SOVEREIGN OF THE THREE REALMS

BOOK 11

Plow Days

EPUB CREATION BY LISA HAYES

Sovereign of the Three Realms

(三界独尊)

by

Plow Days

(犁天)

Synopsis

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

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

Genius?

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

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Chapter 801: Long Xiaoxuan's Human Form

The Coiling Dragon Clan had no need to fear retaliation from the Murong Clan when they had sufficient evidence. Young master Ji San's face was quite calm as he looked on as those from the Murong Clan left with resentful expressions. Only when they disappeared did Ji San address Jiang Chen, "Brother, I almost arrived too late. This Murong Clan are in-laws to the Majestic Clan and have always been their faithful allies. You'll have to be wary of them in the future. This Murong Qiu is a petty and lecherous character."

At this, young master Ji San glanced momentarily at Huang'er as a subtle warning. He had seen Huang'er before and naturally knew who was behind the mask. Jiang Chen flashed a wide grin. "Brother Ji, I owe you again this time."

"There's not need for such words between us." Young master Ji San waved his hands as he looked towards the formation bound area, "Brother, did that bastard disturb your cultivation?"

Jiang Chen laughed, "It's no big deal."

Young master Ji San nodded, "I still don't feel at ease. I'll have Captain Mo station his men within fifty kilometers. That way they can avoid disturbing your cultivation, but will still be able to reach you if any untoward situation arises."

Jiang Chen truly hadn't expected to be disturbed at such a remote place either. He looked towards Captain Mo. "Captain Mo, I'll have to trouble you then."

Captain Mo laughed expansively, "This is within Ole Mo's scope of duty. Please rest assured, Pill King Zhen. I won't even let a fly enter within fifty kilometers of you."

It wasn't simple bragging when a sixth rank emperor realm cultivator gave such a promise. Young master Ji San remarked,

“Brother, Murong Qiu will definitely make a malicious report when he returns. I’ll have to go back and make some arrangements to counter him. Although I don’t particularly fear him, some preparations are necessary for the upcoming battle. We will have to take the initiative in order to avoid a passive defense.”

It wasn’t the Coiling Dragon Clan’s style to wait passively for the enemy to arrive. It had to exert dominance in every battle as the top clan, charging offensively and demonstrating the Coiling Dragon’s ferocity! Passive defense wasn’t ferocious at all!

“Brother Ji, Captain Zhang is truly loyal and worthy of an important position.” Jiang Chen glanced at Captain Zhang momentarily.

Young master Ji San had also noticed Captain Zhang’s abilities and responded with a smiling nod. “True gold truly does stand the test of fire. Ole Zhang, I trust your talents, since even Pill King Zhen has praised you. Come see me at the clan manor after all this.”

As honest and straightforward as Captain Zhang was, he still understood that the young master was hinting at a promotion and hurriedly bowed. “This subordinate understands.” He then cupped his fists towards Jiang Chen. “Many thanks for Pill King Zhen’s high regards.”

Jiang Chen laughed in reply—he admired this Captain Zhang quite a bit—the Coiling Dragon Clan would be as sturdy as a steel plate if all its subordinates were like this captain. The Majestic Clan would then be hard pressed to overtake the Coiling Dragon Clan even if they upped their aggressiveness.

Jiang Chen’s rhythm was largely unaffected by this momentary disturbance. The formation was still in perfect condition and Long Xiaoxuan’s breakthrough remained unaffected.

Long Xiaoxuan broke through after three more days. It was fortunate that Jiang Chen had set up a formation to conceal the

enormous amount of untamed energy released from such a breakthrough. But even with such precautionary measures in place, Captain Mo was still able to detect some wild tremors, which greatly alarmed him. However, he understood his role very well. He knew what he was responsible for, what he should be doing and what he shouldn't do. Thus he kept to his own post despite his curiosity and refrained from going over to investigate. But he was inwardly puzzled, "Pill King Zhen was not only a talent in pill dao but also outstanding in martial dao? What level of breakthrough did he achieve to produce such powerful waves of energy?"

Captain Mo was full of questions. According to his observations, Pill King Zhen should only be in the sage realm. But a sage realm breakthrough shouldn't have generated such a powerful pressure.

Jiang Chen knew Long Xiaoxuan's breakthrough had been successful when he noticed the disturbances within the formation. He entered and found the post-breakthrough Long Xiaoxuan. The scales on his whole body were glistening brightly and he was enshrouded by a mysterious radiance. He appeared mysterious and dignified, with ancient dragon runes crawling lazily across his scaled armor. Long Xiaoxuan's body had evidently grown stronger.

"Brother Long, congratulations on your advancement!" Jiang Chen sincerely gave his regards.

Long Xiaoxuan appeared to be in great spirits after breaking through. His body flashed as a number of mysterious lights shot towards Jiang Chen. "This is for you."

Jiang Chen caught them and found them to be dragon crystals. These crystals were not on the same level as those from before. They'd undergone substantial upgrades and shone with alluring luster.

"You did very well as my protector this time. These crystals are the first few that I produced after my breakthrough and are the most valuable of all. Consider this as a token of my gratitude."

Long Xiaoxuan was the same as ever; cold in appearance but friendly and passionate inside.

Jiang Chen laughed and accepted them without being overly polite. “Well, it seems I received a valuable prize without doing much.”

These dragon crystals would definitely raise his cultivation efficiency. It was hard enough to find one dragon crystal, not to mention so many. Many dragon descendents could secrete dragon crystals, but the dragon blood within normal descendents was too diluted. Their dragon crystals were all appearance and not much use. Only crystals produced by one of true dragon blood would contain such rich spirit energy. Long Xiaoxuan’s dragon blood was incomparably pure and was virtually free of impurities.These were priceless treasures.

His dragon crystals, especially the ones he’d produced during his emperor realm breakthrough, were the absolute best. They can easily produce ten times the result when used for a sage realm breakthrough. One day of cultivation would equal ten.

“Brother Long, you should now be able to use the true dragon transformation arts now that you’ve broken through to the emperor realm.” Jiang Chen smiled at Long Xiaoxuan with great anticipation.

Long Xiaoxuan’s body suddenly shone bright, filling the whole area with dazzling radiance akin to the sparkling of the waves in the sun before fading into nothingness. A strand of mist descended to the ground and revealed a Long Xiaoxuan who’d transformed into a youth clad in black robes. His complexion was somewhat pale and almost translucent, the veiny patterns beneath his skin vaguely visible. But his sharply contoured features and, his somewhat cold and aloof demeanor both pointed towards his identity. He possessed a certain grave and solemn elegance.

Jiang Chen and Huang’er glanced at each other and nodded

delightfully. This transformed appearance was apparently quite similar to what they'd imagined. A gentle appearance coupled with his proud and untamed facial features bestowed a rather unique temperament upon him.

"A faint draconic aura still lingers around you, but many cultivators who refine dragon blood have a similar air around them. It can even be said that they actively release such an aura to show their outstanding qualities. Brother Long, congratulations. From now on you can boldly appear in public." Jiang Chen truly felt happy for Long Xiaoxuan.

Long Xiaoxuan replied slowly, his mastery of the human tongue not perfect enough to hide an accent. "My transformation has yet to reach perfection. Once it does, I'll be free of my draconic aura."

"It isn't a bad idea to let a little leak to frighten thieves and rascals. No one will be able to guess your identity as long as you don't reveal your true body. Furthermore, it's common knowledge that the human domain is devoid of those with dragon blood. People might not believe it even if you announce yourself as a true dragon." Jiang Chen laughed. After the breakthrough, Jiang Chen put away the formation and spoke to Long Xiaoxuan, "Brother Long, there were only two of us when we set out, so it'll look suspicious if we returned as a group of three. So, I'll have to trouble you again for the moment."

Long Xiaoxuan didn't actually mind. With a flicker of his body, he concealed his form and transformed into a tiny speck of light, which attacked itself to Jiang Chen's body. Long Xioaxuan's breakthrough gave Jiang Chen even more confidence. Another powerful arrow had been added to his quiver.

The lake surface returned to its previous serenity as he retrieved the wood spirit spring. Captain Mo had already been waiting for quite some time when they reached the outskirts of the territory. When he saw Jiang Chen, a flash of peculiarity appeared in his eyes as he scanned the latter a couple of times with his gaze. There

wasn't the slightest trace of a breakthrough on Jiang Chen. The captain felt it odd because there'd normally be some residual energy after a breakthrough, but he could detect nothing of the sort.

"Captain Mo, I've troubled you quite a bit during this period."

"Haha, its not trouble at all! I'm just sitting here effortlessly. On the contrary, it's rare to be able to enjoy some peace and quiet." Captain Mo definitely knew what to say.

Captain Zhang had also been following Captain Mo on this mission and was in charge of patrolling the perimeter. He was delighted after seeing Jiang Chen emerge. "Pill King Zhen, congratulations on the breakthrough."

Everyone thought Jiang Chen had broken through. He didn't refute this and simply nodded, a mysterious smile on his face. "Captain Zhang, I'm sure you'll be promoted when you call upon young master Ji San this time."

Captain Zhang laughed out loud as he scratched his head, "I only fear I'll fail to accomplish big things with my meager talents."

Captain Mo laughed from the side. "Skills can be learnt and strength can be trained. Your devotion, however, is something many people lack. Pill King Zhen's insightful eyes burn as bright as torches. Anyone he recommends is certainly good enough."

Captain Mo had inadvertently praised Jiang Chen once again. He'd apparently obtained some news regarding this Pill King Zhen's significance to the Coiling Dragon Clan.

The group laughed and chatted on their way back to Veluriyam Capital. Huang'er was extremely good at understanding others. She knew it wasn't necessary for her to remain beside them during a conversation between men. As such, she intentionally walked on ahead for a short distance to give them some space.

After they entered the city, Jiang Chen had originally planned to

let Captain Mo and the rest return to the Coiling Dragon Manor. But Captain Mo insisted on fulfilling his responsibilities by escorting them back to Taiyuan Tower. Jiang Chen didn't protest much since he couldn't convince the captain otherwise.

Farmer God Market was, as always, bustling with activity. However, people had odd expressions on their faces as Jiang Chen's entourage walked past, although they still greeted him. It wasn't that these people weren't enthusiastic. But their expressions seemed to communicate different attitudes. Some appeared to be sympathizing while others appeared to be gloating...

"Pill King Zhen, it's been quite a while. Why haven't you returned until now?"

"Pill King Zhen, haven't you heard of what happened at Taiyuan Tower?"

"Pill King Zhen, you've finally returned! Taiyuan Tower has been seized and business has stopped for several days."

Jiang Chen's expression froze as he heard that particular tidbit. Seized? Taiyuan Tower has been seized? What kind of sick joke is this? We've just started doing business!

He looked at Captain Mo and realized the latter knew nothing of this. However, the captain had frequently been exposed to grand spectacles, so he calmly responded, "Pill King Zhen, don't be too anxious. Let's go and ascertain the situation first."

It wasn't quite possible for Jiang Chen to not be anxious. He'd put everything into Taiyuan Tower and it was his first step towards gaining a foothold in Veluriyam Capital. But his very first step was being met with so much resistance! Which idiot had come to stir up trouble this time?

Chapter 802: Emperor Shura's Interference?

A group of well equipped soldiers stood at the entrance of Taiyuan Tower, looking like fearsome wolves. The main entrance of the door was tightly shut, and seals coldly plastered all over the door. Thankfully, Taiyuan Lodge hadn't been marked as Taiyuan Tower's property yet, so it hadn't been sealed along with Taiyuan Tower. Everyone in Taiyuan Tower had been chased into Taiyuan Lodge.

Fury rose up in Jiang Chen's heart when he saw this scene from afar. However, Captain Mo's sharp eyes quickly discerned the soldiers' identity, and immediately restrained Jiang Chen before he could unleash his wrath. The captain said in a soft tone, "Control yourself, Pill King Zhen. These soldiers are under the direct command of a great emperor."

A great emperor? Jiang Chen's mind shook. Why was a great emperor attracted by a pill force that had barely established itself not long ago? Also, didn't the seven great emperors normally keep their hands out of Veluriyam Capital's worldly affairs? Distress battered Jiang Chen, but was quickly surmounted by his growing anger. So what if they work for a great emperor? How can a great emperor seal my store without good reason? Jiang Chen was absolutely certain that Taiyuan Tower had obeyed and executed every procedure to the letter of the law. With how cautious Wei Tianxiao was, there was no way he would make a mistake either.

There was no doubt that today's incident wasn't Taiyuan Tower's fault. Jiang Chen didn't even need to think to know that this was a malicious scheme against his store Someone was attacking him on purpose! It didn't matter if it was an attack by a great emperor or a great clan."Let's head over and take a look," Jiang Chen had calmed down after learning that those soldiers

belonged to a great emperor. He understood that he couldn't clash head on against a great emperor's force with his current strength. That would be rather unwise. However, that didn't mean he could just ignore this affront and do nothing. Jiang Chen wouldn't submit even to an empyrean expert without good reason, much less one of the great emperors!

Captain Mo was afraid that something might befall Jiang Chen. Therefore, he forced himself to follow behind Jiang Chen even though he didn't wish to clash against a great emperor's men. On the other hand, Captain Zhang hadn't thought that far ahead. He could only feel the blood rushing to his head when he saw Jiang Chen being bullied. He thought that this world was truly unfair if even someone as good as Pill King Zhen was oppressed like this! Right now, Captain Zhang only had one thought in his mind, and that was to give his utmost, even his life, to take down those bastards if Pill King Zhen were to give the order.

"These are sealed grounds. All unrelated personnel are to leave immediately!" A soldier immediately yelled at Jiang Chen the second the latter walked close to his property. The soldier never even bothered to look at him, and his tone sounded as disdainful as someone who was chasing away a group of flies.

Jiang Chen stared darkly at the group of soldiers. Captain Mo hastily pulled him to the side. It was at that moment a person ran out of Taiyuan Lodge and grabbed Jiang Chen, "Come this way and talk, brother." This person was actually young master Ji San.

He was currently looking completely serious, without a hint of his usual confidence and ease. With hushed words in a heavy tone, he immediately dragged Jiang Chen into Taiyuan Lodge regardless of the latter's will. The moment he went through the door, young master Ji San waved his hands and ordered, "Close the door!"

Captain Mo himself hastily went over to shut the door.

The group of emperor soldiers standing at the entrance of

Taiyuan Tower laughed disdainfully upon seeing the closely shut door on the opposite side of the street. Their noses rose even higher at the outcome. “Everyone says that young master Ji San of the Coiling Dragon Clan is a great person, but I guess he’s really just a cowardly boy.”

“How dare a mere great clan call themselves king of the world? There’s no room for their arrogance before an emperor’s soldiers!”

“Speaking of which, who was that group of people just now?”

“Who knows? I think I heard Ji San calling him ‘brother’ just now, right?”

“Could he be that Pill King Zhen?”

“You mean Taiyuan Tower’s Pill King Zhen? We have orders to arrest him and bring him back for interrogation immediately if we see him!”

“Is he really that Pill King Zhen?”

“We’ll know that if we charge inside and catch him, won’t we?”

“We better not. Our orders are only to seal Taiyuan Tower, and that store hasn’t broken any rules. We’d be crossing a line if we force our way in, not to mention that the Coiling Dragon Clan’s men are there too. If they escalate this up to Emperor Peafowl, our great emperor would be inconvenienced too.”

“Yeah, we shouldn’t force our way in. He’ll come out eventually, and when he does, we’ll question his identity. If he really is Pill King Zhen, we’ll just capture him then. We’re just following orders, and I doubt that young master Ji San would dare stop us.”

“Mm, that’s settled then. Look sharp and watch them closely.” These warriors belonged to Emperor Shura, one of the seven great emperors of Veluriyam Capital. Ranking wise, Emperor Shura sat in third place among all seven great emperors. However, he was firmly in second place in terms of strength and closing in on the number one great emperor, Emperor Peafowl. Moreover, Emperor

Shura was a man of swift and decisive conduct. In the past few years, Emperor Shura had invaded and won many territories for Veluriyam Capital. He had strong support inside Veluriyam Capital, and was a new and rising power. The Majestic Clan and Murong Clan were all great clans serving directly under Emperor Shura. Together, they represented a powerful faction inside Veluriyam Capital.

Jiang Chen met his brother with a dark face after he was pulled into the store by young master Ji San, “Why the haste, Brother Ji?”

Jiang Chen was obviously still angry. He couldn’t stand seeing his territory violated and these soldiers arrogantly ridiculing him with their master’s authority. He might be good tempered, but even he couldn’t stand this nonsense.

“It’s a long and complicated story, brother. This had happened a few days ago, and the reason I hadn’t told you about this was to ensure that you didn’t worry during your breakthrough!” Young master Ji San said solemnly.

Jiang Chen understood that the situation was not as simple as it seemed after seeing how serious young master Ji San looked. He looked around and frowned, “Where are the Wei father and son?”

“They were captured,” Young master Ji San sighed softly, “They and a Pill Master Yan of Taiyuan Tower were all captured.”

“What?” Jiang Chen was shocked when he heard this. Pill Master Yan was in fact his peer from the Regal Pill Palace, Shen Trifire. Jiang Chen paid great attention to his growth because Shen Trifire absolutely possessed the qualities to become an initial level pill king, even if he hadn’t taken the examination yet. Jiang Chen had intended for Shen Trifire to be capable of holding down the fort himself, but hadn’t thought that he would be captured as well.

“It all happened very suddenly. These soldiers suddenly barged into Taiyuan Tower one fine day and asked for the person in

charge to step forward immediately. Since you weren't around, Pill Master Yan stepped up and claimed responsibility. He was shackled on the spot and hauled away. Since young master Wei Jie was present at the time, he too was taken away. At the same time, they also sealed off House Wei's residence and took away the house lord."

The person who said this was Wei Qixia—Wei Jie's trusted aide. He had been watching over Taiyuan Tower all this time. The more Jiang Chen heard, the angrier he grew. "Did they state any reason as to why they took them away?"

Wei Qixia said angrily, "None. They just flashed Emperor Shura's warrant, took our people away and sealed the store. They didn't care to talk at all."

"They're capturing people without giving a reason? Are they bandits? Is this the conduct of a so-called force of a great emperor? Is this what they call non-interference of all worldly affairs?" Jiang Chen was furious when he heard this. He could just barely swallow this if the fault really lay on Taiyuan Tower's side. But wasn't it pure nonsense to seal off his store for no reason at all?

Young master Ji San was also smiling bitterly at this whole predicament as he tried to comfort Jiang Chen. "Calm down, brother. This entire matter is very strange. I suspect that they have some crucial information that can be used against us, but are withholding it for now due to certain reasons. I'm guessing that this isn't the end of the whole matter, and that more trouble is heading our way."

"Information, you say?" Jiang Chen sneered, "I may not know about the rest, but I'm absolutely sure that Taiyuan Tower possesses no such skeleton in our closet!"

Young master Ji San sighed, "Maybe there isn't one, but that doesn't stop them from trying to frame us. After all, there are at least hundreds of ways for a great emperor's force to seal off a

store.”

Jiang Chen smiled and nodded , his anger fully stoked. He actually stopped trying to argue with Ji San. He would be a fool if he hadn’t figured out what was going on at this point. There was no point arguing with them; they were all in the same boat. Jiang Chen looked around once before asking, “Everyone else is fine, right?”

“They took away only the Wei father and son and Pill Master Yan. Everyone else is safe. There’s no way a great emperor’s force would act disgracefully enough to capture everyone. It also wouldn’t be easy to deal with the aftermath if they caused too big of a commotion.” Ji San sighed resignedly.

“Emperor Shura...” Jiang Chen breathed the words softly between his teeth as a hint of killing intent flashed in his eyes. All he wanted to do was to establish a firm footing in Veluriyam Capital and slowly build his power base. There was nothing he’d done that would possibly affect the emperor in any way. The emperor hadn’t given him any reason either. They’d captured his people and sealed his store as they liked, with no room for negotiation. This code of conduct soured Jiang Chen’s impression of Emperor Shura immediately. Did he think that an emperor was unrivalled in this world? Did he think that he could do whatever he wanted to? Even the Celestial Emperor, the ruler of a realm, hadn’t been so tyrannical that he would screw over someone just because he felt like it.

“The situation is complicated, brother, and you are not safe. I heard that your name is on their list of targets, so I suggest that you head to the clan manor and lay low for a time. This matter is most certainly going to turn into an extended battle that won’t be settled in just a day or two.” Ji San had stayed at Taiyuan Lodge for the past few days because he was afraid that Jiang Chen would stumble head first into Emperor Shura’s trap. If even Jiang Chen was captured by Emperor Shura’s men, then they would have an

utter field day. Not even the Coiling Dragon Clan dared claim for sure that they could rescue Jiang Chen from Emperor Shura.

Captain Mo also advised, “Pill King Zhen, you can’t win against them as you are now, and these people are not good people. There is always hope as long as you aren’t captured.”

Jiang Chen understood the sense in their words. He might not even be able to duel the Majestic Clan without external help in his current condition, much less Emperor Shura. Unless he was willing to sacrifice the final charge of the empyrean level restriction inside his palace, he wouldn’t be able to kill a great emperor.

However, it was obviously an unworthy trade. Not only was it Jiang Chen’s most powerful trump card to date, it was one-time use strike. Even if he did decide to use up his final trump card, he’d have to first set a trap for Emperor Shura himself!

The “yan” character is three of the character for “fire”

Chapter 803: When Kings Fight, Vassals Suffer

Jiang Chen didn't think that Emperor Shura would attend to him personally. In fact, he should've been an insignificant small fry in the emperor's eyes. Emperor Shura had countless experts working for him, with even the soldiers standing in front of Taiyuan Tower's door either peak sage realm cultivators or emperor realm cultivators. And those were just the normal soldiers.

The great emperor possessed countless powers beneath him, there was no need for him to personally take the field in order to act against Jiang Chen. While Jiang Chen was furious, he vaguely realized that the raid on Taiyuan Tower might not be just a simple attack on the shop. Perhaps it was an unfortunate casualty of Veluriyam Capital's internal strife. It could be a conflict between aristocratic families, great clans, or even a tiny clash between great emperors. He and Taiyuan Tower were but small pawns used by top forces to cross swords with each other! Jiang Chen calmed down when his thoughts travelled to that point.

Although he was angry, Jiang Chen also understood that the first priority right now was to secure Shen Trifire and the Wei father and son. If those three people were to perish from this calamity, then it would be too late even if he made a comeback in the future. "Their rescue comes first," Jiang Chen had finally reached equilibrium. He looked at Wei Qixia and everyone from Taiyuan Tower with unusually determined eyes, "Everyone, I give you my word that Taiyuan Tower will open for business once more, and that no one will stay our footsteps. Anyone who dares stands in our way will be annihilated!"

Everyone was shocked to hear his declaration. It was obvious that Jiang Chen wasn't joking. However, his words were a little hard to believe. After all, the person who was standing in Taiyuan Tower's

way right now was the great Emperor Shura! He was a great emperor who commanded great power and authority. A person like him could cause the entirety of Veluriyam Capital to tremble with a simple stamp of his foot. He was one of the cultivators who stood at the very top, even in the entire human domain. Although Pill King Zhen was a pill genius and an outstanding talent, they couldn't help but feel that his boast went a little over the top this time.

However, young master Ji San felt an odd sense of excitement. He didn't understand why himself, but his emotions had been ignited by Jiang Chen's passionate words too. Not only did he think that Jiang Chen was sincere, he even sensed that Jiang Chen had reasons to be confident in his ability to succeed. He also nodded, "Don't be pessimistic, everyone. Veluriyam Capital is not under the control of just one power. I have brought this up to my clan lord, and he is certain to report this to Emperor Peafowl and request help. The emperor will definitely uphold justice for us!"

Emperor Peafowl was the foremost great emperor in Veluriyam Capital. He had risen to power three thousand years ago and become the number one emperor in Veluriyam Capital. To that very day, there was no one who could replace him. Three thousand years later, Emperor Peafowl had shed all superficialities and was no longer as unbridled as he'd been when he was still young. However, the accumulations of eons was also a kind of enlightenment, foundation and symbolization. As compared to the time he was showing off his capabilities three thousand years ago, the current Emperor Peafowl was mysterious, abstruse, and enigmatic.

The current Emperor Peafowl was a figure of legends in Veluriyam Capital a living monument and totem in the minds of the populace. Every descendant of Veluriyam Capital looked up to Emperor Peafowl as an idol and Veluriyam Capital's greatest expert. After all, his three thousand years of accumulation wasn't

something any one of the six emperors could replace. That was why everyone had become spirited the moment Emperor Peafowl was brought up. Wei Qixia, especially, was overjoyed, “If Emperor Peafowl were to hear about this, he will definitely uphold justice for House Wei and Taiyuan Tower!”

“Yeah, there’s no way Emperor Peafowl would sit by and watch others abuse their power!” The crowd all grew excited when they heard this.

“You should leave soon, brother. Those people were watching you when you came in, and if my guess isn’t wrong, they have their eyes set on you already. Therefore, you must come back with me to the Coiling Dragon residence for now. Emperor Shura’s soldiers are domineering, but I doubt they would dare head into the Coiling Dragon residence to cause trouble.”

At this point, even Jiang Chen knew that he had to protect himself first no matter how displeased he was. He might have plenty of ways to escape Emperor Shura’s men, but the foundation he’d worked this hard to establish would be gone in an instant if they found his real identity. For the sake of this base, he had to endure this. It was at this moment that Huang’er smiled and walked over. “Brother Chen, why don’t you lay low for a moment at the clan lord’s residence? This matter can only be solved by the Coiling Dragon clan lord anyways.”

Huang’er understood that Jiang Chen’s character to be staunch and unyielding. She was worried that he would tear down any semblance of politeness between him and Emperor Shura and erupt into open hostility.

Jiang Chen felt warm on the inside when he saw the care brimming in Huang’er’s eyes. He nodded, “Then I shall trouble you, Brother Ji.”

“Come on, you’re not troubling me at all. Also, your establishment of Taiyuan Tower and your success in thwarting the

Majestic Clan has benefited the Coiling Dragon Clan as well. We have dominated Veluriyam Capital for many years, and we are not a power who only knows how to take advantage of others and skirt responsibilities. We are in the same boat here, so don't worry too much. If my guess isn't wrong, this incident doesn't just involve Taiyuan Tower. In fact, Taiyuan Tower may even be an innocent victim of a larger scheme."

When kings fight, vassals suffer. The clash of big forces often start from the small powers beneath them. Taiyuan Tower was that small power right now. It was small but whole, and currently the hottest topic on the streets. At the moment, there was no better pig to slaughter than Taiyuan Tower.

Jiang Chen and Huang'er disguised themselves slightly and changed into new outfits before leaving Taiyuan Lodge, following young master Ji San's team of attendants. Although Emperor Shura's soldiers were domineering, it was ultimately not a wise choice to stop young master Ji San's group from leaving publicly. After all, Ji San was not a member of House Wei. They weren't directly related to Taiyuan Tower either. Moreover, the number one clan in Veluriyam Capital wasn't something that they could offend however they liked. They might represent Emperor Shura himself, but just because Emperor Shura could offend a certain person easily didn't mean that they could do the same. In the end, they were just a group of law enforcers.

These soldiers were a little displeased to see young master Ji San leaving without acknowledging their presence at all.

"Hmph, what's up with this act! What's all this strutting around when your clan is about to collapse?"

"This Ji San really thinks that his clan is the number one clan in Veluriyam Capital!"

"So what if it is? They are nothing before the great emperors. Just wait, he won't be able to maintain that facade the moment the

Coiling Dragon clan lord loses his power. His clan will collapse instantly."

"That's true. But say, do you think that Pill King Zhen would slip into Ji San's team and sneak away?"

"Ah? Weren't you guys paying attention just now?"

"What's the point? A cultivator can easily disguise themselves."

"Then what should we do? Should we stop them and inspect everyone thoroughly?"

"Absolutely not. We'll be in great trouble if he isn't among them. If the Coiling Dragon Clan were to make a final strike before their demise and bring this up all the way to Emperor Peafowl, it would become an enormous problem. In fact, it may even drag our emperor into a mess."

"Yeah! There's no need to use force against a power that's about to die real soon. It won't be worth it if they decided to make one last struggle." The warriors ultimately decided against taking the risk.

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Inside the Coiling Dragon residence, Jiang Chen met the clan lord once more. At the moment, the clan lord's spirit and qi were much improved after being treated with the Five Elements Augmentation Art. He didn't look much different from his peak condition. "The direction of the winds changed faster than even I would expect, young friend." The clan lord sighed. Jiang Chen nodded and said nothing.

"Can they be saved, clan lord?" Ji San asked curiously.

The clan lord shook his head slightly, "For now, it is impossible. But this is not the end of the story. According to my investigation, Emperor Shura didn't personally give the order."

"Oh?" Ji San grew interested, "Could this whole thing have

nothing to do with Emperor Shura at all?”

“That’s not entirely true either. Emperor Shura might not have been personally involved, but his underlings wouldn’t dare act recklessly without his permission. Therefore, Emperor Shura must have said something, but the executor of the order was his vassal, the Moon Monarch.”

“Moon Monarch?” Ji san was shocked. “Do you mean the sworn brother of the Majestic clan lord?”

“That’s the one. This person is one of the three monarchs who currently serve under Emperor Shura and is very active. He is a particularly ruthless and overbearing man. There were plenty of incidents in Veluriyam Capital that were masterminded by him.” It was obvious that the clan lord weren’t too pleased with this Moon Monarch.

“So in the end, this is just the continuation of that bet during Taiyuan Tower’s opening day, isn’t it?” Ji San exclaimed with surprise.

“It would seem that way.” The clan lord’s tone was heavy.

Jiang Chen suddenly asked, “Do they have any strong justifications for arresting our people and sealing off our store?”

The clan lord nodded, “That is the crucial point. From what I heard, they do have a strong justification to do so. It sounds like they found fatal toxins in a certain kind of Taiyuan Tower pill. It is even rumored that a descendant of a big power died from poisoning because they consumed the pill you made.”

“What?” Ji San paled, “Who?”

But Jiang Chen shook his head firmly. “It’s a lie. It doesn’t matter what the charge is since they’re going to frame us anyways.”

The clan lord asked, “Are you absolutely sure that Taiyuan Tower’s pills are perfectly fine, young friend?”

Jiang Chen said, “I am the one who created the recipes of Taiyuan Tower’s pills, and those who worked under me are all my trusted aides. There’s absolutely no chance that the problem originates with us. I can guarantee it.”

The clan lord nodded, “In that case, this is probably a ploy by the Majestic Clan. They’re purposely framing you for a crime you didn’t commit!”

“Maybe the Murong Clan is involved too,” Ji San spoke in frustration.

Although Jiang Chen hadn’t said anything in reply, his expression had turned even darker. It was impossible that Taiyuan Tower’s pills would be defective. This was absolutely a false charge. To put it bluntly, the Majestic Clan was purposefully burrowing Emperor Shura’s title to suppress and take revenge against Taiyuan Tower.

Once he understood this, Jiang Chen actually felt a lot easier. He had a clear opponent and target to work against. He also knew their intentions now. So they wanted to oppress him, huh? This wasn’t the first time Jiang Chen was oppressed since he’d started cultivating. None of his oppressors had managed to have the last laugh yet. He was facing a more fearsome oppressor this time, but since when had he ever feared them?

Chapter 804: Jiang Chen Sets A Plan In Motion

"Clan Lord, did you see His Majesty the Great Emperor Peafowl?" Ji San asked.

"Alas, that's why I said they prepared their scheme with meticulous care. His Majesty is in seclusion right now, he'll only come out in another half a month. Half a month is enough to put us on the back foot."

A gloomy Ji San asked, "Then does that mean we can only turn the other cheek and let them act as outrageously as they want? If no one reins them in, will the Capital ever know peace and order?"

The clan lord's chuckle was cold and grim. "There's an even more wonderful piece of news! Tomorrow, the Majestic Clan's Taiyuan Lodge reopens for business. They chose an even more popular address and is planning on promoting the Longevity Pill as their main product!"

"What?" Ji San's face sank even further. "Are they reopening shop while stepping on Taiyan Tower's dead body? The Majestic Clan goes too far!"

Even Jiang Chen's mind went blank when he heard the clan lord. This Majestic Clan was thick-faced enough to reopen Taiyuan Lodge, and still had the guts to use the word "Taiyuan!" However, thinking on it, was there anything the Majestic Clan wouldn't do? Right now, Taiyuan Tower had been seized and become an object of ridicule. Under such circumstances, the reopening of the Majestic Clan's Taiyuan Lodge was a declaration to the world that the ones who had the last laugh were the Majestic Clan and Taiyuan Lodge. As for Taiyuan Tower, they could only be the butt of the joke! This was where the Majestic Clan's true scheme lay. Three birds with one stone! The reopening of Taiyuan Lodge, trampling Taiyuan Tower's carcass, and finally giving the Coiling

Dragon Clan a slap in the face in passing! One had to admit that the Majestic Clan's maneuvers were ruthless to the extreme.

Ji San was furious. "Clan Lord, even with His Majesty Great Emperor Peafowl in seclusion, he still has four exalted emperors under him. Are they all good-for-nothings? Are they just going to watch and sit by while Great Emperor Asura's men run wild?"

"Ole Third, quit talking nonsense! The four exalted emperors aren't happy either. However, Emperor Asura's men obtained so-called evidence this time. So even if they want to get involved, they can't do so recklessly. It would be difficult even for Great Emperor Peafowl to extricate himself if they go parading around this so-called evidence. Perhaps him getting involved is precisely what Great Emperor Asura's men are waiting for."

Ji San spoke with a bitter smile, "Then what should we do? If we let them get away with it this time, it's going to be even more difficult to stop it from happening again in the future. Don't tell me Great Emperor Asura's men can just defecate on Great Emperor Peafowl's people whenever they like? Who gave them that right?!"

Ji San couldn't hold back his anger. He thought that the current situation was utter bollocks. Great Emperor Peafowl was clearly the real number one power in the Capital, so why did it look like Great Emperor Asura was even more overbearing? Why was the Coiling Dragon Clan, a clan in Great Emperor Peafowl's faction, on the defensive on every front? Why were they continuously provoked and taking one punch after another?

In the end, Ji San was full of the vigor of youth. It would have been one thing if such situations only happened once or twice, but seeing them happening in sequence left him thoroughly exasperated.

The clan lord heaved a soft sigh. "Ole Third, it's not as simple as you think. First, His Majesty Great Emperor Peafowl is well aware of our clan's recent straits. They're also in a wait and see approach

when it comes to our clan's future. Second, young lord Fan, His Majesty's most powerful disciple, unexpectedly passed away recently. This was a colossal blow for Great Emperor Peafowl. His Majesty hasn't recovered yet from the shock of losing his disciple."

"That's why Great Emperor Asura took advantage of this weakness?" Ji San snorted. "This Emperor Asura rose to prominence a mere eight hundred years ago, but he already wants to challenge Great Emperor Peafowl's position? Is it really Great Emperor Asura who's becoming restless, or is it the curs and mongrels under him becoming restless?"

"Probably both." The clan lord said with a sigh. "Ole Third, stay cool-headed. I will continue to think of a way to deal with this matter. House Wei is our clan's people, it's out of the question for us to simply sit idly by and watch."

All of a sudden, Jiang Chen spoke up, "Since Great Emperor Asura's side can act like this, then why can't we reply in the same fashion?"

"What do you mean?" the clan lord blinked.

"They have the goods on my Taiyuan Tower. Even if it's mere fabrication, they can still arrest my people. In that case, why can't Great Emperor Peafowl give them a taste of their own medicine?"

The clan lord's smile was wry. "It's easy enough to say but hard to put in practice. If we use the same pretext and arrest some of their men, wouldn't that clearly signify the beginning of open conflict? Great Emperor Peafowl might not be afraid, but it would still be beneath his dignity to do something like that, except if the pretext is foolproof enough."

"What kind of pretext would be foolproof enough?" Jiang Chen asked.

"A reason that can't be doubted even at a mere glance."

"Then what should I do if I can find such a pretext?" Jiang Chen

asked, his voice grave.

“Oh? Do you have a plan?” The clan lord’s eyes suddenly shone bright. If they really had such a pretext, then Great Emperor Peafowl’s people could definitely dose the other side with their own medicine. From the very beginning, an eye for an eye was a fundamental rule of the martial dao world.

If Emperor Peafowl’s faction came off worse in the exchange this time, if would be a tremendous blow to his prestige and authority, even if nothing transpired on the surface. Emperor Peafowl’s men would definitely be unwilling to accept that. The reason why they hadn’t acted yet was merely because of the great emperor’s seclusion. Without his orders, they couldn’t just take the initiative without permission. However, a pretext that was beyond doubt would be justification enough to go into action. Even without the great emperor’s nod, the four exalted emperors under Great Emperor Peafowl could still pass down the order.

Of course, the pretext needed to be rock solid, strong enough to stop the rumors and blabbering of the people. And it also had to be foolproof enough that Great Emperor Asura and his men couldn’t say anything! It was a high bar to reach. The clan lord looked at Jiang Chen expectantly, obviously waiting to hear what brilliant idea Jiang Chen had in mind. After all, this young man had brought him so many pleasant surprises in the past few days. He might very well have a solution to this issue.

With a cold smile, Jiang Chen spoke. As he spoke, the clan lord and Ji San’s eyes shone bright. Neither the old nor young man spoke for a moment after he was done. But soon enough, many emotions surged through their eyes. They contemplated for a long while before surprised delight slowly emerged on their faces.

Ji San slapped his thigh. “Not bad! This method is definitely feasible. And we’ll hit them where it hurts! This time, we must strike where they’re most vulnerable! Hit them ‘til they’re left looking for their teeth on the floor, hit them until they have

nightmares as soon as they close their eyes. Until they have lingering trauma whenever as they think back on it!”

The clan lord was also beaming with delight. “This method is indeed possible. However, little friend, are you certain about this pill recipe...”

Jiang Chen interrupted with a nod. “There is no need to worry about that. There won’t be any issue whatsoever as long as it’s a pill king doing the refining. Of course, the higher the level the better!”

The clan lord let out a boisterous laugh. “You don’t need to worry about that. Would a pill king under Great Emperor Peafowl be mediocre? Also, if you gift them with this pill recipe, the great emperor and his men will definitely see you in a favorable light!”

“Time waits for no man. Should we go right now?” Jiang Chen didn’t want to wait one second longer than necessary.

The clan lord nodded. “Very well, we’ll go right now. We’ll need to hurry. The Majestic Clan’s Taiyuan Lodge is opening tomorrow.”

“Mhm.” Jiang Chen nodded.

With the clan lord leading the way, Jiang Chen arrived at the rumored Sacred Peafowl Mountain. This was the place where the great emperor imparted his teachings. As a great emperor, his teaching site was naturally not something an ordinary sect could compare to. However, Jiang Chen was in no mood to admire the mountain’s luxurious landscape. The clan lord was taking him to pay a formal visit to the four emperors.

Each of these four exalted emperors had a cultivation at ninth level emperor realm, all equally matched with the Coiling Dragon Clan’s clan lord. Only, the clan lord wasa little older and his foundations and accumulation deeper. In theory, he should be a little stronger than the four exalted emperors. However, it was

difficult to tell if that would truly be the case when it came to real combat. After all, the four exalted emperors had followed Emperor Peafowl for a long time and benefited from the great emperor's guidance. It wouldn't be surprising if they possesses some overwhelming abilities when it came to real combat.

……

On the other side of the city, the Majestic Clan's residence was brightly lit, a picture of liveliness and harmony.

At the banquet, the clan lord and a man with an aquiline nose occupied the main seats. Other guests of honor sat in front of them in the guest seats and kept them company. There were more than five lords of great clans present, to say nothing of others.

The Majestic Clan's clan lord offered a toast and smiled, "My sworn brother, no words can express my gratitude this time. Your little brother will empty his cup first to thank his brother for helping us uphold justice. Taiyuan Lodge reopens its doors tomorrow. If you are free, I would like to invite you for a visit."

The one he was calling brother was the man with an aquiline nose sitting at his side. This man was the Moon Monarch, one of the three emperors under Great Emperor Asura. The Moon Monarch responded with an indifferent smile, "I'm merely carrying out my duty, why talk about gratitude? As for tomorrow, I have some business elsewhere, so I won't go personally. But I will instruct my men to stay on alert."

The Majestic clan lord was a little disappointed, but his smile never faltered. "Brother, of course I can't force you if you're busy. With your fame, which hoodlum would dare stir up trouble?"

"Right, who would dare challenge the Moon Monarch?"

"Come come come, let all of us drink a cup in homage to the Moon Monarch." These clan lords were all from clans under Emperor Asura, and all of them were Emperor Asura's diehard

followers.

In theory, the Moon Monarch's status was about equal with these men, so he naturally couldn't deny them face. He toasted them with a faint smile, "Let us all drink a cup together."

Everyone's mood turned for the better after the Moon Monarch took a drink. The atmosphere immediately became harmonious.

"Brother, how are you planning to handle the father and son pair from House Wei?" the Majestic Clan's clan lord asked all of a sudden.

"Manufacturing fake pills and endangering the lives of cultivators in the Capital, of course this sort of miscreant has to be eliminated. After these matters are settled, I'll report to His Majesty and personally behead those pests in Farmer God Market for all to see!" The Moon Monarch's icy, arrogant eyebrows shot up with disdain. His words were eerie and sinister, without a hint of human warmth. Even though those present were all in the same faction, they still felt their scalps go numb.

Chapter 805: Taiyuan Lodge Opens Once More

The Farmer God Market resumed its hustle and bustle in the early morning of the next day. Countless busybodies knew Taiyuan Lodge' was having their reopening ceremony that day. Everyone was curious as to what would happen this time. Would there be a dramatic wager like last time? They all felt it was over for Taiyuan Tower. Even the Wei father and son had been captured and their superior, the Coiling Dragon Clan, was at their wit's end. Whether the whole of the Veluriyam Capital approved or not, they had to acknowledge that House Wei and Taiyuan Tower were done for. Therefore, they also felt that it was highly unlikely that Taiyuan Lodge's opening day would involve any interesting drama this time. Yet, it was especially crowded at Farmer God Market. Everybody wanted to witness how grandiose the triumphant Majestic Clan would act in their moment of victory.

In truth, at least three quarters of Veluriyam Capital's population felt indignant at the Majestic Clan's unjust behaviour. The clan's actions had, after all, crossed Veluriyam Capital's bottom line. It was the Majestic Clan who'd initially provoked and made a great fuss about Taiyuan Tower. They had only themselves to blame for their eventual loss. But they were not resigned to their loss and had come back with a full-court press. Who didn't know that the Moon Monarch, the orchestrator of this incident, was the Majestic clan lord's sworn brother? Such a nefarious collusion couldn't escape the eyes of the conscientious, who subsequently revealed their plot to the whole of Veluriyam Capital. This kind of behaviour was rather taboo.

But unfortunately, most of the discontent souls held no significant sway in such matters and could only feel upset at heart. The world of the martial dao had always been a place where the strong made the rules. Sympathy from the weak did little to

change anything. Taiyuan Lodge's new location was even more famous. It was almost nudged the most central area of Farmer God Market. Bright lanterns and banners adorned the splendidly decorated store. The valuable property extended thousands of meters to reach the door of the closed Taiyuan Tower. The newly crafted signboard above the main door appeared even more lavish and imposing than before, lending the storefront the majesty and spirit of a conqueror. This attitude was as if they'd already considered themselves to be the number one pill shop in Veluriyam Capital.

No one below eighth rank aristocratic families had been qualified to be invited to the ceremony and could only observe from the street. The only ones invited were the most influential people of Veluriyam Capital. Many of these people felt a degree of honor in receiving the invitation because the Taiyuan Lodge's grandeur this time seened unprecedented. Not only would the Majestic Clan Lord be present, but its allied clan lords would also be appearing in person. It was to be a grand ceremony attended by several clan lords, something that hadn't happened during its previous opening. And thus, all the invited parties valued this opportunity.

"Screw this tripe! I don't give a rat's arse about an opening!" Despite the hullaboo, a certain pill king threw his invitation on the ground and spat on it before stomping on it a few more times. Only after venting his anger in this manner did he smile oddly and disappear into the crowd. Pill King Lu Feng had had no choice but walk about in disguise. He'd been entirely infuriated lately. As Jiang Chen's disciple, he couldn't help but feel enraged at the thought of Taiyuan Tower's recent fate. But his foundation in Veluriyam Capital was mediocre at best. It wasn't quite possible for him to do anything for Taiyuan Tower.

He also knew that this was a confrontation between great emperors. He might have some repute in Farmer God Market, but he was not even worthy of being cannon fodder in conflicts of such

a level. Therefore, he could only trash the invitation to vent his frustration and satisfy himself a bit. Although he knew his actions wouldn't hurt Taiyuan Lodge in the slightest, it still felt satisfying to vent some of his ill will. He would rather observe the ceremony from the crowd than put on airs to participate in such a charade.

Pill King Lu Feng was a man who valued tradition and moral integrity, despite his eccentric and somewhat comical behaviour. He'd firmly decided not to step one foot into the enemy's doors now that he'd inherited the Deviant Pill Faction's teachings. The invitation that Pill King Lu Feng had discarded into the street was stepped upon by many a foot. Coincidentally, it stuck to the shoe of one of the patrons who walked along. This passerby, it turned out, was headed for Taiyuan Lodge, and soon walked through its doors.

"Heh heh, congratulations, Clan Lord! Taiyuan Lodge's opening is truly fulfilling the hopes of the masses and destined to be one of the grandest occasions in Veluriyam Capital. It'll also serve to bolster the spirit of the entire alchemy world! This is truly worth of celebration!" An obvious bootlicker, a waterfall of words couldn't disguise the oozing flattery.

Those standing outside without an invitation hissed and booed at the sight. They could no longer stand to listen to such goosebump-inducing, shameless toadiness. It was public knowledge that the speaker used to be from an eighth rank aristocratic family under the Coiling Dragon Clan. It was only in the recent times that they'd switched allegiances and entered the Majestic Clan's protection.

The head of this eight rank aristocratic family wasn't actually invited to the ceremony, but that had done little to hamper his urge to offer congratulations. Furthermore, he had brought valuable gifts. "Clan Lord, this is an earth rank spirit herb which our humble house obtained recently. Much like making an offering to Buddha with borrowed flowers, I hope to present it to Taiyuan Lodge instead of keeping it for personal use, hopefully contributing what little I can to its grandeur!"

The Majestic Clan Lord was busy receiving the numerous guests that had arrived. He wasn't too keen on entertaining this uninvited guest that hadn't been part of his camp to begin with. However, his expression softened somewhat after seeing the earth rank spirit herb. He gestured for his subordinates to receive the gift.

The head of this eighth rank aristocratic family stepped forward delightfully after seeing that his gift had been accepted. But, he was stopped at the door, "Where's your invitation?"

The head of that eighth rank aristocratic family was startled, but replied with a smile, "This humble one came to congratulate the clan lord with great sincerity." He even shot a glance at the earth rank spirit herb as he explained, implying that he shouldn't need an invitation card since the gift had already been accepted.

"Please stand to one side if you don't have an invitation. Don't bump into the honored guests!" The guard discourteously pushed the speaker out. The Majestic Clan Lord flashed a cold smile, but did nothing to intervene. Now you want to express your allegiance? Too late!

"Clan Lord, noble Clan Lord, please speak a few words for me!" The head of the eighth rank aristocratic family called out.

The Majestic Clan Lord turned a deaf ear and continued to chat merrily with the other clan lords. At that moment, a guard exclaimed, "What's that under your foot?"

"Eh? It looks like an invitation."

"Bastard, you dare step on our invitation?!"

"Eh, there are so many footprints and even phlegm! You dog-spawn, are you trying to humiliate our Majestic Clan?!"

"This bastard must've been sent by a rival faction! Beat him to an inch of his life!" The guards crowded around him and pulled the man into the corner before giving him a wild beating.

Thus, a completely unexpected catastrophe descended onto the head of the eighth rank aristocratic house lord. He didn't even know what had happened before countless blows had already started to rain down on him. He could only beg for mercy as he was beaten to the point of vomiting bile. These guards were likely even be weaker than him, but he daren't retaliate, lest he lose his life within minutes.

"Tsk tsk, you reap what you sow!"

"Exactly, a fate worthy of a traitor! You're so easily swayed, you're no different from grass growing on the fence. Keep on beating! It's best that we beat such a despicable person to death!"

"The Majestic Clan is simply too narrow-minded! Other potential defectors will definitely think twice if they beat all their defectors like this."

"Tsk, what do you know? Those with true intentions to defect will negotiate in private. Why would they only come at such a time? This fencesitter has been hesitant all along and now it's too late for him to defect!" The nearby audience wasn't sympathetic towards this clan lord. All of them felt that he deserved the beating.

Taiyuan Tower was becoming increasingly lively with the arrival of even more guests. The Majestic Clan was indeed formidable. With the clan lord personally overseeing the reception, all of the invited dignitaries were obligated to attend, and were forced to attend in person. Most of the arrivals were the representatives of various powers. No one was willing to offend the Majestic Clan at such an occasion and leave a bad impression on the clan lord. It seemed that the clan's grandeur within Veluriyam Capital had reached an unprecedented level.

"Sigh, could it be that the position of foremost clan of the Veluriyam Capital is about to change?"

"It appears that the Coiling Dragon Clan no longer has the power

to retaliate. How sad!”

“What are you sighing about? The next wave will always push the one ahead of it. So it’s no surprise that the new will replace the old eventually. It wouldn’t be surprising for the Coiling Dragon Clan to be eliminated if they can’t keep up with the circumstances.”

“What do you mean by ‘can’t keep up with the circumstances’? The Coiling Dragon Clan is the model clan of our Veluriyam Capital. Do you see them bullying people? Do you see them monopolizing markets?”

“That’s true. I feel that only the Coiling Dragon Clan is worthy of being the foremost clan. I won’t be satisfied if the position changes hands.”

“I feel the same, but what can we do? Now that the Majestic Clan’s influence has been established, it’s only a matter of time before it replaces the Coiling Dragon Clan.”

“Sigh, I was hoping for a pleasant surprise with the appearance of Taiyuan Tower. But it proved quite short-lived in the end. How unfortunate.” Ever increasing discussions and debates were taking place as the crowd in the vicinity grew larger. But none of these affected Taiyuan Lodge in the least. With their imposing signboard, the splendid storefront along with the powerful clan at its back, this was definitely one of Veluriyam Capital’s most extravagant events in recent years!

Chapter 806: Free Longevity Pills

“Everyone, the Majestic Clan has been planning to open Taiyuan Lodge for many years. Unfortunately, its opening was met with many twists and turns due to some insignificant troublemakers. However, the road to good things are often strewn with setbacks, and no force was able to prevail against the tide. On this fine day, we open Taiyuan Lodge for the very first time…” The Majestic clan lord made his speech loudly, full of vim and vigor. His voice enveloped every corner of Farmer God Market. “Today, we are honored to welcome several clan lords of Veluriyam Capital to partake in our opening ceremony. Moreover, I have a piece of good news to share with you all -” The Majestic clan lord paused for a moment before continuing, “I believe you’ve all heard about the Longevity Pill, haven’t you? Yes, you guess correctly! Today, Taiyuan Lodge will officially launch the Longevity Pill!”

Cheers filled the entire scene. Of course, most of the cheering were shills hired by Taiyuan Lodge to liven up the atmosphere and improve the mood. These people felt very honored to be able to work on behalf of a great clan. Therefore, they worked hard to put on a good performance.

“Clan Lord, the Longevity Pill is unparalleled in this world! It’s said to be a pill that can snatch life from the heavens themselves, and moreover, its effects are immediate! Is it really true? Can it turn back time for one’s life on the spot?”

“Yeah, why don’t you put on a live demonstration for us, Clan Lord!”

“That’s right, seeing is believing. We all know that the Longevity Pill is amazing, but we haven’t actually seen its effects with our own eyes!” The voices of the paid promoters were particularly shrill. Those who didn’t know the truth would be hard pressed to identify them as props hired by the Majestic Clan themselves.

The Majestic clan lord smiled, “Everyone, please rest assured. I have taken your concerns into consideration already. It is true, as these friends have said. Seeing is truly believing, and rumors remain simply as whispers in the wind. Therefore, the Majestic Clan will give out, for free, two Longevity Pills to perform a live demonstration today. Moreover, to ensure that we’re not just putting on a fake show, we’ll be selecting a candidate from the crowd gathered here today=.”

“What?!”

“Giving out pills for free? The Majestic Clan is certainly deserving of its reputation. They truly are an impressive clan!”

“Tsk tsk, the Majestic Clan is looking more and more like the foremost clan considering their level of generosity. How unfortunate that I’m not old enough to test the Longevity Pill myself!”

“Mm, a great clan should be this magnanimous. These two Longevity Pills are worth tens of millions, and they’re just going to use them for a live demonstration? The Majestic Clan is full of sincerity!” The props worked hard and coordinated well with each other. The fawning talk fell like rain, as each strove to drum up support for the Majestic Clan.

Pill King Lu Feng was still watching the charade from within the crowd, and almost threw up a little when he heard the props trying to one up each other in flattery. How could he possibly miss the fact that these people were all shills the Majestic Clan had secretly hired? How was this not unlike the actions of a shameless certain “sect” in the community?

Generous? Magnanimous? The Majestic Clan? It was a line that could arguably be the best punchline of the year. There was no one in Veluriyam Capital who didn’t know the Majestic Clan as the most unscrupulous clan who’d sell their own mothers for profit.

That being said, there was no doubt that the hard work of the

shills had an effect on the crowd. Many of the neutral parties were drawn by this announcement of a live demonstration. Those who were slightly prejudiced against the Majestic Clan were also slightly adjusting their viewpoints a little. They all thought that the Majestic Clan was finally doing something that was deserving of a top rank clan.

The Majestic clan lord smiled, “My friends, if any who are sage realm cultivators and of elderly age care to show themselves, perhaps the chance to try out the Longevity Pill for free will be yours!”

There were only too many sage realm cultivators in Veluriyam Capital, and solo cultivators the most numerous among them. These people had been waiting at the scene for a very long time ever since they’d heard rumors of Taiyuan Lodge bringing out the Longevity Pill. Although they didn’t have an invitation and thus weren’t qualified to enter Taiyuan Lodge, there were no rules that forbade them from waiting outside. It was all to get in queue and buy a Longevity Pill first. Cultivators with such needs and wants numbered in the several hundreds, even at a conservative estimate.

When these people heard the clan lord’s words, they pushed their way into Taiyuan Lodge with all their might. It was obvious that none of them were willing to give up the chance to obtain a Longevity Pill for free. After all, it was impossible for a miraculous pill like the Longevity Pill to be sold at a cheap price, especially considering how much effort had been put into crafting the crowd’s atmosphere. Solo cultivators were a poor lot to begin with. They were worried that their personal wealth might not be enough to make a purchase, and they were also worried by the fact that they might not get a turn to buy the Longevity Pill. Therefore, when they heard that there was a chance they might get the Longevity Pill for free, they went crazy trying to get to the front and improve their chances! As a result, the scene grew even livelier

than before.

Hundreds of sage realm cultivators with white beards, white hair, or both scrambled and jockeyed or an advantageous position. Jabs and subtle elbows were the norm as the morass of cultivators threatened to escalate out of control. It took a lot of effort and even the interference of Emperor Asura's soldiers before the situation finally stabilized once more. But even then, the solo cultivators were glaring at each other and showing no signs of backing down at all.

The Majestic clan lord seemed to find such a scene very pleasing, his face split by a large smile. "There's no need to fight with each other. There are so many people, and only two free spots. Therefore, let us draw straws for fairness sake. Luck will decide who will get the Longevity Pills, and we shan't blame either the heavens or men when the results are made clear. What do you all think?"

"Alright, let's draw straws!"

"Clan lord, we trust in the Majestic Clan's integrity, so you absolutely mustn't rig the drawing, alright?!"

"Yeah, we poor solo cultivators hate unfairness the most. We hope that you can give us true impartiality, clan lord."

"As long as the process is truly fair, I will do free promotion for Taiyuan Lodge even if I don't get a chance to buy the Longevity Pill!" These solo cultivators all cried out.

The Majestic clan lord smiled, "I swear on the Majestic Clan's name that the process will be absolutely fair, and that there will be no rigging whatsoever. Everyone, please relax."

When the total number of participants were tallied, they discovered that there were actually more than five hundred solo cultivators participating.

"Alright, as you have observed with your own eyes, every one of

these lots were made on the spot. If you have any objections to the process, you may put them forth now." The Majestic clan lord smiled faintly.

It was quite difficult to rig something under so many pairs of eyes, not to mention that anything so hastily set up would be easy enough to see through and therefore tough to fool a crowd's eyes. The solo cultivators said, "Clan lord, why don't you make the draw? It'll be our fortune if you draw our number, and if you don't, we will truly accept the result as our fate."

"Yeah, this is a fair competition. There's nothing we can complain about if we lose."

The Majestic clan lord smiled and nodded. He put his hand into the draw and grabbed a straw, "Number 33? May I know who this is?"

A short cultivator on the scene trembled all over before he cried out in joy. "It's me! Haha, it's me! I'm number 33! Haha, who knew that I, You Laosan would have a lucky break today? This is great! This drawing process really is fair!" The short cultivator obviously couldn't wait to get his hands on the pill. He rolled his way to the front like a melon and passed his numbered token to the Majestic clan lord. "This is my number, clan lord. Please, check it."

The Majestic clan lord didn't accept it. Instead, he allowed the cultivator next to him to take the token and inspect it. "It is him."

The Majestic clan lord smiled, "Very well, congratulations! You're You Laosan? You are our first customer, and you will be gifted one Longevity Pill for free! Bring forth the pill!"

His attendants immediately brought up the Longevity Pill they'd prepared earlier and passed it to You Laosan, "You're a lucky man! Take it and consume it on the spot. Let everyone see the might of the Longevity Pill!"

You Laosan beamed and hastily wiped his hands repeatedly on

his clothes before he finally accepted the pill. “Of course, of course, I’ll eat it now. Is there anything I need to pay attention to before I eat it?”

“Nothing. You may eat it directly. Refine the pill so that it merges with every part of your body. When the merging process is done, the effects will show itself!”

You Laosan was overjoyed to hear this. Unable to wait even a second longer, he threw the Longevity Pill into his mouth and swallowed it post haste. He ignored the countless eyes staring at him and threw all ideas of courtesy to the back of his head, sitting on the floor. He began refining the Longevity Pill on the spot. It didn’t take long before the effects of the pill started to appear on every part of You Laosan’s body. A faint halo started to rise from his body.

“Everyone, look! What’s that on the surface of his skin?”

“Eh? It looks like a halo. I think it’s You Laosan’s qi and blood being expelled outwards!”

“Is this pill really that magical?” The onlookers’ discussion grew louder and louder. They were all very surprised by the halo that was growing increasingly brighter with every passing second.

As the halo grew stronger and stronger, You Laosan’s skin began to undergo a transformation. His face, neck, the back of his hand and all other parts of his skin that were exposed actually began to crack. Soon enough, the old the skin was falling off his body like bark being shed by a tree. Soon, his skin had been entirely replaced. The new skin from below seemed to brim with life. All kinds of impurities continued to be expelled from You Laosan’s seven orifices. Almost all of these transformations were visible to the naked eye.

“He really has become younger. How miraculous!”

The pill actually turns back time! I can’t believe that there really

is such a pill in this world! This is a fortune to all sage realm cultivators!”

“What a miraculous creation! Just who on earth is the genius who created this pill? They’re literally robbing fortune from heavens’ grasp!”

The Majestic Clan is going to be rich this time!”

“This is a benefit to the people and the entire world of martial dao. There is nothing better than the Majestic Clan!”

“They truly deserve the title of foremost clan in Veluriyam Capital!” The flattering words came in waves and droves, but this time it didn’t grate on the ear as they did before. It was obvious that the people’s disgust towards the Majestic Clan had been greatly dispelled by the effects of the Longevity Pill.

“Haha! I can’t believe that I would get a new lease on life today. And moreover, be able to enjoy being young once more. This is too wonderful. Clan Lord, from today onwards, You Laosan’s life belongs to the Majestic Clan!” You Laosan suddenly leaped to his feet. His movements was as light as a sparrow’s, and he looked like an entirely changed person. He exuded an incredibly lively feeling. Moreover, You Laosan was no longer the shortie he used to be. He seemed to have grown a lot taller than before, and his spirits had become noticeably vigorous. Moreover, the vanishing of the wrinkles and lines all over his body made him look a lot younger than he’d first looked. His transformation won many cries of surprises from the scene.

“My lord, isn’t there still a free spot left? Let’s get on with the next draw already! That free spot is absolutely going to be mine!”

“Hmph, that free spot is definitely mine!”

“A fortune teller once told me that great fortune would befall on me when I was young. Therefore, this free Longevity Pill is absolutely mine. No one can take it from me!” The last chance to

grab the Longevity Pill for free had grown even more tantalizing.

Chapter 807: Whetting One's Appetite

It had to be said that the Majestic Clan's marketing was quite successful. You Laosan's on-the-spot sampling was more effective than any advertising. Who wouldn't want to keep one or two pills like that around? Emperor realm cultivators were in the minority, after all. Tens of billions of cultivators lived within the several million miles of land that made up the Veluriyam Capital's ruled territories. How many of those had actually reached emperor realm? For the masses, being able to reach even sage realm was quite a feat already.

The Longevity Pill was suitable for anyone in the sage realm. It could extend their lives by at least five hundred years, and even up to eight hundred if the effects were good. No marketing effort was as striking as the change in You Laosan. The second free Longevity Pill was drawn. The person who drew it this time was an old lone cultivator, on the verge of cultivation dissipation. Yet again, the effects of the Longevity Pill were miraculously displayed. After he took the pill, the old cultivator in the dusk of his years regained his youthfulness in less than a quarter-hour.

The event's visual and psychological impact completely overturned conventional wisdom. It was truly miraculous. There scant existed any language that could describe the spectacle. It dumbfounded everyone present, including the others in the pill industry at the Veluriyam Capital. It was a long while before they recovered from the shock.

Pill King Lu Feng was surprised as well, and cursed internally. What in f*cking hell?! What is this pill, and why is it so amazing? With this pill in their possession, isn't the Majestic Clan going to roll in the dough from now on? He felt dissatisfaction, frustration, even jealousy. His heart was filled with a variety of emotions. Though he'd taken Jiang Chen for his master and the latter had taught him a few techniques from the Deviant Pill Sect, he wasn't

yet privy to Jiang Chen's true identity. Thus, Pill King Lu Feng knew nothing of the connection between Jiang Chen and the Longevity Pill, that it was the work of his new master.

The two free pills had been distributed, yet several hundred cultivators who thirsted for the pill still remained. They could only watch, wide-eyed, as others enjoyed the pill free of charge.

"Clan Lord, there are no more free pills, but surely we can pay for them? I'd like to buy one, so how much are you selling this Longevity Pill for?"

"That's right, me as well! A single Longevity Pill is all I want!"

"Clan Lord, is the store open today? Surely those of us already here have priority in purchasing the pill?"

"Clan Lord..." The rogue cultivators were indescribably anxious. Their bloodshot eyes were filled with desire, and they edged forward in a throng. There was a very real concern that there'd be no pills leftover. The lord of the Majestic Clan was greatly pleased at the proceedings. He'd known far earlier that the Longevity Pill would have astounding effects, but not necessarily to this degree. He pressed a palm downwards in the air. "Everyone, calm down and let me speak."

The people present did as he said. In that instant, the words of the Majestic Clan lord seemed to carry a hitherto unperceived clout. "We have a reasonable amount of the pill in stock. However, first things first: it is not easy to refine this pill. Therefore, our supply is not unlimited."

His listeners panicked at the clan lord's words. Since the pills weren't limited, there'd be a severe shortage. That meant the only chance they had at getting one would be to buy it first.

"Majestic Clan Lord, save a few pills for me!"

"Clan Lord, House Nanguo would like to reserve ten!" The people made their orders without even asking the price.

The Majestic clan lord was secretly delighted and his son Wang Teng overjoyed off to the side. From the looks of it, the Longevity Pill would definitely become a pillar of financial support for the clan. It wouldn't be long until they recovered from the loss they had sustained from losing the store! The entire Majestic Clan was excited at their future prospects. Their joy was contagious. They had discussed several tiers of pricing before today's grand opening. If the atmosphere was especially good, they would name the highest tier. The atmosphere evidently far exceeded their wildest expectations. There was no reason to set the price any lower than that.

His thoughts coming to a pause, the Majestic Clan lord laughed. "Thank you for your love and support! We will have a new batch every half month, with two hundred pills per batch."

There was an uproar even before he fell silent. Only two hundred pills every half-month? Was this an artificial shortage?

"Clan Lord, how can you stock only four hundred pills a month? Isn't that number too low? In the several million miles of land under Veluriyam Capital's jurisdiction, there are tens of billions of cultivators. There is huge demand for the Longevity Pill!"

"That's right, four hundred is a drop in the bucket. That number is way too small, and it would be even so if it were four thousand. I think that at least a hundred thousand a month would be reasonable as a baseline."

"Clan Lord, can you increase that number even a little? Otherwise, us nobodies will never have a chance to buy it!" Wails of anguish filled the air. The people's worries were only exacerbated after hearing the bad news. If there were only four hundred Longevity Pills per month, the highborn of the Veluriyam Capital could line up for several years before they were satisfied with their purchases. Who knows when it would be possible for lone cultivators to buy the pill?

The Majestic Clan lord couldn't do anything about it, either. He wasn't keeping any pills in reserve by selling only four hundred a month. It wasn't hunger marketing at all. They really didn't have the supply to keep up. The Eternal Celestial Capital only gave them five hundred a month. Of these, a hundred was set aside for internal affairs, only sold to those closest to the clan. It was the most they could do to sell four hundred to the public.

If he could, he would have no problem with selling a hundred thousand a month. Where could they find a supply like that, though? It wasn't easy to refine the Longevity Pill. It wasn't suitable for mass production. It was taxing even for a pill king to refine a single batch of them. Moreover, the success rate wasn't particularly good. It was a problem that the Eternal Celestial Capital themselves had as well.

Understandably, the Eternal Celestial Capital had received none of Jiang Chen's optimizational advice for refining the pill, and grasped few of the key tricks of the trade. Because of this, they experienced higher difficulty both in terms of the refining process and the resulting success rate. This prevented the Eternal Celestial Capital from the bulk production of the pill. Despite their recent mobilization of all of the sect's pill kings, the refinement of the Longevity Pill was still limited. It couldn't be like other pills that could be made in volumes of hundreds of thousands, millions, even tens of millions. If the Longevity Pill could be made in those numbers, then the potential wealth would be immeasurable.

The Majestic Clan lord spread out his hands. "Gentlemen, this is the most we can do. I don't seem any improvement to this in the immediate future. The Longevity Pill is not a common product, after all, and you've all seen its effects. It wouldn't be called the Longevity Pill if everyone could buy it."

His words were harsh, but rang true. Some lone cultivators piped up nevertheless. "Clan Lord, can you prioritize selling to us lone cultivators today? After all, the nobles in Veluriyam Capital can

buy it anytime, but we don't have nearly the same kind of connections. There's no chance for us after this."

"Exactly. If the clan lord is willing to give us this opportunity today, we will spread the good name of the Majestic Clan far and wide!" It must be said that the proposition was quite attractive for the clan lord.

Because of their preference for travel and tendency to mix with a large variety of people, lone cultivators carried news the fastest of anyone. If these cultivators benefited from the Majestic Clan's goodwill, and moreover put out a good word for the clan, it would be extremely beneficial for the Majestic Clan's motion to replace the Coiling Dragon Clan. This kind of hype and momentum was something that the Majestic Clan truly needed.

However, his reason won out in the end. Pleasing lone cultivators was all well and good, but the aristocracy in attendance would doubtless be offended in the process. Offending the noblemen of the city risked destabilizing the Majestic Clan's base, and carried with it many associated troubles. Though they might not promote the Majestic Clan even if they bought the pill, they would definitely try to obstruct the Majestic Clan in secret if they lost out to lone cultivators.

"Everyone, please. I fully acknowledge your great appreciation for the pill. But, everyone who's come here today is an honored guest. We cannot favour one particular party. Therefore, we've decided to maintain our decision to sell by lottery. That way, everyone gets a fair chance at the pills. Success or failure comes down to luck alone, and there's no debate about it. I believe that all of you ultimately prefer fairness, no?" The Majestic Clan lord was an adept actor.

"Clan Lord, what price are you selling this Longevity Pill at, really? You've talked for so long, but we still don't know!"

"That's right, an amazing pill like this can't be cheap, right?"

“Personally, I think that a pill as miraculous as this must carry an exorbitant price to go with it. If everyone could buy it, then it wouldn’t be called a miracle pill. Let’s guess… twenty million saint spirit stones, maybe?”

At the Joined Ridges Pavilion’s auction, three of the pills had been sold for the insane sum of a hundred twenty million. Of course, that was at an auction. The price wouldn’t fly for ordinary sales. The Majestic Clan lord smiled. “It is not easy to refine the Longevity Pill. Each pill has been made with painstaking effort by our pill masters. The materials for the pill aren’t cheap, either. The price for one pill… ten million saint spirit stones!”

Ten million million! Some rejoiced at the price, and some were downcast. The ones who were dejected by it were the lone cultivators. Their status was a mark of relative poverty, and for them, ten million was extremely difficult to bear. They’d guessed prior that the pill wouldn’t be cheap, and had been prepared to buy one for several million. That it would be ten million for one pill was beyond their expectations. The price alone was enough to scare off many of that crowd.

However, the aristocrats felt safe and secure. The announced price did not exceed their estimate, and though it was a little outrageous, they could afford it. As the crowd moaned and sighed, a wave of commotion could be heard on the outside. A troop of men came through, cutting a path into the mob. The men were clad in green armor, each adorned with three distinctive plumes. It was Emperor Peafowl’s personal retinue – the Peafowl Guard!

The people present suddenly became quiet. The excited mood chilled instantly. Seeing the Peafowl Guard rush in, the more thoughtful amongst those present could already smell the gunpowder in the air. It was the grand opening for the Majestic Clan’s Taiyuan Lodge, and the Majestic Clan was a faction subordinate to Emperor Shura.

Logically speaking, there was absolutely no reason for Emperor

Peacock’s men to appear here! Their sudden appearance in the middle of the proceedings was hardly a friendly signal.

Chapter 808: The Peafowl Guard

“Everyone, please back off ten meters!” A captain of the Peafowl Guard waved his token around. “The Peafowl Guard is keeping the peace here. Your cooperation is appreciated.”

The Peafowl Guard was an untouchable presence within Veluriyam Capital. They signified the most elite forces under Emperor Peafowl’s command. Any position in the Guard was hotly contested for by countless people. Most remarkably, the Peafowl Guard never disturbed any of the commoners despite their strength. They took a hard line, but were ultimately fair. Thus, they were well-loved by the people.

Seeing that the Peafowl Guard had arrived, everyone was in a cooperative mood and collectively backed off ten meters or so to give sufficient room for the guardsmen to work. Two men, whose robes gave away their identities as pill kings, stood near the captain. In particular, their garments also spoke of their status as ones who answered directly to Emperor Peafowl. Either of them were heavyweights in Veluriyam Capital’s pill scene, and didn’t ordinarily show themselves in public. But now, both had appeared at the same time!

“What’s going on?” The crowd was filled with uncertainty.

Those who couldn’t stand the Majestic Clan’s actions enjoyed a moment of schadenfreude. “The Majestic Clan’s attack on House Wei must have angered Emperor Peafowl. This is their just desserts, hmm?”

It wasn’t just a few people who shared this opinion, especially after the Majestic Clan had set the price of the Longevity Pill at ten million. The slight bit of goodwill that they’d accumulated evaporated instantly. The Majestic Clan was still the bloodsucker they all knew. How could one expect sudden generosity? Selling a single Longevity Pill for ten million was tantamount to robbery.

Three or five million would be an acceptable price for most people. Ten million, on the other hand... everyone knew that it was too high, and not just by a little! There were many present who were only in attendance to watch a spectacle. For them, the arrival of the Peafowl Guard was unexpected, but they had wanted to see something along those line. Now this – this was the main event they had come to see.

The Peafowl Guard were hardly here to take afternoon tea. The captain who led the guardsman was a man of high standing. He walked towards the clan lord with an imposing gait. “You are the lord of the Majestic Clan, yes?”

The clan lord furrowed his brow a little, not particularly satisfied with the man’s way of speaking. But, the speaker was a member of the Peafowl Guard though, and thus representatives of the foremost faction in Veluriyam Capital. Even though the Majestic Clan had a backer themselves, this was no place for impudence. He nodded, tamping down his irritation. “Correct, that’s me.”

“My name is Kong Quan, First Captain of the Peafowl Guard.” The captain’s voice was coolly indifferent.

“What business does Captain Kong have with me?” The Majestic Clan leader had a hunch that the other man was here to pick a fight, and so chose his words carefully.

“Were you selling the Longevity Pill here just now?” the captain asked.

There was nothing for the clan lord to deny. “Yes.”

Captain Kong nodded, and suddenly changed the subject. “This Taiyuan Lodge... is it property of the Majestic Clan?”

The clan lord found it difficult to contain his rising irritation, but inclined his head nevertheless. “The Majestic Clan owns this place, correct. Captain Kong, today is the grand opening for our store. If you are willing to grace us with your presence at the festivities,

then please come on in. But acting like this on our big day is a little inappropriate, don't you think?"

Captain Kong smiled faintly, neither confirming nor denying the accusation. "How many Longevity Pills has Taiyuan Lodge sold today, if I may ask?"

The clan lord made no sign to hide his anger now; this was the last straw. "Is that something I must report to you, captain?!"

The Shura Guard stationed nearby disagreed as well. One of their captains walked towards the two of them with large strides. "Ole Kong, what is the meaning of this? Are you trying to make trouble?"

Captain Kong returned a nonchalant glance. It was easy for him to identify the other man. Besides being a guard-captain, this man was also one of the Moon Monarch's most valued henchmen. However, Captain Kong was content to feign ignorance as he smirked. "And who are you?"

"Ole Kong, don't play the fool with me. If you're here to stir up trouble, then be upfront about it. What's the point of all this playing around?" The Shura guard captain retorted angrily.

Captain Kong examined the other man closely. "Your uniforms... the Shura Guard, hmm? Not impostors, are you? Men directly serving the emperors rarely meddle in worldly affairs. Has Emperor Shura not taught you the slightest tidbit of common sense? Or perhaps you really are all fakes, after all?" The captain waved a hand, completely denying them face. "Take this rabble away. Don't let them obstruct the Peafowl Guard's work."

Rabble? The Shura Guard was Emperor Shura's private army. It was astounding that they would reduced to mere rabble in the mouth of the Peafowl Guard. Indeed, everyone was taken aback in the moment. The Peafowl Guard had clearly made ample preparations. At the command, its best experts charged forward and surrounded all of the Shura Guard in front of them. To begin

with, only about a dozen from the Shura Guard were actually present. The Moon Monarch had left them there to hold down the fort against casual troublemakers. Who would dare to make trouble at the Majestic Clan's opening ceremony while the Shura Guard was present? Thus, the Moon Monarch thought that a dozen men was enough. That over a hundred men of the Peafowl Guard would appear was entirely unexpected. Moreover, they were hand-picked, elites even amongst the other guardsmen. Those from the Peafowl Guard completely outclassed the few Shura Guard that were around.

The Shura Guard captain was enraged. "Kong, don't be an ignorant fool. The Peafowl Guard is strong, but we of the Shura Guard aren't pushovers, either!"

Captain Kong's reply was just as serene as ever. "The Shura Guard? Don't make a fool out of yourselves. How could the great men of the Shura Guard disgrace themselves to the point of acting as domestic security? You riffraff, calling yourself the Shura Guard... you're besmirching Emperor Shura's reputation! Such malice must be punished by death. Even if your claim was true, you would still be scum. Otherwise, how would you not know of the pact between the seven great emperors? Those under the emperors' direct command do not participate in worldly affairs."

Clearly composed beforehand, the speech was filled with righteous indignation. The Shura Guard captain was flabbergasted, and was momentarily at a loss for words. They really were here to serve as domestic security for Taiyuan Lodge. There was nothing inaccurate in Captain Kong's words. However, the Shura Guard weren't people who could be taken lightly, either. Though he was outnumbered, the Shura guard captain did not wish to lose this war of words. "You say that the Shura Guard is participating in worldly affairs, but what about the Peafowl Guard? Isn't this a case of the pot calling the kettle black?" He sneered.

Captain Kong didn't reply, but gave him a piteous look, as if this

guard captain in front of him was truly a fool. With a wave of his hand, Captain Kong directed his subordinates, “Watch them closely. If they do anything suspicious, cut them down where they stand!”

Cut them down where they stand! The order amazed everyone present. Even the Majestic clan lord felt a pang in his heart. Everything in the Peafowl Guard’s actions was directed at his clan! Had the Peafowl Emperor come out of seclusion, and personally sent men to squelch the Majestic Clan? That didn’t seem likely. If so, then the four monarchs under Emperor Peafowl’s command would surely have come as well. There was no reason to send just a single captain. Although he was still as perplexed as before, the Majestic Clan lord felt a little more secure with his analysis. “Captain Kong, this is just an ordinary opening ceremony for Taiyuan Lodge. What have we done to offend you that you would make such a big ruckus?” He inquired in a low voice.

Captain Kong grinned coldly. “Majestic Clan lord, there is no need to play tricks with words! You know what you have done. Personally, I do not know who you are at all, so there’s no need to speak of offense. I come here today only to enforce the law.”

“The law?” The Majestic Clan lord spoke in soft reply. “The Majestic Clan has always followed the rules, and we keep to ourselves. We are model citizens here in Veluriyam Capital. What law has been broken, may I ask?”

“You’re not taking revenge for a private slight, are you?” The Shura Guard captain sneered from behind the Peafowl Guard.

Captain Kong burst into laughter. He gave the Shura Guard captain a hard stare. “Private slight? I’ll take that to be an admission of guilt, hmm, for kidnapping the Wei father and son from earlier? How brave of you. I appreciate you being so candid. Not to worry, if it’s a personal slight, it will be resolved when Emperor Peafowl leaves seclusion.”

The Shura Guard captain's face instantly colored. "Don't misunderstand me!"

If that statement was taken as fact, the Shura Guard would become a public enemy. Kidnapping the Wei father and son because of a private slight was an act that would incur public resentment, even to a group as prominent as the Shura Guard.

"No need to quibble so. The truth is as plain as day in our hearts." Captain Kong did not tolerate the mincing of words, and cast the nature of the event in stone.

The Majestic Clan lord barely choked back his ire. "Captain Kong, I have no interest in private slights and revenge plots! I only ask one thing of you. What regulation has Taiyuan Lodge broken today, on our grand opening?! What is the cause for this mass mobilization? Though I am a humble man, I still know that nothing should be done without reason!"

Captain Kong snickered. "Majestic Clan lord, there's no need to bluff your innocence. We came here because we have sufficient evidence. There are so many people here, and no one is missing their eyes. Are you scared of being wronged? When has the Peafowl Guard falsified criminal proceedings?"

Hearing that their business was purely official, the Majestic Clan lord was somewhat relieved. Even taking everything he knew into account, he still didn't see anything that Taiyuan Lodge could be attacked for. They were pristine enough to withstand any test. The other party could be as unreasonable as they wanted, since the Majestic Clan had the moral high ground. The opening ceremony last time was a subversive tactic against Taiyuan Tower, and thus could be attacked. But there was no problem this time, they were on their best behaviour. The Majestic Clan lord felt immensely certain of his innocence, and with that certainty came the courage to speak. "The Peafowl Guard does not make up crimes, yes? Then, please tell me what law Taiyuan Lodge has violated."

Captain Kong's gaze was chilling, and he affixed an intense, almost piercing stare upon the Majestic Clan lord. "Taiyuan Lodge's Longevity Pill... where does the recipe come from?" His voice was sudden and lance-like.

The abruptness of the question caught the Majestic Clan lord completely off guard. He'd never imagined that Captain Kong would ask about that, and a brief moment passed as he recovered. Having thought things through, the clan lord laughed mockingly. "Captain Kong, there's no need for me to answer that question. Should the Majestic Clan's business arrangements be laid bare for you? If I remember correctly, there's no law like that here in Veluriyam Capital. Furthermore, just like you said, the great emperors cannot interfere in worldly affairs. Don't you think you're being a little hypocritical?"

Chapter 809: Take Them Down

Still concealed, Jiang Chen was amused when he heard the Majestic clan lord's words. The Majestic clan lord still thinks that the Peafowl Guard has nothing on them. In reality, Jiang Chen had been present for quite a while. It was just that he couldn't make an appearance because of what would happen next. Therefore, both young master Ji San and him had disguised themselves as solo cultivators and watched the show unfold from a hidden corner. They were extremely pleased to see the Shura Guard stumped for words at the hands of the Peafowl Guard.

As for the Majestic clan lord, he was still smiling calmly, righteous in the belief that his words had demolished Captain Kong's cause. If Captain Kong was smart, he would be taking his men away right about now. However, the clan lord didn't see the embarrassment he expected on Captain Kong's face. In fact, Captain Kong's face turned chilly, "I see the Majestic Clan isn't going to be convinced unless we show you reality! Are you still going to be remain stubborn and resist to your last breath?"

His words only confused the Majestic clan lord. Do you really understand the rules, Captain Kong? Where on earth do you get your confidence? You say that I won't be convinced unless I see reality? Whatever do you mean?

The Majestic clan lord had thought the Peafowl Guard had learned of the clan's partnership with the Eternal Celestial Capital, but that was nothing to be ashamed or afraid of. It was perfectly normal to cooperate with another entity and act as an agent to sell pills. The only reason the Majestic Clan didn't want to reveal the partnership was to give Veluriyam Capital the false impression that they were the refiners of the Longevity Pill. Although his decision was a little selfish, it was hardly an important matter, much less one that broke the law.

"I'm afraid I don't understand what you're talking about,

Captain Kong. The Majestic Clan has done nothing wrong, so naturally there's nothing to admit. Please be aware that there are countless witnesses here, if you really are planning to intimidate the Majestic Clan using the Peafowl Guard's authority or frame us, Captain Kong." The Majestic clan lord was actually subtly threatening Captain Kong instead.

Captain Kong smiled eerily and nodded all of a sudden, "Very well. I will take that as an admission that you will turn down your final chance to confess your crimes. Don't say that I never gave you a chance, you hear? Men, arrest the Wang father and son and seal off Taiyuan Lodge. You have permission to kill anyone who resists!"

The open kill order that came twice in a row caused the conflict to escalate in a matter of seconds. The Majestic clan lord and his son turned deathly pale. Wang Teng especially cried out in grievance, "What the hell? This is persecution!"

Captain Kong smiled coldly, "That's your forte, no?"

Once he was finished, Captain Kong swept a glance across all other clan lords who were partaking in today's event, "Everyone, are you going to watch from the sidelines? Or are you going to step into this mess yourself?"

These clan lords were all Emperor Shura's subordinates and the Majestic Clan's diehard followers. There was no way they could allow the Majestic Clan to be detained without saying anything. Even if they couldn't resist, they had to say something in support of the Majestic Clan.

"Captain Kong, we are in no position to comment about the Peafowl Guard going about their business, but law enforcement has to have a basis in law, does it not? At least tell us what the Wang father and son did wrong, or how can the masses be convinced otherwise? We clan lords are the Majestic Clan's friends. There is no way we can let you take the Wang father and

son away without good reason!”

“Yeah, there must be reason behind this!”

Captain Kong was also well aware that these people were diehard supporters of the Majestic Clan. He smiled coldly, “Everyone, my advice to you is to stay out of this business, for it won’t be worth it if you accidentally get yourself involved in the ensuing mess. This is my final warning: back off. If you don’t, we shall treat you as accomplices and arrest you as well.”

These clan lords didn’t think that Captain Kong would act this forceful. They exchanged uncertain glances with each other. Although they had the courage to speak up on behalf of the Majestic Clan, that didn’t mean that they actually dared to go up against the Peafowl Guard. The Guard represented Emperor Peafowl. If they dared to offend Emperor Peafowl, the emperor himself might cause a river of blood to flow at their expense. The emperor quite literally could slap them into meat paste if he so wanted. Although these clan lords looked impressive and awe inspiring in Veluriyam Capital, their posturing was only effective to people who were beneath their stature. They were nothing but ants before a great emperor, and especially Emperor Peafowl. It was said that Emperor Peafowl was a supreme expert who could apparently handle three great emperors on his own. Even great emperors didn’t dare pick a fight with Emperor Peafowl, much less the emperor realm cultivators present.

The Majestic clan lord laughed loudly at this, “Very well, very well. The Peafowl Guard truly is mighty and baleful. Everyone, I do not ask you to offend the Peafowl Guard for my sake. I only ask that you report this injustice to Emperor Shura so that he may seek out justice for me.”

The Majestic clan lord also knew that enforcement carried out by the Peafowl Guard could not be stopped. If they tried, the Peafowl Guard would kill them all without mercy. Their words were definitely not empty threats, which was why he wasn’t going to try

at all. He was now even more certain that this was Emperor Peafowl's subordinates purposely trying to cause trouble for the Majestic Clan and take revenge for the capture of the House Wei father and son. However, while the Shura Guard had created 'evidence' before they made their arrest, the Peafowl Guard had merely ordered an arrest without producing any at all.

Not only was the Majestic clan lord not panic-stricken by the situation at hand, he was even feeling a little pleased. Come on then, arrest me. Let's see how you're going to conclude things once you've made the arrest. Of course, you can punish me first before trying me for my crimes, but if you did that, then not even Emperor Peafowl can handle the backlash!

He actually felt safe when he thought up to that point. The clan lord continued to show off his poise in spite of his arrest, "Everyone, I hereby thank you for attending today's event. I am sure that you know in your hearts who is in the right and who is in the wrong today. Some people think that they can hide the truth from the world, but they are wrong! I know that I am innocent, and although they've arrested me today, it is only a matter of time before they'll have to set me free, safe and sound later!"

His words sounded both just and forceful. The Majestic clan lord was very deft at rousing sympathy. His touching plea actually made plenty of neutral parties on the scene feel that the Peafowl Guard had acted a little overbearing this time. Perhaps it was true that the Majestic Clan was a victim of revenge. Setting aside what had happened to the House Wei father and son, it was undeniable that the Peafowl Guard's current actions seemed a little unfair.

Captain Kong paid the murmurs of the crowd no heed however. With the trace of a sneer lingering around the corner of his mouth, he oversaw his subordinates taping Taiyuan Lodge's entrance shut. In fact, some of the Peafowl Guards also took down Taiyuan Lodge's shop sign and smashed it to bits. They gave the Majestic Clan no face at all. The entire process was carried out in crisp,

clean, and overbearing manner.

The Majestic clan lord was bleeding on the inside to see his beautiful shop sign being smashed into bits after it'd been just hung atop his store, but he was also sneering inwardly. You can throw your weight around all you like now, but you absolutely won't get off scot free later!

When everything was done, Captain Kong swept an indifferent glance across the Majestic Clan faction. "Who are the pill kings registered under Taiyuan Lodge?"

The Majestic Clan's pill kings all cowered behind the closest piece of cover they could find. However, Captain Kong had already investigated their identities beforehand. He locked his gazes on these people as they were dragged mercilessly out into the open.

The Shura Guard commander sneered, "You may be feeling happy now, Kong, but I dare say that you won't be able to settle this later! Detaining a clan lord like this! Your gall is greater than the four monarchs under your Emperor Peafowl."

Captain Kong smiled indifferently, "I'm sorry? Did you say you wanted to join them at Sacred Peafowl Mountain?"

The Shura Guard commander simply sneered and said nothing, knowing that the odds were against them right now. It was only after Captain Kong had done everything that he needed to do that he finally cupped his fists to the crowd, "Everyone, I am sure that some of you think that we have acted a little hastily and over aggressive, didn't you? But I'm sure you won't think the same way if you knew just how angry we are right now. I am sure that you'll think even less of the Wang father and son's innocence once I tell you the truth." He stared coldly at the Majestic clan lord, "Clan Lord Wang, why did you not answer me when I asked you where your pill recipe was from? If you won't answer this question, then I'll be the one to tell everyone where you'd gotten the Longevity Pill's pill recipe!"

“What on earth are you trying to say?” the Majestic clan lord sneered.

Captain Kong declared loudly, “The Longevity Pill’s pill recipe originally belonged to the Sacred Peafowl Mountain. However, not only did this Majestic Clan somehow manage to steal our pill recipe, he actually had the gall to build Taiyuan Lodge and sell the Longevity Pill openly! Now you tell me if the Majestic Clan should be punished for their crimes!”

What?! His words was a tidal wave that caught everyone by surprise.

The Longevity Pill’s pill recipe was originally Sacred Peafowl Mountain’s?!

The Majestic Clan had stolen the recipe from Sacred Peafowl Mountain?

Oh… no wonder the Peafowl Guard would muster so many men and make such a big fuss! The Majestic Clan had been a little too bold to pull this kind of stunt, hadn’t they? How dare they steal something that belonged to Sacred Peafowl Mountain? The onlookers who hated the Majestic Clan from the start immediately started to hoot.

“I see, no wonder. Well done, Peafowl Guard! You’re utterly shameless, Majestic Clan!”

“Yeah, well done! I can’t believe that a great clan would commit thievery. This is an insult to our civilization!”

“I knew it, the Peafowl Guard has always been fair, so why would they suddenly oppress the Majestic Clan for no reason? Where’s there’s smoke, there’s obviously fire!” More and more were standing up and accusing the Majestic Clan. It was obvious that the Majestic Clan’s reputation had always been bad, and they had annoyed people even more with their exorbitant pricing earlier. In comparison, the Peafowl Guard maintained their image as a

mysterious but fair unit. They represented the peak of Veluriyam Capital, and they had always been loved by all. Naturally, they trusted the Peafowl Guard over the Majestic Clan.

Don't tell me that the Peafowl Guard would accuse the Majestic Clan wrongly! They wouldn't make such a claim without sure evidence!

A boom resounded in the Majestic clan lord's mind. He was obviously blown a little off his feet by Captain Kong's words. However, he quickly regained his cool and laughed loudly. "What a joke, what a joke! Sacred Peafowl Mountain's pill recipe, you say? What a bold claim to make, Captain Kong! Let's not forget just how heavily guarded Sacred Peafowl Mountain is. Is it really possible for the likes of me to slip into such a place? Moreover, since when did Sacred Peafowl Mountain possess the Longevity Pill? If you did, why haven't you promoted it despite possessing such a revolutionary pill?"

One had to admit that the Majestic clan lord was very good at capturing the important points. He immediately won some support with his words. For a time, everyone's gazes were directed to Captain Kong once more. It was obvious that they were waiting to listen if Captain Kong had any further evidence to support his claim.

Chapter 810: The Domineering Peafowl Guard

Captain Kong was calm and collected. He'd long since expected the Majestic Clan to resort to quibbling.

"Everyone, we of the Peafowl Guard only ever take action when we have concrete evidence and have never acted blindly. Our capture of the Wang father and son is indicative of the fact that we have concrete evidence against them." Captain Kong continued indifferently, "We have studied this pill for several years now, and the exact recipe is still undergoing trial and revisions. Even the pill kings of our Sacred Peafowl Mountain haven't been able to ascertain whether these pills have any side-effects or not. That was why we hadn't brought them out for the benefit of the public. We'd never expected these thugs to steal our formula and refine the Longevity Pill with unproven methods just to rake in money! These are the actions of a madman!"

What?!

The Longevity Pill hasn't been tested? It's even unknown whether there are side effects? Everyone was starting to be convinced by Captain Kong's words. How could he have made it all up? The Majestic clan lord laughed coldly, "Captain Kong, please stop this malicious slander. It's useless to frame me with such a method."

Captain Kong simply ignored him and continued, "Furthermore, despite its difficult refining process, we can tell everyone with absolute certainty that the market price, when commercially available, will be at most two million saint spirit stones. It most definitely won't be priced at ten million saint spirit stones!"

At this news, the whole audience began to hiss and boo.

"Two million?! Good heavens, this Majestic Clan was actually

selling it for ten million. This is daylight robbery!”

“They shamelessly stole the pill recipe and not only do they not reduce the price, but they raised it by five times! This is shamelessness at its finest!”

“And they were using an untested pill recipe! Are they trying to play around with everyone’s lives?!”

“Such a lack of conscience! This kind of family isn’t worthy of leading a clan. Behead them as soon as possible! Kill! Execute their whole house!” These people had long since been dissatisfied with the Majestic Clan. How could they not take this chance to chime in? There were also many from the Coiling Dragon Clan and House Wei mixed within the crowd. These people naturally stood out to add oil to the flames.

The Majestic clan lord smirked coldly. How could he not know what was going on when things had reached such a stage? The Peafowl Guard was here to frame him. But after some thought, the Majestic clan lord concluded that it was impossible for these accusations to hold water. Such blatant boasting! Does your Sacred Peafowl Mountain even have this pill recipe? That was the minimum required if Peafowl Guard wanted to suppress him. How otherwise would they stop the masses from criticizing them? “Captain Kong, you’ve made up so many things just to set us up. How do you justify all of this?” The Majestic Clan asked with a sneer.

“Indeed. You claim to own this pill recipe but where is the proof?”

“Your babbling is worthless without any proof. The Sacred Peafowl Mountain can’t just expect something to be theirs just because they say so!” That captain of the Shura Guard began to jeer.

Captain Kong laughed, “I’d already expected such a last-ditch struggle. I’ll have you fully convinced and at the same time let

everyone here know that our Peafowl Guard always upholds justice. We never wrong the innocent!”

With that, the captain pointed at the two pill kings by his side, “These two are the senior pill kings of our Sacred Peafowl Mountain. They spent meticulous effort to derive the Longevity Pill recipe from ancient records and serve as the most substantial evidence of our ownership.”

The Majestic clan lord laughed loudly, “You bring two random pill kings here and call it proof?!”

One of the two pill kings spoke with a grim voice, “Then what of the Majestic Clan? You lot fail to repent even at your last hour. The Longevity Pill Recipe is our lives’ work. Why can’t we testify?”

The Majestic clan lord laughed coldly, “Then let’s see you bring out a Longevity Pill, since you claim to be the owners of the pill recipe.”

The pill king nodded calmly, “I knew you would make such a demand. Everyone, please observe.”

With that, the pill king extended his hand to reveal an upper rank Longevity Pill. “Everyone, this is an upper rank Longevity Pill. The comparative difference is obvious—the Majestic Clan’s pills were refined with a stolen recipe—their products are absolutely incomparable to ours. This is proof!”

The appearance of a Longevity Pill shocked the entire audience. Many people bold enough stepped forth to examine the pill couldn’t help and sigh with admiration.

“This is indeed a Longevity Pill similar to that of the Majestic Clan, but the quality is much higher.”

This pill was the one Jiang Chen had given young master Ji San, which served as irrefutable evidence under present circumstances. The Majestic Clan was momentarily dumbfounded. They couldn’t accept the scene playing out before them. How had the Peafowl

Guard gotten their hands on a higher quality Longevity Pill? Could it be that the Eternal Celestial Capital had given the recipe to the Sacred Peafowl Mountain in secret? That was highly unlikely. The Eternal Celestial Capital's channels and influence could never reach the Sacred Peafowl Mountain. But what was with this pill?

The Majestic clan lord was at a loss about what to do. He vaguely sensed something was off about this incident, but couldn't put his finger on it even after racking his brains. A feeling of extreme foreboding welled up in his heart. At first, he had thought that the Peafowl Guard was here to intentionally cause trouble for them without any justifiable reason, just a simple setback to account for what the Shura Guard had done to the House Wei father and son. But things didn't seem that simple now! It appeared that the Peafowl Guard had come well prepared. The Majestic clan lord's rock-steady mindset wavered ever so slightly as a sliver of dread invaded his heart.

However, he was very clear that he would suffer dearly if he failed to offer an explanation and allowed himself to be captured. He hurriedly retorted, "It's no surprise that you have a single Longevity Pill. Perhaps you bought it from us via certain channels."

Captain Kong laughed loudly, "Are you kidding? It's not as if your Majestic Clan is doing business for the first time. There's no way you'd sell a Longevity Pill to me in secret before your shop opens. Furthermore, can your Majestic Clan even refine such a high rank Longevity Pill? Bring out a pill of the same rank for us to see!"

These words left the Majestic clan lord speechless.

"Everyone, I'm sure you've all witnessed the superior quality of our Longevity Pill and are clear regarding its implication. Everyone should already have a clear idea regarding whose Longevity Pill is the original," Captain Kong spoke loudly.

The audience was immediately swayed by the captain's words. After all, the Peafowl Guard's public reputation was at stake. Moreover, their Longevity Pill was definitely of a higher quality. If the pill really was the Majestic Clan's creation, why couldn't they bring out one of the same quality? This went against all logic. And as such, the shouts and curses rose up continuously.

"Majestic Clan, how long are you going to keep deceiving the public?!"

"Still not admitting to the theft? Are you still trying to worm your way out? Liars!"

"Everyone has seen the truth with their own eyes. The Wang Family stole the pill recipe and refined unproven pills to sell at exorbitant prices. I was wondering why they didn't test the pill on the aristocratic disciples but chose two lone cultivators instead. So it was because they feared side-effects!"

"Ah, it does feel odd now that you mention it. This Majestic Clan is too shameless! Are lone cultivators not humans?!"

"Down with the Majestic Clan! Down with immoral merchants!"

"Indeed! Overthrow them! These beasts who consider lone cultivators as test subjects are definitely bad people!" The fury of the lone cultivators was ignited as they began to curse and jeer. They were seconds away from rushing up to tear the Wang father and son to pieces.

Captain Kong raised his hand, "Everyone, I can understand your anger. But the Majestic Clan's theft of our Sacred Peafowl Mountain's recipe has infuriated our higher-ups. Rest assured that they will be punished to the fullest extent of the law!"

The Majestic clan lord was now frantic. Judging by the other party's tone of voice, they'd likely already decided upon the verdict. There'd be no return for him if he allowed himself to be taken away. He struggled and shouted loudly, "Everyone, don't fall

for their tricks! The pill was indeed not refined by our Majestic Clan, but it certainly wasn't stolen from their Sacred Peafowl Mountain. Our Longevity Pills were provided by the Eternal Celestial Capital!" The anxious Majestic clan lord could no longer care about other considerations and revealed the truth in his panic.

Captain Kong laughed after hearing this, "Majestic clan lord, your shamelessness knows no bounds! You stole our recipe and cooperated with external forces but refuse to admit to the theft. This is living off the house yet secretly helping outsiders. This is a serious crime!"

The captain had long since rehearsed his words in response to the possible scenarios. The Majestic Clan's resistance and arguments were all well within his expectations. He was prepared to respond accordingly, no matter how the Majestic Clan tried to deny their crime. These words merely added fuel to the flames.

Previously, the Majestic Clan had only been accused of theft and dishonest business, but now they'd added external collusion to the list. This was much more serious, particularly of the final crime. External collusion was punishable by death. The Majestic clan lord roared furiously, "Captain Kong, this is blatant slander! Our Majestic Clan has always been devoted and loyal. How could we collude with external forces?"

"Then was it me who mentioned 'Eternal Celestial Capital'?" Captain Kong chuckled sarcastically.

"It's a simple business relationship. How does that amount to collusion?" The Majestic clan lord argued back resolutely. But to the others, it appeared as if he was trying to weasel his way out.

Captain Kong laughed disdainfully, "Stealing pill recipes and handing it to external forces—which part of that is simple business? This is leaking internal secrets! Such crime deserves exterminating nine generations of the family!"

The rapid escalation caused the Majestic clan lord's back to be drenched in sweat. He knew he'd fallen into a disadvantageous position. Even jumping into the river wouldn't be able to wash away these crimes. Wang Teng cried loudly, "Slander! Fabrications! The Peafowl Guard is concocting false accusations to frame us. Everyone, you're all forthright people. Can't you see what they're trying to do?"

Chapter 811: Taiyuan Lodge Is Done For Again

Perhaps it would've been better if he hadn't said anything. The crowd erupted in hisses when Wang Tong turned to them.

"Motherf*cker, piss off with your trumped-up charges! Is there anyone here who's unaware of your clan's code of conduct? It's one thing to be a despotic oppressor and bully the weak, but you're even a thief who colluded with foreign scum!"

"And the most despicable is selling a Longevity Pill worth two million for ten million. Even a leech doesn't suck out the people's lifeblood like that!"

"Please, honored lords of the Peafowl Guard, you mustn't let this slimy and evil father and son duo get away with it!" The voices denouncing the Majestic Clan all of a sudden became an endless, crashing tide.

Jiang Chen's eyes were icy when he witnessed everything from the shadows. His chest was filled with elation. Weren't you very full of it? Weren't you quite adept at exploiting the situation to your own advantage? Weren't you counting on the Longevity Pill to make you a fortune? Then I'll use the Longevity Pill to bury the two of you and your Majestic Clan!

He had been the one to plan the entire scheme. The pieces had all fallen in line when he'd made the decision to gift away the Longevity Pill's recipe. To begin with, Sacred Peafowl Mountain had merely lacked an opening. They'd also thought this plan feasible after he'd shared it with them. They'd immediately inspected the recipe, and Jiang Chen had spent the entire night teaching the two pill kings how to refine the pill. The two of them were ninth-level pill kings, both outstanding in their study of the dao of pills. Together with Jiang Chen's guidance, it'd taken them very little time to learn how to produce the pill. That was how the

Longevity Pill had become the Sacred Peafowl Mountain's pill recipe.

With this underlying basis, the Sacred Peafowl Mountain had more than enough justification to spring into action. This was the reason why they'd arranged such a play to back the Majestic Clan into a corner. The origin of the Longevity Pill recipe had always been a mystery to begin with. The critical part was that the Majestic Clan couldn't explain themselves fully either. They had first resorted to sophistry, then mentioned the Celestial Eternal Capital's name. Such a change of tune naturally wouldn't convince anyone.

On the contrary, the Peafowl Guard had always asserted that the Longevity Pill was the property of Sacred Peafowl Mountain. They'd never deviated from this line from start to finish. Then they'd displayed an upper-rank Longevity Pill and instantly crushed the Majestic Clan's Longevity Pill. This pill might look a minor thing in the larger scheme, but it was an extremely important piece of evidence. It instantly convinced those previously skeptical to trust Sacred Peafowl Mountain. Furthermore, the Majestic Clan's story was full of holes. Captain Kong hadn't let any of them pass by freely and constantly battered at them.

All of a sudden, the Majestic Clan side was riddled with loopholes while Captain Kong and his men pressed every opening. On top of all that, the Majestic Clan had set the price of the Longevity Pill at ten million saint spirit stones. This was a price that infuriated the public. They all heard this Longevity Pill was only worth two million! Let alone, the Majestic Clan had even stolen this pill recipe. In their rush to rake in more wealth, they'd put it up for sale before even verifying whether there were any side effects! In comparison, the Sacred Peafowl Mountain had been very conservative while studying the recipe. They hadn't been in a hurry to sell before they collected sufficient data. This contrast

made the Sacred Peafowl Mountain look serious and responsible, worried about everyone's safety, while the Majestic Clan was blinded by wealth and didn't have any scruples using the wandering cultivators as their guinea pigs. It was obvious at a glance which side was more deserving of trust.

Seeing the Majestic clan lord's speechless dismay, Captain Kong shouted, "Since you already admit your guilt, then obediently come back with us to the Sacred Peafowl Mountain!"

The clan lord shuddered from head to toe. "I'm not going with you! You're framing me! The Peafowl Guard is showing quite some daring today to frame a great clan! I won't accept this! I want to see His Majesty Great Emperor Shura!"

"Dream on!" Captain Kong sneered. "Stealing Sacred Peafowl Mountain's pill recipe is a crime that even Great Emperor Shura can't save you from!" His face turned stern. "Attention, Peafowl Guards, take away the Wang father and son as well as the Taiyuan Lodge's pill kings. Kill anyone who resists!"

"Let's go!"

A myriad of expressions flashed in quick succession on the Majestic clan lord's face. He was clearly debating the best course of action in his mind. He knew full well he still had a lifeline left to him if he could break through from this encirclement. Perhaps he could escape disaster if he fled to Great Emperor Shura's side. However, his son would certainly be killed on the spot if he were to flee. They would also take the opportunity to execute all the pill kings. He would have no one left by then. Whatever aspirations, whatever ambitions he had, they'd scatter like smoke. The most important thing was that he might have some confidence in making good his escape, but it wasn't an absolute guarantee! Moreover, if he were to flee with his life all by himself, then the question of how much use he would be and how much value he would have for Great Emperor Shura would also arise.

After much deliberations, the clan lord clenched his teeth and announced to the great clans allied with him, “Clan Lords, you know I am innocent. Please go to His Majesty the Great Emperor and plead for me. Tell His Majesty he must save us.”

To clash head-on with the Peafowl Guard right now was definitely not a clever choice. His only choice was to beg Great Emperor Shura. Only the great emperor could save him and save his son.

The Peafowl Guard wasn’t planning on dilly-dallying. “We’re counting to three. If you’re still not leaving with us then, then there won’t be any need to leave.”

His eyes bloodshot, his chest filled with a feeling of humiliation, the clan lord still stood up nevertheless. “I’m coming with you! Don’t feel so pleased with yourself though. Great Emperor Shura will never let you get away with your sinister plot.”

“You still want to quibble even when death is knocking at your door? The evidence is foolproof. The more you argue, the more wretched your fate will be!”

“You even had the gall to steal something from Sacred Peafowl Mountain, you even dared collude with foreign powers and leak Sacred Peafowl Mountain’s secret recipe. You really deserve death!”

These successive accusations were like thunderbolts striking the clan lord. He couldn’t hold back the urge to twitch. The Peafowl Guard took away the father and son from the Majestic Clan, as well as the pill kings. They parted the crowd apart and left with great fanfare. Only the Shura guards and the clan lords were left behind, flabbergasted.

“Why are you still staring like fools? Hurry up and notify the Moon Monarch!”

“We must notify His Majesty Shura at once. Big trouble’s

brewing this time."

"Alas, who would have thought a Longevity Pill recipe would cause so many problems."

"I also thought it weird. I kept asking the clan lord where the Longevity Pill came from, but he always skirted around the subject. Could he really have gotten it from the Sacred Peafowl Mountain?" This time, even the Majestic Clan's allies were suspicious of the clan lord. After all, they'd also previously inquired about the pill's origins, but the clan lord had always acted secretive and had never been willing to reveal the truth.

"What the bloody use is there talking about this now?" The Shura Guard captain was furious. "Hurry to the Shura Palace and report to His Majesty and the Moon Monarch!"

"Right, the Moon Monarch is Lord Wang's sworn brother. He definitely won't sit by idly and watch this happen." These great clans had looked grand and imposing when they'd arrived, but now they looked like stray dogs, one and all. They were all cutting sorry figures. Their fighting spirit was obviously rock bottom after the Peafowl Guard's maneuver. It hadn't been their business to begin with. If the Majestic Clan had really stolen Sacred Peafowl Mountain's pill recipe, they would also follow suit and be covered in shame. The Murong clan lord's frown was particularly intense. He was the most nervous one, and also the most afraid. If the Majestic Clan's pill recipe had truly been stolen from Sacred Peafowl Mountain, and if they'd even smuggled it to the Eternal Celestial Capital, then the Majestic Clan was done for. This might compromise anyone associated with the Majestic Clan. With the Murong Clan so close to the Majestic Clan, they'd definitely be implicated. After all, the Murong clan lord and the Majestic clan lord were brothers-in-law!

Sacred Peafowl Mountain's paper seal was stuck to the front of the Taiyuan Lodge. It was two simple strips of paper, yet more frightening than any seal. No one even had the guts to approach

within three meters of that area. The previously resplendent Majestic Clan had become so miserable and desolate in the blink of an eye. Looking at the Taiyuan Lodge's shattered signboard lying on the ground, everyone lamented.

"Retribution really comes quicker than one imagines!"

"Isn't that so? They took revenge against House Wei's father and son, but forgot their own butt wasn't clean. Serves them right!"

"House Wei is so honest, and their pill king has genuine ability. The Majestic Clan lashed out at them simply out of jealousy."

"That's right. The Majestic Clan has always been like this. They can't tolerate others. It's best to eradicate such a faction as soon as possible, or else they might become a disaster for the Veluriyam Capital in the future."

"Indeed. The Peafowl Guard's actions are really gratifying this time!"

"Isn't that so? The Peafowl Guard has always been fair and impartial. Otherwise, do you think they could have stayed the number one faction in the Capital for so long?"

"Right. Today showed us the Peafowl Guard's indeed more reliable. In comparison, humph..." The crowd hadn't yet dispersed from the street. Everyone obviously felt today's trip had not been in vain. They'd originally planned to visit the Taiyan Lodge on the first day of their reopening and see whether something interesting would happen. Who would have thought they'd really get to see such a great drama? They had to admit it felt very satisfying. In particular, many people felt gratified when they saw the crestfallen Majestic father and son taken away by the Peafowl Guard.

Inside the crowd, Pill King Lu Feng was also delighted. Seeing the Majestic Clan in deep trouble of course made him ecstatic. He walked to the shattered signboard and viciously spat on it. He

swore, “A great clan that doesn’t practice virtue and doesn’t accumulate positive karma, serves you right!”

Pill King Lu Feng’s steps became light and spry as though he’d been cleansed by the spring breeze. He walked away. The drama had about come to an end. On the way back, he suddenly ran into two people barring his path. “Pill King Lu Feng, throwing away the Majestic Clan’s invitation and secretly watching the show unfold, wasn’t it very interesting? Come, take a walk with us!”

Pill King Lu Feng suddenly grew furious. “What the hell are you, get lost!” He threw a punch, but the one in front laughed mischievously. “Hehe, you damn old man, did you really attack me? I wouldn’t have asked you for a favor last time if I’d known.”

Pill King Lu Feng froze as soon as he heard this voice. “You… Young master San?”

The other person came forward and patted his shoulder. “Ole Lu, I’m quite pleased with your attitude this time, you passed my test. I am thinking of formally accepting you as my disciple.” This voice naturally was Jiang Chen.

“Honored master?” Pill King Lu Feng was overjoyed when he heard this voice.

Jiang Chen was all smiles. “Let’s go, we’ll chat after we go back.”

Jiang Chen and young master Ji San had arrived at the scene some time ago. Only, their sole mission today was to watch the drama unfold. However, while watching, they’d also been observing the others at the same time. They’d inadvertently noticed Pill King Lu Feng throw away the invitation card, spit and step on it. Jiang Chen found it funny, and he’d also understood that Pill King’s intent to seek refuge with him was indeed sincere and genuine. Otherwise, since he didn’t know Jiang Chen was present on the scene, he naturally couldn’t have deliberately put on a front for him to see.

Chapter 812: Emperor Shura

“What did you say!? The Wang father and son were captured by the Peafowl Guard?!” At Shura hall, the Moon Monarch abruptly shot to his feet when he heard his subordinate captain’s report. His face looked as dark as black bean paste.

“Yes… Captain Kong had mobilized more than a hundred Peafowl Guards, and they were all among the best of the best. They had come prepared.”

“What was their justification? They can’t have detained them without a reason, can they?” The Moon Monarch obviously couldn’t accept this outcome.

“They said that the Wang father and son stole the Longevity Pill pill recipe from Sacred Peafowl Mountain! The evidence they provided was actually quite convincing,” This captain actually started defending the Peafowl Guard in order to exonerate himself. With this proof, he could at least prove that the Shura Guard present at the scene weren’t completely powerless!

“The Longevity Pill recipe? How does it possibly belong to Sacred Peafowl Mountain?” The more the Moon Monarch heard, the more confused he became. Did they seriously believe the other party’s claims? Just like that?

“My lord, they produced a Longevity Pill of their own which was of better quality than any the Majestic Clan’s pills. Almost no one present could debunk this piece of evidence, and that included the Majestic clan lord himself. In the end, the Majestic clan lord even brought up the Eternal Celestial Capital in an attempt to defend himself, but the Peafowl Guard accused him of colluding with foreign forces and leaking the Sacred Peafowl Mountain’s top secret pill recipe instead. Therefore, the criminal charge on him only worsened.”

The expression on the Moon Monarch’s face grew darker and

darker. He cursed under his breath, “Not good enough to accomplish anything, yet good enough to ruin everything!”

No one knew if he was cursing his subordinate or the Majestic clan lord. Still, this matter was of the utmost urgency. The Moon Monarch understood that a criminal charge like this was a serious matter.

If the fake criminal charge they fabricated could enable them to arrest the Wei father and son in the first place... then the charges against the Majestic Clan were enough to doom the entire clan to death tens or hundreds of times over. This was especially true for the last charge where they were accused of colluding with foreign forces and leaking a top secret pill recipe. There was no doubt that the Majestic Clan would be exterminated down nine generations if the other party really wanted to go all the way with the sentencing. In fact, it might even drag other forces into the mess. That was why the Moon Monarch could no longer stay silent. He understood that this matter had gone out of his control, and that it was time to ask for instructions from the great emperor.

Emperor Shura was also a little surprised when he heard the Moon Monarch’s report. “How can such a thing have come to be? Tell me the details” Although Emperor Shura was a little surprised, he showed no signs of panic whatsoever. A great emperor’s bearing alone was something none of his subordinates could compete with.

The Moon Monarch responded, “Those great clan lords were all present that day. Should I call them in so that you may question them closely?”

The clan lords entered, each badly masking fear on their faces. They weren’t normally this cowed when they met Emperor Shura, but that was not the case today. They had allowed the Peafowl Guard to detain the Wang father and son right before their eyes. But despite their worries, Emperor Shura obviously wasn’t looking to place blame, merely nodding indifferently, “There’s no need to

hold back. You were wise not to butt heads against the Peafowl Guard in those circumstances, for our losses would have only been bigger. They would have had even more excuses to cause trouble for us."

Emperor Shura truly deserved to be called the ruler of a region. His words immediately dispelled their worries. "Now speak. The more detailed, the better."

And so the clan lords gave Emperor Shura a complete report of the situation that had happened. Since he was hearing this from his subordinates' point of view, Emperor Shura frowned and asked them a question, "You were there. Do you think that the Majestic Clan had stolen from Sacred Peafowl Mountain, or do you think that they were framed?"

"I think they were framed!"

"I think they were framed too." None of them were saying what they really thought of the situation.

"Speak truthfully," Emperor Shura's expression darkened.

The clan lords exchanged anxious glances with each other. The truth was, they thought that the Majestic clan lord and his son looked extremely suspicious. After all, the evidence produced by the Peafowl Guard had been extremely solid. Moreover, the Majestic clan lord and his son had sidestepped the question every time these clan lords had pressed them about the origin of the Longevity Pills. But how would they dare tell the truth to Emperor Shura?

"Your Majesty, the situation at the time was extremely disadvantageous for the Majestic Clan. In the end, not even the Majestic clan lord himself could think of something to defend himself. He simply told us to tell you that he was wronged."

"Indeed. Regardless of whether the Majestic clan lord is wronged, we can't just stand by and do nothing to help him, can we? Your

Majesty?”

Emperor Shura looked indifferent, “It would seem that all of you do think that the Majestic clan lord and his son stole the pill recipe from Sacred Peafowl Mountain.”

The clan lords were all stumped for words.

“Absurd!” Emperor Shura humphed coldly, “I know the Majestic clan lord. He is not such a careless person. One, if he really did steal the pill recipe from Sacred Peafowl Mountain, the first thing he would do is to report the theft to me. Two, there is no way he would openly sell the Longevity Pills. After all, is it not the same as telling Sacred Peafowl Mountain that he had stolen their pill recipe? Therefore, there is no doubt that the Majestic clan lord is being framed for a fabricated crime!”

The Moon Monarch stood up abruptly, “If this is a fabricated crime, please allow me to lead a group of men and demand the Majestic Clan’s release from Sacred Peafowl Mountain, Your Majesty.”

“Sit!” Emperor Shura’s tone wasn’t strong, but there was a dignity within it that brooked no disobedience. Even an unyielding person like the Moon Monarch had sat back down involuntarily upon hearing his words. He actually felt no annoyance or disobedience at all. “You won’t get them back even if you do go. In fact, you might even be captured by them,” Emperor Shura sounded as collected as ever.

“What should we do then?” The Majestic clan lord was the Moon Monarch’s sworn brother. He was the most anxious person out of all present.

“We must go back to the root of the issue in order to settle this matter. Although the Majestic Clan hadn’t stolen the Longevity Pill recipe, all of this started because the Majestic Clan suppressed House Wei.” While Emperor Shura might not interfere with worldly affairs, his insight was ever clear and precise. His vassals

were silent, but they all had to admit that Emperor Shura's words were true. It was patently obvious that the Peafowl Guard was taking revenge against the Majestic Clan.

The Moon Monarch raised his eyebrows, "Your Majesty, should I do the same thing as before and return the 'favor' to the Coiling Dragon Clan? We're not afraid to trade blows with each other."

"Do you really think that a golden opportunity like that will arise again?" Emperor Shura asked indifferently.

The Peafowl Guard had planned out their scheme perfectly, with more than sufficient evidence to back it up. There was nothing they could do to prevent the capture of the Majestic clan lord and his son. It would only be foolish to return the favor to the Coiling Dragon Clan without being able to produce evidence any more convincing than what they had right now. They would definitely become a public enemy.

The Moon Monarch thought for a moment before letting out a depressed sigh, "Then what do we do?"

"How fares the Wei father and son?" Emperor Shura suddenly asked.

"They were interrogated for a bit, but I didn't go too far with the torture." The Moon Monarch replied.

"Didn't I tell you not to torture them?" Emperor Shura frowned.

Moon Monarch's eyes looked a little evasive, "That father and son were just too repulsive. I couldn't stand them, so I punished them a little secretly. It didn't leave signs that ordinary people would notice, however."

"Absurd! The main reason we captured them is to coerce them into giving in to our interests. It was already bad that you privately tortured them, and it has only worsened with the capture of the Wang father and son!"

The Moon Monarch said angrily, "They will torture the Majestic

clan lord and his son too, won't they?"

"The evidence they have will survive an inspection, but the evidence you created to frame the Wei father and son is not nearly as solid before a public investigation. Therein lies the difference." Emperor Shura sighed softly, "Never mind, it is already too late for recrimination. We can only contact the other great emperors and pay Emperor Peafowl a visit."

"But I thought that Emperor Peafowl has gone into closed door cultivation."

"Then we shall wait until he comes back out," Emperor Shura said indifferently.

"Rumor has it that he'll be coming out in half a month."

Emperor Shura waved his hands, "Treat the Wei father and son well during this half month, and don't cause any more trouble during this period. I shall resolve this personally when Emperor Peafowl surfaces."

At this point, it was obvious that Emperor Shura's side was at a disadvantage. Emperor Shura was a formidable character, and he was very good at taking stock of a given situation. He knew when to withdraw when the tides were unfavorable. This incident would only grow bigger if they retaliated, and it obviously wouldn't go well for them judging from how the winds were blowing right now. After all, the source of this incident was the Majestic Clan.

Although Emperor Shura had laid down a basic response of passivity, Sacred Peafowl Mountain wasn't quite cooperative. Many pill stores in Farmer God Market found themselves in trouble after the Majestic clan lord and his son were captured. Every day, a group of mysterious pill masters would visit a pill store and destroy them. The pills provided by these pill stores would be analyzed and criticized mercilessly by this group of mysterious pill masters. All kinds of dark secrets would be spilled in the process.

The pill kings of the attacked pill stores came out to defend their reputation, but they were all beaten by a single mysterious pill master. The pill master would debate so eloquently that they could do nothing but accept their defeat in dejection. These visits quickly grew to become a daily phenomenon. Moreover, the pill stores that were attacked all belonged under Emperor Shura's subordinates. Not only were the Majestic Clan's shops attacked, other great clans' pill stores were dragged in as well. Within a short period of time, every great clan beneath Emperor Shura were scared of being the next one visited. It was obvious that this mysterious pill master and his destructive visits had become everyone's nightmare as of late. It didn't matter how powerful the pill kings they had sent were. The end result was always the same: They were completely and utterly exposed by that mysterious pill master!

These pill stores suffered horrendous blows to their reputation and lost a large majority of their business very quickly. Moreover, these defeated pill kings were so discouraged that they almost all quit their jobs. It was obvious that their defeat was so bad that they no longer had the face to keep working in Veluriyam Capital. As such, a vicious cycle began to grow. The pill stores of the great clans beneath Emperor Shura lost seventy to eighty percent of their business because of this mysterious pill master. They had practically become the joke of Farmer God Market.

Thankfully, this mysterious pill master chose his targets well and never once attacked innocents. All of the pill stores he chose belonged to Emperor Shura, and he never once went after an innocent pill store. Therefore, not only did the other forces not feel sad for their competitors, they were even rejoicing on the inside. Their business had obviously improved since so many other shops were crippled to the point of vanishing overnight. To them, this mysterious pill master and his antics was a major windfall. They only hoped that this mysterious pill master would never stop. Ideally, they hoped that he would take down all the pill shops that belonged to Emperor Shura. Unfortunately for them, after ten or

so days, just when Emperor Shura was readying himself to deal with him, the mysterious pill master vanished, like he had never existed in the first place.

Chapter 813: Seething With Rage

“How wonderful! Honored master, this really feels wonderful!” Pill King Lu Feng was in an outstanding mood. He’d been posing as Jiang Chen’s attendant for the past few days while they’d gone around wrecking pill shops. He was having the time of his life and couldn’t help but shout his happiness. They’d visited all the pill shops belonging to the great clans, and even the ninth rank aristocratic houses under Great Emperor Shura, sent them tumbling head over heels and left in style afterwards.

A simple brush of the clothes after a done deed, an anonymous departure, their names still hidden. This was simply the peak realm of throwing his weight around. Lu Feng didn’t feel like it was a crude sham at all. On the contrary, he felt it to be an amazing pleasure. It wasn’t simply the pleasure of wrecking these shops. Even more than that, it was the joy of being together with his master and immersing himself in his teacher’s divine erudition in the dao of pills.

Lu Feng had first thought his master to be a mere representative of the Deviant Pill Faction, a genius of the Deviant Pill Faction. Spending these ten days as his attendant had caused Pill King Lu Feng to deeply realize how thoroughly wrong he had been! This teacher was simply an phenomenal genius. The Deviant Pill Faction was merely a small fraction of his knowledge.

Lu Feng had spent the past couple of days watching the honored master duel pill kings and destroy their shops was like it was child’s play. All of his master’s pill dueling knowledge, all the various techniques and tricks... they’d utterly flabbergasted Lu Feng.

Truth be told, he had been a little apprehensive at first. After all, there were quite a few formidable pill kings holding down the fort in these pill stores. However, after becoming accustomed to the situation, he’d realized how absurd his worries had been. Those

hadn't been any pill duels, simply utter trampling! After ten days, the adoration he felt for this master was boundless.

"Ol' Lu, even I have regrets now that I see how delighted you are." The depressed Ji San said from the side. Young master Ji san had been eager to participate in the rampage, but it wouldn't have been suitable with his status. His identity was just too sensitive. It was bound to attract no end of trouble if by any chance someone were to see through his disguise. So Ji San had repressed his impulsive thoughts and refrained from going with them. As a result, listening to Pill King Lu Feng's hyperbolic recounting now, young master Ji San faintly felt he'd let a great time slip out of his hands.

Jiang Cheng merely offered a faint smile. "Ol' Lu, you're making a fuss out of nothing. Back then, when my own teacher taught me the art of pills, he used many surprising ways throughout the entire ten years. He taught me many petty ways to nitpick and find fault. Do you know what the old gentleman said back then?"

"What did he say?" Lu Feng brimmed with interest. Although he'd never seen his master's master, he was full of curiosity about this mysterious man, full of limitless reverence.

"The old gentleman said that he taught me these skills so that I can go ruffle other pill masters' feathers for no reason, so that others won't dare offend me. It was a self-preservation method."

Pill King Lu Feng blinked. "It's also a self-preservation method?"

Jiang Chen laughed. "That's right, if someone is afraid of you nitpicking them, won't they be forced to ingratiate themselves with you?"

Lu Feng laughed out loud. "Excellent, how right that is! What an odd, brazen notion from the grandmaster. Why is even his teaching method so bizarre?"

Jiang Chen nodded. "Mhm. Next time I see him, I'll tell him

what you said."

Lu Feng's face froze as he scrambled for words, "Don't! Honored master, I didn't say anything, so don't you slander me now. I'm afraid the old gentleman will directly expel me if he gets angry."

Ji San laughed. "Brother, even my own curiosity is piqued from the way you talk about your teacher. Such an eccentric person is deserving of reverence and fascination."

Jiang Chen nodded with a smile. "Oh right, Brother Ji, how's the situation of late?"

"It's Great Emperor Shura's turn to be in a panic now. The seven great emperors have already informed each other of the situation. They're going to look for a way to settle the matter."

Ji San said, "House Wei's father and son will certainly be safe now, at the very least. Meanwhile, the Wang father and son might not escape unscathed."

"Mhm. We have to bury that particular duo deep now that we've started."

"Mhm. Leaving a snake alive would be akin to sowing the seeds of future disaster. The father and son are definitely done for this time. Only, it might not be a fatal blow for the Majestic Clan. Great Emperor Shura is certainly going to replace them," Ji San said.

"But it's still a pleasant surprise for the Coiling Dragon Clan!"

Ji San laughed. "Indeed."

If the Majestic clan lord and his son were done in this time, then the Majestic Clan would greatly suffer even if someone replaced them. Moving forward, they would naturally pose a much smaller threat to the Coiling Dragon Clan.

……

The Coiling Dragon clan lord was as happy as young master Ji San. After many twists and turns, this pleasant surprise seemed

like a glimmer of light at the end of a long tunnel. The Majestic Clan had long since set their sights on the Coiling Dragon Clan as prey. But now, it'd all suddenly fallen apart, just like that. Moreover, there wasn't much hope left for them to rise from these ashes either. At the very least, there was certainly no hope left for their clan lord and his son.

Since the Peafowl Guard had already gone into action, the "ironclad evidence" they'd produced would definitely doom the Majestic clan lord and his son, even if the seven great emperors were to try and smooth things over. As for Lord Wei and his son, the fabricated evidence would naturally not stand up to scrutiny. So, nothing might happen to Lord Wei and his son, but Lord Wang and his son were bound for a wretched fate. Great Emperor Peafowl was certainly going to show a personal interest in the matter after coming out of seclusion. As soon as Great Emperor Peafowl went into action, everyone would have to give him an accounting.

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Sure enough, Great Emperor Shura was seething with rage.

"All of you, don't you know how to do anything? Can't you show a little brains? Since you already knew they were coming to wreck the shops, don't you know to prepare yourself in advance? You let him run amok for ten days, are you this helpless!?" The audible anger in Great Emperor's Shura's tone skewered everyone in the room.

The continuous shop wrecking didn't have a direct connection with Great Emperor Shura, but it was definitely an indirect slap to his face. None of the shops belonging to factions under the other great emperors had been touched. The shops involved all had belonged to those under his banner. None of the clan lords had anything to say in the face of such words. They had been dead busy with the Majestic Clan's matter when this pill master had gone to town, so they hadn't had spared enough focus for the Farmer God

Market. Who would've thought that every pill store would be wrecked one after another in the past ten days? It was an utter disaster!

"Moon Monarch, did you find out the identity of the pill master in question?" The great emperor asked, looking at the Moon Monarch.

The Moon Monarch was crestfallen. "They'd already disappeared without a trace by the time we'd sent out our men. What's left to investigate? There isn't even the beginning of a clue to be found."

A great emperor's faction usually didn't set foot in the mundane world. By the time the Moon Monarch's men had been dispatched, Jiang Chen had long finished his shop-wrecking and face-smacking already. He had also thoroughly cleaned up after himself and left nothing behind.

"Your Majesty, there's no need to investigate. It's certainly a pill king from Sacred Peafowl Mountain under a disguise who went out to wreck our shops." One of the clan lords was bold enough to speak up.

"Do you have any evidence?" Great Emperor Shura asked, his tone cold.

The clan lord in question immediately shut his mouth. The lord of the Murong Clan suddenly spoke up, "Your Majesty, back then, the Majestic Clan and House Wei had a bet. In the end, it was that pill king from House Wei who'd come out the winner in some bizarre fashion. Even now, the origin of Pill King Zhen is unclear. Could it have been that Pill King Zhen's doing?"

"Pill King Zhen?" It was a name Great Emperor Shura had heard before, but never taken to heart. As one of the great emperors, of course he wouldn't have paid attention to a low-ranked pill king.

"Yes. That Pill King Zhen is very strange. Back then, when he defeated Taiyuan Lodge's Pill King Rong, he'd revealed quite a few

abilities, all of them earthshaking in their own right. That fellow even knows the solution to the Ingenious Decan Pill Enigma and is also a representative of the Deviant Pill Faction…" As though he were pouring his heart out, Lord Murong talked on and on. It was obvious that he had carefully investigated Jiang Chen.

"Lord Murong, aren't you exaggerating? How strong is House Wei? How could they entice such a powerful pill king? The one who wrecked the shops this time is obviously a veteran and his ability in the dao of pills is beyond comprehension. None of the pill kings we had were his match. This person's pill dao is extremely profound. I'm guessing it must be an old monster recluse from Sacred Peafowl Mountain." Another clan lord objected.

"How do you know that House Wei's pill king isn't an old monster? Maybe Sacred Peafowl Mountain and House Wei has been in concert all along! " Lord Murong countered convincingly.

Seeing them argue without any coherent line of thought, Great Emperor Shura lost his temper and bellowed, "Why are you arguing!? State your proof if you have any! If you don't have any evidence, then why are you fighting amongst yourselves?"

The two of them didn't dare continue their dispute now that the great emperor had spoken. It actually wasn't out of hostility, but after holding in their dismay for so long everyone merely wanted to display their abilities in front of the great emperor.

A powerhouse dressed in daoist robes who'd been sitting below Great Emperor Shura until now suddenly opened his eyes. Calm as a placid lake, he spoke, "Your Majesty, your servant is of the belief that we have to let go of this matter even if we have to suffer a loss."

His daoist robe was embroidered with scattered five-pointed stars. This man was one of the three other monarchs beneath Great Emperor Shura, the Star Monarch. He was the wisest man in Great Emperor Shura's service, with overwhelming strength and

outstanding intelligence. Moreover, he always kept the bigger picture in mind. He'd always served as a trusted adviser for the great emperor, offering plans and suggestions.

"Star Monarch, aren't you undermining our men's morale?" The Moon Monarch was quite unhappy at those words.

"Brother Moon, looking at the bigger picture, Lord Wang and his son are in a disastrous situation. We can't protect the Majestic Clan even if we stand firm behind them, and there's the possibility that we even might even drag in others. Moreover, the Veluriyam Pagoda Ceremony is soon upon us. Our first priority should be to prepare for Pagoda's competition. That's our real path to dominating the landscape in the future. Embroiling ourselves in marginal battlefields doesn't hold real meaning for us." The Star Monarch's tone was calm and kind, as though he would never let his personal feelings affect his words. This was one of the reasons why Great Emperor Shura admired him.

Great Emperor Shura glanced at the usually taciturn Sun Monarch. "Scorching Sun, what do you think?"

"I follow Your Majesty's will." The Sun Monarch was even more concise. He was loyal man who carried out his orders, a shadow following Great Emperor Shura.

Great Emperor Shura heaved a quiet sigh. "One thing the Star Monarch said is quite correct. The Veluriyam Pagoda's Ceremony is the real method to dominating the future. Everything else falls behind in comparison. Let us do as the Star Monarch said!"

Chapter 814: Fifth Level Sage Realm

Emperor Shura's words were tantamount to a declaration of concession. He was yielding not because of love of peace, nor was he taking a step back to open up easier solutions to the problem. It was, in fact, to prepare for an even more aggressive advance later on. He had painstakingly accumulated power for the past eight hundred years. He knew he was ready to strive for supremacy with Emperor Peafowl, and the upcoming Veluriyam Pagoda opening was the perfect opportunity.

Emperor Shura's compromise had effectively relinquished the House Wei father and son back to the Peafowl Guard, but not before a final episode of resistance. When the seven great emperors were seated together, Emperor Shura brought up the question as to whether the Longevity Pill indeed belonged to the Sacred Peafowl Mountain. The Peafowl Guard naturally had to present sufficient evidence before the seven great emperors. Their two pill kings refined the Longevity Pill on the spot in order to defend the legitimacy of their claim. This proved to the other imperial powers that the Majestic Clan had in fact stolen the pill recipe, invoking the unanimous opinion that even death couldn't atone for the crimes of the Majestic Clan father and son. Now even Emperor Shura could no longer protect the Majestic Clan father and son.

Moreover, the Shura Emperor wouldn't allow the Majestic clan lord to bring up the Eternal Celestial Capital. It'd serve no other purpose than to bring shame upon their own camp. It would instead give Emperor Peafowl the opportunity to confirm the Majestic Clan's collusion with external forces. This would widen the scope of damage. Emperor Shura had no choice but to sacrifice the minority to remedy the greater cause. And thus, the Wang father and son were sentenced to death. The issue regarding the House Wei father and son was relatively simple. Detailed investigation revealed several doubtful points on their peddling of

fake pills. The combination of witnesses and material evidence scarcely formed a plausible explanation.

Apparently, Emperor Shura wasn't willing to be entangled with them on this. He simply played along and released Shen Trifire and the House Wei father and son. Otherwise, he was well aware that Emperor Peafowl's mad reprisals may further expand to the Majestic Clan's collusion with the Eternal Celestial Capital. The truth would truly be difficult to explain at that point. There was obviously no such thing. But there was no way to deny anything now since they were tarred most convincingly with that brush.

The seven great emperors, once gathered, shared a mutual understanding that such a matter should no longer be extended. It was the Wang father and son shared the most tragic fate. Even their execution was carried out in one of the crowded districts of Farmer God Market. There was no shortage of people who came to witness the execution. It was quite the rowdy occasion. The Majestic Clan father and son didn't put up any form of resistance and accepted their decapitation like walking corpses. Only then did the curtains fall on this sensational case.

The implicated person, however, didn't even bother to witness the execution. Jiang Chen had been undergoing closed door cultivation since the previous episodes of disruptive gatecrashing. He had Pill King Lu Feng oversee things even after Taiyuan Tower restarted for business. Jiang Chen now had a clear understanding of the general situation after all that he had experienced. Neither the Majestic Clan nor Emperor Shura was the endpoint of his martial dao path. Strength was the ultimate deciding factor. Only those with absolute strength were qualified to speak and make it so that none dare offend them.

Take this counterattack for example. There'd be no possibility of turning things around if he hadn't had the Longevity Pill Recipe or summoned intervention from the Sacred Peafowl Mountain. He wouldn't even be qualified to strike back, much less launch an

effective counterattack. He could at most stir up some trouble in secret if he were to depend on his own power. There was virtually no hope for him to destroy the Majestic Clan.

Jiang Chen was different from the other sage realm cultivators. He'd obtained large amounts of Sage Fledgling Grass from the restricted area back at Mount Rippling Mirage and had refined countless Heroic Sage Pills. As such, he held the absolute advantage over other sage realm cultivators in terms of resources. He also possessed a batch of Long Xiaoxuan's dragon crystals, which were powerful supplements. Jiang Chen's closed door cultivation lasted for a mere one month but within that period, he had broken through to a level that would take others several years to accomplish.

Fifth level sage realm! However, he felt no satisfaction after sensing the changes to his body after the breakthrough. After arriving at the Upper Eight Regions, he could most acutely feel the various constraints brought about by the difference in strength.

"Break through—I have to keep breaking through! The Veluriyam Pagoda opens in less than a year's time. I have to reach seventh level sage realm before then!" This was Jiang Chen's immediate aim. It was an ambitious target, but not impossible to accomplish. He'd mostly exhausted the potential of the Heroic Sage Pills and dragon crystals, and it would normally be difficult to use such a method to break through once again. But Jiang Chen still had the Sage Smile Pills.

The Coiling Dragon Clan Lord had granted him two Sage Smile Pills. Its appeal lay in the chance to unconditionally advance one level, although it could be used only once. Jiang Chen, therefore, would never use up such a chance during his origin realm years. He would have to cultivate by himself to reach sixth level origin realm, whereupon he would use a Sage Smile Pill and catapult himself into the seventh level sage realm. As such, his ambition to reach the sky sage realm before the Veluriyam Pagoda appeared

far-fetched but it was, in truth, only dependent on whether he could reach the sixth level sage realm during this period. Eight months remained until the Veluriyam Pagoda opened. If only he could use his own palace abode to cultivate, his cultivation speed would increase to reach ten times the normal rate.

“It’s worth taking some risk in order to raise my strength.” Jiang Chen knew that it would be absurdly difficult to achieve two consecutive breakthroughs in one year. But things would be completely different if he trained inside the palace. Training within for a day would likely equate to tens, if not hundreds outside. This was the exceptional privilege afforded by such a place designed by empyrean cultivators. Utilizing the palace naturally involved certain dangers. But it shouldn’t pose much of a problem for Jiang Chen after setting up certain concealing formations.

Jiang Chen exited his isolation after stabilizing his newfound realm. He hadn’t had time to greet Shen Trifire and the House Wei father and son since their recent release. The House Wei father and son weren’t upset by their capture for they understood that it had little to do with Pill King Zhen and more to do with the enmity between House Wei and the Majestic Clan. Thus they were being apologetic instead, “Pill King Zhen, we’ve dragged you in with us once again.”

Jiang Chen laughed, “Those of us in the same boat should share the burden. It was actually the Majestic Clan father and son who had truly gone too far. Hopefully, we can enjoy a period of peace and quiet now that they’ve been executed.”

Jiang Chen didn’t say much after meeting Shen Trifire. He merely patted the pill master’s shoulder, “You’ve suffered a fair amount of injustice this time, but you performed handsomely and suffered no disgrace. From here on out, you’re my brother.”

The persistent Shen Trifire refused to undergo the humiliation of surrender even after being captured. Jiang Chen couldn’t help but have a whole new level of respect for him and felt he’d not

misjudged the man. Shen Trifire's eyes turned red after receiving a consoling slap on the shoulder—a torrent of emotions shook his heart—he'd been sold around and suffered numerous hardships since the destruction of the Regal Pill Palace. Now he'd finally found a backer. It wasn't the steadiest of supports, but a firm one nonetheless. Jiang Chen's clap on the shoulder was, undoubtedly, indicative of his approval and acceptance. Shen Trifire was assaulted by a host of complex emotions brought about by this overwhelming favor.

"Senior brother, I'll definitely work hard and not disappoint you." Shen Trifire gave his earnest word.

The House Wei father and son made their entrance at that moment, accompanied by young master Ji San. Ji San was extremely delighted the moment he saw Jiang Chen, "Brother, I have great news I must tell you."

"Pray tell." Jiang Chen was somewhat puzzled.

"Come, let's find a place to talk about this in leisure." Young master Ji San dragged Jiang Chen by the sleeves and headed toward a relatively isolated area.

"Have you found the Invisible Chameleon Cloudpine?" Jiang Chen asked curiously.

"It's not about that," Ji San shook his head. "Brother, it's a great opportunity for you! The Veluriyam Pagoda Assembly will be hosted by Emperor Peafowl this time and you're on the list of invitees."

"Oh?" Jiang Chen appeared distracted.

Ji San sighed after seeing that Jiang Chen wasn't particularly amazed, "Brother, your reaction disappoints me. Don't you know what this signifies?"

"Do elaborate." Jiang Chen was now curious.

"It implies that you've been noticed by Emperor Peafowl! You

might even gain his favor if you perform well in this test."

"Oh, I see." Jiang Chen nodded. He scarcely felt the wild joy Ji San was expecting.

"You bastard. Were you born with such a zombie face? It's as if you don't ever feel extreme joy or sorrow." Young master Ji San mocked, "But thanks to you, I was also invited. You should know that apart from the clan lords, scarcely any other normal people are qualified to attend. You and I are the only two wildcards."

Jiang Chen felt it to be a good turn of events, but was obviously far from being overjoyed. After all, it wasn't such an ecstatic matter to be favored by a mere great emperor to him. His anticipation toward these great emperors were no longer as intense after learning about the Myriad Abyss Island.

But of course, Jiang Chen naturally wouldn't turn down the favor of this mysterious Emperor Peafowl who'd ruled the Veluriyam Capital for nearly three thousand years. After all, he'd never made the acquaintance of such a high level expert barring Elder Shun. Perhaps he might even profit from this meeting. Seeing Jiang Chen completely unperturbed, young master Ji San said in a gloomy tone, "Brother, can you not show some spirit? This event holds extraordinary meaning for us. You know Emperor Peafowl never truly recovered from the passing of young master Fan. Perhaps this time he'll seek a new successor! Heh Heh, I'm looking forward to it even though chances are slim at best. Brother, it's not that I'm blaming you, but you should really be more serious about this matter if you're to save your fellow sect disciples and find your father. Who in the Upper Eight Regions would dare go against you once you become Emperor Peafowl's successor? All would answer to your beck and call!"

Chapter 815: Emperor Peafowl

Ji San's words had quite the impact. Though Jiang Chen had little interest in becoming someone's disciple in order to inherit their teachings, it would no doubt of great use to his future endeavors if he could create a connection to Emperor Peafowl.

"Brother, look 'ere. The Eternal Celestial Capital is chasing you everywhere right now, but if you become Emperor Peafowl's successor, then they won't dare touch you even if you stand right at their gates. That's a big difference, isn't it?" Though it was a little harsh, Ji San's words rang true. Emperor Peafowl had made a name for himself three thousand years ago, and his renown was spread across the entirety of the Upper Eight Regions. Even great emperors from first-ranked sects dared not antagonize him.

Jiang Chen laughed at Ji San's excitement. "Brother Ji, everything in the world follows the path of fate. It has guided us together as brothers, as it did for the serendipitous meeting with Wei Jie at Myriad Peoples City. My meeting with Emperor Peafowl is just another thread in fate's tangled web. As for whether I can become his disciple... well, we'll just let fate decide, hmm?"

Ji San was astonished. "Brother, do you really believe in fate, in heaven's mandate?"

Jiang Chen smiled faintly in reply. He sighed softly to himself. How can I not? In his previous life in the divine planes, he had observed the lives of countless people. The majority of lives and events he'd witnessed had been dictated by fate's interwoven threads. Two brothers from the same family and background could walk drastically different paths, simply because of differences in their fate.

Jiang Chen suspected that his reincarnation into this world had a hidden thread of fate attached as well, but didn't dare think further on it. Every time he did so, he would get a headache. The

seal of chaos within his consciousness only fueled his theory—his presence here was preordained. What else would explain the chain of seals within his consciousness?

During Jiang Chen's time at the Precious Tree Sect, he had meditated on the dao beneath the sect's Precious Tree in order to break through to origin realm. Marked by natural phenomenon, it had led to the discovery of the seal within his consciousness for the first time. There were also what appeared to be nine droplets of water that surrounded the seal in a ring. Till date, it was an unsolved mystery to him. Jiang Chen hadn't been able to analyze the seal back then upon first breaking through to origin realm, and he still wasn't able to even now—though he was fifth level sage realm.

However, whenever he touched the seal during his meditation, inexplicable tremors would pass through his mind, followed by various primordial visions that ran rampant through his consciousness. Jiang Chen felt... odd, but with a dose of curiosity. However, curiosity aside, he had no intention of forcibly exploring the seal. One wrong move on his part meant the total disintegration of his consciousness, and the destruction of his soul and spirit.

"Brother, what are you thinking about?" Seeing Jiang Chen's face full of smiles, Ji San was curious himself.

Jiang Chen maintained his expression. "Nothing much. I was reminiscing about something and lost myself for a second."

"Okay. Well, you just have to remember one thing really. This is an opportunity, and it leads to many more like it in the future. You know that the Upper Eight Regions are core to the human domain, and there are often events held to exchange information between the major factions. As long as you hold a high enough position, you'll have plenty of chances to travel as part of these exchanges, as well as meet fellow geniuses from different Upper Regions. This will make it easier for you to obtain news about your parents. If

you do it yourself, it might take ten or twenty years before a lead comes up, but with the right person... well, it might only take ten or eight days, right?" From the young master's words, Jiang Chen could hear that Ji San had only his best interests in mind.

"Brother Ji, I will treat the matter with all seriousness," he nodded.

Ji San was finally satisfied with Jiang Chen's attitude. "That's more like it!"

The two brothers spoke for a while. Ji San was clearly in a good mood. Now that the Wang father and son were taken care of, the Coiling Dragon Clan was enjoying much better days.

Though he'd only received an extension of three to five years to his life, the Coiling Dragon clan lord also seemed in much better spirits. His recovery brought an important matter to the other clans' attention. The decision to distance themselves from the Coiling Dragon Clan before did not seem so wise now. From the look of the Coiling Dragon clan lord currently, the man was at least refreshed enough to contend again. The act of reclaiming respect after losing it for a time solidified the Coiling Dragon Clan's place as the Veluriyam Capital's foremost clan once more. Moreover, the Coiling Dragon clan lord knew that majority of the merit for this act went to Ji San.

Thus, Ji San distinguished himself among his fellow candidates in the race for the successor, and gradually assumed a leading role. All of this was ultimately thanks to Jiang Chen. As a result, the young master's gratitude towards Jiang Chen and thoughtfulness on his behalf were both completely genuine.

Jiang Chen retreated to the back garden after a long time spent entertaining guests. A sudden upward glance revealed the apparent presence of a sound, or possibly a translucent shadow, near the pagoda. Was there someone there? Perhaps, perhaps not. It was so indistinct that Jiang Chen thought he was seeing things. Upon

closer examination, he found that there was a person there after all. However, the person almost seemed to meld into the garden's scenery.

"Who is it?" Jiang Chen called out in a low voice. Someone who could slip into the garden unseen and undetected was surely extraordinary. Moreover, Taiyuan Tower had a rule that only female family members were allowed in the back court. Even the ten sage realm cultivators Jiang Chen had handpicked had no right to enter. There were very few people who were eligible to enter.

"Young man, I've waited for you for a long time now. Do you have the courage to come with this old fellow and speak awhile?" The voice was foreign to Jiang Chen, and didn't hold any clues to its identity either. But, it had an odd magnetism, piercing through time and space in a mystical way. Jiang Chen furrowed his brow. In that moment, he found himself a little indecisive.

"Don't worry. If this old fellow wanted to harm you, there would be no need for such theatrics." The voice laughed softly before it rushed outwards in a flash. Concerned for the women in the rear court, Jiang Chen pursued it with gritted teeth. He was very familiar with the garden's layout, but found himself walking its paths no longer. As he shot forward, he seemed to head onto a different road, but the connection between the two was seamless—almost if he really had come onto it from the path near the pagoda.

"Hmm? What's this?" Jiang Chen's heart sank, and he stopped in his tracks. Activating his God's Eye, he scanned his surroundings. "Is this a formation?" Frowning, Jiang Chen realized that he had entered a formation set by the other entity without even noticing. The formation that he was now in was unique. It was able to connect itself to reality and manufacture a patchwork landscape that even Jiang Chen hadn't noticed at first glance. After activation, Jiang Chen's own formations ordinarily formed an internally consistent world. It was always drastically different from the outside world. However, this person's formations could

link together with reality, and bridge the gap flawlessly. The formation methods on display here moved Jiang Chen greatly.

“You have a good eye. I thought it would take longer for you to understand.” The voice sounded again, this time directly in front of Jiang Chen. The shape of a body appeared near a patch of pines. The entity’s form was dressed in a rainbow taoist robe, and gave off a feeling of antiquity. The man cut a tall and straight figure, his features well-defined on his face. He had a very handsome appearance, and the lines of his body was nothing less than perfection.

“Who exactly are you, if I may ask?” Jiang Chen asked, grimacing. Though he was within the man’s formation, Jiang Chen didn’t lose his composure. However, the other man carried a disorienting aura around him. It was as if Jiang Chen was standing at a seashore, and could not measure the depth of the waters before him, or as if he gazed at an endless expanse, and could not tell the stars’ origin. The man’s profundity made him a mystery.

“Who do you think I should be?” The man faintly smiled, his expression placid.

Considering the man for a moment, Jiang Chen came to a sudden realization. “Emperor Peafowl?” He blurted aloud.

The man did not deny the identification. “Your intuition is quite good,” he smiled cheerfully. Suddenly, the man’s gaze intensified, though his expression remained unchanged. “Then, you’re the Jiang Chen from the Myriad Domain?”

“Did the Coiling Dragon clan lord tell you, Your Majesty?” Jiang Chen blinked.

The man grinned nonchalantly. “Then, the Coiling Dragon clan lord’s known your identity all this time? Ah, that old eel... he didn’t tell me.”

Jiang Chen didn’t say anything. His instincts told him that the

man before him had no need for deception.

“Jiang Chen. This old fellow has known of you ever since you first set foot in Veluriyam Capital with Wei Jie.”

Old fellow? As far as Jiang Chen could see, Emperor Peafowl’s face was that of a man in his thirties. He showed no sign of age. Thus, Jiang Chen found the man’s self-designation of ‘old fellow’ a little peculiar.

“Your Majesty, calling yourself an old fellow while looking like that… well, it feels a little odd.”

Emperor Peafowl smiled softly. “Then, what shall I call myself? Shall I use the royal we, or say ‘this emperor’? Do you not see that I have no desire to converse with you as Emperor Peafowl?”

“Why is that?” Jiang Chen asked.

“Because today is just a private visit.” Emperor Peafowl laughed. “I wanted to take a closer look at the youth from the Myriad Domain—someone who could stir up chaos even in the ranks of the Eternal Celestial Capital—and see what kind of person he was. Now that I’m here, I see that I have not made my trip in vain.”

“Oh? And what has Your Majesty seen in me?” Jiang Chen chuckled.

“You saw through my formation, which was your first distinction. You identified me, which was another. You are neither anxious nor uncomfortable, which was the final point in your favor. Are these three distinctions not satisfactory enough for me?”

Jiang Chen didn’t think that Emperor Peafowl would be able to casually summarize so much. “Your Majesty, you said just now that you knew of me the first day I arrived? What do you mean by that? I didn’t have the chance to see Your Majesty that day.”

Emperor Peafowl shrugged. “That day was my successor’s funeral. You remember this much, at least?”

“Young lord Fan?” Jiang Chen remembered the circumstances in which he entered the city that day. House Wei being a staunch supporter of young lord Fan, Wei Jie had been severely distraught upon hearing the latter’s death. The entire House had worn funereal white in remembrance and commemoration.

But Jiang Chen still didn’t recall having seen the emperor.

Chapter 816: Emperor Peafowl's Intentions

"No need to be surprised. It's true that I wasn't physically present at the time, but I did imbue a trace of my consciousness onto my successor's coffin. It is this consciousness that had scanned the entirety of Veluriyam Capital."

"Consciousness imbuement?" Jiang Chen was shocked. It wasn't a technique that just anyone could perform. The cultivator first had to shear off a tiny shred of their own consciousness before they could imbue it onto a lifeless object. Just how powerful a cultivator must be before they could perform such a thing?

Normally speaking, it wasn't difficult to imbue one's consciousness onto a living object. For example, Jiang Chen often imbued his consciousness onto the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice. There were plenty of experts who knew of this technique. It wasn't a difficult thing to perform. But the imbuement of one's consciousness on a lifeless object was a completely different league. The cultivator literally had to tear a part of their consciousness off to perform the technique. One must understand that a consciousness separated from its host body and wasn't supported by a living being would quickly fall apart.

Emperor Peafowl had solidified this separated piece of his consciousness, imbued it onto a lifeless object and made it scan the entire city. Jiang Chen didn't think it was something that just any great emperor could perform. Some of the surprise unconsciously showed on Jiang Chen's face as he stared at Emperor Peafowl. However, Emperor Peafowl looked as calm and serene as ever. It was rumored that Emperor Peafowl was unable to pull free from the pain of losing his disciple, but Jiang Chen couldn't sense such sadness from him at all. Not now, at least. Perhaps Emperor Peafowl was just good at concealing his pain?

Emperor Peafowl smiled when he saw Jiang Chen scanning his face, "What are you looking at?"

“Your insight is profound, so why don’t you venture a guess, Your Majesty?” Jiang Chen started playing games of mystery as well.

“Hehe, I shall do just that. You must be trying to detect a hint of pain or sadness from my expression, aren’t you?”

Jiang Chen smiled wryly, “You truly are all-seeing, Your Majesty.”

Emperor Peafowl answered smilingly, “Yet you found no such emotions from my face, no?”

Jiang Chen subconsciously nodded, “No, I haven’t.”

“Do you know why that is the case then?” Emperor Peafowl asked indifferently.

“I don’t,” Jiang Chen shook his head honestly. He was going to say that Emperor Peafowl was very good at concealing his emotions, but that didn’t seem to be the case. Maybe a magnanimous person like Emperor Peafowl had achieved supreme enlightenment and simply gotten over his loss?

Emperor Peafowl sighed softly before he suddenly spoke, “I have nothing to be sad of, because I am the one who killed him. It’s just that the outside world thought that he was killed by poison due to a mistake in his cultivation.”

“What?” Jiang Chen was shocked. His words were so shocking that Jiang Chen doubted if the man before him was really Emperor Peafowl for an instant. But once he thought through everything carefully, Jiang Chen thought that this Emperor Peafowl should be real. So why had Emperor Peafowl killed his beloved disciple?

“You are the only one I’ve told about this,” Emperor Peafowl said slowly.

Jiang Chen smiled wryly, “I’m feeling the burden of the situation then.”

“What burden is that? Are you wondering if this incident has something to do with you?”

Jiang Chen shook his head, “Your disciple was already dead before I arrived, so I am sure that it has nothing to do with me.”

Emperor Peafowl nodded, “It had nothing to do with you before, but now, it does.”

“Why do you say that?”

“I say this, because I felt like I’ve found an even better successor,” Emperor Peafowl’s eyes abruptly lit up. He looked at Jiang Chen with unconcealed praise.

“You mean me, Your Majesty?” Jiang Chen looked startled.

“Is there anyone else here?” Emperor Peafowl smiled faintly, “What you said earlier with your sworn brother makes a lot of sense: There is fate in everything. I do not know if it is your acute instinct or your unique perception, but I felt like taking you in as my disciple the moment you spoke about fate.”

“You wish to take me as your disciple?”

“So? Do you think your destiny in this matter has arrived?” Emperor Peafowl asked with a smile.

Jiang Chen was silent. He had crossed arms with many experts and seniors since he had started cultivating. For example, there was Ye Chonglou of Skylaurel Kingdom, and then the sect head of Precious Tree Sect. There was also Palace Head Dan Chi and Elder Yun Nie of Regal Pill Palace. They were all his seniors, but Jiang Chen called none of them his master. This was because Jiang Chen valued the relationship between master and disciple very highly.

There was nothing he particularly sought in martial dao, so he wasn’t particularly interested in taking a master. In fact, he’d always held a certain arrogance that maintained that there was likely no one in this world who could qualify as his master. It was just a kind of pride that he held in his heart. In reality, there were

still plenty of experts who were stronger than him, even though this world couldn't compare to the great divine plane he used to inhabit during his past life. In learning, there was no first or last. When one learns and progresses fast, then the last would become the first. But even then, it didn't mean that no one was qualified to teach him. No matter how many memories he possessed from his past life, there were certain things that he could only learn and inherit in person. That was why Jiang Chen didn't find the idea of a master repulsive even though he wasn't really interested in it.

Even now, Jiang Chen didn't feel particularly much like admitting Emperor Peafowl as his master. Or rather, he felt like it wasn't time for that fated moment yet. Emperor Peafowl seemed to have expected his reaction, and smiled faintly, "I can wait... or at least I hope that I can last until that moment of fate arrives."

Emperor Peafowl actually sounded a little aged when he spoke those words. A thought suddenly flashed through Jiang Chen's mind, "If I may ask, Your Majesty, young lord Fan was described to be an incredibly outstanding person by everyone. It can't be all fake, can it?"

Many people were full of praises when they spoke of young lord Fan. Wei Jie in particular was almost at the level of a mindless, diehard fan. Emperor Peafowl nodded, "It was all true -" Then, he immediately added, "- except for one thing, unfortunately."

Jiang Chen looked startled, "What is it?"

"His identity," Emperor Peafowl said indifferently, "He possessed the blood of the demon race in his veins. He hid it well, but for all of his brilliant schemes, I was the exception to his equation. My powers had long since exceeded his imagination."

"The demon race?" Jiang Chen looked startled. Everyone, be it Chonglou or Palace Head Dan Chi, had more or less brought up the topic of the demon race back in the Myriad Domain. However, the demon race they described were comprised of scattered tidbits of

extremely superficial information. They had nothing substantial to tell of.

Jiang Chen only knew that the demon race was part of the history of the Divine Abyss Continent, and was a powerful enemy of ancient times who'd invaded and settled the land. It was said that no peace would befall Divine Abyss Continent as long as they weren't thoroughly exterminated.

"The demon race," Emperor Peafowl's voice was the same as ever. Surprisingly, the seriousness in Palace Head Dan Chi and everyone else's voice when they talked about the demon race was absent from his tone.

"What kind of a race was the demon race?" Jiang Chen was curious.

"In the ancient times, people of foreign realms invaded the Divine Abyss Continent and started an ancient war that completely overturned its original power structure. The continent shattered, and the powers that existed was almost completely reshuffled and transformed into the way they are now. Later on, heaven's orbit collapsed and the passage that those of foreign realms used to invade Divine Abyss Continent was closed off, but some of the foreign races had managed to take root here. Over time, they slowly became natives of the Divine Abyss Continent. The battle against the demon race continued until the last Great War of Demon Sealing. There, the demon race was defeated and the leaders of the demon races were sealed away. They had no choice but to go dark and lay low. But this didn't mean that the demon race had accepted their fate. The demon race is born brutal, possessive and warlike. Their ultimate objective is to devour all bloodlines that exist on the Divine Abyss Continent and install the demon race as a sole ruler. If that day were to come, then the Divine Abyss Continent would lose all of its inheritances and become the Demon Abyss Continent instead."

Jiang Chen listened quietly without interrupting Emperor

Peafowl, but he inwardly felt quite surprised. If the demon race really was as brutal as they sounded, then why hadn't the true experts of Myriad Abyss Island gotten involved? Could it be that the true heart of the Divine Abyss Continent was actually afraid of fighting against the demon race? Jiang Chen couldn't think of anything despite mulling over the question.

Of course, Jiang Chen wasn't particularly interested in these stories to begin with. Be it the demon race or the Divine Abyss Continent, Jiang Chen had never thought of himself as a native of the Divine Abyss Continent. What he cared for wasn't the conflict between the demon race and the natives of the Divine Abyss Continent, but his friends and families if a demonic apocalypse were to arrive one day. His own slight indifference aside, Ye Chonglou and Palace Head Dan Chi had influenced him into paying some attention to the situation. He also understood that no one was safe if the sky was falling on everyone's head.

"Jiang Chen, I've been waiting for you to ask me a question, but to my great surprise, you've not done so."

"What question?"

"Your true identity. Why was I able to recognize you the moment you entered the city?"

Jiang Chen smiled wryly, "And why's that?"

"The answer's quite simple. A long time ago, I detected an abnormal phenomenon at the Precious Tree Sect of the Myriad Domain. Since then, I've begun collecting information about you and made plenty of calculations. Most others may not know that you are tied to that phenomenon, but I am well versed in the art of divination. After I tied together all the details I could gather and made my calculations, I concluded that all the evidence pointed towards you being the cause of that phenomenon."

Jiang Chen was stunned. He was actually completely stumped for words. From the moment he'd been born, he had always thought

that he was unique because he carried with him the skills of the divine plane. That was why he always thought little of the Divine Abyss Continent because he thought that the experts of this world were ultimately incomparable to the ones he'd seen in his past life. This thought had given birth to a tiny bit of contempt.

But Emperor Peafowl's words suddenly made him realize that he was very, very wrong in his assumption. Be it the divine plane or the Divine Abyss Continent, anyone who could rise to the top possessed extraordinary talent and intelligence. For example, Emperor Peafowl might have been a ruler of a small world himself if he'd been born on the divine plane. It wasn't that his talents were insufficient. It was just that this was as far as he could go within the confines of this world!

"The Mt. Rippling Mirage Pill Battles happened, and you were trapped in Mt. Rippling Mirage for two years. While the Great Scarlet Mid Region had invaded during the Myriad Grand Ceremony, you managed to escape safely from the invasion. When your sect was destroyed, you were able to escape the Eternal Celestial Capital's ambush and escape confidently. You were even able to singlehandedly annihilate the Eternal Celestial Capital and the Ninesuns Sky Sect's team... All of these events only goes to prove that you are a genius of great destiny."

"Destiny?" A sharp gleam flashed past Jiang Chen's eyes, "Your Majesty, can you see the threads of destiny?" Naturally, Jiang Chen wasn't unaware of the theory of destiny. There were plenty of great people in the divine planes who knew how to observe destiny.

Destiny was supposed to be something that was indiscernible and untouchable. However, there were some people who were born with special eyes who could see views that no other could see. They could unlock the All-Seeing Eyes of the divine plane and see the threads of destiny! There were very few such people in this world, but all of them were top level geniuses.

Could this Emperor Peafowl possibly be a...

Chapter 817: All-Seeing Eyes

A look of doubt colored Jiang Chen's face for a moment, and he looked at Emperor Peafowl a little more seriously than he did before. If Emperor Peafowl really had activated the All-Seeing Eyes, then calling him a terrifying cultivator would be an understatement. A person like him shouldn't be limited to an earthly plane like this!

Emperor Peafowl had been observing Jiang Chen all this time, and he himself was very, very surprised at the strength of the youth's reactions. As a great emperor, he had never talked about destiny with any youngsters. In fact, most of his friends and great emperors who were close to him were skeptical when he talked about destiny. One might even say that most of them disapproved of his theory completely. Most of them saw destiny in the same way as heaven's will. They thought that it was something that was completely unpredictable.

Emperor Peafowl might be keenly aware of the correctness of his ideas, but he wouldn't go so far as to force his understandings down someone's throat. However, after a thousand years of careful exploration, he had managed to summarize and create a technique that could observe destiny itself. It was true that he felt that his abilities in this regard were half-baked, but he was almost never mistaken about the people of great destiny whom he had observed in private.

Although Jiang Chen hailed from the Myriad Domain, Emperor Peafowl had secretly gathered much information on him and come to the conclusion that he was a boy of great destiny. Emperor Peafowl was tempted many times to see Jiang Chen with his own eyes, but he was worried that his visit would disrupt Jiang Chen's fate. So he had kept his desire in check. Then, he heard that the Eternal Celestial Capital had sent out a capture order on Jiang Chen, and that the person in question was on his way to Veluriyam

Capital.

This revelation gladdened Emperor Peafowl, and his belief in the will of heaven grew even stronger. As such, he had been waiting all this time. He had been waiting for a genius who shouldered the destiny of a world to show up. Finally, Jiang Chen entered Veluriyam Capital that day. His arrival happened to coincide with young lord Fan's funeral procession.

It was yet another sign that the old was ushered out in exchange for the new. The powerful destiny Jiang Chen carried with him when he showed up in Veluriyam Capital was a massive shock to even Emperor Peafowl. It was enough to finally convince him of his own theory. What surprised Emperor Peafowl the most at this moment was that Jiang Chen's reaction was not one of skepticism. No, the boy asked the emperor if he could see the threads of destiny. Did Jiang Chen believe in the theory of destiny too?

Emperor Peafowl sighed, "I've always been cultivating eye arts. More than a thousand years ago, enlightenment suddenly dawned on me, and my arts transformed into a strange kind of observation art. At first, I didn't know what it was, so I spent a thousand years observing everything before me. Although my observations have never coalesced into a system of their own, I was seldom wrong when I used it to observe destiny. The day you entered the city was a great shock to me. I've never seen someone with a destiny as great as yours, not to mention that it subtly matched the winds of destiny that had surged to the sky and shaken the clouds back in the Myriad Domain. In that moment, I had ascertained almost immediately that you were the youngster I was waiting for from the Myriad Domain. You were the Jiang Chen who the Eternal Celestial Capital wanted very badly, but couldn't hunt down despite all their efforts."

Eye arts? Jiang Chen couldn't help but stare at Emperor Peafowl's eyes. Emperor Peafowl's eyes were like a pair of deep pools, but their depths were as unfathomable as the sky itself. His

eyes would shift colors between dark green and azure from time to time, and it constituted an incredibly unique visual impact.

“If I’m not mistaken, you have an eye art yourself, Jiang Chen. In fact, it is an incredibly powerful one!” Emperor Peafowl said smilingly.

Without an objection to offer, Jiang Chen nodded, “You have amazing talent, Your Majesty. There really is nothing that can be hidden from you. Now that I think back, it’s hilarious how confident I was at hiding my own abilities. Thank goodness I haven’t caused trouble within your domain, or you could’ve killed me in a single strike.”

“Hahaha,” Emperor Peafowl laughed candidly, “Your claim that you haven’t caused trouble is not entirely accurate, but it is a fact you haven’t started one of your own accord. I wouldn’t have visited you if you did, or if you’d proven yourself to be evil.”

Cold sweat silently escaped Jiang Chen’s pores. Emperor Peafowl is too amazing. I’m not even living in his house, and yet he seem to know everything that has happened around me. “Your Majesty, you haven’t imbued a consciousness around my social circle, have you?” Jiang Chen didn’t know what kind of expression he should wear.

“Haha, do I look like someone who enjoys spying on others?” Emperor Peafowl was also somewhat amused by Jiang Chen’s words.

So far, Jiang Chen’s impression of Emperor Peafowl was quite good. At the very least, Emperor Peafowl’s bearing and broadmindedness were things that no ruthless overlord could compete against. Through his conversation, Jiang Chen could deduce that the latter’s understanding of him had come from general observation, not spying. If it really was spying, Jiang Chen would’ve left Veluriyam Capital without a second thought. After all, no one wanted to be spied upon during every moment of their

lives. It was practically torture of a whole different kind to live that way.

“Your Majesty, do you mean that you know everything that I did in Veluriyam Capital?”

“Not necessarily. I can more or less grasp the general aim of your actions. For example, you are the one who trashed all those pill stores at Farmer God Market, aren’t you?”

Jiang Chen knew that anyone with a discerning eye could figure that out. He smiled, “It was a choice I was forced to make. They had to pay for their intolerable acts of bullying. In fact, I’m actually relieving you of some burdens, Your Majesty.”

House Wei belonged to the Coiling Dragon Clan, and the Coiling Dragon Clan belonged to Emperor Peafowl. Indirectly speaking, he was indeed helping out Emperor Peafowl.

However, Emperor Peafowl returned a noncommittal smile. After a moment of silence, he said slowly, “I know everything that happens in Veluriyam Capital. The Majestic Clan’s provocations, the feathery probes of Emperor Shura, their hopes towards Veluriyam Pagoda and their desire for my seat as the number one great emperor of Veluriyam Capital... if even my subordinates know about this, how could I not know about them as well?”

Jiang Chen was surprised, “You knew it all from the very beginning, Your Majesty?”

“That’s right,” Emperor Peafowl revealed the ghost of a smile, “In other words, even Emperor Shura’s tremendous success and growth, so much so that even the outside world think that he was now capable of replacing me, was within my predictions. In fact, you might even say that I’m the one who pushed for his growth in secret.”

“What?” Jiang Chen’s mind couldn’t quite catch up to the topic, “You mean you were purposely nurturing a threat?”

“The nurturing part is true, but a threat? Not necessarily so.” Emperor Peafowl’s smile was deep, “My only fear is that he grows too slowly.”

“What do you mean?” Jiang Chen frowned. He suddenly felt like his brain was a little lacking.

“More than a thousand years ago, I vaguely activated the All-Seeing Eye and felt the call of heaven’s dao. There, I was able to capture tiny glimpses of the laws of the world.”

“You’re about to achieve a breakthrough?” A thought abruptly flashed across Jiang Chen’s mind.

“I am. I’ve been suppressing it for more than a thousand years, holding myself back from mastering the laws, but I feel that I can’t do so for much longer. I am afraid that I am fated to leave Veluriyam Capital in less than a hundred years. Therefore, someone capable enough must succeed my seat. An ordinary person would be unable to quell the internal and external threats of Veluriyam Capital.” Emperor Peafowl sighed softly with a hint of melancholy.

“Forgive my rudeness, Your Majesty, but there are countless people out there who is incapable of learning heaven’s dao or win its acknowledgement. If you have sensed it, then why on earth would you suppress it on purpose?” Jiang Chen seriously couldn’t understand Emperor Peafowl’s thoughts.

“Would you believe me if I told you that it was all to keep a close watch on the demon race?” Emperor Peafowl suddenly revealed a self deprecating smile. Jiang Chen shivered as he stared at Emperor Peafowl in disbelief. He actually doubted his own eyes for a second, for he saw a hint of true worry leaking from Emperor Peafowl’s expression. It was both great mercy and great wisdom that had been born of a compassion that encompassed the world. Jiang Chen had seen a very similar expression from Ye Chonglou and Palace Head Dan Chi’s faces before. It was just that Ye

Chonglou only had the worry, but not the in-depth knowledge of the bigger picture. He didn't know just how deadly the demon race was. Palace Head Dan Chi possessed greater understanding than Ye Chonglou, but he thought more from his sect's point of view.

Emperor Peafowl was the only one who Jiang Chen'd seen so far to possess both mercy and wisdom. An erudite wisdom and true worry for the world that was untainted by even a speck of selfishness. A moment of puzzlement later, Jiang Chen came to understand why. Emperor Peafowl's cultivation was so great that he could sense the laws of the world already. Therefore, what meaning did worldly power conflicts mean to him? His viewpoint and insight of the world had long since exceeded the viewpoint of Veluriyam Capital. Unfortunately for him, his viewpoint was too high and too far out of reach. It was so high that no one could catch up to him. As a result, not many people could understand his feelings at all.

The demon race? Why on earth would normal cultivators bother to think about the demon race unless a demonic calamity actually happened? There could be countless calamities in the world, but none were as important as their own cultivation. It was exactly because most people were this numb, selfish, and easily satisfied by low ambitions that no one paid attention to the bigger picture.

It was why Emperor Peafowl was alone in his wisdom. It was to the point where one might even say that the timing of his worries and compassion was a little off. Suddenly, Jiang Chen felt a little stifled. For whatever reason, he suddenly recalled his father from his past life. His father had exactly been such a person himself. Despite holding the post of a celestial emperor, he was troubled by a lack of people who could understand him. He was worried to death for the fate of the great Taiyuan world, but still failed to prevent the calamity that destroyed the heavenly plane in the end. A person like him might be called a hero or a pioneer in books' written pages. However, most of them didn't have a good ending.

In comparison to his father, Jiang Chen felt that he had lived his life too lowly during this lifetime. His father would likely be unhappy if he learned of his current appearance, wouldn't he? Passion mixed with shame rose within Jiang Chen's heart, "Jiang Chen is most impressed by the height of your insight, Your Majesty. I may not be able to become someone as great as you, but I will contribute my strength to the Divine Abyss Continent to the limit of my capabilities."

Despite not having promised anything in stone, Jiang Chen had made up his mind. He had lived so very cautiously so far, but what had befallen him after all his efforts? A destroyed sect, and no home to go back to. If that was the case, then why should he live so suffocatingly anymore? Why should he not do all he could and live to his heart's content instead?

Chapter 818: Redistribution of Longevity Pills

Throughout the course of his visit, Emperor Peafowl hadn't given any Jiang Chen any promises or made any lofty demands. If one had to describe this visit, it was as if a lonely elder spotting a young man that happened to catch his interest, and so made a visit to make a friend. A smile appeared on Emperor Peafowl's face when he heard Jiang Chen's words.

"Just like you said to Ji Ole Third before Jiang Chen—destiny. In the thousand years that I've held sway in Veluriyam Capital, there has yet to be a single person who has so elicited admiration from me. I have nothing else to say that other than if you remain pure of heart in Veluriyam Capital, you can do as you will in the Capital. I will handle all trouble that may arise from what you might do." Emperor Peafowl smiled faintly after saying this and pointed lightly with his finger, causing all of the scenery around them to instantly vanish—the emperor as well. Only a voice lingered by Jiang Chen's ear, "Jiang Chen, remember to come to the Peafowl Gathering."

Jiang Chen remained silent for a long time, deep in thought. He'd had quite a bit of gains from this conversation.

The next day, young master Ji San came hurriedly running over with another bit of news. "Brother, this kind of sucks. I just received word that many more places have been added to the Peafowl Gathering. Almost all great clans beneath Emperor Peafowl have received invites for a large portion of their disciples."

"Oh? The invitation list's grown bigger?" Jiang Chen smiled.

"Right!" Ji San was a bit depressed. "I'd thought we were the only young disciples to be invited amongst all the great clans yesterday and was feeling a bit proud of that fact. It's all turned to nothing the next day, sigh."

Ji San really was sounding a bit depressed. After all, everyone wanted to be special. If everyone was invited, then there was nothing special about this treatment at all.

Jiang Chen smiled, “Brother Ji, there’s nothing to be depressed at all. At last you were the first batch to be invited, no?”

Ji San started and broke out in a grin. “That’s right! I was the first batch. There’s still more glory in that than them!” He seemed to immediately think of something else and spoke again, “Oh right brother, there’s something very important that I must tell you.”

“What?”

“About the Longevity Pill. The Sacred Peafowl Mountain owes you a big favor having received the Longevity Pill, so they’ve been discussing what to do recently as well.”

“Have they reached a conclusion?” Jiang Chen asked carelessly. The Longevity Pill hasn’t been released to the market yet. Apart from the two that the Majestic Clan had taken out to experiment with last time, all of the rest had been confiscated by the Peafowl Guard. There were none in circulation, so they were impossible to find in Veluriyam Capital.

“The clan lord says that the Sacred Peafowl Mountain has decided upon what to do.”

“And what is that?”

“Initial plans are to split the profits five ways.”

“Five ways? What do they mean by that?” Jiang Chen didn’t quite understand this plan.

“The Sacred Peafowl Mountain as one, the Coiling Dragon Clan for one, House Wei, you, and the Regal Pill Palace.” Ji San explained in detail. A thought struck Jiang Chen when he heard this. The Regal Pill Palace also has a share? Sacred Peafowl Mountain is showing me quite some face. However, he then immediately felt that this was likely a result of personal

intervention from Emperor Peafowl. “In terms of materials, House Wei will shoulder the cost for that. The Sacred Peafowl Mountain and the Coiling Dragon Clan will be in charge of providing pill kings, and you and House Wei will handle the technique aspect.”

This meant Jiang Chen and House Wei’s contribution were a result of the pill recipe. This was quite a reasonable proposition.

“Brother, you can raise any objections you have as well. We’re still in the process of gathering opinions.”

Jiang Chen thought about it and shook his head. “This is a very reasonable offer, I have no opinions.”

“Alright, then I’ll go back and tell the clan lord.” Ji San was quite happy. After all the loops and turns, the Longevity Pill recipe had still fallen into their camp.

Jiang Chen suddenly thought of something and spoke up, “There’s something we need to keep an eye on.”

“What is it?”

“The Eternal Celestial Capital stole the pill recipe and were the ones who gave the pill to the Majestic Clan. However, their quality was lower because they didn’t benefit from my pointers. But since they have the recipe, they possess a latent threat to the future market.”

“That’s very true.”

“Therefore, the Sacred Peafowl Mountain must announce right now that the Longevity Pill is their research item. Apart from the pills from them, everything else is counterfeit and fake. There’s no guarantee that there will be no side effects, and we must have everyone acknowledge that only pills from the Sacred Peafowl Mountain are the legitimate products.”

“Right, this point is very important. This means that even though the Wang father and son are dead, they must shoulder this to the end. We’ll say that the Eternal Celestial Capital’s recipe was

stolen by the Majestic Clan.” Ji San’s face was solemn.

“That’s how we’ll do it.” Jiang Chen smiled coldly. “The Eternal Celestial Capital stole the recipe from the Regal Pill Palace to begin with. What business does such ill gotten gains have in being announced to the world?”

“Precisely!” Ji San agreed.

“The most critical thing is, the quality of their pills is less than ours. If the Eternal Celestial Capital doesn’t wish to accept this, then the Sacred Peafowl Mountain can issue a challenge and host a competition. The results of the contest will determine whose is real and whose is fake.”

Ji San’s eyes lit up as he slapped his thigh. “This plan is perfect! If they don’t answer the challenge, that means they have a guilty conscience. If they do and their quality is less than ours, then theirs is still fake and their reputation will suffer heavily as a result.”

Jiang Chen had spoken so much to get to this point. Even though the Eternal Celestial Capital had stolen the pill, he wasn’t going to let them have an easy time of things. You destroy my clan, kill my peers, sell my friends, steal my things, and want to live large after all of that? Dream on! Even if Jiang Chen didn’t have the strength to hack his way to the Eternal Celestial Capital at the moment, he would never let them go skipping off into the sunset.

Having received Jiang Chen’s plan, Ji San happily went to report back. If this plan could be deployed properly, then they would be able to take down a majority of the market without having to defeat the Eternal Celestial Capital’s recipe. After all, the only factor everyone agreed on in the world of martial dao was the quality of the pill. Whoever’s was higher was the authentic one!

After sending off Ji San, Jiang Chen went in search of the House Wei father and son and relayed what he’d just learned. They were overjoyed to hear of all this as they hadn’t been told of it yet. To

them, it was a stroke of good fortune falling out of the sky and striking them on the head.

“Pill King Zhen, the Longevity Pill? Two parts of the profit to our House Wei?” Wei Tianxiao found it a bit hard to believe as an incredulous expression blossomed over his face.

“Indeed, but House Wei in charge of the materials. Of course, the cost of the goods aren’t too high for this pill. Two million saint spirit stones per pill is already a very high price. The costs of the materials themselves are at most fifty thousand saint spirit stones.” Jiang Chen had been the one to create the pill, how would he not know the price of the materials? When he’d auctioned off one pill in the Myriad Domain, he’d sold it for ten million origin spirit stones and some other bits to Xiang Wentian of the Great Cathedral. That made for less than two million saint spirit stones. So now that a pill was priced at two million saint spirit stones, that was a very high price indeed. With the twenty percent that House Wei could split, that meant they would receive four hundred thousand spirit stones per pill. Compared to the fifty thousand saint spirit stones in costs, this was an absolute killing!

Gratitude was written all over Wei Tianxiao’s face when he heard Jiang Chen’s analysis. “Pill King Zhen, it is truly House Wei’s fortune that my son was able to make your acquaintance. Although I know that you were destined to soar to the skies one day in your brilliance, I hope that House Wei has the great fortune to follow in your footsteps when that day arrives.”

As a mighty expert and the house lord of House Wei, Wei Tianxiao was holding to a very humble posture in front of Jiang Chen. This also displayed his rational actions in dealing with interpersonal relationships. Jiang Chen had close relationships with the Coiling Dragon Clan now and had even caught the Sacred Peafowl Mountain’s eye. Wei Tianxiao knew that Pill King Zhen wouldn’t be spending much time in House Wei in the future. Although this depressed him some, he knew that this was a

momentum he couldn’t stop.

After last time’s affairs, Taiyuan Tower’s business boomed even more so after reopening for business. Taiyuan Lodge also opened for business after being won by Jiang Chen in a bet. Of course, House Wei also viewed Taiyuan Lodge as Jiang Chen’s property as well. They were keenly aware of their positioning and had placed themselves as of secondary importance. With the force of Jiang Chen’s rise, they knew it wasn’t anything that their house could hold back. They might as well adjust their mentality and lower their posture so as to cooperate with Jiang Chen for even longer, therefore benefiting even further from their friendship. From the current circumstances at least, House Wei’s position had risen to new heights compared to even their previous peak. This was all because of Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen didn’t plan on sharing Taiyuan Lodge with House Wei as it was something he’d won in a bet. This was going to be his new stronghold of operations. He naturally knew what Wei Tianxiao meant with this low posture and wasn’t the sort to burn bridges after he’d crossed them. “House Lord Wei, House Wei is a great reason for why I’ve been able to find my footing in Veluriyam Capital. We suffered through trials together and will naturally enjoy the rewards together. It’s natural that you take twenty percent of the Longevity Pill. The most important thing is that the Sacred Peafowl Mountain and the Coiling Dragon Clan acknowledges House Wei.”

Wei Tianxiao only nodded with a smile as he ruminated on the gratitude flowing through him.

Chapter 819: The Sacred Peafowl Mountain

Though it was his second time coming to the Sacred Peafowl Mountain, Jiang Chen felt entirely different from his first visit. His previous appointment had been marked with worry. His presentation of the Longevity Pill as a stratagem to strike at the Majestic Clan was a slight gamble. Who knew if the people at Sacred Peafowl Mountain would play along? But this time, Jiang Chen was here on the personal invitation of Emperor Peafowl, and his heart was undisturbed. Naturally, he had come accompanied by the Coiling Dragon Clan lord and company. Besides young master Ji San, there were two other geniuses from the Coiling Dragon Clan as well.

The Coiling Dragon Clan trio's cultivation levels were similar. One was at the peak of ninth level emperor realm, and another was simply ninth level. On paper, there was no substantial difference between the two of them and Ji San. Unless Ji San suddenly broke through into emperor realm one day, he had no overwhelming advantage in the competition to be the clan lord. The Coiling Dragon clan lord himself had little bias overall for all three of the possible candidates, whether for or against. However, Jiang Chen was keenly aware that young master Ji San had distinguished himself in recent events via his unparalleled contributions. He was likely first place in the clan lord's heart already.

"Ah, this must be the Pill King Zhen I've heard so much about recently?" The one speaking was a smartly dressed youth. The fairness of his appearance easily rivaled Ji San's, though he tended a little more on the feminine side.

Ji San extended a hand in introduction. "Brother, this is one of the best and brightest among the younger generation of the Coiling Dragon Clan. You can call him young master Liuxiang."

"How do you do," Jiang Chen smiled and nodded.

Young master Liuxiang looked Jiang Chen over closely, but his expression was warm. “I’ve long heard your name, yet we haven’t been acquainted until now. Ole Third, you’re truly a master smuggler. You’ve hid a good brother like this away for so long without introducing us. Don’t you know I love to make new friends?”

“Well, you’re acquainted now, aren’t you?” Ji San laughed, and the other two followed suit. However, the third genius refrained from doing so. Garbed in black, he looked at the mirthful trio coolly, his expression stern. His features were well-defined, almost as if they had been sharpened against an axe and saber. His entire person gave off a sense of incisiveness. He was obviously not an easy person to approach.

Ji San had no intention of ignoring him, however. “This is a newcomer to our ranks, a rising star in the Coiling Dragon Clan. His name is Ji Zhongtang, and he is four or five years younger than me, and yet he has already arrived at ninth level sage realm. His future potential is limitless.”

Jiang Chen inclined his head, grinning a little. “The Coiling Dragon Clan’s strength is truly profound. Geniuses like him are hard to find.”

Ji Zhongtang returned the nod with indifference, as a kind of half-reply. Once the youths’ conversations were concluded, the Coiling Dragon clan lord waved a hand. “Come, we should not be late to the Peafowl Gathering. It is not good to arrive after the others.”

Led by the clan lord, it only took a short while for the group of youths to arrive at Sacred Peafowl Mountain. Two of the monarchs subordinate to Emperor Peafowl awaited them at the foot of the mountain. The one elegant in demeanor was named the Cloudsoar Monarch; the other was more fierce, called the Chronobalance Monarch. Alongside their compatriots the Wildfox and Plumscore Monarchs, they were the Four Monarchs of Sacred Peafowl

Mountain. Together, they were the strongest among those who directly answered to Emperor Peafowl. Of course, it was difficult to gauge their strength against the Coiling Dragon clan lord's.

In the four monarchs' opinion, the Coiling Dragon clan lord was older than all of them, and possessed unfathomable strength. Hypothetically, he would not be an easy opponent. Moreover, the clan lord had always kept a low profile. Thus, it was impossible for the four emperors to have ever sparred with him. Exactly which party was stronger was still a mystery.

"Clan Lord, your complexion is quite rosy as of late. That is cause for congratulations." The Cloudsoar Monarch consoled, clearly on good terms with the Coiling Dragon clan lord.

"I had a stroke of good fortune a while ago, and it's helping me temporarily. Hopefully my good luck continues, and things change for the better." The Coiling Dragon clan lord was not about to betray Jiang Chen's trust.

Some matters were so grave that it was difficult to disclose them, even to close friends. The Cloudsoar Monarch looked over at the youths behind the clan lord. "Many of the Coiling Dragon Clan's disciples are geniuses, as expected of the foremost clan of Veluriyam Capital," he smiled.

The clan lord chuckled as well. "Brother Cloudsoar, there is no need for the flattery. We are amongst friends here. The only reason our clan has the position is because of the emperor's care. Without His Majesty, I'm not sure if we could even maintain a foothold here, much less contest first place."

There were laughs all around. The Cloudsoar Monarch seemed quite interested in Jiang Chen. "Clan Lord, this must be Pill King Zhen?" He asked, pointing to the youth behind the man.

Jiang Chen's submission of the Longevity Pill's recipe was a well-guarded secret, and had no place in open discussion. This was especially true with youngsters present.

“That’s right. Pill King Zhen’s genius is something to be marveled at. Even His Majesty has made remarks to that effect. That’s why he was hand-picked to come to this conference,” the Coiling Dragon clan lord laughed.

The Cloudsoar Monarch nodded in agreement. “To defeat the Majestic Clan several times in succession on his own strength alone... a genius like that is worthy of the emperor’s invitation. Well then, please come in.”

He made an ushering gesture. At the signal, the Coiling Dragon clan lord finally began to walk inside, the youths in tow. There were many guests already present. As the greatest emperor among the seven great emperors of the capital, Emperor Peafowl had a whole seven subordinate clans beneath him. No other emperor came close. This was despite the fact that Emperor Peafowl hadn’t intentionally gathered factions to his side. The only one who came close was Emperor Shura, who commanded five clans. Together, Emperors Peafowl and Shura controlled almost half of the twenty-eight great clans of Veluriyam Capital.

Of the seven that sided with Peafowl, the Coiling Dragon Clan was the most prominent. At the sight of the Coiling Dragon clan lord, the other lords who’d already arrived rose to greet him. The internal ushers working directly for Peafowl were just as attentive to the clan lord’s arrival, receiving him with great care. Meanwhile, young master Ji San took Jiang Chen away in a different direction, an odd expression on his face.

“Brother, let’s take a look over there instead.”

Jiang Chen had no preference one way or another. He had no interest in participating in a conversation with a group of old geezers. The deeper they went, the more austere the environment became.

“Ji Ole Third, what are you sneaking around like that for? What do you plan to do?” There was a sudden cry from nearby.

Ji San stopped in his tracks, displeased. “What does that have to do with you, Fatty Miao?”

To the side, several youths showed themselves from behind a flower rack. At their head was a young man, broad-shouldered, stocky of build. Ji San glanced at them lazily, his attitude clearly irreverent. The bear of a youth was named Miao Suo, an heir to the Spiritbranch Clan, another of the seven great clans beneath Emperor Peafowl. Though they weren’t the foremost clan, they weren’t quite last place, either. They were a respectable top six clan. But more importantly, Ji San and Miao Suo had always had bad relations. It wasn’t that they had a natural grudge. Rather, they liked the same girl, a disciple who studied under Emperor Peafowl.

“Hmph, Ji Ole Third. I know you’re going to solicit Miss Dan’s attention again. I’m warning you, she’s in a bad mood lately. I wouldn’t disturb her if I were you.”

Ji San sneered. “Fatty Miao, are you sure there’s nothing wrong with your brain? Or are you seriously telling me how to conduct myself?” Not wanting to bother with Miao Suo any longer, he turned to Jiang Chen again. “Brother, let’s go.”

Miao Suo was greatly upset, but he was held back by several of the youths near him. “Brother Suo, don’t be so angry. If Ji Ole Third wants to be rejected, then let him. Miss Dan is a disciple of the emperor, many of her peers admire her already. There’s no way that she’d pick Ji Ole Third.”

Unfortunately, the speech only gave Miao Suo further cause for concern. Ji San himself was already a tough rival. If Emperor Peafowl’s other disciples joined in, what chance did Miao Suo have? In the moment, he felt a little desperate. For his part, Jiang Chen didn’t know whether to laugh or cry. Ji San was taking him to see his prospective sweetheart! It sparked some curiosity in him, though. Ji San was a genteel and handsome youth. What kind of a woman was she, that he esteemed her so?

A bamboo grove was seen in the distance, and a flowing stream lay in front of it. A narrow bridge of the same material connected the shores. It was a charming scene.

Ji San waited at one end of the bridge. “Miss Dan, Ji San of the Coiling Dragon Clan seeks an audience.”

A few moments passed. Footsteps could be heard within the grove. A young maid appeared, addressing Ji San. “Please go back, young master Ji San. My mistress is in a bad mood today.”

Ji San wasn’t about to be deterred after coming so far already. “Little sister Cui’er, can’t you let her know that I’m here?” He said, obviously thick-skinned.

The girl named Cui’er scowled back. “Just go back like I told you.”

Ji San chuckled. “But I’ve gone to the effort of making a trip here! This is rare for me. Isn’t it a shame to simply leave? Little sister Cui’er…”

Cui’er raised a willowy brow. “Who’s your sister?”

Ji San was still smiling, not taking any offense. “Okay, okay. Can I call you Miss Cui’er instead? I have a letter here that you simply must give to Miss Dan. Please, please do. Even if I can’t see her, surely a letter is fine?”

Seeing someone as suave as Ji San adopt such a humble attitude shattered Jiang Chen’s worldview. How beautiful did Miss Dan have to be for Ji San to act like this? Cui’er thought for a moment, giving Ji San another onceover. He seemed to pass some kind of litmus test, at least compared to the fatty earlier.

“Wait here,” she stomped off.

Ji San was very pleased. Miss Cui’er must be deferring to her mistress. He threw Jiang Chen a look of victory.

Miss Cui’er reappeared very quickly, her pace brisk. She was

pouting and had a pile of things in her arms. “These are all the things you’ve given mistress in the past. None of it has been touched. So, you can have it back,” she said, candidly facing Ji San.

“What?” Ji San found himself in a disarray by her words.

Chapter 820: An Imperial Opportunity

Miss Cui'er felt a bit guilty when she saw young master Ji San's depressed demeanor. "Young master San, Cui'er knows that you're a good person. It's not that my mistress thinks otherwise, either... she just has someone different in her heart, and always has. After all these years, she still hasn't put him down."

Ji San's cheer faded when he heard those words. Relationships were strange like that. If her heart had been empty, Ji San was confident that he would one day, with enough effort, be able to change her mind. But a lost love was much more difficult to beat.

"Young master San, please just go..." Cui'er sighed in resignation at the situation, turning to leave as well.

Jiang Chen patted Ji San on the shoulder. "Brother Ji, let things be decided by fate."

Ji San laughed aloud, managing to remain carefree despite the situation. "As you said, brother. All things under heaven are decided by threads of fate. Perhaps there is none between Miss Dan and myself." He shook his head slightly as he spoke. "As it is said, 'The modest, retiring, virtuous, young lady / For our prince a good mate she.' But alas, though I may admire beauty, even I know that forcing one's hand in such matters leads to nothing but unhappiness."

The two of them departed from that place. Though Ji San had felt some sadness still, he was able to recover after another few moments. "How unexpected. That I, crushed by my first love, could scatter it to the wind so soon." Walking out from the bamboo grave, Ji San's laugh was self-deprecating, but perhaps poignant also.

Miao Suo and company awaited them outside still. At Ji San's reappearance, the former couldn't help but mock him. "Ji Ole Third, didn't I tell you already not to go? You were just asking to

get snubbed.”

Ji San returned a breezy smile. “Well, it’s better than how she treats you, isn’t it?”

……

Miss Cui’er returned to the bamboo grove and approached a clearing. A pastoral domicile lay here, a refuge from the busyness of the outside world. “Miss, I’ve sent them all away.” She stood at the door, speaking to the house’s inhabitant.

“Mm.” A tranquil voice replied from within.

“Miss, forgive me for speaking out of turn. The… young master Ji San just now, he’s a young man with both talent and character, and more importantly, he’s a moral man. I think, maybe…”

“Cui’er, His Majesty instructed you to attend to my domestic needs. Do you intend to change professions and play the matchmaker as well?” The voice was aloof, with a hint of annoyance.

“I’m sorry, miss,” Cui’er hastily apologized.

“I’m not blaming you, but I hope my wishes are known.” The voice sighed.

“Yes, miss, I’ll never suggest anything like that again.” Cui’er flicked out her tongue, some fear still lingering.

“What is His Majesty up to recently?”

“His Majesty has recently left seclusion, and is hosting some sort of Peafowl Gathering. Would you like to go observe, miss?”

The voice faltered a moment. There was a faint exhale. “Never mind, I will not.”

“Miss, don’t be like that. You cultivate every day, but you should get some fresh air as well. I know you might have a lot of things bottled up, but I’m worried you’ll hurt yourself if you continue like this.” As she spoke, Cui’er felt a light pat on her shoulder, and

turned her head. “Your Majesty?” She gasped in surprise.

Emperor Peafowl had come. “Cui’er, feel free to excuse yourself. I’d like to talk awhile with Dan’er.” Emperor Peafowl’s tone was mild. There was no feeling of remoteness, even for a servant.

Too nervous for words, Cui’er could only nod. She ran off like a gust of wind, tiny steps pattering upon the ground.

“Dan’er, can I come in?”

“Yes, Your Majesty?” The voice inside the house took on a tone of slight amazement. “Please do.”

Pushing past the door, Emperor Peafowl entered the residence. A slender, beautiful shadow stood by the windowsill inside. From a distance, she looked a little thin, but her figure was lithe nevertheless.

“Dan’er, the Peafowl Gathering... What do you think about taking a look together?”

“I would rather not, Your Majesty.” Dan’er’s inflection seemed to be permanently neutral. It was as if she cared for nothing, could be interested by nothing.

“Ah,” Emperor Peafowl murmured, “Dan’er, your cultivation foundation is not particularly sturdy. Even though I’ve helped you rebuild it, you cannot pursue haste alone in your studies.”

“Your Majesty, I cannot be lazy. My homeland is destroyed, and the people I care about are lost. How can I disengage myself from these truths?” Dan’er shook her head, adamant in her conviction.

“The Myriad Domain’s fall is not something that can be rectified in a single day. It takes time for these things. If you abuse your body like this, you’ll use it all up before that day comes.” Emperor Peafowl breathed out in quiet encouragement.

“Don’t forget, you have Nian’er as well,” he added.

Dan’er’s delicate body shook when she heard the name. “Your

Majesty, how is she? I remember you said you'd take good care of her."

"Don't worry, Nian'er is quite well. I've instructed the Plumscore Monarch to teach her personally. I am sure that with enough time, she will become a bright pearl of Peafowl Holy Mountain."

"Your Majesty, your grace towards me is boundless. I couldn't repay the debt even if I were to devote my next life to you."

"There's no need to treat me as a stranger like that." Emperor Peafowl returned a carefree grin. "All things are decided by fate, and fate led me to you and your daughter in the wilderness. Your deliverance from evil men was merely circumstantial."

Dan'er inclined her head. "Even if fate is responsible, I must still thank you for your charity and kindness."

"Let's not speak about such depressing matters. Haste makes waste. Your first priority right now is to calm yourself. If not for yourself, then for your daughter. Fate will guide you, as it does in all things. I've been childless my entire life, and we've gotten along rather well. I see you as my own daughter, and I do not want you to torture yourself so."

Dan'er nodded, momentarily lost in thought. Taking in her enduring sadness, Emperor Peafowl knew that she hadn't really gotten over things. "Well, the Peafowl Gathering begins soon. Dan'er, I remind you of only one thing. All things fall into place, when fate's trajectory dictates." Saying this, he drifted out the door. Emperor Peafowl shook his head as he left the bamboo grove. "All men are troubled by emotions, and Dan'er is no different. She's such an emotional girl, yet so stubborn. I wonder what kind of youth she gave her heart to, back in the Myriad Domain? After all these years, she still hasn't forgotten."

He sighed softly, but wasn't about to press the matter. He knew that Dan'er hadn't said a word about it because she didn't want others to interfere. A man of his skills could divine and investigate

the past quite easily. However, Emperor Peafowl wasn't that kind of work-making busybody. If Dan'er didn't want outside help, then she would have to unravel the knot in her heart on her own. Any external meddling could only end in disaster. The Myriad Domain had already fallen, and likely the person that Dan'er held in her heart with it.

Emperor Peafowl shook his head again as the thought arose. "Am I really getting old, and my heart is softening in my old age?" He allowed himself a wry, almost self-deprecating smile. With a single movement of his body, he disappeared into nothingness.

……

The much-anticipated Peafowl Gathering finally began. All of the guests were seated in their assigned places, their postures solemn. The venue for the event was a place sacred in its beauty. There were ponds filled with lotuses all around and bamboo forests to the side, adorned with exotic flora and making the scene as if an ethereal realm. All present had their eyes focused on a single entrance. Emperor Peafowl and the Four Monarchs were about to appear. Under everyone's gazes, the much-anticipated five strode out.

Jiang Chen's look froze. Emperor Peafowl's clothes were the exact same as when they'd met that day, and he had the same carefree air. Everyone stood simultaneously at the appearance of the emperor, as if in agreement. They saluted in respectful unison. "Greetings to Your Majesty"

"Haha, there's no need to be so formal." Emperor Peafowl opened both arms, laughing. "This isn't a grand ceremony or anything, friends. Make yourselves at ease."

The attendees were influenced by the emperor's bright smile, their own moods improving as well. Evidently, part of the reason for their presence was to see if His Majesty Peafowl had recovered from the loss of his disciple. It looked like he had, after all.

“I called everyone here today so we could talk about recent events. Of course, there’s the matter of preparing for Veluriyam Pagoda’s opening as well! How ready do you feel, gentlemen?” Emperor Peafowl carried himself very jovially. His eyes settled on the Coiling Dragon clan lord first. “Would you like to talk about it, Coiling Dragon?”

Hastily standing, the Coiling Dragon clan lord disclosed recent events before introducing the several geniuses from the clan at length. Afterwards, he pointed at Jiang Chen. “This is Pill King Zhen, a guest pill king of House Wei. I recall that Your Majesty personally asked him to be invited.”

Smiling, Emperor Peafowl shifted his attention towards the young man. Maintaining full composure, Jiang Chen returned the gaze with a cupped fist salute. “Greetings to Your Majesty.”

“The pleasure is mine. I hear that you’ve distinguished yourself in the recent events of the capital. You’ve done a lot of work for both House Wei and the Coiling Dragon Clan. I hear that you’re an apostle of the Deviant Pill Faction?”

The question was a customary part of proceedings, and Jiang Chen knew it to be the case. “My studies in pills have been rather eclectic, but it is true that I am quite proficient in the teachings of the Deviant Pill Faction. I’ve studied their knowledge in particular for many years.”

Emperor Peafowl nodded. “Very good. There are many pill kings here at the Sacred Peafowl Mountain, but we don’t have much expertise with the Deviant Pill Faction and its teachings. It would be good if we could exchange knowledge here. You are welcome to come to visit anytime.”

“I thank you for your kindness, Your Majesty.” Jiang Chen smiled slightly in thanks.

Nothing further was said. The Emperor moved his gaze towards the other clans, who reported their situations one by one as well.

After the conclusion of the reporting segment, Emperor Peafowl chuckled. “I’m glad to hear that everyone is working hard. I’ve called our young geniuses here to present a select number of opportunities. Of course, supplies are limited, and only fortune will dictate the degree of your benefit. Thus, I’ve made a few arrangements... geniuses of the clans, are you ready to face my trials?”

Opportunity? Trial? The young geniuses were flush with excitement. Opportunities given by the emperor... it was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity!

Chapter 821: The Test Begins

Jiang Chen sat on his seat, his face entirely unperturbed. However, he had the impression Emperor Peafowl had thrown an encouraging glance this way when he said those words. What did His Majesty mean by that? Is he asking me to participate in the test together with those scions of the great clans?

Besides Jiang Chen, Ji San poked him and said via voice transmission, “Brother, I think Emperor Peafowl was looking at me just now. Did you notice anything?”

Jiang Chen was left speechless. This guy was truly narcissistic enough. However, Jiang Chen wasn’t going to tell him the truth. Seeing his brother’s face brimming with delight, Jiang Chen didn’t have the heart to burst his bubble. After all, it would be too cruel for a man to suffer a blow in his professional life after suffering from sentimental woes no long ago.

“Ladies and gentlemen, now that the His Majesty has spoken, everyone has to treasure such a great opportunity.” The various clan lords were also delighted. They looked at their own children and started discussing the development with them. Soon after, the youngsters all brimmed with excitement, eager to give it a go. The young people invited this time numbered eighteen, Jiang Chen included. All of them were first-rate geniuses from the various great clans.

“We naturally can’t thank His Majesty enough for his blessings.” The Coiling Dragon Clan’s clan lord chuckled. “If I may be so bold, Pill Master Zhen here present is also a striking genius. I wonder if it would be possible for Your Majesty to include him in your test?”

With a hearty laugh, Emperor Peafowl said, “Since everyone here is a guest of mine, everyone will naturally be treated the same.”

A pill king? The other young people from the various clans all looked at Jiang Chen in turn. They all revealed clear surprise.

What is a pill genius like you sticking your nose in our business? His Majesty's test was certainly related to martial talent. As a pill genius, this simply isn't the stage for you to shine. By participating, wouldn't you be humiliating yourself? Those people's expressions weren't overly aggressive, but they still couldn't entirely conceal the rejection and the doubts in their eyes.

Jiang Chen hadn't been particularly keen, but the provocation he could see from these guy's eyes made him unhappy. He immediately cupped his fists in a salute. "Many thanks for Your Majesty's favors." His words clearly expressed his intent to participate. Emperor Peafowl laughed out loud. He silently sighed in relief for no reason at all when he saw Jiang Chen agree to participate. He had actually been a little worried. If others were to know Emperor Peafowl's frame of mind, they would likely unhinge their jaws in shock.

Seeing Jiang Chen really about to participate, the disciples from the other great clans suddenly were a little put out. Clearly, this pill king from a noble house receiving such an exalted treatment didn't sit well with them. After all, even the scions of noble houses weren't qualified to participate. As a guest pill king from an aristocratic house, why don't you consider your own status first? Even if His Majesty is magnanimous, you should still show some discretion and take the initiative to withdraw! Even if you want to take this opportunity to climb the social ladder, that's still too much lack of tact!

Some of the more narrow-minded were already plotting how to put him in his place when the opportunity arose. They could also let him know at the same time that even a pill genius couldn't careless stick his nose in the martial geniuses' territory.

"Are all of you ready?" Cloudsoar Monarch said. "If you're ready, then please come forward."

All the geniuses hurried forward in a rush to outdo the others and gathered near Cloudsoar Monarch. Jiang Chen reached the

group in Ji San's wake at a leisurely pace. He saw some clan scions with undisguised mockery on their faces as soon as he reached the group, seemingly a little hostile to him. Jiang Chen was long accustomed to such meaningless posturing. He didn't feel like paying attention to them, and merely replied with a careless smile. For others, his attitude came across as conspicuous contempt. Miao Suo said with with a cold smile, "Ole Third, are you becoming senile? You even cozy up to an aristocratic house's guest pill king now?"

The two of them were personal foes. It wasn't surprising for them to be at each other's throat.

A contemptuous smile was Ji San's only reply. "Fatso, do you think you're qualified enough to run your mouth in my presence?"

Miao Suo was about to speak when he noticed Cloudsoar Monarch's eyes on him. His bulky figure suddenly shook. His face ashen, he couldn't find the courage to say any nonsense any longer.

"Do you see the Peafowl Lotus Pond?" Cloudsoar Monarch pointed at the vast Peafowl Lotus Pond undulating with blue waves. It was so vast one couldn't seem from one end to the opposite shore in a single glance.

"Each of you will be given a lotus leaf. You have to reach the other shore of the pond with the help of this lotus leaf. The Thousand Peafowl Mural is there. What you have to do is to meditate on the Mural. His Majesty Peafowl has left opportunities therein. Whether you can obtain them will depend on your own luck. Of course, keep in mind that whether you can reach the Mural is an issue in itself. There are at least three trials involved."

Three trials? They could only reach the Peafowl Mural after surmounting the three trials. Only after visualizing the Mural would they have an opportunity to obtain a blessings left behind by Great Emperor Peafowl.

One had to admit that the difficulty was substantial. Jiang Chen didn't bat an eye. Standing inside the group of people, his eyes lightly closed, he seemed to be simply meditating without a care to the various reactions around him.

"Brother?" Ji San cautiously asked.

"Stay calm." Jiang Chen merely spoke two words.

A startled Ji San immediately seemed to realize something. He steadied his state of mind. Jiang Chen's two words had rang in his mind like a great bell. He realized he had been in a light-headed state of mind every since arriving on Peafowl Holy Mountain. Such a state of mind hadn't vanished even now. How was he going to face the contest in such a mood?

Some clan scions didn't pay any attention at Jiang Chen's appearance. They thought this Pill King Zhen really liked to put on a mysterious act. How far a would a pill genius go in such a situation? It didn't matter how hard he played the part. Cloudsoar Monarch seemed very interested in Jiang Chen. His gaze revealed a bit of admiration when it swept past Jiang Chen. Even putting aside whatever talent he had in the dao of pills, this young man's self-possession was definitely out of the ordinary. Not every young man could stay calm by simply willing it.

In such a competitive atmosphere, a young man who could turn a blind eye to the provocative glances from the other competitors, a blind ear to all sorts of provocative words, was definitely a rare sight. After all, all young people were prone to anger. When it came to martial cultivation, all sorts of negative feelings were sources of internal demons.

Greed, envy, pride, anger... Those emotions in particular were great hindrances for martial cultivation. However, most of the time, most martial cultivators failed due to lack of control over their own emotions. To surmount the chains of the martial dao was easy, while vanquishing the demons in one's own heart was

much more difficult. However, this Pill King Zhen made Cloudsoar Monarch feel that, though the youth's martial cultivation wasn't at a particularly high realm, he might not lose to anyone present when it came to spirit and consciousness.

With a broad wave from Cloudsoar Monarch, the blue ripples suddenly surged. Eighteen lotus leaves appeared out of nowhere and fell on the surface of the pond. "Ladies and gentlemen, these are the boats that will carry you to the other shore. Remember, don't think of it as a normal lake. In this place, your cultivation, your strength, your wits and wisdom, everything will be vividly reflected. No one can certain to be the victor before laughing the last laugh." Cloudsoar Monarch ordered, "Be on your way."

"Brother, do your best!" Ji San leaped on a lotus leaf. With a nod, Jiang Chen also jumped onto a lotus leaf.

By the time Jiang Chen landed on the lotus leaf, he realized none of the other competitors were in sight anymore when he glanced around. What was left in their place was a vast expanse of white water. He surveyed the scene for a moment without any fear or worry, then called upon his internal energy and slowly pushed the lotus leaf forward without striving for excessive speed. Jiang Cheng thought Cloudsoar Monarch's final words had been anything but casual. Especially when he said that "no one can be certain to be the victor before laughing the last laugh." There had obviously a meaning hidden therein.

In other words, only the one to have the last laugh would be the victor. In that case, pursuing blind speed at the beginning might not be a good thing. Especially when they would run into three obstacles on the way, at the very least. Jiang Chen opened his God's Eyes and observed his surroundings. Although Cloudsoar Monarch hadn't mentioned whether there would be any element of danger, being careful couldn't hurt either way.

Something suddenly flashed in Jiang Chen's consciousness after a quarter-hour. He suddenly narrowed his eyes and looked in front

of him. He saw many white streams of water forcibly partitioning the pond like blockades of steel, barring his way.

“Is that the first obstacle?” Jiang Chen slowed down and carefully studied it for a moment. He realized it was a dividing formation.

This formation wasn’t too complicated. It purely used the properties of water to create layer upon layer of folding waves in order to blockade the space. If he couldn’t break through this blockade, then he couldn’t progress any further. Everything was that simple. Jiang Chen waved his hand without halting. Something appeared in it: it was the Moonshatter Awl he’d obtained from Cao Jin after he’d killed the latter. This item was simply custom-made for this obstacle. The Moonshatter Awl was none other than a formation-breaking artifact. Back then, Cao Jin had used this Awl and, together with several members of his sect using formation-breaking techniques, they’d broken the formation surrounding Mt. Rippling Mirage. One could see from that how ridiculous the Moonshatter Awl was.

Jiang Chen wasn’t one of those inflexible men. He gripped the Awl and ruthlessly slashed with it. A moonlight-like beam of light shot at the layers of folding waves. After seven to eight successive slashes, the moonlight-like beams of light interlaced together and broke a small opening in the folded waves with a loud rumble. As soon the opening appeared, the internal structure of the formation suddenly crumbled and disintegrated, becoming countless sprays of water that scattered away entirely with a crash.

The water surged all of a sudden before recovering its calm a moment later. Jiang Chen didn’t stop after seeing the first obstacle. He steered the lotus leaf and continued his journey forward. He’d passed this first obstacle more easily than anyone else.

“Now that I’ve dealt with the first obstacle, what’s the next one going to be?” Jiang Chen wasn’t excessively pleased or complacent

despite surmounting the first obstacle. The first obstacle might not have been particularly difficult, but he'd have needed a long time and a lot of energy without the Moonshatter Awl.

"It seems like His Majesty is being serious this time?" Jiang Chen couldn't help but be a little more interested in this test. He might have many things already, but one never have too many good things.

Chapter 822: Passing Three Stages in a Row

Jiang Chen continued onwards and paid a bit of attention to his surroundings, but still didn't see any of the great clan disciples around him. "I suppose this entire Peafowl Lotus Pond is a big formation in itself, and is a formation that contains many little formations inside that isolates all participants."

Jiang Chen had done quite a bit of research into formations, so it was only natural that he managed to glimpse a little into Peafowl Lotus Pond's true nature. While moving forwards, he suddenly heard a rumble at the front. He looked to the horizon, and was surprised to find that the water surface to the front had actually parted to make a path through the center. The tides on two sides were at least several hundred feet tall, and they looked like two walls of water that had sealed up the passage. He could see countless whirlpools spinning circles at the center of the passage. Moreover, the water walls would sometimes fire rays of rainbow light that were obviously very powerful. Jiang Chen rubbed his nose. Am I supposed to pass through this passage to clear this stage?

He observed the passage for a moment and found that the whirlpools sat very close to each other. A simple misstep or a tiny loss of control might mean that he would dragged into the whirlpools. These whirlpools were a kind of a test. The dense rays of rainbow light shooting out from the water walls were one as well. If he was accidentally clipped by one of the rainbow lights, then he might be swept away immediately by the whirlpools at the bottom.

Jiang Chen might not know the exact rules, but he was sure that being swept away by the whirlpools would mean failure. He had no intentions of leaving at such a sour note.

After observing the passage for a moment, he came to the conclusion that there wasn't a regular pattern behind these

whirlpools. Still, he now know that he should be able to deal with these whirlpools with relative confidence. The problem was that the rainbow light beams were even more irregular. Their speed were irregular, and a pattern was non-existent. The only thing he could do here was to dodge on instinct. Yes, the speed of these light beams were travelling faster than the eye could see. Therefore, he could only rely on his instincts as a cultivator.

Thankfully, Jiang Chen's instincts weren't weak. Hesitating no longer, Jiang Chen urged the lotus leaf and threw himself into the passage immediately.The second he entered the passage, he immediately sensed that the surrounding whirlpools were pressing against him constantly. Although Jiang Chen had avoided them carefully enough that he wasn't being pulled into them, the strength of the whirlpools still affected his path. Consequently, it also affected his movement speed.

He knew that this stage wasn't easy, but he was a bold man with the skills to match. Although his speed was decreased by the whirlpools, he hadn't slowed down too much as he circled around them constantly. He knew very well that those rainbow lights would land him in great trouble if he were to fly too slowly. Therefore, he must control both speed and rhythm properly. He had to control it so that he would neither be hit by the rainbow lights or be swept away by the whirlpools at the bottom.

The passage was extremely long. Although Jiang Chen had been traveling for almost an hour already, he felt like that there was no end in sight. He looked a little surprised, "Why did this second stage suddenly become so much harder?"

……

Everyone was seated around Emperor Peafowl, but no one was in the mood to taste the delicious wine atop the table right now. Their minds were on the Peafowl Lotus Pond. Unfortunately, no one could see what was happening inside.

Emperor Peafowl was the only one who was still wearing a calm and unfathomable smile. He had already received the Cloud Monarch's report when Jiang Chen passed through the first stage. As it turns out, the first person to pass through was actually Jiang Chen. Emperor Peafowl wasn't surprised in the least. He immediately notified the Cloud Monarch in secret to increase the difficulty of Jiang Chen's second stage by 50%. Under wraps, Jiang Chen had no idea that that his second stage was 1.5 times more difficult than other participants.

The rainbow light continued to fire wildly, and their speed and rate of fire was increasing continuously. Even Jiang Chen was starting to find the test strenuous. This stage was supposed to be testing a half-step emperor realm genius, but Jiang Chen was only at fifth level sage realm right now. Moreover, his test was fifty percent harder than others! Therefore, one could say that the difficulty of his test was almost the equivalent of an early stage emperor realm cultivator's test. It was no wonder that he was feeling stressed. Suddenly, an idea popped into his mind. He recalled an item.

Happy at the sudden flash of inspiration, he took out the Featherflight Mirror and used it at the same time the light rays were firing towards him. The moment Featherflight Mirror was used, the rainbow lights' speed immediately decreased by half. Overjoyed, Jiang Chen immediately sped up and flew through the passage like hot knife through butter.

With the aid of Featherflight Mirror, Jiang Chen was able to pass through the remaining distance at relative ease. He broke through many obstacles again and again, and finally, there was a white flash that caused both water walls to collapse abruptly.

Rumble! As the water churned like a rumbling earthquake, Jiang Chen finally exited the second stage and arrived at a calm water region. He relaxed and put away the Featherflight Mirror. "This stage was seriously difficult. If I hadn't used the Featherflight

Mirror, even I can't tell if I could've survived the last stretch. In fact, this last stretch in particular was really ridiculously difficult. Can those clan descendants really pass this stage?"

Jiang Chen was doubtful of their chances. It wasn't that he was looking down on the others, but realistically speaking, even a half-step emperor realm cultivator like young master Ji San only had at best a thirty percent chance of making it through that stage. As for the rest, Jiang Chen couldn't see even a sliver of hope for them to make it through.

Jiang Chen continued forwards after passing through the second stage. "Your Majesty, Pill King Zhen is still the first person to make it through the second stage," The Cloud Monarch's voice resounded.

"Oh? Didn't you increase the difficulty of his stage?" Emperor Peafowl replied by message.

"I did, but he used some sort of unknown method later on and was able to travel even faster during the second half of the test." Not even the observing Cloud Monarch could see what was happening inside the formation. His responsibility was to supervise the test from outside the formation only. Therefore, even he had no idea exactly what method Jiang Chen used to speed through the second half of the test even faster than before.

After all, the second half of the test was even more difficult than the first half, not to mention that Jiang Chen's difficulty was intentionally increased by 50% compared to other participants. But he'd still been able to pass through the second stage first. Now this was a little unusual.

"This kid really is interesting," Emperor Peafowl thought for a moment and smiled, "Do refrain from upping the difficulty again during the third stage. It's true that geniuses must be tempered, but it isn't right to interfere too much either."

"Understood," the Cloud Monarch responded.

Jiang Chen very quickly ran into the third stage. In fact, there were no prior signs at all. Roars just started resounding from all across the water as water monsters charged out of the underground. These water monsters were actually all living creatures living beneath Peafowl Lotus Pond. Moreover, every one of these living beings looked incredibly sinister and brutal. Every one of them possessed the strength of a human sky sage realm cultivator, and the strong ones were actually possessed the strength of a human half-step emperor realm cultivator.

Jiang Chen actually counted a total of nine water beasts in the water. In addition, the position of these nine water monsters were so meticulously planned and logically arranged that one could even see a hint of formation dao from it. Jiang Chen would be attacked no matter where he went he chose to enter the water. In fact, he might even be attacked en masse.

Do I have to use Featherflight Mirror again? While he might be capable enough to deal with these monsters in the norm, there was no telling what might happen beneath the water. Jiang Chen wasn't willing to waste time on them either. Plus, the test only requested that he pass through the stage, not take down all these monsters.

Jiang Chen was just about to use Featherflight Mirror when a yell suddenly resounded in his mind. "Idiot, what's there to be afraid of mere water monsters? Do you think that the dragon crystals I gave you are just for sure?"

The voice came suddenly, but Jiang Chen was overjoyed to hear it. The dragon crystals! It was the gift Long Xianxuan gave him after he made a breakthrough. They contained a tremendous amount of dragon aura in them. What was there to be afraid of mere water monsters if the dragon aura was deployed?

Jiang Chen was overjoyed, and he sent Long Xiaoxuan a message. "Brother Long, we can save the crystals. Why don't you unleash the aura yourself? It'll be stronger, and they'll get the hint and out

of the way faster."

Long Xiaoxuan let out a quiet humph, but didn't answer. Jiang Chen knew the dragon very well. The fact that he hadn't declined meant that he agreed to the proposal. Jiang Chen immediately chuckled and urged the lotus leaf to speed up towards the front instead of slowing. It was at this moment Long Xiaoxuan abruptly unleashed his stunning dragon aura and focused it around Jiang Chen's body. A moment later, Jiang Chen's body was filled with the divine aura of a dragon race. He almost felt like an ancient divine dragon himself. The dragon race's aura was no trifling matter. It wasn't only used to intimidate enemies. A dragon's aura also contained an extremely powerful consciousness attack that greatly intimidated most living beings. Most importantly, all living beings that were touched by dragon's aura would be frightened out of their wits and have their souls crumble. However, these water monsters were all quite powerful. Although they were stunned by the dragon's might, they didn't perish immediately to the attack. Still, there was no hiding the fear and anxiety in their eyes in this one instant.

This one instant of hesitation was enough for Jiang Chen to slip through an opening. Even if he had passed through the stage, the leftover presence of dragon's aura still caused the nine water monsters to roar non-stop in a low tone above the water surface. There was reluctance and anger behind the roars, but fear was the most prominent emotion of them all. Even these water monsters couldn't control their instinctive fear towards the might of an ancient dragon. They could only watch Jiang Chen leave and do nothing about it. Contrary to his expectations of a difficult battle, Jiang Chen never thought that he would be able to go through this third stage like he was going for a walk.

"Brother Long, the dragon's race divine aura is truly impressive," Jiang Chen praised. Long Xiaoxuan humphed and mumbled something indiscernible, but Jiang Chen could absolutely sense

that he was feeling pleased about himself. It was true that the dragon had helped him to pass through the third stage with ease, and in doing so stunned the wits out of the formation observer, the Cloud Monarch.

“Your… Your Majesty.” The Cloud Monarch was starting to feel that his brain wasn’t catching up to reality, “That… That Pill King Zhen has passed the third stage.”

“What did you say?” Even Emperor Peafowl was more than a little shocked this time as well. Jiang Chen had just passed through the second stage, but now had gotten through the third stage too? Could it be that the third stage hadn’t activated for some reason?

Chapter 823: The Thousand Peafowl Mural

Even the Cloud Monarch was completely puzzled, to say nothing of Emperor Peafowl. The former was already amazed at how Jiang Chen had breezed through the previous two stages. These three stages had, after all, been personally arranged by His Majesty. None of them were remotely ordinary since their difficulty had been raised to match geniuses at half step emperor realm. It was virtually impossible for any normal person to trick their way through such a level of difficulty without sufficient strength. But this Pill King Zhen had actually passed through all three stages with relative ease!

He hadn't even seen how Jiang Chen had passed the third stage. It appeared as if those aquatic monsters were very wary of Jiang Chen. Such a thing was practically unprecedented. Emperor Peafowl had personally used his abilities to suppress and capture these aquatic monsters. Not only were they extremely savage and ruthless, but they were also fearless even in the face of death. How could they be afraid of a human pill king? As such, the Cloud Monarch was also at a loss. He had no idea how to reply to Emperor Peafowl's question.

"Continue observing that child. This emperor has finally found an interesting youth after three thousand years of service to Veluriyam Capital. Haha, what a rare occasion!" Emperor Peafowl was in great mood. He had previously predicted that Jiang Chen was that lucky figure from the Myriad Domain, but he hadn't been entirely sure. His All-Seeing Eyes were not entirely clear, akin to seeing a flower blooming in fog. Moreover, most of the experts on his level were unwilling to believe him. But now, Emperor Peafowl was confident that his All-Seeing Eyes definitely had the ability to calculate fortune. The results of his deductions were being proven by Jiang Chen's actions. At the very least, Jiang Chen's every performance to date had far surpassed his peers, regardless of how

far he would go in the future.

Amongst the geniuses of the Upper Eight Regions or even Veluriyam Capital, those who were able to reach such a stage were as rare as dragon horns and phoenix feathers, to speak nothing of those from the Myriad Domain. And, compared to Jiang Chen, these people had most likely started out with an overwhelming advantage in resources.

It was settled, Jiang Chen was the one he'd been looking for. Having lived several millennia, Emperor Peafowl's attitude towards solving problems was far superior to the normal person, and few things warranted his excitement. But his heart was surging with waves of delight at the moment.

Seeing a faint smile on Emperor Peafowl's countenance, the clan lords below merely felt that the emperor was in exceptionally good cheer today, but scarcely knew why he was so delighted. Nonetheless everyone was happy to know that the emperor had at least shaken off the pain of his disciple's loss. This, in and of itself, was a cause for celebration. These clans had followed Emperor Peafowl for many years and were completely loyal to him. Deep down, they were unwilling to accept Emperor Peafowl being replaced by Emperor Shura.

But as of late, Emperor Peafowl had been living in relative seclusion and scarcely ever appeared in day-to-day administrative activities. He cared little about Emperor Shura's gradual usurpation, and may even have tacitly allowed it. Such an attitude had created a fair amount of worry in his subordinate clans. At this rate, Emperor Shura would replace Emperor Peafowl one day. At that time, Emperor Peafowl's old subordinates would surely be suppressed. How should they safeguard their future status in Veluriyam Capital?

Thus, these clan heads all hoped to see a more proactive and aggressive Emperor Peafowl. They'd all been worried that the emperor would be unable to recover from the setback of young

master Fan's demise. Could it be that he'd been drained of all his grand aspirations? Everyone realized, after seeing the emperor smile so candidly, that His Majesty hadn't lost his determination. His smile was a symbol of his proactiveness. Invariably, these clans were also thinking, "With the emperor in such a good mood, could he be planning to select a new personal disciple?"

Great waves surged within their hearts at the thought. If any one of their scions would be fortunate enough to be designated as a personal disciple, they would be destined for a meteoric rise in status. Even more riches and honor would await, should one of theirs become the successor. Even the Coiling Dragon clan lord couldn't help but feel a great deal of expectation.

"The end of my destined life draws near. If I'm not fated to obtain the Pine Crane Pill, the Coiling Dragon Clan will surely fall into chaos after my passing. But if one of the Coiling Dragon Clan's younger generation is selected by the emperor as his personal disciple, the clan's position would once again become rock-solid and unshakeable... I wonder if any of our clan's scions possess such a destiny?" The clan lord mentally sifted through the several descendants of the clan and felt that, while each of them had their own merits, Ji San was still slightly ahead of the rest. At the very least, Ji San becoming acquainted with a rare genius like Jiang Chen went to show that his fortune was somewhat superior to his peers. I do hope my Coiling Dragon Clan's descendents can rise above the others and obtain the emperor's good graces.

The other clan lords also had similar thoughts running through their minds, but not a whit was exposed on their faces. Nevertheless, Emperor Peafowl was, of course, quite aware of their minds. It was just that the scope of the emperor's vision had far surpassed these clan lords, and although their descendents were indeed not bad, none were up to Emperor Peafowl's selection standards. He could, perhaps, select one of them to nurture as a disciple. But they were all fell slightly short as a candidate for a

legacy disciple. There were certain disciples who had sufficient talent, but were somewhat lacking in temperament, whereas some with excellent attitude just slightly lacking in terms of talent. There were also those adequate in both, but lacking in terms of fortune. Emperor Peafowl was different from the others in that he had opened the All-Seeing Eyes, albeit only slightly. As such, he attached much more importance to fortune than his peers could imagine.

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Jiang Chen didn't reduce his vigilance even after passing three stages. Who knew if there would be a fourth stage or not? He wasn't one to relax until he was at the end. This was a good habit he'd formed from the countless times he'd been hunted during this lifetime. But his path continued unhindered after three stages and after a quarter hour, he arrived at the shores of the boundless waters.

He first spotted it as indistinct reefs barely visible at the furthest end of this body of water.

"Oh? Could this be the other shore?" Jiang Chen's mind was shaken as he sped up. Only upon closer inspection did he realize that it wasn't a reef, but rather an enormous cliff rising above the ocean.

The tall cliff stretched dozens of kilometers high and its smooth walls were decorated with countless images of peafowls. Each of these vivid and lifelike depictions displayed upon the tall cliffs were of vastly contrasting demeanor and bearing. A single image of a peafowl would perhaps be nothing out of the ordinary, but it was indeed a magnificent sight to behold thousands at the same time. But Jiang Chen remained unmoved by this stately scene before him. He had experienced countless spectacles of greater grandiosity in his past. However, he was impressed by Emperor Peafowl's technique after seeing these realistic images.

“As expected of a expert who’s sensed the heavenly laws. This Emperor Peafowl’s techniques are indeed different from the normal titled great emperors.” Although Jiang Chen hadn’t reached the emperor realm himself, he had a rather keen grasp of how they differed in strength.

Gazing at these lifelike peafowl images, some were gorgeously decorated, some detached and noble, some splendorous and majestic, some solemn and dignified... The numerous peafowl illustrations each possessed their own characteristics and were quite the pleasing sight to the eyes.

“Perhaps Emperor Peafowl’s fortune lies within this Thousand Peafowl Mural?” Jiang Chen felt curious. He noticed no two peafowls were the same, but it was quite difficult to point out the differences between them. Even with his eye arts and Boulder’s Heart, Jiang Chen failed to see through its profundity at a glance.

“Emperor Peafowl is one of the most powerful great emperors in the Upper Eight Regions. Surely, he wouldn’t fool someone with a mediocre stroke of fortune after employing such a grand spectacle—it’s likely that the opportunity this time isn’t small. Though I’ve a great number of protective treasures on me, most of them are best kept concealed. However, it’ll be perfectly justifiable for me to use the fortune obtained from Emperor Peafowl in public. Any fortune related to the emperor is certain to act as a protective charm whether within Veluriyam Capital or without.“ At the thought of this, Jiang Chen began to inspect each peafowl diagram with all seriousness.

A few other great clan descendants also passed the third stage roughly after a quarter hour had passed.

“Heh heh, the tests should be nearing its end after passing the third stage. The border should be just ahead right? Great emperor fortunes, here I come!” Ji San rushed out, his face flushed with excitement.

The other outstanding clan descendants were more or less of the same thought. After passing the third test, none of them could bother with the miserable state of their injuries and were instead focused on rushing forward as quickly as they could, lest they get left behind. They all hoped to get the first claim after breaking out of the third stage so quickly. In the world of martial dao, every detail was worth competing over, regardless of whether they obtained the fortune or not. They were all afraid of falling second and rushed madly towards the other shore.

“Faster, I must be first to arrive!”

“Chances are greater for the ones who arrive earlier.”

“With my powerful consciousness, I’ll definitely be able to discover the emperor’s fortune if I can arrive early to observe the mural.”

“It’ll be my greatest fortune if this leads to being selected as an inheriting disciple!” All of the clan scions were seized by a sense of urgency.

Chapter 824: Unexpected News

All those who could take the top among great clans were people of great ambitions. None of them was willing to admit they were second fiddle. This was especially true when they all decided to participate in the competition set up by Emperor Peafowl. Everyone wanted to show their best side, come out on top and suppress all other opponents. They all wanted to become unparalleled amongst all others. Therefore, it was impossible even for disciples within the same clan to concede their position to others.

For example, the Coiling Dragon Clan had fielded three participants. Young master Ji San, young master Liu Xiang and Ji Zhongtang, although they had differing personalities, were in direct competition against each other right now. They didn't give each other an easy time just because they came from the same clan. If even scions within the same clan acted this way to each other, one could imagine just how hostile the relationship between those of different clans were. However, when the disciples made their way one after another up to the tall cliff that housed the Thousand Peafowl Mural, they heard a devastating piece of news that nearly made them spit blood on the spot.

"You are too late. The opportunity left behind by the emperor has already been received by its destined person." The Cloud Monarch's indifferent words felt like a bucket of icy water drenching these scions from head to toe. They felt chilled all the way down to their very hearts.

"How is that possible?"

"Yeah, we showed up so early to the cliff. How could it possibly be claimed by someone else?"

"This isn't right, we're all reputable geniuses within our clans, and there are only so many of us. If we're all here, then who on

earth is the person who claimed that opportunity?”

“Honored Cloud Monarch, it’s not that we are sore losers, but at the very least, we would like to know why we lost. We all know who the geniuses of each clan are, and every reputable person is standing here right now. This means that no one has gotten that opportunity.”

“Yeah, Cloud Monarch, there’s no way that some unknown small fry had gotten ahead of us, right?’

“There’s no way, unless… did the emperor’s direct scions participate in the match as well?”

These scions of great clans were all completely confused. It was obvious that they couldn’t accept this result calmly. How could they call this a test? This is practically cheating! They would’ve rioted already if this wasn’t an exam set up by Emperor Peafowl himself.

Thankfully, Emperor Peafowl’s dignity wouldn’t be denied. Moreover, the Cloud Monarch was a senior at the level of their clan lords. In fact, he might be even higher placed than their clan lords. Therefore, they didn’t dare act too brazenly despite harboring many doubts in their minds. But just because they didn’t dare to start a riot didn’t mean that they could accept this outcome with equanimity.

After all, this outcome was plainly preposterous to them. It was obvious that not a single one of the geniuses here had obtained the fortune. But the Cloud Monarch had informed all of them that they were late. If this wasn’t a lie, that what was? The only other possibility they could think of was that Emperor Peafowl’s own geniuses had participated in the exam as well.

However, they hadn’t heard that the emperor’s scions would be participating in this exam. If they did, they wouldn’t have been so optimistic and hopeful about their chances, and thus wouldn’t experience such a rollercoaster of emotions. The Cloud Monarch

didn’t get angry despite facing these youngsters’ accusations. Instead, he smiled faintly, “It is good that you all possess an inquisitive spirit. However, an emperor’s opportunity is not child’s play, so go back to your original positions and wait. You will know the answer eventually.”

He didn’t give them a clear answer, but there was no doubt that it was a declaration that his words were the undeniable truth. They could question all they wanted, but it wouldn’t change no matter what. At this point, those scions who were slightly smarter than others understood that this outcome was an unchangeable fact already. Therefore, they gave up and went away with sighs of defeat. However, most of the genius scions still couldn’t find it in themselves to accept this outcome. They continued to hang around the Thousand Peafowl Mural.

“Could this be a test the emperor has set up for us?”

“You’re right! Maybe it’s a test to see if our dao heart is firm!”

“That makes a lot of sense.”

“Hehe, we were nearly fooled, weren’t we? It may actually be a test after all.” One had to admit that these great clan scions were quick to regain their calm from their previous fury and wonder if this was just another test. Their ability to adjust their emotions were definitely extraordinary.

However, the Cloud Monarch could do nothing but shake his head wryly]. He himself knew that these youths would probably find his words hard to accept no matter what he said. To be honest, even he didn’t feel like he could accept this outcome. It was an unsolvable puzzle. Just where on earth had this monstrous Pill King Zhen come from? Even if the Cloud Monarch were to overlook the fact that the pill king had cleanly passed through three stages in a row, the latter had still seen through and obtained the opportunity concealed by the emperor himself inside the Thousand Peafowl Mural in less than fifteen minutes’ time.

Even the Cloud Monarch himself had to admit in shame that he couldn't match Pill King Zhen's speed. "It's no wonder why these youngsters couldn't accept this outcome. If I haven't seen it with my own eyes, I wouldn't have believed it either. I wouldn't have believed it no matter who told me."

Even now the Cloud Monarch was still stunned beyond belief at the rate in which Pill King Zhen had passed through the three stages and meditated on the Peafowl Mural. "Where on earth did the Coiling Dragon Clan find such a strange pill king? It's one thing to have godly pill dao talent, but now he seems to possess a martial dao talent that's just as outstanding. Could he be the heir the emperor has been searching for a thousand years?"

The Cloud Monarch was Emperor Peafowl's loyal supporter. If there was anyone who believed in Emperor Peafowl's so-called destiny theory in the entire world, they had to be the four great monarchs beneath him. Completely loyal to him, they would follow him unconditionally no matter what he said or did. Therefore, they were all very supportive of Emperor Peafowl's talk of destiny. The Cloud Monarch was wondering right now if Pill King Zhen was the person of great destiny the emperor had been searching for.

Emperor Peafowl hadn't revealed Jiang Chen's identity to any of his subordinates due to his calculations of how sensitive it was. The Coiling Dragon clan lord and House Wei father and son already knew this from the beginning, so naturally they were an exception. Therefore, although The Cloud Monarch was shocked by Pill King Zhen's unparalleled talent, he still knew nothing about his true identity. Otherwise, if he knew that Pill King Zhen came from a poor lower region like the Myriad Domain, his shock about this youth would likely skyrocket beyond the limits of belief.

The Cloud Monarch felt amused as he watched the scions of great clan focusing all their attention on the Peafowl Mural. Even now, these youngsters weren't willing to accept reality. Since the

opportunity had been taken away by the destined person, this Thousand Peafowl Mural would be fading pretty soon. As expected, someone started to shout a short time later.

“It can’t be? Why is the Peafowl Mural fading?”

“Ugh, it disappeared. What’s going on?”

“Are they intentionally keeping us from studying it or something?”

“Is this another test? Has the Peafowl Mural gone invisible?” All kinds of heated discussions started once more.

The Cloud Monarch spoke seriously, “The great emperor’s opportunity has been taken by its destined person, so it is only natural that the Thousand Peafowl Mural would disappear. I am sure that all of you were prepared to lose when you chose to participate in this contest. If you will not admit defeat even now, it will only reflect badly on you.”

When they saw the serious look on the Cloud Monarch’s face, these geniuses finally realized that they really might have lost. This wasn’t a test at all. This was reality. As a result, the atmosphere of the scene grew even stranger than before.

“Who on earth was it?”

“Did a nameless person seriously get ahead of us geniuses and take the opportunity for themselves?”

“Let’s count off. How many people participated in the contest? Who else is missing?” These people began to interrogate the crowd one after another. It was obvious that even now they found it somewhat difficult to accept the reality of their loss. They all wanted to know exactly who had taken Emperor Peafowl’s fortune.

Did one of the great clans hide such an unbelievable genius in their midst? Had they kept a profile so low all this time so they could reveal the genius at this exact occasion? That assumption just didn’t sound all that believable. The only one who seemed to

have figured out something was Ji San. Although he was smiling wryly at his defeat, his expression also looked somewhat joyful. It was obvious that he had his own guesses as to who the winner of the opportunity was.

“What are you laughing at, Ole Third?” Young master Liuxiang was confused by Ji San’s smile.

“What do you think I’m laughing at?” The more Ji San thought about it, the more amused he felt. His expression also grew more and more cheerful. Young master Liu Xiang looked confused, “You’re not going to tell me that you’re the one who got the opportunity, are you?”

The moment he said this, everyone’s gazes snapped to Ji San. Envy, jealousy, and even malice was clear in their eyes.

Ji San laughed but didn’t reply. But Miao Suo said loudly beside him, “No way! Ji San was only a few steps ahead of me. There’s no way he’s the one who got the opportunity!”

“Yeah, I almost arrived at the same time as Ji San. How would I not realize it if he’s the winner?”

Someone came out to ‘clear’ his name, and so the suspicion on Ji San was washed away. But Ji San’s smile only grew wider and wider. His odd reaction puzzled everyone on the scene.

“Ji San, don’t tell me that you’ve lost your mind because you can’t handle the loss?” Miao Suo sneered and taunted him. It was obvious that Miao Suo still thought of Ji San as a love rival.

“Ji San, you haven’t actually gone crazy with jealousy, have you?” Young master Liu Xiang rubbed his nose as he asked.

Ji San raised his eyebrows, “You’re the one who’s gone crazy. In fact, every one of you have. I’ve already figured out who is the winner is. I can’t believe that you’re all still completely clueless about it.”

“Who is it?” Everyone’s curiosity was piqued by his words.

Ji San smiled leisurely, “Like Buddha says, some things cannot be spoken of.”

Ji San waved his paper fan and walked away leisurely while purposely concealing the truth from everyone. He looked so happy it was almost as if he himself had gotten the opportunity.

Suddenly, Ji Zhongtang broke his long silence and exclaimed in surprise, “Could it be him?”

When he looked around, Ji Zhongtang didn’t find the figure he was looking for. In an instant, Ji Zhongtang turned to look at Ji San’s back with an extremely complicated look on his face. Young master Liu Xiang’s figure also started a little when a vague figure slowly surfaced in his mind thanks to Ji Zhongtang’s reminder. It was him?

Chapter 825: Pentecolor Divine Swords

Ji San's intuition really was quite powerful. The second Jiang Chen's name appeared in his thoughts, he immediately came to the conclusion that this opportunity must've been claimed by Jiang Chen. In truth, the answer he'd jumped to was in fact the reality of things.

When Ji San and the other geniuses returned to their seats, Jiang Chen was already seated next to Emperor Peafowl. There were countless gazes of jealousy, envy and hatred that flicked across Jiang Chen in that instant alone. It was obvious that these great clan scions was unable to accept this young man who had come out of nowhere to claim the great emperor's opportunity for himself.

"Pill King Zhen?"

"How did a pill dao genius obtain an opportunity like this? Could his martial dao talents be higher than even us of the great clans?"

"Where on earth did this Pill King Zhen come from? Why have we heard nothing about him before?" It was obvious that everyone was having trouble accepting this kind of outcome.

Even the great clan clan lords themselves couldn't quite wrap their heads around it, much less their disciples. They were all hoping that their own would emerge the victor, but they'd never thought that a young man of unknown origin would be the one who would ultimately claim this opportunity for himself. His identity was an even greater joke than this outcome. His true identity was that of a pill king, a guest pill king who hailed from a ninth rank aristocratic family!

If they were to judge by status alone, a guest pill king from a ninth rank aristocratic family shouldn't even possess the qualifications to attend this battle. But it was this unqualified person who'd laughed at the finish line, and this result was an enormous slap to the face for all the great clans. Every other clan

lord under Emperor Peafowl were immediately filled with disgust towards this Pill King Zhen, with the notable exception of the Coiling Dragon clan lord. It was obvious that they couldn't find it in themselves to accept this outcome with a tranquil mind.

Surprisingly, the Coiling Dragon clan lord was the one who'd managed to be the most open minded, having lived through so many years of torment. The three young scions beneath the Coiling Dragon Clan were all peerless geniuses. That being said, the Coiling Dragon clan lord still thought them to be just a tad bit unqualified to succeed the mantle of Emperor Peafowl. It wasn't that they were entirely unqualified. It was just that they didn't stand head and shoulders above their peers. If they were forcefully raised to that level of power, they might end up shooting for the moon if their luck held. However, if their luck turned for the worse, then they might encounter a death worse than young master Fan's.

Although Jiang Chen was the one who stood at that prominent spot right now, the Coiling Dragon clan lord didn't see it as a bad thing. Rather than displeasure, he even felt an undercurrent of excitement. Even though he had been very courteous to Jiang Chen before, it had primarily been because he required Jiang Chen's aid. But although he needed Jiang Chen's help, even he was doubtful as to whether Jiang Chen could really procure the Pinecrane Pill for him.

Even though Jiang Chen had vividly described that extraordinary master of his to the point of creating the image of an otherworldly master in the clan lord's mind, he wouldn't be completely convinced until that senior was before his eyes. But the moment he saw Jiang Chen grabbing the emperor's opportunity for himself in such a monstrous fashion, the final trace of doubt in the clan lord's mind vanished completely.

How could the scion of a feudal vassal, born in a tiny, worldly kingdom of the Myriad Domain, reach such a level if he hadn't

landed on a massive opportunity during his youth? It just didn't seem possible for a poor, desolate backwater like the Myriad Domain to ever produce a genius like Jiang Chen, no matter how he looked at it. If that was true, the only possible explanation behind Jiang Chen's growth was the guidance of his elusive master. That was how the clan lord rationalized his conjectures and finally came to believe Jiang Chen's words in full.

"Your Majesty, we are all very curious as to how this Pill King Zhen obtained this opportunity. Please grant us this favor and satisfy our curiosities." The Spirit Branch Clan Lord took the lead to speak for the clan lords.

"It is truly surprising to see this Pill King Zhen beating all of our clan's geniuses. We cannot help but be curious at this pill dao genius who possesses such wonderful martial dao talent as well.

"Your Majesty, may we know where this Pill King Zhen comes from?" Although the clan lords had not voiced it out loud, they were obviously harboring some ill will towards Jiang Chen. It was only natural that a fellow who had appeared out of nowhere, without any foundations to speak of, wouldn't win everyone's acknowledgement so easily.

Emperor Peafowl smiled calmly, "It is a moot point to ask a hero where they were born. However, I can give you all the answer of how he did it easily."

As he spoke, Emperor Peafowl nodded at the Cloud Monarch. The latter opened his palm to reveal an image crystal. The image crystal, as its name implied, could record images. Although it didn't capture every moment from within the formation, there were still records of Jiang Chen at certain critical regions. At the very least, the image crystal had caught the crucial moments when Jiang Chen had beaten the stages. However, the crystal wasn't omnipotent, and the footage appeared blurred and unclear.

Everyone could see that Pill King Zhen had passed through the

three stages like everyone else present. The difference, however, lay the ease in which Pill King Zhen had overcome all of them. In comparison, the great clan scions all encountered some measure of difficulty or trouble, even though they'd passed through the stages all the same. Almost no one had been able to overcome the obstacles as easily as Pill King Zhen. As for the Peafowl Mural, Jiang Chen had used only fifteen minutes to beat the test. If there was one thing Jiang Chen didn't lack over the course of his two lives, it would be his insight.

Even if he hadn't cultivated God's Eye, Evil Golden Eye, Boulder's Heart, and Psychic's Head in this life, it was still impossible for anything within the mural to hide itself from Jiang Chen's insight. His experience and insight were simply too vast. One might even say that his experience and insight exceeded that of Emperor Peafowl's.

It was true that Emperor Peafowl's formation was exquisitely made, and the Thousand Peafowl Mural was an extraordinary object. It was also true that the formation was intelligently laid out, and the opportunity very well hidden. One could say that the entire setup was almost perfect. But no matter how outstanding Emperor Peafowl's setup was, his mind couldn't exceed the limitation that was the Divine Abyss Continent.

Jiang Chen's insight was solidly at the level of the divine planes. How could a mere Divine Abyss Continent contain someone like him? Therefore, he'd only needed to visualize for fifteen minutes before he spotted the opportunity hidden within the mural. However, the fortune he'd gained had truly been extraordinary.

It was a set of swords Emperor Peafowl had used to dominate the Divine Abyss Continent in his youth. The swords had five colors that matched the natural cycle of the five elements. This set of five swords was the set of weapons Emperor Peafowl had used to kill demons and monsters, dominating the world in the process. There were almost no opponent of his that had survived to tell the tale of

these five swords after facing them. After Emperor Peafowl had reached the apex, the Pentecolor Divine Swords started to appear less and less. Finally, he sealed away the five swords a thousand years ago and never used them since. More specifically, he sealed these five swords into a diagram of a peafowl, turning them into the tail feathers. On the surface, the tail feathers looked completely ordinary, perfect yet unassuming.

But Jiang Chen was still able to detect a bit of the five elements and a portion of the seal thanks to the God's Eye and Psychic's Head. The emperor's seal had been sublime, almost completely flawless. But for a singular genius like Jiang Chen, the flaws in an almost perfect seal like this was still magnified tens and hundreds of times. Perhaps the flaw looked like a wisp of smoke in Emperor Peafowl's eyes, but it was practically a smoke signal in Jiang Chen's eyes.

Although the clan lords felt absolutely depressed after watching the recording on the image crystal, the only thing they could do was turn around and scold their disciples. It was the only way they could make themselves feel better. But they knew in their hearts that it wasn't that their scions had performed badly, but that this Pill King Zhen was simply too monstrous.

Just how powerful must his consciousness be to be able to visualize that mural and find its flaw in just fifteen minutes? Even ninth rank emperor realm experts would be hard pressed to see through the devices that surrounded fortune bestowed by Emperor Peafowl. But this young lad of unknown origin really did seem to possess the insight to see through it. Even if they assumed that it was just luck, there was no changing the fact that he was the victor of this test.

Emperor Peafowl smiled, "Do you have any doubts remaining after watching the contents of this image crystal?"

"Your Majesty, this Pill King Zhen's mysterious origin is an enormous hidden threat. There is no harm in granting him a small

opportunity, but the selection of your direct disciple is a whole other matter."

"He is absolutely right, your Majesty. There are plenty of forces who are eyeing Veluriyam Capital covetously. We cannot allow the enemy to infiltrate our ranks." If they couldn't suspect his results, then they could only attack his origin. This Pill King Zhen had been a character of mysterious origin ever since he entered Veluriyam Capital. This was the only point they could feasibly use to attack him.

Emperor Peafowl's tone was as calm as ever, "I have my own considerations with regards to his background."

The Coiling Dragon clan lord smiled, "Pill King Zhen's genius in pill dao is known to all, but who knew that his martial dao talents were just as outstanding? A genius among geniuses like him is exactly the kind of genius Sacred Peafowl Mountain needs right now. Your valuable insight is truly a fortune, Your Majesty. My Coiling Dragon Clan disciples admit defeat wholeheartedly."

"Yes, I'm utterly impressed!" Ji San echoed with a laugh.

Ji Zhongtang examined Jiang Chen closely several times before nodding his head thoughtfully. It was obvious that even Ji Zhongtang had nothing to complain about if he lost to such a great opponent. Considering that Emperor Peafowl had laid down the foundation, and the Coiling Dragon Clan had offered their support as the number one clan, the rest of the clan lords were naturally no longer in a position to persist in their objections.

Emperor Peafowl couldn't help but inwardly praise the Coiling Dragon clan lord when he saw this show of support. The Coiling Dragon Clan Lord truly was deserving of his title as the number one clan lord in Veluriyam Capital. His horizon and generosity were leagues ahead of the other clan lords. He was about to speak when a beam of light suddenly cut through the air. It transformed into a sacred message glyph in Emperor Peafowl's palm. The

message glyph was a long range consciousness transference divine glyph that was of a far greater grade than a normal message glyph. The information contained inside the glyph entered his consciousness in full with a single sweep of consciousness.

His expression darkened instantly. Everyone's heart skipped a beat involuntarily when they saw his expression change so drastically. There were very few things that could cause Emperor Peafowl to lose his genteel mask after so many years. This news, whatever it was, must be one of great weight.

Chapter 826: Provocation from Pillfire City

The Peafowl Gathering was now concluded, and the participating clans were about to depart. However, the Coiling Dragon clan lord and Jiang Chen were given a new command - to stay. No one else had this honor, not even young master Ji San. All of the clan lords were bewildered by this turn of events. Since when had this Pill King Zhen become more important than them? Especially someone who'd popped up out of nowhere. That the Coiling Dragon clan lord was able to stay was at least somewhat understandable. He was the lord of the foremost clan, after all. This Pill King Zhen, on the other hand—even if he had obtained the emperor's grace, surely that wouldn't correspond with a rise in his position?

What was up with this sudden promotion? Did he now outrank them in importance? Though they didn't understand, they didn't dare defy His Majesty's orders nor resent him. Their time with Emperor Peafowl had taught them well of his tendencies. His Majesty's decisions always had a good motive behind them. There had to be a reason as to why His Majesty had sent them away while allowing Pill King Zhen to stay. They were also somewhat curious about the message in the glyph. Why had it caused Emperor Peafowl's face to darken ? The people departed with a bellyful of questions, no different from the two who remained behind.

Emperor Peafowl looked meaningfully at Jiang Chen, his lips curving into a faint smile, "Pill King Zhen, more trouble has come to us."

Trouble? Jiang Chen did a double take. Is there really a need to tell me that? Am I supposed to solve all of Sacred Peafowl Mountain's problems for you? The Coiling Dragon clan lord was also very curious, but refrained from immediately voicing his questions given Emperor Peafowl's stance. Despite their uncertainty, the four monarchs present similarly stayed silent, choosing instead to cast strange glances at Jiang Chen. Evidently,

they too wanted to know what was so unique about this Pill King Zhen. Why did His Majesty value the young man so much? What did that glyph have to do with him?

"Forgive my slowness, Your Majesty." Jiang Chen smiled wryly.

"It’s news related to the Longevity Pill you presented. There's a rumor circulating in Pillfire City that the Longevity Pill actually belongs to them. They say that those of us from Veluriyam Capital have stolen their concept. The rumor has spread like wildfire within their private circles, and though it hasn’t been publicly declared yet, that day is not far off."

Pillfire City? Jiang Chen was no stranger to the name. It was where Mu Gaoqi and Elder Yun Nie had been sold to by slavers. He’d found out about the faction back when he’d interrogated the Myriad Puppets Pavilion’s Shopkeeper Li about Mu Gaoqi’s whereabouts.

If there was any faction in the Upper Eight Regions that Veluriyam Capital had scruples about, it would be Pillfire City. In terms of absolute martial strength, it was unlikely that Pillfire City surpassed Veluriyam. However, with respect to pills, Pillfire City undoubtedly held the upper hand.

Within the Upper Eight Regions and even within the entire human domain, Pillfire City amassed over seventy percent of the profits in the pill industry. As a leading force in the business, countless pill factions rallied beneath Pillfire City’s banner. They had branch stores and regional headquarters in various cities and territories. Anywhere a pill faction existed, one could also find Pillfire City.

Yet, Veluriyam Capital was an exception to that rule. The capital’s pill business was held entirely in its own hands, as was that of its surrounding territories. Besides Veluriyam Capital and its neighbors, the remaining lands had their respective pill industries essentially monopolized by Pillfire City and its

associated factions. Insignificant locales and minor factions aside, of course, as Pillfire City had no interest in them. As for everywhere they did have interest in, it was virtually impossible to shake off their shadowy influence. In terms of pill-related influence, Pillfire City could exert far more of it than Veluriyam Capital.

In the human domain, Veluriyam Capital could at most claim ten or twenty percent of the market share and power. Pillfire City, on the other hand, could claim more than three times that on its worst day. The difference between them was quite marked. Although Veluriyam Capital had undertaken numerous efforts over the years, having trained many pill kings and genius pill masters, they had not been able to close the gap in face of Pillfire City's strong foundation. Thus, the faces of the Coiling Dragon clan lord and the four monarchs instantly darkened at the rival city's name.

"Pillfire City?" Cloudsoar Monarch furrowed his brow. "Can they not bear to see even the slightest sign of growth from us? Is suppressing any and all of our attempts their agenda?"

"Your Majesty, don't you think they're going too far? We can't let them bully us like this." Chronobalance Monarch's fiery temper had been roused.

Wildfox Monarch's eyes glittered with insight as he focused his gaze on Jiang Chen. "Pill King Zhen, you were the one to submit the Longevity Pill recipe. Did your teacher tell you how many factions in the world knew how to refine it?"

The others looked at Jiang Chen with curiosity as well. He was completely calm about the whole matter, his tone sanguine, "'The Longevity Pill is an exclusive recipe, and no one else in the human domain can possibly know how to refine it.' These words came directly from my master's mouth."

"Is your master that sure?"

“I don’t know exactly how sure he was, but I know my teacher well. I don’t think any pill expert in the human domain could even compete with him. Thus, I have complete faith in his wisdom.” Jiang Chen couldn’t say that the Longevity Pill was a product of the heavenly planes, or that it was impossible for anyone from the Divine Abyss Continent to know how to refine it. But it didn’t even require his toes for him to guess that the Eternal Celestial Capital had to be responsible for Pillfire City’s sudden intervention. They knew that they could not beat Veluriyam Capital when the latter announced their copyright over the Longevity Pill. Having understood this, they’d changed tactics, turning instead to cooperation with Pillfire City.

Jiang Chen hadn’t seen the exact proceedings, but he was almost certain that this was the truth of the matter. The raw sensibility of his logic was almost as good as seeing things first hand. There was little need to suspect that something else was at play.

The gathered crowd had mixed reactions at Jiang Chen’s confidence. Neither Emperor Peafowl nor the Coiling Dragon clan lord questioned Jiang Chen’s veracity. Cloudsoar Monarch wasn’t particularly suspicious either. The other three monarchs, on the other hand, had varying degrees of doubt. Perhaps this Pill King Zhen was over-exaggerating a little. Maybe the Longevity Pill wasn’t exclusive after all, and Pillfire City had seen the recipe for it from somewhere.

The skepticism in the monarchs’ eyes did not go unnoticed, and Jiang Chen wasn’t exactly pleased to see it. “The Longevity Pill’s exclusivity is unambiguous,” he began softly. “But if you seniors don’t have the courage to compete with Pillfire City and are fine with giving it up, then I won’t comment on the decision.” Jiang Chen took a breath, his tone hardening. “However, what belongs to me cannot be taken away by force. Even if they can do so now, I will make them pay up one day with interest.”

It wasn’t an idle boast; he was entirely serious. He was sick and

tired of the Longevity Pill being abused by others. The Eternal Celestial Capital, the Majestic Clan, and now Pillfire City... they all treated the Longevity Pill as a mere tool to stir up chaos in order to gain an advantage. How could he not be upset?

The three unsure monarchs were astonished by Jiang Chen's rigidity. There was even a hint of anger on their faces. No matter how much His Majesty appreciates you, shouldn't you still respect your seniors?

However, Jiang Chen had no intention of retracting his statement. He raised a cupped fist salute to Emperor Peafowl. "Your Majesty, the Longevity Pill was first taught by my master to the head of Regal Pill Palace in the Myriad Domain. When the sect fell, the recipe was snatched away by the Eternal Celestial Capital. The Longevity Pill that Pillfire City currently possesses is merely their unjust offering, created after Sacred Peafowl Mountain's announcement. There was no way the Eternal Celestial Capital had a chance against Veluriyam Capital, so they turned to Pillfire City for support instead. In the pill world, Pillfire City is accustomed to great gravitas. Their authority has remained unchallenged for a long time. It would be strange if they were not worried about Veluriyam Capital's claim to the Longevity Pill!"

His speech removed the anger from the monarchs' faces, replacing it with the shock of realization. They hadn't thought about that aspect. They were only concerned with their own misgivings about Pill King Zhen and hadn't considered Pillfire City's potential malice. Sacred Peafowl Mountain's acquisition of the Longevity Pill recipe was an opportunity for rapid growth and the realization of great ambition. As the current tyrant of the pill world, how could Pillfire City simply let a potential competitor rise unchecked? How could they allow their dominion to face such a severe threat?

Emperor Peafowl nodded admiringly. He had understood the rationale behind Jiang Chen's words all along, but he hadn't

thought the youth would have a vision that greatly exceeded his station. Jiang Chen had pierced through the smoke and mirrors of the situation and reached the core of the issue. The emperor had already previously found Jiang Chen's talent commendable, but this display of broad contextual awareness served to further elevate the youth in his mind. Smiling faintly, Emperor Peafowl probed further, "Then, Pill King Zhen, do you have any stratagems to counter this?"

Jiang Chen knew this question was a test and took some time to consider his answer. "Well, I have three stratagems – best, better, worse."

"Oh?" The emperor laughed in spite of himself. "I haven't even fleshed out one, but you have three already?"

"The worse stratagem is to fight it out with Pillfire City on a military level, using the logic of might makes right. In terms of strength, Pillfire City cannot edge out Veluriyam Capital so easily. However, in terms of influence in the pill world, they have the advantage, which might cause future complications. Therefore, this is the worst of the stratagems.

"The better stratagem is to ignore them entirely. They can produce their pills, and we can produce ours. Let us speak purely in terms of production volume - as long as we do not lose to them in terms of quality, they can complain all they like. In these matters, each side has their own version of the events that transpired , and it is difficult for observers to discern the truth. If Pillfire City really did own the Longevity Pill, where was it prior to now? Considering this, their claims don't really hold much factual basis."

Everyone nodded at Jiang Chen's analysis, including the three monarchs who had doubted him. The words he had spoken thus far were quite reasonable.

Chapter 827: Preemptive Strike

Emperor Peafowl smiled meaningfully, "And what is your best stratagem?"

The audience perked up their ears, their eyes fixated upon Jiang Chen. They waited for him to reveal his last plan.

"The best stratagem is to completely defeat them on a technical level. That way, they would have nothing to say over their loss. The biggest advantage of this is that it will shake up Pillfire City's hegemony over the pill world. Though circumstances won't immediately change, we can damage their foundation. From what I can see, Veluriyam Capital doesn't want to be crushed by Pillfire City to the point of asphyxiation when it comes to pills either, does it?" It had to be said that Jiang Chen's words were extremely motivational and persuasive. If it wasn't because Veluriyam Capital lacked the prowess to compete with Pillfire City, who at the capital was willing to see such a thing happen?

Indeed, Pillfire City's monopoly was against the interests of the entire human domain. After all, the current situation was oriented in a very anti-consumer fashion. That Pillfire City was able to to control over seventy percent of pill-related profits was precisely because of their position of utter exploitation. Their pills were always measurably superior to other pills of the same level. Moreover, the city quashed any potential competitors to the degree that no one was able to put up a fight. Even a place as gargantuan as Veluriyam Capital could only protect the city itself and a few surrounding areas from Pillfire's market invasion. Pillfire City’s products dominated everywhere else.

For Veluriyam Capital, its pill business provided a crucial source of income and was one of the capital's lifelines. However, this lifeline could never grow nearly to the degree that they wanted it to thanks to the existence of Pillfire City. Pillfire City had both the coercive might and the historical wealth to back its hardline

stance.

Its ancient pill recipes, its systems for training pill kings, its various tomes on pill dao... Pillfire City's resources were three or four times those of Veluriyam Capital. This kind of gap wasn't something that time could reduce. In fact, the passage of time possibly only served to widen the distance between the two cities. Thus, for a long time now, the attitude of Veluriyam Capital towards Pillfire City was very mixed. There was recognition, of course, but antagonism and jealousy accompanied it as well. Of course, the Capital also did many things in an attempt to bridge this gap. Such action extended to even Emperor Peafowl himself. However, the result of their efforts only led to the maintenance of the gap, a sort of preventative measure. But truth be told, even that was a victory, considering the scope of the difference between them.

When Jiang Chen had submitted the Longevity Pill's recipe, the Sacred Peafowl Mountain felt the arrival of an opportunity, an entry point. If the production and distribution of the Longevity Pill proceeded smoothly throughout the human domain, it would be a significant turning point for their pill market. Veluriyam Capital's influence in the pill world would soar, and its market share with it.

However, while their plans were still in the cradle of infancy, they discovered that Pillfire City's targeted persecution had come. Without a doubt, the city’s aim was to prevent Veluriyam Capital from executing designs. In this environment, Jiang Chen's best strategy was immediately attractive to all of his listeners. Past the initial rush of enthusiasm, however, a wave of wry smiles emerged around the room. Overcoming Pillfire City on a technical level was easier said than done.

If they were really this easy to defeat, how could they command so much of the market share in a market as hostile and competitive as the pill industry? Pillfire City's claim to fame was their overwhelming superiority in terms of technique. That was why

they held over 70 percent of the profits. Pills made from forgotten recipes, pills that were rare and expensive and impossible to duplicate, countless pill dao techniques, and a rich pill tradition - the Pillfire City had all of these things. No other faction could remotely compare.

Although Pillfire City appeared to be only a city, just how many first ranked sects in the Upper Eight Regions were under its control was anybody's guess. It was a hot topic of discussion in private circles. There were only eight first rank sects in the human domain and less than five factions surpassing first rank sects in strength. Both Veluriyam Capital and Pillfire City were examples of these mega-factions. However, though Veluriyam Capital had influence over many sects, one would not go so far as to say that it controlled them.

The Pillfire City was different in this regard. Their methodologies were more materialistic. They relied on their influence over pills to infiltrate the ranks of the various sects and thereby accomplish their goals. It could be said that in the human domain, Veluriyam Capital was an entity which no one wished to provoke, while Pillfire City was an entity which no one dared to provoke. In terms of threat and authority, Pillfire City slightly exceeded Veluriyam Capital.

The Chronobalance Monarch didn't like Jiang Chen's perceived boasting and spoke with a slightly dissatisfied tone, "Pill King Zhen, I don't know how strong your teacher is, but Pillfire City has dominated the pill industry's profits for many years. Their position has always been stable. You can't defeat them just by saying so."

The Coiling Dragon clan lord smiled wryly as well, "That's right, Pill King Zhen. Your suggestion sounds great, but unless you can convince your teacher to help us, I don't see how it can be done."

The clan lord was entirely focused on Jiang Chen's teacher. His opinion of the latter definitely approached that of outright

worship. His thoughts were entirely on requests for Jiang Chen's teacher to leave seclusion so that he could refine a Pinecrane Pill.

The Wildfox Monarch chuckled, full of wisdom, "Only a sage above the mundane could be Pill King Zhen's teacher. I don't fancy our chances, even if we do extend an invitation."

From the circumstantial evidence shown in Jiang Chen's methods and talent, no one doubted the existence of his "teacher" any longer.

"A famous master breeds excellent disciples. Perhaps Pill King Zhen's teacher is a hermit who cares not for the world, but there must be some merit to his suggestion as well. Why don't we hear more about how Pill King Zhen intends to defeat Pillfire City on a technical level?" Emperor Peafowl suddenly declared.

With the direction of the conversation set, the others had no room to protest.

"I can't promise the same for all matters, but what's so difficult about defeating them on the matter of the Longevity Pill?" This was no mere display of arrogance. The Longevity Pill was originally Jiang Chen's recipe. It didn't matter how superb the pill kings from Pillfire City were - they had no chance of surpassing him with the recipe having originated from him. Moreover, this was only an ordinary mortal plane. Regardless of how strong his opponent was, they could not rival the pill dao saints of the heavenly planes in his previous life. Therefore, Jiang Chen's words were backed by sufficient confidence.

Emperor Peafowl raised an eyebrow, secretly pleased by Jiang Chen's earnestness. The youth hadn't refused to work or withdrawn, but rather faced the problem head-on. His temperament, at least, was something that the emperor was happy to see. "The Longevity Pill is an original creation of your teacher, Pill King Zhen. As your master's disciple, you are of course its lawful owner. Even if Pillfire City has the Longevity Pill's recipe, it

is the unrighteous result of the Eternal Celestial Capital's robbery. Morally, they cannot compare to the Longevity Pill recipe that we rightfully obtained. If we can surpass them in technique, Veluriyam Capital will assume natural ownership of the pill."

The emperor spoke only words of encouragement, and looked with the same at the young man, "Pill King Zhen, how certain are you of the outcome?"

Jiang Chen thought for a moment. "Seventy to eighty percent." He refrained from making a full guarantee to avoid being perceived as a madman. Nominally, he was still a low-rank pill king.

"In all worldly things, one may strive for something with even a thirty percent chance of success. Seventy or eighty means that victory is nearly assured. Since Pillfire City bears only malice, why should we cower at the prospect of a fight? Gentlemen, what say you?" Emperor Peafowl's tone bore an unquestionable air of solemnity. Though it was worded as a question, it was actually an announcement.

"We defer to your decision, Your Majesty."

"Pillfire City has pushed us too far. It is time for us to teach them a lesson! If we can crush them with the Longevity Pill, it will be a huge boost to Veluriyam Capital's influence in the pill world."

"Yes, this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. We can't miss it."

"Everyone is thinking only of chastising Pillfire City. What if we lose? How shall we conduct ourselves then?" It was Plumscore Monarch, the female monarch who had been silent thus far. Her tone was collected and cool. "If we fail, we will be branded as thieves of the Longevity Pill as a result. We will receive universal condemnation... not something desirable for Sacred Peafowl Mountain or Veluriyam Capital, I'm sure." Her figurative bucket of cold water was splashed at a timely point in the proceedings.

"It matters not whether we win or lose," Emperor Peafowl smiled.

"What's important is the conflict between good and evil. The Longevity Pill belongs to Pill King Zhen, thus we represent justice. Even if we lose here, there is nothing to be ashamed of."

"That's right, winning or losing doesn't matter. We got the Longevity Pill through completely fair and equitable means. Even if we don't win, we can have the peace of mind to refine the Longevity Pill." At the end of the day, nobody was willing to simply abandon the Longevity Pill. Everyone knew that the pill meant a huge business opportunity, one that would propel Veluriyam Capital forward in the pill world.

Emperor Peafowl gave the final, decisive word. "It's decided then. We will send out notices immediately. From today onwards, the Longevity Pill is the exclusive secret of the Sacred Peafowl Mountain. No other factions are eligible to privately refine it, and those that do will be labeled as thieves. If anyone disagrees, they can come to an open competition within these next three months. If they win, they may refine at their leisure, but it remains theft otherwise."

Emperor Peafowl was full of boldness. Even though he faced an entity as big as Pillfire City, he wasn't ambiguous about his decisions. Moreover, the announcement was aggressive and on the offense. Rather than remaining passive, he had taken the initiative and made a preemptive strike.

Jiang Chen found the mindset very admirable. If Pillfire City was able to strike first and take the initiative, the Sacred Peafowl Mountain would only be able to reactively respond, thereby falling into their opponent's cadence. However, the voluntary announcement ignored any possible ploys from Pillfire City. They were essentially nullified. The Sacred Peafowl Mountain's announcement had priority.

Chapter 828: Emperor Pillzenith

The Sacred Peafowl Mountain's declaration was duly circulated through its various channels, its great impact spreading to the furthest reaches of the domain within three days. The recently popular Longevity Pill once again became the focus of all the major powers' attention.

Pillfire City was no exception. They were caught completely unawares. They had been secretly planning a series of methods with which to fabricate a charge against the Sacred Peafowl Mountain. They'd planned to accuse the latter of stealing the Longevity Pill recipe, thereby suppressing Veluriyam Capital's prestige. Never did they expect that the Sacred Peafowl Mountain would deploy a preemptive strike. This effectively thwarted their still-forming plans.

Pillfire City and Veluriyam Capital had always been bitter rivals. Meanwhile, within Pillfire City, the lord of Pillfire City was receiving the pill dao representatives from the Eternal Celestial Capital. Emperor Pillzenith, was an expert not in the least bit inferior to Emperor Peafowl. The Eternal Celestial Capital representative this time was one of their first-rate pill kings — he'd lived well over a thousand years and was one of the Eternal Celestial Capital's best in terms of skill and experience—his name was Shi Yangshu. But even the Eternal Celestial Capital's most senior pill king had to observe a junior's etiquette before the Pillfire City lord. The Pillfire City lord was one of the most powerful experts in the Upper Eight Regions and in the last thousands of years hardly anyone had dared claim that they were stronger than Emperor Pillzenith.

"Your Majesty, it was rather unexpected that Veluriyam Capital would be so shameless. They not only destroyed our Eternal Celestial Capital's business, but they also plan to monopolize the Longevity Pill. Their ambition truly knows no bounds." The pill

king's angry words contained some hidden intentions of instigation.

Emperor Pillzenith smiled indifferently. He'd naturally noticed Shi Yangshu's petty tricks. But the emperor remained the picture of calm, "Tell me again in detail about how your Eternal Celestial Capital obtained the Longevity Pill Recipe from the Myriad Domain. This emperor must determine from whence Veluriyam Capital's Longevity Pill recipe came, lest we fall into a passive state."

Shi Yangshu was given no chance to play tricks before Emperor Pillzenith and could only narrate the whole story regardless of how upset he was. Fortunately, such plundering was not rare in the martial world and Emperor Pillzenith only laughed ambiguously in response, "I hear that your Eternal Celestial Capital hasn't yet captured a certain remnant member of the Regal Pill Palace?" The emperor suddenly asked.

Shi Yangshu was somewhat startled but eventually nodded, "The survivors are quite cunning. However, given enough time, we'll definitely capture them in one go."

Emperor Pillzenith smiled with relative indifference and replied dispassionately, "I'm afraid the Eternal Celestial Capital won't ever have that chance."

"Your Majesty, what do you mean by this?" Shi Yangshu was somewhat astonished.

"It's obvious that the Regal Pill Palace survivors have joined Veluriyam Capital. More specifically, he's been recruited by Emperor Peafowl." Emperor Pillzenith's speculation, albeit not personally witnessed, was resolute and seemingly unquestionable. His every speech and action possessed a special charm, as if his words were the absolute truth. There was virtually no room for doubt.

The speechless Shi Yangshu swallowed hard with a rueful smile,

“Could the survivor have actually escaped to Veluriyam Capital despite our encirclement and pursuit?”

This survivor in question was, of course, Jiang Chen. Emperor Pillzenith smiled unenthusiastically, “Is this the extent of your Eternal Celestial Capital’s capability? You lot can’t even clean up your own mess and refused to offer up the Longevity Pill before reaching the end of your tether. Do you know that it was your idiocy that allowed the situation to worsen to such a degree?!”

At this point, Emperor Pillzenith had taken on a rather harsh tone of voice. The emperor was speaking as if he was disciplining a child, but Shi Yangshu dared not retort and could only shake his head with a rueful smile. They wouldn’t be in such a deteriorating situation if they’d given up the Longevity Pill recipe to Pillfire City much earlier.

The Eternal Celestial Capital had initially been afraid of being swallowed up by the colossal entity that was Pillfire City after offering up the recipe. They were apprehensive of testing the waters at Pillfire City’s market and as such, they’d gone to Veluriyam Capital instead.

Never did they expect to fail so miserably at Veluriyam Capital. The Eternal Celestial Capital soon fell into a passive state under Emperor Peafowl’s relentless assault and was forced to rely on Pillfire City. They had hoped to move their way up Pillfire City’s ladder by relying on the massive profits the Longevity Pill brought them. Their wishful calculations were all well and good, but Emperor Peafowl’s next move had also put Pillfire City at a disadvantage.

They’d lost the opportunity to speak out against the other party and now their argument was hardly justifiable. At this point it’d be too passive for them to make an appearance and announce that the Longevity Pill recipe was theirs when the other party had just declared ownership. The outside world would question why they hadn’t announced it earlier and had instead waited until right after

Emperor Peafowl's declaration if the recipe was indeed theirs. They would appear to be intentionally stirring up trouble.

This was also the most important reason why Pillfire City was in a passive position. But nonetheless, it'd be impractical to think they'd give up on such a profitable business. Furthermore, the force that had obtained the Longevity Pill Recipe was their archrival, Veluriyam Capital. Although Pillfire City would still be affected if any other power were to obtain the Longevity Pill, the effects would slowly but surely dissipate over time. They could employ various methods to mitigate the effects. But that wouldn't work on Veluriyam Capital.

Veluriyam Capital was a tough bone which even Pillfire City couldn't chew on. The other party definitely wouldn't play according to their rules. Neither robbery nor deceit would work on Veluriyam Capital. They had always strived to surpass Pillfire City and would never give in. Neither soft nor hard tactics were viable. The only remaining method was to challenge the Sacred Peafowl Mountain.

Didn't the Sacred Peafowl Mountain announce that anyone in doubt could challenge them within three months? If their Longevity Pill could triumph over the Sacred Peafowl Mountain's, they could still turn the situation around and claim the rights. History was written by the victors, and ergo legitimacy would belong to the victor!

While playing with the jade cup in his hand, Emperor Pillzenith suddenly laughed, "Holy King Shi, I've received your message. You may go."

"Go?" Shi Yangshu was dazed, "Your Majesty, I came on the clan head's orders to discuss, with all sincerity, our cooperation with Pillfire City."

"Cooperation?" Emperor Pillzenith laughed indifferently, "What are you offering for this negotiation?"

“The Longevity Pill of course.” Shi Yangshu was puzzled.

“The Longevity Pill?” If I remember correctly, the recipe to it is in the hands of Veluriyam Capital. What does it have to do with your Eternal Celestial Capital?” Emperor Pillzenith’s tone was disinterested.

Shi Yangshu’s expression suddenly changed, “Your Majesty, you… are you trying to exclude us?”

“Exclude?” Emperor Pillzenith laughed in a leisurely manner, “Your Eternal Celestial Capital was never included in the first place. If you’re dissatisfied, you can challenge the Sacred Peafowl Mountain and win back the rights to the Longevity Pill. At that time you’ll naturally have the right to negotiate with this emperor. But for now…”

Emperor Pillzenith smiled meaningfully. Why should Pillfire City carry the Eternal Celestial Capital along if they had to throw their cap in and fight it out with Veluriyam Capital?

Shi Yangshu’s heart sank and stammered, “Your Majesty, that’s completely unreasonable. How would you contend with Veluriyam Capital if not for us offering you the recipe? Our Eternal Celestial Capital…”

Emperor Pillzenith’s expression became solemn, “Pill recipe? Do you think our Pillfire City doesn’t have the means to obtain it?”

This time, Shi Yangshu had realized that Emperor Pillzenith was looking to renege on his words. He was going to exclude them with a flat denial. “Your Majesty, you shouldn’t be so tyrannical.”

Emperor Pillzenith replied apathetically, “Is your Eternal Celestial Capital not clear about this emperor’s principles?”

Shi Yangshu was left speechless. How could he dare express the flames of fury burning in his heart? Emperor Pillzenith could turn him to ash with a single slap should he reveal the slightest hint of disrespect.

“Since that’s the case, things have truly gone beyond my control. I shall take my leave immediately, report this back to our sect head, and await his decision.” Shi Yangshu was indeed upset inside but he knew he could hardly redeem anything with his meager ability. But the Eternal Celestial Capital, being a first rank sect, still had a bottom line. Although Pillfire City was indeed very powerful, the Eternal Celestial Capital might not take this lying down.

Seeing Shi Yangshu leave with fury, the corners of Emperor Pillzenith lips curved into a cold smile. The smile was very meaningful, as if he was plotting something. After a while, Emperor Pillzenith eyes turned pensively towards the south where Veluriyam Capital was located, “Emperor Peafowl, I wonder where you get the confidence to make such a declaration. It’s as if you’re openly challenging our Pillfire City’s foundation. Since that is the case, allow us to give you a lasting lesson and show you just how limited your outlook is!”

……

The whole of the Upper Eight Regions was abuzz following Veluriyam Capital’s declaration.

Three days later, Pillfire City finally made their next move. They announced that the Longevity Pill was originally their product and that it’d been somehow plagiarized by Veluriyam Capital. However, an empty speech made for a hardly convincing argument. As such, Pillfire City’s representative would arrive at Veluriyam Capital in one month’s time to compete against their pill king on the subject of the Longevity Pill to prove their claim. This forceful announcement immediately exacerbated the conflicting views.

With this, the two giants of the Upper Eight Regions, one of the north and the other of the south, would suddenly come face to face without prior warning. And the focus of their collision was surprisingly the Longevity Pill which had been causing quite the

clamor recently.

Everyone knew that whoever obtained the rights to the Longevity Pill would be on a path to tremendous wealth. Everyone was clear about the Longevity Pill's market potential and value, but nobody had expected this Longevity Pill to cause Veluriyam Capital and Pillfire City to clash head on with little room for error. Suddenly, the entire Upper Eight Regions was full of anticipation.

Chapter 829: The Preparations of a No Preparation Period

A month wasn't too long of a period of time, and Pillfire City's power and influence was undeniable. The contest hadn't even begun, but news had already spread throughout the lands. Only, most of the factions in the human territories unconditionally favored Pillfire City. After all, Pillfire City had been the hegemon of pill dao in the human territories for over three thousand years.

Veluriyam Capital was doing fine, but when it came to pills, it had merely shown a little development in the last thousand years. It was still far from posing a tangible threat to Pillfire City. Never mind the wild speculations running afire throughout the world at large, there were many questions even inside Sacred Peafowl Mountain. Even the four great monarchs were baffled by Great Emperor Peafowl's decision this time. Why did His Majesty trust Pill King Zhen so much?

If one put their respective pill traditions and heritages side by side, it was an almost impossible task for Sacred Peafowl Mountain to go against Pillfire City. Anyone with a little brains knew that Pillfire City was an existence one couldn't provoke when it came to pills. However, Great Emperor Peafowl had gone so far as to pin all his hopes on an outsider. Granted, this outsider had exhibited a pill talent formidable enough to shock everyone in the capital, but was talent truly enough to shake Pillfire City's impregnable, millenia-long position at the top? Even the Cloudsoar Monarch couldn't be certain.

The four great monarchs had tactfully broached the subject with Great Emperor Peafowl several times, but received only a silent smile in reply. The Chronobalance Emperor was the most outspoken of them. "Your Majesty, Pill King Zhen might have outstanding talent, but in your loyal servant's opinion, we will be

in deep trouble if he turns out to be an agent sent by Pillfire City. His origin is far too unclear at the moment."

He wasn't the only one with such thoughts. The other monarchs were also baffled at this seemingly obvious oversight . Even the Cloudsoar Monarch, the one most loyal to the great emperor, was somewhat uncertain. After all, to challenge Pillfire City to a pill contest was to publicize their conflict. Even though it was evident that a fight between Pillfire City and Veluyiram Capital had always been inevitable, it was hard not to be surprised by the suddenness of this contest. However, Emperor Peafowl seemed to be set on his course this time, his resolve seemingly unshakable. No amount of persuasion, be it tactful or blunt, could make him waver. Even many of the other great emperors in the Capital had come to Sacred Peafowl Mountain and tried to subtly reminded Emperor Peafowl that going head to head with Pillfire City would have far-reaching consequences. Was it truly a necessity?

Emperor Peafowl had but one answer for them—we fight! His resolve was as firm as iron. When everyone saw his determination, they all understood it was impossible for anyone to change his mind.

As for the one involved, Jiang Chen went into closed door cultivation after returning to his residence, turning a deaf ear to the quarrels outside. He knew that the one Pillfire City would send would definitely not be an ordinary figure, since they were adamant about obtaining the Longevity PIll. Only, Jiang Chen had never been afraid of anyone when it came to pills, and he was certain there was no one on the Divine Abyss Continent capable enough to cause him fear. In particular, Jiang Chen didn't even take Pillfire City seriously when it came to the Longevity Pill. He could even send a pill emperor running with his tail between his legs, never mind pill kings.

The various rumor mills in the Capital were running at full steam. Countless versions of "Pill King Zhen"'s past history came

to the fore. Some people said that this Pill King Zhen had once received the teachings of an immortal and had already gone beyond the realm of pill kings thanks to his talent.

Some others said this Pill King Zhen was an agent of a hostile power dispatched to the Capital to disrupt the local situation.

Of course, there also those who said that Pill King Zhen was merely a charlatan. Sacred Peafowl Mountain's trust in Pill King Zhen would cost them dearly. There were all sorts of rumors flying through the air. The one about being an undercover agent in particular, under the guise of great insight, took a life of its own. What was surprising was that Great Emperor Peafowl didn't adopt any measure to stop these wagging tongues.

All kinds of rumors came and went in the Capital. At Great Emperor Peafowl's urging, the Coiling Dragon clan lord and House Wei didn't make any comment, to say nothing of taking any action. It was as though they weren't concerned in the least about the upcoming confrontation. They only had to do what they ought to do. They didn't have any apprehension on the eve of battle.

As for Jiang Chen, he'd gone straight into seclusion for just one goal, to break through to sixth level sage realm. With the two Sage Smile Pills from before, he now had the possibility to break into sky sage realm in one fell swoop. As long as he broke through to the sixth level, one of those pills could instantly help him break through to the seventh level.

Such motivation filled Jiang Chen with renewed vigor. His cultivation progressed in leaps and bounds with the help of countless Heroic Sage Pills. Supplemented by the refining and absorption of the dragon crystals, Jiang Chen made steady steps on the road to the sixth level, each day nearing closer to his goal.

"I haven't yet seen a great emperor's disciple, but the scions at the great clan level are on the whole comparable to a first rank sect's core disciples. I need more strength to establish myself in the

Capital. As long as I can reach the sky sage realm, then I can thrash any peak ninth-level cultivators or half-step emperor realm cultivators that comes my way."

To fight against cultivators of higher levels was child's play for Jiang Chen nowadays. However, after obtaining the information about Myriad Abyss Island, Jiang Chen was much more driven to increase his cultivation. He knew that the Upper Eight Regions wasn't the summit of the Divine Abyss Continent, and weren't even the peak of martial cultivation on the continent.

Remembering Huang'er's background, recalling he was still without news of his father in the Upper Eight Domains, how the rebuilding of the ruined Regal Pill Palace was still a faraway thought, how he still didn't know whether his father in his former life was dead or alive... Jiang Chen felt a heart-rending pain each time he thought of any of these, forcing him ever onward. He didn't dare slack off even in his dreams.

Time flew by, day by day. Jiang Chen finally came out of closed door cultivation three days before the pill battle. In the end, he hadn't broken through to sixth level during this seclusion, but he'd still laid down firm foundations in preparation for his breakthrough."Pillfire City." After organizing his thoughts, Jiang Chen reviewed the information he had about Pillfire City. "Greed and shamelessness. A faction can't become grand with these tags attached to it. I wonder which Pillfire house has gotten its hands on Mu Gaoqi and Elder Yun Nie?"

Jiang Chen was in fact still quite worried. He could see how shameless Pillfire City was. They had been so brazen about snatching the Longevity Pill by force, even though it clearly didn't belong to them. Judging by this alone, they were definitely not easy to deal with. He would of course not judge a faction with simple criteria such as "good or bad." However, regardless of morality, it was out of the question for them to occupy his own things. Such was Jiang Chen's temperament. If he was willing to

offer something, then he wouldn't bat an eye no matter how precious a gift it was. If it wasn’t a gift given willingly, but snatched by force, then Jiang Chen would never allow it even for the cheapest trifle.

To tell the truth, the Longevity Pill was a mere small fragment among Jiang Chen’s countless memories. There were countless more precious pill recipes stored in his mind. Only, the theft of this pill recipe touched upon the principles Jiang Chen lived by. Even the strongest pill faction in the Upper Eight Regions couldn’t just take it from him. He would never agree to someone claiming his possession by shady means.

No one from Sacred Peafowl Mountain had come to disturb him while he’d cultivated behind close doors. However, Ji San made his way over as soon as he exited, as the Coiling Dragon clan lord’s representative.

“Brother, the clan lord said that the mood in the entire Capital is strange now that the pill battle is near at hand. He thinks that you should go to His Majesty now to boost their morale.” Ji San was actually fully confident in Jiang Chen. “I told him those people were short-sighted. They simply don’t know your talent and abilities. Pillfire City? If you ask me, they aren’t even fit to polish your shoes!” Ji San’s words were as blind as they could get. Their only goal was to enhance his good brother’s morale.

Jiang Chen actually listened with a calm smile. “Brother Ji, your words actually hit it on the head. I wouldn’t let Pillfire City polish my shoes even if they wished to.”

These words made have been said in jest, but they still were Jiang Chent’s real thoughts. In his former life, there had been so many empyrean powerhouses eager to polish Jiang Chen’s shoes they were impossible to count. Even divine powerhouses had been a dime a dozen. However, one could count on one’s hand the number of people Jiang Chen had taken a fancy to.

Jiang Chen wasn't as exalted now as he had been in his former life, but he still had the memories of his past life, so his sights were likewise set high. With Pillfire City's manner of doing things, Jiang Chen felt true contempt for them.

Ji San's smile was awkward when he heard Jiang Chen's boasting. "Brother, you actually should pay a visit to His Majesty. After all, His Majesty is putting his faith in you this time. You should go and ease his worries!"

Jiang Chen smiled. "If I am to guess, this doesn't come from His Majesty himself."

"How did you know?" Ji San blinked. True enough, he'd come this time to persuade Jiang Chen at the clan lord's behest. In the Coiling Dragon clan lord's opinion, no one was optimistic about the upcoming confrontation, and so it brought an enormous pressure down on them. No matter the outcome, the clan lord felt that Jiang Chen ought to report to his Majesty and at least talk about the duel.

However, Jiang Chen and Emperor Peafowl had a faint, unspoken mutual understanding. Jiang Chen guessed that the Longevity Pill was only a small part of the reason why Emperor Peafowl backed him in the pill duel against Pillfire City. The greater reason was that Emperor Peafowl wanted to borrow this opportunity to test Jiang chen, and test the reliability of his All-Seeing Eyes. After the long talk with Emperor Peafowl that day, Jiang Chen in fact understood him now better than many others.

For one seated in Emperor Peafowl's position, one pill recipe or one business opportunity weren't enough to make him move heaven and earth. Rather than saying the Emperor didn't mind shouldering the fallout of going against Pillfire City for the sake of the Longevity Pill, it would be better to say he was doing it to test Jiang Chen, to make the youth prove his talents.

Chapter 830: Emperor Peafowl's Wish

There was no reason for Jiang Chen to deny Emperor Peafowl's intentions. Personally speaking, Jiang Chen was very impressed by Emperor Peafowl's behavior and amiability thus far. Moreover, this battle was no longer merely a conflict between Veluriyam Capital and Pillfire City. It was directly related to his personal future and fate. Therefore, the thought of retreat didn't cross Jiang Chen's mind even once.

The Longevity Pill was his!

If Jiang Chen hadn't given the pill willingly to Pillfire City, then there was no way they would get to keep it. They had to first ask for permission from Jiang Chen if they wished to use it!

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That day, Jiang Chen met Emperor Peafowl once more inside the Sacred Peafowl Mountain secret realm. Although the highly anticipated battle was going to happen in less than three days' time, not a shred of pre-battle jitters could be seen on Emperor Peafowl's face. At his level, it seemed as though nothing could cause huge emotional turmoil in Emperor Peafowl. Even a matter such as this, a battle so important that it would influence the future trend and fate of Veluriyam Capital's influence in pill dao for the next thousands of years wasn't enough.

"Jiang Chen, you and I may be the only two people in the entirety of Veluriyam Capital right now who are completely unaffected by this battle." Emperor Peafowl cast Jiang Chen a rather meaningful glance before smiling.

"Aren't you worried about this battle at all, Your Majesty?" Jiang Chen blinked and asked with a smile.

"Why should I be worried?" Emperor Peafowl countered.

Jiang Chen rubbed his nose, "Aren't you afraid that I would lose

this battle and negatively affect Sacred Peafowl Mountain's fate?"

Emperor Peafowl smiled freely, "I can see the flow of destiny, so why on earth would I be afraid of the effects of destiny? My eye art tells me that Sacred Peafowl Mountain will only climb to greater heights. I can almost see no possibility of you losing this battle."

"Are you that confident in my abilities, Your Majesty?" Jiang Chen asked curiously.

"You're even more confident in yourself than I am, aren't you?" It was as Emperor Peafowl said. Jiang Chen truly was completely unaffected by this battle.

It wasn't that he was confident in his chances of victory. The thought that he would lose simply never crossed his mind. "Oh right, I heard that Pillfire City's team has already crossed the borders, Your Majesty?"

"Yes, they have already arrived in Veluriyam Capital. Emperor Pillzenith and I have already met."

"Oh?" Jiang Chen remarked, "It must have been very interesting, not? Sparks must have flown everywhere when the two greatest emperors encountered each other."

Emperor Peafowl laughed, "What sparks? It is true that we fight each other on the surface, but drawing daggers in private is a whole other matter altogether. Great emperors wouldn't butt heads against each other easily unless their very life was at stake, young friend."

Jiang Chen smiled but said nothing in reply.

Emperor Peafowl actually took the initiative to ask Jiang Chen with bright eyes, "Do you plan to publicize your identity after this battle, young friend?"

Jiang Chen didn't think that Emperor Peafowl would ask this. A moment later, he ultimately shook his head, "My father and my sect mates are still out there somewhere. I'm afraid that

publicizing my identity would put them in danger."

It was true that it was somewhat dangerous for Jiang Chen to publicize his identity with his current status in Veluriyam Capital, but if he managed to beat Pillfire City, then not even the Eternal Celestial Capital would dare act brazenly before him. But still, he didn't wish to publicize his identity. They might not be able to threaten him in Veluriyam Capital, but they could attack those who were close to him in secret.

He could imagine that his father, Jiang Feng or his Regal Pill Palace sect mates would definitely come running after hearing his name. He had no doubt that it would also give enemy forces the chance to attack them. Jiang Chen would rather investigate in secret than openly publicize his identity. If his actions enabled his enemies to threaten his loved ones, he was sure that he would come to regret this decision his entire life.

"Come to me whenever you feel like publicizing it. I will give you the greatest protection possible in Veluriyam Capital. I guarantee that not even the Eternal Celestial Capital will dare raise a hand against you." Emperor Peafowl made his standpoint very clear.

Jiang Chen was touched. No matter what happened next, there was no denying that Emperor Peafowl was treating him with great kindness. "I won't forget your kindness, Your Majesty. I will definitely win the Longevity Pill for Sacred Peafowl Mountain and send Pillfire City back with their tail between their legs," Jiang Chen also expressed his determination.

Emperor Peafowl laughed loudly, "Haha, that's a sight I'll look forward to! Emperor Pillzenith completely looks down on Sacred Peafowl Mountain's pill kings completely, and it is true that they are inferior to those of his Pillfire City. That being said, I have a feeling that the all-encompassing Emperor Pillzenith will be met with a loss at Sacred Peafowl Mountain's hands this time around, shattering their invincible legend in the pill industry. My expectation grows just thinking about it."

“The Longevity Pill is mine. If I haven’t given them the pill willingly, then they shouldn’t dream of keeping it to themselves. I would not have the face to meet my master if I lose.”

“Alas, your master must be an expert of unimaginable heights. I can’t believe that he could nurture a genius like you in just ten years time. I’ve dominated Veluriyam Capital for three thousand years, and I have seen as many geniuses as there are fish in rivers. But I have never seen a more skilled young man than you. If it isn’t for your master, I might actually consider keeping you in Veluriyam Capital by force, young friend.” Emperor Peafowl might be using a joking tone, but who knew if that had seriously crossed his mind ?

When Jiang Chen had triggered that shocking worldly phenomenon back at Precious Tree Sect, Emperor Peafowl had seen it all with his ability to observe the threads of destiny. It had came as a great shock to the emperor. Even he hadn’t triggered such a ridiculous worldly phenomenon the day he broke through to become a great emperor. Now that he had seen Jiang Chen with his own eyes, the flow of destiny circulating around the youth was to a degree he had never seen in his whole life. It would be stranger yet if Emperor Peafowl wasn’t tempted to bring a genius like this into his camp.

He had forcefully suppressed his ability to perceive the heaven’s dao and stayed in Veluriyam Capital because he was waiting for a successor of great talent and destiny to succeed him. In his opinion, Jiang Chen was the best choice he’d ever seen. That was why he had never given up trying to take Jiang Chen as his disciple these past few days.

Although Jiang Chen found Emperor Peafowl a lot to his liking, he still found it somewhat difficult to accept the emperor as his master. After all, he couldn’t just forget his past memories, and in his past memories, the only person worthy to become his master was his father, and no one else. Be it Ye Chonglou or Palace Head

Dan Chi, Jiang Chen had thought both of them as his friends and seniors despite their age difference. He had never given them the salute of a disciple.

In terms of seniority in this lifetime, he deserved to be called a junior considering his age and status. However, a master and disciple relationship was a lot more serious. Naturally, Jiang Chen didn't wish to take a secular world's expert as his master. After all, there literally didn't exist anyone in the entire Divine Abyss Continent who could guide him along the path of martial dao.

He had no doubt that Emperor Peafowl was tens and hundreds of times stronger than him right now. At the very least, there was zero harm in accepting Emperor Peafowl as his master at the moment. Moreover, the emperor could pass down many things regarding actual combat. But still, Jiang Chen couldn't overcome that final hurdle in his heart. He couldn't help but feel a little something keeping him from accepting Emperor Peafowl as his master.

Thankfully, he had this fake 'master' to use as his shield. Therefore, turning down Emperor Peafowl's offer was less awkward than it could've been. After all, his fake 'master' sounded a lot more mysterious and powerful than even Emperor Peafowl. Experts attached great value to their inheritances, so naturally they couldn't forcefully take in another master's student. It would be a breach of the rules of martial dao.

"I am very grateful, Your Majesty. It's just that my master once told me that the ten years of skill he imparted to me is enough for me to use for an entire lifetime. He forbade me from accepting another expert's offer to teach me, or it would constitute a breach of the rules."

Emperor Peafowl waved his hands gently and smiled, "That is exactly right. Do not worry, young friend. Even if your master is just an origin realm expert, I would not force you to take me as your master." He wasn't that narrow minded considering his

position as the heavyweight of an entire faction. However, Emperor Peafowl immediately smiled again, “That being said, I do have an idea.”

“Please speak, Young Majesty.”

“You and I are like old friends, even though we met not long ago. Perhaps a master disciple relationship does not yet exist between us, but that doesn’t mean I can’t pass down my inheritance to you.”

“What do you mean, Your Majesty?” Jiang Chen was surprised.

“You and I are the only ones here, so I shan’t speak in circles, young friend. I had three direct disciples, and two are left after one was killed by my own hands. Both of them are preeminent geniuses of their time. However, they still lack a quality that would enable them to carry certain responsibilities on their shoulders; a quality that only you currently possess. It is not yet time to pass on the torch of Sacred Peafowl Mountain’s fate.”

“You can always wait a little longer, right?” Jiang Chen smiled.

“I’m afraid that isn’t possible for much longer. I can miss the heavenly law’s the first and second summons, but I absolutely cannot miss the third time. If I do, I am afraid that the law would smite me.” Emperor Peafowl sighed softly, “In the next ten years, I must either obey the heavenly law and refine the empyrean decree, or perish and enter the cycle of reincarnation.”

Ten years? Jiang Chen looked shocked when he heard this, “Your time is that short?”

“Ten years is just an estimate, but that is more or less the right time. That’s why I’m so curious: What kind of method did you use to stop the Coiling Dragon clan lord from losing his cultivation?” There was no need to tell this to others, but Emperor Peafowl’s insight was so great that it obviously couldn’t be hidden from him. Therefore, Jiang Chen had no choice but to tell the truth.

“This is something your master taught you?” Emperor Peafowl let out a soft sigh. He was filled with respect and admiration after he finished listening to the story. Jiang Chen nodded.

“Then the Pinecrane Pill truly exists?” Emperor Peafowl suddenly asked.

Jiang Chen nodded, “It definitely exists.”

Emperor Peafowl’s pupils contracted a little when he heard this. He continued, “Did your master teach you the method to refine the Pinecrane Pill?”

Jiang Chen couldn’t lie in front of Emperor Peafowl, so he had no choice but to nod in acknowledgment.

“So you mean that if the ingredients are present you could try refining the Pinecrane Pill too?” Emperor Peafowl’s eyes shone brightly.

Chapter 831: Sacred Peafowl Mountain's Inheritance

Jiang Chen couldn't avoid Emperor Peafowl's enthusiastic gaze, so he smiled and answered honestly, "I could try. Though I would not be able to guarantee the success rate. Plus, this pill is so precious that it would take ages to gather its ingredients again in the case of failure."

Jiang Chen left himself some leeway to fall back on.

Emperor Peafowl sighed, "Genius. What genius! To think that a place overflowing with fortune as my Veluriyam Capital would lack a genius of your ability all these years, but a forgotten place like the Myriad Domain would produce one! No matter how powerful your master was, he couldn't have molded a genius like you if you didn't possess outstanding talents yourself. It is the combined effort of your master's godly methods and your own outstanding talents that made you into the shining genius you are now!"

There were countless youngsters in Veluriyam Capital, but there had never been a person who received such high praise from Emperor Peafowl until now. This was no longer just simple praise, but one that came from the bottom of his heart. Suddenly, the emperor's eyes became determined as if he had just made up his mind about something. "Jiang Chen, I must admit that I haven't told you everything earlier. Now, I believe that I don't have to hesitate any longer. I would like to give you the legacy of the Sacred Peafowl Mountain once ten years is over."

"What?" Jiang Chen was shocked, "You're giving it to me after ten years?"

"Yes," Emperor Peafowl nodded. "You and I need not share a master disciple relationship. All you need to do is to receive the inheritance of Sacred Peafowl Mountain."

Jiang Chen was dumbfounded. “But why?”

Emperor Peafowl’s expression was serious. “A great chaos is coming, and Sacred Peafowl Mountain’s fortunes will decide Veluriyam Capital’s fortunes. In turn, Veluriyam Capital’s destiny also decides the destiny of the entire human domain. I have made acquaintances with countless people in my life in attempt to find a person of great destiny to inherit my Sacred Peafowl Mountain, and you are the brightest pearl I have found. I have a feeling that Sacred Peafowl Mountain’s legacy will be passed down for eternity if it is in your hands. No one else can fulfill my expectations.”

Looking at Emperor Peafowl’s sincere eyes, Jiang Chen knew that this great emperor was not joking with him. In reality, Jiang Chen was very much impressed by Emperor Peafowl. After all, the emperor had been born with the All-Seeing Eyes that enabled to see another person’s destiny. Even the people around him hadn’t made the connection when he achieved his breakthrough beneath the Precious Tree of the Rosy Dawn back then. Emperor Peafowl was the only one who was very certain that he was connected to that extraordinary phenomenon. Moreover, his suspicions were well founded and not empty guesses in any way.

Jiang Chen himself knew about his own fortunes. How could a person who survived the cataclysm and even able to reincarnate with full memories have no good fortune at all? It was impossible that a person who didn’t possess a great fortune could achieve reincarnation.

“Don’t turn me down so quickly, young friend. Sacred Peafowl Mountain needs your fortune, but you need Sacred Peafowl Mountain to pave your path to the future too. You understand the reason why your journey has been so rocky, don’t you?” His words hit the nail on the head and silenced Jiang Chen completely.

Of course Jiang Chen knew the reason why.

“There are plenty of reasons, but they can all be summarized

under one major one. Your background and starting point is too low, and your patron and power is too weak as well. The fourth rank sect Regal Pill Palace may be a top rank power in Myriad Domain, but resistance is futile even for them when the great calamity arrives." Emperor Peafowl's words were very direct. He continued, "The law of survival in the world of martial dao can be cruel or kind depending on your viewpoint, but before a standpoint can even be made, it must have at the bottom a foundation of strength. My Sacred Peafowl Mountain may not be the strongest power in the human territories, but no one can deny that it is one of the strongest."

Jiang Chen couldn't refute this point either. "That is why Sacred Peafowl Mountain needs you, and you too need Sacred Peafowl Mountain." Emperor Peafowl looked at Jiang Chen enthusiastically. "If I name you the young master of Sacred Peafowl Mountain, then no matter how much the Eternal Celestial Capital or the Ninesuns Sky Sect hate you, none of them would dare show their faces in Veluriyam Capital and threaten your wellbeing. The only thing they could do is to swallow all their hatred and live with it."

Emperor Peafowl was not an expert who embellished the benefits of strength single mindedly, and that was also why his words moved Jiang Chen even more. It was the truth. It had been a while since he started cultivating, and although Jiang Chen was full of mettle and capable and caused big waves wherever he went, he was undeniably weak in the face of true strength.

"Your Majesty, I can only express my gratitude at the great love you show me. However, the burden of inheritance is so heavy. What if I fail to uphold this responsibility? Would it not be a betrayal of your trust? You know of the head of Regal Pill Palace, Dan Chi, who saw the potential in me just like you did. In the end, I wasn't able to save my sect from being destroyed, and Palace Head Dan Chi himself is still missing. Although I wasn't the cause

of the Regal Pill Palace's destruction, but it doesn't change the fact that I, a Regal Pill Palace disciple, wasn't able to turn the tides around and save my sect from destruction."

The destruction of the Regal Pill Palace indeed wasn't Jiang Chen's fault. The Ninesuns Sky Sect and the Eternal Celestial Capital had long since set set up their plans in order to find Emperor Featherflight. From the moment Emperor Featherflight had escaped into Myriad Domain, he had almost certainly doomed Myriad Domain to a fate of tragedy. But he still couldn't absolve himself from the guilt that was the destruction of the Regal Pill Palace. He couldn't help but blame himself for failing to save the sect even though Palace Head Dan Chi put so much trust in him.

Jiang Chen also knew this. After all, he had barely entered the Regal Pill Palace before disaster struck them. There had been so little time that he grow powerful at all. It was obviously unrealistic to hope that an origin realm expert could grow powerful enough to rival a first rank sect in just a couple of years. It was this guilt and regret that had propelled Jiang Chen to do many things for the Regal Pill Palace. He'd willingly braved many dangers and travelled all the way from the Great Scarlet Mid Region to Veluriyam Capital in search for his sect mates. He even went against the ninth rank aristocratic house, the Sikou Family of Veluriyam Capital in order to save his sect mates.

Logically speaking, Jiang Chen should have felt overwhelmed with joy by the favor Emperor Peafowl was showering him with his offer of inheritance. But all he felt was a heavy weight that threatened to crush his back. It wasn't that he was afraid to shoulder this burden. He simply didn't want to disappoint those who trusted him again. His experience in the Regal Pill Palace had cast a bit of shadow in his heart.

Emperor Peafowl let out a soft sigh, "Young friend, it is only a matter of time before the Divine Abyss Continent falls into chaos. Forget the Regal Pill Palace, even Veluriyam Capital's chances of

survival is currently unknown. I am not pushing you to achieve something by entrusting you this inheritance. I simply thought that it is the best choice out of all the candidates I can possibly entrust this to. When chaos arrives, the world will shatter, and no one shall be spared from the great calamity. Even I cannot tell the future of Divine Abyss Continent, and if it will welcome a new age of recovery when chaos passes."

Experts, even those at the great emperor level, were ultimately not omnipotent. No one could predict the future accurately as fate wasn't something so easy to predict. Although there exists great arts that could predict some traces of the future, it was simply impossible to come up with the whole picture. Emperor Peafowl couldn't do it, and even those who were ten times stronger than Emperor Peafowl couldn't do it as well. Not even Jiang Chen's father from his past life, the Celestial Emperor who ruled over the great heavenly world, could predict everything. The saying that heaven's dao is unpredictable was absolutely not empty words. Jiang Chen could see sincerity and great hope in Emperor Peafowl's eyes. He felt like he would be committing a sin if he were to turn the emperor down.

Jiang Chen hesitated for a while. "Your Majesty, this matter is too important. Please allow me some time to think before making my decision."

Emperor Peafowl shook his head. "Jiang Chen, you are good in almost everything, but there is one tiny thing that you lack as a youngster."

"What?" Jiang Chen looked startled.

"Courage and vigor," Emperor Peafowl said indifferently. "I don't know if you teacher has told you this before. I can see a thousand talents in you, but you lack the determined courage and the vigorous drive of a youngster when it comes to such important matters. If a youngster is as astute and circumspect like us older people, it would be mature if put nicely, but lacking vigor if not

bluntly.”

This was the first time Emperor Peafowl had criticized Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen was silent. He couldn’t deny that everything he did was the result of much careful planning ever since he was reincarnated as the son of a duke in the Eastern Kingdom. Although he would do impulsive things sometimes, they were never the result of any less than absolute certainty that he would come out ahead. It wasn’t that Jiang Chen was truly lacking in courage. It was simply that the nightmare that was the destruction of the divine plane during his past life had instilled in him an unconscious mindset of cautiousness. After all, the things he bore were so heavy that any misstep might result in the loss of everything he had built for himself. He couldn’t afford to lose even once.

Although Jiang Chen had no idea why the divine planes had shattered during his past life, he was certain that it hadn’t happened without reason. His reincarnation in this place was not without reason either. Perhaps his father’s enemies were the ones who’d brought about the calamity this time. Therefore, as his father’s son, he couldn’t afford to be careless even though he was reincarnated into a new body. If the cultivators of the divine plane were to find him again, they could easily destroy him a thousand times over.

Jiang Chen had never paid serious attention to his current mindset, but it had become a subconscious of his. When this was pointed out by Emperor Peafowl directly, Jiang Chen abruptly realized that he was a little too cautious, and a little too lacking in the arrogance and recklessness that only a youth would possess. He had maintained a low key profile all this time and was unwilling to get himself involved in conflict. He had wanted to keep to himself and quietly cultivate to the point where he had the strength to investigate the cause and effect of that incident of his past life. But

the more he tried to run away, the more he tried to cast off the ties, the more he ran head first into those things.

"Jiang Chen, I may not know what you're trying to escape from, but I can tell you clearly that no one can spare themselves from danger when chaos arrives. The world changes like the tidewaters, and none can resist its mighty flow. It doesn't matter if you're a good or bad, righteous or evil. Everyone will be drawn in all the same. So if you can't escape it, why not meet it head on? Don't you think that you are letting down those wonderful talents of yours by keeping to only yourself?" His words rang so loudly beside Jiang Chen's ears that even the deaf could probably hear them. Jiang Chen was left speechless in the end.

Chapter 832: News of Ling Hui'er

Though Emperor Peafowl wasn't criticizing Jiang Chen, his words still carried a hint of admonishment. As it happened, Jiang Chen couldn't exactly refute him. He'd truly been a little selfish in that area, a little self-centered. He had to admit he'd never thought about carrying the fate of an entire sect on his shoulders. He'd thought even less about shouldering the fate of the common people. Jiang Chen hadn't reached such a level enlightenment yet. In fact, in the world of martial dao, those who'd gained such enlightenment numbered very few.

Ye Chonglou, Palace Head Dan Chi, Emperor Peafowl, they were the only ones who'd reached that level among all those Jiang Chen had met. Only, Ye Chonglou's strength had been a little lacking despite his good intentions. On the other hand, Palace Head Dan Chi had grand aspirations, but the Regal Pill Palace's power and foundation restricted his possibilities. Emperor Peafowl's status was exalted. He was, sadly, at an advanced age, and had come to feel and comprehend the dao of the heavens. He was soon going to break through to a higher stage. When he did so, he wouldn't be able to remain in Veluriyam Capital.

Jiang Chen stayed silent, yet thoughts stormed through his heart and mind. As a matter of fact, Emperor Peafowl was the same type of person as his father from his previous life, the Celestial Emperor. Jiang Chen was convinced that if his father could see him right now, he would certainly not like this child who was cautious to a fault. To put it bluntly, the Celestial Emperor was a heroic sovereign, grand of aspiration and bold of spirit. Otherwise, he wouldn't have willingly sacrificed his own fate and power to refine a Sun Moon Divine Pill for the sake of his son, ruining natural order in the process. Jiang Chen was simply ashamed if he was held up in comparison.

Emperor Peafowl's words reverberated in Jiang Chen's mind like

the rolling ringing of a morning bell, cracking, shattering the shackles of his heart, layer by layer. The chains that bound his heart, the shackles buried deep within, shattered and disintegrated one after another. All of a sudden, a spiritual flash shot inside Jiang Chen's sea of consciousness.

As if on the surface of a calm sea, waves suddenly rose on the surface of the seal in Jiang Chen's consciousness. The turbulence was miniscule, but Jiang Chen clearly felt it. And in that moment, he seemed to sense a familiar feeling, the aura of the Celestial Emperor. The feeling was almost imperceptible, disappearing in a flash from his sea of consciousness. However, that flash was like lightning illuminating Jiang Chen's mind, instantly shattering all his burdens.

"Father!" Jiang Chen was now dead certain this seal was related to his father. It had always been a nagging guess, but he was absolutely certain now. At that moment, Jiang Chen's spirit was clear and serene. The chains holding him back vanished with a trace, and he was overflowing with spirit and energy.

"Your Majesty's guidance allowed a sudden flash of insight for this humble junior. Since Your Majesty has bestowed such favors upon me, it would be rude for me to refuse." Jiang Chen's eyes were crystal-clear as he faced Emperor Peafowl.

Delight shone on Emperor Peafowl's face. "Very good, good kid! Sensible and perceptive, you're indeed someone worthy of grooming, the kind of successor I'm looking for."

"After handing Sacred Peafowl Mountain over to me, isn't Your Majesty afraid that your personal disciples will refuse to comply? That the four great monarchs under you will refuse to comply? What about about the clan lords?"

Emperor Peafowl responded with a faint smile, "Since I'm handing it to you, that's something you'll have to resolve with you strength, wisdom and ability. What, not feeling up to it?"

Jiang Chen smiled. “Your Majesty is indeed adept at goading someone into action.”

Emperor Peafowl laughed out loud. “Tell me, are you confident?”

“That will depend on how much free rein Your Majesty leaves me.”

Emperor Peafowl’s face was resolute. “SInce I’m leaving it to you, then of course you’ll be the one to make decisions. I won’t put any restrictions on you. Even if you flip everything on its head, even if you turn Sacred Peafowl Mountain upside down, I definitely won’t utter half a word as long as you seem able.”

“Very good.” Jiang Chen was elated at the promise. “Your Majesty’s chiding today has set free my heroic spirit. Since Your Majesty gives me carte blanche, I’m now fully prepared for what’s to come. Ten years... ten years...” Jiang Chen quietly mulled over the words “ten years.”

It hadn’t yet been ten years since he’d appeared in this world. In that time, he’d gone from a small place like the Eastern Kingdom all the way to Veluriyam Capital, shaking the world in his wake.

Ten years later, what would stop him from heading for the pinnacle and dominating human territories? Jiang Chen had never lacked in self-confidence. He’d never let his daring and his aspirations run free, but that had been out of fear of the consequences, not because he was lacking in either. After tossing away his restraint and the shackles of his heart, Jiang Chen instantly felt himself relax. He was now brimming with grand aspirations.

If one gave a cultivator ten years, perhaps he would only progress a level or two in the same realm. However, ten years for Jiang Chen was the same as a hundred years for others, maybe even a thousand years. After all, ever since his debut, he’d walked a road in a few short years that others would need several hundred years to travel. Hence, ten years might be a pressing constraint, but

Jiang Chen didn't believe it was a responsibility too heavy for him to bear.

"Haha, kid, if I hadn't goaded you, would you be brimming with this much motivation?" The Great Emperor laughed out loud. "After the contest this time, keep hiding your strength and biding your time. You'll have to take center stage after the Veluriyam Pagoda closes. Then, I'll proclaim you as my successor. You should be aware that the Veluriyam Pagoda Gathering will have far-reaching consequences for the Capital. When the time comes, you'll have to shoulder the mantle of Sacred Peafowl Mountain's young lord, whether you do it as Pill Master Zhen or as Jiang Chen."

Being Sacred Peafowl Mountain's young lord implied that Jiang Chen would formally enter the core of the Capital, and formally compete with the other great emperor's successors.

Only the strongest could be the Capital's true master. Emperor Peafowl for example, had been the unshakeable number one for three thousand years.

"By that time, you'll have proper justification for mobilizing Sacred Peafowl Mountain's power. It wouldn't be any problem even if you wanted to use Sacred Peafowl Mountain to rebuild the Regal Pill Palace, look for your father, or even look for your fellow sect members. Even declaring war on the Eternal Celestial Capital isn't outside the realm of possibilities."

Something flickered on Jiang Chen's face, but he still immediately shook his head with a faint smile. "Declaring war on the Eternal Celestial Capital isn't a pressing matter for now, and I won't need Sacred Peafowl Mountain's power either. As to rebuilding the Regal Pill Palace, it's actually something I can think about."

Jiang Chen knew that using Sacred Peafowl Mountain's power to wage war on the Eternal Celestial Capital would be a little

excessive. He didn't want to give others food for gossip.

"Haha, you are candid and straightforward; that's the thing I like most about you. Of course, it's not impossible for Sacred Peafowl Mountain to wage war on the Eternal Celestial Capital. The only thing required is a suitable reason. If it's because of the Regal Pill Palace, then you would be using your public status for a private quarrel. That would be a little low and unprincipled. But if it's for another reason, it's not impossible to fight against the Eternal Celestial Capital." Emperor Peafowl laughed out loud. "Alright, your promise today relieved me of a worry. As for the duel against Pilfire City, you'll have to prepare yourself a little anyway. Are you planning to do it in my Sacred Peafowl Mountain or are you going to go back to Taiyuan Tower?"

"I will return to Taiyuan Tower."

……

Jiang Chen's mood after leaving Sacred Peafowl Mountain was a lot more carefree. He'd thrown away all the worries weighing down his mind. He recognized that his life had indeed been a little constrained and stifled previously. He'd been restricted by all sorts of things. In order to handle matters in place of others, he'd fallen into a vicious circle of overcautiousness. He couldn't do as he wished or act free and unrestrained, following his heart's desires.

To put it bluntly, his hands had been tied by the circumstances. Only, no matter how cautious he was, what use had it been? Almost every bad thing that could happen happened anyway. In that case, why would he still continue like that? Just as Emperor Peafowl had admonished, he might as well live the way he wanted to live, live his life a little bolder, a little more carefree. Everything in Taiyuan Tower was as he'd left it, apart from the business that'd become much more flourishing. Every corner of every floor was bustling with activity.

"Senior brother." Shen Trifire hurried to his side all of a sudden.

“You’ve come out of seclusion?”

Jiang Chen nodded. Seeing Shen Trifire maturing day by day, already able to take charge of the Tower by himself, was a great source of gratification for him. He nodded when he saw the latter wanted to tell him something. “Let’s go inside.”

Shen Trifire followed Jiang Cheng to a private room.

“What’s the matter?” Jiang Chen asked.

“Senior brother, you told me to pay attention to junior sister Ling Hui’er’s whereabouts last time, so I’ve continuously sent men to inquire and investigate everywhere. We found a clue a few days ago.”

“Oh?” Jiang Chen’s eyes suddenly shone bright. He had been in Veluriyam Capital for a long time now. Ling Hui’er and Ling Su should have arrived already by now. Only, because of all sorts of reasons, Jiang Chen hadn’t found them so far. If Ling Su and Ling Hui’er had been able to bypass the Eternal Celestial Capital’s blockade, then they’d certainly have come to Veluriyam Capital. That had been their agreement with Jiang Chen.

“Even if junior sister Ling is already in Veluryiam Capital, she still wouldn’t have guessed that you’re Taiyuan Tower’s master. So they wouldn’t have come here on their own. My guess is that, if they’re already here, they should have mingled with the wandering cultivators. That’s why I’d sent many informants to watch the places frequented by wandering cultivators. Yesterday morning, someone sent news that at a certain gathering place for wandering cultivators in the northern part of the city, they saw a man and a woman somewhat similar to the description of junior sister Ling.”

“Is she still there?” This stirred Jiang Chen’s interest. Ling Hui’er had very distinctive traits. The sight of her bosom was in and of itself rather conspicuous. This trait was extremely obvious. Facial features could be altered or masked, but she couldn’t shrink

her assets in that particular area.

“We don’t have any further news for now. That said, I already sent more men there. When things are settled here, I had planned on going there myself.” Shen Trifire knew that any sect member of the Regal Pill Palace was very important right now. Ling Hui’er was a particularly important person even among them. Back then in the Regal Pill Palace, many fellow members of the sect had gossiped about the relationship between Jiang Chen and Ling Hui’er. Shen Trifire was of course aware of the rumors, so he simply thought Ling Hui’er to be his senior brother Jiang Chen’s wife. How could he not take this information to heart?

Chapter 833: The Ling Father and Daughter Pair

Jiang Chen could see that Shen Trifire was already quite devoted to the task at hand. However, he still felt somewhat guilty when he recalled Ling Bi'er's selfless assistance back in the Myriad Domain. The world was a big place—who knew where Ling Bi'er had ended up? Still, her father and sister had come to Veluriyam Capital and were thus his responsibility. He was obligated to take care of them and, in good conscience, couldn't allow any harm to befall them. It wasn't simply a responsibility towards a peer of the same sect, rather, it was a kind of accountability towards the girl who had saved his life.

"Trifire, let us go right now. I will come with you." Jiang Chen couldn't sit still. He wanted to take the Ling father and daughter duo to Taiyuan Tower immediately to ensure their safety. They were already here in the capital. Even though law enforcement was fairly adept, it was still an eat-or-be-eaten type of social pecking order amongst wandering cultivators. Considering Ling Su and Ling Hui'er's level of cultivation, sooner or later they were bound to end up in an unfavorable position.

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Located in the northern part of the city, the Azure Sea District was a place well-known for its population of wandering cultivators. At least two or three hundred thousand wandering cultivators roamed its streets each day, with upwards of a million at its busiest times. It was heaven for wandering cultivators, intentionally created by Veluriyam Capital itself to serve as such. The locale was designed to be an area of activity for these cultivators. Here, cultivators could cultivate, conduct business, take up missions, entertain themselves, and carry out just about anything they wanted to do. There was endless wine here,

countless women, and limitless money to be earned. Thus, the wandering cultivators of surrounding territories had always viewed this place as a kind of wonderful refuge.

Of course, the district's luxurious surface belied its hidden corners, devoid of light. A place with a heaven-like appearance often held a great deal of accompanying darkness within as well. Acts steeped in grime and malice took place here, just as they did anyplace else. However, wandering cultivators each followed their own paths. No one concerned themselves with the fate of others. For a wandering cultivator, anyone they did not know was considered a passerby. Because of this, the Azure Sea District was actually a rather lawless place. Some obtained money and fame here while others met their demise.

By now, Ling Su and Ling Hui'er had already stayed here for three days. For the first two days, Ling Su had taken his daughter into the nearby streets to privately gather information. He had been more cautious both yesterday and today, however. His worldly experience told him that they were being watched. Today he fully intended to stay inside the inn without venturing a single step outside. Yes, the Azure Sea District did have certain things that were better left unseen, but there were still a few basic principles that everyone adhered to. The inns, at the very least ,were safe.

Ling Hui'er was a little bored by it all. "Daddy, we've been stuffed up in the inn all day. This is so dull. Plus, how are we going to discover any news about senior brother Jiang and older sister like this?" She pursed her lips.

Ling Su knew his daughter's nature well. She was indeed the kind of person who found it difficult to simply sit idly in an inn. But an old hand like him knew that the situation within the Azure Sea District was complicated, more so than it appeared at first glance.

"Hui'er, don't be so capricious. This isn't the Myriad Domain. With what little strength we have, at best we can be considered

middle-lower class. I can't keep you safe if a problem arises."

"There's no way things are as bad as you say, daddy." Ling Hui'er repeatedly tugged on her father's arm. "We can go out during the day and come back before nightfall. It'll be fine."

It wasn't Ling Su's first day navigating the world, and he was much wiser than his daughter. If he hadn't noticed the signs that something was awry, he wouldn't have needed to be discreet.

"Hui'er, when has daddy hurt you?" He patiently explained. "I want to find your sister more than anybody. But I've traversed more bridges than you have roads. Something is definitely amiss. Let's lay low for a bit—we can take a look around afterwards."

Ling Hui'er was unhappy at her father's refusal to budge and sat down with a huff.

"Hui'er, you…"

They were mid-conversation when a series of footsteps could be heard in the hallway. An attendant at the inn knocked on their door.

"Customer, the crystals that you gave us have almost been used up. If you don't give us further payment, you'll need to vacate your rooms between eleven and one."

Ling Su frowned when he heard the announcement, his expression suddenly becoming very serious. They had spent long days on the road over the course of these past few days. In order to avoid the Eternal Celestial Capital's investigation and pursuit, they had taken many detours. Thankfully, the Eternal Celestial Capital had been after Jiang Chen. People like the Ling father and daughter duo had no place on the city's wanted lists, and they were able to successfully muddle along to Veluriyam Capital. However, their road had been a bumpy one, and they had kept low profiles. They didn't have any real way of making money. As such, their crystals had been quickly used up.

They had only been in Veluriyam Capital for three days, but they had already reached the last of their funds. The original assumption was that they would be able to live at Veluriyam for a fortnight or so, then find some missions to keep themselves barely afloat. But it wasn't until they'd actually arrived at Veluriyam Capital that they discovered their own naivete. The inns within the capital were much pricier than the ones outside. Three or four times more so, in fact.

However, the inns here were significantly safer. While living here, there was no need to worry about someone assaulting them in the middle of the night. Something like that would never happen at Veluriyam Capital. If something like that were to occur, the inn in question would immediately close down. Despite the safety benefits, however, the price for accommodations was high enough to make Ling Su's heart drip blood. The attendant's prompt for the required additional payment only exacerbated his anxiety. He wanted to seek refuge here until the dust settled, but misfortune came in pairs. Instead of finding shelter, he was about to be kicked out of the inn.

Ling Hui'er put on a more careless air. She wasn't at all saddened by the news, and her large eyes twinkled. "Daddy, we don't have money anymore, so how can we keep staying here? Let's go find a mission and ask around in the meantime." She sighed softly, seeming to recall something. "I wonder if senior brother Jiang has gotten here yet? Has older sister met up with him? I really want to know..."

Ling Su's face was fraught with worry. He looked outside with some concern, but had no idea as to what to do next. Without money, they couldn't do anything in Veluriyam Capital. If they couldn't stay in an inn at night, then their safety was no longer assured. "Hui'er, let's pack our things. We're leaving quietly." He had no other resort.

"Why do we have to leave quietly?" Ling Hui'er widened her

eyes. “We haven’t done anything wrong! Is it really necessary for us to have to sneak around like that?”

“Hui’er, we’re not at Regal Pill Palace anymore,” Ling Su chuckled wryly. “We can’t afford to be easily noticeable. It’s my fault for spoiling you when you were little… if your sister were here, you wouldn’t even think twice about listening to her.”

Ling Hui’er giggled. “Daddy, if you were as fierce as sister is, how would I be able to live with the both of you?” Both of them knew that they couldn’t stay in the inn without more money.

There was nothing that could be done. Ling Su had no better solution than to pack his bags and attempt to sneak out. They weren’t too far from the inn when a pair of eyes around the corner spotted them. It immediately darted backwards, retreating into the darkness. Ling Su was a well-traveled man and had a wealth of commensurate experience. His intuition was very good in these situations. Sensing something, he pulled Ling Hui’er towards the opposite direction and moved to hasten their pace. “Hui’er, let’s go this way.”

Though Ling Hui’er was fairly obtuse, her father’s guarded watchfulness reined in her whimsical nature in the heat of the moment. She followed closely behind him. In no time at all, several horses charged from the opposite direction they were going in. Ling Su hastily pulled Ling Hui’er to the side of the road, preparing to let them pass by.

However, they were evidently the target of the horses, as the steeds and their riders scattered upon reaching the Ling father and daughter duo’s side, encircling the pair. His face tensing, Ling Su growled in a low voice, “Friends, we do not know each other. Why are you blocking the road?”

“Hahaha, you don’t know us, eh? So you don’t remember borrowing money from us, old fart? You’ve evaded us for these past few months, but finally no longer!”

“No need for small talk. Debts must be paid. You can’t leave today without paying us both the principal and the interest!” The cultivators flourished the riding whips in their hands. With vicious demeanors and greedy looks, they appeared implacable.

Ling Su’s heart fell. With his experience, how could he not see that these people were picking a fight on purpose? “I think you have the wrong person. I’ve never borrowed money from anyone here. If you’d like your debts to be repaid, why are you soliciting me for money?”

Though he knew it was just a trumped-up charge, Ling Su didn’t want to turn on them right away. From what he could see, he couldn’t match a single one of these cultivators. It would be completely effortless for the men to defeat them.

“Hahaha, the wrong person?” The burly man at the head of the group chuckled. “We’ve done this for a couple hundred years, and you say that we’ve got the wrong person? You’ve got to be kidding me.”

“You wanna renege on your debts, old man?”

“’Course, you can do that, as long as you give us that girl as collateral. That’ll make us barely even.”

Ling Su’s heart trembled. It was as bad as he had thought. He’d felt someone gawking at his daughter before, but from the looks of it, trouble was unavoidable. The supposed debt they talked about was only a ruse—it was Ling Hui’er they were really after.

Hui’er’s babyish face was all puffy and red. “Aren’t you guys being unreasonable?” She shouted angrily. “When did we borrow money from you?”

“Ho, the girl has a bit of a temper!”

“Hmm, having a wild side is even better. You can’t get out of paying your debts, little girl!”

Ling Hui’er hadn’t met anyone as unreasonable as these men

before. She was speechless, her cheeks flushing with fury.

Pulling his daughter behind himself, Ling Su spoke to her in hushed undertones. “Hui’er, these people are here to make trouble. They’re here for you. Daddy will hold them off for a bit. In the chaos that ensues, you should make your way out of here. Remember, forget about me. Just run away as fast as you can.”

As insensitive as Ling Hui’er was, by now even she knew what these men’s intentions were. Her heart was both furious and remorseful. She shouldn’t have called her father overcautious—his worries had been entirely justified. “Daddy, Hui’er definitely won’t leave you behind. We’ll fight them if we have to. How can the law not be upheld at Veluriyam Capital? I don’t believe it.” Ling Hui’er huffed.

Chapter 834: Making Trouble In Public

The cultivators on horseback guffawed when they heard Ling Hui'er's tone. With exaggerated expressions, they staggered to and fro, their bodies swaying from side to side. It was as if they'd heard the funniest joke in the world.

"Law?" One of them cackled, clutching at the back of his horse. "What right do two little ants have to speak of law here, in Veluriyam Capital?"

"Wench, let me teach you what the law here is really like, eh?" Another cultivator rode towards them as he laughed, reaching for Ling Hui'er's chest with a one-armed swipe. Ling Hui'er's pretty face turned pale. Ling Su saw an opening in the action and countered with a block, parrying the other man's arm with his own.

"You're looking to die, aren't you?!" The attacker angrily shouted upon being intercepted. He raised the whip in his hand with a savage motion. It swished through the air like a serpent soaring through water, intent on striking Ling Su's head. Having to not only protect his daughter but also dodge the blow, Ling Su found himself in a tight spot. Incensed by the proceedings, Ling Hui'er drew her shortsword and slashed towards the whip.

"Get out of the way, girl!" The man was evidently much stronger than Hui'er and knocked away her blade with a single curl of his whip.

Ling Hui'er felt her arm throb, her body shaking as if she'd received an electric shock. The next moment, she was sprawled on the ground, incapable of moving. The man's whip, however, still had leftover momentum. It smashed brutally into Ling Su's face.

Crack!

The sound of the whip was crisp and audible. The blow

immediately left a deep gash, exposing the underlying bone.

“Resorting to force because you can’t pay up, hmm?” The man grinned scornfully. Showing no sign of relenting, he took another swing at Ling Su’s head with his whip. This attack was more vicious than the last. If it hit, Ling Su’s head would definitely be sent flying.

Ling Su hastily attempted to evade the strike. Though he was fast, the man’s whip was faster. It seemed inevitable that the whip would connect with its target. Suddenly, a sound tore through the air—the whistle of a rock, ricocheting off the whip. The unexpected projectile diverted much of the whip’s impact and direction, causing the whip to veer slightly off to the side. Seizing this opportunity, Ling Su avoided the fatal attack just in time.

Gravely taking note of his enemy’s ability, he ran quickly towards his daughter. Pulling out his saber, he stood in front of her protectively. The burly man had intended for his whip strike to kill Ling Su, but the rock had appeared out of nowhere and foiled his plans.

“Who?! Who sabotaged me like this?!?!” The man roared savagely into the air, whip still in hand. His companions rode up on either side of him as well, indignantly surveying the surroundings. Clearly, these people were used to running rampant around these parts. They hadn’t expected that someone would have the audacity to cause trouble for them in public.

A red-haired man strode over from across the road, his manner indifferent. “Gentlemen, live and let live.” He made a cupped-fist salute to those who were gathered. “How much money do they owe?”

The burly man was the unmistakable leader of the bunch. “You’re the one who took the shot just now?” He glared at the red-haired man, his eyes menacing.

The red-haired man seemed to have a natural corpse-like

demeanor, his face completely devoid of emotion. “Yes.”

“Do you know what you’re doing?” The burly man asked pointedly.

“I know.” The red-haired man seemed to completely overlook the other’s intimidation tactic and threatening aura.

“If you know, then you should also know that no one sticks their noses into Myriad Snake Gang’s business here in the Azure Sea District! You don’t look like someone with three heads and six arms, hmm?” The burly man looked the red-haired man up and down, his voice becoming gloomier by the second.

“Why don’t you tell me how much money they owe?” The red-haired man had no intention of beating around the bush.

“Who are they to you? You want to pay for them? Do you even have the money?” The burly man sneered.

“Let’s hear your answer first.” The red-haired man said coolly.

“Fine, fine. It’s rare to find a hero like you who’s willing to be a good Samaritan, especially in the Azure Sea District! This is something new! I’ll give you a chance. He borrowed a million high-rank saint spirit stones from us. Now that such a long period of time has passed, he needs to repay three million stones for principal and interest.” The burly man extended three fingers. “If you give us three million saint spirit stones on their behalf, I’ll forget about what happened today.”

The red-haired man furrowed his brows. Three million was clearly more than he’d expected. By now, Ling Su had recovered from the shock of his near-death experience. “I don’t know how overbearing you Myriad Snake Gang people are in Veluriyam Capital,” he loudly protested. “You say that I borrowed money from you, but there’s no proof that I ever did. Do you just grab any random person off the street and say that they owe you money? And if they can’t pay, you’ll detain them instead? Are you debt

collectors or robbers? The capital can't let horrible people like you run amok out in the open like this! I don't believe it."

Ling Su had seen similar things happen to others in the past, but he had never personally been the victim of such blatant fraud. And of such a large sum too! He knew that if the debt was substantiated, it would be impossible to overturn for the rest of his life. His daughter would be taken away as well, and terrible things were sure to happen to her. He absolutely could not sit around idly and allow something like that to happen. Seeing as how someone else was willing to come forward and defend him, Ling Su had to loudly proclaim his innocence.

"Us Myriad Snake Gang people always carry out honest deals. We lent money to you because we trusted you—that's why there's no lending slip. We didn't expect you to be such a crafty snake and blatantly deny your debt." The burly man scoffed, turning to stare at the red-haired man. "Sir, we're not opposed to you coming to their aid. However, if you can't pay up, then please get out of the way." The burly man had noticed the impressive strength of his red-haired adversary. Though he and his cohorts were capable of defeating the man, they would likely have to pay a certain price for doing so. Thus, he had chosen to take a step back in light of different goals. He didn't want to tangle with the red-haired man for now. It was better to take care of the father and daughter duo first. The red-haired man could be saved for later, when more gang members were present. They could then teach him a lesson about what happens when you stand up for others in the Azure Sea District!

The red-haired man shook his head mechanically, "If you have no lending slip, how can you prove they owe you money? That makes no sense."

"What now?" The burly man's tone turned frosty. "Are you saying you'd want to teach the Myriad Snake Gang how we should do business?"

The compatriots behind him were furious as well. “You better take the easy way out while you still can. What happens here is none of your business. If you know what’s good for you, scram! Don’t interfere with our gang’s business. If you don’t, don’t blame the Myriad Snake Gang for not giving you any face!”

“I’m not interested in any of that,” the red-haired man smiled faintly. “However, I won’t let you swindle my friends here either.”

“Friends?”

“You’re lying to our face, aren’t cha? You don’t look like friends to me.”

“Hah, you have too many friends! Is everyone off the street your friend?”

The red-haired man crossed both arms in front of his chest. “I have no right to question how you do business, so you also have no right to question how I make friends.”

“You...” The burly man’s face darkened. “So you’re determined to stick your nose into this?”

“Brother Iron, don’t waste any more words with him. If he wants to be the better man, we’ll just cut him down. Since when did we allow trash like him to have any say in what our gang does?”

“Yeah, kill him!” The riders were fired up and out for blood.

The red-haired man would have none of it. “How imposing and ferocious! If I didn’t know you were the Myriad Snake Gang, I’d think that you were some faction under one of the emperors!”

The burly man hadn’t been expecting those words, and found it difficult to assess the red-haired man’s background. “Who are you really?”

“A man with no name. It’s not important enough to mention.” The red-haired man replied calmly.

“You say you’re some no-name person, and yet you want to stick

your nose where it doesn't belong anyway? Mind your own business!" The burly man had a hunch that the red-haired man likely had some sort of backing. It would be best to avoid conflict with him. The Myriad Snake Gang really didn't have anyone to fear in the Azure Sea District, but still.

"It's not something I enjoy doing, I assure you. But if I don't act, something awful will probably happen to me. Whatever it is, though, it'll be worse for you." The red-haired man was as deadpan as ever.

"Something awful? And it'll be worse for us?" The burly man roared with laughter. "You talk a big game, but can you back it up with your actions? Be careful that you don't hurt your tongue!"

"Hurting your tongue isn't a big deal, but hurting your head... well, then you're done for," the red-haired man sardonically remarked.

"So you're intent on meddling in someone else's business, then?" The burly man was out of patience.

"It's hardly someone else's business. You could say that it's of paramount importance to me," the red-haired man declared. "If I were you, I'd leave now and avoid making this worse for yourselves. The bigger the ruckus, the more trouble you'll have."

"Tsk tsk, are you threatening us?"

"Heh, what a joke! There's someone brave enough to challenge the Myriad Snake Gang in the Azure Sea District?"

The red-haired man took no heed of their cavalier attitude. He didn't budge an inch. Like a nail, he was securely stuck into the side of the street, placing himself in front of the Ling father and daughter duo. By now, Ling Su had helped his daughter get back on her feet. He walked towards the red-haired man. "Thank you for your chivalry, friend. I greatly appreciate..."

"Is your last name Ling?" The red-haired man interjected

suddenly.

Ling Su paused, unsure if the other man was friend or foe. He didn't know how to answer the question.

"If so, I'll deal with things here. If not, I'll be off." The red-haired man seemed to use the same tone to speak to everyone, be it friend or foe.

Ling Su's heart was aflame with anxiety. After some hesitation, he nodded. "Yes, that is my surname."

"Then I've got the right guy, eh? Take a seat," the red-haired man gestured with his head. "Don't worry, their extortion isn't going to work here. Rather, something bad will happen to them very soon." The Ling father and daughter duo exchanged looks, sharing the same feeling of incredulity. They weren't acquainted with the nobility at Veluriyam Capital, and they didn't have anyone to rely on. But from the looks of it, someone knew them instead and were dead set on helping them... how could this be the case? Moreover, their mysterious benefactor was clearly prominent. As notorious as the Myriad Snake Gang was locally, the gang was completely disregarded.

Chapter 835: The Myriad Snake Gang On Their Knees

One had to admit that the red hair's panache had affected their confidence to a certain extent. However, the Myriad Snake Gang had been entrenched in the Azure Sea District for so many years, and also had a powerful backer to rely on. Things might be different elsewhere, but within the Azure Sea District, there really weren't that many people who had the gall to meddle in their business. Even if there were, they knew each and every one of them.

The Myriad Snake Gang's business was very complex. They had both legitimate and illegal connections, and everyone in the gang was a discerning person. They clearly knew the difference between someone they could offend and those they couldn't. But this red-haired fellow in front of them was wholly unfamiliar. Looking closer, his clothes weren't all that impressive either, so he clearly wasn't someone from a powerful faction. Even if someone like that had a few tricks up their sleeve, they still didn't pose much of a threat to the Myriad Snake Gang. So, angry enough to lose his temper, the sturdy fellow gave the red-haired man a cold stare. "Sir, since you've gone and stuck your nose in business that doesn't involve you, you can't blame us for being rude." The sturdy fellow lifted his hand, sending a firework shooting into the sky. The firework sparkled in the air, snake-shaped trails zigzagging out of it, filling the sky.

As soon as he saw the firework, the red-haired fellow knew that this band of people in front of him was calling their companions. With a slight change in his expression and a cold smile floating on his lips, he said, "Does that mean your gang is determined to make a big fuss out of this?"

"Sir, since you wanted to play the hero, then we might as well

play along and make a spectacle out of it." The sturdy fellow waved his hand with a nasty laugh. Several riders spread apart and surrounded them.

A mocking smile appeared on the red-hair's face. "Make it a spectacle? I'm simply afraid you won't be able to afford to later."

"Pfft! In the Azure Sea District, there's very little our gang can't afford to do!" Several of them signaled at each other with their eyes and surrounded the trio, but didn't act immediately. Their original plan had been to catch the Ling father and daughter, and sell them as slaves. A wandering cultivator like Ling Su would fetch a decent price, but not too much of a profit. On the other hand, Ling Hui'er's figure was top notch. She would be a hot commodity in the slave market, and earn them an easy fortune.

The Myriad Snake Gang often did shady and unscrupulous business. Only, they had a lot of tricks up their sleeve, and they had sharp judgement. They almost always chose their targets carefully. They could tell the pair was unfamiliar with the Capital, and they had absolutely no one to rely on. They had run around like headless chickens as soon as they arrived at the district. People like that were the gang's favorite targets. No foundations, no connections, and not too strong either. Moreover, a young woman with Ling Hui'er's figure was a pearl amongst pearls.

The Myriad Snake Gang had done illegal business for many years. Their judgement was quite accurate in that area. They knew that they wouldn't suffer any negative consequences acting against the pair. So for these past few days, they'd spent time watching their targets, prepared to go into action when an opportunity rose. They hadn't expected Ling Su to be so vigilant and hole up in an inn. Even the Myriad Snake Gang couldn't brazenly charge inside. Only after they ran out of spirit stones and were forced to leave the inn did the gang find the opportunity they wanted. However, they'd never imagined in their wildest dreams that a red-haired fellow would appear along the way and play the role of hero.

In the Azure Sea District, no one would investigate even if they came across a half dead cultivator on the streets. The relationships between wandering cultivators were loose at best, so who would care about another's life or death? To put it bluntly, it was none of their business. It was precisely because most of the wandering cultivators had this attitude that the Myriad Snake Gang had been able to smoothly operate in the shadows for so long. They'd never met with any resistance, and they'd almost never met with failure.

Not long after the firework exploded in the sky, the sounds of many men and horses rushing to their position filled the air. A hundred people or thereabouts poured in around them. The one in the lead wore full-body scale armor. He sported a pair of triangular eyes sinister enough to give off a frightening feeling. This man was one of the vice leaders of the gang.

"Vice Boss Ma, us brothers were asking these creditors for repayment when this red-haired guy came to stop us. He's dead set on clashing with our gang."

"Who might you be, good sir? Which house or sect do you hail from, friend?" Vice Boss Ma didn't act recklessly. His triangular eyes slightly narrowed while he examined the red-haired fellow.

"I'm not your friend, so no need to act all friendly." The red-hair's tone was curt. He wasn't having any of it.

With a blink, Vice Boss Ma sized up the red-hair up and down. He really felt a little uncertain. Usually, no one important would bother to come down to the Azure Sea District. Even if they did, they would bring a big retinue and in grand fanfare. You could recognize them from miles away. Meanwhile, the red-haired fellow didn't look like someone from a great clan. His mannerisms seemed off. He definitely didn't have the bearing of one form a great sect or mighty house. Rather, it was closer to that of a wandering cultivator. But for a wandering cultivator to try and take on the Myriad Snake Gang inside the Azure Sea District, was this guy looking to die?

How many people had Vice Leader assessed after several decades in this district? Regardless of anything else, his eyes were sharp. He could tell at first glance that this red-haired fellow had the manners of a wandering cultivator, something hard to hide. He was definitely not someone from a powerful faction. With this judgement in mind, Vice Boss Ma now knew where he stood. “Sir, if you’re being so unfriendly, then you’re not giving our gang any face. In the Azure Sea District, our gang won’t show any face to someone who doesn’t give us any.”

The red-hair shrugged, looking baffled. “I never asked you to give me face though?”

Seeing him play the fool, Vice Boss Ma was of course furious. “If I’m not mistaken, you’re only a wandering cultivator. Or do you think that you can challenge our gang with what little cultivation you have?”

The red-hair picked his ear, impatience written all over his face. “Is the Myriad Snake Gang something amazing?”

Furious, Vice Boss Ma’s expression immediately sank at those words. “There’s nothing else to say then.” Glancing left and right, he ordered, “Get them!”

The Myriad Snake Gang had always reigned as despots in the Azure Sea District. Not mentioning wandering cultivators, they wouldn’t even blink at challenging scions of great clans if the latter kept their identity under wraps.

Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh. As soon as his voice fell, shrill sounds pierced the air from behind them. Out of nowhere, arrows streaked through the air like shooting stars. Flying far with far more speed than normal arrows, the arrows thudded into Myriad Snake Gang members with enough force to send them tumbling dozens of meters. After the first volley, arrows came in fast and hard like an thunderous monsoon shower. The sound of iron hooves on flagstones resounded through the air as armored riders

seemed to come charging in out of nowhere with awe-inspiring momentum. As the arrows died down, the warriors, sitting astride white horses, rode in, forming up in orderly ranks around them. A full three thousand riders, majestic as fierce tigers, made their presence known. A flag flourished in the wind, depicting a coiling dragon baring its fangs and brandishing its claws. A boundless aura of might radiated from the troop of riders.

“The Coiling Dragon Armored Guard?” For those familiar with Veluriyam Capital, who would fail to recognize the Coiling Dragon Clan’s private guard? As soon as they saw this flag, everyone realized this was the Coiling Dragon Clan’s manor guard. Apart from the seven great emperors, this was the greatest force in the Capital. As for the private forces of the seven great emperors, they almost never set foot in the Capital, so the Coiling Dragon Armored Guard could be labelled the most powerful force in the Capital.

The Coiling Dragon Clan had kept a low profile these past few years. Their grasp on the Capital had weakened quite a bit. But with the Majestic Clan’s fall, the Coiling Dragon Clan shone bright once again. It reminded everyone that the number one clan was still the number one clan. The situation in the Capital hadn’t changed yet.

The Azure Sea District was a gathering spot for wandering cultivators, a place great clans and noble families rarely involved themselves in. But that didn’t signify that this district was left to run rampant. As the number one great clan in the entire Capital, the Coiling Dragon Clan’s forces could go unimpeded anywhere in the Capital.

To put it bluntly, the Azure Sea District might be home to countless wandering cultivators, and their resulting factions, but it was still a marginal area compared to the Capital in its entirety. The great clans and noble houses didn’t lack the power to meddle, they simply had no desire to do so.

Seeing the Coiling Dragon Clan's flag appear in this place, the wandering cultivators watching the show all were dumbstruck. It had been a long time since a great faction had publicly come into the Azure Sea District. This time, the Coiling Dragon Clan had made a flashy appearance, even using the Coiling Dragon Armored Guard! It looked like their target was the Myriad Snake Gang? Vice Boss Ma was struck dumb as well when he saw the Coiling Dragon Armored Guard arrive. He suddenly had an ominous feeling.

The red-haired fellow's smile was unsympathetic. "I urged you not to make a big fuss. Things sure are a mess now, aren't they?"

Speaking of, Vice Boss Ma's heart was also in a mess. F*ck you, arsehole! Why didn't you say so earlier that you were from the Coiling Dragon Clan?! What are you dressed as a wandering cultivator for!? If I'd known you were from the Coiling Dragon Clan, I wouldn't uttered a word even if I had ten times the guts!

Like tigers and dragons, the Coiling Dragon guards encircled the scene. When the encirclement was complete, they opened up a path and three people strolled in. Jiang Chen turned to the other two, "Brother Ji, Captain Mo, I'm in your debt again this time."

"Haha, you and I are brothers, don't talk like a stranger." The one who spoke was young master Ji San. He fanned himself with a folding fan and stopped in front of the crowd.

Vice Boss Ma's knees grew weak. He suddenly had a little trouble staying on his feet. With a plop, he knelt on the ground in spite of himself.

Please, would he still act the tyrant in front of the number one clan in the Capital? If they wanted to destroy him, they could extinguish the Myriad Snake Gang ten times over in a matter of minutes!

"We are honored by your presence, Lord San. Little Ma begs your pardon for not coming to greet you. I am willing to receive any punishment you see fit, my lord." Vice Boss Ma was already

advanced in years, but he shamelessly called himself Little Ma in front of Ji San, and he didn't even feel any shame for it.

Crash! Everyone from the Myriad Snake Gang went down on their knees. These people usually strutted about and committed unspeakable evils, but in the end, they were strong against the weak and weak when facing the strong. Seeing the troops from the Coiling Dragon Clan, they were one and all scared out of their minds. Not a whit of their usual rampant, despotic attitude was left.

Chapter 836: Annihilating the Myriad Snake Gang

Young master Ji San's leisurely smile suddenly froze. "And who are you?"

Vice Boss Ma kowtowed repeatedly, "I am the vice boss of Myriad Snake Gang, Ma Yue."

"Myriad Snake Gang?" Ji San frowned and cast an inquiring glance at Captain Mo. As a first rate young master in Veluriyam Capital, there was almost nothing in Veluriyam Capital that young master Ji San didn't know. That being said, he very seldom frequented the gathering places of wandering cultivators. Naturally, he had heard of Myriad Snake Gang. But there was no reason for someone at his level to pay any more attention to an underground gang. This tiny Myriad Snake Gang might be a first rate power in Azure Sea District, but it was ultimately a small fry in the eyes of something as big as the Coiling Dragon Clan. It was already impressive for Ji San to know of its name.

Captain Mo walked over and explained briefly in a whisper. Young master Ji San nodded slightly and frowned, "Even my Coiling Dragon Clan wouldn't dare extort someone on the streets in broad daylight. The Myriad Snake Gang sure has some guts."

Vice Boss Ma immediately started shaking like a leaf, "It's a misunderstanding. It's all a misunderstanding, young master Ji San."

Young master Ji San nodded, "I won't accuse you wrongly, but it's no use for you to proclaim your innocence. Another person's opinion must be checked to verify this." He looked at Jiang Chen, "How do you think we should deal with this, brother?"

Currently, Jiang Chen was listening to the red haired man's narration of events from beginning to end. After that, he patted

the red haired man's shoulder and praised, "Good job, Ole Meng. This is a great accomplishment."

The red haired man was overjoyed to hear this. He was one of the ten sage realm experts from the slaves Jiang Chen had snatched from House Sikou. This red haired man, Meng Redhair, was also the first person to come around to the idea of submitting to Jiang Chen and serving him for the next twenty years.

During this period of time, he had been entrusted with searching for the Ling father and daughter in the Azure Sea District. Shen Trifire's attentiveness in this matter had to be commended as well, or he wouldn't have sent a sky sage realm expert like Meng Redhair to Azure Sea District. And if Meng Redhair hadn't shown himself and defended the Ling father and daughter until Jiang Chen and the others had arrived, they would've been taken away by the Myriad Snake Gang already. The consequences of that were simply too awful to contemplate.

Jiang Chen was secretly shocked at how closely the Ling father and daughter had flirted with danger. At the same time, anger was rapidly sending his blood pressure soaring. Although this wasn't the right time to reveal himself to the Ling father and daughter, Jiang Chen was most familiar with Ling Hui'er. Jiang Chen was very sure that these two 'strangers' were the Ling father and daughter, even though they had disguised themselves a little. It was only natural that Jiang Chen was furious after he had heard of their experience.

He knew very well that there was no way someone as cautious as Ling Su would ever borrow a million saint spirit stones from the Myriad Snake Gang, especially since they had just arrived at Veluriyam Capital. He barely needed a toe's worth of brains to know that the Myriad Snake Gang was purposely blackmailing the Ling father and daughter. Although Jiang Chen didn't yet know why, it most likely had something to do with Ling Hui'er.

Jiang Chen frowned slightly when he heard young master Ji

San's inquiry, "I've heard the ins and outs of this incident, and it is obvious that this Myriad Snake Gang extorted and attempted to murder these two wandering cultivators on the streets of Veluriyam Capital. I wonder what is the punishment meted out in Veluriyam Capital for such crimes?"

Vice Boss Ma's expression changed greatly when he heard this, "It's a misunderstanding, young master Ji San. It really is a misunderstanding! It is my subordinates' fault for getting the wrong person! We are absolutely not doing this on purpose!"

Meng Redhair sneered, "Got the wrong person, you say? What were you saying again when they told you repeatedly that you'd gotten the wrong person?"

Young master Ji San nodded and looked at the Ling father and daughter. "You two are the victims of this affair, so you should be the ones to tell us the whole story. Don't worry, the Coiling Dragon Clan upholds the principles of justice and fairness in Veluriyam Capital. You don't need to worry about being attacked or having vengeance exacted on you by anyone for telling the truth."

Ling Su had suffered a whip lash to the face, and although the ugly wound wasn't fatal, it still drew an involuntary frown to Jiang Chen's brow. To his side, Ling Hui'er sobbed and sniffled as she repeatedly dabbed medicine onto her father's wounds. She was like a wounded deer, looking everywhere and nowhere with panicked eyes. It was obvious that this little girl who had never seen the outside world until recently had truly been spooked this time. Her former naivete was now completely gone.

Ling Su comforted his daughter softly, but wasn't quite sure what to do. A trace of doubt and worry was evident in his eyes. It was obvious that he very much wanted to speak the honest truth, but he was also worried that justice would not be upheld even if he did speak out and make complete enemies out of the Myriad Snake Gang. If the worst case scenario really happened, then the two of

them would be utterly done for. Even a strong dragon couldn't repress a local snake, not to mention that they weren't strong dragons to begin with.

Suddenly, Jiang Chen walked over to the Ling father and daughter and patted Ling Su's shoulder, "You don't need to worry about anyone taking revenge against you two." At the same time, he sent a message to Ling Hui'er, "Junior sister Hui'er, it's me, Jiang Chen. Just testify against them all you want. I'll make sure they get the justice they deserve!"

Ling Hui'er's tear-ladden eyelashes couldn't stop from blinking furiously when she heard this. She stared at Jiang Chen with a trace of disbelief on her face.

"Calm down, junior sister. Don't let them notice anything amiss," Jiang Chen hastily reminded.

Thankfully, Ling Hui'er, for all her carelessness, wasn't a complete fool. She forcefully swallowed the cry that climbed all the way to her throat and broke into a smile. Her senior brother had came out of nowhere to save her and her father when she was in one of the lowest points of her life. Like a drowning person who suddenly found a most reliable log to cling onto, Ling Hui'er wanted to cling to her senior brother tightly. She swiped fiercely at the tears around her eyes before declaring in a loud voice, "It wasn't a misunderstanding at all. When my father told them that they had gotten the wrong person, they said that they had done this for decades, long enough that there was no way they would have gotten the wrong person. They even said that we were a fool to talk about the law with them. When my father told them to show him a lending slip, they couldn't show us one either. They said that the Myriad Snake Gang didn't need any proof to do business."

Now that Ling Hui'er knew that the person standing before them was in fact senior brother Jiang Chen, she felt as if she had found a mountain to lean against. Her confidence immediately rose by

leaps and bounds. Ling Su also nodded. “These people from the Myriad Snake Gang did not speak reason from the beginning. Their demand for repayment was just an excuse! They were coming after us from the beginning.”

The vice boss and the brawny man from before felt like ramming their heads against a wall. They had a feeling that the sky was about to fall on their heads very soon. Unspeakable regret welled up inside their hearts. Even in their wildest dreams they hadn’t imagined that the Coiling Dragon Clan would appear to defend two insignificant wandering cultivators. No one in their right minds would provoke you two if they knew that you were affiliated with the Coiling Dragon Clan!

But it was obviously too late for regrets now. That red haired man had warned them that the consequences would be bigger than they could bear if this incident were to blow up. At the time, they thought that the red haired man’s threats were empty farts. Now that they thought back to it, it had been good advice that’d simply sounded jarring to their ears.

Young master Ji San turned serious and nodded slowly after he listened to everything that had happened, “Amazing, truly amazing! I didn’t realize that such a thing could happen in broad daylight in Veluriyam Capital. I must say that you Myriad Snake Gang are tough as nails. You’re more awesome than even the Peafowl Guard of Sacred Peafowl Mountain!”

Vice Boss Ma shivered all over the second he heard young master Ji San’s words. How could he not know that the destruction of Myriad Snake Gang was right around the corner?

He kowtowed repeatedly, like he was pounding garlic with his head, “Mercy, young master Ji San, mercy! The Myriad Snake Gang is willing to pay any price to apologize to them. We are only begging that you show us mercy!”

Young master Ji San’s voice grew chillier, “Mercy? Why didn’t

you show them mercy earlier? Why didn't you show your victims mercy when you publicly extorted them? Why didn't you think of mercy when you were breaking Veluriyam Capital's rules?"

Every Myriad Snake Gang member turned deathly pale at his words. Not wanting to waste his breath any longer, Ji San waved his hands. "Detain them all. Kill anyone who resists!"

He would've dealt with this matter even if Jiang Chen wasn't here to motivate him. Maybe he could've feigned ignorance if he hadn't seen anything. But inaction was unacceptable now that a crime was laid bare before his own eyes. What was the point of having rules in Veluriyam Capital if he were to do nothing about those who broke them before him? These rotten apples were only going to bring harm to the Capital if he kept them around.

Every Coiling Dragon Clan guard acted at young master Ji San's command. It was true that the Myriad Snake Gang had plenty of men, but who in their right minds would try to resist in this situation? They would only be arrested if they didn't resist, but they would be killed if they did. Very soon, every Myriad Snake Gang member was trussed up like a pig for roast. But young master Ji San wasn't content to stop here. He ordered, "All forces, march to Myriad Snake Gang's headquarters and seal off the entire Azure Sea District. We will not allow even a single scum of the Myriad Snake Gang to slip through our grasp!"

"Understood!" How long had it been since the last time the Coiling Dragon Clan Guard had bared their fangs? Every one of his soldiers grew spirited and flared murderous auras upon hearing young master Ji San's command.

For the past few years, the Coiling Dragon Clan had kept a low profile in Veluriyam Capital, so much so that the people were one step away from forgetting that they were the number one clan in Veluriyam Capital. But now, the clan had finally found an opportunity to brandish their claws and flex their muscles. They would let everyone in Veluriyam Capital know that the number

one clan title was still theirs!

The Myriad Snake Gang had never imagined that a trivial matter like this would bring forth the destruction of their organization. Although someone had managed to get word to them, the Coiling Dragon Guard possessed great mobility. They sealed off the entire Azure Sea District in no time at all.

The Myriad Snake Gang reacted fairly quickly, but they still fell short when compared to the Coiling Dragon Guard. A couple of squads split off to seal off the main exits, while the bulk of the troops headed straight for Myriad Snake Gang's headquarter to destroy this malignant tumor that had plagued the Azure Sea District for more than a hundred years.

This truly was a gang who'd committed countless crimes as many wandering cultivators actually joined the Coiling Dragon Guard on their own accord and carved open a path for the guard. It was obvious that the Myriad Snake Gang's conduct had incited the fury of nearly everyone in the Azure Sea District.

The Myriad Snake Gang was swiftly subdued the moment the Coiling Dragon Guard arrived. They were quite impressive within the district, but in reality they sat between a normal fourth rank sect and a third rank sect in terms of strength. Moreover, a gang like this was far less organized than an actual sect. They also had a higher ratio of riffraff than the usual sects, which was why the Myriad Snake Gang collapsed under the might of the Coiling Dragon Guard mere minutes after battle began. The Myriad Snake Gang's boss was strong, but he was leagues away from the sixth level emperor realm expert Captain Mo. He was taken down with almost no resistance to speak of.

Chapter 837: Reunion

All Myriad Snake Gang's mid management and senior executives were put in locked collars and paraded down the streets.

"The Myriad Snake Gang has committed many evils, so the Coiling Dragon Clan will uphold justice today and put them on a public trial. Our aim is to return a clean, untainted Azure Sea District to everyone. If any one of you have injustices or grudges to tell of, please reveal them now, but without any embellishment."

There were at least one hundred people kneeling in the square when all the big and small ringleaders of the Myriad Snake Gang were accounted for. The boss and elders of the gang were actually all emperor realm experts. Even the normal ringleaders were at sky sage realm at a minimum. One had to say that a power like this could literally do anything they wanted to the wandering cultivators. However, Jiang Chen didn't think that this Myriad Snake Gang was simply a gang made up of wandering cultivators. If they were, they wouldn't have dared act so arrogantly.

The fact that they had dared do what they did meant that they had a patron behind them. Thankfully, the Ling father and daughter were frightened but safe. Therefore, Jiang Chen didn't plan to go down this particular rabbit hole much further. When the news of Myriad Snake Gang's public hearing spread, almost every wandering cultivator in the Azure Sea District rushed to attend. There were plenty of victims of the Myriad Snake Gang who showed up as well. All kinds of accusations and complaints were thrown around like snowflakes in a blizzard. Only the heavens knew exactly how many sinister secrets this utterly unethical organization possessed, so any one of these witnesses voiced a tremendous number of charges. The total amount of crimes this gang had accrued were almost innumerable.

Six hours had passed since the public hearing started, but the number of accusers had only grown bigger over time. The sight

was getting unbearable even for the likes of young master Ji San. He cursed fiercely, “I never imagined that a tiny gang like this could’ve committed so many crimes. They truly are evil to the core.”

Jiang Chen smiled, “Brother Ji, you’re a great clan descendant who sits high above the status quo and leads a pampered life, so you couldn’t possibly imagine just how cruel the competition at the bottom rung is.”

Ji San smiled wryly, “Are you lecturing me, brother?”

Jiang Chen shook his head, “What for? You only need to look at these furious wandering cultivators to know just how hard it is to live amongst the roots of society. Veluriyam Capital is quite fair already compared to many other places. It is only normal that there exists a rotten apple or two wherever you go.”

“You don’t need to console me, brother,” Ji San sighed. “Veluriyam Capital has always prided itself as a city of freedom and justice. If these wandering cultivators can’t get the protection they deserve here, then it is our breach of responsibility as the administrators of this city.”

Jiang Chen looked to the distance and found that the queue of accusers was practically endless. He couldn’t help but smile wryly, “I think we can save the public hearing then, brother Ji. The evidence and statements are more than enough to hang them a hundred times over. Also, if you keep this up, the hearing won’t end even if you keep this up for three days.”

That wasn’t an exaggeration either. From the looks of things, every single person who stood up to provide their statements at the hearing were full of grievances to tell. The tears and snot on these people’s faces were as pitiful as one could imagine. If this hearing were to continue like this, they might not be done even in ten days’ time.

Ji San waved a hand to get a semblance of quiet before declaring

loudly, “Everyone, the evidence and statements we’ve collected are enough to sentence the Myriad Snake Gang to death a hundred times over. Be at ease, the Coiling Dragon Clan will definitely return justice to you all. We will be imprisoning these evildoers and placing them onto death row for the moment. Once we’ve reported this to our superiors and verified the evidence, we will announce a public execution and settle your pains once and for all!”

The Azure Sea District had been terrorized by the Myriad Snake Gang for a very long time, so when an upholder of justice finally showed his face in the form of Ji San, no one was willing to let him go just like that. That being said, they also understood that the Myriad Snake Gang was likely doomed for sure this time since the Coiling Dragon Clan itself had gotten involved in the matter. The Myriad Snake Gang left the Azure Sea District under heavy guard. The wandering cultivators who were watching this scene couldn’t help but throw a few glances in the Ling father and daughter’s direction. Tongues were wagging spiritedly.

The Myriad Snake Gang has finally been toppled. What a satisfying outcome!”

“I know right? They thought that those two wandering cultivators were easy pickings, but it turns out that they were the exact opposite. The Myriad Snake Gang absolutely deserved what they got. Only the heavens know just how many crimes they’ve committed, and how many lives have been lost to them.”

“I wonder what’s the connection between this father and daughter pair and the Coiling Dragon Clan?”

“That may not necessarily be the case. Perhaps someone reported the Myriad Snake Gang to the Coiling Dragon Clan?”

“Maybe the Coiling Dragon Clan had their eyes on the Myriad Snake Gang for a long time already.”

“Hehe, you guys know nothing at all. The Coiling Dragon Clan

has kept a low profile for so many years, and they need an opportunity like this one to prove their might to the world. This Myriad Snake Gang is nothing but the appetizer for bigger things to come." All these wandering cultivators were brimming with excitement. It was obvious that the elimination of the Myriad Snake Gang was a good news of enormous proportion to all of them. Although not all of them were necessarily a victim of the Myriad Snake Gang, everyone in Azure Sea District knew that the gang wasn't a power they could provoke. Every time the Myriad Snake Gang was brought up, there existed no one who wasn't scared witless by the possibility of being targeted by them. Now that this knife hovering over their heads had finally been taken away, almost all the wandering cultivators felt like celebrating. Meanwhile, those at the center of the affair felt like they were dreaming.

Although Ling Hui'er tried her best to control her excitement after Jiang Chen's reminder, it was only by the barest of margins that it didn't spill over into her face. She was just so very happy. They had been drifting here and there for the past few days and experienced countless hardships before they had finally made it to Veluriyam Capital. The few days they'd spent after arriving were especially difficult where even finding an affordable inn had become serious business. They were practically on their last ropes. And now, their hardships had finally come to an end in the form of senior brother Jiang Chen.

His existence was literally like that of a hero of legends. He had appeared like a god to save her and her father when she needed him the most. This feeling was just like the time Jiang Chen had cured her father's sickness. His actions were like a battering ram that continually dealt a massive impact to her heart. When Jiang Chen passed by Taiyuan Tower, he said, "Brother Ji, I shall be parting ways with you here."

"No problem. A great battle is right upon you, so be ready,

brother!" Ji San refrained from inviting Jiang Chen over this time. He knew that Jiang Chen was about to butt heads with Pillfire City's pill dao expert very soon. This battle was one of the most important battles in the history of Veluriyam Capital. It was a battle that happened but once in a millenium. It was so important that young master Ji San dared not affect Jiang Chen in any way for fear that he would disrupt his mental state.

Jiang Chen nodded slightly at Ling Hui'er, and Ling Hui'er pulled her father by the arm towards Taiyuan Tower's entrance. They were welcomed into the store by Taiyuan Tower's attendants. Ling Su still had no idea about Jiang Chen's true identity at the moment. Therefore, he was a little anxious and worried by the situation at hand. He wasn't sure whether to be pleased or worried at the excitement on his daughter's face. He was afraid that they'd simply jumped out of the frying pan into the fire. But there was nothing he could do now except to take it one step at a time. These people were obviously a hundred times stronger than the Myriad Snake Gang.

If the Myriad Snake Gang was at a level where he could only put on a tiny bit of resistance, then these people were so powerful that he didn't even have the right to resist. After they entered Taiyuan Tower, Jiang Chen spoke to Meng Redhair, "Ole Meng, you did very well today. I'll decrease your period of servitude by ten years and give you an extra reward later."

But Meng Redhair wasn't overjoyed by this. In fact, he responded with a gloomy expression, "But young master, I don't want to decrease my period of servitude. In fact, why don't you add ten years instead?"

Jiang Chen was caught off guard, "Huh? But I thought you guys were dissatisfied when I set it at twenty years?"

Meng Redhair said hastily, "That's them, not me. I thought from the beginning that you were an extraordinary person, and I sincerely wanted to join you, young master. I'm a wandering

cultivator with no one to rely on anyway, and a person who treats his subordinates as well as you is almost impossible to find. Forget twenty years of servitude, I can spend an entire lifetime here and still be content!”

Jiang Chen smiled wryly as he was momentarily lost for words. Meng Redhair spoke excitedly, “It’s a promise then, young master! Please don’t decrease my time here. I only want increases.”

Jiang Chen gave him a smile after he realized that Meng Redhair really did want to stay here. He immediately nodded, “Of course I welcome you to stay, Ole Meng. Don’t worry, why would I chase you out if you truly wish to stay here? Keep up the good work. Taiyuan Tower’s future definitely isn’t going to stop here.”

Ole Meng nodded repeatedly, “Yes, yes, I knew that from the beginning. Young master is no small fish in a pond, and it is only a matter of time before you soar to new heights!”

“Mm. Go get some rest. I’ll be talking with them for a little while.” Jiang Chen beckoned the Ling father and daughter over and walked inside. Shen Trifire and a few other Regal Pill Palace sect members also came over. However, none of the two sides recognized each other yet because they’d all disguised their appearances. Jiang Chen arrived at a private room and made sure that there were no outsiders present before he finally smiled. “Junior sister Hui’er, Uncle Ling, you’ve finally shown up. I was quite worried about you two lately.”

Ling Hui’er’s eyes suddenly reddened, and the next thing she did was incredibly shocking. She jumped straight into Jiang Chen’s arms, broke into a loud cry, and punched his chest repeatedly. “Senior brother Jiang, you have no idea how scared Hui’er was just now! We tried to find you so many times in Veluriyam Capital, but we just couldn’t, and our spirit stones were about to run out. We were so close to sleeping on the streets and we had no idea what to do…”

Jiang Chen realized that she must have suffered quite a lot of hardships along the way. Their encounter with the Myriad Snake Gang had especially taught her a good lesson. Ling Su looked astonished when he heard her words, “Ne… Nephew Jiang?”

Jiang Chen patted Ling Hui’er’s back softly while casting a slightly apologetic glance at Ling Su. “I’m really sorry, Uncle Ling. I wasn’t able to find you even though I looked around a lot. I’m sorry for the troubles you’ve gone through.”

“It really is you?” Even a calm person like Ling Su couldn’t help but be overwhelmed by joy at this moment.

“It’s me,” Jiang Chen pointed at Shen Trifire and the others. “They’re all members of Regal Pill Palace. Shen Trifire also played a big role in saving you two.”

“Senior brother Trifire?” Ling Hui’er’s big eyes looked all over Shen Trifire. “Are you really senior brother Shen?”

Shen Trifire took off his mask and smiled wryly, “It is your shameful senior brother, junior sister Ling. If it wasn’t for senior brother Jiang, every one of us would’ve been sold off to who knows where already. This day of reunion would not have happened if that had happened.”

Everyone else was also extremely excited to see Ling Hui’er once more. This was the first other sect member they’d been able to meet except Jiang Chen after the destruction of the Regal Pill Palace. They were overjoyed even at this simple reunion.

Chapter 838: The Gathering of Pill Dao Heavyweights

It was natural that a reunion between peers would result in exceptional excitement from everyone. Experiencing the destruction of their sect together had drawn everyone much closer together. They had been competitors before, but now they huddled together for warmth. They were all vagabonds, and the feeling of meeting old acquaintances in a foreign place was indescribable.

Ling Hui'er listened to Shen Trifire's retelling of Jiang Chen's exploits with much gusto. The more she asked and the more answers she was given the happier she became. Though Ling Su had stayed quiet during the recounting of the tale, his heart was astonished by the news. For Jiang Chen to be capable of achieving such results in the short time that he'd been here at Veluriyam Capital...

Ling Su had been saved by Jiang Chen before, but he'd only awakened after Jiang Chen and Ling Bi'er had departed from Regal Pill Palace for the Myriad Grand Ceremony. Thus, his previous impression of Jiang Chen wasn't that strong. He only knew that the youth was his one-time savior. They'd met once more at Tai-ah City, but that instance had been brief as well. They parted ways after a few scant moments of conversation, agreeing to meet up again at Veluriyam Capital. Ling Su had always based his impression of Jiang Chen off of Ling Hui'er's retelling of events.

Because of the girl's admiration for Jiang Chen, her words constantly sounded overexaggerated. Jiang Chen was portrayed as a prodigious genius without equal. From Ling Su's perspective, his daughter had likely described him as such because Jiang Chen was the object of her affections. It was common for girls in love to embellish the exploits of their beloved. Though Ling Su was grateful for Jiang Chen's help, he didn't raise the youth up on a

pedestal simply because of what his daughter had said. It was more accurate, in his opinion, to guesstimate Jiang Chen's abilities to be at around half that level.

The brief gathering with Jiang Chen hadn't helped much in terms of further understanding the young man, either. He later heard some rumors that Jiang Chen had eliminated an entire group from the Eternal Celestial Capital, headed by Gong Wuji. Ling Su dared not inquire too much about the rumors, however, and found it difficult to believe them entirely. Only now, after Shen Trifire had recounted recent events, did he understand the full extent of Jiang Chen's remarkable accomplishments. His daughter hadn't exaggerated at all—in fact, from the sound of it, she'd been fairly conservative. After all, Ling Hui'er had no way of knowing about anything that had happened at Veluriyam. She was only familiar with Jiang Chen's exploits at Regal Pill Palace. How could they compare to the recent happenings here in the capital? She was someone who blindly worshipped Jiang Chen. She never found anything he did too surprising, regardless of how impossible it might seem in the eyes of others.

However, Ling Su didn't possess that element of pure admiration or girlishness, and the things that Jiang Chen had done shocked him to an extraordinary degree. That a youth from the Myriad Domain could do such great things in Veluriyam Capital, the heartland of the Upper Eight Regions... And moreover, he had Emperor Peafowl as his backer. It sounded legendary. Shen Trifire also wasn't the type of person to boast for the sake of boasting.

Ling Su was both surprised and overjoyed. The surprise was from learning Jiang Chen was far more prodigious than he had previously expected, and the joy was from being able to find a place to stay at Veluriyam Capital after meeting him again. He was doing quite well here—even the heir of the Coiling Dragon Clan called him brother.

"Uncle Ling, you and your daughter have wandered for so long.

Why don’t you stay at Taiyuan Tower for now? I’ll have Trifire help you settle down... and of course, your wounds need to be treated.”

Flesh wounds like his weren’t difficult to treat. Ling Hui'er latched onto Jiang Chen’s arm and refused to let go. “Senior brother, tell me more about Veluriyam Capital...” She shook his arm relentlessly.

Jiang Chen smiled wryly. “Trifire’s gotten to everything already. What else do you want to know?”

“Anything is fine.” She’d always been an adorably simple girl, one who held little regard for trivial details. The fact that she continued shaking Jiang Chen’s arm, to the point that he was put in close proximity to her ample chest, went by completely unnoticed.

Ling Su cracked a similarly wry smile internally upon seeing his daughter’s closeness to the youth. As the saying went, it was indeed hard to keep a matured woman at home. Jiang Chen wasn’t the type of lech who couldn’t think straight after seeing a woman, however. “We can talk more some other time, when there’s a better opportunity for discourse.” he smiled.

“Junior sister, senior brother Jiang Chen has a pill battle in two days. It’s quite important. You should let him make the necessary preparations for it,” Shen Trifire exhorted.

Ling Su joined in on the reproach, “Hui’er, don’t be rude. Senior brother Jiang is very busy. He doesn’t have the time to waste with you.”

“Okay, okay, fine.” Ling Hui’er pursed her lips. She was only slightly capricious, not a child who didn’t know good from bad. Though a little reluctant, she let go of Jiang Chen’s arm.

“Senior brother, you have to tell me more stories after the battle —that’s a promise. I heard that you really ruined those bad guys

from the Eternal Celestial Capital."

Jiang Chen furrowed his brow upon hearing the Eternal Celestial Capital's name. "Can that really be called ruining the Eternal Celestial Capital? It's not even enough to pay off the interest they owe us for destroying our sect."

All of Regal Pill Palace 's disciples nodded at the mention of the sect's fall, their expressions tragic. Finding the Ling father and daughter duo had relieved Jiang Chen of one of his worries. Though he didn't need to prepare for the battle over the Longevity Pill, he didn't want to underestimate his opponent either. He spent the next two days in a secret room, wholly focused on researching pills and organizing his thoughts. The battle was extremely important. Losing was not an option.

When the time for the battle came, Sacred Peafowl Mountain opened its gates to welcome pill dao heavyweights from all over the world. They had been invited to spectate the battle here. Almost everyone who'd made a name for themselves in the Upper Eight Regions had an invitation from either party. The battle concerned not only ownership of the Longevity Pill, but a larger direction for the Upper Eight Regions' pill scene as well.

If Pillfire City won, the right to the Longevity Pill would not be their only spoil—Veluriyam Capital's recent momentum in the pill world would be crushed instantly. On the flip side, if Veluriyam Capital won, their right to the Longevity Pill would no longer be questioned. Furthermore, it would be a modest challenge to Pillfire City's dominance in the pill world. Thus, there was more at stake to this pill battle than met the eye.

The invited guests had largely neutral stances in the conflict. It made no difference to these heavyweights whether Veluriyam or Pillfire won. They were only here to spectate and observe—to get a glimpse of how amazing the Longevity Pill actually was. It was the catalyst for this confrontation between the two great factions of the Upper Eight Regions, one southern and one northern. Of

course, the guests served dually as referees as well.

The battle could not simply be decided by word of mouth. There had to be pill dao experts observing the outcome. In order to settle the matter once and for all, a significant crowd of masters had to attend. That was the only way to ensure that future disputes would not occur. On a rational level, none of the observers thought that Veluriyam Capital had the ability to challenge Pillfire City when it came to pills.

On an emotional level, however, some hoped that the attempt would have some effect. Pillfire City's monopoly over the pill industry was too severe. For the human domain, such a dominant position was illogical on a larger scale. Pillfire City received far too many benefits from their throne. The scene needed to be shaken up. Only, could Veluriyam bring that into effect? That was the biggest question that had arisen in everyone's hearts.

Apparently their representative was not one of the long-established pill kings from Sacred Peafowl Mountain, but rather a newly-minted pill king. That raised even more questions. A fresh pill king, and apparently a youth too... did such a youngster really have the strength to challenge Pillfire City? Everyone's hearts were filled with many doubts.

Whether it was pill refining or martial dao, youthfulness had no benefit aside from granting natural vigor. Pill dao especially was a discipline that called for foundational work, aggregated knowledge, and accumulated experience. No matter how much of a genius a pill king was, it was unlikely for him to even match an average peer who was well-read, much less a top-rank master from Pillfire City.

There was a Peafowl Stage upon Sacred Peafowl Mountain. Pill dao heavyweights from all around the Upper Eight Regions all had seats around it. All of the greats who'd been invited were either pillars of their sect or true masters of their generation. Each individual was at least halfway to pill emperor, a step above ninth-

level pill kings. Any one of them would be able to cause ripples across the Upper Eight Regions on their own. They were the greatest amongst the countless pill experts of the human domain, the most radiant stars in the night sky.

There were thirty-some-odd Pillcraft Scrolls in the human domain. Every thousand years, a new scroll was drafted, recording a hundred people within its text. The people present today all had their names in the most recent edition of the scroll. There were thirty-two in total, all of them prominent and well-known. They had gathered out of respect for both Veluriyam Capital and Pillfire City. But most importantly, the battle itself was attractive to them.

All of the guests had arrived by now.

“I hear that Pillfire City has sent the brightest star of their younger generation, Pill King Ji Lang.”

“Pill King Ji Lang, eh? Rumor has it that he’s already received the full tutelage of Emperor Pillzenith. It looks like Pillfire City is attaching a considerable amount of importance to this fight.”

“I’m not surprised that they sent him. The bigger surprise is that Veluriyam Capital is sending a nameless pill king... Pill King Zhen, was it? I’ve never even heard of him before.”

“What does Veluriyam Capital have up their sleeves this time?”

“They’re acting too mysterious for me to tell, that’s for sure. Apparently, this Pill King Zhen hasn’t been at the capital for long, but he’s already stirred things up several times... and he’s also a disciple of the Deviant Pill Faction, I think?”

“The Deviant Pill Faction? Unorthodox scoundrels, nothing more.”

“You can’t just say something like that. I know the Deviant Pill Faction doesn’t have any outstanding successors in the public eye right now, but they have their place in the pill world.”

The Deviant Pill Faction was always a topic of hot debate when it

was brought up.

“I say, do you guys mind not squabbling? That’s not the main focus of today.”

“Exactly. It doesn’t matter what faction he’s from, sending out a young pill king like that… is Veluriyam Capital trying to destroy its own reputation?”

“Perhaps they’re just utterly giving up. They must have heard about their opponent being Pill King Ji Lang, and thought it was a guaranteed loss. They may as well send a young pill king to cut things short, right?”

“Hah, that’d be a bore. If that really were the case, why would Veluriyam Capital make an announcement to begin with? So that just about anyone could challenge them for the pill at Sacred Peafowl Mountain in three months? That doesn’t sound like they’ve given up.”

“Maybe they didn’t think Pillfire City would swoop in in the first place?” There was widespread discussion before the start of the battle. The gathered parties had many guesses about the circumstances.

Chapter 839: A Hot Reception

"Look, they're coming out!" Someone with keen eyes shouted in the middle of the crowd, putting an end to the heated discussion that was taking place. Their collective gazes moved to the front.

At the end of the long hallway, the four monarchs led the way. Emperor Peafowl and a youth dressed like a pill king trailed behind them. Further behind was a group of other pill kings, all dressed in Sacred Peafowl Mountain's pill king uniforms. Only the strongest had been chosen to be in the entourage. Simultaneously on the other side of the corridor, Pillfire City's representatives made their entry. Emperor Pillzenith was at the head of the pack, followed by a group of his elite guard. A scholarly, middle-aged man was the object of their protection.

"It really is Pill King Ji Lang! Pillfire City is certainly attaching a great deal of importance to this occasion."

"Pill King Ji Lang is a half-step pill emperor. The average ninth-level pill king has no right to even think of seeking him as their master. Tsk tsk, Pillfire must really want to win."

"If Pillfire City wants something, it's hard to say if anyone can deny them. That's definitely the case when it comes to anything pill related, anyway."

"Look at Veluriyam's side. The young man who's walking with Emperor Peafowl... is that the so-called Pill King Zhen?"

"That should be him. He's calm enough—what a surprise."

"How's that surprising? He's probably aware that he's just there for show. He's going to lose anyway... why should he feel pressured?"

"That sounds about right. I don't think Veluriyam Capital expects him to win either—he's so young. No pressure accompanies being the sideshow and learning from his superiors."

“I’m not so sure about that. Even if he’s not intent on being the star of this event, it’s still difficult to maintain one’s composure. I think that Veluriyam’s Pill King Zhen isn’t as simple as everyone thinks.”

“You have a point, my friend. Someone who can rise up in such a short amount of time in Veluriyam must be a rather remarkable individual. Just look at his mental composure… I doubt this Pill King Zhen will be content with being the sideshow.” Everyone had their own point of view, but the sounds of discussion once again ceased when the two groups approached one another.

“Brother Pillzenith, we have known each other for several millennia, but this is the first time that we’ve had the fortune to see our juniors compete in our stead.” Emperor Peafowl laughed sonorously. As the master of Sacred Peafowl Mountain, Emperor Peafowl was playing the role of a sufficiently good host. He wasn’t being overbearingly aggressive at all.

Emperor Pillzenith faintly smiled. “Brother Peafowl, it is indeed true that we can take a break this time, but I’m not so sure about the compete part.”

“Oh?” Peafowl’s smile was undiminished, even a little inquisitive.

“If I may, I don’t think that the youth you’ve delegated has the qualifications to duel Pill King Ji Lang. They’re not in the same weight class.” Pillzenith’s voice exuded arrogance. His overwhelmingly gate-crashing tone made everyone from Sacred Peafowl Mountain frown. Emperor Peafowl’s strict ruling came through, however, and no one forgot themselves in spite of their anger.

Emperor Peafowl curved his lips, unaffected by the provocation. “Brother Pillzenith, we cannot jump to conclusions too quickly.” he smiled serenely.

“I’m not one to make hasty conclusions in most cases, but when

it comes to pills… there's no reason for us Pillfire City people to be humble, is there?"

Peafowl grinned, "Then, Brother Pillzenith, you haven't considered what you'll do if your side loses?"

"Lose?" Emperor Pillzenith laughed. "Brother Peafowl, do you think that Veluriyam Capital has even the slightest chance of victory?"

"The world is transient and ever-changing." Emperor Peafowl's eyes gleamed with a curious mysterious quality. "I, at the very least, will refrain from making comments about things that have yet to be decided."

"Words alone will prove nothing." Emperor Pillzenith chuckled derisively. "If Veluriyam Capital is so confident, then let everyone here be witness. Let's see how much substance there is behind your poise."

"Ji Lang, some youngsters don't know their place in the world. A bit of appropriate education isn't bad." Pillzenith tossed Jiang Chen a sidelong glance, a hint of contempt creeping into the corner of his mouth.

Ji Lang inclined his head in a slight smile. "I understand, master."

Jiang Chen viewed Pillfire City's actions with some disdain. He'd seen many powerful factions in his previous life, with no shortage of pretentious ones amongst them. The ones who were the most pretentious generally suffered the greatest losses. Educate me? He couldn't help but sneer. There had barely been anyone who could teach Jiang Chen anything regarding pills in his previous life within the heavenly planes, much less here on the Divine Abyss Continent.

Pill King Ji Lang appeared to be stronger than all the other pill kings he'd previously seen, stronger than even all of the top pill

kings from Sacred Peafowl Mountain. But so what? Someone like that wanted to educate a known master of the heavenly planes? What a joke!

Ji Lang's gaze was as deep as the starry sky, and anyone who locked eyes with him felt his incredible acumen. He looked at Jiang Chen thoughtfully before making a gesture. "Please, go ahead."

"The host should favor the guest. After you," Jiang Chen replied quietly.

Ji Lang paused a moment. He'd expected that Sacred Peafowl Mountain's young pill king was only here to put on a show. There was no way that the youth's ability could precede his reputation. He had not expected to be wrong about this aspect. The young pill king didn't seem to be here on half-hearted measure. Even so, Ji Lang's heart was tranquil. No external events could alter his confidence. At the Pillfire City of the present, there was no one besides Emperor Pillzenith himself who could make him feel nervous.

The contestants settled into their respective competition areas. Emperor Peafowl and his men returned to Veluriyam's staging area. The competition was a major event for the city, as the seven emperors were all present, Emperor Shura included. Numerous clan lords sat beside them in the gathering. The Wei father and son duo were normally ineligible to attend such occasions, but they had been granted special permission because of Jiang Chen's status as House Wei's guest pill king. The expressions of the people from Veluriyam Capital were mixed as they saw Emperor Peafowl walk towards their area. Some were confused and inquisitive, others were expectant, and still others were indifferent, as if they didn't care who would win or lose.

"Daoist Peafowl, is this Pill King Zhen reliable?" The one who spoke was a bald, elderly man. His robes were plain and unadorned, appearing uncommonly noble. He was nominally the second-ranked person in Veluriyam, Emperor Petalpluck. Though

the elderly man possessed a great deal of seniority, he also had little ambition and primarily treated others with kindness. Though he was allegedly second only to Peafowl, his actual authority and command were inferior to Emperor Shura's. However, because of his superior seniority, he had always been ranked second behind Peafowl. His special position allowed him to ask such questions without appearing too forward.

Emperor Petalpluck's inquisitive look only made Emperor Peafowl smile. "If he wasn't reliable, us sending out another pill king would still elicit the same result."

It wasn't a direct answer, but it showcased Emperor Peafowl's attitude. Given his response, there was no room for inappropriate comments from the other emperors. Further questions would indicate that they questioned Emperor Peafowl's decision-making ability. Emperor Shura was silent all this time, his expression diffident. It was as if his heart had left his body. As to what he was exactly thinking, who knew? Emperor Peafowl certainly didn't pay him much mind, and sat down in his assigned spot. There was no trace of nervousness in his demeanor.

When everyone was seated, the pill kings from all over the world stood up and introduced themselves. Any one of these pill dao experts were the cream of the crop in the human domain. Being half-step pill emperors, they possessed extremely high statuses and prestigious reputations.

"We are here on both parties' invitations, to observe this pill battle. You've come to an agreement that the winner of this battle is the true owner of the Longevity Pill, and this will settle that matter once and for all. The ownership will be exclusive, of course, and attempts to refine the pill by any other faction will be seen as copyright infringement and be subject to prosecution, including the loser of today's battle. Do both sides agree to this?"

Emperor Pillzenith boomed with laughter. "That is the way it should be! History is written by the victors. Losers do not deserve

the Longevity Pill! Of course it should be exclusive to the winner. Brother Peafowl, what do you think?”

Emperor Peafowl was the picture of placidity. “I have no objections. However, brother Pillzenith, I’d like to ask you once again… is the Longevity Pill really related to Pillfire City?”

Emperor Pillzenith was expressionless. “Asking this now is merely a dispute of words. Is there any meaning in that?”

“I suppose not, but I have no doubt that the pill will revert to its true owner in the end. That is all I wanted to say. Evil shall never prevail.” Emperor Peafowl laughed.

“Well said. I could say the same to you.” Emperor Pillzenith responded, his voice a bit wooden.

“Alright, since there is no objection from either side, shall we discuss what exactly the competition for the Longevity Pill should consist of? You should collectively discuss the subject. As the referees, we will not give you any suggestions.. We’re responsible for only the judging portion.” The jury of referees made a second announcement.

“Brother Pillzenith, how do you propose we compete?” Emperor Peafowl smiled softly.

“Since the Longevity Pill is at stake, of course we’re refining it.” Emperor Pillzenith wanted to get straight to the point.

Emperor Peafowl glanced at Jiang Chen. Having stayed silent until now, Jiang Chen suddenly smiled. “If we’re betting on just refining the Longevity Pill, that is pure blasphemy against this miraculous pill. Sacred Peafowl Mountain has researched the pill for several hundred years, and there are many intricacies to the pill. Limiting this competition to only refining it… that puts a damper on things.”

Emperor Pillzenith frowned at his words. “It’s a battle between pill kings. If you’re not betting on refining the pill, what are you

betting on instead? How absurd!”

Jiang Chen’s expression was laid-back, his eyes focused on Pill King Ji Lang. “You’re here on Pillfire City’s behalf. If the Longevity Pill really belongs to you, surely you’re not scared of the contents of this competition?”

“What do you propose?” Ji Lang was impassive.

“It’s common for pill battles to have three rounds in order to decide the victor. I have three ways here for us to compete. If you’re not up for it, then we’ll go with your method and simply refine the pill. If that really is the case, though, I wonder how guilty Pillfire City’s conscience truly is. I doubt you obtained the pill’s recipe from a legitimate source.”

It was a crude application of reverse psychology, but oftentimes even crude methodologies yielded unexpected results. Not accepting the bet could be construed as proof of guilt. That was a hard-hitting thought.

Chapter 840: Jiang Chen's Ploy

Jiang Chen had plotted out everything before arriving. The Longevity Pill was a most wondrous pill, and the pill recipe Jiang Chen had produced back then was the most common one. In reality, there were a total of eight ways to make the Longevity Pill. The recipe he used during the Mt. Rippling Mirage Pill Battles was just one of the many pill recipes that existed, and he'd used it only because the ingredients he had been provided coincided with the ones in that particular recipe.

It definitely wasn't the only pill recipe that could create the Longevity Pill. Moreover, many of its ingredients could be replaced. He hadn't told even his Regal Pill Palace sect mates about this. After all, this particular version of the Longevity Pill was difficult enough to digest already. He doubted that a sect at the Regal Pill Palace's level could digest the rest of the pill recipes even if he were to reveal them.

And it was the truth. During the two years Jiang Chen had spent trapped in the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect's forbidden area, the Regal Pill Palace had failed to refine even one Longevity Pill. Their strongest pill dao expert, Elder Yun Nie, hadn't been able to succeed in refining it. Jiang Chen aside, the only person in the entire Regal Pill Palace who had the potential to refine the Longevity Pill was Mu Gaoqi. Unfortunately, the Regal Pill Palace had been destroyed before Mu Gaoqi had a chance to fully develop.

Pill King Ji Lang seemed to notice something, and his deep eyes landed on Jiang Chen with a examining gaze. It was obvious that he was trying to figure out what kind of hidden meaning existed behind Jiang Chen's suggestion. Jiang Chen's smile was calm but unfathomable. Pill King Ji Lang couldn't glean anything from Jiang Chen no matter how he tried. After a pregnant pause, Jiang Chen suddenly smiled, "I see that you've been silent for a long time. Have you lost your will already?"

If you won't speak, then I'll force you to speak. If you won't answer me, then it only means that you're lacking confidence. It was an unremarkable psychological attack, but it was also very effective. Pill King Ji Lang was quick to respond, although his voice sounded as indifferent as ever, "There is nothing more convincing than the quality of the pill in pill dao. Whoever refines the highest quality Longevity Pill will be acknowledged as the true creator of the Longevity Pill. Don't you think that everything else is but senseless effort that strays from the right path?"

The moment he said this, the people of Pillfire City immediately echoed him in agreement.

Jiang Chen slapped his forehead softly before smiling a little exaggeratedly, "I heard that you were the pill master with the greatest pill dao talent. Even second only to Emperor Pillzenith in Pillfire City? I can't help but feel the rumors to be exaggerated now that I've heard you speak."

He was purposely trying to infuriate Ji Lang, and his attempt didn't escape Ji Lang's notice. The latter smiled faintly, "Don't you feel embarrassed using such substandard psychological attacks?"

Jiang Chen smiled coldly in disdain, "Psychological attack? You're trying to read too deep into things. You aren't worthy of my psychological attacks with just your level of pill dao. You may think that I'm boasting, so let me show you right now just how foolish your earlier words are."

Jiang Chen turned to face the people around him, cupping his fist in greeting, "As everyone already knows, the quality of a pill is but one part of a whole equation. Whether or not a pill can be passed down in time depends not on its quality alone. First, we must consider if it is cost effective. Next, we must check if its ingredients are easy to gather. We also have to consider its compatibility with other pills and even more importantly, its effectiveness... Therefore, the quality of a pill is but one part of pill dao.

“Take the Longevity Pill for example. If you and I were to compete in pill refining right here, there are many objective factors that may affect the quality of a Longevity Pill in this contest. For example, the level of a pill cauldron and level of pill fire. This gentleman has requested a duel in pill refining. I do not disagree with that desire. However, I have a suggestion that I would like all present judges to listen to.”

“Tell us.” These judges were all secretly surprised when they heard Jiang Chen’s speech. It really seemed like this young pill king wasn’t here for show. Judging from his aggressiveness, it was obvious that he had come prepared.

On the other hand, that Pill King Ji Lang had chosen to respond with silence when Veluriyam Capital’s side brought up the suggestion. This didn’t necessarily mean that Pill King Ji Lang was afraid, but it did feel like Pillfire City had lost a minor mental skirmish even though he’d retained his grace.

After Jiang Chen had the judges’ permission, he smiled confidently, “Since this is a duel to refine the Longevity Pill, I have a personal suggestion to make on the basis of fairness. I suggest that both pill masters use the most common pill cauldron and pill fire. Only by reducing all objective factors to a minimum will we be able to test a pill master’s true skill. Otherwise, victory through the use of an overpowered pill cauldron or overpowered pill fire can only be considered as a contest of equipment quality, and not true skill. If one side wins, it would be an unfair victory. if one side loses, they can hardly be appeased. You are all leaders of the pill dao industry. I am sure that you all can understand the logic behind my shallow suggestion.”

All of the judges looked to be in agreement as they discussed amongst each other. No matter how badly they thought of the Veluriyam Capital pill king’s chances, it didn’t change the fact that his suggestion made a lot of sense. A battle to decide the right to a pill recipe was a battle of skill. It was natural that whoever had the

higher refinement skill when it came to refining the Longevity Pill had a higher chance of being the Longevity Pill's true master. Ultimately, a fake could never compare to the original in terms of skill.

Moreover, these leaders of pill dao all possessed great understanding of pill dao. Jiang Chen's words seemed to be in line with returning everything to one's roots, which resonated with all of them. At their level, pill dao was less of a study, and more of a discourse. Sometimes, all they needed was pure skill and nothing else to refine a pill. No one could deny that outstanding equipment made life better for every pill king, but the pill refining process and the enjoyment one derived at a technical level were absolutely necessary.

"Pill King Pillzenith, Pill King Zhen's suggestion sounds extremely logical. You are a central pillar of pill dao as well, so may I request your faction's opinion on this?"

"Yes, if the right to the Longevity Pill is in question, then we should tackle this from a technical perspective. A victory that is won through equipment does feel a little fishy."

"It's bad to grow reliant on equipment in the first place. I support the suggestion to use a common pill cauldron and a common pill fire. True essence shines from normality." A large majority of the judges supported Jiang Chen's suggestion.

There was no doubt that Jiang Chen's surprise move had thrown Emperor Pillzenith's plans quite into disarray. Pill King Ji Lang had been researching the Longevity Pill's pill recipe ever since they'd acquired it from the Eternal Celestial Capital. As a result, his skill in refining the Longevity Pill had improved massively. That was why he had suggested a duel to refine the Longevity Pill straight away. He was confident that he had a 99% chance of victory if the duel was simply based on who could refine the better Longevity Pill. After all, his skills had improved leaps and bounds after a long period of training. If he could refine the Longevity Pill

using top quality equipment, then it was absolutely not a problem to refine a few pills of upper rank quality.

But how could Jiang Chen not notice their little schemes? As the plagiarizers, their confidence was ultimately inferior to Jiang Chen, who was the original. Words couldn't describe how familiar he was with the Longevity Pill in either lifetime. He'd destroyed his opponent's plans in one careless move.

At this point, a refusal from Pill King Ji Lang would only make him look guilty. But if he were to respond to the call and enter the duel with only a normal pill cauldron and pill fire, he had no doubt that this duel would become a challenge. After all, he had never refined the Longevity Pill under such circumstances. It was a conundrum with only one correct answer. Ji Lang knew that Pillfire City would lose its face completely if he refused to meet Jiang Chen's suggestion. Therefore, after making brief eye contact with Emperor Pillzenith, Pill King Ji Lang smiled, "In that case, we agree to his suggestion."

Jiang Chen smiled inwardly when he heard Ji Lang's reply. He knew that he had thrown Ji Lang off balance already.

"This is just the first round. Do you dare to meet us in a round of three?" Jiang Chen had no intention of letting things go down without a bang. He already planned to drag his opponent underwater and defeat them soundly, so he might as well make sure that they lose every bit of face they could muster. Fancy my Longevity Pill, you say? Then you must be prepared to face the consequences of your greed.

Ji Lang frowned, "Three rounds? What other suggestions do you have?"

Jiang Chen smiled faintly, "I already told you that the Longevity Pill is Sacred Peafowl Mountain's original creation. We spent hundreds of years in research and learned many things in the process. What I'm really afraid of is that you're too cowardly to

accept my challenge, assuming that you even knew that such challenges existed in the first place."

A bad premonition suddenly flashed past Ji Lang's mind, but he immediately chased out stray thoughts with his consciousness. Judging from Sacred Peafowl Mountain's aggressiveness, they probably had mastered the Longevity Pill's recipe. Moreover, there was a high likelihood that Sacred Pill Mountain's recipe had come from a Regal Pill Palace captive. This also meant that the source of both their pill recipes was ultimately the same. They both came from the Regal Pill Palace.

As for their opponent's claim that Sacred Peafowl Mountain had studied the Longevity Pill for several hundred years, Ji Lang didn't believe it in the slightest. Emperor Pillzenith and the entire Pillfire City faction shared the same sentiment. It was impossible for Sacred Peafowl Mountain to keep that sort of information under wraps for several hundred years. If both sides obtained the Longevity Pill from the same source, then what is there to be worried about?

They both had the same pill recipe, but could Veluriyam Capital really master the Longevity Pill better than Pillfire City? Ji Lang didn't think that Sacred Peafowl Mountain's pill king had any right to be placed on par with him. This kid had run his mouth in grand fashion, muddied the waters and fired off one psychological attack after another, causing Ji Lang to feel a little stumped for words. But now that he had calmed himself down, Ji Lang couldn't help but wonder if this kid was simply bluffing him. Is he trying to cheat me out of a win when he's actually all bark and no bite?

The more Ji Lang thought, the likelier he thought that to be Jiang Chen's plan. They both had their recipe from the same source, so what could Veluriyam Capital possibly do that Pillfire City hadn't already figured out? Veluriyam Capital must know that their chances of victory aren't high, which is why they're throwing so many red herrings in an attempt to mislead and bait me into a

trap. They must be trying to instill fear and doubt in my mind to create an opening.

Ji Lang didn't feel that his opponent could throw anything at him that he hadn't already seen. In the end, everything he'd said, including the suggestion of three rounds, was to fool everyone into thinking that he, Ji Lang, was afraid to meet Jiang Chen in a pill battle. To put it bluntly, this kid was double bluffing.

I can't be fooled by this kid and weaken Pillfire City's momentum. Let us what he has to say first and decide later. If he wants to fight three rounds, then three rounds it shall be. If the subject doesn't stray from the Longevity Pill, then what do I have to fear even if we go a hundred rounds? When he thought up to this point, Ji Land regained his usual cool and smiled coolly, "Three rounds it is then. Pillfire City is the original creator of the Longevity Pill. The outcome of your shameful defeat won't change even if we were to duel three hundred rounds."

Jiang Chen's every move was to lead Ji Lang into thinking that he was bluffing. So when Ji Lang fell for his trap just as he imagined he would, cheer bloomed in his heart as he smiled leisurely. "Original creator, he says. Shameful defeat, he says. I seriously wonder where Pillfire City finds its courage to be able to say such words. Don't you feel embarrassed at all?" Jiang Chen extended his second finger, "In that case, let us compete and see who can refine the Longevity Pill using different ingredients. What do you say?"

The crowd broke into an uproar the second those words hit their ears. Ji Lang especially felt a shiver crawl down his back as his pupils violently contracted. His eyes narrowed as he glared straight at Jiang Chen.

Chapter 841: Consecutive Moves

Refine the Longevity Pill with different ingredients? Not only was Jiang Chen's proposal fresh and stimulating, it was also very entertaining. It was enough to instantly capture everyone's attention. Even those from Sacred Peafowl Mountain hadn't expected Jiang Chen to come out with such a proposal. After all, the pill recipe Jiang Cheng had gifted to Sacred Pill Mountain was also a fixed recipe. There had been no mention of interchangeable ingredients.

For a divine pill like that, everyone thought that every ingredient and every detail of its refining had been perfected after thousands of trials and experiments by masters of the dao of pills. It shouldn't be possible to alter it at will. Even people from Sacred Peafowl Mountain suddenly felt a little skeptical. Was Pill King Zhen bluffing Pillfire City on purpose? Was he deliberately using a stratagem, because he knew his odds of victory were slim?

Only Great Emperor Peafowl maintained a faint smile on his face. He too was a little astounded by Jiang Chen's proposal, but he didn't let anything show. On the contrary, he vaguely thought that Jiang Chen might perhaps really have something up his sleeve.

Pillfire City's side was at a loss. Great Emperor Pillzenith had never imagined that this insignificant Pill King Zhen from Veluriyam Capital would be this crafty and come up with so many tricks. Pill King Ji Lang bore into Jiang Chen with his eyes, as though he wanted to read the other's deepest thoughts. But it was to no avail. Not a clue could be gleaned from Jiang Chen's face, but Ji Lang could see traces of skepticism from the others of Sacred Peafowl Mountain. The doubt on their faces was enough to spark delight in his heart. This kid is definitely trying to pull the wool over our eyes. Looking at the people from Sacred Peafowl Mountain, they clearly don't know anything about whatever changing ingredients. This is definitely a cheap trick the kid just

came up with. Trying to bluff me?

“Sir, is there any use to such sensationalism? The Longevity Pill has gone through a thousand revisions and fine-tuning, where is there any place for alternate ingredients?” Ji Lang said with a cold smile.

Jiang Chen was precisely waiting for those words to come from Ji Lang. His lips slightly curled in a cold smile. “Is this what they mean when they talk about showing your true colors? The Longevity Pill has indeed gone through thousands of revisions and fine-tuning, this much is true. It’s precisely because it’s gone through so many corrections that we can research many different ways to reach the same result. You say it’s impossible to use different ingredients? If I can use different ingredients, will Pillfire City admit to theft from Sacred Peafowl Mountain?”

Each of Jiang Chen’s words was interwoven with the others, full of interlinked traps. As long as his opponent fell into one of those traps, he would have to face all the following ones. It was simply impossible to escape from this ever tightening noose, unless they voluntarily conceded defeat.

Ji Lang was unable to answer on the spot when he saw Jiang Chen brimming with such confidence. With a cold smile, Jiang Chen gave him no time to think. “Pill King Ji Lang, your every word exposes your rank amateurism. In fact, this challenge seems entirely useless. I believe everyone already has a good idea of who created the Longevity Pill. It’s obvious even with a mere glance.”

Ji Lang suddenly frowned. “What a sharp tongue. Are you already proclaiming victory on your own?”

Jiang Chen’s returning smile was faint. “Speaking of sharp tongues, if you have an even sharper tongue and can refute my arguments, then I’ll concede defeat. What’s so hard about it? Sacred Peafowl Mountain is the Longevity Pill’s original creator, so I can boldly talk about changing ingredients. Your Pillfire City calls

itself the original creator, but do you have the confidence to say the same? You don't, because you merely stole one of the recipes. Meanwhile, Sacred Peafowl Mountain has researched many different possibilities for this recipe. They're all interchangeable. Even some ingredients can be switched around. Can your Pillfire City use an entirely different recipe to refine this pill?"

One stab following another. Jiang Chen's words were even more ferocious than sharp swords, the sting so penetrating Ji Lang actually felt like he couldn't withstand them. Great Emperor Pillzenith suddenly laughed out loud. "Brother Peafowl, this pill king of yours, is he a smart aleck or a pill king? I'm really curious. In a contest of pills, where does so much nonsense come from?"

Great Emperor Peafowl was impassive. "Brother Pillzenith, your words sound a little sulky. To put it bluntly, in this Longevity PIll contest, we need to demonstrate our technique and knowhow for everyone to see. What Pill King Zhen said is entirely related to the core issue of knowledge. I'm certain that the various pill experts we invited didn't come just to see us refine a few pills and call it a day. If the duel were so crude and simple, wouldn't we be letting down the distinguished gathering here? Wouldn't we be letting down everyone who took the trouble to come here?"

The judges thought Great Emperor Peafowl's words to be entirely reasonable. If this duel merely consisted of both sides refining one pill each, then it would be too dull and boring. Everyone wanted to see skill and technique put on display. The higher the skill, the more spectacular the show. The judges chose that moment to speak up. "Your Majesties, we have no intention of favoring either side. But since it's a duel of the very top, then both sides naturally need to to showcase their outstanding talent and superiority when it comes to skill and knowhow. That's why we have come to a decision. If you merely refined two pills, then there are too many random factors to truly determine the owner. It would be very hard for us to come to a fair judgment."

“I actually find Pill King Zhen’s words rather reasonable. If you’re the original creator, then after hundreds of years of research, you should be able to demonstrate higher skill and better technique. To simply refine a single pill would leave too much to chance.” It was obvious to see that these judges were fanatics when it came to technique. Everyone wanted to see a spectacular show, so more than half of the judges instantly agreed with Jiang Chen’s proposal. The other half didn’t express any opinion, but they in fact thought Jiang Chen’s proposal to be more reasonable as well.

Jiang Chen struck while the iron was still hot. “Let me first present the esteemed judges with one recipe for the Longevity Pill. Please take a look. I can guarantee that any recipe Pillfire City can come up with is identical to the one provided, because it’s the one they stole. I can even declare right now that I’ll admit defeat if they can come up with a second pill recipe.”

A scroll opened in Jiang Chen’s hand with a slight shake. The Longevity Pill’s recipe was suddenly exposed for all to see. Only, he had obscured some critical details, so while people could see a rough outline of the recipe, they wouldn’t be able to plagiarize it. Many pairs of eyes zeroed in on the scroll in Jiang Chen’s hand. They didn’t dare blink, as though they were afraid of missing anything. After displaying it for everyone to see, Jiang Chen declared loudly, “If Pillfire City can present a pill recipe different from this one, and successfully refine the Longevity Pill, then I’ll concede right here.”

“Pill King Ji Lang, what say you?” His tone was aggressive.

Ji Lang had been forced on the back foot with Jiang Chen’s repeated attacks. His smile had gone terribly cold, “Pill King Zhen, I’ll admit I’m not your match when it comes to grandstanding. Since you’re talking about different recipes, how about you show us another one?”

Jiang Chen chuckled with mischief. “If I provide another one, will you concede defeat in the name of Pillfire City?”

Ji Lang's momentum suddenly took a sharp dive.

"You dare not, because you have a guilty conscience! Thieves will ever be thieves! In front of the original, no matter how big your reputation, no matter how great your fame, you'll still hide a guilty conscience!"

Great Emperor Peafowl chuckled slowly. "Brother Pillzenith, on this subject, your Pillfire City is indeed falling behind in momentum. I offer the same terms. If you can show us a different pill recipe, then we'll concede defeat. We can do it, but dare you agree to the terms?"

Great Emperor Pillzenith's face was a little dark, but his words still sounded tough. "No matter how many pill recipes there are, doesn't it end up in the same Longevity Pill when all's said and done? I persist in thinking that only the Longevity Pill's quality can determine the winner."

Such sophistry sounded rather weak.

Jiang Chen laughed contemptuously. "You didn't have the guts to take me up on my first proposal. I propose something else, and you still don't have the courage to man up. Is the so-called number one faction sitting at the pinnacle of pill dao really not as much as everyone makes it out to be? Fine, since you keep talking about comparing pill quality or whatever, then let's have that duel first, so that you Pillfire City can be wholeheartedly convinced of your loss."

With that, Jiang Chen cupped his fist in a salute to all the judges. "Esteemed judges, do you perchance have a most ordinary pill furnace with you?"

According to the previous agreement, the pill duel required the use of the most ordinary of pill furnaces and the most ordinary of pill fires. Equipment cheats were out of the question. An ordinary pill furnace was something the judges would naturally have collected a few of. They took out countless commonplace pill

furnaces. Jiang Chen waved his hand with poise. “Guests first. Pill King Ji Lang, you pick one first.”

Ji Lang told himself to calm down, but after being continuously derided by Jiang Chen’s words, his mind was still a little unsteady. Especially since he had to use an unfamiliar pill furnace, an such a mediocre one at that; Pill King Ji Lang was a little uncertain whether he’d achieve the desired result. On top of that, he couldn’t even use those outstanding divine fires, but rather the most ordinary pill fire. This was another challenge. After selecting a pill furnace, both sides presented their ingredients. The ingredients went through a strict inspection before finally being handed back to the two of them.

The judges declared, “First round, a refining contest. The one with the higher quality pill will win. If the quality is identical, then the one who finishes refining first wins. If everything is identical, then it’ll depend on the success rate of your refining. The one with more successful pills will be the winner…”

The established rules were very detailed, but they were all rules commonly seen in pill contests, the standard rules used all over the world. Both sides proceeded with their final preparations. One could tell that the ever-changing rules of this duel had completely disturbed Ji Lang’s arrangements. He had no choice but to stay on his toes to try and catch up.

They didn’t have much time to prepare. With an order from the judges, the curtains finally lifted on the pill contest. The ordinary pill furnaces only seemed ordinary to pill kings. But for Jiang Chen, the most ordinary pill furnace wouldn’t be worse than the ones he’d used back in the Myriad Domain. The most important thing was that Jiang Chen had never been heavily reliant on pill furnaces when it came to refining pills. He hadn’t refined the Longevity Pill too many times in this life, but he’d refined them quite often in his former life.

Add that to his special training in the past few days, he didn’t

have any sense of unfamiliarity when he received his pill furnace. Warming up the furnace, controlling the fire, the entire sequence proceeded as smoothly as flowing water.

After all, this process was truly too familiar to him, whether in his former life or in his present one. Jiang Chen's vigorous and spirited appearance vanished entirely as soon as he started refining, replaced by a look of utter concentration.

Chapter 842: The Longevity Pill Complete

Pill King Ji Lang had studied the Longevity Pill's recipe intensively before coming to Sacred Peafowl Mountain. He had especially put a lot of effort into learning how to refine it. Both pill masters had entered their respective zones; it was difficult to discern who was superior in that precise moment. For Jiang Chen, this time was different from before. In all his previous pill battles, he rarely revealed the full extent of his ability. Twenty or thirty percent, used in a very offhanded way, was enough in most cases. This time, his opponent was unimaginably strong. As such, Jiang Chen didn't feel the need to hide his true strength. Refining the Longevity Pill didn't give him room to hide much of anything anyway.

Jiang Chen fully exerting his abilities was terrifying in terms of pill dao skill. His talent did not manifest in a single specific detail; rather, he was a well-rounded contestant, excelling at almost every aspect of the pill-refining process. The formidable memories from his previous life had been compounded with the experiences from his current. Though Jiang Chen's pill dao strength was still lacking when compared to his previous life's level, it was enough to deal with any competition on the Divine Abyss Continent. The gap between his current and previous lives was not due to a lack of experience, rather, it was due to his youthfulness—he needed more practical opportunities.

Compared to the millions of years of experimentation he had performed in his previous life, the current Jiang Chen had much more to practice. It hadn't even been ten years since he had transmigrated into his current body. During these past few years, the only time he had spent refining pills had been after he had entered Regal Pill Palace and after he had come to Veluriyam Capital. Jiang Chen had refined the Longevity Pill many times even during his current life. Moreover, he had entered seclusion

for the previous two days in order to further prepare.

With the passage of time, Jiang Chen was completely at ease, and no longer perceived the world nor himself—he was entirely focused on the pill. There was a brief lull. All eyes stared at the two pill kings, spinning around in their sockets. The air was fraught with anticipation. By now, the invited judges had different attitudes. They had thought that Veluriyam Capital had literally zero chance of winning, and that the Pill King Zhen they had chosen was only there for show. But now everyone could see that that was no longer the case. Every move Pill King Zhen made was meticulously planned and well thought out. Every request was logical and appropriate, making it difficult for Pill King Ji Lang to refuse. The judges finally realized that the battle wasn't going to be completely one-sided after all, like they had previously anticipated.

Pill King Ji Lang presently held no advantage, at least. Pill King Zhen was young but candid. He also showed no signs of stage fright. In their respective areas, Pill King Zhen and Pill King Ji Lang were both about to enter the most intense part of the refining phase. It was plain for all the judges to see that Pill King Ji Lang wore a solemn expression, his movements full of caution. Pill King Zhen, on the other hand, seemed to have forgotten his very own existence. He almost appeared to be in a state of ecstasy. He was clearly enjoying the process.

As for who was better? That was still unclear.

"Your Majesty, Veluriyam Capital seems to be sufficiently prepared this time around. We may have fallen for their ruse." a confidante transmitted to Emperor Pillzenith.

Emperor Pillzenith was not in a good mood. He had realized as well that although they had prepared as much as they could for the Longevity Pill—one could even say perfectly—there was still a large gap between theirs and Sacred Peafowl Mountain's. Moreover, the emperor was even a little doubtful. "Is the Longevity Pill really the Sacred Peafowl Mountain's original

creation? How could this Pill King Zhen have the confidence to propose using a different recipe otherwise? Does the Longevity Pill really have several recipes?”

Emperor Pillzenith didn’t believe it at first, but the more time continued to pass, the more he suspected that something was a bit off. If Veluriyam’s Pill King Zhen was truly bluffing and being intentionally bluffing, his psychological stability and skill in disguise were beyond exceptional. At the very least, Emperor Pillzenith couldn’t see through his bluff. In theory, there was never any confidence behind a bluff. All bluster meant that there was no bite, and there were flaws with such a presentation. But Emperor Pillzenith hadn’t observed any such flaws.

“Where did Veluriyam Capital find this young pill king? Whether or not he’s bluffing aside, his mental fortitude is still exceptional. This young man’s psyche is uncommon in its tenacity.” Without realizing it, Emperor Pillzenith had raised Jiang Chen in his esteem.

Some people on Sacred Peafowl Mountain’s side hadn’t expected much out of Jiang Chen initially. However, they now had the faint feeling that Pill King Zhen perhaps had some real skill after all. Obviously, Pill King Ji Lang was giving it his all in the competition. To be capable of making Pill King Ji Lang do such a thing… finding another pill king who could provoke that same level of effort was impossible at Sacred Peafowl Mountain. Thus, they ceased their pessimism and waited with a hint of anticipation,the four monarchs included. “Maybe this mysterious Pill King Zhen will give us a pleasant surprise?”

The Wei father and son duo were far too insignificant in this kind of environment, having to stand behind the Coiling Dragon clan lord. However, though they acted with prudence, unlimited pride welled up in their hearts. No matter the result, the fact of the matter was that Pill King Zhen was currently representing Veluriyam Capital in a battle against Pillfire City. Pill King Zhen

was House Wei's guest pill king; they had been the ones to introduce the young man to Veluriyam Capital. House Wei was the only aristocratic house that was allowed to attend the battle today. This honor alone was enough to grant House Wei a hundred years of fortune.

The other titled emperors from Veluriyam felt unspoken surprise as well. They had recently heard of Pill King Zhen's name in the capital, but the things that Jiang Chen had done weren't particularly important nor earth-shattering. They were, in fact, fairly mundane. After all, he had only intervened in conflicts between clans and houses. His exploits were sensational, but a little gimmicky as well. With the high stakes bet that Jiang Chen had partaken in, his opponent had only been a sixth-level pill king. Someone as insignificant as that wasn't enough to attract the emperors' attention. And so, understandably, the other emperors did not quite understand why Emperor Peafowl had chosen Jiang Chen, an unknown pill king, to represent them. The current situation told them that Emperor Peafowl's eyes were as sharp as ever; they saw further and higher than everyone else's.

Time ticked by, second by second. Both sides of the contest had devoted their full concentration to the task at hand, not daring to be distracted in the least. The Longevity Pill actually required a lot of mental effort. Its nature meant that it was the type of pill that required slow and painstaking work to be put in.

The first time Jiang Chen had refined the pill at the Mt. Rippling Mirage pill battles, he'd spent a lot of mental effort, time, and energy. But the Jiang Chen of the past could not at all compare to the Jiang Chen of the present, whether in pill dao or martial dao. In particular, the level of his consciousness was now on a different level.

At the time, Jiang Chen had only been an earth origin realm cultivator. He had taken a big step up and was now an earth sage realm cultivator. This was a substantial leap. He had found it

difficult to refine the Longevity Pill before, but it was now easy for him. The refinement of the Longevity Pill was indeed very complex. Every detail had to be firmly grasped. In particular, the last step of compressing spirit energy was the key to successfully refining the pill. Jiang Chen was currently on this step.

Nine hand seals and nine different forces of spirit energy were gathered together in Jiang Chen's practiced hand. Just because the nine forces had been gathered didn't mean that the refinement process was over, however. The moment that put a pill master's true skill to the test had arrived. Whether the refinement was good or bad determined the quality of the finished pill. A perfect Longevity Pill resulted from a flawless fusion of the nine spirit energy forces. A golden ratio had to be achieved.

Jiang Chen's mind was exceedingly clear. Nine spirit energy forces gathered into a great ocean, like the waters of nine streams. Their paths were etched clearly into Jiang Chen's brain, their twists and turns fully discernible. He had no stray thoughts. As a top-rank pill master, the more important the moment was, the fewer distractions that entered his mind. He abandoned all notions of gain and loss. Only by casting that off could one forget one's own existence and refine a truly perfect product.

Rumble!

Suddenly, the pill cauldron shook rapidly.

The pill is done, finally... a job well done. Jiang Chen was secretly pleased. Everything went according to plan. This refinement was as impeccable as ever. There had been no breaks, no blemishes, and no flaws. Jiang Chen's cauldron contained six Longevity Pills. In terms of time, he was quite a bit faster than Pill King Ji Lang. The latter was still in the final fusion stage.

The completion of Jiang Chen's refinement elicited visible cheer from Sacred Peafowl Mountain's side. No matter Pill King Zhen's results, his speed was ahead of his opponent's. If the pills' qualities

were identical, they would have the advantage.

Emperor Pillzenith's expression was very focused, glancing at Jiang Chen with some interest. The foreboding sensation in his heart heightened. Prior to the beginning of the contest, Emperor Pillzenith had never considered the possibility of Pill King Ji Lang being at a disadvantage when it came to refining. Quality of refinement aside, Pill King Ji Lang was the fastest in Pillfire City apart from Emperor Pillzenith. A man of the emperor's stature naturally could not personally compete. Therefore, Pill King Ji Lang's participation represented Pillfire's highest level of competency. That they had lost to Veluriyam Capital in terms of speed was a great shame for the high-and-mighty Pillfire City.

The good thing was that Pill King Ji Lang wasn't too slow either, having finished the stage in less than fifteen minutes after Jiang Chen did. However, one could make a few conjectures based off of Pill King Ji Lang's frozen expression. This Pill King Ji Lang hadn't really performed well. In truth, Jiang Chen had already spotted the problem from the color of the smoke emanating from his opponent's cauldron. This Pill King Ji Lang must have practiced the Longevity Pill's refinement a lot. Otherwise he couldn't be this fast. But his personal refinement relied particularly on outside equipment. With garbage equipment, a thief like him couldn't fully display the Longevity Pill's true attraction!

Chapter 843: A Decisive Test

Both sides submitted their pills to the judges. Jiang Chen's expression was completely at ease. On the other hand, while Pill King Ji Lang was relatively satisfied with the product of his handiwork, there was still a trace of inexplicable worry in his heart. Today's events had been filled with a strange quality. He had a very bad feeling about something he couldn't quite place.

Both sides' pills were presented before the judges. Jiang Chen's cauldron had six pills, and Pill King Ji Lang's caudron only had five. From the quantity alone, Jiang Chen was already in the lead. Of course, for pill battles involving refining, the number of pills was never a topic of comparison. Rather, the pill with the highest quality was selected from the two sides, and the battle decided over that.

Jiang Chen's cauldron clearly represented the pinnacle of his craftsmanship. Out of the six pills, three were fully of the supreme rank. The remaining three were of upper rank as well. That is to say, Jiang Chen's six pills didn't even have one of mid rank, not to mention ones of lower rank.

Pill King Ji Lang's five pills, however, had one upper, one lower, and three mid-ranked pills. It had to be said that Pill King Ji Lang was extremely impressive in being able to do this much alone. After all, his recipe had been stolen, and his refining method had come from the Eternal Celestial Capital.

Eternal Celestial Capital's refinement method was already that of an amateur. Without Jiang Chen's personal direction, many details were incomplete. Although they'd pried the recipe out from Elder Yun Nie's lips, but it hadn't been difficult for the elder to conceal a few minute details. Therefore, even though Eternal Celestial Capital's refinement method could make the pills, the small alterations prevented them from refining upper rank Longevity Pills.

After it fell into Pillfire City's hands, the recipe and method were analyzed by countless experts from the city. It was adjusted and improved several times after innumerable trials and errors. Using his own equipment to refine the pill, Pill King Ji Lang was almost always able to obtain upper rank pills, with the occasional supreme rank as well. Of course, the chance for the latter happening was rare.

Regardless of the amount of their research, they lacked Jiang Chen's tutelage. There was an irreconcilable difference between theirs and the truly original Longevity Pill. This time, with only a plain cauldron and an unremarkable flame, the fact that he was able to refine a single upper rank Longevity Pill at all showed an above-average performance from Pill King Ji Lang.

The judges examined the pills with meticulous earnest. Both contestants' pills were circulated in front of each individual judge. The competing pair waited below for the judges' testing results. Jiang Chen was as calm and collected as ever, giving off a mien of unreadability. Though Pill King Ji Lang retained his grace, a flash of worry occasionally flashed across the corner of his eyes.

Both the factions of Pillfire City and Veluriyam Capital looked expectantly at the judges, awaiting their final verdict. Now that they'd come this far, neither side could fail to notice that Pill King Ji Lang felt threatened by Pill King Zhen, at least in terms of the Longevity Pill. No matter Pill King Zhen's talent, he had the qualifications to strike at Pill King Ji Lang on the matter of the Longevity Pill. This was observable from the intermittent changes in the expression of the Pillfire City representative.

The previously confident Pill King Ji Lang was now completely serious. His attitude of being above everyone else was gone, replaced by one of being faced with a formidable enemy. When compared, Pill King Zhen became the one that seemed sure of victory. His decorum was unruffled.

After careful examination, each judge came to their conclusion.

They gathered their opinions together before a more experienced judge stood up, saluting both sides with a cupped fist salute. “Your Majesties, we have evaluated both Longevity Pills. The recipe is the same, and so is the style. However, Veluriyam Capital’s Pill King Zhen seems to be a bit more mature in terms of skill, with fewer things to criticize. It’s closer to perfection.

The Longevity Pill he provided is of supreme rank. Pill King Ji Lang’s Longevity Pill, on the other hand, still has some minor problems in terms of methodology. They are quite hard to notice, and may be missed entirely without careful examination. Moreover, his methodology shows slight signs of stiffness, and the best pill he refined was only upper rank, with the majority being mid and lower. Because of a combination of these reasons, we feel that Veluriyam’s Longevity Pill looks more like the original.”

The judges were all pill dao heavyweights of the human domain. They didn’t need to rely on Pillfire City for their livelihoods. Thus, they had the freedom to give results that weren’t biased towards anyone. This was what the pill world was like. Being a judge was an ultimate honor, and anything that would tarnish that status was forbidden. If someone spoke falsehood from the position of a judge, their reputation would be greatly damaged and their standing plummet. This was something unique to pill dao.

Because the judges were unbiased and factual, their justness was unquestioned. Once the judgment was revealed, the entire Sacred Peafowl Mountain side erupted in thunderous applause. There was much cheering and jumping for joy, and they instantly lost themselves in celebration. Even people as lofty as the four monarchs laughed aloud, pleasant surprise plain in their eyes. The Coiling Dragon clan lord nodded incessantly as well, his visage radiating an unconcealed sense of gratification. Jiang Chen’s performance solidified his faith that the youth’s master would be able to refine the Pinecrane Pill that would save his life.

It didn’t need to be said that the Wei father and son were

animated to the point of bursting. When the results came in, they felt the blood in their bodies nearly boil, and their entire beings were aflutter, almost airborne. The gazes coming from all sides had some admiring, some appreciative, some grateful–but all of them were very friendly, and no one treated them as simply a minor aristocratic house. The feeling of being treated with importance almost made the Wei father and son want to bawl and sob. The wrongs they'd experienced for so many years such as being misunderstood, the house falling to the wayside, endless internal conflicts, various other issues... all of that no longer mattered anymore.

When the results came out, Emperor Peafowl's face revealed only a hint of a smile. It was as if this was all within his expectations. The other six great emperors all came over to congratulate Emperor Peafowl. Even Emperor Shura couldn't help but lower his stature to sincerely congratulate Sacred Peafowl Mountain. After all, the victory did not belong to Sacred Peafowl Mountain alone, but the entirety of Veluriyam Capital. Pillfire City's undefeatable myth had finally been shattered! After this battle, Pillfire City was still the foremost heavyweight in the pill world, but their invincible legend was no more.

In stark contrast to Veluriyam's side, Pillfire's side was livid at hearing the results. They'd prepared amply for the battle, and couldn't fathom that this was the conclusion. Emperor Pillzenith struggled to repress the anger in his heart, staring coldly at Emperor Peafowl. "Brother Peafowl, I still do not believe that you are the original creators of the Longevity Pill."

Emperor Peafowl smiled serenely. "There's no need for you to know whether we're the original creator or not. One thing is sure, though, you're definitely not the original either. The fact of the matter is, stolen craftsmanship cannot compare to that of its rightful creator's. True gold is not afraid of refinement by fire, and the fakes will be revealed by the flame."

“Hold on. If I remember correctly, the battle isn’t over yet, no? We decided on three rounds beforehand. This is just the first.” Pill King Ji Lang suddenly opened his mouth.“Brother Pillzenith, Pill King Ji Lang seems a little dissatisfied still. What do you think?”Emperor Pillzenith was detached. “Naturally, we should execute what was decided earlier.”

Jiang Chen was a little surprised. Pill King Ji Lang is clearly no fool. He should know after losing the first round that he has no chance of winning the following rounds, either. Why continue the battle if there was no chance of winning? Was he dissatisfied with his current amount of shame? Or perhaps he thought that Pillfire City hadn’t lost enough face today yet? If he was putting his face forward anyway, Jiang Chen didn’t mind giving it another vicious slap.

“Pill King Ji Lang, we don’t need to do the second round. If you can present a different recipe for the Longevity Pill, and successfully refine a single pill with that recipe, I’ll admit defeat. Even a lower rank pill is enough. In fact, we’ll count the entire battle yours, okay?” Jiang Chen feigned magnanimity.

Emperor Pillzenith smiled faintly. “In the same vein, can you do it? If you can, what’s the problem in me admitting defeat?”

Startled, Jiang Chen immediately realized his adversary’s intentions. Knowing that he couldn’t win, Pill King Ji Lang was continuing with the mindset of certain loss. His actions were clearly an effort to muddy the waters. How could he not understand Pill King Ji Lang’s motive? Jiang Chen grinned coolly. “I don’t need to do anything to solidify my victory. If neither of us does anything during the second round, then it’s a tie. The same is true for the third round. Two ties and one win is enough for a convincing victory for Veluriyam against Pillfire City, so why should I give you more opportunities to steal my knowledge?”

As shrewd as Pill King Ji Lang was, his expression nevertheless blanked. “Stealing your knowledge? What a joke. Pillfire City’s pill

dao knowledge is unmatched. Since when did we need to steal from anyone?"

"Then what's with your recipe for the Longevity Pill?" Jiang Chen shot back a retort."Veluriyam Capital can't prove that the Longevity Pill is its own creation either. According to my knowledge, the recipe for the pill appeared earliest in the Myriad Domain," Pill King Ji Lang smiled faintly.

"Myriad Domain's Longevity Pill was given and inherited from Veluriyam Capital." Jiang Chen showed no sign of relenting. Pill King Ji Lang gave Jiang Chen a profound look, grinning incredulously.

"We'll call it a tie for the second round if neither party wants to compete," a judge interjected. "Are you going to do anything for the third round or not?"

At this point, Pill King Ji Lang knew that they didn't have any more cards to play with for the Longevity Pill. There was no reason to continue the battle. He had wanted to continue in order to test his opponent's bottom line. Did they have another recipe for the Longevity Pill or not?

His opponent hadn't fallen for the ruse, though, so Pill King Ji Lang understandably preferred a ceasefire over battling further.

Emperor Pillzenith knew as well that extending the proceedings would only invite ridicule onto Pillfire City. The entire battle felt stifling, and Emperor Pillzenith was more than a little frustrated. He'd come here with the determination to win. The entirety of Pillfire City uniformly believed that Veluriyam Capital's Longevity Pill recipe must have come from Regal Pill Palace. Both Longevity Pill recipes were stolen, right? With Pillfire's long standing tradition and knowledge, how could they lose to Veluriyam in researching the Longevity Pill?

Thus, losing hadn't been an option or a notion that even registered for this battle. However, the conclusion wa just so

devastating. They hadn’t just lost, they’d lost beyond a shadow of a doubt!

Chapter 844: Pill King Zhen Soars to Fame After One Battle

The competition had fallen into a deadlock in which the second and third round had become rather pointless. If Pill King Ji Lang didn't make a move, then neither would Jiang Chen. Therefore, the second and third round of the bet became irrelevant in one fell swoop.

Jiang Chen had suggested settling their dispute in three rounds to prevent the possibility that Pill King Ji Lang might score a draw from him during the refining round. But Pill King Ji Lang hadn't even managed to accomplish that, so there was no longer any need to proceed to the second and third round. However, Jiang Chen had to admit that Pill King Ji Lang was the strongest pill king he had met thus far.

It wasn't an easy task to refine an upper rank Longevity Pill with a common pill cauldron and pill fire. Moreover, it would seem Elder Yun Nie had purposely misled them in some of the details of the refining process. But the fact that Pillfire City was still able to improve the formula and refine a Longevity Pill of such quality proved that Pillfire City's foundations in pill dao really were second to none. It was highly unlikely that Veluriyam Capital's accumulation in pill dao even came close to rivaling their opponent.

The fact that this gamble had ended in such a theatrical manner disappointed the judges a little. They really wanted to know if there existed other pill recipes that could form a Longevity Pill. But since neither party had chosen to display their skills, they could do nothing to scratch the itch. The dust had settled, and the judge announced, "The contest for the Longevity Pill ends today. From today onwards, Sacred Peafowl Mountain possesses sole rights to the Longevity Pill. All major powers in the human domain are not

to refine the Longevity Pill, or the act shall constitute a crime of plagiarism. Veluriyam Capital reserves the right to demand compensation for the losses they incurred during this process."

These judges were all central pillars of pill dao. Their words were absolute in the human domain.

The curtains officially fell over the conflict of the Longevity Pill after the judges' declaration. Sacred Peafowl Mountain's side erupted into thunderous cheers. This outcome was the best one for them. From then on, the Longevity Pill and the business associated with it was their sole possession. The Longevity Pill's allure and potential would be a massive impact to the pill market in the human domain. If Veluriyam Capital could capitalize on this opportunity and expand their share in the industry, it would lead to a profound, long-ranging impact.

With the bet concluded, Emperor Peafowl cupped his fist and smiled at the judges, "You have all made a long journey to come here, so you simply must stay at Sacred Peafowl Mountain for a few days and allow me to play host."

"You're too kind. If I may ask, Your Majesty, could I be so bold as to solicit a Longevity Pill for collection purposes?"

Emperor Peafowl cast a merry glance at Jiang Chen. The latter knew that Emperor Peafowl wished to deepen his acquaintance with these pillars of pill dao, so he didn't mind the extra work and replied with a smile, "Your will is my command, Your Majesty."

"Sacred Peafowl Mountain is flattered by your great favor, everyone. We are glad to offer these Longevity Pills for you to share amongst yourselves. If they are not enough, then please stay for a few more days while we refine a few more cauldrons worth of pills for you. We will ensure that you won't return empty handed." Emperor Peafowl longed for these people to spend more time in Veluriyam Capital. These people were all heavyweights and the representatives of many factions in the Divine Abyss Continent. If

he could build a solid relationship with them, it would be very beneficial for Veluriyam Capital's future in pill dao.

Naturally, Emperor Pillzenith was extremely displeased to see his rival taking advantage of his victory like that. How could he not notice that Emperor Peafowl was attempting to undermine him? He was using the opportunity to deepen his acquaintance with those people and eventually challenge Pillfire City. However, Emperor Peafowl was the host right now. It was perfectly within the rights of the host to invite his guests to linger for a few days, and it was not his place to interfere. After all, every one of these heavyweights in pill dao represented the top power of their home regions.

Emperor Pillzenith might be powerful and highly respected, but he didn't have the right to order these people around. He immediately chuckled, "Brother Peafowl, I have long since admired Sacred Peafowl Mountain, and it is rare that I find the opportunity to visit Veluriyam Capital. This spar means little in the grand scheme of things, since I am only here to visit an old friend. So why don't you let me admire the radiance of Sacred Peafowl Mountain a little longer?"

It was a rather shameless request to stay in Sacred Peafowl Mountain. On the surface, it was out of admiration for Sacred Peafowl Mountain. But in reality, it was both a supervision and an intimidation tactic. It was a warning to these heavyweights that they shouldn't overdo their interaction with Veluriyam Capital. Pillfire City is still the king of pill dao. This spat over the rights of the Longevity Pill is but minor entertainment.

Naturally, Emperor Peafowl had no choice but to accept Pillfire City's request to hang around for a bit. Technically speaking, Jiang Chen should have been able to leave after accomplishing his mission, but these heavyweights all refused to let him go. They were obviously very curious about this young Pill King Zhen, and wanted to get to know him better. No one present was blind, and

they could all see a kind of potential in this Pill King Zhen that one might not encounter even in a thousand years.

Although Jiang Chen didn't really like this type of social mingling, he also knew that these people were all pill dao elites in the human domain. He might have to deal with them in the future. He could not deny face to Emperor Peafowl either, so he had no choice but to remain behind. He refined a few more cauldrons of Longevity Pills and finally managed to appease these judges. Everyone got to take one home as a souvenir. Moreover, these Longevity Pills were all supreme rank pills. No one was better off than the others.

Jiang Chen's generosity won everyone's goodwill. There were even plenty of people who sent him messages in secret to try and recruit him away from Sacred Peafowl Mountain. Jiang Chen naturally didn't agree to their offers. He didn't talk about these offers with Emperor Peafowl either. It would simply make things awkward. He knew very well that the label of Emperor Peafowl had been stamped on him no matter what path he chose to take in the future.

Moreover, after mulling over his agreement with Emperor Peafowl, Jiang Chen had considered the logic within it to be sound. Emperor Peafowl needed someone to bear the great burden that was the inheritance of Sacred Peafowl Mountain, and Jiang Chen needed a powerful faction to become his patron. His years of journeying was more than enough proof that fighting alone was absolutely not the right way to go.

The guests stayed at Sacred Peafowl Mountain for five more days before finally taking their leave. But during their stay, Jiang Chen's performance earned Emperor Peafowl significant prestige. This was especially true in the exchange of pill dao, because not even the senior level pill kings of Sacred Peafowl Mountain were able to interject their own opinions in certain subjects. Jiang Chen hadn't taken much of an active role, but was always able to

respond fluently and provide a new and original perspective to the subject when he was asked a question. None of his personal views were a clichéd retelling of established theory, and surprised the heavyweights quite a bit.

These heavyweights were all top class pill kings of their respective regions and half step pill emperors. In reality, Sacred Peafowl Mountain's greatest pill kings weren't really on the same level as any of these people. This was especially true when compared to the pill kings from Pillfire City.

Pillfire City's people would sometimes throw in some thorny problems into the conversation on purpose in hopes of embarrassing Sacred Peafowl Mountain's pill kings. However, Jiang Chen was always able to resolve them smoothly. His ease at dealing with these problems thwarted all of Pillfire City's attempts to embarrass their rival. Because of this, even the pill kings who were reluctant to accept Jiang Chen before had all wholeheartedly changed their stances.

Even if they were to forget the fact that Jiang Chen had thoroughly trounced Pill King Ji Lang, there was no denying that his presence had kept Sacred Peafowl Mountain from falling into extremely embarrassing situations many times. Even when they, as bystanders, had only barely managed to avoid losing face, Pill King Zhen had resolved all these complications single-handedly without a trace of hesitation. They were all experts in pill dao, and his contributions did not go unseen. Jiang Chen had not only retained dignity for Sacred Peafowl Mountain, but also themselves.

Jiang Chen could feel an obvious improvement in attitude and friendliness from all parties in Sacred Peafowl Mountain after the guests had been sent off. Even the four great monarchs no longer viewed Jiang Chen as a normal guest pill king. They had also come to realize just why the emperor regarded this young man so highly. His performance in the past few days had conquered everyone in Sacred Peafowl Mountain. The other great emperors present in

Veluriyam Capital had also gone to Emperor Peafowl to inquire about Pill King Zhen. They all wanted to learn of this young pill king's background.

For a time, a 'Pill King Zhen fever' swept Veluriyam Capital. The citizens blew Pill King Zhen's skills so out of proportion that he was almost a myth. The details of Pill King Zhen thwarting Pillfire City and slapping their faces were described so well and in such detail that it was as if those hearing the stories had witnessed the battle with their own eyes. This fever was an unexpected boon for Taiyuan Tower. It became even more popular than before, as its business kept breaking new records. In a matter of moments, Taiyuan Tower had broken the status quo and became a first rate power.

House Wei had also experienced an enormous jump in status due to their relationship with Pill King Zhen. Not only did they win the Coiling Dragon Clan's commendation, it was said that Emperor Peafowl himself had paid them a visit. This was an unparalleled honor. It was as of someone had painted an invisible sheen of gold onto Taiyuan Tower's reputation, which made them look even better than before. The Wei father and son was as pleased as punch at their current situation. Originally, everyone had considered House Wei to be in decline, and predicted that they would eventually lose their status as a ninth rank aristocratic house. No one could have imagined that they would perform a perfect hundred eighty degree reversal in fortune and show signs of becoming the number one aristocratic house in Veluriyam Capital. It was even rumored that House Wei had the chance of being conferred with the title of a great clan.

Rumors aside, there was no doubt that everyone in House Wei was absorbed in boundless happiness. Nearly everyone except the Wei father and son and the clan elders worshipped Jiang Chen like a god. They knew where they stood very well. They knew that they absolutely couldn't treat Jiang Chen like a normal guest pill king.

Right now, Jiang Chen was their savior, benefactor, and the man of fortune they needed to curry favor with. Thankfully, Jiang Chen didn't put on airs just because he'd won a great battle. He didn't become arrogant, and Taiyuan Tower's modus operandi didn't change despite his rise to fame.

Chapter 845: Dan'er's Emotions

Sacred Peafowl Mountain was brimming with noise and excitement as a result of this battle. The pill dao powers subordinate to other great emperors of Veluriyam Capital sent their men over to learn from Pill King Zhen and absorb some experience. Or that was what they claimed to be doing. In reality, they were simply checking to see if they could share in part of the Longevity Pill's profits as well. Unfortunately for them, the share of interests had been decided a long time ago, so it was impossible for another party to try and take a slice of the pie now. Moreover, those great emperors had done nothing to aid in the fight for the right over the Longevity Pill, so of course they weren't given a piece of the profits.

The great emperors themselves knew this very well. They were relatively certain that they wouldn't luck out with a share of the profits. But trying cost nothing, and Sacred Peafowl Mountain might grant them the authority and pill recipe to refine the Longevity Pill. However, Emperor Peafowl was very resolute on this matter.

No meant no. His stance didn't change no matter who came to persuade him. He knew very well that the Longevity Pill recipe belonged to Jiang Chen to begin with. Now that the matter of ownership had been decided, it was prime time to cash in on the pill. If he were to grant all these powers the authority to refine the Longevity Pill, then they would only be undercutting each other. If that happened, it was no different from undercutting Jiang Chen's profit, the person who supplied the recipe and the main contributor to this battle.

Emperor Peafowl hadn't discarded all of his principles just yet, so he turned them all down even when a great emperor personally came to ask for permission. In fact, every pill king who was selected to refine the Longevity Pill had gone through a meticulous

selection process. If there were traitors, he would root them all out.

……

Behind a mountain, inside the residence built behind the bamboo forest, Miss Dan’er was leaning against a window and decided to push it open. She took a deep breath in as the refreshing air from the bamboo forest rushed in and felt her knot of gloom and frustration subside a little.

“Are you finished with closed door cultivation, Miss Dan’er?” Servant girl Cui’er hurriedly rushed over from the garden in front after seeing her mistress opening a window. For some reason, she seemed rather joyful and excited at the moment.

“Cui’er, I heard some thunderous cheers from Sacred Peafowl Mountain now and then. What’s happened?”

Cui’er’s eyes lit up in delight when she saw the opportunity to share her excitement. “It’s a shame you didn’t see for yourself yourself, Miss. Even Cui’er feels sorry for you. From what I heard, Pillfire City made a huge fuss and came to snatch a pill recipe that belonged to us.”

“Pillfire City?” Miss Dan’er frowned slightly, “I heard that Pillfire City is the greatest pill dao power that exists in the human domain. Doesn’t that mean… that Sacred Peafowl Mountain is in trouble?”

“Pillfire City is pretty powerful, and everyone thought that Sacred Peafowl Mountain was in deep trouble at first. But later on… guess what happened, Miss!” Cui’er hurriedly replied.

“What happened?” It would appear that the situation had taken a surprising turn, judging from Cui’er’s cheerful appearance.

“I doubt that even you can imagine this, Miss, but Sacred Peafowl Mountain won the pill battle! We achieved complete victory over Pillfire City and sent them home with their tail between their

legs!”

“We won?” Miss Dan’er looked startled, “Did the emperor take the field himself?”

“Of course not,” Cui’er said, “The emperor towers above the rest of us, so he wouldn’t act unless it is a very important occasion. Also, Emperor Pillzenith of Pillfire City himself didn’t participate in the battle. Pillfire City sent out a genius called Pill King Ji Lang. He’s said to be the most outstanding pill dao genius in Pillfire City, second only to Emperor Pillzenith himself. But obviously this Pill King Ji Lang is just a junior compared to Emperor Pillzenith.”

“If it was a junior who participated in the battle, then you’re correct in that Emperor Peafowl could not take part himself. So who did we send out to face this Pill King Ji Lang? I think I’ve heard of this pill king as well. People say that he is one of the strongest ever to dabble in pill dao, and that he is inferior only to some pill dao emperors. If I remember correctly, they also say that he is a half-step pill emperor who is destined to become a pill dao great emperor in the future. Is there really anyone in Sacred Peafowl Mountain who can defeat him?”

“Everything you say is right, Miss. But not only was Pill King Ji Lang defeated, I heard that he was beaten straight into the ground!”

“Who was it that defeated him?”

Cui’er giggled, “I doubt you’ve heard of this person, Miss. His name is Zhen Shi. Everyone calls him Pill King Zhen. He’s arrived for barely a year and is just the guest pill king of a ninth rank aristocratic house.”

“A guest pill king? Why on earth did the emperor choose him to participate in the pill battle?” Dan’er was completely stunned at this point. “Isn’t a ninth rank aristocratic house just a third level power in Veluriyam Capital? They come after a great clan and a great emperor, right?” Miss Dan’er might have lived at Sacred

Peafowl Mountain for a couple of years, but she seldom ventured outside and lived a rather secluded life. She knew a little about Veluriyam Capital, but not the greater details.

“Exactly. That’s why this pill battle was so legendary. Right now, the most popular person in the entire Veluriyam Capital isn’t Emperor Peafowl, but Pill King Zhen!” Cui’er giggled again, “Miss, I heard that this Pill King Zhen is still unmarried.”

Dan’er chided her, “You ditzy little girl.”

“Heehee, I’m not ditzy, Miss, I simply thought that…”

“Thought what?” Dan’er asked with an annoyed sigh.

Cui stuck out her tongue. “I don’t have the courage to say it, Miss. I’m afraid that you’ll yell at me for it.”

Dan’er sighed quietly, “That’s for the better. Nothing good ever comes out of your mouth anyway.”

Cui’er started complaining, “What? Come on, Miss! Cui’er has only ever thought for you. I think there must be a reason why the emperor regards this Pill King Zhen so highly.”

Dan’er pondered for a moment before nodding, “The emperor has just lost his most beloved personal disciple not long ago. Perhaps he is seeking a new personal disciple.”

Emperor Peafowl’s wellbeing was one of the few things Dan’er was concerned about. Not only had the emperor saved her from her plight, he’d also granted her a huge favor and appointed the Plumscore Monarch herself to educate her child. Dan’er was not a heartless person. She was very grateful to Emperor Peafowl for everything he’d done for her.

Cui’er tittered, “Personally, I think the emperor is choosing a son-in-law.”

“Son-in-law?” A moment of surprise caught her off guard, but Dan’er immediately thought of something and blushed. “Oh, you

naughty girl. I see you're setting your sights on me again without me noticing, hmm?"

"Miss, the emperor treats you like his own daughter and cares so much for you. You can't always turn down his kindness." Cui'er instantly begged for forgiveness.

"Hah," Dan'er sighed softly. "It is true that I owe the emperor my new life, Cui'er. But still, you should restrain yourself from such nonsense. I'm still a married woman, even if the emperor has such thoughts. I would never accept another man in my life."

"Miss, you always said that you're a married woman, but why hasn't your husband come to see you after all these years? Also, if he really loves you that much, why would he ever allow you to wander by yourself before the emperor found you? How can a man like that possibly deserve your undying love?" Cui'er was an honest and unfiltered person. She was the kind who would speak her mind without any scruples.

But Dan'er's expression froze when she heard Cui'er's words. She stared at Cui'er solemnly, "Cui'er, I hope that this is the last time I hear words of that sort from you. Remember this well: he is absolutely not the kind of man you speak of. He is responsible and ambitious, and possesses a talent equal to none in this world. I didn't leave him because he abandoned me. I left him because I don't want to tie him to my side and keep him from the great future that lies ahead of him!"

Dan'er's face glowed with a divine radiance as she spoke. She wouldn't allow even half a sentence of disrespect for her man. The way she spoke, it was as if the man she had left behind was her greatest pride and joy in this entire world. It was as if he was worth a lifetime of silent sacrifice.

Cui'er had served Miss Dan'er for many years. She knew that her mistress was very easygoing on small things, and she never spoke a word of censure even when Cui'er sometimes failed to perform her

duties adequately. However, Miss Dan'er was more stubborn than anyone else when it came to her principles.

It was obvious that this man whom no one knew a thing about was a taboo subject to Miss Dan'er. No one but herself was allowed to tread harshly upon it. Anyone who tried would be met with a stern rebuff. Dan'er hadn't mentioned his name even to Emperor Peafowl himself. In fact, she never talked about her past. Therefore, for all the power Emperor Peafowl wielded, even he didn't know what'd happened to Dan'er before he'd met her.

Dan'er herself was the only one who knew the forlornness, the pride, and the longing she felt every time she thought of the man she missed day and night. She wanted to know where he'd gone after the Myriad Domain had been destroyed. She wanted to know if he thought even a little about her during his idle time when he was wandering outside. Every time she thought a little too deeply, the headstrong Dan'er couldn't help but tear up a little. It was true that she had left that man of her own accord. In fact, he never knew that she'd borne and given birth to his child. But Dan'er never regretted her decision to leave him, even now.

She knew that he would definitely take responsibility if he learned of their child and the sacrifices she'd made for his sake. But Dan'er didn't want to do so. She didn't want to tie him to her side just because she wished to. She thought that it would be very selfish of her if she did something of that sort. This was why she'd left to wander the world alone. It was her pride and her selfless love that had driven her to make such a choice.

She firmly believed that he would understand her feelings one day. If a bond of destiny truly existed between them, the heavens would bring them together. She didn't need to force things if this bond didn't exist. But even then, he was still irreplaceable in Dan'er's heart, even in a place hundreds of times stronger than the Myriad Domain like Veluriyam Capital where geniuses abounded.

No matter how brilliantly these geniuses of Veluriyam Capital

shone, they were ultimately incomparable to that young boy she'd met back in the Myriad Domain; the boy who had barged deep into her heart before she'd noticed. For the past few years, Dan'er had neither mentioned him nor attempted to inquire about his whereabouts. She only knew that the Myriad Domain had been destroyed, and she had no idea where he'd gone or how he was doing. But she was absolutely certain that a genius like him wouldn't go down silently just because his sect was destroyed. Even if that man was currently buried in dust, it was only a matter of time before his brilliance would see the light of the world once more. Of this, Dan'er had no doubt at all!

Chapter 846: Pillfire City's Secret Letter

There was simply no place left for any other man in Dan'er's heart, because every inch belonged to one man already. Whether it be a superlative genius, or the most handsome man in the world, they were but an insignificant passersby to her. That man was her sky and her earth, her entire world and the source of her happiness.

The feelings that grow between men and women are fascinating like that. It was also Dan'er's nature. She was simply powerless to extricate herself from her feelings. She didn't feel a hint of regret no matter how much hardship she'd suffered. In Dan'er's mind, this man was someone sacred, an ideal that no one could infringe upon. She would never allow anyone to say half a word against him.

The reason why she'd never mentioned him to anyone else was that she didn't want to hear the slightest negative opinion about him. Dan'er had made every decision in her life out of her own volition. He might even be completely unaware that she'd carried his flesh and blood. If he truly was the kind of man to love and leave them, then he would have had the opportunity to do so back when she'd revealed her feelings to him. But he hadn't done so. So Dan'er knew he was a genuine gentleman. She'd never doubted that.

Cui'er was at a loss when she saw the young lady's anger. Her gaze fell to the floor as she stammered, "Miss, Cui'er is in the wrong again. Don't be angry, alright?" The servant girl's tears streaked down her cheeks when Dan'er remained silent. "Miss, if I made you angry, then hit me or yell at me. Just don't hold it inside. His Majesty said that you worry too much, so your worries are buried too deep. You can't keep sulking by yourself anymore, or it'll be bad for your health," Cui'er said while choking down her sobs.

Dan’er heaved a small sigh. “Cui’er, you accused him wrongly because you don’t know him, so I won’t blame you. Just don’t let it happen again.”

Cui’er hurried to nod. “There won’t be a next time. Miss, you can pull out my tongue if you hear me talking nonsense again.”

“Am I that cruel?” Dan’er didn’t know whether to laugh or cry.

Cui’er broke into laughter despite her tears. “Miss, you’re not cruel at all, you’re very kind to me. I simply can’t express how fortunate I was to have His Majesty choose me to serve by your side. Miss, don’t be angry at me, I beg you. If His Majesty thinks my service to be lacking, I will have to leave this place. Cui’er doesn’t want to leave Sacred Peafowl Mountain.”

On Sacred Peafowl Mountain, even a servant girl was an upper class servant girl. Cui’er’s family had ridden her coattails and moved up in the world all thanks to her. If she were to be kicked out from Sacred Peafowl Mountain, her family would probably fall back to their previous station. Such was Sacred Peafowl Mountain’s prestige. Even mere servants had unfathomable influence.

“Silly girl, what are you thinking of now? I’m not going to let you go. I would always feel something amiss without you babbling in my ear.” Dan’er wouldn’t truly be angry at such a honest and outspoken servant girl. She soothed Cui’er;s anxiety with a few words and changed the topic. “Alright, Cui’er, now tell me what really went on with that pill battle?”

Cui’er completely forgot her previous anxiety and trembled in excitement. Her gossipy nature came to the surface once more as she tirelessly told her tale, the rise and fall of her voice akin to that of a storyteller. After all, this girl lived on Sacred Peafowl Mountain. Though she hadn’t the seniority to personally witness the duel, she’d still heard quite a few rumours. The news one heard on Sacred Peafowl Mountain was much more reliable than

those in the outside world. And so, she told Miss Dan'er every tidbit she knew.

"So that means that His Majesty's judgment is as keen as ever. There are so many outstanding pill kings on the mountain, but he chose a young outsider over any of them. I'm sure no one understood His Majesty when he came to this decision. They must have doubted him instead, am I right?" Dan'er sighed.

"Miss, your insight is as penetrating as ever. From top to bottom, many people on the mountain truly questioned His Majesty's decision. I heard that out of the four great monarchs, apart from the Cloudsoar Monarch, the other three were all a little skeptical, not to mention the other great emperors in the Capital," Cui'er said, fully animated.

"Yet the facts have proven that His Majesty is still His Majesty after all. His Majesty is still the one standing at the very top in the Capital, the one who sees the furthest. Everyone else is a step, or ten, even a hundred steps behind." Dan'er brimmed with adoration when mentioning Emperor Peafowl, a little pride slipping into her voice like a daughter talking about her amazing father.

"Hehe, no wonder His Majesty loves you so much, miss. Sacred Peafowl Mountain is so big, but you are His Majesty's real confidante," Cui'er exclaimed in admiration.

"How can I pretend to be His Majesty's confidante? His Majesty merely chats with me now and then, so I can discern some of his thoughts from his words." Dan'er was a sensitive girl. She knew that at Emperor Peafowl's level, his very thoughts were impossible to understand for the average person. Choosing this Pill King Zhen of no fame whatsoever merely emphasized this point. How much courage and resolve had he needed to choose an obscure junior? If this duel had ended in failure, all the criticism and all the blame would have fallen on Emperor Peafowl's shoulders, rather than on Pill King Zhen.

Shouldering so much pressure, facing so much skepticism, the emperor had nevertheless plowed forward in spite of the adversity, braved the tremendous risk of defeat and challenged a colossus like Pillfire City. Pill King Zhen had reaped all the acclaim, but Dan'er knew that, though Pill King Zhen's performance was admittedly near perfection, most people had neglected His Majesty's role as the decision maker and the one supporting him from the shadows.

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Back at Taiyuan Tower.

Jiang Chen had received many private letters, but he threw them all in the fire without even reading them, reducing them to ashes. Those letters had all been left behind by those pill experts before their departures. Though their words changed, their meaning was still the same. They all told Jiang Chen that, as long as he brought their letter to their territory, he could receive the highest level of treatment. He would definitely receive more honor and prestige than he did in Veluriyam Capital.

In the Capital, everyone had learned that Pill King Zhen was merely a guest pill king in a noble house, just a last minute find by Great Emperor Peafowl. There were no ties of inheritance whatsoever between them. For that reason, everyone had seized an opportunity to lure him away. That was why every single one of these pill experts kept sending him confidential missives, to try to pry him away to their own factions.

If they'd known that the Pill King Zhen they wanted to rope in had already refused Emperor Peafowl several times already in private, they likely wouldn't have done something so pointless. He'd even refused an invitation from Emperor Peafowl to become his personal disciple. Why would he even consider theirs? So, these secret letters all ended in the fire.

"Hm? Even fire can't burn this particular letter?" Jiang Chen took one letter from the fire and observed it from every angle, but

he didn’t see anything unusual.

“Who gave this to me?” Jiang Chen couldn’t remember off the top of his head. He’d received several dozen letters and casually put away all of them without keeping track of which one was whose. Most of the letters were already ashes, so it was even more difficult to tell now, unless he opened it.

When he tore it open, it was actually Pillfire City’s emblem that appeared, a divine pillfire alternating blue and red, giving off a striking visual impact. “It’s from Pillfire City?” There weren’t too many words written on this missive, merely a few lines telling Jiang Chen that, as long as he was willing to leave Sacred Peafowl Mountain and seek refuge with Pillfire City, Pillfire City would forget about today’s matter, and would bestow him with countless riches, as well as the highest treatment for a pill king in Pillfire City. If he failed to appreciate this kind gesture, he was bound to meet with a tragic end someday soon…

The tone between the first and last parts of this letter was quite at odds with each other. There didn’t seem to be any sincerity to their offer, while the threat was painted in quite vivid details. It was very difficult not to be provoked. With a laugh, Jiang Chen was about to crumple this letter and destroy it when his eyes suddenly flashed. With a yelp of surprise, he carefully put this letter in front of him and looked at it for a long while. The closer he examined it, the more his brow creased. By the time he was done, his expression was as dark as an approaching thunderstorm.

Bam!

Jiang Chen slammed a fist into the wall beside him, gaze fixed into the distance as he ground out from between clenched teeth, “How ruthless of you, Pillfire City! You sound like you want to rope me in, but in fact, you want to bury me six feet under!” He looked at this letter and the unique grain of its paper. There didn’t seem to be anything unusual about this letter at first glance. Only, his sight was exceptionally keen. He could see that the paper had a

particular texture to it. The grain actually contained a lethal poison.

Definitely a lethal poison! Jiang Chen had been a pill grandmaster renowned throughout the entire heavens in his former life. The letter's paper was made from a certain type of snake skin. It was one of the most poisonous things in the world. Were it not for Jiang Chen's vast knowledge, he would never have spotted it. In particular, this snake skin would exude ten times the toxicity when burned or encountered heat. It would drift in the air, poisoning a man's body through his lungs, or failing that, even through the pores of the skin.

"Pillfire City!" Jiang Chen put down this letter, a strong murderous aura flashing in his eyes. He never imagined Pillfire City would be so sinister. This secret letter was clearly a scheme against him. The so-called offer was pure hogwash. The stern threatening words in the latter part were designed to anger him. Furthermore, his enemies had clearly planned this in great detail. They'd wanted to anger him, to provoke his wrath, so that he would act in fury.

If Jiang Chen had crumpled the paper in his hands and used pill fire to destroy this letter, then the toxicity from the snake skin would have been ten times more violent. Even a powerhouse at the peak of the emperor realm would probably suffer from such a ferocious poison. Even a great emperor might suffer quite a bit if they'd entirely let their guard down.

"Pillfire City, you really don't show any mercy when clamping down on your opponents. It looks like Pillfire City's position as leader of the pill world has been maintained thanks to these shameless methods!" Jiang Chen seethed with anger. It had merely been a single challenge for the Longevity Pill, but now Pillfire City wanted to directly send him to the afterlife. This instantly ignited the flames of Jiang Chen's wrath!

Chapter 847: Momentous News

It had to be said that Pillfire City's ruthlessness knew no bounds; they would stop at nothing when attacking outsiders. Furthermore, there was no way to prove this crime once the item had been destroyed.

"Good, good, very good!" Jiang Chen ground his teeth. "It seems I need to add one more name—Pillfire City's—to my blacklist."

Jiang Chen was never one to be trampled on. "Since you want to kill me, then you should be mentally prepared for the possibility of you being killed instead!" He was absolutely enraged. Victory and defeat were common in pill competitions, but very few would actually resort to immediate murder after being defeated.

"Pillfire City's vicious move is probably not only due to the disgrace of this loss, but also so that they can preserve their domination in the field of pills. They won't tolerate even the slightest threat. So it turns out that Pillfire City's philosophy as a hegemon is just that simple and cruel." Jiang Chen was greatly dissatisfied. He wouldn't be too surprised if such a matter happened to someone else, but once threatened, he wasn't one to be trifled with. He had already made Pillfire City a target of his vengeance despite its colossal status. It wasn't in Jiang Chen's nature to let an attack go unanswered.

He would remember this grudge well, but was in no rush to return this favor. It'd be inviting trouble for himself if he retaliated without consideration. Pillfire City's strength was at least on par with that of Veluriyam Capital, or maybe even greater. He had to be cautious if he wanted to seek revenge against such a behemoth. It wouldn't do to fail in the counterattack and suffer a loss instead.

"It was a great stroke of fortune that I'd refined the golden cicada's bloodline and gained immunity to all poison before all

this. Otherwise, I might've been poisoned even without burning the letter with pillfire. Pillfire City, you think so highly of me, eh? So highly that you would resort to such treacherous methods!" Jiang Chen proceeded to dispose of the secret letter with due caution.

He wasn't afraid of the poison in the snake skin at all, but that likely wasn't the case for other people. Thus he had to meticulously eliminate all traces of the poison. Afterwards, he destroyed the remainder of the secret letters. He had little interest in them.

His mood had been utterly ruined by Pillfire City. With a great deal of effort, he managed to calm himself before emerging from the secret chamber and heading over to the Ling father and daughter duo's residential area. The father and daughter duo were finally able to sleep soundly at night and enjoy some peaceful days at Taiyuan Tower.. Ling Su had always been on edge as they had wandered the outside world and could be said to have suffered all kinds of torment. He was truly glad now that they had found a safe haven.

He wasn't actually afraid of the hardship, but he couldn't bear to see his daughter suffer. This was especially true for this naive and innocent younger daughter of his, who knew so little of the ways of the world. He was relatively unworried about his wandering elder daughter, Ling Bi'er, despite the lack of communication between them. After all, she possessed outstanding talent, wisdom, and knowledge regarding the ways of the world. Even if she was still wandering outside, Ling Su was confident she'd be able to overcome any and all hardships. On the contrary, he was much more worried about the younger daughter he always kept nearby. The lass was somewhat naive, insensitive, and was too expressive of her likes and dislikes. She had a tendency to stand up for the oppressed despite her mediocre talents which, needless to say, would get her into trouble from time to time.

Ling Su had to maintain constant vigilance along the way out of fear that Ling Hui'er would cause trouble. He could only find relief after they had arrived at Veluriyam Capital and entered Taiyuan Tower. After seeing the status of both Taiyuan Lodge and Jiang Chen, Ling Su knew that the Eternal Celestial Capital wouldn't dare act wantonly even if they came to Veluriyam Capital. He also noticed that the several surviving disciples from the Regal Pill Palace had also walked out from the shadow of their sect's destruction. They were all quite spirited since they now had a common goal to reestablish the sect. Their mental attitudes and outlook had been completely renewed.

Ling Su couldn't help but gasp in amazement at Shen Trifire's progress, adding to his recognition and admiration towards Jiang Chen. He was now completely convinced. He also suspected that Ling Hui'er's had fallen for this youth who had saved her life. Ling Su was previously concerned that this man would take advantage of the two sisters' feelings of gratitude and deceive them.

Recalling that, Ling Su felt quite embarrassed about his worries. It wasn't that Jiang Chen had deceived the two lasses, but rather, his daughters had been the ones to fall in love with him instead. In fact, Jiang Chen already had a beautiful lady in his company and didn't exhibit any special feelings even towards her. The thought of this made Ling Su slightly depressed. But he knew that as a father, he could do little to help in the matters that ensued between youngsters. He knew, at least, that Jiang Chen was an honest man and would never do anything inappropriate to his daughters.

Looking at the mysterious Miss Huang'er beside Jiang Chen, he found that her temperament, manners, and self-restraint all shone with the qualities of a well-raised lady. She had treated Ling Su with due courtesy and showed not the slightest bit of indifference just because he was the father of a love rival. Even towards Ling Hui'er, she was still just as friendly as a next-door neighbor.

The simple-minded Hui'er had also begun addressing her intimately as elder sister after only a few days of interaction. Ling Su felt that the situation was both funny and rueful. He knew both his daughters were admittedly outstanding, but neither of them had any advantage when compared to this Miss Huang'er. If one were to discuss appearances, even the well known beauty Ling Bi'er was somewhat inferior before Huang'er.

In terms of temperament, Miss Huang'er exuded the traits befitting a lady of noble heritage, while his child exemplified that of a beautiful daughter from a humble family. The two were of a completely different nature. When it came to social interaction, one of his daughters was cold as ice while the other innocent and naive. It could only be said that his daughters had their own characteristics, but held no obvious advantage over Miss Huang'er's poised and dignified manner.

Most importantly, it was quite obvious that the relationship between Jiang Chen and Huang'er was that of lovers. Although they weren't yet betrothed, it was easy to see the affinity they had for each other. Thus, whenever he saw his daughter Ling Hui'er getting along so well with Huang'er, Ling Su was at a loss for whether he should be happy about his daughter's broad-mindedness or if he should grieve for her naivety.

……

Jiang Chen was completely unaware of Ling Su's concerns, nor did he have the time to analyze them in detail. He greeted Ling Su briefly and inquired after the latter's well-being. Jiang Chen also told him that he should recuperate in peace at Taiyuan Tower and that he could choose to do some work for the Tower in the future if he so wished. In any case, the Taiyuan Tower was now easily capable of supporting idle people.

Ling Su couldn't help but like this Jiang Chen after seeing his generosity. He had once thought the young geniuses of Regal Pill Palace were quite talented. But now, none of them felt up to par

when compared to Jiang Chen. Shen Trifire suddenly walked in while they were talking, “Senior brother, Pill King Lu Feng has arrived and claims he needs to see you urgently for an important matter.”

Pill King Lu Feng had left in high spirits after receiving a large number of Deviant Pill Faction recipes from Jiang Chen last time and hadn’t shown any signs of activity since. How did the mad old man find the time to visit him? Those Deviant Pill Faction recipes were quite sufficient enough for him to study for several years. Not much time had passed since then. Jiang Chen actually quite admired the old man. He had overheard the old man secretly cursing and spitting at the Majestic Clan the day of Taiyuan Lodge’s reopening. He knew that this old geezer had been following him with genuine sincerity. Jiang Chen naturally had to reciprocate since the latter was so devoted.

“Master, something big! Something big has come up!” The excited Pill King Lu Feng was positively beaming when he saw Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen had long since grown accustomed to his crazed manner, “What seems to be the matter? Don’t tell me you want more pill recipes?”

Pill King Lu Feng laughed loudly, “Master, those pill recipes are enough to keep me occupied for three years at least. I don’t need anymore for the time being. I shan’t bite off more than I can chew. This time, I came to report something really important.”

“What’s this important matter? Pray tell,” Jiang Chen smiled. “There’ll be no more recipes for you in the next ten years if I find you raising a false alarm.”

Pill King Lu Feng smiled smugly, “Is there a reward if the information is useful?”

“What kind of reward do you want?”

Pill King Lu Feng laughed mischievously, “I only want master to designate me as a successor of Deviant Pill Faction and publicly announce that I’m your disciple.”

The old man’s demands had always been quite odd. He’d taken such a young pill king as master despite his advanced age. Normally people wouldn’t want such a thing to be known and would choose to stay low-key while reaping the benefits. But this old geezer almost seemed afraid that everyone wouldn’t know that he had taken Jiang Chen as his master, insisting that they announce this matter to the world. This vexed Jiang Chen quite a bit.

“Tell me the news first. What’s it about?” Jiang Chen didn’t want to be pestered endlessly.

“I just received news regarding the Requiem Wood,” Pill King Lu Feng approached mysteriously and whispered with all seriousness.

“What?!” Jiang Chen jumped up in surprise, “From where did you get this news? Why haven’t I heard of it?”

Elder Shun had previously left an enormous reward for any news regarding the Requiem Wood. This reward would activate automatically as long as any relevant clue was found. Jiang Chen had also mentioned this to the Coiling Dragon clan lord before. The clan lord would have notified Jiang Chen immediately if this reward had been activated and news of the Requiem Wood appeared.

“It wouldn’t be valuable news if everyone knows of it. I learned of this news by accident, and it’s still a secret even now.” Pill King Lu Feng smiled bizarrely.

“Oh?” Jiang Chen was fully intrigued by now. If the Veluriyam intelligence networks had learned of this, Elder Shun’s reward would’ve been activated, and the situation would’ve become complicated with the intervention of multiple factions. Who knew when the elder would return to the Upper Eight Regions? If the

elder had indeed gone back to Myriad Abyss Island and was preoccupied there, then he might not return. Wouldn't the reward be an empty promise in that case? Then the Requiem Wood might not fall into Jiang Chen's hands, as the latter had no ability to offer up Elder Shun's reward.

Chapter 848: A Hint of the Requiem Wood

Elder Shun left the sixteen kingdom alliance a few years ago, entrusting Huang'er to Jiang Chen's care. Jiang Chen deduced that the elder had first travelled to the Regal Pill Palace, then come all the way to Veluriyam Capital, and finally travelled the length and breadth of the Upper Eight Regions. He'd also left behind an incredibly high bounty. The bounty offered a great emperor's relic for the Requeim Wood. At the time, this bounty had sent waves throughout the entire Upper Eight Regions.

If it hadn't been for Pill King Lu Feng back then, Jiang Chen wouldn't have learned that Elder Shun had once visited the Upper Eight Regions and Veluriyam Capital before. A bounty with a great emperor's relic as reward was enough to stir the interest of everyone in the human domain. Jiang Chen thought carefully and seriously for a moment, "Ole Lu, this isn't something to joke about."

Seeing how serious his master was, Pill King Lu Feng immediately lost his irreverent attitude and answered in a rare, serious tone, "I can't guarantee this matter is one hundred percent true, master. But I do think that the source of this news is likely reliable."

"Explain it to me carefully." Jiang Chen didn't dare take this matter lightly. The Requiem Wood was tied to Huang'er's life, so naturally Jiang Chen was very concerned about it.

"A wandering cultivator came to my store yesterday. You could say that he has made quite the name for himself in the community of wandering cultivators in Veluriyam Capital for the past few years. He and I have always gotten along well, and he often does business with me too…" Pill King Lu Feng responded. The pill king didn't leave Jiang Chen hanging. He relayed everything he knew in full detail. "When he returned this time, he had an extremely bizarre wound. He sought me out immediately and even dragged

me out of seclusion, asking for my help to treat his wounds. However, his wound is so strange that even I, a highly skilled first rate physician, could do nothing about it. He wasn't willing to tell me the truth at first when I asked him how he got the wound, but when he felt that he was likely to leave the world, he struggled to make arrangements for after his death. He asked me to take care of his young son. The price he's willing to pay for my aid is a piece of intel regarding the Requiem Wood. For now, only a few wandering cultivators know about this…"

"Is he dead already?" Jiang Chen was moved when he asked this.

"Not just yet, but almost. If I am not mistaken, he only has less than three days left to live. He probably knows that no one in Veluriyam Capital can treat his wound, which is why he didn't try to seek out other reputable physicians to save him. He plans to just lie at my place and wait for his death to find him."

Jiang Chen hastily said, "Take me so I can take a look."

Pill King Lu Feng looked surprised, "Master, you wish to give it a try yourself?"

"I wish to know if his claims about the Requiem Wood is true or false. If it is a lie, then this person doesn't deserve to be saved."

"A lie? Why would he lie to me?" Pill King Lu Feng shook his head. "We've known each other for tens of years, so I know how he is. He is a somewhat arrogant man, but he is not someone who speaks off-the-cuff."

"What if he told you a white lie so that you'll take care of his young son?" It wasn't that Jiang Chen thought that this wandering cultivator was a bad person, but it was better to seek confirmation since it was a matter of great importance.

Naturally, Pill King Lu Feng supported Jiang Chen. He and that wandering cultivator were good friends with each other, so he didn't want to give up on his friend's life if there was even a sliver

of hope of saving it. “What are we waiting for then, master? Let’s head to my place right now. I feel that he’s already at the end of his rope. Every minute we delay means that he’s a step closer towards death.”

Jiang Chen didn’t dilly dally. After briefly informing Taiyuan Tower’s people and letting Huang’er know, he set out with Pill King Lu Feng immediately. No progress regarding the Requiem Wood had been made thus far, so naturally Jiang Chen wasn’t going to tell Huang’er about this new discovery. If this turned out to be false news, then he would only be disappointing her.

As a ninth rank pill king, Pill King Lu Feng was a man of high status even though he had no powerful patrons in Veluriyam Capital. His home was located at a very prominent area in the Farmer God Market.

“Master, this is the first time you’ve come to my place,” Pill King Lu Feng looked very delighted.

Jiang Chen waved his hands, “Just in case, don’t let your subordinates know too much.”

Pill King Lu Feng chuckled, “Don’t worry, master. Of course I’ll make sure they stay out of the way while you’re here. We can’t have them spoil your visit, can we? They are all your diehard fans now, so it will be a problem if they try to keep you here upon learning of your arrival.”

Pill King Lu Feng might look the way he did, but even he didn’t work without obeying a set of guidelines. At the very least, he managed to keep everything in his pill king residence neat and tidy. Jiang Chen followed the pill king inside and went straight for the private rooms.

The wandering cultivator was staying at a room at the backyard. He looked a little startled when he saw Pill King Lu Feng leading a young pill king into his temporary lodgings. He was writing a letter and put it away upon seeing an unfamiliar face. He looked at

Pill King Lu Feng, “Brother Lu, who is this? Is he your new disciple or something? He sure looks like a talented person.”

Pill King Lu Feng’s face turned green when he heard this, “Ole He, you musn’t say such careless things! This person here is my master.”

This wander cultivator is called He Hongshu. Although his relationship with Pill King Lu Feng didn’t run so deep that they would risk their lives for each other, it was still a pretty strong relationship. He Hongshu looked blankly at Pill King Lu Feng when he saw his expression, “Your master?” It was obvious that he didn’t believe this claim, at least not at the moment.

“That’s right, he’s my master,” Pill King Lu Feng nodded affirmatively and without any hesitation, “Hear me out, Ole He. If there’s anyone left in Veluriyam Capital who can save your life, then that would be my master.”

He Hongshu’s complexion was ashen and ugly. Rather than looking overjoyed at Pill King Lu Feng’s claims, he smiled wryly. “Ole Lu, I’m a dying man, so can you not make a joke like this? I’m writing my will right now, and I’ll give an account of everything I have. Who would have thought that I, Ole He, a wandering cultivator who has moved unhindered throughout the human domain would be met with such a terrible death? In the end, you are the only person I can entrust my son to.”

Pill King Lu Feng waved his hands impatiently, “Hold your horses, will you! Now that my master has arrived, allow him to inspect your condition before you say such things. You might even find yourself unable to die in his presence even if you want to.”

Seeing that Pill King Lu Feng bring up his ‘master’ again and again, He Hongshu couldn’t help but cast Jiang Chen a few extra glances. He noticed that that young pill king was smiling and showing no indications that he was going to deny Pill King Lu Feng’s claims. His expression was also completely free of any

reverence or restraint. He really didn't look like Pill King Lu Feng's junior.

Can this young man really be Pill King Lu Feng's master? Does he look as young as he was because he's skilled in the art of maintaining his looks? But He Hongshu had met countless people in his life. He couldn't shake the feeling that this young pill king really was as young as he looked. A moment later, he asked hesitatingly, "You really aren't making a joke at my expense, are you, Ole Lu?"

Pill King Lu Feng cried out, "Where would I find the mood to make a joke at your expense when you're about to die?! You and I may not be brothers on a battlefield, but we have known each other for more than ten years. Out of so all the people I've seen in Veluriyam Capital, you are one of the few who actually deserve my attention. I'll be frank with you, if you were anyone else I would not have purposely invited my master over and trouble him like this. You may yet survive this predicament now that you have met my master."

"H-he really is your master?" He Hongshu was finally starting to believe Pill King Lu Feng's claims a bit after hearing this emphasis over and over again.

Pill King Lu Feng might have a comical temperament that made him a stubborn old man at times, but he wouldn't lie about something that he had stressed repeatedly to be true. "Of course! Do you really think that taking masters is a joking matter?" Pill King Lu Feng responded impatiently.

"I er... may I ask your master... master's name then?" He Hongshu immediately felt less confident than before. He was equals with Pill King Lu Feng, so technically speaking he should treat Ole Lu's master as his senior.

"Ole He, you may not have heard of the recent big news in Veluriyam Capital since you're traveling outside all the time. You

know about Pillfire City, right?”

“Pillfire City and Veluriyam Capital are the northern and southern powers that reign supreme in the Upper Eight Regions. Of course I’ve heard about them,” He Hongshu answered carefully.

“Then you probably know about the challenge Pillfire City issued to Veluriyam Capital as well, right?”

He Hongshu thought for a moment and nodded, “I’ve just returned, but I did hear of this when I passed through the streets. It actually sounds like Veluriyam Capital had the upper hand this time, am I right?”

“What do you mean upper hand? Complete and utter domination are the words you’re looking for! We destroyed Pillfire City so thoroughly that they had to run home with their tail between their legs without even a loincloth to cover their shame!” Pill King Lu Feng’s tone was exaggerated, and his spittle was splattering all over He Hongshu’s face. The old man was even dancing for joy with an absolutely thrilled expression on his face.

He Hongshu knew how Pill King Lu Feng was, so he simply wiped away the spit on his face wryly and didn’t try to interrupt his friend’s fun. “In that case, do you know what kind of character this Pill King Ji Lang of Pillfire City is, Ole He?”

“I often visit Pillfire City territory, so I do know about him. Pill King Ji Lang is Pillfire City’s half-step pill emperor, and his talent is said to be second only to Emperor Pillzenith. Emperor Pillzenith even once proclaimed that Pill King Ji Lang’s pill dao talent exceeds his, and that the reason the pill king hasn’t exceeded him yet is because the latter is still too young and has yet to achieve his full potential. However, he is certain to exceed Emperor Pillzenith one day. Although it is likely that Emperor Pillzenith is creating some momentum for Pill King Ji Lang, it is true that Pill King Ji Lang is the nominal successor of Pillfire City. He’s more important than many other important elders.” He Hongshu lived an

adventurous life and often travelled to a lot of places. That was why he knew the gossip happening all over the human domain very well.

“In that case, do you know how badly this Pill King Ji Lang lost to us at Sacred Peafowl Mountain?” Pill King Lu Feng asked while chuckling.

“I had heard some, but there are too many details and too many versions of the story. I’m not sure which one’s the one to listen to,” He Hongshu answered honestly.

“Allow me to tell you the real version then. Pill King Ji Lang was trounced by my master himself. My master crushed him so hard that Pillfire City had to capitulate before him before they ran back to their mamas while covered in dirt!” Pill King Lu Feng looked so pleased it was as if he was the one who defeated Pill King Ji Lang.

Realization flashed through He Hongshu’s mind, and the wandering cultivator stared at Jiang Chen and exclaimed in astonishment, “You… you are Pill King Zhen?” The deaf aside, who in Veluriyam Capital hasn’t heard of Pill King Zhen? His legendary feats were the talk of the town wherever one goes. The pill battle of Sacred Peafowl Mountain was a battle that had turned the three words ‘Pill King Zhen’ into a new legend, achievement and popular figure in Veluriyam Capital.

Chapter 849: A Leaf From the Requiem Tree

It hadn't been long since He Hongshu returned to Veluriyam Capital, but he wasn't deaf. How could he be ignorant of all the rumors about Pill King Zhen? Only, he'd never imagined that this pill master who was so famous in the Capital and throughout the human territories would actually turn out to be Pill King Lu Feng's master! This relationship was completely beyond belief.He Hongshu actually had a little trouble wrapping his head around it. He looked at Jiang Chen, then at Lu Feng. This pair actually did look like master and disciple, were their roles reversed. However, to have the young man as the master and the one with white hair and white beard as the student instead was rather head-scratching.

Lu Feng didn't think of it as a shameful matter. It was a source of great honor for him. "Hehe, Ole He, normally I wouldn't even tell anyone. I tell you because of our relationship. How about it, is my master qualified enough to treat you? If you really don't want to, then forget about it."

He Hongshu's face turned green before words spilled from his mouth in a torrent, "I'm willing, I'm willing! To have someone as famous as Pill Master Zhen treat me is nothing less than the accumulation of good karma from several lifetimes!" He indeed had a way with words, as expected of a seasoned traveller of the jianghu.

Jiang Chen hadn't uttered a word yet, but he'd been paying close attention to this He Hongshu, silently examining him. He suddenly asked, "Sir, do you perhaps feel as if countless ants are crawling through your veins? Do you feel fidgety all over, like you'd rather be dead than alive?"

He Hongshu froze. He looked at Lu Feng, thinking that Lu Feng had already mentioned his condition. However, shock was written all over Lu Feng's face. He immediately looked at Jiang Chen reverentially. "Master, you can see what's wrong with him with

just a few glances?”

He Hongshu was shocked when he heard Lu Feng’s exclamation. Judging from his tone, it seemed Ole Lu hadn’t told his symptoms to Pill King Zhen? If so, being able to discern his problems with a simple glance, it seems this Pill King Zhen’s reputation was truly well deserved.

“It’s easy. Look at the surface of his skin, you can see that his veins seem to be throbbing. In turn, that causes all the hair in his pores to stand erect. An abnormal condition like that wouldn’t be too surprising if it only happened now and then. But this condition persisted from the moment I came inside, so it was easy to pick out.”

He Hongshu and Lu Feng shared a look, a trace of admiration flashing through their eyes. Lu Feng spoke, his voice full of respect, “Master, I’d always thought that you were only lucky enough to have met a good teacher who taught you some theory. Now I realize how short-sighted I’ve been. Even with a good teacher, obtaining so much ability is thanks to your unsurpassed innate talent. Otherwise, why would your teacher take a fancy to you and teach you so many formidable techniques, when they’d never taught anybody else? Your keen insight and your ability to get things done, that’s definitely your own talent, and not something a master can teach.”

It wasn’t flattery, just an expression of the deep admiration that rose from the bottom of his heart. Jiang Chen gave a slight nod and didn’t contradict him, instead looking at He Hongshu. “Sir, I presume you won’t mind if I take your pulse?”

He Hongshu hurried to say, “I would be honored.”

Without further ado, Jiang Chen took the patient’s wrist and inspected him in great detail. He spent a long time taking his pulse, a full half-hour. Only after a long time did he release He Hongshu’s wrist with a shallow nod.

He Hongshu had long been resigned to his death. He'd found serenity after making peace with the idea. Though his eyes were inquisitive, he didn't lose his composure. Unlike him, Lu Feng looked restless and impatient. He sidled up to the duo anxiously and asked, "Master, how is it, is there still hope for Ole He?"

Jiang Chen heaved a soft sigh. "Ole He, is it? Would it be rude to call you so?"

"It's not rude at all, it's not rude at all. Pill King Zhen, calling me Ole He would be my honor," He Hongshu hurriedly replied.

"I only want to to ask you one question. Where on earth have you gone to?" Jiang Chen frowned. "There's not only a demonic yin deep within you, but also parasites. You don't have a single affliction, but two of them."

"What? Two of them?" Lu Feng was also startled. He'd only found one. Jiang Chen was as composed as ever, his eyes flashing with an authoritative aura that brooked no question. Lu Feng's smile was a little awkward. "If master says there are two afflictions, then there must be two of them. My judgment can't compare to yours, master."

Lu Feng wasn't being falsely modest in this regard.

He Hongshu sighed, "I travelled very far this time. I went southeast, through the Myriad Domain, all the way into the desolate wildlands."

Lu Feng was taken aback. "You went into the wildlands?"

He Hongshu nodded with a wry grin. "I did."

"Then what about what you said yesterday about going to some hidden realm? Were you lying to me?"

He Hongshu looked ashamed. "Ole Lu, I did lie to you. Only, I didn't lie to harm you, but to save you."

"Bullshit, what kind of monkey logic is that?!" Lu Feng flew into

a rage.

He Hongshu rushed to explain, “Ole Lu, old friend, I’m already at death’s door, so why would I try to cheat you? I just wanted you to look after my youngest son in my stead, so I didn’t want you to face danger. That’s why I told you about some fake place. Otherwise, maybe you would have been tempted by a treasure like the Requiem Tree. But that place is definitely somewhere no one can return alive from!” He Hongshu’s face was full of terror at the mention of that place, as though he were recalling some terrifying memory. His eyes fairly brimmed with dread.

Lu Feng stared at He Hongshu for a long while before finally nodding. “You really didn’t deceive me on purpose?”

“I lied to you, but I absolutely didn’t do it out of ill intent. If I lie about this, may my whole family die a wretched death!” He Hongshu was becoming a little anxious.

Jiang Chen didn’t breathe a word, instead watching them coldly. Whether or not this He Hongshu had really come across the Requiem Tree was a matter of great importance. If he hadn’t come across the Requiem Tree and mentioned it on purpose in order to survive, then his character would be questionable. He wouldn’t be worth saving.

Lu Feng seemed to guess Jiang Chen’s thoughts and asked again, “Then what you said about the Requiem Tree, is it true or false? Don’t lie this time.”

“It’s real. Only, I can’t be sure whether it’s a genuine Requiem Tree or not. But with my experience, my judgement tells me it should be the Requiem Tree.” His expression seemed a little lost in memories. “The situation was very dire back then, so I only caught a glimpse of it and didn’t manage to examine it in detail. Out of the wandering cultivators who’d gone with me, eight had perished for no reason. The rest all ran madly away. I don’t know how many made it out in the end. Oh, that reminds me.” He Hongshu

suddenly slapped his head and took out something. “Back then, I took this leaf in passing from the tree. I don’t know if it’s the Requiem Tree. Ole Lu, see for yourself.”

Lu Feng roared in anger, “You hid that from me as well?”

He Hongshu said, a little embarrassed, “I was afraid that you wouldn’t be able to sleep after seeing the Requiem Tree. I didn’t want you to lose your appetite after becoming obsessed with it. That’s why I didn’t give it to you. If something happened to you, then what about my son?”

He Hongshu seemed to understand Lu Feng very well. He knew that Lu Feng was impulsive, and wouldn’t be able to sleep if he came across something like that. If he’d told Ole Lu about the tree, Lu Feng would have searched high and low for it. Lu Feng was about to take the leaf when Jiang Chen slapped his hand away, berating him, “Have you lived all these years in vain? Haven’t you wisened up at all?”

Lu Feng blinked, then vaguely understood something. He looked at Jiang Chen, flabbergasted, and stammered, “Master, could there be a problem with this leaf?”

He Hongshu was also startled. “It can’t be, can it? I took this leaf from the tree, is there a problem with it?”Jiang Chen couldn’t reach an immediate conclusion on whether the leaf was part of the problem. However, He Hongshu had escaped from such a dangerous place. Jiang Chen would be rather skeptical if anyone claimed that there was nothing wrong with the leaf. He gestured with his chin. “Ole Lu, get a jade plate to hold the leaf first.”

Jiang Chen’s mind was surging like a stormy sea. Through the appraisal of his God’s Eye and Evil Golden Eye, this leaf seemed no different than a leaf from the Requiem Tree. In other words, there was a ninety percent chance this leaf had truly come from the Requiem Tree. To begin with, it was an extremely peculiar tree, with leaves shaped in a strange way. The veins on the leaves were

filled with a mysterious aura, resembling the characters inscribed on a talisman.

Such a shape was a distinctive characteristic of the Requiem Tree. It was impossible for ordinary plants to obtain such an appearance. However, although the Requiem Tree's leaves shared the same effect as the Requiem Tree, they simply couldn't replace the tree itself. Jiang Chen wanted to obtain the Requiem Tree itself. A simple leaf wouldn't cut it.

After putting the leaf on the jade tray, Jiang Chen examined it for a long time before finally confirming that it indeed came from the Requiem Tree. Happiness welled up in his chest. He'd searched everywhere in vain, but he accidentally obtained news of the tree today. And from the looks of it, the news didn't seem fake.

The next question now was how to deal with this Ole He. He had to give Ole He a big enough an enticement if he wanted to know the whereabouts of the tree. And for the present, the greatest temptation was his life.

However, Ole He's condition wasn't so easy to handle. Jiang Chen had some confidence in his success, but it was a very thorny issue. And, the most important thing was to make sure Ole He wouldn't randomly run his mouth after being cured. Otherwise, as soon as the news of the Requiem Tree spread, countless powerhouses would certainly rush there no matter the danger, even if they had to break open their own skulls. This issue also increased the difficulty for Jiang Chen.

A great emperor's relic was all one needed to purchase this kind of information, and it would cause a frenzy if it did leak. For that reason, Jiang Chen needed to save He Hongshu, and also seal his mouth. Seeing Jiang Chen remain silent, He Hongshu carefully asked, "Pill King Zhen, is there hope for me?"

Lu Feng also looked at Jiang Chen. "Master, if possible, please save him at all costs. I don't even have a wife or children myself,

do you think I'm in the mood to take care of his child? I'm not a nanny."

Jiang Chen thought for a moment before nodding. "Your issue is very tricky, I don't have complete confidence either. That said, I have a few conditions if you want me to save you." He didn't want to beat around the bush when it came to the Requiem Tree.

Chapter 850: Terrifying Poisonous Parasites

Life was the only thing precious to a person nearing death. Everything else was as transient as the fleeting clouds. He Hongshu didn't even frown after seeing Jiang Chen preparing to state his conditions. "Pill King Zhen, please state your terms. No matter what they are, I won't hesitate to fulfill them as long as they're within my power."

Ole He was willing to part with anything other than the lives of him and his son at the moment. He'd realized on death's door that only life was the most valuable possession and that all forms of material wealth were expendable.

"I don't want any payment from you. I only want a map, a detailed overview, and a promise." Jiang Chen replied in all seriousness.

He Hongshu was startled. "Pill King Zhen, are you planning to search for the Requiem Tree?"

Jiang Chen didn't deny this and nodded softly. He Hongshu spoke with great concern, "Pill King Zhen, Ole He has absolutely no doubts regarding your pill dao talent, but I suggest you stay away from that place. The Requiem Wood is a valuable item, no doubt, but that place is simply too eerie in far too many aspects. It's hell on earth. Any living being that goes in will find it difficult to escape with his life."

"Didn't you escape just fine?" Pill King Lu Feng suddenly cut in.

"I was able to walk out alive but I currently have one foot in the grave, as you can see."

"Nonsense! With my master here, you'll be hard pressed to die even if you wanted to."

He Hongshu repeated with a pleading look in his eyes, "Pill King Zhen, I'm not simply saying this because you're about to save my

life—I'm saying this from the bottom of my heart. That place is simply too dangerous, an absolute nightmare for human cultivators."

Jiang Chen smiled faintly, "Ole He, I understand your good intentions. But my conditions for saving you remain unchanged. Do consider them." He didn't insist on this matter, but neither did he want to go to great lengths to persuade He Hongshu.

He Hongshu sighed helplessly after seeing Jiang Chen's stance, "Pill King Zhen, you're a person of great skill and courage. You're also Ole Lu's master by right. I fear I'd be harming you by giving you this map."

"You'll have harmed yourself if you don't give it to me," Jiang Chen smiled indifferently. "Since I have a method to treat you, I naturally have methods of overcoming the dangers you speak of. The person dearest to me will die without this Requiem Wood. Ole He, what would you do in my stead?"

He Hongshu was stupefied. Indeed. Would he go there if his own son was in mortal danger and required the Requiem Wood for survival? He knew he would still go without hesitation despite being aware that it was the place of nightmares.

He Hongshu immediately nodded at this point, realizing that there was no way to dissuade the other party, "Pill King Zhen, I'll give you a map and a detailed written record of my experiences. But, please do heed my words. That place is far too terrifying. If Pill King Zhen insists on going, I suggest you bring some helpers and venture there only after sufficient preparation."

Jiang Chen nodded, "I'll be sure to make the necessary arrangements."

"Very well. I assume that the promise you spoke of is for me to keep quiet about the Requiem Wood. You can rest assured regarding this aspect. I swear to the heavens and earth that, apart from the three of us, Ole He won't reveal the location of the

Requiem Wood to anyone, not even to my son. May the heavens strike me down should I violate this oath."

Swearing a heavenly oath was the most efficient method. Pill King Lu Feng glanced anxiously at Jiang Chen after witnessing Ole He's pledge, obviously looking forward to Jiang Chen displaying his abilities.

"Ole Lu, bring me brush and paper. I'll list a few spirit herbs. You go and prepare them with haste. I'll also need a spacious location to lay down a formation. This treatment procedure isn't one to be trifled with. Any mishaps will lead to endless trouble."

"Endless troubles?" Pill King Lu Feng appeared puzzled. "Why is that?"

Jiang Chen replied solemnly, "Incorporeal poisonous parasites crawl through Ole He's blood vessels. An epidemic would ensue if we let them scatter after they break out of his body."

"Poisonous parasites?" Pill King Lu Feng's facial muscles twitched hard. "Such a thing really exists?"

"These things aren't normal parasites either. When removed from their host, the normal ones die after losing their breeding grounds. But these formless parasites grow within blood and are virtually invisible to the naked eye. They're smaller than a speck of dust while their numbers are nearly countless. The bugs will continue to rapidly increase in number once their growth cycle reaches maturity as one gives birth to ten and ten to a hundred. The first parasite will continuously absorb the essence of its descendants and eventually become a queen parasite. Once such a parasite evolves, its replication abilities will increase by thousands of times. The outcome would be inconceivable at that time..."

Pill King Lu Feng and He Hongshu felt their hair stand on end after hearing this explanation. That terrifying?

"The most terrifying aspect of these bugs isn't their replication

rate, but rather, their ability to hide. It's quite difficult for a normal person to detect them growing in their blood. The victim might not even know it was the work of parasites even after all his essence had been sucked dry and his life extinguished. The growing bugs would then search for new hosts and the disaster would spread continuously." Even Jiang Chen would have no way to know of this, were it not for his experiences from his past life. He had seen old records of such parasite infestations during his past life, the symptoms of which were all clearly exhibited in He Hongshu's body.

Pill King Lu Feng felt his skin crawl with horror as he stammered, "Master, according to what you just said, wouldn't it be very difficult to control them once the bugs break out?"

"Indeed. There have been ancient records of human powers at their peak deteriorating into ghostly domains in a matter of months."

"And these parasites are the cause of all this?"

"Yes," Jiang Chen nodded. "The heavenly law is fair. Cultivators think themselves the rightful rulers of the world just because they can contend with the heavens and earth for life. They never realized that many stronger species exist amongst the numerous living beings of this world. Any one of them could potentially become a natural predator to the human race."

In fact, many planes weren't ruled by human cultivators. But he couldn't tell them such things at this point. Such information would likely be too terrifying for them. After all, the scope of the Divine Abyss Continent's knowledge simply stopped there. Speaking of the other planes would surely exceed the limits of their comprehension.

"These bugs... master, you do have methods to deal with them right?" Pill King Lu Feng's normally wacky behaviour had been replaced by a cautious demeanor.

Jiang Chen replied grimly, “The best method is to destroy them along with the host.”

At the mention of this, He Hongshu’s body twitched and his expression froze involuntarily. It never occurred to him that he had inadvertently invited such a potential calamity. He’d thought that death would be the end of it. But it appeared that the scourge would spread and harm many others, even after his death. So much so that, the whole of Veluriyam Capital might be thrown into disorder because of him. He Hongshu felt anxious at the thought of this. He was worried that Pill King Zhen would choose to euthanize him out of consideration of the greater good. Pill King Lu Feng also asked timidly, “Master, we... we’re not planning on being so ruthless, are we? With master’s brilliance and might, you surely have another way, right?”

“I asked you to prepare brush and paper. Why haven’t you gone yet?” Jiang Chen replied unhappily. “The more you delay, the greater the risks.”

Pill King Lu Feng’s expression changed after hearing this and he immediately tore off in search of writing utensils. Jiang Chen made a list with due haste after brush and paper were prepared, “Gather all of these items within two hours.”

Pill King Lu Feng replied hurriedly, “I’ll set out immediately.”

He also knew that this wasn’t a trifling matter. If he didn’t hurry, they might not be able to save Old He and would likely be forced to euthanize him instead. Pill King Lu Feng didn’t dare tarry as he thought of this. Firstly, he didn’t want He Hongshu to encounter a mishap and secondly, he would have to take in Ole He’s son should the latter pass away. From then on, he’d have to walk the inevitable path of a foster father. His scalp went numb when he thought of this, and he wanted nothing more than to have Ole He live tens of thousands of years like a turtle.

Ole He felt a large knot of emotions in his heart after he saw Pill

King Lu Feng depart. He stole glances at Jiang Chen through the corner of his eyes, hoping to glean some clues from his expression, but Jiang Chen's expression was wooden, as if he were pondering something. Suddenly, his eyes flicked towards Ole He and said indifferently, "Ole He, stop being so surreptitious. Just say what you want and ask what you will."

He Hongshu laughed ruefully, "Pill King Zhen, if I can't be saved then please put me down. I, Ole He, am not afraid of death. I just don't want to be cursed by everyone after my passing."

"I'll certainly follow this method if I truly fail to save you," Jiang Chen's tone was insipid. "Ole He, whether your words are sincere or just those of someone putting on an act, I'll have to take such an action should things reach that point. I hope you understand."

He Hongshu nodded, "I completely understand. Oh yes, I'll go draw the map and record my experiences now. I hope it'll be of some assistance to Pill King Zhen." He was quite humble at present.

Jiang Chen didn't stop him. He wasn't intentionally trying to frighten the old man. Although he was confident, he wasn't one hundred percent certain. He'd be forced to thoroughly destroy Ole He along with the parasites inside him if he couldn't control the situation. It was obvious that the matter had more or less affected Ole He. His expression was changing constantly as he drew the map. This period of waiting was clearly quite tormenting for him.

"Ole He, don't think too much. I don't dare ensure complete success but I'm still seven parts confident. I'm just telling you these things in advance to prepare you for the worst case scenario."

He Hongshu nodded repeatedly, "I understand, I understand."

Jiang Chen had no idea if he really did understand or not.

Pill King Lu Feng hurriedly returned with the prepared materials

before two hours had passed and proclaimed, “This time, it can be said that Ole Lu has gone all out! I cleared out the larger half of all the stores at the Farmer God Market. I didn’t bring shame to the mission!”

Chapter 851: An Easy Capture

Regardless of whatever means Pill King Lu Feng had used to obtain the items, he had readied everything that Jiang Chen had requested. Jiang Chen relaxed when he saw that the preparations were complete. He was much more confident with these items in tow. “I will set up a formation immediately once we find a spacious location. Good thing that Ole He’s return wasn’t delayed much. Otherwise, there’ll be bigger trouble after the parasites’ first incubation period passes.”

Jiang Chen could see that only three or four days remained until then. After the first period of growth, the parasites would mature, and the essence within the first host’s blood would be sucked completely dry. The parasites would then break out of that body to find a new host. Once the parasites broke out, there was no knowing how many people would be infected due to lack of preventative measures. The more hosts there were, the more parasites they would breed. From one person to ten, from ten to a hundred. It was no wonder that the bugs had caused even prominent dynasties to fall in a matter of months. A total collapse of order had ensued, and their lands became hell on earth. These were not exaggerated rumours; they had significant basis in truth. Thankfully, the first period had not yet passed.

Pill King Lu Feng’s residence had many spaces, with ample room to maneuver. Jiang Chen chose a secluded corner, then instructed the pill king to forbid anyone else from entering. He took out his formation flags and set up a meticulously designed formation. Around it, he constructed several more with spirit herbs.

“This kind of parasite is called the Wood Demon Parasite. According to legend, it was first refined and bred by the Wood Demons, a bloodline of the demon race. In ancient times, the Wood Demons relied on this parasite to conquer countless continents and planes. The most impressive characteristic of this

kind of parasite is its ability to remain concealed. It cannot be detected by human eyes, nor by one's consciousness. Once implanted, it does not make itself known until the outbreak and when that happens, it's generally very difficult to deal with.

"Ole Lu, be sure to pay close attention. You must memorize every detail of my actions," Jiang Chen warned in a serious tone as he set down the formation. "Ole He has apparently been struck by these Wood Demon Parasites for no rhyme or reason, and I suspect that the demons of myth are ready to make trouble once more. His Majesty Peafowl's worries are likely to come to fruition. The Wood Demons' methods are quite terrifying. It's good for you to learn this now, so you know how to deal with them in the future."

Pill King Lu Feng straightened up his irreverent attitude at once, sincerely listening to Jiang Chen's words. He was concentrating fully with the mindset of a disciple studying from his master.

"This Wood Demon Parasite has few natural enemies, but they do exist. Out of the five elements, there is a kind of fire called the Fire of Firstdawn which has the power to thoroughly eliminate it. It is only found during the initial moments of each sunrise, filled with the essence of night giving way to day. No matter if the parasite is a larva or a queen, it will die upon touching this fire. However, this Fire of Firstdawn is very difficult to find," Jiang Chen explained patiently. "Therefore, it is the natural enemy of the Wood Demon Parasite only in theory and doesn't have much widespread application."

"Amongst the elements, water is effective as well... a soak with Dragonwhisker Water will cleanse away Wood Demon Parasites, though its effect is a little diminished when compared to that of Fire of Firstdawn. Aside from those two elements I mentioned, there are spirit medicines that can suppress the Wood Demon Parasite as well. However, that's only suppression, and not extermination."

"Are these the spirit ingredients you mention?" Pill King Lu Feng

looked at the spirit ingredients he'd prepared.

Jiang Chen shook his head. "These ingredients must be refined and their essences extracted. Then they must be dried in the sun to turn them into a fragrant powder to be scattered around one's body. Wood Demon Parasites hate this powder most of all. What we need to do right now is to process the powder and inject it into Ole He's veins. This is a risky venture for him. The powder will have some side effects when it enters his bloodstream. However, it will force the parasites out."

"So that's it. Then we have to spread the powder out very evenly, too. There can be no gaps in its coverage. There will be big trouble if even one parasite is left behind."

Jiang Chen nodded, "You don't need to worry about that. I am capable enough to do this much, at least."

"Ole Lu, start processing these ingredients first. After you're done refining them, use your arts to dry them as quickly as possible into fragrant powder. Then, set down a line of defense to prevent the parasites from getting anywhere else after they're forced out. This line of defense will serve as a double safety precaution alongside the formation."

Pill King Lu Feng inclined his head as well, "Sounds good."

There was no time for delay. Pill King Lu Feng couldn't have all of his concerns addressed. He took out his caudron and began refining the powder. Thankfully, the process didn't require much technique. However, the required volume was uncommonly large in turn. Large batches of fragrant powder was produced after about an hour of work.

"Put down the defenses," Jiang Chen instructed.

As a disciple, Pill King Lu Feng didn't mind assisting at all. He did as his master commanded and handled everything properly. Jiang Chen spoke again, "Now, watch closely off to the side. Be ready to

act if things don't go well."

"Ready to act?" Pill King Lu Feng blinked, inquiry plain in his eyes.

"He means, be ready to kill me," He Hongshu said.

Pill King Lu Feng glanced back at Jiang Chen, who nodded. "That's only the last resort. I don't want to do it either, but if something unexpected happens, then it must be done. Do you understand?"

"I understand," Pill King Lu Feng was resolute. "Ole He, we've known each other for many decades, but public and private matters are separate."

"Don't worry about me, I get it. Do what needs to be done. What do I have to fault you for? Whatever my fate is, I will accept it calmly," He Hongshu acknowledged. With things being this bad already, he had no option either way.

"Sit tight. I'm going to seal the important acupoints all over your body. I will use a controlling technique to manage your vitals, which will slow your blood flow. Only then can I inject the fragrant powder into your veins at leisure. This entire process will be a bit painful, and since you'll be under my control, you can't struggle or move. You can only endure it. You'll need to prepare yourself."

"What could be more painful than death, now?" He Hongshu laughed openly. "I'm not even scared of dying. How bad could a little pain be?"

"Alright." Jiang Chen continuously struck Ole He's vital acupoints as he spoke. With the acupoints held in place, the patient's blood flow began to stagnate. Observing this closely, Jiang Chen flourished his gold needles, injecting the fragrant powder into the acupoints with each stab. At the same time, he constantly pressed the powder down, injecting it into the veins

with a special technique. It was quite painful for the subject of the treatment. Pea-sized sweat drops rained down from He Hongshu's forehead. However, the man himself gritted his teeth, refusing to groan even a little. Seeing this, Jiang Chen was mildly impressed by the man's tenacity.

"There's no problem if you want to make noise. You don't need to hold back." Jiang Chen said.

Ole He shook his head. "Keep going."

Jiang Chen was increasingly impressed by Ole He's fortitude. "As you wish," he nodded. His hands moved continuously, injecting more powder with the gold needle in hand the entire time. Jiang Chen looked relaxed during the entire process, but it was costing him a lot of mental strength. He had to continually observe and pay close attention to the parasites' movement.

The parasites could not be seen by regular eyes. Even with the God's Eye and the Evil Golden Eye, Jiang Chen could only barely see the tracks of their activity. Thankfully, Jiang Chen had also set fragrant powder about them in a formation in order to guide these bugs along a certain path. There was a basin of fresh blood on the other side of this formation. It had been placed there deliberately in order to lure the parasites over.

"They're coming!"

"Ole Lu, be careful and don't get too close. Stand outside the powder's circle and don't step in. These bugs will make their nest in you otherwise." Jiang Chen spoke in hushed tones.

Pill King Lu Feng paled at his words, subconsciously taking a few steps back. "Master, don't scare Ole Lu. I'm an old man, I can't take too much of that."

Jiang Chen wasn't intentionally scaring Pill King Lu Feng. The Wood Demon Parasites' bloodlust gave them an almost perverse acuity. They loved live human blood most of all. As more of the

fragrant powder entered Ole He's body, the parasites were finally fed up. They swarmed out from the man's pores. Though the bugs themselves couldn't be seen individually due to their small size, the clusters were so numerous that they made even Jiang Chen's skin crawl. He had a bit of trypophobia, and seeing the hordes of parasites together made his hairs stand on end.

The parasites would completely overlook his cicada bloodline, but he had prepared an alternative solution in advance just in case. His entire body was smeared with fragrant powder. This way, the parasites wouldn't even get close to his body, instead frenziedly surging through the route Jiang Chen had designed. The better part of an hour passed like this, and Jiang Chen made several rounds of checks. He was finally certain that He Hongshu's body no longer contained any Wood Demon Parasites. There wasn't even a single bug left.

It cost a lot of mental energy to inspect the blood vessels for any traces of parasites inside, but Jiang Chen had no intention of skimping out on the process. Extra caution was warranted in order to ensure complete the parasites' complete annihilation, with no remaining survivors. The call of fresh blood drew the parasites towards the basin. When all of the parasites were gathered within, Jiang Chen poured the entire basin's contents into a pre-prepared gourd—blood, bugs and all. He layered several seals upon it before rubbing a thick layer of fragrant powder over it as well.

"We're finally done." Jiang Chen let out a long breath. He made sure that there was nothing he'd overlooked before standing up again. He felt a little tired after spending such a long time on the operation. "Ole He, you don't have any parasites in you anymore. However, you'll still need to take the time to expel the powder."

"Pill King Zhen, thank you for saving my life! Even if Ole He were to work myself to the bone, I'll still make sure to express my gratitude." He Hongshu was very thankful.

"Don't mention it," Jiang Chen waved a hand. "If you don't get

along with getting rid of that fragrant powder, you won't have much time left in your life anyway." His idea hinged on fighting fire with fire. Compared to the parasites, the fragrant powder was much easier to get rid of.

Chapter 852: Plans to Visit Old Stomping Grounds

Just because He Hongshu's Wood Demon Parasites had been dealt with didn't mean that the entire affair had been resolved. Out of convenience, Jiang Chen had removed the demonic yin energy that had lingered on the wandering cultivator's body as well. It was something he could easily deal with, especially when compared to the parasites. However, the demonic yin energy had no reason to be present either. Jiang Chen could tell that it had come from a different source than the parasites.

That was to say, after He Hongshu had entered the wildlands, he had been attacked not once, but twice. He'd been the prey of two separate factions. Moreover, Jiang Chen felt some familiarity from the demonic yin energy, and his intuition told him that this matter wasn't so simple. However, without further clues, he had no way of making any additional inferences.

Pill King Lu Feng sidled over, curious. "Master, you've sealed away the Wood Demon Parasites inside that gourd, but you haven't killed them. How do you plan on dealing with them?"

"They're sealed away, so they won't be able to act up for now. I'll kill them when I find the chance to." Jiang Chen actually had a way to kill them completely, but revealing it in front of Pill King Lu Feng and friends was less than ideal.

Fire of Firstdawn could only be chanced upon with luck. Jiang Chen did have a way to obtain Dragonwhisker Water, though. The so-called Dragonwhisker Water was created from combining the spit of true dragons with regular water. Coincidentally, Jiang Chen had a true dragon very close by. Obtaining a little of its spit was a trivial matter. Therefore, he had no worries regarding the method of disposal.

After solving He Hongshu's problem and receiving the map and

information from him, Jiang Chen left Pill King Lu Feng's residence in a hurry. He had no interest in listening to words of gratitude at this time. If He Hongshu was someone who took such words seriously, he would naturally remember it in his heart.

He Hongshu felt Jiang Chen's hasty departure to be deeply regrettable. "Ole Lu, your master moves with mystical elusiveness. He acts like a hermit above the world."

Pill King Lu Feng laughed proudly, "Isn't that true? My master's master is a sage above this world as well. The disciple of a sage has to feel a bit like one as well, of course. Hey, Ole He, do you think I look a little like a sage now?"

He Hongshu stammered; he didn't quite know what to say. "Ole Lu, considering how long we've known each other for, do you want me to be honest?"

Hearing that, Pill King Lu Feng's self-satisfied look was replaced with sadness. "If you put it that way… how could I not know what you mean, even if you weren't being honest?"

"Ole Lu, you should just be yourself," He Hongshu chuckled. "There's no way you'd fit the style of a sage above this world."

Mildly displeased, Pill King Lu Feng waved a hand, "Don't console me. I will follow my master for the rest of my life, so I'll learn how to be a sage sooner or later."

"Doesn't seem like it." He Hongshu was fairly casual in conversing with his friend.

Pill King Lu Feng ground his teeth, "I say, Ole He, you're all better now, right? What're you sticking around here for? I'm telling you, don't entrust your kid to me next time. I have no interest in being a dad."

He Hongshu knew that the pill king's crazy nature was kicking in again. "Ole Lu, I've really come to terms with something after all this," he smiled wryly. "I'm planning on leaving it all behind and

retiring. I'd rather take care of my kids and get some peace of mind. I believe you'll come to see me around here a lot more often."

Pill King Lu Feng harrumphed. "Here or not is your business. I'm not going to provide meals."

He Hongshu knew as well that Ole Lu wasn't actually angry. Given their friendship, it was only a little joke. However, he really had learned a heavy lesson this time. The doorstep of death had released many burdens from his mind. "Ole Lu, I'm truly envious of you now. Just a little," He Hongshu sighed.

"What are you envious of?" Pill King Lu Feng glared back, grimacing.

"Envious of your foresight and courage. I wonder, you asked Pill King Zhen to be your master before the decisive battle that spread his fame. How did you possess such sharp eyes at the time?" He Hongshu was still quite interested in the topic. With Pill King Lu Feng's unconventional personality, the man rarely had such a sharp eye. How had he found such a golden thigh to hug so suddenly?

This was no exaggeration. Pill King Zhen's current position in Veluriyam Capital definitely made him a golden thigh. Someone who even Emperor Peafowl respected as a favorable honored guest... just how many of these kinds of people were still in the capital? He was still so young, too. Given enough time, he was sure to distinguish himself in the world. Such a rise was inevitable. And yet, a genius like that was Pill King Lu Feng's master. Even before Pill King Zhen's rise to fame, Pill King Lu Feng had latched onto this person for dear life in order to become his disciple.

Speaking of this matter made Pill King Lu Feng appear proud again. "Ole He, I've always said that the busywork you've been doing for all your life amounted to nothing. Look at me. I didn't go anywhere, I just waited right here at Veluriyam Capital for my

lucky star to arrive. See, my master appeared right before my eyes!”

Pill King Lu Feng was extremely content with this fact. He felt that his discernment couldn’t simply be described with normal words like ‘extraordinary’ or ‘remarkable’. Although Pill King Zhen had some fame at the time, it had only been come about as a result of the conflict at Taiyuan Tower’s opening with the Majestic Clan. At the time, the Majestic Clan had only sent a sixth-rank pill king.

Anyone could see the potential in the young pill king then, but only that and nothing else. He was far from exhibiting the level of strength that everyone in Veluriyam would respect. After the battle at Sacred Peafowl Mountain, Jiang Chen had defeated Pillfire City and sent the imperious Pill King Ji Lang scrambling. That battle had really spread his name to the entire world. Pill King Lu Feng had forcibly inserted himself between these two events and took Pill King Zhen as his master. What did this show? It showed Pill King Lu Feng’s precognition and prudence. It showed how much further he saw than everyone else.

A ninth-rank pill king, taking a normal pill king as his master... was this something that just anyone could do? Only someone with Pill King Lu Feng’s style could accomplish such a feat. The average ninth-rank pill king wouldn’t be willing to do such a humbling thing. On another hand, Pill King Lu Feng was also tremendously loyal to Deviant Pill Faction. Upon finding out that Pill King Zhen was a noteworthy representative of the faction, he stopped at nothing to seek the young man as his master. Rather than Jiang Chen’s potential, it could be said that Pill King Lu Feng valued his Deviant Pill Faction’s status more. He didn’t think that he would get such a stroke of fortune. Without even realizing it, Pill King Lu Feng had found a golden thigh which he could rely on. He was very smug about it.

Pill King Lu Feng really had done something to boast about this

time. He looked forward to the prospect of revealing their master-disciple relationship the most. If not for the lack of approval from his master, Pill King Lu Feng would have done so much earlier out of impatience. He couldn't wait to share his joy with everyone else in the world, especially his enemies. More than anything, he wanted to loudly proclaim his relationship with Pill King Zhen to their faces.

He Hongshu had complicated feelings about the entire thing. He had known Pill King Lu Feng for several decades, and they'd always maintained a reasonably close relationship, with many back-and-forths. He Hongshu had always felt that Pill King Lu Feng possessed the mannerisms of a stubborn child. Though his pill dao talent was remarkable, there was no way for the pill king to reach the uppermost echelons of Veluriyam Capital.

He Hongshu had been focused on martial dao and was already a fifth-level emperor. His goal was only to attain the peak of martial dao. Thus, though he had always been close to the kooky Pill King Lu Feng, deep down he had always considered the latter to be inferior to him. But now, after some additional consideration, he noticed that although his strength surpassed Pill King Lu Feng by quite a bit, he could not remotely compare with the pill king in terms of position, fame, or network here in Veluriyam Capital. Not to mention the fact that Pill King Lu Feng had taken on such a remarkable master... he had a direct line of contact to even Emperor Peafowl!

These things affected He Hongshu greatly. He wondered to himself, was the path that he had insisted on taking really all that better than Pill King Lu Feng's? He had always thought so, but in that moment, he was shaken. In the instant between life and death, he had wavered.

Without Pill King Lu Feng, without the pill king's master, it was likely that he would have died in just a few days, and moreover become Veluriyam Capital's worst criminal–the harbinger of

endless catastrophe. Cold sweat condensed on his body at the very prospect of the thought. He sighed, “Ole Lu, I’ve always thought that your ideas were different from mine. But now I see that you have your reasons for walking the path you trod on. What you are doing is the best for someone of your temperament. From the looks of it, you understand more of the dao than I do. I am merely a little clever, but you are very wise.”

He Hongshu was not acting humble. He had come to the realization after being faced with the matter of his own mortality. Whether it was martial dao or pill dao, or any other dao, it was all still dao. All roads led to the same destination, and all daos led to the heavenly dao. Following, feeling, and seeking eternity in the heavenly law was every path’s goal. It was just that each person’s dao was different. He Hongshu had always firmly trusted in his own dao, looking down upon Pill King Lu Feng’s dao. But from what he could see now, his understanding of the dao was not as deep as Pill King Lu Feng’s understanding. Hidden beneath the latter’s eccentricity was a considerable amount of acumen.

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Jiang Chen returned to Taiyuan Tower and requested some Dragonwhisker Water from Long Xiaoxuan. He used it to kill off all of the Wood Demon Parasites. Jiang Chen felt stifled while those bugs still lived. Dragonwhisker Water acted upon the bugs like hot water boiling away ice, and the parasites were all exterminated in no time at all. Only after he was done did he begin to carefully peruse the map and information he had been given.

According to He Hongshu’s information, his route into the desolate wildlands had been through the Myriad Domain and around the Eastern Kingdom. The time of my return to the Myriad Domain is much earlier than I’d thought.

After the fall of his sect and his own departure from the Myriad Domain, Jiang Chen had never returned to the place. During his time at Veluriyam Capital, he had begun to miss the place. After

all, the Myriad Domain was the homeland of his current life. His relatives, his old friends, his sect—they were all there.

In that moment, Jiang Chen thought of many things. All kinds of experiences were compiled and flew through his mind several times, beginning from when he had first entered the wider world. He thought of the strange piece of spiritual land back in the Jiang Han province of the Eastern Kingdom, the spirit beast Mang Qi who'd swore an oath with him in the Boundless Catacombs, the demon sealed lands Ye Chonglou had always went on about... All of these mysteries made Jiang Chen profoundly aware that the Eastern Kingdom wasn't as simple a place as he'd thought, either.

Chapter 853: Preparations Before Departure

The divisions in the human territories were likely a structure that had slowly emerged after the great ancient war. Back then during ancient times, even the Upper Eight Regions was a territory where ordinary humans lived, just like all the other territories. Only after the great ancient war ended did the empyrean powerhouses gradually go into seclusion, leading to the present situation where the core Upper Eight Regions became the heart of the entire human domain. Meanwhile, the Myriad Domains had been gradually marginalized because they bordered the desolate wildlands, and because legends spoke of demons were sealed therein. In particular, the sixteen kingdom alliance in the Myriad Domains was even more of a trivial existence.

Even in the strongest four great sects in the sixteen kingdoms, the strongest people were merely forefathers at the origin realm. The strength of an original realm cultivator was simply a trifling nonentity in the heartlands of the Upper Eight Regions. After the Eternal Celestial Capital's rampage in the Myriad Domains, it was likely that all of the fourth rank sects had been destroyed and scattered just like the Regal Pill Palace. The sixteen kingdom alliance wasn't one of the main factions in the Myriad Domains to begin with. It was a marginal faction at best. It was even more impossible to survive once the calamity struck.

As to the other factions, Jiang Chen wasn't that much worried about them. The only ones he was worried about was the Precious Tree Sect, the Skylaurel Kingdom, as well as the Eastern Kingdom. The Skylaurel Kingdom in particular. His uncle Jiang Tong and his younger cousin Jiang Yu were still there. It had been so long. He wondered how they were now. The thing he was most worried about was the Eternal Celestial Capital taking out its anger on Jiang Tong and his son after suffering at his hands.

Although the Eternal Celestial Capital might not be aware Jiang Tong and his son were in the Skylaurel Kingdom, they still had the intelligence network of a first-ranked sect. It would be child's play for them to deal with Jiang Tong and his son once they found out about this relationship. However, Jiang Chen surmised that they hadn't caught Jiang Tong or Jiang Yu yet. Otherwise, with their usual style, they'd have used his relatives to threaten him with already.

In any case, Jiang Chen decided he'd go back to his homeland on his way and take a look. However, this journey seemed fraught with danger, so he needed to make some preparations beforehand. "There is only half a year left until Veluriyam Pagoda's opening. I only have half a year for this trip to the desolate wildlands."

He wasn't the sort to break his promise. Since he'd already given his word to Emperor Peafowl, then he would participate in this gathering no matter what. The most reliable way would have been to leave after the end of the gathering. Only, Jiang Chen wasn't willing to wait a minute more than necessary. He worried that any delay might bring greater trouble. The contest at the gathering would last for a full year. The ship might have already sailed by the end of the gathering. The news about the Requiem Tree hadn't spread extensively around yet, so he had take this opportunity to be the early bird and catch the worm. If he waited for everyone to be abuzz with the news, then he would have lost all advantage.

After all, since He Hongshu had escaped from that damned place, then it was very hard to say that no one else escaped from there. As long as someone else escaped, the news about the Requiem Tree was bound to spread. However, what was even more terrifying than the news about the Requiem Tree spreading around was the possibility that someone else had left the area with the Wood Demon Parasites as well. Fortunately, judging from He Hongshu's words, these people shouldn't have been wandering cultivators from Veluriyam Capital. Even if trouble were to break out, the

Capital wasn't in imminent danger.

As for the other regions, Jiang Chen might be a merciful man, but he already had more than enough on his plate. After all, if something like that were really to happen, then it wasn't something he could stop by himself. What he wanted now was to find the Requiem Tree and dispel Huang'er's Generation Binding Curse, so that she would become healthy again.

However, judging from the data left by Ole He, that place was truly full of danger. So Jiang Chen had to do his homework before setting off. What he needed to enhance first was his strength. It was clearly impossible to enhance his cultivation all the way to the emperor realm in such a short time frame. However, Jiang Chen held many cards in his hand. If he sorted through them, he should have enough to enhance his fighting power by quite a bit.

The Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice as well as the magnetic golden mountain were trump cards that'd been in Jiang Chen's possession for a long time already. He'd made full use of them all the way until now. He'd also been progressively mastering the formation disks and flags he'd inherited from the Ancient Crimson Heaven Sect, slowly bringing out their power.

Of course, the ultimate Crimson Heaven Formation disk could imitate the ten great ancient formations. Jiang Chen had merely scratched the surface of what it could do so far. He'd barely managed to operate it last time and imitate the Major Artifice Formation. This formation disk had played a major part during that fight, temporarily trapping the troops the Eternal Celestial Capital had sent after him. In the end, the troops had been poisoned by the Divine Befuddlement Miasma and annihilated to the last.

Back when he'd challenged the Ancient Crimson Heaven Sect's inheritance tower, Jiang Chen had also obtained two formation disks, one of them the Minor Artifice Formation Disk. This formation disk didn't have too much use for Jiang Chen now. He

planned on giving it to those close to him so that they they could protect themselves.

The formation disk of the Ancient Slaughter Formation of Seven was of a much higher grade. It could imitate three levels of formations. The simple level could confuse ordinary sage realm cultivators. The intermediate level could disorient sky sage realm cultivators, trapping them inside. As for the highest level, it could confine ordinary emperor realm powerhouses. So this formation disk was still of use. Jiang Chen still took it with him.

The Soldier Rosary Beads were also increasingly losing its usefulness as Jiang Chen's strength continuously rose. That being said, this toy could be used now and then to keep an enemy busy and buy him some time. He might have a use for it on this trip to the desolate wildlands, so he didn't give it away for now.

Of course, Jiang Chen's current priority was to refine the Pentecolor Divine Swords. This sky rank artefact was a gift bestowed by Emperor Peafowl. The five colors of the Pentecolor Divine Sword correspondeded with the five elements. Its might was no trifling matter. The five elements reinforced each other. As long as a complete circle revolved inside, it could break every demonic obstacle and slash through any evil energy.

Unfortunately, the great emperor had only given him the sword, and hadn't given him any sword technique. Jiang Chen wasn't discouraged, however. He was already prepared when it came to sword techniques. In his memories, Jiang Chen had already identified several sword techniques matching the characteristics of the Pentecolor Divine Sword, and planned to choose one of them.

"There are quite a few sword arts combining the five elements, but ordinary sword arts aren't worthy of an exceptional artifact like this sword. I remember a method from ancient times called the 'Divine Five Thunderclap Sword Technique', the ancient Celestial Firmament Emperor's famous supreme technique. As for the Firmament Emperor, he was quite a curious tale in himself.

Legends say that this celestial emperor rose from the mundane world. He went against the power of time, beholding all things life and death, reversed the wheel of reincarnation, holding onto himself the fates of the heavens and of the earth, and finally became a divine celestial emperor of an era." Jiang Chen had researched the many legends encompassing the heavenly planes.

The ancient Firmament Emperor was by one of the countless celestial emperors of the heavenly planes. There were many rumors about him. Legends said his strength even surpassed that of his father, the Taiyuan Emperor. The tales of the Firmament Emperor were too many to count throughout the vast universe. Jiang Chen heard some of the rumors about this celestial emperor rising from his mundane origins all the way to the seat of a celestial emperor. His path had been unimpeded like a knife slicing through butter. However, the Firmament Emperor was also someone with powerful luck. He'd inherited the legacies of quite a few celestial emperors throughout the planes. This was someone even his father had praised continuously.

It was unfortunate that the planes were too far away from each other. One had to pass through ancient heavenly formations for every journey. If by any chance an issue arose in the orbits of the heavenly planes, even a celestial emperor would be sucked into the endless, flood-like chaos of the spatial currents, forever drifting like a piece of deadwood. For that reason, the Taiyuan Emperor had always wanted to pay a visit to the Firmament Emperor, but he'd never found the opportunity to do so.

Under the influence of his father, Jiang Chen had also heard quite a few things about this Firmament Emperor. That was the reason why the "Divine Five Thunderclap Sword Technique" was the first thing he thought of. This sword art was in fact a supreme technique that the Firmament Emperor used when emerging from the mundane world. Only, through the celestial emperor's repeated improvement, this sword technique evolved step by step

to finally become something of resounding fame throughout the planes.

Jiang Chen had always researched this technique, so he was very familiar with its many forms. The greatest advantage of this sword technique was that it could be cultivated no matter one's cultivation. Not only did this sword technique contain the energy of the five elements, but it could even summon divine thunder and add a dazzling power to its physical attacks. Its might was extraordinary.

Jiang Chen possessed the Golden Cicada's Thundercloud Tree within his body. He had an unmatched advantage when it came to attracting thunder. For that reason, this sword technique seemed tailor-made for Jiang Chen.

"Great Firmament Emperor, I hope you can bless me. This junior is Jiang Chen. After I study your sword technique and become famous throughout the planes, I'll come and thank you in person." Jiang Chen silently mouthed a few words to himself. He'd already decided he would cultivate this "Divine Five Thunderclap Sword Technique." The Pentecolor Divine Sword and this technique was a match made in heaven.

In addition, Jiang Chen also planned to refine Emperor Featherflight's Divine Featherflight Wings. He had obtained the inheritance back in the Paramount Realm. But apart from the Featherflight Mirror he used frequently, he hadn't used the other inheritances left by Emperor Featherflight out of fear he'd expose this legacy. This journey to the desolate wildlands would be fraught with danger. The Divine Featherflight Wings were a necessity. Combined with Emperor Featherflight's Tactics, he could have full confidence in his speed.

Even he were to encounter immense danger, he could hope to survive as long as he had absolute speed. As for the inheritance Emperor Featherflight had obtained from the empyrean cultivator, Guo Ran, Jiang Chen had no use for them for the moment, apart

from the palace. Jiang Chen had no use for either of mid-rank empyrean decree or an order to a fate secret realm for now. As to that palace dwelling, the prohibitions inside were too formidable. Jiang Chen had used it once back in the Paramount Realm. Thinking back on it, he felt it was a pity even now.

As soon as those prohibitions started operating, even a cultivator at the great emperor level would be seriously wounded, if not outright dead. This was the strongest killing tool Jiang Chen presently had in his possession. Jiang Chen would never use it unless he met with the greatest of dangers.

Weekend event for bonus SOTR chapters! To celebrate the launch of my other novel, Return of the Swallow, I've making up to five bonus SOTR chapters available for folks! How to unlock the five bonuses? You might be aware that I have an Instagram, sharing various pics of food, Chinese culture, and translation life, and a Twitter where I banter with a lot of other translators.

I'd like to offer an additional chapter for each 100 new followers I get, on either platform. Currently Instagram has 634 followers, and Twitter stands at 651. Twitter is also in a widget to the right! The event will run over the weekend, ending on Monday, Feb. 26 @ noon, GMT+8!

Chapter 854: The Holy Kings of the Eternal Celestial Capital Meet

After a quick mental inventory, Jiang Chen abruptly realized that he possessed an unbelievable amount of trump cards. Any one of the items could transform an average genius into a first-rate genius. The fact that he alone possessed all of these trump cards left him in wonder at his extraordinary fortune. In fact, Emperor Peafowl himself had noticed that Jiang Chen's fortune was remarkable after the emperor awakened his All-Seeing Eye. Naturally, Jiang Chen found this theory of fortune to be perfectly reasonable. It was simply impossible for a person who'd managed to survive the destruction of the heavenly plane and obtained a new lease on life not to have fortune on his side. As long as he didn't try to commit suicide or actively seek death, his fortune alone would carry him through most problems.

This was obvious if one were to take another look at his past. Despite losing his sect, and hunted by two first rank sects, Jiang Chen had still been able to live freely. Of course, fortune alone wasn't enough to carry one all through their life. If a person of great fortune stepped into their own death, then no amount of fortune would be able to change their outcome.

There were plenty of geniuses of great fortune in the world of martial dao, but not all of them could grow to their full potential and reach the end. It was common for geniuses of great fortune to lose everything in the end because of a flaw in their personality. Jiang Chen didn't consider himself unparalleled just because he was a person of great fortune.

He went into closed door cultivation after making up his mind. Right now, his first priority was refining the Featherflight wings. He needed to quicken his cultivation of the Five Thunder Divine Sound Sword Technique too. That being said, sword technique

wasn't something that could be cultivated in just a few days' worth of time. For now, Jiang Chen planned to nurture the sword with his aura and foster his relationship with the swords first. The cultivation of the sword technique could come later.

A sky rank divine sword was no ordinary divine weapon. A sword at this level possessed spirit energy of its own. If the wielder was lucky, the sword might eventually even nurture a spirit of its own. Although the Pentecolor Divine Swords didn't seem to have a sword spirit, this was good news for Jiang Chen. He would have to spend time communicating with the sword spirit and foster a relationship between them.

No sword spirit meant less hassle. Of course, if a thread of destiny were to exist between Jiang Chen and this set of swords, then it wasn't impossible for him to nurture the swords long enough for it to develop to a sword spirit of his own.

If he managed to develop a sword spirit, then the Pentecolor Divine Swords would definitely grow massively in power. They would also become his true personal weapon. If he wished to cultivate the Five Thunder Divine Sound Sword Technique, then he had to first familiarize himself with this set of swords first. If he became so used to the swords that they practically felt like an extension of his body, then his cultivation of the sword technique would grow by leaps and bounds.

No one was surprised that Jiang Chen would announce closed door cultivation now. Taiyuan Tower was now on the right track, and nothing major was going on at Sacred Peafowl Mountain. However, a middle aged man in a certain area of Veluriyam Capital was frowning in the courtyard. "Pill King Zhen is cultivating in seclusion, they say? Is this true, or is it a lie?"

The middle aged man was a spy that Pillfire City had left behind in Veluriyam Capital. He had been gathering intelligence in Veluriyam Capital for a long time. In Pillfire City's opinion, their plan to kill Jiang Chen with the poisoned secret letter was

foolproof. As such, Emperor Pillzenith had purposely instructed him to watch Pill King Zhen closely and to send him a report the moment he heard anything. The emperor was obviously waiting for news of Pill King Zhen's death to reach his ears.

However, no news of Pill King Zhen's death came even though so many days had passed. Everything in Taiyuan Tower operated as usual. It was impossible that Taiyuan Tower could act this calmly if something really had happened to Pill King Zhen. No one in Sacred Peafowl Mountain would be able to keep calm upon hearing this news, much less Taiyuan Tower. It would be stranger still if the sudden death of a pill king that could change Sacred Peafowl Mountain's entire fortune caused no waves at all. But Veluriyam Capital looked as calm and peaceful as ever. The stories of Pill King Zhen trouncing Pillfire City continued to spread everywhere.

"Maybe... Pill King Zhen hasn't read any of those letters?" The middle aged man was completely puzzled by this outcome. In the end, he could only justify the lack of news this way. "Maybe Pill King Zhen is too busy with work and social niceties to look at those letters. After all, those poisonous letters were refined by Emperor Pillzenith himself. There's no way he could've survived that if he did touch those letters. Yeah, I should wait patiently and see what happens. Maybe he'll get bored and think of those letters. If he so much as touches them, he's dead, and there's no better outcome than him dying in his own private room while he's in seclusion. If his body is discovered too late, it'll be too hard conduct an investigation! Hahaha!" The middle aged man comforted himself in this way.

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There was another group of people gathered at a secret base of their own. It was in fact an Eternal Celestial Capital base of operations in Veluriyam Capital. A couple of holy kings had all gathered inside. Holy King Ke, who'd gone to negotiate with the Majestic Clan, was present. Holy King Mu, the one who locked

down the city gates of the Myriad Peoples City, was there as well.

Both saint holy kings were amongst the highest existences in the Eternal Celestial Capital. Their status was only a bit lower than the sect head of the Eternal Celestial Capital himself. The two saint holy kings were gathered together with a few other holy kings who were one rank lower than them, a rank shared by the deceased Gong Wuji. A total of ten people were present at this place.

The person who attended to the holy kings' needs was a spy the Eternal Celestial Capital had planted in Veluriyam Capital dozens of years ago. Everyone called him Holy King Bei even though he was just a reserve holy king. He hadn't been given an official title yet, though he already possessed the qualification to become a holy king. That being said, It was only a matter of time before he was given an official title considering the years he spent at Veluriyam Capital gathering intelligence for the Eternal Celestial Capital. The reason he wasn't given the title yet was because he was still a spy, and it wasn't the right time for him to expose himself. Of course, Holy King Bei's status couldn't compare to the saint holy kings. That was why Holy King Bei appeared very respectful before the two saint holy kings. He dutifully relayed everything that had happened in Veluriyam Capital as of late to the two saint holy kings.

"My lords, the Longevity Pill has now been monopolized by the Sacred Peafowl Mountain. Not even the other great emperors of Veluriyam Capital were given the right to refine them. There's no doubt that Sacred Peafowl Mountain plans to enjoy the spoils of the Longevity Pill by themselves," Holy King Bei said.

Saint Holy King Ke humphed coldly, "How on earth did the Sacred Peafowl Mountain acquire the Longevity Pill recipe to begin with?"

Everyone in the Eternal Celestial Capital was indescribably sour about the final outcome when it came to the Longevity Pill. Despite all the work they had put in and the expenses they'd swallowed,

the Longevity Pill fell into the Sacred Peafowl Mountain's hands in the end. The pill recipe they had spent so much effort to pry out of their victims' mouths had now been monopolized entirely by another party. This wasn't a declaration made solely by Sacred Peafowl Mountain, but one by every major representative of the pill industry. Even the Eternal Celestial Capital didn't dare go up against every pill industry heavyweights of the entire human domain simultaneously.

Plus, everyone knew that the Longevity Pill belonged to the Sacred Peafowl Mountain now. Even if they tried to refine some Longevity Pills anyway, no one would buy it or accept a broker deal. While there would be some fearless criminals who would dare sell the Longevity Pill on the black market, the consequences of discovery would be the anger of the entirety of Veluriyam Capital.

No one dared take a risk like that. Emperor Peafowl was acknowledged as one of the strongest great emperors in the human domain, a person no sane person would ever intentionally offend. Offending him would only mean death. Even their sect head didn't wish to provoke someone like Emperor Peafowl.

Saint Holy King Mu was surprisingly unaffected by their loss, "What's gone is gone. If this is the price we have to pay to make Veluriyam Capital a sworn enemy of Pillfire City, then who cares? Even if the pill hadn't fallen into Sacred Peafowl Mountain's hands, it still would've been taken by Pillfire City anyway. A thing like this wouldn't have lasted long in our hands. I heard from the sect that Pill King Shi Yangshu had gone to Pillfire City to meet Emperor Pillzenith, and Pillfire City had snatched our pill formula right from his hands the second it was presented. Emperor Pillzenith never planned to partner with the Eternal Celestial Capital from the very beginning. All he wanted to do was to rob us. Unfortunately for them, they failed to defeat Sacred Peafowl Mountain despite all their schemes and actually ended up worse off

than when they started. Serves them right, that's for sure."

The Eternal Celestial Capital's hatred towards Veluriyam Capital was actually smaller than their hatred towards Pillfire City. After all, Veluriyam Capital hadn't robbed the pill formula directly from their hands. Whereas, Pillfire City had just taken possession of the pill formula and kicked the Eternal Celestial Capital out of the game. This wasn't something a first rank sect like the Eternal Celestial Capital could swallow with grace.

Thankfully, Pillfire City ultimately lost to Sacred Peafowl Mountain and failed to retain ownership of the Longevity Pill. The Eternal Celestial Capital might not have the right to refine the Longevity Pill, but the ownership of the pill hadn't fallen into Pillfire City's hands either. The Eternal Celestial Capital couldn't help but let out a sigh of relief at this outcome. You robbed us, sure, but I wonder who's the bigger loser in the end, Pillfire City?

Everyone shared a look of perfect understanding when they heard Holy King Mu's words. It was obvious that everyone had learned of Emperor Pillzenith's malicious robbery of the Longevity Pill after Pill King Shi Yangshu sent back a message to the sect. The Eternal Celestial Capital was deeply dissatisfied with the Pillfire City's unreasonable aggressiveness. It was only natural that they enjoyed Pillfire City's double loss after trying to trick the enemy. Even the irksome Veluriyam Capital was looking more friendly than Pillfire City right now.

"Oh right, Holy King Bei, you've stayed at the Veluriyam Capital for a very long time, haven't you? Did you figure out anything about Pill King Zhen yet?" Holy King Mu asked.

Holy King Bei pondered for a moment, "This Pill King Zhen's background is extremely mysterious. No one knows where he comes from. I have tried to inquire about him in secret, but I can find no clues whatsoever."

Holy King Mu had been trying to catch Jiang Chen at Myriad

Peoples City all this time. In the end, a long enough time had passed for him to realize that his plans to intercept Jiang Chen had failed. That was why he'd chosen to sneak into Veluriyam Capital. It was all to gather information.

"What are your opinions, Brother Mu?" Holy King Ke asked curiously.

Holy King Mu frowned, "I don't know why, but I can't shake the feeling that this Pill King Zhen has something to do with us."

"Something to do with us? What do you mean?" The group of men looked puzzled.

"I've seen this Pill King Zhen at the Myriad Peoples City before. At the time, he was travelling together with the young master of House Wei, Wei Jie, and making his way to Veluriyam Capital. We stopped him at the roadblock, and he showed us a pill king token to prove his identity. Though, the surname on the token was a different 'Zhen' character. But I wonder if the two are actually connected?"

"So he's a member of the House Wei. What does that have to do with us?" Holy King Ke still didn't understand his meaning.

"Sigh. I suspect that this Pill King Zhen is that bastard Jiang Chen." Holy King Mu couldn't help but feel a bit of pain in his heart when he said this. He'd never talked about what had happened during the inspection until now, and he never stopped regretting the decision he had made that day. If he'd been a little more resolute that day, if he had insisted in inspecting that Pill King Zhen, he might have found the person he was looking for. However, he'd ultimately decided against inspecting Pill King Zhen by force and yielded to the authority of Veluriyam Capital. The more he thought about that day, the more he found it suspicious. That was why he had come to investigate this matter more deeply.

Chapter 855: The Wood Demon Tribe

Holy King Mu's words sent everyone into a daze. Pill King Zhen was actually Jiang Chen? What kind of far-fetched joke was this? Wasn't Jiang Chen a mere genius from a fourth-rank sect? He shouldn't be at such a level even though he was moderately talented.

"Jiang Chen? Impossible! He's admittedly quite cunning, but how could he produce such a grand spectacle with his meager abilities? Even Pill King Ji Lang of Pillfire City wasn't his match."

"Indeed. It isn't quite possible for Regal Pill Palace to produce such a genius with their modest heritage." Those assembled successively expressed their lingering doubt towards Holy King Mu's deduction. It wasn't so surprising that the people had their misgivings. In their eyes, Jiang Chen was only a genius who was relatively adept at using the time and terrain to his advantage.

Wiping out Gong Wuji's group had been Jiang Chen's greatest feat of strength. But everyone knew that it wasn't because Jiang Chen had been exceptionally strong. Rather, it was because he had made use of the Infant Shriek's topography to poison his enemies with the Divine Befuddlement Miasma. Those who knew about the incident at Mt. Rippling Mirage were naturally aware that Jiang Chen had ways to deal with the poison of the Divine Befuddlement Miasma. That was all.

But the things Pill King Zhen had done were obviously on a much higher level. He was a genius that even Emperor Peafowl favored greatly. How could that boorish Jiang Chen hold a candle to him? Thus, everyone felt that this deduction wasn't quite reliable. They couldn't accept this in the depths of their hearts. If Jiang Chen was indeed Pill King Zhen, the Eternal Celestial Capital would have no way to deal with him seeing as how he had Emperor Peafowl as his supporter. This was something they'd never be able to accept.

Holy King Mu disregarded everyone's doubts. "I'll not change my stance on this, regardless of what you all think of this matter. I will definitely investigate the origins of this Pill King Zhen."

Others didn't dare comment but, as a peer, Holy King Ke Sheng couldn't help but point out, "Brother Mu, I'm not against you investigating this matter, but you must know your limits. Neither you nor I can bear this responsibility if things get out of hand and we draw the attention of Sacred Peafowl Mountain."

The Eternal Celestial Capital possessed experts as abundant as the clouds, but Sacred Peafowl Mountain boasted no less. The Eternal Celestial Capital's strength was, at most, half that of Veluriyam Capital's assets. It was rather unwise to offend the latter. What's more, the Eternal Celestial Capital had incurred the wrath of Pillfire City.

From their perspective, they wouldn't have landed in such a situation if the meddlesome Eternal Celestial Capital hadn't given them this Longevity Pill recipe in the first place. Neither would Pillfire City have lost so much face after having their unbeatable status broken. Even a legendary character like Pill King Ji Lang had been defeated! Pillfire City naturally wouldn't shift all the blame for their humiliation onto the Eternal Celestial Capital, but they would inevitably take it out on the sect to a certain extent. The Eternal Celestial Capital didn't want to put themselves directly in the firing lines of both sides.

Holy King Mu snorted coldly, "The reminder is unnecessary. I always act with due propriety. Do you lot realize that, if Pill King Zhen is indeed Jiang Chen, he's most likely obtained Emperor Featherflight's inheritance—something that our Eternal Celestial Capital and Ninesuns Sky Sect have been pursuing for thousands of years?"

Everyone fell silent because they had no way of refuting this statement. It had become a different matter, now that the long sought-after inheritance of Emperor Featherflight was involved.

They might not necessarily covet Emperor Featherflight's own inheritance, but the latter had once obtained the inheritance of an empyrean cultivator. That inheritance was specifically what the Eternal Celestial Capital and Ninesuns Sky Sect had been pursuing for thousands of years. They'd even gone to great lengths to plot against the Myriad Domain for this. But their thousand-year arrangement might have all been for naught in the end, and they might have even sustained losses instead!

This was especially true for the Eternal Celestial Capital. They had lost a holy king, a batch of elites and had even thrown in their puppet, the Great Scarlet Mid Region. Many major sects from the Great Scarlet Mid Region had accompanied Gong Wuji as he chased after Jiang Chen, and all were buried within Infant Shriek that day. The most infuriating aspect was that Jiang Chen had cut off the victims' heads and had them transported to the Great Scarlet Emperor. It was said that the Great Scarlet Emperor nearly spat out blood on the spot. This was a great humiliation to both the Great Scarlet Empire and the Eternal Celestial Capital.

Holy King Ke Sheng asked solemnly, "Brother Mu, did Emperor Featherflight's inheritance really land in Jiang Chen's hands?"

"I can't be completely certain, but it's quite likely because the pawn we'd planted in the Darknorth Sect died that day as well. It's highly unlikely that this well-trained agent would've died without encountering a major incident. Furthermore, Jiang Chen once mentioned Lin Hai's name to Gong Wuji, which goes to show that he was aware of Lin Hai's status as our undercover agent. But Lin Hai wouldn't have exposed himself for no reason. It's highly likely that he'd found Emperor Featherflight's inheritance but was ultimately unable to overcome Jiang Chen. Of course, all of this is just my speculation, but I feel that it's quite reasonable."

Admittedly, Holy King Mu's theory was fairly reasonable. He hadn't had much to do in recent days and had been continuously mulling over this matter. It was no wonder that he was able to

piece together all the important clues and come up with this deduction.

Holy King Ke Sheng frowned, “If he has indeed obtained Emperor Featherflight’s inheritance, then it becomes quite likely that Pill King Zhen is Jiang Chen in disguise.”

“Yes, how otherwise did this genius suddenly appear in Veluriyam Capital? He must’ve obtained a heaven-defying inheritance.” Holy King Mu was quite certain of his theory.

“Then we should really look deeper into this Pill King Zhen’s background,” Holy King Ke Sheng nodded at Holy King Mu Shen. “Should we report this matter to the sect head and have him dispatch more people?”

“I think we have enough manpower. We’ll plan this slowly. It’s easier to be discovered if too many people are involved. I heard that Emperor Peafowl has extremely terrifying insight. The current scale of our operation is already quite dangerous. His discerning eyes might see through us if we mobilize more people.” Holy King Mu was quite cautious.

The others nodded successively, and Holy King Mu said to Holy King Bei, “Holy King Bei, you can be considered a local boss in this area. You should ask around more about this Pill King Zhen and relay any clues you find about him to us. We’ll ambush and capture him once we’re able to track his whereabouts and immediately bring him to the Eternal Celestial Capital. We can always let him go secretly if we’re proven wrong.”

“Either way, we have to exercise extreme caution. We definitely can’t expose our movements.” Everyone agreed to continue working in secret after much discussion.

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A month’s seclusion passed by quickly. Jiang Chen had spent nearly twenty days refining the Featherflight wings and another

ten to comprehend the Featherflight Tactics. He then spent the remaining time nurturing the Pentacolor Divine Swords. Jiang Chen had formed a solid connection with the Pentacolor Divine Swords after a month of painstaking effort. It had become more familiar with Jiang Chen and was gradually fusing with him. Although a sword spirit hadn't yet developed, Jiang Chen believed that, at the current rate of fusion, it might eventually be possible one day. A divine weapon was only truly complete after giving birth to a spirit.

After exiting his isolation, he decided that he wouldn't bring along anyone other than Huang'er this time. The Goldbiter Rats and Long Xiaoxuan were, of course, an exception. He chatted with Shen Trifire about matters regarding Taiyuan Tower and also spoke briefly with the Wei father and son duo. His explanation was that he was planning to wander outside for a period of time and look for something, but didn't offer any detailed explanation regarding his reasons.

Pill King Lu Feng repeatedly pleaded to go along with Jiang Chen, but only received a scolding in return. In the end, he was helpless and could only behave obediently. Jiang Chen used a carrot and stick approach, later giving the old man a Deviant Pill Faction pill recipe. The ecstatic "old brat" couldn't stop grinning from ear to ear. Before leaving, he also briefly informed young master Ji San of his plans. The latter immediately offered to go along with him but Jiang Chen tactfully declined.

"Brother Ji, I want to keep things as low profile as possible for this journey. You can just pretend that we never had this conversation. I'll keep the clan head's matter in mind. It'll be a great fortune if I can find an Invisible Chameleon Cloudpine."

Young master Ji San didn't insist on the matter and only wished Jiang Chen well on his journey. His final stop was naturally Emperor Peafowl. Emperor Peafowl smiled faintly, "You're traveling?"

Jiang Chen was startled, “Your Majesty is already aware?”

“I wasn’t certain but I made an educated guess from certain clues. Where do you plan to go this time?”

“I want to return to my homeland.” Jiang Chen replied truthfully.

“The Myriad Domain?” Emperor Peafowl’s eyes gaze shifted but didn’t say much. “Do you need me to dispatch some people to follow you?”

Jiang Chen shook his head, “My training would be meaningless with Your Majesty’s people escorting me everywhere. I only came to inform Your Majesty that I will return in time for the Veluriyam Pagoda opening six months from now, lest Your Majesty thinks I’ve broken my promise.”

“Haha, I rarely make errors when judging people. I wouldn’t hold you in such high regard if you were one to break promises.” Emperor Peafowl was a fairly unconstrained person and didn’t stop Jiang Chen. “Take care.”

Jiang Chen nodded but after a moment of thought, he added, “Your Majesty, there’s one thing I must bring to your attention.”

“Pray tell.”

Jiang Chen replied seriously, “The demon race you were worried about has already appeared. According to my knowledge, there’s a subdivision of the demon race called the Wood Demons. I’ve found certain clues regarding said tribe near Veluriyam Capital, but I’ve dealt with them already.”

“What?! Wood Demons?!” Emperor Peafowl was greatly astonished. “You’ve heard of the Wood Demons?”

Jiang Chen could only laugh wryly after seeing Emperor Peafowl’s strong reaction. “I’ve only heard a little bit about them from my teacher.”

Chapter 856: A Powerful Warning

Within the heavenly planes, the demon race was a particularly invasive race. Moreover, the assimilation capabilities of their bloodline was extremely strong. An ordinary race would be hard-pressed to avoid being turned into a demon once the demon race's bloodline assimilated with theirs. Therefore, from their bones down to the very blood coursing through their veins, the demon race could be said to be an extraordinarily invasive race. With their aggressiveness, they would not only take over a power's territory and land, but also invade people's bloodlines and souls, completely converting them into a denizen of the demon race. This was the major factor behind how the demon race had grown into a large tribe renowned around the world.

Of course, since the demon race possessed so many distinctive traits, they could definitely effortlessly dominate the world if they did not have some form of weakness. The heavens were fair. Although the demon race had a strong invasive ability and offensive power, they also had some corresponding weaknesses. For example, the bloodline of the demon race was very easily distinguishable. Due to this weakness, the moment the demon race appeared, they'd immediately be noticed and attacked by those around them. This had also largely restricted the expansion of the demon tribe.

In his previous life, Jiang Chen had heard of the demon race but had not conducted much research on them. When Emperor Peafowl raised his questions, Jiang Chen naturally turned to words he'd heard from his non-existent "teacher". Actually, Emperor Peafowl had always been very interested in this "teacher" of Jiang Chen's. Everything Jiang Chen had done so far irrefutably indicated how exceptional he must be. A teacher who could produce such an outstanding disciple in a mere ten years—just what kind of unnatural existence was he?

Even when Emperor Peafowl used himself as a measuring stick, he could only shake his head in inferiority. As he heard Jiang Chen mention his teacher again, Emperor Peafowl couldn't help but ask, "This teacher mentioned even matters regarding the demon race to you? What opinions does your teacher have on the demon race?"

Jiang Chen shook his head. "He only introduced me to the demon race so I'd be aware of their existence. He didn't actually offer any opinion on them."

Emperor Peafowl was slightly disappointed. He had wanted to listen to the opinions of Jiang Chen's teacher, this uncommon, saintly being. When the emperor followed up with a few questions about the demon race, Jiang Chen spilled everything he knew apart from the Requiem Wood. The reason why he hadn't mentioned the Requiem Wood wasn't because he was afraid that Emperor Peafowl would fight him for it, but rather, that the emperor would not allow him to go.

After all, for a young cultivator of the fifth-level sage realm, entering the desolate wildlands was undoubtedly a dangerous matter. If Emperor Peafowl took the dangers Jiang Chen would be facing into consideration, naturally he wouldn't allow Jiang Chen to go. When he heard that Jiang Chen had a way to counter the Wood Demon Parasites, Emperor Peafowl was shocked. "Was this method also something that your teacher taught you?"

Emperor Peafowl was beyond astonished. Was there anything this teacher of Jiang Chen's didn't know? From what he could see, this teacher was definitely not a simple person. One had to know that whenever a variant of the demon race appeared, the world would be immeasurably affected. Hence, Emperor Peafowl had previously heard plenty of news regarding the Wood Demons. He had also seen ancient records of how the Wood Demons had managed to turn an entire region into hell on earth within just a few months. Considering this, how could he contain his shock

upon hearing that Jiang Chen had a way to destroy the Wood Demon Parasites?

Emperor Peafowl viewed his problems with great foresight and immediately asked, “Little friend, did you know that you’ve unintentionally accomplished a task of great virtue?”

Jiang Chen did not deny this. “It was nothing but a trifle. Your Majesty can ask Pill King Lu Feng for the medicine I prescribed him. If that’s able to bring peace to Veluriyam Capital, then I am willing to offer it for free. If Your Majesty feels apologetic, then you can simply repay Pill King Lu Feng in some way. He’s my disciple now.”

“Your disciple?” Emperor Peafowl was shocked for a moment before he smiled, “Pill King Lu Feng, that old jester, I’ve heard of him too. He has a terrible temper. He won’t show anyone ordinary a shred of respect. There must be a great story behind why he’s taken you as his master.”

Jiang Chen laughed, “I have yet to consider making this public. If Your Majesty wishes to carry this out, you can collaborate with him. Allowing him to take credit will suffice.”

He found matters like credit rather insipid. After taking his leave, Jiang Chen returned to Taiyuan Tower to prepare for his departure the next day.

Emperor Peafowl sighed lightly. As he watched Jiang Chen’s retreating figure from Sacred Peafowl Mountain, his heart filled with sorrow. “The reason Jiang Chen was born to shoulder this burden must be related to the fate of the Divine Abyss Continent. This child carries many mysteries. And I’m afraid that it’s not simply because of his mysterious teacher…”

Emperor Peafowl harbored many speculations within his heart. Nonetheless, they were not important at present. What was important was the spark of hope he saw within Jiang Chen.

……

On a small footpath in the backyard of Taiyuan Tower, Huang'er asked in a gentle voice, "Brother Jiang, you've prepared for so long this time. Which faraway place are you planning to go?"

Jiang Chen smiled slightly, "Huang'er, even if you hadn't asked me, I was just about to tell you."

Their two hearts were connected. Just as one wanted to ask, the other wanted to answer. When they glanced at each other, they smiled warmly, clearly displaying the chemistry between them. Huang'er laughed gently, taking the playful pose of a little girl. She tapped the corner of her lips softly, "Allow me to guess?"

"Guess." Jiang Chen chuckled upon seeing her in high spirits.

"It must be related to your native country? You want to return to the Myriad Domain?"

Jiang Chen nodded his head mysteriously, "You're half right."

"Only half?" Huang'er's beautiful eyes moved slightly.

"Yes. This matter—it's related to you," Jiang Chen hinted.

Huang'er's elegant brows suddenly arched, "Is it news related to the Requiem Wood?"

Jiang Chen exclaimed in praise, "As expected of your intelligence. I've received a clue regarding the Requiem Wood. No matter if it is real or fake, I must still pay a visit. The reason I didn't tell you earlier was because I was afraid that you'd worry too much about the gains and losses. That wouldn't be good for you."

A light smile appeared on Huang'er's face, "Then why aren't you afraid of that now?"

"Because if I keep it hidden any longer, I wouldn't be able to forgive myself."

"Brother Chen, if things were like before, I naturally would've

hoped that the illness that plagued me could be cured earlier. But now? When I'm with you, Huang'er feels very comfortable. I've already forgotten all my pain. No matter my illness, my heart will remain lively." Huang'er murmured softly as she disclosed her innermost feelings. Her bashful speech carried an underlying current of steel.

Jiang Chen felt the ache in his heart worsen when he heard these words. "Huang'er, don't worry. There is nothing in the heavens or earth that can stop us. The Generation Binding Curse can't and even the Myriad Abyss Island can't. Your family clan, your rival clans...none of them can stop us!"

His tone was incomparably resolute. His eyes shone with a sense of determination. Huang'er might be a well-raised young lady from a large clan, but even so, when a young girl hears such a promise from the man she loves, her heart cannot help but be filled with happiness.

A night passed in silence. Early next morning, the two people disguised themselves, dressing up in the likelihood of wandering cultivators, before quietly leaving Taiyuan Tower. Not long after they left Taiyuan Tower, a few pairs of eyes affixed upon them.

"Report for the Saint Holy Kings! Two people from the Taiyuan Tower left in the early morning dressed in the clothing style of wandering cultivators. We suspect them to be members of Taiyuan Tower in disguise."

"What exactly is going on?"

"We have been keeping a close eye on Taiyuan Tower recently. These two people left very early, yet they are currently entertaining no visitors. They must be members of the tower."

The two saint holy kings' eyes lit up. Although there were numerous people residing in Taiyuan Tower, not many of them were significant. Apart from Pill King Zhen, the rest were all insignificant characters who would have no need to disguise

themselves. Hence, the first thing that occured to Holy King Ke and Holy King Mu was how fishy this development seemed.

“Continue to pay attention to the important figures in Taiyuan Tower to see if any are missing. If none of them are missing, then the only one who could have left is Pill King Zhen.”

“Also investigate any movements from the Wei father and son duo!” The two kings commanded in succession.

“Understood!” The spies left one by one. However, once they had left, the spies did not return for a long time.

As a result, Holy King Mu, who had been waiting for news all this time, began to rage. “What the hell are they doing? It has already been a few hours. If we continue to wait like this, who knows where those people would have gone already?”

“Those guys don’t usually do things this way.” Holy King Bei was somewhat ashamed. He was the head of the spy network in Veluriyam Capital. These men had all been trained by him. The fact that they had not brought back news even after so many hours caused him to feel as though he had lost plenty of face.

However, Holy King Ke frowned instead. “Could something have happened to them?”

Holy King Bei’s expression changed. “This subordinate will personally check.”

Just as he was about to get up, a hurried pattering of footsteps resounded from the corridor. Immediately, a guard responsible for securing the yard rushed in, his face full of fear as he said, “Saint Holy Kings, the spies that have been sent out have all been beheaded. Their corpses have been thrown into the yard.”

“What?” The few holy kings were completely dumbfounded. They stood up one after another.

As they rushed outside, Holy King Mu suddenly shouted loudly, “Everyone, stop! Don’t exit through the main gates.” The people

were all stunned. Holy King Mu's face was grave as he intoned, "There's danger."

Holy King Ke had also gathered his wits. He stared at the door for a second before saying, "It's been restricted. This doorway—someone has laid restrictions on it."

"Not just the doorway. All our exit paths have been restricted. We've been completely trapped." The holy king's complexion instantly turned extremely ugly.

Suddenly, a voice traveled from the void, "If the Eternal Celestial Capital would like to visit Veluriyam Capital as guests, Veluriyam Capital will not reject you. However, if you are here to cause a storm, consider this your first and final warning. If this happens again, every one of you can forget about ever leaving Veluriyam Capital again."

This voice was neither too fast nor too slow, but everyone who'd heard it felt the chill of fear penetrate their bones. The person who dared to proclaim this must be an enormous heavyweight within Veluriyam Capital. It was entirely possible that this was Emperor Peafowl himself!

In an instant, everyone had turned as stiff as stone statues. No one dared to move an inch, as though they were afraid that a single action would cause a misunderstanding that would result in a mass murder. All along they had been under the impression that they had worked in secret. They had always assumed that their plans were flawless. Never had they imagined that their each and every move had been under close inspection. As their line of thoughts trailed to this eventual conclusion, every one of them felt their blood run cold.

Weekend event for bonus SOTR chapters! To celebrate the launch of my other novel, Return of the Swallow, I've making up to five bonus SOTR chapters available for folks! How to unlock the five bonuses? You might be aware that I have an Instagram,

sharing various pics of food, Chinese culture, and translation life, and a Twitter where I banter with a lot of other translators.

I'd like to offer an additional chapter for each 100 new followers I get, on either platform. 3/5 chapters unlocked so far, final 24 hour countdown!

Chapter 857: Chance Encounter with an Old Acquaintance

The Eternal Celestial Capital had realized to their shock that they were completely trapped. Not only could they not exit, all forms of communication with the outside world had been cut off. It was as though they had been isolated from the outside world in every possible way. Naturally, Jiang Chen was not aware of these things happening within Veluriyam Capital. After he had left, he and Huang'er mixed into the various groups of wandering cultivators. With nothing to obstruct their path, their travel was smooth and peaceful.

When they reached the borders of Veluriyam Capital again, those powers from the Eternal Celestial Capital had already retreated from Myriad Peoples City. By now, the city had already regained its previous state. They passed through unimpeded.

The last time, he had slaughtered his way to Veluriyam Capital from the Myriad Domain. As his path had been paved with countless hardships, it had taken him no less than half a year of time. This time, his mood was entirely different. With no one to block his way and no fear of being recognized, his travels had been extremely smooth. Moreover, Jiang Chen’s speed was no laughing matter. Even without using the arts of flying from Emperor Featherflight, the Golden Cicada Wings alone were already incredibly fast. No matter how lively matters were in each territory Jiang Chen passed along his way, he dallied not at all.

They arrived at the Great Scarlet Mid Region within a day. At this point, they weren’t far from the Myriad Domain. Although this wasn’t the time to seek revenge against the Great Scarlet Mid Region, Jiang Chen still decided to visit the region’s imperial capital. At least, he could make some inquiries into the region’s recent developments and catch up on some news.

Once he entered the Great Scarlet Mid Region, Jiang Chen could immediately sense that the defenses in said region were much tighter than before. The checkpoints he had to pass by were all extremely strict.

In every city around the Great Scarlet regions, the liveliest places were those bustling with news regarding bounties on both Jiang Chen and the Regal Pill Palace. What Jiang Chen had not expected was for his bounty to rank among the highest. The price on his head was even higher than that on the palace head of the Regal Pill Palace. He wasn't actually too surprised about that. He'd taken out so many heavyweights of the Myriad Domain in Infant Shriek last time and mailed their decapitated heads to the emperor of the Great Scarlet Mid Region. It'd be strange if the region didn't hate him to the bone.

However, Jiang Chen had become more audacious since his skills had improved. He remained completely relaxed even in the face of his massive bounty and entered the capital with Huang'er. Even though so much time had passed since he last visited the capital, the hatred that Jiang Chen felt towards the Great Scarlet Mid Region had not abated at all. Although this region was only an accomplice of the Eternal Celestial Capital, their heinous murders in the Myriad Domain outnumbered even the Eternal Celestial Capital's. It could be said that the chain of calamities that the Myriad Domain had suffered could all be linked to the Great Scarlet Mid Region.

As they entered the region, Jiang Chen and Huang'er were not in a hurry to find an inn. Instead, they strolled towards the Dragon & Phoenix, the tavern they had previously visited.

The Dragon & Phoenix had been their previous haunt. It was where Jiang Chen had coincidentally spotted the third prince of the Great Scarlet Empire and met with Elder Gui of the Eternal Celestial Capital. This was where the two parties had discussed who the creator of the Longevity Pill was. Furthermore, this was

where Jiang Chen had overheard the news that Gouyu and the rest had been sold to the Eternal Celestial Capital. This was a place where news from all over the Great Scarlet Mid Region seemed to gather. From imperial secrets to market gossip, one could happen upon all kinds of information.

The Dragon & Phoenix was located in the liveliest district of the Great Scarlet Capital. People came and went amidst busy traffic; it was truly bustling with life. Before the two had even walked to the entrance of the tavern however, they could already see that the empty space in front was filled with people. At first glance, these people looked as though they were about to attack the tavern, their poses were that frightening. Jiang Chen and Huang'er exchanged shocked glances.

Normally, a place for food and beer should be lively but even then, shouldn't it only be lively on the inside? Why were there so many people outside the building? Although the two people were curious, they didn't rashly ask any passersby. Instead, they blended into the fray, secretly eavesdropping on the conversations between the crowd.

"I say! Is this really the way your Dragon & Phoenix does business? Whatever's in the pockets of those domineering nobility is money, and whatever's in ours isn't?"

"That's right! What gives them the right to enter first?"

"You can spew all the pretty words you want. What do you mean by treating nobility and wandering cultivators equally?! Ultimately, we wandering cultivators are still discriminated against!"

"Sigh, never mind. Wandering cultivators will remain wandering cultivators. Don't even think about arguing with those rich nobles."

"Guess you're right. This kind of auction was never something we poor wandering cultivators could afford. Let's go, let's go. Even

the entrance ticket is so expensive. They're really ripping people off here!"

"Don't even mention the price. We're still queuing over here, a few thousand people fighting for a single ticket, while those rich and powerful families can just swagger on in!"

After listening to various complaints from these wandering cultivators, Jiang Chen gained a rough understanding of the situation. As it turned out, it just so happened that they arrived at the Dragon & Phoenix while some kind of auction was happening. But, shouldn't auctions be held in auction halls? Why was this Dragon & Phoenix tavern holding some auction?

Jiang Chen was here only to catch up on recent developments, so he wasn't really interested in this.

As he stood in the crowd with Huang'er, he didn't see anyone he knew. They glanced at each other and walked away from the crowd, deciding to leave and go somewhere else. Before they had walked too far however, a line of people along the road stopped in their steps. This group of people were carrying a sedan chair. With a light sweep of the chair's curtains, half a face was exposed from within the sedan as it looked towards Jiang Chen and Huang'er. Although only half the person's face had been exposed, Jiang Chen's heart sank.

This face belonged to someone he knew from a long time ago. The person in the sedan also seemed to respond, calling out lightly, "Stop for a while. I'm going out."

"Young Mistress, the auction will be starting soon."

"If I tell you to stop, you stop. What nonsense are you blabbering on about?" The person in the sedan scolded delicately. It was a girl's voice.

As soon as Jiang Chen heard this voice, he was even more certain. This was someone he knew. Only, how had she recognized

him in his current disguise? Moreover, she had clearly been in the sedan. How had she seen him? As Jiang Chen was unwilling to interact with this person, he spoke to Huang'er, “Let’s go.”

The two of them had barely managed to walk away before the delicate voice sounded out from behind them. “Please stop, the two of you.”

Jiang Chen did not pause, only continued to walk straight ahead. However, the person behind them were clearly calling out to them. When she saw that Jiang Chen’s footsteps had not paused, she walked faster. Sweeping along like a scented breeze, she rushed in front of Jiang Chen in two or three steps. Raising both her hands, she blocked Jiang Chen and Huang'er’s way.

This girl had a slender figure, a waist as thin as a water snake yet still supple. The curves on her body were still impressively perfect. Only, her face had gained a sense of maturity and melancholy, and lost some of its previous seductive grace. This girl was actually Wei Xing’er of the Myriad Domain’s Walkabout Sect. She had tried to tempt Jiang Chen with sex appeal during the Mt. Rippling Mirage PIll Battle. Ling Bi'er had repeatedly warned Jiang Chen that this girl was a poisonous scorpion that he should handle with caution. She was a famous scorpion temptress in the Myriad Domain. Although he wasn’t with Ling Bi'er now, her earnest advice remained rooted in his memory. Moreover, he never had any pleasant history with Wei Xing’er, so he didn’t want engage in any pleasantries now.

“Move aside.” Jiang Chen frowned.

Wei Xing’er’s lips curved into something that wasn’t quite a smile. She placed her hands on her hips as she fixed her gaze on Jiang Chen. “Would you have any interest in a little chat?”

This was what Wei Xing’er had said to Jiang Chen during the Mt. Rippling Mirage Pill Battles as well. The only difference was that back then, Wei Xing’er had harbored no good intentions. She had

wanted to use the Azure Smokesnare Powder against Jiang Chen, but Jiang Chen had turned her plans against her and given her a harsh spanking. Today, the same sentence had been spoken. Yet, it managed to move Jiang Chen's heart. Wei Xing'er actually managed to recognize me? Why would she say the exact same line to me as back then otherwise? The only difference was that she didn't add my name at the front.

"We don't know each other. There's nothing much to chat about." Jiang Chen said as he was about to walk around Wei Xing'er.

Wei Xing'er giggled as she extended a hand to block his way. "You little boy, we haven't seen each other for so many years, but you're still so insensitive?"

Jiang Chen furrowed his brows. "Please control yourself."

Wei Xing'er rolled her eyes because shooting a glance at Huang'er at his side. She clucked her tongue. "Who would have thought that even after a few years, you still don't lack a beauty hanging off your arm. So, how did you swindle your way into this little girl's heart? I once took you for a loyal and dependable rare male specimen. Who'd have thought you also ended up being one of those hot and cold playboys? Heehee, if that delicate senior sister of yours saw you now, I wonder how heartbroken she'd be?"

If Jiang Chen hadn't altered his looks, the expression on his face would definitely be flabbergasted. Wei Xing'er's words already sufficiently revealed that she knew who he was. The only thing left was for her to call his name. That aforementioned sweet senior sister, wasn't that Ling Bi'er? For a split second, the thought of murder flashed through Jiang Chen's mind before quickly being quashed.

This was unrelated to his being in the Great Scarlet Mid Region. Even if he wasn't in this region, murdering someone to silence them wasn't something Jiang Chen could do. Besides, he was still

unclear about Wei Xing'er's intentions. Her watery eyes seemed to be able to tell a story. They seemed to understand everything as they swept up and down Jiang Chen's body. With a knowing smile, she said, "You fickle bad boy. Good thing you're not totally evil, nor do you have any murderous inclinations. Or else, I'd definitely be shouting your name loud and clear."

As she said this, Wei Xing'er tossed her hair and revealed a meaningful smile. She suddenly changed to silent transmission. "Jiang Chen, you little brat, I'm on my way to attend an auction. Either you come with me, or..."

"Or what?" Jiang Chen's brows furrowed. If this Wei Xing'er dared threaten him, Jiang Chen definitely didn't mind making her suffer a little. Even if he was stuck in this dragon's lair, he could still kill her in a flash before she could spit out a single word.

"Look at you, you look like you want to eat me. Don't you know? This big sister has never bore you any ill will. Last time, when I used the Azure Smokesnare powder against you, it was merely in the interest of the clan. I told you a long time ago that I love boldly and hate openly. And the kind of man I love most are geniuses like you. Especially since after so many years, you've even become the worst nightmare of the Great Scarlet Mid Region. The higher the price on your head rises, the more I feel justified in my tastes back then. What a pity..." Who knew what Wei Xing'er pitied herself over. Jiang Chen had no interest in listening further. Wei Xing'er abruptly shifted the topic of discussion. "You can choose not to go. But, if you don't go, then you might not be able to hear some information about the Myriad Domain."

Chapter 858: Resplendent Emerald Veranda's Young Madam

It had to be mentioned that Wei Xing'er certainly had a bag of tricks up her sleeve. Somehow, she'd always had a way to handle men. She had a way of attracting even Jiang Chen's attention, a man unlikely to fall for her tricks. Of course, what she relied on was not her assets but rather, the fact that she was able to analyze Jiang Chen's thoughts. Upon seeing his hesitation, Wei Xing'er giggled. "You evil little boy. Back when this girl fell into your palms, why didn't you hesitate before you spanked me? Could it be that you're scared right now?"

Jiang Chen exchanged glances with Huang'er. Huang'er didn't seem too scared of this temptress either. She nodded lightly, indicating that Jiang Chen should respond to her. He thought for a second before replying, "Wei Xing'er, I don't care what status you have right now or which house's young madam you might be. If you dare to do anything unfavorable to me, it's child's play for me to take your life, regardless of how many patrons you have."

Wei Xing'er raised her brows when she heard this. Not only did she not show a trace of fear, a smile graced her lips instead. "I just love how fierce you look. I haven't seen you for a few years but it's wonderful that you've become manlier! You hold my life within your palms anyway. Do whatever you want to me, I have no objections." As Wei Xing'er said this, she shot Jiang Chen a coy glance instead.

Jiang Chen sneered. "Your little tricks have no effect on me."

Wei Xing'er spat softly. "I'm fully aware that you're being manipulated by that wench, Ling Bi'er. You're biased towards her. Hmph, what a hypocritical little girl. In the end, doesn't she still have to watch the two of you flirt from the sidelines, just like I have to?"

Wei Xing’er seemed to carry some innate hatred towards Ling Bi’er. One was a publicly acknowledged goddess of the Myriad Domain. The other was a temptress who everyone feared but yearned to get close to. Character wise, the two women seemed to be naturally seemed to oppose each other. Hence, it wasn’t hard to understand why Wei Xing’er didn’t see eye to eye with Ling Bi'er.

Jiang Chen frowned. “You can stop spewing nonsense now before you go too far. Didn’t you say you were going to the auction? Let’s go then.”

Wei Xing’er was delighted when Jiang Chen agreed to go to the auction. “Little boy, you’ve made the right choice!” She walked back to the sedan chair and spoke to the porters and guards, “I’m bringing two friends to the auction. There’s no need for the sedan.”

Those people seemed extraordinarily deferential to Wei Xing’er as they did not dare defy her. Since Jiang Chen and Huang'er seemed to be a romantic couple, they probably wouldn’t be a negative influence on the young madam. Hence the servants felt at ease simply walking behind the trio respectfully. When Jiang Chen saw the judging eyes of the people around him, he sneered, “You also seem to be well-regarded nowadays. These people appear as though they respect you, but why are they looking at you like you’re a criminal?”

He’d originally expected Wei Xing’er to rebuff him. Who would have guessed that Wei Xing’er would only sigh lightly and indifferently reply, “You were born lucky. You have great potential and can stir up all the wind and rain you want. I’m just a weak woman. My sect has been destroyed, I have no one to rely on. Being bought by someone without being sold back and forth is already be considered a blessing.”

Wei Xing’er’s words left Jiang Chen speechless. No matter what grudges there had been between the Walkabout Sect and the Regal Pill Palace, they were all matters of the past. As of today, the two

sects had already become part of history. Most sect members had already passed from this world too. Grudges from the past had long since been written off with one stroke.

When he thought about this, Jiang Chen's mood had turned somber. He felt that if he mocked Wei Xing'er any further, it would be an ill thing to do. However, despite his resolution to stop making fun of her, he would keep his guard up around her. As the world had changed, who knew what position Wei Xing'er now occupied? From her appearance, her status in the Great Scarlet Mid Region didn't seem to be that low. If she stood on the side of the Great Scarlet Mid Region, then she would naturally oppose him.

After all, the relationship between their sects had been complicated to begin with. Although tensions had eased somewhat towards the end, they definitely couldn't be considered friends. Once again, they arrived in front of the Dragon & Phoenix. When the wandering cultivators saw Wei Xing'er arrive, they automatically moved aside to form a path for her.

"Tsk tsk, who'd have thought that even Resplendent Emerald Veranda's young madam would be here. This auction definitely doesn't seem to be on a small scale.

"Indeed, this young madam is certainly breathtaking."

"Hehe, if she wasn't as beautiful as that, with Resplendent Emerald Veranda's top tier wealth in this region, how could she get a chance to become the young madam?" Various secretive whispers echoed around him, yet Jiang Chen could hear them loud and clear. He couldn't help but glance over at Wei Xing'er. Resplendent Emerald Veranda? Although Jiang Chen didn't know what kind of power Resplendent Emerald Veranda had, he could tell from the tone of the people around him that this entity was definitely a big shot within the Great Scarlet Imperial Capital. Moreover, it was apparently shockingly wealthy. He remained silent as he followed Wei Xing'er into the Dragon & Phoenix.

“Oh my, young madam Wei has graced us with her presence today. Please, come in, come in. Will Master Shixuan be present today?” A staff member of the Dragon & Phoenix greeted them enthusiastically.

Although Wei Xing’er had spoken to Jiang Chen with a faceful of seduction, she did not bother putting up a facade for others. Her tone was bland as she replied, “He doesn’t have time.”

“Master Shixuan is a diligent and hardworking man. It’s natural that he does not have time. Young madam’s presence here is the same.” That person added with a harried smile as he seemed to have detected the distaste in Wei Xing’er’s tone.

Wei Xing’er remained silent. She simply walked inwards according to the staff member’s instructions. Jiang Chen and Huang'er followed Wei Xing’er in with silent amusement. Jiang Chen hadn’t thought that Wei Xing’er would have racked up such a immense reputation during her time in the Great Scarlet Mid Region. He’d truly underestimated her.

After crossing a few long corridors, they arrived at a spacious site. The staff member said, “Young madam, every VIP of this area has their private area that’s been separated from the outside. As Resplendent Emerald Veranda’s representative, please enter this private room.”

The auction hall was extremely luxurious. Although the private room wasn’t big, it was cosy enough for the few of them. However, it was indeed a private room removed from the outside world. This small private room actually provided a significant advantage. When other people competed against each other, they could all see each other’s conditions. However, they weren’t able to see those people in private rooms. There were around fifty private rooms. The other guests were all in the hall, which could comfortably contain about two or three thousand people. To tell the truth, Jiang Cheng wasn’t that interested in the auction.

After all, he'd seen auctions of much higher value in the Veluriyam Capital. Back when he'd been at the Joined Ridges Pavilion in Veluriyam Capital, the auction there had naturally been better. And it was during that auction that Jiang Chen had gotten to know Ji San and entered the upper echelons of society.

The private room wasn't that big but it contained three rows of seats that could house about nine people. Since only three people had entered, it was naturally very spacious. There was no conversation after they had entered the private room. The atmosphere turned heavy in an instant. There was still some time before the auction. As Wei Xing'er looked at Jiang Chen and Huang'er, a trace of envy was unconsciously revealed in the corner of her eye. However this look passed in a flash and was subsequently well-hidden. The other two hadn't noticed. Wei Xing'er stared at Jiang Chen. "Aren't you curious?"

Jiang Chen shrugged. "About what?"

"Curious about Resplendent Emerald Veranda or about what I'm doing here? Curious about why I dragged you to this auction? Curious about why they're looking at me like I'm a criminal?"

When Jiang Chen heard her questions, he laughed but didn't answer. He was naturally a bit curious. However, he was following the principle of not asking unless necessary regarding Wei Xing'er's matters. At any rate, he was always on his guard against this woman. It was best if he remained at a respectable distance from her.

"Resplendent Emerald Veranda has a lot of money. With money, comes power. If we're only talking about wealth, then perhaps there might be a number of people in Great Scarlet Mid Region wealthier than us. If we're talking about power, we can still enter the top twenty." Unexpectedly, Wei Xing'er volunteered this information. However, as she introduced this party, there wasn't a shred of pride on her face, much less any trace of showing off.

“You’re definitely looking down on me, thinking that I’m dependent on a sugar daddy.” Wei Xing’er laughed self-deprecatingly. “However, all that is already irrelevant. I know you two are on your guard around me. That’s also natural. We’ve all changed. Even if we’d been in the same sect, you two would still be cautious around me after so long. Moreover, our previous relationship has never been very good.” After entering the private room, Wei Xing’er put away her bubbly facade.

Jiang Chen did not comment. Instead he asked, “You asked me to come to this auction. Why?”

Wei Xing’er laughed. “Now, you’re thinking of clarifying everything then leaving, aren’t you? You’re scared of me. You’re scared of this succubus, scared that I’d report you at any moment? You’re scared that by interacting with me, you’ll raise the ire of that beautiful girl beside you?”

When he heard the hint of anger that had entered Wei Xing’er’s speech, Jiang Chen sighed softly. “You’re thinking too much.”

Huang'er also smiled slightly. “I don’t know whether you’re a succubus. But I don’t mind if you two want to reminisce about your past. If you need me to, I can take a step back too.”

Huang'er remained as open as ever. It was as though she was willing to accept anything that happened in this world, even if the girl opposite her was called a temptress and harbored some complicated feelings towards her man. Her woman’s intuition told her that this girl called Wei Xing’er probably had butted heads with Brother Chen previously. But as of today, she didn’t feel any enmity emanating from her. Conversely, her declaration caused Wei Xing’er to be rather stunned, as though she was seeing Huang'er for the first time. Wei Xing’er carefully examined her for a long time before she sighed softly, “I know now.”

“What do you know?” Huang'er laughed softly.

“I know why Ling Bi'er lost to you. Her attitude is too aloof. She’s

as pretty as a portrait but not as magnanimous as you," Wei Xing'er exclaimed.

Huang'er laughed softly and shot a glance at Jiang Chen. Actually Huang'er was fully aware of what happened between the Ling sisters and Jiang Chen. She had even seen Ling Hui'er grab Jiang Chen's hand and press it against her abundant bosom. Only, at that time Huang'er had used some clever way to cover for Jiang Chen. She'd never nagged about this matter, nor did she deny it. In reality, her impression of the Ling sisters wasn't even bad. In particular, Ling Bi'er had given up her own life to save Jiang Chen in the Paramount Realm, something that Huang'er really respected her for. Hence, when Wei Xing'er said that Ling Bi'er's personality wasn't as good as hers, she didn't preen, but rather calmly accepted it.

Chapter 859: Another Side of Wei Xing'er

Of course, it had actually been Wei Xing'er who misunderstood Jiang Chen in a moment of sentimentality. With Jiang Chen and Huang'er's relationship, their hearts and minds were completely linked. There was absolutely no need for mindless speculation from others. Furthermore, there was no need to worry that Huang'er might overthink from their interactions with Wei Xing'er. However, Jiang Chen wasn't fond of the way Wei Xing'er compared Huang'er and Ling Bi'er.

"Young madam Wei, if you have anything to say, just say it." Jiang Chen said indifferently.

When Wei Xing'er heard the way Jiang Chen addressed her, she was first taken aback, then produced a bitter smile. With a sudden flourish of her sleeves, the scarlet virginity dot that struck a sharp contrast against her snow white arm was once again jarringly exposed to Jiang Chen's gaze. Wei Xing'er bit her bottom lip as she eyed Jiang Chen. "That's right, I am a succubus. My heart is that of a scorpion's. There are certainly countless men who have suffered at my hands. However, which one of them can dare to proclaim that they are innocent? From what I can see, they all deserved to die. I am a succubus, but I'm not a cheap whore to be used by any man. I might have woven numerous lies throughout my life but everything I told you previously was the truth. This virginity dot is genuine. I am still a virgin even today." For some reason, Wei Xing'er seemed exceptionally conscious of what Jiang Chen thought of her. In Jiang Chen's eyes, she saw contempt. It left a lump of discomfort in her heart that she had to pour out her feelings.

Jiang Chen was stunned. He couldn't comprehend at all. Why had Wei Xing'er sought him out was to talk about such insignificant things? Conversely, it was Huang'er who shot Wei Xing'er a meaningful glance. She sighed quietly. "Miss Wei's

virginity dot is indeed genuine. She can't make this up." Huang'er spoke up suddenly.

Wei Xing'er would never have thought that this girl standing in front of Jiang Chen would actually speak up for her. Her eyelashes gathered a little mist as she abruptly asked, "I'm still curious. Which prestigious sect does a noble young lady like you come from, for you to be have such a generous temperament?"

Huang'er laughed. "I come from a rural place. You wouldn't know even if I said it."

Wei Xing'er did not pick on her unwillingness to answer. Instead, she sighed, "There's no way a small sect could foster someone as generous as you. No wonder even that wench, Ling Bi'er, lost to you. There's nothing strange about her loss."

As she said this, Wei Xing'er's brilliant eyes shifted towards Jiang Chen, "Little boy, I suddenly thought of something. Can you tell me?"

"What?"

"Wei Qing of the Walkabout Sect, did you kill him?"

Jiang Chen smiled coldly, "What, are you planning to seek vengeance from me?"

Wei Xing'er raised her brows. "You really did kill him? Then I must thank you. That brat is from my clan, but he'd always lusted after me. Not only that, he even drooled after that exquisite senior sister of yours. That kind of repulsive man pesters me when he's in the sect and troubles others when he's out. Good riddance, I've wanted to kill him since a long time ago if not for sect camaraderie. When he died, I even had to pretend to grieve for him."

"You really think so?" Jiang Chen asked, his expression not quite a smile.

"You must think that I, Wei Xing'er, was born a liar, hmm?" Wei Xing'er sighed.

“Yes, he died at my hands. But he invited his own death,” Jiang Chen didn’t deny anything.

Wei Xing’er nodded. “Even if you didn’t admit to it, I still could have guessed. With that personality of his, he’d have kicked the bucket sooner or later. The fact that you killed him was within my predictions.”

Jiang Chen didn’t answer her. Instead, he asked, “Even if you’ve become the young madam of the Resplendent Emerald Veranda, you don’t seem to want to sell us out. So what are your intentions behind calling me to attend this auction?”

“If it was anyone else, I’d have turned a blind eye. There are less than five people who have captured my interest within the entire Myriad Domain. There’s an Elder Wu Hen in my sect who’s always taken good care of me. He originally swore revenge on you but in the end, he retreated with your Regal Pill Palace’s Palace Head instead. Tell me, doesn’t that make me fortune’s fool? If I’d know, I would have just left with him.” Wei Xing’er was filled with regret and her tone carried a hint of sorrow. “Afterwards, our sect head was killed in the war along with many others. The few of us left became prisoners and were brought to the Great Scarlet Mid Region. Jiang Chen, we might not be as accomplished and powerful as you are in stirring up so many matters, but there wasn’t a single coward nor was there anyone who turned traitor in our Walkabout Sect. Your Regal Pill Palace never lost your moral integrity. Our Walkabout Sect certainly never lost ours either!”

Her words struck a chord within Jiang Chen. With the destruction of the Myriad Domain, the Regal Pill Palace had not been the only one shattered. Various other big sects had also collapsed. Today, as he heard Wei Xing’er recount firsthand the details of the Myriad Domain’s collapse, Jiang Chen was similarly shaken. The Myriad Domain had been the homeland of the Walkabout Sect as well. It had been the bloody battlefield that they had fought to protect until their last breath. From this perspective,

they were all wandering survivors, nomads of the Myriad Domain's collapse.

"Since then, the Myriad Domain's cultivators that I've saved so far in this region number at least eighty, if not a hundred. Some of them were sold as slaves, others were being pursued... If I ran into them, I don't care who they are. I've spent money and effort to help them settle their past. No one knows of these things, no one understands them. Nor will anyone believe me.

"A woman who's been labelled a succubus... how could she have any kindness?" Wei Xing'er scoffed self-deprecatingly. "Truth be told, I've never been a saint. They say I'm a scorpion, that I have a heart of stone. Well, sometimes they're not wrong. Back in the Myriad Domain, I'd be too lazy to even glance at these people. I might even kill them if they pissed me off. But when I saw their pathetic figures here, I couldn't help but lend a helping hand. Perhaps this is just a case where misery loves company? After all, we're all stray dogs after our home has been destroyed. I might have squirmed my way into a moneypot, but I'm not blind to the reality that I'm still a stray dog. You ask me what my intentions are in coming to this auction? I can tell you. I was just taking a stroll here to see if there are any slaves from the Myriad Domain for sale. If there are, spending a bit more money isn't a problem if I can save them from the abyss of suffering. As for what they do afterwards or where their future takes him, I don't care neither can I care."

If Jiang Chen listened to other people pass on this information instead of personally hearing it from Wei Xing'er, he would never have believed it to be true. But, at this moment, as he stood face-to-face with her, Jiang Chen could determine that Wei Xing'er's spiel didn't seem to be a lie. She also had no need to lie. Moreover, under the watchful gaze of Jiang Chen's God's Eye and Evil Golden Eye, it was impossible for her to lie.

This rather surprised Jiang Chen. It never occurred to him that

venomous scorpion Wei Xing'er, that moody and resentful succubus, would actually have such a sentimental side to her. It was just as she said. They were all stray dogs. Maybe, this truly was misery seeking company. At least, Jiang Chen was currently also wrestling with similar feelings. For any sect disciple of the Myriad Domain, after the collapse of the domain, all the gratitudes and grudges of the past had become fleeting clouds. Every one of them now shared a common identity as a stray dog, the common possession of the remnants of a broken home.

After Wei Xing'er said her piece, a smile of relief was revealed on her face. "Alright, I've said everything I needed to say. Today I am very happy, but not because I saw my enemy. There's nothing happy about seeing my enemy. We're all stray dogs anyway, seeing one would only add to my frustrations. But, you are different. You are the only one who I desire to tell everything to. Don't ask me why, because past, present or future, you will always hold such a place in my heart... Because of the way you left us helpless during the Mt. Rippling Mirage Pill Battle, because my Azure Smokesnare Powder had no effect on you, because you are the only man who dares to spank me...." Towards the end, Wei Xing'er's voice had turned into a light murmur.

Jiang Chen's face had turned completely red in embarrassment. He never would have imagined that this Wei Xing'er would view himself in such a favorable light. Huang'er also laughed softly. She took all this in without jealousy or ridicule. She was even a little moved. Whether a succubus or a goddess, everyone held love in their hearts. Everyone had their true self. Only, reality was too cruel... The sects had been destroyed and people changed. The next time they'd met, this Wei Xing'er was already someone's wife.

Wei Xing'er smiled a carefree smile filled with false confidence. She blinked away the mist gathering at the corner of her eyes as she forced a laugh. "Little boy, put that sour expression away. I'm already married off to someone else now. I never had the chance to

say this during my teenage years. As of today, I haven't lost ownership of my body yet, but I have already become another person's wife in name. Other people might think that what I told you is unbecoming for a wife. I don't give a damn. If it makes me happy, I have to say it. I'm not like that lass, Ling Bi'er, so clearly in love yet so self-restrained. In the end, didn't someone snatch her man away? If I was her, I would have thrown myself into your arms long ago and taken your name. Even in death, I would at least have been your woman."

Jiang Chen had nothing to say to that. This manner of speaking was akin to that of a little demon. This was truly Wei Xing'er's style, fearless and rebellious.

"Now, you know why those people are scrutinizing me so closely, right? They're scared that I'll run off with some other man." Wei Xing'er appeared to laugh blithely, but someone as attentive as Huang'er could detect something else.

"Miss Wei, if your heart isn't here, why not leave the Great Scarlet Mid Region?" Huang'er suddenly asked.

"Leave? Where would I go?" Wei Xing'er scoffed. "I might appear as the young madam of the Resplendent Emerald Veranda, a lofty identity that's worthy of respect. But the one being respected is not me, it's the Veranda. I'm just an ornamental vase, a puppet. If I overstep my boundaries even a little, then what's waiting for me might even be a fate of eternal damnation." This was not an exaggeration. Wei Xing'er possessed at least this much wisdom.

She was very clear that her status had not been achieved by her own power. Instead, she had received it from the Veranda. If she displayed any signs of infidelity, she would inevitably land herself in hot water. Leave? How could she leave to?

Huang'er nodded lightly, opening her mouth to say something. However, Wei Xing'er waved a hand in dismissal. "You don't have to console me. I won't leave anyways. I might fancy your man, but

those are all thoughts from my teenage years. I'm going to stay here and do what I can do. If you really want to make me happy, then grow stronger. Reestablish the Myriad Domain and counterattack the Great Scarlet Mid Region! If I am to leave, there is only one place I will return to and that is the Walkabout Sect. I won't go anywhere else where I'd just have to prostitute myself again anyways. At the Resplendent Emerald Veranda, I at least have some status to do some good."

Chapter 860: The Five Great Cauldrons of the Regal Pill Palace

Jiang Chen suddenly felt a sense of shame. He hadn't quite brought himself to respect Wei Xing'er all along, and it wasn't just because of Ling Bi'er's warning. Rather, it was because Wei Xing'er's previous style of doing things had been overly unruly and sinister. To put it succinctly, she'd been poisonous. She would achieve an end regardless of the means. Naturally, Jiang Chen wasn't fond of that.

In reality, Ling Bi'er had never slandered Wei Xing'er. She'd only warned Jiang Chen to be on her guard around the other girl. Everything Ling Bi'er had said was true, because Wei Xing'er had decided to make a move against Jiang Chen soon afterwards. The Wei Xing'er at that time had truly possessed all the attributes of a succubus. Only, as things changed with the passage of time, the paradigm shift within the Myriad Domain had given Jiang Chen the chance to see another side of Wei Xing'er.

Jiang Chen might have saved a fair number of people in the Myriad Domain, like the group young geniuses he'd rescued at the entrance of the Paramount Realm. However, in his heart, he would never have expected Wei Xing'er to do the same. And yet, that girl had done exactly that. It was just that their individual methods at been different, that was all!

As they spoke, the remaining customers of the auction had more or less all arrived. Following that, the voice of the auction master echoed throughout that the auction would be entering its preliminary stage.

"The situation of your Regal Pill Palace's prisoners is more complicated. They normally don't enter the markets, nor do they appear at auctions. But it appears that every faction regards your Regal Pill Palace as a very important entity. They all want to lay

hands on a few disciples for interrogation about the Longevity Pill recipe." Wei Xing'er explained, "The highlight of this auction is the sale of slaves. However, there definitely won't be anybody from the Regal Pill Palace. Right now, everybody wants to use the people from your sect to get rich. Even if they're not interested in the Longevity Pill, they still hope that they can lure you out by seizing members of the Palace. You know how much you're worth, no?"

Jiang Chen smiled indifferently. If those people really thought that way, he could only laugh at them for being too naive. If they could force him to show himself by simply capturing a disciple of Regal Pill Palace, then something must be wrong with his brain. There were many people he cared about in the Regal Pill Palace, but very few people would cause him to show himself. There were some people Jiang Chen had never even interacted with. Naturally, he wouldn't out himself for the sake of the so-called "sect righteousness".

That wasn't righteousness. It was foolishness.

"Miss Wei, you said that your sect's Elder Wu Hen retreated with the Regal Pill Palace Head and others. Perhaps you have some information regarding them?" Jiang Chen abruptly brought up this matter.

Wei Xing'er shook her head helplessly. "If there was news about Elder Wu Hen, I would definitely seek help from him. He's the only one in the sect with knowledge and experience. He was more open-minded than that obstinate sect head."

Jiang Chen had a deep impression of this Elder Wu Hen. Initially, when he'd acquired a Invisible Chameleon Cloudpine in the restricted area of Mt Rippling Mirage, that Elder Wu Hen had pursued him endlessly with a thousand strategies. Finally, they had engaged in a battle of wits that had ended with Elder Wu Hen's retreat. The elder was able to advance or retreat according to the situation. He was a rather impressive being. Only, he, Palace Head

Dan Chi and the others were only a group of sage realm cultivators. How long could they last under such merciless pursuit? How were they doing today? Jiang Chen was quite worried on their behalf.

Huang'er suddenly asked, “Miss Wei, I’m curious. We’ve completely disguised ourselves. How did you recognize us? I feel that I have some confidence in my ability to change my looks.”

The answer to this question was something Jiang Chen was also curious about. It was just that he hadn’t asked it yet. Wei Xing’er’s delicate smile was rather ambiguous. Her clever eyes turned towards Huang'er, “I’m afraid that you won’t like the answer to that question.”

Huang’er smiled softly, shaking her head instead.

“Alright, I’ll tell you then. I, Wei Xing’er, was born with a very sensitive nose. Detecting a man’s scent is especially easy for me. The scent of your man here, do you know how unique it is to me, how memorable? Moreover, you two were so close to me. I might still be able to detect it even if you were a few hundred meters away.”

There were various talents within the world of cultivators. Some people seemed to have received heaven’s favor and were born with exceptional eyesight, which helped tremendously in training various arts of the eye. Others had keen ears that were incredibly sensitive to all kinds of sounds and movements. Naturally, there were also people with a good sense of smell as they’d been born with a exceptional nose. Who’d have thought that this Wei Xing’er possessed such a unique advantage? For anyone who wanted to refine pills, this talent was truly akin to receiving a gift from the heavens. In terms of pill refinement, sense of smell was vital in identifying spirit herbs and evaluating pills.

The preliminary stage of the auction concluded as they chatted. The real stage was about to begin.

“Honored guests, we welcome everyone to the Dragon &

Phoenix's monthly auction. The format of this auction will remain the same as usual. It is split into two parts, an auction for goods and an auction for slaves. We will begin with the goods. As everyone knows, ever since the Myriad Domain collapsed, there have been an outflow of valuable items and slaves from that domain. We will never run out of business in the next hundred years."

There were numerous big and small sects in the Myriad Domain that were now tens of thousands of slaves. Valuable items were also indeed flowing out like a gushing river. Even the Great Scarlet Mid Region would need at least a hundred years to fully assimilate the Myriad Domain.

"We would like to thank everyone for your honorable patronage. Without any further ado, we will cut straight to the point. The first article is a treasure from the Myriad Domain's Dark North Sect. Named the Dark North Bell, is the sect's treasured legacy and can be used for both offense and defense. The Dark North Sect has not even used thirty percent of its might. Only in the hands of an emperor realm heavyweight will this Bell be able to display its power on a greater scale. The starting bid is ten million saint spirit stones. Every bid must exceed five hundred thousand saint spirit stones."

The Dark North Bell? Jiang Chen had heard of this bell. It was pride and joy of the Dark North Sect. After the sect's collapse, even this protective treasure had been brought out for auction. Moreover, the price of ten million saint spirit stones wasn't actually very high.

"This first article is usually be considered one of the most valuable items in this auction. It's intended to whet our appetites," Wei Xing'er sneered.

Although the Dark North Sect's relationship with the Regal Pill Palace hadn't been bad, Jiang Chen obviously wouldn't help them buy this in present circumstances. As he carried numerous

treasures, he wasn't too concerned about adding this Dark North Bell to his collection. Hence, he only watched emotionlessly as the others clawed eagerly at each other for the Bell.

It had to be said that the wealth possessed by inhabitants of the Great Scarlet Mid Region was a far cry to that of the nobles of Veluriyam Capital. During his time in Veluriyam Capital, he'd seen firsthand how fierce competition had been at the auctions there. Items that were above average could easily be inflated to a few dozen million spirit stones. And although this Dark North Bell had been touted so highly, everyone remained restrained while raising the bid, adding only five hundred thousand every time. The price finally rose to twenty million after a long period of time.

"Do you want me to bid?" Wei Xing'er asked.

Jiang Chen shook his head. "No it's fine. This is just the first item." With how much he had seen by now, Jiang Chen found himself spurning this Dark North Bell. It wasn't that the item itself was a failure but rather that Jiang Chen already possessed enough equipment. There was no benefit to bidding for this Dark North Bell other than to attract attention. Even if he won it, was he supposed to return it to the Dark North Sect as a sign of goodwill in the future? Jiang Chen certainly had much better things to do. Moreover, he didn't even know if there was anyone from the Dark North Sect who was still alive.

The price plateaued when it reached twenty million. In the end, this Dark North Sect was sold to a noble of the Great Scarlet Mid Region. The second item was a batch of talismans. They appeared to be of rather high level ones. However, Jiang Chen remained indifferent. He possessed many similar talismans, some of which were even superior to the ones for auction.

Wei Xing'er had been observing Jiang Chen all along. When she saw his calm demeanor and faceful of disinterest, she felt a prickle of curiosity in her heart. This little boy has his sights set so high? Not only did he turn his nose down at the Dark North Bell, he even

scorns these life-saving talismans? Everyone has turned into stray dogs with the fall of the Myriad Domain. Why is it that he's only gotten wealthier instead?

Women were mysterious creatures. Although Wei Xing'er had made a name for herself as a succubus back in the Myriad Domain, she actually had very high standards, perhaps even higher than Ling Bi'er. It was just that their personalities were expressed in polar opposite ways. Wei Xing'er wouldn't even spare most men a second glance. It was only Jiang Chen who had attracted her attention during the Mt. Rippling Mirage Pill Battles.

Afterwards, when her Azure Smokesnare Powder had failed to work on Jiang Chen and she'd been spanked thrice instead, her heart had truly been pried open. The harder something was to attain, the more curious she was about it and the more she yearned for it. That was why her impression of Jiang Chen had not faded even after these years. Instead, it had grown deeper everyday. At this moment, as she faced the man she'd yearned for all along, Wei Xing'er wanted to present her best side, but she was curious as to how he'd been for the past few years. Today, she could sense from Jiang Chen's attitude that he hadn't spent those years worse for the wear. She could infer all these clues from his standards alone. Just as Wei Xing'er pondered upon this, the third item was brought out for display.

"The third item for auction is a set of constructs from the Regal Pill Palace. The Regal Pill Palace was founded on pill dao. The Longevity Pill that everyone is familiar with also initially originated from them. I believe everyone is familiar with this sect. The items for auction today are four of the Regal Pill Palace's Five Great Cauldrons. The Skyscatter, Skypeak, Skyorigin, and Skywood Cauldrons. Apart from the Skyweave Cauldron, the four of the five great cauldrons have been gathered in this room. Everyone must be curious as to why there is one cauldron missing, right? You might have already guessed it. The remaining

Skyweave Cauldron lies in the hands of that thieving Jiang Chen. Whoever can catch and kill that thief can take the Skyweave Cauldron to complete the set. These five cauldrons can contain the fortunes of a fourth ranked sect. I believe everyone is clear on the starting price of twenty million."

Jiang Chen was naturally completely in the know about these five treasured cauldrons. It was exactly like the auction master had said. The last of the five cauldrons, the Skyweave Cauldron was in his possession. Huang'er and Wei Xing'er both turned their gazes towards Jiang Chen. Clearly, both women knew that Jiang Chen would not ignore matters that involved the Regal Pill Palace.

"Outbid everyone else. I don't care how much it costs. Help me win those cauldrons." Jiang Chen immediately took out a storage ring. "There are over a hundred million saint spirit stones in here. If that's not enough, I have more." He was a tycoon even in the ranks of Veluriyam Capital now. Was there anything more to be said about the degree of his wealth in this insignificant Great Scarlet Mid Region?

Chapter 861: Shocking Wealth

Forget twenty million, the bid could start at two hundred million and he wouldn't even crease his brow. For Jiang Chen, this was no longer a large sum of money. He had already come into quite a bit of money back when he took out three thousand people back at Infant Shriek. If the valuables he obtained back then were to be converted into saint spirit stones, they would be worth at least several hundred million themselves. After he arrived at Veluriyam Capital, Jiang Chen had opened Taiyuan Tower and then seized Taiyuan Lodge for himself. He had obtained innumerable rewards from the various events that happened after that. Currently, Jiang Chen's wealth was shocking to say the least.

In fact, House Wei, the Coiling Dragon Clan and even Sacred Peafowl Mountain itself would send an endless stream of spirit stones into his pockets if he were to make such a request. Money was the one thing Jiang Chen lacked the least. Whereas the Five Great Cauldrons were the symbolic treasures of the Regal Pill Palace. They were important to the Regal Pill Palace just like the Dark North Bell was to the Dark North Sect. They might not be the only sect treasures the Regal Pill Palace possessed, but they were still part of the collection.

In fact, the Five Great Cauldrons practically symbolized the Regal Pill Palace itself and its face. Without the Five Great Cauldrons, the sect's resurrection would be incomplete even if it turned out to be a success. These cauldrons were the only things that could represent the Regal Pill Palace's history and former glory.

That was why Jiang Chen was dead set on obtaining these cauldrons. It was true that he currently possessed a better set of cauldrons compared to the Five Great Cauldrons, such as the Skysnatcher Cauldron he'd won from the Joined Ridges Pavilion auction. But these cauldrons were of special meaning to him.

Wei Xing'er was the one who was stunned by this turn of events.

Her bewitching eyes couldn't move away from Jiang Chen as she temporarily forgot how to speak for a moment. Had he really just flung a hundred million saint spirit stones without batting an eyelid? Technically speaking, Wei Xing'er was the young madam of the Veranda now. She had seen enough of the world to know that there were many kinds of wealthy people. However, their wealth only stretched as far as their own local regions. Moreover, not every one of them could throw out a hundred million saint spirit stones without batting an eyelid.

The Resplendent Emerald Veranda might possess this ability, but that was the total sum of all its properties and businesses added together. Even they would have to make some preparations even if they needed to fling out a hundred million spirit stones in one go. But not only had Jiang Chen produced one hundred million saint spirit stones in one go, he even looked like he could repeat the action a couple of times more. In fact, he looked like he carried a few hundred million saint spirit stones with him as pocket change everyday. If her guess was true, then his wealth was shocking to say the least.

If Wei Xing'er were to learn that Jiang Chen was the owner of Taiyuan Tower and the pill king that even Sacred Peafowl Mountain needed to cater to, she would probably forget to collect her jaw even after the auction was over. She let out a soft sigh and smiled wryly. "I guess a good life is not the only thing you're leading, hmm? I doubt even your Regal Pill palace head had so much money in his life."

A hundred million sacred spirit stones equaled one billion origin spirit stones. It was shocking enough that the head of the Great Cathedral, Xiang Wentian had produced ten million origin spirit stones to bid for the Longevity Pill back then. Jiang Chen had just casually exceeded that amount one hundred times over. It was no wonder that Xing'er was shocked by his current wealth. She might be representing the Veranda in this auction, but she was also

representing herself too. The amount of capital she was allowed her to use for one auction was just around fifty million. Anything more than that would require real consideration before the bid was allowed to go through.

Admittedly, the Five Great Cauldrons was a more attractive item than the Dark North Bell. The bids rang out faster than the Dark North Bell too. It didn't take long before the bid reached twenty five million.

"It's time for you to make a move," Jiang Chen reminded her.

Wei Xing'er blinked, "How should I bid on this?"

"Just bid however you like," Jiang Chen smiled. His tone was generous and unrestrained.

Wei Xing'er's eyes sparkled as the hint of a devilish smile appeared on her face. Then, she opened her lips and declared, "Thirty million!"

She added five million onto the bid immediately. It was fundamentally different from the petty five hundred thousand bid increase made by those other parties. As expected, her bid quashed many competitors in an instant. There were plenty of people present who recognized Wei Xing'er's voice, and they knew that Wei Xing'er represented the Resplendent Emerald Veranda, and was a local tycoon of Great Scarlet Capital. Normally, Wei Xing'er spent her money bidding on slaves and not objects.

Therefore, her sudden, generous bid of thirty million saint spirit stones on an object was quite intimidating. Despite Wei Xing'er's declaration, there were a few people who refused to give up and continued to bid for the cauldrons. However, their quotes were exactly as minor as before; adding just five hundred thousand stones onto the existing bid. Wei Xing'er immediately made another bid of thirty five million.

This time her aggressiveness completely stamped out their

opportunistic hopes, and she ultimately won the four cauldrons with a final bid of thirty million saint spirit stones. No one was surprised that she was this wealthy. After all, the Veranda often displayed all kinds of strange objects in their stores. These pill cauldrons were definitely a suitable addition to their collection. All those who wished to bid for the cauldrons understood that it was a stupid endeavor to try and match the Veranda's wealth. Therefore, Wei Xing'er easily won the items after putting in just two bids.

Although the price was a little high, winning four pill cauldrons with just thirty five million saint spirit stones was still quite a good trade for Jiang Chen. The Skysnatcher Cauldron he bid for back at Joined Ridge Pavilion's auction was more expensive than all four of these cauldrons together. Jiang Chen counted out fifty million saint spirit stones and passed them onto Wei Xing'er. Wei Xing'er looked surprised. What was the meaning behind these additional fifteen million saint spirit stones?

"Stop staring at me like that and take it already. You'll be suspected for bidding for a Regal Pill Palace object no matter what, so these fifteen million saint spirit stones is the money you got for selling the cauldrons to another buyer right after you bid for them. Do you understand? This is how you justify your bid. This is how you shut the mouths of those who try to question you after you return."

Huang'er was very approving of Jiang Chen's decision. While Wei Xing'er appeared well off on the outside, the amount of freedom she really enjoyed was the completely opposite of expectations. They had no doubt that she would be questioned if she spent thirty five million to bid for these cauldrons, but couldn't produce them because she'd passed them to Jiang Chen when she returned. But if she had fifteen million spirit stones, she could excuse herself saying that she had sold the cauldrons right after receiving them.

"Just take it." Huang'er smiled kindly.

Wei Xing'er’s strong pride told her that she mustn't take the money. However, Jiang Chen and Huang’er’s determined gaze made her feel like turning down their offer would be a crime against them. She looked well off on the surface, but the amount of money that actually landed in her lap weren’t much at all. The amount of money she privately owned even less so. A moment later, Wei Xing'er ultimately accepted the money with a soft sigh.She could tell that Jiang Chen didn’t care about this miniscule amount of money at all. The fact that he could give away fifteen million just like that meant that his actual wealth was at least tens or hundreds of times bigger than this sum.

The next items that came through the auction failed to garner the same price tag as the cauldrons. Jiang Chen quickly lost interest in the auction as it progressed further. He was waiting only to see if he could spot any familiar faces during the slave part of the auction. If there was no one, then he was going to leave right after.

The last item to be auctioned triggered a commotion, however. It was a saint spirit creature’s bloodline from the Great Cathedral with a beneficial effect on going berserk! The object immediately caused an uproar the moment it appeared. Going berserk was no ordinary art. Any cultivator who successfully did so would instantly experience a great increase in strength. Jiang Chen himself had fought against Xiang Tai of the Great Cathedral in a berserk state back at Myriad Grand Ceremony. A clamor of bids overtook the scene the moment it appeared. In the end, the bloodline sold for a total bid price of thirty million.

The auction of goods might have ended, but the auction itself had only progressed halfway. The next part of the auction was of course, the slave auction. Naturally, the bid price of slaves fluctuated wildly. Normally speaking, an origin realm slave wasn’t worth much at all. A sage realm slave was worth a lot more.

Between two slaves of the same rank, female slaves were worth more than male slaves. Between two slaves of the same gender, the

slave who knew pill dao was worth more than the slave who knew nothing about it. There were plenty of standards in the slave market. Naturally, the price of a single slave couldn't compare to that of a single item in a goods auction. However, slave auctions usually involved large numbers, so the sum of money that flowed from the transactions was not a small sum. Moreover, noble powers often had huge demands for slaves.

Slaves were bought either to be used as servants, cultivation cauldrons, attendants, or for strange purposes. In conclusion, the slave market was ever a hot market in the human domain. In fact, other races would often frequent the human domain to capture human cultivators and sell them in their own domain as slaves. That was because human slaves were obedient and the most convenient race to order around.

"The first group of slaves are origin realm slaves. We will begin this auction by making available five hundred slaves for all to select from. Every one of these slaves has a price tag on them. If you found one that you wish to take, you may pay for them and make the trade immediately. If two people have their eyes on the same target at the same time, then whoever offers the higher price will be the buyer."

Wei Xing'er remarked to Jiang Chen, "Origin realm slaves have no status here. They do not even have the right to be auctioned in a slave market. Therefore, they're normally sold by odd-lot trading. Also, there is a rule in the market that states that one family is allowed to buy at most twenty slaves in one go. No one is allowed to go above that number."

Jiang Chen wasn't unfamiliar with these rules since he had experienced it firsthand at Veluriyam Capital's slave market. However, the limit on this quota differed from place to place. It was a way to prevent people from secretly recruiting manpower and strength from the slave markets and breaking the balance of power this way. To put it bluntly, the rule existed because of fear

towards the swelling ambition of man.

“Let’s go take a look.” Myriad Domain had plenty of origin realm cultivators. In fact, a lot of Jiang Chen’s acquaintances were at origin realm. He wanted to take a look and see if he could pick up some figurative fish that’d slipped through the net. Origin realm slaves weren’t expensive anyway, so he didn’t mind spending a bit of money to redeem their freedom. He viewed the action as good karma.

In Veluriyam Capital, the price of origin realm slaves hovered between two hundred thousand to one million saint spirit stones. The exceptional ones might cost up to more than a million. Meanwhile, the price of sage realm slaves hovered between two million to twenty million. The exceptional ones might be priced higher. The price of slaves in Great Scarlet Mid Region were a lot lower. Great Scarlet Mid Region’s level of wealth was quite some distance away from Veluriyam Capital’s after all.

It was no wonder that Great Scarlet Mid Region’s imperial family would sell Elder Yun Nie and Mu Gaoqi to Veluriyam Capital. It was obvious that they could profit more if they sold them in that region. Slave trading wasn’t that popular a trade in Great Scarlet Mid Region originally. It was because Myriad Domain was destroyed that the supply of slaves had suddenly become plentiful.

Chapter 862: Jiang Chen Buys Three Slaves

Unlike the slaves in the Myriad Puppets Pavilion back in Veluriyam Capital, these ones didn't wear any masks. Otherwise, Jiang Chen wouldn't even haven't looked at them. However, he didn't lower his guard even if their faces were exposed in broad daylight. Seen from another angle, the Great Scarlet Mid Region being so straightforward and completely exposing these slaves' faces might be a trap designed to lure their enemies with.

He was originally planning on buying all Regal Pill Palace disciples if he saw any. But thinking carefully on it now, it seemed very dangerous to do so. In case it turned out to be a trap, he was bound to attract attention if he only bought disciples of the Regal Pill Palace and no one else. After all, who would be so kind as to buy disciples of the Regal Pill Palace only, if they weren't a disciple of the sect themselves?

Five hundred slaves were put on display one by one and made to kneel on the ground. Only, they were under control. All of them looked dazed. No shame could be seen on their faces, no joy or happiness. Jiang Chen realized with a quick glance that there were indeed quite a few Regal Pill Palace disciples among them. However, he hadn't had many dealings with them in the past.

All of them were geniuses from the Rosy Valley, but Jiang Chen wasn't on very friendly terms with them. One of them had even crossed paths with Jiang Chen before. It was Yan Hongtu, someone who'd tried to intimidate Jiang Chen as soon as he'd entered the Rosy Valley. He naturally felt lukewarm towards someone like that.

Jiang Chen wouldn't have been very keen to rescue him even without any danger. He wasn't someone to repay grudges with favors. It was important to keep the interest of the sect in mind, but in Jiang Chen's opinion, there was a problem with the intrinsic nature of someone like this who bullied the weak and fawned on

the strong. Yan Hongtu might not even be grateful to be rescued, to say nothing about how much aid he could offer for the sect's rebuilding.

This auction seemed to have placed the Regal Pill Palace's disciples in rather prominent spots. Jiang Chen noticed no less than five of them merely walking through the first two rows. On the contrary, not one of them was to be found behind that. Jiang Chen suddenly halted his steps after reaching the fourth row. He noticed a familiar face, but not someone from the Regal Pill Palace. He wasn't even a disciple of the six great sects in the Myriad Domain. Instead, he was a disciple from a fifth ranked sect.

"Is it him?" Jiang Chen had some impression of this man. His first opponent back in the Myriad Grand Ceremony's martial tournament was called a man Feng Pao, if memory served him right. He was a genius from the fifth ranked Extreme Wind Sect. He had been seventh level origin realm back then. This man had been single-mindedly devoted to the way of the sword, someone who could even be called a sword fanatic. In Jiang Chen's opinion, he was someone who should be able to go far in his single-minded pursuit of the pinnacle of sword dao.

Jiang Chen had admired this Feng Pao back then, so he'd imparted to the latter some deeper mysteries of the sword when they fought each other in the tournament. Feng Pao was also a very perceptive man. He'd realized by the end that Jiang Chen had been guiding him, conveying the truth of the sword. He'd reached greater heights in his comprehension of the way of the sword after that fight. Afterwards, with the arrival of the great factions in the Myriad Domain, Feng Pao couldn't fight alone against the tide and found himself a captive after a moment of carelessness.

Jiang Chen stopped in front of him and glanced at his price tag. Eight hundred thousand saint spirit stones.

"I'm taking this one." Jiang Chen picked Feng Pao out without the slightest hesitation. Everyone was still observing looking over

the goods right now. He'd been the first to make a move. Jiang Chen wasn't like the others. When others chose who they wanted to buy, they often considered the slaves' characteristics and compared them against each other. As for Jiang Chen, he wasn't buying slaves, he was merely buying familiar faces. That was why he wasn't choosy at all.

Fourth row, fifth row. No one familiar in sight. Jiang Chen saw two familiar faces at the same time when he reached the sixth row. Likewise, the two of them weren't disciples of the six great sects in the Myriad Domain. They weren't even disciples of fifth rank sects. Rather, they were old friends from the sixteen kingdom alliance.They were from the Myriad Spirit Sect, one of the four great sects in the sixteen kingdom alliance. It was Liu Wencai and Lu Yali, his brothers back when he'd undergone training on Eternal Spirit Mountain.

Liu Wencai had also received a stroke of fortune from Jiang Chen back on Eternal Spirit Mountain. Jiang Chen had given him the Redscale Firelizard bloodline and awakened the power in Liu Wencai's body. Jiang Chen had even given him quite a few insights about cultivation back on Eternal Spirit Mountain.

Back when Jiang Chen had left the Precious Tree Sect, he'd made a detour to the Myriad Spirit Sect to see Liu Wencai and Liu Yali. Those two were both good friends of Jiang Chen's in the sixteen kingdoms. The scenes of his time back on Eternal Spirit Mountain re-emerged in Jiang Chen's mind when he suddenly saw the two of them again.

"I never thought I'd come across brothers from long ago after such so many years." Jiang Chen was a little moved. He didn't have much affection for those Regal Pill Palace disciples. They might have been fellow disciples in name, but they shared none of the feelings between peers from the same sect. On the contrary, Liu Wencai and Liu Yali had shared joys and sorrows with Jiang Chen on Eternal Spirit Mountain. He couldn't just leave them here

now that he had come across them. He glanced at their price tags. Liu Wencai was worth eight hundred thousand saint spirit stones, Liu Yali a mere three hundred thousand.

“It looks like Liu Wencai’s cultivation made huge strides forward after the awakening of his bloodline. Otherwise, why would his price be the same as an origin realm genius like Feng Pao?” Jiang Chen took both Liu Wencai and Lu Yali with him. After taking those three, Jiang Chen took another look but didn’t spot any other familiar faces. He immediately led the three to the transaction area. “I’m taking these three.”

The staff inspected the slaves’ numbers, took the payment, removed their bindings, and completed the deal. The process was extremely simple. None of the three was someone important, so no suspicions were aroused. The transaction went without a hitch.Jiang Chen took the three of them back to his room at the auction. He saw Wei Xing’er sitting there dazed, her face wan and her lips quivering, as though she’d suddenly suffered a tremendous blow.

“What’s the matter?” Jiang Chen asked, a little surprised.

Huang’er heaved a soft sight. “She said that those auctions are all fake. She saw some slaves she once bought amongst those up for sale. She’d clearly released them, but here they are again. In other words, it’s simply impossible for those slaves to leave the Great Scarlet Mid Region!”

“What?” Jiang Chen froze.

Wei Xing’er’s face was pained. “I was too naive. I always thought I could spend some money and buy their freedom. I never thought they would still be shacked to their fate in the end. The Great Scarlet Mid Region will never allow those from the Myriad Domain to walk free.”

Jiang Chen wrinkled his nose. “In other words, the three I bought are also a no go?”Wei Xing’er said with a bitter smile, “I

don’t know either, maybe it’ll depend on their luck. If their luck’s good, they won’t be caught and will make good their escape. Otherwise, they’ll be caught again return to a life of slavery.”

She had clearly just realized this matter, so she suddenly felt dismayed. She’d sometimes participated in auctions in the Great Scarlet Mid Region before, and when she saw familiar faces from the Myriad Domain, she’d rescue them within the limits of her financial resources. Not because she had particular feelings for those people, but purely out of psychological comfort. However, cruel reality told her that everything she’d done was futile as smoke.

It was easy to imagine her disappointment when she realized what she thought to be meaningful suddenly lost all meaning. Jiang Chen didn’t contradict her this time. “You already did what you could. If they can’t run away, then it’s their own fate. No need to blame yourself. Not everyone will be caught and brought back.”

Wei Xing’er felt a little better after his comforting words. She looked up and asked, “Did you come back this time to seek revenge against the Great Scarlet Mid Region?”Jiang Chen shook his head, his tone exceptionally firm. “Let them be proud for a few more years. One day, I’ll repay them twofold everything they did to the Myriad Domain.”

“Then, do you think my Walkabout Sect will be revitalized one day?” Wei Xing’er’s eyes suddenly shone bright.

“If everyone in the Walkabout Sect is like you, then that day will come without fail.” Jiang Chen didn’t want to dampen her enthusiasm after all. He suddenly asked once more, “What’s the approximate situation in the Myriad Domain now?”

“I haven’t returned there ever since they caught me. I hear it’s been divided between the various factions of the Great Scarlet Mid Regions. All the resources have been forcibly seized by the Great Scarlet sects as well.” Wei Ting’er was a little depressed.“Seized?”

Jiang Chen's laugh was cold. "It seems these sects haven't learned their lesson yet."

Wei Xing'er suddenly remembered something. "That time when someone sent all the heads of big sect leaders in the Region to the Great Scarlet Emperor, I heard everyone say it was your doing, is that true?"

Jiang Chen smiled. He didn't deny it. That was only a little advance interest. It was nothing at all compared to everything the Great Scarlet Mid Region had done to the Myriad Domain.

Wei Xing'er stared at Jiang Chen for quite a while before finally asking, "You didn't buy those Regal Pill Palace disciples? Do you need my help?"

"No need, they're merely bait. They shouldn't be in any danger for now." Jiang Chen shook his head and turned down her good intentions. If he bought those Regal Pill Palace disciples right now, it was an unknown whether he could get them out of the Great Scarlet Mid Region. If he didn't buy them, they might continue to live on as bait. So now wasn't the time to save them yet, even if he was going to do it.

Everyone finally finished picking over the five hundred origin realm slaves. Next, the organizers led out twenty sage realm slaves and sold them via auctioning. These sage realm slaves mostly came from the Myriad Domain. Of course, some also came from other areas. The minimum bids were usually above five million.

Jiang Chen didn't recognize any familiar faces, so his interest for the auction waned. He was ready to leave with the three he'd bought once the auction ended. He asked about many other subjects from Wei Xing'er as they waited for the auction to end. However, she'd never left the Great Scarlet Capital. She only heard some news of the outside world in the Veranda. It wasn't convenient for her to inquire further about them, for fear of raising suspicions that she would turn traitor.

At the end of the auction, Wei Xing'er didn't try too hard to detain Jiang Chen since she knew he wanted to leave. She didn't invite them to go to the Resplendent Emerald Veranda either. After taking their leave, Jiang Chen quickly led Feng Pao and the others out of the Great Scarlet Capital. Though he didn't think Wei Xing'er would go as far as harming him, he could tell she was in a delicate situation. He would find himself in great trouble in case those surveilling her became suspicious.

Jiang Chen didn't stop after leaving the Great Scarlet Capital. Instead, he quickly traveled a thousand miles away from Great Scarlet Capital before finally finding a remote corner to rest. The three he bought showed signs of anxiety since having been bought. They had no idea how their futures would unfold.

Chapter 863: Brotherhood

The three of them weren't bound by any restrictions, but they couldn't conjure up the thoughts to escape. From what they could feel, their purchaser had strength that surpassed theirs by a hundredfold. There was no way they could outrun him even if they got a five hundred mile head start. Simultaneously, they were also curious. Why were they not implanted with any restrictions after being purchased? Was their purchaser really not afraid of them running away? But what ordinary cultivator was this kind to his slaves?

Each member of the trio was occupied with his own thoughts for a time. Feng Pao was unfamiliar with the other two. On the other hand, Liu Wencai and Lu Yali were both sect and blood brothers, but they couldn't exactly communicate in present circumstances.

"Ay," Jiang Chen sighed softly. "Life is a lottery. I didn't think that my travels into the Great Scarlet Mid Region would lead me to some old brothers."

This time, he didn't disguise his voice. Liu Wencai and Lu Yali trembled when they heard this. They gazed at Jiang Chen with indescribable astonishment, their eyes filled with a strong desire for inspection. Clearly, the familiar voice greatly deviated from their expectations. Feng Pao was no stranger to Jiang Chen's voice either. Stunned, he couldn't help but speak aloud, "Are you... are you senior brother Jiang?"

At the Myriad Grand Ceremony long ago, Jiang Chen had thought Feng Pao to be an upstanding man devoted to the sword. He was a candidate with potential and could be molded. Because of this, he had taught Feng Pao some mysteries of the sword at the time. Though Jiang Chen remembered those events still, it didn't weigh much on his mind. But for Feng Pao, it had been an amazing stroke of fortune, and he had taken it to heart ever since. He was very grateful to Jiang Chen. Hearing the voice of his benefactor

was very shocking to him.

Liu Wencai was thoroughly bewildered as well. “Brother Boulder…”

At the trials at Eternal Spirit Mountain, Jiang Chen had participated with the alias of ‘Boulder’. It was thus the same name that Liu Wencai had always called him by. Though Liu Wencai had found out later about Jiang Chen’s true identity, he’d already given Jiang Chen a place deep in his heart as a brother worthy of lifelong respect. He could never forget Jiang Chen’s debt of instruction and reformation of him. Back at the Myriad Spirit Sect, Liu Wencai had been given the cold shoulder everywhere. Without Jiang Chen’s tutelage, there was no way he could have stood out from his peers and become the primary recipient of resources. Because of this, he appreciated Jiang Chen beyond everyone else at the sect, including even Forefather Ninelion who mentored him later on.

Lu Yali was even more overlooked at the Myriad Spirit Sect. Just like Liu Wencai, his fate had been changed by Jiang Chen singlehandedly. He saw the latter as a blood brother just the same. ‘Brother Boulder’ was someone unforgettable to them. The revelation that he was their deliverer from suffering quite excited them. Jiang Chen patted Liu Wencai’s shoulder. “Wencai, we haven’t seen each other for several years. You’ve made a lot of progress. You didn’t let me down.”

“Fatty, you’ve improved considerably as well.” Jiang Chen turned his gaze towards Lu Yali. He’d met the rotund youth through a brawl. An interesting fellow, to be sure–especially when Jiang Chen remembered the fact that he’d intentionally feigned weakness back on Eternal Spirit Mountain. Because of his rounded build, Lu Yali was often nicknamed Pear Lu, or Fatty Lu. The fatty grinned from ear to ear. “Is it really you? The Brother Boulder we’ve kept in our thoughts day and night?”

Jiang Chen nodded, then turned to Feng Pao again. “Brother

Feng, a genius of the sword. It's been many years for us as well. Perhaps these struggles will inspire something in your understanding of the dao."

Feng Pao was the kind of person who could endure anything for the sake of his art. He had treated the past few days of enslavement as a trial. His spirit hadn't been crushed by the experience. However, he was still quite thankful for his rescue. "Senior brother Jiang, the world works in mysterious ways. You were the one to teach me the sword back then, and you are my deliverer now. I have been blessed by very few people in my entire life. You are one of them. If I by chance survive my ordeals and achieve a new pinnacle of the sword, I will come wherever you summon me. Regardless of my strength, regardless of the difficulties before me. I won't bat even an eye."

He wasn't making things up. He was fanatically devoted to the dao of the sword, with little concern life and death. His life had been saved by Jiang Chen anyways. He was prepared to turn it over back to his savior at anytime. As long as he lived, he would not give up pursuing the supreme dao of the sword. Feng Pao saluted with fist and palm. "Senior brother Jiang, I've been imprisoned for a while. I don't know what's happened to my sect and I'd like to investigate. May I have leave to go?" Having been both saved and purchased by Jiang Chen, he felt he had to obtain permission in order to leave.

"Brother Feng, you wish to leave now? Isn't here too far away from the Great Scarlet Mid Region? There is considerable risk if you travel alone."

Feng Pao smiled wryly. "If I am captured again, that is entirely my uselessness. It cannot be helped. Do not be worried, senior brother Jiang. Even if that comes to pass, I will not divulge your location no matter what."

Jiang Chen didn't doubt that one bit. If Feng Pao was the kind of scoundrel who would do that, Jiang Chen would never have taught

him the secrets of the sword in the first place. He thought for a few moments before taking out an escape glyph. “This is an escape glyph. It may help you to retreat at a crucial moment. Keep it so you have something for emergencies.”

Feng Pao laughed, accepting the glyph without melodrama. “I owe senior brother Jiang more and more. For as long as I live, I will repay you with everything in me.” Accepting the escape glyph, he bowed deeply to Jiang Chen, then saluted to Liu Wencai and Fatty Lu before disappearing. With a single twist of his body, he became a dashing breeze in the wind.

Seeing Feng Pao’s departure, Lu Yali couldn’t resist. “Brother Boulder, there are bounties for you throughout the world. Just letting him go like that, is anything going to…” Fatty Lu did not know Feng Pao very well, and was evidently worried that he would sell Jiang Chen out.

Jiang Chen waved a hand. “There’s no need to worry. Even if he was a person that would do something like that, there are many people hunting me already, but I’m still alive and well, aren’t I?”

“Brother Boulder, your talent is extraordinary. We’ve only been apart for a few years, but the gap between us has only widened,” Liu Wencai exclaimed admiringly. His emotional reflections aside, Liu Wencai was still entirely overjoyed. Back at Eternal Spirit Mountain, Jiang Chen had taken care of him and instructed him, just like an elder brother would. It could be said that Jiang Chen was the person Liu Wencai admired most. He played the role of a generous patron in Liu Wencai’s life.

Even after all these years, he was still touched whenever he remembered Jiang Chen’s care. Liu Wencai had both missed and worried about his brotherly figure. Seeing Jiang Chen again was like a hot-blooded youth’s reunion with a respected elder brother. His heart was greatly moved. Moreover, this respected eldest brother had just rescued him from a world of suffering. The emotions he felt were indescribable.

They exchanged words about what their experiences had been in the interim. It turned out that the Myriad Spirit Sect had followed the example of Precious Tree Sect's alliance with Regal Pill Palace, affiliating themselves in turn with the Great Cathedral. Because of Liu Wencai's superiority of talent over his peers, he had been sent to the Great Cathedral as well. In effect, Myriad Spirit Sect became a branch of the great sect. However, after the invasion of the Great Scarlet Mid Region, there were heavy casualties since the Great Cathedral was a primary target.

At the battle of the Myriad Grand Ceremony, Xiang Wentian and three other family heads, as well as a few other elders from the Great Cathedral, used their totemic power to break through. Many died in the process, and the escaped survivors were never found. There was also no news of the younger geniuses such as Xiang Qin, who'd come out later from the Paramount Realm and were rescued by Jiang Chen.

Before these sweeping changes, Liu Wencai had cultivated at the Great Cathedral's headquarters. After the great force's invasion, many of the experts guarding the Cathedral died, but some successfully broke through the enemy's encirclement. Being from the Myriad Spirit Sect, Liu Wencai and Lu Yali had not been informed of anything even in crucial moments in the proceedings, so both of them became unknowing prisoners. A tumultuous journey later, they were sold as slaves at Great Scarlet Capital.

Recent times had not been kind to either Liu Wencai or Lu Yali. Hearing the former recount their struggles depicted a new image of the violence of those days.

"It looks like that nowhere in the Myriad Domain was safe from this calamity. There was equal ruin everywhere," Jiang Chen sighed.

"Brother Boulder, do you have any news of the family heads from the Great Cathedral?" Lu Yali asked eagerly.

“What are you asking about them for?” Liu Wencai angrily interrupted. “They were going to escape, but didn’t tell us anything about it. The Great Cathedral, hmph... a sect like that isn’t worth our thoughts.”

Liu Wencai had bad experiences of isolation at Myriad Spirit Sect already. He especially despised the feeling of being abandoned. Lu Yali didn’t know how to reply. “...then what about Myriad Spirit Sect?”

Liu Wencai looked at Jiang Chen when his old sect was mentioned. Certainly, he still had some leftover feelings for it. After all, he had grown up with the Myriad Spirit Sect. No matter how they’d ostracized him and neglected him in the past, there were also people that had been good to him.

“Don’t ask me, I don’t know much about it. The Eternal Celestial Capital and Ninesuns Sky Sect had made preparations in order to unleash this calamity. If a bird’s nest is overturned, no egg within can remain unbroken. I would assume that there is great loss of life within the sixteen kingdoms alliance as well.” Jiang Chen’s tone was heavy.

Liu Wencai and Lu Yali were worried about Myriad Spirit Sect, but he was worried about Precious Tree Sect and the people he knew in both the Skylaurel and Eastern Kingdoms. However, a faction like the Eastern Kingdom that was already second-or third-rate in the sixteen kingdoms alliance was fairly likely to be overlooked by first-ranked sects. Current circumstances didn’t exactly permit Liu Wencai and Lu Yali to return to the Myriad Spirit Sect, either.

“What do you plan to do next?” Jiang Chen asked.

Liu Wencai looked at Jiang Chen wordlessly. Now that he’d found Jiang Chen, Liu Wencai’s heart was dead set on following him. Lu Yali was anxious as well. “Brother Boulder, both of us are homeless now. We’ve always treated you like an older brother.

Hopefully you can show us a better way."

After considering a moment, Jiang Chen nodded. "I have important matters at hand that more people would make inconvenient. How about this, go to Veluriyam Capital, to a place called Taiyuan Tower. I'll give you a token, and you'll find out the rest when you get there."

This trip carried great risks for Jiang Chen himself, and he had no reason to take Liu Wencai and Lu Yali along with him. The pair had enough self-awareness to know that they would only be dead weight for Jiang Chen. "Alright, then we shall go to Veluriyam Capital." They nodded simultaneously.

"Don't worry, I own that place. Just let them know your relationship to me when you arrive, and people will receive you appropriately. Remember, caution is key. The Great Scarlet Mid Region is cracking down on slaves of every kind. You need to disguise yourselves a bit more..."

Chapter 864: Pursuers

After much costuming and disguising from Jiang Chen and Huang'er, Liu Wencai and Lu Yali's appearances were drastically changed. Apart from Lu Yali's inflexibly rotund build, the two were almost entirely different people. The pair was bewildered after seeing each other's appearances. Jiang Chen's skills were simply masterful.

"Here are two escape glyphs for each of you. When there is danger, activate one. A single glyph can carry both of you." Jiang Chen had enough of these glyphs to spare. He gave one to each of them.

Liu Wencai and Lu Yali had never seen anything as nice as these. They were consumables that only a large sect could afford. If they had something like this back then, there was no reason they wouldn't have been able to escape.

"This is another treasure. I've modified it a little bit. Take it for self-defense." Jiang Chen took out a flag as he spoke. The flag used to belong to Dark North Sect's Lin Hai. Lin Hai was actually a traitor from Eternal Celestial Capital. In the Paramount Realm, he had fought with Jun Mobai, a fellow undercover agent from Ninesuns Sky Sect. However, their conflict only ended up benefiting a third party in the end–Jiang Chen.

The flag had made a strong impression on Jiang Chen at the time. Lin Hai was slightly weaker than Jun Mobai in terms of raw strength, but the latter was rendered helpless just by the flag. The flag could both attack and protect, and was quite mighty. It could easily beat out the average sage realm expert. Jiang Chen hadn't actually used the flag after commandeering it. Instead, he adapted it somewhat by removing Eternal Celestial Capital's marks and restrictions, as well as changing its outward appearance.

This way, even if someone from the Eternal Celestial Capital

were to see the flag used, they wouldn't necessarily know the flag was their sect's property. After all, this treasure had been given to Lin Hai in secret to assist in his role as a covert operative. Most people wouldn't know where it came from. Jiang Chen placed this flag into Liu Wencai's hands.

"This flag has extraordinary origins. If you find an enemy, you must either kill them or use this item judiciously," Jiang Chen instructed again. He thought for a final while before taking out yet another item. It was a medallion this time. "This is the Silver Dragon Medallion. It's a token of the foremost clan of Veluriyam Capital, the Coiling Dragon Clan. If you truly find an enemy whom you cannot resist, show them this medallion. Ordinary factions won't touch you upon seeing it."

The Coiling Dragon Clan was a representative faction in Veluriyam Capital. Besides the seven great emperors, they held the most influence in the city. The clan lord had given the medallion to Jiang Chen in order to ensure he would be unhindered in the capital. But there had been no reason for Jiang Chen to use it. Pill King Zhen's name alone was prominent enough. There was no one who would possibly dare to offend him in the Capital.

As for elsewhere, if anyone were to discover he was Jiang Chen, even a token from Emperor Peafowl wouldn't be enough to discourage them. The absurdly large bounty on his head was enough to deprive any cultivator of their reason. Therefore, the Silver Dragon Medallion wasn't very useful to Jiang Chen at present. However, it was quite possibly the best protective talisman he could give Liu Wencai and Lu Yali.

Receiving valuables that they previously never had experience with, or right to possess, made Liu Wencai and Lu Yali a little ashamed. Seeing their anxiety on their faces, Jiang Chen clapped their shoulders. "Both of you are my brothers. Don't be a stranger."

The necessity of departure so soon after a reunion left some

dismay in Liu Wencai's heart. He knew that Jiang Chen had important things to do though and nodded. "We'll leave right now."

Jiang Chen suddenly smiled. "Don't be in such a hurry to go just yet. Watch me cut down some pursuers."

Liu Wencai and Lu Yali both paused. Jiang Chen traded glances with Huang'er. The girl smiled, slightly inclining her head. "Be careful."

With a sway of his body, Jiang Chen put himself into the open. At this time, five men in black arrived on the scene in hot pursuit. The person who led them had a pair of yellow eyebrows, almost as if they were singed. He stared at Jiang Chen before looking speculatively at his companions. "That's him. He has someone with him, too."

The group nodded amongst themselves, fanning into a circle around Jiang Chen. Jiang Chen looked over the five of them coldly. The strongest among them was only a sky sage realm cultivator. Of the others, two were mortal sage realm, and the other two earth sage realm. If it were the Jiang Chen of the Regal Pill Place, this five-man group would pose a mortal threat to him. But the Jiang Chen of today...

"Are you looking for me?" He smiled faintly.

"Kid, where's the person you were with?" The yellow-browed cultivator glared at Jiang Chen, his consciousness searching through the area.

"There's no need for you to look now. If you can kill me, then you'll be able to find her easily. I'm curious, though, what faction are you from?"

"Heh heh, you're asking too much, kid!" With a shout, the yellow-browed cultivator beckoned his compatriots forth. Five shadows swept towards Jiang Chen. They were well-coordinated

and vicious. Though the way they arranged themselves was outwardly chaotic, they were actually following a formation within.

Jiang Chen harrumphed coldly, leaping into action instantly. Like a bolt of lightning, he soared backwards towards the two in the southwest. Two experts took this corner, one earth sage, one mortal sage.

“Excellent!” The two weren’t startled by Jiang Chen’s charge. On the contrary, they were very pleased. They looked at each other, then changed their stances. Like fishermen pulling at a net, they pulled out a silver chain, sending it hurtling at Jiang Chen’s torso. In this moment, something strange happened. The two of them felt their bodies struck by an unknown force. Suddenly, their perfect lockstep was slowed by an invisible strength. Their movement became sluggish for an instant.

The instant however, was enough to spell their final doom. Crack crack!

Two alarming cracks sounded through the air, heralding two terrifying finger points which detonated themselves upon the two. It was Jiang Chen’s third Supernova Point technique, Galaxy Supernova Point. The two experts exploded to smithereens upon contact. The shocking spectacle occurred extremely quickly– astoundingly quickly, in fact.

When the other three were able to react, their two peers were already dust. The yellow-eyebrowed sky sage realm expert gasped in surprise. “Careful, everyone. This kid is pretending to be weak in order to take us all!”

Jiang Chen cackled. Taking two lives ignited further murderous intent. He strode forward, reaching another earth sage realm expert with only two or three steps. Taken aback at his speed, the expert clutched at something with a hand. He was making a grab for an escape glyph. Jiang Chen was faster than him, however, and

stabbed a finger into the man's forehead.

Bam!

Another one destroyed.

"This is tough, let's pull out!" The yellow-browed expert's face colored considerably. He had come to the realization that this opponent was someone he couldn't contend with. He crushed an escape glyph as he spoke. Its power expanded in preparation to take him away, but his feet were leaden. He wasn't able to move!. The man looked at his feet, and noticed that strange vines hung around his legs–some were fiery crimson, some were verdant green. The last sage realm expert met the same fate. His entire body was wrapped tightly. How could he escape?

The Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice had evolved with each refinement from Jiang Chen. Its current incarnation was far changed from its original form. With its current qualities, Jiang Chen was confident that it could ensnare even a normal emperor realm cultivator, much less a sage realm one. The Lotus had a consuming hunger. Something as nutritious as a sky sage realm expert was swallowed up instantly by the petals at Jiang Chen's command. There was no time for even a scream to escape.

The remaining mortal sage realm expert was pallid, his body shivering like a leaf. Though they weren't the most elite in the Great Scarlet Mid Region, they could do as they wished without much interference. Even those from the top sects here gave them some face. The upper classes of the Great Scarlet Empire and the imperial family as well gave them the same degree of respect. That they were thugs working for the Resplendent Emerald Veranda was enough. As one of the wealthiest in the Great Scarlet Mid Region, Veranda was a very influential organization here.

Though they were not as mighty as the few third-ranked sects, the typical fourth-ranked sect found it hard to compete with the Veranda. The five of them weren't the cream of the crop at

Greenwood, but they were still fairly important individuals there. They'd always performed the menial tasks and dirty work for the sect.

Time was of the essence. After having dispatched the four others, Jiang Chen arrived in front of the remaining man, and smiled faintly at him. "Would you like to tell me what you know straight up? Or shall I torture it out of you?"

The man was yellow with fear. His pupils dilated, eyes full of terror. "I... I only want you to let me live. I'll tell you whatever you want."

"What if I'm not going to let you live?" Jiang Chen asked quietly.

"Then... I'd rather commit suicide than be threatened by you." The man gritted his teeth.

Jiang Chen nodded. "Well, that means you don't know much then. Why don't I send you off with your friends?"

The man's face colored drastically. "You... you don't want to know where we're from?"

Jiang Chen grinned nonchalantly. "You think I care about something as unimportant as that? You're either dogs of the Great Scarlet Empire's imperial family, or members of some sect. But I think it's most likely that you're from the Resplendent Emerald Veranda."

The man was stunned by Jiang Chen's words. He thought they had been quite secretive about it, but their quarry already knew who they were.

"As I thought, you really are from the Veranda." Jiang Chen's face darkened. Huang'er walked over now as well. "I've always felt that Wei Xing'er was in a bad situation at the Veranda. It looks like they won't let anyone off who's met with her, huh. The slaves she rescued before must have been recaptured by these guys too, hmm?"

Huang'er was very clever, and had discerned hints of the truth from these details. Jiang Chen didn’t suspect Wei Xing’er herself. If it had been her that betrayed them, then it wouldn’t be only these five after the pair, but masses of emperor realm experts instead. She must have had the wool pulled over her eyes regarding this matter as well. Moreover, it seemed that she was only superficially well-off at Greenwood. She knew nothing about the organization’s shadowy side.

Chapter 865: The Resplendent Emerald Veranda's True Intentions

Jiang Chen's expression was solemn. He'd felt no goodwill towards any power that existed in Great Scarlet Mid Region at all, and the Resplendent Emerald Veranda was no exception. They'd tried to kill him just because he made contact with Wei Xing'er and bought a few people from the auction. They were completely unafraid of any consequences. People who saw no worth in life were obviously nothing good.

Liu Wencai and Lu Yali walked over while he was deep in thought. Their faces were riddled with shock. The five sage realm experts were akin to children who'd just started walking before Jiang Chen. Four of them were taken out in the blink of an eye, while the last one could do nothing but beg on his knees. They wouldn't have believed it possible if they hadn't witnessed this scene with their own eyes. They'd noticed there was a gap between their strength and Jiang Chen's back at Eternal Spirit Mountain, but the gap had still been visible and measurable then. But today, that gap had grown so big they couldn't even see his back anymore.

"Brother Boulder, can we be the ones to take his life?" Liu Wencai suddenly asked. Jiang Chen nodded and didn't object his request. Liu Wencai had improved a lot over the past couple years. He had been just an earth origin realm cultivator back at Eternal Spirit Mountain, but was already a sky origin realm cultivator. He could see that the evolution of his bloodline was continuously unearthing the potential within his body and enabling him to reach new heights. If that calamity hadn't befallen Myriad Domain, and if Liu Wencai had an another three to five years' time to cultivate in the Great Cathedral, he definitely would've risen above many others and become a genius that even the Great Cathedral would fight over. Unfortunately, fate had its own game

to play.

When the mortal sage realm cultivator heard that they were going to kill him, he immediately begged, “Please, please, don’t kill me. I have information, very precious information that will definitely be useful to you all. If you are friends with the young madam, then I guarantee you’ll regret not hearing this information.”

Jiang Chen raised a hand and stopped Liu Wencai when he heard this. The combined weight of God’s Eye and the Evil Golden Eye landed on his victim. The cultivator couldn’t stop sweating and chattering under Jiang Chen’s might, but he said, “You... you are stronger than I am, but I... I would rather die than tell you what I know if you won’t spare my life.”

Jiang Chen knew of a few ways to search the soul, but he hadn’t practiced any of them as of now. Moreover, it was extremely difficult to search the soul of a cultivator at the same rank as the seeker. Therefore, Jiang Chen couldn’t deny that it would be an issue if the fellow refused to speak even on threat of death.

Huang’er walked over. “We can spare your life, but how can we make sure that you won’t betray us if we spared your life?”

Wild joy erupted from the person’s eyes when he saw a glimmering hope of survival. He hastily responded, “I can swear an heavenly oath that I will reveal everything I know to you as long as you spare my life. I will leave this place immediately and go into hiding. Even if l am unlucky enough to be captured by the family later on, you will be long gone by then. They won’t be able to find you even if they try.”

Huang’er exchanged a glance with Jiang Chen. “We can spare him. We might as well get that information than waste our time like this.”

Jiang Chen didn’t mind killing one more or one less person. Killing a small fry like this fellow wouldn’t cause the Great Scarlet

Mid Region's strength to drop drastically. His life carried no weight whether Jiang Chen spared him or not. Plus, this cultivator had betrayed his master right after losing to the enemy. There was no way he could serve the Great Scarlet Mid Region after this.

Jiang Chen nodded, "Make the oath, and don't try to play any tricks, you hear me? Any smart tricks or word games you try to play will only backfire on yourself."

The heavenly oath was a most effective tool. A coward like him wouldn't dare go against his oath in a million years. Therefore, Jiang Chen wasn't afraid that he would renege on his oath. As expected, this fellow carefully plotted out his words before he swore a flawless heavenly oath. When he was done, he stared pitifully at Jiang Chen. "You... you won't kill me, will you? You won't go back on your words after I confess, will you?"

Jiang Chen smiled. "That's a gamble that you have to take."

He didn't have the inclination to swear a heavenly oath to a captive. Huan'er frowned, "Either you confess now, or you won't get the chance to say anything ever again in your life. You are our captive, and you don't have the right to bargain with us."

Said captive was extremely depressed to hear this, but he didn't dare go against her words. He knew that he was a captive too, and that he had no right to speak on equal terms with his captors. Haggling would only kill him faster, which was why he said honestly, "We are the Resplendent Emerald Veranda's men. We have been ordered by our superiors to capture you."

"Why?"

"That's because you are acquaintances with our young madam and hence, potentially remnants of Myriad Domain. As a member of Great Scarlet Mid Region, it is our obligation to hunt down all remnants of Myriad Domain."

Jiang Chen sneered, "You mean your young madam, Wei Xing'er,

is nothing but a figurehead?”

The cultivator shook his head, “Not exactly. She is the young madam of the family after all, so she is not completely without real status. It is true that our master is using her, however. More specifically saying, he’s raising her for a certain purpose. I’m not sure exactly what purpose it is, but I did hear that the master needs a cauldron of pure yin to cultivate a certain art. The young madam happens to have the requirements and talents necessary for his cultivation, so she was secretly chosen by the master as his cultivation cauldron. You can say that her time as the ‘young madam’ of the family is her last supper.”

Cultivation cauldron? Jiang Chen and Huang’er exchanged a disdainful glance with each other. A cultivation cauldron basically meant a cultivator of the opposite sex to be used as a cultivation medium and tool during a time of need. Normally, the people used as cultivation cauldrons were met with horrible ends.

In the best case scenario, the cultivation cauldron would be crippled. In the worst case scenario, the cultivation cauldron would lose their life outright. Moreover, the process of this type of cultivation was so horrendous that it was almost publicly acknowledged as the worst thing that could happen to a cultivator.

The fate of a cultivation cauldron was worse than that of a slave. A slave at least had a life and the hope of freedom. A cultivation cauldron’s journey was a one way trip. Moreover, both the process and the ending were absolutely horrifying. Eight out of the ten cultivation arts that required a cultivation cauldron in the martial dao world were evil arts. Generally speaking, the ratio of female cultivators being used as cultivation cauldrons were higher than males. This method was commonly known as plucking yin to nourish yang.

Real dual cultivation cultivation arts did exist in this world. Dual cultivation arts that were acknowledged as right and proper emphasized on coupling yin and yang. There was no such thing as

using one person's power to replenish the other. That was true evil.

"What cultivation level is your master at?"

"Our master is a sixth level emperor realm expert. I heard that he's planning to reach the seventh level emperor realm, the sky emperor realm."

"Seventh level emperor realm, huh..." Jiang Chen nodded slightly, "It would seem that your master is quite strong."

There weren't many seventh level emperor realm experts in the Great Scarlet Mid Region. Most of the sect leaders of fourth rank sect who'd invaded Myriad Domain were only third level or fourth level emperor realm at best. A seventh level emperor realm expert could be the leader of a third rank sect, a head of the Great Scarlet Mid Region or even a heavyweight in the imperial family.

After all, the Great Scarlet Mid Region wasn't particularly strong in the human domain. The Myriad Domain was just weaker than them. Jiang Chen asked a few more questions to find out almost everything he could about the Resplendent Emerald Veranda. After that, he restrained the captive and threw him into a very concealed spot.

"I've put a restriction on you that will automatically dissolve three days later." Jiang Chen hadn't left any tracks to be found in this desolate and uninhabited place, so he wasn't worried about the threat of discovery.

"Wencai, Fatty, allow me to send you along your way." When he led Liu Wencai and Lu Yali across thousands of kilometers and confirmed that no one was tracking them down, Jiang Chen finally came to a pause. "Watch out for yourselves, you two. You absolutely mustn't cause any trouble while you're still in Great Scarlet Mid Region. Make way for Veluriyam Capital the soonest you can," Jiang Chen advised.

Both Liu Wencai and Lu Yali looked reluctant to part with Jiang Chen, but they understood that this wasn't the time play coy. They immediately bid their brother goodbye and went on their way.

Jiang Chen shot a glance at Huang'er after sending Liu Wencai and Lu Yali on their way, knowing what she was hoping he would do. Huang'er was a softhearted girl, and she had felt a kinship with Wei Xing'er even though they'd met each other only once at the Great Scarlet Mid Region. It was obvious she wanted to head to Great Scarlet Capital and save her. But he felt that now wasn't the best time to save Wei Xing'er. The cultivation of an evil art and the process of nurturing Wei Xing'er into the perfect cultivation cauldron wasn't something that could be achieved in just a day or two. Jiang Chen felt that saving Wei Xing'er after he returned from the desolate wildlands might be a better choice.

It wasn't that he was a cold blooded man. It was just that curing Huang'er of her Generation Binding Curse was more important than saving Wei Xing'er to him. Wei Xing'er wouldn't be in danger even if he did nothing for now. But Huang'er's Requiem Wood might be gone if he missed this opportunity. Although he'd managed to suppress the Generation Binding Curse for now, it was ultimately a temporary measure. If her curse were to erupt one day without the Requiem Wood to cure it once and for all, then even Jiang Chen would be able to do nothing about it.

"Huang'er, I know that you wish to save Wei Xing'er, but we can't afford to delay our trip to the desolate wildlands any longer. How about this, we'll come back to Great Scarlet Capital after we return? The Resplendent Emerald Veranda is still nurturing Wei Xing'er, so it'll be a few years more before its master can use her properly. There was no way he would give Wei Xing'er her current treatment if it's something can be completed in a short time." Jiang Chen's deduction made a lot of sense.

Huang'er thought over the suggestion for a moment, knowing that everything Jiang Chen did was for her own sake. Therefore,

she nodded, “Then let us go and return quickly.” The pair quickly left the place after making up their minds.

Inside the Great Scarlet Capital, at the Veranda.

“Have the five not returned yet?” The Veranda master had youthful looks and a head of shiny black hair. The look in his eyes were deep in a way that gave people an unfathomable feeling. The senior executives standing before him right now were all emperor realm experts.

“Master, they have served the Veranda unfailingly for many years. I am sure that they’ll capture their targets if they truly are the remnants of Myriad Domain.”

“Don’t worry, Master.”

The master nodded and asked, “We have not slipped up in front of the young madam, have we?”

“Allow me to report, Master. The young madam looked pretty unhappy after she returned today. It seems that she figured out that the slaves she bought were resold in the market.”

The Veranda master frowned, “Whose sloppy work is this?”

“Please quell your anger. As long as she is not privy of your ultimate objective, I doubt that she’ll care too much about it. In my opinion, she seems to enjoy her life as the young madam quite a bit.”

He pondered for a moment. “Ensure that everything is conducted in absolute secrecy. I will achieve a breakthrough in three years’ time.”

Suddenly, someone rushed in to make a report in the middle of their discussion. “Master, the second group of men we sent out reported that everyone in the first group was killed in action.”

“What?!” Everyone present jumped to their feet with a look of shock on their faces.

Chapter 866: Homeland Remains, Empty Chairs at Empty Tables

Five sage realm cultivators were a remarkable force, even for an organization as strong as the Resplendent Emerald Veranda. Their extermination in the blink of an eye struck a heavy blow to the organization. The five had a sky sage realm cultivator among them, and moreover were proficient in coordinated tactics. A combination like this could duke it out even with a lower rank emperor realm cultivator. One or two dying wasn't entirely unacceptable, as long as a few others escaped. But it was the worst result of everyone dead!

A normal first or second level emperor realm cultivator wouldn't be able to kill all of them at once. In the beginning levels of emperor realm, a cultivator's domain wasn't yet stable, and fully containing five sage realm cultivators on a large scale was a struggle. As long as one remained free, they could activate an escape glyph to escape. Fleeing meant opportunities to send out a distress signal to their compatriots at the Veranda. But neither flight nor signal had been possible in time. Their deaths had been sudden and complete, the act itself cleanly performed.

Their opponent, then, had to have been at least third level emperor realm, perhaps even earth emperor realm. There were many earth emperor realm cultivators in the Great Scarlet Mid Region, but they could all be named. None of them had motive to oppose the Veranda. In that moment, the air was thick with contemplation. One of the higher-ups frowned. "Did they hunt down the wrong people?"

"Surely not. It's not like they've done our work for only a day or two. If we weren't satisfied with their work, why would we send them as the vanguard?"

"But if it's an cultivator from outside this region, what interest do

they have in simply buying a few origin realm slaves here? It's not like those slaves are important or anything. They're not even disciples of the Myriad Domain's six great sects."

"Perhaps they're a remnant of the Walkabout Sect? Otherwise, why would the young madam be familiar with them?" The senior executives members voiced their concerns and conclusions.

The master of the Veranda was silent. The news of the five's death had been sudden, and he wasn't quite prepared for them. "The head of the Walkabout Sect has already fallen in battle. Of the other important members of that sect, only Elder Wu Hen escaped. I hear he did so alongside Elder Yun Nie. But, that elder is only a sage realm cultivator... he wouldn’t be able to kill all five of them all at once, unless it were by poison."

Mentioning the matter of poison use elicited serious looks from everyone all around. The Walkabout Sect had indeed been a sect which relied on poisons heavily, and were very proficient in their usage. It was an enlightening reminder. The master of the Veranda raised an eyebrow, looking at a white-haired elder. "Great Elder, this matter is quite strange. I would like to trouble you to investigate with a team personally. It doesn’t matter if you can catch them or not. Investigate the scene for any clues, and notify me at the earliest opportunity."

The elder nodded. "I shall go immediately."

"Bring as many as you need," the master instructed.

Another elder piped up. "Master, shall we ask the young madam about this?"

"There is no need to wake a sleeping lion before we are ready to handle it. If they're really from the Walkabout Sect, they'll show up again. We just need to sit back and wait."

.....

Jiang Chen was already a few thousand miles away from the

scene of the crime by now. There was no more dawdling on his journey. Two days later, the two of them successfully entered Myriad Domain. After weathering the ravages of war, this region was now much less bustling than that of yesteryear. There were traces of fierce battles everywhere. On the roads, there were even wind-worn skeletons and blackened bloodstains from time to time. Some corpses were still in the stages of decay, and were visited by various scavenging vultures. The birds congregated by the bodies, ravenously tearing flesh from bone. The sight evoked an endless feeling of somberment.

It was a devastated landscape, a banquet of bones. Although Jiang Chen didn't exactly have strong feelings for the Myriad Domain, he couldn't resist becoming angry at the scenery. It was a good thing that Huang'er was by his side. She held his palm softly, soothing his heart and mood like delicate rain.

When he passed by Regal Pill Palace territory, Jiang Chen hardened his heart in order to refrain from revisiting. He was afraid that he would begin a killing spree out of hate and vengeance. Once he did, numerous factions would be notified, and his operation would be jeopardized. When he departed from there, he noticed an increase in wandering cultivators. Evidently, most of the territories here were under the grasp of various factions in the Great Scarlet Mid Region. However, masters from outside clearly weren't as capable as the locals had been. Thus, the Myriad Domain had become a heaven for wandering cultivators instead.

The irritation and depression in Jiang Chen's heart subsided a little as they traveled further from Regal Pill Palace land. The sect had fallen already. Jiang Chen had returned once before, and there would be no difference from back then if he were to do so now. It would increase his sorrow perhaps, and nothing more.

The Skylaurel Kingdom and Precious Tree Sect however, he urgently wished to return to those places and see how they fared. The scenery on the way was no different from when he'd first

entered Myriad Domain. That continued to be the case even as he approached the sixteen kingdoms alliance. Blood dripped from Jiang Chen's heart. "It looks like this great loss of life wasn't restricted to just the Myriad Domain's core. Distant places, like the sixteen kingdoms alliance, were affected as well."

He finally entered sixteen kingdoms' territory. Myriad Spirit Sect was closest to the border; as Jiang Chen expected, the sect no longer held those lands, being replaced by a small faction from the Great Scarlet Mid Region. Already numb to the shock, Jiang Chen didn't stay long. He reached the Precious Tree Sect after another half-day. The devastation was especially bad here, and the checkpoints stricter.

The Eternal Celestial Capital and Ninesuns Sky Sect had both made numerous arrangements near Precious Tree Sect territory. Thankfully, Jiang Chen was dressed just like any other wandering cultivator, including those who were plentiful within the areas close by. He wasn't given away. The Precious Tree Sect clearly had new masters.

Mundane nations like the Skylaurel Kingdom were untouched. However, the kingdom's royal family were mere figureheads now. If not for the unspoken rule that mundane factions were not to be touched, someone would have surely come along and utterly destroyed the royal family as well. By now, fourth prince Ye Rong had long ascended to the throne, becoming king of Skylaurel. However, there was no savoring the position. He was a puppet under another's control.

Jiang Chen went to Skylaurel's capital covertly to take a look around. The Dragonteeth Guard was intact as well. His old acquaintances, such as Tian Shao and Tang Long, were still around. Unfortunately, they were only superficially glamorous and lacked autonomy. The king was a puppet, and they were puppets of a puppet. Skylaurel's four great sites had been utterly destroyed as well. Jiang Chen was somewhat cheered up by the

fact that many had prepared in advance, thanks to his early warning.

When calamity had befallen the Myriad Domain, Ye Chonglou had gone into seclusion along with a large number of elites. With him was Jiang Chen's uncle Jiang Tong and cousin Jiang Yu, as well as Qiao Baishi, who had joined Jiang Chen ever since his Eastern Kingdom days. They hadn't been vulnerable to the predations of outside factions. Jiang Chen was secretly relieved that he had given a lot of funds and equipment to Ye Chonglou before he went to the Myriad Grand Ceremony. He'd told the elder then to leave Regal Pill Palace and return to Precious Tree Sect in order to prepare for the worst.

It seemed that the old man had trusted him implicitly. For him to have escaped the disaster, his execution was top-notch as well. The Precious Tree Sect was unharmed, and his uncle and cousin were in no danger. Jiang Chen was finally able to lay down his worries. He did not think it prudent to act now on Skylaurel's behalf, either. The grand scheme of things was such that even if he did help the kingdom and restore Ye Rong's rule, it would be meaningless.

Once he'd departed, someone else would find it easy to undo his work.

There was no reason for him to make a move on impulse. It would only further endanger his past acquaintances. Once the overall situation shifted, then an opportunity would perhaps arise. Otherwise, it was best to maintain the current state of things and let sleeping lions lie. Jiang Chen gathered some more information before coming to the royal tutor’s residence. Ye Chonglou had lived here, once upon a time, but it was owned now by another.

He stood in the streets beside the residence, and remembered. It had been another night like this, many years ago, when Dan Fei had spoken the secrets of her heart to him. It was a long time since then, but Dan Fei seemed to have vanished thin air. He kept the

letter she'd left him. It was still in his traveling bags. There was only a single line: even thousands and thousands of words are insufficient, I will never regret pining for my love. These words crushed down on his heart like a mountain.

Each time he remembered them, Jiang Chen felt strangely flustered. He didn't quite know why that was. He felt that something was amiss, and there was a truth that needed to be uncovered. He even felt that Dan Fei's sudden disappearance might have something to do with him. Except, just what might it be? He really had no idea. Even Ye Chonglou had once reminded him to help look for Dan Fei.

The streets were still as they were, but it was now empty chairs at empty tables. Jiang Chen felt a bit melancholy, and he dallied for a while before leaving. He didn't plan on visiting the Precious Tree Sect. Since it'd fallen into someone else's hands, it was surely the same as everywhere else. Visiting would only increase his heartache.

"Brother Chen, have you felt an odd feeling ever since setting foot into the sixteen kingdom alliance?" Huang'er suddenly asked.

Jiang Chen had been depressed ever since arriving, so although he'd felt that something was off, he hadn't paid attention to it. His thoughts turned in that direction now that Huang'er had mentioned it.

"There's a certain strange, indescribable presence on many of the cultivators here." A complicated tone had crept into Huang'er's voice.

Chapter 867: Returning to the Boundless Catacombs

While they were still speaking to each other, a figure suddenly walked out of an alley of the royal tutor's residence. After the initial surprise, the figure immediately smiled. "Have you two came for that secret realm too?"

Secret realm? Jiang Chen felt a bit of astonishment, but he smiled and said nothing in reply.

"Hehe, there are only two days left before registration closes, and the amount of spots left are few to say the least. You should hurry up if you wish to register."

Jiang Chen answered smilingly, "We're not in a hurry."

"You're not?" The person frowned, "The number of spots are limited. You won't qualify for participation if you don't register yourselves soon. Everyone is required to follow a strict set of rules this time."

Jiang Chen had visited practically every reputable secret realm that existed in the sixteen kingdoms alliance. Therefore, he didn't believe that there was another secret realm here that could catch his attention. Seeing that Jiang Chen was unmoved by his words, the person's tone turned a little hostile, "What are you here for if not for the registration? Are you trying to spy on us or something?"

"Is this place your home's private grounds or something?" Jiang Chen countered with a sneer.

The person grew angry and laughed oddly. "You're pretty arrogant for an insignificant wandering cultivator, aren't you? If you're here to register then get moving already, but if not then get your ass out of this place now. Save your spying for another place."

Jiang Chen could eliminate a small fry like this with a finger if he

wished. But he had important things to do right now, so why would he? He sneered, shot Huang'er a glance and left with her.

"Hmph, I guess you aren't stupid enough to fight me." The person thought that the two wandering cultivators had left because they feared his terrifying aura. He muttered behind Jiang Chen and Huang'er's back with an air of pride.

When the duo left the royal tutor's residence, they noticed a lot of wandering cultivators rushing towards their direction in a hurry.

"What kind of secret realm is this to attract so many cultivators?" The sight of these wandering cultivators gave even Jiang Chen odd vibes. They'd likely come from other powerful domains as they were obviously not on the same level as those in the sixteen kingdoms alliance. Origin realm cultivators and sage realm cultivators were literally crawling all over the place.

Huang'er frowned, "I can sense a frenetic energy from these people. It's almost as if they were drawn here by something deadly attractive. What on earth is it? Can it be..."

Jiang Chen's expression abruptly changed when he heard this. That the prize these people were looking for might be the Requiem Wood had hit him as well. Had news of the Requiem Wood finally leaked to the public? If that was the case, then the difficulty of their journey had just inched up another notch. Still, Jiang Chen was determined to hunt for the Requiem Wood at his own pace. That the place was crowded didn't matter, that all these wandering cultivators had come together for an unknown reason didn't matter either. As long as he had He Hongshu's map and data, he didn't need to pay attention to any of these variables.

"No matter what happens, as long as the Requiem Wood exists, I will obtain it and eliminate the Generation Binding Curse plaguing you once and for all, Huang'er." Jiang Chen's tone was imbued with unquestionable determination.

The Eastern Kingdom wasn't that far away after they left the Skylaurel Kingdom. Jiang Chen ultimately decided to swing by the former as well after a moment's thought. Although the Eastern Kingdom was his birthplace, there was no one else he cared for there except Eastern Zhiruo. The kingdom might be a remote location, but it too was currently ripe with unusual activity. It hadn't escaped disaster simply because it was located out of the way.

The entire Eastern Kingdom was more or less experiencing the same thing as the Skylaurel Kingdom. Although the Eastern royal family was still nominally the ruler of the Eastern Kingdom, they had become puppets just like Ye Rong of Skylaurel Kingdom. Contrary to expectations, Eastern Zhiruo wasn't disturbed by the changes happening around her because she wasn't a cultivator. She was staying inside the palace and living the life of a princess. The changes of the outside world didn't affect her much.

Many years had passed, and the sickly little girl he knew in the past had now grown up into a beautiful adult. But despite her growth, her constitution still made her look a little sickly. The tinge of sadness furrowing her brows suggested that she wasn't quite happy with the palace life she was currently leading.

Perhaps it was a mistake to leave her here back then. Jiang Chen thought as he watched her from the palace walls outside. That being said, he also knew that leaving Eastern Zhiruo behind was the best choice he could've made at the time. If she had come along with her sister Eastern Gouyu, she might have perished during the destruction of the Regal Pill Palace.

Huang'er knew about Eastern Zhiruo. Back when Huang'er stayed at the Eastern Kingdom, she already knew that Jiang Chen's rise to power had started with Eastern Zhiruo's treatment. Therefore, she wasn't surprised that Jiang Chen would visit Eastern Zhiruo.

"Let's go." Jiang Chen watched over Eastern Zhiruo for a

moment, but didn't stay any longer than was necessary. He neither wanted to shatter the peace she currently enjoyed or meet with her right now. It might not be a good thing to catch up now either. Jiang Chen's worries were completely settled by the time he left the Eastern Kingdom. Although the sixteen kingdoms alliance was just as tattered as the Myriad Domain, the situation was better than he initially feared.

After leaving the Eastern Kingdom and approaching the Boundless Catacombs, Jiang Chen came to a pause, "Please wait here for a moment, Huang'er. I would like to meet an old friend here."

Huang'er was very generous and didn't pry into Jiang Chen's private business. She smiled softly and nodded in response.

The Boundless Catacombs were the same as he remembered. To everyone else, it was just a secret realm in the Eastern Kingdom. A secret realm of this level held no attraction to any foreign cultivators at all. After all, the bar of the Eastern Kingdom Hidden Dragon Trials was too low. The Boundless Catacombs was a secret realm targeted at true qi realm cultivators. Naturally, no one paid attention to a secret realm of this level. But Jiang Chen knew more about this place than others.

Back when he was undertaking the trial of the Boundless Catacombs, he had been hunted by the assassins of Hidden Death. Two descendants of the Soaring Dragon clan had also tried to harm him. When he escaped into the depths of Boundless Catacombs, he once encountered a wild beast called Mang Qi at the fourth level. Jiang Chen had made a pact with the creature at the time.

Although Jiang Chen didn't notice anything amiss back then, Mang Qi's presence and the formation beneath the Eastern Kingdom now felt absolutely strange to him. He walked deeper into the Boundless Catacombs. The infinite army of swordbirds that once threatened his well-being was no longer a threat to him. They shied away from him in fear when he unleashed his aura.

Jiang Chen walked all the way to the third level and entered into the abyss of the Boundless Catacombs once more. This was supposed to be a trip down the memory lane, but Jiang Chen noticed something different this time. Although he had visited this place once, he couldn't sense even a shred of familiarity from the abyss around him. With his level of consciousness, there was no way he would have no impression of the place if he had came through this way before.

"As I thought, this Boundless Catacombs contains an enormous secret." Jiang Chen grew even more certain in his assumption. The scions of the Eastern Kingdom dukedoms who entered this place normally operated around the first and second level. Anyone who could make their way down to the third level was considered pretty impressive. Jiang Chen felt as if the abyss was truly endless as he walked into the fourth level of the Boundless Catacombs. There didn't seem to be a fixed route that existed at all in this place. The innumerable forks in the road overlapping one another made him feel like he was feeling his way inside a maze.

"It looks like the Boundless Catacombs aren't as simple as they appear. Most who enter the fourth level lose their way and never make it into the heart of this place. I didn't find any clues despite having come to this place once. There's definitely a formation in this place. Those who aren't able to walk behind the curtains of the formation can only be lost forever amidst the infinite forks of roads." Jiang Chen was no longer a greenhorn in terms of formations. After inheriting the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect's formation foundation, his knowledge of formations could now be considered quite vast.

However, this Great Formation of Heavenly Soul Confinement couldn't be completed by the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect prior to their destruction. Several other sects specializing in formations had to come together before it was finally complete. "Can it be that this Great Formation of Heavenly Soul Confinement really was

arranged by the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect?" Conflicting feelings plagued Jiang Chen's mind as he walked further into the abyss. If the Great Formation of Heavenly Soul Confinement really was set up by the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect, then the living beings who were sealed here might very well be a foreign race of ancient times. However, he'd promised Mang Qi that he would take the creature out of this place.

"Let's meet Mang Qi first and see what he has to say. If Mang Qi really is of foreign origin, then I must restrict its actions and prevent it from committing evil, even if I am to fulfill my promise and save him from this place." He recalled that Mang Qi had shown itself as a spirit rank cultivator at the time. But now that he thought about it, it was plainly impossible. If it really was a spirit rank cultivator, it would've died a long time ago already. There was no way it could've lived since ancient times. He had no doubt that Mang Qi had hidden its true strength.

While thinking, Jiang Chen suddenly sensed something before him. A purple flash later, a door seemed to appear in the void. Jiang Chen was startled. Countless green light suddenly exploded where the purple flash was.

Thump thump thump. The familiar shaking was caused by Mang Qi's footsteps.

"Jiang Chen, you're here!" Mang Qi's voice rang from inside the darkness.

Jiang Chen stayed at the same spot and unleashed his consciousness completely. He was fully on his guard towards Mang Qi. Its enormous body appeared from the darkness as its bell-like eyes roamed around Jiang Chen's body, "It's only been a few years, but your growth truly is impressive, Jiang Chen. I knew that my eye for talent is good!"

"You haven't changed at all, Mang Qi." Jiang Chen said indifferently.

Mang Qi was startled for a brief instant before he examined Jiang Chen. Then, it smiled wryly, “It looks like you have your guard up against me?”

Jiang Chen didn’t deny it, “You are a being who’s trapped inside the Great Formation of Heavenly Soul Confinement. If I’m not mistaken, you’re a member of a foreign race, aren’t you?”

He had learned about the foreign races from the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect. That was the deduction he came to with knowledge, information and rumors he’d collected over time.

Mang Qi exclaimed, “You know about the foreign races?”

“Are you part of them?” Jiang Chen frowned.

Mang Qi’s expression dimmed, but it didn’t deny the accusation, “From the standpoint of a Divine Abyss Continent denizen, yes. I am part of a foreign race.”

Jiang Chen’s expression turned cold. His assumption wasn’t wrong.

Chapter 868: Mang Qi's True Origin

"You, a foreign being from outside the realm, are asking me, a cultivator of the Divine Abyss Continent to save you from the Great Formation of Heavenly Soul Confinement? What a great scheme," Jiang Chen mocked.

Mangji only smiled wryly without argument. In an instant, the air between them grew stiff. In the darkness, neither man nor beast spoke. It was a beat later that Mang Qi sighed softly as it spoke. "Jiang Chen, when you've lived to my age and been in this situation, perhaps any edges, any opinions you have would have already been worn down by the endless ebb and flow of time. Nonetheless, since you have brought up this matter, I feel that I still have to defend myself a little. Would you be willing to grant me this chance? You can choose not to listen."

Jiang Chen wasn't tyrannical to the point of denying the creature speech. He calmly replied, "Say your piece."

Mang Qi nodded. His eyes shone with the bleakness of the endless currents of change. "It is as you say. I am from another realm. Most of those been bound here by the great formation are as well. It's just that there are differences even within the foreign realms. The only ones who truly invaded your Divine Abyss Continent are the demon race. The rest of us are merely their puppets, mercenaries under their manipulations. Our homes have long since been seized by the demon race. Our people, our children are mere cannon fodder and sacrificial pawns coerced into forced conquest across the endless planes! You can see me as a foreign being, but the ones invading your Divine Abyss Continent are actually the demon race."

This speech by Mang Qi was not too long, but its meaning was clear.

"You are puppets of the demon race?" Jiang Chen furrowed his

brows, half-believing Mang Qi's words.

"That's right. We're all victims of the demon race. Being trapped in this formation by the heavyweights of the Divine Abyss Continent is our just desserts. We carry neither hate nor vengeance towards your Divine Abyss Continent. Because to you, whether we came here voluntarily or not, we are still invaders. It is natural that we should be trapped and killed. However, the real source of evil springs from the demon race. The instigator of this war is the demon race. It's this greedy and aggressive evil race!" Mang Qi's eyes flashed with boundless hate as he said his. The fires of rage in his gaze seemed to have blazed without rest since an eternity ago. "You may question me, doubt me or even hate me. And you're right in doing so. To you natives, we are no doubt invaders. From your point of view, anyone who encroaches upon your homeland is an enemy or a bandit."

Mang Qi sighed lightly. There was a dreamlike quality to his voice as he mused, "I had a family and a homeland. My home was a incredibly beautiful place. The various races there might have occasionally disagreed and fought, but everyone lived in peace. That is, until we were discovered by the demon race. With them, they brought endless destruction. They ravaged my homeland, eliminated countless races, rounded up every warrior and sent them on forced conquests whenever and wherever they liked... Who knows how many places like my homeland the demon race have razed? I must commend the heavyweights of your Divine Abyss Continent for their strength. At least they can withstand the the demon race's invasion. Even under such onslaught, you can stand firm against the destruction of your homeland..."

Jiang Chen was curious. "Haven't you been trapped underground? How do you know that my homeland hasn't been destroyed?"

Mang Qi laughed bitterly. "That's because you don't know the extent of the destruction the demon race can wreck. If they

successfully dominate this realm, then how could there be any traces of your human bloodline left? How could the human race continue on until today? And how could you be standing in front of me?”

With the strength of the demon race’s bloodline, they did not simply occupy any place they invaded. They assimilated the place starting from the bloodline and finally changed every race into denizens of the demon race. If there were races that could not transform or integrate into the demon race’s bloodline, they would be turned into slaves or tools of war. Otherwise, they would all be killed.

“Mang Qi, I’ll believe you for the time being. I only want to know, just how many heavyweights have been sealed by this formation? And how many of them are members of the demon race?” Jiang Chen knew too little of the distant past. The records of the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect hadn’t mentioned too much either and had almost no details. Clearly, since there had been no one left in the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect to return, there would naturally be no substantial records. Jiang Chen wished to take this chance to thoroughly understand everything.

Mang Qi shook his head. “Not a single one is a member of demon race.”

“What do you mean?” A flash of distrust crossed Jiang Chen’s face.

“The only ones in the formation traps are puppets like me who have been forced into combat. I don’t know exactly how many of us there are. Nor do I know how many are still alive. I only know that in the initial battle, the heavyweights of your Divine Abyss Continent had given their all to construct such a terrifying seal, in order to lure us to this place and trap us within the seal. In that battle, the demon race had only pulled strings behind the curtains. None of them actually fought.”

This news was extremely unexpected. Mang Qi continued, “If you don’t believe me, you can extract my blood and bring it to an expert for confirmation. Then you’ll know that I don’t carry the demon race’s bloodline.”

Instead, Jiang Chen raised an eyebrow. “Since the demon race forced you to fight, why did they not assimilate you?”

Mang Qi forced a laugh. “The demon race are an arrogant bunch. All along, they’ve believed themselves to be the most outstanding, the most distinguished race in the universe. As such, they’re exceptionally proud of their bloodline. Not everyone is qualified to inherit their so-called bloodline assimilation. We were only their puppets of war. From their point of view, we weren’t even good enough to receive their bloodline.”

“Are you serious?” Jiang Chen was dumbfounded.

“Actually, that is only the arrogant prattle of the demon race. In reality, despite the strong invasive ability of the demon race’s bloodline, the universe is too wide and there are just too many races. Not every race’s bloodline can be so easily taken over. Many races are too difficult to assimilate, nor do the demons choose to assimilate all races. Normally, races with strong offensive abilities that are good at close combat possess strong bloodlines. They’re gifted with a natural resistance against the demon race. For example, you humans aren’t all qualified to inherit the demon race’s bloodline. Instead, they will select some stronger bloodlines to assimilate. With generation after generation of endless multiplying and assimilation, the demon race will achieve their goal of replacing the original bloodline.”

Jiang Chen understood quite a bit about the demon race from his previous life. Some of this information he was aware of but there were some parts that were new to him as well.

“Then, you’re one of the races that the demon race couldn’t assimilate?” Jiang Chen asked.

Mang Qi sighed. “If we’re talking about bloodline assimilation, they can assimilate me over my dead body. Even if I’ve become a puppet of war, I can at least still latch on to the string of hope that one day, I can return to my hometown and rebuild my home. If I lose even my bloodline, I will have completely turned into a zombie. What right do I have to return home with a sullied bloodline?”

It was clear as day that this Mang Qi had very unique feelings for his family and hometown. To him, they were obviously saintly existences.

“That means you want to leave this place not in order to incite trouble, but in order to return to your homeland?” Jiang Chen felt that his question was a little superfluous but asked anyway.

“Yes.” Mang Qi answered very sincerely, “I can swear a heavenly oath to you. It was definitely not my intention to come here. Nor is it my intention to retaliate against your Divine Abyss Continent upon leaving this place. The endless flow of time has worn down every ambition I ever had. Now, I only have one desire and that is to return to my homeland. Even if I can only glance at it before dying the next second, I will pass on with a smile.” As he said this, Mang Qi’s eyes glowed with a divine light, the flow of intense feelings of sincerity.

Jiang Chen also felt sorrow in his heart. From what he had observed, this Mang Qi was not lying. He immediately nodded and replied earnestly, “Thank you for explaining things to me. The previous agreement will is still in effect. Should I gain the power to in the future, I will definitely bring you out of this place. However, leaving the Divine Abyss Continent will also not be easy.”

Mang Qi’s eyes revealed rays of delight. “As long as I can leave this seal, I would at least have regained my freedom. As for when I can return home, that’d depend on luck. As long as I’m still alive and my body is my own, there is still hope for me to return to my homeland. Wouldn’t you say so?”

As long as there was freedom, there was hope. Without freedom, everything was just empty prattle.

“Yes. However, at my current level, I cannot bring you out from this formation. You can only remain here for the time being.”

“That’s alright. It’s fine. I’ve already waited for countless years. What’s impossible about waiting a while longer? Jiang Chen, I have a premonition. If I am ever able to leave this place, the person who sets me free will be you and no one else.” As a creature that had existed since ancient times, Mang Qi possessed powerful instincts. When it first sensed Jiang Chen’s existence, it had felt that this boy was different from the rest. It had sensed some traits that were not from this world on the human boy’s body. When it saw Jiang Chen again today, the changes to Jiang Chen’s body within a mere ten years were astounding. This only reinforced Mang Qi’s opinion.

“Since you’re that confident in me, then wait a little longer. Similarly, I also hope that you’re not playing any games with me.”

Mang Qi hurriedly replied, “Nowadays, there is only my home on my mind. I think of nothing else. That’s right, what made you return here to visit me?”

Jiang Chen recounted the situation in the world outside. Mang Qi knew nothing about the Divine Abyss, nor was he too interested in its matters.

“You said you want to go to the desolate wildlands?” Something in Mang Qi’s eyes shifted when he heard this.

“Yes. The Requiem Wood, have you heard of it?” Jiang Chen asked. The moment this question left his lips, Jiang Chen discovered instead that Mang Qi’s expression had instantly turned extremely ugly and deadly serious.

Chapter 869: Secrets of the Demon Race

Mang Qi's expression was extremely ugly. Its tone was unprecedentedly stern as it responded, "In ancient times, the desolate wildlands were invaded by the demon race. The nest of the demon race is precisely in the desolate wildlands. This place where we were sealed is the boundary of the desolate wildlands. Are you really thinking of charging straight into demon race territory?"

"Demon race territory? We're in the Divine Abyss Continent. There aren't any demons here."

Mang Qi shook its head repeatedly, "There's no way the demon race isn't present. The bloodline of the demon race is not so easily extinguished. Their temporary absence may only be a sign that they are biding their time. Without the demon race, why have the desolate wildlands remained as desolate as ever even today? Because you human cultivators don't even dare to occupy that place, because the bloodline of the demon race has not disappeared at all. Jiang Chen, if you... if you don't know how terrifying the demon race is, it's best that you don't approach the desolate wildlands." Mang Qi was clearly extremely agitated. It hated the idea of Jiang Chen risking his life.

"I'm sorry but I must go to the desolate wildlands. I have to obtain the Requiem Wood." Jiang Chen will not let anyone stand in the way of his plans.

Mang Qi stared at Jiang Chen with eyes as wide as copper bells before it sighed softly, "Do you know that the Requiem Wood never existed in your Divine Abyss Continent? It's a species the demon race brought with them."

Jiang Chen laughed, "That doesn't matter to me."

He had seen Requiem Wood before in his previous life. It wasn't necessarily a species that belonged solely to the demon race. There

were many other races that could cultivate Requiem Wood as well. However, Requiem Wood was indeed a kind of plant favored by the demon race. Nonetheless, Jiang Chen needed to get his hands on the Requiem Wood. He would climb a mountain even if he knew it was infested with tigers.

Other people might be terrified of the demon race. But with the knowledge accrued from his previous life, Jiang Chen possessed no bone-chilling fear towards the demon race. To him, the demon race was nothing more than just another race in the heavenly realm. While they were strong, they weren't powerful to the extent that other races would quake in their boots upon hearing their name.

When Mang Qi saw his stubbornness, it could tell that this youth had already matured. He had his own way of thinking now, to the degree that people around him had no way of changing his standpoint. Mang Qi felt shock but also a sense of gratification. Jiang Chen's growth was music to his ears. The faster Jiang Chen matured, the brighter its hope of leaving this place became. Ultimately, this was a good thing.

"Mang Qi, I might be speaking out of turn, but what exactly is your cultivation?" Jiang Chen naturally did not believe that Mang Qi was truly only in the spirit realm.

Mang Qi smiled bashfully before saying in a somewhat embarrassed voice, "It's true that I hid my true strength last time, but I didn't want you to be scared. I was also worried that you wouldn't understand, that you wouldn't accept me."

"Just tell me. I can handle it," Jiang Chen smiled.

"That year, the ones who were chosen by the demon race to be leaders of the puppet army were all acknowledged by the heavenly law. Do you understand me when I put things this way?"

"Empyrean rank?" Jiang Chen's pupils contracted rapidly in shock as he stared unwaveringly at Mang Qi.

“Indeed. There are at least a hundred others like me within the formation and countless others below empyrean rank. However, it’s almost impossible for anyone below empyrean rank to survive for so many years. Of course, each race differs from the others. But anyone able to make their way here, even those below empyrean rank, is certainly no poser. Although they haven’t been able to train, but if they managed to survive until now, they must undoubtedly be terrifying existences!”

Jiang Chen was speechless. He’s already given Mang Qi’s power the benefit of the doubt, but who’d have thought that even then, he had underestimated it. More than a hundred beings of empyrean potential were sealed within this formation! If a situation of this scale was unleashed, it would pose an unfathomable danger to the Divine Abyss Continent. He couldn’t guarantee that every one of the beings trapped here was like Mang Qi who did not harbor any hatred for the Continent. His expression instantly turned grave. A moment later, he asked, “Mang Qi, I hope you keep our agreement a secret. If I manage to get you out of here one day, I also hope that none of the others here will be released to wreak havoc on the Divine Abyss Continent as a result.”

Mang Qi fell silent for a second before it nodded. “I will take the secret to my grave. However, I feel that if you really manage to break this seal one day, it’d be most beneficial if you could use the others for your own goals.”

Jiang Chen pondered on this, but he still replied, “We’ll see when the time comes. If their personalities are all like yours then it wouldn’t be so bad. I’m just afraid that some will be overly stubborn in their ambitions.”

Mang Qi sighed, “If the edges of their personalities have not been worn out even after this amount of time, then something must be wrong with their brains.”

Things like personalities were difficult to predict. Some people’s

stubbornness could be washed away by the tides of time but others might be naturally unbridled. No amount of years could change that.

“Wouldn’t an even larger number of demon race forces be needed to manipulate so many puppets of war to serve them?” Jiang Chen asked abruptly.

“Why would the demon race need so many troops to control puppets? But still, there were some troops of demons, consisting of quite a few members, that invaded the Divine Abyss Continent. However, they obviously underestimated the power of your continent. Those few troops failed to achieve anything. From the looks of it now, they should have been suppressed by the heavyweights of your Divine Abyss Continent. But don’t just assume that everything is over,” Mang Qi replied in a heavy voice. “When the orbital trajectory of the heavenly planes coincides once more with the demon race’s path of invasion, the demon race will be given another pathway into this place. That is when they will strike again.”

Jiang Chen was very clear on matters related to orbital trajectories. As the son of the Celestial Emperor in his previous life, he naturally knew the theory behind the movement of the heavenly planes. These realms contained countless secular realms and minor worlds. These worlds that fell within the umbrella of the heavenly planes were all governed by the laws of heavenly orbit. Every plane was interconnected through a heavenly path. Only, the heavenly paths were closed most of the time.

The overlap of heavenly paths signaled the time when interplanar wars was at its most active. Intersection meant that the heavenly paths were straightened out, and no obstacles were in between each other. The entrance of one plane into another was as simple as breaking into a neighbor’s backyard. Of course, the realms and minor worlds within the heavenly planes were as numerous as water droplets in the ocean and stars in the sky.

There was no way to account for all of them.

The time until the heavenly paths into these countless planes overlapped again could be as short as ten thousand years, or as long as more than a few million years. Apart from the overlap of heavenly paths, the only other way for a plane to invade another was through interplanar hopping. That kind of dimensional travel required an extreme amount of time and effort, and was fraught with danger. Therefore, unless the heavenly paths overlapped, there was rarely any conflict between planes, unless they were close enough to each other to simplify interplanar travel. From the records of the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect, the invasion of the demon race should have been because they accidentally discovered the Divine Abyss Continent during the overlap of heavenly paths.

When Mang Qi saw Jiang Chen's skepticism, it emphasized very seriously, "Don't doubt me. The demon race holds long grudges. The demon king will definitely not forget the defeat of his armies here. When the heavenly paths overlap again, they will definitely invade again in even greater numbers. Even more heavyweights of the demon race will descend upon this place. Mark my words!"

At least ten thousand years had passed since the ancient era. Who knew when the heavenly paths would overlap again? As of now, the Divine Abyss Continent, especially those in the know within the human domain, did not fear the invasion of the demon race from outside the continent. What they feared was kindling the embers of the demon race within the Continent.

The demon race had definitely not been completely exterminated during the ancient war. It was just that those that had been sealed were still in stasis and those in hibernation were still isolated. That war had only come to a temporary lull. It had not concluded, and the various races of the Divine Abyss Continent only buried their heads into the sand. Everyone was content to pretend that this matter had never happened. They were satisfied with simply deceiving themselves to get past each day. In particular, what had

occurred with He Hongshu reinforced Jiang Chen's belief that the demon race had already begun to stir again.

However, Jiang Chen was not that fearful of the demon race, nor did he desire to escape. "Mang Qi, I will keep what you've told me in mind. The movement of heavenly paths is governed by the laws of heavenly dao. No man can obstruct them. All I can do is to prepare myself to greet any unforeseen changes." This was Jiang Chen's truest mentality.

Mang Qi was somewhat astonished by Jiang Chen's confidence. But as he thought about his judgment of Jiang Chen and the latter's stunning progress in recent years, he began to relax. "In short, just be careful. You'll definitely alert the demon race if you try to cross the desolate wildlands," Mang Qi warned Jiang Chen again. "Even if they're no longer running rampant in this world, even if they've already gone into hibernation, you must never underestimate the kindling ambitions of the demon race."

Jiang Chen took Mang Qi's painstaking advice to heart. He left the Boundless Catacombs in much higher spirits. At least, Mang Qi wasn't part of the demon race and the contract they had formed would not be something that would come back to bite him. That was a preoccupation that he could finally lay to rest. When Huang'er saw Jiang Chen emerge with both relief and grimness on his face, she was also curious. "Brother Chen, Elder Shun once said that this Boundless Catacombs is a very unique place. Nothing happened to you down there, right?"

Jiang Chen didn't have anything to hide from Huang'er. When she heard all that Jiang Chen had to say about the formation, she was greatly shocked. "Who'd have thought that there'd be so many mysteries surrounding the ancient era!"

"Heh, those heavyweights from the ancient era were such a courageous generation. Yet now, they're all turtling themselves up in the Myriad Abyss Island with no balls to poke their heads out. What the heck is that?" Jiang Chen still looked down on the

Myriad Abyss Island. Did they really think that foreign experts would be unable to detect the Divine Abyss Continent if they hid on the island? They were definitely burying their heads into the sand.

Perhaps the Myriad Abyss Island possessed some mysterious way to deceive prying eyes. Indeed, hiding on the island might help one evade those wandering interplanar adventurers. But, when the heavenly plans overlapped once more, when the vengeful demon race launched their large-scale invasion, it wouldn't matter where they hid.

When Huang'er heard Jiang Chen's dissatisfaction towards the Myriad Abyss Island, she also smiled, "Actually, Brother Chen, regarding the Myriad Abyss Island, hiding from other planes' heavyweights is just one aspect. Another aspect is the geographical advantage of the island. Those people are not only hiding. In the ancient war, countless spirit veins were dispersed and destroyed. Many places are no longer suitable for the training of empyrean experts. It is difficult for those spirit veins to recover without at least a few tens of thousands of years. The Myriad Abyss Island is the only remaining place where empyrean experts can train easily. It is already incredibly difficult for this outside world to accommodate a large number of empyrean experts..."

Chapter 870: The Desolate Wildlands

It wasn't as if Jiang Chen had never considered these reasons. Although certain parts of the explanation sounded reasonable, once those empyrean cultivators had entered Myriad Abyss Island, they'd turned it into their paradise, a forbidden area cut off from the rest of the world. Thereafter, they had never paid any attention to the world around them, showing no interest in matters unrelated to their island.

As a result, a problem more or less arose. As the heavyweights of Myriad Abyss Island continued to hole themselves up in the island for increasing periods of time, they gradually distanced themselves from the outside world. Unlike the heavyweights of the ancient era, they no longer felt the same sense of responsibility. If it had been those heavyweights from the ancient era who had protected their home up until their dying breaths, they would never have abandoned their homeland just because they had found a plot of pure land.

"What a pity. Most heavyweights from that time must have perished during the ancient war. What's left is only a generation of opportunists, it seems." Jiang Chen surmised.

On the battlefield, especially during the ancient war where entire races had been extinguished, the ones who had managed to survive must have either been profoundly lucky or supremely crafty opportunists. As the saying went, my brothers can die but I will not.

There were quite a number of such snakes in the martial dao world. They only followed one principle: self sacrifice was out of the question. If sacrifices needed to be made in the name of justice, take the lives of others instead. These snakes simply hid. Even if they had to play dead, they still refused to battle to the death like proper men. They could sacrifice anything except their own lives. Of course, not all of them were necessarily like this, but there were

definitely plenty of snakes among those who had managed to survive the bitter war of the ancient era.

Jiang Chen continued to mull over Mang Qi's words along the way. After departing from the Boundless Catacombs, their next destination was the Jiang Han province. Back then, the spirit herbs that had been planted in the land with the spirit vein had matured overnight. Jiang Chen had a deep impression of this odd occurrence. He had sensed this was a sign of great foreboding. After so many years, he suddenly wanted to see how everything had developed.

The Jiang Han province had changed beyond recognition. Since this had once been Jiang Chen's hometown, various parties had exerted their influence over this area. Whether it was the Eternal Celestial Capital or the Ninesuns Sky Sect, they had all sent numerous heavyweights to this place, turning it upside down. Only, those close to Jiang Chen had already left the province. The people left behind were all relatives far removed from his family. Jiang Chen didn't feel any sense of attachment towards them. However, even those far-removed Jiang family members had also completely vacated this place.

The land had already turned into a no man's land. Even the monarch of the Eastern Kingdom did not dare to dispatch people to govern this place. This was because this place had been seized by numerous wandering cultivators. It had become a paradise for the activities of wandering cultivators, a rest stop for those looking to explore the desolate wildlands. Indeed, the Jiang Han territory and Jiang Han City were not only much livelier than before, they had also grown massively in scale.

Even the duke's manor had been requisitioned. The outer appearance had stayed the same, but the ones who lived there no longer had any relations with the Jiang family. Jiang Chen didn't feel much sentiment towards the Jiang Han province, but he still felt that there was something distinctly wrong about his province

being taken over by other people.

If his father returned and saw that the place of his past glory had been ransacked like this, he would definitely be unhappy. As much as Jiang Chen wanted to shoo these people away, he forcefully restrained this impulse. Right now, everything had to be considered in the greater scheme of things. Prior to obtaining the Requiem Wood, nothing else would be of importance. Much like the Skylaurel Kingdom, the place was teeming with passing cultivators. Occasionally, one could even catch a glimpse of some sects' heavyweights. It was truly uncommonly lively for so many people to come and go through the tiny Jiang Han province.

"Just what kind of event is going on?" Jiang Chen felt that there must be a reason behind this unusual buzz.

In the interior of a tavern, Jiang Chen and Huang'er sat in a corner, drinking some ale while listening to the idle chatter of the wandering cultivators around them.

"Apparently, the seal will break within a few days. The fog of mystery enshrouding the desolate wildlands will also be mostly dispersed. Finally, we human cultivators will be able to enter the desolate wildlands, that enormous treasure trove!"

"Brother, you're too optimistic. Since time immemorial, the thousands of miles comprising the desolate wildlands have been sealed off from our human domain. If this seal is currently breaking, it might be indicative of an imminent disaster."

"Quit your alarmist talk. Who knows how many heavenly treasures the desolate wildlands has carried from ancient times until today! Even if there's some danger, it's a necessary risk for the sake of honor and riches!"

"Ugh, I hope you're right."

Jiang Chen and Huang'er heard many similar conversations after sitting for fifteen minutes. The desolate wildlands, a seal, fog and

haze... Such terms caused shivers to run silently down their spines.

The Darkmoon Kingdom was located beside the Eastern Kingdom. These two kingdoms were both bordered by the desolate wildlands. Many people saw the two kingdoms as places located on the periphery of the desolate wildlands. Therefore, these two kingdoms had always been rejected and marginalized by the sixteen kingdoms alliance. On the flip side, the sixteen kingdoms alliance was further marginalized and looked down upon by other powers. The root cause of it all was their proximity to the desolate wildlands.

Any place that was located near these desolate wildlands was considered to be a source of danger within the human domain. According to legend, the desolate wildlands was where demons had been sealed away in ancient times. This was the land where the demon race had staked their claim a long time ago; this was where the ancient heavyweights had defeated the demon race and sealed the area off from all other human cultivators. However, anything related to the ancient war with the demon race had been labelled as taboo within the Divine Abyss Continent. No detailed records of any kind had been passed down. It was to the extent that even some large sects didn't have much information on the ancient war.

Those who knew of the war were either dead or had already left the human domain. They had departed this vast earth to the similarly boundless Myriad Abyss Island; they had fled from the infinite continent to the endless abyss. Therefore, the entirety of the human domain, including other races from different domains, was relatively ignorant of the desolate wildlands and of the ancient war that had taken place there. Conversely, there was no shortage of rumors and suspicions.

Humanity was perversely curious about the desolate wildlands. But, at the same time, they feared it down to their very bones. The curiosity stemmed from the fact that the desolate wildlands was a place that had been left untouched since the ancient era—it was a

virgin land that had never been exploited. From the distant past to present day, more than a few tens of thousands of years had passed. This untouched land undoubtedly contained endless amounts of treasure. Moreover, it might even contain valuables and precious items left over from the ancient war. This was why everyone agreed that there must be countless opportunities waiting in these desolate wildlands, and that it was surely a treasure trove untouched by human hands for more than ten thousand years.

For any hot-blooded adventurer, this point was undoubtedly an enormous attraction. In particular, for runaway fugitives who were disillusioned by years of futility and hopelessness and were willing to risk it all, this was the place with the highest chance of helping them reverse their fortunes. After all, with the current hierarchy of the human domain, it was impossibly difficult for wandering cultivators to stand out amongst their peers. Great sects carried great power, as they controlled most of the resources in the human domain. The number of wandering cultivators might be more than ten times the number of sect members, but the amount of resources allocated to them might not even reach one tenth of that allocated to sect members.

This severe disparity drove the wandering cultivators to stake their lives on much greater risks than sect disciples. Wandering cultivators possessed no boundless resources, no immovable pillars of support, and no inherent bloodlines. Their only advantage was their fearlessness of death. Therefore, upon hearing the news that there was hope of entering the desolate wildlands, countless wandering cultivators had rushed madly into the sixteen kingdoms alliance, as if ready to toss their lives to the wind. It was just that this news had not spread to the general public yet. Otherwise, the number of wandering cultivators hurrying over would perhaps be ten times greater.

The chatter around Jiang Chen and Huang’er was filled with

various statements and theories. At present, they didn't know just whose information would be relatively more accurate. However, the general gist of everyone's conversations revolved around the desolate wildlands, the gap in the seal, and how everyone was planning to go about exploring the area.

Jiang Chen couldn't understand it. "He Hongshu and the others have already entered the desolate wildlands. Doesn't that mean that the desolate wildlands should have opened long ago? Why are these people saying they need to wait two more days? Was He Hongshu lying to me?"

He dismissed this possibility upon further consideration. Perhaps He Hongshu was capable of lying, but he couldn't have fabricated the information regarding the piece of Requiem Wood. Jiang Chen ran through some careful mental calculations before coming to a conjecture. "Maybe there's indeed a gap in the seal within the desolate wildlands, but this gap only appears cyclically?"

Actually, the periodical weakening of a seal was nothing uncommon. For example, some solar formations would weaken deep into the night, when the sun's energy was at its weakest. When the sun rose the next day, the seal would once again regain its normal strength. From the distant past to the present, more than ten thousand years had passed since the desolate wildlands had been sealed. Some weakening taking place in the seal was entirely possible. After all, things like formations could be affected by a gap in even the smallest component. Back on Mt. Rippling Mirage, Cao Jin and his fellow sect members had only been able to break the seal surrounding the place and subsequently enter the mountain because, after many years, the formation had slowly degraded, exposing a tiny gap.

The two of them stopped over at the Jiang Han province for half a day before leaving.

"Brother Chen, it seems that all these wandering cultivators rushed here for the desolate wildlands." Huang'er's delicate brows

were colored with a trace of worry.

“Right. It’s still too early to tell if this spells fortune or disaster,” Jiang Chen sighed. “Let’s not worry about these things at present. As long as we find the Requiem Wood, our trip will not have been in vain.”

They didn’t need to group together like the other wandering cultivators. With the map that He Hongshu had provided, the two of them soon arrived at the entrance indicated on the map. This entrance was at the intersection between the Jiang Han territory and the Dark Moon Kingdom. It was an extremely remote place surrounded by miles upon miles of mountainous ravines. What they had not expected was for the area around this valley to be packed with cultivators. Clearly, there were quite a number of well-informed cultivators. Jiang Chen and Huang’er’s arrival at this place also did not stir up any particular response from these cultivators, who had long since occupied the place.

Chapter 871: Making a Move with Dominance

The valley was very secluded and hard to find. Two soaring mountains arched towards each other, forming the only pathway into the depths of this misty canyon. The desolate wildlands of fable and legend lay beyond them. To an onlooker from outside the valley, mist and fog surrounded the area, enshrouding the valley in a kaleidoscopic haze all year round. The phenomenon imparted the area with a sense of eerie mystery. Currents of air permeated the valley's entrance, rumbling like bolts of violent lightning. It was clear evidence of a powerful restriction.

"It really is the entrance to the wildlands." Jiang Chen exchanged a look with Huang'er. According to the map they had, at least, they knew they had come to the right place. He Hongshu hadn't deceived them. Witnessing the power of the restriction and its intermittent discharge of air currents of the same thickness as a baby's arm, Jiang Chen had no doubt that the seal was weakening. If it were otherwise, even emperor realm cultivators would be reduced to dust when they tried to enter the wildlands. It was completely out of the question for wandering cultivators.

"The ancient times truly did have remarkable restrictions. It still holds such power after innumerable years. No wonder no one has explored this area, even with the Eastern Kingdom and Darkmoon Kingdom so nearby. Considering the strengths of the cultivators from these two kingdoms, it'd be a problem for them to even get to the entrance, much less explore any further." Jiang Chen did not doubt the veracity of his inferences.

It wasn't even two thousand miles from the Jiang Han duchy, but the road between the two wasn't something that ordinary kingdoms' cultivators could simply traverse. Even origin-realm cultivators would find it difficult to keep themselves safe against

the beasts and dangers they would encounter along the way, much less spirit realm cultivators, who were the best that these two kingdoms could offer.

“What’re you doing here all shifty-looking, eh? Get outta my sight!” Someone felt provoked by the sight of Jiang Chen and Huang’er walking further in. He appeared in front of the two of them, roaring, with displeasure plain on his face.

Jiang Chen pretended to not notice and gazed at the valley entrance instead. Deploying his God’s Eye to the maximum, he began to probe the surroundings. He wanted to know which area of the restriction had weakened and when the crack would appear. He Hongshu hadn’t mentioned these details in the information he had provided. He had only mentioned that the entrance hinged on passing through several layers of restrictions and that an antidote pill should be consumed beforehand. The opening in the restriction would close shortly afterwards. If the person who entered wanted to leave, they had to wait until its next opening.

Jiang Chen was a man who paid close attention to detail. He liked to investigate everything thoroughly before taking action. The right to speak came only after a detailed investigation, as did a better grasp on the situation at hand. However, his actions inadvertently further provoked the person who had shouted at him.

“Kid, you deaf or mute? I told you to scram!” The sharp voice from earlier rang out again with heightened anger. He seemed ready to charge into a fight at the slightest provocation.

Jiang Chen furrowed his brow, glancing at the person in question. He was standing more than ten meters away from the other fellow. How was he affecting him in any way? But the guy kept barking incessantly like a mad dog. Jiang Chen’s mood was already gloomy, and the commotion only served to worsen it.

“What, is this your house?” Jiang Chen’s tone was frosty. A

casual once-over from him revealed a total of five members in their group. Upon closer inspection, he was even a little familiar with them. Jiang Chen exchanged another look with Huang'er. Both of them remembered where the five were from. It had been just after the fall of Regal Pill Palace, and Jiang Chen had taken revenge against Gong Wuji by killing his grandson Gong Qi. At the time, he had entered the Great Scarlet Capital to gather information. It was the first time he had been to the city and the first time he had appeared at the Dragon & Phoenix. That was how he had met these five wandering cultivators.

The Great Scarlet Mid Region and Eternal Celestial Capital's bounties had just been posted. Their sums weren't quite as ridiculous as they were now, but it was still five million saint spirit stones, three thousand Origin Doubling Pills, and a single sky rank spirit herb. Moreover, the person turning in the bounty would be entitled to a dukedom of ten thousand miles, bequeathed the Great Scarlet Imperial Medallion, and given the right to found their own sect in the region.

The five of them had first appeared at the Dragon & Phoenix, shamelessly claiming that they were going to capture Jiang Chen and collect the accompanying handsome bounty. He had a strong impression of these people. Their leader was a one-eyed man with a ferocious demeanor and a shrewd mind. They called themselves the 'Ghost Cave Five'. They were reasonably strong sage-realm cultivators and could be counted amongst the better of most wandering cultivators here. Moreover, they were a company of five close friends. Appearing strong and mighty to the casual observer, they had claimed a fairly large piece of land as their own. The closest cultivator was located over a thousand feet away from them. Four out of the five were incensed; the one-eyed leader was the only one who didn't register a change in expression. Jiang Chen hadn't just ignored them—he had dared to talk back! The one who had spoken earlier suddenly stood up. He was a lanky man with a pointed chin. "Kid, you looking to die?"

Although the Ghost Cave Five were wandering cultivators, they were still rather overbearing. However, Jiang Chen wouldn't be intimidated by them. Even the old Jiang Chen wouldn't be afraid of any 'Ghost Cave Five', much less the Jiang Chen of present. He glanced at the other party coolly. "You're part of the 'Ghost Cave Five'? It's a wonder that someone as arrogant as you is still alive," he remarked offhandedly.

Huang'er shook her head to herself as well. The only thing they had done to provoke the guy was that they had stood next to him for a brief moment. Any expert worth one's salt could swat these people like one would a fly. In fact, Jiang Chen could easily exterminate the five of them if he so pleased. His unfriendly tone prompted Huang'er to tug on his arm. "It's okay, don't take these guys so seriously."

Jiang Chen allowed himself a slight smile. Of course he would listen to Huang'er's words. He nodded imperceptibly, then resumed his journey inwards, walking directly past them.

"Halt!" The one-eyed man who had been silent up until now moved forward suddenly, landing in front of Jiang Chen and Huang'er. "You can't pass by here," he waved a hand.

Jiang Chen frowned, angered by the repeated rudeness and provocation from the other party. "You want to pick a fight?"

"I don't care who you are or where you're from," the one-eyed man retorted coldly. "Since you're here, you need to follow our rules. We've already claimed this territory. If you want a place for yourself, you can go somewhere else. We all have another agreement as well—you can't go past this line. If you go deeper in, then you'll be breaking the rules we have in place."

"Rules? Did you make them?" Jiang Chen smirked with disdain.

"Everyone made them together. What, you want to piss all of us at once as soon as you get here?" The one-eyed man was obviously proficient at sowing discord. With but a few words, he had placed

Jiang Chen on everyone's bad side. As expected, the onlookers' collective gazes gathered towards him. Some were sneering, some questioning, some wary, and some even hostile with a hint of provocation. Still others pretended to be uncaring.

Jiang Chen had planned to take a step back, but the one-eyed man's malicious intent upset him. Twisting his brow, one side of his mouth smirked upwards. It was a strange smile. He swept his gaze across the Ghost Cave Five's faces. "You can get out of here. I'm taking your territory over now," he said suddenly. That the Ghost Cave Five were capable of keeping such a large portion of land to themselves was a testament to their oppressive ways. No one else was willing to even approach them. They weren't necessarily the strongest nor were they the shot-callers, but their position in everyone's eyes was clear.

And now, an unassuming, young wandering cultivator wanted the Ghost Cave Five to vacate their territory? This turn of events thickened the previously peaceful air. The bystanders looked on at this show with glee in their eyes. They were evidently happy to see something more exciting happen. Such a boring wait was difficult for all of them. A spectacle was just what everyone needed to spice up their lives and soothe their nerves. Naturally, this kind of liveliness was agreeable to all.

For a moment, the Ghost Cave Five hesitated. Then, the one-eyed man began to cackle. Halfway through the gesture, his eyes turned cold. The two words, "kill them", spat from his malevolent lips. Killing intent spewed forth like an explosive conflagration. The five were quite experienced and coordinated. They had been brothers for many decades and struck in unison upon their leader's command, viciously coming at Jiang Chen from many different directions.

Thump, thump, thump. Jiang Chen kicked thrice through the air, and the three fast-moving figures looked as if they had run into the tip of his foot. Like sand bags being used for target practice,

they fell in the worst possible way. One after another, they fell so closely together that it was difficult to distinguish who was who.

The remaining two were slightly stronger in terms of cultivation. They were both very surprised at the ease with which Jiang Chen kicked away their comrades, quickly reducing their speed and momentum. Smiling faintly, he wound up both hands with a dextrous twist. He reached towards them in the air, picking up the remaining two with his hands as easily as he would little chicks.

“Scram!” Shaking his arms, Jiang Chen tossed both of them away like sandbags. Attempting to resist further, the two found that they were incapable of doing so. They were entirely paralyzed and unable to move, and their bodies crashed into the earth like weights.

Thump, thump. The impact kicked up dust, which subsequently scattered everywhere. The impact left a gaping hole in the ground. With almost the swiftness of thought, the formerly insufferable Ghost Cave Five were sent flying like dead dogs. It was a horrible sight to behold. The damage was severe enough to keep them on the ground for quite a while. The wandering cultivators bearing witness to the spectacle were conflicted. Some of those with previously calm expressions became far more serious.

Clearly, the people present no longer underestimated the pair of youths before them. The Ghost Cave Five themselves were thrown into disarray as well. They were typically quite aggressive and normally fought tooth and nail when at a disadvantage. But, amidst their present cries, the five no longer dared to even look in Jiang Chen’s general direction. Helping each other up, they crawled into a distant corner without even a single word of hot air. Their eyes were full of aversion and fear. What energy did they have to make a retort with? They weren’t idiots. They knew that they had picked on the wrong person this time.

Chapter 872: The Wandering Cultivator Selling Pills

The Ghost Cave Five had a thuggish reputation, making the typical wandering cultivator give them a wide berth. Jiang Chen was even fiercer and more domineering in this respect, exerting a suffocating pressure on everyone in sight. Many wandering cultivators became fearful of his gaze. They no longer dared look at him directly, examining him with only sneaky sidelong glances and ensuring that no unfriendliness could be deciphered from their actions.

Jiang Chen didn’t let taking care of the Ghost Cave Five get to his head, though. He calmly beckoned to Huang'er, and they sat down in the area that had belonged to the recently evicted group. The Ghost Cave Five had occupied a sizable territory. He thought it was nice that he had enough space to be undisturbed by others. The entrance to the seal was only roughly two kilometers away from where he was seated. From this distance, Jiang Chen could use his consciousness to carefully inspect the opening in the seal

Jiang Chen examined it for a brief moment to discover where exactly the gap was. At first glance, it appeared to be no different than the rest of the seal. But closer inspection revealed that the spirit energy flowing past the opening was slightly slower than that of everywhere else. It was like a chain that contained a misshapen ring within. When the spirit energy within the seal came to this ring, it skipped half a beat.

After looking at the seal a bit longer, Jiang Chen was able to glean some of the principles behind its operation. According to his calculations, the seal still needed another day or two for a man-sized opening to appear. After analyzing the seal, Jiang Chen calmed himself and began to observe his surroundings. He had originally thought that the Ghost Cave Five had a piece of prime

real estate, but upon closer examination, that wasn't really true. Though the spot appeared to be close to the entrance, it was actually a crossroads at a high risk of being contested. When the seal erupted, the spot that the Ghost Cave Five formerly occupied would bear the brunt of activity.

Of the other wandering cultivators scattered around, some had spots that seemed far but were actually more effective. When the opening arose, the front entrance would be quite crowded. The places nearer the wings were probably much better in terms of geography.

Jiang Chen made a note of this mentally after a rough look. "The Ghost Cave Five had a loud bark, but they're not very smart. The cleverer ones have hidden themselves, ready to pounce at the first sign of weakness or opportunity."

This was the frightening conclusion that Jiang Chen came to after his investigation. Perhaps the Ghost Cave Five did have an advantage when compared to some of the wandering cultivators on the outskirts. But, against the ones who'd concealed their strength to the degree of being overlooked, they didn't have a chance at all. They seemed almost fools.

"I guess that explains why no one's contested their territory. It directly faces the seal and will definitely face heavy traffic. It's both dangerous and will be contested. I'm surprised that the Five are still alive, considering their brain power... they must lead a hard life." Despite his thoughts, Jiang Chen wasn't planning on changing spots. Now that he'd so openly kicked out the five from their spot, perhaps others viewed him as a slightly stronger brute. He wasn't willing to correct their mistaken preconception. If others overlooked or underestimated him on this journey, then all the better.

There would be no cause for concern if everyone present was like them. But those who were conserving their strength were clearly different. Some were terrifyingly, even absurdly, strong. For

people with even that level of strength to hide their power, the situation must be very delicate. Nobody wanted to stand out. Keeping a low profile was surely the mantra of many people here on this journey. But Jiang Chen didn't want to show off a different side of himself. He intentionally put on a façade of "I'm very strong, so nobody should offend me".

Huang'er was an understanding girl. She could tell from the quickest of glances and the slightest of movements what Jiang Chen was thinking, and vice versa. She knew that Jiang Chen was feigning incompetence. After they sat cross-legged for a while, there was a voice from the left. "Friend, can I have a few moments of your time?"

Jiang Chen wiggled his ears, already locking on to the sound's origin. Looking in that direction, he saw a comparatively young wandering cultivator. The young cultivator smiled at him, his eyes belying a strong desire for social interaction. Seeing Jiang Chen's attentive gaze, the youth messaged again. "I swear to the heavens that I mean no harm."

Jiang Chen squinted at the youth, looking him over a few times to make sure there was nothing unspeakable hidden in his eyes. "Come, then," he nodded. The youth raised both hands horizontally, careful not to disturb anyone else, even the ants on the ground. His cautious behavior indicated his nature as a cultivator.

Concerned about any possible misunderstandings, the youth had both arms raised as he walked into Jiang Chen's territory. He flashed a slightly guarded smile. "Hello friend, a little introduction first. I'm Lin Yanyu."

"Hmm, I see. Have a seat." Jiang Chen nodded nonchalantly, then glanced at the youth again. "Don't act so suspicious. If you have something to say, then spit it out."

Lin Yanyu couldn't help but keep nodding. His expression was

apologetic. “May I ask your surname?”

Jiang Chen tilted his head at Huang'er. “Huang,” he said casually.

“Ah, so Daoist Huang then.”

“You came over to make small talk?” Jiang Chen frowned.

Lin Yanyu offered a conciliatory smile. “No, no, not at all. Sorry if it’s a little sudden, but I came over here to, ah, market a few products I have.”

“Market... products?” Jiang Chen couldn’t understand why the youth had come to such a serious place in order to sell things. That didn’t quite fit in.

“The desolate wildlands haven’t been opened since ancient times. Many Miasmas must have built up without human activity. I am not a man of many talents, but I do take modest pride in my pill refining skills. I came to offer you some antidote pills for your travels.”

Jiang Chen exchanged a look with Huang'er, privately amused by the prospect. Someone was marketing pills to him?

Lin Yanyu took his expression as one of dismissal, hastening an explanation. “Friend daoist, I’m a wandering cultivator from Pillfire City. My recipe is exclusive. I just haven’t been able to make a name for myself because of the fierce competition there. This is an opportunity for me to prove the quality of my pills. You can put your mind at ease, I only intend to get some testimonials rather than make money. As long as my material and traveling costs are covered, that’s enough.”

The youth’s eyes exuded sincere honesty, mixed with a dash of appeasement. He’d clearly been here for a while, but the results of his marketing bore little fruit. From the faint palm-shaped bruise on his left cheek, he’d even been slapped by someone. Jiang Chen didn’t quite know why, but he suddenly felt a little compassion for

Lin Yanyu. For a wandering cultivator from a grassroots background, there was the risk of being insulted and beaten even amongst other wandering cultivators, much less when competing with Pillfire City. There were countless people like this in the world of martial dao, Jiang Chen couldn't help but be moved by the look in Lin Yanyu's eyes.

"Let's buy a few, then," Huang'er suddenly spoke up to the side. "Take out your pills. Let's have a look."

Overjoyed by Huang'er's words, Lin Yanyu nevertheless looked to Jiang Chen for further guidance. He knew that this mighty male cultivator was the one who had the final say. Jiang Chen nodded. "Yes, let's see the quality of your pills."

Lin Yanyu took out a pill bottle hurriedly, pouring out aquamarine pills from the vessel. "This pill is called the Eight Treasures Antidote. It can defend against most common poisons and Miasmas you encounter." Lin Yanyu was very proud of his own pills.

Jiang Chen turned the pill over in the palm of his hand. Wandering cultivators from Pillfire City were truly a cut above the rest. This Eight Treasures Antidote was upper rank in both design and quality. It was almost worthy of being called an earth rank pill.

"This pill is pretty good. How much are you selling it for?"Jiang Chen asked smoothly.

"For one pill? Only two hundred thousand saint spirit stones," Lin Yanyu answered quickly.

Even something like the Longevity Pill could be sold for ten million or more. A pill like this for two hundred thousand was actually quite cheap. Jiang Chen smiled a little. "Give me ten, then."

"Ten pills?" Lin Yanyu blinked. "You want that many? Friend,

there’s no benefit to using several of this pill. The effect is the same whether you consume one or five. I wouldn’t buy so many at once.” Though Lin Yanyu desperately wanted to sell his pills, he was still a very honest merchant. He was willing to inform Jiang Chen of the disadvantages of his product.

Jiang Chen smiled again. “You don’t want to sell? Then never mind, you can leave.”

Lin Yanyu looked as bitter. “Fellow, I’m… I’m just saving money for you.”

“What’s the point in buying just one or two of a pill worth only two hundred thousand?” Jiang Chen said squarely. “Ten or nothing.”

Lin Yanyu could only laugh with helplessness before nodding. “Fine, ten it is. If you feel that you’ve bought too many, you can find me for a refund.”

“You talk too much.” Twisting a corner of his mouth, Jiang Chen tossed the other man a storage ring. “Here’s the money for the pills. Stop nagging and get out of my sight.”

Huang'er knew by now that Jiang Chen was putting on an aggressive appearance. He wanted to trick those observing into thinking he was a mere brute.

Taking the storage ring, Lin Yanyu scanned its contents. He was stunned. The ring held a full five million saint spirit stones. However, Jiang Chen’s hawkish appearance and the prior warning made him swallow the words on the edge of his lips. He did a cupped fist salute instead. “Thank you for your patronage.”

Jiang Chen waved a hand impatiently. “What's there to be thankful for? It's a fair transaction.”

Bowing, Lin Yanyu changed from speech to message. “Daoist, you’ve given me more than I am owed. My heart obliges me to tell you a few extra things, and I hope they’re of help to you.

“Firstly, the territory you have now is intentionally overlooked by many experts. Secondly, there are many very strong experts hidden in the people about you. Thirdly, these strong experts seem to have formed a hidden alliance, in order to set down some new rules about this specific expedition into the wildlands…”

Chapter 873: The Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain

Jiang Chen's expression didn't change even after he'd heard Lin Yanyu's message. Lin Yanyu transmitted again, "The first two things I've told you are absolutely true. I don't have any hard evidence for the third, but based on my own observations, I am almost certain that it's true. You can see for yourself later, Daoist Huang, but please don't say that I'm the one who told you this, or not even having ten lives can save me."

Lin Yanyu smiled wryly and cupped his hands towards Jiang Chen's direction. Only then did he carefully walk away. Jiang Chen frowned, but didn't look at Lin Yanyu's departing back. Considering how cautious Lin Yanyu was, it must have taken him a great deal of courage to reveal this information. Jiang Chen sighed inwardly. Everyone has their own way of living. This Lin Yanyu may seem petty and low, but he has his own principles. The spirit stones I gave him was what the Eight Treasures Antidote was truly worth, but not only did he refuse to accept them, he even give me a bit of intel in return. He's an interesting fellow alright.

To be honest, he was very impressed with Lin Yanyu. Lin Yanyu might not live an unrestrained life—one might even say that the way he lived his life was perhaps a little too cautious—but that didn't mean that he was a person who lacked principles. He refused to take advantage of others even when he was in dire straits. There were many top-rated experts in this world, but Jiang Chen dared say that many of them didn't possess a moral character like his. He didn't need the Eight Treasures Antidote. Both he and Huang'er had refined the Thundercloud Cicada's bloodline and were thus impervious to poison. There was no poisonous fog or miasma that could hurt them. On the other hand, the information Lin Yanyu provided was of great value to Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen had figured out the first piece of information Lin Yanyu had provided him with through his own observations. The place he had chosen was a place that no one wanted, even if an expert were to give it up. Jiang Chen had also figured out the second piece through his own observations. There were definitely some experts far stronger than the Ghost Cave Five hiding somewhere around in the area. The third piece he had been given, however, was especially important.

If there really was a secret alliance as Lin Yanyu had claimed, Jiang Chen needed to think through his plan of action thoroughly. Normally, an alliance like this was in no way reliable. Jiang Chen himself had no plans of allying with anyone in the area. However, an alliance like this meant that there clear-cut rules and a set profit distribution system. Bluntly speaking, a small number of experts wanted to claim the pie all to themselves and kick everyone else away from the dining table.

Jiang Chen didn't want to be outcasted by the alliance. He liked the idea that an alliance like this might be stirring up trouble for him in the dark even less. That was why he needed to know more about the alliance. If he couldn't destroy the alliance, he would have to become a part of it. It wasn't like Jiang Chen needed their help, but it wasn't part of his plan to be ostracized like a fool either. While he was deep in thought, he suddenly heard a yell nearby, "Move on, scram!"

Jiang Chen frowned and looked towards the source of the voice. Lin Yanyu's figure appeared before Jiang Chen's eyes once more. He was biting his lip softly and stared stubbornly at the brawny man trying to chase him away. "If you've taken the pill, then you have to pay for it, friend. It's not like you lack the two hundred thousand spirit stones. If you don't want to do so, then you have to return my pill." The person he was talking to was a bulky man. There were also a few cultivators surrounding Lin Yanyu and cackling at him. These cultivators seemed even stronger than the

Ghost Cave Five. The place they claimed was also closer to the entrance.

“I’m giving you face and helping your fame by accepting your pill, fool! If it’s really as good as you claim, then I’ll consider paying you for your troubles after we make it out of the desolate wildlands. Who knows if you’re just lying to make some quick money if I pay you now? Don’t you think so too, brothers?”

For a split second, the brawny man made the act of claiming another’s possessions without providing the necessary compensation seem reasonable. However, this wasn’t Lin Yanyu’s first day in the jianghu. How could he not know that these men were trying to take his pills without paying? Their so-called delayed payment was complete bullshit. If they weren’t willing to pay him now, would they really be willing to pay him after coming out of the desolate wildlands?

“Friend, I’m doing business on a shoestring, and this is the first time we’re meeting. There is no way I’m letting you buy on credit like this. If you aren’t willing to pay me, then please return my pills now.” Lin Yanyu’s tone might have been a little fearful, but he still summoned the courage to protect what was his.

“Are you scramming or not?” The brawny man’s eyes abruptly darkened as he glared maliciously at Lin Yanyu. “Or maybe you’d like to see if I can slap you to death with one move?”

Lin Yanyu’s eyes were bloodshot, and a bit of hesitation crept up into his face. In the end though, he shook his head and said, “Give me back my pills and I’ll leave immediately.”

The brawny man laughed savagely, “You asked for it!”

No one here was unfamiliar with the law of the jungle in the world of wandering cultivators. That Lin Yanyu tried to market his pills to a group like the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain was suicidal to say the least. Money? It would already be considered a great feat if he managed to escape with his life. The Ghost Cave

Five might appear oppressive and ferocious, but that was all on the surface. The evil deeds the Ghost Cave Five had committed didn't even amount to one tenth of what the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain had done.

The Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain was a famous brigand group that operated all throughout the human domain. They were ruthless and merciless bastards who specifically targeted lone, wandering cultivators. If they were in a good mood, they might kill off their victims immediately, but if they were in a bad mood, they would torture their prey endlessly until they gasped for their last breaths. The fate of women was even worse than that of their male counterparts. Female cultivators who fell into the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain's hands were better off dead than alive. They went on top of their prey in turns and used every kind of disgusting tricks they could think of to torture their prey. The captured female cultivators were often tortured to death before the group eliminated their victims. That was why the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain was infamous in the world of wandering cultivators.

Unfortunately for everyone else, the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain was both tricky and strong. They had managed to escape several organized hunts and remained free despite numerous wandering cultivators' attempts to hunt them down. In fact, the wandering cultivators who had participated in the hunts were later the victims of revenge, either vanishing without a trace or dying horrible deaths.

Compared to them, the Ghost Cave Five were a bunch of brats who had just learned how to walk. The brawny man Lin Yanyu was facing was the third oldest group member. He was the kind of guy who caused trouble even when none came to him, so he couldn't think of any reason to turn down a fat lamb who had walked right up to his doorstep like Lin Yanyu had.

Lin Yanyu's expression changed when he saw the man

approaching him. The man was obviously stronger than him, and he had no idea what he could do to protect himself. He put a pair of gloves on his hands immediately and said, “Don’t come any closer. My gloves are filled with all sorts of poison. You’ll die if I touch you even once!”

The brawny man laughed, “Trying to scare me, eh? Even if I assume that the poison on your gloves is real, do you really think you can touch me before I crush you like an ant?”

Jiang Chen frowned at the scene and spoke up, “That’s enough.”

Everyone was watching the spectacle unfold quietly and didn’t lift a hand to help Lin Yanyu, because offending the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain was a foolish thing to do. Therefore, Jiang Chen’s voice came as a surprise to many people. The brawny man abruptly glared at Jiang Chen after a brief moment of surprise. “And who are you talking to?”

Jiang Chen sneered, “I see you have a big head on your shoulders, but your brain must be pretty small.”

“Are you trying to interfere with my business and stand up for justice, boy?” The brawny man suddenly cackled and whistled frivolously, “Hey brothers, someone is trying to stand up for justice over here! What a trip!”

The other five cultivators of the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain looked over with unfriendly looks on their faces. A white-haired old man, who was clearly the boss of the group, walked slowly over to their side while holding a walking cane made of a strange type of metal. “It might be better to keep your mouth shut, friend.”

Jiang Chen answered in annoyance, “Who’s your friend?”

The white-haired old man looked surprised by this. The Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain was quite infamous in the human domain, so who on earth was this guy to talk in such a way with the alpha wolf of this pack? The wolves behind the old man hooted

in anger, “Got tired of living eh, you bastard!”

“Kill him, boss!”

“Even a blind fellow should have a pair of ears. Haven’t you heard of the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain?”

Their yells coupled with the clanging of their weapons built up quite a bit of momentum. It was obvious that Jiang Chen’s thrashing of the Ghost Cave Five didn’t intimidate the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain much at all. The old man commanded quite a bit of respect in the group. He only needed to make a single hand gesture to silence all of them. Even so, they all continued to stare at Jiang Chen with evil eyes that were filled with malice and devoid of any trace of humanity. They looked like a pack of wolves that was waiting for their king’s permission to charge so that they could savagely maul their enemies and deal the fatal blow.

“Do you really think that you have the right to call the shots here just because you took out the Ghost Cave Five?” The white-haired old man sneered. The Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain were no idiots. They had all seen how Jiang Chen had destroyed the Ghost Cave Five. To be entirely honest, the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain thought nothing of the Ghost Cave Five at all. The young man who had destroyed them, however, would require a little more probing before they could decide whether to attack. They weren’t afraid of fighting, but they weren’t the only two groups that existed in the area. Only the heavens knew exactly how many experts had established themselves in the surroundings. The Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain had come to this place with great ambitions, so although they weren’t afraid of trouble, they weren’t willing to reveal too many of their trump cards either.

Jiang Chen smiled slightly and cast Lin Yanyu a glance. “I don’t care if you use that act on someone else, but this person here is my friend. Are you trying to slap my face by harming him in front me?”

“Friend?” The old man chuckled oddly. “If I remember correctly, you guys have only just met each other. Don’t you think it’s a stretch to claim that you’re friends already?”

“Haven’t you heard of the saying, familiarity at first sight?” Jiang Chen’s smile was as calm as ever.

The old man’s expression froze for a second. Finally, he nodded, “Alright, if he’s really your friend then we’ll give you some face. We’ll pay him back after we return.”

Jiang Chen broke into involuntary laughter. “Anyone who makes this type of trade is expected to pay immediately. After all, the customer can claim all kinds of nonsense to avoid paying if the transaction isn’t carried out immediately. Plus, who knows if you’ll come out alive from the desolate wildlands? Also, the Eight Treasures Antidote is the real thing. I’ve verified its effectiveness myself. If you dare doubt the pill’s effect, then you are doubting my insight. Do you really expect me to tolerate such insolence?”

Jiang Chen purposely threw his weight around like a true troublemaker to the point that he appeared even more tyrannical than the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain. Off to the side, the Ghost Cave Five was stunned by the sight. They were clutching their faces and butts while feeling a great deal of shock and regret. This young man was someone who dared to provoke even the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain. They were fools to taunt someone like him. The beating they had suffered was completely justified!

Chapter 874: Lin Yanyu's Background

Lin Yanyu was a little surprised. When he did business with Jiang Chen earlier, the only impression he got was that this 'Daoist Huang' was extremely overbearing. He surmised that this person was a descendant of one of the great clans or great families, because he carried himself with the strong mannerisms of aristocratic families. A person like him might spare the less fortunate a little money when they were in a good mood, but they would never take the other person's side when they were being threatened by injustice. This was because such actions were utterly beneath them and why Jiang Chen's actions had caught Lin Yanyu a little off guard. However, he was obviously unwilling to involve an innocent person in his own predicament. He went over to Jiang Chen and said, "It's alright, Daoist Huang. I can give up a few pills. It's not like I'd become rich even if they paid."

Jiang Chen snorted coldly, "Now that I've interfered, you'll get those pills back even if you don't want them anymore."

Sheer dominance!

The onlookers watching the spectacle all thought that he had a screw loose in his head. Why was he insisting when the master of the pills himself had given up on pursuing the matter? Did he fancy himself the master of this place and ruler of all or something? The onlookers couldn't wait for the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain to grow enraged and immediately fight Jiang Chen to the death. In fact, the more chaotic the better, and the best—if someone died. Who didn't want a good show and fewer competitors to fight against? Surprisingly, the infamous Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain were unusually restrained today. Everyone could see a hint of killing intent passing through the white-haired old man's face, but not only did he hold himself back, he went so far as to control his restless companions as well.

"Daoist Huang, is it? The young do indeed harbor heroes, and

you're one one with a fiery temper too. If I have to guess, both your background and origin aren't simple, are they? Fine, I'll give you a bit of face this one time." The white haired old man swung his arm and tossed a storage ring to Lin Yanyu, "Keep your eyes open, kid. We won't be this lenient if you try to sell us pills again a second time."

Did he just... pay for the pills? The sight stunned everyone who was watching the scene. The white-haired old man wore no expression on his face, however. He simply stared indifferently at Jiang Chen. "The Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain never forgets a grudge. The reason we give you face today isn't because we're afraid of you, but because we want you to remember that you've offended the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain. Once we head out of the desolate wildlands, you and us shall settle this grudge once and for all."

What he really meant was that both their goals lay inside the desolate wildlands, and that there was no point in hurting each other now and enabling others to take advantage of their weaknesses. Jiang Chen shrugged nonchalantly, "I hope you can come out alive too. A reminder, if you will—the Eight Treasures Antidote is the real thing. If you don't want to be poisoned to death, you'd better consume it now."

Of course, he wasn't doing this for the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain's sake. He was advertising for Lin Yanyu. Humans were strange creatures in that they bullied the weak but bowed to the strong. Jiang Chen's tyrannical and self-centered behavior intimidated even the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain, much less the other normal wandering cultivators. As Jiang Chen had expected, people began approaching Lin Yanyu to buy pills on their own.

There were a lot of people here who could afford two hundred thousand saint spirit stones. The price Lin Yanyu had priced his pills at really was quite fair. In less than an hour's time, the Eight

Treasures Antidote that no one had wanted to buy just a few moments prior was actually completely sold out. Lin Yanyu had roughly sixty pills before he had met Jiang Chen. He had failed to sell even a single pill despite trying to do so for a couple of days. This was because no one was willing to believe his words and take that first leap of faith.

But Jiang Chen did, becoming the first person to buy his pills. He was then followed by the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain. Soon after, everyone else grew tempted to buy them. After all, the desolate wildlands were filled with danger. The price of a mere two hundred thousand saint spirit stones for insurance against one kind of danger one might encounter there was quite fair. While some of the top experts or leaders within the area might possess powerful pills that protected them from the threat of poison, the same couldn't be said for every wandering cultivator. That was how the pills came to sell like hot cakes.

Even the Ghost Cave Five purchased five Eight Treasures Antidotes before the pills were sold out. This time they were extremely honest and didn't try to cheat during the payment at all. It was obvious that they had become a lot more obedient after they had been taught a lesson by Jiang Chen. They too were afraid that he would hold a grudge against them, and they bought the pills in an attempt to express their desire to reconcile with him. They wanted to say, hey, we can't beat you, and we're afraid of you, so we're buying a few pills from your friend as a show of our respect.

The fact that he had sold out of pills in just an hour bewildered Lin Yanyu a little. He had transformed into a rich man, with ten to twenty million saint spirit stones jingling in his pockets. The cost to make the pill was relatively low, so his net profits were pretty high. He had earned at least ten million saint spirit stones from today's business. "Thank you for standing up for me, Daoist Huang. I cannot even begin to express my gratitude. I have a few pills left that I would like to gift to you as a show of my thanks."

Lin Yanyu truly was a person who refused to take advantage of another person. He was the kind of person who repaid every kindness he received.

Jiang Chen waved a hand and said, “It’s fine.”

Lin Yanyu fell silent. He wasn’t quite sure of how to deal with Jiang Chen’s oppressive mannerisms. He wanted to be acquainted with Jiang Chen, but he was also afraid that Jiang Chen might be disdainful of him, which was why he was pacing back and forth around the area in an awkward manner.

“You sold your pills, so why haven’t you left yet?” Jiang Chen asked with a frown.

Lin Yanyu smiled wryly at Jiang Chen. Although he didn’t reply, his eyes told Jiang Chen that he wasn’t planning to leave.

“You’re a wealthy man right now. Someone may think ill of your profits. You can stay if you think you’re good enough to deal with these greedy robbers.” Jiang Chen had spoken out of good intentions. He could see that Lin Yanyu’s martial cultivation wasn’t as outstanding as his pill dao cultivation. Although he was a sage realm expert, he was only at the first or second level sage realm. Cultivators like him were everywhere in this place. Even the weakest amongst the Ghost Cave Five was slightly stronger than Lin Yanyu.

Lin Yanyu knew that Jiang Chen was saying this for his own good, so he sent him a mental message, “Thank you for your kindness, Daoist Huang, but I still wish to enter the desolate wildlands and try my luck. Do not misunderstand my intentions, however. I am not here to get rich or anything... I bear a burden that I cannot speak of.”

Lin Yanyu might look like a soft person, but in reality he was quite stubborn. Jiang Chen knew Lin Yanyu must have his own reasons for staying and that it wasn’t the sort of thing for him to stick his nose in. Suddenly, he recalled that Lin Yanyu came from

Pillfire City. He threw out a careless question, “Do you come from Pillfire City?”

Lin Yanyu nodded with a bit of self derision, “I am from Pillfire City, but their reputation is less of a talisman and more of a burden to me.”

“Burden? What do you mean?”

Conflicting emotions roiled behind Lin Yanyu’s eyes. He cast a glance at Jiang Chen before saying, “I hope you won’t tell this to anyone, Daoist Huang. I may come from Pillfire City, but if I’d had the choice of choosing my own birthplace, I would prefer to not have had any association with that place.”

“Why?” Now Jiang Chen was puzzled. Pillfire City was the greatest power in the pill industry and one of the most powerful entities in the entire human domain. Normally, to have been born into a powerful entity like Pillfire City, one would be proud of both their status and origin..

A hint of hatred actually flashed across Lin Yanyu’s normally gentle eyes, “That’s because Pillfire City destroyed my family and robbed us of the pill formula that’s rightfully ours. They killed my clan and destroyed my entire life.”

“Huh...” Jiang Chen was speechless for a bit. He never would have thought that Lin Yanyu would have such a tragic past.

“Thirty years ago, when I was still a child, my Lin family was a top-ranked aristocratic family in Pillfire City. One day, my family found an ancient inheritance of three ancient sky-rank pill formulas inside our ancestor’s house. After news of the discovery was spread,countless powers set their eyes on my Lin family. Just like that, a family of ancient heritage was wiped from the world. If I hadn’t happened to be with my mother paying a visit to her family at the time, even I may have been destroyed along with the rest of my family.” A hint of apology passed through Lin Yanyu’s eyes before he cut his sorrowful story short, “Daoist Huang, I’ve

never told anyone this secret before, but you aren't from Pillfire City, and you are my benefactor. It wasn't my intention to burden you with such a secret, but... I hope that you won't tell anyone about this."

Jiang Chen was dumbfounded by Lin Yanyu's reactions for a moment. Finally he said, "Relax, I'm not that senseless of a person."

Lin Yanyu nodded nonstop, "I know, I know."

"You're still staying in Pillfire City after your family's destruction?"

"Mm, Pillfire City is huge, and my enemies do not know that I am right within their midst. Pill factions are everywhere in Pillfire City, so I randomly joined one and learned the basics of pill dao at a young age. I did know some of my family's inheritance. That was how I managed to climb to the... half-assed level I'm at right now," Lin Yanyu said a little self-derisively.

Jiang Chen grew some respect for the man. It was rare to find a person who could endure such humiliation and bear his family's mantle for revenge for so many years while still maintaining a heart of gold on the inside. Another person might have already become twisted beyond recognition. "I don't think your pill dao level is half-assed. In my opinion, you're at least at the level of a mid-rank pill king," Jiang Chen gave his assessment.

"That's because my family has a long history in pill dao," Lin Yanyu sighed. "My grandfather and great-grandfather are all ninth-rank pill kings. In fact, my father was once called a genius who could challenge a half-step pill emperor. Unfortunately... it's all gone. It's all gone."

"Your father could challenge a half-step pill emperor?" Jiang Chen looked a little surprised. "He was that great?"

Great pride exuded from Lin Yanyu's eyes when his father was

brought up. “It’s true. When my father was still young, he was on par with Pill King Ji Lang. However, Ji Lang was lucky to be born in the emperor’s direct line of descent. In the end, the sheer amount of resources Ji Lang had access to propelled him to where he currently stands. My father may not have necessarily been weaker than him if he had been given the same amount of opportunities.”

Pill King Ji Lang was the pill king who had fought against Jiang Chen at Sacred Peafowl Mountain. He was said to be second only to the ruler of Pillfire City, Emperor Pillzenith, and was his indisputable successor of pill dao. Before he had participated in the pill battle of Sacred Peafowl Mountain, he was said to be undefeated in pill dao. Had Lin Yanyu’s father really been the equal of Pill King Ji Lang when he was younger? If this was true, then his talents really were quite incredible.

Jiang Chen smiled, “Do you mean that Pill King Ji Lang who lost to Sacred Peafowl Mountain’s Pill King Zhen not long ago?”

A hint of disgust flashed through Lin Yanyu’s eyes when his name was brought up, “That’s him, that cocksucker. The stories of him being undefeated for his whole life is utter nonsense. My father’s fought him countless numbers of times in pill dao, and they both scored victories and suffered losses, so how can he possibly be undefeated?”

It was clear from Lin Yanyu’s tone that he was extremely hostile towards Pill King Ji Lang.

I've always felt that Divine Throne of Primordial Blood's cover is pretty badass...

Su Chen lost his sight in an unfortunate, unanticipated encounter. He was unwilling to give up despite suffering one of the most tragic fates possible in the human realm, and fought on. Su Chen wants to use his own efforts to create a completely new destiny, both for himself and for mankind!

Chapter 875: Scouting for Information

This was a rather unexpected discovery. Jiang Chen had already burned his bridges with Pillfire City. Whether it was Emperor Pillzenith or Pill King Ji Lang, both of them hated him to the core. It wasn't just because he had caused the Pillfire City to lose the Longevity Pill, but also because Jiang Chen had shattered Ji Lang's undefeatable legend. He had slapped Pillfire City's face and shaken the foundations of the faction's rule of pill dao. To Pillfire City, this was completely unacceptable. Hence, when Jiang Chen heard that this Lin Yanyu was on bad terms with Pillfire City, his interest in the boy grew even deeper.

However, for now, Jiang Chen kept his silence about these matters. Lin Yanyu didn't spot anything strange about Jiang Chen. Clearly, when he thought of his father, his emotions became a little heated. He seemed to finally remember his manners as he flushed with embarrassment. "Daoist Huang, I'm sorry. I forgot myself there."

"Don't worry. It's normal to be emotional when thinking about your family." Jiang Chen paused slightly before asking off-handedly, "If Pillfire City is so invincible, there must be plenty of pill dao geniuses there, no? I wonder if you know how many pill dao geniuses with innate constitutions there are in Pillfire City?"

Lin Yanyu laughed wryly as he replied, "Spirit constitutions are incredibly rare. That kind of genius might appear once in a hundred thousand people. Although they exist in Pillfire City, there aren't many of them. Daoist Huang, why are you suddenly asking about this?" Lin Yanyu thought this was somewhat strange. "Can it be that you want to meet some pill dao geniuses?"

Jiang Chen nodded his head. "I have a friend who's contracted a severe illness. Apparently, only pill kings with an innate wood constitution of high order have a slight chance of saving him. But, it's really not easy to find anyone with such an innate

constitution.”

“Innate wood constitution of high order?” Lin Yanyu was startled. Still, he couldn’t help but nod. “Amongst the high-order constitutions, wood and gold are the hardest to find. Fire constitutions are much more common. However, those who can truly attain a first-class fire constitution of high order are also existences as rare as phoenix feathers and dragon scales.”

“Daoist Lin, you’re very experienced with Pillfire City. Do you happen to know any geniuses with an innate wood constitution of high order?”

Lin Yanyu subconsciously shook his head. However, he seemed to immediately think of something as his eyes lit up. He spoke up, “I don’t know anyone with an innate wood constitution of high order, but back when I was in Pillfire City, I heard some news regarding that constitution.”

“Oh? Tell me more,” Jiang Chen’s eyes also glittered with interest. His questions about the innate wood constitution were naturally to scout out news regarding Mu Gaoqi. As for his supposedly ill friend who apparently needed healing, that was just a front.

Lin Yanyu struggled to recall the specifics for a moment before he replied, “I was really cautious during my time in Pillfire City so my network isn’t that big. I only heard someone say that some huge power in Pillfire City bought a bunch of slaves and there was actually someone with a higher order innate wood constitution amongst them. This news caused quite a stir in Pillfire City’s gossip mill.”

“Something like that actually happened?” Jiang Chen’s face was a mask of shock, but waves of great emotion had begun to roil in his heart. This piece of news definitely referred to Mu Gaoqi. There was no doubt about it. Who would have thought that he’d actually unexpectedly hear about Mu Gaoqi in a place like this?

Lin Yanyu sighed, “The world is wide and full of extraordinary mysteries. That influential power definitely has some great luck. Still, too much good luck isn’t necessarily a good thing. If our Lin family hadn’t discovered those hereditary pill recipes, we might have not been wiped out.”

Jiang Chen wasn’t in the mood to listen to Lin Yanyu talk about his family. Instead, he asked, “Just what influential power has such good luck?”

Lin Yanyu replied, “One of Pillfire City’s secret societies. They’re called the Star Harvesters. They’re one of the top powers in Pillfire City.”

“Star Harvesters?” Jiang Chen silently mulled over this name.

“Daoist Huang, you can’t be thinking of going to the Star Harvesters for medical help?” Lin Yanyu asked.

“Is there some sort of problem?”

“It’s immensely difficult. Pillfire City really looks down on external powers. An ordinary person will have to pay a lofty price to ask anything of the citizens of Pillfire City,” Lin Yanyu didn’t conceal anything.

Now that he knew the name of the Star Harvesters, Jiang Chen’s heart had become more tranquil. No matter what, he couldn’t just abandon Mu Gaoqi like that. Wandering around as someone’s slave would be an immense waste of his innate wood constitution of high order. “So how’re they going to use a slave like him?” Jiang Chen wondered out of curiosity.

“It’s difficult to say,” Lin Yanyu thought for a moment. “Pillfire City won’t educate a slave like him of unclear origins. Well, perhaps they’ll groom him into a puppet pill king who specializes in pill refinement. But they won’t give him very many positions, nor will they impart much knowledge to him.”

“Isn’t an innate wood constitution of high order extremely rare?”

Jiang Chen frowned.

“It is indeed rare. To the extent that it’s said that there has been none in the history of Pillfire City. But the world of pill dao is more mindful of the issue of inheritance than the world of martial dao. They care a lot about your background and origin. If a genius comes from an uncertain origin, they’d rather lose him than take the risk of passing their legacy to him. Many incidents have occurred in the past where enemy factions dispatch their geniuses to infiltrate other sects and steal their legacies. This kind of thing has happened too many times, so the pill dao world has become extremely guarded. Do you know why my father never received Emperor Pillzenith’s favor back then, and why that Pill King Ji Lang somehow managed to get promoted?”

“Why?” Jiang Chen seemed to have thought of something.

“Simple. It’s because my family is not in the emperor’s line of descent while Pill King Ji Lang is descended directly from the emperor. Although my ancestors were all from Pillfire City, my family often drifted outside the city and established many branch families throughout the human domain. Hence, in terms of background, my family wasn’t as unconditionally reliable as Pill King Ji Lang was,” Lin Yanyu gazed at Jiang Chen with a pained smile. “It’s cruel, isn’t it? Everything about Pillfire City is this cruel.”

Jiang Chen saw that every time Lin Yanyu brought up Pill King Ji Lang, the boy would be seized by some kind of inexplicable hatred. Suddenly, an epiphany occurred to him. “Then, that Pill King Ji Lang wouldn’t happen to be the culprit behind your family’s downfall, would he?”

Lin Yanyu looked slightly taken aback as he stared at Jiang Chen with a hint of surprise. It seemed that even he had been startled by Jiang Chen’s guess. This was clearly the reaction of someone who’d had his thoughts laid out in front of him. “Ugh, Daoist Huang, I’ve really lost control today. I’ve always bore this hatred

in my heart without showing it to anyone. I didn't expect that you'd see through me." Lin Yanyu's expression abruptly cooled as he fumed with gritted teeth, "There is only one explanation for the downfall of my Lin family. The root cause wasPill King Ji Lang's fear of my father's talent and the threat my father would pose to his future reputation! How could he let an outsider sleep beside his bed? I guess my family is also to blame for discovering this too late. By the time we could react, we were already finished."

"A mountain cannot be dominated by two tigers," Jiang Chen also lamented. The father of this Lin Yanyu was comparable in talent to Ji Lang and had even defeated Ji Lang before. This was definitely unacceptable to the future successor of Pillfire City. Every absolute authority always had a small flaw. It was just like a thorn hidden beneath an emperor's throne, constantly poking at his buttocks. This kind of feeling was naturally unpleasant.

The two chatted for a while longer. Jiang asked a few more questions about Pillfire City but didn't ask anything excessive lest Lin Yanyu become suspicious. Although Lin Yanyu also sought revenge on Ji Lang, Jiang Chen didn't want the other to find out his identity this soon.

Just as they were conversing, a flock of wandering cultivators hurried one after another to their location from every direction. The number of people hurrying to them continued to rise exponentially. When Jiang Chen had first arrived, there were only a few hundred people. After a few hours had passed, that number had already ballooned to over a thousand. From his position, he could see at least a few thousand people waiting for the opening of that gap. This was definitely a bit too many people.

The increase in number of people signalled an increase in his number of conflicts. As latecomers continued to take a fancy to this particular territory, countless struggles erupted. Nonetheless, these disputes were of no concern to Jiang Chen. The moment he'd arrived, he had battled the Ghost Cave Five and then the Six

Wolves of Sparrow Mountain. His grisly reputation had already spread. Moreover, any discerning person would likely dismiss the spot he was standing on. Conversely, upon seeing that Jiang Chen was not chasing him away, Lin Yanyu sat down in the former's territory instead of leaving.

When he saw Jiang Chen's calm and collected appearance, Lin Yanyu's thoughts were also a little complicated. This Daoist Huang looked so tyrannical but after they'd spoken, Lin Yanyu could vaguely feel that he wasn't that sort of muscle-headed fool. However, if this Daoist Huang truly possessed insight, he should be able to see what the problem with this territory was. Not to mention that Lin Yanyu had already warned him.

At that moment, Lin Yanyu's was feeling extremely conflicted. When he saw that even the Wolves of Sparrow Mountain feared Jiang Chen, he very much wanted to walk the same path as Jiang Chen. Internally, he had already vaguely considered himself to be Jiang Chen's partner. If it was like that, then he naturally wanted to give Jiang Chen some advice. But when he gazed at Jiang Chen's aloof exterior, he felt somewhat uncertain. "Daoist Huang, this territory directly faces the gap. Everyone will be vying for this spot. It's really dangerous. If you'll listen to me..."

Jiang Chen chuckled, "I think this is a pretty good spot."

In Jiang Chen's smile, Lin Yanyu could see that the other had a card up his sleeve. He was momentarily speechless and spoke again after a brief moment. "Has Daoist Huang observed anything about that alliance?"

Jiang Chen nodded. "The atmosphere is a little strange. We will act with discretion."

Jiang Chen had realized that this Lin Yanyu hoped to rely on him and for the two of them to be tied together. Perhaps to Lin Yanyu, his strength was enough to carry the boy through this ordeal? If it was anyone else, Jiang Chen would definitely have refused.

However, this Lin Yanyu came from Pillfire City. His origins were rather unique. Moreover, he held a grudge against Ji Lang. Jiang Chen was a little intrigued by this person. As the two of them spoke, Jiang Chen's expression suddenly darkened. He quickly stood up and walked towards his right.

There was a short, hunchbacked old man taking some unknown action in the direction he was looking in. "Friend, have you wandered into the wrong place?" This was his territory. Naturally, Jiang Chen would not allow anyone to misbehave in his territory. What was more, his intuition was telling him that whatever this hunchbacked old man was doing, it wasn't anything good.

Chapter 876: The So-Called Alliance?

This hunchbacked old man was as short as a nine-year-old child. His clothes were incomparably ragged and tattered. His face, as wrinkled as an air-dried orange peel, was covered with creases and scars. He looked as though he already had one foot in the grave. However, Jiang Chen did not dare slight him. This old man's appearance was simply too bizarre. Even with his level of consciousness, Jiang Chen had not sensed how this old man had sidled over until he had already invaded Jiang Chen's territory.

When the hunchback saw Jiang Chen walk over, he abruptly pushed himself up with the cane he held in one hand. With a swish of his body, he immediately floated a few hundred meters away. Jiang Chen's expression twisted as he flourished his sleeves.

Psht psht psht psht! The piercing whistle of air echoed around him. The gale summoned from Jiang Chen's sleeves was actually imbued with the power of the Featherflight Mirror that slowed down the flow of space around him. In that space, a few slender, seemingly transparent silver needles were forced to a stiff halt eight meters in front of him, suspended in thin air. Unrestrained rage bubbled within Jiang Chen. This old man had actually dared to ambush him!

He glanced at the ghostly needles and was clearly aware of the fatal toxins contained within them. Moreover, these needles were transparent and invisible to the naked eye. If Jiang Chen did not possess such a strong consciousness, if he had not obtained the Featherflight Mirror, he would have suffered a terrible fate as soon as he'd let his guard down. When Lin Yanyu saw the needles floating in midair, his face had also paled. "Daoist Huang, careful! Those silver needles contain poison."

Jiang Chen huffed coldly as he glared in the old man's direction. But with a twist and turn in the underbrush, the old man had disappeared underground like a burrowing mole. Jiang Chen

waved his hand in cold fury. A pulse of dark energy emanated from his palm and shattered the needles. He wasn't particularly afraid of the poison. However, if they had been aimed at his vitals when he'd been caught off guard, he would have paid for his carelessness dearly. Moreover, that old man had no history with him, and yet the first move the other party had made was attempt to murder him. Such vicious methods naturally roused Jiang Chen's ire. He checked the area around him. Apart from the hustle and bustle of the site, he could garner no clues from his surroundings.

"What a crafty bastard." Jiang Chen was silently shocked. His opponent had actually managed to escape so easily under such circumstances. That was no easy feat. When the surrounding people saw the assault on Jiang Chen, they were all inwardly terrified. Originally, no one here had been vigilant against danger. But in an instant, the atmosphere had become riddled with tension. Someone was launching ambushes!

Once this news spread, every surrounding cultivator became nervous. They had assumed that everyone would peacefully wait together for the the seal to open, but such a thing had actually happened! Unexpectedly, it was the victim, Jiang Chen, who swept the area around him with his consciousness. When he found no clues, he chuckled coldly to himself and returned to his original spot. Huang'er asked, deeply concerned, "Are you alright?"

"Heh, what a shameless scoundred. It's not that easy to take me down." Jiang Chen deliberately raised his voice. "It's just a fluke that he managed to dig himself an escape route. If there's a second time, I'll teach him the taste of regret!"

Huang'er was fully aware of Jiang Chen's abilities. It would definitely be difficult to hurt him with an ordinary poisoned needle. Lin Yanyu's expression was somewhat perplexed, but he didn't leave. Instead, he sat down with Jiang Chen and Huang'er. After this attack, Jiang Chen fully expanded his consciousness. However, that hunchbacked old man did not appear again. It was

as if he had never even appeared at the mouth of the valley at all.

“Are you Daoist Huang? My master has requested for your presence.” It was not long after Jiang Chen had sat down that a young man, dressed in black robes, suddenly appeared at the periphery of his territory and spoke cautiously.

“Who is your master?” Jiang Chen frowned.

“The honored Prince of Shangping.”

The Prince of Shangping? Jiang Chen furrowed his brows. The human domain was too vast. Jiang Chen hadn’t been to that many places, nor did he recognize that many people. Who was this Prince of Shangping?

Lin Yanyu hurried to his side and murmured a few sentences in Jiang Chen’s ear. Upon hearing Lin Yanyu’s words, a meaningful smile appeared on Jiang Chen’s face. He waved his hand, “Show me the way.” After he spoke, he turned around and glanced at Huang’er. Huang’er smiled peacefully at him. “Go, I’ll be here.”

Although Huang’er could not easily make any moves, Jiang Chen was very cognizant of the level of cultivation she had reached. Even Cao Jin, the pride of a first-rate sect, had been easily defeated by her. There was no need for Jiang Chen to be worried for her.

“I’ll be right back,” Jiang Chen spoke next to Lin Yanyu. “You stay here.”

Lin Yanyu had initially wanted to follow Jiang Chen. It wasn’t so much that he was curious, but rather that he was afraid that Jiang Chen would be attacked again. However, upon hearing the indisputable firmness in Jiang Chen’s tone, he took two steps forward before pausing, “Daoist Huang, be careful. The number of people here complicates things.”

Jiang Chen gestured dismissively before following the black-clothed young man. The young man didn’t attempt anything as he led Jiang Chen to a forest of apricot trees to the left of the valley

entrance. The moment he'd entered the forest, Jiang Chen immediately saw the scenery before his eyes change. He'd actually walked into a formation that had turned into a strange space. Even if the people outside were to walk into this forest, they would definitely be unable to spot this space created by the formation. Jiang Chen didn't stop. As he scanned around the area, he didn't sense any killing intent from the formation.

"We're here." Before they'd walked too far, the black-clothed young man brought Jiang Chen to a stretch of empty land. Large pieces of limestone were strewn messily around the land, forming an irregular forest of stone. A few people were occupying the stone forest. Of them, some were unaccompanied while others had formed groups of two or three. Jiang Chen looked around and calculated that there were around a dozen groups in total.

"Hehe, you are Daoist Huang?" A man donned in elaborately embroidered robes walked out from within the stone forest. His hair was swept into a high topknot, and he kept a thin wispy beard that exuded the aura of royalty.

"Prince of Shangping?" Jiang Chen had heard from Lin Yanyu that this Prince of Shangping was the ruler of a certain territory. Although he was a prince, he had no interest in seizing the throne. Instead, he was extremely passionate about martial dao. In the martial world, this man could be considered to be a little famous.

"Hehe, that is me indeed. A book is not to be judged by its cover. Daoist Huang looks to be full of bravado. Everyone believed you to be an impertinent man with all talk and no action. It seems that they have all underestimated you." This Prince of Shangping seemed to be evaluating Jiang Chen, but his words seemed to carry a strange undertone.

Jiang Chen smiled indifferently, "What are you trying to say?" He had zero interest in listening to the other party's nonsense. He had definitely not been selected from such a large crowd of people and invited here to simply make small talk.

“Just now, Elder Feng Huan acted to assess your capabilities. I trust that my fellow daoist will not take offense?” The Prince of Shangping suddenly smiled at a pile of stone formations.

A figure suddenly emerged from the surface of that stone formation. It was precisely that old man who had attacked Jiang Chen earlier. The old man seemed almost unable to lift open his eyelids. But abruptly, his cat-like eyes opened, and he shot a look at Jiang Chen before snickering at him cruelly. “Do not resent me. I was entrusted by the Prince of Shangping to test your abilities, that’s all. If you want revenge, hold it against him. It has nothing to do with me.” In an instant, the old man had completely washed his hands of the matter.

Jiang Chen arched his brows. “Prince of Shangping, we are not yet acquainted. It seems that this method of testing me is a bit too extreme, don’t you think?” Jiang Chen’s tone was clearly a little unhappy.

Unexpectedly, the Prince of Shangping laughed as he replied, “If you knew of my intentions, you would not blame me. Instead, you might even be thanking me.”

Jiang Chen sneered, “Thanking you for the ambush?”

“Daoist, from another perspective, the ambush on you was to test your qualifications. Only when you’ve passed our test do you have the right to enter this place.” The Prince of Shangping’s tone was even, neither fast or slow; it gave off a sense of full composure.

“Enter this place?” Jiang Chen laughed apathetically. “It’s just a formation designed to confuse. What’s so special about it?” Since he had given everyone the impression that he was a madman, then he might as well act a little wildly.

The Prince of Shangping laughed. “Daoist, I trust that you’ve also seen just how many people there are outside. The desolate wildlands hasn’t opened a single time within the past tens of thousands of years. No one knows what lies within. But so many

people trying to rush in all at once will certainly result in major chaos. If they're not careful, they will run into some powerful spirit in there and drag us, the true heavyweights, into their mess."

True heavyweights! Jiang Chen smirked as he understood what the other was implying. It seemed that every test had been to determine who was a "true heavyweight".

At this moment, a middle-aged man walked over from the distance. He appeared rather impatient as he said, "Prince of Shangping, this brat's potential hasn't even surpassed the sage realm. Surely you don't need to be so courteous to him? Letting him enter this place is already a show of respect. Why should you indulge him so much?"

"That's right. Out of everyone seated here, which one of us isn't in the emperor realm? Allowing a sage realm brat to come into this place isn't even appropriate to begin with."

Once someone started, the others began to speak up, one after another. Clearly, they did not acknowledge Jiang Chen's right to walk into this place. The Prince of Shangping didn't object to these statements either. He only gazed at Jiang Chen with a smile, wishing to see how Jiang Chen would handle himself. Jiang Chen shrugged, "Well, if I'm not welcome then I'll just go."

"You've come and already you want to leave?" That middle-aged man from just now laughed coldly before speaking to the Prince of Shangping. "If you let this brat in here then allow him to depart, who knows how his tongue will waggle when he leaves this place? If he starts spouting nonsense the moment he's back out there, he'll stir everyone up. If a few thousand people start to create trouble, how will we handle that?"

"Yes. Since he's here, we can't let him leave."

Jiang Chen's expression darkened as he started to laugh coldly. "What, don't tell me this is the kind of invitation where the plan is

to murder the guest?”

The Prince of Shangping waved a hand in dismissal. Then abruptly, his lips curved into a secretive smile, “Ladies and gentlemen, please calm yourselves. Our dear Daoist Huang here might only be in the sage realm but the level his consciousness has reached is formidable and comparable to any one of you. We could certainly use some heavyweights with a powerful consciousness on our journey. Moreover, the more of these kinds of people the better.”

“Even if his consciousness is a redeeming quality, he doesn’t have enough potential. Won’t he need us to protect him?”

“Exactly. We’ll be lugging around a dead weight. Wouldn’t that just create trouble for ourselves?” One by one, they all began to hurl various words of contempt at Jiang Chen with extremely unfriendly tones.

Jiang Chen only sneered. He was more or less certain that this was the alliance that Lin Yanyu had spoken about. They had likely gathered together in hopes of controlling l the expedition into the desolate wildlands. “Continue discussing at your own leisure. I have no interest in listening to your nonsense,” Jiang Chen said. With a sway of his body, he had already reached the edge of the formation.

The Prince of Shangping was startled. Entering his formation was easy but leaving was not. The exit had been hidden very well. An ordinary person would definitely not be able to find it. This young cultivator had actually fled to the edge of the formation in just a single step! The level that his consciousness and observation skills had reached greatly shocked the Prince of Shangping.

Chapter 877: Those Who Make the Rules

“Please wait, friend.” A trace of anxiety fleeted across the Prince of Shangping’s calm face. If Jiang Chen were to step out of this place, their secret alliance would be completely exposed. If the cultivators outside learned of their plans to take control, they would absolutely go ballistic. This was why they couldn’t allow this young man to leave no matter what. Plus, considering his temper, he would definitely rile up the crowd.

Jiang Chen smiled, “Do you think you can stop me?”

The moment he’d arrived, he’d already spread out his consciousness throughout the entire area and thoroughly gauged everyone’s strength. Although there were a lot of experts here, they were all in the emperor realm. He was sure that no one here who could truly harm him. Jiang Chen wasn’t being arrogant—It was simply a fact that, with his current level of cultivation and the number of treasures he possessed, no ordinary emperor realm cultivator was capable of suppressing him. Sure, a sky emperor realm cultivator who also possessed an overpowered treasure might cause him to be a bit more wary, but even then he wouldn’t be afraid of them.

Some cultivators exuded confidence completely for show, while some others’ were entirely genuine. As for the confidence Jiang Chen was currently exuding, his was of the unfathomable kind. In the group’s opinion, this young and arrogant cultivator couldn’t possibly be all that strong. However, his confidence wasn’t simply an act either.

The Prince of Shangping hid a wry smile before shooting everyone a glance. “Everyone, you trust me enough to let me plot our plans and actions. Since this is the case, please stop objecting to my decisions.”

Everyone stared quietly at the Prince of Shangping for a moment.

“Alright, I’ll give you face, Prince of Shangping.”

“Yes, we’ll give you face. However, if this kid can’t prove himself useful, we won’t allow him to stay no matter what.”

The Prince of Shangping looked intently at Jiang Chen. “I have a suggestion, Daoist Huang. If you don’t mind…”

“Speak,” Jiang Chen answered expressionlessly.

“Please understand that everyone here is pretty famous, so their pride is bigger than that of most others, Daoist Huang.”

Jiang Chen simply sneered and didn’t respond. Understand, you say? Why should I try to understand you lot?

“The reason we are gathered here is in hopes of controlling the current situation and setting down some rules to govern the entry into the desolate wildlands.” The Prince of Shangping possessed a voice that was naturally magnetic. It made people want to continue listening to him. “You may have noticed already, but the number of cultivators here has been increasing rapidly over the past two days. In fact, I dare say that there are tens of thousands of more cultivators to come. It is, of course, good news if these newcomers are all experts, but don’t you think that it’s a bit comical that some origin realm or even spirit realm weaklings are showing their faces too? If we don’t set some down some regulations and gain control of the situation, who knows just what kind of mess will happen if everyone were to charge into the secret realm all at once?”

His words made a lot of sense. The desolate wildlands was a place that had been sealed away for at least a hundred thousand years, and during this time no humans had ever set foot there. Therefore, who could say what was inside? There was no doubt that a place that had remained untouched for one hundred thousand years would contain many precious treasures, but could they say that the desolate wildlands only contained loot and no powerful divine spirits? Could anyone say that it was completely devoid of any

great powers that could potentially threaten their lives?

Of course not!

In addition, the desolate wildlands was where the demon race had been sealed during ancient times. Who could say that the sealed race hadn't made a comeback during the past one hundred thousand years? Nothing was known about the desolate wildlands. No one could give a sure answer. Therefore, the idea of regulating the amount of explorers inside the desolate wildlands was actually quite sound. After considering the present situation for a brief moment, Jiang Chen accepted these words.

The Prince of Shangping brightened up after seeing that Jiang Chen's face had loosened up a little. "And so, the reason why I've gathered everyone here today is to pool all of our wisdom for our mutual benefit. Of course, the rulemakers must also have the necessary strength required to uphold their rules. If you wish to join us, then you must prove your abilities.. If you do, then there is no reason for us to reject you, is there? What do you think, Daoist Huang?"

His logic was sound, but Jiang Chen refused to accept his entire proposition. If he were to act according to these people's wishes, he would be falling into their rhythm and playing their game, both of which he had no intentions of doing. "Number one, I have no interest in making any rules. Number two, I don't need anyone to acknowledge my worth. Number three, if your rules do not exclude me from the explorations, then everyone gets a happy ending. But if they do, then I'm sorry to tell you that I won't play by them."

The Prince of Shangping frowned, "You put me in a very difficult position with your unwillingness to cooperate, Daoist Huang."

Jiang Chen smiled, "In that case, pretend I never came."

The Prince of Shangping said hastily, "Wait. I'll opt for another compromise—You only need to show that your consciousness is at a powerful enough level to be on equal footing with the rest of us.

By doing so, I guarantee that no one will reject you with malice."

Jiang Chen thought for a brief moment before asking, "How?"

The Prince of Shangping said, "Simple. You only need to tell us where the entrance and kill zones of the formation are to pass the test." He looked at everyone as he said this to see if they were okay with his idea. Although they were reluctant to allow a sage realm cultivator to join their alliance, the Prince of Shangping was worth giving face to.

"If that is what you wish, then so it shall be."

"We support your idea, Prince of Shangping."

"I'll give you face, but if this kid still refuses to cooperate, don't blame us for being unkind."

The Prince of Shangping smiled and looked at Jiang Chen, "You have seen our sincerity, Daoist Huang. If we had thought that you were unworthy, we wouldn't have bothered to notify you in the first place and would have gone about our own business, don't you agree?"

Jiang Chen's response was noncommittal. He lifted his eyelids slightly and said, "The place I'm standing on right now is the only exit that exists in this place. There is a kill zone thirty meters to your left, another one over there, there, and... five kill zones in total. Am I correct?"

In fact, he had found a total of seven kill zones in this place. Moreover, he was sure that there existed only seven kill zones in the entire formation. The answer of five was a purposeful deceit. He didn't want to put himself in so high of a position that everyone would be on their guard against him. Right now his current treatment was exactly the kind of treatment he wished to receive. Although these people showed him a mask of acceptance, they were in fact utterly disdainful of him. This was most advantageous to him.

The Prince of Shangping looked slightly startled, “Are you sure, Daoist Huang?”

Jiang Chen smiled. “I’m sure.”

The Prince of Shangping rubbed his palms and smiled, “You’ve all witnessed Daoist Huang’s level of consciousness and perception. It is not any weaker than any of yours, is it?”

The rest of the group’s original looks of disdain switched to looks of assessment and inquiry. They couldn’t deny the fact that Jiang Chen had identified the secrets of this place—the entrance and kill zones—almost flawlessly. In fact, there were many emperor realm cultivators who weren’t sure if they could do the same in such a short amount of time. For a time, no objections were raised towards Jiang Chen joining their ranks.

The Prince of Shangping was all smiles. “It is great news to have Daoist Huang and his powerful consciousness in our ranks. I believe that no one will object to your participation anymore.”

Jiang Chen looked calm and collected. He showed no excessive gratification towards the Prince of Shangping’s praises.

“Alright, now that another person has joined our ranks, our plans will have an even higher chance of succeeding.” The Prince of Shangping surveyed his surroundings once before saying, “Nothing can be done without some basic rules. If my calculations are correct, we can allow no more than five hundred people into the desolate wildlands. The situation will spiral out of hand if this number is exceeded.”

“Five hundred? Isn’t that number a little too small?” Someone asked.

“Yeah, tens of thousands of cultivators have journeyed to this place. If we allow only five hundred people to enter at a time, I’m sure that trouble will arise.”

“Trouble?” The Prince of Shangping’s face turned cold. “In the

world of martial dao, the rules are set by the strong. Why have we come together as an alliance? It's because we wish to set the rules and maintain them so that others can't start any sort of trouble. If they do, then we'll stop them by force if we have to!"

"I support the Prince of Shangping. Those ants are all miserable wretches who won't leave the area unless we show them something to be fearful of."

"I support him as well. We have to play the role of the villain or else, if ten thousand people were to enter the desolate wildlands all at once, the situation would be uncontrollable. Even worse, we might be forced to clean up their shit."

"Yeah. If they were to accidentally upset some powerful beings, we would be dragged into their mess!"

"Godlike opponents aren't scary, but stupid teammates are the devil incarnate. We absolutely cannot allow those average wandering cultivators to enter the desolate wildlands."

The Prince of Shangping nodded, seeing that almost everyone was agreeing with his suggestion. "Then it is decided. The number of entrants shall be limited to five hundred people. There are about thirty people here. If we are to bring our subordinates with us, the total number will reach about four hundred people. We will allow the powerful sage realm cultivators to fight for the remaining one hundred or so spots. By the time they finish fighting each other to the death, in their eyes we might not even be considered the villains in the end."

"Yeah. Once we set the standard, they'll do the killing all by themselves. We may not even need to do anything and have them fight each other for the spots."

Jiang Chen was dumbfounded by the opinions that had been voiced. Although he also agreed with the sentiment of not opening the floodgates, he never once thought to plot against so many cultivators. It was becoming apparent that working together with

these cultivators was a bad idea no matter how strong they were. If they could sacrifice others with so little regard at present, then they could sacrifice Jiang Chen just as easily during a critical moment in the foreseeable future. People like them were destined to be self-centered.

"Do you have anything else to add, Daoist Huang?" The Prince of Shangping seemed to utter this question on purpose.

Jiang Chen answered indifferently, "You set the rules. I just want a piece of the pie."

The Prince of Shangping smiled, "We're partners now, aren't we? As a member of this alliance, it's only natural that you contribute your strength as well, right? I just want to know if you'll help us if we're forced to suppress those wandering cultivators."

It was an extremely tricky question. Jiang Chen shot the Prince of Shangping a glance, "You're all experts, aren't you? Do you even need someone at my level?"

His answer dissatisfied one of the alliance members. "Are you planning to reap all the profits and contribute nothing in return? There's no such thing as a free lunch in this world, kid!"

"I'm strong enough to get in and out of the desolate wildlands. I doubt that your bite is as strong as your bark though," Jiang Chen responded faintly.

Chapter 878: The Experts Set the Rules

Some rules were finally agreed upon after a series of incessant arguments. The first rule stated that every faction present was allowed to bring three subordinates with them. It didn't matter if this faction was made of a lone cultivator, a pair, or a whole team. They all counted as one 'faction', and the number of subordinates allotted to each of them were the same. This particular rule was heavily debated for a very long time. In the end, there were more solo-wandering cultivators present than paired or grouped cultivators. Therefore, the minority had no choice but to concede to the majority.

Jiang Chen could understand the need for this rule. Those who came in groups already started off with an advantage in numbers. If they were allowed to bring even more subordinates with them, the difference in strength between cultivators who came in pairs or groups and cultivators who came alone would grow too big. It would skew the balance of power a little too much in favor of the larger groups. After all, this was not a friendly collaboration between brothers—everyone here was on guard against each other. No one wanted to see another's power grow so large that it broke the balance. This particular rule didn't bother Jiang Chen. Huang'er and Lin Yanyu would be using only two of the three allocated slots. Therefore, three slots were more than enough for him.

The second rule stated that the total number of entrants, inclusive of everyone present along with their subordinates, must not exceed five hundred people. Five hundred was the absolute limit. The third rule stated that everyone must put the rules into effect and that they could use force to enforce it if necessary.

The fourth rule stated that, after entering the desolate wildlands, everyone could choose to cooperate with each other or work alone if they so desired. The alliance wouldn't restrict anyone's choices.

……

There were quite a few more major and minor rules that came after the fourth rule, but Jiang Chen didn't care much about them. He could imagine that the ordinary cultivators outside had no choice but to submit, since these rules were going to be enforced by so many emperor realm cultivators. There was no doubt about that at all. Out of all these rules, what really concerned him more was the fourth rule.

After entering the desolate wildlands, everyone could choose to cooperate with each other or work alone if they so desired. The alliance wouldn't restrict anyone's choices. There was an underlying meaning behind this rule. What the rule really meant was that they were no longer on the same side after they entered the desolate wildlands. Since they no longer shared any relationship with each other, anyone could fight another to the death if they both ran into something valuable. No action would be considered 'too foul'. In short, the law of the jungle applied after they went inside.

Jiang Chen understood this rule very well. The group dispersed after the rules were set. Just as Jiang Chen was about to make his way back to his territory, a magnetic voice suddenly rang from behind, "Please wait, Daoist Huang."

Jiang Chen might not have been present for long, but he had already grasped everyone's characteristics. He knew immediately who was calling out to him the moment he heard the voice. A cultivator dressed in a scholarly appearance walked swiftly towards Jiang Chen. His attire made him look more like a scholar who was rushing to the capital for the imperial exams than a cultivator. "May we speak somewhere privately, Daoist Huang?"

Jiang Chen remembered the fellow. His name was Lu Shinan, one of the few cultivators who didn't display any objections or hostility towards him. This didn't mean that Jiang Chen would let his guard down around this person, however. The two walked to a

secluded corner before Lu Shinan smiled. “I am very impressed by the strength of your consciousness, Daoist Huang.”

“You can save the pleasantries and get to the point, Daoist Lu.”

Lu Shinan showed no anger towards Jiang Chen’s interruption. He smiled, “There is indeed something that I would like to talk to you about.”

“If I remember correctly, you and I share no relationship with one another, so what exactly do you wish to talk about?”

“We may have been strangers previously, but we can be friends later, can’t we? You might have a bit of a hot temper, but I still find you more trustworthy than those devious fellows.”

Jiang Chen didn’t take this praise too seriously. After all, pretty words came at no cost.

“It’s like this. I noticed that you were able to deal with Ole Feng Huan’s ambush confidently earlier, so I’m guessing that your true strength is not weaker than us emperor realm cultivators. Why don’t we join hands after we enter the desolate wildlands?”

Jiang Chen smiled. “You want an alliance? Give me a reason to trust you.”

Lu Shinan said, “I came alone, so I’m sure those people will look down on me, and you even more so. If we don’t ally with each other now, the moment we enter the desolate wildlands we will definitely become their first target. As the saying goes, misery loves company, so I thought that we should join hands and keep each other safe.”

Jiang Chen had to admit that Lu Shinan’s suggestion made a lot of sense. Unfortunately for him, Jiang Chen had no interest in allying with anyone right now. He couldn’t trust a complete stranger either. “I’m sorry, but I have companions of my own already. Please find yourself another helping hand, Daoist Lu.” Jiang Chen returned to his territory after turning down Lu

Shinan's offer to work together.

He was away for only a short period time, but the number of cultivators outside had obviously increased. Huang'er looked around her with a bit of worry. "More and more people are starting to gather."

Jiang Chen let out a soft sigh. Their arrival was pointless, for they were destined to be barred from entry into the desolate wildlands. The alliance of emperors had already been formed, and the rules had already been made. "Don't worry," Jiang Chen patted Huang'er's hand softly. "Most of these people are just random bystanders. They don't qualify to enter the desolate wildlands anyways."

Huang'er looked curious, "Do you have news already?"

Jiang Chen nodded slightly and mentally transmitted everything to Huang'er. Although Huang'er found the moral character of these emperor realm experts to be a little disagreeable, she thought that the rules were quite sound. When she recalled the sight of many zealous cultivators continuously making their way towards the desolate wildlands, for some reason her instincts called out to her in warning. It made her slightly suspicious and worried about the situation at hand. However, she couldn't explain why she felt this way.

"The rules will be announced tomorrow morning. Let us wait until then."

Huang'er nodded thoughtfully and grabbed Jiang Chen's arms gently. The duo leaned closely against each other.

Even more wandering cultivators showed up overnight, and the space before the valley entrance grew noisier and even more crowded. When morning arrived, a sea of heads filled Jiang Chen's vision as he looked around. There were at least ten thousand people gathered outside the desolate wildlands now.

It was at this moment that Prince Shangping's disciple came over to invite Jiang Chen to a gathering once more. Every expert who had participated in yesterday's alliance meeting had gathered together in one place. The Prince of Shangping, the appointed leader of the alliance, stood on a higher elevation and forcefully spread his aura to the surroundings, pressing his palms downwards. He spoke resolutely, "Please be quiet, everyone!"

The mighty aura of an emperor realm cultivator surged into the surroundings like a storm. Powerful astral winds whipped out in every direction, as if enormous tidal waves had suddenly sprung into existence. Every cultivator within a thousand meters of the Prince of Shangping was knocked off balance by these winds. Some weaker cultivators even spat out blood and staggered on their feet. Jiang Chen knew that the Prince of Shangping was setting a forceful example with his display of strength.

"I would like to say a few things, everyone." His tone was apathetic, but contained within his timbre was the unmistakable might of an expert. "I don't care where you come from or what you plan to do inside the desolate wildlands. I simply want to say that the desolate wildlands isn't a place where everyone can venture into.

"In order to secure everyone's interest, the greatest experts of this place have gathered in a meeting and set up a few rules. I am now going to announce them to you all. Once the rules have been proclaimed, I hope that those who understand them will leave on their own accord. Those who do not may choose to stay, but will not be able to take a step further into the desolate wildlands. If you still wish to intrude into this forbidden land by force, then death is the only outcome!" Either way, they were going to play the villain's role, so the Prince of Shangping spared neither pretenses nor pleasantries in his speech.

The moment he said this, the entire area was engulfed in an uproar.

“What?! Are my ears deceiving me? What rules, and who set them?”

“Yeah, who do you think you are? Do you think you’re the leaders of the entire human domain? Why should we obey the rules you’ve set?”

“F*ck you, we’re all wandering cultivators here, so why are you pretending to be all high and mighty?” These wandering cultivators were all brutish and rebellious fellows, so the first thought that came to their minds upon hearing this was that of immediate refusal. Even if they were only given their butts to use as heads, it was clear as day that these rules were disadvantageous for them. They knew that these so-called rules were just a way for the minority to protect their own interests and prevent others from taking a piece of the pie.

Several beams of light appeared from behind the Prince of Shangping right after the shouts cut through the air. The beams immediately pierced into the crowd as terrifying attacks that accurately pinpointed the loudest complainers, blasting them away. Bloodcurdling screams rang out at almost the same time as the withdrawal of these beams.The wandering cultivators who had just been jeering at the Prince of Shangping a moment prior vanished into thin air, leaving behind only pools of flesh and blood. This cruel scene caused the wandering cultivators who were surrounding the victims to turn pale and back away rapidly. None of them wanted to be caught within that terrible intent. The emperor realm cultivators behind the Prince of Shangping smiled apathetically. “Please continue.” The Price of Shangping wore an equally expressionless face as he continued, “I will not repeat this twice. Anyone who dares interrupt me while I’m speaking will be met with the same fate as them.”

Those people had been killed to set an example. For a time, the scene was so quiet that even a falling pin could be heard. Every wandering cultivator appeared ashen-faced and frightened despite

the anger they felt towards the unjustness of the rules. The might of an emperor realm cultivator was something that everyone here simply had to respect. But now, a whole group of them was standing in front. It was obvious just how powerful and intimidating they were. Jiang Chen was inwardly dumbfounded by the scene that had just unfurled before him, but even he couldn't stop it from happening.

The Prince of Shangping swept his chilly gaze across the entire place before continuing, "The desolate wildlands have been a forbidden land since ancient times. Although news of its opening hasn't been publicly spread, there are still at least tens of thousands of people around here. If we allow everyone to go in at once, it is inevitable that that the situation will dissolve into great chaos. Someone may even accidentally bring great trouble upon us. Therefore, we've decided to limit the number of entrants to five hundred people only. We have reserved three hundred of these slots, and we leave the remaining two hundred for you to choose amongst yourselves.

"Remember, don't complain about the rules, and don't try to cause trouble. If you're truly capable, then you'll naturally emerge as one of the qualified entrants. But if you aren't, then you'll die even if we allow you to enter the desolate wildlands. And of course, it should go without saying that we won't allow anyone useless to cheat their way into the place." His tone was as ruthless as cold steel. No one dared to refute his points.

Chapter 879: Entering the Desolate Wildlands

Not including the cultivators who were still streaming in, more than ten thousand people had already arrived. When they heard that only two hundred slots had been allocated to them, the atmosphere instantly turned very strange. Everyone was incensed, but no one dared to erupt first, because they all knew that if they lost control, they might become the focus of these emperor realm cultivators' aggression. They would be turned into the second batch of sacrifices, slaughtered to serve as an example to the others.

The Prince of Shangping's voice rang out again, "Those who have reached the sage realm are qualified to enter. For those who have not, we will make further selections from those at the peak of the origin realm. Once the two hundred slots have been filled, the selections will automatically end. If those who have not qualified don't leave at that time, we cannot guarantee your safety."

The sage realm threshold barred the paths of the majority of cultivators present.. After all, news regarding the desolate wildlands had yet to spread widely. Not many people were aware of its imminent opening. Any well-informed cultivator who knew of the news and wished to try their luck would already be here. When the sage realm cultivators heard this news, their initially rebellious mental states were immediately put to rest. When they put everything into careful consideration, this rule seemed beneficial to them. Comparing the entrance of five hundred people to the entrance of ten thousand people into the desolate wildlands, it was crystal clear which was more advantageous. Hence, every sage realm cultivator stood up one after another. Their attitudes had undergone a complete change, shifting in support of the Prince of Shangping and the other emperor realm cultivators. In this way, the tension hanging in the air dissipated further.

The cultivators in the emperor realm were considered to be at the top of the food chain. They made the rules. As for the sage realm cultivators, they also stood near the top, exerting power over the rest. Both of these two parties supported the recently-established rules. On the other hand, the remaining people were all at the bottom of the food chain. Their hearts were completely unable to accept the situation at hand, but their thoughts were as fleeting as smoke—they had no say at all.

Since two hundred sage realm cultivators would be chosen out of the three to four hundred sage realm cultivators present, all of them thought their chances were rather high. Hence, there were no sage realm cultivators who rose to oppose this rule. Jiang Chen sighed internally. This plot was as clear as day but still extremely effective. The Prince of Shangping had thoroughly segregated those at the scene. As long as the sage realm cultivators were segregated, how could the remaining people have any say?

Truth be told, the cultivators who were below the sage realm but had still hurried here regardless were really just jumping on the bandwagon. If they tried to enter the desolate wildlands, the endless mysterious fog alone would wipe out at least half of them. However, under the intense magnetic attraction of the treasures that might lie within the desolate wildlands, none of them could think straight. They trusted that honor and wealth lay amidst danger. Their chance for a breakthrough was right before their eyes. The ground inside must be littered with endless gold, ripe for the picking.

Whether these people agreed with the rules or not, the selection had begun regardless. It was very easy to single out two hundred people. Most of the people's positions could be decided based on strength alone. The remaining cultivators duked it out amongst themselves for the few spots left. After two hours, the two hundred spots had been completely filled. The two hundred people who had been chosen were beside themselves with excitement

while every one of those who had failed were utterly dismayed. Their eyes flickered with silent thoughts of wanting to stir up trouble, but no one was brave enough to be the first person to act out.

After all, the ones who had created and benefited from the rules were undoubtedly superior when it came to their level of power. Even just those few emperor realm cultivators could absolutely massacre everyone else at the scene. After the selection, the Prince of Shangping said calmly, “One hour. The safety of those who have not left within an hour cannot be guaranteed.”

This was both a warning and a threat. Some of the more timid cultivators sighed with despair but left unwillingly. With their weak cultivation levels, they knew that staying was pointless so they had no other choice. The minority of sage realm cultivators who had failed the selection were still somewhat hesitant. They had heard that each emperor realm cultivator could take three others with him into the desolate wildlands. Although these spots were tight, many of them were reluctant to part with this opportunity.

Jiang Chen had also helped in creating the rules. He left one of his spots for Huang’er and another for Lin Yanyu, much to the latter’s immense delight. With his strength, there was a seventy to eighty percent chance that he would not have made it past the selections. “Daoist Huang, I really owe you greatly for this.”

Jiang Chen smiled tranquilly. “You are deserving of this.”

From Jiang Chen’s perspective, Lin Yanyu had created this opportunity himself when he’d warned Jiang Chen about the existence of the alliance. Lin Yanyu chuckled before solemnly swearing to Jiang Chen, “Daoist Huang, I definitely won’t drag you down.”

Jiang Chen did not take this kind of posturing statement too seriously. Once they entered the desolate wildlands, Jiang Chen

didn’t even have full confidence in himself. Even if Lin Yanyu didn’t drag him down, things might not be as easy as he was expecting them to be.

“Excuse me senior, may I ask if you have another spot? Can you sell it to me?” Suddenly, a sage realm cultivator shakily approached Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen shook his head indifferently, “Not interested.”

The only reason he was bringing Lin Yanyu was because he felt that the boy had some purpose. He could be used in the future. Jiang Chen had no interest at all in bringing anyone else with him. This wasn’t some sightseeing trip. An additional unfamiliar face meant an additional potential source of danger. Another unknown factor. No matter how much money the other party might offer to him, Jiang Chen had zero interest. When that wandering cultivator saw how decisively Jiang Chen had rejected him, he seemed to grow a little afraid. He hurried away dejectedly without a single argument. After that, wandering cultivators turned up one by one to ask him for a spot, but Jiang Chen rejected them all.

The hour was soon to be up. The remaining wandering cultivators finally did not dare linger any longer and left the area with gloomy expressions. Although they clearly harbored resentment, they did not dare misbehave. After all, the Prince of Shangping’s overbearing course of action had been sufficiently intimidating. Since he’d given them an hour leave the area, if they stayed past the time limit, death might just come knocking at their doorsteps. Even if gold grew from the ground in the desolate wildlands, it wasn’t like they could collect it if they were dead. Worst case scenario, they could look for opportunities after these heavyweights had entered.

Even though the remaining cultivators were in the midst of leaving, they were unwilling to go too far away. They either stopped at a few dozen miles away or, for the more timid, at a few hundred miles. Clearly, they were unsatisfied with leaving in such

a fashion The Prince of Shangping and the rest did not seem too mindful of all this.

“Everyone, those that remain are the cream of the crop of this expedition. You will all receive the right to enter the desolate wildlands. However, I have a few ugly words that I must say beforehand. After we enter, every one of you must know your place. In particular, don’t be too curious if you run into anything too strange or unique. Moreover, you must take special care not to alarm any powerful spirits in the wildlands. Refrain from coming into contact with anything that is obviously out of bounds. If you really stir up any major trouble, no one here can shoulder the consequences.”

Unexpectedly, the Prince of Shangping’s words carried no trace of selfishness. Everything about the desolate wildlands was completely unknown. If one wished to enter an unfamiliar place to poke and pry around everywhere, one would die a very swift death indeed. If just a single person died, no one would mind. But if any sort of major trouble were to arise, everyone would suffer the same tragic repercussions. The people here had to be warned against such a possibility. Otherwise, if someone who wasn’t aware of the consequences lost himself to greed in the wildlands for just an instant, it could spell disaster for everyone.

A chill ran through the listening audience. Even Jiang Chen found himself agreeing with the Prince of Shangping. There must be a reason behind why the desolate wildlands had been labelled as a forbidden area since the ancient era. Extra care had to be taken in a place where demons had been sealed.

The Prince of Shangping rattled off a few more rules that no one objected to. “Alright, that should be all. Everyone here is intelligent enough to understand the situation at hand, so I will not say too much. The gap in the seal will soon enlarge. When the time comes, all of us will attack together to force it wider. Once we enter, we’ll immediately seal the gap back up to prevent the

remaining people from returning to this place.”

This suggestion was met with even more approval. Since five hundred people had already been selected, they definitely couldn’t let anyone else enter. The entrance of more people would only result in the reduction of everyone’s benefits. This was something they all clearly understood. They did not have to wait long. Approximately two hours later, that gap started to expand at a speed visible to the naked eye. The surrounding air crackled with divine violet lightning that writhed through the air like dragons. Although it looked as violent as ever, the gap soon showed no further signs of expanding.

“Let’s move!” With the sharp command from the Prince of Shangping, every cultivator readied their weapons and struck at the gap. Numerous streaks of light rays of various sizes collided uniformly with it. After a few dozen collisions, a gaping crack was finally opened where the gap had been. The restraining forces around the crack were like yin and yang, constantly threatening to fuse back together. But from the looks of things, the crack would not close for a good while.

“Go!” The Prince of Shangping took the lead as he rushed inside at lightning speed. Jiang Chen and Huang’er exchanged glances before they also dashed inside at similar speeds. Lin Yanyu felt his body being lifted as Jiang Chen grabbed him. Wind abruptly howled past his ears and he could barely open his eyes. Wisps of astral wind danced past his face. Claps of thunder assaulted his ears. In the span of a few breaths, the whistling of wind and rumbling of thunder finally stopped.

Lin Yanyu opened his eyes to find himself in an entirely new space. Ancient trees towered upwards towards the sky. Each was so wide that a few people were needed to encircle a single tree. The forest seemed to sprawl on beyond his field of vision. It was as if he had entered a world made for giants. The trees and vegetation that greeted him appeared at least twice as big as those in the outside

world. Even Jiang Chen clicked his tongue in wonder at the view before him.

The Prince of Shangping raised his voice, “Don’t be distracted by admiring the view. There’ll be plenty of time for that later. Repair the formation first. The ones left outside have definitely not given up yet.”

Everyone hurried to help out with these instructions. After repairing the gap, the Prince of Shangping applied a few more changes to it. His deep knowledge of formation techniques was evident. After roughly an hour, a new formation had completely taken shape.

“Even if we’ve repaired the gap, those who dare to take the risk can still enter. With my formation blocking this entrance, anyone who enters will die. They can forget about coming in.” The Prince of Shangping smiled calmly as he surveyed the area around him. “This formation cost this prince over a million saint spirit stones. Don’t you all think that you should show a little appreciation?”

He was demanding to be reimbursed! From what Jiang Chen could see, the Prince of Shangping was simply taking the initiative to extort the others. He had been silently observing this formation all along. It cost at most two hundred saint spirit stones and yet the moment the prince opened his mouth, its price had risen to a million. How shady.

Nonetheless, Jiang Chen didn’t expose him. At any rate, when divided amongst everyone, this measly sum amounted to just twenty thousand saint spirit stones per person. This kind of small fee was a mere trifle to him. There was no need for him to offend the Prince of Shangping over such a minor issue. The others seemed to agree that paying up such a fee was within their expectations. Moreover, twenty thousand saint spirit stones was nothing to those who had gathered there.

Chapter 880: Untouched Spirit Herbs All Over The Ground

After receiving the money, Prince of Shangping chuckled. “Alright. Since we’ve entered, all of you can either split up or travel as a group according to our previous agreement. Let me just remind you again that we have all struggled to gain access to this place. It would be best if there were no fatal conflicts. All of you will have a chance to obtain something from the desolate wildlands. Do not impose on others.” His words flowed as gracefully as water. But of course, no one really believed him. Some present were privy to what Prince of Shangping was usually like. No matter what flowery language flowed from his lips, when they were truly faced with something valuable, he might be the first one to turn on a teammate.

Jiang Chen was clearly not interested in forming a group with others. In fact, before Prince of Shangping had even finished speaking, he had already shot Huang’er a meaningful glance and swiftly left the area with Lin Yanyu. After walking for a while, Lin Yanyu hastily asked, “Daoist Huang, why didn’t you take the Eight Treasures Antidote?”

Jiang Chen snickered. “How do you know I didn’t take it?”

Lin Yanyu laughed wryly. “This Eight Treasures Antidote has a very strong smell. There will be a kind of odor fifteen minutes after you consume it. You’ll know it the moment you smell it.”

Jiang Chen laughed. “Let’s go. We’ll be fine without the Eight Treasures Antidote.”

Words of advice remained on Lin Yanyu’s tongue but Jiang Chen and Huang’er had already hastened their steps, shooting ahead at a lightning pace. Lin Yanyu hurried after them. However, their speed was completely off the charts. It took all his energy just to trail weakly after them.

“Wait for me, Daoist Huang!” Entering this strange new world had eaten away at Lin Yanyu’s confidence. After a short while, the various parties that had entered the desolate wildlands had scattered like five hundred carps in a mighty river. Not even a ripple was left to be seen. Indeed, the desolate wildlands were vast to the extent that even five million humans would achieve the same effect. The sheer scale of the wildlands dwarfed even the human domain by more than ten times.

A short fifteen minutes later, there was no one left at the entrance. However, a moment later, a silhouette suddenly reappeared. The figure glanced around before they swiftly retrieved something with a hand and tossed it violently at the flags that marked Prince of Shangping’s formation.

Booom! A series of rumbling explosions rapidly destroyed the formation base. The moment the base was destroyed, the formation was completely ineffective. After this person blew up Prince of Shangping’s formation, they expanded their consciousness, retrieved more treasures and smashed them repeatedly against the gap on the outer boundary.

The gap that had previously been repaired was quickly replaced by another giant crack. Then, the figure stood to examine his handiwork for a split second before vanishing instantly. After about an hour, the cultivators who had originally left the scene wandered back to the valley entrance one after another. The hope in their hearts had not yet been extinguished. The valley entrance was deserted. These returning wandering cultivators approached with utmost care, afraid that Prince of Shangping and the rest would pop up suddenly to massacre them all. With a quick glance, they discovered that the restrictive gap had already been cracked open and those five hundred people had already entered the wildlands.

“Damn it, they went inside but we’re not allowed to? On what basis?! We’ll go in after them. Who’s with me?!”

“What’s there to be scared of? The worst that can happen is that we’ll die. But if we don’t, we’ll be set for life! Let’s go.”

“Wait a moment. Don’t you see that this gap is a little suspicious? If they already entered, why haven’t they repaired it? I don’t trust this. There might be a trap waiting for us inside.” Many people grew alert at these words.

However, there were still the fearless ones who shouted, “The hell is a trap? All of them entered because they want to get rich. Who will be so free as to set such a trap? You think they’re really working together? In the end, aren’t they still a bunch of backstabbing, selfish bastards?!”

“Right! Let’s go and take a look. Even if there is a formation, there’re so many of us that we should be able to shatter it.”

“Not necessarily. We’re all familiar with Prince of Shangping. His skill in formations is truly abnormal. If he set a formation inside and we rush in carelessly, then the only fate that’ll await us is death.”

“Scram if you’re not going! Stop dumping cold water on the rest of us. If you’re a man, then let’s break in together!”

“That’s right. We’ll go together! Whoever’s left behind is a bastard. If we die, we die together. If we make it rich, we make it together.” More and more people gathered at the valley entrance. A bunch of firstcomers had already agreed that upon their shout, everyone would rush towards the gap.

The first batch entered, then a second, a third... Quite a while later, batch by batch, there were at least another twenty to thirty groups who entered. With the exception of those who had not dared to return, these cultivators who had initially left all made their way into the wildlands. Those inside, Jiang Chen included, remained in blissful ignorance of what was happening at the entrance.

……

Jiang Chen and Huang’er stopped at a fork in the road, waiting for the heavily panting Lin Yanyu to catch up.

“Daoist Lin, this is where we’ll part ways. Let’s meet up in seven days. Whoever arrives first will wait here, but only for three days. If we still haven’t met up by then, just leave.”

Lin Yanyu had just caught up to them before he heard the news that they were splitting up. He couldn’t help but become dispirited, “Daoist Huang, this junior is sincere about following you…”

“We need to handle some important matters. It’s dangerous. There’s no need for you to take the risk. Moreover, you’re not suitable for the job.” Jiang Chen got straight to the point without beating around the bush.

Lin Yanyu was a little dejected. But after considering things, he still nodded. “That’s fine then. I’ll be back after seven days. Daoist Huang, I wish you a smooth trip.”

“Take care.” Jiang Chen believed that a seasoned cultivator like Lin Yanyu would definitely have his own means of survival. Otherwise, he wouldn’t dare to enter the desolate wildlands so rashly. Hence, he was relatively unconcerned about Lin Yanyu’s wellbeing. To tell the truth, they were still mere acquaintances. If the boy’s fortune was truly so scant that he could not surpass this obstacle, then it was also impossible for him to stay by the boy’s side as a nanny. That wasn’t realistic.

After splitting ways with Lin Yanyu, Jiang Chen and Huang’er followed the map left to them by He Hongshu. They travelled relatively undisturbed along the designated path.

“Huang’er, take this pill.” Jiang Chen retrieved two pills, swallowing one before handing the other to Huang’er. He had personally handcrafted these pills as a precaution against the

Wood Demon Parasites. Every single one of the ingredients that had gone into this pill was intended to repel the parasites. Moreover, he had integrated Dragonwhisker Water, an excellent defensive measure against the parasites. At least, taking this medicine could prevent a sudden assault of the Wood Demon Parasites.

Although he didn't know how He Hongshu had been attacked by the Wood Demon Parasites, nor did he know where that man had been targeted, Jiang Chen followed the principle of 'it pays to be cautious'. Taking precautionary measures was definitely necessary. After taking the pill, the two people sat down to refine it for a while before they continued on their way.

The greenery in the desolate wildlands was very lush. Vegetation covered every surface, leaving no clear trace of a trail. This was not unusual. Tens of thousands of years had passed without human intrusion. Naturally, there wouldn't exist any kind of pathway. At any rate, with a map in hand, Jiang Chen wasn't too worried about getting lost.

"Brother Chen, look! Over there." Huang'er suddenly pointed at something.

Jiang Chen looked along the length of her arm before he spotted a stalk of spirit herb. Twice as big as an ordinary spirit herb, it appeared extremely sturdy, filled with exuberant vitality. His eyes flashed as he rushed over and circled this spirit herb twice. After examining it, he spoke in an awed voice, "This is... a sky rank spirit herb!"

Huang'er nodded. Her appraisal ability wasn't bad. She could naturally distinguish sky rank spirit herbs. Only great emperors were qualified to use them. Even the empyrean experts on the Myriad Abyss Island mostly only used sky rank spirit herbs. After all, anything above sky rank could be classified as divine rank, true items fit for the gods. It was immensely difficult to a divine rank spirit herb. Even the Myriad Abyss Island didn't possess many of

them. Although they did exist there, it wasn't to an extent that they could be thoughtlessly used by any person. This was why Huang'er was so shocked to encounter one in this place.

Jiang Chen surveyed his surroundings, ascertaining that there were no signs of danger. However, his instincts were screaming at him to leave this stalk of spirit herb alone. He lingered for a split second before he grabbed Huang'er's hand. Gritting his teeth, he said, "Let's go."

Huang'er seemed a little startled that Jiang Chen was not harvesting this herb. She shot him an astonished glance.

"Trust me, there's definitely something wrong here. My instincts are very rarely wrong. If I remove it, there'll definitely be trouble brewing on the horizon." Jiang Chen wasn't really afraid. But he did not want to stir up any unnecessary ruckus before they found the Requiem Wood. When Huang'er heard his words, she nodded. She was a woman who didn't think much of material goods in the first place, and was indifferent to fame or gain. As someone who possessed a vast repertoire of knowledge, she pondered briefly upon listening to Jiang Chen and came to a similar conclusion that this seemed rather strange. Hadn't they just entered the desolate wildlands? If they were to able to find sky rank spirit herbs a mere five hundred miles in, then the desolate wildlands must be too abundant with priceless treasures. If that was the case, it'd be much more attractive than the Myriad Abyss Island.

Along the way, the two of them ran into various kinds of spirit herbs of both earth and sky rank. Nonetheless, Jiang Chen refused to gather them and staunchly ignored the possibility of gathering the later stalks. He resolutely quashed any tendrils of greed. Whether it was sky or earth rank spirit herbs, he was certainly not lacking in them. The only thing he needed right now was the Requiem Wood.

When Jiang Chen and Huang'er's silhouettes disappeared into the distance, a tremor suddenly ran through that stalk of sky rank

spirit herbs before it began to glow with a bizarre emerald light. These emerald rays of light slowly coalesced a ghostly figure. It flickered in and out of sight, sometimes solid, sometimes an illusion, giving off an ephemeral sensation. The figure clicked his tongue. “Tsk tsk. A human cultivator actually resisted the temptation of sky rank spirit herbs? Could it be that my transformation wasn’t realistic enough?”

That ghostly figure wavered abruptly, dissolving into an emerald tinted breeze and vanishing where it had stood. Amidst the endless desolate wildlands, its movements appeared incredibly bizarre. Jiang Chen and Huang’er remained unaware of what happened behind them. Their goal was very clear: the Requiem Wood.

The two of them continued to pick up their pace. Then, while they travelled, they suddenly heard an unusual voice travel from the undergrowth beside them. Unexpectedly, Jiang Chen stopped in his footsteps. His God’s Eye shone a beam of golden light towards the source of the voice.

“Eh? Why is it them?” Jiang Chen’s gaze penetrated the vegetation and landed on five figures. It was the Ghost Cave Five! These five guys had previously passed the selection and somehow snuck into the valley as well.

When the Ghost Cave Five brushed away the bushes to see Jiang Chen and Huang’er, their expressions were somewhat embarrassed. The one-eyed man who led the group chuckled awkwardly, “Ah, it’s you, senior.”

Senior? When Jiang Chen heard this, he couldn’t help but laugh silently. This Ghost Cave Five really knew how to grovel! Previously, they had called him “brat” the moment they opened their mouths. And now, he’d suddenly risen to the rank of senior?

Chapter 881: Bone Apparitions

Despite the five's change in honorific, Jiang Chen didn't let down his guard. "You guys are pretty fast, huh," he snickered. "Stay away from me if you don't want to get beat up again."

He had no interest in wasting words on them. The five bowed in simpering embarrassment. The one-eyed man nodded several times. "Yes, yes, senior, we shall leave immediately. But we do have one word of advice for you. Don't go west. It's a little dangerous there."

"What kind of danger is there?" Jiang Chen frowned.

"We didn't quite find out ourselves, but we saw the Prince of Shangping head in that direction. It looked like he was setting a formation to ambush someone. There must be something good there." The one-eyed boss wanted to make a good impression.

"Prince of Shangping?" Jiang Chen was not surprised at all. The prince's facade of an honorable appearance could trick normal people, but Jiang Chen hadn't believed a word he said. Jiang Chen looked back at the Ghost Cave Five, sneering with the corner of his mouth. He didn't trust this group either. Something good? Prince of Shangping? Jiang Chen had no interest in them whatsoever, and wouldn't even think about it. He was heading west, and he wasn't about to be stopped by a few words from the Five.

"You should hurry up and leave. Don't show yourselves in front of me any longer." Sneering, Jiang Chen glanced at them a final time before flying away with Huang'er.

"Hold on!" the one-eyed man shouted. "Don't you wanna know something about the friend who sold you pills, Daoist Huang?"

Jiang Chen halted in his steps, coldly gazing at the one-eyed man. "What do you mean?"

The one-eyed man chuckled. "Finally, something you're

interested in."

"Speak up. If you lie, I don't mind cutting you down where you stand." Jiang Chen's face darkened.

"You can kill us, but your friend will die for sure," the one-eyed man laughed strangely.

"Get on with it," Jiang Chen frowned.

"Five million saint spirit stones," the one-eyed man interjected suddenly.

Jiang Chen's look was chilly. "I'll give you ten, but if you give me fake news, you're dead."

The one-eyed man cackled. "I can make a heavenly oath. If I'm lying 'bout it and it's not related to that guy at all, then let us all die in the wilderness."

Jiang Chen was very surprised at how readily the oath was made, enough to leave him momentarily astonished. He was under the impression that the one-eyed man was bluffing, but the latter's oath made him think otherwise. He had to treat the matter more seriously. In the world of martial dao, a heavenly oath wasn't something to be trifled with for anyone. Anyone who did only did a disservice to themselves. Moreover, there were no loopholes in such an oath. The one-eyed man was clearly set on this matter.

"Lead the way." Jiang Chen felt many emotions well up in his heart. He frowned, unable to pinpoint the key. Though the one-eyed man's oath was surety enough, Jiang Chen still suspected something afoul with the situation.

Why had the Ghost Cave Five reappeared so suddenly, and with such relevant news of Lin Yanyu? It was only a few hours since Jiang Chen's departure from the youth. What could have happened in such a short span of time for them to bear convenient witness? That they was able to reach him and Huang’er at all to inform them of this was yet another coincidence. Even if there was

a scheme afoot, it was difficult to execute with such perfection.

"Where did you see him last?" Jiang Chen asked suddenly.

"You'll know when you come with us," the one-eyed man smirked. "We won't say before we get the money. Don't ask us anymore, senior."

"How is he now?"

"Very dangerous. Trapped by some kinda man-shaped plant 'n can't get free. I'd guess he can't resist it for much longer. If you're slow, there won't be much of him left."

Nodding slightly, Jiang Chen decided to stop asking any more questions. He took a few more steps before sniffing at the air, remembering something crucial. "Do you people not have a conscience at all? He sold the Eight Treasures Antidote to you, and you're taking money for news of him?"

"Heh heh, we cultivators who live on the edge only care about money. Even if he gave us pills, we still wouldn't do it for free."

"You still have the pill?" Jiang Chen asked suddenly.

The one-eyed man paused, then grinned. "Ate it already."

"How'd it taste?" Jiang Chen smiled faintly.

The one-eyed man squinted at Jiang Chen. "What kinda taste could a pill have? It's whatever, right. Nothing special." He gave an off-handed reply. The one-eyed man seemed to realize that Jiang Chen was trying to trick him, and stopped giving away further info. Stopping in his tracks, Jiang Chen allowed the hint of a smile to fade away from the corner of his mouth. A cold, murderous intent replaced it.

"What?" The one-eyed man frowned. "No way you're unsure about anything after our oath, right? But if you aren't going, nothing I can do."

Jiang Chen nodded. "There's no need for that. We can stop here."

"Here? What for?" The one-eyed man couldn't understand.

"Here, I'll send you off to a place where all of you belong." With a flurry of hand signs, Jiang Chen drew the Ghost Cave Five into a freshly-activated formation. The surroundings were instantly filled with magma. Countless volcanoes ringed them in the sweltering heat.

"What... what're you playing at?" The one-eyed man was genuinely panicked.

Looking directly at the one-eyed man, Jiang Chen enunciated each word clearly. "You disguised yourselves well, so well that I almost couldn't tell the difference. If you had hid your putrid air a little better, if you could point out the slightly pungent scent of the Eight Treasures Antidote, then your act would've been perfect. What a shame... you're just a bit off."

Huang'er's pretty eyes spun upwards, her mind moving with them. When Lin Yanyu told them to use the Eight Treasures Antidote, he said that there would be a pungent scent that was easily distinguishable within fifteen minutes or so of consumption. Yet, none of the Ghost Cave Five had mentioned this detail. She inspected the five with renewed interest. Simultaneously, she was secretly impressed by Jiang Chen's alacrity. His seemingly thoughtless questions were filled with hidden depth. He'd found holes in their story with only a few words.

Putrid air? Her expression became more wary. Jiang Chen, on the other hand, had already leaped to action. With a turn of the Featherflight Mirror, one ray of light split into five, scattering themselves towards the Ghost Cave Five. Beneath the light's radiance, Jiang Chen summoned the magnetic golden mountain. Its shimmering peaks and ridges bore down from above like a divine apparition, descending with a weighty rumble. The light from the mirror, the scorching heat, and the pressure of the mountain caused the Ghost Cave Five crack open. Their bodies shifted and morphed. Suddenly, the five screamed in unison, their

bodies splitting open in a flash of black light. Their bodies had turned to piles of bone. The bones seemed to have life of their own, and endlessly struggled against the weight of the Goldmount. However, their strengths were hopelessly unmatched.

"Die." Jiang Chen pressed down with his palm.

Boom! With a flash of golden light, the crushing weight of the mountain pulverized the bones into dust. There was a resounding shriek within the formation, dissipating only after a long time. If he hadn't been a martial cultivator with a wealth of experience, the mere sound of the shriek would have struck fear into his own bones.

Huang'er looked on at the scene with alarm. "They're not the Ghost Cave Five?"

"I was almost fooled," Jiang Chen shook his head. "They're not the Ghost Cave Five, but ghostly apparitions. The transformation of bone is a method that belongs to the demon race..." He was very grave. It hadn't taken long at all for them to encounter the demon race, and not even a Wood Demon, at that. Bone apparitions certainly wasn't theirs.

From the evidence, the Wood Demons weren't the only demon race in the desolate wildlands. There were other branch races as well. It complicated Jiang Chen's feelings on the matter. There had always been legends about the demon race in the human domain. Even Emperor Peafowl had kept tabs on them. He'd been able to detect traces of their imminent return to the world with his All-Seeing Eyes. Despite the various indicators, Jiang Chen hadn't thought it would be this soon. It seemed now that the emperor hadn’t been needlessly pessimistic. Rather, Jiang Chen and every other cultivator of the human domain had been too optimistic. In fact, most in the human domain were numb to this threat. Though there was a latent danger, they didn't want to face it head on because of their natural fear of the demon race.

"No wonder they made a heavenly oath as soon as they spoke," Huang'er murmured. "They weren't actually the Ghost Cave Five, after all."

"Yes, that was the genius part about their plans." Jiang Chen was relieved after the fact as well. When it came to situations like this, he only had instinct to rely on. He only found flaws in their story after slowly digging for them. Without the cleverness of his ruse, it was impossible to tell they were false. However, Jiang Chen recalled yet another thing. Clearly Huang'er did as well, because their faces colored at the same time.

"They didn't know the details about the Eight Treasures Antidote, but they did about the things that happened outside the valley." Jiang Chen was very pale. "That must mean the demon race had allies in the group outside. Their communications are certainly very advanced. Even their bone apparitions had such detailed knowledge. It was difficult to notice anything out of place."

They both became rather tense when they considered the underlying problems. The demon race, possible traitors, the wildlands... All of this contributed to a growing sense of unease.

"At least they didn't know anything about the happenings after we came in. This shows that Lin Yanyu isn't one of their guys, at least," Huang'er supplied. Jiang Chen agreed. If Lin Yanyu was an ally of the demon race, there would have been no need for him to reveal the Eight Treasures Antidote's distinctive trait. The tidbit of info about the pungent scent had come straight from the youth's mouth.

"Then who is the undercover agent here?" The other cultivators' faces flashed across Jiang Chen's mind one by one. He didn't have a clue. None of them looked like nice people, but working for the demon race? There was no evidence of that whatsoever.

Chapter 882: The Shadow Demon King

Luckily, the bone apparitions hadn’t been that strong. They’d been on par with the Ghost Cave Five. Select recent events had put Jiang Chen on edge. It looked like demons had indeed permeated the desolate wildlands.

"With the demon race resurfacing, repeating the calamity of ancient times seems unavoidable. They are back with a vengeance." Any other cultivator would have a natural fear of demons. Jiang Chen was different. Demons were fearsome because they were alien for the continent. They came and went like shadows. But he knew of both the race's advantages and disadvantages from his previous life. Though the demons were one of the stronger races within the heavenly planes, they were not invincible.

"Of the five hundred entering this time, I wonder how many will return alive?" A trace of worry flew across Jiang Chen's heart. He had no emotional attachment to these people, the demon race was the true threat. Once their claws and fangs reached outside the wildlands, there would be great calamity for the human domain.

"Ideally, there are people wise enough to make early preparations against them." Jiang Chen could only hope to himself that it was the case. He didn't dally after destroying the five bone apparitions, but kept going forward with Huang'er. Both of them were more cautious on the way.

"Brother Chen, did the demon race intentionally spread news of the Requiem Wood?" Huang'er couldn't help but ask. Jiang Chen had considered the possibility as well. However, he'd seen a leaf from the wood with his own eyes. It was definitely real. Moreover, its freshness meant that it had been plucked from the tree not long ago. Thus, perhaps the Requiem Wood was a trap, but it certainly did exist. He couldn't just back down from the situation, despite the risks.

"The Requiem Wood is definitely around here somewhere. You're right that it could be the demons' trap, but we still have to go. This is our only chance. So what if it is? We're no stranger to beasts' lairs. Remember Tai-ah City and the Eternal Celestial Capital's trap there, when they claimed they'd captured Regal Pill palace head?" Jiang Chen wasn't scared of traps. Not finding the Requiem Wood was a bigger concern. As long as it was found, he wouldn't bat an eyelash at any trials and tribulations required to obtain it, regardless of their severity.

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In the depths of the wildlands, ghostly wisps glittered within a secluded karst cave underground. Their eerie radiance shone like stars in the night sky, motes floating like fireflies in half-light. A shadow scurried into the cavern. "My liege, I've finished the mission." It knelt towards the darkness at the end of the passage.

A cold voice harrumphed softly in the gloom. "How many people have come in?"

"The first wave is five hundred. The opening is quite wide now, so at least ten thousand more are behind them. More should trickle in as time goes on... I estimate the final figure to be twenty to thirty thousand."

"...Are there cattle for the slaughter?"

"Fifteen or twenty emperor realm cultivators."

"Not bad, not bad." The demon king cackled chillingly. "You've done well, and deserve to be rewarded for your effort. When they are all dead, you shall be given a tenth of their wealth. The remainder will be placed in the treasury to fund our future war efforts."

"Thank you, my liege!" The person sounded overjoyed.

"I give only what you deserve. However, your mission is not yet complete. There are too many emperor realm cultivators even for

an appetite as great as mine. Only through home field advantage can I take all of them out individually. I require your further assistance in this matter."

"Of course, my liege. I will do everything I can."

"Good. There is one more thing, pay attention to the Wood Demons. Their interest in this prey is as strong as ours. Even both clans are demons, there is still competition among different branches. Since we Shadow Demons have awakened earlier, there is no reason not to take advantage of this opportunity. The Shadow Demons were not one of the more prominent in the ancient times. I hope to change that, and gain a stronger influence through our achievements in the second holy war."

"My liege, there is no need to worry. Your servant will pay close attention. As you say, Wood Demon parasites are hard to defend against. I see many cultivators who are unknowingly infected with them. They have a clear advantage when the parasites widespread."

"Advantage?" The king of the Shadow Demons sneered. "You've only scratched the surface of their capabilities. Wood Demons are fairly strong, but not much more than us Shadow Demons. Their parasites do reproduce and spread quickly, but once someone figures out how to deal with them, their advantage is rendered null."

"One can deal with parasites?"

"Obviously. Wood Demons would have long taken over the heavenly planes otherwise. However, spreading parasites is only one of their methods. What's truly terrifying about them is their pervasive use of poison. Moreover, they're a very intuitive race with high degrees of comprehension. Wood Demon geniuses often rise beyond all ten of the demon races. In warfare, it is more likely for top-ranked experts to be Wood Demons than compared to every other race, so much so that they're comparable to Celestial

Demons."

"...Celestial Demons?" The person blanked.

The Shadow Demon King audibly exhaled in disgust. "You don't need to know more about these things. Do your job. Remember, it doesn't matter who you were previously... now that you've joined with us, you better not have second thoughts. Otherwise, I'll make you regret you were born into this world."

"Quite, quite, my liege." The person rushed to express their loyalty. "Your servant is completely faithful to you. My only hope is to do work for you, that I might have for a good future when the demon race takes over the world. I couldn't possibly have other thoughts. The only thing on my mind is my lord's wish."

"If that's really what you think, then that's fine." The demon king snorted. "Go, carry out the next stage in our plans."

"Yes." The person made to leave.

"Hold on," the demon king suddenly called out. His consciousness was moved by something.

"What is it?" The person stopped in his footsteps.

"Someone destroyed five of my bone apparitions. More importantly, their identities were discovered!" The demon king's voice had a hint of anger.

"Discovered?" The person was surprised. "By whom?"

Bone apparitions were controlled directly by the Shadow Demon King, and moved at his command. He scanned his thoughts for the relevant memories. "A cultivator surnamed Huang and his partner. What background do they have?"

The person's body shook a little when he heard. "It's them? Then there should be another, no?"

"Only two."

"Maybe they split up?" The person muttered to himself.

The demon king was quite upset at having lost five apparitions. "So, what do you know about them?"

The person grimaced. "That fellow's pretty odd. I only know that his last name is Huang, and nothing else. I will say though that he's very arrogant. I don't believe that he's emperor realm even, but he is definitely strong. Even the Prince of Shangping is a little wary of him. My best guess is that he's a great disciple of a big sect or faction, but he's hiding his identity."

"I don't care what big sect or faction he's from. He has to pay for destroying my bone apparitions. His strength only makes him more valuable!" The demon king wore a bizarrely eerie smile.

"My liege can rest easy. That kid doesn't know two things about the world. He'll be right under your finger as soon as he enters your territory."

"Hmph! Lure some people here first. If I am to assume a physical form, I still need a bit more essence from cultivators. It's best if you can get a strong emperor realm cultivator to come. The stronger the body, the better. I shall... temporarily... borrow his body."

"Then let's pick that prince. He's pretty strong, and he practices some kind of body-tempering art as well."

"A fine choice." The demon king cackled once more.

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"Your Highness, we haven't done much since we entered the wildlands. There are so many earth rank and sky rank spirit herbs we've missed, all because we're chasing after that Huang brat... is it really worth it?" The one who asked this was a cultivator dressed like a retainer. He was halfway to emperor realm, and a force to be reckoned with.

He was speaking to the Prince of Shangping, who merely smiled. "Sky rank herbs, earth rank herbs... they are only illusions. As a

master of the arts of the eye, I’m not fooled by such trifles. You shouldn’t be, either."

"Illusion?!" The retainer gasped.

"Even if they aren’t, there will certainly be many traps." The prince sounded like all was within his grasp.

"What's so worthwhile about pursuing the Huang brat, though?"

The prince faintly smiled. "Ole Shen, you've been with me for many years. Do you think a cultivator like you would act with such impudence in front of true emperor realm cultivators?" "This subordinate wouldn't dare."

"If even you wouldn't dare, but that brat would as a sage realm cultivator... do you think he's just puffed up? Or do you think he has good reason to be that way?"

"I, er, I can't really tell." The retainer laughed, a little lost.

"You can't tell because you haven't studied the arts of the eye. Though I can't completely tell either, I know that his arrogance is likely an intentional pretense. His confidence isn't, however. When Ole Feng Heng snuck up on him, the kid slowed down the speed of the old man's needles with a flourish of his sleeves. He must have some powerful treasure hidden in there that can slow attacks down. I estimate that he's a great disciple of some strong sect, and carries many treasures on his person. If we can take them for our own, then we'll be able to do as we like here in the wildlands."

"A great disciple of a big sect?" The retainer was shocked.

"Yes! But now that he's in the wildlands, it doesn't matter who he is anymore. Ole Shen, remember, never underestimate him if you meet him in person."

"Thank you for your advice, Your Highness. I will exert my full strength to help you crush him."

The Prince of Shangping showed a winning smile. "Let's go. I already sense that he's not far from here. Make sure to kill him in one blow. Don't give him any opportunities to turn the tables."

Chapter 883: A Mint Ginseng

A vast and roaring river stretched horizontally before Jiang Chen and Huang'er. There had originally been a bridge crossing the river. But the bridge had fallen into severe disrepair with the passage of time. Vegetation grew rampantly around the broken bridge, protruding from the river like pillars of coral reef.

"We've reached the river," Jiang Chen was delighted. "Our destination lies just beyond the other bank."

Huang'er also examined the map. This river had been clearly marked out. Once they crossed the river and passed by a few more areas, they would reach the place that He Hongshu had indicated where the Requiem Wood lay. "According to He Hongshu, there are some aggressive spirits residing in the river, but they aren't very strong."

This place hadn't been unearthed at all from ancient times until now. Just the natural spiritual energy suffusing this place would be enough to birth various powerful spirits. Without the interference of the outside world, even a plant with some degree of natural aptitude could become a spirit being, developing into a sentient lifeform. The two of them had refined the Golden Cicada bloodline and simultaneously called on the power of the Golden Cicada wings, leaping towards the opposing riverbank.

Although He Hongshu had given them this information, Jiang Chen didn't rely entirely on the other's experience. He continued to be on his guard as he crossed the river. That was then and this was now. When He Hongshu had crossed the river, he might have been lucky enough to be disrupted by only a few small spirits. However, the rapid currents of this wide river were inky green. They obscured the riverbase like the currents of a vast ocean, giving people an unfathomable feeling. It wouldn't be surprising that some powerful spirit was lurking in the depths. Caution was the parent of safety. Even when he approached the opposite bank,

Jiang Chen did not lower his guard lest he fail in the face of success. It had to be said that his instincts were quite strong.

When the two had flown across the center of the river, something unexpected suddenly appeared from a piece of the shattered bridge. Without warning, what had originally been nothing but a swathe of innocent vegetation abruptly spewed jet after jet of green-colored fog. Amidst the fog, a tentacle covered with countless green warts writhed into the air towards them like an enormous green python. The green fog actually carried some kind of mysterious power. It had powerful swathes of restraining energy that instantly reduced the speed of Jiang Chen and Huang'er's wings. Like flowers scattered from the sky, that tumor-like tentacle instantly sealed off the space within a hundred meters around it.

Jiang Chen smiled in cold rage. These tentacles were comparable to his Lotus of Fire and Ice. In the second it took to think, the Lotus of Fire and Ice on him had already been unleashed. The vines of countless lotuses violently lashed out towards those tumor-like tentacles. Simple and direct! Ever since Jiang Chen had nurtured the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice, its form had evolved continuously. Its speed of evolution was still full speed ahead. As of today, even a random prompt by Jiang Chen would cause hundreds of vines to completely immobilize the tumor-like tentacles.

Immense flower petals lunged towards those tentacles like the gaping maw of a beast. At the same time, Jiang Chen and Huang'er unleashed their techniques, sweeping away the green smoke that creeped towards them. The two people moved with urgency, swiftly dashing higher into the clouds. In the face of adversity, the brave prevail. The Bewitching Lotus of Ice and Fire truly deserved its status as a sky rank spirit creature. These terrifying tentacles had initially been a cultivator's worst nightmare. But the petals of the lotus closed around them like an enormous mouth and slurped

them up like a bowl of noodles. No matter how the tentacles struggled, they could not break free.

Awwoooo! Suddenly, the bridge split in two with a loud rumble. A green monster emerged, its entire body covered with green patterns that looked like eyes. The ends of those tumor-like tentacles just so happened to be attached to these patterns.

“What kind of monster is this?” Huang’er frowned. As expected, the desolate wildlands was truly a bizarre place. Such a hideous monster had actually managed to conceal itself in the vegetation so that even Jiang Chen had not detected its presence!

With a sweep of his God’s Eye, Jiang Chen spotted its limitation. “Look at its main body. Doesn’t it look like a mint ginseng?”

The mint ginseng was a kind of spirit herb. Huang’er had also heard of this. Upon closer inspection, its main body really resembled the fabled mint ginseng. However, the size of that spirit herb was only supposed to be that of an infant. This monster was well over eighty feet long and twenty feet wide. It was definitely a mint ginseng that had been magnified a few hundred times. Moreover, the mint ginseng might be a kind of spirit herb, but it couldn’t possibly be sentient!

“That thing must have been nurtured here for ten thousand years, to the extent that its physical form changed and it developed a consciousness. It’s become a sentient lifeform!” Jiang Chen exclaimed upon seeing this. Nonetheless, even if this mint ginseng had developed sentience, it still posed no big threat to Jiang Chen. Moreover, the guy seemed to have just gained its consciousness. Its attacks might be powerful, but they lacked cunning. Spewing poison fog, using toxic tentacles to sweep things away... These attacks might be sufficiently fatal for any ordinary cultivator. But Jiang Chen was not one of them.

As they spoke, that mint ginseng’s tentacles were being continuously engulfed by the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice,

eliciting screeching howls. Clearly, this newly-born creature that had just developed consciousness was just like a small child. It wailed and cried whenever it suffered. The devouring ability of the Lotus was extremely strong. Soon enough, the bottom part of the monster would be swallowed. After that, the main body of this mint ginseng would then be cut apart by the lotus. It would be destroyed.

When Huang'er heard the mint ginseng's howls of pain and saw it writhe around in agony, she couldn't help but feel sorry for it. "Brother Chen, it should be a newborn lifeform, just like a baby. Perhaps, you should capture it instead?" She was innately soft-hearted.

When Jiang Chen heard the girl's words, he immediately prompted the lotus to stop. An ordinary person might truly be baffled by how he could communicate with this mint ginseng. But Jiang Chen had been fluent in numerous languages in his previous life. He understood the speech of ancient beasts and somewhat knew the languages of various spirit races.

"I see that developing a consciousness was not easy for you. Perhaps you'd be willing be accept me as your master?" Jiang Chen used the language of the spirit races to converse with the mint ginseng.

The mint ginseng had just been born. It was just like a small child being bullied by a stronger person. Since it had no parents to tattle to, raising its hands in surrender was its instinct.

"I am, I am, just don't kill me!" The foremost instinct of any sentient life form was putting its survival above everything else. The human race was like that, as was the demon race and any other race.

Although it had already surrendered, Jiang Chen did not let down his guard. A ray of consciousness surged into the mint ginseng's form. "Since you've surrendered, don't think about

trying something else."

"N-no, I wouldn't dare." Initially, that mint ginseng seemed to have some thoughts in mind. But after seeing Jiang Chen's methods and being pierced by a ray of consciousness, how would it dare resist? It let Jiang Chen's consciousness settle within its soul. This ray of consciousness was to monitor the creature's actions. Once this guy showed any sense of disloyalty, Jiang Chen's consciousness would instantly know.

"Relax, you won't lose out by following me. It's not like you'll have any future to speak of if you keep hiding under this bridge. You'll be destroyed the moment you encounter any powerful opponents."

"Yes, of course." The mint ginseng was obviously terrified of Jiang Chen. It went along with whatever its new master said, not daring to rebut anything. The mint ginseng could increase or decrease its size at will. After it was captured, it turned back into the form of an ordinary mint ginseng. Although it was still a little bigger than normal, it wasn't as exaggeratedly enormous as just now. This small interlude might have been more bark than bite, but it still cost Jiang Chen a bit of time.

After they crossed the river, they encountered no further dangers along their way. Jiang Chen also asked the mint ginseng about the demon race, but the creature had just gained its consciousness not long ago. It was completely ignorant, not even comprehending the concept of the demon race. He didn't know whether to cry or to laugh. This whole situation felt like the blind leading the blind.

After around fifteen minutes, two shadows flitted past the vast river, landing on the bridge fragment where Jiang Chen had captured the mint ginseng. Unexpectedly, it was Prince of Shangping and his trusted aide.

"There was a battle here not long ago," Prince of Shangping had keen senses. "It should be him. The remnants of battle haven't

been erased. From the looks of it, he's confident in his power."

His aide replied, "That brat is too arrogant. I feel that he swaggers everywhere is because he doesn't feel that anyone here poses a threat to him."

Prince of Shangping muttered, "We can't be sure about that. I still suspect that his bluster is all an act. Perhaps his goal is for us to underestimate him."

"How can a young cultivator be that shrewd?" His aide asked, half mired in doubt.

"And who cares whether he's faking it? Hurry and catch up to him before it's too late. Listen to my commands. When the time comes, I'll keep him busy with small talk while you launch an ambush." This master and servant pair did not hesitant as they continued their pursuit of Jiang Chen.

After Jiang Chen crossed the river, he began to slow down. According to the hints provided on He Hongshu's map, beyond the river, this was a comparatively more dangerous territory. This territory stretched across a valley. According to He Hongshu's records, this valley was heavily suffused with yin energy. From time to time, fiendish yin demons and monsters would appear. Back then, He Hongshu's party had lost plenty of people because of this place. However, fortunately, someone amongst his companions had possessed a treasure with the yang attribute that specialized in restraining those yin monsters. This had allowed their group to escape with their lives.

"Huang'er, we'll have to be careful here." They would be one step closer to their destination after passing through this valley. Moreover, although this valley was not too big, at first glance, it was as dark as the interior of a sack, giving off an extremely unpleasant impression.

Jiang Chen himself wasn't too scared of these things, but Huang'er was different. Although Huang'er's cultivation was very

powerful, these yin monsters might affect her Generation Binding Curse.

Yin monsters and foul creatures could most easily trigger the Generation Binding Curse. This was what Jiang Chen was most afraid. He instantly retrieved some wood spirit spring. “Huang’er, this is the essence of the wood spirit spring. When you feel like something is wrong, swallow some of it. It’s effective against those yin monsters.”

Wood spirit spring contained purifying qualities, more so for the essence that he had extracted.

Chapter 884: Myriad Corpse Valley

Huang'er received the wood spirit spring essence with an elegant nod. Her clear eyes had become a bit more serious. She was aware of the inflammatory effects that yin-attributed beings had on her Generation Binding Curse, so she took them very seriously. She had been tormented by the curse since she was little and had long since come to terms with it. However, today was different. If something happened to her, Jiang Chen would be affected as well. Huang'er didn't want to drag him down with her.

Jiang Chen activated his God's Eye and looked into the distance. The valley was obscured with fog. It appeared equally gloomy no matter the season, as if sunlight was forever incapable of piercing through it, giving the valley an incredibly sinister feeling. Regardless, time waited for no one. Jiang Chen and Huang'er exchanged a glance. "Let's go."

The moment the two of them entered the valley, they heard a voice call out from behind them, "Daoist Huang, please wait."

Even without turning around, Jiang Chen could identify the owner of the voice as the creator of their alliance, the Prince of Shangping. He didn't slow down as he continued to dash deeper into the valley. He didn't want to deal with any side issues, so he called out instead, "Prince of Shangping, let us walk our separate paths on this wide road." His attitude clearly indicated that he didn't wish to interact with the Prince of Shangping.

The Prince of Shangping appeared startled before he forced out a laugh. "Daoist Huang seems to hold some enmity towards me, but from the bottom of my heart I hold nothing but praise for you. Today, I wish to share an opportunity with you."

Jiang Chen didn't turn his head at all. Mocking laughter rang in his trail. "Just enjoy it yourself. I have no interest in whatever opportunities you may have for me."

The Prince of Shangping had never imagined that this man wouldn't even give him a chance. A small seed of irritation took root in his heart. However, he was very careful not to expose his exasperation, or else his scheme would completely fall apart.

Jiang Chen held zero interest in the other's nonsense. Although he did not know why the Prince of Shangping had sought him out, his instincts told him that this Prince of Shangping definitely did not hold nearly as much goodwill towards him as he tried to make it seem.

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"My liege, the Prince of Shangping has entered the Myriad Corpse Valley along with a cultivator named Huang. According to this servant's earlier deductions, this Prince of Shangping might wish to take advantage of Huang." The person from earlier contacted the Shadow Demon King through a secret method.

"Tsk tsk, I'm interested in both of these two fellows. Who'd have thought that they would stroll in together?" The king clicked his tongue in wonder.

"Should we move now?" The person asked.

"No rush. Let them fight it out for a while first. Afterwards, we'll seize the opportunity to break them down one by one. How far are the others from here?"

"This servant has planted a number of mechanisms along the way. If anyone sees them, they'll be lured here step by step. This servant has also followed Your Majesty's instructions and planted these mechanisms in order to separate all of them. In doing so, it'll prevent a surge of people from entering this place and interfering with Your Majesty's plans."

"Mm, not a bad job. Continue to execute the plan. Be aware of the Wood Demon's movements at all times. They will definitely not let me enjoy this feast alone."

“Understood.”

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“Huang’er, seal your senses and consciousness. I’ll guide you,” Jiang Chen whispered. The dark forest surrounded them like a dense fog. Shadowy figures flickered hauntingly within the fog. The further they traveled into the valley, the more they could sense the yin qi that pervaded the place. If an ordinary person entered this place, they might even be directly swallowed by the yin qi. Even an ordinary cultivator wouldn’t have much luck traversing this valley. This fiendish yin qi was definitely not something they could defend against.

Not only did Jiang Chen have to be mindful of the situation around him, but he also had to pay attention to the Prince of Shangping. This caused him to greatly slow down his pace. He didn’t dare travel any faster lest he miss any warning signs of sudden situations. If they continued at this speed, they would need at least two hours to make it through the valley, and that was assuming that everything went smoothly. Clearly, such smooth sailing was nothing but wishful thinking.

As Jiang Chen moved, he suddenly realized that the scenery alongside him was continuously shifting. Countless tombstones were springing up one after one from the loosening soil. If they were just ordinary tombstones, he had nothing much to fear. However, these tombstones were very abnormal. Strange characters had been inscribed on the surface of every tombstone, as if they had been summoned straight from the depths of hell. In the moment it took Jiang Chen to bring up his guard, those tombstones actually started to move, as if they had grown legs. Piece by piece, they arranged themselves in an orderly fashion, and in the blink of an eye they had formed a formation, blocking the duo’s path.

Jiang Chen’s eyes darkened as he gazed at these tombstones. He abruptly activated his God’s Eye, his gaze penetrating deep into the

ground past these tombstones. Beneath the ground, each tombstone was actually supported by several bone apparitions that were rapidly moving these tombstones around.

"Pfft, such pretense!" Just as Jiang Chen was about to dispose of them, he heard the howl of wind whistle past his ear. The Prince of Shangping and his subordinate had caught up to them. Jiang Chen restrained himself from impulsively making a move. Instead, he stood to the side, gazing at the Prince of Shangping with a supercilious smile. "Prince of Shangping, these tombstones are a little strange. I'll leave them to your Highness' remarkable prowess."

The Prince of Shangping sternly replied, "This place is somewhat bizarre. Why not attack together?"

Jiang Chen shook his head. "It's hard for me to fight right now. I'll have to trouble you instead."

The Prince of Shangping shot a passing glance at Huang'er, who lay in Jiang Chen's arms. He furrowed his brows and asked, "What happened to this daoist?"

Jiang Chen calmly replied, "She's not very used to all this yin qi. If the Prince of Shangping views me as a friend, then help me out by getting rid of these. How about it?"

The Prince of Shangping thought for a second before he nodded. "I've known that this place was suspicious all along. It's natural for us human cultivators to travel in groups and work together after entering the desolate wildlands. Since Daoist Huang is inconvenienced, I will try my best. If I am unable to handle everything alone, I ask that Daoist Huang refrain from simply watching from the sidelines."

"If Your Highness is having trouble, how can I simply watch from the sidelines? How would I have the confidence to proceed further if even Your Highness has fallen?" Jiang Chen watched a patch of tombstones with a shadowy gaze as he spoke calmly.

The Prince of Shangping nodded. His profound gaze was fixated on those stone plates. Suddenly, he pointed to the sky with a talisman in hand. “Shatter!”

Once he activated the talisman, it immediately split apart. Countless streaks of violet-colored energy snaked over the tombstones. The light carried an enormous explosive power, rumbling loudly as it traveled.

Boom! This Exorcism Rune seemed extraordinarily destructive against demonic yin creatures. The violet, snake-like lightning crashed against the tombstones with a roar, and the tombstones were instantly ground into a fine powder as they shattered one after another.

The Prince of Shangping smiled leisurely. “That wasn’t much. Please proceed, Daoist Huang!”

Jiang Chen’s appearance remained normal, but he was sneering inwardly. As expected, this Prince of Shangping bore him no goodwill. His attack had seemed vicious, but he had only destroyed the tombstones. The bone apparitions beneath the ground had been left untouched. There was no way he could believe that someone as discerning as the Prince of Shangping would overlook the bone apparitions below the tombstones. Jiang Chen had run into these bone apparitions before. They possessed the ability to transform. When needed, they could even take the shape of a human.

The tombstones had been destroyed but at least a hundred bone apparitions were still buried below ground. The constructs were not intelligent enough to realize that the two humans standing above them had long since discovered their existence. When Jiang Chen saw that the Prince of Shangping prompted him to go first, he knew it was definitely not out of kindness. He chuckled, “Your Highness should complete his act of goodwill. Why not lead the way?”

The Prince of Shangping kept a straight face as he nodded, “This place is rather suspicious. It’s truly inappropriate to ask Daoist Huang to create a path for us while he cares for his friend. However, I am worried about placing you behind me. How about this? Ole Shen, you lead the way. I will bring up the rear. We’ll work together to cross this valley.”

Jiang Chen smiled calmly but didn’t move from his spot. He suddenly asked, “Your Highness, this valley is so dangerous. Why are you so adamant about crossing it?”

The Prince of Shangping sighed. “I received news that an opportunity lies at the end of this valley.” “What opportunity?” Jiang Chen could not help but ask.

“Hehe, since Daoist Huang does not seem interested in working with me, you’ll have to forgive me for keeping this to myself,” The Prince of Shangping’s smile was veiled with mystery.

Jiang Chen silently cursed this sly old fox, but his expression remained etched in stone, as he did not inquire further. He waved a hand, “Since Your Highness has such a great opportunity, why don’t we return to our old rules? The road is wide—we can each walk our own paths.”

The Prince of Shangping blinked in surprise. “There’s only one road here. Are you thinking of leaving the valley?”

Jiang Chen laughed. “I’ll wait for Your Highness to leave first. I don’t want our relationship to be hurt by you thinking that I wish to fight you for this opportunity.”

In the end, Jiang Chen was still unable to trust this Prince of Shangping.

The other smiled wryly, “Fellow daoist, you don’t seem to trust me very much.”

“Better to be a little prudent when I’m not in my home territory.” Actually, Jiang Chen’s heart was seething with anxiety.

The reason he had requested for the Prince of Shangping to walk ahead was so that he did not have to expose his back to the man. If the prince walked ahead, Jiang Chen would still have sufficient time to react even if this old timer deployed any malicious schemes. Moreover, although the tombstones in front of them had been destroyed, Jiang Chen was unwilling to dispose of those bone apparitions by himself.

The Prince of Shangping sighed lightly. At this point, he could only pretend to be ignorant of the numerous bone apparitions hiding underground. He gestured to his follower, “Since Daoist Huang cannot trust us, let us walk on ahead.”

When the prince saw that Jiang Chen continued to be on his guard and keep him at arm’s length, he instantly wanted to erupt with hostility. However, he still managed to control himself. Without absolute guarantee of victory, he would never make his move. This was his principle, particularly since he was in this strange of a valley. If he wanted something, he had to attain it in one fell swoop.

Whether it was out of fear of the powerful talismans that the Prince of Shangping had deployed or for some other reason, the bone apparitions did not attack the Prince of Shangping as he walked past them. When Jiang Chen witnessed this, he thought it was somewhat unfathomable, and he became somewhat hesitant. The bone apparitions had not attacked this Prince of Shangping when he’d walked past. If he himself did the same, would they remain docile as well? If that was the case, this was actually a great opportunity.

However, if the bone apparitions suddenly attacked him, what Jiang Chen was truly afraid of was not those pesky little monsters, but rather the cultivator who had walked in front of him. He had a way to deal with bone apparitions. But bone apparitions on top of the Prince of Shangping? That was difficult to say.

Chapter 885: The Eight Statues

Jiang Chen hesitated for a split second. In the end, he still decided to wait until the prince and his aide had walked ahead for a while before proceeding. He didn't want to take the risk of being simultaneously assaulted by the bone apparitions as well as the Prince of Shangping. Thirty minutes after the latter had left, Jiang Chen saw that those bone apparitions still didn't seem to want to attack. He glanced down at Huang'er. Although she had completely sealed off her five senses, she would still be affected by the insidious yin qi within the valley.

"Can't wait any longer." Jiang Chen grit his teeth and bounded forwards. He hadn't expected the bone apparitions to remain completely docile, as if they were asleep. They were like terracotta soldiers that had been buried underground, completely still without any signs of aggression. How could Jiang Chen dally when this was the case? He swiftly passed through the area.

However, even after crossing the tombstone district, Jiang Chen remained alert. In such a strange valley, these tombstones were probably just the opening act. Moreover, why had those bone apparitions not attacked him and the Prince of Shangping? This was incredibly suspicious.

"Someone must be controlling these bone apparitions. Otherwise, these transforming monsters couldn't possibly possess such a high level of intelligence, even if they'd retained some form of knowledge from their previous life. They should have some offensive capabilities. Why did they suddenly decide to let us pass?" The more Jiang Chen mulled over this, the more the hairs on his skin began to prickle. He constantly felt as though there were a pair of eyes on him, closely watching everything he did.

"Huang'er's situation doesn't look too encouraging. I have to find the Requiem Wood as soon as possible. No matter how powerful the demon race here might be, I must obtain that Requiem Wood."

Jiang Chen was fully aware that there was already no path of retreat. Currently, apart from the threat of the demon race, there was also the unreadable Prince of Shangping who really troubled Jiang Chen. Hence, even though a sense of urgency burned in his heart, he couldn't travel any faster.

On his way, Jiang Chen suddenly stopped in his tracks again. He stared at the ground and then at his surroundings before his expression twisted into a grimace. Alarm bells rang out in his head as his acute intuition warned him that a source of extreme danger was surging madly towards him. In response, Jiang Chen clawed the air in front of him, his fingers clamping around a talisman.

It was the Imperial Advent Defense Talisman that he had received from the young master of the Coiling Dragon Clan. Simultaneously, his other hand closed around the Featherflight Mirror. His gaze swept the area around him as he listened for any noise. Suddenly, an arrow shot out from the undergrowth on his right. Its momentum far surpassed Jiang Chen’s expectations. He didn’t even need to think as he brandished his Featherflight Mirror. With a swish of the mirror, the arrow instantly lost speed.

Without any delay, he raised a finger towards the heavens. The powerful force of his Supernova Point slashed outwards in a criss-cross arc, towards the direction where the sneak attack had been launched.

It was at this moment that Jiang Chen suddenly felt the scenery before his eyes shift. The next moment, the duo’s bodies were sent into a formation. When he regained his bearings, one by one a series of majestic statues began to stretch into existence before his eyes. Each of these golden divine statues possessed the terrifying eyes of a guardian deity. Immense pressure bore down on Jiang Chen under their heavy gazes.

The eight statues suddenly floated up into the air and subsequently charged ferociously at Jiang Chen as if they were living beings. An attack from eight different directions instantly

placed Jiang Chen into an exceedingly vulnerable position. He instinctively activated the Imperial Advent Defense Talisman. Golden radiance erupted three feet into the air. As the brilliant rays engulfed Jiang Chen, they gently turned into streaks of flowing light, circling his entire body. The next moment, the defensive measure of the talisman reinforced Jiang Chen’s body as the eight statues simultaneously struck.

To his immense shock, Jiang Chen realized that each one of these eight statues possessed the offensive power of the initial emperor realm. Moreover, the attacks made by these eight statues even corresponded to formation-type attacks. As formation after formation rained down upon him, Jiang Chen was no longer even sure which side he should defend from.

Although he was protected by the Imperial Advent Defense Talisman, Jiang Chen didn't dare to relax. Without warning, he activated his body tempering arts. Ten feet of golden light covered his torso. He hugged Huang’er tightly, pressing her body against his chest. Even if he was injured, he didn't want Huang’er to be hurt by these statues. Attacks were coming from his right, his left, and from behind... Jiang Chen could no longer pay attention to them. He knew that what he had to defend was his front.

Because Huang’er lay in his embrace.

The Imperial Advent Defense Talisman could protect him but not Huang’er. The blows from the two statues charging head on at him must be deflected by his own strength. Thankfully, Jiang Chen possessed so many strategies that he instantly stopped the assaults with a swish of his Featherflight Mirror. At the same time, the attacks of the other statues landed heavily on his body.

Crash!

Streaks of golden light poured out from Jiang Chen’s body. It was as if he was being gently pummeled by a baby’s fists. Although he could feel the attacks, they didn’t bring the slightest sensation of

pain. He was inwardly delighted. This Imperial Advent Defense Talisman definitely lives up to its name!

Once activated, the talisman could last at least eight hours. Jiang Chen didn’t need to worry about the talisman losing its potency any time soon. At this point, he could no longer conceal his true power. He unleashed his Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice, entrapping the two statues in front of him. With a hand seal, the numerous vines of the lotus lashed violently towards the two statues.

The lotus was incredibly powerful at both binding and shattering, but these two statues had clearly also been constructed extraordinarily well. While Jiang Chen couldn’t tell what exactly had been used to create them, even the combined strength of hundreds of vines couldn't grind them down. Finally letting his frustration get to him, Jiang Chen repeatedly sliced into the air with a fingertip.

The fourth move of the Supernova Point: Galaxy Slash!

This Supernova Point had been coined by an authority from the ancient era. Its formidable might could slice even the Milky Way apart. Jiang Chen had been training this technique for a very long time. Just because his Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice couldn't break these things didn’t mean that the Galaxy Slash would fail to. The powerful blow sliced into the statues. As expected, cut after cut carved into them. Just as Jiang Chen repeatedly deployed the Galaxy Slash, another arrow hurtled out from the distance. It pierced through space, careening towards him with a deadly trajectory.

Anger flared up within him as he pushed his hand downwards, slamming the mint ginseng into the ground. “Go and drag out that bastard shooting these arrows.” The fellow launching sneak attacks on me must definitely be rather weak. Otherwise, he wouldn’t keep relying on these unseen arrows.

The mint ginseng was still quite terrified of Jiang Chen. When it saw that this was its chance to prove its usefulness, it was naturally extremely happy. On the other hand, Jiang Chen only had one goal in mind as he continued to slice those two statues apart. When the other statues realized that they had no way to attack him, they consecutively surged towards his frontal side. How could Jiang Chen allow them to do as they wished? He shifted his position continuously as he called out, “Prince of Shangping, is this your so-called cooperation?” If he still couldn’t figure out that this was the prince’s dirty ploy, then there must be something wrong with his brain.

In the darkness, the Prince of Shangping seemed slightly dumbfounded as he manipulated his formation disk. He had received this formation disk thanks to a stroke of good luck in an extremely fortuitous situation. The disk could compel eight divine golden statues to attack simultaneously. With the Prince of Shangping’s potential, he could only tap into a third of this power. The eight statues were only able to materialize strength of the initial emperor realm. After all, his own level of cultivation was only in the emperor realm. These eight statues were akin to an alliance between eight initial emperor realm cultivators. One could easily imagine their resulting power.

Moreover, these eight divine statues were different from ordinary emperor realm cultivators. An ordinary cultivator might possess slightly higher offensive power, but their defensive capabilities might not be up to par. The defense of these eight statues was truly insurmountable. A normal attack couldn’t even hope to scratch them. After all, they didn't fear pain. This kind of perverse durability would definitely cause an ordinary opponent to suffer a severe headache.

Hence, when the Prince of Shangping had set up the formation as a ploy against Jiang Chen, he had felt fairly confident. Who would have expected that these eight golden divine statues would be

unable to ruffle the feathers of this mysterious young cultivator? This brat actually possessed such an impenetrable defense that the attacks of his statues had no effect on him! If he hadn't had to protect his companion, he might very well have taken out all the statues already.

In that moment, the Prince of Shangping was both shocked and furious—shocked because his opponent possessed a defense more formidable than his eight golden divine statues, and furious because all his efforts seemed to have gone to waste. If the first attack failed, any further aggression would be much more difficult. Moreover, his location had been discovered by his opponent. At this moment, the Prince of Shangping had almost given up. However, he was a very determined person. Some glowing thing covered this brat's body just now. He must have used some kind of strange defensive talisman. Defensive talismans last for an hour at most. After one hour, the effects will naturally disappear...

When he thought of this, the Prince of Shangping regained his fighting spirit. This brat is decked from head to toe with so many treasures. If he didn't snatch them for himself, then he would truly have wasted all this effort. When he realized this, the Prince of Shangping chuckled before springing out from the darkness. One of his hands grasped the handle of a silver longsword.

"Since Daoist Huang possesses such strong enmity towards me, then don't blame me for being too harsh on you!" This Prince of Shangping was completely shameless. It was obviously him who had initiated the attack, yet he continued to speak of himself in such a pompous manner.

Jiang Chen only sneered at him. His gaze was fixed on the Prince of Shangping as he said, "I knew an old codger like you would be up to no good. You can't hide your sly fox tail anymore, can you?"

The Prince of Shangping was completely shameless. When he heard Jiang Chen's mocking words, he acted as though he couldn't hear anything. "Brat, things have already reached this stage.

What's the point of spouting such nonsense? Tell me your background so I can see if I can afford this offense."

Jiang Cheng was too lazy to even converse. "Fight if you want to. What's the point of chit chatting?"

A nasty grin appeared on the Prince of Shangping's face. "Quite arrogant huh, brat? But even if you're the disciple of a famous sect, do you really think you have any right to mess around after you've entered my formation? Today, I will send you straight to hell. All your valuables... I'll take them for safekeeping. I'll send your companion to accompany you after I've toyed with her. Ahahaha..."

Chapter 886: Fleeing With His Tail Between His Legs

The Prince of Shangping had repressed himself for so long. When he saw Jiang Chen fall into his hands, he no longer needed to hide anything. He shed his mask of geniality and instantly displayed his true character. When Jiang Chen heard this, he abruptly raised an eyebrow. His gaze was filled with killing intent. “Prince of Shangping, do you think that you can suppress me just because you’ve put everything you have into this scheme?”

The Prince of Shangping appeared as if he was about to say something, but a sharp shriek resounded from the area beside them, cutting him off. When he heard this shriek, his expression instantly changed. Naturally, he could identify that this voice belonged to his aide. “Ole Shen, what happened?”

Jiang Chen only smiled chillingly. He knew that the mint ginseng had found its target. As expected, countless tentacles lashed out from beside them. Stream after stream of green fog billowed rapidly towards the Prince of Shangping.

The other’s pupils contracted violently as he dodged in a flurry. He could vaguely sense that a strong binding power lay within that green fog. Within the space obscured by the fog, more than a few hundred wart-covered tentacles shot successively towards him at lightning speed. He was completely dumbfounded. His longsword soared into action, slicing apart a few dozen tentacles. However, the moment a tentacle was split apart, it regenerated almost instantly. This regenerative ability was ludicrous, to the extent that the Prince of Shangping wanted to break down in tears.

Jiang Chen chuckled darkly. Suddenly, he raised his hand. A small golden mountain appeared at the center of his palm. With a single hand seal, countless tadpole-like characters began to orbit around him. Without warning, the miniature mountain expanded

into a hill before ruthlessly crushing the Prince of Shangping.

The prince had many tricks to his name and was well versed in formations. He was also bolstered by the eight statues and his own arts were quite strong. As a cultivator well-versed in formations and in possession of the eight statues, his innate power was also remarkable. And yet, today's events had truly opened his eyes. The techniques and abilities of this mysterious youth actually outmatched him in terms of both number and prowess. As the golden mountain engulfed the space overhead, the Prince of Shangping felt as if the sky was falling down. His wits had deserted him out of sheer terror from the immense shock he felt. He still possessed several techniques that had not yet been used, but under the pressure of this titanic mountain, he was suddenly rendered incapable of activating any of his vast repertoire of tricks.

Similar to the green fog, the golden mountain actually also carried a binding power with it. These two different kinds of binding power caused the Prince of Shangping to feel as though his body no longer obeyed his commands. How would he dare continue the fight?

He didn't even have time to retrieve his eight statues. He activated a talisman and used it to quickly shatter the golden binding power before rapidly hurtling away from the mountain. The magnetic golden mountain's shining rays might travel quickly, but they were still a hair behind the speed of the escape mechanism granted by his talisman. Even after it had smashed into the ground a few times, it was still unable to block his path of escape.

As soon as the Prince of Shangping fled, the formation around them greatly weakened. When Jiang Chen broke the formation with his Moonshatter Awl, the eight statues also lost their connection to it. One by one, they ceased their flailing and toppled to the ground like deflated balloons. Jiang Chen had no qualms about sweeping these eight statues into his storage ring. The

statues were extraordinary. Even numerous blows of his Galaxy Slash had only scratched them instead of shattering them entirely. In order to destroy these statues with his current level of power, Jiang Chen would have to slash at them repeatedly for at least two hours. And even then, he might barely be able to eliminate one of them. This kind of spectacular durability truly amazed Jiang Chen. However, he was currently in no mood to admire these statues. After retrieving the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice, he called the mint ginseng back as well and praised it, “Not a bad show. Some credit goes to you in this.”

One glance at Ole Shen’s shriveled corpse told Jiang Chen that the mint ginseng had completely drained the body of its essence. Jiang Chen didn't feel a twinge of sympathy for him as he helped Huang’er up and left the area. He had been trapped in battle within this formation for a good two hours and hence, didn’t want to waste any more time. The Imperial Advent Defense Talisman could maintain its defensive power for another two hours. He had to take advantage of this time to cross this sinister valley as soon as possible.

If Jiang Chen had been alone, he would have been fine with surviving in this place for ten to fifteen days. But Huang’er’s Generation Binding Curse couldn't withstand the aggravation of even a little bit of yin qi. At this point, Jiang Chen hated that he wasn’t able to instantly find the Requiem Wood and cure her illness.

……

On the other hand, the Prince of Shangping had run a long distance but fear still lingered in his heart. His face was deathly pale. From time to time, he glanced behind him, worried that Jiang Chen was still pursuing him. “Bastard, that brat acted like a weakling to lure the tigers out!” The Prince of Shangping’s eyes were filled with fury. All along, he had thought that he was the one trying to lure and kill those tigers. He had never expected that his

opponent would be even more vicious than him and conceal himself even more deeply than he had!

“Just where did that brat come from?” The more the Prince of Shangping considered the entire situation, the more he felt that something didn’t quite add up. “Even if he was a great disciple of a first-rank sect, he couldn’t possibly possess such power, right?”

The Prince of Shangping had seen plenty of such disciples. To tell the truth, he had even killed many of those kinds of disciples. Although great disciples of a first-rank sect did indeed know numerous techniques, they were still lacking in power compared to an emperor realm cultivator like him. Moreover, the equipment that the Prince of Shangping owned was also considered to be at a top-level existence amongst cultivators.

Naturally, although the Prince of Shangping might call himself a wandering cultivator, in reality he couldn't strictly be considered as such. It was just that he enjoyed going on adventures and doing the same kinds of things that wandering cultivators generally liked. He had always been confident in his equipment and treasures. He felt that even if he wasn’t considered to be amongst the top cultivators in the human domain, he would at least be one of the best. However, the opponent he had encountered today had caused him to taste bitter defeat. As of now, he had escaped with his life. Although he was devastated by the result, he continued to silently ponder over the losses and gains from his battle.

“That brat’s defensive power may even be in the great emperor realm. He didn’t shy away from the blows of the eight statues at all. Not a single hair on him was ruffled. Could that be the power of the Imperial Advent Defense Talisman?” The Prince of Shangping had not thought of this earlier due to his panic. But now, upon careful consideration, he could make a few conjectures about what had happened.

“As expected, this brat should have the blessings of some great emperor realm cultivator.” As this occurred to him, the Prince of

Shangping felt the beginning of a headache. “No, I can’t let this brat live any longer. If he leaves, will there be any place left for me in this world?” The Prince of Shangping might have a powerful backing, but the person he had offended today was under the protection of a great emperor. If word of this spread, there would be hell to pay.

“Wait a minute...” When the Prince of Shangping thought of Jiang Chen’s abilities, he was struck by a sudden flash of inspiration. “The brat’s techniques, I seem to have seen them before somewhere? But it’s definitely my first time seeing them... If I’d encountered him somewhere before, I’d definitely remember him. But why do I keep thinking that he seems a little familiar?” The Prince of Shangping’s brain vaguely seemed to have latched onto a particular train of thought, but he was unable to piece together the puzzle. He racked his brains further.

“So many vines, suffused with ice and fire attributes... Eh?” The Prince of Shangping’s expression abruptly changed before he leapt up in revelation. “It’s him?!”

At that moment, he finally found the final piece of the puzzle he had been looking for. When he had been traveling around the world, he had visited numerous places. When he had passed by the Great Scarlet Mid Region, he had come across an incredibly exaggerated bounty poster. And the person worth such a bounty had been called Jiang Chen...

“Jiang Chen... Right, Jiang Chen!” The Prince of Shangping’s eyes suddenly shone with rays of epiphany. “When the Eternal Celestial Capital invaded the Myriad Domain, the Capital’s Holy Kings dispatched countless armies in vicious pursuit. The Great Scarlet Mid Region’s reputation was also severely damaged. And the target of their pursuit, wasn’t it this Jiang Chen? His techniques and equipment seem to match this guy very well. Could it be him?” As the Prince of Shangping mulled over this line of thinking, he felt that it made more and more sense.

“It’s him. It’s definitely him!” The Prince of Shangping’s mind continued to spin. “This damn brat... you’re being targeted from all sides and yet you strut into the desolate wildlands in such a carefree manner! Ah, the bounty posters did mention that he had a companion. It must be that friend he was carrying in his arms.” As he considered the situation, the bitter taste of defeat completely disappeared.

“Even the Eternal Celestial Capital suffered at the hands of this brat. I didn’t know about him, so it’s only natural that I lost a little to his nonsensical techniques.” Although the Prince of Shangping was willing to admit his loss, there was no way that he would just let bygones be bygones. Rather, his number of grievances had only increased.

“If this brat has so many techniques, it’s no surprise that the Eternal Celestial Capital fell to him. No, even my eight statues fell into his palms. What’s more, what right does this brat have to own so many heaven-defying treasures? Why should he be the one to control these things?!” The Prince of Shangping couldn't accept this. “I must kill that brat! I’ll quench the hatred in my heart, take his treasures, and turn him over to the Great Scarlet Mid Region for bounty.”

The Prince of Shangping might have been driven into a corner but that was only because of the unexpected pressure of the magnetic golden mountain. He still had some techniques up his sleeves. Although he might not be able to triumph over his opponent, he still had some combative power.

“I underestimated him previously. I didn’t expect that that brat would hide his strength so that he could prey on the strong.” The Prince of Shangping comforted himself. “I’ll slowly set another trap. This time, the trap must be foolproof enough so that the brat won’t have an escape route.” He had experienced many battles in his life. He might have suffered a slight setback, but his fighting spirit still remained intact.

“Those tentacles might be terrifying but they can be dealt with. Only… if I’m covered by that golden mountain, things won’t be so easy.” He carefully considered the tactics he would use to oppose Jiang Chen. After a brief second, a plan had formed in his mind. And at that same moment, his ear twitched before he suddenly turned around and shot into the nearby undergrowth.

The sound of light footsteps sounded out from across him. A figure floated out from the forest as it called out, “Prince of Shangping?”

When the Prince of Shangping heard this voice, he could immediately tell that this was not his death-sworn enemy. His pounding heart immediately relaxed. He walked out calmly and gazed towards the newcomer, apathetically asking, “Ole Brother Lu, why are you here?”

This person, who was dressed like a scholar, had also been one of the members of the alliance formed outside the valley. His name was Lu Shinan. Back then, he had actually sought Jiang Chen out to form a secret alliance, but had been firmly shot down.

Lu Shinan looked at the Prince of Shangping in shock, “Your Highness, why do you look so beaten up? Have you encountered any danger?”

The Prince of Shangping huffed coldly, “This has nothing to do with you, Brother Lu. Anyway, why have you suddenly appeared here?”

Lu Shinan smiled bitterly, “I was pursuing a trail but it seems that the trail mysteriously ends here.”

“What trail?” The Prince of Shangping asked without inflection.

The smile remained on Lu Shinan’s face. “It’s not convenient for me to reveal what it is. Since the Prince of Shangping is occupied, this junior will not disturb you. I’ll leave first.”

A light went off in the Prince of Shangping’s head as he suddenly

spoke up, “Wait a moment!”

Chapter 887: Colluding Villains

Lu Shinan grew serious and a little wary as he stared at the Prince of Shangping. “What else do you have to say, Your Highness?”

The Prince of Shangping smiled wryly, “Don’t worry, I’m not interested in you.”

Lu Shinan spat on the ground, “Are you trying to imply that I’m interested in you?”

The prince waved his hands to show that he wasn’t here to quarrel with Lu Shinan. He answered calmly and without stress, “Daoist Lu, you and I are both emperor realm experts. Therefore, it is understandable that we are wary of each other.”

Lu Shinan snorted softly but didn’t answer. It was obvious that he had his guard up against the other. Lu Shinan frowned, “Just say whatever it is you have to say, Your Highness.”

The Prince of Shangping nodded, but without any anger towards his rudeness. He pondered for a moment, “I have recently stumbled upon a great fortune. I wonder if you are interested in it, Daoist Lu?”

“There are opportunities everywhere across the desolate wildlands, so I’m actually not interested in this fortune of yours, Your Highness. Who knows if it’s a trap you’ve laid down for me to jump into?”

The Prince of Shangping had a somewhat awkward expression on his face. He would’ve killed this offender with a single punch if this had been any other time. However, Lu Shinan’s appearance had given the Prince of Shangping a few ideas. Therefore, he didn’t retort angrily. He said seriously instead, “I can swear a heavenly oath that I have no intentions of targeting you in any way, Daoist Lu.”

Lu Shinan thought for a moment before speaking reluctantly,

“Why don’t you tell me about the opportunity you found and let me decide if it’s real first.”

The Prince of Shangping didn’t try to beat around the bush. “Do you still remember that cultivator named Huang in the valley?”

“Are you talking about Daoist Huang? The one with a female companion?” Lu Shinan asked curiously.

“Yes,” the Prince of Shangping nodded. “What do you think of his strength, Brother Lu?”

“His strength? He should be at the sage realm, but he probably possesses the combat strength of an emperor realm cultivator. At the very least, his confidence is likely backed by some measure of ability,” Lu Shinan voiced his own judgment.

“Some measure of ability, you say?” The Prince of Shangping laughed wryly, “He is a monster who fakes weakness to fool others. At the very least, his strength is on par with yours and mine.”

“What do you mean?” Lu Shinan’s eyes moved rapidly.

“I had a bit of a conflict with him earlier and suffered a minor loss because I underestimated him.” The prince purposefully obscured things instead of explaining clearly.

A bit of ridicule dripped into Lu Shinan’s smile. “Are you trying to get me to join you on a revenge excursion? If that’s the case, then I am sorry to say that I’m not available.”

Lu Shinan had figured out the Prince of Shangping’s underlying intentions from his expression. The prince smiled wryly, “Am I that obvious?”

“Cut the nonsense. I’m not idle enough to waste time on your petty revenge.”

The Prince of Shangping suddenly let out a cold laugh. “Why do you think wandering cultivators travel everywhere and seek adventure, Daoist Lu? We search for riches, power, or resources,

all of which ultimately contribute to helping us become stronger. Do you agree with this, Daoist Lu?”

“You don’t say.” Lu Shinan seemed to have lost the heart to listen to the prince any longer.

The Prince of Shangping suddenly said, “In that case, let me be frank with you. This person is of extraordinary origin, and if you aid me in defeating him, I will grant you a great fortune.”

“Tut! If there really is such a great fortune, why don’t you claim it for yourself?” Lu Shinan still refused to believe his words.

“Naturally, there are things that I desire from that person as well. But he is valuable—far, far more valuable than you can possibly imagine. Do you still remember that joint bounty offered by the Eternal Celestial Capital and the Great Scarlet Mid Region, Daoist Lu?” The prince asked with the ghost of a smile on his lips.

Lu Shinan finally turned serious as he cried out involuntarily, “Are you speaking of that junior of Regal Pill Palace, Jiang Chen?”

“That’s right. Right now, the bounty on his head has grown several times larger than what it was initially at. Do you think that you can ever earn that much wealth with your own talents, Daoist Lu?”

Lu Shinan thought for a moment before shaking his head honestly, “I don’t think so.”

“What if you have a chance to earn that bounty? To rise to the top in one fell swoop? Are you interested in giving it a go now, Daoist Lu?” The Prince of Shangping asked with a chuckle.

“Are you saying…?” Lu Shinan’s pupils abruptly shrank. “Is that kid the Jiang Chen that the Eternal Celestial Capital is hunting?”

“That’s right. I am at least ninety percent sure that he’s Jiang Chen.” The Prince of Shangping nodded.

“Hmph. That bounty is great, but that doesn’t mean that it’s easy

to split between two people. I don't understand. Your Highness, why are you willing to share this all with me?" Lu Shinan was a very cautious person.

"It's very simple. I may not be able to take him down alone."

"Where's your aide?" Lu Shinan suddenly asked.

"He's not strong enough, so he can't help me with this." Of course, the Prince of Shangping wouldn't tell Lu Shinan that his subordinate was already dead.

Lu Shinan pondered for a moment. "The bounty is great, but there are still two of us. If we do go to the end, I may not necessarily be able to gain my fair share of the agreement should you change your mind."

"The bounty is yours," the Prince of Shangping said indifferently. "I am a person of some stature, and I don't particularly need the riches offered by that bounty. Just the same, the amount of land offered and the chance to start a sect are not where my interests lie."

"Then what do you want?" Lu Shinan looked startled.

"You can have the bounty while I reclaim the eight statues he robbed from me and take some of his equipment for my own. Are you satisfied with this distribution, Daoist Lu?" The Prince of Shangping said suddenly, "Don't try to bargain with me. I've already made some concessions. If it weren't for revenge, I would never have come to you to make a deal. You know that there are plenty of people who are willing to work with me."

He had been negotiating from a weaker position all this time, but his tone grew a little forceful now that they were at the final stage of the negotiation.

Lu Shinan thought for a moment before raising his eyebrows. "This split is fair, I suppose. But how do I know that you won't break your promise?"

“We can swear a heavenly oath. If I am to renege on this split of rewards, may the heavens punish me with death.”

Feeling that the deal was fairly secure now that the heavenly oath was involved, Lu Shinan nodded immediately, “Alright, then I will partake in your revenge.”

The Prince of Shangping was very happy to hear this. “Very good. You and I are at about the same level of strength. If you and I were to fight him two on one, plus utilize some formations and the terrain to our advantage, I’m sure that our victory will be quite certain. Oh right, allow me to inform you of some of his combat characteristics, Daoist Lu. This is so that you won’t be caught off guard by him while in a tight spot.”

The prince looked incredibly sincere and his actions made Lu Shinan feel that he meant well. Thus, he nodded, “That is for the best. If you and I are both aware of what he can do, we can tackle problems properly and come up with the right plan of action.”

“That is correct. You and I must cooperate in good faith and not let a single thing slip by us.” The duo found a hidden corner and muttered to each other for a moment, creating a rough plan.

“First, we must have a formation that can trap him. Moreover, this formation must be concealed by the terrain so that he can’t discover it beforehand.” The Prince of Shangping said.

Lu Shinan thought for a moment before his eyes lit up. “I know of a place that is rather suitable to lay down a formation. However, it’s a little dangerous. At the very least, it’s dangerous enough that even I have to pick my way through it carefully.”

A fierce gleam fleeted past the Prince of Shangping’s eyes, “Dangerous, you say? As long as it doesn’t threaten both you and I, then the greater the better. That’s the best way to keep his attention fixed solely on the terrain around him. But before that, it must be a place that he has to pass through, of course.”

“That’s no problem. We can always try and lure him over,” Lu Shinan smiled. “I’ve communicated with that kid once before. Just leave it to me.”

The Prince of Shangping suddenly frowned, “You won’t suddenly betray me and work together with him later, will you, Daoist Lu?”

Lu Shinan smiled wryly, “I swear by the heavens that I will be smited by thunder and lightning if I were to work together with him.”

There was nothing more convincing than a heavenly oath. Therefore, the Prince of Shangping relaxed upon hearing this. “Please don’t blame me for my cautiousness, Daoist Lu. The human heart is difficult to fathom, and I have no choice but to be on my guard.”

Lu Shinan smiled. “I can understand that.”

Both these people were old foxes who refused to take any losses. But now that they were working together, they had no problems feigning a magnanimous heart. “Where is this place you speak of, Daoist Lu? Take me there to have a look. I’ll put my formation there if the terrain is suitable.” The prince obviously didn’t want to waste anymore time.

Lu Shinan nodded, but the hesitation on his face hadn’t yet faded completely. “I’m still a little worried. That place is somewhat dangerous.”

The Prince of Shangping frowned. “We have the two of us, so what is there to be worried about? If anything is to happen, you and I can always work together to overcome most of the obstacles.”

Lu Shinan finally nodded after thinking for a moment, “Alright. You mustn’t leave me behind if anything were to happen, Your Highness.”

“Two people fighting together is always going to be better than

one person fighting alone. So what do I have to gain by discarding you?”

Lu Shinan was already leading the way as they continued talking to each other. The pair ran into a massive grave about fifteen minutes later. White banners were everywhere, hanging on mounds. The Prince of Shangping frowned when he saw the white banners, “Why are these white banners here?”

Lu Shinan smiled wryly. “That’s why I said that this place is eerie. These white banners were likely demonic objects from the ancient times, considering that they’ve remained intact even though a hundred thousand years have passed.”

The prince investigated for a bit with a serious look on his face, but didn’t see anything out of the ordinary.

“Will this place work? If it’s not, we can always find someplace else.” Lu Shinan suggested, likely because he was quite wary of this place.

The Prince of Shangping looked around for another moment. “No, this place is perfect. We’ll set our trap here. These white banners contain some subtle demonic aura, so there’s likely something strange beneath these mounds. However, this isn’t a problem to us because I have a particular discerning eye art that allows me to see what’s hidden inside. Although there are definitely some demonic signs around this place, you and I are strong enough to overcome them together. Plus, this is a place that that brat must absolutely pass through.”

Anyone could see that the prince’s mind was completely focused on Jiang Chen right now. “Daoist Lu, you must contribute some effort if you wish to claim the bounty. So why don’t you keep watch while I lay down some formations according to this terrain?”

“Alright.” Lu Shinan might not like this place too much, but he still nodded in agreement. “It’ll be best if the formation blends so

evenly into the terrain that he won't notice anything. Only then will the formations truly be effective."

"Relax, these are formations we're talking about. I'm fairly confident in this aspect of my skill set." The prince smiled coldly. He thought that Lu Shinan's warning was a little unnecessary.

As he said this, the Prince of Shangping suddenly stopped his hand movements. The white banners erected in front of the mounds had abruptly started to shake violently.

Lu Shinan shivered all over and jumped instantly to the prince's side, "What's going on, Your Highness?"

The prince was both worried and furious at Lu Shinan's cowardice. "What are you worried about? It's just a bit of movement from some evil air. There's nothing to be worried about."

He said this as he stared at the white banners, but he had no idea that the hint of a strange smile had crept into Lu Shinan's lips. He also didn't see that Lu Shinan's arms were raised slightly in a conspiratorial manner.

Chapter 888: Demon King Nineshadows

"Your Highness, that brat is here!" Lu Shinan suddenly called out.

"Where?" The Prince of Shangping was startled. However, he realized something was wrong the next moment. A black burst of light erupted behind him as he turned, and a strange black talisman exploded in the middle of his back. It turned into an inky jet of air and shot itself into the prince's body. On the other side, Lu Shinan shifted a few dozen meters away like a slippery eel.

The prince was furious. "Lu Shinan, you backstabbing..."

Lu Shinan laughed malevolently. "You're wily, Prince of Shangping, but your wits are no match for mine!"

"Then die!" The prince's face darkened. He was about to deploy an art but found that his body was weak and devoid of any energy. He had no strength left to muster. His entire body had been wrapped in the black air. He couldn't move at all.

"Lu Shinan, what did you do to me?" The Prince of Shangping was scared witless. His normal calmness was lost, and his entire body shook in fear. His intuition told him that the end was nigh.

"Heh heh, what do you think?" Lu Shinan stayed at a distance from the prince, not approaching beyond a certain point. His expression was inscrutable.

The prince's pupils contracted. "Don’t forget that you made a heavenly oath!"

Lu Shinan snickered, "I made an oath that I wasn't in cahoots with the kid. That much is true. I'm really not."

The Prince of Shangping finally realized—there had been a loophole in Lu Shinan's oath from the very beginning. Because he had been wholly focused on Jiang Chen, it had slipped past him. And as as a result, Lu Shinan's plot found unexpected success. The prince had been overconfident. In his alliance with Lu Shinan, he

had thought that he was the more favorable party, that he was the stronger cultivator. Even if the other man was plotting something behind his back, he had assumed that he wouldn't be really threatened by it. As such, the prince didn't believe that Lu Shinan would attack him before they had taken out Jiang Chen. Even if they were to reach a point of contention when they divvied up their spoils and ended up coming to blows, it would only be after Jiang Chen was out of the picture.

The possibility that Lu Shinan was never interested in working with him in the first place hadn't even crossed his mind. The Prince of Shangping was full of regret. He had plotted against countless people in his life. His failure to scheme against Jiang Chen was already unlucky enough; Lu Shinan's backstabbing was simply karmic justice.

"Do you think you'll be able to defeat that kid by yourself, Lu Shinan? Is that why you've trapped me like this?" The prince still wanted to salvage the situation.

Lu Shinan chortled, "Are you still dreaming, Prince of Shangping? Who said that I was going to face him alone?"

"You have a partner in crime?" The prince's expression changed drastically. "Who is it? Even if you do, they couldn't possibly be as strong as me. You think you'll have a better chance with them?"

"Don't think so highly of yourself. My partner is already 'in' you." Lu Shinan retorted mockingly.

"What?" The Prince of Shangping was completely lost.

Lu Shinan's mocking expression grew more pronounced. "You're at death's door, and you still don't even know how you got there. Truly, if wise men play the fool, they do it with a vengeance."

The prince's body shuddered as a new thought entered his mind. His look turned to despair. "Have you defected to the demons, Lu Shinan? Are you now their faithful servant?"

“It is good to know which way the wind blows," Lu Shinan laughed. "Demons are a high-class race hailing from the heavenly planes, and I'm only following their natural ebb and flow. Too bad you don't have the chance to do the same, prince. My liege has a use for your body. Though it's not perfect, there's little choice in haste."

"Your liege?" The prince's smile was grim. An incredibly powerful force within the stream of black air was already eating away at his consciousness. Completely restrained by it, he couldn't move a finger, much less launch any form of active resistance. It was as if a cleaver was headed straight towards his head, but he was powerless to avoid it. He wanted to destroy himself, but his body wouldn’t respond to his commands.

"Lu Shinan, you traitor of the human race... I won't let you get away with this, even from beyond the grave!" The Prince of Shangping was hoarse from exertion.

"Oh, come off it," Lu Shinan was unimpressed. "You think you'll have a chance to do that? Don't waste your breath. I've set up soundproof barriers all around us. No one will hear you. You wanted to take out that brat, right? Don't worry, I’ll avenge you in that regard at least. Why don't the two of you compete when you're both in hell, eh? Hahahaha." By the end of his speech, Lu Shinan wore a ghastly smile. The light in the prince's eyes faded as his consciousness was eaten away, until it finally dimmed to a corpse-like gray hue.

Everything was quiet. The Prince of Shangping looked as if he had been dead for many hours. Suddenly, the prince's body moved. His gray-white eyes dilated, and his eyelids fluttered. He was alive once more. However, his eyes were now home to a new malevolence.

Lu Shinan's body shook. "Congratulations, my liege. You have finally attained a new body. This is a big step forward for the demon race." He knelt to the newly-risen prince.

The 'Prince of Shangping' looked a little disoriented, and his eyes moved about constantly. He scanned his surroundings, his expression vibrant. After a long while, he smiled bewitchingly, "Good, good, good. I, King Nineshadows, can finally see the light of day once more!"

"Now that you've awakened, my liege, I'm sure that a new renaissance for the demon race is not far off." Lu Shinan laid on heavy flattery.

The demon king smiled faintly, his gaze resting for a moment on the man. "You've done well, Lu Shinan. You deserve a rich reward for your work. When the time comes, I'll request a high-rank portion of demon blood from His Majesty the emperor himself. You'll truly become a member of our superior race then."

"Thank you for your praise, my liege." Lu Shinan was overjoyed.

"Stand now. This is only the first step. Though I've taken the Prince of Shangping's body, this unrefined body is not very suitable for my demonic arts. I do not expect that I'll have much combative ability, and I'll surely be cut down by any strong adversary." The demon king was not blinded by arrogance. He understood the situation very clearly.

"According to the information supplied by this Prince of Shangping, my liege, the person who destroyed the five bone apparitions is Jiang Chen. He is a tough character in the outside world."

"Oh? How tough, exactly?" King Nineshadows asked, frowning. Lu Shinan relayed a few of the rumors he had heard about Jiang Chen, as well as some details regarding the prince's loss to the young man.

"A sage realm youngster can stir up so much trouble? He seems like he'd fit in well with the demon race. We need geniuses like him the most. Shall I take his body? Or adapt his bloodline? Or perhaps make a corpse puppet out of him?"

Taking his body entailed occupying a new body with his consciousness, much like he was doing now with the Prince of Shangping's body. Adapting his bloodline meant injecting demon blood into his body, then letting it awaken in the youth naturally. In this particular way, Jiang Chen would end up becoming a member of the demon race as well. As for making him into a corpse puppet, it was a method unique to Shadow Demons that allowed them to change a living person into a lifeless puppet. Corpse puppets were stronger than bone apparitions.

Bone apparitions merely involved controlling bones through demonic arts. They appeared fearsome, but were actually rather simple and weak. On the other hand, corpse puppets could retain the abilities they had in their previous lives and moreover, gain new abilities that were unique to the demon race. They would become enhanced versions of their previous selves, in a sense.

Shadow Demons were not one of the stronger bloodlines of the demon race. However, they excelled at borrowing external strength. They didn't only use corpse puppets and bone apparitions; they boasted control over malevolent ghosts and monstrous zombies as well, using all kinds of minions to complete their goals with ease. Therefore, Shadow Demons were more difficult to deal with than many of their brethren. It was difficult to guard against their mysterious and insidious methods. Of course, that much could be said about the entire demon race. It was just that the Shadow Demons exemplified more of these characteristics.

"Don't you have a body already, sir?" Lu Shinan asked.

"This body is only for temporary measure. I won’t be able to recover my former strength with a body like this."

The Prince of Shangping was decently strong amongst wandering cultivators. However, he didn't amount to much in front of actual competitors. This was especially true given that he had reached his body’s natural limits in many respects. There wasn't much more to

dig up and areas that he could make additional improvements in. To King Nineshadows, this was a deal-breaking flaw. Obviously, it was better for him to have a surrogate body of the highest possible quality.

Unfortunately, the demon king's soul wasn't in an ideal state. He wasn't able to take over cultivators that were exceedingly strong. A great emperor's body would of course be ideal, but the pressure they exerted could instantly crush his demonic soul. The demon king had no choice but to pick on the likes of people like the Prince of Shangping instead. He had the desire for greater, but not the necessary ability. Anyone stronger than the prince, and he would suffer significant backlash as a result.

"My liege, that brat should be close by now. What if you take him down as he approaches?" Lu Shinan's eyes flashed with malice.

The demon king thought for a moment, then shook his head. "There is no rush. If, like you said, the kid is capable enough to foil even the Prince of Shangping, then he's certainly quite a character. Though I can fight him immediately, my body’s instability will be at a significant disadvantage. Let's play it safe since we're just starting out. There's going to be a lot more chances to toy with them once they enter Myriad Corpse Valley. I shall return to my Ten-Thousand-Year Coffin to gather more demonic energy so that I can further refine this body. You'll be responsible for keeping them in check. You can activate some restrictions when the time arises, but you must keep them in place. Three days is all you have. Remember, they cannot be allowed to leave. The territory outside the valley isn’t mine."

Lu Shinan was a little disappointed by the demon king's instructions. He had hoped that the demon king would seize Jiang Chen, because then he would have the opportunity to rob the youth of his possessions. Although he didn't know what Jiang Chen possessed exactly, it had to be of superior quality and utility. After all, the Prince of Shangping had been willing to hand over

Jiang Chen’s entire bounty to him in exchange for these possessions.

Chapter 889: Leaving Myriad Corpse Valley

Jiang Chen moved forward at a steady pace. He wasn’t overly pleased with beating the Prince of Shangping. With his knowledge of the prince’s characteristics, he knew that the fellow wasn’t the type to give up so easily. He would come again, or perhaps was already lying in wait for him with another trap. If Jiang Chen hadn’t been with Huang’er, or if she were able to function normally, Jiang Chen wouldn’t mind going a few rounds with the prince until the latter was dead. However, he couldn't afford to horse around right now. The Imperial Advent Defense Talisman would last only two more hours, and one had already passed. Yet strangely, the Prince of Shangping had seemingly disappeared into thin air.

"Perhaps that old codger Shangping guessed what kind of talisman I was using. He won't bother me until the time is up!" Jiang Chen was a little bothered by the prospect. He wanted to get the fight over with quickly, no matter how many trump cards he had to use. He was tired of this game of cat and mouse. They were in demon territory, and all signs pointed to the gradual remobilization of the race. However, the time left was at least enough for him to leave the valley.

The good thing was that although Huang'er wasn't in a particularly great state, her condition also wasn’t significantly worsening. Sealing away her senses had been the right choice. If he hadn’t done so, it would have been much more likely for her consciousness to have been attacked under the current circumstances. Though Jiang Chen was somewhat worried that he had not seen any traces of the Prince of Shangping along his route, he didn’t let this concern disrupt his thoughts. With Huang'er in tow, he continued moving forward. Now that they were more than halfway across the valley, he could simply press on if the prince refused to show himself. Once past the valley, Jiang Chen had a

much better chance of survival.

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Lu Shinan, on the other hand, had mixed feelings. Though it was good that his liege lord once again possessed a physical body, he felt no sense of contentment. The demon king had given him firm orders to hold Jiang Chen off for three days. Three days? Lu Shinan's heart was aflame. That kid's strength is unfathomable. I don’t even have the confidence to hold him off for six hours! The king has too much faith in me. What should I do?

While he deliberated, Lu Shinan received information from the bone apparitions that Jiang Chen was heading his way. His arrival wouldn’t be immediate, but it would be within fifteen minutes. I have no chance of facing him with brute force alone. Why not use the same trick I used on the Prince of Shangping? Having come to a decision, he immediately carried out his course of action.

Jiang Chen arrived right on time. His consciousness was on the alert as soon as he entered the area. He spotted a man beneath a large tree, appearing to be resting against its trunk. Jiang Chen used his God's Eye to take a closer look. It really was a human cultivator, and someone he was familiar with at that.

"Lu Shinan?" Jiang Chen remembered him quite well. When everyone had been grouping up, the man had approached him in private, but Jiang Chen had refused his offer to team up.

Jiang Chen's approach seemed to surprise the man. Lu Shinan wiped away the blood on his mouth. "Daoist Huang?"

Their reunion in this particular place was very odd. Though the man seemed to be hurt, Jiang Chen had no plans of dropping his guard.

"Daoist Lu, what are you playing at?" Jiang Chen smiled faintly, looking Lu Shinan up and down.

Lu Shinan's face was pale. He grinned helplessly, "What do you

think, friend?"

Jiang Chen had no interest in riddles. His smile remained, but he decided to continue moving forward. He had Huang'er with him, after all.

"Daoist Huang, how is your friend?" Lu Shinan couldn't help but ask.

"Just a little out of sorts," Jiang Chen said. "Thank you for your concern, Daoist Lu, but there's no need to worry."

Lu Shinan wiped at his mouth again. He smile was a bit wry, but it was suffused with an undoubtable sense of sincerity. "Daoist Huang, you really don't want to know how I got hurt?"

Jiang Chen was indifferent. "No, I don't."

Lu Shinan sighed softly. "I treat you like a friend, and this is how you repay me? I wanted to team up earlier, but you refused. Now, I've almost lost my life to the Prince of Shangping because of you. Alas, you're as distant as ever."

"The Prince of Shangping?" Jiang Chen raised an eyebrow. "What do you mean?"

"I randomly encountered the prince just a little while earlier. He was a little flustered and told me that he'd had a big fight with you. He wanted me to help him. I disagreed, of course, but as a result he wanted to use me as a punching bag. Daoist Huang, that Prince of Shangping has surely laid a trap further in. You should be careful."

Jiang Chen was quiet as he looked at Lu Shinan with his God's Eye. He stared at the man for a few seconds before suddenly tossing a pill in his direction. "This is a healing pill. A gift from me."

Lu Shinan laughed ruefully. "Do you really intend on walking into danger alone, Daoist?"

"You don't need to worry about that." Jiang Chen smiled faintly.

There was no way he would partner up with Lu Shinan, regardless of what the man said. He wasn't in the habit of traveling with strangers, nor would he show his back to anyone.

Lu Shinan was frustrated. The Prince of Shangping had been hard to deal with, but the prince had weaknesses. Though the guy in front of him also seemed to have many flaws, Lu Shinan didn't know how to find them. Nothing worked on him. People who didn't have any noticeable desires were detached and aloof. Lu Shinan had no breaching point against someone who wanted nothing from him.

His eyes glittered as he watched the youth disappear from his sight. He couldn't do anything about it. Fight him head on? He didn't think that he was stronger than the Prince of Shangping, and the prince had lost to the kid.

Jiang Chen slowly passed by. When he'd first entered the area, he pretended not to have noticed the surrounding mounds and white flags. His heart, however, was not so still. Someone with a consciousness as strong as Jiang Chen's could easily sense the demonic auras surrounding those fixtures. He could even perceive a bit of the Prince of Shangping's aura in the midst of those strong demonic auras.

Jiang Chen would have long since struck first if he didn't have Huang'er in tow. His intuition told him that Lu Shinan was hiding something. Was being hurt a pretense as well? Jiang Chen couldn't immediately tell. But Lu Shinan himself was definitely problematic, he was sure of that much, at least. Could Lu Shinan be the one who's defected to the demons? Jiang Chen had already confirmed that there was such a traitor amongst the human cultivators. There was no other way that the bone apparitions could have acquired their intel.

He didn't have a clue who it was prior to this. But now, he had a vague inkling of the perfect candidate—Lu Shinan! I assume that the unlucky Prince of Shangping is already dead. Doesn't look like

I'll be able to obtain the formation disk for the eight statues. Too bad...

Jiang Chen wasn't the slightest bit happy at the news. After all, the clandestine threat of the demon race's revival far overshadowed the prince's insignificant plotting. He had the option of spurring on some Goldbiter Rats to seek out traces of demon activity, but there were many underground creatures in the valley. The rats had no advantage. With this all in mind, Jiang Chen decided not to further complicate things. He headed for the valley's exit posthaste.

Though it wasn't exactly safer beyond Myriad Corpse Valley, at least Huang'er wouldn't be negatively affected by the malevolent air. Taking care of her was his first priority. Jiang Chen didn't have the luxury of engaging in any sort of heated battle.

Having been unable to detain Jiang Chen, Lu Shinan was like a cat on a hot tin roof. He had to return to the cave and inform his liege of his failure.

"What, you just let him go like that?!" The demon king was still in the process of absorbing demonic energy. He was greatly upset by the news of Jiang Chen's departure.

"My liege, that kid possesses extraordinary strength. Not even the Prince of Shangping could beat him. I was just worried that... well, it would throw a wrench into our other plans."

King Nineshadows's eyes gleamed, as if deep in thought. "Is that kid really as strong as you say?"

"I'm not really sure. But from what I understood of the prince's words, Shangping suffered at the kid's hand."

The demon king was silent for a moment. "Never mind. It's not worth the risk just for a sage realm kid. If he wants to return the same way he came, he still needs to pass by my Myriad Corpse Valley. I'll have completely infused this body with demonic energy

by then. There will be no escape for him."

Lu Shinan's thirst for Jiang Chen was stronger than others'. "My liege," he couldn't resist interjecting. "If he leaves the valley, he'll be in the Wood Demons' territory. Do you think that they'll give him the chance to return at all?"

The demon king cackled. "That doesn't matter to us. We have to let them have some morsels, right? He's a mere appetizer compared to the emperor realm cultivators' rich feast. You said that there's probably going to be twenty or thirty thousand cultivators this time, no?"

Lu Shinan had nothing to say. He wanted to disagree. He actually thought Jiang Chen was the ideal prize. He didn't want to just say something like that, though. He greatly desired Jiang Chen's belongings. "My liege, isn't it hard to keep twenty or thirty thousand people in place just by ourselves?"

The demon king harrumphed. "Don't worry, I have my ways. This kid is lucky he's here early. My formation is not yet complete. When it is, the valley will be transformed into a living hell. Anyone who goes inside won't be able to make it out again."

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Jiang Chen had been careful along the entire way. He had expected a great struggle, but his expectations were let down. He was already out of Myriad Corpse Valley, but there were no assailants in sight. It was quite fortuitous. Now that they were out of immediate danger, he didn’t bother thinking much more about it. He followed the map another few dozen miles, then unsealed Huang'er's senses.

Huang'er gradually woke up. "Brother Chen, where are we now?"

"Huang'er, even though I sealed your senses away, the malevolent air still found its way into your consciousness." Jiang Chen's expression was worried. "I think we'd better find that

Requiem Wood, and fast."

Huang'er smiled apologetically. "Sorry... my condition is causing so much trouble."

"Why? We're closer than that." Jiang Chen comforted her softly. The land in front of them was perfectly clear. A vast grassy plain stretched off into the distance, and green coalesced into blue on the horizon.

Chapter 890: Chaotic Astral Wind

“There’s a dense primordial forest past this grassland. According to what He Hongshu wrote, the Requiem Wood should be in that forest.” Jiang Chen analyzed the map as he spoke to Huang’er, “Let’s go.”

He vaguely sensed that something was strange. With He Hongshu’s level of cultivation, how had he managed to cross the Thousand Corpse Valley? Could it be that the demon race within the valley had not fully awakened at that time? Despite his skepticism, he currently wasn't in the mood to question how the information had been obtained. As their gazes roamed over the vast grassland before him, Jiang Chen and Huang’er didn't step onto the grass. Instead, they activated their Golden Cicada Wings and flew at a low altitude. To a normal cultivator who had never refined their wings of flight, this much flying would consume large amounts of energy.

Through the Golden Cicada Wings, the energy that Jiang Chen and Huang’er were expending didn't even reach a tenth of what they would have used had they relied on their own energy. As long as they occasionally took some pills to replenish themselves, they wouldn't suffer any side effects at all. However, the air currents within the area were extremely strange. Even as they flew close to the ground, they found it difficult to gain speed. It was as though there was some form of resistance in the air that barred their attempt at passing through the area quickly.

Initially, He Hongshu and his group had alternated between travelling on foot and flying to cross this grassland. They had spent a grand total of two days trekking though this passage and more than a third of their comrades had died. The grassland might appear tranquil, but within the endless, rampant growth of wild grass that had surpassed human height, who knew what was concealed within and below the terrain? What kind of terrifying

existences were lying in wait for them?

First and foremost the marshlands that dotted this grassland were filled with countless traps. From time to time, quagmire whirlpools would mysteriously appear, dragging people down into their depths. As the two of them hovered above the ground, they could see plenty of what was happening below them. Occasionally, they could spy a couple of wind-worn bones lying amidst the grass. There were also the corpses of numerous animals with various astonishing appearances. This place truly brimmed with desolation and isolation.

It wasn’t that the two didn't want to soar higher into the sky, but the higher they went, the stronger the air resistance became. It was as though this patch of grassland had been naturally created to contain a special kind of magic power. The two were more or less stuck to gliding three to four meters above the ground. Of course, even this speed was much faster than travelling on foot.

If they could fly unobstructed for the entire trip, Jiang Chen felt that it would take them less than a day to pass through this large grassland. They glided without obstacles for two hours. Their trip so far had been very quiet—so quiet that he found it rather unfathomable. He was even quite uneasy about the entire situation. Throughout the trip, he had felt that there was something oddly suspicious about this unsettling quietness. By now, the defensive power granted by the Imperial Advent Defense Talisman had already disappeared entirely. Hence, Jiang Chen had no choice but proceed with the utmost caution.

“When Brother Ji gave me the Imperial Advent Defense Talisman, he said that I could use it twice. I’ve already activated it once so there should be one more use. I can’t use it so freely now. If I use it, I’ll be left with almost no defensive resources.” When Jiang Chen thought of this, he felt a flash of intense hatred towards the Prince of Shangping. If it hadn’t been for that man’s attack, he wouldn’t have wasted the Imperial Advent Talisman’s

first use like this! Nevertheless, this was all in the past. By now, that fellow had probably already passed on. No matter how much Jiang Chen might hate him, it wouldn’t amount to anything. The two people continued their flight with rapt attention, their five senses carefully attuned to their surroundings.

Eh? Suddenly, a rustling noise floated past Jiang Chen’s ears. At first, he even thought he had misheard. But this noise grew louder and louder. However, when he glanced around, he didn’t see anything unusual. Ever since Jiang Chen had refined his Ear of the Zephyr, his sense of hearing had never failed him under any circumstance. This sound reminded him of a silkworm gnawing on a leaf, distinct and easily distinguishable. He listened carefully and sensed that the sound was emitted from all directions. Although it didn't sound like anything too serious, it still filled Jiang Chen with a kind of uneasiness.

Screech! Suddenly, an ear-piercing noise split the air. From high above the clouds, an enormous black shadow careened downwards. It was an enormous eagle! It flapped its wings in alarm as it circled the sky above the grassland, its eyes filled with panic.

Indeed, panic! Jiang Chen could see extreme anxiety in this enormous eagle’s eyes. One, two, then numerous ones...

Amidst the clouds, numerous birds appeared out of nowhere in the sky above them, screeching sharply in alarm and fear, as if the end of the world was imminent. The first huge eagle seemed to have made up its mind. With a violent dive, it abruptly plummeted towards the grassland below.

Suddenly, a lightning fast green shadow flashed within the grass before a gaping, fanged maw opened wide and swallowed the eagle whole. Upon closer inspection, Jiang Chen realized that it was actually an enormous green python. What the... it had concealed itself so masterfully! He had came so close to it, but he hadn’t detected the hidden presence of the python at all.

“What in the world is this?” Jiang Chen was dumbfounded at the scene before his eyes. The spirit birds in the air seemed to have thrown all caution to the wind as they shot towards the grass like dumplings.

Every kind of creature born in the wild had its own natural territory. Birds like these usually only hunted for food in the grasslands. They didn't actually make the grasslands their homes. But at this moment, they had completely ignored this fact. They hadn’t even consider that they might be barging into the territory of some other creature. They dived towards the ground in a flurry. When the predators on the ground saw this phenomenon, they hunted the birds continuously, devouring them one after another. But even so, tens of thousands of birds continued to shoot towards the grass. It was as if they didn't want to spend a second longer in the air.

Jiang Chen and Huang’er watched all this happen with wide eyes and gaping mouths. And at this moment, the noise by Jiang Chen’s ear grew even louder, crescendoing almost instantly into a tidal-like roar. As he gazed into the horizon with his God’s Eye, he discovered that a charcoal-colored air current was flowing all around them, heading towards them at a lightning-like pace. The momentum behind that air current was actually ten times fiercer than the surging ocean tides! In the distance, there were some birds who had not dodged in time. Their feathers scattered wildly into the air, their flesh exploding into bloody fragments as they were ground into fine powder by the vicious currents.

“This is bad!” Something seemed to have occured to Jiang Chen as he grabbed Huang’er and buried into the ground without a second thought. At the same time, he used his Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice to open a path before them, escorting Huang’er deeper into the ground. In his current situation, even if some emperor realm beast were lying below ground, Jiang Chen still wouldn’t retreat.

Uwuwuwuwu! The terrifying air currents swallowed the surrounding clouds as they moved in all directions, gathering together. With a ghastly howl, the currents sucked away at the space around them like an unrestrained wave. Jiang Chen had already pierced more than three hundred meters into the ground by that time. Even so, he could still feel the fearsome tremors that wracked the ground around them, as if the earth itself would split apart at any moment and the sky would collapse from above.

Huang'er had seen and experienced many things in her life but she had also gone deathly pale. She whispered in a low voice to Jiang Chen, "Brother Chen, what is going on?"

Jiang Chen's expression was grave. "This is chaotic astral wind. It tears apart even the tallest of mountains in its way into tiny pieces. If our flesh and blood were to touch it, we'd be instantly ground into fine dust."

"Chaotic astral wind?" It was the first time Huang'er had heard this name. She was temporarily shocked. As someone from Myriad Abyss Island, everything she had seen and experienced throughout her lifetime was of the highest tier within the Divine Abyss Continent. But she had never ever seen this chaotic astral wind. Conversely, it was Jiang Chen, a boy born in the backwater Eastern Kingdom, who knew what this terrifying thing was. A wisp of gratification floated within Huang'er's heart. "It seems that Brother Chen has indeed awakened many memories that don't belong to you. Could it be that you're really the reincarnation of a celestial from your previous life?"

The wind ravaged the area around for a few hours before it showed any signs of dissipating. However, Jiang Chen was in no hurry to leave. Even if the gale was weakening, it still wasn't something that a human body could defend against. Nonetheless, he felt something was strange about this. They were in the desolate wildlands. Where in the world could this chaotic astral wind have come from?

Normally speaking, chaotic astral wind was created by a spatial crack. When a plane shattered or if a crack appeared in the space between two planes, a powerful chaotic astral wind would be generated. But in the desolate wildlands, how could there be such a powerful shattering of a realm?

The world above them might be in the process of being demolished by the astral wind, but that didn't mean that the area below ground was safe either. When Jiang Chen activated his God's Eye and surveyed his surroundings, he sensed the approach of at least four to five enemies from all around them. "Such powerful spirit creatures live even in such a deep underground crevice. No wonder so many people lost their lives in this grassland. This is hell on earth."

Fortunately, these powerful creatures which eyed them hungrily didn't seem overwhelmingly strong individually. Hence, Jiang Chen didn't fear them. Most importantly, these sources of power that eyed them so covetously were also naturally cautious. He didn't provoke them. He only wanted to wait for the astral wind to disappear before leaving this underground place. If it was anywhere else, he might have considered travelling underground. But this underground area was different from all others. Here, the quagmire around them was extraordinarily sticky, making it difficult to travel quickly. Moreover, there were countless spirit creatures in the ravine below ground. If Jiang Chen wished to travel underground, just dealing with these creatures alone would be enough to give him a headache.

At this time, one of the underground creatures could no longer restrain itself. With a menacing bellow, it shot towards Jiang Chen like a drill. It was incredibly fast, as though the stickiness of the quagmire in this abyss had no effect on it at all. However, just because Jiang Chen's movements were impeded didn't mean that he had no means to deal with the situation. With a flash of the Featherflight Mirror, a beam of light shot towards the creature. It

instantly slowed down, but it had already been engulfed by the countless vines of the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice.

Fortunately for it, Jiang Chen had no wish to offend these underground dwellers. With a careless swish of his lotus, he tossed the spirit creature aside. Simultaneously, he grabbed Huang'er, straightened his body and flew up towards the surface. The astral wind had dissipated and their surroundings regained their usual tranquility. Only, when they emerged from the ground, the scene that greeted their eyes was vastly different. Those tufts of tall grass had been completely shredded. Numerous spirit beasts had been wrangled into tiny bits of bloody flesh that littered the entire area. Truly, this was the widespread aftermath of a catastrophe.

Jiang Chen sighed lightly. A trace of fear lingered in his heart. If he had been even one step slower just now, he could have been wiped out as well. "As expected, you run into trouble every ten steps you take here in the desolate wildlands. We can't let our guard down at all." Jiang Chen calmed himself. He exchanged a glance with Huang'er before they proceeded forward.

Chapter 891: The Monster and the Altar

The chaotic astral wind seemed to have disrupted the natural order of the grassland. This actually made the rest of Jiang Chen's journey proceed even more smoothly. After a period of journeying, his God's Eye caught sight of the end of the grassland. He was delighted. "The disruption caused by the chaotic astral wind actually cleared many of the dangers we would have otherwise encountered along the way. Who'd have thought that we could travel so unimpeded? I can see the end. We should be out of the grassland in less than an hour."

He glanced at the sky. It was already close to dusk. It would be ideal if they could reach the other side of the grassland before night fell. Although day or night didn't make a difference to most cultivators, spirit creatures would become unusually active in the dark. To Jiang Chen, this wasn't necessarily a good thing. Luckily, they were able to increase their pace after the passage of the chaotic astral wind.

They finally passed this vast grassland just moments before sunset. As Jiang Chen stood at the edge of the grassland, he could see a small river meander across. Opposite him was a patch of dense forest. From what he could see on the map, this should be the place that He Hongshu had indicated. He glanced up at the sky—it was almost dark. As he was unwilling to take any more risks, he decided to set up camp on the riverbank and leave the search for the Requiem Wood to tomorrow. The closer he got to the Requiem Wood, the calmer he felt. After summoning Long Xiaoxuan and instructing him to keep watch, he entered a deep state of meditation.

With the dragon guarding them, Jiang Chen felt more at ease. The wood demon parasites might be strong, but they were completely ineffective against Long Xiaoxuan. Dragons excreted a specific kind of saliva that naturally repelled those parasites. In

addition to Long Xiaoxuan, Jiang Chen also ordered the mint ginseng to go underground, in case any underground spirit creatures were to suddenly attack them. With such meticulous arrangements made, a few small issues popped up during the night, but nothing particularly dangerous happened. When morning arrived, the two opened their eyes and welcomed the light of a new day. In particular, Huang'er was extremely lively. Today, her eyes seemed to carry a different kind of quality. This was a new day, and perhaps the beginning of her new life.

"Let's go." Jiang Chen made a few adjustments before stepping into the dense forest. After moving just a few hundred meters inwards, most of the sky had already become obscured. The rays of the morning sun were strong, but they couldn't penetrate the dense foliage of this mysterious forest. The deeper they went, the darker it became. However, this had little effect on Jiang Chen because his God's Eye and Evil Golden Eye could see through everything. Even in the dark, he could see everything as clear as day. From time to time, a few noisy wails would resound in the distance, adding a trace of eeriness to the otherwise quiet forest. Occasionally, an ear-splitting roar could be heard as a wild beast displayed its power.

His heart was as tranquil as still water. These kinds of things couldn't obstruct him from progressing forward. "Huang'er, don't worry. My intuition is telling me that the Requiem Wood should be in this forest. As long as it appears, I can definitely obtain it, no matter what it takes."

Huang'er remained silent. She only gently nodded as she held on tightly to Jiang Chen's hand, as if afraid that by letting go, she would lose everything. Suddenly, something pricked at Jiang Chen's consciousness. He instantly leaned to a side as an enormous banana leaf pressed down on him from above. He huffed coldly and brandished his Featherflight Mirror. That green curtain had been careening towards him rapidly, but the Featherflight Mirror

promptly halved its speed. The two of them took advantage of the plant's delayed approach to leap to a safer area. Only, they couldn't jump that far away because they had already been surrounded by at least ten such plants.

One by one, like raging bulls, they violently extended green leaves that billowed in the wind, creating layers upon layers of a green canopy that enclosed Jiang Chen and Huang'er within its center. Jiang Chen was furious, and he immediately summoned his Goldbiter Rats. "Ole Gold, let's see what you guys can do!"

There was almost nothing in the heavenly planes that Goldbiter Rats couldn't gnaw through. At Jiang Chen's command, numerous rats surged madly towards those ten green plant-like existences, like prisoners seeing the light of freedom for the first time. Crunch crunch... Ear-piercing gnawing sounds reverberated from all around them. The Goldbiter Rats' bite was definitely renowned throughout the realms. In just a short while, they had gnawed through the ten plant-like creatures without leaving a single piece behind. Instead of recalling the Rats, Jiang Chen summoned Long Xiaoxuan instead. "Brother Long, we need some of your saliva to cleanse these rats so that the Wood Demon Parasites don't attack them."

Jiang Chen might not fear the Wood Demon Parasites, but he didn't dare to let his guard down after entering this place either. Not only did the Wood Demons have parasites at their disposal, but they also possessed a gamut of other bizarre tactics as well. However, their parasites were undoubtedly one of the most intractable problems to deal with.

"Ole Gold, lead your descendants well. Don't wander anywhere and listen to my commands." Since they had already entered the desolate wildlands, Jiang Chen didn't need to be that cautious. He could do as he wished. With the ferocious Long Xiaoxuan and Goldbiter Rats clearing a path for them, the number of presumptuous creatures along the way significantly decreased. It

was to the extent that some powerful spirit creatures were completely intimidated by Long Xiaoxuan and didn't dare to misbehave at all. This was precisely the effect that Jiang Chen wished to achieve.

When He Hongshu had initially entered this forest, he had lost his way. Hence, the area where he had discovered the Requiem Wood was not clearly marked on his map. Nonetheless, He Hongshu had mentioned that there was something terrifying in this mysterious jungle, called the Scarlet Dawn Wasp. This kind of wasp reproduced extremely quickly. Once someone was stung by one, their body would start to burn like liquid fire before violently exploding within an hour. Even the gods couldn't save the victim. Back when He Hongshu's party was in this forest, they had unfortunately run into these Scarlet Dawn Wasps. As a result, many of them had perished. Hence, Jiang Chen was especially cautious and didn't dare to barge forwards recklessly.

"Young master Chen, we discovered a large supply of sky rank spirit herbs in front!" The Goldbiter Rat King suddenly ran back excitedly, reporting this piece of good news to Jiang Chen.

"Take me there." It wasn't that surprising to come across sky rank spirit herbs in this place. Nonetheless, Jiang Chen thought of the numerous stalks of sky rank spirit herbs that had lined his path when he had first entered the desolate wildlands. However, those sky rank spirit herbs looked problematic to him. As he followed the Goldbiter Rat King a few hundred meters forward, a vast area filled with countless stalks of spirit herbs stretched before his eyes, as though someone had planted them there. Moreover, they were indeed all sky rank spirit herbs. Jiang Chen combined his God's Eye and Evil Golden Eye to survey the area, but couldn't see anything out of the ordinary.

"These sky rank spirit herbs should be real." Jiang Chen confirmed this once again before he decided that these sky rank spirit herbs should not pose any problems. "Ole Gold, you can take

half for your clan. Brother Long, take your pick and leave me the rest.”

Long Xiaoxuan hummed softly in thought before he picked some out, but he didn't take much. Jiang Chen swept the entirety of what remained into his possession. The Goldbiter Rats also attained massive benefits as well. After this point, however, Jiang Chen had no further plans to let the rats mess around outside. He summoned all of them back. He had a premonition that although these sky rank spirit herbs were genuine, there could be some unimaginable dangers coming for them later after reaping these sweet benefits.

The demon race was extremely underhanded in the way they conducted things. Jiang Chen certainly didn't believe that the demon race would simply allow human cultivators into their territory so that they could share their wealth with them The appearance of these sky rank spirit herbs in this place could simply be bait. Nonetheless, even if they were bait, there was no way Jiang Chen could turn back. He proceeded forwards, walking side by side with Huang’er. Long Xiaoxuan had succeeded in transforming himself into a skinny youth and was currently leading the way. From behind, his figure looked extremely cold and aloof.

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In a deep ravine a few dozen miles from Jiang Chen, a bizarre-looking creature slowly crawled out from with a large white cocoon. That strange creature’s body was covered with numerous oily bubbles that appeared extremely nauseating. The loose flesh over its multi-colored body writhed. Even looking at it was enough to give one chills of fear. After it emerged from the large cocoon, it crawled forwards with a startling speed, as though each feeler on its body ended in a sucker. After it crawled for some distance, it reached a neglected altar. This altar was covered with withered dead leaves and the area around it was incomparably desolate.

Nonetheless, it emanated a kind of immense power that caused even the monstrous creature to tiptoe around as it approached. The creature came to a stop in front of the altar.

“Yes, yes. Not bad, not bad.” From the center of the altar emanated a voice. “You’ve broken through your cocoon for the seventh time. It looks like you’re not far from your true birth.”

The monster let out a few grunts, as though it was reporting something to the voice on the altar. The voice on the altar asked in shock, “What did you say? The little ones that you birthed last time were destroyed by someone?”

The monster waved its feelers continuously in the air, looking rather angry.

“Strange, that’s strange. Tens of thousands of years have passed and yet, there are still humans able to kill Wood Demon Parasites?” The voice on the altar also seemed to be filled with doubt. However, moments later it sighed, “Perhaps it was an accident. Moreover, your spawn are not yet strong enough. It’s possible that someone killed them. Do not be disheartened. With every evolution of yours, the spawn you produce become more and more powerful in both offensive and defensive capabilities. Now, simply wait for enough hosts to wander in and bring your spawn out of the desolate wildlands, hahaha... Us Wood Demons will finally lead the glorious return of the demon race!” The voice on the altar was filled with triumph. Then it suddenly seemed to realize its situation as it sighed lightly, “It’s a pity that the ten great generals of my Wood Demon bloodline all died in battle. My own body was destroyed and soul sealed. I can only wait for you to break through nine times and rescue me from here.”

“Uwuwuwu.” That monstrous creature nodded incessantly, grimacing towards the altar, as though it had been completely moved.

“There’s no need for you to be emotional. We have waited ten

thousand years. What more is waiting a little longer? Today, I sense that a large number of human cultivators have entered the desolate wildlands. Go and warn King Nineshadows to control his appetite. Otherwise, when I leave this place, I will force him to spit out everything he’s eaten with interest.”

That monstrous creature didn't seem to have fully awakened. It seemed only to understand one thing—that the being sealed into this altar was its master, and that the orders of its master prevailed over all else.

Chapter 892: Wood Demon Parasite Progenitor

“Go and take care.” The voice on the altar spoke as if entrusting a task to its child. “No need to worry about me.”

That monster still seemed somewhat unwilling to leave. It was like a small child completely attached to its parents. It nuzzled the stone stairs around the altar. Suddenly, the voice on the altar made a sound of surprise. “Wood Parasite, go quickly. Someone seems to have broken into your territory.” The voice on the altar seemed a little worried. “Go, go now. Watch over the Requiem Wood. Don’t let anyone touch it! If I’m to reconstruct my body, I need the Requiem Wood. Otherwise, even if I manage to break out of these constraints, I’ll always be flawed.”

“Uwuwuwu.” When that monster heard its master’s instructions, it seemed to realize that things were urgent. Although it was still reluctant, it resolved itself to turn around.

Sealed within the altar, the spirit of King Woodbranch was filled with anxiety. This piece of Requiem Wood was the key for him to recover his soul after breaking free. If he lost the Requiem Wood, his soul would never recover to the peak of its power. The thought of his servant, the wood demon parasite, abated his emotions a little. There are thousands upon thousands of parasites protecting the Requiem Wood. Anyone who trespasses will surely die.

Furthermore, the parasites were not the only line of defense. A number of poison formations, the specialty of Wood Demons, had been carefully laid about the tree as well. The death of would-be explorers was assured.

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Jiang Chen's eyes stared straight ahead, his attention caught by a tree seedling. It was as delicate as coral and shimmered a vibrant

green hue. From a distance, it looked like a wonder of nature. Any observer would be awestruck by the sight.

"Brother Chen, is that the Requiem Wood?" Huang'er was dazzled by the tree's beauty.

"Yes, that's what we're looking for." This Requiem Wood is pretty large. "It only grows one ring every ten thousand years, so this one should be at least a hundred thousand-some-odd years old. It's still fairly young when compared to other members of its species, though."

He was no stranger to the Requiem Wood. It was common to see Requiem Woods that were millions of years old back in his previous life, within the heavenly planes. Of course, a hundred-thousand-year-old wood was enough for Huang'er's Generation Binding Curse. Carefully examining the tree, Jiang Chen didn't rush into things. There were several oddities in its vicinity. A casual glance didn’t seem to reveal anything peculiar, but someone with his experience knew better. Every kind of plant near the tree was deadly, and they were placed in such a way as to form an enormous poison formation. The entire setup was very complicated.

Most importantly, the Requiem Wood was in the middle of a deep pool. If Jiang Chen wanted the spirit herb, he'd have to wade in. The muddied waters looked peaceful on the surface, but countless wood demon parasites swirled beneath. A casual estimate numbered them in the millions. The parasites were everywhere. There were even some near their feet, though Jiang Chen had no intentions to tell Huang'er about them. They were scared of the scent on their bodies anyways, and wouldn’t attack them.

Jiang Chen looked at the wood for a few more moments, then tossed his hesitation aside. "Huang'er, step back a little and wait for me outside. I'm going in to get it."

"How're you going to get it, Brother Chen? Are you going to take

a branch from its body?"

"No," Jiang Chen shook his head. "Why leave nice things behind since we've finally arrived? We'll uproot the entire tree, of course." He smiled strangely. Jiang Chen knew all about the properties of the Requiem Wood. It was very useful for demons to use in refining their own souls. Cutting off a branch inflicted minimal damage. Completely uprooting the tree was much more devastating.

He wasted no time and glided towards the Requiem Wood with his Cicada Wings. As he did so, he summoned his new spirit creature. Its tentacles could do the heavy lifting that was needed to actually uproot the tree. As a plant creature, the mint ginseng wasn't necessarily scared of wood demon parasites. Nevertheless, Jiang Chen took precautions to bathe it in Dragonwhisker Water. This way, it would be completely unhindered by the wood demon parasites teeming in the pool below. Meanwhile, Jiang Chen hovered in the air as backup.

The ginseng’s countless appendages grabbed at the Requiem Wood's roots. The tentacles surged with power, their green muscles popping forth like countless arms. They pulled upwards with a mighty strength, brimming with endless vigor. Up! It took several hundred of them only a few pulls to uproot the spirit herb in its entirety. Water pooled in to fill the empty space.

Rumble! Now that the Requiem Wood had been touched, the poison formations about it began to fiercely attack. However, they had very little effect on a plant creature like the mint ginseng. Jiang Chen's added help was only icing on the cake. In the wildlands, poison formations were only really useful against human cultivators. On the outskirts of the wildlands, if the average cultivator were to even slightly brush against one, they would die several times over.

"We did it!" Jiang Chen was overjoyed at the sight of the uprooted tree. He had the lotus take over carrying the Requiem

Wood, and placed the huge tree directly into his storage ring, dirt, roots, and all. "Let's go!"

Recalling the ginseng without delay, Jiang Chen turned to leave. Suddenly, jets of air streamed out from beneath the bottom of the pool. Formed by innumerable parasites, they swept towards every part of Jiang Chen's body. In the next moment, a terrifying creature bit at his feet. He was greatly shocked by the attack. He slowed the monster's offense with a sweep of the mirror, then shook his body to call upon his Pentecolor Divine Swords. Drawn simultaneously, the five blades sliced towards the monster's body in five streaks of divine radiance.

Clang! Savage streams of sparks flew as the swords were stopped short by the monster's carapace. Like metal on metal, neither could damage the other.

"What?!" Jiang Chen was shocked yet again. The Pentecolor Divine Swords had been personally given to him by Emperor Peafowl! And yet they couldn't even scratch this monster, much less break through its armor. He hadn’t used any special sword techniques, but it was difficult to believe that weapons of the Pentecolor Divine Swords’ caliber couldn't even leave a mark on the monster’s body. Just how hard could its carapace be?

Still astonished, Jiang Chen had no desire to keep fighting. He pointed several times at the jets of parasites with vehemence. Air streams of Galaxy Slashes divided and disintegrated the bugs within. The monster looked bewildered that Jiang Chen was able to cease the flood of parasites. Roaring loudly, it made a mad dash for the human. Without the Featherflight Mirror's intervention, the monster would have long reached Jiang Chen already.

With another wave of the mirror, Jiang Chen retreated out of the pool's boundaries. "We're leaving, now." He said to Huang'er in a low voice. She didn't miss a beat at Jiang Chen's panic. She instantly gathered that the monster was a difficult adversary. Placing Jiang Chen's hand in her own, she crushed an escape

glyph, and the two of them disappeared on the spot with a flash of light.

The monster roared again and again when it saw the humans depart. They'd taken the Requiem Wood! Its cries shook the very heavens, and its fierce eyes radiated a horrific light. Rather than the Requiem Wood, it was as if the monster's own child had been taken. After a few seconds of observation, its body halted, then completely disappeared.

The escape glyph's light subsided, and Jiang Chen and Huang'er landed in a different place. The glyph had taken them more than a hundred miles out, which was hopefully enough to evade the monster's pursuit. However, the air beside them began to ripple before they could even catch their breaths. The monster tunneled out from nothingness, as if moving directly through time and space. Its eyes welled up with blood, and it thrust towards Jiang Chen with another angry roar. The monster had an almost frightening ferocity. There wasn't much that Jiang Chen could do. He had to continuously shine the Featherflight Mirror on the monster to curb its advance. His continual points towards the monster yielded no results. Try as he might, the power of his Galaxy Slash left not a single scar, whether he cut against its head or body. All his efforts went down the drain.

"What an abomination," Jiang Chen cursed under his breath. He summoned the lotus, which sent out hundreds of ground-creeping vines towards the monster.

Pfft pftt pfft! The vines wrapped around the monster tightly, plant whipping against scale. It coiled around the monster, attempting to constrict it to death. No matter how much force the lotus used, however, the monster didn't seem to feel a thing. Noticing this, the lotus switched to fighting with fire. Incalculable lotuses shot out witchfire in an attempt to scorch the monster. The monster was unimpressed. The witchfire was hot enough to melt metal and stone instantly, but it barely tickled the monster.

Since fire didn't work, Jiang Chen swapped to ice. A frost colder than primordial glaciers enclosed the monster within. With a wild shake of its body, the monster struggled free of its icy prison. It resumed its charge towards Jiang Chen, howling in rage. Given the situation, Jiang Chen wasn't entirely sure what to do. Swords didn't hurt it, and neither did the elements.

Beckoning to his magnetic golden mountain, Jiang Chen smashed it into the monster dozens of times. Like an iron hammer against a tortoiseshell, the creature beneath the carapace remained undamaged despite the numerous blows crashing into it.

"What kind of vile creature is this?!" The youth couldn't understand it. It was quite possible that only great emperor realm cultivators' attacks could pierce the creature's armor. Weaker techniques were helpless against its thick, meaty hide. Jiang Chen was entirely lost on what to do next. However, the mountain did exert a certain amount of pressure on the beast, which struggled beneath its weight. Because of this, Jiang Chen had some time to observe it more closely.

The monster's entire body was covered with scales, and it had pores as small as needles. A glittering crystalline substance exuded out of those pores. Upon closer inspection, the substance was actually a mass of wood demon parasites bunched together.

A new possibility materialized in Jiang Chen's head. "Wood demon parasites, huh... is this monster actually their progenitor?!"

Chapter 893: Aura of the Demon King

This scene startled Jiang Chen quite a bit. He'd accidentally stumbled across the true progenitor of the wood demon parasites! It was the culprit for the parasites' infinite plague. If he could kill this monster, the parasite's true progenitor, then the source of the plague would be cut off. Though parasites elsewhere could still reproduce, it wouldn't be hard to exterminate them. The reproductive ability of this parasite progenitor was incomparable to all others—none of its children could possibly match it. This strengthened Jiang Chen's resolve to kill the monster. Unfortunately, he had already played most of his cards.

The only thing he had left was the restriction of his empyrean dwelling. A restriction made by an empyrean cultivator should theoretically kill this parasite progenitor with ease. However, he only had two uses of it left. Jiang Chen didn't want to use them up so casually.

A thought suddenly popped into Jiang Chen's mind. Wood demon parasites had two natural enemies: Fire of Firstdawn and Dragonwhisker Water. Didn't he have a fresh supply of the latter on hand? He conjured Long Xiaoxuan up with a snap of his fingers. "Brother Long, only your spit can contain this monster. I'll leave it up to you."

Long Xiaoxuan shot a sidelong glance at the ugly abomination, not bothering to conceal his disgust. With a curl of his body, he revealed his true form. A sneeze resounded in the sky. Countless jets of Dragonwhisker Water scattered towards the monster like a thousand needles. Truly, everything in nature had a natural enemy.

The monster that Jiang Chen had used so many methods in vain on instantly began to writhe in pain when doused with the water. Plumes of smoke sizzled upwards from the places on its body where the water had made contact with. Long Xiaoxuan

unrelentlessly followed up with another sneeze. As more Dragonwhisker Water began to seep in, the monster's armor began to melt. Many marks of severe damage appeared on its carapace. The monster itself shrieked loudly in pain. However, the power of the magnetic golden mountain and the endless reflections of the Featherflight Mirror slowed the beast twice over. Its speed restricted, it could only move at a crawl.

Scorched by the Dragonwhisker Water, its wounds only became more severe with the passage of time. So, too, did the intensity of its shrieks. Jiang Chen was unmoved. The parasite progenitor didn't look fully evolved. Things wouldn't have proceeded so smoothly otherwise, even with the Dragonwhisker Water. Calling upon the Pentecolor Divine Swords once more, he readied to strike while his enemy was weak.

In this crucial moment, two terrifying presences rushed through the air, hurtling towards Jiang Chen and Long Xiaoxuan without ceremony. Alarmed, Jiang Chen hurriedly recalled the magnetic golden mountain, placing it in front of his and Long Xiaoxuan's bodies to block the attack. The two presences smashed into the mountain with a resounding boom. The treasure was shaken by the impact, its golden light flickering.

"Solidified... aura? Is this the aura of a great emperor?" Jiang Chen had fought with emperor realm cultivators before. Though the presence of such a cultivator was fairly strong, there was no way that it could be focused into such a potent attack. Not daring to fight further, the wood demon parasite progenitor seized the opportunity to flee. Tunneling into the air, it vanished without a trace.

Jiang Chen tried to find it again using his God's Eye, but it had completely vanished. He spat on the ground in disgust. How unfortunate! Without those two presences, he could definitely have killed the monster. But that was all conjecture. The two presences had been quite extraordinary. Though their source was

unknown, he nevertheless felt threatened.

“Are there great emperor realm demons in this forest?” Jiang Chen didn’t want to be reckless. Now that he had the Requiem Wood, there was no need to stick around. The heavy injuries that the parasite progenitor had sustained would take a while to heal. On the other hand, the sudden attack cast a shadow over his heart. He couldn’t muster up the courage to explore further. He had what he came for—there was no need to dally. He couldn’t defeat the entire demon race by himself, after all. Resolving to leave, he shot back towards the outskirts, Huang'er in tow.

He wasn’t unwilling to explore further in, but he was more concerned about the possible pursuit from a great emperor realm demon. However, Jiang Chen was guessing that something was impeding the demon’s movements. It wouldn’t have attacked with aura alone otherwise. If it had come personally, he would’ve had no chance of victory without using his empyrean dwelling’s restriction.

Emperor Peafowl was evidence enough for that. Jiang Chen felt powerless before the man, even though Emperor Peafowl had only been a great emperor for three thousand years. Any reawakening great emperor realm demon was at least a hundred thousand years old, and thus likely to be stronger rather than weaker than Veluriyam’s emperor. If an entity like that decided to pursue him, Jiang Chen didn’t fancy his chances to put up a fight. These considerations only cemented his desire to leave.

After an extended period of travel, Jiang Chen finally returned to the boundary between the forest and grassland. By now, the sun was going down again. He didn’t want to travel by night, so he cautiously made camp in the borderlands, all the while worried about the great emperor realm demon. The night was uneventful, however. There were no signs that a demon was on his trail at all. It assured Jiang Chen that the demon did indeed have mobility problems. His theft of the Requiem Wood was a great loss for the

demon race. There was no other reason that a demon as strong as it would just let him go. It could only be that the demon had no way of personally hunting him down.

Spending the night worrying, Jiang Chen departed at the dawn of the second day. He only had one thought in mind now—to leave the wildlands. The goal of his journey had not been to investigate the demon race's activities, but rather, to obtain the Requiem Wood, which was already safely within his grasp. His own mission was already complete. Having experienced the chaotic astral winds once before, the plains weren't as scary as they previously seemed. Many strong creatures had died to the natural disaster, so Jiang Chen was met with noticeably less resistance. Besides of the winds' ravaging, perhaps it was Jiang Chen's own might that intimidated the stronger creatures of the plains. He traveled through the grasslands in less than a day.

He didn't let his guard down once he was out though. Just because he'd left the Wood Demons' territory didn't mean that he was out of the figurative woods. Myriad Corpse Valley wasn't a place that Jiang Chen enjoyed dawdling in, either, but it was squarely on his way back. Thankfully, the valley wasn't nearly as vast as the grasslands geographically. If Jiang Chen proceeded at the same speed, he could pass through in only about two hours. There was no way around it. Whether he wanted to enter or leave, he had to go through Myriad Corpse Valley.

"From what I recall, it seemed like the Prince of Shangping died in this valley. Now that it's been three days, I wonder how many more have met the same fate?" Jiang Chen shook his head to himself. He was very upset by Lu Shinan's defection to the demon race. It wasn't hard to imagine the huge losses the cultivators on this excursion would suffer thanks to the man's act of betrayal. The death of the prince, for one, had to be related.

Once deceived, it was likely that most other cultivators would die to Lu Shinan as well. Lu Shinan had such an innocent appearance,

too. He was very good at acting. If Jiang Chen didn't naturally dislike people like him, he could have been deceived as well.

……

"Hmm?" Patrolling bone apparitions had brought him back an important piece of news, but Lu Shinan found it hard to believe. Jiang Chen came back! "Did that kid get the short end of the stick somewhere further in? Did he fail to pass through the grasslands, and that's why he came back?" Jiang Chen's unexpected return naturally made Lu Shinan very happy. Three days had passed since the youth's departure, and the demon king had wanted him to hold Jiang Chen back from advancing further. Although he didn't succeed at the task, Jiang Chen's return was quite opportune and was essentially a second chance for him.

"Great news, my liege. The kid is on his way back here. I don't think he passed through the grasslands." Lu Shinan relayed the information excitedly to his lord.

"On his way back?" King Nineshadows was extremely surprised. "I thought you said he was strong. How strong can he be if he didn't even make it through the grasslands?"

"My liege, perhaps he has a special reason?" Lu Shinan had an intense interest in Jiang Chen, far surpassing his interest in any other cultivator.

The demon king didn't care. "You don't need to pay attention to the kid. You should keep a closer eye on the things I told you to do instead. How many cultivators have come into this valley in the last three days?"

"Heh heh, we've had a good harvest in these last three days. At least three thousand cultivators had their souls sucked out by my lord's Soulreaver Banner. They're now your loyal corpse puppets. Two thousand more have been poisoned by Demonshade Flowers. They'll become corpse puppets sooner or later."

“That only accounts for five thousand, yes? I thought you said there were twenty or thirty thousand?”

“It’s only been three days. As time goes on, more cultivators will surely make their way in here,” Lu Shinan chuckled. “Moreover, there are already three emperor realm cultivators trapped by my liege’s demonic formation. Though they’re still putting up a fight, they’ll succumb in due time.”

The demon king laughed as well. “I am not capable enough to have set this demonic formation. It is merely a geographical benefit. The land here contains a primordial demonic formation, refined by a great emperor of the Shadow Demons. It’s been a hundred thousand years since then. I’ve only repaired the formation to a third of its former effectiveness. If His Majesty were to awaken and command the formation personally, capturing even a couple of Titled Great Emperors would be a piece of cake.” The demon king cackled proudly. He was especially pleased about what he’d just said.

“My liege, you have received a true legacy from the primordial era. Given enough time, I think it's quite possible for my lord to become the next Shadow Demon Emperor.” Lu Shinan was particularly well-versed at flattery.

“Hah, you know me well. How about this, I’ll let you take three thousand bone apparitions with you to block off that kid. If you can get him to come before the Soulreaver Banner, all the better.”

“Yes, your servant will do so immediately.” Lu Shinan was overjoyed.

Chapter 894: Fighting Lu Shinan

Lu Shinan was fully focused on robbing Jiang Chen of his possessions. Treasures strong enough to overwhelm the Prince of Shangping had to be extraordinary! He was someone with ambition, having taken shelter under the demon race's wing because he had a reached a bottleneck in his cultivation. He knew he couldn't ever become the strongest of the strong. Thus, he had taken a road less traveled—selling his soul was no object, as long as the demon race could be the strong backer he needed. It was also the reason for Lu Shinan's unscrupulous nature.

Upon entering Myriad Corpse Valley, Jiang Chen's first observation was that the malevolent air was even denser than it had been three days prior.

"Such a big change in such a short amount of time. The corrupt influence of the demon race is becoming more and more evident. The Wood Demons, the Shadow Demons... I wonder how many other branches are stirring?" He was greatly saddened by the discovery. As the factions within the human domain were still at one another's throats, the demon race was already roiling with restlessness. They were ready to make a resurgence any day now. The human domain was in no condition to engage in a battle of life and death with the demon race.

Jiang Chen couldn't spare the effort to think much more. He only wanted to leave this horrible place and find a safer area so that he could remove Huang'er's Generation Binding Curse. His road wouldn't be an easy one. After fifteen minutes, Jiang Chen noticed numerous throngs of cultivators. He could see many walking by on his road of return. There was only one path, so it was natural to spot them.

"How come there are so many of them?" Jiang Chen frowned. "They're not among the original five hundred that entered with me, hmm? Are there more who came in from the entrance in the

outside valley?”

The more he thought about it, the odder he found the situation to be. These cultivators were clearly at varying degrees of strength. Some were even mere origin realm cultivators. The original five hundred cultivators had definitely been stronger than this level. A problem with the entrance was the only explanation. More cultivators must have entered this awful place.

Jiang Chen grieved for them. They thought that there were untold riches here. How could they possibly know that deathtraps were all around them? There were treasures too, of course, but there was no opportunity for normal people to obtain them.

“These people are clearly possessed by a demonic aura. Their expressions are noticeably sluggish and the characteristics of the living are gone. Have these people been demonized already?” Jiang Chen paid close attention to these cultivators. They lacked the vital signs that could be seen in every human. In truth, they were more similar to the walking dead under demonic control. He knew that the demon race had a multitude of methods for taking control of others and using them as their puppets, so it was reasonable to infer that these cultivators had already become demonic vassals. As such, he wanted to avoid further trouble all the more.

Suddenly, the ground beneath him moved strangely. Jiang Chen hastily activated his Cicada Wings, shooting towards the sky. The earth where his feet had been a moment prior was plowed open, as if a furious ox had penetrated it. Countless bone apparitions surged upwards from the ground, mounting an aggressive charge at him. It wasn’t the first time he had seen bone apparitions. They weren’t particularly strong demonic troops. Not wanting to get involved in the fray, he continually flashed his Featherflight Mirror to reduce the bone apparitions’ speed. Meanwhile, he sought to break through the encirclement with Huang’er in tow.

However, the malevolent air in Myriad Corpse Valley was too dense. Despite keeping his altitude low and flights short, Jiang

Chen still felt tired. He had to adjust after each brief airborne stint. Thankfully, though the Pentecolor Divine Swords had trouble killing the wood demon parasite progenitor, it cut through these bone apparitions easily enough. Large swathes of bone were torn to shreds with every sweep. The light from the swords burst forth like a lion charging into a pack of lambs, ravaging its prey freely.

His God's Eye lit up suddenly, as Jiang Chen locked on to Lu Shinan, who was commanding the bone apparitions in a corner. Like a white crane riding on lightning, Jiang Chen glided towards the cultivator. A point of his fingers through the air carried the power of a Galaxy Slash. It bore towards the hidden Lu Shinan like a river of stars.

Aiya! Lu Shinan couldn't have possibly expected Jiang Chen's sudden attack. He scrambled to respond to it. Thankfully for him, he was an emperor realm cultivator after all. His personal strength wasn't just for show. He evaded Jiang Chen's lethal attack with a shift of his body.

At the same time, he moved to hide himself even more deeply within the shadows with a cackle. As an emperor realm cultivator, he had no fear of Jiang Chen. He was more concerned about Jiang Chen's prior defeat of the Prince of Shangping. As a cautious man, Lu Shinan had no intention of facing Jiang Chen head on without first fully understanding his opponent.

"Lu Shinan, you've allied with the demons and sold your soul. I'd like to see where you're running off to today!" Jiang Chen was hot on his heels. He flashed his Featherflight Mirror at Lu Shinan's back. Being affected by the mirror's power was like touching electricity. Lu Shinan's body slackened a moment. Jiang Chen had arrived at his location in no time. Raising the magnetic golden mountain high into the air, he smashed it towards Lu Shinan's skull with a lofty motion.

Pfft! Seeing this, Lu Shinan knew that he couldn't leave without a fight today. Performing numerous hand signs in succession, he

called a large cauldron into being near him. Its silver light caught the golden mountain, even repelling it.

Jiang Chen flashed his mirror once again at Lu Shinan, not stopping for a second. However, the cultivator seemed to have noticed Jiang Chen's Featherflight Mirror. He bolted to the side the moment Jiang Chen's palm moved. The magnetic golden mountain and Lu Shinan's silver cauldron fought each other directly, ramming into each other repeatedly.

Paying no mind to his mountain, Jiang Chen commanded his Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice into action once again. Countless lotus vines flew across the ground, curling themselves around Lu Shinan's feet. Lu Shinan smirked and stomped. Many defensive wooden stakes rose to counter the vines. Curling around the defenses, the vines couldn't reach further towards Lu Shinan himself.

"How could this be?" Jiang Chen thought it was strange that Lu Shinan had countermeasures for all his methods. Upon further consideration, it made sense. A good guess was that the Prince of Shangping must have asked Lu Shinan to be his ally, planning to fight against Jiang Chen together. The prince must have never entertained the possibility that Lu Shinan would join the demon race.

"Kid, why don't you use the rest of your methods?" Lu Shinan cackled, circling around Jiang Chen from a long distance. He had no wish to enter into a direct confrontation with the youth. Clearly, he wanted to see just how many methods Jiang Chen was actually capable of dishing out. Of course, Jiang Chen had more tricks up his sleeve. However, his brain was operating at max capacity in order to come up with a better solution. In the heat of the moment, he activated a formation disk. The Ancient Slaughter Formation of Seven instantly materialized.

Lu Shinan's face colored immediately. He found himself having already entered Jiang Chen's formation. "You... you're a

formation master as well?" He was a little surprised.

Jiang Chen smiled coldly. "Lu Shinan, there's no reason for me to not kill you today. You've joined the demons and are willingly serving as both their informant and lackey."

"Kill me? With what, your half-baked formation?"

The Ancient Slaughter Formation had three levels. Jiang Chen activated the medium difficulty. There was at least some hope of causing Lu Shinan a bit of trouble. However, the defector clearly had a treasure to defeat formations. A blast of radiance heralded an attempt to forcibly break out.

Jiang Chen countered with a swish of his Featherflight Mirror. Greatly astonished, Lu Shinan hurried to dodge. He knew his enemy had a method that could slow both people and attacks down. It was a lethal threat to him. His breakout wasn't delayed by the maneuver. He knew as well as anyone that the longer you stayed in a formation, the greater the risk you'd face. Suddenly, trails of green smoke rose out of the formation, gusting towards him. Lu Shinan tried to sweep the smoke aside with his sleeve. He quickly discovered that the smoke was a little odd. It had a strange restraining power.

"What on earth is this?" Lu Shinan gasped in bewilderment. He remembered what the Prince of Shangping had relayed about the battle with Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen had used the mint ginseng in his battle against the prince, so Lu Shinan was at least somewhat familiar with the attack. Pushing at his reserves of strength, he finally struggled free of the green smoke's binds. Lu Shinan waved a hand, and a folding fan appeared within.

"Take this, kid!" The fan's flourishes had a tectonic strength. It sailed towards Jiang Chen with the irresistible force of two mountains.

Bam! Jiang Chen keeled over from the attack, falling to the ground.

“Hmm?” Lu Shinan was amazed. The kid had a strong offense; did he not have the defense to match? It couldn’t be. The Prince of Shangping had said that he couldn’t break through the kid’s defenses even with the eight statues. Had Jiang Chen used the Imperial Advent Defense Talisman to gain such absurd resilience and without it, he was actually quite weak? Countless thoughts passed through Lu Shinan’s mind. As he mulled things over, he discovered that the ‘Jiang Chen’ who had fallen wasn’t actually the real one. Instead, it was an illusion created by the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice. The discovery was far from encouraging. “Oh, this isn’t good.”

Lu Shinan moved to turn around, but was met by several golden rosary beads, rolling underfoot. “What are these?” The beads were fairly non-threatening, but due to the strangeness of the scene, he stepped back instinctually. As soon as he did, Lu Shinan realized that he had underestimated the situation at hand after all. The beads twirled over the ground, then transformed instantly into several soldiers in gold armor. They assailed him without hesitation.

“Out of my way!” Lu Shinan was quite upset now. He had been continually toyed with by a mere youth, and still hadn’t broken out of the formation. It was a thoroughly unenjoyable situation. The waves of his folding fan repelled the golden soldiers. However, the soldiers seemed perpetually resilient—they came back each time after being sent flying, their ferocity increasing with every rebound.

Chapter 895: The Mighty Long Xiaoxuan

These golden armored soldiers were obviously only in the sky sage realm, so Lu Shinan wasn't afraid of them. However, they were extremely durable to the point where he could only knock them back and not destroy them, no matter what he did. This outcome was a bit depressing. It was at this moment that he felt a sudden tremor beneath his feet. Innumerable tentacles that looked like fleshy tumors suddenly shot towards him from all directions.

It was the mint ginseng's attack. Although it looked a little similar to the Bewitching Lotus of Fire and Ice's attack, its effects were completely different. The creature's strength was greater than even the lotus', but it only had restrictive powers and lacked the attributes of fire and ice. Right now, Lu Shinan had been forced into a very desperate situation. The mint ginseng's addition to the mix only made his burden heavier. It was at this moment that Lu Shinan abruptly detected a tremor from the air above his head.

When he looked up, a great domain abruptly pressed down on his head. This domain was accompanied by an energy that struck fear in people's hearts, and it stifled Lu Shinan so much that he felt like he couldn't breathe. In the next moment, an enormous paw appeared and attempted to grab him from the sky. The giant paw had five claws, and every one of them was sharp enough to rival any divine weapon in the world. There were black jets of air around the giant paw as well, and they blinked rapidly like black lightning. It was a combination of the dragon domain, the Claw of Crushed Mountains and Rivers, and the Black Cage. This attack was the fatal attack Long Xiaoxuan unleashed at Lu Shinan after materializing into his true body.

Lu Shinan looked up only to find the ever-present might of a dragon locking down every bit of space around him. The Claw of Crushed Mountains and Rivers instantly caught his body. Lu

Shinan was instantly lifted into the air, unable to break free no matter how hard he struggled.

“A dragon, a true dragon!” Lu Shinan screamed at the top of his lungs as he commenced his final struggle. “Mercy, Daoist Huang, mercy! I am willing to betray the demon race!” At this point, he couldn’t do anything even if he possessed a million trump cards. The only thing he could do was beg for his life.

There was no reason for Jiang Chen to listen to his pleas of mercy, so he looked at Long Xiaoxuan. “Brother Long, he may be a degenerate, but he’s still an emperor realm expert. Do as you wish.”

Long Xiaoxuan cackled sinisterly and instantly tore Lu Shinan in half. He threw the man into his mouth and devoured him in three chomps. Lu Shinan’s bloodcurdling scream barely broke through the air before he was completely devoured by the dragon. A true dragon didn’t care if Lu Shinan’s body contained the aura of the demon race. The bloodline of an ancient true dragon could purify anything with its blood, and not even the demon race dared claim that their bloodline was stronger than the ancient true dragon race. After all, the dragon race was an ancient royal bloodline. Now that Lu Shinan had been destroyed, his cauldron naturally fell into Jiang Chen’s possession.

“To think that this cauldron can actually block my magnetic golden mountain! It’s definitely a good item. But I wonder what it is exactly?” Jiang Chen didn’t currently have the time to identify it, so he immediately stored it within his storage ring. “Unfortunately, I didn’t manage to get the Prince of Shangping’s formation disk. Otherwise, those eight statues would have truly been a rather powerful offensive treasure.”

Jiang Chen had searched through Lu Shinan’s storage ring, but the formation disk wasn’t in there. After destroying the defector, Jiang Chen departed the area without even bothering to clean up the scene. He paid no attention to the human cultivators who had

been corrupted by demonic energy. Everyone governed their own fortune and fate. These people had made the choice to throw away their lives here on their own accord. Jiang Chen had no reason to play the role of a savior and save them all.

……

Inside the Ten-Thousand-Year Coffin, Demon King Nineshadows was at the final stretch. Since he possessed the Prince of Shangping's body, the body needed to be tempered with demonic energy. After three days of work, the body was almost fully tempered. Suddenly, Demon King Nineshadows felt a change and his expression notably shifted, "Lu Shinan is dead?"

The demon king was very shocked by this outcome. "Lu Shinan is a skilled cultivator, and I gave him three thousand bone apparitions to aid him in his mission. So how did he get himself killed? How did he fail to run away while he was in my domain? Is Jiang Chen really that powerful?"

Demon King Nineshadows found this outcome a little unbelievable even as wrath grew within him. Lu Shinan was one of the pawns he controlled. While he didn't really care for the man, the human had still been a very useful and loyal dog as of late. Lu Shinan had also done many other things for him. For example, he was the one who had spread the rumors of this place to the outside world, lured cultivators into the desolate wildlands, and damaged the formation that the Prince of Shangping had left at the valley entrance…

But now that his dog was dead, many of his plans had suddenly been ruined. Thankfully, the formation in Myriad Corpse Valley had already begun operating. Even without Lu Shinan, the mission wouldn't stray off course too much. Moreover, the recently completed corpse puppets would serve as useful assistants after the demon king gave them the proper training. The corpse puppets retained most of their host's consciousness, but their first instinct was to obey the demon king's order. Therefore, they were in some

ways more useful than Lu Shinan himself. Although Lu Shinan was an obedient dog, he had plenty of his own schemes. For example, Lu Shinan had gone after Jiang Chen out of his own greed. Naturally, Demon King Nineshadows was privy to his little schemes. He just had no reason to burst the human's bubble and stop him.

"This brat! If I allow him to run wild in my Myriad Corpse Valley and leave unharmed, he will absolutely think lightly of my domain!" Demon King Nineshadows was no kind demon. It was only natural that he feel deeply offended by Jiang Chen's act of insolence in his domain and at the murder of his dog. Why should you be the sole exception when everyone else is turned into corpse puppets? Why are you able to enter and exit Myriad Corpse Valley in a flamboyant fashion and even take the life of a dog that belongs to me?

When the demon king thought of this, he felt like going right after Jiang Chen. But another thought quickly followed, "My physical body isn't complete yet, and I have reached a critical moment. If I were to chase after him now while my physical body is still unstable, everything I've done for the past three days would have all been for naught. In fact, the damage may even extend to my consciousness. Worse, if this brat is powerful beyond my expectations, I may even suffer enormous damage by engaging in a fight with him in this imperfect body, so forget it. I'll allow that arrogant brat to live for the moment. When I leave the desolate wildlands, the first person I'm sacrificing for the supreme ceremony that summons the demon race is you!"

Demon King Nineshadows undeniably possessed some semblance of rationality despite his inherent brutality. This was thanks to the infinite tempering of time. All these years had cultivated some shrewdness atop the demon king's foundation of ruthlessness.

……

Jiang Chen finally stepped out of Myriad Corpse Valley after

killing Lu Shinan. However, the ease at which he made his escape puzzled him a little. Why does it feel like my luck is holding up a little too well? I even ran into the emperor realm aura of the Wood Demon King earlier, but Shadow Demons haven't come after me for some reason. I wonder what level the monster that controls the Shadow Demons race is at? It can't be an average demon considering that it is able to control an emperor realm cultivator like Lu Shinan.

He was feeling much better after stepping out of Myriad Corpse Valley. One might say that the most dangerous part of his journey had passed. After leaving Myriad Corpse Valley, Jiang Chen unsealed Huang'er's senses once more. The trip to and from the desolate wildlands had caused her illness to worsen. But now that he had obtained the Soul Requiem Wood, they could afford to waste a few days. When he left, Jiang Chen noted that wandering cultivators were continuously pouring into this place like dumplings dropping into a pot. He was dumbfounded at the sight. Just how many people had rushed in?

Some of these wandering cultivators were filled with hatred when they saw him. It was obvious that these wandering cultivators had recalled the rules set by the Prince of Shangping's alliance upon seeing Jiang Chen, preventing them from entering the desolate wildlands.

"Everyone, this kid was one of the members of that alliance. Don't you think that it's despicable that they are the ones who profited from this venture while we received nothing?"

"Don't you think we should get revenge?"

"Yeah, yeah! We number in the few hundreds while he's alone. He has to give us an explanation today no matter what!" The crowd started jeering.

Jiang Chen's ears were sharp, and he immediately noticed that some of these hooters were members of the Six Wolves of Sparrow

Mountain. How shameless were they to hide themselves amongst the wandering cultivators, but pretend that they were one of the members of the groups who'd come in later? Jiang Chen wasn't a blindly kind person, so he sneered, "Since when did the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain become so pathetic, hiding in the crowd and pretending to be a victim? Let's not forget that you were one of those who benefited from the rules too."

"The Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain?" The group of hundreds immediately turned clamorous. These wandering cultivators had been the second group to enter the valley. They had all formed their own temporary alliances, and their plan was to fight the first group together should they run into them. There was no way they were allowing themselves to be bullied by the cultivators of the first group!

The Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain was within the first group, so why had they purposely disguised and hidden themselves inside the second group? Just what were they plotting at? For a time, these wandering cultivators were all on edge, as if they faced a dangerous enemy. No one knew better than them what kind of people the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain were. There was no way the group would be kind enough to look after the crowd like a nanny.

Jiang Chen began scanning the crowd with his God's Eye. What on earth was the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain planning by mingling amidst the second group? They couldn't have been transformed into dogs of the demon race just like Lu Shinan, could they?

The more Jiang Chen thought about the possibility, the likelier he felt it was. It was impossible that a group as arrogant and domineering as them would lower themselves to join the weaker second group of cultivators otherwise. There was only one reason they would do so, and that was to fan the flames in order to lure more cultivators into Myriad Corpse Valley for the demons.

“Don’t listen to this kid’s nonsense, everyone. He’s purposely trying to distract us. Let’s charge at him together and take him out! He’s gone in for so many days and he’s ready to leave. This means that he must have gotten a lot of loot. Who else do we rob if not him? Everything he possesses rightfully belongs to us!”

“Yeah, he’s purposely trying to make us fight. Let’s kill him first and talk about other details later!” The voices kept sounding amidst the crowd.

Jiang Chen kept his Ear of the Zephyr open and roughly locked down the locations of the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain. He abruptly declared in a loud voice, “Everyone, the opening of the desolate wildlands is a complete trap. The desolate wildlands is the forbidden land of the demon race, and almost all of the numerous cultivators who went inside were turned into corpse puppets. If you wish to meet the same fate as them, then enter as you so please. You will be met with no resistance. However, know that once you go in, you will never make it out of that place ever again.”

Chapter 896: Eliminating the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain

Jiang Chen wasn't even trying to scare them. He truly hadn't found anyone alive when he was making his way out of Myriad Corpse Valley. They'd either been turned into corpse puppets or bone apparitions. He sighed as he watched a continuous stream of people flooding in his direction. "If you would use your brains for even a second, you would realize why you were all gathered at this place. It's because someone has purposely laid down a trap to lure all of you in. I'm sure you all think that there are countless precious treasures lying on the ground just waiting for you to pick them up inside, but the reality is a stark and brutal contrast."

He didn't expect them to change their minds. He had already fulfilled his original goals. There was no reason for Jiang Chen to stop them by force if these people insisted on committing suicide. Right now, he only hoped that these people would calm down a little.

"Bullshit! That kid must have gotten quite the haul inside the valley, but is afraid that we'd go in and grab the rest for ourselves. That's why he's spouting such idiotic nonsense."

"Let's kill him first and see if there's anything good on him!" Because Jiang Chen wasn't an emperor realm expert, these people thought that they might have a chance to take him down together. Moreover, the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain was hiding inside the group. If they could spur these blind wandering cultivators into clashing against Jiang Chen, then they would have a good opportunity to benefit from the conflict.

"You want to kill me?" The mint ginseng acted as Jiang Chen sneered. It let out many puffs of green smoke, causing its innumerable wart-riddled tentacles to burst out from underground, enveloping the cultivators. The mint ginseng might

have been weak in comparison to Jiang Chen, but it was still quite strong against these wandering cultivators.

The second they were caught, the hundred wandering cultivators couldn't move a single muscle no matter how hard they struggled. They felt as if they were wrapped by steel. Fortunately for them, Jiang Chen had no intentions of taking their lives. A flash of cold indifference flew through his eyes as he stared at the captured cultivators. "I wouldn't have given a damn about you lot if the demon race wasn't lying in wait to profit freely from your corpses."

As he said this, the mint ginseng swung its limbs repeatedly and tossed the cultivators at least several hundred meters away. Thump thump thump. The wandering cultivators cut a sorry figure as they crashed into the ground like sandbags. Although the collision was hardly fatal, it still hurt them a little. However, not everyone was as lucky as them. More specifically, six particular people didn't fare so well.

"Hello, Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain. If you don't mind, can you tell me what you're plotting by hiding within this group?" Jiang Chen sneered and stared at them, the ghost of a smile passing through his lips. "Don't tell me you're trying to take down strong opponents later by pretending to be weak now?"

The Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain wore fearful looks on their faces. They hadn't immediately turned against Jiang Chen earlier, outside the valley entrance, out of consideration of the bigger picture. Otherwise, how would a group as infamous as the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain let go of the matter as simply as they did otherwise? Moreover, they had never regarded Jiang Chen highly from the beginning to the end. They had always thought that Jiang Chen's arrogance was a product of ignorance. But now, these thoughts had completely vanished from their minds. Pride was now a forgotten priority as the white-haired old leader of the group hastily said, "It's all just a mistake, my friend. We

surrender."

The Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountains were flexible people who could bow their heads if need be. Otherwise, their tyranny would've already earned them a swift death in the world of wandering cultivators.

"Surrender?" Jiang Chen's eyes turned cold, "Do you think that this is just a matter of winning or losing?"

The white-haired leader hastily continued, "Friend, we gave you face earlier outside the valley, didn't we? If you can let us go this one time, our lives will belong to you."

It was only natural that they would struggle in the face of death. They were strong enough, but because the mint ginseng had ambushed everyone by spewing the green gas, their movements had been greatly slowed. Moreover, Jiang Chen had locked onto the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountains before he'd attacked them. He had subtly pointed the Featherflight Mirror at them a few times during the ambush. Therefore, despite their strength, they weren't able to avoid capture. As long as their movements were restricted, they could possess a million trump cards, but not be able to use any of them.

The wandering cultivators who were tossed to the distance looked shocked to hear that these six people were really the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountains. They glared at the group with disbelief in their eyes.

"The Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountains?"

"Holy shit, is it really those six bastards? Hadn't they already made their way into the valley from the start? Why are they here with us?"

"Also, weren't they fanning the flames and attempting to push everyone into the valley?"

"Can it be... can it really be true that these six bastards have

submitted to the demon race and were baiting us into our deaths?" Not all wandering cultivators were foolish, so quite a few of them came to the realization that this whole scenario was a trap after taking the time to consider the entire situation. Everyone turned pale when they heard of the demon race.

The Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountains were shocked when they heard the cultivators' conversations. "You must not misunderstand us. We are simply trying to take care of you, fellow wandering cultivators, as there's strength in numbers. We absolutely haven't surrendered to the demon race."

"Daoist Huang, how can you wrong us? The demon race is an ancient threat, how can we possibly submit to the demon race? Plus, we've only arrived here a few days ago, and the desolate wildlands was still sealed at the time. How can we have defected to them?"

If this conversation had happened in the past, then maybe Jiang Chen might have believed their words. But with the earlier case of Lu Shinan, although he still had no idea how these people had managed to defect to the demon race, facts spoke louder than words.

"In that case, do you mind swearing a heavenly oath to prove your innocence?" Jiang Chen's tone was indifferent, "You know, just in case I did accuse you wrongly. If you, the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain dare swear a heavenly oath to prove your innocence, then I can let you live this one time."

A heavenly oath? A trace of panic appeared in the group's eyes. If they swore a heavenly oath, then there was no escaping death no matter what. But if they didn't swear it now, they might not even be able to live past this moment. All six of them were men of steel. After they exchanged meaningful glances with each other, they decided to take a risk and survive today's predicament first. Whether or not the heavenly oath would strike them down after this was a matter for the future.

Fortunately, Jiang Chen hadn't missed the cunning gleam in their eyes. So he said coldly, "Remember, your heavenly oath must include the people who are closest to you. I know you're trying to make it past this moment and hope to get lucky later on. You can stop thinking such thoughts now."

Jiang Chen's words were like a bucket of cold water poured over the six men's heads.

"Daoist Huang, you go too far. This is intolerable!"

"Why should this involve the people closest to us? Also, I thought the heavenly oath only harms the person who swears the oath and not their family?" His words were in fact true. Most of the time, the heavenly oath only bound the person who swore the oath. However, if an entire group was involved in the oath, it wasn't unthinkable that the group would be dragged into it as well. At the same time, the oath might not necessarily trigger punishment on every person. For example, the Tristar Sect broke their heavenly oath and was punished for it, but not all Tristar Sect disciples were killed by the oath.

"It's true that the punishment of the heavenly oath may not befall on your families, but if you're lying, then I will act on behalf of the heavens instead." Jiang Chen's tone was cold.

The Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain shuddered and glared hatefully at Jiang Chen. He didn't fear them in the slightest. He smiled faintly, "First Lu Shinan, now the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain. It's exactly because of trash like you all who have surrendered to the demon race that's prompted their revival and seemingly infinite numbers."

The Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain turned deathly pale when they heard Jiang Chen bringing up Lu Shinan. They knew that they likely weren't going to escape death today. The white-haired old man abruptly chuckled evilly. "Do you think you can escape after you kill us, Huang?"

“That’s right. When the demon king descends upon the desolate wildlands, all cultivators who intrude here can do nothing but die!” Realizing that they weren’t escaping today, the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountains decided to discard all pretenses and cackle like madmen. Their faces were ugly and terrifying.

The wandering cultivators who had been previously fooled looked dumbfounded by this. They hadn’t really believed Jiang Chen earlier, but now that they heard the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain’s crazed words, their jaws fell open in shock. Had the group really surrendered to the demon race? Did they just say that a demon king was about to appear in this world? Did these signs really indicate the start of the demon race’s revival?

Jiang Chen’s eyes turned frosty. “The descent of the demon king, you say? That may be true, but you lot still aren’t escaping death today no matter what.”

He hated traitors like these to the bone in both of his lifetimes. After the order was given, the mint ginseng crushed the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain to bits with its tentacles. Unlike the Bewitching Lotus, the mint ginseng didn’t have suckers on its tentacles and thus wasn’t able to absorb their essences into its body. Jiang Chen sympathized with the lotus for missing out on the essences of six cultivators, but he couldn’t summon it in the public like this. He didn’t stay behind after killing the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain. He slipped past the wandering cultivators, as light as a sparrow. “Make your choice. I care nothing for it.”

He had performed his obligation to the utmost anyway. If these people insisted on committing suicide, he had no reason to stop them. One had to say that the lure of the riches and powers within the desolate wildlands was too great. Although these wandering cultivators didn’t dare provoke Jiang Chen any longer, they were reluctant to give up just like this.

“Don’t you think the kid is being a little melodramatic?”

“Yeah, if the demon king really has descended upon this earth, then why is he still able to enter and leave the valley freely? Maybe he just didn’t want us to plunder the riches in there and is trying to scare us away from it?”

“But the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain confessed their sins.” The hundreds of wandering cultivators conversed with each other, but didn’t take a step away. It was obvious that they were all reluctant to leave after finally being given the chance to enter the desolate wildlands. However, none of them realized that a great danger was currently sneaking towards them while they were wasting time there.

Jiang Chen was dumbfounded by these foolish cultivators. He had already said everything there was to say, so there was no way he was turning back to convince them further. A person’s life was destined at birth. If it was their fate to die here, then he wasn’t going to become the anchor that kept them from it. He turned his head immediately and swiftly moved outside.

After passing through the river and walking for a few hours straight, he finally arrived at the crossroads where he had agreed to meet Lin Yanyu. Only five to six days had passed since, and there was still a day or two left before their agreement of seven days was up. Jiang Chen was a man of his words, so he didn’t leave the area.

Chapter 897: Majestic Mountain-Sealing Formation

Lin Yanyu wasn't as blind as many of the other wandering cultivators. With the weight of a family vendetta on his back, he didn't overestimate his own strength. He was eager to do well here, but he was careful as well. After a few days, he was rewarded with modest results. He arrived seven days later, as previously agreed upon. He was very surprised when he saw Jiang Chen already waiting for him. He had been worried about the possibility that Jiang Chen might not show up after a week's time. "Daoist Huang, did you wait long?"

Jiang Chen had indeed waited an entire day, but decided not to comment on it. He glanced at Lin Yanyu. The latter was well-worn from traveling, but free of demonic taint.

"You must not have picked the sky rank spirit herbs on the way in, Daoist Lin?" Jiang Chen asked rhetorically with a half-smile.

Lin Yanyu returned a wry smile. "Maybe someone else would have, if they hadn't been paying any attention, but the Lin family specializes in pills and medicines. I'm not likely to miss any detail relating to spirit herbs. Those supposed sky rank ones... well, I knew better than to touch them. Frankly, I didn't think that they were genuine."

"Quite," Jiang Chen nodded. "You have a good eye and remarkable self-control. That's why you're still alive. Others weren't so lucky."

He knew now that the sky rank and earth rank spirit herbs were mere illusions. Demonshade Flowers lay beneath their disguise. If cultivators were greedy enough to pick those herbs, the flowers would immediately strike. Their souls would be captured, and they would be fashioned into corpse puppets. Jiang Chen had seen many such afflicted cultivators on his way back.

The remark from Jiang Chen made Lin Yanyu grow more serious. “Daoist Huang, I think there’s something odd going on this time around. I’ve only been around the outskirts because I didn’t dare go further in, but I saw a large inward flow of cultivators while I was traveling. They didn’t look like they were part of the original five hundred.”

“Yes, it’s definitely not just five hundred cultivators,” Jiang Chen sighed. “I’d say the number is closer to tens of thousands.” He shook his head, shrugging. “Each man has his own fate. If they want to go hastily to their deaths, how are we to stop them?”

“Why do you say that?”

Not bothering to explain, Jiang Chen merely waved a hand. “You’ll see when we go back outside.”

Lin Yanyu was quite confused. Assessing people and trusting others was one of his good traits, and he knew, after prolonged contact with Jiang Chen, that he was someone rather extraordinary. He had good reason to trust Jiang Chen implicitly. As they headed back outside at a brisk pace, they saw even more cultivators rush in. Jiang Chen didn’t want to bump into them. He avoided them the entire way back to the valley’s entrance. The formation that the Prince of Shangping had set had long been destroyed. The hole in the restriction over the wildlands had been previously repaired somewhat, but there were signs of damage here as well.

“How can this be?” Lin Yanyu gasped in surprise.

Jiang Chen didn’t know how to answer. Of course he knew Lu Shinan was the culprit. The wandering cultivators wouldn’t have gotten in at all if the formations had remained untouched. Lu Shinan’s sabotage was the direct cause of roughly thirty thousand cultivators entering the wildlands. They would never return. Thankfully, nightfall was coming soon, and the number of cultivators near the valley entrance began to dwindle. Everyone

that wanted to go in seemed to have already done so. The three of them carefully walked out of the restriction. Jiang Chen stared at it briefly. The restriction showed signs of self-recovery.

“This restriction... it can fix itself?” Huang'er saw a hint of the restriction’s recovery as well.

Lin Yanyu was awestruck. He couldn’t make any assessments about the restriction aside from noting its immense strength and power signature.

“This is an ancient restriction. It only opens up every so often because of how old it is. It looks like the period for this opening is almost over, though. Good thing we came out so quickly.” Jiang Chen sounded pleased. “Otherwise, we’d have to wait until the next time this thing opens up.”

“How long would that period be?” Lin Yanyu asked curiously.

Jiang Chen shot the young pillmaker a meaningful look. “Oh? Do you want to come back some other time, Daoist Lin?”

“No, no, I’m just asking. There’s no way I’ll come back to this dastardly place. It’s so creepy here.” Lin Yanyu shook his hands hurriedly.

“I’m glad you think so. Daoist Lin, perhaps we three are the only survivors of this wildlands excursion.”

However, Jiang Chen was quickly proven wrong. One by one, a few other wandering cultivators exited the opening as well, their appearances haggard. Jiang Chen probed each of them with his consciousness as they exited. If these people had been tainted by demons, he wouldn’t have let them just leave. However, his investigation revealed that these cultivators were likely the timid ones. Just like Lin Yanyu, they had only hung around the outskirts. They hadn’t been brave enough to go further in.

Huang'er gazed at the restriction’s opening, her expression serious. “Since the opening is closing up, it looks like anyone who

still hasn’t come out will no longer be able to.”

“They certainly won’t come out alive again,” Jiang Chen sighed. “The only way they can possibly return is as a plague on the human domain.”

“Why do you say that?” Lin Yanyu exclaimed, fearful.

“The demon race is awakening once more. These cultivators are only serving as cannon fodder and sacrifices for the demons. When they come out again, they’ll either be converted to demons or be turned into their puppets. Lost forever to the abyss, as it is.”

“What?”

Jiang Chen continued staring at the opening in the restriction, but Lin Yanyu was pale with terror. The news about the demon race positively frightened him. He wanted to leave immediately and go as far away as possible.

“Daoist Huang, shall we go now?” He called out to Jiang Chen. The latter shook his head, then walked to the side. He found a mossy rock and sat cross-legged upon it. Knowing what he was planning, Huang'er sat beside him as well. Eyes affixed on the opening, Jiang Chen furrowed his brow. He was contemplating something.

Lin Yanyu’s heart was bitter with complaint when he saw his benefactor’s strangeness. What had come over Daoist Huang? But as a kind-hearted man, he wasn’t just about to up and leave while Jiang Chen remained stationary. He didn’t want to let the other down by fleeing alone. Picking a spot reasonably near Jiang Chen, he sat down quietly in wait. He didn’t know what this ‘Daoist Huang’ wanted to do, but his instincts told him that his friend had some unfinished business.

Only when the morning of the second day came did Jiang Chen let out a breath of relief.

“The restriction has closed up. Only eighteen people came out

during the night. They're the only survivors. I assume they similarly only went around the outskirts and didn't have any clue regarding what happened further in." He muttered, speaking as much to Huang'er as he was to himself.

"Mm. How long is the period until the restriction reopens?"

Having observed the restriction for a long while now, Jiang Chen gave an accurate estimate. "Half a year to one year, but that's only temporary. With the restriction loosening up more and more, I'd posit that the period could shorten to three months, or even one month. Plus, with news of the desolate wildlands spreading further, there'll just be more and more cultivators who go in."

"Then we have to make sure that news about the demon race spreads as well," Lin Yanyu added from the side.

Jiang Chen smiled bitterly. "It's no use. Wealth ruins many. Even if we say that there are traces of a demonic presence, it'll hardly stop the desperados who go in solely to satisfy their own greed."

He wasn't just making things up. Though he'd previously killed the Six Wolves of Sparrow Mountain in front of hundreds of wandering cultivators, none of them had actually left. Clearly, all of them had put their faith in their own luck, as none of them had personally seen a demon before. Thinking about the situation at hand for a little while, Lin Yanyu didn't know what he could do either. "Demons... the demon race... is another demonic calamity going to fall upon the Divine Abyss Continent?"

Jiang Chen had his own ideas regarding the matter, but there was no way he could spread the news himself. Simply making it known to the masses served only to incite panic, nothing more. Those who needed to know the news might not believe in such an unreliable word-of-mouth recounting either. He inspected the fully-healed opening of the restriction. "I'd like to trouble the two of you to intercept any unwise trespassers from a bit further

away," he stated to Huang'er and Lin Yanyu. In secret, Jiang Chen instructed Long Xiaoxuan to protect Huang'er.

The girl seemed to know what Jiang Chen was planning. "You should be careful," she pressed lightly upon Jiang Chen's palm.

Jiang Chen caressed the soft, silky skin on the back of her hand. "Don't worry, the restriction is closed now. No matter how fierce the demons are, they can't leave for the moment."

Huang'er and Lin Yanyu fanned out. Jiang Chen circled the restriction a few times. "There's nothing for it," he sighed internally. "If the seniors of the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect were still alive today, they would undoubtedly do the same. As the heir of their legacy, I should strive to be worthy of it."

Back at the sect's forbidden area, Jiang Chen had read the characters carved into the cliff face. They had detailed the history of the sect—every member had been devoted to fighting the alien threat from the outer realms, sealing off their own doors in the process. Such exemplary conduct was characteristic of great sects in the ancient times.

As heir to their tradition, Jiang Chen didn't want to lose face for the sect. Taking out both sets of sect flags, he surveyed the landscape for a good place to begin setting up a formation. Jiang Chen had marked the flags with his own unique signature. Though he was using them in a formation, he wasn't scared of losing them permanently. This time, he was setting the Majestic Mountain-Sealing Formation.

It was two formations in one, one primary and one supplementary. The Majestic Mountain-Sealing Formation was ten times stronger than the Nine Gates Incineration Formation. As one of the formations passed down from the Crimson Sect, it had excellent compatibility with his two sets of flags. Setting the formation would cost a jaw-dropping number of spirit stones, but thankfully, it was what he had the largest surplus of.

Even so, he was only a sage realm cultivator. He could barely unleash a tenth of the power of an ancient formation. It wasn't because his formation skills were insufficient, rather, he simply didn't have enough power to fuel the formation's true capabilities. Three days later, two vastly different Majestic Mountain-Sealing Formations had been completed. One was within, one without; one aligned with yin, one aligned with yang.

It had cost Jiang Chen more than a hundred million saint spirit stones to create. It was a heart-bleedingly huge sum to spend, but he didn't have any regrets. Though using up so many saint spirit stones was indeed painful, the alternative may have led to a lifetime of regret. With the formations complete, Huang'er and Lin Yanyu were free to return. They saw a newly-fashioned formation and obelisk stationed outside the restriction's opening.

"Beware of demons?" Lin Yanyu pondered over the writing on the monument. The Demonward Obelisk was Jiang Chen's handiwork. It served as a warning to anyone who came after them. There were demons roaming out and about in the wildlands, and any accidental trespassings should be avoided.

Chapter 898: Chasing the Dragonteeth Guard

The formation that Jiang Chen had set was unconcealed. He was absolutely sure that unless several top-rank emperor realm cultivators struck in tandem, the formation would remain unbroken. Even a great emperor would have some trouble breaking through the formation that had taken him three days of time to set up. After all, this formation had been one of the cornerstones of an ancient sect.

Huang'er looked at the formation, then at Jiang Chen. Her clear eyes welled up with renewed adoration. She was naturally quite comforted that her man was so responsible. What girl didn't desire for the boy of their heart to be indomitable, able to hold up the heavens and the earth on their own? The act that Jiang Chen had performed benefited the entire world. Using his own resources and time, he was working for the good of all human cultivators. Many would not know of his sacrifice, much less remember it. It was more likely for others to curse him for his gesture—after all, the formation blocked their way into the wildlands. But what did a truly responsible cultivator care for empty reputation?

Looking at the monument and formation, Lin Yanyu had a lot to think about as well. After a long while spent in amazement, he came before Jiang Chen and deeply bowed. "Daoist Huang, I haven't respected many people in my life, but you have my sincerest gratitude for your righteous gesture."

Jiang Chen gave a lackadaisical wave. He didn't have much interest in such words. "I'm only doing what I can. How useful it ends up being... well, that's up to the heavens."

The formation would stop the average wandering cultivator in their tracks. Even a typical emperor realm cultivator had very little chance of success. However, if a large number of top-rank emperor

realm cultivators pooled together their strength, the formation could be broken through after some time. Jiang Chen simply hoped that the words on his Demonward Obelisk would serve as a fair amount of warning to newcomers.

Lin Yanyu was forlorn. The greed of human cultivators was incalculable. When news of the wildlands spread, only more and more cultivators would arrive. The formation was strong, sure, but it could only block things off for a short while. It wasn't a permanent solution. It made Lin Yanyu respect Jiang Chen all the more.

Jiang Chen had some additional temporary solutions for this as well, though. He'd tucked a multitude of image crystals away into various corners. When someone did manage to break through the formation, the image crystals would record who it was. If they took his flags in the process, Jiang Chen would be able to see who had taken them away as well. He had no intention of just throwing away his flags. They were intrinsic to the Crimson Sect's traditions, and he had no right to simply dispose of them. Having done all of this, Jiang Chen looked to Huang'er for affirmation. Her voice was soft with emotion, "You've done enough. Stopping the demon race isn't a job for one cultivator alone. More must join the cause, especially the strong ones."

"But human cultivators are largely concerned with only money and power. Those with vision and wisdom are few and far between." Jiang Chen smiled wryly. He'd only seen a few cultivators who were like that during his time in this world. People like Ye Chonglou and Palace Head Dan Chi had limited strength. Even though they were quite insightful, they couldn't affect change on a large scale. The only one he knew that could was Emperor Peafowl.

Lin Yanyu felt the same way. "Truly, Daoist Huang. I doubt there are even a few leaders of the big sects who have their minds set on the well-being of the world. It's a shame. They've climbed so high

that it's distanced them from the rest of us... what do they care if we live or die? They only care about power, profit, and immortality."

No cultivator could be faulted for pursuing their own dao. But compared to most, Emperor Peafowl was willing to stay within the great emperor realm despite having experienced communion with the heavenly dao. He did so only to keep an eye on the demon race, a gesture of remarkable honor and uprightness that even Jiang Chen had to respect.

"Daoist Lin, what are your plans next?" Jiang Chen asked, once the group was out of the valley.

Lin Yanyu sighed softly, "I'll keep traveling, I think. Add a bit to my life experiences. Maybe after that, I'll return to Pillfire City."

"Then we'll part ways here," Jiang Chen nodded. "I hope to see you again someday."

Lin Yanyu had something on his mind he wanted to voice, but he'd held himself back all this time. After a brief moment of silence, he finally mustered up the courage, "Daoist Huang, I've always wanted to know... which great sect's genius disciple are you?"

He had his guesses, but he didn't feel that any of them were right. He only had an expectation of the sect's general level. There was something more to it, though. Daoist Huang had been even stronger than the typical true sect disciple. Especially with regards to the formation he'd set up! Lin Yanyu hadn't been able to make heads or tails of it, but he could feel its strength. A formation like that required great strength, wealth, and presence of mind. The combination of all three was nothing short of extraordinary.

Jiang Chen smiled. "My identity is a little special. I'm not sure you want to know. But I'm also curious about you, friend. If you really don't have a place to go, perhaps you can come find me at Veluriyam Capital."

Veluriyam Capital? Lin Yanyu gasped aloud in surprise. His expression changed several times as he looked at Jiang Chen.

Still smiling, Jiang Chen inclined his head and presented a cupped-fist salute. “Let us meet again someday.”

He was in a rush to find a place where he could remove Huang’er’s Generation Binding Curse. He couldn’t possibly tell Lin Yanyu who he was right now. Why risk complicating things further?

Jiang Chen’s departing figure induced a sense of loss in Lin Yanyu. “Veluriyam? ...Veluriyam Capital?” His eyes suddenly lit up. “Isn’t that Pillfire City’s mortal enemy? If Daoist Huang wants me to go to Veluriyam Capital, does that mean he’s a scion of some great faction there?”

Lin Yanyu was very excited now. Though he had been born in Pillfire City, Lin Yanyu held only endless hatred for his birthplace. He didn’t hesitate in his decision. “I’ll go. Only Veluriyam can give me the opportunity to enact revenge!” A glimmer of resolution flashed across his eyes.

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Jiang Chen’s flight took him over the skies of the Eastern Kingdom. He passed by the Boundless Catacombs. As he was preparing to soar past Skylaurel Kingdom, he noticed that there was a gruesome battle taking place in the kingdom’s airspace.

Usually, Jiang Chen would have no interest in such a low-level battle, but a closer look revealed the Dragonteeth Guard to be one of the parties involved. Moreover, there were two old friends of his in the group—Tian Shao, who had received many promotions because of him, and Tang Long, whose destiny he had changed. Both of these men were backbones of the Guard now. Because Skylaurel Kingdom was controlled by other factions behind the scenes, the Guard’s power in the kingdom’s capital had become much weaker than it had been prior.

At the moment, a dozen guardsmen were being attacked by a group of men in black. The latter group had roughly fifty members, all of them in the spirit realm. As for the guardsmen, because of Jiang Chen's connections to the Precious Tree Sect, the sect had invested more into Skylaurel Kingdom accordingly. Thus, there were a number of spirit realm cultivators in the Dragonteeth Guard now as well. In particular, Tian Shao and Tang Long were at the sky rank spirit realm.

Unfortunately, the men in black were no slouches either. Many guardsman corpses were strewn across the ground. It was a grisly sight to behold. Tian Shao and Tang Long led their remaining men in a small circle of resistance. They were fending for their lives. From the looks of it, they were at their limits. Their assailants could overwhelm them any minute now.

"Director Tian, you should go first. I'll cover you!" Tang Long shouted.

"That's right, Director Tian. Go on without us. Go as far as you can, away from Skylaurel Kingdom!" The guardsmen were evidently Tian Shao's most trusted associates. Though they were almost spent and faced inevitable death, their loyalty never wavered.

"Am I the kind of person who would leave my men behind to die?" Tian Shao roared, his face bloody.

One of the men in black snickered, "Tian Shao, what goes around comes around. How did you get your promotions? Wasn't it through flattery? You chased after Hidden Death all those years ago. Did you think about what would eventually happen one day?"

Hidden Death? Jiang Chen suddenly frowned. Remembering the name, he smiled out of extreme anger. It had been such a long time ago that he'd almost forgotten about them. The faction had done as they'd wished in the sixteen kingdoms. They'd been one of the most elite killer organizations. There had even been a killer sent

after him, who had tried to kill him here with the Long family's help. When Jiang Chen had returned to Skylaurel Kingdom later on, another stronger assassin had been delegated to accomplish the same. Xue Tong had been briefly captured in the process.

Jiang Chen had caught a few from the organization at the time, but there were always fish that slipped through the net. Because he'd been busy going on to bigger and better things, Jiang Chen hadn't taken them to task for their crimes. But now, Hidden Death was openly violating the peace in Skylaurel Kingdom?! Something perplexed him, though. Wasn't Hidden Death a, well, hidden organization of killers? Why were they moving about so openly?

Tian Shao and company were at the end of their rope. Jiang Chen shook his sleeves. A golden stream of air poured down from the sky like a cascading waterfall. It crashed down onto the men in black below, wrapping them entirely within. The golden waterfall was actually powered by magnetic energy. Even sage realm cultivators would have a very difficult time escaping from such a prison. The men in black were stuck in place. They couldn't move no matter how much they struggled. They were powerless to resist.

"Who? Who is ambushing us?!"

"Who dares meddle in Hidden Death's affairs?" The men in black were too used to running amok! Even in captivity, they were still quite ferocious. Their tone was filled with an arrogance that showed a complete lack of awareness.

The Dragonteeth Guard on Tian Shao's side had been prepared to fight to the death. They weren't sure what had just happened. This turn of events was shocking.

"Director Tian, we..." Tang Long had no idea what was going on either. Tian Shao had long since been promoted to vice director of the Dragonteeth Guard, but despite that, with regards to the situation at hand, he knew about as much as the rest of his crew.

Chapter 899: Death by One Palm Strike

Jiang Chen and Huang'er were emotionless as they descended into a lower altitude where the battle was happening. Because he was disguised, Tian Shao and Tang Long wouldn't know who he was. In fact, not even Gong Wuji would, even if the man were to come back to life.

The men in black were slightly intimidated by the fact that Jiang Chen and Huang'er hadn't flown on mounts, instead descending middair with their own strength. Tian Shao and his subordinates saw it as well. Flying! They looked at each other with shocked eyes, their faces pale. These newcomers had flown in without spirit beasts. They had to be at least in the sage realm! Although the occasional sage realm cultivator did show up in Skylaurel Kingdom from time to time, seeing such a cultivator in person was off limits for them. Even if they were accidentally able to catch a glimpse, they wouldn't know about it. Both parties were surprised at such a rare sight.

"Wh-... who're you?" The leader of the men in black stammered. "We... we are of the Hidden Death..."

"Hidden Death. Is that one of those clandestine killer organizations?" Jiang Chen said impassively. Tian Shao and company were relieved at Jiang Chen's evaluation of the organization. It didn't sound like they were on particularly great terms.

"That's how we were before," the black-garbed leader nodded. "We have become followers of the Ninesuns Sky Sect and are now a faction beneath one of their first-rank sects. Our sect head is one of the division leaders for the Purple Light Division."

"Ninesuns Sky Sect? Purple Light Division?" Jiang Chen blinked. Isn't the Purple Light Division what the Purple Sun Sect changed its name to after defecting to the Ninesuns Sky Sect? It appeared

that after the sect's elites died, the Division had fallen into Hidden Death's hands.

The black-garbed leader puffed himself up. "That's right, the Ninesuns Sky Sect. Our sect head is sworn brothers with an eleventh-rank inspector of that sect and has received sufficient recognition from the sect itself. He's a sage realm cultivator now. Friends..."

Jiang Chen's face suddenly darkened. "Friends? What right do you have to call me your friend?"

"We might not, but surely you've heard of the Ninesuns Sky Sect's name?!" The black-garbed leader loudly proclaimed.

Are these guys trying to pressure me using the sect's name? Jiang Chen couldn't help but laugh. He hadn't been scared of the Ninesuns Sky Sect even when he'd been a mere spirit realm cultivator. What possibility was there of that changing now?

On the other hand, Tian Shao and his guardsmen were quite anxious. They were fearful that these two strong cultivators would leave after hearing the sect's name. If they did, then the Dragonteeth Guard would lose their only lifeline.

Seeing that Jiang Chen had fallen silent, the black-garbed leader thought that the person in front of him had grown fearful. He began to push for an advantage. "I don't think you're related to these Skylaurel ants, friend. Why risk your head for theirs? We need to settle some old grudges. Surely that doesn't relate to you?"

Jiang Chen laughed coldly. "Are you threatening me?"

"I don't think I am. Rather, I'm trying to convince you to see the truth of the matter. Why make an enemy of the Ninesuns Sky Sect? There isn't anywhere to rest under the heavens for people who do."

It was sounding more and more like a threat after all. Jiang Chen was no stranger to words like these, but the source that they came

from... the men in black didn't even have an origin realm cultivator in their group. How did they have the guts to threaten him? Quite odd, really. These people from Hidden Death showed themselves to be upstarts after all. Now that they had the Ninesuns Sky Sect to back them up, they thought that they were the greatest in the world.

Jiang Chen bobbed his head a little. "How unfortunate for you. I have old debts to settle with Hidden Death as well. I'll treat you guys as an advance payment of interest."

"What? You should think things through... ah!"

The time for talk was over. Jiang Chen smacked his hand down, conjuring a golden hand sign that grew bigger and bigger until it became a mountain. The hand burst the men in black as easily as if they'd been bubbles. Their lives were snuffed out like candle flames, their screams stifled in the process. A cultivator of Jiang Chen's caliber could fight toe-to-toe with an emperor realm cultivator. These spirit realm toadies were no match for him. They were ground to dust beneath the palm of his hand.

To Tian Shao and his men, however, the sight was enough to make the muscles on their faces spasm. Their opponents were the ones being killed, but the method that had been used to do it was still gut-wrenchingly fearsome. The scores of enemies who had been after them couldn't even take one slap of this stranger's palm. They had been directly reduced to smithereens. Just what kind of power did he possess? Tian Shao's entire body felt limp. He barely calmed himself, offering a cupped-fist salute to Jiang Chen. "Thank you for your help, sir."

Jiang Chen looked back at Tian Shao, then at Tang Long. Those two's strengths had increased a fair amount during these many years. But alas, the Skylaurel Kingdom of today was no longer the same as the Skylaurel Kingdom of days past. Their skills were a drop in the bucket in the grand scheme of things. Faintly nodding in approval, he asked, "What's up with Hidden Death? Can one of

you explain in more detail?”

Tian Shao worked up the courage to come over. He recounted the drastic changes that Hidden Death had undergone during these past few years. Everything was described in detail. When Hidden Death had worked within the sixteen kingdoms alliance all those years ago, their strength had been formidable even back then. Though they weren’t as strong as the four great sects, they were only weaker by a small measure.

Their first opportunity came after the alliance of Precious Tree Sect and Regal Pill Palace several years ago. Purple Sun Sect had been at a low point then, and the other sects all had different backers. Ninesuns Sky Sect’s plans were greatly disrupted, and that was where Hidden Death had come in. The head of Hidden Death offered up a treasure that greatly pleased a certain rank eleven inspector of the Ninesuns Sky Sect. The inspector instantly became sworn brothers with Hidden Death’s sect head, wholeheartedly recommending Hidden Death to his higher-ups. With Ninesuns’ assistance, Hidden Death shot up in strength over the course of only a few years. Their strength surpassed the historical four great sects, and neared that of a fifth-rank sect.

When Eternal Celestial Capital invaded the Myriad Domain, a further opportunity for Hidden Death’s advancement came. The added chaos was perfect for the Ninesuns-backed Hidden Death to develop like wildfire. The Hidden Death of today was fully under the Purple Light Division. Its sect head was the second-in-command there. There was no difference between the second-in-command and the actual person in charge, since the latter was designated by the Ninesuns Sky Sect. For the most part, they didn’t mind much of the division’s business. Thus, Hidden Death grew full of themselves in the sixteen kingdoms. Moreover, they were able to spread their reach to the entire Myriad Domain.

Though the domain had a multitude of factions occupying it, others gave the Purple Light Division a wide berth. They were

subordinate to the Ninesuns Sky Sect, after all. A few days prior, someone at Hidden Death had probably recalled the shame of their previous failure in Skylaurel all those years ago, putting forward a proposition to get even. Tian Shao had been one of the heads of the taskforce at the time. Unfortunately, he had been found on duty and engaged by this bloodthirsty group.

"Sirs, the Purple Light Division will surely investigate now that you've killed someone from Hidden Death." Tian Shao couldn't help but mention after his explanation. "They're backed by Ninesuns Sky Sect now, and they use that as license to run rampant all over the place. You should depart as soon as possible."

"What about you?" Jiang Chen smiled faintly.

Tian Shao looked depressed. "We can only change our names and retire. Skylaurel Kingdom isn't what it once was. If it wasn't for our loyalty to His Majesty the king, we would all have left long ago."

Jiang Chen sighed softly. It hadn't even been ten years, but things had already become this bad. Even a place as insignificant as Skylaurel Kingdom had been caught up in the sweeping changes of the world. The Eternal Celestial Capital and Ninesuns Sky Sect were the ones ultimately responsible for the state of things. Thinking for a moment, he took some time to sort through a few things before giving Tian Shao a storage ring. "Here, take this."

Tian Shao figured out its nature as soon as he received it. "Sir, what are you…"

"Ole Tian, this is Jiang Chen," Jiang Chen messaged. "There are a lot of things in this storage ring that will help you in your retirement. Some of it will also increase your strength. Go split them up with Tang Long. As for the fourth prince… he'll have to sit tight for a while longer. Remember, as long as you're still alive, there's always hope."

The message shook Tian Shao to the core. He immediately

remembered that Jiang Chen was still technically a criminal at large. His location could not be betrayed. Suppressing his elation, he bowed. “Thank you for your generosity, sir. If you have any interest, please come to the capital for tea and a chat.”

“There’s no need,” Jiang Chen waved. “If you intend to hide yourselves and your names, you should leave now.” He followed up with a message. “Don’t worry about Hidden Death. Starting tomorrow, there will be no such organization anymore. However, you should still retire into seclusion. There will definitely be an investigation from the Ninesuns Sky Sect if Hidden Death simply vanishes off the face of the earth. You should be prepared for it so as to avoid being implicated.”

Tian Shao had wanted to retire for a long time. His heart was amazed at the contents of Jiang Chen’s second message. Was the young man going to destroy Hidden Death alone?

Hidden Death was as strong as a fifth rank sect and had the Ninesuns Sky Sect as its backer. It was the strongest entity in the sixteen kingdoms alliance. It was likely that the current Purple Light Division could do as it wished even within the Myriad Domain. Not necessarily due to their own strength, but because Ninesuns Sky Sect’s name carried far too much weight.

However, Tian Shao recalled a few rumors that had circulated about Jiang Chen. A few years ago, Jiang Chen had been able to kill an emperor realm cultivator from Eternal Celestial Capital. Perhaps his cultivation as of late allowed for even greater miracles? Though Hidden Death was strong, they were mere upstarts. They had a million chinks in their armor before a genius like Jiang Chen. There was no more time for small talk, though. Tian Shao bowed once more with the rest of the Dragonteeth Guard, then beckoned to them. “We’re off!”

Chapter 900: The Delight of Old Acquaintances

Tian Shao couldn't contain his excitement when he left. Though he was silent the entire way back, the recent revelations sent powerful waves surging through his heart. After they returned to the capital, he dismissed the rest of the guardsmen. "Come with me for a moment," he spoke to Tang Long.

The latter had been promoted by Tian Shao and naturally obeyed his every command. The two of them walked towards a secret room in the Dragonteeth Guard headquarters. Tian Shao's serious expression made Tang Long a little uneasy. He knew as well as anyone that they couldn't survive in Skylaurel Kingdom anymore after killing those people from Hidden Death. Seclusion via retirement was their only choice. Closing the door of the secret room, Tian Shao looked about him before erecting a soundproof barrier. "Little Tang, do you remember how you got to your current position?" He messaged, as a final security precaution.

Tang Long paused a little before nodding. "It's because I met young master Chen, my great benefactor, while I was out on border patrol. After that, you promoted me every step of the way."

Tian Shao smiled wryly, "My current position was given to me through the same way."

It wasn't good for subordinates to comment about the matters of their superiors. Thus, Tang Long kept silent. Still, he thought that something was odd given how solemn Tian Shao was. He also messaged silently, "Director, what's the matter?"

Taking out the storage ring he had been given, Tian Shao retrieved a wealth of treasures from it.

"Did... did that cultivator give this to you, director?"

"Yes, he gave it to the both of us." Tian Shao remarked after a

glance. The things in the storage ring were portioned for pairs. One set for him, one for Tang Long. These things were useless to Jiang Chen, but for Tang Long and Tian Shao, they were priceless treasures. Pills, the essence of a wood spirit spring, the blood and bone of a Redscaled Firelizard, various weapons and armors, talismans, and hundreds of thousands of origin spirit stones... It was an enormous treasure trove.

"How come there's so much stuff? There's some for me, too?" Tang Long was surprised.

Tian Shao laughed, "Do you know who that cultivator was, Little Tang?"

Tang Long thought for a moment, his eyes glittering. Tian Shao's earlier question inspired him. "Was it young master Chen?"

Smiling, Tian Shao nodded affirmatively. "That's right, it was him. Young master Chen messaged me about it and how we should split up these things he gave me."

"Young master Chen... thank goodness he's alright!" Tang Long's eyes reddened. "I always knew that a genius like him would come out unscathed. It's the best news I've heard in a couple of years. He's... he's already a sage realm cultivator, huh!"

"I don't think he's just at the sage realm anymore. He mentioned that he was going to destroy the entirety of Hidden Death."

"What, the entirety of Hidden Death?" Tang Long stammered. "Taking down the whole sect? By... by himself?"

Tian Shao found it hard to believe as well, but he had mulled over the entire situation for a little longer than Tang Long had. "When has young master Chen done anything brashly since making his way into the world? He's always had a good grasp on things."

The reminder rang true. Tang Long agreed after thoroughly considering everything.

“He told me some other things as well. He said that we should be patient. As long as we’re alive, there’s hope. It looks like he has great ambitions in sight. Maybe he’ll recover the entire Myriad Domain some day and drive out the bandits who are currently residing here.” Tian Shao was enthusiastic at the prospect.

Tang Long’s face was full of joy. “I’m sure that day will come. Someone as prodigious as young master Chen will definitely return with a vengeance. Look at how long the Eternal Celestial Capital has chased after him for, but he’s still fine!”

“Yes, that’s why he gave us these things. We should become strong in preparation for that day’s arrival.”

Tian Shao’s tone was very passionate. “We’re here today entirely because of young master Chen. That’s why we must keep his secret, even unto death. You must remember this, Little Tang.”

Tang Long nodded gravely, “Don’t worry, I won’t sell him out even if I’m at death’s doorstep. Oh, yes, should we tell His Majesty about this?”

Sighing softly, Tian Shao shook his head. “Young master Chen probably doesn’t want His Majesty to know yet. After all, His Majesty has to stay to maintain the current situation here in Skylaurel Kingdom. From his point of view, there’s no way for him to leave.”

Tang Long nodded. “Then if we go now, wouldn’t His Majesty be even lonelier?”

“We must go. We cannot burden him with our continued presence. His Majesty has suffered for so many years already. Perhaps it is a kind of trial from young master Chen?” Tian Shao had thought through things more thoroughly than Tang Long had. It was difficult to judge the machinations of men in power. Though young master Chen and His Majesty had been almost akin to brothers in the past, Tian Shao didn’t know if that was still the case now. Thus, in the end he couldn’t tell the king about these

things.

“Little Tang, make your preparations. We’ll turn in our resignation to His Majesty shortly.” Tian Shao instructed.

“Will His Majesty agree?” In truth, Tang Long wanted to quit as well. He had stayed these past years because he had wanted to repay Tian Shao, not out of devotion to the king. Now that the director was leaving, it was natural for him to follow.

“His Majesty will understand,” Tian Shao said sadly. “We can’t help him much anyway. I find it hard to understand what His Majesty thinks sometimes, nowadays.” Because of the change in circumstances, Ye Rong now lived an aggrieved life as a figurehead king. His relationship with Tian Shao wasn’t as seamless as it had been before. Tian Shao was nominally a vice director of the Dragonteeth Guard, but the Guard itself was powerless in Skylaurel. They had none of the glamour and style of their bygone days.

……

Jiang Chen was not in a hurry to leave Skylaurel Kingdom. He wanted to make sure that Tian Shao and Tang Long were able to safely depart. He didn’t want them to encounter any further complications. He also took the time to draft up some plans against Hidden Death.

The organization had crossed him twice before, and he hadn’t returned the favor. This was the perfect opportunity to uproot them in their entirety. No matter who their new backer was, no matter what faction they were now part of, Jiang Chen would no longer allow Hidden Death to exist in this world. Such a faction was not fit to exist.

Tian Shao and Tang Long left in the night, and Jiang Chen protected them part of the way. He only left after ensuring their safety. The next day, he arrived at the Purple Light Division’s headquarters very early in the morning. The division was located

in the Purple Sun Sect's former territory. He had heard rumors about a gathering held here in three days' time. Everyone belonging to the division would come to the gathering.

Given Jiang Chen's current level of cultivation, there was no one at the division who could even detect him, much less throw a wrench in his plans. Any security became just for show around him. He had enough time to wait. He observed that half of the Purple Light Division was made up of original Purple Sun Sect members, and that the other half consisted of Hidden Death newcomers. However, the killer organization was in the leading position now. The Purple Sun Sect people were forced to occupy second place.

Purple Sun Sect's geniuses of yesteryear were pretty much all gone by now. The ones that remained were largely the elderly. Knowing that they didn't have a future elsewhere, they treated the Purple Light Division as a retirement home. They spent their days living off the Ninesuns Sky Sect's handouts. The Purple Sun Sect no longer possessed its previously illustrious prestige.

Jiang Chen was unsympathetic. They had brought their troubles upon themselves. They had been in cahoots with Ninesuns Sky Sect from the very start, and they were the first ones to sell out the sixteen kingdoms alliance. Their current situation was well-deserved. How pretentious they once were in the sixteen kingdoms! It was not easy to forget the overbearing old man Sunchaser of the past.

Three days passed, and the conference was set to begin. All of the middle and high-ranking members of the Purple Light Division had gathered together. There were several hundred people in the same place. Most were from Hidden Death, but a few were old-timers from the Purple Sun Sect. The head of Hidden Death was seated high on the division head's throne. His gaze was proud and his spirits high. "Everyone," he looked all around him. "After the last few years of growth, our Purple Light Division is improving

with every passing day. There's some good news that just came in during these last few days. A territory with a spirit vein that used to belong to the six great sects has fallen under our control. We will use this land in the next decade to strengthen ourselves even further. We are sure to receive even more accolades from the Ninesuns Sky Sect!"

The audience below resounded with applause. Waves of flattery swelled up like an incoming tide. The Hidden Death head looked over at Purple Sun Sect's previous members. "Elder Qiu, do you or any of the other Purple Sun Sect people have leads on the Precious Tree Sect? It's been so long since their leader's disappearance and the disbanding of their sect. Even their precious tree has disappeared. How can this be? Have you forgotten your grudge with them?"

The elder who'd been called on laughed ruefully. "Precious Tree Sect must have received some kind of forewarning. They scattered even before mass change swept across the land. Even if we wanted to pursue them, what clues do we have?"

"Hmph, do you Purple Sun Sect old-timers all waste away your days like this? Wallowing in incompetence?" The Hidden Death head's tone became chilly. "We can't have that kind of thinking here. Useless people are not welcome within the Ninesuns Sky Sect."

The old-timers from the Purple Sun Sect could only agree. One of them piped up, "They can hide for a time, but they can't hide forever. Skylaurel Kingdom is the Precious Tree Sect's home. If we decimate the place, maybe they'll show up."

It was a very malicious suggestion.

"Decimate Skylaurel Kingdom? What, you want me to just walk in and slaughter some people there? The martial dao world has unspoken rules about interfering with worldly affairs. That's a stupid idea. I remember there was a group sent to the kingdom in

order to take revenge for something," the head of Hidden Death added suddenly. "That was a few days ago. Is there any news of them?" Having said this, the head looked to an officer responsible for the delegation.

"Maybe they're still waiting to strike," the officer explained hastily. "They can't publicly make a scene in the capital. They might need a bit of time."

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