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Start of the Foundational Exams

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The same two people had faced off once more, and Yan Yiming had fallen in defeat and once again lost completely.

Jiang Chen was once again the victor and had used the same Eastern King Point to win.

The only difference was that Yan Yiming had employed his family's heritage this time and his mindset had been adjusted from underestimating his opponent to full battle readiness.

But, Yan Yiming had still been the one to fall.

And, it was within the agreed upon three moves.

That was to say, Yan Yiming still hadn't been able to take three of Jiang Chen's hits even when the former had been fully prepared.

Of course, Yan Yiming hadn't been so lucky this time. Jiang Chen had left him some face during last time's spar and he hadn't really used his true qi.

This time, Yan Yiming's repeated provocations had crossed Jiang Chen's bottom line. Thus, Yan Yiming had tasted at least 70% of Jiang Chen's strength.

After this loss, Yan Yiming probably wouldn't be able to get out of bed without recuperating for three to five months first.

"How does the saying go? A full bucket of water doesn't sway, but half a bucket of water likes to sway back and forth; those who are knowledgeable don't like to boast, but those who are ignorant love to strut and preen. This saying was probably meant for people like you, was it not?"

Jiang Chen didn't care if Yan Yiming was still alive or dead. Brawls between heirs were more than common in the capital, not to mention that the Hidden Dragon Trials were originally designed to increase competition between heirs.

The heirs who were unfriendly with Jiang Chen all took subconscious steps backwards when they saw Yan Yiming lying prostrated on the floor.

They were deathly afraid of being seen by Jiang Chen. They didn't even possess the strength of Yan Yiming to fight back if he were to challenge them.

By this point, no one believed that Jiang Chen only possessed three meridians true qi.

Only a fool would believe that Jiang Chen was in the initial realm of true qi after that poke.

Could someone in the initial realm have inflicted that type of injury on Yan Yiming?

Jiang Chen didn't think much of defeating a mere nobody such as Yan Yiming. After all, his current strength was at the peak of five meridians true qi.

With all of his advantages, it was a foregone conclusion that he could defeat Yan Yiming, who was at six meridians true qi.

If he found it difficult to defeat someone with even six meridians true qi, then all the advantages that had been conferred upon him in his past life would be a joke.

As for Jiang Zheng, he puffed his chest out with elation. He had already enjoyed the treatment of being waited upon by others last time in the Hall of Healing. And today, he was once again receiving looks of respect from those around him.

What was the key point in being a servant? That was for things to go smoothly, and to be able to walk proudly upright, no matter where he went.

And today, Jiang Zheng's waist was quite upright.

"Organizer, my house's young duke wishes to sign up for the three foundational exams." Jiang Zheng's voice was also louder than normal.

If it had been before, Jiang Zheng would've found it too embarrassing to sign up for the foundational exams at such a shameful timing.

But things were drastically different after Jiang Zhen had trampled over Yan Yiming. How couldn't a superior practitioner, who had run roughshod over Yan Yiming, be unable to pass even the three foundational exams?

Why hadn't he come before? That was because our young duke had been too busy to come and pass the exams!

Other than Jiang Chen, there was no one else who had not yet passed the three foundational exams before the deadline.

However, no one dared cause trouble for Jiang Chen in this step of the process.

He quickly arrived at the testing site for the first exam.

There was a large disc in the center of a ring. The disc was punctuated by twelve holes. Each of the holes had a white jade column erected in the middle of them.

These were the true qi columns that were used in testing true qi.

No one was able to cheat in this test. The candidate would be able to light the number of white jade columns according to how many meridians true qi he possessed.

One could reserve his strength, but could not falsely inflate his strength.

That was to say, if you had ten meridians true qi, you could display eight levels, or even four meridians true qi.

But if you only had four levels, there was no way you could materialize an additional meridian out of thin air.

Therefore, this was a test that no one could cheat in.

"No wonder the past Jiang Chen couldn't pass this test. How would it be possible for three meridians true qi to pass?" Jiang Chen shook his head slightly and walked forward, placing his palm in a depression and circulating the five meridians true qi within his body.

The disc started turning with a crackling sound.

The white jade columns on it started lighting up one by one.

One column, two, three, four, five...

Some in the crowd breathed a sigh of relief upon seeing the light stop at the fifth column, whereas a few others were slightly disappointed.

All sorts of reactions were present, but Jiang Chen paid them no heed. He did not reserve his strength for this particular test.

“Eh? Look. Although there are only five columns lit, this light...” Other people immediately noticed this after one person had pointed it out.

“That’s right, we only give rise to faint blue light normally. Jiang Chen’s true qi light is green! And look, there are no impurities within the light, every column is quite balanced and pure...”

“Such perfect true qi. No wonder a mere five meridians true qi was able to easily defeat Yan Yiming!”

“Looks like we’ve underestimated this Jiang Chen!”

“Makes sense! With this kind of true qi purity, I think he’d be able to put up a fight even if he challenged someone in the advanced realm of true qi!”

The lowest barrier to the advanced realm of true qi was seven meridians true qi. Such an assessment was high praise indeed.

Even the official in charge of this exam was slightly moved by Jiang Chen’s true qi columns, and he cast a complicated look at Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen could see praise and doubt in that look. Perhaps, in the official’s eyes, Jiang Chen had even held back some of his true qi.

“Alright, Jiang Chen, five meridians true qi. You pass the first foundational exam!”

The official continued speaking brightly, “Jiang Chen, congratulations. Your passing grades and performance will be recorded and used for reference.”

“Thank you for going to the trouble.” Jiang Chen smiled faintly. He would naturally respond in good grace if someone was polite to him.

He had easily passed the first foundational exam. Jiang Chen had also anticipated this.

He arrived at the second foundational exam site after walking through a few hallways.

The second exam took place in a sealed off room with sword aura.

“Jiang Chen, the second exam is not the same as the first, and it embodies a certain amount of danger. If you don’t possess four meridians true qi and your Amethyst Eastern Qi hasn’t been trained to the realm of “perfection”, you are very likely to fall victim to the aura inside this room.” The organizer of the second exam reminded Jiang Chen of the dangers, as according to the rules.

Jiang Chen nodded. “Thank you for your reminder, I am ready.”

“In that case, go on in.” The organizer nodded and said no more. Since the candidate had already come, there was no reason for the candidate to leave just because of his words of warning.

The sword aura room was a square space measuring roughly ten meters by ten meters.

Countless mechanisms were installed within this room. They would randomly shoot out all sorts of sword aura, following no rules or reason.

Candidates must endure an hour within the room.

In addition, one or two flying beetles would be placed into the room at regular intervals. Candidates must shoot down at least ten flying beetles within an hour.

They had to remain unharmed in the room and shoot down at least ten flying beetles within the designated time.

This exam was, in comparison, only slightly harder than the first exam.

A practitioner wouldn’t be able to shoot down the flying beetles if he had yet to reach four meridians true qi. The flying beetles speed, flight patterns, as well

as the hardness of their armor, would not be easily overcome by someone in the initial realm of true qi.

“This exam is a bit interesting.”

A current of sword aura came shooting at him just as Jiang Chen was thinking those thoughts. But these simple sword aura currents posed no threat to him.

The face of the second in command of the Trials, Du Ruhai, was turning ghastly pale as he listened to the reports from a trusted man within a secret room in a highly restricted area.

“This brat had concealed his true strength of five meridians true qi. And the purity of his qi is actually on par with the heirs of the preeminent dukedoms!”

Du Ruhai’s face darkened considerably upon viewing the results of Jiang Chen’s first exam. He had been harshly lectured by Princess Gouyu on that day at the Soaring Dragon manor. Although he hadn’t been fired afterwards, he was facing tremendous pressure from the rumors in the outside world.

His credibility and influence had also been similarly impacted with the team in charge of the Hidden Dragon Trials.

This was what he least wished to see. Du Ruhai had made his way up from the bottom of the ranks. His desire for power outweighed everything else.

And now, the duke of Soaring Dragon had given him an ultimatum. If he wasn’t able to stop Jiang Chen, then he would lose Duke Long’s trust.

Losing Duke Long’s trust meant losing his biggest backer. It could even be said that without the duke’s support, all his vaunted riches and power would quickly become a joke.

Therefore, he had to suppress Jiang Chen. He simply had to suppress Jiang Chen at all costs!

He had to take the risk. Duke Long’s ultimatum wasn’t a mere joke. If the duke became unhappy, then perhaps Du Ruhai’s corpse would be found on the streets tonight.

“Xiaoma, come here. I want you to...” Du Ruhai issued a series of commands to his most trusted man.

This Xiaoma was absolutely loyal to Du Ruhai. He thumped his chest in affirmation after hearing Du Ruhai's instructions, "Be at ease sir, I will complete the task with competence, and leave no clues behind!"

"Mm. If this matter is conducted smoothly, I will ensure a life of riches for you."

Within the sword aura room, the bodies of more than fifty flying beetles lay haphazardly in the smooth floor. Time elapsed had been one hour exactly.

Jiang Chen did not leave the sword aura room, and had, in fact, become more and more excited.

"No human opponent can match this sword aura room. Who in the same level can deploy such abstract, unsystematic moves like the mechanisms of this room? Where else could I go to find a free opponent like this one?"

Jiang Chen was hooked on this room.

Although the force of the room's sword aura attacks would double every hour, Jiang Chen grew more invigorated from battle, and his interest intensified.

He also became more skilled at utilizing his five meridians true qi as time went on. The clashes between true qi and sword aura further heightened his battle intent and potential.

Chapter 32: Impressive Performance, Setting New Records

Geniuses loved spending time in the second foundational exam.

Every genius seemed to love using this masochistic method to stimulate his or her own potential. Jiang Chen was no exception.

Previously, none of the many Eastern Kingdom geniuses had docilely left the room after an hour was up.

Every person kept hanging on inside, and refused to come out until they had reached their limit.

This exam had basically become a hidden battle stage for the top notch geniuses.

They competed on who could stay inside the longest.

Who could kill the most flying beetles.

In actuality, no one could spare a thought for shooting down flying beetles towards the end of the exam. They were too busy dodging the boundless sword aura that danced without rules, threatening to take candidates' lives at any moment.

Observers had started gathering outside the sword aura room.

Jiang Chen had been in the sword aura room for a full four hours. Many curious bystanders rushed to the room when the news circulated.

Four hours, what kind of concept was that?

The sword aura attacks would double in strength every hour in the sword aura room. This meant that after four hours, the sword aura in the room had increased sixteen fold!

If he still hadn't emerged after another hour, the strength of the sword aura would increase to 32 times, and continue at that rate!

"This Jiang Chen, has he already died in there?"

"Stop bullshitting. If a candidate is killed the sword aura, the mechanisms will stop attacking when it senses no life. They will also send out a notification."

"Heh heh, I'm curious, is all. Is this Jiang Chen really that good?"

"A wolf in sheep's clothing. He's absolutely a wolf in sheep's clothing."

"Ai, the only result of comparing oneself to another is a frustrated death! I remember that I wanted to put up a front when I took the second foundational exam and stay in there for another hour, but that doubled sword aura was almost the end of me!"

"Do you know what the longest record for staying within the sword aura room is?"

"I don't think anyone's made it past six hours."

"It's said that Miss Long Juxue stayed in the room for almost six hours. She almost faced 32 fold attacks!"

“Huh. Don’t compare Jiang Chen with Miss Long Juxue. He’s not worthy!”

“Yes. Although Jiang Chen is a wolf in sheep’s clothing, he’s only that tiny bit stronger than ordinary geniuses. Miss Long Juxue is a genius for the ages! A peerless genius who has an azure phoenix constitution and has attracted the attention of the great hidden sects! They’re absolutely not on the same level.”

“Comparing Jiang Chen with Miss Juxue is an act of sacrilege against Miss Long Juxue!”

Many zealous fans immediately opened their mouths to reduce Jiang Chen to less than worthless when it came to Miss Long Juxue.

It was apparent from this that Long Juxue was in high demand amongst these heirs. You had to give it to her, her natural captivating charms were no trivial matter.

“You there, what nonsense are you farting? My house’s brother Chen is my brother Chen, why does he need to compare himself against others?” This voice rang out like an earthquake.

Fatty Xuan had arrived. As Jiang Chen’s best friend, insulting Jiang Chen in front of him was worse than insulting him.

The brawny Hubing Yue stood next to fatty Xuan.

The two were either fat or stocky - like two mountains, giving others an imposing feeling.

It was easy to be sarcastic, but these onlookers didn’t yet have the guts to really face off against Jiang Chen. These two arrivals were Jiang Chen’s best friends. Insulting them was the same as offending Jiang Chen.

Another hour passed...

Fatty Xuan checked the time in the hourglass — this was the sixth hour’s hourglass.

Every hourglass represented an hour. This was to say, Jiang Chen had already been in the sword aura room for six hours.

The level of sword aura attacks had now reached 32 times.

Although fatty Xuan still swaggered around pridefully, his tightly clenched fingers beneath his robes betrayed his internal anxiety.

“Fatty Xuan, do you think brother Chen could be in some danger?” Hubing Yue was also similarly worried.

“Do you think brother Chen is someone who doesn’t know his limits?” Fatty Xuan asked in response. Although that’s what he said, fatty Xuan wasn’t too sure of his own words.

The previous Jiang Chen had never been so awesome or displayed such potential before.

He had vaulted to the challenge of enduring the sixth hour. Out of all the heirs, only Long Juxue had taken the challenge before, but she hadn’t made it through to the end.

If Jiang Chen emerged after the hourglass had run out, then he would’ve broken this year’s records!

However, Long Juxue had already been at eight meridians true qi, about to breakthrough to the ninth meridian when she took the second foundational exams.

She treated the sword aura room as a means to stimulate her potential and break her shackles, as a way to successfully ascend to nine meridians true qi!

She was successful in the end.

Although she wasn’t able to fully take the entire gamut of attacks from the sword aura at 32 times, she broke through to the ninth meridian and created a sensation in the kingdom.

Long Juxue had not even been 15 years old at the time. She broke through to the ninth meridian in one fell swoop and became one of the few, the mighty within the kingdom.

One had to know that apart from very few true qi masters, nine meridians true qi was basically invincible.

And out of all the true qi masters in the kingdom, who hadn’t trained for at least a few decades? She could stand shoulder to shoulder with the

experienced true qi masters at the tender age of not even fifteen. With such potential, no wonder she possessed the asure phoenix constitution.

Long Juxue was now sixteen, and there were vague rumors that there was only a thin veil separating her from being a true qi master of ten meridians. It was a very thin veil that could be punctured by a single poke.

All eyes stared intently at that hourglass.

Many felt complicated emotions. They hoped for a miracle to be born, for a subject ripe for new gossip to appear within the kingdom. They also felt a bit envious at the same time. What right did this Jiang Chen have to suddenly become such a blockbuster figure?

Long Juxue's fans even cursed him inwardly, hoping for Jiang Chen to be hit by a sword aura attack and thus be ruined.

Long Juxue was the goddess of their heart, and they were absolutely unwilling to see a previously infamous good-for-nothing break the record set by their goddess.

Allowing Jiang Chen to break Long Juxue's record was the greatest insult to the goddess!

However, matters would not change because of some people's thoughts. The sand in the hourglass slowly trickled downwards as time marched on, second by second.

Finally, the hourglass reached its end.

As the final grains of sand trickled down, the entire hourglass had finally emptied!

That meant that six hours were up!

The stone doors to the sword aura opened haltingly. There were slight traces of sweat on his forehead, as the previous five hours hadn't taxed him at nearly the level that the last hour had.

The power of sword aura at 32 fold in the sixth aura had simply be too frightening. If it wasn't for the fact that Jiang Chen had grasped a tiny bit of the

sword aura rhythm, he would have definitely been unable to take the barrage with his true level of training.

Upon seeing Jiang Chen walk out slowly from the room, those who had been verbally attacking Jiang Chen all hid guiltily towards the back.

It was as if Jiang Chen could pierce through the darkest recesses of their hearts with his bright, clear gaze.

They didn't even have the courage to look Jiang Chen in the eye at that moment.

As for Jiang Chen, his entire being was like a finely honed knife, his light increasing with each step he took. It wasn't Jiang Chen stepping out of the room! Everyone had the sudden impression of a divine weapon walking out of the room.

After the baptism by sword aura at 32 fold, Jiang Chen was indeed infused with the light of a slashing sword at this moment. It would be more appropriate to say that the sword aura had cut and polished Jiang Chen, rather than baptized him.

Regardless, Jiang Chen had become one with the sword aura, and his light shone patently!

"Brother Chen, Brother Chen, first of all geniuses!" Fatty Xuan called out with great emotion.

"Jiang Chen, congratulations. You have passed the second foundational exam with flying colors!" The organizer in charge of this segment was also agog with surprise, and sincerely admired Jiang Chen's performance.

Such an amazing performance wasn't available every day. The organizer also felt proud to be able to witness such a feat with his own eyes.

"What? Six hours? Are you sure that nothing's wrong with the sword aura room?" Du Ruhai found it hard to believe his eyes when he received the report of the results of Jiang Chen's second foundational exam.

Even Long Juxue's prior performance paled in comparison with this record.

“There’s nothing wrong with the sword aura room. That kid stayed in there for a full six hours and shot down 120 flying beetles.”

“Jiang Chen!” Du Ruhai’s overcast eyes shot out a sinister look. “It looks like I would’ve had to suppress you even without Duke Long’s exhortation. Otherwise, with the grudge that I have formed with your Jiang family, what place would there be for me if your Jiang family actually rose to power?”

In this moment, Du Ruhai was even more resolute in his determination to firmly suppress Jiang Chen.

If he didn’t suppress Jiang Chen, he, Du Ruhai, would have no future to speak of.

The Jiang Chen of now was the greatest victor of the two foundational exams, and had won the support of many neutral parties. Many saw shadows of themselves in Jiang Chen.

Ordinary potential, middlingly dukedom rank. But even with these circumstances surrounding his birth, Jiang Chen’s performance was not any less than those top tier heirs.

They had found emotional sustenance, a point of resonance with Jiang Chen.

So therefore, when Jiang Chen appeared at the testing site for the third foundational exam, he was actually accompanied by a large crowd that cheered and applauded him.

Apart from a few preeminent heirs, only Jiang Chen had enjoyed such treatment.

The third exam was also the easiest out of all of the foundational exams. It tested the basics, concepts that could be committed to memory.

Of course, there were also dissertation topics that allowed for creative leeway - ones that tested the candidate’s experience. The final score wouldn’t be affected even if these freeform topics were left blank.

As long as one answered all those rote memorization topics, one would receive enough points to pass the theory exams.

Therefore, there was a saying in the three foundational exams that as long as one passed the first two exams, the third one was a walk in the park.

Only idiots or people who really hadn't studied would fail out of the third exam.

Jiang Chen walked into the testing site for the third exam in the midst of a hail of applause.

Four scrolls, four tests represented the major topics from "The Articles of Martial Arts", "The Articles of Spirit Medicine", "The Papers of Power and Influence", and "The Papers of Military Strategy".

Chapter 33: End of Exams, Brothers Lay Their Hearts Open

A generous amount of time was given for the exam and Jiang Chen wasn't unduly worried. This third exam was a walk in the park for him. With the reading abilities that his past life had cultivated for millions of years, he had developed an almost photographic memory for things that needed to be committed to memory.

Therefore, this little bit of rote memorization was no sweat for him.

He inked in his name with a grand flourish of his brush and started to answer the questions.

About an hour later, he had completed the rote memorization problems to his satisfaction.

The creative portion was next. This section's questions would be more flexible and deeper as well.

Of course, with Jiang Chen's experiences, these questions were still so low and crude that they were just a joke to him. However, he still structured his answers very seriously.

Although the topics were shallow, it wouldn't do for his answers to be too insightful. With the Eastern Kingdom's standards of theoretical knowledge, it was unlikely for the kingdom to be able to digest anything that was too convoluted.

With Jiang Chen's knowledge, if he really answered too profoundly, then it would be no different to him handing in a blank exam paper.

Anything too profound wouldn't be understandable... then what difference would there be to answering nonsense?

Therefore, Jiang Chen racked his brains to start from this world's foundation of knowledge, and elaborated with some innovation.

These answers were actually ranked as very low knowledge in his knowledge banks. But Jiang Chen was still a bit worried that he had gone outside of the box and created some unnecessary trouble.

Thus, he repeatedly held himself in check and finally overcame the urge to really elaborate. He controlled the summary for the creative section and held it at a level appropriate for knowledge found within the Eastern Kingdom.

Doing it this way actually created more work for him. He double checked his exam paper after an hour, discovered that it was impeccable, and then turned it in.

The organizer in charge of this exam sealed Jiang Chen's exam into a box in accordance with the rules.

"Jiang Chen, this exam needs to be read by senior officials and graded by officials from the various subjects. Do you understand this rule?"

There was indeed such a rule and Jiang Chen paid it no heed. He nodded.

No matter who graded it, this exam was sure to pass. Jiang Chen was completely confident about this point.

It was already dusk when he'd completed the three foundational exams. Fatty Xuan jogged as he kept up with Jiang Chen. With his weight and body shape, it was tough for him to keep up with Jiang Chen.

Fatty Xuan was panting heavily after a short distance. "Brother Chen, wait for your brother!"

Brother Chen, I've reserved a table at the Autumn Crane to celebrate you passing the three foundational exams. I knew a long time ago that Brother Chen must be a wolf in sheep's clothing. You didn't pass the exams before to purposefully portray that you're weak. Heh, numbing the enemy through strategy!"

Fatty Xuan's fawning words flowed like the tides and he was utterly unembarrassed in doing so.

"Let's not go to the Autumn Crane." Jiang Chen said faintly, thought for a moment, and sighed when he saw the earnest Fatty Xuan and Hubing Yue. "Let's gather at my place tonight."

Hubing Yue nodded, "Yes, Brother Chen is correct. My old man has also said that there is too much going on within the capital recently. We should avoid going to places like the Autumn Crane."

"Heh heh. If Brother Chen says not to go, then we won't go. Besides, going to Brother Chen's manor just means more face for us brothers, right?" Fatty Xuan was an easygoing character and went with the flow instead of stubbornly sticking to something.

As a personal body servant, this was Jiang Zheng's moment to shine. He immediately spoke up when he heard Jiang Chen's words, "Your steward will return home to make preparations."

Fatty Xuan and them were even more relaxed once they reached the Jiang Han manor.

This was also the first time that Jiang Chen had gotten together with his best friends since arriving in this world. He was in good spirits, and listened raptly to fatty Xuan and the others talk of all that had happened before.

"Brother Chen, wouldn't you say that that Yang Zong is completely heartless? To think that you took such care of him back then, and he recoiled from fear and shrank from responsibility after something happened to you. He hunkered down and was too afraid to interact with us. Looks like this person is unreliable. And I even treated him as a brother before. What a shameful person!"

Fatty Xuan was quite impassioned when it came to Yang Zong.

On the other hand, Jiang Chen laughed easily and decided to ignore the matter. Everyone had their own ambitions. Yang Zong had chosen the pursuit of profit and a side that benefited him instead of choosing his brothers. That was his choice.

Except, Jiang Chen naturally struck off Yang Zong's name from his heart.

Fatty Xuan eased off crucifying Yang Zong upon seeing that Jiang Chen didn't join in. He changed the topic to the Hidden Dragon Trials.

"Brother Chen, do you actually have any ambitions when it comes to the Trials?" Fatty Xuan had had a bit too much to drink and his tongue had become a bit loose.

"What ambitions?" Jiang Chen smiled.

"Brother Chen, I, fatty Xuan, am a stubborn sort. I don't think much of any of those premier dukes. I only feel a kinship with Brother Chen, so if Brother Chen soars triumphantly in the sky, then I will smile even in my dreams! Brother Chen, I wish you would aim for those preeminent positions!"

"Indeed Brother Chen, that Bai Zhanyun is just that. You absolutely have the potential to make a play for a position as one of the four great dukes." Hubing Yue was also extremely fervent as he thought of Jiang Chen's performance that night.

"Four great dukes?" Jiang Chen murmured lightly and then grinned widely. "The four great dukes are not my end goal."

"Ah? Brother Chen, then what is your goal? It would also be great if you could vault into the ranks of the top ten." Hubing Yue said.

"Hubing Yue, are you a silly pig?" Although Fatty Xuan was drunk, his mind wasn't. With his understanding of Jiang Chen, his tone wasn't that he couldn't nab one of the spots as one of the four great dukes, but that he didn't deign to!

As his thoughts traveled down this path, Fatty Xuan's immense body shook briefly, his sobriety returning immediately. Looks of unparalleled fervor shot out from his quickly darting eyes beneath his plump eyelids.

"Brother Chen, can it be that your goal is the position of the Eastern royals? Haha, that's my Brother Chen alright! Great ambitions, damn straight!"

Fatty Xuan was also a slight bit of a bastard. Add to that the influence of alcohol, and that resulted in him completely losing all reservations when talking. He probably hadn't thought that these words would already clap him as a suspect for rebellion.

“This... Brother Chen, are you for real?” Hubing Yue was gobsmacked and his breathing also grew heavy.

Jiang Chen didn't know whether to laugh or cry upon seeing how serious these two were. “Fatty Xuan, your imagination is too active. When did I say I wanted to replace the Eastern royals?”

“Then what?” Fatty Xuan scratched his head and wore a perplexed look.

“I am a cultivator. It would be a waste of my life if I pursued momentary wealth. I, Jiang Chen, wish to pursue martial dao with my life. All common wealth and riches are but floating clouds to me.”

Fatty Xuan became completely listless upon seeing how serious Jiang Chen was.

“Brother Chen, this doesn't seem like you. What happened to our previous vows? Didn't we agree to go crazy together, enjoy everything together, be wild and free together, and weather all storms together?”

Fatty Xuan pouted as he muttered complaints.

“People have to change.” Jiang Chen sighed lightly. “Fatty, since you two are my brothers, I won't voice false words. Although playing hooky is fun, those days won't last long. Do you know how many eyes are staring at the dukedom that you hold in your hands, to speak of nothing else? If it wasn't for the dukedom, on what basis do you have to be a dandy? What ability do you have to be wild and free?”

Fatty Xuan was speechless. How would he not know that to be wild and free together was just a temporary dream.

How could you be wild without strength? Who would allow you to be so haughty?

At the end of the day, they were able to be wild and free together because of a good father and a good reincarnation.

But after their generation had run carefree, what of the next generation?

This resonated deeply with Hubing Yue, “Fatty, Brother Chen is right. I too think that only strength is the true law of this world. Look at Brother Chen's

experiences over the past couple of days, isn't it a perfect illustration of this rule? People used to challenge us no matter where we went. And now? Everyone who sees Brother Chen dare not even look at us. This is the change brought by strength!"

Fatty Xuan had become an old, lonely man as he despaired, "But you guys also know that I'm a fatty that no one takes seriously. Training is a luxury for me. I've only reached this step because my old man beat it into me with his fists and feet..."

Fatty became more dejected as he spoke. Although he was ordinarily high spirited and looked like a complete dandy, he had a side to him that no one else could see, a fragile side.

His body size and weight had brought many troubles for him that others didn't have. It also brought for him discrimination and mockery that no one else would understand.

Inwardly sensitive, fatty had always cared a lot about this, but he had to pretend that he didn't care at all. He learned to self deprecate and to joke about himself.

Except, he had met Jiang Chen when he arrived at the capital for the Hidden Dragon Trials. He had met the only person in this world who didn't discriminate against him and even called him brother.

At that moment, fatty Xuan had felt that Jiang Chen was his confidant - his brother for the rest of his life, and someone that fatty Xuan would die for.

"Brother Chen do you know? When I first arrived at the capital, I tried very hard to assimilate into the world of the other heirs. But I was faced with their discrimination and mockery no matter where I went. You... you were the first one who called me fatty without a jeering smile on your face. In that moment, I decided that I would listen to whatever you said for the rest of my life!"

Fatty Xuan swiped fiercely at his red eyes when he stopped at this point. "Brother Chen, you were right just now. If we didn't have a good father, what right would we have to loaf around, to act crazily? Besides, to ensure that my descendants have the ability to be a dandy, I must keep this dukedom!"

A resolute desire that would cause others to straighten with seriousness appeared for the first time in Fatty Xuan's eyes.

Chapter 34: Secret of the Nine Laughing Oceans

Jiang Chen still felt some loyalty and friendship towards the two best friends that his prior self had left behind. Besides, these two had something in common in that their hearts were trustworthy and that they were staunch people.

This point suited Jiang Chen's taste quite well. This was also a marked, foundational difference between fatty Xuan and Hubing Yue versus Yang Zong.

Jiang Chen could see that fatty Xuan's potential was average, and that there wasn't the requisite tenacity and fierceness to be found on him that practitioners needed.

It was perhaps possible in the short term, but it was impossible for fatty Xuan to maintain a mindset of 'till death will I cease' on the path of martial dao.

Hubing Yue, on the other hand, concealed a heart of martial dao with strong fortitude beneath his honest exterior.

Jiang Chen knew what to expect with this round of judgements.

He raised his glass, "Both of you have long since treated me, Jiang Chen, as your big brother. Therefore, as your big brother I will say these words today, if you will believe me. Well, no matter if your life's goal is to seek wealth and riches, or to pursue martial dao -- I can help you achieve them.

However, the caveat is that you remain my brothers - unchanging brothers for a lifetime."

Jiang Chen was extremely serious when he spoke these words. These two were absolutely his brothers right now, but, time could change much. What he needed was eternal and unchanging loyalty.

"Brother Chen, I, fatty Xuan, have only one thing to say. The fat on my body is all yours. Whenever you tire of tasting the delicacies from land and sea and want to try human meat, then come carve it from my body. If I can't trust you, then I can trust no one!" Fatty Xuan's brow didn't even crease.

“Brother Chen, I’m not the best with words but I’ve always felt that you’re a good big brother, a big brother worthy of me to follow.” Hubing Yue also expressed himself.

“Alright. We’re brothers. For life.” Jiang Chen nodded. “Let’s stop here today. Remember, come here again after the Hidden Dragon Trials. I’ll give you a little surprise.”

Jiang Chen also needed to consider what to do with these two people, and how to help them in a way that wasn’t over the top but in a way that was curiously effective for them.

Being too over the top would inevitably catch others’ eyes and incite unnecessary trouble.

Being too stingy might lead to less than ideal effectiveness. Then the help he rendered was the same as not giving any at all.

This needed to be personally tailored and some time was needed to muse over it.

It is said that it’s hard to clap with one hand. In any world, one is always powerless towards some things when relying only on the power of one. Sooner or later, it would be imperative to cultivate some others.

Jiang Chen did not remain idle after sending off his two best friends. He went directly into the secret training room and shut his doors for training.

The six hours that he’d spent in the sword aura room during the day had helped him comprehend and gain much. When he had been confronting the 32 fold sword aura in the room, the five meridians true qi and five meridians in his body had been repeatedly forged, impacted, bathed, and attacked until they metamorphosed...

Jiang Chen had unwittingly ascended to six meridians true qi during that battle.

This was also his biggest gain in that battle.

“I can feel that my battle strength has risen at least two or three times after entering six meridians true qi.” Jiang Chen sensed the changes in his body. He could feel that his life signs had been strengthened by a level, and had

changed a lot from how he had been when he first entered - it was as if he had been reborn.

“The battle with Yan Yiming today also obliquely illustrated a few of my current problems. Although I won, it was a victory gained through trickery.” Jiang Chen analyzed that battle and had some reflections on the gains and losses of it.

Firstly, Jiang Chen had been disadvantaged in terms of martial arts techniques. The previous Jiang Chen had been exceedingly slipshod when practicing the family’s martial dao techniques. The only one that he’d truly put some effort into practicing was the jack of all trades “Eastern Amethyst Qi”, and this was because the Hidden Dragon Trials would test it. If this wasn’t the case, he probably wouldn’t have practiced it either.

To think that he would still be using the accompany martial arts techniques of “Eastern Amethyst Qi” to combat foes since coming to this world, one had to admit that Jiang Chen would have to herald in a new generation in the field of martial arts techniques.

Jiang Chen familiarized himself with the Jiang family’s hereditary martial dao methods. Its name was the “Vast Waves Method” and it was a method that combined training qi and martial arts techniques.

“Vast Waves Method” was a middle-grade martial dao method and it could be practiced to nine meridians true qi. This was also its upper limit.

The accompany martial arts techniques were “Wave Breaker” and “Sea God Fist”.

This “Vast Waves Method” counted as one of the aces of the Jiang family martial dao methods.

“Indeed a poorer family.” Jiang Chen smiled wryly. “This world’s wudao ranking seems to be divided into five great degrees of ‘common’, ‘spirit’, ‘saint’, ‘earth’ and ‘heaven’. These five great degrees are then divided into minor ranks of ‘inferior’, ‘middle’, ‘upper’, and ‘supreme’ rank. To sum it up, a martial dao method that is common degree, middle rank is a second grade from the bottom. And this kind of grade is an ace method of the family clan.”

Jiang Chen had to lament that the starting point of his reincarnation was indeed a bit low.

Of course, out of all methods under heaven, as long as a method was able to be ranked, that was still something.

A great many practitioners practiced ordinary methods that couldn't even be ranked.

The so called common degree method was actually an exceedingly precious martial dao classic in a nation such as the Eastern Kingdom.

What caused Jiang Chen to not know whether he should laugh or cry was that his previous self had practiced this "Vast Waves Method" since he was small, but had only just achieved the minor achievement realm.

"How lazy could this fellow have been to practice the family clan's prized method to this level of accomplishment? Were his thoughts really not on training at all?"

In terms of technique training, minor achievement was but the first step. Skillful, perfection, flawless and great perfection followed thereafter, and there was even a legendary realm.

Minor achievement meant one was just getting started.

"The upper limit of "Vast Waves Method" was training only to nine meridians true qi. No wonder father's training has halted at nine meridians true qi. It looks like restrictions in methods were indeed sufficient for a genius to become a mediocre talent within this world."

A duke's prized clan method only went up to nine meridians true qi at the highest. Any further meant reaching the limits. One had to say, this was a practitioner's sorrow.

"Ask not how high the heavens are, I ride the waves myself? Wait a moment..." Jiang Chen suddenly had a sense of deja vu when he read the first line in "Vast Waves Method". "Could it be that I've seen this "Vast Waves Method" before somewhere?"

But that couldn't be the case. Logically speaking, it would be impossible for an inferior method like the "Vast Waves Method" to enter the Tianlang Library. That was the library of the Celestial Emperor, how could it record such a low level method?

But, Jiang Chen truly did have an impression of those two lines.

He exerted great effort in searching through his memories and suddenly, a method of “Secret of the Nine Laughing Oceans” surfaced in his mind.

I made one dream through nine lifetimes and dried the vast oceans with one laugh. Ask not how high the heavens are, I ride the waves myself.

Suddenly, many recollections regarding the “Secret of the Nine Laughing Oceans” poured out from Jiang Chen’s memories in the span of a moment.

Although this “Secret of the Nine Laughing Oceans” was also not enough to even garner a glance from those on high, Jiang Chen remembered this method because he had been moved by the story behind the practitioner who had created this method when he perused it.

This person had reincarnated nine times for just one glimpse of the girl in his dreams. But he had waited until the seas had dried up and the rocks had rotted away, and this finally proved to be unattainable. He had quickly awakened to the truth, but realized that he had already missed the law of heaven. He therefore lamented that “ask not how high the heavens are, I ride the waves myself”.

Although “Secret of the Nine Laughing Oceans” was also not enough to be called a method of the law of heaven, but it was a great many times stronger than the “Vast Waves Method”.

The mysteries ensconced inside were at least a hundred times more than the “Vast Waves Method”.

And, this “Vast Waves Method” was obviously an offshoot of the “Secret of the Nine Laughing Oceans”. But it had reduced to an exceedingly mediocre method by the time it had been passed onto the Jiang family clan.

Of a common origin!

“Indeed, destiny naturally plays a hand somewhere. Since this “Secret of the Nine Laughing Oceans” is destined for me, then I shall practice it.”

Jiang Chen had previously searched for a method with great effort, but had never found one suitable for this body.

And now, the Jiang family's prized method had lead to the "Secret of the Nine Laughing Oceans", what was this if not fate?

Jiang Chen's heart was much more at ease after he had decided on a method.

There were many accompanying martial arts techniques within the "Secret of the Nine Laughing Oceans", but Jiang Chen still decided to focus on the two techniques "Wave Breaker" and "Sea God Fist" that were of the same origin for the time being.

But these two wudao techniques naturally had different names, respectively "Vast Ocean Current Splitter" and "Divine Aeons Fist".

Martial dao method, martial arts technique, all were selected.

Jiang Chen was in an excellent mood. After all, the "Amethyst Eastern Qi" was someone else's method. There always lacked a sense of belonging when he practiced it.

Jiang Chen knew that he had made the right choice when he started familiarizing himself with this method. The moment that this method starting circulating in his body, the acupoints and meridians within his body almost started resonating together.

Every acupoint emitted a light and rich rhythmic pulse, and his meridians thrummed slightly when they opened and closed.

"Meridian resonance? Acupoint resonance? This is the highest degree of endorsement that a body will show towards a method!" Jiang Chen was delighted.

"Indeed, a family's own method is the best." Jiang Chen thought carefully and understood. Many families valued bloodline heritage when it came to training in martial dao, and many clans emphasized not sharing methods with outsiders. In reality, this was a type of tradition, and a type of agreement between bloodline and method.

Only the suitable is the best.

Jiang Chen thought through this point and thereby understood this principle.

“Perhaps my mind is filled with all the methods under the heavens, but those are not suitable for the current stage me. Ultimately, right now I am but a common practitioner with six meridians true qi. My mindset should stress this life’s training and not the prior life’s experiences.”

The experiences of the prior life could bring all sorts of good fortune and pave the road for him, and even let him take shortcuts.

But training would still have to rely on this life’s body to step over obstacles and embark on the challenge to reach the peak, one step at a time. This was irreplaceable by any experience.

He started to circulate his true qi, circulating the true qi of vast waves within his body. Jiang Chen’s meridians became like the lesser dragons frolicking in the waves of the vast sea, at their hearts’ content.

“Vast waves true qi still lacks a bit of fierceness. It looks like the true qi within my body requires further forging in order to truly train some actual results out of the true qi of vast waves.”

After a night of starvation training, it was readily apparent Jiang Chen’s grasp over vast waves true qi was quite adept. However, it was uncertain how much stronger it was than when he’d practiced Amethyst Eastern Qi.

However, due to the short training period, fierceness was obviously lacking within the vast waves true qi. If dominance was lacking, then this method would be taken down a few notches.

“Fierceness is not something to be gained from closed door training.” Jiang Chen thought carefully and sighed in dissatisfaction. “Looks like, it’s almost time to experience the outside world, once the time is right.”

Chapter 35: You Won’t Die if You Don’t Seek Death

The repressed, bone-deep, wild nature of Jiang Chen’s past and present life came abruptly roaring out uncontainably when he had the idea of traveling a bit in the outside world.

Of course, this travel wasn’t something that Jiang Chen could arbitrarily decide.

First, he had to pass the Hidden Dragon Trials before leaving. Otherwise, leaving the capital without permission meant forfeiting the Trials.

The Trials were Jiang Chen's first major objective upon arriving in this world - there was no way he would give up.

For one, he had to fight for his father's right to continue holding the dukedom.

In addition, the great undercurrent of power that had formed in the capital left Jiang Chen with no avenues of retreat - he had to fight!

Jiang Chen woke up early the next morning and went for a round of practice in the manor's practice field. He had prepared to pay a visit to the Hall of Healing when he saw that the sun had risen to the height of three connecting bamboo segments.

He had signed a contract with the Hall of Healing and naturally wouldn't break his appointment.

Except, he didn't have time to set foot outside before fatty Xuan and Hubing Yue came hurriedly rushing in. Their faces looked like the sky was caving in.

"Brother Chen, why are you acting like nothing is going on?" fatty Xuan almost dashed into the door with a rolling posture, and came out at the very start with this question when he saw Jiang Chen.

"What about me?" Jiang Chen was baffled.

"Brother Chen, something major has happened!" A sense of anxiety also pervaded throughout Hubing Yue's clumsy honesty, a type of anxiety that accompanied the sky caving in.

"What?" Jiang Chen felt that the expressions on these two weren't a joke.

"Brother Chen, you didn't pass your foundational exams!" Fatty Xuan was almost to the point of tears in his worry. "Brother Chen, you lectured us yesterday, how..."

"Didn't pass? Impossible!" Jiang Chen shook his head resolutely. He was firm, that was absolutely impossible. "You guys also saw my exams."

"We saw it alright, you passed the first and second exams. However, you didn't pass the third exam."

The third exam, the theory exam, but that was one that no bystanders could watch.

“I didn’t pass the theory exam?” Jiang Chen thought back and resolutely shook his head. “I still don’t believe it. I wouldn’t have erred on a single one of the rote memorization portions. It was enough to guarantee passing. I also felt that I elaborated quite well in the creative portion, unless the examiner was blind.”

Fatty Xuan was like an ant on a hot pan in his haste and he kept pacing around in circles.

“No, no. Brother Chen we can’t sit still in the face of such adversary such as this. Didn’t you get strike up a relationship with Princess Gouyu? Hurry and enter the palace to request that the princess think of something. This matter will be irredeemable when the final results are announced!”

According to the rules of the foundational exams, if one of the three foundational exams had yet to be passed before the deadline, that meant the candidate hadn’t passed the exams.

If the foundational exams weren’t passed, then the candidate had no qualifications to participate in the Hidden Dragon Trials afterwards.

Therefore, there was naturally nothing to speak of when it came to retaining the dukedom.

Although Jiang Chen was a bit dumbfounded, he didn’t panic. As he was lost in thought, the duke of Jiang Han also trotted out quickly from the manor. He had obviously also just received the news.

“Chen’er, you...” Jiang Feng walked towards Jiang chen.

“Father, I feel that something must be amiss here. The only thing I can guarantee is that there is no way my answers wouldn’t’ve passed the exam.”

Jiang Chen’s tone was quite firm with no room for doubt.

Jiang Feng had originally wanted to console his son, but blanked for a moment upon hearing his words. His eyebrow crooked, “Then this is to say that someone is conniving against our Jiang family!”

“Damn, daring to do something even to the Hidden Dragon Trials, is this not giving the royal family face? No, Brother Chen, we can’t let them get away with this!”

“Right, we must thoroughly investigate. We must understand why if we are to die!”

Jiang Chen spread out his hands, “I must get to the bottom of this. Father, stay within the manor and avoid throwing ourselves into disarray. Your son will go to the Trials testing site to look up my answer scroll. If it truly was my fault, then I, Jiang Chen, am not someone who cannot take a loss.”

He paused, and his words turned in another direction as his tone hardened. “But if I learn of someone being up to no good, then they have very successfully infuriated me this time.”

The news of Jiang Chen not passing the foundational exams quickly spread like a plague throughout the capital. Some felt it was unimaginable when they recalled how formidable Jiang Chen had been in the first two exams, whereas others gloated over misery.

Of course, even more people took a wait-and-see attitude. Those with even a little bit of brains could sniff out the undercurrents of conflict and could hear the bloodthirsty sounds of armored cavalry in this.

When Jiang Chen had arrived at the Trials testing site, it was already packed to the brim with people who were all waiting to see the show!

“I want to check my answer scroll!” Jiang Chen was straightforward.

There was nothing for Jiang Chen to be low key about, now that someone had taken their bullying to his face.

“Check your answer scroll? According to the rules, you only have the right to apply for such after three days.” The eyebrows of the official in charge quirked slightly and he didn’t even raise his head. His voice was lazy, as if he was almost about to die.

“I want to check it now!” Jiang Chen said diffidently.

“Who do you think you are? Checking it because you say so? On what basis?”

“On this basis!” Jiang Chen’s palm slapped down hard on the table, and the dragon medallion representing the royal family actually embedded itself on that metallic table, leaving a big, easily noticeable mark.

“What?” The official in charge immediately woke up upon seeing this item. He frantically stood up and left a panicked and battered sentence behind. “Please wait here, I will inform my superiors.”

With the engraved dragon medallion beating a path, this meant he had Eastern Lu’s imperial decree within the Trials testing ground. All difficulties became but floating clouds in front of royal power.

Finally, a middle aged organizer called Organizer Ma arrived.

“Young duke Jiang, according to the rules, a three day period are requisite before an application can be made for checking your answer scroll. However, since you have a royal token, you do indeed possess the qualification for special treatment. Let’s do it this way, wait a moment while I pull up your answer scroll. In addition, checking scrolls needs to be conducted under the personal supervision of our main organizer. Now, since our Lord Du has not yet arrived, you may need to wait.”

“No need to wait, I will personally supervise.” At the moment, a crisp and sonorous female voice traveled in from outside.

Heads turned and saw that it was Princess Gouyu, dressed in leather and boasting of a body so sexy that it would cause nosebleeds.

A royal princess and royal token appearing all at once in the Trials testing site. This immediately caused the site’s atmosphere to become fervently excited.

Everyone knew that Princess Gouyu ordinarily didn’t give much heed to the affairs of the Hidden Dragon Trials. She would only control it remotely sometimes and occasionally tell Du Ruhai to give a report.

Princess Gouyu was the main organizer - the first in charge, in name. But, it had always been Du Ruhai in charge of these matters. It wouldn’t be unrealistic to say that Du Ruhai was shutting out the heavens with one hand.

Except, no one had thought that the normally aloof Princess Gouyu would descend personally today.

“What? Can it be that even I, who ranks as the number one main organizer, has no authority to decide upon the matters of the Hidden Dragon Trials?”

A frosty expression materialized on Princess Gouyu’s face.

Organizer Ma’s forehead sweated and he didn’t even dare breathe. He immediately went to pull Jiang Chen’s answer scroll.

After going through the process, the four answer scrolls were finally unfurled one by one. Scroll checking commenced under the witness of several examiner authority figures.

“This isn’t my answer scroll!” Jiang Chen shook his head with a cold smile after flicking his first glance.

Organizer Ma shifted his gaze to the officials from the various subjects who were in charge of reading the exams. He asked, “You were the ones who graded these answer scrolls. Take a look and see if these are the ones that Jiang Chen handed in.”

The officials all took a look and said, “These were indeed the answer scrolls that we graded. Look at these answers, unbearable mistakes and omissions, answers irrelevant to the question, completely nonsensical responses. We really couldn’t pass him with these kinds of answer scrolls.”

The various subject officials had been chosen to read exams naturally because they had authority, possessed integrity, and were able to garner acceptance from others.

Bystanders’ first opinion was that Jiang Chen’s answer scrolls were indeed quite terrible after hearing the officials’ words.

Princess Gouyu’s phoenix eyes made a quick movement as she looked towards Jiang Chen.

“Don’t look at me. These idiotic answer scrolls definitely didn’t come from me. You’re the main organizer of the Hidden Dragon Trials, you take care of it.”

Princess Gouyu inwardly ground her teeth. Would it kill you, you brat, to speak a bit more smoothly? She would have to take a slight turning point and make a bigger fuss out of this matter in order to create some room to maneuver.

“Everyone has their own explanation of this matter. As the organizer, I cannot be partial to any side. How about this, let’s have Jiang Chen take the exam again right now?” Princess Gouyu’s proposal was born out of compromise.

The various subject officials didn’t care either way. It was just reading the scrolls again.

However, someone didn’t agree.

“Princess, this must be avoided at all costs. The ancestors laid down the law that no makeups can be taken if the exams were not passed after the deadline. The princess is the main organizer and a royal princess. How can the writs of the forefathers be abolished for a mere heir of a duke?”

It’d been said that he wasn’t here yet, but Du Ruhai had appeared in the nick of time.

“Du Ruhai...” Jiang Chen faintly guessed at something when he saw Du Ruhai’s face.

“Jiang Chen, you disregard law and discipline, greatly disturb the Trials testing site, your crimes are heinous!”

“Breaker of rules, tempting the princess into chaos, scheming to abolish the writs of the forefathers, you’re a traitor!”

“You’re a mere heir to a duke, how dare you!”

Du Ruhai’s words sprayed one after another and one large hat of crimes after another was buckled onto Jiang Chen’s head.

The former’s nose had almost traveled to Jiang Chen’s vicinity.

At this moment, an incredible scene happened!

Jiang Chen’s arm whirled as he viciously flung a slap onto Du Ruhai’s face.

“Jiang Chen, do not be reckless!” Princess Gouyu spoke hastily.

But, a burning, stinging big slap had landed solidly on Du Ruhai’s face. A bright red mountain formed by five fingers was imprinted on Du Ruhai’s face, appearing all the more conspicuous due to his grim, darkened face.

“Du Ruhai, I’ve warned you not to mess with me. But, you are indeed incorrigible. One won’t die if he doesn’t seek death. Since you seek death, I, Jiang Chen, will gratify you!”

“Come, I want you to accompany me to the Aurum Imperial Hall. I want to confront you in front of His Majesty. If my answer scroll is wrong, then I will docilely hand over the dukedom. If someone is playing a trick, then Du Ruhai, the head on your shoulders is mine!”

Jiang Chen completely ignored the complete shambles that the scene had fallen into, completely ignored those gobsmacked expressions as he strode out like the shooting stars, speeding straight towards the Aurum Imperial Hall.

Leaving behind a site full of a dumbfounded - utterly transfixed - crowd of people.

Princess Gouyu was expressionless as she too left swiftly, leaving Du Ruhai with no time to even squeeze out tears if he’d wanted to cry.

“Oh heavens! This Jiang father and son want to rebel! Beating up the organizer of the Hidden Dragon Trials, greatly disturbing the Trials testing site, abolishing the writs of the forefathers! I too want to present my case to His Majesty in the Aurum Imperial Hall. This official seat will seek the annihilation of the Jiang family clan!” Du Ruhai’s expression was beyond grim!

Chapter 36: Complaining to His Majesty

The Drum of the Shocking Dragon was hammered ten times in a row and the Bell of the Waking Dragon rang out nine times in front of the Aurum Imperial Hall.

Jiang Chen walked in and headed towards the hall with large strides after the round of drum and bell sounds. Parting the road with the engraved dragon medallion, the ceremonial guards let him pass without challenge.

Under the shocked and astonished gazes of an entire gathering of civil and military officials, Jiang Chen took large steps to the front of the throne, and started wailing his innocence after paying his worship to the king. “Your Majesty, your subject persevered for ten years and industriously studied the civil and military subjects. Heaven and earth can bear witness to my heart of pure loyalty. Alas, your subject has run afoul of scoundrels in his life, and thus they have caused me to suffer a grave injustice. Your subject has nowhere

else to request a redress and can only come to Your Majesty to present my case. Your Majesty is benevolent and moral, and can surely make a decision on your subject's behalf."

"Minister Jiang, what matter has caused you such desolation? Tell us of any wrongs you have suffered." Despite Eastern Lu knowing that Jiang Chen was under suspicion for putting on an act, Jiang Chen had been imperceptibly crowded into the same boat as Eastern Lu given the current situation in the capital. Eastern Lu had no choice but to play along for a bit.

"The facts of the matter are, your subject..." Jiang Chen immediately went over the entire issue from beginning to end, and naturally didn't fail to exaggerate things a bit in several crucial areas. All in all, the spearhead was directed at Du Ruhai.

He was irreproachable on this matter and reason was on his side. Therefore, he felt absolutely no pressure in making a ruckus.

Eastern Lu mused deeply for a while after listening, "If it is indeed as you say Minister Jiang, then you have truly suffered a grave injustice. We know of this matter now, but as with all things, it would be unwise to listen to only one side. We would also like to listen to what the testing site has to say."

"Your subject is willing to confront that Du Ruhai face to face!"

Jiang Chen's personality was that one always had to win some points, even if one was being unreasonable - not mentioning that he was entirely within reason this time.

Besides, Du Ruhai had truly enraged him this time. Jiang Chen had already determined that he would fight to the last breath with Du Ruhai.

At this moment, Du Ruhai also came wailing in. He was wiping away snot with one hand and tears with the other. Add to that the eye catching five fingered print on his face, and that he'd also conveniently ripped out his hair bun on the way over to make himself appear bedraggled and disheveled...

It gave others an exceedingly desolate feeling when he walked in like this.

"This Du Ruhai is a sly old fox alright, his acting skills are more than a step higher than the kid Jiang Chen." A few ministers and officials thought privately.

One had to admit, Du Ruhai's acting was more consummate and exquisite than Jiang Chen's. Aggrieved eyes, desolate movement, and a body full of disordered hair and clothing. His entire body was an act.

"Your Majesty, your old subject has suffered injustices." Du Ruhai's head hit the floor, his butt stuck up perkily in the air as tears flowed down like an opened faucet.

"Minister Du, stand up and speak." Eastern Lu could not treat one person well and treat another poorly in front of his assembled subjects.

Jiang Chen didn't behave atrociously in the Aurum Imperial Hall. He stood to the side coldly, watching Du Ruhai put forth hard effort into his performance. Jiang Chen's heart was filled with cold contempt and he was filled with scorn for mad little clowns like Du Ruhai.

"Your Majesty, this old subjects wishes to sue that this Jiang Chen is completely without law and order. He caused a great disruption at the testing site of the Hidden Dragon Trials, beat the organizer and even dared to tempt Princess Gouyu to destroy the rules set down by the ancestors. Your Majesty, this brat had already acted wildly during the Rites of Heavenly Worship, and now insults the writs of the forefathers. The crimes of this Jiang father and son are heinous indeed, and your subject respectfully requests that Your Majesty pass a judgement to annihilate the Jiang family clan."

Given that he now stood in his current position, Du Ruhai possessed a few political schemes up his sleeves. He naturally knew how to stoke emotions, how to generate public anger, how to add insult to injury, how to frame others, and how to pin a label on others - especially in order to put the finishing touches on the Jiang father and son death sentence.

However, in the multitude of his schemes, he had never reckoned that Eastern Lu had long since listed the Jiang father and son as part of the royal camp.

His performance here not only didn't stoke any corresponding emotion from Eastern Lu, but rather gave birth to a bit of increased precaution against Du Ruhai.

Whereas amongst the crowd of assembled officials, some old men's emotions had become a bit restless thanks to Du Ruhai's machinations.

They were all old antiques and had already felt quite put out by the fact that Jiang Chen had luckily escaped being caned to death after his atrocious behavior during the Rites. They thought it was a bad omen.

And now, Jiang Chen hadn't even properly licked his wounds before causing a great disturbance at the testing site of the Hidden Dragon Trials, and had challenged the writs of the forefathers! In their eyes, this was high treason and a monstrous crime.

"Your Majesty, the Jiang father and son are too presumptuous, and their behavior cannot be condoned!

"I too agree, we cannot facilitate the growth of such unhealthy trends!"

Two old geezers with white beards had quickly jumped out to chime in.

Jiang Chen flicked a glance at these two old geezers and then looked at the duke of Soaring Dragon who was standing deep in thought to the left of the dial.

The duke of Soaring Dragon wore a calm and indifferent expression, as if this business had absolutely nothing to do with him. But in actuality, Jiang Chen could be certain that he must have been controlling everything for the matter to have progressed to this state.

Du Ruhai putting on an act and complaining, two old geezers adding fuel to the flame, and a crew of followers playing jackal to the tiger as well.

Those present were all heavyweights in the Eastern Kingdom. If there were those that belonged to the duke of Soaring Dragon's party, then there would definitely be those against him.

"Your Majesty, this old subject feels that something must be amiss after listening to Jiang Chen and His Excellency Du. Why not give them a chance for both to offer an explanation, respectively, and clear their own name? If Jiang Chen was in the wrong, then the law of the land will not forgive him. But if someone truly is so bold as to cheat and cause mischief on the Hidden Dragon Trials, is that not also an act of provocation against the writs of the forefathers? This old subjects feels that we cannot wrong a good man, and cannot let any villain off the hook. This matter must be handled in a just and open manner in order to give both sides a satisfactory explanation." This

person was obviously a firm stickler for the royal family and had stepped forward to give Eastern Lu a hand.

“Yes, your subject also thinks this way. At the end of the day, it’s a one-sided story from both of them. Your subject feels that we should let them finish their words and allow them to defend themselves.” This was an official that was friendly with the Jiang family.

Eastern Lu was deep in thought for a moment and then nodded. “Since this is the case, Minister Du, you start first.”

Du Ruhai nodded, “Alright, then please allow this old subject to speak first. This Jiang family had come to me twice before the three foundational exams began. The first time was to gift me six hundred thousand silver. I have been blessed with royal favor and my responsibilities are great, how could I be someone who takes bribes and bends the law? I immediately harshly denied Jiang Feng’s preposterous request to cheat and paid the silver to the national treasury after the fact.

The Jiang father and son once again invited me to their manor the second time. When their coaxing and pestering tactics failed, this Jiang Chen took to publicly threatening me, saying that I would regret my actions sooner or later.

This old subject is a firm and unyielding character. I have a clear conscience throughout the many matters I’ve handled for Your Majesty, why would I be afraid of the Jiang family threats? Except, who would’ve thought that this Jiang father and son would be so perverse and rabid as to disturb the testing site and even beat me when he didn’t pass! Your Majesty, professionals handle the many portions of the exams, and those subject officials reading the answer scrolls can attest to the fact that the scroll Jiang Chen handed in for grading was sheer bullshit and irrelevant. In this case, how could I have shown favoritism and cheated? Destroyed the objective rules of the Hidden Dragon Trials? Destroyed the writs as laid down by the forefathers?”

Du Ruhai’s tone was gloriously in state and he didn’t even pause for breath. Judging from his appearance, it was as if he was as impartial and incorruptible as Justice Bao (1).

One had to give it to him, his eloquence was fantastic. After his round of words, many neutral officials all felt that this Jiang family was probably not innocent.

Eastern Lu also felt this matter was quite tough to handle and looked at Jiang Chen.

“Your Majesty, your subject has come to the Aurum Imperial Hall not to engage in a verbal spar with this Du Ruhai. He has been an official for more than a decade and has long since trained his official eloquence to a perfect and flawless realm. He would even be able to say that a stick of straw was a bar of gold.

There was indeed a matter involving six hundred thousand silver, but it definitely wasn't from my father requesting him to cheat and let me through. But rather, this man came to my Jiang Han manor to solicit a bribe, hinting that my Jiang family could buy peace of mind with money. If we didn't pay up the six hundred thousand, then he would halt my progress in the foundational exams.

He accepted the money but then came once again to my family after receiving pressure from some parties. He indicated that he had received the money but would still halt my progress in the foundational exams. My father could not contain his anger and argued with him a bit. He did indeed say that Du Ruhai has accepted money but not done the corresponding work.

If six hundred thousand could buy peace, then our Jiang family was willing to be that sucker. When it's all said and done, we could just go back to our territory and tighten our belts for a few years of hard living. But, never did we anticipate that this Du Ruhai, charged with royal favor, would accept the threats from a few parties and completely ignore the regulations of the ancestors and blatantly undermine the rules of the Hidden Dragon Trials. He employed slight of hand and switched out my answer scroll! Those present are all heavyweights with names and reputation in the kingdom. I would to ask how is it possible that I could pass the first two exams, but couldn't pass the third that was based off rote memorization? Does this conform with common sense?”

“What? Switched out the answer scroll?”

“This Du Ruhai has such presumptions?”

“No one has ever messed around with the Hidden Dragon Trials throughout the ages. Can this Jiang family be making a false complaint?”

“What Jiang Chen says makes sense. The third exam completely relies on rote memorization. Even a seven, eight year old child could pass given some time!”

The officials held heated discussions. They suddenly didn't know what was true and what was false.

If based on usual reputation, the duke of Jiang Han, Jiang Feng, was indeed a staunch and steadfast man.

On the other hand, Du Ruhai's reputation was more mediocre. Many in the capital had heard that the man was greedy and had his fingers in and ate out of many pies when he was an official.

Eastern Lu rubbed his forehead and looked out at the rows of his subjects. He sorely wished that Princess Gouyu could materialize at this moment and help him make a judgement.

Except, this Gouyu hadn't appeared even now. What was she busy with?

Du Ruhai was hopping mad, “Jiang Chen, you're making unfounded, venomous accusations! Let me tell you something - this is the Aurum Imperial Hall. Your words must be backed up with evidence, if you have none, then I can sue you for the crime of defamation against an important official.”

“Evidence?” Jiang Chen gave a cold laugh. “I only ask one question. Du Ruhai, you say that my answer scroll is complete bullshit and irrelevant. Then let's make a bet in the Aurum Imperial Hall. Summon the subject officials in charge of reading the scrolls, I will answer for them again, right now. We'll see if my answer scroll is as unbearable as you say!”

“Answer again?” Du Ruhai planted his hands on his waist and laughed. “Jiang Chen, who do you think you are? The rules set forth by the ancestors have never been modified. Why should they be changed for you?”

“Du Ruhai, you object with all your might because you have a guilty conscience.”

At this moment, all the subject officials and Jiang Chen's answer scroll had been presented to Eastern Lu.

Eastern Lu took a brief look and sighed lightly. “Jiang Chen, this answer scroll has your name on it and this handwriting is the same as yours. You will need more evidence to prove your innocence.”

Jiang Chen was wholly unafraid as he looked lightly upon the four subject officials. “Your Majesty, it would be difficult for your subject to find evidence given how the situation is now. However, I happen to remember all the contents of the exams as well as clearly remember my answers. I respectfully request Your Majesty to give me an opportunity to rewrite my correct answers. In this way, even if my Jiang family still loses this lawsuit and the dukedom, I, Jiang Chen, will accept and admit my defeat!”

“In that case, bring out the four treasures of the study!” Eastern Lu immediately gave his approval.

“Your Majesty, doesn’t this violate the writs of the ancestors?”

“Please consider carefully Your Majesty, how can the laws of the forefathers be easily changed?”

Eastern Lu smiled faintly, “Those assembled need not unduly worry, we merely wish to view this Jiang Chen’s correct answers, but did not say that we would let him pass if his answers were correct. Our actions are done to pursue a judgement on the case, and not to readminister the exam. Both sides in the case are our important ministers, and we dare not act carelessly.”

The four treasures of the study were quickly readied and Jiang Chen stepped forward confidently and naturally. His facial expression was cool and composed as he started writing.

The atmosphere of the scene however, fell into a strange sort of anxiety.

1. Ancient Chinese judge known for his absolute impartiality and fairness

Chapter 37: Drastic Change in the Situation, Conquering the Examiner

One had to admit, Jiang Chen’s memory was impressive. He had completely filled out multiple scrolls within the span of two hours.

Jiang Chen stood up, nicely rolled up his answer scrolls, and presented them.

“Your Majesty, please peruse these and then pass them over to the various subjects’ officials.” Jiang Chen’s tone was at ease and brimmed with confidence.

Eastern Lu took the scrolls and glanced a few times over them. He discovered that these answer scrolls were indeed different from the ones before. He thought deeply for a moment and then passed them onto the four subject officials.

“Four ministers, read them well. This is an important matter and you absolutely cannot be numb or careless.” Eastern Lu reminded.

The four officials in charge of their own respective subjects suddenly felt a mountain of pressure on them.

On one side was the ruler of the kingdom - the king’s reminder - and on the other was Du Ruhai’s gaze that held blatant warning and threats.

They were, after all, in the Aurum Imperial Hall, in royal territory. A king’s dignified majesty finally overcame the psychological pressure that Du Ruhai brought them.

The four people tried quite hard to calm themselves down and started reading.

At first, the four’s expression were only vaguely surprised as they thought that this answer scroll was indeed completely different from the one previous.

But when they read the creative portion in the second half, the expressions of the four subject officials became exceedingly grave. They would occasionally reveal an expression deep in thought and then smile in understanding. They would follow that up with an expression of running into a difficult problem, but then a look of sudden enlightenment would spread across their faces.

Many were extremely curious upon seeing the rich play of expressions across the four faces. Was the answer scroll that complicated to make this four read it with such ridiculous expressions?

The four finally rolled up the scrolls after a long while, despite wishing to continue.

“Well?” Eastern Lu asked personally.

“In response to Your Majesty, if we were to grade these scrolls, we would have surely awarded full points.”

“Absolutely, indeed. And, the creative portion displayed such a depth in theory, unique opinion, and vast experience that even your humble subject feels quite humbled and doesn’t quite measure up.”

“Your humble subject greatly agrees. This answer scroll brims over with talent and inspires the feeling of beholding a high mountain.”

“Your humble subject only has one sentence to say. This scroll is the first that your humble subject has seen in his life, it is unprecedented!”

The evaluations were one higher than the other.

Anyone could see that the officials in charge of the four subjects weren’t talking off the cuff. The fact that these answer scrolls contained many things that they would need time to digest could be seen from their intoxicated expressions.

Judging from their satisfied expressions, it was most likely true that the contents within the scroll were enough to open their eyes, and imparted no small amount of benefit.

Eastern Lu looked at Jiang Chen meaningfully and sighed lightly. “My ministers, we are a bit confused. How can the two answer scrolls be so drastically different with regards to the same test subjects. One of them brims with talent and has subdued the subject’s officials, while the other is full of unreadable rubbish and does not pass.”

“Your Majesty, a night has passed since that exam. The Jiang Han household could have easily hired a crew of experts to craft a satisfactory answer scroll through the course of a night. Such a matter would be so easy.”

It was true that many things changed easily throughout the course of a night.

Du Ruhai also started clamoring. “Your Majesty, this Jiang family is self styling themselves as clever and is not worth despising. Your subject would like to say something unwelcome. This Jiang Chen is renowned throughout the capital for being a good-for-nothing as well as ignorant and incompetent. Even the peddlers and the porters would be hard pressed to believe that he had created answer scrolls that had subdued examiners.”

The situation was once again disadvantageous towards Jiang Chen.

When everyone's gazes had once again focused on Jiang Chen, he gave a hearty laugh and took a proud step forward. "It is reasonable for you all to think that I've cheated given it's the same exam topic. Then if it would please the examiners, please propose a few more topics and Jiang Chen is willing to immediately engage the examiners in a bout of learning from each other."

Learning from each other!

"Jiang Chen, do you think this is your Jiang Han manor? Your childish play will not be tolerated in this great hall! Once had already been outrageous enough, how could you be permitted to do so again?"

Indeed, the king had already been magnanimous enough to allow you to answer the questions again. How could your atrocious behavior be permitted again?

Eastern Lu laughed heartily and curbed the officials and courtiers itching to take action. "In this great hall, we sit and pontificate. It's a wonderful thing that our Eastern Kingdom has a young junior with such courage. This should be commended and not smothered. We will accede to Jiang Chen's wishes. Unfortunately, this places additional strain on the four subjects' officials and causes them to expend more effort."

The four subjects' officials didn't really care, they had already let loose. Since there was an opportunity to express themselves before the king, this wasn't too bad either.

Besides, they were truly curious. Had Jiang Chen truly created the four answer scrolls? If that was the case, they too wished to test Jiang Chen and see what they might gain.

The four main subjects of "The Articles of Martial Arts", "The Articles of Spirit Medicine", "The Papers of Power and Influence", and "The Papers of Military Strategy".

Of those, "The Papers of Power and Influence", and "The Papers of Military Strategy" were actually accompanying topics. There wasn't much content tested, and their proportion wasn't as weighted. Therefore, these two subjects were tested first.

The two examiners each gave two topics. Jiang Chen thought briefly and began to respond eloquently.

Clear thinking, innovative perspectives, an aspirational viewpoint, an unbound realm.

When Jiang Chen had answered all four questions, not only did the two examiners, but also some of the courtiers and officials, break out in applause.

Because Jiang Chen's answers had simply been too splendid. Each answer had not deliberately pursued to do something new and original.

But each answer had cut in from a fresh angle and resulted in unexpected responses that also made sense. Listeners were able to reflect on the answers and gain something.

"Your Majesty. These two topics already encompass your humble subject's lifetime of knowledge. No matter what angle we look at it from, young duke Jiang's response has surpassed your humble subject's level of learning. Your humble subject acquiesces."

"Your humble subject also acquiesces. Your humble subject believes that with young duke Jiang's level for "The Papers of Military Strategy", there is no way that he was the person of the original scroll."

These words created waves when they were spoken.

"Examiner Hua, what do you mean by that?"

Examiner Hua of "The Papers of Military Strategy" spoke faintly, "I am an old pedant, but also a scholar with a scholar's integrity. Young duke Jiang's standards leaves me in admiration. Therefore, I will say an additional word. As the organizer of the Hidden Dragon Trials, Your Excellency Du is broad minded, tolerant of diversity, and should be able to accommodate a variety of sounds?"

Du Ruhai's face darkened, "But aren't your words a public defamation that someone in the Hidden Dragon Trials cheated?"

"As to whether or not someone cheated, we prevail upon His Majesty to make an honored judgement. This humble subject dare not speak brashly." Upon

concluding, examiner Hua consciously backed up, closed his eyes and automatically entered a playing dead state.

“Heh heh, this humble subject will now test young duke Jiang in “The Articles of Spirit Medicine”.”

“Please deliver your instructions.” Jiang Chen cupped his hands.

“Alright, the first question deals with cultivating spirit ingredients. How is it that the common degree ninth rank spirit ingredient Three Immortal Grass often appears as one or two blades of grass when cultivated, as opposed to three blades of grass as it should be, like the three immortals in the heavens?”

Those who understood how to cultivate spirit ingredients all privately cursed this examiners. This question was too tricky wasn't it? Even the examiner himself probably didn't know why?

Jiang Chen smiled faintly. “The reason is simple. The Three Immortal Grass is a spirit ingredient in which three blades grow on the same stalk. If there is the slightest deviation during fertilization, causing one blade to become overly strong, it will swallow the other two blades. Therefore, in the cultivation of the Three Immortal Grass, there can be absolutely no aberrations in the tillage of the soil and application of spirit fertilizer. The slightest aberration will cause the gravest mistakes.”

“What? To think it would be so demanding?” The examiner thought carefully and suddenly whapped his head. “That's true, why didn't I think of this? I always thought it was the seed's problem. According to the records, the Three Immortal Grass is like eagles and hawks in nature, able to eat their own kind. So it turns out it's not that the Three Immortal Grass cannot grow three blades, but that it was swallowed by its brethren on the stalk!”

The examiner grinned widely and a few additional traces of admiration appeared in his look at Jiang Chen.

“Then I shall test you another question of refining pills. If you can also answer this question, I too shall vouch for you like old Hua has done!”

“Please go ahead.” Jiang Chen was neither humble nor overbearing, and did not forget himself in excessive joy because of the other's promise.

“When I refine the ‘Divine Returning Qi Pill’, I sometimes use the eggs of the water heart bug, and sometimes the wings of ice cicadas. Why is it that using the eggs of the water heart bug can sometimes result in an upper rank pill, and sometimes the wings of ice cicadas can result in an upper rank pill? I’d like to ask which of these two ingredients are more suited for refining the ‘Divine Returning Qi Pill’?”

This question was also one that plagued this examiner for quite a while. In all these years of refining the Divine Returning Qi Pill, he ended up with a middle rank nine times out of ten and rarely produced an upper rank pill.

This had caused him to not gain much, and sometimes even resulted in a loss.

Jiang Chen searched through his memories and made his response. “Although the eggs of the water heart bug and the wings of the ice cicadas are both ingredients used in refining the Divine Returning Qi Pill, but they’re actually not the most ideal choice. If you use the Spirit Dream Frozen Rain Fruit, it will increase the chances of you refining an upper rank pill to seventy, eighty percent.”

“But why is that?” The examiner asked humbly.

“It’s quite simple. Whether it’s the eggs of the water heart bug or the wings of the ice cicadas, they are all beings of flesh and blood. The main ingredients of the Divine Returning Qi Pill will be somewhat cancelled out by the vigor of these two beings. When this is the case, you’d be hard pressed to refine an upper rank pill. Being able to produce one once in a while is simply good luck. The Spirit Dream Frozen Rain Fruit is a plant and has no vigor. Its characteristics also correspond best with the main ingredients. That is the best choice.”

“Ah...” The examiner’s mouth fell open and he didn’t speak for a long while. He finally bowed towards Jiang Chen after quite a bit of time had passed. “Now that I have heard this today, I can die without regret. I, old Zhao, also acquiesce.”

He then came to Eastern Lu, “Your Majesty, this youth’s knowledge of spirit ingredients is broad and profound, far surpassing this old man’s. Your humble subject also feels that young duke Jiang was not the author of that answer scroll.”

Examiner Zhao paused, and then added, “Completely incomparable. One is in the heavens, and the other on the earth.”

One person’s words may not hold much weight. Two people’s words could also be a coincidence.

But if three people speak, then that is no longer a coincidence.

The three examiners who had tested Jiang Chen had already spoken on his behalf and praised him ceaselessly. This situation had far outstripped everyone’s expectation.

Changes began to slowly occur in the situation.

Chapter 38: The Truth Comes Out, Heads Roll

The fourth examiner was in charge of “The Articles of Martial Arts”.

Jiang Chen was even more at ease in this field. He easily resolved the three questions that the examiner asked in succession.

These three questions all belonged to this examiner’s martial arts obstacles. They had restricted him for many years, and he had a feeling of suddenly seeing the light after Jiang Chen’s explanations.

“Your Majesty, your humble subject is a man of martial arts and dares to use my head to vouch for the young duke Jiang. If even his level is unable to pass the foundational exams, then no one in the younger generation will be able to pass.”

These words were even more thorough, more absolute.

The duke of Soaring Dragon’s face darkened slightly when he heard the fourth examiner’s words. Was this a slap in the face? My daughter Long Juxue was born with an azure phoenix constitution. Would her potential and experience be inferior to this brat’s? Humph. You’re a mere examiner, what aspects of life have you seen? How dare you speak so wildly?

The duke of Soaring Dragon was quite infuriated.

Du Ruhai immediately jumped out, “Your Majesty, your humble subject was charged by Your Majesty to administer the Hidden Dragon Trials. I have been diligent and hardworking, but was beaten by this presumptuous youth today. I

beg Your Majesty to make a judicious decision and a judgement for your old subject.”

“Your Majesty, this Jiang Chen is lawless. Although he has some talent, he has repeatedly committed grave infractions. Your subject feels that we can no longer tolerate this youth.”

The duke of Soaring Dragon had finally spoken up.

His words represented the attitudes of a select portion.

Indeed, many courtiers and officials also jumped out and all sincerely begged Eastern Lu to handle this harshly in accordance with the laws of the land!

“Ministers, Jiang Chen is a youth brimming with talent. How could he have produced answer scrolls filled with such unreadable nonsense? I however, will be appointing Minister Du to quickly investigate the circumstances. Are there those unworthy in the ranks below who have employed some shady methods in private?”

Eastern Lu gave those aggressive proclamations the cold treatment. His words were the equivalent of publicly protecting Jiang Chen.

The duke of Soaring Dragon was about to open his mouth when light sounds suddenly traveled in from outside the hall.

“No need to investigate! I have already discovered the truth.” At this moment, Princess Gouyu, dressed in armor, walked in with a mighty and brave air.

The crowd of warriors akin to tigers and wolves that followed behind her were obviously the royal palace guards.

These royal palace guards had tied up a few people.

Du Ruhai’s face changed drastically when he saw the band of tied up people. These were all his confidantes! Had these guys broken under the pressure at this critical moment?

There was also a middle aged woman wearing gold and silver, with the shine of jewels all about her. Her face was shiny, and she wore powder and blush. Wasn’t this Du Ruhai’s wife?

The middle aged woman started cursing loudly when she saw Du Ruhai. “Du Ruhai, didn’t you commit a crime and were hauled off to the royal prisons? What are you doing here?”

Du Ruhai leapt up. “Who said I was hauled off to the royal prisons? That’s rumor mongering! You idiot woman, did you say something you shouldn’t have?”

The woman blanked, “I... I told them everything. They said leniency will follow frankness?”

Princes Gouyu laughed coldly once, “Royal brother, I have long since heard the rumors of Du Ruhai’s corruption and abuse of the law. I have been observing secretly and gathering evidence. Collecting evidence from all avenues has indeed resulted in rewards. This Du Ruhai is absolutely a harmful vermin! This is Du Ruhai’s wife’s confession and initialed testimony. There is detailed evidence for Du Ruhai’s cheating in the Hidden Dragon Trials.

And this, Ma Datong, is Du Ruhai’s confidante. Du Ruhai instructed him to commit the entire act. Ma Datong, now is your chance to redeem yourself with good service in front of His Majesty!”

This Ma Datong was indeed Du Ruhai’s confidante, and since Du Ruhai’s wife had confessed, he was only forcing himself down the path of death if he continued to cover things up.

He didn’t dare look at Du Ruhai either at that moment and genuflected tremblingly. He poured out the entire matter of how he’d swapped answer scrolls and how he’d hoodwinked others like beans being poured from a bamboo pipe.

Eastern Lu’s face darkened continuously as he listened.

“Then where are the original answer scrolls?”

Princess Gouyu took them from the hands of a royal palace guard and presented it forward. “This Ma Datong was somewhat of a smart man and knew to hold something back. He surreptitiously kept them when Du Ruhai told him to destroy them, and they’ve acted as a lifesaver.”

Witnesses and material evidence were all present.

Following that, a steward who had mimicked Jiang Chen's handwriting also confessed honestly.

All the crimes and evidence pointed to Du Ruhai without a single exception. These people had all been threatened and coerced by Du Ruhai, leaving them no choice but to do so.

Next up were continuous counts of accusations.

Du Ruhai was completely befuddled by what was occurring in his surroundings, and his blood pressure skyrocketed. His facial expression was wretched as he sat down heavily on the ground.

"How can this be, how can this be?"

Suddenly, his eyes glanced at the duke of Soaring Dragon and it was as if Du Ruhai had found a straw to clutch at. "Duke Long, say something on my behalf. I, Du Ruhai, have accomplished things for you before."

At this moment, Du Ruhai was like a pile of turd. Whoever sullied themselves with it would be unlucky. Duke Long's brow faintly creased as he privately cursed "useless" and kicked Du Ruhai away with one leg.

"In this duke's life, petty villains like you that are greedy and jealous of the virtuous are the most abhorred." The tone of the duke of Soaring Dragon was filled with disgust, as if disdaining a large fly, one that was to be avoided like the plague.

"Your Majesty, the thing that your subject Long Zhaofeng cannot abide the most in this life are traitors like these. Your subject sincerely requests that Your Majesty pronounce an edict to allow your subject to haul this thief out to behead and display publicly!"

Eastern Lu smiled faintly, thought momentarily, and then actually nodded his head. "We are comforted by Duke Long's loyalty. Approved!"

Even Jiang Chen was a bit surprised by this development.

Princes Gouyu likewise harbored some confusion. But her confusion aside, she wasn't about to say something after Eastern Lu had made a decision.

Du Ruhai was frightened out of his sense when he heard those words. “Duke Long, don’t kill me. I’m still of use.”

He also started barking up the wrong tree in his panic. When he saw that the duke of Soaring Dragon was ignoring him, he actually crawled backwards to Jiang Chen, “Young duke Jiang, I was in the wrong. I’m not human. I.... but I have inside information. I was coerced. Young duke Jiang, I know that you’re currently His Majesty’s favorite. Plead on my behalf and I, old Du, will become your dog from now on. I’ll bite whomever you tell me to bite. I have inside information to report. I...”

Jiang Chen had seen some wretched, petty villains after coming to this world, but he hadn’t thought that Du Ruhai could take things to another level.

“Du Ruhai, I said that you would regret it when you set a foot wrong. But who would’ve thought that you would die in Duke Long’s hands. What great irony.”

Jiang Chen laughed heartily and gave the duke of Soaring Dragon a meaningful look.

He had no need to treat anything as taboo in front of the duke of Soaring Dragon. Even a fool could see Duke Long’s shadow behind this matter.

As for why Eastern Lu hadn’t uncovered it, it must be because he didn’t want to blatantly call out Duke Long, yet. That was to say, it wasn’t time to show the cards in hand yet.

Du Ruhai was quickly hauled out and personally beheaded by the duke of Soaring Dragon!

When the duke of Soaring Dragon dragged the bloody, headless corpse in to discharge his duty, even Jiang Chen was a bit impressed by this person’s ruthlessness.

Although Du Ruhai was one of his dogs, he was a dog that did Duke Long’s bidding.

He’d beheaded Du Ruhai just like he said. He was indeed a fierce and ruthless person.

This disturbance quickly evolved into an anticorruption operation. Eastern Lu was exceedingly wrathful and he gave the order for house raids and execution!

The remaining accomplices were all sent to a distant exile!

As for the victim Jiang Chen's true answer scrolls, after a round of verification from the four examiners, they discovered that the answers were exactly the same, matching the new answer scrolls he'd drawn up that day, with not a single word different.

This way, people were quite amazed by Jiang Chen's astonishing memory.

The truth had come out. As the main organizer of the Hidden Dragon Trials, Princess Gouyu immediately announced that Jiang Chen had passed the three foundational exams and were qualified to enter the final exams of the Trials.

"I owe you one."

When court had been dismissed, Jiang Chen nodded towards Princess Gouyu. Jiang Chen was much obliged to this favor as a lot of trouble would have been necessary otherwise.

"No need!" Princess Gouyu's slender arms waved as she spoke with a businesslike manner. "I am the organizer of the Hidden Dragon Trials and it is part of my duties to ensure that each dukedom's heir receives fair and just treatment."

Jiang Chen smiled involuntarily. "Must you be so cocky?"

"Excuse me?" Princess Gouyu's phoenix eyes moved and she asked with a frown.

"Women don't look good when they frown." Jiang Chen smiled faintly. "And, when I say I owe you one, then I owe you one."

"Whatever." Princess Gouyu flipped her wavy hair and her tone was still noncommittal. "Is there anything else? If not, I have many other things to take care of."

One had to say, women's thoughts were always quite odd. Princess Gouyu felt the same towards this Jiang Chen.

Her first impression had indeed been poor the first time she met Jiang Chen. She'd felt that this was a frivolous young man.

These thoughts became more resolute when he'd hotly lectured her during that first meeting.

Following that, Jiang Chen had even more unreservedly bossed around Princess Gouyu and dictated orders when it came to revamping Princess Zhiruo's quarters.

Some bizarre feelings had appeared in Princess Gouyu's heart at that moment, because she had yet to meet someone in her life who'd dared speak to her this way.

And, this person was at least six or seven years younger than her.

Afterwards, when Princess Gouyu learned that Eastern Zhiruos's illness had actually taken a turn for the better after Jiang Chen's diagnoses and treatment, her viewpoint had unknowingly taken a 180 degree turn in that moment.

When Jiang Chen caused the huge disturbance at the Soaring Dragon manor afterwards, Princess Gouyu had to admit that she had misjudged this youth previously.

And now in the present time, Princess Gouyu knew more clearly than anyone else that Jiang Chen was not as simple as he'd previously portrayed himself to be. That so-called fop and dandy who refused to learn and had no martial skills was absolutely a stealthy guise!

But, Princess Gouyu was also a headstrong person. She hadn't received any concessions from Jiang Chen in their previous interactions, and a woman's modesty prevented her from laying down her dignity and speaking calmly with this youth.

However, Jiang Chen had no idea that Princess Gouyu's thoughts were thus, and thought this woman was still holding a grudge because he'd yelled at her that day in the palace.

Smiling wryly at Princess Gouyu's sexy retreating figure, he smiled and increased his voice's volume. "Conflicts of true qi result in difficulties of control. You've been stuck in the ten meridians true qi realm for at least three years now, no? Why have you continued to fail to breakthrough? I'd originally wanted to use this opportunity to return this favor, but forget it since you don't want it."

Princess Gouyu's body that was as proud as a phoenix, vaguely shuddered once with weakness. Her moving lotus-like steps suddenly stopped.

Chapter 39: Giving Gouyu Pointers, Returning Her Favor

With Princess Gouyu's proud nature, if Jiang Chen had said anything else, she would've flatly not turned back again.

But, Jiang Chen had happened to hit on currently her most sensitive, followed most closely, and most worrisome matter!

Yes, she had halted at ten meridians true qi for a good three years. When she was 18, a Princess Gouyu in her prime had shaken off the shackles and broken through nine meridians true qi with one stroke, ascending to ten meridians true qi, becoming the kingdom's youngest true qi master.

In that moment, Princess Gouyu had resolutely affirmed that her life's faith lay in practicing martial dao.

She'd labored all the time during these three years and had pretty much completely thrown all the missions that her royal brother Eastern Lu had handed to her over to Du Ruhai to control.

This was also why Du Ruhai could command the wind and rain in the Hidden Dragon Trials. It really was because she had given him too much power.

But in these three years, no matter how hard she'd tried, ventured out to train, traveled from north to south, she'd been unable to find opportunity needed to breakthrough to eleven meridians true qi.

That moment of ascension dragged its feet and had failed to arrive.

In these three years, she had tried, fought bravely, acted crazily, and even cried silently in the dark of the night when no one else was around.

But it was as if locks had been placed onto her path of martial dao. She had never been able to enter the halls of eleven meridians true qi.

She almost suspected that she had overestimated herself.

Was ten meridians true qi the upper limit of her potential?

During the time that she had returned to the capital, that was also one of the most downcast, dejected periods of her life.

That cold expression on her forehead spread out lightly, and subtle hints of emotion flashed visibly through her limpid eyes. However, this appearance only appeared for a brief flash.

Princess Gouyu reassumed her cold demeanor afterwards.

“You are young, do not guess wildly at issues of martial dao.”

“Is it really guessing randomly?” Jiang Chen smiled as he sat and waited. “You probably don’t even know that the anxiety you feel at being unable to breakthrough to eleven meridians true qi is written all over your face.

What probably has occurred to you even less is that at this rate, not only will you be unable to breakthrough, but you’re not far off from a cultivation deviation that will backfire on you.

You also have to admit that whenever the sun sets, your emotions become agitated and irritable, as if numerous raging fires are burning crazily in your chest, seeking to reduce you to ashes.

You can deny it, but I still have to say it. Treat it as me returning your favor. As for whether or not you’ll listen, that’s up to you.”

Jiang Chen displayed a kind smile. The smile of a fifteen or sixteen year old youth was the most brilliant and filled with sunshine, and also one to most easily dispel a gloomy haze.

Indeed, this kind smile caused the headstrong Princess Gouyu to surprisingly refrain from kicking up her heels and leaving, refuting Jiang Chen, but rather to look at him with a complicated gaze.

To look at a youth she understood less and less.

“Your potential, the method that you’re training in, all are all enough for you to breakthrough to the eleventh current of true qi. Your body embodies even the potential to try for spirit dao.

But unfortunately, you’re too bent on victory. Your headstrong personality has affected your state of mind.”

“So what?” Princess Gouyu was a bit dissatisfied but still wished Jiang Chen to quickly continue speaking.

“Very simple, one word - tranquility.” Jiang Chen smiled faintly. “The fire in you burns too hotly, resulting in an overabundance of yang qi within your body and causing an imbalance in your yin and yang. This affects the circulation of your meridians. Add to that your impatient nature, and it further weakens your control over your meridians.”

“That it?” Princess Gouyu didn’t seem to quite believe him.

“If you say it’s simple, then it’s that simple. But if you say it’s not simple, it’s also not that simple. Training in martial dao is not merely reading books and theory, but one must cultivate a state of tranquility and banish the demons of the heart. How is that simple? With your personality, I feel that the difficulty will be high. Have you not discovered that you’re walking closer and closer to a cultivation deviation?”

Princess Gouyu was moved. A trace of low spirits flashed across the unparalleled beauty of her face. She really didn’t want to admit it, but instinct told her that the truth was such.

Suddenly, her slightly frowning eyebrows lifted lightly and she blurted out a question, “Jiang Chen, do you have any ways to resolve this?”

Princess Gouyu had almost used up all her strength in asking this question. She even felt that she was truly weak. Why was she so childish as to ask him for answers? If he said he didn’t know, how ugly would that be?

Gouyu’s emotions were extremely complex in the span of a moment and she didn’t even have the courage to meet Jiang Chen’s eyes. The look from this youth seemed like it would pierce through metallic rocks and directly breach her inner mind.

“I said that I owe you one.” Jiang Chen smiled. “I’m going to go see Princess Zhiruo, would you like to come?”

Princess Gouyu stamped her foot, but cowardly her feet still betrayed her into following him.

Princess Zhiruo was overjoyed to see Jiang Chen. Her entire being seemed like it would fly up in her elation as looks of incomparably happiness shot out from her eyes.

“Brother Jiang Chen, didn’t you say you would come once a month? Is today’s visit because you missed Zhiruo?” The little girl was young and naturally had few reservations when she talked.

“How could I be at ease if I didn’t look in on you. What if they tortured you and didn’t follow my instructions? If anything happens to you, then my head will be chopped off to accompany you.” Jiang Chen was equally relaxed and casual around Princess Zhiruo.

The two laughed and talked without any trace of estrangement.

The newly arrived Princess Gouyu witnessed this scene and felt a bit odd in her heart. She rather envied the fact that they could chat so intimately.

But she also vaguely felt that this wasn’t quite appropriate.

But she said nothing in the end.

“Auntie, you’ve come to see me. How wonderful, Zhiruo has seen two of her most beloved people in the span of a second today. What joy!”

“Zhiruo, go fetch brush and paper, I’m going to write something down for your aunt.” Jiang Chen held an attitude of I’m-the-boss. He was also the only person who dared order Eastern Zhiruo around like this in the entire kingdom.

Even Eastern Lu was too tender hearted to order his daughter around like a maid.

But, this little girl was eating this up and ran off happily, as if an adult had given a candy to a child, full of energy.

She seemed to be honored to do something for Jiang Chen.

After receiving the brush and paper, Jiang Chen mused silently for a moment as he held the brush, and then began to write.

Two forms were quickly written.

“The first form is a set of incantations to smooth your qi. Take it back for some study, it will absolutely be of use to you in seeking tranquility. As for the second form, it’s a prescription. You can take it to prescribe medication for yourself.” Jiang Chen stuffed those two items into Princess Gouyu’s hands with a fluid motion.

She accepted them with robotic movements.

“You must be thinking, you’re just a silly brat, you’re bamming me with these things?” Jiang Chen smiled merrily. “You can choose to believe, or you can choose to not believe. Either way, I’ve returned the favor.

Oh right, if you truly don’t believe me, then you can take the prescription and auction it off at the Hall of Healing. Perhaps it can bring in three or five million silver for you.”

Jiang Chen started wandering around Princess Zhiruo’s quarters after he’d left those instructions.

The crouching yang stone had been placed according to his instructions. But for the time being, these crouching yang stones were still dead items that were not communicating with each other and had yet to form a matrix effect.

However, this was the most that he could do at this moment. With his current level of training, it would be a bit unrealistic to manipulate a matrix.

Temporarily speaking, it was more form than function. It would be quite decent if it could expand a tenth of its power.

“Alright, you two have a lovely chat, I’ve still things to do and need to go. Don’t be mischievous little one, don’t forget the things I told you.”

Jiang Chen felt that the scene’s atmosphere was a bit odd and decided to take his leave.

Eastern Zhiruo was a bit depressed. “Brother Jiang Chen, leaving when you’ve just arrived? Don’t worry, Zhiruo will live healthily for Brother Jiang Chen, and won’t drag you down with me.”

Jiang Chen was speechless after hearing those words and took his leave.

Princess Gouyu glared at Jiang Chen’s retreating figure and muttered, “This person loves to boast cockily.”

“Heh heh, Auntie, it’s not kind to say bad things about someone behind their back.” The little girl laughed mischievously. “Not to mention that someone had just benefited from that cocky person.”

“Alright you little brat, you’re biased towards outsiders and forget about your own family?” Princess Gouyu was quite close with this niece, and they acted more like sisters usually.

The sounds of laughter, giggling and play chasing sounded. Sounds of joy filled the entire yard in that moment.

Jiang Chen’s mind had finally calmed down when he left the palace, and he was summarizing the gains and losses of the day when a crowd of men and horses came up the street.

The leader was clad heavily in body armor. It was the leader of the Jiang family Iron Guard, Jiang Ying.

“Young duke, Duke Jiang has ordered me to come aid you.” Jiang Ying jumped down from his horse with smooth, practiced movement. His eyes were filled with wariness and they observed the vicinity in between his words.

“Uncle Ying, what are you doing here?” Jiang Chen’s thoughts raced as he seemed to immediately understand something.

“Let’s discuss after we’ve escorted the young duke back to the manor.” The contingent of Iron Guard had already surrounded Jiang Chen in the protective care of their core as Jiang Ying spoke.

“Has something happened?” Jiang Chen asked lowly.

“When His Lordship was leaving just now, he was ambushed at the door of the manor. The situation is quite chaotic in the capital, thus His Lordship has ordered me to come aid the young duke.”

“What? Was my father hurt?” Jiang Chen’s face darkened. It seemed like he’d underestimated the chaotic situation in the capital.

“Just some light injuries, he will be fine with a few days’ rest.” Jiang Ying’s eyes constantly patrolled the area like a hawk as he responded. His level of wariness was quite high.

“Who did it? Do we have any clues?” Jiang Chen relaxed slightly upon hearing that his father was seriously incapacitated. To be honest, the first person that he had identified with upon arriving on this world was that adorable father of his.

“I haven’t had the time to investigate.” Jiang Ying responded simply.

“Hmph. Looks like they were unable to take our Jiang land with the spirit vein through wit, so now they’re prepared to use force.” Jiang Chen could use merely his toes to figure out that this must be another hand that the duke of Soaring Dragon, Long Zhaofeng, had played.

Du Ruhai played the role of a striker in blocking Jiang Chen in the three foundational exams. Now add to that the attack on his father at the front door - this was obviously a string of interconnected attacks.

Jiang Chen was enraged, truly enraged from the bottom of his heart.

The provocation that he’d been greeted with since coming to this world were all small interludes of minor fights and scuffles in Jiang Chen’s eyes. He had always viewed them with a detached attitude.

But now, a bloody truth was in front of him. This wasn’t a minor scuffle, but a bloodthirsty fight to the death.

“Long Zhaofeng...” Jiang Chen silently repeated this name in his heart, a strong urge to kill rushing to the forefront for the first time.

Chapter 40: Father Attacked, Controversy Renewed

What Jiang Chen and Jiang Ying both hadn't thought of, was the fact that the duke of Jiang Han, Jiang Feng, had an injury that wasn't as simple as it appeared to be. He hadn't merely suffered a small wound.

His opponent had actually applied poison to the blade of the knife, and it was a violent and swift acting poison!

In the short time that Jiang Ying had gone out to escort Jiang Chen - less than an hour - Jiang Feng's injuries had quickly deteriorated.

When Jiang Chen had returned to the manor, the duke of Jiang Han had already sunk into a coma and his face was as black as cinders.

"Young duke, Master Ying, you've finally back. His Lordship..." The head steward of the manor, Jiang Fu, was so worried that tears had streaked down his face.

Jiang Chen combined three steps into two as he rushed to Jiang Feng, "Father!"

Jiang Feng's consciousness had already sank into a coma. He merely groaned slightly, and his eyelids didn't even open.

Jiang Ying's fierce eyes were filled with thick regret. As the head of the Jiang family Iron Guard, it was his dereliction of duty in not properly protecting the duke.

"Your Lordship, your subordinate has failed you and can only thank you with my death." Jiang Ying pulled out the dagger at his waist with a clang and slashed at his own neck.

Jiang Chen's elbow bumped him slightly, just so happening to bump into the area between Jiang Ying's waist and ribcage. Jiang Ying felt his arm go numb. Unable to firmly grasp the knife in his hands, the dagger fell to the ground with a clank.

"Jiang Ying, it's easy for a man to die. Toiling to live in the face of hardship is the difficult part. You're not going to tell me that the head of our Jiang family Iron Guard is a coward, are you?"

Jiang Chen's tone was cold and severe, and it carried a few traces of a lecturing tone.

It was as if lightning had struck Jiang Ying. How comical was this scene? When had the young duke started lecturing like this? When had a foppish dandy that had given Jiang Ying headaches become equipped with such skill? Causing him to be unable to hold his waist dagger firmly with a careless bump?

Jiang Chen paid no more attention to Jiang Ying and asked Jiang Fu, "Have we sent for a doctor?"

"Yes we have. We've sent for three or four doctors and they all left without another word when they saw this situation. They were so scared that their faces had turned green." Jiang Fu's words were said with a tearful tone.

This type of poison had spread incredibly fast. If it wasn't for the fact that Jiang Feng was a strong practitioner at nine meridians true qi, an ordinary person would've long since succumbed to death.

How could ordinary doctors, who had never seen this kind of poison, be able to cure it?

"Have none of the spirit alchemists been by?" Jiang Chen asked.

Jiang Fu was distressed. "I went in person to the Pill King Garden but was met with ridicule and mockery. I have no connections with the other two places."

The Pill King Garden had always been in partnership with the Jiang family. Therefore Jiang Fu had not given it too much thought when he went to the Garden to ask for a spirit alchemist. He'd been subjected to a good round of ridicule and sneering, and it made him so angry that his entire body had shook.

Jiang Chen was speechless. This Jiang Fu was turning to any doctor he could find in his time of need. It would be a bizarre thing indeed if the Pill King Garden was willing to come cure Jiang Feng now.

Who knew, perhaps the Garden had even had a hand in the business with the poison.

After all, the situation now was quite clear. The Pill King Garden had thrown their lot in with the duke of Soaring Dragon and become a biting dog at his behest.

Jiang Chen did not sit idly by. He placed his fingers on Jiang Feng's pulse as his brow creased faintly.

Jiang Chen had also conducted much research on the matters of employing poison in his past life.

He thought for a moment, stood up, and called for Jiang Fu to bring brush and paper, writing out a list.

"Jiang Fu, make a trip to the Hall of Healing and give this list to the third hallmaster Qiao Baishi. Also, ask him to come by with the items on the list."

Jiang Chen fished around in his pockets and gave the engraved dragon medallion to Jiang Ying. "Uncle Ying, take this item and accompany Jiang Fu."

Jiang Chen was calm in the face of panic and orderly in his measures.

For some reason, Jiang Ying had suddenly mysteriously grown a bit of confidence towards the young duke since being lectured by him just now.

"I hear and obey." Jiang Ying knew that saving a life was as urgent as dousing a fire and he grabbed Jiang Fu, hauling him as he flew out the door.

One had to say, Qiao Baishi gave Jiang Chen a lot of face. He had arrived at the Jiang manor with the spirit medicines on the list in less than five minutes.

Qiao Baishi was also extremely shocked to see Jiang Feng's condition.

After a moment's diagnosis, his expression became even more grave. There were hints of incomprehension in his expression, some of deep musing and a bit of helplessness.

"Young duke Jiang, His Lordship has been poisoned. Of that there can be no doubt. But the theory behind this poison is difficult for me to grasp. I'm afraid that I am helpless with my mere level of practice. The lord hallmaster is highly resourceful and has extraordinary powers, but he unfortunately set out on a trip yesterday..."

Qiao Baishi's tone carried regret and apology. He looked at Jiang Chen, momentarily at a loss of how to comfort him.

And, he was also internally shocked. To think that the situation within the capital would suddenly deteriorate to this! A regional duke had been ambushed on the doorsteps of his own house!

“Third hallmaster, in your mind, how many have the ability to use this poison within the capital?”

Qiao Baishi furrowed his brow in deep thought, and responded after a long while. “The three heavyweights in spirit medicine in the capital are all not particularly adept at using poison. I theorize that this wasn’t the work of a poison expert within the capital.

Young duke, the poison in your father has invaded the blood vessels. We must hurry and take action. Why not act according to the usual methods of treatment, and pierce the acupoints with silver needles in order to let out the poisoned blood?”

Although Qiao Bai could not fully grasp the workings of this poison, he knew treating poison usually followed this procedure. Bleeding out the poisoned blood first could at least slow down the speed in which the poison would attack the heart.

However, Jiang Chen shook his head. “No, we would be falling into the other’s trap if we use silver needles to pierce the acupoints. This poison is not one of blood, but one of the nerves. If we use silver needles to stimulate the acupoints, this will only cause the poison to spread faster.”

“What?” Qiao Baishi was extremely astonished. This was the first time that he had heard something like this.

Even the expressions of Jiang Ying and those on the sidelines changed drastically upon hearing these words.

Treating this poison in the usual way would actually increase the speed of the poison. It was a good thing that they hadn’t fancied themselves clever and used the silver needles. Otherwise, wasn’t this placing the duke in even greater danger?

Qiao Baishi suddenly remembered something and his brows quirked. “Young duke, you wrote a list for me and told me to bring those spirit medicines over. Do you already have a way to cure it?”

Jiang Chen nodded lightly. "If the level of my practice were similar to my father's, I would be able to easily cure him of this poison. However, my father's level is much higher than mine and thus it will take some effort to cure him. But I have my ways.

Jiang Fu, prepare a secret room.

Jiang Ying, activate the manor's highest level of alert!

Third hallmaster, thank you for making the trip. Please wait here, I will come chat with you when I have cured my father of the poison."

Qiao Baishi found it difficult to scratch the itch in his heart upon hearing Jiang Chen's words. He had never seen this kind of poison before and really wanted to observe from the side. But he also knew that there couldn't be a moment of distraction during the process of curing the poison, so he fiercely contained his curiosity.

But he would never agree to returning to the Hall at this moment if someone told him to. He wouldn't give up this prime opportunity to broaden his perspectives.

Besides, he also wanted to use this opportunity to fully understand the theory behind curing this poison.

As a spirit alchemist, Qiao Baishi was an avid scholar. How could he miss a chance to learn and increase his skills?

He was willing to wait for ten days and ten nights without even the slightest crease of his brow - not to mention for just a short while.

This poison, although extremely incomprehensible in the ingredients used, wasn't enough to stump the widely knowledgeable Jiang Chen. Although there were some uncommon methods used in the application of this poison that confounded even Qiao Baishi, a hallmaster in the Hall of Healing. Whoever had used the poison would count as an adept in using poison.

To Jiang Chen though, these tricks were all still at the pediatrics level.

One had to know, Jiang Chen had spent millions of years in studying the dao of alchemy in his past life, what had he not seen? Many of the alchemy immortals had often come to ask questions of Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen in his prior life was a wastrel in the aspect of training martial dao, but was a preeminent master at the level of being able to laugh proudly at the heavens in terms of the dao of alchemy.

In the entire process of Jiang Chen preventing Jiang Ying from committing suicide, instructing them to bring back Qiao Baishi, writing the list and conversing with Qiao Baishi just now, he had actually been continuously contemplating how to cure the poison.

Finally, he settled on a method that was most reliable for a cure.

After entering the secret room, Jiang Chen thoroughly crushed all the spirit medicine and completely dispersed them using vast waves true qi, incorporating the medicine into the true qi and conducting them into Jiang Feng's body.

The theory of using true qi to conduct medicine seemed simple in theory, but it wasn't something that just anyone could use to cure a poison.

First of all, the two people's true qi must be of a common origin and could not have even the slightest bit of conflict. Otherwise the true qi would oppose each other, and the slightest conflict between the true qi would be enough to stimulate the poison and result in the poison spreading in all directions.

This process wouldn't tolerate the slightest bit of interference.

For Jiang Chen, the only problem lay in the difference between his six meridians true qi and Jiang Feng's nine meridians true qi. Since this was the case, he would have to be careful of the poison counterattacking while he was in the process of curing his father.

It was a good thing that Jiang Feng was in a poison induced coma. Although his consciousness still went through the motions of manipulating true qi out of habit, there was no way he could actually activate the limits of his true qi.

Add to that the fact that Jiang Chen was practicing the "Secret of the Nine Laughing Oceans", a method that was hundreds of times more sophisticated than Jiang Feng's "Vast Waves Method".

Therefore, Jiang Chen's vast waves true qi enjoyed absolute advantage and solidly conducted itself into Jiang Feng's body, carrying the antidote medicines to all corners of Jiang Feng's body.

In this matter, the process of curing the poison became simple.

Jiang Feng leisurely woke up after an hour.

“Chen’er, you’ve cured me of my poison?” Jiang Feng immediately extended his senses and was even more surprised. “Such rich and pure vast waves true qi, you... Chen’er, what level is your ‘Vast Waves Method’?”

Jiang Feng thought the rich and pure vast waves true qi were simply incredible.

Jiang Chen chuckled, “Father, I wanted to talk to you about this matter. I’m practicing not the “Vast Waves Method”, but the “Secret of the Nine Laughing Oceans”. “Vast Waves Method” is merely an offshoot of it, and is a method that shares a common origin with it.”

“Secret of the Nine Laughing Oceans?” Jiang Feng had become completely petrified.

“Yes, for instance. This Secret of the Nine Laughing Oceans is like the old ancestor of the “Vast Waves Method”. Father, find your inner peace and I’ll tell you. Practice the “Secret of the Nine Laughing Oceans” from now on and I promise that you’ll break through the shackles of the nine meridians true qi within a month, and join the ranks of the true qi masters!”

Within the realm of true qi, ten meridians true qi to twelve meridians true qi were all called true qi masters.

Becoming a true qi master meant entering the top levels of the true qi realm. The practitioner was bound to become the apex of the strong in the Eastern Kingdom!

It was as if Jiang Feng was in a dream, and his expression still had not fully recovered.

But Jiang Chen’s next sentence still fully flabberghasted him.

“Father, this “Secret of the Nine Laughing Oceans” is an advanced method. Practicing this method will grant you a seventy percent chance to assail the spirit dao realm!”

“Spirit dao realm?” Jiang Feng was utterly gobsmacked.

The spirit dao realm was a legendary existence to the superior practitioners in the Eastern Kingdom. It was said that in the entire hundreds of years of the Eastern Kingdom's existence, only one had appeared!

Ascending to spirit dao was like becoming a golden scaled dragon. One would soar into the heavens, rise meteorically, break the worldly cage, and soar over the clouds!