouths, then this old man is willing to accompany you all."

An elder from the Dark North Sect's tried to smooth things over, "I think it's better for us to stop squabbling about this. Whether it's true or false, everyone has their own fortunes here in Mt.

Ripping Mirage. Jealousy will not cause others' fortunes to become yours. In my opinion, everyone should be figuring out how to reach that cluster of islands."

Having a deep friendship with the Regal Pill Palace, the Dark North Sect would obviously not add insult to injury. Instead, the elder's words were trying to give Regal Pill Palace a way out.

The Sacred Sword Palace's Elder Chen retorted coldly, "The Dark North Sect and Regal Pill Palace are like one family. Just because you want to be magnanimous doesn't mean everyone else needs to be generous. This Jiang Chen attracted those two wyverns here and caused everyone to exert themselves in chasing them off, yet he still monopolizes the thousand blades of Grass? How can there be such a thing? As I see it, sharing in responsibilities means sharing in rewards. Anyone who puts forth their strength should be rewarded for their efforts. Doesn't everyone agree?"

These words had great appeal as the importance of the Sage Fledging Grass was really too great. Even the Great Cathedral was keeping silent. Although they had previously benefited from the Regal Pill Palace with regards to the Longevity Pill, the thousands of Sage Fledging Grass had aroused their greed.

Elder Xiang Gan stood there smiling without a word, evidently not intending on smoothing things over. It was actually Xiang Qin who opened his mouth, planning on speaking out on Jiang Chen's behalf. Unfortunately, he had to swallow his words upon seeing Elder Xiang Gan's glare, and could only scratch his head and look at Jiang Chen apologetically. Xiang Qin was actually rather grateful towards Jiang Chen for refining the Longevity Pill and

helping his grandfather, Xiang Wentian, gain a few hundred more years of life.

Thus, although the Dark North Sect stood on the Regal Pill Palace's, they seemed quite forlorn. The other three great sects were united while the Great Cathedral was tacitly agreeing to all this on the sidelines. Great pressure was being brought to bear on the Regal Pill Palace.

Seeing this situation, Elder Chen became more audacious. "Since everyone has no opinion, Elder Yun Nie, is the Regal Pill Palace planning on going against the collective will?"

An elder nearby also jeered, "The Regal Pill Palace sure has a big appetite to try and swallow thousands of Sage Fledging Grass. I'll be blunt. Can you take it all? Are you not afraid of choking to death?"

Elder Tan Lang from the Tristar Sect was exasperated. "Yun Nie, in our Myriad Domain, there truly isn't any sect willing to go against the collective will. If Jiang Chen hadn't attracted those two wyverns here, then all those thousands of Sage Fledging Grass could be considered his own good fortune. However, since everyone ended up putting forth effort, then the herbs should be divided up."

"Right. The herbs should be divided up. Yun Nie, stop wasting everyone's time!" Walkabout Sect's Elder Wu Hui blustered.

Elder Yun Nie also felt that this was all quite troublesome. But

just as he was about to speak, he was interrupted by Jiang Chen's carefree laughter. "Everyone here can be considered my seniors, so normally I would remain silent. However, this Wang Han has always been hostile towards our Regal Pill Palace. Wouldn't the world laugh their heads off if they heard that a single accusation from him has spun everyone in circles?"

Jiang Chen then calmly added, "I'm merely a fifth level origin realm cultivator. Do you think I have the ability to not only face off against the two wyverns and snatch the thousands of Sage Fledging Grass, but then also frame Wang Han? Aren't you all thinking too highly of me?"

Everyone paused upon hearing these words. The wyverns needed only one move to completely oppress the fifth level origin realm Jiang Chen. He might not even be able to escape from them, much less steal the thousand blades of Grass.

Wang Han coldy interjected. "Don't be confused by this kid everyone. This kid has some sort of method to escape through the ground and avoid the wyverns' sight. I've seen this with my own eyes. If this is a lie, then may I be struck by lightning!" Wang Han had hardened his heart to kick Jiang Chen while he was down, and didn't hesitate in swearing such a fierce oath.

Those assembled had started to waver, but their doubts were dispelled upon hearing this oath and they all looked at Jiang Chen again.

"I did see the thousands of Sage Fledging Grass. However, Wang Han attacked me before I had a chance to harvest any. As for what

happened after I fled, I have no idea. Wang Han, do you dare swear an oath to the heavens that you personally saw me pluck any Sage Fledging Grass?”

Wang Han sneered. “Wouldn’t you go back and harvest them when I was being pursued by the wyverns?”

“Tsk tsk, is it possible that your Sacred Sword Palace’s framing method is all about assumptions and ‘could haves’ and ‘would haves’? I rather suspect that it was you who harvested all the Sage Fledging Grass and thus caused the two wyverns to chase after you. After all, I left the scene before you did.” Jiang Chen argued with great aplomb.

Wang Han’s face darkened. “I can swear an oath that I absolutely did not obtain any Sage Fledging Grass. Jiang Chen, do you dare swear such an oath?”

Jiang Chen answered indifferently. “I can’t be bothered to. Do I have to swear an oath every time you try to frame me? Why?”

Elder Tan Lang from the Tristar Sect laughed slyly, “In my opinion, there’s no need to keep arguing. Innocence or guilt is very easy to prove here, just take out your storage ring and show everyone!” These words resulted in great agreement.

“Right, the two of you should take out your storage rings and show everyone! This is clear and simple. We can stop wasting time this way.”

“Yes, let’s do it this way!” Everyone nodded and agreed with Elder Tan Lang’s suggestion.

Wang Han smirked after his own sect’s Elder Chen glanced at him. “I’m fine with this. Jiang Chen, why don’t you show us your storage ring? Don’t say you can’t be bothered with this. Otherwise we’ll assume it’s because you have a guilty conscience!” With this, the pressure seemed to now be all on Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen’s heart was full of rage as his eyes flashed coldly. This world was truly crass. Everyone wanted him to cooperate, checking this and checking that just because of a single claim from Wang Han. It wasn’t that Jiang Chen didn’t dare, it was that Jiang Chen was pissed off.

“Jiang Chen, are you feeling guilty now? Since even Wang Han has agreed, what’s a mere fifth level origin realm cultivator like you putting on airs for?” Elder Chen ridiculed.

Jiang Chen coldly glared at Elder Chen, “Elder Chen, why must I cooperate every time your Sacred Sword Palace tries to frame me? Where’s the justification in that?”

“Do we need justification?” Elder Chen’s tone was apathetic, as if this was only just and right. He suddenly laughed and said, “But since you’re asking so ignorantly, let this old man give you an answer. The justification is that you aren’t strong enough. The justification is that you’re merely a junior. What right do you have to monopolize thousands of Sage Fledging Grass?”

Jiang Chen snorted angrily. “Then I’ll only say this. If you are unable to find the thousands of Sage Fledging Grass on me, will you go eat shit, Elder Chen?”

Elder Chen’s expression froze when he heard this. “How impudent!”

The Sacred Sword Palace’s people all burst forth with killing intent, ready to unsheathe their swords. Those from the Regal Pill Palace did not shirk away and Elder Yun Nie’s aura flared as he stepped forward to protect Jiang Chen. The atmosphere had become very tense, as if another wrong word would cause outright fighting to break out.

Chapter 583: Asking For A Face Slapping

The bystanders from the other sects were struck speechless. They never would've dreamed that a mere fifth level origin realm disciple of the Regal Pill Palace would possess enough of a temper to actually tell a venerated elder of the Sacred Sword Palace to eat shit! Elder Chen Shizhen was ranked in the top three in the Sacred Sword Palace, and was a top existence of the Myriad Domain. Now, a junior had told him to eat shit?! The spectators couldn't help but admire Jiang Chen's courage.

Chen Shizhen was livid, but the next moment, he burst into heavy laughter as killing intent flooded his eyes. "Good, very good! I've lived for a few hundred years, but it's my first time meeting such an arrogant and unbridled junior! Elder Yun Nie, your Regal Pill Palace has such good manners, huh!"

Elder Yun Nie didn't back down either. "Elder Chen, are you implying that your Sacred Sword Palace is allowed to oppress Jiang Chen, but he can't try to defend himself? Even if my sect wasn't a fourth rank sect, we still wouldn't be under your jurisdiction, much less when all of us are on the same level. What right do you have to force my disciple to do something against his will again and again?! Last time, you wanted to test his bloodline, and this time, his storage ring. Next time, if you want his life, does he have to docilely hand over his head!?"

Obviously, Elder Yun Nie had gone beyond mere irritation. As the highest ranked among those participating in Mt. Rippling from the Regal Pill Palace, he was well aware that his words held the most weight. He was also aware of the ramifications to the Regal Pill Palace's reputation if he didn't stand out to protect Jiang Chen

this time. Jiang Chen may eventually have to accept the inspection if the situation warrants it, but the Regal Pill Palace would brook no nonsense from the Sacred Sword Palace.

Elder Chen rolled his eyes, ignoring reason as he started to mock Jiang Chen. “This ole man only knows that it’s foolishness to go against the crowd. Even a sage realm genius Wang Han is willing to show everyone his storage ring, so how dares a mere fifth level origin realm cultivator show such attitude?”

“So what if he’s a sage realm genius? Does being in the sage realm grant him greater status?” Elder Yun Nie refuted coldly. “Furthermore, Jiang Chen is only in his early twenties. How do you know he won’t break into the sage realm in a few years? How about I ask what level origin realm Wang Han was at when he was Jiang Chen’s age?”

In all honesty, reaching the fifth level of the origin realm with Jiang Chen’s young age and poor origins was already considered a miracle.

Tristar Sect’s Elder Tan Lang gestured placatingly, “Elder Yun Nie, this bickering is unbecoming of the both of you. Inspecting the storage rings a little isn’t a big deal. If it turns out to be a misunderstanding, then at least everything will be cleared up.”

“Heh heh, Elder Tan Lang, I’m surprised that you haven’t exhausted yourself from meddling in matters that don’t concern you. Just let things go if it’s a misunderstanding? Do you treat our Regal Pill Palace disciples like puppets on a string, free to dance at anyone’s pleasure? Will a single phrase of ‘it’s a misunderstanding’

be enough of an apology after an unwarranted inspection? Do you not understand that continuously making things difficult for a junior will affect their dao heart?!" Elder Yun Nie bellowed, the very picture of indignant fury. He might not be able to overturn the collective opinion, but he could not easily allow others to freely inspect the storage rings of his sect's disciples.

"Then how do you want to go about this?" Elder Tan Lang asked with furrowed brows. In response, Elder Yun Nie looked to Jiang Chen, silently asking what his bottom line was.

Jiang Chen's reply was carefree and light. "This is already the second time the Sacred Sword Palace has publicly accused me. It is said that one shouldn't bully the young when they're poor, and this situation seems to be a perfect example of everyone bullying me in my destitute youth. I don't want much, but even if my cultivation level is low, I will not yield to the Sacred Sword Palace's constant provocation. How about this? You can inspect my storage ring, but if the results prove Wang Han was slandering me, Wang Han has to eat shit as an apology."

A cold glare shot out from Wang Han's eyes when he heard this. His hand instantly moved to his sword, ready to attack.

Jiang Chen sneered. "What? If you can talk shit, then you can eat it. Wang Han, each bit of spittle from a man is like a nail. If you dare talk shit, then you should be prepared to eat shit as well. If you don't want to eat it, I'm fine with anyone from your Sacred Sword Palace substituting for you." Though the truth of the matter wasn't known yet, many people in the audience still admired Jiang Chen's courage and demeanor. If they put themselves in his shoes,

Jiang Chen really did have a reason to be indignant.

They'd previously claimed his bloodline was problematic and had forcefully tested his blood. Now they wanted to inspect his storage ring. Which young genius' temper wouldn't flare up at this sort of behavior? Thus, Jiang Chen's words resonated with some of the young geniuses present.

"Kid, not only do I think that you're hiding a guilty conscience, but you also seem to want death in the worst of ways. Do you think that your Regal Pill Palace is capable of going up against the entire Myriad Domain?" Wang Han threatened coldly.

"Don't make me laugh, why would we go up against the entire Myriad Domain? The only question that matters here is, Wang Han, since you've dared to accuse me, do you dare bet with me? If you find the thousands of Sage Fledgling Grass on me that you accuse me of hiding, then I'll absolutely agree to evenly share it with everyone present. Without complaint. However, if you can't find it, then it means you were deliberately slandering me with dishonest motives. Do you really think your face so great that you can slander me willy nilly?"

Jiang Chen earnestly cupped his hands at the surrounding elders. "Everyone here is a heavyweight of the Myriad Domain and should all understand that I, Jiang Chen, am not a junior who will make something out of nothing. I only have a single reasonable request: if the Sage Fledging Grass is not found on me, Wang Han must eat shit. Only then will the resentment of my heart be resolved. If he dares not shoulder the consequences of slandering me, but still wishes to inspect my storage ring, then I, Jiang Chen, would rather

die than submit!”

With those words, the pressure was now all on Wang Han’s shoulders. There was always a price to pay for attempting to incriminate another, no? One couldn’t just open their mouth and freely dump a crock of shit on someone.

A Dark North Sect elder chimed in, “While I don’t know how everyone thinks, Jiang Chen’s request sounds very reasonable. There has always been animosity between the Sacred Sword Palace and the Regal Pill Palace, and the constant nitpicking won’t sit well with the younger generation. I don’t believe there’s anyone here who wishes to take unfair advantage of the young, right? Moreover, anyone who wishes to stir up trouble should be ready to shoulder the consequences, correct? Otherwise, if I accuse you and you accuse me right back, then won’t we dissolve into chaos? What say you, ole brother Xiang Gan?”

This elder from the Dark North Sect was rather sly. He was able to speak up for the Regal Pill Palace while also drawing the Great Cathedral into the fray,, forcing them to stand out and make their stance clear. Although Elder Xiang Gan also wanted to inspect Jiang Chen’s storage ring; objectively speaking, Jiang Chen’s rage was reasonable. After all, Jiang Chen had been the passive defendant from beginning to end so far.

In addition, the Great Cathedral had recently bought the Longevity Pill personally refined by Jiang Chen. Burning the bridge after crossing it was indeed inexcusable. Thus, Xiang Gan could only nod his head and ask, “Ole brother Chen, how certain is your Sacred Sword Palace about this? If you’re not confident, then

it is indeed not appropriate to recklessly accuse someone. Why don't you display some sincerity as well?"

By the side, Tristar Sect Elder Tan Lang only cared about finding the Sage Fledging Grass. He couldn't care less about the grievances between the Sacred Sword Palace and the Regal Pill Palace. Thus, he nodded his head in firm agreement, "When it comes down to it, Jiang Chen's request isn't unreasonable. Although, 'eating shit' seem to be words spoken in anger. No one can really eat feces. Why don't we change to a different method?"

"Right, let's use another method." Many also agreed.

This really depressed Wang Han. Him exposing Jiang Chen was obviously something that would benefit all of them, but he alone would have to bear the consequences. However, how could he back down now? If he shrank back here, everyone would only assume he had falsely accused Jiang Chen and wasted everyone's time. This would in turn cause the Sacred Sword Palace to become the butt of public criticism.

"Sage nephew Jiang Chen, how about switching to a more moderate method? For example, maybe some kind of compensation?" chuckled Elder Xiang Gan.

Jiang Chen shook his head, "Buddhas fight for faith, while men fight for honor. I don't need any sort of material compensation. Either he eats shit, or else he slaps himself in the face twice and publicly apologizes for slandering me."

Though this request was indeed certainly milder than eating feces, it was still very hard for a top genius to accept slapping himself. However, this was already Jiang Chen's bottom line.

"Everyone, don't try and urge me to concede even more. This is my bottom line. We all know that If someone else was continuously trying to slander and find fault with you, your anger would burn several times hotter than mine!" Jiang Chen stoppered any further entreaties of mercy with iron words. He would not budge a single step more. Thus, everyone's gaze moved from Jiang Chen onto Wang Han.

Wang Han was now unable to dismount from the tiger's back, caught between a rock and a hard place. Though he had guessed Jiang Chen was the one who'd harvested the Sage Fledging Grass, he had no evidence. At the end of the day, he was simply gambling on the outcome. However, if he lost this bet, slapping himself in front of so many people would hardly be any better than eating shit. Unfortunately, he no longer had anywhere to back down to now that everyone was staring at him.

Elder Chen snorted, "Everyone, aren't we all mistaken about something here? Just a few pestering words from this kid Jiang Chen and now our Sacred Sword Palace is somehow the public enemy? That doesn't seem fair!"

"Fair?" Jiang Chen laughed coldly. "Are you qualified to talk about fairness? When your Sacred Sword Palace wanted to test my bloodline, did you think about fairness? When you were interfering with my Longevity Pill's auction, where was fairness then? Now you're accusing me of monopolizing thousands of Sage

Fledging Grass, what is this fairness you speak of?”

Elder Chen was dumbfounded by Jiang Chen’s unexpected eloquence.

“Wang Han, scrub that sour expression from your face. You keep yapping about how you’re a sage realm young genius, acting as if you’re a notch above everyone else. Does your so-called genius’ demeanor lack even this bit of courage?”

Wang Han erupted with anger. “Sure I can agree, kid! But do you dare to let us search your entire body? Who knows if you’ll hide the Sage Fledging Grass somewhere else on your body and offer a decoy storage ring?”

Jiang Chen scoffed lightly. “Just say it. If you can’t find the Grass, are you willing to slap yourself?”

“Why not?!” Wang Han had been completely riled up.

“Words are cheap. Swear a heavenly oath.” Jiang Chen had steadily reeled in Wang Han to this point.

Wang Han was now completely devoid of ways out after these words dropped into the situation. Xiang Qin from the Great Cathedral could not help but ridicule him when he hesitated, “Wang Han, I’ve long since felt that you’re no man at all! If you’re a man, then act like one! A man should repay kindness with grace and return animosity with revenge. Be more direct about it! If you

dare make the bet, then make it. If not, then admit your loss! What are you dithering about for?”

“Right, well spoken! The Sacred Sword Palace is full of sissies. Speaking of sissies, where the heck is that idiot Du Lihuang? How come he’s not here yet? I still need to collect a debt from him!” Yue Baize, another Great Cathedral genius, added on.

Compelled by this string of mockery, Wang Han gritted his teeth, “Fine! We have quite a few elders present here. If Jiang Chen is willing to submit to a full body search and no Sage Fledging Grass is found, then I, Wang Han, am willing to slap myself and apologize to him. If I renege, may the heavens strike me down with lightning!”

Hearing this oath, everyone turned their attention towards Jiang Chen and he smiled lightly, “Very well.”

Following this, he once again performed a cupped fist salute towards everyone, “The Great Cathedral, the Dark North Sect, and the Tristar Sect can search me. As the plaintiff, the Sacred Sword Palace cannot search me. Who knows if they’ll try and frame me by planting something on my body? Also, I don’t like the Walkabout Sect, so if they want to search me, they must do so under the supervision of Elder Xiang Gan and Elder Yun Nie.”

Jiang Chen obviously did not trust the Walkabout Sect one bit, purposely singling them out.

Chapter 584: Wang Han Slaps His Own Face

Elder Wu Hen's face darkened. He said frostily, "Jiang Chen, you treat my Walkabout Sect differently. Do you feel guilty? The more you do, the more I actually suspect you."

The sly fox had kept his mouth shut so far as he sized up the situation. Possible ways of taking care of Jiang Chen even ran through his mind. If he left a lethal poison on Jiang Chen's body, he wouldn't have to worry about him not handing over the sky rank spirit herb. As valuable as it was, it wasn't worth dying for.

Although his plans were well thought out, it was a pity Jiang Chen had ruined them with a few simple words. If he couldn't freely search Jiang Chen, it would be difficult to do anything to the boy. Elder Yun Nie and Xiang Gan both had sharp eyes, it would be incredibly difficult to surreptitiously poison Jiang Chen under their supervision.

Jiang Chen remained cool and collected. "What the hell do your suspicions have to do with me? This farce wouldn't exist if it wasn't for many here suspecting me. What makes you so special that I have to accede to your wishes?"

Elder Xiang Gan spoke at this time, "Alright, less nonsense. I can promise nothing will be overlooked if I conduct the search. Let's settle this fairly. Wu Hen, it doesn't matter if your Walkabout Sect is involved."

The Great Cathedral always brought along a domineering aura,

so Elder Wu Hen had to pause and consider Elder Xiang Gan's words. Elder Wu Hen was infuriated. But in front of the elder from the Great Cathedral, he didn't dare to be too overbearing. A dark laugh escaped his mouth as he said, "Of course, ole brother Xiang, I fully trust you. It's just that I understand the devious nature of this child like no other, and when it comes to several thousand blades of Sage Fledgling Grass, I prefer to keep matters in my own two hands. I also bear responsibility to sage nephew Wang Han from the Sacred Sword Palace!"

Elder Chen of the Sacred Sword Palace nodded. "Indeed, I believe Elder Wu Hen is the most impartial. If he cannot conduct the search, I won't accept the outcome!"

Tristar Sect Elder Tan Lang was also quite irritated. "I don't care what you all are blathering about. I'll go first. Jiang Chen, open your storage ring and don't try to resist me with your consciousness. I'm going to search you."

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. "Please do as you wish." He allowed Elder Tan Lang access to his storage ring. One after the other, the elders of the various sects swepped their senses over the contents of his storage ring. Jiang Chen let it all happen, a cold smile on his face.

He had long since anticipated that Wang Han would try to frame him, so he had made some preparations like placing all his newly gained treasures into the Millionditch Stone Nest. The nest had a space that could hold millions of rats, so there was definitely enough room for Jiang Chen's spirit herbs. Luckily so, because if the elders were to see the sheer number of earth rank herbs and

the single Hidden Chameleon Cloudpine in his possession, even without the Sage Fledgling Grass, they would be stunned speechless. Hundreds of his Goldbiter Rats had scavenged the ancient herb garden, gathering far more spirit herbs than the other fifty people here combined. Jiang Chen also received quite the haul from the storage rings of Wei Qing and Du Lihuang.

With all that said and done, there were only tens of thousands of upper rank spirit stones and some true saint rank and saint rank spirit herbs within his ring. These were all items everyone knew about as well. He also had some pills, but they were nothing out of the ordinary. Everything he wished to keep a secret, like the Longevity Pills, were also hidden in the nest.

The elders' consciousnesses didn't overlook any corner of Jiang Chen's storage ring. They swept back and forth, but couldn't even find a single blade of the Grass, much less thousands. To the elders, Jiang Chen's storage ring was of no value. There was nothing that caught their eyes. In fact, his items were so ordinary, they didn't even pause on any for a closer look.

Elder Tan Lang was the first to retract his consciousness and swept it over Jiang Chen's body. He didn't find anything out of the ordinary on his body either, so he shook his head and looked at Wang Hang with the hint of a smile. It was obvious that the elder was now thinking that Wang Han had purposefully set Jiang Chen up.

The elder of the Dark North Sect walked up and searched Jiang Chen from top to bottom, then walked off, a smile on his face.

Elder Xiang Gan was even more careful than Elder Tan Lang in his search, but came up empty-handed as well. He shook his head and said, “Ole brother Chen, your Sacred Sword Palace really creates too much trouble. I believe sage nephew Jiang Chen is innocent.”

Everyone from the Regal Pill Palace sighed in relief when they heard Elder Xiang Gan’s words. Especially Mu Gaoqi had nervousness written all over his face. He wasn’t all that worried about a few blades of grass, but if Du Lihuang and Wei Qing’s storage rings were found, a sect war was more than likely to break out. Mu Gaoqi was soaked in cold sweat, terrified of what might happen. Only when Elder Xiang Gan’s words entered his ears, did he manage to calm down the worry in his heart.

Elder Wu Hen laughed coldly. “It’s my turn now, isn’t it?” He was absolutely certain Jiang Chen played some trick on them. Otherwise, where had that sky rank spirit herb gone to? Of those present, only Elder Wu Hen and Elder Wu Qi knew Jiang Chen had a sky rank herb. They concluded from the reactions of the three elders before them that they hadn’t found it. That could only mean Jiang Chen had hidden it somewhere!

He began a careful search under the supervision of Elder Yun Nie and Elder Xiang Gan, but he too came up empty-handed. However, he was more detail oriented than most and desired more than anyone else to grasp one of Jiang Chen’s secrets. He searched through Jiang Chen’s storage ring for a long time when his vision landed on a certain item. “What’s with this stone? It looks very odd.”

He was talking about the Millionditch Stone Nest, and Jiang Chen's treasures really were hidden within it.

Jiang Chen only snorted coldly, "Does that stone look like Sage Fledgling Grass to you?"

Elder Wu Hen sniffed. "Answer my question. Stop it with the useless excuses."

Jiang Chen was indifferent.. "Are you speaking useless platitudes or am I? You're looking for the Grass, so why the sudden interest in a stone? Do I even have the obligation to answer you?"

Elder Wu Hen cackled. "I think there's something wrong with this stone."

Jiang Chen laughed in anger. "Do I have to explain everything, everytime, when you have it out for me again? Can I try that too? You're the descendant of the demons! Can you prove to us you aren't?"

Elder Yun Nie harrumphed. "Wu Hen, are you trying to create trouble where there is none?"

Elder Xiang Gan also showed his displeasure. "Wu Hen, are you done searching?"

Elder Wu Hen rolled his eyes, a million thoughts running through his mind. "I suspect there's something amiss with his

stone, but he doesn't dare take it out for inspection. Pretend I hadn't said anything."

Elder Chen of the Sacred Sword Palace immediately followed up. "No clues should be overlooked when it comes to the Sage Fledgling Grass."

Elder Yun Nie could take it no longer. "Chen! Watch it!"

Xiang Gan spread out his hands and spoke to Jiang Chen, "Sage nephew Jiang Chen, what is the stone?"

Jiang Chen shrugged. "I want to decorate my residence in the Regal Pill Palace with some stones. Why? Do you guys really think I can hide Grass in a stone...?"

Silence followed.

Before anyone, especially Elder Wu Hen, could regain their wits, Jiang Chen continued, "You're a senior, so I should respectfully call you Elder Wu Hen. However, you're not worthy of my respect, Wu Hen. I'm not fake like you. If you want to search my stone so badly, fine, you may. I only have one condition. Just like Wang Han had to do before, swear a heavenly oath, and if you're wrong, you must slap yourself across the face twice. After you make the oath, you can search all you want."

"Disrespectful brat!"

Jiang Chen had properly enraged the members of the Walkabout Sect. He laughed heartily, “Disrespectful? Look at how much time we’re wasting here because of an idiot’s words.”

Elder Wu Hen’s expression was overcast, no one knew what he was thinking. Finally, he showed a bright smile and said, “Forget it, I give up.”

He had a name and reputation, a heavyweight of the Walkabout Sect. He couldn’t take the ignoble loss of face that came with slapping himself. He trusted Wang Han, who had accused Jiang Chen of taking all the Sage Fledgling Grass, but he couldn’t dismiss the possibility Jiang Chen had hidden the Grass somewhere else prematurely. It was the only explanation he could come up with as to why Jiang Chen could stand here so fearlessly. Although Elder Wu Hen wasn’t the headstrong, proud young man Wang Han was, he wasn’t a pushover either. He was experienced and shrewd, and guessed he wouldn’t be able to find any clues on Jiang Chen after weighing things up.

Elder Wu Hen decided to give up for now. It was actually good news for him they were unable to find anything. That meant he still had a chance to gain the sky rank herb for himself! With Elder Wu Hen’s announcement of giving up, the search concluded. Naturally, the two parties in question, the Regal Pill Palace and Sacred Sword Palace, didn’t search.

Jiang Chen took a step forwards, a cold glint in his eyes and his mouth tightly shut as he stared at Wang Han. Shen Qinghong was dancing with joy inside, absolutely thrilled and delighted. He finally had the chance to jeer at Wang Han. He walked up to Jiang

Chen's side, smiling, and said, "Brother Wang Han, the heavenly oath is said to work unerringly. Don't joke with your own life now."

Mu Gaoqi also smiled. "Is this an example of being caught in your own web and picking up a stone to smash your own feet?"

Shen Qinghong said between his fits of laughter, "Junior brother Mu is wise, there's also another saying that says you won't die if you don't look for death. Hahaha!"

All eyes focused on Wang Han, who was now boiling with rage as the flames of fury surged in his chest, wanting to explode out. If he could vent this fury on Jiang Chen, he wouldn't have minded killing him ten times over. However, he couldn't even regret things in the face of the heavenly oath.

He grit his teeth as he stared at Jiang Chen with the eyes of a viper. "Jiang Chen, I know you're up to something. I lost the bet, so I apologize to you."

Wang Han showed no compassion to himself as he stretched out both arms and slapped himself fiercely on both cheeks.

The crisp sounds of the slaps numbed everyone's scalps. They muttered inwardly, thinking Jiang Chen wasn't a character to antagonize. Even a genius like Wang Han had met with defeat in his hands.

Chapter 585: Rules Of Division

The entire scene had fallen silent. There was no one who couldn't feel how much hatred was imbued within those two slaps that hit Wang Han's face. And the person responsible for this? A fifth level origin realm cultivator from the Regal Pill Palace!

Elder Chen's face was also ashen. Although it was Wang Han who'd slapped himself, Elder Chen had also suffered an extreme loss of face. After all, Wang Han hadn't just slapped himself, but had dealt a blow to the Sacred Sword Palace's entire reputation as well.

"Jiang Chen, I, Wang Han, swear I'll kill you one day!"

Jiang Chen couldn't be bothered with such threats. Would Wang Han have coexisted peacefully with him, even if the events of today hadn't come to pass? Wang Han had attacked without a word when they'd found the Sage Fledging Grass.

"You should be thankful that I didn't make you eat shit." Jiang Chen responded with an indifferent smile, dismissing Wang Han's pointless provocation.

Elder Chen also glared darkly at Elder Yun Nie. "Our Sacred Sword Palace will remember this!"

Elder Yun Nie scoffed. "Sure, go ahead and record it. Who are you trying to scare?"

The relationship between the Regal Pill Palace and the Sacred Sword Palace was already antipathic enough to be akin to fire and water. Since the two didn't get along to begin with, what did it matter if new hatreds were added to old animosities? Not to mention, this time, it'd been the Sacred Sword Palace picking a fight.

Elder Xiang Gan chuckled. "Alright, alright. Any and all misunderstandings should be cleared up by now. Fortunately, we didn't waste too much time. Now that most of us have arrived and not much time remains, shouldn't we think about how to distribute the treasure from the island in the lake?"

The eyes of those assembled gleamed and filled with desire when the topic of the core island of the lake was mentioned. However, Elder Wu Hen from the Walkabout Sect furrowed his brows. "Wait a moment, our Walkabout Sect is still missing someone."

Elder Xiang Can was unsympathetic. "We've all waited so long. If we wait for everyone to gather, we may run out of time. Who's willing to wait?"

Most of the sect elders shook their heads, those from the fifth rank sects even more vigorous in their efforts. It had taken so much effort to enter this place that they were unwilling to wait.

Elder Wu Hen glaced at Wei Xing'er nearby and asked, "Has Wei Qing responded yet?"

Wei Xing'er shook her head. "We're unable to contact him."

Elder Wu Hen's heart skipped a beat. Although Wei Qing was arrogant, he was still a genius after all. There were only very few who were capable of harming him in this ancient herb garden. If he hasn't arrived by now, has Wei Qing actually... perished? Elder Wu Hen couldn't help but glance at Jiang Chen when his thoughts traveled here.

With Elder Wu Hen's understanding of Wei Qing, Wei Qing certainly would've gone to create trouble for Jiang Chen. But here, Jiang Chen was perfectly unscathed, and Wei Qing was now mysteriously missing. Although he had no evidence, Elder Wu Hen's initial hunch was that Jiang Chen had slain Wei Qing. Only, this sort of guess was not something he could bring up without evidence. He could only sit silently on his speculations.

Elder Chen of the Sacred Sword Palace also interjected, "Our Sacred Sword Palace's Du Lihuang has also yet to arrive. Elder Xiang Gan, how should we deal with this?"

Elder Xiang Gan mocked him right back, "What the hell does Du Lihuang have to do with this old man? Do you think this old man is responsible for babysitting your Sacred Sword Palace's brats?"

Elder Chen refuted, "Didn't you originally promise that your Great Cathedral would not make trouble for our disciples?"

"Do you have evidence that my sect's disciples did anything?" Elder Xiang Gan's tone turned cold.

Elder Chen's first thought was that Yue Baize had killed Du Lihuang in revenge. Seeing Elder Chen look at him, Yue Baize bristled. "What are you looking at me for? If I really killed that idiot, why would I be afraid to admit it? He was lucky and didn't run into me, or I wouldn't have minded smashing him to death with a single punch!"

Yue Baize's anger clearly had not abated from Du Lihuang ruining his plans for the Silverlion. Although Du Lihuang seemed to have run into trouble, Yue Baize still resented not having personally beaten him to death.

Elder Chen carefully observed Yue Baize for a while and realized that he really wasn't putting on an act. Elder Chen's heart skipped a beat. If Yue Baize really hadn't killed Du Lihuang, then who was responsible? Elder Chen broke out in a cold sweat as he came to terms with the fact that the Sacred Sword Palace seemed to have quite a few hidden enemies within the Myriad Domain. If not someone from the Great Cathedral, was it possibly someone from the Regal Pill Palace? But they weren't necessarily strong enough to kill Du Lihuang. Even the half-step sage realm Shen Qinghong was only slightly stronger than Du Lihuang. The former wasn't so strong as to kill Du Lihuang in a one-sided battle.

The opponent must have exerted overwhelming strength in order to kill off Du Lihuang such that he couldn't even get a message out. Was it an elder?! But that seemed unlikely; all the elders would've focused on approaching the center of the herb garden. They had a low chance of bumping into Du Lihuang.

Suddenly, Jin Feng from the Sacred Sword Palace spoke up. “Elder Chen, junior brother Du sent me a message previously that he was going to make a deal with Wei Qing from the Walkabout Sect.”

“Oh?” Hearing this, Elder Chen’s expression shifted as he glanced at Walkabout Sect.

Elder Wu Hen dismissed his glance. “Don’t look at me. Wei Qing has probably perished too.”

Everyone was shocked to hear this news. Two top geniuses from fourth ranked sects had actually perished here? This ancient herb garden really was a dangerous place!

“Did they accidentally run into those two fierce wyverns?” Some folks wondered.

“It’s highly likely. If it wasn’t those two wyverns, it would be virtually impossible for a normal expert to kill off both Wei Qing and Du Lihuang.”

“Ai, who knows? Maybe those two encountered a dangerous situation and escaped by crushing their jade tokens? There’s no point in worrying about it right now. Let’s just treat those people who haven’t arrived already as having forfeited.”

Elder Chen sighed and could only hope optimistically that the situation was really thus. Mt. Rippling Mirage was isolated from

the outside world, so they really wouldn't know if the two had left the mountain. The truth would only be known once all of them left Mt. Rippling Mirage.

Elder Wu Hen seemed expressionless, but was inwardly taken aback. Wei Qing combined with Du Lihuang hadn't been able to take out Jiang Chen, but might have been killed in return instead?

His vigilance towards Jiang Chen grew even more. This youth, who only boasted a fifth level origin realm cultivation, seemed to be a wellspring of surprises again and again. This only went to prove that Jiang Chen really wasn't as simple as he appeared.

Unfortunately, aside from the Sacred Sword Palace and the Walkabout Sect, no one else paid much attention to the missing Wei Qing and Du Lihuang. No one cared much about whether they were dead or alive. Their primary concern at the moment was how many precious spiritual herbs and priceless treasures could be found on that island in the middle of the lake.

Someone shouted out suddenly, "Look! The mist over the lake seems to be dissipating." As everyone looked up, they saw the mist shrouding the lake gradually thinning. The gradual dispersal of the mist allowed the island to grow clearer, revealing details that were previously hidden.

At first glance, the island didn't seem overly large, being less than a hundred acres. However, it exuded an unbelievable amount of spirit power. More than anything else, it was clear proof that the island was hiding a great amount of precious treasures. Just seeing the layers of spirit power emanating from the island caused

everyone to burn with enthusiasm. Who wouldn't be ecstatic at a rare stroke of great fortune avidly waving at them from the island?

"Everyone, let's be blunt first. The Great Cathedral has a priority claim on any treasures that are found." Elder Xiang Gan stepped ahead of the group and stated. His tone brooked no opposition, a domineering presence emanating from his words.

Since the Great Cathedral's strength was the highest among the six great sects, the other five sects couldn't object to the arrangement set forward by the Great Cathedral. However, the remaining five sects were relatively equal in strength, so ranking them in order of priority was a difficult task. After all, it was clear that it may not be possible to evenly split the profit from this venture. On the other hand, looting as they pleased would only create complete chaos.

"I propose that we use the rankings of the Pill Battles to decide priority." Ouyang De of the Regal Pill Palace suggested.

"Absolutely not!" rejected Elder Chen. "Why should we use the Pill Battles to decide the order?"

"If the Great Cathedral is willing to abide by the pill competition rankings, then our Walkabout Sect is also willing to." Since the Walkabout Sect ranked second during the competition, they were okay with a relatively high priority ranking.

Elder Xiang Gan scoffed, "What now, your Walkabout Sect is trying to scheme their way above our Great Cathedral?" The Great

Cathedral was the strongest among them, and would naturally not agree to use the Pill Battle rankings.

"Let's draw lots then," advocated Elder Tan Lang of the Tristar Sect. Since his sect had no advantage in either the Pill Battle rankings or overall sect strength, then he might as conduct a random drawing. At least this way, they might get lucky.

"Right, let's draw lots. Our Dark North Sect also supports this suggestion."

Elder Chen coldly intoned, "I have no comment about drawing lots."

"Fine, drawing lots it is." After Elder Wu Hen deliberated for a bit, he also felt that drawing lots was the best method.

Elder Xiang Gan sneered, "It's decided then. The five of you can draw lots. The Great Cathedral will retain our number one priority."

Imperious and dominating without question! Elder Xiang Gan's strength was unquestionable, and the Great Cathedral the first sect amongst all in the Myriad Domain. Everyone could only helplessly endure in silence in the face of his haughtiness. So other than the Great Cathedral, the remaining five sects drew lots. The fifth ranked sects were completely marginalized in this process, since they didn't have the qualifications to participate. The Regal Pill Palace's luck turned out to be average, drawing the fourth ranking.

Thus, the Great Cathedral was first, the Walkabout Sect was second, the Sacred Sword Palace was third, the Regal Pill Palace was fourth, the Dark North Sect was fifth, and Tristar Sect ended up sixth. Although Elder Tan Lang was quite unhappy with the result, he dared not voice his ire after receiving one of Elder Xiang Gan's glares. Instead, he could only swallow his resentment with dejection.

"Now that the order is set, everything else is straightforward. We'll use the priority sequence if anyone comes across sky rank herbs. Each sect can only pick one herb. After all six sects have picked one each, if there is a seventh sky rank herb, then the Great Cathedral will kindly accept it. If there are twelve sky rank herbs, then congratulations to everyone as each of the fourth rank sects will end up with two sky rank herbs. As for the fifth rank sects, they are allowed to take earth rank herbs, but only after the fourth rank sects have done so. The same goes for true saint rank herbs. As for sage rank herbs, they belong to whoever harvests them." Elder Xiang Gan thus laid out the rules.

He couldn't be too overbearing with his rules. If he was too oppressive, then the five other great sects might band together to resist him. Thus the rules were balanced such that, overall, the six great sects had roughly the same treatment.

Of course, having number one priority meant his Great Cathedral had an innate advantage. In case there was only one sky rank herb, it would naturally end up with the Great Cathedral.

Jiang Chen appeared as if he wasn't listening as they discussed the rules of distribution. Instead, he'd opened his God's Eyes and

was observing the dissipating mist. His brows were furrowed, as if engrossed in thought.

Chapter 586: Fighting Uproariously Over Spirit Herbs

The island in the center of the lake was certainly the heart of the ancient herb garden. Of that Jiang Chen had no doubt. However, although it was close at hand, he had the feeling that it wasn't as easy to reach as it appeared. He also felt something slightly disconcerting about the atmosphere around the large lake. At first glance, the lake surface looked calm and serene, but Jiang Chen's experiences from his past life warned him. To him, it felt like the peaceful lake surface hid a terrifying power lurking just within the waters.

Even as the hazy mist slowly dissipated from the air above the lake, Jiang Chen felt his suspicions grow. The radiant light that spilled over from the island seemed too unreal to be believable. As he pondered, Elder Xiang Gan suddenly called out, "Everyone, my Great Cathedral will take the first step!"

He shot into the air, leading the way as he headed towards the island. Xiang Qin and Yue Baize were a step behind him, streaking through the air in a blaze a light. The other three elders of the Great Cathedral also followed swiftly behind the trio. The two remaining geniuses of the Great Cathedral were only at the peak of the origin realm, but were undeterred in their pursuit, crushing flight glyphs that bore them through the air.

Members of the other sects also took the opportunity to take to the air, even those of the fifth rank sects. On the Regal Pill Palace side, Elder Yun Nie led the group to occupy the center of the overall formation, flying over to the island in the center of the

lake. Although none of their four young geniuses were of the sage realm and thus couldn't fly, this feat wasn't difficult to accomplish thanks to the help of flight glyphs.

It didn't take long for everyone to arrive at the center of the lake. As each figure landed on solid ground, they felt a feeling of ease and comfort suffuse their bodies as the abundant spirit energy made them feel carefree and joyful.

"Tsk tsk, even the outskirts of this island has such abundant spirit energy. It's already on par with the richest land in our sect. How dense will the concentration of spirit power become when we reach the heart of the island?" An elder of the Sacred Sword Palace called out. This island wasn't big, but it gave others a sacred feeling.

Elder Yun Nie looked out and also reflected to himself, sighing, "Such rich spirit power is unseen even within the six great sects. There might very well be sky rank spirit herbs within!"

Everyone was thinking of sky rank herbs in traveling to the island. The elders had all more or less collected some earth rank herbs along the way. Although it was a level of spirit herb more commonly used by emperor realm cultivators, there was still a market for them in the Myriad Domain, albeit one not commonly seen.

Sky rank herbs however, were an occurrence that appeared once in a hundred years. The appearance of a sky rank spirit herb heralded conflict and bloodshed, which was why they were virtually unseen in the Myriad Domain. However, everyone

present had a hunch, that this time, one would certainly appear in the core area of the ancient herb garden. So therefore, none of them were wondering if a sky rank herb would appear, only wondering how many would appear.

"Everyone be careful, there's a formless formation on the outskirts of the island. Don't charge about heedlessly." Although Elder Yun Nie was inwardly agitated, he didn't lose his composure and actually discerned something of the situation.

Jiang Chen had also noted that there were invisible formations around the moment he landed, and even more things present that no one could see. His nose twitched as he cautiously observed the surroundings with his consciousness, doubt growing in his heart.

"What are you looking for, junior brother?" Ling Bi'er grew curious when she saw Jiang Chen walk to and fro on the outskirts of the island, looking hither and thither. She was worried that there would be danger on the island as well, and so had followed Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen said lowly, "Senior sister, don't you think this island is a bit bizarre?"

"This island is full of peculiarities, but I can't actually identify what." Ling Bi'er responded honestly.

Jiang Chen nodded, seeming to be forming vague guesses but saying nothing. When he saw how concerned Ling Bi'er was, a thought struck him. "Senior sister, I've already found the

Scarletheart Fruit out of the four spirit herbs. We're only missing the Thousandmesh Jaderoot now."

"Really?" Surprised delight shot out of her eyes, agitation cracking the face of the usually frosty Ling Bi'er.

"Yes. I hope the Jaderoot is on this island." Jiang Chen nodded. "There are many spirit herbs in the outskirts. Senior sister, let's go take a look."

Ling Bi'er nodded and responded very docilely, "Alright."

The two walked around for a bit. Although there were saint rank spirit herbs on the outskirts, there were very few true saint rank spirit herbs present. The Jaderoot was a true saint spirit herb of the highest order, so there wasn't a single shadow of it to be seen.

The heavyweights of the six great sects had managed to find the entrance formation by now. "Everyone, the formation should open once every three thousand years as well. This entrance is not fully opened yet, so why don't we combine our efforts to attack the formation and open it? Otherwise, we'll have to wait for a day or more for it to finish opening." This was Elder Xiang Gan's proposal, one that was met with general approval. It was apparent that everyone was in an extremely anxious mood after entering the core of this island.

Every minute and second was utterly critical.

Jiang Chen and Ling Bi'er had returned to the crowd by now and heard Elder Xiang Gan's suggestion. Jiang Chen, however, frowned. "Mt. Rippling Mirage and this ancient herb garden, as well as the center island of this garden are protected by layers of formations, set up in a complicated manner. It's obvious that someone went to great pains here. There's a certain order to everything here."

From his past life's experience, Jiang Chen felt certain that a great deal of careful calculation had gone into setting up the formations on this island. If the formation was still opening up, then they should wait and not try to break through it with brute force. Yet, while those may be his thoughts, he had no right to speak here. He had already taken the lion's share of attention before, and had attracted many eyes. If he were to step out and proffer his thoughts, he'd only attract more attention. He didn't want to put himself forth as the public enemy and be universally condemned.

Therefore, although he was greatly dismissive of Elder Xiang Gan's idea, he didn't show a flicker of a reaction, only sending silent messages to Mu Gaoqi and Ling Bi'er, "I fear that there will be repercussions if we break through this formation with force. Everyone should be careful and leave immediately if we run into any dangerous situations!"

Jiang Chen was a decisive person. Although he was curious just how many treasures could be obtained from this core area, he wasn't someone who would forgo his life for wealth.

Mu Gaoqi's worship of Jiang Chen had reached almost utter

blindness by now. At this point, if Jiang Chen issued a proclamation to eat shit, he'd likely think that the former had a reason for it. As for Ling Bi'er, although her level of trust wasn't at Mu Gaoqi's exaggerated levels, she had an inexplicable sense of dependency on Jiang Chen as well.

All of the elders gathered together under Elder Xiang Gan's leadership and unleashed their respective arts, raining blows on the gap in the formation. The combined efforts and strength of thirty sage cultivators weren't any inferior to the normal blow of a sixth level emperor realm cultivator.

Wham!

Each attack ripped apart various runes, releasing multi-hued air currents from the formation gap. These runes were the ones that had built up the formation, and were continuously destroyed as the formation opened. As the attacks continued, they hammered away at the integrity of the formation and increased the density of the spirit power leaking out from it. The rainbow-colored air currents began to spread, causing an iridescent fog to enclose the air over the island after a short while.

As Jiang Chen watched the opening widen, his expression actually became more solemn instead of growing excited. His God's Eye looked at the vivid clouds spreading through the air, furiously running through calculations and ideas in his mind.

It was at this moment—

Boom!

A colorful plume of air mushroomed into the air, accompanied by a heaven-shattering explosion. The formation had completely collapsed, and an obvious rupture appeared in front of everyone. The formation is finally destroyed!

“Come, let’s go in!” Elder Xiang Gan didn’t hesitate for a moment as he charged in with his people. All of the other sects were loath to be left behind and sprinted in as well.

“We go!” Although Elder Yun Nie was a cautious sort, the arrow had already been notched to the bow and he couldn’t fall behind. Otherwise, if they went in too late, there would be nothing good left for the Regal Pill Palace.

“Let’s go!” The other three elders also agreed.

Jiang Chen saw Mu Gaoqi look at him and nodded in return. He still finally decided to go in to take a look. With that, the Regal Pill Palace team also rushed into the depths of the island.

A carpet of lush, verdant growth greeted the eyes as they rushed in. All sorts of exotic and rare flora decorated the two sides of their trail. There weren’t just any spirit rank herbs here at all, the most inferior among them were of the saint rank, and there were many true saint rank herbs as well.

This was an absolute treasure hoard!

The young disciples of each sect in particular lost their minds and started furiously raiding the area. Although saint rank spirit herbs weren't that precious in the context of the ancient herb garden, they would fetch a pretty price in the Myriad Domain, to say nothing of those of the true saint rank. Those spirit herbs were absolutely a luxury good for origin realm cultivators. Even the top geniuses who'd just entered the sage realm had an enormous need for true saint rank spirit herbs. So no matter their cultivation level, all the young geniuses started furiously harvesting herbs.

Shen Qinghong couldn't help but join in as well. Mu Gaoqi spoke, "Brother Chen, should we go grab some?"

Jiang Chen nodded his head slightly, "You can grab some if you like."

He however, didn't make a move, but merely took a leisurely spin around the premises, occasionally picking a herb here or there. However, he didn't sweep through the fields with abandon like the rest of the young disciples. He was very choosy with the herbs he took, and they weren't the most precious ones either. No one paid attention to his movements apart from Elder Wu Hen. He was watching the former with a cold eye from the shadows, completely perplexed. No matter how hard he thought, he couldn't fathom exactly what Jiang Chen was up to.

Chapter 587: Deliberate Suppression

Only Elder Wu Hen, who was keeping an eye on Jiang Chen, would glance at the herbs occasionally; the other elders didn't spare them even a glance. The spirit herbs growing here were unable to satisfy the appetite of these elder level old monsters. Sky rank herbs were what they sought, and they even disdained to act if it didn't at least involve earth rank herbs.

The young geniuses only required four hours to pluck the fields in their immediate surroundings bare. These fellows were very satisfied with their bountiful harvests, faces of joy all around. Mu Gaoqi, by virtue of his innate wood constitution, had also hit a big score. "Senior brother Chen, how was your harvest?" Mu Gaoqi asked curiously.

Jiang Chen shook his head and smiled mysteriously, not saying a word. He hadn't fought for the herbs at all, and the ones he did take could not be considered valuable. But Jiang Chen was confident that in a few days' time, these herbs could spike in value, giving him unimaginable wealth. After all the herbs were divided, the group set off again.

The island was not large. A large and tall structure came into view through the hazy mist after a few kilometers. Jiang Chen had excellent vision by virtue of his God's Eye and could make out the structure was actually an altar. There was a large platform surrounded by thousands of stone steps leading up to it, like a ladder ascending to the heavens.

In each corner of the first platform was a garden filled to the

brim with spirit herbs. There was a second platform identical to the first after ascending another 400 or so steps. Although the gardens on this second platform were much smaller than the ones on the first, they were abundant in richer spirit power. Different from the first two platforms, the third had an altar in the middle. There was a garden in each corner of this platform, very much like it had been on the previous platforms. The real difference was that these gardens were brimming with layers of fortuitous aura. Rays of respondent light emanated from them and created a breathtaking scene, exuding an exceedingly divine atmosphere.

"Sky rank herbs!"

Jiang Chen could not see the third platform, but when he used Psychic's Head, his consciousness was on par with any of the elders here. Just like the elders, he discovered the sky rank herbs up on the third platform. Jiang Chen wasn't sure on the amount of sky herbs that were up there, but their strong and unique sense of spirit power could not be mistaken. He could also tell that there were earth rank herbs growing in the gardens on the second platform.

Correspondingly, the largest four spirit fields on the first level contained true saint rank herbs. This was to say there were three platform levels ranked from low to high, with different levels of fortune that increased in a linear fashion. The elders had all experienced many things in their lives. When their eyes were met with the highest platform, they instantly knew what was there!

The imaginations of these old monsters ran wild. They knew they would find sky rank herbs on the third platform. The only

question they couldn't yet answer was how many of these herbs they would each obtain.

"Everyone, I have a suggestion!" Elder Chen from the Sacred Sword Palace suddenly spoke up. Everyone's hearts were afire at this time and they were feverishly scheming and plotting. Elder Chen's words actually broke up this awkward situation.

"What is it?" The elders looked at Elder Chen with some puzzlement.

Elder Chen said straightforwardly, "Everyone here should have guessed by now that the platform on the third level contains sky rank herbs. I suggest we divide up the herbs using the previously decided order." His Sacred Sword Palace had placed third in the lottery. If they stuck to this plan, he was certain there would still be sky rank herbs for him to obtain. Perhaps, they might even get lucky and get two or three herbs. No one had any objection toward Elder Chen's restatement of the distribution plan.

"Since the distribution method for the sky rank herbs has been set, shouldn't there also be rules for the earth rank herbs?"

Sky rank herbs were a legendary existence in the Myriad Domain, so cultivators were willing to put their lives on the line for them. However, they were just too hard to come by and as a result, earth rank herbs were also very precious. Even sage rank cultivators considered earth rank herbs to be luxury items. After all, sage rank cultivators normally used true saint rank herbs and even then, were not able to freely consume them. Everyone had been fully focused on the sky rank herbs, they had forgotten about the earth

rank herbs. With Elder Chen's reminder, realization struck them, he's right! There's still earth rank herbs!

Judging from the size of the second platform, there should be quite a number of earth rank herbs available. The sage realm cultivators already harvested quite some earth rank herbs in the ancient herb garden, but none of them would complain to get a few more of these luxury items. Besides, even if they did get their hands on the sky rank herbs, who was to say they could actually use them for themselves? It was much more likely that they would have to hand them over to the sect. Earth rank herbs on the other hand, could be kept for their own use and no one would criticize them for it. "Younger brother Chen, do you have a plan in mind?" Elder Xiang Gan smiled lightly.

Elder Chen smiled. "Since the sky rank herbs were divided according to sect, the earth rank herbs should be divided up according to individual cultivation levels. I recommend only sage realm experts should be allowed to pluck earth rank herbs. Each earth sage realm expert should be allowed two herbs, and each mortal sage realm cultivator one. We'll take turns harvesting and when everyone's had their turn, we'll start again from the beginning until there are none left."

Elder Xiang Gan had no objections, but still stated overbearingly, "It will be the same as before, the Great Cathedral has number one priority. I suggest we use the previous distribution order and have the fifth rank sects go after the Tristar Sect. Are there any objections?"

"The Sacred Sword Palace has no objections." Elder Chen replied

instantly.

"The Dark North Sect has no objections."

"The Walkabout Sect likewise has no objections."

Elder Tan Lang from the Tristar Sect felt quite depressed because his Tristar Sect ranked last in the lottery, making this plan quite unfavorable for them. However, he also understood that objecting would only be inviting humiliation upon himself, so he could only helplessly concur. "What is there for me left to say? There seems to be no objections."

On the Regal Pill Palace's side, though they were ranked fourth, this new rule was actually not the fairest for them since they only had four sage realm elders. None of their young geniuses were in the sage realm. This was a great point of dejection for them. As for the Dark North Sect, although they were ranked fifth in the lottery, they had agreed because they had two sage realm young geniuses on top of their four sage realm elders.

The Sacred Sword Palace was in a similar situation with Wang Han and Jing Feng both being in first level sage realm. Elder Chen wouldn't have made the suggestion in the first place if they didn't have an advantage in terms of numbers. As for the Great Cathedral, they had no reason to object either, since aside from having priority, their four elders and Xiang Qin and Yue Baize were all in the sage realm.

It was easy to see from this that Elder Chen's distribution

proposal was meant to lower the Regal Pill Palace's gains. Elder Yun Nie was well aware of the situation, but was helpless to object since everyone supported the proposal. The Regal Pill Palace could not object by itself. As for the elders of the fifth rank sects, they were just here to make up the numbers. They were already thankful to be here; how could they have any right to speak?

"Elder Yun Nie, we're just waiting on your Regal Pill Palace to agree. Unless, you wish to oppose?" Elder Chen mocked.

Elder Yun Nie snorted. "A small man is intoxicated by his success."

Elder Chen burst out in laughter. "Yun Nie, I know you're unhappy. However, it isn't our fault your young geniuses are trash. If only they were half decent and stepped into the sage realm, wouldn't your quota be higher?"

Elder Xiang Gan also knew that Elder Chen's proposal was meant to upset the Regal Pill Palace but he didn't want to waste any more time.

"Alright, let's stop digressing. The sky rank herbs and earth rank herbs' distribution have been decided. As for the true saint herbs on the first platform, let's have the young geniuses at the origin realm take them. After all, we can't take everything for ourselves. The young should have a taste as well, mm?" Elder Xiang Gan stepped in to play the role of a good person.

With the sky rank herbs and earth rank herbs' thus distribution

decided, the rest didn't matter much anymore. Although the remaining true saint herbs were still valuable, all of them combined might not be comparable to a single earth rank herb. This so-called generous gesture seemed less of compensation and more of a way to stuff their mouths full. Mu Gaoqi felt his belly burn with anger after hearing how the herbs would be distributed. He muttered, "The Sacred Sword Palace really is a bunch of bastards, opposing our Regal Pill Palace at every turn. They're clearly aiming for us with that plan!"

He felt depressed, also because he was completely helpless. After all, in the end it was him who hadn't lived up to expectations. Jiang Chen on the other hand, only showed a hint of a smile with a slightly odd expression. It was as if he didn't resent this distribution plan and thought that being excluded from the earth rank herbs wasn't a big deal whatsoever.

"Brother Chen, what do you think?"

"Gaoqi, calm down. Their fists are stronger, for now, so the distribution method is naturally up to them. But who knows what the final distribution will turn out to be?" A mysterious smile appeared on his face, but he refused to explain. Turning his head to Ling Bi'er, he said, "Senior sister, let's see if we can find any Jaderoot on the first platform. We just have to find one and we'll have gathered all the ingredients for the antidote."

"Mm, junior brother, it's all thanks to your hard work."

Elder Xiang Gan's sonorous voice sounded out at this time. "Alright, the origin realm cultivators can go harvest the spirit

herbs on the first platform. They will follow the same rules we do."

Hearing this, the origin realm cultivators stepped forward one by one.

Chapter 588: The Sacred Altar

The enormous three-tiered altar looked sacred and majestic from a distance. The closer the group approached, the more they perceived the altar's ancient, desolate atmosphere, inspiring a sense of awe. Upon arrival, the elders of the various sects began their foray by circling the first platform to eliminate any hidden risks.

Elder Xiang Gan then spoke, "Alright, there are four spirit herb fields here with over ten thousand true saint rank herbs, and only twenty some origin realm cultivators. Therefore, I propose that the origin realm cultivators can keep half of the herbs they harvest, and offer up the other half to their sects." Over ten thousand true saint rank herbs divided by twenty some origin realm cultivators meant that each cultivator would still receive three to four hundred true saint rank herbs. This number was quite stunning.

No one objected to this proposal; half of the herbs collected should indeed be handed over to the sect according to the normal harvesting rules of Mt. Rippling Mirage. With these rules, it became easy to divvy up the herbs. Jiang Chen's God's Eye searched to and fro, and he soon found the Thousandmesh Jaderoot in the second spirit herb field. There was also more than one of them as well. Luckily, no one had taken it by the time it was Ling Bi'er's turn. Thus, it fell into her hands, and at long last, the two of them had collected all four herbs on Jiang Chen's list. After roughly an hour, all the true saint rank herbs on the first level had been claimed and the group proceeded onwards to the second layer platform.

“Brother Jiang Chen, how many earth rank herbs do you think there are on the second level?” Mu Gaoqi asked curiously.

Jiang Chen smiled, “The more the better.”

Mu Gaoqi was a bit sullen. “We won’t have a share even if there are a lot. In fact, I hope that there aren’t any so they’ll be less pleased with themselves.”

Wang Han was walking in front and looked back with a contemptuous smile when he heard Mu Gaoqi’s muttering. “Is this an act of denouncing the grapes as sour since you can’t have them?”

Mu Gaoqi’s lips twisted as he growled back, “And what are you so proud of?”

“What now? I can’t be proud? I have a share of the earth rank herbs from the second layer coming to me. Do you?”

Clearly, Wang Han was deliberately showing off. It was Jiang Chen who yanked on a corner of Mu Gaoqi’s robes and said, “Gaoqi, it’s pointless to argue. As good as these earth rank herbs are, who knows who they’ll end up with in the end?”

Wang Han scoffed arrogantly. “No matter whose pocket they end up in, they won’t end up in your sub-sage realm level hands.”

“Really now? “Jiang Chen smiled indifferently. “Do you want to

bet again? If an earth rank herb lands in my hand, will you go eat shit?”

The words of ‘eat shit’ had become taboo to Wang Han, so when he heard this, his expression went black. “You pathetic origin realm level insect! You’re merely at the level of an ant, what are you so proud of? If you ever fall into my hands, I will let you know what it means to wish for death!”

At this time, that Elder Chen suddenly laughed. “Wang Han, what are you arguing with an origin realm cultivator for? Don’t forget your own identity as a sage realm genius. You need to look upwards, not always pay attention to the rabble below.”

This young and old duo were putting on quite a show. Mu Gaoqi’s face was flushing beet red, and he was quite livid. Shen Qinghong had also been silent, but he’d been mentally flying through certain plans. When I return to the sect this time, I must go into closed door seclusion and not come out until I break into the sage realm! Ling Bi’er, on the other hand, was still immersed in joy. Her mind was no longer here in this ancient herb garden, but had instead flown back to the Rosy Valley, back to her own residence, and back to her father’s side. All she wanted was to leave as soon as possible so that she could remove the Divine Befuddlement Miasma from her father’s body.

On the other hand, Jiang Chen’s face was a mask of detachment. How many ultimate experts in his past life had scraped and bowed in front of him? How could a mere first level sage realm Wang Han be mentioned in the same breath as them? Even a Titled Great Emperor was not qualified to be a doorman in the divine levels. As

strong as they were, they were only experts in the secular realm, but minor characters in the greater picture. Thus, it was useless for Elder Chen and Wang Han to try and provoke Jiang Chen like this. Their words were like the passing breeze, not leaving a single trace behind.

Four hundred stone steps later, they finally reached the second platform. This platform was rather spacious, and its floor was marked by various strange drawings. Ancient characters, ancient pictograms, and dense tadpole-like runes decorated the ground. They looked particularly abstruse and mysterious. This place should have been used for sacrifice in the ancient times. Jiang Chen took a look around, roughly gleaning the meaning of the drawings and understanding that the drawings had no attack power in and of themselves. Apart from him though, there was an obvious lack of comprehension from the others. However, they had also guessed that these drawings were highly symbolic, and were likely some sort of ancient totem. Thus, they looked upon them from a distance and didn't dare approach.

The four spirit herb fields had been scattered to four corners. The fields were lush and full of herbs, all striving to outdo each other in appearance. It was as if the place had flourished from ancient times till the present. Jiang Chen's gaze swept through the fields, and the results were greatly surprising. There was almost a hundred earth rank herbs in each field, indicating around four hundred herbs in total.

Thus, the thirty plus sage realm experts would each receive around ten earth rank herbs. This number was slightly out of Jiang Chen's expectations. The elders of the six great sects were just as excited, as shrewd light radiated from their eyes.

“Haha, since we’ve already said the Great Cathedral would go first, this old man is going to help himself!” Elder Xiang Gan was extremely domineering. After wandering through the four fields for a bit, he immediately locked onto two earth rank herbs and stashed them into his storage ring. The Great Cathedral’s other six participating members all waded in afterwards as well.

Next, the Walkabout Sect took their turn. Elder Wu Hen took the lead unceremoniously as he put two spirit herbs into his storage ring that he’d earmarked quite a while ago.

The Walkabout Sect was only allowed five harvesters but even so, the number of earth rank herbs once again decreased by another small amount. Next was the Sacred Sword Palace with a quota of six people allowed.

They had the same numbers as the Great Cathedral, so another batch of herbs went into the pockets of the Sacred Sword Palace. According to the previous rules, an earth sage realm cultivator could pick two herbs while a mortal sage realm cultivator could only pick one. When it was the Regal Pill Palace’s turn, only Elder Yun Nie could harvest two earth rank herbs, as he was the only one in the earth sage realm. The other three elders could only pick one during their turn. Earth rank herbs also had different levels of quality to them, so those harvesting earlier naturally had an advantage. Fortunately, the overall quality of any of the earth rank herbs was not low. Plus, everyone had different needs, so they ended up taking what they needed with little conflict.

There were ten earth sage realm experts and twenty five mortal

sage realm cultivators, meaning that forty five herbs would be harvested in each round. Thus, the four hundred or so earth rank herbs were enough for the sage realm cultivators to go through the harvesting order nine times. This meant that each earth sage realm expert would end up with eighteen earth rank herbs, while each mortal sage realm cultivator would have nine. As envious as the origin realm cultivators were, they could only stand on the sidelines and look on at the others earning a fortune.

"Ai, who knew that there would be so many earth rank herbs? If this is the case here, then there are probably many sky rank herbs above as well." Mu Gaoqi's tone was somewhat forlorn. According to his calculations, the Regal Pill Palace would only receive forty five earth rank herbs out of the total of four hundred.

This number was quite low compared to the Great Cathedral and the Sacred Sword Palace's haul. The Great Cathedral in particular, was able to obtain seventy two earth rank herbs after nine rounds with their two earth sage cultivators and four mortal sage cultivators. Moreover, since the Great Cathedral was number one in the pick order, if any herbs remained after the nine rounds, they would get to go again.

There really were another fourteen herbs after the ninth round. Thus, the Great Cathedral went a tenth round and harvested another eight herbs. The remaining six herbs then went to the next in order—the Walkabout Sect. As a sage realm genius, Wang Han ended up with nine more earth rank herbs in the end and obviously wanted to mock the Regal Pill Palace with his gains.

Displaying the nine earth rank herbs in his hand, he looked at

Jiang Chen and sighed, “Though the distribution of the earth rank herbs is complete, it seems like some people’s hands are as empty as ever. Where are their so-called earth rank herbs, ah?”

Mu Gaoqi curled his lips and cursedly quietly, “Puffed up scoundrel!”

Wang Han looked at Jiang Chen. “It seemed that someone wanted to bet with me earlier? Do I remember this correctly?”

Jiang Chen smiled leisurely, “What are you so proud for? Life is fickle. Maybe in just a little while, you will beg me to take your earth rank herbs!”

Hearing this, Wang Han gave a scornful laugh and then suddenly spat out, “The f*ck you sprouting in broad daylight?”

Jiang Chen smiled silently, and did not continue to argue.

At this time, Elder Xiang Gan’s voice once again sounded out, “Alright, we’ve finished distributing the earth rank herbs. Next up is the real show. Once we reach the third level, everyone must be extremely careful. Rash behavior will not be tolerated. Whoever affects the harvesting of the sky rank herbs will become the eternal sinner of the Myriad Domain.” Elder Xiang Gan issued a reminder in advance; he would not forgive any lapses in attention at this point. Faces full of tension, everyone nodded. Although they were all happy from dividing up the earth rank herbs, that was just an appetizer. The main course was on the third level of the altar!

Although the group was still on the second platform, they were already able to feel a rich concentration of spirit power falling from the third level. This kind of atmosphere was as if a desolate and sacred air was passing through a river of space and time, traveling directly from the ancient times. As if with an unspoken mutual understanding, everyone remained silent as they walked towards the third layer of the altar.

The hundreds of stone steps were like a bridge from the current times to the ancient past; everyone felt immersed in the atmosphere; it was as if they were on a holy pilgrimage. Only Jiang Chen's mind was as calm as water. He had opened his God's Eyes to the fullest and had spent his time observing this mysterious altar. Though he also knew that the third level would have sky rank herbs, he had a feeling that the most noteworthy and valuable things on this ancient altar might not be the sky rank herbs at all.

Chapter 589: Appearance Of The Sky Rank Spirit Herbs

The altar appeared both sacred and dignified on the third platform, looking down at everything from its position at the top. In the moment that the crowd set foot on the third platform, they felt a wave of an ancient presence wash over them. The altar had stood for countless years, its thick sense of desolation instilling an urge in those assembled to genuflect at the altar. Despite the years, the sand grains from the river of time had left nary a hint on the altar. Not even a speck of dust adorned its surface. It was almost as if someone had been dusting it off every day. However, everyone present knew how impossible that supposition was. The ancient herb garden opened but once in three thousand years. There was no one who could come day after day to clean the altar. Nevertheless, no hint of the time that had passed was visible on the altar, not a single detail out of place.

It was as if the countless years had only left behind a feeling of desolation, and nothing else. Jiang Chen stood at the rear of the crowd, not a ripple of emotion visible on his face, but great waves surging in his heart. When he'd set foot on the third platform, he'd felt some sort of connection with this presence. But when he analyzed it further, he realized that this tenuous unknown connection didn't seem to be between him and the ancient garden, but between the altar and the nameless blade on his back instead!

This discovery left Jiang Chen quite astonished. He'd always known that this treasured blade was extraordinary. Although he'd used it against enemies, the blade technique of "Vast Ocean Current Splitter" wasn't really at a high enough level to truly excavate the blade's potential. He'd only tapped into the barest

surface of its abilities, but what had puzzled him the most was that Jiang Chen had obtained this blade from the Eastern Kingdom, when the second organizer of the Hidden Dragon Trials Du, Ruhai, had been arrested and his house sealed. Princess Gouyu had been present as well, and he'd taken almost nothing, just this simple blade. And now, he'd unexpectedly discovered a clue about it in this altar.

Although this connection was nebulous at best, Jiang Chen was very sensitive and had clearly grasped it. "A blade from the Eastern Kingdom and a divine altar within Mt. Rippling Mirage of the Myriad Domain. What's the connection between the two?"

Jiang Chen couldn't even begin to extrapolate the answer no matter how hard he thought, but of one point he was certain, and that was that the two had something in common. Even if they weren't directly linked, they were certainly indirectly connected. As for why the blade had come into the Du clan's hands and had its shine dulled, obscuring the splendid radiance it should've had—this was an ancient mystery that no one would be able to solve.

Jiang Chen didn't outwardly reveal his discovery, but discreetly observed the altar instead. There were twelve round pillars to the towering altar, with exceedingly profound, ancient runes carved on each pillar. All of them formed a perfect whole together with the twelve pillars. The dome of the altar topped the pillars, with even more lifelike pictographs inscribed into it. Although quite a sight, no one knew what they meant.

This altar looked simple and apparent to one glance, but that solemn, holy presence made everyone unconsciously avert their

eyes. Jiang Chen took a close look and noted steps made of white jade around the altar, with ripples that shimmered in and out of existence around the jade steps.

Jiang Chen recognized that to be an exceedingly strong formation. It would appear that although the altar had weathered many years, the restrictions had yet to fade. This meant to say that the interior of the altar was a forbidden area, not to be ventured into. The shimmering ripples looked as gentle as water, but Jiang Chen was certain that even if Elder Xiang Gan barged in, he would be instantly slaughtered by the formation.

Elder Xiang Gan observed the altar's outskirts for a bit and revealed a hint of a solemn look. "Everyone be careful, don't venture in mistakenly. Be careful of being destroyed by the formations!"

Elder Xiang Gan was someone who recognized the value of what was staring him in the face. Everyone snapped to solemn attention, but they weren't here for the altar either. Although the altar was incomparably holy, it was apparent at a glance that it was empty, with nothing of value within. Therefore, everyone felt that the altar was just for worship. It might've held special meaning in ancient times, but there wasn't much meaning to it now for them.

However, Elder Xiang Gan still approached, gravely reverent, and bowed respectfully towards the altar. "Oh ancient gods, we are but passersby from the Myriad Domain. We dare not desecrate the altar, but only wish to beg for some sky spirit herbs for the future of the Myriad Domain. We pray that the gods do not fault us for doing so."

The other elders also came forward to pay their respects as well. Although no one had any idea if there was any use to this ritual, everyone felt more at ease after doing so. There were beams of spirit power ensconcing the four corners around the altar, but in between them, one could still glimpse them, the sky rank spirit herbs!

There were three sky rank herbs in each plot of land, making for twelve total. Elder Tan Lang of the Tristar Sect instantly heaved a sigh of relief. His sect was ranked sixth from the lottery, so if the total number of spirit herbs wasn't a multiple of six, it would be a loss for his sect. But since it had turned out to be so, each great sect would be able to receive two sky rank herbs.

But now it was Elder Xiang Gan who was a bit dejected. Since there were twelve herbs, there wasn't anything extra that his Great Cathedral could skim off. If there'd been thirteen, then they would've been able to take another one. But since it was an even twelve, everyone would receive the same amount. However, he wasn't overly depressed as there were two sky rank herbs earmarked for him. He chuckled, "The same rules apply. My Great Cathedral chooses first. Since there are twelve, each sect will receive two. That's fair."

Elder Wu Hen was one who played his cards close to his chest, but he couldn't help but feel moved at the sight of the sky rank herbs. He'd chased after Jiang Chen for so long for just a single sky rank herb, right? But now, there were twelve in front of him. And of those, two would be coming to his sect!

However, there were spirit power forcefields around the spirit herbs, so it would take some effort to harvest them. But with the strength of the sage realm cultivators present, even though it would take a bit of time to break through the forcefields, it was still a sure bet. The only difficult part was to do so without harming the spirit herbs. Otherwise, they would've easily broken through the forcefields through brute force with just a couple blows.

Jiang Chen took a look at the heavyweights grouping together and didn't step forward to become involved. He started walking down the third level platform. When Mu Gaoqi and Ling Bi'er saw him do so, they grew curious.

"Brother Chen, where are you going?" Mu Gaoqi asked inquisitively.

Jiang Chen waved his hand, "I'm going to take a look around on the second level; you can just stay here."

Although Jiang Chen's actions were a bit odd, no one paid any attention to him at this critical moment. Even Wang Han only smirked disdainfully when he saw Jiang Chen walk down to the second level. Is something wrong with his brain? Is he hoping that something's been left behind on the second level?

It was impossible for anything to be left behind after so many sage realm cultivators had swept through the area. Wang Han might've followed Jiang Chen down at any other time, but now that a sky rank spirit herb was about to emerge, there was no way he wanted to miss the show. Therefore, after he flicked a

contemptuous glance at Jiang Chen's diminishing back, he retracted his gaze and turned his attention to the sky spirit herbs.

Jiang Chen arrived on the second platform and found a relatively quieter corner, taking out the Skyweave Cauldron and a pile of spirit herbs from his storage ring at the same time. These were the herbs he'd collected after setting foot on the island. Almost all of the young geniuses had been furiously raiding the spirit herbs back then, with the exception of Jiang Chen. He'd targeted very specific herbs, a move that had elicited surprise from Elder Wu Hen. But no one knew why Jiang Chen had done so, and now he was taking out the herbs he'd gone to great pains to collect. Naturally, he had his uses for them.

Ever since he'd arrived at the banks of the lake with everyone else, he'd felt that the environment around the lake had been rather special. The multi-hued haze over the lake had attracted his particular attention. When he set foot on the island, the presence hidden within the rainbow colored haze had made him even more certain that a Miasma was hiding within this seemingly splendid colored fog, within the interplay of rainbow colored spirit power.

The haze was the Divine Befuddlement Miasma!

Although completely different from the one that afflicted Ling Bi'er's father, it was only stronger than it and not weaker. The complexity within was many fold over the one that plagued Ling Bi'er's father.

Jiang Chen had kept watch along the way, and he concluded that this Miasma was likely intentionally left behind by the great

personage who'd created the ancient herb garden. To put it plainly, it was a test. If one could sense the Miasma, they would also know that there would be a corresponding cure for it on the island.

This was a great scheme of life and death. There was death in life, and life in death. But apart from Jiang Chen, everyone's eyes had been on the spirit herbs on the island, and no one had understood this plan!

It was only Jiang Chen who'd detected the slightest incongruity when he arrived near the lake. Add to that his previous experiences in his past life, it quickly enabled him to see through this life and death scheme. The spirit herbs that he'd picked were precisely those that could counteract the Miasma. And now, he was going to take advantage of the time everyone was so busy harvesting the spirit herbs above to refine the antidote on the second level.

Chapter 590: Is Jiang Chen Crazy?

Jiang Chen had the recipe and the necessary ingredients, which he had harvested in the ancient herb garden, to concoct the antidote. Put plainly, it was impossible for another antidote for this particular Miasma to be produced on this island.

Once he finished refining the antidote, it wouldn't matter how many sky rank and earth rank herbs the other people had obtained, the final distribution would still be up to him. If they didn't cooperate, Jiang Chen wouldn't mind 'accidentally' dropping the antidote into the lake. Only the members from his sect could count on his benevolence.

It was obvious this island was full of peculiarities with restrictions seemingly all around. However, these restrictions' only function was to scare people. Those who moved with caution and patience wouldn't find their lives put in danger in the herb garden, since the killing power of the formations had decreased. This was also the reason the sects were able to enter the island.

However, one obviously couldn't come and go as they pleased on this island. The formations were merely some trivial tests on the surface. The real test was this ingenious life and death scheme that was concealed exceptionally well. This island was meant to be enjoyed by pill experts, so the life and death scheme was obviously to test their pill knowledge. If they couldn't figure out the existence of this test, or lacked the knowledge on how to overcome it, they were simply not fated to enjoy the fortunes of this island.

After all, life and death were ruled by fate.

Those who ended up poisoned by the Divine Befuddlement Miasma and perished here did not deserve any sympathy. In fact, the heavyweight who had designed this life and death scheme had left behind multiple solutions to live. A large number of ingredients necessary to create the antidote for the Miasma were planted within the spirit herb fields. If a pill king level expert noticed the Miasma only after they left the island, they could still use the herbs they previously harvested to refine the antidote.

From this it became apparent the creator of this island understood full well that whoever entered this island, they would sweep the place clean. In the process, they would obtain all the necessary herbs to concoct the antidote. This life and death scheme illustrated the concept of ‘death in life and life in death’. The key point was to see if those who entered the island possessed the necessary perception and comprehension.

It turned out that of the many who entered, only one had all these qualities, and that was Jiang Chen. He was aware of this and came up with a plan accordingly.

This was the reason he was indifferent no matter how the ‘experts’ divided up the sky and earth rank herbs. Jiang Chen didn’t feel dejected at all when that petty character Wang Han was boasting. In fact, the more earth rank herbs there were, the better it was for him. This was also the reason he was willing to continue to bet with Wang Han. Jiang Chen understood clearly, that as precious as sky rank and earth rank herbs were, they weren’t as precious as life itself.

Mu Gaoqi was very dissatisfied with the distribution method and felt that the Sacred Sword Palace was deliberately suppressing the Regal Pill Palace. Jiang Chen, on the other hand, remained calm throughout and informed Mu Gaoqi that the final distribution was still up in the air. When Wang Han showed off his earth rank herbs, Jiang Chen had casually mentioned Wang Han would be begging for him to accept them later on. At every point was it evident that everything was within Jiang Chen's calculations. The antidote itself was not difficult to refine. The difficulty was in seeing through this life and death scheme and finding the correct herbs from the various fields.

Jiang Chen finished refining over a hundred antidote pills about four hours later. After leisurely putting the pills and pill cauldron away, he calmly walked back up to the third level. At this time, the distribution of the sky rank herbs was nearing its end. Seeing Jiang Chen ascending the stone steps, Mu Gaoqi hurriedly came over, "Brother Chen, why did you come only now?" He sighed deeply, then continued, "Sky rank herbs are really extraordinary. Every single one of them is amazing. They seem like they're alive. That spirit power really is..."

Mu Gaoqi was unable to find the words to describe them.

Jiang Chen understood his enraptured look. Sky rank herbs were really too rare in the Myriad Domain. Once every hundred years some of them would appear. And even when they did, they wouldn't be up for auction. They were kept by the top level experts who could obtain them. Today was an eye-opening experience for the younger generation. Of course, there was an exception. These sky rank herbs were precious to the current Jiang Chen, but in his past life, any random weed in the Celestial Palace's rear garden was

more valuable than the sky rank herbs of the secular realm.

The others were treating this as an eye-opening experience, whereas Jiang Chen was thinking about the sky rank herbs' practical value. The distribution of the herbs went smoothly, the fifth rank sects not even daring to think of partaking. Letting them participate in the distribution of the earth rank herbs was already very generous. If they had so much as thoughts of taking the sky rank herbs, they might have to spit out the earth rank herbs they'd already obtained. Although the fifth rank sects were envious, they were quite self aware and dared not make a ruckus or show any covetous emotions.

After the group finished distributing the sky rank herbs, they didn't seem to find anything else special around the altar.

The sun was already setting on the horizon, so everyone decided to camp on the island for the night and leave the next day. Twelve sky rank herbs, four hundred earth rank herbs and countless true saint herbs. The island's herb harvest had far exceeded everyone's estimates. The great sects were greatly elated. Only Elder Wu Hen didn't share in everyone's joy, Jiang Chen's sky rank herb on his mind. After walking down the altar, they found a place to set up camp on the first platform. Each sect maintained their distance from the others as they were worried about any issues that might crop up.

After all, they were currently in extraordinary times as everyone possessed precious sky rank and earth rank herbs. They were all on guard against those harbouring evil thoughts.

Though Elder Wu Hen was ready to make a move against Jiang Chen, he was unable to find an opening since everyone was on high alert. He forcefully held back his urges. We still have two days left. As long as Jiang Chen doesn't leave Mt. Rippling Mirage, I still have a chance!

Moreover, Elder Wu Hen was confident Wang Han's claim that Jiang Chen had obtained over a thousand Sage Fledgling Grasses was true. A thousand Sage Fledgling Grass were almost comparable to a single sky rank herb. After all, in the Myriad Domain, the demand for the Heroic Sage Pill far surpassed its supply.

A calm night passed.

Early the next morning, everyone returned to the edge of the island, and they waited for the layers of mist to disperse..

"Alright, the lake's mist has almost disappeared. Everyone, get ready to leave," said Elder Xiang Gan from the Great Cathedral.

"Right. Let's leave as soon as possible. I've always had this feeling that this island is a bit strange. If we don't leave, my heart will always be at sixes and sevens," Tan Lang of the Tristar Sect followed up.

"Hmm? You also feel it?" Elder Chen was slightly surprised.

The senior elders looked at each other traces of dismay. Evidently, everyone felt this vague ominous feeling, but no one

had mentioned it until now since they couldn't discern what it was. They now realized they were all sharing this feeling.

Elder Wu Hen sneered, "Who cares how strange or ominous it is. As long as we leave, what does it have to do with us? Those sky rank herbs aren't illusions, that's all that matters."

Everyone nodded in agreement. "Come on, let's go!"

As everyone turned into streaks of light traveling to the shores of the lake, Jiang Chen reluctantly looked back at the island. He was somewhat unwilling to leave the island as he still wanted to know what the connection between the divine altar and the saber on his back was!

But he could not carefully explore the altar with so many people around. He could only leave with everyone else for the time being. There were still two days left after all. Jiang Chen had decided he would find an excuse later on to come back to look for clues.

Aside from Jiang Chen, everyone was a bundle of nerves. They didn't relax until their feet touched the shore again. After landing on the shore, Elder Xiang Gan looked around. "Alright. The ancient herb garden was a great find. From now on we will go our separate ways, so be careful of your valuables. The heart of a man is unpredictable. If an accident happens in the remaining two days, you will only have yourselves to blame."

Elder Xiang Gan's meaning was very obvious. Everyone should go back to their original groups. If any sect was robbed or plotted

against by others, they could only resign themselves to fate and could not blame others. Everyone understood this fact and many had decided that they would immediately find a transportation matrix and crush their return talismans after leaving the ancient herb garden. They had already obtained a great harvest and could care less about the spirit herbs outside this garden. At this crucial time, they shouldn't be penny wise and pound foolish. No one wanted to pick up sesame seeds only to lose the watermelon!

Everyone was filled with worry and about to set off, when they suddenly heard a remote voice. "Please, wait."

This voice was unexpected as everyone was preoccupied and unwilling to waste time chatting. They turned toward the voice and saw Jiang Chen indifferently standing on the shores of the lake, seemingly looking down on them all.

Wang Han scoffed, "What now? What more nonsense does a kid like you want to fart?"

Not giving Wang Han a single glance, Jiang Chen faintly smiled and looked at each sect's leader. "Gentlemen, isn't it time to discuss the issue of distributing the earth and sky rank herbs?"

Jiang Chen's question stunned everyone and their expressions represented their thoughts perfectly. Has that brat gone mad?

Elder Chen ignored Jiang Chen and instead turned toward Elder Yun Nie with a mocking smile. He coldly asked, "Yun Nie, has this kid from your Regal Pill Palace gone crazy from heartache?"

Chapter 591: Jiang Chen In Control Of Everything

The group burst into raucous laughter after Elder Chen's question. It was apparent that they all had similar thoughts, but they didn't hold a grudge with the Regal Pill Palace. The sect usually conducted themselves well, so although they'd felt the same, they hadn't voiced their thoughts. However, Elder Wu Hen had an odd smirk on his face. He was happy to watch a good show, and he also wanted to see what Jiang Chen was up to.

Elder Tan Lang snorted dismissively, "Yun Nie, your Regal Pill Palace really needs to teach your younger generation proper manners!"

"Indeed, if something's wrong with his mind, we should take care of it early! If he goes out and blabs nonsense, he might reveal the entire secret of the ancient herb garden!" Elder Wu Hui spoke up as well.

It was apparent that no one cared about Jiang Chen's status as the champion of the genius group in the Pill Battles. Or, it could even be that the others had the motivation to suppress Jiang Chen precisely because of his status.

Elder Xiang Gan only smiled coldly, not saying a word. It was clear that he was also dissatisfied that Jiang Chen was seemingly creating trouble out of nothing, but he wasn't at liberty to publicly censure the Regal Pill Palace due to their transaction with the Longevity Pill.

It was actually an elder of the Dark North Sect who smiled. “Alright, alright. The young are always so hot headed. Don’t take it seriously, we should leave while it’s early.” He walked over to Elder Yun Nie after speaking, “Daoist Yun Nie, just quickly apologize to everyone so we can leave. This place truly does feel uncanny.”

Elder Yun Nie was also quite taken aback. He had no idea why the normally calm Jiang Chen would suddenly voice such stunning words. They were an absolute affront to the experts present! The items had already flowed into their pockets, but he was suddenly discussing matters of distribution. This was without a doubt, a highly forbidden topic. However, he was someone who protected his own, so he naturally wouldn’t lecture Jiang Chen. He only smiled faintly, “A joke from a young man. Everyone can just disregard it.”

Elder Chen from the Sacred Sword Palace snorted. “A joke? If he keeps voicing these kinds of jokes after we leave Mt. Rippling Mirage, then it’s not so simple as just a joke!”

It looked like Elder Chen wasn’t going to let this matter just pass by, but wanted to keep worrying away at it like a dog with a bone.

Elder Tan Lang also nodded. “I too think that voicing these kinds of words shouldn’t be treated as a joke. He should be punished!”

“Right, if the Regal Pill Palace doesn’t bear to discipline him, then we don’t mind disciplining him in place of the Regal Pill

Palace!” Elder Wu Hui also called out.

Elder Yun Nie frowned, looking at Elder Xiang Gan and hoping that he would step forth to smooth everything over.

Yet, Elder Xiang Gan had a distant expression on his face. It would seem that he quite minded what Jiang Chen had said and didn’t plan on intervening. It was rather Xiang Qin who murmured some words to Elder Xiang Gan in a low voice, but was glared back down into submission. It was apparent that Xiang Qin wanted to intervene, but his elder had fiercely rebuked him. It looked like Jiang Chen’s words had also breached Elder Xiang Gan’s bottom line.

On the Regal Pill Palace side, they too were also baffled. Apart from Elder Yun Nie, the other elders were looking at Jiang Chen, baffled. Some even looked at him with mounting anger. This was to be a joyous occasion, what was Jiang Chen mouthing off for?

As for Mu Gaoqi and Ling Bi’er, they supported Jiang Chen unconditionally. Although they didn’t understand why Jiang Chen had spoken these words, they didn’t even think of censuring him at all.

Wang Han from the Sacred Sword Palace couldn’t wait to see the matter grow bigger. He would be absolutely delighted to see Jiang Chen rouse public ire.

Through all this, Jiang Chen remained indifferent. He hadn’t spoken again before now because he wanted to clearly observe

everyone's reactions. After he'd taken a look at all the sects' reactions, he finally smiled faintly, "I won't waste time in speaking nonsense, since I've noted all your reactions just now. I'll say only this, you all are free to leave if you want to die. Or, leave if you're confident in being able to cure the Miasma."

The crowd was stunned after these words. The Divine Befuddlement Miasma? These three words were like a spell. One mention of them was enough to induce a sense of horror and drain the color away from everyone's face.

"What do you mean by that, Jiang Chen?" Zhu Feiyang from the Tristar Sect roared. "Don't think you can be an alarmist just because you're the champion of the Pill Battles."

Jiang Chen didn't pay the slightest attention to Zhu Feiyang. He just smiled nonchalantly. "I'd planned on telling you this earlier if you'd divided up the earth rank spirit herbs fairly. But what a pity you listened to the Sacred Sword Palace's counsel and subjected my Regal Pill Palace to unfair treatment when apportioning the spirit herbs. Since you wished to exercise a tyrannical hand over the distribution rules, then I'm sorry, I'll be domineering for once as well. Those who say I'm just spreading alarm can leave right now and pretend that I'm just farting. But I can definitely say that you won't even make out of the mountain. Your graves will be made right here!"

A bizarre smile appeared on Jiang Chen's lips. "If you don't believe me, you can search your own consciousness. See if you've fallen victim to the Miasma on this island."

Although everyone felt that this was highly unlikely and just hyperbole, some of the young geniuses still did as Jiang Chen said. Their faces changed drastically when they did, because they discovered a faint layer of Miasma drifting around their consciousness!

The reactions of the young instantly drew attention from the elders, and they too all checked their respective consciousness. Expressions of stunned terror soon appeared on their faces.

“Didn’t you think that the atmosphere on this island was bizarre? That wasn’t a misconception. You thought the feeling of danger came from the formations on the island, but didn’t realize the true danger lurked within those multi-colored hues of fog instead! I trust you’re all familiar with the Miasma?” Jiang Chen’s tone was casual, without the slightest bit of warmth to it.

Apart from the Dark North Sect having a bit of heart just now, the Sacred Sword Palace, Tristar Sect, and Walkabout Sect had all wanted to kick him when he was down, even hoping to sentence him to death if possible. Although the Great Cathedral hadn’t spoken up, it was evident that Elder Xiang Gan had also wanted to punish him. This had opened up Jiang Chen’s eyes to the reality of human emotions. That so-called relationship arising from the Longevity Pill had been but a piece of paper, unable to withstand the slightest test. Since this was the case, he had no need to be polite about anything any longer.

The heavyweights all had darkened expressions as they probed the fog around them, then took a look at the Miasma in their consciousness. They’d discovered tragically that Jiang Chen had

spoken the truth!

Careless!

They'd been too careless.

They hadn't thought at all that after successfully reaching the island, exerting such minimal effort to open the restrictions, and smoothly claiming the earth rank spirit herbs and sky rank spirit herbs, that what would truly threaten them would be the entwining mists of this island, the colorful mists that looked like they belonged to an immortal realm. There really was spirit power within them, but there was also Miasma mixed in as well, taking one completely off guard. No wonder they'd had a foreboding feeling rise in their heart that they hadn't been able to shake since leaving the island. So this had been the case!

Solemn gravity was writ all over the heavyweights' faces. Whether it was the young geniuses or elders present, everyone there was familiar with the Miasma. Ling Bi'er in particular swayed slightly. She hadn't thought that following her father being infected, she would be infected as well, and by a strain that was more than ten times stronger than her father's.

The heavyweights that'd called for Jiang Chen's punishment earlier were now all flabbergasted, left without words to utter.

The elder from the Dark North Sect laughed dryly. "Sage nephew Jiang Chen, how did you see through this Miasma? Were you not poisoned?"

Jiang Chen was impervious to poison because he had refined the bloodline of the Golden Cicada. He naturally hadn't been poisoned. However, he naturally wouldn't be speaking of that anytime soon. He only smiled faintly, "Although I was poisoned, I was on my guard well beforehand. I used some methods to diffuse the poison."

"Oh?" The Dark North Sect elder's eyes gleamed. "You know how to cure the poison?"

Everyone breathed an inner sigh of relief to hear that Jiang Chen had handled the poison. Things would be simple if there was a cure. It was said that the Miasma was an incurable poison. They had fallen to the utter depths of despair just a moment ago, and had almost thought that they would perish within the ancient herb garden.

Jiang Chen smiled nonchalantly when he saw everyone turn their gazes to him again. "I can cure it, but why should I give it to you?"

The crowd was left speechless again, sinking into an awkward silence. As thick-skinned as they might be, they couldn't bring themselves to voice words of having Jiang Chen cure them. After all, they'd just wanted to lecture Jiang Chen just a moment ago, and to harshly discipline Jiang Chen on behalf of the Regal Pill Palace. They'd only just finished proclaiming those words to suddenly realize that Jiang Chen grasped their fates in his hands. Even though they didn't know if that was true or not, no one dared take the risk. They were well aware that they were completely

helpless in the face of the Miasma. Jiang Chen had no need to help them. He could just pick up the spoils after they all died. This meant to say that no matter whether they were willing or not, they didn't control their destinies anymore at this moment.

However, these weren't Wang Han's thoughts. His eyes were bloodshot as he screamed, "Jiang Chen, I suspect this Miasma is something you've cooked up!"

"That's right! I think the same too!" Zhu Feiyang from the Tristar Sect also yelled.

Jiang Chen sniffed. "Your suspicions are your matter. As to whether I cure you or not, that's my matter. Since you two idiots have the moronic idea to hop up and down to try and frame me even now, it would a shame indeed to not admire your ugly posture in death." His eyes swept those present after he spoke, smiling, "Who else thinks I released the poison?"

Even the various elder heavyweights felt themselves unable to meet Jiang Chen's eyes. They were all very rational and knew that it was impossible for the poison to have originated from Jiang Chen. That fog had been there long before Jiang Chen had arrived. The haze was also all over the lake. It just wasn't on a scale that Jiang Chen could've managed to pull off.

Chapter 592: Profiteering

The most critical thing was, how dare they continue to slander Jiang Chen and add to his anger? If they enraged him, what if he really possessed the antidote and refused to give it to them? Wouldn't they all perish here? After all, the heavyweights here were all smart people, and they were very clear on how tyrannical the Miasma in their minds was. Although the poison was currently dormant, its effects would explode once it invaded their consciousness. Upon its activation, those afflicted could only sit back and await death. Seeing Jiang Chen's calm and leisurely look, everyone felt even more uneasy. Those elders who had previously spoken out to discipline Jiang Chen felt especially regretful.

"Jiang Chen, you sure are ruthless. You didn't even mention such a significant matter. But, are you callous to the extent that you don't even care about your own sect?" Zhu Feiyang couldn't help but say.

Jiang Chen smiled indifferently, "Don't you worry about my sect."

He then turned to Elder Yun Nie to say, "Elder Yun Nie, due to some previous circumstances, I couldn't notify you properly." He flicked his fingers a few times. Seven antidote pills shot outwards into the hands of his fellow sect members.

"Take the pills immediately, the sooner the better." Jiang Chen had long since prepared these seven pills for the four elders and three young geniuses. Since he wasn't poisoned, he naturally did not need an antidote for himself. Fearing that Jiang Chen might

change his mind, Elder Yun Nie and the others did not hesitate to quickly swallow the antidotes and sit down to refine the pills.

The surrounding onlookers all felt a surge of adrenaline, some of them even feeling the urge to steal the pills. However, the Regal Pill Palace members had swallowed the antidotes almost immediately, leaving no chance for theft. Not to mention, no one would dare make any trouble at this time. Should they fail to obtain the pills, they would completely enrage Jiang Chen, which would only spell certain death. At the very least, the pills were likely real, seeing that Jiang Chen dared give them out to his fellow sect members. The atmosphere instantly became very awkward, so silent they could have heard a pin drop. After enough time to brew a cup of tea had passed, Elder Yun Nie stood up and laughed, “Jiang Chen, your antidote sure is miraculous. The effects were instant!”

Elder Yun Nie was actually quite stunned, not only at the efficacy of the antidote, but more surprisingly, out of so many here, Jiang Chen had been the sole individual who had discovered the Miasma on the island. Plus, he hadn’t just discovered the Miasma, he had also analyzed the poison and quickly formulated an antidote. Although Elder Yun Nie wasn’t sure how Jiang Chen had created the antidote, there was one thing he could be certain of: Jiang Chen alone had the resources at hand to create the antidotes.

Jiang Chen’s display of incredible insight, prodigious pill talent, heaven-defying perception and extraordinary strategic ability caused Elder Yun Nie to view him in a completely new light. A mere fifth level origin realm cultivator was making a group of sage realm experts dance in the palm of his hands, to whatever tempo he set. Although there were some external factors involved, Jiang

Chen had definitely displayed astonishing wisdom and tactics.

Following this, the other members of the Regal Pill Palace also finished digesting the antidote to rid themselves of the Miasma. They rose one after another, taking a place next to Jiang Chen. Each of them had a tacit understanding that they should now present a united front to the others. Even Shen Qinghong was fully willing to stand beside Jiang Chen without awkwardness. When he had accepted Jiang Chen's pill, he'd been struck by a sense of shame. Nevertheless, he'd been able to clear his mind as he refined the antidote and break through the demons Jiang Chen stirred in his heart. Thus, he was wholeheartedly submissive as he stood next to Jiang Chen. Seeing the Regal Pill Palace's lively and vigorous looks after refining the antidote, everyone else gained a more serious expression. Any trace of their former doubt regarding Jiang Chen's antidote had been replaced. If the antidote was fake, then the rest of the Regal Pill Palace would not have acted so happily along with Jiang Chen.

The Dark North Sect elder sighed lightly, "Ai, we were all blind to have offended the true pill genius."

Despite saying this, he was still somewhat relieved. Instead of adding insult to injury previously, the Dark North Sect had instead spoken up for Jiang Chen and the Regal Pill Palace. "Sage nephew Jiang Chen, why don't you state a price for the antidote?" The elder smiled ruefully. Their Dark North Sect only needed six antidotes as they had entered with seven members, but one had already perished. Though Elder Yun Nie didn't speak up for the Dark North Sect, he gave Jiang Chen a meaningful glance. Jiang Chen was naturally aware of the relationship between the Dark North Sect and the Regal Pill Palace.

He smiled faintly. “The Dark North Sect and our Regal Pill Palace have always had a good relationship. If I had not been vexed by the distribution of the earth rank herbs, I had intended to publicly inform everyone of the Miasma. But since you all went ahead and listened to the Sacred Sword Palace’s disparaging words, well, you’ve simply tied my hands in this matter. I’m sure everyone can understand that I’m not the type to try and impress those who can’t be bothered. Relationships are a two-way street after all.”

These words were very reasonable, so the elder nodded slightly, “We can’t blame you for this. It was indeed our mistake to begin with.”

As the other sects heard this, regret twisted in their guts. Why had they listened to the Sacred Sword Palace’s slander and purposely sabotaged the Regal Pill Palace’s gains during the earth rank herb distribution?

Alas, it was too late for regrets now.

Elder Chen saw the unkind looks that the other sects were sending his way and was inwardly incensed. He mentally cursed eighteen generations of their ancestors. These old bastards! No one spoke up when I made that proposal because they would profit from it. But now they all want to blame me for saying too much?

Unfortunately, these thoughts could not be voiced, only bitterly swallowed.

Everyone here had their hearts in their mouths. Previously, they'd all believed Jiang Chen was crazy for wanting to redefine the heaven and earth rank herbs' distribution.

But now they knew, Jiang Chen wasn't crazy. They were the ones who were crazy!

Jiang Chen smiled lightly, "The Dark North Sect and the Regal Pill Palace have a good relationship, and you did not kick us while we were down or speak up to lecture me. Thus my price is simple. I'll take half of your Dark North Sect's earth rank herbs."

Among their five participating members, the Dark North Sect had harvested a total of fifty-four earth rank herbs. Everyone was shocked when they heard Jiang Chen's words. The antidote was this expensive? And this already included a friendship discount?

The Dark North Sect elder thought for a moment before nodding decisively, "Twenty seven earth rank herbs to buy six lives is a very fair price." Saying this, he turned to the other members who had earth rank herbs, "Everyone, take out half of your earth rank herbs."

This was a matter of life and death. They might have been reluctant but they had no choice in the matter. After the twenty seven earth rank herbs were delivered into Jiang Chen's hands, six antidote pills were unhesitatingly passed over to the Dark North Sect members. They didn't dawdle either, and immediately sat down in place to refine the pills.

Seeing this transaction, the remaining four great sects all considered whether or not they should buy the antidote from Jiang Chen.

The Tristar Sect's Elder Tan Lang was the first to speak up. He laughed, "Alright, alright. This old man had truly judged wrongly. Honorable nephew Jiang Chen, it was this short-sighted old man who had wrongly given offense. I never expected that such hidden dragons and crouching tigers would be amongst us, more so a genius of your ken. Fortunately we do have you, otherwise I'm afraid everyone would have perished here."

These words seemed very grand and optimistic, as if the elder was a heroic character.

However, Jiang Chen remained indifferent. He wasn't clear what sort of person this Elder Tan Lang was, but this elder had been amongst those who had spoken to discipline Jiang Chen. In fact, he'd been the first person to do so.

Elder Tan Lang felt a bit awkward when faced with Jiang Chen's unresponsive demeanor, but still doggedly pressed on with a look of magnanimity as he smiled, "This old man knows that just now everyone went a bit too far and the previous earth rank herb distribution was indeed unfair. How about this, the Tristar Sect is also willing to purchase the antidote with half of our earth rank herbs."

Upon hearing this, Mu Gaoqi was inwardly elated. After doing some calculations, flowers of delight bloomed in his heart. Brother Jiang Chen was about to make a fortune, ah!

There were a total of four hundred earth rank herbs. Subtracting the ones the Regal Pill Palace had obtained meant there were still three hundred and sixty seven earth rank herbs. If they took half of that, then Senior Brother Jiang Chen would suddenly obtain nearly two hundred earth rank herbs! This sort of extravagant wealth would immediately transform Jiang Chen into the richest man among the Myriad Domain's younger generation.

But who expected that Jiang Chen would remain expressionless, before suddenly chuckling indifferently, "When did I say I would sell the antidote to you?"

Jiang Chen's words immediately caused everyone's expressions to change.

What? Not selling? Could Jiang Chen be planning on staying put and watching everyone die from the poison?

Elder Chen from the Sacred Sword Palace promptly tried to incite the others, "Does everyone see and hear this? This kid is vicious to the bone. All he wants is to sit back and watch us all die to poison so that his Regal Pill Palace becomes the only one that benefits!"

These words immediately aroused a large number of people to join in opposition.

Wang Han poured more fuel onto the fire by shouting, "This kid is too cruel! I think everyone should combine forces and forcefully take the antidote from him. The Myriad Domain can be without a

Regal Pill Palace, but absolutely cannot only contain the Regal Pill Palace!”

Wang Han’s words inflamed the thoughts of everyone present. Everyone turned towards Jiang Chen with grave expressions and unkind eyes, like tigers glaring at prey.

Jiang Chen laughed indifferently as he revealed a pill bottle with its cover removed, slightly shaking it in the palm of his hands. He moved the bottle over the lake waters and tilted it slightly. “This is the only bottle of antidote. With the slightest shake of my hand, these pills will sink into the lake and dissolve. If anyone feels confident they’re faster than me, then they’re free to try and snatch these pills from me. But be warned, you only have one chance. If you can’t steal these pills, then you can only sit tight and wait for death.” Jiang Chen laughed leisurely, “I, on the other hand, can easily run away with an escape talisman. I’ll just have to come back later to help bury your corpses and take care of all the treasures you’re all carrying.”

When they saw Jiang Chen’s relaxed demeanor, bitter expressions crossed the faces of the other four great sects’ members as they suppressed the previous impulses that Wang Han had incited. They did not dare gamble. They could not afford to gamble. If they lost the gamble, the only route for them was death. Who knew if Jiang Chen was a careless person? If he actually threw the antidote pills into the water, then they would be completely out of luck. Pills were all refined under high temperatures, and would instantly dissolve in water. They would have no way to save the pills even if they wanted to.

At this moment, they tragically discovered that their life and death were no longer in their own hands, but rather firmly within Jiang Chen's grasp.

They couldn't steal the pills. They couldn't buy the pills. Just what did this Jiang Chen really want from them?!

Chapter 593: An Exorbitant Price For The Antidote

Pressure built in everyone's hearts as even sage realm cultivators were hard pressed to remain unmoving in the face of impending death. Those of the Sacred Sword Palace were even more desperate. They were well aware that they had long since formed a death grudge with the Regal Pill Palace, and they had previously mortally offended Jiang Chen. Even if Jiang Chen was willing to hand out the antidote, he likely wouldn't sell it to the Sacred Sword Palace even at a high price.

A crazed look flashed through Elder Chen's eyes. "Everyone! This Jiang Chen has ulterior motives! He has resolved himself to torture us to death and then conveniently pick up our treasures! When it comes down to it, we have nothing to lose! Even if we all go down together, that's still better than his Regal Pill Palace profiting from everything! We're dead either way! Are you all willing to let the Regal Pill Palace watch us die and then rob us of our items?!"

Nothing to lose!

This was the only way out in the face of no alternatives. Elder Wu Hen of the Walkabout Sect stared at Elder Yun Nie. "Daoist Yun Nie, does your Regal Pill Palace truly want to force us to this step?"

Elder Yun Nie didn't know what Jiang Chen intended, but he had to step forth at this time to gloss things over. "Jiang Chen, we're all compatriots in the Myriad Domain, leave them some hope," he sighed lightly.

Jiang Chen hadn't planned on really seeing things through either. If he really did want to see them dead, he wouldn't need to have revealed the existence of the Miasma at all. He could just pick up their treasures after they'd died from the poison. Logically speaking, that would've been the best outcome.

However, Jiang Chen knew that if they all died from the poison, those in the outside world would blame the Regal Pill Palace no matter how the sect tried to explain things. They might even unite to mount a crusade against the Regal Pill Palace, turning the sect into a public enemy. Therefore, after considering the issue carefully, Jiang Chen felt that he couldn't be that heartless in this matter. The reason why he had not relented to their demands was actually because he wanted Elder Yun Nie to be able to play the good cop, and he to play the bad.

Jiang Chen pretended to think for a moment before nodding, "Since it is Elder Yun Nie's instructions, I dare not disobey. However, are all of you certain you want to buy my antidote? That I'm not forcing you to do so?"

Elder Xiang Gan of the Great Cathedral spoke up at this time, "Sage nephew Jiang Chen, since out of everyone here, you were the only one who could see the problem with this island, you absolutely have the right to speak. Us old fellows can only admit our defeat. My Great Cathedral is also willing to offer half of our earth rank spirit herbs."

"My Tristar Sect is willing as well." Elder Tan Lang chuckled.

“Then my Walkabout Sect is naturally willing as well.” Elder Wu Hen had been silent all this time and now looked at Jiang Chen meaningfully. In his mind, Jiang Chen had now grown even more mysterious. He couldn’t help but sigh. Why did a kid with such perverse talent have to belong to the Regal Pill Palace, and not his Walkabout Sect? Come to think of it, Palace Head Dan Chi had been the one to discover Jiang Chen back in the sixteen kingdom alliance. He had been the one who’d shown great vision, whereas numerous others in the Myriad Domain had reacted like they were watching a joke back in the day when the Regal Pill Palace had allied itself with the Precious Tree Sect.

Even though Elder Wu Hen was standing in the opposing camp, he had to admit that Dan Chi had made quite a good move there.

Those of the Sacred Sword Palace however, had all frozen in place. It wasn’t that they weren’t willing to offer up half of their earth rank spirit herbs, but there was no way that Jiang Chen would sell the antidote to them. Hence, they dithered about in place, at a complete loss of what to do. Originally, they’d wanted to unite the other sects against the Regal Pill Palace, but that strategy hadn’t held up to the test at all. How would the other sects think like the Sacred Sword Palace and fatally offend Jiang Chen when their lives were on the line?

Even as all of the heavyweights looked at him pleadingly, there wasn’t a ripple of emotion in Jiang Chen’s heart, nor was there any hint of sympathy or pity. These fellows were only acting like this because of the circumstances. They might very well erupt in open hostility the second after they acquired the antidote. Naturally, Jiang Chen wouldn’t give them the antidote that easily. The momentum and initiative would no longer be in his hands as soon

as he did so.

“Everyone, I won’t beat around the bush. The price for the Dark North Sect’s antidotes was indeed half their spirit herbs, but that was the price for friends. Why is that? Because apart from them, all of the other sects have behaved in a non too friendly manner. Therefore, apart from the Dark North Sect, no other sect can enjoy this discount for friends.” He spoke in a measured tone.

Everyone was taken aback by these words, their expressions turning bitter a scant second later. It seems that Jiang Chen’s appetite is more than half of the earth rank spirit herbs!

Elder Xiang Gan took a deep breath. “Sage nephew Jiang Chen, I was unhappy just now, but I didn’t step forward to fan the flames. Even if you don’t give us the price for friends, you’ll give us at least a fair price, right?”

Jiang Chen smiled faintly and nodded. “Since Elder Xiang Gan has spoken, I’ll give you a fair price. One sky rank spirit herb and half of your earth rank spirit herbs. Ah yes, I’ll also throw in Brother Xiang Qin’s pill for free. He doesn’t need to split his earth rank spirit herbs.”

“What?!” Elder Xiang Gan’s tone turned frosty as he stared at Jiang Chen. “You’re certain? Sky rank herb?”

Jiang Chen’s expression was cold. “This is the first price I’m setting. If you make me restate the price, then it won’t be just this much.”

He’d had a decent impression of Elder Xiang Gan before this, but Jiang Chen had been somewhat disappointed with his performance just now. Therefore, Jiang Chen’s price gave face only to Xiang Qin and not much to Elder Xiang Gan.

Elder Xiang Gan was incensed. He had never imagined that Jiang Chen would demand such an exorbitant price. This was profiteering!

“My Tristar Sect will pay this price!” Elder Tan Lang quickly spoke up when he saw that Elder Xiang Gan was silent without a word. He’d offended Jiang Chen terribly just now. If he wasn’t more proactive now, the price might be even higher when it was his sect’s turn.

“Heh heh, but that isn’t the price for your Tristar Sect.” Jiang Chen flicked a noncommittal glance at Elder Tan Lang. He grinned, “Nevertheless, I won’t be too hard on you. One sky rank spirit herb and two third of your earth rank spirit herbs. Take it or leave it, just tell me your decision. No room for negotiation.”

Zhu Feiyang of the Tristar Sect couldn’t help but fly into a rage. “Jiang Chen, you’re raising the price for no reason at all! This is a complete scam!”

Jiang Chen laughed coldly. “Don’t get me wrong, everyone. I’m not asking for you to buy my antidote. Refine the antidote for yourself if you can.”

Refine the antidote now? Even if they had an inkling how to do so, Jiang Chen had likely taken all the necessary ingredients.

Elder Tan Lang's expression was very dark as he grit his teeth lightly and replied, "Alright, as you say. One sky rank spirit herb and two thirds of our earth rank spirit herb."

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. "Alright, please wait to one side."

"Why do we need to wait?" Elder Tan Lang was in a hurry to get the antidote.

"Don't worry, I'll definitely give the antidote to you before the poison takes hold." Jiang Chen wasn't in a hurry at all. He shifted his gaze to the Great Cathedral, then the Walkabout Sect. As for the Sacred Sword Palace, he couldn't even be bothered to look at them.

Elder Xiang Gan finally sighed with resignation. "Alright, I was wrong this time and got taught a good lesson by a youngster. It will be as you say then, one sky rank spirit herb. My Great Cathedral obtained eighty earth rank spirit herbs in total, taking out Xiang Qin's ten makes for seventy. Half of that is 35 herbs, correct?"

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. "That's correct." He then casually waved his hand. "Those of the Great Cathedral please also wait momentarily." Looking at the Walkabout Sect again, he asked, "What say you, Elder Wu Hen?"

Elder Wu Hen started. He'd thought that Jiang Chen had long since viewed the Walkabout Sect on the same level as the Sacred Sword Palace, but here he was asking them. He frowned, "What price would sage nephew Jiang Chen like to propose for my Walkabout Sect?"

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. "I clearly delineate between my grudges and gratitude. Your Walkabout Sect has offended me deeply, but I should still give you the chance to make a transaction. I will name my price only once, it's up to you whether you want to buy or not."

Ultimately, Elder Wu Hen was still a worldly person, and he relaxed slightly when he heard that Jiang Chen was willing to sell the antidote to him. After all, if they did not obtain the antidote, they were dead without a doubt. It was impossible to expect them to research what the antidote was and refine it in the short amount of time left. However, Elder Wu Hen was a bit worried that Jiang Chen would ask for an exorbitant and unacceptable price. So, he looked at Jiang Chen again after reconsidering multiple times. "Jiang Chen, we can settle all of our previously grudges as long as you give us a fair price."

Elder Wu Hen had finally realized that Jiang Chen was no ordinary person after experiencing so much. He was clearly not a character that Elder Wu Hen could take care of himself. As opposed to continuing to oppose him, he might as well be forthright and beg for reconciliation.

Jiang Chen stared at Elder Wu Hen for a long time before finally smiling slightly. He'd used the Psychic's Head to observe Elder Wu

Hen just now and discovered that the old man actually really did want to make up with him, likely because he knew that he wouldn't be able to best Jiang Chen. As for why he was begging for reconciliation, he was likely asking Jiang Chen to not set too exorbitant of a price.

Jiang Chen nodded lightly. "I'd planned on taking both sky spirit herbs, but since Elder Wu Hen understand the principles of what is right or wrong, your sect can enjoy the same price as the Tristar Sect."

He wasn't an unfeeling sort of person. Elder Wu Hen's attitude clearly indicated that he was giving up on his pursuit of Jiang Chen and forgoing his plan of seizing the Cloudpine. This indirectly meant that he was forfeiting. Therefore, Jiang Chen decided to go with the flow and give the Walkabout Sect a fair price. Originally, he'd wanted to take both of their sky spirit herbs, but abruptly changed his mind and left them one to give them some hope.

Elder Wu Hen sighed lightly. "I am immensely grateful for this."

He was of also aware of Jiang Chen's meaning. All along, he'd wanted to rob Jiang Chen's sky rank spirit herb. But now, Jiang Chen hadn't taken away both of the Walkabout Sect's sky spirit herbs, he was indirectly returning them a herb. When all was said and done, the Walkabout Sect would still have one sky rank spirit herb remaining. Elder Wu Hen both admired Jiang Chen and felt resigned that he could only admit defeat.

Thus, there was only the Sacred Sword Palace left. The few sect members felt extremely awkward and kept shooting looks filled

with pleas for help towards the Walkabout Sect and Tristar Sect. They obviously hoped these sects would still speak up for them.

Chapter 594: Returning With Arms Full Of Loot

After all, they were all part of the Myriad Domain's six great sects so the other sects weren't willing to just watch the Sacred Sword Palace perish here.

Elder Xiang Gan spoke up, "Sage nephew Jiang Chen, the grudge between the Sacred Sword Palace and the Regal Pill Palace..."

Jiang Chen cut him off before he finished his sentence, "Elder Xiang Gan, no one should try and be the peacemaker here. What did I say when Wang Han was swaggering in front of me previously after receiving his earth rank herbs?"

Everyone stared at one another, not knowing what Jiang Chen meant. Only Wang Han stared at the ground in embarrassment, dearly wishing for a stone to hide under. When he had originally been showing off in front of Jiang Chen, Jiang Chen had said there would come a time when Wang Han would beg Jiang Chen to take his earth rank herbs. How could he not remember this clearly?

Meanwhile, off on the side, Mu Gaoqi's blood was frothing with excitement. Jiang Chen was still able to speak to these heavyweights with such ease, and even toy with them as he pleased. What could be considered the true demeanor of a genius? This was a true genius! By this point, Mu Gaoqi was willing to prostrate himself before Jiang Chen in admiration.

Mu Gaoqi quickly followed up when he heard Jiang Chen's

question. “My Brother Chen has previously said that Wang Han would end up begging him to accept his earth rank herbs. Wang Han replied that Brother Chen was daydreaming.”

Wang Han was red-faced but could not retort. Although his heart was full of teeth-gnashing hatred, there was no way he could act on his anger. He knew that this wasn’t the time to flare up. If he exploded in rage now, it was tantamount to condemning all the lives of the Sacred Sword Palace members into the abyss.

“Jiang Chen, killing someone is but a simple matter. What are your conditions for selling your antidote to the Sacred Sword Palace? Just give us a price. A slice or a dice is all the same. Be more straightforward about it!” Elder Chen said indifferently.

Jiang Chen’s voice was likewise apathetic. “Does this count as begging me?”

The ashen-faced Wang Han suddenly stepped forward and bowed before Jiang Chen. “Jiang Chen, my mouth was previously cheap and dirty. You are a truly magnanimous gentleman. Here are all my earth rank herbs, please accept them.”

This Wang Han was unexpectedly aware of when he should bow and submit. At this moment, he had actually managed to overcome his mental hurdles and bent his back to Jiang Chen in surrender.

Even if everyone knew that his actions weren’t heartfelt, it was still quite a large change for an arrogant genius like Wang Han to humble himself. Jiang Chen also felt slightly surprised and glanced

coldly at Wang Han. Though he saw that the corners of Wang Han's eyes were about to erupt in furious fire, Jiang Chen remained unconcerned. He had never been afraid of Wang Han and if it wasn't for the greater picture, he simply did not want to give the antidote to the Sacred Sword Palace. However, Jiang Chen was quite aware that if he really withheld the antidote from the Sacred Sword Palace, then he wouldn't just offend the Sacred Sword Palace, but would incite hostility from all the other sects as well. They might even covertly band together to suppress the Regal Pill Palace. Such was human nature. Although Jiang Chen was not at fault, it was human nature to sympathize with the weak. And in this matter, the Sacred Sword Palace was undoubtedly the "weak" side.

"Alright, Jiang Chen, the grudge between the Regal Pill Palace and the Sacred Sword Palace does not need to be resolved through this matter. Why don't you sell them the antidote?" Elder Yun Nie spoke up in an attempt to persuade him.

Jiang Chen nodded, "Since that's the case, then here's my price. I'll take your two sky rank herbs and two-thirds of your earth rank herbs!"

This price caused everyone to suck in a breath of cold air. They all looked at the Sacred Sword Palace, clearly waiting to see if they would accept such a price. This price was obviously much higher than the other sects', who needed to pay only one sky rank herb.

The Sacred Sword Palace on the other hand, needed to pay up both their sky rank herbs for the antidote. This wasn't that surprising however, considering the hostility between the Sacred

Sword Palace and the Regal Pill Palace. At the same time, everyone else was secretly glad that Jiang Chen had given them some leeway instead of enforcing such a ridiculous price.

If Jiang Chen had hardened his heart and asked for all their sky rank herbs, everyone would have had no choice but to pay such a price in exchange for their lives. Thus, those who originally still had grievances all felt a bit better. In retrospect, these transactions were all voluntary. They were the ones asking Jiang Chen to sell the antidote and not Jiang Chen forcing them to buy. Those from the Dark North Sect felt especially good. Originally, they had felt Jiang Chen was unreasonable as he had still asked for half of their earth rank herbs despite their two sects' good relationship. It wasn't until they compared themselves with the other sects that the Dark North Sect realized how much face they were given. The Sacred Sword Palace wouldn't even be able to keep a single sky rank herb!

Elder Chen seemed to have expected that Jiang Chen would give such an extortionist price. His complexion was ashen as he stared at Jiang Chen, "Fine. Jiang Chen, we accept this price. The Sacred Sword Palace has really underestimated you!"

Jiang Chen ignored the looks of those in the Sacred Sword Palace as they gnashed their teeth and smiled faintly, "Everyone, the prices have been set, but our deals have yet to be completed. In order to proceed with our transaction, I need a promise from you all."

"Promise?" Everyone was suspicious.

“I’m not a fool who will take blind risks. Although this transaction entails you begging to buy my antidote, I know that your hearts aren’t satisfied. In fact, some of you are already plotting how to take care of me after you receive the antidote. Apologies, but I won’t give you such an opportunity.”

Jiang Chen had calmly calculated every step from beginning to end. As he swept his gaze lightly over the various elders present, Jiang Chen spoke evenly, “Therefore, I need you all to swear a heavenly oath that afterwards, you won’t use this matter as an excuse to create trouble for or bear resentment towards the Regal Pill Palace. If anyone troubles any members of the Regal Pill Palace regarding this matter, then they will be punished by heavenly tribulation.” Jiang Chen wasn’t purposely trying to make things difficult for the others. But since he had started this matter, he must wrap things up cleanly and not bring downfall to the Regal Pill Palace.

Hearing Jiang Chen’s words, Elder Yun Nie also nodded, “Yes, this is a transaction made of free will. You don’t have to purchase the antidote if you have any grievances, but no one is allowed take their anger out on our Regal Pill Palace due to this matter.”

Elder Xiang Gan smiled wryly, “The Great Cathedral has already acknowledged our bad luck regarding this. On behalf of the Great Cathedral, I swear that we will not use this matter as an excuse to find trouble with the Regal Pill Palace. Otherwise, may I, Xiang Gan, be struck dead by heavenly lightning!”

Although Elder Xiang Gan was normally domineering, he still had a bottom line and clearly understood that Jiang Chen was not

at fault in this matter. If he was in Jiang Chen's position, then he would only have been more ruthless and taken all the others' sky rank herbs. By charging only half, Jiang Chen could already be considered benevolent. Continuing this dispute would be disgraceful.

Moreover, since they had previously sworn a heavenly oath not to reveal anything regarding this ancient herb garden, anyone who raised a fuss over this later on would bring down heavenly tribulation upon their entire sect!

After Elder Xiang Gan swore the oath, the Dark North Sect elder also laughed. "Needless to say, Jiang Chen has shown us much face. Our Dark North Sect is filled only with gratitude, completely free of resentment. But since sage nephew Jiang Chen requires an oath, then this old man swears that..."

After the Dark North Sect, the third to step forward and swear their oath was actually Elder Wu Hen. Elder Wu Hen had a face full of dejection as he smiled ruefully at Jiang Chen, "Sage nephew Jiang Chen, this old man has been highly intelligent for my entire life, but yet I always end up with my hands tied when it comes to you. This time, I've thought things through: don't bully the youth when they're poor. From now on, I will neither find reason to make trouble for you nor trouble the Regal Pill Palace over this matter. If I renege on this oath, then may I suffer heavenly tribulation!"

Elder Wu Hen's words induced some surprise from the other elders. It seemed that Elder Wu Hen and Jiang Chen had some unspoken history?

The Tristar Sect's Elder Tan Lang released a long sigh, "Who would imagine that so many old fellows would be helpless in front of a youth? I have to say, Jiang Chen, you've really caused this old man endless astonishment. Fine then, I, Tan Lang, vow on behalf of the Tristar Sect that after receiving the antidote, we will not find trouble with the Regal Pill Palace over this matter. If we renege, may heavenly lightning strike me down!"

After all the four great sects had sworn their vows, the remaining fifth rank sects naturally dared not dally and stood to swear their oaths. Although they hadn't obtained that many earth rank herbs, they had still received some.

Finally, only the Sacred Sword Palace remained, but they were obviously reluctant to swear the oath as the Sacred Sword Palace and the Regal Pill Palace had already completely fallen out with each other. Jiang Chen frowned and said, "It doesn't matter if the Sacred Sword Palace doesn't want to swear the oath. If you want to make trouble for me, I, Jiang Chen will keep you company anytime."

The relationship between the Sacred Sword Palace and the Regal Pill Palace was akin to fire and water, so Jiang Chen did not care whether or not they swore the oath. Even without this matter, they were already life and death enemies. With these oaths, Jiang Chen was reassured that there would be no future problems and thus traded the antidotes for spirit herbs from each sect. Jiang Chen did not take any covert actions with the antidotes and straightforwardly handed them out one by one.

“Everyone, don’t blame me for not reminding you. Although the antidote can cure the Miasma’s poison, this Miasma is still extremely overbearing you should avoid exerting yourselves in the short term. Otherwise, if the poison breaks out before it is purged by the antidote, then not even the heavens can help you.”

When they heard Jiang Chen’s reminder, everyone turned pale and quickly sat down on the spot to refine the antidote.

Seeing this, Jiang Chen threw a look at Elder Yun Nie. “Well then, the Regal Pill Palace will take our leave.” Elder Yun Nie laughed.

As the Dark North Sect had also taken the antidote earlier on, they also laughed, “The Dark North Sect will also take our leave.”

As the two sects quickly departed the scene, the other four sects could only stare at each other, not knowing whether to laugh or cry. Obviously, the unexpected development this time had given them a heavy sense of helplessness. They were unable to do anything despite being extorted of so many spirit herbs by a young cultivator.

After walking a while, Jiang Chen suddenly paused and headed over to the nearby Dark North Sect. He took out all the earth rank herbs he had previously received from them.

“Friends from the Dark North Sect, I was previously forced by the situation to take your earth rank herbs in order to set an example in front of the other four sects. Our two sects have always

had a good relationship so how could I sit back and watch you die? Please take back these earth rank herbs. I, Jiang Chen, am definitely not one to loot a burning house."

The Dark North Sect all glanced at one another and then stared at Jiang Chen. They felt more and more that they were unable to see through this kid. The head elder laughed, "Jiang Chen, these earth rank herbs are a reasonable payment for saving our lives. You don't have to be so polite."

Hearing this, Jiang Chen took a single earth rank herb, "Since that is so, I'll accept this one. I definitely can't accept the others."

After saying this, he left the other herbs on the ground and rejoined the ranks of the Regal Pill Palace. Elder Yun Nie could not help but sigh in admiration at Jiang Chen's demeanor and strategy. By first receiving and then returning the spirit herbs, their Dark North Sect allies could not help but be grateful towards the Regal Pill Palace. It had to be said that Jiang Chen had played his hand to perfection!

Chapter 595: A Solo Operation

Since Jiang Chen had suddenly received roughly a hundred earth rank spirit herbs, he naturally did not care about twenty or so from the Dark North Sect. Not only would he be making a magnanimous gesture in returning their spirit herbs, he would also strengthen their loyalty to the Regal Pill Palace. If the Regal Pill Palace really needed to request a favor from the Dark North Sect in the future, the latter wouldn't be able to idly sit by on account of the favor he'd granted them in saving their lives. So it was without a doubt that Jiang Chen's actions had not only won Dark North Sect's friendship, it had also solidified the close relationship between the two sects.

Indeed, the head elder from the Dark North Sect sighed. "Daoist Yun Nie, the Regal Pill Palace will surely enjoy great fortune in the future due to Jiang Chen." He raised his hands in a cupped fist salute towards Jiang Chen. "Sage nephew Jiang Chen, our Dark North Sect will remember this debt of gratitude. Please let us know if we can help you in the future."

The others of the Dark North Sect also raised their hands in cupped fist salutes towards Jiang Chen. After exchanging a round of pleasantries, the Dark North Sect was aware that Jiang Chen must have a great deal to speak about with Elder Yun Nie about so they took their leave. When they did, that was when Jiang Chen took out the five sky spirit herbs and about a hundred earth spirit herbs that he'd just obtained. "Elder Yun Nie, according to the rules of Mt. Rippling Mirage, half of this needs to go to the sect. I'll take two of the sky spirit herbs and half of the earth spirit herbs. The rest is for the sect."

Elder Yun Nie was rather embarrassed by this. “Jiang Chen, how can we possibly accept this?”

Jiang Chen remained resolute. “I was merely taking advantage of the opportunity I was given. If I hadn’t handled things well, then I would have brought trouble to the sect instead. Therefore, I will only feel at ease if I offer this up to the sect.”

He thought a little more before he took out half of the Sage Fledgling Grass, placing the grass into an old storage ring and giving it to Elder Yun Nie as well. “Elder, this is half of what I received before.”

Elder Yun Nie accepted the ring. When he examined it closely, his heart skipped a beat. Sage Fledgling Grass!

It really was the Sage Fledgling Grass, and there looked to be at least two or three thousand blades! Then had all that Wang Han spoken of been true? Although Elder Yun Nie was surprised, he did not speak frankly, but only looked at Jiang Chen with some surprise.

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. “It was just a lucky opportunity. I don’t need that many for myself. Palace Head Dan Chi has always said that he has a grand ambition. I might not be able to serve him until the end, so take these as another source of strength I can provide for the sect.”

Jiang Chen had spoken similar words back when he offered up the Longevity Pill. Elder Yun Nie was shocked and silent for a long

while. His heart was full of a multitude of feelings as he looked carefully at Jiang Chen, unable to find the right words to describe the latter.

This young man had brought him so much shock, surprise and wonder again and again. Even discounting those three sky rank herbs and half of the earth rank herbs, just these three thousand blades of Sage Fledgling Grass were more than enough to cultivate a dozen sage realm experts for the sect. This was an absolutely sensational amount of wealth! However, receiving this wealth was secondary. The most important thing was that Jiang Chen was actually willing to give away so many things in one go. This disciple's character and magnanimity had continuously shocked Elder Yun Nie.

Jiang Chen had previously utilized the Miasma's antidote to manipulate the overall situation and used various tactics to isolate the five other great sects so that they were unable to come together to contend against the Regal Pill Palace. Each sect had been met with a different strategy. Faced with Jiang Chen's sophisticated methods, Elder Yun Nie had been simply rooted to the spot in amazement.

Such a talent was unique even in the entire history of the Regal Pill Palace, much less during Elder Yun Nie's lifetime. Though Palace Head Dan Chi had also accomplished much in his younger years and was considered a genius amongst geniuses, Dan Chi's history couldn't be compared in the same breath with Jiang Chen's radiance.

After Jiang Chen had given these spirit herbs to Elder Yun Nie,

he took out the Aletheia Icegrass and Scarletheart Fruit he had previously harvested and gave them to Ling Bi'er. "Senior Sister, these two spirit herbs, along with the Tranquil Jade Sumi and Thousandmesh Jaderoot you previously obtained comprise the four necessary ingredients for your father's antidote. Hold on to these for now."

When Mu Gaoqi saw Jiang Chen acting like this, he asked curiously, "Brother Chen, do you still have something else you need to do?"

Jiang Chen nodded, "I still have some things to take care of, so you all should leave first."

Hearing this, Elder Yun Nie couldn't help but walk over, "Jiang Chen, although everyone is constrained by their heavenly oaths and can't deliberately make trouble for you, there are definitely some people who will still target you..."

Of course, Jiang Chen was well aware of this. However, there were only two days remaining and he was still quite curious about that sacred altar. If he left without answers, he would feel terribly unjustified.

He just felt that the secret hidden within the sacred altar was far more precious than some mere earth sky rank herbs. Since he was already here, he refused to leave empty-handed. Otherwise, the next opportunity to enter would be three thousand years later. Would he still be in the Myriad Domain after three thousand years? Jiang Chen didn't have to think hard to know there was no chance of that happening.

Originally, Elder Yun Nie had wanted to add a few more words of advice. But after thinking about it some more, he didn't try and sway Jiang Chen any further. He only gave Jiang Chen a simple look, "Take care." He knew that this kind of maverick genius was destined to be unconstrained by normal rules and convention, and already beyond his control. Since Jiang Chen had already made up his mind, Elder Yun Nie knew nothing he could say would convince him otherwise.

Ling Bi'er also felt a bit of loss and surprise when she saw that Jiang Chen would not be leaving with everyone else. But due to her introverted character, her face revealed no emotions as she gazed at Jiang Chen and lightly said, "Junior brother, be careful."

Then, she paused for a moment before giving Jiang Chen her two unused escape talismans. "These are for you."

Jiang Chen nodded with a smile and accepted the escape talismans without any pretense. He then waved good bye to everyone present.

"All of you should also leave quickly, since running into the other four sects would be inconvenient." When he finished saying this, Jiang Chen's body flashed and disappeared.

Elder Yun Nie shot a deep and meaningful glance towards the spot where Jiang Chen had vanished. Then, he suddenly smiled and waved his hands, "Let's go, we're leaving this ancient herb garden. After we leave, we'll immediately find the transportation

matrix and depart this island straight away.”

Without a doubt, the spirit herbs that Jiang Chen just gave them had caused the Regal Pill Palace to become the biggest winner of this expedition to Mt. Rippling Mirage. Their harvest was comparable to the other sects’ combined total, as just their sky rank herb collection was equal to that of the other sects. The third level of the sacred altar had twelve sky rank herbs, and the Regal Pill Palace had originally been assigned two. Jiang Chen had extorted another five herbs through trading the antidote, of which three had been given to the sect, totaling five sky rank herbs for the Regal Pill Palace. As for Jiang Chen keeping two for himself, Elder Yun Nie was naturally fine with that and even felt that Jiang Chen had kept too little.

With such an enormous harvest, the Regal Pill Palace would certainly not stick around. The sooner they left, the safer they would be.

Roughly half an hour later, the Great Cathedral, the Tristar Sect, the Walkabout Sect and the Sacred Sword Palace had finished refining the antidote, and left the lakeshore to arrive on the outskirts.

Elder Chen of the Sacred Sword Palace was full of indignation, “Everyone, we’re all been played by that little bastard Jiang Chen. Will you all just forgive and forget?”

The other three sects’ people all smiled faintly. Each of them were wily old foxes who knew that the Sacred Sword Palace wasn’t saying this out of a sense of justice, but trying to incite them

against the Regal Pill Palace. This sort of manipulation was seen through very easily. Elder Xiang Gan smiled indifferently, “Brother Chen, if you have other plans, that’s your own business. All the Great Cathedral did was engage in a simple business transaction with Jiang Chen.”

Although the Great Cathedral was domineering, they couldn’t really consider Jiang Chen to have cheated them in this matter. To be blunt, it had been Jiang Chen who had saved them. If it was the Sacred Sword Palace who had the antidote, it was likely they would’ve been even more ruthless. They might have even just concealed the matter and waited for everyone to die from poison before cleaning up the spoils. Hence, even though the Great Cathedral was very jealous of Jiang Chen’s spirit herbs, they disavowed these thoughts as they’d already sworn a heavenly oath.

After all, Jiang Chen hadn’t robbed them blind and even left them some herbs in the end.

Elder Chen sneered, “This one is a bit surprised that old brother Xiang is being so reasonable... Elder Tan Lang, Elder Wu Hen, what do you two think?”

Elder Tan Lang said coldly, “The heavenly oath has already been sworn. What can we do about it?”

The Walkabout Sect’s Elder Wu Hen also did not want to continue to fight. He had a hunch that if they continued entangling with Jiang Chen, they would still be the ones who would suffer a loss in the end. Thus he smiled darkly, “Elder Chen, if your Sacred Sword Palace wants to go make trouble, just go do

your thing.”

“Can it be that Elder Wu Hen is not going?”

Elder Wu Hen laughed, “This old man is neutral.”

Neutral my ass! Elder Chen almost blurted out but managed to hold the words back in the end. Seeing that the Great Cathedral and the Walkabout Sect had both given up, Elder Chen also knew that his attempt at provocation had failed.

“You all made a heavenly oath, but I did not. You guys go first then!” Elder Chen had obviously hardened his heart to make trouble for Jiang Chen.

“Let’s go.” The Great Cathedral’s Elder Xiang Gan did not want to keep wasting time with Elder Chen and led the Great Cathedral in a quick exit.

The Walkabout Sect also left quickly under Elder Wu Hen’s leadership.

Elder Tan Lang from the Tristar Sect sighed. “Elder Chen, with the heavenly oath restraining us, I’m afraid I can’t accompany you.”

Elder Chen just sneered and waved his hands, not even bothering with perfunctory words.

“Elder Chen, don’t blame this old man for not reminding you. Jiang Chen has definitely left long ago after receiving so many treasures.” Elder Tan Lang chuckled and left with the Tristar Sect.

As Elder Chen watched them leave with a darkened face, Elder Xi next to him walked over, “ Brother Chen…”

“Don’t worry right now. Let’s leave this place first.” Elder Chen waved his hand. Under his leadership, the Sacred Sword Palace members disappeared in streaks of light.

Not long after the disappearance of the Sacred Sword Palace, the Great Cathedral once again appeared in the same spot.

“Elder Xiang Gan, why did we return here?” asked an elder from the Great Cathedral.

Elder Xiang Gan laughed lightly, “We have a heavenly oath restricting us while the Sacred Sword Palace does not. If the Sacred Sword Palace succeeds, we can then ‘ask’ them for the herbs. That wouldn’t be contrary to our oaths, right?”

When they heard this, the others were all shocked and had to admire Elder Xiang Gan’s cunning – the older the ginger, the spicier it was!

Chapter 596: Each With Their Own Plots

It was not long after the Walkabout Sect had left that Elder Wu Qi came up to Elder Wu Hen and said, “Daoist Wu Hen, as I see it, the Great Cathedral and the Tristar Sect aren’t going to just let things go. Although they are bound by their heavenly oaths, they are keeping their eye on the Sacred Sword Palace. If that sect succeeds in their revenge, then they will still have a chance to strike. How about our Walkabout Sect also...”

If this was Elder Wu Hen from a few days ago, this kind of reminder like this wasn’t even necessary as he would have already considered different angles and calculated the best strategy. But now, he had no such inclination or interest, so he just lightly smiled, “Wu Qi, have you noticed? Despite the fact that we’ve all been focused on this child for the past few days, none of us were able to do anything to him? This time around, he even managed to fool everyone by being a wolf in sheep’s clothing.”

“So what? He was just lucky.”

“Lucky?” Elder Wu Hen smiled nonchalantly, “In the world of the strong, you can be lucky once, but definitely not twice or thrice. I can guarantee that the Sacred Sword Palace will definitely be unable to deal with Jiang Chen. And if they keep underestimating him, they might even eat another loss! Let’s go, our Walkabout Sect shall not meddle in these muddy waters any longer.”

As Elder Wu Hen was a very shrewd and thoroughly wily old fox, he was able to assess the overall situation without losing his

presence of mind. He saw in Jiang Chen an obscured potential. Through his foxy old eyes, this Jiang Chen was definitely not someone whom those in the Myriad Domain could suppress. This child would surely shine brilliantly in his own time.

Unless one could instantly kill him on the spot, forming an enmity with someone like him would lead to endless trouble. Hence, Elder Wu Hen felt that there was no need to continue their feud since the Walkabout Sect had managed to resolve all grievances with Jiang Chen. Otherwise, the Walkabout Sect would never have a day of peace when this child grew into his own.

Past events had already proven that the younger generation of the Walkabout Sect, whether it was Wei Qing or Wei Xing'er, were unable to contend with Jiang Chen despite currently having stronger cultivation. Although there were other talented youngsters in the Walkabout Sect, they still lacked a certain temperament compared to Jiang Chen – the ability to conjure clouds and summon rain with the flip of a hand.

Undoubtedly, Jiang Chen's previous prudent planning regarding the use of the antidote as a bargaining chip had caused even a vindictive person like Elder Wu Hen to give up on his feud and make a clean break. It wasn't that he was a magnanimous person, but that he could identify from the details that Jiang Chen had a kind of potential incomparable to that of his peers. Thus, although Elder Wu Hen had guessed Wei Qing had died at Jiang Chen's hands, he didn't even bring that up. Firstly, Wei Qing wasn't his descendant; secondly, although Wei Qing had been talented, his frivolous character rendered him unable to accomplish great things. There was no need to create waves for him.

After the Walkabout Sect left, the Tristar Sect's members who thought similarly to the Great Cathedral also decided that they were going to be the oriole behind the mantis stalking the cicada.

Elsewhere in the jungle, after Elder Chen formed several hand seals and blew a few whistles, a few green butterflies quickly flew over. Their wings were gossamer thin, and looked oddly like two swords.

"Sword Butterflies?" Wang Han's eyes lit up upon seeing these butterflies. He had heard that the Sacred Sword Palace possessed a marvelous butterfly that could act as their eyes and ears, but he'd never seen one before.

The butterflies fluttered down to rest on Elder Chen's arms. Though it was unknown what communication method he was using, he soon revealed a pleased expression. "The Regal Pill Palace has left, but one has remained. From the Sword Butterflies' description, it should be Jiang Chen. This kid actually wants to explore alone!"

Elder Xi was also overjoyed. "The kid hasn't left?"

Killing intent burst forth from Wang Han's eyes. "He hasn't left? That's wonderful! Truly, a person will not die unless he seeks death. No matter what, we must slaughter this kid!"

Elder Chen nodded. "Elder Xi, take everyone else and leave. I will remain."

Elder Xi was surprised. “Why?”

Wang Han was also anxious. “Elder Chen, Jiang Chen has also humiliated me greatly. If I don’t personally kill him, my heart won’t be at peace. The others can leave, but I definitely won’t!”

Elder Chen had a frosty expression. “What? Do you wish to disobey this seat’s order?”

Elder Chen was a cultivator of the earth sage realm and thus had an incredibly strong aura. In the face of this pressure, rapid changes flitted across everyone’s expressions.

Elder Xi quickly said, “Brother Chen, please calm down.”

“Humph! Do you think I don’t want to bring you all? It’s just that since this kid is operating by himself, bringing more people just makes it easier for him to notice our traces. Plus, do you think those old foxes, Xiang Gan, Wu Hen and Tan Lang, will just simply leave?”

Elder Xi showed a bewildered expression, “What do you mean?”

A cold light danced in Elder Chen’s eyes. He spat out fiercely, “If my guess is correct, they must be tracking us so that they can take the easy pickings..”

When Elder Xi heard this, his expression slightly changed as he suddenly understood what Elder Chen meant.

“Although they’re unable to touch the Regal Pill Palace after being bound by the heavenly oath, they know we aren’t restricted. Thus from their perspective, we’re the perfect target. As long as we take care of Jiang Chen and snatch the spirit herbs, they will definitely all jump out one after another!”

Elder Chen gnashed his teeth. Although he could guess that this would happen, he had no way of changing the outcome. Colliding head on with the three other sects would only result in a lose-lose scenario. The best way was to pretend he was still unaware of them and then immediately escape after he secretly succeeded in chasing down Jiang Chen. As long as he left Mt. Rippling Mirage, the others would have no way to publicly start anything. They knew there were only two days remaining and every moment was precious regardless of their schemes. Elder Xi was also an intelligent person, so he nodded. “It is indeed better with fewer people. We will be responsible for luring the other three sects away and leave Elder Chen to pursue Jiang Chen alone.”

Since even Elder Xi had spoken up, Wang Han had no way of contradicting both elders no matter how reluctant he was.

“Elder Chen, after you catch that thief, Jiang Chen, please cut off a few pieces of flesh for me!” Wang Han’s tone was full of resentment.

Elder Chen smiled indifferently. “Let’s go, Jiang Chen has dishonored our Sacred Sword Palace far too much. When he falls into my hands, he’ll be dreaming if he wishes for a painless death!”

When he saw Elder Xi look at him, Elder Chen knew what the former was thinking and sent him a silent message. “Rest assured, Jiang Chen managed to grab so many sky rank herbs. If I get them back, there will naturally be a portion for you.”

Elder Xi nodded after hearing this promise. “Alright. I’ll take the others to lure the other sects away. You be careful of that little beast’s counterattack.”

The corners of Elder Chen’s mouth quirked into a chilling smile. He was a sage realm expert pursuing a fifth level origin realm youngster. If he really ended up being counterattacked, then he really didn’t need to show his face in the Myriad Domain anymore. “Let’s go!”

After Elder Chen finished saying these words, he whistled softly and the ghostly Sword Butterflies started leading the way. Obviously, these incredibly perceptive butterflies had long since tracked down Jiang Chen’s whereabouts. Elder Xi led the others towards the outer areas.

A quarter hour later, the Great Cathedral once again appeared in this spot. Elder Xiang Gan inspected the area, while another elder belonging to the Sacred Wolf family sniffed the air with a solemn expression.

“Martial Brother Xiang Gan, the Sacred Sword Palace seems to have guessed that we’re tracking them and are trying to avoid us. They were here before but from here onwards, they have started to conceal their aura.” This elder was Elder Na Zhi from the Sacred Wolf family, who had a strong tracking ability.

“Are there any clues?”

“Well, there are some traces. They tried to hide their tracks but should be heading towards the peripheries.” Elder Na Zhi replied.

“Go, follow them!” Elder Xiang Gan waved his hand and commanded. But he sneered just as his voice faded, “You guys go on first. I have something to take care of.” Saying this, Elder Xiang Gan’s figure flashed and streaked towards a dense patch of forest in the west. He soon landed in a place a dozen miles away. There, the Tristar Sect was stunned by the sudden appearance of Elder Xiang Gan.

Elder Xiang Gan glared frostily at the Tristar Sect, “I will only warn you once. Stop following us. Don’t blame this old man for being impolite if there’s a next time!”

Elder Xiang Gan’s strength was extraordinary, and he was much stronger than even the strongest member of the Tristar Sect, Elder Tan Lang. Coupled with the Great Cathedral’s usual threatening influence, the Tristar Sect was embarrassed but they could not ignore his threats. They had lost track of the Sacred Sword Palace, so were following the Great Cathedral instead, hoping to share in the spoils a little.

“Heh heh, old brother Xiang Gan, perhaps there’s a misunderstanding here?” Elder Tan Lang chuckled. “We’re just hurrying along on our own journey.”

Elder Xiang Gan sneered, “There’s no need for your slyness. This old man isn’t interested in playing word games with you. Remember, this can happen only once with no exceptions. Otherwise, all of you can stay here forever.”

Menacing, tyrannic, straightforward. Elder Xiang Gan coldly swept his gaze over their faces before he sped away.

The Tristar Sect could only stare at each other in dismay. The livid Elder Tan Lang helplessly grit his teeth while staring at Elder Xiang Gan’s departing figure. But since he couldn’t beat the other, he could only pinch his nose and endure.

“This old brute is too cocky!” Zhu Feiyang spat out. “There will come a day when he won’t be able to be so arrogant.”

Elder Tan Lang took in a deep breath. “Never mind. That old man is simply too tyrannical, even more overbearing than the patriarch of the Sacred Elephant family. It’ll be too troublesome for us to keep following them. Let us leave!”

They could only give up since they couldn’t beat the Great Cathedral in this. There were only two days left anyways, not to mention if they could find the Regal Pill Palace, it wasn’t even clear if the Sacred Sword Palace would be able to beat the Regal Pill Palace. Besides, the Regal Pill Palace certainly should have left after receiving so many good things. Thus, after much deliberation, Elder Tan Lang decided to give up pursuit.

Jiang Chen had taken the long way around and left some

Goldbiter Rats as sentries along the way. He suddenly halted as he received some surveillance information from the Rats. “The six great sects are all rather remarkable. If I had been a bit more careless and didn’t leave the Goldbiter Rats as watchers along the way, I might really have fallen into their traps.”

Jiang Chen was secretly amused as he gained a deeper understanding of the intricate schemes between the six great sects of the Myriad Domain. However, instead of being troubled, he was secretly pleased. From these Goldbiter Rats’ reports, he knew that the other sects wouldn’t team up to oppose the Regal Pill Palace. As long the Regal Pill Palace wasn’t dragged into this whirlpool of a mess, Jiang Chen had nothing holding him back.

Chapter 597: Elder Chen's Doomsday

The Goldbiter Rats he had left as sentries quickly transmitted some intelligence that surprised Jiang Chen. "It seems that I've previously underestimated this Sacred Sword Palace. I hadn't thought that Elder Chen would be this shrewd and calculating. He's actually used some scheme to lure the Great Cathedral away while he comes after me himself?"

He had to admit, he had understated the Sacred Sword Palace's abilities. He'd always felt that the Sacred Sword Palace was all brawn and no brains, with their eyes on the top of their heads. Now, as he looked at Elder Chen, Jiang Chen realized that he had been too naive. None of the elders were the kindly sort. Elder Xiang Gan of the Great Cathedral and Elder Tan Lang of the Tristar Sect had both been planning on effortlessly reaping the spoils of a contest fought by others. They wanted to be the unknown oriole behind the mantis stalking the cicada. Rather, it was rather the Walkabout Sect who'd learned their lesson, since Elder Wu Hen had left first with his sect.

Jiang Chen was somewhat surprised by this. He'd thought that the Sacred Sword Palace and Walkabout Sect would be the two sects most eager for his blood. Judging from their actions, could it be that the Walkabout Sect truly wanted to let bygones be bygones? Either way, it was all the same to Jiang Chen since he hadn't suffered any losses in his exchange with the Walkabout Sect. He'd already killed Wei Qing, and although Elder Wu Hen had coveted his Hidden Chameleon Cloudpine, the elder had ended up giving him a sky rank herb instead.

No matter how he looked at things, this trip had been quite

profitable. If the Walkabout Sect had truly recognized the error of their ways and turned back, he wouldn't mind that either. After all, one enemy fewer for the Regal Pill Palace was a good thing, particularly when the sect had been the main beneficiary of this trip. A party who had received benefits should always be more reserved and keep a lower profile afterwards.

However, since that Elder Chen had resolved to create trouble, not only did Jiang Chen not mind, he even slightly looked forward to their upcoming clash. Without considering the various grudges between the Sacred Sword Palace and the Regal Pill Palace, how many times had the Sacred Sword Palace suppressed him and troubled him during the Pill Battles and the harvest of Mt. Rippling Mirage? How many times had this sect tried pressuring him and encumbering him? Wang Han had attempted to murder him whenever the two had met! And now this Elder Chen was looking for him with hostile intent, obviously coming to kill him as well.

Previously, Jiang Chen had given them the antidote out of consideration for the greater picture and not because he was generous. If he hadn't, the other sects would definitely have grown more hostile towards the Regal Pill Palace. If the other sects had not been present, Jiang Chen would've never spoken of the Miasma. Had the matter been only between the Regal Pill Palace and the Sacred Sword Palace, he'd absolutely have stayed in the back and quietly admired how they would die to the poison, before making off with all their treasures.

Now that Elder Chen was hunting Jiang Chen down by himself, he no longer needed to consider the bigger picture since no one else was around. The killing desire that Jiang Chen had suppressed for

a long time finally exploded. As the intelligence was continuously fed to him by the Goldbiter Rats, Jiang Chen knew that the other members of the Sacred Sword Palace had lured the Great Cathedral and Tristar Sect away. This meant that only him and Elder Chen were left inside.

"Mm?" Jiang Chen's ear suddenly twitched as a faint smile appeared on the corners of his lips. "Is he here?"

He didn't take cover or try to escape the meeting. Instead, Jiang Chen merely stood on the banks of the lake and looked at the island in its middle. He should've been setting foot on the island by now. But if he didn't do away with this old fart first, that would just be leaving trouble behind him.

……

As Elder Chen followed the sword butterflies, he noticed that Jiang Chen was on the path to the island in the lake. He was startled and had to speed up, since he was deathly afraid that it would be difficult to track Jiang Chen down if he set foot on the island again. After all, the Miasma was on the island. Even though he'd taken the antidote, who knew if the antidote would still be useful after its effects had passed? Therefore, Elder Chen picked up his pace and hurried back to the lake area.

Suddenly, he halted in his steps as he noticed a figure standing proudly on the banks of the lake with its arms crossed. The figure perched on an enormous boulder, giving it the dashing air of standing aloof from the world, above all else.

It was Jiang Chen!

Elder Chen was surprised and delighted. He was surprised that Jiang Chen was standing there, coolly composed, and delighted that Jiang Chen had yet to set foot onto the island. Elder Chen could easily hunt him down in this area.

“So you’ve come hmm, Chen?” Jiang Chen slowly turned around with a slight smile that made Elder Chen’s heart sink.

The elder spoke frostily, “What, you knew I was coming?”

Jiang Chen’s smiled emotionlessly. “Does it matter whether I knew or not? Here you are. Speak. What do you want this time?”

“What do I want?” Elder Chen started laughing. “You ask me what I want? You’ve humiliated my Sacred Sword Palace multiple times in a row, do you think I’m here to have a heart-to-heart chat with you?”

“So this means you’re here to kill me, right?” Jiang Chen said with a supercilious smile.

“Don’t act coy, you’ve brought this upon yourself! If I were you, I would’ve left for the outside world immediately. If you’d done that, I wouldn’t have been able to hunt you down. But who knew that you’d lose your head and not bear to leave? It looks like there’s something on this island that still holds your interest?”

Jiang Chen nodded. “Chen, it seems I’ve underestimated you. Since you’re able to find your way here while throwing off the other sects, you’re definitely not dumb.”

For some reason, Elder Chen’s heart sank even further when he heard this. Jiang Chen seemed to have known that he was coming? And he even knew that the other sects tried to follow him, and that he’d shaken off their pursuit? Elder Chen was momentarily astonished, but got over it in a second. “Jiang Chen, I don’t have time to flap my lips with you. Spit out all you’ve gained and I can leave you a whole corpse. If you insist on defying me, I don’t mind ripping you apart piece by piece, and then using my internal flames to bake your soul so you beg for death!”

Elder Chen leered as he clapped his hands together. Seven sword shadows whooshed into the air, enclosing Jiang Chen’s body and blocking off all movement. He wouldn’t be able to jump into the lake even if he wanted to.

Nonetheless, Jiang Chen’s expression didn’t change at all. He still had an amused hint of a smile playing about his face. “I wonder how your cultivation ranks in the Sacred Sword Palace, Chen?”

“Kid, do you think you can escape death by changing the topic?”

“No matter what your rank is, I only want to tell you that you will no longer exist in the Sacred Sword Palace after today. Ah right, I can also tell you that Du Lihuang…”

Elder Chen's expression darkened before Jiang Chen had finished speaking. "You killed Du Lihuang?"

"Although I didn't kill him, I saw exactly how he died. Mm, I have everything he collected as well. Do you want to take a look?" Jiang Chen laughed leisurely before he suddenly smacked his head. "Oh right, that idiot Wang Han's accusation that I gained a few thousand blades of Sage Fledging Grass was correct." He took out some blades of Grass as he spoke and flung them up in the air, tauntingly.

Elder Chen's face had grown colder and colder, and he spoke lowly, "So it seems that you'd long since hidden these things away, and have come back to pick up your loot? What a filthy little vermin you are!, As expected, you have a keen mind indeed if you've managed to deceive even those old foxes!"

Jiang Chen smiled indifferently. "You think too much. The only reason I've come here is to attract some idiots from the Sacred Sword Palace so I can take my anger out on you. You've done your fair share to provoke me during this time."

"Hahaha!" Elder Chen laughed uproariously. A mere fifth level origin realm cultivator dared speak such words even when death was staring at him in the face! "Kid, dreaming in broad daylight, huh? I don't know if you've lost your mind from the fright or if you're simply too arrogant. I'll crush a fifth level origin realm ant like you in three moves!"

Elder Chen activated his sword technique after speaking, The seven sword shadows turned into numerous beams of cold light

and shot down from the heavens, churning through the air. It was at this moment that a glimmer of light the size of a mustard seed suddenly materialized in the air around Jiang Chen. It only wavered once before it formed a marvelous vortex that swept through the air and sucked in all of the sword qi without warning.

"What?!" Elder Chen was dumbfounded. He'd never seen such a bizarre thing! The next instant, something even more incredulous happened as the mustard seed of light swayed with the wind before turning into a stunning gale that disturbed the air currents and shifted the clouds. The most frightening thing was that the momentum of this gale actually sealed off the air within twenty kilometers around them. It was as if this section of space had been carved out and separated from the outside world.

"How can this be?" Elder Chen was frightened clear out of his soul. He had simulated many possible outcomes along the way, such as him easily crushing Jiang Chen, or Jiang Chen being defiant to the end, such that he needed to call upon his trump cards to end things with great effort. But in all his speculations, the end result had been him killing Jiang Chen. He'd never thought that a mere fifth level origin realm cultivator would be any threat to him in martial dao.

And yet—

Elder Chen finally understood in this moment why Jiang Chen had always been so composed, why this young disciple was of the mind to discourse freely and proudly with Elder Chen. Jiang Chen wasn't stalling for time at all; he really did have the confidence to do so! Elder Chen had viewed Jiang Chen as prey snared in a trap,

easily within his grasp. But he'd never thought that Jiang Chen saw him as the prey instead, one that he could kill at any time!

It was just—how could Jiang Chen be doing this? How could such terrifying spatial restraining power explode so suddenly from a fifth level origin realm ant? This didn't conform to reality at all, it had surpassed the bounds of reason!

Elder Chen soon had his answer but he almost didn't believe his eyes. He blinked, hard, as he stared unwaveringly at the heavens above him. That—was a true dragon!

Horns, scales, five claws. A real, true dragon!

Elder Chen was completely shellshocked in this moment. He couldn't understand this at all, why did Jiang Chen possess a true dragon?!

What did a true dragon represent? Even though the elder had never seen one, he was still aware of a dragon's power. He couldn't imagine at all that a mythical dragon, present only in legends, would appear here under Jiang Chen's control! It was at that instant that Elder Chen's heart sank, never to arise again as he knew he was done for!

Chapter 598: Sudden Changes In The Altar

Although Elder Chen was an earth sage cultivator, he had no way to defend against the strength of Long Xiaoxuan's dragon aura. The immense dragon aura had transformed into an ultimate overbearing strength that covered the heavens and earth, crushing down on Elder Chen so hard that he couldn't move even a finger.

Long Xiaoxuan opened his maw and swallowed Elder Chen as if swallowing a date whole. Six exotic butterflies frantically flew out in the instant that he was swallowed, but all were diced into nothingness under the dragon aura. Long Xiaoxuan returned to a mustard seed of light to Jiang Chen's side. The dragon had used the Dragon Domain to seal off the area as he killed Elder Chen, then swallowed everything whole. There was no need to clean up the scene.

Elder Chen's storage ring naturally landed in Jiang Chen's hands. He only swept a perfunctory gaze over it, not having enough time to look closely at it. "Brother Long, I'll have to borrow your arts this time to take me across the lake."

Lon Xiaoxuan didn't waste any time and immediately transformed a ball of wind and cloud to carry Jiang Chen through the fog and onto the island in a blink of an eye. Jiang Chen remained on guard even though this was his second time here, however, he didn't need to take so many precautions as there was nobody else here. He could stop and closely observe anything that caught his eye along the way.

There wasn't anything of particular note on the periphery of the

island, so Jiang Chen quickly arrived at the altar again. He lifted his head to look at the altar sitting high at three levels into the air. The altar was located at the peak of the third platform, giving one a mysterious and fathomless feeling. Jiang Chen dashed upwards and quickly arrived on the third level. He stood beneath the altar and spent quite some time observing it, studying the various strange words and carvings on its side. The restrictions shimmering in and out of existence around the altar cautioned Jiang Chen from approaching lightly. He'd returned to this island purely because he wanted to make a thorough investigation. He felt that there was still something about this island that had yet to be uncovered, and that this secret was possibly more precious than the sky spirit herbs.

Now that there were no elders or heavyweights restricting his movements, Jiang Chen could investigate the situation as freely as he wanted, but he still hadn't discovered any clues after half an hour. Jiang Chen grasped the nameless saber in his hand and felt the saber's agitation. He still had no idea how the saber was connected to the altar. Even Jiang Chen found things odd. The altar was most likely a holy place and desecration should be absolutely forbidden. Although the blade was good, it was still an item of violence. There shouldn't be any connection between the two.

However, he could just so happen to feel that there was an exceedingly mysterious connection between the two. Yet, he was unable to successfully bring them together even though he could feel this connection. Just as Jiang Chen was feeling slightly disappointed...

The vibrations from the nameless saber abruptly heightened as it

suddenly turned into a beam of black light and shot through the air.

In the next instant, the saber actually stuck itself into the top of the altar like it was a key!

Wham!

It was a perfect fit, and the pillars around the altar started shaking in unison, emitting dull hums. The entire altar began to shake slightly as well.

In the next moment, numerous strange doors appeared in front of Jiang Chen. An incredible force roiled out of the doors and sucked in Jiang Chen's body, a force that seemed to be able to take in everything beneath the heavens and on the earth. Everything went black in front of Jiang Chen's eyes as he sank into the void.

.....

On the outskirts of Mt. Rippling Mirage.

As time began to count down, the expressions of the various heavyweights became noticeably graver. This was the last day to harvest within the mountain, and no one had emerged from the mountain up to now. They had no idea what was happening inside, because the interior of the mountain was completely segregated from the outside world. There was no way to communicate, even using one's consciousness to probe the mountain was impossible.

Although everyone here was an exceedingly shrewd heavyweight of the Myriad Domain, they were all becoming more nervous as time went on. This time's harvest had simply been too bizarre. No one had come out ahead of time even on the last day. This was completely different from usual as people would start exiting the mountain roughly three to four days before it closed. Judging from the complete lack of people, could it be that unexpected events had happened inside?

No one wanted to think that way but given this abnormal situation, ominous thoughts began creeping up in everyone's minds.. All the sects had sent their elites this time, and the elders accompanying them had all been pillars of their sects. Even if the young geniuses weren't the cream of the crop, they were still extraordinary existences within their sects.

"Ai, I wonder if something's happened inside? This is very out of the ordinary." Honored Master Tian Ming of the Dark North Sect sighed, further dampening everyone's spirits. Just as they were all sinking into a solemn silence, the transportation formation on the outskirts of Mt. Rippling Mirage began to show a ripple of movement.

"Someone's coming out!"

The formation rippled slightly as figures began appearing from within.

"Eh, it's those from the Regal Pill Palace." Palace Head Dan Chi

immediately looked over and saw that Elder Yun Nie was emerging with the group, but his look immediately froze when he saw that there were only seven present. The one missing was Jiang Chen!

Dan Chi's heart sank. Jiang Chen occupied a place in his heart that was even higher than Shen Qinghong's. How could he not be shocked when he saw that Jiang Chen was missing from the group that had come out? He wouldn't have been surprised if someone from the Regal Pill Palace had perished in Mt. Rippling Mirage, as there were all sorts of odd things happening within the mountain and many dangerous elements, but Jiang Chen wasn't the sort to lack fortune and perish young!

"Palace Head, Yun Nie has fortunately not let you down." Elder Yun Nie ignored the odd looks coming from the other sect heads and directly walked up to Palace Head Dan Chi.

Although Dan Chi was concerned about Jiang Chen, he wasn't at liberty to be frank with his questions. He could only nod. "Where are the others?"

Elder Yun Nie sighed. "It's difficult to explain. Allow me to elaborate in detail later on as we truly have had great harvests in the mountain this year."

However, Palace Head Dan Chi was feeling anxious and didn't care about what they might've gained. That was all secondary to Jiang Chen's existence. If a genius who could impact the fortune of the Regal Pill Palace for thousands of years to come had perished, then it would be an enormous loss that no treasure could replace.

“Elder Yun Nie, we can talk about the harvest later. Why are there only seven of you?” Palace Head Dan Chi decided to cut straight to the point.

Elder Yun Nie smiled ruefully. “Jiang Chen is fine. He told us to leave first as he seems to have some matters to take care of. That disciple undertakes his matters in mysterious ways. We can explore them in detail later.”

Palace Head Dan Chi’s heart settled back down when he heard that Jiang Chen was fine.

The other sects came up at this moment. “Elder Yun Nie, what’s happened inside? Where are the others from our sects?”

Elder Yun Nie smiled. “There aren’t many who perished on this trip. Don’t worry, they should be out soon.”

The formation stirred again as they spoke, and the Dark North Sect quickly walked out followed shortly thereafter by the Walkabout Sect.

When Sect Head Wei Wuying saw that there was someone missing, and that the person was Wei Qing, his expression couldn’t help but change subtly. “Elder Wu Hen, where’s Wei Qing?”

Elder Wu Hen sighed wryly. “Is Wei Qing not out? Then he’s likely perished.”

Wei Wuying's expressions flickered rapidly. "Perished? How could he have perished?"

Although Elder Wu Hen guessed that it likely had something to do with Jiang Chen, he only wanted to draw clear the lines between him and Jiang Chen at the moment and not have this child become the Walkabout Sect's nightmare. Therefore, he didn't say anything even though he suspected that Jiang Chen was behind this. "Sect Head, Wei Qing insisted on going off alone and likely ran into a strong spirit beast within the mountain. It's not just him, but also Ding Tong of the Tristar Sect, Du Lihuang of the Sacred Sword Palace..."

Tristar Sect Head Zhu leapt to his feet before Elder Wu Hen had the chance to finish. "What did you say? Ding Tong? What happened to Ding Tong?"

Elder Wu Hen responded sharply. "Sect Head Zhu, are you interrogating a prisoner?"

Sect Head Zhu had lost his composure because he was beyond shocked.. Ding Tong wasn't a disciple of the Tristar Sect, but one that the Ninesuns Sky Sect had sent to set the scene in the Myriad Domain. How would he explain to the Sky Sect if something had happened to Ding Tong? Sect Head Zhu was stunned senseless for a moment and stood there dumbly.

Everyone thought that the sect head was concerned about his genius disciple. Who would know his real thoughts? It took Sect

Head Zhu a short while to adjust his emotions before he could apologize. “I was brusque earlier, Daoist Wu Hen. If I may, what’s happened to Ding Tong of my sect?”

“He vanished without a trace early on.” Elder Wu Hen nodded. “If he hasn’t come out by now, then that means he probably perished within.”

Sect Head Zhu felt like he’d been struck by lightning as he fell into complete disarray. Although Ding Tong wasn’t as strong as him, the former wasn’t far off. As a sage realm cultivator, there was no one who could threaten him in the group that’d entered the mountain?! Ding Tong was a genius of the Sky Sect after all! His cultivation level and his methods made it so that he could do as he wished in the Myriad Domain!

Such a character had perished? And early on at that?

“Daoist Wu Hen, are there incredibly strong spirit beasts within the mountain?” Sect Head Zhu obviously couldn’t accept the news that Ding Tong had fallen.

Elder Wu Hen shook his head. “I only saw two wyverns that were third or fourth level sage realm and I didn’t run into anything stronger.”

Sect Head Zhu was further baffled by this. A third or fourth level sage realm wyvern wouldn’t threaten Ding Tong at all. Only a sky sage realm cultivator, and pinnacle expert at that, would be able to thoroughly overpower Ding Tong. How could Ding Tong have

perished?

Chapter 599: The Formation Closes

By the time two hours had passed, the fifth rank sects had all emerged, followed closely by the Tristar Sect. However, even within that group, Ding Tong was nowhere to be found. Sect Head Zhu's expression grew colder with each step he took, "Elder Tan Lang, where's Ding Tong?"

Elder Tan Lang seemed to have anticipated his sect head's question, but had a baffled expression on his face. "It's odd. I tried to get in contact with him as soon as we entered Mt. Rippling Mirage, but never received a response. It's as if he hadn't entered the mountain at all.

Sect Head Zhu's expression was stricken as all thoughts of being lucky withered and vanished. Judging from the situation, Ding Tong must have perished not long after he'd entered.

How would any of them understand how prideful Ding Tong had been; how sure of himself he had been to immediately go after Jiang Chen, only to be promptly killed? As for Elder Tan Lang attempting to contact Ding Tong, he had indeed received the elder's missives, but he was far too arrogant to listen to Elder Tan Lang. He just couldn't be bothered to respond, and had set about planning Jiang Chen's death by himself. Therefore, his mysterious disappearance almost made Elder Tan Lang suspect that he hadn't even entered Mt. Rippling Mirage at all.

"Could he have been sent into a patch of turbulent space when the formation activated?" Everyone started to voice their own speculations, a hubbub of discussion quickly growing around his

possible fate.

The only ones left within were those from the Sacred Sword Palace and the Great Cathedral. However, the Sacred Sword Palace soon made their appearance after the Tristar Sect. They looked quite worse for the wear, and were even missing two from their group. Their leader, Elder Xi, seemed to have suffered some serious injuries while he was inside.

This bedraggled appearance made Sacred Sword Palace Head Wang Jianyu frown. “Elder Xi, what happened?”

Elder Xi spat out, “Elder Xiang Gan of the Sacred Sword Palace was domineering and utterly unwilling to listen to reason. He’s the one who injured me. If we hadn’t taken advantage of the opportunity to crush the jade token and transport out, I likely would’ve lost my life.”

The crowd broke out into shocked murmurs as those words rang in the air. Elder Xiang Gan of the Great Cathedral had done this? Why?

Wang Jiangyu was enraged and turned to glare ferociously at Xiang Wentian of the Great Cathedral. “Family Head Xiang, just what does your Great Cathedral mean by this?”

Xiang Wentian smiled with a distant look on his face. “Ole brother Wang, who should I look to for answers? Elder Xiang Gan hasn’t come out yet, so I don’t know what’s happened either.”

Wang Jianyu's rage was already burning white hot. "Would my people lie with a straight face? Only your Great Cathedral was named, not a single other sect!"

However, the Great Cathedral wasn't the type to just roll over either. The family head of the Sacred Lions snorted coldly upon hearing Wang Jianyu's unfriendly tone. "What do you want to do huh, Wang Jianyu?"

That instantly stopped Wang Jianyu in his tracks. What could he do? Lay his life on the line against the Great Cathedral? He'd have to be able to beat them to do anything of the sort! Yet, he wouldn't take this lying down no matter what! He combusted his aura as an enormous sword shimmered into being behind him, hovering gently as it flickered in and out of sight. Wang Jianyu's voice was a menacing growl, "Although the Great Cathedral is strong, they cannot bully others for no reason at all. Even if I am weaker, I will not idly sit by and see my disciple bullied like this! You may be domineering and strong, but you can't stopper the mouths of everyone beneath the heavens, can you? Can you do as you want in the Myriad Domain just because you're a bit stronger than everyone else?"

One had to say, his words were ones that fanned the emotions of every sect there, and his tone was nothing short of provocative.

As the tension grew, the formation took the opportunity to tremble one more time as the final group from the Great Cathedral walked out. Elder Xiang Gan cackled when he saw the tense atmosphere. "You haven't died yet, Xi? Good, let's go again!"

This was akin to dousing a fire with oil. If looks could kill, Wang Jianyu's glare would've killed him a hundred times over. It was a good thing that Xiang Wentian stepped out to cool things down with a shout, "Xiang Gan, what's going on here?"

Xiang Gan chuckled. "Family Head, the Sacred Sword Palace is simply too shameless. They had ulterior motives towards the Regal Pill Palace and I simply couldn't stand it any longer. Then, Xi went on to talk a load of nonsense, so I had no recourse but to angrily strike out."

Elder Xi almost spat blood in anger when he heard these words. "Xiang Gan, can you be any more shameless? You wanted to interrogate me as to where Elder Chen had gone! You..."

Elder Chen?

This was when Wang Jianyu remembered that there was still one more elder who wasn't present in the Sacred Sword Palace group, Elder Chen. "Elder Xi, what's going on here?"

Elder Xi didn't actually know how to respond to this. Should he just say that Elder Chen had gone off to pursue Jiang Chen, and Xiang Gan had wanted to follow behind to pick up the spoils? There was no way he could spin it into something honorable no matter what he said.

It was Elder Yun Nie who immediately sized up the situation with a clear mind. He couldn't help but become anxious. It looked like the Sacred Sword Palace was using some sort of method to track

Jiang Chen with the intention of killing him. Although the Great Cathedral was restricted by the heavenly oath and couldn't do anything to Jiang Chen, they could set their sights on the Sacred Sword Palace and act as the oriole behind the mantis. The Sacred Sword Palace had been crafty enough to split into two groups and lure the Great Cathedral people away. This meant that Elder Chen had gone off to chase after Jiang Chen alone!

"Yun Nie, what's going on here?" Palace Head Dan Chi seemed to have guessed at something, since only Elder Chen and Jiang Chen had yet to emerge, and those who hadn't exited yet had been confirmed as perished.

Elder Yun Nie was also a bit nervous at this time as well. If Elder Chen had gone off alone to hunt down Jiang Chen, there would be no end of trouble on that front. Although Jiang Chen was highly competent, he still had quite a gap to bridge when compared to Elder Chen. One was at fifth stage origin realm, the other at the earth sage realm. This enormous difference spanned an entire realm, and was normally grounds for a complete trampling!

Elder Yun Nie's mouth twisted into a bitter smile; he really was a bit regretful that he hadn't stopped Jiang Chen from going off. He could only respond, "Palace Head, this is a long story. It all starts off with the ancient herb garden..."

They'd all sworn not to reveal the secret of the ancient herb garden, but were allowed to mention it in a report to their sect heads when they emerged. The caveat was that their respective sect heads couldn't reveal the secret of the ancient herb garden either. Therefore, it didn't count as Elder Yun Nie violating the

oath as he reported the full story to Palace Head Dan Chi.

With the floodgates opened, everyone else started making their own reports as well. Everyone present had a clear picture of what had happened after roughly half an hour, particularly how Jiang Chen had used one bottle of antidote to seize so many sky and earth rank herbs in the end. The sect heads were all immensely taken aback at the reports. Wang Jianyu even cursed audibly, “Jiang Chen that brat! This is absolutely despicable!”

Palace Head Dan Chi’s growing irritation was sparked by that comment. He snorted coldly, “Would any of your people have made it out alive if not for Jiang Chen? Wang Jianyu, I’ve seen shameless people, but none as shameless as you!”

Wang Jianyu glared back fiercely. “Dan Chi, we all know that you protect your own, but I won’t let this matter lie! You’ll have to return all of the spirit herbs that your people scammed out of us!”

“That’s no problem. I’ll give them back to you as soon as all of you commit suicide!” Palace Head Dan Chi laughed indifferently.

“Palace Head Wang, don’t you mangle things! Your people were the ones who begged Jiang Chen to make this transaction with thick faces. He didn’t beg them to trade with him!” Elder Yun Nie also roared out angrily. “Why don’t you talk about how he saved seven of your people? And why don’t you talk about how shameless Chen is to immediately chase after Jiang Chen to kill him?!”

Wang Jianyu snorted coldly several times, glowering at the Regal Pill Palace.

Xiang Wentian suddenly spoke, “Wang Jianyu, you should be satisfied with your lot. A few spirit herbs for seven lives. Jiang Chen has responded to your hatred with kindness. If it had been the Sacred Sword Palace in the same position, you likely wouldn’t have been so generous with the antidote, hmm? Perhaps you would’ve been happy watching everyone die from the poison and then gone to pick up the spoils!”

Xiang Wentian had been irritated by the conflict just now as well. In standing out to say this now, he could suppress the Sacred Sword Palace and indicate goodwill to the Regal Pill Palace at the same time.

Honored Master Tian Ming of the Dark North Sect also chuckled. “Indeed, sage nephew Jiang Chen’s actions have actually been exceedingly kind. After all, much was to his credit, and so it’s only right that he receive some of the spirit herbs. If it hadn’t been for him, not only would everyone not obtain the antidote, they wouldn’t even have their lives. And now, sage nephew Jiang Chen isn’t even out yet!”

Wang Jianyu’s position immediately weakened when faced with the words of three other great sects. He looked at the Walkabout Sect as if looking for help, but they didn’t speak up. Sect Head Zhu didn’t have the heart to participate in the verbal sparring because of what had happened to Ding Tong. It was obvious that Ding Tong’s supposed death had plunged the sect head’s emotions deep into the abyss.

Palace Head Dan Chi's gaze was just as solemn as he looked at the transportation formation. As time dwindled, the formation was already showing slight signs of closing. If Jiang Chen didn't exit before the formation closed, then he'd be in great trouble. The difficulty in trying to survive the interior of Mt. Rippling Mirage alone for thirty years was far from ordinary, not to mention the pursuit of Elder Chen. This was a threat on both sides for him.

If Jiang Chen really was lost somewhere in the ancient herb garden, then the Regal Pill Palace would still be unable to rescue him in time for the next Pill Battles. After all, the ancient herb garden operated using different rules from Mt. Rippling Mirage. There was no way anyone from the Myriad Domain could open that formation if not at the end of the three thousand year cycle.

Three thousand years...

Palace Head Dan Chi's head went numb at the thought of that number. He'd be decrepit then, and likely half of those present would've died already. Those who yet lived would be doddering antiques.

Palace Head Dan Chi was filled with mixed emotions as concern filled his heart. Jiang Chen had, at some point, become someone who could impact the fortunes of the sect. The importance attached to him was almost on par with the palace head himself!

How would he be able to explain himself to Elder Shun later if Jiang Chen went missing? Dan Chi stared fixedly at the formation

with a steely face.

Each grain of sand in the hourglass marked the passed time as they fell. Elder Yun Nie's mood was also extremely heavy as he glanced at the hourglass. There really wasn't much time left.

In the end, all the grains of sand had fallen through to the bottom. Wham!

The formation abruptly vanished before everyone, and Ling Bi'er suddenly weakened as she fainted, right next to Dan Chi.

Chapter 600: The Mysterious Cemetery, The Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect

Palace Head Dan Chi's heart sank to the bottom of the valley the instant the transportation formation closed. All color drained out of Elder Yun Nie's face as his lips trembled slightly, unable to accept this reality. Mu Gaoqi clutched his head with both hands, squatting down in misery. And if it wasn't for Palace Head Dan Chi's fast reactions, Ling Bi'er likely would've crashed onto the ground after fainting.

"My condolences, ole brother Dan Chi..." Honored Master Tian Ming walked over with a soft sigh and comforted Dan Chi.

Elder Chen hadn't emerged on the Sacred Sword Palace's side either, but Wang Jianyu could not do anything about it other than curse loudly. He had no idea what had happened. Logically speaking, Elder Chen shouldn't have lost track of time. If he'd succeeded in killing Jiang Chen, he should've exited immediately. If he'd failed, he should've left early as well. There was no way an expert of his caliber would make the mistake of losing track of time. Therefore, something must've happened inside, something big. Otherwise, how could an expert like Elder Chen not have made it out?

On the Great Cathedral side, Xiang Qin also stared dumbly at the formation, tongue-tied for the longest of times. He had rather admired Jiang Chen, and was quite crestfallen to see that Jiang Chen hadn't exited. However, the other members of the Great Cathedral, particularly Elder Xiang Gan, were actually taking delight in the Regal Pill Palace's misfortune after witnessing Jiang

Chen's stunning abilities. It wasn't a bad thing that such an extraordinarily talented person like Jiang Chen hadn't come out, particularly since he possessed so many sky rank spirit herbs! His absence would surely shave away at the foundations of the Regal Pill Palace.

As the foremost sect in the Myriad Domain, the Great Cathedral was never happy to see their competitors grow stronger. There was no need to even speak of the Walkabout Sect—they were almost dancing a jig of delight. Unexpectedly, it was Elder Wu Hen, with his previous experience facing off against Jiang Chen, who frowned slightly, also feeling that something was amiss here. It constantly nagged at him; Jiang Chen was not an unlucky person so how could he possibly have been trapped within the mountain?

Regardless, the formation to the mountain had shut and they could only reopen it after another thirty years. If Jiang Chen and Elder Chen were still inside the ancient herb garden, then they'd have to wait three thousand years before that formation could be opened.

Three thousand years...

That number was simply too stupefying!

With Ding Tong's demise, the Tristar Sect could not spare any effort to delight in the Regal Pill Palace's loss of Jiang Chen. They sketched perfunctory waves of farewell and decided to leave.

The next was the Walkabout Sect, whose morale was also

affected after losing Wei Qing.

Xiang Wentian of the Great Cathedral called out at this time. “Everyone, allow me remind you all before we leave. Remember to keep the ancient herb garden a secret. After all, we’ve all sworn secrecy on our sects and will bring annihilation down on our sects if we accidentally reveal its existence.”

After the groups of people had left, only the Sacred Sword Palace, Regal Pill Palace and Dark North Sect remained. The Dark North Sect did indeed have good relations with the Regal Pill Palace. They’d stayed because they were worried that the Sacred Sword Palace would do something disadvantageous towards the Regal Pill Palace. However, since the Sacred Sword Palace had lost Elder Chen and Du Lihuang, their battle strength was roughly on par with the Regal Pill Palace now.

The Sacred Sword Palace dithered for a long time but realized that the Dark North Sect seemed to have no intention of leaving. Thus, the former knew that it’d be difficult to make trouble for the Regal Pill Palace this time. The fierce and ambitious Wang Jianyu also left irritably with his group when he saw that nothing could be initiated here. No matter how important Elder Chen was, they could only come back after thirty years.

The Dark North Sect felt great gratitude towards Jiang Chen for not only giving them the antidote, but also returning all of their earth spirit herbs. This undoubtedly strengthened the friendship between the two sects. The Dark North Sect kept the Regal Pill Palace company for a few days, only taking their leave when it was apparent that the Sacred Sword Palace would not return.

Palace Head Dan Chi sighed lightly, knowing that it was useless to keep waiting here. He left despondently with the Regal Pill Palace's team. Along the way, when Elder Yun Nie relayed that Jiang Chen had handed over half of his spirit herbs, the latter's loss cut into his heart even harder.

The more extraordinary Jiang Chen was, the harder it was for Palace Head Dan Chi to tolerate all this. Moreover, he had been the one to bring Jiang Chen to the Regal Pill Palace. If anything really had happened to Jiang Chen, then he would have let down both the Precious Tree Sect and Elder Shun.

"Palace Head, we must remember that Jiang Chen is someone who possesses great fortune. Perhaps we'll be able to save him after thirty years, when we enter the mountain again." Elder Yun Nie sighed.

Palace Head Dan Chi nodded. "Indeed, Jiang Chen doesn't seem like the sort who will meet an early doom. I believe that he will make it out. Don't reclaim his residence when we return, and don't alarm those of the Precious Tree Sect. All shall be as before."

Although Jiang Chen hadn't emerged, Dan Chi wasn't the sort to burn a bridge after crossing it. However, he was worried that someone else within the sect might do so, so he made this statement before anything could happen.

……

Jiang Chen remained in that groggy, unaware state for an indeterminate period of time. Then all of a sudden, the suction force vanished, restoring autonomous function to his limbs. He took another look around and saw that he had entered a space that was completely cut off from the rest of the outside world!

What greeted his eyes was a vast, sprawling cemetery. As It stretched out in the distance, the sheer sense of desolation resulting from the countless years that had passed here almost made Jiang Chen suspect that he was standing at the origin of time.

“The tomb of Lu Qiu of the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect.”

“The tomb of Lu Qi of the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect.”

There were rows of tombstones that looked like they had been cut from the same mold. They were all graves of the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect members, and each one was just a cenotaph containing the personal effects of the deceased! This meant that their bodily remains weren’t present beneath the tombstones.

“Why is it like this?” Jiang Chen walked straight down the rows of the tombstones. All of them were adorned with only a few simple words, but he had the feeling that there seemed to be a glorious history behind each of these names. Each person here had lived a impassioned, fervent life. . It was just... for some reason, not only had all of them died without exception, their bodies had not been recovered.

The endless graveyard gave Jiang Chen the sudden forlorn feeling of having reached the end of the world. Finally, when he reached the end of the graveyard, he suddenly saw an altar there that was exactly the same as the one on the island!

"How is this possible?!" He stopped, stunned, and stared at the altar for a long while.

"It really is that altar!" He confirmed in the end that this was the same altar as the one that had stood on the island. It appeared that this altar was the key to triggering the transportation formation. Jiang Chen had activated it because of the nameless blade, and it'd sent him to this bleak cemetery which appeared to have been forgotten by the heavens as it lay quietly in the long river of time. No one had looked for it and weeds were flourishing everywhere.

"Just where is this place? And what is the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect?" Jiang Chen's mind was full of questions. He'd spent a fair bit of time in the Regal Pill Palace and had perused many of its ancient tomes. Thus, he knew a bit of the history of the Myriad Domain. However, there was no record of this sect in the Regal Pill Palace's archives.

Jiang Chen almost suspected that he'd been transported to another plane! But looking at the altar, he had to admit that he was still on the Divine Abyss Continent. It definitely wasn't that easy to move between planes. With his cultivation at fifth level origin realm, he would never be able to withstand the immense pressure and turbulence from transportation between planes.

Jiang Chen stared dumbly at the altar as his nameless blade fell

soundlessly to the ground behind it. He walked over quietly and picked it up. No matter whether he was able to use it or not, it was still one of his belongings and he wasn't willing to discard it.

After he'd crossed over the cemetery, what lay beyond was a mess of broken and dilapidated buildings. Although abandoned, their scale and aura of magnificence illustrated their once-glorious states. As Jiang Chen weaved his way through the ruins, he sensed the desolation clinging to the buildings and felt a wave of bleakness wash over him.

Judging from the materials used in the buildings and the fragmented formations around him, Jiang Chen could already see that the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect had once been an absolutely enormous entity. All of the Myriad Domain sects together wouldn't be enough to stand up to even one of its fingers.

Although Jiang Chen had never experienced the might of a true first rate sect such as the Ninesuns Sky Sect, his instinct was that the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect was even stronger than the Sky Sect! Except, even such a strong sect had been unable to weather the tribulations or time, becoming part of a nameless history that no one asked after. If it hadn't been for Jiang Cheng experiencing the cataclysm in his past life, he wouldn't have been able to believe his eyes.

"Ai, even after thousands of years of power, even if their name was carved into the annals of history, one is still unable to escape being rendered obsolete by the heartless passage of time. Then, this Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect was likely a sect from the ancient times? Current books have almost no record of the ancient

times.” Jiang Chen didn’t understand much of the Divine Abyss Continent, but he knew that its history traced back to the ancient times. Perhaps this sect had been one that existed in that era.

As Jiang Chen walked along, he arrived beneath a cliff as tall as ten thousand feet that looked as if it would bridge the heavens. There were countless words carved on the stone cliff, giving it an extremely strong visual impact.

“The Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect seeks not for our legacy to be passed down through the ages, but seeks to have a clear conscience. As strong enemies from outside the region have invaded, the entire sect has mobilized. Since we know death is a sure fate, we hereby raise our tombstones to pass this knowledge on. From today henceforth, the doors to the mountain will be sealed off from the world. If there are any disciples who do not die in this battle, they should reopen the formation and restore the sect. If the entire sect perishes, then anyone who comes after can receive the legacy of my Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect!”

Jiang Chen saw that the elegant script on the wall was simple but noble, filled with a grand and magnificent air. Although the writer was charging into certain death on the battlefield, he had the optimism of one who could look at death calmly in the face.

Who knew how many thousands of years it’d been, but Jiang Chen could still imagine the heroism of the writer as he read the words on the wall. It was a pity that he seemed to be the first who’d set foot into the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect afterwards. That meant to say that every one of the sect had fallen, and no disciple had made it back alive.