

SOVEREIGN OF THE THREE REALMS

Chapter 15: Three Foundational Exams

Chapter 15: Three Foundational Exams

Seeing as everything had been laid out on the table, there was no point in Du Ruhai further concealing his blatant threat. With his status in the kingdom, there was no need to be polite to a duke who was about to lose his power and influence.

Jiang Feng had originally wanted to plead for leniency, hoping for a fluke, but his face darkened as well upon hearing the last couple of sentences.

“Organizer Du, insult me if you must, but leave my son alone! So what if the young are a bit good-for-nothing? Are you that certain that my son won’t turn himself around? They say to bully the old but not the young!”

“What a pretty turn of phrase! Do you mean to tell me what goes around comes around? Not to insult a young man for being poor? Hahahahahaha...”
Du Ruhai threw his head back in laughter. “Wake up! If it he wasn’t such a lucky bastard, Jiang Feng, you’d be holding a funeral for your son and not trying to curry favor with me!”

He flung his sleeves in a grand flourish and walked proudly towards the outside.

“Hold!” Jiang Chen had been standing beside his father and suddenly spoke. “Du Ruhai is it? If I remember correct, my father sent you 600,000 silver last time on my behalf. You no longer concern yourself with my matters, yet do you intend to pretend ignorance of the money?”

Du Ruhai's body abruptly halted as a vicious glare shot out from his eyes. He stared fixedly at Jiang Chen, his glare so savage that it sought to swallow Jiang Chen whole.

But what he hadn't anticipated was that when his vicious gaze swept over Jiang Chen's calm and placid eyes, his entire body shuddered involuntarily, as if he had suddenly fallen into an ice cold hell.

"What the hell? That kid's gaze..."

Du Ruhai calmed himself down and told himself earnestly that that had been an illusion.

"600,000 silver? Go look for it in the official treasury! Bribing an official is another severe crime. Do you think I am such a corrupt individual? I have long since turned over the silver you offered to the official treasury!"

There was no way that Jiang Chen believed such tripe. How could someone possibly have spat a choice piece of meat that had made its way to their mouth? This Du Ruhai in no way resembled an honest person with integrity.

It would seem that Long Juxue and the other heirs had already started covertly moving against him because he hadn't handed over the Dragonbone Sun Grass!

If it was the old Jiang Chen, offending several noble sons and Long Juxue, as well as the organizer of the Hidden Dragon Trials carrying a grudge against him would definitely spell his doom.

However, what did Jiang Chen fear now? All of these people added together were no more than bothersome flies in his eyes.

Given just a bit of time, he would be able to smack them to death many times over.

A few hints of an icy smile tugging at his lips, he looked at the swaggering Du Ruhai and raised his voice. "Du Ruhai, to seek gain and avoid losses is part of human nature. It's no big thing to be afraid of those influential dukes. But to bully the kind and fear the evil, and insult my Jiang family -- you will know what a grave mistake that was before too long."

If Du Ruhai had politely and respectfully declined Jiang Feng without a mutual loss of face, then Jiang Chen would have fully understood.

But Du Ruhai had long since accepted the money and suddenly come by today to renege on his promises. Fine, renege then, but return the money.

If you wanted to still keep the money, at least display a better attitude?

To take such a hard line and be so cocky? Was he already viewing the Jiang family as a pile of bones in a grave, a flower to wilt on the morrow?

That kind of attitude successfully enraged Jiang Chen.

"Ai, Chen'er. This Du Ruhai is not someone to irritate. He's ranked number two out of all the organizers of the Hidden Dragon Trials." Jiang Feng sighed lightly. "And, your father has heard that the one who ranks number one doesn't ask many questions. He has delegated a lot of power and basically allows Du Ruhai to do as he wishes. He listens to periodic report from Du Ruhai; therefore, it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that he's the main person in charge."

As a duke, Jiang Feng was brave and heroic. But in terms of strategy and planning or power struggles, he didn't amount to much.

Jiang Chen didn't know whether to laugh or cry. He hadn't had enough time to understand the situation since he'd reincarnated. Could it be that the mess left behind by the previous Jiang Chen was bad enough that money couldn't resolve things?

“Ai, Chen’er. Don’t be depressed. I will continue thinking and see if there’s another path we can walk. Not to mention...”

There was a saying that a loving mother led to a failure of a son. But with Jiang Feng as a father, Jiang Chen gained a new understanding that a loving father could also lead to a failure of a son.

However, Jiang Chen was still touched. The duke of Jiang Han truly did love his son. The situation was so dire that a burning flame had made its way to their butts, but he still did not speak any harsh words.

“Right, father. What are my grades like for the Hidden Dragon Trials? Did Du Ruhai mention them at all?”

Jiang Feng’s expression was a bit awkward as he stammered, “Well... this...”

Jiang Chen was seriously speechless. His father was still trying to preserve his feelings even now?

“Father, I have a thick face, I can take it. How bad is it? You can tell me directly.”

Jiang Feng was also worried that his son wouldn’t be able to accept it in the face of just surviving such a disaster. He “heh”ed in laughter upon seeing that his son was mentally prepared. “You darn kid are a special one alright, asking your old man for your own grades? Are you sure you won’t be shocked by my response?”

“Tell me, surely I can’t be last?”

“Can there be any doubt that you’re last?” Jiang Feng smiled wryly. “The problem in front of us is that you haven’t passed a single one of the three foundational exams. The final tests of the second half of the year will be held at the end of this month. If you don’t pass the three foundational exams, you

won't even have the qualification to sit for the final tests in the Hidden Dragon Trials.”

The first two and a half years of the Hidden Dragon Trials were a period of learning and growth. A qualification examination was held at the end of this time.

If a candidate couldn't even pass the qualification exam, then he would not even have the right to participate in the final Trials.

Jiang Chen finally understood why his old man would humble himself. Why a proud and regal duke would be lectured like a kid by Du Ruhai.

Upon seeing Jiang Chen lower his head without a word, Jiang Feng smiled even more wryly. “Darn kid, don't tell you don't even remember what the three foundational exams are?”

Jiang Chen rubbed his nose and said, “Alright, I'll go back and think hard about them.”

If it was any one of the other dukes, a stinging slap across the face would have been a given after hearing such passive words from his son.

Jiang Feng was a unique one amongst fathers, he only sighed lightly. “Son, looks like your destiny is one of going back to the fields with your old man. Ai whatever. A life of fortune and riches is not written in the stars for the Jiang family. We might as well take off our armor and return to the fields with your generation. Too much nonsense occurs in politics, going back to a simpler life may not be a bad thing.”

“Wait a second. Old father, when did I say that I wanted to go back a rural life and work the fields?”

Jiang Feng was dumbfounded. “But the three foundational exams...”

“So they’re three exams! When I have time, I can pass eight, or even ten of them.”

“Darn kid, will you die if you don’t boast once a day? If nothing else, take the first foundation for example, it’s also the most basic requirement. Your true qi must be within the intermediate realm of true qi, at least four meridians true qi. Do you have that?”

“Four meridians true qi? The foundational exams ask for such a simple thing?” It was Jiang Chen’s turn to be gobsmacked and he minutely raised his arm. “Father, look at the stone stool over there.”

His true qi circulated throughout his body as he spoke, flowing through his four meridians like four thundering rivers. They coalesced into one and concentrated at the tip of his finger.

He shook his finger, looking out of the corner of his eye..

A hole was poked straight through the stone stool where his finger had been pointing.

“A line formed of true qi, coalescing without dispersing. This is truly the intermediate realm of true qi? You kid, when did you locate the fourth acupoint, clear the fourth meridian, and successfully train to four meridians true qi?”

Jiang Feng was overjoyed beyond belief with a face full of incredulity. Four meridians true qi was a quite basic achievement for any son of a duke. Clearing the fourth meridian was something not even worth being happy about.

But to Jiang Feng, it was a moment on par with witnessing a miracle with his own eyes.

“Heh heh. I did this yesterday. I just meditated for a few hours. Right, Father, what are the other two foundational exams? Can you tell me all at once, and I’ll go back and think of ways to handle them? We can’t let vile characters like Du Ruhai make a mockery out of us, can we?”

Jiang Feng was speechless. Since when had the foundational exams become so easy in this kid’s eyes? He could handle them by sparing just a random bit of time?

“What’s wrong? Can that old fart Du Ruhai make life difficult for me even after I’ve passed the foundational exams?”

“No way!” Jiang Feng puffed his chest out and said assertively. “Your old man isn’t a vegetarian who just rolls over to play dead. As long as you can pass the foundational exams and make it to the final tests of the Hidden Dragon Trials, I can assure you there will be no problems there. But as for the content of the final tests... if Du Ruhai has something hidden up his sleeves...”

“Vile characters are as common as ghosts. I, Jiang Chen, am an outstanding individual and do not fear these characters. The only thing I’m afraid of is that his abilities are not up to par and won’t be able to create some complicated mess for me. That would greatly disappoint me then.”

At the end of the day, Jiang Chen paid no heed to third rate clowns like Du Ruhai.

The three foundational exams really weren’t hard. Their purpose wasn’t to stump test takers, but to weed out the good-for-nothings.

Unless one was a dandy that expended absolutely no effort on training, it was truly not a problem to pass the foundational exams.

Apart from Jiang Chen, all participants in the Trials had achieved four meridians true qi. Even fatty Xuan had achieved five meridians true qi.

The second exam was to practice the kingdom's "Eastern Amethyst Qi" method until one reached the perfection level, and be able to successfully maintain it for an hour in a room filled with level four fighting aura.

The Eastern Amethyst Qi method was created by an ancestor of the Eastern royal family. It was a method used in the process of founding the kingdom, and thus highly symbolic. It was further divided into five achievement levels of 'minor achievement', 'skillful', 'perfection', 'flawless' and 'great perfection' realms.

The so called perfection realm was to merely learn the entire set of foundational tactics and know them thoroughly.

The third foundational exam was a theoretical exam. Its purpose was to test the academic knowledge of each duchy's heirs. This exam was even easier, one could basically pass it by rote memorization.

"What the heck! The past me dragged his heels for two and a half years on such easy exams, and still couldn't pass them?"

Jiang Chen was a bit lost in wonder. What was even more eye popping was his old man. When faced with such a son, had he never thought of harshly slapping him?

His agreement with Eastern Lu was for three days, and only two days had passed. In the remaining day, Jiang Chen decided to spend some time and effort on the foundational exams.

A mere dukedom was nothing to Jiang Chen, but it seemed that a subtle general situation had developed in the capital, and he had no desire to lose any advantage.

Particularly when some bored fellows were waiting to see a fool made out of the Jiang family.

As for those idiots that came up to him asking to be slapped, he could vent a bit of his frustrations by obliging them, no?

Amethyst Eastern Qi was a complex set of tactics. Duchy heirs only learned the most basic parts of this method.

The purpose of mandating that all heirs learn the basic tactics were to evaluate their potential, personality, understanding of martial dao, and the ability to endure suffering in the path of training.

Jiang Chen sat cross legged and meditated for a moment, running through the foundational portions of the Eastern Amethyst Qi.

At that moment, the vastly knowledgeable memories of his past self were starting to show their true worth.