SOVEREIGN OF THE THREE REALMS

BOOK 13

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!

Copyright

All rights reserved.

English Translation by etvolare @ Wuxiaworld

Translation Edit by Aruthea, Crimsonguard, LemonPEEL, Studmonster, and Premonition @ Wuxiaworld

ePub conversion by Lisa Hayes @ Hasseno Blog

This is a free eBook. You are free to give it away (in unmodified form) to whomever you wish.

No part of this eBook may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and retrieval system, without written permission from the author.

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

Chapter 1001: Momentum That Leaves One Speechless

The good news from the Pagoda spread like wildfire throughout Veluriyam Capital. Someone had passed the eighth Veluriyam Obelisk and broken the record Emperor Peafowl had held for nearly five thousand years! Emperor Peafowl's apparent intention to advertise this success only caused the news to spread even faster. The three words "young lord Zhen" were brought up again and again amongst the citizens of Veluriyam Capital. People were of the mindset that the greatest star of Veluriyam Capital's young generation of cultivators had made his appearance. Young lord Zhen was absolutely the best candidate to succeed Emperor Peafowl. His achievements and the fortune he carried were proof of his qualification.

For the past three thousand years, Emperor Peafowl had been the absolute authority in Veluriyam Capital. He was the totem and protector god in most citizens' hearts. Young lord Zhen breaking through the record that a young Emperor Peafowl had set meant that young lord Zhen was even greater than the emperor. In addition, his excellence was acknowledged by Emperor Peafowl himself.

The student surpasses the master and the new replaces the old. There was nothing the martial dao world loved more than this saying. A genius' improvement meant that the citizens under their protection were safer. No one wished to see their territory being handed to a coward or a mediocre ruler in the future. Young lord Zhen was without a doubt a candidate that truly satisfied everyone's hopes and wishes. Young lord Fan had been completely forgotten by the citizens of Veluriyam Capital. They believed from the bottom of their hearts that the young lord Zhen was superior in every way.

The powers under Emperor Peafowl's command were greatly inspired when they received this news. The Coiling Dragon Clan and House Wei in particular could hardly contain their joy. They wanted nothing more than to announce to the world that young lord Zhen had made his way to the peak from under their wing. This was especially true for Wei Tianxiao, lord of House Wei. He stood tall and proud before all others, and his status in House Wei rose like never before. His words were now law in the entirety of his family, and the family elders were also utterly loyal to him. No one dared to even think about betraying the family. Everything they had now was thanks to young lord Zhen. Introducing young lord Zhen to Sacred Peafowl Mountain alone was enough to secure great riches and honors for the Wei father and son duo for generations to come, to say nothing of anything else.

Judging from how things were moving right now, even House Wei's enemies were sitting on pins and needles. Those who had stomped ruthlessly on House Wei when the aristocratic family were down on their luck were especially worried of their future. House Wei was going to rise meteorically with young lord Zhen's rising status. At this rate, it was entirely possible that House Wei would want to take revenge against all those who offended them in the future. For a while, many of the powers that had offended the aristocratic family in the past wondered if they should repair their relationships with them before it was too late.

Similar joy had erupted over on the Coiling Dragon Clan's side as well. However, they were rejoicing because of young master Ji San. He had also broken Emperor Peafowl's old record when he successfully grasped the seventh Veluriyam Obelisk. To the Coiling Dragon Clan, his success brought about an unprecedented level of glory. No one, not even the most outstanding clan lord in clan history had ever been able to obtain such an illustrious achievement. Young master Liuxiang might be the only person in the entire Coiling Dragon Clan who was unhappy with the news. As Ji San's rival, he had no choice but to sorrowfully admit that he

had been surpassed by Ji Ole Third. In fact, Ji Ole Third was so far ahead right now that he almost couldn't see the other's back. Surprisingly, Ji Zhongtang was doing very well despite the news. Ji San's impossible performance had only fanned his passion for martial dao and inspired a greater drive in him.

Taiyuan Tower was more popular than ever. All those previously unfamiliar with the establishment made for the pill shop. They wanted to see just how amazing the Taiyuan Tower that had nurtured a genius like young lord Zhen truly was. Thankfully, the powers under Jiang Chen's personal command weren't present in Taiyuan Tower right now. Otherwise, they might not even be able to set foot outside their door.

Those at work were awash with both pleasure and stress. While the attention was perfect for business, the building itself was seriously going to break under the immense amount of attention and pressure it was receiving. As long as young lord Zhen's performance continued, so too would this level of public enthusiasm.

"Your Majesty, do you think young lord Zhen will continue to challenge the ninth Veluriyam Obelisk?" Cloudsoar Monarch asked softly. The other three monarchs also turned to look at Emperor Peafowl with great interest.

Emperor Peafowl smiled leisurely. "From what I know of him, I'm sure he'll continue the challenge. As for the exact timing, I think that'll come later. After all, he has so much time in the Veluriyam Pagoda."

With Jiang Chen's successful attempt at the eighth obelisk, his time limit was extended by another two years. \That was enough for him to do many things. Naturally, Emperor Peafowl thought that Jiang Chen wouldn't give in to petty impulses. However, something shocking soon happened. The young lord actually started on the ninth obelisk three days after passing the eighth! His firm and resolute attitude caused the seven great emperors to

explode with great furor.

Even the depressed Emperor Shura's faction was absolutely bewildered by Jiang Chen's choice despite their dislike of him. A frisson of hope suddenly arose in Emperor Shura's heart. The dejection he felt after Li Jiancheng's defeat had lessened slightly. An impulsive attention seeker like him must be a rash person. Geniuses like him normally don't last long. Emperor Shura had seen countless young geniuses like him in the past. They were all people who had grown smug and conceited just because of a bit of success.

"Seriously? This young lord Zhen is too impulsive. The ninth Veluriyam Obelisk is the last challenge in the Veluriyam Pagoda. It's said that it's key to opening a new world in the Veluriyam Pagoda!"

"Yes, everything beyond the ninth Veluriyam Obelisk has been a blank canvas for the longest time. Will Pill King Zhen be the one to bring us this pleasant surprise?"

"I doubt it. He's been too proud this time. He only waited for three days to begin his challenge, when he has at least two years left in his time limit. Why didn't he stabilize his strength first before attempting the challenge?"

"It's hard to say. Maybe he's thinking of doing the challenge in one go while morale is high? He's in a good and inspired frame of mind right now. It's not necessarily a bad thing to challenge the ninth Veluriyam Obelisk like this."

"Anyways, I think that he's acted a bit too hastily this time."

Even Emperor Peafowl looked a little worried when he received the news. Of course, he wasn't worried because Jiang Chen had overturned his earlier prediction. He had a different view regarding Jiang Chen's risky choice.

Everyone knew that the main pagoda contained nine Veluriyam

Obelisks, but no records of the world beyond them could be found. Emperor Peafowl himself wasn't sure why this was the case, as he didn't know that the teleportation formation at the entrance of the main pagoda had the ability to wipe a cultivator's memory. All those who failed to enter the Six Palaces of Heritage would have their memories related to the nine Veluriyam Obelisks wiped when they left.

Therefore, no one including Emperor Peafowl knew what secrets were hidden behind the nine Veluriyam Obelisks. With that being said, the emperor often mused about this despite his puzzlement. He deduced that the nine Veluriyam Obelisks were probably a test to the geniuses of Veluriyam Capital. Only those who had passed through these tests were qualified to access more of the Veluriyam Pagoda's secrets. Naturally, those who failed to do so were forbidden from learning those secrets.

Following this line of deduction, Emperor Peafowl deduced that the Veluriyam Pagoda was likely hiding even greater secrets in its depths. Moreover, these secrets were so important that every measure of secrecy were taken to ensure that they weren't revealed. Therefore, all those who failed to conquer the nine Veluriyam Obelisks were unqualified to uncover these secrets. Not even he, Emperor Peafowl, master of Veluriyam Capital, ruler for three thousand years, knew much about the Veluriyam Pagoda. His knowledge in this regard was as limited as everyone else who had participated in the Veluriyam Pagoda gathering. Today, he felt very conflicted to see Jiang Chen act so recklessly in trying for the ninth Veluriyam Obelisk.

On one hand, the emperor knew Jiang Chen well enough to know that he wouldn't loose his arrow until he had his prey in his sights. He would not have acted this way if he wasn't confident in his chances. On the other hand, Jiang Chen was in the prime of his youth. The emperor was worried that Jiang Chen had been blinded by his recent success and made the wrong choice during a critical

moment. It was entirely possible for one impulsive move to ruin all of his efforts.

Emperor Peafowl very much hoped that Jiang Chen could uncover the deeper secrets and greater inheritances that were hidden behind the Veluriyam Pagoda's walls. In fact, it would be best if the lad could surpass him and the upper limits of the entire Upper Eight Regions. It was the only way to better ensure Veluriyam Capital's survival during the demonic calamity that was sure to come. It was also the only way to ensure that the fate that held Veluriyam Capital together wouldn't break. Emperor Peafowl possessed the All-Seeing Eye, so he didn't think that he was mistaken in his choice. He didn't doubt in the slightest that Jiang Chen was a man of great fortune.

But he was worried that Jiang Chen's youthfulness would cause him to grow so careless that he might miss out on the inheritances hidden in the deeper levels of the Veluriyam Pagoda. This was something he least wanted to see. The four great monarchs looked dumbstruck. It was obvious that they were bowled over by the news too.

Chronobalance Monarch slapped his own head. "This young lord Zhen seriously does not play by the rules. Why is he acting so hastily when he has so much time?"

Plumscore Monarch said coldly in anger and disappointment, "He's a young man who just obtained great success and has ultimately failed to keep his cool. If he were to fall before the ninth Veluriyam Obelisk, it will not be due to a failure of talent, but a failure of character. If he doesn't change his frivolous attitude, his so-called fortune will only become as transient as clouds in the end."

Wildfox Monarch also sighed. "Impulsive, how impulsive. But he's a youngster, isn't he? Who didn't have moments of impulse when they were young?"

Chapter 1002: The Mysterious Chain Seal

Standing before the ninth obelisk, Jiang Chen wondered if he had opened a portal and arrived in a different world. The difficulty of the ninth obelisk was increased by at least five times. Jiang Chen sent his consciousness towards the ninth obelisk to activate it. A great pressure fell from above, as though the sky had collapsed on top of him. Jiang Chen was genuinely suppressed by the aura and pressure emitted by the ninth obelisk. He would have wet his pants if his dao heart and consciousness hadn't been so unwaveringly resilient. The ninth obelisk was immensely packed with substance. He seemed to have opened the gates of hell itself. Sometimes, he would be pelted by eerie winds filled with rage or baleful killing intent, other times he would hear wraiths shrieking and wailing. He could even hear an approaching army from hell.

"Young one, welcome to the Pelagic Dragon Obelisk. This is the final obelisk and your final test. If you overcome this challenge, you shall soar through the heavens like a dragon. If you don't, you will forever splash in mediocrity like a mere fish in the sea. The opportunity to reach the very peak will slip from your hands, and you will never become the brightest pearl in the oceans." There was less teasing and more seriousness to the voice.

Jiang Chen wore a somber expression while enduring the hellish attacks on his consciousness. He mused deeply on the meaning behind those words as he built a defense to the attack. The voice had spoken quite loftily and made exaggerated claims of soaring like a dragon once he passed this challenge. Jiang Chen didn't necessarily agree with any of it, but the words had incited the competitive spirit deep inside of him.

"Remember, your fate as a true dragon or a mere fish depends on whether you can withstand this one month-long test. You will face all kinds of challenges in the coming month. Your dao heart must remain untainted and your consciousness whole."

There was nothing for him to understand this time. It was a pure tempering of his dao heart and consciousness. The task might sound simple, but it was definitely the most difficult thus far, as the voice clearly stated that he would be facing all kinds of different, multifaceted challenges. Even someone as knowledgeable as Jiang Chen couldn't afford to take the trial lightly.

The Pelagic Dragon Obelisk was simply too mysterious. It felt like he'd fallen into a world within the obelisk after linking his consciousness to it. There was an odd sense of realism to this particular world. Eerie winds of hell, baleful killing intent, and wailing sounds of spirits immediately flooded his five senses. He withstood this hellish torment for seven to eight days until the scene before his eyes suddenly changed into another. The scene of hell was swept away into nothingness. The horrors from only a moment before were nothing but a nightmare. However, the next scene dumbfounded him.

I... what's happening? Have I returned to my past life? Jiang Chen truly felt like he'd returned to his previous life. The scenery before his eyes was something that had appeared in numerous dreams in his current life. This was the world that he'd once known. The majestic Taiyuan Sky Palace, the bustling Taiyuan Realm, and the numerous scriptures in Tianlang Library...

Jiang Chen suddenly found himself inside the pagoda, leisurely reading the books and scriptures within. The pageboy off to the side was fanning Jiang Chen and was seemingly made of real blood and flesh. There was no obvious flaw that Jiang Chen could spot. In fact, he could even see the tiny pores on the pageboy's face.

"Chen'er, why do you bury yourself in books all the time? Father will take you on a visit today to a nice place you've never been to."

Jiang Chen felt a lump in his throat when he heard this voice. His eyes welled up with tears. Father! He would never forget this voice, even after ten reincarnations. This was the very man who had

given him a long and fulfilling first life. He was a great man, but an even greater father. He had sacrificed everything to refine the Sun Moon Pill so that he could extend his son's life for millions of years.

Father... father... All kinds of emotions roiled inside Jiang Chen. He desperately wanted to shout for his father, but his voice wouldn't come out no matter how hard he tried or how much he concentrated. He frantically searched everywhere, but there was simply no sign of his father.

Father... Jiang Chen's body was trembling before the obelisk. His consciousness was in great disarray and his emotions out of control. His eyes were bloodshot as tears swam in his eyes. But he wasn't aware that any of this was happening. He was too deeply entrenched in the illusionary realm.

Clang! Suddenly, a great tremor befell the world. Row after row of bookshelves toppled over. Books fell from the shelves and scattered all over the floor. Bam! The board over the library's door soon followed suit and crashed down while the thick walls were torn apart like paper. Jiang Chen escaped from the pagoda and noticed that Taiyuan Sky Palace was also crumbling into ruins.

A mysterious force of destruction had appeared in the sky and was destroying everything, including the palace. Powerful experts swarmed out of the palace, but every single one of them collapsed before the destructive force. Blood splattered throughout the air. Their bodies were like blood-filled bags that exploded whenever they came into contact with the mysterious force.

"Chen'er, Chen'er! Run!" Jiang Chen suddenly heard his father yell in his ears. The Celestial Emperor was someone who was always calm and composed. At this moment, however, his voice was filled with a horror and despair that had never been heard before. He leapt off his throne and came running towards Jiang Chen at lightning speed. It looked like he was trying to save his son from something. Unfortunately, the destructive force struck and

trapped the emperor when he was only twenty meters away.

Bam! The force swept through the emperor, instantly crushing him into smithereens. No! Jiang Chen's mind almost fell apart when he saw the realistic and incredibly ruthless scene. There was constant ringing in his ears, and all he could see was pitch black. It felt like a million arrows had pierced through his head.

No! Jiang Chen cowered in anguish. He could feel the energy within the sky and earth condense into a lethal arrow. It was about to strike him in his consciousness.

Hmm? Suddenly, a formation appeared all over him. An immensely bright light appeared within his consciousness, which was on the verge of collapse. It was frighteningly powerful, like the boundless stars in the Milky Way. Convoluted thoughts, negative emotions, and all kinds of destructive forces were condensed into a single arrow. However, they were all caught by the bright light before they could reach the deepest parts of his mind.

Jiang Chen was trembling violently and immediately opened his eyes. Upon further inspection, he realized that he was still sitting before the obelisk. He was drenched in sweat from head to toe. The constant ringing in his head was slowly dissipating. His mind was also becoming less and less confused.

Why did this happen? Jiang Chen shuddered in trepidation. He was too deeply entrenched in the illusionary realm and was thoroughly frightened by the mortal dangers he had faced. He shuddered again at the thought of what could have happened.

Whatever happened before was merely illusion, but the destructive force formed by his negative emotions and inner demons had been anything but fake. His mind had genuinely been under siege. His conscious would have instantly collapsed if his inner demons had penetrated it. He would have become a slave to his inner demons and a walking corpse, never to regain consciousness. The chain seal within his conscious had been

triggered during that extremely precarious moment. Like the boundless Milky Way, the chain seal devoured all of the negative energy. It protected Jiang Chen's mind from danger.

The chain seal was ever-present, and he had first noticed it when he broke through to the origin realm under the Precious Tree of the Rosy Dawn in the Precious Tree Sect. The mysterious seal had caused a strange anomaly in the heavens and earth when he had broken through. There were nine droplets surrounding the chain seal. It didn't seem particularly remarkable or unique, but there was a frightening amount of power contained within the seal. It made the restricted area within Jiang Chen's consciousness seem like the vast cosmos, deterring all unwanted visitors. He could sense exactly how much power was contained within the seal. If released, it could instantly destroy the entire Divine Abyss Continent.

It's the seal again. Jiang Chen sighed gently. However, there was no doubt that the seal had helped greatly this time. In fact, it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that it had saved his life. Jiang Chen was now certain that the seal had something to do with his reincarnation. It was definitely somehow related to his father from his previous life.

Why were the convoluted thoughts that attacked my consciousness and the incident at Taiyuan Sky Palace so realistic? Did I truly live through all of that in my previous life? His mind was still a little hazy and fuddled. He was now a lot more vigilant after soaking up this lesson.

The Pelagic Dragon Obelisk is truly a difficult test. Jiang Chen finally knew why it was the ninth and final obelisk in the pagoda. A powerful obelisk that reflected the darkest inner demons of a cultivator was indescribably scary.

Chapter 1003: The Final Hurdle

Having just passed a harrowing trial, Jiang Chen actually felt a lot more relaxed but remained on his guard. Tests from the Pelagic Dragon Obelisk pervaded everywhere. At the same time, outside the Veluriyam Pagoda, most of the seven emperors' geniuses had already been eliminated. Less than a handful remained within the complex, enough to be counted with one hand.

Young lord Zhen had the flashiest performance up until now. He had shocked everyone by already reaching the ninth Veluriyam Obelisk. According to initial estimates, he would surely be stonewalled cold by this final challenge. But it had been ten days since then. He was perfectly intact and hadn't been eliminated.

Aside from Sacred Peafowl Mountain's young lord, young master Ji San shone the brightest. He had made his way about the secret realm of battle like a fish in water, scoring victories in the arena one after another. It was a tangible testament of his improvement. According to rumors, he had plans to challenge the eighth Veluriyam Obelisk at precisely three months on the clock. This year, young master Ji San and young lord Zhen were the only two geniuses to pass the seventh Veluriyam Obelisk. The others had either eschewed challenging it entirely or had been kicked out already.

The greatest element of suspense left for this year's Veluriyam Pagoda gathering was whether the young lord would conquer the ninth obelisk. Immediately after that was whether Ji San would do the same with the eighth. Was Coiling Dragon Clan's young master going to become the second-darkest horse right after his friend? If that question had been asked before the geniuses' entrance into the Pagoda, everyone would have thought that it was a joke. But now, no one dared say that Ji San had no hope whatsoever!

The young master was showing a surprising amount of hidden talent. Who would have thought that Ji San, ranked twenty-first,

would be able to defeat the seventh Veluriyam Obelisk and succeed where rank one Li Jiancheng had failed? It was these untold surprises that made the road of martial dao all the more splendid. Defying expectations was how legends were born. On the whole, this year's Veluriyam Pagoda gathering had produced an above-average crop of geniuses. Uniformly speaking, they were a significant cut above the norm. It was considered rare in past years for just one or two geniuses to pass the sixth Veluriyam Obelisk. This year, there were six who had. As for the seventh obelisk, previously unsurpassed for the past several millennia—two geniuses had appeared, and both had been able to move past it. What was more, that wasn't the limit of their abilities. Thus, the current Veluriyam Pagoda Gathering was loaded with geniuses.

Jiang Chen was presently zeroed in on his goal. Completely attentive, he fused into the ninth obelisk's realm once more. This time, however, his mind was much clearer. None of the negative emotions prevailed, and the images shifting between reality and illusion could no longer invade his consciousness any more. The lesson that he had been taught had reinforced Jiang Chen's ocean of consciousness a fair bit.

The Pelagic Dragon Obelisk underwent many other changes after that, presenting fresh trials each time. However, Jiang Chen's consciousness seemed to have been spontaneously transformed into something much mightier. A layer of protective power had awakened in the chain seal, fortifying his mind several times over. No matter how fierce the obelisk's trials came at him, how manifold its alterations were, Jiang Chen was as immovable as a mountain. His dao heart was unshaken.

This state of mind allowed him to exist for the next half-month in a relative state of tranquility. It was something that Jiang Chen himself hadn't been able to foresee. The chain seal destroyed the Pelagic Dragon Obelisk's intimidating attacks on his consciousness each and every time, crushing them utterly. It thus appeared that

the obelisk's tests had been greatly reduced in difficulty.

Jiang Chen knew fully well, however, that that wasn't actually the case. In fact, there were signs of quite the opposite. It was simply because his harrowing experience had caused his consciousness to improve qualitatively. The obelisk's own increase paled in comparison to it. If his count was correct, only three days remained in the month-long test.

The final days are sure to hold even more insane trials. Whether I'll be able to enter the Six Palaces of Heritage... that'll be decided here and now. The ninth Veluriyam Obelisk had mentioned that crossing its threshold represented entering into the might of a true dragon, fit to rule the heavens. To do otherwise was to remain a common fish in the dust of the world.

He didn't agree with such an extreme statement, but he didn't like being called a common fish either. I will bravely bear whatever comes my way in the next three days. Even if the sky falls, I shall withstand its aftermath! The young lord had no fear. Indeed, infinite courage was a prerequisite for even making it this far. His heart was completely placid as he prepared for the trial's final throes.

On the first day, Jiang Chen felt as if he'd been pushed into a boundless sea. Innumerable whirls and waves beat constantly against him from every direction. He was set adrift like a leaf in the vast ocean, liable to be swept away at any moment. He descended into a state of hibernation, keeping only his consciousness awake and alert. He could not let himself be overwhelmed by the trial's power.

The first day was finally over. Despite the immense strength of his consciousness, Jiang Chen felt a wave of fatigue wash over him. His trials were far from concluding. The scenery changed on the second day. This time, a burning expanse surrounded him. Flames shot up to the sky, tens and hundreds of yards tall. The crackling conflagration seemed to set the entire world aflame. There was fire

everywhere, a sea of crimson as far as the eye could see.

Jiang Chen felt like a pill in the cauldron of an ancient master, unable to decide anything relating to his own fate. The flames burned with a refining truth, pummeling Jiang Chen's consciousness with extreme force. The terrifyingly fiery inferno appeared capable of rending his very flesh to incinerate the soul within. It threatened to burn up his entire ocean of consciousness.

Jiang Chen grit his teeth. He knew that his fate in the Veluriyam Pagoda depended on his performance in these next two days. If he endured, the Veluriyam Pagoda would unveil to him an even deeper set of mysteries. If he faltered in his attempt, all of his previous efforts would be useless. There wouldn't have been much point in coming this far. With this in mind, he pushed onwards and finally survived another day. The sea of fire carried a power that had almost destroyed his mental self-defense mechanisms.

The final day was also the scariest. Heralded by a howling tempest of dust, it barraged him with countless daunting trials. Most fearsome were the powerful arrows, formed of frightening presences that shot themselves at his ocean of consciousness.

Though it had begun with only a handful of arrows, there seemed to be more than ten thousand at the end. At the same time, the sounds of hooves and steel were also audible. The din of a million heavenly soldiers charging at him filled his eardrums. It was supremely intimidating. Anyone who possessed a consciousness of even slightly lower caliber was likely to have their mind shattered on the spot.

"Well come on! Bring it on!" Though his consciousness was being sorely tested, Jiang Chen nevertheless yelled silently. "I will pass this trial. I must pass this trial! Even if heaven falls and earth crumbles, I shall remain immovable!"

The latent ferocity hidden at the bottom of Jiang Chen's heart had fully risen to the top. Outside the Pagoda, the seven emperors

and their retinues waited with bated breath. Strangely enough, there was no sign of casual conversation or rampant speculation. The audience had only a single focal point on their minds: young lord Zhen. Less than half a day remained. If the young lord was able to resist being ousted past that point, then the Veluriyam Pagoda would usher in a radical change. All eyes were fixated upon the image formation. Though they did not know how much torment young lord Zhen was experiencing at the moment, the image told them at least part of the tale. The young lord was in a difficult position, but far from the brink of disaster.

Some were pleased by this state of affairs, others quite bothered. Emperor Shura's faction was especially disappointed. Young lord Zhen's meteoric rise placed him squarely in front of them as an insurmountable obstacle. All of their ambitions had been crushed by it. The only thing they could do now was watch from the outside. Time and time again, young lord Zhen broke records and created miracles. Emperor Shura's number one genius, Li Jiancheng, was now just an observer.

Aside from Emperor Vastsea, who was one of Emperor Shura's staunchest supporters, none of the other emperors spared their outpourings of praise. They commended young lord Zhen because he had their wholehearted approval. With a genius like him, it was impossible for Sacred Peafowl Mountain's fortunes not to be preserved. Young lord Zhen carried so much momentum that Emperor Shura's faction was essentially irrelevant.

There was no possibility that Emperor Shura himself could do better than Emperor Peafowl. He lacked substantially in both strength and charisma compared to his peer. Young lord Zhen had the advantage of youth on his side. The potential and popularity he showed had signs of surpassing even the Emperor Peafowl of yesteryear. In fact, it was easy enough to say that he already had, considering the direction he was headed in.

The public opinion of the entire Veluriyam Capital was moving

in a certain direction—that young lord Zhen would succeed Emperor Peafowl as leader of Sacred Peafowl Mountain. After that, he would naturally become the city's absolute ruler and master. In the hands of such an amazing genius, Veluriyam Capital was sure to move towards ever greater success. It was the final day. Was Jiang Chen going to pass the trial?

Everyone looked forward to that moment of truth. Even if young lord Zhen failed now, his challenge to the ninth Veluriyam Obelisk was enough to leave his name in the history books. If he did succeed, the exploit would be even more exciting. Perhaps this was the new beginning of Veluriyam Capital's road to glory. Even Emperor Peafowl felt a tinge of anticipation. For him, it was a hitherto unexperienced sensation.

Chapter 1004: Inheriting the Six Palaces

For both Jiang Chen and his observers outside, the last day seemed by far the longest. He felt hopeless exhaustion. There seemed to be many mountains sitting on his consciousness, their heavy weights pressing down on him. The endless trials of the three past days had forced his stamina to its limit. If the test had gone on for three more days, Jiang Chen would surely have been strained to the point of failure. He was truly at his wit's end this time. Thankfully, a day only consisted of twenty-four hours. No matter how long one sometimes seemed, every day eventually came to an end at some point.

When the last second of the final day finally passed, the ninth Veluriyam Obelisk gave off a cheerful ring. In the next instant, the Pelagic Dragon Obelisk shone with a brilliant light. The entire obelisk shimmered a jadeite green, giving off the appearance of an enormous stele of emerald. In that moment, its radiance was unparalleled.

"Congratulations on conquering the ninth Veluriyam Obelisk, young man. You are the third genius to have done so for the past hundred thousand years! Do not be reluctant or surprised. You are every bit worthy of being called a 'genius'. Your erstwhile accomplishment proves this, and the Veluriyam Pagoda welcomes true geniuses like you. Guard your heart. You are about to be brought into the territory of the Six Palaces of Heritage."

Hurriedly, Jiang Chen steeled his heart and kept his consciousness closed. He prepared himself as well as he could. Before long, the ninth obelisk's verdant light enveloped the heavens, the earth, and the void. It sucked in Jiang Chen entirely. It was as if there was a dimensional gate that had now been opened. In the next moment, Jiang Chen disappeared entirely from in front of the obelisk. The obelisk became silent once more. All of its former light and radiance had completely disappeared, as

if they had never appeared in the first place.

“Has he broken through?”

“He… he really passed the ninth Veluriyam Obelisk?”

“Genius… a real genius… I didn’t think that I’d be able to see someone break through the ninth Veluriyam Obelisk during my lifetime!”

“Young lord Zhen has nothing stopping him now!”

“The young lord of Sacred Peafowl Mountain has broken through the ninth Veluriyam Obelisk… Sacred Peafowl Mountain’s fortunes are truly unwavering!”

“That much is obvious. Me personally, I’ve never even considered the other six emperors capable of challenging Sacred Peafowl Mountain, much less replacing it.” Discussion and exclamation took place all around, quiet but incessant. They were filled with shock and envy, and perhaps a dash of sour jealousy as well.

Emperor Peafowl’s mood brightened all of a sudden, his eyebrows unfurling. A lock had been removed from his heart, lightening up his burden many times over. Good… that kid didn’t let me down, huh. The emperor’s joy was entirely heartfelt. It was his unique eye for talent that had led him to Jiang Chen. Finally, he was able to see his labor come to fruition. After conquering the ninth Veluriyam Obelisk, Jiang Chen would inevitably enter into the innermost layers of the Veluriyam Pagoda. Perhaps he would have the opportunity to shed some light upon its archaic mysteries.

Beginning from only moments after his breakthrough, the news began to fervently spread throughout the city’s streets. It made its way into every house, around every corner. All at once, Veluriyam Capital began to boil over with activity. Its residents came out from their homes into the lanes and avenues, shouting and

cheering in celebratory joy. This was a stirring occasion.

Though the other geniuses had returned to the secret realm of heritage in order to spend their spare bits of remaining time on the seventh Veluriyam Obelisk, all of them ultimately failed including Zhou Yan, Shui Rutian, Ye Piaoling, and the rest. It was quite the stark contrast to Jiang Chen's bold accomplishments. Despite being ranked amongst the top five in this year's Ranking of Young Lords, there were obvious limits to their ability. Their potentials were remarkable, but nevertheless lesser than Emperor Peafowl's of yesteryear.

After their humbling challenges concluded, young master Ji San began to prepare for his own challenge of the eighth Veluriyam Obelisk. His posture and momentum were rather like a king's return. Only two people remained in the Main Pagoda: Jiang Chen and Ji San. The other geniuses from the Ranking of Young Lords had all been eliminated by now. Having awakened his draconic bloodline, his skill in cultivation grew by leaps and bounds, his drive onward relentless.

He had spent his time in the secret realm of battle, accumulating a great deal of practical combat experience in the process. Through the endless melee, his heart had also grown in fortitude. Ji San was a promising youth indeed. When his true dragon blood's advantages emerged, he began to progress at a breakneck pace. Doing so allowed him to gather up enough confidence to try breaking through the eighth Veluriyam Obelisk. Though the outside audience did not look well on the attempt, something that even he himself gathered, Ji San used his actions to mock them once again.

He showed no cowardice before the obelisk, and was actually almost like a fish in water. Jiang Chen had been someone who had practiced the art of producing images, but the same was true for Ji San. He had a draconic bloodline, after all. Compared to his sworn brother, he lacked only in experience and prowess. The eighth

Veluriyam Obelisk's demand for him to cultivate its image wasn't particularly hard for the young master.

After feeling things out for a while Ji San amply succeeded in conquering the eighth Veluriyam Obelisk as well. Nevertheless, he knew that he had overreached a little in his advancement. It wasn't that he lacked the potential, but rather that he had overexerted his own body. He knew that Jiang Chen had broken through the ninth Veluriyam Obelisk, but blood didn't rush to his head because of it. He had no intention of challenging the ninth Veluriyam Obelisk straight away.

"Brother, you're sprinting so quickly ahead of me. I should follow through on my own ideas too, right? I have two extra years thanks to beating the eighth obelisk, so I have plenty of time to ready myself for the ninth." The trial had been a baptism of sorts. Ji San traded some of his flightiness away, replacing it with calm. He had enough self-awareness to understand that he had absolutely no chance of going against the ninth obelisk at present. Why rush things? He had a two-year reward to spend, no?

Ji San was perfectly content with his own position. He no longer cared much about perceived face. He would be eager enough to compete with any genius, but he was completely and utterly deferential towards his sworn brother's ability. Without the true dragon blood Jiang Chen had given him, Ji San would have been stopped much earlier at the fifth Veluriyam Obelisk, or the sixth at most, perhaps. That he was now qualified to challenge the ninth Veluriyam Obelisk was something he hadn't even dreamed of.

……

Wrapped in the strange interdimensional passage, Jiang Chen waited for an indeterminate amount of time before he felt his entire body relax. Subsequently opening his eyes, he found that he'd been taken to an expanse of glittering space. More accurately, an endless starry sky served as his backdrop. A river of stars, glistening like a belt of jade, blazed in milky radiance.

Are these the Six Palaces of Heritage? The question popped into Jiang Chen's mind as he observed his surroundings. Within the infinitely extending astral vault were many buildings, ancient and great. The age of the structures could be felt in the sense of antiquity they exuded.

Each stone and pillar were steeped in tradition. Each masoned step had over a hundred thousand years of history. Each inch of ground held the footsteps of countless sages from ages past. Standing upon a plain patch of ground, Jiang Chen looked at the timeworn buildings around him in awe. It was as if he had traveled back into the distant past through a dream. Each time he raised his head, a fan of galaxies greeted him.

"Welcome to the Six Palaces of Heritage, young man. That's right—the buildings you perceive before you are precisely what you think. Don't be surprised. The Veluriyam Pagoda was a work of extraordinary ingenuity. Neither divine nor demonic can discern its truths. It has countless formations embedded within, and everything you see here is merely an intersection of the mysteries of space and time, accomplished through the profoundness of yet another formation. Each man that enters may see something entirely different."

The explanation wasn't easy to understand. Jiang Chen was just barely able to comprehend it. The Six Palaces of Tradition had likely been created by an ancient master, or even several, through many methods of fusion and synthesis. In this way, a grand complex had been erected from nothingness.

"Young man, the area you are currently in is surrounded by the Six Palaces. When the transportation formation is activated, you will be moved randomly to one of them. Before that, however, you have an opportunity: do you choose to depart, or explore?

"If you choose to depart, you'll have another chance to re-enter the Veluriyam Pagoda. If you choose to explore further and fail in your exploration of the first palace, you'll get another chance to

return to the Pagoda at that time as well. Therefore, most clever people choose to explore.

“Do you see the taiji diagram before you? The white area means exploration, and the black means departure.”

Jiang Chen considered it for a moment. If failing on the first palace gave him another chance anyway, what was the point of departing? Since I’m here, there’s no reason for me not to explore. I need to understand what these Six Palaces are all about, anyway. His curiosity and desire for victory fueled him. Without hesitation, he stepped into the white area of the taiji diagram.

“Very good, I admire your courage. I hope that you will give a marvelous showing in the first of the six palaces.” The voice disappeared, and a frost-white light began to glow in the white area around Jiang Chen. Its rays swept across his body, dissipating it into thin air. When Jiang Chen’s footsteps touched ground again, he was in one of the palaces.

“You’re finally here, young man.” An old, weary voice sighed, filled with unfathomable sorrow and desolation.

Chapter 1005: Honored Master P'eng

Jiang Chen was slightly surprised when he heard this voice. This wasn't the voice he'd heard earlier. A voice had guided all the cultivators since they entered Veluriyam Pagoda. It had been the same voice up until he entered this palace of heritage. But this time, it was different. Although it sounded just as weary as the previous voice, there was a trace of human emotion behind this new voice. It sounded like a mix of some worry, joy and surprise. He thought that the voices of Veluriyam Pagoda were all set up through the mysterious application of some formations. So why was there such a complicated mix of feelings behind this new voice? Why did it sound like someone was talking to him in real time?

Jiang Chen calmed himself down and started looking around boldly. This place was a palace alright, but it wasn't nearly as dazzling or luxurious as he imagined before he came in. It was ancient and mysterious. Every inch of land in this place seemed to have been marked with the passage of time. However, it was completely empty. He couldn't find a place where someone might be talking to him from at all.

"There is no need to search for me, young man. You can't detect me with your current consciousness. You only need to remember one thing, and that this is the first palace of the Six Palaces of Heritage, the Skykun Palace."

"The Skykun Palace? Are you actually a real person, senior? Or are you a voice of some formation?" Jiang Chen asked curiously as he blinked.

"Heh. Is there even any doubt that I'm real?" The voice let out a wry laugh. "That being said, I suppose I can't exactly be called a real person. That's because I'm barely more than a speck of true spirit right now."

“Oh? What do you mean?”

The voice sighed. “That’s a long story. Are you sure you want to hear it? It’s a long story that go on for at least three to five years. It won’t be strange if it goes beyond that.”

Jiang Chen’s expression changed when he heard this answer. He hastily waved his hands. “In that case just forget about it. Why don’t you pick just the important points and tell me.”

“Important points? I’ve been trapped here for more than a hundred thousand years, and at this point everything in this world is but floating clouds to me, including your so-called important points. I’ll make this short. First, I’d like to congratulate you. You are the third youngster for the past one hundred thousand years to make it to the Skykun Palace. You are also the youngest genius out of all of them. Tsk tsk, you’re not even over thirty years old, and yet you’re able to step into the Six Palaces of Heritage. I wonder why I feel that you’re slightly different from the previous two entrants?” The old man seemed to have been piqued by Jiang Chen. His lazy voice had become a bit more energetic than before.

“You know my true age, senior?” Jiang Chen was slightly surprised.

The old man broke into laughter. “Are you joking? I knew what kind of underwear you’re wearing the moment you stepped into this place, much less your true age.”

Jiang Chen also laughed wryly when he heard this response. He knew that it was no problem at all for an expert to see through a secular cultivator’s true age after they’d reached a certain height of power. Therefore, this senior’s cultivation was likely above even a great emperor like Emperor Peafowl. After all, Jiang Chen’s disguise was good enough that it fooled even emperor level experts. They only knew that young lord Zhen was younger than usual, but no one could tell exactly how young he was.

However, the master of Skykun Palace was able to see through

him completely. No secret of his were a secret to this old man, but he hadn't even seen this old man's face yet. Jiang Chen felt very depressed at this point. It was completely unfair. He didn't object to this intrusion of privacy, however. He was a guest in his host's territory right now, and he would have to follow the rules. He smiled awkwardly and asked, "You sure like to joke, senior. May I have the honor of knowing your name?"

"Mm hmm, my name is Honored Master P'eng. [1] Remember it well, young man. You're a bit interesting, more interesting than either one of the two fellows who came in before you. That being said, if you are planning to challenge my palace, I'm not going to go easy on you just because you're interesting, okay?" Honored Master P'eng said while cackling strangely.

Jiang Chen didn't expect him to go easy on him from the beginning. That being said, he still had no idea what the Six Palaces of Heritage are, nor their relations to the Veluriyam Pagoda.

"Senior P'eng, please forgive me if I say that I am utterly confused and that I have no knowledge regarding this Six Palaces of Heritage in my head at all. Should you not dispel my doubts first before we begin anything?"

It was true that Jiang Chen was very confused right now. a challenge wasn't a bad thing, but he wasn't willing to play into the old man's game while completely blind either.

"Alright, I suppose you haven't been an eyesore so far, so I'll tell you some things that you may need to know. As the name 'Six Palaces of Heritage' might suggest, there are a total of six palaces in this place. The Six Palaces of Heritage is the true core that surrounds and protects Veluriyam Pagoda, and we, the masters of the six palaces are responsible for protecting the Six Palaces of Heritage. We have no freedom, and we are not allowed to leave our posts. Freedom is possible only when a new master succeeds Veluriyam Pagoda."

“Freedom? Were you forced into your roles, senior?” Jiang Chen asked in surprise.

“Duh! Who in their right minds will want to stay in this shitty place for one or two hundred thousand years if they weren’t forced? Worse, we weren’t allowed to move too much or go beyond our designated areas like a tortoise.”

“But why?” Jiang Chen grew even more puzzled.

“We have no idea when the Veluriyam Pagoda will welcome its new master. As powerful as we are, not even our lifespan is infinite. Therefore, we have no choice but to use a secret art and limit a year of physical activity into a single day. That is the only way to minimize the rate of loss of our life force. We would’ve been dead already even if we were actually turtles with ten thousand years of lifespan. It’s been more than a hundred thousand years, you know.”

Jiang Chen abruptly came to a realization after hearing the old man’s explanation. He could understand what he meant. Back at the Boundless Catacombs beneath the eastern kingdom, Mang Qi and his people were trapped inside a formation. The only reason they managed to survive until this day was because they had employed various secret arts.

This type of secret art was rather torturous. Imagine having an entire year’s of physical activity shrank to just one day. This meant that the cultivator who employed this art could only perform a day of activity in an entire year. How dull must it be to live like this year after year? However, the benefits were huge. If a year’s time was shrank into a day, then the cultivator would’ve only ‘lived’ for a couple hundred thousand days even though a couple hundred thousand years’ of time had passed. A couple hundred thousand days translated to just a couple hundred years only. That amount of lost time didn’t matter much to an expert of this level.

“Senior, you said you were all forced into your roles? Who on

earth was the person who did this to you?”

“Who else could it be?” Honored Master P'eng sounded depressed. “The master of Veluriyam Pagoda is the one who did this to us, of course. That old bastard, he even forbade us from mentioning his name. But so what? If I can’t mention his name, then I’m going to call him an old bastard. That cunning, cunning bastard!”

“What do you mean? It doesn’t sound like being cunning has anything to do with forcing you into your roles.”

Honored Master P'eng sighed. “Well, I suppose we weren’t technically forced into our roles. The thing is, I have a feeling that I was fooled by him. Ah, a single slip has truly caused everlasting sorrow. Sigh, back then I often flaunt myself to be unrivalled in speed. One day, this old bastard came to me and said that he wanted to race me. Since the stake of this race was a treasure that tempted me greatly, I agreed to the bet, and just like that, I lost my whole lifetime of freedom. Depressing. Just depressing!”

Judging from Honored Master P'eng’s tone, Jiang Chen roughly guessed a bit of what really happened back then. If he wasn’t mistaken, this Honored Master P'eng was tricked by the creator of the Veluriyam Pagoda and fell into a trap, thus losing the race. That was how Honored Master P'eng lost his freedom and became one of the protectors of Veluriyam Pagoda.

“Do you understand now, boy?”

Jiang Chen reined back his urge to laugh and nodded obediently. “More or less, yes. The fact that you’ve kept your promise and accepted your loss proves that you are a trustworthy person when it comes to gambling, senior. I dare say that you are a virtuous person considering how trustworthy you are.”

Honored Master P'eng had been trapped here for more than a hundred thousand years, and it was only natural that he was bored out of his wits. That was why tears nearly appeared in his eyes

when he heard Jiang Chen's words. Just how many years had it been since he heard such warm words? Although the flattery wasn't great, he had stewed in boredom for at least a hundred thousand years. Even the worst flattery would sound like the words of god to him. That was why Honored Master P'eng felt so happy that he couldn't wipe the grin on his face. "I see that your insight is quite good, boy. That is a rare trait to have. Ah, back when I still traveled the world I've never gone back on a bet. I may have lost a bet once in a while, but I have and never will lose my honor."

"Mm. Now that's how a senior should act. This kid is impressed." At this point Jiang Chen had realized that this old man loved to hear compliments.

"Mm hmm, you are an interesting person, boy. Since I'm feeling so good today, I shall speak a bit more about the Six Palaces of Heritage. By entering the Six Palace of Heritage, you have won the right to obtain the inheritance of Veluriyam Pagoda. But that is all. If you truly wish to inherit the Veluriyam Pagoda, you must go through challenges presented by each of the Six Palaces of Heritage first."

Jiang Chen nodded slightly. He had guessed that this was the case earlier.

"Keep in mind that not all the protectors of the palaces are as good tempered as I am. That being said, you are a quick witted boy. I doubt that you'll be hated by any one of the protectors of the palace. However, if you truly possess outstanding talent, then it doesn't matter if everyone here hates you. That's because all six protectors of the Six Palaces of Heritage have sworn to their inner demons that they will never ignore the rules due to personal preferences. Therefore, even if I am very fond of you, the difficulty of the challenge you will soon face is the same as the two previous challengers who entered the Six Palaces of Heritage. In this regard, I will always be impartial."

Jiang Chen understood just how strict the rules of the Six Palaces of Heritage from Honored Master P'eng's repeated warnings that he wouldn't go easy on him.

"I can't go easy on you, but I can give you some friendly tips within the limits of the rules. To be honest, I wish for every genius who enters this place to succeed no matter how much I may dislike them. If no one succeeds, we won't be able to fulfill our end of the bet and complete our responsibility. We won't have a shot at obtaining freedom either."

"A shot at obtaining freedom? Why's that?" Jiang Chen was puzzled by this.

"Oh, it's very simple. That old bastard's scheme was watertight. Not only did he want us to protect this Six Palaces of Heritage, he even requested that we assist the new master of Veluriyam Pagoda for ten thousand years. He's totally planning to enslave me for the rest of my life, that old bastard. Damn me for being possessed by greed and falling for his devious trap..." Honored Master P'eng sounded like he was swearing through clenched teeth, but for some reason Jiang Chen felt that he didn't actually hate the former master of Veluriyam Pagoda. His tone wasn't right.

Of course, this was just Jiang Chen's feeling. "But senior, if you really hate that senior that much, surely you won't perform a sloppy job when you are serving the new master he requests you to assist, will you?"

"Well, of course not. I may hate that old bastard, but I made a bet and I am a man of my word, so I don't hate him that much. Also... haha. To be honest, if it wasn't for that old bastard, there's no telling if we might've survived the ancient demonic calamity. You win some and you lose some, I guess..." Honored Master P'eng sounded a little sad here. He seemed to be recalling something from a very, very long time ago.

1. The characters for his name are Kun and Peng. Together they

make the name of a mythological fish that could change into a roc. K’un is the name of the fish, and P’eng the name of the roc. You’ll see later why P’eng was chosen.

Chapter 1006: An Angry Old Man

Jiang Chen could tell that there was a long history between them. Honored Master P'eng was expressing his resentment towards the master of Veluriyam Pagoda, but one could tell from his voice that he didn't just bear hatred for the late master. Rather, it was an odd mixture of gratitude and grudge.

"Alright, the past should remain in the past. Young lad, what is your name?"

Jiang Chen wanted to tell the keeper his fake name, but he quickly realized that there was no need to do so within the pagoda. "This young lad is called Jiang Chen, but because of certain reasons, I'm now going by the name of Zhen Shi. I am the young lord of Sacred Peafowl Mountain of Veluriyam Capital."

"Sacred Peafowl Mountain?" The elder shook his head in a confused manner. "Never heard of it."

"Senior, you've never heard of Sacred Peafowl Mountain?" Jiang Chen was quite taken aback.

"Is that weird?" Honored Master P'eng asked in response.

Jiang Chen smiled wryly. "Sacred Peafowl Mountain is the current ruling faction of Veluriyam Capital. They've been the rulers for many millennia."

"Only a few thousand years?" Honored Master P'eng laughed. "Do you know how long I've been cooped up in here? According to my modest estimates, I've been here for over 150,000 years. Remember, this is only a modest estimate. The last time a genius managed to enter the Six Palaces of Heritage was more than 20,000 years ago. Jiang Chen immediately caught the meaning behind his words.

To the citizens of the capital, Sacred Peafowl Mountain seemed like a faction with very long history. After all, many generations

had come and gone ever since Emperor Peafowl came into power a few thousand years ago. This span of time was miniscule when compared to the entire history of Veluriyam Capital. The last genius who managed to enter the Six Palaces of Heritage did so over 20,000 years ago. The Sacred Peafowl Mountain probably didn't exist back then. Even if it did, it was probably a faction with little power. Jiang Chen wasn't too overwhelmed by the large span of time. After all, he was someone who'd lived for millions of years. A few hundred thousand years was still a long time, but not enough to shock him greatly.

Honored Master P'eng was a little surprised when he noticed Jiang Chen's bland reaction. "Jiang Chen lad, you don't seem very surprised by the large span of time. Does a young lad like you really know what it entails?"

"Of course." Jiang Chen replied blandly.

"Yeah, right." Honored Master P'eng was skeptical. "If you knew, why would you have such a bland reaction after hearing such an astronomical number?"

The two geniuses that he'd met before were extremely dumbfounded when they heard the number of years at play.

"Esteemed senior, must I show an over exaggerated expression for you to be content?" Jiang Chen smiled wryly.

"Uhh..." The elder was at a loss for words. However, he still stood by his opinion. "Since you understand, why don't you explain it to me?"

"Even a great emperor realm cultivator will only have a life expectancy of five to ten thousand years. Rarely do they live for more than ten thousand years. One can only be free from the baggage of time when one reaches the empyrean realm. Even then, one still couldn't consider oneself immortal. The empyrean realm has its own trials and tribulations. It's why they say an immortal has five paths to degradation. A few hundred thousand years is still

an extremely long time to an empyrean realm cultivator.” Jiang Chen spoke with extreme detail, rendering Honored Master P'eng speechless. He’d originally thought that Jiang Chen was nothing but an ignorant child. Never in his mind did he think that the young lad would give him such a detailed response.

It seems like the young lad truly understands the meaning behind the years. But he is no more than thirty years old! How can he maintain such composure after hearing about such a great span of time? How steady must his dao heart be to do such a thing? He was growing more and more interested in the young lad and gave a long and sincere sigh. “Good lad. It seems like it’s not luck that brought you here. Not bad. You are very interesting. I’ve begun to think quite highly of you now. By the way, you mentioned that you are now going by the name of Zhen Shi. Why is that?”

The old man had been lonely for over hundreds of thousands of years. He could no longer stop talking now that he had company. Jiang Chen was more than happy to converse with the old man. The more he could find out about the the Six Palaces of Heritage, the more advantageous it would be for him. He regaled the old man about his past without leaving out any details, up to the destruction of the Regal Pill Palace. Nothing was hidden, including what had happened at the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect and the Myriad Domain.

Jiang Chen knew that there was no need to hide the truth. After all, Honored Master P'eng was a powerful cultivator from the ancient times who had lived through the ancient demonic calamity. Based on what the old man had just said, he was most definitely an empyrean cultivator. Jiang Chen wasn’t sure about his cultivation level, but he was more than certain that the heritage found within the Myriad Domain wouldn’t be enough to incite the slightest interest in him. The elder remained silent after hearing his story. He sighed gently after a some moments had passed.

“It seems that after the ancient demonic calamity, the Divine Abyss Continent has gone downhill with each passing generation. What happened to the great ancient races? Where are they now? Upper Eight Regions? What is that? Is it part of human territory?” Honored Master Tiankun knew nothing about the current state of the outside world, but Jiang Chen could tell that the old man wasn’t the least bit satisfied with the current state of the human race. He also viewed the Upper Eight Regions with great scorn.

“The Upper Eight Regions, Mid Regions, and Lower Regions form the entire human domain. This junior has no information regarding the other great ancient races as they are no longer found within the human domain or the ancient texts. Oh, this junior has heard rumors about an island called the Myriad Abyss Island. It’s said that many powerful beings have gone into seclusion on that island after the great ancient war. I believe they left because the qi in the human domain was exhausted after the great battle. It was no longer a suitable place for an empyrean expert.” Jiang Chen explained carefully.

“Horse shit!” Honored Master P'eng yelled agitatedly. “Everything you’ve heard is a lie! The only reason they survived the ancient battle was because they were nothing but cowardly turtles! All experts with a backbone joined the battle against the demons! Many powerful experts fell in battle! Only vermins that hid and contributed nothing to the battle was able to live to the end!” He let out another long sigh. He seemed very agitated and upset. “I’m also a coward. The biggest coward of all!” He blamed himself.

Jiang Chen immediately consoled him. “Esteemed elder, It isn’t your fault. You were sealed in this place by the master of Veluriyam Pagoda.

Honored Master P'eng sighed. He calmed down a little after Jiang Chen consoled him. However, it didn’t take long before he raised his voice again. “Young lad! If the human realm is truly at the state

which you've described, I can guarantee that the demon race's revival will spell the end of the human race!"

Jiang Chen's heart skipped a beat. "Is the situation really that dire?"

"Of course it is!" Honored Master P'eng no longer bothered to affect the air of a sage elder. "Many great races have united together as one army during the ancient battle. Even then, we were barely able to stop the demon army's advances after paying a great price. We lost almost eighty percent of our army. Of course, we culled their army in great numbers as well, but there were a few demons that were too powerful for us to kill. In the end, we were forced to seal them away.

"What does sealing them away mean? It means that we weren't able to eliminate them down to the roots! It means that the demon race will one day rise from the ashes!" The more he spoke, the more riled up he became. "I can't believe that these shameless cowards actually ran away and hid themselves in a corner of the world! They are the scum of the ancient ages! Even if they are no longer alive, their descendants are surely as cowardly and spineless as them!"

Jiang Chen couldn't agree with these words. His most beloved Huang'er was from the Myriad Abyss Island, and was most definitely not a coward. She was a very compassionate person, and would never run away from danger. They'd braved through all kinds of dangers together. However, Jiang Chen didn't correct the Honored Master P'eng. The old man was very hot-headed by nature, and was sealed in the pagoda for hundreds of thousands of years. The only thing he could do was worry, as he knew nothing about the outside world. It was only natural that he would fail to control his emotions and lose his temper.

"Sigh... no wonder there have been so few geniuses that could enter the Six Palaces of Heritage. Even an old man like me is beginning to despair. Who knows? Maybe a demon spawn will be

next to enter the six palaces.” Honored Master P'eng began to laugh at his own words. “Indeed, that is something that will never happen! The moment someone with a demon’s bloodline enters the pagoda, he will be struck down by the formations! By the way Jiang Chen, you mentioned that the strongest cultivator in the human domain is only at the emperor realm?

Jiang Chen gave the question some thought before he replied. “I’ve met an expert beyond the emperor realm, but he wasn’t from the human domain. Instead, he calls the Myriad Abyss Domain, home.”

“Don’t even mention those cowardly turtles.” Master Tian Kun was fuming with anger.

Jiang Chen smiled wryly. “Esteemed elder, you shouldn’t make generalized assumptions. That elder is definitely no coward.”

Master Tian Kun snorted. “Even if he isn’t, the same couldn’t be said for his ancestors and his elders!”

It was at this point that Jiang Chen realized it would be futile to reason with the old man. However, he remained firm that Elder Shun was no coward. How much courage would it take for someone to escape the Myriad Abyss Domain with Huang’er, despite the strict rules? It was a great act of treason to the Myriad Abyss Domain. Their lives would be forfeit if they were ever caught. However, Elder Shun was willing to risk it all for Huang’er. He didn’t just take Huang’er away. He also went back to Myriad Abyss Domain to look for the Requiem Wood.

Jiang Chen didn’t know Elder Shun well, but he still respected him greatly. He didn’t think badly of Master Tian Kun either, but treated them both with equal respect. Within Honored Master P'eng, he could sense the valiance and courage from a person of ancient heritage. The ancient expert also had a great amount of vitality. It was beyond anything seen on a modern cultivator.

Jiang Chen explained a little more about the situation in the

Upper Eight Regions. The elder cursed in a low voice every once in awhile as he listened. “What a bunch of bastards! They aren’t even close to being as valiant as us, but they sure are quick to master infighting! How can they murder each other when the human race is in such a great decline?”

These words were obviously meant for Eternal Celestial Capital and Ninesuns Sky Sect.

Chapter 1007: Kunpengs Meteoric Escape

Even Jiang Chen could feel a great sense of danger with his limited knowledge of the human domain, much less Honored Master P'eng's dissatisfaction with the current state of the human race. The atmosphere of the human race was one in which they had to restructure themselves in search of salvation. If the current state of affairs were to be allowed to continue, the moment the demon race broke through the ancient seals, they would absolutely engulf the human domain. Jiang Chen had seen the signs since a long time ago.

There were just too few people with knowledge and experience within the human race right now. In the olden days, someone like Emperor Peafowl would be at best an average cultivator, but in present times he was practically one of the strongest leaders of the human domain. Most importantly, there weren't even that many people at Emperor Peafowl's level at all. The fact that there weren't many people in Veluriyam Capital who could understand the emperor's viewpoint showed just how few in the entire human domain that truly possessed his visions and aspirations. There weren't many people who would consider the fate of the entire human race either.

More than a hundred thousand years of peace had made humans grow comfortable and lazy. They had gotten used to living a self deceiving life. They knew of the demon race's existence, but they refused to face and deal with this problem. They all lived in the wishful thinking that the demon race couldn't possibly cause any trouble after they'd been defeated and sealed away during the ancient times. Even if the demon race would eventually come back one day, no one thought that they would be so unlucky as to be born in that unfortunate era. That was why there were very, very few experts who really took the long and broad view like Emperor Peafowl. This was also the biggest obstacle the human domain was

currently facing right now. They refused to be convinced unless they were faced with grim reality.

From Jiang Chen's perspective, he had gone into the desolate wildlands and witnessed the demon race's activities with his own eyes. That was he had a deeper recognition of this threat than most people. He couldn't help but say, "Senior, I've actually gone into the desolate wildlands where the demon race was sealed not long ago. I've even gone into the sealed grounds."

"What?" Honored Master P'eng's tone abruptly changed. He sounded so shocked it was like he'd struck by thunder. What did you say? You've gone into the desolate wildlands? The sealed grounds no less?"

"Yes." Jiang Chen nodded. "Holes are starting to appear on the desolate wildlands' seals. Not long ago, some cultivators actually came out as carriers of wood demon parasites. Luckily, I discovered the parasites early and eliminated them before any real harm could be done. I've already made some arrangements at Veluriyam Capital because of this, but unfortunately they are only effective against the wood demon parasites. These arrangements are useless against other types of demon. It almost feels impossible to stop the demon race from infiltrating the human domain."

Honored Master P'eng muttered angrily to himself. "The demonic calamity is here. The demonic calamity is already here. Tell me quickly, Jiang Chen, what else have you seen in the desolate wildlands?"

Jiang Chen didn't try to conceal his knowledge. He relayed everything he learned from the desolate wildlands. "When I left, I used the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect's formation to seal up the gaps in the seal. An average cultivator should find it very hard to destroy."

"Good, you did good in this matter. Unfortunately, this measure can only prevent human cultivators from walking to their deaths.

In the end, your formation isn’t powerful enough to stop a true demon expert that has awakened from their slumber.” Honored Master P'eng sighed. “I didn’t know that you’ve inherited the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect’s legacy. Interesting, very interesting. You’re definitely looking like a person of great destiny, so I’ll give you a warning, boy. One of the protectors of the Six Palaces of Heritage is an Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect expert. It’ll be your boon when you finally meet him.”

“Oh? There’s actually a survivor of the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect in this place?” Jiang Chen’s curiosity was immediately piqued.

“What do you mean by that? Don’t tell me everyone in Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect is dead?”

Jiang Chen had no choice but to repeat everything that was written on the ancient sect’s stone tablet.

Deep veneration rose in Honored Master P'eng’s heart as he praised, “See? They are an example of the moral integrity of an ancient expert and the honorable bearing of an ancient sect. The Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect may have sat only between a first and second rate sect, but they were uncommonly talented in the dao of formation. Even a sect like them was willing to go all out against the demon’s invasion and die rather than dishonor themselves!”

Honored Master P'eng didn’t need to tell him this. Jiang Chen had already been very impressed with the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect’s moral integrity even before today.

“Luckily for all of us, the area you were in was at the edge of the ancient war zone. The demons sealed in that place are pretty weak. At the very least there were no empyrean level demons or demon lords there.” Honored Master P'eng sighed quietly. “Still, if just a few demon emperors and demon monarchs awaken were to awaken from their slumber, I doubt the human race can hold out

considering the scattered mess that is the human domain right now."

Jiang Chen agreed with this point. All of the various regions of the human domain had a terrible culture. There was an extreme amount of infighting and disunity within the human race. If a demonic calamity were to happen now, it would easily sweep through the entire race. But such was the reality of things and no one person's strength could prevent this tragedy from happening. Considering the level of degradation the human race was in already, perhaps a calamity was exactly what was necessary to wake them up a little.

"Boy, the Emperor Peafowl you mentioned is a somewhat interesting person. However, one Emperor Peafowl is not nearly enough to save us from this predicament. I believe that you are able to enter Veluriyam Pagoda because fate has chosen you to walk the path of great destiny. Therefore, I very much hope that you can conquer the Six Palaces of Heritage and become the new master of Veluriyam Pagoda. That old bastard may be a terrible person, but his morals were in the right place when the demon race is involved. The reason he built the Veluriyam Pagoda is to leave behind his inheritances. As one of the leaders of the human race, he knew very well that he could perish at any moment during the war. He was prepared to die for the greater good. That is why I do not loathe him even though I dislike him for what he did to me." Honored Master P'eng sighed quietly. "Now, it almost seems that his choice to imprison us is correct. His treatment of us is unfair, true, but from a long term standpoint I believe that he made the right choice. After all, what use is an ancient inheritance if it were to fall in the hands of cowards?"

Jiang Chen still had no idea who the creator of Veluriyam Pagoda was, but he had no doubt that he was a great expert. Honored Master P'eng wouldn't only have dislike for this person for a hundred thousand year's imprisonment otherwise. Only a person

of incredible charisma could've achieved this feat.

"Alright, we've talked about many things, and I believe you've learned everything you needed to know. So? Are you going to challenge the next palace, or are you going to head out and prepare yourself first?"

Jiang Chen thought for a moment. "I'm here already, so I may as well give it a try. Speaking of which, do I have a second chance to try again if I were to fail this challenge?"

"That's right. You will have a second chance at every palace."

Jiang Chen nodded as a surge of heroism rose in his heart. "Then I shall give it a go. Please give me the challenge, senior."

"Give the challenge, you say?" Honored Master P'eng smiled wryly. "I'm a prisoner of this place, and I cannot regain my freedom until you've completely inherited the Veluriyam Pagoda. Therefore, the challenge you are about to face was set up since a long time ago. My Skykun Palace cares for absolute speed, and here you may learn my Kunpeng's Meteoric Escape. Once you've succeeded, you will be met with a challenge of speed. If you can beat this challenge of speed, then you will have overcome Skykun Palace itself. Your reward for overcoming my palace will be a bloodline that you may use to refine a pair of Kunpeng Wings in the future."

Speaking of escape arts and wings, Jiang Chen actually had two such arts in his arsenal already. One of them was the Cicada's Wings, the other the Featherflight Wings. However, Jiang Chen also knew that both wings were far inferior compared to the Kunpeng Wings. The Kunpeng race was an incredibly powerful divine beast race even during the ancient times. The dragons, vermillion birds, kunpengs, peafowls, black tortoises and white tigers were all sovereigns of the ancient divine beasts. Honored Master P'eng had obviously assimilated a kunpeng bloodline into his human body, or he couldn't have possessed such a bloodline or

cultivated the Kunpeng's Meteoric Escape.

Honored Master P'eng obviously had a very good impression of Jiang Chen. He consoled the lad. “Boy, you are the genius that I like the most out of every genius I’ve met since ancient times, and you are also the genius I believe to have the greatest chance at succeeding Veluriyam Pagoda. I am only going to tell you that the challenges of the palaces tests your potential and not your current cultivation. So don’t be afraid because you think that your current cultivation is lacking. Remember, the challenges you face changes accordingly to your realm, but the one thing that doesn’t change is their goal to test your potential. If your potential is good enough, then you will have a glimmer of hope to succeed.”

Jiang Chen felt reassured after hearing this. The setup was even more perfect that he thought. If this wasn’t the case, if the tests were specifically targeted at a cultivation level that was above and beyond his current cultivation level, then there was almost no hope for him to succeed in these challenges. The inheritances prepared by ancient experts would likely cause headaches even for great emperor cultivators.

“Remember, the Six Palaces of Heritage tests your potential, destiny and overall strength. If fate truly has sent you here, then your chances of success will be greater than any other challenger.” Honored Master P'eng explained patiently. “You have half a years’ time to get ready. Do you see the words and images of inheritance around the Skykun Palace? Your task is to find the right method to cultivate the Kunpeng's Meteoric Escape from these words and images. Then, you will have to cultivate the art. Once half a year is over, the challenge will officially begin.”

“What do you mean finding the right method to cultivate the Kunpeng's Meteoric Escape? Are some parts of these words and images of inheritances actually wrong?”

“Of. Course. This is also a part of the test. If you lack even the martial talent to distinguish the proper cultivation method, if you

couldn’t even pass the test of the theory of martial arts, then what’s the point of even letting you attempt the challenge?” Honored Master P'eng said impatiently.

Jiang Chen chuckled in understanding. This wasn’t a problem for him. If there was one thing he dared boast about, it would be his foundation and insight of martial dao. He knew that the inheritances of the Six Palaces of Heritage must be pretty high level, but no matter how high level it was it couldn’t possibly be higher than his father, the Celestial Emperor, could it?

Chapter 1008: Reactions From All Sides

The four walls of Skykun Palace were recorded with words and images of all sorts of inheritances. Their sheer number overwhelmed Jiang Chen. It was actually quite difficult to find one cultivation method from these dense walls of information. Even if the cultivation method was correctly identified, two or three months would probably have passed since then. However, the challenger was only given half a year's time to prepare before the first challenge began. Therefore, the challenger was actually quite pressed for time.

Of course, should the challenger fail to pass the challenge, they would be given a second chance. This rule applied at every stage. However, all cultivators were naturally competitive. No one was willing to use this second chance if at all possible. After all, what if the inheritance was somehow altered because they used the second chance? Therefore, Jiang Chen had no plans to use the second chance. He only wanted to use the chance to leave.

Although the Veluriyam Pagoda and the outside world shared the same flow of time, a cultivator could cultivate ten to twenty times faster in the Veluriyam Pagoda. He had entered the Veluriyam Pagoda for a very long time, and he was rather concerned about the situation outside. This concern was only enhanced by his promise to the Coiling Dragon clan lord. Several years had passed by already, so the Five Elements Augmentation Art was likely going to fail very soon. Perhaps the clan lord was caught up in anxiety at this very moment. Jiang Chen didn't want to become a person who breaks his promises. He planned to head out after he completed this first challenge at Skykun Palace.

"This isn't it."

"This isn't it either..."

"This doesn't match up."

“Hmm, this one’s too stiff as well.” Jiang Chen activated his eye arts of God’s Eye and the Evil Golden Eye in full and swiftly looked everywhere in Skykun Palace. The mental component of this cultivation method had been broken up, so he had to connect them together segment by segment.

That was why he searched around for clues very carefully. If even one segment was connected incorrectly, the entire art wouldn’t be able to function. Thankfully, Jiang Chen possessed the memories of his previous life. His martial dao foundation was probably far superior to even the master of Skykun Palace, Honored Master P'eng himself. He didn’t expose too much of his foundations. Obviously, it would be bad if he performed too well.

At the very least, he needed to limit his skills to a level that was appropriate to his age. Even if he were to ‘overperform’, he should still make sure that it didn’t defy common sense too much. Otherwise, a busybody like Honored Master P'eng was would be sure to ask questions until he got to the bottom of the whole thing. There were many things that Jiang Chen found no reason to conceal, but the secret of his previous life was one thing he couldn’t reveal to anyone.

He made steady progress as he searched around for the complete cultivation method. He’d finally gathered all the mental arts and physical arts about a month later. After he looked over his work several times and was sure that he had completed the cultivation method, he finally relaxed and started cultivating.

Although Honored Master P'eng was trapped, Skykun Palace was his domain. His consciousness was spread throughout this whole place, so he was able to grasp everything that was going on. He was very surprised to see that Jiang Chen was able to gather all the physical arts and mental arts of the cultivation method in just a month’s time. He exclaimed in silent admiration.

“I guess the human race hasn’t lost their ability to pass on their bloodline, even though they have largely faltered since the ancient

war. There are still geniuses in every generation. This little guy seems to be a lot more talented and perceptive than the previous two geniuses who came in here." Honored Master P'eng had incredible insight, so it was only natural that he could distinguish who was superior and who was inferior. Plus, Jiang Chen had obviously outperformed the previous two geniuses.

"He's only at the ninth level sage realm, but he actually managed to find the answer from this random cluster of inheritances in just a month's time. This kid sure makes you expect great things from him." At the same time, he couldn't help but guess. "Could this kid be the successor that the old bastard was searching so hard for?"

Honored Master P'eng allowed his first impression to rule his judgment. He had an extremely good impression of Jiang Chen, so he couldn't help but want to raise Jiang Chen to greater heights when he saw how outstanding his performance was. Factually speaking, he also thought that Jiang Chen's talents had absolutely exceeded the previous two cultivators. Fortune-wise, the sheer amount of opportunities Jiang Chen had run into despite being only twenty years old or so was also proof that he was absolutely a genius of great destiny. If he truly possessed all the necessary qualities, then...

"He might actually be able to become the new master of the Veluriyam Pagoda." Honored Master P'eng couldn't help the strange excitement he was feeling. After being trapped for more than a hundred thousand years, no one wanted freedom more than he.

However, this freedom wouldn't be obtained easily. First, someone must show up as the heir. Moreover, they needed to serve their new master for ten thousand years after they had regained their freedom. This was also a rule that couldn't be changed. Every single protector of the Six Palaces of Heritage was a proud fellow. If their new master's character and temperament disgusted them, they would probably not enjoy serving their new master. However,

Honored Master P'eng found that this little fellow named Jiang Chen was very much to his taste in every aspect. That was why he was looking forward to his success.

“My freedom is all in your hands, little fellow!” Honored Master P'eng didn’t deny that the previous two geniuses who showed up were also true geniuses. However, his impression of them was far inferior to his impression of Jiang Chen. It was because he saw a unique quality in Jiang Chen. Moreover Jiang Chen was very honest, and he had spoken about his experiences without attempting to hide anything at all. Even rarer was the fact that Jiang Chen wasn’t afraid to talk back. He didn’t yield unconditionally just because the master was the protector of Skykun Palace. Honored Master P'eng didn’t mind a bit of arrogance at all.

……

On the outskirts of the Veluriyam Pagoda, the powers beneath the seven great emperors’ command were still absorbed in the reality that was young lord Zhen’s successful breakthrough of the ninth Veluriyam Obelisk. The entire Veluriyam Capital had sunk into wild merriment too. This wasn’t a grand event, but it might as well be one. In fact, it was a grand event that couldn’t be enjoyed even once in ten thousand years. Young lord Zhen’s successful domination of the ninth Veluriyam Obelisk was an achievement that surpassed all other geniuses to date. Right now, not only did young lord Zhen’s glory overwhelm his peers, but it also overwhelmed even the seven great emperors’ and the thousands of years of history of Veluriyam Capital.

Some were happy and others troubled.

At a secluded place in Veluriyam Capital, several holy kings of the Eternal Celestial Capital had gathered together. Saint Holy King Mu, Saint Holy King Ke, Holy King Bei, and Mie Chenzi, the challenger who’d forfeited against Jiang Chen, were all present. When they heard that young lord Zhen had successfully conquered

all nine Veluriyam Obelisks, these Eternal Celestial Capital cultivators all wore grave expressions on their faces.

“Everyone, I must say that the Eternal Celestial Capital may be facing a great trouble in the near future.” There was no point in hiding anything, so Saint Holy King Mu spoke frankly.

“Yeah. I never thought that that kid would be this talented. He hid himself extremely deeply.” Saint Holy King Ke also sighed.

But Holy King Bei asked timidly, “Saint Holy Kings, are you two absolutely sure that that young lord Zhen is Jiang Chen of Regal Pill Palace?”

Frankly speaking, this was where they felt the most defeated. Despite all their scheming, they weren’t able to confirm if young lord Zhen was Jiang Chen even to this day. Although they had made some deductions and felt that young lord Zhen was Jiang Chen, upon closer inspection they felt that the lord, particularly in the arena, didn’t feel like the legendary Jiang Chen.

“What do you think, Mie Chenzi?” Saint Holy King Ke asked.

When Mie Chenzi was challenging the Ranking of Young Lords, he had surprised everyone by surrendering and leaving in a hurry. Although he had managed to escape with his life, he’d also become a joke in Veluriyam Capital. With that being said, no one knew who Mie Chenzi really was.

“I believe that we may have over thought things. If young lord Zhen truly is Jiang Chen, then he has no reason to conceal his identity right now.” Mie Chenzi continued, “I agree with the general opinion outside. This young lord Zhen is probably a pawn that Emperor Peafowl has raised in secret.”

Holy King Bei also nodded. “I believe that this line of deduction is more logical too. If we were Emperor Peafowl, we wouldn’t have left a genius successor at the secular world to waste his life, would we? That animal Jiang Chen was born in a tiny place called the

Eastern Kingdom. He also wasted time in other tiny places like the Skylaurel Kingdom and Precious Tree Sect. No matter how you look at it, he just doesn't seem like a pawn that Emperor Peafowl was secretly raising."

Saint Holy King Ke sighed softly. "That is the logical deduction, yes. But if that is the case then why can't I help but feel worried about young lord Zhen's success?"

Saint Holy King Mu also agreed. "I too can't help but feel that this young long Zhen may become a threat to the Eternal Celestial Capital in the future."

Mie Chenzi and Holy King Bei exchanged a glance with each other. Their status was inferior to the two saint holy kings, so it wasn't in their place to raise an objection. However, they definitely thought that the two saint holy kings were overreacting.

A while later, Saint Holy King Ke sighed. "Forget it, it's too late to talk about this anyway. Whether or not young lord Zhen is Jiang Chen, we must be prepared for this possibility. In case he really is Jiang Chen, the Eternal Celestial Capital will be met with a crisis in the future. Who knows, if he becomes the true master of Sacred Peafowl Mountain tens or hundreds of years later, he may start a war against us."

Everyone's expression changed when they thought of Veluriyam Capital starting a war against the Eternal Celestial Capital. Mie Chenzi couldn't help but say, "It can't be that easy, can it? Even if he is Jiang Chen, and even if he takes control of Sacred Peafowl Mountain, it still doesn't mean that he controls the entire Veluriyam Capital. I heard that not everyone in Veluriyam Pagoda shares the same opinion. For the longest time, Emperor Shura was seen to be the most likely cultivator to succeed Emperor Peafowl, and then this young lord Zhen suddenly appeared out of nowhere. I doubt that Emperor Shura's faction would be willing to obey his commands."

This analysis did make a lot of sense. Saint Holy King Mu also nodded. “In that case, what we need to do now is to make an ally out of Emperor Shura and support him. As long as Veluriyam Capital falls into Emperor Shura’s hands, the Eternal Celestial Capital will be able to rest without worries. If it’s only Sacred Peafowl Mountain that we have to face, then what is there to be afraid of?”

Veluriyam Capital was strong because they had seven great emperors. Moreover, the only reason the Sacred Peafowl Mountain was almost on par with the Eternal Celestial Capital’s strength was because they had a heaven-defying expert like Emperor Peafowl. Otherwise, if the emperor were to be excluded from the equation, his faction was far inferior to the Eternal Celestial Capital in terms of overall strength.

Chapter 1009: Accepting The Challenge

It didn't take long for the Eternal Celestial Capital to set their plan in stone.

……

A dark silhouette shot across the sky. Jiang Chen flew past like a shooting star.

Whoosh whoosh whoosh! Jiang Chen flew across the sky repeatedly, each successive attempt quicker than the previous. I've yet to reach my limits. I can go faster! He mused deeply and shot through the sky again. He was a meteor in a race with the moon.

It had been four months since he first started cultivating the Kunpeng Meteoric Escape. He'd improved immensely within the period of time. His execution of the art was even more perfect, and with a much greater speed than before after he'd combined it with the Featherflight Wings. He'd broken through his limit yet again.

Tsk tsk. This is truly an incredible art. My current speed is likely beyond that of some high level emperor realm experts. Jiang Chen was innately quick. However, his speed had improved by leaps and bounds after he cultivated the Featherflight Wings in tandem with the Kunpeng Meteoric Escape. He was also incredibly surprised by the immense improvement in speed.

Cultivators of the same level will no longer be a match for me in terms of both absolute and relative speed. In fact, most emperor realm cultivators will not be faster than me. With so much improvement to my absolute speed, I'm certain that I can now escape an emperor's domain with speed alone!

The only art without counter was speed. Speed was in itself an advantage. The faster one was, the more advantage one had. Speed was by nature, powerful. It amplified and enhanced the power of an attack. It wasn't a mere tool to use in escape. It was incredibly

useful in real battle, where speed often gave overwhelming advantages. It didn't matter if one was on the offense or defense, the one with the fastest speed had the greatest chance of winning. After all, defending against a faster enemy was no easy task.

The first palace challenge was gradually approaching with each passing day. Jiang Chen already had good mastery over the Kunpeng Meteoric Escape, but due to his perfectionist nature, he didn't slack off even in the slightest for the remaining days. He continued to dedicate himself to the cultivation of the art. Even the Featherflight Tactics paled in comparison to this particular art. The Featherflight Tactics was more dedicated to the art of escape. Most of its specialty was meant for escaping. It was a very useful survival art. Emperor Featherflight had often relied on it to escape from desperate situations.

Even then, it was still no match for the Kunpeng Meteoric Escape. This art didn't just share many advantages that the Featherflight Tactics had; it was also superior in many different ways. For example, it gave him much more relative speed in battle, allowed for much more nimble and agile movements, and also improved his response time. It was an art that trained one's speed for all situations.

Moreover, this art also contained innate destructive powers. When the Kunpeng Meteoric Escape was brought to the extreme limit, it would give rise to very powerful heat energy and a formidable severing light. Many opponents were instantly killed by the sharp severing light. Even if they somehow evaded it, they would be consumed by the large amount of heat generated. It was an art that gave rise to offense while on the defensive, and vise versa. It was a truly formidable art. Jiang Chen was impressed by it even though he had studied arts from the heavenly planes.

The more he learned about the art, the more extraordinary it became. His admiration for Master P'eng only grew as time went on. Half a month later, his half year time limit was finally up.

Master P'eng's voice was heard yet again.

"Jiang Chen, half a year's time has passed. You should enter the testing grounds. If you pass the challenge, it means you've passed the Skykun Palace. Even though you are given one retry in each round, I truly hope that you won't use it here. In fact, it'd be better if you never have to use it."

Jiang Chen could sense the encouragement within Master P'eng's voice. Warmth filled his heart. He yelled loudly, "Esteemed elder, don't worry! I've comprehended the art very well, and my cultivation has gone perfectly! If the challenge only tests for potential and not cultivation level, then I have full confidence for success!"

This was absolute confidence. The old man laughed. "Hehe! Good lad! I like your confidence! Based on my observations from these past months, I can only say say that I'm truly stunned by your potential. The gates to the testing grounds are already open. There will be a formation outside the gates to adjust the difficulty according to your cultivation level. You may go in."

Jiang Chen no longer hesitated and walked towards the gate with big strides. There was nothing left for him to worry about at this point. He was as calm as still water. The thought of losing never even crossed his mind. He was dedicated to only one thought: Conquer the challenge!

A sealed door was slowly opening on the right side of Skykun Palace. A beam of light appeared from within the gaps and ensconced Jiang Chen's body. The light scanned his body and confirmed that his cultivation was at the ninth level sage realm. The formation began to pulse, and Jiang Chen soon disappeared within the bright light.

When the bright light subsided, he realized that he had been teleported into the testing grounds. There was a wide river before him. Its waters were as blue as the Milky Way, making it seem like

a blue meandering ribbon. The opposite bank was shrouded by fog.

“The first round is a test of absolute speed. Do you see the river? You must reach the opposite bank with the Kunpeng Meteoric Escape before the first wave crashes and before the second rises. If a drop of water lands on you at any given time, you’ll have failed. Remember, it isn’t just a test of absolute speed. It’s also a test of your agility and response time.”

Jiang Chen took a deep breath while looking at the blue river. Its waves were rising and crashing at very quick speeds. There was almost no time interval between the two motions. It was quick and smooth, like walking. The right leg naturally followed the stride of the left leg. To complete this challenge, one would need an extremely quick response time and a full comprehension of the situation. There was only a breath’s time between the two wave motions. One had to make their move within that instance.

All efforts would go down the drain if one mistimed it by even a fraction of a second. A drop of water landing meant immediate failure. Jiang Chen noticed a very powerful barrier between the two banks. The maximum height that he could reach with the Kunpeng Meteoric Escape was around ten feet above the river. This meant that if he failed to catch the correct timing between the two wave motions, he would be splashed by the water from the rise of the second wave.

Jiang Chen took in another deep breath and stared at the river. He fully immersed himself in the river’s rhythm. He suddenly made his move. The Kunpeng Wings expanded and contracted behind him. A golden silhouette shot through the air, leaving afterimages in the shape of an arc above the river. As the silhouette landed on the opposite bank, a wave rose and crashed into the afterimage.

Jiang Chen was already on the opposite bank. He had executed the art flawlessly, timed it immaculately, and achieved the perfect speed. There wasn’t even a drop of water on his body. He had

completed the challenge with grace and finesse.

“Congratulations, you’ve passed the first round. The next round is a test of relative speed.”

There were three rounds of testing in the Skykun Palace challenge. The first round tested for absolute speed, the second round tested for relative speed, and the last round tested for his comprehension of the art.

The testing grounds for the second round were in a secret chamber. Jiang Chen could feel an odd pressure within the chamber. There was an aura within the chamber that gave the occupants a certain feeling of oppression.

“The second round is a test of relative speed and also response time. You’ll be attacked at random from all sides of the room. It’s up to you to respond to these attacks and evade them. Remember, you’re not allowed to return any hits. You can only evade by relying on your art. The test will last for fifteen minutes.”

Upon hearing those words, Jiang Chen immediately expanded his consciousness and fully activated Psychic’s Head. He had entered a state of apprehension. Every corner of the room, every detail, and every inch of moving air was now within his grasp. Even the hair on his body was now a sensor.

He suddenly heard an abnormally quick movement of air with his ears. He immediately executed the art and moved away slightly. A fast arrow shot past his body, narrowly missing him. He kept the light speed art activated and continued to dodge left, right, and center.

Arrows were being shot at him from all sides like torrential rain. They weren’t just fast, but also extremely sharp. He was truly besieged from all directions. However, he had already experienced a similar attack in his earlier years. Back when he was in the Eastern Kingdom, he faced a similar barrage of sword intent. However, the difference in difficulty was as clear as night and day.

He couldn’t even afford to make a millimeter of mistake due to the intense speed. An arrow would strike him if he made even the slightest mistake. Fifteen minutes wasn’t really that long. But an attack of this intensity, density, and speed would absolutely be a test for anyone.

After all, one was only allowed to dodge and couldn’t even return any hits. This round of testing required much more accuracy than the one prior. Beads of sweat were dripping from the tip of his nose.

Chapter 1010: News That Stunned Jiang Chen

Despite his sovereign mastery over the art, Jiang Chen was quite strained by the test of strength and speed. A test like this surpassed the limits that someone of his cultivation level could sustain. Because the trial taxed him past his breaking point, it was a significant hurdle with regards to both reflexes and stamina. Thankfully, he had two lifetimes' worth of experience to guide him. He was able to calm himself during crucial moments, keeping both his direction and composure.

The longer he fought, the more tenacious he became. In between dodges and shifts, he felt countless bursts of inspiration rise to the top of his mind. Initially, Jiang Chen had found the task to be quite daunting. In these last few moments, however, he gleaned ideas increasingly frequently about how to pick up his own speed. Thus, he found it easier to survive with every passing second.

The fifteen minutes were up before long. When all of the attacks ceased, Jiang Chen's clothes were absolutely drenched, permeated with sweat from the inside to out. He hadn't expected a mere quarter-hour to consume so much of his energy and stamina. Admittedly, this particular test had been exceptionally exciting. It was perfect in essentially every aspect. It had tested speed, reflex, finesse, and conscious judgment. Almost everything there was to examine, really.

"I suppose this shows that I shouldn't underestimate these Six Palaces of Heritage. I thought I'd prepared so well for them, but there had been only a fine line between success and failure just now nevertheless." The past round of trials made Jiang Chen warier of the palaces' difficulty.

"This is only the first of many to come. The later trials will surely be harder rather than easier. If I rush headlong into things, the

slightest amount of hubris will be enough to cloud over my heart. Any impurities therein just now would likely have ended in my elimination." Thinking back on it, he was both relieved and somewhat grateful.

Jiang Chen adjusted himself a little before exiting the secret room, coming into a wholly different world. The test this time was to verify Jiang Chen's grasp of the Kunpeng's Meteoric Escape technique. Naturally, passing this round meant his successful weathering of the entire Skykun Palace. Accordingly, he would be eligible to receive the appropriate rewards: the kunpeng bloodline.

The kunpeng bloodline could be counted as a token, a mark of Master P'eng's trust. Receiving the bloodline was equivalent to receiving both the palace and the master's acceptance. The test was somewhat similar to that of the Veluriyam Obelisks. Jiang Chen needed to analyze the Kunpeng's Meteoric Escape with his consciousness. Standing before a gigantic stone obelisk, Jiang Chen injected his consciousness into the structure. Instantly, the shadow of a kunpeng appeared on the obelisk's surface.

Roar! The beast reared its head, roaring into the sky. Then, it began to move with comet-like haste.

Jiang Chen's task was to use his consciousness to understand the this art. In fact, he needed to follow and even predict the beast's path. It was a job that required meticulous attention to detail. He quickly accustomed himself to the rhythm needed for the trial.

Someone of his intuitive caliber was easily able to tail the meteor's shadow, plotting out all of its potential paths forward. Such fine control tested not only the keenness of perception, but also a thorough understanding of the technique's delicacies. Any inaccuracies in comprehension meant abject failure. Besides the aforementioned control, sufficient foresight was required as well. It was a trait that required certain foundations as well. Without sufficient practice with this technique, how could there be foresight? Jiang Chen's extensive experiences with martial

techniques and superb martial talent both granted him insurmountable advantages. It wasn't easy, but it was actually comparatively easier than the second round. After a battery of struggles, Jiang Chen brought this round of testing to its conclusion as well.

"Good lad! I knew that you had it in you." It was Master Kunpeng's joyful voice. "You haven't let me down."

Three successive rounds of testing had drained Jiang Chen of every iota of energy. He had to sit for a while, regaining his strength, before being able to open his eyes again. A pleased smile now hung upon his face. "I appreciate your high hopes, senior master. Truthfully, I only passed by the skin of my teeth."

"I wouldn't say the same." Master P'eng chuckled. "I can see that you're actually quite skilled."

The master rarely praised others. He especially spared junior disciples such gestures, having the notion that youngsters who received too much adulation would become too proud and full of themselves. In this moment, however, his approval was entirely honest.

"Ah, yes. You will receive two things as your prize. The first is three drops of kunpeng blood, which is a token of Skykun Palace's trust. The second is a... spacetime seal."

Kunpeng blood was easy enough to understand from its name. What was a spacetime seal, though?

"A spacetime seal is a talisman uniquely found in the Veluriyam Pagoda. Breaking it will create a dimensional passage, no matter where you are. It will take you inside the Six Palaces of Heritage. Because you've broken through Skykun Palace, you will be taken straight to the next one whenever you do."

"How miraculous!" Jiang Chen was surprised at the seal's effects. He knew that some talismans were potent enough to accomplish

similar things.

However, only masters of the heavenly planes could create such items. Prospective makers had to grasp powerful spacetime mysteries in order to be able to forcefully open such passages. A spacetime seal was an extremely effective lifesaving treasure. No matter how dire one's circumstances, breaking it would instantly return the user to the Veluriyam Pagoda. The architect of the Veluriyam Pagoda had to have been a master among masters.

An expert like that would surely have had a place even in the heavenly planes. Jiang Chen was suddenly filled with curiosity about the Divine Abyss Continent. If this plane really was only an ordinary one, how could it have spawned someone so powerful? To put it another way, why had he been reborn into such a supposedly mundane plane? What kind of power had led to his reincarnation here? Had it been a willful act from his father the Celestial Emperor, or simply a stroke of happenstance?

For now, it was a question without an answer that filled Jiang Chen's heart with doubt. Puzzled by all of this, he sank into deep thought.

"Can I leave the Pagoda right now, then, senior?" Jiang Chen suddenly piped up once more.

"Obviously, you dolt. Anyone who comes into the Six Palaces of Heritage has a chance to leave and re-enter after every individual one. However, before you do, you have to swear on your inner demons that you will not reveal the palaces' secrets. Otherwise, may they consume you totally." Master P'eng sighed. "Those are the rules. The person who built the Veluriyam Pagoda made them, and no one is allowed to break them."

Jiang Chen found these rules to be quite understandable. Those who refrained from entering the Six Palaces had no such opportunity. The formation that sent them away automatically wiped the associated memories clean.

Only those who entered the Six Palaces had the chance to preserve their memories, but that also required them to gain the right of re-entry. If they failed at their single chance and repeated their result a second time, their memories would be wiped away just the same. The Veluriyam Pagoda had perfected its art of secrecy. That was how it had preserved its traditions throughout over a hundred thousand years of heritage. The outside world knew none of its enigmas to this day.

Jiang Chen's subsequent silence made Master P'eng scratch his head. "You're not really going to go outside, are you?" He couldn't help but ask. "If I were you, I would rather stay here and go challenge the second palace when the time comes."

"Senior, I do have to go out for a bit." Jiang Chen cracked a wry smile.

His stubbornness disappointed the master. "If you want to go out, the other palaces have formations that do that as well. Are you sure about this?"

"Yes, I am." Jiang Chen nodded. Having been here many years, he was unsure about how the outside world had progressed while he'd been gone. The heaviest thing that hung upon his mind was the possible premature occurrence of the demonic invasion. The promise he had made to the Coiling Dragon clan lord was another reason he had to leave. Breaking it would likely result in the creation of an inner demon.

Master P'eng was depressed at the young man's resolution. Jiang Chen didn't seem like he was amenable to staying for any reason. "It's rare that there's a kid around to chat with me and alleviate my boredom. Why do you want to go outside, huh? Never mind, never mind, I know you'll have your reasons for this-and-that. Alright, swear the oath."

Jiang Chen immediately swore an oath on his inner demons. Just like a heavenly oath, an inner demon's oath tended to be both

horrific and self-fulfilling.

“You better not renege on that oath, Jiang Chen. If you do, you will be eternally doomed. I’m not just scaring you, you know. The Veluriyam Pagoda’s secrets are linked with the fate, fortune, and future of the human race. There can be no mistakes, no errors, no accidents. Do you understand?” Master P’eng was tireless in his repeated admonishments.

The old master’s seriousness sparked a question in Jiang Chen. “The human race’s fortune? Who built the Veluriyam Pagoda exactly? I hear that the Main Pagoda holds his empyrean decree and relic? Was he—is he—a great empyrean expert?”

Master P’eng smiled serenely. “Empyrean expert? Too young and too simple, my little friend. The so-called empyrean decree and relic are mere smoke and mirrors. They are hardly the things that actually lie at the heart of the Pagoda. Just that old bastard’s elaborate ruse, you see.”

“...What?” Jiang Chen was perplexed. He remembered the first day that he’d come into Veluriyam Capital, still. Back then, Wei Jie had proudly told him, very clearly, that the Veluriyam Pagoda held the first-generation master’s empyrean decree and empyrean relic. All this time, he had thought that they were the most important items the Pagoda held. Given what Master P’eng had just said, was that not the case at all? The decree, the relic, were both just part of a lie?

Chapter 1011: Jiang Chen Exits the Pagoda

Both the empyrean decree and relic did exist. However, that they were the Veluriyam Pagoda's heart was just a diversion. The true heart of the Veluriyam Pagoda was a hundred times more valuable. Though Master P'eng did not clearly say it outright, his tone was verification enough. The creator of the Veluriyam Pagoda was definitely beyond empyrean rank. Thus, the Pagoda's innermost secrets couldn't be as simple as they appeared on the surface.

The things that everyone's seen for over a hundred thousand years is only surface level, huh... how unexpected. So the Pagoda's real secrets haven't even shown themselves yet. Jiang Chen mused to himself. This made a lot more sense. If the Veluriyam Pagoda's secrets had been exposed long before, then there was no way it could stand this long without crumbling.

Other problems aside, the hidden experts of the Myriad Abyss Island were sure to come at any cost if they knew. The secrets of someone greater than empyrean realm were quite attractive indeed. However, just an empyrean decree and an empyrean relic were insufficient to draw those same experts out. Those who lived on the island were descendants of the ancients who had passed on their heritages to the present day. Empyrean realm experts were not uncommon there, and an empyrean decree had little value to the isle's inhabitants.

Empyrean realm experts relied firstly on their personal cultivation and understanding of the dao of heaven. In that way, they could create their own empyrean decree. Refining someone else's empyrean decree was possible as well, but that meant permanently forfeiting further progress in cultivation. Therefore, experts who had any shred of ambition never refined someone else's empyrean decree.

Only emperor realm cultivators at the end of their lifespans, who also had no hope of rising up naturally, would do such a thing. It

was because of this that the Veluriyam Pagoda's empyrean decree and relic had remained unscathed all this time. Some were ambitious enough to lust after those treasures regardless, of course, but anyone who wanted only to pounce on them were unable to enter the Pagoda in the first place.

As soon as they entered into the restricted area, they were relentlessly attacked by the Pagoda's terrifying restrictions. Such schemers came every three to five decades, but they were always slain by the Pagoda's stalwart defenses. As time went on, the entire human domain grew to know that the Veluriyam Pagoda was not a place easily trespassed upon. And so, the number of intrepid thieves decreased.

The empyrean decree was attractive, but it had remained safe for over a hundred years in the Pagoda. That meant that there was no way that it could actually be obtained. If it were otherwise, the decree would be long gone. Historically, even Veluriyam Capital's rulers hadn't been able to touch it. There had been no shortage of powerful great emperors like Emperor Peafowl, but the threat of their mortal lives ending hadn't rendered the decree any closer to their grasps. Just like everyone else, they had been denied entrance to the Veluriyam Pagoda.

The restrictions of the Veluriyam Pagoda were omni-directional and indiscriminate. Aside from the gathering held every sixty years, the Pagoda did not allow visitors within. Anyone who tried was mercilessly struck down. It was different for Jiang Chen now, of course. Because he'd entered the Six Palaces of Heritage and received a spacetime sigil, he was considered half a master. He could enter any time he wanted as long as he had it.

"Take care of your spacetime sigil, kid. Don't let it fall into the wrong hands. Oh, yes, also... use the kunpeng blood I gave you very carefully."

"Is there any special meaning behind these three drops of blood?" Jiang Chen asked curiously.

“No special meaning at all. They’re part of the bet I made with the master of this Pagoda. Each of these is potent enough to turn someone into an empyrean expert. The kunpeng bloodline is an empyrean bloodline, after all. Because the human race is so weak presently, you must be cautious in how you use the blood. If you become the Pagoda’s next master, you’ll need a team of your own as well as an impressive heritage. Therefore, you can use the blood either to gather additional followers and buy their hearts, or you can save them for your future disciples. I only have a single piece of advice: sometimes, less is more.”

Less… is… more.

Jiang Chen thought about it for a second. He had a moment of epiphany. This was an empyrean bloodline. Even a single drop could whip up a crimson tempest in the human domain. A priceless treasure only served to bring out the worst of human nature. Master P’eng was advising him to be circumspect and wise with his confidants. No one who harbored ambition or malice could know about the blood. Otherwise, the only things they would bring him were death and bloodshed.

“You seem to have a bloodline in your body that rivals the kunpeng’s. This is a big surprise, but there is no such thing as too much power. Amongst the races in the ancient times, the human race was one of the weakest. However, humans do have a singular advantage of extreme adaptability. A human can assimilate any bloodline of their choice, and human inclusivity when it comes to blood can be said to be one of the best.”

The human race could survive on any plane. They weren’t the strongest, or even particularly strong at all, but they thrived everywhere because of this inclusivity. No matter the environment and the creatures living there, humans were able to incorporate the advantages of the native creatures and adapt to the harsh conditions. No matter how much they had to alter themselves, their descendants managed to live on. This was the human race’s

biggest advantage. Recognizing that Master P'eng had noticed the true dragon bloodline within his body, Jiang Chen made no attempt to explain.

"Thank you for your wisdom, senior. I must now take my leave. I hope that I may receive your tutelage once again someday." His words of farewell were quite humble.

"The next time you come in, you'll be sent to the second palace." Master P'eng sighed softly. "If we are to meet again, it will be when you conquer all six palaces."

Jiang Chen's gaze was calm and exceptionally steely. "You can be sure of it."

Having said his goodbyes to the master, Jiang Chen walked into Skykun Palace's teleportation formation. Master P'eng's parting instruction echoed at his ear. "Remember the oath you made on your inner demons."

Before the voice fully settled, the formation was already activated. In the next moment, Jiang Chen landed at one of the formation openings on the outside of the Veluriyam Pagoda.

"Hmm? Has someone different come out?"

"Young master Ji San came out three months ago, right? He failed by just a hair's width against the ninth Veluriyam Obelisk. The person coming out right now can only be young lord Zhen."

"Oh, so it is him."

"Why is he coming out now? Did he fail in getting the Veluriyam Pagoda's ultimate heritage as well?"

"Look, look, he's coming over now."

Walking out from the formation opening, Jiang Chen raised his head to glance over in the seven emperors' direction. Both the emperors and their retinues were assembled here still.

Emperor Peafowl's eyes were unfathomable as he looked back at

his young lord. There was a hint of worry there. Jiang Chen's apparently quick departure from the Veluriyam Pagoda was somewhat disappointing for the emperor. He'd wished for Jiang Chen to reap all the rewards he could from the Veluriyam Pagoda, but Jiang Chen didn't look like he'd accomplished anything particularly illustrious. Why had he come out in only six months, otherwise?

"Your Majesty." Stepping forward quickly, Jiang Chen gave Emperor Peafowl a prompt salute. Seeing his acquaintances present relieved the bulk of his worries. Emperor Peafowl was still here, which meant that Veluriyam Capital hadn't seen any significant change in the past few years. That was good.

"You came out." The city's leading emperor smiled faintly, looking back at Jiang Chen with the faintest tinge of inquiry.

"I'll say more when we get back to Sacred Peafowl Mountain." Jiang Chen refrained from elaborating. He scanned his surroundings before opening his mouth again. "How did young master Ji San do, if I may ask?"

"He performed excellently," Cloudsoar Monarch answered hurriedly. "He lacked a bit at the final Veluriyam Obelisk... it was only the slightest bit. A shame. He came out three months earlier than you did, and he's back at the Coiling Dragon Clan now."

Jiang Chen agreed with the remark somewhat. Ji San's untimely loss against the Pagoda's greatest obstacle was a bit of a shame. The fact that the young master had only assimilated the true dragon blood not long ago worked against him. Moreover, Long Xiaoxuan's own bloodline power was not yet at its peak. His draconic friend was only a child currently, and though his blood was pure, its transformative strength could not compare to that of a mature true dragon. Just getting to the ninth Veluriyam Obelisk was an impressive achievement enough.

None of the other geniuses on the Ranking of Young Lords had

come remotely close. By now, a smiling Emperor Vastsea had sidled over as well. “Good nephew Zhen, congratulations on defeating all nine of the Veluriyam Obelisks. What kind of heritage did you obtain in the Pagoda?”

The other emperors were equally interested, following hotly on their colleague’s heels. They wanted to hear it straight from the horse’s mouth. Who didn’t want to know more about the Veluriyam Pagoda? What kind of grand fortune lay behind the nine obelisks?

Emperor Peafowl waved a hand. “Each man’s fortunes are his own. There is no need to ask.”

It was an impressively dominant statement, enough to shut out everyone’s questions produced by curiosity.

Jiang Chen sighed softly. “After the nine Veluriyam Obelisks, I was given the right to try for the empyrean decree. Alas, I faltered in the attempt. Aside from the experience of the exercise, I didn’t receive anything substantial.”

He didn’t want the others to dwell upon what he had or had not done, and so he made a show of being open, telling a white lie. Given that everyone thought that the empyrean decree and relic were at the heart of the Veluriyam Pagoda, he fabricated a falsehood based around that conclusion. It was perfectly believable, wasn’t it? The decree and relic were still at the top of the tower. Everyone could see that, so there was no room to suspect that he’d received the empyrean decree.

Emperor Shura let out an imperceptible breath when he heard Jiang Chen’s words. It was truly wonderful that the young man hadn’t gotten the empyrean decree. Otherwise, all of his ambitions would have been for naught. No matter how confident he was in his own abilities, he could not compete with an heir of Sacred Peafowl Mountain that also possessed the Pagoda’s empyrean decree. He had that much self-awareness, at least.

The rest of the audience had mixed reactions. Some were skeptical, others mournful, still others completely quiet.

Chapter 1012: The First Drop of Kunpeng Bloodline, Gifted

A large majority of people believed Jiang Chen's words. Although they didn't think that he might have given the complete truth, they didn't suspect him too much. In their opinion, the biggest boon one could receive from the Veluriyam Pagoda was without a doubt the ancient Veluriyam King's empyrean decree and relic. Compared to these two items, the rest were insignificant at best. The reason so many people tried to conquer the Veluriyam Pagoda every sixty years was to obtain that ultimate inheritance enshrined within.

Therefore, no one suspected Jiang Chen's words when he claimed that he had been given the chance to obtain the empyrean decree. As long as the empyrean decree and relic were still around and the Veluriyam Pagoda's infinite light still present, it meant that young lord Zhen hadn't obtained the ultimate inheritance.

In that case, there was nothing to be jealous about. His achievement of conquering all nine Veluriyam Obelisks no longer drew as much envy and jealousy as before. After all, what everyone was most concerned and worried about previously was the possibility that young lord Zhen might claim the ultimate treasure. Since it was safe, they immediately felt a lot better.

While conquering all the Veluriyam Obelisks was a great boost to young lord Zhen's reputation, reputation was ultimately a transient thing. The real reward was the training and improvement one obtained during the process of conquering all nine Veluriyam Obelisks. Such benefits weren't visible for everyone to see, so naturally the people didn't feel too strongly about it. Now that Jiang Chen had finally come out of the Veluriyam Pagoda, it meant that this gathering was truly over.

After the seven great emperors' forces had all retreated from the

Veluriyam Pagoda, the curtains finally closed on this grand event. The factions and powers under the seven great emperors' command all returned to their territories with all kinds of thoughts.

Several years had passed since Jiang Chen had entered the Veluriyam Pagoda, but when he returned to Sacred Peafowl Mountain, everything felt as familiar as yesteryear. The first thing he did after returning to Sacred Peafowl Mountain wasn't to return to his abode. Instead, he visited Emperor Peafowl in his palace. He knew that the emperor must have some private questions that he wished to ask him.

"Little Zhen, did you really not obtain anything from the Veluriyam Pagoda?" Emperor Peafowl was still a little curious. He didn't covet the boons inside the Veluriyam Pagoda. He was just unhappy that Jiang Chen had come away with nothing. He thought that a person of Jiang Chen's fortune and destiny shouldn't have ended up empty handed.

Jiang Chen had sworn an oath on his own inner demons, so of course mentioning the Six Palaces of Heritage was taboo. He smiled calmly. "Your Majesty, the most critical thing I've received on this journey is the training, so of course I've benefited a little from the experience. However, I really didn't obtain that empyrean decree or relic."

Jiang Chen purposely diverted Emperor Peafowl's attention towards the two items.

The emperor sighed quietly. "The empyrean decree and relic. Everyone believes that these two items are the ultimate inheritance that exists in the Veluriyam Pagoda, but I've spent a great deal of time meditating about it, and I just have a feeling that these two items may not necessarily be the final inheritance."

Jiang Chen was very surprised to hear this. Was Emperor Peafowl really this enlightened? If he hadn't heard the truth from

Honored Master P'eng's own mouth, he might have believed that those two items were the ultimate inheritance of the Veluriyam Pagoda himself.

Naturally, Emperor Peafowl had no idea, but his words were proof of his incredible level of enlightenment. This was truly surprising. But of course, Jiang Chen wasn't in a position to agree. He only responded, "The Veluriyam Pagoda is too big. I only hung around in the secret realm of heritage while I was inside. I didn't even have time to check out the secret realm of battle or the secret realm of adventure."

"It's a non-issue. Your gains are definitely the greatest out of everyone who entered the Veluriyam Pagoda because you've conquered all nine Veluriyam Obelisks with your might. Even if there are no physical rewards, I still believe that your knowledge and experience in martial dao exceeds that of all other participants."

"It's unfortunate that I failed to fulfill your expectations, Your Majesty." Jiang Chen could see a trace of disappointment from Emperor Peafowl's eyes despite his attempts to conceal it.

Emperor Peafowl let out a quiet sigh. He was a little disappointed, but not because of Jiang Chen's performance. He was feeling sorry for Jiang Chen's loss. Sadly, it seemed that the Veluriyam Pagoda was just too powerful. Even a genius like Jiang Chen wasn't able to conquer it.

"It's alright. The fact that you were able to conquer all nine Veluriyam Obelisks is extraordinary enough already. Who knows, maybe you'll find greater gains in the future. There are all kinds of pleasant surprises to be met along the way of martial dao, and that is why it is as attractive as it is. You've done your best by conquering all nine Veluriyam Obelisks. It is something that no one has accomplished for tens of thousands of years." Emperor Peafowl actually consoled Jiang Chen instead.

Jiang Chen was troubled. The emperor was truly a man of honor, and yet he had to lie to such a person because of his oath. Jiang Chen couldn't help but feel a bit uncomfortable with this. Your Majesty. I have no choice. I hope that I'll be able to tell you the truth when I inherit the Veluriyam Pagoda in the future.

Suddenly, he recalled the kunpeng bloodline. He remembered Honored Master P'eng telling him to use this bloodline carefully, and that he should only entrust it to people that truly deserved it. He had no doubt in his mind that Emperor Peafowl was worthy of this trust.

"Your Majesty, I may have not obtained the empyrean decree and relic when I entered the Veluriyam Pagoda, but I didn't go away completely empty handed," Jiang Chen said after an idea danced in his mind.

"Oh?" Emperor Peafowl's eyes lit up.

"I've acquired three drops of an ancient divine beast's bloodline. It's called the kunpeng bloodline. I owe Your Majesty for your protection, so it is only right for this junior to repay the favor with one drop of kunpeng bloodline." Jiang Chen had long since split up the three blood droplets into sets. He took out one set and passed it respectfully to Emperor Peafowl.

He felt that the emperor deserved one drop of kunpeng bloodline. His moral standing also deserved Jiang Chen's trust. The oath that he had sworn on his inner demons only demanded that he would not reveal the secrets of the Six Palaces of Heritage. Since the kunpeng bloodline was his possession, it was his natural right to distribute it however he liked. Therefore, it didn't count as exposing a secret. Jiang Chen didn't think that it was a waste to gift it to Emperor Peafowl. Perhaps a drop of empyrean bloodline was the best praise to a senior of acute foresight like Emperor Peafowl.

The emperor was a direct descendant of an ancient peafowl

bloodline just like the Coiling Dragon Clan, whose clansmen were direct descendants of a dragon bloodline. The only difference between Emperor Peafowl and the Coiling Dragon clan lord was that the former's peafowl bloodline was thicker. That was why his achievements were destined to be greater than the Coiling Dragon clan lord.

"The kunpeng bloodline is an empyrean bloodline. When I obtained this item, a voice told me that every drop of kunpeng bloodline can manifest an empyrean expert," Jiang Chen said seriously.

This time, Emperor Peafowl was truly moved. "An empyrean bloodline?"

Jiang Chen nodded and stared at Emperor Peafowl. "Your Majesty, you are a kind person. When you sensed the heavenly laws thousand of years ago, you should have already ascended as an empyrean cultivator. Therefore, you rightfully deserve this bloodline. This gift will make you stronger."

Jiang Chen knew that Emperor Peafowl was a proud man. He was a cultivator who could sense the heavenly laws on his own, peer into them, and ascend as an empyrean cultivator without any outside help. That was why Jiang Chen was very reserved with his words. He meant that His Majesty might be able to ascend to empyrean realm with his own strength, but that the bloodline could still make him even stronger.

Emperor Peafowl laughed loudly. "Wonderful. The kunpeng bloodline, is it? This bloodline is similar to the peafowl bloodline, and the two divine beasts were even related by blood in the ancient times. Although I am a descendant of the peafowl bloodline, after so many years the strength of my bloodline has become largely inferior. The kunpeng bloodline you obtained from the Veluriyam Pagoda is sure to be an ancient bloodline, so not only will I be able to ascend to empyrean realm easily, this bloodline will even expand my potential and improve my bloodline's strength

massively! I may even be able to cultivate to greater heights in the future. There's no doubt that I've benefited from associating with you this time, little Zhen."

The emperor didn't pretentiously try to turn down the offer. After all, there was no need for such pretense right now. Emperor Peafowl knew just how difficult their current circumstances were, and it was too difficult to change the fate of the entire human race with his strength alone. There were many times where he was plagued by a sense of powerlessness. This ancient kunpeng bloodline was without a doubt a serious boost of confidence. It immediately quelled a lot of the restlessness in Emperor Peafowl's heart.

After accepting the kunpeng bloodline, Emperor Peafowl cast another glance at Jiang Chen. This time, however, he frowned. "Your martial dao progress seems barely satisfactory even though you've entered the Veluriyam Pagoda."

Before Jiang Chen had entered the Veluriyam Pagoda, he was at eighth level sage realm. But now, he was only at ninth level sage realm. Although he was at the peak of ninth level sage realm, this cultivation speed was a little dissatisfactory to Emperor Peafowl.

If it had been anyone else, Emperor Peafowl might not have said anything about it. But when it came to Jiang Chen, this progress was obviously not enough. A day of cultivation in the secret realm of heritage was the equivalent of twenty days of cultivation outside. Therefore, a few years of cultivation in the Veluriyam Pagoda was the equivalent of tens to hundreds of years of cultivation outside. Naturally, Emperor Peafowl couldn't be satisfied with the fact that Jiang Chen had only improved by only one level.

Jiang Chen smiled wryly. "Your Majesty, I received many kinds of rewards in the Veluriyam Pagoda. If I had focused all my efforts on achieving a breakthrough, then I would have reached the emperor realm already. However, there are certain things that I've

taken into consideration, and I ultimately thought that now is not the best time to achieve a breakthrough."

"Oh?" Emperor Peafowl looked moved upon hearing his answer. Suddenly, a trace of expectation rose in his heart as he stared at the interesting young man. He had never seen a young man who was so opinionated regarding his own cultivation. In fact, he actually looked like he had a clear plan in his head.

"Your Majesty, does tSacred Peafowl Mountain have any earth attribute treasures? Thanks to the Pentecolor Divine Swords you've gifted me, I am now only lacking in the earth attribute. If I can gather some earth attribute treasures and fully master all five attributes before I attempt my ascension to emperor realm, the results will be much better."

Chapter 1013: Refining The Pinecrane Pill

There was nothing Emperor Peafowl could do with regards to an earth attribute treasure. However, he was incredibly gratified after hearing Jiang Chen's explanation. He realized that the young genius already had a unique understanding of martial dao. There was no need for further advice.

"Jiang Chen, I am truly gratified to see that you possess such an incredible comprehension of martial dao. I will be traveling to the desolate wildlands in a few days. Sacred Peafowl Mountain will be in your hands now."

Jiang Chen was stunned. "So soon?"

"Haha! Why do you complain when I'm handing power over to you?" Emperor Peafowl teased in a half-joking manner.

Jiang Chen smiled wryly. "Your Majesty, I'm only worried that we are taking things too quickly. My foundation has yet to solidify. I also don't have any experience in managing Sacred Peafowl Mountain. Also, I wish to depart on an adventure in a few days. I want to see the world and broaden my horizons."

Emperor Peafowl smiled. "No worries. You don't need to be at home all the time to manage Sacred Peafowl Mountain. As the young lord, you are given the freedom to come and go as you please. If neither of us are around, there will be others who will maintain order for us. Do you truly believe that the daily operations of the mountain are all micromanaged by me?"

Jiang Chen understood what the emperor was trying to say. People in high positions weren't required to be concerned with mundane matters. He bid the emperor farewell and returned to his abode.

Jiang Chen's close subordinates were incredibly excited when they heard about the young lord's return. Their lives in Sacred

Peafowl Mountain had been very comfortable, but Jiang Chen's absence had caused them to lose direction. It was only natural that they would be excited by his return. Huang'er had missed him greatly as well. They'd been apart for an incredibly long time. She led a group of followers and waited for his return at the entrance of his residence.

Jiang Chen could see Huang'er and his followers from afar. His spirits were raised when he saw those familiar faces. He quickened his pace and walked with bigger strides. Huang'er couldn't maintain a calm demeanor. Her cheeks blushed a rosy red. "Welcome home." She smiled gently.

"Young lord!"

"Young lord! We've missed you so much!" The personal guards swarmed towards him. Gouyu was a lot more reserved than before. Her feelings and thoughts had changed over the years. She felt that Huang'er and the young lord were truly a match made in heaven. The feelings of yesteryear were now buried deep within her heart. She had firmly placed herself in her place.

"Hehe! Senior brother, you've returned! It's been a few years since your departure! Everyone misses you greatly. Especially big sister Huang'er!" Ling Hui'er was full of smiles and giggles while hugging Huang'er's left arm. They had gotten close over the years.

Jiang Chen smiled at Ling Hui'er. "Junior sister, you've grown bigger as well."

The latter responded by pulling a face. "Senior brother, Hui'er was already a grown up! Are you saying that some parts of me have grown bigger?" Her shocking words came out of nowhere. She even raised her chest in protest when responding.

Pfft! The crowd immediately broke into laughter. The Qiao brothers held their stomachs as they laughed. Xue Tong, typically a very austere person, couldn't hold back his laughter either.

Gouyu immediately pinched Ling Hui'er's nose. "You girl! How can you say such things without the slightest shame?"

Huang'er laughed gracefully. "It's only because Hui'er is innocent and untainted by the world."

Huang'er and Ling Hui'er had gotten along well over the years. It was evident that their closeness wasn't just skin deep. They were like blood-related sisters. Gouyu and Wen Ziqi also got along well with Huang'er. Jiang Chen was impressed by Huang'er's temperament. It almost seemed like she was born with an aura that made her get along well with everyone. She had many qualities that nobody else could mimic. She was very tolerant and considerate of others, yet equally as sincere. One would never think that she was being disingenuous.

Her personality enabled her to get along well with the other girls, despite knowing that some of these girls also admired and even liked Jiang Chen. Huang'er didn't belittle them because of it, and neither did she alienate nor dominate them. Quite the contrary, in fact. She was actually proud of it and thought that it was a natural thing. A man as outstanding as Jiang Chen was definitely going to attract the attention of many excellent girls.

Jiang Chen returned to his residence and was glad to see that it was well managed despite his absence. The place had looked a little bleak when he'd left, but not anymore. Everything was neat and tidy and seemed a lot more prosperous now. The slaves he'd bought from the market had fully assimilated into their roles. They were now very important cogs in the daily operation of the residence.

Huang'er made sure that they were well treated. She was generous towards the slaves and would occasionally reward them with top grade pills from Taiyuan Tower. Her generosity had made her very popular with the slaves. They would even gossip amongst themselves about the future madame of the residence, praising her for being a generous, virtuous, and compassionate partner. She

didn't belittle them just because they were slaves.

Jiang Chen was very satisfied with how the residence was managed. He found out that Huang'er played a big role in the management of the residence by listening to the conversations of others.

"Senior brother, you have big sister Huang'er to thank for the well-managed residence. If you're going to drink, you should give big sister Huang'er a toast first!" Ling Hui'er said.

Jiang Chen laughed. "Huang'er, let me give you a toast."

Huang'er smiled and raised her cup. "Huang'er returns the toast."

Everyone went up to Jiang Chen and toasted him within a sea of laughter. The banquet had a very lively atmosphere. Everyone was incredibly high spirited.

……

On the next day, Jiang Chen left his residence to visit the Coiling Dragon Manor. One of the main reasons that he'd decided to return was to fulfill his promise to the Coiling Dragon clan lord. A promise like this could very well become an inner demon if he failed to realize it.

Ji San had immediately announced that he would enter closed door cultivation when he returned, so he was currently in seclusion. The person who came to receive Jiang Chen was Ji Zhongtang, brimming with admiration and respect for the young lord.

"Zhongtang, where is the clan lord?" Jiang Chen cut straight to the point.

"The clan lord has been a recluse in recent years. Young lord, please come with me." He was extremely courteous when he realized that young lord Zhen was here to visit the clan lord.

Jiang Chen was genuinely surprised when he saw the clan lord. The clan lord was in very bad shape. The onset of cultivation dissipation hadn't begun yet, but it was already on the verge of happening. Judging by his current state, he was likely to pass away in three to five months.

The clan lord's eyes brimmed with life when he saw Jiang Chen. "Young lord?" He immediately waved his hands to send Ji Zhongtang away. "Zhongtang, you may take your leave. I wish to speak to the young lord in private."

Ji Zhongtang was a very honest and forthright person. He immediately took his leave upon hearing the command.

The clan lord sighed gently when they were finally alone. "Young lord, I was convinced that I wouldn't be able to make it until your return. However, please believe me when I say that I've never once blamed you or bore any form of resentment towards you. I understand that the fortunes within the Veluriyam Pagoda are more important than a frail old man like me. I truly hope that you didn't exit the Pagoda solely to fulfill the promise that you've made to this old man. Otherwise, I will never be able to forgive myself."

Jiang Chen smiled wryly to himself. The clan lord's assumption was correct. Of course, there was no way he would say such a thing. The clan lord would surely be ridden with guilt.

"Clan Lord, a man's promise is worth a thousand gold. Since I've promised you the Pinecrane Pill, I'll make sure that you'll get your hands on it. I'm here today to honor my promise."

The clan lord's eyes gleamed. "Young lord, are you certain that you can refine the Pinecrane Pill?"

"Back then, I was only thirty percent certain. But now, my certainty has risen to at least seventy percent."

The clan lord was overjoyed. A seventy percent certainty was basically a ninety percent chance of success for a pill king of Jiang

Chen's caliber.

"Let me borrow the pill refining hall in your manor." Jiang Chen smiled. "We already have the Goldencrown Cloudcrane heart and the Invisible Chameleon Cloudpine. Other facilitating ingredients were also prepared beforehand. Everything is in order."

The clan lord didn't hold back this time. "If that's the case, then let me thank you in advance for your troubles. My instincts tell me that I can hold on for three more months at the very most."

Jiang Chen nodded. "I have confidence that I will be able to refine the pill in less than a month's time. Please hang on for as long as you can."

Holding on for a month was definitely doable. Time was of the essence. The clan lord immediately summoned Ji Zhongtang and ordered him to assign some helpers to Jiang Chen and prepare the pill refining hall with the ingredients.

Jiang Chen had never refined the Pinecrane Pill before, but the formula was already etched in his heart. With his current cultivation level, refining a single Pinecrane Pill wouldn't be a problem. There were actually a few similarities between the refining process for the Pinecrane Pill and the Longevity Pill, but the former required a lot more attention to the details. Back then, Jiang Chen struggled a little while refining the Longevity Pill because his martial dao level and his consciousness hadn't been up to par. But after the tempering from the ninth Veluriyam Pagoda, his consciousness was now many levels stronger. Even a mid-level emperor realm cultivator would be no match against his consciousness.

Refining the Pinecrane Pill now was of equal difficulty to refining the Longevity Pill back then. However, because it was a sky rank pill, the refining process required a lot more technique and finesse. The Goldencrown Cloudcrane heart and the Invisible Chameleon Cloudpine were incredibly rare ingredients. Gathering both of

them had been extremely difficult. It was part of the reason why the Pinecrane Pill was so rarely seen. The first reason was because the formula no longer existed, while the second was because the materials were very difficult to prepare.

Chapter 1014: A Great Success

The Goldencrown Cloudcrane was a rare and elusive spirit beast. Moreover, it only had a single heart. Thus, the Pinecrane Pill was equally hard to find on every material plane. Whether or not the ancients had knowledge of it, neither pill nor recipe tended to survive the ages. If a Cloudcrane heart was available, however, then it could be refined into an entire cauldron of Pinecrane Pills. Provided the refiner had a sufficient number of Cloudpine acorns, of course. Depending on one's fortunes, each batch contained six to ten pills.

The process was identical regardless of the number of pills in the batch. For the current Jiang Chen, maintaining control over the Pinecrane Pill's refining process was no problem at all. A cauldronful was undoubtedly preferable to just a single pill, and there was nothing wrong with keeping a few extra around. The Pinecrane Pill was a quasi-sky rank pill. There would surely be a use for it eventually. Given how big the world was, there was no shortage of emperor realm cultivators nearing the end of their lifespans. Plus, the Pinecrane Pill was effective for great emperor realm experts as well. An upper-rank pill could easily extend an emperor realm cultivator's life by a thousand years or so. A great emperor, perhaps six to eight hundred years instead.

Yes, great emperor realm cultivators had extremely long lives in the first place, anywhere from several to ten-odd millennia. However, when faced with their own mortality, they were just as clingy to life as anyone else. Living a few years longer was better than not. Therefore, the additional Pinecrane Pills almost certainly had future utility. In another hour of need, a single Pinecrane Pill could work wonders in converting an emperor realm cultivator (or perhaps a great emperor, even!) willingly to his side.

He hadn't had the time to refine pills during the couple of years within the Veluriyam Pagoda, but that didn't mean that he'd

grown rusty. As soon as he took out his cauldron, Jiang Chen felt the whirr of familiarity moving through his mind. He meditated for a few hours, mentally running over the steps for refining the Pinecrane Pill carefully before beginning the refining process proper.

Starting and controlling the fire, warming up the cauldron...

Jiang Chen knew every step intimately by heart. With his Psychic's Head fully employed, he had perfect control of all the little details. As long as he had a feel for what to do, the steps became exceedingly simple.

Fifteen days passed before Jiang Chen retracted his hand seals and pillfire. The Skysnatcher Cauldron rang with a quasi-draconic roar. A few moments passed before the smoke dissipated from its opening, a fragrant scent slowly wafting out in its place. Between the cauldron's cracks were countless glittering rays of light, bursting outwards against the vessel's seams.

He was very pleased by this. All signs pointed towards a very successful refining process. He hadn't encountered anything resembling a difficulty. In fact, one could say that he had finished it all in one go. He opened the cauldron. Nine extremely pure Pinecrane Pills sat within, as flawless as a nest of dove eggs. The sight of so many pills made him even happier. Serendipity comes in nines, apparently.

Just five or six would have been enough for him. Nine was a much bigger number than either of those. Moreover, there was no significant difference in quality between any of the pills. Besides three mid-rank pills, the rest were all upper rank. The Pinecrane Pill was a quasi-sky rank pill! It was difficult enough to reach mid rank with the completed product. Any pill that was at least lower rank was acceptable. Mid rank meant that it was a product of reasonable quality. Upper-rank pills could be considered excellent. Finally, supreme-rank pills were in a league of their own. They were completely perfect and without blemish. For the highest-

ranked pills, achieving such a state came at the cost of the number of pills obtained.

Jiang Chen was bent on acquiring as many pills from this batch as possible. As such, he had made some sacrifices in terms of quality. Supreme-rank Pinecrane Pills were great and all, but there was no reason for him to pursue those. Instead of refining three supreme-rank pills, it was far more practical to refine nine that were mid to upper-rank in quality.

A supreme-rank Pinecrane Pill allowed for a few extra years of life than the rest. An acceptable Pinecrane Pill gave its emperor realm consumer another thousand years. A supreme-rank pill could possibly surpass a thousand five hundred added years or more. Of course, Jiang Chen's cauldronful of Pinecrane Pills were largely upper rank in quality. Because of their rank, they could bestow additional life upwards of a thousand two hundred years. Even a mid-rank pill resulted in more than a thousand added years. If the cultivator was lucky enough, a thousand two hundred wasn't quite out of the question either. Because of these two facts, it was definitely not worth it to opt for the supreme rank at all. A larger number of pills was far more economical and effective.

Taking out a pill bottle, Jiang Chen stashed eight of the pills carefully inside. The last one he placed separately in a different bottle. He put away the cauldron and adjusted his emotions before exiting the pill room. Ji Zhongtang was seated cross-legged at the other end of the hallway. From a distance, he looked rather like a gatekeeper. His eyes stared alertly in every direction, intent on keeping trespassers from disturbing the pill room's peace and quiet within.

The trusty guardsman hastily came forward as Jiang Chen exited the pill room. "Have you finished your seclusion, young lord Zhen?"

Jiang Chen nodded, surprised. "Have you waited here all this time?"

Ji Zhongtang returned the same gesture. “The clan lord told me to stay here until further notice. He said that no one should disrupt you.”

That the clan lord had issued the command was unsurprising to Jiang Chen. He nodded. “Come then, take me to the clan lord himself.”

Though Ji Zhongtang knew nothing of what the Pinecrane Pill actually meant, he could still guess that young lord Zhen had made something truly marvelous this time. Maybe it could even help the clan lord’s cultivation dissipation! A few years ago, the clan lord had been very close to losing all of his cultivation entirely. Back then, something unknown had cured him for a time. As a fairly clever man, Ji Zhongtang had attempted to draw his own conclusions. Though he’d never settled on anything specific, he vaguely deduced the general gist of it. Hadn’t the change been because of young lord Zhen alone? In the entirety of Veluriyam Capital, it was very likely that young lord Zhen was the only miracle worker that could save them all.

The Coiling Dragon clan lord couldn’t remain still when he heard Jiang Chen’s footsteps. He stood up involuntarily, his outward composure an obvious façade. Anyone remotely attentive noticed that his eyes gave away his barely-concealed fervor.

“I’m pleased to say that I haven’t let you down, Clan Lord.” The clan lord’s anxiety was completely transparent. Jiang Chen knew what he was likely feeling right now. A mountain of concern was likely piling up even as he spoke. Mindful of the elderly man’s emotions, he was extremely straightforward.

The clan lord was initially stunned, then wide eyed and overjoyed. “Did you… really… succeed?”

His excitement was palpable in the shaking of his voice.

“Absolutely. I think I’ve said this before, but you are a naturally fortunate person, Clan Lord. The heavens themselves are on your

side.” Stepping forward with a smile, Jiang Chen tossed the pill bottle directly at the Coiling Dragon clan lord.

Taking the bottle in his hand, the clan lord had no more regard for his composure despite Ji Zhongtang’s presence. His old, withered hands gripped it with a deathly firmness. He was as animated as a child who had just received his first piece of candy. No amount of naivete could prevent Ji Zhongtang from guessing that something was up. The clan lord’s contagious enthusiasm and young lord Zhen’s broad smile were clues enough. All at once, Ji Zhongtang was filled with gratefulness and worship.

“Clan Lord, this pill’s effects are quite extraordinary. You should take the pill immediately, then go cultivate behind closed doors. Given your level of cultivation, the pill should have no side effects at all, backlash or otherwise. However, you should thoroughly refine it in order to absorb all of its medicinal benefits. The better your absorption, the more years of life you will gain. The pill I gave you is of upper rank in quality, capable of granting you upwards of a thousand two hundred years if used well.”

“A thousand and two hundred years?” The clan lord’s eyes were ablaze. He was so happy that he was completely beside himself at the quoted number. For a person who was at death’s door, a reaction like that was completely understandable. Who wouldn’t be pleased with a twelve-century extension of their lease on life?

“That’s right. You have plenty of time, so do take it slow with the refining process. Try to make the most of the pill. It is a sky rank pill, after all.” Jiang Chen adopted a serious tone.

“A sky rank pill? Young lord, this is a sky rank pill?” This was yet another surprise for the clan lord.

“Correct. Because it’s of the sky rank, it works even on great emperor realm cultivators, with somewhat reduced effects, of course.” The young lord made no attempt to hide anything.

“This pill must occupy a much loftier position than the Longevity

Pill, then." The Coiling Dragon clan lord sensed another commercial opportunity.

"Yes, indeed. The Longevity Pill is only a quasi-earth rank pill. It functions only for sage realm cultivators and barely helps emperor realm ones... what's more, it has more side effects when taken by someone with a higher cultivation. The Pinecrane Pill, on the other hand, is good for both emperor and great emperor realm cultivators. In terms of both value and rarity, the Pinecrane Pill is at least five to ten times that of the Longevity Pill. However, the Longevity Pill's advantage lies in the fact that it's beyond easy to collect the ingredients for it. I can't say the same for the Pinecrane Pill. Because of this limitation, one is fit for mass production and distribution while the other, internal usage only."

"I suppose this pill is worthy of being called a sky rank pill." The clan lord sighed. "The materials are hard to find, as you said. If fortune hadn't favored me, perhaps..."

The mere act of considering the alternative possibilities made him tremble. Without the young lord who stood before him, he wouldn't have known what a Pinecrane Pill even was, much less gotten one refined. At the root of things, the young lord had saved his life.

"Young lord, I'm not about to voice empty platitudes." The clan lord's tone became solemn. "In fact, I will say only one thing. No matter how far the Coiling Dragon Clan goes, we will always support you as long as I am at the helm. Sacred Peafowl Mountain will always guide our footsteps, and our alliance will never falter."

Ji Zhongtang was moved by the declaration.

"Zhongtang, are you mute?! Come thank young lord Zhen for saving my life!"

As if waking out of a dream, Ji Zhongtang came forward and knelt. "Young lord, I am a simple-minded man that doesn't know many things. I do know one thing, though: you're our clan's

greatest benefactor, and I shall assist you to the best of my abilities for all my life. May Sacred Peafowl Mountain prosper!”

The Pinecrane Pill did more than just simply save the Coiling Dragon clan lord’s life. It altered the fate of the entire clan.

Chapter 1015: Wake Up Call

Jiang Chen wasn't actually planning on buying people's hearts, but if one Pinecrane Pill could buy the unswerving loyalty and support of the Coiling Dragon Clan, then it would be worth it. He was now the young lord of Sacred Peafowl Mountain. Although buying loyalty was a very secular method, it was a necessary and unavoidable one too. The young lord of Sacred Peafowl Mountain might sit high above many others, but if he wasn't supported by the people below him, he would have no foundations for his climb no matter how high he ascended. His position wouldn't be secure at all. The Coiling Dragon Clan was Sacred Peafowl Mountain and Veluriyam Capital's number one clan. Naturally, it was very important to obtain their support.

Plus, Jiang Chen had high expectations for the Coiling Dragon Clan. If they continued to develop at their current rate, it was only a matter of time before they became the eighth great emperor faction of Veluriyam Capital. That would make for eight great emperors instead of seven. Their right to speak would become a lot more valuable then. It would no doubt be beneficial to Sacred Peafowl Mountain. If the clan lord survived this tribulation, learned the realm of great emperors, and ascended to great emperor realm, he and the emerging young master Ji San were sure to take the Coiling Dragon Clan to further heights.

Therefore, it was only natural for Jiang Chen to do something to express his goodwill towards the Coiling Dragon Clan. He smiled. "There is no need for pleasantries, Zhongtang. After all, the Coiling Dragon Clan and I are close friends in the same boat. We're partners of shared honor and disgrace." He then turned to the clan lord. "Clan Lord, you should finish this sooner than later, so it is best if you can enter seclusion as soon as you are able to. I shall not disturb you any longer."

After leaving the Coiling Dragon Clan's main residence, Jiang

Chen didn't hurry back to the Sacred Peafowl Mountain young lord main residence. Instead, he visited Taiyuan Tower. He had delegated the management of Taiyuan Tower to Shen Trifire. The establishment was now looking to become the number one pill shop in the entire Veluriyam Capital. Shen Trifire might still be young, but since two first-rate pill kings in the form of Pill King Bu and Pill King Lu Feng were watching over Taiyuan Tower, the shop had encountered very little problems so far.

When Shen Trifire and the others noticed Jiang Chen's arrival, they immediately became very excited. They all inquired about his well being. Seeing their excited expressions, Jiang Chen knew that their lives here had been substantial.

"Trifire, please gather all our senior brothers and sisters over. I'll like to have a word with everyone." Shen Trifire's admiration of Jiang Chen was at a level where he would prostrate himself before his senior brother without any hesitation. Naturally, he immediately executed the order. All of the Regal Pill Palace disciples were soon gathered inside a secret room.

They had been lucky enough to be rescued by Jiang Chen, and they now were able to survive on their own within Veluriyam Capital. Their lives were so comfortable now that a portion of them had lost some of their fighting will. In fact, some were even starting to think that rebuilding Regal Pill Palace wasn't that big of a deal any longer. They were leading better lives than the ones they had previously led in their sect. There was nothing wrong with continuing things as they were.

Their mindset didn't escape Jiang Chen's attention. The glitzy world that was Veluriyam Capital far exceeded Regal Pill Palace in every aspect. After all, the Myriad Domain was just a lower region far from real civilization. Be it in terms of prosperity or horizons, they were far inferior to Veluriyam Capital. What was Veluriyam Capital? It was a core region even amongst all of the Upper Eight Regions!

Therefore, a small number of these Regal Pill Palace survivors were slowly starting to succumb to these endless days of pleasure. Their willpower had grown weak, and they were satisfied with just getting by everyday. Jiang Chen swept a glance at the Regal Pill Palace disciples before him before saying, “Trifire, you’ve managed Taiyuan Tower well.”

Shen Trifire’s heart skipped a beat despite Jiang Chen’s praise. This tone caused sweat to appear on his forehead.

“Senior brother, Trifire has done his best. Unfortunately, my talent is poor, so maybe I need to work harder to meet your expectations?” Shen Trifire sounded a little nervous. He couldn’t help but be nervous. Back at the Rosy Valley of Regal Pill Palace, Jiang Chen was just his senior brother of the same sect. There was no element of inherent fear. But now, Jiang Chen was no longer just the person who had saved his life. He was the young master of Sacred Peafowl Mountain and an important figure who would rule over Veluriyam Capital in the future.

Jiang Chen responded indifferently, “Your talent isn’t poor and you’ve done well. There is one thing that you may have forgotten though: the reason why I’ve put you here is so that you can assume personal responsibility and nurture your talent. The reason I’ve done this is so that you may shoulder the heavy responsibility of resurrecting our sect one day. You haven’t done well enough in this regard.”

Sweat trickled down Shen Trifire’s forehead. “You’re right to lecture me, senior brother!”

“You’re still calling me senior brother, so this means that you haven’t forgotten that we are both sect members of Regal Pill Palace. If it wasn’t for this bond, I wouldn’t have risked life and death to come all the way to Veluriyam Capital from the Myriad Domain in the first place, much less rescue all of you from the Myriad Puppets Pavilion. The reason I saved you all is to preserve the last spark of Regal Pill Palace. However, I neither see much

fighting will in any one of you, nor do I see the determination and courage necessary to rebuild our sect at first notice. Is the glamorous world of Veluriyam Capital enough to make you lose yourselves, your origin, and the bloody debt on your backs?

"If that is true, then I'd rather that I hadn't rescue you at all back then." A hint of disappointment tinged Jiang Chen's tone. His calm, sweeping glance caused every Regal Pill Palace disciple to feel restless and uncomfortable. They all kept their heads low and didn't dare meet his eyes.

They were guilty. It was as Jiang Chen had said—their fighting will had weakened, and they had nearly forgotten about the blood debt they shouldered. Truthfully, they hadn't actually forgotten their roots or turned ungrateful. It was just that they had been living too comfortably in Veluriyam Capital as of late. It had been so comfortable that they were starting to care less about their own roots and had chosen instead to escape reality. They all thought that rebuilding their sect was something very, very difficult that couldn't be accomplished overnight, so what was the hurry? The sect was already destroyed anyway, so rebuilding it a day sooner was no different from rebuilding it a day later. This was exactly the mindset that had caused them to grow lazier and evade their responsibility.

Today, they all felt guilty after this lecture. Some felt regretful, others timid, and some others guilty. Frankly speaking, their fates were currently completely under Jiang Chen's control. If Jiang Chen were to tell them to leave right now, they would have no choice but to obey. Without their senior brother's protection, they were nothing but piles of shit after leaving Taiyuan Tower. It was true that all of them had some level of skill, but their skill was at best average in the Upper Eight Regions. Maybe they could barely protect themselves, but to excel amongst others, enjoy a high status, and be respected wherever they went like they were now was nothing more than foolish talk.

Shen Trifire collapsed on his knees with a thump, in tears. He punched the floor fiercely with a fist and spoke in a trembling voice, “Senior brother, I don’t know what the rest think. However, I have never stopped thinking about resurrecting the sect every day. It’s just, sometimes, when I remember how weak I am, and how difficult the task to resurrect our sect from the ashes is, I can’t help but be sad and even depressed. However, I haven’t forgotten about this goal. I have never forgotten senior brother’s expectations of me!”

Shen Trifire had been a core disciple and one of the greatest geniuses of Regal Pill Palace back then. His spirit, mind, body, and strength of character were of course much better than everyone else’s. Jiang Chen didn’t suspect his claim and nodded slightly. “I’m not trying to lecture you all today; I’m just here to give you all a wake-up call. Your roots lie at Regal Pill Palace. No matter how happy you are at Veluriyam Capital right now, you are all rootless duckweeds and flying leaves. A gust of wind may be all it takes to scatter all of you.

“Ouyang Chao, weren’t you a proud man back at Regal Pill Palace? Didn’t you fight me to participate in the Mt. Rippling Mirage Pill Battles? I ask you, do you still have your pride? Will you be brave when the sect needs you accomplish its goals?” Jiang Chen stared at Ouyang Chao with deep eyes.

Ouyang Chao was originally the grandson of Regal Pill Palace’s Herbal Hall Elder, Ouyang De. Ouyang De had gone missing after Regal Pill Palace was destroyed, but Ouyang Chao was still alive. He wasn’t cowardly. His face flushed beet red after this provocation. He abruptly looked up. “You’re right, senior brother. Our roots are at Regal Pill Palace, and we are now nothing more than rootless leaves. If we forget our origin and background, we will never be able to escape our mediocre lives in this corner or establish ourselves without your protection. I, Ouyang Chao, would rather accomplish great things for our sect than to live the

rest of my life this way!”

Ouyang Chao was very loud and agitated when he said this. It was obvious that his personality hadn’t been completely whittled away by the long period of comfort.

“Good, very good. This is what I wish to see from a Regal Pill Palace disciple! I may not need you to contribute much in the task of rebuilding Regal Pill Palace, but I do want to see that you all haven’t lost your courage and bravery. Why else would I keep you around? And why should I shelter you otherwise?” Jiang Chen didn’t mince words when he said this because it was the complete truth. If they weren’t tied together by Regal Pill Palace, why would he ever want to keep them around?

Neither their martial dao strength nor pill dao talent even qualified as outstanding in Veluriyam Capital. Their current qualifications were far beneath the current Taiyuan Tower’s level as well. The only reason they had their status today was because they were Jiang Chen’s sect mates. If they didn’t even want their identity as Regal Pill Palace disciples, then Jiang Chen could no longer count them as sect mates. In that case, why on earth would he want to keep them around?

If Taiyuan Tower wished to recruit new blood, they could recruit a bunch of superior talent. Take Lin Yanyu as an example; he was just as young as the Regal Pill Palace disciples. If he were to enter Taiyuan Tower, even the likes of Shen Trifire would have to stand aside like a lackey. Lin Yanyu was the champion of the Pill Pagoda battles after all. Everyone was drenched in sweat after they heard Jiang Chen’s words.

“Trifire, this is as far as I’m going to go with the heavy words. This is the first and last time I’m going to give a wake-up call to all of you. Don’t forget who you are, and don’t forget the mission you bear.” Jiang Chen was done with his lecture and fell silent.

Shen Trifire stood and stared at his fellow sect mates. He said

loudly, “Everyone, senior brother Jiang’s attitude is my attitude too! I hope that none of you will ever forget about the virtuous cause of our sect at any moment. If all you can think of is to live comfortably like a parasite for the rest of your lives, then I’ll kick you out of Taiyuan Tower myself even if senior brother Jiang chooses not to. Now get your mind, spirit, and body up! This isn’t a vacation, and Taiyuan Tower is not the place to cultivate a haughty temper!”

Chapter 1016: Jiang Chens Plans

The disciples of Regal Pill Palace were incredibly anxious after being reprimanded. They realized that they could no longer freeload. After saying what he needed to say, Jiang Chen didn't pursue the matter any further. When they left, he summoned Pill Kings Bu and Lu Feng to the secret chamber to ask about the recent state of Taiyuan Tower. The two old men understood the weight of their responsibilities. There was nothing they could be reprimanded for.

Ling Su didn't spend much time in Veluriyam Capital after Ling Hui'er decided to move to the young lord residence. He much preferred the life of an adventurer and his previous line of work. Nothing held him back anymore since his youngest daughter was now in safe hands. He had left the capital a few years ago to go on his own adventure.

Jiang Chen guessed that Ling Su was likely searching for Ling Bi'er. He missed the latter greatly. Back when they were in the Myriad Domain, Ling Bi'er had risked her own life just to warn him about the secret attempt on his life. He felt that he owed her a favor. Sigh... Palace Head Dan Chi has been missing ever since the fall of Regal Pill Palace. The elders of the sect have either died or left. I wonder how long it will take to finally rebuild the sect? This matter was an enormous stone weighing down his heart.

Palace Head Dan Chi had treated him with much care and respect back then, but the reconstruction of Regal Pill Palace had gone nowhere after so many years. He felt somewhat remorseful about this. The sect couldn't be rebuilt in just a day. Truthfully, the task wouldn't be too difficult if he borrowed outside power and raised the flag of reviving the sect. But, a sect should be rebuilt by its own members.

The elders of Regal Pill Palace should also be present to increase its prestige. Also, new blood was needed to infuse meaning into the

reconstruction of the sect. There wasn't much reason to rebuild Regal Pill Palace for such a small group of people. Moreover, Jiang Chen was also somewhat disappointed in them. Shen Trifire and the rest weren't capable of shouldering the entire sect. Only a genius of Ling Bi'er or Shen Qinghong's caliber was capable of such a feat. Jiang Chen believed that Mu Gaoqi was the best person for the task, but he had been swept up by the previous incident and was now in Pillfire City, his status unknown.

Maybe this is a sign that it's time to visit Pillfire City. Jiang Chen had always admired the pure, kind, and somewhat introverted pill dao genius. Mu Gaoqi even surpassed Lin Yanyu, a noble descendent from Pillfire City, in terms of raw pill dao talent. He was one of the biggest talents in the Upper Eight Regions due to his innate wood constitution of high order. Mu Gaoqi is like a brother to me. How can I be at peace if I don't rescue him from his current predicament? Moreover, I need talent like him. I can't bear to see a genius of his caliber end up as a slave for others.

Jiang Chen had been wanting to go on an expedition to the outside world ever since he exited the Veluriyam Pagoda. Of course, rescuing Mu Gaoqi wasn't his only goal. He wanted to find his father, Jiang Feng, as well. He might be worried about Mu Gaoqi, but he wasn't overly concerned because he knew where Mu Gaoqi was. His brother wasn't in any danger for now. However, the same couldn't be said for his father, Jiang Feng. He had braved the Upper Eight Regions with just a spirit realm cultivation. Jiang Chen genuinely missed him and was filled with worry every time he thought of this. Unfortunately, the human domain was as vast as the ocean. He wasn't able to catch any hint of his father, even with the resources and intelligence that Sacred Peafowl Mountain and the Coiling Dragon Clan had.

This worried him greatly. The greatest obstacle in his search was the fact that his parents hadn't left any leads. However, his father had left him a letter. The contents were already seared into his

mind, but there simply wasn't enough information that he could use as a lead. All he knew was that they were now in the Upper Eight Regions.

He knew next to nothing about his mother's background. He'd thought about visiting the Lan clan, the clan which had taken in his mother, to make some inquiries before. Unfortunately, he found out that the entire clan had gone missing when he returned to the Eastern Kingdom. It was possible that the entire group had been exterminated. The Lans were technically Jiang Chen's maternal relatives, but his impression of them wasn't very good. It was the reason why their disappearance hadn't particularly bothered him.

His cousin Xue Tong was also one of the Lan grandchildren and related to them by blood, but he was also greatly loathed by them, and he knew nothing about them. Jiang Chen was incredibly vexed. He couldn't just sit back and relax when his father was in danger. He might not feel anything for his mother from this life, but his relationship with Jiang Feng ran incredibly deep. It couldn't be compared to his relationship with his father from his previous life, but Jiang Feng definitely came second to the Celestial Emperor.

Blood was thicker than water. At the end of the day, he was still Jiang Feng's flesh and blood. The love and shelter his father had given him wasn't something that could be repaid. His father had shown him concern and care during his weakest moments and was the reason why he was able to turn his life around when he first reincarnated into his present body. His father could only do less and less when Jiang Chen grew stronger and eventually became the pivotal person of the Eastern Kingdom, but his love and concern hadn't diminished one bit.

Jiang Chen greatly approved of Jiang Feng as a father. He would never give up on the search for him even if he was searching for a needle in a haystack. Dead or alive, he was going to find his father!

If father is no longer alive, then I must find mother. I will find the woman that he loved so much and tell her that father spent his whole life searching for her, even though he was unable to protect her before. If someone really forced her to leave, then I'll make that person pay!

Jiang Chen was no longer someone who lived by the rules of others. He was the young lord of Sacred Peafowl Mountain! His status was greater than that of many others. His mother's background no longer mattered as long as she was from the Upper Eight Regions. He was confident that he could even the score for his father.

Of course, that was assuming that someone had forced his mother to leave. Things would be complicated if his mother had parted with his father without a semblance of regret. There would be no outlet for him to vent his anger. However, Jiang Chen remained resolute. I have no recollection of the woman who gave birth to me, but since father remains smitten by her after all these years, I am confident that she is someone worthy of my father's love. He knew his father well. A big respectable man like him would never be so enchanted by a woman unworthy of his love.

Jiang Chen decided that he would use this opportunity to explore the Upper Eight Regions and keep an ear out for more information. It would be great if he could find traces of his father, but it wouldn't be bad either if he somehow found information about his mother. It could potentially lead him to his father.

The Upper Eight Regions spanned miles and miles. The summation of all eight territories was roughly fifty times larger than the Myriad Domain. Searching every corner of the region was impractical. He could only search as he journeyed, but he couldn't be too open about his search either. After all, he was being hunted by two great sects and the Great Scarlet Mid Region. It might implicate his father and put him in danger if his true identity was revealed during the search.

His father had left him years before he had a bounty on his head. The factions searching for him definitely didn't know where his father was. If he was too open about his search, it might attract attention from those great sects, essentially throwing his father into a fire pit. He was careful and meticulous. He couldn't afford to let that happen.

"Your disciple, Lin Yanyu, pays his respects to the honorable master." Lin Yanyu immediately responded to his master's summons when he heard that his master wanted to see him.

"Yanyu, no need to be overly formal. I've summoned you to ask you something."

"Master, please speak your mind." Lin Yanyu had great veneration for his master. He was genuinely excited that he could be his disciple. The more time he spent with Jiang Chen, the more he was impressed by his master's knowledge of pill dao. No slouch could ever defeat a pill dao master like Pill King Ji Lang. Therefore, Lin Yanyu deeply cherished this master and disciple relationship.

"It's been a long time since you've left Pillfire City. Do you want to go back and explore a little?" Jiang Chen asked while smiling.

"Go back to Pillfire City?" Lin Yanyu was confused. "Master, why do you ask such a thing?"

"Mm. I remember you mentioned that someone in Pillfire City purchased a pill dao genius with an innate wood constitution of high order. Is that right?

Lin Yanyu remembered. His master had asked him this question when they were in the outer regions of the desolate wildlands. The incident had caused a great commotion in Pillfire City. He was in the city at that time and heard discussions about it. He nodded. "Yes indeed. Master, are you interested in the one with the innate wood constitution of high order?"

"Extremely." Jiang Chen replied with a faint smile on his face.

“Lin Yanyu, are you brave enough to accompany me to Pillfire City and poach some people?”

Lin Yanyu’s eyes brimmed with excitement. “Master, how do you suppose we do that? I’m more than ready to cause some trouble.”

He hated Pillfire City with the passion of a thousand suns. He was extremely excited that his master had suggested such a thing!

Chapter 1017: Sending Lin Yanyu on An Errand

Lin Yanyu harbored great hatred towards Pillfire City. His family had been annihilated simply because they had accidentally obtained an ancient sky rank pill recipe that was passed down in the family. It was only natural that he couldn't forget this deep-seated grudge. His anger and desire for revenge burned fiercely after the seed of hatred had been planted and nurtured since young.

"How do you think we should proceed?" Jiang Chen asked smilingly. His question was intended as a test.

Lin Yanyu thought for a moment before sighing. "Of course, the most delightful way is for master to publicize your identity and challenge Pillfire City directly on their own grounds. This is also the most direct and domineering method. However, the risk is too high, even though it is a very flashy way that is certainly going to soothe some of my hatred. Pillfire City doesn't hesitate to act by fair means or foul, so it will be very hard for you to extricate yourself after the deed is over. Unless..."

"Unless?" Jiang Chen asked smilingly.

"Unless Emperor Peafowl accompanies you on your journey. With Emperor Peafowl by your side, there is nothing Pillfire City can do against you two."

Jiang Chen shook his head. "His Majesty has many things that are more important than this to deal with every day. He can't accompany me on such a childish expedition."

There was nothing more delightful than kicking down an enemy's door and beating them on their home turf, but it was also the easiest way to incur someone's hatred. Had Jiang Chen been alone, it would have been a negligible consequence, but since he

was there to rescue Mu Gaoqi, this method would only bring trouble to the both of them. Therefore, this method was out of the question.

“I believe that method is unsuitable as well.” Lin Yanyu nodded and continued, “If we cannot take by force, then we must take by ruse. If that is the method that you’re going to take, I believe that your chances of success are quite good if you head to Pillfire City first and then play it by ear. After all, master has plenty of tricks up his sleeves.”

“Correct. Play it by ear. That’s precisely the approach we’ll take. But before this, I would like to ask some questions about Pillfire City.”

“You can ask me anything.”

In this regard, Jiang Chen didn’t suspect that Lin Yanyu was either lying or boasting. Setting aside the fact that Lin Yanyu was originally a noble disciple in Pillfire City, his hatred for Pillfire City would have driven him to gather as much information about the city as he could.

As expected, Lin Yanyu’s understanding of Pillfire City was extremely rich and detailed. He knew all about its power structure, key figures, and its few powerful noble families. Back then, Lin Yanyu’s family had also been an incredible power in Pillfire City. It was the equivalent of a ninth-rank aristocratic family, similar to House Wei. His family had been at the top of the pyramid. The great emperor factions aside, there were only a few great clans that were stronger than House Lin. Furthermore, the great clans of Pillfire City were more scattered than the great clans of Veluriyam Capital. That was why it could be said that House Lin had a better reputation and foundation in Pillfire City than House Wei in Veluriyam Capital.

“Tell me this first—what level is the faction that bought the cultivator with an innate wood constitution of high order?” Jiang

Chen was more concerned about this detail.

“That faction… is called the Star Harvesters. In Pillfire City, they definitely count as a first-rate power. Even when House Lin was still around, the Star Harvesters were not a power that we would offend carelessly. Although the Star Harvesters’ foundation may not have necessarily exceeded ours, their strength and influence in Pillfire City probably did.”

“Oh? Can you tell me about the Star Harvesters in more detail?”

“The Star Harvesters are a gang. They’re like a sect except they're less organized and have lousier manpower. However, their morals are far lower than a sect’s too. It’s rumored that the Star Harvesters have committed plenty of atrocities.”

Characteristics wise, a gang was almost identical to a sect. However, the organization of a gang was not as tight knit as a sect’s. Normally, a sect had a core inheritance, and most sect members were tied together by this core inheritance. A gang, on the other hand, wasn’t necessarily tied together by a bond of inheritance. Their relationship was a more worldly kind that emphasized a code of brotherhood and maintenance of profits.

Most gangs existed by raising a flag of brotherhood while sharing profits with each other. Generally speaking, everyone in a gang had a shared interest. It was this bond of interest that tied a gang together tightly. Oftentimes, a gang displayed greater fighting strength than a sect for the sake of their shared interest. Of course, internal strife existed in both sects and gangs. Generally speaking however, interacting with a gang was easier than with a sect. A sect member’s eyes were normally located on top of their heads, and they were so removed from the world that some of them didn’t even know how to interact with those around them. They were also incredibly difficult to get into contact with.

Gang members, however, were brought up in a secular world and were well versed in the ways of the world and doing business. It

might be possible to speak freely with a gang member. In fact, it might even be possible to buy a genius from a gang member if the buyer had enough money. But if someone tried to buy a genius from a sect with money, they would think that that person had gone insane.

A gang didn't mind haggling openly over a price. A sect cared more about face. If he had to choose between the two, Jiang Chen was more willing to deal with a gang. Therefore, after hearing Lin Yanyu's introduction of the Star Harvesters, Jiang Chen had some inklings on how he wanted to proceed.

"Yanyu, I plan to send you back to Pillfire City first to act as a spy. Use your social network, open the channels, and try to gather as much information as you can. It'd be best if the information is the most current. If you succeed, I will count it as a great merit on your record." Jiang Chen might dislike ordering others around, but he also knew very well that he was unfamiliar with Pillfire City. He would definitely stir up a lot of trouble if he went there right now. Lin Yanyu was a local and would have his own network. Although House Lin had fallen, Lin Yanyu must have had his ways to survive on his own. Therefore, it would be a wise decision to send him forward as a scout.

Besides formally becoming Jiang Chen's disciple, Lin Yanyu had also received many favors from Jiang Chen. He had always want to find an opportunity to repay his master for the kindness and prove his own worth. Therefore, when he was given this mission, not only did Lin Yanyu not look unhappy, but he was also filled with fighting spirit. "Master, knowing how much you trust in me, I will absolutely accomplish this mission without fail. House Lin may be gone, but some of our network is still there. The reason I was able to stay hidden in Pillfire City for a long time was because I had my own ways for survival. Your disciple shall do his best to accomplish this mission, master. I will do it no matter what the cost."

Lin Yanyu was a man who knew gratitude. His words came from

the heart.

“Good, I am very happy to see so much confidence in you. If you accomplish this, I will reward you with a great boon in pill dao. It is a boon that will deliver you to such heights that even that Pill King Ji Lang can only prostrate himself before you in worship.”

If Jiang Chen had been anyone else, Lin Yanyu would have snorted with disdain. Pillfire City was the most powerful pill dao power in the entire Upper Eight Regions! Pill King Ji Lang himself was the most outstanding successor of the faction, so who could make Pill King Ji Lang prostrate himself before him in worship? What else could the claim be but a joke? However, these words had come from his own master. Therefore, Lin Yanyu didn’t suspect them in the slightest.

During these years, Lin Yanyu had a good grasp on just how deep his master’s foundation in pill dao was. No matter how carefully he looked at the pill recipes his master had passed down to him, he couldn’t find any fault in them. They were all pill recipes that had greatly opened his eyes. Jiang Chen tossed a storage bag at Lin Yanyu. “There are some spirit stones and spirit herbs in this bag. Spend them on your own volition. Don’t worry about spending these worldly possessions as long as they’re worth it. If you run out, I have more that I can spare.”

An emperor cannot command a starved army. If he wished to use someone, it was only natural to reward and encourage them. This bag of items was a down payment for Jiang Chen’s future reward.

“Alright, ready yourself, Yanyu. I would like you to depart in a few days’ time. Remember, don’t force yourself, and don’t forget that nothing is more important than your own well-being. If you fail to protect your own life, then this mission will become completely meaningless. I hope that you’ll avoid taking risks and put your own safety above all else.”

Jiang Chen might miss Mu Gaoqi a lot, but he couldn’t treat

other people's lives like nothing just because of Mu Gaoqi. Lin Yanyu was his disciple, and Mu Gaoqi was his junior brother. There was no such thing as preferential treatment here. To lose one to save another was a trade that Jiang Chen would never make.

After bidding Jiang Chen goodbye, Lin Yanyu opened up the storage bag and was immediately stunned by its contents. There were two hundred million saint spirit stones in this bag alone! Besides that, there were all sorts of top-rated pills from Taiyuan Tower—ven the Longevity Pill was among them! Moreover, there were roughly thirty earth rank spirit herbs and five sky rank spirit herbs inside the bag. The sheer value of the contents of this storage bag felt so heavy to Lin Yanyu that he nearly dropped it on the floor. It was also the moment he realized that his master's efforts were never miserly.

His eyeballs had nearly fallen out of their sockets. This sum of wealth was shocking to say the least. Lin Yanyu even suspected that he could bring this bag of goods directly to the Star Harvesters for Mu Gaoqi, and the latter might just make the trade directly. While a slave with an innate wood constitution of high order was admittedly good, there were also plenty of items in the bag that many people could never touch in their lifetime.

The sky rank spirit herbs, for example. These sky rank spirit herbs were supposed to be spirit herbs that only great emperors were qualified to use. Not even emperor realm cultivators could afford to be this wasteful. He might not know how crazy a great emperor would become over a sky rank spirit herb, but he was sure that it was at least enough to make them owe a favor. Five sky rank spirit herbs were enough to make a great emperor owe their gifter an enormous favor. It was entirely possible to command a great emperor to do any one thing with such a present!

After all, sky rank spirit herbs were just too precious. Even a great emperor couldn't always find them. Moreover, this storage

bag didn’t contain solely sky rank spirit herbs. There were plenty of earth rank spirit herbs, finished pills, and spirit stones in the bag too. Lin Yanyu had never seen so much wealth in his entire life. His family had already been destroyed when he was young, and he had made a living for himself the moment he could. This amount of wealth would have been a huge boon to House Lin, much less to Lin Yanyu alone.

Chapter 1018: A Gift From A Great Emperor

Lin Yanyu quietly departed for Pillfire City after three days. Jiang Chen, however, wasn't in such a hurry. He was the young lord of Sacred Peafowl Mountain. It was a position where even the smallest decision could lead to great repercussions. He had to straighten out some problems in Veluriyam Capital before he could leave. The capital might seem calm on the surface, but trouble lurked underneath. Emperor Shura and his faction were as ambitious as ever. He was summoned by Emperor Peafowl immediately after he returned from Taiyuan Tower.

"Jiang Chen, I will be departing for the desolate wildlands tomorrow. The responsibilities you have to shoulder will become much greater from now on. Be prepared."

"So soon, Your Majesty?"

Emperor Peafowl sighed gently. "I would have left much earlier if I hadn't waited to see your accomplishments in the Veluriyam Pagoda."

Jiang Chen didn't know what to say. The ancient demons had become a thorn in Emperor Peafowl's heart.

"Your Majesty, please be safe on your journey." He knew that the emperor wasn't easily swayed by others. He was a man with a strong sense of responsibility.

"Someone has to do this. I only wish to contribute a little something to the cause." Emperor Peafowl sounded a little worried.

"The human race has survived since the ancient times because of our unity. Your Majesty is someone of great use to the human race. Your life should come first regardless of the occasion," Jiang Chen advised.

"Mm. I know my limits. I'm only there to investigate the

demons' movements. I will not throw myself into the pits of hell like an ignorant fool." The emperor knew exactly how much was at stake. He could serve a much greater purpose by being alive rather than dead. Only by living could he fight against the demons. The dead, no matter how valiant, were of no use to the cause. The emperor didn't want to make it sound like he was walking on a path of no return. He knew fully well that the ensuing war after the arrival of the demonic calamity would be long and drawn out. It wasn't something that could end in a single day even if the human race went all out.

Jiang Chen laughed. "There will be enough wood to fuel the fire as long as the hills remain green."

Emperor Peafowl roared with laughter. "Don't worry, young lad. I may have lived for thousands of years, but I'm not sick of living yet! I'll have to count on you to stabilize the situation in Veluriyam Capital. The water may seem calm on the surface, but there are deep currents underneath. Be careful."

Jiang Chen pondered for a moment before he came clean. "Your Majesty, I am also preparing for an excursion."

"Oh?" He had mentioned this before, but the emperor had never thought that the young lad would be in such a hurry to leave.

"I haven't heard any news about my father ever since he left the sixteen kingdoms alliance and came to the Upper Eight Regions. I have to search for him. Also, I've heard that my birth mother was forcefully taken away by her family to the Upper Eight Regions when I was still a boy. My father came here to search for her, but there has been no news of him. As his son, my worries and anxiety grows with each passing day."

Emperor Peafowl nodded. "Matters related to your parents should demand immediate action. Feel free to use the resources that you have in Sacred Peafowl Mountain. Don't forget that you are now the young lord and the owner of the Progeny Feather

Medallion. The Peafowl Guards and the four monarchs will listen to your every command as long as it's within your possession."

"Mm. I will not hesitate to use it if I have to. However, I have to approach this matter with stealth due to some circumstances. I'm worried that the Eternal Celestial Capital and various other factions might target my father if I'm too brazen with my search. It will only make matters worse." Jiang Chen had described the reality of things.

"That's a good point. I agree, you should resolve this matter quietly." Emperor Peafowl pondered for a while before he flicked his finger and sent a storage ring flying to Jiang Chen. "Take this as a small present from me."

An Imperial Advent Defense Talisman, two escape glyphs, and one Imperial Advent Onslaught Talisman were found within the ring. The Imperial Advent Defense Talisman was meant for defensive purposes. The one Jiang Chen had received from Ji San long ago could be used twice. The escape glyph required no explanation. It could instantly teleport a person to safety. The Imperial Advent Onslaught Talisman, however, had the exact opposite effect of the Imperial Advent Defense Talisman. It was equivalent to a single attack from an emperor realm expert. Both of these talismans could be used thrice.

These glyphs and talismans were incredibly valuable. Jiang Chen was filled with gratitude. "Your Majesty, these are very precious talismans!"

The emperor smiled in response. "They're precious, but far less valuable than the kunpeng bloodline you've given to me. It might come in handy if you ever find yourself in a dangerous predicament during your journey."

They'll definitely come in handy! Jiang Chen wasn't the original owner of the kunpeng bloodline. He had given it to the emperor without any personal cost. However, these talismans were the

result of the emperor's blood, sweat, and tears. They weren't just any common talismans. These had to be refined from the blood of an emperor.

The refining process was extremely complicated and was accompanied with a very low success rate. Great emperors didn't typically refine many of these talismans, as the price to pay in terms of blood and energy was simply too high. Talismans of this caliber were never given to anyone except for the closest of families and those highly regarded.

Emperor Peafowl had refined less than thirty of these talismans throughout his entire life. It would take him two to three years to restore himself to his original state after the creation of a single talisman. Since it couldn't be mass produced, every single great emperor had very few of these talismans. Every single one of them was invariably rare and precious.

Jiang Chen was very grateful when he accepted the talismans. He could tell that the emperor was regarding him as a nephew or a son. "I will be eternally grateful for Your Majesty's generosity."

The emperor laughed heartily in response. "This is what a man should be like! Don't be hesitant! You deserve it! Cloudsoar Monarch often mentions that our allies have encountered various kinds of fortune ever since you appeared in the Capital. All forms of deterioration and decline were turned on their heads, helping Sacred Peafowl Mountain earn the trust of the citizens once more. The negative rumors after young lord Fan's death are also no more. These are the fruits of your labor, are they not?"

Jiang Chen was slightly embarrassed. "It was my duty. It's nothing to write home about."

"Haha! If your achievements are nothing to write home about, then my achievements over the years must be a joke! I was never able to deal as big of a blow to Pillfire City as you dealt them!" The emperor smiled. "Throughout my years of rule, I've never seen

anyone conquer the ninth obelisk either."

"Also, the Coiling Dragon clan lord should have seen his cultivation disperse and fall by now. Aren't you the reason he's still alive? Not even an empyrean expert can reverse the fates and escape from death at the end of one's life. And yet, you have the ability to extend the life of a dead man. Isn't this another one of your contributions?"

Jiang Chen hadn't reported to Emperor Peafowl about the clan lord's situation because he knew that it would enter his ears sooner or later. It was just that the Pinecrane Pill had to remain a secret. Otherwise, trouble might brew in Veluriyam Capital again after he had just resolved the issues caused by the Longevity Pill. He was hesitant to speak, but came clean in the end. "Your Majesty, the clan lord should be fine from now on. He should have no problem living for another millennium."

"Another millenium?" The emperor could no longer stay in his seat. "Are you telling me that the clan lord will live for another thousand years?"

Jiang Chen nodded. "A thousand years is a conservative estimation. If all goes well, he should live for another thousand two hundred years."

"Did you give him a Longevity Pill? Didn't you say that the Longevity Pill is useless for emperor realm cultivators? Don't tell me... it was misdirection all along?" Emperor Peafowl was visibly excited.

"I didn't give him the Longevity Pill, as its effects would likely backfire. Of this I have no doubt. The pill I gave him was a hundred times more valuable than the Longevity Pill. It's a pill that can extend even a great emperor's life by a thousand years."

"What? There's a pill that works on emperor realm cultivators too?" The emperor was flabbergasted. His mind was drawing a blank. "Jiang Chen, this isn't a joke, right?"

Jiang Chen smiled wryly. “Indeed, I’ve chosen not to speak about it because it does defy all logic. However, I’ve decided to come clean because Your Majesty will likely find out the truth sooner or later.”

“It seems that you’re still hiding a lot of secrets from me.” Emperor Peafowl said with a faint smile on his face. He couldn’t hold himself back from asking more questions. “What kind of pill is it? I’ve traveled the human domain for thousands of years, and yet I’ve never heard of a pill that is so out of this world. The entire human domain might go into a frenzy if rumors about your pill spread through the lands. Great emperors from all corners of the world might crawl out of their caves in search for you.”

“That is precisely why I’ve decided not to disclose this information to anyone. It’d be troublesome if everyone came asking for the Pinecrane Pill.”

“The Pinecrane Pill?” The emperor seemed a little surprised. “Both the pine and the crane possess long life. It’s truly a fitting name!” he muttered to himself.

“The two are one of the reasons for its name, but the biggest reason is because the pine and the crane are both the main ingredients in the pill.”

The emperor waved his hands. “You needn’t tell me about the ingredients of the pill. I only have one question left in my mind. Can this pill be mass produced?”

Jiang Chen shook his head. “Definitely not. The ingredients for the pill are extremely difficult to gather. Two sky rank ingredients, the Goldencrown Cloudcrane heart and the Invisible Chameleon Cloudpine, are the main ingredients of the pill. Moreover, the facilitating ingredients don’t exactly come cheap either.”

The two sky rank ingredients alone deemed it unsuitable for mass production.

Chapter 1019: A Game of Seven Emperors

“Your master is a truly remarkable man. I wonder if I’ll have the fortune of meeting him someday. With a sage so much more my senior, even the mere passing of acquaintances would yield me a lifetime of benefit.” Emperor Peafowl yearned for a conversation with and dispensation of wisdom from such a legendary figure. As always, he thought that the aforementioned master had taught and given all that Jiang Chen had and knew. What other explanation was there?

Could Regal Pill Palace be capable of such a thing? It was impossible for a fourth-ranked sect to have educated a student as excellent as Jiang Chen. Therefore, the emperor firmly believed the more reasonable alternative. The mysterious hermit who had taught Jiang Chen all he knew was, in actuality, one of the strongest cultivators in this world. As for how strong exactly, that wasn’t something the emperor could begin to guess at. Jiang Chen had performed many miracles, all of them earth-shaking. If Emperor Peafowl were two thousand years younger, he might have requested to become Jiang Chen’s disciple as well. Pill King Lu Feng had already set that precedent, had he not?

“Your Majesty, I still have more Pinecrane Pills here…”

Emperor Peafowl smiled placidly, waving a hand. “I don’t need it. I have at least three thousand more years of life left in me. If I wanted more time, I would have made a different choice all those years ago by transcending the laws of the world and entering the empyrean realm.”

When one broke through to empyrean realm, their lifespan was drastically extended once more. Eternal life was a stretch, but cultivators at this level tended to survive for a great many more years. In the memories of his previous life, the number of empyrean realm cultivators who had died due to old age was essentially zero. The vast majority perished during their

harrowing journeys of self-improvement, or as a result of battles and feuds. Unpredictable circumstances were also a factor of death. As for the ones that had become decrepit and eventually passed away, they accounted for barely a fifth.

“Why not keep one, Your Majesty? You don’t want it, but it may be useful to one of your good friends sometime. Why not keep it around as a possible favor?” There was no reason for Jiang Chen to be miserly about it. After the Coiling Dragon clan lord had taken one, there were eight pills left. If he gave another to Emperor Peafowl, he would still have seven left.

Jiang Chen’s reasoning was sound; Emperor Peafowl had no reason to refuse. He accepted the bottle with the Pinecrane Pill in it. Scanning it with his consciousness, he was slightly taken aback. “The spirit energy coming from this pill is exceptionally concentrated. As expected of a sky rank pill. Can great emperor cultivators really use this as well?”

“Absolutely.” The young lord was completely sure. “The effects are a little diminished, but it should be otherwise fine. Maybe a fifth less?”

“Just a fifth? So, if an emperor realm cultivator gets a thousand years from it, then a great emperor would get eight hundred?”

“Something like that, yes.” Jiang Chen nodded.

“A veritable miracle of creation.” Emperor Peafowl sighed with marvel. “It’s hard to imagine that such a small pill can dictate the flow of time itself, delaying death with furthered life. Maybe my fixation on martial dao over pill dao was a biased mistake. I’ve underestimated how powerful pill dao can be.”

Jiang Chen smiled without commenting. His own opinion had always been the same. Though martial dao was the foremost amongst all the daos of the heavenly planes, one could comprehend the truths of existence through any of them when properly applied. Pill dao had its place in the world. Besides, pills

that could reverse the sands of time were not altogether too remarkable. It was only a thousand years or so of additional life, after all.

In his previous life, his father the Celestial Emperor had challenged the very laws of life and death for his son. For the sake of a mortal son, the Celestial Emperor had shattered the fortunes of the heavenly planes in an attempt to defy natural order. That was how the Sun Moon Pill had been refined, a pill that had allowed someone as frail as Jiang Chen to live more than a million years. Both the Pinecrane Pill and the Longevity Pill were insignificant at best in the face of the Sun Moon Pill's wonder. They were on entirely different planes of existence. Utterly incomparable.

The Longevity Pill and the Pinecrane Pill were much more transient in their preservation, and only affected powerful martial cultivators. In truth, neither the Longevity Pill nor the Pinecrane Pill could actually undo the effects of time. They merely kindled the cultivators' deepest sources of latent lifeforce, with the medicine's effects acting as a catalyst for transforming the body. This caused a renewal in one's metabolic functions, much like the act of reversing the flow of time. In actuality, the two lesser pills merely induced the cultivator's own body to rejuvenation.

"Since the Coiling Dragon clan lord has gained another thousand years of life and weathered his troubles, there is no question that he will be able to break through to great emperor. It seems that Veluriyam Capital's eighth emperor is going to appear early because of you, eh?" Emperor Peafowl mused.

"The Coiling Dragon Clan is sufficient in its strength. I have only offered the tiniest bit of assistance in comparison."

"Your assistance is hardly tiny nor insignificant. There is no need for excessive humility. Your pill has changed the fortunes of a great clan, and perhaps with it, the entire Capital. With the extra thousand years in his grasp, the Coiling Dragon clan lord has

virtually no possibility of failure. Maybe it will prove to be a good investment for you personally, as well." The emperor smiled serenely. "If the Coiling Dragon Clan becomes the eighth imperial faction of Veluriyam Capital, its clan lord will surely support you without reservation."

As one of the staunchest supporters of Emperor Peafowl, the clan would have supported Jiang Chen with or without ascension. The young lord's Pinecrane Pill secured their backing by saving the clan's leader, and by proxy, the entire clan. Now, there was absolutely no reason for them to turn elsewhere.

"The Coiling Dragon Clan will become the eighth imperial faction sooner or later." Jiang Chen smiled. "Compared to this matter, the complications between the existing emperors' factions give me far larger headaches. What do you think about the seven emperors' current relations, Your Majesty?"

"The seven emperors support each other, but there is an internal competitiveness as well. Take Sacred Peafowl Mountain, for example. If a day comes in which I am no longer around but you haven't yet grown, perhaps Sacred Peafowl Mountain will see great trouble then. Challenges of dissatisfaction will likely abound. There exists a possibility of you being exiled, or worse yet, sent to the guillotines."

"Don't scare me like that, Your Majesty." Jiang Chen smiled wryly. "I'm the person you picked, aren't I? Hearing things like that just makes me lose even more motivation to be young lord."

"I am not scaring you, young man. I am stating the harshness of reality. Because of my presence here in Veluriyam, we have had peace for the past several thousand years. And yet, do you know how many attempted assassinations I've faced over the years? How many conspiracies I've foiled? I daresay you couldn't begin to imagine it."

"Are things really that bad?" Jiang Chen didn't know whether to

laugh or cry.

“Obviously. All men have a love for their own ambitions. Authority over one of the most powerful factions in the Upper Eight Regions is especially desirous—a true luxury. In fact, I originally sought my throne because I wanted to fully enjoy life from this privileged position.” Emperor Peafowl made no attempt to hide his attitude. “However, as time went on and a few centuries passed, I realized more and more that the glamor of authority came with a weighty responsibility. When the excitement from the former is spent, the latter will be the primary driving force that carries you onwards. I have never relented from avoiding making Emperor Shura my successor, not because I am worried about my own authority passing into the hands of another or about Sacred Peafowl Mountain losing its place of honor amongst the factions… but because I know my peer all too well. Emperor Shura has sufficient ambition, but he lacks commensurate responsibility. He could very likely give his all for the sake of power and profit, but he would not necessarily risk his life for our city’s people.”

Jiang Chen remained silent. Emperor Shura’s ambition was plain for all to see. However, the position of young lord had been previously absent because of young lord Fan’s sudden demise. Thus, nobody thought that Emperor Shura’s sentiments were inappropriate at the time.

“Won’t Sacred Peafowl Mountain and Emperor Shura’s faction clash sooner or later then, Your Majesty?” Jiang Chen was curious what Emperor Peafowl had to say on the subject.

Emperor Peafowl did not speak for quite a while. His eyes exuded a quiet vulnerability. “Exactly. You’ve touched upon the greatest of my worries.”

The wise emperor had every reason to be concerned. He was clearly unwilling to pass his throne and his control over Veluriyam Capital to Emperor Shura. Otherwise, there would have been no reason for him to make Jiang Chen young lord. Without the surety

of his succession, a man with Emperor Shura's ambitions was unlikely to sit still. There was the tangible possibility that the ensuing conflict would stir the city up into chaos. Emperor Peafowl was confident that Emperor Shura would not act up as long as he was around.

The problem was that Emperor Peafowl would have to leave, one day. The moment he did, Sacred Peafowl Mountain and Emperor Shura's faction would have cause to cross blades. Anyone sane enough could see that regardless of who won, it would be a pyrrhic victory for them. The biggest loser in either case was Veluriyam Capital. If the time for it coincided with the demonic invasion, Veluriyam Capital was doomed for absolute anarchy.

"It is better for our factions not to fight." Emperor Peafowl took a long pause before finally continuing, "Over the past few years, Emperor Shura has gathered a fair bit of momentum himself. I wasn't opposed to it, but I wanted him to show me his boldness and magnanimity. If he lacks the courage to bare his fangs in front of me, how can I rely on him to safeguard the Capital?

"So, the conflict may not be so set in stone after all. If your charisma can convince the other emperors to support you wholeheartedly, then no bloodshed will be had between Sacred Peafowl Mountain and Emperor Shura's men." Such was Emperor Peafowl's advice to Jiang Chen. Gather the other emperors to his side and Emperor Shura would succumb under the pressure.

Chapter 1020: A Sudden Enlightenment

Of course, this didn't mean that every great emperor in Veluriyam Capital was worth recruiting.

"Emperor Vastsea has been in close relations with Emperor Shura since his youth. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that half of Emperor Shura's ambition stems from Emperor Vastsea. Their alliance has only emboldened the former," Emperor Peafowl said with a stern expression. "You needn't bother to rope Emperor Vastsea in. He is a sworn ally of Emperor Shura. If you ever find yourself up against Emperor Shura, remember that you will be facing two emperor factions."

Jiang Chen was already mentally prepared. He smiled faintly. "Everyone in Veluriyam Capital knows that Emperor Shura and Emperor Vastsea are on the same team. Did they do that on purpose to empower Emperor Shura?"

"You are correct. The capital has a precedent rule to prevent emperor factions from forming an alliance. They might not be a true alliance, but it is a known fact that they have close ties to each other. They are practically no different from an alliance."

"What about the other great emperors? What are they like? And what kind of relationships do they have with Sacred Peafowl Mountain?" Jiang Chen was wondering what attitude the other great emperors had.

"Emperor Petalpluck is a hermit indifferent to the matters of the world and doesn't seek fame or fortune. He is ranked second amongst the great emperors, but his presence is less than that of Emperor Shura and Emperor Vastsea. However, this doesn't mean that his faction is a pushover. Those who provoke him would have to face his wrath. If he had to choose between us or the Shura faction, he would definitely choose us. That should remain true unless we do something to disappoint him and cause him to see no

future with us.”

Jiang Chen nodded with a smile. He somewhat understood Emperor Petalpluck’s stance. As long as he remained competent, the emperor would always side with Sacred Peafowl Mountain when push came to shove. He was absolutely confident that this status quo would remain.

“Emperor Mountaincrush is the fifth great emperor. He has a straightforward personality and is likely the most simple-minded amongst the seven great emperors. He’ll be the easiest person to pull to your side. However, it’s also relatively easy for Emperor Shura to do the same. Therefore, your personal skills will be the deciding factor on which side he will pick.

“The sixth emperor is Emperor Void. You needn’t worry about him, as it is I who gave him support throughout his rise to power. He owes me a big favor and will never abandon us. Emperor Shura would never trust him even if he chose to switch sides.”

Jiang Chen didn’t think that Emperor Void would be Sacred Peafowl Mountain’s sworn ally. It didn’t seem that way on the surface. With a loyal supporter like Emperor Void, Sacred Peafowl Mountain’s situation no longer seemed as dire.

“Emperor Skysplitter is the seventh emperor. He has risen to the ranks of a great emperor in the recent millennium. Thus, his foundation of power in Veluriyam Capital has yet to solidify. However, he is a fiercely stubborn and headstrong person. It wouldn’t be easy for either factions to pull him into their ranks. For all we know, he might become the next Emperor Shura in two or three millennia.”

“Another headstrong person, eh?” Jiang Chen’s curiosity was piqued.

“Mm. With that said, he’s still a lot more open-minded than Emperor Shura and has a firm view on what is right and wrong. He’ll show fealty to you if you are able to show him strength that is

far beyond his reach. He's confident in his own abilities, but he's no conceited fool. He knows when to step back."

Jiang Chen roughly understood the current situation now. Emperor Vastsea and Emperor Shura were sworn allies, but the rest of the emperors were viable targets. It would not be easy to rope in someone with great ambition like Emperor Skysplitter. However, the situation wasn't entirely terrible, as Emperor Void was a sworn ally to them. This meant that he only needed to bring in two more emperors out of the remaining five.

Emperor Mountaincrush was an easy target due to his straightforward nature. Thus, he was a primary target. Emperor Petalpluck was apathetic by nature. To gain his support, Jiang Chen would need to demonstrate more talent and potential so that the emperor would see a brighter future in siding with him. Sacred Peafowl Mountain's position would be safe and secure as long as Jiang Chen could bring them to his side. Moreover, the Coiling Dragon Clan might soon also become the eighth great emperor faction.

"Your Majesty, the Coiling Dragon clan lord requests an audience." Their conversation was interrupted by a sudden announcement.

The Coiling Dragon clan lord? Jiang Chen and the emperor exchanged glances. The latter knitted his brow slightly. He was clearly surprised. Jiang Chen nodded in response. "The pill was refined roughly five days ago. It should be about time."

"Show him in!" The emperor immediately ordered.

Moments later, the clan lord walked into the hall, seemingly full of life. "Your subordinate pays his respects to Your Majesty and the young lord." He immediately kowtowed. Gratitude flashed across his face when he noticed Jiang Chen.

The emperor waved his hands to send the messengers away. "You may leave." The emperor glanced at the clan lord and smiled when

everyone else had left. “It seems I must congratulate you, Clan Lord. There was nothing I could do to save you from your predicament, but as it turns out, fate eventually granted you a new lease in life. It seems you haven’t just regained your vitality; you’ve also made some progress in martial dao!”

The clan lord sighed while wearing a complex expression. “I would’ve been one with the dirt by now if it wasn’t for young lord Zhen.”

“Haha! This young lad is always full of surprises. However, his new surprise has gone a little too overboard. It’ll be a great shock to Veluriyam Capital if rumors of this spreads.” Emperor Peafowl sighed.

“It’s not just the Capital. The entire human domain will be shocked by this. Therefore, this subordinate believes that it’d be for the best if we keep it a secret. If anybody else asks, I will tell them that my advances in martial dao has led to a large increase in my life energy.”

“That excuse will work for now, but you’d better make a breakthrough to the great emperor realm as soon as you can. Otherwise, people will see through your lie.”

“This subordinate has come today to ask for some pointers. Your Majesty, please guide me through some of my questions so I may gain some inspiration for a breakthrough.” The clan lord was only a hair away from a breakthrough. However, there was a barrier he simply couldn’t overcome. He was only a slight intent away from a breakthrough. If he was struck by inspiration, he would immediately grasp the way forward and break through.

Many find themselves stuck before this barrier, never to comprehend things unto death. The clan lord was an example of a person with such fate. He had remained inches away from his breakthrough until his lifespan had run out.

The Pinecrane Pill had given him a thousand years worth of life.

His confidence and spirit were multitudes greater than before. His body was back at its prime, as was his spirit and soul. He felt that this was his chance, which was why he had decided to seek guidance from Sacred Peafowl Mountain. He hoped that the emperor would give him some pointers.

The emperor sighed gently. “A breakthrough at the peak of martial dao is as enigmatic as it is perplexing. I can offer you some pointers, but they might not be of use to you. This barrier of yours is one which you will have to overcome yourself. Your dao heart should be a lot more resilient after beating death. You should have gained a lot of insight. The fate of certain death is as terrorizing as it is meaningful. Maybe you should explore this even further.”

The clan lord mused deeply. Jiang Chen was impressed by the emperor’s advice. The master could lead the way, but the path of learning should be walked by the student. A martial dao master could impart martial arts, techniques, or even treasures to their students, but cultivation was something deeply personal and individual. Everyone walked a different path of dao.

Nobody could understand their own dao better than themselves. Martial dao could be imparted, but one could only rely on oneself to comprehend it. Unfortunately, he couldn’t voice such words, as he was their junior. However, the emperor seemed interested in Jiang Chen’s opinion. “Young lad, your talent in martial dao is much more monstrous than both of ours in our youth. You break through bottlenecks as easily as taking a walk in the garden. You should tell us your opinion. Maybe we can learn a little something from you?” He smiled.

Jiang Chen smiled wryly. He did have some opinions, but it might be a little too shocking for them. He had no choice but to use flowery speech and speak in vague terms. “Your Majesty, Clan Lord, my understanding is simply too shallow to offer you anything of substance. However, my mysterious master had once told me something related to this matter. He said that everyone

walks their own path of dao. Dao is within oneself as is within one's heart. The clan lord is extremely powerful, has a stable foundation, and possesses an ancient bloodline. There's definitely a path of dao meant for him and only him."

"Dao is within oneself as is within one's heart!? Wonderful words!" Emperor Peafowl laughed joyfully. "Clan Lord, nobody can give you any pointers for your own dao. However, who's to say that you won't gain inspiration from our conversation?"

The clan lord sported a somber expression. He pondered deeply over those words. Suddenly, a flash of light appeared in his mind. It was as though a ray of sunshine had suddenly emerged in an endless night sky. A blinding light filled his soul. A meteor shower of inspiration was found within the light. The clan lord trembled from head to toe as tears trickled down his cheeks. "Why didn't I think of this earlier? Dao is within oneself as is within one's heart! My dao was already in my palms, yet I've failed to grasp it! My mind was too occupied by my issues of cultivation dissipation and the loss of my life! How could I have grasped my own dao when I was too terrified of death?" The clan lord murmured to himself. Each tear drop contained some form of enlightenment and comprehension.

Chapter 1021: Stunning Veluriyam Capital

Jiang Chen's words were a moment of enlightenment for the clan lord. It immediately tore apart the paper that had stood in his way and caused boundless inspiration to enter his dao heart. Emperor Peafowl smiled. "You master is truly an astonishing person, little guy. Some words were all that it took to manifest a new great emperor. Clan Lord, congratulations."

The clan lord spoke in a trembling voice, "Your Majesty, young lord... I... your subordinate is truly about to achieve a breakthrough. I can already feel the fountain of inspiration knocking at my doorsteps. I feel that it's unstoppable and that it'll break through that final barrier."

"Haha, a couple thousand years later Veluriyam Capital finally welcomes its eighth great emperor!" Emperor Peafowl sounded very gratified. The fact that a new great emperor was born to Sacred Peafowl Mountain was invigorating news to the faction.

"Your Majesty, please allow your subordinate to use the precious land of Sacred Peafowl Mountain temporarily. I would like to enter seclusion for several days."

"Go and seek out Cloudsoar Monarch. He will make the appropriate arrangements." There was no reason for Emperor Peafowl to turn him down. The ascension process to great emperor was a critical stage in one's cultivation, so a secular place like the Coiling Dragon main residence was obviously not suitable for a breakthrough. Such a breakthrough demanded a lot from its environment. Most importantly, the strange phenomenon caused by the ascension to great emperor was incredibly shocking. If the breakthrough was completed in the secular world, the Coiling Dragon main residence might be turned upside down.

Neither Emperor Peafowl nor the clan lord wished to see this. The emperor sighed softly. "It seems that my plans to head out

must be delayed for a moment longer. Your plans to head out will probably be delayed for several days too."

It was now certain that the Coiling Dragon clan lord was going to break through to great emperor. He would spend three to five days in seclusion and would need another three to five days to stabilize his realm. If the entire process was finished quickly, it could be completed in seven days at the quickest or half a month at the slowest. Once he came out of seclusion, a new great emperor would be born in Veluriyam Capital.

The arrival of every new great emperor was a grand event in Veluriyam Capital. This tradition had been present since several thousand years ago. The new great emperor would be coronated, granted a new title, and allowed to build his own sacred ground. This all required a grand celebration. As the master and young lord of Sacred Peafowl Mountain, Emperor Peafowl and Jiang Chen had to attend attend this celebration.

They had to support the clan lord during this celebration because he had ascended to great emperor as a member of Sacred Peafowl Mountain. Even after he became the eighth great emperor, he would still be labeled as a member of Sacred Peafowl Mountain. He would be a diehard follower of the faction.

……

Three days later, a splendid light suddenly shot towards the clouds. Thunderous rumbles followed as countless rainbow lights, clouds, and birds scattered down. The powerful strange phenomenon in the skies covered the entire air space of Sacred Peafowl Mountain. It pushed the surrounding clouds ten thousand kilometers away. Inside Veluriyam Capital territory, every country, city, capital, and territory under the seven great emperors' command were alerted by this strange phenomenon. Everyone's gazes were fixed upon Sacred Peafowl Mountain.

"What's this? A strange phenomenon?"

“Considering its strength, does this mean that someone in Sacred Peafowl Mountain has become a great emperor?”

“That’s absolutely a phenomenon that only a great emperor’s ascension would trigger. The phenomenon caused by a normal emperor’s breakthrough doesn’t even reach one fifth of its size!”

“Did someone reach great emperor realm in Sacred Peafowl Mountain? Who? Is it Cloudsoar Monarch?”

“That can’t be right. We haven’t heard of any emperors who were on the verge of ascending to great emperor from Sacred Peafowl Mountain lately.”

“What’s going on over there?”

“Let’s go have a look!” The experts who happened to be closer to Sacred Peafowl Mountain could no longer sit still. The birth of a great emperor was something that happened only once in a thousand years. Not even a great emperor would be able to sit through such a grand occurrence.

Countless experts from all kinds of forces were gathered at the entrance of Sacred Peafowl Mountain in just a short amount of time. Out of all six great emperors of Veluriyam Capital, Emperor Shura was the only who didn’t show. Emperor Vastsea especially was wearing an incredibly complex expression on his face. He stared at the strange phenomenon that didn’t fade until a very long time later with a wordless frown.

“It really is the phenomenon of a breakthrough to great emperor. It becomes more obvious the closer we are to it.” Emperor Void sighed. “To think that someone in Sacred Peafowl Mountain would break through! This is truly a place of crouching tigers and hidden dragons.”

He was a diehard supporter of Sacred Peafowl Mountain and also the first person to exclaim his admiration. Despite Emperor Petalpluck’s calm demeanor, he too was gladdened by the birth of a

new great emperor.

“Sacred Peafowl Mountain has countless talents in their midst. They truly are the strongest power to exist in Veluriyam Capital for nearly five thousand years. Sacred Peafowl Mountain is the indisputable ruler of Veluriyam Capital.”

His words caused Emperor Shura’s ardent supporter, Emperor Vastsea’s heart to skip a beat. This was not good news for their faction at all. It was bad enough that Emperor Shura’s ambition had been thwarted again and again. Today, a new great emperor had emerged and shattered the silence that had enveloped Veluriyam Capital for thousands of years. Veluriyam Capital was about to welcome its eighth great emperor. This was an even greater blow to Emperor Shura’s ambitions to rule over Veluriyam Capital.

Emperor Mountaincrush smiled. “We’re lonely at the top too, aren’t we? Today, a fellow great emperor will be joining our fold. This is truly fantastic news.”

Cloudsoar Monarch flew out of Sacred Peafowl Mountain’s entrance at this moment. When he saw that the five great emperors had gathered outside Sacred Peafowl Mountain, he hastily moved forward and saluted them.

“My greatest apologies for not welcoming your arrival properly, great emperors. Please, come with me for a meeting in Sacred Peafowl Mountain. His Majesty is already waiting respectfully inside.” Cloudsoar Monarch was neither overbearing nor servile, but he didn’t forgo any etiquette either.

“Haha, Cloudsoar, and here I thought that you were the one who had ascended to great emperor. So, who was it? Was it Wildfox Monarch? Plumscore Monarch? Or Chronobalance Monarch?” Emperor Mountaincrush asked laughingly. He had a straightforward personality.

Cloudsoar Monarch smiled. “Please come with me for a meeting.

His Majesty will personally explain this matter to you all. It's not my place to reveal this."

The great emperors didn't grow angry even though Cloudsoar Monarch was keeping the secret. Instead, they exchanged a smile with each other before flying through the entrance. It was obvious that these great emperors were all itching to know the answer.

Inside Sacred Peafowl Palace, Emperor Peafowl had sensed his guests before they arrived. He had long since given orders to prepare drinks. As the young lord appointed by Emperor Peafowl himself, it was only natural for Jiang Chen to stay right by Emperor Peafowl's side. He didn't turn down the emperor's request. He knew that Emperor Peafowl was purposely giving him the opportunity to gain more exposure.

By now, the seven great emperors had shown up in the hall. Emperor Shura was the only one who hadn't come. Emperor Shura's absence was within Emperor Peafowl and Jiang Chen's predictions. That Emperor Vastsea was here meant that he represented Emperor Shura.

After the great emperors had taken their seats, Emperor Mountaincrush asked impatiently before he even took a sip of wine, "Daoist Peafowl, everyone here is anxious to know the answer. Who is the friend in Sacred Peafowl Mountain who has ascended to great emperor? We are all peers now, so why don't you invite him or her over?"

The other great emperors also had a great deal of questions to ask themselves, but Emperor Mountaincrush had stolen a march and asked what they all wanted to know. Therefore, everyone stared intently at Emperor Peafowl for the answer.

Emperor Peafowl smiled leisurely. "The heavens favor Veluriyam Capital. A new great emperor is born after thousands of years have passed."

"Fellow daoist, please don't keep us on tenterhooks any longer.

My heart is itching to know the answer, so why don't you tell us who's the person who has ascended to great emperor before anything else?" Emperor Mountaincrush said.

"Yeah, Daoist Peafowl, let us know the answer already," Emperor Void also asked smilingly.

"It's the clan lord of the Coiling Dragon Clan." Emperor Peafowl stopped beating around the bush.

"What? The Coiling Dragon clan lord?"

"How can it possibly be him?"

"He... didn't they say that his cultivation has dissipated several years ago? In fact, he hasn't come out of seclusion since the last Veluriyam Pagoda gathering. Everyone thought that his cultivation had dissipated and he passed away as a result."

Emperor Mountaincrush smiled wryly. "What in the world is going on, daoist? Were the rumors about the Coiling Dragon clan lord false?"

"But it's true that he is reaching the end of his lifespan. Everyone knows this. This isn't fake, is it?" Emperor Vastsea himself looked a little astonished. He could accept it if either one of the four monarchs of Sacred Peafowl Mountain had ascended to great emperor. But the Coiling Dragon clan lord was about to die. In fact, everyone had assumed that he was a dead man already. Now that it was suddenly revealed that he had ascended as a great emperor instead, it was no wonder that this news was slightly difficult to accept.

"It is true that he was nearing the end of his lifespan, but the rumors regarding his cultivation dissipation were fake. If that had truly happened, how could he possibly be ascending today?" Emperor Peafowl smiled. "It was exactly because he was nearing the end of his lifespan that he achieved enlightenment while trapped within the great fear of life and death. Faced with his own

mortality, he fought with everything he had and ultimately found the inspiration to go even higher. As a result, his life's potential became active and actually pushed him to ascend to great emperor."

The entire hall was silent after he said this. Was there really such a thing? This was actually the first time they had heard of a person nearing the end of his lifespan who was able to unearth such powerful potential. Normally speaking, such a person would appear lifeless and experience a continual degradation of his life force and bodily functions. Logically speaking, it shouldn't be possible for a person like this to activate his life's potential. Was this Coiling Dragon clan lord a monster or something?

Although they were doubtful of Emperor Peafowl's claims, they had no choice but to believe him. After all, it was impossible to hide things in such a manner. The emperor wouldn't be saying such things if the clan lord hadn't really ascended to great emperor. Plus, there was no point in lying about such a matter. Most importantly, the clan lord was a man nearing the end of his lifespan, so how had he managed to activate his life's potential?

This was what they were most curious about. It was because the Coiling Dragon clan lord hadn't looked like a man who was nearing the end of his lifespan or experiencing cultivation dissipation when they saw him last at the Veluriyam Pagoda Gathering. Although he hadn't shown any signs that his life's potential was activated at the time, he definitely didn't look much different than before.

Emperor Vastsea suddenly asked, "Your Majesty, the Longevity Pill of Sacred Peafowl Mountain can increase the lifespan of a sage realm cultivator, am I right? Is it possible that Sacred Peafowl Mountain has come up with a new pill that can expand even the lifespan of an emperor realm cultivator?"

This question had come out of nowhere. Even Jiang Chen was slightly startled. Emperor Vastsea's intuition is pretty good. However, Emperor Peafowl broke into involuntary laughter. "Ole

brother Vastsea, you have a vivid imagination. A pill like this may exist in the world, but at the very least I haven't seen such a pill despite having lived for several thousands years already."

Everyone laughed too. "If there really was a pill like this, Veluriyam Capital's pill business would absolutely be able to compete with Pillfire City's."

"True, setting aside the amount of profit it would bring, how many emperor realm cultivators would Veluriyam Capital attract if we actually had such a pill?"

Chapter 1022: Stirring to Action

Indeed, if the Pinecrane Pill could be mass produced, it would definitely cause many emperor realm cultivators to defect to the Capital. However, the ingredients for the pill were simply too precious. Emperor Peafowl felt that it was a beautiful idea not destined to happen.

“Honorable guests, the appearance of an eighth great emperor is cause for great celebration. I’ve decided that once Emperor Coiling Dragon comes out from seclusion, we shall immediately perform the coronation, start the construction of his palace, and formally bestow him the title of great emperor. I trust that everyone is fine with this arrangement?”

To be granted the title of great emperor, one had to reach the required cultivation realm and be recognized by other great emperors. It wasn’t difficult to find a great emperor to recognize his ascension in a city like Veluriyam Capital. There were seven great emperors in this capital alone. It was unlikely that the clan lord would face any obstructions. However, the formation of a new emperor faction couldn’t be completed overnight. First, his sacred grounds had to be cleared, the palace built, authority granted, and news of his title publicized.

“The ascension of an eighth emperor is definitely good news for the capital.” Emperor Void laughed. “We titled emperors should offer our full support. Emperor Peafowl, if you need money or labor, just ask and I shall give!”

“Haha! This is good news indeed! Count me in as well!” Emperor Mountaincrush followed.

“My faction has always preferred the simple life, but for a momentous moment like this, we wish to offer our assistance too.” Emperor Petalpluck smiled.

Emperor Skysplitter was the seventh great emperor and had

ascended roughly a millennium ago. The other great emperors had provided him with a lot of support at that time. Therefore, it would be a bit unseemly if he chose not to contribute. “The foundations of my faction have yet to solidify, but I will also offer full assistance, as it is the tradition of our Capital.”

Emperor Vastsea had no choice but to agree, “Since it is tradition, the Vastsea faction will not be stingy either.”

Emperor Peafowl smiled brightly. “Very good! Our fortune will continue as long as we remain united as citizens of Veluriyam Capital.”

News of the clan lord’s ascension to great emperor spread throughout all corners of Veluriyam Capital just a few hours after the five emperors had paid a visit. The news spread to even the most remote areas of the capital and to all the other great powers in the Upper Eight Regions. Veluriyam Capital had become even mightier than before.

Great emperor cultivators were few in numbers in even the most powerful sects. A powerful first-ranked sect might have three or four great emperors, while the weaker ones would have two at the very most. The quasi-first-ranked factions had great emperors as a proof of might. Only factions with great emperors could be considered as part of their ranks. There were many powerful factions in the Upper Eight Regions, but there were only so many that were as powerful as the eight foremost sects, Veluriyam Capital, and Pillfire City. In fact, it was actually possible to count the total number of great emperors in the Upper Eight Regions on one hand.

There was only around two hundred great emperors in total if one counted those that were in powerful factions and ignored the recluses. If the hermits and ancient wandering great emperors were added to the count, the numbers might go up to three hundred.

The middle region was much worse off. It would be incredibly impressive if they even had one or two great emperors. The great emperors in the middle regions were all reclusive patriarchs that didn't meddle with worldly issues. The only exception was the Great Scarlet Mid Region. Nobody knew for sure if they even had a great emperor. Most had the impression that the strongest cultivators in the middle regions were only at the peak-level emperor realm. Great emperors were the stuff of legends in that region.

One would only be certain if there was a great emperor if a middle region was on the throes of destruction, and even then it might still remain a mystery. Great emperors were often apathetic to worldly issues by the time they ascended to that realm. They remained solely focused on the study of the heavens and earth so they could make their next breakthrough.

Everyone had different desires and pursuits once they became a great emperor, but none of them were willing to give up the study of the law of heavens and earth. It was the only path they could take. They wanted to understand the heavenly dao and ascend to the empyrean realm. There wasn't much else that could affect them once they had become a great emperor.

Veluriyam Capital was a very frightening force due to its eight great emperors. It was definitely one of the top three most powerful factions in the human domain. The entire Coiling Dragon Clan was over the moon when they heard the news. They had been quite anxious in recent years because they knew that the clan lord was on the verge of losing his cultivation. Their stable future had become fraught with uncertainty. The clan lord had seemed fine during the Veluriyam Pagoda gathering, but matters were worrying. They wondered if the clan lord was only holding on with a final burst of his lifespan.

It didn't help that he had immediately went into seclusion after returning to the manor and no longer handled any household

matters. This only further intensified speculation. The number of pessimists increased with every passing day. They had witnessed the strange phenomenon in Sacred Peafowl Mountain as well and figured that it was Cloudsoar Monarch who had ascended to great emperor, but they were astounded by the news they received.

It wasn't Cloudsoar Monarch; it was the clan lord! The atmosphere in the Coiling Dragon Clan instantly reached a new high. Their repressed emotions were unleashed all at once. The sudden reversal of their moods sent them into a frenzy. The entire manor was in a celebratory craze. Even someone as austere as Ji Zhongtang was bawling his eyes out. He knew full well that he had young lord Zhen to thank for all of this. The emotions and excitement had made him an even more resolute believer in young lord Zhen.

Ji San had no clue that this was happening, as he was still in closed door cultivation. The clans and families under the Coiling Dragon banner, especially House Wei, were also in high spirits. But the families that had been on the verge of switching to another great clan were filled with fear and anxiety. They were worried that the clan lord would see through their wavering hearts. Correction, he was now Emperor Coiling Dragon.

The entire Veluriyam Capital was seized in a festive mood yet again. The five great emperors returned to their respective territories with different moods. Emperor Void was happy from the bottom of his heart, Emperor Mountaincrush was excited for the future, Emperor Petalpluck felt gratified, and Emperor Skysplitter felt neither happiness or grief, but his mind was filled with questions. Emperor Vastsea was in the most complicated of moods. He was equally as suspicious as he was envious. Logically, there should be nothing for him to be envious about, as he was a seasoned great emperor. But for unknown reasons, his heart was always filled with envy and jealousy. He envied the Coiling Dragon Clan and Sacred Peafowl Mountain.

“Brother Shura, It seems your plan has become even harder to realize.” Emperor Vastsea didn’t conceal his emotions one bit when he met Emperor Shura. “The Coiling Dragon clan lord has become Emperor Coiling Dragon. Like a tiger that has grown wings, Sacred Peafowl Mountain has become even more powerful.”

Emperor Shura wore a somber expression. “Brother Vastea, does Sacred Peafowl Mountain possess some kind of magical power? Their heir is already as formidable as they come, and now you tell me that their subordinate clan is just as outstanding too?!”

Constantly comparing oneself with others would only result in anger and disappointment. The Majestic Clan of yesteryear was as powerful and influential, but was now in ruins and destitute. Rumors had long circled that the Coiling Dragon clan lord was at the end of his lifespan, and the clan was at its knees. Yet, their clan remained the foremost clan in the capital after all these years. They didn’t rest on their laurels, and in the blink of an eye, the clan lord had become Emperor Coiling Dragon. Words could not describe how depressed Emperor Shura was by the unexpected change.

Was Sacred Peafowl Mountain blessed with great luck? Emperor Peafowl had already ruled for a few thousand years. It should be his turn now. But this luck was simply too indomitable. If this went on, they would likely still be the ruling faction for the next few thousand years. He couldn’t accept this. His ambition had already taken root in his heart and grew stronger with each passing day. The flower of ambition couldn’t be stopped after it had bloomed.

“Brother daoist, maybe it is time that we resort to backhanded methods.” Bloodthirst flashed across Emperor Vastsea’s face.

“Backhanded methods? What kind do you speak of?”

“The most extreme kind, of course. Normal methods would never be able to topple Sacred Peafowl Mountain’s luck.” Emperor

Vastsea carried a somber expression. “Emperor Peafowl is stronger than both of us. In other words, he is the main pillar of Sacred Peafowl Mountain. Without him, young lord Zhen or Emperor Coiling Dragon would be no match for either of us.”

“Are you saying that we should start dealing with Emperor Peafowl?” Emperor Shura was shocked by the proposition.

Emperor Vastsea laughed coldly. “Neither of us are a match for him. Even if we team up, it isn’t likely that we’ll defeat him. Fortunately, he’s an overambitious person who always puts up an altruistic act. Because he wants to be the world’s savior, he believes that us humans are in danger and that the demonic calamity will soon be upon us. We can take advantage of this.”

Emperor Shura mused deeply. He understood that the discrepancy between their strengths was simply too big to be made up with ambition alone. Even if he teamed up with Emperor Vastsea, they would be evenly matched at best. However, there was a lot more they could do if the demon race was added into the calculations.

Chapter 1023: A Bit of Surprising News

“Sage brother Vastsea, this foolish brother plans to head out on a trip,” Emperor Shura suddenly said.

“Oh? Where do you plan to go, brother?”

“The Eternal Celestial Capital,” Emperor Shura suddenly said. “Some time ago, its master sent me an invitation. I’ve been wondering about his intention since then to no avail.”

“Oh? This happened?” Emperor Vastsea exclaimed. “Where’s the invitation?”

Emperor Shura waved his sleeve, sending a note straight into Emperor Vastsea’s hands. However, Emperor Vastsea frowned when he read the letter. “The tone of this invitation is sincere, but there’s not much to it at all. It only requests your presence at the Celestial Capital. I wonder what his intentions may be?”

Emperor Shura responded indifferently, “I am just as puzzled as you are. That being said, I cannot find any malice in this invitation.”

Emperor Vastsea pondered. “The way things are going right now, brother, it will be difficult for you to rustle up any more support within Veluriyam Capital. Perhaps a trip outside may yield some pleasant surprises.”

“That is true. Perhaps I really should consider a different way of doing things. Oh right, sage brother, a grand celebration will be held to celebrate the Coiling Dragon clan lord’s ascension to great emperor. I don’t wish to participate, so I’ll head out instead. When the time comes, just inform the others that I went out traveling some time ago.” Emperor Shura was in no mood to participate in Emperor Coiling Dragon’s grand celebration.

Emperor Vastsea could understand Emperor Shura’s feelings. “Don’t worry, brother. Just leave these trivial matters to me.”

……

The Coiling Dragon clan lord's ascension to great emperor, establishment of a new sacred land, construction of a new palace, crowning ceremony, and all other kinds of celebration took almost two months of preparation before everything was on the right track.

A new emperor faction wouldn't rise to be on par with the other emperor factions sans tens to hundreds of years of development. However, Emperor Coiling Dragon's right to speak had become a lot stronger than before. Although he wouldn't be on equal standings with the other great emperors just yet, there was no doubt that his words now meant something. However, having newly risen to great emperor, he couldn't simply build his palace within Veluriyam Capital either. It would have to be built in a more isolated place. Thus, the Coiling Dragon Clan's main residence was being used as temporary quarters and hadn't been dismantled just yet.

After Jiang Chen finished participating in the crowning ceremony, he prepared to head to Pillfire City. Right now, the young lord residence still needed Huang'er to oversee things. Therefore, Jiang Chen ultimately decided to head to Pillfire City alone.

"Huang'er, the young lord residence still requires your management skills. Also, if Elder Shun were to return from Myriad Abyss Island, Veluriyam Capital would be his priority destination. I'm sorry for leaving you behind at Sacred Peafowl Mountain."

Huang'er was a sensible girl. She understood that currently, there really was no one but her who could manage the entire residence. Although both Gouyu and Xue Tong were very smart and hardworking, neither of them were qualified to manage a property at this level. It wasn't that their abilities were lacking, but that they came from a small place like the Eastern Kingdom. Although he had no qualms letting them manage a small group or

two, this was a little beyond their scope of abilities. Everyone else's abilities and qualities were simply inferior to Huang'er's.

"Don't worry, Brother Chen. Huang'er will definitely keep everything in the residence neat and tidy. Come back soon, and take the utmost care of yourself. Please don't take risks, and should you run into certain matters, remember that we are all waiting for you to return," Huang'er reminded.

"Don't worry, I still have a lot of things that I haven't accomplished, and favors to repay. I'll stay safe," Jiang Chen said smilingly.

"Mm. Huang'er believes in Brother Chen."

Jiang Chen made sure to settle everything before his departure. Other than Huang'er and a few personal bodyguards, not even the servants of the residence knew that Jiang Chen was about to head out.

Once everything was ready, he decided to depart Veluriyam Capital the next morning. However, he received a visit the night before. Surprisingly, the visitor was none other than young master Ji San. The fellow had been cultivating in seclusion ever since he had exited the Veluriyam Pagoda. He hadn't come out of closed door cultivation even during Emperor Coiling Dragon's crowning ceremony. But here he was today.

"Congratulations for emerging, Brother Ji! It seems that your strength has improved tremendously." Jiang Chen only needed a single glance to notice that young master Ji San's strength had improved enormously.

"It's all thanks to your gift, brother. Speaking of which, I hear that you conquered the ninth Veluriyam Obelisk but ultimately failed to obtain the empyrean decree and relic. What a shame. The mere thought of it makes me want to protest against this injustice!" Ji San wrung his hands and let out a long sigh.

“Didn’t you almost conquer the ninth Veluriyam Obelisk too?” Jiang Chen smiled.

“That’s hardly the right way to describe it. The only reason I said I ‘almost’ succeeded is because I didn’t want to look too bad. The truth is, the ninth Veluriyam Obelisk was so mighty that I nearly broke down on the spot. I doubt I can endure the ninth Veluriyam Obelisk’s pressure even if I had another ten years to cultivate.” Ji San didn’t try to hide his failures and spoke of everything honestly. “But you, you conquered the ninth Veluriyam Obelisk, and failed at the last step. I can’t help but feel sorry every time I think about it. Considering your level of talent and smarts, I’ve always thought that there is no better inheritor for the empyrean decree and relic than you. Unfortunately…” He couldn’t let this go.

“It’s alright. Everything in this world has its own fortune and destiny, so perhaps this empyrean decree and relic are meant for someone else. Speaking of your clan though, your fortune has been soaring up to the heavens lately. Not even the heavens can stop the Coiling Dragon clan now,” Jiang Chen joked.

“Thank you, thank you. We still have to thank you for our fortune, however. The reason the Coiling Dragon Clan was able to reach where they are today, why the clan lord was able to ascend to great emperor realm, and why my martial dao potential has increased exponentially is all thanks to you. There are very, very few people who I’ve submitted to in my life, and you are one of them. You have my complete respect.” Ji San might not be an arrogant person, but he was not lacking in a basic level of pride. However, there really was nothing that he could put on airs about before Jiang Chen.

“Ah, Brother Ji, is there something urgent you’d like to talk about since you’ve come at this time?”

Ji San smacked his head. “Man, my memory, I nearly forgot what I came here for. It’s like this. Didn’t you tell me about your father a few years ago? I’ve used every avenue the clan had to search for

clues, and just as I exited my seclusion today, I learned that a man asked about a few things at an information station about four to five years ago. It seems like he was inquiring about your mother."

"What?!" Jiang Chen was shocked. "Can you tell me more?"

"The clan's nations and cities in Veluriyam Capital all have their own intelligence systems. This came from a station in a northmost country. A middle-aged man posted a bounty at their intelligence station a few years ago, searching for a woman born in the Upper Eight Regions who had wandered to the Myriad Domain when she was young and returned to the Upper Eight Regions some time later. The woman's real name was not available in the bounty. There was only her nickname, Ah Huan."

"Ah Huan?" Jiang Chen frowned. His father's letter hadn't mentioned his mother's name. In fact, there was almost no exact information about his mother at all in the letter. Jiang Chen knew that his father had been trying to stop him from coming to the Upper Eight Regions on purpose, which was why the letter had been vague. Therefore, he had absolutely no clue if this 'Ah Huan' was his mother and if the person who had posted the bounty was his father.

Still, Jiang Chen couldn't help but feel a bit spirited about the news. It was a clue regardless. Although searching after a clue like this was no different from finding a needle in a haystack, even the vaguest clue was still a clue. Maybe there were a lot of people who had wandered from the Upper Eight Regions to the Myriad Domain when he was younger. Maybe the person who had issued a bounty to search for a woman wasn't his father at all. But Jiang Chen wasn't willing to let go of a chance like this.

"Tell me, Brother Ji. What is the exact location of that intelligence station?"

"Are you really going to seek out that place, brother?" Ji San couldn't help but ask.

“I must. I am the son of my father and mother. How can my mind be at peace if I were to ignore a clue like this?” Jiang Chen said firmly.

“Alright, I’ll come with you tomorrow.” Ji San volunteered himself.

But Jiang Chen said, “The Coiling Dragon Palace has just been built, and Emperor Coiling Dragon cannot lose a powerful helper like you. Greater numbers will not help solve this matter faster, so I believe I should I go there alone and investigate slowly.”

Ji San hastily said, “Family business is important, but your business, my brother, is important too. My family can function without me, but your business—”

“Brother Ji, I still think that this investigation should be conducted with a low profile.” Jiang Chen turned him down gently. “You only need to tell me the address, that’s all.”

Hearing how firm Jiang Chen’s tone was, Ji San sighed. “Alright. Take a look, the address and the map is inside this jade token. Do you remember the Silver Dragon Medallion the clan lord gave you last time? The medallion will be even more useful now. Once you’re there, flash the Silver Dragon Medallion and you can get anything done.”

The Silver Dragon Medallion represented the Coiling Dragon Clan. Back then, Jiang Chen had lent the medallion to Liu Wencai and little fatty Lu to ease their passage to Veluriyam Capital. It was thanks to the Silver Dragon Medallion that they were saved from a lot of unnecessary trouble.

Even if they did run into trouble, the medallion ensured that it would be nothing but a small scare. Apart from the seven great emperors, the Coiling Dragon Clan was the greatest power within a ten-thousand kilometer radius of Veluriyam Capital. Although the great emperor factions were powerful, they seldom interfered with the secular world. Therefore, their secular powers were actually

weaker than the number one clan of Veluriyam Capital.

Later on, Liu Wencai had returned the Silver Dragon Medallion to Jiang Chen. He'd kept it with him since and had added the Sacred Peafowl Mountain's Progeny Feather Medallion as well.

Practicality wise, the latter was infinitely more useful than the Silver Dragon Medallion. There might be factions out there who weren't very familiar with the other great emperors in Veluriyam Capital, but Sacred Peafowl Mountain had been the most powerful faction to exist in Veluriyam Capital for almost a thousand years. They were the totem and emotional harbor of the people's hearts. However, the Progeny Feather Medallion might not necessarily be needed on smaller occasions. After all, it represented him, Jiang Chen. Revealing the Progeny Feather Medallion was the equivalent of revealing that he was the young lord of Sacred Peafowl Mountain. It would no doubt be detrimental to his attempts to keep a low profile.

Win a Nintendo Switch, JBL waterproof speaker, or Death Adder Elite gaming mouse! ...have I got your attention yet? Apparently there are those who don't read the translator thoughts that are just after the chapter. Therefore, you don't know about this giveaway or how advance chapters are only on WW now. Please don't just close out of the chapter when you're done, take a moment to see what else we've written. Treat us as more than just machines pooping out chapters please. :)

Chapter 1024: The Prancing Pony

“Northern region of Veluriyam Capital, Bluesky Nation, Goldtower City…” By next morning, Jiang Chen had memorized all the roads and pathways on the map in the jade token. He kept a low profile when he left Sacred Peafowl Mountain. Once he’d exited the main territory of the Capital, he activated Kunpeng Meteoric Escape, which increased his speed by three times.

The feeling of absolute speed cheered him up a little. He was worried about his father, but there was little he could do. Worrying wouldn’t help the situation one bit. The only thing he could do right now was find his father as quickly as he could. Father, the heavens will surely favor a good person like you. Please be safe so that we may reunite one day. If someone really took mother away, you can rest assured that I will set things straight. It doesn’t matter how powerful mother’s family is. I will not turn a blind eye to this!

He was no longer the same person as before. He had improved by leaps and bounds and could now hold his own in the Upper Eight Regions. Also, he was the young lord of Sacred Peafowl Mountain, the future ruler of Veluriyam Capital. Nobody would ever dare to ignore a person of his stature.

In the past, Jiang Chen would have taken three to five days to travel from Veluriyam Capital to Bluesky Nation. But now, he reached his destination in just half a day’s time. There was at least a hundred cities and nations, big and small, under Veluriyam Capital’s rule. Each nation or city was on par with a third-ranked sect. There were some even on the same level as a second-ranked sect, but not that many of them. Veluriyam Capital’s most important stronghold in the northern region was a notable nation on par with a second-ranked sect.

The gate checks were much more lenient this time because Jiang Chen was traveling to Goldtower City from the inner regions of

Veluriyam Capital. When he entered the city, he realized how influential the Veluriyam Pagoda was in the entire region. There were also three pagodas in the middle of Goldtower City. They copied the layout of the Veluriyam Pagodas at a one-third fraction.

It seems that Bluesky Nation has a great sense of belonging with Veluriyam Capital. That's a good thing. Jiang Chen immersed himself in the hustle and bustle of Goldtower City. It couldn't be compared to the main district of Veluriyam Capital, but this was the most bustling city Jiang Chen had ever seen outside of the Capital.

The Prancing Pony was a second-rate inn in the city. It was a place mostly visited by wandering cultivators and located in a more isolated part of Goldtower City. It was built on a bigger piece of land because of the distance, which was why the inn grounds spanned further than most. When he arrived at the inn, he matched it with the map in his mind. Brother Ji said that the information station is right over here.

Jiang Chen was dressed plainly in a disguise. He seemed just like a common wandering cultivator. The associate didn't seem particularly enthused when he saw him.

"Will you be staying? That'll be three thousand spirit stones for a night in the sky grade rooms. There's a five percent discount if you stay more than three days. The earth grade rooms are one thousand spirit stones a night, and the regular rooms are three hundred spirit stones a night. The same discount applies for all three rooms." The associate had memorized his lines well, but there wasn't the slightest hint of a professional smile on his face at all.

"I'm looking for someone." Jiang Chen smiled faintly.

The associate immediately frowned when he heard those words. "You can register for bounty missions over there." The Prancing Horse Inn ran as an inn and also as an information station. They

also provided bounty and headhunting services.

“I’m looking for Niu Wuhua.”

“Niu… you’re looking for Steward Niu?!” The associate was surprised at first, but his surprise quickly turned into mockery. “There are at least ten cultivators looking for our shopkeepers every day. However… they don’t recognize these visitors most of the time. Esteemed guest, you’re not asking for our shopkeeper so you can ask for handouts, right?” It was evident that the associate didn’t think that Jiang Chen was qualified to meet the shopkeeper. He was judging based on appearances.

Jiang Chen smiled and didn’t mind. He swept his eyes across the counter to find someone easier to talk to. Someone dressed as a manager coincidentally walked out from a door behind the counter and heard the associate’s words. He frowned immediately. “Xiao Wang, you’re not minding your tongue again! How many times must I tell you to not be impudent and disrespectful to the customers?!”

The manager was clean shaven and seemed a little scholarly. He was much more likable than the associate.

“My sincerest apologies, dear customer. This associate is new and is still rather unfamiliar with our rules.” The middle-aged attendant apologized.

The Prancing Pony was a business. They would never want to offend their customers. Besides, one should never judge others by their appearances. There was no need to offend others, even if they were only a wandering cultivator. The world of martial dao was simply too chaotic. Offending someone could potentially result in a series of disasters. The associate had been too tactless and in fact usually offended at least five customers every day. He would have been fired from the inn in less than ten days if his brother-in-law wasn’t one of the shopkeepers here.

The associate felt humiliated after being reprimanded. “Manager

Qiu! What do you mean by being new? I've been working here for at least eight months, alright? You have no right to say that I'm unworthy! This one here doesn't know the rules, alright? All he talks about is looking for someone, and even mentioned Steward Niu by his name! I'm only teaching him manners! Is that such a big deal?"

Teaching him manners? Manager Qiu snorted coldly. How could he teach something he knew nothing about to others? That was the joke of the century! However, the manager didn't want to pursue matters further in front of the customer. He didn't want others to think that the inn had management issues.

"Xiao Wang, just let it go for now," he responded noncommittally and looked back over. Manager Qiu promptly got back to Jiang Chen. "Honored customer, you're here to see Steward Niu?"

Jiang Chen smiled, as he had a good impression of Manager Qiu. "Is Niu Wuhua the shopkeeper here? I'm not sure if we're speaking about the same person."

This complicated things a little for Manager Qiu. "Dear customer, why are you asking to see Steward Niu if you don't know his identity?" he asked with a wry smile. Manager Qiu was starting to agree with Xiao Wang. Was this unremarkable guy here to ask for handouts? Steward Niu was well known for being charitable. He had helped many with their financial woes and was loyal to his friends and generous to the needy. He was actually a heroic figure in Goldtower City.

"Is he here or not?" Jiang Chen was running out of patience.

Manager Qiu sighed gently. "It's been a few days since he's come to the inn."

"Oh? Doesn't he own this inn? Why wouldn't he come? Has he run into some trouble?" Jiang Chen frowned.

“His inn? That won’t be true in a short while,” Xiao Wang interjected with a cold laugh.

Manager Qiu was obviously unamused by Xiao Wang. He conveyed his displeasure thoroughly with a cold hard glare. Xiao Wang was also incredibly thick faced and just leered back, as if he had done nothing wrong. He obviously didn’t respect Manager Qiu very much.

Jiang Chen sniffed coldly at Xiao Wang. “With an associate like him, I can understand why the Prancing Pony is going under.”

It was almost as though he had stepped on Xiao Wang’s tail. The associate recoiled in fury and began to throw out expletives like a firecracker, “You damn bastard! What are you trying to imply with that? Are you here to pick a fight? Somebody get in here! This man is here to pick a fight with the Prancing Pony!”

A group of fighters swarmed into the inn from behind after they heard Xiao Wang yell. They seemed incredibly vicious.

“Which bastard is it? Where’d he get all that brazenness from? How dare he cause trouble in our inn?!”

“Little brat! Is it you?!”

Manager Qiu immediately tried to resolve the situation. “Leave, all of you! This is the front of the inn! We’re here to do business! How can you be so rude in front of our guests!”

The fighters glanced at Manager Qiu, but none of them backed down. Xiao Wang yelled arrogantly, “This bastard is clearly not here to do business! I’m almost certain that he’s only here to pick a fight! Our inn’s reputation will be ruined if we don’t show him who’s boss!”

There wasn’t all that many people in the inn’s hall. A few wandering cultivators were there, but none of them wanted to be involved. They were only interested in watching from the sidelines.

Jiang Chen clicked his tongue disapprovingly. A manager powerless against a mere associate! Moreover, the fighters were ignoring the commands of a manager and instead following the orders of an associate. Management here was a mess. He began to doubt the authenticity of the inn. Did Brother Ji make a mistake? How can a place as disorganized as this have valuable information? It wasn't that he didn't trust Ji San. His first impression of the inn was simply rotten beyond belief.

The group of fighters was actually quite strong. Three of them were at initial sage realm, while the other three were at half-step sage realm. They were good enough to serve as punching bags. Jiang Chen's gaze swept across the fighters. "What, are you going to fight me?" He sounded cold and ruthless.

"Brat, you've insulted our inn! I'll let you go if you kneel before us and apologize."

"If you don't, we'll break your legs and make you crawl out of the inn!"

Chapter 1025: Forcing Me to Beat You Up

Jiang Chen didn't want to stir up too much trouble, but he wasn’t about to wait around for someone to step on his toes. The fact that such two-bit characters dared to be so boisterous right in front of him was slightly upsetting. Normally, he would have laughed it off. But he hadn’t just come in here for lodgings like he would have usually. He had worries weighing on his mind... It was a very poor time for anyone to get on his bad side. The act of provocation infuriated him.

“Crawl?” Jiang Chen smiled angrily. “Try and make me.”

“You son of a bitch! Pretending like you’re some big shot, huh?”

“Come on, buds, get ‘im!”

“Don’t hold back! Dead or maimed, count it all on me!”

Manager Qiu knew that the thugs weren’t exactly a friendly bunch. The Prancing Pony hadn’t been cluttered with such debris in the past, but the past several months had changed it for the worse. The atmosphere here was quite awful now—a public brawl was about to start! He was both pained and anxious. “Taking a step back is both the safest and wisest choice, friend. Why not retreat for a bit?” he called out.

He didn’t want guests to be injured at his tavern. Both the commotion and the inconvenience to the involved parties were very undesirable.

“Retreating? I don’t think I’d be allowed to leave, anyway.” Jiang Chen smiled faintly. “Rather than that, I’d prefer to move forward.”

He really did stride up as he said this, footsteps crunching upon the floor. The thuggish cultivators grinned ferally to each other. They exchanged a few glances before pouncing in sudden synchronicity, charging at Jiang Chen all at once. They looked like

a ragtag bunch that often fought together. The way they moved and attacked in unison was impeccable. In an instant, they shut off Jiang Chen's every path. He was surrounded. Renewing his smile, Jiang Chen raised a foot. An indistinguishable shadow flickered across the space. And then—

Slap, slap, slap, slap, slap, slap! Six resounding slaps were followed by six agonizing shrieks. The six vicious cultivators were sent flying out the door like sandbags.

Thump, thump, thump. They fell on the ground heavily. Some clutched at their faces, others at their behinds, and none of them were left with a shred of composure. In fact, they looked positively helpless.

Manager Qiu's mouth was agape with shock. He had foreseen the onset of a bloodied and battered scene when the six cultivators charged. There might have even been the drawing of blades. But the result was jaw-droppingly different. The six heinous thugs were punted like sacks of ballast, swatted out the door like flies. They hadn't even reacted in time, much less been able to resist.

This... A sliver of curiosity crept into Manager Qiu's eyes. They expressed a blend of wonderment, wariness, and worry. Associate Wang was white in the face and bitter in the mouth. He stared at Jiang Chen with a faceful of disbelief, his expression as uncomfortable as could be.

Jiang Chen looked at the associate through a half-smile. "I've seen my fair share of inns on my travels, but an associate who's more puffed-up than his employer is a first. I know you enjoy the feeling of pretending like you're the boss here, so go ahead. Go call the rest of your thugs out, hmm?"

Like most people of his ilk, Xiao Wang was a simple bully—strong against the meek, meek against the strong. The might that Jiang Chen had displayed at the drop of a hat scared him senseless. Call in reinforcements? He had them, but he had doubts that they

would be able to beat his problem away.

The associate was both petrified and cursing loudly. Where did this bastard come from? He has such terrifying strength, but he pretends to be some nobody. He shouldn't prey on us weaklings like this... what's the point of him disguising himself in the first place? It was quite depressing, really. It was the first time in a long while that he had the chance to flex his muscles. He hadn't expected to do so and run into a brick wall.

"F... friend," the associate stuttered, his face all red, "don't... don't be too impulsive. I... I'm... I'm Grand Steward Dong's... brother-in-law, at the Prancing Pony."

"Grand Steward Dong?" Jiang Chen smiled faintly.

"Right, right, Grand Steward Dong Sheng." Xiao Wang unconsciously puffed out his chest as he said the name. There was a magic in it that gave him courage and resolve.

"Dong Sheng? Don't know him." Jiang Chen smiled impassively.

"You... you don't know Dong Sheng? But he's... the grand steward! That's impossible?" Xiao Wang's eyes widened. This was too incredible for him. How could this strange customer know Niu Wuhua, the steward's second-in-command, but not the boss in charge?

"Why should I know him?" Jiang Chen was incredulous himself. Beating up the miscreants had lightened his mood. This Xiao Wang was a harsh talker, but Jiang Chen wasn't going to give him the same kind of martial treatment. He had beaten up those thugs only because they had started the fight. There was no need to give someone who had only run his mouth a thrashing.

Manager Qiu noticed easily enough—the unassuming youth before him was a tough nut to crack. Worried that Xiao Wang's mouth would get either the tavern or the associate himself into trouble once more, he stepped out from behind the counter.

“I am the manager on duty today, friend. If you’re looking for Niu Wuhua, I’ll take you to him.” Both his look and tone were sincere. The manager knew that upsetting the young man to any degree would be catastrophic for the Prancing Pony. Despite Jiang Chen’s unremarkable appearance, he instinctively felt a strange power within the youth that was likely capable of burning the entire building to ash. It could have been a hallucination, of course, but Manager Qiu generally trusted his intuition implicitly. Therefore, he saw no reason to risk crisis over a few trifles.

“Manager Qiu, I respect that you’re a man with some common sense. I’m looking for Niu Wuhua. I don’t know anyone else, nor am I interested in them. If you know where he is, please take me to him. Don’t worry, I’ll make it worth your while.” He grinned winningly.

Manager Qiu, meanwhile, was here purely to avoid future conflict. “That would be part of my job description, friend.” He tried to return the smile, but it came out as more of a grimace. “I’d do it whether you made it worth my while or not. This way, please.”

“Hold on!” Xiao Wang piped up, slamming the counter angrily.

Manager Qiu’s eyes looked at the associate chillingly. “Are you going to continue being so impudent, Xiao Wang?”

Xiao Wang was full of suspicions about every which thing. In fact, he suspected that Manager Qiu might have invited the youth to act out the scene, with him as the audience.

“Why are you taking him away like this, Manager Qiu? He was boisterously rude and even harmed our people. Are you even part of our tavern? Are you favoring outsiders instead?” His tone became more and more harsh.

“Absurd!” Manager Qiu’s own face fell. As an honest gentleman, he had no interest in debating with arbitrary ruffians like the associate. Taking in a deep breath, he turned to Jiang Chen again.

“Friend, he’s just arrogantly abusing his own position. He’s a youth that hasn’t experienced life’s difficulties. Let’s not take him too seriously, eh?”

He’d said this in a very low voice. Xiao Wang failed to overhear any of it, regardless of his eagerness to eavesdrop.

“I wasn’t going to in the first place. There’s no reason for me to teach an employee anything on your behalf.” Jiang Chen smiled heartily. He strode out the Prancing Horse’s door as he said this, following closely behind the manager.

“Don’t you dare run, kid!” Xiao Wang was at his wit’s end.

Jiang Chen paused. The manager was staring him with an almost begging look, and he couldn’t respond with much else than a wry smile. “I’ll give you some face, Manager Qiu.”

“If you know Steward Niu, then please give him face instead, friend. Xiao Wang is a rude one indeed, but he was put here intentionally by Grand Steward Dong Sheng to stir up trouble. To put it plainly, he wants to supplant Steward Niu and force Steward Niu to give up his portion of the business. That way, Grand Steward Dong Sheng will become the tavern’s only boss.”

“So the Prancing Horse has two owners, then?”

“There are a few more than that, but they’re the most prominent. Grand Steward Dong Sheng has a forty percent stake, and so does Steward Niu. The remaining twenty belongs to the other few bosses combined.”

“You have some stake yourself, don’t you, Manager Qiu?” Jiang Chen asked with a half-smile. He had observed easily enough that the manager was more mindful about the tavern’s business than most. Without his own horse in the race, there was no reason for him to be so tense or careful. Grand Steward Dong Sheng’s brother-in-law was the troublemaker in this situation. Someone not directly benefiting from a solution wouldn’t make an enemy of

someone like him.

“You have sharp eyes. May I ask how you’re related to Steward Niu?” Manager Qiu inquired curiously.

“We’re not related.” Jiang Chen shook his head. “Though I suppose we might be, after today.”

These words confused Manager Qiu quite a bit. He had no idea what the young man meant.

Jiang Chen followed the manager on a thirty-minute walk to Niu Wuhua’s private residence. The opulence of the place belied how much wealth the steward was raking in. Its craftsmanship was artful and luxurious. A lot of work had been put into the home.

The servants and inhabitants of the residence were wary of the fact that Manager Qiu had led a stranger here. The Prancing Pony was in a complicated state of affairs. There were visible flashes of steel beneath a quiet surface.

“You’re not here without good reason, Manager Qiu. What have you come for today?” The guard-captain of the residence had the surname Niu as well. His name was Niu Ben.

“Captain Niu, this friend asked to see Steward Niu. He’s had a misunderstanding at the tavern with Xiao Wang, and I’m worried that it’ll escalate into something bigger. That’s why I took him here straightaway. Please excuse the lack of notice.” Manager Qiu was a polite man, measured in every regard.

Captain Niu scrutinized Jiang Chen cautiously. “Do you know the steward that lives here, friend?”

“I don’t know him, nor he I,” Jiang Chen smiled, “but maybe he’ll know what this is.” He took out a box as he said this. “Take this inside. Let him have a look at it.”

Chapter 1026: The Arrival of Steward Nius Hoped Savior

The box looked very average. Nothing could be assumed from its appearance. However, Captain Niu was experienced and knowledgeable. He noticed that Jiang Chen's bearing and manners didn't quite match his ordinary appearance. Normally, the only explanation for this was that this was a purposeful disguise. Captain Niu didn't dare slight Jiang Chen. He accepted the box and quickly delivered it inside.

Ultimately, Steward Niu was just a shopkeeper in the Prancing Pony. He wasn't actually an all too important figure of Goldtower City. That was why the people of Niu Manor didn't dare act too ostentatiously. When Manager Qiu saw the calm smile on Jiang Chen's face, he couldn't help but ask, "Did you store a treasure in that box, my friend? Are you planning to use it to bribe Steward Niu? Listen, Steward Niu is a person who's loyal to his friends and generous to the needy. He seldom accepts gifts from his friends."

Jiang Chen shook his head with a wry smile on his face. "I doubt he'll dare to accept the box even if I did mean to gift it to him."

Manager Qiu looked stunned. That was a bold claim. The steward wouldn't dare accept this gift? Was there a gift in this world that one wouldn't dare accept? While Manager Qiu still wore a puzzled look on his face, a series of rapid footsteps suddenly rang from inside Niu Manor. Steward Niu's voice could be heard while he was still far, far away. His voice sounded a little trembling and even fearful. "Where? Where is he? Where is my important guest? Captain Niu, how foolish can you be, how dare you slight my important guest? Foolish, how foolish!"

Manager Qiu was surprised at hearing Steward Niu's voice long before he showed up and was even more stunned by his words. What did he mean by that? His important guest? Steward Niu

seldom criticized his subordinates, much less his most competent subordinate, Captain Niu.

In fact, he couldn't remember Captain Niu ever receiving a single word of criticism. Just how important was this guest to make Steward Niu lose so much of his composure?

Manager Qiu's curiosity was greatly piqued. As of late, the Prancing Pony's situation was quite precarious, and it filled Manager Qiu's heart with worry. Although his share in the Prancing Pony was small, this place held a lifetime of livelihood and hope to him. That was why he didn't wish to see Grand Steward Dong Sheng take the inn all for himself. Therefore, emotionally speaking, Manager Qiu was on Niu Wuhua side. Still, just who was this young man to make Steward Niu rush out so urgently in welcome and nerves?

While Manager Qiu was still caught up with surprise, Niu Wuhua's fat, round body finally 'rolled' to a stop. When he saw Jiang Chen and Manager Qiu, Niu Wuhua immediately went over to the former. "Important guest, what an important guest! I never would have imagined that I would have the honor of meeting the disciple of a great emperor faction in my lifetime. If I may ask, are you the legendary young master Ji San who nearly conquered the ninth Veluriyam Obelisk?"

Jiang Chen nearly broke out in laughter when he heard this question. Young master Ji San? This Niu Wuhua had actually mistaken him for Ji San! But then he remembered that he had changed his appearance. Niu Wuhua has probably never seen Ji San in his life. Therefore, he could only go off of first impressions.

Jiang Chen was just about to deny it when he realized that pretending to be young master Ji San... wasn't exactly a bad idea. He smiled faintly and didn't deny the name. Knowing Ji San, he wouldn't feel unhappy even if he learned that Jiang Chen had pretended to be him. On the contrary, he would find the situation very interesting.

Young master Ji San was incredibly well known as of late. In Veluriyam Capital and all of the territories it ruled, he was the hottest topic, second only to young lord Zhen. It would in fact, be difficult for this genius who had nearly conquered the ninth Veluriyam Obelisk not to become famous. After all, young master Ji San's achievement had surpassed all other young lord level geniuses' achievements except young lord Zhen's.

That was why Manager Qiu had trembled all over when he heard the name "young master Ji San". His bewildered look had immediately turned into one of great adoration. Captain Niu was obviously stunned by Niu Wuhua's words too. What? Young master Ji San? The chosen successor of the eighth great emperor, Emperor Coiling Dragon? The top-rate genius who had nearly conquered the ninth Veluriyam Obelisk? Had he truly closed the door on such a person just now?

Captain Niu felt a chill grip his heart. He was filled with fear and worry. Had "young master Ji San" been someone else, he would have only been doing his job in keeping this person outside of the door. But this was a young lord genius from Veluriyam Capital! This was an important figure who would almost never make an appearance in Goldtower City, someone as unapproachable as a god.

Niu Wuhua thought that he had guessed correctly since Jiang Chen didn't object to the appellation. He immediately knelt. "Please forgive me for not coming out sooner to welcome you, young lord."

Captain Niu was dumbstruck by this scene himself. He subconsciously knelt and saluted. "I'm sorry to have disrespected you, young lord. I am blind to not have realized your arrival."

Manager Qiu's knees also turned weak. "Young lord... my eyes are just as blind. How blind I am!"

Jiang Chen smiled. "There is no need for such courtesy,

everyone. I haven't come here to meet Steward Niu as a young lord today. If it suits you, shall we speak inside your manor?"

Niu Wuhua stood up and spoke respectfully, "Of course, of course, please come in, young lord. Niu Manor has seldom welcomed such an esteemed guest, so please allow me to show my respects, young lord."

Manager Qiu was indescribably stunned too. He finally understood why the young man was as confident as he was, and why he hadn't even batted an eyelid at Xiao Wang's taunts. He had beaten up the thugs and claimed that it was of no consequence. He didn't even feel a bit of guilt or fear after beating them up. So this was the reason. He was a young lord. Would a young lord of a great emperor faction be afraid of a mere shopkeeper? Even if they were a power that was three to five times bigger than the Prancing Pony, what difference would it make? They could still be crushed as easily as an ant.

A young lord... Manager Qiu was extremely moved by this turn of events. He was afraid, but he also felt vaguely excited. His fear came from the natural fear of those with great power and influence. His excitement came from the baseless assumption that the arrival of a great emperor disciple might change the fate of the Prancing Pony. If his eyes weren't deceiving him, could young master Ji San be the reinforcement Niu Wuhua had invited to save the Prancing Pony? Was he here to support Niu Wuhua and take that Grand Steward Dong Sheng down a peg?

If this really was the case, then it was nearly impossible for Dong Sheng to devour Niu Wuhua's shares for himself. He might even lose all the shares he currently possessed. Dong Sheng no doubt had a few backers of his own, but if Niu Wuhua's backer was a great emperor faction, then all the backers that Dong Sheng had found in Bluesky Kingdom and Goldtower City would amount to nothing. Even the monarch of Bluesky Kingdom had to take orders from the ruler of Veluriyam Capital, Emperor Peafowl himself.

Moreover, the Prancing Pony was hardly the best tavern that existed in Goldtower City, much less in the vast territory of Veluriyam Capital. Therefore, Dong Sheng's backer couldn't possibly be the monarch of Bluesky Kingdom. Niu Wuhua and Manager Qiu carefully and apprehensively attended to Jiang Chen.

He inquired about their troubles after seeing the look of deep worry on their faces. And so the duo told Jiang Chen about the grand steward's ambition to buy out their shares in the Prancing Pony at a cheap price and take everything for himself.

Dong Sheng had not only utilized both legal and illegal channels in order to fulfill his ambitions, but he had also recruited his wife's younger brother. That Xiao Wang was definitely a qualified shit-stirrer. He had managed to create all kinds of trouble and mire the Prancing Pony in a foul atmosphere in just a few months' time. Worse, this tactic was incredibly effective. Niu Wuhua had grown so angry that he'd almost vomited blood. He had no choice but to rest for a few days to sort out his feelings.

Niu Wuhua thought that he might die from an excess of anger if he were to visit the Prancing Pony every day. Although he had employed some countermeasures of his own, he couldn't defeat Dong Sheng. Therefore, he had been pushed around a lot recently. The inn's business had also suffered a devastating decline.

Manager Qiu was one of the few people who shared Niu Wuhua's feelings. Although his business share was small, he sympathized greatly with Niu Wuhua's plight. The Prancing Pony was theirs, and yet they were being forced to sell it to others at a low price. After they had refused, the other party even used all kinds of shameless tactics to force their hand.

Dong Sheng had nearly succeeded. It was during this moment that Niu Wuhua had coincidentally learned that Emperor Coiling Dragon was investigating something. That was why Niu Wuhua had tentatively sent the news to Emperor Coiling Dragon's faction.

Young master Ji San had sent this request through his clan's channels and Niu Wuhua just so happened to see it one day. It reminded him of an old incident from a few years ago that matched many of the details described in the request. That was how Niu Wuhua had sent out the gesture of goodwill in hopes of finding a powerful backer. If he could secure a relationship with the Coiling Dragon faction, the Prancing Pony's business would be secure for at least ten thousand years. He might even be able to force the Grand Steward Dong Sheng to spit out his own business share.

Jiang Chen finally learned the ins and outs of everything after listening to Niu Wuhua's explanation and Manager Qiu's occasional input. He wasn't really willing to interfere because this was the Prancing Pony's internal matters, but if Niu Wuhua abandoned himself to despair because of this, it was likely that he wouldn't do his best with what Jiang Chen asked of him. Jiang Chen immediately flashed a faint smile. "There are rules to doing business. If you don't want to sell your shares to the grand steward, there's no way he can force you to do so. Veluriyam Capital's laws exist for a reason. All those who break the law shall be punished."

Although it wasn't a promise, it was close to one already. Niu Wuhua was overjoyed when he heard this. Manager Qiu's eyes were also alit. It was obvious that they had found a trace of hope.

"If you'll uphold justice, then Dong Sheng wouldn't dare act wantonly even if he is powerful beyond measure, young lord." Niu Wuhua's face lit up with delight.

Manager Qiu also said sincerely, "Please uphold justice, young lord."

Jiang Chen smiled. "I have need of you, so if you truly don't wish to sell your shares to the Dong Family, then no one can take them from you. I can guarantee you this at the very least."

Forget that he was actually the young lord of Sacred Peafowl Mountain, even if he was just the young lord of the Coiling Dragon Clan, it was still enough power to settle this business. Even if Dong Sheng had all the power in the world, there was no way he could challenge the disciple of a great emperor faction.

Chapter 1027: Searching For News of Parents

Why had Niu Wuhua come out so hastily to welcome Jiang Chen? He'd seen the Silver Dragon Medallion and knew that it was second to only Emperor Coiling Dragon's Golden Dragon Medallion. That was why he didn't suspect Jiang Chen's identity at all. He knew that this was an important figure and backer who could change his fate.

Although Manager Qiu guessed from Jiang Chen's appearance that he was probably an extraordinary young man, he didn't believe him entirely. A bit of doubt and suspicion still lingered in his eyes. Naturally, his suspicion didn't escape Jiang Chen's attention. He smiled casually at Manager Qiu.

"Manager Qiu, you seem to be suffering from some hidden illness. Did you experience an inner energy reversal three to five years ago? And did you almost experience a cultivation deviation?"

Manager Qiu's entire body shook when he heard this. An astonished light filled his eyes. Only a few people close to him knew about this matter, much less an outsider. But this young master Ji San had figured out this many of his symptoms with just a few glances. Just... just how great were his observation skills?

"It wasn't really a big issue, but unfortunately you didn't resolve it in time. That's why it became a substantial problem after a few years. For the last few months, you've realized that your cultivation efforts have been useless, haven't you?"

Niu Wuhua couldn't help but cast Manager Qiu a slightly surprised glance. The manager's face was pale white, like he had just seen a ghost. Jiang Chen smiled, knowing that he had struck the most sensitive spot in the manager's heart. He immediately stopped talking.

Manager Qiu trembled all over. He knew very well that his actual condition was even worse than what young master Ji San had described. As of late, the troubles he had encountered during his cultivation and business made every day feel like a living hell.

Manager Qiu's face contorted and spasmed. He couldn't stop himself from asking in a shaky voice, "Young master, can my illness still be treated?"

It was obvious that he feared for his life. Jiang Chen stared at Manager Qiu with a half-smile. "Naturally, there is a way to treat your illness. However..."

Manager Qiu collapsed on his knees before Jiang Chen could say another word. "Please be merciful and show me the light, young master."

The Prancing Pony had no relations to the Coiling Dragon Clan. Therefore, Manager Qiu didn't count as a subordinate of the Coiling Dragon Clan. On the other hand, Niu Wuhua was slightly related to the clan. His status was just too low that he'd almost never had an opportunity to curry favor with the clan directly. Right now, Jiang Chen's appearance in the guise of young master Ji San invigorated him greatly. He thought that his savior had arrived. That was why Niu Wuhua had acted as humbly as possible. He knew exactly what kind of situation he was in.

He couldn't help but give Manager Qiu some guidance when he noticed that the manager was still somewhat confused. "Manager Qiu, you're a smart person. It wasn't easy for you to get to where you are now. However, if you have a better backer, I am sure that you can climb even higher, considering your abilities. The young master has pointed out your problems and shown you the light, so what else are you waiting for?"

Manager Qiu was a smart person to begin with, so he grasped the situation after Niu Wuhua's advice. He hastily knelt on the floor. "Young master, I am a foolish man. If you are willing to enlighten

me, I will give my life to the Coiling Dragon Clan. You will be my savior, young master."

Niu Wuhua was also staring at Jiang Chen with hope and expectation. He held a genuine appreciation of Manager Qiu. Although they were friendly with each other, they weren't particularly close because they didn't belong to the same faction. However, if they could solidify their alliance through a connection with young master Ji San, then their chances against Grand Steward Dong Sheng would be much greater. Plus, young master Ji San would be around to help as well.

"Please, get up so we may speak properly. Your illness isn't too serious nor too minor. It depends on who your doctor is. I will write out a prescription. Take your medicine as suggested, and if you experience any lingering effects, you may visit me in Veluriyam Capital. That being said, I believe your illness can be cured completely."

Be it the nations or the cities under Veluriyam Capital's rule, they all greatly admired the rich and powerful of Veluriyam Capital. The Coiling Dragon Clan had been unapproachable even when it was just the number one clan of Veluriyam Capital, much less the great emperor faction it is now. Therefore, Manager Qiu didn't suspect Jiang Chen's words at all. Rather, he was quite filled with joy.

"Thank you, young master. I must have done much good in the past to be saved by the young master himself. From today onwards, I shall obey all of young master's commands."

Niu Wuhua smiled. "Manager Qiu, this is a favor that others cannot earn even if they wanted to. You are right to say that this is a fortunate occurrence."

Manager Qiu nodded repeatedly. Jiang Chen grabbed a brush and paper before writing out a prescription. "Take this two times a day. I guarantee that you'll be cured three months later."

Manager Qiu's illness wasn't really all that serious; it was just that he had no idea how to cure it. As the saying went, education separates the fool and the wise. Jiang Chen looked at Niu Wuhua again and said, "Shopkeeper Niu, do you still remember the details of that information?"

Niu Wuhua snapped to attention since Jiang Chen had moved onto the main topic. He thought carefully before responding, "I believe this incident should have happened six, seven, or even eight years ago. I don't quite remember the details because it has been a very long time. However, I recalled that a man had posted a bounty here because I was reviewing some old missions a few days ago. I thought that it was somewhat related to the clues the clan had asked us to investigate."

"Do you still remember what the man who posted the bounty looked like? What exactly did the bounty say?" Jiang Chen worked hard to suppress the excitement in his heart.

"He was a vigorous, middle-aged man. His cultivation wasn't very impressive, and the reward for the bounty wasn't very high either. I vaguely remember that he had a black mole at the bottom right corner of his mouth."

A black mole? Jiang Chen was moved. He remembered clearly that his father had a black mole at the bottom right corner of his mouth. This revelation made his blood boil with excitement. He was almost certain now that this person was his father, Jiang Feng.

"Do you still have the bounty he posted back then? Show me."

"Yes, I do. I've already made a copy of it. Please, have a read." Although Niu Wuhua didn't know why young master Ji San was so concerned about this bounty, he could clearly feel the deep emotions behind his inquiry. Since the reward wasn't high, the contents of the mission were very simple. The issuer wanted to know if a baby girl had been abandoned in the Myriad Domain by any Upper Eight Regions power within the past fifty years and had

been brought back twenty to thirty years later.

The content of the mission was somewhat vague. Jiang Chen read through it a couple of times, and the more he looked at it, the likelier he thought that it was his father's. In this lifetime, he was twenty plus years old. If his parents had been very young when they'd given birth to him, they should be around their forties at most. Therefore, the request for information about a baby girl abandoned in the Myriad Domain fifty years ago did fit his mother's supposed age. The specification that she had been taken back to the Upper Eight Regions later also fit.

All these details proved that the mission had most likely been posted by his father, and the small bounty indicated that his father had been rather poor at the time. As a result, no one had accepted the mission. It was very likely that the reason the mission remained untouched even though seven or eight years had passed was because the reward had been too small.

Seeing that Jiang Chen was quietly pondering, Niu Wuhua and Manager Qiu dared not let out a sound.

I was in Veluriyam Capital for about three years and for another five in the Veluriyam Pagoda. The Eternal Celestial Capital and Great Scarlet Mid Region likely hadn't started hunting for me when the mission was posted, had they? If the hunt had started around that time, Jiang Chen was sure that his father wouldn't have been able to hold himself back. He wouldn't have the mind to post that bounty either. In that case, seven to eight years was actually a conservative estimate. The bounty had likely been posted almost ten years ago.

Ten years had passed since the bounty had been posted, and Jiang Chen dared not make any further inferences. Although his father had some money with him, he'd probably ran out on the way from Skylaurel Kingdom to the Upper Eight Regions. Without money, his father's situation could only be worse in a place like the Upper Eight Regions. Jiang Chen's heart burned with anxiety at

the thought of this.

“Shopkeeper Niu, were there any new clues regarding this mission?” Jiang Chen suddenly looked at Niu Wuhua and asked in a complicated tone.

Niu Wuhua shook his head. “The person who posted it never showed up afterwards. That being said, I believe that I’ve heard a similar story somewhere.”

“Hmm?” Jiang Chen raised his eyebrow. “You mean the story of an Upper Eight Regions baby being abandoned in the Myriad Domain?”

Niu Wuhua seemed worried that he might say the wrong thing. He only nodded after thinking for a moment. “It’s just gossip that I picked up somewhere. I can’t say for sure whether it’s actually true.”

“Tell me.” Jiang Chen shot him an encouraging look.

“Um. I accidentally came upon this during an outing. I was executing a mission and had to pass through the Tilted Moon Region. It was there that I heard that a holy maiden of the Moon God Sect, a first-rank sect in the Tilted Moon Region, had once gone missing.”

“Moon God Sect? Tilted Moon Region?” Jiang Chen’s eyebrows moved. “Is this reliable?”

“I don’t know if it’s reliable. I heard the rumor in a pub. The Moon God Sect seemed to have rediscovered their holy maiden, but the holy maiden felt no sense of belonging in the Moon God Sect. Sadly, this holy maiden was tied to the Moon God Sect’s fortunes, so opinions regarding the holy maiden were incredibly divided. Some people hated her deeply because they thought that a holy maiden who had lost her purity while astray in a lower region should be punished by death from a thousand cuts. On the other hand, some people thought she was the key to maintaining the

Moon God Sect's fortunes, and that killing her would be the equivalent of slaughtering their sect's fortunes..." Niu Wuhua' words caused Jiang Chen's insides to churn with emotion.

Chapter 1028: A Way to Repay a Favor Once and For All

Regardless of the reliability of this news or whether it was even relevant, it was still very important. Jiang Chen couldn't ignore it no matter what.

"Shopkeeper Niu, was this mission widespread?" Jiang Chen couldn't help but ask.

"the Tilted Moon Region is situated near the northwest side of Upper Eight Regions, so few people in Veluriyam Capital knew about this. However, this mission is somewhat known to the regions northward of Upper Eight Regions. Of course, this was rather small news, so no one thought much of it even if it was brought up during a conversation. The only reason it was even mentioned was because a first rank sect was involved. Had the sect been a second or third rank sect, then no one would mention it at all."

A first rank sect normally earned more attention because there weren't many real first rank powers in the Upper Eight Regions. Veluriyam Capital was located to the south in the Upper Eight Regions, whereas the Tilted Moon Region was situated at the northwest of the Upper Eight Regions. There was around 300,000 miles distance in terms of a straight line between the two regions. If someone were to travel on foot from Veluriyam Capital to the Tilted Moon Region, they would have to walk for at least a million miles. If one were to factor in potential mishaps one during the journey as well, then it was literally impossible for a normal person to travel from Veluriyam Capital to the Tilted Moon Region without travelling for at least three to five years.

Jiang Chen thought about this carefully. "Are you sure that you've heard nothing about the person who posted the bounty since?"

“Mm, I have heard nothing about him since. He’s probably a long way away from Veluriyam Capital already. His cultivation isn’t very strong, and considering his strength he would probably have to travel at least seven to eight years before he could reach the Tilted Moon Region. If he was looking out for the holy maiden of Moon God Sect, then his final destination must be the Tilted Moon Region, right?”

Because he had no idea who this person was to young master Ji San, Niu Wuhua didn’t dare make a careless comment. Frankly speaking, he quite doubted that the poster of this bounty could make it to the Tilted Moon Region alive. To travel from Bluesky Nation to the Tilted Moon Region was to traverse more than half of the Upper Eight Regions. It was just too unlikely for a weak cultivator to reach the Tilted Moon Region without running into any troubles at all. The chances of success were almost nonexistent.

Moreover, the poster had obviously never heard of this bit regarding Moon God Sect. Therefore, he might not even be aware that he should search travel to the Tilted Moon Region. Jiang Chen was content with what he’d learned from Niu Wuhua even though the intelligence was somewhat indefinite. It had all happened far too long ago. That Niu Wuhua even remembered some of it was quite impressive already. It would be entirely normal if he’d forgotten about the details of a small bounty from almost ten years ago.

The Tilted Moon Region, Moon God Sect. Jiang Chen quietly repeated the words to himself. He had already made up his mind to check out the place. He had to pass through Pillfire City if he wished to make it to the Tilted Moon Region anyway. Pillfire City was situated at the north side of Upper Eight Regions, whereas the Tilted Moon Region was situated to the northwest of Pillfire City.

Of course, he could also choose not to [ass through Pillfire City. There was a desolate, ten-thousand mile stretch of mountain

ranges to the south of the Tilted Moon Region. If he chose to go down that path, he would have to pass through the desolate and uninhabited mountain ranges. Mountain ranges like these were normally ripe with all sorts of monsters and extremely dangerous to say the least. Therefore, most cultivators who wished to go to the Tilted Moon Region chose to pass through Pillfire City.

Jiang Chen had already planned out the route in his head. He would head to Pillfire City first and save Mu Gaoqi. Then, he would go northwest to the Tilted Moon Region and inquire about the Moon God Sect.

“Steward Niu, your intel is very useful to me. Where does Grand Steward Dong Sheng live right now?” Jiang Chen asked.

Niu Wuhua felt a spike of joy when he heard Jiang Chen asking about Dong Sheng’s dwelling. He knew that the young master was going to defend him. For a moment, he was so excited that he wasn’t sure what to do. The only thing he thought as of late were ways to reject Dong Sheng’s demands. He hadn’t actually thought of plotting against the grand steward at all. Therefore, he was actually at a loss when Jiang Chen asked him about it.

“Tell me, what is your bottom line?” Jiang Chen smiled faintly.

“My bottom line is to protect my share and not let Dong Sheng take everything. Plus, he’s absolutely unqualified to run Prancing Horse Inn’s business.”

Manager Qiu also echoed these sentiments. “The grand steward’s actions showed that he’s too selfish. He allows his idiotic brother-in-law to cause chaos in Prancing Horse Inn just for the sake of his own goals. The current inn is a foul place to be in.”

“If that’s so, then let us have Dong Sheng surrender his own share,” Jiang Chen said indifferently.

“Ah?” Niu Wuhua was stunned by these words.

Manager Qiu’s brain also blanked out for a moment as his mouth

fell open. Have Dong Sheng give up his own share? Wasn't this turnaround a little too abrupt? He was demanding they hand over their share. But the young master was going to pull off this instead? Was it even possible?

Niu Wuhua smiled wryly. "Young master, that Dong Sheng... seems to have some powerful backers. I hear that the vice city lord of Goldtower City has a son who's close to Dong Sheng. It appears that they're sworn brothers."

"Vice city lord?" Jiang Chen looked startled. "Does the vice city lord have the final say in Goldtower City?"

Niu Wuhua started, then shook his head subconsciously. "Not really, the city lord is normally the one who has the final say, although that is not the case sometimes. After all, this is Bluesky Nation. The monarch of Bluesky Nation is the one who has the final say when major events are involved."

"Then there's no problem, is there? If the vice city lord himself can't decide what goes in Goldtower City, then what can the son of this vice city lord possibly do?" Jiang Chen smiled. "How about this. I'll visit Bluesky Nation's palace myself while the rest of you wait here for my good news." A moment of thought later, he ultimately decided to settle this matter once and for all. He did owe Niu Wuhua a favor, so it was his responsibility to settle this properly and take care of it once and for all. Judging from Niu Wuhua and Manager Qiu's tone, Dong Sheng was probably younger and wilder than they were. He was no slouch when it came to socialization given his sworn brotherhood with the son of the vice city lord. He must be a silver tongued and cunning person.

If a person like this saw hope, he would work towards his goal by crook or by hook. Even if Jiang Chen forced him to cough out his business shares, he would absolutely cause trouble for Niu Wuhua and Manager Qiu in the future. Therefore, simple oppression wouldn't work in this case. Jiang Chen had to find a way to scare Dong Sheng so much that he couldn't even muster the thought of

resistance. That was the only way he could settle this matter once and for all.

The royal palace of Bluesky Nation was heavily guarded. At the Eastern Palace where the crown prince lived, a few sorry-looking pill masters were walking out the place dejected and depressed. They looked like they couldn't wait to sprout wings and fly away from this place.

"Trash, all of you are trash! How can the nation achieve great things if you are the kind of people we keep?" A young man with flawless wearing official, ceremonious robes and a golden crown yelled angrily at the group of pill masters. The young man rained a torrent of abuses on the elderly pill masters, but not one of them dared to rebuke him. Instead, they kept their heads bowed and walked outside.

"Your Highness, they've already done all they can. It is not their fault that the pill is too difficult to concoct," an elderly voice advised.

It was only then the young man stopped swearing and waved his hands impatiently. "Get out, get as far away from me as you can!"The pill masters immediately poured out of the palace as if pardoned from a terrible crime.

The young man's kindly face turned beet red with anger when he saw their reactions. He sighed towards an elder. "Grand Tutor, it seems that I have to make a trip to Veluriyam Capital. There is only so much the pill kings of Bluesky Nation can do. I hear Veluriyam Capital has produced many amazing pill kings as of late, and the new young lord of Sacred Peafowl Mountain is even heralded as a future pill emperor of the pill industry. Even the invincible legend of Pillfire City was defeated by this young lord."

The elder smiled wryly. "Your Highness, Bluesky Nation is but one of the many nations ruled by Veluriyam Capital. I doubt we can even be compared to those first rate great clans. No problems

will arise if you simply wish to visit the pill kings of Veluriyam Capital, but if you wish to visit young lord Zhen, I fear that…"

The elder didn't continue, but his unsaid words were clear. You may be the prince of Bluesky Nation, but you're still not important enough. Even the monarch of Bluesky Nation couldn't meet young lord Zhen any time he wanted to.

The prince seemed to be aware that he wasn't important enough. "It's not like I'm visiting him out of selfish interest." He sighed. "Everybody says that that young lord Zhen is a kind, friendly person who respects the wise. These days you can hear everyone under Veluriyam Capital's rule praising him everywhere you go. I hear it so often that you can see calluses growing on my ears. So there must be some truth behind those praises, right? There's no reason for him to close the door on my face, is there?"

While they were speaking, a palace attendant suddenly rushed in to report. "Your Highness, a strange person requests to see you outside the entrance of the Eastern Palace."

"A strange person?" The prince looked confused. "Who is it?"

"This servant doesn't know." The palace attendant looked just as confused.

"What? You came in to report to me without even checking who he is? And, how did he make it to the Eastern Palace?" The inner section of the palace was heavily guarded. It was impossible for a stranger of unknown origins to make it all the way to the Eastern Palace.

So where had this strange person come from?

The palace attendant turned deathly pale after hearing this. He stuttered. "I… I'll tell the guards to chase him out right away."

"A moment, Your Highness." The elder suddenly spoke. "The fact that this person can come all the way without being detected proves that he also has the ability to come and go as he wishes. He

sent someone in to report his arrival means that he isn't entirely inconsiderate. Since we may not necessarily be able to chase away someone like him, we may as well meet with him instead."

This old man was the prince's teacher. Therefore, the crown prince was more receptive towards his advice.

"Send him in." A moment of thought later, the prince decided that his teacher's words made a lot of sense.

A while later, an average-looking fighter strode into the hall. When he saw the prince, he smiled and clasped his hands together carelessly. "Well met, crown prince of Bluesky Nation."

The palace attendants next to the prince immediately scolded the newcomer when they saw how rude he was.

"Insolence! Why do you not bow immediately when you see the prince?"

"Where do you come from, barbarian?! How dare you act like this before the prince?"

Chapter 1029: Turning Stone to Gold, Trash to Treasure

Jiang Chen paid the guards no mind. His only response was a faint smile as he looked piercingly at the crown prince. His expression was relaxed as he spoke. “Are you interested in a private chat, Your Highness?”

Though the stranger had acted brusquely, the crown prince noticed his composure under the royal guards’ pressure. That alone was enough to mark this man as extraordinary. Captains of the crown prince’s personal guard were usually mid rank emperor realm cultivators. Furthermore, the guardsmen were all at least sky sage realm, with the slightly better ones half-step emperor realm and a few even mid rank emperor realm. A retinue like this was more than enough to render the common man incapable of controlling his bladder in fear.

The crown prince’s hesitation made Jiang Chen smile. “As Veluriyam Capital’s line of defense on the northern border, Bluesky Nation is a principality of considerable importance. You are its crown prince, are you not? Surely you have more courage than this.” A provocation would usually do the trick.

“Who are you, sir?” The prince’s face chilled. “For someone who now stands in my palace, you are being exceptionally discourteous. There is no need for me to prove to you how much courage I have. I don’t even know where you hail from. Am I supposed to be polite to someone who shows a lack thereof?”

Jiang Chen chuckled. “Ah, absolutely. You are the crown prince of a great nation, to be accorded a certain degree of respect. However, that doesn’t mean it is deserved from everyone you meet.”

His words were so authoritative that everyone on the prince’s side did a double take.

There were no fools here. Everyone sensed that the strange youth likely had extraordinary origins.

“Do you come from Veluriyam Capital, friend?” The old man suddenly spoke.

“You have a good eye, Grand Tutor. Alas, you haven’t taught your student to a similar degree of excellence. A crown prince should have a broader view of things.” A man of Jiang Chen’s current stature had more than sufficient authority to comment on the mere crown prince of a nation. In fact, he had enough to criticize a king. He was the young lord of Sacred Peafowl Mountain, the future master of the entire Veluriyam Capital! A great number of great nations and cities sat within his territory.

As it is written in the Book of Poetry, ‘Under the wide heaven all is the king’s land, within the sea-boundaries of the land / all are the king’s servants.’ As the future ruler of Veluriyam capital, it didn’t matter if they were kings of the great nations or lords of the great cities, everyone had to bow before him.

But the crown prince was still somewhat of a youth. A hint of dissatisfaction appeared on his face when he heard Jiang Chen’s words. Thankfully, the old man’s sharp glances hsi way stifled his temper for the moment. There was no immediate outburst, no order for the guards to attack. But the effort of keeping his temper in rein had manifested itself in an angrily red face. It made Jiang Chen crack a smile inside. The crown prince is a young man after all. It’s unsurprising that he can’t keep his cool.

From the looks of it, the prince was probably a few years younger than him. Suddenly, a scent wafted past his nose. Distracted, Jiang Chen sniffed at the air. He detected a whiff of something unusual.

“Hmm? Is someone trying to refine the Fierce Tiger Pill?” He was very sensitive to pills. The barest hint of a scent floating in the air was enough for his nose to pick up on. “The refining techniques don’t seem very good, though. The Fierce Tiger Pill has been

utterly ruined. Refining the pill like this is just a waste of materials."

Jiang Chen chuckled, looking back to the young crown prince once more. "Is Bluesky Nation's crown prince actually a pill aficionado?"

This simplified things a great deal. The crown prince's face went from red to an alarming shade of purple. The Fierce Tiger Pill's associated problems had occupied his mind for a long time now. He'd spent quite some time on it, and yet his attempts so far had all failed. The grand tutor's eyes lit up. "Do you know about the Fierce Tiger Pill, friend?"

The crown prince's eyes began to shine with interest as well when he heard the question. His unconvinced eyes roamed over Jiang Chen's body, considering the other youth more seriously this time.

"The Fierce Tiger Pill is hardly complicated or remarkable. What is there to know about? Something fit for me to practice with when I was ten, that's all. A second-rate pill at best." Jiang Chen casually shrugged.

The crown prince's entire body shook. "Bragging doesn't cost you anything," he curled his lip.

Jiang Chen didn't bother to explain. He continued to speak with the same tone of indifference. "The Fierce Tiger Pill can strengthen the body and tap into one's latent potential. It is able to multiply a cultivator's power several times over for a short time. Commonly used in the military because of its cheapness, it has devastating side effects as well. The best pill kings do not typically find it worthwhile to refine something so flawed." His description finally evoked a change in the crown prince's skepticism. Evidently, Jiang Chen had mentioned everything there was to say about the pill.

"You are not the average scholar, friend, but a veritable expert!"

The grand tutor was extremely pleased. “Your Highness, our guest here is a master of pill dao.”

“Who doesn’t know how to give a nice speech, huh? That’s no proof of his competence.” The crown prince still looked somewhat distrustful.

Jiang Chen openly grinned at that. The young crown prince was flipping the provocation card back at him. Considering its intended target though, it went wide of the mark.

“The Fierce Tiger Pill is too low-ranked, crown prince. I would not care to refine it even if you provoked me ten times more. Veluriyam Capital has another pill called the Tiger Eruption Pill. It, too, is a berserk pill, and you can consider it a ranked-up version of the Fierce Tiger Pill. It is superior to its lesser version in both medicinal effect and the severity of its side effects. Moreover, because it is a recipe from the Deviant Pill Faction, its cost is incredibly low.”

“Tiger Eruption Pill?” The grand tutor’s eyes glittered. “I believe I’ve heard of that pill before. Hmm, if I recall correctly, there’s a store called Taiyuan Tower in Veluriyam Capital that sells it. The young lord of Sacred Peafowl Mountain owns it.”

“Exactly so,” Jiang Chen nodded.

The grand tutor turned back to the crown prince. “Is this not confirmation enough that our guest is a master of pill dao after all, Your Highness? Since you thirst after the wise, should you not honor one when such appears in front of you?” He waved to the guardsmen. “You, you, and you. All of you, come outside with me. Let the crown prince and our honored guest have some privacy.”

The prince’s guards were a bit hesitant. Their charge was the crown prince after all, his were the only orders that mattered. The grand tutor was the prince’s teacher, but this concerned the prince’s safety… they couldn’t afford to take risks.

The crown prince knew that his teacher always had a good reason behind his actions. The old man was cunning and unfailingly cautious. Despite his own misgivings, he waved them off as well. “You may go. I’d be glad to have a more intimate chat with our visitor.”

Seeing his guards’ remaining uncertainty, he called out, “What are you waiting for? We’re in the palace. Are you afraid of him eating me or something?” His small show of annoyance finally compelled the guards to leave.

“Not bad, not bad.” Jiang Chen applauded him, laughing. “Being able to rectify your mistakes is a great virtue.”

“Yes, yes, keep sharpening your tongue,” the crown prince harrumphed. “I’d like to see how much skill you have with literally anything else.”

Suspicion still ran subtly beneath the crown prince’s words. There really was no way around the prince’s youth.

“I have skills aplenty, I assure you. However, refining the Fierce Tiger Pill can hardly be counted as one. Your own cauldron of pills is already ruined, no? Then I’ll go to the trouble of turning that waste into wealth.” Jiang Chen didn’t allow the prince a moment to fire off a retort, walking directly towards the pill room off to the side. He found the prince’s behavior amusing. The other youth was standing in the doorway, stuck between wanting to excuse himself and wanting to watch. An interesting young man, to be sure.

Personally, Jiang Chen didn’t care either way. “Feel free to watch if you want. It’s not like the Fierce Tiger Pill is some kind of secret recipe, no do I have anything to hide.”

His tools: the crown prince’s cauldron, and his materials: the materials within. There was no flourish in his actions. He conjured the most basic of pill-flames, casually summoning a decidedly average heat source to heat up the cauldron. Following this, he casually matured the flame, beginning to refine the once-wasted

materials once more.

The Fierce Tiger Pill wasn't even a top-ranked pill. It was sage rank at most, not worthy enough to be considered even true sage rank. It affected only origin realm cultivators. Sage realm cultivators could find some benefit out of it in a pinch, but the effects were greatly discounted. On the other hand, the Tiger Eruption Pill could be used by both origin and sage realm cultivators without much of a difference in its effects. More importantly, the majority of the side effects present in the Fierce Tiger Pill were alleviated.

Jiang Chen's technique was practiced enough, but the crown prince saw nothing amazing or unique in it. None of the steps were particularly mysterious or hard to understand. He frowned, his heart marred with uncertainty. This guy looks confident, alright, but there's nothing special in what he's doing. There's no way he can turn stone into gold. No, I don't believe it. How can he possibly refine the Fierce Tiger Pill with ruined materials? He must have boasted without the ability to back it up.

Nonetheless, Jiang Chen's equanimity and self-control were formidable. Despite himself, the crown prince appreciated that kind of discipline. One would be hard-pressed to find the like in a common charlatan. Still, composure wasn't everything. At the end of the day, the results had to speak for themselves.

Thirty to forty-five minutes passed before Jiang Chen concluded forming hand seals. "All done," he smiled serenely. He quenched the flames with a flick, and the cauldron sounded several times with a ringing roar. With a flourish of his sleeves, Jiang Chen brushed the lid atop aside.

"Take a look: some Fierce Tiger Pills, as promised." His sleeves swished in the air as the young lord pushed the cauldron towards the crown prince's direction.

The crown prince blinked incredulously, striding forward rapidly

to stare into the vessel. His expression froze as his eyes made contact with its contents. It was as if he'd seen the most unbelievable thing in the world. Paralyzed by shock, he couldn't tear his eyes away. After a long while, the prince convulsed and looked at Jiang Chen with mixed feelings. "You... you really didn't cheat?"

He was hit by a wave of insecurity. He had witnessed every step of the process, but he was still dubious about what he'd seen.

"Cheat?" Jiang Chen's expression was perfectly cool. "The Fierce Tiger Pill does not merit the act of cheating, period. Can't you sense your own materials within the pills? Your pill dao ability is worse than I thought, then."

The crown prince was perfectly capable of that, but had completely forgotten to. Hastily moving to do so, he found that the finished product really did consist only of his own materials. More accurately, they had been the exact materials that he'd ruined earlier. This revelation sent him into a frenzy. Was pill dao truly able to perform the miracle of turning trash into treasure? That seemed far too good to believe.

All of his pill dao teachers had been picked from Bluesky Nation's best pill kings. They represented the nation's cream of the crop. Unfortunately, without a concrete recipe, their collective attempts to refine the Fierce Tiger Pill had ended in failure. The fact that someone as ordinary-looking as the man before him had been able to refine the pill was wholly unexpected. After all, his teachers had spent several years without anything close to resembling a success.

Chapter 1030: Dusting Off and Leaving

If the prince was somewhat unconvinced earlier, then the reality that greeted his eyes rendered him completely speechless. His earlier distrust completely disappeared, leaving behind admiration that rose from the bottom from his heart. Despite being depressed, he couldn't help but ask, "Are all pill dao experts in Veluriyam Capital as skilled as you? I suppose Bluesky Nation is a little outdated compared to the world."

Jiang Chen found the dejected-looking prince to be rather more interesting than before. He understood that the young prince was simply trying to strengthen his country by refining the Fierce Tiger Pill, so he refrained from attacking the example of royal proactiveness.

"It's only natural that Veluriyam Capital's pill dao is many times stronger than Bluesky Nation's. You don't need to be depressed. When it comes to pill dao, there are only a handful of people who are better than me in Veluriyam Capital." This was Jiang Chen being humble. In reality, no one in Veluriyam Capital could compare to him when it came to pill dao. In fact, no one was even close to his level. In all likelihood, there was no one in the entire Divine Abyss Continent who came close when it came to pill dao.

If Jiang Chen had made that claim before his demonstration, the prince would've thought it a load of hot air. But now, it almost seemed irrefutable; this strange man might actually be a pill dao genius of Veluriyam Capital.

"I must say that you truly are skilled, sire. So, about the refining method of this Fierce Tiger Pill..." The prince rubbed his palms together, but seemed to feel as though he was being a bit forward for speaking so suddenly. He waited for a moment before continuing, "Please name a price. We are willing to buy the recipe and the refining method of this pill as long as it's reasonable."

“You’re truly bold to attempt refining the pill without its recipe. That being said, it is a little unwise of you to waste time like this.”

The prince turned red in embarrassment. He was simply trying to do something for his nation by refining the Fierce Tiger Pill. Now that Jiang Chen mentioned it, even he thought that he’s been a little too brash in his actions. There was nothing more difficult than refining a specific pill without its recipe. If they were lucky, they’d be able to reverse engineer the recipe. But if they were unlucky, then the fruits of their labor might only come after several years of research.

“I don’t have a choice. Bluesky Nation is responsible for guarding the northern side of Veluriyam Capital, but we are surrounded by many powerful enemies. War can break out at any moment. However, the Fierce Tiger Pill can increase our troops’ courage and multiply their combat strength, so it’s research that benefits both our nation and our people. It is not out of selfishness that I started on this path…”

“I’ve already said this, but the side effects of the Fierce Tiger Pill are too strong. An army would probably only be able to use it once or twice without much repercussions, but long term use of Fierce Tiger Pill will only bring more harm than benefits.” Jiang Chen ruthlessly pointed out the flaw in his strategy.

“Haha. In the end, you just aren’t willing to give us the techniques behind the Fierce Tiger Pill, aren’t you?” The prince sounded a little disappointed.

“The Fierce Tiger Pill does more harm than good if it is used over a long period of time. However, you may equip your army with Tiger Eruption Pills without any of those problems.” Jiang Chen smiled.

“Tiger Eruption Pill?” The prince’s eyes lit up. “Do you know how to refine the Tiger Eruption Pill?” Jiang Chen smiled. He was the inventor of the pill, how could he not know how to refine it?

“You don’t know how to refine the Tiger Eruption Pill?” The prince’s voice once again betrayed his disappointment when Jiang Chen didn’t answer his question.

“Of course I know how to make that pill. However, this pill is proprietary knowledge of Taiyuan Tower. Therefore, I cannot just give you its refining method or recipe. That being said, I can help you buy a batch of Tiger Eruption Pills from Taiyuan Tower at the cost of production.”

“Cost of production? Are you sure you have the power to do so? Also… how much would that come to?” The prince looked worried.

“Haha, are you worried that I lack the ability to authorize such a trade? As for the cost of production, it’s not much pricier than what you were spending on the Fierce Tiger Pill. In fact, it’s pretty much the same as the Fierce Tiger Pill because you won’t need to pay for the manpower necessary to refine the pill on your side. But of course, you will be required to pay a token transportation fee.”

“It’s that cheap?” The prince was completely stunned.

“One of the greatest traits of the Deviant Pill Faction lies in its low cost. If one of their pills has a high production cost, then it’s not considered a successful product.” Jiang Chen smiled faintly.

The prince nodded, half understanding. “I have heard that Deviant Pill Faction is pretty good. It was apparently brought into the limelight by young lord Zhen of Sacred Peafowl Mountain. My friend, considering how close you are to Taiyuan Tower, is it possible that you know young lord Zhen himself?”

Jiang Chen smiled but didn’t answer.

“You really know young lord Zhen?” A look of admiration suddenly filled the prince’s expression. “I heard that young lord Zhen excels in both pill dao and martial dao. Especially his pill dao, it’s said to be unrivalled among the younger generation. In fact,

not even the invincible legend of Pillfire City, Pill King Ji Lang is a match for him. Have you seen him before? Is he a friendly person? Is he easy to talk to?”

The prince’s words were almost tripping over each other as he spoke quicker and quicker. The mention of young lord Zhen had turned into an awestruck fan.

“Not only do I know him, I have a great relationship with him too.”

The prince looked envious of his new guest. “You live in Veluriyam Capital, so of course it’s easier for you to meet young lord Zhen. Sometimes I really envy you people. Personally, I wish to study in Veluriyam Capital for a couple dozen years or so. Goldtower City is just too dull compared to Veluriyam Capital.”

Goldtower City was the capital of Bluesky Nation. Compared to the nations and cities around it, it could be considered a major city, but it was still much, much inferior to Veluriyam Capital. The people of Goldtower City obviously adored Veluriyam Capital, especially considering the three pagodas they built in imitation of Veluriyam Pagoda.

“Oh right, do you think I can meet young lord Zhen if I visit Veluriyam Capital one day?” The prince asked with a hopeful look on his face.

“Of course you can.” Jiang Chen smiled. “Who knows, maybe you’ll meet him one day, before you even realize it.”

The prince sighed. It was obvious that he thought that Jiang Chen was merely fobbing him off. A moment later, the prince suddenly recalled something. “Oh right, you came to the Eastern Palace and sought me out for no apparent reason. But you wouldn’t have shown up here without a purpose, right?”

Jiang Che smiled. “You’ve finally picked up on that. The reason I sought you out today is to ask for a favor.”

“What?” The prince looked startled. You’re a pill dao genius of Veluriyam Capital and you want a favor from me? Since when did I become this powerful? But when he thought that the pill dao genius of Veluriyam Capital had purposely come to ask a favor from him, the prince couldn’t help but feel a bit proud of himself. He had already made up his mind to grant the favor as long as it wasn’t too excessive.

“Steward Niu of Goldtower City’s Prancing Pony is an acquaintance of mine. Right now, the grand steward of the Prancing Pony, Dong Sheng, is attempting to claim everyone’s share of the business for himself…” Jiang Chen summarized the situation and roughly sketched out the players involved.

“Is that all?” The prince actually felt a bit disappointed after getting over his surprise. Not only was it not a difficult matter to deal with, it was almost too trivial in the prince’s opinion. It was so minor that he didn’t think it even counted as a great favor. At the very least, it wasn’t worth the favor of the Tiger Eruption Pill.

“That is all.” Jiang Chen nodded affirmatively. “That being said, Dong Sheng is quite wild and I suspect that he’s a pretty ruthless person. If we are to deal with him, then we must make sure that he never makes a return. He must not be allowed to cause trouble after we suppress him.”

“That won’t be a problem.” The prince said disdainfully, “He’s only the sworn brother of a mere vice city lord. He’s not even worth a mention in Bluesky Nation. You could’ve just sought out the vice city lord himself and told him to deal with this. You are a genius from Veluriyam Capital; I doubt he would’ve dared reject your demands.”

“I’m not confident in anyone else’s ability but yours. You are the crown prince and future monarch of Bluesky Nation. Therefore, your words and actions are worth more than his.” Jiang Chen spoke frankly. He had countless ways to deal with this problem, but he wouldn’t be able to avoid being criticized by others if he

dealt with this personally. On the other hand, the crown prince of Bluesky Nation was the perfect candidate for this task. Moreover, the prince's status should be more than enough to scare Dong Sheng out of any and all thoughts of fighting back. Dong Sheng could live for another ten lifetimes and still not muster up the courage to fight the prince.

"Fine. Seriously, I haven't dealt with such a trivial matter since the day I became crown prince. But since you've proven your skills and ability to turn even trash into treasure, I will personally deal with this matter. As for the Tiger Eruption Pill..."

"You have nothing to worry about in regard to the Tiger Eruption Pill. Taiyuan Tower will sell them to you at the cost of production even if you ordered a million pills. That being said, you'll have to pay for labor. You can't have make the pill masters refine the pills for free, can you?"

"Yes, yes, that is only proper." The prince didn't try to take advantage of the offer. "Plus, we get to save on manpower and costs on our side, so there is value in this trade. We can pay twice the amount of labor if you wish. As long as the cost of the Tiger Eruption Pill doesn't exceed three times the cost of the Fierce Tiger Pill, we can accept this trade."

"Three times? It won't even cost twice the price of the Fierce Tiger Pill." Jiang Chen didn't try to beat around the bush. "Bring me brush and paper so I may write a letter. All you need to do is to send it to Taiyuan Tower. However, it'll take at least three to five years to refine a million Tiger Eruption Pills, so you'll have to be patient."

"It's no hurry. You can take ten or even twenty years to refine them if you wish. The important thing here is availability."

The prince personally brought over brush and paper for Jiang Chen to write his letter. The content of the letter was very simple. After he was done writing, Jiang Chen thought for a moment

before he chose to take out the Progeny Feather Medallion, stamping the letter at the bottom with the medallion. The prince only saw the contents of the letter. Since his attention was entirely absorbed by the letter, he thought that the medallion Jiang Chen produced and stamped on the letter so casually was nothing more but a pill king medallion. He didn't pay much attention to it.

"Take this letter and bring it to Taiyuan Tower. You will then be able to buy as many Tiger Eruption Pills as you wish."

Without further ado, Jiang Chen vanished in a flash of light. The prince was dumbstruck as he held the letter and stared at the quickly vanishing light Jiang Chen had left behind . When the grand tutor and the prince's personal guards saw Jiang Chen's light fly out, they immediately rushed to his side. They relaxed only when they saw their prince safe and sound. It was then that the grand tutor noticed the completed Fierce Tiger Pill beside him. His eyes lit up. "Fierce Tiger Pill? It actually is the Fierce Tiger Pill!"

"Did he refine it himself?"

The prince sighed softly. "Not only did he refine it himself, he even used the wasted materials from the failed refining earlier to refine it. This man is no ordinary person."

"He turned trash into treasure?" The grand tutor was only more astonished when he heard this. He carefully examined the Fierce Tiger Pill in his hand, turning it over every so often.

"He said that long term use of the Fierce Tiger Pill would be more detrimental than beneficial, so he refuses to let us refine the Fierce Tiger Pill. Instead, he told me to head to Veluriyam Capital and buy the Tiger Eruption Pill. He said that I'd be able to buy them at less than twice the cost of production of the Fierce Tiger Pill."

"Cost of production?" The grand tutor looked startled. "Tiger Eruption Pill? Is that the upgraded version of the Fierce Tiger Pill?"

“Mm. He said that the effects are better, and the side effects are much less intense.”

“I am aware that the Tiger Eruption Pill’s side effects are a lot smaller. This man… is he very close to Taiyuan Tower? Why is he so passionate about this? Why did he show up at the Eastern Palace and make a deal that’s completely unfavorable for him for no particular reason?” The grand tutor looked puzzled.

Chapter 1031: The Shocked Crown Prince

The grand tutor was as surprised as the prince when he heard the full story. “The Prancing Pony is a second-rate faction in Goldtower City. At best, they might be able to claw their way into becoming a leading actor on that stage. But it’s only the level of a city. This friend with such lofty origins came to the crown prince for something so insignificant? Truly, it is difficult to understand the whims of the great. He would have been able to settle the matter easily enough just by himself.”

“He said that Steward Niu was a past acquaintance. Maybe he thinks that it would be inappropriate for him to intervene personally.” The crown prince was unsure.

“Hmm. The geniuses of Veluriyam Capital tend to value their dignity. Perhaps he does not want the bad reputation that comes of interfering in a nation’s internal affairs. Our friend is not only a genius, but a gentleman too. He has ability and skill, but he does not exert his authority over others casually. That is not something everybody can simply do.” The grand tutor spoke of Jiang Chen’s actions with respect and praise.

Looking back at the short letter in the crown prince’s hand, he asked, “Is this the introductory letter he wrote you?”

“Yes. Grand Tutor, please take a look to see if this is a fake?” The prince had a lingering feeling of insubstantiality. Fortune had completely bowled him over with its speed.

The grand tutor glanced over the document. From the text alone, it looked impeccable. His gaze dwelled on the mark of the seal for a moment. In the next instant, the tutor’s face changed color completely.

“What?” The change did not escape the crown prince, and now he was curious and more than a little worried.

The grand tutor's expression looked uniquely peculiar. He tossed the guards a look. "All of you are dismissed. I'd like a few moments alone with the crown prince."

There was no reason for the prince to hesitate this time. "Listen to my teacher and leave us for a bit." He waved a hand. The prince's personal guardsmen knew the extent of his respect for his teacher. They complied at once. There were no strangers present this time, hence, no risk whatsoever. After all of the guardsmen had left, the crown prince couldn't hold himself back, "Teacher, what have you discovered? Why did you dismiss the guards to tell me about it?"

The grand tutor's face shifted through multiple shades and hues. His eyes were glued to the letter in his hand, their pupils showing his unadulterated shock. It was as if the communication had been written by some long-lost family member, so excited was he.

"Your Highness, you... you missed an unbelievably wonderful opportunity." The tutor recovered himself only after a very long while. He breathed a sigh of utter disappointment, akin to someone who had come out empty-handed from a pirate's trove.

"Why do you say that, Grand Tutor?" The crown prince was stunned.

"Your youth has worked against you yet again. Is your mind still stuck on the letter's authenticity?" The grand tutor was depressed at his student's abject failure.

"Of course! He wrote the letter way too casually, right? Even now, I'm a little worried it's not the real thing."

"Foolish, foolish, truly foolish! Do you not see this seal?" The grand tutor hopped about in irritation.

"The seal? It looks like chicken scratch. I didn't really pay attention to it." The prince couldn't sit still anymore. He snatched the letter from his teacher's hands.

“Take a closer look. What does this seal look like?” The grand tutor’s palm was quivering with anger as he pointed at the object of his shock and awe. “This… this is a three-feathered seal. Such an exquisitely wrought icon cannot be anything short of extraordinary. Where are your eyes!?” The grand tutor was incensed to the point of freneticism.

“Teacher, what’s… what’s so remarkable about this seal, exactly?” The crown prince’s expression was completely innocent. He was like a child who had made an honest mistake.

“Ah, I don’t want to call you a fool any more than I already have. If my guess is correct, this is a seal made by the Progeny Feather Medallion. Do you still not recognize it at all? You… you’re the future king of Bluesky Nation! Don’t you say everyday that you want to go to Veluriyam Capital to meet young lord Zhen?”

It was as if a jolt of electricity suddenly passed through the crown prince’s body. His face blanched and his voice grew shaky. “Y-you… Grand Tutor, you… you’re saying that… this is, young lord Zhen’s, Progeny Feather Medallion seal? Then he… he’s from Sacred Peafowl Mountain?”

“Obviously. What do you mean, ‘he’s from Sacred Peafowl Mountain’? He… he is young lord Zhen, in the flesh!” The grand tutor was wholly dissatisfied with the prince’s sluggish mind at the moment. He rebuked his student further. “The Sacred Peafowl Mountain rules over Veluriyam Capital. The Progenitor Feather Medallion is His Majesty Emperor Peafowl’s token, and as such, the Progeny Feather Medallion is appropriately the young lord’s. These two items represent the highest authority within the city. Even the four monarchs of Sacred Peafowl Mountain and the Peafowl Guard must heed the Progeny Feather Medallion’s orders. Do you think that young lord Zhen would give something so important to a subordinate?”

The crown prince was completely stupefied. At the end of the day, he was the heir of a great nation, not some witless dirt farmer.

The grand tutor's explanation had been enough to unveil the truth of it all. Young lord Zhen!

Suddenly, the crown prince reached out both hands, slapping both of his own cheeks viciously over a dozen times. "You idiot, you bastard, you're absolutely blind for not recognizing someone so great! How could you not know young lord Zhen when he was standing right in front of you? Your eyes are thoroughly worthless!" The crown prince was filled with incredible regret. How ridiculous he must have seemed, asking about young lord Zhen to the man himself. The crown prince wanted to cry, but had no tears.

The other youth had said that he not only knew young lord Zhen, but he also had a good relationship with him. Maybe they would bump into each other, one of these days. Thinking back, there had been a number of hints in those words. Alas, his brain had been woefully underutilized, and he had utterly failed to decipher their meaning. Regret!!

"Grand Tutor, do... do you think that there's still time if I look for him now?" The crown prince couldn't help but ask, hopefully.

"No, I do not. It is quite possible that the young lord has already left Bluesky Nation. A young lord acts in unpredictable ways, and his thoughts are unfathomable. You being able to meet him a single time was him giving you face. Is he going to let you seek him out a second time? Without the matter of the Prancing Pony, the young lord would not have graced you with his presence at all," the grand tutor sighed.

"The Prancing Pony... Steward Niu must have a pretty good relationship with him, then? Say, why not ask a little about him over there?'

"Definitely not," the grand tutor's face quickly changed hues again. "Superiors despise gossipy information hoarders as subordinates. The smartest thing for you to do right now is to

carry out his instructions impeccably, then take care of Steward Niu and his inn as well as you can. It is best, in fact, if you can help the Prancing Pony become one of the strongest factions in Goldtower City. Young lord Zhen will take notice of your efforts sooner or later. Actively gathering information is inappropriate."

After mulling things over, the crown prince had to agree. If he went to ask now, he would find it difficult to avoid leaving an unreliable impression in young lord Zhen's heart.

"Grand Tutor, I will do everything related to this myself. Dong Sheng must give up his stake, and Steward Niu must be the only person in charge at the Prancing Pony."

"Yes, naturally. You need only command Goldtower City's vice city lord to attend to these insignificant details, but you can keep a close personal interest as well to ensure no problems arise. The vice city lord should be made aware that you have a vested interest of your own in the matter. Indeed, it isn't bad to directly say that the crown prince cares a lot about Steward Niu."

"You are right, Grand Tutor. I shall do as you say."

……

The personal involvement of Bluesky Nation's crown prince neatly took care of the matter.

When the prince made contact with the vice city lord, the latter was scared into a cold sweat by the former's words. He spouted profuse apologies for his son's unworthy behavior and sent his men to retrieve his son at once. The vice city lord's son was partying and drinking with a group of fairweather friends at some brothel, among them Grand Steward Dong Sheng.

As the vice city lord's son was enjoying himself, his father's personal guardsmen knocked on the door to fetch him home. The vice city lord gave his son a severe beating right in front of the crown prince. There was no holding back in any of the vice city

lord's blows, even as his good-for-nothing son shrieked and howled in pain. Knowing that the vice city lord was showing his attitude on the matter, the crown prince intervened. "No more, no more. Discipline in moderation is sufficient. Continuing with the beating would be life-threatening."

The vice city lord's cooperation made the crown prince disinclined to hound him further. The beating was actually as painful for the vice city lord as it was for his son. He stopped immediately when the crown prince spoke. "You scoundrel. If the crown prince hadn't called me off, I would have beat you to death today for sure! Listen to me, and listen well: if you keep on doing these underhanded things with those dishonest friends of yours, then I won't have a son anymore. Are we clear?"

The vice city lord was fuming with exasperation. Any matter that disturbed the crown prince personally was far from insignificant. He knew, of course, about some of his son's poor behavior. However, a faction like the Prancing Pony did not warrant his attention. Any associated issues were minor at best.

He certainly hadn't expected it to involve the very crown prince of Bluesky Nation. Moreover, from the sound and look of things, the crown prince was very close with Steward Niu Wuhua of the Prancing Pony. Without an intimate relationship to defend, why would the crown prince attend to this kind of matter in person? Why would he be here in the vice city lord's residence for an exclusive interrogation?

Having received a beating from his angry father, the dandy was like a frosted-over eggplant. Still, he was entirely perplexed. What had he actually done to deserve his dad's ire? Had he unknowingly upset the crown prince somehow? He pondered over the puzzling subject, but he couldn't make heads or tails of the situation. He had done his fair share of dastardly deeds, but he couldn't think of anything that would catch the prince's attention.

"What are you stuck there for, you idiot? Come over and

apologize to the crown prince. Ask him to forgive your capital crime!" The vice city lord roared in fury. His son was largely ignorant of most things, but he knew enough about politics to behave himself. The crown prince was too high up; both he and his father were like ants before someone so prominent.

"I'm just an idiot, Your Highness. If there's anything I've done to upset you, I'm really sorry. Please let someone worthless like me go." The young man groveled before the prince.

The prince's tone was even. "Never mind. For your father's sake, I'll forgive you this time. However, this is something I'll be paying close attention to in the future."

Having said his piece, the crown prince waved before heading out, his personal guardsmen streaming out behind him. He had said enough. The vice city lord would have to be stupider than a block of wood to not know the rest. The crown prince trusted the vice city lord's intuition and own judgment on what to do next.

Seeing the crown prince leave, the vice city lord hastily chased after him, smiling ingratiatingly all the way. He maintained his simpering expression until the crown prince had left eyeshot before storming back inside in a fit of rage. The sight of his son standing up so casually was too much for him to bear. A surge of displeasure rose up like a newly tapped spring, and the vice city lord vented his ill temper thoroughly, kicking his good-for-nothing son back onto the floor.

Chapter 1032: Pillfire City

“You worthless scoundrel! You’ll be the death of me one day!” The vice city lord was incredibly infuriated by his fop of a son.

His henchmen immediately ran up to hold him back. “City lord! Stop! Stop!”

“He might die if you go on!”

Held back by his henchmen, the city lord slumped into his chair and panted angrily. “You bastard! What on earth did you receive from Dong Shen for the incident at Prancing Horse Inn?!” He yelled with his eyes as wide as a bell.

“I... father... I had nothing to do with the incident in Prancing Horse Inn.” The good-for-nothing continued to deny his involvement.

“Still trying to weasel your way out of this?” The vice city lord lifted his leg and was about to kick his son. His good-for-nothing son would likely be bedridden for three months if his henchmen hadn’t stopped him in time. “Bastard! The crown prince will deal with you if you don’t cough up the truth! You’ll land me in trouble too! Nobody can save you then!”

The good-for-nothing was shocked by the vice city lord’s attitude. “T-t-the incident at the Prancing Horse has alarmed the crown prince?” He stammered.

“Do I seem like I’m in the mood for jokes? How dare you put your hands on one of the crown prince’s men! Your bastard! You’ve given me nothing but trouble!”

“Wu Niuhua... h-he’s one of the crown prince’s men?” The good-for-nothing seemed confused. “That’s impossible! How could he be exploited by Dong Shen if he’s the prince’s man?”

“Exploited? Do you really think he was being exploited by Dong Shen?” The vice city lord’s voice sounded extremely cold. “What

does a jackass like Dong Shen know? He's done for! You shall sink in the same ship as him if you remain this ignorant!"

The good-for-nothing realized that this was no longer a laughing matter after seeing how serious his father was being. His face turned deathly white as he muttered. "I'm innocent! I've received nothing from Dong Shen! I was only trying to be a good brother by backing him up a little! How could I have known that Niu Wuhua had direct relations to the crown prince?"

"I don't bloody care about your history with him! From now onwards, you must make a clear divide between you and him! Report every single untoward act he's done. If you don't rat on him now, don't blame me if this backfires." The vice city lord sounded sinister.

The good-for-nothing trembled when he was asked to betray his brother. He seemed hesitant.

"What's wrong? Can't bear to do it? He's nothing but a fairweather friend good for drinking and eating together. How deep can your friendship be?" The vice city lord laughed. "Don't say that I didn't warn you. You shall join him in deep waters if you don't grab this opportunity to rat on him."

Dong Shen never imagined that things would turn sour so quickly. He was detained by the authorities of Goldtower City on the same afternoon. People were reporting him nonstop for his misdeeds and acts of debauchery. The entire House Dong was also detained.

Niu Wuhua however, was receiving one good news after another. Dong Shen was detained, Dong Shen's residence was raided, House Dong was in total shambles...

Three days later, all of Dong Shen's businesses were transferred to Niu Wuhua. The latter was almost in disbelief by how little price he had to pay for so much to happen. The fighters that Dong Shen had assigned to Prancing Horse Inn had also abandoned the

sinking ship. Some were detained, some left for a different opportunity, and others ran away. Dong Shen's brother-in-law was also thrown into prison.

The great turnaround at Prancing Horse Inn left the citizens at Goldtower City speechless. Everyone was certain that Dong Shen would end up winning the dispute. Suddenly, there were all kinds of speculations about Niu Wuhua. Various types of rumors were being spread around the streets and back alleys of Goldtower City.

Some speculated that Niu Wuhua was directly connected to the throne and had close relations with the crown prince. There were even rumors that Niu Wuhua wasn't just closely related to the crown prince, but also with a great emperor realm faction from Veluriyam Capital.

Niu Wuhua, a second-rate character in Goldtower City, was suddenly catapulted to the top of the hierarchy. Never in his mind did he expect this to happen. He knew that he had young master Ji San to thank for all of this. However, he didn't expect that Ji San was such an influential person. He was overwhelmed by emotions. The turnaround was so surreal that it felt like a dream. The amount of fortune required for this to happen was uncanny.

The perpetrator behind all of his good fortune was already a few thousand miles away from Bluesky Nation. What happened at Goldtower City was Jiang Chen's way of repaying a favor. The information that Niu Wuhua had given him was of incredible significance. To him, repaying the favor was as simple as lifting a finger, but it was absolutely life changing for Niu Wuhua.

Of course, Jiang Chen had other reasons for doing this too. As young lord of Sacred Peafowl Mountain, he would eventually have to rule over the entire Veluriyam Capital. These nations and cities under the capital's rule had to roped in appropriately. It was also the reason why he'd invited the crown prince to Taiyuan Tower. Bluesky Nation was one of the most outstanding nations under the capital's rule. It was only natural to treat them well and take

proper care of them.

One had to traverse at least half of the Upper Eight Regions to reach Pillfire City from Veluriyam Capital. Fortunately, Jiang Chen had cultivated all kinds of travel arts, especially Kunpeng Meteoric Escape. It was capable of both short distance burst of speed and long distance traveling. He didn't cause any trouble during his journey and kept a low profile throughout every land he traversed. He managed to keep his rage in check even when he traveled across Eternal Celestial Capital's territory. He currently only had two targets. One was Pillfire City, and the other, Tilted Moon Region.

Pillfire City and the Star Harvesters... He continued to make haste and eventually arrived at Pillfire City a few months later.

Pillfire City was situated in the northern region of the Upper Eight Regions. Its territory spanned for miles and miles and wasn't less than Veluriyam Capital's at all. In fact, they might be a little larger. The land under Pillfire City's jurisdiction was also much more fertile than Veluriyam Capital. Their soil had a lot more spirit energy by comparison. They were the foremost pill maker in the human domain mainly because of their geographical advantage and pill making pedigree.

Upon entering the city, Jiang Chen immediately noticed how adept they were at the refinement of spirit medicines. Their medicine businesses were also flourishing and incredibly successful. As expected, they have a very deep roots in the art of pill making. The pill industry plays an integral part in every piece of land under Pillfire City's jurisdiction.

Jiang Chen was in awe. He'd seen many things when he traversed through the Upper Eight Regions to arrive at Pillfire City. Veluriyam Capital was no match for Pillfire City in terms of pill dao throughout the Upper Eight Regions and maybe even the entire human domain. Veluriyam Capital held less than twenty percent of the market, while Pillfire City held at least seventy

percent of the market. It was an incredible disparity.

The dependence on Pillfire City's pills grew increasingly apparent as one moved closer to the city. Pillfire City didn't become one of the strongest factions in the Upper Eight Regions without reason. Their influence in pill making alone would solidify their position in the region. Every other faction somewhat depended on Pillfire City for their pills. This meant that they could never afford to become enemies with the city. They had to show great reverence and respect to the city, which only further intensified the power the city held.

It was an endless feedback loop. Unless Pillfire City burned itself to ground, there was no way any other faction could possibly replace or take over the power they held over the entire human domain. Not even Veluriyam Capital. Of course, that was assuming that Jiang Chen wasn't factored into the equation. Nothing was impossible when a monster like him was around.

The capital here was extremely prosperous and on par with the capital city of Veluriyam Capital. The three pagodas were the landmarks of Veluriyam Capital, while the landmark for Pillfire City was the Pill Emperor Mountain. The Pill Emperor Mountain was situated in the middle of Pillfire City. The entire city itself was built around the mountain and expanded outwards from there.

There were statues of various pill emperors on the peak of the mountain. These statues were so tall and mighty that they seemed to tower beyond the clouds. Each statue represented a period of prosperity and excellence throughout the city's history. Each pill emperor was at the forefront of their own respective era of pill dao. They were the pride of Pillfire City and also represented the heritage of the city. There were nine pill emperor statues erected on Pill Emperor Mountain. This meant that throughout the history of Pillfire City, there were at last nine great emperor realm pill experts worthy of being written into the history texts. They bore the fate of the city upon their backs and contributed greatly to the

land.

Jiang Chen immediately realized that these towering statues were the totem buildings that represented the pride of the city. The city had very rigorous security checks. Fortunately, Jiang Chen had been traveling under the guise of a wandering cultivator. The checks failed notice anything amiss. He could immediately feel the prosperity when he set foot into the city.

Pillfire City had an atmosphere that couldn't be seen in Veluriyam Capital. It was an atmosphere unique to only Pillfire City. However, he was in no mood to enjoy the prosperity of Pillfire City. He immediately tried to contact Lin Yanyu using a secret method they'd agreed on beforehand. It didn't take long before he located him.

Lin Yanyu was no match for Jiang Chen in speed after all. He'd left months before Jiang Chen did, but he arrived only two weeks earlier than him.

"Young lord, I've made inquiries and confirmed that the Star Harvesters have purchased a slave with an innate wood constitution of high order. They seem to view the slave with high regard. Many nobles and factions in Pillfire City have tried to purchase the slave, but the Star Harvesters rejected every single one of them. It's the current hot topic in Pillfire City. It didn't even take that much effort to gather this much information.

Chapter 1033: Star Mill

Lin Yanyu was quite competent. Although he had only returned to Pillfire City for half a month, the intelligence he'd gathered was extremely detailed. After a brief overview, Jiang Chen gained a rough understanding of the situation.

"Young Lord, the Star Harvesters know that a lot of factions are keeping an eye on their slave with the innate wood constitution, so they've made sure to obfuscate their activities and keep a tight ring of protection around him. Not many people have even seen this slave in Pillfire City. Therefore, I believe it is very difficult to snatch him by force. As for buying him outright, that seems unlikely as well. They seem to be holding on for a greater profit."

"Hold onto him for greater profit, you say?" Jiang Chen smiled. "If that's the case, then that means buying the slave isn't completely out of the question. In their eyes, a genius with an innate wood constitution is only a product. They're just waiting for a good offer."

The Star Harvesters was ultimately a gang, not a sect. A gang cared most for profit. The reason they were boosting interest this way was simply to raise the price and get a better offer. They wanted to wait until their slave had an astronomical price tag before selling him.

Jiang Chen might not know the Star Harvesters, but what Lin Yanyu had found from his investigation proved that they were boosting interest and hyping up Mu Gaoqi's value. Jiang Chen also realized that Star Harvesters had been very successful in their endeavor. Once the price had gone beyond a certain bar, and Mu Gaoqi became a hot topic, the factions that truly appreciated real talents would fight for him. The greater the competition, the bigger the profit the Star Harvesters would earn.

"Young Lord, are you saying that... we can buy him?" Lin Yanyu

asked in surprise.

But Jiang Chen smiled and shook his head. “We’re not going to buy him. I’m confident in my wealth, but this is Pillfire City, so doing something like that would be a risk. Plus, even if I did win the bid, I don’t know if I can leave with him.”

A giant like Pillfire City wouldn’t allow an outsider to take their pill dao genius away. Even if the buyer was wealthy beyond measure, Pillfire City wouldn’t allow him to take a genius away unruffled. Although Mu Gaoqi didn’t have any relation with Pillfire City, since the gang had bought him, the city would tyrannically think that he belonged to it without a second’s thought. They wouldn’t allow an outsider to touch a genius even if he was a slave.

That was Pillfire City’s modus operandi. They wouldn’t allow any element that might affect their monopoly to exist, and if it did, they would do their best to obstruct or destroy it.

It was similar to how they’d tried to monopolize the Longevity Pill for themselves. After their scheme failed, they’d even visited Veluriyam Capital and challenged the Sacred Peafowl Mountain for the right to the pill. Lin Yanyu’s family was another example. After their accidental discovery of their family’s ancient pill recipe was exposed, it didn’t bring them any glory. On the contrary, it’d pushed them completely into the abyss. There was only one reason behind those unfortunate events. Someone in Pillfire City who was stronger than the Lins had set their sights on that ancient pill recipe.

There was only one rule of survival in Pillfire City. All interests must serve the best interests of Pillfire City. Naturally, the powers who represented Pillfire City’s best interests were first rate powers or top rank great emperors, like Pill Emperor Pillzenith.

“Yanyu, is there any way to approach the Star Harvesters?” Jiang Chen asked after pondering for a moment.

“That’s easy. The Star Harvesters have a lot of pill stores in Pillfire City, and their biggest is the Star Mill. This store only trades in high-rank pills, so it’s quite the high-end shop even in Pillfire City. Recently, many of the pills created by this pill dao genius have appeared in the Star Mill. If I have to guess, the Star Harvesters probably put them on display on purpose.”

“Oh? Where is this Star Mill?” Jiang Chen asked curiously.

Lin Yanyu took out a map. “Young Lord, this is a map of Pillfire City. Star Mill’s location is well known and very easy to find. The Star Harvesters’ headquarters is nearby too. The Star Harvesters has a lot of say in this region. They’re also different from other factions. While the other factions focus on conducting business with great families, they focus on conducting business with wandering cultivators and other gangs. Therefore, their business is quite extensive.”

The Star Harvesters’ status was slightly higher than that of House Wei’s in Veluriyam Capital. However, it was at most a standard great clan in Veluriyam Capital. It was absolutely a first rate faction, but it definitely didn’t belong among best of the best either.

Just like Veluriyam Capital, Pillfire City’s great emperor factions seldom participated in the power struggles of the secular world. However, the ones in Pillfire City tended to interfere more. Most importantly, they held a stricter leash over the secular world.

Jiang Chen took the map from Lin Yanyu, “Keep up your investigation, Yanyu. I’ll be making a trip to the Star Mill.”

Jiang Chen had memorized the map of Pillfire City. Once he acquired his bearings, he pinpointed the Star Harvesters’ headquarters.

Thirty minutes later, he’d found the Star Mill. When he entered the establishment, Jiang Chen immediately felt the thick fragrance of spirit medicine wafting over his face. The unusually rich scent

of spirit medicine was immediately indicative of the exceptional quality of their products.

Star Mill's standards were quite high. Their counters were arranged to give a feeling of picturesque disorder, and the front desk itself was made of high quality transparent crystals. It looked incredibly high class. The spirit medicines were also organized based on various specifications. Many assistants in unified attire were leading around groups of customers within the store. They looked very patient and professional, and it was evident that they were well trained.

This scene surprised Jiang Chen a little. The Star Harvesters was nominally known as a gang, so he thought that their stores would have a similar air and be roughly handled. However, seeing was indeed believing. He realized after he entered the store that the Star Harvesters was far from the disgusting bunch he'd initially imagined.

"What can I do for you, sir?" A pretty girl with a very sunny appearance beamed warmly at Jiang Chen when she arrived at his side.

Although Jiang Chen wasn't a lecher, he couldn't help but feel cheerful to meet a girl as sunny as her. He smiled. "I'm just looking around."

The girl smiled brightly. "My name is Keke. Let me know if there's anything you need."

Jiang Chen nodded before he swept a gaze across the entire store. Then, he casually asked, "I hear that the gang has recently taken in a genius pill master with an innate wood constitution of high order, and that he has released several products."

"You wish to see Master Mu's pill products?" The girl looked a little surprised.

"Master Mu?" Jiang Chen stared blankly at her.

“The genius pill master we recently recruited is Master Mu. His creations are on the second floor, but…” Keke looked a little hesitant.

“But what?” Jiang Chen asked curiously.

“Master Mu’s creations are extremely precious. Therefore, not only do you need to be a pill king to see Master Mu’s products, you must also pay an entry fee.” She responded seriously.

“How much do I need to pay?” Although Jiang Chen was shocked by the Star Harvesters’ ability to fleece customers, he wasn’t so poor that he couldn’t afford an entry fee.

“You must first show your pill king medallion. Then, you will need to pay ten thousand saint spirit stones.”

It costs ten thousand saint spirit stones for one visit!? Although Jiang Chen didn’t mind paying the fee, he was still stunned by the Star Harvesters’ money grubbing methods. He had never seen such overt highway robbery until today.

Even if Mu Gaoqi was a very impressive pill dao genius, he was at best still an unpolished jade. He was far from reaching the level of a top rate pill master. If he was touring a pill emperor’s products, then the admission fee would cost more than a thousand spirit stones. But Mu Gaoqi was at most a novice level pill king currently, wasn’t he? Even if Mu Gaoqi had improved so rapidly that he was now an intermediate level pill king, it still shouldn’t cost ten thousand saint spirit stones to tour his products, should it?

Jiang Chen arrived at an answer after thinking for a moment. I guess the Star Harvesters really is planning to raise Mu Gaoqi’s value as high as possible before selling him. They aren’t beneath charging their customers ten thousand saint spirit stones for admission, and customers are willing to pay the price. The gang really is doing their best to squeeze every bit of money and value they can get out of Mu Gaoqi.

Jiang Chen hadn't actually gotten his pill king medallion yet. However, he did still have Shi Zhen's pill king medallion. It was this medallion that'd enabled him to slip into Veluriyam Capital. He waved the pill king medallion before Keke before producing ten thousand saint spirit stones. "Miss Keke, please lead the way."

Jiang Chen stared at Keke smilingly, so much so that the charming, sunny girl turned slightly red. For some reason, this man's eyes made her heart flutter a little. It was exactly because she was distracted that she didn't even catch the name that was written on the pill king medallion. However, she was too embarrassed to ask Jiang Chen to show it again while he was staring at her like this. Left with no choice, she accepted the ten thousand saint spirit stones and said softly.

"Please wait here for a moment, sir. I'll grab an admission medallion for you immediately."

Jiang Chen relaxed minutely after seeing that Keke hadn't told him to produce his pill king medallion again. He had no intention of parading his fake pill king medallion around if he could help it. If someone happened to know that Shi Zhen was a member of Ninesuns Sky Sect, he would only be creating more issues for himself.

Miss Keke was a quick worker. It wasn't long before she'd obtained an admission medallion and passed it to Jiang Chen with a red face. "Please come with me, sir. This is a reminder, but the second floor of the Star Mill is a VIP area. Therefore, please obey the rules and maintain your decorum once you've entered the second floor."

Jiang Chen smiled and accepted the medallion. He then headed up to the second floor behind Miss Keke. The second floor of the Star Mill was just as wide as the first floor, but its arrangements were also clearly of much higher class. It was also slightly busier. Keke led the way and brought Jiang Chen to a rather crowded region.

“These are some of Master Mu’s recent pill products,” Miss Keke introduced.

Jiang Chen’s eyes scanned the area thoroughly. Although there weren’t many pills in this area, every one of them was put on display in an extremely eye-catching way. When he scanned the pills with his consciousness, his heart immediately skipped a beat. As he had expected, the pills gave off a familiar feeling that was unique to Mu Gaoqi.

Chapter 1034: Mu Gaoqis Unique Style

Although it had been many years since he'd seen Mu Gaoqi, Jiang Chen still hadn't forgotten his brother's unique aura. Mu Gaoqi was born with the natural aura befitting that of a graceful immortal, and his pills also accordingly possessed this unique quality. During his baptism in the wood spirit spring, Mu Gaoqi absorbed some of the spring's intrinsic qualities as well. Naturally, having spent so much time with him, Jiang Chen was quite familiar with his aura.

Therefore, Jiang Chen immediately recognized the pills when he saw them. There was no mistake. These pills had been refined by Mu Gaoqi. They possessed a certain quality that no one else could imitate, not even Jiang Chen himself. He might be able to imitate the wood spring's aura, but he doubted that he could imitate Mu Gaoqi's unique, graceful aura.

What surprised him was that he discovered Mu Gaoqi's pill dao level had improved tremendously. Although these pills weren't considered first rate in Jiang Chen's eyes, they would still be deemed amongst the finest of other similarly-ranked pills. These pills possessed a unique quality that clearly distinguished them from the products of other pill masters in that there was a distinctive, personal label accompanying each of them. This particular discovery gladdened Jiang Chen. Although Mu Gaoqi's recent fate was terrible considering that he had been turned into a slave, at least his cultivation hadn't stagnated.

An innate wood constitution of high order... maybe this trial served as a catalyst, allowing him to tap into the greater potential hidden inside his body and, in doing so, fully unlocked his talents? Jiang Chen had to hide his astonishment at the speed of Mu Gaoqi's improvement as he continued to observe his products. Although he hadn't quite yet reached the level of advanced pill king, he was unquestionably at the level of intermediate pill king

This rank didn't imply a lack of strength on Mu Gaoqi's part, however. On the contrary, it was proof of his talent and skill. He was about four years younger than Jiang Chen. It was immensely impressive for someone so young to have already attained intermediate pill king level.

Even the pride and invincible legend of Pillfire City, Pill King Ji Lang, couldn't possibly have surpassed Mu Gaoqi by much when he was his age. In fact, Pill King Ji Lang might not have even been an intermediate pill king when he was in his twenties. Even if he had been, it was unlikely that he'd been as distinguished as Mu Gaoqi currently was.

Mu Gaoqi was literally born for pill dao, having been born with a unique quality that gave him a distinct advantage no one else possessed. Considering how cautious and timid he used to be, the fact that he had been able to become a core disciple solely because of his pill dao merits left no question that he was extraordinarily talented.

Jiang Chen wondered if Mu Gaoqi had managed to free himself now that he had arrived at the Star Harvesters. Despite sensing the familiar presence, his excitement lasted for only an instant, and he quickly regained his calm. He guessed that Mu Gaoqi was likely currently still a slave. After all, the Star Harvesters were clearly trying to put him on the shelf for display and sell him off at a high price. If this truly was the case, there was no way they would allow Mu Gaoqi to free himself.

"Sir, are there any pills that you find to your liking?" Keke suddenly asked after noticing that Jiang Chen had fallen into a daze.

Jiang Chen shook his head with a smile. "These pills are pretty good, but they don't look like the work of a first-rate pill king. So, why is the admission fee ten thousand saint spirit stones?"

He purposely asked a question to which he already knew the

answer to.

Keke smiled slightly and politely replied, “You’ve only mentioned these things because you aren’t aware of Master Mu’s background. You are right in that his pills aren’t the best products out there, but Master Mu is only in his twenties. There are only so many twenty-year-old pill kings in the entire human domain, and you won’t find a single person who dares to claim that their level is higher than Master Mu’s. Don’t you think that the creations of a future master in his youth are worth collecting?”

This marketing was extremely well done. Not only did they neatly package Mu Gaoqi as a future first-rate pill dao master of note, but they even topped this assertion off with a nicely-wrapped bow, highlighting the pills he created during his youth. These promotional skills were truly impressive. Jiang Chen smiled. “These products aren’t bad, but they aren’t entirely flawless either. Personally, I don’t think that they’re worth collecting.”

Keke’s brilliant smile immediately turned into one of slight embarrassment. With reddened cheeks, she rebutted, “Well, even so, many people have purchased Master Mu’s products for their personal collection.”

“Wealth makes people foolish,” Jiang Chen said with a faint smile on his face.

“Sir, you may be a customer of the Star Mill, but please don’t insult the products we make, especially Master Mu’s,” Keke protested in a very serious tone. Even she maintained her professionalism as a store assistant, she still felt a little unhappy when she heard Jiang Chen’s comments.

Jiang Chen shrugged. “I’m just telling the truth. Even Master Mu wouldn’t dare claim that these pills of his are perfect. If I were to take a guess, these products are only as perfect as the Star Mill’s packaging.”

“Sir!” Miss Keke’s appearance was like that of an angry lamb.

Lambs were born docile, so whenever she grew angry, she looked unusually attractive.

“Fine, fine. If you won’t accept the truth, then just pretend like I didn’t say anything.”

If Miss Keke hadn’t previously accepted his admission fee, she might have kicked him off this floor already. Jiang Chen circled around the area another two times.

“Miss Keke, is Master Mu in at the moment?” Jiang Chen asked in a seemingly casual tone.

However, Miss Keke still gave off the impression that she was angry with him. She cast him a slightly resentful glance but didn’t give him an answer.

“Well, I guess he’d be ashamed of showing his face around here. After all, his pills are being blown way over the top even though they’re obviously imperfect. Not even he could be that thick-faced.”

This time Miss Keke was truly angry at him. She protested loudly, “Please conduct yourself with dignity, sir. If Master Mu’s products are not up to your liking, you can always choose to return to a lower floor!”

Her raised voice immediately drew everyone’s attention. They couldn’t help but stare at Jiang Chen with a bit of hostility when they saw that such a sweet-tempered girl had lost her cool because of him. They obviously thought that he lacked tact, having incited such a sweet and charming girl into angrily raising her voice. What kind of an outrageous person was he?

Jiang Chen was obviously doing this on purpose. Him beating around the bush and criticizing Mu Gaoqi’s products non-stop was to see if Mu Gaoqi himself would show up. Unfortunately, his attempts didn’t yield any results. In fact, he had irritated Miss Keke instead. Jiang Chen hadn’t intended to butt heads with her.

A well-dressed middle-aged man, giving off the appearance of the person in charge, walked over with a frown. He looked at Jiang Chen and asked, “What’s wrong, my friend?”

The middle-aged man appeared a bit impressive. Jiang Chen guessed that he probably held a higher position in the Star Mill. He smiled and glanced at the pills. “Oh, it’s nothing. I simply thought that Master Mu’s products aren’t as good as you promoted. I’m just a little surprised that you would charge ten thousand saint spirit stones for this.”

“My friend, anyone can make baseless accusations, can’t they?” The middle-aged man frowned slightly. “Master Mu’s products may not be considered to be at the zenith in terms of their quality, but he’s only in his twenties right now. These products are impressive enough considering how young he is. If you still wish to nitpick his work, then maybe you shouldn’t come to the Star Mill.”

His words made sense. The other customers also echoed, “We are here to gauge Master Mu’s potential.”

“Yeah, Master Mu is incredibly young. We can’t evaluate him by the standards of a ninth-rank pill king. After all, every ninth-rank pill king out there is at least hundreds or thousand of years old.”

“Exactly. That a pill king in his twenties could create pills of such high quality is already an incredibly impressive feat. He’s absolutely a pill dao genius, the likes of which appears only once every five millennia.”

“Five millennia? I doubt you could find someone like this even in the span of ten millennia.” The crowd shot out their individual opinions, but they all praised Mu Gaoqi’s products unanimously. Jiang Chen hid his amusement. If he didn’t know any better, he would have suspected that these people were supporters hired by the gang.

Even Jiang Chen himself admitted that Mu Gaoqi’s work was incomparable to most for his age. However, he also wasn’t lying

when he said that these products were imperfect. When he'd made those remarks, he wasn't referring to the creator's expertise in pill dao, but rather, the mental knot that existed within the pills themselves. It was almost as if the creator of the pills had been shackled and unable to work freely.

Only sophisticated pill masters could have noticed this. Jiang Chen knew very well that this strange mental entanglement hidden within the pills was related to Mu Gaoqi's current circumstances. From examining these pills, he deduced that Mu Gaoqi was still a slave, and because of this, his creations lacked a certain sense of freedom and fulfillment.

Although Mu Gaoqi's graceful qualities were extremely distinct in his pill products, so too was a lack of freedom. Jiang Chen ignored their comments. He said indifferently, "It seems that the Star Mill only intends to receive praise but not criticism. I suppose I have said too much if that is the case. How unfortunate. If the creator of this pill were here, I'd shut him up so thoroughly that he wouldn't even be able to respond."

The person in charge sneered. "Are you trying to say that you wish to challenge our Master Mu to a pill battle? Am I correct to interpret your words as a challenge to the Star Mill?"

Jiang Chen smiled. "Challenge the Star Mill? Have you ever seen someone challenging a pill store alone?"

"Then what exactly do you mean?"

Jiang Chen said indifferently, "What I'm trying to say is that the Star Harvesters currently own an exceptional genius, a treasure trove, yet you've only dug out a portion of his potential. Worse, you're satisfied with keeping it this way and plan to sell him once his value reaches a certain threshold. This is truly amusing."

Suddenly, Jiang Chen was praising Mu Gaoqi but belittling the Star Harvesters. This change in stance confused the person in charge as to Jiang Chen's true motives.

“Who are you really, friend? You’ve come here to cause trouble, haven’t you?” The middle-aged man’s face turned chilly as his tone turned unfriendly. It was clear that he thought that Jiang Chen was a hooligan trying to stir up trouble.

Chapter 1035: The Temptation of a Deal

Jiang Chen was indeed trying to cause trouble, but it was all to see Mu Gaoqi. Thus, he didn't even attempt to deflect when the manager glared at him angrily. "You're half correct. I'm also here for Master Mu," he replied while smiling.

"Oh? Don't tell me that by challenging Master Mu, you're planning on using his fame to catapult yourself to success? Isn't that a little too much wishful thinking on your part?" The manager's tone was extremely cold.

"Borrowing his fame for success?" Jiang Chen burst into laughter. "You're overthinking things. I'm only here to propose a deal to the Star Harvesters.

"A deal?" The manager tried very hard to suppress his vexation. "What kind of deal?"

"Are you allowed to make decisions for the Star Harvesters? Can you sign off on matters related to Master Mu?" Jiang Chen asked in response.

At first, the manager was stunned by his reply, but he quickly recollected himself and scrutinized the plain-looking wandering cultivator standing before him. He wasn't sure whether Jiang Chen was truly so dumb and fearless, or if he actually had a card up his sleeves. How dare he quibble with me, a manager of the Star Mill, in Star Harvester territory of all places? Who does he think he is? He's nothing but a wandering cultivator! Even though he'd almost burst with rage a few times throughout this encounter, his reason managed to keep him sane and his temper in check.

"It doesn't matter whether I have the proper authority to make decisions. If the esteemed customer wants to make a deal, please at least show us some sincerity. Can you prove that you are worthy of proposing a deal to the Star Harvesters?" The manager sounded cold and aloof.

“Having come all the way here, it’s only natural that I’d have a few cards up my sleeves,” Jiang Chen replied with a faint smile.

“Please forgive me for failing to notice said hidden cards of yours.” The manager didn’t try to be courteous either.

Jiang Chen rummaged in his sleeves and casually took out three spirit herbs. “I have three spirit herbs here. Do you have anything amongst your vast inventory that might rival them?”

The Star Mill possessed quite a few herbs, but sky rank spirit herbs were indescribably rare. They were meant for great emperor realm cultivators, which was why they were rarely ever found in the market. The majority of spirit herbs for sale in the Star Mill were only spirit rank. There were a few earth rank spirit herbs as well, but they possessed none of sky rank.

The manager’s eyes nearly fell out of his eye sockets when Jiang Chen casually took out the spirit herbs. An expression of greed immediately flashed across his face.

“Sky rank spirit herbs?” The manager gulped audibly.

“Good eye.” Jiang Chen praised.

Attempting to distract from his loss of composure, the manager hastily cleared his throat. “Sky rank spirit herbs are rare indeed, but it’s not as if we don’t have any; we just don’t usually display them. I suppose that since you’ve managed to acquire three sky rank spirit herbs, you are barely qualified to propose us a deal.”

“Just barely?” Jiang Chen laughed heartily. “What if I have something worth ten times more than that?”

“Something worth ten times more than sky rank spirit herbs?” The manager was flabbergasted.

Jiang Chen quickly continued. “Are you allowed to make decisions for a deal of such a magnitude?”

The manager almost lost his temper again. Something that was

worth ten times more than a sky rank spirit herb was beyond his imagination. Indeed, he truly didn't possess the authority to make a deal of such caliber.

He took a deep breath. "Dear customer, what kind of deal are you proposing?"

"I intend to exchange my treasure for Master Mu." Jiang Chen cut straight to the point.

"Exchange your treasure for Master Mu?" The manager immediately turned him down. "Never. Master Mu isn't for sale."

Jiang Chen broke into laughter. He mockingly responded, "If Master Mu were truly not for sale, why would the Star Harvesters go to such an extent to promote and publicize him? I rest my case. You'd never spend so much effort promoting him if you didn't intend to sell him. You would have kept quiet and used him to covertly make money if that were the case."

The manager was rendered speechless. He couldn't think of a good rebuttal. Only after a few moments had passed did he manage to eke out a reply. "Customer, surely you don't think that three sky rank spirit herbs are enough to exchange for Master Mu?"

The manager continued before Jiang Chen could even reply, "If that's your line of thinking, you should just give up right now. Master Mu isn't merely worth three sky rank spirit herbs. Even thirty wouldn't suffice!"

Jiang Chen didn't argue. "An exchange can only be carried out if both sides are satisfied. Without either side agreeing to its terms, the deal wouldn't be successful. Naturally, I have my own way of making sure that your side is satisfied."

"What way?"

"If you can't represent the Star Harvesters, do you think there's any meaning in continuing this conversation?" Jiang Chen asked in response.

“Do you think that I will report this matter to my superiors if you don’t show me anything noteworthy?” The manager laughed coldly, refusing to budge.

Jiang Chen laughed slyly. “Hehe, it’s your problem if you don’t want to report this. I imagine that there’s a rather handsome reward for whoever is involved in Master Mu’s sale right?”

“So what?”

“If your boss happened to find out one day that you lost an exceptional deal relating to such matters, what will he think of you?”“

“An exceptional deal? How can you be that confident?”

“Why would I be here if I weren’t confident?” Jiang Chen gave a casual reply. “Since you’re not capable of making decisions on behalf of the Star Harvesters, I have no choice but to personally pay your boss a visit. Once I do so, you can wave goodbye to any rewards you would’ve received otherwise.”

His confidence gave him an air of assertiveness that made him seem extremely convincing. Even the manager had become a little persuaded. He stared at Jiang Chen and asked, “You’re certain that you have an extremely attractive offer?”

“Yes.” Jiang Chen assured.

“You do know what’ll happen to you if you try to con or fool us, right?” The manager still seemed a little hesitant.

“You’ve been prattling on all day. Are you going to say that you don’t have the necessary qualifications to report to headquarters next?” Jiang Chen asked with a faint smile.

The manager snorted and stared at Jiang Chen. He mused for a long time before he finally nodded. “I really hope that you don’t have any tricks up your sleeves. Otherwise, I guarantee that you won’t be leaving the Star Mill alive. Tell me, who do you want to see?”

“Someone who has absolute authority, of course. Ideally it would be someone who has the final say in Master Mu’s fate,” Jiang Chen replied blandly.

“Then I shall have to report to the boss. Let me remind you that anyone who mocks our boss or challenges his authority will be met with a terrible fate.”

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. “Even if I mock you, these sky rank spirit herbs won’t do the same. Remember, it doesn’t matter who talks to me as long as I get to see Master Mu with my own two eyes. I want to make sure that his innate wood constitution of high order isn’t just something you made up.”

It was only fair to inspect the goods before making a deal.

The manager turned towards Keke. “Keke, escort our friend to the honored guest area. Serve him tea and take care of his needs.”

Keke’s anger had yet to subside. “Come with me,” she said indignantly. She served him tea when they arrived at the resting area. When she saw how casual Jiang Chen was acting, she couldn’t resist questioning him. “You’re such a heartless person. If you’re so interested in Master Mu, why did you ridicule his products in such a way?”

Jiang Chen was rather amused by the nosy young lady. He shrugged and looked at her innocently. “When did I ever ridicule his products? I was only speaking speaking the truth.”

“Hmph! How can that be the truth? You were just nitpicking!”

Jiang Chen laughed in response. “Miss Keke, you’re a good employee, but I still stand by my opinion. Master Mu’s products may appear to be quite good on the surface, but there’s an aura of oppression contained within. If I’m not mistaken, Master Mu must’ve felt quite oppressed when he created these spirit herbs, which is why all these spirit herbs possess a similarly wary and oppressive quality—he was mentally torn.

No matter how good it appeared to be, any creation produced from such a mentality would never be perfect. Keke seemed skeptical at first, but she soon began to doubt her own understanding. Master Mu was indeed a slave of the Star Harvesters, so it made sense that there would be a mental knot in his pill dao. The common person would never be able to notice such a detail. In fact, many pill dao masters wouldn't be able to either.

How did he notice so many details with just a single glance? Keke was astounded. Perhaps it was just an empty guess? Many people in Pillfire City were already aware of Master Mu's status as a purchased slave, so maybe he's intentionally saying these things because he already knew about the rumors?

"Miss Keke, I already know full well that I'm speaking the truth, but you're having doubts about the authenticity of my words, aren't you?" Jiang Chen read Keke like an open book. It almost seemed like he possessed a mind-reading ability.

Keke tried her best to suppress her astonishment, but curiosity got the best of her. "Sir, what exactly is your background? Were you sent here by one of the great families of Pillfire City to acquire Master Mu?"

Jiang Chen broke into laughter. "If so, which family do you think sent me?"

Keke pondered for a moment before she shook her head. "I don't know. That's beyond my ability. However, you don't seem like you're from Pillfire City."

"Congratulations. Your guess is correct."

"Where are you from then?" Keke asked curiously.

"Myriad Abyss Island." Jiang Chen was lying through his teeth. The Star Harvesters were unlikely to fear him if he gave them his true background. Since that was the case, he might as well

exaggerate and say that he was from the Myriad Abyss Island. The Myriad Abyss Island was considered a mythical island in the Upper Eight Regions and the human domain. It belonged in the legends.

“Myriad Abyss Island?” Keke’s big watery eyes filled with astonishment and doubt when she heard the name.

“Does that place really exist? I thought that it was merely fiction!” Keke was suddenly filled with curiosity.

Chapter 1036: Star Harvesters Boss

Though Jiang Chen was no expert at dealing with young girls, he knew that girls of such an age were typically extremely curious. The more mysterious one seemed, the more one could pique a her curiosity. Thus, when faced with Miss Keke's inquisitiveness, he returned no explanation, only a faint smile. The more he refrained from speaking, the more unfathomable he appeared.

It was enough to make Miss Keke look at him in a rather different light. Her gaze was not that of a newly-charmed young girl, but rather filled with interest, fascination, envy, and admiration. There was the very real desire to unravel any secrets he held. After a few moments, the supervisor returned to the resting area, making straight for Jiang Chen.

"Friend, the boss has agreed to an audience with you after hearing about the deal."

Jiang Chen had fully expected that sort of answer. "Is Master Mu present or not?"

The supervisor hadn't seen anyone brave enough to haggle so rudely on the very grounds of the Star Mill before. But the deal was too important for them for him to get angry. "Why don't you go and see?" He replied.

"Take me there then." Jiang Chen waved a hand.

Miss Keke hastily put herself at the front. She walked right beside the supervisor, whispering a few phrases into his ear. Her voice was as soft as the sound of a mosquito, but Jiang Chen's Ear of the Zephyr ability allowed him to clearly hear every detail. She was telling the supervisor that he came from Myriad Abyss Island.

The latter's body shook when he heard that particular piece of information. He turned his head to glance back at Jiang Chen, his gaze somewhat more inspecting than before. He wasn't as gullible

as Miss Keke. He did not immediately accept the information as true.

The Star Mill was not far from the Star Harvesters' headquarters. It was only a short walk between one point and the other. The building itself was quite majestic. It was situated among more common elements in Pillfire City, but its dignified style was comparable to at least a handful of hidden sects.

"Friend, keep your eyes out after you enter the headquarters. Clean up your act before the boss especially, because, otherwise... heh heh..." The supervisor warned. Jiang Chen's cheerful expression was unchanged. The warning seemed kind-hearted on the surface, but it was actually just a tool to intimidate. Any amount of additional pressure during the negotiation process was beneficial.

He had no intention of following his adversaries' lead. They passed through numerous checkpoints before reaching the heart of the headquarters. Walking past the well-guarded gate, Jiang Chen entered into a courtyard.

The yard itself had been decorated with care. The Star Harvesters really were measurably more cultured than the average gang. However, Jiang Chen saw it as only pretentiousness. A gang was coarse and crass by nature. Anything that they did to the contrary was a pointless veneer.

"I've brought the guy you wanted, boss." The supervisor came to a stop on the outer edges of the courtyard, speaking into its interior.

"Bring him in," a commanding voice boomed from behind an apricot grove.

"Come on," the supervisor threw Jiang Chen a look.

Past the grove stood a yellow-robed burly man. Both hands behind his back, he overlooked a pool of clear water. The rock

formations within the pool were mountain-shaped, water dripping down from their craggy tops. It was quite scenic. However, the yellow-robed man's figure ruined the picture's composition. The yellow-robed man was the Star Harvesters' boss, Gai Zonglin. The boss's eyes shone like lightning, and two bolts snaked towards Jiang Chen. His gaze was as ferocious as a tiger's, making their target thoroughly uncomfortable.

Thankfully, Jiang Chen had a disciplined heart. He showed no cowardice despite the overbearingness of the gaze. He smiled, returning a cupped fist salute. "I've heard for a long time now of the peerless bravery of the Star Harvesters' boss. Having met him today, I can note that the rumors are wholly accurate."

In the wider world, Gai Zonglin had the nickname of 'Peerless Brave'. He was very happy with that fact, and thoroughly enjoyed it. However, his current expression was as impassive as when Jiang Chen had come in. "I hear that you want to make a deal with us Star Harvesters? May I hear the exact details?"

Jiang Chen looked all about him. "I don't see anyone I'd want to make a deal with."

Gai Zonglin raised an eyebrow. "I lead the Star Harvesters. Who else are you going to make a deal with, if not me?"

"I am absolutely certain of your leadership over your gang," Jiang Chen smiled faintly. "So I'd like to make why I'm here obvious as well. I'm here for Master Mu."

"Master Mu?" Gai Zonglin snickered. "Are you interested in his innate wood constitution as well? Forgive my bad eyesight, but which Pillfire City faction do you represent?"

"I represent no one," Jiang Chen looked plainly and forthrightly into Gai Zonglin's eyes.

"Truly?'

"...Except my own master," the young lord smiled once more.

“Who is your master?” Gai Zonglin was moved.

“Even if I say his name, I doubt that you would recognize him, Boss Zonglin.”

Gai Zonglin roared with laughter. “In all the Upper Eight Regions, there is no senior with any degree of fame that I do not know, regardless of what sect or faction he is from. Why don’t you try me?”

“My master is not from the Upper Eight Regions,” Jiang Chen shook his head tranquilly.

“From a middle or lower region, then?” The gang boss felt his interest drain away. A guest from one of those places could only waste his time.

“Does someone have to come from one of those places? The human domain is not the only place in the world.” Jiang Chen’s smile was ruminant.

“What do you mean?” It was a perplexing statement for Gai Zonglin.

“Has Boss Gai heard of Myriad Abyss Island?” Jiang Chen asked.

Gai Zonglin trembled, his eyes ablaze with a shocked stare. “Myriad Abyss Island? Is your master from there?”

“Is that a problem?”

Gai Zonglin tossed an ambiguous look towards the Star Mill’s supervisor, who hurriedly defended himself. “He didn’t tell me that earlier, boss. Miss Keke said something to that effect, but I don’t know if I could believe it myself.”

The boss slowly nodded. “Word of mouth is no proof,” he said calmly, eyes trained on Jiang Chen. “The Myriad Abyss Island is a blessed place heard of only in myth. Even the Upper Eight Regions’ best and brightest have never set foot there. How do I know that you’re not telling tall tales?”

Jiang Chen chuckled. “You’re right, words alone are insufficient. But, does who I am matter to the exchange itself?”

“Of course it matters,” Gai Zonglin snickered. “If you’re just another run-of-the-mill swindler, the Star Harvesters has no interest being tricked by the likes of you.”

“When did the human domain become so rich? Can some common swindler simply afford to give away three sky rank spirit herbs? The Star Harvesters have great stature here in Pillfire City, I understand. How many sky rank spirit herbs can you provide on the spot?” Jiang Chen remarked indifferently. The question stumped Gai Zonglin.

“Three sky rank spirit herbs are not enough to trade for Master Mu,” Gai Zonglin contested coolly. “If you want to trade sky rank spirit herbs for him, come back with a hundred!”

This initial offer touched on the patently absurd. A hundred sky rank spirit herbs were significantly more valuable than just one genius pill master. When the Star Harvesters bought Mu Gaoqi, they had paid at most around a single herb’s worth. If they were to accept Jiang Chen’s offer on the spot, they would have made two hundred percent profit off the deal. Unfortunately, the Star Harvesters had an extremely large appetite. They went to great lengths to embellish Mu Gaoqi solely to maximize their profit.

“A hundred herbs?” Jiang Chen chortled. “You have an impressive appetite, Boss Gai. If I had a hundred sky rank spirit herbs, I could just give thirty of them to Emperor Pillzenith and ask him the favor instead. If Emperor Pillzenith were to ask you for Master Mu, I daresay that you’ll yield nine times out of ten.”

“I’m brave enough to ask the question, and I hope you’re brave enough to answer. If Emperor Pillzenith really does make that specific request, would you have it in you to deny him?”

“Emperor Pillzenith is an honorable and respectable man. He will not blackmail the Star Harvesters for no reason. Your question is

nonsense.” Gai Zonglin retorted dismissively.

“The emperor hardly needs blackmail you. Would you consider a present of three sky rank spirit herbs from His Majesty to be insufficient?” Jiang Chen grinned shrewdly. “You know best how much you spent on this slave when you first bought him.”

Gai Zonglin could muster no response.

“Are you willing to hear a new offer, Boss Gai?”

“Go ahead,” the boss looked sober as ever.

“Three sky rank spirit herbs, plus a true sage rank ancient pill recipe.” Jiang Chen made his first formal offer.

“If the recipe is something that’s well-known or worthless, then it’s worth even less than another spirit herb. An exclusive recipe, perhaps several spirit herbs. The total value won’t exceed more than ten. You’re slashing down the prices by quite a bit. My price was a hundred sky rank spirit herbs, but you’ve reduced it to less than a tenth.” The boss sneered coldly.

“We’re still discussing the price, no? It is the seller’s right to quote an astronomical price, but it is also the buyer’s to cut it figure down to earth. Everything the Star Harvesters have done in this case is to look for the right buyer, from whom you can ask a high price. I’ve given you what I think is fair, and most would agree. It’s up to you to decide, Boss Gai.” Jiang Chen had more weights to place on the scales, but he didn’t want to show all of them just yet.

“My answer is the same as before. Impossible.” Gai Zonglin’s tone was as firm as ever. “I will give you a counteroffer, however. Thirty sky rank spirit herbs, and three unique ancient pill recipes. If you come from Myriad Abyss Island, I’d think this easily affordable.”

He was one of the most black-hearted merchants Jiang Chen had seen.

The young lord clearly did not have as many as thirty sky rank spirit herbs. He had harvested some from Mt. Mirage's restricted area, but not more than several. His findings in the desolate wildlands added to this number, but he was still definitely short of thirty. The current price was highway robbery, clear and simple.

Chapter 1037: Two Plans

Jiang Chen thought for a few more moments before speaking once more. “Five sky rank spirit herbs, plus two exclusive true sage realm ancient pill recipes. That’s my final offer.”

Gai Zonglin mulled it over for only an instant before cackling. “Not a bad bid, but it’s far from what I’d expect out of a legitimate deal. If that truly is your final offer, then my apologies, but no deal.”

“I doubt that the local leading factions are willing to pay a similar price, Boss Gai.” Jiang Chen frowned.

“Haha, then you underestimate Pillfire City’s wealth. Even if you truly hail from Myriad Abyss Island, I would not belittle the locals’ purchasing power. Their thirst for talent is much stronger than you might imagine.”

No bargaining tactic seemed to be working on Gai Zonglin. His original plan to directly purchase Mu Gaoqi from the Star Harvesters was probably a failure. Even so, although he couldn’t hand over the spirit herbs that Gai Zonglin had demanded, he could definitely offer up more ancient pill recipes in substitution. Forcing his way through the transaction was definitely a viable option. However, that was outside the scope of Jiang Chen’s consideration. For one, Gao Zonglin’s demand was already lower than this bottom line.

For another, if he really had been able to pony up the contents of such a shocking offer, it would be akin to painting a target on him for all of Pillfire City to see. Countless pairs of greedy eyes would be trained upon him then. In fact, a gang boss like Gai Zonglin would probably be amongst the first to pounce.

Money was of no concern for Jiang Chen—he possessed sufficient financial strength. Nevertheless, he was unwilling to yield his bottom line on principle. If he did, he would face an endless

amount of trouble. There was no reason for him to stay once the dysfunction of the deal was set in stone. “Since you insist on making such ridiculous demands, Boss Gai, there’s no point in doing business with you.” Standing up, Jiang Chen casually cupped one hand over the other. “I assure you that I’ll keep tabs, though. I’d like to see what price will get you to eventually part with your prize.”

Gai Zonglin roared with laughter. “It’s not like my gang needs the money. We’re in no rush. As long as Master Mu continues performing up to par, the price will go nowhere but up. If you come back in the future for a purchase, friend, it’ll cost you a good deal more.”

The gangster’s fearlessness impressed Jiang Chen. The Star Harvesters were shrewd in commerce.

“We shall see, hmm?” He snickered before heading out. The Star Harvesters made no effort to bar his departure.

After he left, Gai Zonglin’s face darkened. He looked at Star Mill’s supervisor. “Little Xiao, where did that person come from? He’s as superficial as they come, judging by how indiscreet he was.”

“It’s hard to say, boss. Although, I think he has way more money than the average country bumpkin.”

“No, considering his manners just now, he’s definitely not from the country.” Gai Zonglin nodded. “He said he was from Myriad Abyss Island, but I’m not so sure how true that is.”

He was evidently wary of the island’s name. Even if the claim wasn’t true, he was still bothered by the mere mention of the island. If the young man truly was from there, then him having refused the proposed deal just now might end up starting a grudge or feud, creating further trouble for them down the line. The Star Harvesters weren’t afraid of trouble, but fear of Myriad Abyss Island’s residents was perfectly healthy. Even residents of Pillfire

City were susceptible to such a fear, much less one of its street gangs. Gai Zonglin felt increasingly annoyed by the complications.

“Get someone to check him out later. We have to figure out where he’s from.” He was strangely bothered. He had a vague premonition that his choice today had been unwise.

Star Mill’s supervisor turned to Keke. “Keke, I think that kid has a pretty good impression of you. I have a task for you: Try to get close to him. No matter what you have to do, you need to find out more about his origins. Even if you can’t, any additional information is good.”

Miss Keke had stood timidly on the sidelines throughout the entire exchange. She knew that as an inconsequential employee, she had no right to speak before the boss. Upon hearing the ‘task’ delegated to her by the supervisor, she fell into a panic. “Manager Xiao, I… I… I really can’t.”

She didn’t know what to do. ‘No matter what you have to do’ included the implication of sacrificing her body. Seduction was a perfectly reasonable tactic in their books, but for Keke, doing something like that was unthinkable. As an unsullied girl, considering such a thing was worse than the prospect of death itself.

“What? You can’t do something as simple as that?” Manager Xiao’s face darkened. “The Star Mill does not employ the useless. If you can’t even carry out such a small task, what’s the point of keeping you around?”

Gai Zonglin chuckled, glancing towards the delicate girl. “Little girl, our gang is kind to anyone that can do good work. If you manage to pull this off, both you and your family will receive the Star Harvesters’ protection and care. Why not make your ancestors proud?”

Keke’s face became even redder. She began to sob inconsolably. “Keke is too stupid, boss. I’m worried that I can’t. What if I let you

down?”

“How do you know you can’t if you haven’t tried yet?” Manager Xiao was impassive. “You’re the one I’m most impressed with in the entire store. Keke, the boss has spoken. If you do well with this task, then everyone around you will benefit. Both you and your family will be treated as heroes in the gang. This is the only chance for any of you to move up the social ladder. Even if you’re not interested personally, you should consider the future of your loved ones. Don’t you have a younger brother working as an apprentice armed escort? His dangerous and violent lifestyle must make the rest of you worry a great deal. If you succeed at this task, I will personally allow him to join the Star Mill, and he will receive a great deal of resources to help him grow.”

Keke’s family was her soft spot. Manager Xiao’s words convinced her to wipe away her tears. She began to think that the boss’s idea was perhaps a little feasible. Honestly speaking, the likelihood of it succeeding was very low, but was she was willing to do anything for her family. Her parents’ hard work, her younger brother’s risky lifestyle at the armed escort agency... Keke was quite tempted.

“Our visitor just now, I noticed that he had a strong interest in Master Mu. I don’t think he’ll give up this easily. Just keep him interested, Keke, and see exactly how much he’s willing to part with. If you can find out his origins, even better. You have my word as the boss that I will grant your younger brother the status of a rank four disciple.” Gai Zonglin tipped the scales with a much richer reward.

The Star Harvesters’ disciples were ranked from one to nine. After the disciples were the administrators, then the elders, then the grand elders, and finally the vice boss. The actual boss was only one rank above the vice. The status of a rank four disciple was not particularly high, but it was the perfect placement for a newcomer. Most disciples started from rank one. They needed

twenty to thirty years before they could make their way to rank four. Starting from rank four would shave off several decades of work. Most importantly, Keke's younger brother was currently only an apprentice armed escort. He wouldn't have had the right to join the Star Harvesters in the first place. Hence, the boss's promise to issue her brother the status of rank four disciple was a heart-wrenchingly enticing temptation.

"Boss, Manager Xiao," Keke bit into her bright-red lips, a light blush creeping into her pale face. The resolve in her eyes, however, was undeniable. "I'm willing to try, but I have a tiny request... if I mess up, please punish only me and not my family."

She knew that it was a difficult life living amongst gangsters. Many rules, once broken, affected both oneself and one's family. Therefore, her greatest worry was not her inability to complete the task, but rather how it would affect her loved ones.

Gai Zonglin roared with laughter. "The Star Harvesters are a principled bunch. We don't blame a family for a man's errors. Plus, the most you could do is fail personally. I doubt it'll hurt the gang in the long run. So, don't worry about it."

"Thank you for your kindness, boss, and Manager Xiao as well." Keke had no way out now. She had been ensnared the moment Manager Xiao had said her name.

As he left the Star Harvesters, Jiang Chen felt eyes following his every movement from the shadows. This observation was unsurprising. A gang like the Star Harvesters was far more unlikely not to keep tabs on him after that entire ordeal. It wasn't necessarily out of malice either. Perhaps Gai Zonglin saw him as a potential customer in the future.

The Star Harvesters were waiting for the highest bidder. If the various other factions of Pillfire City couldn't offer up a similarly hefty bid, then the gang might reconsider a deal with him. However, that was only one of the possibilities. There were worse

ones to be considered, with one of them being that the Star Harvesters were now after his three sky rank spirit herbs, and by foul means rather than fair at that.

It was an off-the-cuff thought, not to mention extremely unlikely, but there was no reason not to prepare for the worst possibility. The world was a dangerous place, and caution was a man's most stalwart companion. Knowing that he was being watched, Jiang Chen refrained from returning to Lin Yanyu's place. Instead, he chose an extraordinarily luxurious inn and checked in there. There were a million ways for him to shake his unwanted friends off. However, any action on his part would only cause undue alarm. The more unpolished his behavior now, the less of a threat he would be perceived as. If he showed remarkable cunning, then the Star Harvesters would only be warier. This was of no benefit to his future plans.

Jiang Chen had two plans at his current disposal.One was to use his original bid to trade for Mu Gaoqi while the other was to use more underhanded methods. Gai Zonglin's attitude had made him lean towards the latter.

Chapter 1038: Miss Keke Pays a Visit

Jiang Chen did nothing much over the next few days. He was aware that the gang was keeping an eye on him, but didn't expose its watchers. Instead, he strolled the streets of Pillfire City everyday and even visited the slave market on several occasions. It was an act to make his observers feel like he was thirsty for talent. As a result, his watchers felt like they weren't able to grasp his true objective. Because the Star Harvesters was surveilling him, Jiang Chen and Lin Yanyu now communicated through consciousness messages instead of meeting directly with each other. So far, there had been no trouble.

Lin Yanyu had managed to gather a bit of intelligence through all sorts of channels. It was all related to the Star Harvesters, but the amount of information that was actually useful was pitifully small. Jiang Chen had considered using the Goldbiter Rats to gather information from underground, but a place like the gang headquarters would certainly be protected by all kinds of restrictions. Although the Goldbiter Rats could travel through earth, they couldn't break open layers of restrictions. A gang as powerful as the Star Harvesters must be protected from head to toe. He was sure that their restrictions stretched all the way down into the ground. And so, Jiang Chen ultimately gave up on the idea.

He'd met with the boss of the Star Harvesters last time. That was a good start. However, his request to meet Mu Gaoqi still hadn't been realized. This depressed Jiang Chen a lot. It also made him realize how cautious the Star Harvesters was acting for this matter.

"I guess it will be extremely difficult to take Mu Gaoqi away from the Star Harvesters. But first, I must see him. I need to know how he's doing right now." His current biggest problem was the inability to see Mu Gaoqi. The Star Harvesters just wouldn't let him meet Mu Gaoqi no matter what he tried. Right now, he felt

was stuck between a rock and a hard place.

Jiang Chen was able to rob Myriad Puppets Pavilion of their slaves back then was because they weren't on their guard. Moreover, those slaves weren't too valuable and Myriad Puppets Pavilion didn't think that someone would dare commit a robbery at the Fish and Dragon District. But the Star Harvesters was different. Mu Gaoqi was a treasure to them from the beginning, so they were very much on guard against any unpleasant scenarios.

"Master, I still think we should begin by targeting someone inside the Star Harvesters." Lin Yanyu gave his personal opinion.

"What suggestions do you have?" Lin Yanyu's intelligence was one of the qualities Jiang Chen valued in him, especially since he was a local in Pillfire City.

"I think we should focus on investigating those people who can get close to the Star Harvesters' boss, especially those who can walk in and out freely of their headquarters." Lin Yanyu suggested.

"Yanyu, do you know if the Star Harvesters' boss is particularly fond of anyone, like his children or his direct disciple?" Jiang Chen asked.

"Master. Gai Zonglin doesn't have any direct disciples because he's currently in his prime. As for his children, the Star Harvesters has done well to keep it a tight secret. I tried investigating into this matter, but wasn't able to gather anything concrete."

It was understandable that the Star Harvesters worked hard to maintain a high level of secrecy. The Star Harvesters was a gang, and a gang was different from a sect or a family. The way of living and conflicts between gangs were often crueler and more primal. Therefore, a sect member wouldn't easily reveal their privacy to others. The moment any private relationships were revealed, the people involved might become targets.

Therefore, no one but those who were extremely close to Gai

Zonglin would know if he had a family or children. This was especially true since he was a gang boss. The fact that the Star Harvesters was tightly knit despite its gargantuan size impressed Jiang Chen even more. If the Star Harvesters had existed in Veluriyam Capital instead, it was definitely a match for some powerful great clans. There was no way an aristocratic family could compete against the Star Harvesters at all.

While Jiang Chen was musing, he suddenly heard a series of small, quick footsteps from the corridor in front of him. They were very familiar. Why has she come? He didn't even need to look to know that his visitor was the assistant with a bit of a personality, Miss Keke.

Knock knock knock. Someone knocked on Jiang Chen's door.

"Come in," Jiang Chen responded indifferently. As expected, the door opened to reveal the beautiful Miss Keke. Her eyes looked a little shifty, and her cheeks were a little reddened. She looked like a girl who was secretly meeting her lover that she was privately engaged to.

"Miss Keke?" Jiang Chen frowned. "Why have you come?"

He knew that the Star Harvesters was watching him, but he couldn't fathom why Miss Keke had chosen to show up. That being said, this meeting was not unwelcome. He knew that Miss Keke must have been ordered by Star Harvesters to meet him, and he welcomed their approach, whatever their intentions might be. Maybe they were trying to sound him out through her, but he could also do the exact same thing. Furthermore, the watchers and now this visit proved that the Star Harvesters was still interested in him. It was gratifying news.

Of course, they might just be interested in the three sky rank spirit herbs he showed them.

"Can I come in, sir?" Keke sounded a little timid and hesitant.

“Hmm. Do as you please.” Jiang Chen didn’t show too much enthusiasm. Miss Keke walked in before closing the door carefully behind her. She took a few small and quick footsteps to a chair and perched carefully on it.

“I thought you couldn’t stand my presence, Miss Keke, so I never thought you would visit me one day. Should I say that it is an honor to have you here?” Jiang Chen said smilingly. He had purposely spoken in a joking tone to liven the atmosphere and ease the girl’s tension.

Miss Keke squeezed her fingers together so tightly that the joints looked a little pale. She pondered for what seemed to be a very long time before she finally mustered the courage to say, “Sir, I asked around and learned that you live here, so I’ve purposely come over to apologize.”

Apologize? Jiang Chen broke into involuntary laughter. “Miss Keke, you have been responsible and diligent, haven’t you? If I remember correctly, you don’t owe me an apology at all.”

“That’s not right.” Keke’s face turned even redder as she said somewhat agitatedly, “I want to apologize for my attitude towards you that day, sir. I… I actually thought that much of what you say is true, sir. I am very much impressed by your words that day. But… I’m an assistant in the Star Mill. They can fire me at any moment if I don’t toe the line.”

Jiang Chen stared at the girl but didn’t take her apology too seriously. It was possible that she was as upright and honest as she appeared. But her apology was obviously not entirely genuine. For example, her claim that she asked around and learned where he lived was a complete lie. The only reason she could’ve known this was because the Star Harvesters was watching him.

He didn’t expose her lies though. Instead, he flashed a calm smile. “We are here now, so that’s a pointless subject to dwell upon. I admit that I am somewhat interested in that pill master

with an innate wood constitution of high order, but there is no way I can possibly fulfill your gang's demands. So if you are here to peddle him, Miss Keke, then I can only say that you've wasted your time."

Whatever her intentions might be, Jiang Chen decided to back down for the moment and see how she would respond.

"Sir, it is as you said earlier. The reason the Star Harvesters worked so hard to package Master Mu is because we intend to sell him." Miss Keke sounded rather forthright at least. "But that doesn't mean that we plan to sell him carelessly for a quick spirit stone. On the contrary, our standards are very high. If our customers don't meet our standards, we can't possibly sell Master Mu to them, can we?"

"But Miss Keke, don't you think that such words are wasted on me right now? I've already given up on buying Master Mu." Jiang Chen smiled.

"Are you giving up already, sir?" A trace of disappointment immediately colored Miss Keke's face. "Manager Xiao had sent me over today to learn exactly how passionate you are about buying Master Mu. If you can confirm this, then I am certain that the price can be renegotiated."

"Any further negotiation is pointless. There is no way I can pay what the Star Harvesters demands even if you were to cut that price in half." And it was true that Jiang Chen had no wish to buy Mu Gaoqi any longer. He didn't want to fall into his opponent's rhythm and be baited like a fool at every turn.

"Sir..." Keke bit her lips softly and said with reddened cheeks, "I would like to ask one more question. Do you really come from Myriad Abyss Island? I heard that Myriad Abyss Island is a legendary holy land. It is said that the greatest experts of Divine Abyss Continent take pride in being able to enter Myriad Abyss Island. Also, I heard that even the most average person in Myriad

Abyss Island is stronger than our sage realm experts. Is that true?”

Jiang Chen smiled. “Now that is what you call the spread of falsehoods. It is true that Myriad Abyss Island is very impressive, but average fighters also exist everywhere in the world. All fighters must start from the beginning and build the foundation of their martial dao step by step.”

“If that is so, then may I know what level you are in Myriad Abyss Island? Manager Xiao says that your background must be extraordinary to be able to offer what you offered. He believes that you are of a high status. That is why Manager Xiao is certain that you can afford our price, if you truly wish to buy Master Mu that is.”

She was trying to fish for information.

“Even if Myriad Abyss Island is a holy land of wealth, I am not a fool. I will not pay what the Star Harvesters demands even if I can afford the price.” Jiang Chen’s tone was calm. “This is a matter of principle and bottom line. I have no choice but to give up on this trade.”

“If you are here to persuade me to pay the price you’ve quoted for Master Mu, then you may return and report back to your superiors already.” Jiang Chen opened his hand and gestured to the door.

“Sir, the price can be renegotiated. Our ultimate objective is just to maximize our profits. I’m sure that you can understand this. I have been requested by Manager Xiao to communicate with you as best I can. If you truly intend to buy Master Mu, I am sure that we can still talk this over.”

It was obvious that the Star Harvesters didn’t want to miss out on any potential clients.

Chapter 1039: The Star Harvesters Decision

Jiang Chen didn't chase Keke away because she had been sent by the gang. That was proof that they were still interested in him as a potential buyer. He paid no heed to whatever ulterior motive they had. As long as they continued showing interest in him, there was still a possibility that the deal could happen.

He didn't fret after sending Miss Keke off, because he knew that Mu Gaoqi was simply too important to the Star Harvesters. He had to construct a meticulous plan before making his next move. He would have to succeed in his first try. If any mistakes were made, his previous efforts would have all been for naught. Moreover, it would make the Star Harvesters more vigilant as well. This was also the reason why he hadn't refused to talk with Miss Keke. The gang's stance was unclear, as they hadn't fully refused the trade. Things were at a standstill.

He made his decision, choosing to follow Lin Yanyu's suggestion and tackle the problem from within. It wasn't easy to infiltrate a gang like the Star Harvesters. However, there were no unlockable doors and unbreakable forts in the world. One could find spies in even the strictest of clans, with the six great sects of the Myriad Domain being a perfect example of this concept. Almost every single clan had been infiltrated by spies. The Tristar Sect was practically a puppet of the Ninesuns Sky Sect.

Hence, infiltrating the gang was still within the realm of possibility. Jiang Chen decided to make full use of Lin Yanyu's capacity as a local and tasked him with collecting all sorts of information about the Star Harvesters.

However, four days days later, he received another bit of news.

"Master, I've just received inside information that the Star Harvesters is planning to auction off Master Mu after the Bounty Arena."

Jiang Chen was extremely surprised by the news. Was the clan finally revealing their true greedy selves? Auctioning a pill dao genius like any ordinary product was actually incredibly shameful for a gang of their stature.

“Tsk tsk. It seems they really do prefer money over face.” There was some contempt within Jiang Chen’s comment.

However, Lin Yanyu had a different view of this matter. “Master, based on my observations, I can say for certain that the Star Harvesters are no admirers of talent. However, from a long term perspective, they would almost certainly gain more value if they foster and nurture Master Mu.”

These words made sense. Auctioning off Mu Gaoqi at this stage isn’t the best deal as his value was yet to reach its peak. It was definitely not a smart business decision by the Star Harvesters. Jiang Chen had thought that they were doing this because they’d run out of patience and instead preferred to make some quick money.

“Yanyu, are you saying that there’s more that meets the eye here?”

“Master, the power struggle here is a little different from what you’re used to in Veluriyam Capital. The Capital is a little more orderly compared to this place. There is competition between factions and also all kinds of disputes, but overall it is a place where laws are abided by and rules are obeyed. The same can’t be said for Pillfire City. The laws here are slightly more primitive. Rules of the jungle and the survival of the fittest is taken as gospel.” Lin Yanyu gritted his teeth upon reaching this point. “After what happened to my family, I’ve realized that owning something precious might not actually be a good thing. One’s fortune will arouse the envy of others. If my family hadn’t found the ancient pill formula, and that certain someone hadn’t envied my father’s pill dao talent, they would never have been annihilated for no particular reason!”

A deep hatred suffused his voice. It was evident that he felt a lot of contempt for the laws of Pilflire City.

“You mean that the Star Harvesters has begun to feel pressure from owning Master Mu?” Jiang Chen seemed a little intrigued.

“Your disciple cannot offer you confirmation, but based on my knowledge on the current state of affairs in the city, I have confidence that it is likely the case.” Lin Yanyu theorized calmly. “The Star Harvesters is one of the strongest factions in Pillfire City, but they are not the cream of the crop, and nowhere close to being the strongest. Master Mu’s talent in pill dao has probably exceeded what they can manage. The consensus in the city is that the Star Harvesters is not worthy of Master Mu.”

Stories of trouble stemming from fortune was a daily occurence here. The same also happened in the Myriad Domain. The Eternal Celestial Capital and the Ninesuns Sky Sect believed that Emperor Featherflight and an empyrean heritage was lost in the domain, which was why they plotted and invaded the entire region, causing chaos and destruction. A weak and puny faction possessing a treasure greatly beyond their abilities was recipe for disaster.

In some ways, Jiang Chen understood what sort of pressure the Star Harvesters was facing. Mu Gaoqi wasn’t the only pill dao genius with a wood constitution in the world, but he was definitely a phoenix to be found only once every few thousand years. An innate constitution was rare in the Upper Eight Regions, but it was still possible to locate some. Almost every single sect would have a few members with an innate constitution. However, an innate wood constitution was fewer in numbers compared to other elements. That made one of high order was as rare as a phoenix or a dragon.

An innate wood constitution genius was basically a body built for the pursuit of pill dao. An innate wood constitution of high order however, was a genius beyond that of common geniuses. The Star Harvesters realized that they couldn’t hold onto Mu Gaoqi for too

long, which was why they made so many high profile promotions. Since they couldn't hang onto him for the long term, they might as well sell him off for a high price. It would bring them a sizable profit and create a good relationship with the buyer.

Their issue was that they'd been waiting far too long for the right price. They'd shown too much ambiguity and given no definite answer. Many leading factions were incredibly dissatisfied. They believed that the gang had gone overboard. Therefore, it was natural that they would exert some pressure to the gang, instantly making life harder.

The Star Harvesters realized that they could delay the matter no longer after receiving all kinds of pressure, overt and below the table. Time was of the essence. If they continue to delay, the masses might lose all of their patience. They would become a public enemy if the leading factions flew into rage. They would have to live the rest of their lives like rats, a target of scorn.

They were smart enough to realize that they couldn't delay matters any longer. It was the reason why they announced that they would auction Master Mu after the Bounty Arena.

It was the smartest choice they could make. If they ever conducted a deal in private, they would offend other factions. By having an auction, they could protect themselves from this problem. They would offend nobody if they left the final decision to the auction house. Everyone was clamoring after Pill Master Mu, was it? Then name a price. An auction was a free-for-all. The highest bidder would win the item. If one couldn't manage to win the bid, it meant that one wasn't wealthy or powerful enough. There was no one but themselves to blame. The Star Harvesters were sheltered from any fallout. One had to praise them for making such a smart move. Jiang Chen understood their train of thought after Lin Yanyu explained the current situation.

"Yanyu, what exactly is the Bounty Arena?" Jiang Chen asked. He knew nothing of the customs and practices in Pillfire City, so

the Bounty Arena was also foreign to him.

“Honored master, the Bounty Arena is one of Pillfire City’s traditions. Actually, it’s a tradition also found in many other places in the Upper Eight Regions,” Lin Yanyu explained.

“Oh? Is it similar to the gathering we just had in Veluriyam Capital?” Jiang Chen asked curiously.

“Not quite. Pillfire City indeed has a similar event to Veluriyam Capital’s recent gathering, but the Bounty Arena is an entirely different kind of event.”

“Oh? Explain.”

“The Bounty Arena is a yearly event, with it sometimes being held at the change of every season. There is no regularity to the event. However, it seems that the coming one will be one of the largest they’ve held in the recent decade. I heard that there will be nine full arenas in total, with each full arena housing nine sub-arenas.”

“Is there a specific meaning behind this particular arrangement of arenas?”

“The main motive behind this event lies not within the arenas, but rather within the bounty. There will be numerous bounties in each arena that come in the shape of all kinds of forms and requests. Some might come as questions about martial dao, issues regarding cultivation, inquiries in pill dao, and many other fields. One might even have to expect issues regarding talismans, formations, and perhaps even beast taming. It’s a good platform for someone to earn fame with the common people and build connections. Sometimes, you might even come across an exorbitant bounty for an extremely difficult question!”

Jiang Chen was slowly realizing the purpose of the Bounty Arena. Simply put, it was a platform for solving problems. If someone had questions that they couldn’t solve, they could issue a bounty and

collect help from the masses.

“If that’s the case, it’s likely very difficult to become the lord of a full arena.” Jiang Chen immediately noticed the crux of the matter.

“That is correct. The lord of an arena is handpicked after a series of filtering. However, one stands to gain a lot of wealth if a position in the full arena is acquired. Past Bounty Arenas had three full arenas, or maybe even six at the most. Nine full arenas makes it the largest Bounty Arena in the recent decade.” The more Lin Yanyu spoke, the more excited he became. “Honored master, I’m certain that you’ll gain a position if you join the arena lord tryouts!”

“Me?” Jiang Chen laughed but was actually considering the same thing.

“The Star Harvesters are going to auction Master Mu off after the Bounty Arena. People will no longer doubt your abilities if you join the auction as an arena lord.”

Jiang Chen pondered deeply after hearing these words.

Chapter 1040: Signing Up

In the world of martial dao, seniority and status were common notions. Though he was the young lord of Sacred Peafowl Mountain, prominent in the entire Upper Eight Regions, he could not let that slip here. Pillfire City was extremely hostile to Veluriyam Capital at present. It was better to leave his identity unrevealed rather than risk spoiling the proceedings. That was why he'd said that he was from Myriad Abyss Island instead.

Myriad Abyss Island was mysterious and unfathomable. Anyone who tried to figure out who he was shrank a few degrees from hearing those three words. Though he was falsely flaunting someone else's reputation as his own, he couldn't avoid some petty deceit if he wanted to carry out business here. It was a common saying that it was difficult for heroes to triumph over local villains.

Though Jiang Chen was sufficiently heroic, he had to yield before the critical mass of local villains here in Pillfire City. He knew when to lay low and when to rise up. There was wisdom in measuring one's responses. When he'd first come to Veluriyam Capital, there was no way he could have made such great waves without House Wei as a bridge. Proceeding without information or support could only end in failure. In the worst of circumstances, his life could be forfeit.

During the events at Veluriyam Capital, his Taiyuan Tower wouldn't have been able to open without the Coiling Dragon Clan's help. The Majestic Clan certainly had more than enough strength to crush it in the crib. Jiang Chen knew these truths well. He'd exhaustively considered the details and possible problems.

Though Lin Yanyu's suggestion was admittedly risky, it was also the best for his current situation. If he didn't participate in the Bounty Arena, he might not even get a chance later to participate in the auction. The Star Harvesters' murky grace aside, he had no authority of speech without a prominent title or position. Thus,

the Bounty Arena was a golden opportunity.

“When does the Bounty Arena begin, Yanyu?” Jiang Chen asked.

Lin Yanyu actually really wanted his master to participate. He wanted Jiang Chen to spread his name far and wide across Pillfire City as a show of dominance. So, the fact that Jiang Chen was asking after it made him quite happy. “Master, the selection process for the Bounty Arena’s arena lords has already begun,” he answered hastily. “The actual event begins a week from now, so there’s still time to sign up. I can take care if it, if you’d like.”

“We’re in no rush. Tell me about it first.” Jiang Chen had no information whatsoever on his prospective goal. He needed to educate himself first. “The sign-ups right now, are they for arena lords proper or their assistants?”

“There’s no need to choose assistant arena lords, master,” Lin Yanyu chuckled. “They’re only trialing for arena lords proper.”

“Oh? How are the assistants chosen, then?” Jiang Chen blinked.

“The assistants are entirely chosen by the master of the main arena. In fact, sometimes they are not chosen at all. An arena lord does not necessarily require assistants,” Lin Yanyu smiled. “Historically, there have been many who were selfish enough not to. Still, most masters do pick a number of assistants. Typically, those who attain the post of arena lord are otherwise prominent in Pillfire City anyway. They don’t lack power-hungry peers or associates.”

That was enough to convey the essence of things to Jiang Chen. To put it more plainly, the assistants shouldered the arena lord's burden and were helpful aides.

“Wandering cultivators have a hard time becoming even these assistant arena lords, then,” Jiang Chen sighed.

“Heh, not necessarily.” Lin Yanyu’s smile did not abate. “The Bounty Arena attracts the attention of many powerful wandering

cultivators as well. There's no shortage of past arena lords not tied to a specific faction. They've chosen assistants for the most part, though their main criterion in this case is individual ability. Moreover, any bounties that an assistant collects are split fifty-fifty with the actual arena lord."

Was this way of doing things really feasible? Jiang Chen didn't know what to say. Such behavior was almost equivalent to putting up jobs for sale. There was even a fair-ish split of profits! I suppose it's a much more blunt and straightforward method.

"Master, do you think fifty percent to be too much to give away?" Lin Yanyu smirked. "It's a considerable share, but a lot of people compete to become assistant arena lords anyway. There's no cost to doing so, right? The more bounties collected, the greater the raw profit for the lucky ones who do. At the end of the day, it's all spirit stones in the pocket."

Jiang Chen nodded. On second thought, that made more than enough sense. He himself would be equally happy to take up the offer, were he in the same shoes. The amount given to the arena lord notwithstanding, he still stood to benefit from the remainder. That was much better than those entirely ineligible. One only needed to invest time and skill to be rewarded with a respectable return. The arena lord proper had effectively paid their sign-up fee, after all. It was reasonable enough that he would want a return on his investment.

Naturally, Jiang Chen had no intention of fighting for a mere assistant's post. The only job that was worthy of his time was a true arena lord's. "Then it's settled, Yanyu. No need for you to sign up for me. It's better to keep your identity hidden for now. Just tell me the specifics. I'll do it myself."

Lin Yanyu could not give away anything related to his identity. Otherwise, he would potentially be exposed to much more danger than Jiang Chen was currently exposed to. If Pillfire City's factions knew that a remnant of House Lin lingered within the city still,

they would stamp it out at any cost.

Lin Yanyu was touched by the gesture. His master was as good of a man as he could hope for. Ordinarily, masters treated their disciples as slave labor. There was no reason for them to care overmuch about what happened to their lessers. But Jiang Chen showed an honest kindness and care. Though he was nominally Lin Yanyu's master, he acted more like an older brother.

Lin Yanyu knew that he was physically older than the other youth, but there was a psychological reliance nevertheless. He admired Jiang Chen almost blindly. He understood better than anyone else that if he wanted to make something of himself and one day avenge his house, he could only hope for his master's aid.

Jiang Chen gathered some preliminary information from Lin Yanyu. The Bounty Arena was run by Pillfire City, but any genius or expert from the Upper Eight Regions was eligible to attend. However, the most elite experts didn't show themselves at such occasions. There was no reason for them to unless it was a once-in-a-millennium opportunity. The big-names in the world of martial dao cherished their reputations and cared for modesty to a certain degree, just like everyone else. They never participated in the seasonal Bounty Arenas to avoid damaging their prestige. It was unlikely for them to show up to this one as well, despite its decennial nature.

There was certainly no reason for Pillfire City's own great emperors to show. Whether their subordinates and attendants would was slightly more uncertain. Emperors' factions did not concern themselves with events that occurred more frequently than once every century, in general. There were exceptions to every rule, though, and this particular one had been broken reasonably frequently in the past.

Jiang Chen came to Pillfire City's most famous attraction, Skyfire Avenue. The city viewed it as a symbol of great pride and unrivaled glory. The avenue headed straight towards the Pill Emperor

Mountain.

The venue for the Bounty Arena was Skyfire Avenue's very own Temple of Cleansing Fire. It was home to an official faction of the same name. It was quite well known throughout the Upper Eight Regions. The head of the Temple was also the host of the Bounty Arena. Though the Temple of Cleansing Fire itself did not house any great emperors, it was uniformly recognized by all of the others within Pillfire City. In fact, it was a kind of compromise that they had reached within the city. The Temple had access to a collective smattering of channels, made available by the emperors' factions. It had perhaps the widest variety of tricks available to it on its home turf.

Even in the wider Upper Eight Regions, it had a formidable reputation.

It was because of the Temple of Cleansing Fire that the Bounty Arena was so alluring to its participants. Indeed, half of the event's impressiveness came from its sponsor. This decennial occurence of the Bounty Arena stirred Pillfire City abuzz. As Jiang Chen walked on Skyfire Avenue, the emotional atmosphere hit him with a wave of nostalgia. It was almost as if he'd been taken back in time to the Veluriyam Pagoda gathering. Though there was a measurable difference in the amount of airborne passion, it was a similar sensation.

Suddenly, Jiang Chen looked forward to the Bounty Arena a great deal more. Judging by the enthusiasm alone, this was quite the festive setting. If he could distinguish himself at such an event, it would be very advantageous to his future plans. Attending the Star Harvesters' auction, for example. Jiang Chen wanted decisively to show himself off just this once. He needed the enormous amount of capital that the Bounty Arena could provide him, financial and otherwise.

The site was absolutely packed where the sign-ups were taking place. The insurmountably high fee served as a helpful deterrent.

Without it, ten times over the amount of people would have showed up. But even so, he felt the electricity in the air.

“You want to sign up?” After a lengthy line-up, it was finally Jiang Chen’s turn. The person in charge from the Temple of Cleansing Fire was quite surprised at seeing such a young and unfamiliar face.

“Yes, that’s right,” Jiang Chen blinked innocently.

“There’s a security deposit of a hundred million saint spirit stones. According to the rules, if you fail to complete any of the bounties during the Bounty Arena, the entire deposit will be withheld from you. Each successful bounty completed entitles you to a tenth of your principal. If you finish ten bounties, you’re eligible to the entire sum. Ah, yes, and the Temple of Cleansing Fire also collects ten percent of your finished bounties. Do you understand all of this?”

“Yep,” Jiang Chen smiled. “I understand perfectly.”

“Well, you can give me your security first, then. Oh, yes, there’s something else also. If you fail at becoming a master of the main arena, you will be deducted ten percent of your security as well.”

This was the most important point. This particular rule shut out people giving the arena a random shot, hoping to get luck. The organizers used it to ensure that only those who had the ability, qualifications, and financial clout could sign up.

Chapter 1041: Emperor Peerless

Of course, Jiang Chen wasn't a person who took advantage of a situation for personal gain. But he looked like one to Temple of Cleansing Fire though. First, he was an unfamiliar face. A stranger naturally evoked a sense of untrustworthiness. Second, he looked like a very young man. He just didn't look like someone who could win all the way to become an arena lord. Considering his age, he would have to be a descendant of a great emperor faction at minimum to compete for the seat of arena lord. It was almost impossible for an average young genius to become one.

If he used his influence, then he might have a shot at fighting for the seat of assistant arena lord. Therefore, to the people of Temple of Cleansing Fire, Jiang Chen hadn't come here to compete seriously. He was here to achieve a personal goal.

Jiang Chen didn't bother to explain himself. The truth spoke louder than words. He slapped a hundred million spirit stones worth of deposit on the table. Right now, money was more persuasive than anything he could say. Even if he wasn't here to compete seriously, he still had the money to do whatever he wanted. Plus, he was a man who could pay a hundred million spirit stones to participate in a competition. Would someone as rich as him really care about losing ten million saint spirit stones even if he did lose? He obviously wouldn't.

It wasn't like there were no youngsters In Pillfire City who could produce a hundred million at all. There had to be a small group of people like this somewhere. However, these people might not have acted as brazenly as he did.

The administrator gave Jiang Chen a complicated look. Although he still didn't trust Jiang Chen, the latter could pay the deposit. He had no reason to bar him from the competition. Left with no choice, the administrator could only process Jiang Chen's registration per standard regulation. He over the receipt and

participation token. He also gave Jiang Chen a reminder.

“Please show up six days later to participate in the arena lord selection. Remember, you won’t be admitted if you miss the deadline. We will also claim 10% of your deposit as if you’ve lost the competition.” Although the administrator didn’t trust Jiang Chen, he didn’t allow his feelings to interfere with his job. He did his job and had given his advice. No one could say that he didn’t act professionally.

Jiang Chen himself knew that the administrator didn’t trust him. He didn’t mind it and made to leave with a smile after putting away the receipt and participation token. He didn’t take more than a few steps before a ridiculing sneer rang behind his back.

“People sure are crazy these days, to think that a kid still wet behind his ears would partake in the Bounty Arena. Is it just me, or has the world changed recently?”

“Hehe, he’s young. Maybe he doesn’t know what he’s about to face.”

“Ai, can you two stop talking for a bit? He has the money, and he can do whatever he wants with it.” There was no doubt that young Jiang Chen’s registration made a lot of people unhappy. After all, most registrants were elderly. The rest were all middle-aged men or women. At the very least, they didn’t look young.

On the other hand, Jiang Chen looked around his twenties at most. There was no doubt that his presence in the Bounty Arena’s registration area was a glaring beacon to others. Of course, there were some powerful experts who had sent their disciples or servants to register on their behalf. That was why many thought that this young man was simply registering on behalf of his master or his family. There was no need to attack someone like this.

Of course, these reactions went in one ear and out the other for Jiang Chen. The world would never run out of sarcastic people, so there was no point in remembering their words. Otherwise, the

living would die from sheer anger. Maybe I should dress older the next time I participate in an event like this? He thought wryly. Just as he was about to walk out of Temple of Cleansing Fire, he suddenly heard a commotion outside.

Someone cried out. “Oh heavens, am I seeing right? Is... is that Emperor Peerless?”

“Who’s Emperor Peerless?”

“Oh heavens, just how ignorant are you? How can you not know about Emperor Peerless?!”

“Tsk tsk. Emperor Peerless is the famous king of wandering cultivators of the northern region. He is also one of the few wandering cultivators who’s a great emperor without a faction of his own.”

“Emperor Peerless, he... he can’t be planning to participate in the Bounty Arena, is he?”

“He’s probably just passing by. Emperor Peerless is a venerable senior who made his name more than two thousand years ago. There’s no way he would find a Bounty Arena worth participating in, would he?”

“Nonsense! Great emperors do show up in the Bounty Arenas sometimes, okay?”

“But doesn’t that happen very rarely? Only a few great emperors have participated in this Bounty Arena for the past couple thousand years.”

“In any case, I feel that Emperor Peerless may be here to participate in the Bounty Arena.”

“If he really is here to participate in the Bounty Arena, then this place will become very lively. A person’s reputation precedes the person themselves. I am certain that countless people will participate in the Bounty Arena just because Emperor Peerless is present.”

For a time, all kinds of opinions were exchanged.

The discussion reached Jiang Chen the moment he stepped through the door. He couldn't help but look at the direction everyone was looking at. He barely caught the glimpse of a white-haired, desolate-looking back before it vanished from his sight.

A great emperor? It wasn't like he had never seen one of those before. In fact, he had interacted with quite a few of them. Still, this Bounty Arena would become very interesting if a great emperor really did decide to participate in the arena lord selection. That being said, the logical side of him was nagging up a storm.

This was just a competition that was held once every ten years. There shouldn't be any reason for a great emperor to participate at all, right? Forget it, I shouldn't be concerned about someone else's participation. I am here to fight for my own reasons. Jiang Chen shook his head and let out an inward quiet sigh. Still, he hoped from the bottom of his heart that a great emperor would compete. It would no doubt raise the quality of this Bounty Arena by quite a bit. A great emperor was sure to attract a lot of participants. That meant that numerous high value bounty would appear as well. That would be an opportunity to make some money and build his reputation.

He couldn't stop wondering about Emperor Peerless during his way back to his accommodation. "Yanyu, have you heard of someone called Emperor Peerless?"

Lin Yanyu was a bit startled. "I also heard of him today, master. If I'm not mistaken, he's participating in the arena lord competition. I even heard that he was invited by Temple of Cleansing Fire as the highlight of the Bounty Arena. He was directly granted a slot in the arena lord competition, so he didn't need to participate in the selection. Moreover, I heard that he will be an important judge during the arena lord selection."

Jiang Chen was caught off guard. He hadn't heard as many

rumors as Yanyu did. In fact, most of the rumors he heard was small talk and conjectures when he went to register. Lin Yanyu's information was actually more complete than his. He asked ponderingly, "So, is Emperor Peerless really participating in the Bounty Arena?"

"Mm, that's most likely the case. Moreover, he will be participating in the exams to select the rest of the arena lords as an important judge of this competition."

"As I thought, a great emperor enjoys many advantages. I know that an arena lord is qualified to choose assistants, but he has the right to choose even fellow arena lords. He has great power in this competition." Jiang Chen sighed. He didn't feel that it was unfair through. Emperor Peerless cultivating to the level of great emperor despite being a wandering cultivator was proof that he was an extraordinary person. It was only natural that a person like this had the right to skip the elimination round and be directly granted an arena lord slot.

In fact, a great emperor didn't have to lower himself to participate in a small competition that happened once every ten years like this one. Emperor Peerless had willingly stepped down from his proverbial throne to participate in the Bounty Arena.

"Master, I've heard that Emperor Peerless owes the Temple of Cleansing Fire a favor. Perhaps he's here today to repay the favor." Lin Yanyu wasn't quite sure of the accuracy of this, so his tone sounded just as uncertain.

"How much do you know about this Emperor Peerless, Yanyu? I heard that he hadn't built a great emperor faction of his own?" Jiang Chen was very curious. Normally, even a wandering great emperor would seek to build their own faction. No great emperor would want to stay anonymous forever. The stronger they were, the more they hoped that their talents would be inherited and continued. Therefore, the choice of building their own faction, recruiting their own disciples and passing on their legacy wasn't

even a choice for most great emperors. Generally speaking, there were very, very few great emperors who chose not to build their own faction.

Of course, this outcome wasn't exactly uncommon in a place as big as Divine Abyss Continent. Some were born with a passive personality, and some never got the right opportunity to do so. There were also some people who had their own children and didn't need to build a faction and recruit disciples to pass down their martial dao legacy. It could be any one of these reasons or more.

"Master, Emperor Peerless is pretty famous in the northern region of the human domain. In fact, a lot of big sects are quite wary of him. I heard that the reason he didn't build a faction is because he lost to another great emperor during an emotional bet. The loser of the bet swore to never build a or sect."

"Is that so?" Jiang Chen was shocked.

The construction of a great emperor faction was a matter of great importance. There was an enormous chasm of difference between a great emperor with a faction and a great emperor without one. A faction meant a multitude of supporters. Naturally, they wielded great power as a result. Indirectly, they also possessed many resources because they had plenty of supporters and many territories. The gap between a great emperor with a faction and without was quite huge.

"Master, Emperor Peerless may not have a faction of his own, but there aren't many people who dares provoke him. After all, he has nothing to lose. I heard that not even the great emperors of first rank sects dare provoke Emperor Peerless without good reason." Lin Yanyu sighed. "There is no doubt that Emperor Peerless is a winner in life considering the heights he achieved despite being a wandering cultivator. However, there seems to be another version of the reason he chose not to build a faction."

“What is it?” Jiang Chen’s interest was suddenly piqued. A great emperor who was also a wandering cultivator was a lot more attractive to him than those within his own faction. Jiang Chen subconsciously labeled someone like Emperor Peerless as target for recruitment.

Chapter 1042: Enhancing the Level of the Bounty Arena

Lin Yanyu's information web ran incredibly deep. Jiang Chen couldn't help but be a little curious when he heard that there was another variation to the rumors.

"The other version is something that many dare not share in public. Apparently, Emperor Peerless bet against another famous great emperor because of a girl. They were both in love with the same girl, but the girl loved Emperor Peerless. This troubled the famous great emperor greatly. He had a better background and was a tinge stronger than Emperor Peerless, but yet, he was unable to earn the girl's fancy. Thus, he challenged Emperor to a battle. The winner of the battle would earn the right to be wed to the girl. Unfortunately, the girl's love for Emperor Peerless was simply too deep, and refused to accept anyone but him, regardless of the outcome of the battle. She even publicly announced that she would only love Emperor Peerless, and Emperor Peerless alone. This angered the other famous great emperor greatly. They proceeded with their battle, but the betting terms had changed. The loser was to never set up his own great emperor faction."

Jiang Chen responded with a long silence after Lin Yanyu was finished. It was a beautiful tale of undying love and conflict between two unparalleled geniuses. That love had triumphed over desire for power was also deeply romantic. There was no way to verify the rumors, but Emperor Peerless was definitely worthy of his admiration and respect if it was true.

Not every man could forsake their dreams of conquering the world for the sake of love, especially after breaking through to great emperor realm where one could summon storms and winds at the motion of a hand. Having one's own faction was incredibly important at this realm.

Regardless of the truth, the Bounty Arena would gain an enormous amount of legitimacy if this legendary great emperor joined the event. He was more than happy to see this come true.

There were six more days until the selection. Jiang Chen didn't remain idle during this period of time. He went out to explore the city and followed the hustle and bustle. Within a few days, he'd visited every single place with activity. His understanding of the city had improved by leaps and bounds. At first, he only had a rough understanding of the city, mostly came from collected data. By immersing himself in the city, he'd gained a much deeper understanding.

Pillfire City wasn't on par with Veluriyam Capital and had a dominating advantage in terms of pill dao because of a fluke. The city's foundation in pill dao was indeed much higher than Veluriyam Capital. More importantly, the city's influence in the pill world was simply uncanny.

Jiang Chen spent his time wandering the streets and noticed many powerful experts and pill dao geniuses from various regions. They had come to the city on a pilgrimage to further their knowledge. Veluriyam Capital hosted visitors from all corners of the world, but they were absolutely still no match for amount of locals. This meant that Pillfire City had an extremely big influence to its surrounding regions. There was no fault with the claim that they were the core of the northern Upper Eight Regions. One could certainly say that they were the brightest and most eye catching jewel in the north.

Jiang Chen could never refute this. The Bounty Arena alone held great influence. The coming event was merely at a scale that was held once every decade, and yet its lure was incredible. Powerful experts from all walks of life flooded into the city from the surrounding regions. There was so much activity that it seemed as though the event was only held at every turn of the century.

The bustle was nothing compared to the Veluriyam Pagoda

gathering, but the gathering was something held every sixty years and was the most sought after event in the capital. The Bounty Arena however, was just a common event, sometimes even held every season.

Jiang Chen was deeply impressed by what he'd seen during the past few days. Veluriyam Capital excels in certain areas, but its influence is simply no match for Pillfire City. No wonder people often compare the jewel of the north with the jewel of the south and say that Pillfire City is more splendid. At the end of the day, influence is still incredibly important, particularly to attract talent and formidable experts.

He was incredibly motivated after noticing the discrepancy. Since he'd realized Veluriyam Capital's flaw, he would have to work on resolving it. As the young lord of Sacred Peafowl Mountain, it was his responsibility to shoulder this responsibility. He wasn't someone content with mediocrity. Sacred Peafowl Mountain and Veluriyam Capital wasn't going to remain the same on his watch. He would strive for change now that he was in power.

As long as I remain the young lord of Sacred Peafowl Mountain and ruler of Veluriyam Capital, I will make sure that the Capital exceeds Pillfire City and become the most stunning jewel in the Upper Eight Regions. Even though the two were currently equals, Jiang Chen understood that the latter was already beginning to move ahead of the former. The difference in heritage was one reason why, but Emperor Peafowl's dedication to the demon race issue was also another deciding factor.

Veluriyam Capital would likely be ahead in the race if the emperor wasn't distracted by the demon race issue and focused his efforts on catching up to Pillfire City. It was still one of the most powerful existences in the Upper Eight Regions that no first ranked sect would ever dare offend. But for the past few millenniums, Veluriyam Capital had been in a state of stagnation.

This meant that the Capital was content with their position in the Upper Eight Regions, and there was no outward attempt to expand.

In the meantime, Pillfire City had been focusing their efforts in their expansion. They weren't just expanding their land, but also their influence. Pillfire City had not been as influential as Veluriyam Capital in the past. However, they'd gained much ground after a few millenniums worth of effort. Their influence was no longer limited to just their surrounding region. Even the mid regions had begun to rely on them more and more. They were unknowingly drawn in by Pillfire City, though the influence was imperceptible.

Pillfire City is a lot more powerful that I thought. It seems life in Veluriyam City has been too peaceful for its own good. The great emperors of Veluriyam Capital weren't frogs in a well, but Jiang Chen had probably surpassed them in knowledge about the state of affairs in the Upper Eight Regions after his short excursion around the city. Maybe the emperors believed that the traditions and heritage of Veluriyam Capital was already enough to solidify their position in the human domain, or maybe they believed that Pillfire City was simply too far away to influence their territory.

Regardless of the reason, Jiang Chen believed that the citizens of Veluriyam Capital were too optimistic. Emperor Peafowl likely hadn't considered this issue either. Pillfire City's influence was definitely going to spread to the borders of Veluriyam Capital one day. They would be surrounded by the enemy on all sides by the time they realized this fact.

It's time for Veluriyam Capital to rise up. Let me make the first step by retrieving Mu Gaoqi from them! Jiang Chen wasn't going to allow anyone to trample on him. Due to greed, Pillfire City would never allow themselves to coexist with Veluriyam Capital, even if they were miles apart from each other. They wanted to become the single largest faction and the singular brightest jewel

in the Upper Eight Regions. Nobody else was allowed to compete for their glory. They were destined to become the one and only of the human domain.

Lin Yanyu didn't remain idle either. He brought in new information every single day.

"Master! I've just received news that other than Emperor Peerless, two or three more eminent figures will be be joining the selection test. Because of these great figures, the coming Bounty Arena has become a once in five hundred years event!"

"Oh? Who are those eminent figures?" Jiang Chen was curious.

"I've heard that a very accomplished pill king will also be joining. He's one of the top thirty-six pill kings in the city's millennium pill king hall of fame at half step pill emperor realm."

"A quasi pill emperor?"

"Yes. A peerless talisman master and formation master will also be joining. Come to think of it, it's quite a frightening list."

Jiang Chen didn't waver even the slightest when he heard Lin Yanyu's news. "If that's the case, the legitimacy of the coming Bounty Arena will increase by many folds. It's a good thing." He chuckled. He felt no fear for any of those so-called eminent figures. He'd have no problems competing with them in the coming arena lord selection. If it were a martial dao exchange, there would be some discrepancy between strengths due to age differences. But since it was a bounty mission, there would be nothing holding him back.

Lin Yanyu was excited by how confident his master was. "Master, the more legitimate the event, the more famous you'll be when you become an arena lord. It'll surely be of great help when you attend the Star Harvesters' auction."

He had the utmost faith in Jiang Chen. The thought that his master would fail to become an arena lord never even crossed his

mind. Six days went by in a blink of an eye. On the day of the selection, Jiang Chen brought his receipt and participant medallion to the Temple of Cleansing Fire.

Chapter 1043: The Three Greats

The Temple of Cleansing Fire began to take the Bounty Arena more and more seriously as time went on. It was evident from the kind of people they sent as ushers: they were of a much higher caliber than the last time the Arena was hosted. After verifying Jiang Chen's participation medallion to be without error, the ushers politely let him inside.

Moreover, there was an administrator-level guide ready for him. If there was any suspicion in the man's mind with regard to Jiang Chen's youth, he did not show it. Instead, the covert young lord was treated with a warm smile every step of the way, his attendant maintaining a perfect professionalism. Even if Jiang Chen wanted to find fault, there was very little he could complain about.

It's unsurprising that the Temple of Cleansing Fire is one of the most powerful factions here in Pillfire City. They're not like the rest, that's for sure. Invisibly, Jiang Chen's opinion of the faction rose a fair bit. In the selection area, he noted that the number of participants wasn't as high as he'd imagined.

He had originally thought that anywhere between eight hundred to a thousand participants would come. But in actuality, a cursory scan revealed that only one to two hundred were present. It only took another moment for him to come to terms with that fact. People with insufficient confidence in becoming arena lord wouldn't just throw money away like this. After all, a tenth of the security would be deducted as the sign-up fee upon failure.

Though the sum was affordable enough for most, there was no reason to enter without a reasonable chance of success. There were still other posts available. The main arena aside, they could still compete for being an assistant. Although that was decided by the arena lord, there was no need for the assistants to offer up a security or go through a selection. In some respects, vying for the position of assistant was more attractive than arena lord. Of

course, the arena lord received the lion's share of the bounties; but the assistants didn't have to risk any of their own money, either.

The sight of Jiang Chen making his way into the waiting area came as a shock to those already present. The youthfulness of the new fellow competitor was obviously surprising. He had no desire to draw attention to himself. He sat down at an unassuming place. Once seated, he scanned his surroundings to discover that yes, he really was the youngest among everyone here.

His eyes drew back from a distant gaze when he suddenly ne noticed that someone close to him was sizing him up. Turning his head, Jiang Chen found a half-smiling face right in his own. It belonged to a shifty-looking man on his left. Jiang Chen couldn't help but crack a smile at the sight of him. How quaint. There's someone else here just like me. It was plain as day that the other man had disguised his appearance.

Jiang Chen's keen eyes were enough to immediately recognize that the other person's appearance was a clear façade. Beneath his outward appearance was a youth, roughly the same age. In other words, Jiang Chen wasn't the only youngster here. This discovery piqued some of his interest in the other person.

The 'man' seemed to be as keen as he. Detecting the hidden meaning in Jiang Chen's smile, he immediately perceived that his own jig was up. Chuckling, he struck up a conversation. "You're certainly very blunt and forthright, pal. I put some thought into it, then turned myself into a little old man. You, on the other hand, have disguised yourself as someone of the same age. Aren't you worried that the other old coots around here will gossip about you?"

The fact that the young man had begun talking to Jiang Chen on his own initiative was remarkable. He was even making faces in the process.

Jiang Chen wasn't against talking to such an amusing guy.

“There’s no rule that the Bounty Arena won’t accept young men as candidates, no?” He smiled faintly.

The other man cackled. “I guess not, but you might not be picked by those wealthy bounty-setters even if you do become one, just because you’re too young.”

That worry wasn’t entirely baseless. However, Jiang Chen saw little reason to be concerned. In the end, he thought, it always came down to a comparison of raw strength. The Bounty Arena took place over the better part of a month, not a few hours. One’s ability had plenty of opportunity to stand the test of time.

Seeing Jiang Chen’s impassivity and composure made the other man’s eyes twist and turn in their sockets rapidly with extreme curiosity. Suddenly, the man grinned. “Right, let’s introduce ourselves. I’m Lin Zhirong. What should I call you, friend? Which Pillfire City house or family do you belong to?”

“Shao Yuan.” Jiang Chen said only two simple words.

“Your name is Shao Yuan?” The man who called himself Lin Zhirong asked.

Jiang Chen nodded. He hadn’t just made the name up wholesale. Because his father in his previous life had been the Taiyuan Divine Emperor, most called him by the name of ‘Crown Prince Shaoyuan’. ‘Shao Yuan’ was an obvious homophonous split of that. It also made a perfectly appropriate alias. That was how Jiang Chen had been able to say those two words in a fit of inspiration.

“Shao Yuan. A good name.” Lin Zhirong slapped his thigh, a hint of flattery embedded in the gesture. “Judging by your composure, you must be the heir of some emperor’s faction here in Pillfire, hmm?”

Jiang Chen couldn’t bother mustering a response. He shook his head casually, presenting the same unreadable smile and stayed completely silent.

Lin Zhirong seemed to be a particularly chatty person. He kept talking despite Jiang Chen's lack of a response. "Brother Shao Yuan, we're both youngsters here, so we should be on the same team. Let's fend off those old codgers together, shall we? You really should be careful. I bet they'll collude together and put you down."

Jiang Chen nodded lightly, but remained quiet.

At this time, the sound of footsteps echoed out from the interior. Several of the Temple's senior executives briskly walked in, a bearded, middle-aged man with a cold expression in their midst.

Lin Zhirong's eyes lit up. "Emperor Peerless! It really is him. Are the rumors true?"

Jiang Chen easily recognized the bearded man's identity as well. When he'd walked outside the Temple of Cleansing Fire's doors after signing up, he had seen the emperor's silhouette. Thus, he was able to deduce the emperor's identity from figure alone.

The others were wearing extremely similar uniforms. Their identity as the Temple's executives wasn't worth guessing.

The sight of Emperor Peerless lifted Lin Zhirong's spirits. His eyes glittered with eagerness, and he looked ready to pounce on his star at any time. It almost made Jiang Chen feel that the other young had come solely to chase after his hero. Lin Zhirong was unfazed by Jiang Chen's stunned expression. He gave an embarrassed smile, though he didn't seem particularly ashamed. "Brother Shao Yuan, Emperor Peerless is my idol."

"I see." Jiang Chen knew that worship of any idol was hard to understand for those who did not. He had his own stalwart set of followers in Veluriyam Capital. They were filled with admiration and respect for him, a group of faithful believers. He understood what this type of people could be like. Each person had their own idol in their hearts. Like the him in his previous life, for example. He had been filled with admiration for his father the Celestial

Emperor, and he'd thought that he had the greatest father in the whole world. This kind of admiration was unreduced even with the passage of time.

"I find Emperor Peerless's courage absolutely amazing, and His Majesty's attitude even more. Alas, I do not have the same bravery as he in front of a loved girl." As he said this, his eyes were dark and his tone sad. He hit himself forcefully upon the head. It was a gesture of significant self-blame.

Jiang Chen was fairly resistant to Lin Zhirong's sudden gestures. Still, the other young man's saddened expression affected him somewhat. The humorously unfettered youth was also surprisingly sentimental. He could tell from the crystal-clear look in Lin Zhirong's eyes.

Jiang Chen didn't have All-Seeing Eyes, but he had his own way of scoping people out. Lin Zhirong was a little lightheaded personality-wise, but the look in his eyes tipped Jiang Chen off. Lin was a deeply emotional man. Jiang Chen didn't know what he'd been through, but one thing was for sure. Lin Zhirong had not been as resolute as Emperor Peerless. He had surely made a compromise of some kind instead of taking a courageous step forward. That was the source of his regret and self-blame. However, Jiang Chen had no interest in asking about a man's private affairs.

At this time, a man dressed in the robes of an assistant temple master waved both hands to silence his audience below.

"I'm pleased to announce that this Bounty Arena has been elevated to a tricentennial status. Because of this, we're planning to add three new arena lord seats. We've pre-selected their occupants already: Emperor Peerless; rank thirty-six in the Hall of Thousand Legends, Pill King Blue Phoenix; and formation master Wang Xuetong.

"Why have these three masters come for the seats? It showcases

how the level of this Bounty Arena is far above what was first expected. The rest of you will compete for the remaining nine."

Everyone cheered at these words. It was good news for the candidates as well. The presence of the three senior experts lent the Bounty Arena an aura of increased legitimacy. Though they occupied three arena lord spots, these had been added specifically for them. The original number of available positions was unchanged. It was public opinion and expectation that the seniors would have taken three out of the nine available seats, and rightly so. The fact that all nine remained increased the candidates' chances. It wasn't much, but anything helped.

Chapter 1044: Jiang Chens Ambition

Jiang Chen wasn't particularly moved by this news because the number of seats didn't really matter to him. His objective hadn't changed since the start. Even if there was only one arena lord seat left, he would do everything in his power to take it. Since there were nine seats available, he felt even more confident.

From the crowd's reactions, the assistant temple master knew that this announcement was as popular as expected. He immediately continued his encouragement. "I hope that you will show your true skills and do everything in your power to win this competition. I guarantee you that the scale of this term's Bounty Arena won't disappoint you all. Of course, the nine arena lords who will be joining us in this Bounty Arena later will be very powerful, because they must first obtain our judges' unanimous approval."

So it seemed that Emperor Peerless, Pill King Blue Phoenix and Formation Master Wang Xuetong would also be the judges of the arena lord tryouts. The contestants couldn't help but feel a little nervous. Some people were even worried that the judges had already picked out their arena lords. Would they put down talented and competitive candidates during the tryouts because they felt threatened?

The assistant temple master smiled as if he'd read their thoughts. "Don't worry, the three judges are honorable seniors. They were invited to attend the Bounty Arena because they are formally acknowledged to be people of outstanding moral qualities. I have no doubt that they can represent the objectivity of Temple of Cleansing Fire. Therefore, you don't need to worry about this at all."

Lin Zhirong nodded repeatedly while jabbering in an excited tone, "There's no way someone as amazing as Emperor Peerless would ever commit foul play! Hmph, it is their luck to be able to

stand on the same arena as Emperor Peerless, and they dare worry about him oppressing them through scrupulous means? How foolish!

“What do you think, Brother Shao Yuan?” Lin Zhirong suddenly looked at Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen smiled calmly. “We can expect honor from our seniors. Therefore, we shouldn’t judge them with our shallow rules.”

“Hahaha, you are absolutely right. It is true that I don’t know anything about Pill King Blue Phoenix or formation master Wang Xuetong, but I am certain that Emperor Peerless would never lower himself to such pathetic actions.” By ‘pathetic actions’, he meant the act of suppressing strong opponents or opponents with potential on purpose.

To be honest, Jiang Chen himself didn’t think that they would go so far. The Temple of Cleansing Fire wasn’t a bunch of idiots. If something like this did happen, it would never escape their attention. Moreover, the Temple had their own selection criteria. The only reason they were giving the trio such special privileges was because of the trio’s high status. Therefore, the trio would only be complicating their own lives if they did something unfair, and that was assuming that their pride would even allow such a thing to happen at all. On this, Jiang Chen didn’t doubt their integrity in the slightest.

“Alright, I will now announce the selection rules.

“First, the nine arenas are split into three zones. There is a martial dao zone, a pill dao zone and a general zone. I don’t think I need to explain what martial dao and pill dao zones are, do I? The general zone covers a variety of subjects such as medicine and divination, runes and formations, mechanisms and special arts, beast taming and so on. Each zone has three seats to be won. Therefore, you all must choose the zone you wish to participate

first before the competition can officially begin."

To be honest, Jiang Chen could beat any one of this zones. In fact, he was tempted to participate in two zones at once. He wasn't sure if the rules would allow this though. While he was hesitating, a raspy voice suddenly cut through the air. "Temple Master Gao, this old man is somewhat knowledgeable in both martial and pill dao. May I ask if I can challenge both arenas?"

Apparently Jiang Chen wasn't the only one with that thought. Not only did the old man voice Jiang Chen's thoughts, a lot of people echoed his sentiment as well. There was a surprisingly large amount of people who wanted to try.

The assistant temple master smiled slightly. "Theoretically, a participant may challenge all three zones at once. However, are you sure you have the energy to challenge all of them? And are you sure that you can perform outstandingly in every zone? If you bite off more than you can chew, you may fail to overcome even a single zone and lose everything."

A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. There were many who understand this proverb, but the one thing the martial dao world didn't lack was ambitious and hungry people.

"Assistant Temple Master Gao, if the rules allow it, then my choice is of no one's concern. If I so happen to fail to every zone I participate in, then I will simply be reaping what I've sown." The owner of the raspy voice was extremely stubborn.

Assistant Temple Master Gao smiled calmly. "It is allowed. However, if you failed to triumph in any zones, your deposit will be deducted by the same amount of zones you participated in. For example, if you participated in three zones and failed all of them, you will lose thirty million saint spirit stones in total."

"I understand. As long as I'm allowed to participate in multiple zones at once, I don't care about losing a bit of money." It seemed that the owner of the raspy voice wasn't going to change his mind

no matter what.

The owner of the raspy voice had perfectly voiced Jiang Chen's own thoughts. That being said, he was aware that his martial dao strength was limited by his age. If he were to participate in the martial dao zone, he would definitely stand out like a stork amongst chickens.

I cannot just pass by the pill dao zone and general zone though. Still, my success will definitely cause a commotion. Regardless, he had already made up his mind. He was certain of his victory in both zones. It wasn't blind confidence at all. The memories of his past life were more than capable of sustaining his ambition. A commotion was exactly what he wanted. If he failed to stir up a commotion, then he could not possibly garner enough reputation to suppress his competitors at Star Harvesters' auction later.

Alright. All those who wish to participate in the martial dao zone arena lord tryouts, please come over here," Assistant Temple Master Gao said.

Half of the participants moved over to the place he pointed to immediately. It appeared that martial dao was also the most popular even in Pillfire City. Although Pillfire City was famed for being the strongest in pill dao, it was still a world of martial dao.

"All those who wish to participate in the pill dao zone, please come over here." Another group of people got up to their feet. There were now only twenty to thirty people left in their seats.

Nearly two hundred people had signed up, but in the end only roughly thirty were participating in the general zone. There was no doubt that martial dao and pill dao were much, much popular than others.

Lin Zhirong didn't move from his seat, but he exclaimed in surprise when he saw Jiang Chen move. "Brother Shao Yan, are you participating in the pill dao tryouts? We are in Pillfire City, you know. The competition will be fierce. You may as well join the

general zone tryouts and try your luck."

"I will participate in the general zone too." Jiang Chen smiled. He followed the pill dao group of participants down the right corridor.

For a moment, Lin Zhirong didn't understand what he meant. "What did he mean when he say he's going to participate in the general zone?" Then the realization struck him like a bolt of lightning. He slapped his thigh and exclaimed. "Is he planning to challenge both zones He... Is he trying to defy all expectations?"

Lin Zhirong was utterly shocked. At first, he'd thought that this young man had merely come to spectate and gain some experience, just like he was. He never thought that the other was actually here to participate! Lin Zhirong himself was a man of great background and consummate skill. However, he dared not say that he could absolutely win a spot as arena lord.

After all, no mediocre cultivators dared participate in a tryout like this. Even if there was, their numbers were few. It was a one in twenty chance to succeed given the number of participants to seats. It was plainly impossible for a cultivator without talent or skill to come out victorious at all.

Lin Zhirong muttered to himself, "They all say that I'm wastrel, but this boy is an even bigger wastrel than I am. That's twenty million saint spirit stones he just flushed down the drain!"

He still thought that Shao Yuan was treating this as a party. To a wastrel, spending twenty million saint spirit stones for a valuable life experience was nothing big. Also, freedom of choice was one of the benefits of being rich.

More than seventy people were participating in pill dao. It would be difficult to select just three arena lords from them all. All participants had found their respective spots inside the pill battle room by now.

“This selection is quite simple, everyone. There is a scroll in front of you. It contains various questions about pill dao. These are questions that we have spent more tens of thousands of years to refine. There are a total of thirty questions inside the scroll that are split into ten difficulty grades. Your task is to answer every question inside this scroll. Every question gives a certain amount of points. When you are finished, your total points will be summed up and calculated. The top three participants of this selection will become the three arena lords of the pill dao zone.

“If you happen to score the same amount of points as another opponent, then whoever comes forward first will become the victor.”

This general rule was applied to all pill dao exams in the entire Divine Abyss Continent. If two participants scored the same amount of points, then completion time would be used to determine the victor.

“Remember, you must write down your number on the scroll. When everyone is done with their task, we will seal away the number on the scroll. This way, the judges will not be able to see your number during the review process. Therefore, you don’t have to worry about foul play.

“One more thing. The questions presented before you have all been bounty missions in the past. Therefore, they are a test of your pill dao foundation as well as reflects your ability to accomplish these missions perfectly. Hehe, I believe that some of you want to overcome multiple zones at once. Let’s see if you can still maintain that naive dream after you read the questions inside.”

Chapter 1045: A Jiang Chen Looked Down By All

A barrier isolated all the seats. Their communication was cut off from the outside world to prevent cheating. The anxious ones immediately opened their scrolls, and cold sweat started pouring down foreheads when they canned the questions. The questions ranged from level one to ten, each level significantly harder than the one before. It seemed to be an easy flight of stairs at the beginning, but the difficulty ramped up by several multitudes with each taken step. The ninth and tenth level was so difficult that it was like ascending the heavens.

It was an unknown whether they'd finish just these questions on time, much less than try for another zone. And where would they even find the energy and strength to do such a thing?

The contestants were secretly groaning with agony, except for Jiang Chen. He'd never faced any obstacles in pill dao, whether in the Regal Pill Palace, Veluriyam Capital, or Pillfire City. The contents of the selection were of little problem to him. He didn't even bother with the lower level questions and immediately set his sights upon the tenth level questions. These questions were meant for ninth level pill kings or a half-step pill emperors. There were two questions that even went beyond that difficulty. Even a legendary pill emperor would have a hard time answering these questions. However, they were no trouble for Jiang Chen at all.

Jiang Chen answered them at a leisurely pace as he was given three full days to finish the test, more than enough time. All questions answered within this period of time were acknowledged, but the final ranking still depended on the score. He read through the question slowly. Each question was separated into ten levels, with three questions for each level. The questions ranged from easy to difficult, to convoluted, and baffling. There was a clear

discrepancy between each level.

Jiang Chen went through the questions like a hot knife through butter. His brush moved as quickly as the wind. It only took him four hours to finish the first six levels. These questions were of no difficulty for high level pill kings. Everyone answered the questions at roughly the same pace as these questions were no obstacle when one reached seventh level pill king. The difficulty increased exponentially starting from here on out.

Nevertheless, these were only elementary questions in Jiang Chen's previous life. They were so basic that it was one of the first things children learned. He finished those in the blink of an eye. The bar was raised again for the eighth level questions, but to Jiang Chen, it only seemed that they'd gone to a five-year-old level. He finished them at one go and made quick work of the ninth level questions as well.

It was at this point that he realized that his speed was too quick. Most of the others were still stuck with seventh level questions. There were only two that had just begun answering the eighth level questions. A day hadn't even passed at this point. He couldn't glance around to see the precise questions the others were on.

Since I'm trying to raise a big commotion, there is no need for me to hide my true abilities right now. I might as well pull out all stops and go for flashy showiness since I'm taking part in the selection. This is no time to be overly cautious. Jiang Chen realized that he was on the path of no return. Why bother hiding his true abilities when he was going to have to reveal them sooner or later in the Bounty Arena? If anything, now was the best time to show off!

No longer hesitant, he immediately tackled the remaining tenth level questions. They were a lot more convoluted than the questions before. They still weren't difficult, but it took some time to get the answers down in writing. He was done answering the next morning and double checked twice to ensure everything was correct. He wrote down his participant number and imprinted his

medallion onto the seal. Nobody could secretly substitute his scroll with another now that his personal marks were on it.

The judges expressed their surprise when Jiang Chen handed in his scroll. Those from the Temple of Cleansing Fire and Pill King Blue Phoenix looked at him strangely. It almost as though they were looking at an unforeseen monster.

“You’re… handing in your scroll?” Pill King Blue Phoenix asked after staring blankly at Jiang Chen for a second.

Jiang Chen nodded innocently. “Mm.”

“You’re handing it in early?” The pill king was still in slight disbelief.

“Yes. I wish to try out for the general category as well. Hopefully there is still enough time.” Jiang Chen couldn’t be bothered to have an idle chat with the pill king.

Rendered speechless, Pill King Blue Phoenix exchanged glances with the Temple of Cleansing Fire judges and noticed the same exact expressions on their face. They were all thinking the same thing. Young folks nowadays are too reckless. Is it really worth it to flaunt your wealth in such a manner? Since you’re already participating in the selection, the least you can do is fully utilize the three given days to finish up the questions on the scroll. It would benefit you greatly if you ponder upon the questions seriously. What’s with handing it in early?

They obviously thought that he was a frivolous dandy that was merely fooling around. Even then, he was still being much too insincere. Jiang Chen couldn’t care less about their thoughts. Everything was fine as long as nobody stole his scroll.

“Honored judges, may I take my leave now?” Jiang Chen wanted to confirm.

Pill King Blue Phoenix was utterly speechless. He waved his hands as though waving off a fly. “You may leave,” he answered

coldly.

He was a very strict and austere person. He viewed Jiang Chen's actions as an insult to pill dao. How could he possibly show the young man a friendly face after such a bad first impression?

The judges of the Temple of Cleansing Fire acted a little more appropriately and nodded in response. "You may leave. It's not an issue if you hand in the scroll early. If two are found to have equal score, the final ranking will be based on who finished first"

They were obviously just following protocol. The words they used were quite sincere, but Jiang Chen could tell that they didn't think much of him. It didn't matter. He would've reacted the same if he was in their shoes. He smiled at them and nodded before striding towards the exit.

Pill King Blue Phoenix flew into rage when Jiang Chen finally left. "Young people nowadays are ridiculous! I wonder what family he's from! How can he treat such a prestigious event as a game?"

The Temple of Cleansing Fire judges understood that the pill king was a very proper person. He had a very traditional mindset and was very devout to pill dao. It was only natural that he would have high expectations for the younger generation. He was angry because he believed that the person who handed in the scroll early wasn't taking the test seriously.

"Please calm down, Pill King Blue Phoenix. There's always one or two frivolous ones among the younger generation."

"That's true. However, the young lad seemed very polite and respectful. I don't think he's one of those rascals. Maybe he really did finish the questions?" Someone suggested quietly. Truth be told, nine out of ten youths in Pillfire City were incredibly arrogant and full of themselves. Someone as respectful as Jiang Chen was a rare sight in this city. He didn't fit the frivolous dandy stereotype at all. Another shot down the thought as quickly as it'd arisen.

“That’s impossible. Even if he started before everyone else, there’s no way he could finish it in such a short time. Finishing the questions in three days is already a respectable feat. Finishing it in one day? Impossible!”

Pill King Blue Phoenix smiled coldly without saying a word. He’d rather save his breath than answer that question. He was certain that the questions couldn’t be finished in one day, unless the young lad had cheated and knew the answers beforehand. But without the Temple’s help, there was no way he could know the answers beforehand. It was why he remained certain that the boy was desecrating pill dao.

Jiang Chen couldn’t be bothered with what Pill King Blue Phoenix thought of him. He left the pill dao area and immediately sped towards the general zone selection.

The three zones had started at exactly the same time. This meant that a little over one day had already gone by for the general zone. There was only one and a half day remaining for the selection. He had one less day than the other contestants.

“What? You want to cross zones and join the general zone selection as well?” The judges were flabbergasted when they heard Jiang Chen’s request.

The formation master, Wang Xuetong could resist asking. “Young man, which zone did you participate in before this? Did you give up and handed in the scroll early?”

Jiang Chen didn’t know whether to cry or laugh. Why did everyone immediately assume that he’d given up? Was everyone blind to true talent? He couldn’t be bothered to explain. The judges couldn’t stop him as it was allowed in the rules.

“Master Wang, this is my participant medallion, please take a look.” He didn’t want to waste his breath. Every minute and every second was worth fighting for as he was already behind by one day.

Chapter 1046: The Only Cross-Zone Challenger

Though Wang Xuetong marveled at this sight, he and the other judges didn't hold Jiang Chen up. The young man was permitted inside. The formation master offered further praise after Jiang Chen entered. "Just now, a lot of people were clamoring about challenging several zones in succession. I thought that they were naïve and reckless. I didn't imagine that someone would actually do it!"

"Haha, perhaps it's a scion of some noble house who's having some fun. It's only been a little more than a day. Neither martial dao nor pill dao are easy subjects to master."

"Yes. I'm not sure anyone can complete both sets of questions with even three days. My guess is that he's given up already because he finds it too difficult. He might be trying his luck elsewhere." The judges' opinions of Jiang Chen were surprisingly uniform.

One of them led Jiang Chen to his seat. The youth was given a set of questions on a scroll very quickly. The scroll was very similar to that of the pill dao scroll. There were thirty questions in all, sorted by the same kind of ranking system. Because the set of questions was cross-disciplinary in nature, their required answers were much more esoteric. However, this was no problem for him.

In his previous life, he'd managed the Tianlang Library. His scholarship was unrivaled. No subject was foreign to him. Though his expertise in them wasn't nearly the same as his expertise in pill dao, it was still incomparable knowledge on the Divine Abyss Continent.

Though the questions contained much variety and tested minute details, this suited Jiang Chen's tastes perfectly. Any of the candidates here might have a staggering amount of expertise in a

single discipline: some were experts at refining talismans, some were lords at setting formations, and still more were adepts at math and machinistry, medicine and astrology, beast-taming, weapon-smithing... the list went on.

One had to have at least a passing knowledge of many or all of these to do anything cross-disciplinary. It was commonly said that truly difficult things should be left up to professionals. However, Jiang Chen was different from the common man. He had professional talent in every field, capable of doing anything on a whim by himself. Despite this, he wasn't as adroit with other disciplines the same way he was with pill dao.

Some questions warranted extended consideration to answer. Still, a day or so of time was more than enough for him to show his prowess. At the tail end of the third day, he finally completed the entire set of questions. Penning his identification number as a concluding act, he impressed it with the seal on his participant token. This marked the end of the general zone selection.

Jiang Chen rolled up his scroll with confidence. He didn't make a show of submitting it early this time. His time was about up anyway, so there was no point doing so. He firmly believed that while the rest of the candidates might be lords of certain disciplines, they did not nearly have the same breadth as he. Therefore, the test was essentially in the bag. As for the discipline of pill dao, Jiang Chen did not believe it possible for him to lose to anyone there.

Not that he was expecting to lose here either, of course. At least one of the three spots belonged to him for sure. It was a confidence born out of scholasticism. A confidence given to him by the memories from his previous life.

Time was up. Everyone had to submit their scrolls. Lin Zhirong stretched languidly, then felt his eyeballs bulge at the sight of something incredible. He rubbed his eyes with vehemence and tried to calm himself, then looked into the distance. Good heavens,

he wasn't hallucinating!

"Brother Shao Yuan?" It was difficult to believe what his eyes were telling him. Lin Zhirong suspected for an instant that he was having vision problems. Reality told him, though, that it wasn't the case. The one he saw was Jiang Chen, plain as day.

Seeing Lin Zhirong's ghastly expression as the disguised youth lunged towards him, Jiang Chen returned a kind smile. "How did you do?"

Lin Zhirong was in no mood to reply. He glanced over his fellow youth like he was looking at a monster. In particular, he stared at Jiang Chen's neck; was there a second head growing from there?

"Brother Shao Yuan, so you really did come to the general zone after all! Don't tell me you gave up the test in the pill dao zone?" Lin Zhirong sighed. "You're a lot more good-for-nothing than I could ever be. I always thought I was the wasteful and frivolous one, but you've beat me, all right... haha, I definitely feel a sense of defeat here!"

"Who told you I was gave up on pill dao?" Jiang Chen was speechless.

"Er, hmm. If you didn't give up, how did you get here? I didn't even notice you come in." During the testing process, all the candidates were enclosed in a formation. They had no communication with the outside world. Thus, no one else had noted Jiang Chen's entry.

"Couldn't I have finished the pill dao test?" Veluriyam's young lord shot back. It was one thing for a couple of people to have that kind of reaction. The fact that absolutely everyone did, even his newfound friend, Jiang Chen found to be a little depressing.

Lin Zhirong stared at Jiang Chen the same way one would at an abomination. He tried to keep a straight, unsmiling face, punching at Jiang Chen's shoulder playfully. "Don't mess around, man.

You're telling me you finished the pill dao test? It's not the same thing as taking a nap or eating a meal, you know! How could it have been that simple?"

He didn't believe it. Jiang Chen was about the same age as him. A genius with this much life experience did not have enough of a foundation to accomplish something so absurd, no matter how talented he was. That went against common sense itself!

"Alright, look, Brother Shao Yuan. If you were crushed by the pill dao test, that's okay. It's all in the past! It's better to live in the present and be merry. Hey, why not let me treat you to a drink?"

The color on Jiang Chen's face was getting worse and worse. Lin Zhirong tried to console his new friend, his words and expression both as soothing as could be.

Jiang Chen had no words left. The world was a strange place. He had told anyone who asked the truth, and only the truth. Yet, no one had taken him seriously.

"All of the participating candidates, please refrain from leaving the Temple of Cleansing Fire. You may rest for a few moments outside, but do not go too far. In four hours, we will reveal the results, and the selected ones' identification numbers will be posted in the most prominent place here."

Ignoring Lin Zhirong's mutterings, Jiang Chen strode straight out of the Temple. He had been extremely busy for the entire three days past. He needed a break for sure. Outside the complex, he noticed that the adjacent square was filled with tens of thousands of people. People darted to and fro, and the atmosphere was tangibly aflame.

Clearly, everyone here knew that this was the day the nine arena lords would be announced for the Bounty Arena. They were waiting for the new lords to make their first public appearance and for a first look. Those who were interested in becoming assistants were especially keen in attending today.

Scanning the crowd, Jiang Chen found Lin Yanyu hidden within. Their eyes met for the briefest of moments, then simultaneously looked away. There was no greeting exchanged, and indeed no need for it. Seeing how relaxed his master was allowed Lin Yanyu to relax himself. It seems that master is doing very well. Obtaining an arena lord's spot should be no problem for him.

He was as excited as anyone else present. He had awaited here for three days solely for the moment of the big reveal.

Within the Temple of Cleansing Fire, all of the scrolls from the three areas had been gathered.

"Weren't a lot of people planning on doing multiple sets of questions? How come there's no sight of them, hmm?" one of the judges from the martial dao zone said.

"Now that you mention it, there was one person like that." Wang Xuetong replied with a wry smile. "We at the general zone received him, actually."

"Oh? Did he go there from the pill dao zone? There was no one from the martial dao zone that left early," the first judge said.

Pill King Blue Phoenix, of the pill dao zone, harrumphed coldly. "That flighty youngster only came for the attention. He made a lot of noise, but I doubt he has anything to show for it. How can you call that challenging multiple subjects? In my opinion, he was challenging his own ability to make multiple messes of things."

Everyone laughed at that. Pill King Blue Phoenix's temperament was widely known, and he was not blamed for it.

Emperor Peerless, of the martial dao zone, was the only one to become serious at the pill king's words. "Pill King Blue Phoenix, was there really someone who came out from the pill dao zone that wanted to challenge another subject? Who was it, may I ask?"

"You'll hardly know a good-for-nothing like him, emperor. I hesitate to defile my lips by mentioning him." The pill king was

evidently incensed.

The emperor chuckled. “It is natural for young people to do ridiculous things in their youthful audacity. If all of them followed rules and sense all the time, there would be no fun left in the world. I took a look before, and only two youths signed up this time, is that right? Do you mean the young man that looks his age, or the one that doesn’t?”

Emperor Peerless had a keen eye characteristic of many masterful seniors. A single sweep was enough for him to roughly discern what each candidate was like. The emperor had known that both Jiang Chen and Lin Zhirong were youngsters as soon as he set eyes on them. Lin Zhirong’s disguise into a middle-aged lecher hadn’t escaped the emperor’s eyes.

Pill King Blue Phoenix shook his head in silence. The formation master, on the other hand, chuckled. “The kid that disguised himself as a middle-aged man has been in the general zone all this time. Our pill king is talking about the other youth.”

“Interesting, interesting.” Emperor Peerless inclined his head slightly, the corners of his mouth slightly curving. He made no further comments, instead waving his hand. “Let’s keep at it with the marking, everyone.”

The emperor’s appearance under these circumstances lent him a degree of legitimacy and face, even to the personnel of the Temple. Thus, no one thought it inappropriate for him to utter such a command. Accordingly, the rest of the judges began to mark the scrolls once more. A short while after, a bewildered shout was heard from the general zone.

Master Wang Xuetong was its source. All eyes focused on the formation master as if by prior agreement. They were curious about what could have evoked such a noise from him.

Wang Xuetong’s expression was as odd as could be. “How is this possible?! How?!” He cried out. It was as if he’d just seen the most

improbable thing in the world.

“What’s not possible, Master Wang? What do you see?”

“Yes, is there a problem with the scroll? Or has a marvelous answer appeared?”

Wang Xuetong’s facial muscles shivered a little. He couldn’t resist slamming his palm against the desk. “A genius, a true genius… all thirty questions, flawlessly complete. This is the general zone test!”

There was an immediate uproar at his words.

Chapter 1047: Stunned

If it was the martial dao or the pill dao zone, then the possibility that someone might be able to answer all of the questions wasn't entirely out of the question. But the general zone? Formation master Wang Xuetong couldn't possibly be joking, could he? Everyone knew that the questions of the general zone comprised of all kinds of smaller studies and trades. The questions in there were so random that even the most learned person couldn't possibly master all of them. Therefore, anyone who could answer all twenty questions in the general zone was already an absolute all-rounder genius. But... wasn't that... impossible?

"Stop joking around, Master Wang."

"Yeah, you're not trying to tease us because we're too quiet, are you Master Wang?"

Wang Xuetong smiled wryly. "I wish, but... this is the truth. Emperor Peerless, come take a look and confirm as well?"

Emperor Peerless landed next to Wang Xuetong with a shift of his body and took the scroll. His eyes moved rapidly as he reviewed it. It took only a moment before some measure of seriousness entered his eyes. When he was finished, the seriousness had turned into admiration.

"It's true, it really is true!" Emperor Peerless had travelled across the world and gained much knowledge and experience in the process. He'd seen all sorts of geniuses in his time. However, this was the first time he encountered something so bizarre.

And then, something even stranger happened. A new exclamation resounded from the pill dao zone. It was even louder than Wang Xuetong's.

What now? Why were the judges at the pill dao zone flustered as well? Did someone score full marks there too?

“We have a perfect scroll too! Hahaha, this is brilliant! Pill King Blue Phoenix, come over here and take a look. This scroll is flawless!” The judge jumped out of his seat impatiently before passing the scroll to Pill King Blue Phoenix. It seemed like he’d discovered a new continent from the shock and joy on his face.

Pill King Blue Phoenix was a level-headed one, so he accepted the scroll calmly. However, it didn’t take long before his eyebrows rose, he lost his cool and sprang up from his seat. “Genius, an absolute genius. Quick, find out who this person is! They are an absolute genius! The organization of these answers and the depth of knowledge this participant displays is so impressive that it is literally perfection incarnate!”

Those beside him couldn’t help but shoot him a reminder. “We haven’t finished reviewing the rest of the scrolls yet, so we can’t unseal the numbers and check who he is.”

But Pill King Blue Phoenix was already shaking with excitement. “Then what are we waiting for? Hurry up and review the rest of the scrolls. I have no doubt that this one stands at the top of the rankings. In fact, I dare say that the participant who answered this is a top rate genius and the indisputable leader of the pill dao zone. An arena lord seat for the pill dao zone is theirs already!”

Wang Xuetong echoed his sentiment as well. “You’re right, a scroll like this deserves nothing but the top. I never thought that we’d accidentally discover such an amazing genius in this year’s Bounty Arena!”

He couldn’t help but look at Assistant Temple Master Gao of the Temple of Cleansing Fire. The assistant temple master smiled wryly. “You’re not thinking that the Temple of Cleansing Fire is helping a participant to cheat, are you? If that’s the case then allow me to say, there are absolutely no tricks going on in the selection. I swear this on the fortunes of the Temple of Cleansing Fire.”

To be frank, the idea had crossed both Pill King Blue Phoenix and

Wang Xuetong's minds. For that instant, they did wonder if the Temple had given out answer keys beforehand in order to promote a certain participant. How could such incredible answer scrolls be explained, otherwise? Anyone who could answer seventy to eighty percent of the questions correctly was amazing enough, but a perfect score? That didn't seem possible at all.

Even the two themselves dare not say that they could answer all of the questions perfectly.

But the supposedly impossible had happened regardless. Moreover, the Temple of Cleansing Fire had sworn on their sect's fortunes that they hadn't helped anyone unscrupulously. So not only were the owners of these two scrolls true geniuses, but more than one genius had appeared.

Everyone had high hopes for the results of the martial dao zone because of these perfect scores. Sadly, no such results appeared. The unexpected 'stimulation' still prompted the judges to review the scrolls a lot faster than normal. Everyone wanted to finish quickly and reveal who the two heaven-defying geniuses were.

Two hours later, the judges had reviewed every scroll. The results had also been ranked and were ready to be announced. The top three participants of the martial dao zone shared almost the exact same results.

As expected, the perfect scroll was first place in the pill dao zone. Although the second and third place participant's scores were far behind the champion's, they were also far ahead of the fourth place participant. Just the same, the perfect scroll in the general zone was even further ahead of second and third place. The gap was so enormous that they were nearly incomparable. This difference was the greatest out of all the zones.

After the rankings were made, the seals on the participant numbers were broken. Everyone wanted to know who were the two geniuses, so they matched the number to the name

immediately.

Stunned amazement descended once more. The numbers on the two scrolls were exactly the same! This meant that the two scrolls... came from the same person.

The group felt that they had seen a ghost. How could this be? Inspiration flashed across someone's mind. He cried out, "Only those who challenged both zones can have two scrolls!"

His words broke them out of their confusion.

"Yeah, that's the only explanation why the same number has appeared on two different scrolls!"

"Tsk tsk, unbelievable, truly unbelievable. They both came from the same person? How... how is this possible?"

"Am I dreaming? Did this candidate seriously finish two exams in three days and take the first place in both zones? Are... are they trying to defy logic or something?"

"Just who is this person?" Everyone's gaze suddenly turned a little odd. When they looked at Pill King Blue Phoenix once more, they noticed that a look of deep embarrassment had colored his expression.

Who was it?

It was the 'good-for-nothing' Pill King Blue Phoenix criticized heavily earlier. It was the fellow that the pill king couldn't be bothered to speak of. But he was wrong. This was no fop out to cause trouble. This was a true genius who'd challenged two zones at once and taken first place. Pill King Blue Phoenix was completely stunned by this turn of events. He muttered, "Blind, I was blind, I was so blind. I can't believe I had mistaken a genius like him as a dandy. I am so ashamed. These eyes of mine have truly gotten old!"

He was a little close minded and fiery tempered, but he wasn't completely without his merits. One of them was that he always

admitted his mistakes. He never tried to disguise his faults, and he always strove to fix them. When he learned of his mistake, he openly admitted his faults without trying to explain or defend himself at all.

Everyone was impressed by his bearing. They were worried that the pill king would be biased towards that young man in order to save face. That was why no one had expressed much surprise or wear their heart on their sleeves. The group cheered after he openly admitted his mistake. Pill King Blue Phoenix's actions meant that they didn't need to worry about his feelings, and that they were free to be happy about this unprecedented genius.

Wang Xuetong was a great formation master, but right now he had tossed all the airs of a master to the back of his mind. He paced in excited circles, "I can't wait any longer. This is a genius you cannot miss. It seems that participating in this time's Bounty Arena was a wise decision!"

Pill King Blue Phoenix nodded repeatedly. He had completely forgotten how terribly he treated that young man earlier.

Emperor Peerless was the only person who maintained his bearing of a great emperor. He chuckled. "It is unfortunate that this boy didn't participate in the martial dao zone. Still, the fact that he took two arena lord seats by himself is proof of his amazing talents. I must say that Pillfire City's foundation is truly enviable."

Even Emperor Peerless had voiced his approval enviously. It delighted the Temple of Cleansing Fire even further. This was undoubtedly great news as the accidental discovery of such an amazing genius was a momentous achievement.

Assistant Temple Master Gao grinned from ear to ear. "I need to report this news to the temple master."

He was just an assistant temple master, but also in charge of all matters, big and small, in the Temple. There was indeed a temple master, but he hadn't dabbled in worldly affairs since several

hundred years ago.

“Assistant Temple Master Gao, I think we should announce the rankings first.” Pill King Blue Phoenix suggested.

Wang Xuetong also nodded. “Yes, the winners of the selection are the crowd’s biggest concern right now. I don’t think we should make them wait.”

The assistant temple master turned to look at Emperor Peerless. The emperor also nodded. “Let’s post the ranking first.”

His words carried more weight than the other two experts. Thus reassured, the assistant temple master agreed. “In that case, let us announce the ranking first.”

The assistant temple master led at the front of the group. The experts needed to be present as well. They needed to let the people know that the selection was completely fair, and that no tricks whatsoever were involved.

The entrance to the Temple of Cleansing Fire was quite jam packed. Crowds had nearly filled the public square in front of the entrance as well. A great mass of people filled any empty space from the temple courtyard to Skyfire Avenue. Feverish sentiment filled the air.

The assistant temple master appeared first, followed by the three experts. The hub bub outside the Temple instantly instantly subsided at this. The rankings in the assistant temple master’s hands seemed to have a magical power of instantly silencing everyone. They all stared passionately at the precious pieces of paper.

Assistant Temple Master Gao met gazes with his own steady one before announcing, “The wait has been long. The listing of arena lords has been decided. We have three ranking lists here, each one representing a single zone. All participants will be able to check their rankings. There are a total of nine seats, and a total of eight

had the fortune to be chosen as arena lords. There is a special mark at the topmost of the ranking. You'll know it when you see it."

He made a sweeping motion and the three lists flew into the air to plaster themselves on the walls of the Temple of Cleansing Fire.

Chapter 1048: I Come From Myriad Abyss Island

There were nine arena lord seats, yet only eight people were selected? Many immediately caught on that something was up. There was something else at play here. The quicker ones immediately realized that someone had earned two arena lord seats. It wasn't unprecedented for one person to earn two arena lord seats, but it was a once in a century occurrence. However, there was only numbers and not a single name on the ranking list. Other than the officials, nobody knew for sure who these numbers represented.

Assistant Temple Master Gao smiled. "Alright, those with their number on the list, please step forward and let everyone see you."

Many who joined the Bounty Arena tryouts were from incredible backgrounds. Those who'd triumphed stepped out from the crowd and walked on stage after hearing the announcement. Basking in the attention of a crowd of millions was a very enjoyable feeling. They didn't hesitate at all. However, Jiang Chen wasn't fully engrossed in the moment of glory. He was more concerned about the Bounty Arena. Many gazes set upon him when he stepped out.

Pill King Blue Phoenix's gaze was practically glued to him. Wang Xuetong also seemed incredibly moved. He stared at Jiang Chen as though he was staring at his first love.

Jiang Chen had gotten used to the limelight. After all, he was an incredibly prominent figure and idol in Veluriyam Capital. He stepped on the stage and greeted their complicated gazes with a faint smile. It was his way of showing courtesy.

Assistant Temple Master Gao could immediately tell that the young man before him was the genius who had earned two arena lord seats. He very much admired geniuses like like the young man.

“Congratulations, young man.” He greeted Jiang Chen warmly.

The other arena lords were a little surprised by how cordial the assistant temple master was being. Some even felt quite bitter over the actions. They were all arena lords of equal stature. Why was the assistant temple master being friendly to only the young man? However, something even more surprising soon followed.

Emperor Peerless walked up to Jiang Chen without hiding his admiration. "Such a multi-talented genius that is neither servile nor overbearing. What a rare temperament. Very rare indeed!”

Who was Emperor Peerless? He’d seen more geniuses than there was stars in the sky. Some like to put on mysterious airs, others faked politeness, while yet others trembled in their boots. Those as collected as the young man before him could be counted on a single hand. Moreover, this young man wasn’t faking anything. His aura emanated from his body naturally.

The other arena lords became even more depressed after Emperor Peerless approached the young man. Why was everyone putting so much attention to him? Was it because of his age?

No ordinary person could ever stand out among millions and obtain a seat as a arena lord. They had their own pride and dignity. They felt a little upset when Emperor Peerless and the assistant temple master sing the young man’s praises. They were treated quite well, but nowhere close to as good as the young man.

What happened next shocked them even further. Pill King Blue Phoenix approached the young man and actually bowed to him!

“Young man, I apologize for my attitude from before. This old man must’ve been blind for failing to recognize such a great talent!” His expression was very sincere.

Jiang Chen had realized that the pill king harbored some misunderstandings, but he never thought that the latter would suddenly apologize in the open. “Pill King Blue Phoenix, you speak

too strongly. This young junior didn't explain things clearly as I was rushing to the general zone. It is I that should apologize," he quickly responded.

The senior executives of the Temple of Cleansing Fire nodded approvingly at Jiang Chen. A young man of his temperament was truly a rare breed. The common youth would likely be over the moon right now if they'd gotten an arena lord seat by luck. They would never maintain their calm.

Jiang Chen however, didn't seem the least bit excited. Everything almost seemed like a matter of course. He didn't blindly accept the pill king's apology or mock him like most youths would in this situation. Instead, he had resolved the situation in a way that was most acceptable to the pill king. One couldn't help but praise the young man for his excellent conduct.

The assistant temple master noticed the odd expressions on the other arena lord's faces. He immediately laughed and introduced Jiang Chen. "I forgot to mention, this is a young man who stepped across two zones and earned himself two arena lord seats. By the way, how can we address you?"

"This junior is named Shao Yuan."

"Shao Yuan?" The assistant temple master furrowed his brows a little. "I'm sorry for any offense, but may I ask where you're from? I don't seem to remember that we have such an incredible youth in Pillfire City?"

Jiang Chen had prepared an appropriate response as he'd anticipated this scenario. He didn't speak in vague terms after the assistant temple master had raised his question. Instead, he responded with a faint smile. "This junior is not from Pillfire City. I'm from Myriad Abyss Island."

"What?" The assistant temple master was incredibly shaken by the response. A myriad of expressions flitted across his face. The senior executives of the temple were also taken by surprise. They

stared at Jiang Chen, mouth wide agape, as though a monster was before them.

Emperor Peerless was also incredibly surprised. “Myriad Abyss Island?”

Pill King Blue Phoenix and Master Wang Xuetong wasn’t immune to the shock either. They fixed their gaze on Jiang Chen to try and figure out what game the youth was trying to play.

“You’re from Myriad Abyss Island?” The assistant temple master couldn’t resist asking.

Jiang Chen nodded without giving any explanations. If he explained himself too much, it might seem like he was trying to cover up a lie. The factions in the Upper Eight Regions weren’t familiar with Myriad Abyss Island anyway. It was just a myth to them. He was free to conjure any story he wished. With his background, he’d have no problem impersonating someone from the heavenly planes, let alone Myriad Abyss Island.

The assistant temple master was at a loss for words. He immediately turned towards Emperor Peerless to see what the all-knowing emperor thought of this situation. The emperor let out a big sigh. “The Myriad Abyss Island is from the story of legends. I heard that there’s place called Eternal Divine Kingdom where countless great emperor realm experts reside. Is the legend really true?”

The assistant temple master suddenly realized that this was no place to discuss such things. He immediately guided them inside with a gesture. “Let us talk inside.”

Emperor Peerless nodded. This was definitely not a topic to be spoken about in the open. Fortunately, the crowd had made too much of a commotion to hear their conversation.

The assistant temple master immediately announced. “Everyone keep your calm. The eight arena lords have already been chosen.

They will pick their assistants in two hours. Everyone, please remain patient."

Jiang Chen had disrupted the flow of the event with just a single sentence. The assistant temple master had no choice but to postpone the following events by two hours.

"Brother Shao, please enter."

Jiang Chen smiled and responded with a gesture. "After you, Assistant Temple Master Gao and seniors."

Emperor Peerless laughed admiringly at Jiang Chen's excellent manners. He approached him and patted him in the shoulder. "Let's go! We shall enter together!"

He wasn't hiding his admiration for Jiang Chen at all. The other arena lords were incredibly envious. Some of these arena lords hadn't even heard about Myriad Abyss Island before. However, they could deduce that it was an incredibly amazing place after hearing what Emperor Peerless had said. Was the Myriad Abyss Island real? Did that brat really come from that legendary place? Surely this was a scam!

Truth be told, everyone, including the Temple of Cleansing Fire, was rather doubtful of Jiang Chen's words. However, they would rather err on the side of believing it was real than the other way round. The senior executives, three seniors, and the eight arena lords convened within a secret chamber within the Temple of Cleansing Fire.

The assistant temple master looked towards the other seven arena lords and warned them with a sinister voice. "Dear honored guests, whatever you hear today shall forever remain within this room. You shall never leak anything to the outside world in any manner or form. Doing otherwise will make you an enemy of the Temple."

The seven arena lords immediately understood the weight of the

situation after seeing how serious the assistant temple master was being. Someone immediately expressed their trustworthiness.

“I need you to swear upon your inner demons.” the assistant temple master spoke firmly.

“This is no small matter. This old man shall be the first to show my sincerity. I swear upon my inner demons that I shan’t tell anyone of this matter except to my dao partner.” Emperor Peerless immediately swore his vow.

The emperor was incredibly devoted to this dao partner. It was only natural that he wouldn’t hide any secrets from her. Pill King Blue Phoenix quickly followed. “I swear upon my inner demons that I shan’t tell anyone of the matters spoken here today.”

There was no way Wang Xuetong could back away now that the others had already made vows. He followed suit and swore to his inner demons.

The seven arena lords realized that it was no longer avoidable after seeing the three great seniors swear their vows. There wasn’t much reason for them to be hesitant. After all, they weren’t about to do something that went against their conscience. They were only asked to keep a secret. The people from the Temple of Cleansing Fire wasn’t exempted from the vows either.

The assistant temple master turned towards Jiang Chen after everyone had sworn upon their inner demons. “Brother Shao Yuan, you’ve already seen everyone’s sincerity. Now, there’s only one question left. Are you really from Myriad Abyss Island? Is there really such a place in the Divine Abyss Continent?”

Jiang Chen was only using the Myriad Abyss Island’s name as a deterrence. He never thought that they’d take it so seriously. However, he was actually certain that the Myriad Abyss Island was real. Huang’er was the living proof.

Chapter 1049: Attention from Emperor Peerless

The legend of Myriad Abyss Island was a weighty subject. The seriousness of those present made Jiang Chen appreciate its impact all the more.

Emperor Peerless stared at him with some difficulty. “Don’t worry, young man. Tell us all that you know. If you’ve made everything up, please make it plain to us. I will intervene on your behalf so that nothing bad befalls you. But if you do speak the truth, then speak on.”

The emperor spoke with a very genuine tone. Jiang Chen had no doubt of the old man’s candid character. A single look into his eyes told Jiang Chen that.

“Emperor Peerless, Assistant Temple Master Gao. I’m sure men of your stature know whether Myriad Abyss Island exists or not. However, let my words be affirmation to your suspicions: it does indeed exist. It might as well not, though, for most of the world trying to get there.”

There was no insincerity in Jiang Chen’s words.

Emperor Peerless gazed at Jiang Chen for another long while before nodding. “As I thought,” he sighed, “There is somewhere like Myriad Abyss Island within the Divine Abyss Continent. All is as it should be… indeed.”

Pill King Blue Phoenix and Wang Xuetong exchanged looks, anticipation unmistakable in their eyes.

“I didn’t think that the legends were true. Friend Shao, stories say that those upon the island cannot leave it and enter the mortal realms, but you…”

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. “At the end of the day, stories are just that: stories. Not everything about them is accurate. Though the

Myriad Abyss Island has such an unspoken law, hardly everyone strictly upholds it. In fact, many experts from the island have come to these worldly realms over the past years. Not just the human domain, either, but that of the other races as well. That the local factions didn't detect their presence is hardly any fault of theirs."

"Mythical beings tend to keep themselves well-hidden. That's unsurprising." Emperor Peerless let out another sigh. "The occasional inexplicable events that occur in the human domain... they must have been the hand of hidden masters. I hear that Sacred Peafowl Mountain has appointed a new young lord lately, one with unfathomable knowledge. He apparently received tutelage from an expert not of this world when he was young. Apparently the expert is stronger than even great emperor! Who else could this expert be, if not from Myriad Abyss Island?"

The mention of Veluriyam Capital turned the atmosphere slightly sour. It was common knowledge that the city was Pillfire City's number one enemy. No resident of the latter could bear the former any goodwill. However, Emperor Peerless wasn't someone from that category. He had no horse in the race. He'd only said what he did to make a point.

The particular turn of phrase, however, almost made Jiang Chen's heart jump out of his chest.

If not for the fact that the emperor's expression did not change one bit as he said it, Jiang Chen was almost suspicious enough to think that the old man had found him out. But it seemed that he'd been too worried.

"Sacred Peafowl Mountain's young lord Zhen has a lot of wind in his sails over at Veluriyam," Assistant Temple Master Gao said coolly. "However, as long as the matter of the city's heritage isn't settled, there'll be plenty of internal strife for them to deal with sooner or later. So what if young lord Zhen had some mythical master teach him while he was young? I don't think it'll save him from being embroiled in all that trouble."

The assistant temple master definitely had a grudge against the young lord in question. There was definitely no love lost there.

Pill King Blue Phoenix and Wang Xuetong did not air their thoughts on the subject. They maintained stoic and thoughtful expressions.

“I’m curious,” Emperor Peerless smiled faintly. “How strong are Myriad Abyss Island’s cultivators, really? Can just a few years of tutelage result in a genius that soars above all the Upper Eight Regions’ peers?”

All eyes fell on Jiang Chen. They wanted an answer from him. Thankfully, the young lord had some information prepared from Huang’er in advance. His reply was measured and unhurried. “The Myriad Abyss Island is very large. The Eternal Divine Kingdom has no borders. Yes, it is called an island, but it’s actually a continent several times larger than the human domain. Only empyrean cultivators can be counted among the truly strong there. Supposedly, the strongest surpass even that realm of cultivation.”

Empyrean? And a realm above that?

These words hammered against the assistant temple master’s breast like a hefty fist. He was only ninth level emperor realm, and not its peak, at that. There was little hope of him ever entering great emperor realm for the rest of his days, much less acquire his own empyrean decree by intuiting the truths of heaven and earth. Above empyrean realm? That was not something he needed ever to think about.

Emperor Peerless believed Jiang Chen’s words implicitly. “As a place of legend, Myriad Abyss Island is undoubtedly ten times superior to the mortal realms. How did it come to be, my young friend?”

“The Island has always existed. In ancient times, Divine Abyss Continent’s native cultivators fought with the demon race. In the aftermath of that struggle, some of those cultivators left that land.

They passed through an endless sea before coming upon Myriad Abyss Island, their newfound haven. There, they settled down and propagated. Ever since long ago, the Island has neither seen the smoke of battle nor heard the drums of war. As such, Myriad Abyss Island is the product of long-standing peace." Jiang Chen had come to these conclusions based on what he knew himself.

Had the Island really come about like this? He didn't know, but his explanation made as much sense as any other. He did refrain from calling the ancient cultivators who'd first gone to the Island a bunch of pacifistic cowards, however. There was no reason someone who originated from there would disparage their ancestors.

To avoid an endless stream of questions, Jiang Chen decided to add something. "I've said all I can about Myriad Abyss Island, everyone. The rest must be left unsaid, I'm afraid."

Those present were smart enough to understand. The young man before them was disinclined to take questions.

"I have but a single question, if I may," Emperor Peerless smiled. "Can cultivators from the human domain get to Myriad Abyss Island?"

"In theory. There is great danger and risk in crossing the endless sea. If you can obtain your very own empyrean decree, then there's no problem. Otherwise, the chance for a great emperor realm cultivator to forcibly cross without dimensional coordinates is less than ten percent."

Huang'er had told Jiang Chen all of this as well. Empyrean cultivators aside, Myriad Abyss Island clearly did not want outsiders to get in. They felt that the mortal realms had been polluted in the ancient battle against the demon race. Accordingly, the bloodlines of said realms were no longer pure. How could an island that touted themselves as a sacred land of divines allow impurities into their midst? Despite that... empyrean cultivators

were another matter altogether.

Jiang Chen didn’t care for Myriad Abyss Island’s philosophy. From his point of view, Myriad Abyss Island had initially been populated by a bunch of deserters and wimps. Their descendants could be no better, nor could the place where they lived and gathered.

Assistant Temple Master Gao had a bellyful of questions of his own, but Jiang Chen’s stern attitude made him think twice. He was unlikely to get answers to any of them even if he did press further. Suppressing his curiosity, he said, “Young master Shao, we at the Temple of Cleansing Fire are blessed with your presence. You are from Myriad Abyss Island, yet you’ve graced us with your participation in the Bounty Arena. I fully expect you to give us an extraordinary performance.”

He said he was from Myriad Abyss Island, right? We’ll see if his bite is as potent as his bark. Both of Jiang Chen's test scrolls had been superb, but a practical display better showed one's true mettle. To be honest, the assistant temple master distrusted the young man’s origin claims still. That aside, there was every indication that he wasn’t like any genius of the human domain. The human domain had numerous geniuses, but none of his caliber.

Emperor Peerless roared with laughter. “Hard to imagine that I’d get the opportunity to participate in the Bounty Arena with a Myriad Abyss Island genius! This has been absolutely worth my while.”

Even without Jiang Chen saying he was from the Island, the emperor’s attitude towards him had been one of carefree appreciation.

Praise did not cause Jiang Chen to lose himself. “I am simply a youngster like any other,” he said humbly. “There is no need to give me undue praise, Senior Peerless.”

“Haha, I don’t think it’s at all undue. No, no. How could any praise be so for a genius from Myriad Abyss Island? Come on, let’s go pick some assistants.”

The emperor’s authority here was sovereign. Truthfully, Assistant Temple Master Gao lacked the face to request his presence. The reason he had decided to come for the Bounty Arena was twofold. One was to return a favor, but the other was yet unrevealed. There was no way that the assistant temple master could oppose the older man.

The other arena lords were quite envious of the way their younger peer was being treated, but what could they do? Complain?

Jiang Chen had the necessary knowledge and skill. Moreover, he was from Myriad Abyss Island. Either of these two factors meant that the Temple had to give him more than sufficient respect. Not to mention how much Emperor Peerless was applauding the youth...

Occupying the position of a single arena master allowed one to select up to nine assistants. Because Jiang Chen had two, he could pick eighteen. This made him doubly attractive to everyone outside. The instant he left the premises, countless rushed up in an attempt to become his assistant through flattery. Alas, Emperor Peerless’s protection of the young man was reason enough for them to reconsider. They lacked the courage to put their plans into action. The pressure of a great emperor cultivator was truly very intimidating.

“Young man, you cannot afford to be too casual with your choices for assistants. Some are skill-less charlatans who can only work to your detriment. Don’t be afraid of angering people. If you need it, I’ll be here to offer you an additional fear factor. Ignore anyone that you’re not satisfied with, no matter what they say or do.” Emperor Peerless was being excessively kind to Jiang Chen. He instructed and supported the young man in every capacity, the

assistant-picking process included.

Jiang Chen was quite appreciative of the old emperor's patronage. With the emperor backing him up, the swindlers and phonies were loath to approach. It saved him a lot of trouble. The young lord of Veluriyam had very peculiar standards for picking his assistants. His first was that they had to be wandering cultivators. Those who were not were instantly out of the equation.

This rule eliminated most from his pool of consideration.

Emperor Peerless found that a little odd. Because he was a wandering cultivator as well, he wondered whether the young man was doing so out of deference to him? But the young man's actual behavior indicated no such thing.

Chapter 1050: The Bounty Arena Begins

Jiang Chen truly wasn't planning on currying favor with Emperor Peerless. However, he was very interested in the emperor, just like the latter was very interested in him. Jiang Chen didn't rush to recruit his assistants. He was a principled person, and he wished recruit his assistants to his banner as well. That was why he set a very high bar of entry.

His first requirement was that all who wished to become his assistant must be wandering cultivators. Wandering cultivators had no other ties, so they would be easier to recruit than ones supported by various sects and powers. Although most wandering cultivators preferred to be free and had unrestrained personalities, Jiang Chen still preferred to interact with them compared to the cultivators of big powers.

He wasn't worried if some cultivators might fake their abilities in attempt to get in. To begin with, those with true power and influence would never disguise themselves as a wandering cultivator just to be an assistant. They would think the act beneath them. This was just one example of how much more complicated Jiang Chen's assistant selection process was compared to the other arena lords.

Jiang Chen preferred to recruit only the best of the best, so he never lowered his bar even if it made the selection process difficult. He would rather send most away than accept anyone who didn't meet his requirements. Although Emperor Peerless didn't understand why Jiang Chen was being so selective with his assistants, he didn't go back on his promise to protect the lad.

Lin Yanyu used the opportunity to meet up with Jiang Chen and join him as a wandering cultivator. Lin Zhirong hadn't made arena lord, but for some reason he just wouldn't stop pestering Jiang Chen to make him a assistant. In the end, Jiang Chen gave him a slot on the basis of their brief friendship.

Three days later, Jiang Chen had filled only twelve out of the eighteen slots that were allocated to him. He decided to gift the remaining six slots to Emperor Peerless as a favor since he wasn't going to use them anyway. "Senior Peerless, I don't plan to use the six remaining slots I have. If you have any suitable candidates in mind, please use them as you see fit."

Emperor Peerless was a little astonished. A assistant slot was in high demand. There were countless people who couldn't get one even if they wanted to. But this young man had just given him six of them! This generosity alone was worth Emperor Peerless' approval. He found it very hard to dislike a young man like him. However, the emperor wasn't a greedy person. He smiled at Jiang Chen. "In that case, I shall find two more candidates for you. As for the remaining four, why don't you check with Pill King Blue Phoenix and Formation Master Wang Xuetong to see if they have anyone in mind?"

Emperor Peerless knew that Jiang Chen was doing him a favor, but he couldn't possibly accept all six slots from him. He thought that Jiang Chen should share some of them with Pill Master Blue Phoenix and Formation Master Wang Xuetong. This way, he would be doing everyone a favor. Jiang Chen knew that Emperor Peerless was thinking on his behalf, so he immediately nodded. "Of course. You are much more attentive than I am, Senior Peerless."

Pill King Blue Phoenix was a top thirty six quasi-pill emperor within the Pillfire Hall of Fame. Naturally, his network was widespread. Jiang Chen knew that Pill King Blue Phoenix had no problems fulfilling those two slots, and he would be giving the pill king a favor too. The pill king was naturally delighted and admired Jiang Chen even more.

Formation Master Wang Xuetong was of the same opinion. When he heard that Jiang Chen wanted to gift him two assistant slots, he was very pleased and honored by the gift. If two assistant slots was enough for Jiang Chen to gain favor with Formation Master Wang

Xuetong, whyever not?

With the aid of his three seniors, Jiang Chen finally filled the eighteen assistant slots. The Temple of Cleansing Fire was more or less done with their preparations as well when he was done. And so, the Bounty Arena began.

Nine main arenas were aligned around the enormous public square at the Temple of Cleansing Fire's entrance in order of seniority. Emperor Peerless was given the first main arena, followed by Pill King Blue Phoenix and Formation Maser Wang Xuetong. Jiang Chen was given the fourth main arena, second only to the three seniors, because he hailed from Myriad Abyss Island.

The arenas for martial dao, pill dao and the general zone were all different from each other. This made it very easy for those with bounty missions to locate their intended zones. The Bounty Arena lasted for a short fifteen days, therefore, it bustled with activity the moment it started. Not everyone could just walk up to an arena lord and offer their mission however. Every participant was required to draw lots first and see if they obtained the right to post a bounty. If they didn't, they could only wait for the next chance.

The atmosphere livened up in no time. That Jiang Chen took two arena lord seats for himself made him a center of attention of the Bounty Arena. However, there were many people who didn't seek him out because he was too young. The three great seniors were most people's first choice.

The first choice of the martial dao zone was of course Emperor Peerless. The first choice of the pill dao zone was Pill King Blue Zone. Finally, the first choice of the general zone was Formation Master Wang Xuetong. This was only normal. After all, seniority and prestige was important in all domains of study, and these three experts were representatives of the highest authority in their respective domains.

Jiang Chen didn't envy them. He wasn't interested in small

bounties. He found the small bounties that kept landing in his arenas to be utterly beneath his attention. So he allowed his assistants to resolve all of the missions. This was especially true when it came to pill dao. In this regard, Jiang Chen delegated practically all of his work to Lin Yanyu. As a result, Lin Yanyu became the busiest assistant in both arenas. As for Lin Zhirong, Jiang Chen secretly observed him for a moment and discovered that he was surprisingly talented. His had a wide assortment of knowledge and was able to provide some unique opinions no matter what kind of missions he was dealing with.

Most of the people who attended the Bounty Arena were focused on martial dao and pill dao. Although there were plenty of people who visited the general zone, the number of visitors were lesser compared to the other two. The busiest arena was Emperor Peerless' arena.

Although Jiang Chen's arena was slightly far away from the emperor's arena, he could still see that it was filled with people. It was clear that a great emperor held unparalleled attractiveness.

Even Pill King Blue Phoenix and Formation Master Wang Xuetong's arenas weren't nearly as busy as Emperor Peerless'. Jiang Chen suspected that supplicants weren't here to post bounties, but to form ties with the emperor. However, Emperor Peerless was very patient. He didn't lose his temper because of this.

The emperor aside, Pill King Blue Phoenix was probably the second busiest person of the Bounty Arena. However, the pill king seemed intent on helping out Jiang Chen as he kept pushing people to Jiang Chen's side whenever he got a little too busy. He kept introducing people to Jiang Chen's main arena, telling them that Jiang Chen was a young man of extraordinary talent who impressed even him. Thanks to Pill King Blue Phoenix's recommendation, people tentatively visited Jiang Chen's arena in hopes of getting their bounties resolved. That was how Jiang Chen's arenas slowly grew in numbers.

“Arena Lord, I’m not very confident that I can solve this friend’s problem. Can you check this?” Lin Yanyu led a supplicant in front of Jiang Chen.

Lin Yanyu knew that his master found the average bounties to be beneath his attention. That was he did his best to solve all these questions on his own. Even when he really couldn’t answer them, he would turn the question to other pill dao assistants first. This time however, he couldn’t find anyone who could solve this question confidently even though he had checked with every pill dao assistant. This was why he’d finally turned to his master.

Jiang Chen glanced at the bounty. The mission rank was high enough. It was a rank seven bounty with a reward of two million saint spirit stones. It was also the highest rank bounty he had received in both arenas thus far. The mission was about the cultivation of spirit herbs. After a moment of reading, he had a rough idea of how to resolve the mission.

“I can solve this bounty, but your reward isn’t high enough.” The cultivation of a spirit herb involved a great deal of technical knowledge. This was a rank seven bounty worth two million saint spirit stones, but Jiang Chen thought that it should be a rank eight bounty at least. He didn’t think that it was worth solving at the price he was offered.

“Arena Lord Shao, I’m only here because Pill King Blue Phoenix says that you’re a genius, you know. That’s why I gave him face and came here to boost your business.” The poster felt a little disgruntled when he heard that Jiang Chen wanted to up the price of his bounty. His tone and expression was very displeased too.

Jiang Chen smiled calmly. “Pill King Blue Phoenix sent you to me because he trusted me. If you don’t believe that I’m a suitable candidate, you may go to other main arenas and try your luck there. Perhaps one of them is willing to accept a lower price.”

Annoyed, the man retorted angrily, “Then there is nothing else

to say. Even if the butcher is gone, that doesn't mean I can't find pork meat elsewhere."

Jiang Chen watched the angry man leave and didn't urge him to stay.

"Master, can you claim that bounty?" Lin Yanyu thought that it was a pity to let the man go just like this.

Jiang Chen nodded. "His mission isn't a simple one, but his reward doesn't match its difficulty. We are the arena lords of this arena, so we don't need to yield too much to these supplicants and lower our status as a result."

Such were his principles.

In his opinion, the bounty should've been a rank eight, worth five million saint spirit stones at minimum. Does that guy really think that he could get away with just two million saint spirit stones? Jiang Chen didn't feel that his skills came that cheaply. Moreover, he was sure that there were very few people who could resolve that mission. Even if there was, their price would not go lower than five million saint spirit stones.

Lin Yanyu had unwavering faith in his master. Although he thought that it was a great shame to miss out on two million saint spirit stones, he was sure his master had his own reasons for doing so. They didn't lack bounties anyway. There were plenty of people who were still queuing outside and waiting to get in. They didn't lack customers at all.

And how long had it been since the Bounty Arena began? In less than four hours, their two arenas had welcomed at least thirty supplicants. They had accumulated more than ten million saint spirit stones up to this point. At this rate, he was sure their income for the next half a month's time could only be described as handsome...

Chapter 1051: Speed in Earning Money

The bounties in the Bounty Arena were separated into ten ranks.

The bounty for the first rank was 50 thousand saint spirit stones, the second rank was 100 thousand, the third was 200 thousand, and the fourth was 300 thousand. There was a big jump in bounty starting from the fifth rank with 500 thousand saint spirit stones, the sixth was 1 million, the seventh was 2 million, the eighth 5 million, and the ninth 10 million.

The tenth rank was meant for the most supreme of bounties. The diamond of all bounties. They would only appear on the final three days. These bounties were of utmost difficulty and were the penultimate event. The lowest reward for a rank ten bounty was 30 million saint spirit stones, but it was only the starting price. The sky was the limit for a bounty of this rank. It was also the most sought after and exciting event. The bounties before it were nothing but a warm-up.

To put it in simpler terms, it was to allow the arena lords and assistants to make some money. At the beginning, the arena lords would often refrain from taking on bounties out of respect for their status. When the assistants completed a bounty, half of it would be distributed to the arena lord. They were guaranteed to make money as soon as they made arena lord. They could earn a large sum of bounty even if they chose not to take on any missions.

Becoming an arena lord was no easy feat. It was so difficult that it bordered on impossible. A large sum of money was required as guarantee in tryouts, and they would lose a tenth of it if they failed. It was why many preferred to be assistants. They had to split half of their bounties to the arena lords, but they didn’t have to bear any risks. It was guaranteed profit.

“Yanyu, you should return to your sub arena. The amount of customers in this event has already exceeded our expectations.

Business is surprisingly good." Jiang Chen consoled Lin Yanyu after noticing the dejected look in his eyes. The latter probably felt that it was a waste to lose such a big business. He glanced towards the man who'd just left and saw him walk to another arena.

"Don't bother about him. He'll come back to us in the end." Jiang Chen said confidently.

True enough, the man found that none of the other arena lords could solve his problem after walking around. Many tried to swindle him or ask for a extortionist price. None seemed to know exactly how to solve his problem. He was incredibly depressed. Do I really have to seek his help in the end?

He'd consulted every single arena from the pill dao zone to the general zone. He even went back to Pill King Blue Phoenix's arena. The pill king had taken another look at his bounty and redirected him to Jiang Chen again. He didn't know whether to laugh or to cry. He recalled how furious he'd been when he left Jiang Chen's arena. But in the end, he still found himself at the kid's mercy.

After all, it was a problem that not even the pill king could solve. The pill king recommends that brat's arena even though he was unable to solve the problem? Does this mean that his knowledge is no match for the mysterious, young arena lord? Truth be told, he would never return to Jiang Chen if he could help it.

Unfortunately, that wasn't the case. He reluctantly returned to Jiang Chen's arena.

Jiang Chen didn't respond with mockery or contempt. Instead, he welcomed him with a faint smile. Business was business after all. Jiang Chen wasn't going to resort to flattery or ass-kissing to keep him around.

"Arena Lord Shao, are you certain that you can solve my problem?" Suspicion due to Jiang Chen's age was written all over the man's chubby face.

“My response is still the same. I won’t force you to make the deal if you think that I’m unsuitable for the job.” Jiang Chen couldn’t be bothered to explain himself.

The fat on the man’s cheeks trembled a little. He gritted his teeth as though he’d finally made a decision. “I believe you. Five million saint spirit stones for this rank eight bounty right?”

Fatties were typically quite miserly, and this chubby one was no exception. However, it seemed like he was determined to solve this problem of his once and for all.

Five million saint spirit stones were deposited in the arena. The chubby man clutched the spirit stones tightly with his two hands and growled. “Arena Lord Shao, the Bounty Arena has always had incredible credibility. It’s also why I’ve come all the way here to join the event. If you take my money and fail me, I will not let you off easy, and neither will the Temple of Cleansing Fire!”

Jiang Chen could tell that the chubby man was definitely capable of paying five million saint spirit stones. He was just incredibly stingy. Paying this sum was like asking for his life. Jiang Chen was equally as amused as he was annoyed.

“Friend, just ask your own conscience. How can this bounty be worth a mere two million? Moreover, five million is already a huge bargain. If your attitude gets any worse, I might get angry and increase the price again.” This wasn’t a business he had to accept. His life wouldn’t be even mildly affected if he chose not to take the bounty.

The chubby man panicked after hearing that. “Don’t! Please don’t increase the price! It’d be easier to scavenge the money from my corpse if you did!”

Swish! Swish! Jiang Chen took up his brush and began writing on a piece of paper without saying another word. It didn’t take long before he was done answering the main questions, including the question about the spirit herb, the cultivation method, and the

curing method.

“Just do as I’ve written and your problems should be solved. It takes a lot of technique to mass produce true saint rank spirit herbs. Your technique is fine, there’s just some issues with the details. It’s often the deciding factor for success.”

This bounty wasn’t actually that difficult. The insight of the spirit herbalist was the deciding factor for its difficulty. Those who know, know. Those who don’t, struggle.

The chubby man took the instructions and looked at Jiang Chen blankly. “You really know how to cultivate the Rivercloud Dream Grass?”

“How on earth would I be able to write you an instruction if I didn’t?” Jiang Chen was losing his patience. It was the most idiotic question he’d ever heard.

The chubby man grew more and more surprised. “Are you saying that my inability to cultivate the Rivercloud Dream Grass was all due to the fertilizer and not my technical skills?

Jiang Chen smiled. “Haste doesn’t lead to success. More often than not, spirit fertilizers can hasten the grown of spirit herbs, but sometimes it leads to an opposite effect. Your eagerness for its growth is incompatible with the herb’s nature.”

“Is it really that simple?” The chubby man still found it hard to believe.

Jiang Chen replied blandly. “Why don’t you go home and give it a try? If you really need to apply fertilizer, try applying it only at midnight.

The chubby man seemed to have something to say, but Jiang Chen shooed him away with his hands. “Alright, I’ve already you the instructions. If you have any issues, feel free to complain to the Temple of Cleansing Fire.”

The bounty arena organized by the temple. It was only natural

that they would handle all of the complaints as well.

The chubby man was more or less convinced now. He was just incredibly reluctant to part with five million saint spirit stones. He felt incredibly aggrieved for paying so much money in exchange for a piece of instruction and a few words. However, he didn't dare to cause any trouble as he knew the rules of the arena. He picked up the instruction and left, grumbling all the way.

Lin Yanyu was kept incredibly busy at the sub arena, but he was still able to keep an eye on the main arena. He was elated when he saw the chubby man return to the arena to pay five million saint spirit stones. The amount of foresight his master had was unbelievable!

Master is truly incredible! It would've taken us many hours of labor to make five million! we better work harder to keep up. Lin Yanyu didn't remain remain idle. He had many bounties to claim as well. He was the first in line at the Jiang Chen's sub arena, and was the first person everyone sought. Customers would only be sent down the line if he was busy. Thus, he was practically never without a customer.

By the end of the day, Jiang Chen had only completed two bounties. One was rank eight, and the other rank seven. However, it was a bountiful day for the assistants beneath him. They were swamped with bounties, and made a total sum of sixty million on the first day.

As the arena lord, Jiang Chen would receive half of it. He made roughly forty million on the first day if the two bounties he'd completed was added to the count. Forty million wasn't exactly a large sum to him, but it was incredibly easy money. So much so that he was still in disbelief over how much he made in so little time. Moreover, this was only the first day. Everyone knew that the public mostly preferred to observe on the first day. The following days were only going to be busier.

The public would soon scramble to post their bounties because the event only lasted for fifteen days. If one waited for too long, they might have lose their chance to post a bounty. Jiang Chen made sixty million on the second day, and profits broke through the 100 million mark on the third day.

Profits stabilized on the fourth to sixth day. They hovered around the 100 million to 150 million mark. Something interesting finally happened in the arena on the seventh day. Jiang Chen finally received a rank nine bounty.

Emperor Peerless had actually received rank nine bounties on a daily basis. The public had a lot of trust in him due to his reputation. Thus, almost everyone looking to post a high rank martial dao bounty would seek his help. Pill King Blue Phoenix had already received two rank nine bounties, while Master Wang Xuetong had received one.

Jiang Chen only received his first rank nine bounty after seven days. Moreover, it was a bounty that even Master Wang Xuetong was unable resolve. It was a question related to spirit beasts. The one who posted the bounty was a noble youth from a great clan in Pillfire City. These people often had vast wealth, but an incredibly short temper.

Chapter 1052: Unexpected Incident

Jiang Chen glanced at the spirit beast in the noble son's hand. Nothing seemed to be wrong with it. It was keen-eyed, powerful, and brimming with explosive strength.

"Arena Lord Shao, I heard that you did pretty well during the arena lord tryouts, didn't you? Even Formation Master Wang Xuetong has nothing but praises for you. Well, his arena is out of the question. He said that you may be the only one in this entire Bounty Arena who can solve my bounty. I gotta say that I'm pretty confused though. You don't look much older than I am, so how can you possibly win such high praises from old man Wang Xuetong? What kind of benefits did you sneak under the table, or are you actually his bastard son or something?" Noble fops like this guy was disgusting to say the least. He was arrogant, rude, and showed no intention of conducting himself in a socially acceptable manner at all.

Jiang Chen responded indifferently, "You are here to seek medical treatment, aren't you? Or are you just here to talk?"

The dandy laughed. "Can't take a joke, can you? Alright alright, I suppose the mistake is mine. Anyway, can you tell me what's going on with this Cloud Devouring Tiger, man? It looks lively, but something just feels off about it everyday."Jiang Chen smiled disdainfully. "You may leave now."

The good-for-nothing was caught off guard for a second before he demanded unkindly, "What do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing. I just don't welcome a customer like you." Jiang Chen really disliked useless fops like him. Of course, he could see that this fop was highly placed in Pillfire City. He suspected that even Temple of Cleansing Fire had to give face to this noble son's family.

The hedonistic son immediately exploded. "I may be calling you

an arena lord right now, but you are nothing the moment you leave this Bounty Arena, man! Did you seriously think you can go against me in Pillfire City?"

If he had tried to sweet talk Jiang Chen instead, Jiang Chen might have welcomed him. Unfortunately, the way he was acting was the kind of behavior Jiang Chen hated the most.

"Get out!" It was only two words, but Jiang Chen had uttered it in a domineering, thunderous manner that caused this part of the Bounty Arena to freeze for an instant.

Those in charge of maintaining order immediately ran over when they noticed the disturbance. When they saw Jiang Chen and the fop butting heads with each other, they immediately tried to defuse the situation.

Sadly, the fellow was obviously the kind of who found energy from a crowd. He also felt that he'd lost face because a foreigner had spoken roughly to him. Furious, he jabbed his forefinger towards Jiang Chen repeatedly. "Very good, very good! Shao Yuan, is it? I won't forget you!"

The Temple of Cleansing Fire's men hastily walked forwards. "Young master Nangong, please calm down. You're in the Bounty Arena right now."

The fellow was infamous for his good-for-nothing actions in Pillfire City. Not even the Temple of Cleansing Fire's name might deter him when stubbornness got to his head.

"Remain calm, my ass! Who the hell is this guy? How do you choose your arena lords? How can you allow an uncultured and uneducated barbarian like this to slip through and hold two arena lord seats? This crude bastard just acted rudely to me. How do you think this score should be settled, huh?"

The Temple's senior executive hurriedly pacified, "Calm down, young master Nangong, calm down. Please give me face, will you?

Please give Temple of Cleansing Fire face."

"Fuck you! If I give you face, then who's going to give me face?!" Judging from Nangong's expression, he wasn't going to let go the matter rest until retribution was exacted.

More senior executives had poured into the arena while they were arguing. Assistant Temple Master Gao had also rushed over after hearing that a commotion had broken out somewhere in the Bounty Arena."What are you doing, Nephew Nangong?" Assistant Temple Master Gao shared a relationship with Nangong Ping's family. In fact, he was on very good terms with them. That was why Nangong Ping had behaved as atrociously as he did in the first place. He thought that the assistant temple master would support him no matter what happened."Uncle Gao, where does this country bumpkin come from? He has quite the temper even though he has no skill at all. Would you believe that he talked shit in front of your nephew? Tell me, when have I, Nangong Ping, ever suffered such disrespect? Get out, you say? There really aren't many people in the entire Pillfire City who dare say that to me! Who the hell do you think you are?!"

Nangong Ping definitely enjoyed being in the limelight alright. When he saw Assistant Temple Master Gao, he grew even more insufferable as he fired off another round of insults at Jiang Chen. He looked like he could pick a fight at any moment.

Jiang Chen raised his eyebrows, but surprisingly kept quiet for some reason. He glanced calmly at the assistant temple master. He wanted to know how Temple of Cleansing Fire would react in a situation like this.

Assistant Temple Master Gao smiled awkwardly. "Dear nephew, let us speak about this in private, shall we? The Bounty Arena is a grand event celebrated by all in Pillfire City. Your father would be unhappy if he learns that you're making a scene here. Why don't we discuss this in private?"

“Uncle Gao,” said Nangong Ping with a dark face when he heard this. “What do you mean by that? Are you seriously taking the side of an outsider? He humiliated me, and you’re going to pretend that you saw nothing? Is that it?!”

It wasn’t that Assistant Temple Master Gao was biased towards Jiang Chen, but that his hands were tied. Jiang Chen was an arena lord that the Temple had selected and a genius who’d taken two seats of his own accord. Besides, the assistant temple master was also rather cautious of Jiang Chen’s identity as a supposed denizen of Myriad Abyss Island. That was why he couldn’t take any actions against Jiang Chen no matter what. If he did, every arena lord in this Bounty Arena would be extremely disappointed with him.

This was especially true considering the whispers springing up around them. It was obvious that Nangong Ping was the one who’d acted rudely and talked shit from the start. Assistant Temple Master Gao knew Nangong Ping very well. He knew that the lad was not a good person, so he had even less reason to spout literal nonsense in the boy’s defense.

“Dearest nephew, give your Uncle Gao face this time, alright? I’ll give you a proper explanation once we get back home. Every minute in the Bounty Arena is precious, so if you keep this up…”

Furious, Nangong Ping’s temper reared its ugly head in full. “Well, well, Assistant Temple Master Gao! I’ve finally seen through your mask! You may call my father your brother, but it was all just a lie. Very well, if you won’t do me justice then I won’t treat you as my senior too. Today, I will teach this bastard the price of offending I, Nangong Ping!”

Jiang Chen smiled calmly. “Nangong Ping, is it? Look at how impressive you are! I don’t know who your father is in Pillfire City, but I really can’t help but feel sorry for him. I believe that a friend of Assistant Temple Master Gao is a good man as any, but how did he come to raise a bastard like you?”

Even Assistant Temple Master Gao agreed with Jiang Chen for an instant. It was true that he shared a great relationship with Nangong Ping's father, but business was business. Considering how stupid and unreasonable Nangong Ping was acting right now, he would've thrown out of the Bounty Arena already if not for his father. The assistant temple master wouldn't even be wasting breath on him.

So what if he was a great clan descendant? The Temple of Cleansing Fire only answered to a great emperor faction of Pillfire City, and everyone else was at best their equal. Normally, people answered to the Temple and not the other way around.

Nangong Ping was a dandy, presumptuous and arrogant. He seemed to believe he had the right to behave atrociously even in front of Assistant Temple Master Gao. What he didn't realize was that he had angered the assistant temple master.

Nangong Ping was obviously at fault in this matter, but he was still making a fuss using this incident as a pretext. From the assistant temple master's point of view, Nangong Ping's actions were no different from sabotage!

"Did you hear that, Assistant Temple Master Gao? That bastard humiliated both me and my father! You are the assistant temple master and my father's brother, aren't you? Are you really going to sit by and do nothing about this?" Nangong Ping started interrogating the assistant temple master instead! The latter's face turned cold. "Nangong Ping, this is my last advice to you as your father's friend. I will forget everything that had happened today if you leave right now."

Nangong Ping had never been threatened in his life. Humiliation turned into anger. "Oh, there's no way I'm leaving, if only to see how a mere outsider plans to take a shit on a Pillfire City noble son's head! I don't care if you're a tiger or a dragon, you're going down one way or another, brat! This is Pillfire City!"

Jiang Chen was just about to say something when a blur entered his vision. In the next moment, Nangong Ping was lifted into the air by a big hand.

Everyone exclaimed in surprise when they found Nangong Ping held up in the air by another person. It was none other than Emperor Peerless.

Emperor Peerless frowned slightly as if he wasn't holding a person but a bag of trash. "What are you doing, Assistant Temple Master Gao? You should just throw him right out the door and be done with it. Why even waste your breath with trash like him? Or are you planning to end this Bounty Arena prematurely?"

Assistant Temple Master Gao had no choice but to smile apologetically since it was Emperor Peerless. "His father is a friend of mine. I have to give his father face even if I don't care for his."

"You may know his father, but I don't." With that, the emperor strode straight out of the perimeter and tossed Nangong Ping into the air like he was throwing a ragged doll. The prodigal noble son flew at least a couple hundred meters before he landed on the ground.

"Boy, I don't care who your family is in Pillfire City. If you're going to cause trouble in the Bounty Arena, then you better bring everyone in the family along and pray that they're important enough to stand my wrath!" Emperor Peerless was truly peerless.

Thunderous applause and exclamations of admiration surrounded him. In the end, it was the great emperor who'd tossed the trash straight out of the Bounty Arena without wasting a moment of breath. It was soothing to say the least! Even Jiang Chen felt deep veneration towards Emperor Peerless. Now this was someone who'd won the people's respect.

Pill King Blue Phoenix shook his head wryly when he saw this outcome. Nangong Ping was an infamous good-for-nothing in Pillfire City, so of course he had heard about hithe boy. Formation

Master Wang Xuetong felt no goodwill towards Nangong Ping either. That boy had no idea how to conduct himself before others, nor did he know to respect his seniors either. Worse, Nangong Ping had called Arena Lord Shao Yuan his bastard!Many knew of what'd happened, so no one blamed Jiang Chen for his actions. Nangong Ping was the one who made a scene from the beginning to the end.

Emperor Peerless clapped his hand carelessly. "Alright, let us continue." He glanced at Jiang Chen. "Don't worry. I've given my word to protect you, and that shall be the case for as long as you are in Pillfire City."

Emperor Peerless' tone wasn't flattering. He was simply stating this in the way a senior would to a junior. It left a deep impression on Jiang Chen.

Chapter 1053: One Issue After Another

The issue was settled cleanly thanks to Emperor Peerless. The Temple of Cleansing Fire had been a little too wishy-washy in their handling of this matter. This caused the emperor to temporarily explode with popularity. Jiang Chen's impression of Emperor Peerless was even better than before. He could tell that the emperor was a straightforward person who truly knew how to carry his seniority in front of others.

When the emperor had seen how indecisive and wishy-washy the Temple was being, he immediately stepped in and tossed that young good-for-nothing out without wasting a single breath. His domineering yet effective way of handling the matter left a good impression in others.

"I'm grateful for your help, Senior Peerless." Jiang Chen thanked the emperor with proper manners.

"Even If I hadn't stepped in, that good-for-nothing will still surely suffer in your hands. However, it's better to let me be the bad guy." Emperor Peerless had very keen eyes and could tell that Nangong Ping was nothing to the youth before him. He knew that the youth wasn't from Pillfire City and there would be strong backlash if he'd even touched a hair on Nangong Ping. Thus, he decided to step in and be the bad guy instead. After all, Nangong Ping and his clan were nothing but ants to him. Even great emperor factions were unwilling to antagonize a wandering great emperor like him, let alone Nangong Ping's clan.

"Carry on your activities in peace. You have nothing to worry about as long as I'm here." He exuded the assertiveness of the strong. His every word and action incited a great amount of confidence in others.

Pill King Blue Phoenix cast a meaningful glance at Jiang Chen without saying anything. There also seemed to be complication in

Wang Xuetong's eyes when he looked at Jiang Chen. He approached Jiang Chen after everyone had returned to their own respective arenas.

"Little junior, I'm truly sorry for causing you trouble. I would've chased Nangong Ping away if I'd known he was going to be such a bastard. His bounty was incredibly high so I thought it'd be a good deed to recommend him to you. I didn't think that he'd... sigh... regardless, I just want to apologize for this inconvenience." Wang Xuetong genuinely regretted his decision. He knew how much of a bastard Nangong Ping was, but he never imagined that the good-for-nothing would stir up trouble in a place as prestigious as the Bounty Arena.

He'd had good intentions. He wanted to give Jiang Chen a chance to earn some money and fame. Of course, he was also a bit curious about Jiang Chen and wanted to probe the depths of the latter's knowledge. Unfortunately, things had ended in a mess. Wang Xuetong was a upright and all around nice person. His reputation was quite good in Pillfire City, and he felt somewhat responsible for causing the issue.

"Master Wang, it isn't your fault. Trash like him are all the same. They always misuse their family's influence to act willfully. Your good intention is appreciated." Jiang Chen didn't blame Wang Xueyong for what happened. The formation master had mostly good intentions.

"I'm glad you see it that way." Wang Xuetong felt much better after hearing Jiang Chen's reply. He paused for a second before he continued. "You should still be careful of Nan Gongping. He's famous in Pillfire City for his vindictive streaks. You probably don't need to worry about it too much since Emperor Peerless is backing you up, but you can never be too cautious."

Jiang Chen responded with a faint smile. "Thank you for your advice."

Wang Xuetong nodded. However, he suddenly approached Jiang Chen again when he suddenly recalled something. He quietly asked, “Little junior, come to think of it, what exactly was wrong with Nangong Ping’s Cloud Devouring Tiger? I looked all over and couldn’t notice anything wrong with it. It seemed as healthy as an ox.”

Jiang Chen’s brows quivered a little as he looked straight as the senior. “Master Wang, do you really think it was merely a Cloud Devouring Tiger?”

Wang Xuetong was puzzled by the question. “Are you saying that it isn’t a Cloud Devouring Tiger? Its stripes and head clearly indicate that it’s a Cloud Devouring Tiger.”

Jiang Chen was rendered speechless. He didn’t think that Wang Xuetong would really fail to notice the spirit beast’s true identity. Upon further thought, he realized that Master Wang Xuetong’s true expertise was in formations. It was only natural that a layman of beast taming would fail to identify the spirit beast. Moreover, the beast indeed resembled a Cloud Devouring Tiger. The similarity was more than ninety percent strong.

“Little junior, do you have a different outlook to this matter?”

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. “It isn’t a Cloud Devouring Tiger. However, I didn’t get a detailed look at it, so I won’t be jumping to conclusions.”

Actually he’d already identified the spirit beast, but would rather keep its identity to himself for the time being.

Wang Xuetong didn’t know what to respond after seeing the look on Jiang Chen’s face. After all, the person before him was from the Myriad Abyss Island. Although he himself was a respected elder in Pillfire City, but spirit beasts weren’t within his expertise. He didn’t have the courage to refute the claim.

He sighed gently and patted Jiang Chen in the shoulder. “That

man would've received the answers that he seeked if he'd been a little less full of himself. Everyone could've gone home satisfied."

Business was as usual after Wang Xuetong returned to his arena. Jiang Chen noticed Lin Yanyu's concerned glance and sent him a silent message. "Yanyu, don't lose focus."

The young disciple was calmer after seeing how collected his master was.

The Bounty Arena remained as hectic as before after the small incident. Nangong Ping didn't cause any more trouble. Nobody knew if he was really afraid, or if it was just a temporary truce. No matter what it was, Jiang Chen didn't let his guard down. He understood that the good-for-nothing wasn't the kind to swallow his anger and grievances. Even if Nangong Ping wasn't personally causing strife, he was definitely up to something in the shadows.

As expected, an issue really occurred at Jiang Chen's arena on that very afternoon. Five rank nine bounties were posted at his arena at exactly the same time. Each bounty was worth ten million.

Lin Yanyu was extremely excited to see the large bounties. It was a big deal to receive so many rank nine bounties in such a short time. Unfortunately, Jiang Chen immediately noticed that the customers were up to no good.

"Arena Lord Shao, what do you think? I'm here to seek advice because I heard you were very capable. Surely you won't let me down?"

"Yeah, Arena Lord Shao. You must be better than the others since you're the lord of two arenas. My rank nine bounty must be of little difficulty to you."

"Help solve my mission too, Arena Lord! Money isn't an issue."

"Arena Lord Shao..." These rank nine bounties almost seemed pre-planned.

Jiang Chen remained unperturbed. He swept their questions aside and looked at them coldly. “Is Nangong Ping behind all of this?”

“What are you trying to say?”

“How dare you insult us!”

“We came all the way here for business and all you do is spit on our face!”

“How dare you insult us just because you can’t solve our missions? Just admit that you’re worthless! Why pretend to be high and mighty?”

“You’d best give us an answer or we’ll give you more than just a hard time!”

These men were actually worried that they wouldn’t be able to find a reason to stir trouble, so they immediately grabbed the opportunity when Jiang Chen voluntarily insulted them. They raised their voices and acted very unreasonably.

Jiang Chen was extremely annoyed. It was clear that they were here to cause trouble because their bounties consisted of nothing but gibberish. Their pill recipes and formations were all made up. He didn’t to be courteous to them because he had no enemies here. Nangong Ping was definitely the perpetrator behind this.

He laughed sarcastically at them. “Go back and tell Nangong Ping that if he’s really a man, he’d settle this issue himself with his clan’s power. He’s a coward himself and so sends some mindless idiots to cause me trouble?! It’s an insult to his and your intelligence.”

These words enraged the five greatly.

“You bastard! How dare you insult us?!”

“Where are the representatives of Temple of Cleansing Fire? How did a person like him even become an arena lord?”

“I’m going to lodge a complaint! I stand my ground in protest!”

“This is strange. The Bounty Arena has always set a high standard. But this time, they hired someone worthless to fill the numbers!”

“He’s insulting everyone just because he’s unable to solve the bounty! He should be removed from the event!” These men kept acting as though they were victims.

Personnel from the Temple of Cleansing Fire rushed to the arena.

“Assistant Temple Master Gao! Such opportune timing! We want to complaint about this brat!”

“Yes! This brat insulted us and insulted our intelligence!”

“Mm! We strongly suggest that the Temple remove this man from the Bounty Arena immediately!”

“Fraudsters don’t belong in the Bounty Arena!”

“Kick him out!” They went even more overboard when they saw personnel from the temple.

The assistant temple master and his personnel frowned when they caught a rough understanding of the situation. Why are you so good attracting attracting trouble?! The Bounty Arena was often held without much issues, but today, the problems seemed to have no end. The assistant temple master’s opinion of Jiang Chen was falling even though he understood that these people were likely sent by Nangong Ping. Unfortunately, there wasn’t no proof. He couldn’t help but think that Jiang Chen was the reason for all this mess. After all, his arenas were the only one with endless issues.

From the assistant temple master’s expressions, Jiang Chen could tell that he was being blamed for this incident.

“Assistant Temple Master Gao, I will take full responsibility if I was the one at fault. They claimed that I’ve insulted their intelligence, but one question remains in my mind. Do they even

possess such a thing?" He raised his hand to reveal their missions. "Pill King Blue Phoenix, have you ever seen such a nonsensical pill recipe? There are three conflicting ingredients in this recipe alone, and yet they shamelessly claim that it's an ancient recipe and I'm supposed to complete it for them!

"Also, how is this a formation? Do you even know the basics of formations? Do you really think that a formation is made out of random scribblings? Master Wang Xuetong, just take a look at this nonsense. He doesn't even know the basics of formations, and he claims that this is a long lost formation from the ancient age!"

Chapter 1054: The Emperor Rages, and the World Trembles

While speaking, Jiang Chen shot the two bounty scrolls at Wang Xuetong and Pill King Blue Phoenix while grabbing a third bounty scroll to look at. Then, he sneered. “Ah yes, this, the so-called ancient talisman. If my eyes aren’t playing tricks on me, this is a piece of tiger skin. I’ll admit that it’s a good material for making talismans, but seriously, can’t you put at least put a bit of effort into your forgery? The cinnabar on this thing hasn’t even dried yet. My hands are red after just touching it once. I can’t believe you call this moronic thing an ancient talisman. You want me to fix this? Are you sure you haven’t given me your mother’s menstrual pad by mistake?”

The crowd burst out into raucous laughter. Arena Lord Shao Yuan is truly ruthless. It can’t get any worse than this. A menstrual pad was something that a woman used only during their monthly period. It didn’t take much effort to fill up one’s mind with evil imaginations. [1]

Jiang Chen tossed the pitiful excuse of thing towards Assistant Temple Master Gao. “You may think that I’m a trouble magnet, but I’ll ask only this: what do you think I should do with obvious troublemakers like these?”

The assistant temple master’s face looked incredibly ugly after he caught the tiger’s skin and gave it a look.

It was at this moment Pill King Blue Phoenix swore loudly. “Who is the brainless idiot who called this an ancient pill recipe? Show me your face so I can see if you have a pig’s head on your shoulders! These people are obviously here to make trouble, Assistant Temple Master Gao. When is this going to end if they keep doing this? The Temple cannot possibly let this stand!”

Pill King Blue Phoenix hadn’t made any drastic comments earlier,

but it was obvious that he was enraged now. A brainless, fake pill recipe put pill dao to shame, and that was the one thing he couldn't stand the most. He wasn't being partial to Jiang Chen, he just couldn't stand something like this from the bottom of his heart.

Pill dao was sacred to Pill King Blue Phoenix. He absolutely couldn't forgive anyone who used it like this. At least put some effort into your forgery! The fact that this forgery was so stupid only made him angrier.

Even Wang Xuetong was shaking his head. "Nonsense, this isn't a formation at all. The person who made this doesn't even understand the basics of formations. It's absolute nonsense, nonsense!"

Wang Xuetong was a goody two shoes, but he never lied about something that involved his profession.

Assistant Temple Master Gao's face grew even uglier. He stared coldly at the fellows who were full of righteous indignation just moments earlier. "You lot are determined to cause trouble in the Bounty Arena, aren't you?"

The accused lot panicked. They were the scum of society and lowlife of the streets. After they being bribed by Nangong Ping's men and fooled with honeyed words, they had come to the Bounty Arena to cause trouble or to put it bluntly, attack Jiang Chen. As for the consequences? Their unenlightened brains hadn't thought that deeply. They thought that they would suffer a beating at worst, and it was obvious that whatever Nangong Ping's men offered them was worth a beating and a lot more.

That was why they had shown up without a speck of hesitation. That was why they were utterly fearless when they stirred up the pot. Their mission was to cause trouble and embarrass Jiang Chen from the very beginning. The person who paid them also guaranteed that the worst thing that could happen to them was a mere beating. He even said that they might be chased out

completely unharmed.

Assistant Temple Master Gao's face was as cold as ice, and yet these fools couldn't read an expression to save their own lives. They yelled loudly, "What the hell do you mean by that? We are here to post a bounty, and yet you're accusing us of causing trouble? You're obviously working together to oppress your customers!"

"Yeah, you're accusing us because you don't understand our mission. You're just trying to conceal your low standards, aren't you?"

"Hmph, this Bounty Arena is a sham after all!" This lot was prodigiously stupid. They didn't realize the severity of the situation at all. Their ignorance also showed just how treacherous Nangong Ping was. He never told them how serious the situation was. He wasn't just using them to make trouble for Jiang Chen, but also to slap the Temple's face.

This was because Nangong Ping was a vengeful person, and the Temple of Cleansing Fire had become his target as well. As for whether the idiots lived or died, Nangong Ping didn't care in the least. He wasn't the one who personally ordered them to do this anyways. Even if the Temple knew that he was the mastermind behind all this, they didn't have any evidence to accuse him.

Nangong Ping's scheme was devious and disgusting. Not only did he seek to embarrass the Temple of Cleansing Fire and Jiang Chen with his act, but the entire Bounty Arena as well.

Assistant Temple Master Gao's face darkened. As a murderous intent passed through his eyes, the man ordered with a wave. "Take them away and kill them!"

The Temple of Cleansing Fire was no ground of mercy. It was obvious that this series of unrepentant transgressions had completely exceeded their bottom line. Assistant Temple Master Gao's hate had reached even Nangong Ping. He was certain that

Nangong Ping was the culprit behind all this, but he also knew that the bastard would've steered clear from this nonsense. There was no way he could find anything even if he were to investigate this to the end.

Plus, Assistant Temple Master Gao didn't want to break ties with the Nangong Family just because of this. That was why he laid ordered the group to be killed and save himself some unnecessary troubles. The fighters of the Temple had been waiting for this moment for a very long time. The moment they heard these orders, they immediately rushed forward and captured the five fools.

The lot was nothing more than street thugs, so how strong could they possibly be? They were taken into captivity without being able to resist at all. It was only when they heard the kill order that the lot realized just how big of a blunder they committed.

"Ah, have mercy, don't kill me!"

"Don't kill me, I'm innocent!"

"I confess, someone ordered me to do this!"

"Aah! Please don't kill me, I have an eighty year old mother and a three year old kid..." The pathetic cries immediately caused the Bounty Arena's atmosphere to sink to new depths of incongruity.

Assistant Temple Master Gao was incredibly furious. He never imagined that the Bounty Arena would turn into a mess like this. Even if the customers chose not to leave, this commotion would still be a stain in the history of the Temple of Cleansing Fire. The constant trouble that kept happening in the Bounty Arena was without a doubt a form of an indirect shaming on the Temple.

He waved his hands again. "Take them away!" He then called over another aide. "Go to the Nangong clan and inform them of my will. Tell the head of the Nangong clan to keep that bastard Nangong Ping under control, and that we won't suffer a third

transgression. If this were to happen again, then the wrath of the Temple will befall his family!”

“Yes sir!”

Assistant Temple Master Gao had finally bared his fangs, but in Jiang Chen’s eyes, it was nothing more than pretense. The assistant temple master was just giving both sides a set of stairs to step down. Just as the aide was about to leave the scene, Emperor Peerless suddenly interjected, “Wait.”

The aide came to a stop after a distracted moment. “What are your orders, great emperor?”

“I would like you to bring a message of mine to Nangong Jun too. Tell him that I am waiting for his show of sincerity. If he doesn’t give a response soon, I will personally visit him after this Bounty Arena is over.”

Everyone was shocked when they heard this order. Emperor Peerless was obviously planning to cause trouble for the Nangong clan!

The aide hurriedly looked at Assistant Temple Master Gao after hearing Emperor Peerless’ message. He wanted to know what his superior’s stance in this matter.

Naturally, Assistant Temple Master Gao didn’t dare turn down Emperor Peerless’ demand. He waved his hand again. “Do as Emperor Peerless says.”

In the end, it was Emperor Peerless who put on a real show of force. Some of the crowd were secretly excited by this. Unless they were sorely mistaken, the Nangong clan was soon to meet with a spell of misfortune. The wrath of Emperor Peerless was absolutely not something they could withstand!

Even if the Nangong clan was supported by a great emperor faction, they weren’t a great emperor faction themselves. Therefore, they weren’t strong enough to endure Emperor

Peerless' might. The Nangong clan would gain nothing but misfortune for offending Emperor Peerless.

While the crowd was delighting in the Nangong Family's misery, they couldn't help but wonder: Just who is this young man? Not only does he command two arenas on his own, Pill King Blue Phoenix and Formation Master Wang Xuetong gives him face too. Even Emperor Peerless is clearly taking care of him. Can he be Emperor Peerless' junior or something?

"This young man must have a prestigious background, or there's no way the Temple will let him command two arenas by himself." The mystery of Jiang Chen shrouded everyone's minds for a moment.

After two such ridiculous commotion in a row, half of the day had essentially been wasted. When the day was finally over, the income of all arenas had reduced by at least thirty percent.

The Temple of Cleansing Fire was furious because of this, but even worse was the fact that they had nowhere to vent their ill temper.

Meanwhile, the head of the Nangong clan, Nangong Jun sneezed a couple of times in a row back in his own home. While he was feeling bewildered by his unusual condition, he received the message from the Temple of Cleansing Fire. The man was thrown into disorder immediately after he heard the message. He knew that his spoiled child was a rod of trouble, but he never imagined that he would dare cause trouble in the Bounty Arena!

Not once, but twice in a row! Nangong Jun actually felt like slamming his head against the wall for a second. He could hear from the tone of the Temple's envoy alone that they were truly enraged this time, but if that was all, he could've dealt with their fury. Most shocking was Emperor Peerless himself had sent a message.

The meaning behind his words were as clear as day. If Nangong

Jun didn't clean up this mess and head over to the Bounty Arena to explain himself, the great emperor was going to visit him personally in his residence.

Nangong Jun couldn't help but shudder violently at this point. "Summon all the elders now, quickly!"

Not long after the emergency summons was sent out, every elder in the Nangong Family gathered in one place in fifteen minutes. They all wore confused looks on their faces. Why had the family head send for them so suddenly? There hadn't been an enemy invasion, nor was there any big unforeseen events as of late.

A palefaced Nangong Jun said, "I've failed you all, elders. I have failed to educate my son properly and have brought great trouble to us all..."

At this point the elders were completely confused by this unbelievably humble attitude. The usual Nangong Jun wasn't like this at all.

"Family Head, what on earth did Nangong Ping do again?"

"It shouldn't be too bad, right? This is Pillfire City, it shouldn't be a problem if he caused a bit of trouble here."

"Family Head, this isn't the first time young master Ping has caused us trouble. If it's nothing big, you can make a decision yourself."

"Yeah, we are prestigious enough in Pillfire City. Whoever they are, they have to give us some face."

Nangong Jun shook his head and sighed. "It's different this time..."

He eventually stammered out the entire mess. When he was done, every elder had turned pale with shock and panic.

1. I have no clue what this might be. You guys?

Chapter 1055: Jiang Chen Makes Out Like a Bandit

The morning of the second day, Nangong Jun and the rest of the house's elders brought a restrained Nangong Ping to the Temple of Cleansing Fire's entrance. They found Assistant Temple Master Gao before the Bounty Arena had even opened.

"Brother Gao, I must apologize profusely. I have taught my son poorly and caused you much trouble." These were the clan head's first words of great recalcitrance to the assistant temple master.

Temple Master Gao harrumphed. He glared at Nangong Ping, the latter's face pale and frightened. "Hmph! I don't know what to say. Is one loss not discouragement enough for you to refrain from a second offense? Do you think that the Nangong clan is the greatest beneath the heavens? Even if Emperor Peerless hadn't been present, Arena Lord Shao is not someone you can trifle with. What gave you the confidence to challenge him?"

The harsh words the assistant temple master had sent to Nangong Jun prior was mere posturing, meant for the common observer. Deep within his heart, he knew that this wasn't something they would fall out over.

The questions mark the end of the affair for him, Nangong Jun realized. The assistant temple master had no intention of breaking away from the Nangong clan after all. He gave a swift kick to his son's rear. "Apologize right away to Uncle Gao, you lout! Beg him for forgiveness. If he's not satisfied with your apology, then you're no longer my son!"

These words bound the assistant temple master on a moral level. Assistant Temple Master Gao gave a convincingly helpless smile. "Brother Nangong, there are no outsiders here, so I can speak plainly. It is no trouble for me to forgive your son, his lack of manners aside, but I am not the one in charge here. Emperor

Peerless is the one displeased this time."

"Emperor... Peerless? He and that Arena Lord Shao... are they close in some way?" Nangong Jun couldn't help but ask.

"Brother, there's no point in asking me that. The problem right now is clear: the emperor is really quite upset."

Nangong Ping made a bitter face. "Brother Gao, I am a slow man. This problem has turned my brain to mush. You are much smarter than I. Can you give me an idea?"

"I can put in a good word in for you, but I don't know if it'll be enough to exonerate you in Emperor Peerless's sight." Assistant Temple Master Gao sighed. "The emperor's recent appearance in Pillfire is odd enough by itself. From what I see, he has something on his mind. There is no other reason for a man as clement as he to be so ill-tempered. Well, I suppose it's also possible that his admiration for Shao Yuan is just that strong."

"Then I'll go talk to him about it right away. We are willing to accept any claim of compensation that the emperor asks for." Nangong Jun did not dare become upset at this revelation. A great emperor realm cultivator's authority and clout were absolute. The thought of opposing Emperor Peerless did not cross his mind for even a second. Despite the fact that the emperor was a wandering cultivator, no less. The head of the Nangong clan was perfectly clear on the fact that a single great emperor could annihilate his entire house rather easily.

"If you go to Emperor Peerless right now, you'll only be running yourself into trouble. The root of the matter rests on Arena Lord Shao Yuan. Why not reconcile with him first? After all, he was the... ahem... victim in both conflicts." Assistant Temple Master Gao begrudged Jiang Chen somewhat. Why did a youth have such a fiery temper? What was once a mild inconvenience had been blown up into a significant matter. But it wasn't the young man's fault at the end of the day. From the Temple's perspective, he had

no grounds to offend the arena lord.

Emperor Peerless's attitude towards him aside, if the youth really was from Myriad Abyss Island, the Temple of Cleansing Fire wanted to avoid slighting him at all costs. As for the Nangong clan? If they really did offend someone from Myriad Abyss Island, there was no telling what kind of pain they were in for.

"Brother Gao, you're telling me to apologize to the young arena lord?" Nangong Jun was a bit hesitant. He felt no burden in having to bow to Emperor Peerless. Asking forgiveness of an intrepid youngster was a lot more difficult, mentally speaking. He was a person of some status here in Pillfire City, an expert at ninth level emperor realm. Lowering his head in front of a young man was, at best, mildly humiliating.

Nangong Jun's expression chilled Assistant Temple Master Gao's tone. "Brother Nangong, the Nangong clan is the party that has a problem, so it's your call at the end of the day. I've given you a suggestion, but there's nothing more for me to say if you can't accept that advice."

Beads of cold sweat formed on Nangong Jun's forehead. Assistant Temple Master Gao's coolness scared him. "That, er…"

"I have other matters to attend to. Please excuse me." The assistant temple master spoke with some indifference.

Nangong Jun felt himself collapse into a mess. He smelled the thick stench of danger in the temple master's demeanor.

"House Head, the situation presses against us. If we must yield, then we should." One of the elders urged.

"We don't know what kind of backing the young arena lord has. Since Emperor Peerless thinks so highly of him, perhaps he is of much nobler origins than we imagine."

"Yes, Nangong Ping is the cause of the problem in the first place. There's nothing wrong in apologizing, right?"

“If you can’t bear losing face yourself, send Nangong Ping instead. We will back him up from the sidelines and butter the young man up a bit. Anything to make amends.” The elders were inexplicably frightened by the assistant temple master’s attitude as well. They were aged and experienced enough to sense the oncoming crisis, just the same as Nangong Jun had.

“Impossible!” Hearing that he was being made to apologize, Nangong Ping yelled. “I’d rather die than apologize.”

“Silence, fool!” Flustered and exasperated, Nangong Jun gave his son a vicious slap. “Haven’t you made enough trouble?”

“Nangong Ping, you’ve brought great disaster upon our house. Enough stubbornness!”

“If you were not the house head’s son, you would be dead to house law several times over. Does being the young master of the Nangong clan make you remarkable? No matter how good you think you are, there’s always someone better out there!”

“Isn’t that right! From what Assistant Temple Master Gao says, that young man has enormous backing. Fighting with him when you can’t win? Don’t even think about it. Can you endure Emperor Peerless’s ceaseless fury?” The Nangong clan’s elders were truly angry now. They didn’t care that Nangong Ping was the house head’s son any more and showered him with loud insults.

Nangong Jun became purple in the face. His voice was shiveringly cold. “If you insist on being so hard-headed, you nitwit, then I have no choice but to renounce you!”

Nangong Ping had seen his father irate before. This time, however, his father’s fiercely contorted expression was finally enough to strike a shred of fear into him. He had a feeling that if the current problem wasn’t settled, he was quite likely going to die at his father’s hand. As lawless as the young man was usually, this was enough to bring horror to his face.

“Tell me!” Nangong Jun was infuriated. “Are you going to listen or not?”

His upraised palm tipped his son off that if the answer was ‘no’, he’d be lying down in the next moment.

“I… I am, yes.” There was evident panic in Nangong Ping’s tone.

Nangong Jun’s forearm trembled slightly. He let out a long sigh, his whole person looking several hundred years older. “Fool, fool… You’ve spent all of the Nangong clan’s face today. This is the last time. If you still can’t make something of yourself after this, then I’d rather cripple you than have you around stirring up more trouble!”

……

“Arena Lord Shao, everything is our fault. I did not teach my son well, and I’ve brought the moron in question before you. Do with him as you like. Even if you kill him in the process, we shall not complain.” Nangong Jun humbled himself before the youthful young lord.

Jiang Chen glanced sidelong at the house head, smirking to himself. Admittedly, the older man was a very good actor. For one, his flexibility alone marked him a thousand times superior than his worthless son. After a short pause and a frosty look, he replied icily. “I’m curious. Where does the young master Nangong’s confidence come from? Why does he look down on the rest of us so?”

Nangong Ping’s own eyes narrowed like a venomous snake. Still, he had the semblance of a brain, and quickly drooped his head when he noticed his father’s fierce gaze. “Arena Lord Shao, I was the blind one this time. I’m sorry. Will you forgive me?”

“I’m not interested in such an insincere apology,” Jiang Chen snickered. “Whether you gnash your teeth internally or not is of no matter to me. That’s as much as you can amount to doing, eh?

Whether you hate me or fear me is no business of mine. You're nothing but a flea to me."

It was an intensely demeaning statement. Nangong Ping felt blood rush to his head. Nangong Jun's own heart dripped blood at the insult against his son as well. Still, he knew that he had to bear any degradation that took place now, regardless of how debasing it was. One couldn't profitably go against the tide of things.

"You are a first-rate genius, Arena Lord Shao. Commanding two arenas at such a young age... truly a man among men. My son has many awful habits, and I've spoiled him too much. Will you let a witless child off just this once? We will forever appreciate your magnanimity."

"I know that you're swallowing some very bitter medicine right now to plead with me, head of the Nangong clan. Are you worried that Emperor Peerless will give you hell for this?"

"No, no, we're very sincere. We seek only to douse your fury, Arena Lord Shao." Nangong Jun explained hurriedly.

"Oh, that's easy enough. Everything has its price, no?"

A price? Nangong Jun was pleased to hear it. Any concessions that the arena lord wanted was good news to him. In the grand scheme of things, the young man holding a grudge was much more problematic. Any greed on the youth's part made it significantly more straightforward!

"What compensation would you like, Arena Lord Shao? If it's at all in our power, we will spare no expense." Nangong Jun pledged devoutly.

"I only want Nangong Ping's Cloud Devouring Tiger." Jiang Chen was perfectly fine with resolving the affair on material condition. Why let go of an opportunity to fleece a family of villains?

"Cloud Devouring Tiger?" Nangong Jun bellowed to his son.

“Give it up at once, you dolt!”

Nangong Ping was despondent, but nevertheless wilted at once. “It is kept in the Qinyun Residence at home.”

“Send for it at once!” Nangong Jun shouted.

Before long, the ‘Cloud Devouring Tiger’ in question was brought here. Nangong Jun gave it several once-overs before personally offering it up. “Arena Lord Shao, this Tiger is now yours. About my son…”

Accepting the Tiger unceremoniously, Jiang Chen casually waved a hand. “You can leave. You will hear no more of this particular affair. Whether you want peace or war in the future, that’s up to you.”

Nangong Jun was exuberant. Finally, the problem was solved.

Chapter 1056: The Great Emperors Worries

The root of the issue was now resolved. Earning Jiang Chen's forgiveness was the same as being forgiven by Emperor Peerless. However, Nan Gongjun didn't dare to celebrate just yet. He immediately visited Emperor Peerless to admit his wrongdoings. The emperor was aware that Jiang Chen had already come to a settlement with the Nangong clan.

"Nangong Jun, I'm not the kind of person that seeks trouble, but that doesn't mean I'm afraid of it. If this had happened two thousand years ago, you wouldn't even have the chance to beg for forgiveness right now."

Nangong Ping trembled with fear. "I-I understand. We will forever be grateful for Your Majesty's leniency." He forced a smile. He wasn't saying this out of courtesy. He genuinely believed that the emperor had been lenient with them. If it'd been some other hot headed emperor, his son would've already be dead before he had the chance to hire goons to cause another round of trouble.

"Take your men and leave. This emperor hopes that your clan will be smart enough to nip the issue in the bud."

Nangong Ping understood the gravity of things. "This will absolutely be the last you'll ever hear of this," he reassured.

"Leave." The emperor was losing patience. He chased them away with a sweep of his hand.

The Nangong clan quickly scuttled away. The clan elders shivered in trepidation as cold sweat poured down their foreheads. The emperor had been so dominant that it felt like they'd escaped death. Even though Nan Gongjun was ninth level emperor realm, he was extremely relieved that it was all over.

Jiang Chen watched the Nangong clan leave. A glimmer of excitement appeared in his eyes when he looked at what looked

like the Cloud Devouring Tiger beast. However, he was aware that the issue was only resolved peacefully thanks to Emperor Peerless. He was using the emperor's influence. Since there was still some time before the start of today's Bounty Arena, he asked Lin Yanyu to take care of the spirit beast while he visited Emperor Peerless.

All of the arena lords resided in the Temple of Cleansing Fire for the duration of the Bounty Arena.

"Haha, little fellow, I thought you'd come by!" The emperor wasn't surprised to see Jiang Chen at all. He seemed to have foreseen the visit.

"This junior is here to thank Your Majesty." Jiang Chen wasn't the kind of person that would feign ignorance of the kindness shown to him by others.

"Why thank me? You had no fear of the Nangong clan either."

"The issue was only resolved so quickly because of Your Majesty's influence. Your magnanimity was the only reason I was able to go up against them. " Jiang Chen replied with a smile.

"Haha! You're truly a likeable lad!" The emperor burst into laughter. "Come! Sit with me!"

The emperor was obviously very fond of Jiang Chen. He respected the genius greatly for being on equal footing in the Bounty Arena, despite his youth.

Jiang Chen knew that Emperor Peerless didn't like him just because he claimed that he was from Myriad Abyss Island. The emperor had already shown a lot of goodwill before Jiang Chen had revealed his background. Jiang Chen sat down without the slightest hesitation.

The emperor secretly praised him for being able to maintain his composure before a great emperor. He wasn't anxious or uneasy like many other young juniors.

"Young lad, I've been observing you the past few days. You're

able to instantly solve missions that even Pill King Blue Phoenix can't. It's unfortunate that everyone places so much importance in seniority. The pill king is everyone's first choice for pill dao bounties, and yet you don't mind this even though he's your biggest competitor. This temperament of yours is truly exceptional." The emperor was first to speak. His words shocked Jiang Chen greatly. He never thought that the emperor would observe him so closely under such a hectic environment. Moreover, his observation was incredibly accurate too.

"Are all youths in Myriad Abyss Island as talented as you?" The emperor's words didn't contain any doubt. In fact, there was even hints of fascination.

Jiang Chen could feel cold sweat running down his back. "This junior has been blessed with great fortune. Thus, I am one of the best in pill dao even on the island.".

The excuse he made wasn't exactly the greatest, but it was easier for others to accept.

The emperor nodded. He mused deeply before he suddenly asked, "Little junior, since the island is a place of legends, there should be pill dao masters that exceed even the level of pill emperor, right?"

Jiang Chen was taken by surprise. "Your Majesty, why do you ask?"

"Just answer my question first."

Jiang Chen pondered deeply before nodding. He wasn't sure if there was one, but since it was a place of legends, empyrean realm pill dao masters was most definitely present.

"Is it true?" the emperor was visibly moved by the answer.

"Mm." Jiang Chen nodded again.

"Surely... pill dao masters of that level will have arts that even pill emperors lack..." the emperor muttered to himself.

“Yes, that’s definitely the case.”

“Little junior, how many pill dao masters of that caliber are there on Myriad Abyss Island?” The emperor asked unrelentingly.

No pill emperors or empyrean pill saints could ever hope to match Jiang Chen. He was the strongest pill dao master in the entire world, even in the heavenly planes. In his previous life, empyrean pill saints were only suited to be his pageboy. They weren’t even worthy to be his assistant. “Emperor Peerless, why are you asking these questions?”

The emperor revealed a hint of sadness. He sighed gently. “I didn’t want to bring it up at first as it unearths some sad memories.”

Jiang Chen was at a loss for words when he saw the sadness within his eyes.

“But for some reason, I feel an indescribable connection with you. It’d be a shame if I hide this from you any longer. It’s all related to my dao parter. Speaking of dao partner, you might've heard a few rumors in the Upper Eight Regions, and it’s all true. For the sake of love, I dueled a great emperor that had already been inaugurated for three thousand years. The duel ended with my loss for I was weaker. When he was about to take my life, my love rushed to my side and took half a strike in my stead…”

“Why only half?” Jiang Chen asked curiously.

“Ai… because of that man was also blindly in love with her. He was able to retract half of his force when he saw her rushing to my side. Ever since that duel, I’ve made a vow to live the rest of my life as a wandering cultivator, never to establish my own faction. Unfortunately, my love had to spend the rest of her life in illness after that. Two thousand years have passed, and her progress in martial dao has come to a halt. Her lifespan was also reduced by half. My pitiful Ah Yun. She was born intelligent and sharp, and was on track to become a great emperor. But because of me… the

years of her prime was ended prematurely, leaving her with nothing but a life of slow decline…" Emperor Peerless was extremely sorrowful. A great amount of despair could be glimpsed within his eyes. He must've toiled over this issue for an extremely long time without ever seeing light at the end of the tunnel.

One of the most painful things in the world was to see one's love fall into decline before their time. The pain that the emperor felt pierced through Jiang Chen's heart like a knife. He was suddenly reminded of his father from his previous life. It was a different kind of love, but the great love knew no bounds. Parental or romantic love was the same in the end.

"Your Majesty, may I ask what cultivation level your dao partner is at?" He suddenly asked.

"She's younger than me, but she was already eighth level emperor realm two thousand years ago and would've broken through the great emperor realm by now. Unfortunately, circumstances have caused her cultivation to stagnate at the ninth level emperor realm. Without a breakthrough, she's unable to overcome her injuries, leading to an early decline."

"Emperor realm eh?" Jiang Chen wanted to recommend the Longevity Pill, but since she was at the emperor realm, only a Pinecrane Pill could possibly extend her life.

"Yes. If she can ascend into the great emperor realm, she will surely overcome her injuries. It's unfortunate that her life energy was reduced by half after sustaining the injury, which also reduced her lifespan by a great amount. Sigh… she's even showing signs that she will not make it past another thirty years."

Thirty years was a long time in human years, but to a great emperor realm cultivator, it was like only three months.

"Your Majesty, are you perhaps thinking about crossing the endless ocean with your dao partner to seek help in Myriad Abyss Island?" Jiang Chen asked after connecting the dots.

“At the very beginning, no.” the emperor sighed. “If you hadn’t mentioned that you were from Myriad Abyss Island, I’d never have believed that it was real.”

Jiang Chen felt a little guilty. Surely the emperor wouldn’t travel all the way to Myriad Abyss Island for help because of his thoughtless claim? He would be a great sinner if the emperor really did such a thing. The emperor’s chance of surviving the ocean crossing was very miniscule even if he went by himself, let alone with his injured dao partner.

“I will not lie, I’m only considering this because you brought up the island. Truth be told, I’ve traveled far and wide in search of great pill dao masters, even the reclusive hermits. Unfortunately, there wasn’t a single person who could cure Ah Yun’s injuries. I only joined the Bounty Arena because I was passing through the city and wanted to help the Temple of Cleansing Fire raise the prestige of the Bounty Arena. All this trouble for that glimmer of hope…”

Jiang Chen finally understood the emperor’s reasons for joining the Bounty Arena. After all, the event that was clearly beneath his stature. As it turned out, he was searching everywhere for the slightest bit of hope. It was like searching for a needle in a haystack…

Chapter 1057: The Best of Friends Despite Differences in Age

Seeing Emperor Peerless's normally radiant and graceful visage so sad filled Jiang Chen with compassion. He felt that he had to do something for the emperor.

"Senior, where is your dao partner presently?" he suddenly asked.

Emperor Peerless blinked. He blurted out the answer subconsciously. "I have her somewhere secret and safe. Not in Pillfire City itself, but not far from here."

Jiang Chen nodded. "My cultivation is rudimentary, and I therefore have no grounds for self-recommendation. That aside, though I might not be able to heal your partner's injury, I might yet be able to extend her life via a means or two."

"What?" Hearing this made the emperor jump up like a spring. The emperor's gaze on him was almost searing, but Jiang Chen kept his cool. He inclined his head once, twice, in the affirmative.

"You... you really have a way?" Emperor Peerless's voice trembled. It was a far cry from his typical refinement.

Indeed, Jiang Chen had a way to extend the emperor's partner's life. In fact, he thought himself quite capable of taking care of a supposed 'internal injury' as well. It was simply better to keep his mouth shut about it before seeing the woman in person. Whether she had an injury or not was irrelevant to his ability to lengthen her life, however. Jiang Chen had the Pinecrane Pill on his side.

So what if Emperor Peerless's partner didn't have a constitution befitting an average emperor realm cultivator? The Pinecrane Pill didn't ask for that. As long as she could consume it, and the pill's medicinal effects took, then the effect on her lifespan was the same. Moreover, the Pinecrane Pill intrinsically had the

extraordinary ability to repair bodily functions. Though it couldn't single-handedly cause an internal injury to heal, it would at least partially help. Emperor Peerless's partner wasn't being threatened by her natural end, but a kind of accelerated aging inflicted by her injury. Because of this, the Pinecrane Pill might be even more beneficial than advertised.

"Speaking of increasing lifespans, I've heard of a kind of pill called the Pinecrane Pill. It increases the life of an emperor realm cultivator by a thousand years or so." Jiang Chen immediately spilled the beans – er, pills.

"Pinecrane Pill?" Emperor Peerless was inspired. "I've heard of a certain Longevity Pill. What difference is there between them?"

"The Longevity Pill? That's just an earth rank pill. The Pinecrane Pill is sky rank! I'm sure you can agree that that's enough of a defining difference. Plus, the Pinecrane Pill is even harder than normal sky rank pills to refine." Jiang Chen was entirely truthful.

"Is there such a miracle pill in the world?" The emperor was overjoyed. He rubbed his palms together incessantly, pacing back and forth in place.

Jiang Chen smiled and nodded.

"Where can I find this Pinecrane Pill?" His expression cheered up, Emperor Peerless looked towards Jiang Chen expectantly.

"One of my seniors has refined it in the past. I remember that he has some on his person still." Jiang Chen wanted to take the pill out on the spot, but he managed to repress the impulse.

Emperor Peerless appeared to be an honorable enough man, but the time they had known each other was too short. Jiang Chen wanted to repay the favor the emperor had given him, but all could come in due time.

Emperor Peerless wasn't privy to Jiang Chen's thoughts. The joy in his face still apparent, he prodded at the youth earnestly.

“Where is this senior nowadays? Is he willing to sell this pill of his? I am not a wealthy man, but I am willing to give all that I own for but a single one.”

His tone was resolute. In his eyes, a million million spirit stones could not compare to a single life-saving pill. Anything he owned was a worthy enough sacrifice.

“I cannot promise anything, sir, but I don’t think it’s much of a problem to ask for a Pinecrane Pill. My senior is not within the human domain at the moment, but you needn’t worry. He will come find me for sure in the next three to five years.” Jiang Chen surmised the emperor probably had enough time to wait just a little longer.

Emperor Peerless was really excited now. He clenched both fists with great determination, knuckles white at the sheer force. His back-and-forth pacing increased in frequency. “Good, good! If you do manage to get your hands on the pill, young man, I’ll give you anything you ask for. Even if it’s something I don’t have, I’ll wade through fire and brimstone to bring it to you.”

There was no piece of news that could be as exhilarating as this for the old man. He had traveled over a thousand mountains and ten thousand rivers, but always, always met disappointment. And yet, the Bounty Arena he’d decided to attend on a whim had been a stroke of serendipitous fortune. His partner had a small chance at life again! It was riddled with uncertainty, but the emperor was overjoyed nevertheless.

“Can the Pinecrane Pill really extend an emperor realm cultivator’s life by a thousand years, my little friend?” Still, he wanted to hear repeated verification after coming out of his emotional high.

“Yes, Your Majesty. You may be completely sure on that front. If you’ve investigated the effects of the Longevity Pill, then the Pinecrane Pill is like an upgraded version of that pill. A single

rank's difference means a hundredfold the technical complexity, however."

It was as Jiang Chen had guessed. Emperor Peerless had explored and studied the Longevity Pill. In particular, he knew that the Longevity Pill was definitely off-limits to emperor realm cultivators. That was why he'd held back on having his partner try it.

Jiang Chen's confident and faithful tone alleviated the majority of his doubts.

The emperor did not have the All-Seeing Eyes that Emperor Peafowl did, but his status as a great emperor was still quite respectable. His experience meant that he had some degree of discernment when it came to people. Typically, the emperor had zero likelihood of believing tall tales from the average youth. No, youngsters in general were too flighty and impulsive.

But this youth in particular had a certain bearing to him, a manner of behavior that made Emperor Peerless want to trust him implicitly. He had the perpetual feeling that the young man before him was unfathomably powerful, worthy of sitting on the same level as he. Any lingering remnant of suspicion about whether Jiang Chen came from Myriad Abyss Island or not was dispelled. Even on the very slight chance that the young man wasn't from the Island, his origins were surely extraordinary in some other way.

"Excellent, excellent. Young man, there's no need to call me senior any more. My name is Mo Wushuang, the same 'wushuang' as peerless. You can call me Old Brother Mo."

"I don't think it is proper for me to call you that, senior."

"Why wouldn't it be proper? I don't see a problem." Emperor Peerless coughed. "If you can bequeath Ah Yun with a lifeline, then you are my savior as well. How can I maintain my seniority in front of someone worthy of my thanks and respect?"

Jiang Chen smiled. “That’s something to think about in the future. Actually, er, where is your partner located exactly, senior? If I can take a look at her, the additional information might help me out. I can explain things better to my own senior, right? Better knowledge means better ideas.”

“Is this senior of yours also your master?” Emperor Peerless couldn’t help but ask.

“I guess you can say that.” Jiang Chen grinned. He’d begun weaving this elaborate lie about his tutelage ever since Skylaurel Kingdom. Whether it was around there, Regal Pill Palace, or even Veluriyam Capital, the fact that he had a reclusive but sage teacher was common knowledge. He’d come this far with the story. What harm was there in continuing with it?

“His cultivation level must be above great emperor realm, no?” Emperor Peerless’s eyes were filled with fascination.

“Mhm. In addition, his pill dao cultivation is also one of the best on Myriad Abyss Island.” Jiang Chen kept his face completely straight. His feigned stoicism made it hard for others to doubt him.

“Perfect!” Emperor Peerless slapped his thigh. “A senior expert like him will have a solution without fail. Hard to imagine that I, Mo Wushuang, had to travel the entire world before meeting my lucky star here. Haha, do feel free to call me Old Brother Mo from now on. I won’t answer to ‘senior’ after this.”

As a great emperor who was also a wandering cultivator, Emperor Peerless lacked the hauteur that his fellows often possessed. Noting his insistence, Jiang Chen finally acquiesced, nodding. “Then I will respectfully call you Old Brother Mo.”

“Exactly as you should.” The emperor brightened up instantly. “Come, the Bounty Arena is about to start.” He wasn’t even two steps out before he put a hand to his head. “Look at my memory. I almost forgot. I’ve settled Ah Yun down in the Tilted Moon Region.”

“The Tilted Moon Region?” Hearing that gave Jiang Chen sudden pause.

“Hmm?” His reaction surprised Emperor Peerless somewhat. “Have you gone there, my young friend?”

“I haven’t, but I’ve heard of it for sure. It is located in the northwest of the Upper Eight Regions, adjacent to Pillfire City… certainly not far. I hear that the Moon God Sect rules there?”

“That’s absolutely right.” Emperor Peerless inclined his head.

Jiang Chen didn’t prod the subject further. His next stop was the Tilted Moon Region, so it was a pleasant coincidence that the emperor’s partner was there as well. What a happy coincidence, hmm?

“Little brother, do you hold a grudge against that sect?” Emperor Peerless was astute enough to detect the disturbance in Jiang Chen’s tone.

“No, not at all. I just happened to want to gather some information there.” The emperor’s guess had been patently true, but Jiang Chen wasn’t stupid enough to admit to it outright.

Emperor Peerless chuckled. “Perfect. Two birds with one stone, then. If you need my help once we’re there, don’t hesitate to say so. I shall move on your every whim.”

The two of them walked out to where the Bounty Arena was actually taking place. The sight of them talking and laughing as they did so was mouth-opening for all of their observers. The other arena lords were especially envious. They had attempted to win over their imperial fellow with flattery as well. Though Emperor Peerless didn’t quite give them the cold shoulder, neither did he treat them with any semblance of warmth.

How could this young man be so cozy with the emperor? Was it just because he was from Myriad Abyss Island? In their heart of hearts, the others doubted Jiang Chen’s claim to varying degrees.

Some thought that the boy was a common fraudster.

Pill King Blue Phoenix and Wang Xuetong were also secretly astonished. The emperor was being friendlier to the young man than he had been with them! This only piqued their interest in Jiang Chen further. How many secrets did the youth have hidden away? What moved Emperor Peerless's interest in him so?

Given the Nangong clan's prior example, the Bounty Arena proceeded with remarkable smoothness. No one was brave enough to stir up further trouble, lest they be exposed to Emperor Peerless's fury. As such, business in the next three or four days boomed. Twelve days passed in the blink of an eye. It was time for the last three days of the Bounty Arena, heralding an oncoming climax.

Chapter 1058: Sovereign Rank Bounty

The Bounty Arena was open for half a month. The first twelve days of the event were pretty much routine. The last three days were the craziest days. High rank bounties only appeared during this time. Of course, the highest rank available was sovereign rank. The sovereign rank bounties didn't only include bounties that were posted on the spot by visitors. The incomplete bounties that were accumulating dust at the back of the Temple would also be making an appearance.

During these final three days, only bounties of rank six and above could to appear. This also meant that the reward for all bounties that appeared during this period were worth a million saint spirit stones at a minimum. No other bounties beneath this sum was allowed in the Bounty Arena. Although the rule barred low rank bounties from entering the arena, it wasn't a problem because most of them had already made their appearances during the first twelve days.

For example, Jiang Chen alone had received one and a half billion saint spirit stones during the twelve days he spent managing two arenas. Even the weakest of the eighteen assistants he recruited had earned at least twenty to thirty million saint spirit stones. Naturally, the assistants who were stronger or more favored by Jiang Chen gained even bigger profits.

For starters, Lin Yanyu had earned over a hundred million saint spirit stones. Lin Zhirong himself had earned almost the same amount as Lin Yanyu. The guy's foundation was quite solid despite his crazy attitude. Now that they had entered the last three days of the Bounty Arena, it was entirely possible to earn even greater sum of spirit stones from the continuous influx of high rank bounties. Everyone was eager to get started as they prepared themselves for the final three days.

Standing at a high place, Assistant Temple Master Gao declared

loudly, “Everyone, the last three days of the Bounty Arena are also the best part and the climax of the event. Not only have we already received twelve sovereign rank bounties this time, we are also announcing twelve more sovereign rank bounties that we’ve accumulated in the past. This also means that every arena will get to look through two sovereign rank bounties on average. Of course, it comes down to personal capability as to the number of such bounties you may receive in the end!

“Apart from the sovereign rank bounties, all rank six bounties and above are allowed to enter the Bounty Arena during these three days as well. These bounties will be processed in the same way as before. The same cannot be said about the sovereign rank bounties, however.”

The sovereign rank bounties won’t follow the same format? Everyone, including Jiang Chen, looked at the assistant temple master. They wanted to know exactly how the bounties were going to be distributed. Will they be distributed equally among the arena lords?

“We have twelve arena lords here, and each of you will receive two sovereign rank bounties each.” Assistant Temple Master Gao continued, “However, this doesn’t mean that the sovereign rank bounties are yours alone to take. Upon receiving the sovereign rank bounties, you must first appraise your strength and foundation before deciding if you are qualified to resolve these bounties. If you are not, then you must give up on them. If we do not receive your declaration of concession six hours after the bounties have been distributed, then we will assume that you’ve accepted the responsibility to solve them. If you fail to complete the mission on time, then you will be charged with the same amount of spirit stones as the bounty you accepted.”

Jiang Chen finally understood everything was going to be processed. The sovereign rank bounties weren’t actually distributed evenly among the arena lords. If an arena lord didn’t

believe that they could solve a particular bounty, then they had to give it up back to the Temple. If they didn't, they would have to pay a compensation fee. Because of this, the sovereign rank bounties might not be boons, but hot potatoes instead.

"If you gave up your bounty in time, the rest of the arena lords will have the opportunity to take the bounty themselves. The arena lord who gave up the bounty doesn't need to bear any responsibilities. Just the same, the arena lord who took over the bounty must pay a compensation fee if they fail to complete the mission in the end.

"If the person who took over the bounty ultimately succeeds, they must pay the arena lord who gave up the bounty ten percent of the reward as a gesture of encouragement."

The sovereign rank bounties are certainly more interesting and serious. Jiang Chen was starting to looking forward to them. Considering how mysterious they made the bounties, he was sure that the rewards were very high.

Thirty million saint spirit stones were just the beginning. In fact, there is no cap on the reward. It wouldn't be surprising if several bounties that worth several hundred million were to appear. Most importantly, the person who solved a sovereign rank mission gained more than just spirit stones. They would be gaining fame as well.

The sovereign rank bounties were the climax of the entire Bounty Arena and were problems that not just anyone could solve, so naturally they garnered plenty of attention. This meant that the arena lord who managed to solve one would earn both money and fame. That was exactly what Jiang Chen was looking for. It was the key to acquiring sufficient right of speech and initiative when bidding for Mu Gaoqi.

"Alright, all arena lords, please come up to the stage and receive the two sovereign rank bounties that have been distributed to you.

“The disparity of rewards between these sovereign rank bounties is quite large. It all depends on your luck.” That was what he said, but getting a highly rewarding sovereign rank bounty might not necessarily be a good thing.

After all, the reward of a bounty was proportional to its difficulty. If a bounty was too difficult to solve, then there was no point getting it in the first place. This was especially true considering that many of the sovereign rank bounties had remained unresolved in the Temple for a very long time already. Some of them remained unsolved even though they had passed through the hands of hundreds or even thousands of people. Therefore, there was no point in getting those relic-like bounties no matter how high their rewards were.

“Brother Shao, do you want me to help draw the lot for you?” Lin Zhirong asked cheerfully. “My luck has always been pretty good. You may not know this, but I’m a gambling addict since young. My luck is so good that I’ve never failed to get what I wanted in a casino. That’s why every casino in my area turn me away politely every time they see my face.”

Jiang Chen ignored Lin Zhirong’s offer however. He walked straight up to the stage. As much luck as Lin Zhirong might have, Jiang Chen still wished to do this himself.

“Emperor Peerless, you are the number one arena lord of this Bounty Arena. You may draw the first lot.” Assistant Temple Master Gao was very respectful towards Emperor Peerless. He allowed the great emperor to make the first pick. In reality, the order didn’t matter much. No one could read the contents of the bounty after all.

Emperor Peerless didn’t stand on ceremony either. After randomly picking two bounties from the lot, he returned to his own arena. The second person to go up was Pill King Blue Phoenix. He too randomly selected two missions. It was Wang Xuetong’s turn to draw the lot. The formation master turned around and

smiled at Jiang Chen. “Young friend, do you wish to draw first?”

“It doesn’t matter who goes first, so feel free to make your pick, Master Wang.” Jiang Chen didn’t care who went first.

Wang Xuetong chuckled and rubbed his hands together. “I sure hope I could get two sovereign rank bounties that are suitable for my level of skills. It will be saddening if they turn out to be too easy or too difficult.”

Formation Master Wang Xuetong spoke everyone’s mind. Sovereign rank bounties were uncapped. So of course the best one was the one most suitable for him. After Wang Xuetong was done, it was Jiang Chen’s turn to draw.

Jiang Chen controlled two arenas, so he could draw a total of four sovereign rank bounties. He received two pill dao and two general zone related sovereign rank bounties. He returned to his own arena after he had obtained all four mission scrolls.

Lin Zhirong immediately moved closer to him. “Come on, let’s have a look at the scrolls already.”

Lin Yanyu berated in a somewhat annoyed tone, “Don’t you think you’ve overstepped your line a little, sir? The arena lord has the first right to the sovereign rank bounties. They will only be passed down to the assistants if the arena lord decides to forfeit his right.”

It wasn’t that Lin Yanyu was jealous of Lin Zhirong. He just thought that Lin Zhirong was being very rude to his master.

But Lin Zhirong was an easygoing person, so he laughed and replied, “Don’t worry, that’s not my intention. I just want to see what a sovereign rank bounty looks like.”

“Do take a look, everyone.” Jiang Chen lifted his hand and hung all four bounty scrolls on the arena. He showed the bounties to everyone without hesitation so that they all had an idea of what they were dealing with.

At first, everyone was momentarily distracted by the arena lord's generosity. Then, they all looked at the scrolls. A moment later, the assistants' expression began to crumple one after another. It was obvious that the contents of these four bounties had shattered their delusions in an instant. Forget completing these missions, they found that even understanding the questions was a chore.

There was no such thing as an 'easy' sovereign rank bounty. Every single one of them was a highly difficult problem that almost no one could solve. Why else would the bounty posters offer such a high sum of reward?

Lin Zhirong clicked his tongue while sighing. "Holy shit, the lowest bounty is worth eighty million, and the highest bounty is worth five hundred million. Arena Lord Shao, your luck is downright extraordinary. Even my luck cannot get any better than this."

The guy didn't forget to praise himself even as he praised Jiang Chen. The latter smiled calmly. "All those who believe that you can solve any one of these bounties, take your pick."

Temptation reared its head for a quick second when he said this. However, groans of lamentation quickly overtook them. Their desire to challenge was there, but they just didn't possess the ability to realize their ambition.

Lin Zhirong said gloomily, "This is unfortunate. None of these missions are my kind of mission. Forget it, I guess I'm just not good enough to challenge a sovereign rank bounty."

It was impossible that a normal assistant could take on a sovereign rank bounty. In fact, most arena lords had to give up on them. There might be many who could complete a bounty below one hundred million. But a bounty with a reward of one hundred million and above exceeded the capabilities of a normal arena lord.

Lin Yanyu had kept quiet up to now because he was thinking about the two pill dao bounties. One of the bounty was worth

eighty million, and the other one was worthy five hundred million. The gap of difficulty between the two of them was enormous. The five hundred million bounty caused Lin Yanyu to feel dizzy just by looking at it, so he immediately tossed it out of his mind. On the other hand, the eighty million bounty felt doable to him.

“Why don’t you pick one, Yanyu?” Jiang Chen smiled encouragingly at Lin Yanyu.

A hint of eagerness appeared on Lin Yanyu’s face. Truth be told, he didn’t have one hundred percent confidence that he would be able to solve the eighty million bounty, but it didn’t feel completely hopeless either. Seeing the light of encouragement in his master’s eyes, Lin Yanyu clenched his teeth and declared, “Alright, I’ll pick one then.”

The rest of the assistants looked at Lin Yanyu in surprise. They were obviously shocked by the courage he displayed.

Chapter 1059: A Stunning Pillfire City

Jiang Chen had a total of eighteen assistants since he was the lord of two arenas. Many were discontent because Lin Yanyu was clearly getting preferential treatment, but they didn't dare show it on their faces. After all, the arena lord was the one calling the shots. It was his right to distribute bounties to whomever he wanted. They could only follow his orders as they were only assistants.

However, the reality of things didn't lessen their dissatisfaction one bit. They belittled and looked down upon Lin Yanyu because of his age. How could someone as young as him receive so much preferential treatment? It was clearly because he was around the same age as the arena lord. They simply had more in common.

The arena lord announced that everyone was free to accept the sovereign missions, but nobody volunteered. They were certain that they couldn't handle missions of this caliber. Doing so would only be a waste of their time. Moreover, they had to pay up if they failed. It was obviously not worth it. The total amount of money they'd made from the previous days weren't even enough to pay for the compensation of a single mission.

Under Jiang Chen's encouragement, Lin Yanyu decided to accept the sovereign mission worth eighty million. Though it was one of the easier ones, this action still stunned the others. They didn't show it overtly, but they were quite shocked by his actions.

Jiang Chen glanced at the crowd after Lin Yanyu had taken the mission. "Anyone else?"

He didn't want leave room for contention. He knew full well that no other assistant of his was capable of taking on these missions. He was only asking as a courtesy. As expected, nobody else volunteered to take on the missions. It was clear that they felt the penalty for failure was too high for them to risk it. How could they

have the courage to do so when the price of the bounty nearly caused their hearts to leap out from their throats?

Jiang Chen nodded. “Since nobody else is interested, we shall proceed as usual.”

He accepted the remaining three bounty scrolls and placed them on the arena. Everyone was flabbergasted by this action. What’s going on? Is the arena lord… going to accept all three missions? A pill dao mission worth 500 million was among the three missions. The other two were general missions worth 100 million and 200 million respectively. Their bounties added up to over 800 million in total!

“Is he going to accept them all?”

“That… that’s way over the top!”

“There’s no way he’s going to leave them there. Surely he’ll return them after 6 hours.” The assistants were all speculating wildly. Jiang Chen’s actions had bewildered them greatly. The person in question didn’t care about their opinions. He sat on the arena and mused deeply with his eyes shut. The contents of these missions were already seared into his mind. He was coming up with ways to solve them.

The pill dao mission was quite difficult indeed. The 500 million bounty was a testament to its difficulty. Moreover, it was clearly written on the scroll that it’d been in circulation in the Temple for over 800 years. No one had been able to complete the mission in all this time. Truth be told, the mission wasn’t all that complicated. It was just an ancient pill recipe with two missing ingredients. Unfortunately, both ingredients were critical to the production of the pill.

The mission hadn’t been posted by Pillfire City. Instead, it was posted by one of the first rank sects in the Upper Eight Regions. He had no association with the sect, but it was situated a little closer to Veluriyam Capital. He would never consider accepting the

mission if it was posted by Pillfire City. Solving the city's problems was the opposite of his goal. It'd be like raising a tiger that would bite off the hand that fed it.

I'm surprised that this ancient recipe found its way to the Divine Abyss Continent. It's only a sky rank pill, but not even heavenly pill immortals can necessarily complete this recipe. Jiang Chen wasn't completely certain, but based on the description, it should be the Ancient Reformation Pill. It was a very unusual pill. By ingesting it, one could regrow severed limbs and flesh. As long as one's soul remained intact, one would have the freedom to reconstruct one's body to any specification even if there was nothing that remained except bare bones. One could sculpt their body according to one's wishes.

It was classified as a sky rank pill, but was actually beyond that at empyrean rank. There was a few differences between sky rank and the empyrean rank. For example, a sky rank pill was still considered a mortal pill. It hadn't withstood the test of the heavenly laws. An empyrean pill however, had withstood the test and was baptized by the laws. Sky rank pills were actually the equivalent of emperor realm. Its name was only for vanity reasons. In reality, sky rank pills and spirit herbs were on the same level as the emperor realm.

The Ancient Reformation Pill was an empyrean rank pill in the heavenly planes. However, there were stronger variations of pill that went beyond the empyrean rank. It was a pill with various grades, the lowest of which was sky rank. Its highest grade went beyond the empyrean realm, and was a pill of the divine heavens.

It was meant for incredibly powerful martial dao masters. After the destruction of their bodies, these powerful souls could borrow the pill's power to reconstruct their bodies. It wasn't useful in real life or death situations, because true death was the destruction of both body and soul. The pill allowed for the regrowth of flesh and bones, but not the human soul. It was an incredibly useful pill, but

paled in comparison to the Pinecrane Pill. The latter provided an advantage that the former simply couldn't.

Of course, the Ancient Reformation Pill was still incredibly useful, especially for powerful experts. Upon the onset of old age, experts could still evict their souls to take over a body better suited to their needs. However, this was an extremely dangerous process. Under normal circumstances, nobody would ever take such extreme measures. Any mistakes could lead to the shattering of the soul. The Ancient Reformation Pill made this process easier and safer. Moreover, it also accelerated the integration of body and soul.

Jiang Chen decided to accept the mission since it wasn't meant for Pillfire City. Then it was simply an easy profit of 500 million saint spirit stones. Moreover, he might actually find use for the pill in the future. The ingredients for the pill varied according to its rank. The one before him was obviously one of the lower grade recipes. In fact, it just might be the lowest grade one.

He combined his previous research on the Ancient Reformation Pill's recipe with the ingredients found on the recipe and quickly came up with the two missing ingredients. The principle behind the pill was all the same, regardless of its grade. As long as one understood the principle, coming up with the two missing ingredients wasn't a difficult task at all.

Pill dao might seem complicated, but as always, the difficulty was only relative to one's knowledge. For those without knowledge, even the simplest of questions would stump them. For those with knowledge, even the hardest of questions would be a stroll in the park.

Jiang Chen was done making sense of the Ancient Reformation Pill's mission. He also had some initial thoughts about the other two missions from the general zone. One of them was related to formations. It was still in the middle of conceptualization, and his mission was to complete it.

Jiang Chen was incredibly shocked when he took a closer at the formation. Its theory clearly had something to do with the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect! After some analyzing, he realized that it was actually one of the sect's ten great Crimson Heaven Formations! He'd been too busy in the recent years to study the every formation from the sect, but he did pay some attention to its formation disk.

Every single one of the formations it could simulate was incredibly powerful. Its strength would be incredibly frightening if Jiang Chen could somehow extract all of its power. Mm. This formation is incredibly rare indeed. Jiang Chen noticed that the faction who posted the bounty was also another first rank sect.

There were eight first rank sects in total in the Upper Eight Regions. There was the Eternal Celestial Capital, the Ninesuns Sky Sect, the Moon God Sect, and the Great Yu Skysword Sect [1], which was the sect that posted the Ancient Reformation Pill bounty.

The formation mission was also posted by another first rank sect. It was situated in the eastern region and was named the Celestial Cicada Court. Jiang Chen couldn't help but praise Pillfire City for the range of their influence. The Great Yu Skysword Sect was situated closer to Veluriyam Capital, yet one found their mission in Pillfire City. The Celestial Cicada Court was also situated far east, and was incredibly far away from the city. And yet, they too had posted a mission in the city.

One had to praise the city for their excellent execution of information and cultural exchange. They were now the true core capital in the Upper Eight Regions. Their influence reached every corner of the region except the south, which was under the jurisdiction of Veluriyam Capital. Other than that, there was no corner which their influence didn't reach. It was incredibly frightening. The more Jiang Chen understood about the city, the more alarmed he became. If the city had a complete fallout with

Veluriyam Capital, the latter would surely eat a greater loss. That was an unarguable fact.

1. The name of the Xia dynasty founder is found within this sect's name

Chapter 1060: Jiang Chens Decision

Jiang Chen was a little shaken by Pillfire City's range of influence. Veluriyam Capital's residents often felt a common sense of superiority. The city was the heart of the Upper Eight Regions, a dominant beacon in its heartland. But the sheer force of comparison made Jiang Chen change his opinion. Pillfire City had been grossly underestimated by at least a portion of Veluriyam's populace. Not that they were country bumpkins exactly, but they were just a bit too arrogant.

"The Celestial Cicada Court, hmm..." Jiang Chen silently made a note of the name to himself. If he had the chance, he absolutely needed to make a trip there. This formation piqued his interest in them. If the Celestial Cicada Court was related to the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect, that was very good news. He would take on this mission for sure.

The remaining mission was one that related to blacksmithing and refining. Issued not by a first rank sect, but by a faction slightly lesser that specialized in the forging of legendary arms. In the Upper Eight Regions, many sects had their own blacksmith. However, most were a far cry from elite. The cream of the crop was, instead, largely attracted to this particular faction. Whenever he checked a mission's issuer, Jiang Chen was astounded time and again by Pillfire City's ascendancy.

On the surface, the city was a faction founded on pills. In actuality, its prestige and authority extended to every other aspect and sphere of martial dao as well. This was one of the keystones for the city's success. Invisibly and without notice, it spread its tendrils of power to every vocation and faction.

Jiang Chen had no plans on accepting this mission. Though he had reasonable knowledge of forging a weapon, he didn't want to be involved in this particular affair. First, the difficulty of the task was clearly commensurate with its reward. If he accomplished

something that a faction specialized in forging weapons could not, it would be too astounding and bizarre. Second, he did not want to reveal too many of his skills or attract pursuers. Finally, and most importantly, the faction in question was very intimate with Pillfire City. It was reason enough for Jiang Chen's natural dislike. Thus, he decided to pass the mission up. Let someone else solve the problem for once!

His musings complete, Jiang Chen opened his eyes once more. Taking the weaponsmithing mission in hand, he headed straight towards Assistant Temple Master Gao.

"Arena Lord Shao, have you decided this quickly already?" The assistant temple master asked jovially.

"I'll take on the other three, but I have no expertise with this one. I'll leave it to my fellows." Jiang Chen cut to the chase.

Assistant Temple Master Gao blinked. He seemed to recall that Jiang Chen had taken four sovereign missions. How come only one was coming back? Was the young man keeping the other three? Both the temple master's face and eyes changed color. "Are you absolutely sure about taking on the other three sovereign missions, Arena Lord Shao? Is that what you mean to do?"

Silence on that front was affirmation enough. Jiang Chen countered instead with a question. "Are all the issuers here at the Temple?"

"Of course they are," Assistant Temple Master Gao smiled. "We wouldn't have given you the missions otherwise. We bring out only ones whose bounties can be cashed in immediately."

"Good." Jiang Chen nodded. Being able to cash in the reward in person was best. He had no love for long-term relationships.

The temple master was floored by the young man before him once again. He knew better than anyone what sovereign missions signified. In past years, most had gone either failed or unclaimed.

In a single Bounty Arena, it was considered quite good if two or three such missions were completed, out of ten issued. Why had this young man kept three out of four? Was he able to complete a whopping seventy-five percent of the sovereign missions? That proportion was jaw-droppingly high. Incredible, truly.

Still, the Temple Master retained his composure in the face of private amazement. He was a high-ranking member of a notable organization, after all. “Arena Lord Shao, if you’re sure about taking on those three missions you have, then I will arrange for you to meet your clients immediately. You can discuss the details with them face-to-face.”

Jiang Chen thought about it. “Let them come tomorrow. I need a day’s time to think things over.”

“A friendly reminder, Arena Lord Shao. The amount of time you have to give up your mission is six hours. If you give me an answer tomorrow, and you change your mind then…” The assistant Temple Master was charitable enough with the warning.

Jiang Chen laughed. “No worries. Even if I do, the saint spirit stones I’ve made over the past couple of days should be enough to pay the associated fees.”

Assistant Temple Master Gao was not in a position to say anything further. Instead, he smiled once more. “I’ll offer my congratulations to Arena Lord Shao ahead of time, then. However, do let me note down the identification numbers on the three missions you have right now. For reference and convenience, you understand.”

“Not a problem.” Jiang Chen didn’t object.

The young lord was quite relaxed as he returned to his arena. The Ancient Reformation Pill was missing only two ingredients, a conclusion that he’d come to already a while prior. As for the Celestial Cicada Court’s incomplete formation, Jiang Chen had pretty concrete plans for it. He had seen the formation already,

after all, and there was no difficulty in it for him. The bounty reward wasn't actually in his pocket just yet, but it was as good as done.

Finally, he had no intention of interfering in the mission he'd given to Lin Yanyu. At most, he might give an inspirational hint at an important time. It was a great opportunity both to test his disciple, and for Lin Yanyu to improve his own skills.

Outrageous news tended to spread quickly. At the end of the allotted six hours, most returned their mission scrolls to the temple. Twenty-four sovereign missions had been issued, but only eight had been accepted. Out of those eight, Jiang Chen had singlehandedly taken three. Both these facts had spread almost instantaneously through the entire Bounty Arena. It made Jiang Chen the focus of the proceedings.

The other arena lords and their assistants were now looking at him with extreme shock. Not everything changed for the worse, though. The other bounty issuers, having heard this news, collectively rushed over to Jiang Chen's two arenas.

Business suddenly boomed, as it were. The sovereign missions aside, the other missions were just the same as before. The level of the bounty had simply been restricted to six or above.

This burst of bustling activity delighted all the assistants at either of Jiang Chen's two arenas. It was their time to shine! There was no better moment to rake in the profit. The other arena lords looked at the young man with great anguish. Most of them had chosen to return the sovereign missions' scrolls completely. True to their name, none of them were easy to complete.

Any returned mission was eligible to be taken by the declining arena lord's fellows, however. This regulation worked to the seniors' considerable benefit. In the moments that followed, taking several of the declined missions was exactly what they did. Jiang Chen himself refrained from stealing their thunder. He had

garnered enough attention already. He knew that accepting three sovereign missions was alarming enough. His peers would kill him if he grabbed any more–if not physically, then through looks of envy. Better to leave well enough alone.

Shortly thereafter, a new rumor began to circulate: the mission Jiang Chen had taken involving the Reformation Pill was the mission king of this Bounty Arena. It was so-called because of the sheer payout. A tidy sum of five hundred million! The number two mission belonged to Emperor Peerless, clocking in at a ludicrous four hundred million.

Pill King Blue Phoenix and Master Wang Xuetong had both snatched up three hundred million bounty missions for themselves as well. Among the mission-takers, Pill King Blue Phoenix had the largest number of missions. Four in total, to be precise. Two from his initial allotment, two transferred from the pool of rejects. Both Emperor Peerless and Master Wang Xuetong had three. Adding Jiang Chen's own three made thirteen.

The ratio of accepted sovereign missions to total elicited sounds of awe from the audience. Compared to its usual incarnations, this Bounty Arena had a shockingly high rate of sovereign mission acceptance. More than half had been received.

"The three seniors' presence has made this Bounty Arena extraordinary. As expected from one worthy to be held every several hundred years!"

"Pill King Blue Phoenix singlehandedly took four sovereign missions! No surprise there. After all, he's ranked thirty-sixth in the Hall of Millennial Legends, a man veritably equal to a pill emperor."

"Emperor Peerless took three as well. Martial dao missions are much harder than others, you know, but I guess it's worth it to get His Majesty to teach you."

"That, er, Arena Lord Shao. He's a real black horse, huh? Who

would've thought that an arena lord as young as him would accept three sovereign missions as well? He's even got the mission king! My heavens, it makes me jealous just to consider it."

"Tsk tsk, five hundred million. If I had that much money, I could break through to emperor realm just like that. The Bounty Arena is really great for getting rich quick, eh?"

"Agreed. Time to work hard to join the next one."

"Saying that is easy. Do you really think the Bounty Arena is a place where you can commit wholesale robbery just like that? If you're a talentless hack, you won't even get to be an arena lord, much less make any money."

"Ah, I suppose. Arena Lord Shao is young, but he waded through countless people to get there. The very fact that he holds mastery over two arenas explains a lot."

"I respect him a lot for it. He is a most promising new talent."

"I wonder if Arena Lord Shao has a cultivation partner? My sister is young and pretty, and pretty talented too."

"Heh, you're here dreaming about becoming his brother-in-law, but he might not be willing!" The audience was embroiled in excited chatter and discussion.

The issuance of the sovereign missions sent the Bounty Arena's atmosphere soaring to new heights. The percentage of missions accepted, furthermore, broke the record set over the past few centuries. It increased the public's expectations in the event. The arena lords for this Bounty Arena included both honorable seniors and auspicious juniors. This contrast was enjoyable to watch by itself. The increased enthusiasm reached not only the crowd, but the eyes and hearts of the Temple of Cleansing Fire's elite as well.

Chapter 1061: Haggling over the Ancient Reformation Pill

Jiang Chen hadn't notified the bounty issuers yet because he wasn't sure if Lin Yanyu could handle the mission with the eighty million bounty. Notifying them prematurely could negatively influence Lin Yanyu's reputation. It was why he asked Assistant Temple Master Gao to notify them tomorrow. Giving Lin Yanyu one day was his absolute limit.

Minutes and seconds flew by. Jiang Chen's fame reached a new high after news went out that he was the bounty king. Both of his arenas were incredibly busy. Everything went on as usual. His assistants would take on the missions first, and he'd take over whatever they couldn't handle. His income after a day's work was rather substantial.

Lin Yanyu didn't disappoint. He found a lead right before the day was up. He was still lacking a few details, but Jiang Chen could tell that he was on the verge of completing the mission.

"Very well done, Yanyu. I shall grant you the full bounty if you finish this mission by yourself. You shan't have to split the money with me." Jiang Chen transmitted words of encouragement. Assistants were supposed to share half of their bounty with the arena lord, but Jiang Chen voluntarily relinquished his half of the bounty to encourage Lin Yanyu.

Next day, Jiang Chen told the assistant temple master to summon Lin Yanyu's mission issuer. It was one of the lowest rewards among the sovereign missions, but the issuer was incredibly excited nonetheless. He expressed his appreciation to Lin Yanyu and immediately handed over the mission reward.

It was the first sovereign mission to be completed in the current Bounty Arena, and the assistant temple master was also relieved to see the completion of Jiang Chen's first sovereign mission.

Right after that, he was told to summon the emissary from the Great Yu Skysword Sect.

The Ancient Reformation Pill mission had remained unsolved for over eight hundred years. It was on track to become one of Temple's unsolvable mysteries. Assistant Temple Master Gao didn't expect that anyone to solve it. He was skeptical when Jiang Chen accepted the mission, but he soon realized that today might be the turning point for the 800 year old mystery after seeing the young arena lord's confidence.

This mission was of great significance to the Great Yu Skysword Sect. They'd even stationed emissaries in Pillfire City just for sake of the mission. Throughout the years, they'd participated in every Bounty Arena event and replaced countless emissaries. And yet, their enthusiasm didn't diminish one bit. One could easily tell how important the mission was to them.

The Great Yu Skysword Sect's emissary was currently at the Temple out of obligation. The mission had remained unsolved for over eight hundred years, so they didn't expect anyone to solve it this time either. They were in utter disbelief when they was told to enter the premises by the assistant temple master.

"Assistant Temple Master Gao, are you certain that you're not mistaken? Is it really... our mission?"

"Elder Lu, your mission is one of the top ten missions in our Temple. In terms of age, it's definitely within top three. How could I be mistaken?" The assistant temple master smiled wryly.

The beardless elder named Elder Lu scratched his nose in an awkward manner. "Does that mean that someone is finally able to complete our mission? Who is it? Is it Pill King Blue Phoenix?" He asked in an excited manner.

The elder was incredibly curious, but the assistant temple master didn't divulge anything. "Won't you know after you enter? By the way, have you prepared the spirit stones?"

“Of course. Our sect master places much importance to this mission and demands a report every year. How could we not have the reward at the ready?” the elder immediately responded.

The assistant temple master didn’t tease him any further. “Come with me.”

The elder was nervous, surprised, and at a loss for what to do. This mission was simply too important to their sect. In fact, their sect master had just given them even more saint spirit stones and was prepared to increase the bounty to 800 million. Fortunately, someone accepted the mission before the bounty was increased. Maybe we’ll be able to save the 300 million saint spirit stones after all? It wasn’t long before Elder Lu was brought to Jiang Chen’s arena.

The elder was full of skepticism. “Assistant Temple Master Gao, this is…?”

“Make no mistake. We’ve reached our destination.” The assistant temple master answered bluntly.

“We have?” the elder was flabbergasted. “But… he’s so young?”

“Arena Lord Shao, the person you seek is before you. According on the temple’s rules, we shall only act as mediator. Any further discussion regarding the mission will be up to the concerned parties. We shan’t have a hand in your matters.”

The assistant temple master swept his arms and left after he was done speaking. The Temple was doing a very good job in this matter. Many important secrets were exchanged in bounty missions that concerned parties would like to keep confidential. Even more so when pill recipes were involved. Naturally, the temple knew that it wasn’t their place to be involved.

Elder Lu had a wide grin on his face as he rubbed his fair and chubby hands together. “Let me introduce myself. My surname is Lu, and I’m an elder from the Great Yu Skysword Sect. You may

address me as Elder Lu, or Ole Lu."

"Shao Yuan."

"I know, I know. I've done some research on every single arena lord in the Bounty Arena. The only person I know very little of is you, Arena Lord Shao. I simply never imagined that it was you who accepted our mission. Youth is not a hindrance to great achievements indeed. I must say I am quite surprised." Elder Lu was clearly an excellent diplomat.

Jiang Chen nodded. "Your pill recipe, I've completed it."

"Hehe. Do you mind if we take a look at it first?"

"Elder Lu, do not take me for a fool. The pill recipe is in my head and isn't put down in writing yet. I shall only fulfill my side of the deal when I see the reward." Jiang Chen was in no mood to pay any lip service.

Elder Lu laughed in response. "Of course, of course. The reward is right here with me. 500 million saint spirit stones. I have it with me always. However, the pill recipe..."

"I shall complete it for you. You may check upon its authenticity. I shall bear all responsibilities if there are any mistakes."

The elder smiled wryly. "The problem is, how are we supposed to find you if the pill recipe is wrong? Forgive me for being blunt, but 500 million is a large sum of spirit stones. We cannot afford to take this lightly."

"That should be of no concern to you. The Temple will hunt me down if there's any foul play with the bounty missions."

Elder Lu continued to hesitate because he was still a little wary. What if it was a scam? 500 million was simply too big of a sum! How was he supposed to explain himself to the sect master if he lost it?

"Can you verify its authenticity right now?" He couldn't help but

ask.

“The mission only asks for the completion of the pill recipe. Nowhere does it say that I have to verify it too. If you wish to go back on your word, we can summon the assistant temple master to mediate this issue right now.” Jiang Chen wasn’t going to play by the elder’s rules.

Elder Lu smiled wryly. “We most definitely won’t go back on our word! We remain committed to solving this mission. It’s just that the procedure is a little…”

“The procedure is simple. I accept the mission, complete the mission, and take my reward. If you are going to renege on the deal, I shall have to ask the temple to speak to you.”

It was simply fair trade. If Jiang Chen went back on his word, he’d be fined an amount equal to the bounty. It was only natural that the Skysword Sect would have to abide by the same rules as well. The authenticity of the deal was a matter for future discussion. If it was really a scam, the Temple would deal with it.

In reality, there hadn’t been many cases of scams throughout the five thousand year history of the Bounty Arena. It was simply too big of a risk. Many attempts were immediately exposed. Even if it wasn’t, the scammers were often hunted down by the full force of the Temple. In some cases, they were even hunted down by the full force of Pillfire City. Moreover, the city would also post arrest warrants of the criminal so that the entire human domain would join on the hunt. Only a fool would ever try to commit a scam in the Bounty Arena. Most people would never try such a thing, unless they sought death.

Elder Lu was likely wary because of Jiang Chen’s age.

“Arena Lord Shao, why don’t we make a deal? If you verify its authenticity now, I… I shall increase the reward a little.” He was prepared to bleed money.

“The verification process is extremely complicated. I can complete the pill recipe, but that doesn’t mean I can refine the pill immediately. You should understand that having a recipe isn’t all there is to refining a pill. A lot of practice and trial and error is needed before I can successfully refine the pill.” Jiang Chen was actually capable of refining the pill now, but since they wanted him to verify it, he might as well exaggerate the difficulty to increase the reward even more. A big fat sheep had delivered itself to his doorstep. Might as well make a good slaughter out of it!

Elder Lu gritted his teeth. “If you verify it, I’m willing to add another 100 million to the bounty.”

Jiang Chen shook his head in response. “Too much labor is required. I00 million isn’t worth the effort.

“200 million.”

Jiang Chen still shook his head. “Nope.”

Elder Lu was on the verge of tears. What kind of person was he? Would it kill him if to accept the 200 million? The 300 million extra he received from his superiors was an unavoidable cost after all.

“300 million for verification. I need not the pill, only proof that the theory is sound.”

The creation of a pill depended on many factors, but the affinity between the ingredients was easy to verify. Elder Lu was a seasoned expert and knew how to verify the authenticity of a recipe. A finished product wasn’t needed. The recipe wouldn’t be false as long as there was complete affinity between the ingredients.

“Give me another 500 million and I’ll give you verification. One billion, and I’ll refine a complete pill. Deal or no deal, it’s entirely up to you.” Jiang Chen finally disclosed his minimum demand.

The elder nearly fainted. The youth before him was being too

cruel. 500 million for a mere verification? The amount of money he received from his superiors was only a mere 300 million! 500 million was clearly beyond his limit! However, his eyes gleamed when he fully comprehended Jiang Chen's words. "Wait. You said you'd refine the pill if I gave you a billion?"

Chapter 1062: Celestial Cicada Court

Elder Lu had still been lingering at the bargaining stage when realization struck. I can refine a finished pill for you if you're willing to add another billion to your bounty. The revelation was like a sudden clap of thunder that reverberated throughout his mind. When he recovered from the shock, he stared at Jiang Chen as if he had turned into an imbecile. All kinds of conflicting emotions appeared in his eyes: shock, hope, doubt, worry…

Jiang Chen was secretly amused when he saw his reaction. He understood why Elder Lu wore the expression he did. The elder had pursued this relentlessly despite failing to find an answer for eight hundred years. Thus, it must be very important to him.

The Great Yu Skysword Sect never discarded the bounty for the Ancient Reformation Pill even thought it had been hung for eight hundred years. In fact, they even left some men in Pillfire City just in case someone had picked up the bounty. This showed just how important the Ancient Reformation Pill was to Great Yu Skysword Sect. That was why Jiang Chen boldly requested Elder Lu to increase the reward by a full billion. Of course, he wasn't making an empty claim.

As expected, Elder Lu's conflicted expression turned into one of deep expectation. When Elder Lu saw that Jiang Chen was smiling wordlessly, he lost his patience first and asked, "Arena Lord Shao, are you sure you aren't joking?"

Jiang Chen smiled calmly. "Do I look like I'm making a joke?"

Elder Lu had been staring and probing Jiang Chen all this time. It definitely didn't look like the latter was joking with him. Can this young man really refine the Ancient Reformation Pill? But… isn't this a little too good to be true?

The elder hesitated greatly for a moment, his heart full of doubt. He didn't think that Jiang Chen's demand was overly ridiculous,

but he did wonder if the young man truly had the skill to fulfill the task. If he truly could restore the pill recipe and refine the Ancient Reformation Pill, then Great Yu Skysword Sect was willing to pay even if his demand went higher than a billion. The question was, was it a scam or not?

“Arena Lord Shao,” Elder said in a very serious tone, “I sincerely wish to work with you. Right now, I only have one question to ask: can you really refine this Ancient Reformation Pill?”

Jiang Chen frowned. “Seeing is believing. Show me one point five billion saint spirit stones, and I will exchange it with the pill.”

Elder Lu was overjoyed. “Alright. Let us summon someone from the Temple to serve as the notary!”

“Please summon Emperor Peerless too.” Jiang Chen wasn’t completely sure about the Temple’s integrity, so he wished to involve Emperor Peerless in this affair. He was now in the same boat as the emperor anyways. If the great emperor truly desired the Pinecrane Pill, he would stand by Jiang Chen’s side.

Elder Lu had no problems with this demand. He nodded. “No problem. As long as this is a fair trade, Great Yu Skysword Sect will treat this with absolute sincerity!”

Jiang Chen answered indifferently, “The same goes here.”

Elder Lu cupped his heads. “In that case, allow me to head back and prepare the saint spirit stones. I’m not authorized to carry one point five billion spirit stones, so I need to head back and report to the higher up first. It should be a simple matter, and I can be the decision maker if necessary, but even then I need some time to gather all the money.”

“Do as you please, but I’m still going to repeat what I said earlier. The bounty is complete, so you must pay five hundred million to me first. Otherwise, I will take this as a breach of the agreement.” Jiang Chen had no intention of letting Elder Lu go without

payment. If the old man decided to renege on the debt, then his efforts would become wasted.

Elder Lu reluctantly agreed. “Alright, please accept five hundred million saint spirit stones. In return, please give me the complete pill recipe.”

This was the content of the initial agreement. The pill refinement was something that was added later on, so it would be dealt as such. The trade was completed on the spot. Once the trade was complete, Elder Lu hurriedly left the Temple in an obvious hurry to prepare the money and report to his higher-ups. Since he had obtained his reward, Jiang Chen didn’t care if the elder showed up later or not.

Surprisingly, Assistant Temple Master Gao walked over to Jiang Chen with a smile after witnessing Elder Lu’s departure. “Elder Lu looks to be in a hurry. Is there something urgent?”

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. “He needs me for something else, but that is a matter for another time. Oh right, please invite the third bounty poster over to my arena too.”

Jiang Chen had a total of three sovereign rank bounties in his hands. Elder Lu’s bounty was just the second. The third sovereign rank bounty was about a formation. Truthfully speaking, Jiang Chen was far more interested in this bounty than the one regarding the Ancient Reformation Pill.

Although the reward of this bounty was incomparable to the Ancient Reformation Pill, it was intricately tied to Jiang Chen’s person. He had obtained the Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect’s inheritance, so he possessed both the sect’s keepsake and medallion. That was why he was so curious about Celestial Cicada Court’s formation. Where the Celestial Cicada Court and Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect connected to each other?

Assistant Temple Master Gao quickly brought the bounty poster to him. To his surprise, the bounty poster was a woman. It was

only after Assistant Temple Master Gao had introduced her that he learned that she was of deep background. She was a newly appointed keeper who was ranked last among all other keepers of Celestial Cicada Court.

But despite her ranking, she was without a doubt a person who wielded great authority. After all, there were only a few keepers in the Celestial Cicada Court. Jiang Chen examined this woman of unknown age and felt a little curious.

Assistant Temple Master Gao introduced Jiang Chen. “Keeper Xia, this is Arena Lord Shao and has already resolved the most difficult bounty of the event before you. Do not underestimate him because of his youth, his talent is in no way inferior to the three great seniors.”

“If that is true, then I am the ignorant one here.” Keeper Xia’s voice was rougher and louder than an average woman’s.

Assistant Temple Master Gao smiled slightly. “Enjoy your talk. Please summon me for anything you need.”

It was inevitable that the two parties would talk about the heart of the matter, so he would do well to stay away from it. After Assistant Temple Master Gao had left, a bit of judgment immediately entered Keeper Xia’s eyes. She immediately cut to the heart of the matter. “Arena Lord Shao, can you complete this formation?”

Jiang Chen smiled but didn’t give her a direct answer. Instead, he asked, “Keeper Xia, I will like to ask you a question before answering yours. Where did you get this formation? Judging from its patterns and characteristics, I believe this is an ancient formation.”

His words caught Keeper Xia off guard.

“Does this have anything to do with our trade?” Keeper Xia sounded a little displeased.

“Very.” Jiang Chen smiled. “If you won’t tell me how you come by this formation or its origin, then I won’t complete this formation for you.”

He didn’t beat around the bush either and spoke candidly.

“Arena Lord Shao, please don’t forget that you’ll have to pay us the compensation fee if you renege on your promise.” Keeper Xia obviously didn’t expect this young man to be such a character.

But Jiang Chen didn’t care about her threat. He smiled indifferently. “It’s not like your reward is anything generous, so I’m able to pay it in full. In case you didn’t know, that Elder Lu who left earlier already gave me five hundred million.”

He had money, and he could do whatever he wanted. That was the impression Jiang Chen gave Keeper Xia right now.

Keeper Xia inhaled deeply before frowning. “Are you sure you can complete this formation?”

“In the past, I coincidentally came by some text about ancient formation models and read about them. Not only have I seen this model before, I’ve even studied it intensely for a while. It is truly an impressive ancient formation.” Jiang Chen’s tone was filled with implied meaning.

Keeper Xia was speechless. The arena lord’s intentions were as clear as day.

“Arena Lord Shao, what is the point of you knowing its origin? This formation is something our Celestial Cicada Court inherited since ancient times. That is why it means next to nothing to an outsider.”

“It’s an inheritance of Celestial Cicada Court?” Jiang Chen looked a little doubtful.

“That’s right. This formation is something we inherited since ancient times. Unfortunately, much about this formation has been lost today.” Keeper Xia let out a quiet sigh before casting Jiang

Chen a doubtful glance. “You said that you’ve seen this formation model before, but I must say that I seriously doubt your claim.”

But Jiang Chen didn’t follow her line of thought. Instead, he changed tack. “You say that this is an inheritance of Celestial Cicada Court, but to my knowledge it belongs to a great formation sect of ancient times. Unfortunately, that ancient sect fought to the last and perished in a blaze of glory during the war against the demon race.”

Keeper Xia looked incredibly surprised when she heard this. “What? When you say a great ancient formation sect of ancient times, do you mean… Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect?”

Jiang Chen was surprised by her answer, but maintained a confident smile on his face. Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect? Perhaps Celestial Cicada Court really was related to Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect. How else could she have uttered their title otherwise? After all, the sect had sealed its headquarters and ceased passing down their inheritance.

“Is it truly Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect?” Keeper Xia stared stupidly at Jiang Chen. Her aged but still beautiful eyes shone with deep desire as she asked excitedly, “If I may be so bold, may I know where have you seen this formation model?”

It was obvious that Jiang Chen’s discovery was terribly shocking news for Keeper Xia. It might involve the very fate of Celestial Cicada Court.

“It is in a place that you can never reach.” Jiang Chen smiled calmly.

“A place we can never reach?” Keeper Xia whispered to herself. “But where? Arena Lord Shao, this matter is of the utmost importance to Celestial Cicada Court. Please tell me.”

By now, Jiang Chen had confirmed that Celestial Cicada Court and Ancient Crimson Heavens Sect had no direct ties with each

other given the keeper's attitude.

"I saw this formation in Myriad Abyss Island." For now, there was no way Jiang Chen was going to tell Celestial Cicada Court about the secret realm in Mt. Rippling Mirage.

Chapter 1063: A Great Haul

Myriad Abyss Island? Keeper Xia's reaction was identical to that of Assistant Temple Master Gao, Emperor Peerless, and the rest. Her eyes widened and her slender body shook. "You... you're talking about that place?" She gasped.

Jiang Chen nodded impassively. His makeshift secret was out in the open. If he was going to lie, he might as well go the full length.

'Myriad Abyss Island.' These three words almost had a magic to them. Anyone who heard them behaved exactly the same way, no matter how lofty their position, how distinct their strength. Once again, it was utter and unreserved shock. It took a long while for the female keeper to recover herself. "Myriad... Abyss... Island," she muttered. "That place of legend... does it actually exist?"

Jiang Chen laughed briskly. "Why does everyone think otherwise?"

"No, that's not it," Keeper Xia sighed softly. "It's just... Myriad Abyss Island is too mysterious. Since time immemorial, countless experts from the human domain have dedicated their lives to seeking that insubstantial, mythical place. But there's never been any news."

As a poet once wrote, 'Of immortal isles seafarers speak / Beyond mist and wave, their shores so hard to seek.' Many immortal lands were spoken of in legend and lore, yet a scant few could actually be found.

"Enough. Look, I've completed the formation." Jiang Chen waved a hand. He took out the diagram he'd finished, tossing it to the keeper.

Keeper Xia hadn't expected such generosity from the young man. She hadn't paid yet, but he was already letting her see the diagram. How remarkable he was showed through his actions. Her face

changed color with only a single glance. Her expression grew solemn, eyes glittering with consternation. The formation diagram that the Celestial Cicada Court supplied had been completely rough. The completed version before her now was much clearer. As an expert herself, she saw his supreme expertise.

Keeper Xia had devoted countless hours studying formations. One look was enough to cement her opinion of Jiang Chen as a true master. After a long pause, she finally moved her eyes reluctantly away from the diagram. They pointed towards the youthful arena lord once more, their contents overflowing joy and respect.

There was a sliver of puzzlement as well, but she decided to hold her tongue from inquiring further. Handing over the agreed-upon bounty to him, the keeper accompanied it with another meaningful glance.

“Arena Lord Shao, I’ve never imagined this mission would be completed by a youngster. It is as the age-old adage. Ambitious young men can accomplish great things despite their youthfulness.”

Her tone was filled with approval. In addition, she extended an invitation to the promising star. “Arena Lord Shao, I would like to formally request you to come visit our sect, on behalf of the entire Celestial Cicada Court. Personally, I sincerely hope that you have the time to drop by. Our Court is situated in the southeast of the Upper Eight Regions, a resource-rich land teeming with genius. In particular, a great number of beauties hail from our vicinity. If you’re still single, perhaps you’ll consider…?”

Jiang Chen tried and failed to stifle a laugh. He was going to the Celestial Cicada Court, alright, but not because of the pretty girls there. Definitely not, not at all. His lack of an answer only spurred Keeper Xia on.

“It’s a promise, then! Our doors will always be open for you.”

The young arena lord responded with a carefree chuckle and a

wave. The three sovereign missions thus completed, Jiang Chen thought he'd have a moment's reprieve. To the contrary, however, he spotted Master Wang Xuetong approaching mere seconds after Keeper Xia's departure. The old formation expert wore an astounded expression. "Arena Lord Shao, was that... someone from the Celestial Cicada Court? The formation that they had a bounty on... has it been, ah, completed?"

Wang Xuetong was an old man whose life had been dedicated to the art of formations. He was absolutely enamored by them, and anything formation-related was able to draw his interest. He had seen the Celestial Cicada Court's formation-related bounty himself before. Alas, he'd been hopelessly lost as to how exactly to approach it. He did know one thing, though, despite his lack of a solution. The Court's formation was related to an ancient formation-based sect's heritage.

Keeper Xia's reluctant departure gave him an indistinct clue. The conclusion that it led to was utterly disquieting, and he wanted to see if he could ascertain its veracity. An initial supposition was that Arena Lord Shao had completed the bounty. There was no explanation for Keeper Xia's cheerful walk out otherwise.

Jiang Chen saw no point in deception. "I happened to see the formation once back at Myriad Abyss Island," he chuckled. "So... I got off easy with this one."

Master Wang Xuetong's jaw slackened. His mouth was wide enough to stuff several buns into. How could it have been such a coincidence? 9He felt nothing short of disbelief, yet–what other explanation was there? Was the young man instead a formation master that surpassed even him, instead? Gulping down his accumulated saliva, the formation master sighed softly. "Arena Lord Shao, I find it hard to see through you. Are all of the young geniuses from Myriad Abyss Island as heaven-defying as you?"

Not knowing how to answer the question, Jiang Chen stayed quiet instead.

Wang Xuetong had some professionalism left in him, and chose not to inquire further about the bounty's specifics. He knew that it was strictly forbidden to ask about others' missions. Forcibly suppressing his rampant curiosity, he left Jiang Chen's arena with a bellyful of suspicions. Because Arena Lord Shao was the first to complete all of his sovereign missions, the two arenas under his jurisdiction were subject to even better business prospects.

Furthermore, this increased the arena lord's personal fame. All around the Bounty Arena's premises, news spread of the rise of an Arena Lord Shao who was young but extremely proficient. His ability did not pale in comparison to any of his three seniors. The other arena lords were far below their collective level.

By now, insubstantial rumors had spread to Pill King Blue Phoenix about the completion of the Great Yu Skysword Sect's eight-hundred-year bounty. His heart itched to unearth the specifics. Without the heavy workload on his hands, he had half a heart to go ask about it immediately. The final three days were as spectacular as advertised.

Sovereign missions aside, ninth rank missions appeared with alarming regularity as well. This was yet another form of elevation for the current iteration of the Bounty Arena. As with many things in the world, the Bounty Arena was benefiting from a positive feedback loop.

Jiang Chen's outrageous performance had made the rounds by now. Everyone knew that the eight-hundred-year sovereign mission had been completed today, which generated a sort of invisible push. Those who hadn't been particularly optimistic about the event had their interests piqued. They came out of their homes and into the Arena's audience. There were even outcries for the Temple of Cleansing Fire to add a few days, that those who missed the Bounty Arena earlier could have a chance at participating.

Unfortunately for that, rules were rules. Even if the Temple

agreed, the arena lords who worked here were unlikely to do the same. It was easy money, but also very demanding. Fatigue had started piling up on them. No one here was an unthinking automaton.

It wasn't until the latter part of the Bounty Arena's final day that the Great Yu Skysword Sect's Elder Lu arrived, rather belatedly.

"My apologies, Arena Lord Shao. I am a little late." The elder's forehead was beaded with sweat. It seemed as if he'd rusheed here in great hurry. His expression told all. He was both anxious and excited.

"The Bounty Arena is about to close, Elder Lu. Your eleventh-hour arrival is a little more than just simple tardiness." Jiang Chen smiled faintly.

Elder Lu was deferential. He could not criticize what Jiang Chen had said, but he hadn't planned to keep the Temple of Cleansing Fire as the middle-man in the first place.

He spoke in a low voice. "Arena Lord Shao, I came here today to tell you something more. We want to add a billion to your reward as long as you're willing to refine a single Reformation Pill for us. It's a private invitation, and the Temple is not involved. You won't need to give them a cut of the money."

Any bounty posted at the Bounty Arena entitled the Temple of Cleansing Fire to a portion of the earnings. It wasn't a large percentage, but an enormous principal still made for a sizable deduction.

"Deal." Jiang Chen did not hesitate. Refining the Reformation Pill wasn't hard for him at all. "But you have to provide the materials, and I'll do it when I see fit."

Elder Lu was glowing with happiness. "Of course, of course. As soon as possible would be amazing, but at your convenience."

"I, too, hope to get it done as soon as possible," Jiang Chen said

coolly. “It’s just, there’s an auction after the Bounty Arena that I’m planning on attending. The pill will have to wait until after that.”

Elder Lu knew about the auction. “Alright. The auction will only take a day or too. We can wait that long, no problem.”

The agreement with the elder made, Jiang Chen no longer planned to accept any more missions. Any missions that were submitted would be left up to his assistants. Though there were tons of people swarming in still in the last few hours, most arena lords followed Jiang Chen’s lead. Thus, the assistants had to shoulder the bulk of the work on the last day.

With the passing of its final moments, the present Bounty Arena finally came to a resounding close. All of the assistants were very pleased. Business had been excellent this time. The last couple of days especially had enriched each and every one of them substantially. Half of their bounties had been given to their arena lords, but they still brought in a tidy sum.

After paying the portion that was rightfully the Temple’s, Lin Yanyu’s personal net income exceeded two hundred million. For him, it was a king’s trove. Lin Zhirong had made only a little less than Lin Yanyu did. Both the Lins’ incomes ranked within the top five among all the assistants of the Bounty Arena.

Jiang Chen’s income was even more ludicrous than that. His profit amounted to two or three billion. This serendipitous influx of wealth multiplied his fortune. He now had access to a greater sum than the majority of emperor realm cultivators. However, the best takeaway had been the boost to his reputation. It emboldened him for the auction ahead.

Chapter 1064: Invitation To The Auction

The scale of the Bounty Arena had ballooned with each passing day. At the very beginning, the Temple only aimed to make it a once in a decade event. With the participation of the three great seniors, it became a once in every three centuries event. However, the insight provided by the three seniors and Jiang Chen had elevated it even further, making it a once in a millennia event.

That Jiang Chen was able to solve the Great Yu Skysword Sect's mission even though it had been unsolved for over 800 years caused a great sensation in Pillfire City.

Even though the great emperor factions didn't attend the Bounty Arena themselves, the Temple of Cleansing Fire made sure to report the daily affairs of the event to them. The arena lords' achievements were reported in full. The Temple didn't divulge Jiang Chen's identity as they'd sworn an oath, but his achievements were strongly highlighted by Assistant Temple Master Gao.

When the Skysword Sect's mission was completed, the assistant temple master immediately reported it to the various great emperor factions. Thus, all factions in the shadows were growing aware of the person named Shao Yuan.

Countless people in Pillfire City were astounded. What exactly was his background? How did he solve a mission that nobody else could in 800 years? Of course, those who didn't participate in the Bounty Arena knew nothing about the details of the mission. And there were some who knew, but they weren't allowed to divulge the contents. However, the fact that it had been unsolved for over 800 years was proof of its difficulty.

The name of Shao Yuan became the focus of the entire city. Pillfire City was a painfully pragmatic place. Since Shao Yuan was currently the hot topic in the city, many factions immediately

attempted to rope him over to their side. Their attempts were all in vain. Many tried to borrow the Temple's influence to recruit him, but the Temple only responded with discouragement. They were certain Shao Yuan would never join any of these factions.

Pill King Blue Phoenix visited Jiang Chen immediately after the conclusion of the event. He wanted to know more about the Great Xia Skysword Sect's mission. The pill king smiled wryly after hearing Jiang Chen's affirmative response, as he was completely speechless. To think that he'd once thought that the youth before him was desecrating pill dao during the selection! His cheeks flushed red when he recalled the matter.

"Brother Shao, I'm truly ashamed. Today, I finally understand there is always someone better me, and that the sky's the limit. I was conceited and was way too proud of myself just because I was ranked thirty-sixth in the Hall of Millennial Legends. Compared to you, I'm but a worm." The pill king had an odd personality, but he always looked up to those that were better than him, and owned up to his mistakes.

"Pill King Blue Phoenix, you are too harsh on yourself. I only completed this mission due to sheer luck. My master once tested me on a similar topic. He and I have done extensive research on this pill recipe." Jiang Chen explained.

Blaming it all on luck might not seem very convincing, but it worked more often than not. He was too young after all. Nobody would believe his over-the-top words. Putting the blame on coincidence would ease the burden of their hearts. Just like many powerful pill kings in Veluriyam Capital, Pill King Blue Phoenix greatly revered this "master" that Jiang Chen so often spoke about.

Emperor Peerless walked over at this point and laughed joyfully. "Little junior, I heard that you're the bounty king of the event!"

Jiang Chen responded with a smile. "It's all just blind luck."

“It could be blind luck if it has only happened once or twice. But more than that? I’m afraid luck is no longer a suitable explanation.” Emperor Peerless laughed.

“I agree. If it was blind luck, you could never have gotten first for both the pill dao and general zone. It’s clear that these results are the fruit of your labor and talents.” The pill king spoke with every ounce of seriousness.

Master Wang Xuetong soon arrived too. “Brother Shao, for a moment, I even considered becoming your disciple. I have too many confusions regarding formations. Won’t you consider exchanging some pointers with me when you’re free? We might learn a lot from each other!”

Emperor Peerless immediately poked fun of him. “You should give up you old fool, I’ve already reserved all of Brother Shao’s free time.”

Wang Xuetong protested. “Emperor Peerless, that’s not fair! Sniff sniff… I’ll soon fall ill if I don’t clear up my confusions!”

“No use crying in front of me.” The emperor smiled cunningly. He knew that Wang Xuetong was a seasoned actor.

Assistant Temple Master Gao arrived while they were in the middle of their jokes. “I apologize for the interruption. Will all of you be attending our auction tomorrow? We have collected many incredible items. It’ll be our honor to have you as guests.

The assistant temple master had issued a blanket invite to everyone. Emperor Peerless was indifferent. If Jiang Chen was attending, then he would too. Otherwise, he’d rather bring Jiang Chen to the Tilted Moon Region as soon as possible. Pill King Blue Phoenix didn’t seem interested. The amount of money he made from joining the Bounty Arena was beyond count, but Jiang Chen’s heaven defying talent in pill dao had dealt a large blow to his confidence. It served as reminder to his inadequacy. All he wanted to do now was go home and enter closed cultivation.

Wang Xuetong looked at Jiang Chen with an odd smile. “I’ll let Brother Shao decide. If he attends, then so shall I.”

The assistant temple master was rather surprised. Since when did these eminent figures care so much about the opinions of this young man? All of their decisions revolved around him. He was impressed by Jiang Chen’s charm. He knew from personal experience just how difficult it was to invite these figures. Doing so increased the prestige of the event greatly. Yet somehow, their attendance was dependant on this young man.

Jiang Chen didn’t hide his intentions. “I will attend the auction.”

Wang Xuetong’s eyes glimmered. “Then I shall too! Don’t want to miss out on the fun!”

Emperor Peerless laughed. “It’s been years since I’ve attended an auction. Is there anything that might pique my interest?”

“Finding something that that might pique the interest of a great emperor is truly easier said than done.” The assistant temple master smiled wryly.

Pill King Blue Phoenix had wanted to leave at first, but his interest was piqued when Jiang Chen agreed to attend. “If Brother Shao is going, then I shall too. I wonder what treasure will catch the eye of a genius as talented as him!”

The assistant temple master was ecstatic when all three eminent figures agreed to attend. “With all of you attending, the prestige of our auction will be brought up a notch again. You have my sincerest gratitude.”

“Thank Brother Shao.” Wang Xuetong laughed slyly. “We’re only attending because of him.”

Emperor Peerless smiled without saying anything, but it was clear he agreed with the sentiment.

……

Star Harvester Headquarters.

The boss of the Star Harvesters and his lieutenants were gathered in a meeting. An outlier stood out amongst them. It was Miss Keke, the shop assistant from the Star Mill.

“Keke, what have you learned from your past few visits?” Gai Zonglin, the boss of the Star Harvesters, looked at Miss Keke.

Keke’s voice was crisp and clear. “He… he’s still very much interested, but he seems very dissatisfied with on our price.”

Gai Zonglin burst into an odd laughter. “You might not know this part, my newest intelligence will definitely shock you. That brat is called Shao Yuan. He has taken part in the Bounty Arena, earned two arena lord seats, and became the bounty king of the event. He even resolved a pill dao mission that nobody else could in 800 years. Almost all factions within Pillfire City are trying to recruit him.”

Manager Xiao from the Star Mill sighed. “One should never judge others by looks alone. I’ve truly underestimated him.”

Gai Zonglin waved his hands disparagingly. “There’s no use saying all this. Master Mu must be taken off our hands in the coming auction. Many great factions are interested in Master Mu, but many of them want to acquire him without paying the appropriate price by forcing our hands. We, the Star Harvesters, will never settle for a loss! In the coming auction, he shall be sold to the highest bidder!”

“Mm. I hope Arena Lord Shao will attend the auction. He’s gained a strong public following and is thus worthy of bidding against all the strong factions. It might not be a bad thing if he wins the bid. He’s more generous than any of the factions in Pillfire City.” Manager Xiao theorized.

Gai Zonglin agreed, but an elder didn’t share the same sentiment. “Boss, we don’t know if the auction is a blessing or a calamity in

disguise. Many factions covet Master Mu. If he's sold to an outsider, we might be shunned by the society at large!" There were also a few others who agreed with this opinion.

Gai Zonglin frowned. "Our city runs by its own set of rules. If they're interested in Master Mu, they should show their sincerity! We must not be held hostage by their power!"

"Yes! We can't allow that to happen!"

"The auction is fair. Whoever bids the most gets the prize. Those without the power or strength deserve to lose." The crowd mostly agreed with Gai Zonglin.

Chapter 1065: Radiant Celestial Grass

In the end, Gai Zonglin made the final decision to auction off Master Mu. The highest bidder would win. Although they risked offending some factions by doing this, the Star Harvesters knew very well that they were going to offend someone no matter what their choices were.

They knew that it was almost impossible to offend no one in this endeavor because no matter what happened, there was still only one genius with an innate wood constitution of high order in stock. Someone would be offended no matter who they sold Master Mu to, and chances were some were going to be more offended than the rest. But if the Star Harvesters auctioned off Master Mu, then they could at least limit the damage. After all, they could hardly be blamed for their bidders' inability to afford a product.

……

The Temple's Bounty Arena this time was of incredibly high standards, and it attracted a lot of eyeballs as well. Its popularity indirectly boosted the auction's popularity, and the Temple took the opportunity to strongly promote the key arena lords who were participating in today's auction. All of this contributed to the auction's popularity.

Jiang Chen had transformed from a nobody to a person of much greater status and importance thanks to his feats in the Bounty Arena. His qualifications had been questioned when he first registered, but now he was an arena lord who stood on an equal footing with the three great seniors.

His identity and the halo behind said identity had proven that he was no one to be underestimated. This was without mentioning the sheer amount of money he'd earned from the Bounty Arena. It automatically made him one of the most welcomed VIPs of the auction. There was no need to verify his buying power and wealth

anymore. As of now, there were only a handful of wealthy locals who could compete against him after he'd earned more than two billion saint spirit stones from the Bounty Arena. That was why Jiang Chen received VIP seating along with the three great seniors.

There were twenty to thirty seats in the VIP area, but unlike last time, the place was packed full of people. Moreover, it looked like they might have to add seats to accommodate more guests. Thankfully, the VIP area was very spacious, and the Temple was ready to deal with any kind of situation.

Lin Yanyu had also participated in the auction, but he was only qualified to sit in the common area. Every person who sat in the VIP area had to go through a series of strict evaluations. No one who hadn't reached a certain level of importance were allowed to sit here.

Although there were some complaints in the back that Jiang Chen shouldn't be seated alongside the three great seniors, no one dared voice them out loud, especially considering how highly the three seniors regarded the young man. The rumor was that Emperor Peerless admired him so much that the great emperor had offended a couple of Pillfire City factions for his sake.

According to the rumors, a lot of factions had tried to recruit the young man, but he had turned them all down. Some factions had tried to use both carrot and stick, as well as some other more shameful methods to force the young man to comply, but they had all been taken out by Emperor Peerless without mercy.

Although these were just rumors, there wouldn't be smoke without fire. No one knew why Emperor Peerless would regard the young man so highly, but judging from the way he was talking and laughing animatedly with the young man, there had to be some truth behind the rumors.

"Brother Shao, do you realize that you're more popular than me right now?" Wang Xuetong joked laughingly.

Pill King Blue Phoenix deeply agreed with this sentiment. “I too feel like some Pillfire City’s powers are just itching to carry you off right now. I must admit that I’m feeling a little envious.”

Although the pill king’s tone was a little exaggerated, there were some truth behind his words.

Jiang Chen smiled wryly. “Maybe they’re just eyeing what I earned during the Bounty Arena.”

“There’s no need to be humble, kid. There is a reason why Pillfire City is the heart of the Upper Eight Regions. Their thirst for talent is something you cannot possibly imagine. Your wealth possess may be very attractive, but those top rate factions care far more about your talent.” Emperor Peerless smiled.

Pill King Blue Phoenix agreed with him. “Emperor Peerless is absolutely right. Maybe they’re acting so hasty because there hasn’t been an outstanding young man in Pillfire City in far too long.”

Wang Xuetong chuckled. “Brother Shao, if you wish to stay indefinitely in the human domain, I believe that Pillfire City may be your best choice.”

Formation Master Wang Xuetong was a denizen of Pillfire City. Unlike Emperor Peerless, he felt a deep sense of belonging to his homeland. That was why he spoke up on behalf of Pillfire City. But before Jiang Chen could say anything, Pill King Blue Phoenix shook his head. “I think Brother Shao will shine wherever he goes. It is true that Pillfire City is the heart of the human domain, but that doesn’t necessarily mean it has to be Brother Shao’s final destination.”

Emperor Peerless praised him. “You’re right, Blue Phoenix. Pillfire City may be great, but it’s absolutely not going to be Brother Shao’s final destination.”

The quartet chatted cheerfully with each other. Occasionally, a

bigwig or two would show up and greet them courteously. Emperor Peerless maintained an almost emotionless mask on his face. He wasn't unapproachable, but he wasn't too friendly either. Formation Master Wang Xuetong was a lot more courteous than Emperor Peerless. He was willing to hold a conversation no matter who approached him.

As for Pill King Blue Phoenix, he was infamous for his hot temper and straightforwardness. He obviously didn't want to be disturbed by anyone right now, so his response to the greetings was even cooler than Emperor Peerless'. That being said, he had the right to put on airs just like Emperor Peerless.

Countless factions in Pillfire City had tried to recruit Pill King Blue Phoenix into their fold, but he never joined any of them even though so many years had passed. The heavyweights wisely stopped disturbing the group and went to their seats after noticing the cool indifference on Emperor Peerless and Pill King Blue Phoenix's faces. Not long after, Assistant Temple Master Gao of the Temple of Cleansing Fire announced that the auction had officially begun.

The professional auctioneer who was going to direct this auction was an absolutely tantalizing woman with an hourglass figure. Everyone in the Temple called her Madam Man. [1]

The atmosphere of the auction immediately heated up the second she stepped on stage. The participants at the common area grew noisy as they hooted continuously at the woman. Madam Man was obviously not a stranger to this scene at all. She was charming but not vulgar, and she graciously accepted the crowd's cheers.

"Honored guests, the kind of Bounty Arena that happens only once in a millennium has just ended not long ago. Thanks to this opportunity, we are likewise able to raise the quality of this auction by quite a bit. We are lucky to have invited many seniors, masters, and powerful tycoons of Pillfire City to this auction, and we will like for everyone to enjoy a beautiful night today." Madam

Man had a crisp voice that was pleasant on the ears. It was a voice that seemed able to pierce one's heart and draw the listener towards her before they realized it.

"This woman is no ordinary person." Formation Master Wang Xuetong sighed quietly. Pill King Blue Phoenix still had no sentiments to offer. It was obvious that he wasn't very pleased with Madam Man's methods.

Emperor Peerless smiled faintly, but turned his head to ask Jiang Chen a question. "My young friend, is there something in particular that you wish to bid for?"

"Yes." Jiang Chen didn't try to hide his intentions.

Emperor Peerless gave the young man a smile after seeing his honesty and patted him suddenly on the shoulder. "Just ask if you need me for anything."

Jiang Chen didn't turn down the favor. Again, he nodded slightly.

Madam Man's voice rang once more. "The first item to be presented in our auction today is a sky rank spirit herb. This spirit herb is the Radiant Celestial Grass, also known as the main ingredient to refine the Sage Smile Pill."

The Radiant Celestial Grass? Everyone was startled to hear this. The auction had just started, and the value of the first auctioned item was a great surprise. A sky rank spirit herb was no ordinary item. Even a common sky rank spirit herb was auctioned at a starting price of several tens of millions, and this was assuming that the price wasn't raised beyond a reasonable level due to malicious bidding.

The Radiant Celestial Grass was even more extraordinary. It was a rare item even amongst sky rank spirit herbs, and it was at least several times more expensive than the common sky rank spirit herb. The Radiant Celestial Grass had incredible medicinal effects.

A common shoot of it could be used to refine at least a few cauldrons of Sage Smile Pills.

And what was a Sage Smile Pill? It was a pill that could unconditionally increase the cultivation level of a sage realm expert by one. Origin realm cultivators had the Origin Doubling Pill, and sage realm experts had the Sage Smile Pill. Both pills had the same effect.

A pill like this wasn't sold in the markets at all. Even if there was a market, they would only ever be traded in private. It was impossible for anyone to buy a pill like this in public. The number of such pills was too little, not to mention it was the kind of pill that no one would sell. Even if the owner of the pill couldn't use it themselves, there were countless friends and families to give away too, so why would they ever sell such a precious pill?

That was why a Sage Smile Pill was almost impossible to buy no matter how rich one was. What was even better, the Sage Smile Pill's pill recipe wasn't lost to the world. It might still be rarer than staple goods, but there were a lot of pill dao factions who knew how to refine a Sage Smile Pill. The problem was that the ingredients to refine a Sage Smile Pill was difficult to find. They could only be chanced upon.

Out of all the ingredients that made up the Sage Smile Pill, its main ingredient, the Radiant Celestial Grass, was the most difficult to gather as it was hard to find. Therefore, the production of Sage Smile Pill decreased massively as a result. All of this led to the ultimate question: why was the Temple was able to auction off a blade of Radiant Celestial Grass?

When Madam Man saw that the crowd's reaction was cooler than expected, she understood immediately that they were still coming to terms with the fact that a Radiant Celestial Grass was being auctioned off. Logically speaking, no one in their right minds would ever auction a precious spirit herb like this.

“Everyone, you must be asking: why is the Temple of Cleansing Fire auctioning a Radian Celestial Grass? It’s actually a funny story. First, it doesn’t belong to us. It was consigned to us, and this seller is just an origin realm cultivator. He doesn’t even know what this is, much less the value of this spirit herb. He simply thought that it looked extraordinary and decided to auction it through us.”

1. Man is a Chinese surname, I realize the dichotomy is rather odd here.

Chapter 1066: Jiang Chen Takes the First Crack

Hearing those words left Jiang Chen's jaws slack. Could this really be true? Did someone really not know what Radiant Celestial Grass was? Most present reacted the same way. They were stuck at an awkward state between tears and laughter. Evidently, the reason had shocked them the same way it did Jiang Chen.

Pill King Blue Phoenix vehemently shook his head. "Shame, shame."

Master Wang Xuetong laughed. "I hardly think the seller feels ashamed. Maybe it's actually a clever ruse. He's just an origin realm cultivator, right? A treasure like this wouldn't have a fraction of its true effect in his hands. Pretending he doesn't know what it is and auctioning it off is much better in the long run. Sure, the Temple of Cleansing Fire gets to take some of that money, but it maximizes his profit nevertheless."

The formation master's words made perfect sense. Still, Jiang Chen preferred to believe that the Radiant Celestial Grass's current owner simply failed to identify the plant.

Emperor Peerless seemed to have a different opinion. "Don't forget, for an origin realm cultivator to have Radiant Celestial Grass... well, it may spell disaster for him. In this case, having something that he cannot protect is quite undesirable. Possession alone is his sin, as it were."

The emperor had spoken truly. Radiant Celestial Grass was not necessarily safe in the hands of even a sage realm cultivator, much less an origin realm one. It was a sky rank spirit herb, and medicine of that caliber wasn't regularly used by the likes of anyone at emperor realm, much less those below. Sky rank herbs corresponded with great emperors, after all.

Thus, an origin realm cultivator having a valuable like this spirit herb probably was criminal. The choice of selling it off was quite wise in light of that. The Temple of Cleansing Fire was a fair organization, with maintaining its clientele's secrecy a top priority. An origin realm cultivator could do significantly worse than selling off the Grass for a princely sum of saint spirit stones.

The only concern was the possibility that the Temple could sell off his information and whereabouts. Given its reputation in Pillfire City, though, something like that was virtually unheard of. In fact, the Temple's pristine record was probably one of the contributing factors for the Radiant Celestial Grass's presence here in the first place. No matter the reason for its auction, the spirit herb had been submitted as one of the items to be sold today.

All eyes shot greedy looks towards the herb, their expressions betraying their eagerness for the prize.

"Hah, are you interested, Brother Blue Phoenix?" Master Wang Xuetong laughed.

The pill king in question was the equal of a pill emperor, the thirty-sixth ranked within this millenium's Hall of Fame. How could someone like that not thirst after a spirit herb as rare as Radiant Celestial Grass?

"I am a lonely old man," Pill King Blue Phoenix smiled faintly, "childless and without disciples. Obtaining the herb holds little meaning for me."

"What, you're not planning to fight for it in the auction?" Wang Xuetong was stunned.

The pill king shook his head. "There's no point. For those who need it, the Sage Smile Pill is a pearl without price. I am not one such, and I don't see much value in it."

The Sage Smile Pill was intended for sage realm cultivators. If Pill King Blue Phoenix had sons and nephews, or perhaps students and

their students, he would definitely compete for the Radiant Celestial Grass. But he had none of those things, and he cared not for the struggles of youth. It was no surprise that the Radiant Celestial Grass didn't have hold allure for him.

On the other hand, Jiang Chen's look towards the spirit herb was very thoughtful. Madam Man clearly wanted to whet her audience's appetite. She held the herb in her hand, showing it off to the crowd. Its glistening light reflected the desire in their eyes.

"The starting price for the Radiant Celestial Grass is eighty million saint spirit stones. The minimum bid increment is one million. Tycoons of Pillfire, now is the time for you to flaunt your wealth!" The madam's tone animated her listeners and enlivened the atmosphere.

"I bid a hundred million!"

"A hundred thirty!"

"A hundred fifty!"

"A hundred eighty!" The crowd began bidding furiously after she finished speaking. It seemed that many were dead set on taking the spirit herb home with them.

Jiang Chen did not make any bids himself, however. Seeing this, Pill King Blue Phoenix couldn't help his puzzlement. "Brother Shao, will you not make a move for the Radiant Celestial Grass? I saw you thinking about it. That's why I didn't, really."

Blinking, Jiang Chen burst out laughing. "I thank you, Senior Blue Phoenix, but there's no need for that. I like a fair competition between fellow bidders more."

"Ah, well. For something like that, those who love it want it to death, while those who don't could not care less about it. Not everyone falls in the former category." The pill king's commentary was reasonably representative of common thought on the subject. A lot of people had placed bids on the spirit herb, but a fair few

more were completely unmoved, signaling their total lack of interest.

After all, not everyone needed the Sage Smile Pill. The heads of important factions were, in fact, typically unwilling to see youngsters who were close to them consume the pill. In their eyes, the Sage Smile Pill's level increase risked negative effects in the future. This was a common misconception.

Some pills were like that, but the Sage Smile Pill and the Origin Doubling Pill weren't. As long as one's foundations were solid and there were no intrinsic problems with cultivation otherwise, no side effects would be experienced as a result of using those pills. Still, many of the rich were unaware of that.

Regardless of its exact usefulness, the appearance of the Radiant Celestial Grass heated up the auction's atmosphere. In no time at all, the current bid exceeded three hundred million.

Pill King Blue Phoenix sighed softly. "These people are all crazy. The true value of the Radiant Celestial Grass is two hundred million at most. What a waste of spirit stones!"

Emperor Peerless did not agree, however. "Just like you said, those who love it want it to death, while those who don't, wouldn't be willing to pay even a few dozen million. As long as the buyer gets what they need, it's fine."

Suddenly, Jiang Chen raised a hand. "Four hundred million."

He'd increased the current bid by another hundred million! The bid ushered in instant silence from the surroundings. It was as if time stood still.

Four hundred million? The price went up by a whole hundred million? This is... that guy's first bid? Heads roiled in an attempt to get a better look in Jiang Chen's direction. Everyone wanted to know who the mad bidder was.

One of them identified the young man immediately. "It's Arena

Lord Shao, the bounty king of this year's Bounty Arena."

"Arena Lord Shao? Is that the arena lord who is exceedingly young, yet esteemed by Emperor Peerless? He... he bid four hundred million? Isn't that a little ridiculous?"

"Those who are wealthy can afford to do ridiculous things. Who would want to compete with a bid like that? Even if there was someone, I doubt they'd win the bidding war. That young arena lord made more than two billion stones off his bounties just a short while ago."

"Arena Lord Shao is sensational indeed!" There was a smattering of mutterings within the crowd. Rumor and hearsay circulated very rapidly to and fro. The bid had set the atmosphere aflame.

Pill King Blue Phoenix couldn't close his mouth. Remembering what he'd said just now, he felt tangible pain to the skin of his face. He couldn't stomach such an embarrassment. As soon as he'd said three hundred million was a waste of money, Arena Lord Shao bid four hundred. It seemed suspiciously rude in context.

"You're intentionally doing the opposite of what Blue Phoenix says, aren't you?" Emperor Peerless said, half-jokingly, laughing at Jiang Chen's antics.

Master Wang Xuetong chuckled as well. "What a disaster, Brother Blue Phoenix."

The pill king's face reddened, his expression dubious. "Brother Shao, the Radiant Celestial Grass really isn't worth four hundred million. It's not worth it just for a few cauldrons of Sage Smile Pills."

Even if a couple dozen of those pills could be refined to benefit the same number of sage realm cultivators, what then? Four hundred million spirit stones could help hundreds to the same goal, and there was no risk involved in doing so. Four hundred million wasn't pocket change.

It was large enough for all but the most powerful factions in Pillfire City to have reservations about. Only the best of the best, the first-rate factions and some of their equals, had the financial clout needed to throw that much away on a whim. Second-rate factions had the money, but not necessarily the freedom to spend it.

Yet this Arena Lord Shao had slammed down the stones without so much as an eyeblink. This expansive gesture sent all his competitors reeling. His opponents were mostly the city's noble youths, each with his own robust purchasing power. But in the latter stages of the bidding war, they'd only raised the price by a few million each time.

Jiang Chen's overwhelming determination shown in the hundred-million increment crushed the others' wills to fight. Everyone knew that Arena Lord Shao was fabulously affluent. It wasn't particularly worthwhile to try muscling him aside with sheer finances. No matter how nice the Radiant Celestial Grass was, what was the point of spending four or five hundred million saint spirit stones?

Plus, there was the ever-present possibility that the arena lord was a secret shill, hired to artificially inflate the price. If so, competing with him was absolutely no good. No amount of money would fill up an endless void.

Seeing the wills of the competing bidders crushed, Madam Man tried to incite their fervor again. "Our local tycoons frequent us every year, but I see an exceptionally large number of you here with us today. A friend over here has bid four hundred million saint spirit stones. Can no one from Pillfire City compete with that number? Is that the extent of your fortunes? Four hundred million saint spirit stones. Surely there's someone that'll call a higher price, no?"

It was a very effective speech, but the natural weight of the current bid required anyone and everyone to carefully consider

before they named a new competing bid. Any new bid could end up being a sale. It wasn't worth spending so many saint spirit stones for one specimen of Radiant Celestial Grass.

For the time being, all the other competitors ceased their bidding, returning to their respective seats. Resignation and dejection were plain on their faces, and they cursed Jiang Chen's apparent stupidity again and again. However, it was unrealistic to expect them to continue the bidding war.

No matter how Madam Man tried to provoke them, she could not invoke their fighting spirit. Jiang Chen had brought the auction for the Radiant Celestial Grass to a screeching halt. In fact, he was the auction's first winning buyer.

"Haha, Brother Shao, congratulations. It is a good omen that you've taken the lead in this auction. I'm confident in whatever you're planning to do here." Wang Xuetong gave the younger man a big thumbs-up.

Pill King Blue Phoenix flashed a wry smile. "Once again, my intentional villainy has gone to waste. Still, Brother Shao... this is four hundred million saint spirit stones you're spending."

The young man knew that the pill king bore no ill will. He also responded with a smile. "I like this spirit herb very much. It's more valuable to me than four hundred million spirit stones."

The pill king spluttered when he heard that. "If we do the math and say you can refine fifty Sage Smile Pills with one Radiant Celestial Grass, how much can you sell them for? Ten million each? Your average sage realm genius can't afford to pay that. The cultivators from wealthy families who can, might not be willing to. They typically prefer to get there by cultivating themselves, or use more beneficial routes."

The math checked out. The Radiant Celestial Grass didn't seem to be worth four hundred million at all.

Chapter 1067: Fifth Item On Auction, Master Mu

Jiang Chen obviously disagreed. His understanding of the Radiant Celestial Grass was deeper than Pill King Blue Phoenix. It didn't take long before someone brought the spirit herb to Jiang Chen. He generously handed over 400 million saint spirit stones to the Temple. For this auction, money was to paid immediately after the bid was won. The transaction was incredibly straightforward and direct, which caught the eye of many.

A 400 million bid for the first item wasn't something one could see everyday. In fact, it was the first time it had ever happened throughout the Temple's history. Jiang Chen tended to the plant and placed it in a spirit container for safekeeping before storing it in his storage ring. He smiled as though he'd received an extremely good deal. Emperor Peerless couldn't help but wonder why.

"Little brother, the Radiant Celestial Grass is a spirit herb meant for refining the Sage Smile Pill. The biggest yield from this amount is at most fifty pills. Even if you sold it for ten million saint spirit stones per pill, you'd only get back 500 million! You'll also have to consider the price of the remaining ingredients and this is before considering the cost for your time, energy, and expertise spent! This is bad deal no matter how I look at it. Pill King Blue Phoenix's estimations should be correct. Is there something we're missing?"

The emperor was intrigued. The pill king was also staring at Jiang Chen suspiciously. Jiang Chen quickly realized that they'd never put the matter to rest if he didn't spill the beans.

"I was fortunate enough to have received a lecture about the Radiant Celestial Grass from my esteemed master. It has a hidden attribute that not many know of."

"Hidden attribute?" Pill King Blue Phoenix was stunned. "What hidden attribute?"

Wang Xuetong stretched his neck closer to hear what it was all about. The four of them squeezed together like a rice ball.

Jiang Chen laughed. “Well it’s not like I can’t tell any of you. The herb won’t be as valuable anymore if the secret is exposed, so please keep it a secret.”

Pill King Blue Phoenix immediately swore a vow. “I swear upon my inner demons to never reveal the secret to anyone else!”

Wang Xuetong immediately followed. “I, too, swear upon my inner demons to never reveal the secret! Well... as a formation master, I know nothing about your herbs and pills!”

Emperor Peerless laughed. “Very well, I shan’t be an exception. I swear upon my inner demons to never divulge the secret.”

They weren’t the sort to let their curiosity get the better of them, but Jiang Chen’s actions had truly bewildered them. They simply couldn’t understand his reasoning behind the purchase!

Jiang Chen smiled and spoke mysteriously. “Come to think of it, the hidden attribute is truly a well hidden secret. Indeed, the Radiant Celestial Grass is an ingredient for refining the Sage Smile Pill, but it possesses another very unique attribute. It’s capable of regrowth.”

“Regrowth? What do you mean?” The pill king was puzzled. “Can a spirit herb regrow?”

“I don’t mean reincarnation, but like the common chive. If you cut it in half, it’ll regrow from its cuttings.”

Many plants had a similar attribute. It was how they bloomed and wilted with the change of the seasons. However, spirit herbs didn’t share this attribute. Most of them were only meant for one time use. There were some that could be used more than once, and even a few that could last for thousands of years without degrading. However, in the world of pill dao, the Radiant Celestial Grass had always been known as a herb with only one use. It was a

consumable item, not to be reused over and over again.

Pill King Blue Phoenix immediately disagreed. “It’s widely known that the Radiant Celestial Grass is not capable of regrowth in the pill dao world. Are you perhaps… mistaken?”

“Indeed, that’s the case. But just because it’s widely known doesn’t mean it’s true. There are a few conditions that must be fulfilled for it to regrow. Without extensive research, one can never unearth these conditions.”

“What are the conditions?” Pill King Blue Phoenix’s curiosity was piqued.

“First of all, one must never pluck more than a quarter of the plant or else risk harming its ability to grow back. Secondly, it takes at least three years for the plant to grow back, and in rare cases it might even take five. Thirdly, to stimulate its regrowth, one must apply an ample amount of spirit fertilizer. This is the most critical step. The spirit fertilizer must fully complement the attributes of the plant and its growth rate. Only by meeting all three conditions will the plant regrow. This process can be done in endless succession until the plant reaches the state of decline, which can take at least two thousand years.”

The pill king was utterly baffled. Emperor Peerless and Wang Xuetong had awe written all over their faces. The emperor smiled wryly. “are you going to say that your master has coincidentally lectured you on this too?”

He chalks it up on luck whenever he does something extraordinary. If this is also luck, then he must be the luckiest person ever to walk the realm.

Jiang Chen didn’t panic or overreact. Instead, he responded with unabashed laughter. “This isn’t a coincidence. The attribute of spirit herbs was part of my basic education when I was young. A lot of emphasis was placed on the study of earth and sky rank spirit herbs.”

The pill king's eyes glimmered when he heard that. "Is that so? Brother Shao, does that mean you know earth and sky rank spirit herbs like the back of your hand?"

"Not quite, but I do know a lot about them."

Pill King Blue Phoenix was speechless. They were equally envious as they were jealous, but there was nothing they could do about it. It was the discrepancy between the Myriad Abyss Island and the human domain. The pill king was almost like an ant when compared to the upbringing and legacy shown by a genius from the Myriad Abyss Island. If a person of his age could be so monstrous, then the Myriad Abyss Island must be ten times stronger than the human domain at the very least!

The auction went on as usual in the midst of their discussion. The bid for the second item was nearing its end. It was a pill that was auctioned off at an astronomical price.

Jiang Chen had no interest in pills. Only a spirit herb as rare and precious as the Radiant Celestial Grass could catch his attention. Spirit herbs were created by nature, and thus remain untainted from the hands of other pill masters. Pills however, had to be refined by pill masters, and he wasn't interested in the work of others.

The third and fourth items quickly followed. Not a single item was of subpar quality. Every one of them caught as much attention from the crowd as the Radiant Celestial Grass. Unfortunately, none of them could catch Jiang Chen's eye. He truly desired the Radiant Celestial Grass, but the others were mere trash to him. He wondered if Mu Gaoqi was going to be put on auction. Were the Star Harvesters really telling the truth?

Out of eight items for auction, four were already sold.

"Next up is our fifth item. Every single item before this was incomparably precious, but our fifth item takes it to the next level! What we have next is an actual human! A living breathing

human!" Madame Man smiled radiantly. "I believe various Pillfire City factions have already begun to move in anticipation. Yes it's true, our fifth item is Master Mu, a pill king with an innate wood constitution of high order, entrusted to us by the Star Harvesters!

"I'm sure everyone has heard of him, and is well aware of what he's capable of. An innate constitution isn't something you can see everyday and a wood innate constitution is as rare as a phoenix, but an innate wood constitution of high order? A constitution like his has never been seen within our city gates throughout our thirty thousand years of history! He's practically an uncut diamond! The Star Harvesters have put him up on auction before he's cut and polished so that his magnificence can be unearthed by a better candidate! Is everyone ready to place your bids?" Madame Man's crisp and stirring voice reverberated throughout the auction house.

"An innate wood constitution of high order?" Emperor Peerless was slightly taken aback. "Such a great seedling! The Star Harvesters are one of the strongest factions in the city, are they not? How can they be so foolish? They should've given him time to grow before selling him!"

Emperor Peerless wasn't aware of the situation in Pillfire City as he wasn't a citizen here. A person of his stature had no interest in such things.

Master Wang Xuetong laughed in response. "Emperor Peerless, you're aware of one thing, but not the other. The Star Harvesters are in a terrible spot. After all, it isn't presumptous to say that an innate wood constitution of high order is wasted in their hands. Many various factions have been giving them pressure lately. They're only putting Master Mu on auction because they have no other choice."

Pill King Blue Phoenix sighed. "It's a pity that Master Mu is a slave as one cannot free themselves from slavery. He'll have to live the rest of his life as a puppet pill king, never to fully realize his

true potential. I must say, they've truly butchered a real talent."

The pill king had spoken the fair truth.

The emperor seemed a little sullen. "I can't help but wonder who invented slavery. They've single-handedly ruined so many talents. Master Mu, do you know of his background? Is Pillfire City so boneless that they can't even accommodate a pill dao talent of his caliber?"

Wang Xuetong sighed. "It's not that we can't. The main issue is that Master Mu's background remains uncertain. What if he was a spy sent by an enemy faction to trick us? He might become a huge threat if he regains control of his body and mind..."

The words wasn't pleasant to the ear, but it was the truth. It was the common consensus towards slaves. They'd rather waste talent than allow a slave freedom.

Madame Man's voice was heard yet again. "An innate wood constitution of high order is almost certain to become a pill emperor. His starting bid will be 300 million. Isn't that such a good deal for a seedling as excellent as him? That's right! We'll begin at 300 million, with minimum increases of ten million!"

The starting bid wasn't too exorbitant, but the ten million minimum bid was indeed a little over the top.

Chapter 1068: Emperor Peerless Strikes the Gavel

The Temple personnel brought out a youth in pill dao garb after Madame Man waved her hands.

Jiang Chen was elated when he saw the familiar face. It really is Mu Gaoqi! Even though it'd been years since they last met and the person in question was now a slave, his elegance and poise hadn't diminished one bit. Although, one could now see misery and oppression on his face. He seemed distraught with worries. Unfortunately, his innate wood constitution of high order drew all attention away from his suffering.

"As you can see, this is Master Mu that was entrusted to us by the Star Harvesters, a rough diamond with an innate wood constitution of high order! Esteemed guests, the bidding shall now begin!" Madame Man announced passionately.

"Brother Mo, his constitution is extremely crucial to the creation of the Pinecrane Pill. Even without my master, we will be able to refine a Pinecrane Pill as long as we have a pill king of his caliber. In fact, there's even a possibility that he might be able to cure your dao partner's injuries." Struck by inspiration, Jiang Chen immediately transmitted this message to Emperor Peerless.

Visibly moved, the emperor glanced towards Jiang Chen to seek confirmation. The latter immediately met his gaze and nodded gently without hesitation.

"Rest assured, I'll definitely win the bid. Nobody can stop me." The emperor nodded.

Jiang Chen had been a little worried at first that he wouldn't be able to dominate the field. By luring the emperor towards the same goal, he'd gain a much better stronger foothold. By relying on the emperor's authority, he was capable of doing things that he'd be

otherwise incapable of with wealth alone.

“Brother Mo, I’ll compensate you for every single stone you spend on my behalf. I only ask that you win the bid. He’s of great importance to me.”

“I understand.” The emperor answered firmly.

An innate wood constitution of high order wasn’t just talented in pill dao. They were also incredible masters of healing. Jiang Chen hadn’t spoken randomly. It was all based on some degree of truth. Even though Mu Gaoqi had good mastery over pill dao, he was merely a mid level pill king at most. He wasn’t yet capable of curing Emperor Peerless’ dao partner due to his cultivation level. However, it didn’t matter as Jiang Chen possessed the wood spirit spring. The spring water had incredible healing properties. Even a formidable curse like the Generation Binding Curse which Huang’er was afflicted with back then was suppressed by the spring’s power. The wood spirit spring was almost like the holy spring of heaven and contained the life giving properties of the wood element. Its healing prowess was not to be scoffed at.

300 million was a relatively low opening price, which led to a huge bidding war at the start. The price broke through the 500 million mark within just a few moments. Judging by the look of things, it was unlikely to slow down until the bid had reached one billion.

The demand for pill dao talents in Pillfire City was insane. Mu Gaoqi probably would never have dreamed that he’d one day be worth so much money. 500 million saint spirit stones was an amount of money never seen before in the Regal Pill Palace, including Palace Head Dan Chi or any of the great elders such as Elder Yun Nie. It might still be within their reach if it’d been 500 million origin spirit stones, but 500 million saint spirit stones was simply too far fetched for a fourth rank sect like them.

Judging by the momentum, the auction was absolutely not going

end at 500 million. The price kept on increasing until it quickly went past the 600 million mark.

700 million soon followed. The bidding war only showed signs of slowing down when the price reached the 800 million mark. However, there were still a few powerful clans trying to outbid each other.

At this point, there was no longer any huge fluctuations in price. Instead, it was slowly creeping up, 10 million at a time. Soon, it reached 900 million. This was when Jiang Chen decided that it was time to place his bid. “I bid one billion!”

He broke the stalemate with just a single sentence. The atmosphere in the auction house was brought to a new boil.

“Him again? He must really hate having too much money.”

“Is he planning to spend every single spirit stone he made from the Bounty Arena?”

“Tsk Tsk. By the heavens is he wealthy. One billion! I can’t even spend that much money in a single lifetime!”

“Tsk tsk tsk. It’s the first item to reach the one billion mark today. The winning bid might actually reach the one billion and two hundred million mark!”

“This is insane! The Star Harvesters must be laughing their teeth off right now. Didn’t they pay less than twenty million for Master Mu originally?”

“They’ve made a huge fortune!”

“They’re well known for their competency in business, but this fortune is truly beyond anything they’ve made!”

Jiang Chen preferred to impart despair unto others by massively outbidding them. As expected, two factions with a weaker resolve decided to back out. Other than him, only three other factions remained. These three factions seemed adamant on getting their

hands on Mu Gaoqi.

“I bid one billion and ten million!”

“One billion and twenty million!”

“One billion and fifty million!” It was obvious that these three factions were very annoyed by their new rival. However, they remained very level-headed with their bids. They didn't act brashly like Jiang Chen, who raised the bid by 100 million in one go.

Jiang Chen laughed. “One billion and two hundred million.”

He raised it by 150 million in one go this time.

The Star Harvesters wanted to smother Jiang Chen with kisses when they saw this. Their boss, Gai Zonglin, sighed. “He really is rich after all. He’s the benefactor that our gang needed. If we’d sold Master Mu to one of the clans directly, we’d never receive more than 200 million. By putting him on auction, the price has skyrocketed all the way to a billion and two hundred million! This is what a little bit of ingenuity gets you! Do you guys see this?!”

Gai Zonglin was elated that he’d played his cards right. His plan was perfect, but it’d only work if someone with too much money to spend was present. Hen wasn’t the only one thinking that Arena Lord Shao had too much money to spend. The entire audience in the arena house seemed to be synchronized in thought.

“Keke, you’ve earned a great merit.” Manager Xiao gave Miss Keke an approving glance. “I don’t know what you’ve said to him, but since he’s willing to spend so much money, I will make sure to request a big bonus for you when we return.”

Miss Keke forced a smile though she was feeling extremely complicated over it all. She knew more than anyone what their conversations had been like. Even calling it a conversation would be an overstatement. He hadn’t given her any face at all. At that time, she’d even felt that he was going to give up on Master Mu.

However, things never truly went as expected. That man had actually gone on to take part in the Bounty Arena and made more than 3 billion! He now had enough money to take part in the auction! Even though Manager Xiao was going to put in a good word for her, she found it difficult to get excited about it. Instead, all she felt was an odd sense of emptiness. She couldn't quite put the feeling into words. The more Jiang Chen showed off his wealth, the more sullen she became.

He probably thinks that I'm just a Star Harvester lackey trying to swindle his money. A girl's thoughts was truly peculiar sometimes. Even though they didn't even know each other well, she couldn't help but be self conscious about what a man as excellent as him thought about her.

She began to detest her job greatly when she recalled the various unsavory things she'd been ordered to do. She used to be a kind and pure of heart, but because of her job, she had to say and do many things that went against her conscience.

The atmosphere in the auction house was getting so heated that nobody would have the time to care what a young nobody like her was thinking. A competitor backed out after Jiang Chen's insane raise. The other two factions were incredibly unyielding. They refused to come to an agreement or concession. Jiang Chen threw a glance at Emperor Peerless. The latter immediately realized it was his turn to make a move.

"I raise the bid to 1 billion and five hundred million! Master Mu is of great importance to me. I hope everyone can give this old man some face. The price is already beyond what's considered normal, but I shall persist until the very end if anyone still wishes to continue the stalemate. I'm not afraid of a showdown!"

The crowd was flabbergasted by the emperor's dominating words. Who would've thought that a great emperor would join the fray out of nowhere? Like a deflated ball, the other two competitors had no choice but to give up begrudgingly. Everyone

instantly knew that this was the end of the bid when they saw the emperor's unrelenting face. They were still able to counter bid, but not after a speech like that. They were certain to lose if they continued the bidding war and they'd even run the risk of offending him.

A wandering great emperor was oftentimes more frightening than an established one, because there was nothing to hold him back. Without a faction of own, he had no burdens or obstacles. He was free to do as he pleased. One might receive a huge surprise after offending someone of his stature. No one would ever want such a surprise.

Since they were certain to lose, counter bidding would only raise the price even further. What was the point of that? The emperor's money wasn't going to line their pockets. The only party that would gain from this was the Star Harvesters. They weren't going to do something that would benefit others at their own expense.

"So be it then. With such a large increase, we have no choice but to admit defeat."

"It's truly a pity. We,too, admit defeat."

Madame Man threw a flirtatious glance at the emperor that also contained a hint of resentment. "Emperor Peerless, by saying that, you've prematurely hammered down the price and ended the bidding game!" she complained coquettishly.

It was only natural that the Temple of Cleansing Fire would want the price to go as high as possible. One billion and five hundred million was already an incredible amount of money. However, greed eats at the heart of all men. She wanted to make use of her womanly charms to vent her frustrations a little.

Chapter 1069: Secret Realm

The most she could do was grumble. Faced with someone as forceful as Emperor Peerless, even a temple master of the Temple of Cleansing Fire had to yield several miles. As a lowly auctioneer, she could do even less than that. Madam Man aimed a flirtatious smile at the expressionless emperor. “I’d like to congratulate you in advance, Emperor Peerless. One and a half billion is a lot to pay for Master Mu, and absolutely appropriate for someone of his skill and station. Everyone, please applaud!”

She’d changed tack very smoothly. She knew immediately from Emperor Peerless’s impassive expression that her complaints had displeased him. The tide of her words turned immediately to something much more placatory.

Nobody could act with disregard for a great emperor. Instantly, thunderous applause filled the space. Pillfire City’s own emperors regularly taught their factions who they should try not to tango with and who they should absolutely not anger.

Emperor Peerless was in the second category. Clapping didn’t cost any money. There was no reason for anyone not to give the emperor a little respect. In the next instant, the sound of applause increased in a crescendo. The emperor waved his hand as a gesture of thanks.

Gai Zonglin of the Star Harvesters was jubilant about Emperor Peerless’ purchase of Master Mu. There was no better outcome than this. The other factions could say nothing about their loss at the emperor’s hand.

The Star Harvesters had every right to contest any bullying of the gang after the fact. After all, there was no shame in being outbid by the likes of Emperor Peerless. Though there may be internal dissatisfaction, not much could be done about it. The occasion was cause enough for Gai Zonglin to come forward personally. He

handed the slave's jade token to the emperor with all deference. The token was the key to controlling its associated slave. Its holder could release the captive from his chains at any time to restore freedom.

Mu Gaoqi was before Jiang Chen's very eyes, yet the young man did not know his friend. It was a sad state of affairs that pained his heart to see. 'Master Mu' had increased his expertise in pills over the years in a zombie-like state, a tool fit only to be used by others. Though he reviled Gai Zonglin's euphoric expression, Jiang Chen could not hate the gang boss.

With the Star Harvesters, his friend Mu Gaoqi at least hadn't been mistreated. He was still alive. As for Elder Yun Nie, he too was definitely in the gang's hands. But he had Mu Gaoqi now, and prying away the elder from his captors wasn't far off. Jiang Chen had already made up his mind that he would go find the Star Harvesters again after he was finished here. It should be an easy transaction then. He could simply hand them the cash in exchange for whom he wanted.

Gai Zonglin happily and gratefully left after receiving the spirit stones. The fact that Mu Gaoqi was by his side now reassured Jiang Chen greatly. The auction had proceeded much more smoothly than he'd first thought. If he had been the bidder instead of Emperor Peerless, a billion and a half would never have been the final price. It seemed that the name of a titled great emperor alone was enough to daunt the competition.

The remainder of the auction was still fairly interesting, but both Jiang Chen and Emperor Peerless had little concern for it. On the other hand, Pill King Blue Phoenix became preoccupied with one of the cauldrons presented later on. After a tough back-and-forth, he won it at a steep price.

Jiang Chen had a smattering of cauldrons in his possession already. He had the Five Treasured Cauldrons of Regal Pill Palace in his collection, and the Skysnatcher Cauldron that he'd managed

to buy back at Veluriyam on top of that. Though the cauldron that Pill King Blue Phoenix managed to win was of somewhat higher quality, Jiang Chen did not find it sufficiently enticing. A man of his expertise in pills did not need to dwell on a specific vessel overmuch. He could easily refine sky rank pills in just the Skysnatcher.

After endless clashes between tycoons and magnates, the auction finally came to a successful close. Following the curtains' fall, Pill King Blue Phoenix and Master Wang Xuetong were both reluctant to depart. They separately invited Jiang Chen to visit with them. Jiang Chen fended their overtures off only after several rounds of pleasantries.

Observing the inseparability of Emperor Peerless and the youth, the two seniors realized that it was likely necessary to move the older before they could move the younger. Though they had a bellyful of questions about why the emperor was favoring his young companion so, they didn't dare inquire into such a powerful man's affairs.

Jiang Chen grinned as he watched the pill king and the formation leave. "Are both of them a bit scared of you, Old Brother Mo?"

Emperor Peerless grinned back, but said nothing. As a titled great emperor, he was used to others' wariness.

"Where are you staying tonight, my friend?" The emperor changed the subject.

"A tavern, but I'm not in a rush to return there." Jiang Chen laughed. "Old Brother Mo, let's go to the Star Harvesters again."

"The Star Harvesters again?" Emperor Peerless blinked once before unfurling a smile once more. "Alright. I did say I would listen to you. Wherever you want to go, feel free."

Jiang Chen nodded, then abruptly asked something unrelated. "Ah, actually, I have a slightly impolite question. Would you mind,

Old Brother Mo?”

The emperor waved a hand in the negative. “Just say it. No need to worry about decorum between the two of us.”

“I’d like to know, are you on good terms with Pillfire City? Especially the great emperors here.”

This surprised Emperor Peerless a little. He became quiet for a moment before sighing softly. “I can only call my relationship with the city quite average. The great emperor that I dueled once upon a time was, in fact, Pillfire’s very own Emperor Pillzenith.”

“What?” Jiang Chen was absolutely shocked by the news. “Old Brother Mo, you’re not joking, are you?”

“It’s a well-kept secret, so not many know about it. Pillzenith, that old coot... he is the number one great emperor here, and he has a slight edge over me in terms of cultivation. But after hurting Ah Yun, he’s not bold enough to maintain a pretense of civility up close any more. He’s never admitted it was his fault, of course, and he tries even now to make amends, but even the foremost great emperor of Pillfire City cannot save her. I consider him somewhat of an ignoble fraud. He’s scared of others finding out about his misdeeds, because it would tarnish his reputation. That’s why he’s anxious every time I come to his city. If not for Ah Yun’s injury, why would I even set foot here?”

There was an undercurrent of indignation in the emperor’s speech. Clearly, he hated Emperor Pillzenith’s guts. Because he had to maintain some dignity of his own as a great emperor, he couldn’t exactly curse openly.

Jiang Chen clucked his tongue to himself. So there was something more to that story! He finally understood why every faction in the city feared Emperor Peerless so. The things he’d just heard about Emperor Pillzenith definitely played a part. Emperor Peerless was someone that even Emperor Pillzenith flinched at the prospect of. No city faction would find it wise or agreeable to anger

someone like that. There was the additional worry, as well, that the wandering emperor would use them as punching bags in a fit of temper.

This was why the leader of Pillfire City had warned the factions under his hand ahead of time to avoid provoking the other emperor at all times. He smiled when he saw Jiang Chen's confusion. "What're you asking about that for, partner? You want to go to the Star Harvesters, hmm? Don't worry, I'll be there for you no matter what. Maybe we'll even stir up a storm here, eh?"

Emperor Peerless was a fearless and audacious man. In truth, though he had been a touch inferior to Emperor Pillzenith all those years ago, he'd worked very hard since then on cultivation. Even if he was still weaker after all this time, it wasn't a hopeless difference. He might not be able to win, but neither would he lose.

The emperor's youthful heroism evoked similar emotions in his young companion. "Old Brother Mo, there's someone else on the Star Harvesters' hands that I'd like. They're a fickle bunch, and not likely to give up the chase until they squeeze as much profit out as possible. If I just ask it of them, they're going to jack up the price to high heaven. So... that's where I'd like you to come in."

With a great emperor at hand, the Star Harvesters needed to think twice before unnecessarily inflating the price. If they made Emperor Peerless unhappy, they wouldn't find anyone to cry foul for them even if the emperor stamped them out entirely. Great emperors who were also wandering cultivators were the hardest to deal with.

"Just a person? Should be easy, then." The emperor laughed. "Let's go."

.....

The Star Harvesters' headquarters was holding a celebratory banquet. The price that they'd sold Master Mu for at the auction greatly exceeded their expectations. Eight hundred million would

have been a high enough price, but the closing bid was almost double that. One and a half billion! Everyone who'd opposed the auction idea were instantly silenced by the absurdity of that number.

The astronomical sum received universal praise, a stark contrast to the harshness of previous opinion. Gai Zonglin felt incredibly proud. This decision cemented his position as boss even more. His detractors within the gang were utterly quashed. Understandably, the boss was the star of the banquet. Manager Xiao, of Star Mill fame, garnered a considerable amount of attention as well.

Miss Keke was also present. Though Emperor Peerless was the one to win Master Mu's auction, the Star Harvesters' executives all saw that Arena Lord Shao was right beside him when he did. It was quite likely that the young arena lord was the source of the funds for the purchase. She had been the one to communicate with him all this time.

"Keke, the boss has agreed to induct your younger brother. He'll start as a sixth-rank disciple, two levels higher than what we talked about previously. The gang will take good care of your parents as well, naturally, and you're getting a promotion to supervisor yourself," Manager Xiao said to the girl cheerfully.

Miss Keke belonged to Star Mill–his Star Mill. Boasting about her accomplishments to the boss was a matter of fact for him; it showed off his contribution as well.

Keke didn't know what to feel. She knew that she hadn't actually done much in the grand scheme of things. She was reaping the benefits of happenstance.

Gai Zonglin roared with laughter. "Don't be so embarrassed, little girl1 This is the way of our gang: those who do well are rewarded, and those who do poorly, punished. Come, cheers to our prosperity!"

In the heat of the celebration, a messenger came suddenly from

outside. “Boss, elders, uh, Master Mu! Master Mu is back.”

“What?” Gai Zonglin’s arm trembled. He almost spilled the wine from the glass beside his lips. Master Mu was back? What was he back for? He’d been sold already, hadn’t he? This was likely the start of something bad.

Chapter 1070: Saving Elder Yun Nie

“Is he alone?” Gai Zonglin asked, frowning.

“No… no, he’s not. He brought two others with him.” The person who had come in to deliver the message had not been at the auction. Thus, he didn’t recognize either Emperor Peerless or Jiang Chen.

Hearing this, Gai Zonglin’s expression descended into terror. “What? There’s two other people? What do they look like?”

“One old, one young. They don’t look like normal people.”

Everyone colored at that. Did anything more need to be said? It was Emperor Peerless and Arena Lord Shao. What were they here for? Did they want the one and a half billion back? That would be a big problem. There was no possibility of the gang spitting out a morsel that was already in its mouth. But regardless of how hard-headed its posturing was, it did not match up well against a great emperor!

In that moment, everyone behaved as if a powerful enemy was upon them. Some immediately began to complain. “Just as I thought, there was nothing good about that auction!”

“Selling to a great emperor… there’s no telling whether that’s a blessing or a curse. We were probably too optimistic.”

“Why not halt the banquet altogether?”

Gai Zonglin’s face was as black as a piece of cast-iron cookware. These people were the same ones that had opposed him about the auction in the first place. As soon as they saw a slight change in the situation, they started singing a different tune. What about the praise they’d showered him with during the banquet just now? They changed minds as quickly as a spinning weathervane!

Gai Zonglin didn’t have the time to fuss over them now, however. He barked instructions in a low voice. “Battle

preparations, everyone. No matter what happens, we Star Harvesters have done everything within the rules. So what if they're a great emperor and our senior? Can they break the law?"

As the boss of a large gang, he was composed despite his fearfulness. "Some honored guests have arrived! Come in, come in, invite them to come in and drink with us," he shouted loudly. No matter their intentions, the Star Harvesters would use fair means before force. That was Gai Zonglin's strategy. If they were really here to cause trouble, the gang couldn't show weakness either.

"No need for invitations. We're already in." Even as the sound of the boss's voice disappeared, Emperor Peerless's own cool voice was audible against the gangsters' eardrums. A single flicker heralded the arrival of three to the Star Harvesters' banquet hall.

Emperor Peerless took center stage, with Jiang Chen and Mu Gaoqi flanking him to the left and right. The latter's jade token had not yet been destroyed, so his consciousness was still sealed. The suddenness of the appearance prompted everyone to stand, no matter their actual willingness. No one dared remain seated in their chair.

Gai Zonglin approached the trio with a full smile and a cupped fist. "Senior Peerless, we thank you for gracing us with your presence on such short notice. Apologies for not greeting you more formally. Please, take the best seat, have a few drinks on us. It's the least we can do in your honor."

The Star Harvesters' boss was a capable entertainer. He postured absolute humility before Emperor Peerless. Calling himself a junior of such a legendary man was not embarrassing in the least. There was no worry of being laughed at. Who wouldn't bow to a great emperor?

"So, you're Gai Zonglin, are you?" Emperor Peerless said, rather coolly.

The man in question could not stop nodding his head. "Yes, yes. I

am truly floored that you actually know my humble name, Senior Peerless."

The emperor spared no useless words. He tossed the gang boss a pointed glance before sweeping a razor-sharp look across the rest of the room. Everyone cowered before the keenness of his gaze.

"Are you worried that I'm planning on robbing you of the one and a half billion I just paid, Gai Zonglin?" Finally, the emperor's eyes came to rest on the boss again. He smiled faintly, but his stare stung sorely into Gai Zonglin's back.

"Oh, not at all. You're a senior expert, Emperor Peerless. I can't imagine someone as great as you doing anything reprehensible." The boss was quick to cover himself.

"Hahaha, an impressively nimble tongue. As a matter of fact, I did come for something today… not spirit stones, but a person."

"A… person?" Gai Zonglin was stunned.

"Yes, a person is the only thing I would like. If I cannot find that person here, then I hope you do not mind me taking back the one and a half billion." There was a tangible threat in the emperor's tone.

"Oh, er, who would you like today, Senior Peerless?" Gai Zonglin replied, hurriedly. "I am too slow to tell if we have anyone you'd actually want. Has someone under my command angered you?"

"You're overthinking things." The emperor maintained his half-smile. "The old man that you bought along with Master Mu. Where did you leave him? I don't care what method you use or what you have to do. Deliver that man to the inn I am staying at in twenty-four hours, or we will need another talk." The emperor's voice was impassive.

Gai Zonglin put a hand to his head. The mountain of pressure that he'd felt only a moment prior flowed off him like water. "Oh, hmm, that old man. I believe there was someone like that, yes. He

is here with us, in fact, in our pill refining area. I will send for him immediately."

The boss didn't want to ask why the emperor wanted that particular slave. The old man was relatively ordinary in most respects.

"He's still here?" It was the emperor's turn to blink.

"Ah, indeed, he's still here. We're not in the habit of torturing or killing our slaves. Everyone that we buy is treated with reasonable indifference at worst." Gai Zonglin breathed a sigh of relief. It was good that he had the man the emperor wanted. Otherwise, he might've had a real problem on his hands.

Elder Yun Nie was brought forth after another few moments. The elder hadn't looked very old before the fall of his sect. After all the calamities and ordeals he'd been through, though, his appearance had aged quite a bit. Evidently, he had not been treated as well as Mu Gaoqi. However, the Star Harvesters were definitely off the hook for maltreatment. Elder Yun Nie looked a bit shabbier and worse for wear, but largely normal otherwise.

"Name your price," the emperor said, his voice still frigid.

"Name... my price?" Gai Zonglin was startled a second time.

"I won't have the reputation of taking things for free." Emperor Peerless harrumphed.

"Oh, not at all," the boss offered a placatory smile. "The old man isn't worth much. We only bought him for about ten million saint spirit stones. Senior Peerless, as repayment for dignifying us with your purchase earlier, allow us to offer him as an additional present." Gai Zonglin was astute about social behavior. Hearing about the fact that the emperor was only here to get an irrelevant person relaxed him greatly. His one and a half billion were safe.

As for the slave in front of him, the boss didn't care a whit about the old man. The Star Harvesters traded slaves of his caliber in

great volumes. Each individual one had some value, but nothing close to one and a half billion. Thus, he had no compunctions whatsoever about using it as a tool to leverage a relationship. Anything to get Emperor Peerless out of here more quickly. The emperor glanced at Jiang Chen. After verifying that they did, indeed, have the right person, he casually tossed twenty million saint spirit stones to Gai Zonglin's direction.

"I have no interest in taking advantage of others. Take the money. Twenty million is absolutely higher than market, I'd surmise."

The boss was bewildered at the gesture. His mouth remained open for a long time with shock.

"Let's go." Handing over the stones was the last of Emperor Peerless's business here. He led his companions to immediate departure, with little disregard to the throng of surprised Star Harvesters present.

When the emperor finally left the premises, it was as if a great weight had been lifted off Gai Zonglin's shoulders. "A senior's style is hard to comprehend," he sighed softly. "I thought he was here to interrogate us, but he was just here to make another deal. Can this be called adding icing to a cake?"

The gang members traded confused looks among themselves. They thought uniformly that what they'd just witnessed was nothing short of marvelous. They'd even prepared to fight to the death!

"Boss, why was Emperor Peerless so interested in that old man?" Manager Xiao couldn't help but ask.

Gai Zonglin's face darkened. "That's not something we're in a position to ask. Remember, a great emperor's actions are always inscrutable. No news of what happened today can be allowed to spread. Whoever does will be branded a criminal among us."

A great emperor was not a topic of discussion for the common people. Idle gossip that led to the emperor's fury would spell certain doom for the Star Harvesters. No matter what, they hadn't lost money. Master Mu had made them one and a half billion, and the old man, more than a dozen million. If they could make that much money on every slave, the Star Harvesters would rapidly become the most affluent faction in the city.

Outside the Star Harvesters' headquarters, Emperor Peerless roared with laughter. "How did I do, young man?"

"Simply amazing." Jiang Chen gave him a big thumbs-up. "Haha, after seeing how Gai Zonglin was acting, I finally know the true meaning of kowtowing to one's every will. I remember when I was first talking to him. Gai Zonglin wouldn't budge at all. In fact, he wouldn't even talk to me."Jiang Chen's exclamations came from the heart. The title of a great emperor was extremely useful, much moreso than his attempt had been. Today, Gai Zonglin had been fearful enough to almost relieve himself. He didn't have the courage to ask a typical price, much less jack it up. If they'd wanted to take away Elder Yun Nie for free, there was no way the boss would've prevented them. Rather, he'd give them only smiles for it.

After returning to the inn, Emperor Peerless handed over both Mu Gaoqi and Elder Yun Nie to Jiang Chen.

"Then I'll leave those two in your care, my young friend."

"Old Brother Mo, I owe you one for this. Don't worry about your cultivation partner. I'll think of something to help her out–a perfect solution for sure."

"I've made many mistakes in my life, but I certainly don't think getting to know you is one of them." Emperor Peerless's words always had a mysterious power and magnanimity to them. One instinctively wanted to trust him. "Just like I said, do whatever seems good to you. Even if the sky falls, I'll shoulder the burden for

you.”

“Thank you for your trust, Old Brother Mo. I’ll go back to my room and remove the seals. I’ll be in your care for the next bit.”

“Don’t worry, I won’t let anyone disturb you.” Emperor Peerless’s answer was dominating.

Returning to his inn room, Jiang Chen set up a formation that cut contact off with the outside world. Only then did he begin to prepare for removing his friends’ seals.

It had been many years since the fall of the Regal Pill Palace. Remembering his friendship with Mu Gaoqi back when they were still peers filled Jiang Chen with nostalgia. The successful rescue of an old friend comforted him immensely. With the slaves’ jade tokens in hand, it was no effort at all to restore their freedom. Using the held token as a conduit, Jiang Chen poured a stream of power into Mu Gaoqi’s own consciousness.

Chapter 1071: Long Lost Brothers Finally Meet Again

A powerful force instantly freed Mu Gaoqi from the shackles of slavery. One by one, the seals within his consciousness were turned to nothing. Moments later, Mu Gaoqi placed both hands on his temples and groaned in agony.

Jiang Chen knew that the unsealing process was incredibly agonizing. It was a great burden on one's consciousness. Fortunately, his technique was flawless. The process could've left permanent damage if it'd been some other person with worse techniques. He'd been incredibly meticulous, so there was no need to worry about such things.

The pain didn't last for long. Within fifteen minutes, Mu Gaoqi's mind and thoughts began to stabilize. His memories were slowly coming back to him, including the repression he felt during his time as a slave. He groaned softly as he opened his eye. He immediately was greeted with an unfamiliar environment and a stranger staring at him with a faint smile on his face. He looked towards the side and noticed his master, Elder Yun Nie, lying right beside him. He'd become so old that he almost seemed like a walking corpse.

"What's going on? Wh-who are you?" Mu Gaoqi instantly fell into a state of panic. His memories stopped at the destruction of his sect. At that time, Elder Yun Nie was still as healthy as a bull, the total opposite of his current state. He was extremely shocked by the elder's current state. When he finally recalled what happened to his sect, he began to worry for his own safety as well. However, he soon regained composure after the initial shock wore off.

"Friend, who are you? Why am I here?" Mu Gaoqi was in a much more stable state when he asked the same questions again.

“Gaoqi, you might no longer remember my face after so many years, but you still remember my voice right?” Jiang Chen smiled gently. He’d restored his voice to his original one.

Mu Gaoqi would never forget that voice even after a thousand years. He quivered from head to toe and the light of disbelief shone from his eyes. “You’re… Brother Chen?”

Jiang Chen removed his disguise, showing his true face. “Gaoqi, to think that we’d meet again after so many years.”

Mu Gaoqi rejoiced for a moment before he suddenly froze again. “Brother Chen, what happened to senior brother Shen Qinghong after the three of us journeyed to the wood spirit spring?”

Jiang Chen was taken aback. Huh? The journey to the wood spirit spring? Since when did Shen Qinghong come with us?

“Gaoqi you…” Jiang Chen smiled when he suddenly realized what was going on mid sentence. “Gaoqi, you’ve grown. Your suffering from all these years hasn’t gone to waste. There’s no need to test me, I’m Jiang Chen. It was just us and a few other sect brothers that journeyed to the wood spirit spring. Since when was Shen Qinghong part of us? While we were there, we also killed an elder from the Walkabout Sect. You were backstabbed by Wei Qing of the Walkabout Sect and Du Lihuang of the Sacred Sword Palace when we in the restricted area of Mt. Rippling Mirage. I eliminated both of them soon after. I trust that you still remember all of this?”

Mu Gaoqi finally let his guard down. “Brother Chen, is it really you? This isn’t just a dream?”

These were secrets shared only between the two of them. Shen Qinghong truly hadn’t been present on the trip. Mu Gaoqi was also the only person who knew about the assassination of the Walkabout Sect elder. As for what happened on the Rippling Mirage Mountain. He was in a state of delirium at that time, but he still somewhat aware. He no longer held any doubts after Jiang Chen spoke of all these secrets.

Jiang Chen was pleased to see Mu Gaoqi act so cautiously. The latter had finally grown after suffering through so much hardship. When he revealed his identity, Mu Gaoqi had decided to give him a test instead of blindly believing. Moreover, there was no apparent flaw in the test. It he had been a fake, Mu Gaoqi would definitely have realized it.

“Gaoqi, you’re not dreaming. Although, what has happened in the past few years does truly feel like a dream.” Jiang Chen sighed. “Alright, have some more rest and try to recall the rest of your memories. I shall free Elder Yun Nie from his seals first. Rest easy and don’t make a sound.”

At this point, even a fool with half a brain could tell that he had been rescued by Jiang Chen yet again.

An hour later, Elder Yun Nie was also freed from slavery The two faces he saw after regaining consciousness were also the faces he wanted to see the most.

“Jiang Chen? Gaoqi?” Elder Yun Nie immediately choked up. He was finally able to recall the downfall of the Regal Pill Palace and his enslavement process. The youths before him were irreplaceable to him. As long as they lived, the Regal Pill Palace could one day be rebuilt.

“Master, the heavens took pity on us! I never imagined that we would one day regain our freedom!” Mu Gaoqi’s eyes were red throughout. His was a little choked up as well.

The elder turned towards Jiang Chen. “Sage nephew, is it you who saved us from the abyss again?”

Mu Gaoqi quickly quickly answered. “Master, that is indeed the case.”

The elder sighed as a gratified yet sorrowful expression flashed across his face. “To think that we will one day reunite after the fall of our sect…”

“Sage nephew, where is this place? How many years has it been since the downfall of our sect?” Elder Yun Nie sounded very dejected. He seemed to be avoiding questions about the sect. He was too afraid to ask anything about it.

“This is Pillfire City. It’s a long ways away from where our sect once stood. It’s been eight years since the attack.” This was only a rough estimation as he didn’t really count the years. It might’ve been ten years, but it was most definitely more than eight.

“Brother Chen, is the Regal Pill Palace… still standing?” Mu Gaoqi asked precariously.

Sorrow flashed across Jiang Chen’s face. “The Regal Pill Palace is no longer. In fact, the entire Myriad Domain has been destroyed. The six great sects of yesteryear are also gone. The entire domain has been annexed by the Eternal Celestial Capital and the Great Scarlet Mid Region. Of course, the Ninesuns Sky Sect owns part of it too, but they’ve been kicked out by the others. The domain is now mostly run by the other two powers.”

“Wha-…” Elder Yun Nie couldn’t come to terms with this. “Is the Grand Cathedral gone too?”

“Yes.” Jiang Chen nodded. There was nothing left to hide as it’d been years. The elder and Mu Gaoqi were completely unaware of what happened during all these years. They had been enslaved almost immediately after their capture, and thus knew nothing about what Jiang Chen did to the Eternal Celestial Capital after the destruction of the sect.

“O-other than the three of us… is there anyone else that’s still alive?” Elder Yun Nie asked with an extremely pained look on his face.

“Yes.” Jiang Chen nodded. “Most of our brethren have died in battle, but there were some who were held captive. Out of the few dozen captives, I was able to rescue thirty and help them settle down in Veluriyam Capital. Ling Hui’er and Shen Trifire are

among them”

“What about senior brother Shen and senior sister Ling? And also Jun Mobai and Nie Chong?” Mu Gaoqi asked agitatedly.

“Other than Ling Bi’er who’s currently missing, the rest are no longer with us. Jun Mobai was a spy from Ninesuns Sky Sect, but he’s dead now. Shen Qinghong died after being plotted against when he returned to the sect. Senior sister Ling Bi’er and I were there too, but only the two of us were able to make it out alive. Ever since then, I’ve not heard a single word about her whereabouts.” Realizing that they were very concerned about matters related to the Regal Pill Palace, Jiang Chen patiently told them everything he knew.

“What about the palace head and the others? Didn’t they escape from the Myriad Grand Ceremony?” Back then, Elder Yun Nie didn’t attend the Myriad Grand Ceremony as he’d chosen to remain and guard the palace. Because of that, he didn’t know what happened to Palace Head Dan Chi and Elder Lian Cheng.

“I was in the Myriad Domain when the Great Scarlet Mid Region attacked. The palace head and the others were the first to receive news about the attack because they were outside of the Myriad Domain, and led a charge to break through the enemy’s lines. According to various intelligence, they should’ve successfully escaped from danger. However, I’ve yet to hear from them either.”

Elder Yun Nie was elated. “Good! With our palace head’s abilities, they surely survived the attack!”

Jiang Chen withheld comment on that. Palace Head Dan Chi was merely at earth sage realm at the time. At that cultivation level, it was hard to say if he could survive an encirclement by the Great Scarlet Mid Region and the onslaught from the Eternal Celestial Capital. However, the fact that there was no news of Palace Head Dan Chi’s capture meant that there was still hope. Considering how much the Eternal Celestial Capital hated Jiang Chen, if they’d

captured the palace head, they would surely make mincemeat out of him and openly gloated about it. Since there was no news of this, it was likely that the palace head hadn't fallen into their hands.

He nodded in agreement. "The palace head should still be alive."

Even though the sect was already destroyed, Elder Yun Nie and Mu Gaoqi was able to find some solace within these good news. When they were slaves, all they could feel was despair. There was no room for any fantasy or delusions. But now, they'd escaped from hell and received one good news after the other. They couldn't be more excited to hear this.

"Brother Chen, how did you know that we were here?" Mu Gaoqi asked after a while of catching up.

Elder Yun Nie had the exact same question. Pillfire City was a very long ways away from Myriad Domain. How on earth had he find them?

"It's a long story. After the destruction of the sect, I overheard a conversation between some men from the Great Scarlet Mid Regions. I learned that they've turned a few hostages into slaves. After that, through various methods, I learned that they sold all of you to Veluriyam Capital. I then found our brethren inside the capital's Myriad Puppets Pavilion. Unfortunately, you were the only ones missing. After that, the owner of the pavilion fell into my hands due to a chance encounter. By scouring his soul, I was able to make him spit out your locations. Only then did I realize that both of you were sold to Pillfire City. Eventually, I encountered a few people from Pillfire City that helped confirm that a faction in the city had bought a slave that possessed the innate wood constitution of high order."

Mu Gaoqi was flabbergasted after hearing such a huge series of twists and turns. His journey was filled with so many obstructions, and yet Brother Chen never gave up. His search didn't end until I

was finally found. His eyes welled up with such thoughts. How many others could claim to have done the same for him in this lifetime?

Chapter 1072: Old Brother Mo, My Apologies

After hearing the entire story from Jiang Chen, Elder Yun Nie became very wistful. He was an old hand, wise in the ways of the world, and perceived many details that Jiang Chen had refrained from divulging. Listening to the youth's experiences didn't seem particularly exciting now, but the trip from Myriad Domain all the way here to Pillfire City must've been an arduous one. Countless trials had lined the path, and only a steadfast and stoic youth like Jiang Chen could have remained so dogged after enduring them all.

Anyone else from Regal Pill Palace would have given up by now, their top geniuses included. Shen Qinghong was a good example. All those years ago, Palace Head Dan Chi had made an amazingly correct choice. Elder Yun Nie was exceedingly grateful for this. If the palace head hadn't brought this young man to the Palace, absolutely no hope of rebuilding would have remained. It was Jiang Chen who had protected the sect's last embers.

The two youths that Elder Yun Nie'd had the highest hopes for were together again. One was Jiang Chen, the other Mu Gaoqi. With both of these promising stars, re-establishing Regal Pill Palace would be no problem whatsoever.

"Sage nephew, you have done a great thing for us this day. On behalf of Regal Pill Palace, I sincerely kneel in thanks to you." In a fit of passion, Elder Yun Nie motioned to kneel to the youth.

Jiang Chen hastily waved a hand, then extended it to help the elder up. "Don't say that, Elder Yun Nie. We are all family here. Don't you agree?"

Given his current level of cultivation, it was easy for him to keep the elder from touching the floor. Elder Yun Nie was only earth sage realm, but the Jiang Chen now was already a half-step emperor. If he hadn't consciously held back, he would have long

broken through into emperor realm already.

An offhanded lifting motion was enough for Elder Yun Nie to feel a wall in front of him. No matter how much he struggled, it wouldn't budge.

"Sage nephew, you..." Elder Yun Nie was astounded. It had only been seven or eight years, so how come Jiang Chen's cultivation was already at such a high level? Even Elder Yun Nie had to look up to him.

Mu Gaoqi saw some clues in the exchange as well. "Brother Chen, your cultivation has improved a lot since last we saw each other!"

Coming out from Mt. Mirage, Jiang Chen had only been at initial sage realm. Just a green human sage realm cultivator back then, he'd borrowed Mu Gaoqi's reputation to participate in the Myriad Grand Ceremony. How had he reached such heights in less than a decade?

Jiang Chen had no reason to be insincere in front of his own. "I was gifted with a few bouts of serendipity." He smiled faintly, "so my martial cultivation has advanced at a pretty brisk pace."

"What realm are you at now, Brother Chen?" Mu Gaoqi's eyes lit up, his tone full of admiration.

"Only a step further to emperor realm." Jiang Chen hid nothing from his good friend.

"What? Half-step emperor realm?" Both Elder Yun Nie and Mu Gaoqi gasped at that. They exchanged looks of wonder.

Jiang Chen nodded. If he'd said that he was intentionally holding himself back, the amazement would surely have been much greater still. It was best to not inform them for now. Even so, this surface was more than enough cause for awe.

"Sage nephew, if I remember correctly... wasn't the strongest man in the Myriad Domain–the head of the Sacred Elephant family–only at peak sage realm?" The elder's marvel had not yet

receded.

“It is as the idiom says, Elder Yun Nie. No matter how good one is, there’s always someone better. In Veluriyam Capital, in Pillfire City, in the entire Upper Eight Regions... peak sage realm is actually quite average.” Jiang Chen sighed softly. “ Great Scarlet Mid Region, for example, has no shortage of emperor realm cultivators.”

Elder Yun Nie did not dispute this fact. “If Myriad Domain hadn’t been attacked by Great Scarlet Mid Region a couple centuries ago, we too would have emperors of our own. That disaster crushed our vigor. Myriad Domain lagged forever behind others after that, and our weakness became our crime.”

Jiang Chen shook his head. He knew now better than anyone that Great Scarlet Mid Region’s invasion wasn’t related to a past grudge, nor did it have to do with any supposed rape. These were all poorly thought-up excuses.

The Eternal Celestial Capital was at the root of the problem. They wanted to control Myriad Domain because it was the place of Emperor Featherflight’s tomb. The lure of an empyrean cultivator’s heritage was irresistible. It was the sect’s well-hidden ambition. But nothing would come of it if Jiang Chen told Elder Yun Nie about these things.

“Oh, that’s right. Your rescue today wouldn’t have been possible without a certain someone.” Veluriyam’s young lord remarked, rather suddenly.

“Who?” Elder Yun Nie and Mu Gaoqi both looked utterly lost.

“Come on, let’s go meet him. He’s a senior, but also a kind and carefree man.” Jiang Chen smiled. He felt that it was better to tell Emperor Peerless everything now. The longer he kept the truth from the older man, the worse the misunderstanding down the line. The emperor’s wise and righteous personality would understand the white lie that Jiang Chen had been forced to tell.

This was also the reason why Jiang Chen asked after Emperor Peerless's relationship with Pillfire City. If they were on good terms, then he might've reconsidered his decision. Thankfully, that wasn't the case. In fact, their relationship could be called anything from tenuous to downright awful.

Jiang Chen's worries were dispelled. His identity, once revealed, was liable to place him in incredible danger. He was confident enough in his own ability to escape, but he could not bring the elder and Mu Gaoqi along. With his two old acquaintances in tow, he knocked on Emperor Peerless' door.

"Back so soon, kid? Well done. There doesn't seem to be any problems with the removed seals on these two." The emperor glanced at Elder Yun Nie and Mu Gaoqi for a second each, not thinking much of it at first.

"Old Brother Mo, I have a confession to make." Jiang Chen laughed shamelessly.

"Hmm?" That gave the emperor some pause, but he beckoned anyway. "Come inside and tell me about it."

Though he was a little baffled, Emperor Peerless didn't show his emotions outright. He was most worried about the Pinecrane Pill. As long as everything about that was true, he could accept most anything else changing. It was clear as day that the young man before him had numerous secrets. However, the emperor was not someone who liked to dig up other people's pasts. The relationship between them was one of mutual cooperation, born out of simple appreciation for each other's natures. There was no need to investigate every detail.

After Jiang Chen and his buddies came inside, Emperor Peerless created a soundproof barrier. "Alright, tell me what's going on this time. As long as the Pinecrane Pill is real, shoot for the stars."

"Hah, if I'd lied about the Pinecrane Pill, then I'd be out of here by now. I wouldn't have the face to come and talk to you." Jiang

Chen chuckled.

Hearing this, the emperor's brows opened up. He returned the laughter. "If the Pinecrane Pill is real, nothing else matters."

"Old Brother Mo, I actually wanted to talk to you about my identity," Jiang Chen said, rather seriously. "I made a few things up. I have some ties to Myriad Abyss Island for sure, but I personally come from Myriad Domain."

" Myriad Domain?" The announcement flabbergasted the emperor. "What, can a place like that produce a genius like you? You're not playing with me, are you, kiddo?"

Jiang Chen sighed. "I am a man of many identities. Maybe you've even heard about some of them. Back in my homeland, I was called Jiang Chen. In Veluriyam City, I live by another title..."

The emperor stood up before the sentence was finished, astonished gaze directed straight at Jiang Chen. "You... are you the new young lord that Emperor Peafowl has appointed? Young lord Zhen, was it?"

It was Jiang Chen's turn to be surprised. "Old Brother Mo, how'd you guess that so quickly?"

Emperor Peerless opened his eyes wide, his expression one of utter disbelief. "You're... not really the new young lord of Sacred Peafowl Mountain, are you?"

"Actually, you've hit the nail right on the head." Jiang Chen offered a wry smile. "You see yet another identity in front of you. Shao Yuan, made up to divert unwanted attention. You've been so sincere and forthright with me, Old Brother Mo. My conscience won't allow me to deceive you any longer. I'm sure you know that if I came here as young lord Zhen, I wouldn't possibly be able to rescue these two peers here."

"Peers? Of the same sect? From Myriad Domain, hmm?" Emperor Peerless tossed the peers in question another look.

“Indeed. My closest friends there.” Jiang Chen nodded in the affirmative.

Elder Yun Nie and Mu Gaoqi were just as amazed as Emperor Peerless. They gleaned many surprising bits of information from the conversation just now. Emperor Peafowl? Young lord of Sacred Peafowl Mountain? It was enough to make anyone’s jaw drop. Elder Yun Nie was no stranger to Emperor Peafowl or his reputation. That man was the true ruler of the Upper Eight Regions, a member of its most elite echelon. How did Jiang Chen manage to get to know someone like that? How had he even been made young lord? It had only been seven or eight years. How absurdly fast Jiang Chen had grown!

The atmosphere became quite odd for a time.

Emperor Peerless was the first to speak. He let out a long sigh. “So that’s the case, hmm. The entire Upper Eight Regions is guessing at who Sacred Peafowl Mountain’s new young lord really is. They’ve settled on a strange consensus: they think you’re a game piece that Emperor Peafowl has kept secret for a long time. Young lord Fan was just a smokescreen. I’ve heard of your accomplishments... you defeated the seemingly invincible Pillfire City, distinguishing yourself among countless others to become Emperor Peafowl’s new heir. I’ve investigated your exploits personally. Why did I guess so quickly, you ask? It is because you don’t know how much I’ve been interested in you in turn. Anyone able to beat Pillfire City is worth my attention. Actually, I was going to come visit you if my journey here disappointed. You’ve an exceptional reputation.”

“Visit me?” Jiang Chen blinked.

“Haha, visit young lord Zhen, yes. After all, Veluriyam Capital has sculpted you into a veritably omnipotent deity. How could I resist?” Emperor Peerless was willing to exhaust any and every avenue for his cultivation partner. If not for the fact that the jewel of the Upper Eight Regions was quite a long way from here, he

would’ve gone a long time ago.

Chapter 1073: The Geng Brothers

Emperor Peerless sighed. “To think that I’d meet you all the way here in Pillfire City. Perhaps this is what they call fate?”

Jiang Chen was also dumbstruck by the sheer coincidence. He didn’t expect to hear that the emperor had planned on visiting him next and placed very high hopes on him.

“Old Brother Mo, since fate deems it, I’ll definitely cure sister-in-law of her affliction!” Jiang Chen casually addressed Emperor Peerless as his brother during the hotblooded conversation.

“Good lad! I really like this fearless attitude of yours!” The emperor praised. “Do you know why I had my eye on you in the first place?”

“Why?” Jiang Chen was curious.

“Because I’ve long suspected that you were Jiang Chen, the man whom the Eternal Celestial Capital are after.” The emperor revealed a wisdom filled smile.

“Huh?” Jiang Chen was flabbergasted.

“The Longevity Pill first appeared in the Regal Pill Palace, yet somehow, the Sacred Peafowl Mountain managed to get their hands on it in the end. After that, you even defeated Pill King Ji Lang and claimed ownership of the pill. I wasn’t completely certain that you were Jiang Chen, but I did have some suspicions. Since you were able to create a pill that extends the life of a sage realm cultivator, I began to wonder, maybe you have the ability to create a pill that extends the life of an emperor cultivator too?”

A person nearing desperation was often very imaginative. They’d come up with all kinds of what-ifs and how-abouts. Moreover, their speculations were often incredibly accurate. This was especially true for great emperors as they were often very meticulous with their speculation. Emperor Peerless was no

exception to this. His powerful instincts and noting of various details led him to this conjecture.

Jiang Chen sighed. “Older brother, your instincts truly scare me. It’s fortunate that I chose to make the right choice. Had I deceived you any longer, you might flip on me one day.”

“You little brat, that’ll never happen unless you deceived me on core matters. Moreover, with the feud between you and Pillfire City, I would’ve completely understand if you chose not to disclose your identity. Of course, I’m still thankful for your honesty. You’ve gained even more respect from me over it.”

The emperor was actually quite happy with this development as a lot of courage was needed for Jiang Chen to tell the truth. Revealing his identity under such conditions could’ve been the worst decision in his life. And yet, the lad was still willing to do so. This pleased him greatly.

“Sigh… Brother Mo, there’s something even more important that I need to tell you.” Jiang Chen smiled wryly.

“What?” The emperor was already used to Jiang Chen’s antics, but he still couldn’t help but be surprised again and again.

“I actually already have the Pinecrane Pill.”

“Wha-?” The emperor’s eyes widened into the shape of a bell. “Y-you already have it?”

Jiang Chen nodded. “I refined it some time ago in Veluriyam Capital. I didn’t tell you because of the circumstances. I apologize for making you worry during these past few days.”

He took the pill out from his sleeves. “Brother Mo, this Pinecrane Pill is of outstanding quality. It will surely extend sister-in-law’s lifespan by a millennia after taking it.”

The emperor’s mouth began to tremble slightly. His eyes gleamed with utter disbelief as he stared at the pill.

“Take it.” Jiang Chen shoved the pill into the emperor’s palms.

“Little brother, I...” Even someone as imposing as the emperor was finding it difficult to form words. Happiness had come too abruptly. Even though he was hopeful, he couldn’t help but take a cautionary stance on this matter. How could he remain calm after the thing he’d been seeking all these years was suddenly shoved into his palm? He could sense the powerful life force within the pill. The power emanating from the pill alone was enough to make his eyes widen.

“An excellent pill! Such an excellent pill!” He was absolutely thrilled.

“The Pinecrane Pill is only a sky rank pill in name. It has a few qualities that is already beyond that of the sky rank.” Jiang Chen smiled. “Brother Mo, you’d better seal the jade box lest the pill loses its potency.

Like a child, the emperor frantically sealed the box. He was completely overwhelmed with happiness. Even a great emperor as imposing as him was giggling like a child and could hardly contain his joy. He was only able to regain his composure after some time had passed. “Little brother, a favor as big as this deserves more than words of gratitude. I, Mo Wushuang, owe you a favor in return. I’m willing to repay this favor in any way you please.”

“Brother Mo, there’s no need for such ceremonious words. I only wish to see sister-in-law as soon as possible so that I may know if there’s anything else I can do for her. The Pinecrane Pill may extend one’s life, but it only cures the symptoms and not the disease. I only hope to nurse her back to health so that you may remain as dao partners for eternity.”

Jiang Chen’s words struck Emperor Peerless square in the heart, filling it with light and hope. The emperor was certain that Jiang Chen was the benefactor that he’d been searching for all along.

Elder Yun Nie and Mu Gaoqi were equally as elated and surprised

to see someone as eminent as Emperor Peerless break into tears before Jiang Chen. They didn't think Jiang Chen would grow so powerful after a mere eight years. He'd actually become brothers with a great emperor and done him a great favor! Also, there was something about Jiang Chen being the young lord of Sacred Peafowl Mountain?

The two were almost blinded by the limelight Jiang Chen was under. They began to worry a little. With such a big discrepancy between them, could they remain as close as before? Would he still put effort into rebuilding the Regal Pill Palace now that he was young lord of Sacred Peafowl Mountain?

They were excited, yet also worried. They know Jiang Chen wasn't the kind to forget his roots, but upon further thought, they realized that the Regal Pill Palace hadn't actually done much for him. Instead, all they'd done was receive. Their discussion about the Longevity Pill also caused Elder Yun Nie to recall that he'd been the one who leaked the pill's secrets. There wouldn't have been a battle for the ownership of the pill if it weren't for him.

He felt incredibly ashamed. Back then, he revealed the recipe not because he wanted to save his own neck, but because he wanted to protect the sect's future generations. Regardless, it'd been him all the same. He didn't feel any less guilty just because Jiang Chen chose not to bring it up.

"Jiang Chen, I was the one who leaked the recipe for the Longevity Pill. That caused you a great deal of trouble, didn't it?"

Jiang Chen waved his hands dismissively and refused to dwell on the matter. "Elder Yun Nie, let bygones be bygones. I'm certain that you'd never sell us out just to protect your own neck. It was a wise choice to reveal the pill's recipe out of consideration for the lives of our sect members."

Elder Yun Nie no longer dared to address Jiang Chen as sage nephew as the latter was now brothers with the emperor! It'd be

exceedingly disrespectful to the emperor if he did as such. He'd never do such a reckless thing even if he was emboldened after eating a bear's heart and a leopard's gall.

"Gaoqi, Elder Yun Nie, I have to make a trip to the Tilted Moon Region to fulfill a promise I made to Brother Mo. I regret to say that you'll have to return to Veluriyam Capital by yourselves."

"Brother Chen, I want to go with you." Mu Gaoqi volunteered to come with.

"Gaoqi, this trip is no small matter. The more we bring, the more dangerous it'll be." Jiang Chen was actually in a dilemma. If he didn't take them along, he was worried that they might encounter some trouble on the way back to Veluriyam Capital. The journey was simply too long. Even though they were all sage realm experts, their cultivation level didn't guarantee their safety in the Upper Eight Regions.

"I have a disciple named Lin Yanyu. He's from one of the downtrodden clans in Pillfire City. I'll tell him to make the appropriate arrangements. Fortunately, neither the Eternal Celestial Capital nor the Great Scarlet Region know that you were attained by the Star Harvesters. Trouble shouldn't come looking for you as long as you put on a proper disguise."

Emperor Peerless disrupted their conversation with his laughter. "Good lad! It's nice to see such loyalty from you! Very well, I shall lend a hand in this matter as I'm also quite fond of little Gaoqi's innate wood constitution of high order. Why don't I call upon my friends and get them to escort your friends to their destination?"

The emperor had a wide circle of connections. He didn't have his own faction, but he did have many loyal and dependable brothers. A great emperor's friends was naturally capable of holding their own in the world.

"Brother Mo..."

“Alright, that’s settled then. This is nothing compared to what you’ve done for me. It’s only right that you let me return a small favor.” Emperor Peerless sounded quite adamant.

Jiang Chen smiled. “Then I shall have to thank you on their behalf. Elder Yun Nie, Gaoqi, since Brother Mo is so generous, we have no choice but to thicken our faces a little and accept his offer. I shall tell Lin Yanyu to go along you. He will guide you when you arrive in Veluriyam Capital.”

Lin Yanyu was already enlisted in both the young lord’s abode and Taiyuan Tower. There shouldn’t be any problems.

Emperor Peerless was a man of his word. He rallied his friends on the second day, and by third day evening, two men came to visit. They were both high level emperors. One was a ninth level emperor, while the other was an eighth level emperor.

“Brother Mo, how unbrotherly of you. How could not visit us when you’re in the vicinity?” The ninth level emperor was incredibly straightforward. It was the first thing he said when they saw each other.

Emperor Peerless responded with a hearty laugh. “Come, let’s get all of you acquainted. These two are my brothers. They share the surname of Geng because they are brothers of the same womb. They are renowned throughout the Upper Eight Regions. The eldest is Geng Qianzhang, while the youngest is Geng Qianchi.

“Qianzhang, Qianchi, both of you surely must have heard about this young man over here. He’s the young lord Zhen of Sacred Peafowl Mountain in Veluriyam Capital.”

“Young lord Zhen?” Geng Qianzhang was stared at Jiang Chen astonishingly. “Brother Mo, I heard that you were planning to visit Veluriyam Capital, but I didn’t realize you’d gone so quickly.”

Mo Wushuang burst into laughter. “No, no, you are mistaken. We only met by coincidence. Haha! Truth be told, I’ve actually

found a glimmer of hope for your sister-in-law.”

“Oh? Does young lord Zhen have a cure?” The Geng brothers were elated when they heard this.

Chapter 1074: The Suspected Cloud Devouring Tiger

When the Geng brothers verified that Mo Wushuang's dao partner's condition would improved, they were overjoyed. Words of congratulations were offered to the emperor immediately.

"Big Brother Mo, congratulations! You've remained by sister-in-law for so long. After all these years, the heavens have heard your plea at last. Your love for her came through in the end!"

"That's right, Big Brother Mo. Thank heavens that your partner will recover."

The brothers had had an unshakeable friendship with Mo Wushuang. They both bowed respectfully to Jiang Chen. "Young lord Zhen, we two brothers haven't acknowledged anyone our entire lives except our Brother Mo. You've taken a great burden off his heart, and that is a favor we cannot repay. We will remember it well."

Their bold statement was enough for Jiang Chen to see the steel in the trio's relationship. "What, you're allowed to talk about loyalty and brotherhood amongst yourselves, but I'm not included?" He laughed.

The Geng brothers were both honorable men, and were straightforward and candid. They wouldn't be as content as they were otherwise in their freedom as wandering cultivators. Their combined strength was more than sufficient to found a dominant faction. They had simply chosen not to due to their rough and tumble natures. They lacked a certain shrewd resourcefulness necessary for loftier ambitions.

Seeing the Gengs' reaction made Emperor Peerless laugh as well. "My brothers, this young lord Zhen is my brother as well. He calls me old brother, and I call him young brother. So, I hardly think

there's a need for further thanks. We're all brothers here: why the politeness?"

The Geng brothers exchanged a look of realization, and the older echoed the laughter. "Good, good! We are all brothers here, quite so. I didn't imagine that I would call Sacred Peafowl Mountain's young lord my brother one day, how marvelous. Young brother Zhen, you sit perfectly well with us."

"My brothers, we are the best of friends. I would come to your aid at any cost. Therefore, I won't hide anything from you. Brother Zhen here has another identity." Emperor Peerless said solemnly.

"What?" The Geng brothers collectively blinked.

"Do you remember the business with Eternal Celestial Capital and the Great Scarlet Mid Region?"

"Sure, we remember. Eternal Celestial Capital is really going downhill these days, huh. Attacking a lower region isn't something we approve of at all." The duo shook their heads vehemently, their words tinted with scorn. "Brother Mo, I thought you disliked them as well?"

"Never mind that. This is what I wanted to tell you. Brother Zhen here is actually Jiang Chen from the Regal Pill Palace in Myriad Domain. He has a bounty over his head from the Eternal Celestial Capital. We're brothers, so I didn't want to keep it from you, but... let's keep this a very good secret, eh?"

The revelation shocked the Geng brothers. They were both thoroughly astonished.

"Brother Zhen, you're the guy that's made Eternal Celestial Capital the continued joke of the world? Haha, that's amazing. I heard rumors you were heading to Veluriyam Capital, and you really did. What's more, you're positively thriving there. Truly legendary!" The elder brother cackled.

"Remarkable. As expected from someone whom Old Brother Mo

calls a brother," the younger brother offered his own praise. "Whether you're Jiang Chen or young lord Zhen, we'll always be the best of friends."

The Geng brothers respected Mo Wushuang immensely. They'd always perceived the old man as their own kin. Because of that relationship, they inherently held goodwill towards Jiang Chen.

"I feel blessed. Please accept this salute in your honors, my new brothers." Jiang Chen shrugged off all pretense. It was rare to meet men of such upright character, and he was more than willing to make their acquaintances. The four of them conversed, laughed, and deepened their intimacy.

"I called you here, my brothers, to task you with something important." Emperor Peerless cut to the chase.

"Simply say the word, Big Brother Mo, and we will do all that we can." The elder Geng patted his chest.

"That's right," his brother nodded in agreement.

"It's like this..." The emperor explained the matter to them in detail.

"What, that's it? You want us to chaperone two friends back to Veluriyam Capital? Consider it done! You can leave everything to us."

"Brother Zhen, you're going to such great lengths for Big Brother Mo. How could we refuse a simple task in comparison?"

"My dear brothers Geng, the task this time is very important." Emperor Peerless coughed. "I owe you one."

"Oh, don't say that, Old Brother Mo," Jiang Chen hurried to correct. "My two brothers there are doing me the favor, so clearly I'm the one who owes a favor. Here are two Pinecrane Pills as a small token of our meeting and appreciation. I don't have many special belongings with me, and I hope those are sufficient."

The two Gengs gasped. “Oh, no, we couldn’t.”

Jiang Chen shook his head, his tone firm. “No, you absolutely can. Consider it a gift of gratitude. I don’t have many of these pills, but I am perfectly happy to give them to you.”

The Geng brothers were lost for words. They didn’t know how to react. Mo Wushuang had spoken to them about the Pinecrane Pill only moments prior. They knew its rarity in the human domain. In fact, it was probably extinct here. No one had even heard of such a pill. The duo were both emperor realm cultivators, but the probability of them breaking through to great emperor realm was uncertain. Having two Pinecrane Pills meant they had at least an extra thousand years to live. It was very attractive. But they hadn’t even begun in their task yet. Was it really okay to accept a present from a brother now? Their candidness made them a little embarrassed.

“Take them.” Surprisingly, Mo Wushuang was the one to speak. “All of us here are brothers. Think of it as a heartfelt present from Brother Zhen. Maybe you’ll even need those pills one day, hmm? Better to take them now and keep them with you. You’ll have plenty of chances to repay him anyway. If Brother Zhen is wronged by someone at Veluriyam Capital, will you stand idly by? What about the Regal Pill Palace’s reconstruction?”

Hearing this, both of the brothers grew enthusiastic. “We’ll listen to Old Brother Mo. Brother Zhen, we’re happy to take your Pinecrane Pills. Maybe they really will be useful to us one day. Since we are brothers, there’s no need for all the pleasantries. If you ever need us, just say the word. Neither we nor Big Brother Mo will turn down your call.”

Mo Wushuang roared in laughter. “That’s the Geng brothers I know. We are wandering cultivators! There’s nowhere in the world that we cannot go. Big factions look down on us. They think we won’t amount to anything in the long run. Well, let’s prove them wrong!”

Jiang Chen's blood began to boil as well. He hadn't thought a few Pinecrane Pills would be enough to bring out these experts' true natures. They were all principled and straightforward men, worthy of undying friendship.

"You've done us an incredible kindness, little fellow. If you need us to rebuild Regal Pill Palace, give us a holler anytime. Same goes for anything that makes you upset in Veluriyam Capital. I might not be a man of many talents, but calling up a band of my wandering friends is certainly one of them." Emperor Peerless gave Jiang Chen's shoulder a hefty pat.

Though it wasn't Mu Gaoqi and Elder Yun Nie's place to speak, they nevertheless appreciated hearing the sentiment from the sidelines. The words 'rebuilding the Regal Pill Palace' evoked a similar passion in them. They couldn't resist smiling at these strong cultivators' promise of assistance. Any further help aside, the three experts before them alone could fend off Great Scarlet Mid Region during the reconstruction process. Even the Eternal Celestial Capital had to reconsider any plans.

Not every faction was willing to anger a wandering cultivator who was also a great emperor. The Eternal Celestial Capital was strong, and had several great emperors to boot. But they had little to gain and much to lose by openly opposing someone like Emperor Peerless. The serious part of the conversation concluded, the gathered friends began to drink and make merry. The night passed; the next day, Jiang Chen worked on a new disguise for Elder Yun Nie and Mu Gaoqi before he called for Lin Yanyu.

The sight of his master gathering so many helpers so quickly amazed and pleased the youth.

"Yanyu, go with them to Veluriyam Capital. Once there, take them to Taiyuan Tower to meet Shen Trifire, then bring them to my residence."

"Yes, master." Lin Yanyu answered instantly.

“Listen to the Geng brothers on the journey,” Jiang Chen encouraged him. “They are your seniors, and you can learn much from their experience. The same goes for you, Gaoqi.”

The two young men nodded in unison.

The day after that, Mu Gaoqi and company embarked on the road back to Veluriyam Capital. The Geng brothers were true to their word and responsibility, accompanying them with utmost care the entire way. Emperor Peerless saw them off out of Pillfire City personally. He stopped only after they had gone several thousand miles, after making sure they hadn’t been tailed.

On the way back, he counseled a reluctant Jiang Chen. “Don’t worry, my young friend. The Geng brothers are well-traveled and their wandering cultivator friends are everywhere. There’s no need to be concerned for their well-being, wherever they go.”

The protection of two high-level emperor realm cultivators did set Jiang Chen’s mind at ease. Great emperor cultivators aside, nothing could threaten them.

“So, shall we go to Tilted Moon Region now, or?”

“Let’s go back to Pillfire City first. I left a spirit beast in an inn there.” Jiang Chen grinned.

“Oh? Is it the one that belonged Nangong Ping?” the emperor asked, curious.

“That’s the one,” Jiang Chen nodded.

“I thought it was just a Cloud Devouring Tiger? Not a remarkable beast. At their peak, they’re only equal to a low-level emperor realm cultivator.”

In a small country, a spirit beast of that strength was considered exceptionally ferocious. But for Mo Wushuang, that kind of strength was close to useless.

“You don’t know, old brother? That’s not a Cloud Devouring

Tiger at all. There's more to it than that," Jiang Chen chuckled.

"More to it...?"

"Indeed. A Cloud Devouring Tiger isn't worth a return trip, and that's what most people would take it as. In fact, it is ninety-nine percent similar, and there's no shame for mistaking it for its more common brethren if you're not in the know. Even the best spirit beast tamers are prone to making this mistake." The way Jiang Chen was putting it shrouded the beast in renewed mystery. Emperor Peerless itched to hear what was next.

Chapter 1075: The Celestial Grass Again

When he returned to the inn, he found out that the spirit beast was still being taken care of. The people of the inn obviously knew that their honored guests were no ordinary person, so they took very good care of the spirit beast. The owner of the inn looked to be between joy and tears when Jiang Chen and Emperor Peerless finally returned. “Thank goodness you’re back, Arena Lord Shao. That spirit beast of yours has an extremely bad temper, and we just can’t satisfy its needs no matter what we try. Do you hear that? It’s throwing a tantrum again.”

Jiang Chen wasn’t surprised by this. He smiled. “It would actually be stranger if you could satisfy it.”

He walked to the area where the spirit beast was penned up and whistled. The spirit beast that looked like a Cloud Devouring Tiger cub immediately charged into Jiang Chen’s arms like a black-and-white hurricane. Jiang Chen chuckled. “Did you miss me, little fella?”

The spirit beast nodded repeatedly and obediently at Jiang Chen. It kept scratching his shirt with its front paws as if protesting against Jiang Chen’s temporary departure. When the spirit beast noticed that everyone else was shooting it a strange look, it immediately glared at them and bared its teeth in a demonstration of might.

Even Emperor Peerless couldn’t help but laugh at the spirit beast’s reaction. He had never seen such an interesting creature before.

“Let’s go, Brother Mo.” Jiang Chen ignored the looks of astonishment on the inn owner and attendants’ faces and threw down a bag of spirit stones. “This is the payment for our stay. You can keep the change.”

The inn owner accepted the spirit stones, but still looked

dejected. “Is Arena Lord Shao a beast tamer or something? Why did this spirit beast look like it could die when it was with us, but become so lively when it was with Arena Lord Shao? Can it actually tell who’s who?”

“Of course it can. That being said, it’s rare to find such an intelligent cub. Speaking of which, I heard that this Cloud Devouring Tiger cub belonged to young master Nangong.”

“Young master Nangong? Hah! The Nangong clan is totally screwed this time. Did you hear how they presented the spirit beast to Arena Lord Shao like meek servants?”

“That’s only because Emperor Peerless is around! Do you really think that the Nangong clan would be afraid of him if he wasn’t supported by Emperor Peerless?” Someone disagreed with that statement.

Whatever they were discussing, Jiang Chen was out of earshot already. When they left the inn, he exchanged a glance with Emperor Peerless to immediately travel to Tilted Moon Region. But it was at that moment a figure suddenly appeared from a side alley. “Could I have a moment, Arena Lord Shao?”

Jiang Chen was caught off guard. He must have gotten really famous in Pillfire City, for he wasn’t expecting to be called in public. When he turned around, he discovered that it was a short man who called out to him.

“Are you looking for me?” Jiang Chen stared at the short man with a bit of astonishment. He had a good memory, but he didn’t remember this person at all.

The man cowered a little. It was obvious that he found their auras a little unbearable, but despite the pressure he still forced himself to speak. “Excuse me, but… can you come with me so we may speak in a more private place?”

Jiang Chen stared blankly at him. They didn’t know each other,

but this short man wanted him to follow him to a private place. Was this another ploy by some faction in Pillfire City?

“If you belong to a faction in Pillfire City, then you can save your breath now.” Jiang Chen’s tone immediately turned indifferent.

When the short man noticed that Jiang Chen had misunderstood, he hastily explained, “Absolutely not, I am not related to Pillfire City in any way. I... I have need of you, Arena Lord Shao.”

“You have need of me?” Jiang Chen laughed involuntarily. “What makes you so sure that I’ll lend you my aid?”

Jiang Chen might have helped a lot of people in the past, but he wasn’t so magnanimous that he would help every person who crossed paths with him. He wouldn’t be able to do anything else if he did. The short man looked a little ashamed, but he ultimately gathered the courage to say, “I won’t ask you to work for free. If you will help me, I can gift you another shoot of Radiant Celestial Grass.”

“What?” Jiang Chen’s face changed slightly. “What did you just say?”Emperor Peerless had been silent all this time, but when he heard this, he trained a harsh gaze onto the short man as if he would see through the very soul. The short man nearly crumbled to the ground under the mighty pressure of a great emperor. He was just an origin realm cultivator.

Emperor Peerless stared at him for a moment. “Brother, he’s just origin realm. He’s probably the person who entrusted a Radiant Celestial Grass to the Temple back then.”

“Yes, yes! That’s me. Your eyes are truly keen, Emperor Peerless. I can’t believe you realized this in just one glance,” the short man hurriedly explained.

Jiang Chen waved his hands. “Let us speak in a more private place.”

After they'd arrived at a relatively secluded area, Jiang Chen stared at the short man and threatened, "I hope you aren't lying to me. Our time is very precious."

"Absolutely not. If I haven't seen you winning the Radiant Celestial Grass at the auction, I wouldn't have dared come to you in the first place. I was thinking that you might need more in the future, and it so happens I have more with me, so..."

"So that's why you sought us out. What do you request of me?" Jiang Chen valued the spirit herb quite a lot. After all, it was practically the most important ingredient in refining the Sage Smile Pill.

"I hope that you can escort me away from Pillfire City and to Frostmoon City of Tilted Moon Region."

Frostmoon City? Tilted Moon Region? Jiang Chen and Emperor Peerless exchanged a glance with each other. That was their next destination. Could it be that this person knew they were heading to the Tilted Moon Region? But that was impossible. they had conversed in a most secretive manner. Not even a great emperor could've listened in on Emperor Peerless' conversation, much less a mere origin realm cultivator.

Emperor Peerless cast a glance at Jiang Chen before sending a message. "It should just be a coincidence. Why don't you question him closely and see what he knows?"

"You know, it's not going to be cheap to employ someone of our caliber. Don't you think that we're too expensive for an origin realm cultivator like you?" Jiang Chen joked.

"Yes, I know that I'm humble and weak, and that I don't deserve to employ either one of you. I doubt I can do that even if I have the wealth of ten lifetimes. However, I do have the Radiant Celestial Grass. If you are willing to escort me safely away from Pillfire City and into Frostmoon City, I will give you one shoot. If you're willing to help me after we entered Frostmoon City, I'm willing to

give you two shoots."

Earlier, Jiang Chen had to spend four hundred million saint spirit stones to win the bid. Two shoots of Radiant Celestial Grass were obviously worth a lot. It was definitely enough to hire a couple of emperor realm experts at least. However, it was a different story if the person he aimed to hire was a great emperor expert. It depended on the great emperor's feelings.

Jiang Chen smiled calmly. "From what I learned, the Radiant Celestial Grass is an extremely valuable sky rank spirit herb. It is rare enough to find one shoot, and it's a fact that you've auctioned one of them. But now you're telling me you have another two with you? Do you think this is a joke?"

A trace of hesitation colored the short man's countenance, but he made up his mind in the end and produced out a storage bag before their eyes. Although the bag was simple and crude, the short man opened it to reveal was two shoots of Radiant Celestial Grass inside. The scene was like a three years old child walking on the streets while carrying a gold brick. Even Jiang Chen was shocked to find so many blades of the spirit herb on a mere origin realm cultivator.

Jiang Chen was a bit caught off guard. He looked at Emperor Peerless.

The great emperor nodded slightly. "Brother, do as you wish. If this spirit herb is that important to you, then it is no trouble to escort him along his journey."

Jiang Chen stared at the short man and chuckled in a strange tone. "I'm surprised. Aren't you afraid that we will rob and kill you right now?"

The short man raised his head high and declared. "Of course I'm afraid, but I don't have a choice. If I walk out of the city alone, I am sure to die a horrible death. In fact, I know I'm being watched by many factions in Pillfire City. It is inconvenient for them to act

against me while I'm still inside the city, but the second I get out, I will be a fat target waiting to be picked up."

"Oh? So you do know that you're a fat target." Jiang Chen made fun of him.

"I may be weak, but I'm not an idiot. That's why I'd rather to trust in you and Emperor Peerless' reputation. I am a wandering cultivator myself, and I know that Emperor Peerless is a titan in our world. He is very well famed within our community." Jiang Chen had to admit that the short man was pretty eloquent. After shedding his initial nervousness, he was a lot more eloquent than before.

Emperor Peerless beamed at the praise. "His praises have reached even me, brother. It doesn't look like you can turn down this business."

Jiang Chen also smiled. "In that case, why not? Still, if you're not an idiot then why did you auction this spirit herb off at the Temple of Cleansing Fire? Aren't you just drawing attention to yourself?"

The short man let out a long sigh. "Arena Lord Shao, you have no idea how difficult the life of a wandering cultivator is. You have no idea the pain of a bottom rank cultivator either. If I wasn't in need of money, do you really think I would've come all the way from Frostmoon City just to auction off a single Radiant Celestial Grass? Do you really think I would risk taking this treasure to the Temple if I didn't think that they have enough integrity to appraise this spirit herb without scamming me?"

Jiang Chen was stumped for words. The short man's words rang true when he thought about it carefully. An origin realm cultivator wouldn't dare to bring the spirit herb to a random store for appraisal even if they knew that it was an extraordinary spirit herb.

After all, only two kinds of outcome could come out of this action: One, the store labels it a true saint rank spirit herb instead

and bought it at a pittance even though it was sky rank. Two, the store admitted that it was the Radiant Celestial Grass but keeps an eye on him. He might be killed and robbed the second he stepped out of the spirit herb store.

To a wandering cultivator, the possession of a treasure that surpassed their realm was both a blessing and a curse. In an instant, Jiang Chen understood the short man's pain and difficulties.

"Alright, I accept your request. We will take you to Frostmoon City first. If you still need us after we reached Frostmoon City, you will tell us what kind of complications you're facing. If it is too difficult, we will need to think twice before accepting it." Jiang Chen hadn't fallen so low that he would rob a person, but this was a business deal. All details of a deal must be clarified before it was settled.

The short man hurriedly replied, "It definitely won't be too much trouble for you two, but it is a great deal of trouble to us weak wandering cultivators though."

Chapter 1076: A Competition of Speed

Emperor Peerless suddenly spoke. “Come, let’s leave the city and collect ourselves.”

Scanning the surroundings, he found numerous pairs of eyes looking in this direction. The emperor knew that their owners didn’t have him or Jiang Chen as their target. They were after the short man. Those onlookers might not act within Pillfire City itself, but they were after the short man like snakes drawn to their prey. They laid in ambush, waiting for the right moment to strike.

Jiang Chen noticed the odd tone in the emperor’s voice. His own sweeping glance notified him of the same. “Looks like you came to us with a bunch of people hot on your heels,” he smiled a little.

The short man blanched at this, realizing too late that he had an unwelcome entourage.

“Don’t worry, Old Brother Mo is the strongest deterrent you could ask for. Even if they were ten times as brave as they actually are, they wouldn’t dare do anything.” Jiang Chen wasn’t worried.

The spirit herb was valuable, but not enough to risk a great emperor’s ire. As expected, all the hidden ambushers hated the fact that the short man was walking with Emperor Peerless. They could only watch from afar. The emperor exerted an insurmountable amount of pressure on them. They did not dare act out of turn.

The short man had lived his past few days in abject fear. He breathed a sigh of relief in the knowledge that he was finally safe. In no time at all, the trio left the boundaries of Pillfire City proper. Emperor Peerless summoned into the skies, and a great beast answered his call. It was the emperor’s mount.

“Take a seat on my steed with this man, my friend. I shall fly,” the emperor instructed.

“He can sit,” Jiang Chen smiled. “I’ll fly with you.”

Jiang Chen had his Cicada's Wings, into which he'd refined Featherflight Wings and then Kunpeng Wings. His wings were entirely suitable to be called great emperor level. The additional speed from Kunpeng Meteoric Escape would allow him to easily race the average great emperor. Thus, he had no desire to sit on a steed.

"Little brother, I know it's not too far from here to Tilted Moon Region, but there are at least three hundred thousand miles to go before Frostmoon City," Emperor Peerless reminded.

Jiang Chen smiled. "It's fine. I can keep up, no problem."

"Your confidence surprises me. Is a race what you want?" The emperor chuckled.

"Why not?" Jiang Chen was in high spirits.

The short man found it hard to grasp everything he was hearing.

"Oi, you over there. What's your name?" Jiang Chen suddenly asked.

The target of his question answered instantly. "Ah, my name is Liu Zhen."

"Well, Liu Zhen. Take Old Brother Mo's steed and go on without us. We'll bring up the rear. Don't worry, no one from Pillfire City will get past us."

The man was a little fearful still. He didn't feel it was entirely his place to ride something that belonged to a great emperor. Emperor Peerless exchanged a few words with it under his breath. The beast responded with an unhappy sneeze. It looked a little scornful, but gave a helpless nod anyway. Seemingly, it had agreed to the emperor's unfair request.

"Up you go." With a flick of Emperor Peerless's sleeves, the little man was sent flying into the saddle. With a shrill cry, the beast pierced the heavens like a bolt of lightning, hurtling directly towards the direction of Tilted Moon Region. It looked like a flash

of multi-colored lightning through the sky.

“You’ve a very nice steed instead. It’s extremely quick!” Jiang Chen praised.

The emperor chuckled for a moment before turning a serious eye back towards Pillfire City. “Listen, men of Pillfire. Anyone who is still behind us in fifteen minutes won’t be able to return home.”

It was a warning from a great emperor cultivator. The ones who hadn’t yet given up and the opportunists who’d wanted to strike at Liu Zhen later were all shaken when they heard those words. They hardly missed the emperor’s anger beneath the surface. If they did disobey the command, they would very likely be smashed to smithereens.

“Come on, little guy. Show me the speed that you have so much confidence in.” Emperor Peerless looked back at Jiang Chen in a half-smile.

“Exactly what I wanted. Let’s go!” The young man shot back a cocky grin. He turned into a streak of lightning as well, slicing through the sky. His current wings, infused with the strength of the kunpeng bloodline, was in its ultimate stage of development. Once upon a time, their base had been the Featherflight Wings. But after the alterations, few vestiges of those wings’ appearance could be find.

Because of this, Jiang Chen didn’t need to worry about their relationship to Emperor Featherflight being found out. He had a mind to show off a little before Emperor Peerless. Using his Kunpeng Meteoric Escape ability, he pushed his velocity to its maximum. The ability made him overwhelmingly faster than any emperor realm cultivator. As long as they didn’t specialize in speed, even ninth level cultivators could not outpace him. The same was true in general for great emperors as well.

Emperor Peerless had some aptitude in this area. The formidable haste with which Jiang Chen was moving aroused his interest. He

accelerated to his own limits to compete. Emperor Peerless's successful pursuit, despite Jiang Chen's head start, ignited the latter's fighting spirit. Drawing more power from his kunpeng bloodline, he stepped up his speed with Kunpeng Meteoric Escape yet again.

It was common knowledge that it was extremely difficult to raise one's speed past a certain point. In general, special methods were essential to doing so. Jiang Chen had no special methods, but he did have a bloodline backing him up. The Kunpeng Meteoric Escape was an ability that borrowed the strength inherent in one's blood to increase one's speed. He was merely exerting himself at the moment. If necessary, he could sacrifice his blood in moments of desperation to raise his velocity yet again. That was why he was so confident in his own speed.

In the first serious challenge within the main Veluriyam Pagoda, his kunpeng bloodline and Kunpeng Meteoric Escape ability had been most valuable prizes. It was a perfect improvement for him in terms of agility. Even that venerable expert, Honored Master P'eng, had lauded his speed without reservation. Jiang Chen was only half-step emperor realm. It was difficult to get an empyrean cultivator like the master to offer such words without exceptional talent and potential being present.

Jiang Chen's instantaneous acceleration amazed Emperor Peerless. He increased his own speed yet again. They chased at each other's tails, momentum continuously increasing. The leading person switched to and fro, always changing hands. Four hours later, the two of them had flown a few dozen thousand miles out.

"Hahaha, what a blast. That was really quite enjoyable!" Emperor Peerless roared in laughter. "I didn't expect someone as young as you to be so fast. I almost lost to you, you know."

In the end, Jiang Chen elected not to fuel further bursts speed using his blood. On the other hand, the emperor hadn't shown all

his own tricks either. Thus, no one was nominally the winner.

“Thank you for the concessions, old brother. I know you’re holding back on me, heh.” Jiang Chen felt himself freed in the presence of the old man.

“Uh huh. I’m sure you didn’t use everything you had, either,” Emperor Peerless shot back. Another fit of laughter ensued. They had both flown at top speed, and because of this, Liu Zhen and the emperor’s steed had actually been left behind.

Thankfully, the steed was a rapid enough creature in its own right, and it caught up before too long. The threat the emperor had issued a few hours prior, plus the beast’s own alacrity, meant that Liu Zhen was able to arrive unscathed. However, lingering fears about his erstwhile pursuers and the steed’s incredible speed had led to the short man’s eyes being closed the entire trip. His heart almost leapt out of his chest. It had been almost more than he could bear.

Jiang Chen found Liu Zhen’s bloodless face extremely amusing.

“Sirs, how… how did you get in front of me?” Liu Zhen was agape with shock. Indeed, he had imagined needing to wait at some point along the trip. It was scary being alone. But rather than his waiting for them, they were here waiting for him.

Emperor Peerless and Jiang Chen exchanged a look and smile. The emperor was thinking the same as the youth; the short man’s reaction was quite funny.

“Looks like I’m that frog in the bottom of the well, huh.” Realizing his own embarrassment, Liu Zhen remarked with some self-deprecation. “I really underestimated just how capable you two sirs are.”

They arrived in Tilted Moon Region in two days. But Frostmoon City was another day or two’s journey away. The Tilted Moon Region was in the northwest of the Upper Eight Regions, and had a

rather broad expanse of territory. It was one of, if not the, largest regions. In the Upper Eight Regions, the northwest territories were the hottest lands. A sweltering heat was present all year round, and there was little differentiation in terms of seasons.

Jiang Chen found it rather odd. “Old Brother Mo, don’t you think that the names ‘Tilted Moon Region’ and ‘Frostmoon City’ match the actual circumstances very poorly? It’s so hot here. Why does the city have ‘frost’ in its name at all?”

It was absolutely perplexing. Rationally speaking, ‘Frostmoon City’ gave off the vibe of severe cold that stretched for thousands of miles.

“Haha, I’m afraid I can’t answer that question. Probably no one in the entire Tilted Moon Region can, to be honest. However, I do remember hearing that in ancient times, the climate here wasn’t like this at all.”

“The Divine Abyss Continent is an intriguing place,” Jiang Chen exclaimed. He had no impression of the city whatsoever. If not for the information he’d obtained from Niu Wuhua, he wouldn’t have come here at all.

No matter whether his father Jiang Feng had received news of his mother, Jiang Chen intended to come take a look all the same. Even the smallest rumor was better than perfect silence. Though he didn’t remember his birth mother at all, Jiang Chen needed to thoroughly investigate for the sake of his father. The enduring love that his father had for his mother made Jiang Chen instinctively feel that to deserve such love, his mother had to have been an amazing woman.

Chapter 1077: Frostmoon City

Two days later, the trio officially arrived at Frostmoon City. As agreed, the short man fulfilled his promise and gave Jiang Chen a shoot of Radiant Celestial Grass. After that, both parties made a promise to meet each other at a certain location three days later. They would then discuss Liu Zhen's next request in detail.

Frostmoon City was one of the major cities in the northwest region of the Upper Eight Regions. Although it was inferior to Pillfire City, it was still a place of great value. It represented both the center and the glory of Tilted Moon Region. However, Jiang Chen wasn't in the mood to enjoy its unique local culture despite being in the thick of it. He couldn't help but feel incredibly depressed every time he thought of his father, Jiang Feng.

"Is there something on your mind, brother?" Emperor Peerless' eyes were very keen.

Jiang Chen didn't deny it. "There is, brother, one that relates to the safety of my loved ones. I feel wracked with worry every time I think about it."

Emperor Peerless knew his feelings very well. "We cultivators normally do not fear anything, but the same cannot be said about our loved ones. They are our softest spot and greatest weakness. Do you know why I haven't brought my partner with me to Pillfire City? It's because I was afraid that someone would use her against me."

Jiang Chen felt the same way. It wasn't the first time his friends and family had been used against him in this lifetime, and each time it happened, he learned how best to prevent it from happening again. Now that he thought about it, he'd been a burden to his other father in his previous life. Perhaps a lot of his enemies had used him against his father as well.

Jiang Chen was saddened and depressed. What if his enemies

used his current father against him too? He wouldn't be able to do anything no matter how what powers he possessed. After all, the word "father" was too heavy for him. It was a psychological barrier he could never overcome.

"You shouldn't think so much. You are young, so stop shouldering so many responsibilities and learn a little from the youngsters of Tilted Moon Region. You may not notice, but love is everywhere in this place. For starters, the young girls here are especially carefree, vivacious, sexy and open, so I sincerely advise you to seize the opportunity and..." Emperor Peerless said with a chuckle.

Jiang Chen was speechless. "Brother, if your wife hears about this..."

"Haha, I'm absolutely loyal to my wife. Also, this is something you youngsters should do, not old people like us."

Admittedly, the girls of Frostmoon City were different from others. Maybe because of the weather, but here they were dressed relatively lightly compared to other places. The shyness and restrained bearing that were normally present in girls of other regions were also absent here. Young girls could be seen singing and dancing everywhere. Their eyes and even bellies seemed like they could speak. Every look and movement was ever so tantalizing and seductive.

"Let us make haste, brother. Bring me to your wife now." Jiang Chen's original goal was to inquire about his mother, but since Emperor Peerless was with him, he might as well visit the emperor's partner first.

"Alright, come with me." Emperor Peerless turned serious the moment his partner was mentioned. Although he was a wandering cultivator, he had friends all across the world. He led Jiang Chen to a relatively secluded place not long after they arrived at Frostmoon City. It was his friend's domain, and it was also here

where he arranged for his wife to stay. A place Emperor Peerless could leave his wife behind was definitely a trustworthy place.

“You’re back, Brother Mo?” Surprisingly, the person he welcomed them was a woman; an extremely beautiful woman. Her voice was as gentle and graceful as she looked.

“Sister Qing, how is Ah Yun?” Emperor Peerless asked anxiously the second he saw her.

“Sister Yun’s condition is the same as before. Brother Mo, if I may ask…?” The woman’s residence was more elegant than others. Although they were at the city center, it almost felt like the woman was living alone in seclusion.

“He can be trusted.” Emperor Peerless introduced the woman to Jiang Chen. “She used to be sect mates with my wife, and is a friend of mine.”

Jiang Chen was caught off guard. Was this the friend Brother Mo had mentioned earlier? He thought his friend would be someone like the Geng brothers, but the possibility that it was a woman who was also his wife’s sect mate never even crossed his mind.

“Hello, Miss Qing.” Jiang Chen addressed the woman more politely hearing Brother Mo address her.

The woman’s bright eyes moved once before she nodded. “Hello.”

Her tone wasn’t warm, but it wasn’t unapproachable either.

“Let us speak inside.” Emperor Peerless obviously thought of this place as his own home because he walked right in without the pretense of a guest.

A hint of disappointment fleeted across Miss Qing’s fair face. After letting out a quiet sigh, she followed behind him in small, quick steps.

Jiang Chen couldn’t help but feel that the reaction was strange.

Why had she let out a soft sigh? He couldn't tell if she was sighing for Emperor Peerless and Madame Yun's fate, or her own. For some reason, he felt that there was a complicated story behind her quiet sigh. When he entered the courtyard, he discovered that it was like a completely different world. All sorts of plants were present and the arrangements gave off an otherworldly and serene feeling.

"Miss Qing's temperament matches this courtyard well." Jiang Chen was quite impressed with the arrangements. There weren't many plants in this courtyard, but somehow they exuded grace and elegance. The house was behind the courtyard. Emperor Peerless was obviously very familiar with the place. He was so anxious that he even forgot Jiang Chen was following behind him.

Jiang Chen understood that Emperor Peerless missed his wife a lot, so instead of hurrying, he wisely slowed his footsteps and enjoyed the scenery for a while. Again, he found that both the courtyard's interior and external arrangements were very exquisite and serene.

Miss Qing walked over with small, quick steps. "How should I call you, sir?"

"Hehe, my surname is Shao." Jiang Chen didn't give her his real name.

"Sir Shao." Miss Qing dipped in a small curtsey before asking again in a low tone. "Can you really treat Sister Yun's injuries?"

Jiang Chen smiled. "I'll give it a try. I can't go back without trying after Brother Mo had brought me all the way here, can I?"

Miss Qing let out a quiet sigh. "But what if you fail? Brother Mo has a hot temper. You're so young. Aren't you afraid that he'll kill you in one palm strike?"

Jiang Chen was confused. Miss Qing looked like a gentle and quiet person, but her words were a little incoherent. Suppose he

did fail to treat Madame Yun's sickness. Was that really cause for Emperor Peerless to kill him?

"Then I shall do my best to treat her. I hope my skills are sufficient, considering how much he loves her."

"I'm advising you out of good will." Miss Qing frowned slightly.

Jiang Chen smiled. "Thank you for your concern, Miss Qing, but no matter what the outcome may be, I cannot leave without doing my best. I am friends with Brother Mo after all."

"Oh, I see," Miss Qing said remotely. "I wish you good luck then."

Jiang Chen was very puzzled by Miss Qing's actions. For some reason, the tone she used gave him an indescribable feeling. It was obvious that Miss Qing shared a great relationship with Brother Mo and his wife. Miss Qing must mean a lot to Brother Mo considering that he trusted her enough to leave his wife in his care. But it sounded that Miss Qing didn't want him to check out Madame Yun's condition? Was she really worried that Brother Mo would hurt him? But if that was the case, wasn't her fear a little groundless?

Jiang Chen didn't think much into it despite mulling over it for a moment.

Emperor Peerless stayed inside for a long while before he finally came out. "Come in, brother. What are you waiting for outside? My wife wants to know what kind of young genius I've met after hearing about you."

Again, Miss Qing shot Jiang Chen a cool glance. It was indescribably strange. Jiang Chen didn't pay heed to it and entered the house.

A somewhat haggard-looking woman was lying in Emperor Peerless' lap. She looked a little pale, but was dressed in clean clothing. He could see from her countenance and temperament

that she was a peerless beauty in the past. However, sickness and age had robbed much of her health and good looks.

“Ah Yun, this is the good brother I mentioned.” Emperor Peerless beckoned Jiang Chen over. “Come quickly, brother. This is my wife.”

“Well met, Madame Yun.” Jiang Chen walked forwards.

Ah Yun smiled slightly. “Good, good. When I look at you, I cannot help but recall young Peerless’ great vigor back then. You know, that was how he won my heart.”

Emperor Peerless laughed loudly. “You hear that brother? You still have a lot to learn from me. Hahaha, back then countless people tried to court Ah Yun, but I was the one who won in the end!”

Ah Yun smiled again and patted Emperor Peerless’ palms. “You shameless fellow! Why are you teaching him your bad habits instead of the good ones?”

Emperor Peerless laughed. “But I am! I’m teaching him how to attract girls and make a partner. How is that a bad thing? This is of lifelong importance!”

“And how do you know he doesn’t have a partner already?” Ah Yun asked impatiently.

“Ah? Brother, do you have a partner already?” Emperor Peerless was caught off guard.

Jiang Chen nodded.

“Ah? You actually have a dao partner? Then it’s my mistake. And here I thought you’re an unromantic person who doesn’t get the beauty of Frostmoon City’s girls. As I thought, your taste is just as good as mine. We both only enjoy the best!” Emperor Peerless exclaimed in a very loud voice.

Outside the door, Miss Qing was just about to walk closer when

she heard this. A downcast expression colored her fair countenance once more.

“Don’t worry, Ah Yun. The brother I invited over this time will definitely be able to treat your injuries. It won’t be long before you get healthy again, and we’ll be able to travel the world with me and get back all the happiness that we missed out on for all these years.” Emperor Peerless spoke lovingly like a young man who had just fallen in love.

Chapter 1078: An Unexpected Development, A Toxic Dose Of Love

Jiang Chen gently placed Madame Yun's hand back down after an hour had passed. Her long struggle with her illness had caused the skin on her palms to shrivel and lack luster.

"Little brother, how is it?" Emperor Peerless immediately asked after Jiang Chen was done taking her pulse. The expressions on his face was not that of a great emperor, but of a young and overly anxious brat.

"Old brother, It's... a little complicated. It's going to take some time to cure her. I'd recommend letting your wife take the pill first so that she can regain some lifespan and invigorate her blood and limbs. I'm confident in my ability to cure her after she regains some energy. However... we will have to return to Veluriyam Capital."

The emperor was elated. "No problem! I'm willing to climb a mountain of swords and plunge into a sea of flames as long as you can cure her! Moreover, I've always wanted to go to the Capital! Haha! This is truly pleasant news!"

"Ah Yun! Did you hear what he just said? I told you my brother is a capable man! He's likely the only person in the entire human domain that can cure you! Ah, I've yet to give him a proper introduction. Our brother over here is..." The emperor was interrupted mid-sentence when he noticed that Miss Qing was standing right outside the door. She seemed a little unsure if she should enter the room. "Little sister Qing, why are you standing out there? Come in! It's not like any of us here are strangers."

One could easily see hints of embarrassment on Miss Qing's face. She hesitated a little before entering the room.

"Brother, since there are no strangers among us, I shan't hide

your secrets anymore. Little sister Qing and your sister-in-law are so close that they're like family." The emperor was looked incredibly happy. "This is my brother. He's actually quite renowned around these parts. Most people know him as the young lord of Sacred Peafowl Mountain from Veluriyam Capital. You may address him as Brother Zhen."

The emperor was very excited, but didn't reveal Jiang Chen's true identity as there was no need for it just yet.

"Young lord of Sacred Peafowl Mountain?" Madame Yun was astounded. "Peerless, is he the same young lord Zhen you so often talk about? The youth who defeated Pill King Ji Lang?"

"Hehe. Yes it is!" The emperor burst into laughter. "Ah Yun, don't you agree that this is such a huge coincidence? I was contemplating if I should travel to Veluriyam Capital to see him, but unexpectedly, we met right after I arrived in Pillfire City! We even became sworn brothers! Mm! This is fate!"

Miss Qing also seemed incredibly astounded at first, but she quickly regained her composure and put on a faint smile. However, her smile contained hints of melancholy.

"Little sister Qing, us brothers will be in your care for a few more days! Haha! We'll leave for Veluriyam Capital immediately after my wife's condition turns for the better! We've been disturbing you for too long..."

"Big Brother Mo, why the formalities between family?" Miss Qing sighed gently. "Don't worry about it. It's lonely here. In fact, I'd much prefer to have you here with me, forever."

"Haha! That would be too much!" The emperor laughed.

"Big brother Mo, Sister Yun, rest some. I'll have to make some preparations. My accommodations are a bit lacking. I hope Brother Zhen will not mind." Miss Qing curtsied at Jiang Chen, to which the latter responded with a faint smile.

“Miss Qing is too gracious.” Jiang Chen pondered deeply after Miss Qing had left. For some reason, she seemed a little unreadable to him. He couldn’t sense any evil intentions from her, but what she’d said outside seemed a little overboard. One could easily tell that she and Madame Yun were very close, and that Old Brother Mo was also quite fond of her. Moreover, she didn’t seem to bear any resentment for an outsider like him. So why had she said all that?

Jiang Chen didn’t understand why, but he decided to keep his thoughts to himself. After all, Madame Yun and Miss Qing were as close as actual sisters. He didn’t want to spoil their relationship by saying such things. It would leave a bad impression on them.

“Brother Mo, you should hand over the Pinecrane Pill to sister-in-law now. It isn’t a very overpowering pill, so letting her refine it slowly shouldn’t cause too big of a problem. Jiang Chen headed outside after giving the instructions.

Miss Qing’s residence wasn’t very big, but it was extremely elegant and tranquil. It was a pleasant place to be in.

Miss Qing showed a complicated gaze when she saw Jiang Chen exit the room, but she didn’t comment on it. “Brother Zhen, please pardon my hospitality for my residence is a little lacking.”

“A cultivator like me naturally wouldn’t mind such things.” Jiang Chen smiled in response.

Miss Qing nodded and said nothing more.

Jiang Chen walked briskly around the courtyard, but was soon bored. Thus, he decided to stroll around Frostmoon City instead. His mind was fully occupied with thoughts of this foreign land. He didn’t immediately seek news of the Moon God Sect. He was worried that others might notice if he immediately did so. He didn’t want to attract too much trouble, so the investigation could wait for now.

After a brief stroll, he saw for himself how open-minded the citizens of Frostmoon City were. Many cute and charming girls threw seductive gazes at him. Some even brazenly called out to him. They were finding this foreign youth very attractive. No matter how much he tried to disguise himself, his bearing wasn't something that could be disguised.

Jiang Chen returned to the residence four hours later as he felt that Madame Yun must've finished refining the pill by now. Upon arriving at the courtyard, he noticed that gate was half opened. He furrowed his brows suspiciously before entering the premises. His nose twitched as soon as he entered. There was a odd smell in the air. It was almost unnoticeable, but he had very sharp senses.

"Old Brother Mo?" Realizing something was amiss, he immediately rushed towards the inner residence. When Madame Yun's room was within sight, he noticed Miss Qing wearing a snowy-white outfit leaning against the door.

Traces of not having the heart to do something appeared on Miss Qing's face when she saw Jiang Chen. "Didn't you go out on a stroll? Why are you back so soon?"

Jiang Chen frowned. "Miss Qing, where is Old Brother Mo?"

Miss Qing responded with a dreadful laugh. "Brother Mo he... will not be seeing you anymore. He has gone into a deep slumber. Sister Yun too... she has joined him in his sleep."

"What do you mean?" Jiang Chen furrowed his brows and took a step back instinctively.

Miss Qing laughed when she saw how cautious he was being. Her laughter carried hints of insanity.

"Brother Zhen, you shouldn't have come back. I didn't want to involve an innocent person in this. You didn't have to accompany Brother Mo and I. Why do you have to be so insensible?!" Her words sped up. "Leave! Leave while you still have time to! Hurry,

before the poison invades your consciousness!”

Color immediately drained from Jiang Chen’s face. “You’ve poisoned Old Brother Mo?”

He sniffed the air and noticed the odd smell again. It was barely noticeable, but he was sensitive to the smell of spirit herbs.

“It has nothing to do with you!” Miss Qing began to sound a little agitated. “Brother Mo and I may not be fortunate enough to be born on the same year, month, and day, but we can ask for death in each other’s arms! After this, we’ll finally be together! Are you leaving or not?!”

Mental! This woman has gone absolutely crazy! Jiang Chen had caught the gist of what was happening. It was obvious that this woman had fallen in love with Old Brother Mo, but she chose to bottle up her feelings because of Madame Yun. However, she had gone to extremes to be with Old Brother Mo, even if it meant death.

Such was the nature of love. It was often the culprit of envy, jealousy, and insanity. Miss Qing’s actions were proof that she’d been deeply poisoned by love. It was why she had resorted to such extreme actions.

“Miss Qing, do you really think that Old Brother Mo’s heart will belong to you if you do this? If you really love him and want to be together with him, why not confess your love to him? Why resort to such extreme measures? Don’t you realize what you’re doing right now is extremely foolish?” Jiang Chen’s heart was torn by anxiety. He hadn’t identified the poison just yet, but a poison that could affect a great emperor unnoticed was definitely no ordinary poison!

Miss Qing was obviously not of a sound mind anymore. She began to laugh sarcastically. “Confess? What’s the point? His heart is already occupied by Sister Yun! I can only hate myself for meeting him too late! Even if I confess, all he can think about is

Sister Yun this, Sister Yun that! He's always finding a cure for her! Time and time again, I've tried showing him my charms, but that blockhead never shows me any response! Must I do it like the whores you so often see in the streets? Never!" Her voice was thick with sorrow. "I know that Sister Yun is a very exceptional woman, but I'm not any worse than her. The only reason I've lost is because she got to know him first. If he had known me first, he would definitely cherish me like how he cherishes her! I already know that I can no longer outmatch Sister Yun in this life, but in the next one, I'll definitely get to know him ahead of her! If I fail, I'll just try again in another life! There will at least be one life where I'll end up the winner…"

Jiang Chen was so utterly speechless that goosebumps popped into existence all over. Even with his knowledge and experience, he couldn't help but be stunned by what he just heard. Love was the cause of laughter, sadness, happiness, and sorrow… But to cause such insanity? Only someone extremely deep in the abyss of love was capable of such things.

Was she evil for trying to attain love in her own deranged way?

Obviously not.

Jiang Chen was at a loss for what to do next.

Miss Qing began to laugh ludicrously. "Brother Zhen, aren't you leaving yet? Do you wish to join us in our wretched fate? I heard that the fates of people who die at the same time and at the same place will be entwined even in the next life! Well, it's fine if you choose not to leave. In the next life, you shall seduce Sister Yun so that Brother Mo will be mine…"

Jiang Chen was utterly flabbergasted. This woman was truly too poisoned by love.

Chapter 1079: I Must Save Emperor Peerless

Jiang Chen didn't know whether to hate her, scorn her or be impressed by her. Her love was truly selfish because she tried to push Emperor Peerless and herself into the grave without obtaining his permission. This could only be explained as an expression of jealousy and selfishness. However, she didn't bear any resentment towards her love rival despite loving Emperor Peerless to the point of madness. The fact that she put her heart and soul into taking care of Madame Yun was proof that her nature was good and that she valued her sisterly relationship with Madame Yun. She didn't say a single bad word about Madame Yun at all, and the only fault she admitted to was knowing Brother Mo too late.

A different woman would've hated her love rival and felt that Madame Yun had robbed her of her love, but not only did the thought never cross Miss Qing's mind, she even tried to keep Jiang Chen, an innocent person, out of her scheme. This proved that she was a good-natured woman and not someone with the heart of a snake. A bit of understanding dawned upon Jiang Chen at this point.

Why had Miss Qing tried to convince him to leave and not treat Madame Yun's injuries? It was because Brother Mo would leave with his wife the moment she recovered. If that happened, Miss Qing would be forced to stay alone in this place and watch her beloved departing with his own beloved.

Maybe it was Jiang Chen's fault as well? Maybe his presence had unwittingly added to Miss Qing's madness. He couldn't help but blame himself a little at this point. At the same time, a different thought surfaced to his mind: I cannot allow Old Brother Mo to depart this world in such a manner. I must save Old Brother Mo!

"Miss Qing, actually... there's something I haven't discussed with you all this time..." Jiang Chen suddenly said.

She was completely absorbed in her own world as she waited the arrival of her death with a smile. It was obvious that she had poisoned herself too. The only reason she hadn't fallen into a coma yet was because she poisoned herself a little later than Emperor Peerless.

Miss Qing didn't show too much reaction at Jiang Chen's words. With a tired smile, she asked, "What is it?"

"Why must you wait until the next lifetime or the next if you truly wish to be together with Old Brother Mo?"

Miss Qing shook her head. "Hehe, I know you're trying to change my mind, little guy, but it's useless... Brother Mo can only ever love Sister Yun, not to mention that I refuse to share him with anyone else, not even with someone who's so close to me. Love is selfish after all."

In this world, it wasn't uncommon for a powerful male cultivator to have several partners. However, Miss Qing was obviously not the kind of woman who was willing to share her man with multiple women. Of course in her case her love could only be counted as a one-sided love. After all, Mo Wushuang wasn't even aware of Miss Qing's affection, much less requite it.

"Miss Qing, you say you love Old Brother Mo, but does he know about this? How will you know that you love him if you never let him know? If he can love Madame Yun for all his life during this lifetime, then surely his love won't change even after he reincarnates into his next life." Jiang Chen advised patiently. "I don't know much, but I do know that you should at least boldly let him know of your love. You shouldn't hide your love the way you did and destroy it like this in the end."

Miss Qing sighed softly. "It's too late, it's all too late to say anything now! The poison I used is the Seven Emotions Poison, and it is something that cuts off the emotions and senses of a person completely. The poison has already reached his heart, so

isn’t it all too late?”

“The Seven Emotions Poison?” Jiang Chen cried out with shock. “Do you mean that poison that’s refined from the fusion of several heartless ingredients?”

Miss Qing smiled with distress. “You seem to know a lot. It is unfortunate that you’re going to die here at such a young age. Alas… when I met him on the banks of the pond that year, two heart became one. My love! After you left, my thoughts, my feelings, I put them all into the guqin. But try as I may to adjust the strings, I can’t play a tune of love no matter what…”

Her answer suddenly turned into a song. It was mournful and sad even as a smile fleeted across her face from time to time…

Jiang Chen had no time to spare for Miss Qing. He strode right past her into the room. Emperor Peerless was seated upright before his bed like a frozen statue. It was obvious that his consciousness had been restrained by the Seven Emotions Poison. Madame Yun was lying sideways on the bed. Although her complexion looked a lot better than before, her consciousness was sealed just the same.

There was no time to mince courtesies, so Jiang Chen slung them both on his shoulders and walked towards outside. When he saw Miss Qing gradually slipping into a coma, he sighed inwardly and couldn’t bear to leave her in the end. He grabbed her with one hand and strode out of this quiet courtyard. He arrived at one of the more impressive-looking inns and rented a few rooms of the highest quality immediately.

All kinds of strange things happened in Frostmoon City, so a person slinging a few people over their shoulders wasn’t uncommon. Neither the shopkeeper nor the attendants even bothered to ask. Of course, their motivation mainly came from Jiang Chen’s striking bearing and generosity. The young man had slapped a couple million saint spirit stones on the table and paid for an entire month’s worth of rooms. There was nothing more

welcomed by an inn than a non-fussy guest.

After putting them in their respective rooms, Jiang Chen was about to walk out when he thought for a moment and decided to summon Long Xiaoxuan. “Brother Long, please watch over them for me, will you? I’m heading out to a spirit herb store.”

Jiang Chen knew about the Seven Emotions Poison, but wasn’t satisfied with his current level of knowledge. He took a sample of Emperor Peerless and Madame Yun’s blood for analysis. He needed to confirm exactly which seven types of heartless ingredients Miss Qing had used to refine the poison.

The Seven Emotions Poison was an extraordinary poison. Not only was it deadly poisonous, it was neigh undetectable by most people. Of course, Emperor Peerless was a great emperor. He wouldn’t have fallen for it had he been on his guard. Unfortunately, he never thought to be on his guard around Miss Qing, much less entertain the idea that she might poison him one day.

Long Xiaoxuan had taken on human form ever since he reached emperor realm a long time ago. However, he wasn’t willing to show his face too much because he was naturally shy. He would never admit to this though.

Jiang Chen quickly headed for the most populated spirit herb distribution center in Frostmoon City. Just like Pillfire City’s Skyfire Avenue or Veluriyam Capital’s Farmer God Market, this district was the place with the heaviest concentration of pill factions in the city. Of course, Jiang Chen was aware that Pillfire City currently had the biggest amount of spirit herbs for sale, but he obviously didn’t have the time to make a round trip. He had to gather all the ingredients here.

Since the Seven Emotions Poison was refined with seven types of heartless poison, he had to gather seven types of spirit herbs that countered each ingredient to cure this poison. Every one of these

spirit herbs was rare enough, but there were three that were especially rare.

After visiting several stores and splashing out a large sum of money, Jiang Chen quickly gathered the first four types of counteracting spirit herbs he was looking for. Two of the three last spirit herbs were earth rank spirit herbs, and he managed to gather them after four hours by paying an even higher price.

However, the same couldn't be said about the last ingredient. This spirit herb was known as the Smiling Bodhi, and it was also the most important ingredient he needed to refine the antidote. It was an incredibly precious spirit herb that was categorized as a quasi-sky rank spirit herb, and a high quality Smiling Bodhi could even be categorized as a sky rank spirit herb.

Jiang Chen couldn't find a Smiling Bodhi no matter how much he asked around, and he couldn't tell if these people were purposely keeping him on tenterhooks or truly out of stock. The Smiling Bodhi was precious, but it shouldn't be so precious that not a single one could be found in a city as big as Frostmoon City. He visited at least a dozen or so of the best spirit herb stores to find the ingredient. However, the results were disappointing. He couldn't believe that none of them had a Smiling Bodhi.

"My friend, a Smiling Bodhi is a sky rank spirit herb, and sky rank spirit herbs are all precious things you can only chance upon normally. It's only natural that you can't buy one no matter how rich you are." The shopkeeper of the last spirit herb store he visited smiled. He was a very amiable man.

Money can't buy it? Jiang Chen thought carefully for a moment and discovered that it might be as the shopkeeper had said. Sky rank spirit herbs was always in high demand in the human domain, so the chances he could buy one with money was next to zero.

Take the Radiant Celestial Grass for example. If the spirit herb

hadn't fallen into the hands of the short origin realm cultivator, Liu Zhen, or if he'd been an emperor realm expert, who in their right minds would put it up for auction?

The news depressed Jiang Chen a little. Emperor Peerless, Madame Yun and Miss Qing's lives were trickling away with every passing second. Even fifteen wasted minutes was enough to put them in greater danger. The best time to cure them of the Seven Emotions Poison was three days. If he couldn't find the Smiling Bodhi in three days, then the chances to save them was minimal even if he did obtain the spirit herb afterwards.

I must find the Smiling Bodhi no matter what the cost. Jiang Chen thought resolutely.

Seeing the worry leaking out of Jiang Chen's expression, the shopkeeper advised. "My friend, the Smiling Bodhi is an antidote ingredient and there's almost no chance you'll run into one if you rush things like this. If you aren't in a hurry, you can try head over to Pillfire City. Pillfire City's spirit herb stock is ten times our city's, and whatever that's absent in their warehouse is sure to be missing the entire human domain as well."

There obviously wasn't time to rush to Pillfire City, so the suggestion was completely meaningless to Jiang Chen. The young man laughed painfully before asking, "Do you have another way, shopkeeper?"

The shopkeeper thought for a moment. "I believe that there's a Smiling Bodhi somewhere in Frostmoon City, but as I said earlier, a sky rank spirit herb isn't something you can buy with spirit stones."

"Oh?" An idea suddenly passed through Jiang Chen's mind. "What if I trade with a different spirit herb?"

He suddenly recalled that he had a bunch of sky rank spirit herbs in possession. They were from Mt. Rippling Mirage and the desolate wildlands, and although he had given some to Lin Yanyu,

they weren't all gone.

"You want to trade a spirit herb for a spirit herb?" The shopkeeper looked surprised. "Do you have a sky rank spirit herb?"

Jiang Chen's eyes lit up. "Shopkeeper, do you think that someone will be willing to trade me a Smiling Bodhi for a sky rank spirit herb?"

The shopkeeper answered frankly, "That depends if the spirit herb you have is what they need. Plus, considering how urgently you need it, the other party is sure to bargain with you and up the price as much as possible. They may even fleece you by a great amount."

"As long as someone is willing to make the trade, then I'm willing to give them a sky rank spirit herb and two earth rank spirit herbs in exchange as well. A Smiling Bodhi is just a quasi-sky rank spirit herb. It's not even a real sky rank spirit herb."

The shopkeeper laughed. "If you have need of it, then it will become more precious than any sky rank spirit herb that exists. It is true that the trade will go smoothly in the norm especially considering your generous offer, but your urgency is plain for all eyes to see, so you better stop deluding yourself thinking that this will be a fair trade."

Chapter 1080: The Overweening Third Master Jing

“Have you heard? Someone is trying to trade two sky rank spirit herbs for one Smiling Bodhi at Three River Street!”

“You must be joking! why is it be worth so much all of a sudden?”

“I know, right? Brother, do you have any? If you do, we’d better sell it to him now! This opportunity isn’t going to come around ever again!”

“Aii... the Smiling Bodhi might be a quasi-sky rank herb, but that doesn’t take away the fact that it possesses sky rank qualities. I don’t even have an earth rank herb, let alone a sky rank one!”

“Anyways, anyone who has a Smiling Bodhi is going to get rich! Getting two sky rank herbs for one? It’s a gift from the heavens!”

“Hehe. I suspect that the eminent figures who own a Smiling Bodhi will not be so willing to trade.”

“Huh? Why do you say so?”

“Are you really that clueless? There’s a reason why that man wants to trade two sky rank herbs for one Smiling Bodhi. First of all, do you know what it’s used for?

“It’s for curing poisons, right?”

“Hehe, if he’s in such urgent need for it, he’s probably going to use it to save someone. The person must mean a lot to him too if he’s willing to trade two sky rank herbs for it. Since he’s already willing to part with two, maybe three or four more might be within the realm of possibilities too?”

“Hmm. Now that you mention, it’s a really good opportunity for extortion.”

“Heh! Let’s head over there and watch the show. It’ll be a good

one! Let's not miss it!"

Jiang Chen occupied the most conspicuous place in Three River Street without a care for territorial disputes. He placed a signboard on either side of him. 'Trading two sky rank pills for a single Smiling Bodhi!' was written on one board, while 'This is a one day offer! All deals are off after the day is over!' was written on the other. It might not be the smartest idea, but it was the most straightforward one.

Jiang Chen added the second signboard even though he had three more days for a good reason. He wanted to see if there really was a Smiling Bodhi in this city. It would definitely appear today if there was one. As for what the price would be, well, that was an issue for later He'd never allow others to trample all over him. The time limit served as a warning. Those who wish to trade must hand over the goods today, or all deals were off.

Trading one Smiling Bodhi for two sky rank herbs was an absolute steal. It was in no way a fair deal. It was a wonderful opportunity for anyone who possessed a Smiling Bodhi. However, Jiang Chen understood that greed was human nature. There would be some who tried to extort him in his time of need. This was why he clearly stated that they would only be given one day to make a decision.

He was certain that Smiling Bodhi holders would want to make use of this rare opportunity to get their hands on two sky rank pills. It was a game of nerves. Jiang Chen looked like he was meditating, but he was actually observing with his consciousness. Most of the crowd in the surroundings was only there to watch the show. There wasn't even a single earth rank herb in sight, let alone a Smiling Bodhi. However, he was certain that there was at least one Smiling Bodhi in the city. In fact, they might've already sent their subordinates to scour more information, or they might be hidden amongst the crowds themselves.

"Hey, friend! Do you really have two sky rank herbs?" someone

tried probing.

Jiang Chen replied in a flippant manner. “Show me a Smiling Bodhi first and you’ll get to see my spirit herbs.”

He wasn’t so stupid that he’d show his own hand first. Even though the deal was destined to be unfair, he didn’t want to reveal his trump cards just yet.

“I have a friend with a Smiling Bodhi. I’ve informed him about your deal, but he’s currently in closed door cultivation, and cannot find the time to leave. However, he did say that you may visit him if you wish to trade.”

Jiang Chen smiled blandly. “I’ll remain here. Some sincerity is still needed if you wish to make this handsome deal. If he isn’t willing to come, there will be others who will.”

“I wouldn’t be so sure about that. The Smiling Bodhi is almost a sky rank herb after all. The inventory we have in this city is already quite limited. It won’t be easy to find one!”

Jiang Chen smiled without further response. Many others also tried to probe him, but he remained uncompromising. He would never reveal his sky rank herbs unless somebody showed him their Smiling Bodhi first.

The crowd quickly grew as time went on, but there wasn’t even a single person who could hand over a Smiling Bodhi. Jiang Chen was beginning to feel a little anxious, but he understood that this method was the only way he could obtain a Smiling Bodhi, even though it was a bit risky. There was simply no other choice right now.

Despite his anxiety, he grit his teeth and kept on waiting. If there was a Smiling Bodhi in the city, he was certain that someone would eventually cave in. As expected, a man dressed in lavish clothes approached him right before the sun went down the hill. He had many vicious looking guards standing behind him. The crowd

immediately opened a path upon noticing him. They all wore respectful smiles on their faces, but one could easily see the fear in their eyes. He was definitely not of a common background.

“Third Master Jing is here!”

“He must possess a Smiling Bodhi!”

“Tsk tsk, if Third Master Jing didn’t have one, then no other clan could possibly have it.”

“Young lad, your luck is not bad. You’ve caught the third master’s attention!” The owner of the voices were trying to curry favor. They raised their voices for a game of obvious boot-licking.

Jiang Chen swept a glance over the man. He was wearing a purple, formal robe and had a slightly waxy complexion. His face also had a slight moustache and beard. One could easily tell that he was of high status just by looking at his stride.

“Friend, I heard that you have two sky rank herbs?” The man asked nonchalantly after measuring Jiang Chen up a little.

The latter nodded without hesitation. “Third Master?”

There was nothing much he knew about the city or its factions. His knowledge of the Tilted Moon Regions was limited to the Moon God Sect alone. However, he was certain that this man was not from the Moon God Sect because they were the rulers of the Tilted Moon Region. Their sect was built on a land rich in spirit energy, and not a backwater place like Frostmoon City. The city was only a place where commoners live. Of course, the factions here were all governed by the sect.

“My surname is Jing, you may call me Third Master Jing. Friend, how may I address you?”

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. “My surname is Shao. Shao Yuan.”

Third Master Jing furrowed his brows. The name seemed to ring a bell. Shao Yuan...? Now, where have I heard that name before?

Since he couldn't recall, he quickly tossed the thought aside and opened his palms, revealing a Smiling Bodhi.

"I coincidentally have one Smiling Bodhi in my hands." He said nonchalantly. "Friend, if you're willing to part with three sky rank spirit herbs, I just might consider trading it with you."

The crowd gasped upon hearing his words. Some even began to laugh at Jiang Chen's misfortune. They all know just how overbearing Third Master Jing was. His appearance spelled nothing but bad news for the young man. As expected, he immediately raised the price to three sky rank spirit herbs.

Jiang Chen instantly burst into laughter. "Third Master Jing, sky rank spirit herbs aren't common everyday grass. Even though I really need the Smiling Boddhi, I've already given you my most sincerest offer as I only have two sky rank spirit herbs. If you want me to offer you a third one, then I have no choice but to turn down the trade."

Third Master Jing already figured that Jiang Chen would say as such. "Is that so? That's too bad. Feel free to visit my manor whenever you're ready to accept my offer. Also, you should give up trying to trade with others. Even if someone else possesses a Smiling Boddhi, they will never trade with you."

Jiang Chen's brows twitched. "Oh? Why is that?"

Third Master Jing laughed but didn't answer. A large brute standing beside him answered instead. "You're such a clueless country bumpkin! Who'd ever try to steal third master's business?"

"Nobody would ever try to steal the meat that the third master already has his eye on!"

His words triggered a huge, roaring laughter among the crowd. They seemed to agree.

Jiang Chen frowned. "Third master, the trade will lose its

meaning after today, as I will no longer need the Smiling Boddhi. Surely you can't expect me to find a third sky rank spirit herb within the time we have left now?"

He refused to fall victim to the third master's extortion. The latter was calling it a trade, but it was actually daylight robbery. If he handed over three sky rank herbs, the third master would probably ask for a fourth. People like him were greedy beyond help.

Third Master Jing shrugged. "Friend, a trade can only happen if two parties are willing. I'm not the type of person to force a deal upon others. If you don't hand over a third sky rank spirit herb, don't even think about leaving with a Smiling Boddhi in Frostmoon City. My city, my rules."

The third master refused to budge. It was obviously not his first time doing this. He was extorting Jiang Chen without fear while waiting for the latter to get on his knees and beg.

Jiang Chen would never fall for such a trick. "Third Master, I've mentioned it before, and i'll mention it again. I only have two sky rank spirit herbs. If you really have to suck my blood dry, then I can offer you two more earth rank spirit herbs. It's all I have."

Jiang Chen might sound like he was trying to come to a compromise on the outside, but he was absolutely smoldering on the inside. Regardless of whether the trade was successful or not, he was going to remember this offense.

Third Master Jing was a little offended when Jiang Chen refused to back down. He was treated like a king in this city. Even outsiders would have to conduct themselves in a respectful manner before him. Nobody had ever talked back to him before, especially not a youth that was still wet behind the ears like him!

Chapter 1081: Dragon and Tiger Brothers

Third Master Jing stared at Jiang Chen for a long while before snickering suddenly. “If I remember correctly, you were the one trying to buy up sky rank spirit herbs in the shops around town earlier, were you not?”

“If I could buy what I wanted with spirit stones, what would I be doing here?” Jiang Chen said coolly.

Third Master Jing chuckled. “Well, you certainly look pathetic. Here, I’ll take a step back: two sky rank spirit herbs, two earth rank spirit herbs, and two hundred million saint spirit stones. I think that’s a more than fair price, and it’s my last call. Any more haggling, and I’ll make sure that you never find the Smiling Bodhi you’re looking for in this city.”

The last statement was accompanied with an uncommon flare of banditry. Both conclusion and man seemed unquestionable and unchallengeable.

All the onlookers had their eyes on Jiang Chen. Clearly, the young man was in a lot of trouble after having been marked by Jing Third. He was about to be forced into the transaction, whether he wanted to or not. Few escaped from this particular lowlife’s clutches.

Jiang Chen knew that this was highway robbery, but he urgently needed the Bodhi to save a life. If he didn’t buy it off Jing Third, no one else in the city would dare sell him one, either.

Jing Third’s Bodhi was Emperor Peerless’s only hope. No matter how unwilling he was, the circumstances dictated what he had to do. Suppressing his rage, he nodded. “You’re a shrewd businessman, Jing Third. Fine, it’s a deal.”

The two sky rank spirit herbs prepared prior were taken out and the rest of the materials in the transaction added to the pile.

Honestly, seeing so much wealth out in the open was enough to give anyone a blood rush. ‘One should not flaunt one’s wealth’ was a common idiom, but Jiang Chen could not afford to adhere to it presently.

Third Master Jing’s cocksure confidence made him feel far less calm than he was displaying. In all of Jiang Chen’s life, he had always taken advantage of others. Never had he been wrung out in such a way. Not that he couldn’t bear to ever lose, but he had lost in a very awkward way. It wasn’t a loss he was willing to take. What the third master had done was blackmail. Third Master Jing might deny coercion, but it would be patently untrue.

Furthermore, the manner in which Third Master Jing had acted was less than pleasant. Despite the enormous benefit he was enjoying from the sale, his tone was one of mock accommodation. “Little brother Shao,” he laughed, “you should know that I’m always happy to lend a helping hand. Don’t forget to keep in touch if you have anything else you need help with here.”

Jiang Chen took the Smiling Bodhi in hand, checking it over for problems. After ensuring there were none, he put it away emotionlessly.

“You have such prestige here in Frostmoon City, Third Master Jing. Whomever else could I get to help me?” Jiang Chen smiled ever so slightly, drifting out with nary a word more.

There was a wave of hushed murmurs in the crowd behind him. It was a collective exclamation of surprise. The youth had a strong spirit and deep pockets. Two sky rank spirit herbs, two earth rank spirit herbs, and two hundred million saint spirit stones... it was no small sum, and yet he’d given it away with little pause. The crowd didn’t know why Jiang Chen needed the Smiling Bodhi so badly, but they were nevertheless impressed with his affluence.

Still, some breathed a sigh of lamentation for him. The youth’s age and inexperience showed through. If he was going to suffer a

big loss regardless, why didn't he butter up Third Master Jing a little? Leaving behind those baleful words would only provoke hatred from the other man. Everyone acquainted with Third Master Jing was familiar with his pettiness.

If that young man had showered him with flattery and praise, perhaps that would be the end of the matter. But an offering of disdain was another matter, as thinly veiled as it was. Wasn't that just making more trouble for himself? Those who had past dealings with Third Master Jing knew that certain developments were due down the road. Of course, no onlooker would poke his head into the third master's business. Quite the opposite, they had to express their support for him out in the open.

"Youngsters nowadays don't know what's good for them."

"That's right. If not for the third master, he wouldn't be able to get one Smiling Bodhi for ten sky rank spirit herbs!"

"Exactly. He's taking the third master's generosity for granted and spitting on his goodwill. Young men like that..."

"Hmph. No matter where he's from, it's suicide to be so dismissive of the third master here in Frostmoon City."

Third Master Jing basked in the people's adulation. He accepted all of them with a face full of smiles, then gave a casual wave before storming off himself, henchmen in tow. There was another wave of sighs as the man left the premises.

"No wonder third master is the richest man in the city. His money certainly comes easily and quickly."

"The third master conducts his business through special methods. You can't just not deal with him. You'll end up needing him in the end anyway. That young man looked very well-off, but he was too naïve."

Though the comments sounded fawning, they hid daggers of aversion.

Some were even brave enough to sing a different tune, under their breaths. “Even an idiot can make money like that. It’s just using power and influence to bully people, isn’t it? He’s happy about it because he gets the cash, but he’s also destroying Frostmoon City’s reputation.”

“I agree. Outsiders who’ve visited shake their heads at the sound of our city’s name. They aren’t interested in buying or selling pills and spirit herbs here anymore.”

“Ah, there’s a reason why Frostmoon City is dropping lower and lower in the esteem of the Upper Eight Regions. Infamy typically has a reason.” By now, the people were publicly criticizing Third Master Jing’s behavior. His actions could be summed up in three words: bullying the market.

Naturally, they took care to keep their volumes relatively low. They didn’t want the others to hear and inform Third Master Jing, lest he be offended. In Frostmoon City, few could remain comfortable after offending this character.

For the time being, Jiang Chen wasn’t in the mood to concern himself with the third master. No matter how strong his displeasure, he kept everything to himself. His first priority was to return to the inn, then refine the antidote and cure Emperor Peerless. This Smiling Bodhi had cost him dearly, but at least he had it now. With it, Jiang Chen had an over ninety percent chance at awakening the emperor once more. Moreover, there would be no lasting effects whatsoever.

It was all thanks to Jiang Chen’s exclusive methods. Any other pill king or emperor on the continent could not say the same. As for the empyrean pill sages above the pill emperors, Jiang Chen couldn’t say. He hadn’t seen any in person after all, much less observed their skills at work. Returning to the inn, he found Long Xiaoxuan on careful watch duty. There had been no unexpected developments while he was gone.

“You owe me another favor.” When he saw Jiang Chen back, the dragon looked the very image of impudence.

Jiang Chen snickered. “Brother Long, I owe you too many favors. I can hardly count them all. Let’s find an opportunity so I can repay them all at once, eh?”

“I’ll keep track.” Long Xiaoxuan grinned suddenly. “Remember the spirit beast you got at Pillfire City? I don’t like its aura. Where’re you keeping it?”

“What are you going to do, my good dragon brother?” Jiang Chen hurriedly asked.

“Why so sensitive? Worried that I’ll eat it?” Long Xiaoxuan was particularly full of himself today.

Jiang Chen gave his draconic friend a once-over and chuckled. “Brother Long, why do I have the feeling that your ego grew with your transformation?”

“Don’t change the subject. Where’re you keeping the spirit beast? Let me see it.”

“Brother Long, please don’t ask after it any more. I definitely won’t let you eat it. Even if you did, you wouldn’t be able to assimilate its bloodline,” Jiang Chen tried to cover a second time for his new pet.

“Two things,” Long Xiaoxuan complained. “First, I have no interest in a little cub like that whatsoever. Second, I’m the descendant of an ancient dragon! There is no bloodline that I can’t assimilate.”

“Maybe not this time,” Jiang Chen smiled mysteriously. “Brother Long, not many ancient spirit beast bloodlines can boast sovereign natures. The true dragons are such a breed, and you’re one of them yourself, but they are hardly the only breed in the heavenly planes.”

“What do you mean? Are you saying that the little cub you have

also has a sovereign bloodline, fit to rule the heavenly planes?" Long Xiaoxuan's tone shifted towards skepticism.

"I can't say for sure right this moment, but my instincts tell me that's not far from the truth. If so, then you and him can be tiger and dragon brothers, right? You'll both be great helpers for me."

Long Xiaoxuan felt a flash of inspiration from his inherited memories. His face colored a little. "Does that tiger... have the bloodline of the ancient Astral White Tigers?"

In ancient times, very few kinds of spirit beasts were eligible for rulership. The Eastern True Dragons, the Astral White Tigers, the Blazing Vermilion Birds, and the Ophidian Black Tortoises were all such species. Besides those, a few other bloodlines were considered equal but slightly lesser. The qilin, the peafowl, the kunpeng... a few dozen other bloodlines on this level existed, ranking only marginally lower than the Four Aspects mentioned above. Below them were the countless other species of spirit beasts.

"It's only a small suspicion," Jiang Chen smiled. "I haven't the time yet to test its blood to confirm. It's still only a cub anyway, and has experienced no awakenings of hereditary memories. In fact, it appears just as a normal Cloud Devouring Tiger would. How unfortunate for its previous owner... in both senses of the word. Alright, Brother Long. I'll need you to protect me while I refine some antidotes. If anything comes up, do as you like."

Jiang Chen had no time for further chatter with his dragon buddy. Time awaited for no one. The quicker he refined the antidotes, the better Emperor Peerless and Madame Yun's chances were. As it was a situation with actual lives on the line, Jiang Chen put everything he had into it. Thankfully, the most difficult thing about neutralizing the Seven Emotions Poison was analyzing its toxicity and finding a way to beat it. The antidote itself was nothing special.

The refining process was complete in under an hour. Jiang Chen

ended up refining two different forms of the antidote. One was spirit fluid, and the other in the form of a pill. The Seven Emotions Poison was quite cruel. It did not solely attack one's organs through the bloodstream, but seeped into one's skin and pores as well. Its final destination was its victim's consciousness, having the power to lock on and consume a cultivator's ocean.

Emperor Peerless and his cultivation partner were only in the stages of having their oceans of consciousness sealed away. There hadn't yet been any destruction. Once their consciousnesses were gone, even the immortals wouldn't be able to save them.

Chapter 1082: Third Master Jings Repeat Provocation

After creating the antidote, Jiang Chen decided to tackle Emperor Peerless' poison first because all clothing had to be removed for treatment. This was so one could make sure the poison was fully expelled. The Seven Emotions Poison was extremely lethal. Even a small speck left in the body was capable of growing into another lethal dose in merely a few days. Removing all traces of it from the body was of utmost importance.

Since the emperor was a man, Jiang Chen didn't feel the need to hold back. Considering the circumstances, he would've saved Madame Yun first, but his hands were tied because of the disrobing requirement. Thus, he decided to cleanse the emperor's poison first. The emperor could expel Madame Yun's poison after he was cured.

The process of expelling the poison was significantly harder than refining the antidote. Jiang Chen fed the emperor the pill first and used his inner energy to guide it into the emperor's body. After that, he guided the liquid antidote through the emperor's blood vessels and acupoints, and moved onto the skin and pores. He approached this step very meticulously.

His senses were much more sensitive than normal thanks to the God's Eye and Psychic's Head. Not many could compete with his observation skills either. A regular person would have to look very carefully to locate every single pore. However, Jiang Chen needed only sweep his consciousness across the body to get a clear glance. He repeated the process three more times before he finally expelled all of the poison from the emperor's body. Now came the last step: expelling the poison barricading the emperor's consciousness. This was also the most difficult step.

He had to guide the antidote through the emperor's sea of

consciousness, slowly exhuming each strand of poison encountered. Extreme care was needed in this step as any oversight would lead to a relapse, throwing all of his previous efforts down the drain. The extent of Jiang Chen's concentration was on full display.

Before this, he only used an hour to expel the poison from the emperor's body. But for the emperor's consciousness, he had to spend at least two hours. The sky gradually darkened, and the land was enveloped in a curtain of darkness. Jiang Chen was deep in concentration. He couldn't afford to lose focus for even a second.

Suddenly, a few unwanted guests arrived at the inn they were staying at. These men wore uniform martial outfits, imparting an incredibly menacing air when they strode into the inn. The color immediately drained from the innkeeper's face when he saw their outfits. He scrambled out from the counter to welcome them. "How may I help you..."

The innkeeper was incredibly polite, but these men didn't respond in kind. A fierce-looking brute at the front of the group shoved the innkeeper away.

"Know your place!" The brute had the waist of a bear and the back of a tiger. His mountain-like figure nearly caused the innkeeper to wet his pants.

"Great c-cultivators, m-my inn..." The innkeeper was stuttering so much that he couldn't even form proper words.

"Old man, is there a young man staying in your inn?" the fierce brute asked threateningly.

The innkeeper hastily answered. "W-which young man? There are a few young men staying at our inn right now. Whom is it you speak of?"

"Too much jabbering!" The fierce brute sent him flying with a large slap across the face. "Search the premises! Leave no room

untouched!”

“We must find that whimpering brat! How dare he fool our master with his fake sky rank spirit herbs! That’s a death sentence!!”

The innkeeper vomited blood after being tossed a few dozen feet away. He didn’t dare to say anything else out of fear for his life. He could guess that they were Third Master Jing’s men after seeing their robes and hearing their words.

Third Master Jing was the biggest tyrant in Frostmoon City. Even the city lord had to show him face. He could do anything he wished in the city. Others ten times more powerful than the innkeeper would tremble before him, much less anyone in this small inn. The pageboys and assistants were dumbfounded when the innkeeper was sent flying. No one dared put up any form of resistance after this show of force.

Bam bam bam!

Like a pack of hungry wolves, the rest of the brutes kicked down doors one by one, turning the inn upside down. This angered the guests greatly, but any form of resistance was met with a swift slap to the face. The meeker guests sized up the situation and cooperated in their search, with the luckier ones were spared from a stinging slap.

All hell broke loose in the inn. There was loud yelling, women screaming, and sounds of fighting happening all at the same time. Some panicked so much that they even ran out of their rooms without their pants on.

The innkeeper was aghast when he saw this. He knew that business was done for. Nobody would ever want stay at his inn anymore after such a huge commotion. Even then, he still didn’t dare to speak a word against it. He could only accept it as fate.

“Innkeeper, since these people are Third Master Jing’s men,

could they be looking for the guest in the sky suite? The young man who's staying for a month," a helper asked carefully.

The innkeeper immediately realized something and ran up front. "Great sir! I finally remember! Are you looking for a young man who has a few injured partners with him?"

The fierce brute grinned sinisterly. "Old man, why didn't you say that earlier? Do you want us to flatten your inn?"

"N-no! I simply never thought it was him you were searching for! Great sir, I'm willing to lead the way if you wish to see him. Please, just stop harassing the other guests! Running an inn isn't easy..." The innkeeper shoved a storage ring into the fierce brute's hands as he was complaining. There was a million saint spirit stones inside.

The fierce brute was rather pleased by the innkeeper's small token. He snorted and made a sweeping gesture. "Brothers, I've found the brat. Let's get back to business." He looked at the innkeeper. "Lead the way."

The innkeeper was on the verge of tears. He knew this was wrong and immoral, but what else was he supposed to do? His inn would be in tatters if these men went any further! He had no choice but to sacrifice the young man.

The sky suite was located in a remote place. The innkeeper led them to the suites and pointed at a remote corner.

"Great sirs, that young man has booked a few of those rooms for a month. He should be inside one of them. Please, spare my inn some thought..."

"Piss off." The fierce brute knew that the innkeeper would never dare lie to him. He marched towards the corner rooms confidently with his men.

The innkeeper mouth was quivering as he peeked from a wall corner.

“Halt.” The group brimming with violent intent stopped dead in their tracks.

A skinny, proud, and aloof young man stood in their way. He was staring at them coldly far down the hallway.

“Boss, it’s not him!”

“Did the innkeeper lie to us?”

The fierce brute waved at them dismissively and stepped forward. “Young man, are you alone or do you have others staying with you? Have them come out!”

These fierce brutes might seem as fierce as a tiger, but they were mostly just spineless cowards. They were showing the young man some respect because his face was filled with killing intent and didn’t seem like a pushover.

The youth glanced at them contemptuously. “Are you talking to me?”

“Young man, do you know who you’re talking to right now?”

“Who?” The young man snorted derisively. “Is it a problem if I don’t know who you are?”

The fierce brute could no longer contain his rage. He’d been on a warpath ever since arriving at inn. And despite his somewhat gentle tone now, this young lad was replying with such impudence!

“Brat, you’re the only person in Frostmoon City who dares speak to Third Master Jing’s men in this way!” The fierce brute motioned a command. “You two, cripple him!”

Two cultivators behind the brute charged towards the young man with full force. They were clearly not holding back. The hallway suddenly brimmed with killing intent.

The innkeeper was dumbfounded when he saw this. Who was this proud, young man? He had no recollection of the boy.

Regardless, he was certain that this weak looking young man would be heavily injured after being attacked by those two men at full force. In fact, he might even die on the spot. However, something unexpected caught him by surprise in the next moment.

Those two men were extremely quick, but the young man suddenly made his move just before they were about to make contact. It almost seemed like he had some kind of demonic powers. The two brutes couldn't even put up any sort of resistance as they were drawn in by his hands.

Splat! Blood splashed the hallway liberally after the sounds rang out.

The youth had sawed through their bodies with his hands like a hot knife through butter! He followed that up with pulling out their beating hearts and lungs with his bare hands.

The crowd stood there with their mouths agape.

"Hmph! Truly the heart of a wolf and the lung of a hound." That youth expressed his disgust before throwing the organs at the fierce brute. "You can have them back."

Shivers travelled down the brute's back after watching that scene. He was trembling and shaking like a leaf. The thought that his two brothers would be killed by the youth before they could even fight back never even crossed his mind. After all, they were both ninth level sage realm! This young man was a teenager! How could a person as young as him be so powerful? The vicious bullies immediately realized that they'd barked up the wrong tree. Their killing intent vanished almost instantaneously.

Chapter 1083: Long Xiaoxuan Attacks

The innkeeper who witnessed this from the foot of a wall also shook incessantly. The group of thugs under Third Master Jing were arrogant and domineering enough already, but they never imagined that they would meet someone even fiercer than they. This young man looked so gentle and quiet, so why did his methods contrast so much with his appearance?

The innkeeper suddenly felt faint, as if the world had just fallen on his head. He knew he was ruined this time because Third Master Jing's men were killed inside his inn. Even if he had nothing to do with it, Third Master Jing would levy blame for his loss and subject the innkeeper to his wrath all the same. The innkeeper's legs weakened as strength departed his body. He could clearly sense the looming catastrophe. Murdering the third master's men was like stabbing the heavens themselves. The man's fury could cause the entire Frostmoon City to tremble, much less his tiny, insignificant inn.

He completely lost any intention of watching the fight unfold any further and half crawled away from the scene. He ran to the entrance of the inn and gathered all the inn's attendants. "Take your wages, disperse and leave Frostmoon City as quickly as you can. Quickly, quickly!"

The pale-looking innkeeper didn't even bother verifying the amount of money he gave out to his attendants. He issued the wages haphazardly, packed some clothes for himself and escaped like the wind.

Seeing that their boss had left in such a hurry, every attendant in the inn knew that the sky was about to fall on their heads. They too scampered with deathly pale faces. The entire inn was abandoned, just like that.

……

“You… you dare kill Third Master Jing’s men?” The brawny man was just as shocked as the now ex-innkeeper. He could hardly believe the sight of his lifeless companions lying motionlessly on the floor.

The cool-faced young man asked expressionlessly, “Who’s Third Master Jing? And why are you all here? If you can’t give me an explanation, then none of you are leaving this place today.”

The brawny man shivered involuntarily. He was a first level emperor realm cultivator and a lot stronger than his two companions, but he still couldn’t escape the horrifying feeling that washed over him when the young man trained his gaze on him.

A bit of regret finally dawned on him. He was regretting his brash actions. Worse still, this young man didn’t seem to be the person he was looking for. This mess was absolutely not worth it if he had provoked the wrong person. After all, how could he not know who Third Master Jing was if he was their target’s accomplice? Also, this cool-faced young man was clearly a maverick. There was no other way to explain why he’d murdered a person in a completely unfamiliar environment without feeling any pressure or hesitation whatsoever. And how did the brute know that? Just look at young man’s face! It was as stiff as a corpse’s!

Humans were such despicable things sometimes. They might not look one in the eye if one bowed and scraped to them, but they would certainly treat one seriously if one attacked them without mercy.

“Friend, Third Master Jing… Third Master Jing is vice sect master of the first division of Moon God Sect in Frostmoon City. That’s why even the lord of Frostmoon City has to give him some face.”

“Moon God Sect?” The young man stared blankly at him for an instant before shaking his head. “I’ve never heard of this sect. Are

they very strong?”

The brawny nearly burst into tears. He knew he had run into a real madman this time. After all, a man who dare say that he had never heard of the Moon God Sect before was obviously not an ordinary person. The brute didn’t believe that the young man actually didn’t know of Moon God Sect. Everyone in the human domain knew of the Moon God Sect. The young man must be very confident for some reason, to claim that he didn’t know the sect even though he was currently in their territory.

“Let’s just go at him already, boss. There’s no way we can’t stop him if we jump him together. He killed our brothers, and Frostmoon City is Third Master Jing’s domain, not to mention that the entire Tilted Moon Region is Moon God Sect’s territory. Whatever his background may be, is it really okay to let him behave like this?”

“Yeah, you’re at Frostmoon City right now, boy. I don’t care if you’re a tiger or a dragon, you’re going to have to bow…”

The young man abruptly raised his eyebrows. “What if I refuse?”

“You…”

“You asked for this!” This time the brawny man was completely triggered by the young man’s attitude. He grabbed something and shot a firework into the sky. It was a signal to his companions. His companions in the first division of Moon God Sect would arrive in a short time. In fact, Third Master Jing himself would be arriving soon. When that happens, who cared if this guy had three heads and six arms?

“Boy, if you surrender to us quietly now we can plea for forgiveness on your behalf before Third Master Jing.”

“That’s right. No matter who you are, you’re going to eat shit as long as you’re in Frostmoon City!” These thugs grew confident after they sent out the signal for help. Besides, there were six of

them and only one of him. Even if they couldn't beat the young man, they could at least defend themselves until reinforcements showed up, right? When their main force arrived, this guy was as good as dead!

"How noisy." The young man's face darkened as he swept a steely gaze across everyone's faces. "Since you asked for this, I'll send you all on your way."

The brawny man's expression changed. "Don't spread out. Take up positions in a formation." He then yelled at the cool-faced young man. "Stop this foolishness already, young man! Even if you managed to beat us, death is your only option when the main bulk of our branch arrives. We're not even here for you in the first place! We're just looking around for a swindler."

"Swindler? What swindler?" The cool-faced young man asked blankly.

"He's the guy who swindled Third Master Jing with some fake sky rank spirit herbs."

This caught the young man slightly off guard. "Is he a guy in his twenties looking for antidote spirit herbs in the spirit herb stores around this place?"

"Huh? You know him? He swindled a Smiling Bodhi from our third master. Are, are you really his accomplice?" The brawny man's expression changed again.

The cool-faced young man grinned. "In that case, yes. You do have the right person."

This cool-faced young man was of course Long Xiaoxuan in human form. At the beginning, he was a bit confused by this unexpected intrusion, but now that he learned they were coming for Jiang Chen, a grin began to spread on his face.

"You are his accomplice!" The brawny man's expression changed drastically.

“What are you planning to do with him after you find him?” Long Xiaoxuan asked calmly despite his situation.

“Hmph! The punishment for lying to our master is death!” One of the thugs hooted.

The brawny man nearly dropped to his knees when he heard this. You meddlesome idiot! Why are you talking tough right now? We need to delay him long enough so our companions arrive. Once they do, we can do whatever we want with him, so why the tough front right now?

The cool-faced young man chuckled and nodded suddenly. “Very good, very good. Since it’s already a death sentence, I may as well do him a favor and add a few more to his name.”

While speaking, the cool-faced young man suddenly moved like a ghost. His figure flashed to and fro, making a thin fog rise. As the fog spread, they seemed like walls that’d sprung out of nowhere to confine these thugs in a terrifying prison.

“Not good! This is an emperor domain!” The brawny man was a first level emperor realm expert himself, so of course he knew of this the particular power. But knowledge was one thing and action another. Despite gathering all of his strength to break through this prison-like domain, he discovered that his efforts were completely futile. The black colored fog was completely impenetrable, as if made of steel.

“Watch out!” This time the brawny man was finally afraid. His life depended on this one instant.

A thug’s skull abruptly cracked horribly. In the next moment, the thug suddenly turned into dust as if some invisible energy had struck his body and blew him away. Everyone was scared out of their wits by this terrible scene.

“Ahhh! Run!” A giant claw abruptly appeared out of nowhere and caught yet another cultivator. The poor bastard didn’t even get to

screamed before he was literally pulled away from this plane of existence. He vanished as if he was never there.

One by one the thugs were pulled away…

All six thugs were killed in the blink of an eye.

Long Xiaoxuan's devour ability could literally devour and digest anything. A peak sage realm and a first level emperor realm cultivator was just the kind of meal he was looking for. When the fog dissipated, the scene returned to the way it was before they came in. No combat traces and not even the two cultivators who'd been disemboweled earlier could be found. Long Xiaoxuan dusted off his hands and went back inside as if nothing had happened.

At the same time, Emperor Peerless was slowly awakening from his slumber. When he saw the scene before him, he asked in puzzlement, "Where am I, brother?"

"You literally just came back from a walk with death, brother." Jiang Chen relayed everything that happened.

Emperor Peerless was completely stunned. "Little sister Qing… poisoned me and Ah Yun? She…"

"What can you do? You're so charming that Miss Qing is willing to take your life and her own just to be with you." Jiang Chen joked.

"Ai, brother. It's my fault for being careless this time. How is Ah Yun? Is my wife safe?"

"It's inconvenient for me to treat your wife, brother, but don't worry, the antidote has already been prepared. You may cure her yourself… and Miss Qing too, if you wish. I won't interfere with your decision." It wasn't his place to interfere with Emperor Peerless' family business.

"I'll go save my wife first."

Jiang Chen was passing the antidote to Emperor Peerless when

his ears suddenly twitched. He smiled wryly. “It looks like someone just threw me into a lot of trouble.”

Emperor Peerless obviously detected some commotion himself. His face turned frosty. “Why are there so many cultivators heading our way? What is this place?”

“We are in an inn right now. Come, let us head out and take a look.”

By now, several hundred experts had gathered around their rooms. They all wore the same attire and they were led by two powerful cultivators. Surprisingly, the two were both high level emperor realm experts. One of them was eighth level emperor realm, and the other seventh level emperor realm.

“This should be the place, senior brother Cai.” The seventh level emperor realm expert dressed in silver robes reported.

“Hmm? Where are they?” The eighth level emperor realm expert was confused. “Third Master Jing ordered them to come here, so why have they left without a word?”

Chapter 1084: Things Have Gone Out Of Control

“Old Brother Mo, who are these men?” Jiang Chen asked with a glance out the window. He guessed that they likely had something to do with Third Master Jing.

“Look at their clothes. They should be from Moon God Sect’s first division.” Emperor Peerless seemed indifferent. He obviously didn’t hold these men in high regard.

“The first division? By the way, do you know of a man with the surname of Jing? He’s apparently the number one tyrant in this city.”

“Jing? Third Master Jing?” The emperor nodded. “Yes, there’s someone like that here. He’s the vice head of the first division. The sect master of the division doesn’t really handle mundane affairs, so Third Master Jing actually holds the power in the division. He’s only at seventh level emperor realm, but his family holds a very high position in the sect. His cousin is apparently one of the strongest geniuses in the sect, and many of the elders in his family are also very powerful sect elders as well. This is the reason why Third Master Jing is able to throw his weight around like this. Even the city lord has to show him face.”

Jiang Chen finally understand why the third master was so arrogant and full of himself. It was only natural considering the reputation of his family and his position within the division.

“Little brother, what’s wrong? Did he offend you?” Emperor Peerless burst into laughter. “You sure are a huge troublemaker.”

Jiang Chen shrugged and smiled wryly. “Old brother, you’ve truly wronged me here. You should be calling him the real troublemaker instead.”

He described what went on in the Three River Street, and put

heavy emphasis on what happened during the Smiling Bodhi trade. The emperor's expressions grew darker and darker as he listened on. By the end of it all, he raised his hands in a cupped fist salute.

"Little brother, I've truly wronged you. This is all because you were trying to save my life! This decrepit old man is ashamed of dragging you into trouble. Brother, my gratitude knows no bounds. I truly owe you too much. Don't worry, not even the Jing clan ancestors would dare be arrogant before me, let alone someone as insignificant as Third Master Jing!"

The emperor wasn't tooting his own horn. Even the most powerful Jing clan elder was only ninth level emperor realm. Someone not a great emperor wouldn't even have the right to speak to him. They could only address themselves as his junior.

"Old brother, don't show up until Third Master Jing comes so that you can regain some energy. Let me handle them first."

Even though the poison didn't leave any lingering effects, the emperor still needed some time to recuperate. He had to be at his top form so that he could root out Madame Yun's poison later.

"Little brother, don't overdo it or erupt in open hostilities with them. Wait for me." Emperor Peerless advised.

Jiang Chen laughed in response. "Don't worry." He rushed downstairs in the blink of an eye.

Upon exiting the door, Long Xiaoxuan greeted him with an odd smile. "There were a few who came to stir up trouble just now. I've already taken care of them."

"I knew you weren't someone to be trifled with." Jiang Chen had heard the commotion downstairs, but he couldn't afford to pay any attention to it because he was trying to save the emperor.

"Hehe. You can't blame the rest of this on me. They were here for you. I was feeling nice and took the trash out for you."

"What did they say?" Jiang Chen frowned.

“They said you cheated some sort of third master with fake sky rank herbs. Is that true?”

Jiang Chen flew into a rage. The sky rank herbs that he gave them were genuine! Otherwise, somebody in the crowd would’ve long since pointed it out. Moreover, how could someone as sharp as Third Master Jing fail to take notice if it was a fake? This was clearly slander.

He laughed due to the ridiculousness of the situation. Jing Third, how kind of you to show up at my doorstep so I can save the trouble of kicking your door down. Are two sky rank herbs and 200 million saint spirit stones still not enough for you?

Jiang Chen had seen greedier people, but he was completely enraged by Jing Third’s shamelessness. He didn’t want to stir up any trouble in Frostmoon City, but that didn’t mean he was afraid of trouble. Third Master Jing had simply gone too far.

“Brother Long, I only have two words to give you.”

“What two words?” Long Xiaoxuan was taken by surprise.

“Well done!” Jiang Chen lauded coldly. “Does that bastard really think I’m afraid of him? How dare he make an attempt on my life after extorting me? Fake sky rank spirit herbs? Even if they were fake, he can only blame himself for being blind!”

“Does that mean you gave him the real thing?” Long Xiaoxuan furrowed his brows.

“Of course! How could I give him fakes when I desperately needed the Smiling Bodhi to save Old Brother Mo?” Jiang Chen was burning with rage. “Let’s go! I want to see for myself how arrogant he can be!”

Long Xiaoxuan chuckled playfully. After following Jiang Chen for so long, he was finally getting over his fear of the outside world. Now that the fear was gone, the true dragon bloodline’s unfearing nature was beginning to take shape. Now, the dragon

only feared that there wasn't enough chaos in the world. Why would he stop Jiang Chen? It was already a courtesy that he wasn't adding oil to the fire.

Trouble? Who in the world would be afraid of something like that?

"Senior brother Cai, someone has come out." the seventh level emperor suddenly announced.

The eighth level emperor realm expert glanced upwards and saw two young men descending the flight of stairs. Somebody with good eyesight immediately recognized Jiang Chen.

"Lord Cai, it is he... it is he! The older one is the bastard who traded with the third master! He's the one who scammed the third master with the fake sky rank spirit herbs!" There had been a few servants around when the trade had happened and they recognized Jiang Chen.

Lord Cai was feeling a little suspicious. Where were the men who first released the signal for reinforcements? Why were they nowhere to be seen? There didn't even seem to be signs of a battle.

"Go get the innkeeper and his attendants," he quietly ordered. An eighth level emperor was a lot more prudent afterall.

Someone immediately went searching for the innkeeper, but soon returned with his face aghast. "Lord Cai, s-something's... not right. The innkeeper and his assistants are gone. There's no one else in this inn!"

"Where else could he have gone? Did he abandon his business?" Lord Cai was stunned, but he quickly recalled that there was nobody at the reception either when he first entered the premises. He'd found it a little strange at first, but he paid it no heed. But now, this sent a chill down his spine. What exactly happened? Why was everyone gone?

"Brother Cai, c-could they have... killed everyone?" The seventh

level emperor realm expert asked with a complicated tone and a fearful expression.

Shock also dawned on Lord Cai's face at the sound of this. "Let's ask them."

Side by side, the two men approached Jiang Chen and Long Xiaoxuan.

Jiang Chen glared at these two emperor realm experts frostily. "Frostmoon City is truly restless. If I remember correctly, this should be an inn and not private property right? Are the bunch of you trying to flatten the entire inn?"

Lord Cai snorted coldly. "Friend, stop trying to mince words. I only have one question for you. Where are those men?"

"What men?" Jiang Chen naturally wouldn't admit to anything.

"Hmph! You dare take action but not own up to your crimes? What kind of man are you?!" Lord Cai's voice was extremely cold. "Don't even think about talking your way out of this. I won't let you leave until we get to the bottom of this!"

Jiang Chen laughed angrily. "Tsk tsk! Such arrogance! Are you perhaps the sect master of Moon God Sect or some sort of great emperor in the Upper Eight Regions?"

"The third master has arrived!" somebody announced while they were in the middle of their conversation.

Lord Cai was a bit relieved after hearing that the third master was here. Things would be easier to handle with him around. His words carried more weight as he was head of the first division.

"Third Master."

"Third Master, you've come." They were very respectful to the third master even though they were at seventh level and eighth level emperor realm respectively. They didn't dare to put on any kind of airs. Their cultivation was no worse than his, but his

family name was much more powerful than them.

Third Master Jing glared at Jiang Chen furiously. “Brat, I’ve been in this city for so many years, but you are the first person who’s ever tried to scam me. How dare you deceive me with two fake sky rank spirit herbs?!”

Jiang Chen laughed coldly. This man was clearly trying to get another sum of wealth from him again with this venomous slander. Since all pretense of cordiality was already thrown to the wind, he no longer had any need to explain himself.

“Brat! Are you mute or are you deaf? Didn’t you hear the third master Speak?” Lord Cai immediately yelled.

Jiang Chem smiled contemptuously. “Third Master Jing, I heard that you’re the vice head of Moon God Sect’s first division? Hmm, I really don’t understand why a first rank sect would choose a good-for-nothing like you for that task. Fake sky rank spirit herbs? Are you blind or are you plain idiotic? Wouldn’t you have immediately noticed if they were fake? Even I would feel ashamed if I were in your shoes!”

“Such insolence! How dare you speak to the third master in such a manner?!”

“Third master, this brat is showing no respect for our first division!”

“Brothers! Dice him into pieces! We shall make him pay for his insults!”

The smile on Third Master Jing’s face instantly disappeared. He raised his hands to stop his subordinates from causing any further trouble and fixed a sinister glare on Jiang Chen. “Brat, you have a very sharp tongue. But not even a thousand tongues can save you after you’ve provoked me. I will not fall for your antics. Hand over all of your valuables and I just might forgive you.”

This was clear daylight robbery now.

Chapter 1085: From Arrogance to Humility

Jiang Chen knew that the excessive wealth he'd displayed earlier had attracted problems in the end. If a three-year-old child walked out in the open with a pile of gold, he would naturally draw unwanted attention. Sky rank spirit herbs were both priceless and rare. Even emperor realm cultivators felt their allure. A single such herb wasn't something able to be purchased with stones alone. Decades could go by without sky rank spirit herbs appearing on the market, unless one was blind enough to put one up for sale without knowing it.

Jiang Chen had made an enormous mistake in showing possession of two sky rank spirit herbs. What was more, a swindler like Third Master Jing had marked him. Realizing what he was in for, the young man's expression flared with contempt. "At the end of the day Jing Third, you're trying to bleed the rest of my money out of me. If you were trying to openly rob me, I'd retain some respect for your bluntness and honesty. Making up such an awful excuse, though... I guess your family name is quite appropriate for your actions."

The crowd was confused. What did Third Master Jing's surname have to do with anything? Was there something wrong with it?

The man he was speaking to furrowed his brow. "What're you getting at, kid?"

"What I'm getting at?" Jiang Chen smiled matter-of-factly. "Isn't it obvious? Your family name is Jing. A character formed with two perpendicular 'two's, reflecting the fact that you can't put two and two together. You're too scatterbrained to think straight, you see."

Third Master Jing's face darkened at those words. The first division's personnel all looked on with horror and awe. The young man before them was as good as dead. His courage was certainly astounding. Not everyone had the guts to make fun of the third

master's surname. That was tantamount to suicide!

It was widely known that Third Master Jing took great pride in his surname and family. The Jing clan's prominence in the Moon God Sect was the key to why such a man was in charge of the first division. Making light of it by a stranger was absolutely intolerable for him. As expected, Third Master Jing's expression instantly accumulated a thin layer of frost.

"Do you know what a fool you are, kid?" The third master smiled out of excessive anger. "If you wanted to provoke me, well, congrats! However, I assure you that you'll need to pay a heavy price. I tell you now that not only are you making an enemy of me nor the first division alone. No, you have opened hostilities with my entire clan, and the whole of the Moon God Sect!" Third Master Jing was certainly adept at escalating conflicts. In his mind, he represented the authority of the Moon God Sect.

Jiang Chen would have none of it. "So what?" he replied calmly.

So what? Everyone paused at that. Was there a need for 'so what'? Angering the Moon God Sect in the Tilted Moon Region spelled certain doom. What came next after that?

"So... I'd recommend you look forward to better luck in your next life, heh." With a vicious laugh, Third Master Jing waved. "Take them in, dead or alive!"

"Yes, sir." The expert surnamed Cai and the seventh level emperor realm expert both bowed.

As they were about to move, an even-handed laugh could be heard from upstairs. A serene voice echoed downwards. "If I remember correctly, the strongest member of the Jing clan serves only as an elder in the Moon God Sect, no? Jing Third, please elucidate to this great emperor if you will, where your courage comes from?"

Third Master Jing hadn't expected someone else to be nearby. He

blurted out, without thinking, “Who the hell are you, eh? The Moon God Sect’s business…”

Suddenly, he realized that something was off. He paused mid-sentence to mull things over. What had he heard just now? What had the other person called himself? ‘This great emperor’?

What in tarnation? Jing Third’s eyebrows waggled, and his heart skipped a beat. He was terrified! The man who’d spoken to him he was… a great emperor?

Which great emperor was upstairs, exactly?

Third Master Jing had plenty of social experience, but all of it was useless before an expert as strong as that. However, he was also the leader of a division. Though he felt a sliver of panic, he didn’t descend into total hysteria. Can it be that kid’s ruse? There aren’t many great emperors in the world. Even if it was possible that one was here, there’s no way he would’ve made that kid go find a Smiling Bodhi alone, much less show off a bunch of sky rank spirit herbs. A great emperor cultivator has more wisdom than that!

His mind made up, Jing Ole Third smirked in half-disbelief. “Friend, why don’t you come down and see where my courage comes from?”

He wanted to bait the other party out. Seeing them in person would reveal whether they were a great emperor or not. A slightly mocking smile hung on Jiang Chen’s face. The young lord of Veluriyam Capital shook his head. He saw straight through the trick. Jing Third wasn’t going to be convinced until he saw for himself how wrong he was!

“Then I shall,” Emperor Peerless laughed forbiddingly. The emperor’s figure landed in front of Jing Third the next instant before the sound of the latter’s voice had yet disappeared.

A great emperor’s pressure filled the space, smashing into

countless bystanders. All the cultivators around Third Master Jing were pushed back by an invisible force, reeling in every direction. None of them could keep a stable footing.

Not good!

The cultivator Cai and the other seventh level, silver-robed man exchanged a look, then rushed forward to attempt to stop Emperor Peerless' advance.

The corner of the emperor's mouth twitched. "Do you expect to stop me? With just the two of you?"

Each step he took forward was filled with insurmountable pressure. Both the high-level emperor realm cultivators felt the onslaught of a veritable mountain. Its weight pressed against their chests, and their breathing became more and more ragged.

"For those who stand in my way... the sentence is death!" Emperor Peerless declared, his tone merciless.

The sentence was like the straw that broke the camel's back. It caused the two emperor realm cultivators to shake, then collapse to the side while coughing up blood. Initially enjoying the duo's bodily protection, Third Master Jing did not feel much of the pressure at first. But after their collapse, the pressure on them was entirely transferred to him. Almost in the very next instant, his consciousness was thoroughly crushed. He began to shake uncontrollably, his eyes belying an indescribable fear.

He hadn't expected a thoughtless statement to draw out a great emperor! The aura that the old man exerted did not belong to just any great emperor, but rather the strongest among them. Thankfully for him, the emperor had immense self-control. In the next moment, all of the pressure withdrew right away. Feeling the burden on his body lighten up, Third Master Jing staggered and almost fell. His head and face were covered with cold sweat, and his look took on extraordinary honesty and meekness. In fact, his entire expression was now filled with fear and wariness.

“S-senior… I… I have been… very rude, yes, very rude indeed.” The vermin was at least, a man who knew when to yield. The presence of a great emperor meant that he was in enormous trouble if he didn’t lower his posture.

Emperor Peerless remained expressionless. “I didn’t want to come at first, you know. I was just curious where your courage comes from. You asked me so nicely to come down to see! Tell me, where is it? I haven’t seen a clue.”

Third Master Jing stuttered. He was on the verge of crying. “I… I… that was just a joke. Senior, please, be kind with me. You’re too great of a man, to, er, stoop to my level, right?”

“Too great to stoop to your level?” Emperor Peerless nodded. “I suppose I am. Oh, what did you say just now? Did you say that my little brother here gave you a fake sky rank spirit herb, hmm?”

“No…. not at all. Maybe my subordinates made a mistake. They’re rather incompetent, you understand. I will investigate when I return!” The third master made a vehement denial.

“Don’t investigate when you return! Investigate now. Take out the supposed spirit herb. I won’t make that kind of mistake, I assure you.” The emperor stretched out his right hand.

“No, really, senior. You really don’t have to. I’ll be on, on, on my way now? We’ll leave you in peace, senior.” Even if Third Master Jing had ten more galls, he wouldn’t have had enough gall to misbehave any more. As he spoke, he looked urgently at his underlings. He wanted to depart as quickly as possible.

“Leave? Who told you to leave?” Emperor Peerless’ face darkened.

The emperor’s change of demeanor froze the third master in his steps. He offered a placatory smile, his expression immensely bitter. “Senior, I have made a mistake today. Really, please forgive your junior for this.”

“You’re going to arbitrate right and wrong with a single word? You’re not playing with me, are you?” The emperor would have none of it. “Take out the spirit herb and let me see.”

Third Master Jing’s face was as sour as a lemon. “I didn’t bring the spirit herb. Really, I didn’t.”

“You didn’t bring it? Why are you even here, hmm? What gives you the right to openly accuse my brother without evidence? Where does your courage come from?” Emperor Peerless’ voice became frosty.

The third master was on the verge of tears. He gave himself a resounding slap on the face. “I’m so sorry, senior, it’s all my fault! My eyes were obscured by greed. I… I shouldn’t have smeared your friend. For the sake of the Moon God Sect, senior, please don’t be too harsh on me.”

“Don’t be too harsh on you?” Emperor Peerless snickered. “Do you mean that I should just happily let you go? After you traded a single Smiling Bodhi for two sky rank spirit herbs, two earth rank spirit herbs, and two hundred million saint spirit stones? Does that sound like a fair deal to you?”

Third Master Jing’s heart sank. Countless complaints rose to the top of his heart. He felt a pang of regret. He’d bitten off more than he could chew this time. Had there really been a need to reap a second time after the first batch of insane profit? Now, he was going to have a hard time keeping his current winnings, much less make more!

Still, Third Master Jing was a flexible person. He immediately called to his subordinates, “What are you guys doing standing around here, huh? Go, get the things that our respected senior here wants right away!”

Emperor Peerless found it hard to make an issue out of the third master’s behavior. The other man was being far too compliant. Truthfully, he’d put himself forward in order to make a bigger fuss

of things. If Third Master Jing had acted with arrogance, he wouldn't have minded killing the man on the spot. The Moon God Sect wouldn't be in a position to dispute him for it. After all, the third master was in the wrong the entire time. The sect would have only been able to absorb the blow silently.

But the third master trimmed his sails to the wind, and did so with no hesitation whatsoever. Emperor Peerless was the one to be put in an odd position. The emperor glanced at Jiang Chen for his opinion. The young man considered for a moment, then decided to respect the grand scheme of things. Third Master Jing observed the interaction in secret. That the emperor sought the youth's perspective was not at all lost on him. His heart pounded with distress and bewilderment. He'd angered someone whom a great emperor realm cultivator deferred to! Who... was that young man, really?

Chapter 1086: Brother Long Grows Increasingly Conceited

Third Master Jing of Frostmoon City had always been a ruthless person, even to himself. The moment he saw that the situation wasn't right, he took quick steps towards Jiang Chen and apologized without hesitation. "Friend Shao, I apologize for offending you. Please forgive me for being blind to who you are."

If Jiang Chen hadn't had to consider the bigger picture, he wouldn't have given a damn about Third Master Jing's apology. Moreover, the third master was formidable because he could submit to circumstances if necessary. If one day he had the upper hand, he could turn against Jiang Chen just as easily. The best way to deal with people like him was to kill him and end all one's troubles once and for all.

However, Jiang Chen had business in Frostmoon City, so it might not be wise to fall out completely with a local head gangster. In fact, this seemed like a good opportunity to check if he had any useful information. After all, Third Master Jing was the vice head of Moon God Sect's first division, wasn't he? And so Jiang Chen smiled. "Third Master Jing, there is a good saying that goes 'no discord, no concord'. I'm sure that we will both be pleased if the discord between you and me can turn into a friendly relationship, wouldn't you agree?"

Although Third Master Jing found it strange that Jiang Chen's tone was more amiable than expected, he grabbed onto the extended olive branch and smiled. "I absolutely do. I admit that I can be a bit of a bastard sometimes, but you should also know that Frostmoon City can be so weak. It makes doing business difficult unless you're forceful. Anyways, I have absolutely no reason not to become friends with you seeing how magnanimous you are, friend Shao."

The atmosphere actually turned cheerful and lively as they chatted. They didn't look at all like two sworn enemies who were about to fight each other to the death a moment ago. This outcome caused the corner of Long Xiaoxuan's mouth to droop downwards repeatedly. This wasn't fun. He was hoping to fight another round, but his wish was obviously not going to come true.

Not long after, Third Master Jing's subordinates brought Jiang Chen's spirit herbs and two hundred million saint spirit stones over. He personally placed the goods in Jiang Chen's hands. "No discord, no concord, so please accept the Smiling Bodhi I traded you earlier as a gift. As for these goods, I cannot possibly accept them since the transaction is now null, so please take them back, Sir Shao."

Jiang Chen didn't hesitate to retrieve the two sky rank spirit herbs. "It's true that I have urgent need of the Smiling Bodhi. These two hundred million saint spirit stones and two earth rank spirit herbs are about equal in value to a Smiling Bodhi, so you should keep them, Third Master Jing. Now we can meet comfortably with each other in the future without feeling the pain of our losses."

Third Master Jing gave him a thumbs-up. "That's wonderful!"

And so a conflict came to an unexpected end just like that. Both parties wisely didn't mention the cultivators who went missing earlier, as if they'd never existed in the first place. Now that the atmosphere had turned amiable and friendly, Third Master Jing finally took his leave and cordially invited Jiang Chen and his friends to visit him at the first division.

As Long Xiaoxuan watched Third Master Jing departing with his men, he curled his lips into a sneer. "Hypocrite, what a hypocrite! Had he stayed any longer I might have thrown up on the floor."

The scene earlier was very wearing on Long Xiaoxuan's nerves. Jiang Chen smiled. "He's a formidable bastard who can throw or

take a punch alright. Oh right, brother Long, this is Emperor Peerless. He is my sworn older brother. Old Brother Mo, this is my younger brother, Long Xiaoxuan."

Emperor Peerless hadn't seen Long Xiaoxuan earlier, so he found the young man's sudden appearance a bit strange. Naturally, Jiang Chen had to make the necessary introductions. The emperor didn't ask how Long Xiaoxuan came to be though. He guessed that Long Xiaoxuan must've been in Frostmoon City since the beginning.

Long Xiaoxuan cast a glance at Emperor Peerless and struck a cocky tone. "Old Brother Mo, you're pretty strong, aren't you? Very impressive."

The great emperor smiled. "As I thought, the brothers of my brother are all extraordinary. Little brother Long looks very young, but the depth of your cultivation is incredibly impressive. Also, if I'm not mistaken, little brother Long possesses great qi and blood. You must be a cultivator with a powerful bloodline. Cultivators like you normally possess great martial dao talent."

Long Xiaoxuan was a true dragon, so of course his qi and blood were incredibly rich. Although the young man had hidden them well, a great emperor's insight wasn't to be underestimated.

The dragon withdrew his conceit when he saw how Emperor Peerless had seen through him with a single glance. Old Brother Mo's answer made him realize that the great emperor was truly powerful, and Long Xiaoxuan wasn't so prideful that he couldn't acknowledge a true expert. He knew that he was still a long ways away from becoming as strong as this Old Brother Mo, even though he was a true dragon who had reached emperor realm. There was no way he could beat the great emperor in a straight fight, and the only thing he could do was to run away.

"Old Brother Mo, you should head in and save your wife. Brother Long and I will ensure that you're not disturbed."

It wasn't the time to stand on ceremony, so Emperor Peerless

answered. “Alright. Thank you for all you’ve done.”

Jiang Chen carefully went over the curing method and healing procedure until the emperor was sure that he hadn’t missed anything. Finally, the great emperor went upstairs to cure his wife’s poison.

After Emperor Peerless had gone upstairs, Jiang Chen asked the dragon, “Brother Long, please look after them for a moment. I need to check outside. Why hasn’t the innkeeper and attendants shown up despite such a large commotion?”

Jiang Chen didn’t care about the innkeeper or the attendants. He was worried for his spirit beast cub. After all, he did put it in the inn’s care. When he headed out and took a spin around the inn, Jiang Chen was flabbergasted by his discovery. There was no one inside the inn except them, and everyone from the innkeeper to attendants to guests had fled the scene.

Jiang Chen wasn’t sure how to react, but he did figure out why they’d fled immediately.

“This Third Master Jing is rather infamous. It seems his presence has frightened off the innkeeper and the attendants.”

Thankfully, the spirit beast cub was still right where he deposited it last time; the spirit beast care area. When the spirit beast cub saw Jiang Chen walking towards it, it jumped into his lap with an aggrieved look and let out a plainful whine. It seemed to be complaining that Jiang Chen was heartless or something.

Jiang Chen was amused by its reactions. He petted the cub before smiling, “I’m just protecting you, little fella. If I were to bring you with me, Brother Long is certain to scare you.”

Seeing as there were no one left inside the inn, there was no point in leaving the cub behind in this area. He had no choice but to take it back to his room. When Long Xiaoxuan saw the spirit beast cub, his eyes lit up. “Is that the descendant of the Astral

White Tiger you mentioned?”

“Brother Long, I know that dragons and tigers are incompatible with each other, but it is just a cub right now. You don’t have to show that much animosity, do you?”

Long Xiaoxuan let out an odd laugh. “How did you come to that conclusion? I just want to know if it really has the Astral White Tiger’s bloodline. If it did, then it’ll be quite interesting.”

“Interesting how?” Jiang Chen said warily.

“When it grows up, I’ll have a true opponent I can spar with anytime I want,” Long Xiaoxuan said proudly. “Once my inherited memories and bloodline powers have completely awakened, even you will be outshone by me, young master Chen. I’ll feel lonely if I can’t find a worthy opponent after I’m at the top.”

Jiang Chen was very amused. “Brother Long, is it just me, or have you gotten a lot more self absorbed since the last time you appeared? Have you finally awakened the narcissistic side of a dragon from your inherited memories?”

True dragons had always been prideful and narcissistic race. It was their unique racial characteristic since ancient times. A dragon was both prideful and very conceited. There were never enough ways for them to show off themselves. Jiang Chen had started noticing the signs from Long Xiaoxuan’s recent behavior. He couldn’t help but lament, to think that that pure Long Xiaoxuan who felt shy at the sight of a mere stranger would change so quickly!

Long Xiaoxuan wasn’t ashamed of his attitude though. “Please watch your words, young master Chen. This isn’t narcissism, this is just the truth. I am confident that the strength of true dragons is absolutely superior to you humans.”

Jiang Chen chuckled. “Don’t you think you’re being a little overconfident? I am absolutely certain there are more celestial

emperors within the human race than the dragon race."

Long Xiaoxuan quibbled. "That's only because we dragon race are of noble blood and has a slow reproduction cycle. Out of every race in the heavenly planes, the human race is the species with the greatest reproduction rate."

The human race had two strong points compared to other races. They had strong reproductive and learning capabilities. It was why the human race was able to grow and pass on their knowledge, skill, and more to the next generation despite facing all sorts of calamities. The human race's strong reproductive ability made them very powerful. Moreover, a human race's bloodline had great tolerance, inclusiveness, and assimilation. It allowed the human race to exist within the various worlds like evergreen trees.

Moreover, a strong learning ability meant that a lot of experts were raised within the human community. It made sure that a powerful genius could always be born at the right time to save the human race from disaster. There were countless humans who met with life-or-death crises in the worlds, but they were always able to survive like weeds, never failing to grow between the cracks. When the winds and rain were over, they would flourish with life once more. These two strong points were qualities that many races didn't possess.

Jiang Chen chuckled. "All races have their advantages and disadvantages. All things are created equal."

Surprisingly, Long Xiaoxuan didn't refute him this time. He let out a soft sigh. "My inherited memories do contain some information. It seems that humans and dragons shared a close relationship with each other during ancient times, and dragons are willing to interact with the humans."

Long Xiaoxuan wasn't talking nonsense. In ancient times, the true dragons and humans didn't just share a close relationship with each other, they even copulated a lot and gave birth to

children of mixed blood. The dragons truly wanted to acquire the human ability to reproduce. A dragon's reproductive ability was far, far inferior. If the true dragons could reproduce as quickly as the humans, they would've dominated the heavenly planes a long time ago.

"Brother Long, you and I are not friends because of our races. We are friends who've helped each other in our times of need. Maybe there isn't another true dragon in Divine Abyss Continent, but that isn't an issue. As long as you continue to improve your cultivation, it's only a matter of time before you break through the limits of this plane and ascend to the heavenly planes. When that happens, I am sure that you can find the place where you truly belong."

Jiang Chen himself was intrigued by Long Xiaoxuan's predicament though. If Brother Long was the only true dragon in this whole world, then what on earth had brought him into existence? He couldn't have just popped out of nowhere, could he?

Jiang Chen wasn't able to come up with an answer no matter what. Moreover, the Divine Abyss Continent was strange in many ways. There were a lot of things that couldn't be explained through common sense at all. For example, it should be an average secular plane. However, it contained a lot of things that completely exceeded its level

Chapter 1087: To the Satisfaction of All

"Young master Chen, how confident are you that this young cub is actually of the Astral White Tiger bloodline?" Long Xiaoxuan seemed to more concerned than Jiang Chen.

"I'm not completely certain, but the chances are high. However, its bloodline and heritage memories haven't awakened yet because it's still a young cub. It might look exactly like a Cloud Devouring Tiger, but it possesses a temperament that a dumb animal like the Cloud Devouring Tiger could never hope to imitate."

"Mm. This cub does indeed possess an unusual temperament." Long Xiaoxuan said and suddenly channeled some dragon aura at the cub. The cub immediately switched into a vigilant and alert posture from its original relaxed state. It puffed up its whiskers and glared fiercely at Long Xiaoxuan. It was roaring for battle instead of backing down.

"Little brat, do you or do you not submit before your dragon lord?" Long Xiaoxuan burst into an eccentric cackle.

Jiang Chen knew that Long Xiaoxuan was being spiteful on purpose, but didn't stop him. He wanted to see how the cub would respond to the dragon aura. A Cloud Devouring Tiger would be trembling with fear by now. The young cub was very small in size, but one could see the ferocity within its round, belligerent eyes. It was staunch and incredibly unyielding. Fortunately, Long Xiaoxuan wasn't really trying to suppress it.

"Good kid, you have some guts after all! This dragon doesn't bully young children, so you may bare your fangs at me when you're older. I want to see if your Astral White Tiger line is stronger or my Eastern True Dragon line is stronger!" Long Xiaoxuan knew better than to bully a child. "Young master Chen, how will you evolve its bloodline? It looks so weak and feeble. Even if it's of the white tiger bloodline, I don't think it can ever

catch up to me."

Jiang Chen naturally had his ways. It wasn't his first time helping others undergo bloodline evolution. Back then, he'd helped the Goldbiter Rats. Emperor Peerless had finished expelling Madame Yun's poison during their conversation.

"Little brother, you may come up now," the emperor called out.

Long Xiaoxuan curled his lips. "You should go. I'll stay here and keep a look out."

He was still rather cold and aloof like many from the dragon clan. He didn't dislike Emperor Peerless, but dragons typically took a lot of time to warm up to others. The only human he currently trusted was Jiang Chen. The dragon understood that the emperor was powerful, and that he was Jiang Chen's sworn brother, but that didn't mean that Long Xiaoxuan was ready accept him. Especially not when there was a foreign woman in the room too.

Jiang Chen didn't force Long Xiaoxuan as he knew that this was the nature of the dragon clan. He quickly made his way upstairs.

"Congratulations Old Brother Mo, sister-in-law is doing very well. Her condition is much better than I'd hoped." Jiang Chen smiled after checking her condition. "She'll be fine if you're certain that the poison has been completely removed from her body. The Pinecrane Pill's potency hasn't been affected by the Seven Emotions Poison at all. Her lifespan has greatly increased."

Emperor Peerless and Madame Yun were both aware of this.

"Brother, it's all thanks to your Pinecrane Pill. You've saved your sister-in-law twice!" The emperor sighed. "Ah Yun, what good have I done to deserve a brother as trustworthy as him? Did you know that while we were out, he risked his own life to get us the antidote? We truly owe him a huge debt of gratitude."

"Brother Zhen, I don't know where to start thanking you because I'm not good with words. You two are both very loyal and

honorable men. Fate must've tied both of you together because of this. If there's anything you might need in the future, just ask. Even if Peerless doesn't agree to it, I'll make sure that he will."

Jiang Chen laughed. "Sister-in-law you over exaggerate. Old Brother Mo would never abandon me in my time of need."

Emperor Peerless roared with laughter. "That you are correct! However, with my brother's skill and talent, he will surely surpass me one day! We won't know who'll be asking who for help then! Moreover, instead of helping him, my debt only grows deeper and deeper."

This was just courtesy, of course. Without the emperor's help, Jiang Chen would never have won Mu Gaoqi's auction, nor would he be able to save Elder Yun Nie, let alone having powerful experts like the Geng brothers escort them back to Veluriyam Capital.

Third Master Jing would never have had such huge turnaround in attitude either. Of course, these were words Jiang Chen would keep to himself. "Old Brother Mo, Miss Qing is still unconscious. It's up to you whether you want to rescue her or not."

The emperor let out a gentle sigh and looked at Madame Yun tenderly. "Ah Yun, Little sister Qing is your junior sister. You should decide."

Madame Yun sighed gently as she'd already heard about the sequence of events from Emperor Peerless. "Little sister Qing has always been a good sister. We've relied heavily on each other ever since we were only three. To think that I knew nothing about her unrequited love for Peerless. It's my fault for not showing her enough concern. Maybe... this really is too unfair."

Emperor Peerless immediately interjected. "Ah Yun, how can there be fairness when it comes to love?"

"Peerless, I'll never be able to rest easy if I don't save little sister Qing. Surely you won't blame me if I choose to save her?" Madame

Yun let out another gentle sigh.

The emperor shook his head. “Little sister Qing isn’t a bad person. Otherwise, she would never have taken such good care of you.”

“Mm. I’ll save her.” Madame Yun quickly responded.

Emperor Peerless was worried. Madame Yun had just only recuperated from all kinds of ailments, and was in no state to help Miss Qing. If Miss Qing was hell-bent on dying, she might even cause the poison to backfire.

“Ah Yun... your body has yet to fully recover. Expelling this poison is extremely taxing to the body and mind. Why don’t you rest some first?” The emperor glanced at Jiang Chen, signaling him to say a word or two.

Jiang Chen smiled wryly. “Sister-in-law, with the current state of your body, you’ll have little chance of success. Moreover, the poison might even backfire onto you.”

Madame Yun was very trusting of Jiang Chen. “Ah? Then what shall we do?” she panicked.

“The only person suitable for the task... is probably Old Brother Mo.” Jiang Chen responded wryly.

The emperor’s face immediately turned aghast. “Little brother, how is this appropriate? Y-you... you shouldn’t drag me into the mud!”

Jiang Chen was only speaking the truth. If the task was left to Madame Yun, it would surely end in catastrophe, and he was obviously not suitable for the task either. At the end of the day, the best person for the task was Emperor Peerless.

“Old brother, it might be a little inappropriate to put you up to this task, but you are currently the best person for the job. You may seek female pill kings to do it for you, but in this city, there’s likely very few who’ll risk their lives for this. Moreover, there’s

only two days left before her time is up. The longer you drag this out, the smaller the chance of success will be." Jiang Chen was completely honest.

Madame Yun had something to add too. "Peerless, you should save her. You're the only person who can undo the knot in her heart. She won't let the poison backfire if you do it."

Women were emotional beings, but that didn't mean they were incapable of rational thought. Madame Yun had clearly thought this through from the angle of a woman.

"Fine." The emperor was a true cultivator. He was not going to act wishy-washy like the common man after hearing Madame Yun's request.

"Ah Yun, as long as you know how I feel about you, I'm willing to do anything you ask."

The emperor had successfully purged Miss Qing's poison four hours later. When she regained consciousness, she first thought that they'd reunited in another world, but was quickly awakened to reality when Madame Yun entered the room.

"You... how are all of you alive? W-why am I alive too?" Her face was full of confusion and distraught.

"Little sister Qing, why do you remain so obsessed with the Seven Emotions Poison after coming back from the gates of hell?" Madame Yun sighed. "Why didn't you tell me that you had feelings for Peerless as well?"

Miss Qing sighed faintly. "Dear sister, what use would that be? It won't change the fact that Brother Mo knew you first. You're right, why would I remain obsessed even though I've already been to the gates of hell? Brother Mo, dear sister, whether you wish to beat me up or kill me, do as you wish."

"You silly girl, why would I kill you after asking Peerless to save you?" Madame Yun sighed gently. "You need only say the word

and I'll have Peerless treat you as how he treats me."

Miss Qing gently smiled and got on her feet. "Dear sister, you've always been muddle-headed, but because of that, you're blessed with a fool's luck. Brother Mo is your man, so you should know him better that I do. Do you really think he's capable of loving two women? He wouldn't be worthy of my admiration if he was.

"Brother Mo, take good care of Sister Yun." Miss Qing headed for the exit without looking back.

"Little sister Qing, where are you going?" Madame Yun asked immediately.

"Dear sister, don't worry about me. I've already died once. I won't do something this foolish ever again." Miss Qing flashed an elegant smile and slowly made her way downstairs.

Upon exiting the door, she noticed Jiang Chen standing right outside. She glanced at him emotionlessly and walked right past him. However, she suddenly came to a halt. "You were right about something. I really should've told him about my feelings. Everything feels much lighter now."

Her smile was very muted and discreet, but one could clearly see that her infatuation was now replaced by enlightenment and insight. She had fully conquered her inner demons.

Jiang Chen's thoughts were complex as he watched her leave and disappear from sight. The innkeeper and his assistants had fled, but Jiang Chen and others didn't move into another inn. The emperor and his wife remained where they were for two more days in order to recuperate. After that, they finally departed for the designated place where they'd agreed to meet Liu Zhen.

Jiang Chen was curious. What trouble could an origin realm cultivator run into at a place like Frostmoon City? How serious was it that he'd trade Radiant Celestial Grass to get help from others? Jiang Chen didn't want to be a busybody, but it was worth a look

since he’d receive a shoot of Radiant Celestial Grass in return for his troubles.

Chapter 1088: Inexhaustible Radiant Celestial Grass

Frostmoon City was a prosperous place and its urban sprawl enormous. Liu Zhen's meeting place was discrete. It took quite a while for Jiang Chen and the group to find out where it was. On the outside, it looked like a small, run-down tavern. The district it was located in was one of the most chaotic in the city. It took great effort for the young man and the emperor to find where the tavern was located. Its dilapidated appearance prompted the latter to voice his concern.

"Do we have the wrong place, little brother?"

Jiang Chen was a bit suspicious of the establishment as well. He scrutinized it closely before concluding with a half-hearted laugh, "I think it's right. The address that Liu Zhen gave me matches perfectly."

"Well, never mind then. Let's take a look inside." Emperor Peerless gave a big flourish with his hand. He was at ease regardless of where they were headed. He was in a great mood, the best he'd had in years. Ever since Ah Yun's injury all those years ago, the emperor had brought her everywhere in search of doctors and treatment. From that point on, he'd devoted all of his thoughts to the treatment of his dao partner's condition. It had been difficult to maintain any sort of cheer.

Jiang Chen's appearance also came with the Pinecrane Pill. The pill had improved Madame Yun's condition and kept the amount of suffering she experienced strictly under control. Furthermore, it repaired to varying degrees many of her vital functions. Most importantly was the newfound knowledge that his partner had a ninety-percent chance of making a full recovery.

For Emperor Peerless, it was a miracle. He had spent many, many years scouring the entirety of the human domain. He had visited

countless pill kings and numerous hermit pill emperors. But the only repayment for his efforts had been disappointment; more and more and more of it, until he was overflowing with despair.

In that hour of need, Jiang Chen's appearance was his lamp in the darkness. How could he not feel galvanized? It was natural for him to be in a good mood now. He was willing to go anywhere now, no matter how dirty or derelict the place. Physical, environmental conditions were the furthest thing from his mind.

If it had been for Liu Zhen's sake alone, Emperor Peerless would not have come here. The emperor had little interest in actual sky rank spirit herbs, much less the possibility of them. But he knew that Jiang Chen needed Radiant Celestial Grass. The young man had been willing to bid four hundred million on it. That sum represented its importance for him. Because Jiang Chen put so much value on the Grass, the emperor was willing to help.

Though it appeared unassuming from the outside, the tavern's interior was reasonably decorated. However, it was also obvious that those who drank here were of dubious, mixed origin. Among its patrons, there were wandering cultivators, local snakes, and passer-by merchants. Seeing a man as magnificent as Emperor Peerless walk in, one of the tavern's staff keenly came forward to receive the company. "Honored guests, please, come in."

Of the four people in Jiang Chen's group, none were ordinary enough to lose in a crowd. The waiter marveled silently at the sight. In all the years of the tavern's operation, never had people like these come to their premises. What day was it today? What kind of wind had blown these great men and women here?

The quartet found a table in an inconspicuous spot. After ordering a casual selection of food and drinks, they quietly partook of the refreshments. As time passed, the appointed hour came and went; yet Liu Zhen did not appear.

"He didn't trick us, did he?" Long Xiaoxuan furrowed his brow.

“He seemed on the shrewd side, but I don’t think he’s a malicious sort,” Emperor Peerless laughed. “Let’s keep on waiting.”

Madame Yun had heard from her partner about the eventual destination of the excursion, and nodded to back him up. “Yes, let’s have some patience.”

“I wonder how much more of it I’ll need, exactly.” The dragon in human form twisted his mouth.

The better part of an hour went by, but short man Liu Zhen was still nowhere to be found.

Even Jiang Chen couldn’t wait much longer. He glanced towards the emperor. “Seems like that guy isn’t coming, Old Brother Mo.”

Emperor Peerless sighed. “I didn’t expect an origin realm cultivator to trick us.”

“Maybe it wasn’t intentional. Did he encounter something unexpected, perhaps?” Madame Yun was ever the kindly sort, always thinking on the bright side of things and people.

“Still… I think we’re done here.” Jiang Chen made the final call. As they were about to get up and leave, a silhouette appeared in the doorway. It darted inside like a gust of wind, rushing towards Jiang Chen with a burst of joy.

“Young master Shao, save me!” It was a breathless man, terror evident on his face–Liu Zhen.

In the next instant after his entrance, several other burly men flooded into the tavern. Dressed uniformly in black, they carried the same insignia on their shoulders. It was clearly the sign of some gang or another.

“You bastard, let’s see where you’re running to this time!” Their leader was a man with a flat nose. He looked at Liu Zhen with a vicious grin, the very image of a cat playing with its prey. It was a gesture full of derision.

“What does he mean?” Jiang Chen looked, frowning, at the very same man.

“Y-young master Shao,” Liu Zhen gasped for air, still in a panicked fright. “I’ve been laying low the past couple days, but someone found me out in the end. Please, help me out here! I’ll double what I promised earlier.”

Double? The agreement prior had been that if Jiang Chen solved his problems in Frostmoon City, then he would give Jiang Chen a specimen of Radiant Celestial Grass. Did doubling it mean that he was going to give two instead?

“Are you sure?” Jiang Chen smiled in a strange and sudden fashion.

“Of course I am,” Liu Zhen answered hurriedly. “Heaven and earth judge me if I renege.”

Jiang Chen nodded, then turned to Long Xiaoxuan. “Brother Long, didn’t you say that you were bored a few minutes ago? Your time is now. Remember, don’t be too cruel to them. In fact, don’t smash up this tavern either. Let’s take things outside.”

The dragon’s eyes lit up. “What do you mean, ‘don’t be too cruel’?”

“As long as they don’t die, it’s fine.” Jiang Chen waved a hand, signaling that the dragon should rely on his own judgment.

Long Xiaoxuan was very eager indeed, chuckling profusely. His boredom was gone, instantly replaced with impatience and fervor. Slamming a hand on the nearby table, he walked towards the men who were after Liu Zhen.

The hubbub tipped the tavern’s owner off to the ensuing chaos. He made several cursory motions with his hands. “Friends, friends, please give this old man some consideration. Any disagreements can be settled outside, where there’s plenty more room. We’re a small business!”

Long Xiaoxuan did not dignify those words with a response. Instead, his hand blitzed towards the men. One by one, he tossed them outside, grabbing them with only a single hand each time. The five men were launched outside with remarkable accuracy and speed. Everything happened in the span of a breath.

“C’mon, buds, let’s go outside for some fun.” Long Xiaoxuan chuckled. He picked up the flat-nosed man by the nape of his neck. “I have to thank you guys for alleviating my boredom. I really appreciate your cooperation.”

Jiang Chen paid no mind to the commotion outside. Instead, he fixed his eyes directly on Liu Zhen, his expression locked in an unamused half-smile. “You know that we waited for you more than an hour, yes? Are you trying to put us up?”

Liu Zhen’s neck retracted. “No, no!” he vehemently denied. “How could I dream of putting you fine gentlemen up to anything? It’s because of my own weakness, really. Despite how careful I’ve been, I’ve still attracted a bunch of unwanted attention. I would’ve never gotten here without noticing it quickly.”

With a leisurely upward push, Emperor Peerless erected a soundproof barrier. “Alright, the outside won’t hear us speak here. Tell us, what do you need help with? Don’t forget your promise of a doubled reward.”

“Absolutely not, absolutely not,” Liu Zhen nodded a few times in succession. “Here, take what’s rightfully yours. It’s only fair after you helped me out back there.”

Liu Zhen astutely handed over another jade box. It was a simple one, the basic type commonly used to hold spirit herbs of all kinds. Jiang Chen opened the lid a sliver. Another specimen of Radiant Celestial Grass lay inside, larger than both the one at the auction and the one from taking Liu Zhen away from Pillfire City. This was the third one that the origin realm cultivator had given out.

This made the young man quite curious. “Liu Zhen, how many

shoots of Radiant Celestial Grass do you have? Why do I feel that you have an inexhaustible amount of them? Were you so lucky to find a whole patch of them?"

Liu Zhen looked rather embarrassed. He gave a flustered smile, but refrained from answering the question directly. "Kind sirs, I have a friend who's fallen into the hands of the number one underground faction in this here Frostmoon City. They gave me half a year to save him by paying them off. But you know, someone like me... even if I had the money, I doubt I'd get anything I wanted by going anywhere near them. That's where I need you sirs' help. I would really appreciate if you could... accompany me when I go to deliver the ransom."

"The Heavensfall Society?" Emperor Peerless interjected suddenly.

Liu Zhen nodded several times. "Right, right. As expected of a world-wise great emperor, sir."

"What cultivation level is your friend, hmm? How did he earn the Heavensfall Society's ire?" The emperor found it a little odd. "They usually don't concern themselves with people like you, no?"

Liu Zhen exhaled with some exasperation. "It's a long story. I first made the acquaintance of that friend a few years back. Like me, he is a wandering cultivator. We really hit it off back then, and we've saved each other's hides a few times, so he's practically a brother. He hadn't wanted to offend the Heavensfall Society, obviously. He'd gone to them to list a bounty for information. But for whatever reason, they detained him then and there. It was only three days later that I got the news to bring five hundred million saint spirit stones as ransom for him to the Society's headquarters."

"That's why you went to Pillfire City to auction off the spirit herb?" Jiang Chen asked.

"Pillfire City is dangerous as well, but it's at least somewhat more

principled compared to Frostmoon. In Frostmoon City, each faction is as black-hearted as the next. If I were to auction Radiant Celestial Grass on Three River Street, I might not even get to leave in one piece, much less get the money from the sale."

Liu Zhen's face was contorted in a ghastly smile. "If not for my friend's sake, I wouldn't stay a day longer in a place as awful as Frostmoon City."

The man's impression of the city was undoubtedly horrendous. However, origin realm cultivators were middle-lower class existences anywhere in the Upper Eight Regions. In a place where neither the authorities nor the gangsters had scruples to speak of, they had no security whatsoever.

"So, did you get your hands on the five hundred million?" Jiang Chen inquired.

Despair flashed across Liu Zhen's face. "I only have the four hundred million you bid at the auction, young master Shao, minus the fees taken away by the Temple of Cleansing Fire. I was thinking maybe they'd be alright with another specimen of Radiant Celestial Grass to make up the difference."

Jiang Chen didn't know what to say. If the spirit herb reached four hundred million at the auction-house, why was he using another to substitute for only one hundred million? Wasn't that a huge waste? Did he have more Radiant Celestial Grass than sense?

"Liu Zhen, I'd like to hear the truth from you. How many specimens of Radiant Celestial Grass do you really have? I'll happily buy you out at a hundred fifty million per shoot."

The young man kept his gaze honest, as free of desperation as he could muster. As an origin realm cultivator, Liu Zhen was right to be a bit oversensitive. If he showed too much urgency, the other man would likely second-guess his intentions. He didn't want Liu Zhen to lie because of unnecessary misgivings.

Chapter 1089: Arriving At Heavensfall Society

Liu Zhen hesitated.

He had to admit he was slightly moved by the offer, despite the small fear that still lingered in his mind. It was an instinctual fear of those who were stronger than him and a fear of loss. However, his experience told him that these people were trustworthy characters. At the very least, they were much easier to interact with than the people of Heavensfall Society.

Emperor Peerless continued seriously when he saw that Liu Zhen was still a little apprehensive. “To be honest, you’re not powerful enough to haggle with anyone, but my brother is still willing to transact with you on equal footing. If you cannot recognize his good intentions even now, then I must say that you’re a little blind. If we really wanted to harm you, do you really think you could’ve arrived at Frostmoon City safe and sound? Do you really think my brother couldn’t rob you of your Radiant Celestial Grass anytime he wished to? Also, I don’t mean to be rude, but it’s entirely possible that you’ll be a corpse in the next second if we were to leave you right now.”

Emperor Peerless’ words were direct, but also the stone cold truth. If both parties shared the same level of strength, then Liu Zhen certainly had the right to haggle or even refuse the trade. But right now, he was the one who needed their help, yet he still couldn’t set aside his worries and acted as if Jiang Chen and Emperor Peerless would take advantage of him. His attitude displeased the great emperor.

“Liu Zhen, I may be the only person who’s willing to trade fairly with you, and the price I’m offering is more or less actual market price. Of course, I admit that there are very few sky rank spirit herbs in the market, but that doesn’t change the fact that it’s risky

for you to possess them. You may as well trade it for spirit stones and be safe, don't you think?"

Liu Zhen was definitely moved now. The Radiant Celestial Grass was valuable, but he would undoubtedly have to bear a high amount of risk the moment he produced a shoot and tried to exchange it. Literally anyone could try to rob him because he was an origin realm cultivator, not a great emperor. It was nearly impossible for him not to draw any attention.

"Liu Zhen, I have one last thing to say to you. If you're worried that we might scam you, you can stop worrying about that right now. I swear by my title that we will not scam you after the exchange is complete. Seriously, do you have such a low opinion of my brother?"

Liu Zhen hurriedly shook his head. "Oh no, of course not. I'm not worried about your integrity, and I'm definitely not worried that you might scam me. It's just..."

"What is it?"

"To be frank, these Radiant Celestial Grass don't belong to me alone," Liu Zhen said honestly. "I discovered them with a sworn brother of mine, so he has a right to them too. I'm hesitating because I don't dare make a decision without hearing his opinion."

"What cultivation realm is your friend at?" Jiang Chen asked curiously, "Is he a lot stronger than you are? If that's so, then how did you come to know each other?"

"Oh no, he's an origin realm cultivator just like me. However, his talents are a little special and he grows at a tremendous rate. He has a high amount of talent, but for some reason he wasn't recruited into any great sect or factions when he was younger. It's all pretty unusual."

"If he's an origin realm cultivator, then the spirit herb is useless to both of you," Jiang Chen persuaded.

“I know it’s useless to us, I just... ai. I’m just worried he’ll be unhappy if I make the trade behind his back.” Liu Zhen stuck by the code of brotherhood even though he had a somewhat wretched and cowardly personality. Not just anyone could risk their life to save their friend, or resist the temptation to leave their friend behind and take all of the spirit herbs for themselves. This was especially true considering how risky it was for an origin realm cultivator to travel back and forth between Pillfire City and Frostmoon City.

“Your deep friendship with your friends impresses me greatly. How about this: we will decide what to do with his portion of the Radiant Celestial Grass after we save him. How much do you have in your possession?” Jiang Chen smiled calmly. “I’ll buy any you have. Hmm, the Radiant Celestial Grass is the main ingredient of the Sage Smile Pill. When you ascend to the sage realm in the future, I can gift you a Sage Smile Pill at no cost. It will allow you to ascend a level unconditionally as long as you’re still in the sage realm.”

Liu Zhen’s eyes lit up. This was the most tempting offer yet, and so he nodded. “Alright, we found eighteen shoots back then, and we agreed to split them. I sold one at the auction in order to save him, and I gave you two as your reward for escorting me safely back to Frostmoon City. When we return, I will be gift you one more. Therefore, we’ve theoretically used up four shoots in total. My brother and I will be sharing the losses because we’re both involved in this, so I still have seven shoots to trade you.”

Eighteen shoots of Radiant Celestial Grass! This number absolutely stunned Jiang Chen. These two origin realm cultivators had found eighteen sky rank spirit herbs at once. Just what kind of insane luck was this? Not even a great emperor could be this lucky, right?

Luck was truly was an unpredictable thing, and everybody had their own. One couldn’t be jealous of another’s luck.

“Alright, since you have seven shoots, I’ll give you 1.1 billion saint spirit stones in return.”

The Radiant Celestial Grass was the kind of spirit herb that Jiang Chen would accept as many as possibly, because it was the main ingredient of the Sage Smile Pill and couldn’t be replaced. Therefore, the more there were, the better.

1.1 billion? This was undoubtedly an astronomical number to an origin realm cultivator like Liu Zhen. Heck, even 1.1 billion origin spirit stones would be a ridiculous amount of money to an origin realm wandering cultivator already, but no, the reality was even better than that! 1.1 billion saint spirit stones was the kind of wealth he’d never imagined even in his wildest dreams.

“Alright, you can have all of them. About the Sage Smile Pill…”

“Don’t worry, you will get the Sage Smile Pill. Also, do try to change your friend’s mind, will you? I’ll buy them off his hands at the same price too.”

Liu Zhen nodded. “I will do that. This price is very fair, so I doubt he’ll disagree with me, not to mention that he’s in need of money last I heard of him. He’ll certainly find no better way to trade away these spirit herbs.”

Eighteen shoots of Radiant Celestial Grass! Jiang Chen felt his greed stir just thinking about it.

“Then it is settled. There are a lot of other people here, so we’ll make the trade after we meet up next time. Let’s head out and see what’s going on first.” Long Xiaoxuan hadn’t returned, so Jiang Chen knew that that dragon must be causing trouble again.

After leaving paying for their drinks, Jiang Chen and Emperor Peerless left with Liu Zhen. However, they were dumbstruck by the scene before them. Long Xiaoxuan was waving his hands and making all sorts of noises. Meanwhile, the thugs were running circles in front of the restaurant in only their underwear. The

dragon kept calling out, “The last person will have to take off their underwear, you hear!?”

Madame Yun’s normally composed and elegant face blushed red.

Emperor Peerless laughed loudly. “This guy sure knows how to have fun with people.”

Jiang Chen couldn’t help but shake his head too. He walked over. “Brother Long, I was worried that there’ll be flesh and blood all over the place, but tell me, what on earth are you playing at now?”

Long Xiaoxuan answered confidently. “You told me not to kill, didn’t you? But you know that I can’t control my strength, so I did this instead.”

Jiang Chen was speechless. Long Xiaoxuan was changing too quickly. He never thought that an introverted dragon could change so thoroughly in such a short time. Are all dragons born restless or something?

“Whatever. Come on, let’s go.” Jiang Chen could see that these people were about to fall apart from their deathly pale faces alone. It was so bad that even he couldn’t help but pity their plight.

Meanwhile, Liu Zhen was smiling ear to ear at the way Long Xiaoxuan had toyed with his pursuers. Obviously, he had been extremely frustrated when he was pursued by the group, so their misery could only be food for his joy.

“Are we going there now, young master Shao?” Liu Zhen hurriedly ran over to the group and asked carefully after seeing that they weren’t stopping.

“When else but now? Or do you have a time in mind?” Jiang Chen asked curiously.

“Shouldn’t we make some preparations or something?” Liu Zhen looked a little dumbstruck.

“Prepare for what, exactly? Is the Heavensfall Society really

powerful?”

Liu Zhen couldn’t help but nod. “They are a local faction and the number one underground power of Frostmoon City. They are not to be underestimated.”

“How do they compare to the first division of Moon God Sect?” Jiang Chen smiled leisurely.

“They’re incomparable to Moon God Sect. After all, Moon God Sect is the ruler of Tilted Moon Region.” Liu Zhen’s answer was extremely fair.

“Then there’s no problem whatsoever. Even Jing Third of the first division has to treat us with full courtesy, so why should we prepare against a mere Heavensfall Society?”

Liu Zhen was completely stunned. He had to think for a moment before he could understand Jiang Chen’s meaning.

Emperor Peerless barked out a laugh and followed behind Jiang Chen. Long Xiaoxuan exclaimed with delighted surprise. “Are we going to fight someone? Who? Where? Is it far away from here?”

Jiang Chen discovered that human language was no longer adequate to describe this battle fiend, so he did the only thing he could do: ignore the dragon.

“There’s not going to be a fight. Brother Long, were you always this much of a battle fiend? Do you feel itchy when you’re not causing trouble?” Jiang Chen said impatiently.

“Stop right there. You are the one person who doesn’t have the right to say that! Compared to you, my ability to cause trouble is nothing at all!” Long Xiaoxuan argued.

Jiang Chen found that he was actually had no response for that. Behind them, Liu Zhen was completely flabbergasted by their playful banter. Up until just now, he had thought that the visit to the Heavensfall Society was a very serious matter. However, the two didn’t seem like they were under any pressure whatsoever. In

fact, it looked like they were just taking a stroll down the market.

Liu Zhen felt both surprised and relieved at their confidence. Not long after, they arrived at the entrance of the Heavensfall Society's headquarters. Heavensfall Society was an underground faction, so they had plenty of eyes everywhere. They got wind that Liu Zhen was coming even before the man himself had arrived at their headquarters. They were surprised to see that Liu Zhen had brought some helpers with him. Moreover, they didn't look like average cultivators.

Long Xiaoxuan took the lead and offered himself. "Let me call out to them."

Jiang Chen's expression changed when he heard this. He tried to stop him, but Long Xiaoxuan didn't give him the opportunity and charged straight forwards.

Jiang Chen's expression changed again. This guy's going to cause trouble again, isn't he?

"Is there anyone alive in there? Come out and speak with us!" Long Xiaoxuan had fused a tiny bit of dragon roar technique in his voice, so the shout caused the ground itself to tremble. The building looked like it would collapse at any moment.

Emperor Peerless clicked his tongue with wonder and felt even more curious about Long Xiaoxuan.

Chapter 1090: 500 Million Ransom

Even a commoner would fly into a rage after being spoken to like that, let alone the most powerful gang in the city. Underground factions often conducted their businesses without any concern for the law. Compared to the legitimate factions, they were more likely to go to extreme lengths to achieve their goals. Establishing a good public image was not one of their concerns. When it came to solving issues, almost anything was permitted. Legality wasn't an issue and neither was public perception.

Long Xiaoxuan's words caused a huge uproar within the Heavensfall Society. Armed fighters began to appear in droves.

"Which bastard dares raise a huge fuss on our doorstep?!" The Society was incredibly offended after realized a kid that had barely just weaned had insulted them. They were the undisputed tyrants of Frostmoon City. Not many dared cause strife in front of them. However, that wasn't the case today. This was the height of capital offense!

Long Xiaoxuan's expression sank when he heard the word 'bastard'. He was pure-blooded true dragon! His blood didn't contain even the tiniest bit of impurity! He had an extreme distaste of the word. A cold glimmer appeared in his eyes as he pounced at the man who'd spoken.

Bam! Bam! Bam! Long Xiaoxuan gifted him eight consecutive slaps on both sides of his cheeks. The man was beaten into a swollen pig before he could even scream in agony.

"Y-you! How dare you beat our men in front of our gates?" The Society members were dumbfounded.

Jiang Chen made his way to the front. "Get me the person in charge," he commanded nonchalantly. Long Xiaoxuan was attracting a lot of hostility. Jiang Chen didn't stop the dragon, but this didn't mean he was fine with a complete fall out with the

society.

Long Xiaoxuan was dejected. “I’ve yet to finish taking out my anger!”

“Brother Long, it’s better to practice some restraint as we’re here for business. We’ll need you at your full strength if things turn sour. You should rest for now.”

The Heavensfall Society guards realized that these two young men were of no ordinary background when they heard the relaxed banter. One of them had already left to notify a supervisor. Before long, an even larger group appeared from the base.

An old man with yellow eyebrows was walking at the very front of the group. He seemed extremely furious and was emanating incredible amounts of murderous aura. He was very offended to hear that his man had been beaten up. There were a few others behind him that bore a great amount of presence. They were obviously the senior executives of the Society. The old man stepped to the front and sized up Jiang Chen and Long Xiaoxuan with a ferocious glare.

“You did this?” he asked coldly while staring at them both.

Jiang Chen responded blandly. “And who are you?”

“Hmph! How dare you cause trouble within our grounds when you don’t even know who our great elder is? You must be tired of living!”

“That’s right! How dare you beat up our men? Elder Ke, you need only say the word and we’ll immediately slaughter them!”

The yellow-browed elder made a dismissive gesture to shut them up.

“Young men, name yourselves so that we may know if we can afford to offend you.” Elder Ke’s tone was sinister. They were obviously ready to resort to violence if they were any further offended.

“Elder Ke, my brother over there may have offended you, but the Heavensfall Society isn’t without fault either. We’re here to talk business. Elder Ke, would you rather make money or enemies? Is there a need to continue meaningless fights?”

“Hah! What business?” Elder Ke guffawed with angry laughter. “The Heavensfall Society has done business with plenty of people, but this is the first time we’ve ever seen someone with a gall big enough to beat up our member within our doorstep! Don’t try to change the topic! What business is there to speak of when this matter is yet settled?”

“What’s done is done. What else do you want?” Long Xiaoxuan shrugged in a dismissive manner while smiling at Elder Ke mockingly. This enraged the gang even further.

Elder Ke laughed coldly. “Truly, you are a hero amongst youth. Color me impressed. If this is how you want to do it, then we shall return your hostility in kind.”

Jiang Chen frowned. “Elder Ke, do you really wish to escalate this matter?”

“Brat, even a thousand tongues will not save you from this. I’ll skin you alive today!” Elder Ke was a man who meant his words.

The senior executives behind him immediately surrounded Jiang Chen and Long Xiaoxuan. Almost everyone present had made a move. Their overall cultivation level wasn’t half bad. The weakest among them was at the ninth level sage realm. Many were half step emperors, but there were also a few initial level emperors. Elder Ke however, was a high level emperor.

This wasn’t the complete roster of the gang’s senior executives as their gang leaders had yet to appear. They were only an underground gang, but their strength was already enough to rival many great sects. Long Xiaoxuan didn’t panic. Instead, he was elated when he saw what was happening. He was roaring for a fight!

“Brother Long, do you really yearn for a fight that much?” Jiang Chen was speechless.

Long Xiaoxuan chuckled light-heartedly. “It’s none of your business. You should look to yourself before you talk about others.”

Emperor Peerless had been watching from afar, so he knew that he could no longer remain a bystander. He knew that nobody would be a threat to Jiang Chen and Long Xiaoxuan as long as Elder Ke was restrained. Society members had surrounded them, and Elder Ke was showing signs of joining in. With a flicker of his form, he stared down at Elder Ke.

“They may fight, but you must remain where you are.” The emperor didn’t stop them as he was rather admiring of Long Xiaoxuan’s style.

It was obvious that this was extortion. The gang might not even hand over the prisoner after receiving the ransom. If that was the case, they might as well talk with their fists. If Jiang Chen won the fight, they might even get to take the prisoner away without spending a single spirit stone.

Elder Ke had only just realized that Emperor Peerless was one of Jiang Chen’s accomplices. He was incredibly surprised when he looked at the direction where the emperor came from. It was Liu Zhen! The elder had a rough impression of who the short man was, whereas, he didn’t immediately recognize Emperor Peerless because the latter wasn’t as renowned as the other great emperors due to his wandering nature.

“Halt!” Elder Ke immediately yelled after noticing Liu Zhen.

Jiang Chen smiled mockingly. He was certain that Elder Ke had been shocked by the emperor’s presence. However, Emperor Peerless hadn’t flared his great emperor aura just now. Elder Ke must’ve told his troops to stand down for a different reason. The expression within his eyes wasn’t that of fear, but of discovery.

But Emperor Peerless didn't point out this fact. It didn't matter what Elder Ke was up to. His tricks wouldn't work on the emperor.

Elder Ke pondered for a moment before flashing a sly smile. "Were all of you hired by that short man over there?"

The emperor snorted coldly. He couldn't be bothered to answer.

"So what if we were?" Jiang Chen replied

Elder Ke laughed slyly. "Does that mean you're here to redeem that short man's partner?"

Long Xiaoxuan yelled dejectedly. "Hey! Are we still fighting or not? Why are you so wishy-washy?"

This infuriated the Heavensfall Society greatly, but they had no choice but to swallow their fury as they'd been told to stand down. Their eyes were full of hostility as they glared at Long Xiaoxuan.

"Have you brought the 500 million saint spirit stones?" Elder Ke asked directly.

Jiang Chen signaled at Liu Zhen. The latter immediately ran to him.

"I'll leave you in charge of the negotiation. He's Elder Ke of the Heavensfall Society. Don't worry, just do what you need to do and don't be intimidated by him." Jiang Chen advised.

Liu Zhen's heart was racing, but he somehow managed to suppress his emotions. He knew that this was his only chance. There'd be no second chances if he failed to rescue his brother today.

"Elder Ke, I've prepared the 500 million you wanted. However, I want to see him first." Liu Zhen wasn't dumb after all.

"You'll see him after you hand over the money. I'll be frank, your friend is currently confined within our deepest prisons. Your promise alone isn't enough for us to let him out." Elder Ke had his bottom line as well.

Liu Zhen was in a dilemma. He looked at Jiang Chen for help. The latter nodded. “Give it to him.”

Liu Zhen’s hands trembled when he took out 500 million saint spirit stones. He hesitated a moment before handing them over to Elder Ke.

Jiang Chen noted the look of surprise on Elder Ke’s face. He immediately warned. “Elder Ke, You’ve already received the saint spirit stones. We’d better clear things up now so that there won’t be any room for contention. You’d best make sure that these stones are genuine, and that the numbers are correct.”

He’d gained a lot of experience in dealing with these underground gangs after the incident with Third Master Jing. Jiang Chen might have seen through Elder Ke’s plan, but the latter wasn’t depressed. “There’s no problem with the saint spirit stones. Wait here for a moment, I’ll send my men to the deep prisons to get him. A word of warning, I can’t guarantee that he’s still alive after a stint there.”

Liu Zhen immediately turned aghast. Jiang Chen also furrowed his brows. “Elder Ke, do you take me for a fool? Deep prisons? From what I know, the Heavensfall Society is only an underground gang. Can you even represent Frostmoon City? What rights to do you have to build a prison?”

Elder Ke flashed a crafty smile that didn’t reach his eyes. “Friend, this is where you’re wrong. Which clan or sect doesn’t have its own hidden prison?”

Jiang Chen was just about respond but the emperor suddenly patted him on the shoulder. “Let’s wait and see for now.”

Jiang Chen was extremely furious, but since the emperor had already spoken, he had no choice but to swallow his anger for now.

Chapter 1091: How to Taunt With Greater Skill

Roughly fifteen minutes had passed, but the runner who announced that he would go to the prisons and bring their prisoner back still hadn't returned. Long Xiaoxuan was the first to grow impatient. "Hey Ke, I'm not as patient as my brother is. If you can't bring our guy over in another seven and a half minutes, we'll teach you a lesson."

Still, Elder Ke maintained an inscrutable expression as he chuckled. "Relax, someone will show up eventually. That, I'm sure of."

Long Xiaoxuan snorted, but ultimately decided to shut his mouth. However, his expression spoke volumes, he was hoping very much that the guy wouldn't show up so that a fight could break out.

Fifteen minutes later, the guy who went to pick up the prisoner finally returned. They muttered a few code words beside Elder Ke's ears. Jiang Chen heard them clearly, but couldn't understand their meaning at all.

"Where is our guy?" Jiang Chen asked in a low tone.

Elder Ke laughed. "I'm sorry, but the guy you're looking for is no longer in our custody. You better go ask the Moon God Sect if you want him."

"Are you toying with me?" Jiang Chen asked again in a surprisingly calm tone.

Elder Ke brayed with laughter. "That's right, I'm toying with you! You beat up my men in front of our doorstep and dare ask to make a deal with me like nothing happened? Just who do you think you are?"

Liu Zhen's face turned green with realization. No wonder Elder

Ke had suddenly changed his attitude even though he'd about to erupt just now! It was because he wanted to gain the five hundred million saint spirit stones first!

Jiang Chen nodded slightly before shooting a glance at Liu Zhen. "Liu Zhen, we'll deal with this. Back off a little and don't get caught in the crossfire."

Liu Zhen stared at Jiang Chen in shock and hesitation. He was obviously still reeling from the loss of five hundred million saint spirit stones.

"Don't worry, I promise you that he'll spit out every stone he took in a moment. If your friend is still here, I promise you that they'll return him to you as well!" Jiang Chen wasn't boasting in the slightest. To Elder Ke though, it was of course the joke of the century.

"Boy, I think you've lost your mind. The Heavensfall Society has never had the habit of returning what they took, not to mention his accomplice here completely deserves his punishment for breaking our rules. Forget five hundred saint spirit stones, one billion or even two billion saint spirit stones are still insufficient to cleanse his sin!" Elder Ke declared righteously.

"Elder Ke, I'm not sure where you're getting your confidence from, but I can tell you one thing: I knew from the start you won't return our guy. I purposely gave you the five hundred million saint spirit stones." Jiang Chen smiled calmly.

Elder Ke stared blankly at him for an instant before laughing out loud. "Boy, do you think I'll really believe such nonsense? Or are you trying to make yourself feel better? Hahaha..."

Jiang Chen stared at Elder Ke like he was staring at an idiot. "If you hadn't stolen our money, we wouldn't have the right to destroy you, would we now?"

This time, Elder Ke wasn't the only one who was stunned.

Emperor Peerless looked blank for a moment and Long Xiaoxuan was also staring at Jiang Chen in surprise. They'd all noticed that Jiang Chen wasn't actually joking.

Long Xiaoxuan started laughing. "No wonder! I was surprised when you suddenly turned so easy-going, but it was all just a trick! You're even more treacherous than I am."

Long Xiaoxuan's provocation tended to be too stiff. In comparison, Jiang Chen's were more skillful. A logical excuse was critical when picking a quarrel because the party in the right would always have the upper hand, regardless of the scale of the disagreement.

Elder Ke's proud expression froze. He realized that Jiang Chen might really have been playing a trick from the start. Although he didn't think that Heavensfall Society would mind a petty trick like this at all, he minded because his intellect had been challenged and beaten by the other party. The flustered elder ordered angrily. "Destroy them!"

Jiang Chen let out a chuckle. "Brother Mo, as you can see they're the ones who's bullying us. It's not the other way around."

Emperor Peerless wasn't a good-tempered person to begin with, and his disgust towards the Heavensfall Society only deepened when he saw how shameless the gang was. They'd detained Liu Zhen's friend for no reason and refused to release their prisoner even after receiving the ransom. Most importantly, Emperor Peerless was inclined to fulfill Jiang Chen's wishes right now, so he wasn't going to show the Heavensfall Society any mercy.

Jiang Chen's words implied that the bigger the commotion, the better. But on the other hand, Jiang Chen and Long Xiaoxuan wouldn't get to have any fun if he were to go all out from the beginning. That was why he courteously decided to train his gaze on Elder Ke and Elder Ke alone. He didn't bother looking at anyone else.

The enemy had the advantage in numbers over Long Xiaoxuan and Jiang Chen, but Emperor Peerless wasn't worried because both were monstrous geniuses who could challenge cultivators beyond their realm. Elder Ke was certain of his victory at first. But when he suddenly shuddered and realized that a single glance from Emperor Peerless was all it took to freeze him in place, he panicked completely. The gaze wasn't an immobilizing technique, but the power behind it was so great that Elder Ke's consciousness nearly crumbled on the spot. That was how he knew that any movement he made might be fatal for him.

Emperor Peerless smiled calmly. "Be a good boy and stay there. I don't want to lower myself by fighting you, but if you force my hand, I will end you quickly."

Elder Ke felt numb all over. Every word his opponent uttered felt like heavy weights pressing down on his entire body.

"You..." Elder Ke's teeth chattered. "Who on earth... are you?"

Emperor Peerless smiled leisurely. "Don't you think your question is a bit too late?"

Ping ping ping ping! By now the fight had broken out in full force. Jiang Chen wasn't too vested in the fight because it was just a simple warm up to him, but Long Xiaoxuan was the opposite. He might not be in his true form right now, but his dragon bloodline still gave him incredible combat power even though he was only using hand-to-hand combat techniques.

When he activated the power of his bloodline, his body became as tough as metal. It allowed him to crush any initial level emperor realm expert, be it in both offensive power and defensive power. He could also fight any mid level emperor realm on equal footing. He could even gain the upper hand if he was performing well. In short, almost no one beneath mid level emperor realm could beat him. He was currently crushing the senior executives of the Heavensfall Society to his heart's content.

The senior executives were actually quite strong, not to mention that there were a lot of mid level cultivators in the area as well. However, those inferior cultivators couldn't even get close to the battlefield. Whenever they tried, Long Xiaoxuan's terrifyingly strong dragon battle aura forced them away. Some on the weaker side spat blood the second the dragon aura washed over them.

So then, Jiang Chen actually looked like a third wheel in this battle. He didn't have a chance to show off his skills at all. He didn't mind the breathing space, however. It wasn't like he was weak, he just thought that he didn't need to expose his skills unless necessary. Long Xiaoxuan could show off all he wanted since he was more than capable of handling the situation, not to mention that the dragon had been holding back his thirst for battle for a long time.

Cold sweat poured out of every inch of Elder Ke's body as he heard the blood curdling screams. He had very good hearing, so he could tell who was screaming. The screams undoubtedly came from his men, and it wasn't hard to imagine those two youngsters slaughtering them like wolves among lambs. The reversal terrified him. He'd never imagined that the sure-prey in the palm of his hand would be so troublesome, and that they'd been planning to screw the Society over from the start!

Elder Ke was engulfed with regret and terror. He prayed that the Society lords would show up as soon as possible. If this situation were to continue, it wouldn't be long before they were all slaughtered. If their opponents were in a bad mood, they might even escalate their killing to the entire Society.

At first, Long Xiaoxuan's bloodthirst wasn't completely ignited. But as the battle went on, his cruel side began to show more and more. The number of casualties began to climb rapidly. At first, the sage realm cultivators were the only ones who were killed by his dragon aura. Then, some peak sage realm experts and even half-step emperor realm experts began to follow in their footsteps

as well. Even the initial level emperor realm experts were pushed into dire straits by Long Xiaoxuan's perverse attacks. They repeatedly cried out for help.

"Elder Ke, if you keep doing nothing the rest of us are going to die!"

"What are still you waiting for, Elder Ke?"

"Elder Ke, the Society lords will punish you if you do nothing about this!"

The elder's expression flickered again and again. This situation was torture to him to say the least. The two youngsters might be extraordinarily skillful, but he was still confident he could deal with them. The problem was the mysterious expert who stood not far away from him. If the mysterious expert could almost shatter his consciousness with a single glance and a couple of words, then he was someone completely beyond the elder's level. A cultivator like this had to be at peak ninth level emperor realm or even a half-step great emperor at minimum.That was the limit of Elder Ke's imagination. He dared not imagine Emperor Peerless as a great emperor. It wasn't his fault for thinking the way, however. A great emperor wouldn't show themselves in the world, and very few great emperors would cause havoc in a bustling city like this. A cultivator at this level had to consider many things before they could act. As a result, they actually didn't fight as often as weaker cultivators. After all, the destructive power of a great emperor was too great, and the consequences of their appearance too severe to say the least. Any great emperor had to deliberate carefully before they engaged any opponent in battle. That was why Elder Ke thought of Emperor Peerless as a peak emperor realm cultivator.

Chapter 1092: Not Surrendering? Beat Them Again!

Elder Ke was stuck between a rock and a hard place as the number of casualties kept climbing due to Long Xiaoxuan and Jiang Chen rampaging through his men. The initial level emperor realm experts felt that death was a heartbeat away due to Long Xiaoxuan's pressure.

Jiang Chen was a lot stronger than conventional initial level emperor realm, even though he hadn't yet deployed his full strength. His enemies couldn't afford to be careless for even an instant, because he had the absolute advantage in speed thanks to the Kunpeng Meteoric Escape. His tactics were very simple. Cooperation with the dragon was in order because this wasn't the kind of limelight he wanted.

An emperor realm cultivator, whose weapon of choice was a long spear, suddenly roared and thrust his weapon towards Jiang Chen. "Die!"

The fellow was furious because he had been harassed by Jiang Chen since the beginning of the battle. They had to split their attention towards this shit stirrer because he kept ambushing them randomly. If they eliminated him first, they could focus all their attention on that ruthless youngster. Even if they still couldn't beat the youngster, they could at least preserve their lives. Right now however, the situation was out of their control and their lives at stake.

The most irritating thing about this fight was that Jiang Chen and Long Xiaoxuan were incredibly fast. The two were so fast that the Society members felt like mentally breaking down at any second. Where the hell did these abnormal cultivators come from? How are they so powerful at such a young age? In terms of speed, the two youngsters were faster than all of them.

Although the sudden thrust of the long spear was a little sudden, Jiang Chen possessed unrivaled martial dao knowledge and experience. Naturally, he identified the essence of this attack with a single glance. He sped up and moved forwards instead of retreating. A shift sideways was enough to perfectly avoid his opponent's fierce attack. He clamped onto the spear shaft with all his strength.

His enemy sneered at the gesture and attempted to pull back his spear. However, he quickly discovered that he wasn't able to move his weapon at all. Shock colored his expression. He never imagined that the youngster who'd been relying on speed would possess such depths to his cultivation!

Jiang Chen had been using only speed and guerrilla tactics to harass them throughout the battle, so the Society members had subconsciously thought that his cultivation was weaker than the arrogant youngster. It was only when the spear wielder made further futile attempts that he realized just how wrong he'd been. Jiang Chen wasn't weak at all. He didn't just have good speed; it was all a pretense from the start! By the time he finally realized that Jiang Chen was concealing his strength, it was already too late. Long Xiaoxuan's palm penetrated his chest in the next second.

"You're a convincing fake." Long Xiaoxuan stuck out his tongue before throwing down these sarcastic words. Jiang Chen chuckled and feigned ignorance. He then moved on to ambush the next person...

By now, the remaining emperor realm fighters realized that Jiang Chen had been hiding his strength all this time. They felt even greater pressure. Long Xiaoxuan was already a source of infinite pressure, but they were actually fighting against an even more shrewd, treacherous and dangerous opponent! This... this was starting to look like one-sided annihilation!

Every single one of the fighters felt like smashing their heads against a wall. They furiously cursed Elder Ke and eighteen

generations of his ancestors. If Elder Ke hadn't stirred up trouble, then this strange battle wouldn't have happened in the first place. They wouldn't have lost so many of their men. Most importantly, they weren't going to hold on much longer unless the battle took an advantageous turn soon.

After the death of another fighter, a large gap opened up in their defenses. At this rate, everyone was going to die in less than fifteen minutes. There was no point in surrendering either since the arrogant, bloodthirsty youngster didn't look like he would stop until he killed every last one of them. Frosty ice had gripped the hearts of the remaining fighters. Why was Elder Ke still holding back even now?!

What they didn't know that Elder Ke's consciousness was close to collapsing, even though he hadn't moved an inch. Emperor Peerless hadn't attacked him, but the pressure the great emperor exuded was completely overwhelming.

"Friend..." Elder Ke said in a pained tone. "The Heavensfall Society admits defeat this time. Everything is negotiable as long as you don't go overboard. Will you forgive us if I return to you all of the spirit stones?"

The elder didn't want to submit, but he didn't have a choice.

Emperor Peerless' answer was cool and careless. "I'm not the one you should be asking. If you want to blame someone, then blame your own incompetence and failing to recognize who is the prey and who is the predator. I understand. You're used to getting your way, so it's difficult to recognize a bad habit and correct it."

He neither liked nor disliked a person like Elder Ke. There were countless people like him throughout the human domain. It didn't matter if he let the elder go, just as it didn't matter if he killed the the elder.

Elder Ke felt cold sweat beading down his forehead as a chill ran through him. This powerful expert had spoken as if he was a

subordinate of those two youngsters. If this was true, then just how important really were these two youngsters? Although the elder was both shocked and scared, he still gathered the courage to plead, “Both of you, please! I admit defeat, I admit defeat! If you’re willing to stay your hand, I’m willing to repay you twice the amount of your loss.”

Jiang Chen chuckled and cast a glance at Long Xiaoxuan.

The dragon responded with a dissatisfied expression. “You don’t look like someone who can be bought off with just double compensation.”

Jiang Chen himself didn’t plan to end things so easily. He wasn’t going to withdraw today until they got the guy they were here for.

“Ke, are you playing dumb or are you actually dumb?” Jiang Chen’s tone was cold. “Did you forget that we’re here for someone? You think you’re rich because you can pay double, is that it?”

They want the prisoner? Elder Ke laughed ruefully. Just now, he’d only been pretending to have his men grab their prisoner. In reality, they had turned the man over to the Moon God Sect a long time ago.

The man had come asking about something that the Moon God Sect repeatedly ordered to never discuss. That was why the Society had immediately captured the origin realm wandering cultivator. As for the five hundred million saint spirit stones they’d demanded from Liu Zhen, it was just normal course of operations. There was no reason to let an opportunity to scam someone else slip by, after all.

But Elder Ke had never imagined in his wildest dreams that a mere origin realm wandering cultivator would cause so much trouble. Since when did origin realm wandering cultivators had such powerful backing? At first, they didn’t hold much hope that Liu Zhen could gather the spirit stones they demanded. But not

only did he actually manage to produce five hundred million spirit stones, he even brought some terrifying helpers with him. If they knew this would happen, they would've detained Liu Zhen as well.

However, Elder Ke dared not say that their man was no longer with the Heavensfall Society. He begged again and again, "Please listen to me, friend. If you wish to get your man, then you shouldn't slaughter us down to the very last. Even if you eliminate the entire Society, you still won't know where your man is, right?"

It was the truth, so Jiang Chen waved for Long Xiaoxuan to stop. The young dragon liked to bicker with Jiang Chen, but Jiang Chen was still the only human he trusted. Therefore, although he was reluctant, the dragon still obeyed the command even though he was reluctant to.

"You guys are too soft-hearted. He's the kind of person who'll only tell the truth after we beat the shit out of him." Long Xiaoxuan cast a disdainful glance at Elder Ke.

Jiang Chen smiled. "We can always keep fighting if he refuses to tell the truth."

Long Xiaoxuan's eyes lit up. "You're right. Hey, old man Ke, you can tell a lie or two if you like. My hands are still itchy, you know."

Elder Ke wasn't sure how to react. Today must be the unluckiest day in his life or something. Why did he have to run into a bunch of demon incarnates? When had the Heavensfall Society ever suffered such a terrible loss?

However, currently, he could only swallow his reluctance and obey. Emperor Peerless simply stared at Elder Ke with a supercilious on his face.

The remaining senior executives of the Society glared at Elder Ke after barely escaping with their lives. It was obvious that they were furious with his inaction. The most depressing thing was that the elder couldn't even defend himself. What could he say? That he'd

been frightened into inaction by a glance? Or should he tell them he couldn't summon the strength to act? He would only be embarrassing himself more.

Fiercely tamping down the bitterness in his heart, Elder Ke responded carefully, "Please forgive me for not recognizing my superiors, friend."

They just had their face slapped and their men killed, but they had to apologize and make amends with their tormentors instead. This was undoubtedly a great stain on Society history.

"Cut the nonsense and skip to the main point." Jiang Chen waved his hand.

"Ai..." Elder Ke let out a long sigh to conceal the burning anger in his heart. "I don't understand how an insignificant wandering cultivator like Liu Zhen is able to hire the likes of you. If he paid you handsomely to settle this matter, I can guarantee that we can do even better to win your assistance."

Jiang Chen said indifferently. "That's still nonsense."

Elder Ke was losing control of his composure at this point, but still he restrained his anger and nodded. "We detained Liu Zhen's accomplice because he violated a taboo of Tilted Moon Region. The punishment for violation is death, so he was taken away by the Moon God Sect a long while ago. We can't produce the man you seek even if we wanted to."

"Taboo? What taboo? Are you seriously telling me that an origin realm wandering cultivator is worth the attention of a first rank sect like Moon God Sect? Are you sure you're not bullshitting me?" Jiang Chen's expression darkened as he responded in an unfriendly tone.

"No no no, this taboo is an exception. It doesn't matter if you're origin, sage, or even emperor realm. All those who violate the taboo will be punished." Elder Ke hurriedly explained.

“I’m curious, what is this taboo, exactly?” Jiang Chen’s tone was frosty.

“Friend, it’s a taboo, you know. It is not my place to speak of it.” Elder Ke attempted to sidestep the responsibility.

Jiang Chen nodded and looked at Long Xiaoxuan. “I think they want another beating.”

Elder Ke paled drastically. “Wait! Please listen.”

Chapter 1093: News of His Parents?

Jiang Chen glared at Elder Ke coldly. “You have one, final chance.”

Over the course of several millenniums, Elder Ke had seen and experienced many things. He knew better than to challenge Jiang Chen’s threats. He was in dire straits and had to either obey or die.

“Friend, the taboo has something to do with one of the Moon God Sect’s secrets. Years ago, their holy girl was left behind in the secular world as a child after infighting within the sect. This matter was an enormous disgrace to the sect, which was why they banned all discussion of it. There are very few who know about it. After many years had gone by, an origin realm cultivator suddenly appeared out of nowhere and brought up the matter. Because of that…” Elder Ke began to stammer as he observed Jiang Chen’s facial expressions.

Jiang Chen’s heart pounded furiously. An enormous disgrace to the Moon God Sect? A holy girl left behind in the secular world? Why does this sound so familiar? When he’d been at the Prancing Pony, Niu Wuhua had informed him that the Moon God Sect had left behind a female infant in the secular world as well…

Was this mere coincidence, or had he found the person he was seeking on this trip? According to Niu Wuhua’s intelligence, the holy girl left behind in the secular world was likely his mother in his current life. He traveled all the way to Tilted Moon Region just to verify this.

Jiang Chen was overwhelmed by emotion as various thoughts ran through his mind. If the holy girl is my mother, then who is the origin realm cultivator looking for her? He was almost afraid to travel down that train of thought.

The answer was painfully obvious, but he couldn’t help but be apprehensive about it. The origin realm cultivator, Liu Zhen’s

good friend, was very likely his father. It was a reasonable conjecture. However, he didn't want it to be the truth. According to Elder Ke, his father had come to inquire about the holy girl many months ago.

A lot of time had passed since he'd been handed over to the Moon God Sect. The topic was such an enormous taboo that nobody was allowed to discuss or ask about it. Anybody who violated this rule would likely have to pay a great price. If that man really was his father, the Moon God Sect might've killed him already. Jiang Chen could no longer maintain his composure.

He flashed a bone-chilling glare at Elder Ke. "Old Man Ke, why did you hand him over to the Moon God Sect for merely asking a question? Is this how the Heavensfall Society treats

its customers? Do you betray all of them at your own convenience?!"

Jiang Chen suddenly lost control of his temper as he exploded with rage.

Elder Ke was dumbfounded. He couldn't understand Jiang Chen's sudden and complete change in attitude. Why was Liu Zhen's hired goon so emotionally attached to this matter? It almost sounded like the elder had murdered his father or something. Was there a need to go to such extremes? Origin realm cultivators were mere ants in the Upper Eight Regions.

"Friend... despite our strength, we're still one of many factions in the Tilted Moon Region. In this region, the sect's words are law." Elder Ke smiled wryly. "Over and over again, they've ordered us to apprehend anybody who breaches the taboo and to hand violators over to the Moon God Sect."

"And then?" Jiang Chen's voice was colder than ice. He loomed with the pressure of a massive iceberg.

"A-and... t-then..." His aura had rendered Elder Ke speechless.

The elder was stuttering endlessly and couldn't seem to form any discernible words.

"Brother Long and Old Brother Mo, go ahead!" Jiang Chen could no longer control his emotions and immediately gave an order to Emperor Peerless and Long Xiaoxuan.

Long Xiaoxuan was elated when Jiang Chen gave the order and immediately launched himself at the emperor realm cultivators. Emperor Peerless realized that there was more to this situation when he saw Jiang Chen's sudden outburst. He chuckled and landed in front of Elder Ke with a flash of his figure. Color immediately drained from the elder's face. The latter wanted to put up a proper resistance, but the emperor had already placed a hand on his shoulder. It felt as though a mountain was bearing down on his shoulder. He couldn't move no matter how much he struggled.

"Senior, mercy..." Despair flashed across his face. "I-if... if you kill me, the lords of our Society will never let the matter rest!"

Emperor Peerless burst into laughter. "I only wanted to subdue you while they dished out the punishment. But since you've threatened this emperor, I look forward to seeing how your leaders are going to punish me. Hehehehe."

Elder Ke almost wet his pants. This emperor? H-he... he's a great emperor?! He was petrified as all thought escaped his mind. Oh no, oh no! We offended a great emperor! What have we done?!"

It was all he could think about before the emperor casually patted him on the back. The formless palm strike connected with the force of a heavy mallet. Time ground to a standstill. Elder Ke instantly went limp and fell to the floor, dead. The palm strike had shattered both his body and soul. His eyes were wide open. Even upon death, he hadn't realized how incredibly frightening the person he'd just offended was.

Elder Ke was at upper level emperor realm, but to Emperor

Peerless, he was a child that had barely learnt how to walk. He didn’t even have the ability to run away, let alone threaten the emperor. The senior executives who witnessed the scene were aghast with horror. They instantly realize why Elder Ke hadn’t given them a helping hand just now. It wasn’t because he didn’t want to, but because he couldn’t! Even if he had a thousand galls, he wouldn’t dare act recklessly in front of an expert as powerful as his killer.

“Brothers, our enemies are strong! We’ll have to make break for it! Run to the Moon God Sect and seek help from the first division!”

“Yes! Let’s make a break for it and find the Society lords!” The emperor cultivators lost their will to fight after Elder Ke was killed with one strike. After all, the elder was several multitudes stronger than them. Why could they even do against an enemy that could kill a seventh level emperor with a single palm? They didn't even have the right to put up a show of Unfortunately, escaping wasn’t as easy as it sounded, especially when their enemies were speed freaks like Jiang Chen and Long Xiaoxuan. Long Xiaoxuan was exerting a lot of pressure on them to begin with, and now Jiang Chen didn’t show any mercy either. He didn’t reveal his commonly used martial methods, but he had no shortage of other methods.

These unspectacular initial level emperors weren’t putting up much of a challenge. After Elder Ke was dead, Emperor Peerless immediately barricaded the area with his great emperor domain. It was almost impossible for their opponents to escape.

Moreover, Madame Yun hadn’t even joined the fight yet. She may be ridden with illness, but she was still a ninth level emperor at the end of the day. Even the skinniest camel was larger than a horse. She was no longer at her peak, but initial level emperors still wouldn’t be able to escape her.

One by one, the senior executives were hunted down by Long Xiaoxuan and Jiang Chen. These were men that had committed

every evil. Because of their vicious and violent natures, they didn't beg for mercy even in the face of death. Instead, they kept fighting back fervently.

Unfortunately for them, this wasn't a fair battle. No matter how much they struggled, their numbers continued to dwindle. The battle only came to an end when Long Xiaoxuan dealt with the final opponent. The entrance to the Heavensfall Society was now littered with corpses and dyed with blood.

Long Xiaoxuan looked at Jiang Chen with a laugh. "How about we hack our way in next?"

"Let's." Jiang Chen replied without hesitation.

Emperor Peerless made a sweeping gesture to ask Madame Yun to join him. The Heavensfall Society was nothing before the likes of him. If his blood thirst was piqued, he would charge in to even the Moon God Sect's sacred grounds, let alone an underground faction like the Heavensfall Society.

"Ah Yun, my brother seems to be emotionally unstable right now. I'm afraid I won't be able to calm him down. Why don't you give it a try?"

Madame Yun was also extremely grateful to Jiang Chen. He was their benefactor who had saved their lives. She immediately approached him after noticing that he wasn't himself. "Brother Zhen, did the Heavensfall Society offend you?" she asked tenderly.

Her gentle voice calmed him down like a bucket of cold water over his head.

"Sister-in-law, It's a long story. There's no time to explain. I have to go inside and have a look now," he replied woefully.

Emperor Peerless nodded when he saw that Jiang Chen had regained his composure. "Go! Even if you wish to traverse a mountain of daggers and a sea of flames, old brother will come with you, let alone the Heavensfall Society!"

Long Xiaoxuan didn’t say anything, but his unwavering expression spoke a thousand words.

Liu Zhen however, was so disbelieving that he had trouble processing what was going on. He was someone who thought on his feet, but he was still utterly bewildered by the mountain of corpses at the entrance of the Society. Never in a thousand years did he think that things would end in a slaughter. Moreover, it was the Heavensfall Society that was slaughtered, and not them.

He’d only hired them to help him save his friend, but it seemed like they were more concerned about his friend’s safety than he was. He was incredibly grateful, but couldn’t help but feel a little surprised.

Chapter 1094: His Surname is Also Jiang?

“Liu Zhen, come here.” Jiang Chen signalled Liu Zhen over with a solemn tone. “What exactly is your relationship with that companion of yours?”

Liu Zhen stuttered. “He’s a martial dao friend that I met by chance. We got along well, so we eventually became sworn brothers after going through life and death together.”

“Does a person you met by chance warrant such loyalty from you?” Jiang Chen was a little skeptical.

Liu Zhen was visibly agitated. “Sir Shao, I’m not a capable man, nor do I speak the code of brotherhood and loyalty. But my companion and I, while we may not be brothers of the same blood, we’ve been through thick and thin together. I have very few friends, of which only a few I call brother. This is the least I should be able to do for someone I’ve managed to meet whom I get along so well with.”

Even the weak had their convictions and noble sentiments. Of this, Jiang Chen had never doubted. He determined that Liu Zhen wasn’t lying after seeing the conviction on the man’s face.

The strong weren’t necessarily good, and the weak weren’t necessarily despicable. Liu Zhen wasn’t outstanding in any way, nor was he an exceedingly virtuous and upstanding person. However, even a normal person would have things they cared about and wanted to protect, like their kin and friends.

Jiang Chen sucked in a deep breath. “That companion of yours, what is his surname?”

Liu Zhen looked at Jiang Chen warily before he shook his head. “I know it, but I cannot tell.”

“Why not?” Jiang Chen couldn’t resist asking.

“No reason. I refuse to say a thing.” Liu Zhen was unrelenting.

Jiang Chen pondered deeply for a moment before he glancing back at Liu Zhen. “His surname is Jiang, isn’t it?”

Liu Zhen trembled like a leaf while staring at Jiang Chen suspiciously, like he was staring at a monster. His expressions and body language betrayed him.

Jiang Chen was visibly agitated. “Is his surname really Jiang?” Emperor Peerless was suddenly lost in thought. He seemed to have gotten the gist of things after listening to their conversation. However, it was merely a conjecture. He hadn’t gotten confirmation yet.

Jiang Chen frantically picked Liu Zhen up by his collar. “Tell me! Is his surname really Jiang?”

Liu Zhen closed his eyes without putting up any kind of resistance. “I don’t know.”

The emperor immediately tried to diffuse the situation. “Brother, you should calm down. Don’t be so hasty. Liu Zhen, you shouldn’t be too stubborn either. My brother has no evil intentions.”

Jiang Chen immediately let Liu Zhen go and looked at him apologetically. “Apologies, I was too hasty. Liu Zhen, I admire your loyalty. I really do. However, the companion of yours is very important to me. I really hope that you can tell me more about him. I guarantee you that I have no evil intentions, or may I be destroyed by heaven and earth!”

Liu Zhen still seemed a little hesitant as his eyes flitted to and fro with uncertainty. “Truly?”

Jiang Chen smiled wryly. “Do I seem evil or something? I’m not trying to boast, but what could an origin realm cultivator like you possibly have that I might desire? The Radiant Celestial Grass? Why would I need to con you when I can just take them off your hands?”

Liu Zhen sighed. “Sir Shao, I’m not trying to keep you on the

tenterhooks on purpose. My companion has told me that because of his unique background, someone might try to capture him in order to threaten his kin. This is why I'm not willing to disclose his identity. However Sir Shao, you've already guessed his surname correctly, so why are you being so relentless and overbearing?"

"His surname really is Jiang? Is he called Jiang Feng?" Jiang Chen was very solemn.

"How did you know?" Liu Zhen reacted with utter disbelief. Did he reveal a hint by mistake?

Jiang Chen's mouth began to quiver. He seemed very agitated all of a sudden. "Old Brother Mo, let's head inside and search. I'm still rather cynical of the Heavensfall Society. Elder Ke might be playing us for a fool."

The emperor nodded. "Let's go."

Liu Zhen was panicking. "Sir Shao, you still haven't told me how you know!"

Jiang Chen shook his head without saying anything. He was visibly anxious and charged into the building.

Long Xiaoxuan glanced at Liu Zhen and sighed. "Liu Zhen, you've made a smart decision. Your future is set if your companion is somehow rescued."

The latter responded with a blank expression. He didn't understand the meaning behind Long Xiaoxuan's words. "Sir Long, what exactly do you mean?"

"All I can tell you is that the so-called Sir Shao is actually a Jiang too."

Liu Zhen quivered as though he'd realized something. He seemed extremely dumbfounded as he stared at Jiang Chen's back. "He's a Jiang too? C-can it be...?" he muttered to himself. He grew increasingly agitated. He and Jiang Feng had been through thick and thin together and became as close as brothers over the years.

They'd also shared their backgrounds with each other.

Liu Zhen's parents were no longer alive. He once had a dao partner, but it was a story filled with tragedy as well. He sympathized with Jiang Feng greatly after hearing his side of the story. They grew closer after realizing their similarities and eventually became brothers. Jiang Feng had always been a straightforward man. As their friendship deepened, he decided to reveal his background. After all, it's been a long time since he began wandering the jianghu by himself. He probably felt the need to vent a little to a brother who he could trust with his life. This was why they practically hid nothing from each other.

When Jiang Feng left the Skylaurel Kingdom, he'd brought Jiang Ying, the leader of the Jiang Iron Guards, with him. However, they met with misfortune a mere six months after they'd left the kingdom. Jiang Ying sacrificed himself to save Jiang Feng, but from then onwards, Jiang Feng was by himself. Jiang Feng was devastated by Jiang Ying's death, but eventually got back to his feet. The goal of finding his missing wife was what pushed him onwards.

This goal had stimulated his potential and caused him to attain multiple breakthroughs. After all, he'd taken the Five Dragons Opening Heavens Pill. His body and talents had all been significantly upgraded. His progress in martial dao accelerated. A few months after Jiang Ying's death, he met Liu Zhen and they eventually swore brotherhood.

His cultivation level was much inferior to Liu Zhen's when they first met, but he'd surpassed Liu Zhen within a decade. Liu Zhen was awed by Jiang Feng's martial dao talent. As time went on, Jiang Feng eventually became the older brother, while Liu Zhen became the follower. However, Liu Zhen didn't regret this one bit. He took instructions well and would occasionally share his input.

Over the past decade, they'd gone through thick and thin together. Tenaciously, they survived the cruel and ruthless world

of cultivation. During a fateful encounter, they stumbled across an ancient ruin and discovered the Radiant Celestial Grass. Unfortunately, it was all there was in the ruins.

These poor origin realm bumpkins were suddenly so rich that their wealth could rival the wealth of nations. It was a pity that they couldn't sell their treasures in the market. After all, they were mere origin realm cultivators. Openly selling the Radiant Celestial Grass in the market would be seeking their own death. Liu Zhen was incredibly cautious and vigilant for that reason.

Jiang Feng had wandered the Upper Eight Regions for a better part of a decade, but he simply couldn't find any news about his wife. The only reason he visited Frostmoon City was because the city was located at the most remote part of Upper Eight Regions. He didn't even know if he'd find his answers in this city. He'd only visited the Heavensfall Society to try his luck and not because he'd received some kind of outside information.

Every time he visited a new place, he would visit the local underground factions because they were the ones who were best at acquiring information. He heard that the Heavensfall Society was the strongest underground faction in the city, which was why he visited them. Unfortunately, this was a place of no return. He'd walked right into a trap.

Jiang Feng had been to many places in the Upper Eight Regions, but this was the first time he'd ever encountered such a thing. Money had always been king when it came to acquiring information. Even if the investigation didn't go smoothly, as long as he paid his dues, nobody would ever give him any trouble. But that wasn't the case in Frostmoon City.

When Liu Zhen learned that Jiang Feng had been captured by the Heavensfall Society and 500 million saint spirit stones was required as ransom, he immediately headed to Pillfire City. This was how he met Jiang Chen and Emperor Peerless. It truly seemed like the fates itself had a hand in this encounter.

The doors inside the Heavensfall Society were all sealed shut. The fight outside had frightened the inhabitants greatly. Even Elder Ke had been killed almost instantly. Some of the senior executives inside were quite strong, but none of them were quite as powerful as Elder Ke. None of the Society lords were at the headquarters either.

The people inside the headquarters were incredibly afraid of the murderous invaders. Unfortunately, the tightly shut door and the formations they set up were of little hindrance to Emperor Peerless and Jiang Chen. At the end of the day, they were still an underground faction. Compared to the great sects, their heritage paled in comparison.

Great sects were often located in restricted mountains protected by powerful formations. These formations weren't something the common person could easily get through. Even an unparalleled cultivator would find it difficult. The Heavensfall Society were protected by formations as well, but they paled greatly in comparison. All crumbled under Emperor Peerless' might. Those who blocked their way were promptly crushed and flattened.

Chapter 1095: The Heavensworn Four

Jiang Chen had transformed into an avatar of death. He had only one thought written on his face. Die if you obstruct me! Thus, he faced little resistance from the members of the Heavensfall Society. Default reactions were to cower in a corner and hope not to be noticed, arms over their heads. One wrong move, and we'll be dead!

However, the young lord of Veluriyam Capital wasn't murderous or sociopathic enough to kill submissive people. He held back his anger and left them be. Jiang Chen searched the Society's headquarters in and out, but discovered nothing useful. Immensely furious, he summoned several high-ranking executives. Alas, their stories were identical to Elder Ke's.

The person they had captured long ago had been surrendered to the Moon God Sect almost immediately. It hadn't been a move to curry social favor, but a routine act. The answer was the same no matter whom he asked. The fire that burned within Jiang Chen's chest grew fierier by the moment.

"Brother Long, bind them all! When their lords come back... I'll make them pay!" Though he didn't want to kill all of them on the spot for now, he was far from satisfied. His father wasn't at the Heavensfall Society's headquarters, but his search had revealed evidence of numerous other heinous crimes.

All members present had the blood of countless innocents on their hands. They were a profiteering organization that stopped at nothing to sate their greed. Jiang Chen resisted slaughtering them, but he was perfectly happy to rob them of all their ill-gotten gains. He completely destroyed the Society's complex and infrastructure in the process as well.

The wealth stored at the Society's headquarters amounted to over half of their total fortunes. After Jiang Chen's larceny, it

would take significant effort from their lords to rebuild. The criminal organization might never recover. However, this was only a single payment of interest for him. He needed far more to quench the raging fires of his heart!

The tragedy that had befallen the Heavensfall Society was momentous news. Their absent lords quickly received word of the destruction and hastily made their returns from all over. But none of them were fools. They came from every direction, yet no one brashly came in alone. Instead, they gathered together as a group and made plans to enter together.

They were well aware that their new adversary had terrifying strength. If the lords didn't stick together, they would only serve as easy prey. The act of being in a group also emboldened them. After all, the four lords were the strongest and most core members of the Heavensfall Society. For them, it was much more reassuring to be side by side than otherwise.

"Big bro, you got any info on that guy? The Heavensfall Society hasn't made anyone like that angry, have we?" The four lords of the Society were sworn brothers. They styled themselves 'the Heavensworn Four'. The eldest was surnamed Ye, given name Taiyan. He had an explosive temper, but was the mightiest among the quartet. He was a ninth level emperor realm cultivator. The other three brothers were all around a similar, slightly inferior level of strength at eighth level emperor realm. These four upper rank emperor realm cultivators formed the fraternal core of the Heavensfall Society and controlled every aspect of its operations.

There was a flash of killing intent in Cong Taiyan's eyes. "I don't care where they're from. What do I care about their prestige or power when they're messing around with our Society?!"

"We should still be careful, big brother. They must have something giving them confidence. I'm sure they're well aware of our reputation, but came anyway." The second-oldest of the four spoke up. He was the strategist of the group, called Beigong Ming.

“Something giving them confidence?” Cong Taiyan snickered. “We command the wind and rains in Frostmoon City. Let’s see whose backing is stronger!”

“Don’t worry, I’ve informed those at the first division as well as the sect’s Bleakmoon Hall of Punishment. Hmph, anyone and everyone who comes to Frostmoon City to stir up trouble will be met the same fate. This is our territory! Either stay put or get put down!”

Cong Taiyan was filled with grand emotion. His body screamed, “If not me, then who?!”

Beigong Ming was wily, but lacked in both raw strength and force of personality compared to the oldest member of the Heavensworn Four. That was why he was perfectly content to admit Cong Taiyan’s superiority.

He knew the other man’s nature well. Once Cong Taiyan made a decision, no amount of effort could turn his opinion around. Truthfully, Cong Taiyan’s dominant and decisive style was one of the bigger reasons that the Heavensfall Society had been able to rapidly expand these past few years. The Society exhibited many of the similar qualities. Beigong Ming knew that further counseling was useless now.

The four of them rushed towards their headquarters. It didn’t take long at all for them to arrive on the street outside the building. The first thing they noticed was that a huge crowd had gathered outside. There were multiple layers of onlookers, stacked into numerous rings.

“Tsk tsk, who has the Heavensfall Society offended this time?”

“They deserve it. The things they’ve done are finally coming back to bite them!”

“Shh, quiet down. Do you want to die? We’re in front of their gates right now.”

“Heh, what’s there to be scared of? No one has come out from inside even now. They’re probably all dead by now, huh?” The words were filled with a gloating schadenfreude. Clearly, their owner was greatly displeased with the Heavensfall Society, likely from an unpleasant past.

“All dead? But the society lords aren’t even home. We’ll see about who kills who when they come back!”

“Well then, I look forward to it. I hope they come back quickly. It would be great if I could see them being punished as well...” Someone else put a hand over his mouth before he could finish.

A keen-eyed companion had noticed the Heavensworn Four in the street with his peripheral vision. The sudden sight of the villains was quite startling, enough to evoke such a drastic reaction. If any more had been said and heard by the four guys down the street, the first man was dead for sure.

Thankfully, the Heavensworn Four were in no mood to listen for idle gossip about them. The crowd moved aside for them without prompting when they saw the lords’ arrival. A path was made for them directly to the headquarters. The Heavensworn Four looked further into the distance to find a mass of dead executives splayed on the floor. It was absolutely a gruesome sight.

Elder Ke’s corpse was the most prominent amongst them. The elder had great prestige even among the other elders of the Society. The four lords generally refrained from putting on airs in front of the old man. And now, his body had been sucked dry. He lay splayed like a desiccated corpse, all vital signs gone.

The appearance of the Heavensworn Four elicited accelerated heart rates and blood flow in all the observers. They backed off a dozen meters or so with great self awareness. They were uninterested in getting wrapped up in the trouble. Being mistaken for the perpetrator was a horrible notion. The Heavensworn Four who strode broadly down the path towards the Heavensfall

Society's gate.

"They're stepping on our heads, big brother! This place belongs to us, the Heavensfall Society! Who is this bastard who's been killing people on the premises and where'd he come from?!" The youngest of the four jumped in a rage. His expression looked like he'd just been slapped across the face several times.

Beigong Ming's brows were knitted as well when he saw the carnage. Suddenly, he had an idea and proclaimed, "Onlookers, disperse! Those who remain here in three breaths' time will be seen as open enemies of the Heavensfall Society!"

The bystanders were all intimidated by this and scattered like a swarm of bees.

"Anyone who has reliable information about this incident is free to stay. Any accurate and useful information will be rewarded with the princely sum of one million saint spirit stones!"

Men would find courage given a high enough reward. Several of the people in the process of leaving decided to stay.

"Society Lord Beigong, you're not joking, are you?" There was zero possibility that Jiang Chen and Emperor Peerless's ruckus in front of the Heavensfall Society had remained unseen. In fact, they had been observed by a fair few neighboring residents.

"I have info on them, lord Beigong. I saw everything that happened." Instantly, people began to volunteer.

"Me too, Society Lord Beigong! The ones who came were a few youths plus a dao couple. One of them seemed to be acquainted with your Society–from a past dealing, perhaps. There was something about ransoming someone, but the deal fell through in the end... and then there was a fight."

"He didn't go into enough detail, Lord Beigong. It was like this..." The people who'd stayed scrambled over each other to snitch. They were worried that someone else would receive the reward.

To the side, Cong Taiyan had just finished examining the wounds of the dead. The severity of said wounds struck fear and irritation into his heart. The onlookers were speaking frantically over each other, but little useful information had come to light. He was more and more frustrated by their squabbling, and finally shouted. “Get out of here, all of you!”

Cong Taiyan was significantly more intimidating than Beigong Ming. The remaining onlookers dispersed immediately at his words.

“Why’d you do that, big bro? We were just getting somewhere…”

“What’s the point of asking in the first place?” The eldest of the Heavensworn Four retorted angrily. “Killing people on the premises of our Heavensfall Society? They were happy enough to murder everyone, so we’re already mortal enemies. Why ask? It’s the same either way!”

He waved a hand, still upset. “We’re going in.”

Cong Taiyan was certainly exerting his dominance. Leading the pack, he charged inside like a ball of flames. [1] However, he came to a screeching halt when he reached the door. It was as if he’d smashed himself into a wall. A potent countering force sent his body flying. If not for his strong cultivation, the force’s impact alone would be enough to give him bruises all over. Even without that, it put him in a frightened spin.

“Big brother!” The other three of the four were just as alarmed and rushed towards him. The quartet cared a fair bit about their brotherly loyalty to each other. After steadying his step from the unexpected attack, Cong Taiyan’s expression changed from anger into consternation. He became significantly more serious than before.

1. Taiyan is also a reference to extremely hot flame.

Chapter 1096: Prelude to Inner Conflict?

Just as the Heavensworn Four were gathering themselves and preparing to force their way back into their headquarters, a few figures strolled out from the main entrance. Jiang Chen and Long Xiaoxuan were in the lead, and Emperor Peerless and Madame Yun leisurely bringing up the rear. As for Liu Zhen, he didn't bother coming out at all, instead staying inside to guard the now-hostage members of the Heavensfall Sect.

The hostages had all had restrictions placed on them, making them fish in a barrel, unable to resist in any way, shape, or form. Even a true qi cultivator could easily kill them in their current form, much less Liu Zhen.

Upon seeing Jiang Chen and his companions emerge, the Heavensworn Four were taken aback and reached new heights in their rage. Their surprise stemmed from the fact that these four outsiders could enter and exit headquarters so easily, while their rage came from the situation at hand. They were the lords of the Society, but were being made to look like challengers stirring up trouble. These outsiders were here to supersede and supplant them!

Cong Taiyan took a deep breath to forcefully suppress his rage and rasped out, "I have to say, you've got some nerve killing people in our territory."

Jiang Chen smiled noncommittally while Long Xiaoxuan shrugged. "So we killed them. What do you want? Why don't you mention how they all deserved their deaths?"

Cong Taiyan almost spat out a mouthful of blood in rage. Such flippant attitude from a murderer quite angered him, that youngster had no idea that great disaster was about to descend on his head!

"Good, good, very good! It seems that there's no need for me to

ask about your backgrounds." Cong Taiyan signaled to his brothers with a meaningful look. "Kill them without exception regardless of their origin and background!"

With a large bellow, he prepared to attack. He was sure that although the two youngsters looked smug, their confidence was founded on basis of the couple in the background. One had to admit, Cong Taiyan's judgement of the situation and dynamics between people was rather superb.

The atmosphere grew so heavy that it could almost be cut with a knife. Battle loomed at any second. In this critical moment, a sudden shout was heard from a distance. "Hold, hold! Stay your hands!"

Cong Taiyan and his brothers were elated to hear the voice. They recognized it! It was Third Master Jing from the first division of the Moon God Sect! Even though his actual strength was slightly lacking, Third Master Jing was far younger than them and possessed adequate social standing and sufficient backers, ensuring that his opinions were respected within the sect. Most importantly, the first division of the Moon God Sect represented one of the official powers in Frostmoon City. With their participation, the attempt to apprehend these insolents would have a higher chance of success.

Third Master Jing approached with large, rushed strides. Noting the tension in the air, he hastily placated, "Let us all calm down. Brother Cong, please quell your anger."

Cong Taiyan felt slight irritation when hearing Third Master Jing's tone of voice. If one was to consider the two in terms of seniority, the third master was actually Cong Taiyan's junior. Despite this, Third Master Jing had ignored social conventions and directly addressed him as "Brother Cong". This was slightly difficult for Cong Taiyan to swallow. However, due to consideration of the third master's position, Cong Taiyan had no choice but to pinch his nose and endure this slight. But the Third

Master Jing's words hadn't bolstered the Heavensfall Society at all. In fact, in wanting Cong Taiyan to calm down, he was actually chipping away at the Society's morale! With this, the hope and expectation that'd formed in Cong Taiyan's heart instantly transformed to cool detachment.

"Third Master Jing, you are still a Moon God Sect division head regardless of anything else. We have an obligation to uphold the rules of our city. These scum came to my headquarters and commited mass murder! Take a good look! Which of these aren't key members of my Society? They killed my Society's members on a whim! Third Master Jing, do you think that I can take this lying down and take no action at all?" Cong Taiyan's anger grew with every sentence uttered.

Although both the Heavensfall Society and the first division were influential powers of Frostmoon City, they weren't tightly knit when it came down to it. While they occasionally cooperated under the table, the first division was an official power, but the Heavensfall Society an underground faction. Between the two, they still had some differing opinions and clashes of interest.

Most importantly, they belonged to different factions, ensuring that they could never coexist and interact intimately. But, even when belonging to different factions, the first division was entirely honor bound to help the Heavensfall Society when faced with such a matter. After all, everyone was toiling for the Moon God Sect in the end.

Third Master Jing was one who'd seen grand occasions and wasn't easily bothered by a few words from Cong Taiyan. Honestly, any single lord of the Heavensworn Four was stronger than him in terms of martial dao. Even so, this didn't automatically dictate that the Heavensworn Four was in a higher position of power. In fact, his position as division head was even higher than them. After all, he was so much younger and had been tapped as a candidate with exceptional potential for future

development.

As such, the third master smiled with only his lips when he heard Cong Taiyan's unfriendly tone. "Indeed, Lord Cong, Frostmoon City has its rules. If you insist on having the first division intervene, you must at least allow both sides to state their piece, no?"

If it'd been anyone else, the third master wouldn't have wasted a single breath and just captured the interlopers first, only considering the consequences later. However, he'd recognized from afar that it was this familiar group of people, the ones that had delivered a hearty setback to him and forced him to swallow bitter results.

Honestly, the third master was no saint, and neither was he one to remain at a disadvantage. However, the previous incident had thoroughly illustrated for him that there is always someone better. This was the only point in his life where crazed thoughts of revenge didn't develop after losing face. This was because the more he thought about it, the more frightened he became that he'd almost met his doom. How had he dared swindle a great emperor?! Every time he recalled these foolish actions, the third master felt a chill run down the back of his neck as his heart palpitated with lingering fear.

The Moon God Sect may not necessarily be afraid of a great emperor, but Third Master Jing didn't represent the entire sect. Even if he was killed by the great emperor and the sect had been able to avenge him, so what then? The dead could not come back to life, so there was no meaning in being avenged. This lesson had been etched deeply into Third Master Jing's mind, making him comprehend principles of life that he hadn't been able to normally.

When he received word from the Society today that they had troublemakers, the first division of the Moon God Sect naturally couldn't sit idly by. He had to put in an appearance even if it was just for show. He also had to help if he had to, because the sect was

also the Society's patron. But, when he saw Jiang Chen and Emperor Peerless from afar, Third Master Jing experienced a complete reversal in attitude. He resolutely decided right then and there that he would not intervene or interfere in this matter

The Heavensworn Four didn't give him all due respect normally anyways. They were used to having the final say and threw their weight about everywhere. The two parties were cordial and amiable on the surface but privately, neither side was cowed by the other.

The Heavensworn Four had built the Society and committed countless crimes and profited handsomely from illegal avenues. Yet, they'd never offered some of those profits to the first division to stop tongues from wagging. Many of the Society's dealings were underground and illegal, ensuring that Frostmoon City and the first division had to constantly clean up after them It was a thankless job and yet the Society took it for granted, never acknowledging or appreciating all the help that the first division rendered under the table.

In Third Master Jing's opinion, the Heavensworn Four didn't understand social conventions and didn't respect him, despite his position as division head. With this predisposition, the third master even sometimes wished to see the Heavensworn Four suffer a setback. Now that they had clashed with Jiang Chen's group, a small part of his heart was exulting in schadenfreude. Perhaps it was his usual unhappiness, or that he was really ticked off with the Heavensworn Four's attitude, regardless, the third master just didn't see eye to eye with them.

On the Heavensworn Four's side, their mood ran the gamut of negative emotions after hearing Third Master Jing's words. So not only was he not siding with them, he seemed to be helping the opposition instead?

Cong Taiyan furrowed his brow and regarded Third Master Jing coldly. "Third Master Jing, everyone present has eyes and can see

for themselves. If Third Master would pretend to not see our plight, then just stand aside with your men and watch the show. We brothers can settle this matter ourselves." Pure displeasure and disdain rolled off Cong Taiyan.

"Brother Cong, you're speaking purely out of anger. Since the first division represents Frostmoon City, we must at least deal with matter fairly. Even if we are just putting on a show, it's still necessary, wouldn't you say?"

"Jing, don't think you're all that just because we're showing you some courtesy!" The youngest of the Heavensworn Four was a rash and hot-tempered person. His ire grew when he saw that Third Master Jing didn't seem to want to help them at all. He gave voice to a long string of curses. "Do you really think you're a master just because people call you Third Master Jing? What, you think you're amazing for being the vice head of the first division? Remember, without the Moon God Sect, you're even less than a fart!"

Third Master Jing smiled indifferently. "I know very well how much I'm worth. Unlike some others who have an exaggerated opinion of themselves, and don't even know what can be done, what can't be done, who they can offend, and who they can't."

Cong Taiyan's anger flared at this, while Bei Gongming seemed to consider something and snuck a glance with a trace of confusion in it at Jiang Chen and the others. He'd also felt that something was a bit off. These 'insolent murderers' were far too calm and collected. Not only did they not attempt to sneak away during this conversation, but they stood there with mocking expressions, seemingly enjoying the grand show of inner conflict between Frostmoon City factions. It was likely these people had an uncommon background based off this exemplary mindset alone.

"Jing, f*ck off and get out of the way if you want to watch the show. Stop being such an eyesore idling around here. But remember, we'll eventually get you for all that has happened today!" The youngest of the Heavensworn Four had obviously been

completely provoked by Third Master Jing's attitude.

It was at this point in time however, that Jiang Chen suddenly clapped hard with laughter.

"You guys have said so much, is it our turn yet?" Jiang Chen's tone was relaxed, but there a glint of killing intent flashed sharply through his eyes when his gaze swept across the four brothers. "The Heavensworn Four? So, you guys were the ones who founded the despicable and evil underground organization that is the Heavensfall Society?" His voice suddenly dropped as he looked at the four brothers.

Chapter 1097: The Great Emperors Fury

Cong Taiyan was absolutely livid. All his life, he'd lived on his own terms and tyrannized whomever he wished. When had he ever been on the receiving end of such temper? How could he contain his rage when a kid still wet behind the ears mocked and challenged him, after slaughtering his Society members? It was something his Society did to others, but today, it was being done to them!

Human nature was despicable, and even more so for someone as base as Cong Taiyan. He regularly tyrannized and dominated others. When he killed others, he did so ruthlessly and didn't care if his victim had any regrets or if they were innocent. That was also the case now. His mind was only filled with one intention. He wanted to murder all of the newcomers before him and shred them into pieces! He wasn't going to let Third Master Jing off easy either. He couldn't care less if the latter had the Moon God Sect behind him and was the vice head of the first division. He met Jiang Chen's gaze and flashed a vicious glare. He was going to tear the youngster into pieces in a moment!

"Brat! Cut the bullshit and die!" Cong Taiyan finally blew up. His pent-up rage came bursting out of him like a volcano. With a palm strike, he hurled a fierce and unrelenting sea of red flames at Jiang Chen. The surrounding area was instantly enveloped by fire.

Emperor Peerless immediately rushed to Jiang Chen's side. "Allow me," he said blandly. He made a grasping motion and sent an invisible wave of energy towards the sea of flames. Like an all encompassing net, it swallowed and contained all of the flames. The flames were continuously compacted. One could see them rapidly shrink with the naked eye.

A sea of flame quickly shrunk into a ball of flames, which then turned into a tongue of flame, then embers, and finally a tiny red spark that promptly disappeared in the emperor's palms. He

dusted off his hands and tossed the red spark onto the floor before extinguishing it with his foot.

“Is that all you have? How trite.” Emperor Peerless remarked disdainfully. He shifted his gaze to Cong Taiyan. “Your fire attribute potential isn’t bad, but you don’t even have a fire constitution of high order. You’re destined for mediocrity. You won’t even become a half step great emperor, let alone a full-fledged one.”

The emperor sounded as though he was pronouncing a judgement. It was very impersonal and utterly convincing.

Cong Taiyan had met a fair amount of powerful experts, but the emperor was the strongest yet. The latter had been able to stifle his powerful flames with just one hand, which was nothing short of humiliating. This was proof that Cong Taiyan’s cultivation was simply too unspectacular. The emperor didn’t even need to take him seriously. A simple gesture had been enough to crush the attack that Cong Taiyan was most proud of. Just what cultivation level did his enemy have? The enemy’s comment about his cultivation plunged him into an icy abyss and made all of his hairs stand on end.

He’d actually once heard a similar comment from one of the great emperors in the Moon God Sect. He hadn’t believed those words back then out of pride and arrogance. He wholeheartedly believed that his talents and fortune were too outstanding for it to be true and wanted nothing more than to prove the great emperor wrong. But after reaching peak level emperor, he’d found it impossible to find the inspiration required to tread half a step into great emperor. There was no way he could transcend into being a great emperor if he couldn’t even manage half a step.

Cong Taiyan’s martial dao was already at its predestined limit. This was a fact set in stone whether he wanted to accept it or not. Without anymore possible breakthroughs in martial dao, he lost interest in the power struggles within the Moon God Sect and

slowly shifted his attention into forming his own faction in the city. Under his leadership, the Heavensfall Sect grew stronger with each passing day. His ruthless cruelty and wild ambitions played a large part in the faction's success

"Hmph!" Cong Taiyan was a little taken aback by the emperor's words, but quickly regained his composure. "Friend, I admit that you're quite capable, but that's not enough for you to make a clean getaway after acting like this in my territory!"

He reached for the ring on his right hand as he spoke, stroking it to summon a ball of flame in the next instant. It didn't seem as big as the sea of flames, but the speed and power contained within it was three times more than the previous attack.

"Be careful," the emperor quietly warned with a small frown.

The flaming ball suddenly exploded into multiple red projectiles as the emperor issued his note of caution. Like a meteor shower, these flaming arrows immediately shot towards Jiang Chen and Long Xiaoxuan. The emperor hadn't expected this to happen and so his warning had come a little too late.

Fortunately, Jiang Chen hadn't let his guard down. He'd been instinctively on his guard the very moment the fireball was conjured. He immediately activated the Kunpeng Meteoric Escape and blocked most of the arrows of flame with his Featherflight Mirror.

Long Xiaoxuan was every bit as capable as Jiang Chen. Even though he was located a little bit further back, he was able to activate his escape art instantly after the explosion. Emperor Peerless did what he could to salvage the situation as well.

And so, the arrows were either halted by the emperor, evaded by Jiang Chen and Long Xiaoxuan, or slowed to a non-threatening speed by the Featherflight Mirror. Long Xiaoxuan made excellent evasive moves, but he was still struck by one of the missiles. These arrows were extremely poisonous and produced a frightening

amount of heat inside the body upon contact. The body would then instantaneously combust, causing great suffering and pain. The dragon wailed miserably from the bone scorching pain.

Jiang Chen immediately rushed to Long Xiaoxuan's side and tossed a few pills into his mouth. "Swallow!"

They were some of the best heat soothing pills and were very effective against flame poisons. Despite all that, Long Xiaoxuan's bones and tendons came very close to being destroyed by the terrifying flame. Fortunately, his bloodline was extremely pure and powerful. The flames were quickly overcome by the combination of Jiang Chen's pills and Long Xiaoxuan's bloodline.

The emperor ballooned into rage when he realized that his inadequacy had nearly cost Long Xiaoxuan his life. He flashed Cong Taiyan a cold and murderous glare. "Resorting to tricks and games because of your own inadequacy? It seems this emperor was too lenient with you."

An enraged great emperor wasn't to be reckoned with. Jiang Chen had never seen Emperor Peerless lose his temper before, and certainly not his full strength when furious.

Cong Taiyan immediately lost all color on his face. What? This emperor? He's a great emperor? The other Heavensworn Four members were aghast as well.

Emperor Peerless' power came hurtling towards them while they were still in mental disarray. A towering cage appeared above their heads and descended upon them. Then Heavensworn Four were sealed within the cage before they could even react.

"Relying on a fire attribute ring simply because you don't possess a flame constitution of high order? It's no wonder that you're destined for mediocrity. Without any achievements in martial dao, it's befitting that you'd involve yourself in these underground activities in Frostmoon City!" the emperor dished out coolly. He was clearly rubbing salt in Cong Taiyan's wounds.

Cong Taiyan's face was ashen, but his eyes brimmed with venomous hate. "Brothers, don't be afraid! Let's charge as one! There's nothing we can't do as long as we remain united! Reinforcements from the Bleakmoon Hall will soon be here! All who goes against us will be going against the Moon God Sect too!"

"Only death awaits those who go against the Moon God Sect!" The Heavensworn Four were deep in trouble, yet they continue to talk tough.

"Jing! As the vice head of the first division, how can you watch with your arms folded? How will you explain yourself to the Moon God Sect?!"

"Jing Third, come to your senses!" The Heavensworn Four refused to admit defeat, even though they clearly knew that it was impossible to escape a great emperor's domain with their strength alone. There was no chance it could happen unless they were all peak ninth level emperors. That was clearly not the case, so they had no choice but to borrow strength from Third Master Jing and the first division experts. There may still be hope if they worked together.

Although the Heavensworn Four were hoping they could rope in Third Master Jing, but the latter immediately burst into derisive laughter.

"If I'm not mistaken, wasn't it you who wanted me to step aside in the first place? Are you slapping yourselves in the face now that I've granted your wish?"

Help them? What a joke! Third Master Jing was very much content with keeping his head on his neck. His followers were elites from the first division, but there was absolutely no chance they could rival a great emperor. Moreover, the other two youths were not to be trifled with either. If he joined hands with the Heavensfall Society in battle, they might be completely annihilated before the reinforcements from Bleakmoon Hall could even arrive.

Third Master Jing wasn’t so noble that he’d sacrifice his own life for the Heavensfall Society.

Chapter 1098: The Terrified Heavensworn Four

Though Third Master Jing didn't want to put his own life on the line for the Heavensworn Four, he couldn't just sit idly by and watch them die in front of him either. For one, it would affect his future prospects when an explanation was demanded. The potential criticism had no material effect, but he nevertheless could not discount its intangible potency. It would've been better for him not to be here at all, but he couldn't exactly change that now. He was compelled to take the chance that was available to save his indirect associates.

Smiling ruefully at Jiang Chen, he interjected apologetically. "Young master Shao… my good friend, my dearest brother. I know I'm as much of a bastard as they come, so I'm in no position to say anything, but I'd like to put in a word here anyway. The Heavensworn Four aren't stunning examples of society, but they have powerful backers. It doesn't matter much that you killed the other members of the Heavensfall Society, but if you kill these guys, it'll be a declaration of war on the Moon God Sect. I'm not familiar with the beef you have with them, but I'd still like to, er, recommend that you not kill them if at all possible. If you're resolute about taking on the Moon God Sect, that's fine. But, as I gather, you're not here in Frostmoon City to make enemies, so…"

Third Master Jing was speaking quite conservatively. He didn't want to threaten Jiang Chen with the Moon God Sect, because he well understood how proud the youth was. If he did try to use the sect's clout, it was likely to have the opposite effect. The mysterious young man had both the capital and the confidence to mount a formidable resistance.

Emperor Peerless glanced at Jiang Chen, waiting for the lad to come to a decision. If things were up to him, the Heavensworn

Four would already be dead. Indeed, killing the four of them was the most satisfying solution. But, Jiang Chen couldn't choose to do that for now. He needed to find out who they'd given his father to and where his father had gone from there. Every clue had to be sifted through.

Alive or dead, he wanted to see his father in the flesh. If Jiang Feng really had been murdered by them, Jiang Chen was absolutely ready to spill a river of blood. The Heavensfall Society wouldn't nearly be enough, then.

"Old Brother Mo, take them down first!" Jiang Chen's own strength was insufficient to defeat the Heavensworn Four outright, much less capture them alive. Emperor Peerless, on the other hand, found the task quite easy. For an accomplished great emperor with countless years of experience, not much in the world was difficult.

The Heavensworn mounted a resistance, but pressure exerted from the emperor made it seem half-hearted. One by one, they were apprehended by the older man. Jiang Chen and Long Xiaoxuan took one man in each hand and returned inside.

Third Master Jing forced a smile. He contemplated following the young men, but Emperor Peerless's draconian gaze stopped him. "Halt."

The pressure from a great emperor alone was enough to cow the third master from proceeding. The fact that Emperor Peerless had just used his abilities a moment prior amplified the threat.

"Senior... please, please tell young master Shao not to be too impulsive. Killing the Heavensworn Four will lead to endless trouble!" Third Master Jing had no ties to the quartet, but he was definitely worried about his prospects.

"He can do whatever he likes. It's not my place to lecture him." The emperor left with a flourish of his sleeves.

Third Master Jing and his entourage dithered in front of the door. They were unsure whether to go or stay, but eventually decided on the latter. For the sake of appearances alone, leaving was not an option.

Though restrictions were laid on their bodies, the Heavensworn Four were still completely conscious. Tossed aside to the earth by Jiang Chen and Long Xiaoxuan like dead dogs, they were quite frustrated with the state of affairs.

“The Heavensworn Four? Pah! How can you pieces of shit use the word ‘sworn’ to call yourselves?” Jiang Chen was exasperated and irate. Long Xiaoxuan helpfully accentuated the criticism by kicking each person twice. All four of the men grimaced at the pain. Because they couldn’t move, they were essentially defenseless sandbags. Naturally, being kicked in this position was extremely uncomfortable. By now, Liu Zhen had walked over as well. The Heavensworn Four were surprised to see him. They recognized the origin realm cultivator easily.

“What, how’s it…” Beigong Ming couldn’t help but gasp. “How could it be you? Who are you? How did you…”

Liu Zhen was immensely satisfied by the sight of the splayed Four. When he’d come to the Heavensfall Society prior, even the lowest-ranking member looked at him the way one looked at air. No one spared him a straight look. He was less than a dog. That the four lords of the Society were so flustered in front of him now was sweet justice to him. They were about as presentable as a bunch of dead dogs.

“And why can’t it be me?” He intentionally laughed in an exaggerated fashion. “Did you ever imagine that one day, you’d have to answer for all of your evil deeds?”

“Pfft.” The youngest of the four glared back with hate. “Who do you think you are? So what if I’m in a bad spot now? You’re still so far below me it doesn’t matter. It’s far too early for someone as

pathetic as you to laugh at us!”

The Liu Zhen of the past wouldn’t have dared strut in front of the Heavensworn Four under any circumstances, not even with the severe misfortune they were currently facing. Jiang Chen and company’s boldness and fortitude had been the catalyst that shook his world. His mindset had been utterly changed after seeing them in action. The Heavensworn Four’s youngest’s stubbornness upset him. Liu Zhen retaliated by hacking up a ball of spit and shooting it to his enemy’s cheek. The slippery mess was absolutely disgusting.

“You bastard. I’ll kill you for sure when I’m free again. Just you wait!”

Jiang Chen frowned at the exchange. “Get to the point.”

Liu Zhen didn’t dare misbehave in front of the young man. He nodded hastily and turned to the Four once more. “One more chance,” he declared. “Answer every question I ask. If I’m not happy with what I hear, I’ll kill a member of your Society for every bad answer. After they’re all dead, I’ll move on to the four of you.”

The Heavensworn Four spat tongues of fire from their eyes. They’d experienced insolence before, but never from a mere origin realm cultivator! Origin realm cultivators were less than ants to them. The fact that such an insignificant existence was now lording it over them was unbearable. Most importantly, they couldn’t antagonize the other man too much, lest they actually be killed. As the smartest one amongst the Heavensworn Four, Beigong Ming was the quickest to bring his anger back under control. “Ask whatever you like. I will tell the truth about everything that I know.”

Things had come this far already. At this current stage, keeping their lives intact was much more important than maintaining face. People from Bleakmoon Hall were going to arrive soon anyway. They just needed to wait for their saviors to arrive in due time. Still, disquiet lingered in the back of Beigong Ming’s mind. Given

these people's ferocity, could the Bleakmoon Hall's dispatched team really take care of them?

The Hall had plenty of experts, but whether they'd send them out in sufficient numbers was another matter. Besides, whoever they sent would have no chance without a top-notch great emperor as back up, anyways. A great emperor was not someone who could be defeated simply by a swarm of emperor realm cultivators.

"Where did you take my friend to?" Glowering at the captives, Liu Zhen spoke with a certain vehemence.

"Your friend isn't here anymore. We sent him off to the Moon God Sect." Beigong Ming answered hurriedly, before immediately adding, "That's absolutely true, I swear it. There's nothing false about it whatsoever."

Liu Zhen chuckled. An odd smile crept onto his face. Suddenly, he took a few steps back towards one of the Society's executives. With a single stroke of his saber, he cut the man's throat. Once their body was restricted, cultivators were no different from normal people. Their usual defenses were rendered inactive by their shackles. Thus, the attack was enough to end the man's life outright.

Beigong Ming's face blanched with fear. "My answer was absolutely true!" he called out. "Why did you kill him?"

Liu Zhen cackled mockingly. "Absolutely true? I'm surprised you're brave enough to say it. Did you really send him off? You carried him off in chains! Don't make it sound like he was some kind of guest. Do you like playing word games? It may have looked like my saber killed your executive, but the real murderer is you."

Jiang Chen marveled at the origin realm cultivator's actions and speech. He didn't at all expect Liu Zhen to have another side to him. He didn't see much point to stopping the man, however. He was content enough to watch.

Beigong Ming's throat moved a little, culminating in a wordless sigh. He didn't know what excuse to offer.

"Second question. Is my friend alive or dead?" It was worth remarking that Liu Zhen was a reasonably clever man. He knew what Jiang Chen wanted to know, and asked in a way that made that clear. It was a nice gesture of goodwill.

Beigong Ming didn't dare answer too casually this time. He tossed an appealing glance at his three sworn brothers. Cong Taiyan harrumphed. "We have no control over someone who's with the Moon God Sect. How are we supposed to know whether he's alive or dead?"

Liu Zhen gave a slight nod, then smiled in the same disturbing way. A flash of body and blade later, and yet another Heavensfall Society executive lay dead on the ground.

"You killed this one." He looked coolly at Cong Taiyan.

Feeling the tension in Liu Zhen's gaze, the eldest of the Heavensworn Four became a little evasive. He was afraid of meeting the other man's eyes head on. Having their own lives controlled in the hands of others was the worst feeling in the world. An origin realm cultivator was, ordinarily, the lowest of the low to them. How could someone like that have the right to do what he was doing?! The sheer notion of it was depressing enough to make them cough up blood.

"If something's happened to him, then all of you Heavensfall Society scum will die for it. Not a single one will survive. You better pray that he's still alive, hmm? That he's still alive and well. Otherwise, you can say goodbye to your Society and your wretched existences!" Liu Zhen's tone was as chilly as a frozen lake.

The Heavensworn Four were greatly moved at what they'd just heard. Finally, the truth was out! These guys had come for that origin realm cultivator? But, how did an origin realm cultivator have such a strong background? The Heavensfall Society had a

habit of killing cultivators of every stripe, with plenty of emperor realms among the victims. There'd been no negative repercussions whatsoever from doing so. It was perplexing that an origin realm cultivator was the hornet's nest.

Chapter 1099: Wanting To Cry, But Lacking Tears To Do So

Ordinarily, the Heavensworn Four didn't care a whit about origin realm cultivators of any kind. If that particular one hadn't been trying to gather information on the Moon God Sect's secrets, they wouldn't have known about him personally at all. Though they'd taken a more intimate interest in the matter afterwards, they hadn't thought it was anything more than routine. And yet, it was that mundane event which had brought calamity upon the Heavensfall Society.

Cong Taiyan opened his mouth several more times, but was stopped by a look from Beigong Ming each time. Clearly, the latter was worried that the former's fiery temper would anger their interrogators once more and lead to further bloodshed. Right now, they had to suck it up and wait for reinforcements.

"Next question." Liu Zhen's look swept frostily across the Heavensworn Four's faces. "You better think this one through. If anything is unclear, or if I think you're lying…"

"Oh, no, ask away!" Beigong Ming proclaimed loudly. "I swear on my inner demons that I will tell you the truth and nothing but the truth. If I lie at all, let my inner demons consume me!"

An oath upon one's inner demons was essentially the same as a heavenly oath. Nodding, Liu Zhen was about to ask his next prepared question when he saw the visual communication between Beigong Ming and Cong Taiyan. Sudden, mischievous inspiration struck. He grinned sinisterly.

"I'm asking only you this question," he suddenly turned to Beigong Ming. "You're the second of the Heavensworn Four. Have you ever thought about getting rid of your big brother and replacing him?"

It was a very malicious question. Jiang Chen and Emperor Peerless both nodded, appreciative of Liu Zhen's stroke of genius. The question appeared simple, but it had the powerful effect of throwing the four's brotherly bonds into disarray. If successful, they would no longer be of one mind. Internal strife would make the act of questioning significantly easier.

Beigong Ming's face froze when he heard the question. In general, he was quite accepting of Cong Taiyan's leadership. But to say that he hadn't ever had delusions of becoming the boss was a flat-out lie. After all, there was a big difference between the boss and the second-in-command. The wild thought of becoming the boss of the Heavensworn Society in Cong Taiyan's absence occasionally flash through his mind... However, impractical daydreams like that were supposed to be hidden in one's heart. Talking about them in the open was another matter entirely.

Cong Taiyan widened his eyes when he heard the question. He gawked at Beigong Ming. Liu Zhen's question had hit a soft spot, piquing his curiosity. The leader of the Heavensworn Four was both a firecracker and not one for deep schemes. He couldn't shake his reliance on wily individuals like Beigong Ming, but actually looked down on them a little. In fact, he tended to be wary of and wanted to exclude them. He was greater than Beigong Ming in terms of strength and audacity, but was measurably worse at intellect. Thus, whether Beigong Ming would try to take over his position was also an occasional consideration for him.

Beigong Ming cursed silently. This question put him in a very awkward position. Denying it would be lying, since he had had such thoughts before. The fact that he had never acted on them was immaterial. But... how could he admit to something like that?

Admitting so would instantly offend Cong Taiyan to a grievous degree. The Heavensworn Four would never coexist peacefully together after. His words prior wouldn't let him play dumb, either. An oath to one's inner demons wasn't something to be casually

broken. Lying about it would bring about backlash very quickly, with the consequences being likely lethal.

In that instant, Beigong Ming's heart was a morass like a pot of congee. He was as dejected as could be, and wanted very badly not to answer, but... doing that would upset Cong Taiyan as well. Silence in this case was tacit admission, after all. More importantly, not answering was another chance for the other man to kill someone.

A bizarre smirk drew itself across Liu Zhen's face. "You can choose not to answer," he laughed unconcernedly, his eyes still trained on Beigong Ming. "I can kill someone else instead. But remember, his blood is on you!"

"Second brother, just tell him. What're you worried about?" The fourth of the Heavensworn Four was a frank and single-minded sort. He had never thought about taking over any of his brothers' positions. In his perspective, the Heavensworn Four were as good as real brothers. Since big brother was stronger than everyone else, didn't it make sense to listen to him straight up? How could anyone think otherwise? Thus, he assumed that Beigong Ming would share his line of thought.

Cong Taiyan tossed a distant look at Beigong Ming. "That's right, number two. Just tell him."

The same words were spoken with very different tones and emotions.

After lengthy internal debate, Beigong Ming finally decided not to risk his oath after all. He'd prefer to anger Cong Taiyan rather than bet with his life. He nodded with some difficulty. "I admit that I've had thoughts like that. However, I've never remotely considered doing anything of the sort. Big brother is far stronger and more charismatic than I am, and that's why he's the most fitting boss of the Society."

As expected, Cong Taiyan's expression frosted over at those

words. The fourth brother was agape as well. “Beigong Ming,” he yelped, “you two-faced animal! How could you entertain ideas like that in the first place?”

The third brother shook his head as well. However, his look towards Beigong Ming lacked some genuine indignation. It was filled instead with something more complicated. Simultaneously, his gaze darted around the room, eluding Liu Zhen at all costs.

Roaring in cheerful laughter, Liu Zhen clapped in resounding applause. “Alright, alright, I won’t kill anyone this time. I can see that you told me the truth.”

Beigong Ming couldn’t share the happiness. He didn’t dare lock eyes with Cong Taiyan any more. The other man’s hatred was almost like a condensed ball of flame, able to burn him to ashes if he looked in its general direction.

Liu Zhen smiled smoothly, his eyes coming to rest on the third of the Four. “It’s your turn to answer the same question. I know you haven’t made an oath on your inner demons, but I can just kill you if you lie.”

The third’s body shook, and his heart let out a cry of despair. He hadn’t dodged calamity after all. Cong Taiyan’s gaze was sharply fixed to the third brother now as well. He seemed like a violent beast about to erupt at any time. The intensity of the gesture made the third brother thoroughly uncomfortable. The cold edge of steel was already at his neck.

“Answer,” Liu Zhen declared coolly. “I only want to hear the truth. If you’d like to try lying about it, feel free.”

The third wasn’t willing to risk his life over it. He suddenly raised his volume. “I think the same as second brother.”

Beigong Ming let out a sigh of relief at that. He had a compatriot now.

Cong Taiyan nodded again and again, bristling with fury. “Good,

good, good. What good brothers you are! It's hard to know a man's heart, and I'm glad that I know yours now."

"Big brother, I can explain. I've had thoughts like that, but they're just thoughts. I've never ever acted on them! I know you're the best leader among all of us." The third brother was grief-stricken, begging Cong Taiyan to listen to his excuses.

Cong Taiyan snorted in response. His dictatorial nature meant that he couldn't accept any kind of betrayal. So what if it was a passing thought? So what if it was entirely psychological? For him, even these were entirely unforgivable.

Jiang Chen gave Liu Zhen a big thumbs-up, then motioned for him to continue questioning. The origin realm cultivator coughed loudly. "Back to business. Next question. You gave my friend over to the Moon God Sect, but who did you give him to? Who was responsible for the proceedings?"

Everyone looked at Beigong Ming. This was enough to already answer part of the question.

Beigong Ming knew to be honest now. "I gave him over to the guys at the Bleakmoon Hall of Punishment. Specifically, one of their captains called Gu Xintang."

"What importance does the Bleakmoon Hall have within the sect? How about Gu Xintang within the Hall?"

"The Bleakmoon Hall is a sizable hall within the Moon God Sect, responsible for handling disciplinary action, punishment, and torture. It has great prestige within the sect. The Moon God Sect has four factions: The Purples, the Indigos, the Blues, and the Reds. Members of these four comprise the entirety of the sect. The Moon God Sect has eight large halls, each hall being responsible for a different aspect of affairs. Naturally, everyone who is part of a hall is also part of a faction.

"As for Gu Xintang, he's one of the captains of Bleakmoon Hall.

The Hall has four lords and twenty captains. Gu ranks in the top three in his hall, but obviously can't hold a candle to his lords." There was nothing off-limits for Beigong Ming to talk about now.

"Which faction does Gu Xintang belong to?" Liu Zhen pitched another question.

"The Blue Moon." Beigong Ming answered truthfully.

"What about the holy maiden lost many years before? What faction does she belong to?" This question had clearly been asked on Jiang Chen's behalf.

Beigong Ming paused a moment. The answer to such a question was taboo, restricted by the Moon God Sect from discussion. But this wasn't the time to care about said restrictions.

"Can we... not answer this one?" The second of the Four offered cautiously.

Liu Zhen cackled. "Sure, and I can kill people too."

As he said so, he moved behind yet another executive. A swipe from his saber was enough to lop the man's head clean off. He tossed the gruesome object right in front of Beigong Ming. Beigong Ming was ashen with unease. He'd never been so desperate before in his entire life. They were being toyed to death! He wanted to cry, but didn't have the tears to.

Emperor Peerless inclined his head approvingly to the side. "Liu Zhen's cultivation isn't great, but he's pretty capable. If he can reach emperor or great emperor realm, he will most certainly be able to realize his doubtless remarkable ambitions," he sent to Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen had experienced much in his meteoric rise and met no shortage of people. Just because someone's cultivation level was low didn't mean that they lacked in wit and guile. The four great sects' ancestors back at Skylaurel Kingdom and the sixteen kingdom alliance had all been extremely cunning men, wily as

foxes. Given his grassroots origins, it was not unexpected for Liu Zhen to be reasonably crafty.

Chapter 1100: Other Brothers and Sisters?

Beigong Ming was hesitating still, but Liu Zhen was more decisive than he. In the blink of an eye, he jumped over to yet another executive. Said executive crumbled instantly and began screaming. “If he doesn’t want to, I’ll talk, I’ll talk! This is stuff everyone knows!”

Liu Zhen nodded, revealing a satisfied smile. “Very good, you’re very cooperative. Are you sure you want to? I don’t care who speaks up. As long as the info is good, you don’t need to die. But, if you don’t want to die, you have to show a little sincerity.”

“Yes, yes, I will,” the executive confirmed hurriedly. “I see now that it’s not worth it to put my life on the line for these bastards. The Heavensfall Society is a motley bunch at the heart of things. We’re together only for profit, doing nothing but the most despicable and vile deeds. Those four over there don’t care about the rest of us at all.”

Liu Zhen lit up at that. “Perfect. Speak up, then. You’ll be safe if you show us real sincerity.”

Overjoyed, the executive nodded incessantly. Beigong Ming’s heart panicked at the sound of ‘sincerity’. He had a terrible feeling, a prospect of what was about to happen next.

“I’ll talk! I’m willing to talk too,” he interjected instantly.

“Now? Too late,” Liu Zhen announced callously.

“No, it’s not, really it isn’t,” Beigong Ming sweated profusely. “I definitely know a lot more than he does. I’ll spill all the beans if you give me the chance to!”

The executive was furious at that. “Beigong Ming, aren’t you ashamed of yourself?”

Jiang Chen was impressed by Liu Zhen’s adept manipulation of the men. Surprisingly, only a few tricks were needed to make the

Heavensfall Society turn back on itself.

Liu Zhen's face darkened. "What're you two screaming about? You. Talk." He pointed at the executive.

The executive was simply ecstatic. "No problem! The holy maiden belonged to the Blue Moon faction. The whole thing was an embarrassment for the Moon God Sect. Many years ago, the four factions competed against each other in the selection for the holy maiden. They each had a reasonably good candidate, but the one from the Blue Moon faction, still a baby, had a naturally gifted constitution. Therefore, she had the most support amongst them. For some reason, the Blues were mysteriously attacked later and the holy maiden lost. It's still one of the Moon God Sect's great mysteries. It wasn't until thirty years ago that the Blues were able to recover and to everyone's surprise, they found the holy maiden in a small, worldly kingdom. Alas, she was... no longer a virgin. She had married a duke and had a son with him. This revelation greatly angered the Blues: the holy maiden they'd spent so much effort to find was..."

Liu Zhen looked on in blank dismay, then turned to Jiang Chen. Clearly, he wanted the young man to decide whether to hear more about the topic. Jiang Chen shook a hand slightly. This much was enough.

Liu Zhen quickly reacted to the signal. "Stop, that's all we need to know. What're you rambling on about? We didn't ask you about the rest."

The Blue Moon faction? Passion swelled up in Jiang Chen's heart. He'd finally managed to find out his mother's origins! The details matched up to his father's letter exactly. In other words, the Moon God Sect's holy maiden of yesteryear was very likely his mother.

Hold on, the Blues? Wasn't Gu Xintang of the Blues as well? If so... A ray of hope dawned in Jiang Chen's heart. If Gu Xintang is the same faction as mother... And if she was still around... would

she just let father be put to death under her nose?

No, unless Gu Xintang had intentionally kept the matter from her. Otherwise, there was almost no woman in the world who would kill her own husband. Furthermore, all evidence in his father's letter indicated that his parents' relationship had been a loving one. In particular, his mother had cared a lot about her husband. There was no good explanation for his father's insistence on finding her again otherwise. Without a strong bond, what could motivate Jiang Feng to chase after his wife for all these years?

Regardless, all of this was still a thread of hope. His heart tightened as he walked towards Liu Zhen. "I'll take it from here."

The origin realm cultivator nodded before carefully getting out of the way. His smile was positively simpering. Beyond a doubt, Liu Zhen was aware that this young master Shao led the company.

Jiang Chen's eyes brushed past the face of each Heavensfall Society member emotionlessly.

"You know Liu Zhen's rules. So," Jiang Chen began. "The Blues' lost holy maiden. What's her name?"

"I know, I know. Xu Meng!" The executive they were interrogating scrambled to answer.

"How are things with her now?" Jiang Chen asked.

"When she was first brought back, the other three factions had announced that she should be put to death because her noble blood had been tainted. Oddly, the Blues resisted the other three at all costs. Even more oddly, upon holy maiden Xu Meng's return, she was discovered to be pregnant."

"What? A pregnancy? Are you sure?!" Jiang Chen was floored by the turn of events. "How…"

"Who else could it be? That duke I spoke of, of course. When the holy maiden had first come back, she apparently cried every day about wanting to go back to the small kingdom she'd been taken

from. She wanted to be with her husband again, you see. This was worse after her pregnancy was discovered."

Jiang Chen was astonished. His head rang with the impact of what he'd just heard. He hadn't expected this particular twist. His mother's pregnancy when she was taken away had surely been unknown even to his father.

"What happened next?" Jiang Chen rasped, struggling to hold back his emotions.

"As her pregnancy advanced, she gradually reduced the extent of her struggles. She eventually gave birth to twins: a boy and a girl.

"Twins? A boy and a girl?" Yet more shock rippled through him. An endless tide welled up within his chest, wave after wave breaking upon his heart.

Twins, huh? They would be his younger siblings! They were related by blood of the purest kind. How happy would his father be to find out about that?

"How're they doing nowadays?" Taking a deep breath, Jiang Chen asked once more.

"It's a long story. The Moon God Sect at large despised Xu Meng because they considered her blood tainted by the common world. That feeling extended to her children at first. Some thought they were harbingers of misfortune, and there were calls to evict the three. In fact, some went so far as to declare that they should all be put to death.

"But a bloodline test quelled all of the clamoring. In terms of purity, the twin girl's surpassed even her mother's. The Blues had hit the jackpot. They protected the little girl with everything at their disposal. The other three factions had no grounds any more to oppose it, either. For the Moon God Sect, bloodline was everything. That girl's bloodline far surpassed all the other geniuses of her generation by a mile, leaving them no room for

criticism. Thus, Xu Meng's former position of holy maiden was bequeathed onto her daughter."

Holy maiden? Jiang Chen let out a long breath. If his long-lost sister was now the holy maiden of the sect, then his mother was probably not too badly off there. However, something else suddenly came to mind.

"It's understandable for the daughter to walk in her mother's footsteps. But what of the other twin? The boy? How is his bloodline?"

"He... ah, there's no need to mention it. Despite coming from the same mother, the boy had an entirely different fate. His bloodline was quite ordinary, one that could be found in any worldly kingdom. Even a sixth rank sect wouldn't want a talentless child like him, much less a first rank one like the Moon God Sect. The Moon God Sect only cares about a holy maiden, anyways. There's no tradition of a holy son or anything. Traditionally, the sect's leadership has always been held by women."

Jiang Chen was stunned. The twins had the same mother, but one had superb talent while the other was extremely average. This was almost too incredible to consider. Thinking back, he remembered that his own body had initially been the same way. If not for his continued alterations via his past life's memories, he would've been in a similar situation. Sixth rank sects had standards, too. His little brother that he'd never met was just like him. Mediocre constitution, mediocre talent.

"Is he with the Moon God Sect as well?" Jiang Chen let out a silent sigh. Without surpassing talent, life at a first rank sect like the Moon God Sect was generally awful. Having a sister who was the holy maiden of the Blues did little to mitigate that fact. The comparison to one's sibling alone was enough to crush a weak heart. One child was the holy maiden, sought and supported by everyone. The other was a worthless piece of trash with nothing to his name.

“No way. The Moon God Sect doesn’t normally keep any slackers around, much less a child with tainted blood. The result of the bloodline test decided his destiny, and that’s not something that anyone can change. Still, they gave him a chance. I believe they said that if he was able to enter the origin realm at twelve, then he could stay. Otherwise, he would be exiled the moment he turned twelve.”

Origin realm at twelve? Jiang Chen cracked a wry smile. That meant his unknown brother was definitely with the Moon God Sect no longer. Without a unique opportunity, someone with such middling talent wouldn’t be able to enter origin realm their entire life. The child was indistinguishable from the rest of the sixteen kingdom alliance, perhaps even just the Eastern Kingdom. He couldn’t compare to the typical disciple of the four great sects in the sixteen kingdom alliance, much less survive in a first rank sect.

What were the sixteen kingdom alliance’s four great sects in actuality? Merely seventh rank in the grand scheme of things. Someone that sixth rank sects cared nothing about was at most a common disciple in a seventh rank sect. Back then, the four great sects had only one origin realm cultivator each. This was true of the Purple Sun Sect, the Precious Tree Sect, and the two others. Only Ye Chonglou’s explosive breakthrough had heralded the second origin realm ancestor of the Precious Tree Sect.

Table of Contents

- Sovereign of the Three Realms
  - Synopsis
  - Copyright
  - Chapter 1001: Momentum That Leaves One Speechless
  - Chapter 1002: The Mysterious Chain Seal
  - Chapter 1003: The Final Hurdle
  - Chapter 1004: Inheriting the Six Palaces
  - Chapter 1005: Honored Master P'eng
  - Chapter 1006: An Angry Old Man
  - Chapter 1007: Kunpengs Meteoric Escape
  - Chapter 1008: Reactions From All Sides
  - Chapter 1009: Accepting The Challenge
  - Chapter 1010: News That Stunned Jiang Chen
  - Chapter 1011: Jiang Chen Exits the Pagoda
  - Chapter 1012: The First Drop of Kunpeng Bloodline, Gifted
  - Chapter 1013: Refining The Pinecrane Pill
  - Chapter 1014: A Great Success
  - Chapter 1015: Wake Up Call
  - Chapter 1016: Jiang Chens Plans
  - Chapter 1017: Sending Lin Yanyu on An Errand
  - Chapter 1018: A Gift From A Great Emperor
  - Chapter 1019: A Game of Seven Emperors
  - Chapter 1020: A Sudden Enlightenment
  - Chapter 1021: Stunning Veluriyam Capital
  - Chapter 1022: Stirring to Action
  - Chapter 1023: A Bit of Surprising News
  - Chapter 1024: The Prancing Pony
  - Chapter 1025: Forcing Me to Beat You Up
  - Chapter 1026: The Arrival of Steward Nius Hoped Savior
  - Chapter 1027: Searching For News of Parents
  - Chapter 1028: A Way to Repay a Favor Once and For All
  - Chapter 1029: Turning Stone to Gold, Trash to Treasure
  - Chapter 1030: Dusting Off and Leaving
  - Chapter 1031: The Shocked Crown Prince
  - Chapter 1032: Pillfire City
  - Chapter 1033: Star Mill

Chapter 1034: Mu Gaoqis Unique Style
Chapter 1035: The Temptation of a Deal
Chapter 1036: Star Harvesters Boss
Chapter 1037: Two Plans
Chapter 1038: Miss Keke Pays a Visit
Chapter 1039: The Star Harvesters Decision
Chapter 1040: Signing Up
Chapter 1041: Emperor Peerless
Chapter 1042: Enhancing the Level of the Bounty Arena
Chapter 1043: The Three Greats
Chapter 1044: Jiang Chens Ambition
Chapter 1045: A Jiang Chen Looked Down By All
Chapter 1046: The Only Cross-Zone Challenger
Chapter 1047: Stunned
Chapter 1048: I Come From Myriad Abyss Island
Chapter 1049: Attention from Emperor Peerless
Chapter 1050: The Bounty Arena Begins
Chapter 1051: Speed in Earning Money
Chapter 1052: Unexpected Incident
Chapter 1053: One Issue After Another
Chapter 1054: The Emperor Rages, and the World Trembles
Chapter 1055: Jiang Chen Makes Out Like a Bandit
Chapter 1056: The Great Emperors Worries
Chapter 1057: The Best of Friends Despite Differences in Age
Chapter 1058: Sovereign Rank Bounty
Chapter 1059: A Stunning Pillfire City
Chapter 1060: Jiang Chens Decision
Chapter 1061: Haggling over the Ancient Reformation Pill
Chapter 1062: Celestial Cicada Court
Chapter 1063: A Great Haul
Chapter 1064: Invitation To The Auction
Chapter 1065: Radiant Celestial Grass
Chapter 1066: Jiang Chen Takes the First Crack
Chapter 1067: Fifth Item On Auction, Master Mu
Chapter 1068: Emperor Peerless Strikes the Gavel
Chapter 1069: Secret Realm
Chapter 1070: Saving Elder Yun Nie
Chapter 1071: Long Lost Brothers Finally Meet Again
Chapter 1072: Old Brother Mo, My Apologies

Chapter 1073: The Geng Brothers
Chapter 1074: The Suspected Cloud Devouring Tiger
Chapter 1075: The Celestial Grass Again
Chapter 1076: A Competition of Speed
Chapter 1077: Frostmoon City
Chapter 1078: An Unexpected Development, A Toxic Dose Of Love
Chapter 1079: I Must Save Emperor Peerless
Chapter 1080: The Overweening Third Master Jing
Chapter 1081: Dragon and Tiger Brothers
Chapter 1082: Third Master Jings Repeat Provocation
Chapter 1083: Long Xiaoxuan Attacks
Chapter 1084: Things Have Gone Out Of Control
Chapter 1085: From Arrogance to Humility
Chapter 1086: Brother Long Grows Increasingly Conceited
Chapter 1087: To the Satisfaction of All
Chapter 1088: Inexhaustible Radiant Celestial Grass
Chapter 1089: Arriving At Heavensfall Society
Chapter 1090: 500 Million Ransom
Chapter 1091: How to Taunt With Greater Skill
Chapter 1092: Not Surrendering? Beat Them Again!
Chapter 1093: News of His Parents?
Chapter 1094: His Surname is Also Jiang?
Chapter 1095: The Heavensworn Four
Chapter 1096: Prelude to Inner Conflict?
Chapter 1097: The Great Emperors Fury
Chapter 1098: The Terrified Heavensworn Four
Chapter 1099: Wanting To Cry, But Lacking Tears To Do So
Chapter 1100: Other Brothers and Sisters?